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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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April 24, 2019

William T. Castro  
Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
Arsenal West 24 West 61<sup>st</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10023

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Castro:

At its Full Board meeting on April 18, 2019, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

### **A Resolution In Support of Revisions to Preliminary Designs for DEP Water Tunnel Sites at East 4th Street and Grand Lafayette**

#### **Whereas:**

1. In December 2015, Community Board 2 passed a resolution urging the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to stand behind its prior commitments to turn the water tunnel sites in Community Board 2 over to the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks Department) for promised open space and for the Parks Department to follow a design process that incorporates community input and review to the fullest extent possible;
2. In October 2018, the Parks Department held scoping sessions for two water tunnel sites, the East 4th Street site (31b) and the Grand Lafayette site (30b);
  - a. The East 4th Street site in the NoHo neighborhood is 0.23 acres (9,835 square feet) and was first promised as a park in 2001;
  - b. The Grand Lafayette site in the SoHo neighborhood is 0.29 acres (12,560 square feet) and was first promised as a public park in 2004;
3. In April 2019, the Parks Department presented preliminary design plans for East 4th Street and Grand Lafayette and solicited community feedback;
4. The proposed designs seek to create new passive open spaces, public seating and DEP access to the water tunnel sites;
5. The CB 2 open space ratio remains 0.60 acres per 1,000 residents, well below the city standard of 2.5 acres and the city average of 1.5 acres, both before and after the addition of these two much needed and long-promised parks, given the density of population in our community, and neither site can be considered a substitute for Elizabeth Street Garden;
6. Specific considerations regarding the East 4th Street proposed design are as follows:
  - a. The proposed design is 90-95% porous and includes a planted buffer designed to avoid graffiti, porous pavers, synthetic turf, benches, pebble seating, picnic tables, foot-pedaled solar powered trash receptacles, a combined bottle filler and drinking fountain and a five-foot-tall fence in accordance with Parks Department standards;

- b. The Parks Department is still developing options for including artifacts from Colonnade Row and coordinating with the Merchants House Museum for an ADA accessible opening into the Merchants House Garden;
  - c. Design feedback is to:
    - i. Add significantly more green space, both organic and artificial, at ground level and vertical along walls;
    - ii. Add moveable seating, curved benches, more attractive picnic tables and, if permissible, benches outside the gates;
    - iii. Add more curves to the design, which currently is all right angles;
    - iv. Select a bird-friendly evergreen tree species to screen the rear (north) wall such as Eastern Red Cedar (non-toxic to humans unless consumed in large amounts) or Eastern Arborvitae;
    - v. Add historical details and markers describing the neighborhood and underlying water tunnel; and,
    - vi. Design fence with posts above top rail;
7. Specific considerations regarding the Grand Lafayette proposed design are as follows:
- a. The proposed design is 80-85% porous, includes an artificial turf center with a mound, a planted western buffer, porous pavers, rows of picnic tables with permanent umbrellas, pebble seating, three outdoor concrete tennis tables, one bocce / petanque court, foot-pedaled solar powered trash receptacles, combined bottle filler and drinking fountain and a five foot tall fence in accordance with Parks Department standards
  - b. The proposed design lacks seating with back support;
  - c. The Public Art Coordinator at the Parks Department is continuing to reach out to local galleries and organizations on options for rotating public art installations;
  - d. Design feedback is to:
    - i. Add significantly more green space, both organic and artificial, at ground level and vertical along walls;
    - ii. Eliminate rows of picnic tables and replace with seating with backs for seniors, moveable seating, curved benches or seating areas and fewer but more attractively designed tables;
    - iii. Add more playful features for children;
    - iv. Add a central shade element;
    - v. Add a fountain or water feature;
    - vi. Eliminate some tennis tables;
    - vii. Select a bird-friendly evergreen tree species to screen the rear (north) wall such as Eastern Red Cedar (non-toxic to humans unless consumed in large amounts) or Eastern Arborvitae;
    - viii. Add historical details and markers describing the neighborhood and underlying water tunnel; and,
    - ix. Design fence with posts above top rail.

**Therefore, Be it Resolved that CB 2, Manhattan:**

- 1. Welcomes the Parks Department's preliminary designs for long promised public park space at East 4th Street and Grand Lafayette;
- 2. Reiterates its 22-year goal for public open spaces to be built and maintained for public use on all three water tunnel sites in CB 2, East 4th Street, Grand Lafayette and 388 Hudson Street;
- 3. Requests that the Parks Department add more green space, improve seating and incorporate other design feedback into the East 4th Street and Grand Lafayette designs; and,
- 4. Urges the Parks Department to return to the CB 2 Parks Committee to solicit feedback on revised designs before presenting plans to the Public Design Commission and the Landmarks Commission.

**VOTE: Unanimous, with 36 Board Members in favor.**

## A Resolution Requesting Additional Funding to Renovate Mercer Playground

### Whereas:

1. In January 2019, Community Board 2 passed a resolution to request that the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation initiate a project to renovate Mercer Playground;
2. Mercer Playground is mapped parkland under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department;
3. The Parks Department is meeting with New York University to discuss how NYU will hire a landscape architect to design and renovate Mercer Playground and maintain it after renovations are complete;
4. As part of NYU's 2012 rezoning, NYU committed \$380,000 for renovations, which for the 0.43-acre Mercer Playground equates to \$20 per sq ft;
5. In comparison, the design budget for the park at Grand Lafayette is nearly seven times larger at \$1,696,000 for 0.29 acres or \$135 per sq ft;

### Therefore, Be it Resolved that CB 2, Manhattan:

1. Urges New York University, our elected officials and the Parks Department to secure additional funding to renovate Mercer Playground, and,
2. Requests that the Parks Department return to the CB 2 Parks Committee to present design plans for Mercer Playground as soon as possible.

**VOTE: Unanimous, with 36 Board Members in favor.**

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Carter Booth, Chair  
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Richard Caccappolo, Chair  
Parks & Waterfront Committee  
Community Board #2, Manhattan

TB/EM

c: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman  
Hon. Carolyn Maloney, Congresswoman  
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator  
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NY State Senator  
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Man. Borough President  
Hon. Carlina Rivera, Council Member  
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member