



South Village Neighbors



June 12, 2025

City Councilmember Erik Bottcher
224 West 30th St, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Congressman Dan Goldman
290 Broadway, Suite 291
New York, NY 10007

Borough President Mark Levine
Municipal Building, 19th floor South
New York, NY 10007

Assemblymember Deborah Glick
853 Broadway, Suite 2007
New York, NY 10003

State Senator Brian Kavanagh
250 Broadway, Room 2011
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Bottcher, Borough President Levine, Congressman Goldman, State Senator Kavanagh, and Assemblymember Glick:

Thank you for your June 5 letter to Mayor Adams and Parks Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa regarding your reservations about the City's and the Parks Department's intention to demolish the beloved and landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center at 1 Clarkson Street. It was especially important to see the letter acknowledge that the Parks Department had neglected this facility for decades by deferring maintenance and removing it from public use for five years, which has brought us to this difficult point.

However, we remain concerned about several time-sensitive issues, which we hope are addressed before the City Council finalizes the budget in the upcoming weeks:

First, Mayor Adams has allocated funding in his executive budget for demolition, and if approved by the City Council, will permit his administration to demolish the facility. While the letter calls for a pause in demolition steps, which we welcome, we write to express our grave concern that authorizing demolition funds would in fact have the opposite effect, expediting this ill-advised plan by providing necessary funding. Moreover, even if the facility triggers the legal standards permitting demolition of a landmarked facility, which to date it has not, and a replacement facility were possible, that too will need a funding commitment that so far does not appear to be included in the proposed budget.

Your letter laudably calls for a community-informed plan. But if capital earmarked for demolition is adopted in the final budget, then demolition becomes a foregone conclusion despite profound community opposition, simply because that is the only option that has a clear funding commitment. We urge Councilmember Bottcher to ensure that any funding allocated in the city budget is earmarked for restoration only rather than demolition, and that additional funds as needed are allocated to fully renovate and reopen the facility.

Second, the Parks Department has not researched options for repair and rehabilitation of the facility. During the February 5, 2025 Manhattan Community Board 2 meeting, a Parks Department official noted that current programming offered at the recreation center could not be replicated in a facility brought up to modern code. The official was asked whether it was possible to “provide different kinds of recreational programming in a restored version of that building.” The official stated “I’m sure that could be studied.”¹ We are not aware of what is inhibiting that research and urge the Parks Department to begin this study.

Third, public records show that more than \$100 million in capital funding was previously allocated to the site but has not been used. According to the New York City Capital Projects Dashboard, a city-run instrument that tracks capital funding, \$127.9 million was, at some point, allocated to the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, of which only \$8.5 million was used.² We urge the Parks Department to work with Councilmember Bottcher to clarify whether such funding is still available to be directed towards the repair and renovation of the facility.

Fourth, we are deeply concerned about directing the community towards further engagement with the Parks Department and replacing much needed action with further delay. The Parks Department already appeared before Manhattan Community Board 2 multiple times to discuss the demolition of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. A majority of public testimony favored repair and reopening of the facility over demolition. Manhattan Community Board 2 has also already issued a resolution strongly opposing demolition. These facts are indisputable and a matter of public record. Public input has been amply rendered opposing demolition and urging repair. Further delay only

¹ See 1:48:06 – 1:49:21 of Manhattan CB2 February 5, 2025 – Joint Parks & Waterfront and Landmarks Committee Meeting: <https://youtu.be/NSrAFED7QYk>.

² See NYC Capital Projects Dashboard, enter “Tony Dapolito” in the “Filter by Keyword” search box: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/capitalprojects/index.page>.

guarantees that conditions at the Center will worsen, making repairs more difficult and further out of reach.

Finally, as you noted in your letter, the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center has already suffered from decades of neglect; now, we are facing further neglect through the continued idling of this facility because the Parks Department has failed to move forward with repairs. That is yet another year of no access to public pools, free swimming lessons for children, programming for seniors, and recreational opportunities for youth not just in the community but for New Yorkers across the city who relied on this all too rare affordable resource.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical matter.



Sommer Omar,
Founder,
Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown



Andrew Berman,
Executive Director, Village Preservation



Richard Corman,
President, Downtown Independent Democrats



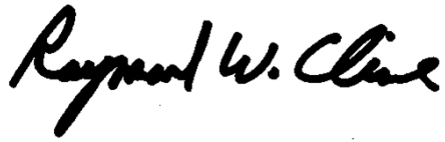
Kim Beck,
Co-Founder, Downtown Nasty Women Social Group



Irene Kaufman,
Co-President, Village Independent Democrats



Sean Sweeney,
Director, SoHo Alliance



Raymond Cline,
Village Reform Democratic Club



Kenny Wind,
President, Grand Street Democrats



Mark Fiedler
President, Bleecker Area Merchants Residents Association



Pat Bates,
Co-Director, Team Min



Micki McGee,
Founding Member, South Village Neighbors

Executive Committee,
Chelsea Reform Democratic Club