



City of New York Parks & Recreation



**New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation**

**Introduction Number 1083-A
(requiring local representation on park conservancies)**

October 30, 2009

**Testimony by
Tupper Thomas
Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Partnerships**

INTRODUCTION

As the Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Partnerships with the Department of Parks & Recreation, my primary role is to work with all the park administrators and their non-profit affiliates. In addition, for the past 29 years, I have been the Administrator of Prospect Park in Brooklyn. I also serve as the President of the Prospect Park Alliance, which was established in 1987. The Alliance, which operates in partnership with the City and the community, restores, develops, and operates the Park for the enjoyment of all New Yorkers. The Alliance is dedicated to serving visitors through its operations and programs, caring for the Park's natural environment, and preserving its historic design. Thus, I am in a unique position to address the viewpoints of both the agency and its partners with you today.

HISTORY OF PARK PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past 30 years, New York has become the model city for partnerships between the local government and not-for-profit entities composed of citizens who care for parks. Each year, hundreds of national and international visitors come to New York to learn more about our system of park management. The impetus for these partnerships arose from the fiscal crisis that had nearly consumed New York City. Even flagship parks, such as Central Park and Prospect Park, where I started in 1980, had fallen into grave disrepair, case studies for urban decay. It was clear that we needed new ideas outside of the traditional government models.

The idea of private citizens helping to care for a public facility was not new—the concept had been applied to museums, the performing arts, universities, and hospitals for generations. It has also become a model for the delivery of a wide variety of social services, from youth sports to health and senior care, provided by community and faith-based organizations and other non-profits. But we believed that dedicated New Yorkers, working in partnership with the City, could reverse the alarming decline of these major parks. People who lived in the neighborhood became

invested in the community and chose to give back—through their money, their resources, and the time they put into taking care of their parks.

CONSERVANCIES TODAY

These organizations have flourished because they create links to the community that go beyond raising money. From the Bronx River Alliance to the Forest Park Trust, and from the Riverside Park Fund to the Greenbelt Conservancy, our partners are vital to the success of our green spaces. These groups represent the will and wishes of their surrounding communities to improve their parks so as to reflect the needs of the citizens who live, work, and play in them every day. And without the boards of these organizations, and those individuals who donate their time, talents, and money, our parks would not be the places of leisure and recreation, horticultural excellence, and oases of calm needed in a fast-paced, crowded city. Our public-private partnerships are strong precisely because they are community-oriented.

Since these partnerships have formed in an organic, bottom-up manner, the composition and role of our boards of directors are understandably diverse. Speaking for the Alliance, our Board of Directors currently comprises 33 members, of whom 28 live in one of the adjoining Council Districts, with each District represented by at least one Board member. In addition, the Board has 3 ex-officio voting members, including the Brooklyn Borough President, the Council Member from the 39th District, and the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

The Board is responsible for fundraising for projects that augment the City's ability to provide improved services for users of the Park. In addition to fundraising, the Alliance Board has a fiduciary responsibility to oversee the management of raised funds to ensure the sustainability of specific projects, as well as the organization as a whole. The Alliance Board of Directors does not make policy decisions for Prospect Park's operations, which are governed by the City and other regulatory entities.

Although the Alliance Board may differ from other not-for-profit boards, they all have community representation. All of our major partners affected by this bill already have local representation on their board, as it has been defined by the legislation. For example, of the 20 members of the board of the Riverside Park Fund, 19 of them live in one of the three Council Districts that abut the park. Similarly, 15 of the 17 Greenbelt Conservancy board members reside in a neighboring Council District, including every member of the Executive Board.

Moreover, the community of park users is defined not just by proximity to the park, but also through the visitors, small business owners, and local organizations that are a major part of the park's area of influence. Prospect Park is located in the 39th City Council District. In addition, the 33rd, 35th, and 40th Council Districts each abut the Park. However, I feel that Prospect Park's "neighborhood" extends even beyond the borders of its adjoining council districts, out into Brooklyn and across the city.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

In addition to the Alliance Board, Prospect Park benefits from an active Community Committee. The Prospect Park Community Committee, or ComCom, was specifically created to involve the local community in Park management. The ComCom consists of representatives of more than 50 local organizations, as well as all of the elected officials (federal, state, and city) and community boards that represent the Park and the surrounding districts. The ComCom takes on an active advisory and advocacy role, representing the interests of Park users and the community while making recommendations for the function and future of Prospect Park. The ComCom meets monthly (with the exception of December, July, and August) to discuss relevant issues of Prospect Park management (e.g., dog rules, garbage and recycling policies, park drive hours open to cars), review all capital plans and programs, and have regular discussions with city agencies – such as the Department of Transportation. A representative of the ComCom also serves as a member of the Alliance Board of Directors. Most of the non-profit partners have similar committees.

We are also linking young New Yorkers to our parks. Our Junior Committee seeks to involve New Yorkers in their 20s and 30s with the Park. In addition, The Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment High School, or BASE, is a New York City public high school developed in partnership with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the Prospect Park Alliance. Operated out of Prospect Heights High School, BASE's curriculum links the Park and the Garden closely to Brooklyn's urban neighborhoods, emphasizing environmental education.

I was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Partnerships in 2007. My goal as commissioner has been to share the lessons I've learned with my peers. The Prospect Park Alliance has been building community ties for more than 20 years; not all partnerships have had the same opportunities that we've enjoyed. I run a meeting of all of the Park Administrators four times per year, and I host special meetings on specific topics of interest. Our most recent meeting, for example, was focused on Board Development and Fundraising. Through sharing successes and ideas, we can nurture fledgling conservancies and challenge longstanding groups.

INTRODUCTION NUMBER 1083-A

We feel that our partnerships have a demonstrated track record of upholding the community based goals of Introduction No. 1083-A. This bill would seek to add a new section, 18-137, to the Administrative Code. Section 18-137 would specify that any conservancy arrangement, defined in the bill as "any license or other authorization allowing a conservancy to operate or maintain any park or portion of any park under the jurisdiction" of the Commissioner of Parks, entered into or renewed on or after the effective date of the bill, require that the board of directors of the conservancy include, as a voting member, an individual designated in consultation with Council members from each Council district in which the park is located or which the park abuts.

While Parks certainly lauds the intent of this bill to make sure that members of the local community in and around each conservancy are represented on the boards of directors, and that local communities are involved in the planning and operations of their parks, we believe that Introduction No. 1083-A may violate the Charter and New York State Law. We also believe that

New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law adequately establishes guidelines on the composition of boards of private not-for-profit corporations.

Furthermore, we believe that our conservancy partners meet and exceed the requirements set forth in Introduction No. 1083-A in terms of local representation on their boards, and already operate with the guidance and approval of Parks and the Mayor's office. The legislation, as proposed, raises other questions. There are scores of small non-profit groups, including dozens of little leagues, 23 historic house museums, and some CBO youth organizations that have license agreements to operate and maintain parkland. Would they be subject to Introduction No. 1083-A? Some organizations, such as the City Parks Foundation, and New York Restoration Project, offer programs and services in all five boroughs. Would they need representation, as defined in Introduction No. 1083-A, from every Council District, in which they operate? It is also unclear about the intent of the board representation required under the bill. Board members are volunteers who contribute their time, talents, and resources to further their organization's mission. If the board member required under the bill is meant to be the Council Member's representative, I would be concerned about how it might affect a board's ability to focus on its mission, particularly in a case such as Prospect Park where we might be required to add four new board members.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the Council's interest and advocacy for our conservancies. Just as the Council serves as the eyes and ears of constituents across the five boroughs, our many partnerships serve a critical role in linking the community to their local parks.

The universe of partnerships extends far beyond these affiliated not-for-profit organizations. Partnerships for Parks, which is an organization run by the Parks Department and the non-profit City Parks Foundation, organizes, manages, and encourages volunteer groups to form. More than 800 groups and 55,000 volunteers are actively beautifying parks, performing 1.7 million hours of volunteer work each year. Just this past weekend, thousands of New Yorkers braved the rain to come out for "It's My Park!" Day, a twice-annual volunteer celebration. Also on Saturday, we celebrated the MillionTreesNYC Fall Planting Day, with the support of the City's not-for-profit partner, New York Restoration Project. Volunteers planted more than 20,000 trees in our city's parks and natural forests.

There is no single universal strategy that works best for all parks. Not all parks have the residential or commercial strength to establish a partnership. In fact, City Parks Foundation, which was founded to support those New York City parks without access to private resources, is today the largest provider of free cultural programming citywide. Partnerships work best when formed by the people who love their park—they should be a celebration of the park, not an imposition. In that sense, we can all agree that a community of park users is essential to making sure that the park's interests are best represented. This should be a holistic process, where the impetus grows out of the community and not one where the political system imposes on citizen volunteers a framework. By working together with the Council, we look forward to strengthening that bond.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

20 questions for Benepe

To The Editor:

Rumors of a conservancy planned for Washington Square Park got some credence with the release of an environmental assessment study. While few people have seen it, the study apparently not only posits such a conservancy, but is specific as to budget and staffing. Here are some questions for Parks Department Commissioner Adrian Benepe regarding this proposed conservancy and conservancies in general.

1. How does a conservancy get started...surely not spontaneously? Are you the decider?
2. Do you first get consensus from the community?
3. Procedurally, do you identify moneyed groups and invite them to come aboard?
4. Or do moneyed groups approach you with an offer?
5. Suppose there are competing park manager wannabes? Do you have a bidding war?
6. What if local groups and officials oppose this? Do you plunge ahead anyway?
7. What are the duties and obligations of a conservancy?
8. What would be the relationship to the community board?
9. If people have problems, do they reach out to the

commissioner or to the conservancy?

10. Your Washington Square Park assessment indicates that you have given this matter some thought. We know there has been no consultation with the board, but are there special people in the community you've spoken to? Who?

11. Would some of the paid posts envisioned be for people who raise funds?

12. Would it not be preferable to allocate such funds to the Parks Department's budget?

13. Speaking of budgets, when did you last make a case for more funding for Parks?

14. Hasn't the Parks budget declined from 1.4 percent of the total budget in 1960 to less than 1/2 of 1 percent in 2006-'07?

15. Hasn't this cut resulted in a drastic shortfall in maintenance?

16. Hasn't the recreation staff been badly decimated?

17. Doesn't the City Charter spell out the obligation of the city to provide certain services, and isn't the proper maintenance of our park system included?

18. What happens to parks in poor neighborhoods that can't afford a conservancy? Does anyone believe that there aren't broken benches, potholed ball fields and litter pileups in parks in these areas?

19. Isn't it true that there are no rules, no guidelines covering the establishment and operations for private entities that manage parks?

20. Wouldn't it make sense to stop and consider the policy implications of these conservancies, as well as the practical aspects of accountability to the city and the community, before authorizing the establishment of any new conservancies?

Carol Greitzer

Greitzer was city councilmember for the Village, Chelsea and Midtown from 1969-'91

Warrie Price, Testimony before The New York City Council, Re: Int 1083-2009



Title: LOCAL LAW TO AMEND ADMIN CODE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, in relation to

Requiring local representation on park conservancies

Friday, October 30, 2009

Esteemed Members of the New York City Council:

I am Warrie Price, founder and president of The Battery Conservancy, a not for profit organization created in 1994 to rebuild and to revitalize the historic tip of Manhattan, 25 acres of city-owned property under the jurisdiction of the City of NY Parks & Recreation. Our voting board of directors number 20, of which 6 are residents of Council District 1, our neighborhood.

In our by-laws we have ex-office representation of five government officials or their representatives. Though non-voting, their voices are heard and views seldom disregarded.

Since arriving in NYC in 1972 to work for the NYC Bureau of the Budget, I have been involved with the civic life of this city for some 37 years. And I have loved every minute of it.

Twelve years serving on CB#1 in Manhattan, chairing the Parks Com and later becoming Chair of the Board gave me a real appreciation of the value of community-based planning and neighborhood involvement in the governance of our dynamic City. A project got better going through public review.

When I decided to focus on one public project I choose the Battery as that focus. It had far too long been neglected and overlooked as just a tourist destination not frequented by New Yorkers, it lacked a strong constituency and a inspired plan.

Now 15 years later and private and public funds totaling \$112M, we are fulfilling a grand new life for the Battery for generations to come. Our success has been built on innovative thinking and inspired exciting landscape designs.

Public review is sought after. Our motto is "GO Early and GO OFTEN." Why build a park the neighbors don't want or don't feel invested in...what's the point? Parkland is a premium Downtown and we suffered much post-9/11. But the neighborhood is coming back and we strive to give them a place of peace, cultural life, and most of all, beauty.

Public/Private Partnerships were born in NYC and now are copied by cities all over the world. They help government be innovative, creative and share the workload of keeping our parks beautiful for active and passive recreation and for the all important public discourse where we all can come together as community.

We are doing now and have always done what Int. 1083 it intended to do. Why add more bureaucracy to our already demanding public review and approval process.

Thank you.



**RIVERSIDE
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October 30, 2009

Testimony before the
New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation
in reference to

Introduction Number 1083-A
regarding local representation on park conservancies

Good afternoon Chair Foster and members of the Parks Committee. I am Lori Brittle, Vice President for Finance and Development for Riverside Park Fund, the non-profit partner organization for Riverside Park in Manhattan. On behalf of our Board of Directors and our thousands of members, thank you for allowing me to speak with you today on Introduction number 1083-A.

Twenty-three years ago this month, a group of concerned citizens founded Riverside Park Fund to reclaim Riverside Park from years of neglect and misuse, through advocacy, volunteer work, and fundraising. Since that time, Riverside Park Fund has raised nearly \$20 million for park improvements, programming, and restoration projects. We also manage the most extensive volunteer program in any New York City park, contributing more than 30,000 hours of volunteer horticultural work each year across the park's five-mile span. This broad and deep commitment by the local community in support the park has enabled us to work in close collaboration with City Council members, Borough Presidents, elected State officials, the Mayor's office, and the Department of Parks & Recreation, and through the years helped to secure more than \$40 million in public support for the improvement of Riverside Park.

Today, Riverside Park Fund represents more than 5,000 Upper West Side families and individuals dedicated to the ongoing care and improvement of the park. We directly support the park's care through the hiring of much-needed horticultural staff, maintenance workers, and playground programming staff, to better meet the needs of the park's thousands of daily visitors. We further assist the Park's Department in its operation of the park through the purchase of equipment, supplies, and services that would otherwise not be available. By leveraging each others' resources we have, together with the Parks Department and elected officials, brought Riverside back from decay to the vibrant park it is now.

As a not-for-profit corporation of the State of New York, Riverside Park Fund's board of directors is self-appointing, and the voting members of the board are approved by the Fund's members at our annual meetings. There are currently 20 voting board members, of whom 19 live in one of the adjoining Council

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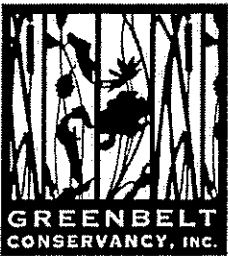
Districts, with each District represented by at least one board member. In addition, the Board has four ex-officio non-voting members representing the City government.

It appears that Introduction 1083-A would require a not-for-profit organization such as Riverside Park Fund to appoint a voting board member from each Council District in which the park lies or which abuts the park, and would require that the Council Member representing that Council District be consulted when that board member is designated. As a grassroots organization founded by community activists, Riverside Park Fund fully recognizes the importance of independent, community-based involvement in the care and operation of our city's parks. Were it not for such community involvement, neither the Fund nor the park would be what they are today. The composition of our board and our membership demonstrate that this community commitment remains strong and continues to grow.

We believe, however, that Introduction 1083-A, by attempting to regulate the makeup of our board or that of any other not-for-profit corporation, would take away from our members the freedom to elect the board they wish to represent them. As one of the oldest park conservancy organizations in New York City, we also recognize that every community and the needs of every park and its users are unique, hence the wide variety of community-based conservancies and "friends of" park organizations across the city. While fully supporting the goal of ensuring local involvement in the care of our city's parks, we believe it best to leave to these groups the composition of their boards.

Riverside Park Fund has a long and beneficial history of working closely with our City Council Members and other elected officials. We are grateful for the Council's interest and support of our parks, and look forward to continuing to work with you to the benefit of Riverside Park and the people who depend upon it.

Thank you again for this opportunity to address you today.



October 30, 2009

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Hon. Helen Foster, Chair
Committee on Parks & Recreation
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Re: Int. No. 1083-A
Amendment of Administrative Code

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To Whom It May Concern:

In connection with Introduction 1083-A, I would like to comment, on behalf of the Greenbelt Conservancy Board, as follows:

Our Board consists of 16 members, 14 of whom live within each council district in which the Staten Island Greenbelt lies. Our board members are civically engaged in their communities and are committed to the betterment of the Greenbelt. In this regard, they directly represent the needs, wishes and concerns of the communities surrounding and throughout the Greenbelt. We are an active board, whose members participate in and support park activities.

The Greenbelt Conservancy has a strong working relationship with all our elected officials: federal, state, and city. Over the last 25 years, our elected officials have been supportive of our myriad efforts in land preservation, creation of active recreational opportunities, environmental education programs and the like.

We, therefore, strongly object to Section 2.b., last sentence, to wit: "Such member [board member] shall be designated in consultation with the council member representing each such district".

This proposed provision could create a partisan board that might become distracted by the demands of elected officials, rather than working toward the betterment of the Greenbelt and fulfilling of the Conservancy's mission.

Very truly yours,

Kathleen Vorwick,
President



Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Central Park Conservancy, an organization many of you know is dedicated to restoring, managing and enhancing Central Park in partnership with the City of New York and the public.

We believe in that partnership, actively involving citizens from the areas surrounding Central Park in our planning and governing processes. Our organization already has Board representation from all 4 Central Park council districts, including 4, 6, 8, and 9. In fact, nearly 85% of the Central Park Conservancy's Trustees reside in one of these four districts. It is our view that legislation requiring us to do what we already have in place, is redundant.

The Central Park Conservancy's by-laws dictate that 8 of our 52 voting trustees are positions set aside for people appointed by an elected official or on our board by virtue of holding a political position. These 8 positions include:

- › the Manhattan Borough President
- › the Parks Commissioner
- › the Central Park Administrator
- › and 5 mayoral appointees (all of whom hail from council districts that abut Central Park)

When adding new Board members, the Central Park Conservancy actively seeks representation from the areas surrounding Central Park, searching for those who want to share our values and commitment to the Park and our mission. We search for Trustees who have a specific expertise or skill set that will broaden the management capabilities of our organization. This criteria, when combined with the importance we place on representation from the surrounding community, is what we believe contributes to our sound management and informed decision-making process.

In addition to these Board selection practices, the Central Park Conservancy also seeks community involvement and communication with

- › Community Boards 5, 7 8, 10 and 11
- › A series of public Advisory Committees, user groups, and Round Tables
- › As well as 250 regular Conservancy volunteers from surrounding areas

At the Central Park Conservancy, we take great pride in our work and organization, and believe firmly the concepts defined in our mission statement, which outlines quite clearly -- "in partnership with the City of New York and the public."

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Thank you again for this opportunity to address you today.



Testimony on No. 1083-A On Behalf of New York Restoration Project (NYRP)

Testimony given by Darin Johnson, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Policy

Thank you members of the City Council for inviting New York Restoration Project (NYRP) to testify this morning on the proposed local law No.1083-A, which would amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring local representation on park conservancies.

As you may already be aware, NYRP is the proud owner of 55 New York City community gardens located throughout the five boroughs. Through a management agreement with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, we also manage and provide free public and environmental education programming at Swindler Cove Park in the Washington Heights neighborhood, as well as assist with park cleanup and maintenance at several other City parks in Northern Manhattan – including Highbridge Park.

For nearly 15 years, NYRP has proudly served as an extension of the Parks Department – cleaning up and programming green spaces across the five boroughs where resources sometimes have fallen short. NYRP began as the “Conservancy of Forgotten Places,” but through our work in restoring 55 gardens, building Swindler Cove Park and the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse, and helping green and program other Northern Manhattan parks, we’ve proven that no green space in New York City will ever be forgotten.

On behalf of our founder Bette Midler and our Executive Director Drew Becher, I want to share our strong support for the concept of community members having an active role and voice in the work and programs that our organization and others offer the neighborhoods we serve. Community participation is core to our mission, and is something we engage in everyday.

For example, when NYRP restores and programs one of our community gardens the process begins with a community charrette –we bring members of that garden and its neighbors together to brainstorm how they want their garden to function and look. In some cases, the community members want a more traditional garden for growing herbs and vegetables, while others want a public space for events and barbeques and others want a leaning garden that can be enjoyed by nearby students.

In recent years, NYRP also created the position of Community Outreach Manager to serve as a centralized liaison to our growing number of gardeners and community members, and just this month we added a second full-time position to our outreach department – in addition to a team of AmeriCorps members who support our community outreach efforts. From experience we know that having our staff on the ground to work with community members is critical to a public spaces' success.

In the case of Swindler Cove Park – which now serves as the headquarters of our environmental education programming – we have established close ties with the neighboring Dyckman Houses and P.S. 5. As an outcome of those growing relationships, we have created programs such as a NatureMania Spring Break with serves over 400 youth from the Dyckman Houses, our 6-week Summer Camp which introduced 30 youth to green collar job opportunities this summer, and community events including Family Day, Campout, and our upcoming Haunted Hike.

I think it's important to note that the majority of programs NYRP offers in our public spaces today are a result of working closely with community members and leaders, because we know that green spaces will only stay green, clean and active when they meet the daily needs and expectations of the community around them. Parks and gardens must have purpose and be functional, or they will return to disrepair.

With that said, NYRP believes community representation on our board of trustees – which primarily serves fundraising and governance oversight functions – would not be

the appropriate mechanism for effective community participation in the management and programming of parks and gardens managed by non-profits and conservancies .

Like other non-profits here today, we believe there are more effective ways to ensure community participation when non-profits and conservancies manage city property – and solutions that can be accomplished through existing management agreements with the Parks Department. From designating a community liaison (which NYRP has established for each of our gardens) to strengthening ties with local community boards to establishing community advisory committees that would actively work with the non-profits responsible for maintaining and programming City-owned parks and gardens – these are solutions that make sense for both the community and the organization.

Lastly, I want to thank the City Council for your ongoing support of NYRP, and for being our partner and supporter in helping to clean and green our incredible city. We do not take our work or responsibility lightly, and hope our efforts have made a lasting impact on the communities and people we serve through our green spaces.



New York City Council Parks and Recreation Committee Hearing

Int. 1083: Local Representation on Park Conservancies October 30, 2009

Good morning. My name is Sheelah Feinberg and I am the Director of Government and External Relations at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), the only independent watchdog for all the city's parks, beaches, and playgrounds. We would like to thank the Parks Committee for holding this very important hearing.

Equitable Representation

In summer 2008, when the Council held a hearing on Intro 699, a bill that would require more financial transparency in public private partnerships, Deputy Parks Commissioner Liam Kavanagh said that "the Bloomberg Administration, and NYC Parks and Recreation, have embraced initiatives that increase transparency and ensure a greater level of accountability in government." We are pleased that Intro 699 was adopted into Local Law 282008. We applaud this new proposed legislation for continuing to expand the levels of accountability and transparency in the operations and management of our public parks. As evidenced by recent parks issues throughout the city, there is insufficient community representation which needs to be addressed and remedied.

Int. 1083 attempts to address the lack of public participation by mandating that at least one individual who resides within each Council District in which a park is located, or abuts, must be a voting member of the board of directors of the respective park conservancy. We support this principle and feel that community representation on conservancy boards is essential towards improving the efficiency, equity and efficacy of public-private partnerships in parks.

However, we feel that there are logistical and legal ramifications for Council Member consultation that may lead to Council Member appointment. Government, especially in regards to not-for-profit structure and management, is moving towards increased transparency, stricter regulations and oversight. We should take equal care not to infuse local politics too steeply in this process.

To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, we recommend broadening the consultation process and appointment of community representatives to the Borough President or Community Board. This would further enhance the public's role in park conservancies by integrating the larger community and many neighborhoods. While some public private partnerships make it a priority to include community members, unfortunately broader legislation is needed ensure that this because becomes the norm rather than the exception. Sadly, community involvement is often seen as an afterthought in many parks operations. This bill allows for members of the local community to take an active role in the oversight of their public park. Local leadership and participation in the decision making process is vital towards increasing transparency, stewardship, and community ownership in public parks.

Conclusion

As stated in the Citizens Budget Commission report, *Making the Most of Our Parks*, "The challenge facing our City in the next century will be to create a park system that can take the successes of parks like Central, Prospect and Bryant and match their managerial prowess with additional public resources to provide a quality park for every neighborhood in New York City." We strongly support Int. 1083 for its effort to ensure that the balance of public and private participation is maintained in parks throughout NYC.

Thank you.

Testimony on Proposed Int. No. 1083-A

To amend the administrative code of the city of NY in relation to requiring local representation on park conservancies.

Judi Francis

President of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund, a 501 C 3 not for profit organization dedicated to advocacy for a planned park along Brooklyn's historic waterfront, honoring the Great Bridge.

First I would like to thank the City Council members, especially Councilman Avella, for their interest and protection of public parks, and for suggesting amendments to the laws governing park conservancies. There have been significant private encroachments in our public parks over the past 8 years and much needs to be done to ensure that the "public" remains in our public parks.

Amendments to the administrative code on private park conservancies is warranted.

As I outlined in city council testimony three years ago regarding the Duty of Park Conservancies in Managing City Parks (April, 2006), there are deep, deep problems with private groups running our public parks. My longstanding experience with the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy is a case study on how good intentions go bad when one local, private organization is allowed free reign over our public parks, without greater representation.

As you may know, the Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition, the predecessor to the current organization called the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy, was formed under the auspices of the Brooklyn Heights Association in the early 1980's to secure a public park along the derelict waterfront between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges to Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn.

This Coalition did an incredible job of raising awareness and local support for the park and they are to be congratulated. They began the advocacy for a park but it was the elected officials who really moved the park forward with the formation the Local Development Corporation. This LDC was responsible for generating greater community involvement, by holding community meetings and hearings on what the larger community wished to see in the park, which resulted in the development of the Park's Master Plan in 2000.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition renamed itself the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy in 2002/03. With this re-branding, their focus should have changed. Instead of the creature of its original founder, Brooklyn Heights Association, this Conservancy *should have* enlarged its mission, goals, and leadership to represent the desires of the much larger park constituency – all the neighborhoods that will be using this Park. But it is hard to change direction after 20 years of working on behalf of a single interest.

And therein lies the trouble with having an unregulated, private group responsible for running our parks. The example of this Conservancy is the case in point. The Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy has not represented the interests of the surrounding neighborhoods, as evidenced by the fact that the leaderships of all longstanding, highly respected surrounding neighborhood organizations including Cobble Hill, DUMBO, Ft. Greene, Carroll Gardens, and the merchants along Atlantic Avenue and Fulton Landing have put in writing that this Conservancy has NOT represented their communities on the use of this park. Over the years many articles have been written by the press regarding the arbitrary decisions on what programming is acceptable for the park and what is not – like a hip hop festival that was canceled in 2007.

The majority of the Board of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy live along a narrow corridor adjacent to the Promenade in Brooklyn Heights. And while residents living close to a park are more impacted than others, the leadership of the park must be tasked with a much broader public view. The BBP Conservancy organization has been limited to a single constituency of central heights dwellers.

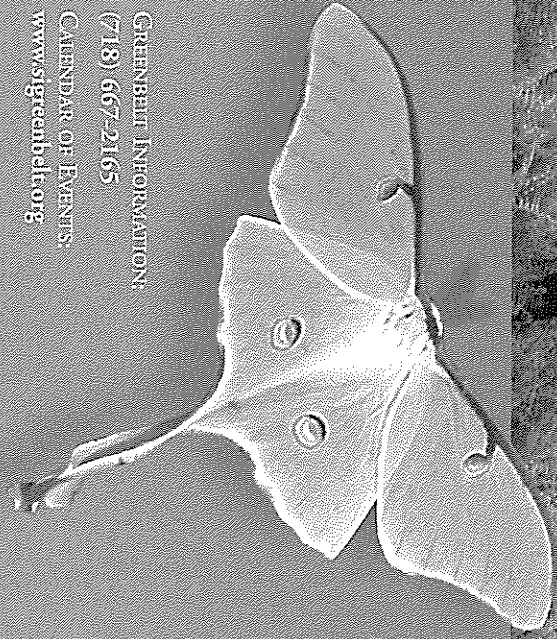
Let me say again, people who live close to a public park do have special interests and their interests must be respected, but they need to be put into perspective with the greatest public good and a park's greater public goals. And while they should have a strong voice their voice – and vote - should never be more than 50% of the decision-makers.

Thus, I recommend a change to Section 1, 18-137 2 b to read:

Any conservancy arrangement entered into, renewed or otherwise granted or executed on or after the effective date of this section shall require that NO MORE THAN 50% OF THE VOTING RIGHTS OF THE BOARD BE MADE UP OF RESIDENTS WHO RESIDE WITHIN THE PRIMARY DISTRICT COUNCIL in which the park is located, AND THE REMAINING SEATS ON THE BOARD BE COMPRISED OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RESIDE IN CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS THAT ABUT THE PARK.

This way, the greater community's voice has a chance to be heard, park governance will be broadened and more inclusive, to maximize its use, instead of treating it as an enterprise for the benefit of those living near it and, worse, in it (as is the case with Brooklyn Bridge Park with the planned 1250 condos in 6 luxury towers).

GREENBELT INFORMATION:
(718) 667-2165
CALENDAR OF EVENTS:
www.sigreenbelt.org

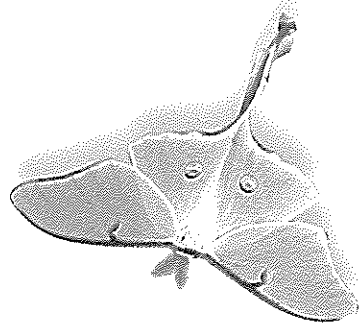


GREENBELT TRAIL MAP

Information & Directions

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Staten Island, NY
Permit #279

Greenbelt Conservancy
200 Nevada Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10306

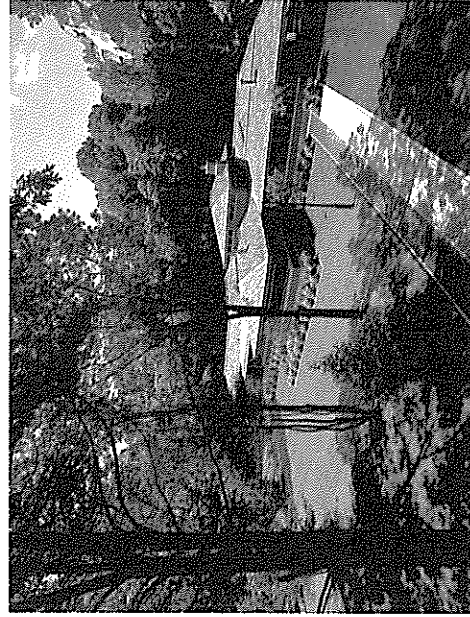


Ray Lindner

Discover
the Greenbelt,
a New York City
Flagship Park
located in the
of Staten Island.

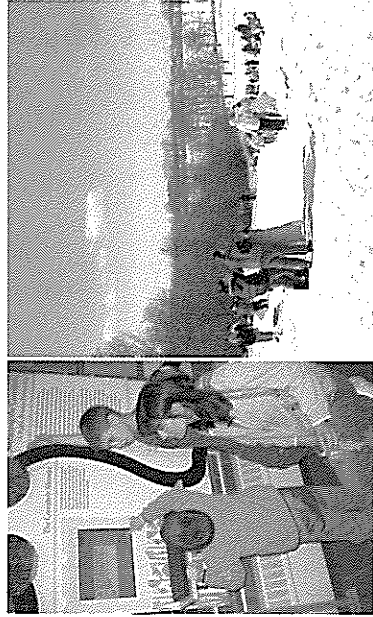


GREENBELT INFORMATION:
(718) 667-2165
www.sigreenbelt.org



Greenbelt Nature Center

Michael Falco



Dorothy Kelly

Learning about ecology

Sledding at LaTourette

We are grateful to volunteers from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, the Greenbelt maintenance crew, and the many scout, volunteer and civic groups for their on-going maintenance of the Greenbelt's hiking trails.

This map was published by the Greenbelt Conservancy in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. Funding was generously provided by the Greenbelt Conservancy and The Staten Island Foundation



The Staten Island Foundation



The Greenbelt Conservancy works in partnership with
The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation



Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Adrian Benepe, New York City Parks Commissioner
Thomas Paulo, Staten Island Parks Commissioner

THE GREENBELT

The Greenbelt consists of 2,800 acres of parks and natural areas in the heart of Staten Island, NY. The area features over 35 miles of marked hiking trails. Much of the Greenbelt is protected parkland, yet several parcels are privately held.

The Greenbelt Conservancy is a not-for-profit organization that works in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to help maintain the Greenbelt and promote prudent use of this urban oasis. Attend a Greenbelt class, festival or guided hike. Join our membership circle, and become involved in helping Staten Island's "great outdoors" remain alive and well!

The Greenbelt Conservancy helps to support:

GREENBELT NATURE CENTER featuring the *Richmond County Savings Foundation Exhibits*
700 Rockland Ave. (near Brielle Ave.)
Staten Island, NY 10314
Open throughout the year (available to rent)
(718) 351-3450

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DEPT. AT HIGH ROCK PARK
Greenbelt Headquarters
200 Nevada Ave. (718) 667-7475
Staten Island, NY 10306

CAROUSEL FOR ALL CHILDREN WILLOWBROOK PARK
2 Eton Place, Staten Island, NY 10314
Open May - October (available to rent)
(718) 477-0605 (during operating hours)

GREENBELT RECREATION CENTER
501 Brielle Ave. Staten Island, NY 10314
(718) 667-3545

For facility rentals, call: 718-667-2165.

GREENBELT TRAIL SYSTEM

Enjoy the wonders of nature along 35 miles of marked hiking trails.

www.sigreenbelt.org
www.nyc.gov/parks

DIRECTIONS

From the Verazano Narrows Bridge, take Rte. 278 west to Bradley Avenue exit. From service road, turn left on to Bradley Avenue and continue to the intersection of Bradley and Brielle Avenues. Turn right on to Brielle Avenue...

- Go 1/2 mi. and turn right at double gate entrance after ball fields for **Greenbelt Recreation Center**.
- Go 3/4 mi. to the end of Brielle Ave., which leads to the **Greenbelt Nature Center**.
- Go to the end of Brielle Ave. and turn left at traffic light; follow Rockland Ave. for 3/4 mi. to Nevada Ave.; turn left and proceed uphill to **High Rock Park**.

From the Outerbridge Crossing take the *Korean War Veterans Pkwy* to Richmond Ave. North exit. Turn left on to Richmond Avenue. Go approx. 1/4 mi., turn right on to Forest Hill Rd. and proceed approx. 1.3 miles to Rockland Ave. Turn right on Rockland Avenue. . .

- At next traffic light (Brielle Ave.) turn left go approx. 50 yards and turn left through the gates into the **Greenbelt Recreation Center** driveway.
- At next traffic light (Brielle Ave.) turn right in to parking area for **Greenbelt Nature Center**.
- Proceed approx. 2 mi. to Nevada Ave. and turn left. Proceed uphill to **High Rock Park**.

Directions to the Carousel for All Children

- From the Verazano Narrows Bridge, take Rte. 278 to the Victory Blvd. exit. Turn left on Victory Blvd. Proceed to Richmond Avenue, approx. 1/2 mi. Turn left on Richmond Ave., stay in the left lane to turn left on Eton Pl., which leads to Willowbrook Park and the **Carousel for All Children**.

- From the Outerbridge Crossing take the *Korean War Veterans Pkwy*, to Richmond Ave. North exit. Turn left on Richmond Ave. Proceed on Richmond Ave. past the Staten Island Mall to Eton Place (approx. 2 1/2 mi.) Turn right on Eton Place, which leads to Willowbrook Park and the **Carousel for All Children**.

For directions via NYC mass transit system:

- Call (718) 330-1234
- www.mta.info

GREENBELT TRAIL SYSTEM

BLUE TRAIL:

Provides an easy/moderate level hike, that is 12.3 miles one way. This trail ascends from Staten Island Boulevard to one of the highest points on the eastern coast (between Maine and Florida).

WHITE TRAIL:

Provides an easy/moderate hike, and is 7.6 miles one way. Its southern end connects to Great Kills Park (Gateway National Recreation Area).

RED TRAIL:

Provides an easy/moderate, closed circuit 4 mile hike in the middle of the Greenbelt. This loop trail begins and ends at Historic Richmond Town and St. Patrick's Place off Richmond Road.

YELLOW TRAIL:

This moderate/difficult trail is 8 miles one way, and brings hikers through Reeds Basket Willow Swamp. It ascends Todt Hill and then parallels the Blue Trail. Moses' Mountain, is located off the Yellow Trail.

NATURE CENTER TRAIL:

The 1-mile Nature Center Trail begins at the footbridge called "Mitchell Crossing" to the left of the Nature Center. The level terrain is suitable for novice hikers. After the trail turns eastward there is a native fern garden stretching out under a canopy of tall tulip, beech and birch trees. In spring Canada mayflower, trout lilies and wild violets proliferate. This loop trail ends at the opposite side of the Nature Center from where it began.

TRAIL NAVIGATION SYMBOLS

Square trail markers which correspond with trail colors on this map, can be found on trees along the trail system. The following navigation symbols can also be found:

- Trail Turns Right
- Trail Turns Left
- Trail Begins
- Trail Ends

MAP KEY (Color markers will be found along the trails.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| — Yellow Trail | — Red Trail |
| — Blue Trail | — Multi-Purpose Trail |
| — Pink Trail | — Orange Trail |
| — White Trail | — Pathways |
| ⊙ Nature Center Trail | — Road |
-
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Ⓟ Parking | Ⓜ Ruins |
| ① Moses' Mountain | Ⓡ Bus Stop |
| ② The Joseph Holzka Overlook | Ⓡ Foot Bridge |
| ③ The Carousel For All Children & | Ⓡ Picnic Area |
| ④ Historic Richmond Town & | Ⓡ Model Airplane Field |
| ⑤ Museum of Tibetan Art | Ⓡ Archery Range |
| ⑥ Greenbelt Headquarters | Ⓡ Radio Tower |
| ⑦ Greenbelt Nature Center & | Ⓡ Ball Fields |
| ⑧ Native Plant Propagation Nursery | Ⓡ NYS DEC Property |
| ⑨ Greenbelt Recreation Center & | |
| ⑩ LaTourette Golf Course & Club House | |
| ⑪ Archery Field | |
| ⑫ Model Airplane Field | |
| ⑬ William T. Davis Refuge | |

SCALE: 1.5" = 1mi.



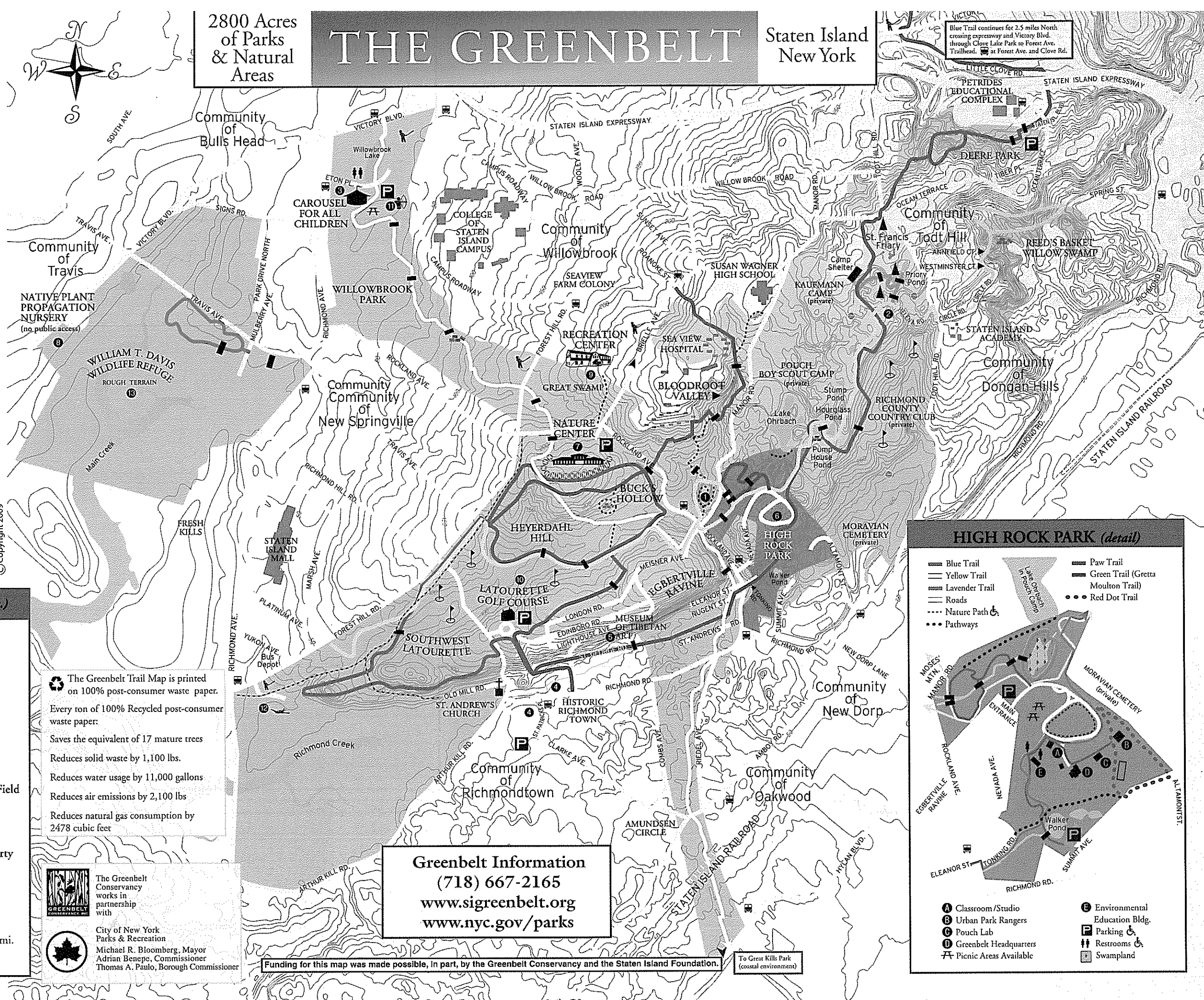
The Greenbelt Conservancy works in partnership with
 City of New York Parks & Recreation
 Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
 Adrian Benepe, Commissioner
 Thomas A. Paulo, Borough Commissioner



2800 Acres of Parks & Natural Areas

THE GREENBELT

Staten Island New York



Blue Trail continues for 2.5 miles North crossing expressway and Victory Blvd. through Clove Lake Park to Forest Ave. Trailhead at Forest Ave. and Clove Rd.

HIGH ROCK PARK (detail)

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| — Blue Trail | — Paw Trail |
| — Yellow Trail | — Green Trail (Gretta Moulton Trail) |
| — Lavender Trail | — Red Dot Trail |
| — Roads | |
| — Nature Path | |
| — Pathways | |
-
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ⓜ Classroom/Studio | Ⓡ Environmental Education Bldg. |
| Ⓡ Urban Park Rangers | Ⓡ Parking & |
| Ⓡ Pouch Lab | Ⓡ Restrooms & |
| Ⓡ Greenbelt Headquarters | Ⓡ Swampland |
| Ⓡ Picnic Areas Available | |

Greenbelt Information
 (718) 667-2165
www.sigreenbelt.org
www.nyc.gov/parks

Funding for this map was made possible, in part, by the Greenbelt Conservancy and the Staten Island Foundation. To Great Kills Park (coastal environment)

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Morroni

Address: 520 Union Ave

I represent: Open Space Alliance - for North Bk

Address: 71 North 11th St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 30 Oct 09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HENRY STERN

Address: _____

I represent: New York Civic

Address: 450 Park Ave. South

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/2009

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorothy Reilly

Address: 200 Nevada Ave. SI NY 10306

I represent: Greenbelt Conservancy

Address: 200 Nevada Ave, SI NY 10306

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HENRY BUNCH

Address: 80-45 Kew Gardens Rd, Kew Gardens NY 11485

I represent: QUEENS SOCCER FOUNDATION INC

Address: 80-45 Kew Gardens Rd, Kew Gardens NY 11485

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAROL GREITZER

Address: SQUID

I represent: 250+ Friends of NYC Parks

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sheela Feinberg

Address: 3

I represent: New Yorkers for Parks

Address: 355 Lexington Ave NY 10017

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Schnall

Address: Dir. of Government Relations

I represent: NYC Parks & Recreation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tupper Thomas

Address: Asst. Commissioner

I represent: NYC Parks & Recreation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JUDI FRANCIS

Address: _____

I represent: PRESIDENT, Brooklyn Bridge Park

Address: Defense Fund

23 State St. Brooklyn NY 11201

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Warrie Price

Address: Battery Park Conservancy

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lori Brittle

Address: Riverside Park Fund

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kathleen Vorwick

Address: Greenbelt Conservancy

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/30/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darin Johnson

Address: New York Restoration Project

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1083-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TOM REAY

Address: 11 MADISON AVE. NY

I represent: MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ADRIAN J. JONES

Address: 7 PLYMOUTH PLACE MILFORD CT 06460

I represent: CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY

Address: 14 E 60TH NY NY 10022