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## De Blasio Administration Launches Community Parks

# Initiative to Build More Inclusive and Equitable Park System

October 7, 2014

***\$130 million investment to re-create 35 parks in communities with greatest need; additional \$36.3 million DEP investment to fund green infrastructure improvements***

***Approximately 220,000 New Yorkers living within 10-minute walk of targeted parks to benefit from initial investment***

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP today launched the Community Parks Initiative—a multi-faceted program to invest in under-resourced public parks located in New York City’s densely populated and growing neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. CPI’s first phase will target 35 community parks through a \$130 million capital investment that promotes the full re-creation of these parks, \$7.2 million in expense funding for Fiscal Year 2015, and \$36.3 million in capital funding from the Department of Environmental Protection for green infrastructure improvements at these sites. CPI’s first phase will target 55 neighborhoods across the five boroughs, reaching approximately 220,000 New Yorkers living within a 10-minute walk of the targeted parks. In its entirety, the initiative’s first phase represents over \$173 million in capital and expense funding.

CPI represents the first phase of *NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future*. The framework outlines NYC Parks’ commitment to increasing the accessibility and quality of New York City’s parks in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs through a dynamic series of immediate steps and long-term initiatives to support sustainable, equitable park development and implement a targeted level of service improvements across the park system.

“From children and parents to athletes and students, every New Yorker deserves access to clean and safe public parkland—no matter what neighborhood they live in. The Community Parks Initiative reaffirms our administration’s commitment to the creation and maintenance of vibrant parks and public spaces in all five boroughs,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Through targeted investments and programming, we will engage New Yorkers by re-creating parks in communities that need open space improvements the most. This is a framework that will address system-wide needs for park equity with solutions that have lasting and resilient results for our city’s neighborhoods.”

“Thanks to Mayor de Blasio’s vision for a more equitable and innovative park system, we are creating a bright, green future for New York City’s parks,” said **Parks Commissioner Silver**. “We will work to invest

in communities with the greatest need and to create thriving public spaces to enhance the livability of under-resourced neighborhoods. The elements of this framework will rest on the foundations of targeted capital investment, strong community partnerships, new programming, and dedicated maintenance. We are confident that good park development is essential to the growth of a truly 21st Century parks system.”

The announcement was held at Bowne Playground in Queens—one of 35 sites that will benefit from an infusion of capital investment, community outreach, expanded recreational programming, and increased maintenance.

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. Community engagement and stewardship is a hallmark of CPI. Through Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of NYC Parks and the City Parks Foundation, using the proven Catalyst model, NYC Parks will engage community stakeholders, such as “Friends of” groups, and help them build their own capacity to use, program, and be advocates for their parks. The program will also engage agency partners, including the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Education, the New York City Housing Authority, and the Administration for Children’s Services to achieve shared goals.

Through its Green Infrastructure Initiative, DEP has committed more than \$36 million in stormwater management funds to the CPI to ensure that the revitalized park spaces also manage stormwater, keeping it out of the combined sewer system and helping to reduce combined sewage overflows that sometimes occur during heavy rainfall. Through a similar partnership with the Trust for Public Land, DEP has helped fund the reconstruction of five school yards to date, creating community playgrounds that collectively manage millions of gallons of stormwater that might otherwise pollute our waterways. In addition, eight more school yards are currently in design or under construction.

“I commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver on this plan to redistribute resources to ensure that parks in low-income communities receive equitable funding to address infrastructure and programmatic needs. The rehabilitation of neglected parks and playgrounds is instrumental in the fight against childhood obesity and other health issues prevalent in dense, low-income communities. Through the Community Parks Initiative, \$130 million in investment will go towards the 35 parks selected, and we will come closer to providing appropriate recreational spaces to communities citywide,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

“Every neighborhood in New York City deserves to have a spectacular park, no matter where you live or what your zip code may be,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “In the Fiscal Year 2015 budget, the New York City Council invested \$9.4 million to make our parks more vibrant and sustainable

across the five boroughs, and the Community Parks Initiative announced today furthers that commitment by analyzing the needs of our community green spaces and harnessing public resources to effectively meet those needs. This comprehensive initiative will bring long-term investment into our city's parks, as well as more short-term improvements that New Yorkers will be able to experience and enjoy right away."

"The Community Parks Initiative is a great example of how collaboration among City agencies gives New Yorkers the biggest bang for their buck," said **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd**. "In this case, DEP will invest dollars that will improve the quality of our waterways for all New Yorkers and provide important amenities to communities that need them the most."

"Access to safe, clean and green outdoor space is integral to the well-being of New York City's children and families," said **ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrión**. "The opportunity to be outside—where childhood memories and experiences are made—has a lasting impact on healthy development. I applaud the Community Parks Initiative, which will allow young people across the City to benefit from additional parks and recreational programs, while also increasing the amount of space in which children and families can play and enjoy themselves in a welcoming and safe environment."

"No matter what zip code they live in, our children must have access to great parks, where they can exercise their bodies and minds," said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. "I love visiting parks with my grandchildren and appreciate the great importance of community parks. I look forward to collaborating with Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver to support safe, open spaces for children and families to play, learn, and thrive."

"This plan reverses years of underinvestment in neighborhood parks in the city's low-income communities. And it avoids the mistake—so common in the past—of focusing on capital spending without adequate attention to the less sexy but still critical funding of park maintenance," said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation**. "I am incredibly proud that the Mayor and the Council have come together on a plan that will deliver for New Yorkers who, until now, have lacked access to truly great public spaces."

"I have been proud to make great strides in my first year as Borough President on creating greater park equity across Brooklyn, and I owe a great deal of thanks and appreciation to my partners at the Department of Parks and Recreation," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. "Open space is not a luxury for the few; it is a necessary component of a community that fosters healthy children and families. It does not matter if you are young or old, if you are rich or poor—our parks bring together Brooklynites of every age, race and income level. I will continue to use my capital budget to ensure that improvements to our parks and our open spaces are made across the borough in an equitable fashion—from Cobble Hill to Canarsie and from Bay Ridge to Brownsville."

“This new funding allocated to nine under-served Manhattan parks is a tremendous step that will make a difference in all Manhattanites’ quality of life,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “The Community Parks Initiative will help not just with capital improvement, but with ongoing maintenance and seasonal programming. In a city as crowded as New York, it will make a real difference.”

“I commend Mayor de Blasio and the Parks Department for investing this badly needed capital funding in some of our most heavily utilized parks,” said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. “It is long overdue and needed. Apart from this program, I remain committed to providing the capital funds needed to make improvements in our Parks. In this fiscal year, I was pleased to allocate nearly a million dollars in taxpayer capital funding for South Shore parks, as well as significant investments in Mid-Island and North Shore parks. Borough Hall will continue to do all we can to ensure we have the best possible parks, from Tottenville to St. George.”

“I applaud Mayor de Blasio for putting forward this ambitious plan to address the needs of New York City’s parks,” said **Congresswoman Grace Meng**. “Preserving, improving and investing in parkland and open space is critical to the quality of life here in Queens and throughout the city, particularly for our children, families and seniors. Working with the mayor and the parks department on this important initiative, we can ensure a greener future for New York City.”

“A year and a half ago, folks were not talking about parks equity, and now Mayor de Blasio is addressing the most glaring inequities in neighborhood parks around the city,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “The Community Parks Initiative means important improvements at parks in communities where they are most needed. This year’s renewed push for parks equity is a credit to the Mayor and a sign that having everyone—government, conservancies, and stakeholders—at the table is critical for building a healthy parks system. I thank Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver, Assembly member Kavanagh, the City Council, and park advocates, and look forward to continue addressing the parks equity crisis.”

“Our bigger parks usually get most of the attention, but this initiative to invest in neighborhood parks, like Bowne Park, is most welcome news for residents of our local communities and I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver for being here in Queens today to announce it,” said **Assemblywoman Margaret Markey, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sports Development**.

“All New Yorkers should be able to enjoy the benefits of great, well-maintained, local public parks,” said **Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh**. “Mayor de Blasio’s and Commissioner Silver’s Community Parks Initiative will go a long way towards making this a reality for communities throughout our city. I look forward to seeing firsthand the difference their tremendous leadership will make, along with that of Senator Daniel Squadron—whom I’ve been proud to join in calling for greater equity in parks funding, like we’re seeing today.”

“Improving public parks and open space is integral to livable communities. It has a direct impact on the everyday quality of life for our residents, from fighting blight to facilitating physical activity and better health in our neighborhoods. We’re delighted that this initiative will bring a much-needed facelift to Bowne Playground for our kids and families to enjoy in the heart of Flushing,” said **Assemblyman Ron Kim**.

“Public open spaces play a fundamental role in improving communities all across our city, and it’s sad but true that parks and playgrounds in low-income areas are often unable to keep up with their better-funded counterparts,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. “That’s why I sincerely applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio for taking a huge step toward social equity with the creation of the Community Parks Initiative. In my Lower Manhattan district, the thousands of families who utilize Luther Gulick Park and Sol Lain Playground will soon see the deeply important benefits this great initiative will bring to their neighborhood.”

“Our city’s parks are places where all can enjoy nature and families can play in the open space. With Mayor de Blasio’s funding, our parks will be even more enjoyable with upgrades, renovations, and new designs. The community looks forward to enjoying the upgrades at Astoria Park, Sean’s Place playground, and Van Alst playground in Astoria. We all thank Mayor de Blasio for funding to make the upgrades possible,” said **Council Member Costa Constantinides**.

“The Community Parks Initiative is another shining example of Mayor de Blasio’s and his Administration’s commitment to ending the tale of two cities,” said **Council Member Peter Koo**. “By targeting underserved neighborhoods and making strategic investments in historically underfunded playgrounds and green spaces, the city is making it clear that a park in Flushing deserves equal attention and no less care than a park located on the West Side of Manhattan. I applaud the administration’s efforts.”

“Growing up in New York shouldn’t mean that you don’t get the opportunity to sled down a hill, or climb a tree. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and his administration’s investment in green space equity,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**. “The Community Parks Initiative will make sure that every child regardless of income has the opportunity to take advantage of the incredible memory making moments that happen in our parks every day.”

“With today’s significant investment in neighborhood parks, the de Blasio administration has made a strong commitment to building a better park system for all New Yorkers. The Community Parks Initiative is smart parks policy that takes the long view,” said **New Yorkers for Parks Executive Director Tupper Thomas**. “It starts with a number of well-targeted capital projects in high-need areas, and delivers a sustained investment in those areas, from maintenance funding to programming to stewardship cultivation. The initiative will begin the long-term task of rebuilding the city’s neighborhood parks and playgrounds. It isn’t just a quick fix: the program lays the groundwork for community building in many

areas of the city that need it most.”

“We are thrilled with the Mayor’s thoughtful and well-conceived plan to bring more resources to our city’s public spaces,” said **Deborah Marton, Executive Director of New York Restoration Project**. “For nearly 20 years, New York Restoration Project has been building and caring for parks and community gardens in our city’s least green, highest-need communities. The Community Parks Initiative increases the impact of this work, and we look forward to partnering with the Mayor and Commissioner Silver to achieve its important goal of creating thriving public spaces for all New Yorkers.”

Uniquely uniting the best practices of NYC Parks and our partners’ work, the Community Parks Initiative goes beyond capital improvement to comprise the following core components:

### Capital Investment

- Capital projects will rebuild 35 community parks (65.5 acres of parkland).
- \$130 million in capital dollars will be targeted to densely populated, growing, and lower income communities. The funding includes a mayoral commitment of more than \$110 million, and will leverage an additional nearly \$20 million in funds from elected officials and grant sources.
- Capital projects will be supported by community outreach coordinators to facilitate—with NYC Parks’ design team—community engagement around the capital process, as well as develop long-term local partners and friends-of groups.
- Through smaller-scale, targeted physical improvement projects such as painting and plantings, CPI will use existing Parks resources to bring immediate impacts to communities at more than 55 complementary sites.

### Partnerships

- CPI will grow the capacity of local stewards beyond the capital project phase.
- There will be an annual investment of \$780,000 for outreach and technical assistance, including new staff members.
- \$750,000 in City Council funding will be made available to City Parks Foundation for community-building work through the Partnerships for Parks program. This will include support for CPI communities.

### Programming & Maintenance

- CPI will promote place-making and encourage physical activity, before and after capital investments.
- There will be \$4.2 million allocated from the City Council’s expense funding for Fiscal Year 15 to increase maintenance capacity with City Park Worker and Gardener hires in CPI Zones.
- There will be an annual investment of \$1.4 million for more than 70 new recreational programming and maintenance staff.
- Playground Associates will offer seasonal programming for kids and adults, such as Kids in Motion and Shape Up NYC, at nearly 100 parks throughout the CPI Zones.

Through these measures, CPI will impact New Yorkers by:

- Improving park access and quality for approximately 220,000 New Yorkers who live within a 10-minute walk of the 35 parks targeted for Phase I improvement.
- Improving park access, quality, amenities, and maintenance across communities in the 55 CPI Zones.
- Reaching 24 New York City Community Districts, with a total population of 3,270,000, where 36 percent live below the poverty line and 41 percent are under age 18.
- Providing Parks-staffed recreational programs for kids, mobile fitness classes, and programs generated by community stewards in order to promote healthy living and active lifestyles at nearly 100 parks in target communities.
- Providing more than 70 new seasonal and fulltime jobs in park maintenance, horticulture, and recreational programming, as well as approximately 15 permanent design and 14 outreach, planning and other supporting staff positions.

To identify the scope and reach of the CPI program, NYC Parks completed a detailed analysis to assess parks' capital need and determine the program's focus neighborhoods, or CPI Zones. This analysis:

- Identified parks with less than \$250,000 of capital investment over the last 20 years.
- Screened for neighborhoods with the greatest needs—defined as neighborhoods having above-average density, high population growth, and an above-average percentage of residents living below the poverty level.
- Examined places with high need for improvement, potential local partners, programming opportunities, and local priorities.
- Surveyed parks across the five boroughs.

The Community Parks Initiative, the first phase of *NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future*, will bring NYC Parks' agency resources together in a coordinated way to better leverage our investments, efficiently targeting those resources to address open space needs in underserved communities through a multi-faceted approach. CPI is a scalable and intensive approach to improving the small parks that directly serve communities. It is also just one of many steps NYC Parks will take toward building a more equitable future for our park system. Mayor de Blasio has committed New York City to building and fostering the growth of economic opportunity, social equity, and livable neighborhoods. With the Community Parks Initiative, NYC Parks supports Mayor de Blasio's commitment to aggressively tackle equity issues in our communities.

The following 35 parks were identified for full re-creations in CPI's first phase of investment.

## **BRONX**

Hunts Point Playground

Little Claremont Park

Longfellow Garden

Lyons Square Playground

Melrose Commons Site 32

Playground 52



Ranaqua Park  
Saw Mill Playground  
Seabury Park

## **BROOKLYN**

Jesse Owens Playground  
Saratoga Ballfields  
Stockton Playground  
Stroud Playground  
Ten Eyck Playground  
Thomas Boyland Park

## **MANHATTAN**

Carmansville Playground  
Henry M. Jackson Playground  
James Weldon Johnson Playground  
Luther Gulick Playground  
Martin Luther King Playground  
Playground 103 CIII  
Sol Lain Playground  
St Nicholas Playground North  
White Playground

## **QUEENS**

Astoria Heights Playground  
Bowne Playground  
Corona Mac Park  
Grassmere Playground  
Rockaway Community Park / Conch Playground  
Van Alst Playground

## **STATEN ISLAND**

Arrochar Playground  
DeMatti Playground  
Grandview Playground  
Levy Playground  
McDonald Playground

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

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