

OVERSIGHT HEARING
STATUS of YANKEE STADIUM REPLACEMENT
PARKS
250 BROADWAY ~ 14th FLOOR HEARING ROOM
TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008 ~ 1 : P.M.

TESTIMONY OF
MRS. JOYCE E. HOGI
1020 GRAND CONCOURSE
BRONX, NY 10451
718 992 0298
joycehogi@yahoo.com

“Respondents contend there is no irreparable harm, because the loss of the parkland is only temporary, there will be a net gain of 2.14 acres of unencumbered parkland...”

(Judge Herman Cahn's decision, p 17, August 15, 2006)

Good afternoon! I am Joyce Hogi, a resident of 1020 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY for 30+ years. Thank you for holding these hearings and thank you for inviting me to offer my testimony. I can't help but wonder if this is now too little, too late; indeed, what is now to be gained after the loss of of unprotected, public parkland. My late husband and I raised our three children in the South Bronx. We are and always have been hard-working, taxpaying citizens who felt that our hard work should count for something in this town. Regrettably, that is not the case. While trying to teach our children the lessons of government and citizenship (they are productive and vote in each election), we struggled to explain to them why our elected officials think so little of their constituency and so highly of themselves. I have this same struggle with the young people who are now in my life. There is not a good example to show them.

Let me share with you an example that will not leave my memory:

The constituents of Councilwoman Maria del Carmen Arroyo were waiting with her on the sidewalk outside the City Planning office to go in and testify against the Yankee Stadium project. Randy Levine was coming down the street and the Councilwoman ran to meet and embrace him. She in effect told the people who had elected her to office that “you don't count, you are not important”.

I am here today to speak for my fellow community residents who could not be here; either because they are working, disheartened or so beaten down by the treatment they are receiving that they have pretty much given up; that they have said, “we can't beat the system”. We in the community were horrified when we learned that every one of our elected officials ~ from the City Council up to the Senate had voted to give away our valuable, historic public parkland to the New York Yankees for the

building of their new stadium without a single public hearing and over the course of just eight days! Such a cavalier action for each of them. No one questioned, “what will the community do?” “How will this affect a community that is already under parked?” “What about the health risks to a constituency that is already suffering unduly from limited access to fresh air and parkland?” An assemblywoman even proclaimed that “there's no community opposition”.

We were locked out of hearings or if admitted, had our cards “shuffled” so that the minimum number of residents could speak. No consideration of our input was taken and when members of the Community Board voted against the plan ~ because they were listening and hearing the concerns of the community ~ they were summarily dismissed from the Board. The Bronx Boro Pres said he wanted people who would “advance his vision”. Meanwhile, new appointees to the board are wont to make any independent decisions lest they offend the Boro Pres; the board is now at its most dysfunctional since its inception. There are 50 slots on the board and there are only 19 or 20 members. Quorums are routinely not met.

Naive as we were, we still held out hope that the Department of Parks & Recreation and the National Park Service, which are charged with the protection of green spaces, would protect our public parkland. However, as stated in a report by NYC Park Advocates ~ “Broken Promises”, these agencies, “with the help of elected officials have been used to provide cover for a greedy corporation to seize public parkland from the poorest Congressional district in the nation”. We found that they were complicit with the Yankees organization before the community became aware of the scheme.

We formed a grassroots organization, “SaveOurParks” and took the City and the Yankees to court to protect our public parks. We lost the case (August 15, 2006) because lawyers for each side assured the court that interim replacement parks would be in place before construction began. The Yankees seized the park midnight Sunday evening~August 13, 2006, 2 days before the judge's ruling. After weeks of community outrage, the DPR quickly painted “walking & fitness paths” and stenciled arrows

on the sidewalks around an existing park. When questioned, the Parks Commissioner claimed this was not supposed to be the interim parks. Construction on an interim park would not begin until weeks later (opened May, 2007) and was so poorly constructed that the artificial turf was ripped up a few weeks later to be replaced.

There have been numerous articles, interviews and documentation on this issue. Simply put, the community has come up on the very “short end of the stick” and ***no one is standing up for us***. I am outraged! I have tried to work within the system to make sure that we are getting what we were promised. I joined the parks committee of Community Board 4 and question the parks' employees who come before us with their drawings and charts. If something is missing and I request it, we don't receive the information. My sense is that they are “bidding time”. There have already been changes to the designs of some of the parks. None have been started. The changes to the size of the garages is of great concern to me, because again, you have the city going to EDC with one plan and the DPR coming to us with another. I have asked for copies of the design that's presented at our meetings and have not received them. There is no continuity, which usually means there are no real plans to follow through. Two of the spaces for replacement parks are still being used for parking for games. Design and approval delays are the reasons given.

In addition, we have learned that the old stadium might not come down immediately after this season ends. ***The reason?*** The Yankees have the option of asking for it to stay open for an additional year. They can exercise this option twice!

The City continues to proclaim that the community is getting more parkland than we lost. In actuality, 12.5 acres already existed as either mapped parkland and in one case, a schoolyard. This is a shell game the City uses and when called on it, the figures are changed. Recently, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new playground at PS 29 that was billed as part of the “Yankee Stadium replacement parks” was held over a mile away from the affected community (a different community board). This construction is a part of the Mayor's PlaNYC2030 to

turn some schoolyards into playgrounds. This is a fine idea as the schools' playgrounds should never have been taken away, but make no mistake, this is not a replacement park for our community. Additionally, an unused field at West Bronx Recreation Center has been turned into a ball field; again over a mile away and not easily accessed. This has also been billed as a "Yankee replacement ball field", but was never mentioned in project documents. Geoffrey Croft of NYC Park Advocates has continuously pressed this issue of the counting of the replacement park acreage.

We don't have anyone to speak for us! When we tried to hold a meeting and invite electeds to hear our concerns, a neighborhood school had agreed to let us use the auditorium. City officials made them cancel it a couple days before our event, citing "political events" could not be held there. We certainly remember going into a public school for one of the hearings the Boro Pres planned on the Yankee Stadium project.

The City has broken its promises to the people of the South Bronx time and again. The replacement parks are nothing more than a grand scheme. Make no mistake, the groundwork for this scheme was laid with the deals over siting the water Filtration Plant in Van Cortland Park.

Parks used for Yankee Stadium:

Macombs Dam (northern portion) 11.2 ac track, soccer field, ball field

Macombs Dam (southern portion) 7.33 ac ball fields, basketball & handball courts

Macombs Dam (southeast portion) 2.89 ac asphalt ball field / parking

John Mullaly (southern portion) 3.89 ac tennis & handball courts

total 25.31

Replacement parks:

'park' on garage 'A' 7.33 track, soccer, basketball & handball / playground

Ruppert Plaza 1.13 landscaped, pedestrian concrete walkway

Heritage Field 8.9 3 ball fields

passive park# 1 ~ 157th St 0.44 skate park

passive park# 2 ~ 157th St 0.24 playground

tennis concession ~ Harlem River 5.11 tennis courts / waterfront park

total 23.15

taken from:

***“Broken Promises: The City's Replacement Park Scheme For The
New Yankee Stadium Project”; NYC Park Advocates***