



**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation
Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget
March 12, 2021**

Testimony By: Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Commissioner

Good morning, Chair Koo, members of the Parks Committee, and other members of the Council. I am Mitchell Silver, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and I am joined “virtually” here today by a number of our senior staff, including First Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanagh and several of our Deputy Commissioners, as well as Matt Drury, our Director of Government Relations.

As you are aware, NYC Parks’ primary responsibility is the stewardship of over 30,000 acres of green and open space, encompassing 5,000 individual properties, ranging from playgrounds and beaches to community gardens and natural areas. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to discuss the agency’s Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, and to provide an overview of our agency’s recent efforts and initiatives in building and maintaining our city’s green and open spaces, during a year that was incredibly difficult and challenging for the agency, and for all New Yorkers.

In fact, it was almost precisely a year ago today that I appeared before this committee in Council Chambers to discuss last year’s Preliminary Budget, in what came to be the last in-person hearing held by the Council before the COVID lockdown. As I testified at the time, we were aware of the impending concerns and working closely with the Department of Health to prepare for a potential pandemic, but no one could have imagined how transformative 2020 would prove to be, in ways both horrifying as well as uplifting. We truly live in a completely different world than we did a year ago, through the terrible toll of lives lost and families shattered due to COVID, the pain of the resulting economic crisis, and the long-overdue national dialogue on systemic racism sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement and the tragic deaths of George Floyd and countless other black men and women.

Through it all, one dynamic has remained constant and increasingly clear -- our City parks and open spaces are critical infrastructure that is absolutely vital to New Yorkers. We have always prided ourselves



on being the agency of “fun, health and happiness,” but we’ve learned even more this past year just how much parks play a central role in improving the well-being of a city’s residents. Anyone visiting one of our parks during the twelve months could see how our City’s residents came to rely on these “sanctuaries of sanity,” for all the physical, mental and emotional benefits that they provide, especially as other alternatives for relaxation and recreation became increasingly rare. Travel to other parts of the country was practically impossible, concert halls and movie theaters shuttered, and the lights on Broadway sadly remain dark, but our City parks stayed open and available to New Yorkers in their greatest hour of need. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Parks employees, especially our frontline employees in the field, who have worked extraordinarily hard in a very challenging environment to keep our properties safe and to preserve the exceptional amenities that people have come to expect from our park system.

The pandemic brought about the need for many difficult decisions, as COVID-19 continued to spread and our understanding of the disease itself and its impact on the City’s fiscal position continued to evolve. Working in coordination with other City entities, we had to close our recreation centers and some of our smallest parks and playgrounds, cancel permits for athletic league sports and large public programs, and pause our capital reconstruction projects. But our agency remained strong and resilient, and we creatively reassigned staff and repurposed several of our properties as part of the City’s response to the crisis. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol officers and Urban Park Rangers helped ensure that parkgoers could relax and enjoy our open spaces in a safe manner, and the creation of our Parks Social Distance Ambassadors program, made possible largely through the redeployment of Public Programs staff, was key to keeping park visitors safe. I am proud to note that our agency staff, through a variety of efforts and initiatives, distributed close to eight million face coverings to the public, free of cost. Several of our recreation centers became Food Distribution Sites, delivering over 42 million meals to our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Central Park and Flushing Meadows Corona Park were sites for temporary emergency field hospitals, providing more capacity for a healthcare system that was heavily taxed in the early weeks of the pandemic, and COVID testing sites have been established at five Parks recreation centers. Our Brooklyn Borough Operations staff even took the initiative and created 6-foot wide signage



to help remind park visitors to maintain social distance, which became an iconic emblem, modeled all over the globe.

But our participation in the City's effort to slow the spread of COVID did not prevent us from focusing on our core mission, as our work continued to maintain and care for our parks and provide recreational opportunities, both virtually and in the field. For those who were unable to get out to our parks, even for a brief visit, we created Parks@Home--which featured virtual content on our website and social platforms serving the young and the young-at-heart, including live park tours, meditation, fitness clinics, art classes, and other fun activities, including NYC Parks' very own Spotify channel, where we are able to celebrate the connection between greenspaces and music with several specially curated playlists.

Out in our parks, we continued to maximize our resources and work smarter to provide the amenities and level of service that New Yorkers have come to expect. In the summer and fall, our Public Programs, Recreation and Urban Park Ranger teams offered a diverse variety of close to 2,000 free, socially-distanced outdoor programs, including nature education, arts, photography, media education, crafts, fitness, and sports, a vast majority of which were offered in the 27 neighborhoods identified by the City's COVID Racial Inclusion and Equity Task Force. Our Arts & Antiquities division was able to repair and clean close to 600 monuments and offer 48 temporary art exhibitions for the public to enjoy throughout the City. Our Partnerships For Parks division, a joint effort with the City Parks Foundation, coordinated the participation of 7,000 volunteers in hundreds of safely-organized service projects, many at COVID-relief priority sites. To keep our local community gardens healthy and thriving during COVID, our GreenThumb staff distributed 110,000 free plants and over 2,000 cubic yards of free topsoil to our community garden groups, and facilitated garden renovations and the construction of new raised planting beds for these unique and beloved community sites. Though we were only able to open a portion of our outdoor pools last summer due to safety constraints, our Marketing and Operations teams worked closely together to add two new sites to our creative and fun "Cool Pools NYC" initiative, which has transformed several of our outdoor pools in under-served neighborhoods into revitalized "resort-quality" destinations that are more vibrant and welcoming. Our Natural Resource Group, in collaboration with the Natural Areas Conservancy, completed and published our Wetlands Management Framework, and delivered



long-awaited improvement and restoration projects, including the Putnam Greenway in Van Cortlandt Park. As soon as we were authorized to bring capital projects back online, our Capital division continued to get results, completing long-awaited projects such as the beautiful renovation of Luther Gulick Park in Manhattan, our Parks Without Borders project at Prospect Park in Brooklyn, which created new entrances for the community on the eastern edge of the park, and Phase I of our Anchor Parks project in St. Mary's Park in the Bronx, helping make an old park new again.

All of this was possible because we prioritized the safety and well-being of our incredible Parks employees. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we have provided our staff with a variety of resources so that they can tend to their work in a safe manner. In addition to following City & State health directives, we have provided necessary Personal Protective Equipment, implemented flexible & staggered scheduling for essential workers, adapted our vehicle policy to promote social distancing, introduced a robust cleaning protocol for our facilities, and continue to provide a steady stream of up-to-date information for all employees through broadcast emails regarding COVID testing and other resources to benefit their physical and mental wellbeing. In May 2020, we led the effort to publicize #GoingGreenForParkies, a global effort to thank our park workers, as iconic buildings across the country and the world were lit in green in tribute to essential park workers. This tribute at the Empire State Building, Washington Square Arch and other buildings across the city, country and world served as an incredible acknowledgement and thanks for all their hard work. Of course, we are keeping our employees informed about the importance of COVID vaccinations and working very closely with health authorities as State and local guidance evolves, and more and more of our employees become eligible for the vaccine.

Alongside the emergence of the COVID pandemic and economic crisis, our society is dealing with a fundamental crisis of conscience, as the nation faces a reckoning with centuries of institutional racism, inequity and hatred. Our city parks were major locations for Black Lives Matter protests and other free-speech gatherings, and we, as an agency, are also contending with these dynamics head-on. Our public-facing efforts included the creation of "Juneteenth Grove" in Cadman Plaza, and the renaming of several Parks properties for prominent persons in the Black community. Though we have long prided ourselves on our record of MWBE inclusion and engagement, we're redoubling our efforts, to create even more



business opportunities for MWBE firms, to reflect and honor the diversity of our city. In light of these fundamental challenges, we also have to look inward as an agency. I was proud to elevate our Equal Employment Officer position to an Assistant Commissioner level in 2015 – the first NYC agency to do so – to ensure that our dedication to equity and fairness includes our internal hiring and promotion practices. During the summer, we launched “Reflections On...,” an internal agency forum encouraging open discourse and candid dialogue about racial and social issues impacting many Parkies. Since its inception, we have successfully engaged in meaningful and poignant staff discussions, in an effort to sustain a safer, inclusive and equitable work environment.

In this spirit of hopefulness and unity, we look forward to 2021, as the City, nation and world slowly heals and recovers from these crises. In accordance with State and City guidance, we are increasingly able to permit organized league sports and special events. All Parks capital projects that had been temporarily placed on hold have been granted permission to officially move forward. Given the large volume of projects that are coming back online, we are carefully strategizing how to proceed, to avoid overwhelming oversight agencies, flooding the construction market, and affecting our active portfolio.

Many of you will recall that Parks faced an incredibly difficult staffing situation last spring and summer, in light of the City’s fiscal challenges, including a suspension of our seasonal staffing plan. We do expect to have an increase in seasonal staffing and other resources compared to last year, but this upcoming season will still be challenging. Warmer weather, lower rates of COVID spread and increased public confidence in vaccines will lead to even more people leaving their homes and seeking a return to “normalcy.” Since many other aspects of life around the City will phased in slowly, including other recreational outlets, we expect that park usage will again surge greatly in upcoming months, leading to similar litter and maintenance challenges as last year. Our incredible staff will work their hardest, but our resources are finite, so we need all New Yorkers to step up and do their part to keep our shared public spaces in the best condition possible. We will be re-launching the anti-litter public education campaign we successfully executed last summer, and we hope the Council will join us in educating New Yorkers, as well as recruiting volunteers to help at “Monday Morning Pitch-Ins” and to serve as “Litter Ambassadors” at targeted sites during periods of peak usage.



Turning to the specific topic for this hearing, this year's Preliminary Budget remains relatively cautious, in light of the ongoing economic impacts faced by the City. However, it still gives our Agency the resources we need to continue getting the job done. The agency's Preliminary Expense budget includes \$532.7 million in Mayoral funding this year for our operational needs, a significant increase over last year's Adopted Budget. The Preliminary 10-Year Capital Plan, including the current Fiscal Year, provides a total Parks Capital budget of \$5.67 billion, reflecting the importance of keeping our park portfolio in a state of good repair.

The last year has been a difficult one for us all, but I am extremely proud of the work we've done and grateful for the solace and comfort that parks have provided for New Yorkers in the face of so much loss and pain. When New Yorkers needed "room to breathe," literally and figuratively, for their physical, mental and emotional well-being, our City parks were there for them, proving Frederick Law Olmsted's belief that parks truly are the "lungs" of the city. This is why I was exceptionally honored when the American Planning Association awarded its 2020 National Planning Excellence Award for Advancing Diversity and Social Change to the agency for its Community Parks Initiative, and when the World Urban Parks organization honored the New York City park system with its 2020 Legacy award.

Though I expect to appear before this Council at least one more time, I wanted to thank you for the Council's support of great parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers during my tenure. I also want to thank Mayor de Blasio for granting me the privilege to help transform this agency and our parks system; making them more equitable, inclusive and resilient. I am grateful to have worked with the amazing NYC Parks leadership team, as well as all of the dedicated Parks staff who keep our parks safe, clean and accessible, especially through this global pandemic. Serving as Commissioner has been the highest honor of my career. NYC Parks looks forward to continuing to work alongside the City Council to create a bright, green future with a more equitable and inclusive parks system. We would now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Parks Committee
NYC Parks FY22 Preliminary Budget Hearing
City Parks Foundation Testimony

Thank you Chair Koslowitz and Queens Delegation members. I'm Heather Lubov, Executive Director for City Parks Foundation, a non-profit that leads free sports, arts, environmental education programs, and co-manages Partnerships for Parks, a joint program with NYC Parks, all to encourage New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces.

The pandemic has made it resoundingly clear that parks are essential to the physical and mental health of our city. Parks saw an unprecedented number of visitors last summer and fall, which, combined with FY21's drastic budget cuts, meant that the Parks Department was operating with only 45% of FY20's staff levels and led to garbage piling up in parks across the city. On an average week in August, 400-500 parks were not being cleaned by staff at all and 311 complaints increased by more than 80%.

New York City has come to rely on volunteers as 'green responders' to help with litter removal, planting, and general care of our city's parks. These volunteer efforts were quickly mobilized because of the existing network of nearly 600 groups and 26,000 individual volunteers from all 51 Council districts that Partnerships for Parks has cultivated and supported for many years. The Council's own Parks Equity Initiative helps make this network possible by funding capacity building workshops, micro-grants, clean up supplies, and staff support. But volunteers are not a long term solution to park maintenance.

The pandemic and budget cuts are simply magnifying long term inequities. According to the Trust for Public Land, parks that serve people of color are half as large and nearly five times as crowded as parks that serve a majority-white population. Parks serving majority low-income households are on average, four times smaller and more crowded than parks that serve majority high-income households. Neighborhoods that are more than a 10-minute walk to a park may be up to 6 degrees warmer.

Long term, we must rethink planning for and maintenance of our city's parks, plazas, gardens, natural areas, green streets, and NYCHA spaces as a comprehensive network of open spaces that meet the health, safety, economic, and environmental needs of communities particularly in our recovery from COVID. And we must explore alternative funding such as mill taxes or park impact fees.

But in the short term, NYC must recognize parks as the essential infrastructure they are, and provide funding -- not 0.6% of the budget, but truly adequate funding -- to ensure that our parks are safe and well maintained for everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued support through the Parks Equity Initiative.



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March 12, 2021

New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear New York City Council,

My name is Betsy Smith, and I am the President & CEO of the Central Park Conservancy. I'd like to start by thanking Council Member Peter Koo for his work as the Chair of the Parks Committee, as well as the Council Members that neighbor Central Park; Mark Levine, Keith Powers, Helen Rosenthal, Ben Kallos, Diana Ayala, Bill Perkins, and Council Speaker Corey Johnson.

This pandemic showed us just how critical our parks are to all New Yorkers. When the city was forced to shut down, parks provided some of the only places we could congregate safely, offering an escape and a place for recreation and rejuvenation. Parks staff did not miss a day of work, even during one of our darkest time as a city, ensuring these spaces were safe, clean, and accessible for everyone.

NYC Parks received a cut of approximately 14% of their total operating budget last year, the second largest cut of any City agency, despite the critical role parks continue to play as a necessity and not a luxury. These cuts resulted in a loss of seasonal staff, Parks Enforcement Patrol officers, Urban Park Rangers, GreenThumb coordinators, Natural Resources Group staff, and critical maintenance contracts.

I am requesting that last year's budget cuts be restored. Parks are critical infrastructure now more than ever before, and it is crucial that we support them as such.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy".

Elizabeth W. Smith
President & CEO
Central Park Conservancy

NYLPI Testimony at
New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 12, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Caroline Parker, and I am a legal intern in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Our EJ program has long advocated for equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens in our City. Today, I am here to urge you to ensure that our City's treasured community composting organizations, which embody the principles of environmental justice, receive the financial support they need to operate with dignity and stability throughout the Parks system.

As New York City faces down the existential threat of climate change, organics recycling is a critically important pillar of the City's emissions reduction policy. The City currently sends more than 3.2 million tons of solid waste to landfill and incineration each year, one-third of which could be diverted by composting it. Like all dirty industries, this waste moves through a system of truck routes and transfer stations that spew pollution in historically overburdened communities of color.

For these reasons, composting has repeatedly been highlighted in the City's climate and emissions targets, including the Mayor's "Zero Waste" goal and the updated OneNYC 2050 framework. These policy commitments led to an expansion of multiple composting initiatives, including the NYC Compost projects currently operating throughout the City's parks, which bring together local residents and students, urban farmers, and grassroots sustainability organizations in collective projects to reduce emissions, protect local soil health, and support healthy food security options.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has derailed the City's composting goals. In May 2020, the City suspended its collection of curbside organics collection and slashed the Department of Sanitation's composting budget by \$24.5 million. Today, the community-based operations sited on Parks land are the only elements of the City's nascent composting system that are still operating. These organizations, which are primarily staffed by volunteers, provide a critical service to the entire City with no compensation and minimal financial support.

With this year's budget, you have an opportunity to build on this foundation towards a more comprehensive and equitable composting program on par with cities like San Francisco and Seattle. As the steward of more than 30,000 acres of public land, the Parks Department is a critical partner in this goal. We urge the Mayor's Office and City Council to ensure that this year's budget includes funding to support small-scale composting operations in places where there is a demonstrated community interest and support.

In the past year, we have heard concerning rhetoric from Parks suggesting that composting is not an appropriate use of parkland because it will crowd out other recreational activities. This zero-sum logic pits two critical community needs against one another when we know there is space for both to thrive. Parks should reflect the diverse interests of all residents. This includes the gardeners and budding environmentalists who find great joy and meaning in turning waste into soil.

We know that DPR shares our desire to ensure a resilient parks system that serves the recreational needs of all New Yorkers. We believe that community-scale composting, which brings neighbors together in the name of stewardship and sustainability, is fully aligned with this vision. The Department has, on multiple occasions, proclaimed its support for composting. We hope that this year's budget will reflect this commitment with tangible support for the grassroots projects that are already thriving throughout the parks system.

Thank you very much.

Caroline Parker
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NEW YORK
RESTORATION
PROJECT 25 YEARS

New York Restoration Project

Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Parks and Recreation

Public Budget Hearing

3/12/2021

Good afternoon, and thank you to the Members of the Council for convening this hearing, and to Parks Committee Chair Peter Koo for your leadership and support.

My name is Lynn Kelly and I am the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). For over 25 years, NYRP has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks, and transformed open space for communities throughout New York City. We bring private resources to spaces that lack municipal support, fortifying the City's aging infrastructure and creating a healthier environment for those who live in the most densely populated and least green neighborhoods. Each year, our gardens provide thousands of pounds of fresh produce for local residents and families in need.

Covid-19 has underscored and exacerbated preexisting social and environmental inequities in our City, including unequal access to high quality green space. This year, the Parks department suffered the second largest budget cut of all City agencies, which has had a devastating impact in low-income communities throughout the five boroughs where NYRP works. This 14% budget cut snowballed into a loss of 1,700 Parks maintenance staff, leaving our parks neglected and filled with trash. Our City's public green spaces have quickly begun to regress to a state we have not seen since the 1970s. Being a City of more than 8.4 million residents, our parks and gardens are heavily relied upon every day, and the pandemic has only increased this reliance.

NYRP is also not immune to the impact of the City's austerity measures – we have suffered a dramatic decrease of nearly 80% in public funding resulting in a loss of staff and programming. While serious, NYRP will bounce back. Imagine the impact of an 80% City funding cut to smaller organizations that are doing yeomen's work in underserved communities. It has decimated these vital organizations.

As a representative of the only land conservancy operating in all five boroughs of New York City, and specifically in under-resourced neighborhoods, I am here to tell you that the current system does not work for everyone. It is time for us to end environmental injustice and reinvest in our green spaces. Urban green space is not a luxury, but a necessity; countless studies have shown that parks and gardens yield outsized financial returns in terms of improved public health, climate change resilience, reduced crime, and economic development. New York City must fully restore the Parks budget and release the \$1 billion of frozen capital funds in order to protect our communities and secure our City's future.



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation & Committee on Finance
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 12, 2021
Adam Ganser, Executive Director**

Good afternoon. My name is Adam Ganser, and I am the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We are a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 300 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Finance for inviting us to speak about the fiscal year 2022 Preliminary Budget. I also want to thank Chair Koo for his leadership and partnership in the Play Fair Coalition.

We are here today to call on the Mayor and the City Council to Play Fair Now for parks, and restore vital funding needed to make sure our parks can support New Yorkers during this historically challenging time. Restoring \$79.8 million to the FY22 Expense Budget for NYC Parks is urgently needed to make sure our city's parks are safe, clean, and accessible for all New Yorkers.

During the last 12 months, parks have been essential for our physical and mental health, forums for protests against racial injustice, and for the cultural vibrancy of this city during lockdown. New Yorkers have gathered in our parks in unprecedented numbers.

At the same time, COVID ushered in a year of austerity budgeting. Mayor de Blasio dealt the NYC Parks Department a crushing blow in the 2020 budget -- cutting the agency's funding by 14 percent, \$84 million our city parks desperately needed. This was the second largest cut to any city agency.

Parks should be drivers of equity. Unfortunately, the budget cuts have had the most severe impacts on those very communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

Further, our parks staff have been essential frontline workers, without the recognition or support they deserve. The hiring freeze and budget cuts have left hundreds of parks positions hanging in the balance. The parks department has been asked to do more with much less at a time when parks and outdoor spaces are the safest places for New Yorkers to play, get fresh air, relax, and the only place to visit with friends and family outside of our households. It has never been more urgent to ensure that our parks are fully staffed and funded.

We call on the mayor and the council to restore the Parks Budget to provide:

- \$10 million to baseline 100 City Park Workers and 50 Gardeners;
- \$30 million to restore the NYC Parks seasonal staff budget;
- \$3 million to restore the Parks Opportunity Program;
- \$15 million to restore contracts for tree pruning, stump removal, and invasive species control;
- \$4 million to restore full funding to the Parks Equity Initiative;
- \$3 million to restore the 50 Urban Park Ranger staff lines cut last year;
- \$6 million to restore the 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol staff lines cut last year;
- \$3.4 million to restore the budget for GreenThumb;
- \$4.5 million to continue critical conservation work in our city's natural forests, wetlands, and trails.

We are also calling on the City to reverse the burdensome hiring freeze currently in place at NYC Parks, which has made it nearly impossible for the agency to replace staff when they are needed most, and already operating on the thinnest of margins.

The city budget is a statement of a city's priorities, and for decades the budget for NYC Parks has been woefully insufficient. COVID didn't create this problem -- the pandemic has only brought this chronic disinvestment to a boiling point. With warmer weather just around the corner, let's make sure the City's budget this year reflects the urgency of our parks and open space needs. We look forward to working with the Council to Play Fair Now for our parks budget. Thank you.



FY22 Budget Platform

\$79.8M to Renew and Restore the Expense Budget for NYC Parks

\$58M to reinvest in critical Maintenance and Operations

- **\$10M** to baseline the FY21 one-shot 100 City Park Worker and 50 Gardener staff lines.
- **\$30M** to restore the seasonal staff budget for maintenance and operations workers citywide.
- **\$3M** to restore the Parks Opportunity Program and provide a pathway to full-time employment.
- **\$15M** to restore critical parks forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal and sidewalk repair, and invasive species control.

\$4M to reinvest in Recreation and Programming

- **\$4M** to restore the Parks Equity Initiative, and support park stewardship organizations citywide.

\$9M to reinvest in Parks Safety

- **\$3M** to restore the 50 Urban Park Ranger positions created in the FY20 budget.
- **\$6M** to restore the 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created in the FY20 budget.

\$7.9M to reinvest in Nature and Resiliency

- **\$3.4M** to restore 15 GreenThumb staff, and expand access to plant materials, resources and tools for community gardeners citywide.
- **\$4.5M** to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests, and begin critical improvements for our City's wetlands and trails network.

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For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.
www.ny4p.org

NYBG

NYBG Testimony for New York City Parks and Recreation

March 12, 2021 – 10AM

Good morning Chairman Koo and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. My name is Angel Hernandez and I am Director of Government Relations for the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG.) The Garden is a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) – a coalition of 34 cultural, arts, and science organizations who have built a public-private partnership with the City of New York, located in all five boroughs, and collectively welcome visits from millions of NYC public school children and residents.

Today I am delighted to testify on behalf the CIG, as many of its members are also partners with the NYC Parks Department. NYBG, along with some of our partnering CIG outdoor living museums such as the Bronx and Staten Island zoos, Queens and Brooklyn botanic gardens, and Snug Harbor are all located on parkland. Occupying and operating on these grounds allows us to continue our great work in our respective communities, while continuing endeavors in the sciences and environmental preservation for unique fauna and flora. As we mark a year since COVID-19 attacked our beloved city, CIG living museums have played pivotal roles during the pandemic. We have provided free access to our city residents to enjoy our grounds as reprieve space for those emerging from quarantine and the recovered. Some of us served as meal distribution sites, distributed PPE to members of their communities in need, and, as the country moves into this next phase of battling COVID-19, outdoor museums have express interests in becoming vaccine distribution sites. CIG living museums have contributed to the public life, public health, and public service of all New Yorkers throughout the pandemic.

I would like to focus on NYBG's commitment to public health. We have utilized our advantage of open space to combat some issues that affected Bronx residents during the pandemic. In a time when social distancing and reprieve from quarantine and the virus was quite evident, NYBG immediately stepped up its offerings for open space when we were allowed to re-open last July. Since then, we received over 350,000 visitors, with more than a quarter of these admissions offered at no cost to Bronx residents and health care workers. The effort was to offer a safe and open space for children, families, and seniors to enjoy. When schools were ordered to close last March, our staff at the Edible Academy were left with a rapidly growing harvest meant for plant demonstrations for students. Immediately reacting to the growing food security in the Bronx due to the pandemic, our staff grew, harvested, and donated over 3 tons of fresh produce to local food relief organizations and public schools. Taking a step further in our efforts, we also began to offer technical assistance and donated tens of thousands of seedling plants to local community gardens such as Bissell Gardens and Rivers Run Garden in City Council District 12, where NYBG has had a long-standing relationship under its Bronx Green Up initiative. Supporting these community gardens will help them become food hubs so that they can feed their respective communities. All these efforts were activated without hesitation because of NYBG's ongoing commitment to serve the Bronx community, as it has done for over a century.

NYBG

This morning, I want to stress to you Chairman Koo and your colleagues that the NYC Parks Department plays a crucial role in the operation of some of our CIG outdoor living museums, especially ours. Operating on parkland allows living museums to be a safe experience for the public and families, while enforcing behavior science that has shown to be effective – social distancing, outdoor experiences, and mask wearing. Living museums provide quality environmental education, while advancing their missions to help breed and protect endangered species, addressing the impacts of global climate change, and fighting the spread of invasive species. We are most proud of educating and inspiring thousands of public-school teachers and millions of school children, literally growing the next generation of conservation stewards.

Yet, our great efforts in continuing the good work in our respective communities will be severely hampered if CIG funding for FY22 is compromised. For NYBG, we have experienced a major reduction in earned income and other programming due to being closed last year. Although we immediately gathered our resources to serve the Bronx community during the pandemic and offered our open spaces as safe havens from the virus, we continue to operate on a limited capacity that will not allow us to recoup the earned income lost during the shutdown. Any reduction in funding would further detriment our efforts to assist NYC residents in a time of need and drastically affect our daily operation as custodians for the city's natural habitats and exotic animal sanctuaries. Understanding that city funds have been stretched and reallocated towards efforts to fight Covid-19, the CIG group, along with its member outdoor living museums would just only ask that the cultural budget be held harmless and maintained at FY21 levels as we await further information on Covid-19 federal relief that may be made available to the City and State.

Thank you Chairman Koo and the Members of the Committee, for giving me the opportunity to speak and for your support of NYC Parks and the Cultural Community.

Respectfully submitted by:

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New York City Council
FY 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Parks & Recreation Committee
Friday, March 12th 2021

Submitted on behalf of:
New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL)
36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504
Long Island City, NY 11106

George Guimaraes
President and CEO

Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director of Community Tennis

Thank you for the New York City Council's longstanding support of New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL), legally incorporated and funded as the New York Junior Tennis League, Inc. We are the largest and most successful scholastic tennis program in the country, serving as a model for other states. Celebrating 50 years in 2021, NYJTL has been a driving force for New York City's youth and tennis communities, traditionally reaching over 85,000 youngsters throughout the five boroughs on an annual basis.

With the NYC Council as our partner, NYJTL is offering the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. The overwhelming majority of the young people we serve are Black, Latino, Asian, and new immigrant populations. Virtually all come from low-income families and neighborhoods where young people lack access to the opportunities typically available only to youth in affluent neighborhoods, suburbs, and private schools.

When COVID started, NYJTL had to suspend our Winter season and cancel our Spring season. In Summer 2020, when NYC Parks allowed for group instruction on the tennis courts, NYJTL was out there the next day. **All NYJTL locations were made aware of NYC Parks COVID rules and protocols were also created by NYJTL to ensure safety of all kids and staff.**

Traditionally, NYJTL runs the majority of our yearly programming at locations through NYC DOE or NYC Parks. We have not been able to obtain any permits from NYC DOE and have had to rely heavily on NYC Parks to provide programming to NYC Youth.

This year, approximately two thirds of NYJTL's yearly programming will occur in New York City Parks. By the end of FY 2022, we expect to have offered programming at 33 locations throughout the city, including 22 parks in all five boroughs:

- Bronx (3)
 - Crotona Park
 - St. James Park
 - Williamsbridge Oval

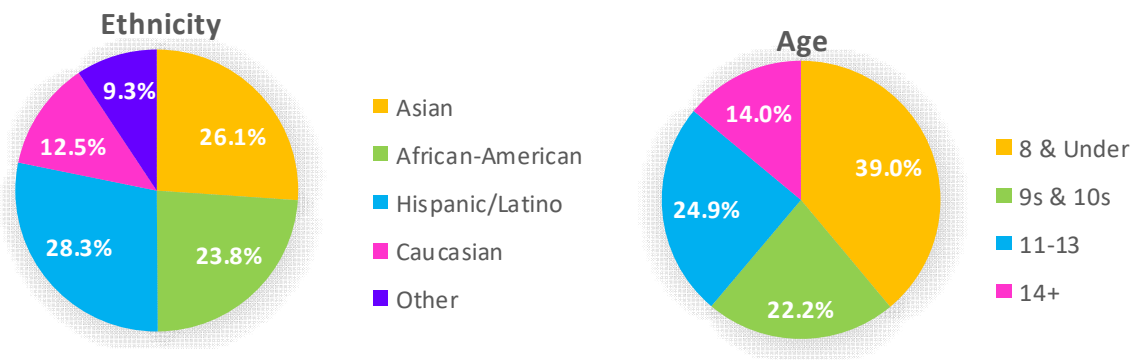
- Manhattan (3)
 - East River Park
 - Howard Bennett Park
 - Octagon Park

- Brooklyn (5)
 - Jackie Robinson Park
 - Linden Park
 - McDonald Playground
 - Andries Playground
 - Sperandeo Brothers Playground

- Queens (8)
 - Bayswater Park
 - Charles Park
 - Clintonville Playground
 - Det. Keith Williams Park
 - Dutch Kills Playground
 - Forest Park
 - Juniper Valley Park
 - Louis Pasteur Playground

- Staten Island (2)
 - Wolfe’s Pond
 - Silver Lake Park

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS¹



Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	26.1%	8 & Under	39.0%	Male	55.4%	New	55.2%
African-American	23.8%	9s & 10s	22.2%	Female	44.6%	Returning	44.8%
Hispanic/Latino	28.3%	11-13	24.9%				
Caucasian	12.5%	14 +	14.0%				
Other	9.3%						

¹- Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 85,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually

NYJTL addresses issues of economic and educational inequities by giving ALL children, including children with special needs, the opportunity to learn the sport of tennis—and just as importantly - the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

NYJTL brings tennis to thousands of children of all economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. **Funded under the Council's *Physical Education and Fitness Initiative*, NYJTL provides quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY borough throughout the city:**

- **Community Tennis Programs (CTP)** – CTP reaches children throughout the five boroughs by supplying trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, and special events to youth ages 5-18 during Spring, Summer and Fall. In our educational component, we provide a Reading Club, USTA ACEs curriculum for our 4th and 5th graders, and free SAT Prep classes for our 11th graders. CTP holds over 15 tennis tournaments for all ages throughout the year. We provide trips to Arthur Ashe Kids Day, US Open Qualifiers, multiple Mets/Yankees games and various pro tennis tournaments in the vicinity of NYC (New Haven to Long Island). **In addition, last year alone, CTP provided tennis to over 1,000 Special Population/ District 75 children.** Finally, CTP develops not only tennis skills but also the character of youth through positive life experiences. *Due to COVID-19, all tournaments and special events have been suspended.*
- **Winter Weekend Indoor Program** – This program enables players to continue their progress during the 20-week indoor season and includes NYJTL sponsored events: Hartman Cup Championships, Holiday Tournament, and Presidents' Week Tournament. This program runs from mid-November to early April. *Due to COVID-19, all tournaments and special events have been suspended.*

- **School-Time Tennis Program (STP)** – STP supplies free tennis equipment, teacher training, and ongoing support to approximately **250** schools annually throughout the city to include tennis as a regular part of their physical educational curriculum. **NYJTL is a NYSED Approved Provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit.** Any participant that attends one of NYJTL’s STP trainings will receive 6.5 CTLE credit hours. *Due to COVID-19, STP is currently suspended.*
- Intensive Training Program (ITP) – ITP provides tennis training for high-performing/high-potential players who currently participate in NYJTL’s Community Tennis Program. With smaller coach-to-student ratios and increased access to tennis, ITP bridges the gap between recreational community-based programs and elite training. ITP is FREE to the under resourced population that NYJTL’s Community Tennis Program serves.

Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various time throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter). In effect, we run our own Student Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

NYJTL is seeking 1.2 million in FY 22. Funding at this level will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising costs, including the new minimum wage of \$15 per hour, and costs associated with implementing COVID -19 protocols –
 - Additional Equipment – no sharing of any items between participants and staff;
 - Equipment to assist in social distancing (lines, cones, spots);
 - PPE Supplies – cleaning products, point and shoot thermometers, masks and hand sanitizers (for players and staff);
- Enable us to continue serving youth in **EVERY** borough;
- Allow us to bring **additional hours** of free tennis instruction throughout the city;
- Increase staffing at each site to ensure safety as per newly implemented protocols
- Increase enrollment throughout the city as a result of additional program hours.

Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 22 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

We could not do what we do without the strong funding support of the New York City Council. On behalf of the youngsters and parents annually served by NYJTL, I thank you for the New York City Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.



**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
Associate for NYC Programs
New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 12, 2021**

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Koo and all of the Council Members on the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

NYLCV supports a Fiscal Year 2022 City budget that secures progress on many of the environmental, transportation, and public health priorities Mayor de Blasio has committed to in OneNYC and beyond. Our city is on the precipice of the road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is incumbent upon our elected leaders to invest our tax dollars in climate action and solutions as we rebound from this crisis and not lose ground, especially with the influx of relief funds that will flow from the American Rescue Act package. New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation plays a critical role in that fight.

Parks and other green spaces are one of the city's most valuable environmental assets and are a major source of the city's urban canopy, which mitigates climate change, provides clean air and habitats for native wildlife, and contributes to the well-being of our residents and economy. Preserving these spaces is a top priority for NYLCV.

The 2.6 million street and park trees that the Parks Department is responsible for remove 1,300 tons of pollutants from the atmosphere and store one million tons of carbon each year. Trees are vital for mitigating urban heat island effect and can lower temperatures by up to nine degrees, cut air conditioning use by 30%, and reduce heating energy use by a further 20-50%. NYC's parks contribute to our resiliency by capturing almost 2 billion gallons of stormwater runoff. That's why NYLCV is proud to join with New Yorkers for Parks and DC 37 again as founding members of the Play Fair for Parks campaign.

Parks not only provide critical infrastructure that have multiple environmental benefits, but they also offer a place for New Yorkers to safely social distance, exercise, and get much needed fresh air. But over the past year, through the hardships of the pandemic, we have seen the cleanliness and safety of our parks drop significantly due to unfair budgetary cuts to staffing and programs. With the summer months coming, parks are poised to see a sharp uptick in usership after having been neglected for months.

Therefore, in this critical 3rd year of our campaign, we are asking the council to play fair now and restore \$78.9 million in the FY22 Parks budget to ensure our parks are safe, clean and accessible. NYLCV and the entire Play Fair Coalition requests this funding be allocated in the following ways:

- Baseline **\$10M** to make permanent 100 City Park Workers and 50 Gardeners, and create secure, stable jobs.
- **\$30M** to restore the critical Seasonal staff budget for maintenance and operations workers citywide.
- **\$3M** to restore the Parks Opportunity Program and provide a pathway to full-time employment.
- **\$4.5M** for NYC's natural forests, wetlands, and trails to receive the proactive care and maintenance they need to remain healthy and resilient in our changing climate, and as they receive unprecedented use by New Yorkers.
- **\$15M** to restore critical parks forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal and sidewalk repair, and invasive species control.
- **\$4M** to restore the Parks Equity Initiative, and support park stewardship organizations citywide.
- **\$3.4M** to restore 15 GreenThumb staff, and expand access to plant materials, resources and tools for community gardeners citywide.
- **\$3M** to hire 50 Urban Park Rangers to connect New Yorkers with the nature that surrounds us, and help ensure our parks remain safe and accessible for all.
- **\$6M** to restore 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol officers citywide to make sure our parks are safe.

The time to invest in the Parks Department is now. We must Play Fair for Parks Now.

I'd like to thank Chair Koo for his partnership and the Committee on Parks and Recreation for their attention to this issue. I look forward to working with you all closely to ensure NYC has healthy and thriving green spaces for generations to come.



**New York Lawyers
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151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
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**Testimony of Caroline Soussloff, NYLPI,
Regarding the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget for DPR
Before the NYC City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Dated March 12, 2021**

Good morning, my name is Caroline Soussloff, and I am a Legal Fellow in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). NYLPI works with communities across the New York City area, providing support and services to combat inequalities, injustices, and infringements on civil rights. Our Environmental Justice program has advocated and litigated on the subject of the inequities of the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits in our City for almost three decades. Thank you to Chair Koo, the Committee members here today, and the Council for providing opportunity to testify today.

I am pleased to be here representing NYLPI and our EJ program to support community members from the St. Albans neighborhood in Community Board 12, Queens, in their efforts to secure funding for the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to develop and maintain two parcels of land adjacent to Brinkerhoff Avenue as parks.¹ The City has neglected these parcels for decades despite repeated pleas from the community for them to be properly maintained. We share the community's vision of transforming this land from an eyesore filled with illegal dumping into vibrant green space. In order to bring this vision to life, NYLPI has been working closely with community representatives from Community Board 12 and the Alpha Streets Block Association, as well as the Trust for Public Lands.

Funding this proposed park is an issue of environmental justice. St. Albans is, and long has been, a community of color, and contends with a long and frustrating history of being underserved and overburdened by the City. For example, CB 12 has been the third most overburdened community district in the whole city for decades in terms of how much garbage is processed in the district. Meanwhile, it is

¹ These two parcels are: (1) a triangle-shaped plot bordered by Brinkerhoff Ave., Hannibal St., Fonda Ave., and Mayville St.; and (2) a fenced-in plot south of the triangle bordered by Brinkerhoff Ave., Mayville St., the rear property lines of homes accessible from Fonda Ave., and Dunkirk St.

home to very few parks or playgrounds. St. Albans deserves equitable access to green space, and the benefits and remedies that quality parks convey. Studies have demonstrated that access to high-quality green space improves community health outcomes.² The community’s need for additional parkland has only taken on greater urgency during the pandemic.

The community is asking the Committee for a *minimal* capital investment and *minimal* continued investment. The land in question is already home to grass and trees. We are simply asking for light landscaping, routine maintenance, and the removal of fencing surrounding one of the parcels. DPR already cuts the grass—but only occasionally, on an inconsistent basis, “as a courtesy.” Including this work in their budget would ensure that DPR understands that regular maintenance is their obligation.

NYLPI is grateful that NYC Parks Commissioner Silver, Queens Parks Commissioner Dockett, and Council Member Daneek Miller have all expressed support for this project in the past. We ask that this Committee follow their leadership and allocate funding for the project in the FY 2022 budget. Thank you to the Chair, the Council Staff, and the Members here today for your time and we look forward to working with you and St. Albans to together create a more equitable and sustainable urban landscape.

² See, e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Assessing the Relationship Between a Composite Score of Urban Park Quality and Health”, November 8, 2018, https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2018/18_0033.htm.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

Preliminary Budget Hearing – New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

March 12, 2021

Testimony of Carter H. Strickland, Jr.
New York State Director, The Trust for Public Land

Thank you, Chairperson Koo and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify at this oversight hearing on the budget of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

My name is Carter Strickland and I am the New York State Director of The Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit organization that creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. One of The Trust for Public Land's guiding principles – supported by numerous studies – is that parks and open space are critical infrastructure that make cities and their residents healthier, happier, more prosperous, cleaner, greener, and more resilient. Since 1978, The Trust for Public Land has worked with New York City residents to improve their neighborhoods by creating public spaces where they can safely play, connect with nature and each other, and create resilient communities.

Parks Are Critical Infrastructure

Since the beginning of the pandemic, parks and open spaces have been critical gathering spaces for New Yorkers when cafes, museums, art galleries, gyms, movie theaters, restaurants, and many other businesses were closed for months (or are still closed). Remaining open and free, our parks played a critical role in allowing New Yorkers to get out of their apartments and see their friends, family, and fellow citizens outside while maintaining the appropriate social distance. Parks helped people deal with anxiety, stress, and loneliness, and also move and exercise, and most parks saw record visitors at all hours of the day. It is not an exaggeration to say that parks were critical infrastructure to help the city through this crisis.

After the pandemic, parks will continue to enhance property values and boost economic development, support local jobs, increase spending at local businesses, and generate local tax revenue. Parks create opportunities for organized events such as art fairs, athletic events, food festivals, and concerts and positive economic impacts to their communities. Parks keep us resilient in the face of climate change, as they can reduce the temperature of urban heat islands by as much as seven to twelve percent (7-12%) and can absorb stormwater. Parks keep us active and address the social determinants of health that drive most non-communicable diseases that cost so much in medical bills,

lost time, and lost wages. Parks also maintain mental and social health, strengthening social and community links.

All of these services are incredibly valuable alone and in combination. These benefits are more apparent than ever against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and the related shelter-at-home orders. For New Yorkers who spend most of the day isolated in our apartments, parks are among the few public places that remain open and usable while following safety protocols. New Yorkers understand that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities, and have provided relief and solace during these unsettled times.

The Trust for Public Land is launching a study of the annual economic benefits of parks in New York City, thanks to the generosity of private funders and the New York Green Relief and Recovery Fund, and it should be available to the Council for next year's budget. In the meantime, however, we can think about the value of this open space by imagining New York City without any parks. It is clear that without parks, residents' mental and physical health would suffer, our city would not be livable and would lose population, real estate would be worth less, and our economy would suffer – and that is why New Yorkers value our parks far in excess of the 0.57 of the budget the City proposes to spend on the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Parks System Needs Investment, not Disinvestment

For several years the City's disinvestment in parks has shown in annual rankings. Every year The Trust for Public Land ranks the park systems of the 100 largest cities in America. In 2017, New York ranked seventh. We came up behind cities like Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Arlington on median park size and spending per resident. In 2018 and 2019, New York was knocked down to ninth place in the ParkScore rankings, as Cincinnati and Chicago moved ahead of us. Last year, The Trust for Public Land released our 2020 rankings, and New York City dropped to *eleventh* place, as we were pushed out of the Top Ten for the first time by Boston. No New Yorker should be happy about that result.

New York's fall from the ParkScore Top Ten resulted from our failure to keep pace with the innovations and investments of peer cities like Boston. According to ParkScore, when all parks and playgrounds are open, 99 percent of New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park, far exceeding the national average of 72 percent for the top 100 cities and average of 55 percent for all cities. However, New York's final ranking was hurt by our median park size of 1.1 acres, well below the national ParkScore average of 5.2 acres. I note that ParkScore does not rank overall park acreage on a per capita basis, which would have driven down New York City's score, as 284 New Yorkers must crowd into every acre of park space. New York's ranking was also hurt by the lack of amenities and features especially such critical features as playgrounds, bathrooms, and recreation and senior centers, which are below the national average on a per capita basis.

The City is not addressing these multi-year trends. In 2020, the City's response was to cut the budget for the Department even more, just as residents needed them more during the pandemic and resulting lockdown. Last year, the Department of Parks and Recreation received the second largest budget-cut of any City agency, an \$84 million cut or approximately 14% of their total operating budget, which ended up at only 0.59 percent of the City's budget. Those cuts meant 1,700 fewer maintenance and operations seasonal staff, a significant reduction in work hours and maintenance visits to parks and playgrounds per month, and the worst cleanliness conditions on record.

As has been widely reported, those cuts combined with the dramatic decrease in funds available for private not-for-profit organizations, had a predictable and profound impact on the care and visitor experience of our city's parks, with overflowing trash cans, trampled gardens, and crowded spaces. Especially during this coronavirus pandemic, when parks are needed and used so much, our ongoing disinvestment in parks is letting down New Yorkers who depend on them every day to stay safe and healthy.

Unfortunately, the FY22 Preliminary Budget indicates that parks are an even lower priority, with the Department's budget dropping to 0.57 percent of the overall City budget. We acknowledge that the FY22 Preliminary Budget of \$532.7 million represents a \$29.6 million increase over the FY21 Adopted Budget, including the restoration of seasonal hires and new needs of \$1.3 million. But it does not restore last year's cuts or keep pace with the system's needs for operations and maintenance.

The Trust for Public Land is a proud member of the Play Fair Now coalition, which seeks to **restore \$79.8 million in the expense budget** for the Department of Parks and Recreation. Specifically, this funding would restore:

- \$58 million to reinvest in critical maintenance and operations (\$10 million to baseline the FY21 one-shot 100 City Park Worker and 50 Gardener staff lines; \$30 million to restore the seasonal staff budget for maintenance and operations workers citywide; \$3 million to restore the Parks Opportunity Program and provide a pathway to full-time employment);
- \$15 million to restore critical parks forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal and sidewalk repair, and invasive species control;
- \$4 million to reinvest in Recreation and Programming;
- \$4 million to restore the Parks Equity Initiative, and support park stewardship organizations citywide;
- \$9 million to reinvest in Parks Safety (\$3 million to restore the 50 Urban Park Ranger positions created in the FY20 budget and \$6 million to restore the 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created in the FY20 budget)
- \$7.9 million to reinvest in Nature and Resiliency;

- \$3.4 million to restore 15 GreenThumb staff, and expand access to plant materials, resources and tools for community gardeners citywide; and
- \$4.5 million to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests, and begin critical improvements for our City's wetlands and trails network.

To make even greater progress, however, we believe that the Council would be justified in allocating **one percent of the City budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation**. That bold step would show New Yorkers that the City understands that everyone deserves a quality park and the substantial benefits that parks provide and would allow the City to keep pace with other cities.

On capital projects, the issue is not so much the budget as it is the procurement and execution process. The 4-Year Capital Budget is \$2.9 billion for FY22-25, or 5.4 percent of the City's overall Capital Budget of \$53.6 billion. The capital commitment rate remains low, however, 40 percent in 2016, 60 percent in 2017, 47 percent in 2018, 86 percent in 2019, and 48 percent in 2020. Parks has not been able to spend more than \$586 million in any one year. In fact, the project delivery is notoriously slow and costly. For example, The Trust for Public Land worked with The North Face to donate a climbing boulder for Harold Ickes Playground in Red Hook in 2018, but ground has not been broken yet and there is no schedule to do so more than three years later. This reality is not reflected in the Mayor's Management Report, which indicates that the Department completed 85 percent of projects on time and 92 percent of projects on time. As the Council reports notes, these indicates "fall short as a true measure of the agency's ability to plan, scope, design, and construct projects timely, efficiently, and/or on budget." This is an understatement, and we urge the Council to tighten the City's measurement of project states, and take its own steps to assess and correct the capital procurement process.

For example, the Council should encourage the Department of Parks and Recreation to use new design-build authority and to increase its use of cost-effective public-private partnerships for capital projects. These steps would merely extend the well-established practice of relying on conservancies in big parks and "friends of" groups in smaller parks to fund or even undertake maintenance and operations. The City's new authority for design-build procurement should dovetail with a better public-private partnership program to result in faster and less expensive capital improvements to parks.

Finally, we note that only a small portion of the Department of Park and Recreation's budget comes from State and Federal funding, and much of that is for minor items such as mandated surveys. There is a significant opportunity for the Department and Council to work with the New York City delegation to the New York State Legislature to get a greater and fairer share of the annual \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund and other sources. State funding for parks in New York City has been far short of the 43 percent of our share of the state population. Similarly, the Department and Council should work with New York City's Congressional

delegation to obtain funding for parks in the city from the \$900 million a year in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Restore Custodial Funding for Community Playgrounds

In a very successful partnership, since 1996 The Trust for Public Land has partnered with the Department of Education, the Department of Environmental Protection, the School Construction Authority, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and many elected officials to convert 214 asphalt lots into publicly accessible community playgrounds on school property that also serve as green infrastructure to absorb stormwater and combat the urban heat island effect. This is a good deal for the City because our delivery is efficient. Our present costs are approximately \$1.5 million per acre, with much of that cost provided by private philanthropy, and our streamlined methods take 12 to 18 months from start of participatory design to construction completion. I note that we currently spend \$1,700 per tree at our playgrounds.

Schoolyards to playgrounds feature shade trees, gardens, and recreational facilities that provide places to gather, exercise and play for students and neighbors alike. In the most productive stretch between 2007 and 2011, the Department of Parks and Recreation managed construction at 123 sites where The Trust for Public Land led design. Since 2014, we have not worked with the Department of Parks and Recreation, but we have continued the partnership with the Schools Construction Authority, Department of Education, and the Department of Environmental Protection.

On our existing projects for which there were historical capital outlays, the COVID-19 pandemic and the City's freeze on reimbursements did slow down this process over the spring and summer, but now the money owed to us is currently being reimbursed.

New project starts were delayed under the City's freeze on new capital starts, this year, but we finally received approval from the Schools Construction Authority in late February 2021 to bid out the following green schoolyards:

- PS 2M (Chinatown)
- PS 223Q (Jamaica)
- PS 293/Pan American HS (Elmhurst)
- PS 71K (Williamsburg)
- PS 295K (South Slope)
- PS 306X (Mount Hope)
- PS 107X (Classon Point)

Collectively, these newest playground parks serve schools with 4,606 students and also communities with 259,835 residents who live within a 10-minute walk. As the COVID-19 crisis continues, it is more important than ever to have outdoor places for education, recreation, and socializing.

While capital funding for green schoolyards comes from Councilmember and Borough President discretionary funds, as well as New York State funds, the City provides operational funds through funding for additional custodian hours to open green schoolyards after school hours and on the weekend.

All community playgrounds depend on custodians to ensure that they remain safe and accessible for community use outside of school hours. Currently this is approximately \$61,000 a year in custodial funding per site. Community playgrounds built before 2018 receive this essential funding, the City ceased to allocate additional custodial funding for 28 new school playgrounds opening between 2016 and 2022. Unfortunately, in recent years custodial funding, which we understand is allocated as part of DPR's Schoolyards to Playgrounds budget, has not grown to match new schoolyards that have been built. There are currently 28 sites that do not receive custodial funding or for which such funding is not anticipated, and this number will grow as we build more community playgrounds:

Opened in 2016

- PS/MS 214X – West Farms, Bronx (funded by BP Diaz, Jr.)
- PS 15M – East Village (CM Rosie Mendez/now CM Carlina Rivera)

Opened in 2017

- PS 120Q – Flushing (BP Melinda Katz/CM Peter Koo)

Opened in 2018

- PS 361/61M – East Village (BP Brewer/CM Rosie Mendez/ CM Carlina Rivera)
- PS 140Q – Jamaica (BP Katz/ CM I. Daneek Miller)
- JHS 189Q – Flushing (BP Melinda Katz/CM Peter Koo)
- PS 19M – East Village (BP Brewer/CM Mendez/ CM Carlina Rivera)
- JHS 250Q – Flushing (BP Katz/CM Rory Lancman)
- PS 33M – Chelsea (CM Corey Johnson)
- JHS 227Q – East Elmhurst (BP Melinda Katz)

Opened in 2019

- MS 354K – Crown Heights (NYS Gov. Cuomo Vital Brooklyn)
- Q445- Bryant HS – Long Island City (BP Melinda Katz)
- MS 384X – Foxhurst (BP Diaz/CM Rafael Salamanca Jr.)
- PS 145K – Bushwick (NYS Gov. Cuomo Vital Brooklyn)
- PS 184M – Chinatown (LMCR/CDBG HUD -Mayor's office of Resiliency)
- PS 221Q – Little Neck (BP Katz/CM Barry Grodenchik)

Opened in 2020

- MS 339X – Bronx (BP Diaz / CM Vanessa Gibson)

Scheduled to open spring/summer 2021:

- PS 84Q -- Long Island City (BP Katz / CM Costa Constantinides) (postponed from Fall 2020 due to school closure week of Grand Opening)
- PS 130K -- Brooklyn (CM Brad Lander)
- PS 2M –Chinatown (LMCR/CDBG-HUD through Mayor’s Office of Resiliency and CM Margaret S. Chin)
- MS 71K - Brooklyn (BP Adams / CM Stephen Levin)

Scheduled to open in late FY21 or early FY22

- PS 295/MS 445K –Brooklyn (BP Adams)
- Q744 - PanAm International HS/Civic Leadership/Voyages Prep Queens (BP Katz / CM Daniel Dromm)
- PS 107/Icahn Middle School, Bronx – (BP Diaz, Jr. / CM Ruben Diaz, Sr.)
- PS 37Q – Queens (BP Katz / CM Daneek I. Miller)
- PS 132X Pre-K yard – Bronx (CM Vanessa Gibson)
- PS 111Q - (BP Katz / CM Jimmy Van Bramer)
- JHS 267/327X Bronx Latin – Bronx (BP Diaz, Jr. / CM Vanessa Gibson)

The City’s failure to re-baseline operational support to match capital investments in green schoolyards has meant that many schools are unable to keep these community spaces open to the public. The disappointing result is that many newly-built, tax-funded parks lock their gates and have been closed to the community. With the global pandemic causing greater stress and making social distancing a necessity, parks and playgrounds are more crucial than ever. We have received many calls from frustrated neighbors of the above-listed playgrounds who don’t understand why the City would close new facilities to children and families over the summer of 2020

We ask that the Council re-baseline and index custodial funding through the Department of Parks and Recreation budget. The current gap is only **\$1.8 million**, and restoring that funding would be a cost-effective way to open new park space across the city.

Finally, in addition to green schoolyards, The Trust for Public Land has overseen the construction of larger parks, such as Heritage Park on Staten Island using Port Authority funds and South Point Park on Roosevelt Island using funds from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. As the Department of Parks and Recreation starts to implement its new design-build authority and otherwise seeks to more

efficiently deliver capital projects, The Trust for Public Land would welcome the opportunity to partner with the City to design and build projects on New York City parkland

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about these critical matters and to strengthen our park system.

UAA Testimony for March 12th NY City Council Budget Hearing for NYC Parks

I am Wendy Paige and am here today representing the United Athletic Association (UAA), a Not-for-Profit advocacy group representing some 16 Sports organizations throughout NYC. We are also members of the New Yorkers 4 Parks Play Fair Coalition and helped to get previous budgets increased for Parks.

UAA is asking for a full restoration of funding for NYC Parks staffing. Last year NYC Parks had a reduction in maintenance and operations seasonal staff causing a significant decrease in work hours and maintenance visits to parks and athletic fields.

We are seeing AstroTurf Fields that were resurfaced with new turf 8 months ago already in need of repair. If this continues and no maintenance programs are put in place, compounded by the lack of rules, regulations and guidelines, these fields will continue to become unsafe and unplayable. These fields will need to be reconstructed again within the next 12 months, costing the taxpayers and the City hundreds of thousands of dollars which we do not have at present.

If Parks' current rules and regulations are properly followed and fields are properly assigned and maintained, reconstructed fields can and will exceed its life expectancy remaining safe and usable throughout while preserving the integrity of these fields for the next 10+ years.

We continue to support the tremendous investment this body and the City has and continues to make in our Parks and Athletic Fields, The appropriate investment and funding would enable proper field maintenance be given the importance and priority it deserves.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

New York City
Urban Field Station
Fort Totten

Mailing address:
290 Broadway, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10007

To: NYC City Council Committee on Land Use

Subject: Testimony for the Hearing- New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Budget

Date: March 12, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic. I'm a Research Social Scientist with the USDA Forest Service. Our team at the New York City Urban Field Station, which works in close collaboration with the NYC Parks Department and the Natural Areas Conservancy, has spent 18 years researching the use, value, meaning, and stewardship of green space. My testimony draws entirely on peer reviewed research including, our current study on the impacts of adaptation to COVID-19 on the management of green space and environmental stewardship.

It is well-documented in the literature that public open space is a critical resource to support public health and well-being, including physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being (Larson et al. 2016; Campbell et al. 2016, Svendsen et al. 2016). Our research found that for many New Yorkers, their neighborhood park is their only outdoor resource (Auyeung et al. 2016). And we know that during COVID-19 shelter-in-place and social distancing, this trend toward increased and localized park use has continued (Venter et al. 2020; Lopez et al. 2010). We also know from patterns of economic decline and disinvestment across the country, that it doesn't take much for these crucial green space resources to decline in maintenance, to be less welcoming, or even to become unsafe. This was experienced firsthand by New Yorkers during the 1970s fiscal crisis that led to subsequent budget cuts and disinvestment in parkland and maintenance, out of which emerged the public-private partnership model of Central Park Conservancy and later dozens of conservancies citywide.

There is an essential — though often less visible — labor force of paid professionals and volunteers that care for the city's green and blue spaces maintaining them for the public. Community organizations play a pivotal, but often unseen role in supporting public open spaces and activating them as social infrastructure -- leveraging significant person power, time, and resources. Over 800 community organizations engaged in environmental action – what we call “civic stewardship groups” responded to our STEW-MAP 2017 survey, representing an estimated 540,000 members and staff and with budgets totaling approximately \$800 million (Landau et al. 2019). During times of disturbance, these civic stewardship groups act as *'green responders.'* After a crisis, first responders help to stabilize life and property. As part of longer-term recovery and preparedness cycles, stewards can help to rebuild communities and landscapes through environmental action. This pattern has repeated over time in New York City, with stewardship groups forming or adapting their work in response to the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, September 11th, Hurricane Sandy, and now COVID-19 (Campbell et al. 2019; Svendsen and Campbell 2010; Chan et al. 2015). The act of caring for local places can transform not only the physical environment, but also our relationships to those places and to each other.

Civic engagement is critical to public space. In addition to providing labor and increasing capacity, it strengthens democracy via empathy, innovation, and fostering social trust (Fisher et al. 2015). Civic stewardship can increase community and cultural relevance by providing locally tailored and specific programming, events, and activities (Campbell et al., in review). These civic stewardship groups work in specific geographic territories, support a wide range of open space types, have different capacities and levels of professionalization, and operate via organizational networks that span civic, public, and private sectors (Fisher et al. 2012; Connolly et al. 2013, 204; Johnson et al. 2019). As such, we know

that engagement is uneven across the landscape, and this has a special consequence for vulnerable communities, as well as a cost for government (Taylor 2009; Sampson 2012, 2017; Klinenberg 2018).

Our current COVID-19 research on land management and environmental stewardship highlights that:

- Along with the increase in parks use, we have seen a decrease in the staffing and related capacity support for local civic stewardship groups. These groups are currently working with limited capacity to continue to take care of our green spaces at a time where they are vitally needed.
- Not an either/or, but a both/and approach is needed to support an interdependent, equitable system of stewardship across public, civic, and private sectors. The public sector provides crucial parks maintenance workers as paid jobs, but volunteerism and civic leadership provide important sources of personal meaning, community contribution, and social ties, particularly in these times of high unemployment and underemployment.
- We have an over-reliance, but under-resourcing of civic stewardship groups in frontline communities.
- Many important civic organizations in our city lack access to information and resources due to limited networks and capacity; organizations have a need for greater strategic coordination to maximize their potential. There is a need to support collaborative partnerships in order to strengthen and sustain environmental governance capacity.
- Vibrant urban public open spaces require government and NGO programs that enable and foster civic engagement at all times of year and in all neighborhoods.

As we think through the path to recovery and to safeguard communities in the future, we would be wise to consider all those who help maintain safe, vibrant, and welcoming natural areas. This includes making sure our municipal workforce, local conservancies, community organizations with place-based expertise as well as our volunteer support programs have capacity and can function to meet demand. By attending to all those ‘behind the scenes’ who care for our green and blue spaces, we can build back better and build back green, and play fair.

Sincerely,

Lindsay K. Campbell, Research Social Scientist, USDA Forest Service

On behalf of the STEW-MAP Research Team:

Lindsay K. Campbell, Research Social Scientist, USDA Forest Service

Erika S. Svendsen, Research Social Scientist, USDA Forest Service

Michelle Johnson, Research Ecologist, USDA Forest Service

Sophie Plitt, Partnerships Coordinator, Natural Areas Conservancy in partnership with USDA Forest Service

Laura Landau, Doctoral student, Rutgers University in collaboration with USDA Forest Service

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March 15, 2021

Allison Jones
310 W 120th St, Apt 1A
New York, NY 10027

Re: NYC Council Testimony

Dear Council Members –

I'm writing to express support of our beloved, and *essential*, NYC Parks! Funding is critical to ensure that our NYC Parks, especially parks in unserved communities, are SAFE, CLEAN and ACCISSIBLE to all.

As lead volunteer coordinator in Morningside Park in Harlem, I can attest to the need for increased funding. While our volunteers have made extraordinary contributions to our park during this pandemic, they cannot, and should not, replace skilled, full-time park staff.

Cared for green spaces are critical the health and vitality of our New York community. Please continue to fund our parks.

Kindly,

Allison Jones
Morningside Park Volunteer Coordinator
Friends of Morningside Park Board Member

Bronx Parks are Essential

Because the Bronx has the highest of health and income inequities in the City, increased funding for parks is essential for our health.

Karen Argenti | February 28, 2021

City Council Parks Hearing

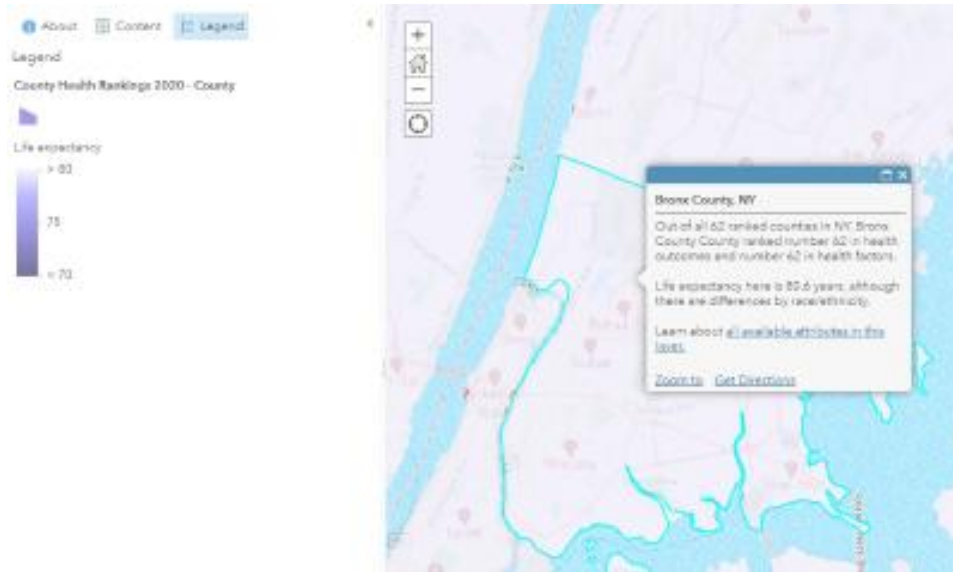
March 12, 2021 Parks Budget Hearing

In the Bronx, parks are essential to meet health and income inequalities, requiring an additional funding formula.

Bronx Health & the City

- Ranking of **62 out of 62 in health outcomes in NYS**, still
- More **incomes of less than \$29,000** per household
- Highest household **income under \$75,000** of any borough
- Largest number of **low income community** census

- High number of **people with no health insurance** (and that was before COVID)
- Highest number of people with **income below the poverty level** >26%



The Bronx ranks 62 out of 62 in health outcomes in New York State

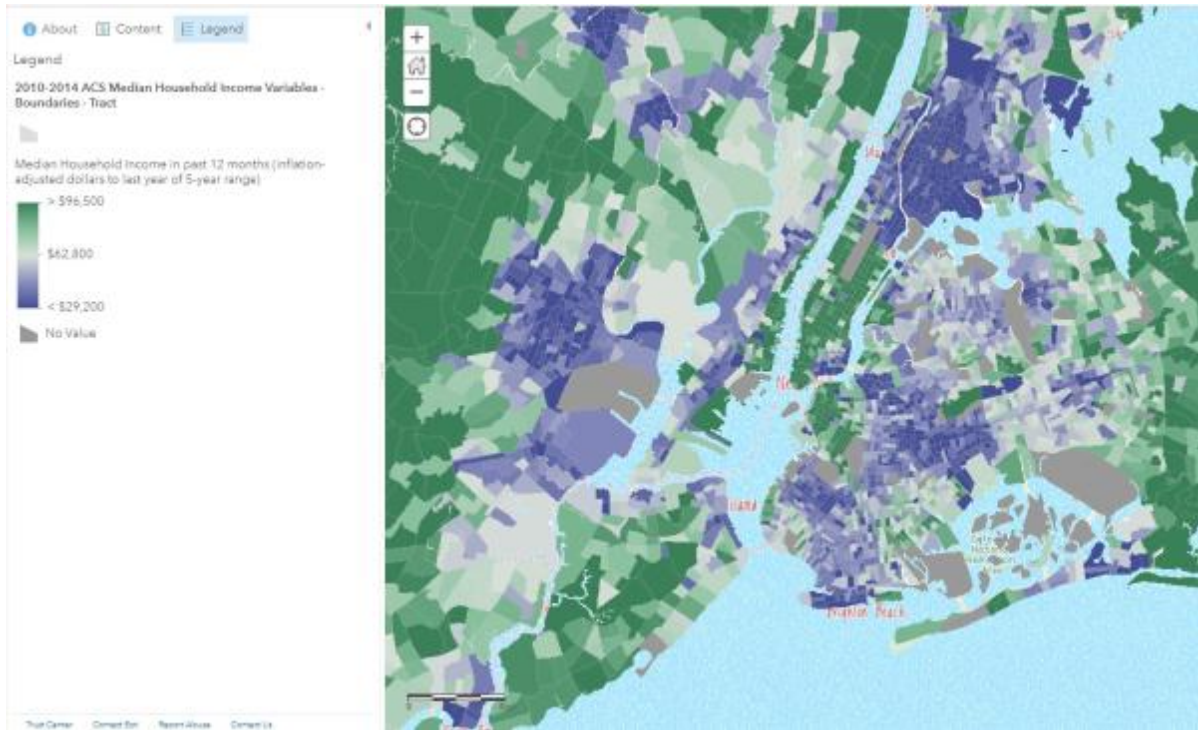
The Bronx ranks 62 in health outcomes in New York State:

Out of all 62 ranked counties in NY, Bronx County ranked number 62 in health outcomes and number 62 in health factors. Life expectancy here is 80.6 years, although there are differences by race/ethnicity.

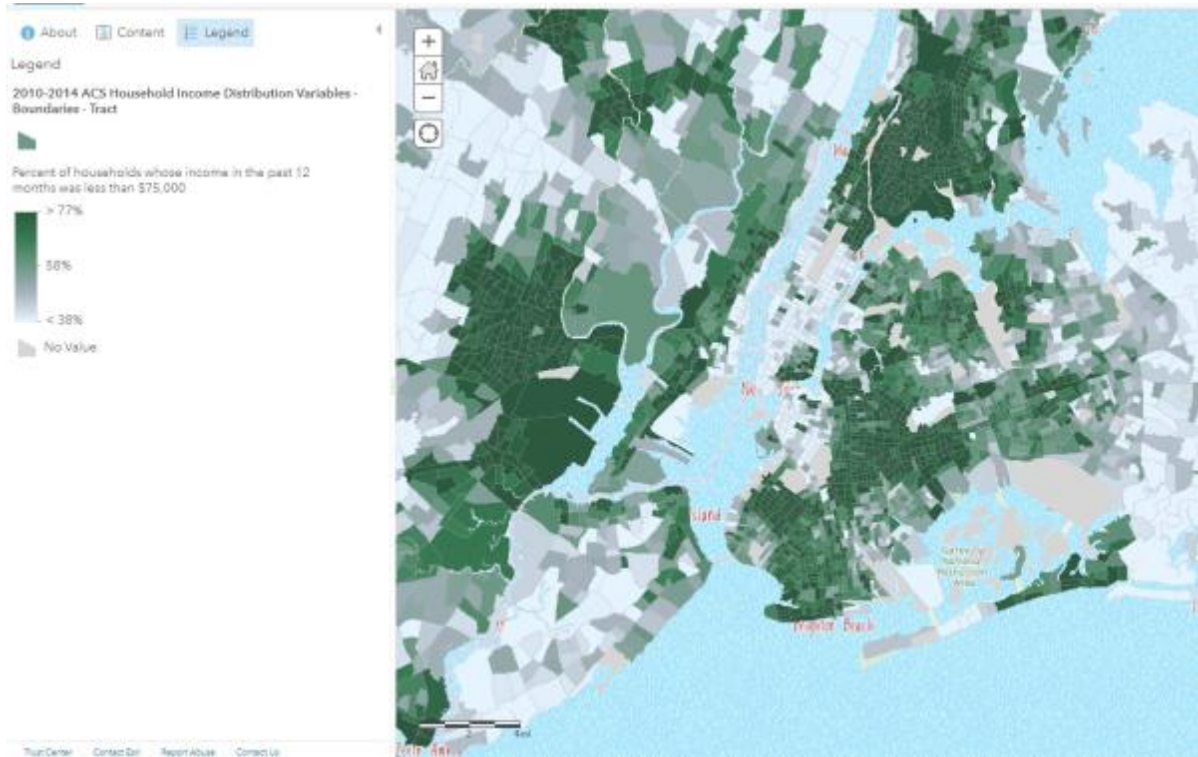
HEALTH OUTCOMES, FACTORS & LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 62 NYS COUNTIES

County	Health Outcomes Ranked	Health Factors	Life Expectancy
Queens County	7	20	83.8 years
New York County	6	11	84.9 years
Kings County	15	53	82.6 years
Richmond County	21	19	80.9 years
Bronx County	62	62	80.6 years

A measure of the City



Blue Purple indicates incomes of less than \$29,000 for household income



Dark Green indicates Household income less than \$75,000

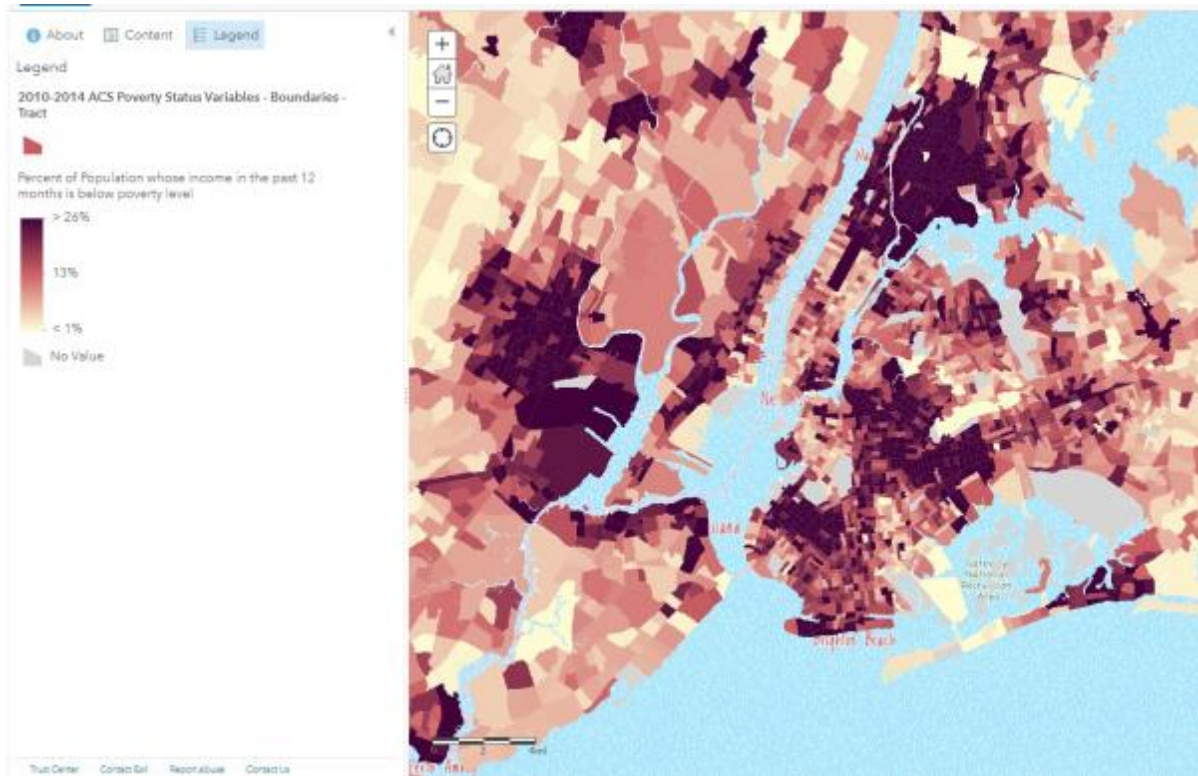


Low Income Community Census Tracts

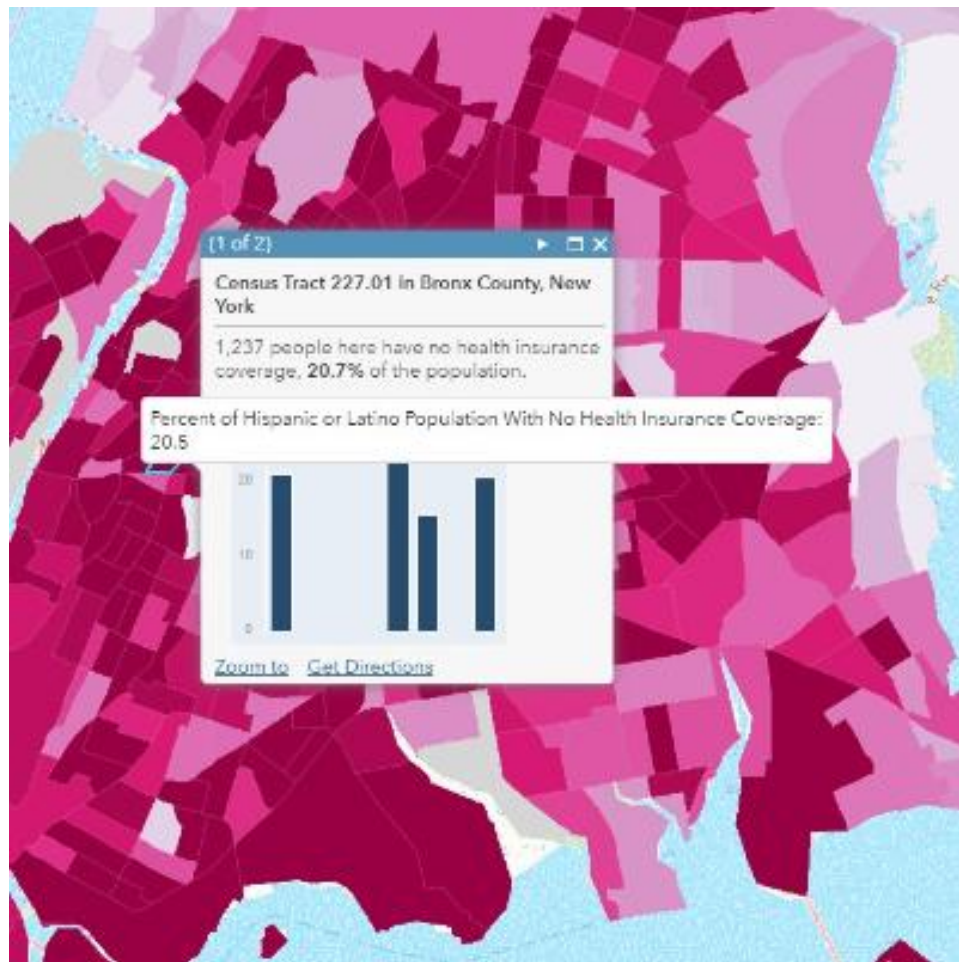
Green indicates the Low Income Community Census Tracts. The indicated one is in the north of the Cross Bronx Expressway, where 49% of the population is in poverty with a median family income of \$23,494.



21% of the Population in this Census Tract has no Health insurance coverage



Dark Brown indicates the percentage of population whose income is below the poverty level >26%. The Bronx is the darker of the boroughs.



Indicates the Hispanic or Latino Population with no health coverage



Indicates the Black or African American Population with no health coverage

Platform for Bronx Parks

As you can see, the Bronx suffers more than any other county in terms of health needs. Below is our platform we hope you will adopt this funding session. We address changes to the [Expense Budget](#), needed [Policy Changes](#) that impact funding, and [area specific concerns](#).



Especially in our dense urban setting, and during the COVID-19 Pandemic, parks have become our salvation for our emotional wellbeing. Parks are the place that children play. It is a

Mill Pond Park

safe open space where anyone can talk at a safe distance.

Last year, Parks Employees were asked to work outside. They made our parks safe. Volunteers did work to pick up litter, but are managed by these employees. Budget cuts due to the loss of revenue and increased cost of COVID-19, must be made whole now that we have the Federal Stimulus for City and State.



Harlem River Waterfront in the Bronx along the future Greenway

NYC Parks and Recreation Expense Budget

1% for Parks. Begin to raise the Parks Budget by 10% each year until we get to 1%. Restore last year's 7%PEG.

Double 2018 Seasonal Hiring to keep our parks clean.

Raise staffing levels to 5000. Not replacing needed personnel who retire or leave means less programs for the Bronx. We need more not less employment opportunities.



Van Cortlandt Park Lake

Policy Changes

Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) programming to support to vulnerable communities.

No Alienation of Parkland for non park purposes.

Rename Parks that memorialize racist historical events.

Indemnify local parks partnership groups that provide programming and stewardship.



Randall's Island Park, looking for a place to dock on the Harlem River.

Area Specific concerns

Harlem River in the Bronx on and near water access including greenways, recreational water-based activities at the edge, upland access from city streets, and the assignment of a Parks Catalyst Person to help stakeholders.

Rikers Island in the Bronx. Create a water-based recreational facility on Rikers Island for the Bronx, with waterfront access and a greenways perimeter.

More than 40 projects from Bronx Parks Speak Up

Parkland & Waterfront Parks need extra funding



Map of our Parks and Green Spaces

We have a lot of Green in the Bronx, now we need the staff, programs, outreach, and maintenance to take care of our parks. We need coterminous parks leadership in each community board district -- not shared supervisors.

As explained in the beginning, we need a "handicap" in the funding

formula for the Bronx. If you want to help the American Dream to be in the middle class, and those working hard to get into the middle class, our communities need a little extra. Extra funding in Parks and more.

Parks are sustainable

One final point is that the New York City Parks Department is the only agency helping us mitigate climate change. Without parks and open spaces, all the land would be stolen for high rise buildings that encompass the entire lot.

Nature works to purify air and water, protecting our health while providing homes for what's left of the biodiversity that once made this amongst the richest temperate landscapes and estuaries on the planet.

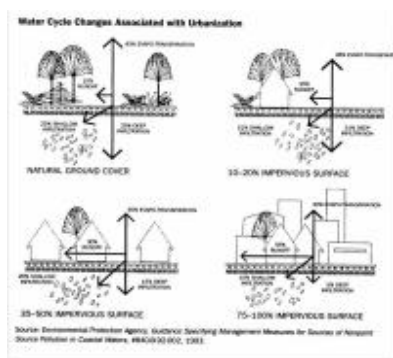


Figure 4: Water Cycle and Urbanization

What was once natural ground cover with 25% deep infiltration is now only 5% in most places of the City. Special places can be found with 30% deep infiltration, not many.

Parks are the Lungs and Kidneys of the City

Low impact development and use of ecosystem services to keep the water *in situ* (where it falls) are two ways to do this. Ecosystem services are nature based processes that mitigate imperviousness and stormwater by using Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructures.

While this is a difficult task to accomplish, it is not impossible. Just look at the Special Natural Areas District In the Bronx, where we have 900 acres. Here people have discovered a way to live in and protect their watershed by limiting landscape development to only

30% cover. There are probably only a few other areas of the city that would fill this prescription -- Jamaica Bay comes to mind, as does our own Van Cortlandt Park with even less than a 30% cover. Savor these areas – the lungs and the kidneys of the City, as they are just as important as our highways, subways, and stock market in keeping the City healthy.

The remainder of the City's development cover is 72%. Yet, the Harlem River Watershed Plan in the Bronx, which covers CB 1, 4, 5, 7 and parts of 8, is 66% impervious. Look at science to help us understand this impact. Tom Schueler of *The Center for Watershed Protection*, classifies stream quality levels by percent impervious: 1% to 10% are stressed, 11% to 25% are impacted, and 26% to 100% are degraded. In fact, research indicates that watersheds are demonstrably and irreversibly degraded when as little as 10% of their surface area is covered by imperviousness.

Deep infiltration promotes clean water as it is filtered in the subsurface -- and for free. Increasing the ecosystem services lower the heat island effect -- a tree does this for free. Together, Parks act to help us, and the cost is minimal. Why can't they get ONE PERCENT OF THE CITY'S BUDGET?

Thank you

Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, www.bceq.org

Content by Karen Argenti, BCEQ

March 12, 2021



New York City Council, Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation | March 12, 2020

Testimony By: Nilka Martell, Bronx River Alliance, Vice Chair

My name is Nilka Martell and I am the Vice Chair of the Bronx River Alliance. I am also a life-long Bronxite, the founder and director of Loving the Bronx, and an enthusiastic champion of all Bronx parks. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY22 budget and the importance of restoring full funding to our vital parks. I want to specifically thank Council Member Salamanca and Speaker Johnson for their generous and dedicated support for the Bronx River over many years.

The Bronx River Alliance is a nonprofit formed by community activists and government partners in 2001 to protect, improve and restore the Bronx River corridor and greenway so that they can be healthy resources for the communities through which they flow. We work in close partnership with NYC Parks and dozens of community-based organizations. We are achieving what many thought was impossible--the creation of beautiful waterfront parks, the restoration of forests and salt marshes, even the return of a beaver! Perhaps most importantly, we have transformed what was once an abandoned dumping ground into a cherished community asset.



I am here today to call for the restoration of FY20 funding levels to NYC Parks. In 2020, our parks demonstrated how essential they are. They were one of the few places that remained opened during the darkest days of the pandemic. And yet, NYC Parks sustained a devastating budget cut, the second largest of any city agency. We all saw the impact of inadequate funding for our parks last year - they were full of garbage; dumping and graffiti increased; enforcement and security couldn't keep up. Our parks suffered. New York City residents suffered, layering challenges on an inexpressibly difficult year.

Today, the Bronx River Alliance stands with all those calling for the City to "Play Fair" and fully reinstate funds that were cut from the Parks budget in 2020. Specifically, we ask you to:

- reinstate FY20 levels for seasonal hires
- eliminate the hiring freeze, which has left key leadership positions empty for over a year
- restore full funding for the Parks Equity Initiative, which has funded hands-on environmental education for young people along the Bronx River corridor
- restore \$4M in funding for the "Forest Management Framework for New York City" to protect our natural areas, including those on the Bronx River

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express the Bronx River Alliance's support for increased investment in NYC Parks.

Sincerely,
Nilka Martell
Vice Chair, Bronx River Alliance



Contact: Clare Miflin
clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org
718.306.9525
March 12, 2021

Testimony for 3.12.21 Parks Budget Hearing

Parks needs funding to help them compost landscape waste with food waste to make good soil for Parks.

NYC Parks High Performance Landscape Guidelines: 21st Century Parks for NYC, discusses how Parks should: *assist in the development of community stewardship, encourage active recreation; and through education should effect a transformation of social priorities about ecological and economic objectives, and provide future generations with a sustainable environment supported by regenerative systems.* It details how Parks should use compost to improve soil functioning, noting the numerous benefits from increasing water holding capacity, supplying nutrients and beneficial microorganisms, suppressing pathogens and reusing organic waste.

Yet recently NYC Parks have taken the view that they only promote “closed -loop composting” of their own landscape waste – most recently stated in the December 2020 joint Parks – DSNY City Council hearing which discussed Parks decision to terminate the leases of LESEC and Big Reuse.

This makes no sense.

Organic waste is transformed into compost by microbes. They need carbon and nitrogen. Both are essential elements, part of every living cell. The optimum ratio is 1:2 of browns: greens. Browns are high in carbon, and readily supplied by leaves and tree trimmings, the most common landscape waste. Greens are high in nitrogen, and supplied by weeds and grass clippings. A typical park with trees is very short of greens, which can easily be supplied by food scraps. Greens speed up the composting process and allow it to reach the temperatures necessary to kill pathogens.

Compost can hold 5 times its weight in water. Compost reduces run off of pollutants into the local waterways. Compost helps restore health of the soil, which globally stores more carbon than all the plants, atmosphere and ocean combined. Healthy soil is alive, and teeming with microbes. Compost helps ensure the good microbes predominate, the ones that protect the plants from diseases and help them thrive. Healthy soil filters pollutants and holds stormwater, reducing flooding and ensuring plants stay green without watering. Healthy plants and trees filter the city air, and make it cooler in summer.

To be sure, it takes space to make compost, and Parks is rightly protective of space for people. But compost operations can also offer extensive active recreation and education possibilities, as well as regenerating the soil of the Park.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center, Big Reuse and Earth Matters welcome thousands of volunteers to participate in recreational composting, and educate thousands of school children every year. They combine food scraps from local community with landscape waste to generate enough compost to



Contact: Clare Miflin
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March 12, 2021

regenerate the soils of the parks they are within, and support the health of local street trees and urban agriculture.

Healthy soil nurtures healthy plants. Allowing New Yorker's to participate in making healthy soil provides an outlet for the fear and panic that the knowledge of human destruction of nature and the coming climate change brings.

A [study](#) found that for many volunteer participating in the MillionTreesNYC events, it was their first act of volunteerism, and follow up interviews found that they went on to be more civically engaged in their communities in other ways. We are at an "all hands on deck" moment. From social inequities to climate change to just managing to keep NYC streets clean, we need to provide support for the public to be able to help the city recover.

We recommend budget increases for Parks to be able to expand community composting, starting with every large park in the city. There are enough enthusiastic community composters in every neighborhood ready to help. The money will help the city twice, reducing food waste which would otherwise be trucked to landfills and contribute to climate change.

Rather than terminating leases for composters like Big Reuse on Parks land under the Queensborough Bridge, or redesigning the East Side Coastal Resilience park with no home for the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Parks needs to welcome community composters and collaborate with them as they will help Parks compost their own landscape waste, and will provide compost for them to make good soil for so NYC Parks can thrive and fulfill their own mission.

Please restore the \$80 million to the NYC Parks budget. I live right next to Herbert Von King Park in Bed-Stuy, and unfortunately I've never seen so much litter there in my life. The park has never been more crowded or used more as it has been in the past year—the community depends on it for safe socialization and for keeping a sense of community during the pandemic. We deserve a clean park that will be safe and pleasant to use for years to come. To ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of New Yorkers, it is the city government's duty to continue to invest in and prioritize NYC Parks, and only restoring the budget will do this.

Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront

Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
Manhattan, New York

The Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront is writing to express our profound appreciation for your decision to commit \$284 million in City capital funds to repair and restore the East River Esplanade from 94th to 125th Street. Considering the deteriorating condition of this section of the Esplanade, we urge you to include these funds in your FY 21-22 capital budget and do everything in your power to move this project forward in the most expeditious possible manner. We stand ready to support its approval this spring by the City Council together with a speedy design, procurement process, and construction.

This East Harlem section is the final major segment of your grand vision for the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, a celebrated initiative to create a continuous loop around the entire perimeter of Manhattan. Until now, it has not been the beneficiary of a substantial capital investment to restore and improve it. The west side of this Greenway with Hudson River Park as its centerpiece is in good shape. The City has started work on six critical projects on the East Side: 1) East River Pinch Point project at East 13-15th Streets, 2) United Nations Esplanade from 41st to 53rd Streets, 3) waterfront park from East 53rd to East 61st Street, 4) Harlem River Greenway from East 125th to 134th Streets, 5) Harlem River Speedway project from 145th to 165th Streets and 6) Inwood section that encompasses Sherman Creek to Inwood Hill Park. Your \$284 million dollar investment addresses the current gap, and is also a vital component of Regional Plan Association's Five Borough Bikeway proposal.

A City press release proudly proclaimed two years ago that the completion of these projects would "connect five miles of continuous waterfront greenway from East 53rd to 145th Streets". However, the progressively deteriorating condition of the East Harlem Esplanade from 94th to 125th Street belies this noble vision with its sinkholes, two sets of fences blocking access through 114th and 117th Streets, and over 1300 feet of crumbling seawall. In addition, the neglected state of the East Harlem Esplanade is epitomized by the condition of the Pier at 107th Street that is now condemned. The attached photographs make this assessment graphically compelling. Groups like East River CREW once provided free rowing instruction and access to the water at East 96th street and that is no longer available. This problem is compounded by the exceptionally low portion of land set aside as parkland on the Manhattan side of the East River in the highly diverse and growing East Harlem community. They deserve easily accessible outstanding waterfront and recreational activities.

In light of our strong interest in and support for restoration of this final section of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, we request the City keep us apprised of your timeline for formal approval of this capital budget item. It is imperative that the City advance this project all the way to completion in the most expedient manner feasible as a matter of elemental social justice and public safety. Given the experience of the NYCEDC in overseeing the other East Side projects that include significant resiliency measures, we would like to assume that NYCEDC will play a cooperating role with City Parks in view of the extensive coastal resiliency measures being put into place around our waterways.

For these reasons, the Coalition for the East Harlem Waterfront strongly applauds your decision to invest \$284 million in the East Harlem Esplanade. We look forward to a spectacular new open green space along the East Harlem Waterfront and completion of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway.

Sincerely,

Please see signature pages that follow



Alliance for Kips Bay

Molly Hollister
Molly Hollister, President



Bike New York

Kenneth J. Podiziba
Kenneth J. Podiziba, President and CEO



Billion Oyster Project

Katie Mosher
Katie Mosher, Director of Programs



Community Board 8

R. Squire
Russel Squire, Chair CB 8
Tricia Shimamura, Barry Schneider
Co-chairs of Parks & Waterfront



Community Board 11

Nilsa Orama
Nilsa Orama, Chair of CB11



Concrete Safaris

Mac Levine, Executive Director

Jessica Elliott

Jessica Elliott, Chair of Environment, CB11



Harlem One Stop



CIVITAS

Jim Tripp
Jim Tripp, Board VP
William Bateson
Bill Bateson, AIA Board Member



East River Crew

V. Gilbert
Victoria Gilbert, President
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El Barrio Fishing Club

Roger Hernandez
Roger Hernandez, Jr., President



Friends of the East River Esplanade

Jennifer Ratner
Jennifer Ratner, Board President
Stacy Papas
Stacy Papas, Executive Director



Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District

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Lower East Side Ecology Center

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Christine Datz-Romero, Executive Director



The NY Harbor School

Jeffrey Chetirko
Jeffrey Chetirko, Principal

Mauricio Gonzalez
Mauricio Gonzalez, Biologist



New Yorkers For Parks

Adam Ganser
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New York League of Conservation Voters

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**Robert J. Rodriguez
NYS Assembly**

Robert J. Rodriguez
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**Rebecca A. Seawright
NYS Assembly**

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Rebecca A. Seawright



Regional Plan Association

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Transportation Alternatives

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Tri-state Transportation Campaign

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Uptown Grand Central

Carey King
Carey King, Director



The Waterfront Alliance



WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Peggy Shepard
Peggy Shepard, Co-founder and Executive Director

Please send any responses to EastHarlemWaterfront@gmail.com

cc.

Diana Ayala, *Member of the City Council*

Justin Brannan, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts*

Gale Brewer, *Manhattan Borough President*

Daniel Dromm, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Finance*

Adriano Espaillat, *US Congressman*

Henry Gutman, *Commissioner of the City Department of Transportation*

Ben Kallos, *Member of the City Council*

Peter Koo, *Chair of NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation*

Rachel Loeb, *Acting President of NYC Economic Development Corporation*

Carolyn Maloney, *US Congresswoman*

Mitchell J. Silver, *Commissioner of the City Department of Parks and Recreation*

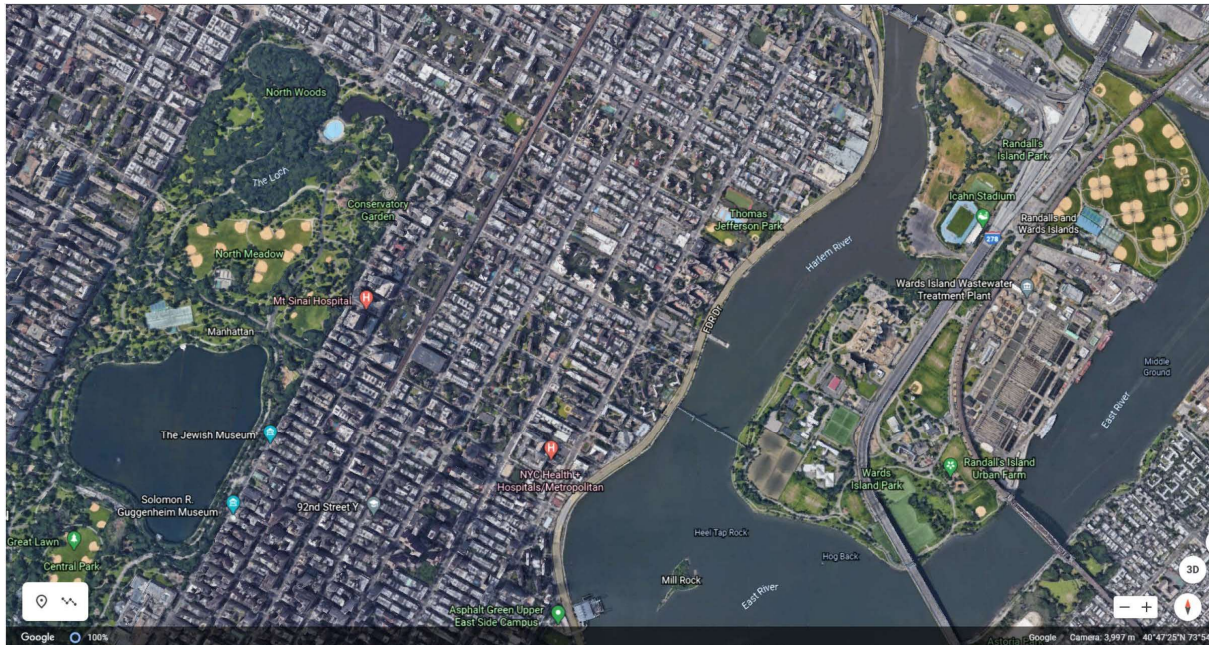
Scott M. Stringer, *City Comptroller*

Jumaane D. Williams, *NYC Public Advocate*

And to key members of pertinent City Council Committees.

East River Esplanade, 90th to 125th Streets

2/24/2021 Update 2



Map of East River Esplanade, west side of the Harlem River from Transfer station (bottom of photo) at 90th Street to RFK Bridge at 125th Street (top of photo). Central Park and Randal's Island are included for context. East Harlem has few parks of its own besides the Esplanade.

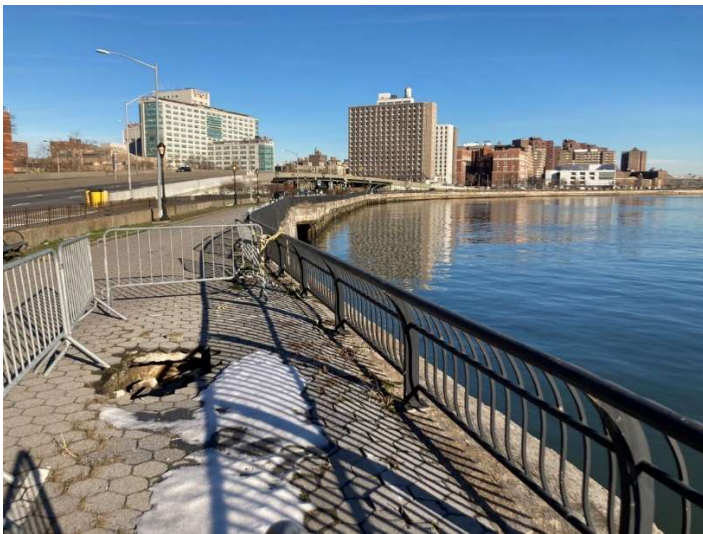


Photo 1 : Looking north from 93rd street, typical sink hole, one of many. See "A" on Keymap



Close up of the same sink hole. See "A" on the keymap, page 3.

Above: Hexagonal pavers and concrete topping have collapsed into a **cavity formed by tidal action and water seeping underneath the structure**. This happens frequently along the esplanade. Temporary barriers are installed for safety here.



Photo 2 Looking north from 98th St. Another sinkhole from tidal action. The FDR drive can be seen to left, adjacent to eroding structure.



Fencing around multiple sinkholes often leaves only a narrow strip of bare earth between fencing and the FDR



Photo 4: Pier at 107th Street: See "C" on Keymap
Potentially at major destination, it has deteriorated and been deemed unsafe and closed.



Photo 5: The smaller pier at 110th street is deteriorated and closed to public. It could be destination for fishing or sitting, away from FDR.



Photo 6: The remaining areas have minimal planting to obscure noises of nearby cars.



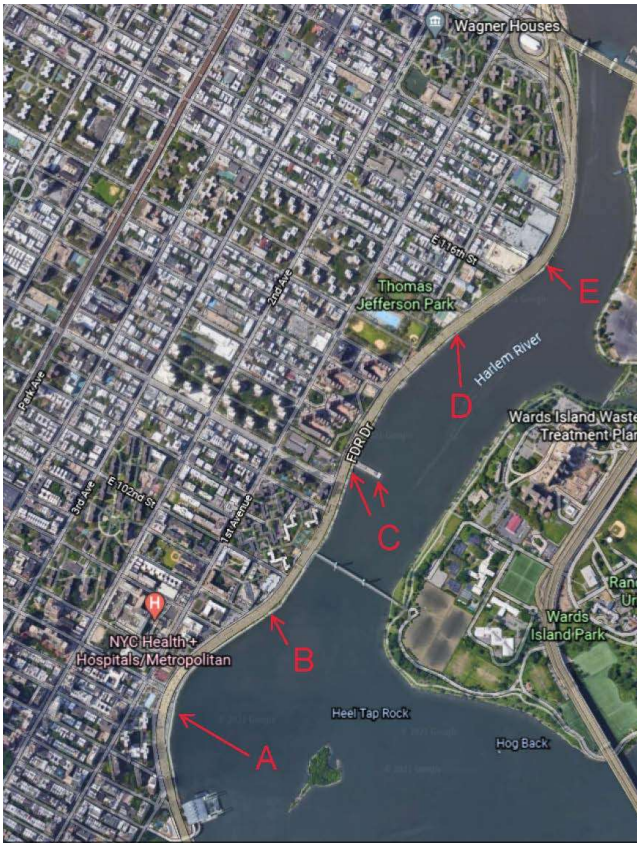
Photo 7: Esplanade north of 114th street has all been closed for safety concerns from structure. See "D" on Keymap, page .



Photo 3: Typical Railing near 105th Street looking north. Concrete is deteriorating under the rails. Balusters in background are not attached to anything as the concrete is missing



For comparison and to show potential: Around 112th street across from Thomas Jefferson Park, this brief section has better planting and not yet any collapsing sink holes. In addition to repairs needed elsewhere, preventative structural work will be needed to preserve the remaining places like this.



Keymap showing 91st – 125th Street.



Above: Fencing at 117th street, looking south.

Photo Key for this letter – see map at right.

- (A) Sinkhole at 94th St.
- (B) Sinkhole and fencing at 101st St.
- (C) Closed Pier at 107th St.
- (D) Fencing at 114th street that blocks all traffic trying to go north
- (E) Fencing at 117th street blocks all traffic heading south.

Note: the area north of 121st street is also closed off by fencing for approximately five years, waiting for installation of safety railings.

Hello, my name is Frank Wu and I am the President of the Court Square Civic Association in Long Island City. Our subdistrict, Court Square, is farther from the waterfront at Hunters Point whom many associate with LIC, and closer to the Queens Plaza district by the former CitiBank building.

I am testifying today as part of the NY4Parks Play Fair Coalition to request the Committee and City Council to restore full funding for NYC Parks.

For so much of the better part of 2020 and this year in 2021, we have seen how critical open public green spaces are to neighborhoods. In my area where new residential high rises are prevalent, our local parks like Court Square Park or Murray Playground are places where everyone can meet, dogs, children, senior citizens, and it creates a sense of a community opposed to one where one can stay in your building and live in a “walled oasis”.

For those on the Council today, by not restoring public investments and increasing funding for NYC Parks, are you saying the NYC we want to live and be a part of is one where one doesn't go to a local park but instead stay in your high-rise residential building with all its amenities, including green space? As someone who lives in a high rise residential building that's not the type of City I'd like to live in.

The Court Sq Civic Association has long advocated for more public green space, we are grateful for capital commitments from our local City Councilmen and other elected officials and hope all neighborhoods can see more investments in their public green parks as well.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Dilcy Benn, President of Local 1505, District Council 37
before the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
FY 2022 Preliminary Budget
March 12, 2021**

Good afternoon Chair Koo and fellow members of the City Council Parks Committee. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify. My name is Dilcy Benn and I am the President of Local 1505 of DC 37 representing close to one thousand City Parks Workers (also referred to as CPWs) primarily in the NYC Parks and Recreation Department. My members work in all five boroughs conducting maintenance in all City Parks.

Once again, I want to thank the Speaker, City Council, and the Mayor for baselining the 100 CPWs we fought for for years. Unfortunately, in the FY 21 budget, **the Parks Department was reduced by \$84 million**. It was one of the largest, if not THE LARGEST, agency cut in the city budget. This came at a time when attendance at parks was unprecedented. When travel bans were in place and many entertainment venues closed due to the pandemic, parks provided a respite for many New Yorkers and their families. At the time, we understood the city was facing a tough fiscal crisis, but this was a time when more parks workers were needed to maintain the cleanliness of parks, not less!

My members are not viewed as frontline workers, but reported to work every day and worked twice as hard to clean and maintain parks, beaches, as well as pools during the height of the pandemic. These workers, who make \$15.48 an hour (to start), were asked to do a lot more with fewer resources. Many of you know the value of my members who report to work daily with a smile on their face to serve the community. Even though many City Councilmembers organized clean-ups in their neighborhoods and parks, this does not make up for the work my members perform. The administration needs to take a long, hard look at how it treats its workforce.

I am here today to urge the City Council to request the Mayor **restore \$78.9 million to the Parks Department**. My immediate ask of the \$78.9 million is for restoration and baselining of **\$10 million** of the FY 21 one-shot for the 100 CPWs and 50 Gardener staff lines so these workers do not have to worry every year whether or not they will have a job.

In addition, I am requesting **\$30 million** to restore the seasonal staff budget for maintenance and operations workers citywide.

I have heard from various groups around the city about how baselining the CPWs in FY 20 improved the conditions of many parks throughout the city. We have come so far and need to keep this trend going. Why go backwards?

Before I conclude my testimony, I want to thank our partners in the Play Fair Now coalition on behalf of my members for standing with us and advocating for them.

With the start of spring in a few weeks and seeing a light at the end of the tunnel with people being vaccinated, there is a lot of work to be done to prepare the parks for the millions of adults and children who will be taking strolls and playing in the park.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to working with you to restore the funding to the Parks Department. I will be happy to take any questions you may have.

**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Emily Nobel Maxwell, Cities Program Director, The Nature Conservancy in New York
March 12, 2021**

My name is Emily Nobel Maxwell and I am the director of The Nature Conservancy's Cities Program in New York. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, and our more than 600 scientists, located in all 50 U.S. states and 70 countries have been working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have 90,000 supporters across New York State, over 35,000 of whom reside in New York City. The Nature Conservancy's New York City Program promotes nature and environmental solutions to enhance the quality of life of all New Yorkers. We advance strategies that create a healthy, resilient and sustainable urban environment and are committed to improving New York City's air, land and water which sustain and support the people and nature of this great city. Statewide, we work with government and non-government partners to tackle climate change, protect land and water, sustainably provide food and water, and build healthy cities.

Today, I would like to express our support for the Play Fair campaign and to strongly encourage the Committee on Parks and Recreation to act to restore and increase funding that is critical to supporting New York City's parks and trees. Last year, NYC Parks sustained an \$84M reduction, approximately 14% of their operating budget. The reduction in funding, as well as the ongoing hiring freeze, has led to a significant reduction in seasonal staff who are vital to sufficiently maintain New York City's parks and open spaces. Parks play an important role in our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, by improving air quality, absorbing heat, and offering shady respite. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has put a strain on the city's economy, the extreme and disproportionate cuts NYC Parks has sustained are alarming, especially considering that the pandemic has underscored the significant role parks, trees, and open space play in ensuring the health, wellbeing and safety of New Yorkers. The impacts on justice and equity are palpable.

NYC Parks is responsible for over half of our urban forest canopy, from individual street trees to large swaths of forested natural areas. Budget cuts to the NYC Parks for the efforts to manage the urban forest are stark. Funding for New York City's trees is at its lowest point in 16 years, which severely limits capacity to provide care and maintenance to this critical resource, jeopardizing its present and future state. The trees that make up our urban forest are essential infrastructure that provide shade and cooling, support cleaner air, sequester carbon, increase energy efficiency, and improve livability and quality of life for New Yorkers. Through our own analysis, and a collaborative partnership with NYC Environmental Justice Alliance, [Just Nature NYC](#), we have documented many inequities in our urban forest and therefore inequities in the important benefits trees provide New Yorkers. Despite the pivotal role of our city's trees, the Parks Department's operating budget for urban forestry programs suffered a 90% cut last year accounting for inflation (from \$25.1 in FY2020 to \$2.6M in FY2021) and are at their lowest point in 11 years. There is also no long-term commitment to fund proper management of forested natural areas, which make up nearly a quarter of city parkland. Though the Forest Management Framework was funded in part in FY2020, the budget for forest restoration is insufficient although New Yorkers are relying on these areas more than ever. Restoring and increasing investments to manage, restore and protect our urban forest as whole, from street trees to forested natural areas, is crucial to ensure we realize the benefits of trees to foster justice, health and equity, particularly in our most heat vulnerable and frontline communities.

[Recent research](#) led by the New School with partners including The Nature Conservancy underscores the need for parks and open spaces. There is overwhelming and consistent public recognition of the many benefits of parks and

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open space. Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported that they currently consider parks and open space to be either “extremely important” or “very important” for their mental health. Eighty percent of respondents reported that parks and open space were either “extremely important” or “very important” for their physical health. Mental health was also identified as more important than physical health, highlighting the value of urban parks and open spaces for alleviating stress, anxiety and other mental health conditions, which have presented a compounding crisis in the face of COVID-19. While the majority of respondents said they had some access to an urban park or open space, the “perceived access,” or ease with which people feel they can reach desired urban parks or open space sites, differed based on location. We found that residents in Queens and Brooklyn overall have lower perceived park and open space access and receive less of their desired features from these spaces, illuminating the ongoing need for increased investments that strive to make our parks system more equitable and just.

It also must be noted that NYC’s green spaces would not be what they are without a [vital civic sector](#) composed of non-profits and volunteers. The groups that steward, tend and advocate green spaces must be recognized, uplifted and resourced at the same time as we sufficiently invest in the public sector.

The protection, maintenance, stewardship, programming, access, and expansion of parks and trees in NYC present tremendous opportunities to advance equity and drive NYC’s COVID-19 recovery. In doing so, we can support a more racially and economically just city. Nature-based jobs can play both a crucial role in providing safe and healthy employment for New Yorkers and in enhancing green spaces to improve quality of life during and after the pandemic. To maintain, expand, and offer all New Yorkers the immense benefits that New York City’s parks and trees provide, sufficient funding to maintain them is required. We are far from achieving that. Reinstating and increasing investments in our parks and trees means renewed commitment to strengthening our resilience to climate change; supporting livable, healthy communities; strengthening our economy; and driving equitable COVID-19 recovery. For this reason, we urge the Committee on Parks and Recreation to take action to restore last year’s budget cuts to New York City parks and trees.

The Nature Conservancy is pleased to be part of this important discussion. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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Fort Greene Tennis Association
www.fortgreenetennis.org
Testimony regarding FY 2022 NYC Parks Department Budget

New York City Council FY22 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Committee on Parks & Recreation
March 16, 2021

Dear Members of the City Council:

We are writing on behalf of Fort Greene Tennis Association, a nonprofit in Brooklyn. Over the past 10 years, we have raised more than \$100k to maintain the tennis courts at Fort Greene Park, which serve thousands of constituents. We're invested in tennis not only at Fort Greene Park but in parks across the City, and we want to emphasize the vital role that the Parks Department's budget plays in making tennis accessible to all New Yorkers.

Tennis forms an important part of the economic, cultural, and daily lives of many New Yorkers. Every August, New York City is home to the US Open Tennis Championships in Flushing Meadows, Queens. This event, which is the only Grand Slam hosted in the US, annually generates \$400 million in economic activity, attracts 850,000 attendees, and creates thousands of jobs.

At a local, recreational level, New Yorkers love tennis. New York City Parks provides access to nearly 600 tennis courts across the five boroughs and the city's residents utilize these facilities to the fullest extent. In 2019, following consistent growth over the preceding four years, there were nearly 15,000 season-permit holders and an untold number of single-use permits were purchased. At NYC Parks' tennis courts, you'll find players both young and old along with a growing network of non-profit organizations, like ours, that provide free or low-cost tennis instruction to children and events and competitions to keep adults active and engaged in the game.

In 2020, New Yorkers' love for tennis took on a whole new meaning and grew to an unprecedented scale. Both newcomers and long-time players saw the sport as an opportunity to stay active while staying socially-distanced and came out to NYC Parks' tennis courts in droves. In Fort Greene Park, 2020 saw local residents travelling to the park daily at sunrise (some travelling as long as 40 minutes each way) to wait in line for the chance to reserve one hour of court time ([link](#)). From July to December last year,



more than 7,500 hours of tennis were played on our six courts. In a community survey our organization conducted ([link](#)), local residents commented:

- “It’s unbelievably hard to get courts here.”
- “It was hard getting courts this year so we gave up. But we used to play there every few days.”
- “I usually play in the morning and have to arrive at the park 45 minutes before sunlight if I want to get a court (that means 5:45am during the Summer)”
- “It’s so hard to get court time that I barely bother making the effort”
- “The only way to get a court is to be there at 6 am and line up which is nuts.”
- “The courts at Jackie Robinson Park on Malcolm X Blvd are a mess. Cracks, trees hang over the courts. It is terrible! They need to be fixed. The amount of people playing there now has grown exponentially over the last year.”

The surge in demand led to extremely long lines and forced residents to find alternative facilities to play tennis, from handball courts to schoolyards and even parking lots. And the same surge in participation that we witnessed in New York City was taking place across the country (our organization was featured as a prime example of this trend - [link](#)). According to a report from the Physical Activity Council ([source](#)):

- An estimated 21.64 million people played tennis in the US in 2020.
- This represented an increase of 4 million players over 2019.
- 3 million of those were new players, which was a 44% increase over 2019.

Similar patterns were also true in other parks besides Fort Greene. Lincoln Terrace Park—located at the intersection of Crown Heights, Weeksville and Brownsville—saw court usage until midnight on a regular basis according to Charles East, head of Lincoln Terrace Tennis Association.

Mark McIntyre, Executive Director of the Riverside Clay Tennis Association in Manhattan, reports:

“In Riverside Park, at the 10 courts at the 96th Street Clay Courts, we saw virtually every court, every hour in use from the day we opened to the day we closed at the end of November. In 25 years working there, I have never seen anything close to that. Nearly 100% usage rate, as opposed to approximately 75% in the past.”

“The same was true at 119th Street hard courts, also 10 courts. The facility was in constant use — every court. However, because Parks provided no attendant at the 119th street courts, many courts were occupied by the same players hour after hour, and so many others who wanted to play could not get on.”



Daniel Carlson, who manages a 200 member tennis Meetup group at Astoria Park in Queens, told us:

“This summer it was common to wait up to 2 hours or more for an open court.”

“I am a frontline healthcare worker. Because of the distance maintained in tennis (singles) this was one of the only sports many people could play during the pandemic and for me personally tennis really played an important part in managing the stress during this past year's quarantine.”

Kings County Tennis League, which uses tennis as an instrument for youth development in and around Brooklyn public housing, has expanded from one to six sites since 2010 and now serves hundreds of kids. Their organization, which relies on alternative facilities such as community centers, reported increased registrations for their programming despite significant limitations imposed by COVID-19.

It should be noted that the usage trends we witnessed in 2020 were not anomalies. At Fort Greene, long lines in pre-dawn hours for tennis courts have been the norm for years now. Since 2010, the number of housing units around Fort Greene and Downtown Brooklyn has grown by 21%. Indeed, some high-rise buildings in the area advertise the tennis courts as a local amenity. But without more public facilities, including tennis courts, to accommodate growing local populations, existing facilities are unable to keep up with increased demand. While we have been experiencing this for several years now, the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and the effect it had on public space has made it impossible to ignore that NYC Parks needs increased fiscal support to serve the City's residents.

It's clear that New Yorkers are in dire need of regular participation in accessible, healthy activities like tennis. With so many new players taking up the sport, we expect demand to remain high for years to come. NYC Parks offers the only affordable way for New Yorkers to access tennis courts.

The Parks budget provides critical support for public tennis facilities, including court attendants who ensure that permits are used correctly so that court access remains equitable. Without dedicated staff, tennis facilities are chaotic, inefficient and serve a much smaller portion of residents than they should. In the long term, the Parks budget helps fund critical maintenance projects that keep the city's courts playable.

Tennis represents just one example of what public parks are for all New Yorkers: an essential resource for physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Funding for Parks



needs to be rebuilt and supported in an ongoing way. The dramatic events of 2020 have only made this more clear to all of us who call New York home.

Sincerely,
Fort Greene Tennis Association Board

CITY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARING FOR PARKS, MARCH, 2021

Testimony of Anne Saxon-Hersh, Director of Development, Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, a nonprofit 501c3 community organization.

My name is Anne Saxon-Hersh and I serve as Director of Development for Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, a 1.5 acre park historically known as the Gateway to the United Nations, an emblem of democracy as the site of marches and protests. In a community underserved by parkland, Hammarskjold Plaza anchors the Turtle Bay neighborhood. The park's Katharine Hepburn Garden is the largest public garden on midtown Manhattan's east side.

Since the park's reconstruction was completed in 1999, our organization has managed to keep this park clean and green. But as service costs escalate and park infrastructure fails, we face challenges beyond the scope of our nonprofit 501c3 community organization. When we entered into the Partnerships for Parks program, we expected the Parks Department to do its fair share. Only by Playing Fair and adequately funding ALL parks, can the inequities which exist across the Boroughs be just and balanced. Only when NYC Parks are adequately funded can public space thrive and with it, the health of our communities. Parks are a lifeline, providing access to nature, fresh air and recreation in an urban environment.

Parks are key to the city's recovery and as such, must receive adequate funding.

Hammarskjold Plaza's six fountains were inoperative in 2020 due to plumbing and electrical problems. Even so, leaky valves and clogged waste lines caused flooding of the plaza. Although the park is slated for a capital improvement project, it has been in Procurement for two years.

All NYC parks grapple with cleanliness. For 20 years, we have contracted the Doe Fund to sweep the block-long park and bag the garbage twice daily. Now we're told they can no longer service the park at a 70% discount and must charge \$40,000 to perform the same work. Other service providers quoted annual fees from \$80K to \$130K, way beyond our budget. Our Street Fair income and city council grants once covered the cost of sanitation AND weekly fountain cleaning, but with the consolidation of street fairs, our share of proceeds continues to shrink, providing 0 income during Covid shutdowns. The 30% restriction on subcontracted labor for city grants presents yet another obstacle since labor, not supplies, is the essential component.

We don't have the staff and neither does the parks department, so who will provide this essential maintenance? Parks mobile crew has no set schedule and one busy lunch hour will fill the trash bins to overflowing. Leftover food littering the seating wall and flower beds attract vermin.

Now let's consider the GREEN component. Private funding has enabled us to completely rejuvenate the park's Katharine Hepburn Garden, and it is a jewel, featured in hotel guides and tour books. Grants and donations support the garden but donors expect the City to provide litter control, sanitation and security. What about a realistic baseline budget for gardeners and tree pruning?

Every year, I read about the city's acquisition of more parkland and new construction, yet DPR's budget for M&O remains inadequate. Every park needs boots on the ground.

The concentration of homeless shelters in midtown make Dag Hammarskjold Plaza an open space to congregate. We need security cameras in the garden and PEP officers to enforce rules and regulations. Most of all, we need a full-time park custodian in the high season. Then Friends could focus on providing public programs and the volunteer work that we are best equipped to do.

We love our park's cafe, but concessions should help support the parks where they are located.

Parks require gardeners, plumbers, engineers, electricians, playground attendants, PEP officers, and administrative staff essential to operations. It's time to stop starving the park system. Give dedicated park workers the job security they deserve and do it now!

New York City parks offer extraordinary environmental assets, from wetlands and beaches to waterfront esplanades and charming community gardens. Public space is the great leveler, bringing communities together. Vote to fund Maintenance and Operations so all city parks can thrive.

END: Submitted by Anne Saxon-Hersh, Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, annehersh57@gmail.com/ fdhp@hammarskjoldplaza.org, 917-374-1440.

Testimony

New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Friday, March 12, 2021

Gowanus Canal Conservancy Testimony for the Preliminary Budget Hearing for the Committee on Parks and Recreation

Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit testimony on the City Council's Preliminary Budget Hearing for Parks and Recreation.

My name is Jordan Heiden and I represent Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), a non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating the development of a resilient, vibrant, open space network centered on the Gowanus Canal through activating and empowering community stewardship of the Gowanus Watershed. Today, I am urging the City Council to prioritize the long-term health and sustainability of our city by restoring the Parks Equity Initiative and last year's drastic budget cuts to NYC Parks.

Through this pandemic, our parks, natural areas, street trees, and gardens have been essential, providing New Yorkers with comfort, connection, exercise, and respite. In a neighborhood like Gowanus, where combined sewer overflow, street flooding, and urban heat island are everyday occurrences; parks, street trees, and other green infrastructure soak up stormwater to reduce flooding and sewage overflow, shade and cool our streets, and reduce air pollution. The ecosystem services provided by planted infrastructure address longstanding environmental issues, which will otherwise endanger our communities once again, both in the short term and through compounded impacts as the climate changes.

Over the past 20 years, the City has wisely invested capital dollars in this infrastructure in neighborhoods across the city, including through the Million Trees Campaign and the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan. Through OneNYC and the Community Parks Initiative, the DeBlasio administration has focused on investing equitably in green spaces across the five boroughs, to ensure that all New York City residents benefit from this infrastructure. In Gowanus, 670 young trees and 30 rain gardens installed over the past decade provide ecosystem services that make the neighborhood more livable and resilient, especially in times of crisis. The benefits of this planted infrastructure will grow exponentially as they mature, but their survival depends on adequate maintenance when they are young, including watering, weeding, pruning, litter and debris removal, and tree protection.

Last year, NYC Parks received the second largest budget cut of any City agency resulting in a loss of more than \$84M in funds typically allocated to support seasonal Park staff and critical maintenance contracts to help care for our urban forest. In Gowanus, these budget cuts meant gaps in maintenance for long-term investments the City has made in critical neighborhood infrastructure.

Last year's budget cuts also significantly impacted the Parks Equity Initiative, which supports GCC programs, such as the Gowanus Tree Network, which help to fill gaps in the Parks Department's capacity to care for young street trees. GCC typically engages more than 1,000 volunteers and students annually in the stewardship of street trees, parks, and gardens throughout the Gowanus neighborhood. In 2020, limitations posed by the COVID-19 crisis and a lack of funding through the Parks Equity Initiative have further widened gaps in critical neighborhood maintenance for parks, street trees, and gardens.

With an anticipated increase in open space use in the upcoming season, GCC stands strongly with our partners in the Play Fair Coalition to ensure future budget planning prioritizes essential maintenance, job creation, and security for frontline Parks workers, and funding for non-profit stewardship activities to support this valuable infrastructure. In this time of crisis, it is more important than ever to protect essential infrastructure and support a resilient and equitable city.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jordan Heiden
Engagement Manager
Gowanus Canal Conservancy



Testimony to the NYC Council
Hearing of the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
March 12, 2021

I'm Sarah McCollum Williams, Executive Director of Green Guerillas, a non-profit that supports community gardeners and activates youth engaged in Food Justice across the City.

Special thanks to Council Members Ayala, Gibson, Cabrera, Eugene, Cornegy and then-council member Torres who have been strong supporters of community gardens. During fiscal year 2020, council members across the Bronx and Brooklyn had allocated \$155,000 of discretionary funds for our work with community gardens through the Parks Equity Initiative and A Greener New York, but largely through Parks Equity. This year, we have less than \$40,000.

As a lean and efficient organization, Green Guerillas was able to act quickly in March of 2020, as soon as the pandemic hit. With last year's Parks Equity Initiative funds, we were able to provide immediate, direct support in the form of seeds, seedlings, lumber, soil, tools, and personal protective equipment to community gardeners who were redoubling their efforts to grow food for their communities.

Communities that were already experiencing food insecurity before COVID-19 are now depending on community gardens to survive. Community gardeners are continuing their food production efforts during the 2021 growing season, many of them ramping up their growing capacity for distribution to families, neighbors, and local organizations in need -- sometimes uniting with other gardens to distribute across large networks.

Unfortunately, due to cuts in Parks Equity Initiative funding, which has greatly diminished our funding from the city, our capacity to assist these gardeners in their vital community work is likewise greatly diminished.

We urge the City to restore full funding for the Parks Equity Initiative after last year's budget cuts. We ask the City to increase their support for community gardens as essential infrastructure for neighborhood food production, rest and respite, and environmental benefit - and to offer community-affirming funding to ensure that they can continue to enrich communities across the City.

I'd like to thank the Parks Committee for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Mike Rezny and I'm the Assistant Director of Green Space of GrowNYC.

GrowNYC has one simple goal: To make our city more sustainable and livable through environmental programming that empowers communities block by block. Our work in New York City has increased access to fresh, affordable food in under resourced communities; built and revived open green spaces; diverted waste from landfills; and educated the next generation of environmental leaders.

GrowNYC interacts with the City's Parks and park land in two main ways:

1. First, many of our Greenmarket farmers markets are hosted on NYC Parks property, and we're proud that these Greenmarket locations remained open and serving residents throughout the pandemic. This includes not just our best known markets like Union Square and Grand Army Plaza, but the Greenmarkets in Poe Park, Corona Park, Inwood Hill Park, and many more neighborhoods across the city.
2. The second way is through the program that I run, GrowNYC's Green Space program. Since our founding in 1970, GrowNYC has built more than 135 community gardens across NYC. Later this year, our garden projects will exceed 1 million square feet of open green space. In 2020, those projects included building 10 new gardens in Brownsville, Bushwick, Canarsie, Cypress Hills, East New York, Greenpoint, Castle Hill, Fordham Heights, Morrisania, and Jamaica. In addition to those 10 new gardens, GrowNYC completed renovation projects at 30 additional sites.

The majority of this garden work takes place at GreenThumb community gardens and we are incredibly grateful for our partnership with the GreenThumb team. In addition to these gardens, a meaningful portion of those 135 garden projects have been built non-Parks spaces, which includes a dozen gardens on NYCHA property, several publicly accessible community gardens on church property, and a community garden on a landmarked historic cemetery in Woodside.

Searching for non-traditional garden locations allows us to reach more New Yorkers and to turn unused vacant land into garden spaces designed alongside the community and built in their image. And, of course, it allows GrowNYC to do valuable work in council districts that do not necessarily include GreenThumb community gardens.

In closing, a critical source of funding for our work on open spaces has been the Council's discretionary programs, including the Parks Equity Initiative and A Greener NYC. We stand with the Play Fair Coalition and ask that these discretionary programs be restored after last year's budget cuts.



March 12, 2021

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, The Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 and The Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

New York City Council, Committee on Parks & Recreation.

My name is Tony Simone, Director of External Affairs at Hudson River Park (HRPK) Friends.

Good afternoon Council Members. Thank you Council Members for supporting Hudson River Park & for funding our discretionary funding requests. This important funding supports the Park's free environmental education programming, our free summer virtual and in-person programming and our volunteer efforts to help maintain the Park. Our park environmental education programs serve students and New Yorkers from all five boroughs.

HRPK Friends is a not for profit & the main fundraising and advocacy partner of Hudson River Park. As you know, Hudson River Park is the beloved, waterfront park that runs 4+ miles along Manhattan's west side, from Chambers Street and ending at West 59 Street. The Park's construction is about 80% complete, with several new dynamic piers opening up this spring and summer as well as improvements to Chelsea Waterside Park and other upland areas. Hudson River Park Friends consists of several thousand Friends from across the city. Over 17 million visitors came to Hudson River Park before the pandemic and during the pandemic we saw the Park full with New Yorkers enjoying nature during this crisis.

Throughout this pandemic, New Yorkers and even visitors from beyond the city, have found solace in Hudson River Park. While the Park has instituted safety measure such as mask giveaways, distance pods and enforcement of limiting gatherings, the Park has been an outdoor refuge, office during warmer weather, a public gym and place for New Yorkers to walk and run to maintain their physical and mental health during this traumatic time.

This terrible health crisis, where we have seen and experienced so much pain, loss and isolation, has proven more than ever that open green spaces, parks and more open streets for our communities are essential for our health and well-being. In the greatest city in the world, it is essential that our city adequately fund Parks at a sustained and consistent level in the city budget every year.

During this pandemic, HRPK Friends has had to reduce our budget and the Park has had to cut back on maintenance, limit volunteer horticulture activity, and negotiate rent with tenants due to lack of business during the lockdown, negatively impacting the Park's overall budget.

- As a member of the Open Space and Parks coalition NYC, we support the effort of our fellow city parks and open spaces. **This year's Play Fair platform will focus on restoring last year's budget cuts.** Last year's drastic cuts resulted in a loss of seasonal staff, Parks Enforcement Patrol

officers, Urban Park Rangers, Green Thumb coordinators, Natural Resources Group staff, and critical maintenance and sanitation services to help care for our urban green spaces and forests.

- **NYC Parks received the second largest budget-cut of any City agency last year.** They sustained an \$84M cut, approximately 14% of their total operating budget. This despite an increase in parks visitorship by more than one-third state-wide.
- **Last year, NYC Parks had 1,700 fewer maintenance and operations seasonal staff.** This caused a significant reduction in work hours and maintenance visits to parks and playgrounds per month and resulted in the worst cleanliness conditions on record. Existing NYC Parks staff were stretched thin without additional seasonal support.
- **NYC Parks are currently subject to a hiring freeze,** which is making it even more difficult for them to replace key staff at this critical time.
- **We are asking for the Parks Equity Initiative to be restored after last year's budget cuts.** Now is not the time to cut back on one of the few safe places for all New Yorkers to spend time taking care of their physical and mental health and see family and friends without having to put their health in jeopardy.
- Hudson River Park, as all open spaces and parks throughout the city have an encountered a surge of more visitors and the need for increased maintenance, more PEP safety officers, horticulture staff, volunteers and other costly repairs. Our beloved parks have become an essential place of refuge during these difficult times. Good parks are one of the hallmarks of a great city; and this city needs to support our parks at a higher level than it does now.

Testimony of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA)

to the

New York City Council

Joint Committee of Finance and Parks and Recreation

March 12, 2020

Good Afternoon Chair Koo and members of the Committees. My name is Jennifer Wainwright and I am the Communications Manager for the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA). I will be delivering this testimony on behalf of RIPA and appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Randall's Island Park is located in the East River between East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens. As nonprofit steward, RIPA develops and maintains the Park and provides and facilitates extensive public programming. To do so, we work in close partnership with the NYC Parks Department.

Due to COVID, like many of our sister conservancies, RIPA's operating budget has taken an enormous hit. We have furloughed staff, cut budgets, and creatively restructured, and it has been a tough year – while, in the meantime, the Park has seen record-breaking public use, especially from our neighboring communities in East Harlem and the South Bronx.

The cuts to funding for the Park Department have created additional challenges to the increased usage of Park Land. Normally, during the busy outdoor season a diverse RIPA staff of 70 works alongside 30 Parks workers to maintain the Island's 330 acres of public parkland; in 2020, Parks staff was reduced to only 10, with threats of further cuts. This placed an added burden on RIPA's already reduced staffing resources, as we worked to pick up the slack. In addition to staffing cuts, there has been a stop on procurements for even the most basic OTPS needs.

With the increased usage, and Parks Department cuts, RIPA looks to the New York City Council for both discretionary and capital funding this year to support New Yorkers in three of the five boroughs. RIPA is seeking support to upgrade pathways which have seen more visitors than ever before along with general programmatic support to ensure that when New Yorkers visit the park it is clean and safe.

It is crucial that the New York City Council fight to restore funding for the Parks Department and continue to supplement this funding through expense funding such as the Parks Equity initiative and in support of Capital projects. If COVID has taught us one thing, it is how essential open space is in New York City, and it has illustrated the critical need for our public parks. New Yorkers have come increasingly to depend upon free, safe, clean outdoor spaces for recreation, relaxation, and exercise. This is especially true for those without the means to leave the City.

With sufficient upkeep, public parks can and should provide a safe space where all New Yorkers can take a break and come together – an essential resource, serving our most basic well-being. As this past year made clear, NYC Parks Department funding should be not only restored but in fact expanded.

Testimony on NYC Parks Budget FY22, March 12, 2021

My name is Joanna Oltman Smith, and I testify today as a professional citizen. I am a member of many of the #PlayFair Coalition member organizations, as well as Community Board 6, Brooklyn where I sit on the Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Protection Committee, among others. In that capacity, I also serve on Prospect Park's Community Committee.

This year, more than ever, New Yorkers loved our New York City parks to death. This might sound like hyperbole, but despite the valiant efforts of parks employees and dedicated volunteers, our parks have suffered damage due to maintenance and operational limitations from which it will take years and major reinvestments to recover. This simply is not a fiscally sound approach to budgeting, which is why we are all here today.

I would like to share a few examples from Prospect Park:

At the same time we celebrated major capitol projects like new entrances on Flatbush and the restoration of Endale Arch, another popular entrance to the park at Garfield Place and Prospect Park West has been severely neglected. The rustic pathways that comprise this entrance are often impassable due to lack of snow removal and muddy conditions for much of the year. People eager to access the Long Meadow and the Park Drive have compacted the soil and destroyed the landscape in a wide radius around the approved pathways. Any "savings" on maintenance have devastated the physical integrity of this area.

Similarly, the decrease in PEP — as well as NYPD's refusal to do foot and bike patrols where they could more effectively interact with park users — have allowed bad actors to run free in our shared open spaces. In Prospect Park, this looks like dog owners letting pets off-leash in restricted areas causing damage to our delicate and unique woodland ecosystems. treasure hunters with metal detectors freely destroy the Long Meadow with shovels and spades. Others build open campfires on the Peninsula with no regard to wind conditions. These are more than pesky



LANDSCAPED AREA ADJACENT TO UNMAINTAINED PATH DESTROYED BY OVERUSE

behaviors. They leave lasting, potentially catastrophic damage that is extremely expensive to remedy. By “saving” on enforcement, we simply generate huge, deferred expenses.

Finally, things got so bad with litter conditions in Prospect Park this year, we were forced to install unsightly, industrial dumpsters and decals begging people to not overfill rarely-emptied trash cans. We are the entrusted stewards of this National Historic Landscape, and all our city-owned parks, natural areas, and urban canopy. We are failing.



RUSTY, OLD OIL DRUM TRASH CANS WITH DESPERATE PLEAS

In this time of extreme fiscal limitations, let's be smart about our spending in parks. From public health benefits to carbon and storm water capture, our open spaces return our investments many-fold in myriad ways that while sometimes hard to

precisely quantify are no less obvious. Let's do what we can NOW by **restoring the parks expense budget by \$79.8 million dollars in FY22.**

Submitted by:

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New York City Council
Parks and Recreation hearing

10am March 12, 2021

Parks and Rec Committee,

I want to submit this testimony in support of restoring and improving the East River Esplanade immediately and connecting it to the Harlem River Esplanade as soon as possible.

It's clear there is not enough open space in East Harlem. The East River Esplanade's northern sectors are currently not only narrow, and hard to access, but literally falling apart. Access needs to be improved. The walkways need repairing, and the pier stands to be rebuilt.

Furthermore, the esplanade opens up at it's the very end, providing more space for more people to enjoy. Yet access to this section is limited not only because of the deteriorating esplanade itself, but because the areas underneath the Triborough bridge are closed to the public and can't be accessed to the north.

And the southern end of the esplanade on the Harlem River is also underutilized, both because it is blocked off, and because there's no access from the south.

None of these improvements are complex. They just need your attention, and with that money to complete the visions that have already been expressed.

I am sure I am not alone in wanted to see this happen. It will be a real improvement not only for the people of Harlem, but for the city as a whole.

thank you for reading my testimony.

JP



March 12, 2021

Dear Chair Peter Koo and Members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation,

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Alex Unthank, the Education Associate of Lewis Latimer House Museum. I'm reading this testimony for our Executive Director Ran Yan, who can't be here today.

Designated a landmark and sitting on a Department of Parks & Recreation site, the Lewis Latimer House Museum was the home for 26 years of the Black inventor who is renowned for his work in the field of electric lighting. Among Latimer (1848-1928)'s numerous inventions, the most important discovery was a method of producing carbon filaments that made the production of light bulbs both practical and affordable for the average household.

During the temporary closure due to COVID, our virtual programs have become a growing success and evident relief to our constituents. However, we face an immense challenge to reopening. The historic site's internet access broke down earlier this year, so significant that returning to office becomes all but impossible under the current condition.

We respectfully request assistance from the Parks Telecommunications team, the Historic House Trust, and the City Council, to repair and upgrade the internet access on this important historic site. Having functional internet up to modern standard is urgent and critical for us to carry out the essential work in interpreting Latimer's story and educating diverse youths.

We ask you to invest in the infrastructure of this African American heritage site owned by Parks, so Lewis Latimer's untold story is no longer overlooked. Our board and staff look forward to working with all of you to ensure that his landmarked home is well-maintained and accessible, and that his legacy is properly celebrated by the New York City public.

Thank you for all your work and support!

Lewis Latimer House Museum

Contact:
Ran Yan
Executive Director
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34-41 137th Street
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Lewis Latimer
House Museum

**Laborers' Local 1010 Testimony Submission By Lowell Barton,
Vice President and Organizing Director, Laborers Local 1010**

*New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal
Year 2022, The Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 and The
Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report*

Introduction- Laborers Local 1010

Laborers' Local 1010 is the premier Paving and Road Building Union of New York City. Our members work together to build streets, bridges, and highways throughout the five boroughs of NYC. Local 1010, an affiliate of the NYS Laborers', representing 40,000 men and women across the state, is a proud affiliate of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA). It is of the utmost importance for the Laborers' Union that accountability and transparency of NYC agencies, especially the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYCDPR), be utilized for the benefit and safety of the public, our members, and NYC contractors.

While tuning in virtually to the 3/12/21 New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, we were unfortunately not surprised by the frustration reiterated by NYC Council members and the public regarding the management of NYCDPR, specifically on Capital projects, overseen by the agency.

Accountability & Transparency

According to the *Report of the Finance Division on the Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget and the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the Department of Parks and Recreation*, NYCDPR's Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget totals \$532.7 million (including City and non-City funds). With millions of dollars in funding, NYCDPR must ensure accountability and transparency to the public on the hundreds of projects overseen by their agency. During the oversight hearing, we were astonished to hear the cost of street tree-planting increasing over the years to about \$3,400, depending on the borough, as reported by Liam Cavanaugh, first Deputy Commissioner at NYCDPR. The cost of tree-planting is highlighted more now that NYC is seeing more superstorms, resulting in street trees lifting sidewalks. This cost, on top of traditional delays by NYCDPR contributes to the frustration and lack of faith in the Parks Department by the public and elected officials. During the hearing, Council Member Salamanca stated he would reconsider allocating capital dollars to the Department of Parks because of the delays he has seen. Council member Salamanca referred to a project in his district that

had almost \$2 million dollars allocated to it in 2018, that is currently still in the procurement phase. The Council member shared that he received varying responses as to which agency was holding up the project, for a mobile commanding station. How is NYCDPR ensuring clarity and transparency is occurring when Capital dollars are allocated to NYC DPR?

MWBE Requirements

Laborers' Local 1010 aims to support and promote not only our signatory minority, women-owned, disadvantaged, and service-disabled veteran-owned contractors but also all MWBEs in the construction industry. By raising the standard for all contractors doing work in NYC, we can promote economic growth and prosperity for all small businesses and community members.

For this reason, we would like to see more due diligence by NYCDPR in ensuring Minority & Women Owned construction companies, MWBEs, are participating and benefiting from NYC's ambitious requirements. Unfortunately, we still see contractors winning bids in NYCDPR and other city agencies who have opted out of using MWBE contractors because they claim they cannot meet the 30% threshold set forth by the city. We are disappointed to see MWBE waivers being approved when there are sufficient MWBE contractors who are desperate for work.

Benefits of Project Labor Agreements (PLA)

Laborers Local 1010 believes the enforcement of project labor agreement (PLAs) on city projects can play a significant role in helping NYCDPR meet their goals. PLAs provide a construction management tool for cost savings, on-time, on-budget, and quality construction. The connection between the labor standards set on DPR project sites and the efficiency of DPR projects is clear. We encourage the City Council to ensure city agencies, including DPR, enforce PLAs on all capital projects. Recent studies have shown that worker injuries and deaths occur more frequently on non-union job sites. The increased skill levels and production of union labor, in addition to the elimination of delays caused by worker non-payments would ensure capital projects

stick to their original timelines. PLA use would also open the door for more workers to become union members and career paths to the middle class.

Utilizing Design Build in Capital Projects

In December, 2019, Governor Cuomo signed “design-build” legislation that now allows NYC to save millions of dollars on public construction projects. The bill allows government agencies, like NYCDPR, to combine design and construction project bids into one contract to save dollars and time. This process has been used to build the \$4 billion Mario M. Cuomo Bridge and add a \$1.5 billion expansion of the Jacob Javits Convention Center. Prior results show that this program, when utilized, cuts time and costs on NYC DPR projects, for example, including street tree-planting, uprooting, and repairs through the city by bundling projects in each borough. Comfort stations, for example, historically take years to complete. NYCDPR could benefit from utilizing design-build to speed up their construction timeline. For use on other projects, the design-build program also allows building designers and contractors to begin working together at the beginning of a project to shorten the construction timeline.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe there are solutions that would benefit the execution of NYC DPR Capital Projects. As a member and Vice President of a 2,000+ member construction local, it is imperative that the agency overseeing the timely process of capital projects prioritize integrity and safety on all job sites. Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council to create meaningful accountability in our City.

[1] http://nycosh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NYCOSH_PriceofLife05112015.pdf



Testimony Preliminary Budget Hearing, Committee on Parks & Recreation
March 12, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Christine Datz-Romero, the Executive Director and I am testifying on behalf of the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

The Ecology Center is a 23 year steward of East River Park 54 acre waterfront park in LES, and we have seen first hand that a newly renovated Park, with many landscape features added was not able to be maintained, since no additional staff resources were allocated.

After investing millions of dollars in capital improvements, these investments were lost within 4 short years because of a lack of funding – and that was in a ‘good’ year. Parks has suffered from structural underfunding for decades.

With budget cuts due to COVID 19 a perfect storm was created in 2020, and seasonal staff, PEP, Urban Park Rangers and Natural Resources Group all suffered staff reduction while Parks and open space were used more than ever.

We stand as a member of the Play Fair Coalition to urge the city council to restore Parks Funding to pre pandemic levels, and we would like to see a commitment to allocated 1% of the City Budget to Parks once our budget health improves.

Parks provides so many vital functions for New Yorkers: gathering spaces, access to recreational spaces and natural areas. In addition, providing environmental services to fight



climate change is of utmost importance in light of our escalating climate crisis.

We are calling on Parks to live up to their responsibility to manage their yard and organic waste in a sustainable matter.

Doing so by partnering with non-profits like the Ecology Center is a win-win for Parks. Not only will leaves and yard waste be managed locally and not put in landfills, where they contribute to methane gas emissions, the finished compost is a valuable soil amendment to create vibrant green spaces. Additional benefits, such as enhanced water infiltration during storms will prevent flooding and pollution of our surface water ways. Compost is also used for community gardens to grow food locally, demonstration sustainable food systems right here in the our urban setting.

We have partnered with Parks for the last 23 years and now the composting program is facing eviction from East River Park, without much transparency why Parks came to this decision. Parks needs to improve on their sustainability practices and embrace partnerships with community based organizations that have the knowledge and dedication to implement sustainability, climate friendly programs to live up to its mission as a steward of natural resources.

To whom it may concern,

This is to testify that since last spring, there has been a very disturbing accumulation of trash around places which are frequently visited by parents with their children. I am referring to the area around the bird feeder and the “water hole” at the east end of the park. These are prime birding locations, which are now littered with used condoms, toilet paper, and other trash – see pictures below, which I have taken today, March 9, 2021. Note that I do not care about what people do in the park, as long as it is consensual and as long as trash is not left behind.

Clearly, the current situation is not acceptable and requires urgent attention by NYC Parks.

Thank you for your efforts!

Sincerely,

Matthias Foellmer

Kew Gardens, NYC











Park workers have been showing up to work all throughout the pandemic. Their first PPE delivery came not from the agency, but from the DC37. As essential workers, they put theirs and their family's health at risk to keep NYC's open spaces safe, clean, and beautiful. As everyone keeps saying, the parks have been a haven for cooped up and stressed out New Yorkers. Our parks need more than they ever have- turf care, trash pickup, outdoor public programming, and more, and yet the workers are told to do more with less. Everyone saw last summer what budget cuts can mean for parks in terms of the trash piling up. Not everybody saw the backtracking on climate resiliency when funding was removed from the natural resources division, or how many lives were put in limbo from actual and threatened job losses. Support good jobs, support climate resiliency, support health and quality of life for all New Yorkers. Restore funding to NYC Parks.

Thank you.

Maya Landy

The Morris-Jumel Mansion, constructed in 1765, is Manhattan's oldest surviving residence. Opened as a museum in 1904, the organization has grown its operations to serve over 20,000 on-site visitors a year, providing high-quality arts and cultural programming to the surrounding community of Washington Heights, in Upper Manhattan. In addition to its exterior having national and city landmark designation status, the Mansion is one of only 120 buildings designated as an Interior Landmark by the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission (1975).

Morris-Jumel Mansion Inc. (MJM), the independent nonprofit that manages the museum's operations, is a small, but nimble organization whose diverse arts and cultural programming serves its surrounding communities within Upper Manhattan. Additionally, the museum serves as a destination for all New Yorkers, domestic, and international tourists. The organization's employees (3.5 FTE) support the administration and programmatic operations of the museum; while the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the historic building, as outlined in the 2007 license agreement with the agency and the Historic House Trust (HHT).

The most recent exterior restoration of MJM's historic building was completed in 1991 through DPR's Capital Division in conjunction with HHT. Since 2005, the leadership of MJM has been vigorously advocating to city leaders for funding to provide desperately-needed attention to the building's exterior envelope and ADA-accessibility.

Over the past several years, \$2.7M in funds have been allocated for the aforementioned exterior restoration and barrier-free access project, which is to be registered through HHT's Sole-Source contract later this year, with the project slated for completion in 2024. **Facilitating these repairs is critical as the historic building is continuing to deteriorate and presents challenges for the organization to continue its mission-critical work.** Of note, rotting woodwork on the porch, which is a primary program space, presents a safety concern for visitors and performers; additionally, roof leaks and recurring plaster loss in the museum's period rooms are jeopardizing the integrity of the museum's collection of renowned fine and decorative arts, all owned by the private non-profit.

Due to the sensitive, historic nature of the building, an efficient and streamlined process for maintenance and capital repairs is needed to ensure the proper care and protection of the site and its contents.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the museum was awarded capital funds for a technology and electrical upgrade through the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA). Despite having

been awarded the funds, neither DPR or DCLA are able to register this project due to respective current guidelines related to the types of projects the agencies are able to undertake. These upgrades are essential to ensure that the private non-profit can continue to offer first-rate educational programming for its diverse audiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the museum and its operations with an estimated 75% drop in earned revenue from fiscal year '20 to '21. **Operating support provided directly to the private non-profit from DPR is needed to sustain and increase public access to the museum and park.** While the museum is open to the public four days a week, the park surrounding the museum is open daily. As a destination park, the museum's site is highly valued by neighborhood residents, which in the face of COVID restrictions has seen an increase in use. This demand presents additional challenges to the organization's operating budget as the museum needs to be staffed while the park is open to ensure the safeguarding of the historic building and the valuable collections owned by the private nonprofit.

The Morris-Jumel Mansion is grateful for its 117-year relationship with the Department of Parks and Recreation; however continued and increased support is needed to ensure that Manhattan's oldest surviving house and the cherished parkland that surrounds it is preserved for future generations.



**Testimonial: Preliminary Budget Hearings
New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation
March 12, 2021**

Testimony By: Amy Thogmartin, Vice President of Marketing at Marine Park Alliance

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I am Amy Thogmartin and serve on the board of the Marine Park Alliance and am providing this testimony on behalf of the organization.

At 798 acres, Marine Park is the largest City property in Brooklyn.

As is true for all city parks, use has dramatically increased during the pandemic. We are delighted to see more people discover all that our park has to offer.

There are four major issues that were previously challenging and that have been exacerbated by the pandemic:

Garbage -- With increased use, our tonnage of litter has also increased significantly. We've also seen an uptick of illegal construction debris dumping in our park.

Ecology -- Because the nature trails are more crowded than ever, visitors walk off-trail, trampling plantings and creating new and harmful pathways. This has been especially destructive near the Salt Marsh Nature Center, reversing the success of a multi-year, multi-million dollar program to stabilize the ecology.

Staffing -- We need a full restoration of Parks staffing. Marine Park has only 8 dedicated staff members, while significantly smaller Brooklyn parks have more staff to cover less acreage. Additionally, Marine Park lost its full time supervisor, without explanation, and suffers for it. Volunteers and hiring teens for summer jobs are inadequate replacements for full time staff.

Private Support -- Large volunteer groups and corporate funding have been cut due to the pandemic and other competing priorities. These sources of labor and funding were critical to the upkeep and maintenance of Marine Park and are sorely missed.

Numerous studies have shown that parks are essential to the mental and physical health of urban communities. We must restore the full Parks Department budget to support the healing power of parks throughout the city, now and in the future.

Thank you.



**New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation
March 12, 2020**

Testimony By: Sarah Charlop-Powers, Natural Areas Conservancy, Executive Director

My name is Sarah Charlop-Powers and I am the Executive Director of the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY22 budget. The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 2012 with the goal of increasing the capacity of NYC Parks and its partners to restore and manage the 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. A signature project of our organization was the development of the "Forest Management Framework for New York City", which we released in partnership with NYC Parks in Spring 2018. This plan includes ecological and social metrics for the care of the city's natural forests and calls for an investment of \$385 million to manage them over the next 25 years.

We were thrilled in 2019 by the leadership of the City Council and Mayor, which resulted in \$43 million of expense funding for NYC Parks, including \$4 million to support the management of 7,300 acres of forested natural areas. This funding was used to implement the first year of recommendations from the Forest Management Framework. NYC Parks was incredibly efficient with these funds. They employed 47 seasonal staff, planted 20,000 new trees and shrubs, engaged 2,000 volunteers, improved 40 miles of trails, and cared for 900 acres of parkland.

The plight of our City's natural areas has mirrored that of the full park system over the past year. Visitation to natural areas increased 65% between 2019 and 2020. At the same time, the Parks Department's ability to care for the 1/3 of parks property that is natural areas has been brought nearly to a halt due to budget cuts and the loss of more than 50 seasonal staff. Another significant challenge is the impacts of the hiring freeze, which has left key leadership positions empty for more than a year and resulted in an incalculable loss of institutional knowledge.

Today, I stand with my trusted colleagues and friends in strong support of Play Fair, calling for the full reinstatement of funds that were cut from the agency's budget last year. It is imperative that next year's budget include \$4.5 million to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests, and begin critical improvements for our City's wetlands and trails network.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express our support for increased investment in NYC Parks.

**FRIENDS
OF THE
EAST
RIVER
ESPLANADE
60TH - 120TH STREETS**

Testimony by Stacy Papas for City Council Budget Hearing
Friday, March 12, 2021
Parks and Open Spaces

Hello, my name is Stacy Papas, I am an East Harlem resident and Executive Director of Friends of the East River Esplanade. Thank you Commissioner Silver for your many years of support of the esplanade, we are sorry to see you go and wish you well.

Our mission is to advocate for the restoration and reinvention of the Esplanade from 60th - 120th Streets, including Pier 107.

We are grateful to Mayor de Blasio for allocating \$75 million dollars in 2019 and an additional \$284 million dollars this year to repair the esplanade. And thank you Commissioner Silver for confirming that earlier.

I am here today requesting that the \$284 million dollars are approved for the FY21/22 budget and that design work begins immediately using the previously allocated \$75 million. Since preliminary design work has begun on the adjacent Harlem Greenway Link at 125th Street, it would be logical to extend that project south, especially because the esplanade is barricaded from 117th to 114th Street.

This area is now legally defined as an Environmental Justice Area according to local laws 60 and 64 so we can assume the repair of the esplanade in East Harlem is a top priority for the current and future administrations.

Conditions on the esplanade are in a constant state of depreciation. The longer repair work is postponed, the more extensive and expensive this project is going to get.

My testimony today is in support of fast tracking the \$284 million dollar budget allocation into the FY21/22 budget and pursuing a Design-Build model of construction so that the project can move quickly.

East Harlem residents deserve to have as safe, accessible, and beautiful of a waterfront as much as our neighbors on the West Side of Manhattan.

Thank you for your time today.



Pier 107 at 107th Street on the esplanade



114th Street looking looking north on the esplanade

**Testimony of Susan M Donoghue, President, Prospect Park Alliance
New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation Hearing
March 11, 2021**

Thank you Chair Koo and all committee members. I am Sue Donoghue, President of Prospect Park Alliance, the non-profit organization that helps to maintain Prospect Park in partnership with the City. I am here today to support the efforts of the Play Fair campaign to restore cuts to parks in the upcoming budget.

COVID-19 has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the well-being of our communities. Prospect Park is truly "Brooklyn's Backyard," and welcomes more than 10 million visits each year from every zip code in Brooklyn and beyond. As a community park, Prospect Park is a critical gathering space for family reunions, birthday parties and all manner of picnics and barbecues. Its 585 acres provide fresh air and respite to Brooklyn residents, who have the least amount of green space per capita in all of New York City. Making Prospect Park a welcoming and accessible space for the diverse communities of Brooklyn is a key part of our mission, and without the support of the City and our elected officials our work would not be possible.

Visitorship to city parks during the pandemic has increased significantly: in Prospect Park we are seeing a record number of visitors at all hours and all days, along with numerous unpermitted events and gatherings; and a significant uptick in park patrons exploring every inch of the park, including more fragile areas such as the park's woodlands. At the same time, we are experiencing significant budget cuts, and Prospect Park Alliance relies on its partnership with the New York City Parks Department for general maintenance and upkeep of the park.

Historically, the Parks Department budget has been a very small percentage of the city budget, despite the fact that parks comprise a large percentage of city land and are used by a significant portion of the population. Since the pandemic, the Parks Department has experienced \$84 million in cuts — about 14 percent of its total annual budget of \$587 million — the department has 45 percent less staff to handle more work, translating to 1,700 less maintenance and operation staff and a reduction of 25,000 maintenance hours a week.¹ In Prospect Park, we have seen a 20 percent decrease in NYC Parks staffing, which has been further challenged by fatigue among remaining staff, resulting in an increase in call outs and absences. In addition, Prospect Park Alliance also was forced to make cuts due to the pandemic, with 11 percent in staff reductions, which has left us unable to fill open positions on our Lakeside maintenance crew, and required cutting our Parade Ground maintenance crew and nighttime summer weekend cleaning crew.

Prospect Park Alliance has attempted to make up for this decrease in funding by launching new volunteer programs, including a series of "It's My Park Days" and the launch of a "Green and Go Kit" program, which provides patrons with trash grabbers, gloves and bags. The response has been overwhelming, and demonstrates how much New Yorkers love their parks, but it is not a sustainable approach to maintaining our parks. We

¹ New York Times, Trash Piles Up in Parks, Just When New Yorkers Need Them the Most, Aug. 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/27/nyregion/nyc-parks-trash.html>

applaud the City Council for taking up this issue, and hope to work with you and our Parks and Open Space Partners to advocate for increased funding for parks.



Community Board 12
The City of New York
Borough of Queens

90-28 161st Street
Jamaica, New York 11432
qn12@cb.nyc.gov
www.nyc.gov/qcb12

(718) 658-3308
Fax (718) 739-6997

Melinda Katz
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Rene Hill
CHAIRPERSON

Vicky Morales Casella
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY BOARDS

Yvonne Reddick
DISTRICT MANAGER

August 19, 2019

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bill de Blasio,

I am sending you this correspondence on behalf of Queens Community Board#12 and our St. Albans, Queens, neighbors. We have come together to ask you to help us in reclaiming two unmapped parcels of land on Brinkerhoff Avenue(north) between Dunkirk Street(west) and Hannibal Street(east). The community would like the two lots converted into a single green space (mall) available to the community. Currently, these unmapped parcels pose a quality of life issue for the community. They exist without curbs or sidewalks, and they are regularly used as dumping areas and they're abused by unseen actors.

This area in St. Albans has very few green spaces and the closest park is six blocks away with a major street, Liberty Avenue, to cross. This positive change to green space would also help to beautify an area that is located on the edge of the Dunkirk St. Industrial area in St Albans.

Besides the attached petition, collected by St. Albans residents, Queens Community Board 12 has unanimously approved the following resolution at our June 2019 General Board Meeting:

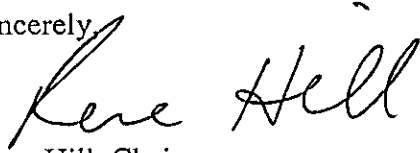
“We, Queens Community Board 12, call on the City of New York to review the two parcels of grassland on Brinkerhoff Avenue, between Dunkirk Street and Hannibal Street, to create a green space that:

- Does not include any seating, to discourage vagrancy;
- Is contiguous, by closing Mayville Street and connecting the parcels; and
- Begin the process of community input into designs for the reclaimed green space”

Mayor de Blasio, we ask that you provide leadership over your respective agencies to clarify ownership of the unmapped properties and by placing them under NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, so that we can de-map the aforementioned street. Once it is de-mapped we can work on allocating capital funding to rehabilitate this blighted and much needed green area.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Queens Community Board 12 office at 718-658-3308 to discuss this matter further. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration with this matter.

Sincerely,

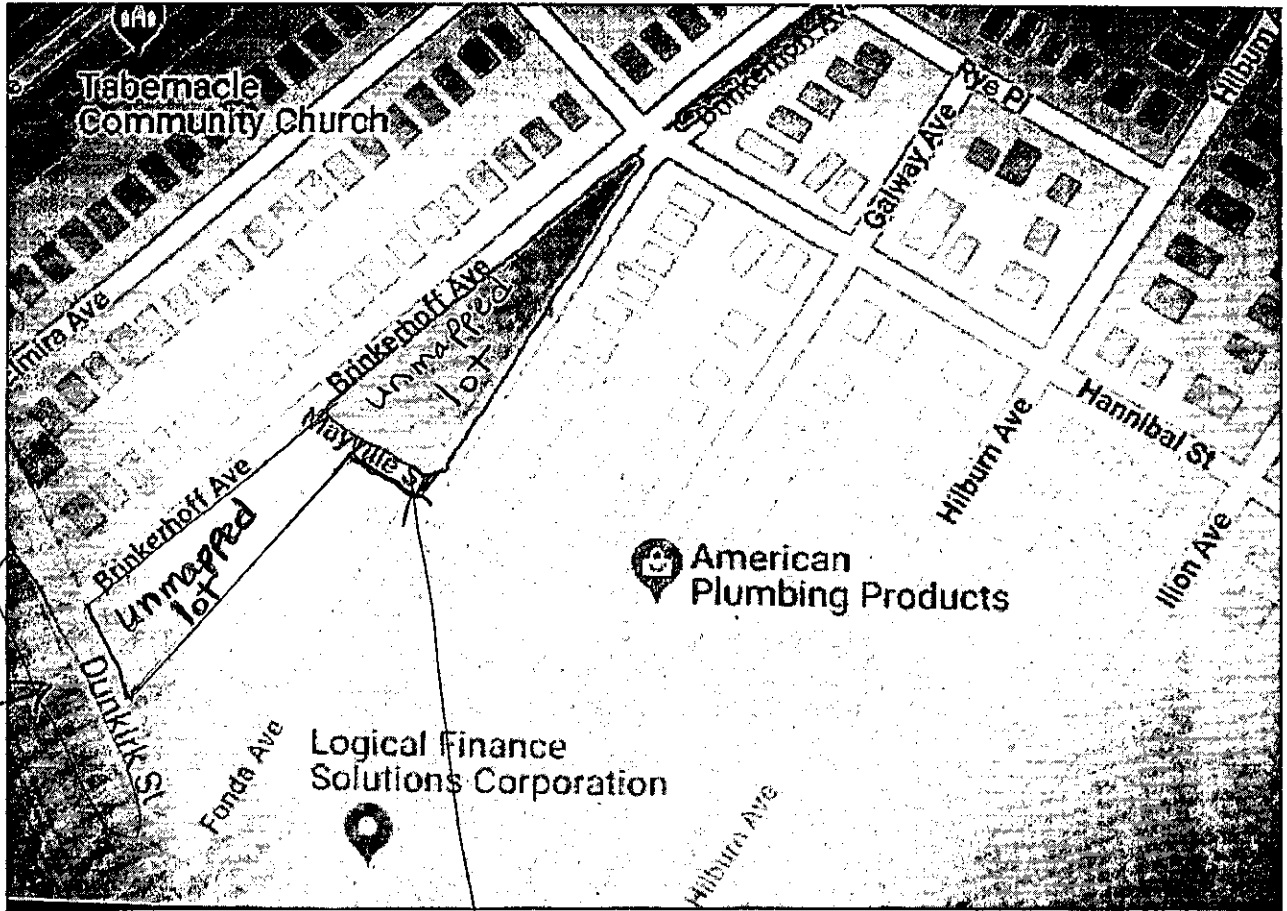
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rene Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "H".

Rene Hill, Chairperson
Queens Community Board#12

Cc: Queens Borough President Melinda Katz
NYC Council Member I. Daneek Miller
NYC Parks Queens Borough Commissioner Michael Dockett
NYC DOT Queens Commissioner Nicole Garcia
QN CB#12 Community Board District Manager Yvonne Reddick
NYC DCP South Queens Team Leader Stephen Everett

Attachments: 12

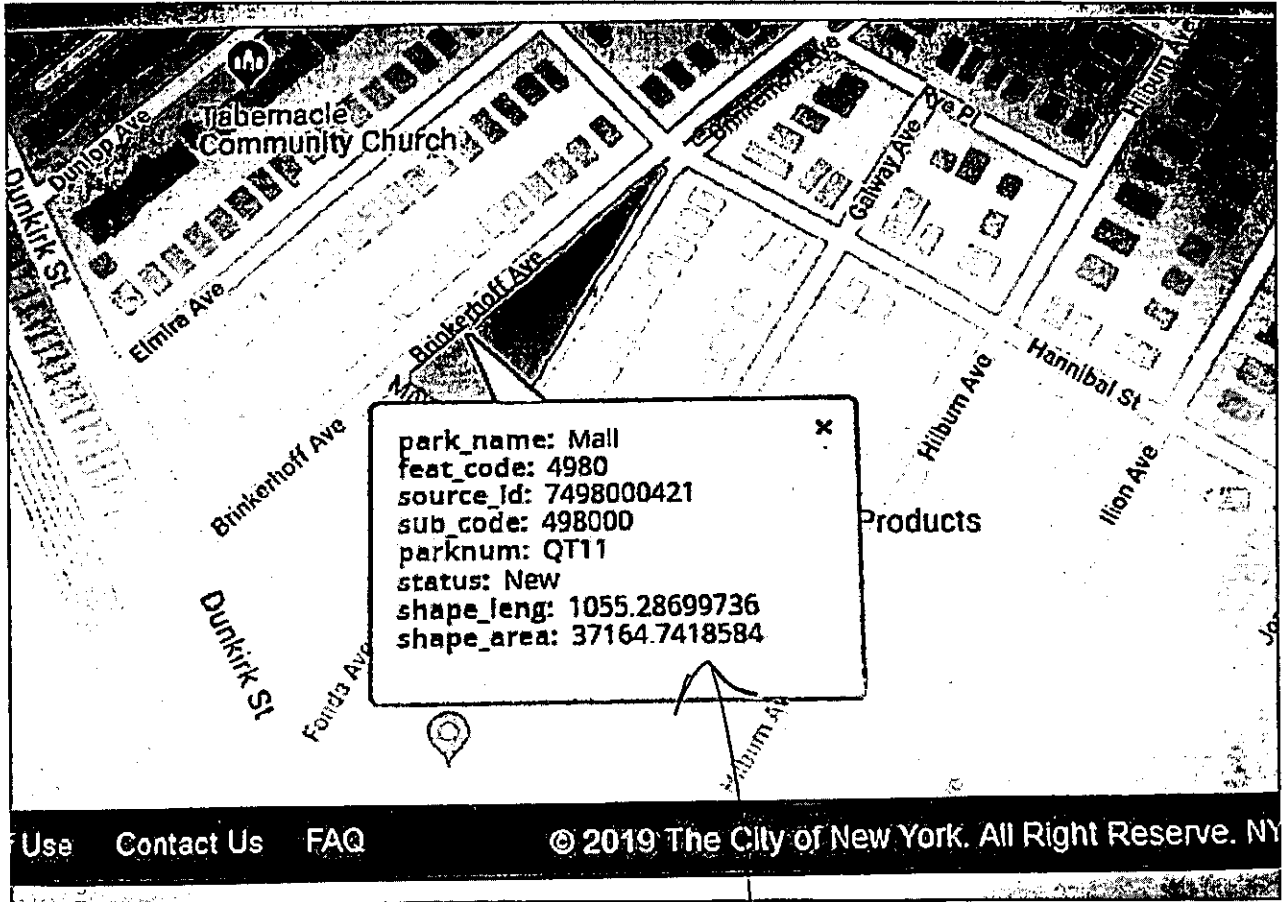
Map 1



Industrial area

Close Mayville Street and make 2 lots into 1 mail.

2 of 2



Map 2

Mapped already as a mall?

Brinkerhoff Safe Green Space

To: Council Member Daneek Miller
Amir Abbady, Chairperson, CB 12 Parks Committee
Renee Hill, Chairperson CB 12

From: Residents of St. Albans

We, the undersigned are making the following requests for the planning of the two parcels of land located between Dunkirk and Hannibal on Brinkerhoff Avenue in St. Albans.

- The two parcels should be made into one continuous green space with adequate lighting
- Designated as a "Green Street" to assure regularly scheduled maintenance by the Parks and Recreation Department or DOT as applicable
- No benches
- Signage to indicate "No Parking" and "Clean Up After Your Dog"
- Community representation throughout the planning process

We thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Attachments: 10 petition pages.

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITY BOARD 12

BRINKERHOFF AVE GREEN SAFE SPACE PETITION

Name (Print)	Signature	Address	Phone	Email	Date
Silvia Clark	[Signature]	183-128 DUNLOP AVE	347-1211	955	6/11/19
Talitha Kinsey	[Signature]	183-69 DUNLOP AVE	347-813-2861	misskinseykinsey1985@gmail.com	6/11/19
Cheryl Morrow	[Signature]	185-31 DUNLOP AVE	718-825-7213	CHAX516@yahoo.com	6/11/19
L. Farney	[Signature]	185-27 DUNLOP	718-799-3199		6/11/19
Richard Wilkey	[Signature]	185-15 DUNLOP	618-869-9685		6-11-19
Melba Soall	[Signature]	185-23 DUNLOP	718-389-9453		
Bryan Acosta	[Signature]	185-76 DUNLOP	917-351-0411		6/11/19
Edna Hansen	[Signature]	185-15 DUNLOP AVE	646-379-2800	phoenix277@yahoo.com	
Nequellie Barber	[Signature]	185-11 DUNLOP AVE	929-400-1619	nequelliebarber@gmail.com	6/11/19
Jarvis Spease	[Signature]	185-03 DUNLOP AVE	610-607-4286	jarvis.spease@gmail.com	6-11-19
Gail Sierce	[Signature]	185-01 DUNLOP AVE	718-454-0937	gailsierce@gmail.com	6-11-19
Pamela Wint	[Signature]	18369 DUNLOP AVE	718-926-9570	pwint159@gmail.com	
Roy Harris	[Signature]	183-63 DUNLOP AVE	646-301-3000	mharris085687@gmail.com	6-11-19
Eva Ash	[Signature]	185-18 DUNLOP AVE	718-264-1544	kingash.kyc@gmail.com	6-11-19
Prerna Dhruv	[Signature]	183-69 Brinkerhoff Ave.	778-614-4116	105cam@105brn.com	6/11/19
Richard Mullins	[Signature]	183-29 Brinkerhoff	917-226-2681	mullinr85@gmail.com	6/12/19
Michael Lewis	[Signature]	186-05 Brinkerhoff	347-998-9099	Lewisrichard127@gmail.com	6/12/19
Corey Thornhill	[Signature]	186-05 Brinkerhoff	718-454-4434	ethornhill187@yahoo.com	6/12/19
Gemma Ramjattan	[Signature]	186-15 Brinkerhoff Ave	718-609-1926		6-12-19
Dorothy Schuber	[Signature]	186-22 Brinkerhoff Ave	718-454-5620	1778ki@bankofamerica.com	6-12-19
Denis Lovell	[Signature]	187-01 Brinkerhoff Ave	718-454-5620		6-12-19
Susan Igoe	[Signature]	187-05 Brinkerhoff Ave	347-279-0661	susanigoe@gmail.com	6-12-19

Contacts: Angela Brunswick: 718-454-1421, email: staibansalphastreet@gmail.com

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITY BOARD 12

BRINKERHOFF AVE GREEN SAFE SPACE PETITION

Name (Print)	Signature	Address	Phone	Email	Date
ANTHONY CURRAN	<i>Anthony Currane</i>	187-10 Brinkerhoff Ave	516-974-8087	ANTHONYCURRAN@GMAIL.COM	6-18-19
Patricia Mason Fuller	<i>Patricia Mason Fuller</i>	185-02 Liberty Ave.	718-445-2311		6-12-19
BENJAMIN CAMPBELL	<i>Benjamin Campbell</i>	186-20 Brinkerhoff Ave	347-693-3527		6-12-19
BENJAMIN CAMPBELL	<i>Benjamin Campbell</i>	186-20 Brinkerhoff Ave	347-693-3527	BENJAMIN.CAMPBELL@GMAIL.COM	6-12-19
MARIE LUMENS	<i>Marie Lumens</i>	186-08 Brinkerhoff	347-829-8685	francesca.lumens@icloud.com	6-12-19
ONILL SMALL	<i>Onill Small</i>	185-16 Fonda	917-914-0580	smallonill@gmail.com	6-12-19
PAULINE MOORE	<i>Pauline Moore</i>	185-42 Fonda	718-454-5108		6-12-19
KRISTIN ROBINSON	<i>Kristin Robinson</i>	185-26 Fonda	917-755-8737	KristinRobinson@gmail.com	6-12-19
KOREN WILLIAMS	<i>Koren Williams</i>	186-10 Fonda Ave	718-264-2710	outlook5@hotmail.com	6-12-19
ERIC WILLIAMS	<i>Eric Williams</i>	185-10 Fonda Ave			6-12-19
BARBARA DOBBLIN	<i>Barbara Dobblin</i>	185-14 Fonda Ave	718-454-6852	weebaby10@gmail.com	6-12-19
PAULA ROBINSON	<i>Paula Robinson</i>	185-14 Fonda Ave	718-454-1082		6-12-19
JUDITH JEFFERS	<i>Judith Jeffers</i>	185-06 Fonda Ave	718-454-5789	judij56@gmail.com	6-12-19
CHARLES TIMMERS	<i>Charles Timmers</i>	183-31 Fonda Ave	646-197-2064	charz.timmez1865@gmail.com	6-12-19
ANGELIA WILLIAMS	<i>Angelia Williams</i>	183-29 Brinkerhoff	646-344-9804		6-12-19
WILMA ELLIS	<i>Wilma Ellis</i>	183-34 Fonda Ave	718-264-8113		6-12-19
BARBARA WILES WALEY	<i>Barbara Wiles Waley</i>	183-30 Fonda Ave	845-664-1942		6-12-19
FERRY WILLIAMS	<i>Ferry Williams</i>	183-14 Fonda Ave	347-234-4254	dellmuse12@gmail.com	6-12-19
EDWIN WILLIAMS	<i>Edwin Williams</i>	183-10 Fonda Ave	718-570-7873		6-12-19
FELICIA WILLIAMS	<i>Felicia Williams</i>	183-07 Fonda Ave	212-977-7020	fluv600@aol.com	6-12-19
WILLIAM WILLIAMS	<i>William Williams</i>	183-10 Fonda Ave	718-676-2772	williamwilliams@gmail.com	6-12-19
WILLIAM WILLIAMS	<i>William Williams</i>	183-10 Fonda Ave	646-437-7053	williamwilliams@gmail.com	6-12-19

Contacts: Angela Brunswick: 718-454-1421, email: stalbansalphastreet@gmail.com

6-12-19

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITY BOARD 12

BRINKERHOFF AVE GREEN SAFE SPACE PETITION

Name (Print)	Signature	Address	Phone	Email	Date
WOODSTOCK, GARY	<i>[Signature]</i>	187-05 Brinkerhoff Ave	347-678-3037	Gary.woodstock@gmail.com	6-10-19
WANG, GUANG	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-69 Brinkerhoff Ave	347-320-4978	GUANG1997@gmail.com	6/10/19
ZERNER, GARY	<i>[Signature]</i>	18564 Dunlop Ave	345-446-7851	gary.zerner@gmail.com	6/10/19
Lottie General	<i>[Signature]</i>	18360 Dunlop Ave	718-457-1110	Lottie@10K.com	6/11/19
JANESSA WALLS	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-50 Dunlop Ave	718-457-1864	mess183@msn.com	6/11/19
WYONE LASHLEY	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-56 Dunlop Ave	718 600 0777	Wyone.Lashley@gmail.com	6/11/19
ROBERT MARDI	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-28 Dunlop Ave	718 464-4666	mr.mardimardi@gmail.com	6/11/19
JENNIFER MURPHY	<i>[Signature]</i>	18345 Dunlop Ave	347 444 3830		6/11/19
CHRISTINA WILSON	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-36 Dunlop Ave	914-791-2212	christina.wilson@gmail.com	6/11/19
MARILYN G. HEADEN	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-20 Dunlop Ave	(914) 393-1418	myghheaden@gmail.com	6-11-19
LEON MATOS	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-30 Dunlop Ave	919 896 9469	smatos516@gmail.com	6-11-19
NEAR McNEAR	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-15 Dunlop Ave	917-471-2204	nearm183@gmail.com	6-10-19
MICHELLE FERRIS	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-13 Dunlop Ave	517-623-2569	Michelle.ferris@gmail.com	6-10-19
ROSALINDA	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-10 Dunlop Ave	516-308 8856	francisrichiefrancisrichie@gmail.com	6-11-19
ANGELA	<i>[Signature]</i>	187-60 Dunlop Ave	576 795 8963	angela.watson@gmail.com	6-11-19
PAMELA MULLAND	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-10 Dunlop Ave	516-395-8843		6-11-19
PATRICIA JONES	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-10 Dunlop Ave	516-395-8853		6-11-19
SALEM DUNLOP	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-07 Dunlop Ave	728-790-8801		6-11-19
PAUL ROBERT	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-09 Dunlop Ave	347-271-1949	robert.paul@gmail.com	6-11-19
ANGELA	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-16 Dunlop Ave	347-863-1930	angela.paul@gmail.com	6-11-19
ANGELA	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-17 Dunlop Ave	347-863-1930	angela.paul@gmail.com	6-11-19
ANGELA	<i>[Signature]</i>	183-27 Dunlop Ave	1-414-2921	angela.paul@gmail.com	6-11-19

Sandra Morrison 185-38 Fonda Ave 917-945-9017 Smackireney123@gmail.com
 Contacts: Angela Brunswick: 718-454-1421, email: stalbansalphastreet@gmail.com

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITY BOARD 12

BRINKERHOFF AVE GREEN SAFE SPACE PETITION

Name (Print)	Signature	Address	Phone	Email	Date
Adebiyi Jimmy		183-28 Elmira Ave	347-238-6996 347-239-8447		6-13-19
Leitha Anselm		183-24 Elmira	917-378-0144		6-13-19
MARANNE KARDON		183-52 Elmira	718-949-7714		6/13/19
Nomosh Lee		183-57 Elmira Ave	917-538-5568		6/13/19
Melkia Brown		183-65 Elmira Ave	917-912-7258		6/13/19
Vanessa Henry		186-01 Elmira	347-324-2350	plum1552@hotmail.com	6/13/19
Maldina Felix		186-13 Elmira Ave	646-206-0876	walakin@gmail.com	6/13/19
Ernestine Murray		186-25 Elmira Ave	718-954-4583		6/13/19
Maria Reyes		186-29 Elmira Ave	347-547-0140		6-13-19
James White		187-18 Liberty	718-457-6946		6-13-19
Peter Daniel Patrick		186-46 Elmira	718-656-3301		6-13-19
Rhosh Hinds		186-34 Elmira	929-233-4387	rhoshhinds@gmail.com	6-13-19
Asif Ali		186-10 Elmira Ave	347-288-8106	asif10419@gmail.com	6-13-19

Contacts: Angela Brunswick: 718-454-1421, email: stalbansalphastreets@gmail.com

CONCERNED CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF COMMUNITY BOARD 12

BRINKERHOFF AVE GREEN SAFE SPACE PETITION

Name (Print)	Signature	Address	Phone	Email	Date
Carolyn Mont Woody Minusson	<i>Carolyn Mont</i>	185-35 Hilburn Ave	718 454 3325		6/11/19
Jessie Lunde	<i>Jessie Lunde</i>	14803 CARPENTER AVE 185-78 Galway Ave	718 310 1624 718 454 7511	DANN WOODY @ AOL	06/12
M. Jeffrey Son	<i>M. Jeffrey Son</i>	184-13 Foxmills Blvd	718 479 9359		
A.D. Lopez	<i>A.D. Lopez</i>	191-02 116th St Albany	917 297 7631	Ronye 726 @ KISX	6/13/19
Shope Bernmark	<i>Shope Bernmark</i>	185-07 Galway Ave	917 995 6641		6/15/19
William McKnight	<i>William McKnight</i>	85-20 Galway Ave	718 454 3458		6/15/19
Gayle McKnight	<i>Gayle McKnight</i>	85-20 Galway Ave	718 454 3458	gjmckson245@gmail.com	6/15/19
Paul Gardner	<i>Paul Gardner</i>	185-16 Galway Ave	718 454 4032	FRANKBR17@AOL.COM	6/15/19
Franklin Rodriguez	<i>Franklin Rodriguez</i>	185-35 Hilburn Ave	917 385 7624		6/16/19
William Mont III	<i>William Mont III</i>	185-35 Hilburn Ave	718 454 3325		6/15/19
Laura Johnsen Rodriguez	<i>Laura Johnsen Rodriguez</i>	185-35 Hilburn Ave	917 951 9199	RodrigLauraL@gmail.com	6/15/19
William Mont	<i>William Mont</i>	185-35 Hilburn Ave	718 866 6568		6/15/19
Clifford Lewis	<i>Clifford Lewis</i>	185-33 Galway Ave	347 879 9731		6/17/19

Contacts: Angela Brunswick: 718-454-1421, email: sialbansal@phaststreets@gmail.com

6/15



This petition has collected
16 signatures
using the online tools at [ipetitions.com](https://www.ipetitions.com)

Printed on 2019-06-18

Brinkerhoff Ave. Green Space

About this petition

We, the undersigned are making the following requests for the planning of the two parcels of land located between Dunkirk and Hannibal on Brinkerhoff Avenue in St. Albans.

- The two parcels should be made into one continuous green space with adequate lighting;
- Designated as a "Green Street" to assure regularly scheduled maintenance by the Parks and Recreation or DOT as applicable;
- Signage to "No Parking" and "Clean Up After Your Dog"; and
- Community representation throughout the planning process.

Signatures

1. Name: DIANE HARRIS on 2019-06-15 12:11:03
Comments:

2. Name: Denise Wallace on 2019-06-15 12:19:31
Comments: No Sitting Space. Plenty of lights.

3. Name: Katerina Sidbury on 2019-06-15 13:12:34
Comments: Agreed

4. Name: Delores Parker on 2019-06-15 13:13:27
Comments: Agreed

5. Name: Ellen Carlisle on 2019-06-15 14:30:05
Comments: Agreed

6. Name: loycent on 2019-06-15 14:53:52
Comments: with adequate patrol

7. Name: Angela Brunswick on 2019-06-15 15:48:42
Comments:

8. Name: Carolyn on 2019-06-15 15:57:13
Comments:

9. Name: Nathaniel Howard on 2019-06-15 17:05:32
Comments:

10. Name: Janet Talbott on 2019-06-15 17:48:53
Comments: Yes. This would indeed be best for the neighborhood.

11. Name: Victoria Banks on 2019-06-15 19:24:17
Comments:

12. Name: Lori stoute on 2019-06-16 06:35:45
Comments:

13. Name: Phyllis Mahmoud on 2019-06-16 23:39:41
Comments:

14. Name: Jasminie Joseph on 2019-06-17 20:18:53

Comments:

15. Name: Vincent Fitzpatrick on 2019-06-18 13:38:44
Comments:

16. Name: Latifa Stephens on 2019-06-18 14:49:35
Comments:

Dear NYC Council,

NYC Parks needs increased support. During this past year of Covid, the residents of NYC have relied on the parks to be their sanctuary, escape, home office, and gym. For many of us who are high-risk, our indoor spaces were no longer viable, so parks were not only a savior, but essential for our physical and mental health.

We specifically go to Riverside Park on a daily basis, and Central Park several times a week. We've seen the difference this past year without the full funding has been on Riverside Park. After the snowstorms, the main paths were not cleared. We've seen shattered glass on sidewalks and stairways that are there for weeks. Staircases need repair, especially between 96th and 119th Streets. I've attached photos to show some of this.

Please increase the support for NYC parks. New Yorkers need this.

Thank you,

Rebecca Hing





Riverside Park Conservancy

Conservation and maintenance of the park's natural resources

Volunteer House Staircase Repair @ 107th Street

We are pleased to report that in the Spring of 2023, Riverside Park Conservancy will repair the outdoor staircase with handrails at the Volunteer House in the damaged section of the Conservancy's 107th Street grounds.

This improvement to the staircase will be a general project for all.

The scope of the project is to repair the staircase and handrails at the Volunteer House.

Conservancy of 222.876.2678

Conservancy of 222.876.2678



Conservancy of 222.876.2678

**Testimony of Riverside Park Conservancy
Before the City Council Budget Hearing
City Hall
March 12, 2021**

Riverside Park Conservancy was founded in 1986 by New Yorkers who were concerned that the New York City Parks Department was not doing enough to support their local park. These volunteers began what has been a decades-long collective grassroots effort to maintain and restore Riverside Park.

Today, 35 years later, the Conservancy has grown to be able to support full time gardeners, to support a robust volunteer program all year round, and to provide free public programming for the community. Funded entirely by private dollars, our organization supports the care of six miles, nearly four hundred acres, of parkland – which includes not only Riverside Park, but also Riverside Park South, Sakura Park, West Harlem Piers Park, and Fort Washington Park.

Unfortunately, all these decades later, the Parks Department’s resources and staff continue to be stretched thin over five boroughs, and parks around the City have suffered decades of degradation due to this chronic lack of fair funding. The impact of this neglect is often felt even harder in communities of color and low income areas, and aggravates existing issues of park equity.

At a time when New Yorkers are relying on their parks like never before – during a global pandemic - the NYC Parks Department budget was cut by \$84 million, the second largest budget cut of any City agency in 2020. This led to 1,700 fewer maintenance and operations seasonal staff around the City, which meant a significant reduction in work hours and maintenance visits to parks and playgrounds. The combination of reduced staff capacity and record-breaking traffic in parks culminated in the worst cleanliness conditions on record.

Riverside Park welcomes millions of visitors every year, and in 2020 there was a clear surge in park use that staff levels were simply unable to keep up with. The \$84 million cut was felt in every corner of the Park. Conservancy staff struggled to meet their responsibilities as they worked to fill gaps in maintenance that seasonal staff would usually fill.

Our parks are essential public infrastructure, and should be funded as such. For several years we have proudly been advocating as part of New Yorkers for Parks’ Play Fair coalition for increased funding for the Parks Department – and we consider this year’s platform as more urgent than ever. New Yorkers

Riverside Park Conservancy

will continue relying on our public green spaces as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and we ask that the NYC Council reverse last year's painful cuts, and restore the necessary funds to the budget as an immediate and necessary step toward adequately caring for our City's parks.

By properly maintaining our parks, we can help to ensure that the City's ecology - and our communities - are resilient and healthy, during this challenging moment and for years to come.

Hello,

.

I live in Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. Last year was disastrous, many New Yorkers suffered. Unfortunately, the New York City parks budget was cut, there was less staff and more litter. Many New Yorkers look forward to the warmer days to go to the parks. All these parks are what make our lives more pleasant. I frequent many parks, Prospect Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, East River Park. It is important that NYC Parks dept is funded properly. Parks are an inclusive space that everyone can enjoy, not just rich people with money..



**TESTIMONY BEFORE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PARKS & RECREATION**

**FISCAL YEAR 2022 PRELIMINARY BUDGET
FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2021**

**PREPARED BY
MICHAEL SCHNALL
CANDIDATE FOR NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
49TH DISTRICT, STATEN ISLAND**

Good afternoon Chair Koo. My name is Michael Schnall and I am a candidate for New York City Council running to represent the 49th Council district, covering the north shore of Staten Island. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee on Parks & Recreation on the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget.

I am a proud alumnus of the New York City Council, first serving in the Council Finance Division, and then Legislative Director for former Council Member Yvette Clarke. I also served almost ten years at NYC Parks, having attended and testified at over 50 committee and budget hearings. And, most recently served five years at New York Road Runners, working with many of your colleagues to creating running and fitness opportunities for people of all ages and abilities across all 51 Council districts.

As someone who has worked on all sides of the City's budget battle, I know how important this budget process is for smart, thoughtful and informed decision-making, that inevitably impacts the health and well-being of this City's millions of residents. They are relying on the decisions being made in the halls of 250 Broadway and at City Hall to live healthy, meaningful and safe lives. Even though we're all working virtually and socially distanced, coming together and working for the betterment of every New Yorkers remains the primary role of every Council Member. I am a candidate for this very reason: I live to service those New Yorkers who are underserved and under-represented, and implore you to keep working until your last hour as Council Member to fulfill your mission of service to 8.4 million New Yorkers. I look forward to picking up the weighty responsibility, and carrying the torch forward in our never-ending work to improve our great city.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE SCHNALL FOR CITY COUNCIL

68 City Boulevard | Staten Island, NY 10301

mike@mikeschnall.com | mikeschnall.com | (917) 426-4312 | #SchnallforCouncil

Facebook: MikeSchnallforCityCouncil | Twitter: mikeschnall | Instagram: mikeschnall

PAID FOR BY MIKE SCHNALL FOR CITY COUNCIL

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I am testifying today in support of every effort the New York City Council can possibly make to provide funding to protect, preserve, enhance and care for our precious parks and open space. I support the Play Fair campaign, which was prescient in its efforts in 2019 recognizing that parks and open spaces would be (unknowingly to many of us) the mental health oases we needed to persevere through the pandemic. And I support every effort to maintain and enhance staffing levels, so the care and operations needed to maintain our parkland becomes a priority for a city that has historically disinvested in the needs of our Emerald Empire.

Parks are more important than ever to the health and well-being of every New Yorker. And the Council will hopefully not just support the City agency overseeing 1,700 parks, playground, and recreation facilities across the five boroughs, included in 30,000 acres of land, but also the dozens and dozens of park-related non-profit conservancies and friends of groups that pour their blood, sweat and tears into keeping parks, clean, green, healthy and safe. Council Members must realize that both capital and expense funding provided by this Council is only a part of the total recipe to successful parks: non-profits rely on donations and volunteers to fulfill their missions, as well as Council Member discretionary funding. Please be generous, support their efforts, and invest in the health and wellness of your communities.

I would be remiss in not mentioning two things. First, I want to acknowledge that Staten Island is the official “Borough of Parks” with the most parkland of all five boroughs. Our parks and open space are second to none, and a signature feature of our borough and why over 500,000 New Yorkers call Staten Island home. The north shore, where I live with my family and I’m seeking to represent, has an amazing diversity of parks and playgrounds. Every north shore resident deserves a safe, clean and beautiful park space, and as the next Council Member for the north shore, I will continue my commitment to NYC Parks to seek out every dollar possible to invest into our parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

Second, I want to say that while I will be deeply sad to see NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver leave the agency in June, I had the pleasure to work for him before leaving the agency, and have come to respect his empathetic approach to caring for parks, his visionary leadership on remaking parks for communities neglected for decades, and his commitment to equity and equality for all across a vast and diverse park system. And, I am deeply thankful for his friendship, his commitment to running, and look forward to running again with him soon.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to joining the Council in January 2022. I encourage Members and staff to stay safe, continue to wear a mask, socially distance, and get the vaccine when you become eligible.

MIKE SCHNALL FOR CITY COUNCIL

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Brinkerhoff Safe Green Space

To: The Committee on Parks and Recreation

From: Angela Brunswick
President, St. Albans Alpha Streets Block Association

Date: March 11, 2021

This petition was circulated in September 2019. Since then we have had meeting after meeting with Parks, DOT, and Sanitation asking who should be responsible for the maintenance of this land. I've lived in this neighborhood for 18 years and have seen the appearance drastically decline. There was a time when the grass was kept cut and it wasn't an eyesore.

The residents of this community pay taxes, have pride in their properties and deserve to get the services to which we are entitled. I am asking this Committee to approve the budget to include this area and make it a safe green space where we can live, thrive and flourish:

The following is the petition that was circulated almost two years ago:

We, the undersigned are making the following requests for the planning of the two parcels of land located between Dunkirk and Hannibal on Brinkerhoff Avenue in St. Albans.

- The two parcels should be made into one continuous green space with adequate lighting
- Designated as a "Green Street" to assure regularly scheduled maintenance by the Parks and Recreation Department or DOT as applicable
- No benches
- Signage to indicate "No Parking" and "Clean Up After Your Dog"
- Community representation throughout the planning process

We thank you for your consideration in this matter.



**New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation
March 12, 2021**

Testimony By: Michael Palermo, President, The Forest Park Trust, Inc.

My name is Michael Palermo, I am the President of The Forest Park Trust.

Thank you to for the opportunity to testify about the importance of NYC forests and supporting the FY22 Play Fair budget.

The Forest Park Trust is a non-profit organization founded in 1997. We work in partnership with NYC Parks to support the Forest and Highland Park administration, in its effort to develop, care for and secure funding for the future of both parks. We beautify and improve the landscaped and recreational areas; provide free family and youth programs including many events and concerts; and hire staff for our garden and trails

In 2019, The Forest Park Trust was thrilled by the by the announcement by the City Council and Mayor to allocate \$43 million in expense funding for NYC Parks. This included \$4 million to support the management of natural areas and the Forestry Management Framework (FMF) plan. In the FMF study, conducted by the Natural Areas Conservancy, sixty four percent of our patrons used our natural areas. The same study revealed that these areas are on the tipping point on the forest health scale as there is less regeneration of native trees, especially oak species, in the midstory and understory. The study asked, "Can you imagine Forest Park without its towering oak trees and its large cradling canopy?"

Forest Park greatly benefitted from the Play Fair program that provided full-time staff members to remove invasive plants, do trail-building, perform erosion control measures, plant new trees and provided a consistent presence, 'eyes on the trails'. These efforts were impactful and significant to our forest health but, just the start.

In the last year, there has been a significant increase of visitors impacting these areas. New Yorkers, especially our neighbors, realized how important Parks and natural areas are to one's physical and mental health.

In Richard Lovu's Last Child in the Woods "researchers believe that the loss of natural habitats, or the disconnection from nature has enormous implications for human health and child development. An individual's connection to nature can improve their interpersonal relationships and emotional wellbeing."

We hope that the City Council will support the full reinstatement of the transformative Play Fair program, including \$4.5 million to continue with the conservation and care of the city's natural areas, so our park patrons can experience the full benefits of connecting to a forest in their own backyard.

We want to especially thank City Councilwoman Darma V. Diaz, Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz, Councilman Robert F. Holden and Councilman Eric A. Ulrich for their continued generosity and attention to our parks.

Thank you all again for your leadership and commitment to NYC Parks.

March 9, 2021

Good afternoon New City Council Elected Officers
Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Fay D. Hill a resident of Springfield Gardens, District Leader Assembly District 31B Queens, New York. A retired executive legal secretary, executive Director/Secretary for Volunteers for Springfield Park in Queens, New York. A board member at Community Board 13 and chairperson for Parks and Environment Committee for the past 8 years.

I am here to testify on behalf of the communities as a whole and to thank New York for Parks on the remarkable work they have contributed to our communities. These are hard working leaders who have contributed to the awareness and the improvement of our parks and green spaces in New York City.

I would like to take a pause to thank my former Councilman Donovan Richards who had made it possible to budget for the parks in Southeast Queens and the Far Rockaway for the past 6 years and have done major improvements to our parks and hope to continue to so.

I have lived in Springfield Gardens for over 44 years and have seen our parks deteriorated, prostitution, drug infested and our residents were unable to use their parks in both Springfield and Rosedale and surrounding communities during other city council administrations during their budget sessions. We were totally ignored for many years. The upper respiratory and asthma disease have increased and if we don't have trees and green spaces our residents will continue to suffer.

We are pleading to the budget committee to be **Fair With Parks**. Now our parks have somewhat improved and the quality of life have become a part of our residents to enjoy their parks we need more fundings where we can hire more park workers, park patrols and the maintenance and the upkeep of our parks so we can continue to enjoy them.

I must draw your attention again on the pandemic we are now facing and the emphasis and how our parks and open are being used on a record basis. This past year our parks did not have enough spaces to accommodate residents all over the city. The park where our board members strive to keep clean because of the lack of park workers was used at a record breaking capacity during 2020 and moving forward. Thanks to the volunteers who had to clean up the garbage and keep our park welcoming to their residents who were isolated for many months, e.g., children who could not have social interaction as well as parents who were having their children staying at home.

Fundings is imperative to be awarded to our parks for our city residents to enjoy relaxation and also enjoy the quality of life.

We would like all of our elected councilpersons present here today to consider in your upcoming budget to make this one of your major priority to the contribution of fundings for **Fair With Parks** for our Parks and green spaces here in New York and the surrounding boroughs.

Thank you all for listening to my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Fay D. Hill