



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

## Squadron to City: Missing Bushwick Inlet Park Money Must Be Spent Now

DANIEL L. SQUADRON March 22, 2012

| ISSUE: [RECREATION AND TOURISM, CONSTITUENTS CORNER](#)

### **Squadron, Colleagues Urge City to Honor Commitment, Fully Fund North Brooklyn Park**

NEW YORK -- Today, State Senator Daniel Squadron urged the City to honor its pledge to North Brooklyn and use the budget process to fully fund Bushwick Inlet Park, in testimony at the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee's preliminary budget hearing.

North Brooklyn has long been starved for open, green space. As part of the 2005 rezoning of the Williamsburg and Greenpoint waterfront, the City committed \$309 million to develop 28 acres of parkland along the East River. However, last year, the City said that it did not have the remaining funding necessary to build the park -- leaving over \$100 million for which the City is still responsible. Since last year, Senator Squadron, along with Assembly Member Joseph Lentol, Council Member Stephen Levin, and the community, have been urging the City to fulfill its commitment.

In testimony at today's hearing, Senator Squadron urged the City to honor its pledge and use this budget process to make Bushwick Inlet Park a reality. Senator Squadron's full testimony is available below.

"Every community deserves access to open space - and ours is no exception. At this juncture, seven years later, the 2005 City rezoning has brought thousands of new residents to Greenpoint and Williamsburg. But where is the promised waterfront park?" said **Senator Squadron**. "The City's promise to provide historically-underserved North Brooklyn with this essential park is even more important today, with the residents I represent more in need of open space than ever. I urge the City to honor its pledge and provide a meaningful plan, during this budget process, to make Bushwick Inlet Park a reality."

"My district remains starved for open space. Our parks remain immensely overcrowded and poorly underfunded," said **Assembly Member Lentol**. "With the 2005 rezoning one the most crucial commitments made to me, made to the neighborhoods I represent, made to the people who have bought the newly rezoned in good faith, was that the city would buy and build more open space. This commitment was an absolutely critical piece to the 2005 rezoning and one that each and every one of us relied upon. We trusted. We had faith and we believed in the promise that was made to us. The City has failed to live up to this commitment to date. That's not acceptable. Now is the time for the City to recommit to this endeavor."

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**Testimony of State Senator Daniel Squadron at the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 22, 2012**

My name is Daniel Squadron and I represent the 25th District in the New York State Senate. My district includes the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Vinegar Hill, DUMBO, Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens and Gowanus, and the Manhattan neighborhoods of Tribeca, Battery Park City, the Lower East Side, Chinatown, the Financial District, Little Italy, SoHo and the East Village. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

I do not typically submit testimony to NYC Council Budget Hearings, but in this instance I am compelled to do so. While my district includes many parks, there are unique concerns about the City's funding obligations to the creation of Bushwick Inlet Park and its commitment to the residents of North Brooklyn. I thank my colleagues Council Member Levin and Assembly Member Lentol for pushing the City to keep their commitment.

An intrinsic piece of the 2005 rezoning of the Williamsburg and Greenpoint waterfront was the commitment by the City to develop 28 acres of parkland along the East River. This commitment constituted the City's agreement that - particularly in a neighborhood that is drastically underserved by green space - vertical development, especially on a grand scale, cannot proceed without an attendant increase in parkland and active recreational areas.

At this juncture, seven years later, the 2005 City rezoning has brought thousands of new residents to Greenpoint and Williamsburg. But where is the promised waterfront park?

A letter dated March 22, 2011, from the general counsel of the City Parks Department, stated that the City “has no funding” or “schedule” the acquisition of the major portion of parkland on the Williamsburg waterfront that was promised by this administration. As stated in a letter dated July 19, 2011, that I wrote with my colleagues Assembly Member Lentol and Council Member Levin, this is simply unacceptable to our constituents.

In addition, it has been difficult to answer remaining questions about what portion of the City's original \$309 million commitment to the park has been spent and what remains. Previously \$166 million was listed as expended and \$29 million was listed as encumbered. This leaves over \$100 million for which the City is still responsible, and yet the city has told us there is no additional money for Bushwick Inlet Park.

The City's promise to provide historically-underserved North Brooklyn with this essential park is even more important today, with the residents I represent more in need of open space than ever. I urge the City to honor its pledge and provide a meaningful plan, during this budget process, to make Bushwick Inlet Park a reality.

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