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**FIRST DAY OF SPRING: MAYOR DE BLASIO OPENS FIVE NEWLY IMPROVED
PARKS ACROSS ALL FIVE BOROUGHES IN ONE DAY**

*Five community parks initiative sites open with \$24 million in renovations to playgrounds,
courts and fields, more to come over spring and summer*

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP today celebrated the opening of five newly renovated Community Parks Initiative sites totaling \$24 million in renovations. The redesigned and rebuilt parks spanned the boroughs: Arrochar Playground (Staten Island), Grassmere Playground (Queens), Hilltop Playground (Brooklyn), Lyons Square Playground (Bronx), and Martin Luther King, Jr. Playground (Manhattan).

“In 2014 we launched the Community Parks Initiative with a commitment to bring world-class neighborhood parks to all New Yorkers. Today, we’re seeing the results of that promise,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “The five completely rebuilt parks we opened today illustrate the breadth and impact of CPI, which has already impacted more than one million children through physical park improvements, expanded programming, and enhanced community partnerships.”

“Today’s ribbon cuttings mark a major milestone for our vision for a fair and thriving parks system. From start to finish, the Community Parks Initiative is about fairness: it’s about bringing best-in-class parks to neighborhoods that were once overlooked, giving communities a voice in the park-planning process, and partnering with neighborhood groups to keep parks healthy and vibrant,” said **Parks Commissioner Silver**.

Launched by Mayor de Blasio in October 2014, CPI is a multi-faceted investment in the neighborhood and local 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. Following an expansion of CPI in 2015, the program is rebuilding a total of 67 neighborhood parks with \$318 million in funding.

NYC Parks celebrated these openings with a “Ribbon-Cutting Relay,” in which Commissioner Silver traveled across the city to cut the ribbon on the following parks:

Arrochar Playground, Staten Island – *\$5.1 million in mayoral, council and Borough President funding*

Two-level Arrochar Playground was transformed from a large asphalt field into an expansive, multi-purpose play area with a turf field, a track, and basketball courts on the upper level; and new play equipment, and an interactive spray shower with water games on the lower level. Parkgoers will enjoy new seating and planting across the park.

Grassmere Playground, Queens – *\$3.3 million in mayoral funding*

Grassmere Playground received new all-new playground areas, a 100-meter track and junior soccer fields, an educational wooded trail, an outdoor classroom, a junior basketball court, adult fitness equipment, a children’s water play area, and improved planting, seating and lighting.

Hilltop Playground, Brooklyn – *\$4.1 million in mayoral funding*

Formerly known as Saratoga Ballfields, Hilltop Park includes a large synthetic turf multi-purpose playfield for soccer and other sports, brand-new playground with equipment for children of all ages, an interactive spray shower, full- and half-court basketball courts. New fencing, landscaping, security lighting, and entrances will provide easy and safe access. A walking track and outdoor fitness equipment will provide the community with state of the art resources to get and stay fit.

Lyons Square Playground, Bronx – *\$7.4 million in mayoral funding*

At Lyons Square Playground, NYC Parks redesigned and reconstructed the playground and added a multi-use area and an all-new comfort station. New additions also include a spray shower, basketball courts, improved safety lighting, a picnic area, ping pong tables, and fitness equipment.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park – *\$5.1 million in mayoral funding*

Formerly known as Martin Luther King, Jr. Playground, Martin Luther King, Jr. *Park’s* new designation reflects its expansive redesign: the park now features multiple play areas for varying age groups, a spray shower, two full size basketball courts, a synthetic turf area, as well as an outdoor gym featuring state-of-the-art adult fitness equipment.

In addition, each of the above sites received funding from the Department of Environmental Preservation, which committed \$50 million toward the construction of green infrastructure – rain gardens, permeable pavers, and other design techniques that manage rain water and reduce its strain on city sewers – at nearly every CPI site.

With today’s ribbon cuttings, there are now 17 CPI sites open. Thirteen sites are in design, 15 sites are in procurement, and 22 sites are in construction. Parks expects to open 15 more sites between now and the end of the calendar year.

In addition to CPI’s capital investment in neighborhood parks, the initiative has an impact on these neighborhoods through community partnership building, park programming, enhanced sustainability, and operating support. Through funding from the City Council, in-kind donations from park conservancies, and community engagement through partners including City Parks Foundation, New York Road Runners, the Uni Project and El Museo del Barrio

resources are allocated across critical categories including community outreach, recreational programming, green infrastructure, and park maintenance.

“DEP is proud to be a partner in NYC Parks’ Community Parks Initiative, which is transforming neighborhood parks across the city,” said **DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “By installing green infrastructure in these rebuilt playgrounds we are helping to reduce stormwater runoff and improve the health of local waterways including Jamaica Bay, Newtown Creek and the Bronx River.”

“I thank Parks Commissioner Silver for his leadership in renovating Hilltop Playground, creating a great place for children and families to enjoy recreation and relaxation. Brownsville is getting greener – and that’s a good thing for a growing neighborhood that has historically been underserved in quality community parks. When we invest in open space, we invest in the health and safety of our communities,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

"The Community Parks Initiative is the right approach: using data-driven criteria to target parks investments in the neighborhoods that need it most," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I'm thrilled to see the new MLK playground open. The redesigned space and new equipment will bring the community together, help children play and learn, and help the neighborhood get the most out of this park."

“I’m pleased that the public will now be able to use this revitalized space,” said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. “I was happy to allocate funding to this project, which provided much-needed upgrades to this park. With these renovations and new amenities, even more people can enjoy our outdoor spaces and get active. I am committed to our local parks and will continue to allocate funds for upgrades of parks throughout the Island.”

“We know there are tremendous health benefits from physical activity for all age groups – young and old. Keeping our public parks and playground accessible for New York City residents is vital to keeping our community healthy,” said **U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat**. “I commend NYC Parks Commissioner Silver and all who worked to complete the renovation of Harlem’s Martin Luther King Jr. Playground and for helping make today’s announcement possible.”

State Senator Andrew Lanza said, "I strongly support creating more open green space for our community to enjoy. The Community Parks Initiative makes this park better and will provide for a more enjoyable experience for all those who visit. I wish Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver a spirited day as he sprints through all five boroughs to unveil newly designed parks throughout our City. Thank you to Mayor de Blasio, and the leadership of the Parks Department and Department of Environmental Protection for your efforts with this project."

"Our public parks and playgrounds are a major resource in our communities. Community Parks is an exciting initiative and I am happy to see this investment in parks that have gone underfunded for many years. All children and all communities should be able to have safe, clean and quality outdoor space available to them," said **State Senator Velmanette Montgomery**.

State Senator Diane Savino said, "In the Borough of Parks, I am thrilled to see another state-of-the-art park updated for our youth and families. I am confident this will be a new favorite spot for my constituents this season."

Assembly Member Marcos A. Crespo said, "Not too long ago, I proudly joined NYC Parks, P.S.75 students and faculty, as well as community activists, during the ground breaking ceremony at Lyons Square Playground in my district. Today I am thrilled to see the process come to full a circle. I commend NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, and all key team members, for consistently showing strong desire and determination towards making all play spaces accessible and appealing to Bronxites and all New Yorkers."

"We live in a society where we have to beg our kids to go outside or to put their smartphones down, so it's gratifying to know that they have a new park that will make them forget about the smartphones," said **Assembly Member Latrice Monique Walker**. "I commend New York City Parks for giving the children in the 55th Assembly District a park they deserve."

"The fully renovated park at MLK Houses will provide much needed park space for our residents in an area that is lacking open spaces and recreational areas. Adults and children will now have the opportunity to enjoy state of the art play areas that enhance the quality of life in Harlem. I fully support the Community Parks Initiative and look forward to seeing more of our City parks come to life under this important program," said **Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez**.

"It is wonderful to start spring by opening renovated city parks in all five boroughs," said **Council Member Barry S. Grodenchik, Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation**. "Every New Yorker deserves access to a quality local park, and today's ribbon cuttings under the Community Parks Initiative bring that vision closer to reality."

"There is no better justification for the Community Parks Initiative than the opening of Grassmere Playground in Far Rockaway," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. "This beachfront community has been severely underserved by green space for decades, forcing seniors and children to travel dozens of blocks to find a beautiful and safe open space. This brand new park will surely bring many educational and entertainment opportunities for families and schools throughout the peninsula. I'd like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver for their commitment to providing green space to underserved communities that have deserved better for far too long."

Council Member Steven Matteo said, "Our beautiful parks, open spaces and playgrounds are invaluable assets to Staten Island residents, but we must continue to invest in them to keep them that way. That is why I always prioritize parks projects in the budget and I am particularly happy to have helped steer funding toward renovating Arrochar Playground. This park has always been an integral part of the community, but with these new, state-of-the-art multi-purpose courts, fitness equipment, seating areas and green infrastructure, it will continue to provide enjoyment for generations to come."

"Today's Ribbon cutting and park renaming is exciting because it gives our children a safe and colorful place to have fun and engage in healthy play time! I encourage all local families to

come by and make great use of all this beautiful and state of the art park has to offer!" said **Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel.**

Council Member Rafael Salamanca said, "The re-opening of Lyons Square Park is a testament of our commitment to creating access to beautiful parks and green spaces for our community to enjoy for years to come. I am proud to join NYC Park's Commissioner Mitchell Silver as we celebrate the first day of spring and showcase the \$7.4 Million Dollar investment made right here in the South Bronx."

Former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, who is now the President/CEO of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, said: "As we come upon the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the renovation of this park takes on more significance as a reminder to our youth and others of his life and legacy in the fight for civil rights, social justice and respect for human dignity. As a teenager in Alabama, I was inspired and motivated by Dr. King, which led me to march with him, face water hoses and other threatening situations, and spend six days in jail. This experience shaped my life's work in the tradition of what he represented."

Genese Morgan, Chairperson of CB #16 said, "In spite of the chill in the air on this first day of Spring, it is heartwarming to see the community's advocacy become a tangible asset available to the residents and visitors of our community. We look forward to Hilltop Park being a place that forges new memories, meaningful experiences, and civic relationships for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community beyond the foreseeable future. We thank the Parks Department and our elected officials for allocating much needed funds to develop Hilltop Park."

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