

Revamped Grassmere Playground Opens In Far Rockaway

A new track, soccer field, basketball court and more were unveiled at the playground's grand opening on Tuesday.

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FAR ROCKAWAY, QUEENS -- Queens residents rang in the first day of spring with the grand re-opening of a Far Rockaway playground made to look brand new.

A new track, soccer fields, and a basketball court were just a few of the new amenities unveiled at Grassmere Playground on Tuesday when the park behind Wave Preparatory Elementary School reopened after a \$3.3 million makeover.

Grassmere was among five citywide playgrounds to host ribbon cuttings after undergoing complete overhauls funded by Mayor Bill de Blasio's Community Parks Initiatives to invest in NYC's most densely populated neighborhoods with higher-than-average poverty rates.

"In 2014, we launched the Community Parks Initiative with a commitment to bring world-class neighborhood parks to all New Yorkers," de Blasio said. "Today, we're seeing the results of that promise."

Aside from all new playground areas, Grassmere also received new sports facilities including a 100-meter track, junior soccer fields and a junior basketball court. The playground was also outfitted with upgraded plants, seating and lighting.

With warm weather just around the corner, children will soon be able to make use of the playground's other new features - including a water play area, an educational wooded trail and an outdoor classroom - while adults take advantage of its new fitness equipment.

The renovations are a welcome change for the playground in Far Rockaway, whose residents for years were forced to walk blocks in search of a safe outdoor recreational space to enjoy, said Queens Councilman Donovan Richards.

"There is no better justification for the Community Parks Initiative than the opening of Grassmere Playground in Far Rockaway," Richards said. "This beachfront community has been severely underserved by green space for decades."

NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver said that's what CPI is all about: "Bringing best-in-class parks to neighborhoods that were once overlooked."

A combined \$24 million went into the five citywide playgrounds that reopened on Tuesday, including \$5.1 million to Arrochar in Staten Island, \$4.1 million to Hilltop in Brooklyn, \$7.4 million to Lyons Square in the Bronx and \$5.1 million to the Martin Luther King, Jr. site in Manhattan.

The Department of Environmental Preservation also committed \$50 million for green infrastructure like rain gardens and other rainwater management at each site.

Tuesday's ribbon cuttings marked a total of 17 CPI sites open citywide, and 15 more are slated to open by the year's end, according to NYC Parks.

Lead photo via Google Images.