



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Tammy Meltzer CHAIRPERSON | Lucian Reynolds DISTRICT MANAGER

March 1, 2021

Edward Pincar
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Dear Mr. Pincar,

In November 2020, Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1) adopted a resolution requesting that NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) work with CB1 and the community to release the Brooklyn Bridge Banks and Dugout areas for recreation and open space for the community (see full attached resolution).

On December 7, 2020 members of CB1 and staff participated in a conference call with DOT and NYPD to discuss the resolution and the community's desire to reopen these spaces. While some initial questions were answered, the community has additional questions and desires to continue this conversation with DOT on how to work together to return some of this space for public use. Some of these additional questions include:

- Your Nov 17, 2020 memo indicated that you anticipate work on the bridge to be near continuous for the next decade or more. This community has already lost use of this important public space for over a decade and is not prepared to be without it for additional years. DOT needs to work with CB1 on a plan to return portions of these areas not under construction as soon as possible. DOT has not demonstrated that the entirety of the areas need to remain closed until all bridge-related work is complete.
- How many vehicles park in the areas adjacent to the arches in Community District 1? It has been reported that the spaces adjacent to the anchorages are mainly used as a parking lot and that no work is ongoing. Can we work with DOT to relocate those vehicles to other spots in the neighborhood? Does DOT similarly house vehicles and equipment on the Brooklyn side of the bridge? Such staging needs should be distributed so that communities on both sides of the bridge share in providing space for these needs.
- CB1 is also interested in the space known as the Dugout for community use. DOT responded that it plans to add additional operations to the space in the near future including contractor operations "to minimize our footprint within other areas of the community". Where are those other operations now located that you plan to move to the Dugout area? We would appreciate time to discuss this and understand why it has to be moved before you proceed and occupy more of this space.

CBI has unsuccessfully attempted to formally engage DOT numerous times since the December 7, 2020 call to continue publicly discussing this important issue. We urge DOT to attend the upcoming Waterfront, Parks & Cultural Committee meeting on March 16, 2021 so that we might continue the conversation surrounding this initiative which has been so passionately supported by many members of our local community and beyond. We look forward to working together to be able to start returning the space under the Brooklyn Bridge back for public use.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tammy Meltzer", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Tammy Meltzer, Chairperson

CC: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
NYC Councilmember Margaret Chin
NYC Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams
NYC DPR Manhattan Borough Commissioner William Castro
Paul Goldstein, Chair, CBI Waterfront, Parks & Cultural Committee

COMMUNITY BOARD 1 – MANHATTAN
RESOLUTION

DATE: NOVEMBER 24, 2020

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: WATERFRONT, PARKS & CULTURAL

COMMITTEE VOTE:	10 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused
PUBLIC VOTE:	2 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused
BOARD VOTE:	41 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused

RE: Brooklyn Bridge Banks and Dugout Space along Robert F. Wagner Pl. and community desire to re-open and activate these spaces for community recreation

WHEREAS: Creating additional active recreation space for the fast-growing Financial District/Seaport areas that have very little such open space has long been a priority of Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1); and

WHEREAS: For over ten years, the space under the Brooklyn Bridge has been closed off to the public due to ongoing construction on the Brooklyn Bridge. Prior to that, the area was an important and heavily used recreation area that housed the Brooklyn Banks skate park and other recreation spaces which provided both active and passive recreation opportunities to the community; and

WHEREAS: CB1 has also identified another potential new active recreation area, the Dugout, that can serve school age and adolescent youth that is now a largely empty large space beneath the Brooklyn Bridge off Robert F. Wagner Sr. Pl and South Street that is controlled by the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) but appears to be very underutilized; and

WHEREAS: DOT has reported in a written memo that they expect work on the Brooklyn Bridge to be near continuous for the next decade and beyond. Further, that the space known as the Dugout is an essential DOT off-street facility that houses several DOT operational divisions, including Bridges, Facilities, Roadway Repair Maintenance, and Fleet Divisions. DOT said it plans to add additional operations to the space in the near future; and

WHEREAS: Rodney Rosado, NYPD 5th Precinct Crime Prevention Officer attended the November CB1 Waterfront, Parks & Cultural Committee meeting and reported that while NYPD has not revisited security for that area for some time due to ongoing construction on the Bridge, that NYPD wants to give back whatever areas they're able to under the bridge to the public, but that it depends on the Bridge construction schedule. Further, if and when construction allows for a return of public use, NYPD would conduct a security assessment to determine what specific measures would need to be taken; and

WHEREAS: The Brooklyn Banks skatepark is a New York City cultural and historical landmark to both local and international action sports enthusiasts since its construction in 1972. Designed by renowned landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg, the Brooklyn Banks is most identifiable as a red brick plaza with large embankment structures on the east side of the park. In early May 2020, the recent

removal of the bricks, on the one side of the banks between Rose and Pearl streets, sparked outrage, fear and sadness throughout the skateboard community, action sports community at large, and even the local community in the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: CB1 has long advocated to return the space under the Brooklyn Bridge for community use as both active and passive recreation space, and in re-opening the arches for commercial and community use; and

WHEREAS: Dozens of speakers attended the November CB1 Waterfront, Parks & Cultural Committee meeting to express their support of returning space under the Brooklyn Bridge to public use, specifically regarding the Brooklyn Banks Skate Park for which members of the public expressed a deep personal connection and passion for; and

WHEREAS: Over 45,000 people have signed a petition to Save the Brooklyn Banks skatepark; and

WHEREAS: The Principal of the Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management within the Murry Bergtraum School spoke during the public comment period that they have been eager to use the space for the seven years that they have been there and reported that the space nearby them is mainly used as a parking lot and does not see work on a day-to-day basis. The space could be used by the school for Physical Education classes, and as an outdoor learning space during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS: As part of this community feedback, CB1 heard troubling reports that as part of the reconstruction of the Brooklyn Bridge, workers were uncovering architectural materials such as ship remains and other artifacts that were being discarded; now

THEREFORE

BE IT

RESOLVED

THAT: Community Board 1 urges that DOT, NYPD, Parks Dept. and our elected officials work together with the community towards the common goal of returning and converting this space under the Brooklyn Bridge back to the public. This space includes the swath of land on the north and the south side of the Brooklyn Bridge and all of the ramps surrounding it, starting from Park Row to the West and ending at South Street to the East, between Robert F. Wagner Sr. Place at the North and Frankfurt/Dover Street to the South; and

BE IT

FURTHER

RESOLVED

THAT: This includes both reinstating the Brooklyn Banks Skate park, but also the Dugout space and areas referenced above in order to transform it into a multi-use area of both passive and active recreation that serves all members of the community, including the community north of the Brooklyn Bridge and elsewhere, and which potentially could incorporate market and event uses; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: The arches should be included in this revisioning as means of reinstating business and/or community amenity uses; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 recognizes both the global and local significance of the Brooklyn Banks Skate park. Members of the CB1 Waterfront, Parks and Cultural Committee noted its importance as an iconic cultural and athletic institution that benefits many cross-sections of the community, including its merit as for spectators; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: This re-envisioning should be comprehensive and also address connections and level changes such as the connection through One Police Plaza and connections from the Brooklyn Bridge walkway to the ground level; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: Any historic architectural materials found in connection with the reconstruction of the Brooklyn Bridge should be appropriately handled by the relevant authorities.