



Mayor Bloomberg and Benepe break ground on \$6.5 million park renovation; 2nd major development at Freshkills Park, Staten Island

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg and parks commissioner Adrian Benepe broke ground on the renovation of Schmul Park, the second project in the development of Freshkills Park, one of the largest landfill-to-park projects in the country. Schmul Park will serve as a community gateway into the larger Freshkills park and includes a new playground with a spray shower, handball and basketball courts, a lawn area, native plantings and permeable pavement, in addition to a new green comfort station that features a rain garden. The \$6.5 million project will renovate all 8 acres of Schmul Park, which is located in the Travis neighborhood. In 2008, construction began on the first major development of the Freshkills Park, the \$6 million Owl Hollow soccer fields. The mayor was joined at the ground breaking by Representative Michael McMahon and State Assembly Member Lou Tobacco.

"When we finish transforming Freshkills into one of the city's largest parks, nearly one-third of Staten Island will be public park land," said Bloomberg. "When construction is finished in the fall of 2011, Schmul Park will serve as a stunning gateway to the larger park we're creating at Fresh Kills."

"Freshkills Park will be New York City's most significant new regional park of the 21st century and New Yorkers and the world will soon be able to explore its potential by visiting Schmul Park, the site's first public access point," said Benepe. "When you visit Freshkills Park, it's hard to imagine it was ever a landfill. Soon it will be another emerald gem for Staten Island, thanks to the leadership of mayor Bloomberg, the enthusiastic support of elected officials on Staten Island and the imagination of numerous agencies at the city and state levels."

Schmul Park, named for the Schmul family who donated a piece of their Travis farm to the city to create a playground in 1939, is the second major project of Freshkills Park and is expected to open in Fall 2011. In 2008, the first project of Freshkills Park, the 28-acre Owl Hollow soccer fields in Arden Heights, went under construction with \$6 million allocated by the administration and the city council. Owl Hollow will also open in fall 2011.

Freshkills Park is a 2,200-acre site and will serve as a living laboratory for many of the sustainability initiatives that the city is undertaking, including research on land restoration and renewable energy projects.

The park will have five main areas: the Confluence, North Park, South Park, East Park and West Park. Each area will have a distinct character and programming approach, developed in response to site opportunities and constraints, public meeting and stakeholder input, agency input, operation and maintenance concerns, and feasibility of implementation.

Though the park's development will continue in phases through 2036, development over the next 10 years will focus on creating early interventions and public access in the North and South Parks as

the East and West Parks are still undergoing landfill capping procedures. Development will complement safe and effective landfill closure operations with state-of-the-art land reclamation techniques, alternative energy resources and ecological demonstration projects. The plan seeks to ensure that Freshkills Park will support richly diverse habitats for wildlife, birds and plant communities, as well as provide extraordinary natural settings for recreation – sports and programs that are unusual in the city, including horseback riding, mountain biking, nature trails and large-scale public art and cultural programming.

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