Boro President Diaz Outlines a Transformative Agenda in State of the Borough Address

In February, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. delivered his annual "State of the Borough" address, his sixth since becoming borough president in 2009. In his speech, he delivered at the newly-constructed Mall at Bay Plaza, Borough President Diaz discussed the progress The Bronx has made since he took office, while also outlining new programs and initiatives his office will pursue in the coming year.

Borough President Diaz noted that, since 2009, more than 16,000 new units of housing and more than 15,000 new jobs have been created in The Bronx. He also noted that unemployment has dropped, and that The Bronx has seen record investment, including over $1 billion in new investment last year alone.

"We've seen unprecedented, transformative growth since I became the borough president in 2009," said Borough President Diaz. The state of The Bronx is stronger than it has been in decades. We are maximizing our assets, while improving our quality of life.

Borough President Diaz announced several new initiatives during the speech, including the study of the potential decking of three Bronx train yards—149th Street, the Grand Concord yards near my alma mater, Lehman College, and the 1 train yards connecting Riverdale and Kingsbridge.

"We will examine possible costs and potential density, and will take the first step toward creating new space as a key component of our city's housing and economic development future," said Borough President Diaz.

The borough president also called for the expansion of "impact investing" in New York City. Impact investments are ventures made with the intention to generate measurable social and environmental benefit, alongside a financial return. Borough President Diaz's proposal would leverage a revolving fund with private sector investment to accelerate the greening of large residential buildings.

"We believe this proposal will clean our environment, create new jobs, reduce energy cost, and in the long run, keep our city affordable," said Borough President Diaz. "We are looking not only to do well, but to do good."

On education, Borough President Diaz noted the racial disparities in admissions at the city's three specialized high schools—the Bronx High School of Science, Stuyvesant High School and Brooklyn Technical High School. The borough president proposed the creation of new specialized high schools, one in each borough that would use a portfolio system to select its freshman class. These new schools would also guarantee admissions to the top two performers in each city middle school.

"We must ensure that the best and brightest from every community have a chance to excel," said Borough President Diaz.

During the speech, Borough President Diaz highlighted a number of new projects coming to the borough, including the redevelopment of the former Bronx General Post Office by Youngwoo & Associates, Freshdirect's relocation to Port Morris, York Studios' plan to build a new film and television studio in Soundview and the future Kingsbridge National Ice Center, among others.

Borough President Diaz also highlighted the future redevelopment of the Harlem River waterfront, urged the State to move on the reconstruction of the Sheridan Expressway, and called on the City to create a new freezer facility for the fish and produce markets at Hunts Point.

"It is time for the city to develop a plan to build a new freezer facility in Hunts Point. This will allow our markets to expand, lower costs for consumers, reduce truck traffic and pollution, create hundreds of new jobs and keep more revenue in The Bronx," said Borough President Diaz.

Borough President Diaz also discussed his office's efforts to employ Bronxites, highlighting the success of "NY Works" in his speech. Launched in August in partnership with the Bronx Development Corporation, Governor Andrew Cuomo and the State Department of Labor, "NY Works" puts Bronxites into direct contact with borough employers, and has so far led to more than 4,600 job placements.

"Without a doubt, these are tremendous numbers," said Borough President Diaz. "We are bringing together development and job placement like never before."

The borough president also highlighted his office's legislative agenda, including his continuing push for a citywide and statewide public gun offender registry. Borough President Diaz also discussed his proposal for a letter grading system for cosmetology businesses, which he announced in last year's address.

"When I speak to people about this issue, every one—every single person—has their own horror story about a friend, a family member, or even themselves, who visited a salon to look good, and ended up with a major health issue," said Borough President Diaz. "We have seen numerous cases of staph infections, hepatitis and other illnesses. Doesn't the evidence demand more oversight?"

Borough President Diaz noted several other future initiatives in his speech, and closed with a remembrance of former Bronx Borough President Herman Badillo and former Governor Mario Cuomo, both of whom passed away in 2014. Borough President Diaz noted the success of the Mall at Bay Plaza, citing it as a transformative development that is setting the tone for the future of the borough.

"We move forward, in the spirit of Herman Badillo and Mario Cuomo. We move forward, understanding that we can design and enact a transformative agenda for our future while also respecting the hardships and the glories of our past," said Borough President Diaz. "Look where we are today. Look at the hundreds of Bronxites working here this morning. Look around you at this tremendous structure, and the new opportunities it has brought to our borough. Borough President Diaz added, "We can. And we will. Because we deserve it."
June 2015

Dear Friends:

We are continuing to do great work in our borough. In partnership with our elected officials, community boards, neighborhood organizations, educational and business communities, first responders and all Bronxites together, we are enacting a transformative vision for the future of The Bronx.

Since 2009, more than 16,000 new units of housing and more than 15,000 new jobs have been created here. Unemployment has dropped significantly, and our borough has seen record investment, including over $1 billion in new investment last year alone.

The state of The Bronx is stronger than it has been in decades. We are maximizing our assets, while improving our quality of life. We are seeing significant progress in our efforts to make The Bronx an even greater place to live, work and raise a family. We are continuing to establish ourselves as a sports mecca and a tourism destination.

I want to share that vision with you. In this publication we have showcased the many victories that our borough has seen over the past year, while also outlining a path forward to success in the future.

I remain as proud as ever to serve as your borough president. I would love to hear your thoughts on the future of The Bronx, and encourage you to contact me at webmail@bronxbp.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

Ruben Diaz Jr.
Bronx Borough President
The Bronx economy continues to grow. Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. is praisin new job numbers from the New York State Department of Labor, which show an even greater drop in jobless rates from months past.

“As I have said in the past, what we are doing in The Bronx is working. Our efforts are bearing fruit. We are creating jobs, and we are making sure that Bronx residents are getting the jobs we are creating,” said Borough President Diaz.

In May, the New York State Department of Labor released new unemployment figures for March 2015 which showed the Bronx unemployment rate at 8.3%, down from a peak of 13.9% in January 2010. In addition, the latest numbers show that Bronx County is no longer the county with the highest unemployment rate in New York State.

Since Borough President Diaz took office in 2009, The Bronx has seen more than $7 billion in total development, which has led to the creation of over 15,000 new jobs. In addition, a partnership announced by Governor Andrew Cuomo announced in August between the New York State Department of Labor and the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, as part of the “NY Works,” program is placing Bronx residents in these jobs, helping to ensure that new development here benefits everyone, especially Bronxites.

Over 6,000 Bronx residents have been placed in jobs through this program, according to data from the New York State Department of Labor.

“We are making considerable progress in The Bronx, and this is very positive news. My office will continue to work with the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, our elected officials, business community, community boards, non-profits, and the 1.4 million people who call this borough their home to make The Bronx an even better place to live, work and raise a family. Great things are happening in The Bronx, and the best is yet to come,” added Borough President Diaz.

At his “State of the Borough Address” in February, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. announced his “#Not62” Initiative, aimed at improving social and economic factors that will help promote more positive health behaviors within for Bronx residents, including help attain better access to clinical care as well as well improve social and economic factors.

The initiative comes on the heal of the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Report, issued by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin, that showed Bronx County ranked last place - 62 out of 62 New York State counties – which measures important aspects of population health.

“#Not62” campaign hopes residents will motivate on another by posting their healthy meals, favorite workout routines, health tips, favorite restaurants that promote healthy options as well as connect Bronxites to resources to encourage healthier lifestyles. So when you eat a healthy lunch or get in a good workout, hashtag #NOT62! on your social media.

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Consequently, progress has been made in reforming the cosmetology industry, following the introduction of a package of legislation by Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. This legislative package, which was officially introduced in the City Council in January, includes a resolution calling on the state to allow New York City to create a letter grading system for salons and spas, as well as a bill creating a “Customer Bill of Rights” for salons and spa patrons. A third item, a resolution, calls on the New York State Department of Licensing Services, which licenses for the cosmetology profession, to expand its health and safety training options.

“While most salon and spa operators clean, sanitize and clean between each client service, Invoice 311 at many salons and spas, doing the right thing, and they are doing this putting the health and safety of their customers at great risk. The procedures used in many salons can be toxic to the health of the people who work there. In fact, cosmetologists are among the highest risk populations for the transmission of hepatitis C and HIV.”

More recently, following a recent expose of the industry by The New York Times, both Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo are proposing sweeping changes that may have a lasting impact on New York’s salon and spa industry, the first Latino to be elected as a Borough President in New York City, the first Puerto Rican to serve as the Chairman of the City University of New York and the first Latino to be appointed as a Commissioner of New York’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Momentum grows for ‘Herman Badillo Post Office’

In April, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) released an analysis of the proposed letter grading system. The analysis, which was requested by Bronx Borough President Diaz, shows that a salon and spa letter grading program would cost the city $7.2 million at the high end. This would provide for the twice-yearly inspection of each of the more than 5,300 nail salons, beauty salons and other personal care facilities located throughout the city. The cost could vary depending on specific changes made to the city’s health code and facilities covered under such an inspection system.

“We would like to thank the Independent Budget Organization for taking the time to score the potential cost of this major public health initiative," said Borough President Diaz. "While we should not put a price tag on the health and well-being of our city and its residents, the IBO’s analysis suggests this program would be incredibly cost-effective. We can provide for the health and safety of salon customers and employees without placing a major burden on the city’s budget.”

Bronx Borough President Diaz has been making the rounds discussing the issue, having spoken before business owners and industry leaders organized by both the New York Hispanic Cosmetology Chamber of Commerce and the New York Women’s Chamber of Commerce. As the legislation continues to gain momentum, Borough President Diaz noted that he would be reaching out to organizations across the city to seek their input and garner their support, a point that he emphasized when he testified in favor of his legislation in May.

“We are eager to work with any and all trade and business associations that support this legislation to make this legislation work for the cosmetology industry while also protecting the health of the public,” said Borough President Diaz.

He added, “Indeed, we have heard from numerous businesses who support this legislation, and who want their industry to be cleaner and safer. We have heard from industry representatives who understand that better health inspections, will only benefit their industry—and their customers—in the long run.”

News From Ruben Diaz Jr. • Bronx Borough President

LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE LETTER GRADES, ‘CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS’ MOVES FORWARD

You have the right to:
1) See the inspection and letter grade of an establishment.
2) Verify the names, titles, license and credentials of professional providing the services.
3) Ask for proper ventilation to keep strong chemical odors from lingering.
4) Ask that all tools and implements be emerged in EPA approved disinfectant prior to each use.
5) Ask that those providing the service wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before each client and properly cover up any cuts, open sores or any abrasions that can put your health at risk.
6) Ask that all porous manicuring and waxing implements such as paper towels, blocks, buffers, waxing sticks and other implements that cannot be disinfected should not be used for more than one person.
7) Ask that styling stations, working stations and manicure tables be sanitized and cleaned between each client service.
8) Ask for a pre consultation before any service to explain service options, expected results and any effects.
9) File a complaint with the Department of State regarding an incompetent professional, establishment or an unlicensed person.
10) Be treated with courtesy and respect.

In March, United States Senators Charles E. Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, together with Congressmembers Charles B. Rangel, José E. Serrano and Joseph Crowley introduced federal legislation to make Borough President Diaz’s proposal a reality.

“It is so heartwarming to see the outpouring of support and respect for my husband, Herman Badillo. Herman was an outstanding public servant and an inspiration to so many people. His story of coming from humble beginnings, being orphaned at a very young age and rising to the top to become the first Congressman of Puerto Rican heritage in the history of our country, is truly extraordinary. It is with enormous gratitude that I have honored Congressman Ruben Diaz for setting into motion the idea of naming the only federal building in the Bronx, after Herman and the New York Congressional delegation, including Congressmen Jose Serrano and Senator Charles Schumer for their support in this project,” said Gail Badillo.
Launch Food Stamp Pilot Program; Initiative Could Lead To Food Stamp Policy Change

Online Grocer Now Accepts Orders From All Bronx Zip Codes; FreshDirect Wins USDA Approval To

FreshDirect expands agreement the company signed with Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., to accept EBT, as part of an initiative the company agreed to expand its service to the Bronx, and to accept EBT, as part of a novel pilot program that it hopes will result in changing a federal policy that currently keeps food stamp recipients from using their benefits to purchase groceries over the Internet.

This pilot program will enable food stamp recipients at a few Bronx locations to purchase healthy groceries.

In April, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. helped cut the ribbon at the completion of the new headquarters of FreshDirect, leading fresh food Internet grocer will invest $112.6 million to build its new headquarters along the Bronx River. Borough President Diaz provided $250,000 in funding towards the project's completion.

In March, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. honored leading women of distinction at the annual Women’s History Celebration held at the Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses. Pictured with Borough President Diaz are honorees Sonia Manzano, author and star of Sesame Street; Marissa Shorenstein, president of AT&T New York; Verona Greenland, President and CEO of the Morris Heights Health Center; and Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene.

Women’s History Month

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Bronx River Fish Passage

In April, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. helped cut the ribbon at the new Bronx River Fish Passage. The new improvements are part of a more than a decade long effort by the NYC Parks Department’s Natural Resources Group and the Bronx River Alliance to restore the river’s herring habitat and ecosystem along the Bronx River. Borough President Diaz provided $250,000 in funding towards the project’s completion.

Historic High Bridge Reopens after Decades

In June, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. was joined by a Bronx delegation across the bridge to Manhattan for the first time in decades. Included were NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, Congressman José E. Serrano, Councilmembers Fernando Cabrera and Vanessa Gibson, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Bronx-born author and actor Sonia Manzano (Maria from Sesame Street).
Borough President releases Annual Development Report

THE BRONX HAS SEEN OVER $7-BILLION IN NEW DEVELOPMENT SINCE DIAZ TOOK OFFICE

In February, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. issued his annual development report, highlighting the total development seen in The Bronx since he first took office in 2009.

The report notes that, in total, The Bronx has seen more than $7.178 billion in total development in all categories since 2009, when Borough President Diaz first took office. In 2014 alone, The Bronx saw over $1.097 billion in new development.

“The Bronx continues to grow stronger and stronger each year, as we create new jobs, build new housing and improve quality of life in the borough,” said Borough President Diaz. “We will continue to attract the type of investors that want to help The Bronx flourish and reach its full potential.”

The report notes other development highlights from 2014, including a total of $788 million in residential development, $449 million in institutional development, and $134 million in commercial development across the borough.

“This is truly an exciting time to visit, work, live and do business in The Bronx. Since 2009, our borough has seen a transformation, with more than $7 billion invested on improving the quality of life of all Bronxites, building more and better affordable housing units, greener business structure and creating thousands of new jobs,” said Marlene Cintron, President of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation.

“We are witnessing an influx of people returning to their roots in The Bronx. It is a great time to invest in our borough – build it and they will come,” said Lenny Caro, President of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce.

To read the complete report, visit http://on.nyc.gov/1cKsDik.
In January, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. hosted a gathering of Latino and Jewish leaders from across the tri-state area with the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Mr. Reuven Rivlin, and the Consul General of Israel in New York, Ambassador Ido Aharoni, at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. The event was designed to foster stronger ties between the Latino and Jewish communities, both in the United States and abroad.

The meeting came on the heels of Borough President Diaz's visit to Israel the week prior, hosted in conjunction with the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, which saw the borough president lead a delegation of Latino business and civic leaders from across the tri-state area on meetings with Israeli political leaders and tours of religious, historic and tactical sites.

“I am honored to welcome Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, as well as Latino and Jewish leaders from all over the city and the tri-state area, to The Bronx to kick off this important conversation, which builds on my recent trip to Israel with a citywide delegation of Latino leaders. The Latino and Jewish communities of this city have demonstrated a deep commitment to one another for decades, and this event will help strengthen and expand on those connections,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

“The Latinos in The Bronx are going to become the majority, not just Latinos but as Americans. And we would like that both friends, American and Israeli, be together because we symbolized the way of how to fulfill and act according to the rules of democrats,” said the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Mr. Reuven Rivlin, at the event.

Borough President Diaz and President Rivlin discussed the Jewish history of The Bronx, the roots of the state of Israel, Israel’s role in the fight against terrorism, ways the bond between Latino and Jewish communities can be built even stronger and the important of strengthening the ties between the Jewish and Hispanic community.

In his remarks, Borough President Diaz noted that what he and his delegation saw in Israel was much different than what one might see in the media.

“But we were also able to experience, through this trip, the everyday life,” said Borough President Diaz. “We quite often see the media, and the media wants to concentrate, rightfully so, on the conflict. But we saw average residents of Israel. We were able to visit a telecommunications company and see how they are not only with technology but also providing jobs and employment opportunities, especially for the women of Israel, how they are dealing with workforce diversity.”

In an op-ed released prior to his visit to Israel, Borough President Diaz spoke at greater length on the importance of supporting Israel and the reason for his trip.

“Does a borough president have an interest in promoting Israel? Of course. At one point more Jews lived in The Bronx than in Israel, and our Jewish community remains vibrant and strong. Across the entire city, Jews and Latinos are already working hand-in-hand on the issues that unite us, be it economic development, housing, education and more,” wrote Borough President Diaz.

He added, “Israel has produced and continues to work on some of the most amazing technological and scientific advancements the world has ever seen. Israel is a partner in our security, and what keeps their country secure helps keep our borough and our city secure. Israel is worthy of not only our respect, but our support.”

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. are urging Bronx residents to seek out forgotten money belonging to them. More than $444,000 accounts valued at nearly $245 million are currently owed to Bronx residents.

“There are about 245 million reasons why Bronx residents should be at Bronx Borough Hall today,” said DiNapoli.

“When an individual forgets about an old bank account or a utility deposit, that money can eventually be turned over to the State Comptroller’s office. It’s your money, come and get it. My thanks to Borough President Diaz for inviting my team and me to provide this service to his Bronx constituents.”

With this found money, poor and low income families can stretch their budget and have more to spend on essential needs, like rent, transportation, child care and utilities,” said Diaz Jr. “I encourage Bronx resi-

vents to make the effort to track down their unclaimed money from the more than $244 million in unclaimed funds currently being held by the state. I thank Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli and the Office of the New York State Comptroller for expanding their efforts to track down the owners of these unclaimed funds in The Bronx.”

Unclaimed funds is money owed to New Yorkers dating back to the 1940s. The accounts are overseen by DiNapoli’s office until the funds can be reconnected with their rightful owners. The money comes from old bank accounts, utility deposits, uncashed checks, insurance claims, stocks and other sources that have been dormant for a number of years.

DiNapoli’s office oversees 444,181 unclaimed funds accounts valued at $244,783,169.60 belonging to Bronx residents. There are 31 million unclaimed funds accounts statewide valued at $13 billion.

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli shows Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. how to search for unclaimed funds currently being held by his office. $245 million in unclaimed funds for Bronxites are currently being held by the State of New York.

New Yorkers can search for and claim money by using the Comptroller’s easy-to-use online claiming system or by calling the toll-free call center at 1-866-221-9311 to speak with English or Spanish-speaking representatives from 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m.

Visit http://www.osc.state.ny.us/odf/ for additional information about unclaimed funds.
In May, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. joined numerous city agency heads and elected officials to announce plans for a $12 million pedestrian bridge that will span the Major Deegan Expressway and improve community access to Van Cortlandt Park by connecting the Croton Woods and the Allen Shandler Recreation areas in the northeast section of the park. The project is expected to be completed in 2019.

"The communities surrounding Van Cortlandt Park have waited years to realize the promise of this long-anticipated project," Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz said. "I am proud to have worked with my colleagues in government, the various city agencies, local activists, our community boards, neighborhood organizations and park enthusiasts whose vision for improved east/west access within Van Cortlandt Park will now be realized. This project is a bridge across the Bronx, uniting communities through recreation, and I am proud to be a part of this wonderful announcement."

"This project is a true collaboration between the City, community leaders, and our elected officials," said Commissioner Emily Lloyd. "This new pedestrian bridge will improve the community's access to the park and provide a connection between two recreation areas in one of New York City's largest and most beautiful parks."

"This pedestrian bridge project is a realization of one of the many proposals in the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan, a plan that is meant to guide future projects in the park," said Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver.

Thanks to additional funding secured by the State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senator Jeffrey Dinowitz, Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, and the Assembly Bronx Delegation, and our partnership with DEP and DOC, the City will be able to construct a new amenity for park users that will provide access to the park's natural areas and recreational opportunities.

"Van Cortlandt Park is the third largest park in our great City and with the addition of this new pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway it is fast becoming one of the most accessible to the public," said Commissioner Dr. Feniosky Peña Mora, Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Mitchell Silver and State Senator Jeff Klein.

The Bronx Tourism Council Executive Director Olga Cintron, President of BOEDC. "Van Cortlandt Park is the largest park in the City and with the addition of this new pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway it is fast becoming one of the most accessible to the public," said Commissioner Dr. Feniosky Peña Mora, Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Mitchell Silver and State Senator Jeff Klein.

"Van Cortlandt Park is a treasure of the Bronx," Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said. This pedestrian bridge will increase access and use of the vast park space to all Bronx residents. "I am proud of my colleagues in the Assembly for supporting the funding for the bridge and commend the hard work of the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Design and Construction for their hard work and dedication to this project."

"By investing in our parks, we are not only ensuring children and families have a top quality space to play and spend time, but significantly improving our city's infrastructure for future generations," said Senator Jeff Klein. "I'm proud to have secured $1 million in state funding for the new Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge. By opening up the park and better connecting previously isolated sections, the new footbridge will increase access to a vital community asset for countless residents, visitors and tourists."

"The construction of the footbridge over the Major Deegan Expressway is something I and all the other local elected officials have been working on for some time now," Congressman Eliot Engelson said. "This was a major priority, not just for me and everyone in government, but also for the members of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, as well as those in the community. This project was a long time coming, and I am excited for construction to get underway soon."

"Our community has fought for many years for a pedestrian bridge that would link the two sides of Van Cortlandt Park, and the creation of the bridge is a major step in the creation of the Major Deegan Expressway," Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said. "Van Cortlandt Park is perhaps the most beautiful park in the city, and among its largest. I applaud the City Administration and the City's Department of Parks and Recreation for their continued support."

"Residents of the Northwest Bronx have been waiting to see the Van Cortlandt Park pedestrian bridge project come to life since 1999," said Council Member Andrew Cohen. "This particular project has been a priority of mine since I was a Van Cortlandt Park activist in the 1980s, and the creation of the bridge was the subject matter of one of the first meetings I had after taking office. The addition of a pedestrian bridge to the City's third largest park would allow members of our neighboring communities to easily access both sides of the park."

"We are working to ensure that our new visitors continue to have many reasons to return to our borough to visit not just these destinations, but also our Bronx businesses and restaurants who provide added value to the New York experience," said Marlene Cintron, President of BOEDC.

The Bronx Tourism Council Executive Director Olga Cintron, President of BOEDC.

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"By investing in our parks, we are not only ensuring children and families have a top quality space to play and spend time, but significantly improving our city's infrastructure for future generations," said Senator Jeff Klein. "I'm proud to have secured $1 million in state funding for the new Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge. By opening up the park and better connecting previously isolated sections, the new footbridge will increase access to a vital community asset for countless residents, visitors and tourists."

"The construction of the footbridge over the Major Deegan Expressway is something I and all the other local elected officials have been working on for some time now," Congressman Eliot Engelson said. "This was a major priority, not just for me and everyone in government, but also for the members of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, as well as those in the community. This project was a long time coming, and I am excited for construction to get underway soon."

"Our community has fought for many years for a pedestrian bridge that would link the two sides of Van Cortlandt Park, and the creation of the bridge is a major step in the creation of the Major Deegan Expressway," Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said. "Van Cortlandt Park is perhaps the most beautiful park in the city, and among its largest. I applaud the City Administration and the City's Department of Parks and Recreation for their continued support."

"Residents of the Northwest Bronx have been waiting to see the Van Cortlandt Park pedestrian bridge project come to life since 1999," said Council Member Andrew Cohen. "This particular project has been a priority of mine since I was a Van Cortlandt Park activist in the 1980s, and the creation of the bridge was the subject matter of one of the first meetings I had after taking office. The addition of a pedestrian bridge to the City's third largest park would allow members of our neighboring communities to easily access both sides of the park."

"We are working to ensure that our new visitors continue to have many reasons to return to our borough to visit not just these destinations, but also our Bronx businesses and restaurants who provide added value to the New York experience," said Marlene Cintron, President of BOEDC.

The Bronx Tourism Council Executive Director Olga Cintron, President of BOEDC.