



New York City Comptroller  
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

PR13-06-093  
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June 19, 2013  
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**LIU: MORE EQUITY NEEDED ACROSS CITY PARKS**

*Comptroller Returns \$90M Central Park Conservancy Contract; Asks Mayor to Revise Agreement, Level Playing Field for Parks*

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NEW YORK, N.Y. — City Comptroller John C. Liu has returned a contract that would enrich the privately funded Central Park Conservancy (CPC) by \$90 million in City funds, asking Mayor Bloomberg to revise the agreement in order to more equitably distribute revenue to the many parks and playgrounds that don't get the same attention or service as Central Park. Comptroller Liu's office is also reviewing another CPC contract, this one for \$60 million in City capital construction funds, with the same purpose in mind.

“Central Park is very important to New York and is indeed an icon of our City. However, the City should do more to ensure that parks across the five boroughs are being funded adequately and equitably,” Comptroller Liu said. “The City should provide funding for basic maintenance and much-needed capital projects across all parks before sending this much-needed taxpayer money to a well-funded private organization. Let's work together to maintain Central Park and provide equity among all of our parks.”

On Monday, June 17, Comptroller Liu returned a \$90 million operations contract between the NYC Parks Department and the CPC because of insufficient information. Comptroller Liu then wrote Mayor Bloomberg asking that the structure of the contract be revised to provide a more equitable distribution of resources. Comptroller Liu suggested that the City:

- Eliminate or reduce the CPC's revenue-sharing agreement, which gives the CPC substantial funding based on City concession and special events income unavailable to most other parks.
- Reallocate capital funds to higher-needs parks.
- Require greater financial transparency from the CPC.
- Encourage the CPC to do more to help support other area parks.

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TEXT OF COMPTROLLER LIU'S LETTER TO MAYOR BLOOMBERG:

June 19, 2013

Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

My office has returned the ten-year, \$90 million Central Park Conservancy contract submitted by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation and is currently reviewing an additional \$60 million capital contract with the Conservancy.

I write to ask you to reflect on the wide disparities that exist among parks in the five boroughs. For example, St. Nicholas Park, located just a few blocks north of Central Park in Harlem, recently received a score of 77 out of a possible 100 points from New Yorkers for Parks because of trip hazards, litter, and out-of-service drinking fountains.

The Parks Department can and should amend both Conservancy contracts so that they help provide more equity among parks. These modifications should also take into account the exceptionally strong financial condition of the Conservancy.

We recommend that the following changes be made:

- **Eliminate or reduce the Conservancy's revenue-sharing agreement.** Currently 50 percent of the estimated approximately \$12 million Central Park net concession and special event revenue is distributed to the Conservancy. In contrast, very few if any other City parks have such a beneficial arrangement.
- **Reallocate capital funds toward higher-needs parks.** If we are serious about equitably distributing scarce resources, we need to reallocate a portion of the City's capital contributions for Central Park to parks with higher needs that are over-reliant on discretionary funds.
- **Increase financial transparency.** The Conservancy's 2011-2012 tax filings show revenues of \$47 million. Other public sources indicate that the Conservancy has a workforce of approximately 300 employees, ranging from seasonal grounds technicians paid \$18,228 to the President and CEO, who received total compensation of \$456,319. Like the Parks Department and every other City agency, the Conservancy should publish spending and payroll data on Checkbook NYC, the City's financial transparency website. Mandatory federal tax filings do not provide adequate transparency.
- **Encourage expanded support of area parks.** The Conservancy should work with the Parks Department to identify struggling parks throughout the five boroughs that would benefit from the Conservancy's operational and development expertise. Such a collaboration could help mitigate some of the widespread concerns that public-private partnerships favor only a handful of elite parks.

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According to its most recent tax return, the Conservancy has more than \$215 million in assets. This staggering number does not take into account the recently announced \$100 million private donation.

The City should ensure that parks across the five boroughs—and not just Central Park—are being funded adequately and equitably. When the City is unable to provide funding for basic maintenance and much-needed capital projects, one must question whether it is appropriate to provide our wealthiest park with \$150 million of new resources.

Let's work together to maintain Central Park *and* provide equity among all of our parks.

Sincerely,

John C. Liu

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johncliu" to 40404.  
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