

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than one-third of New York City residents are foreign born. Because park preferences can vary depending on cultural background, as evidenced by research and the popularity of various sports in different parts of the world, the needs and opinions of foreign-born New Yorkers should be carefully evaluated to ensure that these populations are well-served by parks and recreational opportunities.

The Parks Department has worked to address the increased demand for soccer and cricket fields and offers some translated signage in parks. The agency's Language Access Plan will go farther in conquering the language barrier. These are good first steps, but New York City has the opportunity to enhance these efforts and better connect immigrants to parks through park stewardship and programming, public meetings, and more.

Advocates in the park and immigration communities highlighted three major issues during interviews that should be addressed to improve the park experience for foreign-born New Yorkers: overcoming the language barrier, improving the permitting process for sports and special events, and increasing the diversity of foods available in parks.

New Yorkers for Parks offers the following recommendations to better connect immigrants and parks:

1. To ensure timely implementation of the Language Access Plan, the City should support the Parks Department's efforts with dedicated resources.
2. Provide translation services for all public meetings related to park projects.
3. Increase the transparency of the permitting application process for events and athletic fields by creating a timeline that clearly states when items are due and when to expect notification.
4. Explore opportunities to lessen or remove the insurance burden for small, volunteer-based groups that hold special events in parks.
5. Offer translated permit applications and instructions on the Parks' website as soon as possible.
6. Formally declare the grandfathering rule for athletic fields and publicize it on the Parks' website.
7. Allow new leagues and teams access to high-demand athletic fields by limiting the number of years that a single group can continuously hold a permit.
8. In parks that contain heavily used fields with lights, accommodate the work schedules of new immigrants and expand permitted hours of play for all by exploring the extension of park open hours.
9. Encourage local economic development, welcome various cultural groups, and improve concession revenues by seeking out culturally relevant food vendors for parks.