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Mayor de Blasio Doubles Community Parks Initiative to \$285 Million

October 6, 2015

Investments in Historically Underfunded Neighborhood Parks to Improve Quality of Life

NYC's First Major Parks Equity Initiative Expanding to 67 Total Parks

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP today announced the City has doubled the funding for the Community Parks Initiative – a citywide program to improve historically under-funded parks in densely populated and growing neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. In total, CPI will now invest \$285 million in capital dollars through 2019 – along with a sustained annual commitment of over \$2.5 million in expense funding – to improve neighborhoods' quality of life by revitalizing 67 community parks that have not undergone significant improvements in decades.

“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**. “Our sustained investments in additional neighborhood parks will expand the Community Parks Initiative’s impact to 3 million New Yorkers – ensuring countless more families and children will have a revitalized park right in their neighborhood.”

“In the 12 months since Mayor de Blasio launched the Community Parks Initiative, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in historically under-resourced neighborhoods have benefited from enhanced public spaces, new and increased programming, and grassroots parks scoping sessions,” said **Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. “Now, even more New Yorkers can look forward to 67 total parks slated for complete reconstruction. The doubled capital investment reaffirms the administration’s commitment to ensuring all New Yorkers a bright, green future.”

The additional Mayoral commitment of \$150 million in the FY ’16 Executive Plan, bringing the administration’s total investment in CPI to \$285 million, promotes the full recreation and reconstruction of an anticipated 67 parks through 2019. Thirty-five of these parks were announced by the Mayor in 2014, all of which are on time and on budget. Today, the City announced the next 12 sites, with 20 more sites to be announced over the next three fiscal years.

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. To date, the Parks Department has completed targeted improvements in 60 CPI neighborhood playgrounds. The Mayor’s new, additional funding will allow this Targeted Improvements program to continue, with an additional 25 targeted improvement sites to be completed over the next 12 months.

Launched by Mayor de Blasio in October 2014, the Community Parks Initiative 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. The Community Parks Initiative is NYC Parks’ first major equity initiative and part of oneNYC, the mayor’s plan for a just a strong New York City.

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 the Parks Department's 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 of NYC Parks and 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.
- Last year, Partnership 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. To date, attendance at these programs has 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 committed \$36.3 million in funding for the construction of green infrastructure installations at the 35 2014-2015 sites. DEP has pledged a similar level of support for the upcoming CPI capital projects. 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.

“Through the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver, the Community Parks Initiative is a terrific example of how collaboration amongst City agencies helps to ensure that New Yorkers get the biggest bang for their buck,” said **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd**. “By funding the construction of green infrastructure within the Parks, DEP will help to improve the quality of our waterways for all New Yorkers and provide important amenities to communities that need them the most.”

"Flourishing neighborhood parks create vibrant and livable communities. The expansion of the Community Parks Initiative is vital to turning around public spaces that have been underserved for too long. I'm excited by this important step and pleased that one of the sites that will receive new targeted improvements is Bloomingdale Playground, a cherished recreational area in a diverse and growing community. I'm proud that once these capital improvements are completed, the critical investments by the City Council in maintenance workers, gardeners, and community engagement will be there to ensure that they are sustained long into the future," said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of Committee on Parks.**

Council Member Costa Constantinides said, "Improving a park brings improvements to an entire neighborhood. I am proud that the Community Parks Initiative has expanded and doubled its funding this year. We are looking forward to seeing upgrades at under-served parks, including Astoria Health Playground. The capital improvements, added maintenance, and recreational programming will be enjoyed by children and families. As a greenspace that has not been upgraded in some time, the improvements at Astoria Health Playground will provide a real benefit to the neighborhood around it. I look forward to working with the Parks Department and the community as we move forward with this initiative."

"Today's investment in green space and innovative equipment at Stapleton Playground is an investment in the health and well-being of our families. All of our young children, regardless of their neighborhood, deserve safe places to run, play and enjoy all that childhood has to offer. We are already in the process of revitalizing four North Shore parks, thanks to Mayor Bill de Blasio's Community Parks Initiative, and I welcome the additional investment announced today," stated **Council Member Debi Rose.**

Council Member Stephen Levin said, "I'm thrilled to hear that Epiphany Playground will be receiving the investment it deserves thanks to the expansion of the Community Parks Initiative. Parks, open spaces and playgrounds are vital community assets that improve health and quality of life in our neighborhoods while providing a place for New Yorkers to meet and play together. This initiative is a unique opportunity for residents to participate in coming up with a redesign that reflects and enhances what makes Epiphany Playground special to them and their neighbors. Community-driven design is an exciting avenue for public engagement and I look forward to seeing what comes out of this process. "

"We all know about the big parks in our neighborhoods, and, as elected officials, we are able to give these parks much of the financial attention they need to keep our grass green and our local sports teams happy. But what happens to those smaller, quieter parks we have come to appreciate because we can just get up from our homes, walk over to them, and relax? I'm talking about that park you know that's right down the street where you go to be at peace outside for a couple of hours. Parks like that need to be cared for too, and that's why I'm very happy to have my district participate in the Community Parks Initiative. One of the smaller, but no less valued, parks in my district, Lt. Joseph Petrosino Park, will be

receiving \$4.5 million to make sure that it stays current. This is a step in the right direction to bring all of New York City's parks into view, the big picture we've been waiting for," said **Council Member Vincent J. Gentile**.

"I am proud to have Walton Park included in New York City's Community Parks Initiative. As a park that is host to a large number of daily visitors, this park will now receive the resources and renovations that it so deserves. Given the growing population and the pressing need for green space in our community, the expansion of the Community Parks Initiative to District 14 is both timely and necessary," said **Councilman Fernando Cabrera**.

For many families, our local parks and playgrounds serve as the only community resource where they can take their children to play and host family gatherings. Our green spaces are an integral component of the social fabric of our communities, but for many New Yorkers, their local playgrounds are in an unsightly state of disrepair, and in desperate need of capital renovations. I am thrilled that the Community Parks Initiative (CPI) has been expanded to over 70 sites, including one in my district, Blackrock Playground. I commend the Parks Department, as well as Mayor De Blasio, for their commitment to bringing parity to our parks, and revitalizing our green spaces throughout the city," said **Council Member Annabel Palma**.

Executive Director, City Parks Foundation, Heather Lubov said, "City Parks Foundation is thrilled to be able to play a significant role in addressing parks equity through the Community Parks Initiative as NYC Parks major programming partner and we applaud the growth in the program thanks to the generous support of the Mayor and the City Council. A full 39% of the parks in which we program -- bring free performing arts, sports instruction, and environmental education programs -- are located in CPI zones. We look forward to continuing our efforts to bring free and accessible programs to underserved communities in order to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers."

Since Mayor de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Silver committed to create a more equitable park system at the 2014 CPI launch at Queens' Bowne Playground, neighborhoods across the city have benefitted from immediate, high impact improvements.

Today's announcement was held at Lafayette Playground in Brooklyn—one of 12 new sites that will benefit from an infusion of capital investment, community outreach, expanded recreational programming, and increased maintenance.

The following 12 parks, in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island and Queens, were identified for the 2016 CPI site expansion:

Bronx

Walton Park, University Heights
Black Rock Playground, Unionport
Ogden Plimpton Playground, High Bridge

Brooklyn

Lt. Joseph Petrosino Park, Bensonhurst
Epiphany Playground, Williamsburg
Lafayette Playground, Gravesend
Newport Playground, Brownsville
Bergen Beach Playground, Bergen Beach

Manhattan

Bloomingdale Playground, Manhattan Valley

Queens

Playground Thirty Five XXXV, Astoria
Astoria Health Playground, Astoria

Staten Island

Stapleton Playground, Stapleton

For additional information on the Community Parks Initiative, please visit nyc.gov/parks.

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