



September 27, 2021

**New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Oversight: Maintaining the City's Tree Stock**

Testimony by: NYC Parks First Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanagh

Good morning, Chair Koo, members of the Parks Committee, and other members of the City Council. I am Liam Kavanagh, the First Deputy Commissioner for NYC Parks. I'm pleased to be joined today by Jennifer Greenfeld, our Assistant Commissioner for Forestry, Horticulture, and Natural Resources, as well as our Director of Government Relations, Matt Drury. I want to start by noting our appreciation for the Council's continued advocacy for our City parks, and for the resources and support it has provided for our forestry efforts.

New York City's tree canopy is an incredible natural resource that delivers vital environmental and economic benefits to New Yorkers, nearly \$260 million dollars in combined annual and accumulated value, which has become all the more important in the face of global climate change. Our agency manages over 50% of the City's tree canopy, which represents the best possible opportunity to maximize the benefits of this vital resiliency infrastructure, in hopes of staving off the worst impacts of climate change. Our City trees capture stormwater, help mitigate carbon emissions and pollution, increase property values, and provide invaluable shade to keep our neighborhoods cooler. We have invested significantly in new planting for trees along our City streets, as well as throughout our parks and forests. Through the Cool Neighborhoods initiative, we're focusing on parts of our City that have been traditionally underserved and overlooked, to ensure that trees are being planted in the neighborhoods that are the most vulnerable to heat impacts.

In addition to planting new trees, protecting and caring for existing trees is critical to maintaining and expanding our urban tree canopy. This Administration has provided consistently high levels of funding for routine street tree pruning and maintenance and has significantly increased the level of annual funding provided for block pruning, in comparison to previous Administrations. Our highly trained and dedicated Forestry staff work closely with our contractors and other service providers to address tree concerns as quickly as possible, utilizing a Risk Management approach that prioritizes the conditions that present the most risk to the safety of New Yorkers. Over time, our standards and protocols towards tree planting and tree care have evolved, informed by closely tracking research and best practices implemented by urban foresters around the world.

I would like to take a moment and acknowledge the excellent work done by our Forestry staff. If you've enjoyed a picnic under a park tree, taken a moment to enjoy the cool air along a tree-lined street, or taken a peaceful walk in the woods, you have them to thank. The trees along our streets, throughout our park landscapes, and clustered in our natural forests are a living network of vital City infrastructure that help keep our City healthy, safe and vibrant. Just like the City's networks of streetlamps or water mains, our urban tree canopy is a vital City asset that needs to be maintained, protected and preserved. As we have all come to recognize, the global climate change emergency is all too real, and our City's tree canopy is the first line of defense. To this end, we take our responsibility very seriously to prevent tree impacts from nearby construction or other work, and we do everything in our power to ensure that the removal of a healthy tree is to be avoided if at all possible.



The seven separate pieces of legislation being heard today touch upon a very wide range of forestry-related topics:

Intro 98 relates to unplantable street tree pits; Intro 199 regards the undertaking of surveys before planting street trees; Intro 467 would compel increased reporting related to public requests for tree plantings; Intro 552 relates to the posting of information online regarding tree stump removal; Intro 957 would impact the replacement of city-owned trees after their lawful removal; Intro 2365 relates to the City's Downed Tree Task Force; and Intro 2366 regards tree health assessments and inspections in advance of pruning maintenance.

Regarding the legislation being heard today, we appreciate the intent of these bills and are happy to work closely with the Council to discuss potential paths forward to addressing any existing concerns regarding our City's tree canopy. Given the expansive breadth of these issues, our limited time today won't allow us to provide a comprehensive overview of all of our agency's forestry management efforts, but we are always available to provide further information about our tree-related programs and practices, in hopes of helping you and your constituents better understand our forestry work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for the chance to listen to testimony from the public on this topic, through the Council's hearing livestream. We will now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

NYC Council Parks Committee
Oversight Hearing: Maintaining the City's Tree Stock - 9.27.2021
City Parks Foundation Testimony

I'm Chrissy Word, Director of Education for City Parks Foundation, a nonprofit that leads free sports, arts, environmental education and community building programs that encourage 300,000 New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces each year. As a member organization of the Forests For All NYC, we commend the City Council for holding this hearing to develop approaches to better support the urban forest in NYC. City Parks Foundation would be pleased to support legislation that will meaningfully improve the urban forest and its benefits for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Council to help shape legislation that will do so.

Our urban forest includes more than 7 million trees in the city across public and private lands, and the physical and social infrastructure that supports them. We encourage the Council to think about and plan for the whole of the urban forest. Trees enhance our quality of life and improve health and wellbeing for people by cleaning and cooling the air and reducing heat-related illness. Trees help tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, strengthening our shoreline, absorbing carbon dioxide, and absorbing stormwater before it pollutes our waterways.

However, the urban forest is not equitably distributed. The most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods tend to be low-income communities or communities of color with less tree cover. Our urban forest, and the Parks Department who cares for over half of it, are both chronically underfunded and the urban forest needs more investment and better protection. Often, items in the budget that support the urban forest like tree planting, pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, and invasive species control are seen as expendable. Consistent, sufficient, baselined funding is needed for all of those elements and the City needs to better resource the urban forest as a whole and those who care for it, both the professionals and the vast network of volunteers - we stand with the Play Fair Coalition for the City to baseline 1% of the city's budget for parks.

City Parks Foundation has a special stake in the Council's decisions around how to better care for the urban forest in NYC. Our programs take place in many of the neighborhoods that have much less tree cover than more affluent neighborhoods. We know that public green spaces do not always feel welcoming or safe for people of color. And yet, especially during the pandemic, our parks have become an essential part of life for our students and their families. As a result, we increased our educational focus on trees in our parks to help students to understand trees' roles in climate regulation and what we risk with each extreme weather event when we lose sometimes up to hundreds of trees. We have partnered for years with the NYC Parks Stewards, helping our students to visit parks to learn about and provide stewardship. Our program curricula also look at urban street trees and how they can increase the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Through CityParks Build, we also work with volunteer groups and parks conservancies across the city. While nonprofit partners help to care for parks, without indemnification from the city, they are not able to assist

with tree care due to liability issues. We encourage the city to honor and build upon the deep history of civic engagement and not-for-profit stewardship in NYC by championing and indemnifying parks partners, ensuring these vital partners can continue to care for parks and gardens across the five boroughs.

We ask the City Council to consider advancing a visionary and pragmatic approach that establishes a long-term direction for the whole of the urban forest to support health, equity, quality of life, resilience, and justice that we can work toward together starting now.

We encourage the City Council to review the recently released NYC Urban Forest Agenda, which presents an array of opportunities to make a meaningful, positive difference both in our urban forest and in the lives of New Yorkers. As a member of the Forest for All NYC, we will not support any legislation that diminishes protections or standards for the urban forest in NYC. Instead, we'd like to share opportunities to support our urban forests including:

- Establishing a citywide goal of 30% canopy cover by 2035
- Calling for and resourcing a master plan for of NYC's urban forest for its whole life-cycle, from planting to salvage
- Supporting development of community-scale urban forest plans and goals
- Investing in urban forest career pathways
- Increasing and equitably distributing funding for both maintenance and planting of the urban forest
- Strengthening tree regulations and establishing incentive programs that sustain and expand tree canopy across both public and private property

We wish to thank Chairman Koo, the Parks Committee Members, and City Council for reviewing options to support the urban forest and its many benefits for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance meaningful and effective urban forest legislation.

**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Emily Nobel Maxwell, Cities Program Director, The Nature Conservancy in New York
September 27, 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; our more than 600 scientists and 3,500 team members located in all 50 U.S. states and 70 countries work to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have 90,000 members across New York State, 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.

Today I'm testifying on behalf of both [The Nature Conservancy](#) and [Forest for All NYC](#), a broad and diverse coalition which we convene that has nearly 40 (and counting) organizational members. Members include non-profits, businesses, academics, and government partners who work together to protect, maintain, and grow the urban forest in New York City. We envision a healthy, accessible, well-understood, and resilient urban forest that justly and equitably delivers its multiple benefits to all residents of New York City. On behalf of both The Nature Conservancy, and Forest for All NYC, I want to thank Chairman Koo and the Committee for holding a hearing on the urban forest – an important and pressing issue.

The more than seven million trees that span public and private land across our city, along with their associated physical and social infrastructure, constitute the urban forest. With nearly as many trees as people in the city, the urban forest is an essential system that provides enormous benefits and services to New York City. The urban forest provides shade on hot summer days and cools city streets and buildings, saving an estimated \$17.1 million in residential energy costs each year. It reduces air pollution by 1,106 tons of pollutants annually, thereby benefiting public health. It mitigates climate change by storing carbon and reduces stormwater runoff by 69 million cubic feet per year, helping protect people and properties in flood-prone areas from damage.¹ The urban forest also provides vital habitat for many plant and animal species. Interactions between people and trees can improve the mental and physical health of people, catalyze stronger connections with nature, support social and cultural connections, and much more. In the face of COVID 19 and the growing impacts of climate change, including extreme heat and flooding, its benefits are more important than ever.

Unfortunately, the urban forest in New York City is also vulnerable; it faces insufficient funding for long-term care, lacks a coordinated management plan for the system as whole, and is largely unprotected from removal on both public and private lands. It is also inequitably distributed across the city, meaning low-income communities and communities of color with less tree cover receive fewer benefits, contributing to their heat vulnerability. While 53.5% of our urban forest (by canopy) is cared for by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, 35.3% is privately owned, and 11.2% is managed by other public agencies, such as the NYC Housing Authority. Each of these urban forest segments would benefit from increased attention, resources, and longer-term vision.

The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, which is responsible for over half of our tree canopy, including street trees, landscaped park trees, and forested natural areas, is chronically underfunded, especially for the demand for its activities related to managing our urban forest. Critical maintenance activities, like stump

¹ Nowak DJ, Bodine AR, Hoehn RE, Ellis A, Hirabayashi S, Coville R, et al. The urban forest of New York City. Newtown Square, PA: USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station; 2018 Sept. 1–82. Report No.: NRS-117. doi: 10.2737/NRS-RB-117

removal, pruning, invasive species removal, and tree planting, are frequently treated as expendable and often subject to budget cuts, causing unpredictability for an asset that requires regular care from both professional staff and volunteer stewards. Consistent, sufficient, baselined funding is needed for the growth and maintenance of the entire urban forest.

Beyond the legislation considered today, we encourage City Council to consider setting a long-term, visionary direction for our city's urban forest in support of public health, equity, quality of life, resilience, and justice. Forest for All NYC recently released the *NYC Urban Forest Agenda*. *The Agenda* outlines 12 key actions to make a meaningful and positive difference both in our urban forest and in the lives of all New Yorkers. Together, we call on City Council to:

- Establish a citywide goal of 30% canopy cover by 2035. (As of 2017, the city had 22% canopy cover.)
- Call for and resource a master plan for of NYC's urban forest for its whole life cycle from planting to salvage
- Support development of community-scale urban forest plans and goals
- Increase and equitably distribute funding for both maintenance and planting of the urban forest
- Strengthen tree regulations and establish incentive programs that sustain and expand tree canopy across both public and private property

While I am pleased to share our goals and recommendations, I must also state that given these goals of protecting and expanding the urban forest in New York City, The Nature Conservancy and Forest for All NYC are unable to support legislation that diminishes protections or standards for the urban forest. For this reason, we oppose the passage of Int 0957 and Int 0199 as written, which would weaken current practices, creating greater risk for the urban forest and therefore negatively affect New Yorkers.

Given the critical role that trees play in the daily life of our city, we commend the Council for your attention to trees in NYC and your interest in improving their care and management. Both The Nature Conservancy and Forest for All NYC would be pleased to support legislation that will meaningfully improve the urban forest and its benefits for New Yorkers. We believe there are opportunities to shape the legislation being considered today to provide greater benefit to the urban forest and look forward to working with Council to do so. Potential legislation we would be eager to support would align with the goals of Forest for All NYC and the *NYC Urban Forest Agenda*, invest more resources in the urban forest and those who care for it, support ecologically and operationally sound practices, be administratively practical, provide more public information about the urban forest, advance equity and justice, support climate resilience, and enhance both the urban forest overall and its benefits for New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are grateful to the Committee members for considering issues related to our urban forest, given its role as vital living infrastructure that benefits New Yorkers, and we look forward to working with the Committee to advance meaningful and effective urban forest legislation.

Contact:

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New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Monday, September 27, 2021
Oversight Hearing - Maintaining the City's Tree Stock
Sherrise Palomino, Director of Advocacy and Programs

Good afternoon, my name is Sherrise Palomino, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Programs at 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 for inviting us to speak about our city's trees and their maintenance. I also want to thank Chair Koo for his leadership and partnership in the Play Fair Coalition and for raising these important issues.

The parks department is responsible for maintaining more than 2.6 million street trees on our streets and in our parks. These trees and urban forests are a critical resource in this city's climate change resilience. They mitigate the urban heat island effect, lower temperatures by up to 9%, cut air conditioning use by 30%, and reduce heating energy use by a further 20-30%. Trees in our parks capture almost 2 billion gallons of stormwater runoff every year, a statistic made even more poignant after the impact of recent tropical storms. Our trees are essential to our public health as well, providing shade and cleaner air, impacts that should resonate with our city's leaders as we continue to make our way through this pandemic.

In short, these trees are an essential part of NYC's green infrastructure. The parks department does a valiant job maintaining this critical resource but needs more funding to do so. This is one of the many reasons why NY4P and our coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks budget to 1% of the city's budget – a call that the majority of city council candidates support along with the leading candidate for mayor.

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



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

**City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
September 27, 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.

The trees that make up our urban forest are one of the city's most valuable environmental assets, mitigating climate change, providing clean air and habitats for native wildlife, and contributing to the well-being of our residents and economy. Protecting and expanding this resource is a top priority for NYLCV.

We are proud to be here with our partners from the Play Fair For Parks Campaign and the Forest For All NYC Coalition to support trees, the parks they live in, and our urban forest. We are co-founders, along with New Yorkers for Parks and DC 37, of the Play Fair Campaign which fights every year for parks funding in the NYC budget. We are adamant that NYC Parks needs at least 1% of the total city budget baselined yearly in order to fund vital forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, and invasive species control. Additionally, with Forest For All NYC, we hope to work with the council to expand our urban forest by establishing a goal of 30% canopy cover by 2035 and resourcing a master plan to manage this expanded forest.

These investments will be critical to improving the environmental benefits of our parks and urban forest. Currently, the 2.6 million street and park trees that the Parks Department are 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 the 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 also contribute to our resiliency by capturing almost 2 billion gallons of stormwater runoff.

Because of these numerous benefits, we must see massive investments in our parks and urban forest to help us protect new yorkers and fight climate change now. Therefore, NYLCV opposes Intro 957 and Intro 199 as these bills seek to lower standards and protections for NYC's Urban Forest when we need to be moving in the opposite direction.

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



**New York City Council
Hearing on Maintaining the City's Tree Stock
September 27, 2021**

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 Councilmember Koo and the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. 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. I am testifying today to highlight the critical importance of NYC's urban forest, to articulate my appreciation for the work of the Parks Department for their care of the urban forest, and to highlight the importance of increased funding for planting and maintenance of trees in NYC.

NYC's urban forest provides myriad benefits - they mitigate extreme heat, improve air quality, support biodiversity, increase property values, and provide unparalleled access to nature. 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. In order to ensure that NYC's urban forest, including our natural areas thrive and provide benefits to residents now and in the future, NYC Parks needs at least 1% of the total city budget to support its maintenance and operations.

NYC's trees are vulnerable to climate change, especially coastal flooding, storm events and pests. However, they are also critically important to ensuring that NYC is livable for the next century (and beyond). NYC's trees are a form of green infrastructure, capturing stormwater and reducing the strain on our stormwater systems. NYC's trees can cool neighborhoods, reducing heat related hospitalization and death, and lowering electricity use by 30%. Our large natural area forests serve as heat sinks and cool the City as a whole. NYC's trees support hundreds of species of birds and thousands of species of plants and animals. And our 10,000 acres of natural forests offer an important solution to the problem of parks equity - with appropriate investment, they can offer access to the wonders of the natural world for millions of New Yorkers, many of whom experience nature exclusively in City Parks.

In addition to supporting an increase in the budget for tree planting and the care of NYC's trees and forest, the NAC feels strongly that it is important to retain existing tree protections. We would like to see replacement standards maintained or strengthened.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express our support for NYC's urban forest.

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To: Committee on NYC Parks and Recreation, CM Peter Koo.

From: Carsten W Glaeser, Ph.D Consulting Arborist

Date: September 27, 2021.

RE: Expert testimony.

NYC COUNCIL HEARING: File # INT 2366-2021

“Tree Health Assessments and inspections”.

Parks Committee Chairman Peter Koo, CM Gennaro, and CM Yager thank you for the invitation to share my thoughts and expertise on matters pertaining to the aftermath of 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias and its consequences to the residents of the City of New York.

My name is Carsten Glaeser. I am a Consulting Arborists and urban tree expert, a Certified Arborist, by the International Society of Arboriculture and work across New York City as an independent Arboricultural Consultant. I am a member of NYS Arborists and the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA)- professional organizations that serve the arboricultural and consulting industries. I am a Qualified Tree Risk Assessor. I bring to you a unique knowledge-based skill and approach to understanding urban trees as a living landscape element and by its importance by their retention and preservation for the inhabitants and tree stakeholder of this City.

It is understandable that this Committee has responded to the health and risk concerns posed by some 600,000 NYC urban trees that line our city streets- particularly in the aftermath of gale force wind Storm Isaias, and in anticipation of the next one. While the proposed legislation “Tree Health Assessments and Inspections” prompts the question amid our large shade producing street trees- Is it Safe? bear in mind that the 2020 Tropical Storm Isaias, despite the massive power outages and service disruptions that

lasted weeks, 1 person is reported to have died. The recent Sept 2 2021 Tropical Storm Ida is responsible for the death of 13 across the 5-boros. None of the deaths were street tree related.

I previously testified that the tree and tree branch failures caused by Storm Isaias has forced the need to review and explore just how our street trees are inspected and assessed by Foresters for the Tree Risk that they pose (and not just Tree Health). Protecting the public from defective trees and with prompt mitigating action to lessen that risk, is an exact and costly undertaking and component of any Urban Forest Management Plan. However, Tree Risk Assessments, its quantifications and its methodologies was designed primarily with tree preservation in mind, not to drive the needless removal of trees.

I am most concerned that what this legislation is proposing and that what is being demanded of NYC Parks Central Forestry for the volume of annual inspections, assessments and necessary tree work response that follows- is not only unattainable but no doubt will evolve into an out of control force that will see more street tree condemnations and removals- rather than tree preservation.

It is currently unattainable by the current NYC Parks Forestry staffing, its questionable talent pool and skill set, and most troubling a shaky commitment to ensure that large tree preservation with Best Management Practices is a foremost part of the inspection endeavor- instead of what I have been witness to- the drive for tree removal. Over past decades Parks Forestry by both their policies and individual Forester behaviors have shown that they are not supportive of the protocols and procedures needed to ensure the retention of public trees, despite an acceptable level of risk that they may pose to the public. Instead it is known that Forestry advocates solely for what may best benefit construction contractors and developers, for the volume of street tree installations that they can get for free, and their drive to see large often low risk trees removed. It has been observed that NYC Parks Foresters assumed to be qualified in performing Tree Risk Assessments and their supervisors have to often fallen back onto that aged cliché - "when in doubt, take it out". Such observations from my perspective of needless tree removal suggest a gross mismanagement of this vital living public urban tree resource.

In closing, I advise this Committee and its members to utilize this proposal on tree health (and risk) assessments and inspections to explore further just how our urban trees are being managed for optimal health and performance for the long-term, and the actually nature of arboricultural care paid for by the tax-payer, being provided by Parks Forestry and their unsupervised tree contractors- known to diminish tree health and promote poor branch development prone to failure in wind storms.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. Chairman Koo I avail my expertise, should you and others of the Parks Committee require additional independent technical input on urban tree care and tree management protocols and methods. Good day.

Carsten W. Glaeser, MPhil, Ph.D, ASCA
Consulting Arborist / ISA Certified Arborist / NYS # 5198A
ISA Qualified Tree Risk Assessor



END.



JHBG | Jackson Heights Beautification Group

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My name is Len Maniace and I'm a director of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group, a civic, environmental and arts organization in Queens. In addition, I lead JHBG's Tree LC program, one of the leading volunteer tree-care programs in our city. (Please see end of testimony.)

Our organization thanks the City Council for taking up this important issue. This summer has made clear that climate change is not off in some distant future but is here now. New York City is getting hotter.

Studies have shown that neighborhoods with many mature trees are cooler than those lacking them. **Briefly put, big trees are Mother Nature's air conditioners.** Though the City Council is now considering tree legislation, we believe the most important step it could take to make our city more resilient in the face of global warming would be to endorse and carry out the recommendations of the NYC Urban Forest Agenda. I will elaborate on that and other needed measures, but first I will address the legislation now before you.

We support bill # 467. This will make available to New Yorkers important data that will help them track how well the city's Department of Parks and Recreation is carrying out its mission to plant trees. To the data already included in this proposal should be added the average street-tree planting cost for each year. Easy access to this data through an online site is essential for the public to understand the issues involved with tree plantings.

I have first-hand knowledge of how difficult it now is to obtain this information. After filing a FOIL request, I did not receive useable information for six months, and then in February of this year only after Council Members Dromm and Koo had intervened with DPR.

Despite the good intentions of the authors, we unfortunately must oppose three other bills under review which, we believe, will make it more difficult to plant trees in our city, leading to a further decline in our urban forest.

We believe passage of:

* Intro 98 would mean the paving over many empty tree beds that otherwise could be planted with trees. For instance, the city Department of Environmental Protection has switched from green infrastructure rain gardens to “concrete-topped infiltration basins” to handle stormwater runoff in many locations. The DEP says it will not install these basins where there are tree beds, empty or filled, which would mean that some paved-over tree beds will no longer be considered receiving street trees again.

* Intro 199 would introduce a stricter standard for street-tree planting on top of the many rules Parks already has.

* Intro 957 would allow fewer trees to be planted as replacements when a mature tree is legally removed, such as for development.

Other than # 467, we believe the City Council should table new tree legislation until completion of a new study of our city’s urban forest.

That study - the NYC Urban Forest Agenda - is already underway. This project aims to make our city more environmentally resilient by increasing our cooling tree canopy to at least 30 percent by 2035 from the current 22 percent. This is hardly an extravagant goal. The District of Columbia is closing in on its goal of a 40 percent tree canopy.

Importantly, the NYC Forest Agenda particularly focuses on increasing tree canopy coverage for communities of color and poverty, neighborhoods that have been frequently neglected. We hope the City Council will support the NYC Urban Forest Agenda and work toward its implementation. Thank you.

Independent of the NYC Urban Forest Agenda, my work as head of JHBG’s tree stewardship program and my research into the DPR’s street-tree planting program has made it clear that several steps are needed to expand the city’s tree canopy coverage.

1 DPR will need more funding for tree planting.

2 DPR will need to reduce tree planting costs. **The cost for planting a street tree in the city reached an average of \$3,400 in FY 2020, up from only \$1,400 in FY 2015.** Over the last two years DPR officials have repeatedly explained these high costs are due to too few businesses bidding on city contracts. That shortage, however, continues despite the city’s willingness to pay nearly 2 ½ times more, or an extra \$2,000, for each street tree.

In a normal market, rising prices would attract more businesses to bid on city contracts, which in turn should ease rising costs to the city. DPR needs to do more to learn the reason for these increased. Two years ago, and again this summer, I asked DPR officials if Parks had reached out to other cities to learn how widespread this issue was and twice, I was told no.

3 DPR will need to find a way to reduce the mortality rate of its trees. Though DPR is paying a premium for its trees, too many are dying, frequently within a few years of planting. At today's public hearing, First Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanaugh reported that DPR removes some 8,000 to 12,000 trees, annually. That means we may barely be breaking even, rather increasing the number of trees in our city. Better tree maintenance is needed, particularly in the first three years following planting. Also, DPR should investigate the quality of newly planted trees. Contractors are required to guarantee their trees for two years, however, other than some initial watering after planting, contractors don't seem to do much maintenance. Instead, they appear to have built into their prices the cost of tree replacements. The city should study the possibility of taking over street-tree maintenance, in particular, for the first three years after planting.

Tree Care Groups

yourself with that group on the NYC Street Tree Map allows you to see your activity visualized with your fellow group members on that group's detail page.

Each group's detail page lists contact information and their website. Please remember to join the group in real life before associating yourself with it on the map! If your group is not listed on below and you would like to request it be added, please contact Stewardship@parks.nyc.gov

Most Active Groups

Show Groups In

- Brooklyn
- Bronx
- Manhattan
- Queens
- Staten Island

Group Name	Boroughs	Activities Last 180 Days
Jackson Heights Beautification Group TreeLC	Queens	655
Trees New York	Bronx Brooklyn Manhattan Queens Staten Island	652
NYC Parks Stewardship Team	Bronx Brooklyn Manhattan Queens Staten Island	463
Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District	Manhattan	162
Gowanus Canal Conservancy	Brooklyn	103
GrowNYC	Bronx Brooklyn Manhattan Queens Staten Island	21
Q Gardens	Brooklyn	19
Good & Green	Brooklyn	16
CLOTH / CHAH	Manhattan	13
Lower East Side Ecology Center	Manhattan	13
NYC Compost Project	Bronx Brooklyn Manhattan Queens Staten Island	13
Red Hook Conservancy	Brooklyn	13
Friends of Mosholu Parkland	Bronx	11
Flowering Queens	Queens	5
110th Street Block Association	Manhattan	0

Thank you for your consideration.

Len Maniace

September 29, 2021

Peter Koo, Chair
Committee on Parks and Recreation
New York City Council
Re: Oversight Hearing - Maintaining the City's Tree Stock, Sep. 27, 2021

Dear Chair Koo,

Please accept this letter as testimony on the Sep 27, 2021 Oversight Hearing on Maintaining the City's Tree Stock.

On behalf of Local Nature Lab, I strongly encourage the Committee on Parks and Recreation to advocate for biodiversity plans for landscaped parks throughout the city. Local, nearby parks are often overlooked in the context of long-term environmental planning. Yet, local parks provide New Yorkers with daily and frequent exposure to nature, and we should seek to optimize these public resources to provide the maximum benefits for people and the environment. During the pandemic when we were encouraged to spend time in the outdoors, and at the same time we were also advised not to travel too far from home, our local parks were our respites. These same local parks should also be considered in policy conversations about climate change.

New Yorkers are experiencing climate change locally, on their block, in their neighborhood. Climate change is exacerbating existing environmental challenges related to heat and storms. Trees and biodiversity are not the solution, but are part of the city's toolkit. We must pay attention to solutions for where people live. A solution to mitigate climate impacts locally is biologically diverse tree canopies—all vegetation layers—in our local parks to improve human health and well-being, to provide habitat for wildlife (for their intrinsic values and also because plant and animal diversity has been shown to benefit people), to slow down intense rainfall and storm water runoff, to remove particulate matter from the air, and to cool the hotspots in our neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Georgia Silvera Seamans
Founder, Local Nature Lab
localnaturelab@gmail.com



Georgia Silvera Seamans (she/her/s)
Listen to Season 1 of Your Bird Story @ anchor.fm/yourbirdstory



Trees Testimonial

NYC Council Hearing

September 27, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about trees in NYC. Marine Park Alliance advocates for Marine Park by championing its programs, ecology, and natural beauty for the all New Yorkers.

Since humans are an integral part of this city's ecology, trees are a necessity. It's stunning to me when someone requests the removal of trees because they create so many leaves that have to be picked up. That requestor doesn't remember that plants create the oxygen we need to breathe; nor that the plants that provide the most oxygen are mature trees.

Iconic images of Marine Park are of the near-mile long oval path of majestic pin oaks planted in the 1930s. They are huge, glorious oxygen and shade producers that are now nearing the end of their lives. They shed branches regularly and loose large ones in the big storms that have become regular with the largest storms uprooting entire trees. Park users are concerned how the health of the trees affect their safety while walking, running or biking underneath them. When we recently shared at our Community Committee of representatives from seven groups who use the park that the pruning cycle is every seven years for these trees, they had to laugh. That cycle might be sufficient for young trees but for older, mature trees like those planted in the 1930s, that is not enough care. Careful consistent pruning helps prolong a tree's lifetime as well as public safety.

Marine Park Alliance advocates not only for its flagship park, but all NYC Parks through the Parks and Open Space Coalition, which insists that NYC Parks deserves a full 1% of the City's budget. With the current Parks budget less than one half a percent, there is no way the iconic trees in Marine Park will get the care they need. Our visitors are concerned for the trees' health and their own safety. More resources are needed to address this important issue.

Submitted by Karen Eichel, Board Secretary

**Testimony of Susan M Donoghue, President, Prospect Park Alliance
New York City Council Parks Committee
Oversight Hearing: Maintaining the City's Tree Stock
September 27, 2021**

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 writing today to request the proper funding and support for the care and stewardship of the city's 2.6 million street and park trees.

Living in an urban environment, our trees provide a critical public health service. According to data from the League of Conservation Voters, our trees clean our air by removing 1,300 tons of pollutants from the atmosphere and absorbing one million tons of carbon each year; reducing what is known as the "heat island effect" by lowering the temperature by up to nine degrees; cutting air conditioning use by 30 percent and reducing heating energy use by 20-50%; and capturing almost 2 billion gallons of stormwater runoff annually. This is beyond the immeasurable benefits of trees and green space to our mental health, which could be seen as never before during the pandemic.

No longer can the Parks Budget be treated as non-essential. The current level of funding, and risks each year of budget cuts to the small pool of funding currently allocated to parks, places our trees and green spaces at significant risk. As evidenced by Hurricane Ida, and the increased number of storms that have followed Hurricane Sandy back in 2012, our trees are vulnerable to climate change and require more constant maintenance and care, which can only be achieved by increased resources. In addition to this, with globalization, our trees are placed at risk for invasive diseases that can result in widespread damage and destruction, from Oak Wilt to the Spotted Lanternfly, and this places even more challenges on NYC Parks.

In Prospect Park, which is home to Brooklyn's last remaining forest, we lost 150 trees, and even more trees suffered severe damage, from Hurricane Sandy alone. Today, we rely increasingly on Brooklyn Forestry to care for the Park's 30,000 trees, and this partnership is vital for caring for "Brooklyn's Lungs."

We applaud the City Council for hosting this oversight hearing, and considering the critical need to increase funding for city parks, and recognizing our parks as essential infrastructure, by not only restoring budget cuts, but moving beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model: 1% or more of our city budget must be for parks, and forestry contracts for tree pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, and invasive species control need full dedicated funding not subject to budget cuts.

Testimony – Sept 27th 2021

Trees Damaged by Commercial Lawn Mower-

On June 6th, 2020, I noted over a dozen trees damaged by NYC Parks, It looked like a crime scene with trees mutilated and their shredded bark all over our grounds. Neighbors across the street stated they witnessed Parks commercial lawn mower driven fast and erratically in that area

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=18p_0SWw1Tr4EgQVuyZTbBcvScVo373Vz

I notified NYC Park Manger and there was NO response and No action taken from NYC Parks, Forestry did not bother to check on the damaged trees nor provide any update on the trees' conditions. Parks continued to damage our trees with lawn mower on August 4th, 2020, on April 24th and April 30th of this year until I reported the incidents to News 12 The Bronx. NYC Parks lawn mower ran over a tree and some shrubs and yet have not responded to my request to replace the trees they killed. Details with photos on bottom of page

<https://newjersey.news12.com/friends-of-pelham-parkway-calls-on-parks-dept-to-replace-damaged-trees>

Trees Damaged and Killed by Barbecuing.

For over 3 years, I asked the Parks Dept Manager for the no barbecuing signs on Bronxwood to protect our trees. Not only did he not provide us with any signs but responded that signs don't help. This summer right before July 4th Parks finally put 2 signs up yet not near the area where the barbecuing tends to happen, and the signs falls off already since the signs were held with zip ties. We need parks enforcement to remove people with grills whether the grills are on or off. Several time Parks enforcement

states the people are not barbecuing since the grill is not on. So I have to wait till the grill is lite and then call parks enforcement who still won't remove the group but inform them to move the grill of the grass. This doesn't solve the issue since the group still dumps the coals on our tree pits that kills the trees. WE also have trees 'bark burned by the fire. We need the parks dept to move the barbecuing group out of the parkway and advise them to relocate to a park that has a designated area for barbecuing. Again, the Parks Manager has ignore this issue and his response is that barbecuing is a culture in the Bronx which the parks manager encourages by not putting signs or providing enforcement. The Parks Enforcement Agency is helpful and try their best, but it is the Park manager and the administration that does not support these officers to enforce the no barbecuing rules in parks.

CBS channel 2 reported last year about the illegal barbecuing in Pelham Parkway. one of the barbecuing families told the reporter that "no city staff approached them, so they don't think they were doing anything wrong." That is a common response, they don't see signs or parks presence to tell them that barbecuing isn't allowed on the parkway.

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/07/05/illegal-barbecuing-new-york-city-parks-department-pelham-parkway-park-bronx-park-east/>

Environmental Injustice:

Pelham Parkway North Service and Main Road is under reconstruction by the NYC DDC and as a result of this project over 75 trees were removed, some for design and others for condition. NYC Parks removed 18 Oak trees on Pelham Parkway North from White Plains to Bronxwood which is 5 blocks on the adjacent sidewalk. Instead of allowing the Oak trees to die a natural death, Parks removed them even though these Oak trees still had leafy canopy and their stumps had NO dead wood. And to add insult to injury they did not replace these Oak trees with Oak trees but with non native trees and planted the Oak trees on the south side where no Oak trees were removed. They planted the native trees as the Oak trees where the Homeowners reside while depriving NYCHA residents and tenants of their native trees.

Parks refused to provide the Tree Planting plan before the contractor planted the trees. They refused to answer any questions and kept us in the dark. I even cried on TV when CBS 2 interviewed our group about the trees. I cried not for myself, but for the future generation of humans and wildlife that were discriminated because of their zip code. Pelham Parkway North zip code is 10467 which is a low income area while Pelham Parkway South zip code is 10462 which is a higher income area.

Why did parks removed all our Oak trees and yet planted them where they were not removed? Why didn't Parks plant native trees and all the trees back first in the North side where the trees were all removed for this reconstruction project. WE are one parkway, yet the North should have been a priority since it is the area where the trees were removed

In one meeting Parks stated they didn't plant Oak trees in our area because they stated it wasn't compatible with the landscape. Yet it's parks that has changed our landscape by removing our native trees and replacing them with nonnative trees. Native trees require less maintain and fare better in their native region as well as aid in the biodiversity from insects to birds to other wildlife. Parks has deprived us of nature. Nature heals the soul. Dr. Marin Luther king said 'There comes a time when silence is betrayal' . And even though Parks has retaliated against our group for our advocacy, we can't be silent about the Parks systematic racism and destruction of our trees, our nature and our future.

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2021/03/16/pelham-parkway-park-changes/>

Thank you kindly
Roxanne Delgado
Friends of Pelham Parkway, Founder

(1) Pelham Parkway North and West of Bronxwood

On April 30th , Friday I noted a tree down and informed Parks, I was informed the tree was down for over a day or so by residents. On Monday, May 3rd, I was informed by 2 residents who witnessed NYC Parks lawn mower tractor run down the tree and killed it.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v7CB-9m3Lh6uB0TaZ_wFxp_Ymkdg3tPA?usp=sharing

(2) Hutchinson River Greenway (Balcom/Erickson and Edwards Avenue under Lehman High School)

On April 24th Saturday, I helped cleanup the area and returned on May 2nd Sunday to assist again with the cleanup . I noted not only the grass mowed but all the trees mutilated by NYC Parks lawn mower tractor.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QAwhkZGIAB2AjpB_wIoM-fzpi025kzsm?usp=sharing

(3) Pelham Parkway North from White Plains to Williamsbridge, over a dozen trees damaged by trees

On June 6th, 2020, I noted over a dozen trees damaged by NYC Parks, Neighbors across the street stated they witnessed Parks lawn mower tractor driven fast and erratically.

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=18p_0SWw1Tr4EgQVuyZTbBcvScVo373Vz

(4) Pelham Parkway North and East of Bronxwood

Friday, August 2th 2020 at 11am tractor was to close to this tree and sliced the tree with the lawn mower. I saw the tractor near the tree and the following morning found the tree mutilated.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v7CB-9m3Lh6uB0TaZ_wFxp_Ymkdg3tPA?usp=sharing

Parks Response:

No action taken from NYC Parks, Forestry did not bother to check on the damaged trees nor provide any update on the trees' conditions. To this day, Parks continues to severely damage and kill trees in the process of mowing the grass.

- I'm Aiyanna Milligan from Madison Square Park Conservancy, and our organization is a member of [Forest for All NYC](#).
- We commend City Council for holding this hearing to develop approaches to better support the urban forest in NYC.
- Forest for All NYC would be pleased to support legislation that will meaningfully improve the urban forest and its benefits for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with Council to help shape legislation that will do so.
- Our urban forest includes more than 7 million trees in the city across public and private lands, and the physical and social infrastructure that supports them. We encourage Council to think about and plan for the whole of the urban forest.
- Trees enhance the quality of life and improve health and wellbeing for people by lowering air pollution levels, cooling the air, and reducing heat-related & respiratory illnesses.
- Trees help tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, strengthening our shoreline, absorbing carbon dioxide, and absorbing stormwater before it pollutes our waterways.
- The urban forest is not equitably distributed. The most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods tend to be low-income communities or communities of color with less tree cover and therefore hotter than average temperatures. The effects of past social & economic policies are still relevant particularly as climate change will continue to usher in record temperatures throughout our city.
- Our urban forest, and the Parks Department who cares for over half of it, are both chronically underfunded and the urban forest needs more investment and better protection. Often, items in the budget that support the urban forest like tree planting, pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, and invasive species control are seen as expendable. Consistent, sufficient, baselined funding is needed for all of those elements and the City needs to better resource the urban forest as a whole and those who care for it, both the professionals and the vast network of volunteers.
- We ask City Council to consider advancing a visionary and pragmatic approach that establishes a long-term direction for the whole of the urban forest to support health, equity, quality of life, resilience, and justice that we can work toward together starting now.

- We encourage City Council to review the recently released [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#) which presents an array of opportunities to make a meaningful positive difference both in our urban forest and in the lives of New Yorkers. Opportunities of note include:
 - Establishing a citywide goal of 30% canopy cover by 2035
 - Calling for and resourcing a master plan for NYC's urban forest for its whole life-cycle, from planting to salvage
 - Supporting the development of community-scale urban forest plans and goals
 - Investing in urban forest career pathways
 - Increasing and equitably distributing funding for both maintenance and planting of the urban forest
 - Strengthening tree regulations and establishing incentive programs that sustain and expand tree canopy across both public and private property
- Forest for All NYC will not support any legislation that diminishes protections or standards for the urban forest in NYC, and thus opposes, as currently written, Int 0957 and Int 0199.
- We wish to thank Chairman Koo, the Committee Members, and City Council as a whole for reviewing options to support the urban forest and its many benefits for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance meaningful and effective urban forest legislation.

Sincerely,

Aiyanna Milligan

Horticulture Associate

Madison Square Park Conservancy

amilligan@madisonsquarepark.org | (Wed-Sat)

www.madisonsquarepark.org

Dear Council,

Parks are very important in our city and should be accessible to all who live here.

Street trees are also very important and need to be :

1. On every possible street in the city in all five boroughs.
2. Replaced in a more timely fashion when a tree dies.
3. Left to actual forestry people to decide how to prune.

Right now the rules for pruning street trees follow such arbitrary rules that the shape of a tree is permanently destroyed once these rules are followed. The trees are left in such a state that there is no longer a balance of where the wind hits them and they whip around in the wind and crack and branches end up coming down. The trees sometimes end up with cracked trunks and need to be taken out. (This happened to a large tree at the end of my block.)

They end up looking like sad, spindly trees with tufts of branches at the very top of them. It is criminal.

I cry for the trees on my block every time the city sends someone through. The last time I got into a conversation with the gentleman doing the trimming and he said he had no choice but he wasn't happy about it either because he knew that the trees were left mangled and unbalanced. Why a city would invest so much in trees only to destroy them is beyond me.

Trees are a major part in what makes a city livable, especially with all the environmental services they provide. Trees are vital to our cities infrastructure.

Christine Campbell
315 W. 99th St.

Testimony

New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation
Oversight Hearing - Maintaining the City's Tree Stock
Monday, September 27, 2021

Gowanus Canal Conservancy Testimony for Oversight Hearing - Maintaining the City's Tree Stock

My name is Natasia Sidarta and I am the Community Stewardship & Operations Director at Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), where I oversee community stewardship and volunteer programs to empower local stakeholders in stewardship of local green spaces. We are a proud member of the Forest for All NYC Coalition, and aim to work with City Council and the Parks Committee to advance a visionary and pragmatic approach that establishes a long-term direction for the whole of the urban forest to support health, equity, quality of life, resilience, and justice.

Our urban forest includes more than 7 million trees in the city across public and private lands which provide critical ecosystem services to NYC residents, services that are becoming all the more important as our climate changes. Trees enhance quality of life and improve health and wellbeing for people by cleaning and cooling the air and reducing heat-related illness. They help tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, strengthening our shoreline, and absorbing carbon dioxide. Trees also absorb stormwater before it pollutes our waterways - this is especially critical in Gowanus where the canal receives 363 million gallons of Combined Sewer Overflow per year.

In Gowanus, 670 young trees installed over the past decade are growing to fill a neighborhood wide gap in the urban canopy. These trees will provide benefits of flood management, cooling and shade, which will grow exponentially as this planted infrastructure matures, but surviving to maturity depends on adequate maintenance and protection. But our urban forest, and the Parks Department who cares for over half of it, are chronically underfunded. Consistent, sufficient, baselined funding is needed to ensure that these trees are able to provide these critical services.

In Gowanus, we empower a network of volunteer tree stewards, who water, weed, prune, and remove litter and debris. These activities provide social infrastructure, offering opportunities for neighbors to organize together for neighborhood beautification and environmental benefits. Although we've had successes in maintaining many of these young street trees, we have frequently run into barriers. Over the past decade, Gowanus has lost numerous trees in the name of new grey infrastructure, such as utility lines on 7th St and high level storm sewers on

Carroll St. In a neighborhood severely lacking urban canopy, the loss of trees can be devastating. Public and private entities need to be held responsible for planting, protection and care for replacement trees, to support liveable streets and neighborhoods for all.

We encourage City Council to review the recently released Coalition's [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#) which presents an array of opportunities to make a meaningful positive difference both in our urban forest and in the lives of New Yorkers.

Thank you Chairman Koo, the Committee Members, and City Council as a whole for reviewing options to support the urban forest and its many benefits for New Yorkers.

Sincerely,
Natasia Sidarta
Community Stewardship & Operations Director
Gowanus Canal Conservancy

Parks Committee Testimony on trees on September 25, 2021

Dr. James Fairbanks, 1220 Shakespeare Avenue, #6DN, Bronx, 10452 (fairbanks.james@yahoo.com)
(718-207-1481)

I am a Parks Dept. trained tree steward

Open Tree Pits

On November 26, 2019 I submitted a list of 106 open tree pits with addresses in the Highbridge section of the Bronx, and sent the list to Parks Commissioner Silver, Bronx Parks Commissioner Rodriquez, the 16th District Councilmember Gibson, and the Forestry Division (list attached).

I know it takes time to plant trees, as I was chief-of-staff to Bronx councilmembers for 35 years and yearly sent tree planting lists. However, I have not even received an acknowledgement of having received my tree list from any of the parties above since I sent the list.

Thank you for your help.

The Aqueduct Walk

I am a member of the Friends of Aqueduct Walk in the Bronx. The Friends have requested that the Aqueduct Walk from Tremont Avenue to Burnside Avenue be re-opened, including the re-building of the bridge over Burnside Avenue to reconnect with the Aqueduct Walk.

There are thousands of trees along this closed stretch of the Aqueduct Walk under the supervision of the Parks Dept. that have been ignored and neglected for decades. The Friends want this stretch of the Walk to be re-opened and the trees be given the care and maintenance necessary.

Thank you for your help.

Testimony September 2021

Parks

Jessica Burke

Founder and Program Director

Friends of Crocheron & John Golden Park

Bayside, Queens

Hello

I am founder of Friends of Crocheron & John Golden Park. A program that supports the 62 acre park on Little Neck Bay, widely known just as Crocheron Park it is the 12th largest park in Queens and 45th largest park in NYC. I have been leading volunteers in events in the park since August 2020.

We started as an anti litter movement. The storms that we have had and the ongoing issues with tree maintenance, mean our volunteers we advocate for more than that now. Tree health has been spoken about, I have personally reported a half dozen trees that have fallen, have dangling limbs, or are dead and still standing. I do not bother reporting the extensive negative effects of invasive species. NYC Parks, in NE Queens at least, simply does not have the workforce or money to address them. And we are not a Conservancy or Alliance so we cannot support this through a development department that many public private partnerships have. We need the support of local government.

About those public private partnerships, they are not an answer to under funding government services. In fact, the nonprofit organization that works with NYC Parks on trail maintenance, tree care, and wetland management, Natural Areas Conservancy has told us they do not have the capacity to work with us. This means they cannot help us with the hundred yard trail around our pond that allows park goers to enjoy a natural tree walk. Let me repeat that, Natural Areas Conservancy, the only game in town for the type of service that NYC Parks 'contracts out' refuses to play in Crocheron Park. Why you ask? It seems to be because it is busy working in parks that have Conservancies and Alliances, like Van Cortland Park (nearly 1 million dollar budget) and Riverside Park (4 million dollar budget). This is when Queens has the most parkland and the Natural Areas Conservancy take in 4 million or more in grants to fulfill their mission of "to restore and conserve the green and blue spaces of New York City in order to enhance the lives of all New Yorkers."

By spending their time in parks supported by million dollar budgets, fulltime employees and rela grants/sponsorship agreements, the Natural Areas Conservancy is widening the gap between communities that have million dollar nonprofits and those without. Recent tax records show that they have full time employees making between \$50,000 to \$140,000, allowing them capacity to bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants and sponsorships to support their mission. Yet, these big organizations have support of the only partner that NYC Parks has to work with volunteers for trail and tree care maintenance. Causing the Parks in areas without these

partnerships to suffer, as NYC Parks quietly waits to have their parks serviced under these types of agreements. This is not the answer. Parks are falling apart. Even as a trail maintainer with Natural Areas Conservancy, even with some of our volunteers working with them in these distant flagship parks, this organization has decided that our 62 acre park is not important enough for them to collaborate with us.

This must change. If NYC Parks are used as a platform by these public organizations to take in money under the guise of supporting the 40,000 acres of parks, then it should. Their Executive Director makes 145,000 for her professional experience and knowledge, she and the entire organization should be practicing equity. NYC Parks is lacking equity. Even in an area like Bayside, Queens, where Crocheron Park has extensive issues with invasive species that have taken the view of the bay we are alongside. With the 2nd highest tree cover of any CB, our area has been told no by the only group that can help us maintain our trees and trail. A trail that Ida took out and that is used by residents on a daily basis. Oh and if we can get signs that explain dead trees place in ecosystem that would be great since some are homes to bugs not just an eyesore.

Thank you for your time.

- JESSICA BURKE

Hello,

My name is Jessica Kaplan from Madison Square Park Conservancy, and our organization is participating in Forest for All NYC. Our urban forest includes more than 7 million trees in the city across public and private lands, and the physical and social infrastructure that supports them. We encourage City Council to review the recently released NYC Urban Forest Agenda which presents an array of opportunities to make a meaningful positive difference both in our urban forest and in the lives of New Yorkers. Opportunities of note include:

- o Establishing a citywide goal of 30% canopy cover by 2035
- o Calling for and resourcing a master plan for NYC's urban forest for its whole life-cycle, from planting to salvage
- o Supporting the development of community-scale urban forest plans and goals
- o Investing in urban forest career pathways
- o Increasing and equitably distributing funding for both maintenance and planting of the urban forest
- o Strengthening tree regulations and establishing incentive programs that sustain and expand tree canopy across both public and private property

We wish to thank Chairman Koo, the Committee Members, and City Council as a whole for reviewing options to support the urban forest and its many benefits for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance meaningful and effective urban forest legislation.

Thank you very much,

--

Jessica Kaplan
Horticulture Manager
Madison Square Park Conservancy
jkaplan@madisonsquarepark.org | M: 860.490.3271 (M -Th)
www.madisonsquarepark.org

As a Park Gardener for a nonprofit here in New York, I am very fond of trees being replanted and maintained. I feel we need to choose better trees to place along the streets and animal food trees and bushes for wildlife inside larger parks. We have a tendency to pick pretty and fast growing over diversified and hard wood slow growth trees. Our Parks system is not geared for tree maintenance as many dead and dying branches are left unattended until they fall onto cars or from storms. Budget concerns should be factored into these tree plantings, because many times the roots of trees are lifting the sidewalks and tiles along walkways. Taring over these spots is not a solution, nor a safe measure for anyone walking these paths day or night. I wish there was a better way to communicate with maintenance crews and the nonprofits who care for these parks daily, we have a better handle on reporting to Supervisors. Many requests go unattended, because of budget constraints and not safety issues. I know the budgets need to be increased and used wisely, but if we continue to just grow trees, increase parks and not pay forward for maintenance, we are looking at a disaster with each new hurricane or large storm that crosses over the city.

I am also most concerned that Parks and police don't take the time to protect parks from constant vandalism and plant theft or destruction. Many homeless are blamed for the garbage, when in fact educated New Yorkers are to blame just as much for the waste left to blow freely across the city. We need an education movement and enforcement, for proper clean parks and city streets. I find it frustrating to have a plant growing for years destroyed by overnight drug and alcohol abusers, freely wandering about fenced in areas and in a matter of one night destroy at their whim, anything and everything without any recourse. I hope this new administration becomes aware of your needs and addresses them with full support.

Sincerely,

Joseph Arbo

Dear Committee Members:

I was able to attend a portion of “Oversight Hearing – Maintaining the City’s Tree Stock”, thanks to an email notice I received from Love Your Street Tree Day. I would like to share a few thoughts with you.

I am a former Citizen Pruner and for years have been the designated tree care person in my building (736 West End Avenue, corner of W. 96 St., Manhattan). Thanks to several rounds of building construction, Con Ed digging, and people letting their dogs urinate in the tree wells, it has been an uphill battle to maintain the various trees that have been planted in front of our building.

About a year ago, a honey locust was planted. This summer I set up a GoFundMe asking our building’s residents to donate toward a tree guard <https://www.gofundme.com/f/a-curb-allure-guard-for-our-tree>. I’m afraid we didn’t have much luck, as only \$190.00 was raised.

First a question: Is there discretionary funding anywhere to assist with something like this – perhaps from a Councilmember or other local official? When you have people like myself and some of my fellow residents who are willing to be tree custodians and/or contribute their own money, it seems there should be some funding made available to meet them halfway.

Then an observation: It seems a shame to just plop a tree down with no provision for its protection against the elements. I’ve lived in this location for many years and have seen more than a few trees in this square block not survive. Recently I noticed around the corner (on W. 96 St., between West End and Broadway) markings and a notice that two new trees will be planted next to the bus stop there (which is the terminus for the M96 and M106 buses). Whose idea was this? That location is abused and neglected by the Salvation Army, the NAACP, and the MTA, whose drivers routinely litter there and leave their refuse on the ledges of the W. 96 St. Substation, and occasionally jump the sidewalk when they make the left turn from West End Ave to W. 96 St. A couple of weeks ago I witnessed a driver step off his bus and empty his garbage under the bus. The dispatcher said nothing. What will be done to protect the two new trees you have planned for this location?

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

Best regards,
Linda Lopez
llopez@tellmedia.com

Dear Oversight Committee on Parks and Recreation,

I am writing in my testimony in support of increased and sustained funding for trees and tree maintenance.

I have been a long time community advocate representing the Friends of Astoria Heights Park and the Astoria 5, both groups of which have entirely embraced the care of neighborhood trees in order to create more attractive, healthy and sustainable communities. Trees have become even more vital as the COVID Pandemic reshaped the way people use outdoor public spaces as well as with recent Hurricane Ida, have demonstrated how trees are needed to prevent more intense storm damage. Many neighborhoods in Queens lack green spaces and the damage there from the Hurricane was more than notable. Trees improve the atmosphere by removing pollutants and help to mitigate climate change, by capturing storm water, and mitigating extreme heat.

We need trees and we need to take care of them, but we cannot do that without adequate funding. Funding is preventive and will spare larger costs in the future. The Parks Department needs allocations to do the work its supposed to do. Friends groups are wonderful and helpful but let's not take advantage of our volunteers. Pay our parks Department to remove invasive species, repair sidewalks, plant trees, remove stumps and prune. Pay our Parks Department adequately to have the staff they need to complete these jobs effectively and in a timely manner as well as to train others.

NYC needs to start getting more progressive in how we consider climate control issues and not take a passive, backseat stance watching it all happen. Our children need a future too. After all of these years since 2013 of being an advocate, I would like to not have to fight for what is common sense but will never stay silent. Ask a child what is right, and they would give a simple answer to keep funding something that will help them live a better quality life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Lynn Kennedy, Chair Friends of Astoria Heights Park and Public Committee Member for Parks, CB1

September 27, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Michael Marino and I am representing Friends of Corlears Hook Park from Manhattan's Lower East Side. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I wanted to bring to your attention three matters related to tree care and maintenance as well as some of the confusion the public faces in reporting issues with trees.

As you may already know. Part of the mitigation for the loss of trees related to the East Side Coastal Resiliency plan includes planting of 1000 new street trees throughout community board 3 and 6. Corlears Hook park received 8 of these trees, in fact there was great fanfare that the 500th tree planted through this program was planted in our park. Unfortunately, the contractors paid to plant these trees never returned to water them and at least half of them are either dead or dying already. The ones that survived are the ones that Friends of Corlears Hook Park had long enough hoses to reach and water ourselves. This is the second time that Corlears Hook Park has received plantings from NYC Parks that have died due to the lack of a maintenance and watering plan. What are the ramifications for contractors that do not live up to the expectation of caring for the trees they plant.

The past summer we reported to NYC parks a mature Linden tree that was sinking into the ground due to a rat borough beneath its tree pit. While the forestry division responded rather quickly to cut the tree down the stump and sinking sidewalk remained. After reaching out to the forestry division again we were punted to the Trees and Sidewalks division. That division punted us back to forestry stating and I quote "Trees and Sidewalks program only attends to sidewalk concrete damage caused by city-owned trees and adjacent to one-, two, and three-family, homes not used for commercial purposes and occupied by the owner only." This issue still has not been fixed and the tree pit and surrounding sidewalk continue to sink into the ground causing a major trip hazard for the many elderly folks who like to sit in the park. The process of reporting and issue should be easier and the public should not be required to go back and forth between multiple divisions within the parks department

Lastly and most recently, we had a rather large limb split off a tree hanging over the citibike rack in our park, low enough that you can grab and pull on it if you wanted to. From the time we reported it to the time it was addressed by NYC parks was about a week. The area was never roped off to keep the public safe in case the limb were to become disconnected from the remainder of the tree. To me the response time for such a hazard shod have been quicker.

Michael T. Marino

Board President

Testimony – Sept 27th 2021

Trees Damaged by Commercial Lawn Mower-

On June 6th, 2020, I noted over a dozen trees damaged by NYC Parks, It looked like a crime scene with trees mutilated and their shredded bark all over our grounds. Neighbors across the street stated they witnessed Parks commercial lawn mower driven fast and erratically in that area

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=18p_0SWw1Tr4EgQVuyZTbBcvScVo373Vz

I notified NYC Park Manger and there was NO response and No action taken from NYC Parks, Forestry did not bother to check on the damaged trees nor provide any update on the trees' conditions. Parks continued to damage our trees with lawn mower on August 4th, 2020, on April 24th and April 30th of this year until I reported the incidents to News 12 The Bronx. NYC Parks lawn mower ran over a tree and some shrubs and yet have not responded to my request to replace the trees they killed. Details with photos on bottom of page

<https://newjersey.news12.com/friends-of-pelham-parkway-calls-on-parks-dept-to-replace-damaged-trees>

Trees Damaged and Killed by Barbecuing.

For over 3 years, I asked the Parks Dept Manager for the no barbecuing signs on Bronxwood to protect our trees. Not only did he not provide us with any signs but responded that signs don't help. This summer right before July 4th Parks finally put 2 signs up yet not near the area where the barbecuing tends to happen, and the signs falls off already since the signs were held with zip ties. We need parks enforcement to remove people with grills whether the grills are on or off. Several time Parks enforcement

states the people are not barbecuing since the grill is not on. So I have to wait till the grill is lite and then call parks enforcement who still won't remove the group but inform them to move the grill of the grass. This doesn't solve the issue since the group still dumps the coals on our tree pits that kills the trees. WE also have trees 'bark burned by the fire. We need the parks dept to move the barbecuing group out of the parkway and advise them to relocate to a park that has a designated area for barbecuing. Again, the Parks Manager has ignore this issue and his response is that barbecuing is a culture in the Bronx which the parks manager encourages by not putting signs or providing enforcement. The Parks Enforcement Agency is helpful and try their best, but it is the Park manager and the administration that does not support these officers to enforce the no barbecuing rules in parks.

CBS channel 2 reported last year about the illegal barbecuing in Pelham Parkway. one of the barbecuing families told the reporter that "no city staff approached them, so they don't think they were doing anything wrong." That is a common response, they don't see signs or parks presence to tell them that barbecuing isn't allowed on the parkway.

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/07/05/illegal-barbecuing-new-york-city-parks-department-pelham-parkway-park-bronx-park-east/>

Environmental Injustice:

Pelham Parkway North Service and Main Road is under reconstruction by the NYC DDC and as a result of this project over 75 trees were removed, some for design and others for condition. NYC Parks removed 18 Oak trees on Pelham Parkway North from White Plains to Bronxwood which is 5 blocks on the adjacent sidewalk. Instead of allowing the Oak trees to die a natural death, Parks removed them even though these Oak trees still had leafy canopy and their stumps had NO dead wood. And to add insult to injury they did not replace these Oak trees with Oak trees but with non native trees and planted the Oak trees on the south side where no Oak trees were removed. They planted the native trees as the Oak trees where the Homeowners reside while depriving NYCHA residents and tenants of their native trees.

Parks refused to provide the Tree Planting plan before the contractor planted the trees. They refused to answer any questions and kept us in the dark. I even cried on TV when CBS 2 interviewed our group about the trees. I cried not for myself, but for the future generation of humans and wildlife that were discriminated because of their zip code. Pelham Parkway North zip code is 10467 which is a low income area while Pelham Parkway South zip code is 10462 which is a higher income area.

Why did parks removed all our Oak trees and yet planted them where they were not removed? Why didn't Parks plant native trees and all the trees back first in the North side where the trees were all removed for this reconstruction project. WE are one parkway, yet the North should have been a priority since it is the area where the trees were removed

In one meeting Parks stated they didn't plant Oak trees in our area because they stated it wasn't compatible with the landscape. Yet it's parks that has changed our landscape by removing our native trees and replacing them with nonnative trees. Native trees require less maintain and fare better in their native region as well as aid in the biodiversity from insects to birds to other wildlife. Parks has deprived us of nature. Nature heals the soul. Dr. Marin Luther king said 'There comes a time when silence is betrayal' . And even though Parks has retaliated against our group for our advocacy, we can't be silent about the Parks systematic racism and destruction of our trees, our nature and our future.

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2021/03/16/pelham-parkway-park-changes/>

Thank you kindly
Roxanne Delgado
Friends of Pelham Parkway, Founder

(1) Pelham Parkway North and West of Bronxwood

On April 30th , Friday I noted a tree down and informed Parks, I was informed the tree was down for over a day or so by residents. On Monday, May 3rd, I was informed by 2 residents who witnessed NYC Parks lawn mower tractor run down the tree and killed it.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v7CB-9m3Lh6uB0TaZ_wFxp_Ymkdg3tPA?usp=sharing

(2) Hutchinson River Greenway (Balcom/Erickson and Edwards Avenue under Lehman High School)

On April 24th Saturday, I helped cleanup the area and returned on May 2nd Sunday to assist again with the cleanup . I noted not only the grass mowed but all the trees mutilated by NYC Parks lawn mower tractor.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QAwhkZGIAB2AjpB_wIoM-fzpi025kzsm?usp=sharing

(3) Pelham Parkway North from White Plains to Williamsbridge, over a dozen trees damaged by trees

On June 6th, 2020, I noted over a dozen trees damaged by NYC Parks, Neighbors across the street stated they witnessed Parks lawn mower tractor driven fast and erratically.

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=18p_0SWw1Tr4EgQVuyZTbBcvScVo373Vz

(4) Pelham Parkway North and East of Bronxwood

Friday, August 2th 2020 at 11am tractor was to close to this tree and sliced the tree with the lawn mower. I saw the tractor near the tree and the following morning found the tree mutilated.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v7CB-9m3Lh6uB0TaZ_wFxp_Ymkdg3tPA?usp=sharing

Parks Response:

No action taken from NYC Parks, Forestry did not bother to check on the damaged trees nor provide any update on the trees' conditions. To this day, Parks continues to severely damage and kill trees in the process of mowing the grass.

Committee on Parks and Recreation September 27

Hello,

My name is Sky Pape, and I'm representing myself, but I am connected with several local organizations involving our parks and natural areas, including New York Restoration Project, The Nature Conservancy and others. I appreciated the opportunity to provide testimony via Zoom at today's hearing, and submit this written testimony in addition to that recorded statement.

Complicated issues of climate change and environmental justice require more than just lip service, they require the focused and reliable allotment of money and resources.

I want to speak in general in support of the legislation put forth today especially Intro 2366, and for allocating the city funding and resources that we require to be dedicated to the NYC Parks department for operations and maintenance. It seems preposterous that we need to advocate to get up to merely 1% of the total city budget for this, a goal, which even if met, is still woefully and terrifyingly inadequate to meet the needs at hand.

Not all parks have well-endowed conservancies to do what the city does not. I'm in Inwood in upper Manhattan, where we have the island's only natural, old-growth forest, as well as a significant number of street trees. Here, located in an Environmental Justice Zone, in this time of urgency, that kind of Conservancy just doesn't exist.

The maintenance of our Parks and street trees is not a cosmetic issue. If the city does not provide adequate, reliable funding for Parks, and if Parks does not respond with full transparency, Manhattan's last natural forest will go away. To mitigate the impacts of climate change, dedicated funding of foresters and staff capable of evaluating and preserving the forest, including tree maintenance and management of invasives, must be provided.

One third of Inwood is considered to be in the flood plain, and maintenance of the parks and street trees is crucial for the management of storm runoff, particularly with increasingly frequent and severe storms.

The city relies overly on the work done by partner organizations like Natural Areas Conservancy, New Yorkers for Parks, Super Stewards, NY Restoration Project, and legions of public volunteers, creating an unsustainable burden on these organizations and individuals, and inadequate protection for the parks and trees. We need funding for permanent Parks staff to take on this work, and with this I would include increasing the number of Forestry staff & trained arborists, as well as Urban Park Rangers.

Finally, not only is more money needed from the city for Parks' operations and maintenance, but when such funds go through City Council for distribution within each district, it is

imperative these funds are directed truly towards environmental concerns in a proportion that reflects the urgency – rather than having the Parks budget swallowed whole by recreation.

Respectfully,

Sky Pape

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