

# DEARBORN

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

winter**2012**

*New Tool for Friends Groups:*

## THE PEOPLE MAKE PARKS WEBSITE

BACK IN 2009, DAVID BOLOTSKY STOPPED ALONG HIS WALK HOME to peer through the fence of his neighborhood park, [Luther Gulick](#). A few teenagers were making jumpshots on the basketball court, but otherwise the park was empty. Tree stumps—the remains of an Asian Longhorn Beetle infestation that devastated the area in the late 1990s—stood along cracked walkways. And where there were once benches and game tables, he now saw only metal poles, the seating having been removed years ago to discourage drug dealers from congregating.

“I’d walked past here for 25 years, never giving the park a second thought,” explains David. “But with two young sons, I was looking for places to play. I saw this park as an opportunity to create something positive, for them and for the neighborhood.”

As a fourth generation, Lower East Side resident, Bolotsky knew about the park’s livelier past, when ice skaters competed on winter weekends, handball tournaments riveted onlookers, and kids played under the watchful eye of park attendants. With these stories as inspiration, he joined with neighbors to imagine a Luther Gulick Playground for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a place where winding pathways, space for performances and film, and a custom-made ping-pong table could bring people back to the park again.

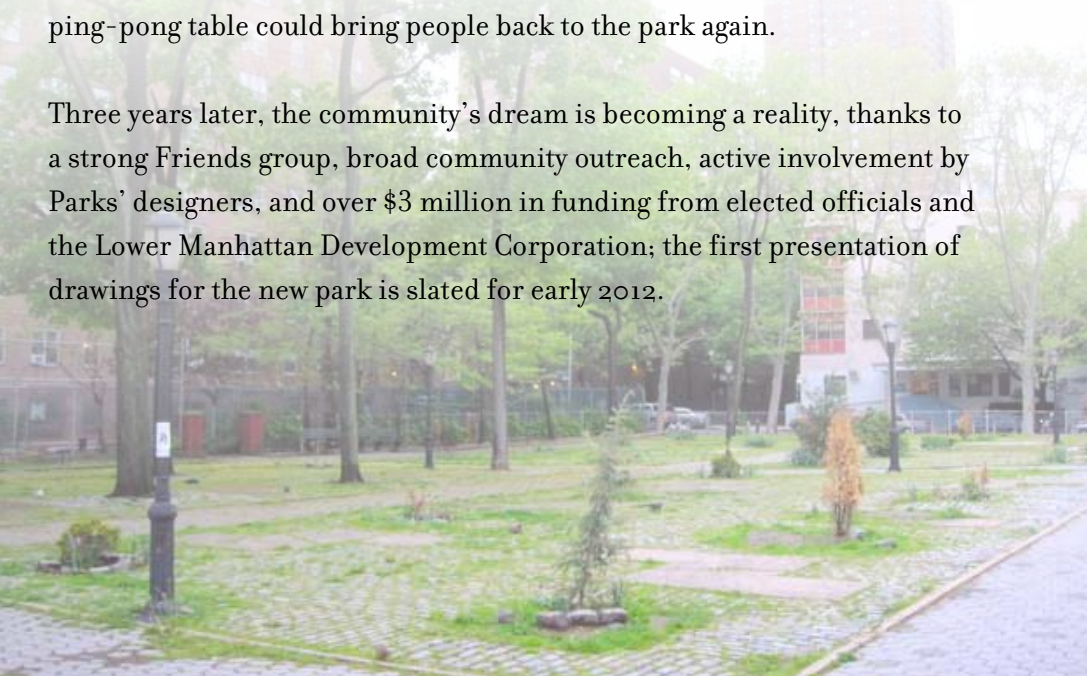
Three years later, the community’s dream is becoming a reality, thanks to a strong Friends group, broad community outreach, active involvement by Parks’ designers, and over \$3 million in funding from elected officials and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation; the first presentation of drawings for the new park is slated for early 2012.

DEAR FRIENDS,

There are so many ways Partnerships for Parks supports Friends groups—lending tools for clean-up days, advising groups involved in programming, and providing grants that help strengthen outreach efforts, among others. Now, with the launch last September of the website [PeopleMakeParks.org](#), Partnerships is sharing resources and information that will enable groups to become more engaged partners with Parks around the park design process. The website, which includes tools, resources, and on-the-ground stories, shows the steps needed to bring a new park to life or re-energize an older park so it better serves a diverse neighborhood. Partnerships believes that great parks begin with engaged communities. And the collaborative spirit at the heart of [PeopleMakeParks.org](#) ensures that parks built today are ones communities will treasure for years to come.

Sincerely,  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,  
Parks & Recreation

Alison Tocci, President,  
City Parks Foundation



Luther Gulick Playground’s dramatic turnaround shows what’s possible when neighbors unite around a shared goal. And now the work done by groups such as [Friends of Gulick Park \(FoGP\)](#), [Dred Scott Bird Sanctuary](#) in the Bronx, and [Friends of Greenwood Playground](#) in Brooklyn, among others, has been documented in a new online toolkit: [PeopleMakeParks.org](#).

More than a year in the making, the People Make Parks (PMP) website is a joint project of the nonprofit design firm [Hester Street Collaborative](#) and Partnerships for Parks, which came together in 2006 to support a community-led redesign of Chinatown’s Hester Street Playground. PMP helps communities become informed contributors to the park design—also known as the capital—process, and is informed by the idea that when communities and government partner on design, the result is better parks for all.

How do Friends groups learn about park design? By exploring the PMP



*The Wish Object tool at Luther Gulick Playground.*

website, where you’ll discover the eight steps involved in bringing a park to life and how your community can contribute at each one.

FoGP began by advocating for funding, before gathering community input about what the new park might look like—one of the most important steps in the capital process and the most critical prior to a scope meeting.

“We met twice over a few months to choose the right input-gathering

tools for our community,” says Brian Crowley, a founding member of FoGP. “In the end, we chose tools that would help us collect ideas from people spanning a wide range of ages, such as Model-Making for kids and Park Stories for seniors.”

What’s also unique about PMP’s input-gathering tools, notes Dylan House from Hester Street Collaborative, is their ability to engage park users across diverse cultures: “Because parks are critical to immigrants, who often rely on parks as oases in the city, we made sure to create tools that were easily translatable or visual rather than verbal, to ensure everyone could participate.”

After gathering the community’s design ideas, groups can then work with PMP to write up their findings. That report is then shared with Park designers and, if there’s time and interest, groups can host a design charrette, where maps are used to

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## Capacity Fund Grant Success Story: From Lot to Art



*Members from First Street Green Ann Shostrom, John Bowman, Jorge Prado, and Silva Ajemian with Manhattan Parks’ Chief of Operations, Namshik Yoon (far left), and PFP Outreach Coordinator, Kirsti Bambridge (third from right).*

Walk by Second Avenue and Houston Street, and you may see something unusual: A sculpture made of foam tiles. A wall festooned with ribbons. Or a sidewalk brightly covered in chalk drawings.

It’s all the work of [First Street Green](#), a Friends group that’s been using a Partnerships’ Capacity Fund grant to creatively gather input about the future of their once-forgotten, now inspirational, community space.

The group was formed by a few East Village residents, who joined forces to advocate for the conversion of a Parks-owned empty lot into an arts-oriented park. After receiving support for the idea from the Community Board and Parks, they hit it big this past summer when the Guggenheim selected the space for a 10-week urban design festival and paid for initial renovations.

Encouraged by their PFP Outreach Coordinator, the group applied for and received a Capacity Fund grant to learn what kind of programming the community wanted in the park after the Guggenheim left.

Their “What’s Next?” event, featuring the foam tile sculpture, was just one of many visioning activities they’ve now held in partnership with the nearby First Street Block Association and The Lower Eastside Girls Club; a tree-guard building workshop and sculpture installation are planned for spring 2012.

Want to encourage more community involvement in your park? Send in your own [Capacity Fund grant](#) application by the February 1, 2012 deadline. You never know what will happen next!

### Audubon Birding Walks

Ongoing Saturdays, 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx, NY

These free walks celebrate the tradition set forth by great ornithologists who got their start birding in Van Cortlandt Park. Participants will look for various species of migratory birds and discuss a wide range of avian topics.

No registration required. Contact (718) 548-0912 or [info@nycaudubon.org](mailto:info@nycaudubon.org).

### Indoor Adaptive Rowing, Row NY

Jan 14, 21, 28 and Feb 4, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Queens Boathouse, Queens, NY

Workout sessions with adaptive coaches to stay in shape and prepare for rowing on the water. All adaptive athletes are welcome, from age 11 and up. No experience necessary! For more information, contact Row NY at (718) 433-3075 or [info@rownewyork.org](mailto:info@rownewyork.org).

### GreenThumb Workshop: Compost and Healthy Soils

Saturday, February 18, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY

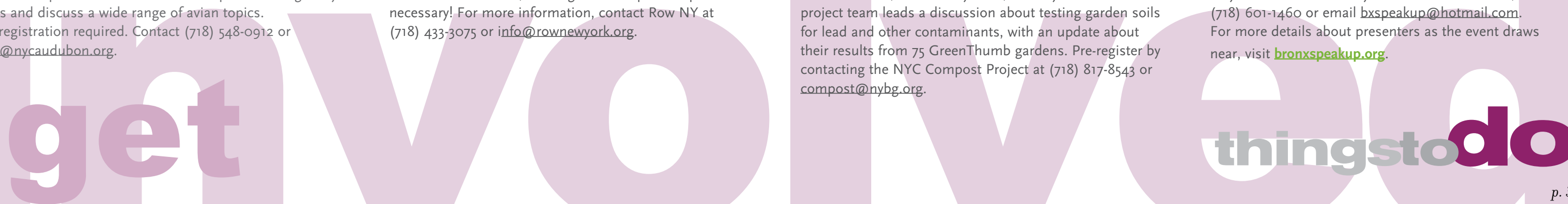
In this two-part Q&A session you’ll get practical tips, advice, and encouragement to take your composting to the next level. In Part II, the Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities project team leads a discussion about testing garden soils for lead and other contaminants, with an update about their results from 75 GreenThumb gardens. Pre-register by contacting the NYC Compost Project at (718) 817-8543 or [compost@nybg.org](mailto:compost@nybg.org).

### 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Bronx Parks Speak Up

Saturday, February 25, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Lehman College Faculty Dining Room, Bronx, NY

Workshops, lectures, and giveaways designed to help all park advocates – not just those in the Bronx – do what they do more successfully. For more information, call (718) 601-1460 or email [bxspeakup@hotmail.com](mailto:bxspeakup@hotmail.com). For more details about presenters as the event draws near, visit [bronxpeakup.org](http://bronxpeakup.org).



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make specific recommendations.

Realizing a PMP project through to completion—especially when a group must first seek funding—can take years. But the payoff is well worth it, and Partnerships staff are there to guide groups every step of the way.

“We were a hard-working and well-intentioned group,” says David, “but working with PFP and HSC kept us focused on what mattered most, so we could spend our limited time wisely. They also gave us perspective on the progress we were making, which lifted our spirits when we got discouraged.”

The new Luther Gulick Playground—the one with a winding, tree-lined path and a kid-friendly water feature? If all goes well, it’ll open long before the next generation of Bolotskys heads out to play. ☆

## tip box

### GRANTS:

#### Partnerships for Parks Capacity Fund

The Capacity Fund offers grants to community groups working in NYC parks to expand their ability to care for their park and to use their park to care for their community. Grants strengthen groups’ outreach, membership, and program-planning capacity. Grants range from \$250 to \$5,000. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2012.

#### Citizens Committee for New York City

New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods’ grants are awarded for creative community projects that bring neighbors together to improve their communities. Eligible groups can receive a grant of \$500-\$3,000, along with one-on-one project planning assistance, enrollment in skills-building workshops, and access to an equipment loan library. Their application deadline is January 31, 2012.

## did you know



Partnerships for Parks has a Facebook page! That’s right. LIKE our Facebook page and stay connected to the latest from PFP, as well as other Friends and partner organizations. Be the first to know about grants, workshops, trainings, and more. Get inspired by checking out what other groups are doing and share your own project photos. Want one place to go each day to find out what’s happening in the world of New York City parks stewardship? The [PFP Facebook](#) page is the place to be.

# LEAFLET

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

## winter2012

## 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.

You can also follow us on [facebook.com/partnershipsforparks](https://www.facebook.com/partnershipsforparks).

## PARTNERSHIPS for PARKS



City of New York  
Parks & Recreation

CityParks  
Foundation

PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS helps New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive. We strengthen our diverse, growing network of dedicated park volunteers and groups by creating opportunities for them to celebrate their parks and accomplishments, access resources, become more effective leaders in their communities, and work with government to affect decisions about their parks.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
City of New York

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner  
Parks & Recreation

Alison Tocci, President  
City Parks Foundation

Jason Schwartz, Director  
Partnerships for Parks

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