

Jimmy Van Bramer

45-18 Skillman Avenue
Sunnyside, NY 11104
(718) 313-0569
www.JimmyVanBramer.com

2009 CANDIDATE SURVEY

What do you believe are the top priority park issues that need to be addressed in your district and citywide?

The City of New York will experience considerable growth over the next twenty years, and much of this will be taking place in District 26 as neighborhoods such as Long Island City experience significant development. All growth on the private sector side must be accompanied by master planning including designating an increased amount of parkland and adequately funding capital projects in current parks. This is particularly pressing in our district. While 14% of land has been designated as parkland citywide, parks make up only 1% of District 26. This places our council district as the 42nd out of 51 throughout the city in terms of acres per resident. Thus, I will fight at every opportunity to convert more land into green space for public use. We must also act to ensure that our park spaces are being fully utilized. By working with the NYPD and Parks Department we can make our parks safe and free of litter, vermin, rats and graffiti in order to truly increase the quality of life of not only this district, but the city as a whole.

Securing Adequate Funding / Maintenance for Parks

a. Will you work towards securing long term funding for Parks?

Yes

i. If so, would you consider exploring creative financial models such as Parks Improvement Districts (based on the BID model), tax increment financing (TIF), zoning benefits and public private partnerships to supplement maintenance and operating costs?

Yes

b. Would you support dedicating revenue earned through park concessions to parks maintenance and operations?

Yes

i. If so, would you also support revising the Major Concessions Rules to include all significant private uses on public property (including parks) to community/borough review?

Yes

c. Will you support establishing the tracking of spending and staffing on a park by park basis?

Yes

d. When a capital project is not fully funded will you support diversifying funding sources to ensure their completion? What would those sources be?

Yes

e. What specific actions would you take to ensure that every park in every neighborhood has properly working facilities such as ball-fields, educational facilities, restrooms, etc?

As each park has its own specific needs, characteristics and patterns of usage, the key to ensuring proper maintenance is to open lines of communication with the community boards, civic and community groups to create expediency in resolving problems when they arise and allocate funds more efficiently. The city must also consider the creation of a system that will measure and monitor the needs of parks. Along those lines, funding is also an issue, and in these times we will have to be creative in order to fully maintain our parks and facilities if an influx of new funds proves elusive. Furthermore, volunteer programs and

reallocating funding and resources to where they are most needed are should be looked into.

i. Will you support a “fix it first” policy for funding capital projects, so that resources are allocated to existing projects in need of repair?

Yes

f. Will you support adequate staffing and funding to ensure that new and existing parks stay in a “state of good repair”?

Yes

i. What funding/programs would you use to increase the full-time parks maintenance staff?

Federal stimulus money is the first and foremost way we can immediately increase funding for full-time maintenance staff. Corporate sponsorships and public-private sponsorships are other avenues that can be pursued so long as the priority remains preserving the character of the each park. Grant programs and private donations have the potential to provide additional help.

ii. What can be done to improve the baseline services, or maintenance of effort, in our parks to ensure that partnerships don’t need to replace poor, existing services or neglected services such as bench and fountain repairs?

When benches and fountains are replaced, we must look into quality and durability. While spending more now may be difficult, if it saves money down the road and saves the over-extended park staff valuable hours. These are worthwhile capital investments. Additionally, routine maintenance is crucial to prevent expensive replacements or fixes to fountains, benches, etc. that become unusable.

iii. How would you fund the unique maintenance costs of waterfront parks (e.g. access, bulkheads, and piers)?

Waterfront parks specifically are an area where instituting public-private sponsorships would be a wise decision. Working together with other government stakeholders within the state and federal government can also create additional funding for maintenance and improvements that are out of reach when funded by the city alone. This is something I will pay close attention to representing District 26, which includes a significant amount of waterfront in Long Island City and Astoria.

g. Will you support park ratings by borough and community board in addition to the citywide level in the Mayor’s Management Report?

Yes

h. Will you support making the official Parks Department “property list” – that specifically delineates all 1,700 properties – available online?

Yes

Protecting Parkland

a. Will you support more laws that require public notification and input when a park will be used for non-park purposes to afford parks the protection they need from development or use by other agencies?

Yes

i. How would you require that professional sports organizations assist in maintaining and operating public parks near their facilities?

Creating and/or enforcing contracts that dictate the terms of use.

b. Will you work to strengthen parkland alienation regulation by requiring Environmental Impact Statements before parkland alienation bill is filed by municipality?

Yes

i. How will you do this?

I would support legislation requiring this.

c. Will you support mitigation for taking of parkland and ensure replacement of lost parkland for the community?

Yes

How will you do so?

Calling for accountability from the appropriate officials.

d. How would you prevent “pay to play” situations from arising at public and amateur sports facilities?

Children are currently prioritized first for sports facilities and perhaps there should be another level of prioritization when a league who charges is bumped down on the list for prioritization. Also depending on the facility, there should be posted and perhaps designated open play hours for everyone.

e. Will you support legislation that requires regular NYPD reports to the City Council on crime in parks (i.e. Intro. 470)?

Yes

f. Will you work towards making parkland part of the city’s CompStat system?

Yes

Expanding Park Use

a. Will you work toward creating, with significant community involvement, a comprehensive citywide master plan for parks and open spaces that will guide the overall acquisition, restoration, improvement, and maintenance of parks, natural areas, playgrounds and athletic facilities in the five boroughs?

Yes

i. What is your vision for some of the new parks?

In District 26 there are few areas with the potential to be converted into large-scale parks and recreation spaces. Instead we must focus on smaller, underutilized areas in the communities that need them most, for example through the creation of community gardens. Our community has only sixty-two acres of parkland total yet there are 106 acres of vacant space. I will work closely with the community boards, local organizations and residents to determine, on a case-by case basis, the most suitable use of currently vacant land. As with the creation of any new parks, we must make sure that there will be adequate maintenance funding.

ii. How would you develop it?

By conducting a thorough inventory of Parklands, and breaking down needs versus parkland CB district by CB district.

b. Will you support extending Resolution No. 1033 which calls for the continued protection of community gardens and the rights of the community and gardeners?

Yes

c. What specific actions would you take to revitalize the recreational and amateur sports programs that have been decreased by this year’s budget cuts?

I would help facilitate public/private partnerships and corporate sponsorship of recreational, amateur and youth athletic leagues.

d. What specific actions would you take to enable a much higher level of collaboration among the Parks Dept.

and other city agencies on issues such as stormwater management, greenways, and economic development projects?

I think an inter-agency task force that reports directly to the mayor's office could be the answer to this problem, but more study would be required.

e. How will you ensure that public spaces created as amenities/mitigation for large scale economic development projects such as Atlantic Yards, Hudson Yards, and Manhattanville are truly open to the public?

I think this has to do a lot with legislation by making inclusionary housing mandatory (as well as actually affordable for the people in the current neighborhood) for ALL new developments so that there is a mixed base of users to begin with. Then City Planning should change registration to not only designate open space, but to be somewhat specific about design standards. For example, a public park would ideally not have high fences with gated locks, not be on the interior courtyards of buildings, should have good linkages, visibility and accessibility from the street, and have a specific min % of planted area. If there are a number of children in the area with a playground more than 10 min walking distance it should include play equipment, etc. On waterfront developments, the current zoning says that new developments are required to have a 40 foot public esplanade along the water. I would say that 40 ft is not enough, and that it should be 60 in order to accommodate a variety of mixed uses as well as plantings into the design.

i. Do you support mapping such public spaces as parkland?

Yes

National and Regional Parks

a. How will you support the creation of planned new regional waterfront parks like Fresh Kills, Hudson River Park, Governors Island and Brooklyn Bridge Park?

One of the ways to support regional parks and all other parks is to reform the method in which operations/maintenance money is dispersed. A common problem the city faces is developing and funding capital plans without having any budget to maintain projects after they are built. As a result the new buildings deteriorate quickly and instead of spending the necessary amount to needed to maintain a properly working facility, far more money must be spent, far more money must be spent to build an entirely new structure.

b. What are your plans to ensure that all citizens have equal access to these regional facilities?

Improve public transportation and bike lane networks. Also make sure that these networks are well advertised after they are put in place.

c. What steps would you take to promote the use of and access to our city's national parks at Gateway National Recreation Area and the other National Parks of NY Harbor?

Again, it's important that we find ways to make our parks as open and accessible to everyone. Parks are a great place to relax and enjoy nature, even when living in a metropolis like this one. It's critical that everyone able reach the parks on bicycles, by foot, and public transport.