

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Meeting
530 W. 166th St., 6th fl.
March 4, 2014

Committee members present: Mitchell Glenn, Chair; Karen Arthur; David Kach; Richard Lewis; Elizabeth Lorris Ritter; Juan Mejia; Chris O’Sullivan. **Committee Member absent:** Ulises Noboa. **CB12 members present:** Edith Prentiss, Steve Simon.

Community Members present: Chris Noel, Leslie Peoples, Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation; Patricia Anderton; Kevin McKeon, Inwood Canoe Club; Maria Loll; JA Reynolds; Aaron Scott; Gayle Addiss; Chris Whitney; Sara Fisher; Luis Ramos, Shorakapok Earthkeepers; Roger Meyer; Joanna Rodriguez; Daniela Lebron; Helena Judd; Katherine O’Sullivan; Nancy Prince; Matthew Perry; Osi Kaminer; Carole Mulligan; Carmen DelaRosa, C/M Rodriguez; Nelson Denis; Fidel Malena, C/M Levine; Angelina Ramirez, Washington Heights BID.

Mitchell Glenn, Chair, called meeting to order at 7:15pm

Girl Scout Troop #3210 Mural Painting Project Daniela Lebron & Joanna Rodriguez from Girl Scout Troop #3210 proposed a project to paint a mural on the wall of a store abutting the southern perimeter of Isham Park at Broadway, along the “Isham Alley” section. They spoke about media in the community, much of which is negative, e.g., graffiti; messages that are demeaning to women; advertising promoting use of alcohol, cigarettes and junk food; monolingual images in a bilingual community. This is in contrast to the potential for more positive images, e.g., exercise; healthful food; bilingual messages; images supporting racial, ethnic, gender and sexual-orientation diversity. They surveyed the community and found that people want to see bilingual messages, positive images and beauty. Currently the wall along Isham Alley is graffitied, which disrespects the community. There was a brief discussion of the history of this wall, which has been “home” to a number of murals, most recently one which engendered some controversy in the summer of 2012 and was painted over by the NYPD. The Girl Scouts propose to engage in a clean-up of that area of the park and to paint a new mural which has positive imagery and inspirational quotes from (for example) Maria Theresa Mirabal (“What matters is the quality of a person, what someone is inside themselves.”) in English & Spanish. They are seeking input on/feedback on the content for a mural, as well as to network with the community for support of the project. They have the support of the building’s landlord if the project is approved by the Precinct & CB12, and will be going to the 34th Precinct for their support as well.

Ms. Hoppa noted that as the park will be undergoing renovations, that area might be inaccessible, and asked about their timeframe. The troop leader replied that the girls are in 8th grade and would like to finish the project before they graduate from High School. Ms. Hoppa said that she would work with the group if they get the approvals for the mural; the Troop replied that they can be flexible with the timing to reflect the construction timetable. Ms. Hoppa asked about ongoing maintenance; the troop leader replied that she is hopeful that the community would honor the newly cleaned area and would help to keep it clean. The idea received the universal support of the Committee and those in attendance. Next step: work with 34th Precinct & Community Council, and with DPR regarding timing and access from contractor.

DPR Accessibility Chris Noel, DPR's Accessibility Coordinator, with Nancy Prince and Helena Judd, spoke regarding universal design - DPR's ongoing efforts to improve accessibility for all parks users: lower tables, with space for wheelchairs to roll up; benches with backs and arms; accessible fountains; etc. NYC DPR has pioneered design in many of these fixtures as there was little or nothing commonly available. They have paved space in dog runs. Graphics are hung lower and printed with higher contrast (i.e., light print and dark background). There are more ramps to eliminate stairs in hilly terrain with multiple grades. These accommodations in buildings and structures are easier with new construction than retro-fitting. Another innovation is to put drinking fountains ON the exteriors of buildings, so that the fountain can work year 'round due to the pipes being within the building, and therefore not at risk for freezing. Mr. Noel shared photographs of Roger Morris Park, Highbridge Park wheelchair accessible Greenway from Dyckman St. south along the Hudson (including a long switchback path to accommodate 50'+ grade change.) and the new playground in Ft. Washington Park near 165th St. to provide recent examples of accessible renovations and innovations. He also talked about special programs for mentally and developmentally disabled; beach access with special mats to enable wheelchairs to travel on sand.

Universal design features for playgrounds includes:

1. Ground Level Play Components for a range of ages and developmental skill levels.
2. Accessible Route to the playground from the street.
3. Accessible Protective Surfacing around the play equipment.
4. Accessible Drinking Fountain.
5. Benches with a paved clear space adjacent to benches.
6. Accessible Picnic Table along an accessible route.
7. Transfer System mount/ dismount opportunity for wheelchair users on the equipment.
8. Child Safety and Security fencing and views of play area from most benches.
9. Multisensory Experiences textures, scents, hearing feature in equipment/ play area.
10. Visual Contrast for partially sighted children on equipment/play area.
11. Social Gathering Areas that are accessible with shared play activities.
12. Quiet Cozy Spaces where children can feel emotionally secure but visible.
13. Access to Landscaped Areas for wheelchairs to landscape plantings.
14. Ramping Experience next to ground features with handrail.
15. Ramping Playtrails to have an elevated experience in the landscape.
16. Shade to provide a mix of sunlight and shade may be natural or manmade.
17. Signage.
18. Decorative Spray Shower Features.
19. Elevated Play Table.
20. Swings with accessible seat or a swaying feature.

Since DPR is such a big consumer, they can push manufacturers for design modifications in play units, which then are manufactured and sold elsewhere. Universal adult fitness features were discussed. Edith Prentiss asked about the benches in FW Park, saying that they are all in the playground. Jennifer Hoppa: there will be more benches in the Park when the renovation is completed. She then praised Ms. Prentiss for the important role she has played as an advocate for the disability community, and in educating DPR, other agencies, CB12 and the public about accessibility issues. Richard Lewis asked about ADA standards and whether DPR complies and can they post these standards and statistics. A: Yes, DPR complies w/ ADA; DoITT is working on posting that information. A member of the public asked about the fee structure for those DPR facilities that require fee for entry (like tennis courts) for the disabled, noting that the same discount as for youth and seniors should apply. Roger Meyers asked about waterfront access for wheelchair users and to boats and kayaks.

Bruce's Garden As continuation of ongoing discussion of the renovation in Isham Park to bring water service into the park and to Bruce's Garden (see previous month's minutes), Ms. Hoppa noted that the design for this project was approved in June '12. Following changes in leadership at Bruce's Garden, a request was made to DPR to keep all water service construction outside of the Garden. DPR announced tonight that two other sections of Isham Park will begin work while design changes are made to accommodate the request of the Bruce's Garden representatives. DPR engineers have re-evaluated the plans, and the backflow preventer ("RPZ") has been moved. Bruce's Garden will remain untouched. If fences are moved, the contractor must secure the area during construction and replace the fencing. These and other changes are detailed in a letter dated today from Borough Commissioner Castro to the uptown elected who wrote to DPR in support of the Garden. The plan was well received by all in attendance.

Ms. Hoppa also gave an update regarding the agenda for the High Bridge re-opening planning on March 13th, and on efforts to shovel snow in the District's various parks during the recent snow storms, particularly on the Ft. Washington & Pinehurst Ave. sides of Bennett Park and adjacent to Payson Playground. One member of the public said it was, "the best I've seen it in my 20 year living in the neighborhood."

Fidel Malena, new representative for C/M Levine introduced himself, and noted that the C/M is in Albany advocating for universal Pre-K, but hopes to attend an upcoming Committee meeting.

CU Baker Field Agreement Roger Meyer for Conservancy North spoke about the disposition of the \$300k promised by CU to the community, hopefully to be used for re-granting and for capital improvements in Isham & Inwood Hill Parks. Carmen de la Rosa said that C/M Rodriguez is fully supportive of these goals, has met with Conservancy North and is meeting next week with CU, and hopes to have an update at the next Committee meeting.

Angelina Ramirez / WH Business Improvement District's "Artervention" Program. "Pod" is a sculpture in Harlem, on the mall on Malcom X Blvd. / Lenox Ave. @ W. 124th St, which is proposed to be moved to the triangle at Broadway / Riverside / Dyckman. It must be approved by DOT. The piece would be a temporary installation (for one year). It will be placed so as not to interfere with pedestrian traffic or driver visibility; also important to place it in a way that does not interfere with the Riverside Inwood Neighborhood Garden's (RING) periodic flea markets and art shows. DPR and DOT will balance these placement considerations with any concerns the MTA may have regarding structural integrity with respect to the A-train station below. Any changes to the sidewalk (drill holes, etc.) will be repaired after the artwork is removed. The proposal was unanimously approved by the Committee (7 in favor) and the non-Committee Board members (2 in favor, 1 not-voting due to conflict); the public approved 7-2-1-0. Because the presentation was also made to the Traffic & Transportation Committee on March 3rd, the two Committees will prepare a joint resolution.

Committee Priorities There was a brief discussing among those remaining regarding the Committee's priorities for the coming budget cycle. It was agreed that the dual emphasis on both Parks/waterfront/open spaces and arts/cultural affairs is a good thing, and that the Committee should continue to strike a balance of concerns among the geographic areas of the District, i.e., Inwood / WH / Southern Heights, and both East & West of Broadway. There was also an expressed desire to bring back old cultural and performance spaces, e.g., many old movie theaters are now retail stores. We need more theaters, theatres and performance spaces. Edith suggested that it would be interesting to see a "then-

and-now” pictorial. Mitchell Glenn made a point of emphasizing the importance of universal accessibility at all opportunities and to actively promote making more facilities accessible.

Community Gardening: Hannah Yokoji made a brief introductory presentation regarding community gardening in our District. Edith: raised beds? A: Yes. Ms. Hoppa had some suggestions regarding other gardening programs in the neighborhood, including community and rooftop gardens.

Security Cameras in Isham Park A member of the public asked about security cameras in Isham Park, citing an article from the Daily News last year. Ms. Hoppa and Mr. Simon replied that much of the information in the article was incorrect, noting that there are two cameras in the park: one at the Park Terrace East circle which is a “flash cam” set to go off when it detects motion nearby during hours that the Park is closed (i.e., 1am-sunrise), and another which currently is being serviced and will be restored to the Memorial Circle in a couple of weeks (it was reinstated soon after our Parks Committee meeting) This latter camera has a 24/7 live feed, to which both NYPD and NYC Parks have real-time access. The camera also records 24 hours of video footage should it be needed by the NYPD.

LG Proposed new Headquarter building on the Palisades: Ms. Hoppa gave an update of this project, noting that the Town of Englewood Cliffs approved a zoning variance which will change the zoning for a 2.9 miles stretch of the Palisades. She urged all to attend a (then-upcoming) “Day of Action” on March 8th, and gave information to contact LG USA Corp to continue to protest this proposed development.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:45pm.

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter