Environment, Open Space, & Parks Committee
Thursday, March 8, 2018, 6:00 p.m.
Board Office

*** Minutes ***

Present: Tabatha Lozano, Frances Mastrota, Jeffrey Monteiro, Russel Shuler

Excused: David Giordano, Ryan Sheffield

Guests: Jennifer Lantaz, NYC Parks; Javier Garcia; Harum Ori; Lane Addonizio; Sarah Neilson; Alda Chan; Peter Feigenbaum; Mahfuzur Rahman; Eric Peterson

1. Call to Order– Adoption of the Agenda

Meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM by the Chair, F. Mastrota. Quorum was established at 6:04 PM, at which time the Agenda was adopted moved by Russel Shuler and seconded by Tabatha Lozano. All in favor.

2. Announcements

b. GreenThumb GrowTogether - 03-31-2018 Manhattan Community College - 9 AM to 4 PM.
c. Community Park Initiative (CPI) - James Weldon Johnson - Ribbon Cutting TBA contact Patricia.Marte@parks.nyc.gov
d. Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez - NY State Budget Town Hall, 03-17-2018 @ 10:00 At Dream Charter School, 1991 Second Ave @ 104th St.

3. Presentations & Discussions

a. NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation to make a presentation on a temporary, public exhibition at Thomas Jefferson Park (15 mins)

Jennifer Lantzas, Deputy Director of Public Art, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation and Artist-Harumi Ori made a presentation for information only, on
the temporary (June 2018-June 2019) artwork entitled "I am Here", will be installed in Thomas Jefferson Park (111th -114th Streets. on First Ave.). The sculpture made of outdoor construction mesh in orange, a holy color in the artist's native country of Japan, will be attached to a chain link fence. The sculpture reproduces the space & time of a single moment of a visitor's experience in the park. There will be a ribbon cutting in June.

b. NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation to present on the East Harlem Resiliency Study (15 mins)

Alda Chan, Project Administrator, NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation presented, for informational purposes only, the start of the East Harlem Resiliency Study (92nd St. to 154th St.). East Harlem was identified as a city priority post Hurricane Sandy as part of OneNYC. The study process for: i. Integrated Flood Protection: solving for coastal and inland flooding. ii. Social Resiliency: understanding social cohesion & community facilities. iii. Open Space Planning: design opportunities in parks & open spaces. The social resiliency study interviews are ongoing. A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) will be formed in April 2018. Followed by Community Forum 1 in late Spring/early Summer 2018. The results of which will produce a Vision Plan to help secure funding and affirmative action.

c. Central Park Conservancy to present on East 96th Street Playground Project

Lisa Kudo, Central Park Conservancy, requesting a "Letter of Support" for the reconstruction of the East 96th St. Playground, located near the northeastern corner of the Reservoir, in a landscape bounded by the East Drive, 5th Ave. and the 96th St. Transverse Road. As part of the Central Park Conservancy's Plan for Play, it is one of the largest playgrounds in Central Park. Originally designed in 1936, the playground has areas for children 2-5 as well as 5-12 years of age. Reconstruction will bring more intergenerational use of the playground. Caregivers, seniors, visitors, and ADA persons, will experience new ideas in playground development. i.e. Landscape fencing, user activated water sprays, strap swings, sand & wood carpets, a picnic area, and the removal of a 7 ft. fence to be replaced by a 4 ft. one & landscaping, & ramp access to the playground area. A motion was made by Jeffery Monteiro to grant a letter of support for the redevelopment of the East 96th Street Playground in Central Park as proposed by the Central Park Conservancy. The motion was seconded by Tabatha Lozano and passed unanimously.

4. New Business

   a. Community Garden Development by HPD chosen developers tabled awaiting a Community Gardeners report.

5. Old Business
a. Capital Expense Request - Tracking
   
   i. 107th St. Pier - East River Esplanade
   ii. East River Esplanade Repairs - 111th St. & 117th St.
   iii. Richard Toussaint Way & Richard Toussaint Park (125th-135th Streets along the Harlem River Esplanade)

b. Expense Budget Requests
   
   i. Support of Green Thumb Program
   ii. Additional horticultural staffing, in CB11 NYC parks - Jefferson, White, Marcus Garvey, 103 ST.
   iii. Additional recreation assistants for summer programs in all CB11 NYC parks
   iv. Policy Effort: To advocate for 1% of the NYC Budget for the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation.
      (Currently @ .6%)

6. Adjournment

   A motion was made AT 7:28 PM by Russel Shuler to adjourn, Seconded by Jeffery Monteiro
RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST 96TH STREET PLAYGROUND
Project Description

Plan for Play
This project is part of the Conservancy’s effort to work in the sixteen playgrounds that have not been comprehensively rebuilt in the last decade, in order to raise all of Central Park’s playgrounds to the same standard of excellence at the same time, as outlined in Plan for Play: A Framework for Rebuilding and Managing Central Park’s Playgrounds. Grounded in the Conservancy’s experience renovating and rebuilding the Park’s playgrounds over the last several decades, the Plan for Play identifies seven overarching design goals:

• Improve the relationship between the playgrounds and the Park
• Enhance the quality and variety of play experiences
• Maximize user accessibility
• Ensure compliance with current safety standards
• Preserve unique and successful aspects of existing designs
• Practice sustainable design and construction
• Design innovative solutions

Background
East 96th Street Playground is located east of the Reservoir and south of the 96th Street Transverse. The original playground was built in 1936, as part of the system of playgrounds constructed under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses in the marginal landscapes along the Park perimeter. The original playground was oval in shape and included equipment and activities typical of the era, including swings, slides, see saws, kinder (sand) tables, and a water spray feature. The edge of the playground was delineated by wood and concrete benches and a low pipe-rail fence. The existing seven-foot tall steel picket fence was installed in the 1940s.

At the time the playground was built, the entrance to the Park at East 96th Street was one of the original vehicular entrances to the Drive. In 1941, the Drive entrance was eliminated and replaced by an exit lane from the 97th Street Transverse Road, which was necessary to connect with a new traffic pattern of one-way crosstown streets. The existing stairs and path leading from the East Drive to the entrance on the east side of the playground were added in 1948. In 1986, to address safety concerns, the Conservancy closed the pedestrian entrance into the Park from the transverse road, replacing it with a new pedestrian entrance off of the Fifth Avenue perimeter.

The playground has been renovated twice since it was built: once in 1980 by the Parks Department, and most recently in 1994 by the Conservancy. The 1980s work featured TimberForm play equipment, which replaced nearly all of the Moses era equipment. Treehouses, climbers, slides, bridges, tire swings, a sandbox, and picnic tables were added in the design vocabulary of the era. The renovation in 1994 by the Conservancy included the replacement of deteriorated pieces of wood equipment with modular play equipment. Rubber safety surface, and new bucket swings for smaller children were also added.
Of users surveyed as part of the planning and design effort, many cited the variety of play equipment, open space, and wide age range as important aspects of this playground.

Project Objectives
The purpose of the project is to meet the design objectives outlined in the Plan for Play by specifically addressing the accessibility of the playground, the relationship between the playground and the Park, and the variety of play experiences for children ages 2-12.

Design Concept
The playground is located east of the Reservoir and south of the 96th Street Transverse. The footprint is large, but constrained by current adjacent paths, existing topography, and mature trees.

The proposed design reorganizes and enhances the play spaces within the playground to allow for better separation of the age groups and better circulation between areas. The existing footprint will be modified and the playground regraded to better integrate it into the landscape. Additionally, an ADA-accessible route will be established for the first time, providing wheelchair access to the playground.

Scope of Work
- Modify the existing footprint to create a wider landscape margin between playground and path, enhancing the connection between the playground and the Park landscape and working around existing mature trees; add a picnic area in the southern end of the playground that is both contained and part of the Park landscape.
- Regrade the playground, which currently slopes and steps down from west to east, leveling the ground plane to the lower elevation to remove barriers and improve the playground’s relationship to the Park. In order to lower the west side of the playground, install concrete seat walls (18” high) that retain the grade outside the playground.
- Replace the 7-foot steel picket fence with a 4-foot steel picket fence. Around the picnic area, and behind the concrete retaining/seat walls (where there is sufficient opportunity for planting), install a lightweight mesh fence screened by the plantings (the same fence as developed for recently reconstructed playgrounds including East 110th, Wild West, East 72nd, and West 84th Street) to ensure that the play environment is contained.
- Regrade the entrance path from East 96th Street and create an ADA-accessible route to the playground, consisting of a ramp set into the landscape and screened by plantings.
- Install an ADA-accessible gate at the playground entrance.
- Reorganize the play spaces to better separate 2-5 and 5-12 age groups and allow for easy circulation between them.
- Construct an enhanced water spray feature at the center of the playground, activated by a user-operated bollard that makes the spray feature interactive and conserves water.
- Relocate sand area to the 2-5 play area; reconstruct to include a sand table for ADA access.
- Move existing swing area for 2-5 year-olds that currently includes six bucket swings to the northern end of the playground and replace them with three bucket swings, four strap swings, and one ADA-accessible swing.