

# DEARBERT

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

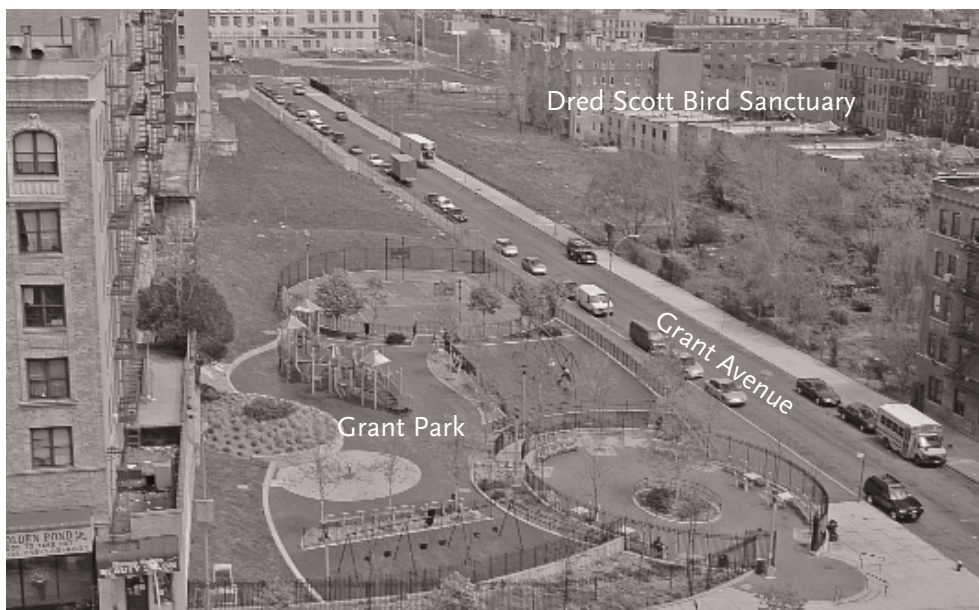
summer**2007**

## DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF PARKS

**PHYSICAL CHANGES HAPPENING IN YOUR PARK** are a great time to get involved.

Participating in the design process helps make park improvements better and can be a starting point for ongoing community stewardship. The Capital Projects division of the Department of Parks & Recreation designs new parks and plans renovations for existing ones. The best time to get involved in the design process is the scope meeting, when Parks staff, elected officials, residents, and community board representatives come together at the site to share ideas about the future park or park to be transformed. The designer gathers ideas from everyone present and considers them when preparing the park's design. Volunteers and community organizations are encouraged to attend scope meetings and contribute their ideas.

**VOLUNTEERS FROM DRED SCOTT BIRD SANCTUARY** in the South Bronx participated in scope meetings and had a profound impact on their park. Parks acquired property on Grant Avenue between 169th and 170th streets in 1995. Inspired by Ann Adams and supported by former City Councilman Wendell Foster, residents Troy Lancaster and Jim Beer founded Dred Scott Bird Sanctuary (DSBS) as a GreenThumb garden on the undeveloped parkland in 1996. Nobody believed



*Grant Park and Dred Scott Bird Sanctuary. Grant Avenue will be closed to unify the park.*

### DEAR FRIENDS,

Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC program aims to create a greener, more sustainable city by 2030, in part by allocating an additional \$1.2 billion in capital and maintenance funding to Parks over the next ten years.

\$386 million will fund the design and construction of eight regional parks, including the reopening of the High Bridge, the oldest standing bridge in New York City. Through the High Bridge Catalyst Project, Partnerships for Parks supported the High Bridge Coalition and other community partners campaigning to reopen the bridge. Now that funding is available, the bridge will once again provide pedestrian access between boroughs and majestic views to all New Yorkers.

PlaNYC will spur the largest park improvement initiative since Robert Moses' federally funded projects of the 1930s, creating an exciting opportunity for volunteers to have a say in the future of our parks. Community advocates for the High Bridge had a profound impact on their parks; read on to learn more about how you can get involved in the design of your local green spaces.

Sincerely,  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,  
Parks & Recreation  
David Rivel, Executive Director,  
City Parks Foundation

that there could be a bird sanctuary in the Bronx, but Troy and Jim planted to attract a variety of avian species, and many colorful birds started to make their homes in Morrisania. The sanctuary is now thriving: music of songbirds carries into surrounding streets, and the garden, full of fruit trees and flowering vines, is a green refuge from the city. With the support of City Councilwoman Helen Foster, the volunteers of DSBS are laying out ambitious plans for the future of the garden.

Soon after the founding of DSBS, Parks began the process to de-map the block of Grant Avenue running through the parkland to make a unified park. Large parks are often built in phases; Troy and DSBS member Robert Garmendiz



*Students and teachers from nearby PS 90.*

attended scope meetings for each phase of design. Their Partnerships Outreach Coordinator, Maria Luisa Cipriano, informed them when meetings were taking place and encouraged them to attend and share their ideas. As long-



time residents and the most persistent presence in the park, DSBS members were uniquely qualified to describe the uses that Grant Park should accommodate. Robert went to a scope meeting where the idea of building a baseball diamond was presented. He pointed out that there was already a baseball diamond at a high school across the street, that building one on the hilly site in question would be difficult, and that seniors in the neighborhood needed a place to sit and stroll. A passive recreation area with meandering paths, benches, and trees opened at the site in 2006.

Local participation in park design not only gave the community facilities it

needed, but also encouraged neighbors to take responsibility for caring for Grant Park. Troy went to a scope meeting and explained that children in the neighborhood needed a place to play. A playground was completed in 2003.

## The involvement of volunteers in shaping the design of a park empowers the entire community.

"You can build a park and if there's no community involvement it'll be trashed in three months. Our playground is three years old and it's beautiful," observes Troy.

The next phases of construction will begin soon: first the retaining walls separating the park from the residences on Morris Avenue will be rebuilt. Then the block of Grant Avenue bisecting the park will be closed, and more recreational features, including handball courts and an amphitheater, will be constructed. Getting involved in Capital projects requires patience, but the DSBS volunteers are not discouraged by the time it is taking to see their vision become a reality. Robert appreciates

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### Caring for Street Trees Monthly Workshop

Learn to care for young street trees, receive free tools and get a Parks volunteer permit. Presented by the New York Tree Trust and Partnerships for Parks. Registration required. Contact [Channaly.Oum@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Channaly.Oum@parks.nyc.gov), or call (212) 676-1929.

#### Wednesday, June 20, 7 – 9 p.m.

Sunset Park Recreation Center, 7 Ave. & 43 St., Brooklyn.

#### Monday, July 9, 7 – 9 p.m.

Pelham Fritz Recreation Center, Marcus Garvey Park, W. 122 St. & Mount Morris Park West, Manhattan.

#### Wednesday, August 1, 7 – 9 p.m.

Citylights Building, 4-74 48 Avenue, Long Island City, Queens. With Friends of Gantry & Neighborhood Parks.

### Put Your Group on the Map

Don't let your hard work go unnoticed! **STEW-MAP** is New York City's first map of the 5,000+ environmental groups working in our amazing city. This June you should receive a mail or email form from the STEW-MAP team and we encourage you to fill it out. Together we will count, map, and connect all the different forms of stewardship in NYC. Questions? Contact Lindsay Campbell at [stewmap@columbia.edu](mailto:stewmap@columbia.edu) or call (212) 637-4175.

**thingstodo**

that the process “has given us time to grow and get smarter.” They’ve learned that, with any new park feature, “you don’t want to build it and then leave it empty,” and so are using this time to plan programs for the park. They may use the amphitheater for graduation ceremonies, promoting education in their community by staging these celebrations in a beautiful public setting. Ultimately, the involvement of volunteers in shaping the design of a park empowers the entire community. Troy and Robert say that their neighbors are still incredulous about the street being closed and turned into park space. Once the park is finished, Robert is confident that “people will see that they can do it, too. They can change their neighborhood. It’s hard work, but things get done eventually.”

Partnerships for Parks can help volunteers who want to contribute input to Capital projects in neighborhood parks. Contact your community board to find out about scope meetings, and get in touch with your Outreach Coordinator to learn about Capital projects planned for your park. 🌳

## Dear Mary,

*I'm planning on attending a scope meeting. What kinds of information should I share with the designer?*

Instead of bringing specific designs, share general ideas and observations about your park's users, uses, and resources for the designer to interpret. Talk to people in your community and find out what they want. Partnerships can provide survey templates and ideas about how to collect information. Consider the following as you're preparing for the meeting:

- ◆ How do you and your community use the park now? What are the favorite places or most well-used spots?
- ◆ What parts of the park are under used? Why? Are there problem areas that flood, need lighting, or contain unused equipment?
- ◆ Who uses the park the most: children, teenagers, dog-walkers, the elderly?
- ◆ What neighborhood resources are nearby? What is lacking? Does your community need active recreational facilities like ballfields, or benches and picnic tables for relaxation? Do you want a mix of both?



*This spring on It's My Park! Day, Tasiana Auguste (left) and Dominique Hugg (right) from Murry Bertraum High School's National Honors Society gathered community input for the upcoming renovation of James Madison Plaza in lower Manhattan. They will present the results of their survey to the park designer prior to the scope meeting. Photo: Leah Worrell*

# How to reach us

[www.PartnershipsForParks.org](http://www.PartnershipsForParks.org)  
[www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)  
[www.CityParksFoundation.org](http://www.CityParksFoundation.org)

To contact Partnerships for Parks or for information on volunteering in parks, call (212) 360-1357 or call the City's non-emergency hotline, 311.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS works to increase community support for and involvement in parks throughout New York City. Founded in 1995, Partnerships works to start, strengthen, and support neighborhood park groups; to link these groups together so that they can learn from each other and become stronger collectively; and to promote involvement in parks so people will join in efforts to restore and preserve them.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
City of New York

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner  
Parks & Recreation

David Rivel, Executive Director  
City Parks Foundation

Jason Schwartz, Director  
Partnerships for Parks

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# LEAFLET

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*, A JOINT PROGRAM OF CITY PARKS FOUNDATION AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

summer**2007**

## GRANT OPPORTUNITY

**Partnerships for Parks Capacity Fund**  
Ready to take your park stewardship to the next level? Apply for grants of between \$250 and \$5000. Deadline: October 1. New to fundraising? Attend the information session Thurs., Aug. 23 at 6:30pm to learn about Capacity Fund guidelines and proposal writing. Call Kate Louis at (212) 227-3626 to register.



## SUMMER READING

Looking for inspiration to get involved in your park this summer? Partnerships staff recommends these favorite books for ideas about how to help your park, your neighborhood and your city thrive: *Groundswell: Stories of Saving Places, Finding Community* by Alix W. Hopkins; *Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs; *The Great Neighborhood Book: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Placemaking* by Jay Walljasper; *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte. And one for children: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.

Attention: For address corrections call (212) 360-1357

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