



DOWNTOWN  
INDEPENDENT  
DEMOCRATS

Downtown  
Nasty Women  
Social Group

BOWERY  
ALLIANCE  
OF  
NEIGHBORS



Village  
Independent  
Democrats



THE VILLAGE REFORM  
DEMOCRATIC CLUB



WESTBETH.ORG



CENTRAL VILLAGE BLOCK ASSOCIATION

*The Central Village Block Association is a forum for residents of Barrer, Jones, Cornelia, Leroy, Blenker, West 4th Street & Sheridan Square*

Morton Street  
Block Association



VILLAGE KIDS

Friday August 28, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani  
Mayor, City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Tricia Shimamura  
Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation  
The Arsenal, Central Park  
830 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10065

**Re: Community Opposition to Demolition of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, 1  
Clarkson Street, Manhattan**

Dear Mayor Mamdani and Commissioner Shimamura,

As community organizations representing thousands of residents of Lower Manhattan and New Yorkers from across the five boroughs, we write to vigorously oppose the Parks Department's commitment to demolishing the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. At an August 5, 2026 meeting

convened by Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal, the Parks Department reiterated its plan to demolish the public recreation center despite the disclosure of FOIL records indicating the facility can be repaired, despite conceding that more than \$100 million in capital funding remained available to begin repairs, and despite overwhelming opposition registered by the community.

The Parks Department initially shut down the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center in 2020 for repairs. In 2024, the Department revealed that no repairs had been made since the facility was removed from public use and instead proposed complete demolition, insisting that repair was not possible. The change in course and the revelation that no progress had been made during several years during which the community lacked access to a popular and affordable recreational facility was not only deeply frustrating, but struck the community as a bad faith decision to allow a public site to deteriorate, and then cite deterioration as justification for demolition.

On March 29, 2026, we made public all files disclosed in response to Freedom of Information Law request No. 19589, where we requested access to any information that could substantiate or explain why the Parks Department sought to demolish one of its own recreation centers rather than repairing and reopening the center, as initially promised to the community. The documents disclosed in response to the FOIL request, generated by the City's own contracted architects, engineers, and staff, entirely refuted the justification for demolition. The files contain, for instance, a more than 50-page detailed reconstruction plan rendered by expert architects and engineers indicating the facility can be fully modernized and can be rendered ADA accessible, code compliant and returned to public use. There is even an email from a NYC Parks Department staffer explicitly stating the facility 'can be fully repaired.' During the August 5 meeting, notably, the Parks Department did not say that the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center could not be repaired.

Further, using the NYC Capital Projects Dashboard, we identified that more than \$100 million in capital funding had been explicitly allocated to repair the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. During a Manhattan Community Board 2 meeting on August 6, 2025 the Parks Department confirmed that such funding remained accessible and was simply idle. During the August 5, 2026 convening, the Parks Department again confirmed the funding remained but suggested that it would be repurposed for various other projects in the area. If funds committed to repair can simply be cannibalized, then demolition becomes a self-fulfilling proposition: the Parks Department can gut the resources needed for repair and then point to the absence of those resources as a reason to abandon the facility.

Throughout the August 5 convening, the Parks Department reiterated its commitment to constructing the recreational center proposed at 388 Hudson. While we have consistently supported supplemental recreation services at the site, such services should not come at the expense of an existing public recreation center that the City has already committed to repair. These facilities should be seen as complementary public resources, not competing ones. Moreover, our community is saturated with exorbitantly expensive gyms and boutique fitness studios. Together,

the two sites could offer a broader range of affordable recreation programs and services, providing a much-needed public alternative to the neighborhood's expensive private fitness options. Tony Dapolito has long drawn New Yorkers from across the five boroughs to this safe and welcoming neighborhood; maintaining both sites would allow that legacy to continue.

Last year, we were heartened to hear the Mayor promise to repair the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. Since then, the case for repair has become overwhelming: the City's own FOIL records show a viable path to reconstruction, more than \$100 million remains available to fund it, and the Mayor has already committed to doing it. After six years without public access, there is no reasonable basis for further delay and no justification for discarding a public institution that the City has the evidence, the money, and the mandate to restore.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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



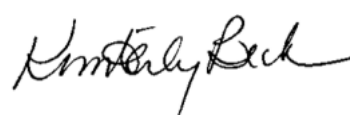
Andrew Berman  
Executive Director,  
Village Preservation



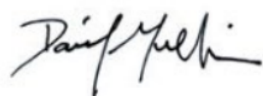
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Kathy Arntzen  
President,  
Central Village Block  
Association

/s/ Maria Leao  
Maria Leao  
Executive Director,  
Village Kids

/s/ Resa Tylim  
Resa Tylim  
President,  
Morton Street Block  
Association