



NEWS

Contact: Lee Silberstein or Shane Kavanagh
The Marino Organization
(212) 889-0808

UNION SQUARE PARK'S NEW AND EXPANDED 15,000-SQUARE-FOOT PLAYGROUND OPEN

Innovative New Play Space Has SofSurface Tiles and New York City's Only Mountain Dome Feature for a One of a Kind Play Experience

New York, NY (January 14, 2010) Marking another major milestone in the park's 170-year history, Union Square's new expanded, 15,000-square-foot playground is open to the delight of children and parents. The new space is triple the size of the previous bifurcated play areas and features state-of-the-art equipment. The opening brings the North End Project – a joint effort by the Union Square Partnership and the City's Department of Parks & Recreation – to 95 percent completion.

"We could not be more thrilled that Union Square Park's expanded playground is open for play," said Union Square Partnership Executive Director Jennifer Falk. "The kids who have visited the new playground have given the space a huge thumbs up, and the feedback from parents and caregivers has been overwhelmingly positive, which is truly gratifying. We hope that this new amenity will provide endless hours of enjoyment to all who visit for many, many years to come, and can't wait for spring when the water features, including spray shower and sandbox water table, can be activated."

"The opening of the Union Square Park playground gives families in the Union Square neighborhood a spectacular, modern, unified playground for children of all ages, designed by renowned landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh, that is nearly triple its original size," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "Our collaboration with the Union Square Partnership has enabled us to create an exciting play space within a renovated north plaza that, once complete, includes a restored Pavilion, public restrooms, new paving, and many more trees."

Union Square Park's state-of-the-art new play space has various features unlike any other playground in New York City. The playground consists of three outdoor "rooms" dedicated to different age groups. The western section is for toddlers (children up to age 5) and includes a large swing set, climbing platforms with slides, and a sand and water play area. The center area is a highly active space for school-aged children (ages 5 -12) featuring play equipment and a spray shower, and the eastern area offers a climbing and sliding dome, monkey bars

and a tube slide. Surrounding the space are beautifully landscaped gardens with dozens of new trees designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

Some of the most exciting spots include the “Nest,” a futuristic spinning teacup, and a swinging carousel called the “Icarus.” Little climbers can scale the one-of-a-kind shiny silver “Mountain,” the first in the City, or swing from the bendy metal “Cattails.” Children can whisper messages to each other from all the way across the playground using the talk tubes located throughout the space. And toddlers can create sand castles in the sandbox using the water-play ledge while grownups watch from the wooden benches lining the Tot Lot.

In the summertime, the area of the playground in front of the Pavilion will transform into a miniature water park with a fountain and misters providing children a fun way to cool off on hot summer days. The playground, which is accessible to children of all abilities, is open year-round from 8:00 AM to dusk with multiple entry points along the East 16th Street transverse.

Other recently completed components of the North End Project include new asphalt pavers and crushed bluestone along the East 16th Street transverse, along with an ADA-accessible entrance to the center lawn. Work at the site is now focusing on completing the restroom facilities including the dedicated playground bathroom. Crews are awaiting the fabrication of doors, screens and stainless steel fencing to enclose the structure before opening to the public. Over at the Pavilion, the difficult task of removing graffiti from the building’s surface has finished and the limestone facade is restored. Plumbing, electric and heating systems are in place, leaving interior finishes to be completed. The remaining work on the building involves substantial structural repair and restoration of the ceiling beams and three exterior columns. The project will be completed in early 2010.

Originally opened in 1839, Union Square Park is one of New York City’s most important public spaces serving as a stage for historic events and a hub for daily activity. The renovation of Union Square Park has been ongoing since the 1980’s. The first phase rebuilt the central portion of the park south of 16th Street, creating new, redesigned paths and lighting. In 2002, the second phase reconstructed and expanded the park’s southeastern triangle and south plaza. The north end renovation, which includes the new playground, is the third and final phase. For construction updates, visit UnionSquareNYC.org/northend.

The north end renovation is a joint project of the Union Square Partnership and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. The project team includes Architecture Research Office, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Hill International, and Padilla Construction.

About the Union Square Partnership

The Union Square Partnership is a community-based, not-for-profit organization responsible for the revitalization of the 14th Street-Union Square neighborhood. The Partnership’s mission is to improve the quality-of-life for the district’s residents, businesses and visitors, by providing public safety, sanitation, economic development and marketing services, and investing in the beautification of Union Square Park. For more information, visit UnionSquareNYC.org.

#