

**Testimony of
Jessica Tisch, Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management and Finance
Monday, May 20, 2024, 9:30 A.M.**

New York City Department of Sanitation's FY2025 Executive Budget

Good morning, Chair Brannan, Chair Abreu, and members of the Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Finance. I am Jessica Tisch, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lojan and by Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner, Management and Budget.

It is a terrible time to be a piece of trash in New York City.

The 10,000 public servants at the Department of Sanitation are deep into multiple rounds of offensives in the Trash Revolution, enacting a broad variety of changes to the management, collection, sorting, and processing of 44 million pounds of waste produced across the City every single day.

Each of the strategic initiatives on which I will update you today could have been era-defining on its own.

And yet, we are not allowing one major project to distract from any other. Just as we collect the trash in every part of the City, we are *changing* the way trash is managed in every part of the City.

This complete overhaul of our essential service is *working*, with historic decreases in rat sightings reported concurrently with this effort. While the Trash Revolution has many components, I will provide updates on four key fronts.

Containerization

First, containerization.

We are moving forward with a once-in-a-generation change to the way the trash is set out, making tremendous strides in the long-discussed but long-delayed process of getting every single piece of trash off our streets and sidewalks and into secure bins and containers.

In October 2022, the Adams administration kicked off this Trash Revolution by changing set-out times for both residential and commercial waste from 4:00 PM — one of the earliest set-out times in the country — to 8:00 PM, effective April 2023, while also allowing earlier set-out if the material is in a container. This incentive of containerization was paired with major changes to DSNY operations, picking up more of the trash far earlier, including ending a practice by which up to *one fifth* of trash had been left out for a full day.

Later that month, we published our "Future of Trash" report, the first meaningful attempt to study containerization models in New York City, and the playbook to get it done.

Last August, containerization requirements went into effect for all food-related businesses in New York City. These businesses — restaurants, delis, bodegas, bars, grocery stores, caterers, etc. — produce an outsized amount of the type of trash that attracts rats.

That same month, installation of the initial 10-block, 16-school Manhattan Community Board 9 pilot containers began.

Last September, commercial containerization requirements extended to chain businesses of any type with five or more locations in New York City. These chain businesses tend to produce a large total volume of trash.

Starting March 1, 2024, container requirements went into effect for all businesses — of every type — in New York City to get their trash off the streets and into a secure bin. There is now a new 311 service request whereby residents can report a business not using bins. Between resident complaints and the observations of our DSNY enforcement staff, we have written over 2,500 summonses to businesses for failing to containerize their trash since the warning period ended April 1.

Later this fall, when container requirements go into effect for lower-density buildings — those with one to nine residential units — approximately 70 percent of all trash in the city will be containerized.

In the spring of 2025, installation of stationary on-street containers will begin in Manhattan Community Board 9 for the first full-district containerization pilot, serviced by new automated side-loading trucks. The responses to our RFP to select a specific on-street container were due just three days ago, and the review began today.

In addition to commercial and residential waste, we have also taken steps to rethink the way we contain public-space trash in litter baskets, placing over 1,600 of the new BetterBins across the City, with the significant help of Council Members who have wisely chosen to use discretionary funds to speed the spread of these new icons that stand at the vanguard of the Trash Revolution. Whereas the old mesh baskets forced New Yorkers to look at the trash all day, the new baskets allow us to look to the future.

Composting

As containerization spreads across the City, so too does the second key front in the Trash Revolution, the largest and easiest curbside composting program ever. This program is on track to reach every single residence in all five boroughs starting the week of October 6th.

While curbside composting programs have existed in New York City for the last decade, none have ever served more than approximately 40 percent of the city. When Mayor Adams took office, he committed to developing a universal program that *works* for New Yorkers, and the team at DSNY set to work developing a model built for long-term sustainability; no more stops and starts, no more complicated rules, no more drama.

The resulting program, currently running in Brooklyn and Queens and coming to the other three boroughs this fall, will be the first to reach 100 percent coverage Citywide, providing residents with simple, universal weekly collection of leaf and yard waste, food scraps, and food-soiled paper products on their recycling day.

That simplicity is the most important part of the program. There's no need for sign-ups, special dates to remember, or specific locations to visit within limited hours. Simply place your material out on recycling day, your Sanitation Workers will collect it from your home, and we'll ensure it's put to good use. This is a composting program for all New Yorkers.

Make the separation of compostable material easy, and people will do it. And we have numbers to back this up: in fiscal year 2023, DSNY diverted a record 211 million pounds of compostable material from landfills, an incredible increase from just over 150 million pounds the year before. This is a testament to the value of simple, universal programs, especially given that it includes only a part of our ongoing Citywide roll-out.

The ease-of-use principle holds true for our network of nearly 400 Smart Composting Bins across the five boroughs, where residents can drop off their compostable material 24/7 through an easy-to-use smartphone app. These bins are serviced six days per week and have proven to be very popular.

And, weeks ago, we made good on a promise to bring curbside compost collection to every Department of Education school, giving the next generation of composters familiarity with the ease and importance of this program. When the Adams administration began, only about half of schools received this service, and only about half of the next generation of composters were learning about proper separation of waste for beneficial reuse. Now, they all are, and they're showing their parents and guardians the way.

Material collected through each of these initiatives – curbside residential collection, Smart Bins, and schools – is put to beneficial use, either through composting or through anaerobic digestion.

The Department produces tens of millions of pounds of finished compost every year at the Staten Island Compost Facility, where in January Mayor Adams and I cut the ribbon on a major expansion. That 33-acre site is now permitted to accept over 62 million pounds of food waste per year, up from just three million pounds prior to the expansion, in addition to another 60 million pounds of leaf and yard waste. The new technology on site can turn waste into compost in half the time it used to take – weeks rather than months. We are producing tens of millions of pounds of beautiful NYC compost every year, and giving it back to New Yorkers for free, with a list of events available at nyc.gov/getcompost.

While the City has sufficient permitted and contracted capacity to process compostable material from a Citywide program, we are currently engaged in a procurement to distribute that capacity more evenly across the region. Though City procurement rules limit the extent to which we can talk about future status of processing infrastructure for putrescible waste, beneficial use and waste equity are both key to our long-term planning.

DSNY would also like to raise the issue of commercial organics separation. Local Law 146 of 2013 requires certain commercial establishments to separate their compostable material, but this law is now substantially out of step with the City's commitment to diversion of compostable waste. The Commercial Waste Zone system will improve commercial diversion, in that DSNY is requiring carters to charge businesses less to collect recyclables and compostable material than to collect trash, but we also urge the Council to consider an update that would allow DSNY to require source separation at all commercial establishments, in line with the progress made in residential diversion.

Taken together, reform of commercial organics and the Citywide wraparound residential services will make our streets *and* our air cleaner.

Commercial Waste Zones

DSNY is also moving full-speed ahead with a third era-defining overhaul of how the trash is managed in New York City, our implementation of the Commercial Waste Zone program described in Local Law 199 of 2019.

This law was designed to reform the commercial waste hauling system by establishing new safety standards for workers in the commercial carting industry, improving service for businesses, increasing diversion rates, and reducing vehicle miles traveled as well as harmful emissions from waste hauling vehicles.

In January, we announced the entire suite of contract awards for this program, available at nyc.gov/cwz, and the first of New York City's 20 non-exclusive Commercial Waste Zones will come online in the second half of this year in Corona, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. Businesses will be able to register new carting contracts beginning in early September and must do so by

January 2nd, 2025. DSNY has a substantial outreach and education program planned for before and during that period.

This program will add legal safeguards to the commercial carting industry that will protect workers, business owners, and our environment. We are talking about 12 million miles fewer traveled by commercial carting vehicles. And, making good on a promise from when this program was created, businesses will pay less for the collection of recyclables and compostable material than they do for trash – a Citywide average of 32% less for recycling and 18% less for compostable material. That means businesses will have a meaningful financial incentive to separate their waste properly.

Enforcement

Containerization, composting, and the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones are major changes in the way the Department performs our work, but they also necessitate changes in the ways New Yorkers conduct *their* work around waste, and in addition to education and outreach, there must be a robust enforcement component to each of these programs.

The Department of Sanitation will never enforce for enforcement's sake, but as part of the Trash Revolution, we are not afraid to hold property owners accountable to the very basic requirements around cleanliness – the legal requirements to maintain a clean sidewalk, to remove litter and debris from the first 18 inches into the street, and to set out waste at the proper time and in the proper receptacles. In 2023, our enforcement of these critical rules around cleanliness was up over 60% compared to the year prior, and we target ongoing enforcement in the highest-density parts of the City, doubling down on this Council's designation around Rat Mitigation Zones.

In addition to enforcing the basic rules of cleanliness outside every property in the City, we have implemented new strategies to combat two specific quality of life offenses.

The first is our camera enforcement approach to the scourge of illegal dumping, a crime wherein dumpers use cars, vans, or trucks to dispose of everything from construction debris to entire suites of office equipment to regular bags of trash. This occurs in areas that dumpers consider to be “out of the way,” like dead-end streets, underpasses, and, perhaps most distressingly, alongside cemeteries.

For many years, the Department of Sanitation did not have a meaningful enforcement strategy against the crime of illegal dumping. We just cleaned and cleaned over and over again, and the behavior continued to afflict neighborhoods like East New York, Glendale, and Hunts Point.

We have *significantly* stepped up illegal dumping surveillance in the last two years. Last year, we issued more than 300 summonses for illegal dumping, an increase of about 70% over 2022. Each of those summonses starts at \$4,000, with the cost of cleaning up the mess also passed along to the dumper. And we impound the vehicles involved.

The dumpers are on notice that they won't get away with it any longer.

The same is true for people who use our streets as free storage for abandoned or derelict vehicles. Under state law, DSNY has jurisdiction for the removal of vehicles identified as derelict, meaning without license plates and with a value of under \$1,250, with authority for removal of vehicles outside this category residing with the NYPD. But for the public, this distinction is meaningless. Who knows the value of a car that has taken up space outside their home, sometimes for years without moving? Who needs to know which agency to call?

That's why in 2023, DSNY and NYPD launched an interagency Abandoned Vehicle Task Force to cut through the red tape. A team of five NYPD officers were assigned to DSNY to partner with our derelict vehicle operations team so that when we encounter vehicles on the streets that do not meet the derelict criteria but qualify as abandoned, we can action them then and there. Thanks to these efforts, in 2023, we increased our derelict vehicle removal by 43%, and removed nearly 8,000 vehicles that calendar year. In 2024, we're on pace to dwarf that number.

All of you celebrate this work and most of you ask for *more* of this work. You speak often about the concerns of your constituents related to the cleanliness of commercial corridors and other dirty conditions in your districts.

But there are gaps in our enforcement authority – areas where the Department of Sanitation does not have the tools we need to do our job.

We want to get the job done, and there are three bills awaiting action by this Council that would give us the tools we need.

Intro 97, sponsored by Council Member Ung, will provide a meaningful escalator in fines for the small number of commercial property owners who repeatedly allow filth to congregate on our streets and sidewalks. Intro 11, sponsored by Council Member Bottcher, will expand the hours of the day that DSNY may enforce commercial cleanliness rules, and Intro 57, sponsored by Council Member Osse, will codify and clarify the penalties for failure to containerize commercial waste, one of the most successful cleanliness programs underway in the City.

In 2023, over 1,600 locations received four or more summonses for Dirty Area, and nearly 500 were issued 10 or more. Three dozen were issued FIFTY or more!

Take this commercial location, which has received 37 summonses year to date. And despite that, when Sanitation officers checked the site on Tuesday, THIS is what they found – filth littering OUR public space. And here you can see a business that has been summonsed for flouting set-out requirements 34 times and STILL hasn't gotten the message. Clearly, the escalating fine structure is not currently steep enough to act as a disincentive to repeat offenders.

Enforcement is not about generating revenue; it is about compliance, but under the law today, bad actors can simply look at DSNY enforcement as the cost of doing business. That has to change.

Cleanliness is a shared responsibility. We urge the Council to pass Intro 97 and implore the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management to vote Intros 11 and 57 out of committee.

We are also asking for your support with a home rule message for state legislative bill A08902B/S08756. This would allow the Department of Sanitation to engage in automated enforcement against Alternate Side Parking violators, letting the mechanical brooms do their important job. Automated enforcement has worked well for the MTA in the bus lanes, and it can do the same for clean streets. These bills are moving, with the support of a very broad coalition of state legislative leaders – and we need your support.

FY2025 Executive Budget

But even as we pursue a wide variety of innovative programs - and even with a challenging fiscal climate - we are not slowing down on our core cleanliness work...and neither are the people who create the need for that work.

This area of abandoned railway along Staten Island's North Shore has been allowed to become the definition of a "No Man's Land" over a period of decades, with dumpers easily climbing the fence you see in the rear of the photo - and Staten Islanders had been left with little choice but to conclude that no one cares.

That must end. The DSNY Targeted Neighborhood Taskforce began a major operation at this site last week, and will not stop until it's done.

I will now discuss the Executive Budget, which includes \$1.985 billion in expense funds in Fiscal Year 2024 and \$1.89 billion in Fiscal Year 2025, reflecting increases of \$83.7 million and \$26.0 million, respectively, from the budget adopted last June.

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes \$1.13 billion for personal services to support a total budgeted headcount of 9,476 full-time positions, including 7,844 uniformed positions and 1,632 civilian positions, and \$756.7 million for other than personal services, or OTPS.

DSNY's Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget includes \$3.36 billion in capital funding in the 10-year plan, \$1.18 billion of which is for garages and facilities, \$2.06 billion for equipment, \$64.9 million for IT, and \$59.8 million for solid waste management infrastructure.

The Capital Budget includes funding for several major facilities projects, including:

- \$487 million in funding for the construction of a new garage for Bronx Districts 9, 10, and 11, with demolition;

- \$283 million in additional funding for the construction of a new garage for Queens District 1, with design slated to begin next year;
- Upgrades to the facility that serves as the home for the Bronx District 12 Garage, which has an overall budget of \$55.5 million and will begin construction next year;
- And the \$20 million finishing touches of the \$213 million build-out for the brand-new home for Staten Island District 3, which is slated to be completed next Spring.

We look forward to taking your questions about the end of the era of the black bags in the City of New York and the FY2025 Executive Budget. Thank you.



**Joint Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance / Committee on Parks & Recreation
Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget
May 20, 2024**

Testimony By: Sue Donoghue, Commissioner, NYC Parks

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, Chair Krishnan, members of the Finance Committee and Parks Committee, and other members of the Council. My name is Sue Donoghue. I am pleased to be here today testifying as the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and to be joined today on this panel by several members of our agency's senior staff leadership.

Firstly, I want to thank the Council for its continued support for our city's open spaces over the past year and for championing the importance of parks for all New Yorkers. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to discuss the agency's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, and to provide an overview of our agency's mission to build and maintain a restorative and thriving park system.

The arrival of warmer weather in the spring means we're heading into our peak season, when our city's green and open spaces truly come alive, and more and more people get outdoors to take advantage of our amazing parks to lead happier, healthier lives -- and we've been busy, delivering results for New Yorkers. However, we also know our parks are utilized all year round and we're ready.

This spring, we were thrilled to celebrate the opening of the new Arverne East Nature Preserve and Welcome Center. This incredible 35-acre nature preserve hosts five different maritime ecosystems and offers New Yorkers a new way to observe and appreciate these natural environments, including accessible connections to the Rockaway beach and boardwalk. The new welcome center hosts a community meeting space, office space for our Urban Park Rangers, crew headquarters for Parks maintenance staff, and public restrooms. This new facility is fossil fuel-free, heated and cooled by a closed-loop, geothermal system, while a rooftop solar array generates power to supply the building and eventually provide additional energy to other residents in the neighborhood. The adjacent parking lot has been constructed with a permeable asphalt system and bioswales for stormwater, representing our commitment to resiliency and sustainability in our new climate reality. This formerly vacant, derelict space that was an eyesore for decades is now educational, green and resilient open space to be enjoyed by the entire Rockaway community.

Working with our sister agencies, we were also very excited to launch the Mayor's Office of Marine Debris Disposal and Vessel Surrendering to help keep the City's amazing waterfront safe and free from marine debris. This new office will protect our shoreline from floating risks and sunken hazards, benefiting people, flora, and fauna that rely on our healthy and clean waterfronts.

To make sure our youngest neighbors get to enjoy summer to the fullest, we have been hard at work on reimagining and reviving various playgrounds across the five boroughs; recently reopening the playground at John J. Carty Park in Bay Ridge and Rainbow Playground in Sunset Park after full redesigns and reconstructions as well breaking ground on the reconstruction of Dongan Playground in Staten Island. These playground renovations represent millions of dollars of investment for the communities that rely on these public spaces, made possible with tremendous support from the City Council. Our agency's Operations and Citywide Services staff are also making targeted repairs and improvements to other park facilities, such as installing diaper changing stations in more park restrooms, so that families with young children have increased access to the amenities they need. I'm pleased to report that, in accordance with Local Law 56 of 2023, we have installed these new amenities in every park restroom where a changing station can feasibly be installed, several years in advance of the deadline.



Of course, as the temperatures rise, we are gearing up for the opening of our public beaches this coming weekend. We're fortunate that we have been able to open all of our pools and beaches in recent summers, unlike a lot of other cities around the country, and we're committed to doing that again this summer, despite a very challenging hiring environment. As we have shared with Council previously, we have worked tirelessly to find ways to recruit new potential lifeguards and encourage more lifeguards to return and help keep our beaches and pools safe for all New Yorkers to enjoy. Though it's premature to speculate about final staffing levels, we are extremely proud of our intense and focused effort to recruit and retain these vital members of the Parks team.

At the Preliminary Budget Hearing, we spoke about our Let's Green NYC initiative, which encourages New Yorkers to get out in their green spaces and help beautify them through service projects. Today, we are thrilled to announce that we officially surpassed our previous record, with over 500,000 people participating since the initiative began in 2023. It is so rewarding to see that New Yorkers feel as passionate about our city's green spaces as we do, and we look forward to encouraging even more volunteers to get involved as the initiative continues.

Turning to the specific topic for this hearing, the Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget reflects the Administration's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility amid the ongoing economic and fiscal challenges facing the city while maintaining critical services for all New Yorkers and investing in a greener, healthier city. NYC Parks Fiscal Year 2025 Executive operating budget is \$582.9 million dollars. We are pleased to note that the agency did not have to implement an additional 5% reduction, as had been originally envisioned. The Executive Budget also reflects salary increases for our invaluable Parks employees which were the result of the City's recent contract agreements with various unions, negotiated through collective bargaining. We know these are difficult economic times and we are grateful to be able to support our critical existing staff so they can continue all the hard work they do.

In closing, I want to thank Mayor Adams for granting me the incredible privilege of leading this agency, and the opportunity to work with each of you to continue improving our parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers. Many of you are already familiar with our experienced, responsive Borough Commissioners and their district teams, who work alongside our central agency division staff to deliver for New Yorkers every day. We are always available to answer questions and address concerns from your offices and are happy to hear your thoughts on any topic, whether it regards a local park in your district or a citywide agency policy. NYC Parks looks forward to continuing our close partnership with the Council, to create a bright, green future with a more equitable, inclusive and resilient parks system. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, we would now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Parks and Recreation - Executive Budget Hearing
Max Barton, Laborers Local 1010

Good Afternoon, my name is Max Barton, and **I am a construction worker** and a union representative for LiUNA Laborers Local Union 1010, Pavers + Road Builders. We are 2,500 members strong who work in Heavy Highway, the Building Trades and in Parks in the construction industry. I, Max, and our membership, thank Committee on Parks Chair, Council Member Krishnan, for holding this hearing. I'd also like to thank our partners, of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, who have been tirelessly advocating for 1% of the city budget be allocated to NYC Parks, a prior commitment made by this administration. The Play Fair for Parks Coalition includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today.

Our Parks are New York's backyard, our members communities back yards, where the city slows down and lives with nature in harmony. And just like everyone in this room today our membership shares with you a deed to 635 million acres of public lands, this makes park and recreation funding a priority for local government service.

The National Recreation and Park Association had a study in 2018 where 9/10 Americans agree that Parks and Recreation is an important government service. In 2023, the study showed that 9/10 agree that Parks and Recreation is an important government service. Americans love their Parks.

I am an appointed member of Queens Community Board 13 and active member in the Parks Committee. During my time in this committee, we see the need for more maintenance workers for our parks and more funding allocation to the Parks Department to keep our parks beautifully kept and safe for all to use.

As you have heard over again, more funding should be allocated to Parks. Currently Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) with the City of New York exclude a substantial amount of capital project work performed by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. We believe a simple study, on the inclusion of site-work into the New York City Project Labor Agreement would yield tremendous savings. Site work includes field work (i.e. baseball and other playing fields) and turf installation as well as tree planting and landscaping, for example. We believe the cost of a feasibility study would be minimal versus the potential savings from coordinated work and other demonstrated savings provided by the existing City PLAs.

In summary, it would greatly benefit the City of New York for the Citywide Project Labor Agreements to include sitework. As a first step, within this budget, we are asking for a feasibility study that will show the cost-saving possibilities. For more information, I can be reached at the LIUNA, Local 1010 Union hall located in Queens, NY.

Thank you,
Max Barton
Laborers' Local 1010

**Testimony of Dilcy Benn, President of Local 1505, District Council 37
before the City Council Committees on Finance and Parks and Recreation
FY 2025 Executive Budget
May 20, 2024**

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and Chair Krishnan and fellow City Councilmembers. My name is Dilcy Benn and I am the President of Local 1505 of DC 37 representing close to one thousand City Parks Workers (also known as CPWs), as well as seasonal workers who primarily work in the NYC Parks and Recreation Department in all five boroughs performing clean up and conducting maintenance in all city parks.

Here we are again. Another budget year is upon us and we are doing the same budget dance. I was disappointed to hear that the administration did not restore any of the cuts to parks in the Executive Budget.

I appear before you to ask for the restoration of the 100 CPW lines that were funded by the City Council last year and referred to as part of the “Play Fair” lines. These 100 CPWs are essential, especially in parks that have second shifts. Without these workers, the parks will be overrun with garbage and rats. This is counter to the Mayor’s war on rats. How do you combat the rat problem if you don’t have the staff to clean up the garbage in the parks? The result will be an endless supply of food for the rats and other vermin to eat.

In addition, these second shift workers were told they would be made permanent, but come to find out that this is not true.

Furthermore, my members risk their own safety when they go to lock up the parks. They have been threatened and even assaulted by park goers who do not want to leave the park. My members are minority women who work alone. As the weather gets warmer, this dangerous scenario will become more frequent.

The parks need to be kept clean so thousands of New Yorkers, as well as visitors, can enjoy these beautiful open spaces. We need dedicated parks workers doing the work necessary to upkeep these places.

I want to remind the City Councilmembers about what Speaker Adrienne Adams mentioned in her State of the City address. The Speaker proposed to create a pipeline to permanent civil service jobs for seasonal workers. This will be a game changer and lifeline for so many seasonal workers in this city.

I should be here today requesting for additional workers to ensure that parks are kept clean, but instead I am here asking for a restoration and to hold onto the existing park staff we have. We need to restore and baseline these positions so

these workers do not have to worry about losing their jobs annually. This is a horrible way to live and it is not right for people to live with such uncertainty.

The Play Fair Coalition held a large rally in Union Square two weeks ago urging the administration to restore the \$55m PEG from the Parks budget and to add funding to bring the parks budget to 1% of the city's total budget as promised.

On behalf of my members, I want to thank our partners in the Play Fair Coalition for standing with us and advocating alongside us for restorations, as well as more funding for parks.

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



**New York City Council
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing: Parks and Recreation
Committee on Finance jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation
May 20, 2024**

Testimony By: Andrew Wallach, Board Chairman of the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC)

Good afternoon, thank you Council Members Brannan, Krishnan, and Abreu for the chance to testify today about the fiscal 2025 Executive Budget for NYC Parks.

My name is Andrew M. Wallach. I have lived in New York City for more than 42 years and have witnessed many economic and political cycles in the city during that period, including the near bankruptcy period in the 1970's.

I am currently the Chairman of the Board of the Natural Areas Conservancy, and have served on that Board since 2017. As many of you know, the NAC is the only park conservancy which focuses solely on the 20,000 acres of natural areas—forests, grasslands, and wetlands—within NYC's park system.

I am here today to strongly request that the City do the following:

- Restore funding for NYC Parks from its proposed level of \$582.8 million back to its fiscal 2024 budget level of \$635 million for the 2025 fiscal year.
- End the hiring freeze at NYC parks and restore agency staffing to pre-covid levels.
- Restore \$2.4 million in permanent, baselined funding for the citywide Trail Formalization program announced last year by Mayor Adams.
- Restore \$2.5 million in permanent, baselined funding for 51 forestry management staff whose jobs are set to expire at the end of June.
- Raise the total amount of operating funding for the parks from the currently proposed level of 0.5 percent to at least 1 percent of its total budget as soon as practicable.

We New Yorkers are blessed with a park system that is the envy of most major cities. Our ancestors displayed incredible foresight and generosity in carving out large areas for green space in all of the boroughs. It's hard to even imagine NYC without Riverside Park, Pelham Bay Park, Prospect Park, and many others.

Yet we are starving these parks of resources, which will result in irreparable short and long term damage if continued. It's as if someone inherited a mint condition 1963 Corvette from their father or grandfather and never bothered to change the oil...

What makes me say that the parks are starved of resources?

First, on a city budget of a staggering \$112 billion—more than all but a few entire states —the total parks 2025 operating budget is planned for \$582 million, or 0.5 percent of the total budget. This number was roughly 1.3 - 1.4 percent of the budget in the 1960's and 1970's.

The budget for our forested natural areas alone has in recent years received an annual average of 0.7 percent of the overall **Parks** budget, which equates to **0.0035 percent of the total city budget**. That incredibly small amount is designed to take care of 7,500 forested acres, fully one third of our city parkland.

Second, if we compare our total parks spending to the spending of other major cities as a percentage of the budget, New York comes in well below other major U.S. cities: our 0.5 percent compares to 1.5 - 4 percent for L.A., San Francisco, and Chicago.

Third, when we look at our spending historically, New York also comes up short. The proposed amount of \$582 compares to \$534 million that the City spent on Parks as far back as 2019. Given the severe inflation since that time, we are not even close to keeping up with the amounts we spent in real terms before Covid.

Why does this matter at all at a time when there are so many other worthy demands on our funds?

Here's why—

The parks and street trees are responsible for storing carbon dioxide that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere, staving off atmospheric warming.

We know from our own research that temperatures in our parks are more than six degrees Fahrenheit lower than on the surrounding streets.

The parks provide a refuge from the bustle of the city, particularly for the vast majority of our citizens who will never visit Montauk Point or Yellowstone Park. There is substantial scientific evidence of the positive impact of parks on urban health and safety.

Almost every visitor to NYC visits our city parks. The look of our parks, like the state of our other infrastructure, is a signal to visitors and outside investors of the soundness and self-confidence of New York City and our country.

Finally, the way we steward these long-term assets is a sign of how much we care about our future and the future of our children and grandchildren.

If the budget goes through as currently specified, in the short term we will see a meaningful reduction in park employment, with the elimination of over 600 positions. We will see an immediate increase in trash levels, which are already pretty intolerable; in bathrooms too wretched for all but the most heroic to use; and a reduction in public safety in the parks. Longer term, our green infrastructure will suffer from long-term neglect, just like that '63 Corvette...

As a citizen who has seen the parks both at their lowest point in the 70's and in better times, I urge you to stand up and be counted on behalf of these irreplaceable assets and on behalf of future generations of New Yorkers.

Thank you very much.



**New York City Council
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing: Parks and Recreation
Committee on Finance jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation
May 20, 2024**

Testimony By: Emily Walker, Natural Areas Conservancy, Senior Manager of External Affairs

My name is Emily Walker, and I am the Senior Manager of External Affairs at the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC). Thank you to Chair Brannan and Chair Krishnan and the members of the Committees on Finance and Parks for the opportunity to submit comments today about the Executive Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget for NYC Parks.

Last month's FY25 Executive Budget release was tied to the City's launch of an ambitious Climate Budgeting initiative. In the Mayor's announcement, he stressed that NYC's budget must work toward reducing emissions, enhancing air quality, increasing heat and flood resiliency, elevating environmental justice, and creating green jobs. We applaud the City for taking this important step to ensure that we are making climate-smart budgeting decisions. But the substance of the FY25 Executive Budget for NYC Parks paints a different picture about how the city is prioritizing the environment.

Despite the fact that the FY25 Executive Budget is the largest ever proposed in NYC history at nearly \$112 billion, the \$582 million allocation for NYC Parks represents the lowest proportion of funding for the agency in over five years. Without action from City Hall to restore the budget for Parks by June 30, we will lose approximately 80% of the natural areas workforce who actively manage and care for our forests and wetlands. We will lose 50 Urban Park Rangers, whose programming helps educate New Yorkers about the natural wonders that surround us. We will again lose the chance to create dozens of new green jobs to make our trails system more safe and accessible, despite the fact that this funding was named as a PlaNYC 2023 priority by the Mayor.

Research consistently shows the benefits that our natural areas provide to New Yorkers, all of which align with the Mayor's Climate Budgeting goals:

- Our forested natural areas contain 5 million of the city's 7 million trees, which absorb a staggering 70% of the city's carbon emissions.
- Our forests absorb as much stormwater as \$580 million worth of new green infrastructure each year.
- Our forests can be up to 13 degrees cooler than our streetscapes during extreme heat events.
- In a social assessment done by the US Forest Service, they found that NYC's natural areas are the only place where over 50% of New Yorkers go to experience nature.

The benefits these spaces provide can only exist if we are actively funding the care, maintenance, and programming of our natural areas. If the City really means to combat the



effects of climate change, the answer couldn't be clearer — invest in Parks and natural areas. The need to create green jobs and care for our local ecosystems is not just needed in the future, it is urgently needed now. Restoring the budget for NYC Parks will not only ensure that New Yorkers have access to parks that are clean, safe, beautiful, and resilient, but will also create hundreds of green jobs. This budget cycle, we urge the City Council and the Mayor to be true climate leaders and push forward their promising Climate Budgeting initiative by increasing funding for NYC Parks for the benefit of all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

NAC's Priorities for the FY25 NYC Parks Budget

- **The budget for NYC Parks must be restored, and we call for an end to the hiring freeze placed on the agency.** For too long, our Parks colleagues have been asked to do more with less. This is particularly problematic in the realm of natural areas management, which often takes many years of targeted care and restoration.
- **We ask that the Administration restore the \$2.4M in baselined Trails Formalization funding,** which was announced as a signature priority of the Administration on Earth Day 2023. This funding would establish a citywide team of 26 to improve our 300-mile network of nature trails. This work supports access to 10,000 acres of forested natural areas, and helps protect the health of these spaces by reducing forest fragmentation and ecosystem disturbance, and helping to manage invasive species.
- **We ask that the \$2.5M added by the City Council for FY24 to support the continuation of 51 critical Natural Areas management positions be renewed and baselined.** The benefits provided by our forested natural areas are many, including cleaning our air, absorbing stormwater, and storing nearly 70% of NYC's carbon. These natural areas are critical public infrastructure, and we call on the City to appropriately invest in the workforce that performs the important work of caring for these spaces.
- **We ask that the 50 Urban Park Ranger positions set to expire at the end of June be renewed and baselined.** The Rangers provide public education and interpretive programming about our local ecosystems, perform vital wildlife management, and provide enforcement services that make our natural areas safer and more accessible to more New Yorkers. Similar to recreation centers and fitness facilities, programming in our natural areas serves to activate these park spaces and welcome New Yorkers.
- **We ask the Administration and the Council to ensure that there are resources in place to support the successful creation of the NYC Urban Forest Plan as required by Local Law 148.** We believe that in order to create the most successful plan possible, the City must commit funding for a robust, multi-agency planning process, including sufficient funding for a rigorous community engagement effort that will lead to the creation of the plan by the July 31, 2025 deadline.



**New York City Council Committee on Parks and
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing
Monday, May 20, 2024**

Testimony for Committee on Parks Executive budget hearing

To: The Committee on Parks, Committee on Finance

From: Jessica Wilson and Dustin Partridge, PhD, New York City Audubon

Date: May 20, 2024

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee on Parks and Committee on Finance regarding the budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year which jeopardize critical urban green space for wild birds and people.

We submit this testimony on behalf of New York City Audubon Society, our 10,000 members, and the tens of thousands of wildlife enthusiasts and sustainability advocates we engage annually. NYC Audubon is a nonprofit organization that works to protect wild birds and habitat across the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations, many of whom will testify today. NYC Audubon runs hundreds of public programs annually that encourage New Yorkers to go outside and engage with their community through nature at the City's parks. **We are in support of NYC Parks' demands for 1% of the City budget** and are testifying about the need for funding for the agency's recreation centers, pools, athletic courts, and playgrounds – and especially for its 9,900 acres of natural areas and 15 miles of beaches, which serve as habitat for threatened and endangered wild birds and invaluable resources for New Yorkers' physical and mental health.

New York City is critical to the conservation of birds. More than 400 bird species have been recorded in the city, and each year 15-25 million birds migrate through this urban area. Birds play a critical role in a healthy ecosystem, providing essential ecological services including pollinating native plants, dispersing seeds, controlling pests, and sequestering carbon. Birds also provide economic services to New York City; the state receives \$1.6 billion annually in ecotourism revenue from birdwatching, much of it flowing to the City.

However, bird populations are disappearing: half of bird species in the U.S. are in decline — with three billion birds lost in the last 50 years — due to human-induced threats. **Habitat loss is one of those dangers to birds.**

Both large and small parks in New York City provide critical migratory stopover, nesting, and wintering habitat for birds. And parks have many additional benefits. They provide opportunities for New Yorkers' connection to birds and nature often lacking in underserved communities. Green spaces also reduce energy consumption and fossil fuel use by mitigating the "heat island effect" in our metropolis. Coastal

habitats protect low-lying communities from flooding and storm surges—protection that is ever more urgent in our warming world.

Many assume that natural areas are “best left alone” and do not require active management. But our city’s habitats, having been transformed over hundreds of years, often require human intervention to be productive for wildlife and people. A well-funded NYC Parks is needed to make these natural areas richer and safer for birds and other wildlife.

Mayor Adams’ FY25 Executive Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55M and eliminates over 600 essential jobs that keep our parks safe, clean, green and resilient. If enacted, New Yorkers can expect trash strewn parks and playgrounds and neglected tree canopy care, both of which pose problems for our city’s birds. Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. They should be funded as such. All New Yorkers deserve safe, clean, green and resilient parks, pools, beaches and rec centers.

NYC Audubon is in support of NYC Parks’ demands for 1% of the City budget and cautions against proposed cuts to the agency’s budget. Funding NYC Parks appropriately will protect the City’s birds and make the City more sustainable for both wildlife and people.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Respectfully,



Jessica G. Wilson
Executive Director
New York City Audubon



Dustin Partridge, PhD
Director, Conservation and Science
New York City Audubon

**Testimony for the NYC Council Committees on Finance and on Parks and Recreation
Tami Lin-Moges, Interim Cities Director, The Nature Conservancy, New York
May 20, 2024**

My name is Tami Lin-Moges and I am the Interim Director of The Nature Conservancy's Cities Program in New York. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, and our diverse staff and more than 400 scientists conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We impact conservation in 76 countries and territories, directly and with partners. We have 90,000 members across New York, 35,000 of whom are in New York City. We advance strategies that create a healthy, resilient, and sustainable urban environment and are committed to improving New York City's air, land, and water to sustain and support the people and nature of this great city.

In New York City, we convene the [Forest for All NYC](#) coalition and we are leading practitioners on the science and policy of the NYC urban forest. In 2021, we published the [State of the Urban Forest in NYC](#) (SUFNYC) a comprehensive assessment of the local urban forest, and with Forest for All NYC, released the [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#), a collaborative roadmap that provides detailed recommendations to meaningfully protect, maintain, expand, research, and promote the NYC urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers justly and equitably. We also conducted an analysis of local [tree canopy potential](#) that shows the feasibility of expanding canopy cover in every neighborhood across the city.

I am here today on behalf of The Nature Conservancy and as a proud member of Forest for All NYC and the Play Fair Coalition to testify regarding the FY25 Executive Budget. We call for dedicating 1% of the City budget for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and to fully fund the NYC urban forest. I first want to acknowledge and express gratitude for the commitment that the Mayor has made to a goal of at least 30 percent canopy cover citywide that was included in *PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done*. Last session, Forest for All NYC was proud to work alongside the sponsors of Local Laws 135 and 148 of 2023, including Parks Committee Chair Krishnan, and advocate for their successful and unanimous passage. I want to express deep gratitude to City Council for its leadership in advancing these important bills to monitor, protect, and grow the New York City tree canopy to 30 percent cover in an equitable way. To achieve the goals of these laws, especially Local Law 148 that mandated the creation of a NYC Urban Forest Plan, we must prioritize funding for the urban forest.

The urban forest includes not just the trees and their canopy, but also their physical infrastructure, such as tree beds and soil, the accompanying biodiversity, and a rich social infrastructure, such as the people who dedicate their careers and free time to it. The urban forest includes over 7 million trees, with their canopy covering 22% of the city as of 2017. It spans the whole of the city, crossing jurisdictions and owners, and can be found on our streets, private backyards, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses, City parks, schools, institutions, and other sites.

The urban forest provides substantial, meaningful benefits including for mental and physical health, educational outcomes, job creation, community cohesion, energy burden reduction, climate resilience, carbon storage, and as monuments or cultural symbols. Achieving Forest for All NYC's visionary goal of 30% canopy by 2035 (30x35) will increase these benefits and distribute them in a more equitable way. (See Ch. 4 of SUFNYC). [Research published in 2018 by the US Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Forest Service](#) for the urban forest as a whole

indicates that its benefits and services of carbon sequestration and mitigation, air pollution removal, avoided stormwater runoff, and reduced energy costs to be worth well over \$260 million per year, and the cost to replace this resource if lost would be about \$5.7 billion.

Many of the benefits and services of the NYC urban forest, especially temperature reduction and shading, are increasingly important with climate change. The New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) has projected increased temperatures in general for NYC in [its 2019 report](#), with more frequent and longer heat waves. Further, as reported in [2023 New York City Heat-Related Mortality Report](#), an average of 350 New Yorkers already die prematurely because of hot weather. Stormwater management will similarly become increasingly important in the future, as the 2019 NPCC report projected an increasing number of days with heavy rainfall ($\geq 1"$), increasing the need for local flood management strategies.

There are severe inequities in the spatial distribution of the NYC urban forest, and thus meaningful disparities in terms of where benefits and services are provisioned and to whom. In general, areas with lower income residents and higher proportions of people of color, and ultimately more socially and heat-vulnerable communities, tend to have less canopy than other areas, and should be prioritized for potential expansion for the urban forest (see Ch. 4 of SUFNYC). These areas also frequently are the subject of environmental hazards, such as high air pollution, and the disparities are a meaningful environmental justice concern. To achieve long-term growth and canopy increases, trees require ongoing care and protection alongside additional plantings. Further, it is critical that investments in greening the landscape be carried out in ways that align with community visions, elevate community leadership, and work to avoid potential adverse impacts on the existing residents, such as economic displacement or gentrification.

Public funding dedicated to the NYC urban forest and parks is insufficient and has been heavily variable. Despite the urban forest's essential role in the health and resiliency of our city, it has faced chronic underfunding and has been vulnerable to disproportionate cuts during times of financial hardship. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is responsible for 53.5% of tree canopy in NYC, but only received an annual average of 0.34% of the total City Other than Personal Services (OTPS) expense budget from FY18 to FY22. The portion allocated to urban forestry work was only 0.04% of the total City OTPS expense budget (or an average of \$23 million per year, adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars). This funding limits critical maintenance activities necessary to keep trees healthy, like pruning, stump removal, and pest and disease management. It also constrains the number of new tree plantings each year despite a large potential for this activity, as demonstrated in our recent [tree canopy factsheets](#) for every Council and Community District.

In addition to limited funding, the urban forest also suffers from inconsistent funding, and is vulnerable to drastic cuts, and these funding fluctuations interrupt cycles of regular tree maintenance and long-term planning that are essential to a long-lasting, healthy urban forest. The NYC Parks budget was cut by \$25M for FY24 and the FY25 Executive Budget is nearly \$55M less than the adopted FY24 Budget. The overall City Budget is growing by \$4.5 billion this year compared the approved FY24 Budget, and yet, DPR's Budget is still being slashed. The

hiring freeze and reduced budget will result in nearly 1,000 fewer DPR workers, making it much more difficult for the agency to ensure parks are safe, clean, green, and resilient across the city. The Administration has said that it values the expansion of the urban forest and has made commitments to environmental justice and equity in climate resilience. Actions speak louder than words, and the current Budget says parks and the urban forest are not a priority. We ask this Committee to help us restore cuts to DPR and guarantee a fully funded urban forest.

Specifically, we ask for the following changes to the FY25 Executive Budget:

- **Dedicate 1% of the City Budget for Parks and commit to increased and baselined long-term funding for the urban forest** (including expense funds for regular maintenance of NYC trees and capital investments for tree planting and restoration).
- **Workforce growth** by ending the hiring freeze and restoring staffing to pre-Covid levels.
 - Save and baseline the roles of the 50 Forestry and GreenThumb staff that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 50 Forestry and Gardener positions to restore staffing levels to pre-covid conditions.
 - Save and baseline the roles of the 50 Urban Park Rangers whose jobs will be eliminated at the end of June that provide environmental and cultural education to parks visitors.
 - Increase the number of Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officer positions that help keep our urban forest and parks welcoming to visitors.
 - Save the roles of the 100 City Parks Workers (CPW's) that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 200 CPW positions to restore staffing levels to pre-Covid. CPW's help clean our parks, which enables more access to trees and green spaces.
- **Protection of forested natural areas** in NYC and reversal of the elimination of the Trails Formalization Program.
 - Follow through on the commitments in PlaNYC to increase access to quality green spaces for all New Yorkers and reinstate the Citywide Trails Program.
- Funding for a **rigorous planning and community engagement process for the City's first NYC Urban Forest Plan**, due July 31, 2025.
 - Ensure multiple agencies are empowered and resourced to participate in the planning process.
 - Provide funding for a robust participatory engagement process to ensure equity and environmental justice is centered in the planning effort.
- Commitment of **long-term funding for monitoring tree canopy** and measuring its growth or loss, specifically including the collection of light detection and ranging (Lidar) data every five years, as outlined in Local Law 148 of 2023.
- **Restoration of funding for tree stump removal** to ensure efficient replacement of felled trees with new plantings to contribute to the City's goal of at least 30% canopy cover.
- **Restoration of the tree risk management program** for inspections, pest management, and maintenance of our trees in streets and parks

Beyond DPR, we support funding for the urban under the jurisdiction of all NYC agencies that have trees in their care. In particular, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is another key leader in relation to the urban forest outside of DPR's jurisdiction, though they are under-resourced for this role. NYCHA campuses play an important role for the urban forest and its benefits for New Yorkers. NYCHA occupies about 1.15% of all land in NYC and is home to about 2.23% of the total tree canopy. Given this, we estimate that NYCHA is one of the largest holders

of canopy in NYC outside of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, making NYCHA a meaningful urban forestry leader in NYC whose actions not only impact the urban forest both locally and citywide, but also help lead and set precedent for others. NYCHA's trees are meaningful not only for the approximately 339,000 NYCHA residents who may access their myriad benefits, from connecting with nature locally to cooling, but also for the broader communities where they may represent some of the limited vegetation in our most heat vulnerable communities. Adequately investing in NYCHA's urban forest is a critical element of environmental justice in NYC, and in addition to increasing DPR's funding, we strongly encourage that NYCHA's municipal funding be restored and increased.

Furthermore, we hope that the City's first NYC Urban Forest Plan will demonstrate a unifying, thoughtful, ambitious, and lasting vision and roadmap to ensure the urban forest's longevity and ensure and expand its benefits for New Yorkers. We are grateful for the expertise of DPR and the leadership of Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice as the designated Lead Agency to develop the Plan. We are also grateful to this Committee for its commitment to a holistic approach for growing and managing the NYC urban forest. The Nature Conservancy stands ready to engage, provide technical expertise and thought partnership, and champion the City's development of the NYC Urban Forest Plan. We hope that sufficient funding will be provided to DPR and other managers, collaborators, and tree stewards in order to meet the Plan's deadline of July 31, 2025, as outlined in the law.

We commend the Council Committees on Finance and on Parks and Recreation, and City Council, for acknowledging the NYC urban forest as an issue worthy of such significant consideration. The urban forest is a critical part of the fabric of our city, as well as a vital solution to climate change and issues of racial and environmental justice. I once again echo our ask that 1% of the City Budget go to DPR and for full funding for the NYC urban forest.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. The Nature Conservancy is pleased to make ourselves available for discussion.

Thank you,



Tami Lin-Moges
Interim Director, NY Cities Program
The Nature Conservancy
Tami.Lin@tnc.org



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Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on
Finance

Executive Budget Hearing 05/20/2024

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Brannan and Chair Krishnan for convening this joint hearing. My name is Cory Hasson, and I am the Government Affairs Manager of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). NYRP is a member of Parks and Open Space Partners, the Play Fair Coalition, and the Forest for All Coalition. I am here today to advocate for a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system. The proposed budget for the next fiscal year will jeopardize our most vulnerable, chronically disinvested in communities. Beyond reversing these devastating cuts, we must achieve 1% of the city budget for Parks.

We already know what disinvestment in the Parks Department looks like. NYC Parks has been chronically underfunded for over 40 years. In 1995, actress Bette Midler returned to New York City and found many of the city's streets, neighborhoods, and parks consumed by a sea of litter and years of neglect. Appalled at the state of open green space, Ms. Midler founded NYRP and partnered with the Parks Department to remove over 481 tons of accumulated trash, garbage and debris from Sherman Creek Park, Highbridge Park, Fort Tyron Park, and Fort Washington Park in Northern Manhattan. Today, NYRP continues the environmental restoration and daily maintenance of Sherman Creek Park and parts of Highbridge Park.

NYRP however, cannot be everywhere. Mayor Adams' FY25 Executive Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55 million and eliminates over 600 essential jobs. As a result, New Yorkers can expect trash strewn parks, overflowing trash bins, and poorly maintained or outright closed public bathrooms. We will see un-mowed lawns, and untrimmed



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trees. For many New Yorkers, parks is their only direct connection to nature.

Investing in our parks system, funds climate change resiliency, public safety, and economic development. Parks drastically improve physical and mental health. Simply put, Parks are critical infrastructure, and should be funded as such.

As a matter of equity, all New Yorkers, regardless of where they live, deserve access to safe, clean, and green space.

Thank you.



May 20, 2024

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**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice
to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Management and Committee on Finance, on March 13, 2024 regarding
Fiscal Year 25 Executive Budget.**

Dear Chair Shuan Abreu and Chair Justin Brannan and Committee on
Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Committee on Finance:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization in
Harlem, New York City. We recognize and advocate for community-driven
solutions that can remedy the institutionalized harms associated with unjust
urban planning policies that have plagued communities of color for
generations. WE ACT is also a member of the Save Our Compost NYC
coalition – a coalition of New York City organizations working to support
and expand community composting to uplift environmental and climate
justice.

**WE ACT is urging the City Council to reinstate \$11.2 million for the NYC
Compost Project and GrowNYC and composting infrastructure.**

NYC Compost Project & GrowNYC	\$ 7.1 million, steady with FY2024 levels
Community Composting Site Relocation	\$ 2.1 million to build out new site promised to LES Ecology Center
Expand local compost processing	\$ 2 million to build out Big Reuse operated site

The Adams administration characterized the Compost Project as “small and
inefficient” when it justified before The City council its permanent
defunding of community composting. The Compost Project is small by
design and extremely efficient and effective in what it was designed to do:
create high-quality compost and build community, resiliency, and
widespread support for citywide participation in organics diversion.

The mayor claims he wants green jobs (115 jobs lost due to these cuts), he
wants a cleaner city, a healthier city. He wants to invest in the youth – the
future of our city. He has talked about sustainability, combating the climate
crisis and reducing the city’s emissions. Community composting programs

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do all of those things and more. There is no other program within the Department of Sanitation's (DSNY) budget that positively impacts multiple dimensions of the quality of life of New Yorkers.

Community composting is small by design and efficient and effective in what is designed to do. It provides local green jobs, hands-on education, technical support for hundreds of community gardens, high-quality finished compost that absorbs storm water, and tangibly connects New Yorkers to community, regenerative agriculture, soil health, circularity, and local resiliency. Furthermore, it is essential at this particular moment to maintain community composting to create widespread buy-in - as defined by long term sustained participation - for the curbside organics collection program, especially as it expands to all five boroughs this fall. Community Composting is a fiscally smart and essential path forward.

We need the City Council to hold Mayor Adams accountable and push back on these shortsighted budget cuts. You cannot accept an adopted budget that does not include funding for community composting.

Sincerely,

Lonnie J. Portis

NYC Policy and Advocacy Manager

lonnie@weact.org





May 20, 2024

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**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice
to the Joint New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Management and Committee on Finance, on May 20, 2024 regarding
Fiscal Year 25 Preliminary Budget for the Urban Forest.**

Dear Committee Chairs Shaun Abreu and Justin Brannan as well as the
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Committee on
Finance:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) is writing to testify on the
need to invest in the City's future by funding environmental and climate
policies and programs. Founded in 1988, WE ACT is a community-based
organization in Harlem, New York City. At the city, state and federal levels
WE ACT has been fighting environmental racism – racial discrimination in
environmental policy-making, enforcement of regulations and laws, and
targeting communities of color for toxic waste disposal and siting of polluting
industries. We recognize and advocate for community-driven solutions that
can remedy the institutionalized harms associated with unjust urban planning
policies that have plagued communities of color for generations. Likewise,
WE ACT stands firmly amongst nearly 140 organizations in our
commitment to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, expanding
New York City's urban forest, and promoting the NYC Urban Forest Plan
as a member of [Forest for All NYC](#).

Due to historic disinvestment and structural racism, such as redlining, our
parks, green spaces, and access to the City's waterfront are not equitably
distributed. Access to green spaces is on average much lower in
environmental justice neighborhoods that are already plagued by adverse
health problems and high levels of pollution. NYC Parks does not have the
resources it needs to provide access to quality green spaces and
infrastructure in every neighborhood. Even though Mayor Adam's
proposed austerity cuts fell short of what was originally expected, only full
restoration of the Parks budget will allow for department staff to
adequately care for New York's green spaces.

**We strongly urge this Council to execute the City's commitment to its
resilience and climate health goals by fully funding NYC's through the
following actions:**

1. Fund the NYC Parks Department at 1% of the total FY25 budget.

We are [lagging behind](#) other major cities in our budget allocation to

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parks, despite having far more acreage to maintain. San Francisco spends 1.6 percent of its municipal budget on parks, Los Angeles spends 2.9 percent, Chicago 4.3 percent and Minneapolis 5.3 percent. This is short sighted planning, and a disservice to New Yorkers who rely on parks not only to improve neighborhood resilience, but as spaces of play, joy, and a connection to nature. Further, we urge you to save the roles of the 100 City Parks Workers (CPW's) that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 200 CPW positions to restore staffing to pre-Covid levels. CPW's help clean our parks, which enables more access to trees and green spaces.

2. **Commit to full funding for the NYC urban forest - including to NYC Parks, NYC Housing Authority, public schools, and many other city agencies with trees in their care.** The preliminary FY25 NYC Parks budget includes:

- Elimination of the tree risk management program and trail formalization program and the civilian positions that supported them
- Reduction in stump removal, which slows the replacement of felled trees with new plantings - hampering the City's goal to reach at least 30% canopy cover
- Elimination of NYC SPARX – a program that teaches STEM to young girls and fosters the next generation of workers with the passion and skills needed to sustain our urban forest

While our coalition expected to witness a shift towards increased and more proportionate investment in the NYC urban forest, the administration has instead proposed disinvesting further. The FY25 budget would cut \$55 million dollars from NYC Parks (in comparison to the FY24 budget) and hundreds of essential jobs, which threaten a greener, healthier, and more resilient New York City.

3. **Follow through on the commitments in PlaNYC** to increase access to quality green spaces for all New Yorkers by achieving 30% canopy cover and reinstate the Citywide Trails Program. Expedient investment toward these goals is essential, as mature trees provide a majority of heat mitigation, air pollution reduction, and stormwater retention benefits when compared to saplings. Saving this task for some other administration down the line increases the likelihood investments in the urban forest will not reach their full potential by the time we need



them most. Full funding for the NYC urban forest is critical for the health of all New Yorkers and the city's resilience to climate change.

4. **Commit funding for a robust multi-agency planning process to create the citywide NYC Urban Forest Plan** mandated by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed by July 31, 2025, including sufficient funding for a rigorous community engagement effort.
5. **Expand and fund green infrastructure¹ throughout the City and ensure the agencies like NYC Parks and DEP have funding for maintenance:** Green infrastructure projects, such as rain gardens, bioswales, water squares, green and blue roofs, daylighting rivers, and permeable pavements help absorb stormwater, purify the air, and mitigate the urban heat island effect. This would maximize environmental benefits to all communities, especially in underserved communities and areas that have underutilized spaces. When WE ACT has previously met with NYC Parks to discuss green infrastructure and street trees in East Harlem, a historically underserved community, their main concern for not expanding desperately needed green infrastructure was maintenance costs. This cannot continue to be a hindrance for the agencies responsible with adapting our built environment for climate change.²
6. **End the hiring freeze and restore NYC Parks staffing to pre-Covid levels** to ensure our parks and the urban forest are safe, clean, and accessible to all New Yorkers: NYC Parks still has nearly 1000 fewer staff than they had before Covid budget cuts. Key positions we would like to see prioritized and baselined in the budget restoration include 50 Forestry and GreenThumb staff, 50 Urban Park Rangers, and 100 City Parks Workers (CPW's). Without the Council's intervention, city staff in these positions will be terminated, leaving our green spaces with diminished access to critical services such as vegetation management, environmental education, and routine cleanings. Likewise, 50 Forestry and Gardener positions and 200 CPW positions are needed to restore staffing to pre-Covid levels. The addition of employees in these roles will facilitate reducing the disparity in quality

¹ Green infrastructure involves capturing rain water through natural systems before it enters and overwhelms the combined sewer system.

² East Harlem is a formerly redlined community that has suffered from years of neglect, disinvestment, and short-sighted planning from the public and private sectors. This has allowed severe racial, economic, and environmental disparities to proliferate. East Harlem has no tree canopy, and a 6 block stretch surrounding 125th street received no new tree plantings this year, and no anticipated tree plantings next year. When we inquired about this with the Parks Department about this stark oversight, they told us that East Harlem is a hostile environment for baby trees which lowers their success rate of plantings without extra maintenance, which they do not have funding for. When WE ACT inquired about a potential green infrastructure project leveraging Bond Act funding for the 125th street corridor to help cool the environment in the absence of tree canopy, their first response was a concern over maintenance, and a lack of funding.



and services available to the most environmentally burdened neighborhoods.

Swift and prudent investment is pivotal to protect the most climate vulnerable New Yorkers against extreme heat. This past summer was the [hottest on record](#), and there is a 99% chance this year will rank amongst the [top 5 hottest years](#). New York is acutely vulnerable to extreme heat events. A recent [study](#) found that New York City has the worst urban heat island effect in the country - temperatures can measure up to nine degrees fahrenheit hotter than surrounding rural areas for nearly 80% of the population. This is due in large part to 72% of New York City's built environment consisting of concrete or asphalt, materials that absorb heat and amplifies the urban heat island effect.. While all of New York City experiences the urban heat island effect caused by the density of impermeable surfaces that absorb heat, environmental justice neighborhoods like East Harlem are subject to a hyper-local urban heat island effect, exposing these residents to [temperatures as much as 10 degrees hotter than the City average](#). And while NYC's natural areas are 4-6 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than the average temperature of other land surface types during extreme heat events, low-income communities have [21% less park space](#) than higher-income neighborhoods. Failure to correct these inequities built into our urban environment results in Black residents dying at twice the rate of their white counterparts from heat stroke and heat-exacerbated illnesses.

These actions also improve the City's ability to manage stormwater from increasing frequent and strong storms. There are many neighborhoods that are vulnerable to flooding from extreme rain, sea level rise, and storm surge. East Harlem residents have been consistently vocal about flooded streets during strong rain. Large areas of the neighborhood sit directly in the 100-year flood plain, according to [flood maps](#) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, however East Harlem's waterfront - its first line of defense to future coastal storms - remains dilapidated and inaccessible. The extreme rainfall and subsequent flooding the city experienced on Friday, September 29th underscores the need for more significant investments in parks, openspace, and proven green infrastructure solutions such as bioswales, street trees and blue belts. Likewise, NYC's forested natural areas [soak up as much stormwater as \\$580M worth](#) of new [green infrastructure](#). The proposed cuts to NYC Park's operating budget will prevent these life saving investments from taking shape and cost us more money long-term remedying more severe flood damages.

The most at-risk areas have residents that are majority Black and Latinx and represent some of the poorest in New York City. This is just one of the ways communities of color tangibly feel the legacy of racist policies like redlining. Such policies that have discouraged investment in communities of color have



resulted in a lack of tree coverage, disparities in generational wealth, and poor building maintenance; all of which render both the inhabitants and the built environment ill-equipped to withstand extreme weather events that will only become more severe and frequent as climate change persists.

Despite the critical functions the urban forest serves to our communities and acknowledgments of its importance by the administration, we continue to see contradictory funding decisions. Mayor Adams' pledge to increase NYC Parks funding to 1% of the City's total budget, PlaNYC's commitment to a 30% canopy cover, the unanimous Council passage of historic legislation creating the City's first urban forest plan and requiring the City to consider the role of trees and tree canopy in its long-term sustainability planning were major touchstones of progress last year. However, the proposed FY25 budget would severely impede all of these commitments and eliminate hundreds of essential jobs. Such funding actions diminish our adaptation capacity, marginalize efforts toward climate health equity, hamper green economy growth, and erode public trust in city leadership.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Caleb Smith

Resilience Coordinator



caleb.smith@weact.org

WE ACT for Environmental Justice



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**New York City Council
Committee on Finance, Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
Committee on Parks and Recreation, Honorable Shekar Krishnan, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Submitted by Sharon Levy, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs**

**Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance and
Committee on Parks and Recreation
May 20, 2024**

I respectfully submit the following testimony on behalf of the YMCA of Greater New York.

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. With 24 YMCA branches and more than 100 community sites across New York City, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services, spanning from infancy to older adults — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

The YMCA is also a proud member of the Interorganizational Taskforce on Lifeguard & Aquatics, and a supporter of New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). As a member and supporter of these networks and coalitions, we support their policy and budget agenda. We join them in the call for a full restoration of the budget cuts introduced in the November 2023 Financial Plan and the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Plan, including the \$5.1 million for swim access and lifeguard training to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's (Parks).

One of the ways the Y reaches the community is through our aquatic programs, placing children and adults on the path to develop lifesaving skills in the water. Utilizing 22 aquatic centers in all five boroughs, the Y provides pool access to tens of thousands of New Yorkers every year. We do this through programs like Second Grade Swim, swim instruction, summer day camp, adult lap swim, and a variety of other programs. Furthermore, through our newly created Aquatics Center for Excellence (ACE) we have been providing free lifeguard training and certification since 2022. Over 300 participants have been certified as YMCA lifeguards through this program.

In 2023, the Y, along with other organizations testifying, convened the Interorganizational Taskforce Lifeguards & Aquatics, comprised of nonprofit providers and City agencies focused first on tackling the City's acute lifeguard shortage and then on the broader issue of water safety in our City. Over the last year, through the work of the taskforce, we have created new collaborations that have supported recruitment efforts, shared resources, and developed joint advocacy efforts to elevate these critical issues with our city and state elected officials. But much work remains.

As New Yorkers, we pride ourselves on being a diverse and dynamic community. Yet, when it comes to knowing how to swim, or access to swimming spaces, we, as a City fall short. We are a waterfront City – with 520 miles of waterfront – and yet too many New Yorkers never learn how to swim. With over 8 million residents, and a warming global climate, our public pools are woefully insufficient to meet the need for quality swim instruction and recreation.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is a leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, with children and people of color disproportionately affected. Shockingly, Black children are five times more likely to drown than their white counterparts. In a City where the vast majority of our communities are black and brown, these disparities are unacceptable. It's time we recognize the importance of swimming for all and take concrete steps to ensure every resident has the opportunity to learn, enjoy, and stay safe in the water.

The key to addressing these issues is improving access to swimming spaces and swim instruction for all New Yorkers. We can accomplish this by creating additional access to existing pools, public, private, and those run by nonprofit organizations. The City must – immediately -- significantly increase funding for swim instruction and pool operations in the Fiscal 2025 budget. Expansion of free swim lessons in pools including but not limited to Parks, DOE, and nonprofit pools will significantly impact the rate of injury and fatality from swim related incidents in our City. Even before recent budget cuts, only a tiny fraction of the city's budget went toward swim instruction – a troubling reflection of its overall prioritization by the city. Over the long term, we must prioritize the expansion of aquatic infrastructure. This means building more pools, particularly in neighborhoods who do not have access to aquatic spaces. It also means finding ways to include pools as critical public investments, along with parks and other green spaces, in our capital planning process.

Furthermore, Memorial Day weekend, the unofficial start of summer, is when City beaches will be open. It is unacceptable that the City will be opening beaches this Memorial Day weekend with less than 200 lifeguards, with expectations of hiring 900 out of the necessary 1600+ lifeguards to watch the City Beaches and Parks' pools. As many know, the lifeguard shortage has been an issue for years and was significantly exacerbated by the pandemic. We believe that through partnership and regulatory changes, we could increase the number of lifeguards in NYC exponentially. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, should have the ability to accept nationally recognized lifeguard certifications like the Red Cross and YMCA certifications. This

would allow us to train a more robust workforce, as well as employ more lifeguards and fill in the staffing gaps.

In addition, we urge the City to work with nonprofit providers to establish a lifeguard development program, as well as a training and certification program within our high schools. By engaging youth from diverse communities to strengthen their swim skills and train to become lifeguards, we can not only create a sustainable pipeline of qualified lifeguards, but also foster a sense of responsibility and leadership among the next generation. Investing in training and mentorship opportunities for young New Yorkers can help address the immediate staffing challenges and cultivate a culture of safety and service.

Universal swimming access is not just a matter of convenience or leisure—it's a matter of equity, public health, and safety. By implementing these solutions, we can make significant strides towards creating a city where every resident, regardless of background or circumstance, can dive into the joy and safety of swimming. Let's make waves together and ensure that swimming truly becomes an accessible and inclusive activity for all in NYC.

We appreciate your support, leadership, and partnership in addressing the City's water safety challenges. Thank you so much for fighting for children, families and adults of New York City. We look forward to working with you and the City Council on the efforts in making swim access for all a reality.

If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Levy, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs, at slevy@ymcanyc.org or [REDACTED].



50 Broadway, 29th Floor
New York, NY 10004
www.alignny.org

Testimony to Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Executive Budget Hearing

May 20, 2024

Board of Directors

Stuart
Appelbaum
President,
Retail
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Department
Store Union

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*Executive
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Lucia Gomez,
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Eunice Ko
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NYC
Environmental
Justice
Alliance

Olivia Leirer
Co-Director,
New York
Communities
for Change

Juanita O.
Lewis

Council Member Shaun Abreu, Chair New York City Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

My name is Theodore Moore and I am the Executive Director of ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York. We bring together labor, climate, and community for a more just and sustainable New York, and I am writing as one of the lead organizations of the Transform Don't Trash (TDT) Coalition. The Transform Don't Trash NYC coalition is dedicated to transforming New York City's commercial trash industry to reduce waste and pollution, foster clean and healthy communities for all New Yorkers, and create better working conditions and good jobs for our state's workers. Thank you to Sanitation committee chair Council Member Shaun Abreu for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

TDT worked tirelessly to pass Local Law 199 in 2019, which established 20 commercial waste zones across New York City to reduce truck miles traveled to transport commercial waste to distant landfills, thus creating safer and healthier environments for communities and sanitation workers. To date, only one zone is set to come online this fall, despite the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) awarding all 20. As the implementation process continues to be delayed, it is our low-income, Black and Brown communities and our workers that are impacted by exposure to polluted air and unhealthy working conditions. A large portion of waste is trucked through already burdened communities which have some of the highest asthma rates across New York, such as North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens. These communities are already suffering from exposure to multiple sources of pollution and the cumulative impacts resulting from exposure to these pollutants.

We urge the Council to support the full implementation of the remaining 19 zones and to ensure the Department of Sanitation is adequately funded to hire appropriate staff, monitor waste zone implementation, and oversee awarded carters. Under Local Law 199, DSNY can enforce more rigorous safety standards for awarded carters, such as workforce training requirements including workplace safety, vehicle operations, and public safety hazards associated with the collection and transfer of waste. The city must enforce training standards and other safety rules to create safer working conditions for sanitation workers.

*Executive
Director
Community
Voices Heard*

*Jose Lopez
Co-Executive
Director, Make
the Road NY*

New York City produces about 24,000 tons of waste each day, thus the implementation of the waste zones also means developing sufficient capacity to support waste collection at waste transfer stations. We must expand the number of marine transfer stations across the city, such as the uncompleted Gansevoort Marine Transfer Station and 59th Street marine transfer station.

New York is also nearing the end of the 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the new 20-year SWMP is due in 2026. The SWMP is an essential milestone to ensure equitable waste handling across the state. Public engagement is imperative throughout this process and must include intentional outreach to impacted communities experiencing waste inequity and communities that will be impacted by the development of new infrastructure. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Council to support the development of a SWMP that invests in sustainable infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and includes protections for solid waste workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise our coalition's concerns regarding continued waste inequity in our city. We reiterate the need to enforce the implementation of the remaining 19 zones and ensure the highest possible environmental, safety, and customer protection standards across the new system.

Sincerely,

Theodore A. Moore



Our organization, the **Bay Ridge Environmental Group**, is a member of Forest for All NYC, a coalition of over 140 organizations committed to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, expanding, and promoting the NYC urban forest. We believe that even the most significant environmental issues facing our world can be addressed by engagement and advocacy at the local level.

The urban forest matters to my organization/community because NYC's Park spaces provide crucial wellness benefits; Bay Ridge has come to rely upon our Parks spaces for a multitude of community events throughout the year. In the most recent census data the Bay Ridge population increased by 40%, while the concentration of green space infrastructure per capita has decreased. Most importantly our green spaces provide the sustainability support we need by providing a respite from urban heat island effect, absorption of pollutants and stormwater mitigation!

We are deeply disheartened by the cuts in the FY24 budget and proposed cuts in the FY25 budget- they are not in line with the City's previous commitments to the urban forest, including Mayor Adams' pledge to increase NYC Parks funding to 1% of the City's total budget.

The FY25 budget would cut \$55 million dollars from NYC Parks (in comparison to the FY24 budget) and hundreds of essential jobs, which threaten a greener, healthier, and more resilient New York City.

Now is the moment to increase investments in our urban forest, not cut them, in order to put NYC on the path to reach at least 30% tree canopy cover by 2035, equitably. We are asking for:

1. End the hiring freeze and restore NYC Parks staffing to pre-Covid levels to ensure our parks and the urban forest are safe, clean, and accessible to all New Yorkers (NYC Parks still has nearly 1000 fewer staff than they had before Covid budget cuts)
2. Save and baseline the roles of the 50 Forestry and GreenThumb staff that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 50 Forestry and Gardener positions.
3. Save and baseline the roles of the 50 Urban Park Rangers whose jobs will be eliminated at the end of June that provide environmental and cultural education to parks visitors

4. Save the roles of the 100 City Parks Workers (CPW's) that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 200 CPW positions. CPW's help clean our parks, which enables more access to trees and green spaces.

The urban forest is essential to the quality of life of all New Yorkers and NYC Parks plays an invaluable role in caring for a significant amount of our city's trees and green spaces.



New York City Council Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing

Monday, May 20, 2024

Testimony By: Nilka Martell, Bronx River Alliance, Chair

My name is Nilka Martell and I am the Chair of the Bronx River Alliance. I am also a life-long Bronxite, the founder and director of Loving the Bronx, and an enthusiastic champion of all Bronx parks. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY25 budget and the importance of restoring full funding to our vital parks.

The Bronx River Alliance is a nonprofit formed by community activists and government partners in 2001 to protect, improve and restore the Bronx River corridor and greenway so that they can be healthy resources for the communities through which they flow. We work in close partnership with NYC Parks and dozens of community-based organizations. We are also a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs. We are achieving what many thought was impossible - the creation of beautiful waterfront parks, the restoration of forests and salt marshes, even the return of a beaver (and dolphins) to the Bronx River! Perhaps most importantly, we have transformed what was once an abandoned dumping ground into a cherished community asset.



In 2020, our parks demonstrated how essential they are. They were one of the few places that remained open during the darkest days of the pandemic. And yet, NYC Parks sustained a devastating budget cut. We all saw the impact of inadequate funding for our parks - they were full of garbage; dumping and graffiti increased; enforcement and security couldn't keep up. Parks were in their worst condition in two decades. Our parks suffered. New York City residents suffered, layering challenges on an inexpressibly difficult year.

Now in 2024, NYC Parks has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic despite increased demand and clear need for these spaces, and thousands fewer workers than it had decades ago. The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities and threaten the progress that has been made along the Bronx River. The over \$55M in proposed cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

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

- Allocate 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks
- Prioritize funding for parks, as they are critical infrastructure
- Provide New Yorkers a parks system that is safe, clean, green, and resilient
- Hold Mayor Adams accountable for committing to allocating 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks

NYC Parks are at a tipping point, with a proposed FY25 budget that will eliminate over 600 essential jobs. Parks need more PEP Officers, City Parks Workers, Gardeners, and Cleaning Corps workers - not less. New Yorkers and our beloved parks deserve better than trash strewn playgrounds, delayed activation of sprinklers amidst unprecedented summer heat, long term bathroom closures, and neglected tree canopy care in the midst of a climate crisis. Parks are critical to our public health and safety, and are drivers of social equity; they should be funded as such.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nilka Martell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nilka" and last name "Martell" clearly distinguishable.

Nilka Martell
Chair

CC: Bronx River Alliance Board Members
Carolyn McLaughlin, Vice Chair
Ethan Strell, Secretary
Jonathan Rook, Treasurer
Raji Kalra
Joan Byron
Maarten de Kadt
Marit Larson
David Shuffler
Nicole Perrino
Justin Mashia
Vivian Vazquez Izirarry
Elizabeth Figueroa



May 23, 2024

To the New York City Council Committee on Parks,

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative is a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, and also the convening organization of the NYC Greenways Coalition.

New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system. The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Beyond parks, these cuts will hinder the agency's ability to manage its 15 miles of beaches, 51 recreation centers, 65 pools, 9,900 acres of natural areas, 2,300 athletic courts, 800 ballfields, and 1,000 playgrounds. They will inequitably impact the well-being and quality of life of countless individuals and families. Parks are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Mayor Adams' FY25 Executive Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55M and eliminates over 600 essential jobs.

These budget and staffing reductions will make it impossible for the agency to ensure parks are safe, clean, green, and resilient across the city.

If enacted, New Yorkers can expect trash strewn parks and playgrounds, delayed activation of sprinklers and water fountains amidst unprecedented summer heat,

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
c/o NewLab
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Brooklyn, NY 11205
718.522.0193

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[@BKGreenway](https://twitter.com/BKGreenway)

reduced hours and public programming at rec centers, long term bathroom closures, and neglected tree canopy care.

NYC Parks now has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic despite increased demand and clear need for these spaces, and thousands fewer workers than it had decades ago.

NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe.

The NYC budget has grown by 127% since 1980, and every other frontline city agency's budget has grown by between 127%-165%, while NYC Parks has only grown by 72%.

We demand 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks. Mayor Adams repeatedly committed to this investment but hasn't yet followed through.

Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. They should be funded as such.

All New Yorkers deserve safe, clean, green and resilient parks, pools, beaches and rec centers.

Thank you,

Hunter Armstrong

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative



The four borough-based Solid Waste Advisory Boards are asking you to restore the PEG cuts to community composting and bring back all of the 115 jobs. As the recently released IBO analysis of the Executive Budget and Financial Plan shows, the money is there.

As you can tell from the outpouring of support for community composting – since cuts were first announced last November –community composting is vitally important to people across New York City. The program creates an inclusive community space, bringing together New Yorkers of all income levels and backgrounds.

The community compost projects were never designed to be an at-scale solution for New York City's organics. But they are very efficient in doing what they were designed to do, which is:

- Outreach to NYC residents about compost and food scrap diversion. For example, engaging with hundreds of community groups and thousands of volunteers, working at community and school gardens, and at street tree care and other events.
- Technical support for community garden compost programs.
- Education for students, community gardeners, and for the Master Composter Certification program.
- Employment of more than a hundred workers in green jobs, many of them union jobs.
- Providing the most environmentally responsible processing for the food scraps diverted and collected according to the US EPA Wasted Food Scale released October 2023.
- And, last, but not least, the distribution of the highest quality compost, distributed at no charge to NYC Parks, the Botanical Gardens, and for street tree events that help the city address climate change impacts from heat and flooding, and mitigate toxicity and depletion of soils.

Only through the community compost projects' feet-on-the-street, hands-in-the-soil, person-to-person outreach will citywide curbside organics collection be sure to succeed and decrease methane created by landfilling, incinerating, and co-digesting organics. Recall that the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act Scope states that the waste sector generates 12% of NYS's greenhouse gas emissions, while electrical generation is 13%. This Council needs to restore and build up the drop-off sites, composting, and education infrastructure that budget cuts have brought to the brink of destruction, and secure their future.

DSNY's strategy of relying on the legality of organics separation and fines is not sufficient, as recycling rates in NYC since its inception in 1989 have proven. Those rates have never reached the modest initial goal of 23%. Now, as the city embarks on a new stream of source separation, residents need education and a reason to participate. Community composting's record of delivering beneficial soil amendments for the City's trees, social connection, green jobs, and measurable climate-altering greenhouse gas reduction, not to mention rat mitigation, is the motivating message that—along with the ongoing involvement of community composters throughout this city—is what will make organics diversion succeed.



Please restore full funding to the Compost Project. While it's not a matter of New York City lacking the financial means to support this crucial program, it's evident that abstaining from funding it is a luxury the city cannot afford.

CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2024

May 20, 2024

Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Parks and Recreation

Chair Brannan, Chair Krishnan, and Members of the New York City Council Committees on Finance and on Parks and Recreation:

My name is David Freudenthal, and I am the Director of Government Relations at Carnegie Hall. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the essential role of free, public arts programming in activating our city's parkland and public spaces.

For more than half a century, Citywide has taken Carnegie Hall beyond its four walls with free, world-class concerts to diverse audiences of all ages and cultures across all five boroughs. The series showcases outstanding mainstage artists and exciting rising stars of classical, jazz, world music and more. Through partnerships with local community organizations, Citywide taps into the pulse of the city and brings people together to share the joy of music. Through leveraging high-profile artists in hyperlocal venues, these partnerships generate tourism throughout the city and stimulate local economies. Built on long-term and new partnerships with important neighborhood gathering places such as libraries; museums; houses of worship, mission-driven organizations; public plazas; and parks, our close collaborations with local partners are key to the program's success, strengthening these community anchors.

Carnegie Hall's Citywide programming can be a great way to advance the City Council's goal of centering arts in revitalizing communities, energizing and activating economic and cultural activity in NYC with a hyper-local neighborhood-based model. Free concerts encourage New Yorkers to take part in community activities and provide access to extraordinary music in their neighborhoods. Vibrant arts programming in public spaces serves as a powerful driver of local economic development and improved quality of life for residents, creating thriving New York City neighborhoods. These free performances seek to bolster neighborhood-driven community-building efforts, thereby creating opportunities for civic engagement and supporting local small businesses and the entire network of New York's tourism and entertainment economy.

The Citywide Partnership

Citywide is unique among public concerts because of Carnegie Hall's deep investment in the partner. Success of this is based on:

- Bespoke program curation – the organization and CH work together to identify the best artist for that venue/community. Culturally responsive programming is prioritized in partnership with the venue to identify artists relevant to their communities.
- Partnership – Carnegie Hall brings talent, strength of brand, expertise, to enhance each organization by both reinforcing the organization's engagement with its own community and bringing the community of Citywide fans to that organization.

- Carnegie Hall supplies:
 - artist/artist fee
 - marketing
 - artist hospitality
 - project and production managers
 - volunteers
 - supplemental backline
 - supplemental production support
- Community partner supplies:
 - venue
 - house staff
 - security
 - ticketing support (if the venue has a set capacity)
 - production staffing
 - backline
 - marketing

Carnegie Hall works closely with the partner venue to promote and market the performances to both the partner's constituents and our own community of Citywide fans who attend the performances all around NYC. Carnegie Hall volunteers staff the Citywide information tables at the concerts. The role of these volunteers is to make the concert attendees feel welcome at the event and to answer any questions they may have about this and other events. They also encourage them to complete a survey to understand better who is coming to these events and to help us develop programming of interest to them.

Citywide and COVID

Citywide events were the earliest live Carnegie Hall events emerging from the pandemic. On June 12, 2021, Carnegie Hall presented its first in-person event since March 2020, a Carnegie Hall Citywide performance by Los Hacheros in Harlem's Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park. Throughout summer 2021, Carnegie Hall Citywide produced 22 concerts with fantastic artists, including Adrienne Warren, Terence Blanchard, Hazmat Modine, Slavic Soul Party!, Toshi Reagon & BIG Lovely, Harlem Quartet, Son Del Monte, and Ensemble Connect. Several new partner venues joined the summer lineup, including Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park, DUMBO Archway, Historic Richmond Town, New York Botanical Garden, Times Square, Queens Botanical Garden, the Third Avenue BID, and The Bronx Music Heritage Center. After a truly challenging period for arts and culture organizations, Carnegie Hall Citywide concerts brought the performing arts in NYC back to life and spread the healing power of music to every borough.

Last season, Carnegie Hall presented a diversity of artists comparable to past seasons such as Edna Vazquez, Los Hacheros, Le Vent du Nord, Ray and Vivian Chew, Cha Wa, Harlem Quartet, The Baylor Project, and Soh Daiko. Partner venues included Madison Square Park, Bryant Park, Historic Richmond Town, Times Square, and many others. As in past years, the concerts featured established and emerging artists representing an array

of musical genres, styles, and traditions that reflect the vibrant diversity of the city and of Carnegie Hall's programming.

Citywide Today

As the program returns to pre-pandemic levels this year, Carnegie Hall invites local elected officials and agency community liaisons to table at Citywide concerts. These events generate attendance from the immediate neighborhood, borough, and city at-large, and therefore provide meaningful opportunities to share important resources, including but not limited to IDNYC registration and renewal, information for newly arrived migrants and their families, participatory budgeting, and other community events.

Upcoming Dates

- Times Square (Manhattan – Midtown)
 - 6/6 5PM Ensemble Connect
 - 6/13 5PM Natalie Tenenbaum
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (Manhattan – Greenwich Village)
 - 6/6 7PM Le Gateau Chocolat
- Robert F. Smith Center for the Performing Arts at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park (Manhattan – Manhattanville)
 - 6/15 6PM The Pedro Martinez Group
- Wave Hill (The Bronx – Riverdale)
 - 6/27 7PM Jasmine Rice LaBeija
- Bryant Park (Manhattan – Midtown)
 - 7/5 7PM The Harlem Chamber Players ft. Tania León, Terrence McKnight, and Josh Henderson
 - 7/12 7 PM Thandiswa Mazwai
 - 7/19 7PM Louis Cato
 - 7/26 7PM Michael Olatuja and Lagos Pepper Soup
 - 8/2 7PM La Excelencia
- Madison Square Park (Manhattan – Flatiron District)
 - 7/10 6PM Alisa Amador
 - 7/17 6PM JACK Quartet
 - 7/24 6PM Ekep Nkwelle
- Al Quiñones Playground (The Bronx – Mott Haven)
 - 7/13 5PM Johnny Mambo, Don Sonero
- O'Donohue Park at Beach 17th Street (Queens – Far Rockaway)
 - 7/20 6PM OKAN

Citywide Expansion

Looking ahead to the future, we seek to expand from 30,000 to 50,000 attendees over the next couple of years. We propose to expand in phases by:

- Deepening existing partnerships (more events at existing venues). We tend to stay away from established presenting organizations that have well established programming as they don't need our support. We are interested in venues such as: Parks; BIDS/Plazas (privately owned spaces); Mission Driven Organizations; and Churches/Synagogues/Mosques.
- Serving public goals by working through systems of human services agencies that exist to support New Yorkers in need. For example, Settlement Houses have arts central to their mission. Similarly, the City's system of public hospital and health centers is another model.
- Forging new partnerships in new neighborhoods and venues, specifically outside of Manhattan.

This work is made possible by consistent public support of arts and culture. Carnegie Hall respectfully requests \$100,000 to underwrite Carnegie Hall Citywide programming.

The Carnegie Hall Citywide Concerts series is just one example of the breadth of services available that demonstrate the broad and deep impact of the arts and cultural sector in our city, especially through public-private partnerships. Carnegie Hall is also a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a collective of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. In pursuit of meaningful, sustained public support of the vast array of programming and public resources offered by our CIG colleagues and the NYC arts and culture community at large, **Carnegie Hall endorses the field's \$53 million request to restore culture fully in FY25:**

- **Reverse November Plan PEGs - \$7.9 million**
- **Reverse CIG FY24 reduction - \$5 million**
- **Restore one-year funding - \$40 million**

A commitment to funding the arts and culture is a compound investment in economic resiliency and growth, workforce development, community healing, education, and public safety. Sustained investment in the arts and culture is a statement to each and every person who calls New York City home that their holistic wellness matters.

We thank the Committee for their interest and investment in these programs, and we encourage the Council to continue to support this important work and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and thanks to our community partners, artists, educators, and community members for being a part of truly transformational changes.



Contact: Clare Miflin
clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org

Testimony for March 20th 2024 Preliminary Parks Budget Hearing

I am Clare Miflin, Executive Director of the Center for Zero Waste Design, a member of the [Save our Compost Coalition](#); and a supporter of [Forest for All NYC](#) and [Play Fair](#). I participated in the panel [What Happens to NYC's Organic Waste?](#), and the [Community Compost Teach-Ins](#).

Parks and NYC's Urban Forest are essential for all New Yorkers for urban cooling, stormwater mitigation and active and passive recreation. They can be even more effective for stormwater management and urban cooling with the application of compost, and the community stewardship that can come from the work of community composters and their volunteers.

Community composting educates New Yorkers, which is essential for the success of DSNY's municipal "composting" program. In 2023, after a full year of collection in Queens (for all 14 districts), a mere 4.3% of organic waste was collected by DSNY's compost trucks, down from 7.5% in 2018 (for 9 districts). See [Biocycle article](#). That means even after a full year of the curbside program was rolled out to every household of Queens, 95.7% of compostable waste still went to landfill or incineration. This is unacceptable, and it is foolhardy to cut the one program that educates New Yorkers on how food scraps and yard waste can be made into compost, and giving thousands of volunteers every year actual opportunities to take part in the process.

Community composting creates high quality compost to make the city greener and more resilient. Of the organic waste that DSNY does collect, 80% goes to waste water treatment plants where it is turned into biogas, some of which is used by the plant, and digestate, most of which is sent to landfill. 20% is composted, most in the Staten Island Compost Facility. In 2022 DSNY composted about 2,000 tons of organic waste in Staten Island Compost Facility, but the NYC Compost Project composted more, close to 3,500 tons (see [What Happens to NYC's Organic Waste?](#)). The compost from NYC Compost Project is also higher quality, as there are no plastics to try and screen out, and has higher nitrogen content as more food scraps are incorporated. This high quality compost is ideal for parks, community and school gardens, rain gardens and street trees - increasing stormwater infiltration rates and the health of soils, plants and trees.

We are glad the administration is moving forward with **Climate Budgeting** – [In a recent interview](#), New York's Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi remarked, *"Every dollar has to do double duty now — it has to not only do its purpose in terms of building out infrastructure or providing energy, but it also has to lower emissions, cool, and absorb water. And that is the only way that New York City will survive."* **In which case I can think of nothing more important to fund than Community Composting and Parks**, which do many times more than double duty.

Community composting allows people to experience the concept of circularity firsthand; seeing food scraps become compost that is then returned to their own communities offers New Yorkers a tangible vision of how to live mindfully. Direct involvement in the process at drop-off sites teaches correct separation more effectively than the best signage, helping them form lifelong habits. **At the heart of community composting is local stewardship — an approach needed to [maintain 21st-century green infrastructure](#) which NYC has invested billions of dollars in.**

We call for the restoration of 7.1 million dollars for community composting, \$4.1 million of capital money previously allocated to build out Big Reuse's and Lower East Side Ecology Center's new compost sites, \$2 million for GrowNYC schools zero waste education program, and the \$55 million cut from Parks.

Full funding for community composting and Parks is critical for the health of all New Yorkers and the city's physical and social resilience to climate change. For more information please see my opinion article written with Samantha MacBride, for more: [Don't Kill Community Composting in NYC](#) (pasted in below)

I am very happy to discuss or expand on any of these ideas further,
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Miflin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Clare" written in a larger, more legible script than the last name "Miflin".

Clare Miflin,
Executive Director, Center for Zero Waste Design

Don't Kill Community Composting in New York City

Eliminating funding for NYC's neighborhood network of food waste drop-off sites would be a significant blow to the city's sustainability and climate resilience efforts.



Food waste is the part of garbage that makes it disgusting. When sealed in plastic bags with other trash, food waste putrefies, releasing foul odors and garbage juice, attracting rodents and roaches. When it winds up in landfills, food waste creates leachate and methane that pollute the land, waterways and air.

But when food waste is composted, it transforms into a nutrient-rich, environmentally friendly soil amendment: black gold. An ancient practice that has evolved over centuries of work by gardeners and farmers, composting is an effective way to bolster cities' green agenda.

The social and environmental benefits of community composting are vast — yet New York City [plans to permanently defund the largest, most successful program in the country](#). In November, Mayor Eric Adams announced cuts to the program to save \$6 million in the city's fiscal year 2024 budget, a fraction of a fraction

(0.09%) of the city's [\\$7 billion gap](#). The mayor's preliminary [budget](#), released Jan. 16, shows no funding for community composting through fiscal year 2028.

To justify defunding community composting, the city has pointed to the [expansion of curbside organics collection](#) — over the course of 2024, residents across the five boroughs will be obliged to separate their food scraps and participate in a citywide composting program. But the success of that municipal effort depends greatly on the existence of community composting. It's shortsighted of the city to eliminate this program, which provides so much to New York City on such a small budget. As experts on composting, waste management and regenerative urban systems, we urge the mayor to recognize that community composting is an integral part of his own vision for a more resilient, sustainable and equitable city.

In New York City, community composting grew out of grassroots efforts to reclaim disinvested neighborhoods in the fiscal crisis of the 1970s and '80s. In 1993, the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) launched the [NYC Compost Project](#) as an educational partnership with the city's four botanical gardens. Since then, community composting has grown to involve dozens of partners, including nonprofits like the [Lower East Side Ecology Center](#), [Big Reuse](#), [Earth Matter](#) and [GrowNYC](#) as well as parks, community gardens, schools and citizen volunteer groups. Every year, they [manage](#) hundreds of drop-off sites, process over 4,000 tons of food waste, engage thousands participants in activities, and provide education and outreach to more than 600,000 New Yorkers. The resulting compost is used in the communities where it is produced, nourishing gardens, parks and trees.

Community compost makes good soil — literally and figuratively. It enriches the earth at a time when the world's soils are [degrading](#) at an alarming rate, and it grows social bonds, civic awareness and a healthier society.

It's also a key partner in the city's broader [green infrastructure](#) and climate resilience plans. Over the past decade, New York City has invested [billions of dollars](#) in these efforts. Mayor Adams's own [PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#), unveiled in April 2023, includes a host of promises to expand the city's tree canopy, create curbside rain gardens, reduce emissions and grow NYC's green workforce. Compost is integral to the success of these initiatives. It enhances [the ability of soils](#) to act as a carbon sink and to mitigate stormwater run-off. Adding compost to neighborhood parks, street trees and community gardens once or twice a year allows them to [absorb up to 80%](#) from a four-inch rainfall.

Across the US, other cities are expanding their community composting programs, which grew an average of 22% a year from 2010 to 2021, according to a [composting census](#) released by the nonprofit Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Municipal composting programs are also on the rise, with sanitation departments offering curbside bin collections for organic waste (food scraps and yard waste) alongside trash and recycling.

Both community and municipal programs are welcome given the vast quantity of food waste that still ends up in landfills. But the two are very different in terms of scale, process and benefits. Many municipal systems don't actually compost, but instead send organic waste to [anaerobic digesters](#), where it is transformed into biogas and digester solids, as [in Toronto](#). Digestate is nutrient-rich and potentially usable as fertilizer, though if the waste is co-digested with sewage in wastewater treatment plants — as it is in NYC — it [often ends up in landfills](#). Municipally collected organic waste also contains contaminants like plastic bags and other non-compostable material, so the resulting compost or digestate may contain plastics, an [issue the EPA](#) is starting to study.

DSNY previously [recognized](#) how their support of community composting helped their municipal program. Community composting allows people to experience the concept of circularity firsthand; seeing food scraps become compost that is then returned to their own communities offers New Yorkers a tangible vision of how to live mindfully. Direct involvement in the process at drop-off sites teaches correct separation more effectively than the best signage, helping them form lifelong habits. At the heart of community composting is local stewardship — an approach needed to [maintain 21st-century green infrastructure](#).

With under 5% of the city's organic waste currently being diverted, low participation in municipal composting is a problem that cutting the community compost program will make worse. DSNY would be wise to find \$6 million in its \$1.9 billion budget to preserve the program. Over the long term, the department could institute measures which both save costs and help achieve their zero waste and [containerization goals](#). For example, DSNY could cut redundant trash collection on the [37% of city streets](#) that are home to one- or two-family residences that currently get twice- or thrice-weekly pickup. If residents correctly separated recycling and organics, that trash would fit in a single bin per week. Once-a-week collection could save the city

Other city leaders see the value of saving this [crucial community resource](#): 29 out of 51 City Council members and four of the five borough presidents sent [letters](#) imploring the mayor and DSNY commissioner to restore the community compost program's funding. They're joined by the more than 49,000 New Yorkers who signed a [petition](#) organized by activists that have banded together under the [#SaveOurCompost](#) banner. Meanwhile, time is running out: NYCCP has been forced to lay off staff and close food-scrap drop-off locations and would have been shuttered entirely were it not for private donations which are allowing partial operations to continue through June.

Over the next six months, as the budget is negotiated and adopted on June 5, New York City still has a chance to work towards a future of vibrant public spaces, thriving communities and a growing green economy. NYC has spent decades building up a successful community compost network. Let's not throw it all away.

Clare Miflin is an architect and executive director of the [Center for Zero Waste Design](#), principal of design consultancy [ThinkWoven](#), and member of the [Save Our Compost](#) Coalition.

Samantha MacBride is on the faculty of the Marx School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, an advisor to [Earth Matter NY](#) and a former official for New York's Department of Sanitation and Department of Environmental Protection.



**Testimony of the Central Park Conservancy
Parks & Recreation Committee
May 20, 2023**

My name is Bety Smith, and I am writing to you on behalf of the Central Park Conservancy. I want to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to address the City Council Finance Committee at this hearing. This platform provides a crucial opportunity to underscore the indispensable role that our parks play in the fabric of our communities and to advocate for the necessary funding to ensure their vitality.

New Yorkers deserve nothing less than a fully funded, safe, clean green and resilient parks system. Unfortunately, the budget cuts to NYC Parks this year, and the proposed budget for the next fiscal year, pose a significant threat to this vision. These reductions jeopardize the fundamental functions of our parks, making it increasingly challenging for the already overstretched Parks Department to fulfill its mission of ensuring equitable access to green spaces for all New Yorkers.

The ramifications of these cuts extend far beyond the parks themselves. They will impede the agency's ability to manage essential amenities such as beaches, recreation centers, pools, athletic courts, ball fields and playgrounds. Such measures will disproportionately affect the well-being and quality of life of countless individuals and families across the city.

More than 160 years ago, New York City leaders pioneered what was then a novel concept: a park dedicated to the idea that people from all walks of life deserved to enjoy safe, free, beautiful open spaces. The result was Central Park, which was a bold and unprecedented investment in the future of New York City.

What we've learned over these 160 years is that creating greenspace is not enough. That's why the Conservancy supports the allocation of 1% of the city budget to NYC Parks. This investment is essential to ensure the long-term viability of our parks system and the well-being of all New Yorkers.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize the funding and support necessary to safeguard our parks and green spaces. By investing in NYC Parks, we not only enhance the quality of life for current generations but also ensure a legacy of health, resilience, and equity for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your continued leadership in preserving and enhancing our city's parks.



**Testimony of Jenny Veloz, Policy and Advocacy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to New York City Council Committee on Parks, Committee on Finance -- FY25
Executive Budget Hearing
May 20th, 2024**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure the wellbeing of New York's children, families, and communities.

As a member of the Fair Play Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, we would like to thank the Chair Brannan, Chair Krishnan, and all the members of the New York City Council Finance and Parks Committee for holding this hearing.

The pandemic elevated the importance of city parks, particularly as families sought safe and public opportunities to engage children.¹ Parks provide a vital service for families and children, helping promote play, exercise, and positive mental health. Children explore and learn in playgrounds and natural areas. In a city where few residents have access to a backyard, parks are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate climate crisis.

The budget cuts to NYC Parks jeopardize the very heart of our communities. Years of underfunding have presented challenges for NYC Parks employees in keeping parks clean, safe, and accessible. NYC Parks now has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic despite increased demand and clear need for these spaces, and thousands fewer workers than it had decades ago. NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed. There are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe.

Mayor Adams' FY25 Executive Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55M and eliminates over 600 essential jobs. If enacted, these budget and staffing reductions will make it impossible for the agency to ensure parks are safe, clean, green, and resilient across the city. New Yorkers can expect trash strewn parks and playgrounds, delayed activation of sprinklers and water fountains during the summer, reduced hours and public programming at recreation centers, long-term bathroom closures, and neglected tree canopy care. While New York City's budget has grown by 127% since 1980 and other frontline city agency's budget has grown between 127%-165%, NYC Parks budget has only grown by 72%. NYC Parks budget has not kept up pace with other city agencies and neighborhood parks and green spaces are feeling the impact.

Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity, and they should be funded as such. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers. **CCC joins the Play Fair Coalition in calling on the City to fulfill the Mayor's commitment to fund New York City Parks at 1% of the city budget.**

Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. New York City has a responsibility to make sure that our parks are safe, clean and equitable for all New Yorkers. New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

ⁱ New Yorkers for Parks. “1% for Parks Impact Report.” March 2023. <https://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/NY4P-1-Percent-for-Parks-Impact-Report.pdf>



Department of Biology

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City College of New York
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New York, NY 10031
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Dear Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

I am writing to strongly encourage the restoration of city funding--and support-- for community composting.

My name is Dr. Amy Berkov. I am a recently retired faculty member in the CCNY Dept. of Biology, and a 44-year resident of Manhattan's East Village. I am also a community gardener. I initially became familiar with the ground-breaking work by the Lower East Side Ecology Center via their initial recycling bins outside my garden, and have been dropping off my food waste for composting for almost three decades. A year or two ago I estimated how much food waste I personally had dropped off at the farmers market for conversion to compost:

Composting since: 1996

Number of weeks: 1150

Estimated pounds per week: 4

Total pounds diverted from waste stream, and not available to rats: **2.3 TONS**

Community Composting is an important tool— for addressing the root causes of climate change, and mitigating our thriving rat populations. Community composting has also made strides towards a **critically important mission**: educating the public about human impacts and how our collective behavior threatens the planet on which we all depend. Community composting educates urban residents, trains volunteers, provides employment, and **empowers all of us** to make decisions that address root causes of environmental ills. At a time when many of us feel overwhelmed by, and helpless in the face of, environmental problems, it is so important to demonstrate that we can take small, but rewarding steps, towards our environmental goals.

We should be making Community Composting more, not less, available! If we lose community composting now, we will lose decades of progress towards NYC's sustainability goals. That represents a very costly loss, in the long term. I hope that you will consider the importance of community composting, and restore funding in the upcoming NYC budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Berkov".

Amy Berkov

aberkov@ccny.cuny.edu



May 20, 2024

Civics United for Railroad Environmental Solutions represents communities that are adversely impacted by the city's waste-by-rail exports. We absolutely need organics to be removed from the waste-by-rail stream because of the community health and environmental impacts from the new waste-by-rail industry, which continues to grow exponentially.

Since this new industry started in 2008, communities that live with waste-by-rail have been adversely impacted by increasing hours of excessive nighttime noise, toxic diesel exhaust from locomotives, crashing rail cars, blocked rail crossings, toxic dust and runoff from open rail cars of construction and demolition debris, and from the "stench of death" that rail cars with rotting organics can emit.

The educational programs and facilities of the Community Composting sites coupled with the NY City Council's new Zero Waste laws and DSNY's halting rollout of curbside composting were finally in place and beginning to effect the needed reduction in organics-by-rail exports in 2023. And then, unaccountably, funding was completely ripped away from Community Composting.

More than one City Council Member at this morning's hearing suggested that baseline funding is needed for Community Composting, and Commissioner Tisch agreed to discuss funding mechanisms. Communities that are living with the misery of NYC's organics-by-rail exports -- by transfer stations, WRRFs, railyards, landfills, incinerators -- are counting on your action to get this tonnage out of the waste export stream and into as much local composting as possible. Relying on technocrats, industry players, law, and enforcement alone will never get this done, as the city's recycling diversion rates prove. You also need the power of Community Composting sites -- and the New Yorkers and communities they cost efficiently teach, engage, and serve -- to get organics out of NYC's waste stream. Please restore and stabilize Community Composting funding now. Thank you.

Mary Arnold

Civics United for Railroad Environmental Solutions
civicsunited@gmail.com

**City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management written testimony
05.20.2024**

I'm Laura Sewell, the director of the East Village Community Coalition and a community garden member. We appreciate the administration's leadership on mandatory curbside organic waste composting, but we urge you **not** to cut funding for community composting.

The East Village and Lower East Side are well-known for our activism and do-it-yourself spirit. Local residents are eager to participate in activities that are for the greater good: to reduce methane emissions from landfill, spare our communities the environmental impact of incineration, and spare our city budget the expense of exporting waste. Community composting not only transforms organic waste into soil for our gardens, parks and tree beds, but empowers residents (from youth to seniors) to make a difference in their community.

There are many community gardens in CB 3, some of whom process compost internally. While very few have the capacity to take on more than their members produce, Down To Earth Garden in the East Village is a notable exception. A handful of dedicated volunteers processed almost **11 tons of organic waste** in 2019, even while our district was being serviced by the curbside brown bin program. Larger programs like the Lower East Side Ecology Center and the Big Reuse have an even greater impact.

Please continue to support and **fund community composting** activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Laura Sewell
East Village Community Coalition
143 Avenue B - Simplex
New York, NY 10009
(212) 979-2344
director@evccnyc.org

To whom it may concern,

I serve as a member of [Forest for All NYC](#), a coalition of nearly 140 organizations committed to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, expanding, and promoting the NYC urban forest.

Forest for All NYC celebrated the City's previous commitments to the urban forest, including Mayor Adams' pledge to increase NYC Parks funding to 1% of the City's total budget, PlaNYC's commitment to a 30% canopy cover, and the unanimous Council passage of historic legislation creating the City's first urban forest plan and requiring the City to consider the role of trees and tree canopy in its long-term sustainability planning. However, the cuts in the FY24 budget and proposed cuts in the FY25 budget are not in line with these commitments.

While our coalition expected to witness a shift towards increased and more proportionate investment in the NYC urban forest, the administration has instead proposed disinvesting further. The proposed FY25 budget would cut \$55 million dollars from NYC Parks (in comparison to the FY24 budget) and hundreds of essential jobs, which threaten a greener, healthier, and more resilient New York City.

Now is the moment to increase investments in our urban forest, not cut them, in order to put NYC on the path to reach at least 30% tree canopy cover by 2035, equitably. Failing to adequately care for the urban forest could cost New Yorkers more in the long run; caring for the trees we have and planting more now means cost-savings in the long run.

The urban forest is essential to the quality of life of all New Yorkers and NYC Parks plays an invaluable role in caring for a significant amount of our city's trees and green spaces. The urban forest is critical infrastructure to New York City and should be both valued and treated as such.

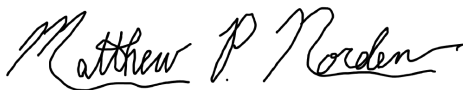
The urban forest matters to my community because I work for an non-profit affordable housing company dedicated to providing a high quality of life and to our tenants – many of whom stay for generations.

Life in New York does not just happen at home and at work; by making neighborhoods and local parks greener, New York can ensure a higher quality of life for all New Yorkers. With 2023 being the hottest summer the Northern Hemisphere has seen in 2,000 years and climate change accelerating this warming trend, heat related illnesses and deaths will continue to rise. These issues tend to impact lower-income New Yorkers, neighborhoods of color, and elderly or younger New Yorkers at a higher rate. Increasing the parks budget and supporting the commitment to at least 30% tree canopy cover is a way to reduce the risk of heat related illnesses and deaths through increased shade.

The Forest for All Coalition is asking specifically for the following:

- Commit to full funding for the NYC urban forest, including city agencies with trees in their care.
- The 2025 budget to restore the tree management program and trail formalization program, increase stump removals so that felled trees can be replaced with new plantings, and to restore NYC SPARX – a program that teaches STEM to young girls and fosters the next generation of workers with the passion and skills needed to sustain the urban forest.
- Follow through on the commitments in PlaNYC to increase access to quality green spaces for all New Yorkers and reinstate the Citywide Trails Program
- Commit funding for a robust multi-agency planning process to create the citywide NYC Urban Forest Plan mandated by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed by July 31, 2025, including sufficient funding for a rigorous community engagement effort
- End the hiring freeze and restore NYC Parks staffing to pre-Covid levels to ensure our parks and the urban forest are safe, clean, and accessible to all New Yorkers (NYC Parks still has nearly 1000 fewer staff than they had before Covid budget cuts)
- Save the roles of the 100 City Parks Workers (CPW's) that will lose their positions at the end of June and add 200 CPW positions to restore staffing levels to pre-Covid. CPW's help clean our parks, which enables more access to trees and green spaces.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew P. Norden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" and last name "Norden" being more prominent than the middle initial "P".

Matthew Norden

Keanu Arpels-Josiah
Fridays For Future NYC
FY2024-25 City Budget Sanitation & Solid Waste Management Testimony
Monday, May 20, 2024



Hi! My name is Keanu Arpels-Josiah, I'm an 18-year-old high school student and an organizer with Fridays For Future NYC, a youth-led climate justice organization representing high school students and young people throughout the city.

We're nearing the anniversary of our skies turning orange last June—of asthma rates spiking, of the worst air quality in the world. Last summer was the hottest on record, though it will go down in history as the coolest one for the rest of my generation's lives.

And what does this city do in response? Cut investment after investment in our communities and in our future. In New York City, 20% percent of our landfill waste is composed of food scraps. 58% of nationwide methane emissions, a greenhouse gas with 80 times more warming power than CO₂ when it's released, come from these food scraps. There is no addressing the climate crisis, there is no climate justice, without community composting.

Just a few weeks ago, the head of the UN climate body, Simon Stiell, said "We have two years left to save the world." That's not hyperbole. It's high time for this City, which is ranked as the 3rd highest emitting city in the world, to restore the \$7 million dollar Community Composting program entirely cut by the Mayor, as well as the rest of the budget cuts.

The current anaerobic co-digestion being partially used by the city is just simply not composting. It actually continues to perpetuate the same system of burning fossil fuels and creating planet-warming emissions. We simply just need to invest in our communities, in our parks, in climate justice, and in composting, our generation's future is on the line.

The question for this body, for the Mayor, for New York City is will you choose our generation, our communities or will you hand down a death sentence to frontline communities here in New York, around the world, in the global south?

In 2018, Greta Thunberg left school to protest for climate justice outside of the Swedish Parliament. In New York City, we've been doing the same here every Friday since 2019. Since January 2022, just here from 4-6 every Friday at City Hall.

Stand up for our generation. Restore the budget cuts.

Thank you.

Good morning. I am Dorian Colucci Mecir from Friends of Francis Lewis Park in Queens. Thank you for having this hearing session and giving us the opportunity to discuss the budget cuts. FOFLP is a volunteer group that cares for and beautifies Francis Lewis Park in collaboration with NYC Parks Dept, DSNY and Partnerships for Parks.

We have received the terrible news that on June 30th of this year, our full time CSA – City Seasonal Aide, Marcelo Ortiz will lose his job. Marcelo is hardworking, reliable and our only full time worker.

As we all know, more than ever, our Parks are oasis' in the city for millions of New Yorkers. Covid 19 showed the stark reality of how important parks are for the physical and mental well being of residents. Park workers are the very back bone of maintaining clean & safe parks for all to enjoy. While having clean trash cans, manicured lawns, clean beaches and working playgrounds is ideal, I would like to talk about the role of our essential park workers and SAFETY!

In the Spring of 2023, I was in Francis Lewis Park with my dog chatting with Sanitation Supervisor Dan Hennessey. Suddenly, Marcelo was coming up the middle of the lawn from the waterfront. Marcelo was assisting a young man who was clearly in distress-he looked limp and he was struggling to walk.

Marcelo called out to me:

“Dorian, this young man needs medical assistance now. I have already called 911”

I asked the young man what was going on and he told me that he was having an allergic reaction to milk and needed his Epi-Pen. His face was beet red and his voice was fading. He was having trouble breathing. Marcelo asked him where his Epi-Pen was and he told us in his car. Marcelo stayed with the young man while Dan and I ran to find his car.

We found his car and sadly found an empty gallon of milk inside. It occurred to us that he may be trying to commit suicide. We found his EpiPen and raced back. Marcelo had him on the sidewalk grass at the curb waiting for the ambulance to arrive. The young man was fainting out. Dan and Marcelo administered the Epi-Pen in his thigh. The ambulance and FDNY arrived a minute later. After updating EMS, Marcelo came over to Dan and I and told us something that just broke us. He said that when he found the young man at the waterfront, sitting on a bench, hunched over.....he was vomiting and crying. He told Marcelo:

“I should have jumped off the bridge”

Marcelo immediately realized that not only was this young man having a medical emergency, he was having a mental health emergency and came to the park to commit suicide. He assessed the situation quickly, assisted the young man and called for help

Because of Marcelo Ortiz being on duty that day, that young man is alive.

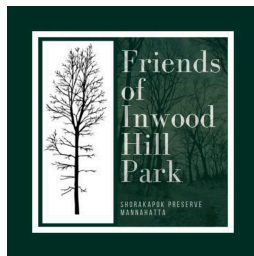
ON April 28, 2023, Marcelo was honored at our Arbor Day celebration where he was presented with a citation by CM Paladino for his lifesaving effort that day.

On June 16, 2023 Marcelo received the “Beyond The Call” award from NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue.

As a matter of fact, about 20 other Parks workers received the “Above The Call “ award that day for saving lives while on duty.

Parks workers are the eyes and ears of our Parks. They keep the pulse of their community park and know the grounds like the back of their hands. They are ESSENTIAL to the safety of New York park goers.

We URGE YOU to help reinstate the budget and help keep the jobs of the 600 Parks workers that are set to be let go this summer. We need them to help keep our parks safe & clean!



***New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing
Friends of Inwood Hill Park***

My name is John Druzba. I have attended nearly 200 park cleanup and beautification events in NYC. I speak on behalf of Friends of Inwood Hill Park and Hell's Kitchen Conservation Corps, environmentally based communities rooted in a network of NYC Park's advanced-stewards, volunteers and staff. We are members of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition of over 400 organizations. We thank the Finance Committee for holding this hearing.

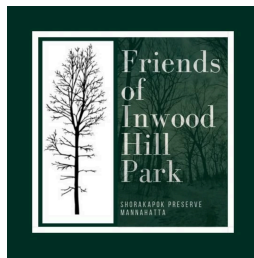
I recognize and acknowledge we sit on the Indigenous territory known as "Lenapehoking." I am aware that our parks and trees are shared resources that we are collectively responsible to protect. I'd like to recognize the late NYC Council members Stan Michaels, who protected Inwood Hill from developers, and Sally Fisher, whose impacts on our parks are immeasurable.

New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system. The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Beyond parks, these cuts will hinder the agency's ability to manage its 15 miles of beaches, 51 recreation centers, 65 pools, 9,900 acres of natural areas, 2,300 athletic courts, 800 ballfields, and 1,000 playgrounds. They will inequitably impact the well-being and quality of life of countless individuals and families, especially in historically disadvantaged communities. Parks are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

The preservation and expansion of NYC's forest and tree canopy is essential to reducing NYC's carbon footprint, reducing stormwater runoff and resulting combined sewer overflow events, reducing the urban heat island effect, providing key habitat for animals, and much more. In our experience, coordination at all levels of government is key to preserving and expanding our urban forest. Ensuring proper funding for Parks is the only way this coordination can take place.

Hell's Kitchen Conservation Corps' Chief Officer is a mother of two beautiful girls. She volunteers her time in Hell's Kitchen because she wants her children to live in a city where her girls can play in natural areas. To let them play without fear of a shard of glass or an exposed, used hypodermic needle lurking in the community garden. Friends of Inwood Hill Park's director is a father of two young children. He wants them to live in a world where litter isn't dominating the landscape and shorelines of Manhattan's only old growth forest. Inwood Hill is under threat from climate change, invasive species, erosion and upkeep and it's urgent to help it flourish.



Both of their organizations came into being to help fill that gap between the historical lack of funding and allocation of resources toward our city's forests, parks and street trees. These two leaders are more than conservationists. They aren't just trying to keep the status quo. They are attempting to make their park's thrive with thoughtful planning and execution by hundreds of local volunteers. Yet they are constantly stunted by our governing agencies inability to collectively recognize the benefits of Parks, the rights of nature, and the urban forest as a solid investment. They don't provide adequate and equitable funding for even bare essential needs.

Therein lies the point of why I'm here. The NYC budget has grown by 127% since 1980, and every other frontline city agency's budget has grown by between 127%-165%, while NYC Parks has only grown by 72%. Mayor Adams repeatedly committed 1% investment into NYC Parks, of which covers 14% of NYC's land over 1,942 sites across all 5 boroughs, but he hasn't followed through. So I am here with the Coalition to demand that a very reasonable 1% be given up.

Speaking for myself, I know NYC Parks deserves closer to 10%. I am unreasonable. But I know that the value of land, business storefronts, and marketing for tourists is greatly increased when we invest in our biodiversity and tree equity, not to mention safety and mental health.

If the Mayor's proposed budget is enacted with over \$55 Million in cuts to NYC Parks, we'll be forced to expect trash strewn parks and playgrounds, delayed activation of sprinklers and water fountains amidst unprecedented summer heat, reduced hours and public programming at rec centers, long term bathroom closures, and neglected tree canopy care. 600 jobs - essential jobs - gone. But fund the parks, and we'll all have the chance to watch trees grow up along with our kids, providing safe havens of cool shade and increased biodiversity and mental health for our communities, with our neighbors now and generations of neighbors to come.

NYC Parks now has thousands of fewer workers than it had decades ago, back when NYC was the greatest city in the world. All that's eroded and for as long as I can remember, there's not nearly enough workers to keep our parks clean and safe. Let's make our parks great again by funding them properly, so that New Yorkers who stay can nurture their families here in nature.

Thank you,

John Druzba of Hell's Kitchen,
NYC Park's Super Steward,
Friends of Inwood Hill Park &
Hell's Kitchen Conservation Corps

Chris Whitney of Inwood,
NYC Parks Super Steward,
Director & Co-Founder of
Friends of Inwood Hill Park

Rita Kwong of Hell's Kitchen,
Citizen Pruner
Chief Officer of Hell's
Kitchen Conservation Corps

Marion Boulton of Inwood,
NYC Parks Super Steward &
Earth Day Festival Committee
Friends of Inwood Hill Park



Public Comment of Hayley Gorenberg on behalf of

Friends of Mount Prospect Park

to the New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation and
Committee on Finance (May 20, 2024)

USING PUBLIC MONEY TO PAVE GREEN PARK SPACE FOR A REGIONAL-SCALE SKATE COMPLEX

As New Yorkers face new Parks Department cuts of \$55M, some officials are funneling more than 20% of that amount – over \$11M of public money – to pave over green park space in beloved Mount Prospect Park in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn.

Friends of Mount Prospect Park opposes Mayor Eric Adams' initiative to construct a regional-scale, 40,000-square-foot, mostly concrete and asphalt paved skateboarding complex on green space the community never imagined we'd have to defend and protect against the Parks Department and the Mayor's sudden rollout – complete with professional lobbyists and an expensive public relations campaign by BerlinRosen. The Mayor's \$24M plan includes four skate sites – two in the Bronx and two in Brooklyn. All except Mount Prospect Park are already paved; the paved sites do not face opposition.

THIS PROJECT WOULD MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WORSE FOR NEW YORKERS' FAMILIES AND OUR FUTURE

This project warrants the most probing environmental examination, but officials have provided none. Problems include:

HEAT AND TREE CANOPY: Paving green space worsens heat effects and heat islands. The Brooklyn Public Library directly next door runs a cooling center because of already dangerous heat impacts. A member of Friends of Mount Prospect Park analyzed satellite data from August 2023 that showed temperatures about 13 degrees higher in NYC skate facilities (even where there was some shade) as compared to adjacent green space. Tree canopy is key to cooling; construction and paving green space endanger trees, even if they're not cut down.

FLOODING: Paving green space worsens stormwater impacts, flooding, and sewer problems. Mount Prospect is well-known for drainage problems. Paving makes it all worse. Paving green park space in a locale already known for intense flooding and sewer overwhelm flies in the face

of key climate and resilience goals. Any new drainage interventions should be added to address the existing and growing problem – not added to offset new paving.

NOISE/CONGESTION/TRAFFIC: Other environmental impacts include increased noise (from skating and events) and increased local sidewalk and street traffic on a block already jammed with tourist attractions and frequent events.

DANGEROUS SITE, DANGEROUS PLAN

Mount Prospect Park's inherent features violate Tony Hawk's Skatepark Project foundation's own "best practices" guidelines:

- **No sightlines:** Celebrity skater Tony Hawk's Skatepark Project foundation (donating design – not funding) publishes an online "best practices" guide that says it's very important for everyone's security and for monitoring any problematic activity in a skate facility that there be clear sightlines through the facility from street level. But Mount Prospect Park is on a steep grade high up from street level, with no sightlines from the street into the park.
- **No site evaluation provided:** Hawk also says data and evaluation should be available to clearly demonstrate the suitability of the site. But officials have presented no such material whatsoever; at first they claimed they'd performed a "feasibility study" showing this site was uniquely suited – but after community members filed Freedom of Information Law requests, they admitted no such study existed. From the outset, officials involved have steadfastly refused to discuss site selection.

The ramp entrance: Everyone (including Hawk's design experts) acknowledges the obvious, serious danger of skaters "hill-bombing" down Mount Prospect Park's sloped, crowded access ramp, next to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's entrance. People pushing strollers, people walking pets, elderly and frail people, small children accessing the playground, and people who use mobility aids or have disabilities use the ramp all day long.

The stairway entrance: Lobbyists and Tony Hawk's foundation representative insist skaters won't skate Mount Prospect Park's stone stairway entrance or stair rails, which empty onto a crowded sidewalk next to the Central Library's children's wing, and then busy Eastern Parkway. But people have already posted online that they want to try and skate the stairs! (And if the pros pushing the paving plan are so sure no one will try to skate these features and plow into pedestrians or Eastern Parkway traffic, will The Skatepark Project indemnify the City, so taxpayers don't pay out for injuries or deaths?)

Natural park debris: Proponents say a so-called skate "garden" (pouring a large concrete skating surface inside a now-green park) is a special new idea that has not been tried before. Of course, debris like twigs and pebbles – which create dangerous conditions for skaters – naturally falls and scatters in the park. Proponents pledge skaters will constantly clean

everything up themselves. But isn't it problematic to have natural park debris that skaters acknowledge causes falls and injuries continuously falling on paved skate surfaces?

WHO BENEFITS FROM SPENDING OUR PUBLIC MONEY?

Who's paying for the professional public relations campaign that references "partnership" and "collaboration" with celebrity skater Tony Hawk? Glossing over the fact that Hawk (who presented himself as an environmental activist in November on Climate Action Day) is not actually funding construction has led many New Yorkers to believe one of the biggest touristic skate complexes on the East Coast is largely bankrolled by a multimillionaire and his foundation. Not the case! The paved complex would be built with New Yorkers' public money.

Speaking of money, there is plenty of market interest by corporations in selling pricey skateboards and skate fashion apparel for profit – perhaps in a relatively affluent area on Brooklyn's "Cultural Row," the block already jammed with heavily touristic, heavily congested sites like the Botanic Garden and Brooklyn Museum, also in the vicinity of Prospect Park's rink, bandshell, etc. (Meanwhile, huge swaths of less affluent Brooklyn have no skate sites at all, despite The Skatepark Project foundation's professed mission to serve the "underserved.")

What financial interests relate to this "fast-tracked" project helmed by the Economic Development Corporation? Why is speed a goal here, especially as we are also told this is a unique effort, the first time such a project has been attempted in this manner within a park? Why is our green park space the test case for fast-track paved construction?

- We call for investigation and disclosure of any and all direct and indirect financial interests in constructing and marketing related to this relatively expensive sport – including but not limited to corporate connections with Tony Hawk's Skatepark Project foundation; potential concessions of any type; income from potential events; and marketing and sales of Brooklyn-related items, skate fashion items, designer skateboards, etc.
- We furthermore call for analysis of the economic and health impacts of substituting a multimillion-dollar single-use paved complex for multi-use free public green space that requires no equipment purchases.
- Finally, we demand an economic assessment and valuation of green space for the community, the environment and our collective climate future.

WORK THE PROBLEM FOR A "WIN-WIN": MAKE ALREADY PAVED SITES GREAT FOR SKATERS!

PR and power-plays aside, there is every opportunity here for a win-win: Use New Yorkers' public money to build great skate facilities (including cool green features, if skaters want them) on already paved areas, near and far:

- The only other Brooklyn site in this “citywide initiative” is already-paved Brower Park in Crown Heights, right next door to Prospect Heights, where Mount Prospect Park is located. Make Brower a fantastic skate space!
- Improve the many Parks Department skate sites nearby that draw skaters’ complaints over their design and condition:
 - Thomas Greene (near many schools, near Atlantic Center and trains, and near Homage Skate Academy, whose director in 2010 said if only there were funding, they would excavate or build a bowl). Consider Kensington/Conroy, with its sad little ramp near Greenwood Playground. Enhance Washington skatepark.
 - A nearby favorite location for skaters, Columbus Park Plaza, has a paved Parks Department lot where the Borough President and local City Council Member profess to support building a skate facility – if only there were funding....
 - And obviously there are many other paved areas throughout Brooklyn – including in areas where people have no skate facilities whatsoever, indicating an equity problem Parks and the City should address.

MAKE CHANGE NOW!

But of course there is the NIMBY card to play: shouting that anyone who objects to this terrible plan to pave beloved and important urban green park space – in contravention to standards for climate resilience and wellbeing – must reflexively hate change. In reality (climate) change is all around us – and in this instance we must change this plan to deal with it. We must make every choice a good choice – for ourselves and for our children. New York City was recently redesignated as within the “humid subtropical” climate zone, with worse and worse storms and flooding, and dangerous heat. We are all teetering together on a terrifying brink – and our children face the worst.

Step back from the brink. Change the course of this ill-conceived project. Don’t pave the park.



**New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony of Negin Farsad - Representing Friends of Tompkins Square Park**

I'm Negin Farsad representing the Friends of Tompkins Square Park in the East Village. We're also a part of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition. Like most people here, we're really concerned about budget cuts to parks because a park in New York City is so, so many things. I use my park anywhere from 1 to 35 times a week. For our family – like so many others - it's our backyard, it's our fun, it's our access to nature, it's where we build memories. My daughter experienced her first ever ride down a playground slide in Tompkins Square Park, it's where she's had birthdays, where our dog goes to the dog run. And, I don't mean to get too sentimental here, but the first time my husband told me he loved me was in a New York City park! (The Carl Shurz Park if you're curious.)

Parks are foundational for New Yorkers. On top of being spaces for three-dimensional city life they are now our first line of defense for the fight against climate change. I know that sounds almost too big for these parks to shoulder but it's true. Keeping them green and growing the right plants means keeping the city cool and breathable – which will help us fight against a rapidly warming planet. We, in Tompkins Square Park, take our role as environmental stewards of the park very seriously.

So for all the New Yorkers out there - the parents, the kids, green thumbs, the sunbathers, the athletes, the squirrel enthusiasts and yes, for all the future love birds out there - we beg of you to restore park funding so we can all enjoy a safe, clean, green and resilient park system.





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Wendy E Brawer
Director
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GreenMap.org
Think Global, Map Local!

Sanitation – Composting – 3/14/24 now 5/20/24
City Council Testimony

I'm testifying in writing although I was on City Hall steps in support of community composting yet again today.

How wasteful that these programs are being cut again. We need the soil these great programs create, not the greenwash GHGs of the bio-slurries made in the City's program, which is a world-class mockery of people doing the right thing.

What kind of a city closes down this incredibly beneficial program while simultaneously announcing mega green jobs development in the Brooklyn Army Terminal, Naval Yard & Governors Island - the [Green Economy Action Plan](#), which includes the Harbor Climate Collaborative with an investment of \$725 million from New York City.

City Council can set us on the right path. We need the public educated across the board and enabled to be climate smart citizens by the community compost network – every one of us can be part of the solution.

I'm Wendy Brawer and I have been mapping sustainability in NYC since 1992. Composting was one of the first things I mapped, and today, 32 years later, reducing food waste is #1 on the Project Drawdown [Table of Solutions](#) –

* Gigatons CO2 Equivalent Reduced / Sequestered (2020–2050)			
SOLUTION	SECTOR(S)	SCENARIO 1*	SCENARIO 2*
Reduced Food Waste	Food, Agriculture, and Land Use / Land Sinks	88.50	102.20

Let's make it a priority for today and permanent for tomorrow.

Thank you from everyone at Green Map System,

Wendy Brawer
Founder and Director
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Cemetery
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The Green-Wood
Historic Fund
(718) 210-3080

TESTIMONY May 20, 2024

Budget Hearing for the Department of Parks

Good afternoon. My name is Sara Evans, and I am the Director of the Living Collection at the Green-Wood Cemetery, a National Historic Landmark, arboretum, and a 478-acre greenspace in the heart of Brooklyn. Like our public parks, Green-Wood is open 365 days a year, with free access to the public. And, just like our public parks, Green-Wood is dependent on funding through the Parks Equity Initiative.

As New York's largest contiguous private landowner, Green-Wood is committed to leveraging our acreage to support the climate resilience of the city. We have over 8,000 trees and will plant 2000 more over the next five years to grow our canopy cover from 32% to 35%. Green-Wood's neighbor is the thriving community of Sunset Park, an Environmental Justice Area, under-served, economically, culturally, and environmentally for decades, which underscores the importance of our dedication to supporting a collection of healthy, climate-resilient trees.

One of Green-Wood's longest-standing research conservation projects is a partnership with the United States Forest Service, where we survey and scout for beetles in order to catch newly introduced species that have the potential to cause catastrophic damage to our city and wild forests, like the Emerald Ash borer. With NYC being an epicenter of international trade, its urban forest, held in its parks, cultural institutions, and wild areas, stands on the frontlines of invasive species detection and management. This is only one of the many reasons why the city's funding for these spaces and the workers that steward them is so critical.

Green-Wood is proud to be one of 140 member organizations of the Forest For All NYC coalition which is committed to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, and expanding the urban forest. And we stand with our colleagues in the Coalition to urge the City Council to invest in green spaces and organizations like Green-Wood that offer initiatives for climate resilience, environmental justice, and community outreach.

I'd like to personally invite members of this committee to visit Green-Wood and see the progressive work we're doing to benefit all New Yorkers. I look forward to welcoming you all to Green-Wood soon.

Sara Evans, Director of the Living Collection and Curator

The Green-Wood Cemetery



Statement of GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Executive Budget Hearing

May 20, 2024

Thank you, Chairperson Abreu and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kate Wimsatt and I am the Director of GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools.

GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools has been the educational partner of NYCPS and DSNY for the past 13 years, most recently working with all schools newly enrolled in Curbside Composting by providing on the ground technical support and education essential for school curbside composting to work. Our team of waste educators train custodians, form onsite sustainability teams of adult stakeholders with a focus on open communication and problem solving, and educate students about how and why to compost.

In just one month, a much anticipated and celebrated annual milestone will be reached when NYC schools break for summer. As I am sure you will all remember, it is an exciting time. Less exciting, in one month, the successful and effective 13 year partnership of GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools with DSNY and NYCPS will end due to the elimination of funding in the FY25 budget. While I celebrate the great achievement of all NYC schools now having curbside compost service, I am highly concerned that the loss of dedicated educational support provided by GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools will jeopardize the full implementation of school curbside composting.

Let's be honest, schools now all have the service, but they are not, by any means, all participating fully. The largest schools system in the country with the largest curbside compost program is celebrating the roll out to all schools by cutting the support that has been shown to improve participation and diversion rates. I just don't get it. Now is not the time. Now that service is fully available, ensuring that ALL schools fully integrate waste sorting into their daily habits as well as continuing to educate students and adults who can influence behaviors at home should be a priority.

Why do schools need continued support to ensure they are diverting up to 83% of their waste and teaching the next generation of NYers about composting?

- The pace of the roll out to over 1200 schools in 700 buildings in 2 years did not allow for the deep education, training and troubleshooting necessary for the systems to become fully established. The GrowNYC Zero Waste team laid the groundwork for success, ongoing support is most critical at this time.
- Compared to previous school curbside compost expansions, schools enrolled these past two years in the Bronx, outer Queens and outer Brooklyn received the

least support. Timing allowed for only 4-6 visits over a few months to a building, far short of the 1-3 years provided in previous expansions.

- While many in this room are committed and excited about compost, not all schools new to the service welcome the change. We don't expect everyone in a school to become a champion of compost, we do expect them to do what is necessary to separate the waste in their buildings for proper collection. This requires a sustained, ongoing effort to change behaviors, habits, and systems. In the process, and when the system is working, many along the way have come to realize the benefits of compost.
- Schools experience high turnover of populations. The staff, administrators, and students reached today are not the people present next year.
- Schools enrolled in Curbside Composting prior to this last 2-year expansion, have not received direct on-the-ground educational support since first enrolling, and many have consequently experienced major backslide in their participation and diversion rates – this must be addressed to ensure the success of the service.

Without funding: GrowNYC Zero Waste schools will not be able to provide training, troubleshooting and, when necessary, escalation of issues to our agency partners, so that school-based staff are able to operate a smooth-running waste management system that results in clean, uncontaminated, containerized, separated waste put out on the correct day for collection by DSNY.

We will not be able to provide outreach to empower NYC students, the next generation of NYC's leaders, makers and doers to take climate action in their schools through sorting their waste, and to bring that knowledge to their homes, where taking out the trash (or rather, recycling and compost!) is one of the most frequently designated chores of young people beginning to contribute to household tasks.

25 highly trained, full-time green jobs will be lost, 20 of which are union jobs.

Data from previous years has shown that with dedicated support, schools achieve higher diversion rates (this data will be provided in my written testimony). We know schools need our hands-on education and technical support in order to effectively participate and ultimately divert their waste from landfills. **They perform significantly better with help. Eliminating the GrowNYC Zero Waste School program by cutting our funding, directly and significantly inhibits Schools' ability to access this critical support.**

We are currently being asked by schools about what support ZWS will be able to provide them next year. Custodians, teachers and administrators we have previously worked with reach out to us to find out how we can come to the schools they have moved to to help get compost collection off the ground. One recent note from a teacher underscores how our support helps to build the capacity of the people who are ultimately responsible for the daily success of curbside composting: the administrators, custodial staff, sustainability coordinators and school aides.



Our team first worked with William Schell at Brooklyn Tech and recently provided support to him at his new school, IS 318 in Brooklyn. William had this to say when he learned of the loss of our funding:

Without specialized educators from outside organizations like GrowNYC helping educators on the inside, NYC teachers will continue to lack important support pieces necessary for us to coordinate school-based sustainability efforts and reinforce city policy. Or, more simply, we will lack a motivational factor for us teachers who need to be reenergized when we see that trying to do something good for the whole of our school or city doesn't matter to some of the stakeholders who should care the most.

GrowNYC ZWS urges Mayor Adams and City Council to care the most by funding the educational programming essential to the success of school curbside compost

We respectfully request:

- The restoration of 2.5 million for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools
- The restoration of 7 million for community composting including GrowNYC's Food Scrap Drop off sites and the NYC Compost Program

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Wimsatt
Director, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools
kwimsatt@[grownyc.org](mailto:kwimsatt@grownyc.org); [REDACTED]





The Olmsted Center
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
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Flushing, NY 11368
646-360-0203

**Testimony: Historic House Trust of New York City
Committee on Finance - FY25 Executive Budget Hearing
Monday, May 20, 2024**

My name is Giulietta Fiore, and I'm here today representing the Historic House Trust of New York City, a nonprofit that helps preserve 23 publicly-owned historic houses that operate as museums, cultural centers, community hubs, and vibrant greenspaces across all five boroughs. We thank the City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing, and support our fellow Play Fair for Parks Coalition members in advocating for increased funding for NYC Parks to ensure a safe, clean, and resilient parks system.

As some of the oldest structures in New York, the city-owned sites that we help steward sit on over 400 acres of public parkland that serve as important cultural and educational spaces. Celebrate Pride Month at the Alice Austen House on Staten Island, experience African-American folk and Americana music with the Cornelius Eady group at the Van Cortlandt House Museum in The Bronx, or join the 45th Annual Thunderbird American Indian Powwow at the Queens County Farm Museum. Head over to the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum in Upper Manhattan to celebrate the African and Dutch New York celebration of Pinkster, or sign your family member up for the Youth Garden Apprentice Program at the Wyckoff House Museum in Brooklyn.

Despite the best efforts of hardworking employees, years of disinvestment in NYC Parks have taken a toll on our public resources. The proposed budget cuts to NYC Parks for FY25 will make it even more difficult for the already under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic **work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers**. At our sites, we're seeing unsafe conditions on pathways, deteriorating roofs and wood siding, water infiltration, and graffiti. On top of all this, New York City's parkland is on the front lines of climate change. In the past few years, we've seen increased storm impacts including flooding, downed trees, and more. Without funding for maintenance workers, specialized tradespeople, and climate resiliency efforts across all five boroughs **we fear that communities will no longer see these park resources as safe and welcoming places**. By allocating more funds to NYC Parks in the FY25 budget, you will be supporting livable communities citywide.

One of the benefits of our parks system is that NYC Parks can see the city's needs holistically to work towards equity across boroughs. While nonprofits like us are happy to help out where we can, we want to caution against overly privatizing our public spaces. We work with over 20 local groups that excel at community engagement, programming, innovative interpretation, and education. However, they are increasingly being asked to expand their operations to respond to growing needs across the parks system. Like training staff in de-escalation and emergency response, our partners are rising to meet the challenge - but they shouldn't have to. We urge you to hear our call to help sustain the places that make New York City our home.

On behalf of our partners and neighbors, thank you for this opportunity to voice our needs.



**To: New York City Council Committee on Parks
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing**

***Submitted Comments by Majora Carter
Majora Carter Group LLC
May 20, 2024***

My name is Majora Carter, I am a lifelong resident of Hunts Point neighborhood in The Bronx and the owner of three local businesses: my eponymous urban revitalization and real estate company: the Boogie Down Grind Cafe; and the event venue, Bronxlandia.

In my early years as an environmental equality community developer, I founded and lead the community-based organization, Sustainable South Bronx. While there, I spearheaded the development of Hunts Point Riverside Park, launched one of the country's first and most successful green collar job training and placement systems and wrote the proposal for Federal CMAQ funds which resulted in more than \$50M in local, state and Federal funds for the development of the South Bronx Greenway.

As I hope you can tell, I have played a pivotal role in supporting the development of open space in NYC, especially in The Bronx.

MCG supports the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs that ALL New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system.

The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Beyond parks, these cuts will hinder the agency's ability to manage its 15 miles of beaches, 51 recreation centers, 65 pools, 9,900 acres of natural areas, 2,300 athletic courts, 800 ballfields, and 1,000 playgrounds. They will inequitably impact the well-being and quality of life of countless individuals and families. Parks are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

- Mayor Adams' FY25 Executive Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55M and eliminates over 600 essential jobs.
- These budget and staffing reductions will make it impossible for the agency to ensure parks are safe, clean, green, and resilient across the city and if enacted, New Yorkers can expect trash strewn parks and playgrounds, delayed activation of sprinklers and water fountains amidst unprecedented summer heat, reduced hours and public programming at rec centers, long term bathroom closures, and neglected tree canopy care.
- NYC Parks now has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic despite increased demand and clear need for these spaces, and thousands fewer workers than it had decades ago.
- NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe.
- The NYC budget has grown by 127% since 1980, and every other frontline city agency's budget has grown by between 127%-165%, while NYC Parks has only grown by 72%.
- We demand 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks. Mayor Adams repeatedly committed to this investment but hasn't yet followed through.
- Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. They should be funded as such.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Majora Carter", is located below the thank you message.

Majora Carter
CEO
Majora Carter Group LLC;
Boogie Down Grind Cafe
Bronxlandia

NYC Council FY 25 Executive Budget Hearing Public Session:

Finance Committee –
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair
&
Children & Youth Services Committee –
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

Health Committee –
Hon. Lynn Schulman, Chair

Parks & Recreation Committee –
Hon. Shekar Krishnan, Chair

Submitted on behalf of:

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

Udai Tambar
President and CEO

Presented by:

Scott Daly
Senior Director, Community Tennis

On behalf of the Board and Staff of **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL** (legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**), I thank you for the Council's over five decades of funding support. With the Council as our partner, we have become the nation's largest tennis and education organization.

With the city's finances in much better shape than expected in January, we ask that the Council continue their support by increasing our funding in the FY 25 Budget. This year we are seeking **\$1M** under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness* Initiative – an increase of \$200,000. **This would be our FIRST INCREASE in 16 years.**

During the past 16 years:

- The minimum wage in NYC has more than **DOUBLED** from \$7.25 per hour to the current \$15 per hour
- Permit fees and indoor court costs have more than **TRIPLED**
- Equipment costs for nets, racquets and balls have more than **DOUBLED**
- Bus transportation to and from tournaments/special events have more than **TRIPLED**
- **\$1 today only buys 69% of what it could in 2008**
- **Prices in 2024 are 1.44 times higher than in 2008**

Given the current state of inflation and the years of rising costs, it has become increasingly challenging for NYJTL to provide the level of programming that it is known for to youth across ALL five boroughs at its current level of Council funding, **ESPECIALLY since discretionary programs funded by the Council have not benefited from any COLA increases through the years unlike youth programs funded directly by DYCD.** In order to keep up with these costs, to continue to pay our staff a livable wage and to prevent cuts to programming, increased funding to NYJTL is **VITALLY** needed.

Funding of **\$1M** will enable us to:

- Continue to pay our staff a livable wage and keep up with rising staffing costs due to NYJTL's **minimum wage of \$18 per hour (above NYC minimum)**;
- Allow us to purchase sufficient equipment and cover additional site costs (permits/indoor court time);
- Enable us to continue serving youth in **EVERY** borough;
- Allow us to bring programming to **NEW LOCATIONS** throughout the city;
- Allow us to bring **ADDITIONAL HOURS** of free tennis instruction at existing sites;
- **INCREASE SATURDAY** programming to increase access for kids who cannot attend during the weekdays;
- **INCREASE ENROLLMENT** throughout the city as a result of additional program hours and new locations.

It is our belief that talent IS universal BUT access and opportunity IS NOT. That is why we have strived over the past 53 years to introduce the sport of tennis to **ALL** children, including those with special needs. NYJTL programs offer the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. They have the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

Studies have proven that the sport of tennis offers young people numerous developmental benefits. Regular tennis play has been demonstrated to improve physical fitness in the following areas (including but not limited to):

- **Aerobic & Cardiovascular Fitness**
- **Anaerobic Fitness**
- **General Body Coordination**
- **Bone Strength & Density**
- **Hand-eye Coordination**

Tennis has also been demonstrated to improve:

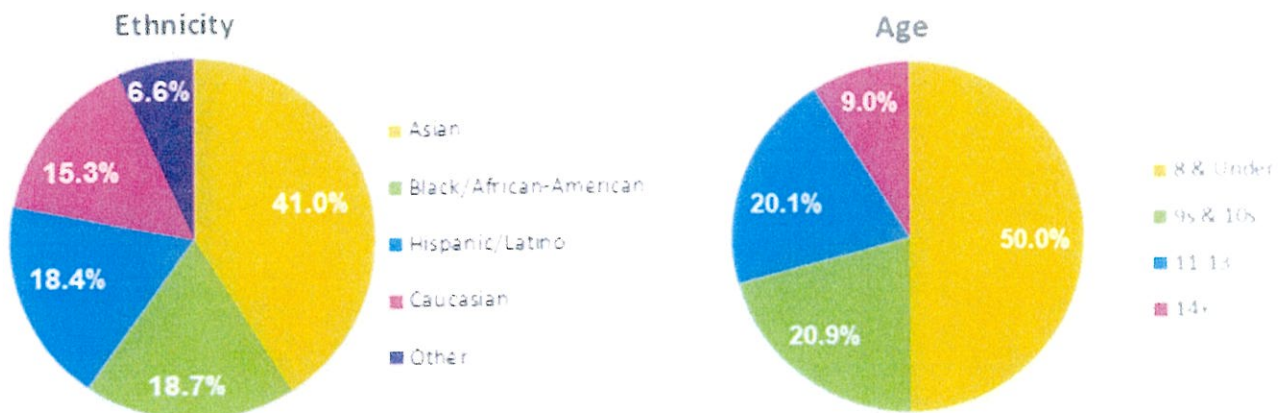
- Work Ethic
- Discipline
- Sportsmanship
- Teamwork
- Social Skills
- Resiliency skills

Council citywide funding under the *Physical Education & Fitness Initiative* enables us to provide **SAFE, ENGAGING and MUCH NEEDED physical activity to youth in ALL 5 boroughs**. Through our programs, we are reaching more than **90,000 under-resourced youth** year-round at over **100 sites**, including **24 parks** across the city, developing the character of young people for a lifetime of success on and off the court.

Over **80%** of young people served by NYJTL are Black, Latino, Asian and from immigrant populations. Over **70%** are 10 and under. Many are from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people typically lack access to the opportunity to learn the sport of tennis.

Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school juniors & seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various times throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter).

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS ¹.



CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS ¹

	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	41.0%	8 & Under	50%	Male	51.4%	New	67.4%
Black/ African-American	18.7%	9s & 10s	20.9%	Female	48.3%	Returning	32.6%
Hispanic/Latino	18.4%	11-13	20.1%	Non-binary	0.2%		
Caucasian	15.3%	14 +	9.0%				
Other	6.6%						

¹*Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics*

During the pandemic when the youth of this city needed us, NYJTL was there. Due to the very nature of tennis – **NO DIRECT PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT IS REQUIRED** – NYJTL was uniquely positioned to provide NYC youth with a SAFE and FUN physical outlet to help relieve the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic. **Recognizing the need for its programming, NYJTL stepped up to the task. Our coaches were back on the courts by August 2020 providing NYC youth with FREE youth tennis programming.** Since then, our in-person programming has been operating uninterrupted without incident and with participation rates exceeding all expectations.

We now need the help of the City Council. Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 25 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe, who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

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



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing
May 20, 2024**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Abreu, as well as members of the Committee on Sanitation for the opportunity to comment.

One of NYLCV's top policy priorities is getting us closer to our zero waste by 2030 goals. Food waste is the third largest source of New York City's overall emissions according to the City's [integrated NYC Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#), after buildings and transportation. Twenty percent of New York City's greenhouse gas emissions come from household food consumption. When food waste is sent to landfills, which are disproportionately located in low income and communities of color, organic waste decomposes to create methane gas, a powerful greenhouse gas more than twenty times more potent than carbon dioxide. Neighborhoods near polluting facilities like waste transfer stations and incinerators have higher rates of pollution, which cause disproportionately higher cases of asthma, cancer, and other health issues and compound already existing environmental and racial inequities.

Due to these environmental injustices—which are only being compounded with the impacts of climate change—the City must do everything in its power to continue moving towards organic waste recycling, including allocating robust funding for these programs. Along with many other advocates and elected officials, NYLCV was very disappointed the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget did not restore the cuts to community composting or the original timeline for the citywide curbside organics program. With the deadline for the FY25 Adopted Budget approaching, we urge the Administration and City Council to find a path to ensure these programs continue and are adequately funded and implemented in the years to come.

Composting

First and most importantly, [NYLCV stands with advocates](#) calling for the restoration of the community composting budget of \$7 million, plus capital funds for build-outs of the replacement facilities planned for the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse mid-scale composting facilities. The community composting budget is a drop in the bucket compared to many other City programs, despite having a profound positive impact on many communities and residents. According to the Save Our Compost Coalition, the \$7 million spent on community composting is

0.4% of DSNY's overall annual budget of \$1.7 billion and 0.006% of NYC's total annual budget of \$112.4 billion in FY2022.

Moreover, NYLCV was disappointed that the original rollout for the curbside organics program in the Bronx and Staten Island was not restored in the FY25 Executive Budget and instead pushed back to October 2024, bringing three of the remaining boroughs into the program all at once. It is fair to say that with [the stop and go of previous composting initiatives](#), we are wary this program will not effectively roll out as originally planned since the FY25 Executive Budget includes PEG cuts to DSNY outreach and communications through FY28. NYLCV urges the City to restore these PEG cuts for outreach since this is a vital part of making the citywide organics program rollout a success. This includes robust outreach and education to building superintendents and landlords. In sum, NYLCV urges the City to restore funding for community composting and to prioritize the curbside organics program before the FY25 budget is adopted. Since achieving zero waste and an effective curbside organics program requires behavioral changes across the board, we believe that the community composting program, operated by long standing non-profits specializing in zero waste educational programs, can and should [complement](#) the City's residential organics program, especially when it comes to workforce development, outreach, and education.

NYLCV was pleased DSNY expanded composting to all NYC public schools and hopes this program receives the requisite funding for education and outreach in the years to come. With that said, [according to GrowNYC](#), the GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools Program's \$2.5 million budget for education and outreach to schools has been cut. This program is the educational arm of a partnership between DSNY and New York City Public Schools to provide operational training and student engagement for NYC public schools for recycling and curbside compost compliance. Since these programs should work in tandem, we urge the City to restore GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools' \$2.5 million budget so schools can fully and successfully participate in the curbside composting program and see DSNY's goal through.

At a higher level, the proposed FY25 Executive Budget cuts directly undermine our City's climate and zero waste goals outlined in [PlaNYC](#), in addition to the Mayor's own quality of life goals, a theme he continues to champion. With the climate crisis growing more urgent by the day, this is no time for New York City to cut funding for zero waste initiatives and outreach. With higher-than-anticipated tax revenues, we hope the City restores the community composting program funding, and allocates robust funding over the next several years not only for operations and staffing, but also for outreach and education, and enforcement of the curbside organics program.

Commercial and Residential Organic Waste Infrastructure

NYLCV has long advocated for the equitable siting of regional capacity for processing residential and commercial organic waste, including continuing to invest in more City-owned composting facilities and community composting programs, to the extent feasible, marine transfer stations to ultimately avoid the use of landfills and incinerators. Moreover, NYLCV believes that the City can do better when it comes to incentivizing and enforcing commercial

organics. In accordance with Local Law 146 of 2013, DSNY is required to evaluate whether sufficient regional processing capacity exists to accommodate the expansion in the proposed LL146 rules.

To that end, if the City improves and expands commercial organic recycling, we would like to stress the importance of siting more regional processing capacity for organic waste sufficient for handling future increases. It is imperative that the emissions reductions achieved from diverting this waste are not diluted by transporting it long distances, and does not compound poor air quality in environmental justice communities by siting additional capacity that will increase truck traffic in these already overburdened districts. Lastly, the City should ensure that small businesses and large businesses alike have access to recycling and food donation programs that are accessible, easy to use, transparent, and which would result in cost savings compared to landfilling and incineration. We echo [DSNY's February 27 testimony](#) calling for the Council to consider updating Local Law 146 of 2013 that would allow DSNY to have source separation at all commercial establishments, in line with the residential curbside program.

We also urge the City to continue taking action to upgrade the City's wastewater treatment plants' digesters to process organic commercial and residential waste into renewable energy to reduce local pollution and help address food waste, including exploring the feasibility of public-private partnerships. DEP should make clear and public what its intentions and plans are for anaerobic digestion capacity at its WWTPs and what quality of materials they will take.

Containerization

NYLCV appreciates DSNY's [recent announcement](#) about the rollout of waste containerization in CB9 in Manhattan and its partnership with Council Member Abreu. NYLCV was pleased that the FY25 Executive Budget included an additional \$3.4 million of City funds in Fiscal 2025, \$2.3 million in Fiscals 2026 and 2027, and \$2.9 million in Fiscal 2028 for waste containerization. This funding will support the expansion of the waste containerization pilot program into surrounding areas, and will support an additional 17 uniformed headcount. We urge the City to continue making strides on the containerization front and allocate the requisite funding for the rollout of this program, including long-term funding for Automated Side-Loading Trucks.

In the future, NYLCV hopes the City learns from the pilot in CB9 to implement and fully fund a permanent citywide waste containerization program on our streets to streamline waste and prevent buildup on sidewalks and trashrooms. Providing permanent, sealed containers throughout the City to hold trash bags prior to collection can mitigate the issues of the bags being opened by rodents and will create a cleaner city. Getting trash off the sidewalk also creates more opportunities for beneficial use of public space like bioswales, bike corrals, sidewalk seating, bus shelters, and pedestrian plazas.

Commercial Waste Zones and Truck Electrification

We also call on the City to provide continued funding for the electrification of light-, medium-, and heavy-duty DSNY and commercial sanitation trucks. Additionally, the City must continue working with DCAS, utility companies, and industry professionals to ensure adequate charging

infrastructure is installed and available for sanitation trucks and give extra consideration for CWZ carters with the most aggressive plans to do so. Requiring cleaner fleets as part of the City's move to CWZs is also the best way to bring measurable air quality improvements to neighborhoods that house a disproportionately high number of haulers and waste processing facilities. It is not good enough to require citywide emissions reductions. We should also strive for more localized benefits.

Conclusion

As our City continues to experience climate change on a regular basis, with the most vulnerable communities impacted disproportionately, we cannot risk cutting funding for vital environmental programs that are designed to reduce emissions and improve public health. While the City Council and Administration made strides over the past year prioritizing zero waste bills and policies, they are only as effective as the funding and political support they receive. NYLCV stands with advocates calling upon the Administration to restore cuts to community composting programs and LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse facilities, and prioritize education, outreach, and communications for the citywide rollout for curbside organics.



**Comments Submitted by Justin Wood, Director of Policy of
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
to the New York City Department of Sanitation
on May 20, 2023
Regarding the FY2025 Executive Budget for Sanitation**

Good afternoon, my name is Justin Wood and I am the Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). Thank you to Chair Abreu, Chair Brannan, Chair Krishnan, and members of the committees for the opportunity to testify today.

As you know, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) recently released an end of year analysis showing that the City will end up with a budget surplus of about \$1.1 billion following a year of cuts to vital public services, understaffing of agencies that serve as our city's social safety net and economic engine, and severe under-invest in proven solutions to systemic inequality and the monumental challenge of the climate crisis.

NYLPI thanks Speaker Adams and the City Council for recognizing the immediate and long-term harms of austerity budgets, and for proposing restorations and expansions of vital social and economic programs and infrastructure investments that will make our communities more equitable, sustainable, and healthy.

Now is not the time to retreat from our city's public health, equity, and sustainability goals.

We are concerned that the proposed Sanitation budget will have ongoing negative impacts on our City's waste reduction, public safety, and climate goals, and offer these recommendations:

1. Community Composting and Waste Diversion

First, the administration's decision to close community composting programs and lay off composting workers is unacceptable and undermines our city's efforts to reduce waste and climate emissions and to educate millions of New Yorkers on the importance of diverting organic waste from landfills – both in our homes, and in our workplaces and businesses.

These program closures come just as a new waste characterization study shows that for the first time in recent history, recycling rates have actually declined to just 20% over the past several years – a serious blow to the City and State's climate and equity goals given that the waste sector is now thought to account for as much as 12% of statewide greenhouse gas

emissions, and that polluting solid waste transfer stations and truck infrastructure remain concentrated in a few overburdened communities of color and low-income communities in our City.

Our essential green workforce including sanitation workers and community compost workers should not have to live in constant fear of being defunded and laid off. As the City prepares to implement Commercial Waste Zones and Curbside Composting, we must seize the opportunity to synchronize, coordinate, and rationalize recycling practices citywide with an all-of-government approach spanning the residential and commercial waste sectors. We simply cannot reverse the trend of declining recycling rates with start-stop, underfunded, and uncoordinated efforts.

2. More funding is necessary to implement the equity goals of the current Solid Waste Management Plan. While the Executive Budget includes \$16.9 million for construction and renovation of transfer stations "in accordance with the City's Solid Waste Management Plan," DSNY has not announced a plan to begin accepting commercial waste at existing municipal marine and rail transfer stations, nor to convert a Manhattan marine transfer station to a commercial waste facility, which are among the commitments of the nearly expired 2006 SWMP.ⁱ

We urge that the FY2025 budget include funds to operate these transfer facilities during hours when they can accept commercial waste, thereby eliminating unnecessary diesel truck miles by private carters traveling from dense commercial districts to private transfer stations clustered in a few communities overburdened by waste facilities and other truck-intensive infrastructure.

We commend the members of the Council Sanitation Committee for advancing Intro 55 of 2024 which would mandate a plan to accept commercial waste at these transfer stations by 20 and call on the Council to pass the bill as soon as possible.

3. Enforcement of Safety and Recycling Rules

Finally, we are concerned about reductions in enforcement budgets in the proposed executive budget.

Robust enforcement of sanitation laws is critical to public health and safety and will need to be part of an all-out comprehensive effort to turn around the troubling decline in diversion rates. **I especially want to highlight the critical importance of enforcement of safety regulations, labor standards, and recycling rules in the private sanitation industry, where tragically, just last week another New Yorker was killed by a private sanitation truck reported to be illegally reversing down a one-way street.**ⁱⁱ The highest safety and labor and environmental standards

must be a pillar of the forthcoming Commercial Waste Zones system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and comment. We look forward to working closely with the City Council, with DSNY, and with City Hall to transform our unsustainable and costly export-to-disposal model to a system with far less waste generation, and far more sustainable and job-generating investments in local reuse, composting, and recycling.

Yours,

Justin Wood, Director of Policy
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New York, NY 10001
jwood@nylpi.org
(212) 244-4664

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Founded more than 45 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) is a community-driven civil rights organization that pursues justice for all New Yorkers. NYLPI works toward a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In NYLPI's vision, all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's community-driven approach powers its commitments to civil rights and to disability, health, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.

ⁱ DSNY, 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan, Chapter 4 "Commercial Waste Management." Available at: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/downloads/resources/reports/solid-waste-management/2006-swmp/swmp-comprehensive-report-2006.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/05/16/private-garbage-truck-driver-reversing-down-greenwich-village-street-fatally-strikes-man/>



New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing

To the New York City Council Committee on Parks,

My name is Kathleen Welch, and I represent **Patagonia Upper West Side**. We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing.

The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. Our city's vast and essential natural spaces are a cornerstone of the physical and mental wellbeing of our people. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Put simply, New Yorkers deserve clean, well-maintained green spaces. Our children deserve safe and secure playground areas within the parks. Mayor Adams's proposal to cut NYC Parks funding and eliminate over 600 essential jobs is unjust, inequitable, and shameful. We call on the mayor and the budget committee to dedicate 1% of the city budget for parks.

Thank you,

Kathleen Welch
Patagonia Upper West Side

**Testimony of Morgan Monaco, President, Prospect Park Alliance
Executive Budget Hearing: Parks & Recreation
May 20, 2024**

I am Morgan Monaco, President of Prospect Park Alliance, the non-profit organization that operates Prospect Park in partnership with the City. I would like to thank the Council for holding today's budget hearing and giving members of the open space community a chance to share our perspective on how the budget cuts impact our work and the public at large. I am here today to support the efforts of the Play Fair campaign to restore the 5% budget cut currently in place for NYC Parks and for the City to fulfill the Mayor's campaign promise of 1% of the City budget for parks.

Prospect Park is truly a public-private partnership—we rely on the City to help with day-to-day trash pickup and facility maintenance. This essential service is core to making Prospect Park a welcoming and accessible space for the diverse communities of Brooklyn. Since the pandemic, visitorship to City parks has increased significantly: in Prospect Park we have seen a record number of visitors throughout the year, which has created significant wear and tear in the park. At the same time, the City has not kept up with this record use in its funding of parks in the City budget. Now is the time where we need more and not less funding for our parks.

Parks are not only essential living infrastructure, they are critical to our health and well being, and are the great equalizers of our society. The Citizens Budget Commission recently released a survey that made clear that neighborhood parks are part of what contributes to excellent quality of life for New Yorkers. NYC Parks have been operating with an austerity budget for more than 40 years, with **only 0.5% of the city budget allocated to parks despite the fact that parks comprise 14% of city land**. This chronic underfunding has been devastating to our parks. While we **applaud the City for reinstating the Parks Opportunity Program**, which provides essential frontline maintenance staff, **the current 5% budget cut represents a loss of 700 parks staff and \$55 million in critical funding**, which includes the elimination of the tremendously successful **second shift program** that brought evening maintenance care to the park, as well as further **reductions in Urban Park Rangers and Parks Enforcement Officers**, which is incredibly disheartening considering that currently there are only 2 parks enforcement officers on duty in Central Brooklyn at any one time.

We implore the Council to increase funding for parks in this budget cycle. In addition, we applaud the City Council for recognizing our parks as essential infrastructure by not only restoring current budget cuts, but also by moving beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model: 1% of our budget must be for parks. Parks saved our city during the pandemic. Now is the time to make sure they get their fair share of the budget.



New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing
K Webster, Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition

Good afternoon, my name is K Webster, and I represent the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing.

Our Sara Roosevelt Coalition has built many gardens here: like the Hua Mei bird Garden and the M'Finda Kalunga Garden. We've built many memorial gardens: the M'Finda Garden honors an African Burial Ground that was once here, the Rivington House garden honors the staff, and former residents living with HIV/AIDS (many died during Covid in a lousy nursing home they were transferred to from the state-of-the-art-infectious-disease Rivington House), and one for those who died or were killed because they were homeless. We just finished planting a garden to honor the life of a young woman who was murdered across the street from this park.

We created a Ribbon garden after COVID for parkgoers to write their hopes on ribbons that are still flying here. We built one to honor a beloved gardener and the first Black esprit de corps dancer at Rockefeller Center. We built a plot to honor the lives of the Black people who owned land here in the late 1600's. In June we'll be working with volunteers for survivors of Human Trafficking to create "The Freedom Garden". Honoring the lives of those who used to line the streets of our park.

I was telling a colleague in another city about the gardens we build in this harsh landscape, and they looked puzzled and said, "it sounds like you're building a cemetery".

It's kind of true. But as we honor the dead we make life and beauty out of devastation.

The other day a mother walked into one of our gardens crying. She had just come from the new Behavioral Health Center across the street where her daughter was being kept in a respite bed. She asked if she there was a tree she could hug. "Any, all" we said.

Parks are indispensable parts of life, of trying to notice the goodness of life, of hope, of honoring the environment, especially in a tough city that is getting tougher.

You know all the talking points. They translate into safer, kinder, better, more beautiful and humane cities. You know what to do.

New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green, and resilient parks system. The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Cuts will hinder the agency's ability to manage its 15 miles of beaches, 51 recreation centers, 65 pools, 9,900 acres of natural areas, 2,300 athletic courts, 800 ballfields, and 1,000 playgrounds. They will inequitably impact the well-being and quality of life of countless individuals and families. Parks are an invaluable resource that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

- Mayor Adams' FY25 Exec Budget proposal cuts NYC Parks funding by over \$55M and eliminates over 600 essential jobs.
- These budget/staffing reductions will make it impossible for the agency to ensure parks are safe, clean, green, and resilient across the city.
- If enacted, we can expect trash strewn parks/playgrounds/delayed activation of sprinklers/water fountains amidst unprecedented summer heat, reduced hours & public programming at rec centers/ bathroom closures/neglected tree canopy care.
- NYC Parks now has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic despite increased demand and clear need for these spaces, and thousands fewer workers than it had decades ago.
- NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe.
- The NYC budget has grown by 127% since 1980, and every other frontline city agency's budget has grown by between 127%-165%, while NYC Parks has only grown by 72%.
- We demand 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks. Mayor Adams repeatedly committed to this investment but hasn't yet followed through.
- Parks are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. They should be funded as such.
- NYC deserves safe, clean, green and resilient parks, pools, beaches and rec centers.

Thank you,

K Webster,
Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition



**Testimony of Save Our Compost NYC
to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and
Committee on Finance, on May 20, 2024 regarding Fiscal Year 25 Executive Budget.**

Dear Chair Shuan Abreu and Chair Justin Brannan and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Committee on Finance:

We are a coalition of New York City organizations working to support and expand community composting to uplift environmental and climate justice. The coalition is currently fighting city budget cuts, and advocating for the restoration of funding for community composting and defending the legal right of community scale composting on park land.

Save Our Compost is urging the City Council to reinstate \$11.2 million for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC and composting infrastructure.

NYC Compost Project & GrowNYC	\$ 7.1 million, steady with FY2024 levels
Community Composting Site Relocation	\$ 2.1 million to build out new site promised to LES Ecology Center
Expand local compost processing	\$ 2 million to build out Big Reuse operated site

The **\$7 million in PEG** spent on Community Composting is 0.4% of DSNY’s overall annual budget of \$1.7 billion (and 0.006% of NYC’s total annual budget of \$112.4 billion in FY2022)

- **This funds GrowNYC and The NYC Compost Project** (organizations include: Big Reuse, LESEC, Earth Matter, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, NY Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden):
 - **To collect, haul, process food scraps, and redistribute finished compost across all 5 boroughs of NYC**

350NYC | Astoria Pug | Big Reuse | BKRot | Brooklyn Botanic Garden | Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board | Cafeteria Culture | Center For Zero Waste Design | Common Ground Compost | Earth Matter NY | Forest Hills Green Team | GrowNYC | GrowNYC Workers Collective, affiliated with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union | Lower | East Side Ecology Center | National Wildlife Federation | Natural Resource Defense Council | New York Botanical Garden | New York Lawyers for Public Interest | New York League of Conservation Voters | North Brooklyn Neighbors | Nurture BK Compost | Queens Botanical Garden | Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden | WE ACT for Environmental Justice



- Each year over 8 million pounds of food waste is collected at 155 Food Scrap Drop-Off & Education Sites in partnership with non-profit organizations and volunteer groups.
- Nearly 1.5 million pounds of finished, professional-grade compost distributed annually to city residents, schools, community gardens, urban farms, and parks
- **To facilitate the Master Composter Program and educate New Yorkers**
 - 10s of thousands of New Yorkers educated annually on responsible management of food waste, community greening best practices, and rodent mitigation via the Master Composter Certificate, pop-up education centers at food scrap drop-offs, school workshops, and events
- **To empower and engage New Yorkers in their community green spaces and to take an active role in sustainable waste management practices**
 - Over 11,000 hours of volunteer work directed annually in the collection and processing of residential compostable waste, street and park cleanups, and community beautification events
- The NYC Compost Project employed **115 people in local green jobs**

In addition to the reallocation of the \$7 million, our coalition urges the City to provide the **previously promised \$4 million in funding** for building out additional community composting sites to increase local composting capacity.

- **This would fund the following:**
 - A new site for the Lower East Side Ecology Center in Canarsie, as its former site in the East River Park is under construction as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project
 - A new site for Big Reuse, as its current community composting site under the Queensboro Bridge faces eviction by the NYC Parks Department

350NYC | Astoria Pug | Big Reuse | BKRot | Brooklyn Botanic Garden | Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board | Cafeteria Culture | Center For Zero Waste Design | Common Ground Compost | Earth Matter NY | Forest Hills Green Team | GrowNYC | GrowNYC Workers Collective, affiliated with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union | Lower | East Side Ecology Center | National Wildlife Federation | Natural Resource Defense Council | New York Botanical Garden | New York Lawyers for Public Interest | New York League of Conservation Voters | North Brooklyn Neighbors | Nurture BK Compost | Queens Botanical Garden | Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden | WE ACT for Environmental Justice



The Adams administration characterized the Compost Project as “small and inefficient” when it justified before The City council its permanent defunding of community composting. The Compost Project is small by design and extremely efficient and effective in what it was designed to do: create high-quality compost and build community, resiliency, and widespread support for citywide participation in organics diversion. For these reasons, Save Our Compost is urging the City Council to reinstate \$11.2 million for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC and composting infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Save Our Compost NYC

Contact:

Lonnie J. Portis
New York City Policy & Advocacy Manager
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
lonnie@weact.org | [REDACTED]

350NYC | Astoria Pug | Big Reuse | BKRot | Brooklyn Botanic Garden | Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board | Cafeteria Culture | Center For Zero Waste Design | Common Ground Compost | Earth Matter NY | Forest Hills Green Team | GrowNYC | GrowNYC Workers Collective, affiliated with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union | Lower | East Side Ecology Center | National Wildlife Federation | Natural Resource Defense Council | New York Botanical Garden | New York Lawyers for Public Interest | New York League of Conservation Voters | North Brooklyn Neighbors | Nurture BK Compost | Queens Botanical Garden | Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden | WE ACT for Environmental Justice



Stewards of Ewen Park

**New York City Council
Committees on Finance, Parks and Recreation, and Sanitation and Solid Waste
Joint hearing about the FY25 City Budget
Monday, May 20, 2024**

From: Julie Jenkins, Founder, Stewards of Ewen Park

My name is Julie Jenkins and I am here as a resident of the Bronx, founder of the Stewards of Ewen Park, and as a proud member of the Forest for All NYC coalition. Thank you, Committee Chair Brannan, Parks Chair Krishnan, and committee members for holding this hearing.

As noted above, I live in Kingsbridge in the Bronx. My neighborhood is an environmental justice area. It has one of the lowest tree canopy covers in the city and a heat index of 4/5 (5 being the worst). Maintaining the trees we do have is very important in my neighborhood. We also need a lot more trees.

Ewen Park is an 8-acre park adjacent to Kingsbridge. The community relies on it as a respite from pollution, especially from the nearby Major Deegan, and the heat retained by buildings with little to no shade from trees. Ewen Park has 100s of trees, a playground, a basketball court, picnic fields, and already not enough Park operations staff to maintain it properly.

In less than 3 years, we have pulled 100s of bags of trash out of the park. We have painted benches, and cleared invasive vines that make the park feel unsafe or unwelcoming. These are things Parks does not have sufficient resources to attend to.

Trees and plants provide our oxygen, clean our air, cool our city, and mitigate the potential damage from increased flooding that New York City will see in the coming years and decades. The Parks Department is where you can find the expertise, dedication, and experience necessary to protect our urban forest, critical public infrastructure. This division should be generously funded. There is data from the health department demonstrating that heat kills and temperatures are rising. There is also significant data showing that trees cool. This is not a difficult correlation to comprehend.

PlaNYC, "Getting Sustainability Done" explicitly ties our forested areas to improved quality of life. The road map connects our urban forest to cooling our built environment, which will protect New Yorkers from extreme heat. PlaNYC also highlights stewards and volunteers as essential partners. With these budget cuts, it seems that this administration thinks that volunteers will fill the gaps.

But without the dedicated and knowledgeable staff at Parks, there is little we as volunteers can do. Partnerships for Parks, which may lose several positions, was invaluable to us when starting the Stewards of Ewen park. They serve as a fiduciary sponsor because we are too small to have nonprofit status. They help us navigate city bureaucracy and provide tools and training. They tell us what we could and should be focused on. They support us in so many ways and these relationships take time and resources to develop. That should not be taken for granted.

Another example is the natural areas stewardship team within Parks, which is directly called out in the Sustainability plan. They only have handful of staff dedicated to managing volunteers who are working in more than 12,000 acres of public park land. This is not enough.

Trail and street tree stewardship training and management were outsourced to private organizations. Privatizing the upkeep of our public good is not the answer. These groups should be dedicated to taking parks to the next level of excellence, not doing the work that is supposed to be handled by the city. Work that is paid for with our tax dollars. Parks should be hiring more staff to support the influx of interest in urban forestry and tree care stewardship, not decreasing it.

It is a shame that this administration is not protecting our city and ensuring it is a safe and comfortable place to live. It is a shame that they are choosing to reduce the quality of life for residents. Our trees and parks require relatively little, just 1% of the city budget could be sufficient; 1% is what Mayor Adams pledged when running for office. Yet, this administration will not even provide that and continues to decrease the funding allocated.

These budget cuts will have noticeable impacts on our parks and city, not only this coming fiscal year, but well into the future when there is not enough dedicated or trained park staff to fill the ranks because of hiring freezes and cuts today.

Committee Chair Brannan, Parks Chair Krishnan, and members of the Council, I ask that you all join us in our fight to restore the budget and refrain from further cuts. NYC is going to get a lot worse with climate change and related disasters. Let's dedicate resources to an area that is proven to make a difference and secure our resilience - our urban forest and the staff that cares for it.

Thank you.

Julie



*New York City Council Committee on
Finance and DPR*

Monday, May 20, 2024

**NYC COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2025
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS**

Testimony of The Forest Park Trust, Inc

My name is Rafael Espinal. I am a board member of The Forest Park Trust, Inc., and a former New York City Council member.

Thank you City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for your leadership and hearing all our testimony of the mayor's Financial Plan and how it impacts parks and the well-being of all New Yorkers.

Part of my testimony is on behalf of The Forest Park Trust and the President Michael Palermo. The Forest Park Trust is a non-profit organization founded in 1997. We work in partnership with NYC Parks to assist the Forest and Highland Park administration, in its effort to secure funding for both parks. The Trust supports the improvements to the landscaped and recreational areas; provides free family and youth programs and events; and finances seasonal staff to oversee free fitness classes, maintain our natural areas and community garden.

We hope that the City Council will prevent the \$55 million-dollar FY25 budget cuts and stop the elimination of hundreds of essential jobs that are important for your patrons well - being. For many New Yorkers, parks are their backyards. The present budget outline will threaten the cleanliness, maintenance, and safety measures to ensure NYC parks remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.

I grew up and continue to live in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn which is home to Highland park. And as a former City Council member, I saw first hand the positive impacts for my community when I secured over \$40 million dollars in capital funds for the restoration of its playgrounds, athletic fields, pathways, a creation of a dog run and several free cultural and sports programs. There was a tremendous increase in park usership and more respect for Highland Park, which when I was growing up felt abandoned by the City of New York and was deemed unsafe for residents. These cuts will roll back years of progress that has been made to make the park habitable for the people of Cypress Hills and East New York.

These cuts will also disturb the health of our natural areas and the park's contribution to locally reducing the impact of climate change. Forest and Highland Park's forested areas contribute to a significant role in maintaining a greener and more climate resilient

city. Seventy percent of the park's patrons frequent these areas of the park for solitude, exercise, educational opportunities, and their mental health.

We hope that your committee considers our requests so our park patrons can experience the full benefits of connecting to a healthy, well maintained park.

We want to especially thank Councilmembers Sandy Nurse, Joann Ariola, Lynn Schulman, and Robert F. Holden for their generosity and attention to Forest & Highland Parks.

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



Lower East Side Ecology Center
Testimony to New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 20, 2024

The Lower East Side Ecology Center started its programs in 1987 by offering community based recycling opportunities for paper, bottles and cans by creating community based drop off programs in the Lower East Side. We have been running community-based composting programs since 1990 and we have been working in partnership with the Department of Sanitation since 2005 to bring compost education, support to community gardens, food scrap composting, free compost and more to New Yorkers. Community composting is in our DNA as an organization, and we've seen how powerful collective community composting can be in achieving a more just and sustainable city.

We are testifying to urge the City to reinstate \$7.1 million in funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's community composting programs.

We are also requesting that the \$2.1 million allocated to the Ecology Center for its compost site relocation be restored. These funds were promised to the Ecology Center by the City when we left East River Park as a result of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project.

Community composting demonstrates how climate-friendly action can take place right in your neighborhood. It demonstrates that your food scraps don't necessarily need to be sent to far away places, burning additional fossil fuels in the process, but that food scraps can be managed by the community and create a product that benefits the community.

At the Ecology Center we've donated tons of compost to urban farms and gardens to help them grow healthy food for their community. We've applied hundreds of cubic yards of compost to parkland and street trees, which increases the soil capacity to retain stormwater and prevent flooding. These are just a few of the direct benefits that come from our programs to create healthy and resilient communities.

Composting to create soil amendments is the highest and best use of food scraps and organic waste materials. The Ecology Center is committed to composting as a way to recover and recycle resources and restore soil health across the city. It is through Community Composting efforts where truly efficient circular waste systems can be achieved.

Even with the roll out of universal curbside collection, the role of and importance of community composting programs does not diminish but rather supports the success of a curbside compost collection through hands on engagement and learning opportunities.

The Ecology Center is not alone in providing community composting programs. Working together with GrowNYC, Big Reuse, Earth Matter NY, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical



Garden we all bring community composting programs to all 5 Boroughs. Collectively we achieve the following on an annual basis:

- **10s of thousands of New Yorkers educated annually** on responsible management of food waste, community greening best practices and rodent mitigation via the Master Composter Certificate, pop-up education centers at food scrap drop-offs, school workshops, and events
- **Over 11,000 hours of volunteer work directed annually** in the collection and processing of residential compostable waste, street and park cleanups, and community beautification events
- **Over 8 million pounds of food waste collected at 155 Food Scrap Drop-Off & Education Sites** in partnership with non-profit organizations and volunteer groups. All waste collected skips the curbside and is brought to local composting sites modeling the highest standards for cleanliness and community engagement
- **Nearly 1.5 million pounds of finished, professional-grade compost distributed annually** to city residents, schools, community gardens, urban farms and parks for use in community revitalization projects, food growing, and stormwater infrastructure improvement
- **7 professionally-run, community-facing non-profit Compost Sites throughout the city.** Sites welcome members of the community to participate in food waste recycling, finished compost distribution, and public engagement on the importance of proper waste management

Thank you for creating the opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to working with the City to restore community composting and create opportunities for community composting to continue to play a role in the City's sustainability efforts.

Sincerely,
Renée Crowley
Deputy Director
Lower East Side Ecology Center

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

May 20, 2024

Executive Budget Hearing – NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Testimony of Tamar Renaud

New York State Director, Trust for Public Land

Thank you, Chairperson Krishnan and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposal for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

My name is Tamar Renaud and I am the New York State Director of Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit organization that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, we work with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most.

Based on peer-reviewed research, we know that time spent outdoors contributes to our mental and physical health; that green spaces make communities more resilient to flooding, severe heat, and the effects of the climate crisis; and that shared public outdoor spaces contribute to social cohesion within communities. Hearing a woodpecker or touching an earthworm can create that feeling of excitement and awe, so important for us city residents. Since 1978, TPL has worked to improve NYC neighborhoods by creating playgrounds, trails and park spaces.

In 2022, the Trust for Public Land released a report that quantifies the Economic Benefits of Parks in New York City. Based on original research, we found that residents visit city parks at least 527 million times every year and received billions of dollars in benefits— over \$1 billion in health care cost savings, over \$2 billion in stormwater management, and over \$9 billion in recreational value. New Yorkers want to live near parks, contributing at least \$101 million in annual property tax revenues for homes within 500 feet of parks.

Every year, the Trust for Public Land ranks the park systems of the 100 largest cities in America. In 2017, New York ranked number 7. By 2023, New York had fallen to number 10 - as other major cities have consistently invested more in their parks systems and in park amenities, and in ensuring equitable access for residents in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.

Stay on the lookout, this Wednesday May 22, we will be announcing the 2024 ranking.

The NYC Parks System is chronically underfunded and understaffed: Parks now has thousands fewer workers than it did decades ago despite increased demand and clear need for the upkeep of these essential spaces. There are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe.

As a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, we are here to strongly urge the City to restore cuts proposed in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and fully fund the NYC Parks System. Parks are critical infrastructure that support physical and mental well-being, combatting the epidemic of loneliness, as well as mitigating the climate crisis.

New York is a world-class City; it deserves a world class Parks System. We can't have that without **1% for Parks!**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue. (3:35)

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025

**New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair**

**New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Honorable Shekar Krishnan, Chair**

**Submitted by:
Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York**

May 20, 2024

Thank you, Chairpersons Branna, Krishnan and members of the Committees on Finance and Parks and Recreation for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services and allocates over \$180 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, counter antisemitism and strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

Many of the nonprofits in UJA's network have pools in their facilities. Those with indoor pools offer private and group swim lessons as well as opportunities for children, youth and adults to engage in other aquatic activities throughout the year. Those who have outdoor pools are usually located at camps and use these spaces to host swim lessons and aquatic activities for their camp participants. In a few instances, when they do not have access to their own indoor or outdoor pool, some nonprofits use New York City pools for swimming lessons and water activities for their campers.

To maintain the services that nonprofits provide at pools, they require skilled and reliable lifeguards to ensure the safety of their participants. In the case of the nonprofits who partner with New York City pools, they also require access to NYC pools as well as an adequate number of lifeguards. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the nonprofits in UJA's network struggle to hire and maintain the number of lifeguards needed to staff their pools. This becomes increasingly difficult when the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) increases wages for lifeguards at their facilities. Many lifeguards leave nonprofits to work at New York City funded positions. Nonprofits are unable to compete with the higher wages offered at the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation pools and beaches and are left scrambling to find lifeguards to staff their swimming programs.

For the last few summers, one nonprofit in UJA’s network who partners with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to use a city funded pool for their summer camp, struggled to gain access to the facility. NYCDPR cited lack of lifeguards and denied the nonprofit usage of their pool. The nonprofit had their own lifeguards they were prepared to use at the city’s facility but were told they could not use them due to issues with the lifeguard union. They were unable to use the city’s pool and were forced to rent pool space elsewhere, which proved to be costly and inconvenient, campers had to be transported twenty minutes each way to get to the pool. They also were only able to rent the pool three mornings a week, meaning most campers only accessed water two times a week. The limited availability of swimming at the camp caused by lack of lifeguards originally and later inability to access the city’s pool caused many campers to drop out of the program. This has resulted in the program losing hundreds of campers over the last three years.

Lack of access to pools and limited availability of lifeguards create a barrier to teaching people how to swim. The nonprofits in UJA’s network are committed to providing swim lessons and water safety instruction to the communities they serve. In many instances, if these nonprofits did not offer this resource their communities would lose access to this life saving skill. UJA joined the New York City Interorganizational Task Force on Lifeguarding and Aquatics in 2022 to partner with city agencies and local nonprofits to better understand why there is a lifeguard shortage and what can be done to address it. It soon became clear that to create a lifeguard pipeline, the Taskforce needed to broaden their focus by locating ways to increase access to swim and water safety training, as well as supporting nonprofits and municipal partners in building capacity. In many instances, access to swim lessons and water safety instruction is only available to those who can afford the classes and/or are fortunate enough to have access to a pool in their community.

In an effort to prepare all New Yorkers, children & adults, to be safe around the water and address the lifeguard shortage, UJA with the New York City Interorganizational Task Force on Lifeguarding and Aquatics would like to propose that the City of New York create a citywide aquatics initiative.

The lack of broadly accessible swim instruction and sufficient lifeguards to staff beaches and pools, has created an urgent public health crisis. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), more children in the United States, ages 1–4, die from drowning than any other cause of death. And for children ages 5–14, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury or death. This entirely avoidable public safety hazard has an outsize impact on communities of color. The CDC also reports that, on average, the drowning death rate among the Black community is 1.5 times that of the white population. As the lifeguard shortage continues to result in decreased access to swimming education programs, the racial disparities in drownings and water accidents are likely to continue to increase.

A challenge of this significance cannot be fully addressed by a single entity or solution. To achieve meaningful change, a multifaceted approach that meets people where they are and removes barriers to access is needed. As a first step, **UJA supports the proposal of the New York City Interorganizational Task Force on Lifeguarding and Aquatics to create a \$5 million fund for nonprofits to provide access to four categories of programming:**

1. Land-based water safety education which consists of a multi-week set of classes that focus on water safety.
2. “Second Grade” Swim- A partnership between nonprofits and the NYC Department of Education that brings students (2nd grade or similar age) to schools with pools for multi-week swim safety classes.
3. Swim Lessons- Free city funded swim lessons provided to New York City youth & adults overseen by community-based organizations in all five boroughs.
4. Lifeguard Training and Certification: Free lifeguard training and nationally recognized certification programs provided across all five boroughs. Free lifeguard development programs provided across all five boroughs to create a robust pipeline of youth prepared to undertake lifeguard training and certification.

This aquatics initiative is both a lifesaving skills program and a workforce development program. In addition to stand alone programming, the four aquatics programs listed above can seamlessly push into existing youth

programs managed by both the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the New York City Department of Education. UJA urges the city to also consider beginning with pilot programs during this fiscal year at programs including but not limited to: 3-K/Pre-K, Saturday Night Lights, Beacons and Cornerstones.

To truly improve water safety at city pools and beaches, swim and water safety instruction must be made available to every resident in the city. New York City does not have enough pools to accomplish this. Nonprofits must be partnered with and funded adequately, particularly in poorer, under-resourced areas to increase the number of people accessing these life-saving lessons. The city already partners with nonprofits to provide a vast array of services to New York City residents. Nonprofits with pools have the infrastructure in place and connections to their local communities to support the city's efforts in improving water safety for its residents.

Lastly, when nonprofits rely on New York City pools to offer swim lessons, water safety instruction or other aquatic activities to their community members, NYCDPR must work with nonprofits to continue to allow them to use this resource. In the case of summer camps, nonprofits must be notified as soon as possible if NYCDPR will not be granting access to their pools, so they have enough time to look for other options for their campers. UJA also urges the city to work with the lifeguard union to understand and correct any obstacles that may be in place for nonprofits to use their own, non-city funded lifeguard staff at New York City pools.

Conclusion

Improving water safety across New York City and increasing and maintaining enough lifeguards at beaches and pools are issues that will require both city agencies and nonprofits to work together to address effectively. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions about the recommendations in the testimony, please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org.



**New York City Council
City Council Committee on Finance
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearing
May 20, 2024**

Testimony of Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez
Deputy Director, Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center

Good afternoon Chair and Committee members. My name is Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez. I am the Deputy Director of the Street Vendor Project, a membership-based organization of over 3,000 street vendor members - thank you for the opportunity to testify. As the only organization that exclusively serves street vendors in New York City, SVP is the centralized hub for this underserved population, providing critical small business and legal services to vendors since 2001. We're here today to provide insight to the current landscape of street vending.

The Department of Sanitation Commissioner has stated publicly in several hearings before this council that they would take a 'compliance first approach' to provide warnings to non-compliant vendors and then later conduct enforcement - rather than a 'license-first' approach – an acknowledgement of how broken the city's permitting system is. However, in practice, more than half of the tickets issued by street-vendor enforcement officers between April 1, 2023 to April 1, 2024 were for vending without a proper license or permit - in direct contradiction of their own policy!¹

The arm of the Department of Sanitation that oversees street vending is not civilian employees, these are Sanitation Police Officers, authorized by the City of NY to carry weapons and able to issue criminal summonses. We strongly encourage Council to require Sanitation Police to wear body cameras, just as law enforcement agents are required to do.

These enforcement agents are out every day issuing \$1,000 tickets to someone serving fresh squeezed orange juice, then hauling their non-perishable materials to the only location in the city

1

<https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-street-vendors-targeted-for-lack-of-licenses-despite-city-hall-promising-otherwise>

where items are held - in East New York in a lot that's a 34 minute walk from the nearest subway station. This destructive cycle is harming New Yorkers who are already living day to day struggling to keep a roof over their heads and raise their families here. In the last year, vendors in The Bronx received 29% more tickets from sanitation than they had from DCWP in the year prior, like no other borough experienced.² Why is the borough with the lowest average income now the most frequently targeted for vending?

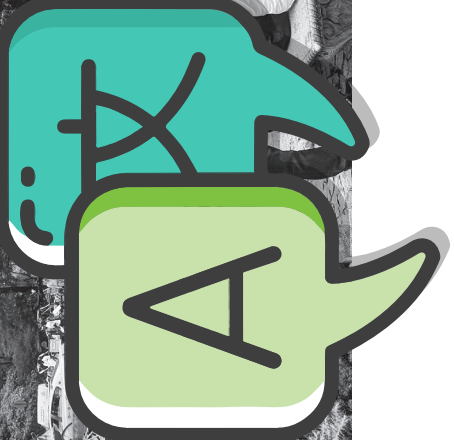
Lastly, we must highlight the wildly disproportionate resources that go to enforcement instead of licensing/education. DSNY has a \$2.9 million budget for the office of street vendor enforcement, with a headcount of 40 employees, which is set to increase to \$4.7 million by Fiscal year 2027. Meanwhile, the agency which is supposed to conduct street vendor outreach and education, SBS, has zero staff dedicated to street vending. Exhibit A is the primary form of outreach conducted by SBS, a mailer which was sent to all street vendors operating or on waiting lists. It states in multiple languages that SBS has the services street vendors need to operate and expand, which we all know physically can't be true, because the licenses are capped and waitlists not taking applications since 2017. Can SBS help our member Magdy, who's vended for years in Times Square, who rents his permit for \$20,000 and the owner told him last week he's not going to rent it to him anymore? The answer is no. The City would be better served saving postage money for

Exhibit B is the printed warning that DSNY distributes by posting them on poles and buildings in neighborhoods where they will later conduct enforcement. As you can see, the warning is vague in identifying what exactly are the concerns, and one of them relates to licensing. Respectfully, the city should be ashamed of these sorry excuses for educational materials – which do nothing to serve the people who are trying to work, to pay taxes, and to be small business owners.

We need a comprehensive reform of the street vending system, to create stability, order and economic opportunity in communities in need. We need the City Council to enact the Street Vendor Reform Legislative Package, including Intros 431, 408, 47, and 24. This package of bills will let vendors provide the services New Yorkers want - in a regulated, predictable, enforceable system - and give them a real chance to build wealth in their neighborhoods.

² <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/04/12/vendors-tickets-violations-spike-enforcement-bronx/>

We have the resources street vendors need to **operate** or **expand**.



We have the resources street vendors need to **operate** or **expand**.



Trained business specialists will:

- Conduct an assessment of your business needs and answer questions.
- Connect you with free resources (business courses, legal services, and more).
- Assist with navigating government rules and regulations.
- Help apply for funding to grow your business.

**NYC Department of
Small Business Services**
1 Liberty Plaza, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10006

POSTAGE

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Call **888-SBS-4NYC (727-4692)**
Visit nyc.gov/business



nyc.gov/business



ATTENTION Street Vendors



NYC law enforcement personnel have observed you operating a street vending business at a time, location, and/or manner that violates the NYC Administrative Code (or other applicable law) in at least one of the following ways:

- You did not obtain a Vendor License from either the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) or the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).
- Your vending display was measured as larger than 8 feet by 3 feet.
- You were displaying items directly on the walkway without the use of a table.

You may be issued summonses and your merchandise and table, etc., may be subject to removal by enforcement personnel.

ATENCIÓN Vendedores ambulantes

El personal de las fuerzas del orden de la ciudad de Nueva York ha observado que explota un negocio de venta ambulante en un momento, lugar o forma que infringe el Código Administrativo de la ciudad de Nueva York (u otra ley aplicable) al menos de una de las siguientes maneras:

- No ha obtenido una licencia de vendedor (Vendor License) del Departamento de Protección al Consumidor y al Trabajador (Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, DCWP) ni del Departamento de Salud e Higiene Mental (Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH).
- Su puesto de venta mide más de 8 pies por 3 pies.
- Exponía los artículos directamente en la acera sin utilizar una mesa.

Es posible que reciba citaciones judiciales y que su mercancía, mesa, etc., sean retirados por el personal encargado de hacer cumplir la ley.

重要通知街边贩商

纽约市执法人员发现您经营街头贩售业务的时间、地点和/或方式，至少在下列方面之一违反了《纽约市行政法规》（或其他适用法律）：

- 您没有从消费者和劳工保护局（Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, DCWP）或健康和心理卫生局（Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH）处获得贩商许可证（Vendor License）。
- 您的贩售展示尺寸经测量大于 8 英尺 x 3 英尺的范围。
- 您在没有使用桌子的情况下直接在走道上展示物品。

您可能会收到传票，您的商品和桌子等物品可能会被执法人员移走。



Visit nyc.gov/StreetVending, call 311, or scan to learn more.

在此了解更多资讯 | Aprenda más | Mëso më shumë | اعرف أكثر | আর জানুন
Μάθε περισσότερα | Jwenn plis enfòmasyon | अतिरिक्त जानकारी प्राप्त करें | Per saperne di più
자세한 사항은 | узнать больше | לערן מער | مزید جانے | Pour en savoir plus



**New York City Council
City Council Committee on Finance
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20, 2024**

Testimony of Mohamed Attia
Managing Director, Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, Chair Abreu and committee members. My name is Mohamed Attia, I'm the Managing Director of the Street Vendor Project.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

We're a membership-based organization with over 3,000 street vendor members.

As you probably know, the vending system we have right now isn't functioning, it's not working for vendors, for the enforcement agencies, or for New Yorkers.

I'm here today to highlight the fact that you can't enforce a system that's impossible to follow. No matter how much we're funding DSNY police to enforce the vending laws, nothing will improve until serious efforts are made to reform the vending system, starting with making sure that vending licenses and permits are available.

It's self-contradictory, that one city agency (DSNY) is fining the vendors for not having a license, while others (DCWP & DOH) are not offering this license to vendors.

The current status of street vending illustrates clearly how the city government is failing to regulate such an important industry that has been a part of the city for centuries.

As we heard today, loud and clear, from Commissioner Tisch, when she was asked about what tools would the agency need to change the dynamics in the streets, she said that "the key driver is the number of licenses we give out as a city"

A number that has been fixed since 1979 for merchandise vendors and is slowly increasing for food vendors over the last year or so!

We can't hide from that fact anymore, the number of licenses available is the key issue!! More enforcement of the current system means trapping vendors in poverty and extracting wealth from disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

We can't blame the city agencies for the number of permits and licenses available, they only implement what's in the books.

It's the city council's job to change the law.

And we hope that the council will address the vending issue soon and stop ignoring the elephant in the room.

We need reform!! It's that simple!

We hope to see the council taking action on some of the bills that are sitting on the table now, including intro 431 & intro 408.

Intro 431 sponsored by Councilmembers Sanchez & Farias will ensure that all vendors in NYC have access to licenses and permits.

Intro 408 sponsored by the Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, will require SBS to create a division for street vendor education, outreach and resources.

These 2 bills are a part of a package of bills that we hope to see moving forward soon, including intro 24 sponsored by Councilmember De La Rosa & intro 47 sponsored by Councilmember Krishnan.

Looking forward to working with the city council to address the dilemma that vendors are dealing with.

Thanks

Mohamed Attia

UPPER GREEN SIDE

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212-759-6895 uppergreenside@gmail.com

May 16, 2024

Sanitation & Committee on Parks & Recreation
New York City Council

Ladies/Gentlemen:

As we all know, even in “normal” times, our great New York City provides the least support for its environmentally oriented efforts of all America’s largest cities.

That that support is now on the brink of evicting an organization that’s one of NYC’s great contributors to its green life in NYC from city land is diminishing our negligible environmental reputation to an even greater degree.

With this letter comes the most deeply felt request that Big Reuse’s access to and use of the Queensbridge Compost Site be fully and immediately restored.

Most sincerely,

Sarah Woodside Gallagher

SWG:mf

Sarah Woodside Gallagher

SWG:mf



**New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday May 20, 2024
Committees on Finance and Parks & Recreation - Executive Budget Hearing
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance**

Good afternoon, I am Christina Taylor, Deputy Director of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Chair Krishnan for holding this hearing.

New Yorkers deserve a fully funded, safe, clean, green and resilient parks system. The budget cuts to NYC Parks this year and the proposed budget for next fiscal year jeopardize the very heart of our communities. These cuts will make it even more difficult for the already understaffed, under-resourced Parks Department to carry out the basic work needed to ensure parks are equitable and accessible for all New Yorkers.

The NYC Parks budget has been cut by \$25 million for the current fiscal year. The FY25 Executive Budget includes another \$55 million budget cut.

Year after year, NYC Parks staff does more with less. The staff is already stretched too thin. They are tired and frustrated, and so are we.

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance exists to add additional programming and resources to the park, not to replace NY City funding. But that is now the role we find ourselves in. For the first time ever, VCPA purchased garbage bags to be used by Parks staff to keep the park clean – we purchased 70 cases in the fall and then 140 cases were delivered just last week. And now we have a new low. Toilet paper! That's right, NYC Parks is currently rationing toilet paper and VCP Parks staff could not get enough to stock the bathrooms in the park, so last week I personally delivered 2,880 rolls of toilet paper to Van Cortlandt Park.

What is going to happen next year when there are additional cuts? This can't keep happening without a reduction in the programming and services that VCPA currently runs. Are we going to trade free community programs for garbage bags and toilet paper? We are nearly there.

And, Van Cortlandt Park is one of the lucky parks that has a partner group to help.

But really, the basics should be covered in the city's budget, not by a tiny nonprofit organization.

To be sure, with these budget cuts, it is New Yorkers who will suffer.

The hiring freeze and reduced budget will result in nearly 1,000 fewer parks workers.

We are already feeling the effects of the hiring freeze, because staff that have left cannot be replaced. There are no outside hires. Period.

With the hiring freeze, we are already seeing:

- Playgrounds are not opening on time and are closing early.
- Bathrooms are out of toilet paper and are not open in the late hours of the day.
- Sports fields were not groomed and ready for the spring season.
- Lawns are not getting mowed in a timely manner.
- Graffiti is not being removed quickly.
- Garbage is just sitting there.
- Park Enforcement Patrol cannot enforce park rules because there are too few of them to respond to the many calls for assistance.
- Pools will not be fully staffed – so you can forget special programs like learn-to-swim and late hours on the hottest days of the year.

It is not a pretty picture.

We demand 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks. Mayor Adams repeatedly committed to this investment but has not followed through. Parks are critical infrastructure, providing equitable and accessible public health, mental wellbeing, and much-needed social interaction. Parks need to be clean and safe in order to serve our great city. They should be funded accordingly.

Thank you,

Christina Taylor
Deputy Director
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance



New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Parks and Recreation – Executive Budget Hearing
Water Safety Coalition

Good Afternoon Chair Brennan, Chair Krishnan, Council Members, and Colleagues,

My name is Shanna Blanchard and I am here on behalf of the [Water Safety Coalition](#), a group of concerned citizens and non-profit organizations working to make water safety an essential right for all, to save lives, and create a more inclusive recreation community. Many New Yorkers do not know how to swim, but still flock to the city's beaches and pools each year to stay cool during the heat of summer, or simply have a good time. We all read about drownings occurring along the city's many coastlines throughout the year, and sadly, we will likely read about more this year. But we can and should take as many preventative measures as possible to prevent these deaths. A critical element of this is funding the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) in a sustainable and reasonable way, a 5% cut to an already underfunded Parks budget leaves our city unsafe, less accessible and less resilient. We simply cannot have a resilient and equitable city without our parks and the many public spaces that NYC Parks is responsible for, including beaches, shorelines, and pools, and we urge Mayor Adams and the NYC City Council to appropriately fund NYC Parks.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing at NYC's beaches and pools have been a challenge, with many learn to swim and lap swim programs canceled, and various beaches and pools closed each year. Prior to the pandemic, 20,000 children were served in the city's learn to swim programs in 2019, with only a few thousand being able to utilize the program last year – this is unacceptable. The NYC Parks Department is responsible for 148 miles of waterfront parks, 14 miles of public beaches, and 65 public pool facilities. Appropriate and sustainable funding is needed for all New Yorkers and visitors to enjoy these amazing places and facilities to keep cool during record breaking heat year to year, connect with nature, spend time with friends and family, and participate in the many benefits of water-based recreation. Budget cuts will lead to closed facilities and beaches, limited access and hours of operation, and unfortunately, water-based accidents and possibly, and likely, drownings.

As a proven leader in the urban realm across the world, it is embarrassing that New York City so poorly values its parks and public spaces that it only allocates less than 1% of the budget to them. Parks are critical infrastructure to a healthy, equitable, and resilient city and we must invest in them appropriately. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, park use has skyrocketed, yet NYC Parks has fewer workers than it did before the pandemic, and thousands fewer workers

than it had decades ago. This is ridiculous. We strongly support the Play Fair Coalition's 1% for Parks recommendation and beyond that, believe that funding for water safety and aquatics should be increased and sustained year to year. Interest in water-based recreation is only growing, and whether we want it to or not, water is at our doorstep not only because we are a city of water with 520 miles of shoreline, but because climate change is changing the way water interacts with our daily lives. We must better understand it and make sure our citizens have the tools necessary to do so. We urge the City Council and the Mayor to appropriately fund NYC Parks, all New Yorkers deserve safe, clean, green and resilient parks, pools, beaches and recreation centers, these places should be treated as critical infrastructure and funded appropriately. We implore Mayor Adams and the City Council to allocate 1% of the city for NYC Parks.

Shanna Blanchard

Chair

[Water Safety Coalition](#)

watersafetycoalitionnyc@gmail.com

TESTIMONY FOR THE CITY COUNCIL RE: SANITATION:

I AM WRITING TO SUPPORT THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING PROGRAM IN NYC FOR FY25.

MAY 19TH WAS THE LAST DAY I WAS ABLE TO BRING MY COMPOST TO THE COMMUNITY

COMPOSTING PROGRAM, AS IT WAS CUT FROM THE BUDGET FOR 2024.

THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN INVALUABLE IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO SO MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME, WHO CANNOT OTHERWISE COMPOST THEIR FOOD.

I RENT IN A HOUSE WHICH DOES NOT SUPPORT COMPOSTING. THERE ARE SO MANY OTHERS IN A MULTITUDE OF SITUATIONS WHICH DO NOT ALLOW THEM TO COMPOST THRU THEIR RESIDENCES.

ALSO, COMPOSTING THRU COMMUNITY COMPOSTING GIVES ME AND SO MANY OTHERS A FEELING OF BEING PART OF SOMETHING LARGER THAT IS VERY CONSTRUCTIVE.— I HAVE MET SO MANY OF MY NEIGHBORS WHO COME FROM ALL AROUND THE AREA TO BRING THEIR COMPOST INTO THE BINS SET UP NEAR AND AS PART OF THE FARMERS MARKET IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD.

COMPOSTING IS VITAL, GIVEN OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS: DRASTICALLY REDUCING THE GARBAGE WE THROW OUT, NURTURING THE SOIL, THE GARDENS, AFFECTING THE TREES AND THE AIR AND SO MUCH MORE.

PLEASE REINSTATE THIS VITAL PROGRAM FOR FY25!

**THANK YOU-
ADELE ROLIDER**

LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE, PUBLIC FRUIT TREES AND PUBLIC EDIBLE PLANTS

By Alexandra Durst

“She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, roughed through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness.” *Frankenstein, Mary Shelley.*

INTRODUCTION

Urban environments need to increase green space to address heat and storm runoff. Landscape requirements in many districts require a certain amount of green space in lots. Most of the plants and trees in these areas are not edible. Current public health concerns include food security. Community gardens are one way public food has been made available. However, community gardens are limited by membership and even assigned harvesting rights.¹ Increasingly, urban agriculture seeks to broaden where we plant food, and who we share it with.²

There are cities internationally and domestically with fruit trees. Cities like Valencia, Spain. Valencia has orange trees on public streets, and produce hundreds of fruits per tree.³

Public edible plants are perhaps disfavored for their maintenance. With community support, however, there is no legal barrier to public edible plants.

¹ NYC PARKS. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/greenthumb/join-a-garden> (last visited May 1, 2024).

² USDA.GOV. <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/international/topic/urban-agriculture> (last visited May 1, 2024). (“Urban agriculture can increase local food security in the face of climate change, making it an important component of land-use planning.”)

³ Huffman, Rachel, *Orange Country: Valencia’s Ruta de la Naranja*, METROPOLITAN BARCELONA <https://www.barcelona-metropolitan.com/travel/orange-country-valencia-ruta-de-la-naranja/>. See also, *city machinery harvesting in large quantities*, YOUTUBE, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_ikMEXjWHU (2021).

First, as part of the background, I will discuss the environmental, economic, medical and social benefits of public gardens and fruit trees.

Second, I will discuss liability implications.

Third, I will discuss zoning laws applicable.

Finally, I will discuss financing and maintenance.

I. BACKGROUND:

There are many benefits to gardening especially trees and edible public plants. So why has gardening been limited to households and farms? Why haven't businesses and public places taken up the opportunity to use their spaces for public sources of food?

The original anti-foraging laws were created after the civil war, by southern landowners attempting to force previous slaves back into labor.⁴

Now, foraging laws are kept for conservation purposes in parks.⁵ Various groups have organized recently, in a sort of collective consciousness going towards urban gardening.⁶ Even cold climates can benefit from planting gardens and fruit trees.⁷

Public food bearing plants provide environmental, economic and public health benefits.

⁴ Linnekin, Baylen J., *Food Law Gone Wild: The Law of Foraging*, FORDHAM URBAN LAW JOURNAL, 1008-1013 (2018) ("early anti-foraging laws were based on "racism, classism, colonialism, [and] imperialism," targeting Native Americans, African Americans, and those living in the country.")

⁵ *But see*, US FOREST SERVICE, COLLECTION PERMITS, USDA <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/ethics/permit.shtml> (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁶ Iscoe, Adam, *The Urban Fruit-Tree Vigilantes Case Brooklyn*, THE NEW YORKER, (Oct. 16, 2023) <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/10/23/the-urban-fruit-tree-vigilantes-case-brooklyn>. ("a hotline—1-888-GRRRAFT—that had been set up by a guerrilla grafter for collaborators to leave voice mails about their recent efforts. "Greetings, grafters," the recorded message said. "What sort of tree antics are you up to?" After the beep, Prefer said, "We put some plum on some Japanese flowering cherries.").

⁷ *Backyard Fruit Trees*, WESTCHESTER COUNTY, <https://www.westchestergov.com/fruit-trees>. "An established fruit tree will live a productive life of anywhere from 15, to 20, to even hundreds of years, depending on type. Cherries, pears, peaches, apricots, apples, figs, and pawpaws grow well in the northeast."

A. Environmental Benefits

In 2015, “The UN Paris Agreement set targets for planting trees to offset the threat of climate change and global warming.”⁸

Environmentally, trees and plants purify groundwater,⁹ absorb CO₂, create oxygen, cool atmospheres, and prevent floods.¹⁰

Edible plants that are currently lacking from urban environments, would improve crop biodiversity. “The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 75 percent of crop biodiversity has been lost from the world’s fields.”¹¹

“Because biodiversity will be threatened by climate change, the ecosystem services urban agriculture provides will be important to provide additional habitat that is lost elsewhere and support pollinators.”¹²

Environmental justice laws seek to address the systematic discrimination against minority populations in environmental law.¹³ Environmental Justice is a Federally Recognized objective. Executive Order 1409688 requires implementation of an Environmental Justice Strategic plan.¹⁴

⁸ JUNIPER, TONY, *THE ECOLOGY BOOK* 256 (2019).

⁹ *Role of Plants in Water Filtration*, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/role-plants-water-filtration> (last updated June 27, 2023).

¹⁰ See Juniper, *supra* note 8, at 258. (“Tree roots drink up moisture and limit surface runoff.” And, “in extended periods of dry weather, exposed soil dries out faster than tree-covered areas, making it more prone to wind erosion.”)

¹¹ See Juniper, *supra* note 8, at 327.

¹² *Urban Agriculture*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/international/topic/urban-agriculture> (last visited May 1, 2024) (“Urban agriculture has the potential to benefit cities environmentally and socially, but many cities do not currently have easy-to-follow guidelines or ways to help farmers get started.”).

¹³ NY LOCAL LAW 97.

¹⁴ EXEC. ORDER NO. 1409688 FR 252512023 WL 3074495 (Pres.), Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All, 88 FR 25251.

Large polluters have often set up their operations near minority communities.¹⁵ Planting trees is one way to help communities overburdened by industry offset their carbon emissions.

Urban heat is one major issue facing Environmental Justice Communities. Heat affects vulnerable populations such as children, those who are pregnant, those with pre-existing conditions, those who work outside, and those without access to adequate air conditioning.¹⁶ Each summer, on average, an estimated 350 New Yorkers die prematurely because of hot weather in New York City.¹⁷

Urban heat also affects energy grid systems by putting a huge burden on capacity.¹⁸ NYC Government recommends “implementing green infrastructure projects, especially in high HVI neighborhoods, including planting trees and other greenery and expanding cool roofs.”¹⁹

Clean water is also a growing concern for cities across the United States.²⁰ “[W]ater pollution sources fall outside the traditional parameters of water quality law, and originate from activities that are the traditional focus of the Clean Air Act or of state and local land use law.” So, it is local land use that will help address Clean Water in our communities. And since plants aid in filtration, one way to combat water pollution is by planting vegetation.²¹

¹⁵ THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, “GHGRP Emissions by Location,” [epa.gov. https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/ghgrp-emissions-location](https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/ghgrp-emissions-location). See also, EJNYC Full Data Explorer, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6a3da7b920f248af961554bdf01d668b/page/Data-Explorer/>.

¹⁶ Nazarian, N., Krayenhoff, E. S., Bechtel, B., Hondula, D. M., Paolini, R., Vanos, J., et al. (2022). *Integrated assessment of urban overheating impacts on human life*. *Earth's Future*, 10, e2022EF002682. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2022EF002682>.

¹⁷ NYC HEAT-RELATED MORTALITY REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH PORTAL, NYC.GOV. (2023) .

¹⁸ New York State Energy and Research Development Authority. Impacts of Climate Change on the New York Energy System. NYSDERDA Report Number 23-30. (2023).

¹⁹ Juniper, *supra* note 8.

²⁰ O'Neill, Ruth, CDC Foundation, *Addressing a Growing Water Crisis in the U.S.* (March 22, 2023)

²¹ THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, “Role of Plants in Water Filtration,” EPA (last visited May 1, 2024) https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-03/documents/activity_grades_4-8_plantsinwaterfiltration.pdf.

“Agriculture, not manufacturing or other non-agricultural industrial activities, constitutes the single largest source of water pollution.”²² “Large amounts of water are needed to produce common foodstuffs. Meat of all kinds requires high volumes, while vegetables and fruit require much less.”²³

HOW CITIES INTEGRATE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR ADAPTATION IN URBAN PLANNING



bit.ly/AdaptOurWorld | #AdaptOurWorld

²² Aagard, Todd, Owen, Dave & Pidot, Justin, *Practicing Environmental Law*, 281 (2nd ed. 2024). See also, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INVENTORY: REPORT TO CONGRESS (2017).

²³ BLACK, MAGGIE, THE ATLAS OF WATER 49 (3rd ed. 2016).

²⁴ WRI CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES. Accessed via UN Biodiversity LinkedIn, April 28, 2024.

B. Economic benefits

Urban heat has economic consequences, including workers not showing up to work, or even quitting.²⁵ In the United States, “[T]he loss of labor as a result of heat exposure cost the economy about \$100 billion, a figure projected to grow to \$500 billion annually by 2050.”²⁶

One Environmental Justice initiative fruit trees addresses is food security.

Currently, “Urban agriculture contributes 15 to 20 percent of the global food supply.”²⁷

“We found that 108 % of the daily recommended minimum intake of fruit for the entire city’s population could be met under the most ambitious planting scenario, with substantial potential to contribute to food security even under more modest scenarios.”²⁸

Cold climates can maintain food security, despite the shorter growing seasons. “Dotting just 5 percent of open space with apple trees could help as much as 20 percent of Burlington’s food-insecure population reach its daily fruit requirements.”

C. Public Health benefits

Gardening improves mental and physical functions.

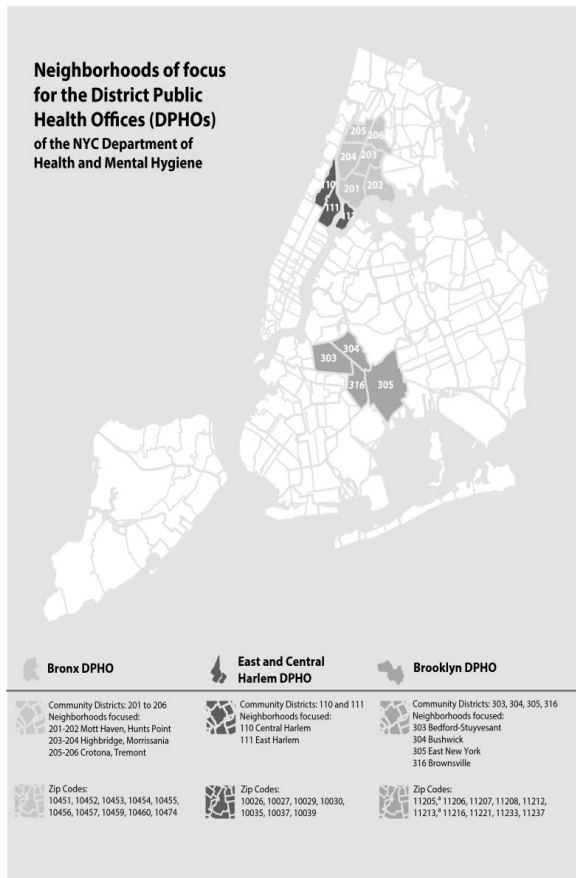
The photos below show how the places with the least tree canopy in NYC are also some of the areas of focus for NY Public Health and Mental Hygiene.

²⁵ THE NEW YORK TIMES, *Heat is costing the U.S. Economy Billions in Lost Productivity*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/31/climate/heat-labor-productivity-climate.html>.

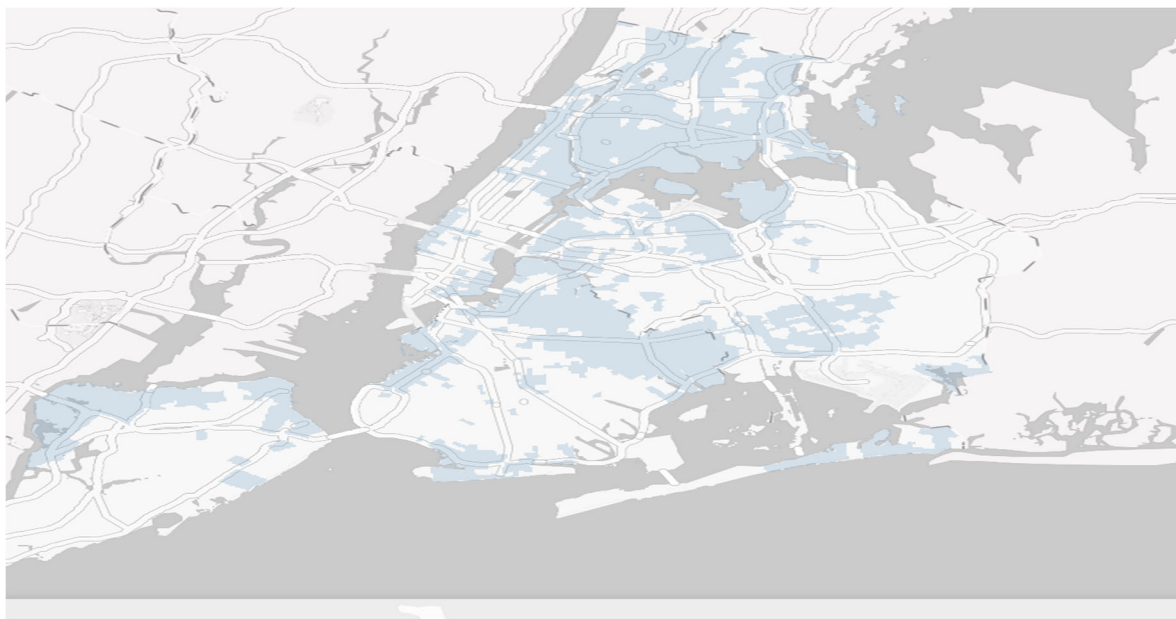
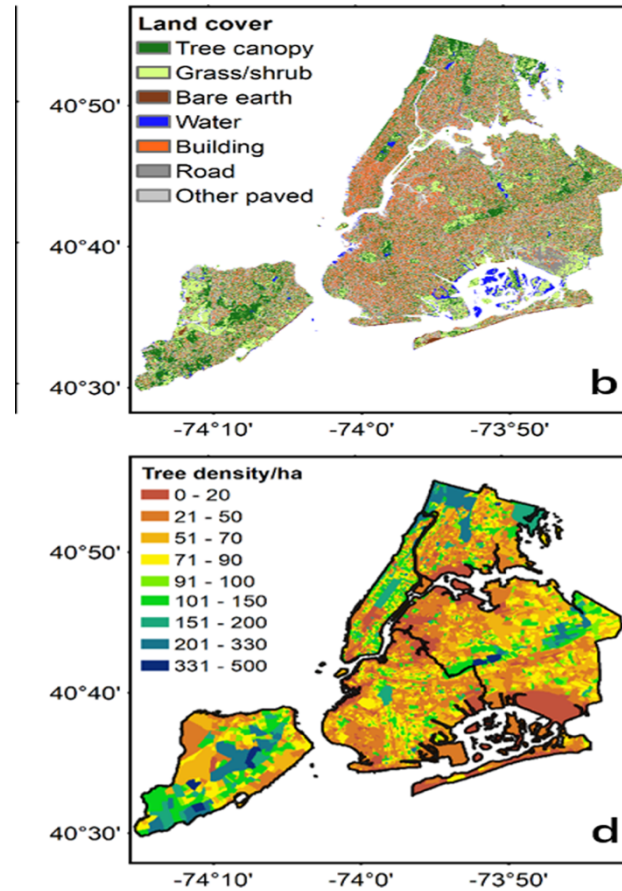
²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, *Urban Agriculture*, USDA, <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/international/topic/urban-agriculture>. “It can come in many forms,” “Edible landscaping also takes advantage of space that has historically been unused for food production.” “Urban agriculture can increase local food security in the face of climate change, making it an important component of land-use planning.”

²⁸ Kyle H. Clark • Kimberly A. Nicholas, *Introducing urban food forestry: a multifunctional approach to increase food security and provide ecosystem services*, (2013) <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10980-013-9903-z.pdf>.



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²⁹ Ma, Q., Lin, J., Ju, Y. et al. *Individual structure mapping over six million trees for New York City USA*. Sci Data 10, 102 (2023). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41597-023-02000-w/figures/1>.

³⁰ MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EJNYC FULL DATA EXPLORER, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6a3da7b920f248af961554bdf01d668b>. (Food and Nutrition layer) (last visited May 1, 2024).

1. Physical Health Benefits

There is ample evidence about the physical benefits to gardening.³¹

Gardening has been shown to decrease obesity, increase undereating, and generally increase fruit and vegetable intake.³² “Frequency of adult vegetable intake of “Several time a day” increased from 18.2% to 84.8%, ... and frequency of children’s vegetable intake of “Several time a day” increased from 24.0% to 64.0%....”³³

The Center for Disease Control offers a suggestion of providing gardening to early education students as an effort to combat childhood obesity.

2. Mental Health Benefits

Mental health is a problem in the U.S., especially in young and low income populations. “Younger adults had poorer mental health rates than other age groups; two in five (40.0%) New Yorkers between the ages of 18 and 34 reported poor mental health. More than half (57.4%) of food-insufficient New Yorkers had poor mental health—nearly twice the rate of food-sufficient New Yorkers (29.2%).”³⁴

³¹ Thompson, Richard, *Gardening for Health: a regular dose of gardening*, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE. (June 2018) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334070/>.

³² Carney, Patricia, et al., *Impact of a Community Gardening Project on Vegetable intake, Food Security and Family Relationships: A Community-based Participatory Research Study*, J Community Health. August, 2012, 37(4): 874-881. Accessed May 1, 2024 via PubMed Central. (Studying with 40 families).

³³ *Id.*

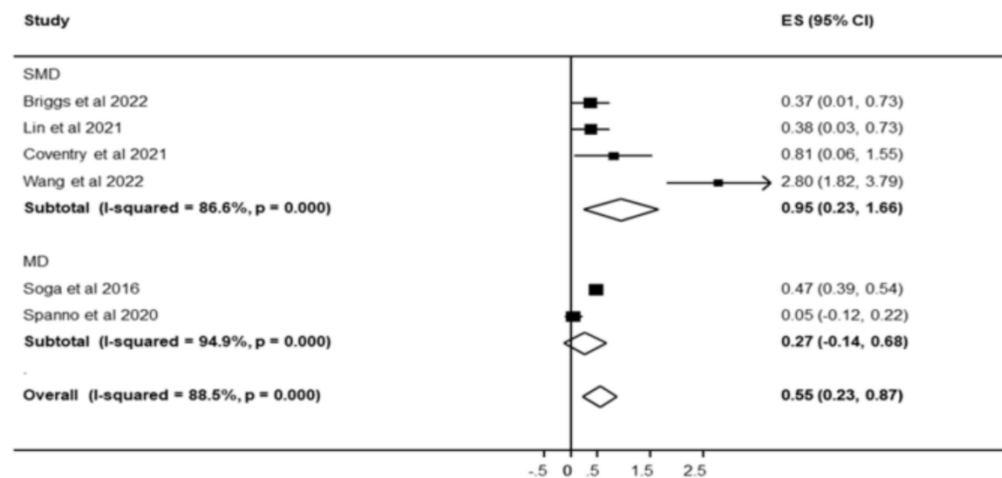
³⁴ VanBoxtel, Arica, *Mental Health of New Yorkers Stagnates Overall, Worsens for Some New Yorkers*, NY HEALTH FOUNDATION, June 21, 2023.

Green spaces are a “happy place.”³⁵ Many Americans agree that we need more trees and green spaces in general because of the positive impact on mental health.³⁶

Spending time outdoors has been shown to improve mood and cognitive function.³⁷

More specific to edible planting, research from different types of agriculture shows an average “55% increment in well-being measures (95% CI: 0.23–0.87) for gardening,”³⁸

Fig. 2



Effects of gardening and horticultural interventions on well-being and mental health

³⁵ Hailstone, Jamie, *Why Trees and Green Spaces Are Good For Health And Wellbeing*, FORBES, April 24, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiehailstone/2024/04/24/why-trees-and-green-spaces-are-good-for-our-health-and-wellbeing/?sh=34c3fb106ca7>. (“82% of Americans consider spending time around trees and green spaces important for their mental well-being. 85% of respondents say “spending time in nature, surrounded by trees” is like a “reset button for my mind and soul”, while 77% agree that “being among trees is my happy place”. The survey also found 89% of respondents see trees as a public health tool,” and “88% agree forests and communities need more trees. 77% reported greenspaces being their go to happy place.”)

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ Jimenez, Marcia, et al. *Associations between Nature Exposure and Health: A Review of the Evidence*, April 30, 2021.(Citing, Igarashi M., Song C., Ikei H., Miyazaki Y. *Effect of Stimulation by Foliage Plant Display Images on Prefrontal Cortex Activity: A Comparison with Stimulation Using Actual Foliage Plants*. J. NEUROIMAGING OFF. J. AM. SOC. NEUROIMAGING. 2015;25:127–130. doi: 10.1111/jon.12078. “Seeing real plants was associated with increased oxy-hemoglobin concentrations in the prefrontal cortex, suggesting that real plants may have physiological benefits for brain activity not replicated by images of plants.”)

³⁸ Panțiru, I., Ronaldson, A., Sima, N. et al. *The impact of gardening on well-being, mental health, and quality of life: an umbrella review and meta-analysis*. Syst Rev 13, 45 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-024-02457-9>.

Many gardeners plant with their hands. Interacting with the soil chemical Mycobacterium vaccae triggers the release of serotonin in our brain.³⁹

Additionally, public foraging will produce more happiness even than traditional trees. The dopamine release can be triggered by sight (seeing a fruit or berry) and smell as well as by the action of actually plucking the fruit.⁴⁰

D. Social benefits

Socially, gardening and fruit trees can improve family communication, community connection, and decrease isolation.⁴¹

Neighborhoods have greater connection when there are green spaces.⁴² There were found to be “positive impacts on social capital, place attachment, and food knowledge,”⁴³ in a “public urban orchard located along a bike path in Sainte-Anne-de Bellevue, Quebec.”⁴⁴

There has even been studies that suggest vegetation may reduce crime.⁴⁵ “Crime rates for 98 apartment buildings with varying levels of nearby vegetation were compared.... Residents living in “greener” surroundings reported lower levels of fear, fewer incivilities, and less aggressive and violent behavior.”⁴⁶

³⁹ Francis, Robyn, *Why Gardening Makes You Happy and Cures Depression*, Permaculture College Australia, <https://permaculture.com.au/why-gardening-makes-you-happy-and-cures-depression/#:~:text=Getting%20your%20hands%20dirty%20in,and%20strengthens%20the%20immune%20systemc> (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Carney, Patricia, et al., *Impact of a Community Gardening Project on Vegetable intake, Food Security and Family Relationships: A Community-based Participatory Research Study*, J COMMUNITY HEALTH. (August, 2012) 37(4): 874-881 (accessed via PubMed Central) (last visited May 1, 2024)..

⁴² Kuo, Sullivan, Coley & Brunson, *Fertile Ground for Community: Inner-City Common Spaces, Neighborhood Common Spaces*, American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol 26., No. 6, (1998) (accessed via austintexas.gov) (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁴³ NYS AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS, COMMUNITY GARDEN TASK FORCE REPORT 13. <https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/02/communitygardenstaskforcereport.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Kuo, Frances E. & William C. Sullivan, *Environment and Crime in the inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?* DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE NCJRS VIRTUAL LIBRARY, Environment and Behavior, Volume 33, 343-367 (May 2001).

⁴⁶ *Id.*

Thus green spaces, as well as using green spaces for edible plants and fruit trees, can efficiently increase the public's promotion of health, safety, and welfare.

II. LIABILITY

The New York Court of Claims Act broadly waives the State's sovereign immunity for tort claims, provided the claims are brought in the Court of Claims.⁴⁷ States and businesses would owe a duty of that to a licensee. Residences would owe a duty of that to a trespasser. Liability is limited by conducting regular maintenance.

A. Personal Injury/ Premises Liability

"Nothing in the record indicates that defendants were aware of the existence of the tree branch involved in the injury or that they negligently failed to remove it as part of their regular maintenance of the property."⁴⁸

Duties attached to sidewalk liability can be found in NYC Administrative Code 7-210.

Slip and fall cases can be unlikely to arise because "[t]ree well grating surrounding trunk of tree growing on public sidewalk [is] equivalent of sidewalk, and thus written notice of alleged defect was prerequisite to village's liability in pedestrian's personal injury action."⁴⁹

For indoor plants, consider *Egan v. Emerson*, 6 N.Y.S.3d 600 (A.D. 2nd Dep't, 2015), where a potted plant that was on the landing of the staircase on the date of the accident was not a proximate cause of her accident.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ N.Y. Ct. Cl. Act §§ 1 et seq.

⁴⁸ *Hessner v. Laporte*, 171 A.D.2d 999, 1000, 567 N.Y.S.2d 944, 946 (1991).

⁴⁹ Statute § 6-628. *Antenozzi v. Village of Spencerport*, 2009, 26 Misc.3d 650, 889 N.Y.S.2d 433, amended and superseded 2010 WL 9545486. Municipal Corporations 788.

⁵⁰ *Egan v. Emerson Assocs., LLC*, 127 A.D.3d 806, 807, 6 N.Y.S.3d 600, 602 (App. Div. 2d Dep't 2015).

B. Attractive Nuisance

“Under the attractive nuisance doctrine, the relevant element is not what attracts the child, but rather the nuisance itself.”⁵¹ “Natural elements not found to be nuisances.”⁵²

Assumption of risk is a subjective standard, and the plaintiff's age is therefore relevant.⁵³

There would be liability for an attractive nuisance,

“where there is a trap set for the children or pitfalls dangerous to them, where active vigilance is demanded, or where there are certain dangerous instrumentalities on the premises, or where the place is quasi public, or where children are lured or led wantonly and knowingly into danger and thereby suffer injury or death. An owner cannot do an act on his land which is illegal, or which may probably endanger human life.”⁵⁴

The main attractive nuisance consideration would be whether ripe fruit would encourage a child to climb a tree.

“[F]alling from a height is considered an obvious danger even to very young children, so that there is no liability under the attractive nuisance doctrine for falls except where a dangerous condition was concealed, the structure from which the child fell was in a defective or hazardous condition, there existed a distracting influence which made it likely that the child would not appreciate the danger, the child was too young to appreciate any risk, or there was a present danger that a child of tender years could not readily apprehend.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ See Restatement (Second) of Torts § 339, ill. 3 (stating that a landowner is liable when a child picking blossoms in a magnolia tree comes in contact with a wire that the child did not observe); *Pippin v. Atallah*, 245 Mich.App. 136, 626 N.W.2d 911, 916 n. 3 (2001) (“The term ‘attractive nuisance’ is a misnomer ... because it is not necessary, in order to maintain such an action, that the hazardous condition be the reason that the children came onto the property.”)

⁵² *Maalouf v. Swiss Confederation*, 208 F. Supp. 2d 31 (D.D.C. 2002): “Although plaintiff was attracted to defendant's land by a natural source (i.e., the hill), the nuisance—namely, the metal wire—was artificial.” (holding Swiss Embassy was not protected by sovereign immunity for decisions as to maintenance of the Embassy's grounds because such decisions were made in its capacity as a land owner, not in its capacity as an diplomatic mission.)

⁵³ *Morrison v. MacNamara*, 407 A.2d 555 (D.C.1979).

⁵⁴ *Jaffy v. New York Cent. & H.R.R.*, 118 Misc. 147, 156, 192 N.Y.S. 852, 859 (Sup. Ct. Westchester Co. 1922).

⁵⁵ § 40:10. Attractive nuisances—Places and conditions, 2 Premises Liability 3d § 40:10 (2023 ed.). See also Restatement, 2d, Torts, § 339, Comment j; *Patterson v. Proctor Paint & Varnish Co.*, 21 N.Y.2d 447, 454. (12 year old trespasser picked up a drip can containing fluid that looked like water, then lighted a fire playing “fireman.” The motion to dismiss was denied, as the land was open and accessible to children, children use it for play, and there were accessible highly volatile substances, creating a prima facie case for plaintiff).

The owner must exercise reasonable care. If the tree becomes tall, reasonable care may include a sign to not climb the tree to get fruit, and to encourage using a grabber tool instead. Adequate signage indicating climbing is not allowed, for a tree that is large with low branches, can also mitigate the likelihood that the child is so “distracted” by the fruit that they would not appreciate the risk of falling from the tree.

Caselaw suggests that to consider fruit on a fruit tree a distracting influence would lead to absurd results.

“There is nothing more attractive to a boy than apples on a tree.... Apples on a tree are not only a temptation, they are an invitation. To climb for them is also an attraction....The apples are attractive whether big and red or small and green...So we have in the fruit tree the hyperbole of attraction carrying its own danger...[y]et notwithstanding all these elements of an attractive nuisance... the idea of so applying the doctrine would be an absurdity for which no one would contend.... [R]eason and justice declare it would not do to apply the doctrine.”⁵⁶

C. Nuisance

A nuisance claim can be brought for an unreasonable and intentional interference with another’s right to enjoy their property, or public land. ⁵⁷

To consider possible nuisances the trees may pose, one can think naturally about what trees do. They grow. That can pose problems when roots protrude surfaces. They drop leaves. They host living things, including certain pests when unkept. Fruit trees have some special considerations such as consumption, and any fallen fruit rotting.

⁵⁶ *Memphis v. Trice*, 13 Tenn. App. 607, 618. See also, *McKiddy v. Des Moines Electric Co.*, 202 Iowa 225, 206 N.W. 815, while recognizing the attractive nuisance doctrine to say: “Of necessity it (the Court) has allowed or denied application of the doctrine as the particular facts of each case would justify or require. . . . No hard and fast rule of liability or non-liability can be fixed in this regard.”

⁵⁷ See generally, *Bove v. Donner-Hanna Coke Corporation*, 258 N.Y.S. 229 (1932) (“The inconvenience, if such it be, must not be fanciful, slight or theoretical, but certain and substantial, and must interfere with the physical comfort of the ordinarily reasonable person.”). See also, *City of Monterey v. Carrnshimba*, 156 Cal. Rptr. 3d 1, 31 (2013) (“a city council may, by ordinance, declare what it deems to constitute a public nuisance.”).

Squirrels may already be attracted to acorns (and chestnuts are edible when cooked). Similarly with fruit trees, bats, birds, bunnies, squirrels, mice, raccoons, and rats may take a liking to a particular area with fruit trees.

There are various ways to keep these animals out, which include planting peppermint nearby, and/or putting a small fence around the tree. With proper maintenance, and ensuring that the fruit gets harvested, the risk of rodents and other pests can be vastly reduced.⁵⁸ By spraying a diluted solution of peppermint oil around the base of your fruit trees, you can create an unpleasant scent that rats will avoid.

And an encouraging fact is that the animals wait until they smell the sugar, which is usually a few days *after* the fruit ripens.⁵⁹

“Rat guards,” a device that wraps a tree to prevent climbing, are an option for fruit trees.⁶⁰

Another option, of course, is to allow the animals to take their share. Some call it the “fruit tax.”⁶¹ These animals are part of our urban ecosystems.

Nuisance claims for farming can be fought with right to farm statutes.⁶² Though right to farm statutes are not an absolute defense.⁶³

⁵⁸ *How to use peppermint oil to keep mice away*, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2021/07/26/how-to-use-peppermint-oil-to-keep-mice-away/> (July 26, 2021).

⁵⁹ *What you can do to prevent rats*, ORANGE COUNTY MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT, <https://www.ocvector.org/what-you-can-do-to-prevent-rats#:~:text=The%20homeowner%20can%20help%20control,leave%20pet%20food%20outside%20overnight> (last visited May 14, 2024).

⁶⁰ Kern, William, *Control of Roof Rats in Fruit Trees*, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, IFAS Extension, <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW120> (last visited May 14, 2024).

⁶¹ Margolis, Jacob, *Squirrels Are Eating All Of My Backyard Fruit! What Can I do?*, LAIST (June 13, 2023) <https://laist.com/news/climate-environment/squirrels-are-eating-all-of-my-backyard-fruit-what-can-i-do>.

⁶² Neumann, Brad, *Right to Farm Act can preempt local regulation authority, but not all local regulations*, MSU EXTENSION (April 11, 2023) https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/right_to_farm_act_can_preempt_local_regulation_authority_but_not_all_local.

⁶³ See, e.g., *Harms v. City of Sibley*, 695 N.W.2d 43 (Iowa App. 2004) (concerning factory farms where the adjacent property owners had the right to bring a nuisance suit); *Owens v. Contigroup Companies, Inc.*, 344

Nuisance claims typically can be brought against non-agricultural commercial industrial entities. However, urban agriculture, in this context, would likely not be considered “commercial,” nor “industrial.”

Broadening right-to-farm statutes to include urban mini-farms may allow the state to retain more protection against nuisance claims. It is not required however, to achieve a low probability of nuisance claims brought against urban farmers.

Therefore, urban agriculture would likely not pose a nuisance. “[U]rban agriculture is ‘a return to past American tradition’ and should not be viewed as implausible or unexpected.”⁶⁴

D. Food Poisoning

There are laws to protect those who donate food. “The Bill Emerson Samaritan Food Donation Act (the Emerson Act) provides a federal baseline of protection for food donors. The Emerson Act covers individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the officers of business and non-profit organization. It also covers gleaners- individuals that harvest donated agriculture crops to give to a nonprofit organization that distributes to the needy.”⁶⁵

There is also always liability insurance for businesses and organizations.

In conclusion, with proper evaluation of potential liabilities, state and local governments can mitigate risk by providing proper insurance, maintenance and warnings. Courts seem reluctant to bring cases arising out of natural human activities such as picking fruit or growing food.

Sw.W.3d 717 (Mo.Ct. App. 2011) (affirming an \$11 million public nuisance judgment against a hog operation that produced 230,000 gallons of waste per day.)

⁶⁴ Sarah B. Schindler, *Of Backyard Chickens and Front Yard Gardens: The Conflict Between Local Governments and Locavores*, 87 TUL. L. REV. 231, 266 (2012) (Citing Community Programs & Services: Garden Program, N.Y.C. Hous. Auth., <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/community/garden.shtml> (last visited Nov. 27, 2012))

⁶⁵ HARVARD FOOD LAW AND POLICY CLINIC, NEW YORK FOOD DONATION: LIABILITY PROTECTIONS (September 2018).

III. ZONING

There are minimal to no legal barriers to expanding community gardens to urban agriculture. It is more a policy choice embraced by municipalities.⁶⁶

Local governments have much of the power in this field. “Our results... demonstrate that UA practitioners in some cities have substantially more access to funding, resources, technical assistance, educational training, and public land access mechanisms provided by municipal government compared to those in other cities.”⁶⁷

For example, in Philadelphia, the man behind the Philadelphia Orchard Project⁶⁸ met with the city many times before the project was approved, awarding him rights to plant public foods on 13 city-owned lots that had been vacant all his life.⁶⁹

“[W]e go into a meeting and there are 8 people around the room and they all have different agendas: developer, utility companies, and different people, we [landscape architects] are, and need to be the strongest advocates for the care and preservation of trees.”⁷⁰

A. Permissible

New York State allows agricultural uses, including urban gardening, in all district zones except for amusement park zones.

“Zoning allows agricultural uses in all residential districts, the vast majority of commercial districts, and all manufacturing districts. The only area where agriculture is not permitted by zoning is within C7 districts, which are intended for amusement parks.”⁷¹ “Agricultural

⁶⁶ Ana Moragues-Faus, Jane Battersby, *Urban food policies for a sustainable and just future: Concepts and tools for a renewed agenda*, FOOD POLICY (2021).

⁶⁷ Madeline R. Halvey, Raychel E. Santo, Sara N. Lupolt, Trent J. Dilka, Brent F. Kim, Grace H. Bachman, Jill K. Clark, Keeve E. Nachman,, *Beyond backyard chickens: A framework for understanding urban agriculture policies in the United States*, UNITED STATES FOOD POLICY, (August, 2021).

⁶⁸ PHILADELPHIA ORCHARD PROJECT, homepage, <https://www.phillyorchards.org>. Accessed May 1, 2024.

⁶⁹ Gorrilla, Buffy, *A North Philadelphia grower is planting an orchard on a vacant lot*, WHYY PBS, August, 18, 2021. <https://whyy.org/articles/a-north-philadelphia-grower-is-planting-an-orchard-on-a-vacant-lot/>. (Describing the now successful Philadelphia Orchard Project, “For Hines, the hardest part is navigating city government.”)

⁷⁰ Braverman, *The Regulation of Street Trees in Four North American Cities* (November 2008). (Citing Interview with Anonymous, Boston’s Landscape Architect, in Boston, Mass (Oct. 7, 2005) (on file with author).

⁷¹ NYC URBAN AGRICULTURE, FAQ, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/agriculture/faqs/frequently-asked-questions.page#:~:text=Gardening%20and%20agricultural%20activities%20are,specifically%20designated%20com>

uses include personal gardening, community gardening, commercial farming, indoor farming such as hydroponics and aquaponics, rooftop greenhouses, and more.”⁷²

1. Residences

Residential agriculture and sharing is clearly allowed in land-use so long that it does not interfere with another’s right to use their property.⁷³ Some municipalities even authorize selling food at residences, if it is food grown on your own land.⁷⁴

Government housing is also permitted, and encouraged, to have gardens. “The New York City Housing Authority's Garden and Greening Program provides year-round technical assistance and other resources to thousands of residents across the City's 328 public housing developments. Garden and Greening supports over 700 gardens and three urban farms.”

2. Businesses

Private entities that function in public spaces, may have an easier time planting fruit trees, until NYC legislation addresses the limited species list.

Private entities can use their parking lots, rooftops, and front entrances to house fruit trees and edible plants. There are Federal Tax Incentives to donate food for businesses.⁷⁵

a. Greenhouses

munity%20garden%20sites (last visited May 1, 2024) (The NYC Zoning Resolution delineates where specific uses are allowed in the city. Agriculture is defined in two places within the Zoning Resolution: Section 22-14 – Agricultural uses are listed as Use Group 4B, which are allowed in all residential zoning districts (R1-R10) and the majority of commercial zoning districts (C1-C6 and C8). Section 42-14 – Agricultural uses are listed as Use Group 17C, which are allowed in all manufacturing zoning districts (M1-M3).

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Bove v. Donner-Hanna Coke Corporation*, *supra* note 57.

⁷⁴ *Ecker v. Dayton*, 234 A.D.2s 584, 585, 651 N.Y.S.2d 206 (2d Dep’t 1996). “[S]ection 57-2 (B) of the Zoning Code of the Village of East Hampton, “[n]urseries, truck gardens and greenhouses” are permitted uses in residential zoning districts. Further... “The terms “nursery,” “truck garden” and “greenhouse” contemplate the sale of products grown on-site (see, 83 Am Jur 2d, Zoning and Planning, § 397; 1 Anderson, New York Zoning Law and Practice § 13.19; Annotation, Permissible activities under zoning laws permitting greenhouses and nurseries, 40 ALR2d 1459, 1460).”

⁷⁵ HARVARD LAW SCHOOL FOOD LAW AND POLICY CLINIC, NEW YORK FOOD DONATION: TAX INCENTIVES, FOOD (September, 2018). https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/taxincentivehlf.pdf. (“donation must be used for charitable purposes and given to a qualified organization as laid out under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC)”).

Greenhouses are specifically defined in zoning as agricultural uses.⁷⁶

New York City provides an incentive to have greenhouses in that a “...permitted obstruction with a certification by the Chair of the City Planning Commission, allows greenhouses to not count toward the floor area of a building and to exceed the height limit of the underlying zoning district.”⁷⁷ “In order to qualify for this Chair certification, applicants must show that the proposed greenhouse is: located on the roof of a building without residences, used primarily for the cultivation of plants, less than 25 feet in height, mostly transparent, and set back from the perimeter wall by 6 feet, if the greenhouse exceeds the building height limit in the district.”⁷⁸

b. Parking Lots

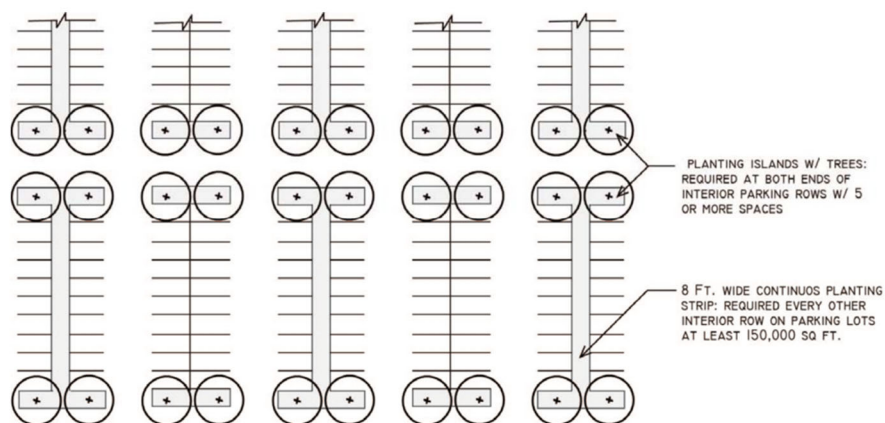
Parking lots are required to have certain amount of landscaping depending on lot size, and per parking lot spot.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Supra* note 71. (“In areas with residential zoning, non-commercial greenhouses are allowed in the rear yard, limited to one story or 15 feet in height above the adjoining grade, whichever is less. Greenhouses also cannot exceed 25% of the area of a required rear yard. This is defined in Section 23-44(b).”)

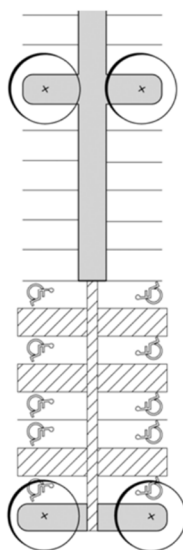
⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ NYC GOV, DESIGN REGULATIONS FOR COMMERCIAL & COMMUNITY FACILITY PARKING LOTS TEXT AMENDMENT (adopted 2007) <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/parking-lots/N070509ZRY.pdf>.



“Planting islands required ... may be discontinued where a pedestrian access lane is provided that serves no more than five parking spaces required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.”⁸⁰



Illustrative Diagram 2

“Tree planting and screening requirements may be waived if the Commissioner of Buildings certifies that planting is unfeasible due to: unique geological conditions, such as

⁸⁰ *Id.*

excessive subsurface rock conditions or high water table; underground municipal infrastructure; or a City, State or Federal mandated brownfield remediation that requires the site to be capped. Such waiver shall be based on a report prepared by a licensed engineer that such conditions exist.”⁸¹

Although companies can choose to pay the city government, they should consider that planting can offset their carbon emissions.⁸²

3. Schools

The Office of Community gardens, powers and duties include to “assist, support and encourage communication, and the sharing of resources between community garden organizations, the New York Harvest For New York Kids Week program established by the department ... and individual farm-to-school and school garden programs,”⁸³

“There are now nearly 800 school gardens registered with Grow to Learn across all five boroughs!”⁸⁴

B. Limited gardening

Although planting within a parking lot can have fruit trees and edible plants, street frontage landscapes have to comply with NYC’s Approved Species list.

1. Street Trees

“[O]ne street tree, pre-existing or newly planted, shall be provided for every 25 feet of street frontage of the zoning lot.”⁸⁵

⁸¹ NEW YORK CITY ZONING RESOLUTION 37-951 (last amended April 22, 2009).

⁸² Juniper, *supra* note 8. (In 2015, “The UN Paris Agreement set[] targets for planting trees to offset the threat of climate change and global warming.”).

⁸³ NY CLS Agr & M § 31-h.

⁸⁴ *Urban Growing and Gardening*, THE NYC MAYOR’S OFFICE OF FOOD POLICE (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁸⁵ NEW YORK CITY ZONING RESOLUTION 26-41 (last amended Dec. 6 2023).

“The species and caliper of all street trees shall be determined by the Department of Parks and Recreation, and all such trees shall be planted in accordance with the street tree planting standards of the Department of Parks and Recreation.”⁸⁶

“Trees may be provided in an alternate manner, or waived, for alternate compliance: Rain gardens, planters, off-site locations, or payment; funds equivalent to the cost of planting such tree, as established by rule of the Department of Parks and Recreation, may be deposited in an account of the City of New York.”⁸⁷

Planting your own tree on NYC land can be done by citizens, with a permit and by adhering to proper specifications.⁸⁸

The “Approved Species List,”⁸⁹ includes smaller fruit varieties, but is limited to: Coffeetree, Cornelian Cherry, Crabapple, European Birdcherry, Ginkgo, Hawthorn, Japanese Flowering Cherry, Okame Cherry, Purpleleaf Plum, Sargent Cherry, Schubert Cherry, Serviceberry, and Yoshino Cherry. Notably, some of these fruits have poisonous seeds or pits, so picker beware.

One can seek a special permit for a different street tree species to be planted, though there is no easy accessible, streamlined process for doing so.

Municipalities are partial to certain species. For example, the Town of Hempstead will plant a tree at request of a homeowner in a residential district.⁹⁰ There are a limited choice of

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ NYC PARKS DEP’T, TREE PLANTING SPECIFICATIONS CHECK LIST, https://www.nycgovparks.org/pagefiles/52/tree_planting_specifications_check_list.pdf (last visited May 1, 2024). *See also*, NYC PARKS, PERMITTING FLOWCHART, https://static.nycgovparks.org/images/pagefiles/128/PPR-Process-Workflow-1-31__5b2acf46917d0.pdf (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁸⁹ NYC PARKS DEP’T, STREET TREE APPROVED SPECIES LIST, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/trees/street-tree-planting/species-list> (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁹⁰ TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD, ENGINEERING DEP’T, TREE PLANTING, <https://hempsteadny.gov/770/Tree-Planting> (last visited May 1, 2024).

tree.⁹¹ The trees cost between \$400-\$500 to be planted.⁹² Or a permit to plant a tree can be obtained for just \$25.⁹³ Fruit trees for sale on Fastgrowingtrees.com, which ships to New York, go for about \$120 each.

The New York Parks of Recreation confirms a request, with a wait time of up to 720 days for tree planting requests by the city. Obtaining a permit to plant your own tree on City Streets requires strict adherence to planting requirements.

Although NYC neglects to mention pricing, the NYC Planting Process is laid out under the NYC's Urban Forest, Street Tree Planting guide.⁹⁴ In the Street Planting guide, there is a section for NYC Park's collaboration with a specific nursery that "Procures Trees" in a manner favorable to urban environments.⁹⁵

2. Parks

"Gardening and agricultural activities are generally not allowed in any New York City Park, or other space under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks, except for specifically designated community garden sites"⁹⁶

The city acknowledges "It is in the best interests of the City to require greater native biodiversity and limit the use of invasive species in public landscapes."⁹⁷ Yet, our parks are so limited to the Approved Species List stated above for Street Trees.

⁹¹ TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD, ENGINEERING DEP'T, TREE SPECIES, <https://hempsteadny.gov/244/Tree-Species> (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁹² *Id.* See also, *supra* note 89.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Parks' Planting Process*, NYC PARKS, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/trees/street-tree-planting/steps> (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁹⁵ Stephens, Matthew, *Tree Procurement Contracts: New York's Quest for Amazing Trees*, NYC PARKS, https://static.nycgovparks.org/images/pagefiles/52/Tree_Procurement.pdf (last visited May 1, 2024).

⁹⁶ *Supra* note 65.

⁹⁷ 2013 NYC Local Law No. 11.

Hawaii has a bill that would even make Fruit trees the preferred state planting.⁹⁸

Yet, as it stands, law varies from park to park, as to whether gardening and foraging is permissible. In New York City, Rules and Regulations of the Parks provides that prohibited uses include “Destruction or Abuse of Trees, Plants, Flowers, Shrubs and Grass.”⁹⁹ And “destroy” shall include, but not limited to, kill, carve, prune, or inflict other physical damage to the tree.”¹⁰⁰ The intent here seems to be conservation. It is likely that foraging small amounts of fruit at a time would not fall into this category, since harvesting can actually improve the plant’s life.

The Commission would have the ability to specify amount restrictions, and allow some foraging within the parks.¹⁰¹

Many national parks, for example, allow for some foraging. The laws vary, some restricting it outright, others placing amount restrictions, and others no restrictions at all.

The United States Department of the Interior provides it is permissible to harvest reasonable amounts of fruits, greenery and mushrooms from National Forests.¹⁰²

The Hawaii Volcanoes allow foraging of Avocado, Blackberry, coconut, guava, passion fruit, Ohelo berries, Poha, Thumble Berry, Strawberry guava, white strawberry, yellow raspberry as long as it is for “Personal use and consumption” and done by “non-mechanical means; use care not to damage any plants; no climbing trees/historical structures or rock-throwing to harvest coconuts.” Amounts are limits to “1 qt. Ohelo berries per person per month. And for the rest of the fruits must “leave some fruit on each plant.”¹⁰³

⁹⁸ HAWAII S.B. NO. 666 (2023). https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2023/bills/SB666_.html.

⁹⁹ NYC PARKS, Rules and Regulations, §1-04 Prohibited Uses.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* (“Violation of this subparagraph constitutes a misdemeanor punishable by not more than six months imprisonment or by a fine of not more than \$15,000, or by both.”)

¹⁰¹ *Supra* note 4 at, Appendix A.

¹⁰² THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, “Forest and Wood Product Permits,” Bureau of Land Management. Accessed May 1, 2024.

¹⁰³ *Linnekin, Supra* note 4 at 1047.

In the eastern United States, many parks allow foraging. For example, Shenandoah Park, in Virginia, allows foraging of mushrooms, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and wineberries. Again, their website says there is no climbing trees to gather fruits or nuts, it is also for personal use or consumption, and is limited to 1 gallon per person per day.¹⁰⁴

Providing reasonable foraging laws, an increase in the varieties available for public planting, and more orchard/garden areas in park would ensure greater availability for public edible plants and fruit trees in our communities.

IV. FINANCES AND MAINTENANCE

NYC Parks are petitioning to have 1% of the state budget restored. Perhaps fruit trees may provide an incentive for the state to restore budgets.

Fruit trees are good for public spaces because they require little maintenance. Perennials can be good as well, because they come up every year as opposed to needing to be planted each year.

Plants need space,¹⁰⁵ food/compost¹⁰⁶ water and sun to grow.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ See CORNELL UNIVERSITY, COOPERATIVE EXTENSION GENESEE COUNTY, *Starting a Vegetable Garden*, Master Gardener Corner, April 7, 2020. (“Almost any vegetable can be grown in a suitable container and many crops now have varieties that have been especially bred for growing in containers.”). See also, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, *Cornell Guide to Growing Fruit at Home*, at 1. (“You can grow large amounts of fruit in a relatively small area.” See also *id.*, Table 2: *Planting and harvesting guidelines for various fruit crops*).

¹⁰⁶ *Soil Preparation for Apple Trees*, SOIL PREPARATION FOR APPLE TREES, STARK BRO’S, <https://www.starkbros.com/growing-guide/how-to-grow/fruit-trees/apple-trees/soil-preparation>. See also, Larney, F. J. and Angers, D. A., *The role of organic amendments in soil reclamation: A review* (2012) <https://cdns.cornell.edu/doi/full/10.4141/cjss2010-064> (“Adding organic materials like compost will improve the composition of most every soil type;” “Soil preparation can be done at any time of the year;” “Garden lime can be added for soil that is too acidic;” “Sphagnum/peat moss can be added if native soil pH is too high/alkaline;” “To add materials simply dig a couple of holes and fill.”). See also, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, COMPOSTING AT HOME, <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home> (last visited May 1, 2024) (Compost consists of things like leaves, bananas, egg shells, and other food scraps.)

If we are to meet urban heat reduction goals, we have to consider not only the public sector but also the private sector. Sometimes entities have already cemented a majority of their spaces, in which case, many plants can do well not only in ground, but also in pots on top of cement or pavement.

A. Grants

There is a document specifically dedicated to the funding of public gardens in New York City.¹⁰⁷ For-profit entities and individuals may not apply.¹⁰⁸

Neighborhood 360 grants in New York City, such as Astoria, Queens, provide up to \$400,000 per year to Community-based Organizations.¹⁰⁹

Business Improvement Districts offer “Storefront Improvement Grants” of up to \$25,000 per building.¹¹⁰ The goal is to enhance the storefront so that stores have a better sense of identity, and look better.

B. Maintenance

The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation already oversees tree care.¹¹¹

Typical maintenance required for gardens and fruit trees includes adding compost for certain times of the year, and watering during droughts and hot summer days.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Grants Gateway # AGM01-UFC24-2024, *New York State 2024 Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program*. See also NYC Agriculture Resources, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/agriculture/resources/resources.page>.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Neighborhood 360 Grants*, NYC SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/sbs/neighborhoods/neighborhood-360-grants.page> (last visited May 1, 2024). See also NYC URBAN AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/agriculture/resources/resources.page> (last visited May 1, 2024).

¹¹⁰ *Small BID Support Grant Program*, NYC Small Business Services, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/sbs/neighborhoods/small-bid-support-grants.page> (last visited May 1, 2024).

¹¹¹ NYC PARKS, NEW YORK CITY TREE MAP, <https://tree-map.nycgovparks.org> (last visited May 1, 2024).

¹¹² *Supra* note 7.

Members of the community, who live along the block or that use the park, can keep an eye on the neighborhood plants. The whole community would play a part in the plant's success.

Soil testing is always a good idea before planting.¹¹³ Sending soil to a University lab, such as the Cornell Nutrient Analysis Laboratory for \$15-100 will have the most accurate results (as opposed to a home test kit).¹¹⁴ In such a case that there is lead found when planting inground, lemon peels have been shown to be extremely efficient at virtually eliminating lead concentrations.¹¹⁵

Businesses and individuals can consider too that store bought soil planted in containers, will not need to be tested. Large pots such as 7-15 gallon fabric pots or barrels, can be efficient ways to have large gardens using pots, only.

Planting in a place where the edible plants or tree may have some onlookers, and providing a tag or sign to establish common knowledge of the type of tree and its needs, are goods ways to insure disease watch.

Additionally, it will be important to keep low fruit, vegetable and herb crops away from heavy traffic areas, and areas where dogs are frequently walked.

Pruning is another fun way for the public to engage with the trees and edible crops.

Pesticides may be allowed, but need not be recommended and should be discouraged.

¹¹³ *In Soil: An Environmental Review, Lead*, NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, <https://nylc.org/news/lead-in-soil-an-environmental-review/>. ("PUREsoil NYC, [is] a project aimed at replacing polluted soil in community gardens, yards, and other spaces to decrease potential lead exposure.")

¹¹⁴ Brinker, Stephanie, *Starting a new garden? How to Test Your Soil*, CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, (April 26, 2021).

¹¹⁵ *Fruitful discoveries: The power to purify water is in your produce*, Dickinson College, (August 1, 2018), <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180801160001.htm>. ("lemon seeds removed 100 percent of lead ions, while the peels removed 96.4 percent.")

Note that when it comes to local law or ordinances, “Any local law that regulates or prohibits the use of pesticides is void, as the enactment of state statutes preempts the field of pesticide regulation, thus precludes local governments from legislating in that area.”¹¹⁶

Yet harsh pesticides are not necessary for these small, local projects. Neither are pesticides.¹¹⁷ In fact, one of the benefits to growing locally grown fruit and vegetables in smaller quantities, is that there will be less pests and overgrowth as there would be in a huge orchard or garden, full of the same fruit or vegetable variety, attract the same pest, and potentially not its hunter.

Fallingfruit is a specific mapping tool dedicated to having a toggle option for fruit bearing trees.¹¹⁸

The legislature is presumptively valid if they are attempting to reach a laudable goal.¹¹⁹ It would be beneficial for the state and local municipalities to endorse the use of fruit trees, fruits, vegetables, herbs and edible flowers in public spaces.¹²⁰

CONCLUSION

With some initial planning, efficient financing and follow through, fruit trees and edible plants in public spaces can become a viable option for cities wishing to increase food security,

¹¹⁶ 55 N.Y. Jur. 2d Environmental Rights § 315.

¹¹⁷ Tweten, Chris, *5 Fruit Trees You Can Grow In Your Backyard Without Pesticides*, NORTHWEST CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVES TO PESTICIDES, July 20, 2023. (Including Apple trees, Cherry trees Peach trees, Plum trees, and Pear trees).

¹¹⁸ FALLINGFRUIT <https://fallingfruit.org>. (“Kissena Park "Orchard." Is a “wide open area of paths has scattered fruit trees and overgrown areas. Also a birding hotspot.”)

¹¹⁹ *Rumson Estates, Inc. v. Mayor & Council of the Borough of Fair Haven*, Supreme Court of New Jersey, 828 A.2d 317 (2003) (where house size not “arbitrary and unduly discriminatory,” the city may adopt “floor area ratios and other ratios and regulatory techniques governing the intensity of land use and the provision of adequate light and air, including but not limited to the potential for utilization of renewable energy sources.”)

¹²⁰ *Id.*

and for businesses wishing to beautify their space, and create foot traffic. New businesses can especially consider implementing them in greenhouses, where floor area is subtracted from square footage allowance, and parking lots, where setbacks and landscaping are already required.

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city has defunded community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profit organizations will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We live in a time where the environmental impact of modern life is almost irreversible. Without taking the environmental crisis seriously, our collective society will soon face astronomical environmental destruction. By protecting the city composting program, City Council would be doing the bare minimum to protect our city's environment, as the composting program is a mere avenue for New Yorkers to dispose of THEIR OWN waste on their own time. Protecting the program therefore allows New Yorkers to lessen the ongoing harm they pose to the city's environment. City Council should be doing so much more to protect our city, namely by establishing a city-wide composting program that makes composting accessible to all New Yorkers. But protecting the GrowNYC composting program is the most basic and necessary step.

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and fight for sufficient bundling in the next city council budget. The Council should also mandate that this program exist through legislation, which would make it permanent.

Thank you,

Allison McPherson
Kings County

Sanitation & Finance Hearing on Monday, May 20th, supporting community composting funding and asking for the budget to be restored.

Our community of passionate and hard-working citizens requests your support to continue fully fund our vital community composting. The environmental work of so many people in the community supports for our valuable parks, city agriculture, and a range of local organizations all doing the work that city cannot!

Local residents have worked for years to support Big Re-use, GrowNYC, LES Ecology Center and so many more. These organizations and all these people got the city (finally) on the right track for reduction of food waste, and brought 100's if not 1,000's of city residents out to join in and get their hands dirty. What damage has already done to these local organizations is despicable - please restore funding to these valuable grass-roots projects.

Mayor Adams please end the recent budget cuts, and please restore the money that is dedicated for construction, and expansion of additional community composting capacity. I also support Big Reuse remaining at their composting site under the Queensboro Bridge. NYC Parks Department is planning to evict Big Reuse's composting site by June 30 to create unneeded Put a parking lot someplace else, this organization creates soooooo much more than a dumping space for a wheeled vehicles! Any eviction would end Big Reuse's composting programs in Queens and remove the site from our public use.

Our gardening, composting, environmental organizations including Big Reuse are all against these financial slashing actions. How can you foster a city of Yes, when you won't support the communities that are an ever-expanding global necessity? Your budget is going against the better judgement and environmental interest of our local elected officials, community boards, community design meetings, legal experts, and environmental and neighborhood groups.

THANK YOU

Andrea Arnold



Bronx, NY 10463

Hello! My name is Andrew Sherman, I'm a resident in City Council District 40, and I'm writing in support of restoring community composting in the FY25 budget. I'm a lifelong NYC resident and have been waiting a long time for the city to have good composting solutions. The brown bin system seemed like a great thing to have, even if I vastly prefer true composting to anaerobic processing, and even if the city is more or less lying when it calls these brown bins "composting" bins. But even that seems to be in jeopardy, with a reportedly botched AD rollout leaving New Yorkers like me confused and distrustful of brown bin composting. I greatly respect the work that the DOS does but it's clear that political meddling by the unpopular and ineffectual Adams administration (lowest approval rating ever recorded!) has impeded DOS's ability to do their job and left us all fighting for unnecessarily scarce resources. Rather than be pitted against each other, DOS, Parks, and community groups need to work together to do what's best for New Yorkers.

While the city has struggled to provide adequate composting, community organizations have stepped in to help out. GrowNYC and Big Reuse, among others, are groups of highly dedicated and admirable New Yorkers, committed to improving the future of this city and doing the right thing for our environment. They work hard but they are taking on a very difficult task and need a small amount of stable funding and support from the city. Until just recently I have depended on them every week to handle my compostable food scraps. However, the Adams administration has delivered a kick in the teeth to these organizations, to my friends and neighbors, by removing funding as well as trying to evict Big Reuse from its Queensbridge composting site. Why this has happened I simply don't understand. The city's rationales have been patently ridiculous. The funding is incredibly

minimal and the city clearly has plenty of free budgetary capacity for it (and to cover the other ridiculous cuts made by the Adams administration). The Queensbridge composting site is simply not necessary for Parks operation and even if it were, the city refuses to even consider alternative plans put forth by Big Reuse.

Community composting may seem like a small issue but it is something I rely on every day. It has positive effects for community gardens, farmers markets, community cohesion, and other reuse programs like Big Reuse's furniture/clothing/etc collection. This city needs to get serious about the climate, not just for the benefit of the world but for the benefit of its residents. A circular economy means self-sufficiency, and when waste management becomes a harder and harder problem worldwide New Yorkers will thank you for treating it seriously. Thank you for your time!

Andrew Sherman



Brooklyn, NY, 11218

**New York City Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Committee on Sanitation
and Committee on Parks**

May 20, 2024

Testimony by Anita Chan

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Anita Chan, a lifelong New Yorker, currently a Long Island City resident, a composter, a park lover, an Earth Matter NY board member, and a member of 350NYC WasteNot.

The Mayor's budget cuts from last year have caused a loss of numerous green jobs and a huge setback to maintaining our parks, organic waste diversion, improving street cleanliness, rat mitigation, and NYC's progress towards sustainability goals. It has been half a year of numerous individuals and organizations voicing their support of community composting, parks, libraries, education, senior care, all of which are crucial to maintaining and improving New Yorker's quality of life. Yet, time and time again we see the budget for NYPD increase and taxpayers dollars are going to insane overtime hours. It isn't that the city can't afford these important necessities, it is because so much money is diverted towards funding the police which does not, and will not ever yield the positive outcomes that community programs, health centered programs, and education will achieve.

I want to urge the city council to fight to ensure that:

- (1) the budgets are restored for community composting (GrowNYC, Earth Matter NY, Big Reuse, The Lower East Side Ecology Center, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden) and the Parks Department. These organizations collectively divert over 8 million pounds of organic waste from landfills; supply finished compost to over 300 community groups and thousands of individuals; and provide compost education to over 600,000 New Yorkers every year.
- (2) Composting has a place in parks and push for the reversal of NYC Parks Department's decision to evict Big Reuse from their community composting site underneath the Queensborough Bridge by June 30, 2024 provide a new renewable license agreement to allow them to continue to operate as they have for the last decade.
- (3) Ensure that money is earmarked for community composting and parks in future budgets every year.

Fund Community Composting

Where I live, there are "brown bins" from the organic curbside collection program and "orange bins" from the Smart Bin program, but they cannot replace the "green bins" at community food scrap drop off sites and all of the staff who engage and educate the public. It is through the

tremendous work of all of these organizations and their staff over the years that made it possible that some people are actually using the brown and orange bins correctly. But there is still more work to be done, we want all NYers to know how to divert their organic waste properly, not only some. While I support having universal and diversified access for all individuals to organic waste diversion, the current state of the brown bins and smart bins is a waste of money without robust compost education, much of which has been conducted by the now defunded NYC Compost Project. While it is true that the capacity of existing composting sites cannot handle all of the organic waste that is produced in the city, turning organic matter into compost locally should be prioritized as *the* method of organic waste diversion above biodigestion. When you participate in community composting, you are able to trace your food scraps to a processing site and know that it has been composted and will be used for good. The go to sites shouldn't be the Staten Island compost site and Newtown Creek for anaerobic co-digestion where New Yorkers have little transparency on. Separating food waste from the waste streams and turning it into compost, a usable beneficial resource for the city, helps cut emissions from shipping it elsewhere to landfill or incinerate, will deter rodents, nourish our soils, help grow nutritious food locally, provide a sense of community, and serve as a tangible way for individuals to combat climate change which contributes to better public health outcomes of New Yorkers.

Fund Parks

All New Yorkers and tourists benefit from parks because of the recreation space they provide, the trees providing shade and oxygen, the laws and soil absorbing rainwater, and they are home to a variety of wildlife that brings a feel of nature to our concrete jungle. The NYC Parks' FY24 budget was cut by 5% (\$25M) in November eliminating programs like Tree Risk Management, Trail Formalization, Community Garden Anti-Gun Violence, Swim Safety Expansion, causing a hiring freeze, and will eliminate 600+ Parks jobs. Please advocate for the FY25 Play Fair Budget Demands which will help ensure a clean, safe, thriving city park system:

End the hiring freeze NOW; Return to pre-Covid headcount

- Restore positions lost to hiring freeze and attrition
- Add 1,000 NYC Parks workers to get to pre-Covid staffing levels, starting with the following:

Safe Parks

- Save the 50 Urban Park Rangers about to lose their jobs in July
- Add 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers to keep parks safe

Clean Parks

- Save the 100 City Parks Workers (CPWs) who will lose their jobs in July
- Add 200 CPWs to return to pre-Covid headcount

Green and Resilient Parks

- Save the 50 Forestry & GreenThumb staff who will lose their jobs in July
- Add 51 Forest restoration and volunteer engagement positions
- Reinstate the Citywide Trails Program
- Renew the Parks Equity Initiative

Stop Big Reuse Eviction

Big Reuse has made their current operation space into a community resource for transforming food scraps and yard waste, much from NYC Parks, into nutrient dense compost which is used in parks and given to people in the community and being an compost education hub. Composting locally is crucial in the efforts of resource recovery, waste diversion, and climate resiliency. I support the reconstruction of Baby Queensbridge Park but it cannot be coupled with displacing Big Reuse. Big Reuse is not using space that will be reconstructed for the park and there exists an underused 22,000 sqft Parks Department parking lot next to the site that can serve as parking and storage during the park reconstruction period. Many local community members, NYC residents, elected officials, and environmental organizations have voiced their support in having Big Reuse be able to stay and continue their operations.

In the past year, Big Reuse has

- Composted over 200 tons of leaf and yard waste from western Queens Parks.
- Returned over 700 yards of compost to Parks, street trees and community gardens.
- Provided most of the compost to Queens Parks Horticulture which uses the high quality compost for their most important planting projects.
- Distributed compost to an additional 154 community groups, gardens, and schools.
- Worked with over 500 volunteers.
- Partnered with 62 food scrap drop off sites at community gardens and other groups.
- Provided compost and mulch that was applied to over 1,200 street trees with over 1,000 volunteers as part of Big Reuse' street tree care program.
- Services based at the site reach over 20 city council districts in Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Queens.

Without this processing site, food scraps and yard waste will see increased miles traveled in order to be composted, and NYC will lose a crucial environmental and compost education resource which will hurt the city's climate efforts.

Thank you to all of the city council members who have been in support of these common sense necessities for our city and I hope the city council can work together and vote in unison to ensure funding for parks and community composting is in the FY25 budget and beyond.

Thank you to Chair Krishnan and to the Council Members for this opportunity to write about the importance of restoring \$2.5 million dollars of the city's budget for Play Fair, as well as the \$2.4 million dollars for the trail formalization program as promised by Mayor Adams last year.

My name is Annie Gugliotta, and I'm a crew member on the Citywide Trails Team with NYC Parks. I began performing trail work as an intern with the Natural Areas Conservancy, and I was one of the candidates for the 26 permanent trail formalization positions that were abruptly canceled late last summer. I was able to join the team on a seasonal basis; however, my position is one of the 51 jobs funded through Play Fair that will expire in July.

New York City has over 300 miles of hiking trails, yet we only have two crew members on the ground who build trail structures and maintain them. Our tiny team will shrink to one person if funding for Play Fair is not secured for FY25. Our goals are to create safe, sustainable hiking trails for New Yorkers to access natural areas. Our work goes hand-in-hand with the efforts of the gardeners who restore our urban forests, the ecologists who track and analyze the health of these forests, and the stewardship teams who engage volunteers across the city.

The work we do is labor-intensive and requires the skillful use of many tools and technical knowledge of our city's natural resources. Much of our work cannot be supplemented by volunteers if our positions are eliminated. Currently, our team struggles to keep up with the workload in our parks, and I fear the worsening trail conditions if our team shrinks further. This is unfair to New Yorkers, many of whom may not have access to hiking trails elsewhere and rely on our trail system as a means of experiencing nature.

We risk losing many passionate and talented professionals if the city decides not to fund Play Fair. I urge the council to vote in favor of making Play Fair permanent, as well as restoring funding for the trail formalization program, and to finally invest in access to and the health of natural areas for the sake of all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the community composting initiatives in New York City. As an advocate for sustainable urban living and environmental stewardship, I believe that expanding community composting programs is crucial for the city's ecological health and resilience.

Community composting offers numerous benefits that extend far beyond the immediate environmental impact. It reduces the volume of organic waste sent to landfills, which in turn lowers greenhouse gas emissions and helps mitigate climate change. By transforming food scraps and yard waste into valuable compost, we enrich our city's soil, enhance green spaces, and promote urban agriculture, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable food system.

Moreover, community composting fosters a sense of community and environmental responsibility among residents. It provides educational opportunities, encourages local engagement, and empowers individuals to make a positive difference in their neighborhoods. The act of composting brings people together, creating a shared commitment to environmental sustainability and a stronger sense of community cohesion.

The success of community composting programs in NYC, such as those managed by the NYC Department of Sanitation and various local organizations, demonstrates the feasibility and effectiveness of these initiatives. However, to maximize their potential, it is essential to expand funding, resources, and infrastructure support. This includes increasing the number of drop-off sites, providing educational resources, and facilitating partnerships with local businesses and community groups.

I urge city leaders and policymakers to continue prioritizing and investing in community composting programs. By doing so, we can build a greener, more resilient, and more sustainable New York City for current and future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I am confident that with your support, we can achieve significant progress in advancing community composting and environmental sustainability in our city.

Sincerely,

Antonio Lopez

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Balsamine Chen and I am a constituent living in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I am writing in support of NYC Parks receiving the full Play Fair funding for the FY25 city budget.

I wholeheartedly support the allocation of 1% of the city budget to Parks. My neighborhood park, John J. Carty Park, and the Shore Parkway Greenway have been integral places in my life since I was a child. There, I was able to connect with friends, relax and play, and enjoy the fresh air and nature. Adequate funding is critical for maintaining these spaces for the families of Bay Ridge.

I also have a personal connection to the wonderful people working at NYC Parks and devote their expertise to improving our city. As a college student majoring in Environmental Studies, I interned at the Natural Areas Conservancy last summer and worked with the Monitoring & Assessment field crew at NYC Parks. There, I experienced field work in natural areas across all 5 boroughs, from the tidy forest trails in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx to the grassy fields of Conference House Park in Staten Island.

That summer, I learned that these areas held an amazing abundance of plant life—up to 70 different species in a 10 meter plot—and lowered air temperatures considerably on hot days, where I preferred doing manual work in the shade of the forest to stepping out on the sunny sidewalk in the afternoon. As our city continues to struggle with urban heat each year, I cannot think of a solution more fitting than increasing access to these natural spaces through trail creation and forest management. I therefore ask the City to restore \$2.4 million for the eliminated Trails Formalization Program.

I also ask the City to restore \$2.5 million to preserve 51 critical forest management staff lines in this year's budget. My colleagues at the Queensbridge office of NYC Parks were incredibly welcoming and knowledgeable about their respective areas, from plant identification to trail building to mapping. Cutting any single forest management staff member would be doing a disservice to the city's health and to all the people, including students like me, who can learn from their expertise.

Inspired by my time at NYC Parks, I've also done academic research into its history of public and private funding. During the citywide fiscal crisis in the 1970s, NYC Parks funding plummeted along with its parks' conditions, paving the way for public-private partnerships. Such partnerships, such as the Central Park Conservancy, has greatly improved the conditions of some parks, but the baseline problem of inadequate public funding still persists, especially after cuts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, forested natural areas make up 24% of the city's parkland, but receive an annual average of 0.7% of the NYC Parks expense budget, and 0.84% of staff resources to manage.

As a constituent concerned about my community and a student passionate about the future of my city, I ask you to support 1% for Parks.

Thank you for the \$2.5 million you allocated last year to our natural areas.

Thank you for advocating for an increased allocation for this year.

Sincerely,

Balsamine Chen

Testimony for the Committee on Finance / Sanitation & Park Hearing

May 20, 2024

by Beth Slepian

In support of Community Composting, Buildout of Composting Sites, and Zero Waste Schools

Good afternoon Chair Brannan, Chair Abreu, Chair Krishnan, and Council Members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Beth Slepian, and I am Vice Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board. I am also an educator and microhauler with Common Ground Compost, a certified Master Composter, and a member of Brooklyn Community Board 12. However, I am speaking to you today not as a representative of any of these entities, but instead as an individual, a longtime educator in schools, and as a public school parent.

I trust this Council to make the right decision and **restore the seven million dollars in funding for Community Composting, as well as the four million dollars for new compost sites managed by Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center**, and I thank you for your continued advocacy for these vital city services. As you know, we cannot have community composting without physical sites throughout our city to turn our organic waste into finished compost that benefits our trees and green spaces and improves our quality of life. I am also hopeful that you will find a solution with the Parks Commissioner to save Big Reuse's Queensbridge Composting site.

Now, let's talk about another line item: schools. The mayor, schools chancellor, and Sanitation Commissioner have recently touted the completed rollout of compost collection in all 1800 public schools. This is no small feat. But let's give credit where credit is due: curbside composting exists in our city schools in large part because of the hard work completed by the Zero Waste Schools team at GrowNYC: 25 people, most of whom are union employees, whose contracts are set to expire and will be losing their jobs by the end of June. **Please include the 2.5 million dollars that was previously allocated for zero waste school programs in the FY25 budget.**

Without continued education, these efforts will be fruitless within a few years. Students grow up, teachers and staff move on. I love my child's school, but the rollout of curbside composting there was likely before my first grader was born, and their brown bins are rife with contamination. Like all schools, they need ongoing education to manage their waste better. 86 percent of our school waste is recyclable or compostable. We don't need larger containers where it all goes to landfill; we need waste reduction and smarter solutions, **more waste educators in our schools, and more funding to ensure we can rely on our young people to preserve a greener future.**

Thank you.

Good afternoon, my name is Brian M. Rodriguez and I am part of the Urban Park Rangers and citizen of New York City that fully enjoys the parks we have. I am a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing.

As a Ranger, I see the side of our city that learns and thrives in our parks and green spaces. Students learn about a world right at their fingertips and discover not just the land's wonders but also to care for it and encourage others to care for it. What does it say to young New Yorkers if we tell them to love our neighborhood and the health of our planet, then allow the very thing we are supposed to care for to fall into disrepair?

As the Ranger mission says, we work to connect New Yorkers, young and old, to the natural world, through exploration and appreciation. However, carrying out this mission becomes infinitely harder when the number of Rangers gets sliced in half due to an insufficient budget. We can ill afford to let the people of New York City down because one of the joys they have in life, the parks, cannot be funded.

Dear Council,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my profound concern regarding the proposed budget cuts to the Community Composting program. This initiative has not only demonstrated its efficacy but has also become a beacon of community engagement and environmental stewardship.

With a modest team of 115 individuals, the program has remarkably diverted over 8 million pounds of waste, mitigating the impact on our already overburdened landfills. The cost-to-impact ratio is undeniably favorable, with an expenditure of merely 7 million dollars – a small price to pay for the substantial environmental benefits and the promotion of a sustainable lifestyle among community members.

As we navigate through the escalating climate crisis, it is imperative that we bolster, not diminish, programs that actively contribute to ecological conservation. Community-led initiatives like the Community Composting program are instrumental in fostering a culture of responsibility and action towards the environment.

Therefore, I urge you to reconsider the proposed budget cuts and advocate for the restoration of the 7 million dollars in funding. It is a crucial investment in our community's future and the health of our planet.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Pearson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christian Pearson



Brooklyn, NYC

May 22, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

Since 2015, compost from residential food scraps has helped the Roosevelt Island community grow school gardens, tree pits and even a pocket forest!

Please refund the community food scrap drop off collection for compost program in NYC.

Please stop the eviction of Big Reuse from the compost processing site under the Queensboro bridge in LIC.

Sincerely,
Christina Delfico
NYC resident

Testimony by Courtney Scheffler, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to New York City Council Committee on Sanitation, jointly with the Committee on Finance
Chairs Shaun Abreu and Justin Brannan
Executive Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20, 2024

My name is Courtney, I am speaking to you today as a member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective. Today is the last day I am a Compost Coordinator and Driver for GrowNYC. Today, I lost half my income. Today, marks the beginning of 78 of coworkers losing their jobs now through June. And many more of our colleagues across the NYCCP. This Friday, I told food scrap drop off participants at Parkchester FSDO we won't be back next week. Our participants were disappointed but unsurprised the city would defund a free service that brought their neighborhood nearer to waste equity.

My participants asked what the alternatives would be because the two smart bins in walking distance from their homes were disappeared physically but still appeared marked on the maps. Commissioner Tisch admitted during the Sanitation Hearing today that bins would be moved from low performing areas, ones that received no outreach or education ahead of rollout, to areas with greater participation. This means that areas that have had access to outreach and education about community compost will receive more bins, and areas that have been disserved by waste inequity will have even fewer options to compost their food scraps. Commissioner Tisch can not accurately say that these sites are low performing when they are performing as designed. The system is not broken but working to uphold environmental injustice in the form of gatekept waste management. Hastily rolled out, without community input, without paying workers to support neighborhoods developing a habit change to compost their food scraps with a tech solution. For my participants in Parkchester, I ask Councilmember Amanda Farías who distributed Healthbuck coupons right next to our Food Scrap Drop Off at the Parkchester Greenmarket, with the support of workers in compost who used language skills and customer service patience to help manage the lines, to stand by us in our fight for restoring this inexpensive and free to the public service to your community.

I ask the City Council to commit to a full restoration of community compost funding because the workers never wagered performance over access to community service the way DSNY and the Commissioner have chosen to.

This work is our livelihood. We have been here before. Our livelihoods will always be up for discussion if our work isn't funded and legislated beyond our year-to-year contracts. Curbside and smart bins alone will not realize the waste equity needs of our city. Smart bin and brown bin contamination rates remain high and participation has stagnated. I see what arrives from the brown bins and public schools when I deliver to Staten Island Compost Site. The workers tell me it's trash and it's a shame they can't make much of the trash other than discard it. Tech solutions won't see us through our growing crisis or waste. The workers in community compost will through outreach and education. The workers will.

To the Mayor Eric Adams, Commissioner Tisch, and Director Jiha from the Mayor's budgetary office who called community composting small and inefficient, we don't accept your narratives. There is money enough for housing, libraries, schools, parks, and the New York City Compost

Project. There is money enough for arriving immigrants. We reject any efforts to divert blame. We will not turn our backs on vulnerable members of the communities we serve.

We know there is money enough for the NYCCP to do more than stay afloat. It is only a \$7 million program. We know this because the NYPD has been given over 7 times this amount in overtime for responding to protests alone for the past 7 months. The NYPD was approved to spend [\\$53 million](#) on overtime since October. This spring, in a matter of 16 days, the NYPD spent roughly \$5 million on overtime pay to surveil and brutalize students, educators, and the communities that stood by to protect them.

The community compost workers will not allow our work to be minimized by settling for anything less than our full funding and legislation of community compost. We will not accept politicized narratives that seek to divide us. We will not turn on our neighbors. We stand alongside workers in Parks, street vendors, and non-profits who have testified today.

We will not give up our fight to ensure equitable and enduring access to waste diversion services in every borough. We demand full restoration, we demand legislation.

Thank you to every Councilmember who showed up and continues to do so for community composting. The workers, volunteers, and participants in community compost, actual complet, will keep fighting for community compost not just as it was but how it will be reimagined.

Thank you,

Courtney Scheffler

GrowNYC Workers Collective

Brooklyn

Thank you Speaker, Committee Chairs, and Council members for the chance to testify today,

I am here today on my day off from work as a Parkie. I am going to talk about my experience as a former worker in the Sanitation funded NYC Compost Project, a worker at a NGO Parks Stewardship Group, a former DOE employee, a Parks employee, and a Sanitation and Parks volunteer that has been in the field on the tough side of the Bloomberg administration's cancellation of recycling and the Compost Project from 2003 to 2005, the Great Recession in 2008, Superstorm Sandy, working through the Covid pandemic, and several hiring freezes by the City Agencies. I am coming from the experience of working with these two or three Agencies, and I know that others in the chamber today will tell you the same difficulties in all of the Agencies.

My message today is one that elected officials often forget, the big capital projects and programs that you get praise for securing funding for, will fail if you don't fund the people that make the projects come to life and work as described.

For the Compost Project, I want to testify that we would not have curbside collection of compostables and curbside collection will fail without the outreach, education, and processing power of the staff of the Compost Project. Without 20 plus years of the Compost Project, residents would not know what composting is, would not be supportive of curbside compost collection, and would not be able to properly separate their waste into the brown bins. We would not have Master Composters going back into their communities to help the Department of Sanitation teach people how to recycle and compost. We would not have shown communities that compost can be collected and processed in their communities without smell or pest problems. And we will not have the outreach necessary to make citywide curbside compost collection work properly and it will fail due to lack of community support and proper separation of waste.

For Parks and Sanitation cuts, our parks and other public spaces will not be clean and safe, bathrooms will be unusable, facilities will not be locked and unlocked in a timely manner, and service requests will take much longer to be corrected. The cancellation of the Parks Opportunity Program cut thousands of staff that not only cleaned the parks, collected the garbage and litter, maintained the bathrooms, but also cut off the stepping stones that allowed for local, diverse, inclusive, and equitable hiring of our future city workers. Additionally, the loss of colleagues, the additional work, and the Play Fair staff leaving work on June 29th not knowing if they had a job the next week causes extreme loss of moral and quality of work among the Park workers that left behind.

In conclusion, these cuts of agency staff and budgets, will lead to all of the great projects and programs that this Council and Mayoral Administration have created to fail and not be spread to the communities that need them most: Curbside Composting will not work! Parks and public spaces will not be clean nor safe, especially in the communities that need them most! Rat abatement will not work! Pre-k and 3-k will not be universal! Bike and bus lanes and pedestrian crosswalk daylighting, which are already way behind schedule, will not continue to be built! The restaurant sheds will not be inspected or have rules enforced! Big resiliency

projects through small playground improvements will not be maintained and will not deliver the promised protection when they are most needed in the communities that need them most! I could go on and on, but I will stop and leave you with the charge: please protect the essential city funded staff that make the City work.

In solidarity,
Daniel Tainow

Dear NYC Council,

For many years, I have been visiting parks all over the city and making videos about them. I love learning about the history of each place and believe every park has a story.

I have spoken to Landscape Architects, Friends Groups, Park Conservancies, City Council Members, and former NYC Park Commissioners about parks. They all say the same thing. Parks are not luxuries, they are necessities. These places need at least 1% of the budget devoted to them.

I have been traveling to Prospect Park Parade Grounds multiple times a week, for Soccer games. It is great to have these fields but the Parade Grounds has many issues. For starters, the comfort stations are often locked. With usage well into the evening, children and adults have no other options nearby. Additionally, The turf itself is in various forms of decay. One thing is certain, when you arrive home you will have a shoe full of small black plastic grains from the disintegrating turf. In some places this (hopefully not toxic) material is piled in mounds and children are playing in it. Assessability is another factor. Parade Grounds is surrounded by a tall black fence with few entry points. Any entry points, besides the main entrances, are locked. It is not unusual to walk a significant distance to get to the field you need to be at.

Maybe I am just complaining, but one thing I believe is spending more money on our parks would solve some of these issues. Not just at Parade Grounds but all over the city.

Thank you,

Darren Hinton

Dart Westphal

Testimony NYC 2025 Budget for the Department of Parks

Submitted May 20 2024

The 2024 Parks budget started with about 4600 employees and a budget of \$624 million. It has fluctuated since then what with cuts, restorations and PEGs, but that's about where we are, One former commissioner – some time this century – said that to run things right would take 6,000 people or 130% of what we have now. That would mean a budget of \$811 million, and that's from someone who probably wasn't pushing the envelope.

But “oh” you say. “we have massive problems with housing, refugees seeking asylum and the remnants of COVID-19”.

I have been involved with parks and open space development in one way or another for over 45 years, along the way co-founding the Bronx Parks Speak-Up the Tour de Bronx the Bronx River Alliance and several other Parks supporting organizations. And I am here to tell you there will not be a better time to fully fund our parks system. **Now** is as good as it gets; because in the words of the late Gilda Radner performing as Roseanne Rosannadanna “It's always something”.

In the 1970's it was a national recession and practical bankruptcy of the City. By the time we climbed out of that it was the deep recession of 1981-82, which lasted a long time in New York. Then the 1987 crash, the savings and loan crisis, the dot com bubble, 9/11 and the subsequent wars, the 2008 crash and a long slog back and then COVID and now surge of refugees.

New York has weathered all of these things but the Parks system never gets to the top of the list.

The Dow is now at 40,000. Some people are making barrels of money. It's about time that Parks “the refuge of the people” were cared for as they deserve.

Dear Councilmembers,

Hello, my name is Davia Hosten, I am 17 years old and work as a Youth Food Justice Network Organizing Intern for East New York Farms. The proposal to cut compost funding to 0 is unacceptable and should not even be considered. The four asks I have included in my testimony benefit everyone and I personally believe these things will make a humongous positive change. I propose that not only should the compost funding remain the same but instead should be increased by another 7 million dollars. This would help farms like ours (ENYF) to cover costs for transporting thousands of pounds of organic waste back to our farms (and/or other composting sites) which will then be transported to other community farms for use.

I propose the creation of more compost sites. Increasing the creation of compost will increase the food supply and the sustainability of the gardens and produce, giving communities access to fresh, organic produce. Doubling the fund would also eliminate the withdrawal of composting sites. Composting facilities significantly lower food waste, which in turn lowers greenhouse gas emissions—the lead cause of climate change. Which impacts not just ourselves but the entire world. Reusable waste can be properly disposed of at these sites rather than being dumped in landfills. Cutting back on compost funds would encourage food waste to be disposed of in landfills. 31% of food supply is disposed of in landfills. Moreover, applying compost reduces the requirement for fertilizer or pesticides on plants and vegetables.

More than 115 green jobs will be lost if funding is cut. Increasing the funding, however, will employ more green jobs and provide more educational opportunities and employment like mine.

There are waste organization bins in my school, which seems to be a step towards change. However, one day I got up to throw my water bottle in the trash, when I realized there was a recycling bin on the other side of the classroom I began walking over when my teacher said “It doesn’t matter which bin you put it in because it all goes to the same place”. I was shocked, and I found out that the 3 waste organizing bins in the cafeteria are going to the same place as well. What’s the point of these bins meant to organize waste, if they all go to the same place? I propose the bins be put in the right places. I acknowledge that many students don’t place items correctly because maybe they don’t know what goes where. I know I get confused sometimes. I propose that schools should have a 30 minute educational class that discusses the right place to put things so that any questions get answered. These classes should include the what, why and how’s of organizing waste.

Farms put in the hard work while you just issue the money. You may not be able to fully understand the true extent of getting rid of compost but don’t wait to find out. Your money will help so many communities. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns, I hope you can grant this for the better of your people.

Sincerely,
Davia Hosten
East New York, Brooklyn 11207

Dear Colleagues in Responsibility,

I would like to share that last year, at 66 years of age, I entered the New York Department of Sanitation's Master Composter Certification Program. I signed up the same week that a friend informed me of the program's existence. It was late August 2023, and the following 4 months of involvement that led to my certification were the most interesting, enlightening, productive, exciting, satisfying, peaceful, socially engaging, environmentally responsible and inspiring months that I can recall, as a New York City resident for over 4 decades.

Through it all I was surrounded by passionate volunteers, committed instructors and a well functioning variety of communities, all committed to sustaining the network of composting which ultimately feeds, balances and makes our NYC soils more healthy, productive and integral to the health of our land, residents and environment.

No other experience in my adult life has inspired such levels of hope and awe. These feelings combined with a solid and deeply satisfying sense of contribution within an amazing network. A chain of care, collaboration, muscle, applied intelligence, instruction, knowledge sharing and volunteerism which has been successfully wrought over many, many years.

Witnessing and participating has changed my life and my beliefs about what is possible for all of us, for our earth and for every inhabitant. You cannot witness this metamorphosis of food scraps into compost, this brilliant management of waste into resource, this demonstration of neglect blossoming into fruitful responsibility, without feeling the same.

Please put forth all your effort to see that funding is reinstated, and, get to know better this miraculous process and all those who make it work, so that it may continue to grow, model and inform.

Thank you!
sincerely

David G. Krueger
Chelsea, Manhattan
2/27/2024

My name is David Ortiz

born and raised in Washington heights NYC. I am 55 years old and have raised 3 of my own children plus a few stragglers along the way. We spend lots of time in High bridge park, Inwood, the cloisters and many of the other parks in the area as a family. I've done the super Stewart and care captain program as well as the composting program and volunteer through the 5 borough parks and community gardens. It saddens me to see that there are plans for more budget and job cuts to our parks.

I hope you will reconsider. The parks are already so under staffed and if it wasn't for volunteers and the handful of employees who come out to show us how to get things done our parks would be in even worse conditions then what they are already. It's bad enough that we are already under served by the city in so many other areas. Please end the hiring freeze at nyc parks and restore agency staffing. Please restore

the \$2.4 million in permanent , baselined funding for the 51 forestry management staff whose jobs are set to expire in June. Please save and make permanent the 50 urban park ranger positions set to expire in June. They help keep our parks safe.

As a native New Yorker the parks are what have helped us keep our sanity in this concrete jungle. If it wasn't for the support, knowledge and guidance of many of the park employees we wouldn't be able to go out on our free time and give back to all the wonderful open public spaces we frequent.

Thank you
David Ortiz

Hello city council members, thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Dhamar Romo Chavez *and I am a member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by RWDSU*. I currently work in education and outreach at public schools through the Zero Waste Schools program at GrowNYC.

As you can imagine, the 1,800 public schools in our city produce a large amount of waste that needs to be picked up every day. Based on the waste characterization study by DSNY in 2023 49% of all waste produced by school can be composted and another 35% can be recycled. The Zero Waste Schools program supplies schools with important infrastructure such as brown bins and orange tilt trucks that allow students to compost and schools to store organic waste until DSNY pickup. These containers are instrumental in decreasing the number of rodents, especially in rat mitigation zones. Unfortunately **not all schools receive the infrastructure they need** and my job is to fill in the gaps to ensure that schools get all the supplies they need.

The outreach that I do in schools is not only for students, but also for faculty and staff. I have folks ask me about how to get a brown bin for their home, what goes in the brown bin, and when you can put it out. Businesses such as hotels and supermarkets get even less outreach than schools. Many of them are completely unaware that it is required by law for them to separate their compost from their regular trash. **Without better education and outreach initiatives composting in the *places where communities are already present* we will continue to have low rates of participation and high rates of contamination across the city.**

I am asking today for the city council to reinstate the funding for all GrowNYC Zero Waste Programming; Community Composting, Zero Waste Schools, Stop and Swap, and the NYC Compost Project. These programs are instrumental in providing education that will not only reduce the amount of garbage we produce now and in the future, but also keep our city cleaner and healthier for decades to come.



Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

TO: Shaun abreu

FROM: Dillon Pierre, New York Harbor School and Earth Matter Community Partner

DATE: Dec 1, 2023

Dear Shaun abreu,

Community Composters are important and want to help the problem, instead of just wasting money on something that isn't worth it. Community Composters are here to better the problem *Over 8.3 million pounds of organic waste was turned into compost in part by us at the New York Harbor with support of GrowNyc and Earth Matter.* We now have a new, more advanced solution to working with community compost groups, like Earth Matter, to learn how to sort, compost and make a soil amendment.

My generation is now left to the hard work like advocating for money for Community Composters, and the composting cut. All the hard work that us at harbor school and our partners at earth matter did, seems unnoticed. And now due to the budget cuts at our school getting affected, my school is actively working with earth matter to teach our Career Technical Program on how to compost. If we as new yorkers can partner more schools with people like earth matter or some one like earth matter on a bigger scale, we could get rid of rats.

Instead of cutting budgets and getting rid of things we need, empowering New Yorkers to make compost locally gives individuals tangible avenues to combat climate change. At my school, we are all about composting, responsible and sustainable management of food. Food scraps can be turned into useful compost that helps make NYC green. So in conclusion we as New Yorkers have to work together and go about this problem in a green way. Which is the community compost way.

Thank you Mr Abreu , and others for hearing my testimony.

[REDACTED]

From: Emma Meyerkopf [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 2:58 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for community composting

[REDACTED]

To Whom it May Concern,

I am unable to attend the Sanitation budget hearing today on May 20 in-person, but would like to submit comment regarding community composting.

I am writing to express my strong support for community composting initiatives and to advocate for increased funding for these invaluable programs. Composting, as you are probably aware, offers a multitude of benefits ranging from waste reduction and associated cost savings to the mitigation of methane emissions from landfills, water conservation, and the enhancement of soil health.

As someone who recently started collecting my food scraps and dropping them off to be composted in Union Square, I have experienced firsthand the positive impact it has had on my life. Contributing to composting efforts not only brightens my day but also instills a sense of pride that I'm doing my part to live sustainably and leave a healthy environment for future generations.

I urge you to take into account the societal and environmental advantages of composting and to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to support our composting programs. By doing so, more individuals in our city, like myself, can access this simple yet effective way to reduce waste and protect our environment. Composting is a worthwhile investment with a great return. Please support the programs the people of NYC love and value.

- Emma Meyerkopf

My name is Fadwa Yousef. I am a recent environmental studies graduate currently interning with the Natural Areas Conservancy. I'm a resident of District 38 with Alexa Aviles as my council member representative. I frequently volunteer at Marine Park, and have worked across NYC's natural areas. Parks and natural areas are deeply significant to me not only due to my background, but also due to my reliance on free, public green spaces to relax in. I am fully in support of NYC Parks receiving the full Play Fair funding for the FY25 city budget, and I support the allocation of at least 1% of the City budget to Parks. Natural areas and parkland are a staple of public health and climate resiliency; we must have the talent and resources to maintain these spaces. The past budget cuts have been highly detrimental to the care of natural areas. This must be rectified through the restoration of \$2.4 for the eliminated Trails Formalization Program and the \$2.5 million necessary to preserve 51 forest management staff lines. I have researched, volunteered, and worked in several natural areas, particularly the City's wetlands. My time in natural areas has been a central facet of my life without which I would not have a place to go and clear mind. The protection of these natural areas is integral to community wellbeing and climate resiliency and mitigation; I recognize this especially as a resident of South Brooklyn who lived through the storm surge of Superstorm Sandy. Our wetlands are a natural form of protection against severe weather. Our forests allow the City to maintain a micro-climate and degree of biodiversity necessary for a livable, healthy future. We cannot do without caring for them. Forested natural areas make up 24% of the city's parkland portfolio, yet receive an annual average of 0.7% of the NYC Parks expense budget, and 0.85% of staff resources to manage. We must focus more resources on maintaining our natural areas; we absolutely must not allow any other budget cuts to proceed, and we must restore the fundings lost from the previous cuts.

I send my deepest thanks to City Council for allocating \$2.5 million last year for the protection of natural areas and for advocating for an increased allocation for this year. I trust that you will continue to advocate for our natural areas, parkland, and everyday New Yorkers.

Good evening City Council,

My name is Gabriel Cummings and I am a resident of Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. I am deeply concerned about the current proposed executive budget cuts to the NYC Parks Department. I firmly stand in full support of the Play Fair Coalition in that NYC Parks receive the full Play Fair Funding for the FY25 budget, support the allocation of 1% of the city budget for parks as well support the restoration of the \$2.4 million dollars for the Trails Formalization Program.

I have had the pleasure of working for the Natural Areas Conservancy for the past seven years on the Citywide Trails Team. My work on trail management and operations on the team has given me a unique opportunity to work collaboratively on a team with NYC Parks staff to oversee and manage the over 300 miles of trails in our beautiful city. I stood with Mayor Adams last year for Earth Day at Alley Pond Park when he announced the \$2.4 million dollars in funding for the Trails Formalization Program only to learn several months later that the program was being cut.

I also work very closely with the forest restoration team and stewardship team and have seen firsthand how detrimental previous budget cuts had been to the parks budget during the height of covid. In 2020, I watched as hardworking and dedicated staff members on seasonal lines lost their jobs due to funding cuts to the Forest Management Framework funding. It is unfortunate to see that nearly four years later, we are in a similar position where essential positions are at risk of being cut. \$55 Million dollars in cuts to an agency that was deemed essential during Covid has us moving in the wrong direction as a city. Parks are a great equalizing force for our city, providing immense benefits to our local communities for both recreation and wellness. Our natural areas capture carbon, store water and our trails system serves as a gateway to the rich biodiversity of our city. I call on the City Council to strongly support the aforementioned requests and restore the budget so NYC Parks can continue to engage the community, steward our natural areas and properly maintain our trail systems with permanent green jobs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

All the best,

Gabriel Cummings

Testimony

I have been at Parks since 2017. I remember when we first got the Play Fair funding in 2019, we were all elated to be getting the green light to implement improved natural areas management and to advance a vision of improving the nearby nature for all New Yorkers. Unfortunately since then we have been on a rollercoaster with funding ups and downs and it has been terrible for morale and efficiency. No sooner do we get fully staffed up then the budget uncertainty looms and we start losing our valued coworkers to positions with better job security, taking the training that they gained at Parks elsewhere. Then we have to start all over again with the next round of hires. Those of us with permanent positions feel rotten that our colleagues with equal expertise and experience are stuck in limbo. During a hiring freeze none of these seasonal workers can even apply to full time permanent positions and all our needs are basically robbing from one part of our agency to pay another part.

I am incredibly proud to be a part of the NYC Parks department, where my coworkers are dedicated, passionate, and knowledgeable. Parks are one of the common goods that all New Yorkers can benefit from and given the increasing inequality in our city, that common good is more important than ever to make all neighborhoods and all New Yorkers feel that their government is working to prioritize their quality of life, their health, and the wellbeing of current and future generations.

As a member of the Forests for All NYC coalition, I ask you to please restore full funding to the Parks Department.

Thank you,
Georgina Cullman, PhD



**Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearings**

To: Shaun Abreu

From: Grace Arnold, New York Urban Assembly Harbor School

Date: 4/20/2024

Dear Shaun Abreu,

My name is Grace Arnold, I am a concerned resident of Staten Island and I support reinstating funding for community composting and education. Mayor Adams proposed to cut funding for community composting and composting education.

Snug Harbor is the closest community composting site to me, I spend a lot of time in snug harbor and I would hate to see budget cuts negatively affect them. Everytime I have walked past the farm there have been bags of leaves sitting outside that they will turn into a soil amendment that they can use to produce new food.

Staten Island does not have brown bins, so it isn't possible to compost food waste unless you have the help of a community composting organization. Food waste from Staten Island doesn't end up in compost, it ends up piled on the curb in garbage bags that won't fit in garbage cans. Most households in my neighborhood end up with two to three more bags of trash than their bin can hold. Community composting organizations like Snug Harbor are vital. They already do not receive much funding and cutting funding will hurt their ability to provide

community outreach and education that gets some of that food waste off of the street and into compost.

Community composting programs divert more than 8.3 Million pounds of organic waste from landfills, produce virtually no pollutants, and result in soil amendment that revitalizes soil, helps manage stormwater and greens our parks. Unlike city wide composting which produces greenhouse gasses.

The funding for community composting not only benefits the environment but also creates connections within communities. Snug Harbor brings my community together in many ways. Until this summer, they have provided community members with the opportunity to buy fresh vegetables from the onsite farm. This brings people into the park and allows them to connect with other community members. But because of potential budget cuts, Snug Harbor will not be doing this anymore.

Thank You.

[REDACTED]

From: herbie jue [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 12:37 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] fully fund community composting

[REDACTED]

hi nyc council,

the people want & love & need community composting, and it's the right thing to do in the now and longterm. it's not very costly and it generates so many benefits. it's a local program and when people are working together, it strengthens the community and the city. i've read accounts of how therapeutic community composting is as well, for the workers and volunteers. it's such a priceless program. thank you for your help.

-herbert jue, 10013

I bring my food waste to a GrowNYC compost drop off site at a farmers market every week. If the community composting programs end, I don't know what I will do with my food waste. It's important to me to know that my food waste is being composted and turned into fertilizer, and not sent to a landfill or anaerobically digested in New York City and turned into methane that will get flared or injected into the gas distribution system. Community composting is a critical component of New York City's efforts to manage waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I urge the City Council and the Mayor to fully fund community composting.

Testimony by Isabella Array
to New York City Council Committee on Sanitation, jointly with the Committee on Finance
Chairs Shaun Abreu and Justin Brannan
Executive Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20, 2024

My name is Isabella Array, and I am a Brooklyn resident who cares deeply about community compost. Last year, I began the process of getting my Master Composter certificate. This program through NYC Compost Program was New York at its finest—people coming together from all 5 boroughs to learn about managed decomposition and becoming equipped with the skills to make high-quality finished compost in hyper-localized community environments. The benefits of investing in community compost are vast beyond measurement. Not only are there obvious environmental benefits and jobs from such investment, but also an intangible but very real benefit for spirit. Attending master composter workshops and volunteer shifts was more than a practical process; it was a joyful one. I work as an environmental educator and get to see firsthand every day the physical and mental benefits for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together and care and learn about their local environment together. The council and our mayor must ask themselves if NYC will be a leader in providing a framework for what a sustainable city that cares about its habitants and its own longevity can look like.



**Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
HEARINGS**

To: Shaun Abreu

From: Jayleen Garita, New York Urban Assembly Harbor School

Date: 12/7/2023

Dear Shaun Abreu,

I am involved with community composting because I am trained in a community composting site called Earth Matter. Earth Matter is an organization that is being threatened by the budget cuts and this affects my program because we do composting with them and process food scraps with them. We need education to teach citizens how to participate in city-wide composting without attracting pests. The EPA says Composting is more preferred than Anaerobic Digestion. Earth Matter deals with Composting and sanitation deals with Anaerobic Digestion. I believe that Earth Matter shouldn't get their budget cut because they do community composting and outreach and education. Earth Matter has benefited me and my program by composting and teaching us how beneficial composting is to the city.

Community compost brings communities together because they help communities build and learn about our environment. Communities also provide workers from the community to help with community composting.

Please enter my written testimony regarding FY25 Parks Budget.

- End the hiring freeze at NYC Parks and restore agency staffing to pre-Covid levels.
- Restore \$2.4 million in permanent, baselined funding for the citywide Trail Formalization program.
- Restore \$2.5 million in permanent, baselined funding for 51 forestry management staff whose jobs are set to expire in June.
- Save and make permanent 50 Urban Park Ranger positions set to expire in June.

Thank you,
Jeffrey Marino
Washington Heights
NYC

20 May 202

Mayor Adams,

Please restore funding to community composting. This is vital green infrastructure for such an enormous, diverse city in 2024. Perhaps you have the mindset that curbside composting is actually more inclusive and brings composting to more people in our city. I disagree. While it does bring brown bins to every home and apartment building, so many people in Brooklyn and Queens that I speak with share how their brown bin disappeared and now they have to throw their food scraps in the trash. Simply put, we need more options. Smart bins, brown curbside bins and green bins processed by Big Reuse, Grown NYC, Earth Matter or the botanical gardens in each borough are all necessary. People live busy lives and we need to give them options that work for their schedules and also that work for what they believe should be happening to their food scraps.

I am a white, middle class, Brooklyn resident who participated in the Master Composter program this past fall (before the funding was cut). I can attest to the diversity of the people that joined me in that program—all ages, races, ethnicities, boroughs, socio economic statuses. That was one of the best parts about the program. We were all processing compost together, but we came from different places with different lives all wanting to do something positive for our communities and the Earth.

Please restore funding to community composting. This seems like a very short-sighted, ignorant choice that refuses to see the whole picture of composting in New York City. Do the right thing for your people of New York City and the future of the the city.

Thank you,
Jenny Poole

New York City Council

FY25 Executive Budget Hearing: Parks and Recreation

Committee on Finance jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation May 20, 2024

Testimony by: Jon Paul Buchmeyer, NYC business owner, Washington Heights homeowner, Board Member of the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC)

Thank you Council Members Brannan, Krishnan, and Abreu for the opportunity to submit written testimony about the fiscal 2025 Executive Budget for NYC Parks.

My name is Jon Paul Buchmeyer and I have lived in New York City for more than 27 years, including as a business owner that employees 300+ folks across the 5 boroughs, and as a homeowner in Washington Heights. For the past three years, I have had the privilege to serve on the Board of Directors for Natural Areas Conservancy, which you know is the only park conservancy focused solely on the 20,000 acres of natural areas—forests, grassland, and wetlands—within NYC’s park system.

My testimony is to strongly request that the City do the following:

- Restore funding for NYC Parks from its proposed level of \$582.8 million back to its fiscal 2024 budget level of \$635 million for the 2025 fiscal year.
- End the hiring freeze at NYC parks and restore agency staffing to pre-COVID levels.
- Restore \$2.4 million in permanent, baselined funding for the citywide Trail Formalization program announced last year by Mayor Adams.
- Restore \$2.5 million in permanent, baselined funding for 51 forestry management staff whose jobs are set to expire at the end of June.
- Raise the total amount of operating funding for the parks from the currently proposed level of .5 percent to at least 1 percent of its total budget as soon as practical.

New York City is synonymous with incredible parks and green spaces like Central Park and Prospect Park. Our parks are not only a major driver of economic tourism, but also important in attracting workers to the city. Without full funding of these parks, both those tax revenue bases will erode.

As a homeowner in the under served community of Washington Heights, our parks and natural spaces are quite literally a lifeline. Inwood Hills Park, where the NAC maintains urban hiking trails, are the lifeblood of our neighborhood. In a community like Washington Heights and Inwood, parks and natural spaces take on an even more important status as a place for health. And now even more so as we face the climate crisis. Research from the NAC has proved that parks and natural spaces are nearly six degrees lower than the urband heat island around them. Perserving the funding to these parks is quite literally a life saver.

Proper funding of NYC Parks is an investment in the future of New York City. We can not afford to go back to the terrible conditions of the 1970s when our parks were unsafe and overrun by trash. I urge you to stand up and fully fund these irreplaceable assets.

Thank you very much,



Jon Paul Buchmeyer
Chief Impact Officer, M Booth & Associates
NAC Board Member
Washington Heights Resident

Dear Councilmembers,

The cut of 7 million dollars to 0 in community composting is unacceptable. New York compost is what makes the city unique and stripping away the funding not only makes composting harder but breaks the chain to everything compost is able to keep up. The strip in funding takes away from people who work in the industry and even more possible jobs that will be sprouted up because of compost, distributed thousands of pounds to farms in New York and the street care industry, and with the recent worry of climate change takes away 8.3 million organic waste that can be thrown into a landfill but is instead put through a process that helps make a renewable source that is what is going to help aid the Earth to heal. If we genuinely want to improve the place we live in we need to ensure that we keep the natural and healthy process that removes our organic waste to turn it into the natural plant food that is going to help keep the fruits you have in your fridge actually healthy and tasty. Composting is a lot more cheaper than building entire factories to throw the organics into sewage that sit and settle in a area and contaminate it compared to a cheaper process that going through heating up the vegetables in a 3 box system and turning into a dirt like substance that's going to make the grass greener and solve issues like flooding in Prospect Park, helping the plants grow stronger and more healthier, or even just making the grass on the front lawn a little bit more greener. The budgeting into compost being cut all the way down to 0 is just unacceptable. You're taking away a huge career path people dedicate time to and a career path that is actively helping people's community, New York, and the Earth itself.

Sincerely,

Joshua John

East New York, Brooklyn 11207



**Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearings**

TO: Shaun Abreu

FROM: Juan Villavicencio, New York Harbor School

DATE: May 20, 2024

Dear Shaun Abreu,

Money is an important thing, that's something everyone can agree on. It feeds people, and it puts a roof over their heads. After these are all used up, people throw them away and collect large amounts of trash. It's seen on every corner while kids and adults are trying to get through their day the best they can. Mayor Eric Adams said he was going to bring curbside compost to the entire city by 2024, so when I heard he was going back on his word and cutting funding from organizations that aid in cleaning up waste and reusing them, I was confused because he was just saying these things that could help everyone in the city.

What can you do about this situation? You can start by convincing the Mayor to not cut funding from New York City Community Composter and Compost Educators like the people from Earth Matter and organizations similar to it because there is a struggle to see the connection between Community Composting and Solid Waste that, by the way, brings rats into the city. Community Composters educate people on how to use food scraps to make soil, making food more scarce for the rats who depend on it. So by cutting funds from the community composters, the Solid Waste and rat situation will not go away and possibly get worse over time.

“By the end of 2024, every New York City resident will have access to clean, convenient, curbside compost pickup from the Department of Sanitation”.

A quote from Eric Adams from The Official Website of the City of New York. If he really wants this, then why is he proposing to go back on this by cutting funds, because if it does get cut then more than 8 million pounds of organic waste will be gutting more money from New York City in

the long run. Also over 600,000 New Yorkers annually will not get educated on Community Composting. In conclusion if the budget stays cut there is nothing that anyone else can or will do.

Thank you committee for listening to my testimony.

Testimony from Julia Ferguson
Resident of [REDACTED] 10044 Middle School teacher in 10010
Secretary for Roosevelt Island Garden Community

May 20, 2024

Dear Sanitation, Finance, and NYC Parks

I invite you to see the importance of community composting. I sincerely hope you will join us in this understanding.

Composting is one of the top 100 solutions for reversing global warming, which is possible. To cite [Drawdown](#) technical calculations – optimizing urban composting can lead to billions of dollars in savings by 2050. As [Drawdown.org](#) explains, composting *converts organic waste into soil carbon, averting landfill methane emissions in the process*. This is what Community Compost sites inside the five NYC Boroughs do. They create more climate or environmental justice by reducing pollution from lower income neighborhoods and they create jobs. Finally, they add resilience to our communities with additional social infrastructure.

In 2015, I reached out to NYC Compost hosted by Big Reuse alongside other Roosevelt Island neighbors. Working with our local government, we succeeded in establishing one of their collaborative Food Scrap Drop Off sites in our neighborhood. We have worked very closely with Big Reuse since that time. At every contact, they are helpful, friendly, and informative. It is Big Reuse and their work located so near to us, which has brought our entire Roosevelt Island community together in quiet, generous ways. They teach and serve through composting. The entire Community Composting network was amazing before you decimated this program in budget cuts. I completed the Master Composter certificate in 2023 and saw excellent teaching and learning and connected with New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds.

Ten years ago, I bought my first small composter from Lower East Side Ecology and started my learning with LES. Both sites are key stone places organizations for our city. I dream of a day when so many more New Yorkers can pass by local composting sites with new earth steaming in the sunrise.

Why do we need to save these compost sites on our street corners and add more in our parks – in every park? Composting leads to healthy soil, urban health, deep personal learning, and community connections. Our earth is sacred, and we are all a part of her. Thanks to community composting, we can know this and teach this even in one of the largest megacities on earth. I have seen this over and over again during the past nine years.

I have seen elderly friends jump at the chance every Saturday to get out and compost the resources that are their food scraps. They enjoy the exercise and camaraderie at the drop off near the green market.

I have seen toddlers' eyes light up at worm bin education displays with compost sponsored Pumpkin Smashes. The micro fauna in the soil is alive! Some spend an hour with the magnifying glass while their parents begin to see, too.

I have seen kindergartners gleefully shout "browns and greens" when asked what you need to make compost. They get it. And they also already know that their future lives are endangered by parking lots, not by composting.

I have watched older elementary children "get it" in a flash as they sift rough compost to create beautiful, fine soil amendment for a plant give away or as they help to share the "black gold" throughout the garden--freely.

I have worked with international middle school students who wrote emails to Lower East Side Ecology. They received immediate responses for their learning and projects about compost. The students show great relief when they learn how compost is a solution to global warming---somehow parking lots and park lawns never inspire this same relief.

I have mentored high school seniors who volunteered their time for graphic design projects in support of Big Reuse. Others have volunteered with community composting and then understood practical science in a way they never learned in advanced biology classes.

I have seen Cornell Tech graduate students trek down to our Roosevelt Island Food Scrap Drop Off site, ask for composting at their campus, and volunteer for composting days on breaks from their PhD studies.

I have seen middle-aged friends look around them at a sustainability presentation. When they saw one hundred hands raised in answer to the question "Do you compost at our local food scrap drop off site which sends all the resources to Big Reuse?" These friends began composting, too.

I have personally had time speaking with the Big Reuse and Grow NYC staff at Food Scrap Drop Off collections. This informal learning is deep, connected, and happens outside in the fresh air when compost is involved. This is learning that sticks with you: our city is filled with resources, not trash.

After the pandemic, our community began Haki Compost Collective to be able to staff the Food Scrap Drop Off site with volunteers. This group served us very well in conjunction with Big Reuse transportation and composting. We were collecting over 1,000 pounds diverted each week now have compost give backs added to soil in gardens, habitat beds, school yards, and forests in over 20 sites on Roosevelt Island

I invite you all to step away from thinking that another NYC Parks parking lot is more urgently needed than Big Reuse composting. Please stop imagining that Lower East Side Ecology, Big Reuse, Grow NYC, and others can just disappear temporarily or drastically cut services without harm to the community. Parks land is ideal for community composting. Botanical garden land is

also ideal. These compost programs were running well and could easily continue to provide us all with so much.

These places and people are vitally connected across our city. I pay NYC taxes and would like to see a clean, green infrastructure with people and jobs as a result. Your new smart bins and current curbside brown bins are only part of the whole picture. The green bin community programs are KEYSTONE elements in a truly green NYC for future generations.

All of us who are compost supporters share the ground and the soil that that we walk upon daily with you and with all of NYC Parks. Organic scraps and community composting are resources that feed us over and over again. Our earth heals us quickly

Big Reuse Compost at Queensbridge is already doing so much for New Yorkers. Reframe and reconsider and STOP the plans for their removal from their current vital site.

Restore all Community Composting sites across NYC and the programs and jobs that they had created and ran so well.

Julia Ferguson

[REDACTED]
New York, NY 10044



Good afternoon, my name is Karina Guzman, and I represent the Playfair line of Seasonal Urban Park Rangers. I am a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing.

Aside from my position, I am a resident of New York City, I've had the pleasure of experiencing firsthand the incredible impact of the NYC Parks & Recreation Rangers. Their dedication to fostering community engagement, promoting outdoor activities, and ensuring the safety of our parks is truly commendable. From organizing free weekend programs, partnering with schools to provide environmental education, and leading educational nature walks, we provide invaluable opportunities for recreation and learning for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Cutting the budget for such a crucial program would not only diminish the quality of life for countless New Yorkers but also jeopardize the well-being of our parks and recreational areas. Investing in Park Rangers is an investment in the health, happiness, and connectivity of our city. The ranger mission declares our duty to link New Yorkers with the natural world. This objective becomes unattainable without adequate financial support to maintain our current ranger team intact, preventing any potential halving of our numbers.

I urge decision-makers to prioritize funding for the NYC Parks & Recreation Playfair Rangers to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the countless benefits of our parks system. This funding would also ensure the quality of our programs due to the volume of rangers employed by our department.

[REDACTED]

From: Kate Kubert Puls [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Testimony; District2
Subject: [EXTERNAL] the importance of composting

[REDACTED]

I have been composting with the Lower East Side Ecology Center since the mid-1980s, and was thrilled when NYC started its voluntary curbside composting program in the 2010s, to which my 8 unit building immediately subscribed. It was a shame that it was cancelled during the pandemic. The amount of food and yard waste that has to be landfilled or dumped in the ocean is atrocious.

Please not only keep the program going, but expand it and make compulsory as planned - and continue to support community composting programs like the LESEC's! We cannot wait until October, when Manhattan can finally compost curbside again.

Thank you,
Kate K Puls
10009

Testimony Submitted to FY25 Executive Budget – Parks

My name is Katherine Fritts. I moved to New York City in 1997 to work for the New York City Parks Department. After two years, I left the Parks Department to go to law school in NYC and have spent the better part of my career and adult life in NYC. My husband and I have owned our home in Washington Heights for 20 years. I walk in Highbridge Park every day. I am on the Board of the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) serving as the Secretary, and am on the Executive Committee, the Audit and Finance Committee and the Program Committee.

I love living in NYC because of the daily intellectual and cultural stimulation that this diverse City provides. I am also a lover of nature and the out of doors. I am quite sure I would not have remained in NYC all these years if the parks, including the natural areas, were not available. I believe most New Yorkers feel the same way.

Given our parks cover more than 40 percent of NYC, provide physical and mental health benefits to all New Yorkers, and are an important part of NYC's resilience in the face of climate change, I find it disgraceful that the current Parks budget is merely .6% of the entire NYC budget and that the FY 25 Executive Budget for Parks is \$55 million less than FY 24.

My asks include:

- **End the hiring freeze at NYC Parks and restore agency staffing to pre-Covid levels.**
 - As a resident of Washington Heights, it is imperative that we maintain our Parks employees. Our Parks employees are working very hard but our Upper Manhattan parks are still not maintained at the level of parks in other NYC neighborhoods. Our Upper Manhattan parks need additional Parks Department employees.
- **Restore \$2.4 million in permanent, baselined funding for a citywide Trail Formalization program.**
 - Formalized trails provide safe access to our natural areas for all New Yorkers. Formalize trails are also critical in maintaining the health of our natural areas, which improves the health of all New Yorkers and builds resilience to climate change.
 - The fact that Mayor Adams held a press conference announcing this funding and has not supported the program subsequently with actual funds breeds cynicism in our elected officials and government in general.
- **Provide funding to ensure the successful implementation of the NYC Urban Forest Plan.**

- NYC's 22,220 acres of natural areas, including its 10,500 acres of forests, are a key part of our long-term resilience in the face of climate change. We need to be able to execute on the plan!
- **Add 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers to help keep parks safe.**
 - My understanding is that there are currently only two Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers for all Upper Manhattan Parks. This is not acceptable. Our citizens deserve safe parks in which to play, recreate and relax.

I want to thank all elected New York City officials and all NYC employees for all the work they do every day making this City great. My comments here reflect my passion for NYC and making it even better for all! Thank you.

Katherine H. Fritts

[REDACTED]

New York, NY 10032

Dear Members of the NYC Council,

As a longtime Brooklyn resident I am adamantly opposed to the elimination of community composting. I use the GrowNYC composting event every Sunday to drop off my composting – in so doing, I have learned from those working the shifts the huge benefits composting brings to our community, our environment, and our landscape. In an era in which we are beginning to experience the extreme and negative impacts of global warming, worsened by emissions that non-composted food produces when it is landfilled, it is unconscionable that the city is considering eliminating such a positive, community-oriented program.

Please, restore funding for the community composting programs. NYC may be rolling out citywide residential composting, but in the meantime, and I also think going forward, the existing community programs provide a critical service to our city.

Thank you,

Kenneth Lay
Brooklyn, NY

May 20th, 2024

Dear City Council,

As a Roosevelt Island resident, I ask you to please refund the community food scrap drop off collection for our compost program. Please stop the eviction of the compost processing site Big Reuse uses under the Queensboro bridge. This is an amazing program that collects hundreds of thousands of pounds of food scraps every year and turns them into soil that goes back into our community. Since 2015, compost from residential food scraps has helped our community grow school gardens, tree pits and even forests! This program is different from the city organized one with orange bins, because it actually generates nutrients back to our city soil rather than burning and generating methane gas.

Sincerely,

-Kseniya



**Sanitation and Waste Management/ Joint with Public Health
Oversight on Rat Mitigation
Community Compost as a tool for Rat Mitigation**

TO: 250 Broadway, New York, NY, 10007

FROM: Kylani Kirton, New York Harbor School and Futures Farmers of America

DATE: 12/07/23

Dear Shaun Abreu,

My name is Kylani Kirton, a student in Marine Affairs, Policy and Advocacy at the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School, and a member of Future Farmers of America. In our city, migration has impacted many of organisations, such as libraries, schools, and even shelters. However, these organisations are held responsible for the migration crisis in New York City. Because of the fact that these organisations are forced to take part in the migration crisis, we'd advise you to not cut budgets from these organisations. If budgets are being cut from organisations, less material will be provided for citizens who are in need of these materials: kids studying in libraries, garbage being collected in a sustainable manner, and better housing for families. However, cutting budgets from these resources will leave an impact on daily lives. However, cutting community compost budgets will leave a negative impact on the community, in which community composting educates the public about sustainable composting. With Mayor Adam's goal of cutting funds from organisations such as community composting fundings from

our communities in NYC, the risk of losing the opportunity to professionally discard food wastes in a sustainable manner will increase. For instance, organisations such as BK Rot who pick up compost from homes will no longer come to pick up compost. Organisations such as Earth Matter, to whom educates the public about composting, and leaves them responsible for it, will soon depart and no longer actively educate the public about disposing food scraps in an equitable manner. It's important for Mayor Adams to acknowledge the fact that organisations such as community composting, are efficient for managing organic materials for our environment for sustainable farming, as well as encouraging other people to efficiently take care of our city. Especially with the increasing number of migrants in New York City, these resources should not have their budgets cut, especially to maintain a safe city with proper sanitation. While the ability to educate the public on sustainable composting should be maintained within our city, other resources such as proper transportation for citizens should be maintained. With the proper fundings for these materials, this can help our city strive to become a better and stronger community for our citizens. Community composting is more sustainable than city wide composting, as city wide composting produces methane, which gets burned into CO₂.

Mayor Adams should refrain from cutting budgets from resources such as community composting, as less opportunities for educating the public about composting are made; Earth Matter provides internships for students to educate them about the benefits of composting. With Mayor Adams's new goal set in stone, organisations such as Earth Matter will no longer be able to provide internships for students. The more community composting there is, the more efficiency there will be for a sustainable way to give back organic material to the earth. For instance, in Governor's Island during sophomore year, students of Marine Affairs, Policy and Advocacy, such as myself, were able to volunteer at Earth Matter by distributing wastes,

collecting data on the soil, and were given the opportunity to be educated about how chickens compost. Marine Policy also manages the urban farm in front of the school, as we distribute the organic material to increase the impact on crops, due to the stability of the soil. Our students also did a project on creating different bins to educate and encourage other students about sorting wastes in the right bin. It also helps sort these wastes into the correct bin for more accurate data collection and easier compost management. With funds being cut from everything, this severely impacts many different programs such as ours, and will negatively impact the lives of migrants.

Imagine what would occur if the public weren't educated enough about composting. Without community composting, more methane would be released into the atmosphere as CO₂, as less people would be educated about the effects of methane. Without other materials such as libraries and transportation, less people, specifically migrants, will get the material sufficient for their needs. More opportunities in our city will continue to decline, as these funds are being decreased. I hope you take this into consideration, especially since migration is increasing amongst our city. Please be mindful and logical about your decisions. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Kylani Kirton



**Sanitation and Waste Management/ Joint with Public Health
Oversight on Rat Mitigation
Community Compost as a tool for Rat Mitigation**

TO: 250 Broadway, New York, NY, 10007

FROM: Layla Bursor, New York Harbor School and Earth Matter Community Partner

DATE: 5-21-2023

Dear Shaun Abreu,

I am Layla Bursor, a junior in the Marine Affairs program at the New York Harbor school. I believe that funding for community composting should not be cut. Community composting provides numerous benefits for communities, in multiple ways. Community composting provides waste mitigation, jobs, education, and benefits parks. Brown and orange bins alone are not a solution.

Just a few years ago, I would have never considered composting to be something that I could participate in at home. I had heard of composting, and I always put my food scraps at school into the orange bin in the cafeteria, but I never knew what happened to the food scraps, or why it was so important. It wasn't until I went to Earth Matter that this changed. They explained every step of the composting process, from sorting the waste to spreading the finished product into their urban farm. I learned that animals can be used for composting, and got to interact with chickens and goats. I learned that when organic waste is put in landfills and breaks down without oxygen, it creates methane. I learned that you can compost in your own backyard. But, as someone who doesn't have a backyard, the most important thing I learned is that the city collects food scraps from residential buildings and smart bins throughout the city.

Community composting is an essential way for people to learn about separating organic waste. In 2022, Earth Matter alone had 15,000 volunteers and visitors. I am just one of the many thousands of people who learned about composting and started separating food scraps because of community compost centers. If funding

is cut from community composting, they will not be able to do outreach and education, slowing the growth of composting and cutting off many people's access to compost education. We should instead raise the budget for compost education, using community composting to make the orange and brown bins more effective.

Community composting provides jobs, mitigates waste, and gives back to parks and the land. While increasing access to composting is important, orange and brown bins alone have no use. The public needs to understand the how and why behind composting if it is going to be effective. We need community composting.

Thank you for your time.

Community composting is an efficient investment in support of the city's sustainability goals. This miniscule percentage of the sanitation budget has far-reaching effects. The design of these programs connects DSNY with gardens, community groups and centers, cultural institutions, other city agencies, and residents to advance waste reduction and recycling goals. These groups and individuals then become ambassadors in their neighborhoods. These relationships have developed over the last thirty years and it is short sighted to dismantle this network. Please restore funding.



Testimony by Lena Frey, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation, jointly with the Committee on Finance
Chairs Shaun Abreu and Justin Brannan
Executive Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20, 2024

Good afternoon Chairs Abreu and Brannan, and members of the City Council. My name is Lena Frey, and I have been testifying before the City Council about the defunding of community composting and the loss of union jobs since last December. Every time, I introduce myself as a proud union compost worker. Well, as of today, I can no longer say that. I have been laid off. I no longer work as a compost coordinator, and I no longer get the immense privilege of educating the public and providing waste diversion access in this city for my job.

All three of GrowNYC's zero waste programs are coming to a halt, and 78 of us union workers are losing our jobs. We want to continue working in sustainable waste management, but the Mayor and Sanitation commissioner are robbing us of that livelihood, and they are depriving the City of the important work that we do.

GrowNYC's Zero Waste programs are immensely popular, extremely effective, and cost the City a negligible amount of money. Allowing these programs to be defunded is a failure to account for the interests of the people of New York, in favor of the interests of an heiress Sanitation Commissioner who has publicly stated that she doesn't care about reducing the City's waste.

The City council must not only restore funding for these vital programs, but push to expedite the RFP process so that we do not suffer a long gap in services. The longer this gap, the harder it will be to maintain sustainable habits, and the longer union workers go without work in our chosen industry. It is unacceptable for the City to drag its feet and delay the return of Zero Waste Programs any longer.

Thank you for your time, and for your supports,
Lena Frey
Brooklyn

Dear Councilmembers,

Hi my name is Manasseh I'm 17 years old and I'm a second year returning intern at East New York Farms. I'm writing this testimony topic of compost funding because I have been working on compost since I was a first year intern and I have to say it was really great for me on how much I did and I will be ready to help our next interns to apply this job and help that process through on how the compost works.

Sometimes I would say compost is messy but that is how I get the job done and get through the work like it was nothing. Some safe stuff to remember is to be careful holding the gardening tools so you don't hurt anybody. You should always lean it on the wall when you are going on break. Some other safety things to remember is to if you spot any trash that are glass, juice bottles, rubber bands, and more you should take them out and throw them away because it's not good for the compost because trash could make the compost not smell good and we won't be able to sell it.

Compost is really important because it's for plants to grow and the compost comes from fruits and vegetables that we give them to insects like beetles, centipedes, even worms even if they're not insects. You can even send fruits and vegetables to our compost bin so you don't throw them away but we don't accept meat. We don't accept meat because it is not good for compost and the insects won't be able to turn it into compost that might rot down and cause the whole compost to be rotten and it wouldn't be good anymore.

When I first saw compost I thought it was a piece of dirt but it was more to know how important it was and how we all need it. So when we get our new interns hired to work with us we can show them how compost works and what they need to protect themselves in case they have allergies. Compost is all about the dirt that keeps plants alive from leftovers. We can even use wood chips and coffee chips that could really help with our compost and use the hose to keep it wet and make sure it does not dry up and get too hardened to shovel up after it's done. After when the compost is all shovel up use the hose to spray down the tools then put them away. Another way to shovel is try to put it on the table with wires and smooth it down with your hands but make sure you were gloves and flat it down to get all the dirt so it can fall in the wheelbarrow to make it to a pile and if you spot any trash throw it in the garbage bin. One more thing I want to say is come and help us make this garden more better through the days weather we have been through to always be prepared for anything to help us why you want this job and what you want your goals to help us for your life from workshop, markets and distribution that we have that we can make a more determination for our farms when we get more people.

Sincerely,
Manasseh Morales
East New York, Brooklyn

I strongly urge the NY City Council to continue to put pressure on Mayor Adams to reinstate budget cuts to all aspects of community composting. I applaud the support the City Council has voiced over the last 6 months. I strongly believe the mayor needs to be pushed hard to fund the Zero Waste Schools program which has championed compost and recycling education in the schools. All funding for GrowNYC compost programs need to be refunded. All cuts to the Big Reuse composting programs – both the education and the hands-on actual composting must be restored. Composting is much better for the environment than the creation of biofuels at the City's anaerobic digesters. Composting needs to be an integral part of NYC's efforts to address climate change



**Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Joint with Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings
Community Compost as a tool for Rat Mitigation**

TO: 250 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

FROM: Marlena Kinlan, UA NY Harbor School and Earth Matter Community Partner

DATE: December 7, 2023

Dear Shaun Abreu,

I am Marlena Kinlan, a student at the New York Harbor School, studying in the Marine Advocacy and Policy Program. I know you've most likely read this many times as my entire class has sent their testimonies in for your review. Although, I wanted this testimony to be different, one that you will remember and that can influence your stance greatly. I have spent a lot of time studying in this program, and though you know this, I want to emphasize the fact that the current events which are unfolding based on funding will shape my future environment as well as other generations. Learning about my environment from this perspective is hard to explain, as much as it is hard to comprehend, knowing that I am learning about the issues of my city which impact my life creates a lot of curiosity in regards to the importance of my future to you. However, the disappointing realization I have come to through my years at this school is that the betterment of people's lives is not reliant on importance or effort, instead the fate of our future environment is reliant on the economy that is provided to us. It is a shame to have to live a life in which futures rely on the allocation of money from our elected officials.

Although I have introduced myself as a student at the UA New York Harbor School, and I am writing this testimony to you like my classmates, I want you to recognize me as a teenager, like any other, who wishes for the betterment of her future. Like any other teenager, if I did not attend this school, I would not have the knowledge I do

today of economic stress on the environment. 'Like any other teenager,' may be a strange statement to you, because I am implying that I would be unaware of the detriments the NY economy has on the environment we live in, had I not studied in this field. Although there are students like that, students I went to middle school with who do not go to this school, students I have met through sports, students I have met on trips, there are students who don't recognize the detriments which the NY economy has had on our environment. There are students and children who aren't given a voice in this debate, which your decisions will impact. Therefore, I speak for the people in my community who are unaware of this frivolous debate, for the children's whose future environments are in the fate of your decisions. When I discuss the impacts of the economy on the environment, I do not refer to the current environment, I refer to the future one. Making a decision today to cut the budget off of services which serve to benefit the lives of people like me will create an immense amount of stress that this city cannot take. My education, my knowledge, and my voice is all funded through money, without it there would be no room for sustainable education, there would be no room for sustainable resources, and there would be no room for a better environment in my future. If you desire to obey the stereotype of NY politicians valuing their economy over the people, then leaving the fate of my future in your hands was the wrong decision. I am asking you to make the humanitarian decision, the decision to cater to the people rather than the economy, the decision to break NY stereotypes and value the future of our environment over your economic benefit.

Thank you for your time.

May 17, 2024

To Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Marta Teegen, and I am a resident of Fort Greene in Brooklyn. I am writing to express my strong support for **increasing funding for NYC parks** in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. Our parks are essential to the health, well-being, and vibrancy of our communities, and it is imperative that we provide them with the resources they need to thrive.

Investing in our parks yields significant economic, environmental, and social returns. Well-maintained parks attract tourists, boost local businesses, and increase property values. They also contribute to environmental sustainability by supporting biodiversity, reducing urban heat islands, and improving air quality. Socially, parks provide inclusive spaces where community members can engage with one another, fostering a sense of belonging and civic pride.

NYC Parks is the steward of more than **30,000 acres of land**, which constitutes 14 percent of New York City. Additionally, NYC Parks is responsible for **53 percent of the tree canopy** in the city. This vast network of parks and street trees plays a crucial role in reducing stormwater runoff, abating flooding, cleaning our air, and providing shade and cooler temperatures. These environmental services are invaluable in our fight against climate change and in promoting a healthier urban environment.

In light of these benefits, I urge you to consider the following recommendations for the FY25 budget:

1. Increase the operating budget for NYC Parks to ensure regular maintenance and cleanliness. Adequate funding is necessary to keep our parks clean, safe, and inviting for all residents and visitors.
2. Allocate funds for capital improvements to upgrade aging infrastructure and enhance park facilities. Many parks need repairs and upgrades to better serve the community and ensure long-term sustainability.
3. Expand programming and recreational services to meet the diverse needs of our communities. By offering a wide range of programs, parks can better serve all demographics and foster greater community engagement.
4. Prioritize equity by directing resources to parks in underserved neighborhoods. Ensuring that all neighborhoods have access to high-quality parks is crucial for social equity and community well-being.

Our parks are not just amenities; they are fundamental components of a healthy, equitable, and vibrant city.

By investing in them, we invest in the well-being of all New Yorkers. I respectfully request that you increase funding for NYC parks in the FY25 budget, ensuring they remain treasured assets for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Marta Teegen

Brooklyn, NY 11205
mteegen@gmail.com
(###) ###-####

Melissa Sions

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11218

Monday, May 20, 2024

Dear City Council Committees on Finance, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and Parks and Recreation:

I am writing as a constituent of NYC Council District 40 to implore you to reinstate funding for community composting in the FY 2025 budget. I believe very strongly that this program is a vital tool in New York City's plans to meet our climate goals, and must remain active if we are to achieve zero waste in the city.

I know that the DSNY is working hard to roll out curbside pickup for organic waste across the five boroughs, and I applaud that effort. But after reading several investigations into where the waste is actually going, I am deeply concerned that curbside pickup is not going to contribute meaningfully to reducing GHG emissions and providing the compost our city needs. I do not believe that community compost needs to be sacrificed in order to curbside pickup to succeed. In fact, I believe community compost provides an important resource for people who don't have access to brown bins, as well as to people who want to learn more about how to properly sort their organic waste. Furthermore, I have not had the impression that this program takes up much of the budget to begin with. Given the level of dividends that community compost pays out, in the form of diverted food waste from landfills, greenhouse gas emission reductions, compost supply for gardens and city parks, and community-building opportunities, there does not seem to be any compelling reason *not* to reinstate the program. Community composting provides green jobs for the city, helps us meet our zero-waste goals, and is cost-effective.

Please bring back community composting!

Sincerely,
Melissa Sions

New York City Parks Committee Executive Public Hearing

May 20, 2024

Dear Parks Committee Members,

Hello again,

My name is Meredith Thomson. I am a Parks (Natural Resources Group) employee and a member of DC-37. I am calling on the Mayor's office to make good on the promise he made to us to increase spending on Parks to 1% for the people who elected him.

Mayor Adams and team, I am not sure if those in your office and on your committee are aware, but you planted trees with my coworkers, my Chief, Kristin King, and her daughter during a planting day in our city's natural areas during your campaign. On that day, you shook our hands and looked us in the eye and promised that you would keep funding our small but groundbreaking program (approx. \$2.5 million [.042% of city budget] spending to manage and ecologically restore 12% of our city's landmass and waterways), and in fact increase spending on the city's parks for the health of your constituents.

Earlier this year, you put us on the chopping block. You threatened, in the third round of budget cuts, to cut us and the money gathered through the Play Fair coalition. As a result, some of the people whose hands you shook that day have left, looking for a more stable way to protect NYC's natural areas, because they lost faith that you would make good on your promise. 25% of our staff have left because of the existential threats we feel in our group.

I challenge you to make it up to them this year, in one clean sweep. Not only should you fund Play Fair for another year, you should fund us in perpetuity. Trails are built by us, connecting New Yorkers to the truly unique ecosystems we have here. Forests and wetlands are restored by us, providing some of the final remaining stopovers that endangered migratory animals have left to help them in their journeys north and south. We need to plan, not for years but for decades, because we need to work on a forest's timescale. Until you fund us permanently, we cannot do our jobs on the timescales we need in order to be truly effective.

In short, the city needs 1% for Parks. Full stop. Please grant us this ask, and New York will benefit for generations to come.

Kind regards,

Meredith Thomson

[REDACTED]

From: Michael Cosaboom [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 5:25 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] I support libraries and community composting

[REDACTED] pected phishing emails with the Phish
Alert Button or forward them to phish@oti.nyc.gov as an attachment.

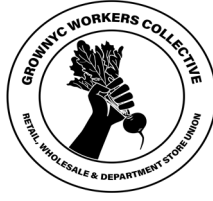
To Whom It May Concern,

I live on Cherry Street on the Lower East Side and I am a parent raising twin sons. For the whole time I have lived in this neighborhood I have made regular use of the food scraps dropoff site operated by the LES Ecology Center at the corner of Rutgers and East Broadway. Please include money in the budget to support community composting programs.

I am also a patron of the Seward Park branch of the NYPL which is another gem of the neighborhood. Please increase the budget of NYPL so that hours of operation can be extended and the library can be open on Sunday.

Sincerely,

Michael Cosaboom



**Testimony by Nathalie Huang, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation, jointly with the Committee on Finance
Chairs Shaun Abreu and Justin Brannan
Executive Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20, 2024**

Good afternoon Chairs Abreu and Brannan and members of the City Council. My name is Nathalie Huang, and I am a longtime member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, a labor union represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. I am one of 53 community composting workers in GrowNYC's compost program who are being laid off today. Additional worker layoffs to GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools and Stop N' Swap programs will be in June, and collectively, 79 union workers will be unemployed.

Despite massive support for restoration of funds and a private donation that kept GrowNYC's compost program afloat until now, the cuts still prompted the closure of some of our drop-off sites. These changes were devastating, as our participants depended on those sites as their only options for composting. Now because the worker layoffs go into effect today, all GrowNYC-run drop-off sites are permanently closed too. Commissioner Tisch from DSNY claimed at a March hearing that all of Brooklyn and Queens has access to the citywide brown bin program. I served your constituents, from Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, Flatbush to Crown Heights, who gave countless stories about their landlords refusing to let tenants use the brown bin and other tenants not participating in the program or contaminating the bin with non-compostable materials. So many times I answered people's questions and taught them to separate their organic waste, with community composting drop-off sites as additional options for them. Rather than getting rid of us, the Mayor and DSNY need to be united with us to further New York City's growth in environmental sustainability and equity.

In a December hearing last year, Director Jiha from the Mayor's budgetary office called community composting small and inefficient. It's a shame the Mayor undervalues our work despite how much we've accomplished on such a small budget and the far reaching strides we've made in encouraging local participation in composting.

Now all that specialized knowledge, accessibility to education, outreach, and hands-on composting experience will be gone with the elimination of our jobs. The emotional labor of this job is exhausting but I'd do it all over again because people's livelihoods and access to composting and education are worth fighting for. I ask the City Council to prioritize baselining funds for GrowNYC's

compost program and the New York City Compost Project in the upcoming budget, and ensure full restoration of funds to our Zero Waste programs.

Thank you for your time,
Nathalie Huang
Queens

My Name is Nick Baisley and I have worked as an Urban Park Ranger for NYC Parks since 2014 as a seasonal and full time since 2017 .

I worked 3 consecutive summers as a seasonal urban park ranger from 2014-16 and I was pretty astounded to first learn that when our cohort staff of 20 were brought on each summer to help with facilitating ranger programming/ operations, we would effectively double the number of UPR's total citywide. It made sense initially as summer is the busy season but I realized immediately that the city of new york is not actually staffing it's parks appropriately throughout the rest of the year and this system of yearly hiring to hire the "right" amount of staff has certainly caused turnover and losing good staff members who need more stability than yearly uncertainty of being re-hired or the job line being funded at all.

When I first was hired full time I was 1 of 8 Rangers covering the entire borough of Manhattan's Parks with a responsibility to perform 3 jobs (at least) all at the same time. As Rangers we are; environmental educators, law enforcement/first responders, and wildlife managers. We are expected to fully and equitably cover all of Manhattan's 400+ Parks properties, and try as we might as you may clearly imagine, we do not have enough staff resources to do so. This leads to a huge level of turnover in staff who become burnt out trying to juggle all the roles at once while provided minimal resources to do so.

One thing that helped turned the tides in making the job feel more manageable was the introduction of the additional long-term seasonal ranger staff agreed to from the Play Fair coalition in 2019, which bolstered the numbers of staff working all across Parks. In our division this basically doubled our overall staff numbers once again which allowed us to reach wider audiences with more programs, respond to calls from the public of sick & injured animals in our parks more quickly, and overall have an increased positive presence in our city's parks.

Of course, when this was unable to be repeated in 2020 due to the covid-19 epidemic's strain on our city budget, as City employees we understood that this was unprecedented in our modern history, and the cuts that were made to Parks that year are still remembered by many as resulting in worst conditions parks have ever been on record since the fiscal crisis of the 1970's-80's.

The fact that we are on course this year to repeat the absolutely insufficient budget allocation to the DPR as that initial covid year, lets me know to prepare for seeing an exceptional amount of trash in our parks, unsafe conditions all around. Fewer; Ranger, PEP, Gardener, Forestry and Trails staff to ensure safe conditions in our Park's natural areas. And of course being shortstaffed quickly burns out current staff and causes more turnover which creates a negative feedback loop.

Due to the proposed budget cuts in FY25, as Rangers we literally are unable now to plan effectively our programming for the core summer months and coming year as we do not know if we will have our just barely enough staff, or if on July 1st we are going to be guillotined down to a skeleton crew and be barely able to perform any of the plethora of responsibilities we carry.

Our current seasonal staff cannot be blamed for actively looking for other jobs while the city plays this yearly dance holding their livelihoods in limbo.

Reverse the budget cuts and provide the 1% of the budget to NYC Parks as agreed upon. Parks are not a luxury, parks are critical infrastructure in the the city's fight against climate change, social inequity and making this place worth living in.

Plan for programming as if

1 program a week in July in Highbridge due to NYS Grant

RCC Supplies from Spring send a new Supply list unless you want the same stuff in the Fall

NPS ACE Training June 19th and 20th, 5 per boro

June 26th Entomology Training

NY City Learn check to make sure your trainings are complete

OBNC asking for a 55 gallon tank for saltwater

I am a life long New Yorker and an avid composter. Over the years, I have watched the community composting movement grow in the City starting 30+ years ago dropping off my compost at the Union Square Greenmarket. The value of community composting can not be overstated and it does so much more than keep waste out of landfill or the rat's tummies. When one considers all the benefits of community composting, its value can not be overstated. Consider the loss of:

1. its carefully developed educational programs
2. green employment opportunities
3. the value of community building
4. the reduction of traffic & fumes resulting from unnecessarily carting waste throughout the boroughs
5. the benefit to our city plants & trees, be they in our streets, gardens or parks
6. the mitigation of excessive rainwater

I am a supporter and participant in the brown bin program as well, but only 1/3 of that material collected through the City's food scraps program actually returns to the earth. How is the Mayor's elimination of community composting compatible with his stated "green agenda"? Does he fear that his brown bin program will not be a success without coopting the significant organic waste collected by the greatly successful community composting infrastructure developed tirelessly & passionately over the years? I wonder...

Please do not allow this gem of a resource disappear from our city, it would be such a disappointment to so many, young and old, as well as a step backwards on so many fronts.

Nina Meledandri
659 Park Place
Brooklyn, NY 11216
646.322.5800

PATRICIA PETICOLAS

- Brooklyn, NY 11221

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
(Jointly with Committee on Sanitation and
Committee on Parks and Recreation)
New York, NY

May 20, 2024

To the members of the Committees:

I am requesting that the funding for Community Composting be restored. As someone who has brought food scraps to the Union Square collection site for over 20 years, I can attest that this is a vital community service. People from all over the city gather at these spaces united in their commitment to a greener healthier environment.

We are being told that the city cannot afford to continue funding the composting program. In reality, the city cannot afford to stop the program. Climate change is creating increasing dangers to New York City; stronger and more deadly storms, dangerous heat waves and air quality alerts. We need to invest in solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change. We owe it to our children to invest in their future. The Community Composting program has been functioning all these years. It is offering a solution that is already in place.

The city food scrap collection is not currently available all over the five boroughs. Many community collection bins fill up quickly. The city program to turn food scraps into biofuel has had technical problems. Ultimately biofuel still adds carbon to the atmosphere. Traditional composting, on the other hand, produces compost rich in nutrients which the community can then use to nourish gardens, contributing to more robust green spaces.

I would also like to point out that stopping food scrap collection will simply divert that waste back into landfills, adding to the current sanitation costs of transporting additional trash to be stored in larger landfills. In the early days of the Bloomberg administration, it was decided to cut the recycling program to save money. Unfortunately, any money saved had to be spent on dealing with the material that was no longer recycled. The administration brought the program back. I hope that we will not make the same mistake today.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony.

Sincerely,

Patricia Peticolas

[REDACTED]

From: Rachel M. Fishbein [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 12:13 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Community Compost - written testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Rachel and I have been a resident of the Upper West Side for 12 years, and am a native New Yorker.

When my husband and I moved to the UWS in 2012 we discovered the greenmarket on Columbus and w79, and then the compost collection. It was so easy to save apple cores, banana peels, and other food waste in our fridge and bring it once a week. We lived in a walk-up and had a garden on the roof - and in the spring picked up locally processed soil to add to the greenery of our garden.

Now we live in a different apartment and have two kids - and these kids know where food comes from. They know to save their (many) peels, strawberry tops, and smushy blueberries to go into the compost bag in the fridge. Together we drop off our bag on Sundays at the Farmer's Market. (Often, this bag weighs 10-15lbs!) They know that this food waste is not WASTE, but the beginning of valuable soil, and that it will be used to beautify the tree beds in the neighborhood, the many city parks we play in, and that it makes our actual garbage waste much less.

The city is touting the idea of "going green," in so many ways - most notably with congestion pricing (which is a conversation for a different letter). COMPOSTING is going green. Reducing trash is fiscally responsible, and environmentally responsible, and just plain good for the city. We are not just sky-scrapers, we are communities and neighborhoods filled with people appreciating fresh local food, and time outside. Taking away community composting - and local community composting sites - ensures MORE garbage, MORE waste, and less opportunity for education and community engagement. Millions of pounds of green-waste have been diverted and literally turned into soil, and along the way created jobs, learning opportunities, and lessons on where food comes from, and how we can all pay a bit more attention about what we buy, what we eat, and what we throw away.

Please do not remove these opportunities, we don't need another example of how this world is going backward.

Sincerely,

Rachel Fishbein

[REDACTED]
NY NY 10024

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Rachel M. Fishbein

RachelMFishbein@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

I'm writing this testimony in support of reinstating city funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools program.

As a current Education & Engagement Lead for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools program, and someone who has been actively engaged in NYC's waste landscape for many years (Master Composter, former member of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board), I have considerable awareness of the practical, psychological, and sociological considerations that impact public participation in waste programs.

My time over the last two years as an Education & Engagement Lead for Zero Waste Schools has given me a "boots on the ground" and in depth understanding of the delicate and intensive work that is required to make behavior change happen - particularly in the overstrained, overburdened, underfunded, and extremely hectic environments that are New York City Public Schools.

Zero Waste Schools is truly unique in that the program provides deep and meaningful school-wide engagement across school stakeholders and students - regardless of a school's stated interest (or disinterest) in curbside composting or recycling. In our assigned schools, Leads spend many long hours across several concerted visits, building rapport amongst stakeholders and devising a unique engagement strategy for each school. We find the changemakers in schools and harness their energy and ingenuity in order to best utilize the short time we have available. As we are able, we give trainings, assemblies, and classroom presentations, ensuring that all relevant contacts have the material, knowledge, skills, and resources needed to be active participants in curbside composting and recycling. By the same token, we support school staff in troubleshooting challenges and obstacles as they arise - some of which include unsupportive school staff who may stand in the way of program success.

In my visit to many schools, some common concerns/complaints from schools about recycling and composting include:

- "We tried it before, but the person heading that initiative left/retired, and the initiative fell apart",
- "We (school staff) are trying to recycle, but the operations staff mix everything together",
- "We (operations staff) are trying to set out materials correctly, but no one is sorting properly".
- "We don't have time/support/intrinsic interest within the school to meaningful participate"

All of these complaints point to a lack of time, training, understanding, and trust within the school community to recycle and compost successfully.

In my nearly two years in this role, I have observed many school stakeholders who initially opined something similar to the quotes above who - once they see well-sorted waste materials, and a neatened waste set-out area - completely change their tune (as well as waste practices) over the course of my engagement. I firmly believe that this is due to the unique nature of our program, which allows the level of depth, relationship-building, and school-specific strategies required to elicit real behavioral change.

Most other sustainability programs in schools function via an "opt-in" basis - meaning only those schools who happen to have an engaged Sustainability Coordinator or interested science teacher will prioritize composting, sorting, recycling, and zero waste. While these schools will likely elicit unique lessons and programming, grant funding for sustainability projects, and will maintain successful recycling, sorting, and composting, schools that lack these genuinely interested staff members will revert to old habits with poorly sorted and set-out materials. While I feel hopeful that DOE's Department of Energy & Sustainability will continue to provide quality educational support to maintain school composting and recycling, the team

is small and has many other priorities, beyond waste. I know that - with its current staffing levels - DOE's Department of Energy & Sustainability will not be able to provide the level of individualized support to each school that Zero Waste Schools has been able to.

It is disappointing that the Zero Waste Schools program - which has enabled NYC to check off the box of "all schools are now enrolled in curbside composting" - will not be funded in order to maintain the progress of these 1000+ schools.

I sincerely hope that more consideration is given to the value this program brings to New York City schools, to their surrounding communities, and to the city's climate goals.

Thank you,

Rachle Boeglin

May 10, 2024

Dear Chair Brannan, Chair Abreu, and the Members of the Committees on Finance and Sanitation,

I write with concern about the gap in composting services in Washington Heights as we head into the summertime.

With the unfortunate termination on May 16, 2024 of the community composting program on Fort Washington Ave. and 181st St. and curbside composting not scheduled to commence until, at earliest, October 2024, our community faces the likelihood of reduced access to composting at a time when more farmers' markets are open, fresh fruits and vegetables are at their peak, and the corn[husks] are as "high as an elephant's eye" and, sadly, at risk of climbing clear into a standard trashcan.

While NYC Smart Compost bins are available in the neighborhood, just 24 hours after the May 9, 2024 community food scrap pickup the two nearest bins were marked as "Nearly Full" and "Full." I can only imagine how much harder it will be to find a useable bin following the final community compost pickup. It is quite possible that frustrated folks will just put their scraps down their buildings' garbage chutes—or worse, leave them on top of or next to the bin (as often happens) as an offering to the rats.

I fully understand that moving to citywide curbside collection allows for a wider range of items than some community food scrap sites can accommodate, supports increased efficiencies, and has the potential to expand composting to neighbors who have not yet started the practice and will find it easier to manage when integrated into their normal trash and recycling routines. However, I believe that the City is missing a critical educational and waste reduction opportunity by ending the community composting program before the curbside program begins.

The Department of Sanitation would be wise to enlist the knowledgeable community-based composting teams—such as the one led by GrowNYC at the Fort Washington Ave. and 181st St. site—to provide outreach to community members in best practices for curbside composting. Food waste increases during the summer months^{1 2}, therefore this extension of service will save additional hundreds of pounds of food scraps from entering trashcans and will build momentum as we head toward the kickoff of curbside composting.

¹ Specialty Food News. "Grocers' Food Waste Rises in Summer." June 23, 2023

[² A household typically produces 4 percent more food waste in the summer months. New York City Department of Sanitation. June 1999. *Backyard Composting in New York City: A Comprehensive Program Evaluation*. \[https://dsny.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/about_1999-backyard-composting_0815.pdf\]\(https://dsny.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/about_1999-backyard-composting_0815.pdf\), p. 29.](https://www.specialtyfood.com/news-media/news-features/specialty-food-news/grocers-food-waste-rises-in-summer/#:~:text=Wasted%20food%20from%20grocery%20stores, %2C%20an%20impact%20technology%20comp any. Food waste at grocery stores during the summer is, on average, over 20 percent higher than during the winter months.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

I personally started composting when GrowNYC resumed operations of the Fort Washington Ave. and 181st St. site following its COVID shutdown. It took our family some time to get used to saving our food scraps, but my elementary school aged children are now pros. Over the past few years we have learned much about the process from the site's team who always take the time to answer questions from community members.

By reinstating community-based composting until the start of curbside collection in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, the Department of Sanitation has much to gain. Already engaged community members will retain the composting habit while new neighbors can begin the practice while learning about how to best continue it when curbside starts. **Please take this opportunity to build an earth-friendly and community-focused bridge to curbside composting by funding neighborhood food scrap collection through October 31, 2024.**

Sincerely,

Robyn Schwartz
New York, NY 10040

May 22, 2024

Please accept my respectful plea to refund community-based composting and Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI which means ground/soil by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

And Big Reuse compost will amend the soil in NYC's first ever Miyawaki Method Pocket Forest on Roosevelt Island April 2024. Losing access to community composting means losing good quality, expertly managed compost for neighborhood soil amendment projects including school gardens and park plantings.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,

Ronald Roth – Roosevelt Island, NYC Resident

I believe that community composting sites can be a corner stone for a more sustainable sanitation system in New York City. Over the past three years I have had the pleasure of bringing my compostable waste to the Sunnyside farmers market. It has been a super convenient way to make sure my compostable waste was heading to a good place. Community compost sites turned waste into a sustainable product that not only sequestered green house gasses, but also benefited the people of the city. I have also volunteered at several compost sites in the city and seen the immense care and effort that goes into this work and how deserving it is of proper funding.

I am extremely disappointed that the city has cut funding to a wholly good program and opted instead for a quick and easy bait and switch compost program that is literally fueling global warming. The replacement program takes compostable materials and turns them into methane, which is a main driver of climate change, through burn off, and poor maintenance of it's production and distribution infrastructure. This is disingenuous, and comes across as just a way for the city to pat themselves on the back with greenwashed PR campaigns, while still raking in cash from fossil fuel companies.

Refund the community composting program now, at the very least. However, the city should really be looking to expand these programs as a source of green jobs, and a reduction in green house emissions.

May 20, 2024

Dear Chair Krishnan and Chair Brannan,

I am writing to ask you to work with the Parks Department to find a solution to the BigReuse space under the Queensborough Bridge. There must be a way to coexist. Please urge the Parks Commissioner to work with the group in order for their efforts to continue.

Thank you.

Ruth Groebner

May 20, 2024

To: City of New York City Council
Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management & Finance

Dear Chair Abreu, Chair Brannan, Committee Members and other Elected Representatives,

I write again to respectfully request the Sanitation Committee and City Council restore community composting to the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. I've provided testimony for each hearing since December so will keep this to three main ideas.

1. Jobs were lost due to the PEGs. Nearly 80 GrowNYC Zero Waste workers have been laid off and join other community compost workers at QBG, Earth Matter, BigReUse, and other sites, a direct result of Mayor Eric Adams, OMB Director Jacques Jiha and DSNY Commissioner Jessica Tisch cutting the budget of these programs.
2. Thousands of pounds of food scraps, previously dropped off for composting, are going into the garbage due to the PEGs. Habits formed will be broken. Rats will have more food waste to choose from when they forage.
3. Compost is transformation. Just like banana peels and coffee grounds becoming nutrient-rich black gold, maybe this moment is a chance for transformation. Maybe the City Council, DSNY and the affected groups can work together, talk to each other and re-envision the coexistence of smart bins, curbside composting, the SICF expansion and community composting groups who collect, process and educate together to create green funds for green jobs to nurture the community in NYC's composting plan.

Thank you, City Council members, for standing up for us. We hope you will be successful at restoring these cuts. Although our jobs have been cut, we know future workers will benefit from the restoration of these cuts.

I am including in my submitted testimony words I have written in four prior testimonies on this subject.

Thank you.

Ruth Groebner
compostwithruth@gmail.com

Prior submitted testimony in 2024

The sudden discontinuation of these community programs has led to confusion and a disruption to the habits New Yorkers have developed over time. The rationale for the cuts was that community composting is ‘small and inefficient’ and yet these cuts have led to waste and adding workers to the unemployment rolls. For many New Yorkers, once the community drop-offs ceased operations, thousands of pounds of food scraps are now being thrown into the garbage.

- Isn't it inefficient to cut food scrap drop-offs when not every borough even has curbside composting?
- Isn't it inefficient to cut community composting when not everyone can use a smart bin or has one near them?
- Isn't it inefficient to cut community composting when even in boroughs that have brown bins, many buildings are not using them?

All of this inefficiency is only causing confusion and disruption to the habits people have developed of saving their scraps until the weekly trip to the market or a nearby drop-offs.

It's mind-boggling to see NYC come so far to now simply decimate all community composting. The brown bin curbside program and the Smart bins are potentially great options and it's not surprising that the DSNY support of community composting will change. But it is inefficient and unwise to completely eliminate community composting. Please consider these ideas below.

Suggestions:

- Keep the community composting collection and processing operations funded for at a minimum of two more years until each borough has both curbside and Smart bin organics processing programs in place as well as fines for noncompliance with brown bins.
- Continue to fund the NYC Compost Project programs that provide education and outreach to students, Master Composter course takers and community members long-term.
- Continue to fund outreach and education programs to support the DOE curbside composting. Schools have new staff and students each year and will need ongoing support to ensure these programs are successful.
- Partner with the community composting groups to design education and outreach roles at greenmarkets and community gardens.

Thank you for reading my testimony. I look forward to your action to save community composting in New York City.

Ruth Groebner

What is Lost Without Community Composting

A child walking by a Greenmarket FSDO points out the totes full of food scraps and excitedly tells their parent how they learned about this in school.

An older adult stops by the FSDO at the market thanking the worker for providing a small bag of finished compost a couple of weeks earlier and shares how her plants responded so well to it.

A new arrival from Los Angeles stops by the market compost booth and asks what composting options are available in NYC.

A family walking by notices the green bins and ask what's the difference between these food scraps and the brown bins.

An older adult anxiously talks about how she tried to use the orange Smart bin but it wouldn't open and an FSDO staffer shows her how to download the appropriate app on her phone.

Several community members, often older adults, share greetings and updates about weather, local events, their lives, and thank the FSDO staff for being there each week.

A person drives up to the market with some yard waste they'd like to be composted, unaware of how the City takes yard waste now.

An engaged NYC resident signs up for the NYC Compost Project's Master Composter course and learns about the science of composting and gives numerous hours to community groups in all boroughs.

Community groups rely on Master Composters to volunteer at a wide range of programs including zero-waste events on Governors Island, library workshops, street tree care events and more.

A community garden that has accepted food scraps for several years receives support of organizations like BigReuse or Queens Botanical Garden to provide leaves or wood chips, or to take excess food scraps or finished compost, or provide bins and tools.

A local street tree care project receives logistical support to provide the finished compost and tools to the group.

Workers who have committed themselves to careers helping the environment by working in NYC's community composting infrastructure are laid off, losing stable work and in many cases, benefits.



**Sanitation and Waste Management/ Joint with Finance
Oversight on Jobs
Community Compost for Jobs**

TO: 250 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

FROM: Ryan Trainor, New York Harbor School and Earth Matter Community Project

DATE: 12/07/2023

Dear Shaun Abreu,

New York City is a food heaven, which ends up on the streets. I am Ryan Trainor, I'm with the Marine Policy and Advocacy program, an Earth Matter partner, and a student attending the New York Harbor School. All located on Governors Island. I want to thank the council for hearing us out today. Earth Matter is a key component to our mission to bring zero waste to Governor's Island. Without it this greatly affects our ability to make our school zero waste. The reason why this is an issue is because we don't need our streets smelling like a garbage dump when it can easily be used for something more useful like compost for parks. The food waste smell coming from the bags is very potent and is not very pleasant.

A few ways we can minimize food waste is to turn all the food waste into compost. For example, when the food waste is turned into compost it doesn't just magically happen. This process is possible with workers. Those workers need their jobs and if the Mayor keeps cutting they may not have a job. I feel the Mayor and the people of New York would benefit from this. Another way people would benefit from not cutting the funding from composting would be education. If you educate people on what composting is, perhaps they will dispose of their trash differently. Not only that but composting is also a big way of reusing. Old food waste and compostable utensils just sitting out when it can be used for parks and rich soil for plants.

Overall, I think there are so many opportunities with composting for the future of this city. Education and revitalization are the main positives taken from this. Again I wanna thank the committee and Shaun Abreu for hearing us out about this new budget proposal.

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing today to ask that the \$7M budget for Community Composting be restored as part of the annual budget. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I was recently informed that only remaining local compost program in Greenpoint/Williamsburg ended as of this past weekend. This is unacceptable to me as a homeowner and taxpayer.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profit organizations will be lost. Cutting these jobs, many of which are union, is unacceptable.

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.006% of the total annual budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program going forward by ensuring sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring. The Council should also mandate that this program exist through legislation, which would make it permanent.

Thank you,
Samantha Horowitz
Brooklyn, NY

Dear Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony in favor of community composting and in saving Big Reuse's Queensbridge Compost site. We all have one crucial issue and that is saving the planet. Composting is an economical, practical and completely do-able practice that can be part of the arsenal to combat climate disaster.

I have worked at Big Reuse's compost site in Booklyn and they are stellar stewards of the space and in building a sustainable community.

Please completely fund community composting and keep the compost site at Queensbridge.

Sincerely,

Sandye Renz

12th St.

Brooklyn, NY 11215

[REDACTED]

From: Sharon Brown [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 6:15 AM
To: NYC Council Hearings
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sharon Brown Jeter testimony for finance and waste Management May 20th hearing etc. We should put money into these systems of reusing fertilizer.

[REDACTED]

if you look at the Moses system of building and being in the wilderness Israel buried the fecal matter using it as fertilizer when the fertilizer of fecal matter backs up the septic system, either we're going to make more septic systems that are going to liquefy the waste and then make it easy to clean or we're going to bury it or both etc and then purify it and pack the waste portion into the ground and the other portion to be cleaned into water system again and we can do this through the judeo-christian, Jewish, Christian system in the Bible and all the other things in the Bible work well with waste Management. Righteousness and waste management is not mutually exclusive. it's also part of what God said because he didn't want to see the waste matter so he forced people to bury it or either flushing it is the same kind of idea. We flush waste and it goes into the ocean and then it goes down to the bottom so it goes into the water and goes into the soil and become fertilizer. So we can separate the water from the fecal matter waste material and use the packed soil or food waste and put it back into the Earth. It's only food. Food is food. Return Judeo Christian values to waste management public square community centers etc and inventions like the ark of the covenant, building in general, Noah's ark. Return Judeo Christianity, Prayer, Bible, Church, Choir back into all schools. Remove idolatry and idolatrous homosexuality that goes with Islam etc. School shootings with cease and all of the problems that we see in schools will end. and we need to display American flags and judeo-christian flags and Jewish flags in school and teach about the Jewish heritage and Christian heritage of our nation. As well as the Indians and pilgrims both Judeo Christian that sounds very Thanksgiving Day and indigenous day. Books with pornographic content cannot be shown in school. We must kick out the UN and the WHO world health organization from our schools and the defunct mental health system that pushes all of the evils of idolatry and anti-Semitism and homosexuality and anti-christianity and anti morals.

[REDACTED]

From: Sharon Brown [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 5:57 PM
To: NYC Council Hearings
Subject: Re: Automatic reply: [EXTERNAL] Sharon Brown Jeter testimony for finance and waste Management May 20th hearing etc. We should put money into these systems of reusing fertilizer. ----- Update by Sharon Brown Jeter on 5/20/2024

- Waste Management and Parks department funding finance committee. There must be bathrooms in the park for everybody in the bathrooms available for everyone military police citizen.
- The parks need to have bathrooms and they need to supply seating all around the parks more than they have and seating publicly so that people can plug up wherever they are damn.kiosks for phones and computers access
- They should have Bible in public square again and all kinds of biblical games and things to share and give out Bibles on the park grounds and have Bible activities everywhere and Bible amusement parks on parklands and camping and amusement parks for the Bible. Noah's ark amusement park. The ark of the covenant ark amusement park. Jesus Peter Paul Jonah Noah water parks.
- We should have the Mosaic Moses water filtration system where we make them waste into liquid and clean it and then make it into solid and bury it for fertilizer like Moses and the children of Israel did. The liquid can be clean and used for water and to fill the communities that need water from the soil water we can give out free water and use it in water parks or for people who are in need of water within shortages.
- We can also use it to store water for emergencies. We should have emergency areas in each box department. We should connect underground tunnel situations with parks to show the underground railroad as well in the Parks department. And it can be completely usable.
- We can offer moving around vendors in parks. We should also have people able to use the parks department paid and for free not only paid services for working out and swimming.
- We can keep the park beautiful and have Park restaurants around not just the four seasons.

On Mon, May 20, 2024, 6:15 AM NYC Council Hearings <hearings@council.nyc.gov> wrote:

Thank you for reaching out to the New York City Council. Your email is important to us, and we appreciate your engagement.

Please be advised that due to the volume of inquiries, it may take some time for us to respond. Rest assured that your message has been received, and we will make every effort to address your concerns or inquiries promptly.

[REDACTED]

We value your input and look forward to assisting you.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Shawn Fujioka and I am a Master's student in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at Columbia University. I have seen firsthand how NYC Parks properties can provide benefits to mental health, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity support. In my own personal experience, I have taken classes that hold field trips to NYC Parks properties. In moments of darkness and stress through the tumultuous journey of graduate school, these moments in the parks have been the light guiding me through. Having such enriching green spaces within arm's reach in New York City is not a privilege, but a fundamental right, providing residents such as myself a respite from the turmoil of the urban jungle. I implore you to allocate 1% of the city's funds towards NYC Parks. If 11.6% of New York City's landcover is natural spaces, how can we justify providing those who manage it with less than 1% of the city's funding. This does not seem fair nor feasible to maintaining these vast, diverse, sometimes densely vegetated spaces.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Shawn Fujioka

Dear Councilmembers,

Good evening my Name is Shawnay, an intern from the organization East New York Farms in East New York. I'm writing to you about the compost funding in hopes of the funding to be revised. Increase in funding for compost can increase jobs for the youth, bring financial stability to the community, decrease the rat issue of New York and create a safer and united community.

Composting funding creates more jobs for the youth and adds important skills that can be used anywhere. It is statistically proven that the decrease in youth unemployment has a hand in the youths crime rate in New York City. Jobs for the youth can keep kids out of trouble because they teach kids teamwork skills and composting by experience is very hands-on and is better with a team. Composting as a job for youth could also bring awareness to ways we can be green. Introducing this as a job can help the youth manage money earlier and make better financial decisions.

Composting funding is crucial for addressing environmental challenges like the NYC rat problem. Composting can reduce the amount of organic waste that attracts rats in urban areas. Properly managed composting can help decrease the availability of food sources for rats, ultimately contributing to pest control efforts in the city.

Composting funding is essential for tackling urban issues like the NYC crime rate. Composting can help deter criminal activities by improving the overall aesthetics and livability of neighborhoods. Additionally, funding for composting projects can support community engagement and empowerment, fostering a sense of pride and ownership that can positively impact crime prevention efforts in NYC.

With increased funding, we can open up more job prospects for youth, boost financial stability, tackle the rat issue in New York, and foster a safer, more united community.

Sincerely,
Shawnay Shack
East New York, Brooklyn 11208



**Testimony by Sitra Bowman, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to New York City Council Committee on Sanitation
Chair Shaun Abreu
Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
May 20th, 2024**

Good afternoon to Chair Abreu and City Council members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Sitra Bowman and I am speaking today as a member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU.

I am here today to ask for the restoration of the Zero Waste Programs at GrowNYC, and the community composting program and to save 79 union jobs. I have been working as an Education and Engagement Lead in the Zero Waste Schools program at GrowNYC for almost two years. During my time I have seen how these initiatives provide vital services that are key to creating a sustainable waste infrastructure for this city.

As an Education and Engagement Lead my job entails providing support and education for schools so they can be in compliance with the curbside composting program. The past two years have seen the expansion of the program to cover all schools within the five boroughs. While this is a great opportunity for schools to divert their waste from landfills, it takes a long time to successfully implement new systems, train staff, and educate students. The current format of serving 8 schools over 6 weeks is not enough to create any type of real change regarding behaviors and attitudes about recycling and composting. This past year, I have had three schools reach out to me that I no longer work with. Two of them were from the Bronx where I worked last year. This illustrates the ongoing need for the outreach and education that the Zero Waste Schools program provides, especially in areas that are already underserved.

As you can imagine schools produce a large amount of waste that needs to be picked up every day. Based on the waste characterization study by DSNY in 2023 49% of all waste produced by school can be composted and another 35% can be recycled. The Zero Waste Schools program supplies schools with important infrastructure such as brown bins and orange tilt trucks that allow students to compost and schools to store organic waste until DSNY pickup. These containers are instrumental in decreasing the number of rodents, especially in rat mitigation zones. Unfortunately not all schools receive the infrastructure they need and my job is to fill in the gaps to ensure that schools get all the supplies they need.

The \$9.5 million that we are asking for is a drop in the bucket compared to what the city could save. This past year the city spent \$452 million to send our garbage to landfills. With proper sorting this city could save at least \$177 million a year. It is absurd for DSNY to cut funding for education and outreach programs when so many people are still confused about what to do with their food scraps. At every school I visited I had folks ask me about how to get a brown bin for their home, what goes in the brown bin, and when you can put it out. The only outreach residents received was a few mailers, mostly about



how to get a free brown bin. Businesses such as hotels and supermarkets get even less outreach than schools. Many of them are completely unaware that it is required by law for them to separate their compost from their regular trash. Without better education and outreach initiatives composting and recycling will continue to have low rates of participation and high rates of contamination.

Zero Waste Schools, and community compost are programs that are part of green job ecosystem. Without sites like Earth Matter or Red Hook Urban Farm where will students be able to go on field trips to see composting up close? Without these programs where will students go for sustainability internships and jobs? How can I encourage students to consider this industry when I am losing my job and my work is not valued? I have been working in education for over a decade. I chose to work in the environmental field because climate change is the most pressing issue facing students today. These programs and opportunities provide students with essential education that not only teaches them about climate change but also provides them with the skills and knowledge on how to cope with it. This program is vital as climate change will continue to affect young people throughout their lives. We are educating a generation of future environmental stewards. I am imploring you today to invest in a sustainable future for this city and our students. Thank you for your time.

Sitra Bowman
Brooklyn

Dear members of the New York City Council,

My name is Smith Deley, I'm 15 years old and a member of Fridays For Future NYC, and I am writing to push for the reinstatement of the community compost program's funding.

The \$7 million dollars initially assigned to the compost program made up only 0.4% of DSNY's annual budget of \$1.7 billion dollars (which is 0.006% of NYC's total annual budget of \$112.4 billion in FY2022), and employed 115 people in local green jobs.

They composted over 8 million pounds of organic waste at seven different processing sites, while also educating New Yorkers to volunteer and engage in their community green spaces. All of the finished compost is given back to community gardens, parks, and thousands of New Yorkers through public events, which shows how this is extremely beneficial to New York's community in many ways.

The compost is used to care for Street Trees, Parks, and our city's urban landscape across all boroughs, building a greener and better foundation for our city's greenery, as well as remediating soil, helping sustain environmental impact, and engaging local communities.

As an uprising citizen, I am worried about the future that your generation is handing me, and the first step we need to take to repair our society is making changes like funding the compost program.

Thank you for your consideration,

Smith Deley
Fridays For Future NYC

I bring my food waste to a GrowNYC compost drop off site at a farmers market every week. If the community composting programs end, I don't know what I will do with my food waste. It's important to me to know that my food waste is being composted and turned into fertilizer, and not sent to a landfill or anaerobically digested in New York City and turned into methane that will get flared or injected into the gas distribution system. Community composting is a critical component of New York City's efforts to manage waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I urge the City Council and the Mayor to fully fund community composting.

Hello Councilmembers,

My name is Stephanie Marino, I am an intern for the organization, East New York Farms. Thank you for holding this week's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am writing to you to talk about compost funding. I believe \$7 million in funding for composting needs to be provided as it is our solution to climate change; climate change is at our doorsteps and it's what's causing New York City's switch to extremely hot or cold temperatures. Funding for composting can also help food waste be reusable and it can keep people in green jobs.

Climate change jeopardizes our future. Its mitigation cannot be put on the bottom of the to-do list.

Massive flooding drowned New York City in September of 2023. This caused individuals to have no choice but to leave their cars stranded and get to safety. Water poured heavily into the subway interfering with one of the largest modes of transportation that has a daily ridership of 3.2 million daily. This was unforeseen to us New Yorkers, but it can become more common if there aren't resources to support composting; a deterrent against climate change. Compost lowers greenhouse gases by removing carbon by storing it in the soil rather than having it in the atmosphere where it can exacerbate climate change. Compost enriches soil with nutrients so pesticide and fertilizers made from fossil fuels don't have to be used in the creation of the foods we eat.

Reducing food waste is ranked within the top 3 solutions to diminishing climate change. Composting fights climate change and helps with the reduction of food waste so funding can kill two birds with one stone. Compost takes food waste and places it in a garden instead of a landfill that has uncaptured methane; a major contributor to climate change. It is 84 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. This is equivalent to more than the CO2 emissions from 20.6 million passenger vehicles driven for one year.

The loss of funding for composting organizations can mean that the amazing accomplishments made by employees would stay at recorded numbers. Composting organizations like The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have led 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills. They employ 115 people in green jobs in the city. Also, "they engage over 1,000 participants each year in the Master Composter Program that provides employment and teaching about the art and science of compost." Budget cuts would cause GrowNYC and NYC Compost Project to lay off workers and no longer exist. These are the achievements of the committed green employees of compost organizations who have made a significant contribution to the growth of composting; erasing it would be a massive disappointment.

Composting can only grow if funding is given.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Marino
South Bronx

[REDACTED]

From: Tara Sansone [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 8:03 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Save our Composting!

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

Please help us help our city to thrive and get out of this mediocrity and muck. Composting is good for the environment and helps keep waste out of landfill. It will probably reduce food scraps that become food for rats. Why must we lag behind other cities by cutting the budget for initiatives that benefit us long term?

Please keep our composting program alive in NYC!

Tara Sansone

Sent from my iPhone

I am a resident of BedStuy, going on 12+ years, and a community gardener at 462 Halsey Community Farm. I am speaking up to urge City Council to please support funding for community composting through the NYC Compost Project, as well as reject the Parks Department's plan to evict Big Reuse from its composting site.

We know that the current city-funded programs are not focused on creating nutrient-rich soil, which is much needed for the environmental and the sustainability of our food systems, but mostly is being used to create methane, a greenhouse gas.

Volunteer-run community spaces like our garden and BK Rot do not have the capacity to take on the entire neighborhood's, let alone borough's, food waste, and the more food waste that becomes methane or CO2 in commercial waste processing plants or in landfills—the closer we get to irreversible climate crisis.

Once again, I urge you to please support and bolster funding and support for community composting efforts, for the sake of the environment, public health, and the people of BedStuy.

Thank you,
TD Tso

I am an artist and a member of Forest for All NYC, a coalition of over 140 organizations committed to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, expanding, and promoting the NYC urban forest.

The urban forest is essential to the quality of life of all New Yorkers and NYC Parks plays an invaluable role in caring for a significant amount of our city's trees and green spaces.

The urban forest matters to my family and community because it is a space to experience nature.

It is a space to rest and recharge.

It is a space to connect.

The NYC Urban forest is essential to the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.

It is imperative for the health of New Yorkers to fully fund the infrastructure, agencies, and organizations that maintain and support our NYC urban forest.

Tyshawn Henry
Brooklyn, NY
CM District 47

New York City Council Committee on Parks
Monday, May 20, 2024
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing
Zachary Hendrickson

Good afternoon, my name is **Zachary Hendrickson**. I am a member of Brooklyn Community Board 4 in Bushwick, and I'm a grants manager responsible for overseeing a program with the goal of supporting an equitable and resilient network of parks and open spaces to benefit the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.

Today, New York City Parks faces over \$55 million in cuts and the elimination of over 600 jobs. These cuts will have a devastating impact despite accounting for a tiny part of the city's \$100 billion Executive Budget proposal from Mayor Adams, and they are made all the more cruel and unnecessary given the City has billions of dollars currently sitting in reserves. The people of New York deserve better!

At my job, I have the immense privilege to work with grassroots community partners - volunteers scraping together time in the evenings and on weekends to care for local open spaces and bring joy to their neighborhoods. Last year we supported 68 organizations across all 5 boroughs, and with just a few thousand dollars each they held weeks of free skateboarding classes for young people in Brownsville, organized produce giveaways in Harlem, and so much more.

Every day is a reminder of just how much goodness there is in this city. And yet, I'm also reminded of just how badly our city has let some people down. People know what their neighborhoods need, and it's horrible to have to tell them that there's nothing we can do to help.

Parks has no money to send more tree pruners to Bushwick, Parks has no money for a new GreenThumb garden in the Bronx — and yes, weekly clean ups have gotten harder because Parks has fewer employees than we did in 1975 and Maintenance & Operations workers are being asked to cover more sites with fewer staff! Last year, one community partner pleaded with me, saying, "I see the cracks in the basketball court get wider and wider every year. Pretty soon we won't even be able to play. You're saying there's nothing we can do?"

Today I'm doing what I can. I implore this city council to hold Mayor Adams accountable to his campaign promise to allocate 1% of our city budget to Parks and secure more permanent, baselined jobs. I urge the Council to use all powers at your disposal to achieve this goal. And should it come down to it, I call on all of you, especially Council Member Krishnan, to vote No on any budget that does not fully fund our Parks. Strong words are not enough. Communities need funding to grow.

Mayor Adams: No Cuts to NYC Parks

Dear Mayor Adams,

Our public parks are our back yards. In the densest city in the United States, New Yorkers rely on parks as spaces to exercise, forge community, and unwind from the stresses of the day. Spending time in parks improves the lives of every New Yorker. They are the lungs of our city and bring joy to our lives. But our parks are in crisis. At a time of great need, proposed budget cuts of \$25 million (or 5%) to the Parks Department will have devastating results for New Yorkers and for our parks system.

These cuts will eliminate 600+ jobs, straining the already burdened workforce responsible for maintaining our parks, exacerbating existing inequities, and impacting safety, cleanliness, and accessibility citywide. I join the Play Fair for Parks Coalition in calling on you to show support for our City's parks system and to urge no cuts to this vital resource.

Three years ago, the NYC Parks budget was similarly cut and within months, by the agency's own metrics, our parks descended into the worst conditions in 20 years. Parks were strewn with trash, lawns went unmaintained, bathrooms were in terrible condition or closed, programming was cut, and our parks felt unsafe. NYC Parks has historically received more than its fair share of budget cuts. The agency has been underfunded for 40 years and has never rebounded from the budget crises in the 1970s and 1980s. We spend less as a percentage of the city budget on our parks than most other competing cities. What's more, the Parks Department budget is losing ground within the city budget. Since the 1980s other major agencies' budgets have grown by 127 – 165%. Parks has grown by just 72%.

Our parks have stepped up in crisis: during Covid and now during the asylum seeker crises. They are critical tools in managing climate change, mitigating heat island effect, and absorbing carbon dioxide and storm water. We cannot afford to cut our parks system, especially as our planet has experienced record-breaking heat and flooding. Parks are not a luxury. They are critical infrastructure. We know the path of parks budget cuts. Instead, let's look forward and invest in this critical resource. This administration and a supermajority of Community Boards and New York City Council Members agree: we must allocate 1% of the city budget for parks.

Dear Councilmembers and fellow New Yorkers,

We are facing a critical point in the stewardship of our city's health and well-being. We know that defunding public services hurts our city because we have already experienced the decades-long implications of defunding during the 1970s and 1980s - our streets and communities became less safe and more policed, with grave effects on equity.

Today, we must decide whether our public funds should be used for care (e.g. investments in public services that provide social, physical, environmental, financial, and mental health support) or policing (e.g. surveillance, police overtime, criminalization). The mayor is proposing an increased city budget inflated by policing costs while simultaneously shrinking other public services spending. Contrary to the narratives used by the Mayor's administration, public services and equity actually help to reduce crime more effectively than policing. The choice should be clear - increase spending for services like schools, libraries, parks, and community-based programming. Minimizing NYPD spending for surveillance and policing. This will make us safer.

We know that the issues we face today are also a matter of wealth inequity... the richest New Yorkers are getting richer and gaining increased influence over the conditions the rest of us must endure (by withholding wealth, distributing it according to their personal interests, and lobbying elected officials). If wealth were more equitably distributed, that money would be available for public spending that benefits everyone, but instead wealthy New Yorkers are able to continue extracting a level of wealth from the rest of us that far exceeds their obligation to give back. A less top-heavy distribution would ensure that New York has the public funds needed to maintain quality of life in this city. The false narrative that our city has limited funds is created by massive inequity in access to funds - not the nonexistence of funds.

While there is no need to highlight specific public services spending - **ALL OF IT should be refunded**, and NYPD spending should be reduced to make sure that other public services are not cut - I want to end my testimony by highlighting two areas of spending that I am most personally invested in: **community composting and parks**. There is absolutely no reason we should be cutting community composting (\$11~ million, with annual \$7 million and \$4 million for previously slated development projects) and no reason that NYC Parks should be so underfunded (parks should receive *at least* 1% of city funds). Both these areas of spending are massively effective at improving quality of life and reducing crime, but more than that, they are complementary, meaning their value is higher than the sum of their parts individually.

We know that well stewarded green spaces that are activated by the neighborhood have inverse relationships with crime. While crimes can take place in green spaces, like parks, activating those spaces with social programming and placemaking projects helps communities to cultivate economic and social wellbeing, reducing opportunities and incentives to commit crimes.

Community composting helps to nourish the parks and the people by engaging the public in the stewardship of their local soils. Public participation has long been an important part of caring for

and keeping the city clean; consider street cleaning days, street tree care, organic waste diversion participation. These are not “nice to have” - we MUST have the public engage in these projects to increase their effectiveness. In the 1990’s the NYC Compost Project was established by DSNY because the city recognized that participation in sanitation programs requires an ongoing effort to educate and foster public awareness and interest in voluntary compliance. This program provides much more than diversion of organic waste from landfills - it creates social and physical infrastructures necessary to cultivate an educated and participatory public, and it offers opportunities for social connection and physical activity in connection with nature - which we know reduces stress and increases longer-term wellbeing. The community composting program in NYC is also a model for highly effective composting: it produces high quality soil amendments that are applied hyper locally, minimizing energy and pollution associated with hauling and distribution. No industrial, large-scale composting (or co-digestion) projects can claim such high quality and diverse areas of impact and effectiveness. While the quantity of scraps processed by this program is of course limited, we know that 1) marginal differences do matter, 2) the social and public health benefits of an engaged public are essential for the city’s compliance and quality of life (nothing DSNY or NYC in general is doing will replace these benefits once they’re cut) and 3) keeping the ideal model going is also hope for the future - promoting and teaching methods for achieving that level of hyperlocal regeneration.

By attacking our parks and composting, and other public services, NYC is sending a strong message that it doesn’t care about the majority of its people and their quality of life. That is a sign of a non-democracy.

We must refund these services... New Yorkers will not stand for this approach to policymaking.

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Restore funding for community composting!

Community composting help our City in many ways – providing jobs to the community, education outreach in schools and community centers, letting food waste decompose aerobically rather than anaerobically in a landfills, and of course creating useful compost. Less tangibly, it strengthens social ties within neighborhoods and across the City. This kind of funding more than pays for itself – please restore it!

New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

New York City cannot meet its waste management goals – and its goals for organics waste management – without community composting.

Given the limits and problems with DSNY organics waste management, community composting should be restored and supported – not cut off at the knees.

Community composting creates a great product with minimal harmful emissions. It also provides a forum to share ideas about waste reduction and transformation and provides education and motivation regarding sustainable practices more broadly.

Community composting will not solve NYC's huge waste management problems, but it is essential that these programs be continued. Community composting is low cost, it creates minimal emissions and it has provided excellent education on sustainable waste management practices. DSNY's programs have none of these characteristics (from what little we know - DSNY is not a model of transparency)!

FUND COMMUNITY COMPOSTING. Funding should be restored ASAP.

Thank you.

Absolutely, here's a response highlighting the mental health impact of public park cuts:

Cutting \$55 million from our parks isn't just about aesthetics; it's a shortsighted decision that jeopardizes the mental well-being of countless New Yorkers. Public parks are our city's sanctuaries, the one place adults can freely escape the concrete jungle for peace and quiet.

These green spaces are essential for our mental health. They provide a place to:

- **De-stress and unwind:** Listen to music, read a book, or simply sit beneath a tree and let the worries of the day fade away. * **Stay active:** Parks offer free exercise opportunities, from walking and jogging to team sports. Physical activity is a well-known mood booster.
- **Connect with nature:** Studies show that spending time in nature reduces stress hormones and improves emotional well-being. * **Socialize:** Parks are hubs for community gatherings, fostering social connections that combat feelings of isolation.

With a hiring freeze and reduced maintenance, our parks will become neglected, leading to trash buildup, broken amenities, and safety concerns. This hostile environment discourages exactly what we need – residents using these vital mental health resources.

We urge the city council to reconsider these cuts. Investing in our parks is an investment in the mental well-being of all New Yorkers.

[Google Search found similar content, like this:](#)
[Parks Provide Billions of Dollars in Benefits to NYC Residents Every Year](#)
[Over a million residents in NYC use parks for sufficient exercise \(150 minutes per week\) to meet the CDC's recommendations to improve their well-being, worth ...](#)



I am writing today as a parks worker, a new yorker, a union member, and a lifelong parks user. I urge the council to restore baselined, permanent funding for the 51 forest restoration workers, and the baselined, permanent funding for a citywide trails formalization program.

My lower back can testify that this is hard, technical, skilled work. And it cannot rely on just volunteer and seasonal labor. Not renewing these lines will mean scores of acres of forest, dozens of miles of trails will go without maintenance and care for 1, maybe more years. Already there is so much more to do than what we have the staff for.

These 51 people are so called "full time seasonals." Currently they are barred from applying to almost all permanent jobs at parks. The budget is hanging over their heads. Picture the weight it puts on you to not know until the end of June if you have a job in July. Picture the uncertainty, the stress, the competition for the one or two permanent positions that open up. That's not how city jobs are supposed to work. There's a banner hanging in the forest restoration trailer that everyone signs when they leave - after a few months it is already filling up with signatures.

Last year, the mayor made a promise to finally fund a citywide trails program, just like his promise to fund 1% for parks. But just as work plans were being made and resumes were being sent in, the funding was paused, then canceled. Trails are how working class people can connect to wildness, for free, right in the middle of the city. Good trail work lasts for decades, it's strong, resilient, made of rock and timber. Right now the city is giving us a foundation built of sand.

The youth's testimony

Our planet, country and state are in a climate emergency, which has affected countless communities all around New York City by damaging many schools and community buildings as well as hurting the public transportation system that New Yorkers use on a daily basis, and destroying the little green life that we have in New York City that is crucial for New Yorkers health and well-being. I ask for the 7 million budget in community composting to be restored. The 7 million are just 0.4% of DSNY's overall yearly budget of 1.7 billion which is 0.006 % of NYCs total annual budget of 112.4 billion. This money being put in community composting is extremely helpful for the community as it helps compost over 8 million pounds of organic waste at seven different procession sites and provides jobs for 115 people in local green jobs, it also helps educate New Yorkers through the master composter programs. Having this budget also helped empower New Yorkers to volunteer and engage in their community green spaces. All of the finished compost is also then distributed to community gardens, parks and thousands of New Yorkers through public events. Furthermore this compost is also used to care for street trees, parks and City's urban landscapes across all boroughs which helps with the problem of pollution that affects thousands of New Yorkers' health daily. Compost helps the soil of the little urban life that there is in New York City which is needed to help stop our climate emergency and create a better world, country, state and future.

Save Community Composting!

I have lived in New York City since 2010 in three neighborhood across Brooklyn, most recently in Greenpoint, since 2020, where I have made frequent use of vital community composting sites at McCarren Park and McGolrick Park. The McGolrick Park compost site has already seen its funding cut, and next weekend is slated to be the last week at the McCarren Park Saturday compost.

Community members say no to this ridiculous cut of our community services! Composting helps keep out neighborhoods and trash areas clean and free of pests; it creates a meeting point and sense of community around shared ecological values which this city administration purports to also share. These cuts will also eliminate 78 jobs for our fellow New Yorkers employed by Grown NYC and other groups. We say no! Invest in our clean, green communities! Prioritize community composting in the budget!

To Whom it May Concern

As a member of the New York City Community I would like to testify to the importance of the cities parks in the daily happiness, well-being, and education of myself and many of those in our community. I believe that parks are a crucial part of our city ecosystem and provide an important place of refuge in a very busy city. I also think that they are very important for teaching our next generations about the world and it's importance and it is a great way to combat the extinction of experience of young people in the city I'm not experiencing the beauty of this natural world. Think that the parks bring me and many others. Incredible opportunities for recreation shared space, relaxation, and just general mental and physical health. I believe that it is crucial that our cities fund this crucial resource and this should be reflected in our budget. I support a one percent increase in our cities budget allocation for parks for city parks and natural areas and I would like to speak for myself and for many of those in my community and syd Heights and Harlem. This is for us, I find myself going to park almost every day and I cannot imagine my New York City experience without our incredible amazing parks. Thank you for your consideration.

My name is Zhenia Nagorny and I have been co-leading the Compost Committee and Food Scrap Drop off at the Maple Street Community Garden in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn since 2016.

When Covid hit and the city abandoned plans of expanding the brown bins program and closed all food scrap drop offs at markets and other FSDO sites, we, at MSCG, knew that we did not have the capacity to process everyone's scraps so we reached out to Big Reuse.

I remember that beautiful Autumn day in September when Gil Lopez and Mary Rose Robbins came by and told us that they'd be happy to partner with us and take all our food scraps from our busiest day (Saturday) and haul them to the Gowanus location. This was the only reason we were able to stay open during the winter. We have been collecting data for this very important occasion so here it is: in 2021-2023, we were collecting anywhere from 23,000-26,000 lbs of food scraps per year and having a volunteer pool of over 100 dedicated community residents each season who were grateful to be working together, educating each other and helping to divert so much organic waste from going to landfills.

Due to the unexpected and senseless budget cuts proposed by Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch, Big Reuse was forced to scale down to a fraction of its operation and could no longer pick up our food scraps. We, at the Maple Street Community Garden, were devastated by this unexpected decision by the Mayor. We were forced to close on December 20, 2023 for the first time in 3 years and our community came out to share their many feelings of disappointment, sadness, dismay and more questions than we had answers to. Many of them were collected on our [Instagram page](#) for the Save the Compost Coalition.

Community Composting was how me and my committee co-lead, Tim Nottage (both of us were certified as Master Composters by the New York Compost Project) learned, collaborated and expanded the garden's compost operation, which includes volunteers, capacity, education. We've seen hundreds of volunteers come through our gates and help in processing, educating, collecting data and listening to the needs of our community.

And you know what they say? Keep community composting in our communities. Not everyone has access to brown bins or the smart bins that are posted around the neighborhood. Also, we want finished compost back in our communities. Our garden committee, for example, greatly relies on the compost that gets delivered by Big Reuse a few times a year.

And we agree with them 1000%!

Here are the facts about community composting programs:

- Community Composting makes up .4% or \$7 million of DSNY's overall annual budget of \$1.7 billion, and .006% of NYC's total annual budget of \$112 billion in FY2022.
- This initiative employs 115 people in local green jobs.
- Community Composting partners have composted over 8 million lbs. of organic waste at seven different processing sites.
- They have educated thousands of New Yorkers, many of our own compost volunteers, and certified them as Master Composters. Majority are inspired to take the knowledge, skills and dedication to sustainability into their own communities to make local change there.
- They have empowered New Yorkers to volunteer and engage in their community green spaces.

- All of the finished compost is distributed to community gardens, parks, and thousands of New Yorkers through public events.
- Used to care for Street Trees, Parks, and our city's urban landscape across all boroughs.
- These processes remediate soil, sustain environmental impact, and engage communities.

On behalf of the Maple Street Community Garden, our volunteers and our community, we ask that funds be relocated to support these important programs and partnerships now, while the momentum is still strong. To defund one of the most successful compost initiatives in the country is something I still cannot comprehend and I stand with my community to demand the necessary funds to support green jobs and community compost programs for all.

I have been dropping off table scraps at the lesec site at the union square farmers market for decades. In that time I have their program and others like it grow and move New York closer to its net zero goals. It is inconceivable to me that after so many years such vital programs would be capriciously defunded, especially when they do so much good with a minuscule fraction of the overall budget.

Please fully restore funding to community composting programs, specifically lesec.

Thank you.

Jeff Schiller
Chelsea

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for community composting initiatives and to advocate for increased funding for these invaluable programs. Composting offers a multitude of benefits ranging from waste reduction and associated cost savings to the mitigation of methane emissions from landfills, water conservation, and the enhancement of soil health.

Contributing to composting efforts is important to involve the community in creating and sustaining a healthy environment for future generations. It is too important a project to cut.

I urge you to take into account the societal and environmental advantages of composting and to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to support our composting programs. By doing so, more individuals in our city, like myself, can access this simple yet effective way to reduce waste and protect our environment. Composting is a worthwhile investment with a great return. Please support the programs the people of NYC love and value.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Kohn

[REDACTED]

NYC 10025

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of community composting initiatives and to advocate for increased funding for these invaluable programs. Composting offers so many benefits ranging from waste reduction and associated cost savings to the mitigation of methane emissions from landfills, water conservation, and the enhancement of soil health.

My daughter started saving scraps to be composted in Union Square and it has been a really positive experience. It is important for her generation -- and all of us -- to be part of efforts to reduce our waste and improve our environmental awareness. Our city should be a leader.

We urge you to take into account the societal and environmental advantages of composting and to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to support our composting programs. By doing so, more individuals in our city can access this simple yet effective way to reduce waste and protect our environment. Composting is a worthwhile investment with a great return. Please support the programs the people of NYC love and value.

Sincerely,
Neil Meyerkopf

Testimony Restoring Funding for Community Composting in the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Dear Honorable Mayor Eric Adams and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I'm sending forth this testimony to push for the restoration of funding for NYC's community composting in the FY 2025 budget. Community composting programs are not merely a luxury but a critical component of our City's environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation efforts. I encourage composting in my personal and professional life (for the following reasons):

Environmental Benefits:

- Community composting offers a myriad of environmental benefits. Primarily, it significantly reduces the amount of organic waste that ends up in our landfills. Organic waste accounts for about 30% of what New Yorkers discard. When this waste decomposes in landfills, it produces methane—a potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide.
- By diverting organic waste from landfills, community composting not only reduces the production of methane but also decreases the overall volume of waste, leading to reduced landfill expansion and less environmental degradation. Moreover, composting returns valuable nutrients to the soil, improving soil health and fertility, which in turn supports urban agriculture and green spaces throughout our City.

Climate Change Impacts:

- The benefits of community composting extend beyond waste reduction. It plays a crucial role in our City's strategy to combat climate change. By reducing methane emissions from landfills, we can significantly lower our carbon footprint. Composting also enhances carbon sequestration in soils. Healthy, compost-rich soils capture and store carbon dioxide, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Furthermore, community composting fosters environmental stewardship among residents. It educates and engages New Yorkers in sustainable practices, creating a culture of responsibility and proactive climate action. This grassroots engagement is vital for the long-term success of our City's environmental policies and climate goals.

Economic and Social Benefits

- In addition to its environmental and climate benefits, community composting offers economic and social advantages. The program creates green jobs and supports local businesses that use composted material, stimulating the green economy. It also promotes social cohesion as community members collaborate on composting projects, strengthening neighborhood bonds.

Given these stated substantial benefits, restoring funding for NYC's community composting is not only an investment in our environment but also in our City's future. It aligns with our commitment to sustainability, climate resilience and community empowerment. I urge you to consider the far-reaching impacts of community composting and restore its funding in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. By doing so, you will reaffirm New York City's leadership in environmental stewardship and climate action.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Ryan D. Hughes, LEED AP, WELL AP, TRUE Zero Waste Advisor
NYC Resident (City Council District 34) & Sustainability Manager at Structure Tone
Hughes.RyanD@gmail.com | [REDACTED]

Parks

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Giulietta Fiore

Address: _____

I represent: Historic House Trust of NYC

Address: _____

Parks

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Morgan Monaco, Executive Director

Address: Prospect Park Alliance

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

PARKS

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SCOTT DALY

Address: NYITL

I represent: _____

Address: Scott Daly



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THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Austin Amencena

Address: _____

I represent: Grown NYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Samantha Normandra

Address: ~~179 Rivington St~~ 179 Rivington St

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mansa DeDominicus

Address: 179 Rivington St

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sitra Bowman

Address: _____

I represent: GrowNYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nathalie Huang

Address: _____

I represent: GrowNYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erik Menjivar

Address: _____

I represent: GrowNYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Violet Black

Address: _____

I represent: Grown NYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Compost

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lana Frey

Address: _____

I represent: Grown NYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorian Mecir

Address: [Redacted] 7th Ave

I represent: Play Fair / Friends of Francis Lewis

Address: Park

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jake Patel

Address: _____

I represent: New York League of Conservation Voters

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ALIA SOOMRO

Address: _____

I represent: NY League of Conservation Voters

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown Jeter

Address: _____

I represent: Jamaica

Address: Queen, NY 11436

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. NYC Budget
☐ in favor ☒ in opposition
Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JUSTIN WOOD
Address: 151 W 30th St. NY, NY 10001
I represent: New York Lawyers Public Int.
Address: 151 W 30th St. NY 10001

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition
Date: 5/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SARA EVANS
Address: 500 75th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11232
I represent: The Green-Wood Cemetery
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition
Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hayley Gorenberg
Address: _____
I represent: Friends of Mount Prospect Park
Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JONATHAN MOLOFSKY

Address: [REDACTED] 11238

I represent: FRIENDS OF MT. PROSPECT PARK

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARTIN LARSON

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Facht

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Therese Braddick

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Stark

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matt Drury

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Chief

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Iris Rodriguez Rosa

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks FDG

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sue Donghee

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Commissioner

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joy Wang

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MAXIMUS ALEXANDER BARTON

Address: _____ NY 11413

I represent: LABORERS LOCAL UNION 1010

Address: 17-20 WHITESTONE EASY, WHITESTONE NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vanessa Butler

Address: _____

I represent: Heather Lubov, City Parks

Address: 830 5th ave Fudt'n

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Nelson

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James P. ...

Address: _____

I represent: 7th High Line

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nedra Fasad

Address: _____

I represent: Friends of Tompkins Square Park

Address: Ave A + 7th St.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. F425 Exec Budget Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5.20.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Walker

Address: 1234 5th Ave, NY, NY

I represent: Natural Areas Conservancy

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darren Hinton

Address: [REDACTED] BK NY 11276

I represent: Day NYC

Address: 177 Rogers Ave

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Ganser

Address: 55 Broad St

I represent: New Yorkers for Park

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Merritt Birnbaum

Address: _____

I represent: Riverside Park Conservancy

Address: 475 RSD NW 10015

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tamar Renaud

Address: BROOKLYN

I represent: TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

Address: BROADWAY STR

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christina Taylor

Address: 80 VIPS Bronx, NY

I represent: Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

Address: 80 VIPS BRONX, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROSA CHANGORENBERG

Address: 20 PINE ST. #3104, NYC, NY 10005

I represent: IGOTLAND PARK - Mount West Park

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorian MECIR

Address: [REDACTED] 7th Ave

I represent: Play Fair / Friends of Francis

Address: Lewis Park

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: K Webster

Address: 246 BOWERY

I represent: Sara Roosevelt Park

Address: UES / Chinatown Manhattan

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

PARIS

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keri Butler

Address: _____

I represent: Municipal Art Society

Address: 488 Madison Ave.

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

PARKS

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANDREW WALLACH

Address: _____

I represent: NATURAL AREAS CONSERVANCY

Address: _____

SANITATION

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BETH SLEPIAN

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

SANITATION

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CARINA KAUFMAN-GUTIERREZ

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

SANITATION

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

Spanish

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Hicente Ventimilla (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

SANITATION

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Veronica Escamilla (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: SPANISH

SPANISH

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: CARLA RODRIGUEZ (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

SPANIS H

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Miguel VARELA

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Sanitation

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keanu Arpels - Josiah

Address: [REDACTED] New York, NY 10013

I represent: Fridays For Future NYC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

ASIN

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Sanitation Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mohamed Attia

Address: _____

I represent: Street Vendor Project

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Preeti Sodhi

Address: _____

I represent: the Friends of the High Line

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 5-20-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keisha Lewis

Address: _____

I represent: The Highline

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tealvin Fkilo

Address: _____

I represent: Friends of the Highline

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lydia Michelson

Address: _____

I represent: H. 1012

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Felicia Hesse

Address: _____

I represent: Hightower Trust

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jane Seiden

Address: [Redacted] St, NY, NY 10009

I represent: 350 NYC

Address: _____

*Funding for
community
composting*

*Sanitation
committee*

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner Jessica Tisch

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lojzen

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner Joe Antonelli

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner Ryan Morola

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joe Puleo

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 983, DC37

Address: (Urban Park Rangers, PEP officers, CSAs)

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dilcy Benn

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, L1505, DC37

Address: (City Park Workers, seasonal workers)

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ralph Baselice

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Vice-President, L 983, DC37

Address: Urban Park Ranger

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Sanitation Res. No. Sean

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Sean Johnson

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: STIF

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arif Summare

Address: _____

I represent: Grow NYC

Address: 100 Gold St

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