



**City Council Oversight Hearing:  
Status of Yankee Stadium Replacement Parks  
Parks and Recreation Committee**

**New Yorkers for Parks Testimony**  
April 29, 2009

Good afternoon. I'm Sheelah Feinberg, Director of Government and Community Relations at New Yorkers for Parks, the only independent watchdog for all the city's parks, beaches, and playgrounds. For 100 years, New Yorkers for Parks has worked to ensure greener, safer, cleaner parks for all New Yorkers.

**Disservice to the Community**

Three years ago, Macomb's Dam Park and portions of Mullaly Park were alienated – or taken for a non-park use -- for the construction of the new Yankee Stadium. The alienation of parkland for the new stadium occurred in just 8 days, and the Yankees and the City did not do their due diligence because they did not involve the community in the initial planning process. New Yorkers for Parks continues to oppose the lack of public process and works to reform the alienation process in order to ensure that this does not happen again.

Macomb's Dam Park served as the "Central Park" for residents; what's left of this parkland is disjointed and in disarray. While there are a few interim parks, unfortunately, the community is forced to wait longer than initially promised for the completion of these replacement parks due to increases in time and cost of construction. With the high rate of obesity, diabetes, and asthma in this community, it is urgent that these recreational facilities be completed as soon as possible. There needs to be more oversight of the mitigation and community benefits agreements to ensure that they are adhered to by all parties.

## **What's Next?**

While many will enjoy the new Yankees Stadium, there is still much that can be done to benefit the community from both a maintenance and policy perspective. New Yorkers for Parks recently toured the new replacement parks. In our judgment these parks are well designed with up to date features including new safety surfacing materials, natural turf on Heritage field, and a waterfront greenway.

For many capital projects, funding is relatively easy to come by, however funding for maintenance continues to be a challenge. One solution is a dedicated source of maintenance funding for the replacement parks. For example, as part of Columbia University's plans for the expansion of its campus into Manhattanville, they pledged to add approximately 94,000 square feet of open space and provided 25 years of dedicated funding for maintenance of the new playground and parks. We think the Yankees should set up an agreement with the City to fund part of the maintenance of the replacement parks, similar to Columbia University.

On the policy front, New Yorkers for Parks is concerned about the permits for use of Heritage Field. It is paramount that this historic field remains accessible to the public. Undoubtedly, private corporations will clamor for use of this space but as a new public park, it must remain truly open and accessible to the community.

New Yorkers for Parks is strongly committed to ensuring that equitable and committed park services are offered in every neighborhood. Considering how the people and parks have been treated in this neighborhood, the replacement parks have no excuse but to go beyond these standards.

Thank you