



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

October 7, 2019

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

Re: Resolution supporting the Schematic Renovation Plan for Msgr. Kett Playground.

Dear Commissioner Silver:

Please be advised that Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed a resolution with 39 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstentions, 0 not voting, at its Tuesday, September 24, 2019 General Meeting, recommending that the Public Design Commission approve the proposed schematic design of the playground as modified per the resolution below and recommending recommends that NYC Parks decrease the size of each gendered bathroom in the comfort station and add a third, non-gendered, "family" bathroom to the comfort station, and that these changes be incorporated into the design presented to the CB12M PCA Committee; and continues to support WIFI capability in public spaces, including most especially parks and other public gathering spaces, and calls upon the Councilmember to fund increased connectivity in public spaces.

Whereas: The Monsignor Kett Playground, named after the founding and much-beloved pastor of nearby St. Jude's Church and located at the triangle formed by the intersection of Tenth & Nagle Avenues at W. 204th Street, contains basketball and handball courts, spray showers, playground equipment, and a comfort station, is heavily used by the area residents including those of the nearby Dyckman Houses (which the playground originally was designed to serve) as well as for basketball tournaments that attract audience both locally and Citywide; and

Whereas: The area now occupied by the playground was, from the 1910s until 1938, the location of the Dyckman Oval, a ballpark that was home to Negro League baseball in New York City, and which welcomed such Negro League elites as Satchel Paige and Smokey Joe Williams; and

Whereas: The playground is severely outdated, having had its last capital renovation in 1995, and is desperately in need of repair and redesign to accommodate its heavy use; and

Whereas: The Mayor's Office has allocated up to \$11.3 million to renovate the playground; and

Whereas: The Mayor's Office also has allocated funds for the renovation of the comfort station as a separate capital project; and

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Whereas: The NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) held a well-attended scoping meeting on 1/29/19, and made a presentation to the Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee ("the CB12M PCA Committee") on 9/10/19 of a proposed schematic renovation plan which incorporates the substantial public input and feedback it received; and

Whereas: NYC Parks is scheduled to make a presentation to the CB12M PCA Committee on 10/2/19 of a proposed renovation plan for the comfort station; and

Whereas: The proposed design includes a completely re-done children's play area with a graded spray area and integrated, accessible features and those for sensory play as part of Parks' efforts to improve various kinds of accessibility in all new playground designs Citywide, as well as a small sensory area on the eastern perimeter with higher plantings to provide a modest noise and visual buffer, with the plantings being no higher than 3 feet so as to maintain sightlines; and

Whereas: The proposed plan also includes a regulation-sized full court suitable for tournament play and a junior court, fixed bleachers at the southern perimeter of the full court and an area for portable bleachers along the northern perimeter of the court, two handball courts, a small and central open area suitable for group exercise classes (e.g., Zumba, tai chi, yoga, etc.), two areas with integrated, accessible fitness equipment at the eastern perimeter and in the SE corner, Big belly solar-powered trash receptacles, water fountains with bottle fillers, increased lighting, and benches for seating both inside and along the exterior perimeter, but does not provide for WIFI capability; and

Whereas: The comfort station will be relocated to higher ground to accommodate new floodplain mapping, and will include larger restroom areas with more fixtures; and

Whereas: Many people prefer to use a non-gendered restroom, and many park users – from children to seniors, and adults of varying ages – would benefit from having an available bathroom that accommodates a caregiver who may be a different gender than his or her charge, and the available footprint of the new comfort station allows ample room to accommodate both ADA-compliant gendered bathrooms as well as a third, non-gendered, "family" facility; and

Whereas: The currently proposed design of the basketball courts provides an inadequate buffer between the adult court and the youth court, and between the youth court and the handball courts; and

Whereas: Many of Community District 12's playgrounds have ADA accessible features but there are no special-needs playgrounds within CD12, and the closest such playground is 5 miles away, on 104th Street in Manhattan and the only such playground in the Bronx is almost 10 miles away, in Pelham Bay, and the addition of a few sensory elements in a small playground located next to an elevated train does not fully meet the community's need for such facilities; and

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Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan supports the proposed design of the playground presented by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation with the following modifications:

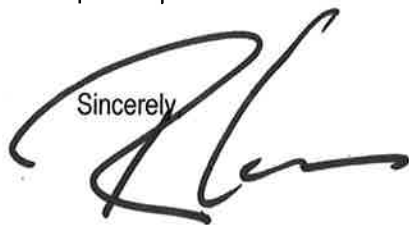
- Reduce the size of the fitness area in the SE corner to move the handball courts and junior basketball court over a few feet and provide a larger buffer area between the basketball courts;
- A commemorative plaque honoring the Negro League be incorporated into the design of the playground, and the story of the Negro League be reflected in the historical narrative on the signage at the playground's entrance; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan recommends that the Public Design Commission approve the proposed schematic design of the playground as modified per the resolution above; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan recommends that NYC Parks decrease the size of each gendered bathroom in the comfort station and add a third, non-gendered, "family" bathroom to the comfort station, and that these changes be incorporated into the design presented to the CB12M PCA Committee; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan requests that NYC Parks add a dedicated sensory playground to the eastern (Broadway) perimeter of Fort Tryon Park's Anne Loftus Playground at such time as that area of that Playground is slated for renovation in a future (and as-yet unfunded) capital project, and calls upon the Councilmember to fund such a project; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan continues to support WIFI capability in public spaces, including most especially parks and other public gathering spaces, and calls upon the Councilmember to fund increased connectivity in public spaces.

Sincerely


Richard R. Lewis
Chairperson

cc: Hon. William Castro, Borough Commissioner NYC Parks
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Hon. Sarah Carroll, Commissioner NYC LPC
Ms. Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator

Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Signe Nielsen, Commissioner NYC PDC
Mr. Steve Simon, Chief of Staff Manhattan Borough
Commissioner