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Press Release

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CITY GIVEN GREEN LIGHT BY COURT TO REHABILITATE UNION SQUARE PARK

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New York, May 7, 2008 – Today, the New York Supreme Court lifted restrictions temporarily imposed on the City and is allowing the Parks Department to proceed with its plan to renovate and rehabilitate Union Square Park. Justice Jane Solomon determined that "the community would suffer tremendous harm if the Parks Department is prevented from implementing the badly needed improvements to the comfort stations, playground and Greenmarket, in addition to rehabilitating the dilapidated Pavilion."

The proposed renovations for Union Square Park are part of an ongoing comprehensive program for the restoration and enhancement of the City's park resources. The Parks Department has sought and received public comment on the Project, which has been approved by the Art Commission and supported by the local community board. The principal purposes are to rehabilitate physically deteriorated features of the Park and to maximize its accessibility and usability. Specifically, the Project will:

- Restore the historic Pavilion
- Provide the Greenmarket with access to electricity and water
- Construct an ADA compliant comfort station next to the Pavilion
- Convert existing bathrooms to be ADA compliant
- Remove 15 trees (10 small, 5 mature) and replace them with 53 new trees in the park, many of which will be planted in the playground area
- Triple the size of the playground from 5000 sq. ft to 15000 sq. ft., and create access to a comfort station from the playground

City officials and lawyers praised the decision.

"We are gratified by the court's decision to allow us to proceed with the renovation of Union Square Park's northern end without further delay," said Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "By removing the temporary restraining order, the court is allowing construction to move forward, which will result in a dramatically enlarged playground, a restored plaza and pavilion, and many more trees. This decision is in the best interest of the community and we look forward to proceeding with this much needed

restoration."

Chris Reo, the Law Department's attorney who argued the case before Justice Solomon said, "We are very pleased with Judge Solomon's decision. The City will now be able move forward with the rehabilitation and renovation of Union Square Park, which will restore the Park's historic pavilion, triple the playground space, plant more trees, improve the public restrooms, and better support the Greenmarket."

Jennifer Falk, Executive Director of the Union Square Partnership said, "Today's decision is a victory for our community and the many proponents of the project who have been working tirelessly for the last six years to complete the renovation of Union Square Park. By removing the temporary restraining order, the court is allowing construction to move forward, including the rehabilitation of the pavilion, the tripling of the size of the playground, and the upgrading of the north end plaza that is home to our Greenmarket partners. The Union Square Partnership is pleased that the legal impediment to the Project has been removed and work can proceed immediately."

Chris Reo and Ramin Pejan of the New York City Law Department's Environmental Law Division handled the case.

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