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## NYC Hosts First Community Parks Initiative Groundbreaking at Thomas Boyland Park in Brooklyn

### Investments in Historically Underfunded Neighborhood Parks to Improve Quality of Life

#### Addition of Green Infrastructure will help Cleanup Newtown Creek and Improve Air Quality

NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, today joined Senior Advisor to the Brooklyn Borough President Ingrid Lewis-Martin, City Council Member Rafael Espinal, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability Angela Licata, and community groups to break ground on Thomas Boyland Playground. This groundbreaking marks the first of 35 sites that will move into construction this year as part of the first phase of the Community Parks Initiative (CPI), launched by Mayor de Blasio in 2014, and doubled in 2015.

“Every New Yorker deserves access to clean, safe green spaces, no matter what neighborhood they live in. By doubling our investment in historically underserved neighborhood parks, we are significantly improving the quality of life of families and children across this city,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Thomas Boyland Park is the first Community Parks Initiative site to move into construction, with many more to follow before the end of this year. The transformation of these parks ensures a better quality of life for so many communities in this city, and we look forward to continuing the revitalization of shared open spaces.”

“The Thomas Boyland Park groundbreaking is an important Community Parks Initiative milestone, as it marks the first of round one’s thirty-five parks that will be transformed to benefit hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers across the city. These parks will be a reflection of the communities’ creative visions for how their parks will come to life when they open back up next year, with new play areas, sports courts, community gathering areas and more,” said **Commissioner Silver**. “Since Mayor de Blasio launched the Community Parks Initiative, in addition to those parks moving into construction, many residents in historically under-resourced neighborhoods have already benefited from enhanced public spaces, new and increased programming, and grassroots parks scoping sessions.”

“In 2014, I stood with Mayor de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Silver to say, in one clear voice, that families in every neighborhood in this city should have access to safe, modern parks and playgrounds, particularly in densely-populated areas where open space and other recreation facilities were historically underfunded,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**. “I am proud to join in the groundbreaking for improvements to Thomas Boyland Park, an important milestone for the Community Parks Initiative. Residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick, who suffer from disproportionately high rates of

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asthma and obesity, will now have an enhanced opportunity to enjoy useful amenities that support physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Every community, be it along Park Avenue in Manhattan or Park Place in Brooklyn, needs robust public and private support to reach their full potential as safe places to raise healthy children and families.”

“I’m so proud to see our community’s vision for Thomas Boyland Park finally becoming a reality. Mayor de Blasio remains committed to ending the tale of two cities—and this groundbreaking is the start of ending the tale of two parks. Access to high quality parks should not be a luxury reserved for the wealthy, and for too long parks like Thomas Boyland have been ignored. I was proud to allocate \$1 million toward its renovation and know it will be transformed into a park our entire community will be proud of,” stated **Council Member Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.**

“Through the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver, the Community Parks Initiative serves as a model for how City agencies can partner to help ensure that New Yorkers get the biggest bang for their buck,” said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “DEP is funding the construction of green infrastructure within the Parks, which will help to improve the health of local waterways, such as Newtown Creek, and provide important amenities to communities that need them the most.”

Launched by Mayor de Blasio in October 2014, CPI is a multi-faceted investment in the smaller public parks that are located in New York City’s densely populated and growing neighborhoods where there are higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. CPI is NYC Parks’ first major equity initiative and part of the Mayor’s OneNYC: The Plan for a Strong and Just City. Last fall, Mayor de Blasio announced the City has doubled the funding for CPI, bringing the total investment to \$285 million in capital dollars through 2019.

Thomas Boyland Park was chosen in the first round of CPI sites and will undergo a complete transformation. Funded with over \$3 million from Mayor de Blasio and \$1 million from Council Member Espinal, it will include a basketball court, a community gathering area, adult fitness equipment, a redesigned children’s play area with spray showers, a natural turf baseball field, and new landscaping.

The initial program funding, along with the additional Mayoral commitment of \$150 million in the FY ’16 Executive Plan promotes the full recreation and reconstruction of more than 60 parks through 2019. The 35 parks announced by the Mayor in 2014 are all advancing according to schedule, and the 12 parks announced last fall as part of the second phase of the program are already in design. More will be announced in the near future.

These wholesale capital improvements are complemented by immediate targeted improvements—high-impact, fast-action enhancements such as new pavements for basketball courts, new plantings, and aesthetic improvements. In the program’s first year, Parks completed targeted improvements in 60 CPI neighborhood playgrounds. The Mayor’s additional funding has allowed this program component to continue, with an additional 25 targeted improvement sites currently underway.

Thanks to significant investments by the City Council in increased funding for gardeners, maintenance workers, and community partnership, parks in the CPI initiative will receive critical operating support to sustain the capital investments. Additional staff and resources will be allocated across critical categories including community outreach, capital and planning, recreational programming, and park maintenance.

**Program Components**

CPI is a multi-faceted initiative that significantly enhances the impact of Parks’ capital improvements through community partnership building, park programming, and operating support.

*Community Partnership Building:* Community engagement fuels CPI.

- NYC Parks funds Partnerships for Parks, a joint program with the City Parks Foundation, to connect with community stakeholders, such as “Friends of” groups, and help them build their own capacity to use, program and be advocates for their parks.
- In 2014 and 2015, Partnerships for Parks recruited more than 1,100 participants in public scoping meetings, where local residents provided input that directly impacted the design outcomes for the 35 initial CPI capital projects.

*Recreational Programming:* Programming helps New Yorkers transform their neighborhood parks into thriving community places.

- CPI continues to provide enhanced programming to CPI parks through its 69 Playground Associates with [Kids in Motion](#), Summer Sports Experience and Shape Up NYC. In 2015, our first programming summer, attendance at these programs exceeded 500,000 New Yorkers.
- Non-profit partners from across the city, including the City Parks Foundation, the New York Road Runners, the Public Theater, the Uni Project and El Museo del Barrio are helping to supplement Parks’ in-house programming in CPI Parks.

*Caring for CPI Parks:* CPI parks are receiving critical operating support to enhance the quality of parks in CPI communities.

- City Council has renewed its one year \$2.98M of funding for gardeners and maintenance workers.

**Enhanced Sustainability**

Additional capital program support comes from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which has committed approximately \$36 million in funding for the construction of green infrastructure installations at the CPI sites. The green infrastructure will manage the precipitation that falls on the parks, and some of the surrounding streets, keeping it out of the combined sewer system and helping to reduce combined sewer overflows that sometimes occur during heavy rainfall. New York City has the most ambitious and aggressive green infrastructure program in the nation, with thousands of installations currently under construction across the city. In addition to managing stormwater, green infrastructure helps to improve air quality while also providing shade and lowering summertime temperatures.

For additional information on the Community Parks Initiative, please visit [nyc.gov/parks](http://nyc.gov/parks).

 [All Press Releases](#)

