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**The City of New York**  
**Manhattan Community Board 8**

**Parks Committee Meeting**

Brick Presbyterian Church  
62 East 92<sup>nd</sup> St., Living Room  
Thursday, May 1, 2014, 6:30 PM

CB8M Members present: Lowell Barton, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider.  
Excused: Barry Schneider

1. Proposal to Rehabilitate Two Central Park Adventure-Style Playgrounds—a joint issue with the Landmarks Committee.

Chris Nolan of the Central Park Conservancy presented the Conservancy's proposal to refurbish two playgrounds in Central Park, at East 72<sup>nd</sup> St. and West 67<sup>th</sup> St.

Broadly, the CPC's goals for both of these adventure-style playgrounds are to: better blend into the overall landscape of Central Park; maximize ADA accessibility and ensure the areas meet safety standards; preserve aspects of the playgrounds' current designs; ensure sustainability, while incorporating innovative designs; and enhance children's play experiences.

1. a Playground at East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street: Specific proposals for Central Park's E. 72<sup>nd</sup> St. playground include: removing the fence and replacing it with a low seat wall that mirrors the wall around the edge of the play zone and installing a lightweight mesh fence through the landscape plantings to ensure that the play area is contained. To accommodate wheelchair-bound children in the playground, the water amphitheater will be reconstructed to provide transfer steps into it, and a sunken wheelchair-accessible water channel area will be created. In addition, the central play area will be reconfigured and most of the sand replaced with wheelchair accessible sand-toned safety-surface carpet, while a sand table will be constructed in a corner of the sand-surfaced area to provide for sand play. In addition, the treehouse in the southern end of the playground will be removed, providing space to install swings for children in the 5-to-12 age range. If all needed approvals of this \$1.5 million project are obtained, work on it is expected to begin in late fall and take roughly 9 months.

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** Central Park's East 72<sup>nd</sup> St. Playground is among the park's 16 playgrounds that have not been comprehensively rebuilt in the last decade; and

**WHEREAS** the Central Park Conservancy is proposing renovations to the E. 72<sup>nd</sup> St. Playground that would maximize access for disabled children, expand users' play experiences and blend the area better into Central Park's overall landscape; and

**WHEREAS** changes to the playground's perimeter--among them, replacing the fence with a low seat wall--would provide for seating, while, broadly, reinforcing the area's angular design and overall connection to the park, therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves of the Central Park Conservancy's plans for the rehabilitation of the East 72<sup>nd</sup> St. Playground in Central Park.

VOTE: 9-0-0

In favor: Lowell Barton, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider

1. b Playground at West 67<sup>th</sup> St.: Specific proposals for Central Park's West 67<sup>th</sup> St. Playground include: lowering the height of the playground's fence, improving the surrounding landscaping and removing the obsolete steps leading from the playground to Central Park West. It also will create an accessible route from the park's perimeter to the playground.

Within the playground, modifications will include creating a modestly sloped accessible ramp and a grate at the entrance to the water spray amphitheater to make it accessible. And the top step of the water spray area will be removed to reduce its height to less than 30 inches.

In the central play area, the grade will be lowered to the elevation of the sand-surfaced area. Steps will be removed and sand-colored safety carpeting will be installed.

The entrances to the conical climber, the shaft at the center of the conical climber, the fortress and maze-structures all will be reopened. A sand table will be added to the undulating concrete wall between the wooden pyramid and treehouse to provide for accessible play. And the pavement around the playground's perimeter will be regraded and repaved to provide wheelchair accessibility around the entire playground. If all needed approvals are obtained on this \$1 million project, work on it would begin in September and take approximately 9 months.

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** Central Park's West 67<sup>th</sup> St. Playground is among the park's 16 playgrounds that have not been comprehensively rebuilt in the last decade; and

**WHEREAS** the Central Park Conservancy is proposing a variety of renovations to the West 67<sup>th</sup> St. Playground that would improve the playground's connection to the park's overall landscape and address the needs of disabled users; and

**WHEREAS** various changes, including the reopening of the conical climber, fortress and maze structures, will allow the CPC to recreate or reinforce lost or obscured aspects of the playground; therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves of the Central Park Conservancy's plans for the rehabilitation of the West 67<sup>th</sup> St. Playground in Central Park.

VOTE: 9-0-0

In favor: Lowell Barton, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider

## **2. Proposal by the Parks Dept. to display sculptures by Ewerdt Hilgemann along the Park Avenue Malls between 52nd and 67th streets from early August to November, 2014.**

Alberto Magnan presented a proposal to display seven stainless steel sculptures by Ewerdt Hilgemann along the Park Avenue mall from East 55<sup>th</sup> St. to East 67<sup>th</sup> St., from the end of August to early November, 2014. There will be four such sculptures in the CB8M district, located on Park Ave. at E. 59<sup>th</sup> St., E. 64<sup>th</sup> St., E. 65<sup>th</sup> St. and E. 67<sup>th</sup> St.

As described, the artist implodes stainless steel cubes to create sculptures that reflect on the architecture of New York. For this exhibit, his works will range in height from 10 feet to 18 feet, weigh between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds, and will be lighted at night. Insurance coverage of the sculptures is being provided. Officials of the Parks Dept., MTA, Metro North, and Dept. of Transportation will determine that the sculptures are safely installed, and that the landscaping surrounding them is not be disturbed, the

Committee was told. However, the Committee wants DOT assurances that the sculptures will not block the views of drivers on Park Avenue.

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** artist Ewerdt Hilgemann will be producing sculptures that reflect the architecture of New York City; and

**WHEREAS** the project has the support of the Parks Dept. and the Fund for Park Avenue; and

**WHEREAS** the Parks Dept. will ensure that the art works will be safely installed and not interfere with plantings in the Park Avenue Malls; and

**WHEREAS** the CB8M Parks Committee is requesting assurances from the Dept. of Transportation that the sculptures will not block the view of drivers in the area; therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Community Board 8, Manhattan, approves of the Parks Dept.'s plans to install seven Ewerdt Hilgemann sculptures along the Park Avenue Malls from late August to early November, 2014, providing that the Dept. of Transportation determines that the sculptures will not block views of drivers using the involved roadways.

VOTE: 9-0-0

In favor: Lowell Barton, Susan Evans, Scott Falk, Sophia James, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider

### **3. Public Access to Poses Park at Hunter College**

At the end of May, Hunter College plans to reopen Poses Park to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 am to 7 pm. Over the following three months, the college will assess public usage of this park, located at East 68<sup>th</sup> St. near Lexington Ave., reported Patrick McKenna, Hunter College's external affairs director. This evaluation will determine how the park is used, how it affects the Hunter College community and whether demand warrants expanding the days the park is open to the public.

In early June, Hunter plans to publicize the partial reopening of Poses Park with a ribbon-cutting event to which the media will be invited, said Mr. McKenna.

In the past, Hunter had provided some public access to Poses Park. But today, it is available only to members of the Hunter College community.

Early this year, as part of its Open Space initiative, the Parks Committee had begun asking Hunter officials to reopen Poses Park to the public. A number of local elected officials, especially Assembly Member Dan Quart, pursued this possibility in discussions with, and letters to, Hunter College officials. CB8M will follow up on this news with a thank-you letter to Hunter College's administration.

### **4. Status of Con Edison's Work on a Portion of the East River Esplanade.**

The Park Dept.'s Mark Vaccaro updated the Committee on Con Edison's restoration of a portion of the East River Esplanade. As described, Con Ed has completed its required work, which included installing pavers on a portion of the walkway. Nonetheless, a large area in the center of this work zone is still fenced off and unpaved. And landscaping won't be possible, since Con Edison won't be providing irrigation.

Currently, the Parks Dept. is awaiting a determination by the Public Design Commission on how it should complete the project.

To its dismay, the Parks Committee learned that Con Ed's Esplanade project has worsened area conditions. Among the problems: Pavers installed by Con Ed do not match existing pavers, creating an unsightly look to the walkway. Moreover, deteriorating barriers separating the walkway from the FDR drive have not repaired. And a sign warns that the area is still dangerous.

The Committee agreed that resolving these problems will require the attention of high-level executives. Thus, the Committee will be inviting Con Ed's chairman, as well as the NYC Commissioner of Parks, to its June meeting to address these problems.

(Photo below: View of the current state of Con Ed's work on a portion of the East River Esplanade.)



**Margaret Price and Barbara Rudder, Parks Committee Co-Chairs**