

For Immediate Release

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It's My Park! Day at Sara D Roosevelt Park hosted launch of *People Make Parks Initiative*

On Saturday, October 25th, 2008, the Sara D Roosevelt Park Coalition and the Immigrants & Parks Collaborative hosted **It's My Park! Day** in Sara D Roosevelt (SDR) Park. The event at SDR Park's **It's My Park! Day** was also the launch of **People Make Parks**, a groundbreaking new initiative of Hester Street Collaborative (HSC) and Partnerships for Parks (PfP), a joint program of City Parks Foundation and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. **People Make Parks** will expand the role of communities in park design, giving them the tools and resources they need to develop a vision for their local parks and share it with the Department of Parks & Recreation.

"SDR needs big community activities like this so that people know this is one big park, not seven small parks" said a local resident who stopped to write suggestions for the future of the park on an interactive "community visioning map." It's My Park! Day, a citywide effort to care for and celebrate New York City's parks, is coordinated bi-annually by Partnerships for Parks. The event at SDR Park was a successful culmination of recent efforts to revitalize the park by involving community in park maintenance, programming, and physical improvements. Over 200 community members gathered at several locations in the park to paint playground equipment, care for street trees, plant bulbs, do general cleanup, and offer their thoughts and suggestions for the park through interactive community mapping activities. "The park is very activity oriented: it would be nice to have more space to just chill out," said one local resident. "More trees and flowers, please! Less concrete!" offered another.

Community members at the event were not only improving and critiquing SDR Park last Saturday: they also had the opportunity to view a large-scale exhibition on the new People Make Parks Initiative. The exhibition included **People Make Parks'** major components, future plans, proposed test sites, and anticipated outcomes for under-resourced neighborhoods across the city. The exhibition also reported back to the community on plans that they have played a role in shaping for local parks, including the visioning processes for SDR Park and the Allen & Pike Street Malls.

The NYC Department of Parks & Recreation is currently embarking on its biggest parks infrastructure improvement since the 1930s, and community voices are becoming more important than ever in that process. The goal of People Make Parks is to foster an inclusive process that encourages community input in park design. SDR Park's Hester Street Playground has served as a test site for participatory park design strategies and will close in January 2009 to be rebuilt according to a plan responsive to community input. SDR is therefore a fitting setting for the launch of **People Make Parks**.

Parks provide a much-needed escape from overcrowded housing in neighborhoods all over our city, but often the people who most depend on their parks as outdoor living rooms have no voice in the process of improving them. These New Yorkers face many barriers to involvement, and People Make Parks seeks to engage park users of all ages and language abilities in fun activities that help them envision the future of their park and communicate that vision to decision makers. As **Anne Frederick**, executive director of Hester Street Collaborative and co-chair of the SDR Coalition, comments, "It's My Park! Day provides a platform for residents, youth, and all kinds of stakeholders to have a hand and a voice in transforming their park spaces; our People Make Parks initiative will take the tools and resources that we have developed for community involvement in park improvements in the Lower East Side and Chinatown and make them accessible to neighborhoods throughout NYC."

**Pictures from It's My Park! Day in Sara D Roosevelt Park
October 25, 2008**



Youth from the Chinatown YMCA & volunteers from the NYC Bike Polo Team decorate park trash cans with stencils of colorful fall leaves.



Youth volunteering with the Chinese-American Planning Council plant flower bulbs and clean up planting areas in SDR Park.



Students from M.S. 131, which is located at the southern end of SDR Park, learn how to care for their neighborhood's street trees in a workshop offered by the Department of Parks & Recreation



HSC volunteers assist local residents as they write their wishes for the park on a "community visioning map."