

January 2024

RE: ESCR CAG Fall 2023 Inquiries

To Members of the ESCR CAG:

Thank you for your inquiries following the October 2023 CAG walk-through and announcement of the closure of ball fields 3-5. Many of the questions were answered at prior CAG and CB3 meetings, but the answers are reiterated. Please see DDC responses below.

**Questions following the October 2023 CAG walk-through**

**Nuisances on site**

1. Question: Many empty water bottles are littered around the site. Is all that plastic just getting buried with the fill or will it be disposed of properly?

DDC Response: *Yes, they will be disposed of properly; they will not be buried with the fill.*

2. Question: Many personal vehicles are being driven into this worksite. Are there any measurements being made of their climate & health impacts?

DDC Response: *Environmental impacts of vehicular traffic were analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement which can be found on the ESCR Website: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/escr/about/environmental-review.page>. Also, the contractor's robust air quality monitoring program includes monitors at construction areas as well as entrance and exit areas. More information can be found on the ESCR air quality monitoring page: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/escr/project-updates/environmental-monitoring.page>*

**Safety concern**

3. Question: Regarding the crossing warnings on the south side of Houston: the first one (most westerly) is about bikes, and it's not clear that the two barriers (off to the side and easy to ignore) are for pedestrians. Indeed, I saw two people crossing the wrong way into the park. This is a real hazard, and it's just too easy to get hit there. Can there be a clearer sign and maybe something graphic since so many park users don't read English?

DDC Response: *The PA1 team has been monitoring this location and making continual improvements to barrier placement and signage. The change has been in effect since May 8, 2023, yet people continue to enter the park from the south side of Houston*

*Street. We added yellow signage in Chinese and Spanish to try and improve compliance with the pedestrian detour.*

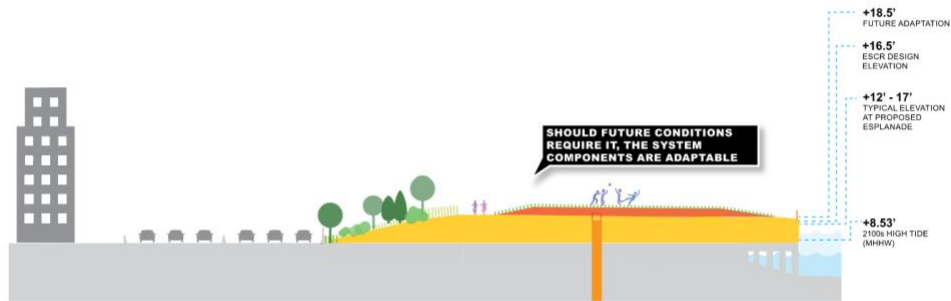
**Technical/construction-related**

4. Question: Can we hear more about the ability to raise the flood wall in 2-foot increments if needed? What does that entail? Would it require another park closure? Would amenities be affected?

*DDC Response: The City studied future flood protection system adaptability in East River Park in considerable depth, predominantly in 2019. There were multiple meetings to discuss among the City Team - NYC DDC, Parks, the Office of the Deputy Mayor, and (then) Office of Recovery and Resiliency, (now) Office of Climate and Environmental Justice.*

*The ultimate direction from the City Team was to proceed with the current alignment and elevations, with the expectation that by the time sea levels rise to level sufficiently warranting raising flood protection elements, significant portions of East River Park would be at or beyond their useful life and require replacing/reconstruction and the park could be raised with the replacing/reconstruction (see September 2019 Preliminary PDC Presentation slide below). Also, it was anticipated that new deployable technologies may come online that may facilitate achieving the additional height of protection required, which would then be considered.*

*Above ground floodwalls were designed to allow two feet to be added if needed.*



NOTE:  
 • IF 90TH PERCENTILE SEA LEVEL RISE OCCURS BY 2100, WAVES WILL WASH OVER THE DECK WITH A SMALLER STORM SUCH AS A 50-YEAR EVENT. THE SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO BE ADAPTABLE FOR THESE CONDITIONS IF NEEDED.  
 • GATE COLUMNS/FOUNDATIONS AND FLOODWALLS ARE DESIGNED TO BE ABLE TO TAKE THE NEW LOAD ASSOCIATED WITH A FUTURE ADAPTABILITY TOP OF WALL ELEVATION OF 18.5 FT.

5. Question: If Homeland Security will not allow fill under the Williamsburg Bridge, how will this at-grade section be impacted by flooding or heavy rain? Does it need a storm gate? Can we hear more about how this gap (which has not been mentioned at CAG or otherwise) will be engineered and managed?<sup>1</sup>

DDC Response: *The at grade areas surrounding the Williamsburg Bridge piers within East River Park is on the protected side of the flood protection. There is no gap in the flood protection around the bridge, therefore, it does not need a flood gate.*

6. Question: Can we get more of a sense of the different elevations at different points of the park? When asked, they said that the esplanade will also have different elevations of about a foot; I'm assuming it will be flat until it reaches the lower elevation section of the park in the south, and then will slope down to meet it, but it would be good to get details.<sup>2</sup>

DDC Response: *All pathways will be ADA compliant with no greater than a 5% slope (1' elevation change per 20' distance). Grade changes along the esplanade are generally more gradual, but never exceed the ADA compliant 5% slope, with dips at embayments and riverside seat walls. The elevation change at embayments will be approximately 6'.*

*Off paths, elevation changes do not exceed 33% slope (1' elevation change per 3' distance), with 33% slope hills primarily along the west side of park adjacent to the bike path or FDR. Elevation changes on passive lawns are more gradual.*

*See the October 2023 CAG presentation slides 22-23.*

### **Fire Boat House<sup>3</sup>**

7. Question: Can we find out more about the status of the Fire Boat House and the structural concerns that the engineer raised/talked about?

DDC Response: *DDC and Parks met with the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) in December 2023 to present the updated design for the Compost Yard and Fire Boat House. DDC also presented an update to CB3 in January 2024.*

*Parks and DDC are assessing the current condition of the building and scope for a potential rehab. Current building conditions show foundation settlement, multiple cracks*

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<sup>1</sup> This was raised at the October CAG meeting.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> This was raised at the October CAG meeting.

*in the foundation and cracks in floor slabs at both levels. In addition, as part of a separate contract, divers were enlisted to investigate the timber piles underneath the platform in front of the building which also support portions of the Fireboat House building. Timber piles accessible from the river were found to be rapidly deteriorating and a limited rehabilitation program is underway. However, rehabilitation of piles under the building is not possible with the building in place. The City has engaged the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as part of the Section 106 process and will fund an alternatives analysis to determine next steps. Updates will be provided once the alternatives analysis is completed this spring. No final decision has been made.*

#### **Amenities<sup>4</sup>**

8. Question: Can we get clarity on what amenities will be open by summer of 2024 in the southern section? It sounded like DDC is planning to open the ballfields and the Delancey street footbridge in summer of 2024, but it's not clear what else will be done by then. The amphitheater and the esplanade do not seem to be included.

*DDC Response: Over the course of summer 2024, many amenities south of the Williamsburg Bridge will open. This includes the esplanade between the Corlears Hook Ferry landing and the Williamsburg Bridge, the amphitheater seating area without the stage and canopy (the amphitheater canopy will be installed in 2025), the basketball courts, and nature play area (without all elements). The amenities will open as they are completed by the contractor and approved by Parks. The passive lawn will close to facilitate bridge staging and subsequent construction of the compost yard, and the amphitheater will close for installation of the updated canopy in 2025 as mentioned. Access to the newly opened areas of the park will be provided via the Corlears Hook temporary bridge until the Delancey Street Bridge and Corlears Hook Bridge open later in 2024.*

9. Question: Can the amphitheater be constructed in winter weather?

*DDC Response: Yes. The amphitheater is under construction and the seating area is expected to open by Fall 2024, without the stage and canopy. The stage and canopy will begin construction in 2025 with an expected opening in 2026.*

#### **Sequencing**

10. Question: Clarification needed: I may be remembering wrong, but I thought they said the Delancey bridge would be first, followed by Corlears. That doesn't match this map (which Desiree shared in May 2023.)

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



DDC Response: *Due to fabrication schedules, the Delancey St pedestrian bridge is currently anticipated to arrive in March/April 2024, followed by the Corlears Hook Bridge later in the year. The Delancey St. Bridge will likely open prior to the Corlears Hook Bridge This is illustrated in schedule on page 25 of the October 2023 CAG presentation: [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/20231026-ESCR-CAG\\_Meeting\\_38\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/20231026-ESCR-CAG_Meeting_38_Final.pdf). Updates will be provided in early 2024.*

**Dianne’s December 2023 Questions, following Ballfield 3-5 Closure Announcement**

11. Question: The weekly bulletin on Friday 12/1 gave the start date as 12/11, but signage in the park near Field 5 says 12/18. Hopefully it’s 12/18, since this hasn’t been presented at CB 3, and the Parks meeting is 12/13.

DDC Response: *Work began 12/18—the start date was changed after the bulletin was initially sent out. A revised Advisory was issued subsequently.*

12. Question: Is the start date the date on which the fields and esplanade will be closed, or will there be "mobilization" activities before the closure takes effect?

DDC Response: *The contractor closed off the new work zone on December 18<sup>th</sup> with minimal pre-mobilization activities in the open area prior such as ground marking.*

13. Question: Re: esplanade, I walked through Fields 5 and 6, and saw that the right-field line of Field 6 extends to the eastern fence just north of a gate. Are you planning to leave that gate open? It would be ideal if the esplanade closure is south of that gate, so that there’s more than one entrance to the ballfield and the remaining esplanade is not a dead end (which was cited as a safety concern at the CAG meeting).

DDC Response: *The initial closure plan included the esplanade path up to the approximate location of the gate. However, NYC Parks requested that the esplanade closure be moved north to provide a wider space for users to turn around. NYC Parks also wanted to discourage people from circulating through the ballfield. Per Parks*



*request, the contractor increased the size of the only entrance to ballfield 6 to improve access.*

14. Question: On the west side of Field 5, there's a large wooden plate in the ground, looks like a dungeon trap door :) Is that the area where the major work needs to be done?

*DDC Response: Parks investigated and determined the plywood had been dumped there. It has been removed.*

15. Question: The track now has solar lights. They are GREAT! If ESCR had anything to do with them, please let's leave them in place all winter. Shortening the esplanade will push more runners onto the track at night, and the lights make a huge visibility and therefore safety difference.

*DDC Response: The contractor is responsible for the lights around the track. DDC, Parks, and the contractor are currently coordinating to keep them in place during the winter.*

16. Question: I have seen the Lions practicing at night recently although I don't remember seeing organized winter evening practices in other years.

*DDC Response: NYC Parks has been in touch with the Lions in advance of the closure.*

17. Question: I was just at the park and discovered that all benches and tables south of 6th Street have been removed from the esplanade - even in the section that is clearly shown on the posted signage to be open (next to Field 6, which will also be open). Could you check with Desiree about what is going on? First, the signage says that work starts on 12/18 - this is a week early. Second, I am concerned that the diagrams and signage are inaccurate if esplanade amenities are being removed from areas designated as open on the signage posted in the park.

*DDC Response: The initial closure plan included the esplanade path up to the approximate location of the ball field's outfield line. However, NYC Parks requested that the esplanade closure be moved north to provide a wider space on the path for users to turn around. NYC Parks also wanted to discourage people from circulating through the ball field using the gate from the esplanade. The contractor increased the size of the only entrance to ball field 6 to improve access.*

*Some furniture was removed by Parks to be replaced with salvaged furniture in better condition.*

### **Wendy's December 2023/January 2024 Questions Regarding Trees, Fill, and Soil**

18. Question: What is the potential for planting more mature trees, rather than saplings in East River Park?

DDC Response: *The design team has worked with NYC Parks construction procurements team to source the trees at sizes that are commercially available based on the quantities specified, the species, and transplanting characteristics. The majority of the trees in the park are Type 1 shade trees according to ANSI Z60.1. The typical size specified for these trees is approximately 3" caliper. The American Standards for Nursery Stock indicates that a Type 1 Shade tree at 3"-3.5" caliper (measured 6" above adjacent grade) should have an average height of 14'-16' with the typical maximum of 18' height. Growth will vary by species, but in nursery settings a rule of thumb is that trees will often add ½" caliper per year with 1'-2' of growth in the canopy.*

*While there may be the urge to plant much larger caliper trees, there are risks from transplant shock, the trees are harder to handle during construction because the weight of the root ball on larger trees, and it becomes much more difficult to source and procure high-quality large caliper trees in the quantities that are proposed for East River Park. Replacement of larger caliper trees during the warranty period becomes difficult and requires repairs to the area around the trees. In addition, many trees do not transplant well as they grow in size. A planting approach that requires larger trees throughout would reduce species diversity and make the tree canopy composition more susceptible to climate change and less resilient. Studies highlight the importance of root structure in establishing trees and shows how the root structure of larger trees is impacted in the transplanting process. One study indicates that larger trees take longer to reestablish the root systems needed to support growth and as a result grow slower than small trees and suggests that small trees planted at the same time start to close the gap in size differential between the two at the time of planting.*

*For more information on planting palette, review ESCR EIS Chapter 5.6, "Natural Resources" (<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/FEIS/ESCR-EIS-Chapter-5.6-Natural-Resources.pdf>) and the pages 147-166 of the Final PDC Presentation (<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/DDC-f-ESCR-pres-rev-final-given-to-PDC-2020-01-30.pdf>).*

**19. Question:**Are there concerns with the soil being just 1-2 feet deep and fill below that?

DDC Response: *The soil depth will vary between 18 and 36 inches depending on the plantings at any given location. Trees and shrubs will be planted in 36 inches of horticultural soil, while grass sod will be planted on 18 inches of horticultural soil. The planned depth of the soil meets standards for healthy plant growth.*

**20. Question:** since this is going to the CCL, I'll ask about the ESCR topsoil, which I hear is 18-24" deep with some Biochar, can you tell me what kind and its source, please? what

% is biochar? What other soil amendments are in that mix? Any microbes being added? Are you adding compost made in Manhattan? Is there any irrigation being added to the new park in PA1 (know Stuy Cove got some)

DDC Response: *At this time, the top soil has not been approved. Updates will be provided when the soil composition has been finalized.*

21. Is there any irrigation being added to the new park in PA1?

DDC Response: *Yes, there will be irrigation throughout the site in all planted areas.*

### **Dianne's January 2024 Questions Regarding PA2 Gate Tracks**

22. Question: The tracks for the roller gates are still filled in with blacktop to prevent tripping. Can she give us some detail at the January CAG on the overall plan for those tracks - will they be cleaned out so that we're prepared to use them? Is there a different no-trip solution for the long term?

DDC Response: *The design for a removable trip prevention covering for the tracks is under final approval and will be presented and then installed when finalized. Should the asphalt still be present at time of deployment, the City will make the decision to deploy the flood protection system days in advance of a storm making landfall, and would be able to clear the asphalt out of the tracks and close the gates in a matter of hours.*