



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Eleazar Bueno, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

April 29, 2021

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner of NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Re: Resolution Supporting the Proposed Reconstruction of the Bennett Park Central Lawn

Dear Commissioner Silver:

Please be advised that Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed a resolution with 35 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 not voting, at its Tuesday, April 27, 2021, General Meeting, supporting the proposed reconstruction and renovation of the central lawn in the Park currently known as Bennett Park between Ft. Washington & Pinehurst Avenues between W. 183rd & W. 185th Streets; and recommending that the design be able to accommodate signage regarding the Park's name and history, including the opportunity for additional signage in the event that the Park is renamed.

Whereas: The Bennett Park's central lawn is a heavily-used lawn with a decades-long history of attempts to restore it using natural turf but the active use reduces the grass to an unattractive patch of compacted dirt in a short period of time; and

Whereas: The NYC Department of Parks & Recreation ("Parks") held a well-attended public scoping meeting on October 29, 2020 (via Zoom) to obtain community input on the Park's use and design; and

Whereas: Parks proposed its design on April 13, 2021 to a well-attended meeting (via Zoom) of Community Board 12, Manhattan's Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee to universally positive feedback and approval:

- Replace the central lawn with tufted nylon turf (without rubber crumb), a durable surface suitable for multi-use and with drainage so it can be sprayed clean, and which has been well-received elsewhere that it has been used, including locally within CD12M. The proposed synthetic turf is protecting the existing trees by avoiding their drip lawn, and making use of only a smaller area outside of their canopy for the synthetic turf picnic and play lawn.
- Add an unfenced planted berm east of the central lawn, rising 2.5-3.5' in the center, with planting that are 2'-4' high, and with a temporary protective fence for the first three years while the plantings establish themselves; and
- The central lawn will be about 3300 square feet, which is smaller than the current lawn. The play area will be consolidated, and the lawn itself will be accessible for people in wheelchairs and strollers.

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- Stone screening will be replaced with harder surfaces to enhance accessibility and provide clearer delineation of tree pits.
- The surfaced play area at the Park's southern end and the Park's planted perimeters will be unchanged.
- All of the seating currently in place will remain; there will be no additional seating.
- There will be no dog run, and leashes will continue to be required at all times; and

Whereas: This project is budgeted at \$1.1 million (\$850k from the Borough President & \$250k from the NYCD10 Councilmember) and construction is expected to begin after Labor Day, 2022 and to take about 12 months, during which time that section of the Park will be closed but the other sections of the Park, including the playground and the comfort stations will remain open to the public; and

Whereas: The Park will continue to be accessible during construction as Parks assured that the W. 185th St. & Pinehurst Ave. entrance, which has no curb or stairs, will remain open during construction; and

Whereas: The discussion of renaming Bennett Park in light of the unfavorable and racist history of its current namesake remains ongoing but is likely to conclude while this project is still in process; now therefore be it

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan supports the proposed reconstruction and renovation of the central lawn in the Park currently known as Bennett Park between Ft. Washington & Pinehurst Avenues between W. 183rd & W. 185th Streets, including the installation of artificial turf in lieu of natural grass, and recommends that the New York City Public Design Commission approve the design when it comes before them for final review; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan recommends that the design be able to accommodate signage regarding the Park's name and history, including the opportunity for additional signage in the event that the Park is renamed.

Sincerely,



Eleazar Bueno
Chairperson

cc: Hon. William Castro, Borough Commissioner NYC Parks
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Ms. Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks
Administrator

Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Signe Nielsen, Commissioner NYC PDC