

ESCR CAG Meeting -- December 18, 2025
(via Zoom)

CAG members present

Frank Avila-Goldman Wendy Brawer Christine Datz-Romero Richard Heitler Dianne Lake Michael Marino Sam Moskowitz Robin Schatell Susan Steinberg
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[Link to slide deck for this presentation](#)

ESCR Presentation

Ethan Kraft, HNTB-LiRo

1. PA1 Construction Activities (*see map on slide 9*)
 - a. Floodwall and floodgate operations
 - b. Parks & Maintenance building, Tennis building construction.
 - c. Esplanade reconstruction, E. Houston Street retaining wall activities. Excavation and clean fill installation.
 - d. Track, esplanade, E. 6th Street bridge, E. Houston Street entry closed for construction. Deep sewer work, floodwall construction, and excavation.
 - e. Utility work. **Preparation for E. 13th Street floodwall construction**
 - f. Phase 1 amenities OPEN
Punch list items, including sports light maintenance, electrical work, and **Delancey Street Bridge closure.**
 - g. Ongoing partial FDR lane closures continue at various locations for bridge work and utility installations

2. PA1 Temporary Delancey Bridge Closure – December 15-19
 - a. Necessary to accommodate installation of permanent railing for the bridge ramp and staircase
 - b. Access to and exit from East River Park via the Corlears Hook Bridge
 - c. **Additional closure anticipated January 5-9, 2026** (formal Advisory to come)

3. PA1 Floodwall Construction at E. 13th Steet
 - a. As early as Q1 2026:
 - i. Pile installation for floodwalls will begin west of the FDR Drive, followed by west side (**nightwork**)
 - ii. Piles will need to be installed across the FDR Drive
 - iii. Due to closures, **DOT requires that we perform this work at night**
 - iv. **These operations are expected to be noisy and disruptive**

- b. ESCR team is communicating regularly with NYCHA Riis residents & management
- 4. PA1 Construction Photos – from December 2025 (*see slides 12-15*)
 - a. Lightning rod maintenance on Fields 1 & 2 sports light towers
 - b. Rebar for floodwall footing near Pier 42
 - c. Installing rails on Delancey Street bridge staircase
 - d. Tennis building construction
 - e. Fence pots installed at future site of Fields 3 & 4
 - f. Trench for sewer construction near Track site
 - g. Combi-wall installation along East River waterfront
- 5. PA1 Project Status
 - a. 42% of East River Park is currently open to the community, following full transition to phase 2 in September 2025.
 - b. Unforeseen underground obstructions, including high levels of historical construction & demolition debris, and extensive utility conflicts have required mitigation and alternate engineering approaches.
 - c. PA1 is now anticipated to be completed in late 2027.
 - d. The ESCR team’s top priority is implementing a functional flood protection sooner than full project completion.
- 6. PA1 Site Context (*see slides 18-21*)
 - a. Map showing natural shoreline, infill as of 1865, and present-day park
 - b. Construction of FDR Drive and East River Park infill – 1937
 - c. Completed FDR Drive and East River Park – around 1940
 - d. Community swimming in East River near E. 10th Street – 1933
 - e. Construction of East River Drive near E. 4th Street – 1938
 - f. Piers and buildings on East River shoreline prior to demolition and fill for East River Park – 1937
 - g. Bulkheads and pier stumps during demolition for East River Park and East River Drive – 1937
 - h. Bulkheads and pier stumps during demolition and fill for East River Park and East River Drive – 1937
- 7. PA1 Timeline (*see chart on slide 22*)
 - a. Phase 2 to go until end of project (2027)
 - b. Working to implement flood protection as quickly as possible
 - c. E. 10th Street bridge to be completed before Phase 2, but it likely won’t provide access to the park until it’s done at end of 2027
- 8. PA1 What We’ve Heard
 - a. 14th Street Connector timeline - Tracking to begin construction early 2028 with anticipated completion in 2030; the new timeline does not impact this.
 - b. Trees at site of future public restroom building (adjacent to Fields 1 & 2) - Three trees will be transplanted to Corlears Hook Park, scheduled for Friday 12/19/25
- 9. Environmental Reporting and Air Quality Monitoring
 - a. Monitoring locations in PA1: most of them are north of the tennis courts where construction is happening (*see map on slide 25*)

- b. November 2025 Update
 - i. Good month; only one alert lasted over an hour; the rest were fairly limited. In all cases dust suppression techniques were applied.
10. PC Construction Activities
- a. Location 1 – Jackson St., Water St., South St. & Corlears Hook Park
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Sewer installation
 - b. Location 2 – Lewis St. & Delancey St. S
 - i. Secant pile installation
 - ii. Sewer installation
 - c. Location 3 – Baruch Dr. & Delancey St. N
 - i. Jet grouting
 - ii. Secant pile installation
 - iii. Sewer installation
 - d. Location 4 – E. Houston St. & Columbia St.
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Sewer installation
 - e. Location 5 – Avenue C & E. 18th
 - i. Minimal activity in this area
 - f. Location 6 – Avenue C, E. 20th to E. 23rd
 - i. Test pits
 - ii. Jet grouting
11. PC Construction photos (*see slide 29-30*)
- a. Manhole construction at Lewis St.
 - b. Sewer installation on Lewis St.
 - c. Backfilling sewer trench on Lewis St.
 - d. Installing frame and casting for manhole at Broome and Lewis St.
 - e. Jet grouting on Delancey St. N
 - f. Secant pile installation on Delancey St. S
12. Upcoming Meetings
- a. Thursday, January 15, 2026 - CB3 Parks: ESCR / BMCR update
 - b. Thursday, January 22, 2026 - CAG Meeting #65
 - c. Thursday, February 12, 2026 - CB3 Parks: ESCR Compost Facility update

Q & A

Michael: About the trees that are being transplanted to Corlears Hook Park tomorrow -- what does it mean for the warranty on those trees, and where in the park are they going?

Ethan: I'll have to get back to you on whether the warranty re-starts or goes back to the planting here. There's One Hackberry tree and two River Birches: one will go at the bottom of the staircase, one will be planted east of the flagpole/paved circle, and the third will go where the FDR service road meets Cherry Street.

Dianne: Another topic that came up at CB3 and in speaking to elected officials is whether or not any of Phase 2 can be opened ahead of the end of 2027, to have a rolling opening like for Phase 1.

Ethan: At this time, it doesn't look super-likely that we'll be able to have interim openings, but we're continuing to look at opportunities to do so. We will not just take this

answer and stick with it. Similar to the timeline, as construction moves forward, there are times when it doesn't look likely that we'll open it, but as things moves along there might be more opportunities that change that dynamic. The community engagement team and others on the project are highly interested in returning portions of the park to the public, so we will continue to try to do that.

Dianne: Great, we'll continue to inquire about that at the CAG and CB3 because people will want access to the waterfront a little closer to the north. Right now, for those of us who live in the very northern end of Phase 2, it's over a mile just to get to the park. Being able to get to the waterfront more effectively would be great. I'm sure everyone would be very interested in getting access to more of the esplanade heading north if that's possible.

Ethan: Yes, thank you for bringing those points back up. I invite you to continue doing so. I will make sure the esplanade message is heard as well.

Wendy: At CB3, I asked about street repair adjacent to the park because it's getting more treacherous for bikers, runners, and walkers. Is there any word on that?

Ethan: I have not had a chance to speak with DOT about it. An hour before this meeting, I emailed you to ask for more clarification. I am looking into it and want to work with you on that.

Wendy: Great. And for Fields 3 and 4, is that real grass or turf?

Ethan: I'll have to report back; I can't recall.

Wendy: I was surprised that it wasn't anticipated that they would find underground construction and demolition debris in the north end given all the soil testing and long understanding that the manufactured gas plant was there. We received a report on lead; are there any other materials down there that you have to report to the public on?

Ethan: We have a strong understanding of the types of things we'll find in the soil; however, much like the need to open the street when dealing with utilities, sometimes it's just a piece of concrete or timber that the machine runs into. We don't have a full view of what's underground until we're digging and drilling so that's part of why there are still surprises. I'll have to find out what our exact public reporting requirements are on other materials.

Wendy: The soil report from 2019 report included elevated levels of mercury, arsenic, and benzene right in that area. It would be good to know what else is popping up. Also, on the east side of the new public restroom building will be one of the few places with shade in the afternoons, so let's think about that people will want to be sitting there. Maybe there could be an awning on that building to increase shade.

Ethan: The design is set, but I can take that back and see if there's any wiggle room.

Wendy: Is there a Gantt chart for parallel conveyance?

Ethan: I can go back to that team and get an update on that.

Christine: I'm happy that these trees are getting moved, but when is the bathroom construction starting?

Ethan: I'll have to report back on that.

Christine: We were all really excited for the opening of the southern part but surprised by the lack of amenities such as bathrooms. With the northern part slated to open in 2027, are we going to see a similar pattern where the park might be open but amenities for fully enjoying it are still in the process of being added? I don't think anyone on the CAG or elsewhere realized that we wouldn't have restrooms when the southern portion opened. It's an issue when porta-potties are the only option. How complete is the park going to be when it opens in 2027?

Ethan: Your feedback on the need to have bathrooms activated when the park is open is very helpful, and I'll take that back. The bathroom near Field 1 & 2 is anticipated to start construction in early 2026.

Christine: And it will take a year?

Ethan: I'm not sure; I can find out.

Christine: OK, because it impacts how the park is being used and enjoyed. The ball field by Houston was closed earlier than anticipated so as to not slow down construction, which I understand. But I'm surprised that the big chunk near Houston Street will be closed until however complete the northern part is.

Ethan: I understand your frustration with my saying that it's unlikely that anything will reopen. We and the contractor are interested in returning the park to the public, and there are efforts to do so. I just can't promise it at this time. The retaining wall at Houston has presented its own challenges, so that's one of the reasons why it might not be open until the end of the project. Again, we will continue to try to find opportunities to open parts of the park earlier.

Robin: I have a few questions about this bathroom. How will construction dust be managed, especially considering that it's next to the ballfields where kids will be playing. Why was this spot that required ripping up a newly installed lawn chosen for the bathroom? I understand there are parameters, but aren't all park bathrooms pretty similar in design? Finally, will the open space that is lost via this bathroom construction be supplied someplace else?

Ethan: I should have clarified earlier that the bathroom contract is totally separate from ESCR. That's part of the reason I don't have all the answers. It's handled by a separate DDC team.

Jeff, DDC: This is a contract for five separate bathrooms around the City. This was [a standard design](#) that DDC and Parks worked on; it's the Parks standard bathroom design. We're trying to simplify the construction and procurement so we have the same features in each of them and can save time and money.

Working with Parks, this location next to the fields was requested.

Robin: Did the Community Board have any questions about the location?

Jeff: I don't recall any specific concern.

Kristen Cawthorn, DDC: There were no specific questions regarding the location. We did get some feedback on the design and some of the exterior finishes that we've taken back to the project team and are under discussion now. The location has been set.

Robin: It looks nice in the renderings, but it's too bad the construction is happening when the park is open now.

Jeff: Yes, as Ethan said, it's a separate contract, unfortunately the funding didn't all come together at once.

Robin: I just hope that construction-related dust is properly handled since the park will be in use.

Dianne: Going back to the punch list, how big is it in the southern area? Also, how much is on the punch list, and how do things get put onto it? Should we be pointing things out to you and the contractor that we think need to be addressed? Why are some of the paths being dug up and replaced?

Ethan: I will circle back with you about the punch list and what's on it. I always appreciate it when you send us things, including photos. Even if it's on the punch list, we don't mind getting those emails so we can look into it and get an answer for you.

Dianne: That would be great if we could talk about that in January. We had a reasonably clear list of the punch list for Stuy Cove that we talked about at the CAG, so it would be helpful to know that when you open parts of the park, everything is not necessarily "done" – whether it's things that were perfectly left for later since they're less important or things that have gone wrong and need to be addressed. This will help us know what's going on.

Ethan: Okay, thank you.

Frank: I just wanted to reiterate that regarding the noise we heard in the middle of the night a few weeks ago, thank you for following up on that. It was very loud, unexpected noise at one, two in the morning. Is that possibly going to happen again?

Ethan: I don't know what the answer is, but I will apologize that we didn't provide advance notice about that.

Frank: Your team didn't know. It was the contractors, as usual.

Ethan: We have reminded them to let us know any time there's nightwork. I'll look into your question about how much more is needed down there, and for future nightwork we hope that we will be able to provide you with the notification that you deserve.

Frank: OK, and tied to that, is there more construction work to be done for the Montgomery Street floodwall? Is there anything related to sleeves that are needed to connect to ConEd?

Ethan: I don't think the full length of the timeline (*on slide 22*) is just for the landscaping. I'm sorry, but this is another item I'll have to get back to you on.

CAG-Only

Paula: I sent the letter to the electeds that requested funding for shade structures in the open areas of the new park and heard back from the Manhattan Borough President's office. They outlined the capital funding request process: the portal is vetted in January with a February deadline.

Michael: The difference is where the money's coming from: state versus city. CM Marte's budget director said that we don't actually apply because we're not a formal entity. We should have a conversation about that with the Manhattan Borough President's (MBPO) office. Let's ask for a phone call to explain the situation since we're not an entity that can apply. We might be able to leverage CM Marte's budget director and ask them to communicate that to the MBPO's budget director.

Christine: We're going to have a new borough president soon (on January 1). Also, we heard from Stuy Cove that there was no formal application process for shade infrastructure from Keith Powers. I think we should leverage what we heard from CM Marte's office.

Michael: The budget director won't necessarily change because Brad Hoylman-Sigal is coming in.

Wendy: I was just looking through the MBPO's jot form, and it looks like we have to click on that just to request a meeting.

Wendy: Would Friends of Corlears Hook Park or LESEC be a conduit?

Dianne: I was wondering the same thing since there are so many non-profits (on the CAG), but we should get more guidance.

Michael: Friends of Corlears has applied before to other borough presidents. I'm familiar with the process but haven't done it in a while. If the budget director says someone has to apply, then I'm sure the rest of the Corlears board wouldn't mind us doing so. I would need to check with them. We should still explore the opportunity to meet with this person and say this is a special circumstance; what can be done other than forcing an organization to apply on the CAG's behalf?

Dianne: I agree; the CAG is a special circumstance, and I think that would be the first conversation to have.

Christine: We should also engage with Parks and see how they feel about it. They could also apply. We should reach out to Parks, Max, MBPO and find out what they would advise. Any money they release would end up in Parks' budget anyway. Let's reach out to Steve Simon, Max, or even the Commissioner to see what they advise.

Paula: I could reach out to Terese.

Michael: That would be a good first step.

Paula: The other shade-related item to discuss tonight is about incorporating shade structures into the northern end of the park that is under construction. Ethan suggests that the CAG make a formal request to Parks to ask for a design change. Are there any objections to my doing that?

Dianne: No. Let's shoot for January 5th when post-holiday business resumes.

Michael: The letter should go to Steve Simon (Chief of Staff for Tricia Shimamura).

Paula: I'll send the letter to the CAG for review before the holidays so I can send it to Parks on January 5th.

Christine: Do we want to keep these design change requests to shade structures, or do we want to brainstorm a bit on lessons learned more generally and what other changes could be made?

Wendy: Like the placement of benches so they're closer to shade?

Michael: The more we ask for, the easier it will be for them to say no, we can't do this all.

Christine: It was just an idea, like could we advocate for grass instead of artificial turf?

Robin: And dugouts with permanent shade?

Sam: In the application it should just say it's for "shade structures and enhancements" so that there's flexibility if there's extra money – just keep it flexible. That's what we've done in the past with capital funding. I would keep it focused on the shade structures.

Wendy: I still think we need a dog run at the north end. I hear many people talking about dogs off leash on the lawns. The only dog in the north end will be on the other side of the drive. I had suggested one instead of a basketball court. I know it's probably too late for that.

Michael: There is a group advocating for a dog run. The challenge with that is that Parks is going to do what it does: make a dog run with a hard surface. People who don't want their dog on a hard surface will continue to let dogs run around on the turf fields or the lawns. They won't change their behavior if the surface is hard. Also, I'm not opposed to advocating for grass instead of turf, but from my time on the Community Board and going to many meetings on this subject they're not going to relent on that. They like turf because it's easier maintenance than grass.

Wendy: Just a piece of information: the 18-foot umbrellas at Governors Island are \$10,000 each.

Frank: I love the idea of a dog run, but my observations at Pier 42 is that people just let their dogs go into the children's play area, letting them urinate and defecate on turf areas where kids play. Lots of dog owners are not going to use a dog run; people want to let their dogs off-leash and run around in the park. I see people right next to the dog run at Corlears, letting their dogs run around in the grass. I don't know how we change that culture.

Michael: Just to go back to sending a letter to Parks for a design change, the simpler the better. It should be a very focused ask that the biggest lesson learned from opening of the south section was the lack of shade throughout out park and the ballfields. Can we remedy that in the design of the northern part before it's constructed?

Dianne: I don't think there's anything wrong about including something about the placement of benches (what Wendy brought up) because it's not as invasive as a dog run. All the benches are in the sun. It's something we want, and it can't be that expensive to move the benches.

Wendy: We could ask them to take a walk on a hot, sunny day.

Robin: I think that's a good idea; we could frame it as "lessons learned; this is what needs to be changed." They can't say "sorry, it's already done" because they haven't built it yet.

Wendy: I might be six months from now before we get a really hot day. Also, it's hard for emergency crews to get down there and through the bollards. I had asked for lifesaving rings along the fence, and they said they could only do that where there's active construction. It's probably only about \$100 each, but maybe we should just stick to shade and keep it simple.

Christine: Keep it simple

Paula: OK, so based on a consensus of what I've heard, I'm going to keep the letter about the design change for shade in the northern end fairly simple and straightforward. Happy holidays, everyone.

Meeting ended at approximately 5:10 pm.