



Community Board 12 - Manhattan
Washington Heights & Inwood
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George Fernández Jr. - Chairman
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

January 28, 2014

Hon. Veronica M. White
Commissioner
NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation
The Arsenal
830 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Dear Commissioner White :

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 Community Board 12-Manhattan passed the following resolution with a vote of (34)In favor, (0)Opposed, (0)Abstain, that the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation plan to renovate Fort Tryon Park's Staircase #50.

Whereas: The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and representatives of Quennell Rothschild & Partners came before Community Board 12, Manhattan (CB12M)'s Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee on January 7th to present a plan to renovate Fort Tryon Park's Staircase #50; and

Whereas: Then-Borough President Scott Stringer allocated \$1.35 million for this project; and

Whereas: Fort Tryon Park is triply landmarked, by the City, State and Federal governments, and does not lie in a flood zone; and

Whereas: The Olmsted Brothers' original design sought to emphasize the Park's rough topography, including the additional of many staircases to ascend the steep traverse from the Broadway and Riverside Drive sides to the higher elevations near Fort Washington Avenue, but many of them have degraded considerably over time, including Staircase #50, which is hazardous and has been closed for 4 years; and,

Whereas: The staircase's original features included bluestone treads and risers, asphalt landings, bluestone landing pavers; the concrete curb with steel railing is likely not original. Virtually everything will be removed; those parts that are salvageable will be reused. New stones will be matched to the original materials; and

Whereas: The concrete-and-steel railing will be removed, and replaced with a new steel handrail on the western side that is appropriate (similar to what is used elsewhere in the park) so as to maintain openness and honor the original design while also improving visitor experience; and

- Whereas:** There was considerable discussion about the railing, related accessibility issues, and whether railings on both sides or in the center would increase utility; and
- Whereas:** New plantings will help to open up site-lines, and will be consistent with the spirit of the original plan, though not using invasive species that were used in the original plan, but emphasizing native plantings, including evergreens and perennials, within the original palette, and dead or dying trees will be removed and replaced according to NYC regulations and NYC DPR guidelines; now therefore be it
- Resolved:** That that CB12M endorses the DPR's proposed project to renovate Fort Tryon Park's Staircase #50 as presented, notwithstanding reservations about the railing(s) design; and be it further
- Resolved:** That CB12M requests that the DPR re-evaluate, in the context of overall design and cost, the placement of a second rail on the eastern side of the staircase, or a single central railing in lieu of the single western railing, so as to maximize utility for those ascending and descending the stairs, and to enable those who may be weaker on one side of the body to avail themselves of a rail if needed; and be it further
- Resolved:** That the DPR consider planting of additional mosses and lichens to supplement that which will grow naturally so as to enrich the soil and control erosion; and be it further.
- Resolved:** That the DPR install additional way-finding signage at the top and base of the stairs to make clear the non-stair alternatives.

Thank you for your continued support and a favorable consideration to our resolution.

Sincerely,



George Fernandez, Jr.
Chair

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Leitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, State Senator
Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member
Hon. Gabriela Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. William T. Castro, Borough Commissioner, DPR
Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator