



March 13, 2020

Dear Chairperson and Council Member of the Subcommittee on Capital Budget and Committee on Parks and Recreation

Re: Testimony for the NYC City Council Parks Committee Preliminary FY21 Budget Hearing,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of the Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park. We are so grateful to Mayor de Blasio who, in 2016, made good on the promise made during the transformative 2005 Greenpoint/Williamsburg Waterfront rezoning and acquired the last parcel of land to complete the 27 acre Bushwick Inlet Park park along the North Brooklyn Waterfront.

In the face of unprecedented development, this tremendous commitment to the future generations of park-goers is palpable. We would like to thank our Councilmembers Steve Levin and all of our other elected officials for supporting us in the fight for Bushwick Inlet Park.

I am here today to report that out of the 27 acres of potentially beautiful and critically needed open space only 8 acres have been created or are in the process of being built out- 19 acres remain polluted industrial wastelands and off limits to the citizens of New York.

At this moment, our most urgent task is to have 16M allocated for the demolition of the CitiStorage building. With the removal of this huge warehouse, DEC and Parks can proceed with testing of the property for contamination to begin the long process of remediation- and very importantly, there will be for the first time in many generations an uninterrupted view of the whole 27 acre park- situated as a much needed respite, in between curtains of highrise buildings lining the Brooklyn waterfront- for the pleasure of all people strolling along Kent Avenue along the East River.

We at Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park strongly believe that NYC Parks is underfunded. With the increased building development and population density parks are needed more than ever- And we need to protect the investment in any new parkland that is created as well as the people that care and work for the Parks Dept. With this in mind, Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park join the NY4Ps Year 2 of the Play Fair Campaign, asking the Mayor and the City Council to consider adding \$100M to the NYC Parks Expense Budget and \$100M for NYC Parks Capital Investments.

Most Sincerely,
Katherine Conkling Thompson

Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park

Greetings Chair Koo and other members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation,

My name Susan Donoghue and I serve as both the Administrator of Prospect Park and the President of the Prospect Park Alliance (PPA). It is my pleasure to submit this testimony today.

As you may know, the Prospect Park Alliance is a not-for-profit that partners with the NYC Parks Department and the community to foster stewardship of Prospect Park. Established in 1987, the Alliance helps to care for the natural environment, preserve the Park's historic design, provide facilities, oversee more than 25,000 permitted events (mainly consisting of small birthday parties and family picnics), and host programs and activities throughout the year for all New Yorkers.

For over 30 years, the Prospect Park Alliance has played a pivotal role in restoring the Park to its original glory. During this time, we have worked closely with Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Corey Johnson, Borough President Adams, Majority Leader Cumbo Councilmember Brad Lander, Councilmember Eugene, and the entire Brooklyn Delegation, the Parks Department, and the surrounding communities, to identify, prioritize, design, and complete approximately 50 restoration projects over close to 120 acres of the Park and 5,100 linear feet of our watercourse totaling over \$200 million dollars of capital investment. We now estimate that the Park receives some ten million visits each year, and thousands of people every year are engaged in the free educational and volunteer programs offered by the Alliance.

Prospect Park Alliance is thrilled to join the over 200 Coalition Members from all around this City as we encourage this body to "Play Fair". For well over a decade there has been a funding disparity in the City Budget for NYC Parks / Parks Department. In past budgets the agency received just 0.59% of the City's total budget –despite City parks accounting for 14% of all of NYC's land.

Keeping up with maintenance and programming is paramount for Prospect Park Alliance and we know that feeling is the same at any other Park in this City. This is why we are lending our voice in calling for an investment of \$100M to the expense budget for the Parks Department. This crucial funding could:

- Baseline the new 150 staff lines, 50 new Urban Park Rangers, and 80 new PEP officers added in the FY20 Budget
- Create a pathway to full-time employment for 100 Parks Opportunity Program participants citywide
- Establish an in-house comfort station improvement team

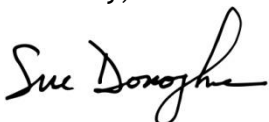
We are also calling for \$100M in capital investments for NYC Parks, this funding would:

- Help rebuild 10 neighborhood parks and playgrounds via the Community Parks Initiative
- Provide resources for structural improvements for Green Thumb Community Gardens citywide
- Enhance investments into proactively protecting, conserving, and maintain our natural forests

Prospect Park Alliance and the City of New York have enjoyed an extraordinarily fruitful partnership over three decades and we look forward to continuing this relationship for decades to come. However, we encourage you to take the testimonies that you hear today under serious consideration and make this long-overdue investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and thank you for the City Council's continued support.

Sincerely,



Susan Donoghue
Park Administrator and President, Prospect Park Alliance

Toba Potosky
Founding Member, former President
Cadman Park Conservancy

Testimony to NYC Council Subcommittee of NYC Parks

March 13, 2020

Chairman Koo and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony to you today. I am a founding member and former President of the Cadman Park Conservancy. 2020 is our 10-year anniversary. In these 10 years, we have raised more than \$100,000 in private donations and we

successfully lobbied for over \$12 million in city and state funds for Cadman Plaza Park and the Brooklyn War Memorial. The Brooklyn War Memorial has been closed to the public since 1992 and is one of the few WWII memorials in NYC. Thanks to the efforts of the

Conservancy, Phase One of the restoration which addresses handicap accessibility began in February of this year and is expected to be completed by year-end.

That being said, the Cadman Park Conservancy became an organization in 2010 in a desperate response to NYC Park's inability to properly care for Cadman Plaza Park. Only 4 years ago, Cadman Plaza Park, which is located just steps away from the Brooklyn Bridge,

was listed as one of the most rat-infested parks in New York City. We were actually featured in a Morgan Spurlock documentary about rats and NYC. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of Conservancy members, working with NYC Parks and the NYC Dept of Health

we have successfully reduced the rat population and rat burrows in Cadman Plaza, Walt Whitman Park, and Korean War Veterans Plaza. We are no longer on the list of rat-infested parks.

WE'RE NOT ALONE IN OUR DISCONTENT

I was able to watch the entire hearing today from my home. I was impressed by the line of questioning by Council Members. All too often, we

as local volunteers, feel that our concerns and needs are not known by Council members. After today's hearing, I realize

that is not a true assessment. In fact, your questions regarding the number of PEP officers, length of training, and the role they play policing our parks, as well as questions regarding the length of time and the cost of capital projects are exactly what we at CPC question

as well. Most importantly, Council Members addressed the complete lack of tree pruning. This is a very serious issue for us. I was saddened by the response by Parks. If there is tree pruning going on, there is no sign of it in downtown Brooklyn. In fact, in 2019 more than

30 oversized limbs fell from trees in Cadman Plaza, Walt Whitman, and Korean War Veterans Park. Each limb weighing over 25 pounds. Each one could have killed or seriously injured a child or adult standing under it.

PLAY FAIR 2019

Our organization applauded the Council's response to "Play Fair 2019" but that was the equivalent of applying a band-aid on a large wound. For decades NYC Park's, and the people of New York, have been forced to do with less. Broken water fountains, closed comfort

stations, overgrown weeds, lack of park staffing, zero gardeners, etc... Play Fair 2019 turned things around and gave us a taste of what the future could be, only if you and a majority of NYC Council members make it happen.

WHY RISK MANAGEMENT DOES NOT WORK

NYC Parks adopted "Risk Management" several years ago as a means of doing more with less. Unfortunately, that means less pruning, less of everything. The problem is that the "risk" is assumed by the public. The risk is that if we don't prune the trees on a

normal schedule we are risking that no one, mostly children, won't be hurt by a falling limb. I personally was in the park when two large limbs fell. One was about 20 feet from me and my dog, the second limb was dangerously close to children sitting on a park

bench eating sandwiches. Needless to say, this scared the children and their parents, who abruptly left the park in fear. Our children should not be put at risk because of our failure to properly fund our parks.

PLAY FAIR 2020

This year, members of the New York City Council have the opportunity to get NYC Parks on the right track, with a real boost to their budget by supporting "Play Fair 2020" Still far from where it needs to be, but closer to the goal of properly funding the parks that we love.

Not every park conservancy has the ability to raise funds like Central Park, or Prospect Park or even Fort Greene Park and so we look to our elected officials to stand up for us.

THERE'S ENOUGH BLAME TO GO AROUND - IT'S A POINTLESS EXERCISE

It's unfair to blame NYC Parks for what they're not doing while denying them the funds they need to properly do the job we expect of them. It's as simple as that. We can fix this problem this year. We are all partners working together, however, Parks cannot get to the

level we expect from them if year after year they are denied the funding they so rightly deserve. I ask you today on behalf of the members of the Conservancy and the people who love our parks, please fully fund "Play Fair 2020" - Thank You

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