

**Community Board 12, Manhattan**  
**Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting: February 13, 2018**  
**CB12 Conference Room (530 W. 166<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> fl., NYC 10032)**

**Committee Members Present:** E. Lorris Ritter (Chair), Mitchell Glenn (Ass't Chair), Daryl Cochrane, Natalie Espino, Richard Lewis. **Excused:** Barbara Frazier, Karen Taylor (public member). **Absent:** Domingo Estevez. **Other CB12 Members Attending:** Sara A. Fisher, Jay Mazur, Steve Simon. **Staff:** Paola Garcia. Also attending: Tara Wholley; Jennifer Gonzales, Elizabeth Masella, Jennifer Hoppa, Elizabeth Ernish, Kate Ward, NYC Parks; Dana Hanchard & Aaron Scott, Bruce's Garden; Meghan Alvarez, RowNY; Trish Anderton & Steven Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Charlie Samboy, Rada Ruiz, NYC EDC; Jessica Morris; Peter Bulow & son; David Mandel, NYC DCLA; Inyeska Jimenez; Valinn Ranelli; Harold Forsythe, NYS Sen. Marisol Alcantara; Bob Barnett, Hudson River Community Rowing; Genesis Abreu, WeACT; Obed Fulcar, Friends of Sherman Creek Conservancy; Curtis Young; Philip T. Simpson; Joanna Castro, NoMAA.

**The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.**

1. 6:35pm **Welcome, Opening Remarks & Announcements** (Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair) including brief presentations by several representatives of community-based organizations:
  - Joanna Castro, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA):
    - Announced the Healthful Art competition, with a \$400 honorarium.
    - This year will be the ArtStroll's "Sweet 16". And, as last year, it will include a walking tour of the Audubon bird murals.
    - The Uptown Bench exhibit in Inwood Hill Park is extended through April 30<sup>th</sup>. Take photos of yourself by the sculptures, and tag the artists.
    - Women in the Heights Womens' History Month exhibit opens March 8<sup>th</sup> at the Rio II Gallery (583 Riverside Drive @ W. 135<sup>th</sup> St.) and is open through the end of March.
  - Natalie Espino, Northern Manhattan Arts & Culture (NMAC):
    - Jan. 29<sup>th</sup> "Up In Inwood" event to unveil the District Marketing Postcard Project. Kudos to the 14 selected artists; shout out to Indian Road Café for hosting.
    - Next MeetUp is Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> at WordUp and will include an art exhibition created by students of PS132 and the Urban Arts Partnership.
  - Lindsay Sierra, NYC Partnerships for Parks: have the fourth and final round of the Inwood Parks Grant due March 1 at midnight! The Partnerships for Parks Inwood Parks Grant, made possible by Columbia University, provides grants of \$500 to \$15,000 to community groups and nonprofit organizations for small NYC Parks-approved physical improvements, events, and programming in Inwood Hill, Muscota Marsh, and Isham Parks. There will be a workshop for prospective fundees on 2/15 at 6:30 at Bread & Yoga to learn more about how to apply.
  - In the absence of a representative from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, an announcement was made regarding their Arts Engagement grant program. The program is designed to enhance the diversity and frequency of cultural presentations in Upper Manhattan. Grants of \$1k-\$10k (with a 25% matching requirement) are made to support artist-driven projects and organizations with budgets under \$750,000 to make their work more widely available to the public. Unlike other UMEZ grants, applicants to the UMEZ Arts Engagement grants may request funds to support programming and general operations. To administer this program, UMEZ is partnering with Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), which is the Manhattan-based regrantor of funds from the NYS Council on the Arts and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. Deadline is March 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm; visit <https://www.umez.org/cultural-investments-grants#umez-arts-engagement-grant> for more info.
2. 6:58pm **NYC Parks Report** (Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator)  
See full report in separate document.
  - Green Gym design for J. Hood Wright Park was approved.



- Amtrak pedestrian bridge replacement project is advancing. City Hall is expediting the permits, and we are scouting alternate routes to use during construction.
  - Inwood waterline project delayed due to cold; anticipate completion in May.
  - Henry Hudson Parkway Bridge: TBTA is proceeding; hoping to close in during the winter to minimize negative impacts.
  - Nature Center project is advancing through procurement.
  - Pinehurst step-street project also advancing.
  - Completion of Ft. Tryon Park's Anne Loftus staircase anticipated in May; plantings to follow later in the spring.
  - Javits Playground probably will close in May for construction. There will be a "playground-in-a-box" and a Parks Associate and additional amenities to help fill the gap in facilities/programming created by the temporary closure.
  - Highbridge Anchor Park Phases I & II are advancing. Work on Harlem River Drive by ConEd will necessitate closures to increase the electrical capacity. The Esplanade will be repaved.
  - Audubon playground will likely be closed during construction, which probably will begin in the fall. Design is complete; project currently in procurement.
  - Thanks to all who came out to the NYC Parks monthly Trail Days. They were over-enrolled so more dates were added, including March 17<sup>th</sup>: wear green/get green!
  - Announced 16+ free programs over the next month, include the "Freeze Bowl" at J. Hood Wright Park, Tango at Highbridge, Urban Wildlife on March 6<sup>th</sup> (Owls! Eagles! More!), and many Urban Park Ranger programs for "kids week" when school is out for Presidents' week.
3. 7:07pm **Jennifer Gonzalez, new Highbridge Rec. Center Manager** introduced herself; announced many free programs. Email [jennifer.gonzalez@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:jennifer.gonzalez@parks.nyc.gov) or call 212-927-2012 for more info.
4. 7:10pm **Presentation & discussion of proposed public art projects in Fort Tryon and Sherman Creek Parks'** (Elizabeth Masella, NYC Parks Public Art Coordinator).
- Three pieces by Steinunn Thorarinsdottir will be installed in Fort Tryon Park in May. The works are pairs of figured 3D-printed from scans of collection at the Met. Similar works of hers were placed recently at Dag Hamerskold Plaza. The pieces will be on raised plates, not on the lawn directly, and will remain through sometime in the fall, depending on the timing of the Medieval Festival and whether the works are suitable to remain in place through that event.
  - Peter Bulow (who lives in CB12, and attended the meeting with his son, and) whose work was displayed several years ago in Fort Tryon Park's Heather Garden, presented his installation for Sherman Creek Park in May. The works are carved and painted wood statues up to 5' tall arranged to tell a story in relation to its placement. One piece might be floated in the pond. There will be signage with minimal text. He plans to have a puppet show at the beginning of the exhibit, which will remain for about six months.
  - It is hoped that at some point during each exhibition there will be a meet-the-artist walk/talk.
5. 7:20pm **Additional announcements** of then-upcoming events.
- The Audubon Sculpture Project which will join the Audubon Mural Project next spring (2019), a joint effort sponsored by The National Audubon Society, Gitler &\_\_\_\_, NYC Audubon, and the Broadway Mall Association.
  - Sally Fisher of Friends of Inwood Hill Park announced upcoming Earth Day events the weekend of 4/20-4/22, as well as an all-day conference on 3/16: Protecting the Urban Forest.
  - Génesis Abreu, Community Organizer at WeAct announced a new initiative, "Uptown Chats", to engage Northern Manhattan activists and community leaders. Announced then-upcoming March 8<sup>th</sup> event. They plan to do them every couple of months on themes of economic development,



social justice, environmental justice, etc. Also announced monthly meetings on the second Saturday of each month, 10am-noon.

6. 7:36pm **Consideration of Landmark Designation in Inwood Hill Park:** Dana Hanchard and Aaron Scott of Bruce's Garden presented a 15-minute film on the importance of Inwood Hill Park, which includes Manhattan's last bit of old-growth forest, as a cherished natural resource and respite from the City. The park is threatened by development near and at its perimeter, and must be protected not only for the park itself, but for its resources within. These include avian habitats and natural springs, as well as its open sky plane, an overlooked (pun very much intended) natural resource that enhances the urban environment and which, once broken, cannot be reclaimed. The film is a powerful reminder of a precious asset, beautifully filmed and soothingly narrated, and its makers are to be (and were) applauded for their considerable effort. It was a perfect segue into a discussion about the various parks/open space concerns posed by the proposed Inwood rezoning.

Fort Tryon Park is a scenic landmark, one of ten in the City, so capital projects within it require confirmation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission as well as the Public Design Commission. With regard to landmarking, David Thom noted that he applied for residential landmarking for the area around Park Terrace East/West several years ago, and received a non-committal "we'll look into it and get back to you" reply to which he never received additional response. It is frustrating that the LPC is not more responsive to these requests.

In the end, while the park clearly must be protected, it is not clear what tools landmarking affords the Park that it doesn't already enjoy. There are strong protections already in place through the legislation required to alienate park land, which must go through Council and Legislature. The recent example of the potential loss of a playground in East Harlem is not analogous was not technical a park. Irrespective of landmarking, the arguments made here about open sky lane, light/shadow, perimeter encroachment, etc. must be incorporated into whatever resolution CB12 offers with respect to the proposed Inwood Rezoning.

7. 8:25pm **Discussion of parks, culture, & open spaces in Inwood as they relate to the proposed Inwood rezoning** Charlie Samboy of the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) gave a brief summary of the proposed rezoning, recapping EDC's efforts since Spring 2015 with 25 open houses and public workshops on the InwoodNYC plan for affordable and mixed-income housing, to create a comprehensive zoning framework, improve neighborhood infrastructure, and invest in residents uptown. (Details on the fuller presentation are available from prior minutes of this and other Committees, particularly Land Use.) He cited a number of initiatives and spending by NYC Parks, Small Business Services, the MTA, etc. He also gave a timeline for the project, and a calendar for the public review and Uniform Land Use & Review Process (ULURP), which was certified by the NYC Planning Commission on January 16<sup>th</sup>; CB12 must offer a resolution at its March meeting.

Elizabeth Ernish, NYC Parks, gave an overview of the considerable investments by the Parks Department within Community District 12 to provide "a framework for an equitable future". She included the significant investments in Audubon Playground (\$7mm) and Highbridge Park (\$90+mm), neither of which is in Inwood. There was also detailed presentation on waterfront access and an overview of the 202-206 Street street-end parks and Sherman Creek, and the vision for an Academy Esplanade to connect the street-end parks. Parks' Kate Ward spoke about new waterfront open space and the Waterfront Access Plan to provide a visual corridor to the water, public walkways along the water, an upland connection to the water, and supplemental access. There was also a discussion of maintenance and programming, and the commitment for these spaces to be public and open in perpetuity.



Public comments/questions:

- Dave Thom: the Inwood Arch, which is within the “Upland Core” should be addressed. Also the area south of Dyckman Street is not included in the plan. Contextual zoning should extend down Broadway to Nagle/Bennett/Hillside (the 10040 PO divided the southern part of Inwood and merged it with Washington Heights) and extend west at the northern tip to include Baker Field and the Allan Hospital.
- Richard Lewis raised concern with respect to items missing from the InwoodNYC plan:
  - Slave, African American, & Native American burial grounds located under the current MTA rail yards, PS/MS278, and other areas within the proposed plan
  - Potential for casting shadows on and limiting light in the park
  - Increased usage (due to increased population) and the impacts on local parks
  - Must rebuild Monsignor Kett Playground (10<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 204<sup>th</sup> St.), which has been on CB12 budget priorities for some time, and will be unduly burdened by a population increase
  - Include area below Dyckman St. in the contextual zoning, with particular attention to the effects of overscale building on Fort Tryon Park, as noted in previous resolutions regarding development along Broadway between Nagle & Dyckman.
  - The walkways along the shoreline are too far from the shoreline: 40’ such as proposed for Sherman Creek and even 20’ as proposed for the northern tip are too far to provide meaningful access to the water.
- Paloma <didn’t sign in; no last name> asked:
  - What about commercial development in the park? A (Parks): no, there wouldn’t be commercial uses in the park other than possibly the ice cream/hotdog carts such as are common in parks throughout the city. We will correct the slides to correct that misimpression, and to clarify that the commercial uses relate to businesses facing the water in any buildings developed near the water’s edge, not in any parks.
  - We’d like to see continued support of cultural initiatives in northern Manhattan. The \$121k Building Community Capacity DCLA grant ends this year and the \$1.1mm Neighborhood 360 grant ends in FY’19. A (DCLA): yes, we would like to see additional cultural investments. (Note: no specifics or commitments were provided.)
- Natalie Espino: It’s not reasonable to carve out the area of Inwood south of Dyckman St. from the target area but then include investments in areas of Washington Heights as part of the City’s “investments in Inwood” (e.g., Audubon playground, all of Highbridge except the Dyckman perimeter, etc.). Either these areas are part of the project, or they’re not.
- Bob Barnett: the water isn’t just for a promenade to go out TO, but also something we should be able to go out ON and IN: the plans must include put-ins for kayaks, canoes, and other human-powered craft, as well as facilities to store and enable this recreational usage.
- Jessica Morris: there must be connection and usability. It is difficult to project when private developers are involved. We need to know more about the phasing and implementation.
- Valinn Ranelli: what is the definition of “Inwood”? A (EDC): the plan was never supposed to have been all of Inwood. (There then ensued a somewhat heated back-and-forth on this point between the Chair and the EDC representative.)
- Sally Fisher: We should hold the March General Meeting in Inwood. A: It already is on the calendar for the Campbell Sports Center.
- Phil Simpson: the EIS will result in significant adverse shadow and light impacts on the PS18 schoolyard, the B’way/215<sup>th</sup> St. Greenstreet, and the Sherman Creek Park. This is unacceptable.
- Richard Lewis: how will we have continuous access to the waterfront given the presence of the MTA rail yards? A (Kate Ward): we will revise the map to show that the access would be continuous within two discrete sections, i.e., above and below the rail yards.



In summary, the following areas were identified as being of importance to include in the Board's collective comments on and resolution regarding the proposed plan:

- Open views, skyplanes, and preservation of landmarked views
- No overshadowing of public spaces, yards, parks, etc.
- Inclusion of Broadway corridor along Ft. Tryon Park perimeter in the contextual zoning plan
- Preservation of North Cove & 207<sup>th</sup> St. Cove
- Full renovation Monsignor Kett Playground
- Additional programming and maintenance to support increased use of parks
- BBQ facilities and community gardens
- A waterfront (Harlem River) esplanade
- Shoreline and bulkhead restoration
- East/west connectors particularly from the "Upland Core" to the Harlem River waterfront
- Safe access to the eastern (Harlem River) waterfront, including IN/ON as well as TO the water
- Preserve/identify/narrate the Slave, African-American, & Native American burial grounds
- Continued support of cultural initiatives, programming and institutions
- Preservation/restoration of the Seaman-Drake Arch

There being no additional business, **the meeting adjourned at 9:55pm.**

Respectfully submitted: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter