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New York, NY 10119-0002  
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November 16, 2022

Nicholas Sbordone, VP Communications & Public Affairs

Dear Mr. Sbordone:

The Sierra Club, NYC Group appreciates all the commitment of the Battery Park City Authority to protecting Battery Park City and the surrounding community from future flooding in the wake of climate change and sea level rise. We also appreciate your responsiveness to community concerns about Wagner Park. The Sierra Club NYC Group has consistently supported public park and tree preservation wherever possible. We write to you in this vein.

**After watching the presentation delivered on October 27, 2022 recording posted on [www.savewagner.com](http://www.savewagner.com) by the original designers and architects of Wagner Park, Olin and Machado Silvetti, on an alternative resiliency plan to protect Wagner Park from sea level rise, storm surge and other climate risks, the New York City Group of The Sierra Club supports their vision. They showed that their plan creates the same level of resiliency without destroying the park, with the plan's proposed natural or sculpted flood barrier wall.**

Listening to the landscape architects who were the original designers of Wagner Park, it is clear that the alternative Design being proposed was thoughtfully crafted as they consulted with the community, horticulturists, engineering firms and others to create a community backed proposal. It is clear that there is a path forward to provide protection from climate risks in a significantly less destructive way.

The design elements are far less destructive to the green infrastructure that currently exists in the park. The current infrastructure was deliberately designed to mitigate the effects of climate change by including elements such as a sandy soil composition and plants and trees that can withstand the impact of salt water exposure. The large mature trees along with the large passive lawn and flower beds that exist there now are critical and are currently mitigating the effects of carbon on the community and reducing the urban heat island effect. With the current expectations of temperature increase and increased rainfall events we do not have 30 years to wait for trees to mature for them to prevent these harmful effects. We can't afford to increase areas of cement that do not absorb water from increased rainfall or water infiltration from sea-level rise.

"Climate scientists project that the frequency of annual heat waves in NYC will increase three to-five-fold by 2050, and heat waves are expected to last longer than those of the recent past. t. Heat waves are the leading weather-related cause of death nationally."

<https://nyc-eja.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nature-Based-Jobs-Report-2021.pdf>

The Sierra Club also finds that the elimination of the park during the construction period would prove detrimental to the community and the ecology. The community's plan does not close the park during construction nor interrupt park usage. It also maintains the same level of flood protection that it has today throughout the construction. It does not interrupt the benefits of the many species of pollinators and birds that have acclimated to the current landscape environment, including the monarch butterfly that are now an endangered species and have Wagner Park as a stop along their migration journey each year. There is no doubt that it will be far faster and far cheaper to install.

Experts from around the world are promoting nature-based solutions (NBS) to prevent and protect from climate change and risks. Maintaining the natural environment is critical in absorbing water from sea-level rise and increased rain events. The Olin/Machado design is aligned with the concept of Nature Based Solutions.

The New York City Group of The Sierra Club strongly urges The Battery Park City Authority to examine this strong community led proposal and work with those who have worked so hard on creating a less disruptive design. We remain available to work with you on this and any other park or environmental matter.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Catherine Skopic, Chair of the Sierra Club NYC Group and  
Alan Gerson, Chair of the Urban Sustainability Committee