

NYC Parks Cuts Ribbon on Phase One of Improvements to Fort Greene Park

By: Tyler Peterson Jun. 15, 2016

NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, yesterday joined Fort Greene Park Conservancy Chairman Charles Jarden and local community members to cut the ribbon on the first completed part of a multi-phase project at Fort Greene Park and for a traditional Flag Day celebration.

A \$2.63 million project funded by Borough President **Eric L. Adams** and Council Member Laurie Cumbo, this phase includes a new drainage and water supply system, new paths and benches, planting and landscaping to correct hillside erosion, entrance gardens, a wheelchair accessible entrance at Willoughby Street, and the beginning of new perimeter sidewalk. The Fort Greene Conservancy has a federal grant to continue the sidewalk reconstruction along Washington Park to Myrtle Ave.

Phase two was recently funded with \$3 million from Borough President Adams and Council Member Cumbo and is currently in design. When completed, it will include new paths, landscaping, benches, drainage and water supply toward the Myrtle Avenue section of the park and will correct the drainage and path ponding condition known as "Lake Fort Greene" near the playground.

"The new renovations to Fort Greene Park allow this already beloved public space to serve even more community members," said Commissioner Silver. "Wheelchair access at Willoughby Street opens the park up to all visitors, and special planting to control erosion keeps the park green and healthy. The diverse surrounding communities can also look forward to many more improvements to the park, including the second phase of construction, now in design, and the recent announcement of Fort Greene Park's inclusion in the Parks Without Borders initiative. As this park continues to improve and evolve, Parks is grateful to our generous and dedicated partners in this community, Borough President Adams, Council Member Cumbo and the Fort Greene Park Conservancy."

"Our parks are a reflection of our commitment to the activities we value: outdoor recreation and fresh air, athletics to support physical fitness, and the enjoyment of a quiet afternoon under a tree with a good book," said Brooklyn Borough President **Eric L. Adams**. "The redesign of Fort Greene Park will allow neighborhood residents, particularly families living in the Ingersoll Houses and Whitman Houses on the north side of the park, to pursue these activities, by creating useful amenities such as additional benches, paths, and an improved landscape, eliminating drainage problems to provide more useable space in the park. I am proud to work with Council Member Cumbo, the Fort Green Park Conservancy, and NYC Parks to improve this asset in our community."

"Today marks a tremendous milestone in the revitalization of Fort Greene Park, one of Brooklyn's oldest and most historic green spaces. I am so proud that in partnership with Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, we were able to allocate \$5.63 million in support of critical improvements towards the beautification and accessibility of Brooklyn's own outdoor community hub. The preservation of Fort Greene Park will ensure future generations the opportunity to celebrate its past and cherish its present, while being engaged in new visions for its future. As we celebrate the completion of phase I, we look forward to the continued enjoyment of Fort Greene Park by all New Yorkers-- particularly our aging and disabled communities," said Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo.

Also acknowledged were the volunteer efforts of two Eagle Scouts who completed service projects to improve the park. Sean Devine Dunn constructed and replica redoubt of Fort Putnam which existed near this site during the American Revolution and Devin Malanaphy outfitted the redoubt as an outdoor classroom for historic, environmental and other programs as a supplement to the Visitors Center.

Fort Greene Park has been the recipient of additional capital funding from the Parks Without Borders Program which is incorporated into the park design to make open spaces more inviting and accessible to the public.

Fort Greene's history is rife with important names--**Walt Whitman**, Nathaniel Greene, Frederick Law Olmsted, Calvert Vaux, **William Howard** Taft, and McKim, Mead and White, to name a few--hinting at the important role the park has played in the city's history. Originally the site of forts built for the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the community surrounding the land started using it as public space shortly after the threat of the War of 1812 passed. By 1847, it was designated a park (Brooklyn's first), and twenty years later, famed landscape architects Olmsted and Vaux began designing its new layout. In 1897, the park, formerly known as Washington Park, received its name.