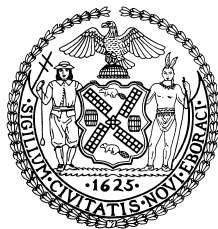


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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8

Parks Committee Meeting
Hunter College's Hunter North Café
68th St. and Lexington Ave., 3rd Floor
Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 6:30 PM College

CB8 members present: Elizabeth Ashby, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider, Teri Slater.

1. Presentation by the Central Park Conservancy of the Reconstruction of the Wild West Playground, located near 93rd Street and Central Park West—a joint issue with the Landmarks Committee

The Central Park Conservancy plans a \$3 million reconstruction of the 21,000 square foot Wild West Playground on W. 93rd St. and Central Park. The proposal is part of the CPC's on-going Parks for Play program to renovate 16 of the park's 21 playgrounds.

Presently, much of the Wild West playground—an area targeted to children ages 4 to 12—is not ADA compliant. To address these and other issues, the CPC's renovation plans include: restructuring the path to the entrance to increase accessibility; replacing ground cover with safer and more permeable sand-colored carpeting; replacing most of the play equipment to meet safety requirements; increasing the undulation of the playground's edges to enhance the area's visual appeal; and, creating bump-out areas for new equipment.

In addition, the current timber walls will be replaced, and the water feature will be redone for greater safety. The current World's Fair benches will be replaced with wood and cement benches that are more consistent with a Wild West theme.

Some community board members expressed concern about the lack of nearby bathrooms. CPC is looking into building bathrooms throughout the park, but have several obstacles to overcome. CPC hopes that construction can begin by September and be completed in nine months.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Wild West Playground in Central Park is part of the CPC's Parks for Play project, and
WHEREAS the site is not fully ADA compliant; and
WHEREAS the play equipment needs to be upgraded and replaced to meet access and safety guidelines;
and

WHEREAS the Central Park Conservancy proposes a host of improvements for this playground, including an array of new play equipment; infrastructure enhancements; new safety surfacing; new benches; and, reconstruction of a nearby path to make it wheelchair accessible; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8, Manhattan, approves of the Central Park Conservancy's detailed plans for the reconstruction of the Wild West Playground in Central Park at West 83 Street.

VOTE: 10-0-0. In favor: Elizabeth Ashby, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider, Teri Slater,

2. Follow Up Discussion on the Forum on Open Space

This issue has been referred to the June Land Use meeting for discussion under Old Business.

Parks Committee members discussed results of the April 25 forum on the need for open space and how to keep the spotlight on this important issue.

Data presented at the forum illuminated the open space problem in CB8M. According to panelist Holly Leicht, executive director of New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), CB8M suffers from the worst open space deficiency of any NYC area. For instance, a new study by NY4P shows that, in CB8M, open space for active play activities totals only 0.07 acres per 1,000 people, versus the norm of 1 acre per 1,000 residents. Total passive open space is only 0.26 acres per 1,000 residents of passive open space, compared with the norm of 1.5 acres.

According to NY4P—co-sponsor of the forum with the Parks Committee—about 20,000 CB8M residents near Second Ave. don't live within walking distance of any park.

Forum panelists—who also included Fred Kent of Project for Public Spaces; City Council Member Dan Garodnick; and Lowline Project founder Dan Barasch—detailed ways to address CB8M's dearth of open space. Ideas ranged for improved use of sidewalk and roadway spaces to creation of new park concepts, such as the underground Lowline park project in lower Manhattan.

While the forum appeared to have been highly successful, questions now center on how to proceed from here. Although many Parks Committee members would like to continue its open space initiative, possibilities for finding such public spaces have become sharply limited: Wording in the recently passed zoning text amendment relating to the CUNY/MSK building project indicates that funding that a developer would provide in exchange for a 20% increase in a project's allowable floor area would be available only for "improvements to a public park." Thus, monies could apply to existing parks, but not to the creation of much-needed new open space/parkland. Moreover, the zoning text amendment did not define how much funding (in dollars or percentages) to parks would be "appropriate" to qualify for a floor area increase.

A draft resolution to refine some of the language of the recently passed zoning text amendment (related to the CUNY-MSK project) was introduced for discussion. It was made clear that this draft resolution did not call for repealing the zoning text amendment but for refining it to make it more applicable to the needs of CB8M.

Meeting attendees debated the proposed resolution. Some objected to the proposed resolution, calling it inadequately posed and "out of order," since the board had already passed the zoning text amendment. As one attendee stressed, "MSK is a done deal." Another member suggested possibly refining the amendment sometime in the future.

However, many did favor the idea of refining the text amendment—making it as useful and appropriate as possible—especially given the permanence of it. Moreover, tweeting some of the text amendment's language, one member said, would better align it with CB8's existing resolution calling for developers to provide open space.

As the debate continued, several members held that—given the limitations the text amendment poses to open space funding—it was appropriate to include recommended improvements to it in this discussion about the open space forum.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS CB8M has approved a zoning text amendment that would permit a 20% increase in the project's allowable floor area if the developer provides funding for improvements to a public park; and WHEREAS terms of that zoning text amendment—as approved by CB8M—allow for the funding to apply only to improvements to existing parks; and WHEREAS such funding limitations would rule out the ability to create public open space, which could provide some relief to residents affected by a large scale construction project, and which is so desperately needed in CB8M; and

WHEREAS terms of the zoning text amendment fail to specify how much of this funding would adequately compensate neighborhoods affected by oversized building projects; and

WHEREAS CB8M previously passed a resolution urging developers to include public open space as part of their project's design; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M approves of a change to the zoning text amendment that allows funding obtained through the zoning text amendment to apply to the creation of public open space as well as to existing public parks in CB8M.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB8M has the ultimate say on which location in the CB8M district receives park/open space funding in exchange for any zoning variances.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB8M has direct input on the amount of funding that constitutes a "significant" contribution of park/open space.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that funding obtained through the zoning text amendment applies to areas directly affected by a construction project.

VOTE: 7-0-0. 3 not voting.

In favor: Elizabeth Ashby, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Teri Slater.

Not voting: Scott Falk, Barry Schneider, Judy Schneider

Chair, Nicholas Viest has ruled that this resolution is out of order.

New Business

New Yorkers for Parks, a city-wide advocacy organization, asked all community boards to support its 2013 platform to make park issues a priority for mayoral and city council candidates. The committee decided to discuss this issue at its June meeting and invite a NY4P representative to make a presentation.

Margaret Price and Barbara Rudder, Parks Committee Co-Chairs