

ESCR CAG Meeting -- January 23, 2025
(via Zoom)

CAG members present

Ditashiah Khan Wendy Brawer Dina Elkan Frank Avila Goldman Dianne Lake Michael Marino Christine Datz-Romero Robin Schatell Susan Steinberg
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[Link to slide deck for this presentation](#)

ESCR Presentation

Ethan Kraft, HNTB-LiRo

1. Hiring Events & Programming
 - a. Two Bridges Dreams YouthBuild Program
 - i. Offers GED attainment assistance
 - ii. Paid job training
 1. OSHA 10 & 30 training
 2. NCCER¹ construction certification training
 - iii. College & career placement assistance
 - iv. Working with DDC on collaboration opportunities
 - b. Workforce1 ITC (Industrial & Transportation Career Center) Recruitment Fair on 2/13/25
 - i. Sessions at 12pm and 1pm
 - ii. 168-46 91st Avenue, 2nd Floor Jamaica, NY 11432
 - iii. Positions include non-CDL² driver, CDL driver, warehouse roles,
 - iv. passenger service agent, e-bike couriers, and opportunities at JFK
 - v. Register here: <https://bit.ly/4jrtLGO>
2. LESEC³ walkthrough occurred to check out progress in PA1 (*see slide 6*)
3. Overview of Contracts (*see slide 8*)
 - a. Similar to previous meeting, especially for PA1
 - b. Partial closures continue south of E. Houston St., Ballfields 7 & 8, the Greenway to E. 10th St., and Corlears Hook Park.

¹ National Center for Construction Education & Research

² Commercial Driver's License

³ Lower East Side Ecology Center

- c. Ongoing utility work, floodwall activities, E. Houston St. retaining wall work
 - d. Deep sewer work really getting underway in Ballfields 7 & 8 after last month's closures.
 - e. Ballfields 1 & 2 are open, and we continue to make progress on the amphitheater area, the tennis court, and basketball court construction
 - f. Parallel conveyance
 - i. Daytime closure of Jackson St. continues to facilitate deep sewer work and utility relocation
 - ii. Utility relocations and test pits at Lewis and Delancey Streets
 - iii. More utility relocations and test piles ongoing at Avenue C (E. 18th – E. 23rd) and E. 20th (Avenue C and E. 20th loop)
4. PA1 Construction Activities (*see slide 10*)
- a. Floodwall, floodgate operations, and utility work continue.
 - b. Corlears Hook Bridge approach construction, including overhead sign structure foundation work
 - c. Esplanade paver installation.
 - d. Amphitheater, Basketball Court construction.
 - e. Ballfields 1 & 2 OPEN!
 - f. Road restoration work
 - g. Tennis Court construction, esplanade reconstruction
 - h. E. Houston St. retaining wall activities
 - i. Floodwall, rigid inclusion, and wick drain installation
 - j. Test pits and deep sewer work
 - k. Ongoing utility and deep sewer work
 - l. Ongoing partial FDR lane closures continue at various locations for bridge work, utility installations, and construction of foundation for overhead sign structures.
 - i. Much of the work at Grand St. is complete
 - ii. FDR has been largely restored from nightwork
 - iii. Another crossing at Cherry St. to be made in a few months
 - 1. There will not be associated nightwork across the FDR for that crossing for quite a while.
5. PA1 Sewer work continues at E. 10th Street – ongoing for roughly four months
- a. Following a successful microtunneling operation, sewer construction continues at E. 10th Street
 - b. Requires daytime road and south sidewalk closures with access restored at the end of each workday
 - c. Flaggers stationed to assist
6. PA1 Overnight FDR Drive Intermittent Closures on 1/25/25 from 1 am to 7 am
- a. To facilitate the transport of heavy construction equipment between East River Park and Corlears Hook Park
 - b. Overnight northbound and southbound FDR Drive intermittent traffic stoppages

- c. Single lane closures and complete stoppages for roughly 5 minutes each
- 7. PA1 Construction photos (*see slides 13-15*)
 - a. Construction of overhead sign structure near Corlears Hook Park
 - b. Backfilling and rebar reinforcement at floodwall under FDR near Montgomery St.
 - c. Much progress has been made in backfilling the floodwall at Montgomery and South Streets (near Gouverneur Gardens).
 - d. Trees, shrubs, and mulch installed near Ballfields 1 & 2
 - e. Planting area under Williamsburg Bridge
 - f. To date 499 trees and 18,000 shrubs, perennials, and grasses have been planted. Next planting season begins in March (weather-dependent).
- 8. PA1 | E. Houston St. Detour Signage (*see slide 16*)
 - a. Signs added, and changes made to make language more consistent and improve the visibility of the detour.
- 9. What We've Heard
 - a. Fireboat House / Section 106 Process: City is consulting with New York State and hopes to have a comprehensive response to the Alternatives Analysis comments that the consulting parties provided in a few weeks
 - b. Future amenity openings: in progress; we'll share the information as soon as we can.
 - c. Parks: Restrooms near Track & Field
 - i. *Luc Alicea from NYC Parks*: Port-a-Johns have been sited to offset restroom closures during the winter. We anticipate opening the E. 10th St. and Track House bathrooms in the spring.
 - Christine*: Why were the restrooms closed?
 - Luc*: Due to a longstanding ConEd issue, the heat isn't working and could lead to burst pipes if we were to keep the water on. ConEd is not willing to fix the issue since the bathrooms will be undergoing extensive renovation as part of ESCR.
- 10. PA1 Environmental Monitoring
 - a. Monitoring locations (*see slide 19*)
 - b. December 2024 update
 - i. A good month with five alerts at Jackson and E. 6th Streets. Each were half an hour or less, and dust mitigation measures were applied to alleviate each of those.
- 11. PC Construction Activities
 - a. Location 1 – Jackson St. & Water St. & Corlears Hook Park
 - i. Daytime road closures at Jackson St. for utility relocation in preparation for deep sewer installation.
 - ii. Utility relocation
 - b. Location 2 – Lewis St. & Delancey St. S

- i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Test pits
- c. Location 3 – Baruch Dr. & Delancey St. N
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Test pits
- d. Location 4 – E. Houston St. & Columbia St.
 - i. Electric relocation
- e. Location 5 – Avenue C & E. 18th
 - i. ConEd utility relocation
 - ii. Test pits
- f. Location 6 – Avenue C, E. 20th to E. 23rd
 - i. Electric relocation
 - ii. Test pits

12. PC Construction photos (*see slide 23*)

- a. ConEd electric layout in Avenue D
- b. ConEd manhole installation in E. Houston St.
- c. Steam main slip joint relocation in Avenue C and E. 18th St.

13. PA2 Construction Progress

- a. Asser Levy Playground – open!
- b. Stuyvesant Cove Park – open!
 - i. North entrance at E. 23 St. **closed** for EDC Solar One construction work.
- c. Murphy Brothers Playground - open!

14. PA2 Advisory: FDR Drive Nightwork between E. 15th and E. 17th

- a. Ongoing, expected to conclude in next couple of days - work hours: 11:00pm to 5:00am
- b. Facilitates testing for overhead sign footing
- c. Overnight closure of one northbound lane and one southbound lane between E. 15th Street and E. 17th Street
- d. Traffic will be maintained on the FDR Drive at all times.

Q & A

Frank: Before your time, there were a lot of discussions about additional lighting for the crossing underneath the FDR right at the base of Montgomery Street. Did anyone ever follow up on that? Also, knowing some of the issues with parallel conveyance on Water St. (easements, complicated things that aren't listed), do you know where we are on the overall schedule for the work?

Ethan: I'll look into the first question. As far as I know, the project is still on track, but I'll double check with the team tomorrow and circle back.

Wendy: The rebar (*seen on slide 13*) is all going to be a wall, right?

Ethan: Correct, yes.

Wendy: Where are the pedestrian and bikers?

Ethan: The shared use path will be on the southern edge, closer to Pier 42.

Wendy: This really underscores what Frank was asking about the lighting; it's going to be very dark with that wall there. I hope there will be lighting; it's very important to people's sense of security there.

Ethan: Yes, I'll look into it and share it with you guys.

Wendy: There's a lot of concrete under the Williamsburg Bridge where you can see picnic tables are being placed. I thought it was supposed to be a grassy area; how did it become a picnic zone?

Ethan: I'm not sure what the design considerations were, but we can present a more in-depth view of that area at the next CAG if you like.

Wendy: That would be great; people are curious about it. Thank you.

Dianne: There are tree guards on the northern end of the park by the anchor. I believe they were put in place to protect the trees while ConEd was working up there, but they seem to be done. Can they come down now? They're kind of falling apart anyway.

Luc: We verified that this wasn't connected to ESCR work, and I've routed it to ConEd. I'll give them to early next week to get a response, and then I'll hound them. I think you're likely right that they can come down.

CAG-only

Guest Jason Froimowitz of Light the Track:

We have an online petition with 700 signatures calling for lighting at the renovated track as part of ESCR. The track isn't fully lit today. It has temporary lights that aren't entirely effective and whose batteries don't last very long. As far as my research shows, the reason why there won't be lighting is because nobody asked for it so they didn't include it. Does anyone in this group know if someone objected to lighting? Our case is that the track is heavily used after dark despite the lack of light there today. It's the only regulation-size running track south of 135th Street in Manhattan. The one at 135th St. at Riverbank Park is fully lit. Lighting will make the track more accessible throughout the year, especially in the darker months. It would improve safety around the track and encourage more use. Brooklyn's McCarren Park is fully lit. It's a once-in-a-decade opportunity to get this done. I'd love any feedback about concerns with lighting or anyone has background on why it wasn't included.

I plan on talking to the CB3 Parks committee next month and hope to get a resolution of support from them. We're also going to work with Councilmember Rivera's office to see if we can secure some funding and change requests. 26:04

Dianne: You're advocating for full flood lighting in the way the ballfields are lit, correct?

Jason: Yes.

Dianne: It's great to have the track lit, but a broader issue for all of the lighting is that we don't want it to be on all night. It's disruptive to wildlife. I would want them to shut off after a certain point.

Jason: Yes, I agree. I think it would be appropriate to follow the ballfields' schedule. McCarren Park's lights are on until 10 pm, but I'm not sure what it is for the ballfields.

Michael: I think the ballfield lights go off at 10 pm. I might be wrong, but it seems like the ballfield lights are only turned on when the ballfield is permitted for a game that night.

Jason: I've seen that the empty field is very well lit.

Dianne: That's a recent development since the park got so much smaller with ESCR. Parks is trying to light up more parts of the park since we don't have as much space as we used to. In the past, it was only lit during permitted times.

Michael: I used to be on the Community Board Parks Committee, and within all the design iterations for ESCR I don't remember any discussion for there ever to be lighting. The old track didn't have it, and it wasn't incorporated in the new design. The old track was only lit by streetlamps which is the plan for the new track. I would suggest that because the Borough President and the Councilmembers have access to capital funding, you should go to them. The odds of you getting this added to ESCR are minimal. You would also have to go to the Community Board whose committees keep ranked lists of capital funding requests. When the time comes, they give those lists to the respective city agencies who go down the list until they run out of funding.

Jason: Thanks; that makes sense.

Christine: I'm not a runner, but I do use the park. My previous experience with floodlights is that they were on and blazing all the time even when nobody was there; it's a big waste of energy. I don't know if new floodlights will be better, but there was no timer to turn them off. I feel that they're disruptive to park users and wildlife. I don't know how nearby residents feel about the lights. Are there less invasive ways to bring lighting to the track?

Jason: Part of the goal of going to the CB is to get feedback from residents and see if there's objection from the community there. There are some potentially viable alternative options. My concern about a dimmer light is how it would affect the perception of safety. I think there's a big difference between using a facility when it's fully lit and clear versus being passable. Shutting the lights off at a reasonable hour would be preferable to something dimmer.

Wendy: You should talk to Audubon because East River Park is an important point on the bird migration route. 500 species of birds were counted in the park before they took the trees down. They're returning now to Stuy Cove, and we'd like them to return to East River Park as well, so it would be said if the track lighting wrecked their habitat. There used to be a big flood light on the track that sort of blinded you when you went around; that's not ideal either. I suggest you bring in some examples to the Community Board meetings so people can get a sense of what the alternatives might be and what they might cost to operate. Solar might also be possible.

Jason: Thanks for listening and giving feedback; I appreciate it. Also, check out lightthetrack.org as it lays out the case.

Paula: Dianne suggested that the CAG discuss DDC and Parks' response to the CAG letter regarding the critical need for shade. Dianne, do you want to kick us off?

Dianne: The suggestion that shrubs and beach grasses--whose full-grown height ranges from 3 to 7 feet--are going to shade people overhead is comical, and I wanted to bring it up and see if others are interested in pursuing this. We seem to be stuck on the fact that the City is maintaining that the shrubs and grasses are going to grow, and that they don't need to provide any shade structures. I disagree with that, so I wanted to ask the CAG if we want to keep talking about this.

Wendy: I took the temperature at the shade structure that Luc put up, and it made a two-degree difference. Then I walked up to Stuy Cove and where there was shade from the sunflowers and the blue stems it was about 12 to 15 degrees cooler. Native plants transpire and give off moisture that helps us feel cooler.

Dina: The number one complaint we've received about the new park is that it's brutally hot in the summer with no shade. The grasses and the shrubs will not grow fast enough to create shade where people are sitting; neither will the Honey Locust trees. I think it's worth continuing to push for shade.

Dianne: Did you appeal to ESCR and/or EDC to provide shade structures and they refused so you ended up with City Council funding for shade?

Dina: Their knee-jerk response to any request to change something is "that's up to DDC design. We're just construction and can only follow plans that have been approved." We asked EDC to reach out to the DDC design team and they did, but DDC won't talk to EDC about it either. There's no avenue to get any kind of design change once the project's approved. I still don't know who signed off on the final plan. It's turned into an untransparent and super frustrating process.

Dianne: Did you have specific shade structures that you were recommending?

Dina: We went out and looked at what might work; we'd like to put them in spaces where people are sitting. We have to be conscious about how easily any sort of protective structure in the park can become an encampment. We came up with these cantilevered shades with fabric on top. I can share what we looked at with the CAG.

Dianne: That would be great because if the CAG wants to pursue this, our next step might be to go back to them with specific recommendations. Part of that might be telling them where shade should go and what kind of structures. I know folks on the CAG visit other parks and have seen examples of what we want, so we should be able to go back to them with a specific ask about where and what.

Frank, via chat: I'd appreciate any shade structure recommendations that people have researched.

Robin: I've done that research before. Union Square playground has these pole-tent structures that are easy to put up. It's not the type of structure someone would want to camp under. It seems kind of ridiculous that we're recommending shade structures to the Parks Department.

Paula: A next step is that people will send me examples of shade structures they've seen elsewhere that might work. The other aspect is location; maybe a few CAG members could sit down with a map of the park and point out some locations for them.

Dianne: I think that sounds like a good idea.

Paula: Once we get some ideas, I could convene a sub-group of the CAG to put geography to the shade structure request.

Wendy: Do you think it would be useful to get some public health data about the negative impacts of recreational areas without shade?

Frank: I don't feel that we need that unless someone wants to do extra work. I think the position should be that there's not enough shade. I don't know if we want to seek to prove that; we should just be pushing for the best way to get the most amount of shade. I don't mean to discredit what you're saying, but I'm sure most agree that there's a dearth of shade all along these new parks that they're developing.

Wendy: I think it's obvious, too, but I'll stick an article about the importance of shade in the shared document.

Paula: Is there any other topic we should talk about? (*No response*) If not, I'd like to thank Dianne for bringing this shade topic back up, and I look forward to getting examples about shade structures and facilitating a meeting about where they should be installed.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:59 pm.