

CB9M Landmarks Preservation & Parks Committee Minutes and Updates

Wednesday, January 4, 2023

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting, Called to Order at 6:37pm

Co-Chairs: Hon. Heather Jason and Hon. Jonathan Thomas

Committee Members Present: Hon. Patricia Caldwell, Hon. Dan Cohen, Hon. Heather Jason, Hon. Carolina Ramirez, Hon. Jonathan Thomas and Hon. Liz Waytkus.

Absent Committee Members: Hon. Kelsy Bettis, Hon. Michael Palma, and Hon. Hugo Torres-Fetsco.

Community Members and Park Representatives Present:

Leslie Wright (Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park), Mallory Craig (The Hort, DFRSP Greenhouse), Matt Genrich (NYC Parks), Jana La Sorte (Harlem Historic Parks), Wesley Hamilton (Riverside Park), Stephanie Caban (Riverside Park Outreach Coordinator), Kim Johnson (St. Nicholas Block Association), Doug Blomberg (Heritage Health & Housing, Inc.) and Gianna Falz (We Act for Environmental Justice).

New Business: NYC Parks and Historic Harlem Parks Updates & Announcements

- **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park:**
 - The park was built over the **North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. (air quality)**
 - Event page: [Riverbank2022-23FallWinterProgramGuide.pdf \(ny.gov\)](#)
 - [Riverbank State Park | New York NY | Facebook](#)
 - **Governor Hochul Announces \$26 Million Renovation of Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park.**
 - **The Environmental Quality Bond Act:** The largest environmental bond act in state history at \$4.2 billion and on any ballot anywhere in the nation in 2022. The measure will **support environmental improvements that preserve, enhance and restore New York's natural resources and create local jobs to fund project.**
 - **Capital Project:** Renovating the 30-year-old locker room facilities in both the athletics and aquatics centers. The \$19 million project will begin with the renovation of the athletics locker room starting in January 2023, with completion in spring 2023. The aquatic locker rooms and reception area will start in May. Trailers with portable bathrooms and showers will be used. The facility will remain open.
 - **Capital Project:** Resurfacing the outdoor track and replacing the turf field - a \$5 million project set to start in February 2023 and end by June 2023. This will be the third renovation in the life of the park. It will be offline during renovations. The 70 feet Light Tower previously reported will also be renovated.

- **Capital Project:** Installing a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system for the park's performing arts center. The \$500,000 project will start February 2023 and the anticipated completion is June 2023. If there are any delays, the contractor must provide temporary service.
 - **Proposed Capital Project:** amphitheater, life guard and first aid stations, entrances, roof replacement, tile facades, elevator towers, stair towers, and offices between spring 2023 and summer 2024.
 - These capital improvement projects have been communicated during previous public MCB9 committee meetings, and information is posted. A dedicated email is also posted on site for any concerns and questions.
 - Beginning the design process of the south end improvements including the kids' playground, comfort stations, handball, softball fields and basketball courts near the 138th Street entrance. Designs are anticipated by this spring. An outreach survey was utilized to include community suggestions.
 - Join us on **January 14th, 2023, as we host "People of Earth" in collaboration with Carnegie Hall inside the Robert Frederick Smith Center for the Performing Arts starting at 5pm.**
 - Ice Skating season including figure skating and ice hockey through March 12, 2023.
 - The **Community Garden Lottery** for 65 plots will occur **Saturday February 25, 2023 at 11am**. Six of the raised beds will be ADA compliant. Save the Date! The lottery is for a two year period commitment to plant vegetables and flowers. Request was made in the future to possibly include an evening or alternative lottery day.
 - **The Park turns 30 years old in May and is one of the most visited NYS parks!** There will be a community celebration the summer.
- **Friends of Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park** meets every second Saturday of the month in the Theater Rehearsal Room. (Reminder)
 - **Greenhouse at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park:**
 - [The Greenhouse Education Center](#)
 - The new Greenhouse Manager is Diego.
 - greenhouseeducationcenter.org
 - Postcards distributed for the winter programs.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rOIV6cFefJoSyHwxM-OFrx8pquAgHLbT/view?usp=sharing>
 - **Tuesdays:** Soil Stories at 10am to 1pm (A self-guided cozy nook in the greenhouse with curated books, games, and artmaking for quiet moments to enjoy with plants. Saute, Sizzle, Savor at 11am (Winter cooking & eating with guest chefs from around Harlem from Ethiopian and Vietnamese restaurants for examples.)
 - **Wednesdays:** 5:30pm – 6:30pm, Recipes and Rituals for Winter Wellness. Herbalists, wellness practitioners, and artists committed to healing help craft your own apothecary and toolkit for winter wellness.
 - **Thursdays:** 5pm, Botanical Arts, Learn new observational skills to combine the art and science of observation in weekly artmaking inspired by plants in the greenhouse.
6:30pm, Art and Agriculture, Create works of art inspired by the stories of foods you

love and how they grow with different visiting artists each week. Food is connected to history and culture.

- **Saturdays:** 10am-noon, Family Farmacy (Food as Medicine in kitchen and learning garden) and Fall Tours at noon – 1pm, Wonder & Wander (Harlem residents are provided the history to understand the green roof on which the park is located. Lead a walk and dialogue about plants play space exploration.
 - **Youth High School Harlem Farm Apprenticeship Program:** Farming, Cooking and Horticulture. The application process is a simple Google form. Participants earn \$100 for a period of eight weeks. Community schools and Fieldtrip opportunities. Interns may participate during the entire year. Reservations are accepted. The hours are Fridays between 3:30pm – 5:30pm.
 - “One of our amazing chefs who facilitates with us is leading an MLK walk on food justice and uplifting Black-owned restaurants.”
 - “The greenhouse will be hosting lots of workshops to help new gardeners.”
 - New programming to starting in January 2023. The registration link is as follows:
[Schedule Appointment with The Greenhouse Education Center \(as.me\)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FJ4q1Pd63XUAgIjoWt8UG6ChDw6kguQT/view?usp=share_link)
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FJ4q1Pd63XUAgIjoWt8UG6ChDw6kguQT/view?usp=share_link
- **NYC Parks Mulch Fest** this weekend on January 7-8, 2023 between 10am -2pm. Christmas Tree Drop off locations are as follows:
 - Morningside Avenue and West 123rd Street.
 - Saint Nicholas Avenue and West 132nd Street.
 - https://www.nycgovparks.org/highlights/festivals/mulchfest?utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=mulchfest-2022%2F2023&gclid=EAlalQobChMIwluo75Cv_AIV0ciUCR0ASwo9EAAYASAAEgJHvPD_BwE
 - NYC Department of Sanitation will be conducting curbside collections for mulching and recycling of Christmas trees from **Friday, January 6 through Saturday, January 14, 2023**. For more information, please visit [DSNY's Curbside Collections website](#).
 - **Morningside Park: Capital Project** Park Path Reconstruction along ball fields on the south side between West 110th and 114th Streets is closed, but will reopened before spring.
 - **Historic Parks: Morningside Park and Saint Nicholas Park:**
 - Communications with friends group to align environmental issues with the parks.
 - Planning in progress for the summer including at CB10 Jackie Robinson Park.
 - **Riverside Park**
 - Camel Park West 142nd Street Riverbank Playground. Power has been out of order. Con Edison is working there tonight. Reconnecting electrical line from the street and will upgrade the meter. It is anticipated that the comfort station will be open to full service with heat and lights soon. There is no specific open date.

- **Riverside Park Conservancy:**
 - Riverside Drive and West 83rd Street and West 152nd Streets are additional Christmas tree drop off locations for mulch.

Presentation:

- **West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. April 2023 Earth Day 5K Marathon Parks Permit Request for Information and Assistance: Gianna Folz, Fundraising Events Coordinator**
 - Previously held the event at Randall’s Island Park with one table with the start and finish in this same park. No mics. “A quick run and done.”
 - Raised \$30k and had 70 participants. Use of green space was important.
 - The Icahn Stadium manager at Randall’s Island said that they would not like to host a 5k marathon in the spring.
 - Preferred date for the 5K marathon is April 22, 2023 for three hours in the morning to include set-up/breakdown.
 - After trying to apply for a permit, the permit rep for Manhattan said that the parks were full for 2023. Applicant is seeking guidance to determine alternative locations.
 - Open to multiple sites and dates including outside Manhattan.
 - It is not necessary to begin and end in the same park.
 - Suggestion was made to form a partnership with the Environmental program or Climate School at Columbia University and the City Parks Foundation including CITYPARKS Green Girls Empowered by ING.
 - Suggestion was made to host the 5K Marathon in the street instead of a park which would require a DOT permit. The Percy Sutton Run was provided as an example.
 - It was also suggested to organize the 5K around all Harlem Historic Parks and relate it to Environmental concerns.
 - The Riverside Park Marketing Department with contact information at 212-360-1313 could be a resource. They have experience with Marathons, DOT, NYPD and large scale events.
 - Most races happen at the Central Park Conservancy and it is connected with New York Road Runners.
 - A 5K Harlem run could possibly be organized between Morningside Park, Marcus Garvey Park, Central Park and Riverside Park.
- **ACTION ITEM: DRAFT MILLION MORE TREES RESOLUTION**, Emily Nobel Maxwell and Kyshia Smith (MBPO) are the Resolution sponsors.
 - <https://forestforall.nyc>
 - Increasing Community Resiliency and Quality of Life through New York City Urban Forest Canopy Protection, Maintenance, Expansion, and Planting at least a Million More Trees.
 - Prior to the meeting committee members received the Draft Resolution on multiple occasions and a copy of the December 7, 2022 presentation with requests to submit amendments to personalize the Resolution prior to today’s meeting.
 - The Resolution was read into the record that included personalization and amendments.
 - The amended technical assistance was provided by The Nature Conservancy:

- WHEREAS, native tree species are a crucial component of a sustainable urban forest and research has shown that native trees are necessary to support the native insect, bird, and animal species that depend on the urban forest for their survival;
 - Develop and implement a citywide Urban Forest Plan that centers on health, well-being, climate resilience, equity, environmental justice, and sustainability and that also prioritizes the planting of NYC native and native adjacent trees that will better support native insect, bird and animal populations
 - The urban forest canopy cover in 2017 (latest available data) for Manhattan Community District 9 was **26.45%**. (Source: [State of the Urban Forest in NYC](#), Table A2.2, p. 205).
 - There is an opportunity to add up to 8.78% cover (or about 84 acres of urban forest canopy), for a total cover of **35%** in Community District 9. Reaching this goal would require a combination of protecting existing trees, increased maintenance of existing trees to ensure they survive and thrive, restoring fallen trees, and planting new trees.

- **Discussion from committee members and the community included the following concerns:**
 - Trees cause trash to accumulate around the trunk and on the sidewalk.
 - Trash on the sidewalk and around the tree is not the fault of the tree. This is a NYC Department of Sanitation enforcement issue.
 - Tree roots growth cause tripping hazards on public sidewalks.
 - DOT issues sidewalk repair violations. A permit is required for work near trees.
 - Trees planted on sidewalks must meet specific rules such as distance from other trees and the corner of a road intersection
 - Tree guards should be installed to protect the trees.
 - It is not feasible to install tree guards at all property types.
 - Tree guards don't stop root growth.
 - Tree guards require an inspection from Manhattan Forestry, a permit and each one costs approximately \$1,000. This could be cost prohibitive for many property owners in our community if required for every tree.
 - [Tree-Time-Tree-Guard-Donation-Table-12-14-21_61dc460c921a6.pdf \(nycgovparks.org\)](#)
 - [Tree Work Permit : NYC Parks \(nycgovparks.org\)](#)
 - Trees have an inspection and pruning schedule in terms of maintenance.
 - [Tree Guards | Trees New York \(treesny.org\)](#) website placed in chat by NYC Parks.

- **Committee members offered the following amendment suggestions today after requesting additional time to review the Resolution and comment on 12/7/2022.**

- “Communities members will be involved in the co-creating the vision of how and where trees will be implemented | community assets (schools, libraries, etc.) will be leverage for community education about the benefits planting trees as a form of community resiliency.”
 - The planting of the trees will meet the requirements and regulations of the NYC Parks Department.
 - **Committee members and community attendees placed the following comments in the chat:**
 - “WHEREAS, there is significant opportunity to expand the urban forest in New York City and to plant at least a million more trees across public and private land, and realizing this opportunity requires the whole city and all Community Districts including all the infrastructures necessary for the livelihood and maintenance and sustainability of the tree (for example, tree guards)”
 - “A tree's trunk will grow over the course of the year, and unless the tree guard is made of a flexible material that grows with the tree, it eventually becomes too tight. Replace tree guards yearly to prevent injury to your tree. Make sure the new tree guard is slightly larger in diameter than the tree to allow for growth and air circulation.”
 - “if urine damages trees and guards help to prevent that then guards increase the sustainability of the tree, sapling” “or be harmed from dog urine!”
 - “and RATS!!!! Rat holes!!!! It's called Accountability, Facts”
 - Committee members were asked to provide any additional Resolution amendments and to make corrections.
 - The Resolution passed committee with 4 yes votes and 2 no votes.

Old Business:

- **Donnellan Square between West 149th and 150th Streets at Saint Nicholas Avenue**
 - Hon. Patricia Caldwell reports she is working with Kyshia Smith at the MBPO to have a pine tree installed at this location.
- **Proposed West Harlem Historic District and Conference** - Yuien Chin, West Harlem Community Preservation Organization and Harlem One Stop. **No report.**
- **RKO Theater** – Exploring the possibility of the Jazz Museum as anchor tenant and space for other tenants. No new report.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:39pm: Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1, 2023

Respectfully submitted by Heather Jason