



**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation
Oversight: The Condition and Needs of Flushing Meadows Corona Park
June 7, 2013**

Testimony By: Dorothy Lewandowski, Queens Borough Commissioner

Good afternoon Chair Mark-Viverito and members of the Parks and Recreation Committee. I am Dorothy Lewandowski, the Borough Commissioner for Queens parks. Joining me on this panel is Janice Melnick, the Administrator for Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to discuss the fourth largest park in New York City- Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park was created as a result of the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs. In 1967 the land was officially turned over to the Parks Department. The original landscape architect, Gilmore Clarke, intended for a great variety of interests in the plan for this new public park including active recreation, physical fitness, passive recreation and spectator venues that would continuously serve the needs of an ever growing city well into the future. As the Queens flagship park, FMCP today meets this original intent and continues to offer a large variety of opportunities for recreation and entertainment.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park annually draws over seven million people from all over the world for recreational and spectator activities. As the largest park in Queens, FMCP has public baseball, soccer, volleyball, tennis, and cricket facilities, a skate park, a recreation center with annual membership of over 40,000, an indoor Olympic-sized pool and an NHL-regulation ice rink. The park has hosted religious leaders such as Pope John Paul II and Billy Graham, as well as world famous musical acts including the Beatles, The Who, Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen. We are also home to many charity events including a March of Dimes Walkathon, Juvenile Diabetes Walk-a-thon, the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, and Autism Awareness. FMCP has become a leader in adaptive sports offering the National Wheelchair Softball Tournament, sled hockey, adaptive basketball, and adaptive water skiing. The Playground for All Children was the first playground in NYC designed for use by children of different abilities. In addition, the park hosts large events celebrating various and diverse cultures including, but by no means limited to, Cinco de Mayo, the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival, and Junta Hispana with attendance at these festivals ranging from 50,000 to 150,000 people. Not only are we very proud of the ethnic diversity of our park, but we believe that this diversity is tightly woven into the fabric of the park and makes it the jewel that it is today.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is home to several premier cultural institutions including, the Queens Museum of Art, which dates back to the 1939 World's Fair and is currently undergoing a major renovation, the New York Hall of Science, the Queens Zoo, the Queens Botanical Garden, and the Queens Theater. Combined, these cultural institutions alone bring over one million visitors each year to the park. And of course we are home to the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center which hosts the US Open, a premier international event, and Citi Field, home of the NY Mets, which this year is hosting the MLB All Star Game.

In 2008, through a grant from the J.M Kaplan Fund, the firm of Quennell Rothschild and Smith-Miller + Hawkins Architects helped Parks develop a framework for Flushing Meadows Corona Park to set forth guiding principles and a new vision and direction for the park's future. This strategic framework plan identifies three major Park Improvement goals: Re-envisioning of the World's Fair Core, reconfiguring and restoring the parks' lakes, and reconnecting the park to the neighborhood and the city. Since the completion of the framework plan, we have used it as a guide for all capital projects.

Through the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation State Bond Act grant, Parks Natural Resources Group (NRG) and Capital Projects Division are currently designing a plan that will address shoreline restoration and path improvements in the south west corner of Meadow Lake. The work will include the prevention of further shoreline erosion, the eradication of phragmites, and the reduction of pavement which is consistent with the park's strategic framework plan.

In 2011, we completed a restoration of a portion of paths adjacent to Meadow Lake south of the boathouse. Two paths were combined into one path, which is designed to accommodate both bikes and pedestrians. This is in keeping with the Strategic Framework's goal to reduce the amount of pavement in the park. In addition, rain gardens were planted near the path to treat and reduce storm water entering the lake- another goal of the strategic plan.

While we are committed to providing world class recreational and open space opportunities, the Parks Department also remains focused on caring for the park as an important ecological habitat in the city. Last fall, NRG completed the first phase of the Willow Lake Preserve Reforestation Project. It is a part of Mayor Bloomberg's MillionTreesNYC initiative to restore plant diversity in the lake ecosystem through the planting of more than 12,800 trees, shrubs, grasses, and wild flowers to establish multi-story forest habitats. NRG recently received additional funding to begin phase II of this reforestation project. This work will include removal of invasive weed species, including phragmites and mugwort, and additional plantings similar to those planted in Phase I. The restored forest will create new nesting habitat for a greater diversity of native and migratory bird species and numerous butterflies, moths, dragonflies, and damselflies. In addition, removal and control of phragmites will allow for the re-introduction of native wetland plant communities, and allow for a more successful wetland restoration.

In addition to the NRG work, we work closely with volunteers in Willow Lake and throughout the park. We recently renamed the trail at Willow Lake after Pat Dolan, a long time Parks advocate and volunteer who was the founder and president of the FMCP Conservancy. Through Its My Park Day events, as well as other volunteer days, trails are cleared, benches are painted, leaves are raked, and litter is removed from the Park. The Parks Department takes pride in the partnership and support we get from local residents and volunteers. In 2012 we had 20 groups that volunteered over 13,000 hours including groups from Queens Vocational High School, PAL of Jamaica, Laborers Local 79 and New York Cares. With the 2013 season just beginning, we have already had 14 groups give almost 3,000 hours of their time.

We also take pride in the strong partnership we share with elected officials and thank them for their support of the park. In total our elected officials have contributed \$87.8 million toward the park since 2002. For example, Council Members Ferreras, Gennaro, Koslowitz, and Borough President Marshall recently allocated a combined \$2.9 million in funding to reconstruct Soccer Fields 2, 3 and 5 which should be opening shortly. In addition, CM Ferreras provided \$1 million to reconstruct Soccer Field #1 and Council Member Gennaro funded over \$3.5 million for pathway and shoreline restoration work in the park. During her tenure as Borough President, Helen Marshall has been a strong advocate of the park providing \$26 million in funding for projects such as the Unisphere and the Boathouse. Nearly \$52 million in Mayoral funding has been allocated to Flushing Meadows Corona Park during the Bloomberg Administration. The \$50 million AI Oerter Recreation Center, the largest in Queens, opened in 2008 and it is by far one of our most frequented recreation centers. We are also proud to have opened the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Aquatic Center and Ice Rink funded by \$18.5 million for Mayor Bloomberg, \$11 million from Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, and \$3 million from the City Council. Most recently, Mayor Bloomberg provided \$4.78 million in funding for structural studies of the Passarelle, Tide Gate Bridge & Tide Gates, and the NYS Pavilion Towers and foundation of the Tent of Tomorrow. Additionally, the City has been a strong supporter of cultural institutions within the park and has provided financial support both in expense and capital dollars; contributing \$48 million to the Queens Museum and \$27 million to the Queens Theatre.

This past week we were happy to be joined by our elected officials, community residents and leaders as we opened the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Carousel for the 2013 season and celebrated the new Fantasy Forest Amusement Area. The majestic Flushing Meadows Carousel was created by the merger of two historic carousels, the 1903 Feltman Carousel and 1908 Stubbman Carousel. Both were originally located in Coney Island and arrived in Flushing Meadows Corona Park for the 1964 World's Fair. Last year, NY Carousel Entertainment began operating the carousel and, during this past off-season, they added four new rides, including Queens' only roller coaster, and other amusements creating the "Fantasy Forest." As a destination in the Park, we are continuing to make this area a family friendly zone. We have added volleyball courts that were created as mitigation from the Con Ed Electric Feeder upgrade construction project and will be adding additional landscaping and picnic tables shortly.

We are also proud to offer extensive free programming throughout the Park. In July and August, we are offering Mommy, Music & Me Together Inc., a music program for pre-schoolers, the movie "Madagascar 3" with craft projects for children, and "Little Red's Hood" performed by CPF's Puppets in the Park. We also have two Shakespeare performances by the Hip to Hip Theatre Company – "The Tempest" and "Love's Labours Lost."

Our Recreation Division at the AI Oerter Recreation Center and Playground for All Children hosts free ShapeUp NYC programs including Zumba, yoga, boot camp and step classes as well as Playground Associates providing arts & crafts, games and other activities in the park. We are also proud of our partnership with Queens College in offering a free summer sounds Latin jazz concert in our Playground for All Children. The Urban Park Rangers offer a variety of public programs on the land and in the waters of FMCP including birding, hiking, fishing, and canoeing. In 2012, they conducted environmental programs for over 300 school children.

The Parks Department's overall mission is to provide all New Yorkers with access to world class parks whether it is our fourth largest or fourth smallest. We are proud of the work we have done in and around Flushing Meadow Corona Park and look forward to continue working with the Council, other local elected officials and the community to continue to make the park a vital and important open space resource for the surrounding neighborhoods, for Queens, and for the city. I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Good afternoon.

My name is Ben Haber and I am a life long resident of Queens County. I reside in Kew Gardens Hills adjacent to Flushing Meadow Corona Park.(FMCP) My connection with the park began about 40 years ago when I was part of a group that successfully fought the Lefrak Organization's attempt to construct a high rise development adjacent to Willow Lake in FMCP. Thereafter I was the chairperson of the Committee to Stop Grand Prix Auto Racing in FMCP which we successfully fought. We did not do well with regard to a tennis loving Mayor who permitted the USTA's intrusion in FMCP, nor thereafter despite having promised not to seek more park land, it did so, and nearly doubled its presence in the park. Now again it sought more land, concededly less than an acre which it will replace with FMCP land it was given to begin with, and provided it reserves the right to use it from time to time. That absurdity qualifies it for admission to the Chutzpah hall of Shame. Suffice it to say FMCP has been consistently dumped upon with all sorts of structures that are in defiance of the universally accepted premise that parks are the life blood of an urban society.

I am not going to embarrass any of you to spell out in detail one great thing you have accomplished for each year you have held public office, that represents a significant benefit for FMCP as a park and not a receptacle for structures that belong elsewhere. I suspect it would be nothing. That is okay because I am not here to urge all these structures currently in the park be uprooted. I am here to find out if starting today, you agree that when it comes to FMCP, enough is enough. The gates to the park will be closed to all things other than passive use. No more structures, no more stadiums, no more businesses. Just grass, trees, picnic tables and benches. In the depths of the Great Depression of the 1930s. New York City did not sell or alienate park land for so called economic reasons and it must be made clear from now on that park land is not real estate and economic reasons no matter what, will not be accepted..

Media reports suggest that you Ms. Ferreras are seeking to establish a coalition of business interests that are in the park, and those outside the park as well as conservancy groups to raise money for the FMCP, which if accomplished would be laudable. But only if you spell out clearly, no ifs and buts, that donations will only be accepted on a philanthropic basis. They get nothing from the park except a name plate recognition. You have thus far refused to do that and without it your proposal is nothing more than the same old same old parks for sale, and is not acceptable nor is your silence. Speak up, you agree or disagree the people have a right to know where you stand and whom you consider your constituents.

There are currently three matters involving FMCP that must be addressed by all of you and your colleagues that you must exercise your right to have before the Council and appropriate legislative action taken.

1. Should the USTA be allowed to replace park land it takes, with park land it has already taken? Its presence in the park is already a physical minus. Do we sit by and watch as they now plan a huge renovation that will make its presence in the park an even greater eyesore?

2. Make it clear right up front no Major Soccer League stadium in the park. Bloomberg's claim New York City is replete with greenery is nonsense. The MLS is a private for profit business. If they want to build a stadium, like all private businesses, they should purchase property on the open market. Nor do we want in our park a soccer team whose ownership is rooted in a country that is the antithesis of our democracy, one that discriminates against women, gay people and religious minorities. We have enough stadiums in the park. Speak up now and make clear it will not be allowed to happen.

3. Mayor Bloomberg has decided he wishes to leave a legacy not as a Mayor, but as the Master Builder and to accomplish this he has rampaged through small neighborhoods and small business and become the real estate moguls dream and the little people be damned. A case in point is Willets Point in Flushing Queens located to the East of Citi-Field occupied by over 200 small auto related shops employing over a thousand people. Granted these businesses were not as elegant as Gucci store, but nor would a factory making soap. In 2008 Bloomberg in his pursuit of being the Master Builder, declared Willets Point a blight. A repair shop in and of itself could not be a blight. To get around that Bloomberg based his claim upon the area's infrastructure, concededly in bad shape. What he covered up was the fact that to the extent there was blight it was caused by the City which collected sewer taxes but failed to install sewers, collected real estate and other taxes but failed to repair the infrastructure.

In 2008 the Willets Point Project was approved. It was clear and unambiguous. The City would acquire 63 acres in Willets Point either through the voluntary sale by property owners and if need be through eminent domain. The property would then be turned over to a private developer who would construct on the site retail stores, office buildings, a school, a convention center and luxury housing with some set aside for affordable housing. The developer selected would be required to remove whatever contamination existed on a 23 acre area. There was no mention

of a 1.4 million square foot shopping mall at Citi-Field or any connection to Citi-Field

When the plan was approved in 2008 Bloomberg promised there would be community in put into the developer selection process. He reneged on this promise intentionally I believe so as to keep in the dark it would be the Mets related companies that would be selected and that there would be a huge shopping mall at Citi-Field. While there were several developers interested in the project, since it was only the Mets with their lease at Citi-Field that could construct a shopping mall, the fix was in and the other developers were stiffed., and the Mets were selected as the developer.

The cabal surfaced in 2013 when the Mets companies filed a ULURP seeking what it called a minor change to the 2008 plan. The change sought was to construct on the 23 acre Willets Point site a parking area, something that would indeed be minor and not subject to much opposition. In fact the change was not minor, but major, consistent with the Mets deviousness throughout these proceedings .The change was sought so that the Mets could transfer their parking lots at Citi-Field and on the then vacated Citi-Field area, construct a 1.4 million square foot shopping mall, something that by no stretch of the imagination had anything to do with the 2008 plan.Keep your eyes on the ball. While application pretends to deal only with Willets Points, it is an attempt indeed fraudulent in my opinion, for an end run to get a huge shopping mall. This nefariousness must not be allowed. Its effect is not limited to Board 7 but to all adjacent areas and that includes the areas and the people you represent. Hear again we have nothing but silence. You have an obligation to let the people know where you stand.

The developer selected would be required ro remove whatever contamination existed on the 23 acre site and by accepting the plan, the Mets knew they would have to clean the site and it had nothing to do with a mall at Citi-Field. At a recent Community Board 7 hearing, Ethan Goodman an attorney for the Mets stated:

“ A vote against the plan is a vote against cleaning up Willets Point.”

Since he knew that under the original plan accepted by the Mets it was obligated to clean up, his scare tactic was not only misleading, but an out right hoax. The lie was further compounded by another when it was claimed the Mets needed the mall to generate a financial engine with which to construct the original 2008 plan. this mind you, from Wilpon a multi billionaire. If they did not have the financial ability to begin with, why did they bid on the plan and accept it. And if

notwithstanding speculation the mall will do great business, it sputters out, does that mean that at the hands of the Mets, the 2008 plan also sputters out?

The Mets have understandably failed to point out that under the new plan it would be required to pay the City only one dollar, that is right, one dollar for the Willets Point property. The City will also contribute \$99 million taxpayer dollars of which \$40 million will be earmarked for contamination clean up, a sweetheart deal that would make the infamous Boss Tweed tip his hat in admiration. So the claim a mall is needed to ensure completion of the 2008 plan is another lie. Tens of millions of taxpayer dollars were used to acquire Willets Point property and perhaps even more in the future. That this property is being sold to the Mets a private for profit business for \$1,00 and on top of which they will get about \$100 million dollars, is not just stupid. It is the most outrageous governmental malfeasance being perpetrated upon the people of this city in decades., As the architect of this taxpayer rip off, this raid on the public treasury for a billionaire, in the old West Bloomberg would be tarred and feathered and driven out of town together with all those who let it happen.

It is the position of the Mets concurred in by Bloomberg that because of its lease it could make a land use change and that is what a change from a parking lot to a huge mall would be, can be done without a ULURP and there is no ULURP sought with regard to a shopping mall. Citi-Field and its parking area are on land that is part of FMCP. It is the position of the Mets concurred in by Bloomberg that because of the Mets lease, there is no requirement to replace park land notwithstanding a radical land use change from a parking lot to a huge shopping mall. This is absurd and at least debatable which a transparent Mayor and Parks Department would contest and litigate if necessary. That will not happen with the Bloomberg Administration given their indifference to FMCP and the less privileged people who use and need the park. You should be aware that a recent survey states the acreage of FMCP is not 1,225 as thought, but 897.62, making it clear that every inch of park land must be protected.

As a further indication of the Mets intentions is the priority they have worked out. (1) Clean up the 23 acre Willets Point site. (2) Construct a parking lot at that site. (3) Move the Mets parking lot to Willets Point. (4) Construct a 1.4 million square foot shopping mall . Housing is placed on the back burner and will not get done until 2028 if at all and then only if there are vehicle ramps in place. The only arteries capable of serving the area are Northern Boulevard, Roosevelt Avenue, Grand Central Parkway and the Van Wyck Expressway, arteries that cannot be

enlarged and are choked to capacity. Ramps are akin to the infamous bridge to no where.

If the Mets want to continue with the 2008 plan without a mall, let them go ahead. If they want to walk away that would be no problem. The other developers who were stiffed by the fix, would line up to do the job without a mall. In short, the 2008 plan would get done without a mall and without the Mets

Queens has many shopping areas, small, large and malls Do we really need a shopping mall at Citi-Field, one that will cause a traffic nightmare and one that even if it does business, it will be at the expense of our long term merchants. If I were a merchant in downtown Flushing, Northern Boulevard or Roosevelt Avenue, I would hesitate to sign a long term lease.

The Mets application was heard by two Community Boards, 7 and 3. Board 7 approved the application by a vote of 22 to 18 hardly overwhelming. Board 3 rejected the application by a vote of 30 to 1 with 1 abstention. If we add all the votes together we have 23 in favor and 48 against. That is overwhelming. The matter is now before Queens Boro President Helen Marshall and her past history with FMCP suggests she will approve the application. It will then go to the City Planning Commission, which with Bloomberg's appointees may well be reluctant to disapprove.

The ball will be in your court and unless you take measures to ensure it comes before the City Council, that will end the issue, The Council can easily see through the deception that all that is being sought is a minor change, but in fact a mall and a raid on the public treasury. This can be avoided by simply rejecting the so called minor change to the Willets Point plan approved in 2008. Without a parking area in Willets Point, the Mets will be unable to move their parking lot and without that there will be no mall.

I want to leave this meeting with your responses to the following:

You will oppose a Major Soccer League Stadium in FMCP.

Replacing FMCP land with FMCP land is unacceptable and the USTA is obligated to replace any additional park land it takes.

The attempt to amend the 2008 Willets Point plan will be opposed..

Donations to a fund to improve and/or maintain FMCP will only be accepted on a philanthropic basis with nothing given or permitted in return except an acknowledgment plaque. Under no circumstances will a claim park land may be alienated for so called economic reasons be permitted. Parks are not to be equated with real estate.

No further non park structures will be permitted in FMCP nor will structures currently in the park be allowed to enlarge, ordinary maintenance excepted.

You will insist the USTA, the MSL stadium if approved at the local level and the Willets Point application seeking to amend the 2008 plan be brought before the the City Council.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions or comments you have and I end my statement with the words of Frederick Law Olmstead the genius who created Central and Prospect Parks in this City and important parks elsewhere, who over 100 years ago said:

“ The survival of our park system requires the exclusion from management of real estate dealers and politicians and that the first duty of our park trustees is to hand down from one generation to the next the treasure of scenery which the city placed in their care.”

Mr. Olmstead did not mean it is okay give away park property for baseball, tennis. or soccer stadiums, nor for a huge shopping mall.

If I leave here today without your assurances you will vigorously support what I just enumerated, then I leave with naked expectations,

Thank you.

Benjamin M. Haber
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**Anthony Ng
Board Member
Jackson Heights Green Alliance**

**New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair
Oversight Hearing: The Condition and Needs of Flushing Meadows Corona Park
June 7, 2013**

Good afternoon. My name is Anthony Ng. I am a Jackson Heights resident and Board Member of the Jackson Heights Green Alliance (JHGA). Formed in 2007, we are a community-based volunteer group with a mission to create more green and open space in the neighborhood, while finding new ways to make Jackson Heights healthier and more sustainable. We are also a proud member of the Fairness Coalition of Queens.

As you know, Jackson Heights is a very diverse mixed income community with a substantial immigrant population. It is very dense and one of the city's most park-starved areas. Being part of City Council District 25, Jackson Heights ranks 49 out of 51 Council districts in parkland acres per resident and 50 out of 51 in parkland acres per child. With a population of about 170,000, 18% of Jackson Heights' residents are under the age of 18, and there is less than one acre of parkland per 1,000 residents. That is below the city's median ratio of 1.5 acres per 1,000 and even further below the city's goal of 2.5 acres for well-served areas.

The lack of public open space in our neighborhood isn't only an issue of health and wellness, but also one of fairness and equity for our community's young families, children and youth, low-income residents and elderly residents. That's why it's so important that Flushing Meadows Corona Park (FMCP) be better maintained and beautified. All the nearby communities of Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Corona and Flushing make great use of the park, especially immigrant families. However, the park's current conditions don't honor the importance that its users bestow on it. For example:

- Pathways need re-paving
- Grass and trees can be unkempt, and need to be better manicured
- Highways traversing the park contribute to its access and circulation challenges
- It's difficult to get into and get around FMCP. At 1,255 acres, it's a huge park that's very spread out. Signage and wayfinding systems are confusing.

It's clear that underinvestment, poor staffing, neglect and cuts in the Parks budget have led to FMCP's current conditions. There is no reason why it can't be a crown jewel in the city's park system, alongside Central Park and Prospect Park. FMCP is a public asset to this city, but it hasn't been treated that way. While we welcome the idea of a strengthened or new FMCP conservancy to leverage private investment, it can't be a substitute for the city's own direct investment. We urge that more funding is included in the city budget for FMCP's maintenance, upkeep, investment and staffing.

We also urge that a long term vision for the park is developed with community input. The vision should include a review of Mayor Bloomberg's own 2008 strategic plan developed for FMCP. The report presented three big ideas for its future:

- Re-envision the World's Fair's core
- Reconfigure and restore lakes
- Re-connect the park to the neighborhood and city

Resources have already been expended on this plan. Let's not waste that effort. Instead, let's revisit these findings and recommendations in a new planning process to create a long term vision for the park, developed in partnership with all the communities of Queens, especially the ones that most use it nearby.

At JHGA, we are very proud of our work to expand open space and park space. Our signature project has been the 78th St. Play Street. By closing the street to car traffic during the summertime, the Play Street has provided much needed open space for formal and informal recreational, social, and cultural activities. We and our partners have organized bike lessons, tennis classes, soccer clinics, yoga sessions, movie nights, concerts and cultural events. Last fall, we worked with the Department of Transportation and local elected officials to turn the Play Street into a public plaza, by permanently closing three-quarters of the street to traffic. We're excited that the plaza will continue to build community and social cohesion in the neighborhood.

JHGA also worked on the city's purchase of a neighborhood private school's playground, to turn into parkland. In early 2011, we worked with Councilmember Dromm and the Jackson Heights Beautification Group to raise over \$500,000 in pledges from community members to extend as a bridge loan to the Garden School. The school was in serious financial distress. It was planning to sell its playground, despite Councilmember Dromm securing \$5 million from the city's capital budget and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall for the Parks Department to acquire the property. The Garden School said they couldn't wait 6-18 months for the city's land use review process to approve the purchase of their land. To make a long story short, the city completed the purchase of their playground this past February. The Garden School got a bridge loan from a private foundation. And today, we have doubled the amount of park space in our neighborhood. While we didn't need to collect the \$500,000 in pledges, it was a powerful expression of support for increased parkland from the Jackson Heights community. We also thank Mayor Bloomberg and Deputy Mayor Wolfson for working with us and our local elected officials on the Garden School playground purchase.

While we have been successful in expanding open space and park space in Jackson Heights, we know it's not a replacement for a better maintained and improved Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Towards this end, we also oppose any loss of parkland by private developers seeking to build on FMCP. Queens needs every inch of its parkland. Our success in Jackson Heights would be diminished if we lost parkland in Flushing Meadows. We should all be working to augment and better our existing parkland, not take it away.

Thanks again for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to continuing to work with the City Council and Mayor to improve FMCP and create top quality parkland and open space throughout Queens. By doing so, we can make the entire city a more healthy, equitable and sustainable place to live.

Good afternoon, my name is Zara Jaramillo. I live in Jackson Heights, Queens. I am a member of MRNY and the Partnership for a Healthier Queens. The Partnership for a Healthier Queens is a coalition of community members working to reduce obesity and chronic disease by making the healthy choice the easy choice in our neighborhoods. We are part of a citywide initiative, The Partnership for a Healthier NYC, funded by a community transformation grant, from the Center for Disease Control. Healthier Queens engages community members in four focus areas – healthy eating, active living, reducing tobacco and alcohol exposure.

We have been meeting with community members over the last couple of months, to identify ways to redesign and increase access to existing public spaces and identify new ones to encourage an active lifestyle – where we live work and play.

Flushing Meadows Park has been at the center of many of our discussions. It is where our community takes a moment to spend time together and to participate in recreational activities. It is where parents take their children and where I take my autistic son who is 11 years old to run free and enjoy the outdoors, to enjoy the quiet, safe and open space that is lacking in many neighborhoods across Queens. For autistic children like my son, being in Flushing Meadow Park is the best therapy. The green and natural environment protects him from injuries when he falls. It is better than the alternative which is playing video games.

Currently, only **one out of five** (20.3%) New York City public high school students meet the national standard for physical activity (60 minutes per day) and three out of five New York City adults (**58.2%**) are obese or overweight.

We have the opportunity to improve the health and well-being of our community and prevent obesity and chronic diseases, like diabetes, heart disease and stroke and depression. By increasing access to Flushing Meadows Park and through better urban design strategies, we can improve walking, bicycling and increase recreational activities within the park. Recommendations from the community are to improve maintenance of the park, increasing green space, planting more trees and improving bike access to the park.

**Queens Civic Congress
Richard C. Hellenbrecht, President**

**Testimony to City Council Parks Committee
on Needs and Conditions
of Flushing Meadows Corona Park**

June 7, 2013

The Queens Civic Congress is an umbrella organization consisting of over 100 civic associations throughout Queens. The Congress has in the past and remains fully supportive of recreational and environmental uses of the park, but we are adamantly opposed to any further commercial development there. The Queens Civic Congress Platform, entitled Civic 2030, adopted and endorsed by the full Congress in 2008 and ratified by resolution in December 2012, includes the following statements:

15. Support the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Conservancy.
16. Protect Flushing Meadows Corona Park from any further commercial and corporate exploitation.
17. Impose a moratorium on all new construction/development of non-public-benefit projects in Flushing Meadows Corona Park pending completion of a Master Plan by a Commission that has public members.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is the largest park in Queens and ought to serve as the flagship park in Queens. But, ironically what began as a dumping ground of ash heaps has become the dumping ground of last resort for any project that no other area will accept.

The potential of FMCP as a historical landmark in Queens has been ignored by city government for decades - and it shows. The space that morphed from tremendous piles of flyash to the second largest Worlds Fair in history now lies as an undistinguished park with its most prominent features being private sports venues. Any school child can tell you this park was the site of two Worlds Fairs, the first temporary headquarters of the United Nations and a resolution forming the nation of Israel was adopted at this site in 1947. While some of the buildings remain and are well maintained from the Worlds Fair days several imposing structures from the fairs, for example the New York State Pavilion, stand as rusting hulks taking valuable space and providing dangerous eyesores for visitors.

The number one problem is that City budgets shortchange this potentially wonderful park. The small but dedicated maintenance staff struggles to keep up, but prove inadequate to the task. On a nice day tens of thousands of people stream into the park by early morning and stay until late at night. Barbeques, soccer balls and boom boxes – some the size of trucks - are everywhere. Trash receptacles are hard to find and instantly overwhelmed.

The narrow roads become impassible because of cars parked on one or both sides and joggers dangerously run in the same lanes.

Roads and paths are horribly underserved. Biking and jogging are dangerous on most paths, particularly after rain when the numerous and cavernous potholes can't be seen.

Restrooms are hard to find and frequently locked or not working. Visitors on the east side of Meadow Lake are happy to see new restrooms at the rebuilt boathouse but other areas are not so lucky.

The lack of maintenance gives the City every excuse to propose private commercial development so that at least something nice, maybe even noteworthy, is there.

Sports Venues physically consume a major portion of the park and on major events cars park on grass, choke roadways in and around the park harming green space and crowd people out.

The "forever wild" Willow lake area has occasional walking or canoe tours, but while it has great potential as a unique and valuable nature area, sadly Willow Lake area is generally uncared for and unknown.

Security is another problem and crime has grown over the past few years but the park lacks its own police precinct. Only recently have additional Park Enforcement Officers been promised, bringing hope for people needing to walk the park late in the evening.

Great potential is lost without proper maintenance. The historic Fountain of the Planets has been allowed to degenerate into a murky cesspool, inviting insane reuse proposals, such as the proposed 35,000 seat soccer stadium, rather than invest a few bucks to bring the fountain back to its potential.

The fountain and potential soccer stadium site sit on an underground river resulting in serious flooding in heavy rains. I dare say today you could more easily swim than walk in that area. The Flushing River should be exposed and maintained and someday I could imagine a river walk, attractive and environmentally friendly.

The New York State Pavilion is being painted only thanks to the volunteer efforts of a few civilians who can't bear to see it scarred and graffiti covered. Meanwhile the grandeur of the building in its heyday is lost, probably forever without maintenance and investment.

I must conclude by saying I am embarrassed to bring friends from other cities to the "Flagship" of Queens' parks. Its shabby appearance and poorly planned layout are not something to be proud of

FMCP lacks a true, current Master Plan that is generated with and by local community members and park advocates. The current Framework does not do justice to the park by proposing costly and impractical projects that would be decades in the making. The master plan should be reasonable and affordable, protect the fragile environment and provide the working-class and middle-class residents from the many communities surrounding the park with a proper back-yard in perpetuity.

Richard C. Hellenbrecht, President

president@qccnyc.org

347-722-1872



Testimony for Park and Recreation

Joel Martínez

Good afternoon. My name is Joel Martinez. I'm a member of Make the Road New York and a resident of East Elmhurst, Queens. I have been living here for four years. Flushing Meadows Corona Park is like my backyard. For me and many other residents of my community, the park is where we go for recreation because we live in such small apartments. We go to the park because there isn't anywhere else to go. I am a marathon runner and I train in the park every day. As I run, I see people – all kinds of people – using the park for many different activities. Some people are walking, others are hanging out with their children, others are playing with their dogs. We all go to Flushing Park because it's the only big open space in Queens.

We also call the park “the lungs of Queens.” If my lungs are damaged, I can't breathe, and it's the same with the park because the trees keep the air clean. If we keep cutting down trees, it will have a terrible impact on our environment and our health.

Flushing Park is our park, and it should be accessible to the public. But during the US Open, it is not at all accessible for residents of the community. One day during the US Open I was running through the park and I was stopped by a patrol of Police and USTA Security. They yelled at me and told me I couldn't go past. They change the logistics from one day to the next. One day they tell me I can't run here; the next day they tell me I have to change my route again. I felt like I was under surveillance. When I train, I wear athletic clothing – and I couldn't have been carrying a bomb! – but they treated me as if I was some kind of threat. I felt like it was a question of classism – that they just don't want to have poor people there during their event.

Flushing Park is a beautiful place and we want it to stay that way but we also want to make sure the park is getting more resources. We want to make sure that the park is properly maintained so that future generations could enjoy the park too.

Thank you.

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Joel Martínez

Buenos Tarde. Mi nombre es Joel Martínez. Soy miembro de Se Hace Camino Nueva York y residente de East Elmhurst, Queens. Tengo cuatro años viviendo aquí. El Parque Flushing es como mi patio. Para mí y muchos otros residentes de mi comunidad es nuestro espacio de recreo porque vivimos en espacios muy pequeños y salimos al parque porque no hay ningún otro sitio. Yo soy maratonista y entreno en el parque todos los días. Mientras corro, veo las personas - personas de todas las clases sociales - usando el parque para muchas diferentes actividades. Algunos están caminando, otros están paseando con los bebés, otros con sus perros. Todos vamos al Parque Flushing porque es el único parque grande en Queens.

También le llamamos “el pulmón de Queens”. Si se daña mi pulmón no puedo respirar bien y así es el parque porque los árboles limpian la atmósfera. Si seguimos cortando los árboles, va a tener un impacto mayor en nuestro medio ambiente y nuestra salud.

El Parque Flushing es nuestro parque y debe ser un espacio accesible. Pero durante el evento del US Open no es nada accesible para los residentes de la comunidad. Un día durante el US Open estaba corriendo allí y me paró una patrulla de la Policía y de la Seguridad de la Asociación de Tenis. Me gritaron y me dijeron que no podía pasar por allí. Cambian la logística cada rato – un día me dicen que no puedo correr por aquí, otro día me dicen que tengo que cambiar mi ruta. Sentí que me estaban vigilando. Cuando entreno uso la ropa atlética – no puedo cargar una bomba y no tienen porque tratarme como un peligro. Pero siento que es una cuestión de clasismo, que es porque no quieren ver la gente pobre allí durante su evento.

Flushing meadows Park es un lugar hermoso y queremos que siga siendo así, pero también queremos mas recurso. Queremos asegurarnos de que el parque se mantenga adecuadamente para que las generaciones futuras puedan disfrutar del parque también.

Gracias.

September 21, 2012

Queens Triple Play: Willets West, Major League Soccer, and the National Tennis Center



Map provided by the Fairness Coalition of Queens

Three separate proposals impacting Flushing Meadows Corona Park are being advanced independently – but they would cumulatively transform Queens' flagship park, and the densely-populated neighborhoods of Corona, Flushing, and Elmhurst that surround it.

Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is scoping a Supplemental Environmental Impact Study (SEIS) as the first step toward a major revamping of the Willets Point project approved in 2008. Completion of the 5,850 units of housing that were a key element of the approved plan would be pushed back as far as 2028; meanwhile, the project would be expanded beyond the Willets Point Special Zoning District to include **Willets West**, a new 1.4 million square foot mall, to be constructed on CitiField's main parking lot, and expected to be completed by 2018. Commercial properties in Willets Point would be demolished to make way for replacement (surface) parking, which the developer (a joint venture between the Related Companies and Sterling Equities, selected last year through a Request for Qualifications/Proposals/(RFP) process) says it would activate with temporary recreational uses during the off-season.

Just across the #7 tracks, **Major League Soccer** (MLS) wants to build a 25,000-seat soccer stadium in Flushing-Meadows Corona Park, as a home field for a new NYC professional soccer team. The proposed site is the Fountain of the Planets, a pool created for the 1963 World's Fair that is actually a captured section of the Flushing River. MLS had originally proposed the stadium for Pier 40 on Manhattan's West Side but faced substantial community opposition there.

To the west, the **National Tennis Center** is proposing an expansion that would add over 7,000 new seats, plus luxury suites, retail space, and approximately 700 new parking spaces, as well as reconfiguring roads into and within the site.

Though the three projects are being proposed separately, their sites are contiguous, and they would collectively transform the under-maintained but heavily-used northern half of Queens' flagship park into a car-dependent and largely commercialized "destination" serving a citywide audience. Taken together, the three projects would add approximately 9,000 parking spaces to the park and its surroundings by 2018, with another 4,000+ spaces to be added in later phases of the project. 2,725 of the spaces to be built for the first phase would be on a "temporary" surface lot located on land being acquired in Willets Point. This would displace approximately 60 companies and hundreds of workers, many years before the permanent developments approved as part of the Willets Point project are built.

Local residents are concerned about the thousands of new car trips the projects are likely to induce, as well as about the privatization of parkland. Though project documents state that only 1 acre of parkland land would have to be alienated for the Tennis Center expansion, and 7.5 acres for the MLS stadium, the total area needed to accommodate access routes and other stadium-related activities appears to be larger. And a very large area – most of the northern end of the park, including the nine public soccer fields that MLS says it would refurbish - would be inaccessible to the public during the three- to five-year construction period for the Tennis center and the stadium.

The communities of Elmhurst, Corona, and Flushing are already underprovided with open space, especially space for active recreation for their rapidly growing population. Much of the land officially mapped as parkland is occupied by parkways, buildings, and space leased to private entities. Flushing Meadow Corona Park is cited in public documents as comprising 1,255 acres of land, including Citifield and its parking lots. But analysis by the Fairness Coalition of Queens shows that when non-park spaces are subtracted, only 347 acres are actually open to the public for park uses today.

None of the project descriptions mentions the Strategic Framework for Flushing Meadows Corona Park, commissioned by the Parks Department and drafted in 2010 by Quennell Rothschild & Partners, with input from park users and other stakeholders. That plan prioritizes improving access to the park from the surrounding communities, from which it is now cut off by major highways, as well as re-naturalizing its waterbodies and enhancing its green spaces. The three projects now being queued up would make it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve these goals; and instead would permanently pave over sizeable additional areas in the park.

Whether it is possible to resolve the many issues these major developments pose, in ways that mitigate traffic and other impacts, deliver good jobs, and improve the park as both a recreational and ecological resource to the dense and growing communities around it is a difficult question, and one that the normal public review processes are unlikely to answer. Each of the projects is being evaluated individually, through separate processes and on uncoordinated timelines, with no recognition of their contiguity and overlapping timeframes. As it stands, the projects' cumulative impacts are unlikely to be recognized and analyzed, much less adequately addressed.

Public actions / processes / timelines:

Scoping hearings for the **National Tennis Center** expansion were held in July 2012; NYC Parks, the lead agency, has not announced its schedule for completion of the EIS, but it is likely to be completed before the end of 2012.

The **Willets West** shopping mall will be examined via a Supplemental Environmental Impact Study now being initiated by the New York City Economic Development Corporation. A **Scoping Hearing** for the SEIS will be held on **September 27**, at **P.S. 19, 98-02 Roosevelt Avenue in Corona**. One session is at 4:30, and a second will begin at 6:30 to better enable local residents to attend. The Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination will receive comments until October 9. The draft scope and additional information about the SEIS, as well as the 2008 Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the original project, are at http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/ceqr/project_willets_point.shtml.

EDC says that the mall project will not require the state legislature's approval for alienation. Citifield and its parking lots sit on parkland, where construction of the original Shea Stadium was authorized by 1961 legislation. A [July 30 article in City Limits](#) explores the alienation question in detail.

To date, no lead agency has been designated for **Major League Soccer's** stadium proposal, and no schedule has been announced for an environmental impact study, or for the introduction of the alienation legislation that would be required.

Who would benefit:

- The Queens Development Group – a joint venture between The Related Companies and Sterling Equities (the real estate arm of the Wilpon family, owners of the Mets) would gain, at no cost, the right to develop what is now a parking lot into what would be the largest shopping mall in Queens.
- Major League Soccer would acquire a new venue that would enable it to expand into the largest US city that does not already have a professional soccer franchise. Terms for payment to the City, if any, have not been publically discussed.
- The United States Tennis Association would gain the right to upgrade and expand its facilities in the park. While the USTA would pay for construction on the Tennis Center itself, New York City would pay for modifications to the access roads.
- MLS is promising rehabilitation of existing soccer fields, wetlands and surrounding park areas, as well as contributing to the construction of new public soccer fields, cricket fields, and volleyball courts.
- The MLS proposal states that local businesses, especially restaurants and bars where fans gather before and after games, have benefitted in other cities where it has built stadiums.
- Soccer has a large and growing fan base that includes many immigrant communities in Queens.

Who would lose:

- Businesses and workers in the Willets Point Special District would be displaced to provide temporary replacement parking – many years before the new housing and schools that were promised as the project's major benefits will be built.
- Tenants of the 1.4 million square foot mall are likely to consist overwhelmingly of national chain stores, whose business models rely on use of low-wage, part-time workers.
- The mall would undermine local retail corridors in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- A total of approximately 100 acres, including 9 existing, heavily-used soccer fields would be unavailable to the public for the duration of the 3- to 5-year construction period.
- The three projects together would require the legal alienation of between 10 and 30 acres of existing parkland, and would pave over many additional acres of existing public green space.
- The combined projects would significantly increase traffic on already-congested local streets and highways. The new ramps proposed for the Van Wyck expressway will connect directly only to future phases of the Willets Point project, and will not be completed until at least 2024.
- The projects would also add to the already severe overcrowding on the #7 line, especially on game and event days.

Big questions:

- Do these projects – individually or collectively – serve the public sufficiently to warrant the disposition of important parcels of public land, and/or subsidy with public funds?
- If a professional soccer stadium is a good idea, is there another location where it could be built without taking over scarce public parkland?
- Is a large new stadium actually viable in this area, when it will be competing for concerts and other events with Citifield? Does the MLS proposal rely upon excessively favorable terms for leasing or acquiring public land?
- Will local fans be able to afford tickets to professional soccer games in the stadium? MLS projects that the lowest-priced individual tickets will cost \$25.
- What is the realistic total cost to the city for infrastructure improvements necessary for all three projects, including the new exit ramps from the Van Wyck Expressway that the city has already committed to paying for?
- Will the promised jobs associated with all three projects offer real opportunity to local residents, including a living wage and benefits?

- Where could replacement park space be developed that would be equivalent in size, quality, and accessibility to the area that would be alienated? Would it be completed and open for public use before existing parkland is taken away?
- What is the impact on public health, especially the health of young people, of taking the existing soccer fields and other active recreational areas offline during the multi-year construction period?
- How will terms agreed to in the public review process be enforced? What mechanisms can be put in place to limit changes to plans agreed to now but executed under future mayoral administrations? What role will the public play in the oversight of any of these projects?

Timeline and milestones:

- Tennis Center: No dates announced for completion of the EIS or for alienation legislation; the latter is likely to be introduced in winter or spring 2013.
- Willets West: EDC will complete scoping very soon after comments are closed on October 9, and is likely to complete the EIS itself before the end of 2012. Actions that would then be required include:
 - Special Permit for parking in the Special Willets Point District, and certification by the Chair of the City Planning Commission of compliance with other provisions of the Special District applicable to large developments (ZR-124-05)
 - Modification of the Citifield lease to allow development of the mall – whether this would require alienation legislation is in dispute
 - Approval by the Mayor and the Queens Borough Board of business terms per City Charter Section 384(b)(4)
 - Approval by the New York City Industrial Development Agency for the waiver of mortgage recording tax for property within the Special Willets Point District
- MLS has given no specifics on a timetable for soccer stadium project, but is currently “in negotiations.” It is likely that scoping for an Environmental Impact Statement will begin this fall, and that a vote by the State legislature on alienation would take place in Spring 2013.

Lead agencies: National Tennis Center – NYC Parks; Willets West –NYC EDC; Major League Soccer Stadium – none designated as of 9/21/12

For more information: <http://www.nycgovparks.org/park-features/fmcp/usta-ntc-strategic-vision-project>; http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/ceqr/project_willets_point.shtml; <http://www.mlssoccer.com/>; <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/fmcp/>;

Pratt Center contacts: Elena Conte or Joan Byron



Pratt Institute
Sustainable Communities Studio
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Adaptation for City Council Parks Committee
June 7, 2013

Elena Conte, Senior Organizer for Planning and Policy
econte@prattcenter.net



Studio Students:
Matthew Castro
Milton Kondilis
Kyle Kezar

Joseph LaGrand
Stephen Miller
Natalia Vichnevsky

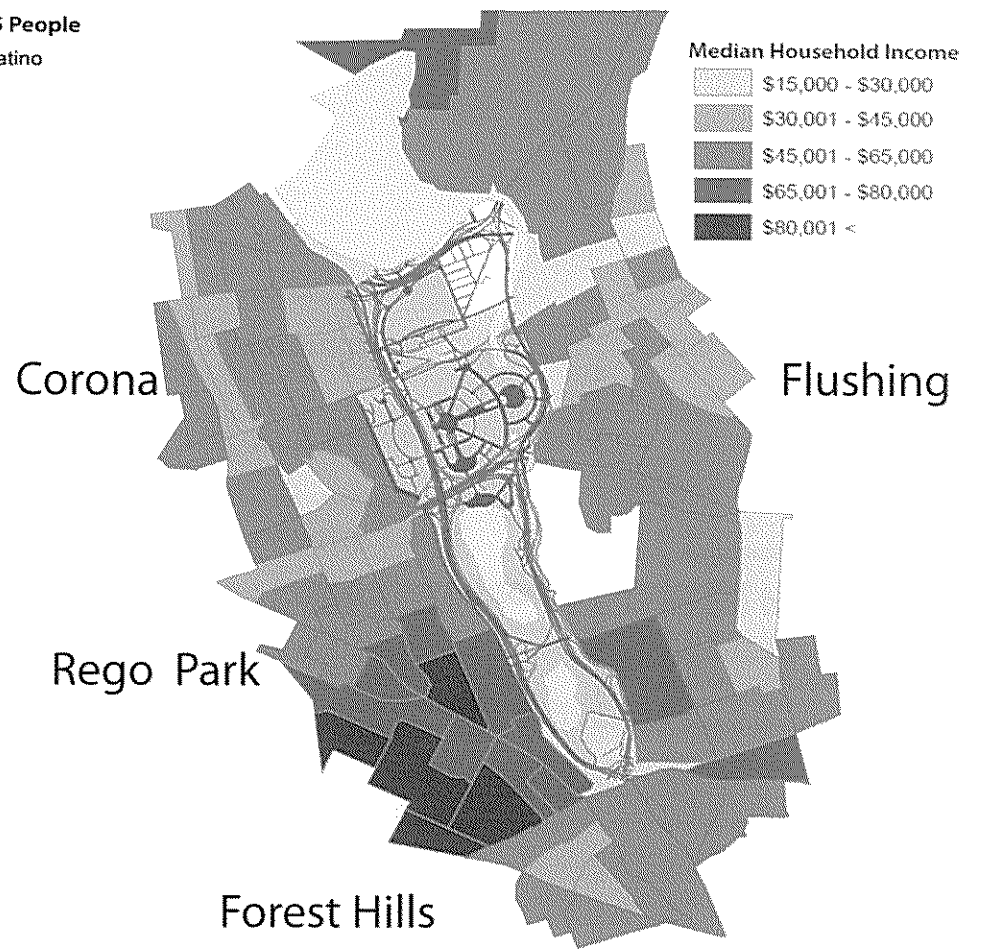
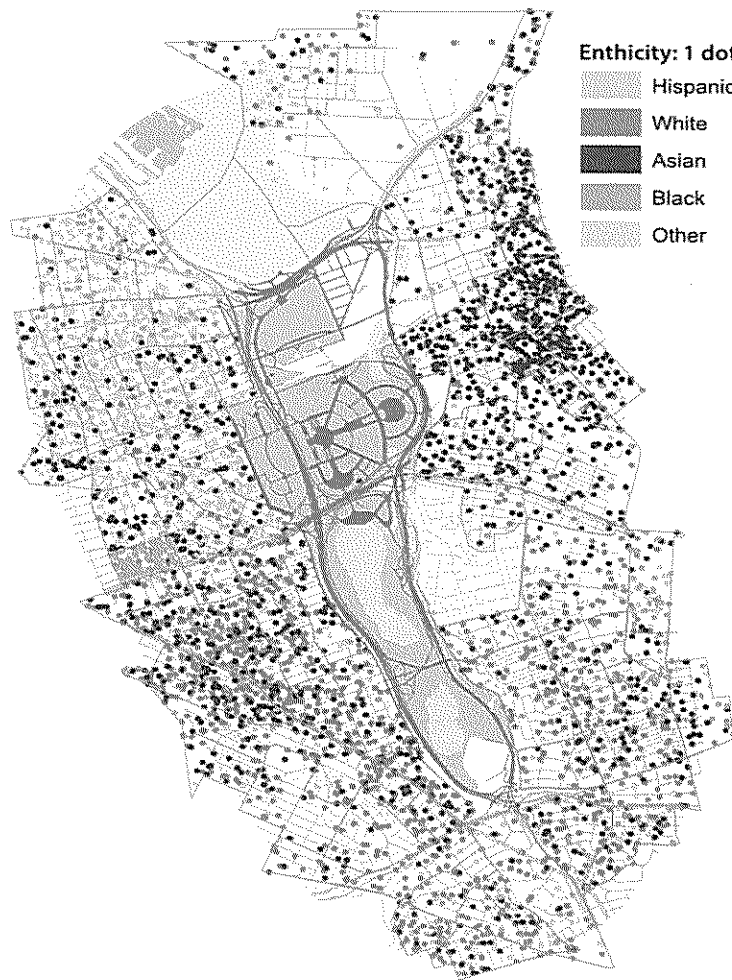




FAIRNESS COALITION OF QUEENS

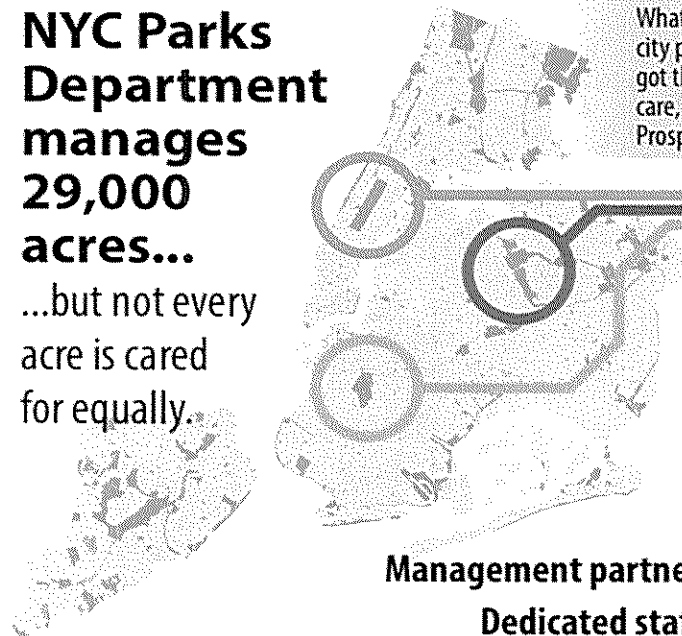
Technical assistance from:





NYC Parks Department manages 29,000 acres...

...but not every acre is cared for equally.



What if the largest city park in Queens got the same level of care, acre-by-acre, as Prospect Park?

Current staff
35 jobs

Potential staff
207 jobs

Current budget
Unknown

Potential budget
\$19 million

How does this compare to revenue generated inside the park today?

2012 Citi Field revenue
\$121.5 million

Estimated US Open revenue
\$218 million

None of this revenue is used to directly benefit the park or its users.

Brooklyn Prospect Park

585 acres

Management partner
Dedicated staff

Prospect Park Alliance
135 people

Queens Flushing Meadows Corona Park

898 acres

No official park partner
35 people

Manhattan Central Park

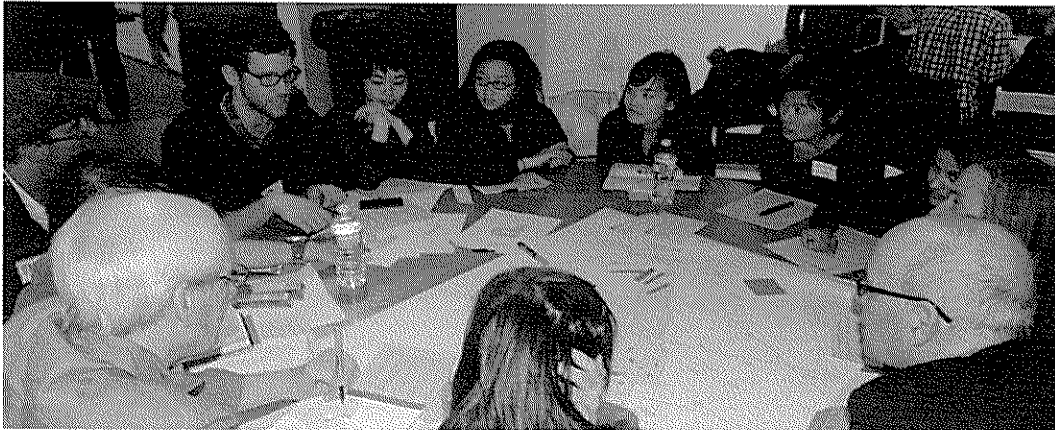
843 acres

Central Park Conservancy
291 people

Source: Central Park budget: "About the Central Park Conservancy." Central Park Conservancy website. Prospect Park budget: Reported by Liz Robbins, New York Times, 3/19/2012 Park staff sizes: Reported by Dana Rubinstein, Capital New York, 2/20/2013 Park acreage: "Frequently Asked Questions." NYC Parks Department website. 2012 Citi Field revenue: Reported by Richard Sandomir, New York Times, 3/5/2013 Estimated US Open revenue: Reported by Romana Cvitkovic, World Tennis, 9/8/2012



Community Workshop - April 22, 2013



Photos: Patti Lowenhaupt



What do community members have to say?



What do you love most about the park?

The park is a symbol of Queens

Seeing kids play in the park

I love to BBQ with my family

The rec center and swimming center

The park's mature trees

Childhood memories from Hall of Science

Diversity of people using the park

Community Feedback

What concerns you most about the park?

Developers using our park for a land grab

There isn't enough park maintenance

Flushing River needs to be restored

Different sections of the park are disjointed

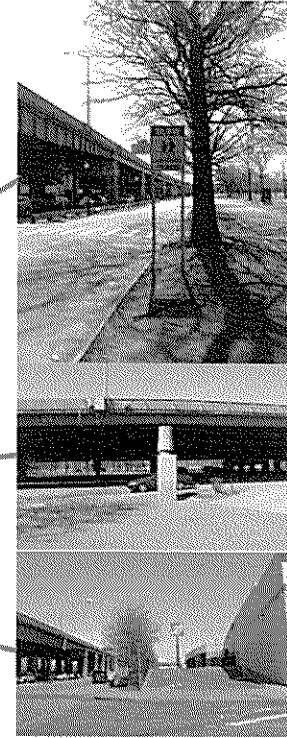
World's Fair structures abandoned

Queens doesn't need another mall

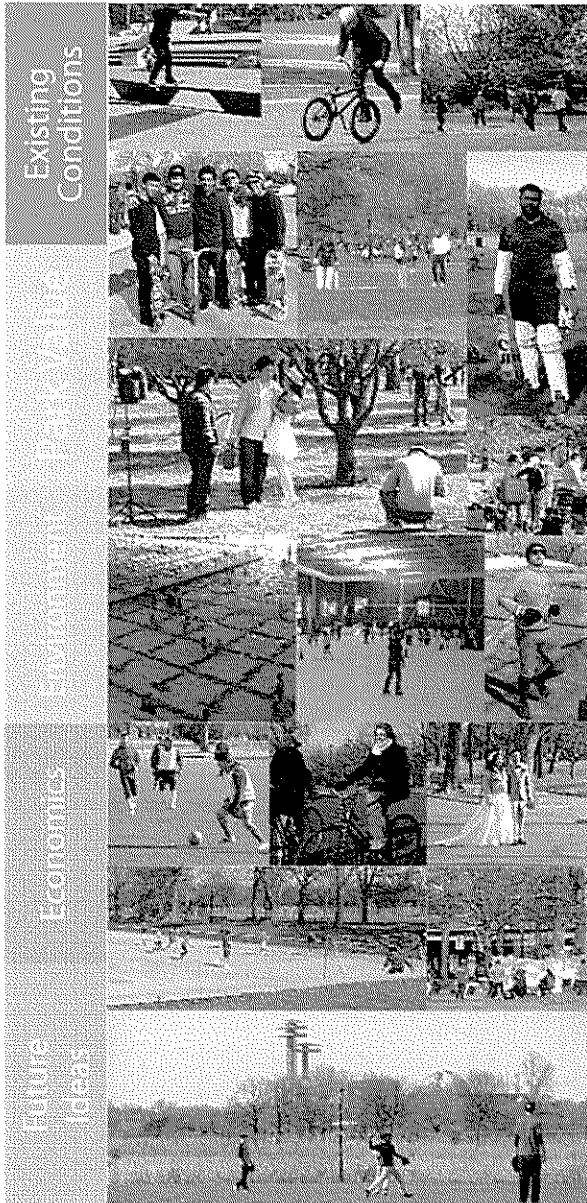
Not enough park staff for its size

Pathways to park from home are unpleasant





- Clear pathway to enter the park
- Path to enter the park but complicated by vehicles and/or poor signage
- Poor park entrance
- Areas that may be blocked or confusing during large events
- Surrounding Residential areas of High Density (75+ people per acre)
- Areas of high foot traffic and commercial activity
- Subway Lines
- Long Island Railroad Lines
- 1 Mile from Flushing Meadows Corona Park
- Separated Bike Path
- On-Street Bike Lane
- On-Street Shared Bike Route

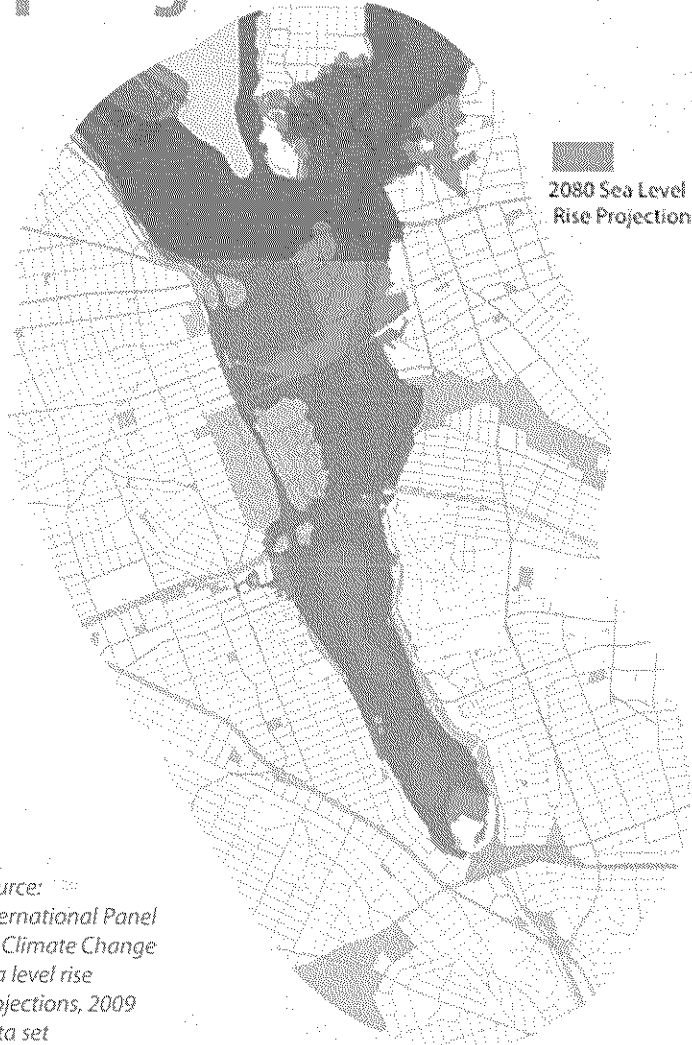


Park Uses

- Playground
- Skateboarding
- Golf
- Kayak/Paddleboat
- Ice Skating/Aquatic Center
- Cricket
- Soccer
- Baseball/Softball
- Tennis
- Fishing
- Barbecuing
- Volleyball
- Queens Museum of Art
- New York Hall of Science
- Queens Theatre in the Park
- Queens Wildlife Center/Zoo
- Vatican Shrine

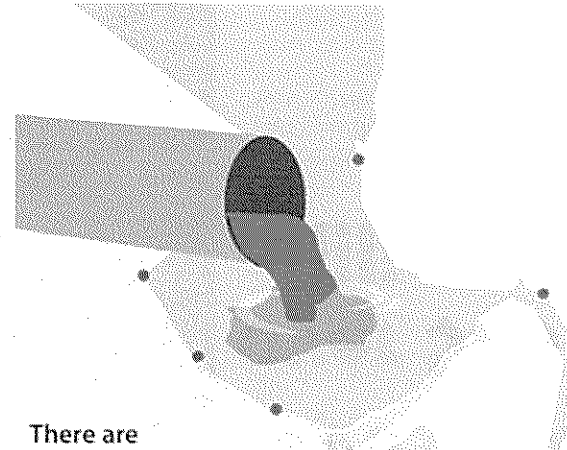


Flushing Meadows Corona Park is a **Sponge!** It protects the surrounding neighborhoods from storm surge.



Source: International Panel on Climate Change
Sea level rise projections, 2009 data set

Outfalls

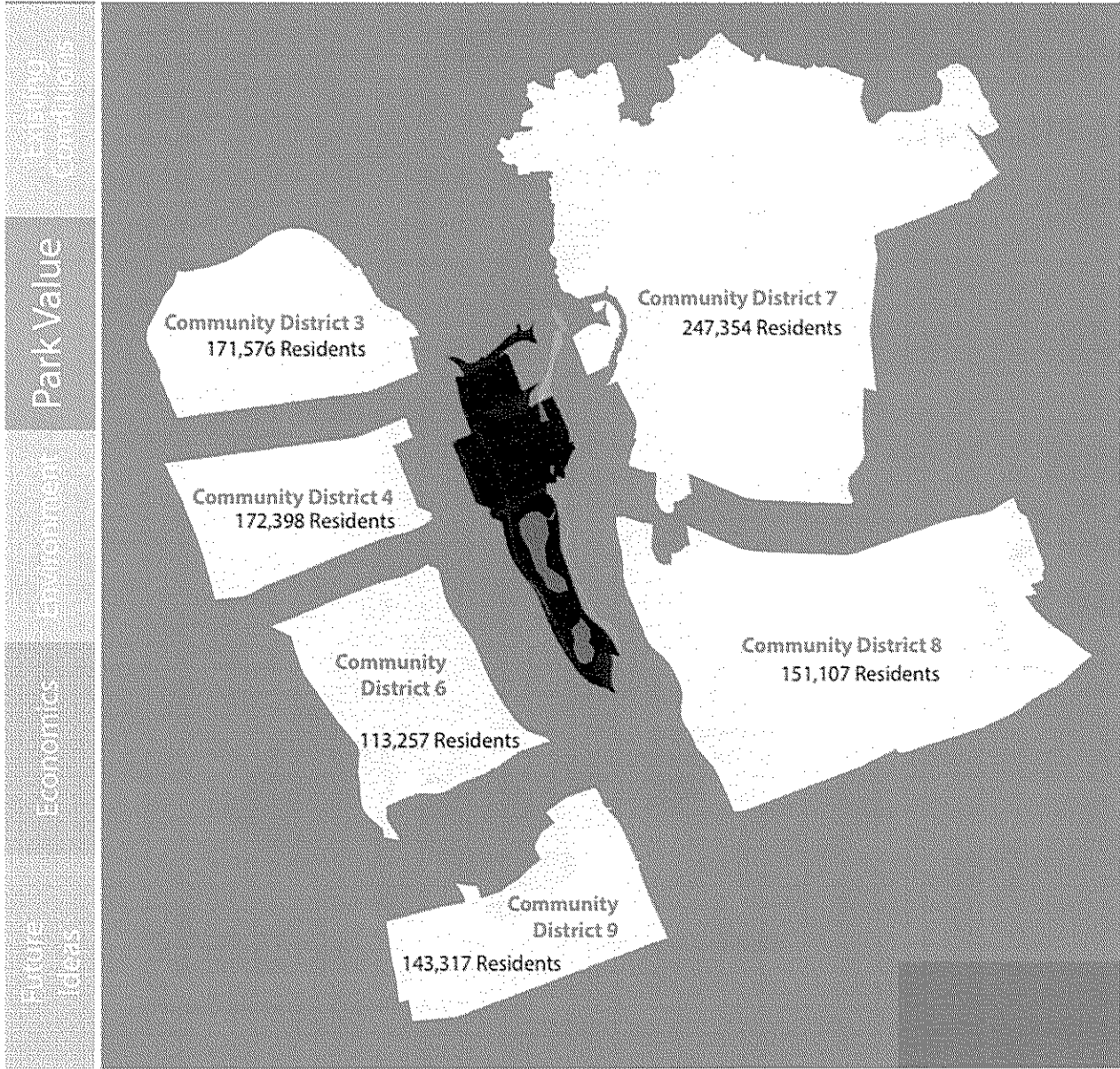


There are **7 Combined Sewer Overflow Outfalls** in Flushing Creek and Flushing Bay

Approximately **90 of 130** rain events resulted in a **Combined Sewage Overflow** within the Tallman Island sewershed

Source: NYS DEC and Regional Plan Association Calculations based on NYCDEP data.





Monetary Value

As an open public park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park saves users over \$23 million dollars.

Source: The Trust for Public Land, "How Much Value Does the City of Boston Receive from its Park and Recreational System," March, 2008.





Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Conservancy
P.O. Box 750303
Flushing New York 11375
(718) 544-7436

Testimony for City Council Parks Committee June 7, 2013

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is the subject of several proposals at this time that will affect thousands of people. The impact of these proposals will have repercussions for years to come.

We agree with New Yorker 4 Parks in that Parkland alienation should not occur unless **no other land is available to serve an essential public need.**

The laws regulating alienation need to be strengthened to ensure that those entities charged with protecting our parks have at least 30-days' notice of any potential alienation action, and that New Yorkers receive an equal amount of proximate new parkland of the same quality and character to replace any alienated parkland.

The City should not view our parks as potential development sites, even for necessary projects.

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park has gone through hard times and there is a lot of work that needs to be done like roads around the park, bike paths, walk way that are in need of repaired because drainage problems and have cracks and holes.

The Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Conservancy is here for the Park and to work with the Parks Department, elected officials, friends group and all users of the park to bring the Park back to its former glory that it enjoyed during the period of the two Worlds Fairs.

In closing, The Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Conservancy believes that all of us together can work together and make Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is truly (The Flagship Park of Queens) and NOT just its icon for sale.

The Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Conservancy will support you in this undertaking to make Flushing Meadows-Corona Park truly "The Flagship Park of Queens".

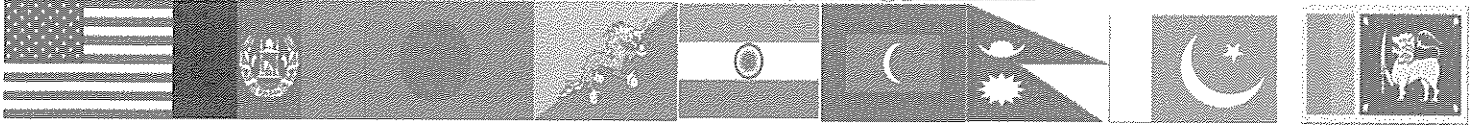
Thank You

Jean C. Silva, President
FMCP Conservancy

ALLIANCE OF SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN LABOR (ASAAL)

P.O. BOX 1698, NEW YORK, NY 10008

E-mail: womenofasaal@gmail.com



Third Largest Park in New York City Must Be SAVED

To The Honorable City Council Members,

6/7/13

My name is Mazeda Uddin, a Bangladeshi-American, who has been relentlessly striving to upgrade the status of the Asian immigrant population, particularly South Asian immigrants by equipping them to be assimilated to mainstream America. With this end in view I involved myself in multivarious humanitarian, social, and political bodies that enabled me to assist people in need. I have been an activist for justice and equality for the last 27 years.

I am very concerned about the situation with the ^{Flushing} Fresh Meadows Corona Park in Queens. As you know, it is the third largest park in New York City, spanning more than 1250 acres. It is my understanding that this beautiful park is on the verge of being sold to land developers. This would be a very tragic situation. Broadly defined, parks provide a diverse and quantifiable range of benefits that immeasurably improve our quality of life. This park is a safe and secure place for our children to play and our senior citizens to relax. This oasis in the midst of the urban city would be lost forever if it were developed into a business park or an apartment complex. Here's a list of nine reasons why parks are one of the best use of land for our neighborhood?

1. **It's Free** : Times are tough and fun is expensive. Visiting our local neighborhood parks are,,,,,, FREE. park bench across the country communities are learning that conserving the community - land for parks, trails and other public open spaces - is not an expense, but an investment that produces important economic benefits. Studies have also shown that crime is lower in the neighborhoods where parks exist and visits to hospitals emergency rooms are reduced when kids are given a safe alternative to playing in streets and parking lots. The availability of recreation opportunities and park amenities is an important quality-of-life factor.

2. **It's Healthy** : Parks offer opportunities to enrich the quality of life for persons of all ages and abilities. When our kids are at the park, they do the healthiest thing kids can do: play! Running and climbing for an hour or two will keep our kids healthy. Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more.

3. **It's Good For The City** : Have you seen the show *Parks & Recreation*? Today, we realize that parks are more than recreation and visual assets to communities; they are valuable contributors to larger community policy objectives, such as public health, youth development, job opportunities, social and cultural exchange, and community building.

4 **It's Good For The Community**: The play area at the community level parks play a special role, they have something to offer everyone from young children and teens, to families, adults and the elderly; their presence can also be a cohesive force. A park can be a community focal point, a symbol of its vitality and character, adding to its overall health, well-being and quality of life.

5. **It Introduces Kids to New Parts of Town**: Whether it's the suburbs or the city, chances are there are plenty of neighborhoods our kids don't know very well. By making it a point to visit new neighborhood parks throughout the city/town we live in can help introduce our kids to other parts of our hometown.

6. **It's Good for the Environment**: Community green infrastructure - parks, community gardens, greenways and other types of public open spaces also benefit the environment. Green infrastructure lands are in ball fields, trails, trees or public open space, provides habitat for wildlife, biodiversity and ecological integrity.

We can also make the trip a learning experience for teach our kids that it's their neighborhood and their park, so they should help take care of it .

7. The City is Putting on a Show For You: During the summer many cities and towns put on special events at local parks. These kind of events need attendance to keep going, so help our city out! Our Elected official should Create a more educational and historical events in the Largest Park that is more important then selling.

8. It's Good For Parents: There are few chances for a mom to simply chill, and the park is a great chance to do that. Or invite a friend that you haven't hung out with in a while and catch up while the kids play.

9. It Can Be an Adventure: Every time we visit a new park, let the children draw a picture and write about the park. This is a great way to make the summer trips to the park a real adventure and a way to help keep children of school age child writing and using their thinking skills while they're on vacation. Thousands of inhabitants of the Fresh Meadows Corona Park agree. For the sake of our children, families and senior citizens please leave the Fresh Meadows Park alone and let everyone enjoy it as they have for years

In Solidarity,

Mazeda A. Uddin
ASAAL National Women's Coordinator
New Immigrants Adult Education Teacher
Queens County Committee Member

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Frenco

Address: 505 W 122ST

I represent: Make the Road Joel Martinez

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANTHONY NG

Address: 83-10 35th Ave #3N

I represent: Jackson Heights Green Alliance

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Rose

Address: 1246 Albany Ave

I represent: Christopher Rose Way Street Co-naming

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

FMCP
Oursigns

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elena Conte

Address: 200 Willets Ave Bk

I represent: Pratt Center

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JACOB MORRIS

Address: _____

I represent: HORIZON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/2013

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joel Martinez

Address: _____

I represent: Make the Road NY

Address: 92-10 Roosevelt + Avenue

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Zava Janowitz

Address:

I represent:

Make the Road N.Y.

Address:

92-10 Roosevelt Ave.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Richard C. Hellenbrecht

Address:

246-72 86 Rd, Bellerose 11426

I represent:

Queens Civic Congress

Address:

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Diage Drozak

Address:

45 Tremont Ave. STNY

I represent:

self

Address:

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6-7-13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ED WESTLEY

Address: BE-11852A, JH, NY, 11372

I represent: Jackson Hts. Beautification Group

Address: PO Box 720253, JH, N.Y. 11372

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Janice Melnick

Address: 830 5th Ave

I represent: NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stuart Eber

Address: 5601 Riverdale Ave Bklyn 10477

I represent: North Riverdale Baseball League

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/13

Name: Holly Leicht (PLEASE PRINT) New Yorkers for Parks

Address: 55 Broad St

I represent: New Yorker for Parks

Address: 55 Broad St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/13

Name: Richard Drexlerhemer (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 84-11 99th St

I represent: me, Parks, Place - Street name

Address: 51 Manhattan Ave.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Geoffrey Croft (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Park District

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/9/13

Name: Michael MAYS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 160 Caberine Blvd

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Ben Haagen (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 138-27-78 Ave FLYING

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: JEAN C. SILVA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 77-20 AUSTIN ST 1A

I represent: Flushing Meadows-Corona Park

Address: Corona

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorothy Lewandbuski

Address: 830 5th Ave

I represent: NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation

Address:

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: T. Mazeda A. Uddin

Address: 161-17 85th Ave

I represent: Jamaica, NY 11432

Address: ASAA

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Will Greeney

Address: 3526 79th St JH, NY 11342

I represent: Jackson Heights Green Alliance

Address: P.O. Box 8569 JH, NY 11342

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