



**June 23, 2025**

**New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
Oversight: Law Enforcement's Role in Keeping Parks Safe**

Testimony by: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, NYC Parks Commissioner

Good afternoon, Chair Salaam, members of the Public Safety Committee and other Council Members. I am Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Commissioner for the New York City Parks Department, and I'm joined here at the panel by Asha Harris, our Assistant Commissioner for Urban Park Service, Matt Drury, our Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs, and other key agency leaders. I'm proud to be making my formal debut as Commissioner before a Council committee, and to be joined by our colleagues at NYPD to discuss law enforcement's role in keeping our city parks safe.

NYC Parks takes its responsibility to protect the safety of our patrons, parks, and public facilities very seriously, so I would like to take this opportunity to briefly outline the ways in which we seek to enforce park rules and make sure our park visitors feel safe and comfortable, which is the primary purview of our agency's Parks Enforcement Patrol, also known as PEP.

The PEP unit's mission is to preserve and protect our parks and public spaces by enforcing agency rules and regulations, educating the public and responding to the needs of our patrons. PEP achieves its mission with the support of various teams that also fall under the umbrella of the Urban Park Service (UPS) division, including Central Communications staff, who are the internal link to first responders throughout the agency, providing support as a 24/7/365 call center utilized to report incidents, request help, dispatch employees, and respond to emergencies. Our Emergency Management team coordinates continuity planning and spearheads agency responses to larger incidents, and these operations are critical to ensuring that PEP officers are supported during their patrols and prepared for any situation, as is the support from division administrative staff, Academy instructors and others.

Our PEP division was created in 1981 as a companion to the agency's Urban Park Ranger program. PEP officers have NYC Special Patrolman and New York State Peace Officer status and are entrusted to enforce NYC Parks Rules & Regulations, in addition to the New York State Penal Law and NYC Health Code. Their enforcement efforts generally focus on quality-of-life offenses and deterring patrons from violating Parks rules through education, but they are empowered to issue summonses for violations on Parks' property, including those related to street trees, and have the authority to make arrests, when necessary. Though they do not carry firearms, officers are equipped with ballistic vests, batons, handcuffs, and pepper spray.

Our officers patrol city parks by bicycle, horseback, car, and on foot. Officers also provide security at many events held in parks, as well as rallies, protests, and concerts throughout the city. They also maintain order, manage pedestrian traffic flow, and conduct security checks at Citywide events, such as the St. Patrick's Day, Puerto Rican Day, and Thanksgiving Day parades.

Our corps of PEP officers is mostly organized into Borough Commands, each led by a Captain and a number of Sergeants. Our deployment approaches are dynamic and vary seasonally, depending on our enforcement needs and staffing levels, but PEP Officers have traditionally provided coverage at our parks during hours when they are busiest, ranging from the early morning through the late evening, either through daily fixed-post patrols or frequent mobile patrols. Additional patrol priorities are developed in conjunction with Borough Commissioners and their Chiefs of Operations, reflecting issues and concerns raised by community members, elected officials, partner agencies, service requests received through 311, and quality of life conditions documented through our Parks Inspection Program, such as canine waste, graffiti, and vandalism.



To help provide a uniformed presence and assist our PEP officers, we also deploy Park Security Service (PSS) staff, largely City Seasonal Aides (CSAs) who are hired to provide extra security at parks, beaches and pools during the busy season and at our recreation centers citywide; as well as participants in our agency's work development initiative, the Parks Opportunity Program (POP), to receive on-the-job training experience that helps prepare them for future employment. These staff members are uniformed and serve an important role on the ground, advising the public about swimming rules and assisting with crowd control at park events, though they are not empowered to write summonses or make arrests.

Our agency also fields a corps of Urban Park Rangers, who, like their Parks Enforcement Patrol counterparts, are designated as Special Patrolmen and New York State Peace Officers and trained at the UPS Academy. Rangers definitely serve a valuable enforcement presence, performing patrol and responding to animal conditions, especially in our natural areas, though they are primarily focused on education through a huge variety of environmental and outdoor recreation programs, enjoyed by New Yorkers across the city, as part of our Public Programs' Education & Wildlife unit.

In addition to this roster of City-funded PEP Officers, Rangers and security staff patrolling parks all over the city, we also deploy an additional number of PEP officers and security staff made possible with private funding, to serve a dedicated enforcement presence at busy park locations including Washington Square Park and the High Line.

The agency's enforcement staff play a substantial role in the City's response to emergencies. In recent years, PEP officers have been recognized for heroic life-saving efforts ranging from pulling an accident victim from a burning vehicle, stopping someone from jumping into the frigid waters of the East River, and administering naloxone, a medication designed to reverse opioid overdoses. During weather emergencies such as wildfires, PEP Officers, PSS staff and Rangers are called upon to help direct patrons to places of safety, report downed trees and other damage, in addition to supporting NYPD as needed. They also assist the NYC Department of Homeless Services in engaging with the city's homeless population in parks, especially during Code Red and Code Blue emergencies. As part of the Mayor's Homelessness Task Force, our PEP officers conduct patrols aimed at finding and aiding people experiencing homelessness and assist DHS and NYPD with the relocation of clients and their belongings from parks.

NYC Parks and NYPD have always had a strong partnership, and our local park managers and Borough Commissioners are in constant communication with NYPD local leadership, but as the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and other Administration leaders have made it a clear priority, our city's enforcement officers are coordinating more closely than ever before, to strengthen and streamline enforcement efforts. Alongside NYPD and other agencies, PEP Officers have participated in 82 "Community Link" details addressing quality-of-life concerns in parks since its launch in 2023. During these details, various quality-of-life conditions have been addressed, including unlawful vending, pedicab violations, homelessness, illegal drug activities and abandoned RVs. Since the pilot program launched in October 2024, Parks has also been a proud agency participant in "Every Block Counts," a data-driven multi-agency initiative that focuses on city blocks that have historically experienced high levels of shooting incidents, crime, and quality-of-life issues. Chosen blocks have been provided with intensive support and resources in an effort to reduce crime and restore lasting safety and livability, with multiple agencies working together to create a safer, cleaner, more livable environment for residents based on each block's immediate needs. "Stronger Parks/Safer Communities" is our endeavor to enhance the recreational assets and green spaces in communities with the highest rates of gun violence, upgrading and activating parks and community centers with positive use and uniting people to strengthen and improve community safety. Above and beyond these interagency efforts, through which we are pleased to work closely with NYPD and our other agency partners, NYC Parks believes that caring for our parks every day and keeping them active and enjoyable spaces makes them more welcoming and safer, whether it's the thousands of programs that take place each year in our parks, recreation



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NYC Parks

centers and nature centers, the day-to-day maintenance performed by our incredible staff, or the longer-term park renovations and reconstruction projects led by our Capital division.

In closing, without the diligent work of our PEP officers, Rangers and the incredible support of NYPD and other partners, the park experience would be greatly diminished. Every day, we work to ensure park rules and regulations are being upheld and that a helping hand can be provided to patrons in need. I am extremely proud of the work of our staff and thank them for their continued service to the City of New York.

Thank you for allowing us to testify before you today and for all of your continued advocacy for our city parks. We will now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



**Testimony of the Central Park Conservancy  
New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Salaam and members of the New York City Council.

My name is David Saltonstall, and I am Vice President for Government Relations and Policy at the Central Park Conservancy. I am joined by Shatic Mitchell, our director of Civic Engagement. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about safety in City parks and the work we're doing – together with our City partners – to make Central Park safer and more welcoming for all.

About a year ago, after a spate of concerning incidents in the Park, the Conservancy joined with the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety's office to try and develop some strategies for addressing crime and quality-of-life challenges in the Park.

We began with one simple premise, reinforced often by then-Deputy Mayor Chauncey Parker, which is that no single entity can create safety in Central Park, or any park. Success depends on collaboration. That's why we're proud to be a key component in what Mayor Adams has since dubbed the "Central Park Conservancy Partnership."

This partnership includes more than a dozen city agencies, working hand-in-hand to address not just crime and long-standing quality-of-life concerns, but also services for those in need, whether it's a bed in a Safe Haven shelter or urgent psychiatric care.

The approach is not complicated: once or twice a week, representatives from each agency and the Conservancy hop on a Zoom call and review a punch-list of items, which can range anywhere from a broken streetlight that needs fixing, to an individual in crisis, to a tree branch that is blocking an NYPD camera and needs pruning.

Strategies are developed in real time, tasks are assigned to specific agency leads, and timelines are established. And progress toward each task is revisited the following week.

It's working: Year to date, crime in the Central Park Precinct is down by 50 percent, including a stunning 90 percent drop in robberies. At the same time, through regular



surveys by the Department of Homeless Surveys along the 110<sup>th</sup> Street corridor alone, we have connected some 48 people to shelter.

Of course, every park is different. The challenges in Central Park are different than the ones in Marcus Garvey Park, or in Flushing Meadows, just like the topography is different. But we believe the beauty of the approach taken in Central Park is that it is scalable and could be tailored to other parks.

What is required is a willingness to work together, a commitment to develop strategies that are sustained, and crucially - a convener like the Deputy Mayor's office that has the authority and the capacity to drive agency cooperation.

It is also vital the next City budget restore some \$79 million in cuts to the Parks Department to help strengthen agency staffing - including some 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers, who play an absolutely vital role in Central Park.

There is always more work to be done, but we believe that this multi-agency approach, combined with the restoration of Parks Department cuts, could offer a new path forward for improving safety in parks and we would be happy to answer any questions that members may have.

Thank you.

## **TESTIMONY FROM FRIENDS OF DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PLAZA**

**Sherrill Kazan, President/Anne Hersh, Director of Development/**

**Kim Baker & Bob Stinson, Advocacy Chairs**

**Oversight - Law Enforcement's Role in Keeping City Parks Safe.**

***City Council Chambers – Monday June 23, 2025***

We continually hear from our community and UN visitors that Dag Hammar skjold Plaza does not feel safe. While NYPD police focus on violent crime, enforcement of park rules and regulations is sadly lacking. We urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce and programs, including funding for Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP). These uniformed officers, authorized to issue summons and make arrests, are necessary to ensure safety and quality of life to the local and tourist population served by NYC parks and playgrounds.

Despite the high-density population of the UN/Turtle Bay neighborhood, we never see a PEP officer in parks serving our area. Continual budget cuts and woefully inadequate funding of the NYC park system (DPR) has made PEP officers an endangered species!

**PEP Officers ensure fair and consistent enforcement of park rules, enhancing quality of life and public trust and preventing an environment of disorder.**

The concentration of shelters in the midtown east area enables shelter occupants to frequent local parks where they can freely engage in rowdy, obscene and illicit behavior. Project Renewal's expansion of the nearby Providence Women's Shelter for substance abuse and mental illness will open a street-side drug intake center and additional housing for both male and female adults. Meanwhile, the Vanderbilt YMCA's hotel facility, one block west of Dag Plaza, was converted to a homeless shelter during the pandemic and continues in this capacity. While treatment facilities are clearly needed, the general public and tax payers' safety and quality of life are at stake.

Park volunteers encounter discarded syringes, liquor bottles, human feces, graffiti. Offenders are hostile and pose a threat to the general public. Homeless encampments are on the rise despite calls to 311. **Public health and hygiene requires clean, safe open space.**

**PEP officers are critical to solving this looming crisis.**

At this writing, Hammar skjold Plaza is undergoing a \$4 million capital renovation which includes a newly designed ADA compliant patio and benches inside the park's Katharine Hepburn Garden. Unfortunately, we believe the amenity will encourage illegal activities due to 0 visibility from the Plaza where NYPD patrol the park block of East 47th Street in vehicles.

Our nonprofit 501c3 has transformed the Plaza and its garden into a midtown oasis, but **we have grave concerns about the future. As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, it must also invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving.**

*Friends of Dag Hammar skjold Plaza is a tax-exempt nonprofit 501c3 organization. Office: 224 E. 47 St. Rm. 304, NYC 10017. Email: [fdhp@hammarskjoldplaza.org](mailto:fdhp@hammarskjoldplaza.org) ~ website: [dagplaza.org](http://dagplaza.org)*



## Testimony for June 23rd City Council's Committee on Public Safety

Kathleen Corrigan/Friends of Tompkins Square Park/East Village/Manhattan

Good morning, I am a volunteer with Friends of Tompkins Square Park. We are a proud member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, advocating for full restoration of NYC Parks in the FY26 budget.

In particular, we advocate for full funding of our Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers.

Our PEP officers play a vital role in Tompkins Square Park especially now with our newly reopened public bathrooms. Our NYC Parks staff keep the bathrooms clean and they often require the assistance of our PEP officers to keep the traffic in & out of the bathrooms moving and ensure safe bathrooms for everyone.

PEP officers in the park are a welcome presence who can offer first aid, respond in a thoughtful manner to undomiciled people sleeping in the park and quickly assess problems without activating the NYPD & FDNY. Our neighbors prefer that PEP officers take an active role with addressing day to day issues as it allows our NYC Parks staff to manage and maintain our landscape.

PEP officers should be on duty in the park especially when our Parks staff are away from the park cleaning other parks in the district.

Max Barton, Laborers Local 1010 NYC

6-23-25 Public Safety Hearing, City Council

Written Testimony Supporting Public Safety in Parks

Thank you, Honorable Members of the City Council Committee on Public Safety, for taking the time to read my written testimony on the issues of our Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers. My name is Max Barton and I am a Union Representative for around 2,500 Construction Craft Laborers who perform Heavy Highway Infrastructure work in New York City. Laborers Local 1010 is a proud coalition partner with New Yorkers for Parks and will stand alongside them in issues like this that improve the communities in which our members both live in and raise their families.

“Play Fair” is what New Yorkers for Parks Champion while simply stating that Parks should receive, at minimum, 1% of the New York City Budget. With, at minimum, 1% of the New York City Budget the Parks Department would have a fair chance to maintain and beautify our New York City Parks. Instead, New York Parks has lost nearly 800 workers in the last three years, ensuring that New York City Parks being maintained and monitored would continually be in jeopardy.

I stand with the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks’ workforce and programs, including funding for 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers. PEP Officers are a visible, uniformed 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.

This is both a priority for New York City and an easy fix. Bring back the jobs lost, so that New York City Residents can go back to work to provide for their families while keeping other New York Residents safe. Vital Parks for All was an important first step into bringing New York City into a modern era of better Parks, now let’s invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving.



June 23, 2025

NYC City Council  
Committee on Public Safety

RE: Public Safety in Parks

Dear NYC City Council Committee on Public Safety,

On behalf of Marine Park Alliance, I am submitting this written testimony to show our strong support for Parks Enforcement Patrol staffing. As we all know, PEP Officers are not NYPD—they are uniformed Parks staff who play a vital role in keeping our parks safe, particularly through de-escalation and community engagement. This is as true here in Marine Park as it is across the five boroughs.

The best way to keep parks safe is by staffing them with NYC Parks workers (including PEP Officers) and ensuring that parks are in a good state of repair, maintained, and monitored. Unfortunately, NYC Parks has lost nearly 800 workers in the last three years, reducing the agency's ability to do this important work.

We stand with the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce and programs, including funding for 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers. PEP Officers are a visible, uniformed 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.

PEP Officers are unionized, career civil servants. Expanding this workforce means more stable, middle-class jobs for New Yorkers, a stronger, more accountable city workforce, and a safer parks system. PEP Officers ensure fair and consistent enforcement of park rules, enhancing quality of life and public trust and preventing an environment of disorder. As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, it must also invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving.

Thank you and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Middleton". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Scott Middleton  
Executive Director





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## New York Restoration Project

### Testimony before Committee on Public Safety

06/23/2025

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety, for convening this hearing. My name is Cory Hasson, and I am the Government Affairs Manager of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). NYRP is a member of Parks and Open Space Partners and the Play Fair Coalition. I am testifying today to advocate for the Mayor and City Council to allocate \$79.7 million in the FY 26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce and programs, including funding 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers.

Beyond responding to the concerns of park users, PEP officers can provide lifesaving first aid and support at-risk individuals in need of social services. More PEP officers will help keep our parks clean and safe, bringing in more park users, making these spaces a more reliable resource for New Yorkers. These spaces at full capacity are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, providing spaces for social interaction.

PEP Officers are unionized, career civil servants. Expanding this workforce means more stable, middle-class jobs for New Yorkers, a stronger, more accountable city workforce, and a safer parks system. All New Yorkers, regardless of where they live, deserve to feel safe in their open spaces. As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, it must also invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving.

Thank you.

## **City Council Testimony for PEP support - June 23, 2025**

**Melissa Julien**

**NYC Plover Project**

My name is Mel Julien representing the NYC Plover Project. The NYC Plover Project, a Rockaway-based nonprofit with the mission to protect endangered piping plovers and other shorebirds that nest on NYC's beaches through volunteerism, community engagement and educational outreach. One of our key locations is the Rockaway Beach Endangered Species Nesting Area, located along the Arverne/Edgemere shoreline of the NYC Parks managed Rockaway Beach. It's home to at least 5 species of federally and state protected endangered wildlife. It's a biodiversity hotspot, unlike any other along the East Coast. And it's currently protected by the hardworking team at PEP.

PEP Officers ensure that both beachgoers and wildlife remain safe in this special location. They do this by making sure that beachgoers understand and adhere to beach rules and model what environmental conservation can be.

But PEP needs more support from the Mayor and City Council to do this job. I stand with the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce and programs, including funding for 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers. As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, it must also invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving. The safety and well-being of NYC's human and wildlife residents is at risk without this funding. Thank you!

**Written Testimony of Morgan Monaco**  
**President, Prospect Park Alliance**  
**New York City Council Committee on Public Safety**  
**Oversight Hearing: Law Enforcement's Role in Keeping City Parks Safe**  
**June 23, 2025**

Chair Salaam and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the important topic of public safety in New York City's parks. As President of the Prospect Park Alliance, the nonprofit organization that partners with the City to care for Brooklyn's Backyard, I am proud to speak to the essential role that Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers play in keeping our parks welcoming, safe and accessible for all New Yorkers.

The best way to support safety in our parks is by investing in the infrastructure, personnel and programs that foster welcoming and highly visited public spaces. That means ensuring parks are in a good state of repair, well-maintained and staffed by trained NYC Parks employees, including PEP Officers. Over the last three years, NYC Parks has lost nearly 800 staff positions. This has severely impacted the agency's capacity to steward parks across the five boroughs, including Prospect Park, which serves over 10 million visitors annually. As parks continue to grow in popularity and importance to our city's health and well being, so too must the investments needed to keep them safe and functional.

PEP Officers are a vital component of this investment. They are uniformed NYC Parks staff who are specifically trained to address safety concerns within the unique environment of parks. Their work includes providing first aid, performing crowd control, supporting at-risk individuals through connections to social services, and enforcing park rules with the authority to issue summonses and, when necessary, make arrests. Their presence helps ensure parks remain spaces of joy, community, and respite and serve a unique role that is separate and apart from the NYPD.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in unpermitted uses of the park, which have created safety and maintenance challenges, particularly as the number of PEP Officers remains at an all-time low. This decline has had a real impact, not only on the experience of our visitors, but also on the confidence and safety of our frontline park workers. Staff regularly encounter complex and sometimes unsafe conditions, including a rise in encampments, public disorder, and drug paraphernalia. Many visitors and employees express concern when navigating situations involving individuals in crisis, particularly near high-use areas like restrooms, playgrounds, and maintenance zones. In these moments, the presence of trained PEP Officers, who are uniquely positioned to respond with a balance of enforcement and connection to social services, is essential. Without this consistent, appropriate presence to connect people experiencing crises in the park to social services, staff feel more

vulnerable and less supported in their ability to safely fulfill their responsibilities. This erosion of safety impacts daily operations, morale, and the long-term strength of our parks workforce.

As a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, I urge the City to allocate \$79.7 million in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce. This includes funding for 60 PEP Officers, who are essential to a safe and thriving parks system. With continued investment in PEP and the broader NYC Parks workforce, we can create a safer, more sustainable future for the parks that so many New Yorkers rely on every day.

Thank you for your attention and leadership.

**Testimony of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA)**  
**to the**  
**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Public Safety**  
**Oversight - Law Enforcement's Role in Keeping City Parks Safe**  
**June 23, 2025**

Thank you, members of the Public Safety Committee, for holding this important hearing. My name is Deborah Maher, and I serve as President of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA), the nonprofit steward of Randall's Island Park—a vital 330-acre green space bridging East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens.

Randall's Island Park offers open space, recreation, and health benefits to thousands of New Yorkers. But like all urban parks, it also faces real public safety challenges. Recently, a woman commuting home was attacked at the park—a tragic reminder that parks can become isolated and vulnerable areas without proper security.

RIPA has the following recommendations on how to increase public safety for New Yorkers in parks based on our experience at Randall's Island:

**1. Strengthen Collaboration Between NYPD and NYC Parks.** We urge the creation of a joint task force that meets regularly to address the unique safety needs of open green spaces. A proactive, not reactive, approach will allow law enforcement to better understand the rhythms, uses, and vulnerabilities of large parks like Randall's Island.

**2. Invest in Park Surveillance Cameras.** The NYPD relies on surveillance tools to deter and investigate crime across our city, yet Randall's Island has no NYPD cameras. This is true of many other parks. With over 30,000 acres of parkland citywide, this lack of infrastructure is widespread and unacceptable. We would like to thank the administration for its working with RIPA to fund cameras at Randall's Island in the future and we urge both the City Council and the Administration to fund cameras in additional strategic locations, particularly at park perimeters and transit points, at all New York City Parks.

**3. Fully Fund PEP Officers and Supplement with Dedicated NYPD Patrols in Large Parks.** NYC Parks has lost nearly 800 workers in the last three years, reducing the agency's ability to have staff on the ground in parks. PEP Officers are a visible, uniformed 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. As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, it must also invest in the personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving. Additionally, dedicated NYPD patrol officers—on foot and on bike, not just in vehicles—build community trust, increase visibility, and deter crime. NYPD patrols should be a fixture in large parks like ours. Without them, these treasured public spaces risk becoming underutilized, especially by the very communities that need them most.

**4. Invest in and Update Existing Park Infrastructure with Lighting, Maintained Roadways and Proper Staffing.** Keeping spaces well lit and properly maintained is an essential component to public safety. We encourage the City to fully fund the Parks budget to ensure that long term investment is made in New Yorkers green space.

New Yorkers rely on parks for physical and mental health, for joy, and for connection. But without adequate security, these benefits are out of reach.

We thank you for your leadership and urge your continued commitment to investing in public safety—for our parks, and for the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.





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The Sutton Place Parks Conservancy ("SPPC") urges the Mayor and the City Council to fully restore \$79.7M to the budget of the Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR") for FY26. Of special concern to SPPC is the full funding of DPR's Parks Enforcement Patrol ("PEP") officers. PEP officers are a critical element of public safety in our parks...they are visible, uniformed, trained and well-equipped to address a range of public safety concerns. Their mere presence contributes to our collective sense of public safety.

There are six small parks/open spaces within our neighborhood from 58th to 53rd Street, east of Sutton Place. They are geographically separated and are difficult to patrol at the same time. One cannot simply walk or ride from one end to the other; a return to the street grid is required to get from one to the next.

Our community now also hosts the southern entrance to the East Midtown Greenway. While most of us are thrilled with the addition of this well-designed open space, the Greenway makes additional demands on our public safety resources.

SPPC has worked diligently to build relationships with both DPR and our local precinct. We are thankful for their efforts. However, there is always more to be done. SPPC has consistently supported the 1% For Parks campaign led by New Yorkers for Parks. This statement in support of the restoration of FY26 funding builds on that prior support. DPR has lost 800 workers over the last three years. It is time to reverse that trend. For the good of everyone in our City, PLEASE restore DPR's funding.

Sincerely,

*Maureen Leness*

Maureen Leness  
President

To Members of the NYC Council Committee on Public Safety:

My name is Hope Cohen, and I serve as COO of The Battery Conservancy, the non-profit partner of NYC Parks in designing, maintaining, and activating The Battery, New York's "birthplace park" at the southern tip of Manhattan. (This historically important site is sometimes erroneously referred to as "Battery Park.")

The Battery is the neighborhood park for residents and businesses of much of Lower Manhattan, including the Financial District. It is one of the city's major multi-modal transportation hubs. Thanks to its role as the place from which to take the ferry to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island National Monuments, it is also a major destination for visitors to New York from all over the world.

The Battery hosts more visitors per square foot of land than any other park in the city. That density of visitorship attracts dozens of vendors who compete unfairly with vendors who hold permits from—and therefore pay fees to—the City. Throughout the, people unlawfully sell souvenirs, fruit, bottled water, and more. But by far our worst problem is those hawking tour services.

These vendors aggressively confront pedestrians and cyclists, pressuring them to purchase overpriced tickets that do not actually allow them access to the Statue or Ellis Island. In many cases, these victims of fraud are loaded onto shuttle buses to Midtown—or even New Jersey—to board boats that travel around New York Harbor without landing on Liberty Island. Only Statue City Cruises, the official concessionaire of the National Park Service, may land on the National Monument islands.

The hawkers block entrances to The Battery, demanding entry fees to a New York City public park and fares for the free Staten Island Ferry.

But the hawkers don't just perpetrate fraud. They threaten and harass park visitors, legitimate concessionaires, and even park employees. They fight among themselves, sometimes with dangerous weapons. Several years ago, an innocent bystander was hit by crossfire between two hawkers.

The result is that tourists get a very bad impression of New York, and neighbors cannot enjoy their local park.

NYC Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) does what it can—and has dedicated a much-valued force of four to deal with The Battery's challenges. But they cover only one shift and are far outnumbered by bad actors. NYPD works with PEP and other agencies to perform periodic "sweeps" of the park, but that barely scrapes the surface. We need full-time NYPD presence in the park—foot patrols 8am-8pm every day with multiple pairs patrolling during the busiest hours of high season. Statue Cruises daily e-mails to an extensive list of stakeholders a census of illegal ticket hawkers. There are regularly at

least 40, and this time of year, they often number more than 70. Simply put, the situation is out of control. Please help by allocating the funds necessary to protect those who live in New York and those from around the world who visit it.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Committee on Public Safety  
Oversight Hearing on Law Enforcement's Role in Keeping City Parks Safe  
June 23, 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 Salaam and members of the Committee on Public Safety for the opportunity to comment.

The best way to keep parks safe is by staffing them with NYC Parks workers and ensuring they are in a good state of repair, maintained, and monitored. NYC Parks has lost nearly 800 workers in the last three years, reducing the agency's ability to do this important work.

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. **For FY26, NYLCV is advocating that the Adams Administration and City Council allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget to restore and strengthen NYC Parks' workforce and programs, including funding for 60 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers.**

As we know, PEP Officers are not NYPD—they are uniformed Parks staff who play a vital role in keeping our parks safe, particularly through de-escalation and community engagement. These 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.

PEP Officers are unionized, career civil servants. Expanding this workforce means more stable, middle-class jobs for New Yorkers, a stronger, more accountable city workforce, and a safer parks system. Moreover, PEP Officers ensure fair and consistent enforcement of park rules, enhancing quality of life and public trust and preventing an environment of disorder.

As the city invests in new and expanded parks and parks programs, especially as the climate crisis ramps up, it must also invest in the parks personnel who keep these spaces safe, usable, and thriving. That's why we urge the Adams Administration and City Council allocate \$79.7M in the FY26 budget, including funding for 60 PEP Officers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**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: Matthew Basse

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYPD

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: Det. Chief Thomas Alps

Address: Park

I represent: NYPD

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: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DET. Timothy Wilson

Address: NYPD/NYC PHU

I represent: NYPD/NYC PHU

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shatic Mitchell

Address: 711 5th Avenue

I represent: Central Park Conservancy

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/23/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Donald Chapman

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Treasurer, 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: 6/23/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ralph Baselice

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Vice President, Local 983, DC37

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: June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rella Stuart Hunt Wharmfeld

Address: 18 Warren Street

I represent: FCHP

Address: City Hall Park

**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: Michelle Siegel

Address: [REDACTED] St. Brooklyn

I represent: myself

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: David Saltan Stall

Address: 717 5<sup>th</sup> Ave NY NY

I represent: Central 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: Melissa Julie

Address: [REDACTED] Far Rockaway

I represent: NYC Planer Road Project

Address: Rockaway Beach

**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: 6/23/2028

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nadira Paltman

Address: [REDACTED] St

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

12

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/22/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Nelson

Address: 830 Fifth Ave NY, NY

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: 830 Fifth Ave



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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matt Drury

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

I represent: Parks

Address: 830 Fifth Ave NYC

**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: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ASHA Harris

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

I represent: Parks

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

**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: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner Rodriguez - Rosa

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

I represent: Parks

Address: 830 Fifth Ave, NYC

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: [REDACTED] 606-010 Ave [REDACTED]

I represent: Self

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: 6/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Saltonstall

Address: 717 5th Avenue

I represent: Central Park Conservancy

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: June 23, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Baner

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New Yorkers for Parks

Address: 111 John St Ste 1160

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