

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH THE

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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION JOINTLY WITH
THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

January 23, 2019
Start: 1:07 p.m.
Recess: 5:11 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: BARRY S. GRODENCHIK
Chairperson

COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES
Co-Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

JOSEPH C. BORELLI
JUSTIN L. BRANNAN
ANDREW COHEN
RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.
MARK GJONAJ
ANDY L. KING
PETER A. KOO
STEPHEN T. LEVIN
CARLOS MENCHACA
FRANCISCO P. MOYA
DONOVAN J. RICHARDS
ERIC A. ULRICH
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
KALMAN YEGER

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH THE

1 COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION 2

2 A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

3 Lorraine Grillo
4 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
Design and Construction, DDC

5 Mitchell Silver
6 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
Parks and Recreation

7 Jamie Torres Springer
8 First Deputy Commissioner at the New York City
Department of Design and Construction, DDC

9 Carrie Grassi
10 Deputy Director for Planning at the New York City
Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, ORR

11 Dante Diez
12 Tompkin Square Student, Resident of Lower East
Side

13 Hudson Athas
14 MS104 Student, Resident of Lower East Side

15 Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

16 Asher Baumrin
17 Representing New York State Senators Brad Hoylman
And Brad Kavanagh; Congress Members Carolyn
18 Maloney and Nydia Velazquez; Assembly Members
Harvey Epstein and Yuh-Line Niou

19 Ayo Harrington
20 Member of East River Alliance, Resident of
Alphabet City

21 Naomi Schiller
22 Representing Damaris Reyes LES Ready

23 Giovanni Mastos
24 Representing Julian Morales of GOLES, Good Old
Lower East Side

25 Christine Datz Romero
Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Lower
East Side Ecology Center

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH THE

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

3 Dianne Lake
4 Member of the East River Alliance, Resident of
East Village

5 Daniel Tainow
6 Member of East River Alliance

7 Amy Chester
8 Managing Director of Rebuild by Design, Regional
Plan Association, Municipal Art Society and the
Institute for Public Knowledge at NYU

9 Lynn Kelly
10 Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks

11 Kate Biocourt
12 Director of Resilience for the Waterfront
Alliance

13 Olympia Kazi
Representing Community Board Three

14 Vaylateena Jones
15 President of the Lower East Side Power
Partnership, Resident of the Lower East Side

16 Diana Carulli
17 Representing East River Park Coalition

18 Ted Pender
Vice President of Friends of Corlears Hook Park

19 Tommy Loeb
20 Resident of East River Houses for 45 Years

21 Catherine McVay Hughes
22 Chair of Community Board One, Co-Chair of the New
York Rising Community Reconstruction Program For
Southern Manhattan

23 Carolyn Ratcliffe
24 Resident of the Lower East Side

25 Rob Hollander
New York City Resident

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH THE

1 COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION 4

2 A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

3 Felicia Young
4 Founder and Executive Director of Earth

5 Tony Rivera
6 President of OLS Little League in the Lower East
7 Side

8 Charles Krezell
9 President of Loisaída United Neighborhood Gardens
10 LUNG

11 Wendy Brawer
12 Director of Green Map System, Resident of New
13 York City

14 Daisy Paez
15 District Leader on the Lower East Side

16 Amy Berkov
17 City College of New York, Biology Department

18 Alexis Adler
19 Resident of New York City for 40 years

20 Wendy Chapman
21 Resident of Tribeca, On Board of Manhattan Youth

22 Ken Bravo
23 President of the Parent Teacher Association of
24 The Lower Manhattan Arts Academy

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2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon,
4 welcome to New York City Hall, it's nice to see a
5 standing room only crowd. Before I begin just a
6 message from our director of security, Chief Sergeant
7 at Arm, Carl Dalba, maybe he doesn't want to talk.
8 He's done, okay. Good afternoon, my name is Barry
9 Grodenchik and I have the honor of chairing the
10 Committee on Parks and Recreation for this term of
11 the New York City Council. Let me start by thanking
12 by Councilman Costa Constantinides who is to my left,
13 he is the Chair of the Environmental Protection
14 Committee, I want to thank them for agreeing to hold
15 this hearing jointly with Parks on this very
16 important issue. I also want to thank Council Woman
17 Carlina Rivera to bringing this..

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I see she
20 brought her family with... here today. If we're happy
21 about something here in this City Council we have a
22 tradition where we go like this [jazz hands] so we
23 can do that, right? I want to thank her for bringing
24 this issue to my attention and urging me to hold a
25 hearing which we're doing today. This hearing is

2 going to examine the process by which the Eastside
3 Coastal Resiliency Project, ESCR was developed. In
4 brief the ESCR was developed out of the rebuild by
5 design competition which was the brainchild of
6 President Barack Obama's hurricane Sandy rebuilding
7 task force. The competition sought proposals for
8 which federal funding would be granted for the
9 development of innovative flood protection systems to
10 better protect flood prone areas from future storms
11 and from rising sea levels. One of the winners of the
12 competition was the big U project which is being
13 managed numerous organizations some of which are here
14 today. the big U is a multi, multi-component plan
15 designed to better protect the Lower Manhattan area
16 from future storm surges. It is designed to be
17 implemented in three separate stages and will be
18 constructed on the low-lying edges of Manhattan from
19 West 57th Street to East 42nd Street in the shape of a
20 U looping around the Battery. The first phase of the
21 big U is the ESCR which was originally designed to
22 cover East 25th Street South to Montgomery Street
23 adding 2.2 miles of coastline that would absorb
24 flooding in the event of a storm surge and upgrade
25 John V. Lindsay although she told me not to call it

2 that, John V. Lindsay East River Park with various
3 recreational activities and amenities. ESCR was
4 awarded 335 million dollars in federal disaster
5 recover funding in 2014 that is due to expire if this
6 project is not completed by 2022. The city then added
7 an additional 425 million bringing the total for the
8 project to over three quarters of a billion dollars
9 at 760 million dollars. Over the four years since the
10 ESCR was funded there have been countless meetings
11 and consultations held among the designers of the
12 project, stakeholders, community organizations and
13 local residents culminating in a design that was
14 close to being finalized in the summer of 2018. I
15 toured East River Park last year with the Department
16 of Parks and Recreation and Council Member Rivera and
17 I know how crucial this recreation space is for the
18 members of the local community. I am told over
19 100,000 people live within a short walk of the park.
20 At the time I was given an update on the plan which
21 called for the construction of flood walls that would
22 line the border along sections of the park and the
23 FDR Drive in addition to berms and levees. The park
24 would receive various upgrades to make it more
25 resilient and act as a flood barrier and absorb much

2 of the flood water that would threaten the area
3 during the event of a storm surge in order to protect
4 the community. And just when everyone involved
5 thought the plan was set, the city announced this
6 September past that it had changed the plan
7 apparently with almost no consultation with the
8 various stakeholders. The timing and the rollout of
9 the change in plans are of great concern to me as
10 four years of work appear to go by the wayside
11 without an appropriate consultation with the effected
12 community and their elected leaders. The plan now
13 calls for raising the entire East River Park eight to
14 ten feet and moving the flood wall and barriers to
15 the water's edge instead of be... their being
16 constructed on the border of the park and the FDR
17 Drive. It has been claimed that by raising the entire
18 park the protected area would extend toward the water
19 line and no longer have the park act as an absorber
20 of flood waters. There is now a concern that the
21 implementation of the new design would require
22 closing large sections of the park for longer periods
23 than was originally planned. In addition, it will
24 come with a price tag nearly double of 1.45 billion,
25 almost double the cost of the original project.

2 Naturally the change in plans left many stakeholders
3 and community members stunned and lacking the
4 information necessary to analyze whether the new plan
5 is in fact in their opinion an improvement over the
6 old. Thus we have called this hearing at which we
7 hope to address these important concerns particularly
8 how the city plan to pay for the additional cost of
9 the new plan, why did the stakeholders seem to be
10 kept in the dark as the new plan was being developed,
11 will the new design actually be completed at a faster
12 pace than the old one, what is the contingency plan
13 if the ESCR is not completed by 2022 and the federal
14 funding expires and what options can be explored that
15 could allow some part of the park to remain open
16 during construction so that the community is not
17 totally deprived of access to this great park? We
18 need answers to these questions, and we need to
19 ensure that the lower east side, the East Village,
20 Alphabet City and their neighbors get the best of
21 both worlds here; protection from future storms and
22 flooding events and access to world class open space.
23 Before I invite the administration to testify, I do
24 want to thank Commissioner Silver, Commissioner of
25 Parks and Recreation and Lorraine Grillo who's the... I

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2 know her first as the head of the SCA but she's also
3 Commissioner of the Department of Design and
4 Construction. I've already told you to do this so
5 that's good. I want to ensure all of you who are here
6 and we do have an overflow crowd and lots and lots of
7 people that want to testify, if you haven't signed
8 up, there should be a Sergeant at Arms sitting there,
9 I'm sure there will be shortly so if you'd like to
10 testify please see the man who's hands are up and he
11 will sign you up. I want to ensure you that I will be
12 here till the end of this hearing to hear everybody,
13 I'm sure that Councilwoman Rivera will be here as
14 well. I do have to be back here tomorrow anyway, so
15 it doesn't matter. At this time, we are going to hear
16 an opening statement from Chair Constantinides and
17 that will be followed by an opening statement by
18 Council Member Rivera and also by an opening
19 statement from Council Woman Chin. At this time, we
20 have with us, I see Councilman Donovan Richards from
21 Queens, Councilman Joseph Borelli from Staten Island,
22 Council Woman Chin from Manhattan, Council Woman
23 Rivera from Manhattan, Chair Constantinides,
24 Councilman Gjonaj from the Bronx, Councilman Yeger
25 from Brooklyn, Councilman Cohen from the Bronx and

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2 kneeling, are you praying, are you praying for a lot
3 of votes? We also have Eric Ulrich from the great
4 Borough of Queens. Chair Constantinides please.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I'm not
6 quite sure how to follow that Chair, Chair Grodenchik
7 but thank you. So, good afternoon everyone, my name
8 is Costa Constantinides, I am Chair of the
9 Environmental Protection Committee and today as you
10 all know we're holding a joint oversight hearing with
11 the Committee on Parks which I thank our great Parks
12 Chair, Barry Grodenchik for all of his great work and
13 hearing this on the status of the East Side Coastal
14 Resiliency Project. Just to concur with my colleague,
15 you know as he talked about getting the both of... best
16 of both worlds, making sure that we are able to get
17 protection from flood waters in the long term to
18 protect the residents of Manhattan at the same time
19 being able to have quality open space that will
20 improve the quality of life for the community for a
21 generation. You know looking at testimony we received
22 earlier, you know in... actually in 2018 we heard about
23 a, a conservative estimate of sea level rise of 25,
24 25 inches in the city of New York. On the not so
25 conservative side we heard numbers of 50 to 75 inches

2 so I think all of us here have deep concerns about
3 whether this new plan will live up to that flood...
4 those flood potentials and what sea level rise and
5 storm surge can do in the city of New York as we've
6 seen tragically with hurricane Sandy we have to... and
7 will do better. So, I'm, I'm very interested today in
8 hearing the answers to those questions from both
9 Commissioners and, and working with my colleague
10 Carlina Rivera to ensure the safety and quality of
11 life of our community. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Chair
13 Costa Constantinides and now for her opening remarks,
14 Council Woman Carlina Rivera who represents most of
15 the effected community.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Good afternoon. I
17 am Council Member Carlina Rivera proudly representing
18 district 2 and East River Park that includes the
19 neighborhoods of Lower East Side, East Village and
20 the Kips Bay neighborhoods right on the East Side of
21 Manhattan along the coast. These are the
22 neighborhoods directly affected by the flood
23 protections envisioned in both the old and new East
24 Side Coastal Resiliency Project or ESCR, hashtag
25 ESCR. I would like to start by thanking Council

2 Members Barry Grodenchik, Chair of the Parks
3 Committee and Council Member Costa Constantinides
4 Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee for
5 holding this very important hearing. They recognize
6 how important this project is for its effects on the
7 57-acre John V. Lindsay Park or East River Park has
8 on its users and they also understand how the success
9 of ESCR as the largest resiliency measure in New York
10 City's history will set the tone for our city's
11 future responses to climate change. We began this
12 community led project at the grass roots level just
13 after hurricane Sandy devastated many parts of New
14 York. I will never forget those days in late October
15 when I was just a humble organizer for good old Lower
16 East Side, GOLES and how we mobilized in the hours
17 before and after the storm. I remember being in my
18 apartment that Monday night exhausted after calls to
19 local seniors and anxious visits to our GOLES
20 storefront. I remember when the lights went out
21 leaving thousands without heat or hot water for days.
22 Many of us went out to assess the damage and realized
23 we had to organize and spring into action. We started
24 a pantry from local donations and began to climb the
25 high-rise stairs to bring food and medicine to

2 stranded families. Many of those volunteers are here
3 today in this room and let me just say, we did not
4 wait to be saved. It was through self-determination
5 that we organized and the days and months that
6 followed we also came to terms with the structural
7 devastation that Sandy brought on our communities.
8 From Kips Bay through Stuyvesant Town and Peter
9 Cooper Village and into the Lower East Side
10 infrastructure was damaged, apartment buildings and
11 housing complexes especially NYCHA needed new water
12 and electrical systems and business owners returned
13 to find their life's work ruined. Billions of dollars
14 in repairs later we now realize that climate change
15 is just as serious, a long-term threat to our
16 communities as gentrification. I am proud to see my
17 neighbors, advocates, and fellow elected officials
18 here today seven years later to speak on why this
19 project must be designed and implemented the right
20 way. Many of them have been involved in our fight for
21 environmental justice since Sandy attending working
22 group meetings or implementing ways to make their own
23 buildings, developments or gardens more resilient.
24 These partners are here today because they see a plan
25 that is different in significant ways from the one,

2 they painstakingly worked on until just last year.
3 They want answers and hopefully we'll be getting some
4 today to questions like why is this a better plan?
5 Why is this new proposal so much more expensive? What
6 are the environmental impacts of the new design and
7 how are you going to provide alternative recreation
8 space during construction for the thousands of public
9 housing residents who rely on this as their only
10 recreational space? Today's hearing is just one step
11 that this legislative body will take as scrutiny of
12 this project which stretches from Montgomery Street
13 to 25th Street and how we are all going to move
14 forward together. It is also a first step for these
15 city agencies to publicly restore trust with these
16 stakeholders following a period of radio silence and
17 then a surprise announcement of the plan. I'm
18 reminded of the recent experience our community has
19 faced with the change to the L train shutdown plan
20 and too often our government agencies do not wish to
21 share all of the information regarding the complexity
22 or rapidly changing nature of large-scale projects
23 such as ESCR. They sometimes do it out of fear of
24 nimbyism or because politicians might get in the way.
25 Decisions cannot be made by the government behind

2 closed doors especially when they will impact New
3 Yorkers for decades. I'm hoping that today we can
4 start to restore, restore a sense of collaboration
5 and communication that leads us to success and
6 really, we have no choice but to make this resiliency
7 project a success. Just this week scientists
8 announced that Greenland's ice sheets are nearing a
9 tipping point that could cause irreversible sea level
10 rise in just 20 years, just another data point in a
11 list of pessimistic climate predictions. As we
12 carefully examine the details of this proposal, I'm
13 sure that the parks design will adhere to the
14 community's feedback, we must keep this in mind. At
15 its basic level this project must protect the tens of
16 thousands of people living on our waterfront from
17 another climate catastrophe for generations to come.
18 So, let me be clear, we are worth this investment and
19 we earned every penny. We all know what's at stake
20 now we need to ensure that this plan meets the
21 expectations of our neighborhoods and our city. Thank
22 you.

23 [applause]

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quite please.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're now going
3 to hear from Council Woman Margaret Chin whose
4 district is also affected by this plan.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair
6 Grodenchik for holding this important hearing for the
7 Lower Manhattan community and Council Member Rivera
8 for your partnership on this issue. While I am
9 thrilled that updates to the ESCR have opened a
10 dialogue on coastal resiliency, we want to make sure
11 that community engagement is prioritized throughout
12 this process especially those groups who were an
13 integral part in providing input in the initial round
14 of this project and that the design will not pose
15 significant adverse impacts to our existing park
16 infrastructure and fragile ecosystem and that the
17 city makes a commitment to mitigate disruption to
18 residents during construction. In November I
19 submitted testimony to the U.S. Corps of Engineer in
20 regard to their study on proposed alternatives for
21 flood mitigation. One of these alternatives include a
22 regional storm surge barrier along the New Jersey and
23 New York Harbor and smaller barriers and levees in
24 high risk neighborhoods like Lower Manhattan but no
25 plan would be complete without adequate protection

2 for sea level rise and groundwater flooding, is the
3 ESCR taking these needs into consideration? According
4 to the new plan Gouverneur Garden, a residential
5 complex in my district serving more than 700 families
6 would be surrounded by the eight-foot protective
7 wall, I am deeply concerned about the sense of
8 isolation that this barrier would impose on this
9 community. What were the factors leading to this
10 determination, how is the city working to preserve or
11 even increase this community's access to the
12 waterfront instead of doing the opposite?
13 Preservation of our green ecosystem remains a
14 priority for downtown residents. What is being done
15 to address this need, what is being done to maintain
16 neighborhood access to the park during construction?
17 These are a lot of the questions that I would like to
18 hear answers to, and I look forward to working with
19 my colleague to make sure that our communities are
20 protected. Thank you Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
22 Council Woman Chin, last opening statement also
23 joining us Councilman Powers, but I also want to
24 acknowledge we've been joined by Councilman Justin

2 Brannan of the great Borough of Brooklyn. Councilman
3 Powers please.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you, I want
5 to say thank you to the Chairs for holding this
6 hearing and thank you for everybody who's come out to
7 advocate for their community. I will be brief because
8 I promised the Chair that. I'm Council Member Keith
9 Powers, I actually represent the piece of this that
10 is north of 14th Street that goes up to 23rd Street
11 and then north of there and I actually live in
12 Stuyvesant Town and lost power on the week of Sandy,
13 I remember standing there in Stuyvesant Cove Park as
14 the water started coming over into the park and we
15 all started to realize that we were going to be in
16 for a very difficult few weeks ahead, we lost power,
17 we had flooding in the many of the basements in
18 Stuyvesant Town and myself and my predecessor and
19 many others went door to door knocking to make sure
20 our neighbors were okay. So, with that being said I,
21 I really do recognize the need for us to get
22 resiliency and protection put in place immediately. I
23 can... I cannot live in a world where we are not
24 protected against the next... the next superstorm but
25 with that being said I share the concerns that my

2 colleagues here have raised about the disruption to
3 the East River Park, a park that I spend a lot of
4 time in, my constituents use to run and to play
5 soccer, a place growing up I played soccer myself and
6 so I am here both obviously to ask questions about
7 the portion north of 14th Street, Stuyvesant Cove
8 Park, Asser Levy, Murphy Brothers Park and to
9 understand and a clearer way what will be the impact
10 to those three places but I also want to share in...
11 and the concerns that my colleague Council Member
12 Rivera has raised about the disruption to the park
13 and I know many of those folks are here as well. I
14 will say if you are represented by Council Member
15 Rivera you are in very good hands, she's been
16 fighting very hard to make sure this is not a
17 disruption, I see many that are represented by
18 Council Member Rivera but to make sure this is not
19 disruption. I know that we have partners here that
20 are going to work with us to make sure that all these
21 concerns are addressed but I know you will hear from
22 many folks today who are concerned about that, so I
23 appreciate you being here to hear their concerns as
24 well. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
3 Councilman Powers. We'll now ask that the Committee
4 Counsel to Parks swear in Commissioner Silver and
5 Commissioner Grillo.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell
7 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
8 in your testimony before these committees today?

9 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yes.

10 MITCHELL SILVER: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Commissioner
12 Silver, Commissioner Grillo whoever would like to
13 start.

14 LORRAINE GRILLO: Good afternoon Chairman
15 Grodenchik, Chairman Constantinides and members of
16 the Committee. I also want to acknowledge Council
17 Member Rivera, Powers, and Chin who have been
18 tireless advocates for their constituents on this
19 project. I am Lorraine Grillo and I am happy to
20 appear today for the first time in my new role as
21 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
22 Design and Construction. I'm joined today by
23 Commissioner Mitchell Silver and DDC's first Deputy
24 Commissioner Jamie Torres Springer as well as members
25 of my senior staff and key members of our East Coast

2 Resiliency team. We are building for a new world.
3 When superstorm Sandy struck in October 2012, the
4 storm surge battered the city's coastline leading to
5 dozens of deaths, destruction of thousands of homes
6 and other buildings. On the Lower East Side, water
7 depths of up to four feet were recorded along Avenue
8 C. Sandy battered the city's water and sewer
9 facilities, transportation systems, and shut down
10 electrical service to much of Manhattan below 34th
11 Street for nearly four days after the storm. Add to
12 this image the inevitable pace of climate change,
13 where more and frequent... more frequent and severe
14 storms and sea level rise are expected to bring water
15 even closer to our homes and neighborhoods. This is
16 the context we are building in. This is the storm we
17 have design... have to design and build for. And the
18 sense of urgency to provide flood protection as
19 quickly as possible is great. This project comes
20 years after intensive community dialogue with
21 thousands of stakeholders and continues almost weekly
22 with meetings with community boards, elected
23 officials and others to discuss this project and
24 adapt it. This includes the Rebuild by Design
25 process, a community-based effort, sponsored by HUD,

2 that inspired much of the park design we see today.
3 The top priority for ESCR is to provide comprehensive
4 flood protection that addresses the worst-case
5 projections of storm flooding and tidal inundation in
6 the 2050s. The protected area addresses the safety of
7 over one hundred thousand New Yorkers residing in
8 portions of the Lower East Side and East Village, the
9 extensive New York City Housing Authority
10 developments that line the East River, East River
11 Park, Stuyvesant Town, and Peter Cooper Village. The
12 city is proposing a flood protection system using a
13 variety of approaches including flood walls,
14 floodgates, and a raised... and raised landscapes, each
15 tailored to the specific site in which they will be
16 constructed. Drainage and other infrastructure within
17 the protected areas will be significantly enhanced
18 and we will have the opportunity to rebuild and
19 greatly improve access to the park and waterfront
20 areas. Instead of a flood wall separating the
21 community and the park, this approach raises all of
22 East River Park to the 100-year flood level as
23 projected in the 2050s. The flood barrier is moved
24 all the way from the highway to the water's edge
25 where it will sit underneath a rebuilt park and will

2 not separate the community from the waterfront. As
3 you are aware, last year a city team carefully
4 reviewed the design program for ESCR and came to the
5 conclusion that there were significant challenges in
6 the previous design that would have had major impacts
7 on our ability to deliver this project. The decision
8 was announced quickly after intensive internal
9 deliberation over the summer. The decision struck
10 many stakeholders as sudden and unexpected. I regret
11 that we did not share more information sooner because
12 the positive outcome is so significant. My mandate
13 when I joined the Department of Design and
14 Construction last year was to scrutinize our project
15 planning before, we embark on a project of this size
16 and scope and that's exactly what we did with ESCR.
17 We must get this project right. It became immediately
18 clear to me and my team that there was incredible
19 risk to building an extended flood wall along the
20 FDR. The plan called for piles to be driven at night
21 immediately next to Manhattan's primary eastern
22 roadway and directly in front of several, several
23 NYCHA developments, home to 15,000 New Yorkers. Each
24 evening at the beginning of the workers' shift the
25 outermost lane of the FDR Drive would need to be

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2 closed and construction equipment moved into place, a
3 process that would take well over an hour to complete
4 in a safe manner. And each early morning before the
5 end of the workers' shift, equipment would need to be
6 removed and orderly... and an orderly process of re-
7 opening the highway would have to take place. Access
8 to this site would have been limited to one entrance
9 on Montgomery Street. Let me be clear; this change
10 had nothing to do with protecting traffic or keeping
11 the FDR open. The change was about making sure we
12 could build this project. Quite simply, we were not
13 convinced it could, could have been done. As if that
14 were not enough, the design called for full
15 excavation of a major ConEd transmission line
16 delivering power to much of lower Manhattan and then
17 construction of a massive protective tunnel around
18 the line, all while the line was still active. This
19 effort may have presented the greatest risk to the
20 project, the exact condition of the transmission line
21 is unknown and the exact cost of excavation,
22 remediation and the means to protect it were
23 amazingly complicated. Our review this past summer
24 helped us fully understand and steer clear of the
25 unknowns of protecting the ConEd transmission line.

2 We recognize that there is concern that parts or all
3 of East River Park will be closed. We did not take
4 this decision lightly but concluded that we could not
5 keep the open and complete and... we could not keep it
6 open and complete the project while keeping residents
7 safe. It also become clear during our
8 constructability review last year that even if we
9 retained the original wall along the FDR, we would
10 have had to close the whole park and potentially for
11 a longer period. I'm sorry this information was not
12 made completely clear before but as our exact
13 engineering became more refined, we learned more
14 about the challenges of staging this project. At the
15 same time, the current design allows us to shorten
16 the schedule by a year and allows us to provide flood
17 protection to the community by spring of 2023, one
18 full hurricane season sooner than under the previous
19 design. The new approach also allows the construction
20 site to be accessed from the water by barge,
21 significantly reduces truck traffic throughout the
22 community. finally, the new design allows us to build
23 an access improvement long requested by the community
24 along the river path, near 13th Street, known as the
25 pinch point. Because of the raised park design the

2 city will be able to construct a flyover bridge to
3 accommodate the thousands of pedestrians and cyclists
4 who now have to navigate a narrow lane between the
5 FDR and a ConEd facility. As Commissioner Silver will
6 describe in more detail, the actual layout for East
7 River Park is exactly the same in this design only
8 better because the park will be fully rebuilt with
9 all new facilities. What's more, the park itself will
10 now be raised and will not flood. In fact, moving the
11 flood protection to the water's edge will allow us to
12 rebuild the waterfront esplanade, which was not part
13 of the original plan in a way that will give users
14 unprecedented access to the river. Removing the wall
15 from East River Park also addresses a concern voiced
16 repeatedly by community leaders prior to this change,
17 removing a barrier and reconnecting this open space
18 to the community. Finally, we have to remember that
19 this project has to be visionary; raising the park
20 will ensure that this park remains a community
21 resource for the next 50 years or more even as, as
22 climate change impacts become more severe. Now the
23 city is proposing a budget of 1.45 billion dollars.
24 This estimate reflects an all-in cost to install
25 flood protection, reconstruct several access points

2 into the park, and the construction of the East River
3 Park and the other parks in the project area up to
4 25th Street. This estimate includes 338 million in
5 HUD funding which we will spend by 2022. There have
6 been discussions that the cost estimate from the
7 preliminary design was approximately 800 million
8 dollars. But let me be clear, by the time we move to
9 a different approach, our estimates for the earlier
10 design were approaching 1.2 billion, nearly the same
11 as the existing design. We are working hard to bring
12 this project into construction by spring of next
13 year. To do this we hope to certify the project into
14 ULURP early spring. We are planning robust, continual
15 community engagement both before and after that
16 milestone. Construction must start early next year in
17 order to have the key flood protections in place by
18 2023. I want to assure you that we are looking very
19 intensely at the construction schedule and whether
20 sections of the park can be reopened in phases before
21 the overall East Side Coastal Resiliency program is
22 completed. Thank you and let me turn the presentation
23 over to Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver.

24 MITCHELL SILVER: Good afternoon Chair
25 Grodenchik and Chair Constantinides, members of the

2 Council Environmental Protection and Parks Committees
3 and other Council Members within the district of East
4 River Park. I am Mitchell Silver, Commissioner of the
5 New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and
6 thank you for inviting us here today to provide an
7 update on the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project.
8 Before I begin, I also want to thank Commissioner
9 Lorraine Grillo of DDC for providing such helpful
10 information and context for this massively important
11 project. While many of you are aware that this large-
12 scale resiliency investment is focused on protecting
13 the lives and property of people of the East Side of
14 Manhattan, today I'd also like to provide our
15 agency's perspective on how this project will vastly
16 improve East River Park and other parks for the
17 betterment of both the local community and the city
18 at large. The East Side Coastal Resiliency Project
19 completely changes the future of East River Park by
20 transforming it into a climate resilient park that
21 can withstand the risks and demands of the coming
22 century. In its present state, the park is highly
23 susceptible to climate risk, predominately due to sea
24 level rise, storm surge and heavy rainfall. Storm
25 surge from sporadic, severe events like hurricanes

2 overwhelm the park and the surrounding neighborhood,
3 as happened in superstorm Sandy. Perhaps even more
4 challenging is the threat from gradually accelerating
5 sea level rise, which increases the risk of frequent
6 flooding from every day storms or high tides. If we
7 do not take action, this will threaten the
8 recreational capacity of our parks, as fields will be
9 left vulnerable to storm surge and plant life to salt
10 water inundation in ways that are detrimental to the
11 existing ecology. When completed, the ESCR project
12 will transform East River Park into the 24th... 21st
13 century resilient park that New York City deserves.
14 We have successfully identified a path forward that
15 not only provides the same level of protection as the
16 initial design approach but also does it faster,
17 smarter and with more benefit to the community. This
18 plan reflects years of community input, through the
19 comprehensive community engagement that preceded the
20 design process, we heard loud and clear that the
21 users of East River Park loved the existing program
22 and amenities that were in place and this design
23 reflects that consensus. The core recreational
24 program and design elements for the park will remain
25 in place and will be enhanced. That has changed in so

2 the engineering approach for how to incorporate flood
3 protection functionality into the park and the
4 technical manner through which the project will be
5 delivered. This revised plan will elevate the park by
6 several feet, ensuring that all of the park
7 investments will be out of the flood zone and able to
8 sustain future climate challenges. The new design
9 strengthens the waterfront bulkhead, which supports
10 the esplanade and is currently in poor condition. The
11 state of the existing bulkhead had previously a
12 design constraint, limiting plantings and other
13 features that could be sited, sited near the water.
14 By reconstructing the bulkhead now, we can avoid near
15 term closures of the park to do this repair work
16 separately. We will also be able to support a more
17 dynamic waterfront esplanade, including redesigned
18 and relocated embayment's and step downs which will
19 allow more New Yorkers to get closer to the water and
20 really be able to engage with this incredible natural
21 resource. By elevating the property, we open up
22 opportunities to improve access and incorporate more
23 graceful and natural entryways into East River Park.
24 We will now be able to initiate necessary repairs to
25 Corlears Hook Bridge, a key entry point into the park

2 that is currently in poor condition. This also allows
3 us to integrate the foundations for the future
4 flyover pedestrian bridge to address the pinch point
5 near Con Edison facility, strengthening neighborhood
6 connections to the park and waterfront. Instead of
7 delaying necessary repair work on the existing
8 waterfront bulkhead at Corlears Hook Bridge, which
9 would mean park impacts and closures at a later time,
10 we are incorporating this work into the ESCR project
11 to maximize efficiency and community benefit. Lastly,
12 as we believe that many local residents will
13 appreciate greatly, altering our approach to the
14 design of the project allowed us to ensure that more
15 New Yorkers living near East River Park will enjoy
16 views of the park instead of a flood wall. Though
17 much of the public dialogue has focused on East River
18 Park, we're also pleased that the ESCR project will
19 provide important storm protection for vital park
20 assets such as Asser Levy Recreation Center, and
21 allow for the construction of other nearby properties
22 within the project limits including Murphy Brothers
23 Playground, Asser Levy Playground and Stuyvesant
24 Cove, which, while not under the jurisdiction of the
25 Parks Department, serves as an important amenity for

2 the community. Similar to the improvements that will
3 be made at the East River Park, we look forward to
4 seeing these properties updated and revived for our
5 21st century open space needs. As with many capital
6 projects of this scale and complexity, there will be
7 significant impacts and inconveniences for the
8 public. regardless of the design approach being
9 considered, the city will have to rebuild the
10 majority of East River Park, a massive undertaking.
11 And we have begun working with existing sport leagues
12 permittees that use the ball fields and will seek to
13 redistribute their access to existing park
14 facilities. We are coordinating with our sister city
15 agencies to identify opportunities to make additional
16 use of recreational space operated by other entities
17 and we are exploring all feasible improvements to
18 nearby parks properties that will increase interim
19 access to recreational space for the duration of the
20 closure, either through short term enhancements or
21 capital work that is already underway. We welcome
22 community suggestions on identifying interim
23 recreation measures and we've already received a
24 great list from Council Woman Rivera, and we're open
25 to other suggestions. Through our public engagement,

2 the enthusiasm for our urban forest and the trees
3 within East River Park has become abundantly clear.
4 The earlier design approach would have required
5 removal or replacement of nearly all the trees within
6 East River Park and that will continue to be
7 necessary, given the need to elevate the park by
8 several feet. We will attempt to transplant as many
9 existing trees and explore planting larger caliper
10 trees that will provide more significant benefit
11 sooner and we will endeavor to accelerate tree
12 planting in neighborhoods nearby to help with
13 greening efforts. In any case, it is important to
14 recognize that the current trees in East River Park
15 are already at significant risk of flooding and the
16 updated plan will ensure that those trees can survive
17 the next century in an increasingly volatile climate.
18 Subsequent to Sandy, we've seen a decline in the
19 health of many trees in the park, approximately 260
20 trees were removed in 2014 after dying off from salt
21 inundation and we've continued to remove additional
22 trees that have been unable to recover. I am pleased
23 to note when this is complete, there will be
24 approximately 1,200 trees within the park, a net
25 increase of several hundred trees, in a diverse

2 palette of species that are resistant to salt spray
3 exposure and more suitable to the park's location.
4 Realigning our planting strategy in accordance with
5 our current best practices for resiliency, in
6 combination with the elevation of the new park, means
7 that these trees and plantings will have the best
8 chance of surviving future extreme weather, be it
9 drastic storms or rising temperatures. Though a
10 project of this size will always present challenges
11 and costs, we are pleased that the ESCR project will
12 help deliver an improved park experience for visitors
13 to East River Park and other nearby open spaces. As I
14 hope we've demonstrated today, improving and
15 protecting our park system for the 21st century is a
16 guiding principle for this administration and this
17 agency, and this spirit has infused and informed this
18 effort. We look forward to achieving the shared
19 community vision of bringing comprehensive flood
20 protection, along with enhanced open space and
21 waterfront access to this densely populated area of
22 New York City. Thank you for allowing us to testify
23 before you today and for all the great advocacy for
24 our city parks. I will not... now like to welcome Jamie

2 Torres Springer, First Deputy Commissioner at DDC,
3 who will give us a short presentation. Thank you.

4 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Thank you very
5 much Commissioner Silver. It's... Council Members it's
6 my pleasure to give you a detailed briefing with a
7 visual presentation to support some of what the
8 Commissioners have been describing in their testimony
9 today. Do you need to swear me in?

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Sorry.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK: Round two. Do you
12 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
13 but the truth in your testimony before these
14 committees today?

15 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yes, I do. So,
16 I'll, I'll make a presentation and also come back to,
17 we've, we've brought some of the modeling of the
18 future project to show to you today and to make
19 available. So, this is the project area for the East
20 Side Coastal Resiliency Project. As has been
21 described, the update to the plan, the approach to
22 delivering the project spans the area of East River
23 Park which is approximately from Cherry Street in the
24 South to 13th Street in the North and as... has been
25 described by both the of the Commissioners the change

2 in the approach to delivering the project basically
3 comes down to what's described on this visual which
4 is that instead of the flood wall along the FDR which
5 you can see in sort of orange, dark orange on the
6 left hand side of the screen with the previous plan
7 at the top and the revised plan at the bottom. So,
8 instead of that flood wall being constructed along
9 the FDR, along the length of East River Park, the
10 flood wall is moved to the water's edge and then East
11 River Park and the esplanade are raised above it and
12 so really while there was a flood wall that was
13 separating the community from the park in the prior
14 plan now it's really not apparent that the flood wall
15 is there, it's a flood protection, the park is on top
16 of it, you're in the park and, and you don't know
17 it's there. So, this is the... a revised approach to
18 delivering the plan between the area of Corlears Hook
19 and East 13th Street and then as I'll get into in
20 additional detail effectively then the, the
21 programing, the various elements of East River Park
22 that have been discussed with the community over the
23 last few years and for which there's been the
24 community input is, is essentially put back exactly
25 the same but on an East River Park that's now eight

2 feet higher in elevation and now out of the, the
3 flood area. So, the benefits of that that we
4 identified in the work that we did are, are really
5 three major categories of benefits. First is
6 constructability. As Commissioner Grillo was
7 describing, flood protection work doesn't need to be
8 done along the FDR expressway for the bulk of the
9 project, that would have had to be done at night with
10 lane closures, for safety, with noise impacts of
11 doing the pile driving adjacent to the community,
12 that's now... any of that heavier construction work is
13 now moved out to the water's edge in this revised
14 plan. We also avoid the risks associated with
15 extensive work around and below the major Con Edison
16 transmission line which you can see on the diagram is
17 also adjacent to the FDR, that's a major risk
18 mitigation effort. And basically this allows us to
19 deliver the plan faster and without risk because we
20 now build the project in a self-contained way, we can
21 stage it in East River Park, this is heavy
22 construction work, we need to barge materials in, we
23 need to establish a temporary concrete batching
24 facility, we need to bring in fill and we do need an
25 area to stage within that, it's one of the

2 complexities that we deal with at the Department of
3 Design and Construction in delivering the, the
4 administration's and the city's capital projects is
5 that often it's really staging that holds us up and
6 costs us time and creates risk. So, this approach
7 gives us much more assuredness about
8 constructability. It also allows us because of that
9 for an improved schedule. So, you can see the
10 previous plan at the top. We had roughly a five year
11 schedule, we would have had to close East River Park
12 at the commencement of construction as the
13 Commissioner said, we do regret that that wasn't
14 clearly communicated previously but we wanted to make
15 it clear now in order to build the project in a safe
16 fashion, now we have a three and a half year
17 construction schedule. So, East River Park is closed
18 for a much less substantial amount of time. And the
19 other thing that we're doing right now as we move
20 into additional stages of design towards construction
21 is looking at how we might be able to reopen the
22 park. So, we do need to close it in order to make
23 sure that people are safe, we just determined that
24 there was no way of safely keeping the park open as
25 the work was done but we're looking at how we can

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2 reopen... complete it and reopen it, there's a sequence
3 that we're looking at where we rebuild the esplanade,
4 we do the sewer work, we build the retaining wall and
5 the flood protection, a seepage barrier, bring in the
6 fill, do the landscape work, create the pedestrian
7 bridges and we're working very hard on that sequence
8 and to figure out how we can reopen portions of the
9 park as soon as possible. We hope to have more news
10 on that over the next couple of months. That's the
11 schedule benefits. The additional benefit that
12 Commissioner Silver referred to is improved park
13 resiliency. So, again in both projects the community,
14 the 110,000 residents of this community are protected
15 for a storm like Sandy, the hundred year storm but
16 adjusted for the worst case projections that include
17 two and a half feet of sea level rise in the 2050s
18 that's the 90th percentile projection of the New York
19 City panel on climate change so, is the worst case
20 projection for that period. The foundations of the
21 flood protection also would allow us to extend this
22 upwards as needed to provide additional protection
23 and then in addition to that we're addressing the
24 future climate hazards of tidal inundation that will
25 become more likely from sea level rise so, that

2 daily, monthly flooding that would occur in certain
3 parts of the neighborhood, of inundation of the
4 ground water which is extremely disruptive of
5 subsurface activity and utilities and also this
6 project includes a parallel conveyance drainage
7 system within the upland area so outside of East
8 River Park that will address the kind of flooding
9 that would occur from heavy rain events which is a
10 different kind of risk that, that we're working very
11 hard to address. So, this project does include that
12 drainage infrastructure and rebuilds the drainage
13 infrastructure within East River Park. In addition by
14 building at the water's edge we are able to raise the
15 whole park out of the flood plain where it won't be
16 damaged or disrupted by future storms and as
17 Commissioner Silver was describing, you know there
18 are parks where they're built to flood, you're
19 comfortable with them flooding, parks that have this
20 much active recreation in them those are not parks
21 that you want to flood, you don't want them offline,
22 you want them to be able to come back quickly so the
23 community can have use of them. So, the other thing
24 and again that Commissioner Silver has described is
25 that this allows us to create... recreate a great

2 waterfront park in East River Park first of all by
3 not building a wall between the community and the
4 park and the waterfront. Also, what we heard from the
5 consultation that we did over many years was people
6 said please put everything back where you found it,
7 please make sure that we still have the active
8 recreation components, we are able to do that in this
9 updated plan. In fact, what's... I guess if there's a...
10 if there's a tech person around it might be helpful
11 to, to... if you could plug this laptop in. I'll, I'll
12 go as long as I can here. So, the... what's shown at
13 the top is that... okay, well that's it. So, anybody
14 have a power cord?

15 MITCHELL SILVER: I'll get it, I'll get
16 it Jamie.

17 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah. I'll just
18 continue while, while we... while we get it set back
19 up. So, what we were showing was that the area for
20 active recreation, public use, so active recreation
21 and esplanade area is increasing in the current plan
22 and that's because in the previous plan we had a
23 bermed area that was not going to be occupiable for
24 active recreation so we're able to provide additional
25 area of what we think of as occupiable space. We're

2 also replacing or improving all of the active
3 recreation components and all of the buildings in
4 East River Park as well as maintaining the fire boat
5 house that's the current home of the Lower East Side
6 Ecology Center within the project. In addition to
7 that, one of the things that was heard very strongly
8 from the community work over a number of years was
9 that East River Park doesn't have enough what we
10 think of as passive recreation, areas for families to
11 congregate, passive lawn space, barbeque pits,
12 children's play areas, those kinds of spaces were
13 lacking, are lacking in the current East River Park
14 and we're able to increase the family recreation
15 opportunities within the current plan. So, we'll show
16 that when we get the screen back but at each of the
17 entrances to East River Park there will be a
18 significant amount of passive space, lawn space where
19 play can be incorporated, barbeque pits and that,
20 that's really been done to address some of the input
21 that we've heard from the community. We have some
22 lovely renderings of that that we're happy to show
23 when we have our, our tech problems sorted out.
24 Should I pause for a second or...

25 [off mic dialogue]

2 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Okay, so just to
3 summarize so, the usable park area has increased in
4 the, the, the revised plan from both today and
5 significantly from the previous plan because that
6 bermed area took up a lot of space. You look at the
7 design that we had before and the revised design,
8 it's the same plan. So, this is a different
9 engineering approach to accomplishing the same thing
10 in terms of restoring active recreation and passive
11 recreation but we're able to provide some additional
12 space and create a great waterfront park that as I
13 said has these family recreation opportunities in
14 lawns and places for people to congregate and enjoy
15 the park. There's a plan that... it does extend for all
16 of East River Park and again this is just another way
17 of looking at the fact that we're putting back all of
18 the active recreation essentially where we found it.
19 In addition as both Commissioners were describing
20 we've improved access, park access, this is something
21 that we've been working on in this revised design so
22 we have replacement, pedestrian bridges now three of
23 them, we're... we've added the Corlears Hook Bridge in
24 the Southern end of the plan which will be entirely
25 rebuilt, replacing the bridge at East 10th Street and

2 replacing the bridge at Delancey Street, those three
3 pedestrian bridges. In addition, the administration
4 is committed to building the flyover bridge that will
5 address the pinch point at the northern end of East
6 River Park as well as improving the continuous
7 esplanade. One other thing we wanted to note about
8 where the design work stands, you know one of the
9 things that people have said which, which we're,
10 we're very conscious of is that because the park will
11 be raised up eight feet they don't want to lose that
12 connection to the waterfront so we've actually... have
13 a slide up here and we have some examples that we've
14 brought in the model to show that... the way that we
15 can address this is with different treatments of the
16 edge along the waterfront esplanade. So, there's a
17 kind of conventional edge which will be in portions
18 of the park where you are up and that's a very
19 similar elevation to many of the other waterfront
20 parks that have been built or improved in this city
21 over the last few years but we're also looking at
22 other ways to get down to and touch the water. One of
23 those ways is that there are two areas we've
24 identified for expanded embayment spaces, an
25 embayment just basically means that the water is

2 coming right into the park and there's a kind of a
3 step down to it, there actually are those spaces in
4 East River Park today but in front of those spaces
5 there's kind of another pedestrian bridge so you're
6 really just standing there looking down into the
7 water without really having a connection to it, in
8 the revised plan the embayment's are really the East
9 River coming right in and up to those steps where
10 people will be able to get down that's where a lot of
11 that fishing activity will be able to occur that
12 people value so much in the current East River Park
13 and we're very confident that we'll have great
14 waterfront access. This is an example of one of those
15 embayment's in the Houston Street area. With this
16 revised plan we have the embayment, you can see the
17 step down and the riprap treatment within the water
18 that will calm the water so that it's a very
19 comfortable place for those, those kinds of water
20 based activities and then of course the thing to
21 remember is that as we see sea level rise occur, you
22 know unfortunately you're going to be even closer to
23 the water, really two and a half feet closer in this
24 visualization but this design approach addresses that
25 by making sure that the embayment can, can, can

2 accommodate that sea level rise. The, the plan has
3 been designed the whole way along and also this
4 revision keeping the residents of NYCHA in mind,
5 7,000 units that are adjacent to the park in the
6 district, we've highlighted just the ones that are
7 immediately adjacent to East River Park here, there
8 are about 15,000 residents and this is part of the
9 city's approach to addressing the, the issues of
10 resiliency and climate change in a comprehensive way
11 so these NYCHA developments have roughly 450 million
12 dollars in FEMA funding being invested in their
13 campuses and that's great and it's in coordination
14 that these two projects are going on but those really
15 just address the issues that are within the NYCHA
16 campuses themselves, these areas would still flood
17 were it not for the fact that we can now reliably
18 deliver this flood protection project along the East
19 River and then in addition to that we've.. as I
20 described we've tried to provide as much programming
21 recognizing the programming needs for NYCHA residents
22 as we can and really are motivated to move that flood
23 protection construction out towards the water so that
24 those residents of NYCHA are not subjected to as much
25 noise during construction. A couple of renderings

2 about how this all comes together. So, this is the
3 track and field section of the East River Park which
4 is towards the northern end of the park, you can see
5 this was the prior design that was being advanced
6 with the track and field area being reconstructed
7 with a berm in the back, it would have been fully
8 inundated in one of those coastal storms now we have
9 the current plan, I just want to go back to this was
10 the prior design, here's the current plan. The main
11 difference is that we don't have as much berming in
12 the rear which provides for better connectivity to
13 the community and then here is an example of this
14 area subjected to a storm condition where it... of
15 course it's, it's going to get... it's going to get wet
16 but it's not going to get flooded and that's a real
17 advantage of this plan. Another example looking at
18 the overlook at Delancey Street... sorry, the existing
19 conditions, the previous design with the Delancey
20 Street Bridge and the reconstructed portion of the
21 park this would be that flooding during a storm
22 condition then again the Delancey overlook under the
23 current plan, the, the bridge... we've updated the
24 bridge design that you could have had the same bridge
25 in, in either condition but you can see that the park

2 itself is in the same configuration delivering the
3 same program and will not be flooded in that
4 condition. The last thing that I was asked to
5 highlight because there have been lots of questions
6 about it and just really on behalf of the Parks
7 Department is that as part of the process since the
8 beginning of the project we've been working with New
9 York City Parks Forestry and Park Design to
10 understand the existing planting in the park and what
11 it means to create a resilient park in the future.
12 These are some of the elements that create a
13 resilient park that we've kept in mind in
14 consultation with the community. One of the things
15 that we've studied is how the trees and plants have
16 been doing after Sandy in East River Park, many trees
17 especially along the esplanade and the London Plane
18 trees across the park have been in decline, this is
19 not unique to East River Park, other parks like
20 Brooklyn Bridge Park, Battery Park City have
21 confirmed that many species have not been recovering
22 from that salt water inundation that occurred when
23 the parks flooded during Sandy. This plan view
24 illustrates the condition of the existing trees in
25 the park prior to Sandy and in 2015 and you actually

2 have to sort of pick a spot and stare at it for a
3 couple of seconds for this to really sort of... you
4 know sort of get, get clear in your head but there..
5 we have lost a substantial amount of tree canopy
6 within East River Park between Sandy and 2015
7 suffering from those issues of salt water inundation.
8 These findings are consistent with a four year study
9 that was done by the US Forest Service and the US
10 Department of Agriculture that confirms that certain
11 tree species have had a high mortality rate when
12 exposed to inundation from salt water during Sandy
13 and show no signs of recovery three years after
14 Sandy, this is especially true of the London Plane
15 trees that are in the park. These findings informed
16 the planting selection, removals and possible
17 transplant candidates in the past and going forward
18 as the design for the project is completed. In March
19 2018, we showed at a community meeting this
20 presentation which showed the extent of tree removals
21 that would have had to occur under the prior
22 approach, and I think as Commissioner Silver was
23 saying, roughly 80 percent of the trees would have
24 needed to be removed. In addition to that though just
25 to be clear those that remained would likely not have

2 survived for very long. There was an area where we
3 were preserving a mature grove of trees around the
4 track, it was primarily London Plane trees which
5 again are... really suffer from that salt water
6 inundation, there's an area that we were planning to
7 preserve a mature grove around the Amphitheatre
8 primarily pin oaks those are reaching the end of
9 their lives, they're 80 years old, planted by Robert
10 Moses and not expected to do very well in the future
11 so that, that was the prior plan. We're now
12 developing a plan that's focused on species diversity
13 with more... a more diverse native plant's palette that
14 has the ability to adapt to climate change stressors,
15 we have a world class horticulture team that's been
16 on the team since the beginning of the project, very
17 substantially the same design team in place. As
18 Commissioner Silver was describing, the plan is to
19 replant roughly 1,200 trees versus the approximately
20 800 that are in the park today. The current planting
21 design pays special attention to species that can
22 handle salt spray, strong winds and extreme weather
23 events. The things about these plant... [clears throat]
24 excuse me... these planting groups as groves creating a
25 more layered planting approach where trees will reach

2 maturity at different stages so that the park will
3 grow over time and add biodiversity over time. And
4 then I did want to quickly highlight the areas of the
5 park, the project that are unchanged and then... and as
6 I sort up wrap, I got... I just have two more slides
7 Council Member. So, we are reconstructing the three
8 areas north of East River Park and integrating flood
9 walls so that we have effectively a water tight
10 compartment. You can see those areas here, the Murphy
11 Brothers Playground, Stuyvesant Cove Park, and Asser
12 Levy Playground which are being reconstructed along
13 with flood protections incorporated into them, a
14 close up of Stuyvesant Cove Park and noting there's
15 ferry service there which is important to the
16 community, we are preserving that ferry service
17 throughout construction, if it needs to move slightly
18 or be rerouted we're working with the Economic
19 Development Corporation on those arrangements. You
20 can also see the Solar One Environmental Education
21 Center being reconstructed in, in the, the back and
22 then a view from that Solar One Education Center...
23 just... almost made it, here we go. View from Solar One
24 looking out at Stuyvesant Cove Park, it's fully
25 reconstructed with the flood protection in the rear

2 and then lastly just to spend a moment on our
3 schedule and next steps we are advancing the concept
4 design for the portion of the park that has the
5 revised engineering approach which is East River
6 Park, into preliminary design which we anticipate
7 completing next fall so that we may bid this out and
8 get into construction in March of 2020 for completion
9 as Commissioner Grillo said within three and a half
10 years with the flood protection element completed
11 prior to the hurricane season in 2023. We also are
12 continuing extensive community engagement, we know
13 that that's been a very important part of this
14 project so far and we'll be going forward. We've
15 conducted over a dozen meetings since revising this
16 approach to, to make sure that we explain the
17 revision, we're happy to continue to conduct those
18 meetings and answer questions that we hear from the,
19 the community and stakeholders, we're currently in
20 the midst of engaging with a number of different
21 stakeholders, we've been... scheduled a number of
22 meetings over these couple of weeks, we're at the
23 NYCHA developments these couple of weeks, additional
24 engagement with elected officials and then we have
25 some major milestones that will be coming for

2 approval of the project. As the Commissioner
3 described certifying into the ULURP process in the
4 early spring, there will be interactive community
5 meetings, large scale that we will organize in the
6 spring, we'll organize additional meetings in the
7 fall and then seeking to complete the design and get
8 the project started in the, the spring of next year.
9 So, thank you very much Council Members, we'll leave
10 our information up there, this presentation will be
11 posted on that website along with all the other
12 presentations that we've shown publicly including all
13 the material and information that we've provided
14 about the design update and other elements of the
15 project and we're always happy to receive people's
16 input through that website and very pleased to take
17 your questions.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
19 much for your testimony Commissioners, Deputy
20 Commissioner. I'm going to ask a number of questions
21 and my colleague, Chair Constantinides followed by
22 Council Woman Rivera. We have been joined at this
23 hearing by Councilman King from the Bronx, Councilman
24 Espinal from Brooklyn, Councilman Koo from Queens and
25 also Councilman Deutsch from Brooklyn as well. My

2 first question, it's at the top of my list and it's
3 at the top of my mind as well, there was a process it
4 was described to me, we had a plan and now we have a
5 different plan and that may be fine, it may not be
6 fine but my first question is what happened here and
7 you know where do you think that the failure in
8 communication happened between the city government
9 represented by the Mayor and all these people here
10 today and tens of thousands of others including their
11 Council Members that kind of got surprised by this
12 all?

13 LORRAINE GRILLO: Correct, Council Member
14 thank you. Yeah, the, the constructability review for
15 this project because of its size and scale occurred
16 at about 40 percent where a number of experts and
17 engineers sat down and said what is feasible and
18 what's not feasible, did we communicate that
19 properly, did we communicate the change properly? No
20 and that's on me and I take responsibility for that
21 and I apologize..

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate
23 your candor and thank you for..

24 LORRAINE GRILLO: Absolutely and again at
25 this point in time as this has proceeded, we have.. as

2 the Deputy, Deputy Commissioner mentioned we have
3 engaged the community to explain this and we will
4 continue to do so. Again, I do apologize for that, I
5 cannot change that however as we move forward, we
6 will do better.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I, I...
8 we're going to hold you to that, and I've known you a
9 long time and I know you to be a person of your word,
10 so I appreciate that and I'm sure Council Woman
11 Rivera's going to hold you to that too. Can you
12 describe the process going forward from here, I know
13 that you mentioned there will be a ULURP required and
14 what is the timeline on that ULURP, will any park
15 alienation legislation be required and if it's not
16 required do you have a plan in case somebody sues the
17 city of New York which might or might not happen so...

18 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yep... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm not making a
20 suggestion I'm just pointing that out.

21 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: I'll, I'll just
22 take the, the ULURP, we're, we're moving to complete
23 the environmental impact study which will enable the
24 Planning Commission to certify the project into
25 ULURP, we're aiming to get that done in the early

2 spring so that we would have the ULURP process and
3 have the approvals that are needed to, to go and bid
4 the project out so if we have those approvals in the
5 late fall then we expect that we'll have the
6 opportunity to bid the project out to qualified
7 contractors and start the work so that we can get the
8 project completed within those, those three and a
9 half years. Leave the alienation question to
10 Commissioner Silver.

11 MITCHELL SILVER: As you know we close
12 parks in order to reconstruct them on a regular
13 basis, in this case alienation is, is not needed
14 because this is going to be for a park purpose, so
15 we'll just have to when something follows up, we'll
16 work with our, our legal team but alienation for this
17 project is not needed.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: One of the main
19 reasons that has been brought forth today and in past
20 days is that there was a need... the redesign was
21 necessary to minimize the construction disruption
22 that would occur on the FDR Drive, do you expect any
23 disruptions on the... on the Drive at this time if, if
24 this new plan were to go forward?

2 LORRAINE GRILLO: There... sorry, this plan
3 will enable the area of the East River Park and those
4 apartments adjacent to the... to that not to face the
5 same kind of disruption that they would have because
6 it takes the construction, what did we say about...
7 actually in length about two blocks away from where
8 it would have been.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, you're
10 pushing it further east towards Queens and Brooklyn?

11 LORRAINE GRILLO: No, further out to the
12 water, yeah... yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I, I am
14 concerned, I know Deputy Commissioner Torres Springer
15 mentioned that there would be community engagement, I
16 think it's fair to say that we have such a large
17 turnout of the community today because they felt that
18 there wasn't enough community engagement and I wonder
19 what you can do to assure them now, I know you did
20 but I'd like to know a little bit more about the
21 concrete steps that are going to take place, where
22 they can turn, this is wonderful most people have
23 access to the internet and they can see the plans
24 there, they can go to libraries if they have to but
25 I'd like to know for the edification of the community

2 will there be a community advisory board, what, what
3 is that process going to take place?

4 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yeah.

5 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah, thanks
6 Council Member. As, as we described we, we've been
7 engaging as... in as many different ways as we can,
8 we've been to both community board three and
9 community board six committees that have concern with
10 this plan twice since announcing the revision to the
11 plan, we do expect a lot of engagement with the
12 community board, they will next be provided the
13 conceptual design documents for review prior to those
14 being submitted to the public design commission and
15 then we've been organizing meetings out there in the
16 community, we had a meeting that was in community
17 board three and a meeting in community board six in
18 December, very well attended, we were very pleased
19 with how many people were there and you know hundreds
20 of people attended those meetings, our intention is
21 to have similar interactive meetings where we are
22 able to get input and feedback on the designs in the
23 spring as well as in the fall of this year. And then
24 in addition to that we've very open to meeting with
25 as many stakeholders as we can, we spend a lot of

2 time talking with elected officials, have plans for
3 additional conversations and we would very much
4 request if there are groups or organizations or
5 individuals that you think it's important for us to
6 meet with we would love to hear that and get that
7 list and, and get the meetings scheduled and on the
8 books.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I don't have a
10 list but I have a feeling that Council Woman Rivera
11 does but I do ask that as a, a person who's spent
12 most of... actually all of my growing up years in a
13 NYCHA development Pomonok Houses in Queens I would
14 appreciate that, that as my father would say fair
15 treatment be given to the people who live in those,
16 not everybody can get to a community board hearing,
17 we're busy, we're New Yorkers I would ask that
18 outreach be made to all the resident associations in
19 each of those, I... there's at least six that I
20 counted, there may be more, some of them massive
21 developments and so I would ask for that. I'm going
22 to ask one more question and then... [cross-talk]

23 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Council... [cross-
24 talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I'm going to...
3 [cross-talk]

4 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: ...Council Member,
5 do you mind, I should have just said that, do you
6 mind if I just also add that we're in the process of
7 scheduling meetings with the NYCHA... residents of
8 NYCHA developments within the project area... [cross-
9 talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate
11 that... [cross-talk]

12 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah... [cross-
13 talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and I think
15 some of them are here... [cross-talk]

16 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: ...it will happen
17 within the next few weeks... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...today so...

19 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah...

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
21 talk]

22 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: I apologize for
23 not mentioning that.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: My last question
25 for now as I said Brooklyn and Queens are on the

2 other side of the river and I wonder what protections
3 there are on the other side, not all of it is
4 parkland, I know a lot of it is not parkland,
5 Commissioner Silver has mentioned the wonderful
6 Domino Park on the other side but I am concerned that
7 we're pushing... you know there's only so much room for
8 the water to go and it... and the next storm we get and
9 I don't know if its next year or 20 years or 50 years
10 but it's going to happen sooner or later that water
11 is going to go up and I, I don't want to be... you know
12 I don't want to... someone to tell me I told you so
13 that we didn't protect the other side of the river..

14 MITCHELL SILVER: Yeah I'm going to refer
15 that question to the Office of Recovery and
16 Resiliency, what I can say is that there is a 20
17 billion dollar plan to look at resiliency citywide,
18 it looks different depending on the borough and what
19 the edge condition is and if possible, I don't know
20 if she needs to be sworn in, we do have Carrie from
21 the Office of Resiliency and Recovery.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, she does
23 need to be, it's only fair.

24

25

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell
3 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
4 in your testimony before these committees today?

5 CARRIE GRASSI: Yes. Thank you for the
6 question Council Member, my name is Carrie Grassi
7 from the Mayor's Office of Resiliency. I think it's a
8 little bit of a two part question so the first as
9 Commissioner Silver mentioned the city does have a, a
10 20 billion dollar resiliency plan across the city
11 that really looks to maximize all of our federal
12 funding in partnerships across that portfolio so
13 working on, you know critical infrastructure
14 improvements, coastal protections projects, building
15 upgrades, zoning and building code upgrades across
16 the city and I'd be happy to follow up with you on
17 specific improvements for your borough and your
18 district.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I would
20 appreciate hearing that... [cross-talk]

21 CARRIE GRASSI: The second... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That would...
23 [cross-talk]

24 CARRIE GRASSI: ...part of the question I...
25 that I think I understood was whether or not some of

2 the improvements that we're making in one part of the
3 city will impact flooding in other parts of the city.
4 We've done a number of studies with our coastal
5 modelers, our consultant teams, numerous consultant
6 teams to look at just this question because we do get
7 it a lot and we found that the volume of water that
8 we're displacing through a lot of these projects is
9 so minimal compared to the volume of water that comes
10 in in storm surge that it really does not increase
11 flooding in adjacent neighborhoods or even
12 neighborhoods across the river so it is something
13 that we've looked at and again we're happy to follow
14 up with more of those technical details.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you
16 for your answer. At this time, I'm going to turn it
17 over to Chair Constantinides for his questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I was
19 actually going to ask a question of you. Alright, so
20 my... I guess my... I have two questions, first what is
21 the role of, of ORR on this entire process and how
22 was resiliency built into what you're doing and, and
23 will you be continued to be... continually be involved
24 that this process moves forward in, into
25 construction?

2 CARRIE GRASSI: Absolutely, MOR or ORR
3 has been involved with the process from the
4 beginning, we were integral to sort of working with
5 our city team to set the resiliency standards in the
6 project working through a lot of the community
7 engagement and working with all of our city agency
8 team to create that team and move this project
9 forward. As we move forward from this point on, we
10 will remain involved particularly on some of that
11 resiliency in climate guidance making sure that we
12 are building in the right climate projections. You
13 mentioned some of, of those increasing projections
14 that we're getting from our global scientist
15 community and, and, and really looking at sort of the
16 multi hazard and making sure that we'll... we're
17 building in those climate risks and, and addressing
18 those climate risks through this project.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: And I
20 appreciate that because I mean I'm just looking at
21 testimony that was given to this committee back in
22 October speaking about, you know coastal storm surge
23 and sea level rise and the, you know New York Panel
24 on Climate Change gave testimony talking about 11 to
25 21 inches by mid-century in sea level rise and then

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2 18 to 39 inches by the 2080s and, and in upwards of
3 between six and 11 feet depending on which report you
4 look at. Even, you know the President's report that
5 he tried to drop during Thanksgiving so no one would
6 pay attention talked about these high level of sea
7 level rise, will this one, be able to keep this
8 design and, and two will it protect the residents on
9 both sides of the river both in Manhattan and in
10 Queens and, and Brooklyn with... we're seeing these
11 models that are rising and we're... and we're, we're
12 not doing better on emissions globally we're seeing
13 emissions skewing more towards the two degrees which
14 means the one... the much worse scenarios, what are our
15 thoughts on how this is going to withstand those
16 higher sea level rise... [cross-talk]

17 CARRIE GRASSI: Yeah, so the... [cross-
18 talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES:
20 ...calculations... [cross-talk]

21 CARRIE GRASSI: ...the, the projections
22 that you mentioned for midcentury those are the mid-
23 range projections and from the very beginning we felt
24 that if we were making this investment in this... in
25 this vulnerable community that we wanted to make sure

2 we were building in the high-end projections. So,
3 we're incorporating 30 inches of sea level rise into
4 these projections in addition to another half foot of
5 what we call sort of a resiliency measure that sort
6 of fudge factor, right and then as, as Deputy
7 Commissioner Torres Springer mentioned all of our
8 foundations for this project are being built stronger
9 so that as we're monitoring sea level rise and those,
10 those projections if we see them increasing over time
11 we can adapt the system to respond to that increasing
12 threat.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: And as
14 far as storm surge and, and the, the 100-year storm,
15 you know how do we... I mean I, I think... believe you
16 said this already, but I just want to reiterate, how
17 do you feel this will withstand the 100-year storm
18 and so on?

19 CARRIE GRASSI: So, absolutely, so the,
20 the, the primary design criteria for this project is
21 the 100 year storm in the 2050s so we take the 100
22 year storm elevation, the current elevations, we add
23 that two and a half feet of sea level rise, we add
24 two and a half feet of wave action and then an
25 additional half foot for that resiliency measure

2 which gets us to the, I think we've mentioned the 16
3 and a half foot elevation which really only looks
4 like about eight, eight to ten feet above ground.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: And as
6 far as... you know I know that there's been a lot of
7 conversations about the trees and, and what is that
8 going to mean for air quality and soil erosion, the
9 uprooting of these trees and, and planting of new
10 ones, I just want to make sure that we are... we're
11 thinking about that as well?

12 MITCHELL SILVER: We actually are
13 thinking about that, as I mentioned in my testimony
14 there will be 1,200 trees and that increase on the
15 site, there was a recommendation from the community
16 about the possibility of planting more street trees
17 in the neighborhood, we're currently looking right
18 now at opportunities where we can do that and as soon
19 the planting season is in place we're going to start
20 increasing the amount of trees in the community so
21 there will be a net increase over time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay,
23 thank you, thank you, thank you and thank you Chair
24 Grodenchik.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Chair
3 Constantinides. We will now hear from Council Member
4 Carlina Rivera.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so
6 much. I, I have a lot of questions... how much time do
7 I have?

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You got a
9 minute. Alright, ten minutes... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Oh well... [cross-
11 talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We'll start... can
13 we set the clock at ten minutes even though I don't
14 know if that that will be enough but that's okay...
15 [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Alright, alright,
17 I that line, okay. So, thank you so much for being
18 here, thank you for being honest about, about how
19 this has gone down, about owning the communication
20 between us and the community because if anything is
21 apparent today it is that we turn out and we show up
22 and these are... this is a project that we really care
23 about, that we have invested countless hours of
24 energy and, and I appreciate you saying that you're
25 going to have a robust community calendar, I think

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2 it's robust continual community engagement. The CB 3,
3 CB 6 task force met for so long and, and some of
4 those people are in this room today and I just have
5 to say that there, there's a lot of stakeholders that
6 you have to meet with in a very limited amount of
7 time and so I want to be supportive of that but I
8 just have to recognize if LES Ready and East River
9 Alliance and all of the NYCHA TA presidents here and
10 East River Co-op and... who is also along the
11 waterfront that deserves recognition, they're going
12 through some stuff as well. So, okay, I mentioned to
13 you in a... in a couple of our meetings it is timeline,
14 it is trees and it is temporary space that we're
15 going to have if this park is shut down in its
16 entirety and again I want to emphasize and reiterate
17 that we are looking for this project to be phased in,
18 we do not have a lot of space. The gardens are, are
19 great spaces but they.. and there are about 50 of them
20 and there are a lot of gardeners in this room that I
21 want to thank for being here but we, we certainly
22 need to look at how we are going to have all of these
23 residents be able to be outside and get fresh air
24 because we have so many issues especially in NYCHA
25 campuses. So, you mentioned the budget and that 1.2

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2 million was the cost estimate at the be... at... for the
3 old plan, can you go over some of the cost overruns
4 of the original plan and why did it look like it was
5 going to cost 1.2, what is the increase for exactly
6 and whether or not that budget allows for mitigation
7 in other places and enhancements specifically on
8 NYCHA campuses? I realize you're not NYCHA, I know
9 that.

10 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yes...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: But there... you
12 know your friends... [cross-talk]

13 LORRAINE GRILLO: No, Council Member I
14 appreciate first of all your kind words and second of
15 all honesty is the best policy and I believe that
16 admitting to everyone here and apologizing to them
17 may not make everybody feel better but it's certainly
18 the right thing to do, that's number one. Number two,
19 in terms of the budget, remember that the 700 million
20 dollars was very, very preliminary and it was very
21 conceptual, okay. As we begin to design and we see
22 what is involved, in particular let's look at the
23 construction aspect of this, had we gone with the
24 original project we would have been limited to the
25 number of hours that we could possibly work because

2 this would be an overnight project and of course when
3 you work nights you pay a night differential so
4 that's factored into this project, I mean the issues
5 of the rebuilding of the bridges and, and that sort
6 of thing added to all of this. In, in the new
7 iteration of this we are talking about rebuilding
8 this park and that is to me the most exciting part of
9 this as well as doing the flyover bridge which I
10 don't believe was included in the original
11 discussion, the bulkhead which was not in the
12 original discussion. So, there are a number of
13 things... obviously we could break that down even
14 further for you at any time to give you an idea of
15 what that estimate meant.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Many of us were
17 worried about the federal funds that were won through
18 the competition for Rebuild by Design and I know that
19 they're here today, so that money has to be spent by
20 2022 and we realize that there was a time crunch but
21 has any portion of federal or state money been spent
22 since this money was allocated?

23 LORRAINE GRILLO: Correct, yes actually
24 money has been spent on the design and I think it's...
25 [cross-talk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Both, both
3 designs?

4 LORRAINE GRILLO: The design is where...
5 it's basically the same. As I said so... beyond the
6 East River Park, the other parts of that design are
7 identical to what was planned so the, the design
8 portion I think we've spent up to approximately 40
9 million dollars so far, yeah and that is HUD money.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, 40 million of
11 the HUD dollars have been spent just on design...

12 [cross-talk]

13 LORRAINE GRILLO: Approximately... [cross-
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: ...and I know that
16 design is the same within engineering difference, but
17 I just want to be clear this, this is... it's
18 different, it's different, it's elevated, there will
19 be new bridges and I also have to put a plug in for
20 the 6th Street Bridge, I realize that the space for
21 the 6th Street Bridge is a little bit different than
22 the others, but it certainly requires enhancement.
23 You know I wanted to ask about the new facilities, we
24 are excited for new facilities, I think that this...
25 again this park could be something really, really

2 special. Is there... are they going to be state of the
3 art, can you talk a little bit about what you
4 envision?

5 MITCHELL SILVER: Well in terms of state
6 of the art if you look across our park system, we do
7 use world class material, just look at any of our
8 newly renovated parks, high quality material. So the
9 answer to your question is yes, I can go specifically
10 in more detail but as you'll know there will be
11 fields here, some will be synthetic, there will
12 tennis courts, basketball courts, they're still in
13 discussion about the Amphitheater, the landscaping
14 has already been stated, will be very diverse and
15 resilient for the future but all of the elements that
16 the community worked on that was in the, the previous
17 plan with the flood wall is the same program just
18 elevated a lot higher so, they'll be high quality and
19 that's something we can go in further detail with the
20 community so they can see samples and images of how
21 we put some of the new park features throughout our
22 park system.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: You mentioned the
24 list that I gave you of possible alternative sites to
25 be enhanced, do you have any update on that, any

2 progress on the list that I gave you and is there
3 anything that you can confirm today in terms of new
4 park investments beyond the amenity design?

5 MITCHELL SILVER: Well we're still
6 looking into some of the recommendations for some of
7 the interim uses but I can share with you just in
8 the nearby vicinity a couple of projects that are
9 nearby under construction, Tompkins Square
10 Playground, Seward Park reconstruction, Baruch
11 Playground reconstruction, Sarah D. Roosevelt,
12 Conference Station reconstruction all of those will
13 be completed during the time that this park will be
14 closed. There are other projects that are moving
15 toward procurement so it's possibility they will be
16 completed before this... while this park is closed and
17 those include Luther Gaelic, Columbus Park, Mulberry
18 Street entrance enhancement, Corlear's Hook, McKinley
19 Playground, Joseph, Joseph Sauer, Playground one and
20 so those are some of the others so those... depending...
21 we just want to make sure that they're not under
22 construction and closed at the same time East River
23 Park is under construction so we're looking very
24 carefully. The one... the four I mentioned will be
25 completed and available to the public when they're

2 renovated, some of the others under procurement we
3 have to watch very carefully while we're excited
4 project we don't want to have too many parks close at
5 the same time. On the interim ones, we looked at your
6 list, we're asking the community if they have other
7 ideas for interim spaces, we're reaching out to
8 sister agencies to make sure we can address as many
9 interim uses and provide them to the public as soon
10 as possible and we'll even looking at some NYCHA as
11 well, we'll be reaching out to them as... to see what
12 other resources may be available in the interim
13 basis.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Right, we have...
15 we have thousands of NYCHA residents living along
16 this park and, and so how would the construction
17 effect their quality of life on, on a daily basis?

18 LORRAINE GRILLO: Actually, I think they
19 will have a much easier time with this new iteration
20 because the work will take place during the day
21 whereas the other option was to do the work all night
22 long and again that was pile driving and the like and
23 bringing in heavy equipment and, and supplies. In
24 this case the supplies and, and equipment can be
25 barged in from the water to that area so that they

2 will... they will be virtually two blocks away from any
3 construction.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, you mentioned
5 the, the old design and I, I, I heard, I don't want
6 to call it rhetoric but there was some comments made
7 recently in the press that the old design was a wall
8 and I just want to be clear that the old design was
9 not just the wall it was a community led process and
10 it was what we all agreed was going to be a great new
11 park so I realize that this is a better design in, in
12 your opinion we just want to hear about how you got
13 to this point and we want a little bit more
14 communication which I think we've said over and over
15 and over. The alternative spaces are really important
16 because the parks that you mentioned Commissioner
17 Silver are already open and a lot of them are already
18 active and many of them are very heavily utilized so
19 the alternative spaces are really important, and we
20 don't have a lot of time. So, can, can you talk about
21 how we're moving toward this and specifically the
22 tree planting campaign, you said that you're looking
23 at it... maybe you're, you're, you're kind of working
24 on it but we really, really do need commitments that
25 there are going to be trees planted because I'm

2 excited that there are going to be several hundred
3 new trees in the park but those are baby trees, right
4 and those are going to take decades and decades to
5 grow and so while I'm going to love that I'm going to
6 be 70 years old hopefully and walking and seeing this
7 tree that grew up with me and hopefully my kids, we
8 really do need that sort of environment mitigation
9 right now.

10 MITCHELL SILVER: When this
11 recommendation came through the community, we
12 immediately started looking for locations where they
13 could be planted, that's step number one and our team
14 is out there doing that right now. In terms of the
15 interim uses from the list you provided us as well as
16 a list we had we're already exploring those interim
17 uses right now, I cannot give you the definitive list
18 at this time that is something that as soon as we get
19 the information, we're open to the public giving us
20 ideas, we'll explore them. In terms of your last
21 question about the wall, one of the things although
22 we realized in the first version that we knew in case
23 of a storm surge the entire would have been flooded,
24 safety surface is uplifted, synthetic turf uplifted,
25 trees destroyed, the structures and buildings

2 possibly destroyed not known how long they'd be
3 offline and that's just one storm surge, there could
4 be five storm surges and it takes some time to
5 replace those elements so that by having the barrier
6 by the FDR Drive meant that this park would have been
7 flooded. As Commissioner Torres Springer said that
8 that's the major difference, there are parks that are
9 designed to absorb storm surge but they don't have
10 recreational elements inside of them so those would
11 have been offline to the public for an extended
12 period of time just from one storm, it could be
13 months if not years to build them back, by lifting it
14 up means that the park would not get flooded and they
15 will be able to enjoy these recreational
16 opportunities. So, I understand you're saying just
17 the, the wall but for us it was also, yes, we want to
18 keep the public safe, protect neighborhoods but also
19 make sure the park and the recreational resources are
20 available to the public.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you Mr.
22 Chair for... okay, I'm just thanking you which I know
23 you enjoy being thanked so I, I just want to thank
24 you for... [cross-talk]

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: When my
3 constituents are here it might be better but it's,
4 it's fine. I'm going to give... if you can take a
5 breather for a second... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Sure, absolutely...
7 [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Councilman King
9 has one question I believe on this subject.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Mr. Chair
11 and Chairs. It's good to see you both... three of you
12 as always. The first thing I just want to just add, I
13 want to say thank you and I always... and, and to
14 everyone in the audience I just... you know I always
15 remember with the words, people pay attention to
16 people who participate, your participation each and
17 every day inspires us to do... try to figure out how to
18 do the right thing with all the advocacy and the work
19 that you do. I also want to add whatever
20 miscommunication or lack of communication I say we
21 hire people to do a job and sometimes we got to trust
22 them to do their job and if they're ineffectively
23 doing their job then we got to hold them to task
24 because I do know sometimes if you put too many cooks
25 in the kitchen you can burn the casserole at the same

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2 time. So, I'm saying to you all we're trusting you to
3 have your communication but we're also asking you to
4 be sure that what you're doing that the people will
5 be alright and for everyone who was in the room when
6 they show you something since we have timelines, we
7 got money that has to be spent, how do we communicate
8 without stopping progress at the same time because
9 that can happen when everyone wants to figure out how
10 I got to say something and we slow the progress down,
11 we're on a timeclock here. But I have a question, my
12 one question goes, goes to budget...

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I was hoping you
14 had a question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes, I... it's in...
16 it's in there somewhere, it's in the drawer, here we
17 go, we got it.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Go ahead.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: The budget... and
20 just explain it to me, 1.5 billion for construction,
21 1.2 billion for existing so I'm questioning is this
22 like a 2.6-billion-dollar project, help me understand
23 this?

24 LORRAINE GRILLO: No, thank you Council
25 Member and by the way I agree with you on, on your

2 first points. In terms of the existing, this is... this
3 is a, a change in engineering so that's why we're
4 here and that's why we're discussing it, the original
5 idea would have cost... that's with the flood barrier
6 on the FDR Drive, that project would have... was up to
7 1.2 billion. Now this new iteration moving that flood
8 barrier to the water's edge we're estimating at 1.45
9 billion so it's a slight... it's a different iteration.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay and that
11 should be it, you... we're going to... we're going work
12 within that or...

13 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Don't worry you
15 won't be in the Council anymore, it's okay, so you
16 don't have to worry about these things.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well I, I, I want
18 to say thank you and I do... and I... and I end with
19 this, I had a park that we had to get done, people
20 wanted to comment and chimed in so what I ended up
21 doing is negotiating with the Parks and we closed
22 down the park, we're... whatever challenges the
23 neighborhood was having with their park being closed
24 but it helped the park move quickly and get
25 constructed and get it done. I know we're trying to

2 accommodate three things at one time but let's be
3 real I'm asking you all to figure out with the
4 community what makes sense because if we want
5 something done for our neighborhood sometimes we've
6 got to sacrifice a little bit of pleasure in order
7 for us to get through the day for tomorrow to be
8 whole lot greater and better for us. Thank you for
9 your time and energy and the work that you all are
10 doing, thank you Mr. Chair and god bless you Council
11 Member Rivera...

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...

13 [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...good project.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
16 Councilman King as always for your love of New York
17 City parks. Before I turn it back over to Council
18 Woman Rivera, Commissioner Silver on page two of your
19 testimony you mentioned a bunch of parks including
20 Murphy Brothers Playground, Asser Levy and Stuyvesant
21 Cove, I would ask if you could take a look at.. I know
22 there's money in and Council Woman Rivera has been
23 advocating for Baruch Playground, it is by far the
24 saddest park out of the hundred or so I've seen since
25 becoming Parks Chair and it really needs a lot of

2 work and so I'm just asking that you keep that in
3 mind today because it's just very sad, it's kind of
4 sad.

5 MITCHELL SILVER: It's noted, and we will
6 definitely take a look.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you.
8 Thank you, Council Woman Rivera, please.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I, I just have
10 two more questions and I... because I know there's a, a
11 lot of people that want to testify and especially
12 some young people that I know have homework. So...
13 okay, so DDC has a limited number of contractors that
14 are approved to use, is that correct? I guess let me
15 get to my question, the contractors that you work
16 with regularly and I'm not sure if you're going to go
17 back to that list but have, they worked on resiliency
18 projects and a parks project of this magnitude and
19 then to go a little bit further... [cross-talk]

20 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: ...what is the
22 percent of time the DDC is late or over budget on
23 their projects?

24 LORRAINE GRILLO: Okay, a couple of
25 things. The construction list of, of companies, it...

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2 this is an open bid project... process so any company
3 of a particular size can bid on our work then they go
4 through the typical integrity check and so on and so
5 forth before they are awarded a contract, that's
6 number one. I think if, if... I'm sorry, I, I, I lost...

7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: No, that's okay...

9 [cross-talk]

10 LORRAINE GRILLO: ...the second part of...

11 [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: ...let me... [cross-
13 talk]

14 LORRAINE GRILLO: ...the question... [cross-
15 talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: ...let me bring you
17 back to the... my next question because it's going to...
18 it, it... they're coupled.

19 LORRAINE GRILLO: Right...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, in terms of
21 the person who will bid and ultimately win the bid
22 are there... are you prepared to put in I guess ala the
23 L train, penalties and... but also to incentivize
24 construction to finish earlier or, or to penalize...

25 [cross-talk]

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2 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: ...them for
4 finishing later?

5 LORRAINE GRILLO: Correct, yes, we intend
6 to include in our construction contracts penalties
7 for lateness as well as incentives to possibly do
8 this work faster.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay, so that's
10 just really, really important so... besides that I just
11 want to emphasize we would love it if it was phased
12 because even if its... the Amphitheater that's also
13 being... it's under question now for, for renovation.
14 We had a fabulous Halloween dog parade, we have Salsa
15 concerts there every summer and so I just want to
16 emphasize that as well as really making sure that we
17 can do this on time. As, as nice as it is to cut a
18 ribbon the most important thing to me is that we have
19 a park that is resilient and that, that it is truly
20 for the people here. So, I just want to thank you for
21 your honesty, I have other questions, but we will
22 answer them when we are meeting amongst the community
23 members and I want to thank the Chair for his
24 graciousness today.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
3 much Council Woman Rivera, again thank you for
4 everything that you have done on behalf of our parks
5 and on behalf of the 165 to 170,000 people that you
6 represent. We've been joined by Council Member Levine
7 and also Councilman Menchaca from Brooklyn, Mr.
8 Levine is from the Bronx, both of them have great
9 parks. Did I say Manhattan because I was just... I want
10 to make sure you were all paying attention...

11 [off mic dialogue]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Almost, alright,
13 Northern Manhattan, I was born in the Bronx I can't
14 help it. This ConEd transmission line can I ask you
15 when... I'm going to ask you, when did you become aware
16 of this and... kind of a big, big monster ball hanging
17 out there.

18 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: You were... we, we
19 were certainly aware of the existence of the
20 infrastructure Council Member and we're working
21 within the prior engineering approach to figure out
22 how we could address it, looking at ways of working
23 around it, underneath it. One concept that was being
24 explored in detail was the concept of putting those
25 transmission lines effectively in a box so that they

2 would be able to withstand the additional load of the
3 berming that was in the previous plan and that box
4 is... it sound... a box sounds easy but it's an extremely
5 complicated proposition especially because one of the
6 problems with the, the work that we do underneath the
7 surface of the city is you don't really know what the
8 condition of those assets are until you open it up
9 and take a look and so it represented some very
10 substantial risk. The transmission line is underneath
11 the shared use path next to the FDR so now we have
12 the ability to maintain the shared use path at its
13 current level which means that we don't have the same
14 levels of concern, we're still in a dialogue with
15 ConEd about what... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Are we going to
17 look at it at some point because what I'm worried
18 about and I'm sure you're worried about, I'm sure
19 everybody here is worried about it, if that line were
20 to fail we may as well look at it now so that if we
21 have to replace it or whatever has to happen and I
22 understand that there are probably tens of thousands
23 people dependent upon that line so, I'm not going to
24 ask you today for what your contingency plan is but I
25 guess as, as we go forward with these community

2 consultations we'd like to know what, what... certainly
3 what's going to happen.

4 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: And, and I'm
5 happy to mention we are working closely with ConEd
6 and are looking at new technologies and options for
7 how to address the continued resiliency of that
8 transmission line. The one thing to be aware of, I, I
9 think we said this very briefly but the project
10 includes a seepage barrier and that's now out on the
11 water's edge and so one of the issues that you have
12 in the future with the rise in, in the water levels
13 is that the water can get underneath and so we're...
14 the seepage barrier will address some of that... the
15 water levels in the ground water which will help to
16 protect those utilities and then we'll have
17 additional work on protecting the utilities where,
18 where they lie.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: During the
20 meetings with the communities regarding the design of
21 the original plan the city indicated the ULURP
22 process needed to start last July in order to meet
23 the federal funding deadlines, it is now January and
24 July has passed and I just want to know what
25 happened, how... do we get more flexibility, did we all

2 of a sudden get a friendlier federal government or
3 what happened?

4 LORRAINE GRILLO: Well Council Member I
5 joined the DDC last July... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're luck...
7 we're lucky to have you Commissioner... [cross-talk]

8 LORRAINE GRILLO: ...okay, thank you... thank
9 you. Prior to that I, I'm not sure about that
10 schedule, I know that we have right now a very fast
11 schedule moving forward and we're confident that A,
12 the HUD money will, will be spent and B, that we can
13 deliver this a year earlier.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I
15 appreciate that. Last question for me and then we'll
16 go to Councilman Powers and then we're going to go to
17 the community, we've also been joined here today by
18 my dear friend and a long-time government colleague,
19 the absolutely wonderful Borough President of the
20 Borough of Manhattan, Gale Brewer, yeah you... we can
21 all do that for her. Commissioner if... and this may be
22 a little hypothetical but... and I, I won't hold you to
23 the answer but I'd like to just... a guesstimate, if...
24 Commissioner Silver all other things being equal and
25 we didn't have to put in flood mitigation and

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2 resiliency and all that stuff and.. if you were going
3 to add to this park, 57 acres of parkland and the
4 other parks that are going to be effected as well can
5 you put a value on that... on the... what it would cost,
6 it'd be north of 100 million dollars easily, right?

7 MITCHELL SILVER: It would be several
8 hundred million dollars, it's... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
10 talk]

11 MITCHELL SILVER: ...difficult to just
12 pinpoint but we... definitely several hundred million
13 dollars.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, what I'm
15 trying to get at is that obviously this is going to
16 be once finished an absolutely fabulous park on the
17 East River and I am as Parks Chair excited about that
18 possibility and I know that the other parks are going
19 to be done very well as well so I thank you for your
20 guesstimate but I was just curious to see what that
21 number might be. Councilman Powers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you, I'm
23 back, thank you...

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You're back.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And I'm sorry if
3 any of these questions are redundant because... if
4 they've been asked already but I want to start just
5 the L train has... there are new plans around the L
6 train, there was timing of phase two around the L
7 train shutdown and with the new plans and likely the,
8 the, the... not the lack of needing the bus terminal
9 under New York Stuyvesant Cove Park I was wondering
10 if there was any update on the, the plans related to
11 the L train shutdown?

12 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yes, thanks,
13 thanks Council Member yeah in, indeed the, the
14 project area two which is the area in, in your
15 district we were postponing the start of construction
16 until the L train... the moratorium was completed, we
17 still are working with that schedule because the
18 reconstruction of those areas, those three areas that
19 we talked about takes less time overall so we can
20 push it out and then it will all finish at the same
21 time but we'll take a look at the schedule now once
22 we have confirmation and, and we'll take a close look
23 at that schedule as we are doing with many of our
24 projects in, in the affected area and see if there
25 can be changes made.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay and staying
3 on the topic of Stuy Cove Park you mentioned a ferry
4 might move, we just opened that ferry not, not long
5 ago, it's a welcome addition to the neighborhood, I'm
6 wondering if... where will it be located to?

7 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Thank... Council
8 Member we, we don't presently anticipate needing to
9 move that ferry... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay... [cross-
11 talk]

12 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: ...during
13 construction, if we determine that during one, one
14 phase of it, it needs to be relocated slightly so
15 that we can do the work there we'll work with the
16 economic development corporation and find a, a place
17 to move it nearby, I mean we don't... we don't expect..
18 [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: It will stay in
20 that vicinity of Stuy Cove Park, that's a yes?

21 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yes, in the
22 vicinity, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you. I want
24 to talk about Murphy Brothers Playground, Stuyvesant
25 Cove Park and Asser Levy Playground, can you tell us

2 just for... on the record when and how long each of
3 those will be closed?

4 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: I, I don't want
5 to misstate it so I'm going to go and find my slide.

6 [off mic dialogue]

7 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: So, we... right, so
8 we... so we presently have Murphy Brothers Playground
9 closing in late 2021 and completing that at the end
10 of 2022 so that's a little under a year and a half;
11 Stuyvesant Cove Park, we have approximately two years
12 construction duration so mid 2020 through mid to late
13 2022, Asser Levy Playground approximately two years,
14 a little under two years of construction, mid 2021 to
15 mid-2023 and I'll just reiterate also that our
16 expectations we'll be able to make the flood
17 protection system operable prior to hurricane season
18 in 2023... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay and, and so
20 what happens if a storm happens in the meantime like
21 during construction for instance?

22 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: The, the flood
23 protection system needs to be completed in order to
24 provide the level of protection that we need, the
25 city is making a series of other improvements

2 including improvements to NYCHA properties that are
3 on different timelines, there are a number of
4 different initiatives that the Mayor's Office of
5 Resiliency can also speak to, to try and address
6 emergency preparedness and, and other measures but
7 this flood protection addressing the coastal storm
8 surge is... really requires this project to be
9 completed.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And if there was
11 a... if there was a storm during construction would
12 that cause a further delay in terms of getting us
13 prepared for the next storm? I, I... my, my point being
14 also for the folks who are anticipating a closure of
15 a park will that mean there will be... another storm
16 could put that out further?

17 LORRAINE GRILLO: I think that's pretty
18 much impossible to anticipate what that would do to
19 that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay... [cross-
21 talk]

22 LORRAINE GRILLO: I honestly just don't
23 know.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. Moving
25 forward the... there is a process where you're going to

2 create the flood gates around Stuy Cove Park up to
3 Asser Levy and at, at some sort of notice... when
4 there's notice given it will... some... it will have to
5 be closed in order to, to trap the water in on the
6 side of the East River, can you tell me who, who will
7 be responsible for actually closing those walls and
8 what will the process be? There's been some concern
9 that people won't know the timing of when the wall
10 gets closed, who will be responsible for it, what
11 will the criteria be so when... there are certain areas
12 that feel like they're going to be locked in and so
13 they want to have a better understanding of what... and
14 when, when those walls will close and what the
15 process will be and how they will be notified.

16 LORRAINE GRILLO: Okay, okay. So, we're
17 working with DOT on a plan for who's in control of
18 that, at what level those, those flood gates are
19 closed and so on, I don't have an answer for you
20 today, but we are working closely with DOT on this...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Do you think
22 you'll have the criteria by the time you enter into
23 ULURP for the Council, criteria process?

24 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Maybe we'll ask
25 Carrie to answer that at the Mayor's Office.

2 CARRIE GRASSI: I think we'll have a, a
3 general process but again each, each storm is, is
4 very different from the last so really this is about
5 working with our Office of Emergency Management to
6 create a playbook that can then be sort of
7 accommodated for, for the, the, the specific
8 variables of each storm and, and the notifications
9 that we get from the weather service so I think we'll
10 have a general process laid out this year but I can't
11 speak to exactly when at this point.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: The, the folks
13 who line in Waterside Plaza which is... [cross-talk]

14 CARRIE GRASSI: Yes... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...north of the
16 wall or northeast of the wall have been continuously
17 concerned that when you put that wall up emergency
18 vehicles will both not be able to get to or will not
19 be able to find how to get in there and the bridge
20 that is there today is not ADA accessible and so
21 you're really leaving them on the water and
22 vulnerable to so on emergency and I think one of the
23 reasons they're asking for some information about
24 that sooner is so they know where they are positioned
25 relative to the plan so I would just ask that if...

2 when, when you get to ULURP you have... we have some
3 understanding of what that process will look like so
4 they can understand how... and, and so I wanted to...
5 well... [cross-talk]

6 CARRIE GRASSI: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...I found out...
8 [cross-talk]

9 CARRIE GRASSI: ...if I could just comment
10 on waterside, we absolutely heard those concerns very
11 early in, in the process and so actually changed the,
12 the flood wall alignment in that location so that we
13 could reroute and make sure that emergency vehicles
14 are able to access the Waterside Plaza... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And, and how
16 will... how will they get there?

17 CARRIE GRASSI: So, maybe I could follow
18 up with you but there's that underneath the FDR in
19 that location and that intersection at 23rd we're
20 able to change the directionality of that service
21 road so that we can have emergency vehicles exit and
22 enter through that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: The one... the one
24 concern I have is that they're not going to know how
25 to get to that, I know exactly what you're talking

2 about that position where... and they're not going to
3 know how to get to there because it... you know a GPS
4 will still... will not account for a flood wall.

5 CARRIE GRASSI: Absolutely, so, so all of
6 the planning work involves our emergency services
7 operators so we'll... we're meeting and will be meeting
8 with FDNY, PD, our DOT traffic management to make
9 sure that everybody understands those, those traffic
10 reroutings.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay and I would
12 ask you to keep meeting with... [cross-talk]

13 CARRIE GRASSI: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...and discussing
15 with them because I... what about Bellevue, Bellevue
16 does not have as I understand flood protection right
17 now, I think NYU does, the VA hospital does, Stuy
18 Cove Park will, all the sort of surrounding areas but
19 is there a plan to protect Bellevue in this case, how
20 far along, does that federal money effect that, does
21 the scope of this plan effect Bellevue?

22 CARRIE GRASSI: So, the scope of this
23 plan does not impact Bellevue, my understanding is...
24 so, Bell, Bellevue received their own pot of funding,
25 it is not HUD funding, I believe it's FEMA funding so

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2 it's not on the timeline, they have done as I
3 understand some of their building level improvements
4 and I think they are working on a campus level plan.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Do you know
6 timeline of when they... [cross-talk]

7 CARRIE GRASSI: I don't...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Can you follow up
9 with us and get... [cross-talk]

10 CARRIE GRASSI: Yes... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...us a timeline?

12 CARRIE GRASSI: Absolutely.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: The... Asser Levy
14 Playground has been a large topic of conversation,
15 it's a new playground, there's a... sort of a, a
16 recreation center over the playground, there's an
17 open area there, I call it Dan Garodnick Park because
18 he created it informally but there's been a lot of
19 debate about where to put the wall there whether to
20 surround the entire park or to intersect the park
21 with the wall, can you give us an update on where the
22 plan has the wall today and just on the record some
23 justification for the intersection versus the going
24 around the entire park?

25

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2

JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah, we

3

appreciate the question Council Member, so in the

4

course of this planning work we have looked at two

5

options for... we've looked at multiple options but

6

last looked at two options for the placement of that

7

wall. The, the current plan is to locate it at

8

basically what would be 24th Street which is the

9

area in between the playground and the community

10

center, there are... and so... and then we did look at

11

the other alternative of the wall basically crossing

12

the FDR coming up the side of the FDR service Drive

13

and then coming along 25th Street, there are

14

advantages and disadvantages that we looked at for

15

both options. The, the things that are in support of

16

the 24th Street option which is what's currently in

17

the plan is first of all surrounding the playground

18

with an eight-foot wall would really not allow it to

19

feel safe and you know that's something that was very

20

important. In addition, the... and it's a little hard

21

to describe this but the wall in that case would need

22

to progress adjacent to the FDR in between the

23

playground and the FDR and we found from pedestrian

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traffic surveys that actually is a pretty heavily

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trafficked pedestrian area that we would interfere

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with. The last salient or important thing is that in order to put it on 25th Street we would actually have to reconstruct the utility infrastructure all the way to 1st Avenue which is a much more complex and time consuming sort of option so we have it along 24th Street and the one thing that I would note by way of reassurance is, you know we're very... we understand the, the point about the... this being one place with the community center and the playground, the... that flood protection barrier has a gate in it, the gate would be open except in the case of a, you know massive storm and the opening is about 80 feet so it's about half a city block and so you know there are places in the playground where you would not be able to see the community center but in most places you would have pretty good visibility. We're also working on the materials for a flood protection like that to... so that... you know sort of their, their presence isn't as significant in that location.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: So, ULURP will

include... will start with the plan around 24th Street, is that right and then... I know the community has expressed an opinion it should be somewhere else, and we will... we will discuss I anticipate. The... in terms

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2 of construction one concern here is that as you get
3 to Stuyvesant Cove Park you're right adjacent to many
4 buildings on Peter Cooper, the L train has taught us
5 that we, we have to be very careful about hours and
6 what type of... what type of work is being done because
7 the people that live right there live with it for as
8 long as it goes on, can you tell us anticipated hours
9 of construction, noise mitigation and other, other
10 areas that you're exploring to help offset any impact
11 to somebody who lives, you know 20 feet away or
12 something from the... from the... maybe it's further than
13 that but 30 feet away from the, the wall at
14 Stuyvesant Cove Park?

15 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yes, Council Member
16 that area of the wall will be done at night in order
17 to, to... obviously it's the only time that would make
18 sense or feasible to do, we'll be very conscious of
19 course of disturbing the community and we'll work
20 very closely with, with the community and with your
21 office on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: What hours are...
23 at night, what is night... [cross-talk]

24 LORRAINE GRILLO: I don't have... I, I... we
25 don't have that yet, when the contract goes out or

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2 before the contract goes out, we'll have that
3 conversation with the community.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And, and why does
5 it have to be at night?

6 JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: So, so, it's...
7 that, that's an area where really we don't have the
8 same choice that we have with respect to East River
9 Park and the flood barrier needs to be constructed
10 adjacent to the FDR and so we're, we're required to
11 do that with a lane closure which would be at night
12 and then deploy the as the Commissioner was
13 describing in her testimony deploy the construction
14 activities at night to build it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I will say that
16 I'm not sure that I knew until this hearing that it
17 was going to be nighttime construction, we have to
18 have discussed it but I don't know that I was made
19 aware of that at any point, I am concerned about that
20 and I'm concerned about that because the L train is
21 the perfect example, people are living with that
22 every night and it stops at eleven o'clock but nine,
23 ten, eleven o'clock at night we get calls, I mean I
24 get... every night I get emails and calls about it and

25

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1 COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
2 this will be I assume around 23rd Street down... going
3 down, there's a lot of folks who live... [cross-talk]

4 LORRAINE GRILLO: We're, we're happy to
5 discuss this further with you before any contract
6 goes out.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I would
8 appreciate that, and I would appreciate some
9 consideration given to... [cross-talk]

10 LORRAINE GRILLO: Understood... [cross-
11 talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...hours or, or...
13 [cross-talk]

14 LORRAINE GRILLO: Under... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...or something
16 else to help offset what will be a painful period of
17 time for the folks that live there.

18 LORRAINE GRILLO: Got it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: The... I have a few
20 more questions but I, I will... I'll hold there and
21 I'll let other folks get back to any questions they
22 have. I would... you know I, I, I... it's... I don't
23 represent the area but I do want to reflect a lot of
24 the concerns people have here about the usage of the
25 parks that go south of here and, and I, I appreciate

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the flyover as being an addition, we get the cause

3

out of that but I've heard from constituents who live

4

in Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper, Waterside and

5

nearby areas about their usage of south of 14th

6

Street and the East River Parks and I would be... I

7

would have to... I have to share the concerns about

8

doing it, I know you're looking at doing it in Peace

9

Meal that to me is the... I don't want to speak for

10

folks who live close... [cross-talk]

11

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Council,

12

Councilman?

13

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Yes.

14

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I love you.

15

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I love you too...

16

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: But if they stay

17

any longer, I'm going to have to buy them... [cross-

18

talk]

19

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay... [cross-

20

talk]

21

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...dinner... [cross-

22

talk]

23

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I will... I will

24

end there, thank you, I'll follow up, thanks.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you
3 very much, I believe Councilman Levine from Manhattan
4 had some questions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you Mr.
6 Chair, Commissioners hello, good to see you. The
7 total price tag on this if I'm not mistaken is 1.4
8 million... billion dollars, billion with a B, we have
9 300 million committed from the federal government at
10 the moment, the worst possible result would be that
11 we start this work and run out of money and we have a
12 half done project which puts the community through
13 all of the disruption and the heartache. So, I'm
14 very, very concerned about the securing of the full
15 budget here and it is a lot of money, we have a
16 hostile administration in Washington and your
17 timeline if you're projecting a 2023 opening is well
18 into another Mayoral administration, can you talk to
19 us about when we're going to know for sure that we
20 have the remaining 1.1 billion dollars secured for
21 this project?

22 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yeah, Council... thank
23 you Council Member, I think at this point in time we
24 have approximately 700 million assigned to this
25 project and again let me just continue to say that

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this administration has been committed to obviously

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resiliency, obviously capital expenditures throughout

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so we will go through the... this is a new need

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obviously, we will go through the typical budget

6

process and we will see... we will move forward in that

7

way.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But is it the

9

presumption that the city then will close the

10

remaining as you say 700, 700-million-dollar capital?

11

LORRAINE GRILLO: That's correct...

12

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Commitment?

13

LORRAINE GRILLO: Yep.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: We're in budget

15

season now, 2020 budget negotiations are underway...

16

[cross-talk]

17

LORRAINE GRILLO: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

18

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: ...can we expect to

19

have this money secured in the fiscal year 2020

20

budget?

21

JAMIE TORRES SPRINGER: I'm not sure

22

which capital plan...

23

LORRAINE GRILLO: Not, not in... I would

24

doubt that it would be this capital plan, but it

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would be an upcoming capital plan.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Will that delay
3 the work?

4 LORRAINE GRILLO: No, no, we are moving
5 forward.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, which
7 moving forward in the planning process but you're not
8 actually... no shovels in the ground yet, is that
9 right?

10 MITCHELL SILVER: There's shovels...
11 [cross-talk]

12 LORRAINE GRILLO: Yeah, the shovel in the
13 ground is going to be... start in 2020.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: In 2020,
15 potentially before the full funding is secured?

16 LORRAINE GRILLO: Correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, that makes
18 us nervous, why can't we have the money secured
19 before the shovel is in the ground, that... if, if
20 we're still a year away or, or 18 months away from
21 work starting?

22 MITCHELL SILVER: There will be a, a new
23 need request made for this and this will be subject
24 to the ongoing budget consultations with, with
25 council but the administration is committed, they

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recognize that there's another need, need to be filled to make the full budget but the question is what budget you would put it... [cross-talk]

LORRAINE GRILLO: Yes... [cross-talk]

MITCHELL SILVER: ...but we can proceed, we recognize it's about 760 we need to get to 1.455 and that will be a new need request that will be made.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, I want... I want to wrap up because we have a long list of public that we want to testify, I'll just say that there have been projects with a lot smaller price tags than this that have died on the vine because we couldn't get the full funding and for that to happen in a project like this that is both so important and has the potential to disrupt life for tens of thousands of people is a risk that, that I don't want us to have to face so I do think we need to push to get this funded as soon as possible so that we do not exposes this community to the risk of a half-finished project. Thank you and thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Councilman Levine for your questions. At this time seeing no other further questions from the Council I'm going to dismiss this panel, I want to thank you

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2 for your answers, thank you for being here today. I
3 would ask as always that Parks and DDC leave several
4 people behind so that they can hear the concerns of
5 the community and again I thank you for being here
6 with us today.

7 LORRAINE GRILLO: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, this is what
9 we're going to do at this time we have two special
10 young people that I want to hear from and that is
11 Hudson Athas, I hope I'm pronouncing your name right
12 and Dante Diez, one is from... Hudson is from MS104 and
13 Dante is from Tompkins Square, I think that's his
14 middle school. After that we are going to hear from
15 the Borough President of Manhattan Gale Brewer on a
16 panel with Asher Baumrin representing State Senator
17 Brad Hoylman and then we will continue to go along.
18 You can save the high fives for later, let's go.

19 HUDSON ATHAS: Okay, before I speak, I'd
20 like to thank Councilor Rivera for all of her work on
21 this project. Hello, my name is Hudson... my name is
22 Hudson Athas, I have... and I have lived on the Lower
23 East Side my whole life. I have witnessed firsthand
24 the things that make this neighborhood a wonderful
25 place to grow up and I strongly believe that we

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cannot lose the precious gem that is the East River Park. The East River Park is home to so many amazing activities and memories for so many people, there are ball fields with sports activities, cookout areas and playgrounds. It is an important connection we all have to the outdoors. We are here from the... from the Lower East Side to have our say in our community. The people making this decision obviously do not know very much about our neighborhood because if they did, they would know just how vital this park is. Some people need to fish on the East River to earn a living and there are others whose only source of recreation is from this park. And, and it's a special place for all of us to connect with nature and step away from the busy city streets. These people are trying to come and take that away from us without giving us our say. This is just unacceptable. The park has something for everybody and how can they say that they are just going to take that away for four years, our childhoods will be over by the time this park is complete. Today, we are asking to have a voice in this plan so that we can keep our access to these things that we love and appreciate. When it

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2 comes to our neighborhood and this park, we will
3 fight for that voice. Thank you.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
6 Hudson, Dante.

7 DANTE DIEZ: Hello, my name is Dante Diez
8 and I have lived in the Lower East Side for my entire
9 life, 13 years. I have seen this neighborhood in
10 storms and sunshine. I have seen and felt the sense
11 of community that we have in the Lower East Side and
12 how much of that community uses the East River Park.
13 Whether it is for birthday barbecues, football,
14 baseball, soccer, running, riding your bike,
15 everybody uses the park. I use the park for soccer,
16 riding my bike, going to fishing clinics, running,
17 hanging out with my, my friends and many other
18 things. And now we are going to lose the park for at
19 least... four years at least. This is going to be
20 extremely detrimental for our community. I would
21 prefer, if possible, to have the park closed for
22 longer but some parts would be kept open. Our
23 neighborhood has 51 percent of kids who do not get
24 enough physical education in school. More than half
25 of the kids in our district don't get enough physical

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education, that's the highest rate in the city. Many kids make up for it by participating in after school sports teams and activities that take place on the river. And now we are going to close the place where many kids get their exercise. I have attended many of the participatory design sessions about the design of the East River Park and I don't feel that enough community outreach has been done about this new plan. The basement of my building flooded during Sandy and our boiler is still being repaired. I know we need flood protection, but we also need to be involved. Thank you.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to thank you both for testifying today, I wasn't as involved as I could have been at your age and it's very important that we are involved, that we stay involved and that we help to shape the communities that we live in. There's a saying that all politics are local and there's nothing more local than your local park and do you know what the most important park in the world is, every park. So, this is your park and you should be proud of your work and I'm sure that your

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parents are proud of you as am I and as is your

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Council Woman so thank you for being here today.

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[applause]

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CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'll give you

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one of these [snaps fingers] and I'm going to dismiss

7

you now because I have got to hear from Gale Brewer

8

your Borough President, okay? Madame Borough

9

President and Mr. Baumrin. And, and before you start

10

Borough President, I just want to announce the next

11

panel will be Ayo Harrington; Damaris Reyes;

12

Christine, I'm going to... I can't say... something

13

Romero so I'm sorry I can't read... [cross-talk]

14

CHRISTINE DATZ ROMERO: D... Datz Romero.

15

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Datz Romero,

16

okay and Julian Morales so that will be the next

17

panel after the Borough President and Mr. Baumrin are

18

done. Thank you, Borough President please.

19

GALE BREWER: Thank you very much Chair

20

Grodenschik, you were as involved as the young people

21

when you were their age because I was there, I

22

remember. So, I want to thank you, I want to thank

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Chair Constantinides and I want to thank all of the

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Committee particularly Council Member Carlina Rivera.

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I am Gale Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough

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President and I think we all know that when Sandy hit in 2012, it devastated New York, it caused a lot of damage. It was only months prior to Sandy that hurricane Irene came through, so we have to work collaboratively and creatively without delay, I got that but the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project it represents... it does represent an important part of the city's storm resiliency, but I have several questions. Some of which have been said earlier by really one... the wonderful young people but I just want to reiterate. Number one, community members some of whom will be testifying at the next panel and in the audience invested years of time and effort to come up with the original plan and have been upset with the rollout of the significant changes. Why did it take so long to come up with this new plan and why wasn't the community given a chance to understand or comment on the plan before it was announced, question number one? Question number two, it is estimated as we know that the park will be closed for three and half or four years for demolition and complete reconstruction. Many have felt that this is too short a timeline because things always do take longer even with a design approach and it... how is the city going

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to maintain this schedule, what plans have been made to inform the community about delays? Number three, we know about the 330 million in federal funding although there was quite a bit spent, I think around 40 for planning and the initial allocations by the city that we know is 1.45 billion, we know it's only funded. We heard earlier in response to Council Member Levine that the money will be there but we do not have any guarantees so what are the guarantees? Number four, the project will require the closure of the park and the playing fields as you know. Has the city identified temporary field and park usage for the sports leagues that now use East River Park? If nearby spaces are identified but not adequate to meet all the needs and I must admit I don't know where you're going to find all of this space because that's the call, I get all day long places to play in the borough of Manhattan? Does the city have a plan to provide transportation to and from fields that are a longer distance away, that means buses that are paid for by the city on a regular basis? Number five, there needs to be a regular, frequent outreach to the city throughout the project to ensure that the community is kept up to date. What is the

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communication plan for keeping the community informed? And that's not an easy thing to do correctly. Number six, the community was told that in the city's original plan, parkland alienation would need to be authorized through the state legislature to account for the massive amount of demolition that would happen to East River Park. Now the entire park is being demolished yet there is no alienation being pursued. This remains a concern for the community and my colleagues in the State Legislature and it needs to be clarified to their satisfaction, clarifying it for State Senator Brian Kavanagh is not an easy project may I add. Storm resiliency... he's very smart. Storm resiliency is not an option, I got it. It is required if we are to protect the Lower East Side and other communities, however as Christine Datz-Romero, who's one of my heroes said to the New York Times, the timeline for building this park could be much longer and the city is destroying important vegetation, bird migration habitat and millions of dollars of city funded playing fields. She wonders why the park itself cannot be a floodplain with juniper and sumac trees that have been planted. I understand that DDC will claim that the plan only

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addresses her plan, things like sea level rise and not storm surge but this idea should be taken into serious consideration prior to the park's destruction and I may be talking to the wind but I'm a big believer in the Lower East Side folks that work on things that do with the environment, the Lower East Side is phenomenal. No matter what, this process must be collaborative, ensuring that the community always feels heard and their concerns are addressed in a timely and substantive way. There is much to be done and the next steps are critical. I know that doing this project in stages would be much preferable, that would be an example of working with the community. We look forward to working with the City Council, the community board on this issue and all related resiliency work that will disrupt and reduce the quality of life for residents it will. So, thank you for this opportunity and I appreciate the comments from this amazing community and the turnout today and excellent and humorous leadership from you. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...

[cross-talk]

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GALE BREWER: Council Member Barry

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Grodenschik... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...Borough

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President. Thank you very much, it was an outstanding

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turnout and I, I'm happy that we've begun to get some

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of the answers that Council Woman Rivera has been

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pressing now from... for many months and hopefully

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we've gotten this back on a track that will make the

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community happy and will leave us with something that

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we can all be proud of but thank you as always for

12

your advocacy and all the work that you do for the

13

great borough of Manhattan, really for all the people

14

of the city of New York. Mr. Baumrin you've got three

15

minutes, you're not the Borough President.

16

ASHER BAUMRIN: Thank you, Hudson and

17

Dante and Gale are three touch acts to follow so

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thank you.

19

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

20

ASHER BAUMRIN: This is joint testimony

21

of New York State Senators Brad Hoylman, Brian... and

22

Brian Kavanaugh, Congress Members Carolyn Maloney and

23

Nydia Velazquez and Assembly Members Harvey Epstein

24

and Yuh-Line Niou. Thank you for the opportunity to

25

present testimony during this New York City Council

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2 oversight hearing on the status of the East Side
3 Coastal Resiliency Project. We are State Senator Brad
4 Hoylman, State Senator Brian Kavanagh, Congress
5 Member Carolyn Maloney, Congress Member Nydia
6 Velazquez, Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, and
7 Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou. Each of our respective
8 districts include a large portion of the area that
9 would be affected by the city of New York's proposed
10 East Side Coastal Resiliency project, the subject of
11 today's oversight hearing. We thank Parks and
12 Recreation Committee Chair Barry Grodenchik and
13 Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Costa
14 Constantinides for help... for holding this important
15 hearing and for the opportunity to present this joint
16 testimony and Council Members Carlina Rivera,
17 Margaret Chin and Keith Powers with whom we've worked
18 closely on this issue, for your leadership. While we
19 applaud the city's desire to take decisive action in
20 response to the urgent risks of extreme weather
21 driven by global climate change, we have serious
22 concerns about the sudden transformation of the ESCR
23 proposal in September 2018 from a plan that
24 incorporated over four years of community input to a
25 new plan unilaterally put forth by the city. After

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years of working with the community on the previous plan, this unexpected change raises numerous questions about the process by which the city selected this new proposal and its process for gathering and incorporating public feedback.

Moreover, as we expressed in a December 6th letter to the city, which Council Members Rivera, Chin and Powers, as well as the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer joined, based on the information the city has provided to date, we have substantial reservations about the project as proposed and how it was proposed. Nor are we persuaded, based upon the city's assertions to date, that it would be legal for the city to undertake this project, which involves demolishing East River Park for the primary purpose of providing coastal flood protection for the surrounding community, unless the state legislature adopts legislation authorizing the temporary alienation of this essential parkland. I'm going to skip ahead just a little bit. Lack of public input and community engagement in deciding upon the new plan. Serious questions remain surrounding the new plan that the city rolled out in September 2018, leading to much confusion and concern within a

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community that it worked for years to ensure the design of its coastline would represent the needs of its residents. Plans and promises were made under the assumption that this project would continue to respect the community driven process. Understandably, our community feels blindsided by the abrupt change of plans. Many of our constituents feel that their time and efforts over the past few years have been overlooked, that the new plan lacks public input and that we have not had enough transparency into what is happening. We share our constituents' confusion. The city has stated on multiple occasions that the results of their 2018 value engineering and constructability review prompted them to change plans. Why, then did the city wait commission a value engineering and constructability review until after more than four years of community planning? If this is standard operating procedure, then the city should revisit this practice so as to better respect the time and energy of the community members who spend countless hours working on these projects. Engaging the community in this new phase is particularly challenging, when as of late November 2018, the ESCR team informed Senator Hoylman during a meeting in his

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district office that the project area one design was just 20 percent complete and the project area two design was only 50 percent complete. How can the community comment in a meaningful way when there is no fully formed plan upon which to comment?

Understandably, many constituents have expressed a desire for greater clarity on a number of specific issues with the new plan. Trust between the community and the ESCR team has eroded and that is not acceptable. We need to find a workable path moving forward. Project area one, community board three. The most dramatic changes to the ESCR plan are in East River Park, which the city proposes to close, demolish and reconstruct at an elevation eight feet higher than the current park. I can skip ahead a little bit if that's okay and wrap up, thank you.

Alienation. In spring 2018, the city announced that it would need New York State legislation to authorize alienation of portions of East River Park in order to proceed with the ESCR proposal as it stood at that time. Although the city is now presenting a revised project that retains only 30 percent of the prior plan it would still be executing a design that is for the purpose of resiliency and be protection of the

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Lower East Side. The new plan is essentially to transform the park itself into a flood barrier. Since it is clear that the city would not be demolishing or reconstructing the park otherwise, we believe that the city is not undertaking the project for a park purpose and it therefore requires alienation. As you know, the requirement that alienation be authorized by the state legislature is based on the principle that the city holds parkland as a public trust for all New Yorkers. Alienation legislation would specify the duration of the period in which any part of the park could be taken out of service to build the storm surge barrier, thus holding the city accountable to complete construction on time. And it would also formalize promises the city makes to Lower East Siders and other New Yorkers who use the park regarding alternative open spaces and recreational facilities that would replace those made unavailable while the park is closed. It would give those promises the force of law. Skipping ahead to the end. The ESCR project was an opportunity for the community to work together with local government and plan ahead for the worst impacts of global warming. The city demonstrated a lack of consideration for the

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2 community when it unilaterally changed the plans,
3 undoing years of work. As we move forward, we hope
4 the city begins engaging more frequently and in depth
5 with the community and local stakeholders. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
7 Borough President, thank you Mr. Baumrin and thank
8 you for representing all of those people today, it's
9 a lot so thank you for that. As we called before Miss
10 Harrington; Miss Reyes; Miss Datz Romero and Mr.
11 Morales. As they walk up the next panel will be Naomi
12 Schiller; Dan Tainow, I hope that's right; Dianne
13 Lake and... I think I got two for this if possible, I
14 have two, I have a Daniel Tainow, it's the same guy
15 so, okay. Unless there's two of them.

16 [off mic dialogue]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We've been also
18 joined by Councilman Daneek Miller from the great
19 borough of Queens my neighbor across Jamaica Avenue,
20 Miss Harrington...

21 AYO HARRINGTON: Yes...

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: If you'd like to
23 begin or any of you... [cross-talk]

24 AYO HARRINGTON: I would... [cross-talk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...would like to
3 begin.

4 AYO HARRINGTON: Thank you. Good
5 afternoon. First, I'd like to thank the Chairs,
6 Chair...

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Barry G.

8 AYO HARRINGTON: Grodenchik... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's perfect...
10 [cross-talk]

11 AYO HARRINGTON: Barry G., yeah, we had
12 this conversation... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Listen, my
14 family... [cross-talk]

15 AYO HARRINGTON: ...already... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...started on the
17 Lower East Side so you got to be... they were married
18 in 1907 on the Lower... on East Broadway... [cross-talk]

19 AYO HARRINGTON: I got you... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay...

21 AYO HARRINGTON: ...and I, I was so sure I
22 was going to get that right and Council Member also
23 Constantinides and I got that wrong as well, right?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: That's
25 alright.

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AYO HARRINGTON: So, I'm just going to
3 have to apologize because I get called Ayo all day
4 long.

5

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I did that to
6 you so we're even.

7

AYO HARRINGTON: Alright, thank you and
8 the Council Members of the Committee and our own
9 Council Woman Carlina Rivera for scheduling this
10 hearing. So, I'm Ayo Harrington, I'm the mother and a
11 grandmother who has lived in Alphabet City since the
12 60s where I raised my son, starting in the mid-80s,
13 helped to reclaim several vacant buildings, through
14 sweat equity and urban homesteading that are now
15 resilient and helped turn vacant lots into beautiful
16 community gardens also now resilient. And I'm still
17 involved in my community as much now as I was then. I
18 serve on the boards of LES Ready and Loisaída United
19 Neighborhood Gardens and others both of whom are
20 presenting testimony here later today but for now I
21 am today representing the newly established East
22 River Alliance, we're a new coalition formed to
23 amplify the concerns of the community in light of the
24 dramatic and I want to emphasize that the community
25 had zero input into it, changes that are about to

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take place on our waterfront. Many of you know as detailed by our Council Woman earlier how much our community suffered in the wake of hurricane Sandy. We saw homes, lives and gardens destroyed by the storm surge and we have worked really in the years since in collaboration with the city to design a resilient park we could be proud of. Now the Mayor has proposed to alter the plan and we find ourselves fighting to be heard. The coalition has met six times just in the last month and we have hundreds of questions that need answers. The East River Park is our park. The East Side Coastal Resiliency Project is our project, the money to build a new park is our money and a new park built... and a new park must be built according to the vision articulated by our community. We demand that the city work with us acre by acre, bench by bench, tree by tree and as you can see from today's attendance, we are ready right now to bring hundreds if not thousands of community members to meetings to work with the city to ensure the new park reflects the needs of community members and that each stake... all the stakeholders that include naturalists, little leagues, families barbequing, fisherman, cyclists, artists, dog walkers, birders and many more and we

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say yes to reestablishing a task force or advisory council for this entire project. During construction we demand mitigation for many of our needs, we're going to need improvements to the NYCHA areas already mentioned and we need resources for the.. infrastructure resources for all of the ultimate parks including our community gardens and we also need free ferries to alternate sites for us to use such as Governors Island the Brooklyn Bridge and we need huge amounts, increase in tree planting to make our community greener, healthier and more shaded. Most importantly we need the park restructured in phases so we are not completely cut off from our waterfront over a three to four year period and that includes needing future permitting by the Parks Department of the park currently and the new park to be done in a way that is equitable to the people in our community such as our schools and the little leagues that are from our community. finally, we demand that the ESCR project return to its mission and purpose, the new park must be a world class dynamic expression of our commitment to living in a sustainable city which includes features like dedicated foraging areas, solar powered lighting,

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2 bioswales and rain water catchments, visionary
3 thinking needs to be had such as like covering the
4 entire FDR Drive so that we can increase park acreage
5 and we are able to actually breath. And finally, as
6 you know, our community is resilient, our community
7 is just and our community is very, very loud. Today,
8 you will hear concerns from many other groups and
9 individuals and we ask you to consider their concerns
10 and to the city we say, please we want you to work
11 with us to build a park according to our vision that
12 is for our future and we want to make it very, very,
13 very clear that we will not accept any other process.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
16 your testimony.

17 NAOMI SCHILLER: Hello, my name is Naomi
18 Schiller, I'm presenting on behalf of Damaris Reyes,
19 who's presenting on behalf of LES Ready. So, good
20 afternoon, thank you to all our Council Members. LES
21 Ready is, is the Lower East Side's long-term recovery
22 and resiliency group which consists of approximately
23 25 formal members and participation from over 50
24 organizations and faith-based groups who were the
25 direct responders to superstorm Sandy. LES Ready is a

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coalition of groups, mostly local, working cooperatively to coordinate our response, resources, preparedness, planning and training to address extreme weather events and future disasters locally. Genuine community engagement is central to our mission and is a critical best practice of community disaster preparedness and resiliency efforts. What's being proposed flies in the face of years of hard work and extensive community engagement to come up with a plan to protect the neighborhood from disaster. For community residents who participated in the previous public process, it feels as if the plan that emerged as a product of years of community input has gone out the window. Public meetings about the new plan have only allowed for ten to 15 minutes public comment and question periods, leaving many questions unanswered. It's critically necessary to conduct new... a new period of community engagement around the new plan in order to ensure that residents are well informed and have an opportunity to make their voices heard. This is especially essential for residents who live in the subsidized housing that lines the waterfront since these residents will be the most impacted by the plan and have the least

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represent... and have been the least represented at public meetings about what's going on. Concerns about the development pressures on the adjacent subsidized housing and potential displacement of low- and moderate-income residents must be addressed in greater detail. These concerns were raised all along but took a back seat to budgetary and timeline constraints, factors that have clearly changed. Residents of subsidized housing and the surrounding neighborhood rely on the East River Park as a vital source of open space and recreation. for low- and moderate-income residents, seeking alternative resources of open space, space and recreational space is prohibitively costly. Closing it for three years will have a devastating impact on thousands, thousands, thousands of community residents and no real mitigation has been planned. For example, there haven't been any proposed solutions for the community to even consider like the provision of free shuttle buses, metro cards and free ferry service to alternate parks such as Brooklyn Bridge Park and Governor's Island for residents impacted by the construction and park closure. Finally, the new plan will result in significant, long term environmental

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impacts that haven't been adequately explored. This plan includes killing all existing flora and fauna in the park. Presentations on the plan to date have offered no sense of the long-term environmental impacts of this level of destruction of autochthonous biodiversity. Construction will also lead to concerns around air quality, in a neighborhood with notably high asthma rates. A thorough assessment of the long term environmental and health impacts of the planned neighborhood... planned landscaping is absolutely imperative. I'm ending. Creating flood protections is at the core of LES Ready's mission but the community's input and needs must be central to their development. This community knows what is best and what it needs, and residents have a right to be a part of planning their future. The introduction of this process, this new process and plan feels like a bait and switch, with minimal little transparency, further exacerbating long term lack of trust in government from our communities. We urge the City Council to do everything possible to prevent any plan from moving forward that overrides years of community input from a broad range of stakeholders, that would restrict access to a vital resource of recreation and

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2 open space for the Lower East Side residents and that
3 leaves critical long-term environmental impacts
4 inadequately addressed. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

6 GIOVANNI MATOS: Good afternoon, my name
7 is Matos, I am the Engagement Coordinator at GOLES,
8 Good Old Lower East Side... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Giovanni, I
10 don't... [cross-talk]

11 GIOVANNI MATOS: Yes... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...have you on...
13 [cross-talk]

14 GIOVANNI MATOS: I will be... yes, I'm
15 going to be reading statement by Damaris... [cross-
16 talk]

17 NAOMI SCHILLER: For, for Julian... [cross-
18 talk]

19 GIOVANNI MATOS: ...Julian Morales for
20 GOLES.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

22 GIOVANNI MATOS: Alright, great. So,
23 before I go, I want to thank the City Council, the
24 Committee Chairs and our City Council Woman Carlina
25 Rivera who just stepped out for giving us the

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2 platform to express our, our concerns. So, GOLES is a
3 40-year-old membership organization dedicated to
4 tenants' rights, economic equality and community
5 revitalization. GOLES is a coordinating member of the
6 LES Ready, the Lower East Side's disaster
7 Preparedness and Resiliency Network working to create
8 flood protections while ensuring that any
9 infrastructural amenities created to mitigate climate
10 change will also enhance resident's quality of life
11 and not lead to displacement of long-term
12 neighborhood residents. Since the beginning we've
13 been organizing hundreds of residents in the Rebuild
14 by Design process resulting in the big U winning
15 HUD's original regional competition securing 335
16 million towards its implementation. GOLES has then
17 helped to lead outreach and community engagement for
18 the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project working to
19 garner participation through extensive, accessible,
20 multi lingual outreach throughout numerous public
21 housing developments, using on the ground organizing
22 to maximize our reach given residents a sense of
23 ownership over ensuring the safety of their
24 community, helping to restore a sense of security in
25 a neighborhood where they survived the trauma of

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2 disaster. In addition to the lack of transparency and
3 disregard for public process in the new proposal,
4 residents depend on the East River Park as a critical
5 source of open space and for recreational and
6 cultural needs. Restricting access to the park for
7 three years would cause significant hardship for the
8 thousands of low- and moderate-income community
9 residents who rely on the park as a vital, free
10 public amenity. This project appeared ready to move
11 forward and go through ULURP when, without
12 explanation, for approximately five months, there was
13 no communication from the city with anybody about
14 what was happening and why this plan was being
15 changed. Further, unlike the earlier public
16 processes, there was no communication of technical
17 rational, no technical assistance and no explanation
18 about social, environmental, or ecological impacts,
19 preventing the community from coming to an informed
20 understanding of what's coming to our community,
21 without the necessary time or expertise to evaluate
22 it. Many of the residents who live on the waterfront
23 are among the most vulnerable, low- and moderate-
24 income people living in subsidized housing and
25 they're not being afforded a sufficient opportunity

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to weigh in about their future. What will this new process mean for waterfront adjacent housing and the vulnerable populations who live there? The new process offers glaringly inadequate opportunities for their input to be taken into consideration and reflected in design. GOLES is deeply committed to protecting our community from flooding and other climate impacts but we've raised similar concerns all along about what this plan would mean for the adjacent housing. Even now, in light of an increased budget and extended timeline, presenting an opportunity to take additional factors into design consideration, where is the consideration for the adjacent land for the... and for the potential displacement of people who live there? Increased infrastructural amenities will undoubtedly increase already boiling point development pressure, and we need to make sure that any amenities created to mitigate climate change will not lead to displacement of long-term neighborhood residents. This plan will undoubtedly impact people who live in the adjacent housing developments and it's absolutely imperative to ensure that residents are afforded the time and technical assistance to be fully informed and to

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2 weigh in on their own futures and on the potential
3 for displacement. Finally, I urge this Council to
4 address this issue, to ensure maximum accountability
5 to the residents of the community and to the city as
6 a whole. The current plan would have far reaching and
7 long-term impacts on our community and this city as a
8 whole, including the erosion of trust and loss of
9 faith and respect for processes that engage
10 community. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
12 much, thank you.

13 CHRISTINE DATZ ROMERO: Good afternoon,
14 my name is Christine Datz Romero and I would like to
15 thank the Council for holding these joint meetings
16 and I'm testifying on behalf of the Lower East Side
17 Ecology Center. We are a community-based community
18 organization that has offered composting, education
19 and stewardship programs in East River Park since
20 1997. Like many stakeholders and community residents,
21 we have participated in the Rebuild by Design
22 process. This planning process stretching over four
23 years, was a transparent process allowing
24 stakeholders and residents to shape the future of
25 their park, with the goal to create a resilient park

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2 that provides flood protection for the Lower East
3 Side. Unfortunately, the trust that we have put into
4 this public process has been broken with the city
5 announced in the fall of 2018 a major departure from
6 the original design concept for ESCR without
7 communicating or since then satisfactorily explaining
8 to us how these decisions were made. In many meetings
9 we have heard that there was a value added design
10 study commission that triggered the rethinking about
11 this plan and I would like to be on record again to
12 call on DDC to make this study public and for us to
13 have... and I think that would be a good faith effort
14 on their part to rebuild the trust that they have to
15 earn again. We also as a community then need time to
16 review the study and come to our own conclusions. I
17 have additional comments about the current plan, I
18 think on top of my list is probably just the
19 wholesale destruction of an existing ecosystem, we
20 have over 700 trees in East River Park and over 350
21 species we have counted that call East River Park its
22 home. This is an urban oasis for, for these creatures
23 and we cannot just justify destroying all of this.
24 There is... I feel no compelling reason offered so far
25 to really justify it. There are also tremendous

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social and environmental impacts. The Lower East Side residents have to... have only 1.2 acres of open space per 1,000 residents currently eliminating eight ball fields, two soccer fields and also a recently renovated track and field facility together with the tennis courts will deprive community residents young and old from recreational resources that cannot be replaced easily for the duration of the construction. Loosing all of these services the park is currently providing for the entire duration of construction is unreasonable and will be a hardship for the community. Will a whole generation of kids growing up in the Lower East Side be denied the experience of playing ball in the park? No matter what design plan will be implemented in the end, a phased approach to construction and the immediate reopening of completed sections is imperative for the social wellbeing of our community. The construct... and have a, a few short comments. Construction duration, the city is promising us 3.5 years and I just want to remind the committee that the track record of agencies coming in with any of these design... construction projects finished on time is dismal in our... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You don't... you

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don't have to remind me of that I can assure you.

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CHRISTINE DATZ ROMERO: ...the Promenade

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was supposed to take four years, it took 12, PO 35 to

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the South took ten years to be partially opened now,

7

so that is just unacceptable and I think we need to

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really take that with a grain of salt when they say

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3.5 years it could very easily stretch for a longer

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period of time. Also, the historic structures in East

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River Park just being eradicated, the Amphitheater

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was the birth place of Shakespeare in the park and I

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think we need to engage in more discussion about what

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that means to the community and whether we really

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need to demolish it. The Fire Board House which is

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close and dear to our hearts because it's the

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headquarters of our organization is, is also... is

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supposedly being rescued by this plan and not

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demolished but I have serious questions about an

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eight foot wall that surrounds this building that

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sits right next to the water how that is going to

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fair in the next storm. We also raised money in FY

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'12 to do... to ensure ADA compliant access to this

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building and again I have many questions about how

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anybody is going to access a building climbing over

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a... over an eight foot wall so there is a lot of

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unanswered questions in this plan and what we're

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really urging is that this plan and the steamrolling

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of our concerns be stopped and we need a pause on

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this whole design planning process to really find a

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good way forward. Thank you.

8

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you all..

9

[applause]

10

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to thank

11

you, you're in a vanguard of testimony today after

12

those two young people, it's been my experience and

13

after over a third of a century.. a third of a century

14

in public life that the community almost always makes

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a project better so I urge you to stick to your guns

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and I'm sure you will, I don't think I need to urge

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you to do that but you have a great champion, Council

18

Woman Rivera had to step out to go to another

19

committee right next door for a few minutes, she will

20

be back but I... delight... delighted to have been able

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to give you a platform to hear from the two

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commissioners and the Deputy Commissioner we heard

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from today but also to put on the record your

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concerns so that they also hear from you as well and

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2 myself as Chair of Parks and your local Council Woman
3 and the Chair of Environmental Protection.

4 AYO HARRINGTON: We want to thank you and
5 I think I will now go find the two 13-year olds so
6 that they can give me a pronunciation lesson... [cross-
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
9 talk]

10 AYO HARRINGTON: ...on all of your names,
11 thank you... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
13 talk]

14 AYO HARRINGTON: ...so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

16 AYO HARRINGTON: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: The next panel
18 has been expanded a little; we have Dianne Lake; we
19 have Daniel Tainow, if I pronounced that wrong, I'm
20 sorry; Amy Chester from Rebuild by Design; Lynn
21 Kelly, New Yorkers for Parks and Kate, this is my
22 issue I did not take French, Boicourt, that's what I
23 was going to say. While they are getting set just so
24 you have... the next panel after this will be Diana
25 Carulli; Vaylateena Jones, I hope I got that right;

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2 Rob Buchanan; Theodore Pender; Daniel Gutman and Tom,
3 Tommy Loeb, that will be the next panel, I'll call
4 you again when this panel is done testifying. Miss
5 Lake.

6 DIANNE LAKE: Hi, my name is Dianne Lake.
7 I especially want to thank Deputy Commissioner Torres
8 Springer, I've spoken to him several times in... one on
9 one and in community meetings and I've been very hard
10 on him and I appreciate his willingness to come back
11 and try to get us the answers that we are looking
12 for. I am a member of the East River Alliance and I
13 have lived in the East Village for 32 years. My
14 family and I were here for Sandy so I am for coastal
15 resiliency that protects our homes and our businesses
16 and ConEd because I went without power. I am in East
17 River Park at least several times a week during the
18 winter and nearly every day... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Excuse me...
20 [cross-talk]

21 DIANNE LAKE: ...in the summer... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...one second Miss
24 Lake, if you could be... please be quite so we can hear
25 this testimony, thank you. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

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DIANNE LAKE: Okay. I'm in East River

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Park at least several times a week during the winter

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and nearly every day in the summer. I am for the

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ongoing preservation and restoration of this park,

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but I am strongly against the plan that we are

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discussing today. Closing the entire park for over

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three years including four summers is more than an

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inconvenience to our community, it is a tremendous

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blow. There are many, many people who will not have

11

the financial means, the mobility or the leisure time

12

to just go somewhere else even if that space is

13

available. I would expect that if the city comes to

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us with such a drastic recommendation that they will

15

have taken plenty of time and done plenty of research

16

to demonstrate that there is truly no other

17

alternative. Instead we've been presented with a

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hastily assembled proposal that was done more or less

19

in the dead of night without any warning. There is

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little hard evidence backing it up, there are a few

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weak justifications; we think it will be quicker, we

22

need to replant the park anyway, that... won't disrupt,

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disrupt traffic on the FDR. These are not reasons to

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destroy the park and deprive thousands of people to

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access... of the access to recreation for at least four

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summers or to spend a billion and a half dollars and there is no answer to whether we are at extra risk during construction if another storm like Sandy comes along. To quote the musical Hamilton, we are the greatest city in the world, we should be more than capable of engaging the best minds in engineering to help us solve our coastal problem with minimal harm to the community, the environment and our budget. Let's pause this extreme project and work together and find the right solution instead of the expedient one. Thank you.

DANIEL TAINOW: Hello, my name is Daniel

Tainow and I am speaking today on behalf of the East River Alliance Environmental Committee. Thank you to the Committee Chairs on Environmental Protection and Parks and Recreation as well as Council Member Rivera. The East River Alliance, an association of community members and groups advocating for East River Park, the other parks within the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project area and the surrounding communities, is deeply concerned about the impacts of the new plans for the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project. After five years of our dedicated participation in creating a world class design for

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coastal flood protection and resilient park land, the city has announced a significantly altered design without reengaging the community members and stakeholders before releasing the new plan. This process is unacceptable. We demand adequate time to evaluate the merits and drawbacks of the new proposal. We have not been satisfied by the Department of Design and Construction's vague answers to our questions about the environmental and social impacts of destroying the existing East River Park and elevating it in order to create a hard-edged sea wall. Our unanswered questions focused around the effects of upland hydrology and neighborhood impacts from the installation of proposed grey and green infrastructure fixes, the human environment, social and economic impacts both during and after construction of the new park, biodiversity impacts from destroying and rebuilding the ecology in the park, impacts on the ecology and the communities' connection to the East River and the effectiveness of the new design on protecting our neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods outside of the proposed project from future coastal flooding. As community members who lived through the devastation of

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hurricane Sandy, we are keenly aware of the urgent

3

necessity for flood protection for the Lower East

4

Side. While we support the city's efforts to provide

5

this protection, we must have a clear independent

6

review in order to answer our questions about the

7

long and short term... short term consequences of the

8

city's proposed new design. We demand that the city

9

provide answers to all of our questions by February

10

28th to allow the community, aided by independent

11

experts, to evaluate the new plan before proceeding

12

any further with design approvals so thank you to the

13

Chairs today for starting this process of getting our

14

questions answered.

15

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. Miss

16

Chester.

17

AMY CHESTER: Hello and thank...

18

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Keep... do you... is

19

that red light on?

20

AMY CHESTER: Yes.

21

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Excellent.

22

AMY CHESTER: Thank you very much. Thank

23

you so much Council Members for having us here today.

24

I'm going to do my best not to repeat things that

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other people have said so I'm sorry if it comes off a

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little bit choppy. I am Amy Chester, I'm the Director of Rebuild by Design and today I am submitting testimony, testimony on behalf of the Regional Plan Association, the Municipal Art Society and the Institute for Public Knowledge at NYU. These organizations that I'm representing were among the leaders that ran the competition Rebuild by Design. We guided the design teams through in-depth research, cross sector, cross professional collaboration, and iterative design to develop regionally scalable but locally contextual solutions that increase resilience in our region. To us, the process we.. to create the designs are just as important as design themselves. We worked to ensure all stakeholders were at the table from the beginning to ensure we were being inclusive with the people who would be most affected. As you know that came up that led to the big U, which I will not go into, but I would like to say that HUD recognized that deep collaboration that the design team had with the community when they awarded the 335 million dollars. It was the largest award for any of our designs, there were seven that received funding and the vision for the big U was a world class park that brought together public amenities with

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innovative resilient features. As you heard today many times, for four years the city worked intensely on engineering and design studies and incorporated community feedback. A task force was created with the local community boards and the city held 25 public meetings. These meetings were very affective in understanding the desires of the community but also effective for the community to understand the physical limitations that were identified through the engineering studies. The community understood what components of the plans were omitted due to escalating costs and through the community boards request... and though the community boards requested necessary changes on specific issues, the community generally supported the final proposal last spring. We come before you today because we are concerned with the abrupt change and the new cost bringing the total to 1.45 billion dollars which is a massive investment for just over one mile of flood protection. The recent exclusion of public in the decision-making process and the rational the city has given for spending an additional 700 million without fostering a public conversation on trade offs is counter to the principles of the Rebuild by Design

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competition. We're submitting much longer testimony for the record however there are five points and a few recommendations that we'd like you to consider. The first is that the redevelopment of East River Park to address our changing climate brings a huge opportunity for the city to demonstrate that it's a leader in climate resilience. The old way of funding agencies is just not going to work, the city has demonstrated that it's easier to spend 700 million dollars on capital costs to raise the park out of the flood plain than have an innovative park that will require an increased maintenance budget... maintenance budget with much less expense dollars. The new approach brings an opportunity... brings, brings also an opportunity cost. While the city has promised that the new plan will have the very same amenities currently in East River Park, we believe that choosing this layout deprives the community of the opportunity to design a now new entirely new park as a blank canvas comprehensively. Instead the community will have a new version of a 1030s design park nearly 100 years later. One of the goals of the competition was to catalyze a project that the government would not have created on its own. While we expected some

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degree of changes for all of our projects and, and
for that we of course have gotten some of the
innovative design elements from the initial proposal
such as an additional access over bridges, decking
over the FDR Drive, new transportation options and
the beloved harbor bath has not been made as part of
this conversation. Can I continue? I have a bit more.
The East River Park poses an opportunity to fuse
equitable long-term stewardship into the design.
Rebuild recently worked with the Trust for Public
Land and James Lima Planning and Development and
community leaders to develop a new model of
stewardship for East River Park. Now with the
prospect of a brand-new park we have an opportunity
to add design elements that, that can become true
local community assets. The city has also stated many
reasons for this abrupt change such as ensuring parks
can be brought back online after a storm and they've
said many times today that the active... that there are
not active parks that flood, that's... we have found
that not to be completely correct, we have found the
number of active parks... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Excuse me, I, I
3 really... we, we have about 40 more people to testify
4 after you... [cross-talk]

5 AMY CHESTER: Okay... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...so I really
7 need you to wrap up and I really need to moving
8 forward if everyone can please stick to their time
9 because everyone's time here is valuable, everyone
10 has time to testify but we have 40 more people to go
11 today.

12 AMY CHESTER: I understand...

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...

14 AMY CHESTER: Quick recommendation, so...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: If it's very
17 brief, yes.

18 AMY CHESTER: Okay, so median...
19 immediately advance meaningful conversations on
20 specific outreach topics, reestablish the trust with
21 the community and the city should provide a portion
22 of the resources they have for design and development
23 to technical assistance for the community so they can
24 hire their own expertise... experts, sorry, work
25 closely with community members and designers to

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2 identify additional community amenities that could be
3 added to the design that will help the long term
4 stewardship process, collaborate on a robust
5 mitigation plan asking the community to identify what
6 they think is needed in their facilities and to
7 commit to the concept of developing floodable parks
8 in New York City if not this one and to determine
9 where and how they will work best. We need to change
10 our culture and learn to live with the water not to
11 stop it. New York City needs to harness this
12 opportunity become... to become a leader in this realm.

13 LYNN KELLY: Hi, good after... good
14 afternoon, my name is Lynn Kelly, I'm the Executive
15 Director of New Yorkers for Parks. Thank you for
16 inviting me to speak today. We want to begin by
17 stating that we understand the extreme engineering
18 challenges that the city faces with this...
19 redevelopment of this park. There's one point of
20 entry for vehicles, its adjacent to thousands of
21 units of housing, it's adjacent to a Con Edison
22 facility and sandwiched between a major highway and a
23 body of water and we also understand that it's not a
24 matter of if the next Sandy happens but when.
25 However, has... as the city has sought to minimize the

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2 disruptions that a major capital project will cause,
3 we also want to reiterate that the residents who have
4 been impacted by this construction are also residents
5 who have waited over six years to see any meaningful
6 changes in their park. New Yorkers for Parks is
7 supportive of the Rebuild by Design process when it
8 began in 2013 and participated in some of its
9 community meetings that took place over the years. As
10 I'm sure you will agree to engage in a years long
11 process... public process of solicitating meaningful
12 feedback is an exercise of trust building but
13 unfortunately trust here has been broken. We share
14 the concerns of the process by which the new redesign
15 of the park was made public even if well intended,
16 constituted a breach of trust with this community to
17 the thousands of residents and many organizations
18 that use this park. While we can understand that the
19 city's argument that the process of rebuilding the
20 park in its entirety will result in a space that's
21 more resilient in the long term, we feel that the
22 design consideration and issues the city seeks to
23 address could have been identified and made public
24 far earlier in the process. Additionally, community
25 stewards such as the Lower East Side Ecology Center

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who worked for years to incorporate resilient native plantings in the park, this forward-thinking work is now all going to be lost. New Yorkers for Parks is also concerned about the fairly recent investments made by this city to improve the park and would like to know where they are going in future projects, how they will be incorporated into the new design. While the city estimates the park could be rebuilt and open to the public in a three-year span of time, I think we all share the same concerns about the ability to deliver this project in that time frame. This is a community that's waited for years to have a reopened esplanade and has taken years to provide detailed input into this process and now they're being told they not only will not have access to their park they might have to go elsewhere for their services that its being rebuilt completely and potentially the plans that they helped create may not be realized. We believe this trust has been broken and the lack of clarity around the decision not to use the input is a severe problem. We want to ensure that there are meaningful alternatives in the interim for construction to help offset the community's temporary loss of parkland and we actually think that the city

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2 can make a good faith effort now to step up
3 maintenance and programming in East River Park before
4 construction begins. Lastly on the trees, we hope
5 that the city reconsiders it's plans that would
6 entail the wholesale loss of all canopy and plant
7 life and the preservation of many of the key
8 landmarks in the park that you've been... heard in
9 previous testimony. In sum, we feel this is a...
10 frankly a teachable moment for the city and teachable
11 in terms of community process and planning, I would
12 imagine with other sites going to be rebuilt as a
13 result of resiliency. We feel that these unforeseen
14 challenges are likely to happen in other parks, we
15 hope they don't, but the lesson learned here is
16 communication, communication and did we say
17 communication. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, thank
19 you.

20 KATE BOICOURT: Thank you to the
21 Chairman, Council Members. My name is Kate Boicourt,
22 I'm the Director of Resilience for the Waterfront
23 Alliance and I'm here on behalf of Roland Lewis our
24 President and CEO. Now I want to thank everybody on
25 this panel who... and those before us who've raised a

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lot of these good points. I think we're here today to not only specifically address the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and the precedence that it sets from a transparency concern with the public but also in thinking about a cautionary case study for how we proceed with these projects for the future. To that end our organization is going to be working over the next year and hope to work with many of you and those of you in this room on really identifying how we can have a better decision making process, there's some fracturing here that we're concerned about, how we can think about financing solutions so that we have more money to work with than a lot of the situation that we have right now and policies that can work on fast tracking and ensuring that we have equitable and accessible and resilient for years to come. So, I'll address three points of ours and then I will submit my longer testimony as I think a lot of these issues have been addressed but firstly I think we'd like to echo the lack of transparency concerns and also just we need a cost benefit analysis that's clear that we can take home, that we can read as community members and organizations working on this issue that really justifies that extra few hundred million that we're

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2 looking at. Secondly, you know what happened to
3 community led design. I think that we've, we've gone
4 through multiple iterations of design and we, we
5 really risk eroding the public trust and that's
6 something that we're really concerned about and again
7 concerned about from actually a speed perspective of
8 some of those issues that have been raised by the
9 Council Members previous. That gets us to our third
10 point which is use it or lose it. So, thinking about
11 how we're going to get to 2022 with all of the other
12 projects that we have citywide and that's a... that's a
13 situation that we recognize the city faces that, that
14 the state faces, that federal government faces and
15 that our, our friends and partners in New Jersey
16 face. So, again just to, to summarize the East Side
17 Coastal Resiliency is a big project but it won't be
18 the last and setting a solid precedence for
19 transparency and community involvement are key to
20 making these things work and not slowing things down
21 and making sure that there's an equitable and
22 inclusive process that we're not disempowering
23 people. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, I
25 really want to thank all of you for your testimony

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2 and activism and engagement, I do really appreciate
3 all of your time, thank you. The next panel Diana
4 Carulli, East River Park Coalition; Vaylateena Jones,
5 East... Lower East Side... I can't see that; Theodore
6 Pender, Friends of, of, of...

7 [off mic dialogue]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Daniel Gutman
9 from Storm Surge Working Group; Tommy Loeb; Olympia
10 Kazi. Daniel Gutman are you here? I'm going to have...

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, yeah...

12 [off mic dialogue]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Great. Alright,
14 great. I, I wanted to make sure I got the names right
15 as... with a name like Constantinides I want to make
16 sure I pronounce name... people's names correctly,
17 yeah. Thank you and if we can just moving forward if
18 everyone can please keep their testimony to the time
19 just because we have so many people who want to
20 testify and I want to make sure we get everyone's
21 information and make sure you submit your testimony
22 that we can read it in mass, make sure that we can
23 get it all in, thank you.

24 OLYMPIA KAZI: So, thank you Chair
25 Constantinides and thank you Carlina Rivera, thank

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you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Olympia Kazi but today I'm representing Community Board three. Community Board three has not yet had a position on the resiliency plan as we have not yet sufficient opportunity to understand and investigate all of the elements. We have serious concerns about the city administration's decision to change so drastically and with such short notice the ESCR project. When CB3 was first informed that the project was delayed we were told that there were technical difficulties, better, clear communication at that point may have prevented this process from being so difficult now. The new ESCR project its mission is basically raising the entire park eight to ten feet with a landfill, it basically creates a mega levee topped with a park next to the East River. Concerns were voiced by CB3 members regarding the increased project cost, 1.45 billion and the three-year completion timeline, questions were also asked about the landfill approach and the necessity to cover existing plantings. Other technical questions were on drainage, flood protection and storm water flood prevention and we need answers on all of these. Committing such a substantial amount of resources to

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a rushed engineering project for a park that provides 54 acres of much needed open public space for our community is not something that we take lightly. The park will be closed for at least three years and there are many potential problems that have not yet been investigated and answered. In conclusion I want to thank... we want to thank Council Member Rivera for her leadership in requesting this hearing and we firmly believe that we need to plan for resiliency, but we need to do it right. We hope in the future the city will communicate better and will be transparent. Thank you.

VAYLATEENA JONES: Hi, my name is

Vaylateena Jones, I've lived on the Lower East Side for more than 50 years and I'm a retired registered nurse, I'm the President of the Lower East Side Power Partnership. We have several concerns. One of them in terms of safety, is given that the city plans to close East River Park for several years and there will be increased use of Pier 42, there will be increased foot traffic to Montgomery Street. The Lower East Side Power Partnership advocates for better lighting on Montgomery Street under the FDR Drive. In terms of health, the Lower East Side Power

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Partnership advocates for low allergen and asthma friendly plants and trees throughout the East River Park. In terms of community outreach, we advocate that the city contacts the various youth leagues that use the fields, alternate sites should be identified, and the city should provide local residents assistance with access in the form of metro cards, shuttle bus, or other forms of transportation and financial support. In terms of community engagement, we believe that clear and empowering presentations are necessary. There have been presentations at various sites, we advocate that the presentations include but they haven't always, the goals in origin, what was heard from the community and how this input was and will be integrated into the design, comparison of previous and current plans at the various ones. One of the things I included was that one of the things that I think people do want to hear is about protection and how this plan works so one of the things would be to have the comparison when you go out to a community especially to a development that had flooding like this, you have people that are very concerned, will this plan protect me? Will I find myself experiencing this again? So, I think that

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one of the things is they need to be very clear about how this plan protects, how this plan protects the people over here. It seems very clear that it protects the park but I'm not sure... it... I think that that's one of the things they need to do is be very clear when they use this, and they should use this, and they haven't used it sometimes in CB3 exactly how this will protect people. I think people are very anxious that we're living like this and so I think that one of the things they need to stress is exactly how this will protect people and it needs to be done in clear and understandable language for the people that are most affected especially when you look at this, this is probably... could be Jacob Riis, Lillian Wald, Baruch Houses, etcetera. So, that's our major focus, I think we heard a variety of once again that people don't quite understand exactly how this will protect them and I think if you went through this you deserve an explanation, a clear, simple explanation of how this will protect them. So, I thank you all for having this hearing and that's it.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Perfect.

DIANA CARULLI: Good afternoon... is this on, hello?

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Hello.

3 DIANA CARULLI: Hello. Good afternoon

4 City Council members, Council Chairman Grodenchik...

5 [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Perfect... [cross-

7 talk]

8 DIANA CARULLI: ...and, and Constantinides

9 and a special thanks to Council Woman Carlina Rivera.

10 I am Diana Carulli and I speak for the East River

11 Park Coalition. We wish to address the responsibility

12 the city has to provide alternative spaces for

13 recreational activities during the reconstruction of

14 East River Park. It is also imperative that the new

15 plan for the park integrate artistic and cultural

16 features that have been assets of East River Park

17 since it's creation in 1939. One can be found in the

18 historic Dance Oval where in the years after World

19 War II people gathered to dance to live music, it

20 still functions as a recreational artistic and social

21 gathering place. The Dance Oval now has a colorful

22 labyrinth painted on the concrete ground in a circle

23 delineated by trees that survived Sandy. It has been

24 there since 2004 and has seen choreographers set

25 dances upon it as children continue to play around

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it. Artists are inspired by it as our soccer players

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who choose to practice their kicks upon it. Early

4

morning exercises are there, and visitors use it for

5

reasons that range from walking their dogs to tracing

6

its labyrinth themed paths known to help us focus. To

7

our point of providing necessary recreational space

8

during the resiliency construction, seriously

9

consider placing labyrinths in other parks as they

10

amplify the use of the areas they're set upon.

11

Tompkin Square Park has an excellent area for a

12

labyrinth, and I am available to create this and

13

other labyrinths with community participating, a

14

creative process that I urge you to support for the

15

benefit of all park users. Thank you for this

16

opportunity.

17

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

18

TED PENDER: Good afternoon, my name is

19

Ted Pender, I'm Vice President of Friends of Corlears

20

Hook Park located on Manhattan's Lower East Side

21

adjacent to East River Park. With help, I discovered

22

one of the design ideas by the architecture firm BIG

23

for East River Park. The city immediately rejected

24

this plan due to cost. I'd like us to revisit,

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actually I demand that we revisit this idea now that

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we have a budget of 1.45 billion. This plan erects a green roof over the FDR with walled sides from the pinch point at Con Ed down to Montgomery Street, ending when the FDR becomes elevated. This plan would not only serve as flood protection but would also protect us from the site, sounds and the carbon pollution produced by vehicles on the FDR. In addition, it would expand our park space giving us acres of new land for public use, something desperately needed for the densely populated East Village and the Lower East Side neighborhoods. This same idea was accomplished in Boston's Big Dig. What it produced was a remarkable new park surrounding parts of the city. That park is now enjoyed by thousands of Bostonians daily while eliminating the views, sounds and obstruction of a major highway that formally divided the city from the water front. Many major cities around the globe are coming up with the same idea of eliminating or decking over their intercity highways to reclaim those wastelands for public use. I'd like to demand that a comparative cost study be accomplished and one second... I'm sorry. This is a radically.. this radically alternative plan...

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2 alternate plan is the answer for the 21st century and
3 beyond. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Mr.
5 Pender.

6 TOMMY LOEB: Thank you, my name is Tommy
7 Loeb, I'm a 45-year resident of East River Houses
8 which sits right on the corner, I live right on the
9 corner of Grant Street and the FDR Drive literally on
10 the FDR Drive. I want to thank the Council people and
11 particularly Council Woman Rivera. We're very
12 fortunate to have a Council Woman who has taken this
13 as her interest but also grew up and lives on the...
14 lived on the Lower East Side and lives on the Lower
15 East Side and knows how important the park is. Over
16 the last year I've actually been working on something
17 that is a perfect analogy. We on the Manhattan side
18 we're going to be enormously impacted by the L train
19 shutdown. There was no environmental impact statement
20 done and we have been... we worked very hard to make
21 sure that the 160 diesel buses an hour that were
22 going to come over the Williamsburg Bridge and the
23 other mitigation project parts of the L train plan
24 were not going to be adversely impacting the
25 community and we were successful but the L train is,

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is a perfect example, we had experts design, design a plan then we had new experts come in and design a new plan because they said the old plan was no good and now the old experts agree with the new experts that the new plan is better than the old plan and that's a... to me just points out that the planning process is enormously faulty. We expect no less of an expert review of the current plan. If the city is going to spend 1.4 billion dollars of our money without reviewing and taking the word now of people who did the first plan who now say the second plan is better, but they haven't really told us why the first plan isn't good and we're supposed to accept that, its unacceptable. The other part is the staged construction, if anybody who is sitting here today and told anybody that they were going to put a fence around Central Park and close it for four years and not provide an alternative we know what would happen. The MTA and DOT took three years to provide an alternative service plan for the thousands of riders on the L train, we have seen zero alternative plan for our recreation during this construction and I'm here to say... I'm going to demand that we get ferry service to Governor's Island, we deserve it and it's

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the only open large space that's available to our community and it should be free and it should be all year round and available and we need a new ferry stop in fact at Houston Street because the current stops at Corlears and at 20th Street are not convenient to the NYCHA residents and we are committed to making sure that everybody gets their recreational needs... service during this construction. My last point is one that I'm really concerned about which I heard here for the last... for the first time. We only have half of this project funded, there's no commitment for the rest of the funds. How can we go forward with a project in which we only have half the funding, what are we going to have, half a park? I don't think anything should happen until the city has committed its full 1.4 billion dollars to this plan and we know it's going to go forward as said so that we don't come a year from now and be saying oh, this can't happen or this bridge can't happen or that can't happen because we don't have the money. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very

much, I think your idea and several other people have spoken about it for a ferry to Governors Island is an excellent one considering the proximity to the

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2 island, it's not open all year round, the ferry
3 service doesn't run year round but the time that it
4 is open I think would be a great amenity for the
5 people who will not have this park. We... I'm hopeful
6 having heard from Commissioner Grillo today that they
7 are looking at keeping parts of the park open, so I
8 think they've heard us on that, but we'll continue to
9 press them.

10 TOMMY LOEB: I just want to.. one more
11 point because it, it was.. there was some information
12 here that was raised which I think needs to be
13 corrected. They talked about closing down the FDR
14 Drive well the northbound FDR Drive actually comes
15 down to two lanes.. [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Right.. [cross-
17 talk]

18 TOMMY LOEB: ...starting north of
19 Montgomery Street and one lane its only used to exit
20 for Houston... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Houston Street..
22 [cross-talk]

23 TOMMY LOEB: ...Street.. [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yep.. [cross-
25 talk]

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TOMMY LOEB: ...so you could in fact close

3

that lane and have an exit to Houston Street and

4

north of that in fact you only have the entrance from

5

Houston Street to the FDR Drive that could also be

6

changed and modified so that we could close the most

7

eastern lane of the FDR Drive for construction and I

8

overlooked that spot. Every day at rush hour right

9

now traffic backs up northbound all the way to the

10

Brooklyn Bridge so if it... so if it backs up a little

11

further what's the difference, if we can close that

12

lane and have a better project.

13

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for

14

your thoughts... [cross-talk]

15

TOMMY LOEB: Thank you.

16

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Sorry, sorry

17

Barry we just have a Catherine McVay Hughes...

18

CATHERINE MCVAY HUGHES: Great... [cross-

19

talk]

20

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Oh, I'm sorry.

21

CATHERINE MCVAY HUGHES: Hi... [cross-talk]

22

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, I'm sorry...

23

[cross-talk]

24

CATHERINE MCVAY HUGHES: Hi, good

25

afternoon Chair Constantinides and Chair Grodenchik,

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1
2 thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I
3 served 20 years on Manhattan Community Board One,
4 half of that time as Chair and Vice Chair. After
5 superstorm Sandy, I was appointed Co-Chair of New
6 York Rising Community Reconstruction Program for
7 Southern Manhattan. Not to repeat other wonderful
8 comments from so many smart people, I'm just going to
9 try to highlight some other areas. First of all I see
10 no resiliency in the face of sea level rise and
11 global climate change can be achieved by multilayered
12 strategy which includes reducing sources of
13 greenhouse gas emissions, by increasing energy
14 efficiency and transitioning to renewable fuels from
15 fossil fuels and adapting to changing conditions at
16 our waterfront edges in combination with a regional
17 storm surge gate. Following up on my testimony from
18 two years ago on the East Side Coastal Resiliency
19 project substantial action plan and then in public
20 hearing CDBG-DR action plan amendment 13, attached,
21 several issues still need to be addressed to make
22 sure that a comprehensive resiliency plan is in place
23 for all New Yorkers including; a coordinated project
24 timeline, what will be the impact of constructing the
25 ESCR and two bridge segments up and down river such

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as on the FiDi neighborhood and in the historic South Street Seaport? This segmentation of the Big U could create a risk, should a serious storm strike New York while one segment is completed and one isn't, the completed section could divert water and amplify damage to the neighborhoods where there's no protection or protection is under construction. Two, construct a layered defense of local sea walls and a regional New York Harbor storm gate system as you heard Council Member Chin talk about earlier, to address future sea level rise and storm surges, a local perimeter of land based sea walls will be necessary to provide protection from rising sea levels, however, huge storm surges are best addressed by a layered defense system built around a regional storm surge sea gate system that vastly shortens the coastline. New York City has roughly... over 500 miles and you combine it with New Jersey a 1,000, you know miles down to less than ten miles. Just so you know in the city's report on how they monitor... they monitor hardening of waterfront in feet, not miles, feet just so you know and they're one NYC key points and provides comprehensive protection against the devastation caused by occasional hard to predict

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massive storm surges, see attached schematic, that's
the chart on the bottom. Three, there's a funding
shortfall for Manhattan Tip, I know a lot of you live
in this catchment area, but you know just to remind
people HUD put in 335 million, the city put in
170,252,693 million for a total of 1.15 billion
dollars for a total project for the ESCR project of
2.4 miles for 1.4 billion dollars. Two bridges is at
203 million dollars a combination of federal and city
funding. FiDi, the fourth largest business district
in the country is... only has 108 million dollars
allocated from the city and the plan we haven't had a
plan updated in a very long time. Battery Park City
they're working on theirs and Tribeca, our friends in
Tribeca up in... north of that ten mile continues U, no
plan, no funding. So, there are lots of issues here
including the design flood elevation, the sea wall
assumption and for friends who are going to be living
in this impact zone I suggest that they follow the
Lower Manhattan construction command center model
during the construction project during the last 17
years of super... of rebuilding after 9/11 to try to
minimize both air and water pollution at the same
time and that the whole purpose of this ESCR project

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is to respond to climate change and sea level rise therefore it is important to minimize its greenhouse gas footprint during construction by using clean barges and vehicles. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you all

for your testimony today. The next panel is Soretta Rodack; I think it's Carolyn Ratcliffe, I was going to say that; Rob Hollander; Felicia Young; Tony Rivera from the Little League and Kim Sillen. Go ahead.

CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: Alright, thank you

very much for having us here today as representatives of people who live in the Lower East Side and care very much about their neighborhood. My name is Carolyn Ratcliffe, I live on East 9th Street, I've been there since 1989, I lived through Sandy with the rest of my neighbors where we had no electricity, there was four feet of water in all of our basements from the street. I've been concerned about the topography of my neighborhood since I became involved with... in 19... what... 1989 and then I realized through maps that I saw in the Sandberg map that there is a huge steam that runs down the middle of our block between 8th and 9th Street and with the proposed

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construction that was going on. I brought with me to turn in a copy of the Viele map in case you're not familiar with it that shows the underground streams that cut through our neighborhood. I am extremely concerned about the current proposal and the safety risks that it represents to my neighborhood, the reason why is that when Sandy hit, okay, the bulk of the water came across 14th Street and Avenue C from 25th Street, that's what we look like, okay, we had between four to eight feet of water that literally just came from like Stuyvesant Cove all the way through the basements of Peter Cooper, Stuy Town, Campos Plaza. The beds in our gardens were raised two and a half feet out and just pushed up against the wall from the force of that surge. That was not even counting what happened to the people along the other blocks; 11th Street, 8th Street who lived in ground floor basement apartments, their apartments were flooded. One guy got out with his laptop in his undershorts because people said you got to get out of there, he had eight feet of water. The businesses in our neighborhood were not served well with FEMA, most of them lost hundreds of thousands of dollars, went into debt, there was not money available, they were

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told to go get a small business loan to recuperate.

3

So, when the proposal was put forward about the, the

4

current proposal they're proposing that there is this

5

underground drainage system that involves large

6

reservoirs that are going to be underneath the

7

streets, okay. I'm assuming that it would be like

8

coming from... the one that they showed in their model

9

was under the Williamsburg Bridge or in that

10

vicinity, they said there would be several others

11

which looks like they would be coming up Avenue D

12

approximately. Okay, the soil in our neighborhood

13

there is no bedrock until you get to 150 to 170 feet,

14

the bulk of our neighborhood sits on sludge, peat and

15

there's a thin shale layer at 40 feet. So, they're

16

telling me they're going to drill pilings to the

17

bedrock in the East River, yeah, I didn't know the

18

piling could go 150 to 170 feet deep, that's news to

19

me... [cross-talk]

20

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: They can go very

21

deep I do know that.

22

CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: Right, yeah. Well the

23

other thing that's really interesting if you look at

24

the Viele map there's a legend on it that shows where

25

glaciers gouged out and how deep the bedrock is that

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flows through our neighborhood and that's... we also...
our neighborhood acts as a drainage base and there's
water that comes from Madison Square Park that comes
down into our neighborhood, it's undercut by many
streams. We constantly have sidewalks and streets
where large sinkholes appear, okay. So, they're
talking about installing this pumping system that
involves placing large steel reservoirs underneath
the street and we have a lot of truck traffic that
comes through, okay and then you're imagining this is
sitting sort of like in this murk, how long do you
think that's going to hold up and then we're told
that ConEd is going to pump all this water out and
send it to Newtown Creek and the sewage treatment
plant and... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well I don't...

[cross-talk]

CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: ...that we're supposed
to feel... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I don't think
that will take... [cross-talk]

CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: ...very secure... [cross-
talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...place during,
3 you know a Sandy type storm but, you know we're here
4 today... really here about the park, I understand there
5 are other concerns that... [cross-talk]

6 CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: No, but these
7 concerns are tied to the park because that's how
8 they're telling us that they're going to deal with
9 the residue of the water because if they put a wall
10 in the East River the streams and the sewer are... that
11 normally flow into the river are going to bounce off
12 that wall and back up, what I'm concerned about is
13 having my neighborhood turned into a soup bowl.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I, I
15 appreciate that, I got to ask you to wrap up because...
16 [cross-talk]

17 CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: That's it... [cross-
18 talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...there are other
20 people that have been waiting, thank you very much...
21 [cross-talk]

22 CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: Those were my
23 concerns.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
25 much... [cross-talk]

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CAROLYN RATCLIFFE: And I will leave these with you.

ROB HOLLANDER: Good evening Council Members...

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good evening.

ROB HOLLANDER: It's been a long evening, it's almost evening isn't it?

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, it's getting there. We'll be serving dinner at six but go ahead...

ROB HOLLANDER: I'll try to get you there. My name is Rob Hollander, I thank you for being here. This is a big project, it's an important project... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Very big.

ROB HOLLANDER: And it should be done properly and there's some evidence, actually there's clear evidence that it's hasty and there are some errors in it, and I want to point out three of them. One of them is the loss of a number of ball parks. Other people have mentioned this already and others will probably soon, so I won't talk about that. I want to address two items. One is the walkway itself, the current park has a wide walkway next to the river

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and it is a wide and flat space so this is a very efficient means of a walkway because it... you can see it... that it allows bicyclists, runners and pedestrians all to maneuver through this flat space. The current proposal adds a step up, that is to say it has two different levels like a sidewalk on a street. This is not only an inefficient use of space for a walkway but it's also very dangerous if you have a bicyclist. The bicyclists, even if you have a dedicated lane, the bicycle will avoid the curb because it's dangerous to fall off the curb. Even pedestrians do not walk at the edge of a curb, alright so its an inefficient use of space and it's also a dangerous use of space. So, this is evidence that this has not been thought through well enough, it's just hasty design, it looks nice, it may be original and different, but it is not useful, efficient and not safe. The other item I want to address is the elimination of the workout space, the outdoor fitness equipment. This has been eliminated in it, it's not in the renderings, this is I think very short sighted. The... this is not the old body builder type exercise, it's this new movement of movement; street calisthenics, parkour, this is a

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2 burgeoning community, it's a very social community,
3 its very welcoming to young and old. If you go to
4 Tompkin Square Park which is one of the best examples
5 of this, actually world renowned, this is how it
6 should be done. You will see that there are for
7 example, little girls love this place, it's... they
8 love monkey bars, you can actually see their parents
9 pulling their kids off the bars to come home. Old
10 people like me also use it, the city... even if it
11 replaces this the city has a... an abysmal record of
12 buying equipment, outdoor equipment. The principles
13 are actually well known, they're actually quite
14 simple but the way to find out what those principles
15 of what, what good equipment are you have to go to
16 the people in that community who use it, they know
17 what is... what is actually good equipment and what's
18 useless equipment. I could talk for hours about
19 exactly that... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, so could I
21 but... [cross-talk]

22 ROB HOLLANDER: ...but I don't have any
23 more time, thanks.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
25 much for your testimony sir.

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2 FELICIA YOUNG: Hi, thank you. As the..
3 I'm Felicia Young, I am the Founder and Executive
4 Director of Earth Celebrations, a nonprofit
5 environmental and arts organization on the Lower East
6 Side since 1991 engaged with both community garden
7 preservation, river remediation and waterfront
8 restoration efforts for the past 30 years including
9 the ecological city procession for climate solutions
10 which takes place in the East River Park both last
11 spring 2018 and upcoming this spring 2019. I am
12 concerned about the abrupt changes on the East Side
13 Coastal Resiliency waterfront redevelopment plan and
14 the dismissal of a four-year community engaged design
15 process. As community stakeholders worked
16 collaboratively and engaged in the development of a
17 design plan, why would the city suddenly dismiss the
18 plan that was generated? If there were engineering
19 parameters, then they should have been included
20 within the guidelines of the community engaged work.
21 The plan stakeholders generated did not put forth the
22 raising of the entire park with trees, plantings and
23 all current architectural features in ball fields.
24 The plan stakeholders generated did not present
25 raising the entire park eight to ten feet with

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landfill and a hard-edged sea wall. The plan stakeholders generated was forward thinking, climate resiliency design incorporating a soft edged rolling hillside sea wall berm and design elements to integrate flooding as is being used in waterfront park models from Holland to Boston. The hard-edged sea wall seems to be an entirely different approach. The announcement of the closing of the entire East River Park for three and a half years is unacceptable and would deprive an entire generation of children the essential access to the park, waterfront and ball fields. Washington Square Park renovation was eventually done in section phases over similar concerns. We're asking for a pause to address the community's concerns and essential input on the East Side Coastal Resiliency waterfront redevelopment plan. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

TONY RIVERA: Thank you everyone, my name is Tony Rivera, I'm the President of OLS Little League which is the largest little league program in the Lower East Side. We have over 300 participants and families that we service every single year. We've been in existence for 60 years. If you do the math

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that means we probably touch over 10,000 lives in the course of our organization's life span. We are a major stakeholder of the East River Park in particular, all of our games are, are, are housed and played there. We are a major permit holder. Our concerns are multiple. We've heard a lot at these hearings, at the community board meetings, at the info sessions, I've been to all of them and I've heard encouraging words about... today we heard that we're making sure that we're putting everything back where it was, that's encouraging but I know that field eight which I have... our organization utilizes is being eliminated in this plan. We've also heard that there's a lot of community engagement, true but today I learned that there was a DDC meeting held for youth sports programs and what... you know was I invited, well as the president of one of the largest youth sports programs, active user of this park we were not invited. So, we're getting mixed messages about just want community engagement is here and I want to make sure that this is not just the process of checking the box but rather we're being heard, our feedback is being taken and, and considered. We, we also support the idea of phasing the project over

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2 many years, not closing it entirely but rather
3 keeping our programs alive during this three and a
4 half to ten year program and, and lastly we think we
5 should... we should have a real discussion on why it is
6 that we need to eliminate one of the eight ball
7 fields that currently resides in the park when the
8 communication and feedback has always been there
9 isn't enough space for all of the programs all... that,
10 that take place there, they're only making it more
11 complicated. We have direct access to the Parks
12 Department, the Commissioner, they've talked to us
13 but we're not getting the answers and we don't... we...
14 and, and despite having that access we don't feel
15 like we're being heard so we want community
16 engagement to be the number one thing that comes out
17 of this process and thank you Carlina Rivera and the
18 Council folks for organizing this.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you all
20 very much, thank you for your testimony. Kim Sillen;
21 Soretta Rodack are you here? Okay. The next panel
22 Charles Krezell, I hope I got that right; Daisy Paez;
23 Wendy Brawer, Brawer, I'm sorry, it's getting late,
24 I'm getting a little punchy here; Jennifer Grange;
25 DeReese Huff and Joan, Joan Rinehart I think, V E T.

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2 [off mic dialogue]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Your Council
4 Woman knows you well.

5 [off mic dialogue]

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's mine,
7 only kidding. Daniel Myers is not here; Diego Gerera.

8 [off mic dialogue]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Come on up.

10 [off mic dialogue]

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, we got
12 four... we got four up there, okay. Charles if you'd
13 like to begin?

14 CHARLES KREZELL: Thank you. My name is
15 Charles Krezell, I'm President of Loisaída United
16 Neighborhood Gardens which is LUNGS. LUNGS is a
17 network of 53 community gardens on the Lower East
18 Side founded in September of 2011. The Lower East
19 Side has always been the home of the immigrant. We
20 still welcome the stranger, the marginalized and are
21 proud of our history, our diversity and our culture.
22 It has always been a poor neighborhood, neglected by
23 the city. Tenement buildings were allowed to burn
24 down in the 60s and 70s. That was City Planning back
25 then. But the demolished buildings became vacant lots

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that were converted into gardens by people who remained. La Plaza Cultural, El Jardin del Paraiso, Parque de Tranquilidad, Los Amigos, these gardens are testaments to our community's spirit and resourcefulness and resilience. Because the urban blight and abandonment, the Lower East Side has the greatest density of community gardens in New York City. LUNGS would like to register our opposition to the newly proposed plan for the East Coast Resiliency Project for the East River Park. Specifically, we question the procedure by which this plan was adopted and the lack of community involvement in this development. This would be a great engineering plan, pure engineering, expedient, efficient. Kill the park to save it. It's a great plan if you don't live here. This is not good public policy. The East River Park is a pure city park really well used and well loved. Open space, green space is essential for the health and wellbeing of our neighborhood, any disruption must be justified. We know the oceans are rising, we are well away... aware of global warming. We lived through superstorm Sandy and are still suffering the consequences. We have suffered the FEMA nonsense and insurance games. But if the L train's stupidity has

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shown one thing, it's that there are more ways to
core an apple than just one. We might as... we might
need to find the right engineers who can devise a
plan that doesn't completely disrupt the lives of
many thousands of people for many years. The city has
had six years to come up with a, a plan. Six years to
develop a meaningful, inclusive solution to make use
of the 400 million dollars from HUD. Now the time is
spent... now the time to spend the money is running out
and the city is in a panic. Why has the city been so
derelict? We are being steamrolled by a new plan in
less than... that was developed in less than 30... 60
days and it's being fast tracked. The public process
was a joke. Public press... public meetings to present
this complicated plan were cursory affairs in which
the community was given 20 minutes to ask city
officials questions. Now respect. It was a great plan
if you don't live here. We will bury your park. We
will kill your trees. We will harm your wildlife. We
do not accept a plan that harms us deeply. Is it the
goal of this plan to save property? To save ConEd? To
save the FDR? What is the real goal? This makes us
feel vulnerable, not valued, threatened. We fight
unscrupulous landlords ever day. We get paranoid when

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2 the city drops new policies on us. Who has our back?
3 We are relying on our elected officials to help us,
4 to protect us. That is why we are here to ask for
5 your help. We request that the city council look at
6 this plan and get answers to our concerns, we need
7 solutions to climate change not engineered troubles.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

10 WENDY BRAWER: Hi, I'm Wendy Brawer, I'm
11 a 30-year resident and Director of Green Map System.
12 I've been working in sustainability and climate
13 change since 1989. I gave you a little map so you can
14 see the outline of where Sandy impacted our community
15 that day and of course the impacts have gone on. I'm
16 really concerned that the plan as we see it seems to
17 prioritize the FDR over the community and I second
18 Theodore Pender's request for a detailed
19 consideration of berming over the FDR and I'd like to
20 add that why don't we toll those drivers to pay for
21 some of the shortfall in the SC... ESCR budget after
22 all private cars are 16 percent of New York City's
23 greenhouse gas. So, why not make the cars help pay
24 for this solution whatever that may be. So, I'll
25 leave it at that because there's plenty more people

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2 here, but I also want to say I'm very much in favor
3 of more trees in the community and a community canopy
4 will do so much to help us move forward as a socially
5 resilient neighborhood, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
7 the map, I like maps.

8 DAISY PAEZ: Hi, first thank you for this
9 opportunity to testify here today. Hello, my name is
10 Daisy Paez, I am a District Leader on the Lower East
11 Side. I was born and raised in the Lower East Side in
12 NYCHA's Baruch Houses. Baruch Houses is a short walk
13 away from the park off the FDR Drive. As a youth I
14 considered this park a Disney World, as my parents,
15 eight siblings and I could not afford a vacation.
16 Growing up in these common circumstances, I was not
17 alone in regarding the FDR Drive Park a vacation from
18 poverty. To this day there continues to be a
19 significant amount of people from Baruch Houses still
20 in poverty that consider this park a vacation
21 paradise as I once did. Here is my issue; to shut
22 down the park with absolutely no alternative where
23 the good people of the surrounding NYCHA houses can
24 enjoy activities such as birthday parties, barbeques,
25 reunions and many other activities native to our

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people is a complete disregard for the low-income families that utilize the park. This is 100 percent unacceptable. I strongly urged the Parks Department to consider a free alternative, key word here is free.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: My favorite number.

DAISY PAEZ: Huh?

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's my favorite number.

DAISY PAEZ: I have previously suggested free ferry transportation to Governors Island. I think this would be a fair temporary remedy. Residents of these houses are already asked to cope with the influx of newer, wealthier people taking over the neighborhoods, NYCHA housing repairs and the everyday worries of their living in poor conditions. It is only right that you offer some sort of comfort to them. Let's not take away these children's only Disney World. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Miss Paez.

AMY BERKOV: Thank you Council Member...

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2 WENDY BRAWER: Push the button so it's
3 red.

4 AMY BERKOV: Thank you. Thank you,
5 Council Members, for your patience. I'm Amy Berkov
6 from the City College of New York Department of
7 Biology and today I'm speaking for the other species
8 that are in the East River park. The new fast-tracked
9 plan will separate by my count almost 300,000 New
10 York City residents from their waterfront parks, it
11 will also destroy every single living thing that
12 makes a home there, that's over 350 species counted
13 thus far from spring wildflowers to shrubs and trees,
14 bees and butterflies, birds and a turtle. Urban parks
15 and gardens provide important ecosystem services and
16 play critical roles in sustaining global
17 biodiversity. The ecosystem services to humans are
18 widely acknowledged, the role of urban parks and
19 enhancing biodiversity receives less attention but
20 it's no less important. New York City open spaces are
21 teeming with life. A survey of 19 community gardens
22 documented 54 bee species. Due to population decline
23 to the golden northern bumblebee is classified
24 vulnerable on the IUCN red list and in New York State
25 its considered a high priority species of greatest

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conservation need. It has along with Coopers Hawk and Eastern Box Turtle, New York State species of special concern found a refuge in the East River Park. In our urban parks we have a chance to help other species have a chance. As an educator, ecologist and 39-year resident of the East Village who vividly remembers Sandy and its aftermath I believe that the cost associated with the fast track plan are unacceptably high. In this time of rapid environmental change why can't we have a park? I'm not convinced that we can't have a park that includes both athletic fields and harbors biodiversity that is designed to absorb and protect us from occasional floods. Floods with the help of some talented park personnel will select for resilient species and we should plan for incremental change. If the city was talking about burying River Side Park under eight feet of fill this plan would sink like a lead balloon. I love the idea that was brought up earlier of berming over the, the FDR, put your athletic fields out of harms way up on top, let the flood plain be a flood plain do its job, it's time to go back to the drawing board. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for your testimony from this panel.

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COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Can I just ask

3

really quickly, sorry Charles, how could some of your

4

concerns about increased traffic in the gardens be

5

addressed because I, I mean I know that... I'm going to

6

make sure that LUNGS have a seat at the table?

7

CHARLES KREZELL: Well we... I mean we're

8

talking about what we're going to do if the park is

9

closed, how we're going to open up the gates to more

10

people and have, have the gardens open more but it's

11

going to take a lot more time and a lot more

12

maintenance and a lot more money really.

13

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Do you know what

14

I, I will have a conversation with you all and the

15

Parks Department about, about rerouting some of the

16

park staff that would otherwise be assigned to the

17

East River Park to potentially help you if you find

18

that appropriate, but we'll talk about it.

19

CHARLES KREZELL: That's, that's a

20

question the community gardeners are going to have

21

to... [cross-talk]

22

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: That's what I...

23

[cross-talk]

24

CHARLES KREZELL: ...deal with, I mean

25

we're talking... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I, I pitch it to
3 you, I just... [cross-talk]

4 CHARLES KREZELL: Yeah, yeah, I mean
5 we're thinking about green streets if we could close
6 some of the streets off and make them into green
7 parks for the time being, you know dead end streets.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah but you...
9 when we have a rally for more money for parks you're
10 going to be there, right, all of you are going to be
11 there?

12 CHARLES KREZELL: Oh, yeah, I'll be
13 there... [cross-talk]

14 WENDY BRAWER: Yep, yeah... [cross-talk]

15 DAISY PAEZ: We're all going to be there.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank you,
17 I'm going to hold you to that.

18 CHARLES KREZELL: Thank you.

19 WENDY BRAWER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you...

21 [cross-talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Alexis I know you
23 were coming up, right, Miss Adler?

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alexis Adler;
25 Jennifer Grange, nope; DeReese, nope; Joan Rinehart,

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Joan is gone, okay. We're going to keep reading some names. Elisabeth Dyssegaard, okay; Nancy Brause [phonetic]; Sarah Blas, is she here? Tamara Jacobs; Kay Webster, been tweeting all day but I don't see the... you know okay. Peter Feld; Wendy Chapin Chapman, she's here; Edwin Rios; Ken Bravo, alright Mr. Bravo, is there anybody's name that I haven't called that wanted to testify? I'm going to be like... I'm going to be like the minister, speak now or forever hold your peace at least till the next meeting anyway. Alright, so we have these three people here.

ALEXIS ADLER: Hi, thank you for having

us here and I'm a 40-year resident of the Lower East Side and I've attended many of these meetings and I just worry that the city has... I mean the... here... we're, we're sitting under a statement, a government of the people, by the people, for the people, I don't know that those parks people who left after they spoke are working for us and I really am concerned that they've... that after years... the three or four years of meetings and the resiliency project design came forward from the community with the... with the help of the city and now we're with this new plan and I feel like they've just decided and we're just

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meeting for naught and I just... you know I, I know that there's money involved and I wonder that if this money is what's driving the, you know decisions here and I'm really concerned about that as a... as a citizen that, that our, our ideas are just thrown under the bus and these people with their money and their... have decide... made a decision about a new project not based on the community and their desires and I just am concerned... I mean I'm glad that we're having this forum but I just... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Before we get...

[cross-talk]

ALEXIS ADLER: ...wonder what, what will

come of this, I mean the, the Parks Committee people didn't want to hear us, did they?

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think they did

and there's still here... [cross-talk]

ALEXIS ADLER: Okay... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and the thing

is this has to undergo ULURP process and your Council Woman will have a critical role in that process and so I don't want you to think that your thoughts and ideas are not going on her and this... [cross-talk]

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2 ALEXIS ADLER: Okay, thank you... [cross-
3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...process is
5 ongoing, we haven't really kicked off the ULUFP
6 process. The goal of today's hearing was to hear
7 about the plan and you can access that plan online
8 but also to hear from the community because the
9 community has obviously invested an incredible amount
10 of time, we had hundreds of people here today in the
11 middle of the day, they... so many people here they
12 switched us to the main room, we weren't supposed to
13 be in the main room but you taught them otherwise so,
14 so you're here.

15 ALEXIS ADLER: Okay and thank you because
16 the community and the community gardens were very
17 much in, invested in, in this park and what it means
18 to us and we... you know we felt that this ecological
19 berm plan addressed the concerns of the... of the
20 rising waters and now this wall may or may not with
21 this... these two barriers that will magically come up
22 when the water is risen that that... you know will
23 somehow protect us. It, it doesn't feel that really
24 addresses the issues that we have, the low-lying
25 water, the rain runoff, I don't believe that that

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2 wall... I mean in Houston they have 50 inches of rain
3 in two days and they... you know that wall wouldn't
4 have protected us if that occurred whereas the berm
5 would absorb it and that's, you know something that
6 we haven't really discussed, have we?

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We'll get there.

8 ALEXIS ADLER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
10 much.

11 WENDY CHAPMAN: Hi, my name is Wendy
12 Chapman, I'm actually from Community Board One, I'm
13 here as an individual not representing Community
14 Board One. I live in Tribeca, I live just a couple
15 blocks from the World Trade, Trade Center site, I'm
16 also on the Board of Manhattan Youth which flooded
17 during hurricane Sandy. My testimony today is
18 actually to say that I've gone to a tremendous amount
19 of meetings listening to what can be done because I'm
20 in favor the Big U and what other form it comes in.
21 My feeling is it's very frustrating that it's
22 actually nowhere right now because we need it
23 yesterday because it's not a matter of if there's
24 going to be another hurricane Sandy it's just when.
25 One of the things that I want to emphasize to

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2 everyone that's here is that we are learning from
3 some of these meetings that... for example, in our
4 neighborhood the South Street Seaport Museum told
5 testimony that they heard the water coming in from
6 underground, it flooded their basement before they
7 saw it coming running down the street and as we know
8 the South Street Seaport area was completely
9 destroyed like FiDi and, and Tribeca where I am. So,
10 I think one of the things that I heard in this new
11 redesign was the acknowledgement and it probably took
12 them a couple of years because I know those tests
13 only happened a couple years ago, to figure out how
14 to build what they're calling now... I called it a, a
15 slurry wall which is, the slurry wall is what
16 protects the world trade center site because as we
17 know that site actually has river water that would
18 have come... that comes in if it weren't for the slurry
19 wall, now they're calling it the seepage barrier so I
20 want to have the Parks Department or, you know
21 whatever design or engineering I want them to explain
22 to the public because I've gone to a few meetings and
23 they always hide that fact, that is the biggest
24 reason why I think they redesigned this whole thing.
25 Now I'm not saying their plan is the right plan but I

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2 would also say that the idea that there needs to be a
3 seepage barrier down to the bedrock that is the thing
4 that we all need to listen to the engineers because
5 I'm with you, I'm a big gardener, I don't want any of
6 this stuff but at the same time if we build something
7 on the edge but the water comes in from underneath it
8 doesn't matter, you know we've got... ground water is
9 one of the big things, rain water is a separate
10 thing, I don't know how to solve that problem. The
11 other thing that I want and encourage people to do is
12 and I hope everyone does is that Holland is, is, is
13 to me and I know there is some consultation with
14 people that are, you know asking Holland engineering
15 firms to come here but they live in a... you know in an
16 environment where they have adjusted their way of
17 life and I think we need to open our minds to what
18 would the Dutch do and the other thing that I would
19 say is there's a Ted Talk that actually is on the
20 front page of the Ted Talk pages right now, it's
21 called how to transform, transform sinking cities
22 into landscapes that fight floods and I would just
23 encourage everyone to watch that Ted Talk. So, thank
24 you very much and good luck, this is not an easy
25 problem to solve.

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CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you Miss

3

Chapman. Mr. Bravo.

4

KEN BRAVO: I am going to utilize every

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minute, every second of the three minutes that I

6

have.

7

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Go ahead.

8

KEN BRAVO: Okay, my name is Ken Bravo

9

and my title is President of the Parent Teacher

10

Association of the Lower, Lower Manhattan Arts

11

Academy which is now at the Seward Park Campus which

12

used to be the Ludlow Street Jail where Boss Tweed

13

was caught. The reason I say that is because I, I am

14

a Lower East Side historian, I know a lot about the

15

Lower East Side, I was literally born in 42 Rivington

16

Street in the tenement building on Rivington. I'm

17

here to tell you that I'm not here for myself, I'm

18

not here for anybody older than me, I'm here for my

19

grandchildren who are going to deal with this after

20

we're done. So, like Miss Rivera said she's going to

21

be there at 70 years old finally the trees are here

22

and everything else for that matter. When the

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esplanade, the East River project was done it took

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ten years but they still didn't close the whole park

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down, they closed half the park that means the, the

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western side of the park was open to the public and nothing was... nothing was blocked or anything else for that matter, you couldn't go to the river but you can use every section of the park. My question is then why can't you just separate into quarters, into fifths each section of the park and have them work at... that at a time keeping the other parts open and then separate them and separate them and separate them. For instance, from Montgomery to Jackson, from Jackson to Delancey, Delancey to Houston, Houston to 6th Street, 6th Street to, to 14th Street and then the rest of way up north, it's the very simple project to do, do it one section at a time and then if you run out of money you've already done whatever you can at that point. That's all I'm saying... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I think... I

think we heard from Miss Grillo today she's Chair of the... Head of the School Construction Authority but now also Commissioner of the Department of Design and Construction and she indicated to us I think very strongly that they're looking to phase the project and I guess we'll have to wait to hear what they have to say about that. It's obvious that this community

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2 is very prepared and there is a ULURP process ahead
3 of us... [cross-talk]

4 KEN BRAVO: Yes, I've heard of... I've
5 heard of the whole thing, we went through all of that
6 with them. My question is this, I literally live on
7 8th Street and the FDR Drive, I can understand and
8 appreciate what some of the people here are saying
9 regarding the overpass of the FDR Drive but that
10 would totally kill me because I live on the first
11 floor and it would block the service road and
12 everything, there would be nothing for me. So, having
13 said that when Sandy came my whole lobby was under
14 water, I can go out my window and touch the water out
15 of my window that's how close I am to this project. I
16 want this to happen and if everything that everybody
17 wants to happen happens once it's never going to
18 happen because we have the money now and we need to
19 get started right away. If we continue saying this,
20 this and that we're going to delay everything else
21 and by 2020 there's not going to be no money.
22 Somebody said it before either use it or lose it and
23 at that point what happens then?

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well we're,
25 we're... we got a ways to go... [cross-talk]

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KEN BRAVO: Yep, I'm good.. [cross-talk]

3

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and I certainly

4

appreciate your point of view as I have all of the

5

people here today, this is certainly a very, very

6

large public works project that has.. [cross-talk]

7

KEN BRAVO: Thank you for having me..

8

[cross-talk]

9

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...to take place

10

in the New York City park. Well we started at... four

11

hours, it's a four-hour hearing, that's okay. I want

12

to thank you all again for being here, I want to

13

thank my colleague Carlina Rivera, Council Woman

14

Rivera..

15

[applause]

16

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay you

17

can clap for her and with that I am going to close

18

this public hearing, get home safely to wherever you

19

may be going. Thank you all for attending.

20

[gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date

February 22, 2019