

Roberto Clemente Revitalization

Public Comments and Responses: June 19, 2014

General Project

- **Who has worked on the project plans; specifically the names of consultants and their roles?**

A team consisting of State Parks regional and Albany office staff, park managers, and retained consultants with expertise in landscape architecture, marine engineering, and related fields developed the concepts and are collaboratively working on the plans. The firms involved are CH2M Hill, The RBA Group, Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, eDesign Dynamics, AKRF, Robert Silman Associates, and ADS Engineers.

- **How were projects prioritized for this plan?**

The projects are prioritized based on multiple criteria, including health and safety risks, protection of infrastructure, code compliance, the remaining useful life of existing structures, and the available funding sources (i.e. certain funds may only be used for certain types of improvements). In the case of the Bulkhead the priority is based on the failure of the existing marine structures (sheet piling) and the need to address resilience to future storm events/flooding in a timely manner. The Lower Plaza is very closely integrated with the Intertidal Area portion of the Bulkhead project, it sustained significant damage to the lighting and electrical systems during Superstorm Sandy, and is one of the mostly heavily used parts of the Park. The North Shoreline, which protects the park north of the Bulkhead and Lower Plaza, was prioritized because of the erosion experienced during Superstorm Sandy and the need to improve resilience to future storm events. Finally, the Upper Plaza project, which is funded by a different funding source from the other projects, was prioritized because of significant structural concerns that have to be addressed.

- **How much of the plan is open for discussion?**

The entire plan has been presented for public review and comment. Certain projects have been prioritized including the bulkhead and related shoreline improvements, and are further evolved in concept and design than others, such as the development of the Southern area of the Park, which remains entirely conceptual.

- **How does State Parks arrive at a final decision for these projects?**

The final projects will be a product of the current design process, which includes consideration of comments and other input from the public as well as the expertise of agency staff consultants. Any public design project may include compromises to achieve a project that can be constructed within the available budget. Upon completion of the design process including approved plans and specifications, a construction contract will be publically bid in accordance with New York State law. Work will not proceed until construction contracts are approved by the Attorney general and Office of the State Comptroller and the agency directs the contractor(s) to proceed.

- **How many of the proposed projects are funded at this time?**
At present funding has been identified for the bulkhead, esplanade, shoreline/ intertidal area, lower plaza, and upper plaza improvements.
- **Has the State considered alternative funding sources for these projects?**
State Parks has and will continue to pursue new and alternative sources to supplement funding for the project. Currently the projects identified will be funded from the following sources: New York Works, federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and Bronx Borough President funding.
- **Will the Park be open during construction?**
State Parks is keenly aware of the need to maintain normal park operations to the fullest extent possible during construction. It is anticipated that work will be phased so that unaffected park areas will remain open to the public during construction. Whenever possible, alternative access and interim uses will be introduced to maintain meaningful public access to the park and its programs. While areas will clearly need to be closed while under construction, we anticipate that the majority of the Park will be open at any given time.
- **Address security throughout the park—lighting, signage, for children—increase police presence.**
The design process will address lighting and signage as elements of all park improvement projects. Additional police/ security patrols will be addressed as a part of the park’s operations, which will be reviewed and adapted to the meet the needs of the patrons.
- **Did you consider utilizing solar / alternative energy for the Park?**
The proposed projects will have several sustainability features. All lighting will be LED, which will reduce electricity demand. Green infrastructure has been integrated throughout the esplanade, intertidal area, and lower plaza to improve drainage. And additional operational sustainability and energy efficiency measures, including solar and alternative energy solutions, will be considered as the design of the projects continues to evolve.

North End

- **If access is removed or displaced from the north end of the Park, we need a new location for boat access. Don’t eliminate boating/waterfront access at the North End too soon. Ensure alternative access is planned.**
State Parks recognizes need to maintain water access and recreational and programmatic continuity as the projects advance. The current plans call for the boat dock adjacent to the Lower Plaza to be replaced as part of the bulkhead project. Conceptual plans for the South End include a boat house and dock. In addition, to the fullest extent possible, alternative/ interim use plans will be developed to avoid or limit any interruptions.

- **Will the new ball fields accommodate football? Will there be bleachers, lights, goal posts, lines, etc.?**
The current concept plan includes a multiple-use synthetic ball field to address a wide range of patron demand, including lines/ hash marks for football, baseball and other popular field sports. The range of other amenities such as lighting, goal posts, bleachers, etc. has not been defined at this time and will be influenced by available space (site lines and conditions) as well as available funding.
- **Will the running /walking track be replaced?**
Yes, the conceptual designs for the north shoreline project include construction of the football/baseball field with a walking path around it on all sides, as currently exists.
- **Will the new fields be turf or synthetic?**
It is anticipated that all new ball fields will be synthetic to afford flexibility in use, resiliency to environmental conditions, and operational sustainability.
- **Consider additional concession stands near the North End fields.**
State Parks will develop plans that can accommodate additional demand-based concessions, including fixed/ seasonal locations, as well as portables such as food trucks, etc.
- **Will the proposed improvements add restrooms at the North End of the Park?**
The current concept plan does not contemplate adding additional restrooms in the North end of the Park; however the agency is considering improving the existing restrooms and increasing hours of operation to accommodate patron need.

Lower Plaza

- **Will the new bike path create conflicts at the plaza? Consider making cyclists walk through busy areas.**
Any shared or “multiple use” path or way creates potential for conflicting uses, particularly among bicyclists and pedestrians. The design process will give careful attention to this issue to assure that the final design affords a pathway with ample room to accommodate the intended uses, and limits the risks of conflicts to the extent possible. Current designs for the shared use path include rumble strips for traffic calming and clear signage. In addition, operational controls, including rules and regulations for use, will be developed to assure a safe and enjoyable park amenity for all users.

Esplanade

- **What is the proposed height of the esplanade fence?**
The esplanade railing will be replaced to meet code requirements of a 42 inch height. The railing will also be mounted on the face of the bulkhead to eliminate any ledge on the water side of the railing.

South End

- **What is the timeline for the development of South End projects?**

A timeline for development of South End projects has not yet been established and all potential projects presented are wholly conceptual at this time. It is likely, but not certain that most South End improvements will follow other improvements in the Park including the replacement of the bulkhead, esplanade, and related shoreline improvements, as well as those in the Lower Plaza and North End.

- **When will South End projects be funded?**

Funding has not been identified for South End Projects and as such no timeline has been developed.

- **A dog run is needed at the South End.**

State Parks recognizes the needs of dog owners and their pets and will consider a dog-run in its continuing concept planning for the South End of the Park.

- **Is there an opportunity for a public/private partnership with respect to funding a boat house?**

State Parks welcomes and stands ready to discuss public-private and community-based partnerships to support capital improvement projects and public programming- including in support of a boat house in the Park.

- **Consider working with River Park Towers' tenants association at on South End projects. Hold additional meetings to gain input.**

State Parks welcomes input and will continue to engage the residents of River Park Towers, the surrounding community, elected officials, user groups and other stakeholders with respect to planning improvements in the South End. Additional opportunities for public input will be presented as the design process continues and concepts for the South End evolve.

Park Operations

- **Can there be a standing/greater presence of emergency services at the Park?**

State Park Police monitor the Park and Park has staff with emergency response training. In addition, the Park has close relationships with the local NYPD precinct and the local FDNY station.

- **Consider adding additional recreation for older patrons.**

State Parks recognizes the growing need for recreational opportunities for older adult patrons as well. Additional opportunities for such programming are being explored and will continue to do so. Public-private and community-based partnerships to achieve this goal will be welcomed.

- **Consider developing and expanding agricultural/ environmental programming for kids and adults.**

State Parks will consider developing and expanding agricultural/ environmental programming and welcomes public-private and community-based partnerships to advance these initiatives. It is anticipated

that the proposed shoreline improvements, particularly the interactive inter-tidal area will provide significant environmental educational opportunities for park and external programming.

- **Will larger boats have access to the Park?**

Other than police/ emergency vessels and those permitted for park work or programming, it is not anticipated that large vessels will have routine access to the park.

- **Reevaluate the hours of restroom operations—many are not open when the Park is open.**

State Parks will reevaluate the operating hours for restrooms.

- **Will the new landscaped areas be maintained? If not maintained, weeds will take over.**

The design team is carefully developing and reviewing all project plans for landscaped areas to ensure environmental and operational sustainability. Whenever possible, native/ low-maintenance plants will be used in the plan. In addition, State Parks is also in the process of improving its landscape staffing capabilities under the leadership of our NYC Regional Horticulturalist.

- **Why isn't the pool open by June 1st? Consider opening the pool to full capacity (additional lifeguards are needed for the pool to be completely open for swimming).**

Operation of the pool is complex and tied both to patron demand and the Park's operating budget. The pool's opening schedule generally coincides with the conclusion of the school year in late June, when demand peaks. Operating costs at Roberto Clemente, as with any public pool, are high and include not only the costs of equipment and supplies, but also substantial staffing costs for operations, filter plant operators, lifeguards, etc. Because the Park has a fixed operating budget, opportunities for savings are pursued when lower patron demand allows, such as by opening (and guarding) only a limited portion of the pool when crowd size allows. Beginning last year and continuing this year State Parks has initiated a "Learn to Swim" partnership with the American Red Cross at the Park. This partnership has resulted in the hiring of additional lifeguards and instructors to deliver swimming classes to many park patrons prior to normal pool operating hours. However the operating budget is not expected to increase, and therefore it is not expected that the current operating schedule will further expand.

- **How can we pay for the proposed improvement projects when we can't keep the pool open?**

State Parks' operating budget provides for pool operating costs, including supplies, staffing, lifeguards, etc. The operating budget is fixed and limited, and separate and distinct from State Parks' capital budget and the other available capital funding sources that will support the proposed projects. State Parks cannot use the capital funding available for these projects to subsidize or supplement the operating costs of the pool.

- **Collaborate with other communities regarding swimming have more swimming-related events.**

State Parks will consider developing and expanding swimming programming and welcomes public-private and community-based partnerships to advance these initiatives. State Parks new "Learn to Swim" partnership with the American Red Cross program at Roberto Clemente the last two summers is one example of the agency's commitment to aquatics programming.