



8th Annual Parks Advocacy Day
May 20, 2010
Breakout Session Notes

Parks Advocacy Day (PAD) is an annual event that brings diverse advocates from all over New York City together on behalf of parks, playgrounds, beaches, community gardens, and natural areas. The event convenes advocates with their City Council Members and provides the singular opportunity for them to advocate, share local knowledge, and strengthen partnerships. This fosters a citywide coalition united in ensuring that all New Yorkers enjoy a world-class parks system.

The 8th annual PAD was held on May 20th at New York University's Kimmel Center. This year, attendees split up into breakout groups focused on three topics, which were determined by coalition feedback: PlaNYC, concessions, and public-private partnerships. The goal of the breakout sessions was to create the foundation for our work agenda for the coming year around specific citywide issues. Led by community facilitators, participants discussed and mapped their concerns on a local basis, identified citywide themes, and determined some possible next steps. Below are the notes from the breakout session.

PlaNYC Breakout Session

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Notes taken by Alyson Beha, Manager of Research & Planning, NY4P

I. Concerns/Suggestions:

- PlaNYC should be more tailored to community needs, rather than consisting of multiple city-wide goals.
- Some communities have not seen any evidence of PlaNYC in their neighborhoods, while others have seen many.
- Schoolyards-to-Playgrounds Initiative:
 - Increase program goals to open more sites in more neighborhoods.
 - Provide more resources for maintenance and security at these sites.
 - Provide more recreational offerings for middle school-age children.
- MillionTrees:
 - Tree maintenance (pruning), particularly for newly-planted trees, is inadequate.
 - Relying on volunteers for tree maintenance is not adequate. The City need to put more public resources into dedicated tree maintenance.
 - Tree pit design is not sustainable and should be improved to integrate stormwater management best practices.
 - Tree pit design is not conducive to growth and longevity of trees. The pits are too small and the fill should be loam, not the dirt/rock mixture currently used. Tree pit policies in Baltimore and Toronto are examples of better practices.
- Recycling:
 - Recycling bins should be available at all City park property.
- Education:
 - The City should engage in more outreach and provide better education on sustainability practices. Including education about recycling and park stewardship.
- Artificial turf fields:
 - Artificial turf surfaces are deteriorating and need to be better maintained.

- Integrate urban agriculture opportunities into PlaNYC.
- Greenstreets sites in some neighborhoods are better-maintained than in other neighborhoods.
- Spray showers in playgrounds run all day long and waste water. The City should use motion detector technology on these spray showers so that they don't waste water when no one is playing in them.
- Other feedback not specifically related to PlaNYC:
 - Esplanade along the East River in Harlem is in need of major investment. The pathways are deteriorating. The bathrooms are in disrepair, and the community would like to have access to recreational activities across the river on Randall's Island.
 - Downtown Brooklyn is too over-developed and has too little parkland. The increasing population puts enormous pressure on the existing park space.
 - Fort Greene bathrooms are in disrepair and are not adequate to handle the demand put on them by park visitors.
 - East River Park needs better lighting over athletic fields and courts.
 - Parks in Astoria need more bathrooms, more trash bins, recycling options and better maintenance.
 - The sea wall in waterfront parks in Astoria needs repairs.
 - More effort should be made to include immigrant communities in park activities and public processes surrounding parks.
 - All parks should be accessible to people with disabilities and should fulfill all Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
 - Confusion over how to report tree vandalism.
 - Confusion over who is supposed to maintain schoolyard-to-playgrounds sites.

II. Common Themes:

- Integrate More Sustainable Practices Into PlaNYC: Many comments during the breakout session focused on the need for better sustainable practices throughout the various PlaNYC initiatives that relate to open space. There were multiple calls for recycling bins in parks. Other suggestions included sustainable design tools such as modernized tree pits that will aid stormwater run-off and playground spray showers that are turned on by motion-detectors (rather than emitting water all day long).
- PlaNYC Should Be More Community-Specific: People complained that the plan was too "top-down" and that the community should have been consulted prior to implementation. Every neighborhood's needs are different. And the plan should take a more nuanced approach. Others thought that the program was being implemented more heavily in some neighborhoods than others.
- Concentrate More Resources on Maintenance: There were a number of complaints regarding maintenance problems in parks. Generally, people wanted their parks better-maintained and wanted to know who was responsible for maintaining the various properties.
- Parks Should Be More Accessible: Specifically, parks should be more accessible to immigrant communities and people with disabilities. Also, there were a number of concerns regarding the age-specific design of many parks and playgrounds. Advocates want to see a greater diversity of features so that people of all ages can use every park.