



City of New York Parks & Recreation



New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation

Oversight - Status of Yankee Stadium Replacement Parks

April 29, 2009

**Testimony by
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First Deputy Commissioner**

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to be before the committee once again, to give you a progress report on the parks being built in the South Bronx as part of the Yankee Stadium replacement parks project. The construction of these parks is a major initiative of the administration, jointly managed by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and Parks as part of the overall Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project to provide the community with more usable recreation space and new, state-of-the-art recreational facilities. The project's total budget is \$306 million, of which \$194.7 million is provided to build 31 acres of replacement park and facilities, \$70.3 million for infrastructure, streetscape, design and construction management, and \$39 million for the city's share of the new Metro North Station.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As is the case with all our park capital projects, before building new or renovating existing parks, Parks meets with members of the community to determine the project's scope to ensure the park features and amenities that are important to neighbors are included. In addition, over the course of developing the designs, each project is presented to Community Board 4, twice. First, at the preliminary level, and later at final design. And finally, in an effort to ensure that both elected officials and the community are kept abreast of our progress, Parks conducts monthly briefings at the Bronx Museum of Art and quarterly, evening meetings for the community as recommended by Council Member Foster.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

The City is not only keeping its promise to replace the amenities/parkland impacted by Yankee construction, it has done so in a manner that expands recreational opportunities to even more residents of the Bronx. This is occurring despite expanding the scope of projects, additional site

and infrastructure costs, unforeseen but necessary environmental remediation and region-wide increases in construction costs.

With community input on the design, New York City is building four new parks with high-quality recreational facilities: three championship-quality grass ballfields, an all-weather soccer / football field surrounded by a 400-meter competition-quality track, four basketball courts, eight handball courts, a skate park, a playground, fitness equipment and a waterfront esplanade linking a picnic area, play area, tennis center and sixteen tennis courts along the Harlem River. This morning, I'm going to speak about each project and give you an update. I am then happy to answers any questions you might have

Public School 29

Completed in the spring of 2008, this \$2.5 million project located in the Melrose section of the Bronx replaced a paved play area with a synthetic ball field and (full) basketball court. In addition, this popular park now features refurbished handball courts, new shade trees, bleachers, a misting station, and a drinking fountain. Henceforward, this site will operate as a Jointly Operated Park – a program in which Parks and the Department of Education share responsibility for and access to the ball field. It will be utilized by P.S. 29 throughout the day and by the community after school and on weekends, holidays and during the summer.

West Bronx Recreation Center

Completed in the summer of 2008 at a cost of \$3 million, this popular Park was constructed on what was undeveloped land adjacent to the Recreation Center on Jessup Avenue. It features a synthetic soccer/ball field, green space, seating, a drinking fountain, a misting station, and pedestrian paths that link to the neighborhood to the community. In addition, Parks provided trees and other landscaping.

Mullaly Park Upgrades

Located across the street from the new stadium, the park's north end renovations were completed in the spring of 2008 with a new synthetic turf multi-purpose field (bringing the total to two), a community garden area, flowering trees, new landscaping and new irrigation systems at the two natural turf ballfields. In December 2008, two turf ballfields were renovated with sod donated by the Yankees.

Renovations to the south end of the park were completed in the spring of 2009, with new basketball courts, interactive play equipment, green space, seating areas and water features. The Mullaly Park improvements were funded from both the Croton project and the Yankee Stadium Redevelopment program.

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

As of spring 2009, approximately \$140.8 million of park work is either completed or under construction. The final \$53.9 million shall be awarded for construction start in 2009 and 2010.

Mill Pond Park

Under construction since spring 2008, Mill Pond Park is expected to be completed by December 2009. Budgeted at \$63.9 million, we are currently 45% complete with park construction.

Constructed on the former Bronx Terminal Market site, the scope of this project not only includes the demolition & removal of 4 buildings but remediation as well. The latter included the removal of concrete encased industrial sized petroleum tanks, contaminated soil, and the capping of the site with soil.

This park will not only transform a decayed industrial site into a new 10-acre park, but it will provide the community with access to the Harlem River waterfront. It will feature 16 tennis courts, scenic overlooks, green space, an outdoor classroom bar-b-que space, a beach area, water/spray features, and an esplanade that will unite the site. In addition, Parks is rehabilitating the piers and slips. Landscaped plantings will line the accessible pathways throughout the park as will signage, devoted to providing patrons a historical accounting of the site.

Twelve of the sixteen tennis courts will be open year-round, as they are designed to allow for a bubbled enclosure, as was the case with the courts in Mullaly Park.

The project also includes the restoration of the former Power House Building, a historic 25,800-square-foot structure (aka Building J). Upon completion, it will feature a green roof visible from the Major Deegan and space on the first floor for a public restroom, the Parks Department – Maintenance & Operations, and a future concessionaire. A Request for Proposals for the Development & Operation of Sports & Food Service Facilities was issued this month.

The Parks Department will seek an operator to develop 12,900 square feet of programmable space on the building's second floor. Though a tenant for the second floor tenant hasn't yet been found, Parks and the Bronx Borough President's Office have been working together to identify one that will benefit the community. Any operator will be approved through the FCRC process.

Rehabilitation of the interior & exterior of this building is being done in a manner in which we feel confident that it will merit Silver LEED Certification.

Macombs Dam (Rooftop) Park

In addition to a Olympic-quality track, this seven-acre \$35 million facility will feature four handball courts, a soccer/football field with grandstand seating, four basketball courts, landscaping, a new public toilet building and picnic table terrace area. A beautifully landscaped hill will connect the park and the adjacent Ruppert Plaza and Heritage Field, providing an integrated park experience for users and spectators alike.

Like the two story garage below it, this facility is being constructed in two phases. The periphery of the Park will be screened using trees and shrubs. It is currently under construction, with the first section of the park to open for community use in the next week or two, providing access to part of a synthetic field with options for running. As construction progresses this summer, park patrons will be able to enjoy the grass berm, grandstand, comfort station, basketball courts, and planting areas. In addition, between October & December 2009, the permanent / full track & field will be installed and the entire first phase of the rooftop park will be completed by December 2009.

For phase 2, which we expect to complete in the spring of 2010, patrons will be able to enjoy

more landscaping and utilize two additional basketball courts, the 8 handball courts, the adult fitness equipment, and another grass berm (as passive recreational space or for viewing games / meets).

River Avenue Pocket Parks

At the River Avenue Pocket Parks, we anticipate beginning construction of this \$3.1 million project in September 2009 with an estimated completion in spring 2010. Remediation of the site, a former service station, is required and will take place this summer. This project transforms two parking lots at the northeast and southeast corners of River Avenue and East 157th Street into a playground and an unsupervised skate park. The play space will include customized play equipment, benches, and pathways, and landscaping that will be positioned so as to frame the existing Yankee mural on the adjacent building. In addition, this site will include lighting and water features that can be triggered by a passing subway. The skate park will feature customized ramps, pipes and fitness equipment. Both sites will be outfitted with stairs, ramps and entry paths to make the parks accessible. And finally, both sites - separated by 157th street – though parking will no longer be allowed, will share design elements and material choices that will unite the two sites. The trees will extend onto the street in an effort to create a green corridor that visually link this space to the adjacent parks.

Heritage Field – Ruppert Plaza – 157th street

Upon completing the demolition of Yankee Stadium (summer 2010), Parks will immediately commence constructing the three natural turf ball fields (1 softball field, 1 little league field, and a tournament quality baseball field) that will be the centerpiece of Heritage Field.

The baseball field will be oriented in the same manner as the field located in the historic stadium, providing players with a unique and enjoyable experience. Other amenities, include a comfort station, concession space, lighting (field & pedestrian), play equipment, bleachers, fencing, a scoreboard, landscaping, viewing mounds/passive recreational space, and a walking/jogging path. Another component of this project will include the construction of pedestrian promenades at both Ruppert Plaza and 157th street.

Ruppert Plaza is important for not only does it unite Macombs Dam Park (Heritage Field to the facility above the Ruppert Place garage), but it also connects the new stadium to the new Pedestrian Bridge / Metro North Train Station. Its anticipated completion date is fall 2011.

While we build the new, refurbished ballfields, we continue to work with all displaced baseball and little leagues to ensure they have a location to play during this interim period of park development. In every borough, the Parks Department is investing in new fields. In the Bronx alone, we are renovating the Van Cortlandt Park Parade Grounds, Hunts Point, Harris Fields, Bronx Park, many asphalt-to-turf fields and Randall's Island fields. While we would ideally want to spread out development to have more fields available to accommodate overflow, we would have missed our chance as the economy slowed. We appreciate patience as we deliver state-of-the-art facilities for all users.

Macombs Dam Park Interim Track and Field

Please note that once Phase 1 of the Macombs Dam (Rooftop) Park is accepted by Parks, patrons who utilize the Macombs Dam Park Interim Track & Field will be directed to this new facility and the closing of the Interim Facility will enable construction of the third garage to begin.

TREE PLANTING

Thus far, 3,242 of the 8,000 plus trees have been planted in the neighborhoods surrounding Yankee stadium. The Tree Replacement budget is \$11.2 million and specifies trees larger (3.5" minimum and larger) than those are typically planted.

DEMOLITION OF YANKEE STADIUM

As you know, the City is currently overseeing the demolition of the old Yankee Stadium. The demolition work commenced in March 2009 and is expected to be completed by summer 2010.

I am joined here today by Dmitri Konon, Vice President of Capital Programs, and Robert LaPalme, Assistant General Counsel, both from EDC, who can answer your questions with regard to the demolition of the old Yankee Stadium.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to update this committee on the progress being made to fulfill our commitment to the Bronx to deliver the world class recreational facilities they definitely deserve. We appreciate the patience and support Bronx residents and local officials have shown in dealing with the issues and inconveniences associated with the rebuilding of Yankee Stadium and the construction of new parks in the community, and we hope to continue that good work in the future.