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Testimony of University Settlement  
before the New York City Council  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Committee on Parks and Recreation

Submitted by Veronica Wong  
Advocacy Director,  
University Settlement

March 21, 2024

My name is Veronica Wong, and I am the Advocacy Director for University Settlement. Thank you to the City Council Committee on Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for holding this hearing.

We are testifying in support of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs.

As a longtime neighbor to Sara D. Roosevelt Park, University Settlement would like to draw particular attention to the resources allocated to smaller parks in the city. Smaller neighborhood parks are essential to the fabric of NYC neighborhoods. They are havens of cooler, green space in the heat of the summer, places to gather for friends and families, and vital play spaces for children. These parks deserve as much attention as the larger NYC parks like Central Park or Prospect Park.

Over the past year, we've been excited to see that more and more people are returning to Sara D. Roosevelt Park, which had seen attendance drop during and immediately after the pandemic. Unfortunately, neighbors still hesitate to return to the park due to concerns about safety, leading to an uneven park recovery. But our neighbors want to use the park.

Last year, University Settlement was able to offer activities in SDR Park on Saturdays in July and August. Our ROAR festival celebrated the vibrancy of our neighborhood and offered resources, performances, and activities for people of all ages. The festival brought out hundreds of people. We need to continue activating public spaces, so more people and families feel comfortable in the park. We need a place for people to gather and receive resources, and the long-awaited return of the Stanton Parkhouse to the community provides a perfect opportunity to create that space.

University Settlement is and has been deeply invested in Sara D. Roosevelt Park. Our early childhood programs bring our youngest New Yorkers there to play on the playground whenever they can; our staff and older adults walk through the park to get to our programming. We ask that the Parks department recognize this as an opportunity to invest in

LEAD. ACT. IMPACT. 領導。行動。影響。 LIDERA. ACTÚA. IMPACTA. अगुवाई कर रहा है और DIRIGEZ. AGISSEZ. IMPACTEZ. .ᲁᲗ᲏Თ ᲁᲗ᲏Თ ᲁᲗ᲏Თ ЛИДИТЬ. ДЕЙСТВУЙ. ВЛИЯЙ. 领导。行动。影响。

