GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

VILLAGE PRESERVATION

SPRCD

THE COALITION TO SAVE THE PUBLIC RECREATION CENTER DOWNTOWN

November 2, 2026

Hon. Zohran Mamdani
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal
Manhattan Borough President
One Centre Street, 19th floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carl Wilson
NYC City Councilmember, 3rd District
224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Re: Continued stonewalling by Parks Department on preservation, repair, updating and reopening of Tony Dapolito Recreation Center

Dear Mayor Mamdani, Borough President Hoylman-Sigal, and Councilmember Carl Wilson,

We write to express our extreme frustration with the Parks Department over its continued refusal to move ahead with or even consider plans to preserve, repair, and reopen the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, using specious and dishonest arguments that continue to avoid the heart of the matter at hand. As each of you have at various points expressed a commitment to seeing the building preserved, renovated, and reopened, we call upon you in the strongest of terms to put deeds behind your words, and ensure that the Parks Department moves ahead to preserve this landmarked building, and return this beloved and valued community institution to public use.

As the chief of executive of the city, Mayor Mamdani you have the power to direct the Parks Department to drop the plans concocted by your predecessor, Mayor Adams, to destroy the Dapolito Center, as you promised to do when campaigning for office. And Borough President Hoylman-Sigal and Councilmember Wilson, as the Parks

Department's plan to destroy the Dapolito Center is tied to and dependent upon their plans for a new recreation center at 388 Hudson Street, which requires a ULURP approval, you have the power to insist that the preservation of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center is part of the deal.

The Parks Department's most recent letter (attached) regarding their justifications for demolishing the Dapolito Center illustrate the disingenuous sophistry in which they continue to engage and their refusal to participate in an honest dialogue with the public. The letter continues to claim that there is no practical recreation purpose to which the building can be placed because bringing it up to code and making it disabled accessible would reduce usable floor area in the building, thus making some of the uses that had been located there, such as an indoor pool, track, and basketball court, impractical or suboptimal.

This is completely irrelevant, and a red herring the Parks Department continues to rely upon in an attempt to divert attention from the true issue at hand, and the very real possibilities for renovating and reopening the Dapolito Center. The modest reduction in usable space resulting from bringing the Dapolito Center up to code and making it disabled accessible may well make space within the center no longer ideally suited for an indoor pool, track, or basketball court. Fortunately, if that is the case, the new recreation center at 388 Hudson Street can, and under current plans will, accommodate all those uses. But the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center can still accommodate a myriad of recreational uses that suit the dimensions of the building and its spaces. It should be noted that a building containing locker rooms and changing stations for the adjacent outdoor pool is required at this site, which Dapolito can continue to accommodate. Repairing and updating the building to house those necessary uses, as well as other new recreational uses, is a much more environmentally sound approach than demolishing the building and constructing a new one. It's also the right thing to do to respect the landmark designation of the building and its historic significance, as well as to respect the overwhelming sentiment expressed by the public regarding their desire to see this building preserved and reopened.

The Parks Department continues to insist that a new analysis is needed to determine what if any elements of the facade need the building can be preserved. But this claim is belied by documents obtained via FOIL which show that previous analyses undertaken by the Parks Department showed that the building in its entirely could in fact be preserved, renovated, brought up to code, and reopened. But the Parks Department simply refuses to do so, and has clearly not engaged in a good faith dialogue with the public about conditions at the building or possibilities for its future.

It must be noted that countless buildings that are older, in worse condition, and on more constricted sites have been renovated and made disabled accessible. The Guastavino tile system which was used to create a structural support for the building is renowned for its perfect record of never failing, and continuing to provide structural support for Grand Central Terminal, the Queensboro Bridge, the Municipal Building, Carnegie Hall, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Ellis Island, and the Alexander Hamilton Custom House/Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian, among countless other locations in New York City and beyond. These are all buildings that

have faced considerably greater challenges than the Dapolito Center, including extensive changes in use and circulation over the years, vibrations from subways, extensive construction nearby and to the buildings themselves, and in the case of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a devastating fire. Yet all have managed to survive and continue to serve the public, which the Parks Department claims is impossible in this case. It should be noted that the Parks Department's own Constance Baker Motley Recreation Center, a short distance from the site, utilizes that same Guastavino tile system, and apparently has suffered no structural failures as a result.

It is painfully clear that for the Parks Department, there is a predetermined outcome here, and they are committed to engaging exclusively in conversations which lead toward their chosen conclusion. But this community knows that this building can be renovated, can be brought up to code and made accessible, and can continue to serve a public recreation purpose. And that is what this community has overwhelmingly called for, to preserve a beloved local institution, and to protect the integrity of our landmark regulations.

Only you can keep the Parks Department from moving ahead with actions which would run diametrically opposite to both of these critical public imperatives. We urge you in the strongest of terms to take action to ensure that is not the case.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Village Preservation
www.villagepreservation.org



Sommer Omar
Founder, Coalition to Save the Public
Recreation Center Downtown
www.sprcd.org

Cc NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Community Board 2, Manhattan
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Assemblymember Grace Lee
David Siffert
Preservation League of NY State
New York Landmarks Conservancy
Historic Districts Council
Landmark West
Friends of the Upper East Side
Village Independent Democrats
Village Reform Democratic Club
Downtown Independent Democrats
Grand Street Democrats

Bleecker Area Merchants and Residents Association
Westbeth
Central Village Block Association
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors
Morton Street Block Association
West Village Residents
Village Kids
Downtown Nasty Women Social Group

NYC Parks

Tricia Shimamura
Commissioner

City of New York
Parks & Recreation
The Arsenal
Central Park
New York, NY 10065
nyc.gov/parks

October 26, 2026

Village Preservation
232 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10003

Cc: Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown (SPRCD)

Dear Village Preservation and the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown,

Thank you for your continued dialogue on the state of recreation in the West Village and for your August 11th letter sharing your thoughts on the path forward for recreation in the neighborhood.

We are excited to invest $164 million in the vision for the Clarkson Street Corridor, which will bring state-of-the-art, spacious, affordable, and accessible public recreation to the neighborhood, including indoor and outdoor swimming, year-round recreation spaces and public art.

In collaboration with our partners at the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC), the project at the Tony Dapolito site will include a new and accessible aquatics center, encompassing an outdoor pool, a pool house and restoration of the Keith Haring mural in consultation with the Haring Foundation. Once DDC procures the design team, the design process will begin with a community input meeting.

As highlighted in past conversations with Manhattan Community Board 2 and other community conversations, unfortunately, the existing Tony Dapolito Recreation Center building is extensively structurally compromised. Over multiple rounds of investigative probes and years of investigation, each round revealed additional structural issues.

Our priority is to provide high-quality, affordable recreation opportunities to the community and provide facilities that allow for New Yorkers of all abilities to stay active. Due to its deteriorated condition, structural layout, and unique site constraints, it is not feasible to renovate the building and comply with modern accessibility standards and building codes without further reducing essential and already undersized programming space for the community. This would include dramatically reducing the inadequately sized indoor pool, gym, fitness, and multipurpose rooms.

While the aforementioned engineering site investigations indicate the Tony Dapolito Building façade is in poor condition, we remain committed to continuing to investigate its condition and future possibilities. A feasibility study on the façade will provide additional technical information, and we are working with DDC to procure specialists for the study. We will share the findings with the community.

Because the future outdoor aquatics complex will be located within a historic district, we will follow all regulatory review requirements, including presenting the future proposal to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and Manhattan Community Board 2.

At 388 Hudson Street, we are partnering with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development to deliver an affordable housing and recreation mixed-use development, which was sited with support from Manhattan Community Board 2. The RFP process is complete, and a development team is on board.

NYC Parks

We look forward to keeping the community updated as the projects within the Clarkson Street Corridor progress, and we are excited to welcome you to the new outdoor aquatics center and the future recreation center at 388 Hudson Street.

Sincerely,



Tricia Shimamura

Commissioner