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Department of Environmental Protection Joins NYC Parks to Cut the Ribbon on First Completed Community Parks Initiative Playground Renovation



Van Alst Playground in Astoria, Queen
by NYC Water

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Van Alst Playground in Astoria, Queens, Reopens Ahead of Schedule After \$3.5 million investment

Addition of Green Infrastructure will help Cleanup East River and Improve Air Quality

Photos of the Event are Available on [DEP's Flickr page](#)

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today joined NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Council Member Costa Constantinides, and kids from P.S. 171, to cut the ribbon on Van Alst Playground in Astoria, the first neighborhood playground to be fully reconstructed under the [Community Parks Initiative \(CPI\)](#). The improvements to Van Alst Playground were funded with \$3 million allocated by Mayor de Blasio through the Community Parks Initiative, as well as nearly \$500,000 from DEP for green infrastructure improvements to absorb stormwater and improve the health of the East River. Improvements to the playground include new accessible play equipment, an adult fitness area, and efficient spray showers with timers for kids to cool off during the summer months.

The new Green Infrastructure at the playground includes rain gardens with subsurface retention basins. All of the stormwater that falls on the playground is directed to the rain gardens where it can be naturally absorbed into the ground, rather than drain into the City's sewer system, where it would otherwise contribute to Combined Sewer Overflows into the upper East River. Modeling shows that the rain gardens will prevent 32,676 gallons of stormwater from entering the sewer

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system every time it rains.

“When I started as Parks Commissioner, the Mayor tasked me with creating a fair and balanced Park system for our city,” said **Commissioner Silver**. “It is a great occasion today to cut the ribbon on the first of many park improvements coming to high-needs neighborhoods, where open space plays a critical role in community development.”

“DEP is proud to be a partner in NYC Parks’ Community Parks Initiative which is transforming neighborhood parks across the city,” said **NYC DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “We are always looking for ways in which we can reduce the water that enters our sewer system to help mitigate the risk of CSO’s, and we were able to do just that with this project at Van Alst. The newly installed green infrastructure at this playground will help to reduce stormwater runoff, improve the health of the surrounding waterways, and beautify the neighborhood.”

Council Member Costa Constantinides said, “Improving our parks help improve entire neighborhoods. Families near Van Alst Playground and PS 171 students will soon be able to enjoy a renovated greenspace. A new multipurpose space for sports, new play equipment, renovated handball courts, and an upgraded spray shower will enhance the recreational experience for children and parents. The green infrastructure improvements and lighting updates bring environmental and safety benefits. Thank you to the Parks Department for ensuring that this Community Parks Initiative capital project is completed ahead of schedule. I also thank Parks Commissioner Silver and DEP Acting Commissioner Sapienza for their partnership.”

“The Community Parks Initiative is bringing real improvements to neighborhood parks around the city,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “CPI came out of a simple idea: all New Yorkers should have access to quality parks and open space. Today, we celebrate another step in that push with the Van Alst Playground. Thank you to the City, Commissioner Silver and the Park Department, DEP, Councilmember Constantinides and my colleagues.”

Today’s event represents a milestone in the City’s commitment to CPI, a plan for investing in under-resourced parks in order to create a more equitable parks system. Van Alst Playground, a Jointly Operated Playground that is shared with P.S. 171, is one of the first 35 sites that was announced by Mayor de Blasio in October 2014 to receive funding for reconstruction under CPI. Almost all of those sites are now in active construction and we’ll begin to see many of these playgrounds opening later this summer, fall and beyond. All of the parks and playgrounds that will receive improvements are in dense, fast-growing neighborhoods with an above-average percentage of residents living below the poverty level.

Capital program support for every CPI site comes from DEP, which has committed more than \$36 million in funding for the construction of green infrastructure installations. 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.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$20.7

billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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