



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**CHRISTINE BERTHET**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

June 6, 2014

Steve Simon  
Chief of Staff  
New York City Parks & Recreation  
Arsenal West  
24 West 61st Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10023

George Bloomer & Allen Scholl  
Landscape Architects  
New York City Parks & Recreation  
Arsenal West  
24 West 61st Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10023

**Re: Mathew's – Palmer Park Redesign**

Dear Mr. Simon, Mr. Bloomer and Mr. Scholl:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) thanks you for your presentation of the new design for Mathews<sup>1</sup> – Palmer Park located between Ninth and Tenth Avenues and between West 45<sup>th</sup> and West 46<sup>th</sup> Streets. We are very pleased with many aspects of the redesign but also have several concerns and suggestions.

The installation promises to be a great improvement over the present configuration of the playground. It is light and airy with trees and other plantings. There are areas for all ages from the young to the senior. Its elements are inventive with basketball courts, a hand ball area, play equipment, seating for families with toddlers and infants, and seating for adults. The rest rooms, while not to be renovated, are adequately separated from the rest of the park. And finally, you have managed to figure out how to replace the concrete 'train' feature with a new version conforming to up-to-date safety requirements yet reminiscent of the long existing installation. Both the members of the Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee and the public attending its Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting offered their whole-hearted approval of the new design. No doubt

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<sup>1</sup> We note this is the correct spelling ( one 't' ). Here is the url to Harley House History - <http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/organizations/hartley-house-settlement/> - and it states:

Residents. Women 14. Volunteers. Women 30, men 6. Head Res1dents. Helen French Green, Jan., 1897-Sept., 1905; May Mathews, Sept., 1905-

this approval results in part because you incorporated the community's ideas arising out of the visioning day you sponsored and by giving members of the public a preview of the new design before Tuesday's meeting.

Nevertheless, there was a long discussion of the new park's design during which the Committee and the Public expressed a number of concerns. Those concerns cover a wide range of issues and are listed below without indication of priority.

Concern was expressed for the preservation of the Arnold Belkin mural on the east wall near the basketball court, "Against Domestic Colonialism" (1972). Your team indicated that you shared this concern. You noted the mural is on a building not owned by Parks. The committee hopes in future conversations we will find the money needed for preservation and enlist the help of the building owner and the community more generally to achieve that goal.

Interest was expressed for the installation of electric power enabling the periodic showing of movies and other activities requiring electricity. We hope you will be able to install this amenity in a secure fashion enabling appropriate members of Parks and the community to turn it on and off when needed.

The committee was pleased to understand that you have more than doubled the permeable area of the park in this design. However, we believe there is more you can do. You indicated your plan to install artificial turf for a ball playing area. You are also installing new basketball courts. Both of these installations should be of permeable materials.

A suggestion was made that benches not be placed near the swings. The committee understands that Parks has a no smoking policy for all of its facilities. Even so, the hope here is to keep potential smokers away from children using the swings.

A hope was expressed that you would increase the area for storage not only for the equipment of your agency, but for the equipment of community groups using the park.

In your presentation you promised plantings in various parts of the new park. Once planted, these patches of garden need to be maintained. You promised ample park personnel to maintain these plantings. In addition we hope you will coordinate these gardens' maintenance with members of an active local gardening community.

Some participants at Tuesday's meeting expressed surprise that even though space is limited there were no tables with opposite seats thus promoting visitors' communication and activities with each other.

We understand some of the active local community organizations may still have concerns about the design of the park. We ask your department to continue to work with community associations in the further development and building of this park. As plans are completed and as construction progresses, we ask you keep the Community Board informed as well.

CB4 believes these are all worthy concerns and expresses our hope that you will be able to incorporate them in your final design. Paying attention to them can only result in an even better project than the one you presented at the Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee meeting. We again thank you for your presentation and look forward to further interaction with you about this new park for our community.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet  
Chair



Maarten de Kadt Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks &  
Environment Committee



Delores Rubin Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks &  
Environment Committee