

Statement to New York City Council Parks Committee,
Sept. 22, 2008
William Crain, Ph.D.
The City College of New York

I am a developmental psychologist and child advocate who first became deeply concerned about the possibility that toxic chemicals are present in the “new generation” synthetic turf in early 2006. When I saw that the rubber granules, made from old tires, are so common and loose on the surface, I asked Dr. Jim Zhang of Rutgers to analyze them for potential toxicants. Our findings raised concerns in our minds, and I believe that we were the first to alert the U.S. public to the potential dangers [1]. I am not a chemist, but I am trained in research methodology and am a coauthor of an article that will appear in the highly regarded scientific journal, *Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology* this year. [2]

Our first investigations revealed worrisome levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the new turf fields in Riverside Park in Manhattan. Follow up studies revealed that other parks in New York City also contained PAHs that exceeded the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) safety standards for contaminated soil sites in residential areas. [3, 4] All the PAHs that exceeded DEC safety standards are possible, probable, or known human carcinogens.

We also found troublesome levels of lead and zinc. Zinc isn't necessarily harmful to humans, except in high doses. Zinc is much more harmful to fish and wildlife. Although the state sets safety levels for lead for humans, research by Canfield, Lanphear and others increasingly suggests that no level of lead is safe. Any amount can cause neurocognitive damage, especially in children. [5]

Recently, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission [CPSC] reported moderate levels of lead in the artificial (polyethylene) fiber blades in a small number of samples of new generation turf, with very high levels of lead in those samples that had yellow coloring to mark field boundaries. The high lead concentrations are probably in the coloring pigment. [6].

The question is not just whether toxicants are present in the environment, including synthetic turf fields, but whether they are bioavailable—whether they can be absorbed into the bodies of children and athletes. The CPSC concluded that lead in the new generation plastic fibers cannot be absorbed into the body through ingestion, but their study was very limited. In light of the research by Canfield and others [5], the CPSC also used safety standards that are probably too lax.

In our research, summarized in the *Journal of Exposure Science*, we found that PAHs, if ingested, are not dissolved into synthetic digestive fluids. This finding will

be reassuring to some, but will come as no surprise to scientists and should direct their efforts toward other potential exposure routes, especially skin contact and inhalation. [2]

We did find that significant concentrations lead in new generation synthetic turf (polyethylene) grass fibers dissolves into both synthetic gastric and intestinal fluids. This is worrisome. A young child could pick up loose fibers, put them in her mouth, and the might get absorbed into her body. [2]

Our results with respect to the rubber granules that constitute the infill of the new synthetic turf are not so dramatic and clear-cut. Substantial fractions of lead can get dissolved in gastric juices, but perhaps not in intestinal juices. But more study is needed. [2]

I urge all concerned to postpone the installation of any synthetic turf fields until much more research has been conducted.

References

[1] Crain, W., and J. Zhang. Hazardous Chemicals in Synthetic Turf. Rachel's Democracy and Health News, #873, Sept. 21, 2006.

[2] Zhang, J., I-K Han, L. Zhang, and W. Crain, Hazardous chemicals in synthetic turf and their bioaccessibility in digestive fluids. Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology, Vol. 18, No. 6. Posted by the journal online August 27, 2008.
<http://www.nature.com/jes/index.html>

[3] Crain, W., and J. Zhang. Hazardous Chemicals in Synthetic Turf: Follow-up Analyses. Rachel's Democracy and Health News, #902, April 12, 2007.

[4] 6 NYCRR Subpart 375-6, Remedial Program Soil Cleanup Objectives, Effective Dec.14, 2006. Department of Environmental Conservation, Tables 375-6.8 (a) and (b).

[5] Canfield, R.L., Henderson, C.R., Cory-Slechta, D.A., Cox, C., Jusko, T.A., and Lanphear, B.P. Intellectual impairment in children with blood lead concentrations below 10 micrograms per deciliter. New England Journal of Medicine, 348, 2003, pp. 1417-1526. Landrigan, P. Testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Washington, DC, Oct. 1, 2002.

[6] U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, "CPSC Staff Finds Synthetic Turf Fields OK to Install, OK to play On," Press release, July 30, 2008.

William Crain, Professor of Psychology, The City College of New York. 212 650 5650.
Billcrain@aol.com



**New York City Council Parks and Recreation Committee
Oversight hearing: Randall's Island**

**New Yorkers for Parks Testimony
September 22, 2008**

Good morning. My name is Sheelah Feinberg and I am Director of Government and External Relations for New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), the only independent watchdog for all the city's parks, beaches and playgrounds.

Last year our organization spoke out against the proposed agreement between the Randall's Island Sports Foundation and a consortium of private schools regarding the renovation and creation of ball fields. The agreement would have resulted in the schools providing an annual payment to construct and maintain the fields in exchange for exclusive access during prime playing hours. The courts have since ruled that the contract was illegal because the City did not comply with ULURP and therefore the deal was voided.

We commend the City and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation for going forward with the renovation and expansion of athletic facilities on Randall's Island, which will have the capacity to serve neighbors in the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan. Once completed, the sports fields on Randall's Island will greatly expand recreation opportunities for nearby communities that have poor public health indicators – such as East Harlem and the South Bronx. In order for the fields to serve the greatest number of in-need New Yorkers, we recommend increasing transportation to the island and improving the permitting process. We also encourage greater oversight regarding the use of synthetic turf on the island and across the city.

Increase Access to the Island

A concrete transportation plan is needed to ensure that school children and those who are not able to travel by private car or chartered bus can safely access the island. Today, the only pedestrian paths that reach the island are the 103rd Street foot bridge from Manhattan, which is open during fluctuating daylight hours between April and October, and the inconvenient Triborough Bridge pedestrian lane, accessible from Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. It is our understanding, that City buses regularly run between Manhattan and the Island and for scheduled concerts and other large scale events, bus service is expanded to Queens. Bronx residents have no access via bus to the Island.

When developing public park space for hard-to-reach sites like Randall's Island and Governor's Island, access must be a priority. Whether transportation is in the form of a ferry, a bridge, a bus, or otherwise, the City must work with all levels of government to enable children and other park users to safely access these valuable green spaces and recreational facilities.

We recommend that a shuttle bus be piloted between the Island and neighboring communities as was suggested last year, during the negotiations for the new ball fields. Such a trial program would show neighboring communities that the City is serious about expanding access and measuring demand for the Island's facilities. Most importantly, a pilot would allow the City to evaluate the success of this method before investing the significant capital funds need to expand access permanently.

Ensure a Transparent Permitting Process

The Parks Department reports that requests for ball field permits have doubled citywide in recent years. With such a high demand for athletic facilities, we must ensure that the process by which groups apply and are awarded permits is transparent. The Parks Department does a great job of ensuring that permitting applications and instructions are available on their website. We recommend that these documents be made available in multiple languages to ensure that all communities are encouraged to apply.

The Parks Department and The Randall's Island Sports Foundation should work to ensure a diversity of permit-holders from all neighboring communities. Due to changes that occur year to year – such as population shifts or facility availability – it is important that the system of grandfathering permitted groups is very carefully considered. We recommend that the agency begin tracking not only groups who receive permits, but also those who apply but are denied due to demand, and should keep a wait list with detailed information. This would allow Parks to analyze the distribution and ensure equity in the issuance of permits from year to year.

Greater Oversight of Synthetic Turf

New Yorkers for Parks and our coalition of partners, including the Natural Resource Defense Council and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, continue to call for testing of artificial turf containing crumb rubber, as well as creating a policy to evaluate and test out new materials before purchase or on a pilot basis. As the largest municipal purchaser of artificial turf, New York City's Parks Department is now constructing its largest turf facility yet on Randall's Island. But we still do not know the health and environmental effects of synthetic turf. The Parks Department has stated that they are now moving toward a new type of artificial turf, but the public has virtually no information on this surface, either. The City should conduct an environmental review regarding the impact of the turf before it is actually installed.

We applaud the efforts of City and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation to improve public parkland, and encourage the groups to work closely with all neighboring communities to ensure that transportation improvements are made and that the permitting process is clear and equitable.

Thank you.

CUNY Athletic Conference Sports Where Outdoor Facilities Are Utilized/Needed

Conference	Sports
<u>Baruch</u>	Baseball Soccer Softball Tennis
<u>City College</u>	Baseball Soccer Tennis Track & Field (In/Out)
<u>Lehman</u>	Baseball Softball Tennis Track & Field (I/O)
<u>Brooklyn</u>	Soccer Softball Tennis Track & Field (I/O)
<u>John Jay</u>	Baseball Soccer Softball Tennis
<u>Medgar Evers</u>	Soccer Tennis Track & Field (I/O) Softball
<u>Hunter</u>	Soccer Softball Tennis Track & Field (I/O)
<u>NYCCT</u>	Soccer Softball Tennis Track & Field (I/O)
<u>BMCC</u>	Baseball Soccer
<u>College of Staten Island</u>	Baseball Soccer Softball Track & Field Tennis
<u>Queensborough CC</u>	Baseball
<u>Kingsborough CC</u>	Baseball Soccer Tennis
<u>Hostos CC</u>	Soccer
<u>Bronx CC</u>	Baseball Soccer Track & Field (I/O)
<u>York</u>	Soccer Softball Tennis Track & Field (I/O)

Garrie W. Moore, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, CUNY—Testimony to City Council, 9/22/08

Brief: Parks & Recreation Committee: Oversight – Status of the Possible Athletic Fields on Randall’s Island

Good morning, Chair Foster and members of the committee. I am Garrie Moore, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York. Accompanying me today is Zak Ivkovic, the Executive Director of the CUNY Athletics Conference.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak with you this morning about our athletics program and its importance to the University—to our student life, our college enrollment and retention, and our commitment to a focus on the whole student.

We are here today to ask for your continued support for the growth of this important staple of University life. CUNY’s athletic program grows more competitive each year and is an integral part of college life for a vast number of CUNY students. In the ’07-’08 academic year, the Athletic Conference made great strides for students in relation to championship opportunities and services. In each of the 24 sports there have been significant improvements across the board. Our athletics serve the all-important co-curricular aspect of the college experience and are a very visible feature of the University.

That said, retaining students is fundamental to the ability of an institution to carry out its educational mission. And the effects of college sports and athletic programs on enrollment and retention efforts are continually researched and documented. Athletic programs are part of the recognized organizational and social factors that contribute to student success. They provide the socialization, collaboration, and opportunity for leadership that complement the academic side of student life. Athletics help to create a campus culture where students learn to help each other and to relate to others as social beings. We know that students who have economic, social or educational advantages are the least likely to leave college while students lacking these advantages are the most likely to leave. CUNY’s athletic programs help to shape a positive student life experience

and allow students a social “bonding” with our institution. As an urban college community, sustaining this social bond is crucial to student success at CUNY.

In addition, campus sports clubs offer diversity and exposure to the school and surrounding community, helping these communities to rally around a common cause.

Finally, our sports programs demonstrate our commitment to a time-honored student personnel philosophy—the “Student Personnel Point of View” which points to “considering the student as a whole—including the intellectual capacity and achievement, emotional make-up, physical condition, social relationships, vocational aptitudes and skills, moral and religious values, economic resources, and aesthetic appreciations. It puts emphasis on development as a person rather than intellectual training alone.”

(<http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/1937.pdf>)

The Athletics Conference encompasses all these benefits ten-fold and is key to the University’s continued growth. Recognizing this, we must move forward with the proposed plans to renovate our on-site athletic spaces, hire new coaching staff, and build on our sports infrastructure. Other colleges are doing this quite successfully. A recent article in the “Chronicle of Higher Education,” entitled “Athletics Raises a College From the Ground Up,¹” describes the results to be achieved with such a commitment. It describes how the college’s student enrollment has reached its highest level in two decades--a growth specifically attributed to its rapid investment in an expanded and improved sports program.

I can assure you that CUNY’s Athletics Conference will remain a top priority at CUNY for the sake of our students and the greater community. CUNY’s great leader, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein was an avid swimming enthusiast while a student at CUNY. It might be an interesting footnote to discover just how many civic leaders and Fortune 500 captains of industry also excelled at college sports.

To that end, CUNY's Athletic Conference must be allowed to continue its planned improvements; and the Council's assistance and partnership in this regard will be critical to our ongoing efforts. The results will be continued growing enrollment, improved student retention, and an increase in student health and wellness.

Therefore, I respectfully request the council's assistance with our proposed enhancements to our sports infrastructure at CUNY. And I thank you for your attention to this very important component of student success.

References

- 1 Chronicle of Higher Education. (2008). *Athletics Raises a College From the Ground Up*;
- 2 American Council on Education. (1937). *The student personnel point of view: A report of a conference on the philosophy and development of student personnel work in colleges and universities* (American Council on Education Study, Series 1, Vol. 1, No.3). Washington, DC: Author.



**New York City Council Parks and Recreation Committee
Oversight hearing: Randall's Island**

**New Yorkers for Parks Testimony
September 22, 2008**

Good morning. My name is Sheelah Feinberg and I am Director of Government and External Relations for New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), the only independent watchdog for all the city's parks, beaches and playgrounds.

Last year our organization spoke out against the proposed agreement between the Randall's Island Sports Foundation and a consortium of private schools regarding the renovation and creation of ball fields. The agreement would have resulted in the schools providing an annual payment to construct and maintain the fields in exchange for exclusive access during prime playing hours. The courts have since ruled that the contract was illegal because the City did not comply with ULURP and therefore the deal was voided.

We commend the City and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation for going forward with the renovation and expansion of athletic facilities on Randall's Island, which will have the capacity to serve neighbors in the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan. Once completed, the sports fields on Randall's Island will greatly expand recreation opportunities for nearby communities that have poor public health indicators – such as East Harlem and the South Bronx. In order for the fields to serve the greatest number of in-need New Yorkers, we recommend increasing transportation to the island and improving the permitting process. We also encourage greater oversight regarding the use of synthetic turf on the island and across the city.

Increase Access to the Island

A concrete transportation plan is needed to ensure that school children and those who are not able to travel by private car or chartered bus can safely access the island. Today, the only pedestrian paths that reach the island are the 103rd Street foot bridge from Manhattan, which is open during fluctuating daylight hours between April and October, and the inconvenient Triborough Bridge pedestrian lane, accessible from Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. It is our understanding, that City buses regularly run between Manhattan and the Island and for scheduled concerts and other large scale events, bus service is expanded to Queens. Bronx residents have no access via bus to the Island.

When developing public park space for hard-to-reach sites like Randall's Island and Governor's Island, access must be a priority. Whether transportation is in the form of a ferry, a bridge, a bus, or otherwise, the City must work with all levels of government to enable children and other park users to safely access these valuable green spaces and recreational facilities.

We recommend that a shuttle bus be piloted between the Island and neighboring communities as was suggested last year, during the negotiations for the new ball fields. Such a trial program would show neighboring communities that the City is serious about expanding access and measuring demand for the Island's facilities. Most importantly, a pilot would allow the City to evaluate the success of this method before investing the significant capital funds need to expand access permanently.

Ensure a Transparent Permitting Process

The Parks Department reports that requests for ball field permits have doubled citywide in recent years. With such a high demand for athletic facilities, we must ensure that the process by which groups apply and are awarded permits is transparent. The Parks Department does a great job of ensuring that permitting applications and instructions are available on their website. We recommend that these documents be made available in multiple languages to ensure that all communities are encouraged to apply.

The Parks Department and The Randall's Island Sports Foundation should work to ensure a diversity of permit-holders from all neighboring communities. Due to changes that occur year to year – such as population shifts or facility availability – it is important that the system of grandfathering permitted groups is very carefully considered. We recommend that the agency begin tracking not only groups who receive permits, but also those who apply but are denied due to demand, and should keep a wait list with detailed information. This would allow Parks to analyze the distribution and ensure equity in the issuance of permits from year to year.

Greater Oversight of Synthetic Turf

New Yorkers for Parks and our coalition of partners, including the Natural Resource Defense Council and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, continue to call for testing of artificial turf containing crumb rubber, as well as creating a policy to evaluate and test out new materials before purchase or on a pilot basis. As the largest municipal purchaser of artificial turf, New York City's Parks Department is now constructing its largest turf facility yet on Randall's Island. But we still do not know the health and environmental effects of synthetic turf. The Parks Department has stated that they are now moving toward a new type of artificial turf, but the public has virtually no information on this surface, either. The City should conduct an environmental review regarding the impact of the turf before it is actually installed.

We applaud the efforts of City and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation to improve public parkland, and encourage the groups to work closely with all neighboring communities to ensure that transportation improvements are made and that the permitting process is clear and equitable.

Thank you.



class size matters

124 Waverly Place, NY, NY 10011

phone: 212-674-7320

www.classsizematters.org

email: leonie@att.net

**Leonie Haimson, Executive Director, Class Size Matters
Testimony on Randall's Island before the NYC Council Parks Committee
September 22, 2008**

My name is Leonie Haimson, and I'm the Executive Director of Class Size Matters, a citywide parent organization devoted to achieving smaller classes and more equitable conditions for NYC public school students. When we learned in the fall of 2006 of the city's proposed no-bid contract that would give preferential access to most of the fields on Randall's Island to private schools for the next twenty years, we were horrified – and could hardly believe that such an egregious deal could even be considered no less approved.

Yet most parents in the community and citywide knew nothing about it. We immediately contacted parent leaders such as Eugenia Simmons-Taylor, head of the Presidents Council in East Harlem, Hector Nazario, president of the Community Education Council in District 4, and David Bloomfield, at that time President of the Citywide Council of High Schools, as well as the Hispanic Federation and community groups such as Civitas, who were similarly affronted and aghast.

We wrote letters to the Mayor and the Parks Commissioner, set up a meeting with the Richard Davis of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation, and others, but despite all our efforts, the Franchise, Concession and Review Commission approved the proposal in February 2007, with only one dissenting vote, that of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer.

Our opposition to the deal was based not only on our view that it was inequitable and unethical– but also that it was illegal. Patrick Sullivan, then a member of Class Size Matters and now the Manhattan representative on the Panel for Educational Policy, had looked at the City Charter and determined that because of the large amount of land involved, the project was a major concession and thus had to go through ULURP, or the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, which means review by the Community Board, the Borough President, and the City Council. Yet this had never occurred.

Though we believe that the project involved probably far more acreage than this, the city itself admitted that the project involved 12 ½ acres – far outstripping the 30,000 sq. ft. or 2/3 of an acre that defines a "major concession" according to the City Charter. Yet at the FCRC hearings, the representative from the city's Law Department made the absurd argument that because the city would convert these fields before handing them over to the private schools, the provisions for community review did not apply.

So we recruited Norman Siegel as well as Alan Klinger and the other attorneys of Stroock, Stroock and Lavan, who generously agreed to represent the plaintiffs pro bono, to try to block this egregious deal in court.

Thankfully, we won our lawsuit last spring, as the judge immediately recognized the absurdity of the city's argument and voided the proposed deal with the private schools. However, she allowed the project itself and the creation of these fields to go ahead – without ULURP or community review.

After filing the initial papers, we also realized that there were also major environmental issues involved, and that such a major transformation involving the cutting down of hundreds of trees, the construction of new roads and infrastructure, and the installation of large amounts of artificial turf by law should require a full process of environmental review, as set out in state law.

According to the ~~State Environmental~~ State Environmental Quality Review Act, all actions taken by localities to “to fund, approve or directly undertake projects or physical activities that may affect the environment by changing the use, appearance or condition of any natural resource or structure” must go through a full environmental review process; but this never occurred in this case, or that of the other projects undertaken by the RISF.¹

As part of our legal proceedings, our attorneys filed a Freedom of Information request to determine if any environmental review had occurred, and in response, the city released a previously undisclosed Type II memo from the Parks Department, dated August 28, 2006, which claimed that no environmental review or environmental impact statement was necessary because of the extremely limited nature of the work involved. Yet the letter erroneously described the scope of the project and the amount of work involved.

For example, while before the FCRC, the Parks Department stated that twenty seven new athletic fields would be added, in their type II memo, they wrote that only thirteen fields would be added, less than half of this number.² The letter also claimed that the new fields would be “located within areas currently used as playing fields,” without mentioning the many acres of picnic areas, trees, and other natural features to be eliminated.

Moreover, state law sets out that any project that physically alters more than ten acres of land requires a “Type 1” determination, which means that an Environmental Impact statement must be prepared. As previously mentioned, by the city's own admission, this project involved the conversion of at least 12 ½ acres, and probably far more than that, and yet they never prepared such a statement.

Unfortunately, even though this Type II memo was previously undisclosed by the city until we FOILED it, and it contained numerous errors of fact and judgment, the judge decided that because the legal statute of limitations had run out, our environmental challenge would not prevail.

As a result, the city has been allowed to evade its legally mandated responsibilities, both relating to its environmental stewardship and to the public being provided with its rightful authority to review the operations and plans of the RISF – which now include not merely the sports fields project, but also new tennis courts, the golf concession, the proposed theatre, and many other projects that will transform and privatize large areas of city-owned land that, by law, should be obligated to go through both ULURP and full environmental review.

¹ See the State Department of Environmental Conservation, General Applicability of SEQRA to Local Governments, posted at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/6465.html>

² See attached “Type II memorandum,” Randall's Island Sports Field Development Project, signed by Joshua Laird, Asst. Commissioner, Planning and Natural Resources of the NYC Parks Dept., dated July 28, 2006.

⁵ Oversight of Public-Private Partnerships”, Office of NY State Comptroller, June 12, 2002 at <http://nysosc3.osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093002/00n16.pdf>; and letter from Frank Houston, Audit Director, Office of NY State Comptroller, April 26, 2004 at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093004/03f55.pdf>.

We are concerned that there remain troubling conflicts of interest between the Randall's Island Sports Foundation and the Parks Department, as pointed out by an audit of the State Comptroller's office in 2002 and again in 2004, calling into question the propriety of any contract entered into between these two parties. And yet subsequent to these audits, the Parks Department refused to adopt the recommendations of the State Comptroller to disentangle its finances and governance from the Foundation.⁵ Even more questions are raised by the fact that the Foundation will be allowed to keep the proceeds of these concessions to subsidize its own operations,⁶

We are also concerned that since the Foundation will control the permitting of the fields to be built on the island, the same group of twenty private schools will be granted most of the new fields as well as the old, and the inequitable aspect of the deal will remain, only the private schools will be exempted from having to pay for their privileged access. Indeed, there remain troubling conflicts of interest between the Foundation and the private schools, and a lack of adequate representation of public school parents and other members of the local community on the Board.

We urge the City Council and the Parks Committee to do what it can to halt these projects and the operations of the RISF, until they can be examined more fully, both in terms of their potential impact on the environment and to analyze whether the public will have equitable access to the island and all its features and concessions. We also ask that you demand that the board of the Foundation be completely reconstituted, to include a larger share of public school parents and members of the community, to ensure that this invaluable city land is not being hijacked for the benefit of a few.

⁶ Patrick Arden, "City to pass bucks on Randall's Island," Metro NY, Jan. 31, 2007.

**Testimony of Eugenia Simmons-Taylor,
former President of the President's Council, District 4 and former PTA President of The
Young Women's Leadership School
before the City Council Parks Committee on Randall's Island
September 22, 2008**

My name is Eugenia Simmons-Taylor, and I was the President of the President's Council, District 4 in East Harlem during the 2005-7 school years. The Presidents Council is the organization of the 34 PA's/ PTA's presidents in the district. I am also on the board of Class Size Matters, a citywide advocacy group dedicated to achieving smaller classes and more equitable conditions for NYC public school students.

When the proposal was disclosed in the fall of 2006 that the city intended to give a no-bid contract to lease most of the sports fields on Randall's Island to a small group of private schools for the next twenty years, no city official or member of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation ever consulted us or even informed us of their plans. When subsequently, there was a community meeting called in East Harlem by the City Comptroller, the Manhattan Borough President and the City Council, no one invited us or any of the other elected PTA presidents or parent leaders in the area to attend.

It was only because Class Size Matters alerted me and other parent leaders in East Harlem of what was happening and told us about the meeting, that I was able to attend. Not surprisingly, I was shocked and aghast that anyone would even think of making such an outrageously unfair deal.

Our public schools desperately need access to more sports fields. We have only eight ball fields, shared among 58 public schools in District 4. This is why after learning about the proposal our Presidents Council and the Community Education Council passed resolutions against it.

Subsequently, we wrote letters, gave testimony and met with the head of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation, asking them to stop it, to no avail. No one listened to our pleas and the deal passed the city's Franchise and Concession Review Committee on February 14. So it was with great relief that a lawsuit was filed in June 2007 to block the deal, and our Presidents Council voted unanimously to become plaintiffs.

And though thankfully, we won our lawsuit to block this outrageous deal with the private schools, the Foundation is still going ahead with its plans to redevelop the island and privatize much of its operations, so that only the rich will be afford to play golf and tennis on it.

The Foundation will also control the allocation of the sports fields, so it's quite possible that the private schools will continue to monopolize most of the new fields as well as the old ones, since the Foundation's board is controlled by an elite group who do not represent the community, many of whom are private school parents.

We demand that all work on Randall's Island be halted before there is further destruction of the Island, and a new board should be created with majority members from the community and parent groups from the area and citywide.

Only then will there be the chance that this precious island, owned by the public, will be maintained and operated for the public good, rather than continue to be controlled by a few, well-connected people who are trying to transform it into a private country club for the wealthy.

Geoffrey Croft, NYC Park Advocates

Good Morning. My name is Geoffrey Croft. I am president of NYC Park Advocates. Very serious land use issues have arisen in conjunction with the unprecedented construction on Randall's Island. Over the last few years more than \$ 215 million dollars has been secured transforming hundreds of acres of parkland on the island. Another \$ 20 million is currently pending. Yet the city and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF) have managed to bypass environmental reviews and public input on the largest park reconstruction project in the city's modern history.

According to the plan, this project represents the building of the "largest outdoor athletic complex in the City," comprising of sixty-six playing fields, rest rooms, lighting, designated parking and staffed information booths. Dozens of acres of flora and fauna have already been destroyed and the island's wildlife habitat has been seriously disturbed. It has been estimated that thousands of trees have been removed. The plan also calls for the installation of the city's largest concentration of the environmentally questionable and highly controversial artificial turf. These plans were developed by a private non-profit, in consultation with the city's parks department and private schools. Additionally, a \$ 14 million dollar tennis concession is currently being built. However no City Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) analysis has been undertaken, no EIS, no analysis under the City Environmental Quality Review Act (CEQRA), has occurred. And most importantly, the area's residents and neighboring communities have had virtually no opportunity to give input or air their legitimate concerns in a public forum. This project has gone unchecked and largely without public transparency and scrutiny. Communities must have meaningful input on significant land use decisions regarding public lands. These issues have ramifications city-wide, not only because the island is used by many who live outside the area but due to the process by which this plan has been developed.

By way of background, the City, through the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), entered into a no-bid contract (the Concession) with RISF, a private organization. They claimed the project would convert 12.5 acres of Randalls Island into sports fields and renovate approximately 158

acres of what it claimed were preexisting sports fields. Pursuant to the terms of the agreement, the RISF would, in turn, enter into a no-bid 20-year contract with a consortium of 20 private schools for exclusive use of the overwhelming majority of these approximately 171 acres during the prime after-school hours, essentially, privatizing the majority of the sports fields on Randalls Island during this time in exchange for a fee.

The number of acres involved in the Concession and the reconstruction can only be approximated, because the City has yet to be held accountable for the exact plan it intends to pursue and the exact number of acres. (Two weeks ago the number of acres had apparently grown to 220.) Moreover, the approximately 158 acres that the City claimed were sports fields included not just sports fields, but many areas that were used for passive recreation, such as picnicking and family outings. An essential element of the public's ability to assess whether the current project being built is desirable for the local East Harlem and South Bronx community and the City as a whole is a firm grasp on the scope of the project. Thus, these public hearings will hopefully illuminate this issue, one which should have been a matter of public record long ago.

Following a notice of a public hearing published in the City Record from January 23, 2007 to February 13, 2007, a public hearing was held by the mayoral controlled Franchise Concession Review Committee (FCRC) on February 13, 2007 to review the Concession, at which time limited public comment was had again, such comments were based on incomplete and inaccurate information regarding the true scope of the project. The FCRC voted to grant the Concession on February 14, 2007.

A group of concerned citizens and civic groups commenced an Article 78 proceeding, District 4 Presidents' Council v. Franchise and Concession Review Committee of the City of New York, in June 2007 to challenge this so-called Concession on the grounds that the City had unlawfully failed to perform a ULURP review prior to granting the Concession. After extensive briefing and oral argument, Justice Shirley Werner Kornreich granted the Petition, holding that ULURP review was required. In rejecting the City's strained interpretation of the Concession agreement, the Judge noted that [a]llowing the City to avoid ULURP review . . . when a

concession has been granted would undermine ULURP's purpose of requiring community input on significant land use decisions regarding public land. The Court initially reserved decision on Petitioners motion to amend the Petition to add a cause of action for failure to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement as would be required under SEQRA, but has since denied this application due to a statute of limitations. Thus, the decision on the June 2007 petition is now final before the Court. However this decision does not change the fact that an environmental review should have been performed.

Despite the Courts order that a ULURP review is required, the City has continued construction on Randalls Island which again includes the uprooting of wildlife habitats, aborcide and deforestation of many areas, and will include, at over one million square feet, the largest installation of controversial artificial turf in the United States. Indeed, this on-going conglomeration of construction has left vast areas of Randalls Island inaccessible to the public and yet more areas unusable for recreation, either active (sports games, etc.) or passive (picnicking, sunbathing). Indeed, while the Petitioners sought a preliminary injunction to halt the construction and destruction on Randalls Island until such time as a full and public review had been completed, this injunction was denied on May 14, 2008. However, as a matter of practicality unless this project was immediately halted, by the time this would have made its way through legal proceedings the judge's ULURP decision would have been moot as this phase of the project would have already been built without public input or without any environmental reviews. There is a very strong sense that the community does not want the plan that is being built. However unless we act now regarding future construction they will still have no say. And only the RISF along with the private schools will have had input into these important land use decisions.

It has also recently come to light that the DPR misstated the scope of work being performed as part of the sports field development. Instead of a Type 1 Memo which would have triggered an environmental review, the DPR filed a Type 2 which dramatically under reported the scope of work being performed. The city acted in bad faith to avoid doing an EIS. The city had originally declared the project wouldn't need an environmental review based on its claim that only 13 new athletic fields would be built.

In a July 28, 2006, Type 2 memorandum, Parks Department planner Joshua Laird said 64 new athletic fields will replace 51 existing fields. The memo stated that construction of the fields constitutes an "in kind replacement, rehabilitation or reconstruction of the ball fields on the same site. "(City attorney Lawrence S. Kahn also confirmed this to a reporter a year and a half later." The city declined to comment after Metro mentioned the disparity to the Law Department." - Metro - February 19, 2008)

Yet at a February 13, 2007, hearing of the Franchise and Concession Review Committee, which approved the deal, DPR Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanaugh put the figure for existing fields at 36, bringing the number of new fields to 28, or more than double the 2006 claim. "Currently, there are 36 fields available on the Island," said Mr. Kavanaugh.

The city's characterization of this project as being an "in kind replacement, rehabilitation or reconstruction" of ball fields on the same site is absurd. However misrepresenting the scope of work was important because it allowed the city to file an Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) and avoid doing a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

It is important to note the required process for completing an (EAS) does not include a public comment period. A fact that the DPR is fond of pointing out. Under 6 NYCRR Part 617 of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA, 617.6), a Lead Agency (in this case the Parks Department) is required to coordinate its review only with other Involved Agencies. This is defined as any agency that has jurisdiction by law to fund, approve or directly undertake an action, or which has a discretionary decision in any such regard. As a courtesy, they sometimes circulate environmental assessments to certain other interested agencies. An agency is defined as being a part of the state or local government. Neither SEQRA, nor the New York City Environmental Quality Review process requires official public review or a public comment period as part of the EAS process. Should the Parks Department, as Lead Agency, determined that the RI project had the potential to cause adverse environmental impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement would have been prepared, including opportunities for extensive public review. Only certain minor actions identified by the state, known as Type II actions, are exempt from environmental review. A "lead agency",

responsible for undertaking, funding or approving an action, determines whether the action requires environmental review.

This is very important. In the community's lawsuit challenging the RI deal the plaintiffs were time barred from bringing action on this. They were not even made aware of the existence of the Type 2 Memo until a year a half later when they received it in a FOIL request. Remarkably we were told last week that the DPR will now be conducting some sort of environmental review. This after much of the Island is already under construction.

The issues that cry out for public review are many. In addition to issues surrounding the creation and use of sports fields, there is also the tennis center. Local Councilmember Melissa Mark Viverito having been in office for more than two years was only shown the plans for the \$ 14 million dollar tennis concession only a few weeks ago. This while the private developer began constructing months earlier. They are building a 30,000 square foot covered tennis building, and according to company promotional materials, a 20,000 Sq. foot club house complete with bar and seating for up to 4000. Each one of these project elements should have also triggered a ULURP in relation to the project being a major concession, and in all likelihood an EIS. Yet this project has also managed to bypass all environmental reviews, as well as public transparency.

Also troubling was language included in a September 21, 2007 press statement from the DPR regarding the cancellation of the water park. In it their spokesperson refers to a portion of the island as "existing festival and concert grounds on the island's western shore." It is clear from this that the city was attempting to establish precedent and stake out future commercial uses for this section of the park, apparently without first going through the State Alienation process, and again, without consulting the community. Also interesting because they counted these as sportsfields in the plans they submitted in the legal proceedings.

Two weeks ago a brand new configuration suddenly appeared. In a meeting with Council member Melissa Mark Viverito, Liam Kavanaugh delivered a new version which contained the phase "Harlem River Event Area" on a

project map. As I understand it this new addition was not even pointed out in the meeting. They are now trying to absorb this into the plan, again with no clear source of authority, no ULURP or CEQRA review and no opportunity for public hearing and comment.

Last year, from June to October 2007, the general public was prevented from using these same many acres of parkland on Randall's Island's western shore. This was due to the erection of a concert stage and use of surrounding parkland which had been set aside to accommodate a few concerts in Summer/Fall. This area of the park is frequently used for many established park purposes, both active and passive recreation, including soccer, volley ball, bike riding and picnics and many people rely on these free public open spaces. This commercial use had completely prohibited the public from using the area for months and also cut them off from being able to access the water front along this section of the park.

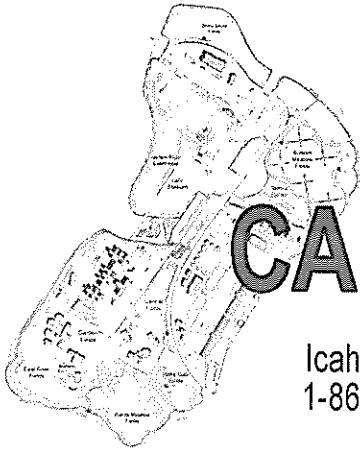
It appears the City, in connection with the Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF), has attempted to circumvent alienation legislation by allowing the building of a "temporary" concert area to remain during the entire summer and into Fall when the public's use of the parkland is the greatest. The desire for these commercial events is being driven by the fees negotiated by the RISF which are used for the operation and maintenance of the island. (Plans for "Bronx ShoreFields," were also officially unveiled to the council member for the first time at the same meeting.)

In closing, the City and private groups should not be allowed to unilaterally make land use decisions without community participation and consultation. Important land use decisions must have significant public input. These projects will not only dramatically alter the island's physical configuration, but also the public's former uses of the park.

The time has come to lift the shroud of secrecy and bureaucratic manipulation that has surrounded the Randalls Island reconfiguration for far too long. The issues above should be elucidated for the public, the City and the RISF should be held accountable for its actions, and the public, including its elected officials, should be given the opportunity to have input into what

they believe is best for the community and the City. Please help us halt these future projects until this can be accomplished.

NYC Park Advocates Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan watchdog group dedicated to improving public parks, restoring public funding, increasing public recreation programs, expanding open space and accessibility, and achieving the equitable distribution of these vital services in New York City for all. We are the only non-profit park advocacy group dedicated to all City, State and Federal parkland in New York City. For more information please visit us at <http://nycparkadvocates.org>



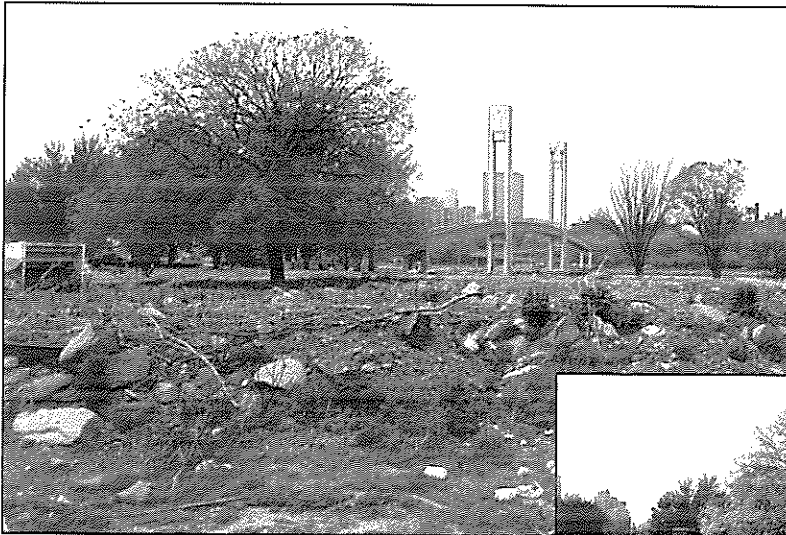
RANDALL'S ISLAND DESARROLLO DE CAMPOS DEPORTIVOS

Icahn Stadium • 20 Randall's Island • New York, New York 10035
1-866-635-6789 • www.risf.org/sportsfields • sportsfields@risf.org

NOTICIAS DESDE LOS CAMPOS

MAYO DE 2008

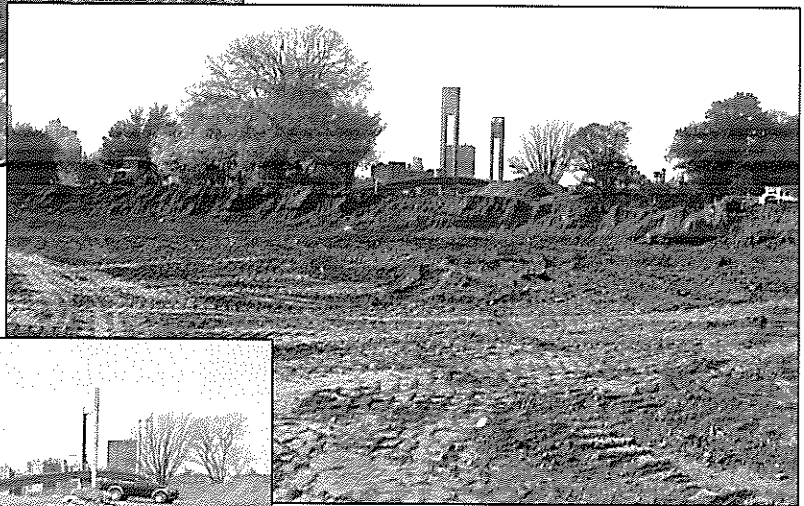
PROGRESO FOTOGRÁFICO – EAST RIVER FIELDS



La construcción en East River Fields se ha mantenido a un paso constante.

Izquierda: Vista de East River Fields con el puente peatonal de Manhattan al fondo, tomada en mayo de 2007, antes de empezar el proyecto.

Abajo: Preparación inicial de otoño de 2007 incluyendo limpieza, eliminación de plantas, árboles y piedras, y sub-nivelación.



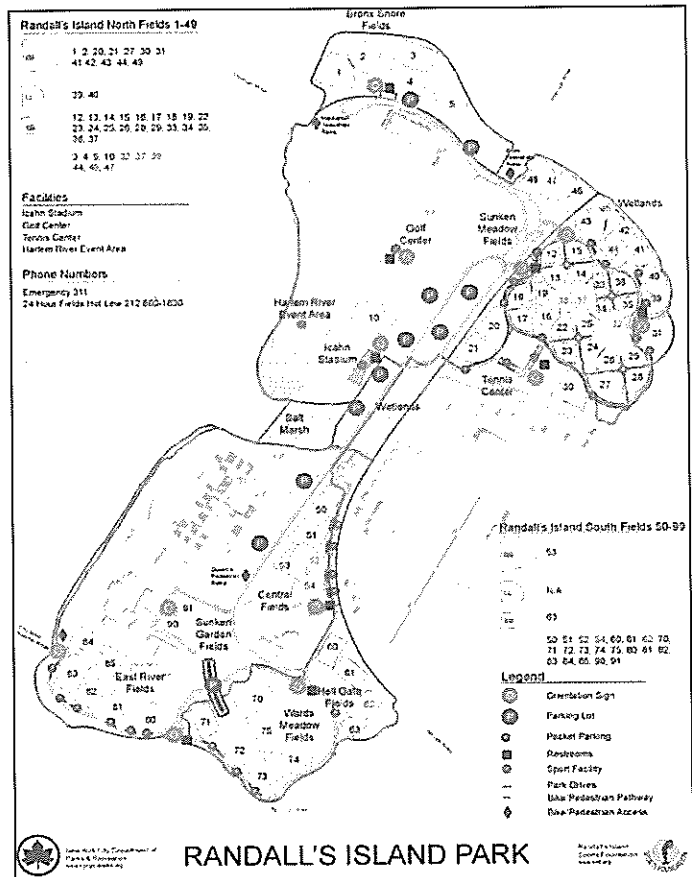
Izquierda: Progreso de la construcción en East River Fields en mayo de 2008. Los campos han sido nivelados y el marco para las nuevas aceras de concreto está hecho y esperando ser llenado. Para más información sobre la construcción en East River Fields, siga leyendo *Noticias de los Campos*.

LA TEMPERATURA SUBE Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN ESTÁ A PLENO

Las actividades de construcción están en su máximo en la Isla, como lo pueden constatar los visitantes del Parque. El trabajo se está haciendo a lo largo de los nuevos campos y las carreteras que los conectan.

El trabajo en **East River Fields** ha estado en proceso desde el verano pasado. Se está instalando la base de piedra bajo los campos, y después se instalarán las estructuras de drenaje. Estas estructuras servirán para reducir las condiciones de inundación que han sido un problema en los campos anteriores. Después de instalar el drenaje, los campos estarán listos para recibir nuevas superficies.

En el sitio de **Ward's Meadow Fields** se está instalando una nueva tubería de agua, y una vez terminada, nuestro contratista procederá a sub-nivelar los campos. En **Sunken Garden Fields**, gran parte del trabajo eléctrico se está haciendo bajo los campos para dar energía a las nuevas luces. Una de nuestros nuevos estacionamientos está en proceso de pavimentación. Está en curso la nivelación de las superficies en **Central Fields**, y seguirá el drenaje inferior. En **Sunken Meadow Fields**, la excavación está terminada en un 50%.



Por favor tenga paciencia mientras se realizan los trabajos en las vías del parque. Algunas de las vías están casi listas para recibir su base de concreto.

LA PRIMAVERA DA UNA CÁLIDA BIENVENIDA A UNA NUEVA TEMPORADA DE GOLF

Con el inicio de una nueva temporada de golf, el Randall's Island Golf Center entra nuevamente en total operación, bajo una nueva administración para la temporada 2008. Las horas de operación son de 11:00 a.m. a 11:00 p.m. los lunes, y de 7:00 a.m. a 11:00 p.m. de martes a domingo. Puede contactar al centro de golf en el 212-427-5689 o en www.randallsislandgolfcenter.com.

**THANKS FOR TEAMING WITH US
TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE!**



The City of New York
Michael Bloomberg, Mayor



Randall's Island Sports
Foundation
Richard J. Davis, Chair
Aimee Boden, Executive
Director



New York City Parks and
Recreation
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner

RANDALL'S ISLAND

PORCENTAJE TERMINADO

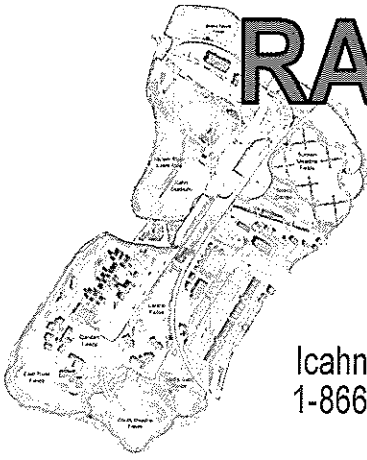
32%

Primavera de 2007

Otoño de 2009

Número total de campos de la isla al terminar: 67
PARA OBTENER MÁS INFORMACIÓN, LLAME AL 1-866-635-6789
www.risf.org/sportsfields

DESARROLLO DE CAMPOS DEPORTIVOS



RANDALL'S ISLAND SPORTS FIELDS DEVELOPMENT

Icahn Stadium • 20 Randall's Island • New York, New York 10035
1-866-635-6789 • www.risf.org/sportsfields • sportsfields@risf.org

NEWS FROM THE FIELDS

FEBRUARY 2008



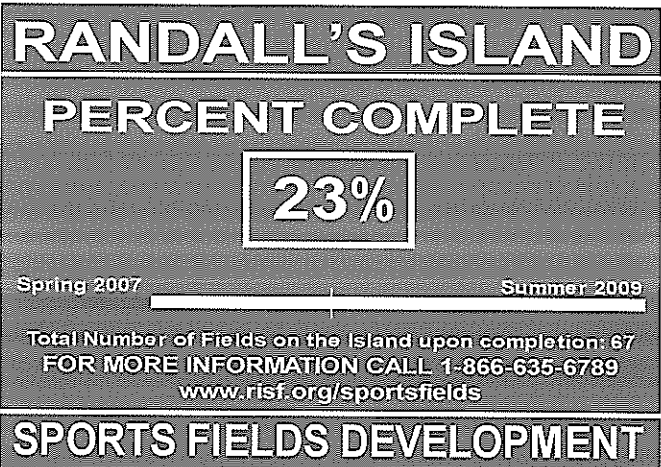
A winter wonderland on Randall's Island as work progresses on the Sports Fields project

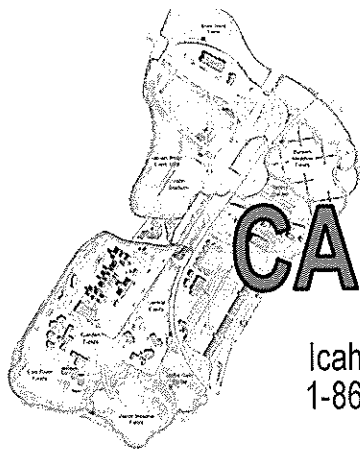
Since the Fields Project began in June of 2007, contractors have made enormous progress. The Project remains on time and within budget.

One of the first priorities of the construction was to create an environmentally responsible storm water management system for the Island. Comfort stations will require water and sanitation lines, and fields and pathways

will require water lines for irrigation systems and fountains as well as electricity to allow for expanded lighting. The contractor has installed over 11,500 feet of water mains and installed over 85 electrical manholes to service the improvements. Most of the utility work completed so far has been in the Central Spine Roadway, which is still the subject of detours and lane reductions as the contractor works to get all the utilities completed.

Clearing and grubbing has been completed in the Central, East River and Sunken Garden Fields, and rough grading has been completed in the East River Fields. Work in the Wards Meadow and Sunken Meadow Fields began in the end of November 2007 and is proceeding on schedule. The first completed fields are scheduled to come on line in fall 2008.



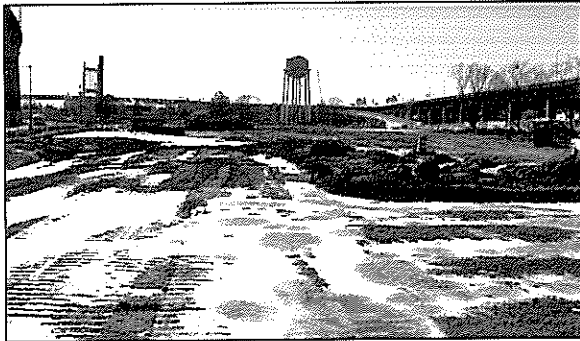


RANDALL'S ISLAND DESARROLLO DE CAMPOS DEPORTIVOS

Icahn Stadium • 20 Randall's Island • New York, New York 10035
1-866-635-6789 • www.risf.org/sportsfields • sportsfields@risf.org

NOTICIAS DESDE LOS CAMPOS

FEBRERO DE 2008



Un paisaje maravilloso de invierno mientras el trabajo progresa del proyecto de los campos deportivos.

Desde que comenzó el proyecto de los campos en junio de 2007, los contratistas han hecho grandes avances. El proyecto sigue a tiempo y dentro del presupuesto.

Una de las prioridades de la construcción fue crear un sistema de administración de agua de lluvias medioambientalmente responsable para la isla. Los sanitarios requerirán tubería de agua y drenaje, y los campos y caminos necesitarán tubería de agua para los

sistemas de irrigación y los bebederos, así como electricidad para permitir la iluminación ampliada. El contratista ha instalado más de 11,500 pies de tuberías de agua y ha instalado más de 85 pozos de registro eléctricos para dar servicio a las mejoras. La mayor parte del trabajo de servicios completado a la fecha ha ocurrido en Central Spine Roadway, que sigue siendo sujeto de desviaciones y reducciones de carriles conforme el contratista trabaja para finalizar todos los servicios.

La limpieza y el desbrozado se han terminado en los campos Central, East River y Sunken Garden, y el nivelado aproximado se ha completado en los campos East River. A fines de noviembre de 2007 comenzó el trabajo en los campos Wards Meadow y Sunken Meadow, y está avanzando según lo programado. Se tiene previsto que los primeros campos entren en servicio en el otoño de 2008.

RANDALL'S ISLAND

PORCENTAJE TERMINADO

23%

Primavera de 2007

Verano de 2009

Número total de campos de la isla al terminar: 67
PARA OBTENER MÁS INFORMACIÓN, LLAME AL 1-866-635-6789
www.risf.org/sportsfields

DESARROLLO DE CAMPOS DEPORTIVOS



City of New York Parks & Recreation



New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation

Oversight – Status of the Possible Athletic Fields on Randall’s Island

September 22, 2008

Testimony by
William Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner

As you have heard Commissioner Benepe say many times, Parks’ mission is to provide active recreation to all New Yorkers. We manage one of the largest networks of athletic fields and facilities in the nation. Each of our facilities, whether it be a small neighborhood basketball court or the large Icahn Stadium, is essential to that mission. Today, I will discuss how we plan to make sure that Randall’s Island, one of the largest recreational spaces in New York City, reaches its full potential.

HISTORY

Randall’s Island Park was once two separate islands—Randall’s and Wards—located at the convergence of the East and Harlem Rivers. In 1830, New York City purchased Randall’s Island from Jonathan Randall’s heirs and used it as a potter’s field, an almshouse, a reformatory, and a hospital.

Its remarkable geography discouraged commercial and residential development, helping to preserve the green, open spaces that moved Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to formally designate the island as a public park in the 1930s. Yet, its relative isolation allowed for more than two centuries of haphazard institutional use and development even after its designation as parkland.

In 1930, the Metropolitan Conference on Parks recommended that both Randall’s Island and Wards Island be cleared of existing uses and devoted to recreational activities. However, the recommendation was not fully carried out as, among other facilities, the DEP Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1937 and the construction of the Manhattan State Psychiatric Hospital was approved in 1954.

With the opening of the Triborough Bridge in 1936, access to the island was greatly improved. Commissioner Moses seized the moment and launched a comprehensive program to build recreational spaces such as ball fields, playgrounds, and a stadium (named Downing Stadium in 1955 for former Director of Recreation John J. Downing). He evacuated the original children’s hospital and closed the House of Refuge. Over the next thirty years, the City gradually filled in the space between Randall’s and Wards Islands to allow for even greater recreational area.

Randall's Island represented a great opportunity for meeting a growing city's active recreation needs. Yet, by the 1980s it became clear that the park needed improvement. The existing fields didn't have any irrigation to keep them green and uncompacted, or a decent drainage system to allow play after a rain. Basic amenities were lacking, such as public restrooms throughout the park, or parking to accommodate visitors. In fact, it was the norm to see cars parked on the grass or driving down paths meant for pedestrians or bicyclists. Even Downing Stadium, the site of Jesse Owens' victory in the 100 yard dash at the 1936 Olympic Trials, Pele's American debut, and a concert by Jimi Hendrix in 1970 had deteriorated beyond repair. Randall's Island, a place of great promise, sorely needed help.

RANDALL'S ISLAND SPORTS FOUNDATION & THE MASTER PLAN

The Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF) was founded in 1992 as a public-private partnership with the New York City Parks Department to improve Randall's and Ward's Islands. RISF, in conjunction with Parks and the local community, works to develop and expand sports and recreational facilities, protect natural environments, maintain parkland, and sponsor community programs for the children of New York City.

In 1999, with these goals in mind, RISF and Parks researched and created a comprehensive Management, Restoration, and Development Plan. This plan now guides the creation of an accessible and well-organized sports and recreational complex.

The surrounding communities, parkgoers and elected officials were instrumental in the development of the Master Plan. Community meetings were held to determine need and interest in all three surrounding boroughs, and RISF and Parks worked with planning staff from the offices of local elected officials including former Borough Presidents Fernando Ferrer, C. Virginia Fields and Clare Shulman.

We heard from the community that they wanted more recreational opportunities, better amenities and improved access to the island. As a result the Plan focused on improving fields, park stewardship, increasing access to the island and waterfront, and developing additional athletic facilities for sports including golf, tennis and track and field.

Parks and RISF are in the process of making the plan a reality. Today I would like to focus on four key components of the plan: environmental preservation, recreational opportunities, amenities, and community access.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

As part of the improvements on the Island, two natural environments, a salt marsh and a freshwater wetland, have been established. Through the process of excavating over 20,000 cubic yards of debris, installing clean sand, and planting native marsh grasses, 4 acres of remarkable salt marsh have been created surrounding the Little Hell Gate Inlet on the western edge of the Island. Just across from the salt marsh, 4 acres of freshwater wetlands were also restored. After

the removal of almost 15,000 cubic yards of debris and fill, the freshwater wetland site was planted with native herbaceous, shrub, and tree species, such as switchgrass, aster, dogwood, and oak.

The restored salt marsh and freshwater wetland are strategically located in the middle of New York City's urban landscape, in which few natural, undeveloped areas remain. As such, these areas will be critical sites for reintroducing wildlife, including birds, crustaceans, mollusks, fish and small mammals. The close proximity of the two types of wetlands to each other, as well as the diversity of their habitat types, increases their ecological functionality and value.

In addition, the restoration projects play a crucial role in an innovative Park-wide filtration system. As it collects storm water from the adjacent sports fields, pathways and paved areas and channels it through the Wetlands, the new plants will naturally filter pollutants before reaching the East River and the Long Island Sound.

RECREATION

Providing active recreation space is perhaps the most significant part of the master plan. The construction of Icahn Stadium, which was opened in April 2005 at the former site of Downing Stadium, was an important first step. This world class track and field venue has a 400-meter running track, seating for 5,000, a modern scoreboard timing system, fitness, exercise and meeting rooms, and a FIFA-certified soccer field with lighting and bleachers adjacent to the stadium. The stadium is the site of both world class and major college meets, as well as public and private high school meets, the PSAL championships and Mayor's Cup Events. We also built a state of the art soccer field, which hosts citywide public school soccer and lacrosse championships.

For those non-runners among us, there is also tennis and golf on the island. Four years ago, after a competitive process, Parks awarded the tennis center concession to Sportime, which is now constructing a new tennis facility with a total of 20 courts, both covered and open. The facility will also have a cafe and meeting rooms, and will host expanded and improved youth programs. The golf center reopened in May 2008 and consists of a two-tier driving range with approximately 80 stalls. Together, these facilities have been operated by concessionaires for over 25 years.

Randall's Island Kids Sports programs are run by RISF in partnership with dozens of public schools and community-based organizations in Harlem and the Bronx and offer free year-round athletic programs. These programs began in 1993, with the inception of a summer camp offering sports instruction to children from neighborhoods adjacent to the park. Building on its success, RISF began an after-school program in 1999, which in recent years has offered thousands of children formalized training through the camp as well as RIK Soccer, RIK Tennis, RIK Golf, Dance Fitness and the Jesse Owens Track and Field Club. Every year, thousands of children from community based organizations come to Randall's Island for free programs. But while those programs are given without charge, the costs are all underwritten by private donations raised by the Randall's Island Sports Foundation.

To fully achieve the goals established by the plan and realize the community's wish for increased active recreation on Randall's Island we must expand and improve the island's athletic fields. The Randall's Island Sports Field Development Project will do just that.

SPORTS FIELD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Sports Field Development Project will construct 63 new baseball, softball, and soccer fields. These new fields replace the existing overutilized fields, which lacked adequate landscaping and drainage and were difficult to maintain. The proposed project will occupy roughly 209 acres of parkland out of a total 500 acres. The new fields have been designed specifically for their respective sports: baseball, little league, softball, and soccer. Some of the soccer fields will be synthetic turf, which will allow for more playing time, and reduce maintenance demands. The natural grass fields will be fully irrigated in order to keep them available for use throughout the playing season.

The Sports Fields Development Project is projected to yield a total of 13 baseball fields, 2 little league fields, 20 softball fields, 7 regulation soccer fields, and 21 varsity soccer/lacrosse fields. Nine of these new soccer fields will overlap with the new ball fields (6 in Sunken Meadow, 2 at the Central Fields, and 1 at the Hell Gate Fields). These new fields will serve in addition to the one existing regulation soccer field (near Icahn Stadium, referred to as the Harlem River Event Area) and two existing varsity soccer/lacrosse fields at Hell Gate Fields. When the project is complete, the new and existing fields will total 66 athletic fields on Randall's and Wards Island.

Because the fields overlap, 51 fields will be available for use during the fall season and 57 fields will be available for use during the spring and summer seasons.

The Sports Fields Development Project is a phased three-year project which began in June 2007. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009. The phasing is dependent on weather and soil conditions on the island and is therefore susceptible to changes. Five fields already have been completed and are open, and a comparable number should be completed in the next month. The remainder of the field work will occur during 2009.

We need these fields because of the spiraling demand we are trying to meet for sports facilities throughout the city. Let me give you figures to illustrate this point. In 2006, we issued permits for 140,194 youth games and 71,774 adult games on our fields. In 2007, the number of permitted youth games increased by 27% to 178,228 and permitted adult games increased by 22% to 87,473. There is no question but that we need the additional fields we will gain from this project. The sooner the better.

AMENITIES

New and expanded athletic fields are key to the island's success, but we know from talking to the community that we must also improve amenities to make this a destination for families, school leagues, and athletic groups. That is why we are adding comfort stations and drinking fountains, improving the overall flow of traffic around the island, increasing signage and upgrading the island's infrastructure.

In the past, there were two informal areas with picnic tables at a few areas of the park: a small section at Sunken Meadow and an area adjacent to the playground near Hell Gate.

The new configuration offers several more designated picnic areas, which will include picnic tables, water fountains and adjacent restrooms: a large site near the Bronx Shore Fields, a few small areas in Sunken Meadow, areas along the Wards Island shoreline near the 103rd Street footbridge, and a particularly scenic spot just north of the ferry dock along the Harlem River. In all, the new picnic areas are much more aesthetically pleasing, contain necessary amenities, and are located strategically to maximize easy pedestrian/non-vehicular access.

Currently, there is one comfort station on the island. As part of the project, six comfort stations will be constructed on the island at Bronx Shore, Sunken Meadow Central (2 stations), Hell Gate (rehabilitated station), and between East River and Wards Meadow. The comfort stations will offer convenient storage for maintenance equipment and central locations for general information about the park.

In order to support the new irrigated and lighted fields, comfort stations, and park amenities, the island's infrastructure must be upgraded. Presently there are two electric vaults with no spare capacity that service DPR facilities. The first services Icahn Stadium, and the second vault services the DPR Five Borough Garage, an NYPD building, and lighting on existing roadways and pathways. These vaults have inadequate capacity and cannot maintain the existing tennis bubble and ball field lights. The construction of a new substation will help alleviate the strain on the existing network and provide power for the new park amenities.

An important aspect of the project is making sure parkgoers can easily and safely access the fields. Currently, many of the pedestrian pathways are used by cars and bicyclists. Randall's Island has a circulatory road system in the northern portion of the island that is accessible from all of the Triborough Bridge ramps. The existing circulatory road accommodates two lanes of traffic in each direction separated by a center median. As part of the proposed project, the circulation pattern will be extended so that visitors can access all of the field clusters without having to drive on pedestrian pathways.

New signage will assist visitors in reaching all of the island's facilities. Directional signs will mark the primary loop and field loop roads, with the purpose of eliminating the confusing system that currently exists on the island. Other signs will identify major facilities such as the Tennis Center, Golf Center, Icahn Stadium, and destinations including specific fields, comfort stations, and designated parking.

Currently, there is a lack of parking spaces on the island, leaving vehicles to park on athletic fields, damaging the playing surfaces. The project includes designated parking areas closer to the fields. Near the Bronx Shore Fields there are plans for two designated parking areas for a total of 200 parking spaces. There are also two open areas which may be used for picnicking. Around Sunken Meadow Fields, the loop road will have approximately 124 parking spaces for visitors. There will also be roughly 75 spaces parking available in front of the new tennis center and along the access road to this field area. On the southwestern portion of the island, about 84 parking spaces will be included in the roadway design for the loop road accessing the East River Fields and 24 spaces around Sunken Garden Fields. In the southeast, nine spaces will also be

included in the loop roads circling Wards Meadow Fields, Hell Gate Fields, and Central Fields. There will also be a larger designated parking lot for Wards Meadow Fields with about 230 spaces.

As part of the project, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian pathways are being constructed to travel nearly the entire five-mile circumference of the island, offering improved shoreline access and views in all directions. Many pathway sites involve reclamation of previously neglected or inaccessible waterfront parkland. These new routes will redirect pedestrian and bicycle traffic away from the major roadways by creating a variety of safe, inviting non-vehicular routes, and will encourage non-vehicular travel by connecting access points to facilities and providing clear circulation for island visitors.

The first phase of Randall's Island Waterfront Pathway opened in April 2006. It connects Manhattan to the island, by leading from the East 103rd Street pedestrian footbridge over the East River along the island's western shoreline to the Little Hell Gate Inlet, where an educational boardwalk brings visitors directly to Icahn Stadium. It is, by far, the best bicycle and pedestrian route from Manhattan to the park, and is especially visible and accessible to residents of East Harlem. Participants in the Randall's Island Kids program use this pathway to access the free sports and environmental education activities.

Further sections of the pathway are in various stages of completion, from development to design to construction. A bicycle and pedestrian route along the island's busy central roadway is already in place, and new pathways connect the boardwalk to this central roadway, as well as to the stadium. A route is in development to run from the park's ferry dock along the northwestern shoreline and along the Bronx shoreline to the Hell Gate Bridge trestle. Design has been completed for a further section running under the trestle, and we are looking forward to its construction. Finally, a pathway section accessing the new salt marsh, sports fields, and Tennis Center at Sunken Meadow is in construction and is expected to be completed in the next eight months.

COMMUNITY ACCESS

In addition to improving facilities on the island, Parks and RISF have been working with the community to improve access to the island. The new Queens pedestrian access ramp was opened in spring 2008 and leads from the Triborough Bridge down to the sports fields in the center of the island, shortening the length Queens residents have to walk by a half a mile. A new Bronx pedestrian and bicycle access path under the Amtrak bridge that will be at grade to allow Bronx residents to walk or bicycle by two routes instead of the one that exists from the Triborough Bridge is in the final planning stage.

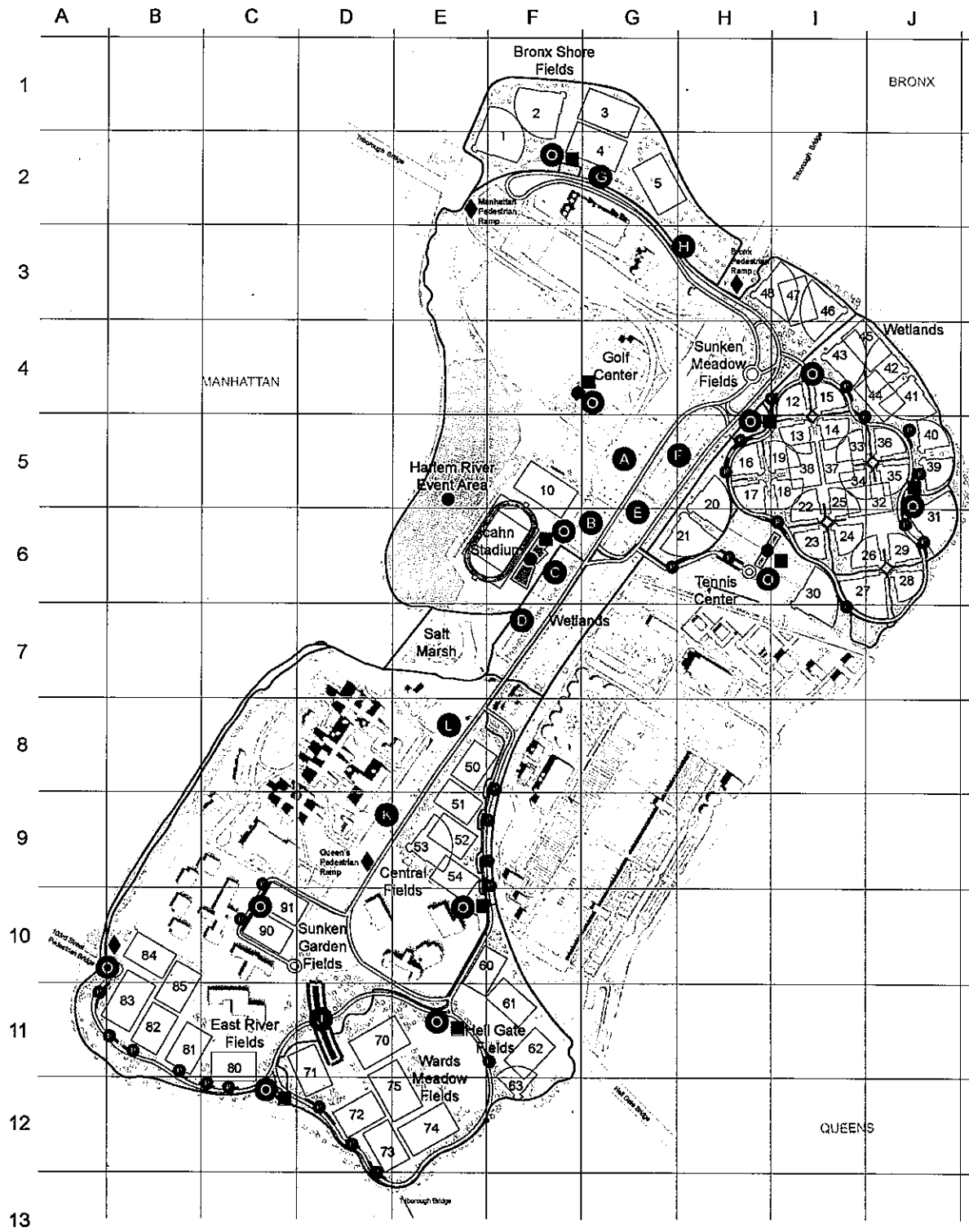
East Harlem residents can now walk over the 103rd Street Pedestrian bridge and enjoy the new fields with magnificent views of the Harlem River and the Manhattan skyline. From Manhattan, we have brought the ball fields closer to the residents in East Harlem and made them immediately accessible to ballplayers who walk over the 103rd Street pedestrian bridge with six new fields that are now open in the East River fields area on the southwest corner of the park. The new waterfront path along the western shore of Randall's Island has dramatically improved

access for East Harlem residents by giving them a quicker, direct route to the center of the park, the stadium, tennis courts and ball fields.

The Harlem River Event site is accessible by public transportation and bike and pedestrian paths. We are working with community groups to expand the variety of events at this site. Revenue from these events helps RISF to maintain operations and provide free youth programming at Randall's Island.

CONCLUSION

Randall's Island is at a significant point in its history. I am pleased to update you on the important work underway and our efforts to realize the goals of the Master Plan, and Parks' mission to provide active recreation for all New Yorkers.



New York City Department of
Parks & Recreation
www.nycgovparks.org

RANDALL'S ISLAND PARK

Randall's Island
Sports Foundation
www.risf.org





RANDALL'S ISLAND SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

September 22, 2008

Board of Trustees

Richard J. Davis
Chairman

Karen Cohen
President and Founder

Richard B. Gross
Secretary and Treasurer

Adrian Benepe
*Commissioner,
Parks & Recreation*

Aimee Boden
Executive Director

Scott Stringer
*President,
Manhattan Borough*

Robert P. Balachandran
Jeffrey Kay
Nanette Smith
Mayoral Appointment

Patricia A. Begley
G. Michael Bellinger
Rodney Cohen
Susan Danilow
Tori Dauphinot
Hector M. Gesualdo
Jerome L. Goldman
Sunil K. Gulati
Jane Hanson
Carl C. Icahn
Gail Icahn
Roy A. Judelson
Dean I. Landis
Nancy F. Neff
Bimla Picot
Elizabeth Sawyer Press
Madeleine Bodkin Rice
Patricia W. Shifke
Vinton A. G. Vickers
Waide Warner
Sheena Wright

Advisory Board

Dorothy Haimé
Margaret Yates Thorne

Honorary Trustees

Michael R. Bloomberg
David Howe
Betsy Barlow Rogers
Thomas W. Strauss
Andrew H. Tisch

Administrative Staff

Pinky Keehner
Associate Director
Jonathan Greengrass
VP Development
Anne Wilson
Development Director
Sabina Ellentuck
Community Director
Louis Vazquez
Sports Director

Honorable Helen D. Foster
Chair
Committee on Parks
New York City Council
250 Broadway, 17th Flr.
New York, NY 10007

FOR THE RECORD

Dear Chair Foster and Members of the Committee:

I am proud to serve as the Chair of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation, an organization which more than 15 years ago was founded to partner with the New York City Parks Department and work with local communities in maintaining and developing the unique potential of Randall's Island Park.

At that time, the Park's nearly 500 acres were hardly living up to their promise. The once historic Downing Stadium was outdated and crumbling, and offered only barely functional facilities for those seeking to use it for athletic activities. The golf center was not serving the number of New Yorkers it could, given its location and size, and the tennis center was at once minimal in its amenities and insufficient to keep up with the local demand for tennis courts. Municipal and State institutional users, banished from the mainland, dominated the landscape and the roadways, and operated without the kind of coordination and partnership necessary for the Island to function as a coherent whole. The wetland areas were filled with rebar, old cars, concrete and decades of other construction debris and garbage; the seawall was falling apart and the shoreline sliding into the river. Large sections of parkland had been overgrown by weeds, invasive species and poison ivy, and were used as camping areas by the indigent. There were no dedicated bicycle and pedestrian routes; instead, the narrow park pathways were used by a snarl of buses, institutional trucks and vehicles, private cars, bicyclists, and foot traffic, including children traveling through this chaos to and from the playing fields.

These fields, while depended upon by a range of groups, were in terrible condition, haphazardly laid out, with no irrigation, lighting or fencing, and no restrooms. They were often either bald and hard or flooded with rainwater; wear and tear was uneven, surfaces were easily exhausted, and in warmer months the dirt blew in clouds across the open spaces. In the after-school hours, they were used almost 100% of the time by local independent schools – schools which had the resources to clean them before use, and who brought their students in buses with built-in restrooms. Generations of these students, and of other athletes from local schools and leagues who came on weekends, remember lining up and sweeping through their field, from one end

to the other, picking up glass, needles and other garbage and debris before playing.

Still, the Island was remarkable, even then, and inspiring to those who had vision. Right in the middle of the East River – and just adjacent to some of New York City’s most under-resourced neighborhoods – was this diamond in the rough. Cut off from the city, surrounded and in a sense preserved by the East and Harlem Rivers, hundreds of acres of waterfront parkland had remained untouched for decades. At a time when green open spaces had become so rare, and when the children of our city were desperate for places to learn, play and expand their horizons, Randall’s Island seemed almost a miracle.

Of course, the local community knew the Park’s potential. They had always known, and residents from East Harlem, the South Bronx and Western Queens had played and relaxed there for generations, in spite of limited access and less than ideal maintenance. Seeking guidance and support, RISF went to Manhattan Community Board 11 in East Harlem, Community Board 1 in the South Bronx and Community Board 1 in Astoria, and to the regular Park users, to work toward developing a management, restoration and development plan for the Island’s future. Not surprisingly, the priority was increased and improved playing fields, alongside increased access, augmented recreational opportunities and overall stewardship. The Foundation, with widespread support from park users, also sought ways to render the Island more self-sufficient and to ensure its future, through revenue generated at and dedicated to the Park.

An overall plan was completed in 1999, and in 2008 we are proud to say that the City, the community and RISF have continued to work together toward realizing so many of its goals: a track & field stadium, a renovated golf center, restored wetlands, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trails, seawall and shoreline repair, an upcoming new tennis center, and of course dozens of reconfigured, increased and improved playing fields. Icahn Stadium, built through a 1:1 combination of public dollars and private donations, now hosts local, regional and international events; last spring, Usain Bolt set a world record with a 100-meter dash performed at the Park. But while used by world class athletes, what is inspiring to so many of our young people is that they too use this wonderful facility. Not only is it extensively used by public and private schools, but RISF created the Jesse Owens Track & Field Club which provides free instruction opportunities to over 1000 children a year from surrounding communities.

The upcoming new tennis center will greatly increase and improve the number of courts available, and we have actively worked with the operator to ensure that it will offer outstanding free professional training for children as part of RISF’s programs. Similar programs will be available at the renovated

golf center. Large areas of seawall have been repaired, saving the parkland from erosion, and more is slated for the next year, and a new ferry dock has been constructed, with service for major events. The Little Hell Gate Inlet wetlands, 8 acres in total, are naturally filtering nonpoint source pollution and welcoming migratory birds and fish. We use this area for, among other things, an outdoor classroom for our RIK Nature program, which provides science classes developed in cooperation with the Bank Street College of Education to Harlem public school students.

Winding bicycle and pedestrian pathways, offering safe, dedicated and scenic waterfront routes, traverse the park, and within a year the entire shoreline will be accessible in this manner. Many of these pathways run along parkland reclaimed from institutional use and/or foreboding overgrowth, and access to the Park has been transformed by their visibility and safety. Institutional usage has been transformed as well, as agencies have been brought together with urging from RISF, the community and the City to reconsider and reorganize their mutual use of the Island, and areas not crucially needed have been returned for public use as parkland.

Players increasingly can access the Island's fields without competing with cars, buses or large institutional trucks, and these fields are being reconfigured and reconstructed to radically improve the Park's ability to meet the recreational needs of one of the world's most populated urban areas. Green open spaces are rare in New York City, and once development of the fields is complete Randall's Island will offer 66 first class fields for waterfront play – all either irrigated or artificial turf, few overlapping, and many with amenities such as bleachers, fencing and lighting. This translates to 57 fields being available in the spring and 51 fields being available in the fall. Access roads have been created alongside dedicated nonvehicular routes, and pocket parking will prevent the danger and destruction caused in past by cars on the fields. Restrooms are being constructed, so that the parkland can be enjoyed equally by all visitors. And the fields themselves could not be more inspiring, vast expanses of true green with river breezes and views along the adjacent shorelines of Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens. Truly, Randall's Island is becoming a backyard park for New York City.

Most importantly, the increased number and simplified maintenance of the Park's fields is expected to open many thousands of new hours of use each year. Public schools, once largely shut out of after-school permits at the Park through longstanding independent school use, will be the principal beneficiaries of this increase and, along with community groups, will now have significant access to these fields, including in the after-school period. Indeed, RISF and elected officials and community representatives will continue to work to make sure that as new fields open up, these groups will truly be able to use them.

In order to ensure these children can visit, RISF has long worked to develop, fund and implement Randall's Island Kids (RIK) Sports after-school and summer camp programs, in close and ongoing partnership with dozens of public schools and community-based organizations in Harlem and the South Bronx. Prior to construction, 14,000 children participated in our RIK programs each year. Even with most of the Park under construction, last year we were able to serve 6500 of these young neighbors. With completion of the fields, the potential for expansion is truly enormous. The local Community Boards and elected officials are also now working alongside RISF and the City to augment public access via increased buses, improved bicycle and pedestrian bridges, and increased ferry service, but in the meantime RISF has been developing on-Island access improvements and funding the buses to bring these thousands of children to the Park each year. Once on the Island, the coaches and counselors from the schools and CBOs work hand in hand with RISF staff and instructors to provide these young athletes with practice and instruction in track and field, golf, tennis, softball, dance fitness and soccer. It is a close and longstanding partnership, bringing together the expertise and goals of the local community with the resources available at the Park.

These efforts first began in 1993, when the community and the new RISF leadership took a look at Randall's Island and realized that on summer days the fields were deserted – while right across the river children in Harlem and the South Bronx lacked safe, open spaces to play and escape the heat of the city. The first summer Camp was born, and subsequent programs have followed on the success of that model, always implemented as partnerships with the adults – parents, teachers, counselors, coaches – who work daily with local children and know best their needs and dreams. Outreach is conducted in the communities, via the Community Boards, via fitness and health forums, via local advocacy events, and by word of mouth, and participation is tailored through collaboration to what best suits each local group. It is a flexible and responsive model and one which will enable the best possible use of the remarkable new resources soon available, as together we complete the management, restoration and development plan laid out so many years ago.

I obviously am aware that some have objected to our attempts to partner with private schools who have been long time park users for them to provide financial support for the renovation of these fields and, at the same time, receive some assurance regarding field use in the after-school period. Certain key points are, however, important to remember:

1. The willingness of these schools to provide financial support provided a key incentive for the City's willingness to fund this extraordinary project.

2. Prior to this project the private school users were almost the exclusive users of these fields, while under all possible scenarios after this project is completed public school use will very dramatically increase in the after-school period.

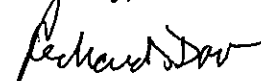
3. Our time of greatest demand is the weekend and these users – primarily community organizations and leagues – will be extraordinary beneficiaries of these new fields.

4. We will be creating approximately 48,000 hours of playing time, nearly all of which will benefit users of the fields other than those private schools who had been part of a concession. Indeed, under all scenarios these private schools would use the fields less than 15% of all playing time on these fields.

5. As budgets come increasingly under pressure, private school financial support will, among other things, help maintain these fields. In the end, as we are reminded of in times of economic difficulty, these kinds of public-private partnership benefit not only the participants, they benefit the broader community and all park users. This project will do so.

It has been a pleasure to work alongside the community, the Parks Department, and the City in protecting and restoring Randall's Island Park. With the support and leadership of our elected officials, I hope this remarkable public-private partnership can continue to work together in realizing the Island's great promise.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Davis

FOR THE RECORD

Good morning Chair Foster and members of the Parks Committee. My name is Kenneth Podziba and I am the commissioner of the NYC Sports Commission.

The Sports Commission works to attract and create sporting events throughout New York City to improve the city's economy and to provide our residents with opportunities to participate in athletic competitions.

The Sports Commission has brought and continues to bring sporting events to Randall's Island. We're excited about the RISF and the Department of Parks & Recreation's Master Plan becoming a reality so that we can attract and create more athletic competitions to this treasured place.

I would like to provide you with some examples of events that we helped bring to Randall's Island:

The Mayor's Cup Lacrosse Jamboree was created through a partnership with the Sports Commission, RISF and the PSAL. It is comprised of 33 teams, 17 boys and 16 girls, from our public, private and parochial schools. Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing participatory sports in the country and this event goes a long way in advancing the level of lacrosse played in our city.

This past May marked the 4th year that New York hosted the Reebok Grand Prix at Icahn Stadium. This internationally televised track meet featured many of

the world's premier track & field athletes. Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt electrified the crowd posting a world-record time of 9.72 seconds in the 100-meter dash.

This past April was also the 4th time that the Mayor's Cup Outdoor Track & Field Championship took place at Icahn Stadium. Over 5,000 high school track & field athletes from more than 200 NYC public, parochial and independent schools competed in this tournament.

And just a few weeks ago Randall's Island was the venue for the Nike Human Race, a 10,000 person race plus a concert at Icahn Stadium. Over a million people in major cities around the world simultaneously participated in the Human Race which raised money for the World Wildlife Foundation, the Lance Armstrong Foundation and the United Nation's refugee agency's ninemillion.org campaign.

I am confident that the Master Plan, and specifically the Sports Field Development Project, will help meet the recreational needs for all New Yorkers in a way that will not hurt the beautiful landscape of Randall's Island. I therefore fully support the goals and objectives of the RISF and the Department of Parks and Recreation in their continuing quest to make this great island an even greater place for New Yorkers.

Bank Street College

610 West 112th Street
New York, New York 10025

Don S. Cook
Director, Randall's Island Project
212/875-4494
dscook@bankstreet.edu

FOR THE RECORD

The partnership of Randall's Island Sports Foundation with Bank Street College Statement to the City Council by Don S. Cook¹ September 22, 2008

Bank Street College is working in partnership with the Randall's Island Sports Foundation [RISF] to take classes from public schools to Randall's and Wards Islands for educational programs. The partnership is now in its eighth year; we have worked with teachers in thirteen East & Central Harlem public schools.

We are trying to develop a model for nature studies on Randall's Island. Our model urges that children return again & again to examine in depth the trees and flowers, the beetles, slugs and butterflies, the birds, and the crabs and fish. We purposefully plan each class' field trip with the teacher and integrate it into the curriculum. We have evidence that some children have returned with their parents, and we have reason to expect this to expand in the future as the amenities on the island improve. We wish to give access to nature to fellow city dwellers who have little experience with the natural world. We want, in fact, to teach the value of protecting the environment.

A central tenet in science education is that learners learn best when they are engaged. Some people characterize this simply as "hands-on learning," though I mean something more. Engagement to me means the opportunity to think about something that is meaningful, seeing it in context, learning about it in great depth, seeing a framework for the facts, and considering what is the next thing to look for.

New York City Department of Education's K-8 Science Scope & Sequence has a natural history unit at every grade level. The third grade unit is organized around concepts arising from the question "How are plants and animals suited to live in their environments?" The fourth grade unit is organized around concepts related to the statement "Animals and plants in their environments." There is no better way than fieldwork to explore the underlying concepts.

¹ Don S. Cook is a member of the faculty of Bank Street College. He is the Director of the Randall's Island Project and the Tiorati Workshop for Environmental Learning at Bank Street. His specialty is preparing elementary school teachers to teach science.

We are finding an energizing effect in other subject matters also. Children who have trouble focusing on their work in the classroom, or trouble writing, or trouble doing math problems, get excited and motivated in the field. Teachers say that the work at the wetlands inspires many of these children to select books to read and to work with data sets.

The RISF is giving careful attention to creating opportunities for engagement with nature. When we first started working in the natural areas of the island, the woods we worked in were a wasteland. Garbage littered the areas. Deep holes into spaces that were once the cellars of former buildings required that we strictly curtail access to certain areas. Much of the vegetation consisted of non-native invasive species.

Construction now underway is increasingly opening up, for our elementary school students and the general public, parklands that were not accessible when we began our collaboration eight years ago. An environmental boardwalk has been completed, pathways into the saltwater marsh, a trail along the freshwater marsh, and walkways along east river, now in place, were mere talking points eight years ago. I cannot wait for the vegetable garden near Kantor field to re-open. Kids are always amazed to see what the plants they eat look like whole. I think that the island's gardeners have agreed to plant some native wildflower species that will attract butterflies. As far as I am concerned, the opportunity to study vegetables and butterflies will add something very special to existing opportunities to study life of the salt and fresh water marshes.

Two of our most valued sites in the park serve both engineering and educational functions: the freshwater and saltwater marshes between Randall's and Wards Islands. The engineering function is to act as collection ponds for storm runoff. Reflecting the RISF's interest in creating parklands and giving people access to the natural environment, the environmental boardwalk allows the general public an elevated view of the saltwater marsh, while restricted access pathways give children access to the water's edge so that they can turn over rocks, study clumps of grass, in brief, look at the water's edge up close. To me, this is evidence of the thoughtful consideration the RISF has given to multiple functions in the restoration of the island.

Thank you.