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POSITIVE DECLARATION

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

<p><u>PROJECT:</u> USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center Strategic Vision Project Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens CEQR: 12DPR005Q</p>	<p><u>LEAD AGENCY:</u> New York City Department of Parks & Recreation The Arsenal, Central Park 830 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10065</p>
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DATE ISSUED: June 20, 2012

TYPE OF ACTION: Type I

PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION

The City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), in coordination with USTA National Tennis Center, Incorporated (USTA), is seeking a number of discretionary actions in connection with proposed improvements and an expansion to its facilities at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center (NTC), located in Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens. These improvements collectively are known as the NTC Strategic Vision. The NTC is located on a portion of Queens Block 2018, Lot 1, on park land leased by DPR to USTA. The leased site is bounded to the north by the railway tracks of Long Island Railroad (LIRR)'s Port Washington line; United Nations Avenue North to the south; the Passarelle Building (that connects LIRR's Mets-Willets Point station to the MTA's 7 train station and Citi Field, the Mets baseball stadium) and Avenue of the Americas to the east; and Grand Central Parkway to the west. The site is adjacent to Queens Community Districts 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The 42-acre NTC is one of the world's largest public recreational tennis facilities. For 11 months of the year, its facilities are open to the public for indoor and outdoor tennis. The NTC is also host to the US Open tennis tournament, one of the sport's four Grand Slam championship tennis

The proposed project would improve the NTC site plan, circulation, visitor amenities, and landscaping, and would include construction of two new stadiums to replace the existing Louis Armstrong Stadium (Stadium 2) in the same location and Grandstand Stadium (Stadium 3) in a new location at the southwest corner of the NTC site, as well as possible improvements to Arthur Ashe Stadium (Stadium 1). The project would add up to 1.02 acres to the NTC site, including up to 0.76 acres of park land that would be alienated, and 0.26 acres of previously-alienated park land that is currently not covered by the NTC lease.

The principal elements of the NTC Strategic Vision plan are as follows.

(A) Reconfigured northwest tournament courts and elevated viewing platform. Currently, the northwest courts include five practice courts and two tournament courts, with bleacher seats. The proposed project would replace these courts and bleachers with five new practice courts, three new tournament courts and an elevated viewing platform.

(B) Two new parking garages and relocated transportation center. Currently, there is an approximately 200-space surface parking lot and transportation center in the northwest corner of the site and an approximately 100-space surface parking lot in the northeast corner of the site. Under the proposed project, the northwest lot and transportation center would be replaced with an approximately 423-space, 2-level parking garage and transportation building, and the northeast lot would be replaced with an approximately 370-space, 3-level parking garage.

(C) Relocated Grandstand Stadium. The current 6,000-seat Grandstand Stadium is located adjacent to Louis Armstrong Stadium, on its east façade. The proposed project would replace the Grandstand Stadium with a new 8,000-seat stadium in the southwest corner of the site. The new stadium would be approximately 55-feet tall and contain about 150,000 gross square feet (gsf).

(D) Relocated connector road. The connector road displaced by the relocation of the Grandstand Stadium would be relocated to the area south of United Nations Avenue North near the Queens Museum of Art parking lot. New pedestrian walkways would also be created.

(E) Relocated tournament courts with a new pedestrian walkway, along the southern boundary of the site. Currently, there is a row of seven tournament courts on the southern portion of the site. Under the proposed project, four of these courts would be relocated approximately 50 feet to the south and three of these courts would be relocated approximately 30 feet to the south. The new NTC boundary line under the lease would move south, allowing space for pedestrian circulation around these courts, and along a walkway connecting to the new Grandstand Stadium.

(F) Replacement of Louis Armstrong Stadium and provision of new adjacent administrative and retail building. The existing Louis Armstrong Stadium (Stadium 2), located in the northeast corner of the site, is a 125,000-gsf facility with approximately 10,000 seats. A new 15,000-seat stadium would be built on the same site, in an approximately 385,000-gsf, 85-foot tall facility. Adjacent to the new stadium at approximately the same location as the existing Grandstand Stadium, a new 2-story, approximately 80,000-gsf administrative and retail building, would be built.

(G) Improvements to Arthur Ashe Stadium. The existing Arthur Ashe Stadium (Stadium 1), located in the north center portion of the site, is an approximately 360,000-gsf facility with approximately 23,500 seats. USTA continues to explore possible methods of covering Arthur Ashe Stadium in the event of rain during the US Open, and is analyzing possible engineering solutions for a canopy system that would attach along the upper edge of the stadium. USTA is also considering the addition of approximately 90,000-gsf of administrative and operational support space on the north side of the stadium, underneath the existing seating platform, a reconfiguration of administrative and operational space within the existing stadium building, an expansion of the existing concourse areas at the promenade level on the south side of Arthur Ashe Stadium by approximately 11,000-sf to improve circulation and amenities, and potential façade improvements.

The area to be added to the NTC lease is currently a mix of landscaped and paved areas, including a one-lane connector road, one lane of the three-lane United Nations Avenue North, and a narrow strip of lawn and pathway between the NTC fence and the roadway. The connector road would be replaced to the south of United Nation Avenue; and the lane that would be eliminated is lightly used, primarily by DPR vehicles and to service the NTC during the US Open. Construction of the project would require removal of trees both outside the existing fence line and inside the NTC site; tree replanting and replacement would comply with DPR's applicable rules and regulations.

In addition to the physical improvements, the project would allow for an increase in spectator attendance at daytime sessions of the US Open. Specifically, the attendance cap set forth in the NTC lease would increase from 35,000 spectators on days when Citi Field is in use, to 45,000; and would increase from 40,000 spectators on days when Citi Field is not is use, to 50,000. There would be no change in attendance for the evening session. The proposed project would include lighting, infrastructure and utility improvements, as well as improvements to landscaping, paving and drainage within the NTC site, with sustainability features.

The purpose of the proposed project is to sustain the long-term viability of the NTC as a world-class spectator venue and outstanding public recreational facility. It would result in a superior visitor experience, and would provide substantial long-term economic benefits to Queens, the City of New York and the region.

The goals of the project include the following:

- Replace and upgrade aging, out-of-date infrastructure and facilities that have reached the end of their useful lives.
- Increase the capacity of the NTC site to allow for more daytime attendance at US Open.
- Improve the reliability of the NTC site for the US Open event during inclement weather.
- Expand public plazas and promenades and improve functionality of public spaces and open areas within the NTC.
- Improve circulation, comfort and safety for visitors and players.
- Activate underutilized spaces within the NTC site.
- Increase player visibility during US Open practice and early tournament play.
- Increase availability of on-site parking.
- Increase efficiency and sustainability of infrastructure and landscaping.

- Enhance economic benefits of US Open event in Queens, New York City, and the region.
- Develop a consistent design experience for sponsor partners.
- Enhance food service and retail offerings during the US Open.
- Develop a consistent visual theme and signage for food service.

Within the framework of these goals, the proposed project would: minimize expansion beyond NTC lease boundaries; maintain public availability of courts at current levels; improve the NTC's context within the park; and maintain opportunities for public programming throughout the year.

REQUIRED APPROVALS

ULURP:

Development of the proposed project would require disposition of up to 0.76 acres of City property by long-term lease for the relocation of the fence and playing courts along the site's southern boundary, subject to approval pursuant to the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP).

Legislation:

The disposition by long-term lease of the up to 0.76-acre southern boundary area would require a home rule request from the City Council to the State Legislature, and New York State legislation to authorize the alienation of that site. Following that disposition, this area would remain mapped parkland. It is expected that improvements in Flushing Meadows Corona Park would be provided in connection with the alienation of up to 0.76 acres of park land.

Other Approvals:

Development of the proposed project also would require the following discretionary approvals:

- Amendment of existing lease between NYCDPR and USTA;
- NYCDPR approval under the existing lease for alterations to the site;
- NYCDPR approval for roadway alterations and improvements in Flushing Meadows Corona Park; and
- Coastal Zone consistency determination by the New York City Planning Commission and, possibly, by the New York State Department of State.

The Proposed Project would require design approvals from the New York City Public Design Commission, and a determination by U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service as to whether any approval is required in connection with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act program requirements due to previously funded improvements to Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECT:

In accordance with Executive Order 91 of 1977, as amended, and the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review, found at Title 62, Chapter 5 of the Rules of the City of New York (CEQR), the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, as the lead agency for

the referenced project, has determined that the proposed project may have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is required to evaluate and disclose the extent to which impacts may occur. Aspects of the proposed action may have the potential to result in environmental impacts in the following areas:

- (1) Land use, zoning, and public policy, including consistency with the New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program;
- (2) Open space resources related to the alienation of up to 0.76-acres of parkland and the addition of 0.26-acres of previously-alienated parkland to the NTC lease;
- (3) Potential incremental shadows that may affect historic resources with significant, light-dependent features, publicly accessible open space, historic landscapes, and significant natural features;
- (5) Historic resources;
- (6) Urban design and visual resources;
- (7) Natural resources, including any removal of trees;
- (8) Potential pathways for human exposure from contaminated materials;
- (9) Infrastructure systems serving the project area, including water supply, sanitary sewage, and stormwater management;
- (10) Transportation (including traffic, pedestrians, transit users, parking and vehicular and pedestrian safety) due to increased attendance at the US Open and the construction of two new parking garages;
- (11) Air quality related to mobile and stationary source emissions from vehicular traffic and parking facilities, and the proposed HVAC system;
- (12) Greenhouse gas emissions;
- (13) Noise, including noise conditions in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, due to the location of the new facilities and changes in traffic patterns;
- (14) Public health;
- (15) Neighborhood character due to the introduction of new travel patterns, structures, visual resource changes and reconfigured parkland; and
- (16) Potential construction-related impacts related to traffic and transportation, parking, air quality, noise, hazardous materials, park users, socioeconomic conditions, and historic resources.

Accordingly, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation directs that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement be prepared in accordance with 6 NYCRR 617.9(b) and Sections 6-08 and 6-09 of Executive Order No. 91 of 1977, as amended.

PUBLIC SCOPING:

Public Scoping is a process whereby the public is invited to comment on the proposed scope of analysis planned for the Draft EIS. A Scoping Document has been prepared outlining the proposed content of the Draft EIS.

A Public Scoping Meeting will be held on Monday, July 23, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. at the:

USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center
Indoor Training Center at David Dinkins Circle
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Flushing, New York 11368
By car: Meridian Road, Parking Lot B
By subway: No. 7 to Mets-Willets Point

A copy of the Draft Scope and the Environmental Assessment Statement and Positive Declaration can be obtained online at <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/fmcp> or by contacting:

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Oral and written comments can be submitted at the Public Scoping Meeting. Written comments can also be sent to the above address, fax number, or email address. Written comments will be accepted by NYCDPR at the above address or by fax or email through Friday, August 3, 2012.

The Positive Declaration has been prepared in accordance with Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law.



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