

**Testimony of State Senator Daniel Squadron at the New York City Council Committee on Parks
and Recreation Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 22, 2012**

My name is Daniel Squadron and I represent the 25th District in the New York State Senate. My district includes the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Vinegar Hill, DUMBO, Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens and Gowanus, and the Manhattan neighborhoods of Tribeca, Battery Park City, the Lower East Side, Chinatown, the Financial District, Little Italy, SoHo and the East Village. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

I do not typically submit testimony to NYC Council Budget Hearings, but in this instance I am compelled to do so. While my district includes many parks, there are unique concerns about the City's funding obligations to the creation of Bushwick Inlet Park and its commitment to the residents of North Brooklyn. I thank my colleagues Council Member Levin and Assembly Member Lentol for pushing the City to keep their commitment.

An intrinsic piece of the 2005 rezoning of the Williamsburg and Greenpoint waterfront was the commitment by the City to develop 28 acres of parkland along the East River. This commitment constituted the City's agreement that - particularly in a neighborhood that is drastically underserved by green space - vertical development, especially on a grand scale, cannot proceed without an attendant increase in parkland and active recreational areas.

At this juncture, seven years later, the 2005 City rezoning has brought thousands of new residents to Greenpoint and Williamsburg. But where is the promised waterfront park?

A letter dated March 22, 2011, from the general counsel of the City Parks Department, stated that the City "has no funding" or "schedule" the acquisition of the major portion of parkland on the Williamsburg waterfront that was promised by this administration. As stated in a letter dated July 19, 2011, that I wrote with my colleagues Assembly Member Lentol and Council Member Levin, this is simply unacceptable to our constituents.

In addition, it has been difficult to answer remaining questions about what portion of the City's original \$309 million commitment to the park has been spent and what remains. Previously \$166 million was listed as expended and \$29 million was listed as encumbered. This leaves over \$100 million for which the City is still responsible, and yet the city has told us there is no additional money for Bushwick Inlet Park.

The City's promise to provide historically-underserved North Brooklyn with this essential park is even more important today, with the residents I represent more in need of open space than ever. I urge the City to honor its pledge and provide a meaningful plan, during this budget process, to make Bushwick Inlet Park a reality.