

Subject: Written testimony regarding proposed boathouse at Sherman Creek Park
Date: Tuesday, November 16, 2021 at 11:27:44 AM Eastern Standard Time
From: Toomey, Anne Helen
To: designcommission@cityhall.nyc.gov, kbutler@cityhall.nyc.gov
CC: Palta, Monica M.

Dear Ms. Butler,

I am a professor of Environmental Studies at Pace University, and I am writing to submit testimony regarding the proposed boathouse at Sherman Creek Park.

I was both surprised and disappointed that the decision was made to approve the boathouse plans at the meeting yesterday without giving the opportunity to members of the public to raise concerns. This is especially disconcerting because the boathouse proposal is not well-known among Sherman Creek Park users and local residents, as my students and I discovered last month when we carried out a social assessment of how people use and value Sherman Creek Park. We interviewed park users and local residents about their perceptions of the proposed boathouse and found that very few people (fewer than 20% of those interviewed, n=25) were aware of the plans to build the boathouse, indicating the need for additional community dissemination and engagement.

Our research findings additionally indicate that many people are concerned that the boathouse will disrupt current uses of the space and not engage with the local community. Some people expressed concerns about future access to the site that the boathouse would be built upon, which is currently a popular picnicking area and offers waterfront access and bird watching. Many respondents mentioned the need for the boathouse plans to engage with the local community and current park users, and suggested possible community outreach ideas, such as free kayaking and rowing, especially for youth. People also expressed the importance of ensuring that the boathouse is open to and accessible by the public, rather than being a private space. Several respondents requested more information to be able to form an opinion about the benefit of the boathouse to the park and the local community. We also found that there was a lot of concern about the extent to which the local community would be able to access the area during and after the construction.

Previously I requested the opportunity to share some of the results of our social assessment of Sherman Creek Park at the Public Design Commission's November 15th meeting. Given that this opportunity was not provided, I hope that you will take into consideration some of the community concerns described above as the plans for the boathouse construction progress. My students and I hope that you can advocate for the local community to participate in decisions that impact their home and green spaces.

Sincerely,
Anne Toomey

[Assistant Professor](#)
[Environmental Studies and Science](#)
Pace University
Periclean Fellow in STEM and Social Sciences