

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND
RECREATION

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June 23, 2022
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HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING, COMMITTEE ROOM,
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joseph C. Borelli
David M. Carr
Eric Dinowitz
Robert F. Holden
Linda Lee
Julie Menin
Francisco P. Moya
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Sandra Ung
Marjorie Velázquez

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Susan Donaghue
Commissioner
New York City Parks Department

Jennifer Greenfeld
Deputy Commissioner
Environment and Planning
New York City Parks Department

Matthew Drury
Director of Government Relations
New York City Parks Department

Benjamin Osborne
Chief of Forestry and Horticulture
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Carlos Castel Croke
Associate for New York City Programs
New York League of Conservation Voters

Elieen Myles
Lower East Side Resident

Harriet Hirshorn
Lower East Side Resident

Emily Maxwell
New York City Program Director
The Nature Conservancy

Sherrise Palomino
Director of Advocacy and Programs
New Yorkers For Parks

Sarah Balistreri
Environmental Educator
Trees New York

Cory Hasson
Government Affairs Manager
New York Restoration Project

Aaron Sanders
Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy
Natural Areas Conservancy

Stephen Thompson
President of the Board of Directors
Brooklyn Queens Land Trust

Allie Ryan
Resident, City Council District 2

Gabriella Velardi-Ward
Coordinator
Coalition for Wetlands and Forests

Sara Hobel
Executive Director
Horticultural Society of New York

Jennifer Bombardier
Education Manager
Lower East Side Ecology Center

Rebecca Berger
Lower East Side Resident

Natasia Sidarta

Stewardship and Operations Director
Gowanus Canal Conservancy in Brooklyn

Matt Malina
Director and Founder of NYCH20

Rita Garcia
Lower East Side Resident

Joel Kupferman
Executive Director
Environmental Justice Initiative

Alexander Bender
Co-founder and managing partner, Tri-Lox

Lucy Koteen
Member, Sierra Club of New York City

Anna Theofilopoulou
Lower East Side Resident

John Plenge
Lower East Side Resident

Catherine Skopic
Vice Chair, Sierra Club, New York City
Group

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Testing 1-2-1-2. Good
3 afternoon, and welcome to the hybrid hearing on Parks
4 and Recreation. For council members and staff,
5 please place all electronic devices to vibrate or
6 silent. Testimony can be submitted to
7 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, there's
8 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Chair we are ready to
9 begin.

10 CHAIR KRISHNAN: Thank you, Sergeant. Good
11 afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our
12 hearing today before the council's Committee on Parks
13 and Recreation. First, I would like to acknowledge
14 my other colleagues who have joined us so far today,
15 Councilmember Linda Lee, Councilmember Bob Holden.
16 And many others joining virtually and will announce
17 more as they come in. I'd like to first begin by
18 reading an opening statement.

19 Good afternoon. My name is Shekar Krishnan. I'm
20 the Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation in
21 our New York City Council. I'd like to welcome
22 everyone who has come to participate in today's
23 hearing on a crucial topic: How we can better
24 maintain and enhance our city's tree canopy. The
25 benefits of well-maintained trees are obvious. They

2 improve water quality by filtering and diverting
3 stormwater runoff, filter high frequency noises
4 provide habitats for wildlife, mitigate the urban
5 heat island effect, foster stronger connections with
6 nature, keep the air cooler in warm weather, and
7 provide better air quality by reducing the presence
8 of many air pollutants. There are approximately 7
9 million trees in New York City representing a tree
10 canopy that covers approximately 21% of the entire
11 city.

12 The New York City Parks tree map has calculated
13 some of the benefits that I mentioned before and
14 found that for example, each year, trees were
15 responsible for intercepting 1 billion gallons of
16 storm water, conserving 649 million kilowatts per
17 hour of energy, and removing 1 million pounds of air
18 pollutants among many other benefits. The most
19 recent decennial tree census completed by the
20 Department of Parks and Recreation in 2016 determined
21 there are approximately 666,134 street trees located
22 on 131,000 City blocks.

23 The process involved in maintaining trees by the
24 parks department has many facets. Briefly, the
25 process includes a blocked by black pruning schedule,

2 engaging nonprofit organizations to help plant
3 preserve and protect trees, and an inspection process
4 to the Park Inspection Program or PIP, in which
5 inspections on parks properties, including trees, are
6 carried out routinely.

7 Over recent years, the department's budget for
8 maintenance has suffered ups and downs, as the
9 pruning cycle had to be increased from once every 7
10 years to once every 15 years and back once again to 7
11 years. With recent budgets, some of these funds have
12 been restored, but issues still persist. For
13 example, the four of the top five categories of
14 parks-related 311 calls involve complaints about
15 trees, including concerns over premature deaths to
16 new trees, broken tree limbs, and sidewalk damage
17 resulting from growing tree roots. Additionally,
18 falling tree branches, many from trees that have been
19 weakened due to severe weather, have raised serious
20 concerns. Numerous incidents over the years have
21 sadly occurred where severe injury and even death to
22 bystanders resulted from being struck. This will be
23 a major problem that needs to be addressed as climate
24 change is going to leave the city more vulnerable to
25 more severe weather and storms, and city trees, and

2 the benefits we derive from them will increasingly be
3 at risk if we don't maintain them in a small way.

4 This all serves to highlight how crucial proper
5 tree maintenance is to the quality of life and to the
6 safety of all who live and visit the city.

7 At today's hearing, we will also examine how we
8 can take significant steps to expand our tree canopy
9 equitably to ensure more communities, especially
10 those underserved communities, which have
11 historically suffered from the lack of green space,
12 and I've been particularly vulnerable to heat island
13 dangers no longer have their environments neglected.
14 In fact, studies have indicated that the urban forest
15 is unevenly distributed, contributing to general
16 inequity across communities. Generally, research
17 shows that the most vulnerable communities, those
18 with lower average incomes, higher proportions of
19 people of color, and higher rankings on the heat
20 vulnerability index, tend to have lower tree canopy.
21 And this is something that, as Chair of the Committee
22 on Parks, and all of us here in the parks committee,
23 cared deeply about. When we think about green space,
24 it isn't just about expanding green space. It's
25 about doing so from an equitable standpoint, knowing

2 that certain communities, especially poor communities
3 of color, have less tree canopy coverage, and as a
4 result, are significantly hotter on average,
5 especially in the summers than many other
6 communities. If we are to address the climate crisis
7 in our city, which we must do, then we must
8 acknowledge these deep-seated inequities and work to
9 reverse them.

10 In terms of where our cities trees are, the
11 highest numbers of canopy cover is typically in areas
12 with large parks and in neighborhoods that have lower
13 population density levels. The lowest canopy cover
14 was in heavily developed areas. According to data
15 gathered by the Nature Conservancy, just over half of
16 the canopy is managed by the parks department, which
17 includes about 28% parkland, and 25% street trees and
18 other rights of way. One third of the canopy is on
19 private land, and the remaining 11% on land that is
20 owned by various other government entities. Many
21 advocates have been working for years on this issue.
22 For example, the Forest For All Coalition has done
23 extensive work in studying our urban forest to help
24 policymakers at the city level and advocates alike on
25 the best steps forward to protect and grow our tree

2 canopy. Some of those steps include goals to expand
3 the canopy coverage to 30% by 2035. A crucial goal
4 up from the current 22%, strengthening career
5 pathways to jobs in urban forestry, developing a
6 master plan to better coordinate care and maintenance
7 of the urban forest, and increasing public investment
8 in the care for city trees. The Forest For All
9 Coalition comprised of over 50 advocacy
10 organizations, nonprofit and government organizations
11 and businesses, has argued that the city has not made
12 the financial investment to keep its tree stock
13 healthy, and a long-term vision is needed for its
14 care. We must, as the coalition advocates, ensure
15 that what's addressed is that trees are not equitably
16 distributed throughout our city's neighborhoods, that
17 trees are facing an increasing frequency of
18 environmental threats, that too many trees are not
19 protected from being cut down, that the city lacks a
20 coordinated plan to care for the urban forest, and as
21 I mentioned, the city should establish the city wide
22 goal of increasing the tree canopy cover to 30%.
23 These are just some of the aims of the Forest For All
24 Coalition, which has done excellent advocacy work to
25 protect our green spaces.

2 I certainly support these efforts and any effort
3 that would increase tree plantings and other green
4 space in areas that are lacking. In addition to
5 trees being an issue of climate justice, of racial
6 justice, it is also an issue of public safety. Data
7 has shown over and over again, that investing in our
8 trees, just like investing in our communities, is one
9 of the most effective ways to keep our communities
10 safe. In fact, recent reporting has shown that in
11 the Ida B. Wells housing project on the south side
12 of Chicago, the investments and trees had a direct
13 correlation with increased public safety. Using
14 aerial photos and police crime reports, researchers
15 calculated that in the Ida B. Wells Projects,
16 buildings still surrounded by lots of foliage saw 48%
17 fewer property crimes on average, and 56% fewer
18 violent crimes than buildings with low levels of
19 vegetation. When we think about community safety,
20 when we think about keeping investing in our
21 neighborhoods, it means investing in everything, our
22 green spaces and especially our trees. That is a
23 core tenant of public safety in the way that I see
24 it.

2 I would like to make sure that this hearing is a
3 call to action but policymakers to get serious and
4 treating our tree stock as crucial infrastructure
5 investments that must be supported with the proper
6 resources and equitably distributed to all parts of
7 the city. Our residents across all communities
8 deserve no less. And the well-being of our
9 environment, our health, our safety, our climate for
10 each and every New Yorker depends on it. Thank you
11 very much, and welcome today's hearing.

12 I also note that we've been joined by council
13 members, Marjorie Velázquez, Councilmember David
14 Carr, and Councilmember Eric Dinowitz.

15 Now, before we start today's hearing and delve
16 into the topic at issue, first I'd like to thank our
17 Parks Department for being here, Commissioner
18 Donaghue for addressing us today too. Since you're
19 here and I know you're on a tight schedule as well,
20 I'd like to take advantage of the opportunity before
21 delving into today's topic, to ask a few questions
22 about an issue of pressing attention right now in our
23 city, which is the city's lifeguard shortage. This
24 is an issue. (background voices) Oh right. I have
25 to swear you in. The lawyer forget to swear the

2 witness in. Well, first before we start, I'm going
3 to swear you in.

4 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you Chair Krishnan. I'm
5 Chris Sartori. Counsel to the committee on Parks and
6 Recreation. Before we begin, I'd like to remind
7 everyone including members of the public who are
8 testifying remotely that you will be on mute until
9 you will call... you are called on to testify when
10 you will be unmuted by the host. So please listen
11 for your name to be called.

12 The first panelists to give testimony today will
13 be from the Department of Parks and Recreation.
14 Appearing today is Susan Donaghue, Commissioner of
15 the Department, Jennifer Greenfeld, Deputy
16 Commissioner for Environment and Planning, Matt Drury
17 Director of Government Relations, and Ben Osborne,
18 Chief of Forestry and Horticulture.

19 I will now administer the affirmation. So I will
20 call on each of you individually for a response. So
21 at this time, please raise your right hands. Do you
22 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
23 but the truth before this committee, and to respond
24 honestly to council member questions. Commissioner
25 Donaghue?

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

14

2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: I do.

3 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you. Commissioner
4 Greenfeld?

5 COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: I do.

6 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you. Director Drury?

7 DIRECTOR DRURY: I do.

8 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you. And Chief Osborne?

9 CHIEF OSBORNE: Yes, I do.

10 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you. And now I will turn
11 it back to Chair Krishnan. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Chris.
13 Okay, now that we've got the oats out of the way,
14 we'll return to the hearing.

15 So as I mentioned, before delving into the topic
16 of today, Commissioner Donoghue, I want to thank you
17 for attending and given the short time that you have
18 use the opportunity to talk a bit about this pressing
19 issue we face regarding lifeguards and access to our
20 pools and beaches. This is obviously an issue that's
21 getting significant attention right now. Many have
22 raised issues about the lifeguards shortage and the
23 way that it's affecting safety and access to our
24 beaches and pools, and forcing the closure of various
25 swimming programs throughout our city. So I have a

2 few questions on that note. And my first one
3 Commissioner Donoghue, is just to know a bit more
4 about what exactly is the current lifeguard staffing
5 level? How does it compare to prior years? And what
6 is the reason for the decline over these years?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, Chair
8 Krishnan, and good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here
9 and good afternoon to members of the committee.
10 Thank you for your interest in and support for parks
11 in general and on this important issue.

12 So as we all know enjoying our beaches and pools
13 is really a classic summertime experience in New York
14 City, and I am so proud of our employees at the Parks
15 Department who worked tirelessly to make sure that
16 millions of New Yorkers can enjoy safe, enjoyable and
17 cool recreational experiences at times like this
18 during the summer when temperatures rise. I am
19 pleased to say all of our city beaches are open and
20 as of today, we are also expecting to open all of our
21 outdoor pools to New Yorkers next week.

22 However, despite our best efforts, and as the
23 Chair said, there is no denying there are staffing
24 levels today for our lifeguards that are
25 significantly lower than any of us would like.

2 Similar to what the entire country is experiencing,
3 it has been a challenging lifeguard recruitment
4 season. It is tough to recruit enough people who can
5 pass our lifeguard requirements, and the pandemic
6 continues to impact recruitment as well.

7 This challenge as we know is it's not unique to
8 lifeguards, nor is it limited to New York City. This
9 is part of a national economic trend that is deeply
10 impacting every corner of the service industry
11 including air travel, hotels, restaurants, and retail
12 as well as other economics actors. We are pleased to
13 engage with the Council we want to discuss these
14 challenges and also short and long-term solutions.
15 But first and foremost, I have to acknowledge the
16 tragic losses that have been suffered in recent
17 weeks. And they are just a terrible reminder that we
18 have to implore all New Yorkers, and with all of your
19 help, I need the help to implore all New Yorkers to
20 please, please use extreme caution and good judgment
21 and only swim in locations that are properly
22 supervised by lifeguards. To answer your question
23 Chair Krishnan, typically pre COVID We would average
24 a total of between 1400 and 1500 lifeguards every
25 year for our outdoor pools and beaches. Right now we

2 have just over 560 certified, but with more
3 certifications on the way. We do continue to certify
4 new lifeguards up until July 4, and we're continuing
5 to do that on a daily basis, and we do encourage you
6 know any lifeguards who are out there that can come
7 in and be certified, we're encouraging them to do so.
8 But to answer your question right now, that number is
9 561.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: 561. And just to clarify,
11 historically, in the past, it's been about 1400 to
12 1500 lifeguards.

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Exactly. Between 1400
14 and 1500 lifeguards in 2020. Obviously with the
15 pandemic we went down to 740 lifeguards. In 2021 we
16 had just over 1000 lifeguards. So it has been a
17 decreasing number over the last couple years.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. And as you
19 noted, this is obviously an area of deep concern, and
20 the impact that it has on access, again, are
21 disproportionate across communities as well.

22 So given the situation that we face, you know,
23 and as I assume there's a training process for
24 lifeguards as well, has the Parks Department and this
25 administration explored other avenues to increase the

2 number of lifeguards? You know, one... one thing
3 that stands out to me, for example is lifeguard pay,
4 on average is a lot less than other parts of the
5 country. And, you know, there has been reporting on
6 potential waivers or other ways to increase the
7 capacity. So given this... given the issues of
8 wages, given the potential for other areas as well,
9 what solution is the Parks Department exploring to
10 increase the number of lifeguards that we have for
11 this summer?

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: We are continuing to work
13 with sister agencies and pursue all options.
14 Lifeguard salaries and pay is not determined by the
15 Parks Department. That is through negotiation
16 between the Office of Labor Relations, and the
17 unions, so we do not control pay. But we are working
18 closely with you know other agencies and doing all we
19 can including just encouraging and recruiting and
20 trying to get as many who are already returning
21 lifeguards to come back and recertify.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, thank you. This is
23 something obviously that is very important to me, to
24 the Council, to the Parks Committee to and something
25 that we're monitoring very carefully, and look

2 forward. I know we've had a number of conversations
3 about the issue, and of different solutions, and the
4 scope of the problem too, and this is something that,
5 you know, we're many of us will be closely monitoring
6 and keeping an eye on and I appreciate us being able
7 to continue having our dialogue too with you directly
8 and with all our parks in our offices to ensure we
9 address this issue and ensure that we don't face this
10 crisis again, too, because it is something that
11 obviously is having an enormous impact right now on
12 all of us as well. So thank you.

13 And you know, at this moment do I'd like to turn
14 it over to Deputy Commissioner Greenfield for the
15 opening statement.

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you,
17 Commissioner... Councilmember. If it's okay, I'm
18 going to just do a quick introduction of Jennifer
19 before we do that. But thank you and we will
20 continue... I do so appreciate your support and the
21 support of the Council and we will continue obviously
22 to work closely on this important issue.

23 But turning over to the task at hand. I want to
24 say good afternoon to members of the Parks Committee
25 and other members of the city Council. I'm Sue

2 Donaghue, New York City Commissioner of Parks. I'm
3 pleased to be joined today by Jennifer Greenfeld, our
4 Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning, as
5 well as our Director of Government Relations, Matt
6 Drury.

7 I want to start by noting our extreme
8 appreciation for the Council's continuing advocacy
9 for our city parks, and for the resources and support
10 it has provided for our forestry efforts. The Urban
11 Canopy as you've noted already, Chair Krishnan, is
12 one of the most vital resources of the city, and it's
13 most vital to ensuring that our neighborhoods are
14 healthy and thriving. It provides numerous
15 measurable benefits across our five boroughs. And I
16 am very proud of the work our parkies do every day to
17 grow and protect our city's trees.

18 I'm very pleased to introduce to the Council our
19 new Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning
20 Jennifer Greenfeld. Some of you may know Deputy
21 Commissioner Greenfeld from her previous role as
22 Assistant Commissioner for Forestry, Horticulture and
23 Natural Resources, and her leadership and years of
24 experience at New York City Parks, protecting our
25 city's trees and forests has been invaluable.

2 In addition to continuing to oversee our
3 forestry, horticulture and Natural Resources team, DC
4 Greenfeld will also oversee now our Planning
5 Division, which leads the agency's long-term
6 initiatives and land use procedures, and it's a
7 reflection of the central and strategic role...
8 important role that resiliency plays, natural
9 resources and the environment plays within our agency
10 and within our park system. We're delighted to have
11 Jennifer take on this vital leadership role, and I
12 will now turn it over to her for her testimony.

13 COMMISSIONER GREENFELD: Thank you, Commissioner
14 Donaghue, for those... the kind introduction. And
15 thanks to the Council for convening today's hearing
16 on this crucial, and I might say one of my favorite
17 topics. My name is Jennifer Greenfeld, Deputy
18 Commissioner for Environment and Planning at NYC
19 Parks. I want to start by echoing the commissioner's
20 appreciation for the Council's support for our urban
21 tree canopy. Our trees provide a wide variety of
22 benefits to our five boroughs, including improving
23 human health and well-being, something I'm sure we
24 can agree has been of utmost importance to New York
25 City as it slowly recovers from the COVID-19

2 pandemic. In my testimony today I will characterize
3 the portion of the New York City tree canopy that's
4 managed by New York City Parks. I'll talk about this
5 administration's work to expand and care for the
6 urban forest, and provide a snapshot of some of our
7 strong partners supporting the work

8 NYC's 42,656 acres of tree canopy is a full 22%
9 of the city's land cover, and is best defined, as
10 I... as you can imagine is the cover or the shade
11 provided by the city's trees. We're excited to
12 report that the city's canopy grew by 3,252 acres
13 from 2010 to 2017. New York City Parks is
14 responsible for just over half of the city's tree
15 canopy as the Chair mentioned earlier, about 22,000
16 acres. Within that portfolio, NYC Parks manages 7300
17 acres of natural area forests, over 4 million trees,
18 over 156,000 trees in in sort of the actively
19 landscaped used areas of the park... of our parks,
20 and over 666,000 trees that are growing along the
21 street. The rest of New York City's canopy, that's
22 47%, grows on a combination of private and public
23 land parcels such as residential front and backyards,
24 NYCHA campuses, cemeteries, vacant land, and on
25 public lands not managed by NYC Parks. This robust

2 urban forest provides an incredible array of
3 environmental, social, and economic benefits, which
4 you already heard about such as cleaning and cooling
5 the air, reducing stormwater runoff, shading
6 buildings, conserving energy by reducing heating and
7 cooling costs, traffic calming protecting city
8 pavement from rain and sun, noise mitigation,
9 increasing property values and as I mentioned before
10 human health and well being. Most of the trees under
11 Parks's care are in natural forested areas. For over
12 35 years New York City Parks has characterized,
13 monitored and actively managed the 7300 acres of
14 natural areas forests. In fact, these woodlands
15 spread across over 82 parks in every borough, play an
16 outsized role in New York's effort to combat climate
17 change. Forested natural areas make up a quarter of
18 the total tree canopy in New York City but account
19 for 83% of carbon sequestered of trees across the
20 city. We know this and other facts about our natural
21 areas, for example, that they are essentially
22 healthy, dominated by native tree canopy, but still
23 at risk from invasive species. We know all this
24 through our partnership with the Natural Areas
25 Conservancy. In 2018, NYC Parks worked in

2 partnership with NAC to develop the forest management
3 framework to guide forest restoration management and
4 public engagement. Thanks in large part to the
5 generous support of the City Council through the
6 annual Playfair funding, Parks has cared for 2200
7 acres of natural areas across 60 parks, including
8 over 500 acres in areas that had not been cared for.
9 In the past 10 years. We've planted 100,000 native
10 trees, shrubs and herbs, producing much of this at
11 our native plant nursery at the Greenbelt Native
12 Plant Center and to accomplish all that we deployed a
13 team of dedicated professionals. These incredible
14 green job opportunities were all possible due to the
15 support and funding that the city Council has
16 provided for our forested and natural areas for three
17 fiscal years, which we greatly appreciate.

18 So closer to home, the trees that grow in the
19 actively used areas of our parks and the trees that
20 line our city streets played a vital role in keeping
21 New Yorkers cool and healthy. The latest Park and
22 Tree Census tells us that this population is healthy,
23 it's growing and it's diversifying over time. The
24 trees along the streets are more and more spread out
25 across every neighborhood, slowly reversing

2 historical disinvestment in underserved
3 neighborhoods. This administration is investing in
4 the further expansion of New York City street tree
5 canopy, adding over \$136 million in tree planting
6 funds over the next four years. That's the highest
7 funding level for tree planting in over five years,
8 allowing us to plant 20,000 Trees annually.

9 All New Yorkers deserve to enjoy the benefits
10 provided by trees, so our planting programs take an
11 equitable approach prioritizing neighborhoods
12 suffering from extreme heat that have not been well
13 served in the past, as well as planting trees were
14 requested by local New Yorkers. As many of you are
15 aware, in recent years, we have faced significant
16 challenges represented by the highest cost of
17 planting trees, very much in line with other
18 increasing construction costs around the city. To
19 address this Parks has introduced several new
20 approaches, including bidding higher value and longer
21 contracts to attract some of the larger construction
22 companies, as well as smaller and geographically
23 limited contracts to attract smaller vendors.

24 We're particularly optimistic and proud regarding
25 our efforts to attract new MWBE contractors, and are

2 hopeful that these efforts along with the newly
3 authorized ability to increase the value of MWBE
4 special procurements will build upon these
5 encouraging initial results, and allow us to deliver
6 more value with taxpayer dollars.

7 As important as it is to plant new trees, it is
8 equally important that we maintain our existing trees
9 and preserve the vital benefits. The most marked
10 increase in tree canopy actually comes from the
11 natural growth of existing trees. In fact, our
12 partners at The Nature Conservancy identified that up
13 to 87% of that Canopy Growth that I talked about
14 earlier between 2010 and 2017 was from the growth of
15 existing trees not from planting new trees. So just
16 as equity shapes our strategic approach to planting
17 it is also central to our approach to caring for
18 trees growing along our streets and in the active
19 areas of our parks, such as playgrounds, sports
20 fields, and picnic areas. In caring for our trees,
21 we utilize a risk management approach to prioritize
22 the conditions that present the most risk to New
23 Yorkers and address those immediately. This involves
24 a rigorous inspection program by some of the most
25 qualified and credentialed foresters in the country,

2 accompanied by responsive in-house crews, along with
3 contractors who focus on proactive maintenance,
4 including pest and disease control, tree preservation
5 during sidewalk repair, and neighborhood block
6 pruning. Following some temporary COVID related
7 reductions in FY 20, and 21, I am pleased to report
8 that baseline levels of annual funding have been
9 restored for our block pruning program, which will
10 allow us to maintain a professionally recommended
11 pruning cycle of seven years.

12 I also want to remind the Council of the great
13 tools one of which Chair Krishnan mentioned already
14 that we have to communicate information about the
15 urban forest. These include the popular online tree
16 map where you can learn about the tree on your street
17 from which you can submit a service request. There's
18 also the tree work hub that maps and lists exact
19 address of planned and completed work, and in
20 addition, the ever-expanding maps of formalized trail
21 networks in Parks's natural areas. Just this June 4,
22 In celebration of National Trails Day, we added four
23 new trail maps online, including the extensive
24 network in the Greenbelt, bringing our online maps to

2 21, making parks 300 miles of nature trails even more
3 accessible to New Yorkers.

4 The success of our continuously improving canopy
5 would not be possible without the diligent work of
6 our numerous Park stewards and volunteer groups who
7 generously donate their time and energy to looking
8 after our trees. New York City Parks has worked hard
9 to encourage a culture of caring for trees and
10 actively involved New Yorkers in that process. Our
11 stewardship team provides support for New Yorkers to
12 care for street trees, natural areas, and trails. We
13 have held almost 150 volunteer events for tree care
14 last fiscal year. While helping to maintain the
15 vulnerable resources, these events also provide a
16 chance for residents to actively engage in the care
17 of their city and to have fun and get a great workout
18 while doing it.

19 And lastly, we again want to acknowledge the
20 continued support of the Council, which has
21 generously helped provide dedicated funding for tree
22 guards, tree plantings, repairing sidewalks damaged
23 by trees and stump removal. We also want to
24 recognize the advocacy of the Forest For All
25 Coalition and the Playfair Coalition, which led to

2 the funding which has contributed directly to the
3 previously mentioned forest management framework and
4 other important investments in tree planting and tree
5 care.

6 I thank you for the opportunity to allow me to
7 testify here today and I look forward to answering
8 any questions you may have. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Deputy
10 Commissioner Greenfeld.

11 Just a couple housekeeping items before we go
12 into questions. We've also been joined by
13 Councilmember Mercedes Narcisse, Councilmember
14 Francisco Moya, and Councilmember Sandra Ung. So
15 thank you all for joining us. One more thing I
16 wanted to note as well, just to ask all my
17 colleagues. You know, I wanted to take the
18 opportunity while Commissioner Donaghue was here
19 briefly to ask questions about the pressing issues of
20 lifeguards, but the topic of today's hearing is on
21 the tree canopy, and the witnesses here are here to
22 testify about it. So I'd ask you all to please keep
23 your questions focused to their areas of expertise,
24 which is on the tree canopy and tree coverage in our
25 city.

2 With that note, let's... let's get started.
3 Again, thank you, Deputy Commissioner for your
4 testimony.

5 My first question for you all is: What is
6 exactly the Department of Parks budget, current
7 allocation for overall tree maintenance for the
8 current fiscal year?

9 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
10 that question. For tree maintenance, the budget is
11 around... almost \$27 million.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay. And that's
13 for the fiscal year ending...?

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Starting this july.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Starting July 1st. Right.
16 Okay. \$27 million, right?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay. And I want to point
19 out also, that this is the largest Parks Department
20 budget in the history of the city. So I am glad to
21 hear that more resources will be allocated towards
22 tree maintenance coverage as well. That was
23 something that was important to me to keep fighting
24 for to. Now, you know, I think similar questions go
25 towards understanding more the process of tree care

2 in our city. And so when it comes to pruning, how
3 much pruning is done by Parks in-house versus using
4 contractors?

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
6 that question. About 70-some percent of the pruning
7 is done by contractors, the rest by our in house
8 crews. And, give me one second, I know the number of
9 trees that we've pruned over the year it's around
10 70... something of that number. I can get that to
11 you the exact number.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure. It would be helpful
13 to know. And I just wanted to revisit the question
14 about the funding for tree maintenance. Is that...
15 Does that include capital funding too? Or is that
16 just expense side?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No, that's expense side
18 and includes pruning, removals, pest and disease
19 control, and the sidewalks program?

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay. And how much how
21 much on the expense side... I mean, on the capital
22 side?

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: On the capital side?
24 So... Apologies, but you had asked about, about tree
25 maintenance funds. So our tree maintenance funds are

2 all expensed. The capital funding is for tree
3 planting, and there is in past years, we've had trees
4 and sidewalks

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how much, sorry,
6 was... was budgeted for... for capital? I know I
7 asked about maintenance. But also on the capital
8 side, how much do we have this fiscal year for
9 capital on trees?

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: One second, let me find
11 out. The tree planting is 40... Excuse me. Thank
12 you for the question. It's \$44 million this fiscal
13 year.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Now, numerous advocacy
15 groups, as I mentioned, as you noted before, have
16 called for the city to increase the tree canopy size
17 to 30% by 2035 as an issue of keeping our city
18 resilient, and also addressing the long standing
19 disparities that we've seen in tree canopy coverage.
20 Is that feasible? And has the Department of Parks
21 and Recreation given thought, to how that goal or any
22 increased canopy size can be reached? We'd love to
23 hear from the agency on their perspective on this.

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
25 that question. And I... I do share our advocates,

2 you know, sort of concern and hope that we can
3 increase the city's canopy. It's something that we
4 are, you know, this administration is dedicated to.
5 The mayor budgeted, you know, funding for us to be
6 able to plant a full 20,000 trees every year for the
7 next four years. So we're really excited to be able
8 to do our part to increase tree canopy both by new
9 tree planting and by caring for our trees.

10 And yes, we were actually quite engaged in the
11 studies that the Nature Conservancy did. They... You
12 all, I see, have a copy of the report. It's
13 extremely well done and well researched. They took
14 advantage of a lot of data that we've collected over
15 time, with support by city funding for... to look at
16 canopy across the board. And there is potential to
17 increase canopy up to 30%. The timing is very
18 aggressive. But there is absolutely that potential.
19 And it's really a question of where it can go. And
20 we're, of course, very focused on our... our sort of
21 jurisdiction at parks. And... so just to give you an
22 idea that about... hold on one second. So the
23 current tree canopy cover in parkland is 47%, right?
24 So while it is 22% across the city, if you just look
25 at Parkland, it's 47%. And if you look at the right

2 of way, which is the other piece of it, the cover is
3 23%. So we have to think about what we have control
4 over at the Parks Department. And there is
5 definitely potential to increase canopy both within
6 parkland and along the city streets. But it... we
7 can't reach 30% without looking at the rest of the
8 city land area. Because if you recall, New York City
9 Parks is only actually 14%. And if you don't count
10 land underwater, because you can't put trees on
11 water, it's only 13% of the land cover. So in order
12 to get to 30% coverage, you really need to have a
13 very wide-ranging effort for both tree preservation
14 and for planting.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And so just on that point,
16 so how can we... how can Parks work to achieve that
17 goal? There's some things that are under the
18 jurisdiction of Parks, the other pieces that may not
19 be, but they obviously affect the overall
20 comprehensive vision that's crucial for us to
21 achieve. Are there strategies that Parks has
22 considered about how to address that overall?

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
24 question. We absolutely think about it. We think
25 about it all the time. When you look at the increase

2 between 2010 and 2017, the greatest amount of
3 increase that you saw in that sort of added canopy
4 was actually in the public right of way. And we
5 believe that's because we've... we have done such a
6 good job ad both planting new trees and protecting
7 the ones we have. And we'll continue to do that
8 through our tree maintenance programs, through
9 protection, the trees and sidewalk program is an
10 important way of saving some of our larger trees, and
11 those larger trees are the ones that have the
12 greatest benefits.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Now, you know, one thing
14 that I've mentioned, as well and really is a focus of
15 this committee too, is the equitable distribution of
16 our tree canopy, and making sure that, you know, we
17 are looking at... looking at it through that lens,
18 looking at our most heat vulnerable communities,
19 making sure they receive their fair share of
20 environmental benefits that larger tree numbers
21 provide. And I just wanted to go through two charts,
22 or maps of data that our Park... Council Parks
23 Committee staff put together that are just very...
24 powerfully convey the how these how these inequities
25 play out. And so I don't know if it's... if it's on

2 the screen here, but I'll do my best to describe it
3 as well.

4 The first chart is about canopy cover and heat in
5 NYC, comparing the percentage of canopy coverage and
6 daytime summer surface temperature for every
7 neighborhood. And what you see is that you know
8 looking at a scatterplot here with the x axis being
9 median canopy coverage... and right... so median
10 canopy coverage and where that stands compared to...
11 on the Y axis of temperature. You see all the
12 different neighborhoods and areas and how they
13 compare to the median both in terms of canopy
14 coverage, and the median in terms of temperature in
15 our city. And so I want to call attention to
16 Elmhurst and Jackson Heights in particular, my
17 district, for example. As I mentioned before, we
18 ranked 50 out of 51 Council districts when it comes
19 to park space per capita in our city. But you can
20 also see in the top left quadrant, Elmhurst and
21 Jackson Heights are just two examples of
22 neighborhoods that have below-average canopy coverage
23 as well as above average median temperatures. And
24 so, you know, it's you can all go through your
25 neighborhoods and we'll make sure to put this data on

2 the Council website as we did for our last hearing,
3 but it really powerfully can convey this
4 relationship between canopy coverage and surface
5 temperatures in our neighborhoods. We've read
6 reports. The New York Times did an excellent report
7 last year about surface temperatures in the South
8 Bronx, for example, versus surface temperatures on
9 the Upper West Side, given the disparities and tree
10 canopy coverage too. And so you really do see the
11 direct causation between increased or lack of canopy
12 coverage and what that means for... for temperatures
13 on the ground, especially for poor countries of
14 color.

15 So I would like to know what efforts has the
16 Parks Department considered to ensure that any
17 increase in canopy size results in an equitable
18 distribution of trees and addresses this challenge
19 head on?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sure. Thank you for that
21 question. And I certainly share your concern.
22 Equity is an extremely important part of this
23 administration. And we are always thinking about how
24 we can do the best job and a better job at providing
25 our services equitably across the city. And we're

2 very familiar with the... with the patterns of
3 canopy. And again, we you know, really can look at
4 the piece of the puzzle that we have management over,
5 right? So it's the public right of way and it's
6 parkland. And a lot of the rest of the canopy is...
7 is really driven by land use decisions, historic
8 disinvestment, and in fact, biological
9 considerations. For example, you... It's very hard
10 to establish great canopy cover in coastal areas
11 where they weren't historically, didn't have trees
12 right there, scrub shrubs, sort of neighborhoods,
13 beaches. So some of those things sort of
14 automatically limit. You're never going to get a
15 huge amount of canopy in midtown Manhattan, in really
16 dense downtown neighborhoods, which also
17 unfortunately, in some ways, you have to be extremely
18 creative in places like flushing, or in downtown
19 Brooklyn. And in fact, the past Councilmember Khuu
20 was very generous and gave us some funding to really
21 try some very inventive ways of accommodating trees
22 and very tough growing neighborhoods. And we're
23 going to be doing that. And maybe we'll learn
24 something about getting more trees into some of these
25 neighborhoods that are very limited. In terms of

2 what we typically do... Oh, and I'll just say one
3 other thing: Is that we're very well aware of the...
4 the inequity, because what we do is we also look at
5 where service requests come from. And historically,
6 the city had for a very long time planted trees only
7 where people requested them. And when you map those
8 requests, you see why. You know, one reason we have
9 this inequitable distribution. So we knew we had to
10 do something about that we couldn't just wait for
11 people to request trees. It's not always top of mind
12 for every New Yorker. And so our approach now is to
13 look at neighborhoods with high heat. We use the
14 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, sort of way
15 of identifying neighborhoods with high heat
16 vulnerability. They have an index, which you're
17 probably familiar with. It's based on residents
18 receiving public assistance. So it's not just about
19 heat. It's looking at social and economic factors,
20 percentage of non-Hispanic black residents, average
21 surface temperatures, so that is part of it, and also
22 the percentage of households with air conditioning.

23 So they take those... This is, again, not the
24 Parks Department, these are the experts in public
25 health. They take that information, they've mapped

2 the city, based on this information. Each
3 neighborhood has a ranking from one to five, with
4 five being the highest vulnerable... most vulnerable
5 neighborhoods. And so we start with five, and that's
6 where we are. It's called HVI, the Heat
7 Vulnerability Index. And so all the neighborhoods
8 under HVI 5 are where we're targeting our
9 discretionary funds. So not things that are like a
10 Councilmember gives us for your district, though we
11 always go into your district. But the discretionary
12 funds first go to these HVI 5 neighborhoods. And now
13 with the new funding that we've... we've just
14 received, we'll be able to reach through all of HVI 4
15 neighborhoods as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. And one also
17 map I wanted to point out as well, and I'll describe
18 it again visually, too. Unfortunately, we didn't
19 have a color printer in our office to print it out.
20 But we'll put that on the website, and it'll be in
21 color too.

22 But what it does show, similar is the data that
23 was on the the scatterplot before too, is the map of
24 the city and the neighborhoods were in red, that have
25 higher than average temperatures, and their outline.

2 The ones in black that are outlined are in the bottom
3 25% for park access. So what you see is across the
4 city, neighborhoods that are on the bottom 25% for
5 park access, what you'd see on the map is that
6 they're the darkest red, in other words,
7 neighborhoods like Jackson Heights or Elmhurst, or
8 communities like ours that lack green space, have
9 much higher temperatures, too. And so, you know,
10 however you look at the data, it's clear where the
11 need is. One question I have is, what areas of the
12 city have seen the largest increase in canopy
13 coverage recently? Or what neighborhoods?

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
15 question. And it's... it's like a perfect leading
16 question for me, because the largest increases in
17 canopy cover are actually those same neighborhoods,
18 because we really have been concentrating planting in
19 those neighborhoods of need for a while, but you
20 don't see the canopy increase, you have the stems
21 increased, right. But it takes a while for the trees
22 to catch up and to fill out, and that that takes a
23 little bit of time. So the biggest increase are
24 areas like Central Brooklyn and sort of the... the
25 Brooklyn, Queens border area, South Bronx, Upper

2 Manhattan, East Harlem. Those are the areas that you
3 saw the most increase in canopy cover and street tree
4 numbers too.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And does Parks track the
6 reasons for why a specific area might have suffered
7 canopy loss?

8 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
9 question. We are always aware of it. I can't say
10 that we track it directly. So I'm sitting with these
11 maps in front of me that are in your... in your book
12 there that you have where, you know, we're looking at
13 tree planting... I mean, sorry... canopy
14 distribution and change. And so when you look at
15 that, and you're welcome to look at it from page 29,
16 I think... So yeah, we looked at this map when we
17 worked with the Nature Conservancy, and we're like,
18 "What's going on in those yellow places?" Those are
19 where you had the most loss over time. That's where
20 our concerns are. And some of them are like, "Oh,
21 right, remember the tornado that came through?
22 Straight down the center from sort of Northeast
23 Queens down through Brooklyn?" You see that. You
24 see the loss in some of those neighborhoods,
25 particularly in Queens because it wasn't as strong

2 and Brooklyn. Remember Sandy? That's where all the
3 loss is around Jamaica Bay in Southern Queens. So we
4 do know that. We know why there's been loss in a lot
5 of these places. Do we track it neighborhood by
6 neighborhood street by street? It's difficult to do
7 that because there's so many factors, but when you
8 look at the trends, we know what's going on.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And the city has zoned a
10 few areas in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island as
11 special natural area districts where restrictions on
12 privately owned trees are enforced. Has the
13 department along with other agencies consider the
14 benefits of expanding SNAD type restrictions in other
15 areas of the city to really make sure trees are
16 protected?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
18 question. So you... you may know we the SNAD program
19 is managed and by the Department of City Planning, so
20 I'll just have to defer to our colleagues at the
21 Department of City Planning to provide information on
22 the potential for either expanding or strengthening
23 the SNAD regulations. They don't apply to city
24 parks. So it's really within the Department of City
25 Planning's sort of jurisdiction

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what requirements and
3 qualifications apply to tree maintenance contractors?
4 For example, are they required to be certified
5 arborists?

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
7 question. They are required to have a certified
8 arborist supervise the crews. They have to have an
9 accreditation by the tree care industry association,
10 which is essentially an accreditation that
11 demonstrates their commitment to safety. They have
12 to have electrical hazard awareness training to work
13 near wires, and they have to have at least three
14 years of experience at the type of work that they
15 will be asked that they will need to do.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how many arborists
17 does NYC Parks have on staff as employees of the
18 Parks Department?

19 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you. So just one
20 clarification: Arborist isn't actually a city's
21 civil service title. So... so I can tell you we have
22 40... We have about 70 some in the forester title
23 people, and 116 in the climbers and pruner title.
24 Now of all of that group of people, plus some more,
25 there are 97 certified arborists, and there are 80

2 people who are tree-risk assessors, or track
3 qualified. So I gave you a little bit about their
4 civil service title and their... their credentials.
5 And the International Society of Arboriculture is
6 very protective over their information. They're the
7 credentialing group. But I can pretty much tell you
8 I don't think there's another city that has that many
9 people working for them who are certified arborists
10 and track qualified.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And one thing we spoke
12 about before was how... I think the stat was 4 out of
13 the top five 311 complaints were about trees. So how
14 are... And that was an interesting fact to me, but a
15 very significant one. So how are 311 complaints
16 regarding trees treated? If a tree was just pruned
17 two years ago? Does the complaint have to wait until
18 the next pruning cycle to be addressed?

19 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
20 question. We... Absolutely, you know, making sure we
21 respond to requests that really present a risk to the
22 public is very important to us. And the things that
23 we look for... The direct answer is no. We look at
24 each individual service request for what it... what
25 that service request is telling us. We're looking

2 for keywords like hanging limb, trees down, split
3 wood, blocking traffic signs, leaning. So it doesn't
4 matter when we looked at your tree before, or if it
5 was block pruned on a regular pruning cycle. If that
6 one of those keywords is there, we're going out to
7 inspect that tree?

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And is... Backing up for a
9 second, because I do feel like this is something
10 that, you know, it comes up a lot, which is: What is
11 the cycle overall for addressing trees and tree
12 maintenance? You know, many of us have seen that it
13 can take a very long time, that there is a
14 categorization system that Parks Department uses for
15 tree. So I love people to speak a little bit about,
16 you know, what the... what the cycle is and why it is
17 that way.

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sure. Thank you for that
19 question. Obviously, we take tree maintenance very
20 seriously. And... and the absolute priority is risk
21 and safety for the public. So the way I look at it
22 is that we have a system of care inspection and
23 responding to requests and work and they're multi-
24 layered. And not everything on... each one on its
25 own doesn't do the full job. So yes, we have a seven

2 year pruning cycle. And yes, it's true that that
3 some trees need attention in less than seven years.
4 And that's why we do other things in addition, we
5 have... we have... Anybody... Somebody's... Any time,
6 we pick up service requests and conditions, as we're
7 driving around, create inspections and work orders.
8 We take service requests all the time. And as I said
9 before, you don't have to wait for the next cycle for
10 us to inspect it. We have supervisors in our parks
11 looking at trees, we have the inspection program
12 which you mentioned, they're all looking at trees.
13 And all of this is sort of feeding this information
14 to our professional staff, to then decide to inspect
15 the trees and then determine the level of risk that
16 they pose to the public. And it's a very
17 quantifiable process we've adapted from the
18 International Society of Arboriculture, from ISA, a
19 tree risk management program that helps us sort of
20 triage and determine which ones we need to get to the
21 fastest with the with the best resources we have.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And is there currently a
23 backlog of tree complaints that need to be addressed?

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: There are... Thank you
25 for that question. Let me just give you a sense of

2 what we look at every year. Not counting tree
3 planting requests we receive on average -- this is
4 sort of a five year average -- 80,000 service
5 requests a year for trees. We inspect 111,000 trees
6 every year, and these are all kinds of inspections by
7 qualified inspectors, and we complete almost 100,000
8 work orders a year. It's a huge volume that is
9 constantly coming in, and going out, and being acted
10 on. Some we do determine has to wait for the block
11 pruning cycle, and some we know needs to be addressed
12 right away. And that's really the expertise of our
13 in-house crews.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Did the latest tree census
15 count the number of dead trees? If so how does that
16 number compare with the recent years?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
18 question. So the tree census, as you say is the...
19 is... as you know, is like... it's like the US
20 population census. And it's a great snapshot in
21 time. And that's the number I always like to use.
22 At that time we identified about 2% of the street
23 tree population was dead... was standing dead. And
24 that's about 13,000 trees. It's not an unusual
25 number for a population. And I wouldn't... I... And

2 we don't have an exact number at this moment in time.
3 So it's just like the census you're not going to... I
4 can't tell you how many people live in between in
5 your neighborhood because it's always a moving
6 target. And if you... Yeah, I think that's the best
7 way to look at it. So at the time, which was at the
8 end of 2016, we had 13,000 trees that were dead.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: You know, I think that
10 that's one of the things that comes up a bunch in our
11 communities too, is that when there are dead trees,
12 to ensure that we're able to get them addressed and
13 taken care of as quickly as possible.

14 Does the Parks Department engage various
15 communities when deciding what the optimal locations
16 are for the types of trees that are planted? You
17 know, I've personally worked with constituents too
18 where their trees that go in, that we actually wanted
19 other ones in there and other kinds of plantings.
20 And so ensuring that we've got a really good and
21 tight-knit community process so that we know...
22 communities can express what they know to be... and
23 especially in my district, for example, we've got
24 some really good advocacy groups that are part of the
25 Forest For All Coalition that focus on trees, like

2 the Jackson Heights Beautification Group and others.
3 How do we ensure that the local expertise and
4 perspective on the locations and the types of trees
5 that are planted is accounted for in the process when
6 DPR decides what trees and where to plant them?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sure, thank you very much
8 for that question, and we definitely appreciate the
9 attention that communities pay to our trees. We
10 can't be the eyes and ears -- well, really eyes as
11 they're not really talking to us -- for every single
12 tree in the city. So we really welcome people's
13 participation. And anytime somebody submits a
14 service request for a tree they can suggest a species
15 for us to consider, tell us what they want. So in
16 that way, an individual request, we absolutely take
17 that into account. So there are... there are also a
18 number of considerations that we're looking at as
19 foresters identifying and matching the tree to the
20 location. First and foremost, we want that tree to
21 survive. So you have to pick a tree. And this is
22 based on data and our experience we've done we track
23 the mortality of our trees, we know what lives and
24 what doesn't live, in which circumstance. So you've
25 got to choose a tree that will you know, will live.

2 The second thing we do is we choose the tree that
3 will provide the most ecological benefits. And the
4 bigger the tree in... when it's mature, the better...
5 it the more services it provides, right?, the more
6 shade. And so that's the second thing we look at.
7 We look at... We pick the biggest tree that's
8 appropriate for that space. We don't plant large
9 trees under wires. We look at how narrow the space
10 is. It's all about the space. And then we have to
11 think of the ecological sort of conditions. Like I
12 said: In coastal areas, some things are not going to
13 live no matter how much somebody wants to see that
14 species of tree, and that's sort of where the
15 community participation comes in, where we appreciate
16 it, but we know it's not going to live and we can't
17 plant that tree there. And in fact, we've come up
18 with a whole new way of looking at how,
19 particularly... in particular, how to select species
20 in coastal areas. So you have that, and you have to
21 look at the design. So you have an LA... you know, a
22 median with all cherry trees, we're going to try to
23 replace it, so the design is... still maintain some
24 cohesive... cohesiveness.

2 And then the other thing that we look at that
3 again, as much as we do appreciate community input,
4 is we have to look at the entire urban forest. And
5 we really have to think about how we can diversify
6 the species across the board. And sometimes that
7 means we know what's going on in that community, or
8 we know what's going on in a neighboring
9 neighborhood. And we... we just have to limit some
10 species that are very, very popular, because we don't
11 want to end up in a situation like we did years ago
12 in the 30s with Dutch elm disease where we really
13 lost a significant population of our of our... of
14 trees in cities.

15 So... And there's one more thing I was going to
16 mention is that in terms of species, one improvement
17 that we have made is that we used to be subject to
18 market conditions. So that often is something that
19 limits. Like, what can you find in the nursery? And
20 it's been about, I don't know, 10 or 15 years now
21 that we've had contracts directly with the growers,
22 so we really have a lot more influence on what...
23 They grow what we tell them to grow. And so we're
24 not as constrained on that.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I always encourage Park to
3 keep communicating... communicating more closely with
4 neighborhoods too, so that we can... we make sure
5 that what's planted before it's planted, also
6 reflects that local input as well. I encourage you
7 to keep thinking of new ways to do so and to reach
8 out as well.

9 I... I've got a couple more questions, but I'm
10 actually going to turn it over to my colleagues
11 first, and I'll come back on a second round for
12 those.

13 But before getting started on my colleagues
14 questions, I just want to also recognize that we've
15 been joined by Councilmember Lincoln Restler and
16 Minority Leader Joe Borelli.

17 And on that note, I'll turn it over to my
18 colleagues ask questions. We can start with
19 Councilmember Holden.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair. And
21 thank you, Commissioner. Welcome. Thank you for
22 your testimony. And you know, just for somebody
23 who's been around in civic life and working with
24 Parks for... since the 1980s, I've always felt that
25 Parks is their own worst enemy in planting trees, and

2 I'm going to tell you why. You mentioned one of
3 them: Where in the 80s and early 90s, I had to do...
4 we had to have homeowners fill out a form if they
5 wanted a tree in front of their home. And if they
6 didn't want it, it wasn't planted. And I always was
7 against that. I said, "This is not their land, by
8 the way. It's... it's the city's." The space and
9 the strip at the curb is the city's space. And it's
10 and it's really for future generations too, where,
11 you know, when we plant a tree, it's for the next
12 homeowner on that block, or residents in the future,
13 otherwise, we wouldn't get anywhere. So we did have
14 residents... and the Parks Department kind of
15 followed that until sometime in the mid-90s, when I
16 said you know, "that's enough, I'm going to survey
17 and put in requests, even if I have to do it for my
18 organization for that particular property." And we
19 got hundreds of trees planted. However, they didn't
20 plant them correctly. They... they boxed them into
21 smaller spaces, and then they bricked... In front of
22 my house, they planted a nice, beautiful, flowering
23 pear, and then just put cobblestones around the whole
24 thing and it couldn't get water. So I would go... I
25 would have to water the heck out of it to get any

2 water in there. In hindsight, I should have picked
3 it up, but it died within four years. And it's been
4 dead for four years. And I still have a stump in the
5 ground that I can't get removed as a Councilmember.
6 It's unbelievable.

7 Homeowners face the same thing. In fact, it's
8 going to be double the wait. I have tree stumps
9 everywhere. So whatever we're doing with trees,
10 historically, we've failed in the city of New York.
11 We planted trees where they shouldn't have been
12 planted, or they should have had more space, they
13 should have had more ground... soil rather than
14 boxing them in. And we planted the wrong ones often
15 too. So I just don't get it, why we keep making
16 these same mistakes? I see it's better now. And
17 maybe that's, you know, to you, or a testament to the
18 parks, whatever. They figured it out a little bit
19 better.

20 But then I asked the previous Commissioner, I
21 said, "I have spaces that requires smaller trees
22 because they're smaller footprints. And so couldn't
23 we plant... Don't have a program that we could plant
24 smaller trees that won't grow that large, but they
25 would look nice, and they would offer people..."

2 People love trees. I mean, most people do. And I've
3 seen... I haven't really gotten a definitive answer
4 on that. But I do think that it has to do with the
5 price of trees, because we've gotten... we've
6 gotten... it's gotten out of hand, and the price to
7 plant one particular tree I think it was \$3600 at one
8 point. I don't know if it's... if it's still that.
9 What was that? Yeah, is it \$3600?

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: That's the average.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah. So that's
12 outrageous. And so that's why I brought it up to the
13 Commissioner, that... let's do a pilot program. And
14 I think you're considering it, where it's done in
15 house, that we could hire more people in parks, that,
16 you know, the 1% would be a great idea that... You
17 know, that's what we wanted. We didn't get it, but
18 you know, we need to get it. And if we hired people
19 to plant trees, and gave them a salary, gave them
20 benefits and you know, they could maintain it. They
21 don't have to... they're not going to plant trees
22 year round, so they could maintain the trees in the
23 off-season when they can't plant.

24 So it's it seems like a viable... Rather than
25 getting this this extorted price of \$3600 to plant

2 each tree and then it still doesn't... and we still
3 don't maintain the ones we have. Because we had a
4 recent windy day in my district and I lost dozens of
5 trees and... to the form of like they're split in
6 half. And every tree that comes down... or every
7 part of the tree that comes down, you can see rot
8 inside. And I had microbursts in my neighborhood
9 because, we're 100 feet above sea level in my
10 district, most of the district. We've had storms.
11 We've had... We had everything. I had tornadoes
12 years ago that we... You know, a microburst is a
13 downward tornado, and we lost 1000s of trees then,
14 and we never recovered.

15 And again, if my neighborhood is going to put on
16 the end of the list, because we do have a decent tree
17 canopy, it's just... We're going to spin our wheels.
18 So I'm putting extra money into my budget to try to
19 get the tree stumps removed, try to get the trees
20 pruned. But if you go into Juniper Valley Park right
21 now you'll see a tree that was cut in half by just a
22 windy day. And you can see the tree was lopsided.
23 You can see it should have been pruned. And I
24 think... in parks especially in where people a lot of
25 people congregate and a lot of people use we need to

2 give that a priority to... to prune those trees
3 because they can kill people. They have killed
4 people in the past when they come down.

5 So sorry... one second. The trees that we're
6 seeing, that we really can't take care... So
7 planting 20,000 trees is... is a drop in the bucket,
8 I think, in a particular year, considering all the
9 storms we've had in the city of New York, so I would.
10 Again, we have to fight to get more money for the
11 trees, but we really have to do a better job in
12 taking care of the ones we have also. Thank you.
13 Thank you Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Next, we've got Minority
15 Leader Borelli.

16 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Can you say again how
17 much it cost to plant a tree?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sorry. Citywide, it's
19 \$3,600. In Staten Island, the average is
20 considerably less. I'll get that for you.

21 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Do you know how much it
22 costs to plant a tree by the city of Jersey City just
23 across the Hudson River?

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No, please.

2 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: You want to take a
3 guess?

4 [laughter]

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No. I'll let you Thank
6 you.

7 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: It costs \$500.
8 According to their 2018 Guide, they estimate their
9 cost per tree which is passed on to homeowners in
10 Jersey City, \$500 per tree. That's a three inch
11 caliper tree, a standard one that we use.

12 Has there been any effort to see what other
13 cities are doing in terms of tree planting, in terms
14 of perhaps saving both homeowners and the city
15 itself? Because correct me if I'm wrong, but we...
16 we talked about the price of capital projects, we
17 talked about delays, and stuff like that the tree
18 restitution cost is often borne by the agency
19 themselves. So has there been any effort to look and
20 see what other cities are doing?

21 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
22 question. And I... I know it's... We really do share
23 your concern for the cost of trees. I also wish it
24 would cost less. We don't want to be spending more
25 than we need to. And yes, you are correct, we have

2 to follow prevailing wages, as well as a host of
3 other regulations in terms of how we contract out
4 our... our tree work... our street tree planting...
5 all of our tree planting work. And yes, we've been
6 exploring a lot of other things.

7 The most promising piece that we've seen... And
8 by the way, I would be happy to directly talk to
9 Jersey City. I don't know if we've talked to them
10 directly about it. But one of our most promising
11 things that we piloted this year is a new kind of...
12 the tree grown in a different way. Typically we grow
13 up we plant the trees balled and burlapped, you know,
14 the big wire baskets. And there's a newish... what's
15 it called... a newish technology where the trees are
16 grown in these bags, they're called grow bags, and
17 and they are lighter weight. So that means they you
18 don't need the same amount of equipment to move them
19 around. You can fit more on the truck. So that
20 means you have fewer things to... to... you know you
21 can do more in a day, for example. And we piloted
22 that this year. We did it in a bunch of different...
23 (crosstalk)

24 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Big picture.

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sorry, yeah.

2 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Can you think of
3 anything else that the Parks Department -- or my
4 other friends on the panel who have lengthy
5 experience in government -- can you think of anything
6 else that we pay seven times the amount that the same
7 service... And by the way, this is the same service.
8 I read the entire 50-page guide from the Jersey City.
9 It has the diagrams. I actually think they copied
10 our guide. But then I did some more research and I
11 realized that all comes from that national standard
12 appendix of Tree Bible. Great.

13 Can we think of any other example where New York
14 City pays seven times the amount that an adjacent
15 municipality pays for a service?

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It's not... it's not an
17 expertise of mine. I'm not aware.

18 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: I can't think of any.
19 Can Jersey City plant our trees?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Excuse me? I'm sorry. I
21 didn't hear.

22 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Can Jersey City plant
23 our... I'm not even joking. Can... Can Jersey
24 City... Can we contract Jersey City to plant our
25 trees? Give them the \$20 toll? And is it possible?

2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It's a good question.

3 (crosstalk)

4 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Can they respond to an
5 RFP, I guess is the question.

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: I think some of our
7 contractors do come from New Jersey.

8 MINORITY LEADER BORELLI: Okay. I mean, at
9 \$3,600, can I sell you my backyard tree for \$1800?
10 Okay. Now I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm sorry to
11 be a bit tongue-in-cheek, but the cost of replacing
12 all 666,134 street trees that would be under the
13 city's jurisdiction in full is \$2.4 billion. And
14 that's a cost that we'll have to bear in 2021
15 dollars... 2022 dollars, I forget what year it is.
16 Obviously, we're not going to come anywhere close to
17 that because we're only replanting, I think you said
18 about 20,000 per year. I guess my point is: Do you
19 see the bigger picture in that if the cost of
20 replacing these... these trees was lower, or we had
21 better contractors, or we did it in house, or we did
22 it through volunteer programs, or we made it a little
23 bit simpler for people to plant a tree on their own.
24 Because one of the complaints I've gotten from just
25 home builders is that when they plant a tree and a

2 single twig is broken, the tree police come and they
3 give them thousands of dollars in violations.

4 I think all of these things collectively add up
5 to our problem. And the cost is a major part of that
6 problem. And if the cost was lower, we'd have a
7 better tree policy overall. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Minority
9 Leader. Before we go to next question, I wanted to
10 point out to everyone to all my colleagues that we've
11 got two books here as well by the Nature Conservancy,
12 and supported by the Forest For All Coalition about
13 the urban forest agenda. I encourage you all to...
14 to look through it too, as it has some really
15 important information and data about the importance
16 of our tree canopy and expanding tree canopy
17 coverage, especially in communities that need it. So
18 just wanted to mention that.

19 I also mention that we've been joined by
20 Councilmember Julie Menin as well. And now our next
21 set of questions are by Councilmember Narcisse.

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon. Thank
23 you for being here. And I want to say thank you to
24 the Commissioner, Sue Donaghue. She's a very
25 beautiful person. We spent some time together. And

2 I have to let you know that you're in a friendly
3 territory. Because when I'm with the City
4 Councilmembers, all my colleagues, all we talk about
5 this is the trees. And I have to let you know that
6 I'm from Canarsie area, where Sandy devastated all
7 our trees. I used to live in a tree lined street.
8 Now it's not. We can barely see a tree.

9 It's difficult for me... Like my colleagues, we
10 were talking, I was thinking about the cost, because
11 you have to be cost effective and responsible for the
12 taxpayers. And I have \$35... now I'm hearing . Now
13 I'm here in \$36 per tree, because I had \$35. Maybe I
14 saw it somewhere. It's \$35. I had... I don't know
15 where, but I think I read it somewhere. But anyway,
16 besides the point. It's still a lot of money. But
17 when you're talking about wages, I hope it goes to
18 black and brown communities, so we can bring some
19 equity to the city.

20 But having said that, if we plant the trees,
21 and.... for that price, and it dies, I mean one out
22 of two... I'm saying one... it's two... probably out
23 of... no... one out of 10 of the new trees are dying.
24 What can we do to make sure that if we spend that
25 much money, our trees are not dying? What can the

2 community do to support? Like, let's say I have a
3 tree in front of my house after you planted? Are we
4 giving information to those folks to know how to keep
5 the tree? Because we love trees. Third, I think the
6 homeowner... we need to improve the mortality,
7 definitely, because we cannot pay that much money.
8 And I have heard you say that, um, you have to pick
9 trees that can live for a long life... that have long
10 life. I can understand that too. So any other
11 question that I have? I think some of them already
12 asked by my colleagues. But I have to let you know
13 that we work hard, and we still want that \$1 billion,
14 because we need the environment equity we're talking
15 about, because what happened during the height of the
16 pandemic's that we realized a lot of folks did not
17 have backyard, did not have a place to go, and our
18 park become the catering Hall, the kids playing. So
19 we appreciate it. So keep on doing the good job, but
20 we have to improve in terms of the money, the tax
21 dollars that we're spending. Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much.
23 Councilmember Narcisse. And thank you so much for
24 your support, for trees and nice to know that we're
25 in friendly territory. I appreciate your support.

2 And I believe one question you asked was about
3 what to do if you... if... when you see a newly
4 planted tree that's not surviving, and those trees
5 are under guarantee, so as soon as you see it, we
6 really encourage you to call 311 and report it so
7 then we can make sure that the contractor is held
8 responsible. We do also inspect everything before
9 they're let off the hook for the guarantee. But
10 please let us know if we... if you see it, so we can
11 get the contractor to replace it in in you know it
12 would be in the next planting season.

13 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: So that's what we can do
14 to increase, you know, the life hold of the trees
15 that we love so much, to keep up...?

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Exactly. For the newer
17 trees that are planted. Yes.

18 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: So I appreciate you. So
19 let's continue planting the trees. So, what can we
20 do right now in the areas that used to have trees but
21 with Sandy, we lost those trees. What can we do to
22 get the trees back?

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah, thank you for that
24 question. We'll take a look, we'll see what our
25 plans are in your neighborhood and let you know, to

2 see how we're approaching planting in that
3 neighborhood.

4 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I guess for now, if I
5 forget, then maybe I'll have a chance to come back.
6 But for now, thank you so much. Appreciate it.

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember
9 Narcisse. Our next set of questions is by
10 Councilmember Dinowitz.

11 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. First of
12 all, I want to be the first to say it. Parks should
13 have 2% of the city budget. I'm going to be the
14 first to say it. And we're going to work to that.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: That's how we move the
16 goalposts.

17 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: That's right. I want...
18 First, I want to thank you for coming. You know, I
19 always say Parks is one of my favorite agencies. You
20 know, with... the reality is your budget is not
21 enough. And with that, I know at least with my
22 office, you are very responsive. Everyone loves our
23 parks. Our parks are for everyone. And you know,
24 Council... Chair Krishnan outlined the importance of
25 our parks, of our tree canopy. I want to go back to

2 something you were talking about, which is the heat,
3 the temperature, because I agree we should be
4 planting trees based on where they're needed. It is
5 not always the case that, you know, people who in
6 neighborhoods with... with high heat index indexes
7 are going to call 311 and request the trees to the
8 same extent as other neighborhoods.

9 So I looked at the map of where the trees have
10 been planted, and where they're going to be planted.
11 The Bronx: So I want to talk about the Bronx because
12 that's where I represent. My neighborhoods of
13 Woodlawn, Wakefield, Norwood, and Bedford Park,
14 according to the city website are rated four out of
15 five for the heat index, which is almost the worst
16 that could be. And so when I looked at the map, what
17 I noticed that there are a lot of orange circles.
18 And what that means is that trees are planned to be
19 planted there. And what it says is "planned to be
20 done by May 31 2022", which is past. So... So I just
21 want to highlight that, that I don't know if I'm
22 asking first about keeping to this schedule.

23 But the second thing is about that equity,
24 because I looked at other parts of the map. And
25 there... and while I have a lot of orange circles,

2 there are a lot of green circles in other boroughs
3 where their heat index number is three, or two, or
4 one. And so while I value and appreciate talking
5 about planting trees when they're needed, it doesn't
6 appear, based on your data, that that is the work
7 that is being done. The work does not reflect that
8 value that I think we both share. So what is the...
9 what is the status of getting more trees in the three
10 neighborhoods I mentioned? But of course, other
11 neighborhoods that are fours and fives? What is the
12 timeline for planting trees? And one thing I would
13 suggest that your website does not show is: If a
14 request was made, when the request was made, because
15 that would give us in in public office a better
16 understanding of the timeline of things.

17 And I would just... I'll ask.. I'll front-load
18 all my questions if you don't mind. Tree stumps.
19 Are we talking about tree stumps? I know no
20 lifeguards, but we could talk about tree stumps.
21 Same thing about the map: There were requests that
22 my office made on Bailey Avenue specifically. And
23 they don't appear even on the map. And this was a
24 request made multiple times a year ago, roughly a
25 year ago. So between the... So if you could first

2 address the... the issue with planting trees and the
3 high heat index areas, and then we'll talk about tree
4 stumps, please.

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sure.

6 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
8 your question. I appreciate the attention to trees
9 and your support for... for trees and parks.

10 Okay, let's see if I can start with the planting.
11 What you see on the tree... not the tree map. I know
12 the tree work hub. So I did mention that the two
13 main ways we plant trees are based on the HVI
14 program, the equity program, and request. But
15 there's actually another... And I also mentioned
16 electeds, who give us specific planting for their...
17 their neighborhoods. There's actually another sort
18 of category of tree planting that we do, and those
19 are... that's planting that's required through sort
20 of legal requirements. So as you know, there's tree
21 replacement laws, and so we... people have the
22 ability to either plant or pay the Parks Department
23 to plant, so those trees we plant and it doesn't
24 matter whether they're in HVI or not. We plant them
25 where the tree was removed, as well as trees for new

2 buildings, right? So for part of zoning you're
3 required to plant trees, and you could choose to
4 plant them or you could choose to pay us to, and
5 again we plant where that building was built, not...
6 regardless of where it is. So you may be seeing that
7 pattern, and we're happy to kind of give you an idea
8 of how it breaks down. But that's not money that's
9 allocated by the city government. That comes in for
10 a very specific reason from the private sector. And
11 we have restrictions of where we can plant those
12 trees.

13 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: So when I... in 13
14 seconds.

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Sorry, I know there's
16 another question.

17 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, it was the tree
18 stumps. But I just... but again, what I'm happy to
19 do is follow up with your office. Because just
20 looking at the map, it's hard to imagine that in
21 areas with heat indexes of one, two, and three, that
22 there's just so much new development and so much
23 legally required tree replacements, that it would
24 totally overshadow the fact that it's pretty much
25 only orange in Wakefield, not a ton in Norwood to

2 begin with, but a bunch of orange there. So I'd love
3 to love to follow up about the details of that. And
4 I see the face like, "oh, no, you'd be surprised how
5 many tree replacements", but I want to be respectful
6 of time. And if you could just help adjust the tree
7 stump issue. That that's... You know, we had like
8 312 pending tree stump removals, and the four that I
9 asked for are not on the map.

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Not on the map. Will do.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember.
13 Now Councilmember Restler.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Wonderful. Well, Deputy
15 Commissioner, let me congratulate you on your
16 promotion. I had the good fortune of listening to
17 you on Brian Lehrer some months ago and was very
18 impressed. That was a fun series. And it's always
19 good to see you, Matt. So thank you all for
20 everything you do.

21 Look, I love trees, as I imagine all of us up
22 here do, and as ardent a proponent as I possibly can
23 for us to have more of them. I think we all
24 understand the myriad benefits around the heat...
25 around addressing extreme heat, around resiliency,

2 around air pollution, around just combating the
3 climate crisis altogether, nothing is more important
4 than... than us planting more trees.

5 The problem I have is that every time I call the
6 Parks Department, I'm told why I can't plant a tree.
7 And why the answer I get no every single freaking
8 time, and I reach out with... you know, I'm not shy.
9 Maybe I'll put it that way, as Matt can attest. So I
10 have neighborhoods in my district where we've done a
11 comprehensive mapping of every single location where
12 we formerly have trees, where we don't have trees. I
13 have community groups, like Neighborhood Tree Corps.
14 So I represent Greenpoint, and Williamsburg, and
15 Brooklyn Heights, in Boerum Hill in downtown Brooklyn
16 and DUMBO, in case you're confused, if you don't have
17 us all memorized by... by neighborhood. Before your
18 next hearing.

19 So how about this: give some advice to an eager
20 Councilmember who is desperately trying to get more
21 trees and who only gets rejected by the Parks
22 Department each and every time they call? What can
23 we do to successfully get more trees in our districts
24 so that when I run for re-election, I can say we have
25

2 this number of additional trees planted in the 33rd.
3 Council District?

4 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
5 that question. What I think we should do is take a
6 walk with you and look at some of these sites that
7 we've rejected, and talk about what we see when we're
8 walking in the neighborhood and how we approach it.
9 And... And similar to I think what... what Chair
10 Krishnan was saying earlier is that there are things
11 that we don't know when we're there, where we're...
12 where we... you know, where we think, "Ugh, it's not
13 going to work here," but maybe you as a local, you
14 know, you know your neighborhood better than we do.
15 You may see things that we're not seeing, but I think
16 it's really helpful to see it through our eyes, the
17 utilities that we see underground. DUMBO, I can't
18 imagine what's under those sidewalks. That's a tough
19 one. And so anyway, that I think is what I would
20 offer to you. That we will take a walk.

21 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Beyond the walk... And I
22 appreciate that. And I know you're busy. So thank
23 you for... in advance for your visit to the 33rd. We
24 look forward to it. We'll have some fun this summer.
25 But in addition to just going for a walk, what else

2 can we do to get more trees planted in our community?

3 Like how do we make it as easy as possible for the

4 Parks Department, and tee it up for you so that we

5 can have a big, gaudy number of new trees in the 33rd

6 Council District?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you, I would... I

8 would love to have a big, gaudy number of tree

9 planting, and get trees in the ground as fast as

10 possible.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: In the 33rd, Council

12 district.

13 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Excuse me?

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, I think you missed

15 the 33rd Council District as part of your as part of

16 your answer.

17 [Laughter]

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: In every Council

19 district.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Me too. There are a lot

21 of great districts around the table.

22 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Equity drives our work,

23 so, you know, all Council districts. You know it's

24 letting us know. I think we're getting to the

25 requests as soon as fast as we can. There were

2 significant delays because of COVID. You've heard
3 this before. There were delays because of the tree
4 planting costs. We rejected... We lost a whole year
5 basically because when the prices came in high, we
6 did not feel comfortable. We didn't have enough
7 information to know that we, at that moment in time,
8 had no choice but to accept those prices. So we lost
9 a year there. That was first. And then COVID came.
10 And we're... we do have a backlog. So I'm hoping...
11 (crosstalk)

12 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: The backlog is in some
13 way separate and apart, although I'm disappointed
14 that it takes so long to actually get the tree
15 planted once approved. That is a serious problem.
16 And if time permits, I'll get to those questions.
17 But I'm still focused on the simple question of how
18 do I get more trees approved in my district? Is the
19 only way to actually do it to have the Deputy
20 Commissioner come walk around with me, and for me to
21 convince you that actually this spot works? Like, is
22 that really it? I don't mean to be a jerk, but like,
23 we want to work together. And we really want more
24 trees. We need more trees. This isn't like a fun
25 thing. This is like the single most consequential

2 solution to the climate crisis. So I'm being you
3 know, I'm having fun. But it's not at all a joking
4 matter.

5 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: No. Thank you. I
6 understand. I mean, I'm sort of... I take it all
7 very seriously. It is my job. I have dedicated my
8 career to this... (crosstalk)

9 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: No. Of course. 100%. I
10 don't imply otherwise.

11 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah. No, I know. So
12 I'm just saying I understand that you are very
13 serious, and I do take it seriously. And the reason
14 I suggest a walk is because I do have faith in the
15 people who work for me, my staff, they're very well
16 trained, they are following certain rules. And yes,
17 maybe we're being a little bit too strict, and
18 sometimes... but in some places... but maybe we can't
19 get trees in our traditional way, and we have to look
20 at alternatives.

21 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I look, I appreciate
22 that. We will put together a comprehensive list
23 across the 33rd of every single location that we want
24 to see a tree... (crosstalk)

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: If I...

2 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: ... and we would love to
3 have as swift and open-minded feedback as we possibly
4 can to actually come up with a comprehensive plan for
5 our district to see tree planting improved.

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: If I may, I would like to
7 share what I think is a really promising thing that
8 we've been doing in Jackson Heights. For years, we
9 told people they could not replace trees in Jackson
10 Heights. There are tree shaded canopies. And
11 streets that are shaded by canopies. And as the
12 trees were, you know, inevitably reached the end of
13 their lives and died, they... people wanted to
14 replace them. And when we went to mark utilities,
15 the Con Edison lines were smack in the middle running
16 underneath the trees. And we don't do that anymore.
17 Con Edison doesn't want us planting. So I don't know
18 how those trees got there in the first place. But
19 they were there, they were doing great.

20 And for years, we heard from Councilmembers that
21 this is unacceptable. And we agreed, but we didn't
22 think there was an option. And just this last
23 season, we worked both with Con Ed and using this new
24 packaging of trees, these smaller trees. We hand
25 excavated to see what was going on there, and we

2 successfully planted trees in Jackson Heights where
3 we said for years, we couldn't plant trees. And so
4 that's why it is good to look at it, for you to know
5 what the issues are and for us to see if there are
6 some creative solutions to it.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Thank you. I look
8 forward to your visit soon.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: You're pre empting my next
10 question and a bit about Jackson Heights and we'll
11 come back to that. But thank you Councilmember
12 Restler. Now we've got Councilmember Lee.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone. Thank you so
14 much, Chair Krishnan. And thank you so much Deputy
15 Commissioner for being here. And congrats as well.

16 I wanted to actually talk a little bit more about
17 what's happening underneath the surface with the
18 roots because I swear to God, this is a true story.
19 I went to a civic this past week and talked about the
20 tree stump removal \$2 million that we got on the
21 budget, and they literally started clapping, because
22 they were so excited about that, because that I think
23 that's one of the top calls I get in my district
24 because I'm all the way out on Eastern queens, where
25 it's very residential, a lot of homeowners. And I

2 think the problem has been -- and correct me if I'm
3 wrong -- but my understanding is that decades ago,
4 the city planted certain species of trees where
5 they... they turn out to be not great for urban
6 environments, because their roots grow enormously in
7 search of moisture. And what's happened is, is that
8 they've punctured a lot of the sewage pipes that are
9 part of the homeowners' properties. And so then it
10 becomes this whole financial burden to them where
11 they're spending tens of thousands of dollars trying
12 to mitigate that issue. And then the responsibility
13 is... okay, they're... they're being told, "Okay,
14 well, we take care of the trees up until this point,
15 but then once it's on your property, you're
16 responsible for that." And so I was just wondering,
17 um... you know, and it does cause a lot of issues
18 with the sidewalks. We have tons of sidewalks
19 raising up, and it when it comes to seniors that are
20 trying to get around and do their walks every day as
21 well as folks with disabilities, it does... it does
22 cause problems. And people... homeowners sometimes
23 pay for the sidewalk repairs and then find out that
24 the city came and ripped it up again, and did those
25 repairs again, so they just wasted a lot of money.

2 So I was wondering if you... what... what the Parks
3 was doing to proactively identify and remove the
4 trees before they cause those damages. I mean, I
5 know pruning is probably a bit easier because you can
6 see it right. You can't necessarily see the roots.
7 And so in terms of the inspection program that you
8 were talking about, would that fall under this as
9 well? Or how do you guys determine or check those
10 issues as well?

11 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for your
12 question. I'm trying to think how to approach the
13 answer. We... we look at risk, essentially. We do
14 consider risks to the public and look at tree
15 defects, and the safety of the tree in terms of the
16 public. Now, we don't believe we take into account
17 the way the tree has lifted the sidewalk, because...
18 We do that when we are looking at trees and sidewalks
19 repair, but not about whether we remove a tree or
20 not. That is not a factor in in tree removal is how
21 much the sidewalk is being... um... (crosstalk)

22 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah, and I think the tricky
23 part is that, I would argue it's the opposite problem
24 where the trees are doing so well, that the roots are
25 growing, like really deep into the... into the

2 property. And so it's... it really is impacting a
3 lot of the homeowners properties. And so I... don't
4 know what guidance there could be, or if there's
5 something that parks could think through in terms of,
6 you know, I mean, I know... I understand the... the
7 rationale behind obviously removing dead trees and
8 the tree stumps, but then for trees that are living
9 that are causing issues, how do we address that?

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right. I mean, thank
11 you. It's a... It's a good question. Our experience
12 and the... sort of the... the literature, the
13 research shows that trees aren't breaking pipes that
14 don't already have some sort of, sort of compromise
15 situation. They are. They do want water and air.
16 That's true, but they don't know it's there unless
17 it's actually open, right? They don't know a pipe
18 has water in it, until they can actually sense this.
19 And it's... and it has a crack or something in it.
20 So... So I know that's extremely difficult for a
21 homeowner to understand or... or not to understand,
22 but to manage. It's not difficult to understand.
23 And it... that is difficult. I mean, there are
24 species that we no longer plant. Because they are...
25 have very much more aggressive root systems and lift

2 sidewalks. And that is true. So the Silver Maple,
3 the orly[sp?] maple, those are just classic sidewalk
4 lifters and you know, troublemakers underground. We
5 don't plant them anymore.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And quick question. I know
7 that there's a tree and sidewalk program. And does
8 that cover... would that cover some of the costs or
9 continue to cover some of the costs that the
10 homeowners are facing with that?

11 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It... Thank you. It does
12 cover the cost for the repair of the sidewalk and the
13 public right of way, but not for any pipes that are
14 underneath or piping that is within the homeowner's
15 property.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. But still, that helps
17 with that issue, at least. Okay. And I had another
18 question on tree stump removals. But that's been
19 asked already. Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember
22 Lee. Now I think we have Councilmember Carr.

23 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair Krishnan.
24 Just to follow up on my colleagues' comments about
25 tree species, right? So I have a number of these

2 older species in Grand City, New York that uplift
3 sidewalks, cause havoc with, you know, underground
4 infrastructure. And I agree totally with my
5 colleagues, train of thought, which I think is I'd
6 much rather see the home... the homeowner protected
7 rather than the tree. We can always go back and put
8 a new tree there. That would be my priority. But
9 I'll live to fight another day on that one with you.

10 My question is about some of the more recent
11 species that have been planted, I believe, are
12 technically referred to as self-pruning, right? A
13 lot of them... The tree limbs are meant to naturally
14 fall off. And while that may sound like a good
15 savings, it does kind of burden neighborhoods like
16 mine, which have a lot of overhead infrastructure
17 wires and whatnot. So even when they've been
18 planted, you know, in accordance with Con Ed wishes,
19 or they've been around for a long time, you know,
20 these storms come through, limbs get damaged. My
21 office calls and asks for tree pruning. We're told
22 we have to wait for the block contract. We can't...
23 It doesn't merit under Parks's assessment. And in
24 house pruning. It's too large... it's too high up
25 for the citizen pruning program. So I guess my

2 question is: In terms of species that you're
3 planting now, in light of all the storms we've had in
4 the last several years, are we looking for species of
5 plants that are not going to bend and break every
6 time a gust of wind comes through?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
8 question. I... I definitely share your concern. We
9 want trees to be... to thrive and live and be safe.
10 Those are our priorities. I'm not familiar with
11 self-pruning as sort of a... it's certainly not a...
12 a characteristic that we look for or even think
13 about. We... There are, you know, proven trees, and
14 part of what we do look at are trees that have
15 strong, both strong wood. So usually like faster
16 growing trees tend to have weaker woods, you don't
17 plant a willow tree on the street, right? You think
18 about a willow as fast growing tree, it's good for
19 stabilizing streambanks. And we don't plant things
20 that have a weak structure, like we used to plant
21 callery pears all over and their structure is very
22 weak and they break apart. So they're not part of...
23 We don't plant them anymore. I don't know if that
24 sort of addresses that. So we definitely do consider
25 that when we're selecting species, is the strength of

2 the wood, the... and the structure to make sure it
3 is... Norway maple is another tree that just sort
4 of... we would never plant anymore for a host of
5 reasons.

6 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: So just to... just to
7 clarify in followup. So, you know, we had a number
8 of storms in last several years from Sandy to
9 present. I think there was a few summers ago, right
10 before the pandemic in 2019 where we, you know, we
11 saw a number of homes that went without, you know,
12 service for a long time in terms of energy delivery,
13 because of all fallen tree limbs. You know,
14 what's... what's the difference in terms of plantings
15 you do today versus 10 years ago that are going to
16 preclude that kind of event from happening again?

17 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right. Thank you for
18 that question. I would say 10 years is too short of
19 a time period, because it's probably been 20 years
20 since we planted tall trees under wires. But trees
21 live a long time and they're still out there. So we
22 no longer do that.

23 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: You're welcome.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember
3 Carr. Councilmember Menin?

4 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Thank you, Chair. So I
5 just have two quick questions. The first is about
6 salt tolerance. Has the agency considered salt
7 tolerance? Because I know during Hurricane Sandy, a
8 lot of trees were lost because they were not salt
9 tolerant.

10 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes, we do. Thank you
11 for that question. I mentioned we actually created a
12 whole new coastal species list that takes into
13 account salt tolerance. Based on what we learned
14 with Sandy. London plane trees, we learned... we
15 didn't really realize how terrible they were with
16 salt tolerance, and that's why you lost a lot of them
17 along... (crosstalk)

18 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: So are all the new trees,
19 then, they are salt tolerant?

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Only in the coastal areas
21 are we really selecting for... All... All urban
22 trees are tolerant to a lot of conditions including
23 salt, because we use salt on our roads. So that
24 we've already done. One reason we don't plant a lot
25 of maple trees is that they are very... they're very

2 sensitive to salt, for example. But... But we're
3 really looking at salt tolerance in coastal areas
4 where we know there'll be sea level rise and they're
5 subject to flooding. That's where we're really
6 restricting.

7 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Okay. My other question is
8 where do the removed trees go? And is the... will
9 the administration commit to some type of
10 sustainability program with the waste that is... that
11 is involved in terms of the tree removal?

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: [audio issue, speaking
13 with microphone off]

14 I didn't have my... You guys heard me but nobody
15 else did.

16 We're working with a company that's looking at
17 how we can reuse our... our wood waste. I don't like
18 to use... call it waste because it's not really
19 waste. We did a study to... that started to look at
20 like how we can, you know what's cost effective in
21 terms of reusing a lot of the wood that we remove.

22 So it is something we're definitely open to and
23 looking at ways of accomplishing that.

24 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Okay, that's good to hear.
25 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember
3 Menin. Councilmember Velázquez?

4 COUNCILMEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Thank you Chair. Um, a
5 couple of random questions just because everything
6 started popping up throughout. I'm going to take it
7 a little bit more beyond the species, the male-female
8 ratios of plants, right? I am an allergy sufferer.
9 And unfortunately, it's gotten worse and worse,
10 because of the amount of male trees that have been
11 planted. Can you tell us if you have the ratio of
12 male to female and how it looks like per borough per
13 district?

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Um, thank you very much
15 for that question. I don't have that ratio right
16 now. We don't select trees because they're male or
17 female. The only ones that are really exclusively
18 male and female are the gingko tree, and we do our
19 best not to plant the female because that has the
20 stinky berries. So other than that, we're not
21 preferencing male trees, but I can follow up with
22 you. But I definitely understand that allergies are
23 a concern for people. There are a lot of things that
24 contribute to allergies. And as you saw, street
25 trees are... are not a large percentage of the canopy

2 overall. So individual trees, the one tree that
3 we're planting may or may not be contributing to that
4 particular seasonal allergy that you have. So we're
5 looking at the entire urban canopy.

6 COUNCILMEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: All right, thank you
7 for that. And my nose thanks you as well. When it
8 comes to tree guards within our community, do you
9 find the current tree guards available to our
10 communities? Is it effective? Or is there another
11 model that you're thinking of having for our
12 communities? To protect our trees from various
13 things?

14 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right, thank you. I
15 think the ones that we use are excellent. I mean,
16 they're steel tree guards. And we're... But we're
17 also... have been experimenting with these aluminum
18 tree guards that have... that are modular. So if
19 they something happens, they get damaged, they're
20 easy to replace the different pieces of them, they're
21 more expensive. And we've also worked with some
22 folks who have done some more do-it-yourself guards
23 that are much less expensive, and you can kind of
24 build it on your own. So... but we are big tree
25 guard proponents,

2 COUNCILMEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Any idea as to timeline
3 for that? When we can expect to see if the aluminum
4 ones do work out? And then we could order for our
5 communities or...?

6 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Um, they're out there and
7 they're... they're... good. I should make it clear.
8 We're not funded for tree guards, right? That's not
9 a classic part of it. But we know that
10 Councilmembers have given us funding for tree guards,
11 and we're excited to be able to do that in
12 conjunction with new tree planting, which as I know,
13 is very tricky. Thank you.

14 COUNCILMEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: All right. Thank you.
15 Those were my questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Councilmember
17 Ung?

18 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you Chair. I also
19 express the concerns that Councilmember Lee has
20 expressed. I do have homeowners who have issues with
21 the roots. And, thank you for explaining the whole
22 lead and root issue. I'm going to ask a couple of
23 questions about the tree and sidewalk program. How
24 much... How much is allocated... How much funding
25 is allocated to this program?

2 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
3 that question. Trees and sidewalks program is a
4 great one for us, because it not just fixes the
5 sidewalk, which is what most people are looking for
6 us to do, but it does protect and save the tree at
7 the same time. This year, we are... we have a
8 baseline of \$10 million for trees and sidewalks in
9 our expense budget.

10 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Great. And how long does the
11 process take from someone who's going to call 311 to,
12 let's just say, how about the inspection report to
13 where, you know, if you guys find it that it's severe
14 enough to fix? Like, how long does the whole process
15 take?

16 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
17 question, Councilmember. I... It is not quick, I
18 will just say. We have a bit of a backlog. But we
19 do prioritize based on the... based on the severity
20 of the damage. We have a another sort of calculation
21 that we do. We get a huge volume of requests for
22 sidewalk repair...

23 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: I'm sure.

24 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: ...and I think we have, I
25 don't know, thousands and thousands that we're...

2 we're prioritizing both by severity and also trying
3 to be efficient and do them by neighborhood, so we're
4 not wasting anybody's time or money.

5 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Excellent. So would it be
6 like a year or two years or so... just tell me
7 honestly, when someone calls the office, I just... I
8 want to say something to them, because they do get
9 frustrated with the time it takes. So I least want
10 to be upfront say, you know, the process usually
11 takes a year... two years.

12 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. It could take
13 several years.

14 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Several years, okay.

15 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: It could. And I...
16 Yeah, it could take several years.

17 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Okay and there's thousands
18 of... thousands, right?

19 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thousands and thousands
20 of requests every year for the service. The number
21 is 80,000 for all requests.

22 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: A considerable amount.

24 CHIEF OSBORNE: And if I can just add a quick
25 point just on a procedural sort of... and a piece

2 that I think is not necessarily is as broadly known
3 as possible, but the New York City Administrative
4 Code actually exempts tax class one properties. So
5 1, 2, and 3-family homes, they're actually exempted
6 from the legal liability of any damage related to
7 those tree... tree damaged sidewalks. It's just...
8 It's something that a lot of homeowners get a little
9 confused about, but it's but it's a protection that's
10 offered to them. That obviously... That helps inform
11 the tree and sidewalk program, frankly. So it's just
12 something that, you know, we're happy to work with
13 you to make sure your constituents are aware of the
14 program and the benefits that are provided.

15 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: That would be great. I would
16 love to follow up on that. I did read out that
17 report on the next page. So I would... Yes, I would
18 love to follow up on that. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks so much,
20 Councilmember Ung. I think that's all the my
21 colleagues who had questions. If anyone else... if
22 no one else has a question, I just have a couple more
23 for the... for this panel as well.

24 So one is submitted by another colleague, which
25 states that a recent report by Just Nature NYC

2 focused on nature-based jobs noted that the Parks
3 Department employs 68 foresters and 120 climbers and
4 pruners. Do you believe this workforce is sufficient
5 to maintain the city's 690,000-give-or-take street
6 trees?

7 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you very much for
8 that question. I think we have the best workforce
9 that we could possibly have. And they do a great
10 job. And we do a great job with the folks that we
11 have.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISNHAN: And you think that that
13 number, though, is sufficient? I mean, 700,000 trees
14 is a lot of trees. You know, it's... For any
15 workforce, that's a lot to care for. So have there
16 been efforts to expand that that number or, you know,
17 what's the... what's the conversation within Parks
18 about that?

19 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you. We do have an
20 increase in a few of those lines for this next fiscal
21 year with this new budget. So we're looking forward
22 to that. And, yes, we can always do more with more,
23 but we're proud of what we can do with what we have.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And my other question was
25 going back to Jackson Heights. You know, I think a

2 Deputy Commissioner, you mentioned it before, too,
3 but this is a problem that goes back years, but there
4 has been issues of Parks refusing to plant trees in
5 pits on 76th Street, 77th Street, 80th Street, 82nd
6 Street, between 34th Avenue and 37th Avenue, because
7 the issue of the Con Ed wiring underneath. You know,
8 there's a number of tree pits there. And this is an
9 issue when it comes to expanding green space in our
10 neighborhoods, that's a ripe opportunity to do so.
11 Again, those... those streets are 76th, 77th, 80th,
12 82nd, and generally around there.

13 Given your testimony before, is it the case now
14 that we can work together to plant trees in those
15 areas? Or are there still issues with Con Ed that we
16 need to work through? Because it would be a shame to
17 really, you know, allow the neighborhood to suffer
18 because of the utility lines underneath when we're in
19 desperate needs of street trees.

20 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Thank you for that
21 question. And yeah, we're, we're proud, and we don't
22 want it to stop with the pilot. But it is not...
23 There are a few things that we have to do to get it
24 into our regular system. We have to make sure the
25 contractors know how to use it. They sort of tried

2 something new, and we're going to be incorporating
3 these trees into our nursery procurement, so we can
4 get them. We need to be able to do this. This was a
5 special case where we had a special procurement of
6 two hundred... it was about 250 trees, I think.
7 About 100-and-something trees. So yeah, we'll keep
8 you posted about the different sort of hoops we have
9 to jump through to make this a more regular part of
10 our tree planting. We won't abandon Jackson Heights,
11 now that we figured out how to do it. I don't think
12 Con Edison is going to keep us from doing it anymore.
13 I think now it's us working through our process, and
14 we'll keep you informed.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So just to make sure I'm
16 clear on that too. Have the those trees already been
17 planted? Or are they...?

18 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay they've already been
20 planted. So if we wanted to bring more in, are they
21 available at this point? Or how can we work together
22 to expand that?

23 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Well, let's talk about
24 it. We did plant... I don't know how many we planted
25 in Jackson Heights. It's just a handful, about a

2 half a dozen of them. We use them all over the
3 place. We tried them with in-house crews. We
4 tried... You know, we wanted to spread them around.
5 I sort of lost track of the question.

6 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Just more street trees
7 where we haven't had them for years because the Con
8 Ed lines.

9 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Yes. So what can we do
10 next? It's... It's... We'll have to talk about the
11 next step together. But it's... The trees... We'll
12 have to figure it out. Maybe there's a way we can
13 buy more. You can't right now use capital money for
14 it. You know, it's a lot of sort of logistical
15 things and we're determined to... to move it through.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure. Well, let's
17 definitely have a conversation about that too. I'm
18 glad to hear that the pilot program has resulted in
19 more trees, there's obviously a backlog now because
20 of all those years. So we'd love to work together to
21 identify how we can bring in more to these areas to
22 in particular, just given the pitch that are there
23 and the lack of tree canopy coverage that we... that
24 we have a desperately need to.

25 COMMISSIONER DONAGHUE: Right.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: That, I think, concludes
3 all the questions from from... from our end. So I
4 want to thank you all so much for your testimony
5 today, for your... for answering our questions as
6 well. And please, thanks Commissioner Donaghue too,
7 for attending. I'm now going to turn it over to
8 Chris?

9 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you Chair. At this point
10 we will move on to hearing testimony from members of
11 the public who have registered to speak either in
12 person or virtually.

13 For panelists again who are testifying remotely
14 we will be calling on individuals one by one. Each
15 panelist will be given three minutes to speak. So
16 please begin once the Sergeant at Arms has started
17 the timer and given you the cue to begin. At this
18 point, I will turn it back to Chair Krishnan to call
19 the first panelists who will be in-person panelists.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Thank you so
21 much, Chris. Our first panel will be Carlos Castillo
22 Croke, Eileen Myles, and Halliet Hirschorn.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 MR. CROKE: Should I start? Yes. Okay. Good
25 afternoon. My name is Carlos Castel Croke. I'm the

2 associate for New York City Programs at the New York
3 League of Conservation Voters. NYLCV represents over
4 30,000 members in New York City, and we are committed
5 to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make
6 our people, our neighborhoods and our economy
7 healthier and more resilient. I'd like to thank the
8 Chair for the opportunity to testify today.

9 Planting trees doesn't just incorporate nature's
10 beauty into our cityscape, but it also benefits our
11 community and creates a greener, more resilient city.
12 Most importantly, trees work to solve a variety of
13 environmental challenges including air pollution and
14 carbon emissions, energy savings, mitigating
15 stormwater runoff, urban heat, and overall public
16 health. Trees play an important role in cooling the
17 city, which faces increased temperatures due to the
18 urban heat island effect. They can lower
19 temperatures in a city two to eight degrees Celsius.
20 When planted near buildings, trees can cut AC use by
21 30% and reduce heating energy use by a further 20% to
22 50%. This is especially important considering heat
23 exasperates an average of 350 deaths per year with
24 the highest mortality rates in low-income
25 neighborhoods with less trees.

2 Urban forests, forests also serve as a large
3 carbon sink, while simultaneously supplying wildlife
4 with habitat, one tree has the ability to absorb 48
5 pounds of carbon dioxide per year which translates to
6 New York City's trees removing 1300 tons of
7 pollutants from the atmosphere every year.

8 Unfortunately, trees are not equitably distributed
9 across the city. Communities with less tree canopy
10 cover often suffer the most risk from heat related
11 illness or death. The fewer trees, the heightened
12 experience of heat vulnerability. Lower income
13 households also are exposed to worse air quality
14 without the necessary trees available to absorb
15 harmful pollutants.

16 New York City's forests are also at a critical
17 juncture. Without concerted efforts across the
18 board, it can be challenging to preserve and protect
19 our urban forest. Between 1984 and 2002 alone, New
20 York City lost 9000 acres of green open space to
21 competing land use. With major investments now, we
22 could see an expanded and healthier urban forests in
23 the coming years so help us protect New Yorkers and
24 fight climate change. Through the Play Fair For
25 Parks campaign, we have pushed for 1% of the New York

2 City budget for parks. While we didn't see this
3 level of commitment from the city this fiscal year,
4 we hope in the future we will have an investment in
5 parks that will ensure all of our green spaces,
6 especially our trees, are properly protected and
7 maintained.

8 Additionally, we stand with the Forest For All
9 NYC coalition to support the goal of 30% canopy cover
10 by 2035 which can be easily achieved through
11 initiative like Borough President Levine's Million
12 More Trees Plan. Protecting and expanding the urban
13 forests will be critical in near future so we can
14 improve the resilience of our city and fight climate
15 change.

16 I'd like to thank the Chair and the committee for
17 their attention to this issue and look forward to
18 working with you all closely to ensure New York City
19 has a healthy thriving for us for generations to
20 come. Thank you.

21 MS. MYLES: [No sound. Speaking with microphone
22 off.] five years and a poet. I write about trees. I
23 live near the very real, very beloved East River Park
24 or John Lindsay Park. And in terms of tree canopy,
25 it's mostly gone. That's why I came here today

2 because it seemed almost monstrous that this was
3 happening now. We lost canopy of about 700 trees,
4 some of them 80 others even 120 years old, trees
5 older than the park. I know the park intimately. So
6 does my own city councilor Carlina Rivera who I voted
7 for the first time she ran. She grew up in the
8 neighborhood. She played softball on the park. She
9 knows it and she didn't fight to save it. She was
10 looking somewhere else. That Park in its tree canopy
11 is being destroyed as I speak to protect the
12 neighborhood from flooding and sea level rise. The
13 park was only flooded for three hours during Sandy.
14 The park should never have been destroyed. We should
15 have never lost this tree canopy ever. As somebody
16 young in my group once said, "How do we know there
17 will be any more 80-year-old trees?" Which is an
18 amazing question. They should never have been cut.
19 It's happening because it's a poor neighborhood. And
20 what used to be East River Park is in fact a really
21 nice piece of real estate... or a nice consulting job
22 for Jaime Torres Springer, a nice fundraising tool
23 for a mayor or two. I don't trust the institution
24 I'm addressing. We implored Justin Brannan for an
25 oversight hearing, because the original Environmental

2 Impact Statement on Esker said it's fine. Yeah, for
3 who? We begged Cory Johnson to intervene, and he
4 said, "I've never heard about this before," even
5 though he voted for it. I've never been involved in
6 New York City politics until I decided to fight for
7 this park and these trees in this canopy, and I'm
8 still fighting.

9 What are you -- and I'm talking to the city
10 Council -- willing to do for the health and sanity of
11 the people of New York? As a group, you vote for
12 every bad environmental plan that comes across your
13 desk. You destroyed the wetlands in Graniteville for
14 a Big Box Store. You approved the development of
15 Governors Island. In fact, the person who's the head
16 of the Trust for Governors Island said it's a really
17 nice piece of real estate. That's where I got that
18 phrase. You support the people of Fort Greene losing
19 their trees. They don't want to lose their trees.
20 They're getting a concrete park. Who wants a
21 concrete Park? These are all poor neighborhoods. We
22 need a Parks Department actually run by
23 environmentalists. We need a New York City Tree
24 Board that will not kill a single mature tree without
25 making an informed environmental decision. Not an

2 engineering decision. Not a contractor decision.
3 Not a developer's decision. My park was destroyed
4 for political reasons. Now you're having an
5 oversight hearing about tree canopy while killing
6 1000 trees. Why don't you come down to the East
7 River Park and look at what you've done? About 400
8 mature trees remain in the north end of the park. If
9 you care about tree canopy, why don't you stop the
10 clear cutting right now. Otherwise, what are we
11 doing here today? Wasting our trees, and our time,
12 and our air for what? Ask yourself that City
13 Council. Thank you so much for being in the room,
14 anybody who is still here?

15 MS. HIRSHORN: Hi, I'm Harriet Hirshorn, and I've
16 lived on the Lower East Side for 40 years. In the
17 same vein, if you care about the tree canopy stop
18 killing trees. I challenge all of you to stop the
19 tree slaughter that is happening now in East River
20 Park and is planned for other disparate
21 neighborhoods. Since December 7, close to 700 mostly
22 mature healthy trees have been killed and mulched on
23 the spot. This is an abomination. This is an
24 environmental disaster. Half of a resilient sponge
25 of a park has been completely decimated. It is a

2 wasteland waiting for the next superstorm. This is
3 unprecedented destruction here in New York City. If
4 you are concerned about the tree canopy, change this
5 project now, it is not too late. Over 400 mature
6 healthy trees are still alive. The canopy right now
7 in what remains of East River Park is magnificent.
8 It is a success. There are birds and squirrels and
9 bugs that testify to that success, and people, and
10 children playing.

11 It is all of your jobs to protect nature. To
12 protect these trees and you are failing miserably.
13 You must consider the existing 83-year-old trees in
14 your decisions. Consider trees. Environmental
15 concerns need to be integrated into every
16 administration, every body, every agency. Outside
17 environmental experts are not enough to counter your
18 murderous ignorance that endangers all of our lives.
19 If you want a tree canopy, start by preserving the
20 one you've got. Trees have to be considered when you
21 plan anything, any development, any park redesign.
22 Build around trees. Protect trees. Consider trees.
23 All of these city agencies are full of people who are
24 ignorant about the environment. They see a tree as
25 an obstacle to construction. They don't know or care

2 that the tree is alive or what it does for them.
3 This ignorance has to change. Environmental
4 knowledge has to be transversal we cannot have these
5 decisions being made every day by people who do not
6 know or do not care about the environment. Like the
7 11 people in the room who changed the plan for East
8 River Park. Who chose this eco-cidal plan? Seven
9 engineers, one landscape architect, and two cost
10 estimators at a construction company ordered by Bill
11 de Blasio. Not one climate scientist, not one
12 environmentalist, not one person with knowledge of
13 environmentally-sound flood protection, not one
14 community member. No representation at all from
15 those most affected by the plan

16 [Applause]

17 CHAIR KRISHNAN: Thank you. Now we have
18 witnesses, virtually. So the first will be Emily
19 Maxwell.

20 MS. MAXWELL: Hi, everybody. It's great to be
21 here with you all today. And I don't think I can fit
22 my entire testimony into three minutes. So I will
23 summarize what... what I want to say today. I think
24 the first and most important thing is that this is
25 unprecedented that there is this hearing on tree

2 canopy in New York City. And I want to acknowledge
3 the leadership of the Chair and the Committee for
4 taking up this really critical and important issue.
5 This is... this is something new, and I'm really
6 extremely grateful for that.

7 So much of what you all have said today is in my
8 testimony, and I won't repeat it. But obviously our
9 urban forest is not just within the realm of parks,
10 it crosses every part of our city. And due to that
11 important nature, we are submitting for the record
12 our report the state of the urban forest in New York
13 City, which details the urban forests from 2010 to
14 2017. And also the New York City Urban Forest
15 Agenda, collaboratively developed by more than 50
16 organizations and now advocated by the Forest For All
17 NYC coalition made up of nearly 60 organizations.

18 The urban forest is not only critical
19 infrastructure, as we've heard in the hearing today,
20 it is emotional for New Yorkers. People are
21 connected to their trees and to their local lands.
22 So I do want to talk about the fact that not only is
23 the urban forest inequitable, change over time has
24 also been inequitable. And so we see some
25 neighborhoods growing more, some loss in some... some

2 smaller areas. But it is very heterogeneous. And
3 this is critical. And it's great to see the
4 attention being paid to equity. We know we need to
5 do even more on that front. We especially need to do
6 it because of some of the things that my colleague
7 Carlos from NYLCV said: That heat waves are
8 increasing and we have significant morbidity and
9 mortality associated with heat waves. We really need
10 to be working more on our heat mitigation strategies
11 and our urban forests plays a critical role.

12 We not only need to plant more trees, although we
13 certainly do, we also need to protect the canopy we
14 have. Our urban forest is historically underfunded,
15 undermanaged and underregulated. We have copious
16 detail of this in our report and also in the written
17 testimony that I'll submit, but historically, the
18 urban forest gets way less than it needs. Only trees
19 on parkland have a degree of protection, except for a
20 small amount of special natural areas districts as
21 mentioned by the Chair, and we need to see
22 protections for existing trees, big old trees
23 especially, more... in addition to better management
24 and more planting. There is some good news, which is
25 we have some incredible leadership to rely on.

2 Stewardship groups across the city are extremely
3 helpful, but they need resources, and our Parks
4 Department and other agencies need resources.

5 I do want to land briefly on land associated with
6 NYCHA. NYCHA accounts for just over 1% of city land
7 and just over 2% of the city's...

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 MS. MAXWELL: ...canopy in some of our most heat
10 vulnerable communities. They need significant
11 resources to... to work on this. Briefly, we have
12 submitted the New York City Urban Forest Agenda for
13 your consideration. It's 12 actions developed by
14 nearly 50 organizations who are expert in these
15 issues. We are eager to work with you all to help
16 advance 30% canopy by 2035. And as always, happy to
17 meet with any and all Councilmembers about the state
18 of the urban forests in New York City or the urban
19 forests agenda. Thank you so much to the committee
20 for your time.

21 CHAIR KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Emily. Now
22 we'll go to Sherrise Palomino.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 MS. PALOMINO: Good afternoon. My name is
25 Sherrise Palomino, and I'm the Director of Advocacy

2 and Programs at New Yorkers For Parks. We are
3 members of Forests For All NYC. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify. New Yorkers For Parks as a
5 founding member of the Play Fair Coalition that
6 advocates for parks and open spaces and includes over
7 400 organizations.

8 I also want to thank Chair Krishnan for his
9 leadership on this important issue of improving tree
10 canopy. New York City Parks identified six target
11 communities in greatest need of tree canopy growth
12 for the Trees For Public Health Neighborhoods
13 Initiative. All of them are in low income
14 communities of color. Hunt's Point, Moorisania, East
15 New York, East Harlem, Stapleton, and the Rockaways.
16 New Yorkers For Parks cares about urban forests
17 because of the racial and ethnic disparity of tree
18 canopy. It has a measurable and lasting impacts
19 communities and residents. In communities with
20 higher tree canopy, the temperatures are on average
21 are 10 degrees cooler. It's time to city Council
22 invest in a fully funded park system that can support
23 an increased tree canopy growth. We believe the city
24 needs to set a goal of least 30% canopy by 2035. New
25 York can't wait. We are in the midst of a climate

2 crisis. New York City's urban forests plays an
3 important role in climate change mitigation and
4 adaptation. Urban forests capture atmospheric carbon
5 dioxide. Trees help reduce air and water pollution
6 and cooling costs by acting as energy savers. The
7 Parks Department plays a critical role in managing
8 urban forests, but nearly half of it is outside of
9 their jurisdiction. The urban forest needs better
10 protection and management. The Parks Department
11 needs more resources and the whole urban forest needs
12 investment. The city Council has an extraordinary
13 opportunity to demand a comprehensive plan that
14 allows for meaningful investments in the management,
15 protection, and expansion of our orange urban forest.
16 This is possible with the City Council making a
17 commitment of allocating 1% of the city budget to New
18 York City parks. We are overdue for transformative
19 investment in our park system.

20 This is one of the many reasons why New Yorkers
21 For Parks and the Play Fair Coalition are calling for
22 a commitment to increase the parks budget to 1% of
23 the city's budget, a call the majority of the city
24 Councilmembers along with Speaker Adams supports.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much
3 Sherrise. Now we have Jackson Heights resident and
4 neighbor Sara Balistreri.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 MS. BALISTERI: Hello, I'm Sarah Balistreri. And
7 I'm an environmental educator with Trees New York.
8 Trees New York is a proud member of the Forest For
9 All NYC Coalition, and we join with our fellow
10 coalition members in calling for at least 30% canopy
11 cover by 2035. Now, when we talk about increasing
12 canopy cover to 30% a lot of people's first thought
13 is plant more trees. But as Deputy Commissioner
14 Greenfeld, and Emily Nobel Maxwell have both
15 mentioned, we know that a key to increasing canopy
16 cover is through preserving and promoting the health
17 of our existing trees. Again, according to Forest
18 For All's Urban Forest Agenda, the majority of canopy
19 gains from 2010 to 2017 were due to growth of
20 existing trees canopy and natural regeneration.

21 Now luckily, New York City has over 250
22 stewardship groups who care for trees all around the
23 city. Trees New York is one such organization, and
24 we are the only group that trains and licenses
25

2 community members to become citizen pruners in New
3 York City.

4 Part of my job is to train and educate volunteers
5 and school-aged students so that they understand the
6 profound impact trees have on health, climate, and
7 quality of life in our city. Many of my students
8 enter the class already knowing that trees absorb
9 carbon dioxide and release oxygen. But they leave
10 also knowing many of the benefits that we've talked
11 about today. Trees filter harmful particulate matter
12 from the air we breathe. They capture rainwater,
13 thereby reducing combined sewer overflow events.
14 They keep temperatures in the city lower during hot
15 summer months, not only by casting shade, but also
16 through the process of transpiration in which leaves
17 release water vapor into the air. And trees have a
18 well-documented impact on humans' mental health and
19 well-being. They create calm, joy and connection to
20 nature even in the midst of our hectic city. I saw a
21 spark of this connection a few weeks ago, when a
22 group of fifth graders from PS 452 gleefully
23 discovered earthworms in their schools tree beds. Or
24 another day when high school students from Brooklyn

2 Tech spotted a robin's nest with baby birds in it
3 just outside... in a tree just outside their school.

4 Once community members begin to understand the
5 multitude of services trees provide, they begin to
6 feel invested in stewarding our trees to ensure that
7 they thrive even in this tough urban environment. As
8 members of the City Council's Parks Committee, I
9 asked you to think of the stewards as a resource
10 worth cultivating, much like the trees they care for.

11 And additionally, I invite and encourage you to
12 join a tree stewardship event in your district so
13 that you can observe firsthand why the Parks
14 Department deserves funding to allow them to
15 adequately manage the hundreds of thousands of street
16 and park trees in their care. And also so that you
17 can appreciate the thousands...

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 MS. BALISTERI: ...of New Yorkers who give their
20 time and energy to stewarding trees and the
21 significant impact they have on ensuring that our
22 existing trees grow to maturity and provide maximum
23 environmental benefits to all New Yorkers.

24 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify
25 and for holding this hearing today.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Sarah.
3 Next is Corey Hanson.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MR. HASSON: Good afternoon. My name is Cory
6 Hasson, and I'm the Government Affairs Manager of the
7 New York Restoration Project. Thank you for the
8 opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon Chair
9 Krishnan. As one of the members of the Forest For
10 All NYC, we are advocating in full support of 30%
11 canopy coverage by 2035. For over 25 years and NYRP
12 has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks,
13 and transformed open space for communities throughout
14 New York City. We believe that nature is a
15 fundamental right, and for over two decades we've
16 invested in and stewarded open and accessible green
17 space throughout all five boroughs. NYRP levied the
18 power of public and private partnerships to spearhead
19 and successfully complete Million Trees NYC.

20 As the climate crisis intensifies, trees play an
21 essential role in New York City's environmental
22 resilience by providing shade, creating wildlife
23 habitat, reducing temperatures, increasing air
24 quality, mitigating storm runoff, as well as many
25 other benefits. This summer, NYRP proudly hosted 16

2 free tree giveaways throughout all five boroughs
3 where we gave over 2000 native species including
4 serviceberry, river birch, hornbeams, hack berries,
5 red buds, persimmons, eastern red cedars, sweetbay
6 magnolia, black gum, black cherry, and swamp white
7 oaks.

8 The NYC urban forest is composed of 7 million
9 trees in New York City, though it is not distributed
10 evenly, and its benefits do not reach everyone
11 equitably. This is generally less canopy in lower
12 income communities and communities of color. Too
13 many communities have suffered from a lack of tree
14 canopy for generations and deserve the undeniable
15 benefits of increased shade, reduced temperature and
16 cleaner air. An equitable distribution of trees is
17 essential for New York City to confront the climate
18 crisis. Trees operate as the lungs and air
19 conditioning of our urban environment. Together we
20 can make our city more equitable and combat
21 environmental injustice in our communities, beginning
22 by investing in our city's urban forest. Thank you
23 for the opportunity to testify today.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Cory.
25 Next, Aaron Sanders.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 MR. SANDERS: Good afternoon. My name is Aaron
4 Sanders and I'm the Associate Director of Advocacy
5 and Policy at the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank
6 you Chair, Krishnan and committee members for the
7 opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of
8 improving New York City's tree canopy, and the
9 importance of forested natural areas in this effort.
10 The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit
11 organization that was formed in 2012 to increase the
12 capacity of New York City Parks and its partners to
13 restore and manage over 10,000 acres of forests and
14 wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. In my
15 testimony today, I wish to highlight the importance
16 of improving NYCs tree canopy and improving equitable
17 access to nature for New Yorkers. Every borough in
18 New York City has large natural areas distributed
19 among more than 50 parks. According to a 2014 study,
20 50% of New Yorkers experienced nature primarily in
21 New York City Parks. I would like to emphasize the
22 importance of increasing our investment and access to
23 all green spaces in a way that's equitable, and in a
24 way that will allow us to recover from COVID-19.
25 Natural areas forest makes up 7300 acres of New York

2 City parkland. That's almost one quarter of New York
3 City parkland, which is tantamount to 24% but
4 receives an average of 0.84% in staff funding, which
5 is tantamount to 33 staff members.

6 While we appreciate the Mayor and the City
7 Council's budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal
8 year, we know that long term funding commitments are
9 needed to protect forests and natural areas and
10 increase New York City's tree canopy by extension. I
11 want to provide really quickly a brief background on
12 natural areas and their existence in New York City.
13 40.5% of New York City landmass is green 11.6% of
14 that is natural areas. This is equivalent to over
15 22,000 acres of natural areas that exists within the
16 New York City metro region. As a leading member of
17 the Forest For All Coalition, the Natural Areas
18 Conservancy is a supporter of the urban forest
19 agenda. As mentioned today, the urban forest spans
20 public and private property in every neighborhood in
21 New York City, from street trees to private backyards
22 to New York City parks. The urban forest mitigates
23 oppressive heat temperatures in the summertime, and
24 also offers respite and recreational opportunities
25 for New Yorkers.

2 I will abbreviate my testimony to respect other
3 witnesses time, but we are proponents of improving
4 your city's tree canopy and I want to thank
5 Councilmember Krishnan and all the committee members
6 for your leadership on this effort. Respectfully
7 submitted.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Aaron.
9 Now we'll go back from virtual to in person and call
10 up our next panel, which is Stephen Thompson and Ally
11 Ryan. Please come up to the front.

12 Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Thompson,
13 President of the Board of Directors of the Brooklyn
14 Queens Land Trust or BQLT. We are proud to be
15 members of Forest For All NYC. Trees are not a
16 neighborhood amenity. Rather, trees are vital
17 environmental infrastructure and should be stewarded
18 accordingly. At BQLT, we care deeply about the NYC
19 urban forest, because we steward 37 community gardens
20 in Brooklyn and Queens, totaling five acres with more
21 than 230 urban trees within the gardens and
22 additional adjacent street trees. As gardeners, we
23 know the vital role of the urban forest for shade and
24 cooling effects, for trapping carbon dioxide and
25 releasing life giving oxygen, for climate change

2 mitigation, for reducing stormwater runoff for urban
3 wildlife habitat, and for increasing the walkability
4 and beauty of our New York City neighborhoods.

5 We believe the city needs to set a goal of at
6 least 30% tree canopy cover by 2035. BQLT
7 understands that increasing the NYC urban tree canopy
8 is an environmental justice issue. Many of our
9 gardens are in Brooklyn Community Districts, CD 17,
10 CD 4 and CD 3 with low tree canopy coverage, which
11 represent heat vulnerable districts and are
12 predominantly made up of people of color. NYC's
13 lowest tree canopy coverage areas need to be
14 addressed aggressively and given highest priority in
15 funding and policy solutions. We also know firsthand
16 the financial costs and targeted efforts that are
17 required to maintain urban trees. Our regular tree
18 work is thankfully made possible in part by
19 discretionary funds from city Councilmembers. In
20 addition, we were awarded a New York State Department
21 of Environmental Conservation urban and community
22 forestry grant for our BQLT tree care in 2021 through
23 23. This grant paid for professional tree
24 maintenance and tree care education for our
25 gardeners. We partnered with Trees New York to offer

2 a citizen pruner course with 20 BQLT gardens in March
3 and April this year. We had course participants from
4 14 BQLT gardens in order to spread their new tree
5 knowledge and pruning skills within their own
6 communities. While impactful, this sole grant funded
7 project underscores the need for consistent financial
8 resources to keep our cities trees thriving. The
9 230-plus trees on BQLT community gardens are just a
10 fraction of NYC's 7 million trees, which require
11 large scale funding and bold policy solutions to
12 maintain the existing urban trees and to increase
13 NYCs urban forest. NYC Parks plays an enormous role
14 in managing the urban forest. But nearly half of the
15 city's trees are outside of NYC Parks and aren't
16 entirely well managed or understood. NYC Parks needs
17 more resources, and the whole urban forest needs
18 protection, a plan, and investment in management and
19 expansion. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
20 before your committee. We look forward to continuing
21 support of comprehensive tree care and access to
22 nature for all New Yorkers.

23 MS. RYAN: Okay, stop chopping down mature trees.
24 Hello, my name is Allie Ryan, and my family lives two
25 blocks away from East River Park, which is in city

2 Council District 2. I'm here today to bring a
3 humanizing perspective to why city policy of treating
4 mature trees as disposable furniture must stop. I am
5 a skin cancer survivor. When I was 40 years old,
6 seven months pregnant, I had a melanoma and a basal
7 cell carcinoma removed. I'm 48 years old and last
8 week I had a basal cell carcinoma removed from my
9 shoulder. I tell my children to put on sunscreen and
10 sun hats they don't get a four inch scar on their
11 face, or a five inch scar on their back like me.

12 Stop chopping down mature trees in East River
13 Park. Over the past seven months almost 700 mature,
14 80-year-old trees -- healthy trees -- have been
15 chopped down in East River Park, my family's favorite
16 local park. Mature trees provide expansive tree
17 canopies that diffuse light and shade parkgoers.
18 Over the past month, the city has chopped down trees
19 in the open area of East River Park, making it hard
20 for park goers such as me and my children to find
21 refuge from the sun now that summer is here. If you
22 overlay a colonial map of lower Manhattan, over a
23 current flood evacuation map, you will see that it's
24 the same coastline. You need to prohibit development
25 at the water's edge such as 250 Water Street and the

2 four mega-towers and two bridges look to the coasts
3 of the southern states such as North Carolina and
4 South Carolina, and you will see that their
5 coastlines consist of wetlands. We need wetlands,
6 not hard edge flood walls for flood protection. Stop
7 chopping down mature trees. We used to say 50% of
8 skin damage happened in your 20s... or by your 20s.
9 Now it's almost 25%, says Susan Chung, who is a
10 doctor. That's because people continue to be active
11 and outdoors more throughout their life.

12 According to the American Cancer Institute,
13 melanoma is one of the most common cancers in young
14 adults especially women. The New York City
15 Department of Health states on their website that
16 skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the
17 United States. Every year in New York City, over 100
18 people die from melanoma and nearly 1000 people are
19 newly diagnosed. I am one of those 1000 New Yorkers
20 who will be diagnosed this year with skin cancer.

21 Stop cutting down mature trees in East River
22 Park. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And Councilmember...
24 actually if the panel can just stay for a minute,
25 Councilmember Holden has a question.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: How many mature trees were
3 cut so far in the East River?

4 MS. RYAN: 700.

5 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: 700?

6 MS. RYAN: Yes. And there's 1000.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, that's criminal.

8 MS. RYAN: 60... 60 acres.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, that's... that's
10 incredible. Because I was told we were fighting a
11 battle in the late 80s when they wanted to divert
12 Westway money into my district in Queens to widen a
13 thoroughfare and cut down trees that were, you
14 know... they don't grow. These were at that time,
15 70-year-old trees. And they wanted to cut down 50
16 trees on the thoroughfare in our neighborhood and we
17 fought it. We said we're going to chain ourselves to
18 these trees. You're not cutting these down. So we
19 actually beat that back. And those trees are... are
20 wonderful trees. They are actually the hallmark of
21 the neighborhood. And they don't grow that... we we
22 were told at that time, "Trees will never grow that
23 large because of pollution."

24 MS. RYAN: Yes.

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: So what we're losing is
3 trees that can't be replaced in a lifetime. And it's
4 criminal. And in my neighborhood, I see trees being
5 cut down for... to... so that they don't obscure
6 billboards. And this is what... this is what the
7 city does. A parks farm does a great job in
8 protecting them. But the rest of the city does not
9 care. They'd rather install bioswales in my
10 neighborhood than trees. Bioswales are very
11 expensive. I don't know if they do a great job in
12 diverting runoff, but we have to get our priorities
13 straight. But destroying that many 80-year-old trees
14 is criminal. And I agree with you.

15 MS. RYAN: Yes. And just to give a sense of
16 perspective, like... in terms of tree canopy, an 80
17 year old tree... tree canopy is probably like three
18 or four people's arm spans, whereas a brand new tree
19 is less than one arm span for... for one person. And
20 as I've... I mean, I testified in 2019 against the
21 Eastside Coastal Resiliency Project and, and now in
22 2022, you're going to be seeing me more frequently
23 because as they're pushing through resiliency
24 projects in lower Manhattan, they're trying to push
25 through the same concept of like, "Oh, we'll just

2 destroy everything." And if you... I encourage you
3 to come visit, I'm happy... like Harriet and Eileen
4 and I am in other residents who have lived there for
5 with our families for a long time, we're happy to
6 meet you and take you around. Every day at 1pm,
7 there's a community gathering of people in East River
8 Park, trying... like saying... like trying to protect
9 the trees. But it's but it's the human aspect that I
10 think is really important, because we don't think
11 about... like, like my neighbor who is African
12 American, she had skin cancer in her 40s. I asked
13 her to come today, but she didn't. But like skin
14 cancer is a real issue. I mean, like, am I going to
15 be like, every eight years getting skin cancer? I
16 hope not. But if we're cutting down trees, like
17 they're disposable furniture I'm going to be getting
18 it... I'm going to definitely get more skin cancer
19 because I spend, like half of like, the majority of
20 my children's lives is spent in the playgrounds. And
21 other parents spend time in the playgrounds too. But
22 we need... it's just like right now. You have
23 elected officials who are just ignoring what's going
24 on in East River Park. I mean, like you drive down
25 the FDR, you can see the mounds of just dirt because

2 70% of the park has been decimated. And we need to
3 fight to save the 30% that's still there. And even
4 in Stuyvesant Cove and Keith Powers district, like
5 they're about to demolish the rest of that park,
6 coming in the summer. And it's just like... it's
7 summertime. And the crazy part is there's lots of
8 documentation on the... on Twitter and Instagram that
9 shows you the trees being cut, like the 80-year-old
10 trees, and they're... they're healthy. They're
11 not... they're not sick.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. We
13 have to move on though, but I for... for coming. And
14 thank you all for coming and fighting for trees.

15 MS. RYAN: One thing I also want to share that I
16 have said repeatedly is that my children are 8 and 10
17 years old. And the plan for East River Park, the
18 Site Coastal Resiliency Project, in 2050, they're
19 supposed to demolish the park again. So my children
20 will never see 80-year-old trees in the park. So
21 like I beseech you, I appreciate you having this
22 hearing today. That we need to like call for an
23 oversight hearing with the park to address this
24 problem.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank you
3 Allie.

4 MS. RYAN: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you for your
6 testimony. Now we have Gabriella Velardi-Ward, a
7 virtual witness right?

8 MS. VELARDI-WARD: Okay. Yes, thank you. Yeah,
9 I'm Gabriella Velardi-Ward. I'm the coordinator of
10 the Coalition for Wetlands and Forests. We're
11 fighting to save the Graniteville Wetland, which
12 is... Graniteville is an environmental justice
13 community and we have no other open space.

14 As we know there are many benefits to trees. We
15 know that we are partners and breathing with trees.
16 We breathe out what the trees need CO₂, and they
17 breathe out what we need, the... the oxygen. We know
18 that trees filter the air of pollution. We know that
19 trees and their root systems sequester carbon, which
20 helps to reduce the effects of greenhouse gases and
21 climate change. We know that tree roots and spongy
22 soil and wetlands filter water which generally flows
23 into other bodies of water. We know that forests
24 under their... and their understory buffer
25 floodwaters as they did in Graniteville. During

2 Hurricane Sandy, we were not flooded at that time.
3 We know that trees cool the air and forests and in
4 areas around the forest. We know that trees
5 communicate with each other through their root
6 systems. They help each other heal. And we know
7 that trees and forests and shrubs heal human beings.
8 They create beauty and their energy lifts the human
9 spirit. So why do we cut them down? I worked from
10 the New York City Park Department in the Capital
11 Projects Division for 23 years as an architectural
12 designer and a construction supervisor. One of the
13 last big projects that I had before retirement was in
14 the forest at Midland Beach right on the beach, that
15 beautiful forest where pheasants visited was
16 destroyed for a diner and a kiddie Park. With
17 climate change, we need to begin to think differently
18 about where we put things. We should not be building
19 on the shoreline. I was there before, during, and
20 after Hurricane Sandy. I know of a filled dumpster
21 that was lifted by the water and it landed on an
22 occupied car. The car... the couple in the car were
23 crushed. I saw bodies being carried out of the homes
24 having drowned inside their homes. I know of a
25 mother with two children in her arms who ran for

2 their lives. The storm surge pulled the kids out of
3 her arms and they drowned. I know of a man who wrote
4 the roof of his home to safety. There was no home
5 under the roof. And I could tell you many more
6 stories. I tasted the mold in the air for months,
7 and after what some people called a tsunami, it was
8 said that there was 15 feet of water on a
9 construction site and its construction site was right
10 on the beach. 24 plus people died on that day from
11 Hurricane Sandy. We can't help but... I can't help
12 but think that if the forest remained, it would have
13 buffered the storm surge and perhaps not as many
14 people would have died. This is the fourth forest
15 I've seen cut down since I've moved to Staten Island
16 17 years ago, Mount (inaudible), Snug Harbor next to
17 the Tuscan Garden, Midland Beach diner project, which
18 was my project, and the Graniteville Wetland.

19 So if we know all of the benefits of forest
20 canopies bring including buffering the effects of
21 climate change, why are we still allowing them to be
22 cut down, we lost almost 1800 mature trees in the
23 environmental justice community of Graniteville
24 freshwater wetland, and that community was flooded

2 during Hurricane Ida. We had never been flooded
3 before. We lost and we'll be losing trees...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MS. VELARDI-WARD: ...in River North, on the
6 northeast side of Staten Island. We lost as Ben said
7 earlier 700 and more in danger East River Park. And
8 there are others which are in trouble in Woodpark, in
9 Manhattan, Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn, and how many
10 others? When will we take seriously the extreme
11 danger that New York City is in with 520 miles of
12 shoreline? When will we protect people from the next
13 storm to come and not the last storm? When will we
14 expect the private sector to conform with the
15 requirements of the public sector? When will we
16 consider the lives of people along the north New York
17 City shoreline it's more valuable than the profits of
18 the developers? When will we take climate change
19 seriously and stop cutting trees?

20 My suggestion is after having been on the front
21 line that the New York State Parks Department must
22 protect our natural resources, trees, forests,
23 marshes and wetlands and not cut down healthy
24 ecosystems and destroy them. And New York City in
25 New York State must begin to purchase a privately

2 owned resources and keep them from development. If
3 we are to avoid total disaster from the effects of
4 climate change, we must do this. And I've repeated
5 some of the things that I've said before because I
6 want to emphasize their importance. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much. Next
8 we have Sara Hobel.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 MS. HOBEL: Good afternoon, Chair Krishnan and
11 members of Council, and thank you for holding today's
12 unique and important hearing on improving the city's
13 tree canopy. My name is Sara Hobel and I serve as
14 the Executive Director of the Horticultural Society
15 of New York. As a service provider with 120 years of
16 experience tending to the nature of New York City,
17 The Hort would like to advocate for the importance of
18 supporting our vital urban tree canopies equitably
19 across our city. The Hort's mission is to improve
20 human life through horticulture. Through our work,
21 we have observed that the trees and plants on our
22 city streets are often the primary access to nature
23 for many New Yorkers, especially those from
24 vulnerable communities. At The Hort, our crews
25 cultivate and maintain 1000s of trees and tree pits

2 across all five boroughs funded primarily through the
3 generosity of City Council. Our crews expand the
4 size of tree pits, install tree guards, amend the
5 soil, water, remove weeds and waste, and install
6 complimentary plantings to sustain the holistic
7 health of our urban forest. As this number continues
8 to grow, we need to advocate for tree health from the
9 ground up not only planting trees but also improving
10 their survival rates by improving our tree pits. As
11 previously stated, many times the environmental
12 benefits provided by our urban forests are
13 innumerable. Our urban forest provides shade, cools
14 the air, sequesters carbon dioxide, intersects
15 particulate matter and helps manage stormwater
16 runoff. It is also without a doubt that our tree
17 canopy nurtures physical and mental health as also
18 has been mentioned. The Hort is an organization that
19 has pioneered and advanced the field of horticultural
20 therapy in the country. We have directly observed
21 the social and psycho benefits that trees and plants
22 bring to communities.

23 In short, access to nature reduces stress, as
24 measured by reduced heart rate and blood pressure.
25 Green space as we know offers cultural gathering

2 places, oases for contemplation, and powerful
3 analogies of growth and endurance that apply to human
4 life, especially in an urban environment. And while
5 I have shared several of the environmental and social
6 benefits, there are still benefits to the Urban
7 Canopy that I didn't address and others that are
8 still being documented. Uniquely, we've just
9 discovered that -- not us but Rutgers -- that the
10 tree cover in canopies provides the essential pathway
11 for our pollinating native bees, a fact I certainly
12 didn't know before. Our tree canopy nourishes and
13 more resilient, vital and healthy New York, and we at
14 The Hort strongly believe in the need to bolster both
15 the quantity of trees and the quality of their care.

16 Thank you for holding this meeting. And thank
17 you for this top priority and an unusual one, and for
18 providing us the opportunity to testify today.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Sara.
20 Next we have Jennifer Bombardier.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 MS. BOMBARDIER: Hello. Thank you so much for
23 having me today. My name is Jennifer Bombardier and
24 I'm the Education Manager at the Lower East Side
25 Ecology Center. We are members of Forest For All

2 NYC, and we think the Chair the committee for holding
3 this space to speak on behalf of our urban forests
4 today. As has been repeated so many times already
5 trees and other urban green spaces filter the air
6 that we breathe, provide shade on hot days absorbs
7 stormwater before it overwhelms our treatment
8 facilities and pollutes our waterways, and provides
9 habitat for our diverse wildlife.

10 The choice to plant and protect our trees is not
11 simply a matter of protecting our environment. It's
12 about protecting the health and the well-being of our
13 communities. Our community, the Lower East Side, and
14 environmental justice community, has lost 700 trees -
15 - we've heard that number a few times today -- with
16 hundreds more scheduled to be cut down in East River
17 Park. We have witnessed this beautiful green space,
18 a valuable outdoor refuge for residents, including
19 those in the adjacent NYCHA housing, become a barren
20 construction site in the name of climate resiliency.
21 We recognize the vulnerability of our community to
22 the impacts of a changing climate, including more
23 severe storms, flooding, and increasing temperatures,
24 and we do believe that action must be taken to
25 protect the people of New York City, especially in

2 low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.
3 But the Eastside Coastal Resiliency Project in the
4 decision making process, pitted people for trees
5 against people for people, when the reality is that
6 it is not one or the other. Trees protect our
7 communities. Trees protect our people. Trees provide
8 the climate resiliency that we need for our future.

9 At the Ecology Center, we have an education
10 program, and we teach students and local schools
11 about our urban environment. I was recently working
12 with a first grade class at PS110 in the Lower East
13 Side, just across the FDR from East River Park, and
14 as we were talking about the role of trees, it became
15 really clear that these young kids already understood
16 and truly deeply believed that trees are important.
17 They had an innate enthusiasm for caring for these
18 trees and protecting them. They didn't need to be
19 convinced. If it can be that obvious for seven year
20 olds, i hope that all of us -- the adults that are
21 responsible for their futures -- can also see it as
22 clearly.

23 We believe that the city needs to establish a
24 goal of at least 30% canopy cover by 2035 and must
25 invest in the expansion of our urban forests, and

2 equitable protection and management of our current
3 trees, especially in low income neighborhoods, and
4 communities of color. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Next we have
6 Rebecca Berger.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 MS. BERGER: Good morning Chair Krishnan, and
9 members of the New York City Council Committee on
10 Parks and Recreation. My name is Rebecca Berger.
11 I'm a Policy Analyst at a major New York City
12 hospital system. I hold a Master's in Public Health
13 from the City University of New York, and I'm a
14 lifelong resident of New York City. I appreciate the
15 committee for holding this hearing on improving the
16 city's tree canopy. I too am testifying on behalf of
17 myself, but in defense of the trees in East River
18 Park. I'm very concerned about the destruction of
19 the tree canopy occurring there as we speak. I'm
20 even more concerned that the community has been
21 offered no plan on how this canopy will be replaced.
22 As we know the public health benefits of a mature
23 tree canopy have been well documented. Trees lower
24 neighborhood temperatures, trees reduce neighborhood
25 violence, trees provide climate change resilience.

2 John B. Lindsey East River Park is a two mile long
3 Park along the East River in City Council District 2.
4 Until autumn 2021 It housed 1000 mature trees aged up
5 to 100 years old. The park was designed in the 1930s
6 by Robert Moses as a tree shaded esplanade.

7 Between 2015 and 2021 trees and East River Park
8 grew an average of two inches in trunk diameter,
9 their canopy growing at pace. These large old trees
10 providing numerous health benefits to the community.
11 As part of the Eastside Coastal Resiliency Project,
12 every one of those mature trees is being cut down.
13 So far more than 700 trees have been killed as was
14 shared by others. The city claims this is necessary
15 for climate resilience but has provided no public
16 plan for how the tree canopy will be replaced. New
17 York Attorney General Letitia James raised concerns
18 over a draft environmental impact statement for the
19 new park saying the project will disproportionately
20 impact minority and low-income people, and the city's
21 repeated conclusion to the contrary is incorrect.
22 Through the Eastside Coastal Resiliency Project,
23 NYCHA's Baruch Houses, Lillian Wald Houses, and Jacob
24 Riis Houses are being robbed of local tree canopy.
25 What is the plan for replacement? Tree saplings will

2 not replace the canopy offered by the mature trees
3 that populate East River Park. The city claims the
4 trees in East River Park are sick or dying but this
5 is quite literally gaslighting. Simply walk into the
6 park to see the canopy the remaining 300 trees
7 provide. The city promised that 40% of the park
8 would stay open during construction but trees are
9 still being cut down with none replaced. The
10 residents of the Lower East Side and East Village in
11 Manhattan demand transparency on how the canopy will
12 be preserved during construction and replaced long
13 term. Thank you for holding this hearing.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Next up is
15 Natasia Sidarta.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 MS. SIDARTA: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank
18 you for holding this, this hearing. My name is
19 Natasia Sidarta, and I'm the Community Stewardship
20 and Operations Director at Gowanus Canal Conservancy
21 in Brooklyn. I oversee community stewardship and
22 volunteer programs and stewardship of local green
23 spaces, including street trees and other park spaces.
24 We're a proud member of the Forest For All Coalition
25 and the Playfair Coalition, and I want to reiterate

that we do believe that the city needs to set a goal of at least 30% canopy by 2035. And while we commend the increase in the FY23 Parks budget, it falls short of the needed full capital and expense funding for the urban forest. I won't repeat all of the benefits that everyone has talked about already about the urban forest. I do want to highlight one which is stormwater absorption, which is one that is especially critical in Gowanus. The canal receives 363 million gallons of CSO or combined sewer overflow per year, and street trees are an essential infrastructure to mitigate this pollution. In Gowanus, 670 young trees installed over the past decade are filling a neighborhood wide gap in the urban canopy. And I want to stress that the neighborhood is rapidly changing due to the newly approved rezoning, the superfund cleanup, brownfield remediation, and these construction activities and demolition pose additional threats to mature trees and newly planted trees. This is a common theme in this hearing. We have to ensure adequate protection and replanting in order to sustain the urban forest in this neighborhood but also across the city.

2 So trees provide critical benefits of flood
3 management, and cooling, and shade, but they do
4 require maintenance and protection. And in Gowanus,
5 we work with volunteer tree stewards, who water,
6 weed, prune, remove litter and debris, and while we
7 rely on city funding, like the Parks Equity
8 Initiative, it continues to be severely insufficient.
9 We're fortunate enough to have the resources to
10 leverage additional funding including from DEC and US
11 Forest Service, and this fills a lot of the gaps in
12 stewardship, and this includes tree guards, tree bed
13 expansions, installing native plants, and providing
14 free trees New York Citizen Pruner Training, and
15 these street trees will always need maintenance
16 beyond what volunteers and community organizations
17 like Gowanus Canal Conservancy can do and countless
18 others across the city. And this includes structural
19 pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, invasive
20 species control. And so I urge the Council to end
21 the long term underfunding of the Parks Department
22 and the workers who care for these trees and continue
23 fighting for 1% for parks. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Next we have
25 Matt Malina.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 MR. MALINA: Yes, I have to... Oh. Good
4 afternoon. Good afternoon. My name is Matt Malina.
5 I'm the director and founder of NYCH20. And I enjoy
6 listening to everyone's testimony and just reminds me
7 about how many people care about trees. I can't
8 remember who it was. Maybe it was from the Trees New
9 York, said that there are 250 partners that they work
10 with around the city. So I have suggested this
11 before: I think that the Parks Department can really
12 benefit, and the trees benefit from working with
13 these partner organizations. And we heard from you
14 know many of them today, including the Brooklyn
15 Queens Use Land Trust, how they're already taken care
16 of many trees.

17 You know, we have a summer youth employment
18 program of 100,000 strong youth. I think we can
19 employ at least 1000 of them to take care of trees.
20 And some things are as simple as clipping invasive
21 vines. And that would extend the life of a tree, you
22 know, by decades. The tree can't keep living if it
23 gets blown over in a storm because it had vines
24 covering it. And they basically act like a sail. So
25 I think the resources are already here with the

2 incredible talent and determination of New Yorkers.
3 And I think that should be harnessed by the Parks
4 Department and their partners. And I think this is a
5 very... very tractable problem. I know from our work
6 at NYCH20, we help the Parks Department and many
7 parks and the New York State DEC and their properties
8 around the city. So I know that we could do even
9 more if... if the opportunity were presented. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: We have a question now by
12 Councilmember Holden.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Uh, I just want to...
14 It's not a question, but I just want to thank Matt
15 for all the work he does at the Ridgewood Reservoir,
16 as you can get a glimpse of what Queens, or what that
17 part of our city looked like before a man came in
18 here, and kind of you put a lot of concrete in the
19 way. But again, Matt, I want to thank you for all
20 the volunteer... dozens of projects that you've done
21 over the years, with the volunteers to make it a
22 little nicer in that part of... in Queens in my
23 district. So thanks and thanks for waiting all this
24 time to testify. Thank you.

25 MR. MALINA: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Matt. Next we
3 have Joel Kupferman.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Joel Kupferman. Next.
6 We'll move on and if he comes back later. Next up is
7 Rita Garcia.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 MS. GARCIA: I'm a daughter of immigrants and a
10 lifelong resident of New York City. I am speaking on
11 behalf of myself in defense of the animals and the
12 trees in the East River Park. I think it's safe to
13 say that we all love trees. And I really wish that
14 the Deputy Commissioner and her staff were here, and
15 all the Councilmembers we're all... still all here to
16 listen. However, Mr. Krishnan and Councilmember
17 Holden, as the only remaining members, I do urge you
18 to please call for an oversight hearing immediately.
19 But your district, and our districts, you imagine all
20 of us here are testifying, as though people
21 testifying to save the trees. I've been advocating
22 for the animals of East River Park for 8 months.
23 It's very frustrating to see the city government and
24 nonprofits preaching and seeking to educate the
25 public about the importance of tree canopy, yet at

2 the same time, they're destroying the ancient canopy
3 in a disadvantaged community of color. It doesn't
4 make any sense at all. Tree canopy is obviously
5 provided only by mature trees. So I just have some
6 questions. You know, why are we allowing this? Why
7 are we allowing the city to destroy hundreds of
8 mature trees? Why are we okay with spending money to
9 destroy existing tree canopy and then replanting
10 individual saplings that won't provide shade for
11 years to come? Is there any coordination between the
12 different departments of the city government,
13 including the appropriate committees and City Council
14 between those preaching the importance of tree canopy
15 with those who actually are the ones who are
16 destroying the trees, and ignoring the community.
17 With the rest of the world planting trees, promoting
18 open green spaces and resilient flood protective
19 sponges, and increasing access to nature and
20 biodiversity? New York City is (inaudible) going in
21 the exact opposite direction. What can you, City
22 Councilmembers... what can you do but be a real
23 representative for the people? Be honest. Be
24 humble. Question the authorities and these ill-
25 conceived plans. Stand up for your community. Stand

2 up for our health, our mental health, our well-being.

3 Do not let them destroy the rest of this park.

4 It's... we need an oversight hearing yesterday and we

5 need to bring back that Deputy Commissioner to hear

6 us out. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. We're going to

8 go back to Joel Kupferman.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 MR. KUPFERMAN: You hear me now?

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Yes.

12 MR. KUPFERMAN: Okay. I'm Joel Kupferman. I'm

13 the Executive Director of the Environmental Justice

14 Initiative. I am Counsel to NYCHA housing Alfred E.

15 Smith Tenants Association, Residents to Preserve

16 Public Housing, and the New York City Community

17 Garden coalition.

18 I concur with all the statements that most of the

19 advocates have said about the value of the trees. We

20 are concerned about enforcement and the health

21 benefits that are even heightened now. I just also

22 want to cite one more health benefit. Harvard

23 studies have shown that a slight increase in exposure

24 to PM 2.5 causes a major increase in COVID death. A

25 lot of that PM 2.5 is prevented by the trees. But

2 moreover, it's... it's caused by bad tree management.
3 That's what we're facing at Smith Houses. We've been
4 fighting a bad FEMA-funded contractor that basically
5 trenched, left the tree's roots, open compacted soil,
6 and yet we fought and fought. Parks Department
7 helped a little bit, but those contractors were paid.
8 This is happening all over NYCHA property. It was
9 really good to point out that how many foresters are
10 on staff that Parks Department. NYCHA right now as
11 one part time forester that's controlling all the
12 work, including a million dollars worth of bad tree
13 pruning that's going on. We really urge this
14 committee to look at improving NYCHA's stance on the
15 trees, the accountability, and offering technical
16 services that Parks Department could do. NYCHA is
17 the second largest owner of trees in the city, and
18 they're definitely under attack. At Baruch, they cut
19 down 200 trees under false pretext that there was a
20 blight. So I really urge, and we will... we'll sit
21 down with you with detail of showing how NYCHA could
22 be benefited by Parks Department expertise, under
23 reorganization, and I think we could actually put
24 your foot in and preserve. It is probably the
25 easiest way to have vacant land. And also, we're

2 very concerned about all that soil that's being
3 resuspended into the lungs of those kids and
4 elsewhere.

5 Our second proposal is that there should be a
6 tree warden system setup, an ombudsman system. We
7 could look at Massachusetts and Connecticut, that's
8 involving more people, more enforcement experts, and
9 giving them some accountability and enforcement bids.
10 Part of the problem is that there is little
11 enforcement that the city does. Up until two or
12 three years ago, the city was owed a billion and a
13 half dollars in uncollected fines. So the way to
14 fight this back is by enforcement, finding out who
15 keeps on violating, and the city has also a bad actor
16 policy. We cannot hire those bad pruners, the bad
17 contractors that are out there, and thus we could
18 reward the better ones. We're very concerned about
19 enforcement.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 MR. KUPFERMAN: Okay, and the third thing is -- I
22 just want to just finish up -- proposal C is that the
23 city could partake of a lot more services, including
24 federal, we really urge you to look at the iTree
25 program. It's used in small BIDs, but it's used in

2 many, many cities and elsewhere, that would help the
3 city determine what's there, what's not there, but
4 also record what's... what's missing and also... it
5 would also aid NYCHA. If NYCHA just needs a full
6 survey of all the trees that are out there, the Parks
7 Department, and also we'd help the tree wardens, and
8 we'll be giving you details and everything that we
9 testified today. Thank you

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Next we have
11 Alexander Bender.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 MR. BENDER: Good afternoon. My name is
14 Alexander Bender. I'm a co-founder and the managing
15 partner at Tri-Lox. We are a Greenpoint, Brooklyn
16 based design, custom fabrication and millwork
17 practice that specializes in locally sourced
18 sustainable wood. Tri-Lox is New York City's leader
19 in connecting the design construction community with
20 wood reuse and reclamation practices, as well as
21 sustainable forestry management and local wood supply
22 chains. And for over 10 years we have been committed
23 to innovative design, environmental integrity, and
24 community stewardship, and we proudly serve in a
25 leadership role within Forest For All NYC.

2 I'm here today to not only lend another their
3 voice to the choir, raising awareness about how
4 crucial it is to support and expand the New York City
5 urban forest. We believe the city needs to set the
6 goal of at least 30% canopy cover by 2035, provide
7 additional resources to our Parks Department, and
8 develop updated legislation and incentives for tree
9 protection and expansion on private land. But to
10 also call attention to the management that our trees
11 need in order to stay healthy, and continue providing
12 all of their important benefits. Expanding the
13 canopy and bringing these benefits to underserved
14 communities that do not have them is essential and is
15 just the right thing to do. But there's one thing
16 that we can do once these trees have finished serving
17 us as standing trees to preserve their environmental
18 benefits and further bring value to our community.

19 And that is salvage them and transform them into
20 usable timber. Timber is the world's most
21 sustainable material. It is solar powered, and it
22 provides so many benefits as a growing thriving tree,
23 including mitigating climate change. I will not
24 repeat those benefits that have been mentioned so
25 many times in previous testimony. If trees are not

2 salvaged all of their stored carbon, all of their
3 hard work of carbon sequestration over their lifetime
4 is lost and returned to the atmosphere. Trees can be
5 a part of the solution to climate change only if they
6 are thoughtfully managed and salvaged and their wood
7 reused. Tree salvage is a win-win-win situation,
8 where we can reduce our carbon emissions and
9 landfill, saving taxpayer dollars, create local green
10 jobs and jumpstart a circular, local, and resilient
11 wood supply chain for local manufacturing and reuse.
12 Tri-Lox is exploring this in partnership with forest
13 managers at Parks and Greenwood Cemetery amongst
14 others.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 MR. BENDER: And we are developing innovative
17 practices that we believe can turn into policy with
18 impact. We have the opportunity here to strengthen
19 our forest and community together. And we can do
20 that with thorough policy and systems thinking as
21 outlined in the urban forest agenda, from planning to
22 planting to care to salvage. Thank you for holding
23 this hearing today, making trees a priority and the
24 opportunity to testify.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much. Next
3 we have Lucy Koteen.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MS. KOTEEN: Hi. My name is Lucy Koteen, thank
6 you for holding this hearing. I have been working
7 with resident residents city wide to save trees and
8 the natural environment. Today I'm not only speaking
9 for myself, but I am also speaking for the New York
10 City group of the Sierra Club. The New York City
11 group consists of over 15,000 members across the five
12 boroughs of our city. I will abbreviate my testimony
13 because much has already been said. I won't repeat
14 all the wonderful benefits of trees. I hope we're
15 all familiar with that now. We also know that urban
16 trees are disappearing across the country right now.
17 We also know that low-income communities have far
18 less tree coverage and canopy than wealthier
19 communities. The Parks Department under Commissioner
20 Mitchell Silver planned to remove 83 mature healthy
21 trees in Fort Greene Park. So far halted for the
22 moment by Sierra Club and a community lawsuit, but it
23 is still pending. The city now plans to demolish the
24 elevated pristine green space of Wagner Park by
25 Battery Park City. Our lawyer and vice president of

2 the Battery Park Alliance stated during Hurricane
3 Sandy it did not flood it was on high ground. The
4 notion that you need to spend several 100 million of
5 millions of dollars to tear up one of the most
6 beautiful parks in all of New York City in order to
7 reconstruct it...

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ...strikes us as a bit of a scam. A couple more
10 things. The City Council should focus on maintaining
11 our urban forests and not just focus on new trees
12 that have a low expectation of survival. And
13 furthermore, underlying reports when foiled for the
14 East River Park project in Fort Greene Park, when
15 released were heavily redacted by the relevant
16 agencies denying the public of the underlying
17 information the decisions that were made. Advocates
18 were then forced to go to court and pay a lawyer to
19 get the unredacted report. These reports are paid
20 for with tax dollars supposedly for the benefit for
21 the taxpayers and Sierra Club has some
22 recommendations which I will send to you.

23 Just one other thing: The rest... In 2006, the
24 US Forest Service discussed the goal of achieving 30%
25 of urban tree canopy by 2030, not 2035. This was

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2 commissioned by New York City Parks Department. In a
3 2006 document they talked about this, and now we're
4 talking about this... it's how many years later?
5 20... 30% by 2035.

6 I could go on I have a lot more but thank you
7 very much. I hope... and I want to thank all the
8 wonderful advocates who are here today speaking for
9 the trees. We need to speak for the trees because
10 the Parks Department has not. They have cut down our
11 large mature trees mercilessly. Thank you.

12 Gabrielle, Eileen, Harriet, Allie, Rebecca, Anna,
13 who's waiting to talk and all the rest of you who
14 have advocated for the trees. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Lucy.
16 Now we have Anna Theofilopoulou.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MS. THEOFILOPOULOU: Thank you. You don't need
19 to pronounce my name. My... My surname is a really
20 difficult one. Thank you. Thank you for organizing
21 the hearings. It was very well timed. I will start
22 by asking the committee a simple question: What are
23 the connections, responsibilities, and accountability
24 between city departments that seek to educate us
25 about the importance of the tree canopy for heat

2 mitigation, public health, and environmental
3 benefits, and those which currently employ and
4 oversee contractors who destroy existing mature,
5 healthy tree canopy under the Eastside Coastal
6 Resilience Plan in the southern part of East River
7 Park, and also adjacent NYCHA communities in the
8 lower Eastside and East Village, as previous speakers
9 said. Now, next, we have also that we hear that the
10 city is rushing to destroy the healthy trees in the
11 Wagner part of the Battery Park City, which was not
12 even affected by Hurricane Sandy because of its
13 elevation. And as others said, the city contractors
14 will still proceed to destroy the remaining 300 to
15 400 remaining trees in the East River Park on the
16 north side, despite their obvious failure to
17 adequately address the unhealthy toxic fumes
18 emanating from the ground after the careless
19 excavations and demolitions of all the structures in
20 the southern part of East River Park. Is there any
21 coordination among the different agencies, city
22 departments and committees of this Council between
23 those who preach about the importance of tree canopy,
24 and those who are destroying it?

2 And in today's hearings, we had a lot of talk
3 about planting new trees both by Councilmembers in
4 the Park Department about the need for planting
5 trees, but nothing about stopping the city itself
6 from destroying its own trees. New Yorkers know
7 about the importance of tree canopy. You don't need
8 a degree in Environmental Science know the tree
9 canopy be is provided by mature trees and not the
10 small saplings that city officials are touting
11 currently as the answer to the excessive heat already
12 plaguing New York City. You can tell that by the
13 large number of residents using parks especially
14 those living in environmental injustice
15 neighborhoods. The argument used by the Parks
16 Department and parroted by many politicians and
17 others, "Oh, we will replant for each tree cut down."
18 It sounds good, but it is grossly misleading, because
19 trees take decades to reach big tree status. What is
20 taken away in canopy, carbon storage, wildlife
21 habitat, and more in just hours, will take decades to
22 replicate.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 MS. THEOFILOPOULOU: So my plea to the... all
25 politicians including the Chairman of this Committee

2 is: Please stop reminding us of the importance of
3 tree canopy for our physical and mental well-being.
4 We know. Instead take urgent action to stop the tree
5 destruction by the city itself, which is happening
6 right now. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Anna.
8 Next up we have John Plenge.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 MR. PLENGE: Yeah, can you hear me? Good. Hope
11 so. Yeah. I didn't know I was going to be speaking,
12 so I haven't prepared anything written but I'm just
13 going to get a lot off my chest. I am a 30-year
14 resident of the Lower East Side, I teach at the New
15 School Parsons and two schools in the East Village.
16 I've raised two children in the East River Park,
17 Tompkins Square Park, and Wagner Park, what we're
18 talking about. And I come to you today first as a
19 very concerned father, and concerned about the future
20 fathers in this neighborhood. And secondly, as an
21 advocate for our parks and our canopy, which I didn't
22 appreciate so much until I found out that it was
23 being taken away from us. But I saw firsthand the
24 effects of access to open green space and an
25 untrammelled area like the East River Park on my own

2 children, later learning all of the health benefits,
3 but I saw it firsthand, and my children that I take
4 from this school to play soccer. And when we talk
5 about planting saplings, I appreciate that gesture,
6 but that is under the possibly false assumption that
7 soil in the future will support a mature tree.

8 So I urge you to look at two things right now,
9 tomorrow, 8 a.m. Look tomorrow at the East River
10 Parks Eastside Coastal Resiliency Project and the
11 Wagner Park project. I've seen firsthand, super
12 healthy trees. Part of this plan was they said,
13 "Well, we need to take these trees out because
14 they're not healthy." They are super healthy. I
15 grew up in Indiana as a boy. I know a healthy tree.
16 There were possibly 2 of the 700 trees that were
17 damaged. The rest were very healthy. I'm very
18 emotional about this.

19 Secondly, my activism started, when I found out
20 there was a much better plan that would have served
21 this community and given the children there much more
22 access to green space and not taking it away. We are
23 coming into very hot, longer summers for the next
24 decades, and I'm very, very concerned about the
25 children and elderly people in the Lower East Side

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2 without that buffer... without that buffer. And when
3 I found out later, there was a better plan that would
4 have protected about 700 of these trees, and given
5 the people in the Lower East Side more green space in
6 the housing areas, I became very involved, and not
7 going into all the other scientific things that
8 people have been doing. But the humane thing is,
9 there is no place for the people in the Lower East
10 Side to have respite from the heat, asthma, air
11 quality, and just to go study and sit under a tree
12 and do their homework, which my children did. I am
13 here for the future children on the Lower East
14 Side...

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 MR. PLENGE: ...which will not see shade or
17 cooling effects of trees for 30 or 40 years. And I
18 urge you tomorrow to call a hearing on these two
19 projects. Tomorrow. Please

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: thank you so much, John.
21 That concludes everyone who was signed up for
22 testimony, except for a few names I'm going to read
23 now of individuals who had signed up but it's not
24 clear that they're... they're still here. If they
25 are please let us know. If you're on Zoom please use

2 the raise hand function, to let us know and you can
3 testify virtually. So I'll go through each name one
4 is Donnie Welch. Diane Katz. Diane? Go... Go
5 ahead. Diane? You can testify. We'll keep going
6 through the names, and we'll come back to Diane
7 afterwards. Wendy Brower. Alexis Ganje. Catherine
8 Skopic.

9 MS. SKOPIC: Uh, yes. I can speak. Thank you
10 very much sir. I'm under Lucy's name. I'm
11 registered today. I thank you for holding this, and
12 greetings Chair Krishnan, members of the New York
13 City Council and Committee on Parks and Recreation.
14 My name is Catherine Scopic. I'm Chair of the Sierra
15 Club, New York City Group and a delegate to Sierra
16 Club Atlantic Chapter. And I would like to say
17 that... the first thing I would like to say is:
18 Preserve and protect existing, healthy, mature trees.
19 Any healthy mature tree that's cut down is taking us
20 that much closer up to our climate crisis tipping
21 point from which we cannot return. Anyone who cuts
22 down a healthy mature tree is responsible for perhaps
23 what could be considered a criminal act. We don't
24 have 30 years. It's wonderful to plant new trees.
25 It's important. We don't have 30 years until that

2 tree matures, until we get the benefit of a full
3 canopy. I want to thank Lucy for letting me know
4 about this hearing. And I'd like us to look locally
5 and globally. And before I do that, I would like to
6 thank the Parks and Recreation Department for taking
7 care of the trees in our parks. If you've never been
8 to Inwood Park, go. There's some virgin forest
9 there. The only place that we have, and there are
10 some very huge beautiful trees. But the Parks
11 Department has also done some what I would consider
12 egregious, possibly bordering on criminal acts, by
13 cutting down healthy, mature trees. I've worked with
14 Gabriela helping trying to save the Graniteville
15 Forested Wetland, 19 acres of trees that were helping
16 to absorb excess water runoff from these heavy rains,
17 from storm surge, and so forth, as well as so many
18 species of mammals, birds, and amphibians that lived
19 there, this was their home. So not only did the
20 Graniteville wetland with all its wonderful trees
21 save the... Save the neighboring people from
22 flooding, which have been flooded since those trees
23 were cut down, about 85%... 90% of the trees were cut
24 down. And they were very badly flooded and did not
25 have flood insurance because they never flooded

2 before, because they had the trees to absorb all that
3 excess water. And in the East River Park, from what
4 I understand, I went to the hearings where they were
5 showing the original drawings from the plan that
6 people in the community had worked on for four years.
7 And then somebody came in with a brand new plan that
8 the city worked on. And I'm not an expert on this
9 entirely, but I've grown up in the country I live
10 near... did a lot of hiking and camping in the woods.
11 You can't... if you have to fill in dirt for the for
12 the resiliency to prevent flooding in the East
13 River... you can add dirt to existing trees several
14 feet up the trunk. It doesn't sound like a very
15 ideal situation. But it's much better than cutting
16 them down.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MS. SKOPIC: We can't wait 30 years for all these
19 trees to grow.

20 So I think right now, the Parks Departments
21 should say, this second, "We're taking a pledge not
22 to cut down any more mature healthy trees." If you
23 walk down Broadway from 14th Street around where
24 Grace church is, you will see there is a bend in
25 Broadway, and the farmer who sold the land there said

2 you can't cut this tree down. It was very old tree,
3 that they could buy the land but they could not cut
4 that tree down. That's why Broadway bends there. I
5 wish that we had more of that kind of respect for the
6 natural environment, the sacredness of trees, a
7 sacred living object. Our... our ancestor. You
8 cannot cut them down. Parks Department, please, this
9 moment: Make a pledge not to cut down any more
10 mature healthy trees anywhere. Developers will have
11 to do something else. Do not appease the developers.

12 And also I'd like to take a look globally, we
13 have lost so many trees because of global warming,
14 forest fires flooding, because the winters don't get
15 cold. We have all these beetles. So we've lost huge
16 forest to these beetles. California alone lost 600
17 million trees in the past several years. 600
18 million. And the boreal forests all around the
19 globe. The boreal forests are forests that are in
20 the upper temperate region going all around the
21 globe. Those forests are essential and some of them
22 provide more carbon dioxide absorption than does the
23 Amazon forest. And we're losing those forests
24 because of manmade reasons, the Amazon so they can
25 clear the land to...

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Ms. Skopic, I encourage
3 you to finish your testimony soon.

4 MS. SKOPIC: Okay, one more minute. So please,
5 please Parks Department continue with the wonderful
6 work you do preserving our parks. Do not be
7 responsible for cutting down one more healthy, mature
8 tree. And thank you for holding this. And thank you
9 each and every one of you on this call for the
10 wonderful words. You really heartened me and all of
11 us. Thank you. I'm sorry. There are too many here.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Don't worry. Thank you so
13 much. Our next... Is Anna Bakis available? Anna
14 Bakis, are you on? No. Okay.

15 Well, thank you all so much for your testimony
16 today. That concludes our hearing on improving
17 the... New York City's tree canopy. I think you've
18 all heard from the testimony today, one thing is
19 clear that as... as one witness testified, trees are
20 not amenities for neighborhoods, but they're a
21 crucial part of our infrastructure, a crucial part of
22 our plan to make the New York City more resilient.
23 And it's not equal across our city. Access to trees,
24 access to green space, the need for more trees, and
25 it's directly correlated to the issues of temperature

2 across our city. And it's no surprise that
3 communities that are the most heat vulnerable are
4 communities that are often the most vulnerable in so
5 many other aspects too.

6 And I want to thank everyone who came to testify
7 today on these issues, I want to also encourage us as
8 a city to fight and advocate relentlessly to get
9 towards our goal of 30% tree canopy by 2035. And to
10 see trees as the climate resiliency and racial
11 justice issue that they are as well as a public
12 health issue too, and a public safety issue, as I
13 mentioned before.

14 I want to say a big thank you to our Council
15 Committee Staff for today's excellent hearing.
16 Christopher Sartori, Patrick Mulhill, Chima Obichere,
17 Rose Martinez, Nicholas Montalbano, thank you also
18 for the great data and maps as well. And of course,
19 thank you to my staff, Greg Clark our legislative
20 coordinator, Chuck Parker our Chief of Staff, Chanel
21 Martinez Community Affairs Coordinator, Shamima
22 Raymon Community Affairs Coordinator, Will Rice our
23 District Director, and Kevin Montalvo our
24 Communications Coordinator. And thank you to all my
25 colleagues too, for today's hearing. Thank you to

2 our Council staff as well and our Sergeants. We
3 appreciate it very much and that concludes the
4 hearing of today.

5 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date 08/09/2022