CITY OF NEW YORK
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4**
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**JESSICA CHAIT**
Chair

**JESSE BODINE**
District Manager

November 13, 2025

Iris Rodriquez-Rosa
Commissioner
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

**Re: Mathews-Palmer Playground – Safety, Sanitation and Scaffolding Concerns**

Dear Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa,

On October 9, 2025, Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee heard from Parks officials, local block association representatives, and concerned residents about ongoing safety and sanitation issues at Mathews-Palmer Playground on West 45th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. Committee members expressed alarm over deteriorating conditions at the park and the negative impacts of construction scaffolding along the southeast border of the park.

At its November 5th Full Board meeting, MCB4, by a vote of 40 in favor, 3 against, 1 abstention, and 1 present but not eligible, approved the following comments.

Residents reported that the scaffolding has become a magnet for illegal activity, including drug use and sales, noise issues in the evenings and public safety incidents — one of which involved a butcher's knife found near the playground (*photos attached*). Parents and caregivers told the Committee that they have increasingly avoided the space out of fear, leaving children without access to one of the few playgrounds serving this dense residential area. Community members described the situation as "dangerous" and "growing more serious by the week."

We understand that the project has been navigating the required DOB approvals following an earlier insurance issue. However, the scaffolding at Mathews-Palmer has now remained in place

since July with no apparent repair work underway, and its continued presence is creating ongoing safety and usability challenges for the community.

This prolonged inaction has created what residents aptly called a “scaffolding trap” — degrading the park environment and undermining public confidence in the space. The Committee also heard that e-bike riders are using electrical outlets to charge batteries, while others gather under the scaffolding to drink and play loud music late into the night. The lack of visible enforcement has made nearby residents feel unsafe walking along the block after dark.

Furthermore, Parks has made little to no attempt to address these illicit actions.

To address these concerns, MCB4 makes the following requests**:**

- Increase Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) presence, particularly between 2pm and closing, to address illegal activity and quality-of-life issues.
- Work with NYPD Midtown North Precinct to establish a regular patrol schedule and improve coordination on incident response.
- Temporarily close the park earlier in the evening until conditions stabilize or the scaffolding is removed and continue to ensure the park is closed and locked at the appropriate hour.
- Require the adjacent property owner to commence repairs without delay and submit a work schedule to Parks and MCB4 including a date certain for the removal of the scaffold.
- Ensure that any future permits for extended scaffolding include maintenance, lighting, and security conditions to prevent misuse of park space.
- Explore signage at the park entrance listing the Parks manager or PEP contact for timely reporting of non-emergency issues — similar to MTA “station manager” posters — to improve responsiveness and public trust.

Mathews-Palmer Playground is a vital community asset and an essential playground for children in Hell’s Kitchen. MCB4 appreciates Parks ’ongoing communication with our office and your staff’s willingness to address concerns raised by the community. However, stronger and faster coordination is needed to restore safety and confidence in this important neighborhood park.

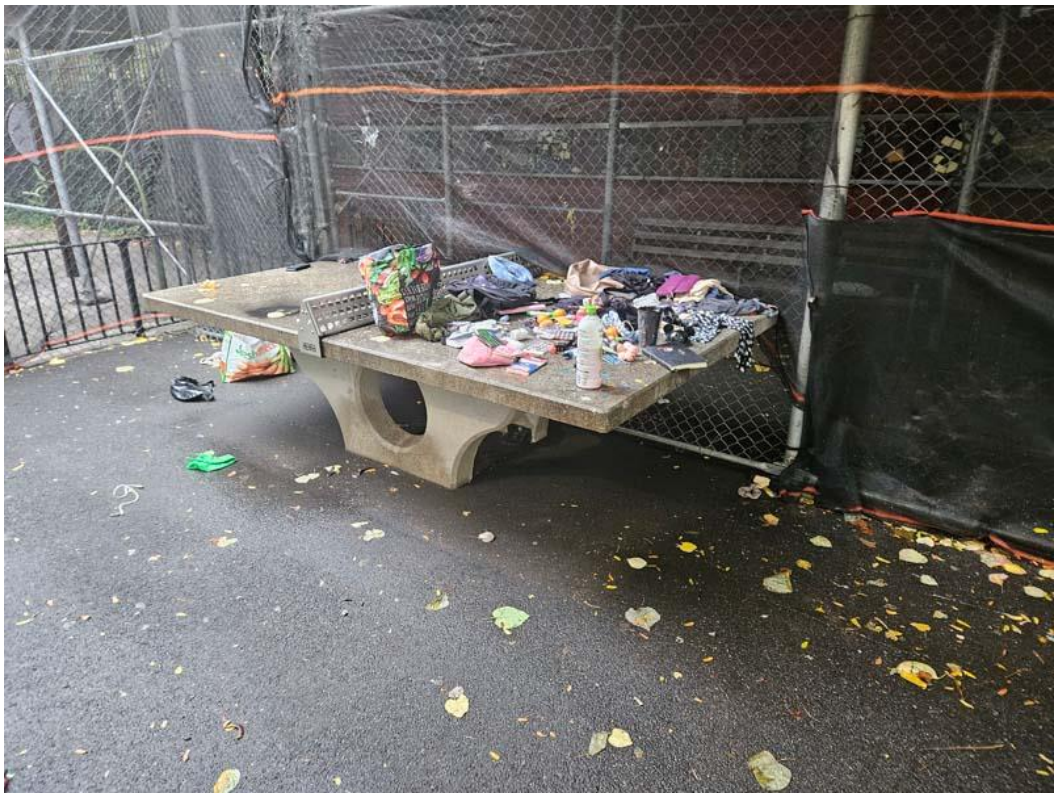
We look forward to continuing collaboration with Parks, Midtown North Precinct and our local elected officials to return Mathews-Palmer Playground to a safe and welcoming space for all.

Sincerely,

Jessica Chait
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

Leslie Boghosian Murphy
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee

Maarten deKadt
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee

Enclosure

cc: Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Tricia Shimamura, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC DPR
Midtown North Precinct
HK45-46 Block Association