



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq., Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

Sept. 29, 2016

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner
NYC Parks & Recreation Commissioner
The Arsenal
830 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair/Commissioner
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez
Councilmember
NYC Council
250 Broadway
Suite 1763
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioners Silver & Srinivasan and Councilmember Rodriguez:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2016 Community Board 12, Manhattan passed the following resolution with a vote of (36)In Favor, (1)Opposed, (1)Abstain (1)Not voting recommending that NYC Landmarks Commission approve the proposed schematic design of Javits Playground calling on elected officials to allocate sufficient funds for installation of security cameras in/on/around Javits Playground and the Phase II comfort station project; urging NYC Parks CPD to study the acoustical impact on neighboring residential buildings of moving the basketball courts closer to those residential buildings; and demanding that Parks Enforcement Patrol begin and the 34th Precinct maintain a concerted effort to enforce the 10pm closing to reduce after-hours use and noise at Javits Playground.

Whereas: Fort Tryon Park's Jacob K. Javits Playground ("the Playground") has not been renovated since 1990, and Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez, Borough President Gale Brewer and the Fort Tryon Park Trust recently earmarked a total of \$2.45 million (\$1.5m, \$600k, & \$350k, respectively) for design and construction to renovate this landmarked playground, the only playground within a mile, and a destination for residents throughout Community District 12; and

Whereas: the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation had a well-publicized public visioning session in February, 2015, attended by a large and broad cross-section of stakeholders, including residents of the adjacent apartment buildings, to determine community priorities for the long-overdue renovation of Fort Tryon Park's Javits Playground, and the public overwhelmingly favored active recreation including a playground, swings, exercise areas for adults and teens, basketball, sprinklers, natural plantings, sitting areas, and a comfort station; and

Whereas: a working group composed of local stakeholders, including residents of the adjacent residential buildings, met regularly beginning in January, 2016 to discuss design priorities and ideas for the Playground's renovation; and

Whereas: the basic footprint of the Playground is limited by the existing retaining walls, natural wooded area in the southwestern corner, and steep grade along the western side; and

Whereas: the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) Capital Projects Division (CPD) could not fully articulate only one design for the renovation and asked the community for clarification as to whether it preferred a basic design concept which preserved the current usage footprint (i.e., basketball on the Cabrini Blvd. side and children's

playground elements on the Ft. Washington Ave. side) or which "flipped" the two uses (i.e., basketball on the Ft. Washington Ave. side and playground elements on the Cabrini Blvd. side); and

Whereas: Community Board 12, Manhattan (CB12M) passed a resolution on March 22nd with 24 votes in favor, three abstaining and none opposed, "supporting this second concept... as the better overall option at this time, and call[ing] on the Parks CPD to begin the process of developing a detailed design and schematics without delay for further community review"; and

Whereas: C/M Rodriguez, BP Brewer and the Fort Tryon Park Trust hosted a public meeting on August 30th so DPR CPD could share the preliminary design schematic for the new playground pursuant to the agreed-upon ("flipped") design concept, and a number of community residents expressed significant concerns with the design, with particular regard to noise, safety, design aesthetic, and the width of the central *allée* of trees; and

Whereas: the proposed design maintains the same sized full- and half- basketball courts and incorporates public demand for better differentiation and use of areas to minimize user conflicts; a children's playground one-third larger than the current playground, with more swings, and a new, protected area for small children; integration of the existing wooded/natural area; facilities for teens; an expanded workout area for adults that is more than three times the current size and has its own benches; improved access and ADA-compliant facilities; space for a future comfort station; more drinking fountains; more social seating; more trees for shade; game tables and tables for eating; while preserving scenic river views and the central north/south *allée* separating playground elements from basketball; and

Whereas: the CB12M Parks & Cultural Affairs (PCA) Committee heard a second presentation by DPR CPD on September 6th which incorporated feedback on a number of points regarding specific components; and

Whereas: the NYC Commission on Human Rights and NYC Parks did a walk-through of the Playground on September 19th with an eye towards additional accessibility improvements of the proposed design; and

Whereas: no 311 were calls logged in the last two months (July/August) for noise complaints in the Playground; and

Whereas: the Playground is not part of Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP)'s regular patrol, but is part of the regular patrol of the new 34th Precinct Neighborhood Coordination Officers for the southwest sector; and

Whereas: there remains significant concern regarding noise, particularly from residents directly across the street though many in the building favor the proposed design, and while DPR CPD and the PCA Committee share some of these concerns it was concluded that people being in the playground after it is closed has less to do with design than with enforcement; now, therefore be it

Resolved: that Community Board 12, Manhattan supports the design schematic proposed by the Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) at the September 6, 2016 Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee meeting with the following suggestions/caveats:

- That DPR conduct an acoustical/noise study to get a clear idea of just how loud are sounds of children's and adult play as the playground is currently configured and as it is proposed;
- That DPR consider higher fencing as a deterrent to entering the park after it is closed;
- Signs be added to the southwest entrance to advise as to the location of the accessible entrance, and railings be added to the steps leading to the basketball and flagpole area;
- That the playground equipment include a "twisty slide" such as is currently in place;
- The adult workout area include chin-up bars and other equipment as noted at the 9/6 PCA meeting;
- That DPR consider the addition of temporary shade structures since even fast-growing trees will take several years before they provide shade;

- That signage be added which prominently states the Playground's closing hours;
- That DPR evaluate the playground's lighting, possibility eliminating flood lights on the basketball court which had previously been added at the request of residents of 720/730 Ft. Washington Ave. as several residents of the building have identified this light as a nuisance and an attractant of late-night (i.e., post-closing) playground users; and be it further


Resolved: that Community Board 12, Manhattan urges the NYC Landmarks Commission to approve the proposed schematic design of Javits Playground; and be it further

Resolved: that Community Board 12, Manhattan calls on elected officials to allocate sufficient funds for installation of security cameras in/on/around Javits Playground and the Phase II comfort station project; and be it further

Resolved: that Community Board 12, Manhattan urges NYC Parks CPD to study the acoustical impact on neighboring residential buildings of moving the basketball courts closer to those residential buildings; and be it further

Resolved: that Community Board 12, Manhattan demands that Parks Enforcement Patrol begin and the 34th Precinct maintain a concerted effort to enforce the 10pm closing to reduce after-hours use and noise at Javits Playground.

Sincerely,



Shahabuddeen A. Ally
Chair

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Charles B. Rangel, Congressman
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, State Senator
Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member
Hon. Guillermo Linares, Assembly Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Commissioner Mike Docket, PEP – NYC Parks & Recreation
Jennifer Hopper, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator
Commanding Officer Raymundo Mundo, 34th Pct.