



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Governor Hochul Announces Design of New Gateway to Marsha P. Johnson State Park

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| ISSUE: **MARSHA P JOHNSON STATE PARK**



Governor Kathy Hochul today announced the preliminary design for a new gateway to Marsha P. Johnson State Park in Brooklyn. The park honors Marsha P. Johnson, a Transgender woman of color who was a pioneer of the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement, born 77 years ago today. The gateway will cap a \$16.5 million renovation project completed this summer.

"Marsha P. Johnson was a trailblazer who stood up for what is right, challenged the status quo, and changed the course of history," **Governor Hochul said.** "As we celebrate Marsha P. Johnson's birthday, New York State will continue to honor her story at this newly renovated state park, where we are highlighting her message and carrying it forward for new generations of visitors."

The ornamental gateway at the Kent Avenue/North Eighth Street entrance will welcome visitors into the park. This bold and artful park entrance gateway structure is intended to communicate Marsha P. Johnson's spirit and legacy and complements the park and surrounding neighborhood. Design of the gateway will continue into Fall 2022 and fabrication will begin in 2023.

The gateway will build on newly completed improvements that consist of extensive new landscaping - including a native species perennial garden and 'Marsha's hillside' to honor her love of nature; a new great lawn; dozens of new trees; permeable pathways; new park furnishings; permanent interpretive panels documenting Marsha's life, work and community; new signage park wide; and a substantial site-wide stormwater management system to improve drainage throughout the park.

Last year, a series of completed improvements included a new park house with public bathrooms, a classroom and gathering space, and park maintenance and ranger contact space as well as a green roof; a refurbished and accessible cobblestone walkway from North 8th entrance into the park; preliminary interpretive panels honoring Marsha P. Johnson's life and civil rights work and community; and refurbished concrete event platforms. The repair and reduction of the event pads and other hardscapes yielded nearly an acre of additional greenspace to the seven-acre park. The improvements followed extensive consultation with the transgender and LGBTQ communities, neighborhood leaders, Marsha's family and the general public over the park's design.

**State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid said,** "Inclusion and acceptance are goals that we take to heart at State Parks. The new and improved version of Marsha P. Johnson State Park is a great example of how we can be welcoming and open to all, and to reflect the varied and diverse stories of the many people and places of New York State."

**State Senator Brian Kavanagh said,** "The new gateway is a fitting tribute to the life and legacy of Marsha P. Johnson, who served as a pioneer for civil rights, especially LGBTQ+ rights, and remains an inspiration to many New Yorkers, especially transgender people of color. It is my hope that as a new generation of visitors enter this beautifully designed gateway, they will be reminded about the contributions and sacrifices that Marsha P. Johnson made to advance the cause of inclusiveness for all and help to carry her message forward. I thank Governor Kathy Hochul, Commissioner Erik Kulleseid, members of Brooklyn Community Board 1, and of course the friends and family of Marsha P. Johnson, who have played an important role in developing this park."

**Assemblymember Emily Gallagher said,** "I am so proud that our North Brooklyn district is home to this beautiful, public waterfront open space that honors the legacy of Marsha P. Johnson and the ongoing struggle for Black, queer and trans liberation. On what would have been her 77th birthday, the New York State Office of Parks has revealed a thoughtful, bold design to welcome neighbors and visitors alike to this truly unique place."

**New York City Council Member Lincoln Restler said,** "Everyone deserves to feel welcomed in public spaces like parks, and I'm excited that the legacy of Marsha P. Johnson will continue to be honored in our community through this new gateway."

**New York State Executive Chamber Deputy Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs Chanel Lopez said,** "This is such a historical event, a park designed for the community by the community, and named after a fearless leader. Marsha P. Johnson is someone we consider a pillar in our Trans

community of color, and someone who broke down barriers for us to be able to be seen and heard. We celebrate you! I hope you are proud of the movement."

**New York State Executive Chamber Edie Windsor, Marsha P. Johnson, and Sylvia Rivera LGBTQ Fellow Jenna Frasier said,** "It is incredible to see a waterfront park named in honor of a pioneer for Black, queer and trans folks. We deserve beauty and rest in our lives, especially while our community still fights for our rights, and it feels so meaningful to find a home for that in Marsha P. Johnson State Park. I am humbled to honor her legacy and to see her celebrated in her park! "

Formerly East River State Park, the facility was renamed in Marsha P. Johnson's honor in February 2020. Known as an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and HIV/AIDS treatment, Marsha was a prominent figure of the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 and later established a shelter in New York City to support LGBTQ+ young people rejected by their families. She was born August 24, 1945, and died mysteriously in 1992 at age 46.

She was a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front, an activist with ACT UP, and a co-founder of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) - later renamed as Strategic Transgender Alliance for Radical Reform (STARR) - along with Sylvia Rivera. Born in New Jersey, Marsha P. Johnson moved to Greenwich Village after graduating from high school. She turned her hardships and her struggles with mental illness into activism for others, participating in demonstrations with ACT UP and raising awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in New York City.

The seven-acre waterfront park located along the East River in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn offers visitors a stunning view of the Manhattan skyline, a delightful play area, and the green space provides many opportunities for recreation and relaxation. As the site of a 19th century shipping dock, visitors to East River may also

discover unique historical remnants like old cobblestone streets and railroad tracks embedded in concrete, as well as a popular dog run and beach. The park preserves and protects the many natural and historical resources along this beautiful city waterfront.

The park is free and open to the public, and attracts approximately 1.6 million visitors each year. In addition to the great views of the East River and Manhattan, the park offers native meadow plantings among the historic rail yard remnants; passive recreation; picnicking and barbecues.

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation oversees more than 250 parks, historic sites, recreational trails, golf courses, boat launches and more, which are visited by more than 78 million people annually. For more information on any of these recreation areas, visit [www.parks.ny.gov](http://www.parks.ny.gov), download the free [NY State Parks Explorer](#) mobile app or call 518.474.0456. Also, connect on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).