



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

232 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street New York NY 10003  
tel (212) 614-9107 fax (212) 614-9127 email hdc@hdc.org

Commissioner Adrian Benepe  
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation  
The Arsenal, Central Park  
New York, NY 10065

April 28, 2010

Dear Commissioner Benepe:

The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods and places. As HDC is concerned with the preservation of the character of New York City's historic places, we are strongly opposed to the current proposal to construct tennis bubble buildings in Central Park by the Parks Department. The intrusion of these large structures into the Park for any length of time, be it one month or one year, violates the park's historic and contemporary role as a serene retreat from the glare and bustle of daily life in the city.

It is self evident that the value of Central Park for the City of New York is as open space, a reserve of nature in a dense urban fabric. The park was designated a scenic landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1974, and the opening paragraph of the designation report states:

“Central Park was the first large-scale public park in the nation that was designed and constructed according to a plan – a plan which reflected the aspirations of a people for their city. It was to be a place where *all the people, from all walks of life* [emphasis added], could find spiritual and physical relief from the pressures of an urban industrial society.”

Certainly four large air-conditioned artificial structures are not in keeping with the vision of the park's designers, Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux.

HDC is also concerned by the seeming lack of transparency in the way this project has been proceeding. We understand that Community Boards 7 and 8 were not notified of the project's scope in a manner to solicit meaningful public input. At a CB7 committee meeting, it was reported that the project was in preliminary stages, but that Parks was already negotiating with the concessionaire selected as a result of a Request For Proposals. This is no way to perform community outreach and we are deeply troubled by the way the public review process has, and hasn't, been followed. Additionally, we are given to understand that the LPC has not even been consulted about this proposal yet, which creates an unseemly tension between the two agencies if and when it comes before Landmarks to be considered.



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In conclusion, the Historic Districts Council is strongly opposed to the construction of these structures, whether temporary or permanent, and we object to the proposal process. In 1974 the Landmarks Preservation Commission's designation report stated: "Although many schemes for buildings in the park have been proposed over the years, most of them have fortunately not been realized." We hope that you will reconsider and come to the conclusion that these buildings are not appropriate in the Park and do not serve "all the people from all walks of life", and that you will abandon this project.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director

cc: Senator Eric Schneiderman  
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried  
Assemblymember Danny O'Donnell  
Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal  
Councilmember Gale Brewer  
Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito  
William Castro, Manhattan Borough Commission, DPR  
Robert Tierney, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Mel Wymore, Chair, CB 7  
Landmark West!