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3 Chris Crowley (or whoever)
4 NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
5 The Arsenal
6 Central Park
7 830 Fifth Avenue
8 New York, NY 10065
9

10 **Re: Proposed new design for Ramon Aponte Park**

11 Dear Mr. Crowley,

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14 On 12 July a proposed design for Ramon Aponte Park was presented to the Manhattan Community
15 Board No 4 (MCB4) Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee (WPE) by NYC Department of
16 Parks & Recreation (DPR). While esthetically pleasing, and containing many desirable features,
17 members of the community and WPE Committee members share some use concerns, which DPR
18 informally has agreed to consider in a new design. This letter will outline these concerns and offer some
19 suggestions.
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21 The primary issue concerns the presence of the full basketball court at the rear of the park, a feature of
22 the current park and proposed to be retained in the new design as presented. Neighborhood residents
23 and park users say that this basketball court, due to it location at the rear of the property and surrounded
24 by buildings, is not used as much for basketball as it is for threatening, unsavory and even illegal
25 activities (i.e. drug dealing). Further, a DPR map of basketball courts in the area shows several full and
26 half courts within a short radius of Ramon Aponte Park, and neighborhood residents claim that these are
27 often under-utilized. The prevailing preference from the community and MCB4 is for another use
28 entirely (i.e. no basketball court) or, at the least, a half court with another use on the remaining area.
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30 Uses suggested to replace the basketball courts fell into two categories: (1) An extension of the
31 playground area, to include swings (if they will fit) or other children play equipment and/or (2)
32 additional features such as chess/checker tables, dominos tables and other features aimed at mature &
33 elderly users. Even uses such as shuffleboard and/or bocce, or other such senior adult activities, were
34 mentioned.
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36 On other topics, community members said that the current park has an active rodent population and
37 urges DPR to take all possible mitigation measures to remove this problem. Another request from the
38 community was to plant only male trees of certain varieties (Ginkgo & Crabapple) to reduce or prevent
39 airborne particles.
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41 However, on the positive side, the general layout of the new park was well received, including moving
42 the fountain feature to a sunnier central location, moving the entry westward, and the pleasing curves
43 that were introduced. The increased seating areas and new plantings are also welcome, and all these
44 features should be retained in the re-design.
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46 MCB4 greatly appreciates the willingness of DPR to listen to the desires of the neighborhood users of
47 the park, and recognizes the challenge of satisfying many, and perhaps sometimes conflicting desires, in
48 a small place. We look forward to seeing a revised design plan in the near future, and we thank DPR for
49 this commitment to upgrade this much needed park. We believe that the changes listed above will help
50 create a friendlier, safer and more used park.

51
52 Sincerely,

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54 CJ/JD/MD

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56 cc: NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
57 47/48 Streets Block Association
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DRAFT