

(Pending Committee Approval)

**Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting
Bronx Community Board 8
Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 7:00pm
Board Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471**

Attendees

Committee:

Present (3): Bob Bender, Miriam Filer, Debra Travis (Chair)

Absent (1): Carol Blake

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation: Joe Magneri (District Parks Manager); Stephanie Ehrlich (Van Cortlandt Park Administrator); Christina Taylor (Deputy Executive Director, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance); Katerine Borrrome (Director of Capital Projects); Valerie Davis-O’Neal (Special Assistant to the Bronx Borough Commissioner); Eric Mattes (Chief of Landscape Architecture); Nichola Magilton (Director of Landscape Architecture Design Resources); Giulietta Fiore (Executive Director, Historic House Trust)

The meeting commenced at 7:03pm

Welcome and Introduction of Committee Members and Guests

Approval of the December 11, 2025 Minutes

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously

Chair’s Report

- The committee chair and the community board chair are sending a letter to the Bronx delegation advocating for reconstruction of Bailey Playground including combining the existing Bailey Playground with the undeveloped Tibbett’s Tail parkland directly adjacent.
- Applications for the community board are open. The deadline is Monday, February 23. Applications are online at <https://form.jotform.com/cbapplications/2026-bx-community-board-application>.
- Thank you to the Parks Department for working with long time park stewards CatRock Ventures to enable them to install a job box in the rear of Washington’s Walk. This will enable them to more efficiently manage volunteer activities and keep their tools safe.
- Trisha Shimamura has been appointed as the NYC Parks Commissioner. She is the former Manhattan Borough Parks Commissioner. We wish her all the best.
- Update on Van Cortlandt Park Stadium turf project – the Borough Commissioner’s office has made arrangements to for a short-term patching of the turf in early spring 2026. This will be a stop gap measure until the full capital project of re-grading the soccer field and replacing the turf commences in 2027.

Discussion- ADA Accessibility Features in NYC Parks

The Parks and Recreation Committee requested additional information from the Capital Division regarding handicap accessibility features in our local playgrounds and pools. See attached presentation for examples of the features. Eric Mattes made a presentation at the request of Katerine Borrome on the types of accessibility features available in our parks and how to identify them. Every playground and park reconstruction incorporates accessibility features, however, the community should advocate for specific needs that they would like to see accommodation for when preliminary designs are presented to the public. The Parks Department has options for children with visual and mobility impairment and children on the autism spectrum. Options like high/low drinking fountains, accessible surfacing, ramps, transfer stations on playground equipment are incorporated into all playground, ballfield, dog run and park reconstructions where site conditions allow. Pool reconstructions will generally include a hydraulic lift or ramp to allow for greater access to the pool. The Parks Department adds these features only when there is a full capital reconstruction. They do not do retrofits.

Examples of recent playground reconstructions in District 8 with accessibility features include:

Classic Playground (Van Cortlandt Park) - contains sensory play elements for autism spectrum children and children with sensory impairment. Accessible swings for children under 5. Inclusive play elements for auditory, tactile and visual impairment

Henry Hudson Playground - contains sensory play elements for autism spectrum children and children with sensory impairment. Mobility transfer systems on playground equipment. Accessible swings for children under 5. Inclusive play elements for children with visual impairment. Note: west playground has limited accessibility

Northwest Playground (Van Cortlandt Park) – ground-based and water-based play and mobility transfer systems on playground equipment. Accessible swings for children under 5. Sensory play elements for autism spectrum children. Inclusive play elements for auditory, tactile and visual impairment

Seton Park Playground – water-based play and mobility transfer systems on playground equipment. Contains sensory play elements for autism spectrum children and children with sensory impairment

Strong Street Playground - water-based play and mobility transfer systems on playground equipment. Accessible swings for children under 5. Play panels

NYC Parks Review of Existing Capital Projects

Van Cortlandt House Museum Renovation (Envelope & ADA Accessibility)

\$16m renovation to secure the envelope, upgrade mechanical systems and make the gift shop and programming area in the basement ADA accessible. Scope will include repair of the roof and exterior envelope and making the house ADA accessible by installing a Lula lift. Due to historic preservation concerns, they have had some challenges making the building accessible. They are reviewing their options and may need to come back to our elected officials for additional funds. This project is in the design phase and they anticipate coming to the community board with their design in the next few months. In the short term, they have added a temporary ramp and made door hardware more accessible. Reconstruction of the historic fence was completed in May.

Van Cortlandt Park Stadium Engineering Study and Community Needs Study

Engineering study recommended the demolition of the stadium citing its condition as beyond repairable. The committee asked that Parks perform some adaptive re-use to save as much of the structure is feasible and safe. The stadium was opened in September, 1939 by Robert Moses and Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia as a WPA project as part of the New Deal. The two men hosted opening ceremonies with track events and a football game between Manhattan College and Fordham University. At its height, the stadium held tennis courts, handball courts, baseball diamonds, horseshoe pitching courts, a bowling green, drinking fountains and lockers. Kat recommended that the community raise these concerns during the community input session this spring.

Mosholu Golf Course Driving Range and Golf House

The new Mosholu Golf Course driving range and golf house along Jerome Avenue are expected to open in early summer 2026. Chair inquired about the temporary trailer which was constructed for First Tee during construction. First Tee will be moving out of the trailer and NYC Parks will take it back for east side operations for Maintenance and Operations.

Tibbetts Brook Daylighting and Van Cortlandt Lake Improvements

Daylighting of Tibbetts Brooks and creating a greenway to West 230th Street is out to bid. Notice to proceed with construction expected late summer 2026. Removing invasives from Van Cortlandt Lake began summer 2024 and will complete in 2026. Living shoreline pilot will complete in 2026/2027.

Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Project

\$23.5 million had been allocated to construct a pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway as part of the community benefit for the alienation of the land to build the water filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park. In 2023, it was determined that this project was not feasible and that alternatives that achieved the same goal would be reviewed. The alternate projects have been decided and they are:

Shandler Recreation Area Sewer Connection:

This project will construct a new sewer connection from the Shandler Recreation Area to the Jerome Avenue trunk sewer. This portion of Van Cortlandt Park currently lacks a sewer connection, resulting in ongoing septic issues at the existing restroom and limiting the area's capacity for park amenities and events. The new sewer connection will allow NYC Parks to retrofit existing buildings, and the possibility of enabling improved sports fields and the development of new recreation facilities in this section of the park. In design phase.

Van Cortlandt Park East Perimeter Restoration:

Along Gun Hill Road, Jerome Avenue, East 233rd Street, and Van Cortlandt Park East, significant improvements are needed to paths, retaining walls, sidewalks, fencing, and security lighting. Work may include new retaining wall construction, excavation, and reconstruction of paths with stormwater management elements, as well as targeted installations such as timber barrier rail. These improvements span several miles of the park perimeter and can be scaled based on available funding. Please note that a capital needs estimate is needed before any of the scope listed are finalized.

Birding Bridge

This project will replace an existing, degraded wood and asphalt crossing over the wetland north of Van Cortlandt Lake between the Putnam Greenway and the Parade Grounds. A new steel bridge will be designed with separate lanes for users of the John Kieran Nature Trail and the golf cart users of the Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course. It will also realign a portion of the trail and approach to increase accessibility and limit impacts on the adjacent wetland. The bridge replacement will be scheduled to minimize impact on golf operations. In design phase.

Woodland Crossings

The Van Cortlandt Woodland Crossings project will overhaul two crossings—one over and one under—the Major Deegan Expressway which are crucial pedestrian connections between isolated portions of Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. At the Jerome Avenue overpass, the project will upgrade and reconfigure the pedestrian path and create an accessible connection at the entrance to the woods on the west side of the overpass. At the John Muir trail underpass, the project will replace lighting, repainting surfaces, remove and reconstruct pavements, and plant shrubs and trees at both entrances. In design phase.

Van Cortlandt Park Electricity

The transformer which provides power to the park headquarters, the nature center, the restrooms and the Van Cortlandt House Museum is not operational. Repairs were completed to the transformer, but the trunk needs to be replaced and connected to the grid. Parks will confirm if this work is fully funded.

Van Cortlandt Park Pool Reconstruction

This project will reconstruct the entire pool complex at Van Cortlandt Park, including the pool tubs and decks for the main and wading pools, filtration system, and will also add new security lighting, locker rooms and offices, while making the facility fully ADA accessible. This marks the first substantial renovation of the facility since it was originally built in 1968. Planned for FY27-FY28. Design phase will start in May 2026.

Van Cortlandt Park Construction of New Restroom North Parade Ground

Restroom design has been approved. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2026 and complete by end of 2026.

Van Cortlandt Park Limited Scope Synthetic Turf & Track Reconstruction

Work is planned for 2027. Temporary patching to occur in spring 2026.

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance Equipment

New van. Planned for FY29

Fort Independence Playground Reconstruction

Replace 20 year-old playground equipment and safety mats at Fort Independence Playground. Planned. Design expected to be complete in June 2026. Procurement will take 18 months.

Washington's Walk /Fort Four Playground Restroom & Basketball Court Reconstruction(PRB X038-118M)

Reconstruction of restroom and basketball courts. Work is complete. Ribbon cutting planned for the spring.

Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park Pond Wall Construction

Committee requested the creation of a barrier wall to prevent pond water from overflowing into the Metro North parking area and station entrance at Spuyten Duyvil train station. This project is being managed by multiple agencies and will continue to move slowly through the process. Planned for FY29. Community input sessions are planned in April/May 2026. The full scope of the project is TBD.

Ewen Park Staircase Reconstruction

Construction is expected to begin in March 2026. The staircase will be closed for about a year.

Restoration of Historic Kingsbridge Heights Community Center Building

Committee requested complete funding of the roof repairs, re-pointing the façade, and restoration of interior walls back to a state of good repair from water damage. Update heat and windows to meet energy efficiency best practices. Parks has completed their survey of work needed. Design phase will start in late February/early March.

Seton Park Tennis Court & Pickle Ball Court Reconstruction

Project is currently underfunded by \$5m. Parks is speaking to Council Member Dinowitz's office to review funding opportunities. Planned FY29

Presentation on Existing Conditions at the Seton Park Dog Run

No presenter attended the committee meeting to speak on the existing conditions of the Seton Park Dog Run. Joe Magneri spoke to existing conditions. The existing dog run was not built as a formal dog run and so lacks some of the features of Parks designed dog runs. Parks does not maintain dog runs in general and relies on volunteers to do so. There are many members of the community who are concerned about the dog run and some informally assist with its care, but so far, so dog run group has formed to organize the community members. Joe Magneri said that he would have his team put wood chips down in the run which should last longer than mulch and assist with drainage. He will also make repairs on the latched. A caller who identified herself as Vivian volunteered to assist with organizing a dog run group and will follow-up with the board office. Volunteers are currently getting water for the dogs from a drinking fountain near the backstop. Joe will talk to shops to see if they have a spare drinking fountain with an integrated doggie bowl. Committee chair said this was a popular amenity near the dog run in Fort Independence Playground. Parks estimates that this is one of the largest dog runs in the city and so a capital project may reduce the overall size if the costs are exorbitant to rebuild and maintain current size.

Discussion – FY28 Committee Capital and Expense Budget Priorities

Bailey Playground - \$15.5m estimate for playground, sport courts, utilities. Does not include combining with Tibbetts Tail to create area for benches, dog run or other community proposed uses. \$6m for the restroom, but a study is needed. Tibbetts Tail fencing has been installed. The committee will continue to advocate for this work.

Parks Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Headquarters in District 8 - M&O is running operations out of St James Park because they lack a facility within our district. They have historically operated out of Bailey Playground informally due to the proximity to transportation. May not be feasible in

Bailey Playground as part of reconstruction but the community can request it. Parks proposed a priority of “Reconstruction of public restroom to include M&O headquarters” or a request for the headquarters and study for location.

Van Cortlandt Park Nature Center - Parks has priced \$4.6m for updating the restroom. This would result in the loss of a stall in order to make the facility ADA accessible. The committee expressed concern about spending money to have fewer restrooms when the existing conditions are inadequate. The committee inquired about adding space for additional restrooms by eliminating the Nature Center which is often closed due to lack of staffing. Committee requested nature center utilization information and an estimate on the cost of reconstruction since the nature center is also in poor condition.

Repair Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park - Parks has fixed the cracked pipe up to the street. DEP will need to dig up the street to run a new connection. This work is currently not funded. Would need to be requested as an Environment and Sanitation Committee priority.

Cross Country Trail (Van Cortlandt Park) Reconstruction – Van Cortlandt Park Alliance requested support for a budget priority to reconstruct the cross-country trail project including the parade ground.

Park Enforcement Command in Van Cortlandt Park – a new class of Parks Enforcement officers just graduated. 100 for the whole agency for the whole city. Not baselined so they are not in the budget in a continuing way and would need to be refunded again in the new fiscal year. Precarious.

Reservoir Lighting – Parks chair has received complaints from the Public Safety chair regarding break-ins of vehicles around Jerome Park Reservoir. Committee needs to consider if they would like to continue supporting lighting around the reservoir as a joint budget priority with public safety. The agencies involved would be Parks and DEP and so would likely need support from the Environment and Sanitation Committee. Committee has pursued this in the past and DOT, who is responsible for lighting for the Parks Department, did a study and found that lighting was adequate for driving conditions and would not review walking conditions. Board office to follow up with appropriate agencies (Parks, DEP, DOT) on best next steps.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm

Minutes submitted by Deb Travis

Recording Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkS8JDeNMuo>

ADA Presentation attached



Accessible Design in NYC Parks

Parks

STANDARD ACCESS PRACTICES



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS

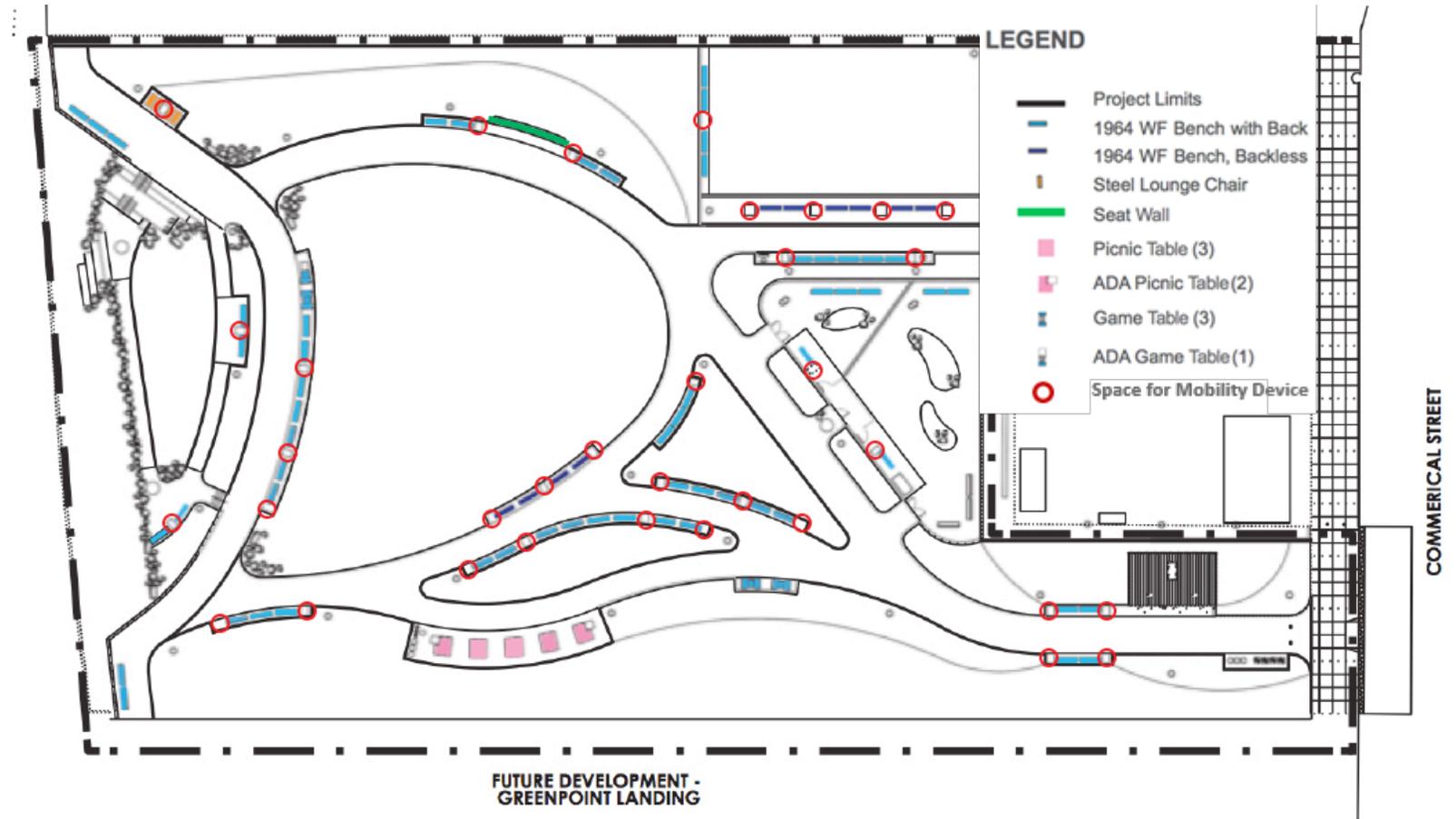


Morningside Park, Playground 123



Morningside Park, Playground 123





PARKS' ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS & FURNISHINGS



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



Amphitheater Seating



ADA Picnic Table



Benches with Backs and Arms



Table with Companion Seating



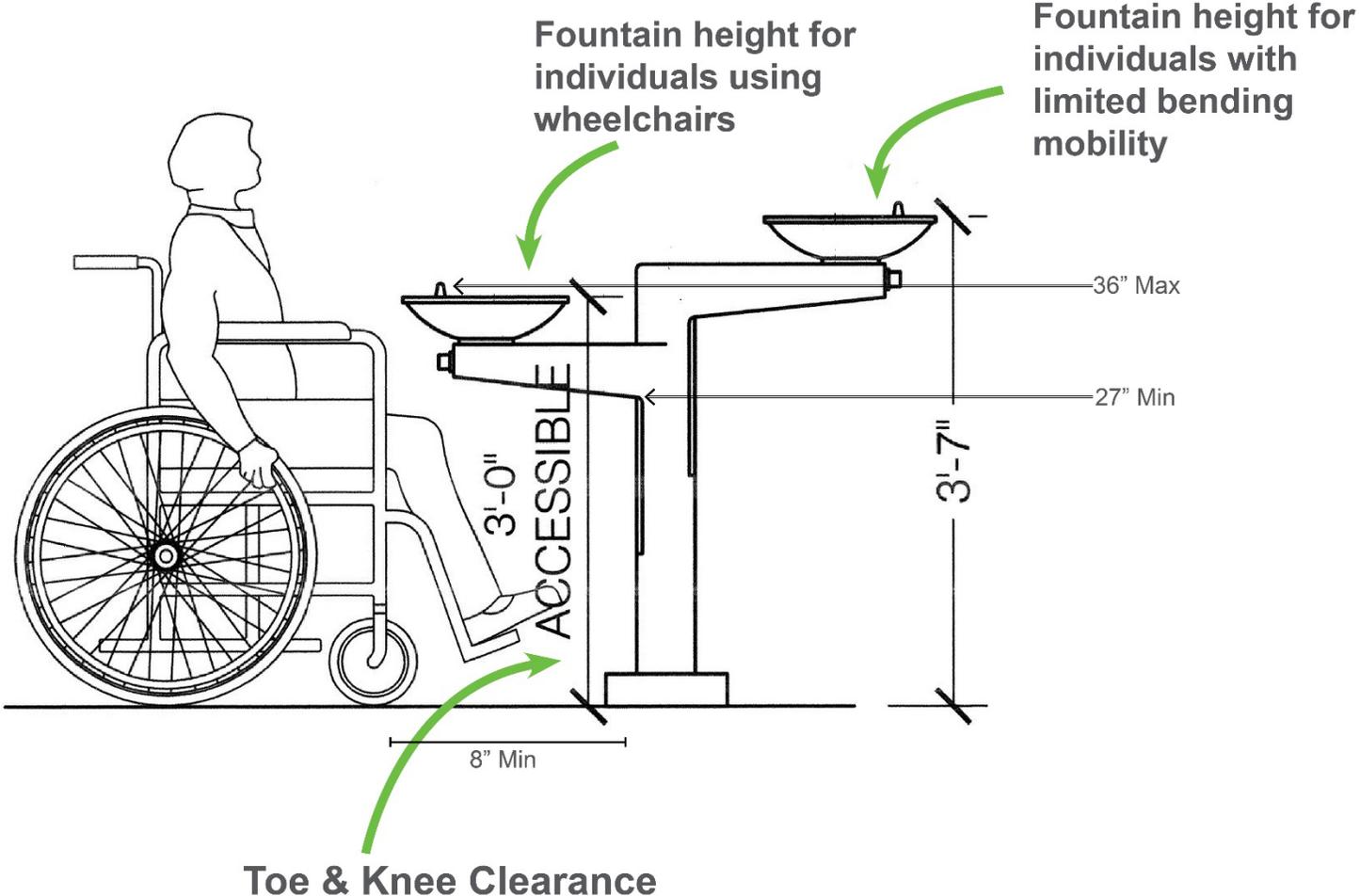
Bench with Companion Seating



Table with Companion Seating



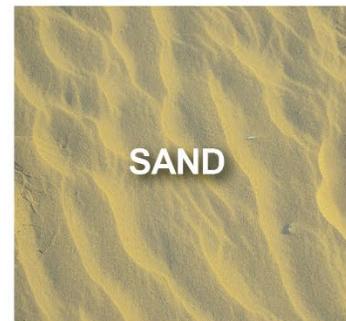
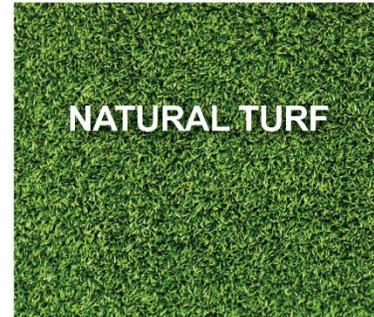
Drinking fountains can be either one fountain with two bowls at two heights or two separate fountains of different heights.



ACCESSIBLE SURFACING



INACCESSIBLE SURFACING



NOTE: Accessibility of both natural and synthetic turf depends on maintenance - the slope must be within guidelines and the turf must be firm. To test this, Parks uses a rotational penetrometer.



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Sidewalk with Accessible Granite Block



Beach Wheelchairs Available for Use

Please call (718) 318-4000 between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily.



NYC Parks

A018



Beach Access Surface

Visit nyc.gov/parks/beach-trails for a list of beach mat and beach wheelchair locations citywide.



NYC Parks

A004



A007



A006



A012



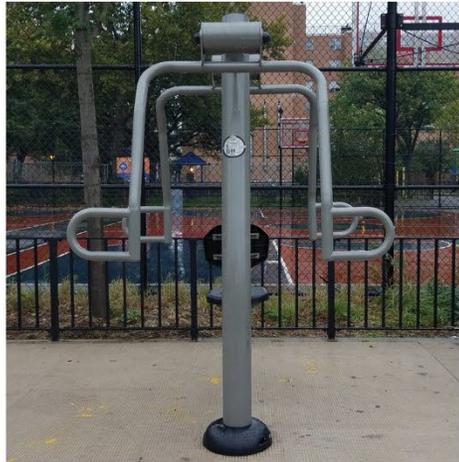
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ADULT FITNESS EQUIPMENT



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | ADA Fitness Equipment

SPRAY PLAY FEATURES



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Spray Showers



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Spray Showers



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Spray Showers

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



River Avenue Playground



Playground 123



Luther Gulick Playground



Laurelton West Playground



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Using Grade Change to Provide Access to Higher Decks of Play Units



Indian Road Playground - Partial Ramping



Sol Lain Playground - Partial Ramping





Laurelton West Playground - Full Ramping



White Playground - Using Grade Changes





ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Accessible Swings



SENSORY PLAY

- Children discover their world through all senses (touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing, as well as balance and spatial relations)
- Playgrounds can offer sensory-rich experiences that will help in the development of children of all abilities







ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Ground Level Play



Accessible Places for Quiet or Imaginative Play



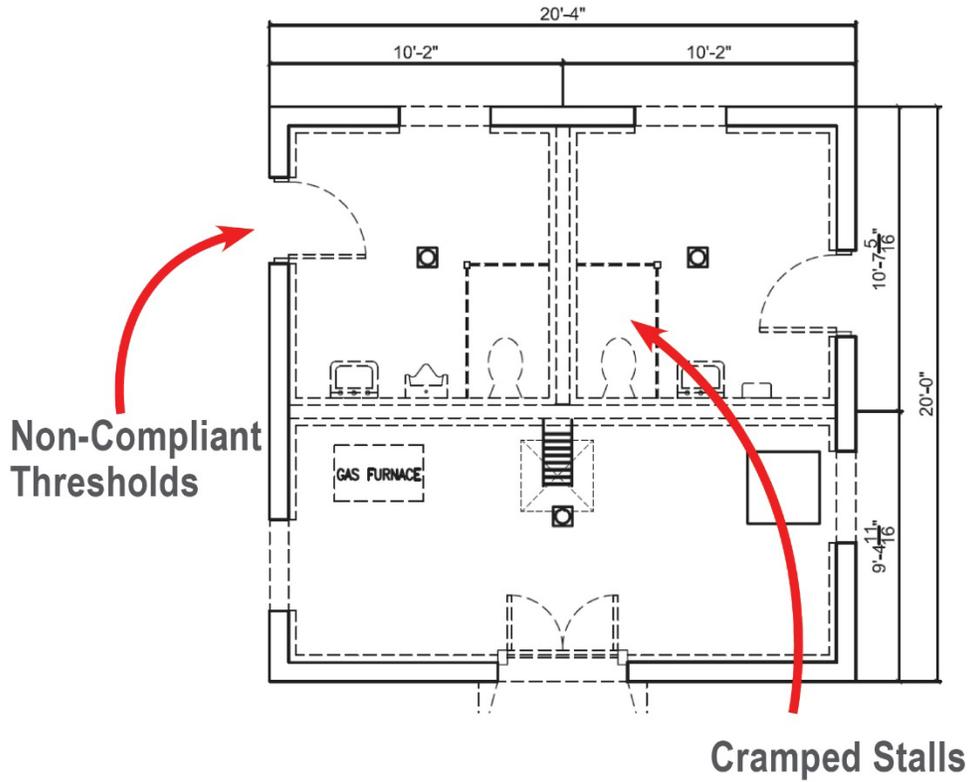
BUILDING RENOVATIONS



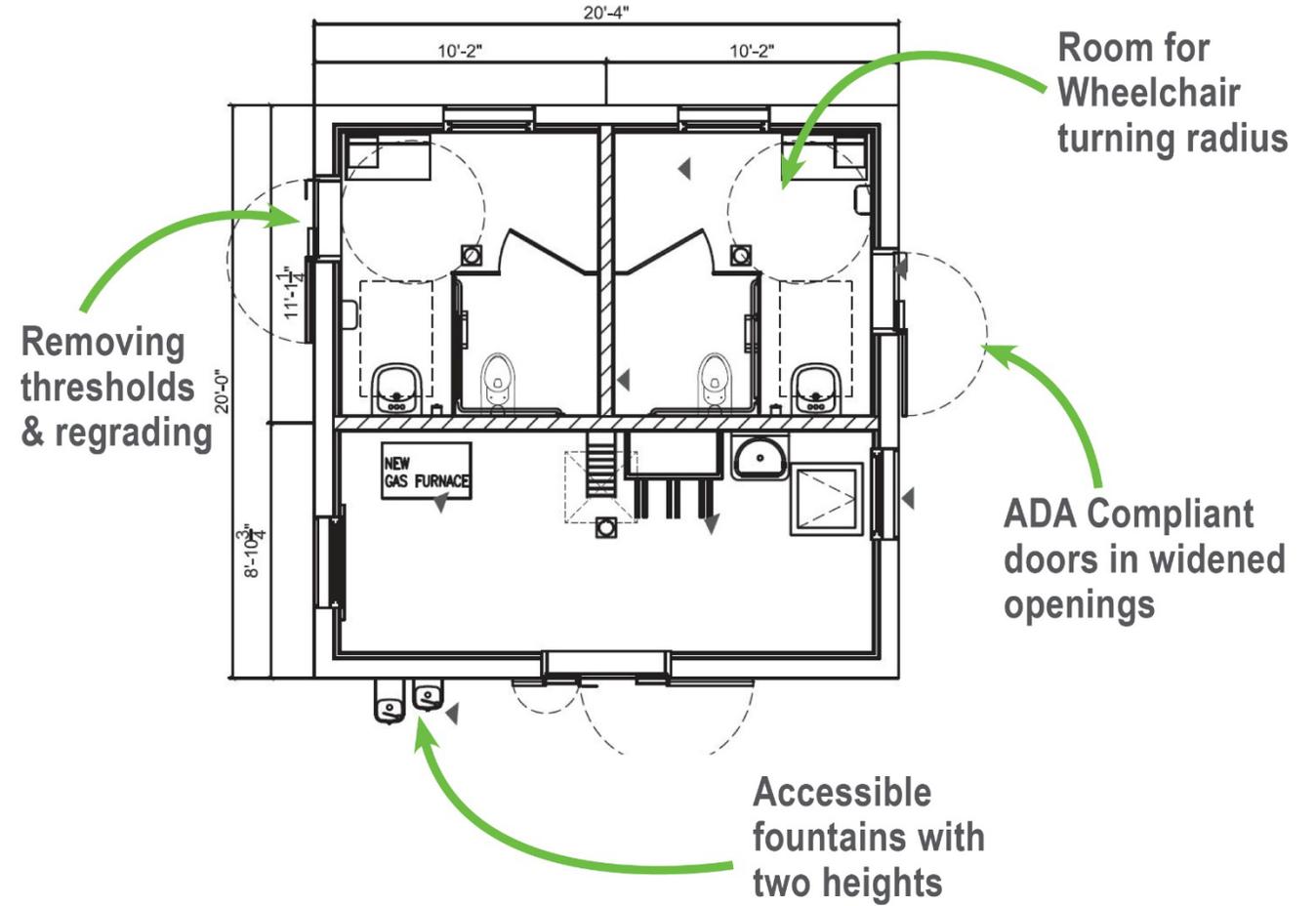
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ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS

Existing Comfort Station



After Renovation



BEACHES



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Accessible Beaches: Mobi-Mats

ACCESSIBLE POOLS



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



Hydraulic Lift Chair



Ramp Structure Access



NYC Parks

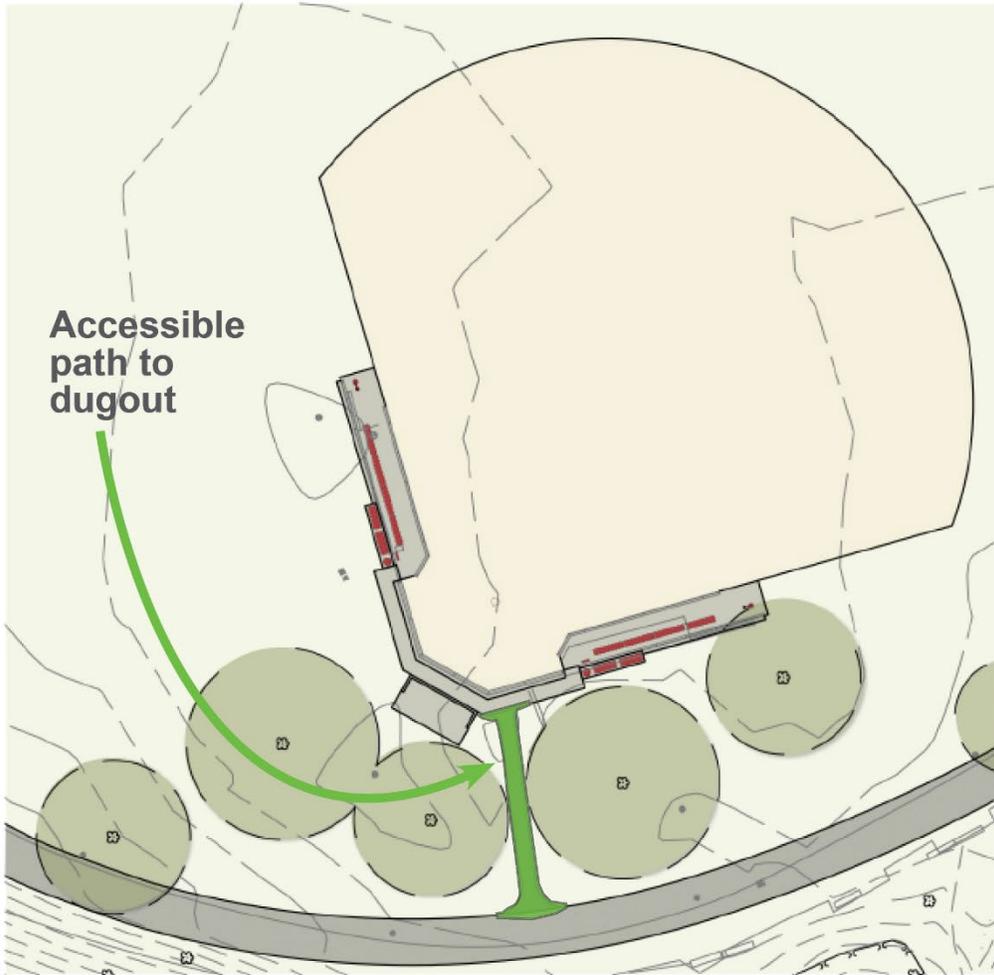
ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Pool Lifts and Ramps

BALLFIELDS



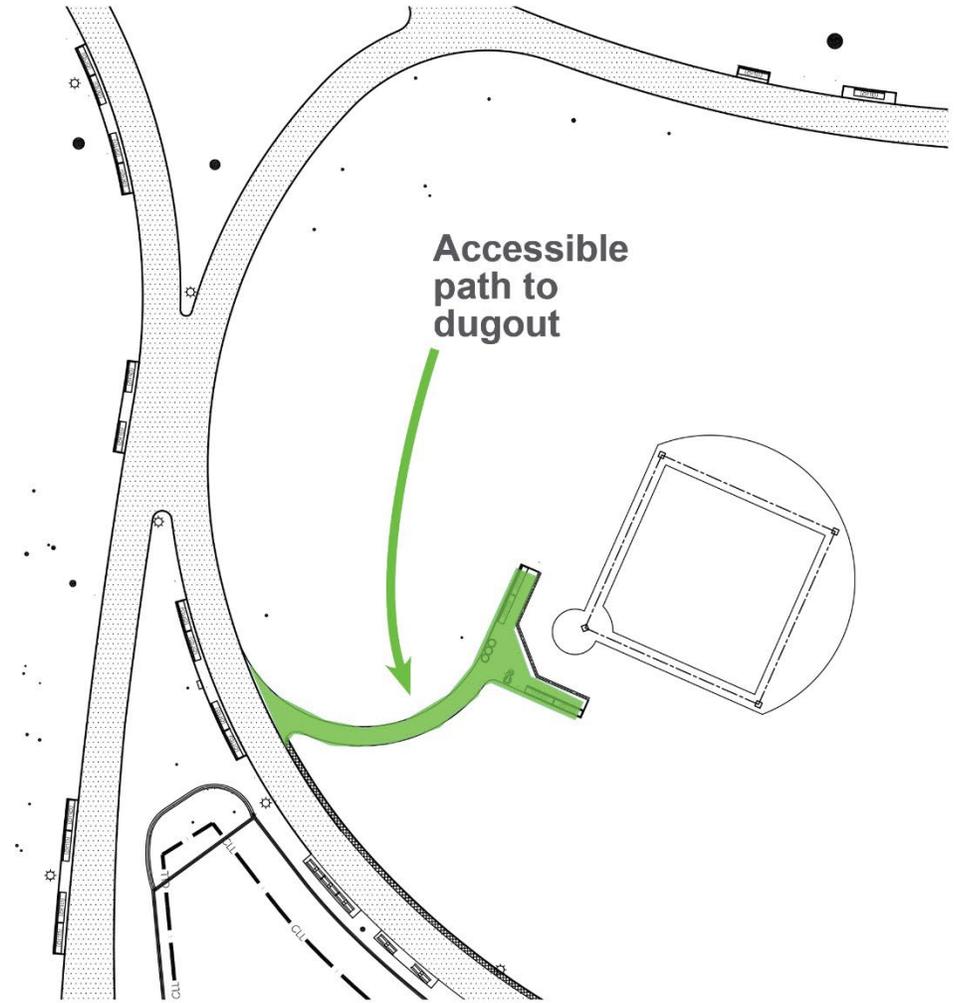
NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



Prospect Park

Prospect Park Alliance



Forest Park





Concrete Paths
in and between
dugouts

Prospect Park

Prospect Park Alliance



J.J. Walker Park

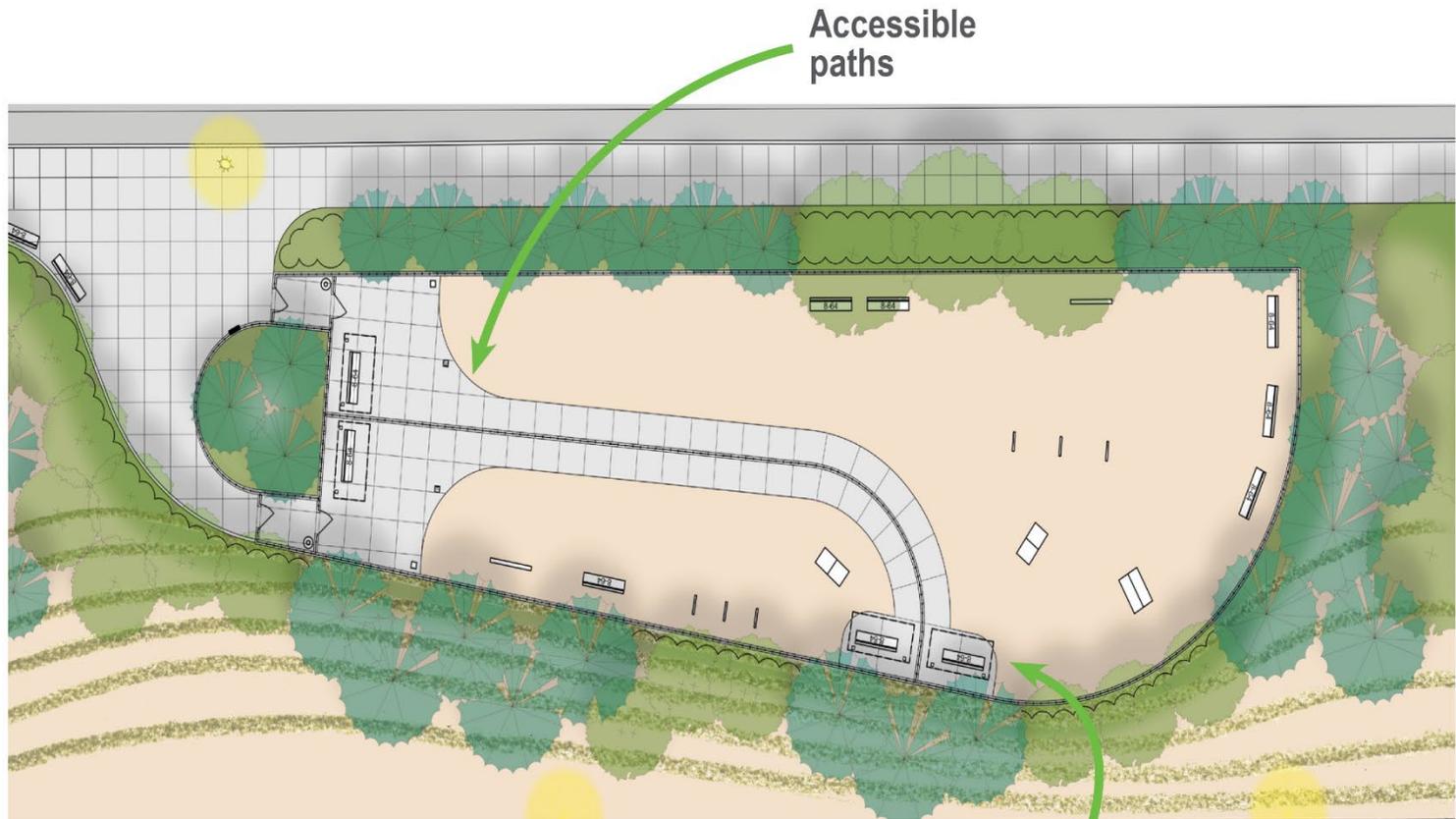


DOG RUNS



NYC Parks

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS



Accessible paths

Benches with companion seating.

Shorefront Dog Run



Accessible Concrete Pads



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Dog Runs: Concrete Pads and Companion Seating



ACCESSIBLE DESIGN IN NYC PARKS | Dog Runs: Concrete Pads and Companion Seating