



DELORES RUBIN
Chair

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District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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January 5, 2016

William Castro
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
Arsenal West
24 West 61st Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10023

RE: West 20th Street Park Design

Dear Mr. Castro:

At Manhattan Community Board 4's ("MCB4") Waterfront and Parks Committee meeting on Thursday, December 8, 2016, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation ("Parks Department") presented the design plan for the West 20th Street Park. We thank the Department for its presentation and for incorporating the community's feedback from the public scoping sessions and other community board hearings on the subject. At its full board meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2017, by a unanimous vote, MCB4 supports the Park proposal, with the following concerns about the design and plan for the space.

We applaud the creative design of the 10,000 square foot space, which incorporates two child play spaces, a water feature, areas for relaxation, active play, a mixed-use stage, and platforms for public art. MCB4 notes with pleasure that Parks included a storm water retention feature in its design for his park. We look forward to seeing such a feature in every new park design.

While the presentation was met with great appreciation, several issues were raised at the public meeting.

Park Access and Furniture:

The proposed 4-foot fence, consistent with the new Parks without Borders initiative, invites the potential for inappropriate behavior and subjects residents whose apartments surround the park at low floors to possible home invasion. The site has a history of

illegal behavior when the current fence is left open overnight; taking efforts to prevent after-hours gathering should be made. While the community welcomes the idea of creating a public space for all New Yorkers to enjoy, safety and security are a top concern. We recommend a seven-foot fence with the installation of an open/close mechanism designed to promote the safety of the youngest children be installed. This fence would also prevent people from entering the park once it is locked for the evening and adds a level of safety for children who will be playing inside the park.

The park has a good amount of seating and so installing a city bench outside of the park is unwarranted. It will also invite nighttime loitering and noise by providing a space to gather outside of the park on a block made up largely of residential buildings. The community would welcome creative ways to arrange seating inside the park to better promote conversation and interaction. Conversation benches or closer, parallel rows of benches could enhance the space.

The community welcomes the addition of bike racks along the front to the park.

Playground and Active Areas:

Concerns were raised for safety of the equipment used in the area for 2-5 year olds. The dome structure appeared conducive to climbing and therefore falling on to what appear to be round boulder objects. While we appreciate the creative ideas for this small play area, safety should be of utmost importance. We ask that the design be re-visited to dissuade climbing.

The central lawn should be increased in size to better accommodate active play and sunbathers, which in turn will create more viewing space for a performance on the stage.

Horticulture:

With no current trees on the lot, the effort to plant quick-growing trees that will create a canopy is warranted. However, more creative tree options should be explored outside of the ubiquitous Honey Locust Tree. There are other varieties of trees that could survive and serve the same purpose as the honey locust, further identifying this park as the unique community oasis it is sure to become.

Other:

A playground associate should be assigned to the park and public wifi should be installed. MCB4 also expresses its concern that there be enforcement of no parking on sidewalks by a nearby garage and that street parking regulations conform with the rest of the block.

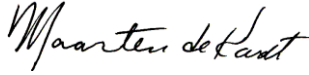
We ask that if these changes are incorporated, it be brought back to MCB4 for final review before the hearing at the Public Design Commission.

Thank you again for allowing this park to be a community-driven process, which will reflect the desires of those who will most benefit. We look forward to seeing this project through and adding a green space to our community.

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair



Maarten de Kadt
Co-chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee



Lowell Kern,
Co-chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment
Committee

Cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman, State Senator
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Richard Gottfried, Assemblymember
Hon. Corey Johnson, Councilmember
Friends of 20th Street Park