



NYC Parks

Veronica M. White
Commissioner, NYC Parks

Press Release

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NYC PARKS AND THE ROCKWELL GROUP UNVEIL DESIGN FOR NEW TREE HOUSE-INSPIRED IMAGINATION PLAYGROUND AT BROOKLYN'S BETSY HEAD PARK

Rockwell Group to Donate Imagination Playground Blocks to the Brownsville Recreation Center

NYC Parks Brooklyn Borough Commissioner Kevin Jeffrey, Marc Hacker of Rockwell Group, and City Council Member Darlene Mealy today joined neighborhood children to unveil the design for the new Imagination Playground at Betsy Head Park, located on Livonia Avenue, between Strauss Street and Hopkinson Avenue in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The playground is anticipated to begin its construction in the spring of 2014 and open in the spring of 2015. Additionally, Rockwell Group is donating a set of Imagination Playground Blocks to the Brownsville Recreation Center to enable children to experience this engaging, open-ended form of block play before the playground opens.

Imagination Playground at Betsy Head Park, a lush, tree-filled park, will be the first permanent Imagination Playground play space in Brooklyn and the second to be built worldwide. Inspired by tree houses, the park will include a multi-level space with water, sand, and loose part play areas surrounded by a long, curving play ramp that weaves through the trees and is bridged by permanent play equipment; renovated basketball and handball courts; and an exercise area for adults. A trained staff of Play Associates will be onsite to maintain and manage the loose parts during the summer. The project was designed pro-bono by Rockwell Group to encourage creative and child-directed, unstructured free play. MKW + Associates, LLC is the landscape architect for the project. The \$3.92 million playground was funded with capital allocations of \$3.1 million from Council Member Mealy, \$750,000 from Borough President Markowitz, and \$70,000 from Mayor Bloomberg.

"The Imagination Playground concept allows children to exercise their minds, as well as their bodies," said NYC Parks Commissioner Veronica M. White. "David Rockwell's innovative design at the Burling Slip site of the South Street Seaport has proved a tremendous success and we are thrilled that he is working with us to introduce a vibrant new permanent play space for children here in Brownsville's Betsy Head Park. Special thanks to Council Member Mealy and Borough President Markowitz for allocating the capital funds for this imaginative oasis of play."

"It's so exciting to design Brooklyn's first-ever Imagination Playground," said David Rockwell, founder and President of Rockwell Group. "We are very pleased to be collaborating with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to transform Betsy Head Park into a vibrant, green oasis where children of all ages can dream, build, and play."

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“Brooklyn is thrilled to welcome the world’s second Imagination Playground! Every child deserves a safe space to exercise and have fun with their friends, especially in underserved neighborhoods like Brownsville, which is why I am proud to support this project along with Councilmember Darlene Mealy – and bravo to City Parks Commissioner Veronica White, a proud daughter of Bay Ridge, and Brooklyn’s own Parks Commissioner Kevin Jeffrey as well as David Rockwell of the Rockwell Group for their commitment to our borough’s children,” said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. “When the playground is complete, Betsy Head Park will be home to a unique play space unlike any other where children can let their imaginations and bodies run free. In addition, with renovated basketball and handball courts and an exercise area for adults, this isn’t just ‘child’s play.’”

Imagination Playground is a play space concept conceived by Rockwell Group that inspires a wide range of play patterns, prompting creativity and sensory exploration. It allows children to physically manipulate and build their environment using loose parts, including Imagination Playground Blocks and objects from everyday life. These elements enable children to stretch their imaginations by constantly altering their environment and inventing new structures.

The first site-specific Imagination Playground opened in 2010 at Burling Slip in lower Manhattan. Following the playground’s success, Rockwell Group developed two portable versions: Imagination Playground in a Box and Imagination Playground in a Cart. Since 2010, over 800 portable playgrounds have enlivened public parks, schools, daycare facilities, and children’s museums across the globe.

For more information, please visit www.imaginationplayground.com.

NYC Parks is the steward of more than 29,000 acres of land including 1,700 parks, 14 miles of beaches, 500 community gardens, and 2,500 Greenstreets. NYC Parks manages the City’s athletic fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, recreation centers, public pools, nature centers, golf courses, monuments, and historic house museums, and cares for 2 million trees inside the parks and another 600,000 street trees. NYC Parks also provides numerous free public programs and services in coordination with New York City’s local elected officials, community members, and non-profit partners.

Rockwell Group is an award winning, cross-disciplinary 140-person architecture and design firm specializing in cultural, hospitality, retail, product, and set design. Based in New York, with satellite offices in Madrid and Shanghai, the firm crafts a unique narrative and an immersive environment for each project. David Rockwell’s interest in theater has informed much of the firm’s work, including W Hotels in New York, Paris, Singapore, and Vieques; the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center at Lincoln Center; the Culture Shed (designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Rockwell Group); exhibition design for the future National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta; The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas; Maialino at the Gramercy Park Hotel; set design for the 2009 and 2010 Academy Awards ceremonies; Canyon Ranch Miami Beach; the Dolby Theatre, Los Angeles; Nobu restaurants worldwide; set design for Broadway’s *Kinky*



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Boots, Lucky Guy, and Hairspray; and the Imagination Playground initiative. For more information, please visit www.rockwellgroup.com and www.facebook.com/RockwellGroup.

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