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# CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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## **RESOLUTION: BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES YOUNG PLAYGROUND BALL FIELD PERMIT POLICY**

**WHEREAS** Brigadier General Charles Young Playground (6.42 acres and Park ID:M186) is located on West 143rd, West 144th and West 145th Streets along Lenox Avenue/Malcolm X Boulevard to the Harlem River Drive in the Borough of Manhattan in Community Board 10; and

**WHEREAS** The 133,000-square-foot dirt field is being converted to a synthetic turf field and will accommodate five sports; baseball, football, soccer, rugby and lacrosse. The Brigadier General Charles Young Playground Ball Field is located inside of Brigadier General Charles Young Playground; and

**WHEREAS** NYC Parks advises that there is a high demand anticipated for use of the ball field by outside groups. Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the community-based recommendation that New York City Parks reset the permits to zero for the application permit process for the newly constructed multi-sport Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field and that local community youth organizations, having been historically marginalized due to grandfathering of permits, decades of poor park conditions and safety issues, be prioritized in the NYC Parks permit application process for the use of the aforementioned; and

**WHEREAS** Across the country the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation teams up with communities and organizations to build safe places for at-risk youth. The Foundation's team helps to raise funding, design, and build three kinds of synthetic turf, low-maintenance facilities: Regulation-size, youth, and collegiate-level baseball fields, multipurpose parks, with baseball and large general-use fields, adaptive fields especially for those kids with special needs. To date, over 602,000 at-risk youth have access to recreational, educational, and athletic experiences at one of the 120 Youth Development Parks in 27 states and Washington, .C. These new fields inspire a renewed sense of community pride, prompting neighbors to maintain their park's integrity, and even refurbish other spaces. Brigadier General Charles Young ball field will be the 121st such facility; and

**WHEREAS** The playground, originally opened September 1944, is named for Brigadier General Charles Young. Brigadier General Young was an American military hero, diplomat, and cartographer who became the third African American to graduate from West Point in 1884. The park was renamed from Colonel Charles Young Playground after the posthumous promotion of Charles Young to Brigadier General Charles Young in 2022; and

**WHEREAS** Mrs. Odessa Simms; wife, mother, grandmother and longtime resident was tragically struck by a stray bullet in 2016 after a shooting broke out as a result of a illegal formed flash crowd. The death of Mrs. Simms galvanized the community resulting in the escalation of efforts to improve the playground safety which had begun in 2014; and

**WHEREAS** A partnership of funding NYPD investing asset forfeiture, former Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer the CC Sabathia PitCCh In Foundation, Major League Baseball, Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, coupled with the advocacy of community stakeholder partners who put together their resources to transform this vital community space; and

**WHEREAS** Four basketball courts are now restored to mint condition at the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground and a brand-new soccer pitch was installed as the result of the New York City Soccer Initiative (NYCSI) partners—the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, NYC Parks, New York City Football Club (NYCFC), the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Adidas, and Etihad Airways in 2021; and

**WHEREAS** NYC Parks presented design plans for the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground Comfort Station Reconstruction project to the Parks and Recreation Committee, to garner community feedback on the proposed plans, on May 11th 2022; and

**WHEREAS** The Brigadier General Charles Young Playground Comfort Station Reconstruction capital project has a budget of \$2,500,000 and is fully funded; and

**WHEREAS** According to the 2021 Citizens Committee for Children, CB10 ranked 13 out of 59 districts across six domains of child well-being—Economic Security, Housing, Health, Education, Youth, and Family & Community. 15% of students who reside in CB10 are homeless. Families with children entering shelters in CB 10 has increased by 51% according to the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness (ICPH). 56% of single mothers with children under five

live in poverty in NYC Council District 9. CB10 has 21 family shelters which is 58% of Manhattan shelters and 6% of shelters citywide. The CB10 community requires programming and associated materials in local area parks to improve outcomes for these at-risk children; and

**WHEREAS** City parks increase community engagement and reduce crime. Planning and programming that engages residents in the design and of their local parks fosters a sense of community and helps ensure that the parks reflect the needs of the community. Community involvement and greening of vacant urban land, for example, has been shown to decrease crime and generate additional support for nearby park projects<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** Manhattan CB 10 recommends that NYC Parks make all of the findings required in the applicable permit process with respect to each permit use, and discern whether the hazards or disadvantages to the community-at-large through the location of such use at the particular site are outweighed by the advantages to be derived by the community from the grant of such permit use; and

**WHEREAS** New Applicant(s) are: (1) those applicant(s) that received permits for the previous year or season, and wish to apply for a different number of hours, or a different number of ball fields or courts at the same location for which a permit was held in the previous year or season; (2) applicant(s) who have never sought permits for the use of a particular ball field or court before; or (3) Returning Applicant(s) who include new or additional requests in their permit application(s) are treated as New Applicant(s) for such new or additional permit requests; and<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS** Returning Applicant(s) are those applicant(s) requesting the same number of hours, and number of ballfields or courts at a location as they received under permit(s) for the previous year or season; and

**WHEREAS** NYC Parks reserves the right to determine appropriate recreational usage for NYC Parks ball fields and courts. Per NYC Parks, permits are issued for the use of individual ballfields or courts designed for a specific sport, (e.g., baseball or soccer) at any time during the year. Ballfields that are designed to host a variety of sports will be allocated as follows:

- during the spring/summer season priority will be given to applications for bat and ball sports such as baseball and softball and including but not limited to cricket, and
- during the fall/winter seasons priority will be given to sports played on rectangular ballfields, such as football and soccer.
- The Department may consider an out-of-season permit application for ballfields that are designed to host a variety of sports (e.g., baseball in the fall, soccer in the spring) provided there are not qualified applicants for the priority seasonal uses set forth above.
- Permit holders granted permits for out-of-season use will not be treated as a Returning Applicant should they apply the year following the issuance of an out-of-season permit.
- No grass ballfields will be available during the winter season; and

**WHEREAS** NYC Parks makes every effort to fairly accommodate as many requests for fields and courts as possible for each season. Because thousands of requests, many for the same fields and times, NYC Parks attempts to distribute permits equitably. The order of distribution of field permits, from highest to lowest priority, is as follows:

1. Field and court requests made by applicants who are part of a youth league
2. Field and court requests made by applicants who are part of an official school league
3. Field and court requests made by applicants who are returning customers
4. Field and court requests made by applicants who are applying within the optimal season request period
5. All other field and court requests

#### **Priority Sports - Multipurpose Fields**

Fields that are designed to host a variety of sports will be allocated as follows:

- During the spring/summer season, priority will be given to applications for bat and ball sports such as baseball and softball and including but not limited to cricket
- During the fall/winter seasons priority will be given to sports played on rectangular ballfields, such as football and soccer

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules/section-2-12>

NYC Parks may consider out-of-season permit applications for ballfields that are designed to host a variety of sports (e.g., baseball in the fall, soccer in the spring), so long as there are no qualified applicants for the priority seasonal uses. Permit holders granted permits for out-of-season use will not be treated as a Returning Applicant should they apply the year following the issuance of an out-of-season permit.<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS** Manhattan Community Board 10 voted unanimously to support the Resolution for the renovation of the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field on October 5th, 2016; and

**WHEREAS** The 2016 Manhattan Community Board 10 Resolution stipulated that permits for usage of the Colonel Charles Young Playground ball field, (now known as Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field), be issued by the NYC Parks Department with priority given to athletic activity programs for local area youth; and

**WHEREAS** The multi-purpose upgrade of the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field to accommodate baseball, football, soccer, lacrosse and rugby, will provide a local area option for local schools, youth and little league sports groups for practice so they will not have to incur unnecessary expense or time to travel to remote locations outside of the community; and

**WHEREAS** The funding of the reconstruction of the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field is primarily funded by Forfeiture Asset funds ( \$7.5 million of the total \$9 million) which are explicitly dedicated to providing resources and opportunities for children in underserved communities; and

**WHEREAS** A survey to assess the needs of the more than 35 local schools, youth and little league sports groups to determine time and scheduling accommodations is available; and

**WHEREAS** The Field of Dreams ball field is expected to be completed by the end of November of 2024; and

**WHEREAS** on October 9th, 2024 Bruce Lincoln (Uptown Lacrosse) and Elijah Brooks (Youth On The Move) presented to the Parks and Recreation Committee which had quorum and **voted unanimously: 7 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals**; to support the policy recommendations; and

WHEREAS on October 30th, 2024 the Executive Committee had quorum and **voted: \_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_ no, \_\_\_ abstentions and \_\_\_ recusals**; and

WHEREAS on November 6th, 2024 the General Board had quorum and **voted: \_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_ no, \_\_\_ abstentions and \_\_\_ recusals** to support the project; and

**THEREFORE NOW** be it resolved that Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the community-based recommendation that New York City Parks reset the permits to zero for the application process for permits for the use of the newly constructed, multi-sport Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that Manhattan Community Board 10 on November 6, 2024 voted unanimously in support to recommend with 36 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions, 0 Recusals; that the local community youth organizations, which have been historically marginalized due to grandfathering of permits, decades of poor park conditions and safety issues, be prioritized in the NYC Parks permit application process for use of the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground ball field.