

HARLEM MEER POOL & RINK FACT SHEET

The driver behind the petition is the false premise that we are replacing two rinks with a single rink, impacting the amount of hockey that can be accommodated. The existing facility is not solely or primarily a hockey venue. It is a swimming pool in a public park that converts to an ice-skating rink in winter, and was originally built to serve the surrounding community. The current concessionaire divides what was designed as a single rink for recreational community skating into two narrow, non-regulation sections in order to maximize hockey use at the expense of public recreational skating open to the general public.

Hockey at Lasker is not a public program of the Parks Department or the Central Park Conservancy. It is a concessioned activity by private leagues, including teams organized by the current operator to generate revenue from fees to participate, as well as other organizations that rent ice time (some of which are regional and also use other rinks outside the city). The current concessionaire's license to operate the rink expires in the spring of 2021, before the start of the project.

The public and philanthropic investment being made in the new facility is for the purpose of providing public benefit and greater access to recreational opportunities for the surrounding community, not to subsidize the profits of a private operator. General public skating and community programming will be prioritized in scheduling ice time. We are working closely with Ice Hockey in Harlem—the non-profit organization that provides free hockey programs for youth from the local community—and other community-based organizations, to ensure that their needs are prioritized in the operation of the new facility.

Key facts:

- The existing facility is failing and cannot be renovated. It is **beyond repair and must be replaced**. Ever since Lasker was constructed, chronic flooding—a result of diverting the historic watercourse into a culvert—has had a devastating impact on the site and the facility. The rink infrastructure is failing, and the refrigerant it uses is banned—it can no longer be manufactured or imported as of January 2020; the rink will not be viable in the near-term when the refrigerant runs out. The pool bottom is failing, and the pool leaks chronically and excessively. The heaving of the pool bottom during the process of freezing it for skating has compromised its integrity.
- **A pool as large as the existing one cannot be constructed with as building as small.** The existing facility does not comply with current code and operational requirements for support space and amenities (toilets, showers, staff space, etc.), nor with current federal accessibility standards or local sustainability standards required of new public buildings. A new facility is required to comply with current codes and standards—including NYC Building Code, NYC Health Code, ADA, and NYC Energy Code, among others—which requires more space.
- The new facility is designed to provide **the largest possible pool and rink that can fit on the site** given (1) current code and operational requirements that dictate the size of the building to support the pool and rink, and (2) the need to restore the disrupted connection between the Loch and Meer, which has caused flooding of the facility ever since it was constructed. The new pool and rink will be more than 75% the size of the existing. It will still be a one of the Park's Department's "monumental" (i.e., larger than an Olympic size) pool, and one of the largest public pools in the city. It will continue to be one of the few pools in the city to accommodate 50-meter lap swimming. And the new building is designed to be open and accessible year-round and support broader park use than the existing facility, which is open only to swimmers and skaters and is shuttered for five months of the year.

- The complaint that the new facility will provide one rink instead of two is specious. The **existing facility was designed as a single sheet of ice**. The current operator uses fixed partitions to divide it into two areas for concurrent uses, diminishing the recreational skating experience in order to maximize hockey revenues. Like the existing facility, the new design includes one sheet of ice. Unlike the existing, it will provide a full-size rink for recreational skating, which will also be able to accommodate regulation hockey (the existing rink provides for neither). The new rink can also be divided using deployable partitions to accommodate concurrent programming.
- Since the project was announced in the summer of 2018, the Central Park Conservancy has engaged the community extensively through a series of workshops, meetings, and site tours. We've also met with and done site tours for specific constituent groups, as well as engaged park patrons in interviews and impromptu site tours. Approximately 350 members of the community have participated in one or more of these events, meetings, tours, and interviews, and **the response has been overwhelmingly positive**. We began the formal public review process in the fall, and received resolutions of support from all six of the community boards surrounding the Park.