

ESCR CAG Meeting -- June 27, 2024
(via Zoom)

CAG members present

Frank Avila-Goldman Wendy Brawer Christine Datz-Romero Eric Goldman Ayo Harrington Richard Heitler Trevor Holland Dianne Lake Michael Marino Robin Schateall Susan Steinberg
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[Link to slide deck for this presentation](#)

DDC Presentation of Updates

Desiree Gazzo, HNTB-LiRo

1. Please reach out if you'd like us to attend one of your events to present and explain the ESCR project
2. ESCR Quarterly Work with Us Event held on June 18 – it was a great event with a new format, and we'll do another one in the fall.
 - a. Registration
 - i. 48 registrants
 - ii. 9 from LES zip codes – ESCR project area, CB3 and CB6
 - iii. 13 from Sandy-impacted zip codes
 - b. Attendees
 - i. 17 opportunity-seeking individuals attended
 - ii. 4 from LES zip codes – ESCR project area, CB3 and CB6
 - iii. 5 from Sandy-impacted zip codes
 - c. Highlights
 - i. Three ESCR team members shared their career paths with attendees.
3. Overview of Contracts (*see slide 6*)
 - a. PA1 – Delancey St. pedestrian bridge installed; floodwall work starting by Montgomery St.
 - b. PA2 – Most of the work is in Murphy Brothers Playground
 - c. PC – We have Water Street updates, and they're doing work in the Corlears Hook Pak area
4. PA1 Construction activities (*see slide 8*)
 - a. [Project video on website](#)
 - b. Moving forward with work on ballfields 3, 4 & 5 (deep sewer work, drainage, etc.)

- c. Amphitheater, nature exploration area, and bike path under construction
5. PA1 Floodwall operations at Montgomery Street
 - a. Work has started; contractor did clearing and grubbing
 - b. Presented to Gouverneur Gardens – [presentation on website](#)
 - c. Vehicles: Parking lane along Montgomery and then one lane on South Street – alternating left/right lane.
 - d. Pedestrians: Sidewalks open for near term, however, will close as work continues.
 - e. Work hours: Monday through Friday, from 8:00am-5:00 pm & Saturdays from 9:00am. to 5:00pm.
 - f. Vibration settlement monitoring.
 - g. Ongoing coordination as construction progresses.
 6. PA1 Delancey Street Bridge Installation photos (*see slides 10 & 11*)
 7. PA1 Tide Gate and Sluice Walls - part of the drainage improvements (*see slide 12*)
 - a. Storage capacity inside the system to prevent excess water from going into river all at once.
 - b. Water goes in and out of system's chambers through sluice walls.
 - c. Tide gates can be open and closed, preventing river from flowing into system during extreme high tide or rain event or allowing water into river during low tide.
 8. PA1 ECO Armor Blocks - to enhance biodiversity and foster marine habitats (*see slide 13*)
 9. PA1 Sea Pillars (*see slide 14*)
 - a. 24" concrete pipe pile interior
 - b. Pillar captures tide water, attracting marine organisms and fostering biodiversity
 10. PA1 Construction Photos – excavation for floodgate 1, nature exploration boulder installation, amphitheater seating foundation (*see slide 15*)
 11. PA1 Phase 1 Openings - Ballfields 1 & 2 will be the only amenities (in PA1) opening this year (*see slide 16*)

Note: After the meeting DDC confirmed that the M&O facility in the original map was a mistake and shouldn't have been there. The slide has since been corrected.

 - a. Scheduled to open September 2024
 - b. Open dawn to dusk
 - c. Water & electric will not be available
 - d. Security: ballfields and Delancey St. bridge to be locked at dusk
 - e. Parks responsible for permitting
 12. PA1 What We've Heard
 - a. Fireboat House: The alternatives analysis is ongoing. Next step: The City will present to the consulting parties.
 - b. Ballfield 7: design change to softball field in progress
 - c. Pier 42: per Parks, upland area scheduled to open July 3rd.
 - d. Bridge loads
 - i. Corlears Hook bridge: pedestrian & emergency vehicles
 - ii. Delancey St. and E. 10th St.: pedestrian & small parks vehicles

- e. Compost: City Hall, Parks & DDC are working with LESEC on future compost area design.
 - f. Responses to CAG Questions: in progress.
13. PA2 Construction Progress – Stuy Cove and Asser Levy Parks are open.
- a. EDC working on Solar One construction; please direct questions about the closed area their way. Once we get permission to work in that area, we'll complete the Stuy Cove Park landscaping.
14. PA2 Construction Photos – Murphy Brothers tee ball field, large dog run, installation of exposed sidewalks (*see slide 19*)
15. PA1 AQM Monitoring Locations – there have been some changes since there's been more construction work in ballfields 3, 4, & 5. (*see slide 21*)
16. PA1 AQM May 2024 Update (*see slide 22*)
- a. Quite a few exceedances in the 15-minute range; some were a bit higher. The majority were due to onsite construction activities and construction vehicle traffic.
 - i. We did receive some complaints about the dust, so the contractor is actively working to apply those dust suppression techniques throughout the workday.
 - b. No exceedances in the E. 10th Street area
17. PA2 AQM Monitoring locations have remained the same (*see slide 23*)
18. PA2 AQM May 2024 Update (*see slide 24*)
- a. There were just a few exceedances, mostly short ones. A couple of long duration exceedances were due to the onsite construction activities. Others of those were likely due to citywide elevated PM 2.5 readings that were observed citywide on May 6.
19. PC Construction Progress (*see slide 26*)
- a. Location 1 – Jackson St. & Water St. & Corlears Hook Park
 - i. Utility relocation & test pits
 - ii. Prep for excavation for south interceptor gate chamber
 - iii. To begin sewer work
 - iv. Sidewalk & trench restoration (South St.)
 - v. July 2: Closure of Water Street from Gouverneur Slip E to Jackson St. for continuation of new 24" sewer work
 - b. Location 2 – Lewis St. & Delancey St.
 - i. Utility relocation & test pits
 - c. Location 3 – Baruch Dr. & Delancey St.
 - i. Utility relocation & test pits
 - ii. Water main installation
 - d. Location 4 – Houston St. & Columbia St.
 - i. Utility relocation & test pits
 - ii. Bus stop intermittent closure
 - e. Location 5 – Avenue C & E. 18th
 - i. Test pits
 - ii. ConEd steam main abatement work
 - f. Location 6 – Avenue C, E. 20th to E. 23rd

i. Test pits

20. PC Water Street closure between Gouverneur Slip East and Jackson Street begins July 2 and will be ongoing for 3-4 months (*see slide 27*)

- a. Typical work hours 7:00am – 6:00pm
- b. Full roadway closure to vehicles 24hrs/day (no parking on Water St.)
- c. Majority of sidewalks will remain open
- d. Operation scheduled for 3-4 months
 - i. Water St. in July
 - ii. Gouverneur Slip E. follows
 - iii. South St. restoration and Jackson St. to follow
- e. Water St. and Gouverneur Slip E. will not close at the same time
- f. More details to follow in upcoming Advisory

21. PC Corlears Hook Park construction activities (*see slide 28*)

- a. Ongoing work
 - i. Test pits
 - ii. Utility work
 - iii. Staging for excavation
- b. 2024
 - i. Excavation for and installation of interceptor gate chamber – night work required to accommodate FDR land closures; more info. to be provided when it becomes available.
- c. 2025
 - i. Construction of interceptor gate building
 - ii. Restoration and return of ballfield

22. PC Construction photos – ConEd steam main on Columbia St., restoration of sidewalk on South St. (*see slide 29*)

Q & A

Trever: You said there was a design change for ballfield 7; what exactly does that mean?

Desiree: There was a request to make ballfield 7 conducive to softball as well, and Parks recognized that request. It's not a huge design difference.

Dianne: Back to the September opening of fields 1 and 2. Did I hear correctly that nothing else in PA1 will open in 2024?

Desiree: Correct, that's what we've been told.

Dianne: What impact will the opening of fields 1 and 2 have on the north end above 6th Street?

Desiree: We are still not taking anything more.

Dianne: So, we can expect the north end to remain open through the end of 2024 unless something happens faster in the south?

Desiree: Yes.

Dianne: There are bleachers in the old ballfields. Will there be seating for observers on fields 1 and 2? The PDC¹ documents make it look like there are benches in the surrounding lawn areas, but those areas aren't going to open right away. If kids come over to play there, will there be room to accommodate the families this fall?

¹ Public Design Commission

Desiree: We were told there wouldn't be seating for September, but we can ask what that future seating looks like and provide more detail.

Robin: Fields 1 and 2 are 100% artificial turf. Will the other fields to the north be configured for baseball and softball with dirt infields?

Desiree: I know field 7 will be, but I'll have to find out about the other fields.

Luc Alicea, Parks: Field 7 will have a clay infield to orient it for softball, but 5 and 6 will be natural grass turf on the infield.

Robin: Will the base pads on 5 and 6 be clay also?

Luc: I think there's a ring of clay that surrounds the natural grass infield.

Robin: Questions keep coming up about shade and seating. Will there be shade structures and dug outs built into fields 5, 6, and 7?

Luc: We'll have to check the specific design documentation and get back to you. I agree that at a minimum there should be trees to provide shade, but if you want something more robust that's a conversation we should have.

Robin: Who will be policing the closing of fields 1 and 2 if the bridge is closing at dusk? Our local parks are often not closed at dusk. Will there be someone from Parks every evening at dusk to make sure that nobody's left inside the park?

Luc: We won't just close the gate and hope that everyone left. I share your concern that it will be a challenge to get everybody out. Right now, the understanding is that it will be Parks police and an operations staffer who will go in every night, clear it, and lock it once everybody leaves. We do that with our playgrounds throughout the borough.

Robin: If a game is running into dusk, will there be a conversation between Parks police, the referees, the umpires, and the coaches about who actually stops the game?

Luc: Dusk is not exactly a hard line, so common sense should prevail. What we don't want is for games to go into the night and create unsafe conditions, but I share your concern that we don't want to abruptly end a game because of "dusk." We're still working through how we're going to staff this, so before, say, the next CAG meeting I'll have a better sense of how we'll address your concerns.

Eric: Thank you so much for taking into consideration the softball field for field 7. It sends a wonderful message to all the softball players across Manhattan. Do we know when Murphy Brothers Park will open?

Nadine, CCL:² October 2024, and it should be ready and back online for the Spring season of 2025.

Wendy: Has there been any thinking about thermal energy networks and wastewater as a source of power as the giant holding tanks are being built? Is there any kind of future purpose potential for this water?

Desiree: I don't think anything specific was built into the project, but we can get back to you on future potential. I think this is also a DEP question as they are taking over and managing a lot of this infrastructure. We can pass this to them and see if they have any plans of that nature.

Wendy: I'm glad about the ECO armor blocks. Is there anything akin to it happening on land?

Desiree: There was a lot of effort put into the planting design to support biodiversity. As far as a structure like the pillars or the ECO blocks, not that I'm aware of. I can bring the question back to see if there are similar things happening inland.

² Community Construction Liaison

Christine: How about water for the ballfields?

Desiree: The water utilities have not come online yet.

Christine: What's the deal with the M&O space next to where the compost yard will go?

Luc: I don't think that's accurate – *Note: After the meeting, it was confirmed that this was indeed a mistake. Slide 16 in the presentation deck [posted here](#) has the corrected version of the map.*

Martin: Has the pinch point been resolved?

Jeff, DDC: The project is still funded and moving forward. It has not progressed as we would have liked, but we will hopefully have some news about next steps in the coming months. There's still a commitment to what we're calling the "East River Greenway."

Martin: Solar One hasn't seen much of the contractor's gardener who put in the plantings. We're lucky that we've had above average rainfall. The Solar One gardener would like electricity so she can shoot water instead of stretching her arm with the watering can. They don't know what's going to still be living in two years after the contract (with the contractor) is over; it looks problematic. Stuyvesant Cove Park Association has been asking for electricity from the get go. We were able to find a sound tech with his own generator so we could have our first concert this past week, and we have seven more planned. The river splashes onto the tables that are bolted into the ground; it's a problem. When will the asphalt between the water walls be removed? If Superstorm Sandy came this week, I don't know how the walls would be able to be moved.

Desiree: We can look into the contractor's watering schedule. The contractor is responsible for replacing dead plants during the maintenance period. Regarding the watering, it was my understanding that there were water connections for hoses throughout the park.

Martin: Solar One doesn't know where they are.

Desiree: We can facilitate a walkthrough with our team and Solar One to look at where they are because there were many conversations about how many of them there would be and where they'd be, and we sent Solar One drawings of where they are. We could recirculate that and make sure they're fully functional. That's really great to hear that you had your first concert. *(Martin mentions that there were over 100 people.)* I can bring the comment about the bolted tables back and see if anything can be done; thank you for bringing that to our attention. Though the walls and the gates are in, the flood protection system is not complete to be functional at this time. Once parallel conveyance is finished and PA1 is connected to PA2 to create the full flood protection system, then either before that or, at a minimum, at that time, the asphalt that's in the track of the floodgates would be removed. They're working on permanent solutions to that potential trip area, potentially a grate.

Martin: So that won't happen until 2026?

Desiree: Potentially yes, some time before 2026.

Frank: I was aware of the right-of-way closure for the floodwall, and if it's possible, I would love signage that we could distribute so people know in advance that that area is closed. It'd be great to have one near our community room entrance. Are there any detour signs that will be posted before you get to this area? That will make it easier for people.

Desiree: I don't know where they will be posted; we can try and get that information.

Ayo: Does the compost yard indicated on slide 16 represent a mobile structure?

Jeff: The compost area design has not been fully designed. City Hall, Parks, and DDC have had several meetings with Christine and her team, and those conversations are ongoing.

Luc: To assuage any fears, there's no conversation about making the future compost yard area an M&O facility.

Ayo: Will there or will there not be a building in which LESEC employees work?

Jeff: There will be some building. Christine has made her request very clear, and that's what the City is reviewing now.

Ayo: Thank you; please keep us updated on that. Also, I want to talk about the historic discrimination that's largely responsible for the lack of diversity of outdoor spaces in New York City and specifically, as it relates to East River Park. There has always been a lack of access for schools that are predominantly black and brown -- this is not a new conversation. It's one thing to have a great, resilient space, it's another thing for people of color to be able to access it and use it equitably which hasn't historically been the case with East River Park. Most of the people who have used it are grandfathered in from year to year; I don't know why. They're from private schools or non-profits outside of the neighborhood. Some people just don't care to talk about what the resiliency project for this park should be if it's not going to be accessible to the children in our schools. Parks, since you issue permits, what is the conversation about this issue? Have permits been issued already?

Luc: Our recreation department has been in dialogue with the leagues and schools. They didn't want to issue permits prematurely so they could see how the construction panned out, but I believe there's a dialogue now between the teams that have been playing. I don't know if there's a specific problem you've detected when it comes to black and brown kids not having access to the fields, and if there is something we want to address that.

Ayo: This conversation has been going on for years. I appreciate what you're saying, but I and I imagine others on this call want to know specifically what's going to be done. We need an intentional change in the permitting process that's going to identify schools that need to use this space. It's not rocket science; we're looking for something intentional. I'd be happy to be part of that discussion offline. We just can't have the majority-white leagues from all over the city coming here and utilizing the best times that are available to them and not to our after-school programs, our runners, and our players. Can you get back to us on this?

Luc: I can talk to the recreation team and see what their response is, but my focus is on ESCR, and this sounds like a larger citywide issue, but I can get back to you.

Ayo: My last question is about the number of staff who are going to be assigned. When we started this project there were one or two staff assigned to East River Park. What's the expectation for assigning staff to the new park? *(Question moved offline since it was 5 pm, and Desiree had to leave for another meeting.)*

Dianne: I had asked in advance of the meeting if we could talk about storm preparations for this summer – could you bring an update on that to the Parks/CB3 meeting on July 11?

Desiree: Yes, we can do that. In general, the field folks have their standard operating procedures for what happens during certain conditions like high wind and rain conditions. The City issues alerts to contractors in advance of bad weather so field preparations can happen. It's up to the contractor whether to move certain equipment out of the area and what protocols he does to maintain that area. This was the direction they took last year, but I will try to get an update.

Christine: To confirm, unless the entire ESCR from 26th Street to Montgomery Street is complete, you won't activate any of the flood gates?

Desiree: Yes, that's my understanding; because the system is connected it has to be fully complete in order to be activated. We'll go back and confirm that this is correct.
Christine: Since you know from PA2 that the rails for the floodgates are problematic, did you redesign what you're installing on the lower portion?

Desiree: I would hope so, but I'd have to double confirm that for you.

Wendy: What about the park lighting? Is it being designed to shine downwards as birding agencies recommend? Can you bring the answer back to the next CB3 meeting?

Luc: Yes.

CAG-only

Frank: The original plan for Pier 42 has been changed because of the mitigation for ESCR. I'd like to see the return to the original plan because we don't need the extra tennis and soccer fields remaining there once East River Park fully reopens. We'd like to have our park waterfront views that were present in the original plan, but I've been asking around and have received mixed answers. Is this an issue that the CAG would handle, or should I continue with this separately with Parks, for example?

Trever: It is indeed Parks territory; there's a lot of history going back decades in getting that land. Phase 2, the remaining portion of the Pier 42 plan, has an estimated cost (at least as of five years ago) of \$96 million. There was never an earmark for it, and it's been hard to get traction raising that money. It would take a huge community push to get that funding to complete the park. The portion of the park that's complete was funded from previous administrations and elected officials.

Frank: Got it. What would have happened if the community didn't advocate for mitigation for these courts?

Trever: It would have been a blank spot and looked how it did before they started the work.

Robin: It's too bad there's no room for changes to any of these designs since there are no dugouts or shade in the ballfields. What do we do? There's no contingency, and it's frustrating.

Martin: Their answer to us is that it wasn't in the original contract.

Robin: There's got to be room for contingencies, for things that are missing. How do we take that on and resolve that?

Martin: Try having the Community Boards Parks committee put it in their budget priorities, and the City Councilperson come up with the money for it.

Wendy: That's what Stuy Cove Park is doing; they're fundraising for shade. Unlike PA1 and PA2, the park doesn't have a stewardship group already in place.

Ayo: We can begin advocating for funding through our elected officials

Robin: But they're building the park now; what can we do in the middle of the process of building this park to get shade structures in?

Ayo: I appreciate what you've said. Regardless of what they said, changes can be made, as they have been with other parks. What we want aren't big, physical changes. I don't think it would be out of the question to insist. I also do think that there will be things that will not be in that we'll have to get money for from our electeds; we should talk to them now and ask them to put it in their line items for next year. Can we agree that we want to send a letter to Parks and the PDC?

Robin: I'm all for it.

Wendy: Participatory budgeting could go swimmingly for this. We need to be on the same page and clear with what we want: dugouts, shade...we don't even have a clear

picture of where there will be shade. Some of us have started collecting examples of shade structures from around the city; there are tons on the west side.

Ayo: Let's get a picture from DDC of all the shade spots and what type of structure. From there, we can say this is not enough. Does anyone disagree with Paula (Pratt Center) writing to DDC or whomever to ask for a plan that indicates where the shade structures and trees are?

Christine: I totally agree that we need to get organized about these asks. It's not like we didn't ask for shade structures before; we were always shut down by Parks saying it's too expensive or that they don't know how to maintain them. Let's ask our members what the priorities are, and then we can agree on maybe five things that we really want to push for. Shade is a huge issue, but there are more.

Ayo: I kind of disagree with you because we've been at this for a long time. I feel we know what our community wants. I feel like the more we add to the ask, the more ways they have to not do anything at all. Do you have something in mind other than shade structures? Are there more things?

Christine: I would like some time to think about that. I'm not saying we should start a huge outreach campaign. I just want to be as inclusive as possible because not everyone attends CAG meetings.

Ayo: It would be OK to ask for one thing now and for something else later on. Can we do this one thing? Time is marching on, but I will defer to the group on this.

Wendy: Just to suggest one other thing that could benefit all of us is access to electricity. We can learn from what Stuy Cove Park is fundraising for -- the things that they didn't get, including police call boxes.

Robin: I brought up the lack of shade structures and dugouts on the walkthrough of ballfields 1 and 2 a month ago. Once the fields are open, it will be hard to ask them to put shade structures in.

Dianne: When we were on the walkthrough, I complained a lot to a person from DDC named Elvis. His advice was though it might be a little bit late in the game to advocate for meaningful changes in the south area, it's not too late for CAG to advocate for better treatments such as shade considerations in the northern end. Time is short in the south end. It might be good for the CAG to propose some things and then share that proposal with the community and get some quick feedback at least on the south end, we might be able to move quickly. Then we can use some CAG-only sessions to propose plans, go through them, and ask Paula and Tara to share those with the entire CAG, get feedback, get things voted on. We could tackle things a little bit at a time and get urgent things handled fairly quickly and then take a little more time for stuff that won't happen for a couple of years.

I propose doing two things. If we ask about shade, DDC is likely to share the PDC presentation, so let's save time and look for ourselves. Then there could be a proposal that people who can't attend CAG meetings can react to rather than a wide-open question.

Paula: What do people think of this? (*Several people chime in in agreement, and Dianne agrees to start a document.*) And who wants to look at the PDC document to try to interpret where the shade is? (*Ayo volunteers.*)

Paula: I have a few updates. I reached out to Laurian Farrell, DEP's Deputy Commissioner for Coastal Resilience, and she will come to the September CAG meeting to talk about how DEP will manage the floodgates. The other thing is a question: should we have an August meeting, or should there be a written update from DDC instead (which is what we did last year).?

Dianne: *Responding to many people agreeing that we could skip the meeting:* I would just want to double check before we don't have the meeting that nothing has changed in

the schedule that Desiree shared today. I don't want them to slip in a schedule change and say, "We couldn't tell you because the CAG and Community Board didn't meet, but sorry, the north end is closed."

Ayo: I want to hold onto the idea of asking our electeds for funding; we could have that on the September agenda. Putting it on their on their mental radar in advance of when they have to make decisions in February/March 2025 is important.

Robin: Have the Stuy Cove Park people asked people if anything is missing?

Susan: They Stuy Town community is largely disengaged.

Robin: Once the ballfields are open and people are playing, that will be the opportunity for the community to ask "Where's the shade, benches, the dugout?"

Susan: Actually, the lack of shade in Stuy Cove Park is upsetting to everybody. The tenant association could consider doing a survey or questionnaire.

Wendy: A survey would be important and could be a way of letting people know that part of the park is open; many people aren't aware.