

Parks and Recreation Committee Hearing Testimony

November 24, 2025

Thank you Chair Krishnan and members of the committee for calling this hearing on something that should be simple: working drinking fountains and clean bathrooms and in our parks. These are not additive amenities for our public spaces: they are public health necessities. And right now, they're failing New Yorkers.

City Parks Foundation (CPF) runs hundreds of free programs in parks throughout the city. When participants finish up their tennis lesson or volunteer project on a hot day, they need access to drinking water that is safe, reliable and free. Instead, they're met with poorly maintained fountains that break and then stay broken for months. Working drinking fountains not only keep people hydrated and cool, they also reduce our reliance on single-use plastic bottles, something that is truly vital to advancing the city's own environmental goals. Through our environmental education programs, we utilize parks as outdoor classrooms to teach kids about climate and sustainability. Our kids are passionate and considerate about this issue, and most bring a reusable water bottle to their lessons. But without working fountains to refill their bottles, participants are forced to buy single-use plastic bottles to stay hydrated on hot days.

Next, our disgraceful three-million dollar bathrooms. The lack of adequate public bathrooms in New York City is well documented. The ones that do exist – in parks – are often locked, or so filthy that parents won't let their children use them. Families, seniors, sports teams, picnickers – anyone trying to spend time in a park all depend on these facilities. When bathrooms are unusable, people leave. Programs get cut short. For this very reason, CPF's travelling PuppetMobile – the mobile version of our marionette theatre located in Central Park – does not bring performances to parks that lack a bathroom. Parks that should be welcoming community spaces become places people avoid.

This is not the version of New York that our citizens deserve. And we know exactly why it's happening: there aren't enough staff to maintain facilities because of budget cuts and chronic underfunding. You cannot keep bathrooms clean and fountains running without people to do the actual work. Every week, our Partnerships for Parks team works with nearly 600 community groups across the city to pick up litter, plant flowers, and organize events. But volunteers, no matter how dedicated, cannot and should not replace

trained maintenance crews with the tools, time, and authority to keep facilities operational – especially when it comes to scrubbing toilets and fixing broken fountains. That's the city's job.

We are hopeful – truly hopeful – that the FY27 budget will finally address this. Parks are essential public infrastructure, and they need to be funded that way. That means investing in the maintenance staff who keep our parks clean, safe, and functional. It means ensuring that when a child needs a bathroom or a senior needs water, those facilities are there and they work.

New Yorkers deserve parks they can actually use, and that starts with the basics.



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Testimony before Committee on Parks & Recreation
11/24/2025

Good afternoon, Chair Krishnan and members of the Committee on Parks & Recreation. Thank you for convening this hearing, and thank you, Chair Krishnan, for your steadfast leadership and support of our parks system and open green space as Chair of this committee.

My name is Cory Hasson, and I am the Government Affairs Manager at the New York Restoration Project (NYRP). We are proud members of the Parks and Open Space Partners and the Play Fair Coalition. I am here today to testify in support of **Intro-1425** and to urge you to increase staffing for Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers and Park Rangers. These roles are critical to preserving the safety, accessibility, and quality of life in our city parks.

As of January 2025, the Parks Department had *fewer than 300 PEP officers* patrolling all of New York City's 30,000+ acres of parkland. That number is strikingly low and means there is one PEP officer per 100 acres. This fundamentally hinders their ability to provide a visible, preventive presence, respond to ongoing quality-of-life issues, or partner effectively with NYPD, especially in high-use or high-need parks.

Historically, when park enforcement staffing is cut or frozen, the quality of park conditions declines: one report by NY4P documented that operating-budget reductions led to a drop in maintenance hours, accumulating trash, overgrown lawns, and fewer staff monitoring natural areas.

Importantly, Park Rangers aren't just about enforcement: they are educators, environmental stewards, community liaisons, and first responders. Their presence amplifies efforts to protect park ecosystems, guide visitors, and address quality-of-life concerns such as noise, illegal vending, off-leash animals, and misuse of park paths.



NYRP strongly urges the Committee to baseline funding for additional PEP officers and permanent Park Ranger positions, making them a consistent part of Parks' operating budget. By doing so, we can ensure that enforcement, stewardship, and safety are not subject to annual political or budget dances.

In conclusion, increasing PEP and Ranger staffing is not simply about enforcement, it is about building trust, protecting natural assets, enhancing public health, and making parks more equitable and welcoming for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Testimony in Support of Increased Funding for NYC Parks Restrooms and Drinking Fountains City Council Hearing – November 24, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the state of public restrooms and drinking fountains in New York City parks. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is an avid advocate for open space and works to ensure that every community has access to safe, clean, and equitable parks. We submit this testimony to highlight the urgent need for increased investment in the maintenance and repair of these essential public facilities.

NYC Parks maintains more than 1,100 public toilets and 3,400 drinking fountains—more than any other city agency. These facilities are critical infrastructure that support public health, accessibility, comfort, and dignity for millions of park users. Unfortunately, decades of underinvestment have left many restrooms and fountains in deteriorating or unusable condition.

A 2024 City Council survey of 100 park restrooms found that two-thirds were closed during scheduled hours or had significant sanitary or safety issues. Nearly one-quarter lacked baby changing stations, and 30 percent had no garbage cans. Similarly, a 2025 survey conducted by Council Member Brewer found widespread broken, unusable, or inaccessible drinking fountains throughout Upper West Side parks. These findings illustrate a citywide problem that demands meaningful action.

To address these challenges, New York City must increase funding for NYC Parks so the agency can repair damaged facilities, hire additional maintenance staff, and ensure restrooms remain open and usable during the hours the public expects. Investment in operations and maintenance staff is especially critical and would result in immediate, visible improvements across the system.

This need is underscored by Local Laws 92 and 93, which require the City to install 50 new drinking fountains in parks and increase the total number of public restrooms citywide to 2,120 within the next decade. Without increased maintenance funding now, the City risks being unable to keep both existing and planned facilities in good working condition.

We urge the City Council to prioritize increased investment in NYC Parks' maintenance and staffing capacity. Clean, safe, and reliable restrooms and drinking fountains are fundamental to an equitable and welcoming parks system—and they are essential to the well-being of all New Yorkers.

TPL is committed to its continued working relationship with NYC Parks and to our shared goal of expanding public access to green spaces in New York City. We thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Renaud", written over a horizontal line.

Tamar Renaud, New York State Director
Trust for Public Land



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Oversight Hearing on Improving the Maintenance of
Park Bathrooms and Drinking Fountains
November 24, 2025**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Krishnan and members of the Committee on Parks for the opportunity to comment.

As co-founders of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, along with New Yorkers for Parks, DC37, and over 400 organizations, we demand a City budget that gives NYC Parks the fair funding they deserve. NYLCV is also a member of Forest for All NYC (FFANYC), a coalition of nearly 140 organizations committed to protecting, maintaining, and expanding the City's urban forest and equitably achieve 30% tree canopy cover by 2035. If we want to maintain our parks system, invest in our city's workforce, increase our tree canopy, or prepare our open spaces for climate change, our elected officials must increase funding for our city's parks system.

The FY26 Adopted Budget did not restore nearly 600 full-time baselined positions that DPR has lost since 2023. The 600 eliminated roles—cut through budget reductions, PEG cuts, and a hiring freeze—were full-time, baselined union positions that allow New Yorkers to earn a living wage. These positions are critical to the maintenance and operation of our city's parks, pools, beaches and recreation centers, and bathrooms. They include City Parks Workers, Forestry and Natural Areas staff, Capital Projects staff and other frontline workers. Further, many of the positions that were added to the FY26 budget (roughly 200) are guaranteed for just one year. They are not permanent positions and do not provide stability for these workers or for the agency.

For the FY27 budget, we urge the next City Council and Mayor-Elect Mamdani to restore the nearly 600 full-time baselined positions that DPR has lost, and get us on a path to increasing DPR's budget to 1% of the total City budget.

The impact of these lost parks staffing lines is clear. The remaining Parks workers are overburdened by the sheer volume of users—millions of New Yorkers who crave green space. As a result, New Yorkers are visiting parks that are poorly maintained, with just 65% of parks across the city achieving the agency's own Vital Parks score goals. On top of this, we are

constantly reminded of the climate crisis and its impact on New Yorkers' lives. Parks, open spaces, and trees are vital to combatting stormwater and extreme heat.

Moreover, public restrooms and outdoor drinking fountains in NYC Parks are vital amenities for residents and visitors. Having access to free, clean, safe, and accessible restrooms and fountains promotes visitor usage, quality of life, and public health. Increasing funding and staffing for NYC Parks is key to improving and maintaining park bathrooms and drinking fountains.

When it comes to safety in our parks system, Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers are an unarmed presence trained and equipped to address the range of potential safety issues in city parks. They offer first aid, provide crowd control, connect at-risk individuals with social services, and are authorized to issue summonses and arrests. NYLCV supports expanding this workforce to bring more stable, middle-class jobs for New Yorkers.

As we approach the start of a new City Council session and the next Mayoral Administration, we hope elected officials will support Play Fair's [Parks 2030 Platform](#), a clear vision for a world-class parks system, and one that both the City Council and the Administration must make a priority. Too many parks remain understaffed, underfunded, and neglected, especially in communities that need them most. NYLCV looks forward to working with the current and future City Council, Mayor-Elected Mamdani, DPR, and park advocates to ensure we are investing in a world-class park system.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**Written Testimony of Deborah Kirschner
Vice President, External Relations, Prospect Park Alliance
New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Oversight Hearing on Parks Restrooms, Drinking Fountains, and PEP Coverage
Monday, November 24, 2025**

Chair Krishnan, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for today's hearing. My name is Deborah Kirschner, and I serve as Vice President of Prospect Park Alliance, the nonprofit organization that partners with NYC Parks to care for Brooklyn's Backyard, Prospect Park. Our team works alongside the agency every day, and we see firsthand the extraordinary dedication of Parks staff and the very real constraints caused by chronic underfunding and understaffing.

Today's discussion on the state of park restrooms, drinking fountains, and Parks Enforcement Patrol officers strikes at the heart of what makes public space accessible, equitable and essential for all New Yorkers. Parks are not amenities, they are essential infrastructure, especially in a city that depends on its parks as living rooms, backyards and cooling centers.

Speaker Adams' *2024 Nature's Call: An Assessment of NYC Park Restrooms* highlighted what many of us already know: too many restrooms and drinking fountains are in disrepair, closed during scheduled hours, or lacking basic safety and sanitary conditions. These outcomes are not the result of neglect by frontline staff. They are the predictable result of decades of disinvestment, and of a Parks workforce that simply does not have the capacity to maintain more than 1,400 restrooms and 3,700 drinking fountains citywide.

Prospect Park is no exception. One of the restrooms included in the Council survey, the Willink Restroom at the Children's Corner, illustrates the challenges faced by public facilities. This restroom serves some of the park's most heavily visited family destinations, including the Carousel, the Zoo, and Lefferts Historic House. Yet after years of underinvestment, it has fallen into such disrepair that it becomes unusable during rain events. It has not undergone a major restoration since 1991. And through the support of the City Council, we are slowly raising the funds for its restoration. But as this example shows, restoring existing facilities—and much less expanding access as mandated by Local Laws 92 and 93—requires investment and staffing that the current Parks budget does not sustain.

We see a similar strain when it comes to Parks Enforcement Patrol officers. Prospect Park sees its highest summer use, yet many PEP officers are reassigned to beaches during this same period. The result is fewer trained officers available during the busiest season, despite the fact that PEP officers are uniquely skilled in park rules, public engagement, and de-escalation. Our own correspondence from park users reflects a consistent desire for a fair and reliable level of coverage across parks and beaches alike.

Intro 1425 is an important step toward understanding these gaps. By requiring detailed, district-level reporting, the City will have clearer insight into where coverage falls short and where additional investment could make parks safer and more welcoming.

The path forward is clear. New York City must invest in the staffing and resources needed to keep existing restrooms and fountains clean, functional, and open; to restore facilities like Willink; and to ensure adequate PEP officer coverage across all boroughs. These improvements can be realized quickly with targeted operating and maintenance funding—investments that will improve the daily experience of millions of New Yorkers.

The Prospect Park Alliance stands ready to work in partnership with this Committee, NYC Parks, and our elected leaders to advance these goals. Together, we can ensure that the essential infrastructure of our parks reflects the dignity, health, and equity that every New Yorker deserves.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Testimony of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA)
to the
New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation
Oversight - Improving the Maintenance of Park Bathrooms and Drinking
Fountains
November 24, 2025

Chair Krishnan and members of the Parks Committee. My name is Deborah Maher and I am President of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA). I would like to thank the committee for holding this important oversight hearing on "Improving the Maintenance of Park Bathrooms and Drinking Fountains".

Randall's Island Park is located in the East River between East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens and serves as vital green space for these communities. As the dedicated steward of Randall's Island Park, the Alliance sustains, maintains, develops and programs the Park to support the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.

I am testifying today to encourage the City not only to invest additional funds for maintenance of bathrooms but also to fund new bathrooms which will help with maintenance costs. New bathrooms would alleviate maintenance issues connected to overuse and aging bathrooms as well as individuals using nature when there is not a public bathroom.

It is no secret that that the City needs expanded access to public bathrooms. This very Council has held hearings and passed legislation to expand bathroom use over the last few years. At RIPA we have advocated for a new public restroom facility at the touchdown of the 103rd Street Footbridge, an amenity that would greatly enhance the park experience for visitors and help cut down on maintenance costs.

We encourage the City to invest in the capital cost in new Bathrooms in City Parks as well as to fully fund the Parks budget so that maintenance can be handled timely.

Thank you for your time.

**Riverside Park Conservancy
Public Hearing Testimony before the
NYC Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
November 24, 2025**

Chair Krishnan and members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I'm Merritt Birnbaum, President & CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy. We partner with NYC Parks to steward six miles of parkland from 59th Street to 181st Street.

Our park is currently home to **12 public bathrooms** and **35 public drinking** fountains. But only about 10% of those facilities are at a standard that anyone in this room would want to use. The 10% I refer to are the ones that were built with new capital dollars as part of other Parks projects – new playgrounds or our new Fieldhouse.

As this hearing has shown - bathrooms and drinking fountains are the most basic pieces of public infrastructure. They are the foundation of our health, safety and dignity as humans. And in New York City, that infrastructure is failing because the City has asked NYC Parks to maintain a century-old system without the staff or capital to do it.

In Riverside, families show up with toddlers and find bathrooms locked in the middle of the afternoon because there is no City Parks Worker available to staff them. And when they are open, too many are barely functional—like last year when Councilmember Brewer did a survey and found that in Classic Playground, **eight of nine urinals were out of service**, and that Dinosaur Playground had a **broken sink and a missing toilet**. These aren't exotic problems, they should fall under the most basic level of maintenance.

But routine fixes are impossible because we don't have enough boots on the ground. We need to restore and baseline parks workers and trades positions, so bathrooms are reliably open, clean, and safe.

At the same time, we need a new capital playbook. In our parks, many restroom buildings haven't seen a true overhaul since the 1940s.

When NYC Parks scopes renovations, we're seeing price tags in the multi-millions per bathroom. That is not sustainable. The City should launch a bundled, standardized renovation program—think capsule-style fixture cores, repetitive designs, and one contract to modernize multiple bathrooms at once—so we can bring the Robert Moses era infrastructure into the 21st century – **without \$6 million per-building costs.**

And drinking fountains need the same systems-level fix. **The City has set a target for 50 new park fountains by 2035, but we won't hit it without new engineering capacity.** Create a multi-agency modernization task force—bring in DEP and outside plumbing expertise—so we're not reinventing the wheel one broken fountain at a time.

Bottom line: fund the people, lower the capital costs through smart standardization, and treat bathrooms and fountains like the core infrastructure they are.

New Yorkers deserve parks where you can find a working toilet and a drink of water—every day, in every neighborhood. Thank you.



November 25, 2025

To the New York City Council,

My name is Nijaah Howard, and I am the President of the Southeast Queens Dog Run Committee. I am writing today because, as a frequent user of our parks and as someone who advocates for the safety and well-being of our community, I have become increasingly concerned about the lack of security measures in our local parks — specifically around park bathrooms.

As a resident and community leader, I often find myself needing to use the park bathrooms. However, the **low lighting**, lack of **visible security presence**, and **absence of functioning cameras** make these areas feel unsafe. I am an adult, and even I am hesitant to use these facilities.

Recently, I learned of a deeply disturbing incident in which a woman captured footage of an adult male attempting to harm a child behind a park bathroom. Hearing this was a turning point for me. It confirmed what many of us already fear: poorly lit, unmonitored spaces create opportunities for dangerous behavior to go unnoticed.

This is unacceptable — and preventable.

I am urging the Council to **prioritize and fund security cameras and improved lighting in and around park bathroom areas** throughout Southeast Queens. These are not luxuries; they are essential safety measures. Our parks should be places where families, children, seniors, and everyday users can feel protected.

Adding security cameras to the budget will help deter harmful behavior, support law enforcement when needed, and most importantly, reassure the community that their safety is being taken seriously.

Our parks are vital spaces. They should not be places where anyone — especially children — is left vulnerable.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and your commitment to public safety. I sincerely hope the Council will consider this request and take action to ensure that Southeast Queens parks are safe for all who use them.

Respectfully,
Nijaah Howard

President, Southeast Queens Dog Run Committee
nh.nyack13@gmail.com



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
November 24, 2025
Improving the Maintenance of Park Bathrooms and Drinking Fountains
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance Testimony**

Dear Councilmember Krishnan and Members of the Committee on Parks & Recreation:

I am submitting this written testimony speaking for the staff and board of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 500 organizations from across the five boroughs.

On behalf of the 3+ million people who use Van Cortlandt Park each year, we urge New York City to fund the repair and maintenance of public restrooms and drinking fountains in Van Cortlandt Park and all of NYC's parks.

The city must increase NYC Parks funding to repair damaged public restrooms and drinking fountains in parks and playgrounds, hire additional staff to ensure regular maintenance, and keep restrooms open later for the public. Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, the park's recognized partner, often receives complaints that bathrooms and playgrounds are not open on time or closed too early. **These problems are always due to lack of staff.**

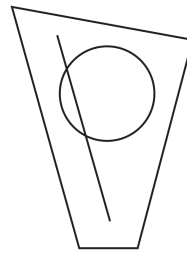
NYC Parks maintains and operates over 700 public restrooms and 3,700 drinking fountains—the vast majority of public restrooms and fountains citywide, and more than any other city agency. These facilities are vital to public health, safety, and accessibility. **Considering the chronic disinvestment in NYC Parks, we should be thanking Parks Department staff for their heroic efforts, not calling them to task.** Any failure rests squarely on the shoulders of Mayor Adams who defunded parks during his tenure.

Funding for staff and supplies to maintain bathrooms and water fountains needs to be baselined. It is time to stop yearly budget cuts that keep parks in crisis. Parks are critical infrastructure which have been overlooked and underfunded for the last 4 decades. **Year after year, NYC Parks staff does more with less. The staff is already stretched too thin. They are tired and frustrated, and so are we.**

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance exists to help by adding supplemental programming and resources to the park, not to replace New York City funding. But that is now the role we find ourselves in. **In the summer of 2024, VCPA spent thousands of dollars to purchase garbage bags to keep the park clean, and toilet paper and hand soap to stock the park's 7 public restroom buildings. Why isn't the Parks budget funded at a level to supply these very basic items?**

Parks are essential to city life, providing equitable access to recreation for physical wellbeing, fresh air and open space for mental health, and a venue for much-needed social interaction. Parks need to be clean and safe in order to serve our great city. They should be funded and cared for accordingly.

Christina Taylor
Deputy Director
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance



A. Philip
Randolph
Square

NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE INC.

November 24, 2025

Honorable Shekar Krishnan
New York City Council, District 25
250 Broadway, Suite 1816
New York, NY 10007

RE: Testimony to the New York City Council Hearing on NYC Parks
Restrooms, Drinking Fountains, and PEP Officers

Good morning

My name is Gregory Christopher Baggett-Andrews, and I am testifying on behalf of the A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood Alliance and a resident of Central Harlem to urge the City Council to significantly increase funding for the repair, maintenance, and staffing of public restrooms and drinking fountains in our parks—particularly in Central Harlem and other heat island communities where these facilities are literally a matter of life and death.

The Crisis in Central Harlem

Central Harlem presents a deadly paradox. We are surrounded by five major historic parks—Central Park, Marcus Garvey Park, Morningside Park, St. Nicholas Park, and Jackie Robinson Park—yet Community District 10 has just 0.3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, Manhattan's lowest ratio and far below the citywide average of 1.8 acres.

More critically, Central Harlem is a documented heat island with a heat island index of 5, the highest level of severity. On the same summer day last year,

West 94th Street near Central Park measured 84 degrees while a treeless lot in East Harlem hit 115 degrees—a 31-degree difference. Central Harlem typically runs 10 degrees hotter than even East Harlem. Residents living in extreme heat islands like ours are twice as likely to die from heat stress as those in cooler neighborhoods.

In this context, public restrooms and drinking fountains are not amenities—they are critical public health infrastructure. When water fountains run dry during heat waves and bathrooms are locked by 3 p.m., we are literally putting lives at risk.

The State of Our Facilities

NYC Parks maintains over 1,100 public toilets and 3,400 drinking fountains—more than any other city agency. These facilities should be sources of pride, ensuring public health, safety, and dignity for all New Yorkers. Instead, they tell a story of chronic disinvestment:

- A 2024 City Council survey of 100 park restrooms found two-thirds were closed during scheduled hours or had serious sanitary or safety issues
- Nearly 25% lacked baby changing stations
- 30% lacked garbage cans
- Council Member Brewer's 2025 survey documented widespread broken, unusable, or inaccessible drinking fountains

In Central Harlem's small parks, squares, and playgrounds, which make up most of our green and open space, these conditions are even more severe. Our facilities receive minimal investment compared to flagship parks at our borders. With only 260 Parks Enforcement Patrol officers responsible for 30,000 acres citywide, safety personnel are virtually nonexistent in our pocket parks. Parks are operating with 1,000 fewer workers than in 2023, with 795 positions eliminated entirely. The results are visible every day: bathrooms locked by 3 p.m., overflowing trash, broken equipment unrepaired for months, and water fountains dry during heat waves—precisely when our community needs them most.

The Cost of Inaction vs. The Cost of Solutions

We recognize that public bathrooms are expensive. Construction, maintenance, and enforcement are real obstacles. A single comfort station can cost millions to build and requires dedicated staff for cleaning, security, and repairs. These genuine challenges make the public facilities we already have in our parks even more pressing and urgent—especially in a community rated #5 as a heat island.

We cannot afford to let existing infrastructure deteriorate while we debate building new facilities. Every locked bathroom, every broken water fountain, every unstaffed comfort station represents a failure to protect public health in communities already facing environmental injustice.

Specific Needs in Central Harlem

To address these inequities in Central Harlem specifically, we need:

1. **Immediate repair and reopening** of existing restroom and fountain facilities in Marcus Garvey Park, St. Nicholas Park, Jackie Robinson Park, and our neighborhood playgrounds
2. **Extended operating hours** for bathrooms—keeping facilities open until at least 8 p.m. during summer months when heat stress is most severe
3. **Daily maintenance schedules** with dedicated staff assigned to Central Harlem facilities
4. **Emergency water access** during heat advisories, including mobile water stations when fountains are under repair
5. **Prioritization under Environmental Justice Zones** that recognize Central Harlem's #5 heat island status
- 6.

The One Percent Solution

When Mayor-elect Mandani was asked by parks advocacy groups—including New Yorkers for Parks, the Urban Design Forum, and the Municipal Arts Society—he committed to dedicating 1% of New York City's budget to parks. Currently, our parks receive less than 0.6% of city funding, even though they cover 14% of New York's land.

If the city allocated 1% of the budget to parks, Central Harlem would benefit through:

- **Staffing restoration:** The \$95 million needed to restore 1,000 park positions would enable staff to be on-site at heavily used restrooms during peak hours, addressing issues when they occur and keeping facilities open later
- **Systematic repairs:** Funding to address the backlog of broken fountains, damaged restrooms, and dysfunctional infrastructure throughout our small parks
- **Preventive maintenance:** Regular cleaning and inspection schedules that prevent facilities from deteriorating to unusable conditions
- **Heat emergency response:** Resources to ensure water access during the increasingly frequent and severe heat waves that threaten our community
- **Evening programming:** Staff to supervise facilities during evening recreation programs, making parks safer and more accessible for families

Our Request

We specifically call on the City Council to:

1. **Allocate \$25 million to hire 460+ additional NYC Parks workers** responsible for cleaning, maintenance, and repair of park facilities, enabling staff presence at 400 heavily used restrooms during busiest times
2. **Prioritize heat island communities** like Central Harlem in the distribution of these resources, recognizing that working-class neighborhoods cannot supplement city funding with private conservancies
3. **Support Intro 1425** to track PEP coverage by district, identifying staffing gaps and enabling more equitable resource allocation
4. **Establish a timeline** for bringing all existing Central Harlem park restrooms and fountains to full operational status before next summer
5. **Champion the mayor-elect's commitment** to allocate 1% of the city budget to parks

Conclusion

Local Laws 92 and 93 require the city to add 50 drinking fountains and increase public restrooms to 2,120 within ten years. We cannot meet these goals while allowing existing facilities to crumble. In the climate crisis era, parks are frontline infrastructure. Public restrooms and drinking fountains are not luxuries—they are essential to public health, safety, and dignity. In Central Harlem, where extreme heat is already a documented public health emergency, they are matters of survival. Budget cuts fall heaviest on working-class neighborhoods like ours. While wealthier districts supplement city funding with private conservancies raising millions annually, Central Harlem depends entirely on public investment. We ask you to ensure that investment reflects our community's needs and our residents' right to the city.

APPENDIX

Budget Justification: Central Harlem's \$3-4 Million Share of Parks Funding

Central Harlem requires \$3-4 million of the proposed \$25 million parks allocation—approximately 12-16% of citywide resources. This estimate reflects five critical factors that compound our community's need:

1. Geographic Scope of Infrastructure Central Harlem borders five major historic parks—Central, Marcus Garvey, Morningside, St. Nicholas, and Jackie Robinson Parks—plus maintains dozens of neighborhood playgrounds, squares, and pocket parks. This represents 30-50+ restroom and fountain facilities requiring daily maintenance, security, and extended operating hours. Each facility needs coverage 12+ hours daily during summer months.

2. Staffing Requirements At approximately \$54,000 per position (based on the \$25 million creating 460+ jobs), properly staffing Central Harlem's facilities requires:

- 20 positions for major park boundaries (\$1.08 million)
- 15 positions for neighborhood parks/playgrounds (\$810,000)
- 10 positions for maintenance and emergency response (\$540,000)

- 5 positions for evening/weekend coverage (\$270,000) Total: 50 positions = **\$2.7 million baseline**

3. Heat Island Emergency Multiplier As a #5 ranked heat island where residents are twice as likely to die from heat stress, Central Harlem cannot be funded at average levels. With temperatures running 10 degrees hotter than East Harlem and 31 degrees hotter than areas near Central Park, our water and restroom access is literally life-saving infrastructure. This health emergency justifies a 30-40% premium above baseline funding.

4. Equity Correction for Historic Underinvestment With just 0.3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents—six times below the city average of 1.8 acres—Central Harlem starts from a massive deficit. Achieving equitable service levels requires proportionally higher investment to overcome decades of neglect. Our broken fountains and 3 p.m. bathroom closures reflect this chronic underfunding.

5. Zero Private Investment—100% Public Dependency This is the critical factor that distinguishes Central Harlem from other communities. While Central Park benefits from a conservancy that raises \$70+ million annually, and Bryant Park operates on a \$20 million private budget, Central Harlem has NO private conservancies, NO corporate sponsors, and NO supplemental funding. Every dollar for our parks must come from public investment.

Wealthier neighborhoods effectively double or triple their parks budgets through private philanthropy. In Central Harlem, the city allocation IS the entire budget. When the city provides only baseline funding, it ignores that other communities are adding millions in private dollars on top. This creates a devastating inequality: wealthy areas get city funds PLUS private millions, while Central Harlem gets city funds alone.

Final Calculation:

- Base staffing need: \$2.7 million
- Heat emergency premium (30%): \$810,000
- Equity adjustment for historic deficit: \$490,000
- **Total: \$4 million**

This represents just 16% of the \$25 million request, yet serves a community facing Manhattan's worst parkland deficit, deadly heat island conditions, and zero private support. Without this investment, Central Harlem residents will continue facing locked bathrooms, dry fountains, and preventable heat deaths while neighboring communities enjoy pristine, privately-funded facilities.

The \$4 million is not a request for special treatment—it's the minimum required to provide basic public health infrastructure in a community that depends entirely on public funding for survival.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Gregory C. Baggett

Founder, A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood Alliance

Co-thought leader, REVIVE Harlem Lane

Committee on Parks and Recreation

Hearing Testimony by EsplanadeFriends (Submission by Maria Kessler, Executive Director)

Esplanade Friends joins in supporting increased NYC Parks funding to repair damaged restrooms, install restrooms in areas with no current public access, and maintain restrooms for an equitable city, ensuring public health, safety, and dignity.

Three specific issues highlighted by EsplanadeFriends:

1) Twenty-Four Sycamores Park

E. 60th to E. 61st Streets, York Avenue – Manhattan

Regular bathrooms have been closed for repair with porta potties as the replacement. These porta potties have become the current standard.

This location is the closest available public bathrooms to Andrew Haswell Green Park where EsplanadeFriends provides periodic public events and outings attended by hundreds of people of all ages who frequent the East River Esplanade.

Repaired bathrooms are needed to provide a safe environment. Porta potties are not a sustainable solution.

2) Stanley Isaacs Playground

East 95-97th Streets (FDR Drive)

Regular bathrooms have been out of order frequently for long periods of time and most recent inspections by NYC Parks as of July 2025 rated both the men's and women's bathroom in unacceptable condition.

3) East Harlem Esplanade

Between 97th Street and 120th Streets

There are no bathrooms currently adjacent to the East River Esplanade in East Harlem, nor are there current plans to install any. This stretch of the Esplanade is home to frequent fishing, biking, walking and outings with no place to go when nature calls. Perhaps the good people of East Harlem do not need bathrooms as do others along the Esplanade.

The East River Esplanade is a place for fresh air, and a vital part of the Manhattan Greenway. These bathrooms are needed to sustain every day and events with our community, as well as every day for groups with developmental disabilities, certain persons with medical challenges, and parents and guardians of children.

Max Barton
Southeast Queens, Homeowner
135-35 227th Street, Laurelton NY 11413

Committee on Parks & Recreation - Oversight
Improving the Maintenance of Park Bathrooms and Drinking Fountains
Monday, November 24th, 2025 – 1pm

To the Committee on Parks & Recreation, and Chair Shekar Krishnan, I would like to thank you for allowing me to share my views on this oversight discussion today at New York City Hall. I was here last on September 29th, 2025, during a Joint Contracts and Parks Committee Hearing and was listening to Council Member Erik Bottcher, who shared one example of what his District was dealing with, in respect to the cost of Capital Projects when it came to bathrooms. He brought up how much it cost to renovate a restroom in DeWitt Clinton Park, and he eventually produced the number \$6 Million.

I know there have been efforts to address these ballooning costs, and I realize that these efforts are still underway, but it should not be as hard to fix the problem of maintaining these structures. If you are going to build a \$6 million structure in a New York City Park, you should be prepared to maintain your investment so that it lasts as long as humanly possible. Squeeze every usable dollar out of the thing.

Without maintaining these structures, you might as well be building the restrooms for solely the purpose of flushing taxpayer's dollars down

the very same toilets you just built. Investment in additional New York City Parks staff would deliver immediate improvements. Let's use New York City tax dollars wisely. Let's create Jobs for New Yorkers; to maintain the investments we have already made for them. The more you maintain the less you have to reconstruct. Thank you.

- Max Barton

From: [Julio Mora](#)
To: [New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation](#); [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Webinar host invited you to be panelist for Committee Parks and Recreation
Date: Monday, November 24, 2025 12:28:45 PM

I would like to give a testimony regarding Kissena park in Qns. NY.

Kissena park seems to be left out of most up projects/upgrades and maintenance. About over 50% of the water fountains do not work since there is no water to feed them. We also have a playground that is being affected and children do not have water to cool off in the summer or even to drink. We have a bocce ball court that is also being affected since water is needed for maintenance. Our bocce ball court has never been upgraded either in decades and it is used daily by mostly seniors. Perhaps some of you may have seen a couple of reports by Elle McLogan from Ch2 news. We wouldn't mind also having toilets and lighting installed by the court as other parks do.

JCM



From: [New York City Council](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mon, Nov 24 2025 @ 1:00 PM - Committee on Parks and Recreation
Date: Saturday, November 22, 2025 7:13:05 PM
Attachments: [New-York-City-must-increase-NYC-Parks.docx](#)

[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Kanwaldeep Sekhon

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Mon, Nov 24 2025 @ 1:00 PM - Committee on Parks and Recreation
Subject of testimony: Restrooms, drinking waters & PEP officers
Organization: Self
Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

New York City must increase NYC Parks' funding to repair damaged restrooms and drinking fountains and hire additional staff to maintain facilities and extend open hours. Our parks have gone unfunded for far too long. NYC Parks maintains and operates over 1,100 public toilets and 3,400 drinking fountains, far more than any other city agency. These facilities are critical infrastructure for an accessible, equitable city, ensuring public health, safety, and dignity.

A 2024 City Council survey of 100 park restrooms found two-thirds were closed during scheduled hours or had serious sanitary or safety issues, nearly 25% lacked baby changing stations, and 30% lacked garbage cans. A 2025 survey by Council Member Brewer found broken, unusable, or inaccessible drinking fountains throughout Upper West Side parks. These unacceptable conditions are a direct result of long-term disinvestment and the lack of adequate staffing and resources to properly maintain the system. Investment in additional NYC Parks staff would deliver immediate improvements.

Local Laws 92 and 93 require the city to add 50 drinking fountains in parks and increase the number of public restrooms citywide to 2,120 within the next 10 years, underscoring the need for proactive measures to maintain existing/ planned facilities. The city **must** hire more Parks employees to help keep our shared facilities clean, healthy and fully functioning.

PEP Officers ensure safety and compliance with posted rules in parks, pools, beaches and rec centers. Due to understaffing, PEP are stretched thin year-round and especially during the busy summer season, making unmonitored park properties less safe and usable as a result. Intro 1425 would allow the city to accurately track PEP coverage, identifying staffing gaps by district and opportunities for more equitable resource allocation.

We were promised a 1% increase in Parks' funding by Mayor Adams, and he has never delivered on this promise. Now, mayor-elect Mamdani is promising the same thing. 1% does not go far enough to recoup all of the loss that the Parks' department has suffered in these last four years of cutback after cutback. We need to double the funding (2%) to make sure that all New Yorkers can benefit from having access to our green spaces, to our parks.

Thank you.

From: [New York City Council](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mon, Nov 24 2025 @ 1:00 PM - Committee on Parks and Recreation
Date: Friday, November 21, 2025 6:21:36 PM
Attachments: [As-a-longtime-resident-of-lower-Manhattan.docx](#)

[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Patricia M. Aakre

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Mon, Nov 24 2025 @ 1:00 PM - Committee on Parks and Recreation

Subject of testimony: Need for restrooms

Organization: Self

Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

As a longtime resident of lower Manhattan, I have observed the need for public restrooms in my neighborhood, especially in city parks. With the increase in laborers visiting the neighborhood as they deliver goods -- groceries, consumer products ordered through Amazon, restaurant supplies delivered to their customers-- there is a crying demand for those workers to have a place to relieve themselves. Not all of their trucks and certainly not their ebikes contain toilets. For a while, down the street from Finn Square, a small greenstreets park, a Starbucks allowed workers to come in and use their facilities. Until they didn't. Now they are closed. I have witnessed not only men using the cluster of juniper trees at the south end of the tiny Finn Square greenstreets park, as a urinal, but even women coming home and about to board the subway at Franklin Street. It is sad that our city does not provide something as basic as a toilet to those who need it throughout the city, not just in parks. But if parks are the only place that this is a given, it is imperative that the city continue to provide this very basic need.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/88

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ralph Rascini

Address: 125 Barclay St NY 10007

I represent: VP Local 983, DC37

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CORY HASSON

Address: _____

I represent: New York Restoration Project

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Merritt Brillbaum

Address: _____

I represent: Riverside Park Conservancy

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Asha Harris

Address: Assistant Commissioner for Urban

I represent: Park Service

Address: NYC Parks

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Focht

Address: Acting First Deputy Commissioner

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matt Drury

Address: Chief of Citywide Legislative

I represent: Affairs

Address: NYC Parks

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bonnie McGuire

Address: Director of Urban Park

I represent: Parks Rangers

Address: NYC Parks

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Butler

Address: Director of Parks Inspections

I represent: Program

Address: NYC Parks

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AFIA HENRIQUES

Address: 1280 CROTON LOOP 3RD FL BKLYN 11239

I represent: TASTE OF WASTE NYC/GRANYS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4426 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Ring

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn NY

I represent: Disabled in Action

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Ganser

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: New Yorkers for Parks

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4426 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anne Lee

Address: [REDACTED] New York, NY 10309

I represent: Tort Arcene Park Conservancy

Address: 855 Oxford St. Brooklyn NY 11217

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1425 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jim Burke

Address: Jackson Hts, NY 11372

I represent: 34 Ave Open Streets Coalition

Address: JACKSON Hts, NY 11372

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1425 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/24/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maria Kessler

Address: NYC 10028

I represent: EsplanadeFriends.org

Address: 60th St to 120th St. adjacent to FDR Dr.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms