

Residents Fight Plan for Tompkins Square Park

By SAMUEL KAPLAN

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Residents Fight Plan for Tompkins Square Park

City's Renovation Is Opposed on Lower East Side

By SAMUEL KAPLAN

Park Department plans to renovate Tompkins Square Park have drawn strong opposition from some residents in the area.

The plans call for, among other things, the construction of a softball field with three-tier concrete bleachers to seat 500 persons, an expansion of existing play areas, the destruction of more than a dozen tall trees and general renovation.

The plans are included in the department's capital budget, which goes before the City Planning Commission for approval Oct. 9. The plan is budgeted for \$357,830.

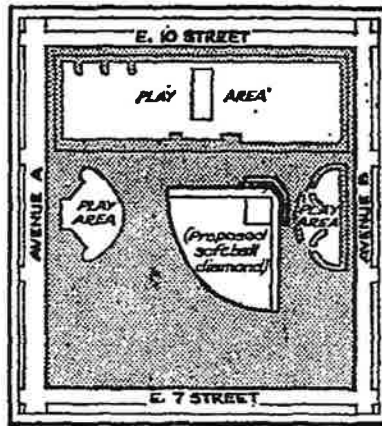
The park, which dates to the Eighteen Thirties, lies between Seventh and Tenth Streets and Avenues A and B on Manhattan's lower East Side and covers 10.5 acres.

The residents, who have formed a group called the Committee for the Preservation of Tompkins Square Park, say they are in agreement with some of the improvements proposed, but are opposed to anything they say will alter the "park-like" character of the square.

Object to Asphalt

They say it is the one green area within the lower East Side and that the proposed renovations would cover two-thirds of the park with asphalt and make it into a recreation area. Approximately a third of the park is already covered with asphalt.

The committee's major objection is the softball field. The members agree that more play facilities are needed in the area, but believed the department should look elsewhere. They say



The New York Times Sept. 17, 1961
City's plan for a softball diamond upsets residents using Tompkins Sq. Park.

that the ball fields in East River Park are under-utilized.

The committee, which is headed by Mrs. Gustave Nemhauser of 319 East Tenth Street, also notes that many of the residents of the community are elderly and use the park as a sitting area. Tompkins Square House, a Community Service Center for the elderly bordering the park, also expressed concern over the plans.

The committee is particularly upset about the department's plan to take down a number of tall trees in the center of the park. Some of these trees are more than 100 years old. The department said it would replace them with younger trees.

Mrs. Francisco Sainz of 151 Avenue B, a frequent visitor to the park and the mother of two children, said that cutting down the trees would be like "cutting the soul" out of the park.

However, there are also strong feelings in the community for the ball field.

Michael E. Cannata of 68 St. Marks Place said that he would be sorry to see the trees go, but that there was a "crying need" for the ball fields. Mr.

Neighbors Assert Character of the Site Would Change

Cannata, who is chairman of the St. Marks Neighborhood Council, agreed with some other residents that the center part of the park was now under-utilized.

He said because of the dearth of recreational area in the community, it was essential that the park be full used.

The Park Department said that the plans were drawn up in 1957 in response to a petition from "twenty to thirty" persons in the community. The petition was sent in by a Mrs. Angela Czerwinski, who gave her address then as 164 East Seventh Street. She could not be located.

Commissioner of Parks Newbold Morris said in a letter two months ago to a member of the committee, "The proposed plans represent the recommendations of a large cross-section of the people of this area. Most of the proposed changes include requests received from people living in the community."

He listed five individuals who aided in the plans, two of whom had been associated with the Lower East Side Neighborhoods Association.

The association has not decided how it stands on the plans, but it was reported that persons connected with the association have been urging construction of a ball field. Mr. Morris is listed as one of the directors of the association.

This aspect has incensed the committee, which feels the true feelings of the community have been overlooked. It is now seeking an appointment to discuss the situation with the Commissioner.

CITY ENDS DISPUTE ON TOMPKINS PARK

Civic Group Supports New Plan for Renovation

By SAMUEL KAPLAN

The Department of Parks and residents of the Lower East Side agreed last week, after nine months of meetings, on a plan to renovate Tompkins Square Park.

The Committee for the Preservation of Tompkins Square Park, which represents the community, hailed the agreement as a "step forward" by the city in dealing with the needs of neighborhoods.

The department's original plan for the park, proposed last September, had met with strong opposition from the community. Meetings were held to work out an acceptable design.

The new plan calls for a stage area for concerts and plays in the south end of the park, rehabilitation of the large teenage playground in the north end, expansion of sitting areas and a renovation of grass, shrubs, trees, fences and walks.

Special consideration is also given in the plan to the many elderly persons who frequent the park. More informal groupings of benches, set off from the areas for active recreation, were designed for them.

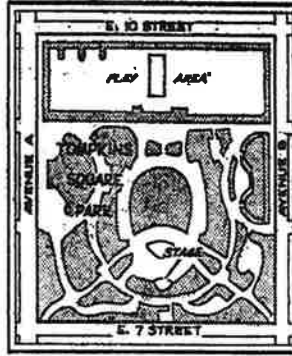
More than a dozen tall trees in the center of the park, which had been marked for destruction in the department's original plan, will remain. Some of these trees are more than 100 years old. They had been defended by residents, who said that cutting them down would be like "cutting the soul" out of the park.

The department's plan for the construction of a softball field with three-tier concrete bleachers to seat 500 persons was dropped.

This proposal had split the community into two groups—one opposed to the field, the other in favor of it. It was finally agreed that the field in the north end of the park be rehabilitated.

The park, which dates to the Eighteen Thirties, is between Seventh and Tenth Streets and Avenues A and B on Manhattan's Lower East Side and covers 10.5 acres.

The plans are included in the department's capital budget for this year, which has been ap-



The New York Times June 24, 1962
RENOVATION: Park plan provides a concert stage as well as a play area.

proved. The plan is budgeted for \$357,830.

The park has been scheduled for renovation since 1957, when the department's original plans were drawn up.