



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

New Yorkers for Parks Testimony
June 24, 2008

Good morning. I am 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.

PARKLAND ALIENATION

Three years ago, Macomb's Dam Park and portions of Mully Park were alienated – or taken for a non-park use -- for the construction of the new Yankee Stadium. The 22 acres of parkland were alienated in eight days behind closed doors in a community that is already underserved by parkland and has some of the highest rates of asthma in the country. New Yorkers for Parks spoke out against this alienation and has worked to reform the alienation process. In particular, we continue to oppose the lack of public notification and public input in this case of parkland alienation. As a result, we have advocated increasing transparency.

In order to ensure that this does not happen again, New Yorkers for Parks has formed the Parkland Alienation Reform Coalition (PARC), which is made up of land use and environmental attorneys. After this alienation occurred, we requested and received an advisory opinion from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that states that environmental review should take place before alienation can occur. Environmental review allows for public notice, hearings, and comment periods.

MITIGATION

These parks were the center of this underserved Bronx community and they cannot be easily replaced. The city is working to provide new facilities at equal acreage. However, many of these facilities will not serve the immediate community surrounding Yankee Stadium and will be extremely difficult to access. For example, reaching one of the replacement parks from the neighborhood requires a lengthy route that includes crossing the Major Deegan Expressway.

Unfortunately, due to the increase in construction costs, the community is also forced to wait longer than initially promised for the completion of these parks. With the high rate of obesity, diabetes and asthma in New York City, it is urgent that these recreational facilities be completed as soon as possible. There needs to be more oversight of the mitigation arrangements to ensure they carried it out according to agreed timetables.

ADDITIONAL FINANCING

In addition, as reported in the media, the Yankees are requesting additional public financing for the construction of the stadium. If the Yankees can give \$29 million a year to A-ROD, and only \$32 million to the community OVER 40 years, then we think they can also complete the financing of this project without increasing the financial burden to New Yorkers. The Yankees have money for championships, but sadly, it appears not for the community they play them in. We strongly urge that no further public funding or tax-exempt bonds be granted to the wealthiest sports team in the country.

Thank you.