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Chair

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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Parks and Waterfront Committee
Thursday, October 8, 2026 - 6:30PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee co-chairs to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolution is discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Resolutions to be voted on:

Item 1 (Motion M380/T386): **Request agency review for public spaces on East 59th Street Between First and Second Avenues**

MINUTES

Present: Felice Farber, Judy Schneider, Bradley Hershenson, Valerie Mason, Paul Krikler, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Sahar Husain, Elaine Wrightman*

** Public Member*

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 64

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

1. **Discussion of Park Sites on E 59th Street between First and Second Avenues Including Representatives from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

Paul Krikler presented a proposal advocating for public use of two lots near the Queensboro Bridge on East 59th Street. He suggested that the spaces could be adapted for community uses such as seating, a dog run, bocce, café seating, or a small playground, and argued that the lots appear underutilized. Sean Basinski added that the group was seeking restoration of public space and offered to arrange a site walkthrough with neighbors.

NYC DOT Manhattan Borough Commissioner Danielle Zuckerman explained that the DOT lots support bridge operations, maintenance, materials storage, and other day-to-day agency functions, as well as major bridge repairs. DEP Manhattan Borough Commissioner Marty Fatooh stated that the DEP shaft site is an active critical water-supply infrastructure requiring 24-hour access and that DEP has no current plans to redevelop it, as it is very close to the surface. He noted that DEP had contributed approximately $750,000 toward refurbishment of nearby Honey Locust Park.

Public commenters expressed support for improving the lots, citing their appearance, fencing, graffiti, historic character, and potential connection to pedestrian and bicycle access from the Queensboro Bridge. Several speakers urged the agencies to consider whether the lots could be made more welcoming while preserving necessary agency access.

A resolution urging DOT and DEP to work with other agencies, elected officials, and local stakeholders to immediately reopen the two lots to public use in accordance with agency operations and community needs was

adopted. Chair Valerie Mason also offered to request a walkthrough with DOT to review the sites and document their current use and condition.

A resolution to encourage public access at two under-utilized city-owned lots on East 59th Street between First and Second Avenues.

WHEREAS, Community District 8 has a need for additional public open space; and

WHEREAS, Community Board 8 has long sought to identify locations within the district that could provide additional public open space; and

WHEREAS, the stretch of city-owned property adjacent to and south of the Queensboro Bridge between Second Avenue and Sutton Place was once a continuous public plaza; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation (DOT) installed a chain-link fence along the western portion of the block around 2005, enclosing an area adjacent to the bridge that is currently used primarily for storage of highway and construction materials, with potential for additional community use and repair of the Bridge and is constantly graffitied; and

WHEREAS, the conversion of the South Outer Roadway (SOR) from vehicle to pedestrian use has increased pedestrian activity on the block, particularly between the SOR entrance and Second Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the corresponding reduction in vehicle traffic provides an opportunity to consider how this space and the surrounding block could better serve pedestrians and the community while accommodating agency operations; and

WHEREAS, DOT has installed a gate providing vehicle access to its underground parking and storage facility from the ramp accessing the SOR, and continued operational access will need to be accommodated in any future plan; and

WHEREAS, neighbors and other community members have expressed interest in reopening and reimagining the enclosed space as a public amenity; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has completed construction of shafts and equipment associated with the end of Water Tunnel No. 3 at East 59th Street and First Avenue; and

WHEREAS, DEP site has remained fenced off and unavailable for public use for more than ten years, limiting opportunities to provide public space that could benefit residents and local businesses; and

WHEREAS, DEP has opened public plazas at other water tunnel sites in Manhattan, including on West Fourth Street and Grand Street, while maintaining access for security and maintenance;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 8 requests DOT and DEP to work collaboratively with other relevant agencies, elected officials, and local stakeholders to develop a plan and timetable for opening these two spaces to public use, consistent with agency operational, security, and maintenance requirements and community needs.

Motion M380/T386: Request agency review for public spaces on East 59th Street Between First and Second Avenues
ADOPTED by a vote of 6-2-0-0

Yes: Hershenson, Mason, Krikler, Pope-Marshall, Husain, Wrightman*
No: Farber, Schneider

2. Presentation of renovation of John Jay Tennis Area by Max Goodstein and Shena Kaufman of the NYC Parks Department

Max Goodstein of NYC Parks explained that the tennis court at John Jay Park currently has a movable net that is not owned or maintained by Parks. Parks sought community feedback on whether to formalize the court as an official tennis court, which would involve a fixed net, fencing, inclusion in the Parks tennis-court system, permits, and maintenance responsibilities. He explained that formalizing the court would also dedicate the space to tennis rather than allowing the broader, multi-purpose use associated with a multi-purpose play area.
Community members expressed differing views about formalization, including concerns about fencing, safety and liability, permit access, competition for court time, and preserving the court's informal community use. The community opposed formal fencing and favored retaining the current arrangement or considering a smaller alternative. Parks explained that leaving the court as-is would mean the existing net would remain outside Parks' maintenance system. Parks was asked to review the feedback and return with further options in December for additional discussion.

3. Clean up at John Jay Park on October 24th from 10 am to 1 pm by Mubeen Siddiqui of Muslim Volunteers for NY

Mubeen Siddiqui, a founding board member of Muslim Volunteers for New York, described the organization's stewardship work in the district and announced a family-friendly volunteer event at John Jay Park. The event will include planting and beautification activities, music, and participation by Urban Park Rangers. Community service letters will be available for student volunteers. The event flyer will be shared through the Community Board website and newsletter.

4. Report by Shena Kaufman, NYC Parks, District Manager 8 & 15

Shena Kaufman provided an update on the East River Esplanade. Contractors are expected to begin repairing the sinkhole at East 80th Street on October 13, with pedestrian and bicycle access affected during the work. Signs will be posted and access will be provided through areas to the south. The completion timeframe is still being clarified. Kaufman also reported that Hospital for Special Surgery's contractors anticipated completing the topside improvements during the following week.
Max Goodstein also reported that Parks staff and the Deputy Commissioner of Capital Projects had recently toured Tramway Park and several nearby sites. Parks planned to develop an estimate for improvements at Tramway Park, potentially including a central water feature and changes to improve the site's street-facing appearance and planting. He also shared that Parks was examining the Phase 3 area at Andrew Haswell Green Park where a maintenance space could potentially be converted to a public restroom and possibly a concession.

5. Report by Robert McLean, NYC Parks, Regional Manager

Robert McLean reported on volunteer work along the East Midtown Greenway, including removal of approximately 685 large bags of weeds since March, with additional trimming planned to improve sightlines near the Great Stairs. He noted that approximately 100 volunteers had contributed around 200 hours of work in recent months.

6. Old Business

No items of Old Business were discussed.

7. New Business – Friends of the East River Esplanade

Maria Kessler announced two upcoming community events hosted by Friends of the East River Esplanade: a family-friendly music and activities event at Andrew Haswell Green Park on the upcoming Saturday, and a "Spooktacular" event on October 24 featuring pumpkin painting, face painting, children's activities, and live music.
It should be noted that the November meeting will likely include an update from Hospital for Special Surgery and a return presentation by the Central Park Conservancy, which would bring revised plans for further discussion and a resolution.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 PM.

By Felice Farber, Bradley Hershenson, and Judy Schneider,
Co-Chairs, Parks and Waterfront Committee