

[CLOSE WINDOW](#)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****PR- 357-05****September 19, 2005****MAYOR BLOOMBERG ANNOUNCES THE REOPENING OF COLUMBUS CIRCLE**

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today joined [Parks & Recreation](#) Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Department of Design and Construction ([DDC](#)) Commissioner David J. Burney, Department of Transportation ([DOT](#)) Commissioner Iris Weinshall and Department of [City Planning](#) Director Amanda M. Burden to announce the completion of Columbus Circle in midtown Manhattan. The \$23 million project included a new streetscape design, granite curbs and sidewalks, distinctive wooden benches, a breathtaking central fountain, and new landscaping as well as the restoration of underground and above ground utilities, water mains, and the roadway.

"Columbus Circle has always been one of New York City's most beloved historic spaces, and it is now even more pedestrian-friendly," said Mayor Bloomberg. "With lush plantings and a beautiful water fountain that screens the area from the passing traffic, one can sit at the heart of one of the busiest intersections in our City and still find the tranquility to relax and read a good book. The multi-agency effort not only transformed the circle into a beautiful public space for New Yorkers and visitors, it also greatly improved traffic conditions making the area safer for pedestrians."

"For much of its history Columbus Circle was neither a circle nor a good public space," said Commissioner Benepe. "A multi-agency effort has created one of New York's great new public plazas, with a glorious new fountain, lush plantings, and a place of respite for residents, workers, and visitors."

"Columbus Circle is one of New York's great public spaces and DDC is proud to have managed this major reconstruction project," said Commissioner Burney. "The new central pedestrian and seating area, screened from traffic by trees and fountains, will provide a tranquil plaza that all can enjoy."

The design was based on an interim space created in 1999 that combined segmented traffic islands, which at that time, made up Columbus Circle. Construction began in July 2003 and was a multi-agency effort. DDC oversaw the final design by Vollmer Consultants and construction by general contractor Tully Construction Company. The Department of City Planning worked closely with Olin Partnership to create the project's overall plan and landscape/urban design features. The \$23 million reconstruction was funded by \$21.3 million from the City, with \$1.2 million from the Transit Authority and \$500,000 for the fountain equipment from Related Companies, L.P. and Apollo Real Estate. Prior to construction, the design was partially supported by \$500,000 from the Related Companies and Apollo Real Estate.

The circle is laid out in a series of concentric rings consisting of a broad, gently raised area of plantings and a ring of fountains in its interior that buffer the traffic noise and provide a serene, pedestrian plaza around the Christopher Columbus Statue. The pedestrian plaza is set inside of the fountain, and includes three new benches made of curved wood, large enough to allow individuals and groups to sit comfortably back to back, facing either the fountain or the monument. The new fountain includes 99 fountain heads and nearly 300 fountain lights, and was designed by WETdesign, who also designed the fountains at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Rockefeller Center Prometheus Fountain.

The Department of Parks & Recreation was responsible for the center public space and provided the scope and funding for the fountain, benches, landscaping and upcoming renovation of Columbus Statue. DOT provided scope and funding for the improved traffic and pedestrian flow and surrounding roadwork. The DEP provided funding for water main and sewer improvements for the surrounding area. The Central Park Conservancy provided assistance to DDC throughout the project.

"Columbus Circle is now a destination rather than just an intersection," said Commissioner Weinshall. "The redesign allows for a more orderly movement of traffic and most importantly creates a safer route for pedestrians to cross."

"DEP's role was mostly on belowground infrastructure, but we're pleased to be part of this marvelous civic effort that revamped Columbus Circle," said Commissioner Lloyd. "Over \$2 million of new water mains likely won't be noticed by the millions of people who pass through each year, but they will play an important role for many decades to come – particularly, getting water to the new central fountain."

"The renewed Columbus Circle has become a magical and compelling open space marking the location of one of the most important crossroads of the City," said City Planning Director Amanda M. Burden. "The graceful fountains, generous seating, plantings and lighting have transformed a neglected traffic island into a vibrant destination for all New Yorkers. We were pleased and proud to work with Laurie Olin on the design of this splendid new public space."

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