



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
QUEENS, NY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 26, 2018

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**MAYOR DE BLASIO VISITS THE OLDE TOWNE OF FLUSHING BURIAL GROUND  
TO UPDATE COMMUNITY ON COMMEMORATIVE PLAZA PROJECT**

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio today joined Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FACIP and Council Member Peter Koo to share the designs for a \$1.63 million project to reconstruct a commemorative plaza at the site of the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground.

"Reconstructing this plaza is a way for New Yorkers to rediscover this sacred historical space, and it's a fitting honor for those buried here," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "As Queens week draws to an end, we're commemorating an important part of our history and the vision of this community, which worked hard to get recognition for this site."

"The Burial Ground is the final resting place for hundreds of ancestors. Such sacred ground on park property must be treated with dignity and respect. The reconstruction of a commemorative plaza is the result of tireless efforts on the part of the community to honor those buried here," said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**.

"Parks is thrilled to have been able to work directly with the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy and local community members to design a fitting commemorative plaza, where New Yorkers can come to reflect and remember the lives of loved ones, and ancestors," said **Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver**. "We are grateful to the Mayor, Borough President, and Council Member for their support to see through the community's vision on this space."

"The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground is a hidden gem in our community that has been deprived of the recognition it deserves for decades," said **Council Member Peter Koo**. "The community fought long and hard for a proper memorial that honors those African and Native Americans who were interned here, and their activism is finally coming to fruition. With this memorial, we let the bones beneath our feet know that times have changed and the disrespect and dishonor they received in life no longer carries over into death. Thank you to Mandingo Tshaka and the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground for their relentless advocacy to ensure this historical site receives the proper recognition and respect from the City of New York."

"I have been a long-time supporter of improving the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground and I'm thrilled to help announce this critical initiative. This project will help ensure that this site receives the respect it deserves and that a proper memorial is created to honor those who are buried here. I thank

Mayor de Blasio, Borough President Katz and Councilman Koo for providing this important funding and I thank the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy for all their tireless work and commitment,” said **Congresswoman Grace Meng**.

“The Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy believes this site, now listed on the New York State and National Registry of Historic Places, is as much a part of Flushing history as any other mentioned. Native Americans and African Americans have been in Flushing since Queens was established. This will be a teaching site as well as a long-needed memorial to the forgotten souls interred here and so long disrespected. The Conservancy members joined with Mandingo Tshaka who discovered the burial ground existed. Working with our Council people, Borough Presidents and Parks we finally got to this conclusion, and we know that our work is not done,” said **Robbie Garrison, Co-Chair of The Olde Towne Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy**.

“We are thrilled that this project is coming to fruition with today’s design unveiling. We are very happy with the design, which honors the people that are interred here and have never been acknowledged before. We want to thank the Mayor, the Borough President, the Council Member, Parks and all of our past elected officials for their work to get us to this day,” said **Eugene T. Kelty, Jr., Chair, Queens Community Board 7**.

The project, led by NYC Parks, will reconstruct 1.6 acres of the 3.5 acre Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground along 46th Avenue between 164th and 165th streets. Parks will construct a commemorative plaza and reconstruct pathways that provide better circulation throughout the site. The plaza will include a wall which will honor those buried there, it will include their engraved names and an interpretive sign will provide historic information about the site. A butterfly garden will be added with new benches and plantings to create an area of tranquility for all visitors, surrounded by cardinal directions written in local a Native American language. The design was created in consultation with the local community members and the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground.

This project is currently in the design phase, and is tentatively scheduled to go before the Public Design Commission in November. It is funded with \$1.62 million including \$600,000 from Borough President Katz, \$520,000 from Council Member Koo, and an additional \$500,000 from Mayor de Blasio.

The ‘re-discovery’ of burial grounds within our municipality is an experience shared by many cities world-wide. The City of New York has buildings and parks that stand on former burial grounds. In the 1990’s, when Parks began a renovation of the site, local activist Mandingo Tshaka drew attention to its previous history. In response, Parks commissioned a \$50,000 archaeological study in 1996. Archeologist Linda Stone concluded that the site served as the final resting-place for between 500 to 1,000 individuals. Death records for the town of Flushing exist for the period 1881 until 1898, and show that during this period, 62 percent of the buried were African American or Native American, 34 percent were unidentified, and more than half were children under the age of five.

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