

ESCR CAG Meeting -- November 21, 2024
(via Zoom)

CAG members present

Martin Barrett Wendy Brawer Christine Datz-Romero Dina Elkan Ayo Harrington Richard Heitler Dianne Lake Michael Marino Sam Moskowitz Robin Schatell Ditashiah Shah Shaheeda Smith
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[Link to slide deck for this presentation](#)

ESCR Presentation

Desiree Gazzo, HNTB-LiRo

1. Work with Us Events
 - a. Virtual info. session on 12/10/24 from 3:30 to 5:00 pm
 - i. Learn about construction training programs and cost-free resources for needed credentials and experience
 - ii. Register here: <https://bit.ly/4ewyDa4>
 - b. DDC Manhattan Construction Career & Training Resource Fair
 - i. Two sessions on 12/4/24: 10 am – 12 pm and 1 pm – 3 pm
 - ii. In-person at the National Museum of the American Indian
 - iii. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/3kpu7zhx>
 - c. Henry Street Settlement Job Fair
 - i. 12/6/24, 11 am – 2 pm
 - ii. Gymnasium at 301 Henry St.
 - iii. Register here: <https://bit.ly/3OkAcx6>
 - d. St. Nicks Alliance Information Sessions
 - i. Weekly on Wednesdays at 1:00 pm
 - ii. 790 Broadway, 2nd floor in Brooklyn
 - iii. Information on training programs for HVAC, building maintenance, construction, environmental remediation
 - iv. For information, email skilledbuild@stnicksalliance.org or call 718-388-5454 ext. 425
2. Community Programming | E. Houston Street Construction Fencing
 - a. Call for Art panels re-displayed

3. CAG Site Visit on 11/19/24
 - a. Participants saw construction progress, including the amphitheater and the irrigation system
 - b. Hope to do more visits as construction progresses
4. Overview of Contracts (*see slide 12*)
 - a. PA2 (Project Area 2) is substantially complete, so moving forward the focus will be on PA1 (Project Area 1) and PC (Parallel Conveyance)
 - b. PA1: Upcoming closure of ballfields 7 & 8, tree planting, moving along with southern end of the park (e.g., amphitheater, tennis and basketball courts)
 - c. PC: Ongoing work at Water St., test piles, ConEd work
5. PA1 | 2024 Construction Activities (*see slide 14*)
 - a. Ballfields 1 & 2 open
 - b. Micropile installation and floodwall operations at Montgomery St.
 - c. Ongoing retaining wall activities at Houston St.
 - d. Utility and deep sewer work at E. 10th St.
6. PA1 | Phasing Update (*see slide 16*)
 - a. The ESCR program is on schedule to finish by the end of 2026. The continued transition to Phase 2 is critical to this success.
 - b. The team continues to maintain at least 42% open space access to the community as committed.
 - c. With the opening of ballfields 1 & 2, open space has increased to 49%.
 - d. Community priorities
 - i. Maintaining access to the waterfront via the esplanade
 - ii. Maintaining walking paths and access to Stuyvesant Cove Park
 - iii. Maintain at least 42% Open Space access to the community
 - iv. Keep fields open during Parks permitted seasons
 - v. Limit tree removals
 - vi. Maintain safe circulation
 - e. Spring 2025: Anticipated opening of Corlears Hook Park Cherry Hill/flagpole area and bridge and amenities south of Williamsburg Bridge
 - f. Phasing update
 - i. Winter 2024/2025 Closures:
 1. Fields 7 & 8 to close December 2, after end of permitted sports season, to allow the contractor to perform critical deep sewer work
 2. Small area in northwest corner of Track area and Parks storage area between Track and Fields 7 & 8
 - ii. Esplanade and access to Stuyvesant Cove Park will remain open
 - iii. Limited tree removals
 - iv. Contractor will continue to maintain 42% open space
 - v. Phase 1 amenities will begin to reopen in Spring 2025
 - g. What We've Heard
 - i. Track area closure/fence line

- ii. Storage containers: Parks is coordinating with leagues and the ESCR team.

Q & A

Wendy: I'm glad that the tree removals will be limited. Are the trees that are being removed marked?

Desiree: No, they're not marked in the field

Wendy: How are the trees that are remaining be protected?

Desiree: In general, if trees are in a construction area and are to be preserved, they typically have a wooden tree guard around them. Fences protect trees outside of construction areas.

Wendy: New areas being opened, including the new bridge at Delancey which has specific hours. Are other parts of the park going to be open 24 hours, or are they going to be limited in some way?

Desiree: We don't have those specifics right now. It will largely depend on the utilities we have available and if there's safe lighting throughout the open areas. It will be a safety discussion that we'll hold with Parks.

Wendy: People have asked for police call boxes in the park. Will there be a regular police patrol of the park? What is the safety plan for the park? As it opens, is each section being considered separately? I don't even know if Pier 42 is open 24 hours.

Luc: Right now, there's no mechanism to lock the gate at Pier 42, so it is effectively open. To your point, we should have a conversation about enforcement so that at a minimum our Parks enforcement patrol is 100% notified that they need to add sites to their regular rounds. Right now, they're closing fields 1 and 2 and escorting people out. Overall, if we have specific concerns that arise out of selectively closing areas, we want to be responsive to the needs of the community, so as it comes up please let us know.

Dianne: We had talked to CB 3 about the plans for the football equipment lockers behind the closed area, whether the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC)'s sheds would have to move, and whether or not the women's bathroom at the track and at the 10th St. bathroom would remain open.

Luc: The women's room behind the track house will remain. The area with LESEC's storage shed will not be impacted during this phase of the closure. We're making sure than anything in the other yard gets transported before we do the closure and that it doesn't get disposed of. As part of that, Parks is going to have to share that space with LESEC because we've been previously using the storage yard that's above it. Finally, we intend to move the football equipment that's on field 7 and 8 that's loose; the track is likely the best spot. A deeper conversation will be had regarding the future of the shipping containers. Right now, there's no plan in the final design to have storage for their stuff, so there's some conversation about what that means in the interim and the long-term, but there's no final answer on that. I'm flagging that it's pressing with the upcoming closures because that area will not be accessible to the public, and the intent is

to move the shipping containers so they can start working. We're working through that right now.

Dianne: The Lions were still practicing on the track infield the other night. Is there an end to their season?

Luc: I know there's a season change on December 1st which is why we went with the December 2nd date, so it wouldn't impact things. I imagine they'll continue to practice in the winter if not play full games. I owe you an answer.

Michael: On the site visit, we saw metal plates being inserted between the seats for the amphitheater; is that a skateboarding deterrent? If not, are there any deterrents planned for the seating area?

Desiree: That was the install for them to then put the grouting in between the block. I'll have to check if there's a skateboarding deterrent.

Michael: Regarding the temporary shade structures, I think the consensus is that we were not really satisfied. It looks more like netting than a shade surface; it's open and not a solid fabric. No shade was being offered by it.

Luc: I appreciate the feedback; it's a prototype. We did look at shade sails that you see in other playgrounds. They need to be structurally sound to withstand rain, wind, and snow. Therefore, even a small one costs \$80,000-\$100,000. We will look at other forms, but the logic behind having a porous structure was to just be able to get something up that doesn't require additional beams. I'll take this feedback, and if there's a specific example of something that could be attached to existing the dugout structure, that would be ideal. This doesn't preclude a more robust shade sail down the road.

Robin: We're looking for a commitment; given the entire cost of the park, this doesn't seem like a lot to raise. I can send you examples of shade structures.

Luc: I want to have a solution for you, and the better answer might be a more robust, more expensive answer.

7. PA 1 | Construction Photos (*see slides 21 to 24*)
 - a. Tree plantings with temporary irrigation system near ballfields 1 & 2 and the esplanade
 - b. Plantings under the Williamsburg Bridge and tennis court; striped multi-use turf
 - c. Sea rail installation along the esplanade near the tennis stepdown; curb formwork in Corlears Hook Park
 - d. Pedestrian pathway and microtunneling launching pit on E. 10th Street

8. PA 1 | What We've Heard
 - a. Planting: 240 trees planted, 440 on site; shrubs to begin arriving next week
 - b. E. 10th Street: ongoing improvements to sidewalks and detour areas
 - c. Microtunneling at E. 10th Street: on track to begin early December
 - d. E. Houston Street: ongoing discussions around detour signage

- e. Future amenity openings: in progress
9. PA1 | AQM Report
- a. Monitoring locations (*see slide 27*)
 - b. October update (*see slide 28*)
 - i. Area from Jackson St. to the Williamsburg Bridge where there's a good amount of construction happening had a couple of exceedances. Exceedances in the area from Montgomery to Jackson Streets have dropped significantly. The areas to the north of the Williamsburg Bridge have had small numbers of exceedances; please note that some of them are from off-site activities.
10. PC | Construction Update
- a. Location 1 – Jackson St. & Water St. & Corlears Hook Park
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Sewer installation at Gouverneur Slip E. requiring daytime road closures; Water Street reopened to traffic
 - iii. Steam main abatement
 - iv. Nightwork on FDR Dr. between Cherry St. and Jackson St.
 - b. Location 2 – Lewis St. & Delancey St. S
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Test piles
 - c. Location 3 – Baruch Dr. & Delancey St. N
 - i. Utility relocation
 - ii. Test piles
 - d. Location 4 – E Houston St. & Columbia St.
 - i. Electric relocation
 - ii. Test piles
 - iii. Con Ed gas work
 - e. Location 5 – Avenue C & E. 18th
 - i. Test piles
 - ii. Con Ed steam work
 - f. Location 6 – Avenue C, E. 20th to E. 23rd
 - i. Test piles
 - ii. Utility relocation
11. PC | Daytime Road Closure of Gouverneur Slip E. (*see slide 31*)
- a. Ongoing until further notice
 - b. Work Hours:
 - i. Monday to Friday, 7am - 4pm
 - ii. Saturday, 8am - 4pm
 - c. Facilitates deep sewer work
 - d. Traffic restored at the end of each workday
 - e. Sidewalk on east side of Gouverneur Slip E. closed & parking limited on Water Street

- f. Jackson Street to follow

12.PC | Steam Pipe Asbestos Abatement

- a. Discovery of active steam pipe near work area.
- b. Adjacent work on Gouverneur Slip E. is progressing.
- c. Asbestos casing on steam pipe requires standard asbestos abatement procedures.
 - i. This includes a licensed asbestos abatement contractor, formulating abatement plan, executing abatement.
- d. The public's safety is a priority and our team will ensure abatement work will be done in accordance with all local, state, and federal guidelines, and safely contain and dispose of material.
- e. All asbestos materials will be isolated and contained in a fully enclosed Containment Zone and within this zone materials will be placed in sealed containers/bags and trucked offsite.
- f. The public may see workers in Tyvek suits as it is necessary for these individuals to wear protective gear because they will be in close proximity with the asbestos-containing materials on a daily basis. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is also mandatory for their work.
- g. We will continue to provide updates to the community.

13.PC | Construction photos (*see slides 33-34*)

- a. Con Ed conduit installation at E. 20th St.
- b. Gas main installation at Columbia St.
- c. Con Ed conduit installation near FDR Drive and Corlears Hook Park
- d. Water St. reopened after completion of deep sewer work

14.PA 2 | Construction progress

- a. Asser Levy Playground – OPEN!
- b. Stuyvesant Cove Park – OPEN! (North entrance at E. 23 St. closed for EDC Solar One construction work.)
- c. Murphy Brothers Playground - OPEN!

15.PA 2 | Murphy Brothers Playground with new plantings - photos (*see slide 36*)

Q & A

Wendy: It's very exciting to see some of this and the plants coming in. Does Murphy Brothers Playground have irrigation?

Desiree: I don't believe that PA2 has an irrigation system like East River Park does. I believe it's hand watering via valves throughout the park. (Luc confirms this.)

CAG-only

Paula: How was the site visit?

Ayo: It was interesting and great to see in person and get a sense of what it's going to look like physically even though we've seen renderings. It was hard to determine how much was going to be green space because even though concrete has been poured, there are spaces that are just mud. We were told that they were going to be grass covered and that the level was going to rise tremendously so that they would be high and slant down in the direction of the stage so people would be able to lay blankets on them. That part was hard to visualize. There were some questions about why more of the pathway was not permeable.

Robin: I was excited that the power was installed, but it was done as if huge sound companies are coming in with their Taylor Swifts. He assured me that there are outlets for the regular people who will be using the amphitheater and bringing in their extension cords. It was unclear how anyone who has difficulty walking will be able to access the seating. They assured us that you can enter from the top.

Michael: If you're coming off the Corlears Hook Park Bridge and go along the right side of the seating, there will be openings at each area where there's seating. If you go down the left side, there are no openings; you would have to walk all the way down to the stage and then walk back up to where the seating openings are on the right side.

Robin: There's an awful lot of concrete. Hopefully it won't look as "cement-y" when it's all finished, but the seating was comfortable.

Michael: Elvis gave us a thorough demonstration of the irrigation system. I asked what happens if a pipe breaks underground; does that mean the whole irrigation system is gone? He said the system is set up in zones, so if a pipe breaks only its zone will be affected. The Parks maintenance building that is going to be installed across from Grand Street will have the dedicated water source for the irrigation system. Right now, the water source is fire hydrants.

Robin: I wish we had pushed for a larger stage for the amphitheater.

Wendy: Isn't the amphitheater supposed to get a cover?

Robin: Yes.

Wendy: I'm worried that it backs up against the esplanade so there's no backstage.

Robin: I think there was talk about having some sort of a structure. Also, the whole area around the amphitheater is a skateboarder's paradise.

Martin: It's very hard to keep up the maintenance of the irrigation system; rats eat into them. Parks says they can't maintain them.

Dina: That's not exactly the case. We have ground hydrants which are too far below-grade so they fill up with silted water which makes it extremely difficult to turn them on and off.

Robin: I want to add that I think it's great that they're putting in an amphitheater and that they actually agreed to put in power.

Martin: In Stuy Cove Park, they didn't give us power, and for our concerts we hired a tech who had his own generator. We had also called for police call boxes two years before construction started, but we didn't get them. The 12-foot walls make it impossible for anyone on Avenue C to see what's happening in the park.

Michael: We noticed that the view is very different. Not only are we higher from the river, but even when you're out on the esplanade looking towards the city it's a very different view, and you can't see things you used to be able to see.

Robin: I've noticed that near ballfields 1 and 2 the traffic is much noisier for some reason. I know that there are no trees absorbing that, but it feels like we're closer to the traffic. We need to mask that sound.

Dianne: Michael, regarding the irrigation system that Elvis explained, is it entirely an irrigation system? Are there no manual water sources in East River Park?

Michael: We didn't ask, so I'm not sure.

Paula: Now might be a good time to transition to our guests from LESPI (Lower East Side Preservation Initiative).

Michael: LESPI and Friends of Corlears Hook Park are collaborating on the archaeological project in Corlears and the artifacts that were found. We're working with the City to come up with some way for them to be seen and be used as educational tools in NYC schools and community events. Richard Moses and Deborah Wye (of LESPI) will talk about that and the latest news regarding the Fireboat House.

Richard Moses: Thank you for having us. The archaeological dig at Corlears Hook Park revealed 100,000 artifacts which is very significant for the Lower East Side. They also found architectural features including foundations, cisterns, and steps. They trace the history of the site and show how New Yorkers lived their lives. We want these features shown in the site as happens in other sites where they put plexiglass over, say, a foundation wall so people can see it as they walk over it. The City said no, that it's too difficult. The least they could do at this point is display a few representative artifacts in the park so people can get a sense of how important the archaeological dig was. We'd like to take the windows at either end of the Corlears Hook Park comfort station and make them into displays. We don't think it's complicated, and it would be highly secure. You'd have to put shelving behind non-reflective glass. Parks hasn't shown great enthusiasm about this. They have a lot on their plate and are concerned about adding more to it. I think that because of the importance of this dig it's worth making an extra

effort. When they were building the new building in Washington Square Park, they came across a headstone from the 18th Century, and they mounted it behind a window. We want to apply that same technique at Corlears Hook Park.

The second issue is the Track House and Tennis Center Comfort Station in East River Park. A couple of years ago, LESPI got them listed as eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places with the hopes that they could be reused, moved, or adapted to the new park. We spoke to engineers, and we felt it was doable, but the City wasn't interested. Because it's listed as eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places, the City is supposed to have some sort of mitigation if they demolish the building. In this case, the mitigation is to take some pictures of it and then tear it down. We feel that's beyond the pale, and we've been working with Parks to try to display some representative pieces of the terra cotta ornaments within the new track house. They are very special as they reflect the site's maritime history before there was a park which included shipbuilding and wharfs. Despite the ornaments' aesthetic and historical value, Parks says there's no money available for this, but that LESPI can try to raise money. We're very willing to do this, but at \$30,000 to \$50,000 we're not sure we can do this. Given ESCR's multi-billion-dollar price tag, mitigation should not just be about taking some pictures. We would love to see the City put up the money since we're a small, all-volunteer organization, but we're willing to take on the fundraising challenge.

Deborah Wye: We had asked if the artifacts found at Corlears couldn't be shown there, maybe they could be displayed in this area. Parks thinks there's not enough room. They have come up with a preliminary layout for a possible display which they plan to send to us, but unfortunately there won't be room for the artifacts from Corlears.

Richard: However, we'd still like to continue pushing for it because we think it would be very viable to install glass display cases that are set into the wall and not disrupt the layout of the building. We just met with them last week, and these conversations are ongoing, but we could use all the support we can get.

Finally, the Fireboat House was to be the last surviving historic building to be left in the park. It's from the 1930s and is listed as eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places. The City was initially planning to retrofit it so it would be able to deal with floods, but now they're saying that because there's so much structural deterioration it would be too expensive and difficult to retrofit it. They're saying that the main problem is that the pilings that support the building are too rotted out. They provided an initial report over the summer; our engineers had a lot of questions. Some of the photographs were not convincing as showing significant deterioration; they showed minor cracks that didn't look structural at all. We weren't convinced that the pilings were so far gone that the building lacked adequate support; we didn't see evidence of failure. We did ask for access to the site, including for our established engineers who have worked with the City before, but we were denied. We also suggested doing some load testing to see if the building would shift, but they didn't follow up on that either. Finally, the City recently released the Alternative Analysis report to see what could possibly be available instead of demolishing the building, including moving it or doing structural repairs. They

eliminated each of these alternatives primarily due to budget concerns. We'd like to see more detailed cost breakdowns to see if this is reasonable. You can always find a reason to demolish a building; we just want to make sure that it's really not feasible to restore it. We're not pie-in-the-sky preservationists, but we want to see that reasonable means are being taken to preserve the last remaining historic building in the park. SHPO¹ chimed in because of its eligibility status and because state and federal funds are being used for work on the new park; they came up with the idea of moving the building to a new pier. We would be happy to see that if it can't be restored on the existing site. That's another reason why we want to see the cost breakdowns. We would hope that the CAG could support us on some of these issues.

Deborah Wye: The excavation in Corlears Hook Park was so significant and yielded so many artifacts. It probably cost a lot of money to perform the dig, the conservation work, the analysis, and the cataloging that there should be some budget to display some of these objects so that the people who use the park can learn about what was going on right beneath their feet.

Robin: Doesn't Parks have a monument department? Have you talked to them?

Richard: We've talked to Jonathan Kuhn there, the Director of Arts and Antiquities.

Robin: I don't know about your fundraising, but the Mellon Foundation is focusing on heritage and cultural preservation.

Wendy: Have you been in touch with any of the local museums such as the National Museum of the American Indian for help or ideas on fundraising?

Richard: We haven't gotten to that point yet. Before we fundraise, we need a real plan. Since Parks has its own architects, we had asked that their team put together a preliminary design that they're supposed to share with us, along with a budget estimate so that the funders can see how much money we need and that there's been thought behind it. Once we get that, we're going to shop this thing around.

Deborah: There are only a few Native American artifacts, maybe 4 to 6, in the whole dig.

Ayo: Thank you for the information. I would love to know where the artifacts are and see the report. I would love to know if remains or bone fragments were found. I do think it's important to document the lost history and what's been discovered. I would like to note the origins of the Dutch in early New York and the massacre that occurred at Corlears Hook that killed over 40 Native Americans and forcibly removed others from that land. It's just as important to emphasize the early history that doesn't require an artifact from any period of time. It sounds like the artifacts that were found were from the most notorious part of Corlears Hook's history. I 100% support what you're doing, and they can't just say it's not in the budget; that's BS. But the early history and the massacre need to be included.

¹ State Historic Preservation Office

Richard: Thank you. There's signage planned for Corlears Hook Park that would outline the history of the park. We would like to see the Native American experience included. Thank you for bringing that up.

Martin: You're doing some great stuff, Richard. Have you tried going to CB 3 with a budget request?

Richard: No, but we can certainly do that.

Martin: Try to get on the agenda of the Parks committee, and show them what you're doing. Maybe you can get budget priority items out of them.

Richard: We have to keep pushing Parks to get their architectural team to come up with something. We don't want to come up with something and ask an architect to put in a lot of time, and then it's nothing near something they'd ever authorize. We need their team to come up with a preliminary design with a budget. Then we could shop it around.

Deborah: An education program for public schools is being planned that will deal with the massacre, Native Americans, and immigrant history. We hoped that as part of this curriculum they'd be able to bring some of the artifacts so the students could experience the objects.

Ayo: The curriculum is great, but NYC DOE doesn't actually do all that is required. Whether we're talking about African American or Jewish history, while it might be required, it doesn't usually end up in the classroom. If it does, it's not sustained, and that's just the reality. We don't have many years to require that this project include this history in some kind of visual. I do think that it should be required, and I'm happy to join an effort that's persistently demanding that the artifacts be featured in some way in this project. I don't think it's too late, and the CAG should sign on in support as long as variety of history is included.

Wendy: I'm glad you brought that up, Ayo. When I first heard about the ferry coming to Corlears, I started writing to everyone I knew at the City to see if we could co-name it Lenape Landing for the ferry. They responded to me before the day of the dedication and told me that I should have had a Lenape person make that request. I think that gives extra meaning and weight to any request involved with the First Nations people.

Michael: The challenge here is that the artifacts are not necessarily Native American artifacts. Paula, I shared one of the last updates that the consulting parties received; it has pictures of some of the artifacts. There's another document that was previously shared with the CAG with information about the archaeological project at Corlears. I can share it again so Paula can reshare it with the CAG. Richard, what do you want from us?

Richard: A letter of support to Parks and OMB and cc'ing SHPO and DDC would be wonderful.

Michael: I can work with Richard and Deborah to draft a letter that we can share with the rest of the CAG. It might be in January.

Robin: We should think about doing land acknowledgements when the park opens and bringing in the indigenous community. When Corlears Hook Park reopens, we should think about a ceremony as opposed to a typical ribbon-cutting. I'm happy to work with anyone on that.

Deborah: There is a someone on the distribution list who's a Tribal Historical Preservation Officer of the Stockbridge Munsee community, so he receives this information and comments on it, too.

Ayo: Where are the artifacts, and who has control of them? Is there an archaeological report about what the objects were used for, who used them, and whether or not there were remains?

Michael: That's the report I was mentioning that Paula is going to share.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:40 pm.