

City will renovate 2nd Ave. playground

By Maciej Wroblewski

It looks like much needed restoration help is on its way to Augustus St. Gaudens Playground on Second Avenue between 19th and 20th Street thanks to a productive meeting between community leaders, P.S. 40 officials and representatives of the New York City Parks & Recreation Department last week.

The meeting, organized by Arlene Harrison, President of the Gramercy Park Block Association (GPBA), and Sharon Ullman, President of the 23rd Street Association, and attended by Robert Redmond, Director of Capital Projects for Parks & Recreation Department in Manhattan, Elliot Sykes, manager of District 6 parks, and Leah Worrell, Community Outreach Coordinator for Partnership for Parks, was deemed a success after the parties agreed on a number of commitments to improve the playground.

"P.S. 40 turned to us for help to see if there's anything that can be done to renovate their park and we're delighted with what they're promising," said Harrison, whose group, together with the 23rd Street Association, has a partnership with the school.

According to the record of the meeting provided by GPBA, representatives of the Parks Department, the city agency that owns the jointly operated playground with the goal of providing play space for kids from P.S. 40, promised to repaint the wall on the east side of the basketball court area during the upcoming NY Cares Park Day in August. Additional improvements to the basketball court area will include repairing and painting of damaged surface areas and repainting of the benches on the west side of the court.

"We have been working with the local community to identify the maintenance needs in

Augustus St. Gaudens Playground. We appreciate the support of community organizations and the students and staff at PS40 and we are excited to get started on these clean-up efforts," the Parks Department said in a statement.

According to the information provided by GPBA, the city agency also agreed to power wash all the padded red surfaces throughout the playground, which have never been washed since installation, and promised to wash them every six months. Power wash is also planned for the white wall supporting the flower garden.

Other scheduled improvements include researching new fencing options for the flower garden, researching new

sprinkler fountain options, and repainting the bottom portion of the flagpole. The school is also going to receive keys to the locks on the entrance at 19th Street.

Meanwhile, Leah Worell from Partnership for Parks, a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and Parks Department aimed at increasing community support for and involvement in parks, offered to host a "Flower Day" in September and again in the

spring, providing all the flowers, plants, and necessary tools and paint.

"The school is thrilled because they depend on the park for so many various school functions and all the kids play there after school," said Jan Renner, a proud parent of a P.S. 40 student and a liaison between the school and the partnership.

Augustus St. Gaudens Playground opened in 1966. The last major renovation of the playground took place in 1996 thanks to a \$720,000 grant from Council Member Antonio Pagan.