



Hon. Marquis A. Harrison
Chairperson
Minah Whyte
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

215 West 125th Street, 4th Floor New York, NY 10027
T: 212-749-3105 F: 212-662-4215
Website: <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb10/>

Resolution To Support the Holcombe Rucker Park Playground Reconstruction

WHEREAS Holcombe Rucker Park (Park ID M216) is a 3.05 acre park spanning West 155th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard to the Harlem River Drive in the Borough of Manhattan in Community Board 10 (CB 10); and

WHEREAS NYC Parks plans to upgrade the Holcombe Rucker Park, while preserving its renowned character, through architectural technologies and innovative reconstruction; and

WHEREAS the mayoral funded \$6.62 million reconstruction is a Community Parks Initiative (CPI) Project; and

WHEREAS The Holcombe Rucker Park National Commemorative Site Act, signed into law on January 4th, 2025 by President Joseph R. Biden. The Bill was introduced By Congressman Adriano Espaillat who guided the legislation successfully through the the U.S. Congress and U.S. Senate to garner unanimous support in both houses. The Harlem historic park is now designated as the Holcombe Rucker Park National Commemorative Site; and

WHEREAS In addition to the children's playground the park houses the Greg Marius basketball court, a baseball field, handball courts and restroom; and

WHEREAS Following CB 10's review, this design must be approved by the Public Design Commission and then go through the procurement process before a contract can be awarded. Construction may begin in late 2026 or early 2027 and be completed one year later; and

WHEREAS the goals of the reconstruction include:

- Improved access, circulation and sight lines within the park
- Provision of more fun and play experiences for children of all abilities
- Enhancement and expansion of seating options for people of all ages
- Expanded use of available areas with walking paths within the park with additional green-space and plantings for aesthetics and stormwater mitigation
- Upgrade and expansion of the spray shower
- Addition of fitness areas and equipment
- Respect for the legacy of Holcombe Rucker; and

WHEREAS The scope of work will include the following features:

- A more Complete playground: The playground has been reorganized to use the space more efficiently, and maximize the play experiences, sports opportunities and seating, gathering and picnicking options.
- A more Cohesive playground: Circulation has been thoughtfully designed to provide a system of wider, noisier primary and narrower, quieter secondary paths, which offer different types of interactions, and flow seamlessly through the various play, sports, seating and picnicking areas.

- A more Coherent playground: Drawing on the legendary, world renowned, and nationally designated commemorative site status of Holcombe Rucker Park as the center of the basketball universe, where the sport evolved from its local and regional stature to one of the most internationally loved and revered sport of all time, the design motif throughout the entire park is basketball, which is evident from afar and in the close-up details, from the basketball topped entry columns to the dynamic, multidimensional basketball spray shower to the basketball-like orbs arcing above all the play units and more.
- A central Entrance corridor and bench lined alle create a strong, axial entrance into the park and leads straight to the central water play feature.
- A huge, central seating and spray circle immersed in multiple and multi-dimensional basketball inspired features, from the overhead spray pipes shaped like the stitching on a basketball, the cant of the arced water pipes that evoke a basketball in motion, the surrounding ring of pavers sized and shaped to resemble a basketball net from above.
- Around the water play is a ring of 16 4-foot benches with companion seating for people in wheelchairs, And ringing that are a dozen flowering cherry trees to provide shade in this currently sun-baked central space and powerfully proclaim this spray and seating circle to be the unmistakable heart of the new Holcombe Rucker Park.
- Two quieter bench-lined secondary path branch off from the main entrance alle. Turn to the right to reach the younger kids play area, and to the left to reach the older kids play and fitness, adult fitness and the sports courts.
- Accessible 5-12 play unit ramps up to two levels, basketball motif, with high spiral slide, ladders, bridges, multiple challenge climbers, interactive and sensory play panels.
- Accessible 2-5 play unit, basketball motif, many accessible ground level elements, child-friendly climbers, low slide, bridge and interactive, visual and sensory play panels, and opportunities to retreat into more secluded play for children on the spectrum.
- Six 10-foot high swings
- Five 8-foot high swing, one of which is accessible.
- A playfully seal coated run-around grove for older kids with infinite opportunities to create their own games and paths.
- A "tween" fitness area for the 10-13 year olds who want a higher degree of fitness and challenge than the 5-12 climbers.
- Adult fitness area for those 13 and over.
- A multi-generational music area sits behind the seating and spray circle and completes the active uses.
- The path from West 155th to the back entrance at Harlem River Drive has become the picnic corridor, with five picnic table alcoves.
- The midpoint of the picnic corridor will be sited a new, enlarged public restroom building, with three toilet/urinal fixtures each for men and women. This Contract will closely follow the Playground reconstruction, but not sure of exact timing.
- There will be new water service with drinking fountains and bottle filler.
- There will be new storm sewer system with onsite stormwater management practices.
- There will be many more park light poles, which produce pedestrian scale even lighting to replace the glaring floodlighting.
- The primary path pavement will be decorative and multi-colored concrete pavers similar to Bennerson Playground.
- Flat topped seating boulders will be scattered through to recall the bedrock outcrops that are common in this neighborhood.
- Many new plant beds are being added, especially along the two bordering streets to screen the bleak urban views of the 155th Street viaduct and self-storage warehouse, and of the overly wide and car-strewn Frederick Douglas Boulevard. We will select plants that not known to trigger asthma attacks.

WHEREAS The park, which houses the reigning hallowed ground of street-ball courts, is named after Holcombe Rucker, a local teacher and a playground director for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Rucker started a basketball tournament in 1950 in order to help less fortunate youth stay off the streets and aim for college careers; and

WHEREAS Since 1969, Holcombe Rucker Park has been a source of incalculable pride and entertainment for Harlemites as well as basketball enthusiasts the world over. What began in 1956 with Holcombe Rucker's youth tournament, which would lead to 700 Harlem youth receiving college scholarships, was carried on and expanded with each passing generation. Bob McCullough continued this legacy with the Rucker Pro Am tournament and Each One Teach One program, providing young people a source of pride and inspiration over the decades. Greg Marius would take up the mantle with the Entertainer's Basketball Classic, inspiring countless youth from NYC and beyond to achieve greatness. Both of these tournaments inspired basketball players throughout the world and drew the respect and participation of some of the world's greatest athletes and cultural icons; and

WHEREAS Many who played at the iconic park in the Rucker Tournament achieved a level of fame for their abilities, with several having gone on to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA); and

WHEREAS Mr. Rucker gave Black players an opportunity to play at a time when the NBA, founded in 1949, first started. At the time there were only 1 or 2 Blacks per team. There were few avenues like the Harlem Globe Trotters where teams of Blacks played together. In addition, players who were not able to go to college had the option to go to the Rucker to play; and

WHEREAS Many professional basketball players have played at the court even after gaining prominence. Many others developed their basketball skills at Rucker prior to becoming notable in the sport, including: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Kenny Anderson, Nate Archibald, Metta Sandiford-Artest, Sylvester Blye, Conney Hawkins, Roger Brown, Julius Erving, Bill Bradley, Joe Hammond, Earl Manigault, Jackie Jackson, Richard "Pee Wee" Kirkland, Larry "Bone Collector" Williams, Rafer "Skip to My Lou" Alston, Herman "Helicopter" Knowlings, Conrad "McNasty" Macrae, Charlie Scott and Wilt Chamberlain; and

WHEREAS The Greg Marius Court was refurbished in 2021 to include: (1) custom-made basketball goals, styled after the backboards and hoops in the 30 NBA arenas and practice facilities; making it the only outdoor court in the world with these high-quality goals, (2) a new surface for the court, eliminating the cracks and other defects in the current pavement, (3) new bleachers and team benches, (4) new scoreboard, (5) new gates and (6) repairs to the fence; and

WHEREAS Rucker Park was featured in the TNT film: "*On Hallowed Ground: Streetball Champions of Rucker Park*" which aired in 2000 and won a Sports Emmy Award, *The Real: Rucker Park Legends---True Harlem Story* (2006), *#Rucker50 Documentary* (2016), *Undefeated The Roger Brown Story - PBS* (2013), It was also featured in the 2018 film: "*Uncle Drew*"; and *Above The Rim* (1994); and

WHEREAS The design provides an opportunity to honor Holcombe Rucker at the main entrance to the playground on Frederick Douglass Boulevard, where two attractive pillars will have decorative features in the form of basketballs on top. Space would be available on the front of

the pillars facing the street for bronze plaques; one could have a bas-relief portrait of Rucker, and the other could be inscribed with a short biography; and

WHEREAS The legendary basketball players who played over the years on what is now known as the Greg Marius Court also could be honored with plaques on the numerous benches on the paths throughout the redesigned playground. These plaques could have the names of players who are still living which would not be possible with a permanent artwork such as a “Walk of Fame” in the park. NYC Parks Department will be working with the Holcombe Rucker memorial committee to identify possible locations where a statue of Holcombe Rucker could be placed in the playground and possible alternatives to the proposed “Walk of Fame.” All of these memorial ideas would require some degree of community fundraising since the policy is to have statues, plaques and similar items in parks paid for with private funds and for statues in particular to have maintenance endowments; and

WHEREAS Community Board 10 calls upon NYC Parks to maintain the 7-foot-high fencing along Frederick Douglass Boulevard and not to lower it to 4 feet in the interest of public safety, especially when large crowds are attempting to attend basketball games at the court adjacent to the playground; and

WHEREAS a Coalition of the Holcombe Rucker Family, The Greg Marius Family, Each One Teach One and HCCI presented at the November 8th, 2024 Manhattan Community Board 10 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting to introduce a proposal to capture the essence of the Rucker Park story in a compelling visual format, around the park itself, for local residents, players and visiting fans to enjoy. The goal is to enshrine the historic legacy of the Rucker Park; its community power and transformation, while telling the story of the historical figures for generations to come; and

WHEREAS NYC Parks held a Holcombe Rucker Playground Reconstruction Community Input Meeting via Zoom on June 27th, 2024; and

WHEREAS NYC Parks and Recreation architects presented design plans to the Parks and Recreation Committee on February 26th, 2025, where the Committee had quorum and **voted unanimously** to support the project; and

WHEREAS The Parks and Recreation Committee presented to the Executive Committee on February 12th, 2025, where the Committee had quorum and **voted 6 yes, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals** to support the project; and

WHEREAS the Parks and Recreation Committee presented to the Manhattan CB10’s Full Board on March 5th, 2025, which had quorum and voted unanimously in-support of the park reconstruction ; and

THEREFORE NOW be it resolved that Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the Community Parks Initiative design plans to upgrade the Holcombe Rucker Park, while preserving its renowned character, through architectural technologies and innovative reconstruction of the Holcombe Rucker Park playground.