



**Statement for East Harlem Community Forum
November 2, 2017
Mariana Lo, Research & Planning Analyst**

Good evening, my name is Mariana Lo, and I'm the Research & Planning Analyst at New Yorkers for Parks. I thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. New Yorkers for Parks is the City's independent parks and open space advocate. Our work in East Harlem started in 2011, when we collaborated with the Mount Sinai School of Medicine to gather open space data. We released our report, the East Harlem Open Space Index, in 2012. This report catalogued East Harlem's parks and open spaces, measuring them against fifteen New York City-specific benchmarks. When Speaker Mark-Viverito's office convened the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan process, we supported the Open Space and Culture group, which used our data as a starting point for their work.

Our main objective in this process is to see that the concerns and recommendations of the community, as articulated in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan, are accommodated in the city's analysis and final plans. We note that the Final EIS published by DCP does not adopt the community's mitigation recommendations for parks and open space access.

East Harlem is already lacking in parks and open space compared to citywide standards. By DCP's own calculations, the rezoning will result in a ratio of just four-fifths of an acre of open space per thousand residents, which is less than a third of the department's recommended baseline of two and a half acres per thousand residents. The amount of open space in the neighborhood will soon decrease even further with the temporary alienation of Marx Brothers playground and the redevelopment of the 111th Street ballfields. New Yorkers for Parks is particularly concerned about the questions raised by the Marx Brothers playground alienation, and we'll be paying careful attention to that situation.

While we recognize the importance of affordable housing, we know that access to parks is critical to the quality of life in any neighborhood. We reject the idea that the community should have to trade one for the other. We urge the Council to commit to further investments in programming, maintenance, and much-needed infrastructure improvements for the public parks and open spaces in East Harlem.

In closing, we support and applaud the Speaker's proactive efforts in convening the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan process. We look forward to seeing how the city's plans for East Harlem will seriously engage with and include the community's recommendations which resulted from that process. Thank you.

For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.