



City of New York Parks & Recreation



**New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation**

Oversight – Status of MillionTreesNYC

November 12, 2008

**Testimony by
Liam Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner
Fiona Watt, Assistant Commissioner for Forestry and Horticulture**

On October 9, 2007, Mayor Bloomberg and New York Restoration Project (NYRP) founder Bette Midler launched Million Trees NYC (MTNYC) at the corner of 165th Street and Teller Avenue in the Bronx. MTNYC has a deceptively simple goal: plant 1 million new trees on public and private property throughout the City over a ten year period. That alone is a major undertaking, but MTNYC is much more.

As a core element of Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC, MTNYC is part of a determined effort to make New York a cleaner, greener and more sustainable City, befitting its place as a dynamic and progressive world capital. It is an environmental initiative that seeks to train and educate New Yorkers about the value and importance of trees and nature to the urban environment. MTNYC is in the vanguard of the budding "green jobs" movement, providing opportunities for individuals and businesses to benefit economically from the drive towards sustainability. And MTNYC is a public/private partnership, led by Parks and NYRP, with an advisory board composed of more than 60 corporations, community-based organizations, professional associations, public agencies, non-profits, and New York's great public gardens. Some of these organizational members include East Brooklyn Churches, the New York City Housing Authority, NY Cares, Con Edison, Trees New York, and the Horticulture Society, to name just a few. As Mayor Bloomberg said at the anniversary event last month, MillionTreesNYC is the centerpiece of PlaNYC and we are proud to be at the forefront of the effort to make New York City cleaner, greener and healthier for all New Yorkers.

BENEFITS OF TREES.

Trees are the workhorses of the environment, contributing to cleaner air and water, cooling the atmosphere, reducing energy use and carbon production and providing homes for wildlife. They also define the character of a community, connect people to nature and add tangible value to property. And while we have long known intuitively that trees are valuable, the emerging research in the field of urban forestry has allowed us to put a dollar value on the contributions that trees make to our city. The U.S. Forest Service, using a sophisticated computer program called Stratum, analyzed the City's street tree population and calculated that each year the 592,130 trees that line our streets provide almost \$122 million in environmental benefits and

additional property value. In air quality alone, street trees remove 272 tons of particulate matter each year valued at \$5.3 million.

In addition to the environmental benefits, trees are increasingly recognized for their contributions to human health and well being. The link between trees, clean air and respiratory ailments is at the heart of our TPH program, of which you will hear more later. A recent study in The Lancet, a United Kingdom medical journal, found the small parks can protect people from strokes and heart disease by simply cutting stress and promoting exercise. The presence of green spaces encourages people to be more active, helped reduce blood pressure and stress levels and even promoted faster healing after surgery. Similarly, a study of Japanese seniors found that access to trees and green spaces contributed to healthier lifestyles and longevity. Other studies have documented speedier recoveries for hospital patients with access to greenery and an enhancement of health benefits when exercise is combined with nature.

MILLION TREES NYC

MillionTreesNYC will touch every corner of the City. The Parks Department is responsible for approximately 60 percent of the million trees, which will be planted on streets, in parks or other publicly owned open space. The City has committed almost \$400 million over the next ten years to accomplish that goal. The balance of the million trees will be planted by homeowners, commercial property owners, non-profit institutions and on non-park public property, including schools and NYCHA developments. NYRP, in partnership with The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public-private partnerships that benefit City programs, are leading the effort to raise private funds to support different components of the project. NYRP has pledged to plant 100,000 of the remaining 400,000 trees, while coordinating efforts to plant and register the 300,000 trees needed to meet the million trees goal.

To celebrate the first anniversary of MTNYC, on October 29, 2008, the Mayor and Bette Midler planted tree number 111,111 on 117th Street and Pleasant Avenue in East Harlem, putting us about 17 percent ahead of the pace needed to reach a million trees by 2017. Our first year goal was to plant 93,397 trees, which we were able to exceed by planting 109,006 trees. Seventy-two percent of the trees were planted by Parks, 14 percent were on private and institutional properties planted by NYRP and partners in the private sector, and 14 percent by other public agencies. We are now at 113,997 trees planted, with more going into the ground every day.

Just last Friday and Saturday, over 1,000 volunteers rolled up their sleeves at parks in all five boroughs and planted over 15,000 trees. This was the third large-scale volunteer event held by MTNYC in a little more than a year. Events like this underscore the importance of the Stewardship and Outreach subcommittee of the MTNYC Advisory Board. This committee is co-lead by Parks, NYRP and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and it includes some of the most effective citizen-based environmental organizations in New York City, such as Trees New York, and Partnerships for Parks. Its goal is to develop and implement stewardship training and programs for New York City. To reach the goal, the subcommittee has developed a MTNYC Ambassador Kit to inspire New York City residents citywide to "adopt" and care for trees. Most recently, it hosted a stewardship roundtable in September which brought together peer organizations with networks of New Yorkers committed to preserve our urban forest. The

participants analyzed ways in which MTNYC can expand the scope of existing stewardship programs and develop a cohesive MTNYC Stewardship Corp, which will be rolled out in 2009. Public awareness and education is also critical to the success of MTNYC. We recognize that instilling an appreciation for trees and nature in children will ensure that we have active tree stewards for generations to come. Our Education and Programs subcommittee, comprised of leaders in environmental education, is developing citywide youth education programs. Working with partner organizations such as Children for Children, Council on the Environment of New York City, and the City Parks Foundation, the Education and Programs subcommittee will work to integrate MillionTreesNYC programming into existing environmental education curricula at public, private and parochial schools.

Critical to the work of the subcommittees and the success of the initiative as a whole is our website, www.milliontreesnyc.org, which keeps all of us connected and up-to-date with this fast moving and growing movement. To date, more than 2,500 people have registered on-line with MTNYC. If you want to request a tree, report a tree planting, sign up for a volunteer event, or learn more about MillionTreesNYC, simply log on and get involved.

GREEN JOB CREATION

MillionTreesNYC has also been a small but steady incubator of green jobs. At Parks, we have hired 81 new staff for MTNYC-related jobs like climber and pruners, foresters, analysts, construct project manager, landscape architects and gardeners. And if you add in the number of jobs added to assist with our tree planting and block pruning programs, PlaNYC and MTNYC have created many new jobs for New Yorkers. We have also started a MillionTreesNYC training program that will bring more New Yorkers into the fold of 'green collar jobs' for the 21st century. Supported by the The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, the Center for Economic Opportunity and the Altman Foundation, 32 trainees began a nine month intensive program in the tree care, natural area restoration and landscape design. The participants are young men and women between the ages of 18 and 24, who are eager to explore career opportunities in what we expect will become a vibrant "green" economy.

TREE PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

With a budget of \$32 million annually, Parks is planting thousands more street trees a year through block planting in focus neighborhoods, while continuing to plant in every community board in response to individual requests for new street trees. In the first year of the MillionTreesNYC campaign, we received 17,378 requests for new trees, and have planted 21,441 new street trees -- the highest number for one year on record- 5,000 of which were in our Trees for Public Health neighborhoods. Our strategy is to plant a tree in every possible space in order to reach full stocking of street trees by 2017. To achieve this we will continue the transformational block-by-block greening, as well as responding to individual requests and automatically replacing dead trees with new trees. It's easier than ever before to request a tree. In fact, it's as easy as 311.

In order to maintain a growing tree population, Mayor Bloomberg has increased our tree maintenance budget to \$5.6 million in Fiscal Year 2008. This will allow us to prune more trees

each year and reduce the block pruning cycle from 10 years to seven years. In Fiscal Year 2007, for example, we pruned 35,000 street trees through this program, and with the additional \$2.85 million for block pruning in Fiscal Year 2008 we were able to prune 81,000 trees. We also hired more than 30 new Climbers and Pruners to continue to remove dead trees within 30 days of request and to respond to storm emergencies when the inevitable weather events occur. Since we remove stumps at the time of planting, we will dramatically reduce the backlog of tree stumps that require removal in just a few years. Finally, our enormously popular program to repair sidewalks disturbed by tree growth has fixed 4,303 sites to date, with a new round of contracts in preparation now to begin next spring

Our borough forestry teams have increased capacity to more swiftly respond to tree issues and emergencies as they arise. These enhancements and increased funding are allowing us to help these trees mature and be healthy with minimal impact on existing or future infrastructure so that New York's development will be in harmony with its sustainability. And, we are thankful for the assistance that district offices of Council Members all across the City give us in identifying areas that need to be addressed when it comes to planting, pruning, stump removal, and sidewalk repair.

TREES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Our "Trees for Public Health" (TPH) program addresses the connection between the outdoor environment and human health. The goal of the program is to increase tree canopy cover in neighborhoods with fewer than average trees and higher than average public health burdens. Positive outcomes will include improved air quality, community empowerment and neighborhood beautification. The program works with community residents to develop a vision of a greener, healthier neighborhood.

In 2005, Parks selected a neighborhood in each borough as initial targets for TPH. Neighborhoods were chosen based on two variables: street tree stocking level, and asthma hospitalization rates for children under the age of 14. Areas with fewer than average street trees and higher than average asthma rates were given priority. Asthma was selected as a health indicator because it is a significant health concern throughout New York City, and because poor air quality worsens asthma symptoms.

The resulting TPH management plans relied heavily on feedback of community residents in developing a vision for their neighborhood and proposed strategies for realizing that vision. MillionTreesNYC has allowed us to begin full implementation of the plans in the TPH neighborhoods: Hunts Point and Morrisania, in the Bronx, East New York in Brooklyn, East Harlem in Manhattan, Far Rockaway in Queens, and Stapleton in Staten Island. Including this fall we will have planted 5,000 trees in these neighborhoods under this program.

STREET TREE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

In early 2008, the Council worked with City Planning and Parks to amend the zoning text to require street tree planting as part of new construction and significant renovations. The new

requirements insure that trees do not get left out of new building projects, and in cases where there is no space to plant new trees, the required trees must be planted off-site.

When the Council approved this amendment, your efforts enhanced and improved our street tree planting capacity by an estimated 2,250 trees a year – which adds an additional 22,500 trees by the end of our 10 year timeline. This ensures that every community in New York City will enjoy the environmental benefit from MillionTreesNYC. We thank you for your endorsement of this zoning text change this year, and know you'll continue to be an active partner with us in this effort.

REFORESTATION

We will not plant one million trees in New York City with right-of-way greening alone. The reforestation initiative is the other core component of Parks' MillionTreesNYC program. With the goal of creating 2,000 new acres of forest on City parkland and other public open space, reforestation will transform degraded landscapes by clearing out invasive plants, remediating the soil, and planting tree saplings. This first year, we planted 45,141 trees as part of our reforestation effort.

These activities mimic natural forest succession, where many trees sprout in woodland openings, gradually thinning out as they grow larger and compete with each other for the available space. Growing close together, the new trees quickly fill the woodland opening and the process repeats itself elsewhere in the forest. In urban areas this natural progression of new forest growth needs human intervention to first remedy degraded soils, re-introduce native trees in areas that have been isolated from natural seed dispersal, and then keep invasive plants from overwhelming the new plantings until they are large enough to establish. Reforestation also includes planting larger caliper trees in landscaped areas of parks. In many cases, parks were designed to have trees in the landscape, but over the years as the trees have died there has not been funding to replant them. In order to increase tree canopy, and restore our parkland citywide, it is critical that we are able to plant these areas where canopy has been lost over the years when there was not a program for planting trees in parks.

Over the last year, Parks has engaged with environmental and forestry consultants, scientists and restoration practitioners from institutions and other agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service, to establish our approach to reforestation. This technical review and assessment of existing models has led to the development of a site selection, preparation, and planting strategy that builds on Parks' 20 years of experience in natural areas management and restoration. Parks' Natural Resources Group has been working with outside organizations and agencies to conduct an analysis of public open space across the city to determine the optimal locations for reforestation. This analysis has included evaluating natural areas as well as active and passive recreation space using remote sensing data as well as numerous interviews with land managers who maintain and manage park uses. This analysis of public lands, has focused on reviewing our inventory of City parkland, but has also included reaching out to other city agencies, as well as state and federal land managers. Through this analysis, Parks has identified 2,328 acres with potential for reforestation. Ideal reforestation sites within Parks are undeveloped areas overrun by invasive weeds and vines and unused lawn areas that will expand on existing forested areas.

Public outreach and stewardship efforts are also well underway and have already brought out 3,000 citizen volunteers, to help plant trees and nurture new woodlands at various sites across all five boroughs, some of which, like Prall's Island on Staten Island, the public has never been able to visit. Over the last three seasons, volunteers have planted more than 45,000 trees, and starting this year we plan to plant over 35,000 trees through new reforestation contracts. Last spring we began contractor planting along Conduit Blvd in Brooklyn. This fall contractors are planting over 15,000 trees at sites that include Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, Little Bay Park, Alley Pond Park, and John Golden Park in Queens, and Willowbrook Park on Staten Island.

TREE PROCUREMENT

Essential to the success of MillionTreesNYC is the effort to obtain quality trees comprising a wide diversity of species. In order to achieve these important goals, we are contracting directly with nurseries to produce the quantity, type, and quality of trees that we need over the next nine years of the campaign. These tree procurement contracts are the first of their kind in New York City, and far surpass in scope and scale any other similar efforts anywhere else. With three contracts already awarded and four more in the bid cycle for street trees as we speak, we are building a comprehensive program to provide New York City with over 200,000 trees by 2017. By specifying over 70 different species, and tracking their progress from small seedlings to larger trees ready to transplant to the streets of our city, we are ensuring a steady stream of high quality plant material to get our plantings off to the best start possible. This fall we have received the first of our procured trees, and will be planting over 2,000 in neighborhoods in all five boroughs, with 11,895 tree plantings planned for spring of 2009 for a total of 23,289 for Fiscal Year 2009. In addition, procurement contracts have also been developed for reforestation, which will be going out to bid in the next two months. By contracting directly with nurseries, Parks will build capacity with regional nurseries to provide native plants of local genotype for natural forest restoration plantings. These contracts will obtain 408,000 sapling trees for New York City by 2017.

After our trees are planted, they are tended for the first two years by our planting contractors, who water them over the summer months and replace those that do not survive. This 2-year guarantee period for new trees exceeds the one-year timeframe that is standard in the trade.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION AND TREE PLANTING SUBCOMMITTEES

The "Research & Evaluation" and "Tree Planting" subcommittees of the Million Trees Advisory Board focus on the scientific and technical aspects of the Million Trees initiative. The research and evaluation committee supports and promotes urban forestry research and data collection to advance MTNYC goals and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. Co-lead by Parks, NYRP and the U.S. Forest Service, has developed STEW-MAP, software which helps identify stewardship organizations throughout the five boroughs, and is completing a case study on the survivability rate of young street tree, the first of its kind. Recently, the committee also forged a collaboration with the University of Vermont, to develop criteria for selecting new target neighborhoods, and is in the process of establishing collaborations with other research and

academic institutions, such as Cornell University, Columbia University and community based organizations.

The tree planting subcommittee is co-chaired by representatives from the New York Botanical Garden, Parks and NYRP. The group is providing technical guidance on a number of challenging aspects of MTNYC including the development of recommended species lists, tree stock quality and availability, as well as proper planting standards and site selection.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about this incredible and transformative program. MillionTreesNYC will continue to uplift New Yorkers by beautifying our streets and green spaces with trees, clean the air we breathe, and enhance the value of our homes by creating those coveted 'tree lined streets.'

We look forward to a continued partnership with the City Council as we expand the urban tree canopy in your districts. The energy and effort invested by Parks, NYRP and all of our partners into the MillionTreesNYC program is great, but the benefits to New Yorkers are priceless and will leave a legacy to our children's children of a greener, cleaner and brighter New York.

TESTIMONY OF

DREW BECHER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

Before

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008

Good morning, Chairman Foster and members of the Committee. My name is Drew Becher, and I am the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP), the City's non-profit partner in the MillionTreesNYC initiative. Many major cities across America have launched urban tree planting campaigns like our own—Chicago, Denver, Houston, and Los Angeles, to name a few. But New York City's MillionTreesNYC stands apart from the rest in one important way: its public-private governance. For us, dividing the initiative's work between a public agency and a non-profit was necessary, reflecting our shared understanding of the need for deeper investment—not just in the urban forest, but also in the social fabric of this city, in the community ties whose power can degrade or enhance our efforts.

This morning I will discuss the key benefits of the City's partnership with NYRP and the value that structure brings to MillionTreesNYC. With just one year of the campaign behind us, NYRP has achieved key successes in the areas of fundraising, tree planting, outreach, education, and stewardship. Across these and other categories, you will hear how NYRP lends functionality and visibility to MillionTreesNYC and the environmental and social principles it champions.

NYRP's fundraising is the resource intake through which we are able to roll up our sleeves and fulfill our primary goal of planting trees. While the Parks Department plants in parklands and along public right-of-ways, NYRP pursues tree-planting opportunity across a host of other publicly accessible properties. During the first year of the initiative, NYRP has planted 7,007 trees across the five boroughs of New York City. We have focused the majority of this direct planting effort on New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments located in designated "Trees for Public Health" (TPH) neighborhoods, totaling over 5,000 trees across 31 NYCHA developments in all five boroughs. Building on this effort, NYRP is launching a new planting partnership this fall with the New York City Department of Education (DOE), and is in the process of partner negotiations with other public entities, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ), and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). These public agencies and authorities will be critical allies in the MillionTreesNYC initiative because their landholdings open a considerable universe of large-scale, organized planting opportunity across the city.

While NYRP works to cultivate partnerships with public agencies and authorities, we also know that these planting opportunities have their limits, and that it will be equally

important to find planting locations elsewhere. Alongside our work with public institutions, NYRP is seeking planting opportunities at a range of other publicly accessible properties, including hospital and health care institutions, college and university campuses, public cemeteries, cultural institutions, and libraries.

Finally, because NYRP is a small non-profit with limited operational resources to plant trees, we are introducing two grant programs that will support organizations that can plant trees under the MillionTreesNYC banner. The first program—the MillionTreesNYC Community Grant Program—is supported through the Home Depot Foundation and provides citywide organizations up to \$20,000 to launch tree planting, stewardship, or education projects related to MillionTreesNYC. For groups with neighborhood and borough-wide reach, the Community Grant Program provides small grants up to \$5,000 for local tree planting projects. The second program, funded through the Bloomberg-Rockefeller gift, will provide free trees to New York City organizations with proven tree planting capacity, and will launch in Spring 2009.

Anytime NYRP and its planting partners consider new planting locations, the question of equity—the problem of how to decide where trees are needed most—is an important one. When MillionTreesNYC launched last fall, the Parks Department and NYRP used two indicators to decide on target planting neighborhoods; the first indicator was the rate of neighborhood childhood asthma hospitalization and the second was neighborhood street tree stocking level. After combining these indicators, the six New York City neighborhoods ranking last in these measures were labeled “Trees for Public Health” (TPH) neighborhoods, and both Parks and NYRP agreed that they should receive the lion’s share of MillionTreesNYC planting resources.

As the initiative moves closer to saturating the TPH neighborhoods with trees, Parks and NYRP are moving quickly to decide on a second set of priority factors for tree planting. While we do not yet know what these factors will be, we do know that a responsible equity equation must weigh ‘suitability indicators’ (such as neighborhood land use, soil characterization, and the presence of local stewards) against more traditional ‘desirability indicators’ (such as neighborhood health, economic, and environmental benefit needs). The University of Vermont is assisting us in this important exercise, using an advanced MillionTreesNYC Spatial Analysis Course to lend applied geographic modeling techniques to the search for new target planting areas.

Tree stewardship is notoriously underfunded and underprovided in urban areas, in part because its positive impacts are not easy to quantify. Understanding that the majority of MillionTreesNYC funding is reserved for tree planting, NYRP does everything within its power to ensure that newly planted trees also have dedicated stewards and receive the ongoing care required for their long-term survival. For all tree recipients, NYRP develops Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Agreement (LOAs), defining the terms of the tree planting project(s). Each of these jointly signed contracts includes stewardship requirements that are tailored to match the resources of the tree recipient. By making stewardship a front-end rather than a back-end concern, and by carefully defining both people and processes to meet stewardship needs, we have a

stewardship framework already in place by the time trees are planted at any given location.

While this is an important step toward a robust tree stewardship model, we know that it is not sufficient to meet the stewardship needs of all New York City trees. Understanding that, NYRP and Parks are developing a 'MillionTreesNYC Stewardship Corps' program that will allow regular New Yorkers young and old to receive stewardship training and tools, and to 'Adopt-a-Tree' (or tracts of trees) through a program website. Through this program, we hope to enhance tree stewardship consciousness and activity, and also seed broad-based citizen involvement in MillionTreesNYC.

Any campaign that sets out to transform New York City stands little chance of success without enlisting the help of a broad-based group of supporters including citizens, community groups, corporations, and government. This understanding lies at the core of the MillionTreesNYC community outreach strategy, and it has been our guiding principle from day one. Early in the development phase of MillionTreesNYC, NYRP and Parks convened a MillionTreesNYC Advisory Committee, including a cross-section of stakeholders with an interest in urban greening, forestry, and sustainability. Today, that group has 214 members representing 78 organizations. As a collective, the Advisory Committee developed a strategic plan, outlining major initiative goals in the categories of tree planting, education, stewardship and outreach, research and evaluation, and marketing and public relations. This living document still stands as the blueprint for MillionTreesNYC program development, and the fact that it is created and modified by the stakeholder community yields incredible investment and good will for MillionTreesNYC. Routine meetings of the Advisory Committee also ensure an adaptive management strategy where stale or ineffective program goals are discussed and revised.

The second hub of MillionTreesNYC community outreach is volunteerism. Since NYRP was founded in 1995, volunteerism has been the backbone of its operational power in greening New York City. That institutional knowledge has been central to our community engagement successes in corporate and community volunteer planting and stewardship events. To date, NYRP has hosted 13 volunteer planting events, totaling over 26,740 hours of volunteer man-hours for MillionTreesNYC. Not only do these volunteer activities relieve the operational burden of large-scale tree planting, but they also help to educate citizens and build long-term grassroots involvement in the initiative.

Grantmaking and community incentive programs are the third hub of MillionTreesNYC community outreach. The grant opportunities I have already discussed will allow us to considerably expand the planting and programming power of MillionTreesNYC. In addition to grants, we host tree giveaway events every fall and spring planting season in an effort to engage New York City homeowners in the MillionTreesNYC effort. After just two giveaway seasons, 2,250 trees have been distributed for residential planting across the five boroughs. As MillionTreesNYC progresses, NYRP is exploring new models for engaging New York City residents in tree planting, including developing a tree coupon incentive program for New York metropolitan area nurseries.

As NYRP and Parks work to expand our urban forest, we know that a key factor in deciding the long-term success of MillionTreesNYC is youth education. Effectively teaching children about the importance of trees in delivering social, environmental, and health benefits is a powerful and direct way to ensure that the trees we plant today will be cared for and protected in the future. In an effort to build this consciousness within our City's public school system, NYRP is launching a tree planting and education campaign this fall, targeting public schools within the city's six TPH neighborhoods.

NYRP has developed two complementary education programs, designed to engage the students of any school that will receive trees by teaching children about the importance of the urban forest. The first program, Talkin' Trees, is a student body assembly program that will be offered at all planting schools. The assembly will describe the MillionTreesNYC effort; the TPH planting strategy and why their school was selected; tree stewardship needs both on campus and off campus; and how students and families can get involved in MillionTreesNYC.

The second education program, RespecTree, is an intensive 7-month curriculum led by NYRP environmental educators that will teach students about the important ecosystem services and health and social benefits that trees provide in an urban environment. The program allows students to be part of their schoolyard greening design, and culminates in a planting day at the end of the school year. The RespecTree program will be piloted in 10-15 5th grade classrooms this year.

Since MillionTreesNYC launched in October 2007, over \$15 million in private dollars have been pledged to the cause. With a projected ten-year budget of \$35 million, the importance of this early fundraising success cannot be overemphasized. Working hand-in-hand with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York, NYRP has played a critical role in this process, seeking and securing gifts from major philanthropic donors (like Bloomberg Philanthropies and David Rockefeller); establishing multi-year corporate sponsorship commitments from Toyota and The Home Depot Foundation; developing other tailored sponsorship opportunities with organizations like BNP Paribas, CIT, JetBlue, Wachovia, The Altman Foundation, and The CEO; and providing an individual giving conduit for private donations.

Across all of the program areas I have just this morning—including fundraising, tree planting, outreach, education, and stewardship—NYRP's leadership has proven vital to the success and growth of MillionTreesNYC during the initiative's first year. The City has arguably never entered into so intimate a public-private partnership before, and I believe that today we can all reflect on the wisdom of that choice for this complex and ambitious program. Through the great combined efforts of Parks and NYRP, MillionTreesNYC is poised for continued success in building a greener, greater New York City. Thank you.

Testimony of Susan Goberman, Executive Director, Trees New York
Parks Committee of New York City Council
250 Broadway, 14th Floor
November 12, 2008

Good morning, I am Susan Goberman, Executive Director of Trees New York.

In the mid-1970s, the New York City Street Tree Consortium was established as a volunteer response to the city's cutbacks in tree-related community services. The founding individuals represented over 20 public and private groups including the botanical gardens, the Council on the Environment, the Association for a Better New York, the Citizens Committee and the NYC Planning Commission. In 1992, we changed our name to Trees New York in an effort to publically convey our mission in its entirety - to plant, preserve and protect New York City's urban forest through education, active citizen participation and advocacy.

For many years, Trees New York was the only city organization dedicated exclusively to urban forestry. In recent years, growing concern for the environment has inspired many governmental and community-based environmental initiatives. We now have the opportunity to partner with groups that share our vision and provide guidance for new organizations.

Our comprehensive stewardship program, the Citizen Pruner Tree Care Course, was one of the first urban forestry programs in the country. Trees New York has trained over 11,000 New York City residents to care for and maintain urban trees. The success of our Citizen Pruner Tree Care Course has reached beyond our city's borders, serving as a model for other volunteer tree care training programs in cities across the nation. Our Young Citizen Pruner Course also serves as a model for youth environmental literacy programs across the United States.

Our Arborist Job Training program, established over 11 years ago, was one of the first green jobs training programs in the country. The intensive 7-week tree climbing course is designed to provide participants with work-readiness skills while learning professional tree climbing techniques. Our program has a high job placement rate - with graduates working with the city, in the private sector and as small business owners. We have partnered with many groups including the Sustainable South Bronx BEST program and the Park's Department Green Apple Corps. In 2008, the NYC Parks & Recreation Parks Opportunity Program recognized Trees New York as their "Best New Partnership".

Since 2005 we have planted almost 2,000 trees on NYC Housing Authority properties for NYSERDA, 78 trees for the Related Companies at the Bronx Gateway Project, 400 trees on private property to replace trees lost to the Asian Longhorned Beetle funded by the USDA Forest Service, 20 trees on NYC school property under our Schools & Trees Program funded by ConEdison and 50 trees in Trees for Public Health neighborhoods under our Healthy Communities Program.

Trees New York also works to educate citizens about the dangers of invasive species. We host an Asian Longhorned Beetle Hotline for the USDA Forest Service. From April to November, during the growing season, we receive an average of 400 calls a month - a testament to how important a healthy urban forest is to the citizens of NYC.

For 35 years, Trees New York has worked to advocate for New York City's urban forest. In April 2007, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced the sustainability PlaNYC 2030. Trees New York is a member of the *Million Tree NYC* Advisory Committee and we actively participate in all of *Million Trees NYC* tree planting and stewardship activities, educational programs and community outreach. We are very pleased to be part of the MillionTreesNYC effort.

Thank you.

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**Testimony by Rohit T. Aggarwala
Director, Mayor’s Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability**

Good morning Chair Foster and members of the Parks committee. I am Rit Aggarwala, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability. On behalf of Mayor Bloomberg, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Million Trees..

Over a year and a half ago, Mayor Bloomberg presented a long-term plan for a greener, greater New York. PlaNYC laid out 127 initiatives designed to address the challenges of a city whose population will grow by one million people by 2030. Today we are here to talk about the progress of the Million Trees initiative—which to date has resulted in the planting of over 113,000 new trees. These trees have sprung up across the five boroughs—in City parks, along once-barren streets, and on public and private land of all types. The City is proud to report that we are well on track to complete the initiative by 2017.

In many ways, Million Trees is the quintessential PlaNYC initiative. The program touches on almost every major PlaNYC objective—from improving property values, to cleaning our air and water, to reducing energy consumption, to shrinking the City’s carbon footprint. And the City Council has recognized the program’s importance as well. Last April the Council passed a zoning resolution mandating street trees for all new

development. This law will result in an estimated 22,500 new trees by 2017, helping to us to deliver a myriad of environmental benefits to New Yorkers.

By planting trees on streets and parking lots across the City, Million Trees is helping to reduce storm water runoff, which strains the capacity of the City's water treatment system and causes direct sewage discharges into our rivers and streams. Parks and DEP are also piloting a new tree pit design, which, if successful, may increase the storm water retention capacity of future street trees.

Million Trees is also helping to curb energy consumption, a key part of the City's strategy to reduce our dependence on coal and oil. The expanded canopy provided by new trees shades buildings from the sun in summer, reducing the need for air conditioning during peak load times. Trees also help to block buildings from cold winds during the winter, lowering heating demand.

Million trees is likely to have its greatest impact on the City's air quality. The 113,977 new trees that have been planted are absorbing pollutants—including nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and carbon monoxide—and intercepting airborne particulate matter like soot from diesel exhaust. Along with City's other air quality initiatives, Million Trees is helping to decrease the impact of air pollution on the public's health.

The shade that these new trees provide in summer is also helping to clean our air. By cooling asphalt surfaces like parking lots and streets, trees slow the formation of ground level ozone.

And not least of all, Million Trees is helping to improve the livability of New York City—by making streets, parks, and public spaces more inviting, more attractive, and more green. Million Trees works hand-in-glove with GreenStreets, the regional parks initiative, and the Schoolyards to Playground initiative to make more of our City attractive and available for public use.

We know that the economy benefits as well—not only from the cost savings in energy consumption and health care and the green collar jobs created by the program, but also from the fact that property values increase when street trees are planted.

We all know these are tough fiscal times, and PlaNYC initiatives have borne their fair share of budget impacts. Million Trees, however, is so cost effective and valuable that we remain committed to fully funding it and meeting our commitment of completing the program by 2017.

Thank you.



November 12, 2008

CITY COUNCIL

Chair Helen Diane Foster, Parks committee
250 Broadway, 14th Floor
Re: MillionTreesNYC Annual Update 2008

Testimony Submitted by Erika S. Svendsen, Research Social Scientist and Lindsay K. Campbell,
Research Urban Planner of the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Research Station, NYC Urban Field Station

Forest Service research scientists are active partners in cities across the country and the Northern Region of the United States – from Boston, to New York, to Chicago, to Baltimore. In New York City, the Forest Service works in direct partnership with New York City Department of Parks and Recreation through a (2006) Memorandum of Understanding, which led to the establishment of a New York City Urban Field Station. As such we are currently working with the department and key city-wide partners such as The New York Restoration Project to respond to a variety of MillionTreesNYC and PlaNYC – related research requests. For example, a team of Forest Service scientists recently provided input to the Mayor's Office of Long-term Sustainability on potential sustainability indicators for monitoring PlaNYC 2030 and the long-term health of the city.

Since the launch of the MillionTreesNYC initiative last year, Forest Service scientists and its research partners have been focused and actively engaged through the MillionTreesNYC Advisory Board, and co-chair (along with representatives from Parks and NYRP), the Research and Evaluation Subcommittee. The goals of this committee are to support an open network of researchers and practitioners to expand urban forestry research and data; to advise in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative; and to ensure that findings are shared widely and developed into program applications. Our committee is comprised of some of the leading academics and local government and non-profit researchers in our city. To date, our group has already established an on-line research bibliography on urban forestry, identified core research goals and objectives, prepared datasets for public use, and conducted research. We've raised resources for research projects and interns and expect to support a city-wide research symposium in 2009. We have also established long-term relationships with faculty specializing in GIS, urban design and ecology to incorporate MillionTreesNYC into their on-going lesson plans and student work. This includes partnerships with the New School, the University of Vermont, CUNY and Cornell University.

Specific research that may be of interest to your committee is as follows:

- *In order to track the changes made by planting trees*, the study of New York City's Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) conducted for PlaNYC 2030 will continue to be monitored by the Forest Service and the Department of Parks and Recreation's Central Forestry and Horticulture Division and the Natural Resources Groups to look at long-term change in canopy cover across various property jurisdictions.
- *In an effort to establish tree planting priorities* that incorporate issues such as environmental justice, public health and stewardship, the Department of Parks and Recreation and the New York Restoration Project have partnered with the Forest Service and the University of Vermont's advanced spatial analysis lab to develop a model that can help direct the selection of multiple tree planting benefits.
- *In order to harness the capacity of New York City residents to care for trees*, the STEW-MAP project will continue to assess the capacity, mission, networks and local areas of activity of citizen stewards and environmental stewardship groups. Information from over 680 groups has already been made available on-line through maps and reports back to our non-profit and agency

partners. This data has already been used for community volunteer outreach in target neighborhoods.

- *In an attempt to decrease street tree mortality*, a young street tree mortality study has been completed on a sample of over 10,000 trees located in neighborhoods throughout the city.
- *In order to evaluate the impact of outdoor urban experiences on ecological literacy*, the Forest Service conducted a structured evaluation of the Bronx Youth Urban Forestry Empowerment Program, which examined the impact of a paid summer urban forestry internship on youth environmental awareness, attitudes, and stewardship behaviors. Findings from this federally-funded field project can be used to inform the structure and implementation of future youth “green collar” job programs related to Million Trees.
- *In an effort to calculate both the contribution of existing trees to our overall carbon footprint as well as what reductions can be expected through the MillionTreesNYC Initiative*, a CarbonPlus Calculator is being developed for New York City by the Forest Service and NYC Parks Forestry in consultation with the Mayor’s Office of Long-term Sustainability and Planning.
- *To better understand the contribution of street tree canopies on capturing storm water*, Parks used STRATUM, a Forest Service model, to calculate the amount of annual rainfall intercepted by street tree canopies, reducing the amount of stormwater entering the City’s combined sewer system. The results showed that proposed street tree plantings that are part of Million Trees could intercept an additional 110 million gallons of rainfall per year, and are part of the City’s Sustainable Stormwater Management Plan.

Research projects currently being explored include measuring the relationship between real estate values and urban trees, factoring in the role of trees to the Department of Public Health’s community air survey, monitoring hydrologic and water quality impacts of urban forests, focusing in on the role of urban canopy and well-being, evaluating the potential to link ‘green jobs’ with neighborhood economic models, and understanding the role of urban design in increasing ecosystem services.

In the future we hope that this initiative as well as the research that it has inspired will continue to receive the full support of the local decision-makers and policy makers. It is important to note that not only does the Million Trees campaign support the quality of life for New Yorkers, but it also serves as an unprecedented research and educational opportunity. Scientists and policymakers have much to learn from research, monitoring, and evaluation associated with this unique “urban experiment.”

At the same time, what is happening here in New York City’s innovative and ground-breaking and as such it is extremely important to share this program with a nation-wide and international network of cities. This is an historic moment in New York City’s environmental and social history. PlaNYC 2030 and MillionTreesNYC have led us into a new era in park, open space and urban forestry development making New York City a world class leader in environmental innovation and management. We commend New York City for its contribution to this field and look forward to working in collaboration toward a greener urban future.

Sincerely,

Erika S. Svendsen

Lindsay K. Campbell

Research Social Scientist
U.S. Forest Service

Research Urban Planner
U.S. Forest Service



**City Council Parks & Recreation Committee
Oversight Hearing: Million Trees NYC Initiative
November 12, 2008**

My name is Sheelah Feinberg and I am the Director of Government & External Relations at New Yorkers for Parks. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

New Yorkers for Parks is the only independent watchdog for all the city's parks, beaches and playgrounds. For nearly 100 years, we have worked to ensure greener, safer, cleaner parks for all New Yorkers.

As a member of the Initiative's advisory board, New Yorkers for Parks continues to support Million Trees NYC, a critical component of the Mayor's PlaNYC campaign to make the City more environmentally sustainable. With a goal of attaining a 30% urban tree canopy by 2030, this program recognizes the important role of trees in improving air quality, public health and the overall quality of life in New York City. Tree leaves filter pollution and help to reduce the city's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, studies have shown that tree plantings are an effective mitigation strategy in combating the urban heat island effect¹. Their ability to cool the air will help to reduce residents' reliance on air conditioning and ultimately lessen energy demand.

We commend the Mayor for his commitment to this initiative and, with more than 100,000 trees planted in the first year of the project, and we congratulate the administration on its early progress.



The wide-ranging benefits of a million new trees can only be ensured through adequate maintenance funding. Given the challenges posed by the current economic crisis and the fact that the Mayor has already begun budget cuts, it is essential that maintenance funding for forestry remain a strong commitment of the City Council. Staff to prune, weed and water the trees is critical to their long-term survival.

Understanding the environmental, health and economic benefits of a vibrant urban forest, New Yorkers for Parks renews its support of the Million Trees NYC Initiative.

Thank you.

ⁱ *Mitigating New York City's Heat Island with Urban Forestry, Living Roofs, and Light Surfaces.* New York City Regional Heat Island Initiative. Rosenzweig, Solecki, Parshall, Gaffin, Lynn, Goldberg, Cox and Hodges. Columbia University and Hunter College, New York, NY, 2005.

FOR THE RECORD

TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN IN FRONT OF THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 12, 2008
10am

Hearing Topic: Oversight Hearing – Status of MillionTreesNYC

Thank you Chairperson Foster for the opportunity to include testimony regarding MillionTreesNYC.

The New York Botanical Garden is an institution founded on, and dedicated to, preserving and protecting the environment. From its beginnings over 100 years ago, The Garden has placed the environment at the center of its mission—as steward of 250-acre National Historic Landmark landscape in the Bronx and as an agent for conservation around the world. Now that we have entered the new century and the new millennium, the Garden is expanding that commitment to the environment in many ways. One significant contribution is our efforts to further Mayor Bloomberg's MillionTreesNYC initiative.

Trees add to the urban landscape and environment in innumerable ways. They filter air pollution, cool temperatures in the summer, block wind, and therefore reduce heating costs, in the winter, absorb and filter stormwater, and increase property values. Adding a million trees to the City's predominantly urban environment will make a real quality of life difference to those who live in our neighborhoods, and therefore The New York Botanical Garden is proud to support this effort.

The Garden contributes to the MillionTreesNYC program in two ways. First, we provide technical assistance and support to the work of the Parks Department and PlaNYC. Second, we have already exceeded our commitment to plant 1500 new trees over the next three years.

The Four Bronx Institutions Alliance, a partnership between the Garden and Fordham University, Montefiore Medical Center, and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS/Bronx Zoo), was established to improve the communities these institutions share with our neighbors in the Bronx. Our joint purpose is to beautify, improve, and enhance the special identity of our surrounding neighborhoods; specifically we pursue projects that improve and enhance the gateway and major corridors and parkland in the area. FBIA partners have invested significant time and resources in these efforts.

Beginning in May 2008, FBIA sponsored a street tree planting plan, known as the Bronx Tree District Plan, to assist the MillionTreesNYC program. This Plan emerged from a series of urban design concepts and street and traffic improvement projects led by FBIA's urban design consultants, Cooper Robertson & Partners. The District is generally defined by Gun Hill Road to the north, Bronx Park South to its south, Bronx River Parkway to its east, and Webster Avenue and Mosholu Parkway to its west.

The Plan, prepared by HM White Site Architects (HMW/SA), landscape architectural consultants to Cooper Robertson & Partners, with cooperation and input from New York Botanical Garden's horticulture and forestry specialists, identifies gaps within the existing street tree inventory and the potential for future plantings associated with proposed street and traffic infrastructure projects. Planting plans for the chosen primary district streets have been distributed to New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) for review, field verification and confirmation of commercially available specified species, and modifications are being made as necessary based on these reviews.

So far over 6,697 trees have been sited for planting in the district: 2,912 for street trees and 3,785 within surrounding parkland and our institutional grounds. Parks has adopted the 2,912 proposed street trees as a way of meeting the Mayor's goal over the next several years. Of these, 648 can be planted now by DPR, as they will not conflict with street improvement plans. These 648 street trees have been broken down into three sequential planting seasons: 162 trees will be planted this fall, while 339 and 147 are proposed to be planted in subsequent planting seasons.

In addition, to assisting the DPR in their efforts, the Garden has undertaken its own program of planting trees in its living collections and natural areas and, through the work of Bronx Green-Up, in community gardens and green spaces throughout the Bronx.

The planting and care of trees has always been central to the Garden's mission as a museum of plants. An estimated 30,000 trees, from centuries-old native oaks in the Native Forest to rare and unusual conifers in the Arthur and Janet Ross Conifer Arboretum, define the character of the Garden's landscape. These trees are more than just an unparalleled scientific, educational, and aesthetic resource: they provide invaluable ecosystem services for all New Yorkers.

Over the past two years, the number of trees planted in the Garden has grown significantly thanks in part to the inspiration and support of MillionTreesNYC. In Fiscal Year 2008, Garden horticulturists and volunteers planted 696 new trees. Fiscal Year 2009 has been even busier, with 1313 trees planted to date. Most of these trees have been planted as part of the ongoing efforts to restore the 50-acre old-growth Native Forest in the heart of the Garden. The planting of trees will ensure that the Garden will be able to successfully pursue its mission as a museum of plants for generations to come.

Bronx Green-Up, one of the most important community outreach programs of The New York Botanical Garden, helps Bronx residents transform vacant, abandoned lots into vibrant green spaces. By overseeing the design, offering hands-on workshops on composting and other gardening techniques, and by making planting materials available to community members, Bronx Green-Up provides inner-city neighborhoods with enclaves of natural beauty, fresh produce and flowers, and a source of community pride. These gardens not only provide oases where people of all ages and of many cultures build

new relationships and work together to improve their communities, they are also partners in the MillionTreesNYC initiative.

Through the efforts of Bronx Green-Up, a total of 280 trees and shrubs were distributed to 29 Bronx Community gardens in Fiscal Year 2008. To date in Fiscal Year 2009, a total of 101 trees and shrubs have been distributed to 13 Bronx Community gardens. Bronx Green-Up also organized a variety of educational programs for community gardeners that will benefit both community gardens in the Bronx and contribute to the success of MillionTreesNYC over the long run:

- Annual Pruning Certificate Course (fall 08, 09)
- Fruit Tree Planting workshops (spring 08)
- Street Tree Care workshop with Partnership for Parks (summer 08)
- Tree planting workdays (spring and fall 2008)
- Pruning workdays (fall 2008)

Funding support for Bronx Green-Up has been made possible through a partnership with the Department of Sanitation's (DSNY) Composting program. However, it is not anticipated that DSNY will be funding its Composting program in the next fiscal year and it is expected that this will required cut backs in the Bronx Green-Up programming.

In closing, the New York Botanical Garden would like to thank the committee, and Chairperson Helen Foster, for the opportunity to present our work in support of the MillionTreesNYC program as part of our commitment to a greener, healthier and sustainable City.



November 12, 2008

**Testimony on MillionTreesNYC for the New York City Council Parks Committee,
Chaired by Councilmember Helen Foster / 250 Broadway, 14th floor**

Good morning Chair Foster and members of the Parks Committee. I am Robin Simmen, Director of GreenBridge, the community environmental horticulture program of Brooklyn Botanic Garden. On behalf of Scot Medbury, President of Brooklyn Botanic Garden, we would like to thank you and the leadership of Commissioner Adrian Benepe for the opportunity to discuss MillionTreesNYC.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden has long been an advocate of planting trees in NYC and of educating people about their many benefits and proper care. Working with Trees New York and the Parks Department, we've taught hundreds of people how to become Certified Citizen Tree Pruners. We also continually offer free workshops on Street Tree Bed Gardening that focus on correct watering techniques and not raising the level of the soil in the tree bed. We prefer this term to tree pits because gardening in 'beds' encourages New Yorkers to take a more caring attitude toward our trees.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden has been a strong supporter of MillionTreesNYC since its inception and has for several years advised the Parks Department and New York Restoration Project (NYRP) to develop a citywide stewardship program for ensuring the long-term survival of the trees planted by MillionTreesNYC. Currently I'm a co-chair of the MillionTreesNYC Community Outreach and Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee, which includes representatives from Trees New York, USDA Forest Service, Partnership for Parks, NYCHA, and the Arbor Day Project, among others. We recently completed a strategic plan for helping Parks and NYRP develop a citywide MillionTreesNYC stewardship program, with the goal of empowering NYC residents to adopt and care for NYC trees.

Judging the Greenest Block in Brooklyn Contest for 14 years, Brooklyn Botanic Garden knows how important trees are for community health, both physical and psychological. Last year, in addition to awards for the Best Residential and Best Commercial Blocks, we initiated a new award for Best Street Tree Beds. Over the years, we've seen blocks and neighborhoods completely transformed by people planting and caring for street trees. For example, visit Macon Street in Bedford Stuyvesant, where jewel-like gardens surround trees on blocks once naked and baking in the summer sun. Street trees bring people out of their individual yards and into a collective effort to care for something that improves everyone's lives. Every neighborhood deserves a chance to breathe clean air, listen to the birds sing, and enjoy the shade on a hot summer day. On behalf of Brooklyn Botanic Garden, we applaud the launch of MillionTreesNYC and this historic opportunity to make New York City a greener, healthier place to live.



PSUSTAINABLE SOUTH BRONX

November 12, 2008

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
re: Status of the New York City Million Trees Initiative

Rob Crauderueff

Policy Director

Thank you Council Member Foster and to the City Council Committee of Parks and Recreation for the opportunity to speak today with respect to the status of the New York City Million Trees Initiative. Sustainable South Bronx is an environmental justice organization working in the South Bronx that promotes innovative, economically sustainable projects that are informed by community needs. As an organization that has had a key role in the design, instruction and maintenance of the South Bronx Greenway, the planting of hundreds of trees in Hunts Point, and runs a job training program that has trained over 100 New Yorkers in ecological restoration and landscaping, we are supportive of the planting of one million trees in New York City.

The Million Trees Initiative is an opportunity for the City to capture the potential environmental services of trees, ranging from improved air quality, public health, property values, and stormwater management. In fact, much of the justification for the creation of the Million Trees Initiative has been based on studies that indicate that street trees can more than pay for themselves: According to the NYC

Department of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service, for every \$1 invested in the installation and maintenance of a tree, there is a return of \$5.60. However, it is important to recognize that the environmental services (and therefore economic benefits) of trees are significantly greater for larger and healthier trees than younger trees and trees that are not healthy. For example, the NYC DPR and the U.S. Forest Service also note that, "A large, healthy tree removes almost 70 times more air pollution each year than a small, newly planted tree"¹. Without proper maintenance, trees will not survive as frequently in the New York City environment.

For this reason, it is critical that the City continue to invest significantly in maintenance. We are supportive of the fact that the City has increased its frequency of pruning trees from 10 years to 7 years, which will improve survival rates and therefore the environmental and economic benefits of trees. It also is critical that the City create comprehensive plans for the maintenance of trees in all neighborhoods of the City. The creation of Stu-Map by the U.S. Forest Service is an excellent starting point by mapping out community-based stewardship opportunities based on existing organizations. We also encourage the City to realistically assess the maintenance needs of trees in communities throughout the city to ensure that the trees will be well maintained in both the short and the long run. Along the same lines, equity should continue to impact the policies of Million Trees Initiative by ensuring strong maintenance programs in Environmental Justice communities, as it did by prioritizing Environmental Justice communities for the planting trees of trees in its "in Trees for Public Health" program.

Importantly, planting and maintaining trees also creates jobs. We urge the City to at least maintain its current budget for planting and maintaining trees. One example of jobs that can be created include tree pruning – if funding remains available, approximately 15 graduates of SSBx's 10-week Bronx

¹ http://www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/urban_forest/urban_forest_facts.shtml

Environmental Stewardship Training program may soon be hired by the NYC Parks Department performed this skilled work, which will have a significant impact on the longevity and health of our city's trees. The Million Trees Initiative has recently initiated an 8-month paid training program and we encourage this pilot program to receive ongoing funding as well if considered a success.

However, the City could do much more to encourage the development of local jobs through the Million Trees Initiative. Presently, the City typically hires large contractors from outside of New York City that frequently exploit an immigrant workforce through unfair working conditions and wages well below the required prevailing wage. This is a lost opportunity to use the over \$20 million annual investment in tree planting to create good jobs for a local trained workforce. We encourage the City and the Million Trees Initiative to work with agencies and organizations with the capacity to work with smaller contractors to see that tree planting contracts are awarded to local firms, encourage local entrepreneurship, and that a trained workforce is hired to plant the trees. As in the Million Trees Initiative training program, the workforce should target populations with barriers to employment for this green-collar work, and encourage that career pathways can be created through the development of these green jobs. Similarly, we encourage that the City work with Green Apple Corp, an AmeriCorp program that maintains 19% of the city's parkland, to develop local recruiting and hiring policies for the maintenance of our city's street trees.

In conclusion, the Million Trees Initiative currently is bringing many benefits to New Yorkers – and we believe that the benefits in both the short and long term could be improved by adopting the above recommendations. Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL
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I represent: United States Forest Service NYC

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Name: Sheelah Feinberg

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I represent: New Yorkers for Parks

Address: 355 Lexington Ave., NYC 10017

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Name: Dawn Henning

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I represent: Youth Ministries for Peace & Justice

Address: 1384 Stratford Ave, Bronx, NY 10472

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Name: Susan Groberman

Address: 51 Chambers St #1412A

I represent: Tales New York

Address: 51 Chambers St #1412A NYC

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Name: Fiona Watt

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I represent: NYC Parks & Recreation

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Name: Liam Kavanagh

Address: 830 5th Ave, NY NY 10065

I represent: Parks & Recreation

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Name: ROBIN SIMMEN

Address: BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN

I represent: 1000 WASHINGTON AVE, Bklyn 11225

Address: _____

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