



CB9M LANDMARKS PRESERVATION AND PARKS COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Wednesday, June 5, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Heather Jason, called the regular meeting of the CB9M Landmarks Preservation and Parks Committee to Order at 6:33 PM EDT, on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. The meeting was held in-person and via Zoom conferencing.

COMMITTEE

Co-Chair Hon. Heather Jason; Co-Chair Hon. Annette Robinson; Hon. April Adams; Hon. Patricia Caldwell; Hon. Daniel Cohen; Hon. Elisa Yoo; and Hon. Liz Waytkus

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT AND IN-PERSON

Co-Chair Hon. Heather Jason; Co-Chair Hon. Annette Robinson; and Hon. Elisa Yoo

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT/OR VIRTUAL

Hon. April Adams (excused), Hon. Patricia Caldwell (Virtual); Hon. Daniel Cohen (absent); Hon. Liz Waytkus (Virtual excused)

GUESTS PRESENT IN-PERSON

Kelvin McAllister (Uptown Inner City League)

COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF PRESENT

Hon. Chris Johnson, Hon. Veronica Savage, District Manager, Eutha Prince

GUESTS PRESENT VIRTUAL

Leslie Wright (NYC Regional Director, New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park (DFRSP)); Mallory Craig (Education Center Manager, The Horticultural Society of New York, DFRSP); Wes Hamilton (NYC Parks, Riverside); Matt Genrich (NYC Parks, District 9 NYC Parks Manager); Tapashi Narine (NYC Parks Historic Harlem Parks Administrator); Karen Asner (Friends of St. Nicholas Park); Brad Taylor and Brigham Keehner (Friends of Morningside Park); (Nora Cole and Nina Talley (Edgecombe Garden Park Sanctuary); Jon Ernsberger (NYC Parks Capital Projects); Laura Drawbaugh, (NYC Parks Landscape Architect) and Ricardo Hinkle; Elizabeth Masella (NYC Parks Senior Public Art Coordinator); Malin Abrahamsson, Patricia Espinosa, and Haksul Lee (Works In Public Artist, Art Students League of New York); Tom Tacik, (Public Program Manager, Works In Public Artist, Art Students League of New York); Issam Abou-Rafeh and Allen Ghaida (IMA Engineering); Stan Stutley (Owner Representative for 456 West 144th Street); Kathryn Mercier (NYC Parks); and natsukitakuji.

QUORUM

A quorum was not established with three of seven voting members present.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda and the minutes from May 1, 2024 were adopted.



PARKS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES:

Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park (DFRBSP): Leslie Wright

- The roller rink and carousel are open.
- The fully renovated aquatics locker rooms opened Saturday.
- There are end of season senior classes.
- Open houses, exhibitions and classes started on June 4th.
- Classes include line dancing, quilting, guitar, keyboarding, drawing and art.
- June 11th Older Adult Resource Fair in conjunction with Assemblyman Al Taylor's office from 10am to 12:30pm in the theater.
- June 15th Carnegie Hall citywide Concert Series featuring Pedrito Martinez will be outdoors, or inside if it rains.
- The next senior social featuring the unique band is June 20th.
- Everything at Riverbank is free.
- Live on the Hudson open mic. Folks come to dance, sing, to perform spoken word and karaoke on Saturday, June 22nd, 6 to 9 pm.
- The artist workshop tomorrow focuses on little kids ages 6 and under. We typically have 100 kids per session. Arts and crafts story time. Sometimes we have puppet shows. The next one is June 28th from 10:30am to 11:30am.
- On Sunday June 30th, there will be Art in the Park workshops for 4 to 12 year olds, together with their families.
- We post everything for the whole summer on the parks website as well.
- This Saturday, 10:30am to noon is our monthly friends meeting in the park main building cultural center on the second floor.

Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park - Greenhouse & Education Center: Mallory Craig

- Website: www.thehort.org/events and email programs@thehort.org or mcraig@thehort.org
- This summer, expect the same daily workshops with focus on the garden: Art and food in the greenhouse and learning garden.
- There will be workshops on plants for attracting pollinators, creating a sensory garden for cultivating mindfulness and creating sun prints; herbal remedies for cultivating joy, plant based paper making, learning how to prepare dish meals from a CSA.
- Celebrated the end of our spring greenhouse internship and planted fruit to the flower bed. They prepared all the blueberries and strawberries that are in that bed.
- *Family Farmacy* gardening is every Saturday from 10:30am to noon. This Saturday we'll be learning about and harvesting the Nettles plant for medicine.
- Sauté Sizzle Savor: Tuesdays 11am-12pm, Recipes & Rituals for Community Care: Wednesdays 5:30pm-6:30pm, Art & AgriCulture: Thursdays 6:30pm-7:30pm.
- Garden program pride event is June 30th.
- Celebrating all things bees with new pollinator ports on July 8th.



Riverside Park Conservancy: Wes Hamilton

- Stephanie Caban has been transferred and her replacement is pending.
- The stairs at West 148th Street are completed and will be opening soon.
- June 8th Riverside Horticulture tour from 10am to 12:30 pm at West 116th Street and Riverside Drive.
- June 28th Freshen Up Friday at West Harlem Pier Park starting at 5pm live music and dancing.
- <https://riversideparknyc.org/summer-on-the-hudson/> Free summer programs (more than 300 programs all summer long)

Friends of St. Nicholas Park: Karen Asner

- St. Nicholas Park hosted a free concert series this past May 2024 curated by renowned jazz vocalist Tyreek McDole. The free events take place at the 135th Street Plaza and James Baldwin Lawn. The event is organized by Friends of St. Nicholas Park with support and partnership from West Harlem Development Corporation and Harlem One Stop. It is hoped that this funding will continue and that type of series.
- This coming month will be the return of weekly free Yoga in the Park on Mondays between 6:30pm and 7:30pm in partnership with Harlem Wellness Center on the James Baldwin lawn. Bring your mat.
- The monthly cleanups are on Saturdays at 11am starting June 15th.
- Our Juneteenth celebration is Saturday June 22nd at 1pm and ends early evening. There is a fabulous line up curated by Good Vibes in the Park with live music and different performances.

Friends of Morningside Park: Brad Taylor

- Brigham Keehner, an architect and our chair is on this call tonight.
- A great Juneteenth program scheduled for June 19th in coordination with Tapashi/Historic Harlem Parks. It will culminate with the screening of *The Wiz* at dusk.
- There will be Lindy Hop, African Dance, Yoga and Meditation.
- Participation with City of Water Day July 13th. It is hoped that the water pumps will be back at the pond and the waterfall will restart that has not been operational in many years.
- We will revisit the Columbia University 1968 Gym protest marker resolution draft from last year.

NYC Parks and Historic Harlem Parks: Tapashi Narine, tapashi.narine@parks.nyc.gov

- **St. Nicholas Park:** Good Vibes in the Park is offering a yoga meditation with live music on June 22nd between 1pm to 8pm. Volunteers are needed to help with set up and cleanup.
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1nB5niS-IHOcDFW5m2SCqcxDC2IPq3n6YIzMOqbK0tq8/viewform?edit_requested=true
- **Morningside Park:** On June 19th there will be Yoga meditation, African dance, and Lindy Hop between 6pm to 8:30pm followed by a screening of *The Wiz* from 8:30pm to 11pm. The City of Water Day is July 13th and still in the planning stages.
- There has been construction delays for the café and the restrooms reopening at Morningside Park due to a water leakage issue possibly due to a drain line from the roof.
- NYC Parks is extending its E-Bike Variance rule which allows electric bikes and electric scooters to use park drives and greenways until May 31, 2025. This is to continue to identify relevant driveways and greenways safety improvements as well. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/things-to-do/e-bikes>
- There has been positive feedback regarding the Harlem Sculpture Gardens in the parks.



NYC Parks and Historic Harlem Parks: Matt Genrich, District 9 NYC Parks Manager

- There are still a couple of Harlem Sculpture Garden pieces still pending installation soon. The artists are finishing up some work.
- We're expecting Alexander Hamilton basketball court to undergo capital renovation. It's almost through procurement which will end in July. It is hoped that renovation of the basketball court and retaining wall that runs along West 130th through West 140th Streets will start by our next meeting.
- There will be Jazz concerts on Saturdays June 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th from 6pm to 7:30pm at Montefiore Square Park located on West 137th Street and Broadway. There will be music on June 21st between 4pm to 7pm and a cleanup event on June 22nd between 10am and 1pm. Thanks to NYC Parks for showing up to the monthly meetings to resolve quality of life issues in this park.
- Concerns were raised regarding Annunciation Playground cobblestone cement, track and turf new installation, water supply/drinking fountain repair to prevent kids from becoming dehydrated during the summer months while participating in programming, public restrooms, two breakaway rims were requested near the basketball court area for the Friday night program, safety issues in terms of locking access to the playground every evening. Answer: The playground is locked between 9pm to 10:30pm.
- The NYC Mayor's initiative to have restrooms installed in each park may require a letter drafted by this committee to submit a request for West Harlem Piers Park, Annunciation and Jacob Schiff Playgrounds.

NEW BUSINESS, PRESENTATIONS, AND DISCUSSIONS

Morningside Park: (Scenic Landmark) Reconstruction of 114th, 116th and 122nd Street staircases at Morningside Drive, **Docket LPC-25-01988**, NYC Parks, Landscape Architect, Laura Drawbaugh and Ricardo Hinkle

- ricardo.hinkle@parks.nyc.gov and laura.drawbaugh@parks.nyc.gov
- The park is located between 110th and 123rd. It is 13 blocks long and 2 blocks wide with a 100 feet elevation change from east to west.
- **Phase 1:** Address unsafe stairs and water runoff. **Phase 2:** Address ADA access on the western edge.
- **114th Street:** There are bluestone treads and no handrails. The retaining wall is in good condition. We propose to reconstruct the steps with a new concrete foundation, reset the bluestone treads, provide Landmarks gray color landings instead of asphalt, and install handrails on both sides.
- **116th Street:** The stairs are wide, grand and connect to even wider and grandeur granite steps. Due to the constant flow of water, rain, and ice from the protruding pipe and slopes above, the treads have been displaced from their foundation. Also the stormwater is flowing on grade instead of into the park's internal drainage system. The center of the steps have non ADA compliant handrails and massive carve boulder cheek walls. The proposed reconstruction will reset the treads on the existing foundation. The boulder cheek walls will be reset this time, adding the correct drainage materials. A trench drain will be placed across the upper part of the path. The exposed pipe will be buried and connected to the parks internal drainage system. The lower path will be regraded and water will be directed to the internal catch basin. Light poles are also proposed.
- **122nd Street:** These stairs were built hastily much later than the above two stairs in the 1940s and 1950s. They have granite block cheek walls which are disintegrating. The treads are misaligned, and there is a very short run of handrail. It is dangerous walking down. The treads, curb and cheek walls are in poor condition. Additionally, the drainage swale isn't working correctly. The proposed design includes resetting the existing treads on a new concrete foundation, reconstructing the cheek walls and providing the Landmarks gray color concrete landings. It is our intention to replace the temporary lighting at the bottom



with a permanent one. Handrails will be provided on both sides of the steps. The existing cheek walls are built of granite block and have a stepdown character which leads to a high reveal on the backside of the steps. It has no coping or protective top stone, therefore the water enters the exposed joints, causing them to weaken. It was decided to maintain the historic character of the wall by using the existing granite block. However, this time the slope of the landscape will be followed instead of the stepdown character to limit that exposed backside of the cheek walls, and a rustic granite coping on the top will be used to protect the masonry joints.

- The procurement process should be complete by the end of 2025.
- NYC Parks has not yet gone to Landmarks (LPC), which they claim is a courtesy. They will perform a Public Design Commission Review. It is believed that the handrails and the grey landings (instead of the asphalt) will be fine because it's already been approved for 113th Street which is currently under construction.
- The LPC liaison who helps guide this project indicates that anything that preserves existing materials is usually looked upon favorably, and that's what is being proposed as much as possible. There is precedent in Central Park Olmsted that has a similar type of coping. Therefore the presentations are optimistic.
- Friends of Morningside Park objected to the presentation and requested that MCB9 not vote on a resolution which is currently premature until they meet with the NYC Parks landscape architect during the summer, to address their concerns and review the proposed improvements.
- The historic fence at 114th street that has been there since the 1940s will remain. The pieces of the cheek wall that are missing will be re-mortared and stones that can be recovered will be reset.
- The small pond (not the pond where Columbia was going to build the gym) with natural spring water was requested that it be preserved. However, NYC Parks explained that it's not a pond, but a perforated pipe that was installed in the 1980s to collect ground water and is causing a lot of damage. In the 1980s there was not as much storm water runoff as there is now. Therefore, it is the NYC Parks intention to bury the pipe and eliminate the pond. The community would like another way to drain and keep it exposed.
- NYC Parks is seeking an approval resolution with qualifications and conditions from MCB9. It was emphasized by Friends of Morningside Park that this presentation should have been provided earlier in the year, if a resolution was expected by June to allow time for dialogue with the community.

Harlem Sculpture Garden Exhibition -); Elizabeth Masella, (NYC Parks Senior Public Art Coordinator)

- Oversee the art in the parks program which permits public art work. This exhibition will be on display through October. These two artworks will be coming to **Riverside Park North at West 145th Street** as part of the Works in Public Program, Art Students League of New York located on West 57th Street.
- **Tom Tasik is the Associate Director at the Art Students League and administers the program.**
- <https://www.artstudentsleague.org/programs/works-in-public>
- **Haksul Lee** announces upcoming public programing by Marco Pali and Sophie Kahn who currently have their sculpture installed. There will be two sets of performance, with sound, dance, and poems. August 4th from 3pm to 5pm. Please come to the event and share this information with other interested people.
- Malin Abrahamsson and Patricia Espinosa will present their works today and are concluding two years in the program. The art will be fabricated and installed north along the water. There are currently two sculptures there from the previous group that will be replaced in August by the Malin and Patricia sculptures.



- **Patricia Espinosa:** The project is about the scarcity of water. The title of the piece is *The Hourglass* and will be located at site Number 1. The concept of the sculpture takes the form of a giant twisted sponge. It's twisted in the center, resembling the shape of an hour glass. It symbolizes the diminishing availability of water and the threat that we are facing over time. It seeks to visually and technically capture the course of water passing through and rounding out. The size is about 10 feet tall and made of steel. The sponge is sitting on top of a base that's designed to resemble a drain. The drain is an interactive component from the piece and will have grills opening on opposite sides. The manhole cover is a custom design, and that's going to be the connection with the sponge. The base houses a sound box. The handle is shaped like an hour glass. People will be able to turn around the handle and hear sound coming out of the base. The sound is generated by rain sticks which are instruments when you turn them around. There are three rain sticks inside that emulate the sound of running water.
- The idea is to have people engage and interact with it and also listen to the water running out with the image of the sponge on top. The intent is to engage in water conservation lectures. Starting to think about partnerships we can do with New York based organizations like the Water Center at Columbia University Climate School, as well as Charity Water at City College. The plan is to host some of these presentation at City College Planetarium which is relatively newly discovered and opened. It is located in the basement of the science building. Free tickets may be reserved online. A goal is to organize a collective community art project and create a giant sponge made out of recycled water bubbles or regular/household size sponges. The plan is to construct a 6 foot tall wireframe in partnership with NYC Parks. Finally, it is desired to organize educational and family days with activities like creating our own rain sticks, providing families with tips for water conservation, and educating on what we can all do to preserve and take care of water.
- **Malin Abrahamsson:** The project, entitled **MOONFINDER**, which is a strange shape on a rock with smaller pieces next to it and will be situated on Site Number 2. Its inspiration is from the moon, the celestial body that we all share equally and how it has been a metaphor for the yearning to understand our existence and place in the universe, and how it has shaped artistic expression in music, literature, and art. It is intended that this sculpture bring the awareness of the moon back into people's lives as they walk through the park. The piece itself will be 10 feet tall. The bottom part will be about 5 feet, and the top part will be about 5 feet. Further on the bottom, there will be 2 smaller rocks that we hope will invite people to sit down and perhaps not necessarily even look at the sculpture, but contemplate the part they have around them, and take a moment to stop and appreciate what's around them. This sculpture will be fabricated out of durable materials. It's all steel. It will be rusted on the bottom sections and powder coated on the top. It should weatherized over the year that it's installed. It is scheduled to be installed in September and will be displayed until September 2025.
- The goal is to provide public programming around sculptures, and invite the public to gather around this sculpture to look at the moon and stars as they travel across the sky. Collaboration with the New York City Amateur Astronomers Association among others is an intention. A physics and astronomy professor at City College who has guided the way to think about the position of this piece, has offered to open up the small planetarium in the basement at City College for the public in conjunction with our free gatherings in the park. Using the coordinates of where the sculpture will be installed, this professor has helped determine which direction it will have, so that it lines up with the ecliptic is what it's called, where all the stars and the moon and the sun traverse across the sky. Other events that can take place around this sculpture is full moon photography nights, a stargazing social, perhaps picnics to get people together and look up for a bit.



456 West 144th Street, NY, NY 10031, Docket LPC-22-10230 (Invalid Docket# provided by Applicant)
Issam Abourafeh, P.E., and Allen Ghaida, Project Manager, Assoc. AIA (IMA Engineering), and Stan Stutley,
(Owner Representative)

- An application was filed with the building department and Landmarks Commission for the owners of the property to do the interior renovation. In the process it was necessary to file to have better accessibility for the owners, Mr. And Mrs. White. They are lifelong New Yorkers and deep rooted in the community.
- They need to live their senior life in a comfort zone and need accessibility from the basement which we renovated for them. There will be two renovation phases for interior and exterior work. In order to have accessibility, installing stairs is proposed. The owners are elderly, and it's very hard for them to go up the stairs. The goal is to address the needs of the elderly client. They have owned this home for 50 years. A solution is sought for them to be able to access the basement where they will be residing into retirement. There is concern to carefully make sure the integrity of the façade is maintained. The steps leading down to the basement is very hard for them to access. Therefore, new steps will be added, a planter and some vegetation to the front yard. The new steps are thoughtfully designed in the lowered areaway by four inches where the risers are such that it's very easy for them to walk down and access the basement steps, are code compliant, and ADA is accommodated with a new railing that will match the existing style of the railings. The applicant believes this design maintains the landmark character of the street, and is seeking approval and opinions from this committee.
- As the owners become older, their mobility condition and their vascular system health situation changes, which makes it difficult for them at times to move up and down steps.
- CB9M Member states the following: In summary, the proposal is to change the entire grade of the areaway to accommodate new stairs in this area, but not create an accessible entrance leading into the basement. The existing step up curb to enter the property at the front gate will remain unchanged. This design does not facilitate ease of access to the property or basement area.
- Have you considered an incline where there are no steps leading to the basement entrance? Answer: We tried to accommodate something like a gentle incline or ramp. Unfortunately, the ramp in this case, is not possible because the front yard depth isn't as deep as required by code. The ramp would be more dangerous for them. It would create too much of an incline, and it would create a tripping hazard. We've actually designed something that's per ADA code and compliant with NYC building code in that you have much longer landings and a lower tread depth. Typically, it's hard for elderly to have steps, but these steps are much shallower than the existing conditions. A lift would actually be much more visually obtrusive. We want to maximize the planter bed area in front of the Gothic steps, but the applicant is happy to shorten the area. A snow melt heat trace system is also proposed.
- CB9M member states it's one of the prettiest streets in our neighborhood.
- This design requires more evaluation because it does not address barrier free accessibility. The rendering shows a before and after of the areaway, but no drawings and pictures of the basement entrance. It's important to accommodate the aging population and still preserve the architectural integrity of these buildings. The emails that the applicant sent indicate that LPC submission checklist is incomplete.
- A community member objects to the design because the applicant is not providing a solution to the accessibility problem and needs to develop a new plan. Some CB9M members and others agreed. It was recommended that the applicant continue to work with LPC staff to revise the plan and to return to our September meeting. The applicant requested a site visit during the summer which was accepted.



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMUNITY BOARD 9
MANHATTAN**

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- There was a concern raised by a committee member that community board members are not designers. The owners of that property hire designers to solve a problem. We are not the problem solvers and the Community Board is talking about accessibility issues. Landmarks is following already within accessibility. We are here to review this, based on whether this fits the criteria of the landmark district. It was further stated that we're just here as a community board to review what it is that they're submitting and not to determine if the design is safe.
- It was advised by CB9M that we meet during the summer and review the LPC mission statement, the approval process and duties of the committee.
- A community member stated that there should be certain standards by LPC based on the style of the houses in every historic district. It's their responsibility, to come up with options and solutions and not put it back onto the Community Board. Some changes devalue the property and the appearance of our district. LPC is not doing their job, and they need to be held accountable.

OLD BUSINESS UPDATES

- None
- Review the LPC MCB9 monthly permit list during the next committee meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday September 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM EDT.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM EDT.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Heather Jason.