

November 2024

RE: ESCR CAG: Shade, Irrigation, Lighting in new East River Park

To Members of the ESCR CAG:

Thank you for your recent follow-up to our September 2024 responses. Formal DDC responses are provided below, including collaboration with Parks where appropriate. We have numbered the questions within to provide organization in the responses.

**CAG:** Thank you to DDC for the quick response to our letter of August 2024. We are responding to request some additional detail on irrigation and to follow up on our concern about the lack of shade until the new trees can "grow to provide shade" (page 3 of the response). Thank you for the detailed list about **spectator seating** -- that's great news.

1. The **irrigation design** is also good news. Given that planting is imminent in the area around ballfields 1 and 2, we are requesting that more detailed information be shared with the CAG at one of our remaining 2024 meetings to help the community prepare for future stewardship activities. We can provide a list of specific questions if that's helpful.

**Parks Response:** *Parks is eager to work with the community on planning future stewardship in the area. The CAG is free to share any specific questions that they have which can help shape the discussion. In anticipation of the next round of openings, Parks is planning on conducting a working group with the Lower East Side Ecology Center (and anyone from the community who wishes to join) on the details of how plants are cared for in East River Park.*

2. Also, in response to your June 2024 letter, specifically the **portable lighting at the track**: the CAG appreciates additional lighting at the track! Our question was about placement of the lights around the field versus on the track infield. Wherever possible, they should remain off the infield so that athletes run less risk of colliding with them.

**DDC Response:** *The ESCR team and Parks are open to relocating the portable lighting at the track. Please provide suggested locations for the three lighting fixtures currently located within the track infield, and we will determine viability.*

3. With regard to **shade**, thank you for the detail about tree plantings and umbrellas. The CAG understands that the trees will eventually provide shade and that a limited number of small umbrellas will be also placed in specific areas of East River Park. Our concern is this: there is no shade now in the new Stuyvesant Cove Park, and this discourages the community from using it. In the new East River Park, with the exception of those small umbrellas and the shadow of the Williamsburg Bridge, there will be no shade. Judging by the trees planted post-Sandy, we expect that it will take at least ten years for the new trees to provide significant shade.

Noting the 12 to 20 degrees of relief offered at Stuy Cove by the bushy Eastern Bluestem and other grasses, tall sunflowers, goldenrod, etc., we suggest encouraging fast growing plants to

flourish in PA1 while the trees take root and spread to provide shade. This cooling solution could be a great stewardship project. On October 8 at around 2 pm, the ambient temperature was 69 degrees; Field #7 (grass) was 75 degrees; turf in the track was 103 degrees; and under the trees at the southeast track entrance it was 54 degrees.

As you know, the communities that border ESCR include many seniors and low-income families who rely on waterfront parks for healthy recreation, socializing, and relaxation. The extremely limited amount of shade will effectively exclude many of them from the waterfront – not only seniors, but young children and people of all ages with health conditions or disabilities that limit sun and heat exposure.

There is already an unfortunate example of this issue at the new Pier 42 upland park. The CAG understands that Pier 42 is not part of ESCR, but its landscape design and newly planted trees are very similar to ESCR. This *New York Magazine* article from August 2024 highlights the Pier 42 issues and concerns well:

<https://www.curbed.com/article/playground-pier-42-sun-shade-extreme-heat-park-design.html>

It also features examples of shade solutions both here in NYC and in other cities.

We are aware that much thought was put into designing accessible park and waterfront entrances, pathways, and seating. Our concern is that without shade, the people who will most benefit from those improvements will not be able to walk along or remain at the waterfront to enjoy it. The CAG is requesting that DDC and the Parks Department partner with us to look for solutions that allow everyone in our community to use the waterfront fully when it reopens, not ten years in the future.

**DDC Response:** *While Stuyvesant Cove Park future shade should be coordinated with EDC, please read below for East River Park (PA1).*

*There are many fast-growing plants in the ESCR plant palette and many of the shrub/perennial areas are in places where people will congregate. A sample of the fast-growing species from the palette are listed below with their mature height:*

**Perennials/Grasses** (can reach full height in 1-2 growing seasons):

- *Asclepias incarnata*, full height: 3-4'
- *Eupatorium maculatum* 'Gateway', 4-5'
- *Heliopsis helianthoides* 'Summer Sun', 3-4'
- *Monarda didyma* 'Jacob Cline', 4-5'
- *Solidago sempervirens*, 3-6'
- *Symphotrichum novi-belgii*, 3-5'
- *Panicum virgatum* 'Cloud Nine', 5-7'

**Shrubs** (can reach full size in 2-5 growing seasons)

- *Amorpha fruticosa*, 6-12'
- *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, 6-12'
- *Cornus sericea*, 6-9'
- *Rhus glabra*, 9-15'
- *Rosa rugosa*, 4-6'
- *Sambucus canadensis*, 5-12'

**Parks Response:** *Parks is looking at creative solutions to bridge the shade gap in between when park opens and when trees are fully developed. Parks installed shade netting over the dugouts at Field 2 at the recently opened property. We are eager to know if the community has any feedback on this specific shade material that was used both in terms of the overall*

*appearance and the amount of shade provided. If this material is desirable, Parks is planning on exploring utilizing it at other areas (this material is not overly expensive and can be installed relatively easily). Parks is specifically looking at doing something to address the lack of shade at Pier 42 for the Summer of 2025 (in anticipation of possible extreme heat events).*