



City of New York  
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TO: Robert Kulikowski, Director  
New York City Office of Environmental Coordination

FROM: Joshua Laird 

DATE: January 26, 2009

RE: Negative Declaration for the Randall's Island Sports Field Development Project  
CEQR # 09DPR002M

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The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR") is lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed Randall's Island Sports Field Development Project ("Proposed Action"). DPR along with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), and the Randall's Island Sports Foundation (RISF), is proposing to reconstruct or create 63 sports fields, some of which overlap, and pursue a concession agreement for the use of a portion of the total of 66 sports fields on Randall's Island Park by a group of independent schools during the academic school year (approximately September through June). In addition to the reconstruction or creation of 63 sports fields, the Sports Field Development Project includes the addition of six comfort stations, new parking areas and roadways, park amenities, signage, and upgraded utilities. The Proposed Action involves a discretionary action subject to review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), its implementing regulations as set forth in 6 NYCRR Part 617, and the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR).

In accordance with Executive Order 91 of 1977, as amended, and Title 62, Chapter 5 of the Rules of the City of New York, DPR assumed the role of lead agency for the environmental review of the above-referenced action. The assumption of lead agency status is consistent with the underlying mandate of CEQR that the appropriate lead agency be the agency "primarily responsible for carrying out, funding or approving an action," as well as with the criteria listed in Sections 5-03 (h) and 5-05 of Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York. DPR, as lead agency, has determined that the proposed project described below would not have a significant effect on the environment and is issuing a Negative Declaration based on the analyses contained in an Environmental Assessment Statement dated December 16, 2008.

### Project Description

The proposed action includes the reconstruction or creation of 63 sports fields to add to 3 existing fields for a total of 66 sports fields (some of which overlap) on Randall's Island, six comfort stations, new parking areas and roadways, park amenities, signage, and upgraded utilities, and the pursuit of a concession agreement with a group of independent schools for use of a portion of the fields. The Proposed Action is located on portions of Randall's and Wards Islands, located in the East River



beneath the Triborough Bridge, south of the South Bronx, east of East Harlem in Manhattan, and west of Astoria, Queens. The project area consists of 209 acres and includes Block 1819 lots 203, 50, 12, and part of lot 10.

The proposed project would reconfigure and restore the worn and non-regulation size fields, as well as add landscaping, drainage improvement, park amenities, and key infrastructure improvements throughout Randall's Island Park. The new fields will enable increased soccer, baseball, and softball programming, as well as additional field days for local public schools in communities in need of active recreation facilities. The proposed project will have a positive impact on New York City by helping to satisfy the demand for playing fields by the City's youth and adult leagues by adding a substantial amount of hours of additional playing time for current and new users of the fields. The additional playing hours are due not only to the overall increase in fields but also to the reduction of overlapping fields, to the synthetic surface treatment, and to field lighting allowing for extended hours of playing time.

The proposed concession would reserve the use of certain of the fields at certain times to the independent school teams (all of whom already hold permits for after-school field use on Randall's Island, in return for a concession fee. The concession would not change the nature or use of the fields from existing conditions, but would simply allocate use of certain fields by those who already use the existing fields and are anticipated to have continued use of the fields under the current DPR permit system.

Consultation on the environmental review was completed with all relevant agencies.. The Proposed Action has obtained design approval from the New York City Art Commission and NYSDEC State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES), Tidal Wetlands, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Joint Application Permits.

Pursuant to Section 5.05 of the Rules and Procedures for the City Environmental Quality Review and Title 6 Section 617.7 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulation, DPR has determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact on the environment. Attached please find the Negative Declaration and Parts One, Two, and Three of the Environmental Assessment Statement.

If you have any questions, please call Colleen Alderson, Director of Parklands, at 212-360-3441.

Distribution List:

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cc: Alessandro Olivieri, William Castro, Aimee Boden, Colleen Alderson

**City Environmental Quality Review  
Negative Declaration  
Notice of Determination of Non-Significance**

**Date Sent:** January 26, 2009

**Applicant Name and Address:** New York City Department of Parks and Recreation  
Arsenal- Central Park  
830 Fifth Avenue, Room 401  
New York, New York 10065

This Negative Declaration has been prepared in compliance with the requirement of the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) process as set forth in Executive Order 91 of 1977 and in the Rules of Procedure for the CEQR as adopted June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1991. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), as lead agency, has determined that the proposed action described below would not have a significant effect on the environment and is herein publishing a Negative Declaration.

**CEQR No.** 09DPR002M

**Name and Location of Project:** Randall's Island Sports Field Development Project

The Proposed Action is located on Randall's and Wards Island, located in the East River south of the South Bronx, east of East Harlem in Manhattan, and west of Astoria, Queens. Randall's and Wards Island are part of New York County, New York.

**CEQR Status:** Type I

**Description of Proposal:** The proposed action is the reconstruction or creation of 63 sports fields, some of which overlap, and a concession agreement for the use of a portion of the total of 66 sports fields on Randall's Island Park by a group of independent schools during the academic school year (approximately September through June). In addition to the reconstruction or creation of 63 sports fields, the Sports Field Development Project includes the addition of six comfort stations, new parking areas and roadways, park amenities, signage, and upgraded utilities.

**Statement of No Significant Effect:** New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, as lead agency for this project, has determined pursuant to 6 NYCRR 617.11, that the proposed action will have no significant effect on the quality of the environment.

**Supporting Statement:** The above determination is based on an environmental assessment and supporting documentation, which concludes no significant impact on the quality of the environment as a result of the proposed project. The reasons supporting this determination are set forth below:

1. **LAND USE, ZONING AND PUBLIC POLICY:** It was determined based on the analysis that no significant land use, zoning, or public policy impacts would result due to the proposed action. The proposed action would not create adverse land use impacts or introduce incompatible uses that interfere with the existing study area. Portions of Randall's Island are mapped as parkland and the rest of the project area is under DPR jurisdiction, and, therefore, all such areas are not subject to zoning. The proposed project is consistent with park uses and would greatly enhance existing recreational uses within Randall's Island Park. All other existing uses within other areas of Randall's Island would remain as is and are expected to benefit from the more attractive public space and improved infrastructure. The proposed action is not likely to have impacts on public policy, as it does not conflict with any established public policy or plan, and is compatible with the general goals of the City and RISF's Management Plan, as well as the East Harlem Empire Zone and the New York City's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

The proposed concession would reserve the use of certain of the fields during after-school hours throughout the school year to independent school teams (all of whom already hold permits for after-school field use on Randall's Island), in return for a concession fee. The proposed concession would not change the nature or use of the fields, but would simply determine who would use certain fields at certain times. The percentage of the total number of fields that would be included in the concession is anticipated to be considerably smaller than the percentage of total fields currently used by the independent schools. DPR is considering giving public schools and community-based youth organizations a priority to use a portion of the remaining fields during the same after-school hours. Moreover, the reconstructed and new fields resulting from the sports fields development project are intended to open up significant new opportunities for public school teams and community-based organizations to play during those after-school hours, as well as at other times. DPR anticipates that outside this time period, the fields will generally be available for use in accordance with DPR's existing permit practice.

2. **SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS:** DPR is proposing to reconstruct a series of sports fields and pursue a concession agreement for the use of a portion of the sports fields on Randall's Island Park. The proposed action is not expected to displace businesses or employees or require a detailed assessment of potential impacts from direct displacement caused by the proposed action. Furthermore, as the proposed action is not projected to introduce more than 200 new units of housing or more than 200,000 square feet of commercial development into the study area, a preliminary assessment of socioeconomic impacts due to indirect displacement is not necessary according to analysis thresholds of the *CEQR Technical Manual*. Therefore, no significant adverse socioeconomic impacts are expected as a result of the proposed action. By redeveloping a portion of Randall's Island and increasing the available recreational opportunities, the proposed action would have a positive socioeconomic impact. All other existing uses on the island would remain and would likely benefit from the more attractive open space and improved infrastructure.
3. **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES:** The proposed action will not result in any adverse impacts to community facilities and services. The proposed action would not add any residents to the study area or displace any existing community facilities, therefore a detailed analysis is unwarranted and no significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

4. OPEN SPACE: The proposed project will not result in any adverse impacts to open space, but will result in the reconstruction or creation of 63 sustainable fields on the island to add to 3 existing fields for a total of 66, some of which will overlap, and the addition of new park amenities such as comfort stations, signage, lighting, and associated infrastructure. The field surface improvements and lighting for the fields will enable more park use. A concession agreement with a group of independent schools for use of a portion of the fields would reserve the use of certain of the fields at certain times to the independent school teams which already hold permits for after-school field use under current DPR permitting procedures. The concession would not change the nature or use of the fields from existing conditions, but would simply allocate use of certain fields by those who already use the existing fields and are assured use of the fields under the current DPR permit system. DPR is also considering giving a priority to public schools and community-based organizations for use of a portion of the remaining fields during the same after-school hours. For the above reasons, no significant adverse impacts on open space are expected.
5. SHADOWS: DPR is proposing to reconstruct a series of sports fields and pursue a concession agreement for the use of certain of the sports fields on Randall's Island Park. As the proposed action does not involve the construction of any structures other than comfort stations and a substation of minimal height, no significant shadow impacts are expected.
6. HISTORIC RESOURCES: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) determined that there are no properties of architectural significance in the area of the proposed project. The proposed action is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts on archaeological resources with the project following a set of procedures to be reviewed and consulted upon by the LPC as they are carried out: 1) DPR will conduct archaeological field testing at those sites where the work is not yet complete: Sunken Garden Fields, Central Fields, and Hell Gate Fields; 2) As necessary, DPR will conduct additional archaeological work on these three parcels. This would include a more detailed sampling strategy and measures to be taken if archaeological resources need to be protected or avoided; and 3) DPR proposes to memorialize the disturbed areas within the project area with pamphlets or other educational materials.
7. URBAN DESIGN/VISUAL RESOURCES: The proposed project will not result in any adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources. The proposed project would be compatible with the existing recreational uses on Randall's Island, and would not change block form, demap an active street, or negatively affect the street hierarchy, street wall, curb cuts, pedestrian activity or street space elements. The proposed new roadways, pathways, signage, lighting, and park amenities will likely have a positive effect on the island's urban design and will not result in any adverse impacts to urban design or visual resources.
8. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER: The proposed project would maintain recreational use of the project site, and would not conflict with surrounding land uses or land use policies, nor result in significant adverse land use impacts. The proposed project is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts on the technical areas relating to neighborhood character, including land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources,

socioeconomic conditions, traffic or noise. The proposed project, therefore, would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

9. **NATURAL RESOURCES:** The proposed project will not result in any direct or indirect impact to significant natural resources. Specifically, there will be no degradation of water quality resources, wetlands functions, upland resources or built resources of the island. The project will support the freshwater and tidal wetlands restoration plans that provide for enhanced water quality, wildlife habitat and passive recreation opportunities due to the installation of stormwater management features throughout the site, which have the additional attribute of providing long term benefits for water retention, recharge and quality. Trees that will be removed to construct the sports fields will be replaced by the planting of over 5,000 native tree species and several hundred native shrubs. Additionally, short-term measures during construction will be reduced or eliminated by implementing a range of techniques and sediment and erosion control practices such as sediment control basins, temporary silt fences, anti-tracking aprons, and perimeter swales installed around the project site.
10. **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:** No significant adverse impacts from hazardous materials are expected as a result of the proposed action. Project components such as geotextile fabric for a subsurface demarcation layer, the installation of vapor barriers beneath comfort stations, the installation of new field surfaces over the recreation areas, and the addition of sod, or topsoil or mulch with hydroseeding for landscaped areas. In addition, measures will be taken during construction to ensure the safety of workers and include the development of a site-specific Health and Safety Plan (HASP) and dust-control procedures.
11. **WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM:** The proposed action is within the jurisdiction of the City's coastal management zone boundaries. As such, a Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP) Consistency Assessment was completed. Parks determined that the proposed project would be consistent with all applicable policies of the Local WRP.
12. **INFRASTRUCTURE:** The proposed action will not result in any adverse impact to infrastructure. The island's utilities, including water, sewers, and electric, will be upgraded and new gas service may be added. The proposed water mains will be able to accommodate the new fields and amenities, new sanitary sewers will be installed to enable service to the new comfort stations, and the implementation of a comprehensive storm water management that will reduce pollutants entering the East and Harlem Rivers will result in no significant impacts to infrastructure as a result of the Sports field development project.
13. **SOLID WASTE AND SANITATION SERVICES:** DPR manages its own wastes in public parks. As a result of the sports field development project the amount of garbage to be generated as a result of the project will likely be similar to existing levels of garbage and will not create a significant impact on sanitation services.
14. **ENERGY:** As part of the proposed project, a new electrical substation would be constructed on the northern part of the island, beneath the Bronx ramp of the Triborough Bridge. The substation would feature four transformers, incoming sections, distribution sections, 15 kilowatt switchgear, and associated equipment. The new substation would help to alleviate the strain on the existing network and provide power for the new park amenities and

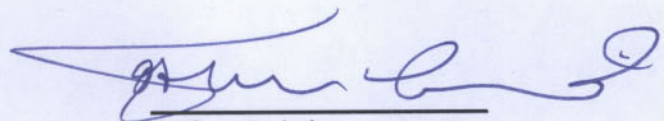
lighting throughout the island. Therefore, the proposed action would not create adverse energy impacts and would not require a detailed assessment.

15. **TRAFFIC AND PARKING:** The analysis demonstrates that the Proposed Action would not create an adverse impact on the study area roadway system during the weekday midday and Saturday midday peak hours. The results of these analyses show that the additional traffic demand generated by the proposed Action would not generate any significant adverse traffic impacts at the seven (7) key study intersections analyzed on Randall's Island during either the weekday midday or Saturday midday peak hours. The proposed project includes small, designated parking areas closer to field areas than the previous parking arrangement, which will help discourage parking on the new fields. About 766 spaces will be available on the island, a net decrease of 214 spaces. While there will be fewer available parking spaces, it is anticipated that there will no longer be large-scale events which depend upon parking at Randall's Island Park; most events will be smaller than in the past, and will be planned alongside mass transit options, including buses and ferries. Furthermore, because these spaces were over-concentrated in a few large facilities and too far from many of the field areas, they were under-utilized. No significant impacts are therefore expected.
16. **TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIANS:** The proposed changes to the Randall's Island sports fields should not have a significant impact on the M35 bus route, and the institution of a multi-use trail system consisting of separate pedestrian and bicycle/in-line skating paths will enable better access throughout the island. The trail is designed to redirect pedestrian traffic away from the major roadways by creating a variety of safe, inviting non-vehicular routes, and will encourage non-vehicular travel by connecting access points to facilities and providing clear circulation for island visitors. These improvements will have a positive effect on pedestrians on the island and are not expected to have an impact on transit and pedestrians.
17. **AIR QUALITY:** The proposed project will not result in any significant adverse impact regarding air quality with the proposed action. The Level of Service (LOS) changes related to traffic as a result of the proposed project are minimal and do not decrease below LOS C, and would have no effect on traffic congestion in the area. No carbon monoxide impacts, therefore, are expected. The proposed action is not predicted to affect levels of particulate matter of 2.5 micrometers (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) levels in the project area, as there are no significant increases in diesel vehicles or significant decreases in LOS. Since there is no overall change in regional vehicle miles traveled associated with this project, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission burdens with the proposed action are predicted to demonstrate no change from the future no-action scenario.
18. **NOISE:** The proposed project will not result in any significant adverse noise impacts. The proposed action will not cause a noticeable increase in noise levels on Randall's Island due to limited traffic increases and, therefore no significant adverse impacts are expected.
19. **CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS:** The proposed project will not result in any significant adverse construction impacts. The proposed action's construction activities are designed to present a minimal impact on existing park users and are proceeding in a phased approach. Overall, the construction effects of the proposed project would be temporary, and are not considered significant.

20. PUBLIC HEALTH: The proposed project will not result in any adverse impact to public health. The proposed action includes the construction of additional synthetic turf fields, with specific measures planned to aid in the reduction of the heat effect known to occur with synthetic turf treatment. Specific measures include the use of alternative synthetic material, additional comfort stations and water fountains, the planting of more than 5,000 trees to add shaded area, and education for staff, coaches, and permit holders.

Parks, in consultation with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, has tested the crumb rubber on ten of the synthetic turf fields (one existing and nine new) on Randall's Island for lead. None of those tests showed elevated lead levels. DPR will also test the crumb rubber on the two remaining synthetic fields before they are used. These two fields are being constructed with the same materials from the same supplier as the nine new fields that were already tested.

No significant effects upon the environment that would require an Environmental Impact Statement are foreseeable. This determination is based on the above and incorporates by reference the additional analyses set forth in the accompanying Environmental Assessment Statement and appendices.



Joshua Laird  
Assistant Commissioner