



**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation
Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget
March 22, 2023**

Testimony By: Sue Donoghue, Commissioner, NYC Parks

Good morning, Chair Krishnan, members of the Parks Committee, and 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 I'm joined today on this panel by members of my incredible senior staff. 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 Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024, and to provide an overview of our agency's mission to build and maintain our city's green and open spaces.

Though most New Yorkers are familiar with many aspects of our park system, not everyone is aware of the full array of properties, programs, amenities and facilities that make up NYC Parks' portfolio. NYC Parks' primary responsibility is to plan, maintain and care for over 30,000 acres of green and open space, encompassing 5,000 individual properties, ranging from playgrounds and beaches to community gardens and natural areas. These properties span the entire city, from the Conference House Park at the southern tip of Staten Island, to Coney Island Beach and the Rockaways, to the forests of Van Cortlandt Park at the northern-most edge of the Bronx. We provide thousands of recreational and educational public programs throughout the year, including free Shape Up NYC fitness classes, Kids in Motion children's programming, and nature education provided by our Urban Park Rangers.

Throughout our city's history, when New Yorkers have needed to exercise, or space to enjoy themselves with family and friends, find solace or just relish some sorely needed quiet time and solitude, they have always turned to our City parks, and this reliance has only grown in recent years. There is no denying that the COVID pandemic has been a challenging time for our agency, and for the entire city, as reverberations are still being felt in the national economy, impacting labor markets and supply chains, but I remain extremely proud of the hard work and dedication exhibited by our incredible agency staff, guided



by a clear principle: parks and greenspaces are for everyone, and we must always strive to make them as open, accessible, and equitable as possible. I'm pleased to report that the past year has been a very busy one for our agency, and our dedication to our core mission is stronger than ever.

In 2022, we expanded our commitment to providing safe and engaging recreational and cultural programming opportunities for young people across New York City by expanding recreation center hours at nine sites, adding 1,400 programming hours for beloved programs like "Saturday Night Lights." Seven of the nine sites were in neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic, as identified by the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE), so that these communities can fully enjoy the fun, health and wellness that our recreation centers help provide. We planted thousands of new trees across the city, including thousands in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods, and to help New Yorkers better understand the state of our urban tree canopy, we launched a first-of-its-kind dynamic tree map—the NYC Tree Map. This map on our agency website showcases nearly one million individually managed City trees, including unique identification numbers, species information, and maintenance status, and New Yorkers can report tree conditions in parks and on streets directly to Parks staff, increasing the efficiency of our tree care efforts. We managed over 600 capital park improvement projects, and renovated, rebuilt, and expanded 21 GreenThumb community gardens throughout the city, including eight gardens located within NYCHA campuses. Despite significant challenges, we convened a successful 2022 beach and outdoor pool season, where more than 1 million swimmers visited our City pools to cool off, local businesses and concessions thrived, and we launched a brand-new water safety initiative to teach children safe behavior in, on, and around water. Even while faced with the challenges of a nationwide lifeguard shortage, New York City was one of the only major U.S. cities to open all of our public pools and beaches, a testament to the City's commitment to equitable access, and we are in the midst of a very aggressive staff recruitment and training campaign to make the 2023 beach and pool season the best that it can be.

None of this would be possible without our incredible agency employees, who have shouldered a tremendous responsibility throughout the pandemic, which is why one of my top priorities is ensuring that our agency's internal culture is built on a foundation of equity and respect. To help advance these goals, we have established a new Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) office to lead factfinding



discussions and increase accountability, continued our agency's "Reflections On" platform, a series of internal listening sessions dedicated to numerous challenging societal concerns facing our employees, including Asian hate crimes, gender identity and domestic violence, and launched an oral history project, to capture the important stories of what Parkies went through during the pandemic – in their own words.

Turning to the specific topic for this hearing, this year's Preliminary Budget reflects the Administration's ongoing commitment to promoting an equitable recovery by making investments in a greener, healthier city, and gives our Agency the resources we need to continue getting the job done, while demonstrating fiscal responsibility amid the ongoing economic and fiscal challenges facing the city. NYC Parks' Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Expense operating budget is \$582.7 million dollars. This budget will allow us to continue delivering core services and keeping our city parks clean and safe, including new baseline funding for an expansion of the Rat Reduction Initiative and the ability to pursue a more flexible strategic approach to the acquisition of new parkland. We are continuing to innovate in how we are deploying our staff and other resources. Earlier this week, we were proud to announce the deployment of 240 newly hired "Second Shift" dedicated Parks staff to address cleanliness in City parks during peak days and hours. Tasked with addressing trash, litter, and graffiti at 100 "hot spot" sites in 62 parks across the city, this new operational deployment will work from Thursday through Sunday in the evening hours to keep our open spaces cleaner and greener than ever. This new strategy represents the first full time staff dedicated specifically for peak evenings and weekends in the history of the department.

The agency's 10-Year Capital Plan is \$8.56 billion dollars, allowing the agency to renovate, reimagine and preserve our parks, playgrounds and public spaces, including a new investment in the restoration of the beloved Soldiers & Sailors Monument in Riverside Park, which commemorates the sacrifices of Union Army soldiers and sailors who served in the Civil War. Over 120 years old, this incredible historic treasure had fallen into a dangerous state of disrepair over time, so we will be advancing a complete restoration of the monument and surrounding plazas. With the consultation and guidance of our dedicated Arts & Antiquities division, this renovation will guarantee that this elegant and meaningful commemorative space will remain a vital historic resource for years to come.



NYC Parks has consistently demonstrated our long-held commitment to robust and meaningful public engagement. Our dedicated staff will never stop working tirelessly, but our city parks are at their best when New Yorkers help care for our public open spaces, so we work closely with our park users and community residents to really get them involved in their local parks. These efforts can range from our Super Stewards who help care for our street trees, forests and nature trails, to the local residents that attend our incredible community design input sessions to shape our playground redesigns, to Partnerships for Parks, our incredible joint program with the City Parks Foundation, which supports and champions local neighborhood volunteers by giving them the tools they need to advocate and care for their parks and green spaces in a dedicated, sustained manner. Earlier this week, the Mayor announced the launch of "We Love NYC," a civic campaign which will celebrate New Yorkers who are making a difference through community service and identify volunteer opportunities to which everyone can contribute. In the coming months, the campaign will focus on ways New Yorkers can help improve the city, prioritizing public safety, support for small businesses, and of course, caring for parks. We look forward to partnering with the Council and other stakeholders on this vital effort to empower New York City residents, so together, we can drive positive change in our communities, and make New York a more livable and greener city.

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 incredible Borough Commissioners and their district teams, who work alongside our dedicated 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.



OFFICE OF THE

MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f

431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f

www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Mark Levine, Borough President

Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation

March 22, 2023

Good morning, Chair Krishnan, and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. My name is Mark Levine, and I am the Manhattan Borough President. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the recently proposed Fiscal 2024 (FY24) Budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

New York City's parks are beloved. Native New Yorkers and newcomers alike find joy in connection in our open park spaces – from playing sports in local fields and courts to exploring playgrounds and more. The pandemic has only emphasized how important our parks are to community-building. These parks rely on city funding – which made up roughly 80% of DPR's total operating budget in FY23 – and they deserve further investments to help them grow and expand. My testimony today focuses on the key initiatives of baselining the parks budget at 1% of the total budget, and the need to maintain and grow our urban tree canopy by investing in the "One Million More Trees Initiative".

Baselining the Parks Budget at 1% of the City's Total Budget

Last year, I was glad to see the Mayor and the Council agree to modest investments to help protect and maintain our parks system. But even with those slight increases in FY23, the Department of Parks and Recreation's operating budget represented only 0.6% percent of City's total expenditures at \$624 million. This is significantly less than what other municipalities dedicate to parks despite the growing needs posed by climate change, invasive species and development. Insufficient funds threaten the daily staffing, maintenance and programming work that helps keep our parks strong.

Further, I am concerned to learn of proposed budget cuts again in this year's FY24 Preliminary Budget, this time amounting to a roughly \$42 million cut in City funding to DPR. The cuts contemplated in the Preliminary Budget will leave Parks without sufficient resources to keep all parks well-maintained and safe, increase park accessibility, provide quality public programming, preserve its workforce, and maintain and expand tree infrastructure.

I urge the Mayor to work with the Council to increase and baseline the Parks budget to 1 percent of the total city budget, with investments specifically in parks maintenance, programming expansions, and as discussed below, preserving and growing the urban tree canopy through funding initiatives like the "Million More Trees" initiative.

Urban Forest: A Million More Trees and Protecting New York's Canopies

The City should allocate funding in both the FY24 Capital and Operations budgets to plant and maintain one million more trees, and help our city achieve 40% canopy cover by 2035.

New York City is dangerously hot. Per the New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC), temperatures in NYC are expected to rise four to seven degrees by 2050 and 90+ degree days will increase from 18 days per year to 52.ⁱ Every year, heat causes approximately 450 New Yorkers to visit an emergency room, 150 to be admitted to the hospital and 13 to die from heat-related causes – and these numbers will only continue to rise without intervention. These impacts are felt disproportionately for racial minorities, older adults, disabled New Yorkers.^{ii iii}

We can work to address these public health issues by resourcing our parks. Well-invested parks can help lower peak ambient temperatures by 2–9° , and shade from our urban tree canopy can reduce peak ambient temperatures by 20–45°F.^{iv}

And while they cannot solve our heat on their own, parks play a role in reducing the city's contribution climate change by acting as a carbon capture tool, with individually managed trees—including both street trees and trees in landscaped park spaces—collectively storing 1.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide each year.^v

As many of you know, the Parks Department launched the MillionTreesNYC initiative, a public-private partnership to plant and care for 1,000,000 trees in New York City.^{vi} MillionTreesNYC saw the millionth tree planted in 2015 after countless hours of work between public servants, not-for-profit employees, and thousands of volunteers. However, our city is failing to keep pace with the growing public push to expand and protect our urban forest. Last month, per Gothamist and the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, the Parks Department planted just 500 trees on city streets and around 2,200 in parks and natural spaces in the first four months of this past fiscal year.^{vii} Further, fewer than 5,000 streets trees received pruning during that same period, as compared to more than 18,000 trees in the previous year – and such neglect can lead to dangerous conditions like falling branches, especially during storms.^{viii}

I have been proud to partner with my fellow Borough Presidents to launch a Million More Trees. I urge the Council to include the Million More Trees initiative in its Council Budget Response and to work with the Mayor to fund this program in this year's budget. The federal government has recognized the tremendous value that trees bring to communities and is willing to pick up part of the tab by offering \$1.5 billion in grants to local governments for tree plantings.^{ix} The NYS Bond Act may also provide opportunities to fund this critical initiative. The City ought to pursue all of these resources for the benefit of our parks and residents.

Finally, small teams and limited staffing levels make it difficult for foresters and horticulturists to safely, effectively and adequately maintain our existing trees and tree lines in the face of challenges like development, invasive species, and climate change. NYC Parks manages roughly 2.5 million trees amongst its many acres of natural and landscaped parklands. We also urge the Mayor and the Council to invest in NYC Parks' forestry teams and other needed staff to help protect our urban forest so New Yorks can enjoy their public health and community-building benefits for years to come.

ⁱ OneNYC 2050: Building a Strong and Fair City, Chapter 7 A Livable Climate 9, New York City (2020), available at <https://1w3f31pzvdm485dou3dppkcq-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/OneNYC-2050-A-Livable-Climate-11.7.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Cool Neighborhoods NYC: A Comprehensive Approach to Keep Communities Safe in Extreme Heat, New York City, 7 (June 2017) available at https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/orr/pdf/Cool_Neighborhoods_NYC_Report.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://nyccas.cityofnewyork.us/nyccas2022/report/1>.

^{iv} 1% for Parks Impact Report, Chapter 2 The Essential Value of New York City Parks 10, New Yorkers for Parks (2023), available at <https://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/NY4P-1-Percent-for-Parks-Impact-Report.pdf>.

^v 1% for Parks Impact Report, Chapter 2 The Essential Value of New York City Parks 11, New Yorkers for Parks (2023), available at <https://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/NY4P-1-Percent-for-Parks-Impact-Report.pdf>.

^{vi} <https://www.milliontreesnyc.org/html/about/about.shtml>.

^{vii} <https://gothamist.com/news/new-trees-planted-in-nyc-fall-to-lowest-level-in-15-years>.

^{viii} <https://gothamist.com/news/new-trees-planted-in-nyc-fall-to-lowest-level-in-15-years>.

^{ix} <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/08/25/towns-may-grow-millions-more-trees-with-15b-for-urban-forestry>.

**Testimony of the Central Park Conservancy
Preliminary Budget Hearing, Parks & Recreation Committee
March 22, 2023**

Good morning and thank you to Chairperson Krishnan and other members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify. My name is David Saltonstall, and I am the Vice President for Government Relations, Policy and Community Affairs of the Central Park Conservancy.

A lot of people know that the Central Park Conservancy is the non-profit organization that takes care of Central Park. However, for nearly a decade, we have also devoted staff, resources, trainings, and equipment to caring for other NYC parks through our Five Borough Program. Since 2014, the Conservancy has helped to improve more than 40 parks in 34 Council Districts, including the four Historic Harlem Parks.

We do this work because we fervently believe that everyone, regardless of what zip code they call home, deserves access to safe, clean, open spaces.

Investing 1 percent of the City's budget into parks would be a game-changer, and an acknowledgement that our parks are not a luxury, but essential infrastructure that are vital to the physical and mental well-being of all New Yorkers.

Never was this clearer than during COVID, when parks became critical respites for cooped up New Yorkers eager to gather safely with friends, share a meal, or just breathe some fresh air. We need to acknowledge this new reality and take real steps to better maintain our parks.

More than 160 years ago, New York City leaders pioneered what was then a novel concept: a park dedicated to the ideal 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 the greenspace is not enough. You must invest in its ongoing care and maintenance. In the 1970s the Park was lost, in a derelict condition due to lack of resources, funding, and maintenance. That's why the Conservancy was formed, which due to the work of our staff over the past four decades, today Central Park generates more than \$1.5 billion in incremental tax revenues for the City of New York and provides a critical source of physical and mental well-being for 42 million visitors a year.

What this reveals is that investing in our parks is an investment in the City itself. This lesson should encourage our leaders to take a page from those early visionaries and invest in our parks, so that future generations of New Yorkers might someday look back and say that 2023 was the year when history was made. That was the year when New York City re-committed itself to parks by building a greener, healthier city.



**New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation
March 22, 2023**

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

My name is Sarah Charlop-Powers, and I am the Executive Director of the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you to Council Member Krishnan and the members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget for NYC Parks.

The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 2012 with the goal of increasing the capacity of NYC Parks and its partners to restore and manage the 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. Our natural forests and wetlands comprise one third of the city's park system, and are the only places where over 50% of New Yorkers go to experience nature. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we found that visitation to natural areas increased by 65%, highlighting the importance of these spaces for respite and recreation.

Today we support the call to dedicate 1% of the City budget for parks, and ask that the City Council and the Mayor commit full funding for the Play Fair budget platform. I specifically want to highlight the ask of \$3.5 million in expense funding in the Fiscal Year 2024 Parks budget to support the care of our city's natural areas. The \$2.5 million allocated to natural areas in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget was a critical investment in the continued care of our natural areas, supporting the maintenance of 1,200 acres in 57 parks, hosting 55 trainings for advanced volunteers, and planting 30,000 native trees and shrubs.

The allocation of \$3.5 million in Fiscal Year 2024 would support the retention of 44 seasonal staff lines, as well as the addition of five seasonal staff to support public access improvements and wetland resilience. \$3.5 million would also provide vitally-needed OTPS funding to support the purchase of native trees and for non-capital contracts.

We're proud to have co-created the Management Frameworks for Forests, Wetlands, and Trails with NYC Parks, which each set a long-term vision and detailed roadmap for the care of this critical public infrastructure. However, the city has failed to fully invest in these plans. Our increasing reliance on inconsistent and unassured levels of single-year funding is making it impossible for our colleagues at NYC Parks to effectively move these complex multi-year projects forward.

Unlike other features of our parks system, our natural areas can't afford to be subject to continually deferred maintenance. Natural forests make up 24% of New York City's parkland, and yet in Fiscal Year 2022, NYC Parks received only 0.0042% of the City budget to maintain them. For natural areas like our city's wetlands, deferred maintenance can mean these crucial assets disappear entirely. We are already losing six acres of wetlands in NYC each year.



In this era of climate change, investing in the proper care and maintenance of our natural areas is an investment in protecting New Yorkers. As we learned from Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Ida, the devastating impact of floods is being felt by our frontline coastal communities, and in many inland neighborhoods citywide.

We know that thriving forests and wetlands provide many benefits, from absorbing stormwater, removing particulate matter from the air that we breathe, providing habitat, and giving us the space to recreate and engage with nature. The NAC recently completed research that found that for every \$1 invested in caring for our natural areas each year, the city will see a return on investment from \$84 to \$120 annually. Using the 25-year, \$385 million funding model of the Forest Management Framework as an example, NYC would see an investment return of \$32 to \$46 billion. Simply put, investing in the care of our natural areas is a win for all New Yorkers.

Today, I stand with my trusted colleagues and friends in strong support of Play Fair, calling for the full reinstatement of funds that were cut from the agency's budget last year. It is imperative that next year's budget include \$3.5 million to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests, and begin critical improvements for our City's wetlands and trails network.

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





**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
FY24 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 22, 2023**

Good afternoon, 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 Krishnan and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation for the opportunity to comment.

New York City's parks and green spaces help to mitigate climate change, fight extreme urban heat, absorb stormwater, and provide clean air and habitats for native wildlife. Parks and open space have also [proven](#) to be essential places to connect with each other, as well as improve the physical and mental health of a community. According to New Yorkers for Parks' recently-released report, [1% for Parks Impact Report](#), New York City's parks and green spaces provide \$1.14 billion in annual reductions to health care costs, approximately \$681 million per year of environmental and health benefits from street trees, and attract over \$17 billion in annual tourism spending. Investing in green spaces is critical if we are to create sustainable, resilient, and thriving communities.

Despite these benefits, due to historic disinvestment and structural racism, such as residential redlining, our trees, parks, green spaces, and access to the City's waterfront are not equitably distributed. Access to parks and tree coverage is on average much lower in environmental justice neighborhoods that are already plagued by adverse health problems and high levels of pollution. Poorer neighborhoods and neighborhoods populated by people of color have [access to 21% and 33% less park space respectively](#). Parks serving primarily non-white populations are also [half the size of parks](#) that serve majority white populations and are five times more crowded. With the numerous environmental and public health benefits that parks provide, it is imperative the City equitably invest in the health and sustainability of parks, green spaces, green infrastructure, and coastal resiliency in low income and communities of color that have traditionally lacked access.

Currently, New York City lags behind in its investment in parks and recreational spaces. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) receives a significantly smaller share of the City budget than the agencies that oversee parks in other cities. [According to the Trust for Public Land](#), our City spends less than other major cities on its parks even though New York has [more parkland](#) to maintain. As of [FY 2021](#), San Francisco spends 1.6% of its municipal budget

on parks, Los Angeles spends 2.9%, Chicago 4.3%, and Minneapolis 5.3%. Moreover, New York City's parks budget has also [lagged](#) behind compared to other City agencies. [From 1980 to 2021](#), DPR has only had a 72% budget increase. By comparison, during that time period, the New York City Police Department budget grew 127%, the Department of Transportation budget grew 130%, and the Department of Sanitation budget grew 148%.

As co-founders of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, we stand with New Yorkers for Parks, DC37, and the rest of the Coalition to demand a City budget that gives parks the fair funding they deserve. While parks and green spaces make up 14% of the City's land, they receive less than 1% of the City's budget. Mayor Eric Adams, Speaker Adrienne Adams, and twenty other Council Members have [already committed to funding](#) 1% of the City's budget to parks, and our Coalition of advocates have been strong supporters to adequately fund maintenance, safety, and accessibility for our parks. Although DPR received its highest parks budget in NYC history at 0.6% of the City budget last year, it still fell short of the needed funding. This year, we are at a tipping point again with citywide cuts, and the Mayor's preliminary budget proposes further cuts to DPR that's close to \$50 million. Allocating 1% is a necessary and reasonable ask, especially considering other major cities consistently [commit between 2-5%](#) to their parks each year.

Therefore, the City must adequately fund the following:

- Restoration of hundreds of DPR staff positions, such as park workers, gardeners, urban park rangers, and parks enforcement patrol officers. As we experience warmer temperatures due to climate change, more people will use our City's parks during traditionally off-season days. Funding these positions will maintain clean and safe parks, as well as ensure everyone experiences the benefits of our City's parks.
- Protection, maintenance, expansion, and promotion of the New York City urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers in a way that is just and equitable, as emphasized by the Forest for All NYC Coalition. Planting more trees lowers temperatures, reduces carbon emissions, and improves public health by reducing heat-related illnesses.
- Invest in natural and nature-based solutions that protect residents from coastal and inland flooding. This includes green infrastructure projects, such as rain gardens, bioswales, water squares, green and blue roofs, daylighting rivers, and permeable pavements to help absorb stormwater, purify the air, and mitigate the urban heat island effect. DPR must continue working with DEP to provide access to quality green infrastructure, especially in NYCHA campuses.
- Improvement of the efficiency of the DPR's capital process by implementing a clearly defined process and deadlines for design, more expedient and transparent decision making on individual projects, standardized project management tools, and increased accountability for completing projects on time and on budget.

Lastly, the City must seize a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leverage funding from [New York State's Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act](#), which requires that disadvantaged communities receive at least 35-40% of the total statewide spending.

We stand with the Play Fair Coalition and the Forest For All Coalition in calling for increasing funding and the equitable allocation of our parks, trees, and green spaces. NYLCV looks forward to working with the City Council, Adams Administration, and fellow advocates to ensure our City's parks get the funding they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

NYBG

NYBG Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations

Given by Angel Hernandez, NYBG Director of Government Relations

March 22, 2023

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

I want to thank you for allowing me this morning to talk about our ongoing relationship with one of our major partners in the Bronx community, and partner to many cultural institutions throughout the city – the Department of Parks and Recreation. For almost 130 years the New York Botanical Garden and the NYC Parks Department have enjoyed a historic relationship, since the Garden occupies a major portion of Bronx Park. Other Bronx CIGs, such as The Bronx County Historical Society and the Wildlife Conservation Society, or the Bronx Zoo, share similar historic relationships.

Today, I want to emphasize on the amount of work NYBG and the Parks Department have accomplished over the years. As neighboring partners, we invested in our collective efforts to support workforce development among the city's hardworking cultural workers. Through the Parks Opportunity Program, for example, the Department of Parks and Recreation and NYBG sponsored educational programming that covered a variety of subject areas, including Introduction to Plant Science, Horticulture Techniques, Perennial Plant Management, and Grounds Management. Participants built skills both inside and outside of the classroom, through 18 modules spanning three months and 108 total credit hours. The Garden had developed a curriculum with the

understanding of botany, maintenance of trees, turf, best pruning practices, and prepare participants for living wage careers in the plant care and horticultural fields. Graduating participants were equipped with a working knowledge of how to best promote healthy tree life, a skill needed to maintain the City's investment major initiatives, like Million Trees NYC.

A more recent partnership NYBG and the Parks Department have embarked on is the highly anticipated renovation and upgrade of the Bronx Park East ADA ramp that leads visitors to the Garden's East Gate. This particular entrance is the institutions least known, but highly important because it is a primary point of access for East Bronx residents. With capital funding allocated by the city council a couple of years ago, the Parks Department will replace the current access ramp with one that would meet current ADA requirements, and thus grant all New Yorkers access to green space and recreation to both institutions. The process of creating equitable access to green space for Bronx residents is crucial and always becomes a priority in this special partnership.

While the ADA ramp at Bronx Park East is a capital funded project that exemplifies NYBG and Parks Department historic on-going partnership, our efforts to maintain workforce development programs together through expense funding will be sullied if our unified request to restore previous fiscal year funding is not heard. This is why NYBG, along with our partners in the cultural community respectfully requests that the \$40M added at Adoption in FY23 be restored and baselined. We request an additional \$10M, to be split evenly between the CIG and our program group partners, to help create more stability and equity within the sector. Finally, we ask for a full restoration of all cultural Council initiatives.

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

Sincerely,

Angel Hernandez
Director of Government Relations
The New York Botanical Garden
ahernandez@nybg.org



Founders

Vernice Miller-Travis
Peggy M. Shepard
Chuck Sutton

Board of Directors

Chair
Jeff Jones

Secretary

Nancy E. Anderson, Ph.D.

Treasurer

Ken P. Mak

Members

Lakeisha M. Aquino
Peter Bokor
Dennis Derryck, Ph.D.
David Evans, Ph.D.
Abiola Fasehun, Esq.
Eric A Goldstein, Esq.
Neetin Gulati
Christy Loper
Sarangi Iyengar
Marielle Villar Martiney
Crystal Romeo Upperman
Vernice Miller-Travis
Phillip Morrow
Dart Westphal

Executive Director

Peggy M. Shepard

Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice

To the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation

Regarding The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Committee Chair Shekar Krishnan and Committee on Parks and Recreation:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need to increase the amount of funding to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks).

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We recognize and fight to remedy the negative cumulative impacts of unjust policies that have plagued communities of color for decades.

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. To counteract this, investments must be made equitably in the planning, maintaining, and building out of our parks, open space, and coastal resiliency.

WE ACT is asking the City Council to hold this administration accountable to promises made to New Yorkers and invest at least 1% of the City's operating budget in parks: Currently, [parks only receive 0.5% of the City budget, despite making up 14% of all City land](#). As advocated by the [Play Fair Coalition](#), increasing the City's parks budget would help invest in maintenance and operations, restore worker and ranger employment, and increase access to forests, wetlands, and trails to preserve our parks and ensure they last for generations.

Mayor Adams earned support from voters by publicly committing to fund the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) at 1% of the city budget. Stating that "an equitable parks system starts with funding for the agency and accessibility for New Yorkers," he recognized



the urgent need to reverse decades of underinvestment in our city's parks system.

However, he has failed to deliver on that promise and has proposed reducing the NYC Parks budget, which directly translates to a net reduction in agency staff working on our parks and cuts to critical operations. New Yorkers and our parks and open spaces deserve more.

In addition the City should commit to implementing the [Wetlands Management Framework](#), with the following investments:

- 40 permanent staff
- \$550,000 expense funding per year
- 10-year capital funding: \$22 million per year

Parks and green spaces are some of New York City's most valuable environmental assets. Trees, grass, and vegetation combat the [urban heat island effect](#), which is caused by structures such as buildings, roads, and other hard infrastructure in urban areas that trap heat in warm months, creating "islands" of higher temperatures compared with outlying areas. Urban heat islands also intensify extreme heat waves, harming more people in cities than any other weather-related events. Furthermore, [studies show](#) formerly redlined neighborhoods are today an average of five degrees hotter in the summer than non-redlined areas due to less tree coverage and access to parks.

Trees and plants [lower surface and air temperatures](#) by providing shade and through evapotranspiration. Trees in cities also [prevent approximately 1,200 heat-related deaths](#) and countless heat-related illnesses each year. They also clean our air and act as a carbon sink, fighting climate change and filtering out harmful pollutants by [removing an estimated 711,000 metric tons of air pollution annually and absorbing more than 90 million metric tons of carbon](#).

Additionally, as hurricanes, severe rainfall, and inland and coastal flooding become more extreme and frequent due to climate change, our parks, open spaces, and wetlands have a vital role to play in stormwater absorption. By capturing stormwater, [parks can reduce runoff by 90% and filter out as much as 95% of major pollutants from water](#). Even beyond immediate physical health benefits, access to parks and green spaces benefits our mental state, reduces stress, and has even shown to improve blood pressure.



This is why the City should invest in building out our urban forests with the goal of achieving 30% canopy cover by 2035 as outlined in the [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#): Planting more trees lowers temperatures, reduces carbon emissions by storing carbon and removing pollutants from the atmosphere, and improves public health by reducing heat-related illnesses. As emphasized by the [Forest for All NYC Coalition](#), the City must protect, maintain, expand, and promote the New York City urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers in a way that is just and equitable. The Agenda states, “More socially and heat-vulnerable communities [like East Harlem and the South Bronx] tend to have lower tree canopy cover [...] Higher income communities tended to have more canopy, and areas with higher poverty rates tended to have less” (pg. 80). This must be rectified by building out the urban forest starting in most underserved communities.

We need improved access to parks and greenspaces, in particular in low income neighborhoods and communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by extreme heat and air pollution. Seventeen percent of New Yorkers still live further than walking distance from a park, meaning that we need more parks in communities that historically lack open spaces and the local environmental benefits of a nearby park.

Lonnie J. Portis

Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10031

| lonnie@weact.org

Thursday, March 23, 2023



Re: Increase funding to NYC Public Parks.

Dear NYC City Council -

I am Angela Miskis, Executive Director, and founder of Abuela Neighborhood Maintenance. My community group has been working in Hollis, Queens, since 2020 and are proud stewards of our local NYC public park properties (Hollis Playground, Gladys Warren Triangle, and the Hollis Veteran Square.)

I write to you today to increase funding for New York City parks and make it at least one percent of the city budget. With the help of over 50 volunteers, we have planted over 2,000 flower bulbs and held three free art workshops in Hollis Park properties. I have witnessed the importance of parks in my neighborhood to turn strangers into neighbors and neighbors into friends.

Hollis only has a few public spaces where people can connect to healthy and enriching activities. Our local playground is in front of a smoke shop, a liquor store, and unhealthy fast-food joints. The playground is genuinely a haven amidst a sea of negative influences. Our local park is an asset that must be protected and maintained if we want to see our community thrive.

We do our part in helping our community come together and care for our public spaces. But without your support to help keep the overall infrastructure of the park running and ensure its safety and maintenance, any work we do will not outweigh run-down or broken facilities.

Parks help promote social cohesion and community pride. A lovely green area can support economic development, attracting new homeowners and long-term residents to stay and invest in the neighborhood, boosting property values, and creating hubs for local businesses to prosper.

Since its renovation in 2014, the Hollis Playground in Queens has become a gathering place for residents of all ages, offering basketball courts, a playground, and a space for public activities like free art and wellness classes. The park is our focal point for community events and has helped to create a sense of belonging and pride in the neighborhood.

Again, please increase funding for New York City parks and make it at least 1 percent of the city budget. Investing in parks will benefit our residents' health and well-being and help build resilient communities that can flourish together for generations.

Sincerely,

Angela Miskis



Good day, council members and staff. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify today.

I am Rosemary Vietor, trustee of the Bowne House Historical Society, Flushing, Queens. First, I would like to endorse the testimony of the HHT House Consortium speaking today. Bowne House is a member of this group. Sharing our common problems has underscored the fact that we have all suffered from the same issues - neglect of routine maintenance and failure to implement needed capital projects.

I will give an example, citing our current situation at the Bowne House. We have two long standing capital projects. The one most urgent today is a prime example of how a long awaited project becomes a lost opportunity for the city. This is the Parsons Education Center.

First envisioned in 2006, by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, funded by BP Marshall and Council Member John Liu, the building would have provided needed office space, an ADA restroom, and much needed exhibit and meeting space. We had retained an architect who developed plans which were reviewed and approved by Landmarks. This project would be overseen by NYC Department of Design and Construction (NYC DDC).

We are still waiting. In the interim, cost estimates have mushroomed and the last figure we received from HHT exceeded \$6mill.

The museum's importance as a major institution has increased, with our recent acceptance by the National Park Service as a member of their Underground Railroad consortium. We are the only organization in Queens to receive this recognition.

In order to tell this new abolition story and implement new educational programs and exhibits, we need the Parsons Education Center. These programs will bring a new, diverse audience to Queens, and raise the borough's profile as a tourist destination. It is imperative that we move forward now.

Fortuitously, additional funding for this project specifically has been made available by the Kaufman Studios; this project is now fully funded.

Please help us make Borough President Marshall's dream a reality. She would have been thrilled to know that Queens' own Underground Railroad story would be told at the Bowne House.

Thank you for your time today.



March 22, 2023

I'm Brian Hedden, the Advocacy and Greenway Projects Coordinator for Brooklyn Greenway Initiative. BGI has been an advocate for a complete Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway, which now stands at 21 miles built out of 26 total. For the last two years, BGI has been the coordinating organization of the NYC Greenways Coalition, which has campaigned for a fully-built, fully-connected, and truly five-borough greenway system.

The City has made considerable strides in the past two years to expand the greenway system to parts of New York that have been left out of previous expansion efforts. With that said, the time has come for the City to make strides towards another critical undertaking, which is the proper upkeep of the existing system.

Earlier this month, BGI and 19 other groups wrote to Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi to raise awareness of several issues impacting the day-to-day management and the investment in greenways citywide. Some of the issues we raised are directly related to the chronic underfunding of the Parks Department over the past several decades. This is why we are here today to speak in favor of the Play Fair 1% platform for its impact on greenways across New York City.

I have included a copy of that letter for the Council's reference.

Greenways blend the characteristics of neighborhood-level open spaces with city-wide active transportation networks. Individual components are managed by several different agencies, and the differences in resources given to those agencies is stark.

As an example, a number of older Parks Department greenways feature walking and riding surfaces that have not been resurfaced in decades, largely owing to a lack of a dedicated budget for surface upkeep - funding needs are secured as ad-hoc allocations, years after greenways have fallen into disrepair.

Winter maintenance is a second example, where Parks-managed greenways are significantly underresourced relative to greenways

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
c/o Newlab
19 Morris Ave. – Bldg. 128
Brooklyn, NY 11205
718.522.0193

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

managed by DOT and Sanitation, even as it is becoming increasingly understood that open spaces are year-round infrastructure.

The consequences of this model is clearly apparent *specifically on greenways*, as users can move from Parks to non-Parks segments within minutes, but of course, this has the same consequences on non-greenway Parks projects as well.

Like other challenges facing the maintenance of our parks infrastructure, much of the needed relief begins with the budget and adequate funding for maintaining our open spaces.

Thank you,

Brian Hedden | Advocacy & Greenway Projects Coordinator

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Andrew Simons, Chair
Amy E. Turner, Vice-Chair
Kate Collignon, Secretary
Ted Weissberg, Treasurer

Terri Carta
Scott Demel
David Dobkin
Deborah Flynn
Paul Gertner
Gordon Hill
Richard Miller
Sumner Pingree
Robert Pirani
Eric J. Pitt
Kati Solomon

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
c/o NewLab
19 Morris Avenue, Bldg 128
Brooklyn, NY 11205
718.522.0193

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

March 14, 2023

Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi
The City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Improving management and upgrades as the city expands its Greenway system

Dear Deputy Mayor Joshi,

Thank you for addressing the inaugural NYC Greenway Summit last spring. We appreciate the Adams Administration's commitment of new funding to greenway upgrades and new projects, for pursuing federal funding for a future set of new greenway corridors, for supporting legislation requiring a regularly updated city greenway plan, and for working apace on projects like the East Midtown Greenway.

We write to raise the following policy issues as a follow up to this past year's progress on greenways. We anticipate that these problems, if not addressed, will become greater in scale as the city expands its greenway network:

1. Surface maintenance of NYC Parks greenways

We were encouraged by remarks by administration leaders at the summit that maintenance of existing greenways would be as strong a priority as building new segments. Nonetheless, in our experience of greenways across NYC, it seems that there are structural problems with NYC Parks that inhibit effective maintenance of the city's existing greenways.

Two critical challenges are the lack of a routine repair capability within NYC Parks, and the funding streams for repair and reconstruction that prioritize or deprioritize maintenance on certain segments of the greenway system based on Council district.

We understand that major reconstruction work can entail specific contracts and procurement, but Parks also appears to lack basic in-house or a where/when-type contract to do basic patching or resurfacing of hard surfaces to keep routine maintenance needs from turning into major reconstruction needs in the first place.

Greenways blend the characteristics of neighborhood-level open spaces with borough- and city-wide active transportation networks. Surface maintenance repairs are funded like the former at the expense of the latter, and surface quality varies on different greenways - and sometimes the same greenway - depending on the interests of the officials of the districts they exist in.

The “current” project to rebuild the surface on the Ocean Parkway Greenway demonstrates both of these points:

- Most of the five-mile greenway is in below-average to poor condition, but repairs have been funded in only one section of one of the four Council districts in which it lies;
- Initiation of the project has taken so long that the Councilmember that funded it has been term-limited out of office; and
- Since routine repairs are not being performed, the deterioration is noticeably worse with each passing year.

On rides just this past year, we’ve seen stretches of asphalt paths in deteriorating condition on:

- Pelham Parkway (the worst of this list)
- Belt Parkway east of Pennsylvania Avenue
- Flatbush Avenue south of Avenue V
- Several segments of eastern Queens greenways between Kissena Corridor Park and the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway

2. Greenery for NYC DOT-built greenways

DOT does not appear to have a strong capacity to maintain plantings along the greenways it builds, such as by the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway along the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Brooklyn Army Terminal. This means that the civic sector has to find and win the ongoing cooperation of “maintenance partners” to create actual greenways as opposed to simple asphalt bike paths. This model is not very sustainable now and will likely see increasing challenges as the greenway network expands.

3. Debris removal and winter maintenance on NYC Parks and NYC DOT greenways

There are inconsistent results for basic sweeping and snow/ice removal on greenways. Again, this challenge is faced by greenway users citywide, though we’ll highlight the greenway along Shore Parkway as an example of all three:

- Trash discarded by vehicles on the Parkway and other sources accumulates along the greenway
- Tire-piercing shells deposited by birds accumulate on the asphalt surface for months at a time
- Days typically pass in normal winters before any snow plow passes through after a weather event, and even in a winter with as little snow as this one, the late December cold-snap and frozen spray from ocean waves rendered the Bath Beach section impassable for days

Suggestion for addressing surface and greenery upkeep challenges

Currently, day-to-day upkeep is a reflection of the mandate of the agency that manages any given section of the greenway system. However, as we previously noted, greenways blend characteristics of neighborhood spaces and transportation networks.

We leave it to the administration to decide whether these agency capability and capacity issues can be resolved within changes to NYC Parks and DOT budgeting/contracting, by providing some level of DOT hardscape maintenance capacity to Parks each year, and conversely, Parks maintenance work on green elements along DOT projects, or whether some other approach is needed.

We are essentially suggesting assignment of agency roles to greenways on less of a territorial basis and more according to function:

- DOT for asphalt and concrete surfaces (DOT already operates major park roadways)
- Parks for greenery/plant stewardship (Parks today tends “Greenstreets” green spaces and street trees within DOT rights of way)
- Sanitation for snow removal/de-icing and basic sweeping

4. Operating hours for greenways

As we noted above, greenways blend characteristics of neighborhood spaces with a transportation system. Users of the transportation aspect tend to expect uniform rules across the city - the roads are open 24 hours a day, as are NYC DOT-managed greenways. However, some NYC Parks-managed greenways are not open 24/7 - some close as early as 6:30pm. We recommend all-hours access to greenways and park drives, even if access to the surrounding park closes at 1am or earlier.

5. Ongoing upgrade of legacy greenways

We couldn't be more excited about and supportive of the federal RAISE grant and the prospect of developing detailed plans for new greenway segments and rights-of-way. At the same time, we urge the city going forward to also develop additional efforts along the lines of the 2021-2022 *Destination: Greenways* effort, which planned major upgrades for specific legacy greenway segments in eastern Queens and southwest Brooklyn. As above, this is needed across the older greenway system, not only to repair surfaces but also in many places where rights-of-way are inadequate for shared bike and pedestrian use, greenways feature awkward or dangerous highway crossings and linkages between existing greenways or to protected bike lanes are missing or tenuous.

6. Advance coordination for greenway construction/upgrade closures

We are very appreciative of greenway maintenance and upgrade work, but urge a much stronger coordination effort for maintaining safe cycling and recreational running/walking capacity when major efforts require greenway closure. Continuity of service — safe cycling and walking paths — during construction will ensure these needed maintenance interruptions do not undermine NYC goals for biking as a viable transportation method as well as maintaining access for New Yorkers less able to cycle in streets with cars. The recent

closure of the West Side greenway north of the George Washington Bridge and the prospect of a future extended closure of Riverside Park's Cherry Walk remain major concerns for our coalition. We are also concerned about pending work on Shore Parkway and the absence of any process for identifying alternate routes to date. Greenway closures are increasing in frequency. Portions of the East Side esplanade in the 70s and 100s are shut today, and of course East River Park has been removed from the greenway network at present. In the latter case, the replacement bike lanes on Avenue C stretch the definition of "protected" significantly.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. We're encouraged that DOT, NYC Parks and EDC are collaborating on the RAISE grant plans and will jointly produce the new city greenway plan. Addressing the issues and potential reforms we identify in this letter should be a natural development as the city takes steps toward an integrated greenway network. We look forward to working with you to realize the potential of a citywide greenway system.

Sincerely,

Hunter Armstrong
Executive Director
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative

Jean Kim
Executive Director
Friends of the East River Esplanade

Jon Orcutt
Advocacy Director
Bike New York

Cliff Stanton
Chair
Friends of the Hudson River Greenway in
The Bronx

John Tomac
Co-Founder
Bike South Brooklyn

Chauncy Young
Coordinator
Harlem River Working Group

Robert Fanuzzi
President
Bronx Council for Environmental Quality

Stanley O'Connor
Administrator
Hudson River Greenway Facebook Group

Edmundo Martinez
Chair
Bronx River Greenway Team

Kevin Daloia
Administrator
Hutchinson River Greenway Group

Sharon Pope-Marshall
Executive Director
CIVITAS

Daniel Abram
Project Manager: Research & Policy
New Yorkers for Parks

Allison Burson
National Greenway Director
East Coast Greenway Alliance

Carl Mahaney
Director of StreetopiaUWS
Open Plans

John Kelly
Co-founder
Eastern Queens Greenway

Paul Steely White
Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York

Tim Gilman-Sevcik
Executive Director
RETI Center

Pamela Cress
President
Shorewalkers

Eric McClure
Executive Director
StreetsPAC

Elizabeth Adams
Senior Director for Advocacy & Organizing
Transportation Alternatives

Carter Strickland
VP Mid-Atlantic and New York Director
Trust for Public Land



Testimony Submitted by
Iyeshima Harris-Ouedraogo, Policy Manager, Equity Advocates
For the Committee on Parks and Recreation Budget Hearing on the FY24 NYC Budget

March 22, 2023

My name is **Iyeshima Harris-Ouedraogo, Policy Manager, Equity Advocates**. Thank you to Councilmember Carr for holding today's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Equity Advocates builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change. We partner with New York-based organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty, providing them with the tools they need to be more civically engaged—including policy education, advocacy training and coalition leadership, such as convening the NY Food Policy Alliance since March 2020.

[NYC Food Policy Alliance](#) is a multi-sector group of 75+ food system stakeholders from across New York, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that not only respond to our current economic and hunger crises, but also address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system. Collectively, we approach this work through an anti-racism lens to ensure communities of color and other systemically under-resourced communities benefit from public policies and funding.

Our city has not fully recovered from the economic, social or public health impacts of the pandemic. Many families are still struggling to make ends meet and our partners are seeing an unprecedented demand for emergency food assistance. Since May of 2020, the unemployment rate in New York City has hovered around twice the national average at around 5.6%. The most recent United States Department of Labor data shows that inflation rose to a record 9.1% in June 2022, the largest gain in nearly four decades, reflecting increased food, shelter, and fuel costs nationwide. In that same time period, 64% of respondents had difficulty paying for usual household expenses¹. With a national economic recession looming, we are concerned that the poverty rates, inequality and need for food assistance we are already seeing across the city will worsen.

Access to healthy, culturally appropriate food is a continuous issue that New Yorkers face and yet the Mayor is proposing flat funding across the board for critical food assistance programs which will place an increased demand for food on pantries, farmers and supermarkets. We are very concerned with recent reporting that HRA is processing just [46.3% of applications for SNAP benefits](#) and we know agencies are already understaffed due to job vacancies. Funding cuts to HRA and other agencies across the board will only worsen this situation and urge the Administration to reconsider

¹ United States Census Bureau Household Pulse Data Survey results from September 2022.

its proposed cuts to HRA and to more seriously address the vacancy rate at the agency, which is greatly contributing to the slow processing of SNAP applications. We also urge the Administration to ensure any cuts in headcount vacancy for HRA do not impact benefits enrollment and ensure frontline positions are not eliminated.

In our policy recommendations below, we advocate for solutions that will assist with alleviating the burden that is placed on the food systems stakeholders. We support streamlining food assistance applications, investing in community based food businesses as well as urban agriculture and gardening programs, and increasing investment in healthy school food and nutrition education.

We stand in support of the nearly [80 organizations calling for a reduction](#) in the scope and budget of the NYPD. Instead we demand an equitable budget that restores and increases investments in human and social services, education, housing, community food programs. We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the FY24 New York City Budget:

Utilizing The Food System As The Catalyst To Build Wealth In Communities

- **\$4.9 Million for Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI).** We support the [NYC Network of Worker Cooperative](#) in its call for increased funding from \$3.7M to \$4.9M in FY24. This local discretionary initiative funds 15 worker cooperative support organizations that coordinate education and training resources as well as provide technical, legal, and financial assistance for the start-up of new worker cooperative small businesses, and provide assistance to existing cooperatives. We urge that this increase in allocation help put worker cooperative support organizations that prioritize food businesses—such as RiseBoro Community Partnerships' [Worker Coop Development Program](#)—on the path to partnership within WCBDI. This focus on cooperative businesses within the food system will foster local food growers, aggregators, transporters, packagers, cooks, sellers and educators.
- **Create a new Food Justice Fund to allocate \$5 Million in Revolving Loans** that can support worker cooperatives, Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) and other employee-ownership models within the food system. There is a need to fund small and working size ESOPS in zip codes that reflect a high BIPOC demographic. Providing access to capital for employee ownership models in the food systems is a key strategy to build community ownership within the local food system, especially in BIPOC communities that have historically had low rates of business establishment by neighborhood residents. In addition, we recommend exploring ways to de-risk the loan, waive personal guaranties and other requirements that often prevent cooperatives from accessing conventional financing.

- **Partner with and support community food hub models** like Universe City and GrowNYC, and community-owned food retail such as Central Brooklyn Food Coop, to leverage existing and growing community-owned food, health, farming and retail infrastructures. We urge the City to fund these community-led groups to create food security plans and reduce barriers that prevent these types of projects from participating in city procurement contracts. In addition, we ask for the City to work with food hub CBOs to create a food security plan that can provide community wide food access and to establish pathways in the development of community food hubs..
- **Fully Fund the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at \$3 million.** We prioritize the notion that moving public land with insecure tenure to trust land will strengthen land security and sovereignty and prioritize access to lands for people who have deep and historic community connections, especially BIPOC farmers, growers and community gardens. Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT discretionary funding initiative has helped catalyze CLT organizing, education, training and technical assistance. We support the [NYC Community Land Initiative \(NYCCLI\)](#) in its call for full funding to support 20 organizations working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and advance a just recovery in Black and brown NYC communities. Public land must be used for public good, and be reserved for CLTs that provide for meaningful community control. It is also critical to raise awareness that CLTs can be utilized for commercial urban agriculture. We believe that this embodies the ability to balance local land control and long-term, stewarded development that addresses changing community needs. Supporting both Community-owned businesses and Community-controlled land together is part of an effort to democratize economic development in NYC's food system.
 - We also support the passage of the [Community Land Act](#), an urgently-needed set of bills that give community land trusts (CLTs) and other nonprofits tools to develop and preserve permanently-affordable housing, community and commercial space, and other neighborhood assets.

Urban Agriculture & Youth Development

- **Allocate funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture** housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to maintain appropriate levels of staffing and increase transparency about Office goals and activities among the community of urban agriculture practitioners. Use funding to create a position dedicated to ongoing, intentional community engagement to inform the urban agriculture advisory's development of a set of recommendations as outlined in Local Law 123.

- As it is within the Office's duty and power to make recommendations to the "heads of relevant agencies with respect to protecting and expanding urban agriculture," we urge the Office to partner with the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) to ensure that interested youth can meaningfully participate at urban agriculture sites through both Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Work Learn Grow (WLG). The Office of Urban Agriculture can play a leadership role in managing the placement of youth participants at community gardens with the collaboration of local CBOs, expanding participation of local compost operations as worksites, aligning the program timelines to allow for youth participants to be matched with an urban agriculture worksite year-round through both programs.
- **Increase funding to train the next generation of farmers and strengthen viable urban agriculture career pathways for youth** by expanding the DOE's Career and Technical Education program to strengthen its Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and investing in local training programs with a commitment to social justice such Farm School NYC.
- **Establish a grant program** managed by the NYC Urban Agriculture Office targeted to residents in low income communities to invest in and provide technical assistance to urban agricultural startups and their acquisition of equipment, land and indoor growing space as well as staff.
- **Invest in GreenThumb at \$4.8 Million** to support the hiring of additional Community Engagement Coordinators, creating a permanent full-time Youth Engagement Coordinator position for the current seasonal position, and providing compensation for both youth and community gardeners that take leadership roles within GreenThumb Youth Leadership Council program, which is currently unpaid.
 - Direct the Parks Department to reduce administrative barriers to providing direct stipends from the City to community gardeners and youth to ensure Greenthumb can compensate community gardeners to teach workshops and train youth to run these programs, making existing gardening programming sustainable.
- **Increase opportunities for young people with \$206.5 million in baseline funding for Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and \$20 million in baseline funding for Work Learn Grow (WLG),** the complementary school-year youth workforce program. Mayor Adams has expressed his commitment to investing in the future of urban agriculture, yet current DYCD regulations create a barrier for urban agriculture worksites that would provide meaningful experiences for young people. We urge the DYCD to commit to a reassessment of these programs to ensure successful partnerships with food systems and urban agriculture worksites by:
 - Increasing baseline funding for employer placements and supporting CBOs that are working with DYCD.
 - Advocating for the reallocation of funding for the program to be directed to out of school programs.
 - Ensuring youth interns are placed at their selected work site based on their interests.

- **Maintain \$7 million in funding for NYC Composting programs.** We applaud Mayor Adams for [announcing a roadmap](#) to create the first citywide curbside composting program ever by the end of 2024. These programs are vital to the community because they create local sustainable jobs, reduce landfill waste, gardeners and residents having access to resources in their communities, are eco-friendly and sustainable, and promote community involvement. We want to uplift the support for:
 - Incorporating the NYCHA and public housing in the compost programs initiative to encourage community engagement and divert food waste from landfills.
 - Developing more transparency for accessing foodscap bins so that community members can register for food scraps collect services.
 - Partnering with and increasing funding for local foodscrap hauling CBOs to collect foodscrap from households who are interested in the initiative. Residence should also be provided with the assurance that they can drop off their food waste at local drop off locations in their neighborhoods.
 - We urge the city to prioritize food waste reduction efforts to alleviate the waste management burden on city agencies and CBOs.

Emergency Food & Benefits Access

- **Increase funding to a total of \$59 Million for the Community Food Connection (CFC), formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).** The Mayor's preliminary budget proposes baseline funding of \$23.8M plus an additional \$30 million for a total program budget of ~\$52 million. We urge that \$30 million that was allocated for FY23 and FY24 to be baselined as well as a moderate increase for a total of \$59 Million to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need, including the continuing influx of asylum seekers and other migrants seeking refuge in New York City.
- **Invest \$38.4 Million of new funding to combat hunger among older adults for home delivered meals programs and congregate meals at older adult centers.**
 - \$6.7M for inflation cost for raw foods, gas and other items for home-delivered meals
 - \$27.1M for inflation cost for raw food and other items for congregate meals at older adult centers
 - \$567k to address the DFTA's home-delivered meal waitlist
 - \$4M to support weekend and holiday home-delivered meals not provided through DFTA, especially as they have not seen an increase in years.
- **Direct the HRA to ensure that any cuts in headcount vacancy do not impact benefits enrollment and frontline positions are not eliminated,** increase wages to help fill critical vacancies and improve internal systems to be more efficient.
- **Increase HRA's budget baseline to ensure it can engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications.** We urge the City to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

Additional administrative funding should support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications.

- **Evaluate the newly relaunched Grocery to Go Program.** This program emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as food assistance for homebound New Yorkers and has since been redesigned to provide food insecure New Yorkers who also have hypertension and/or diabetes with monthly credit to purchase groceries through an online marketplace of local grocery stores. Most participants that were originally participating in the Get Food program will not meet the new requirements for the Groceries to Go Program due to their physical health status.
 - Given the short timeframe in which the allocated funds will need to be spent (by June 2023) and the highly specific eligibility requirements, we are concerned that the DOHMH may not be able to fully enroll 5,000 New Yorkers in time to spend down all of the available funds. To make the program more impactful and ensure unspent credits do not go to waste we strongly recommend: 1) the monthly credits allotted to each participating household are increased to ensure that funds are reaching the individuals that the program is intended to serve, 2) expand the list for diet related conditions to widen the scale of the program, and 3) allow for the participation of young adults who meet the other eligibility criteria.
 - Finally, we encourage the program to allow enrollees to have the freedom to use the credits on food items of their choosing that reflect need, cultural preference, dietary or medical requirements and personal taste. We strongly encourage the DOHMH not to apply additional limitations to eligible foods and to maintain that Grocery to Go credits can purchase SNAP approved items.

The NYC Food Policy Alliance stands in full support of the NYC Food Ed Coalition's call for quality food and nutrition education for all NYC Students, [including its FY24 City Budget priorities](#):

- **\$37 million to provide flexible food & nutrition education funding for all NYC schools.**
- **\$3.5 million to increase compensation and head count at the DOE's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).**
- **Renew \$500,000 in City Council discretionary funding for the Food Ed Hub based within the Tisch Food Center.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Iyeshima Harris- Ouedraogo

Policy Manager at Equity Advocates

iyeshima@nyequityadvocates.org

CITY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARING FOR PARKS, 3/22/2023

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

As a nonprofit 501c3 organization, we assist in the beautification, preservation and care of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, the NYC park historically known as Gateway to the United Nations and a designated site for marches, protests and cultural rallies (capacity 8000). The Plaza provides the largest open space in Midtown East Manhattan in a densely populated area underserved by parkland. It also boasts the largest public garden and urban forest in the UN-Turtle Bay neighborhood, providing a green oasis of sanctuary while cleansing the air of pollutants amid high-congestion traffic.

Since the park's reconstruction was completed in 1999, our organization has managed to keep this park clean and green. But as service costs escalate and infrastructure ages, we face challenges beyond our capacity. I offer this testimony to sound the alarm: city government MUST do its fair share for the public/private partnership to succeed. Only by Playing Fair and adequately funding ALL parks, can the inequities which exist across the Boroughs be just and balanced. Only when DPR is adequately funded can public space thrive, and with it, the health and well being of our communities.

Parks are key to the city's recovery and as such, must receive adequate funding, starting with a modest 1 percent of the city's annual budget.

What message does the City of New York send to visitors and residents when park infrastructure across the boroughs is crumbling from lack of routine maintenance.

Hammarskjold Plaza's six fountains have been inoperative for three years due to escalating plumbing and electrical issues. The fountain basins are used as a latrine and attract homeless encampments. Clogged waste lines spill into the Plaza and flood adjacent buildings. The faulty electrical system with above-ground wires, strung like spaghetti, violates safety codes. The elegant entrance dome, columns and latticed pergolas are marred by rust. Granite slabs are slipping off the seating wall due to lack of mortar. The park's infrastructure is slated for a capital renovation, stalled in Procurement for 4 years after bids came in at double the estimated cost. We field a litany of complaints in the face of our own fundraising efforts to fill the gap in city services.

We contract the Doe Fund to bag the garbage twice daily but can no longer afford pan-and-boom service. Our Street Fair income and city council grants once covered

the cost of supplemental custodial services, but with the consolidation of street fairs, our share of proceeds continues to shrink.

The 30% restriction on subcontracted labor for city council grants presents yet another obstacle since labor, not supplies, is the missing, essential component.

One busy lunch hour or protest will fill the trash bins to overflowing. Leftover food littering the seating wall and flower beds attract vermin. All NYC parks grapple with cleanliness.

Every year, I read about the city's acquisition of more parkland and new construction, yet DPR's budget for Maintenance and Operations remains hopelessly inadequate.

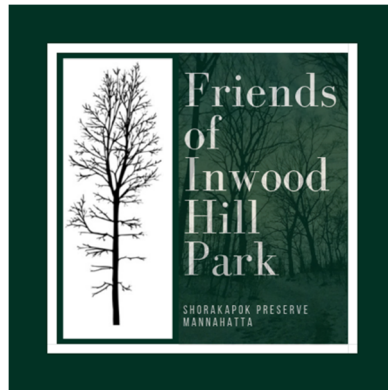
The concentration of homeless shelters in midtown impact the Plaza's safety, health, hygiene and cleanliness. Substance abuse is evidenced by discarded syringes, liquor bottles, indecent exposure and rowdy behavior. We need security cameras in the garden and PEP officers to enforce rules and regulations. We need a full-time park custodian in the high season. Then Friends could focus on providing public programs and the volunteer work that we are best equipped to do.

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

New York City parks offer extraordinary environmental assets, from wetlands and beaches to waterfront esplanades and charming community gardens. Public space is the great leveler, bringing communities together. Vote to fund NYC Parks & Recreation with a minimum of 1 percent of the annual budget so that all city parks can thrive.

END

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



I'm writing in support of allocating 1% of the city budget to fund the NYC Parks Department, as the Mayor promised during his campaign. It's critically important for our city's parks to receive this fund to adequately maintain them and also ensure their viability for future generations.

As the director of the Friends of Inwood Hill Park, I've volunteered the last 8 years in service of stewarding Manhattan's Inwood Hill Park. Before that, I volunteered for several years with other groups working in the park. During this time, I've come to understand the deep historical, cultural, and ecological importance of the park. Inwood Hill Park, as it is known today, was a site of the Lenape, the first people to inhabit this land. The forest, Manhattan's only old growth forest, still looks much as it did back when the Lenape were first here. In an effort to preserve this history, the forest was designated "The Shorakapok Preserve," one of NYC's "Forever Wild" natural areas. This was an important step in protecting this area. However, this area is under intense pressure from climate change, increased usage, and non-native plant life. With this pressure, comes the need for more work to maintain and support the resiliency of the forest. Currently, one staff member is assigned to the 136-acre Shorakapok Preserve, while also serving in other area parks. The need is far greater than one person. So, the Parks Department hosts events to fill the need. Despite this effort, there are still many areas in need of amelioration in the park. Our group has undertaken some of this work along with a number of other groups and individuals. These efforts are ad hoc, but a more sustained, coordinated, and adequately funded effort is needed to ensure the long-term health of the Shorakapok Preserve. I urge the city council to advocate for and vote for a budget where at least 1% of the city budget is allocated to funding NYC Parks to help maintain and ensure the Shorakapok Preserve remains a resource for our community to learn from and enjoy for generations to come.

Thank you.

Chris Whitney
Director
Friends of Inwood Hill Park

Stephen Melnick
###-## 72 Drive
Forest Hills, NY 11375

To Whom it may concern;

As a longtime NYC Park steward and head of the Friends of MacDonald volunteer group in Forest Hills, I wish to convey with strongest urgency the need to reinstate the NYC Parks budget and give NYC Parks 1%.

Our group has tried very hard under extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances to help Parks Dept keep our beautiful sitting park in order. We were hoping the regular park staffing would keep things in order, but with those budget cuts, that wasn't to be.

Seasonal park staffing cuts, including cleaners and gardeners, has caused trash to pile up daily, weeds to overgrow and choke and kill off our shrubs, plants, and several trees. Graffiti on park property is more prevalent. And we have been waiting years for the city to upgrade our very poor lighting throughout the park. We also have been battling an out of control rat infestation throughout the park for over two years. We've lost dozens of shrubs including rose bushes and Japanese Ivy hedges and many more perennials throughout the park. Please note that our park is only 1.25 acres in size.

The lack of staff to regularly water our park has made matters worse. Unfortunately our park's drip irrigation system has not worked for nearly 15 years! We are still waiting for the city to address this. There's a solution but the city has failed to act.

We have spent literally hundreds of hours volunteering in the park and up until the pandemic and the budget cuts, our park was in great shape and enjoyed by many visitors. Sadly, it's a totally different story now.

Please Play Fair Now and reinstate park funding and allocate 1% of the City's budget to Parks so that our communities can enjoy their parks once again.

Now more than ever before, our city parks have become a vital part of keeping NYers both physically and mentally healthy.

We need to get our parks and our city up and running again before it's too late.

Thanks for your time and we look forward to seeing immediate action taken on behalf of our City Council and Mayor.

Give Parks 1%!

Sincerely,
Stephen Melnick
Friends of MacDonald Park, Forest Hills Queens



Wednesday, March 22, 2023

NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Hon. Council Member Shekar Krishnan, Chair
250 Broadway
New York, NY

Re: NYC Parks Preliminary Budget Hearing - We Demand 1% for Parks

Dear Chair Krishnan and Committee Members,

Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify at this important Preliminary Budget Hearing on the NYC Expense Budget for Parks on behalf of the Friends of Morningside Park. Our organization has been a steadfast advocate for our historic Harlem park for over 40 years and has been advocating on behalf of parks city wide since the Play Fair Coalition was formed.

When running for office Mayor Adams pledged to provide 1% of the NYC Expense Budget to Parks. We demand he live up to this pledge and follow through.

As of today, we are a long way from that level of commitment. Parks only receives .6% of the city budget while other cities from all corners of the nation allocate at least 1% to their parks. That NYC can't match their level of commitment is shameful. All New Yorkers deserve a parks system that is safe, clean and equitable.

When the Parks budget was cut in 2020 NYC Parks were in their worst condition in two decades. Given chronic underfunding that continues to this day, parks across the city don't have nearly enough maintenance workers, PEP officers, and gardeners to keep our parks clean and safe.

Our NYC Scenic Landmark park is a steep and rugged park through which many residents of Harlem and Morningside Heights commute every day. The upper level of the park is overgrown and has poor sight lines even in the best of times. It doesn't have a fighting chance when it has to rely on a skeletal city wide forestry crew and only one gardener for its 30 acres.

In December of 2019 the city and world were horrified by the murder of Tessa Majors in a secluded area of Morningside Park. We demand adequate staffing levels and PEP presence be provided so that park users can feel and be safe in ALL our parks. Users of New York City's parks deserve no less.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Taylor, President

Dear Councilmembers,

We support a 1% budget to facilitate Parks & Recreation operations and all that they do. Our parks are an invaluable resource to our community. Most of us live in small apartments and our parks are a place where we relax, exercise, and socialize. I implore you to do all that you can to support our parks and communities.

Lorita Watson
Education Director
Friends of Mosholu Parkland



Testimony to the NYC Council
Hearing of the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
March 22, 2023

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

Special thanks to all of the council members present at this hearing who have been strong supporters of community gardens including Deputy Speaker Ayala, Parks Committee Chair Krishan, Council Members Osse, Nurse, Rivera, Won, Sanchez, Stevens, and Feliz.

In a 2018 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers found that for people living near green spaces, "feeling depressed significantly decreased by 41.5% and self-reported poor mental health showed a reduction of 62.8%." They concluded that "Neighborhood physical conditions have been associated with mental illness and may partially explain persistent socioeconomic disparities in the prevalence of poor mental health." Green spaces provided by community gardens don't just beautify neighborhoods, they have the radical potential to create health, wealth and resilience within them.

Community gardens provide some of the same benefits as parks (recreation, environmental services like absorbing heat & stormwater) but beyond that, they provide strong additional benefits in the form of neighborhood food sovereignty and education around healthy eating. Despite these powerful benefits, community gardens and the essential work undertaken within them are underfunded, and their potential as centers for powerful systems transformation are often overlooked. On behalf of community gardeners across the City, I urge you to

- PROTECT, PRESERVE, EXPAND AND PROPERLY MAINTAIN COMMUNITY GARDENS
- UPLIFT COMMUNITY GARDENS AS SITES OF FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & ACTIVATORS OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMIES
- STRUCTURE DPR & GREENTHUMB WITH EQUITY AT ITS CORE including increasing GreenThumb's budget to allow for a full-time permanent Youth Coordinator and more funding with fewer administrative barriers for compensating community gardeners for mentoring youth, offering workshops and undertaking other forms of labor.

Community gardens are critical infrastructure for public health and safety and are drivers of social equity. They should be funded as such. Nevertheless, NYC Parks have been operating with an austerity budget for 40+ years. Mayor Adams committed to funding NYC Parks with 1% of the NYC budget, but hasn't yet followed through on his commitment to this investment. We

join with our colleagues in the PlayFair Coalition to urge Mayor Adams and the City to make good on this commitment. Our health depends on it.



The Olmsted Center
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
117-02 Roosevelt Avenue
Flushing, NY 11368
646-360-0203

**Testimony: Historic House Trust of New York City
NYC Council Parks & Recreation Committee FY24 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Wednesday, March 22, 2023**

My name is Giulietta Fiore, and I'm testifying today as Associate Director of External Affairs for the Historic House Trust of New York City. First, we applaud Chair Krishnan for supporting the need to dedicate 1% of the city's budget to NYC Parks. As a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition, the Historic House Trust calls upon the city to recognize parks as critical infrastructure by allocating 1% of the city's budget to parks. This investment is essential in ensuring that our city's parks and their diverse resources, including the public historic house museums that we help steward, are properly maintained and protected for the future.

The Historic House Trust works to preserve 23 historic houses that tell the inclusive stories of those who have enriched our city's past. These sites flourish today as historic landmarks, museums, educational centers, cultural beacons, and public greenspaces thanks to our nonprofit partners and in collaboration with NYC Parks. Integrated into communities across all five boroughs, we believe that these publicly-owned historic sites are critical to a dynamic cityscape. They keep the past alive for hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, and provide programs for school children and residents to address specialized community needs at the intersection of history, culture, and the arts. From literacy workshops, to urban farming, the programs our partners offer are drivers of equity & community.

Our vision is simple: a collection of well-maintained historic properties, operating effectively and sustainably, and engaging visitors and neighbors to celebrate New York City and its history. Increased funding for NYC Parks is critical to realizing our vision. Years of an austerity budget has eroded our collective ability to preserve these important places. Above all, NYC Parks needs more staff and funding to address our greatest concern—**deferred maintenance**—which causes structural deterioration to the museums, hinders their ability to serve their communities, and challenges their working relationships. Our nonprofit partners want to help, and are dedicated to these places and their communities. But they cannot do it alone. We urge the City Council to support an increase in funding for NYC Parks for the benefit of all New Yorkers, past, present, and future.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our needs, and for hearing our call to help sustain the places that help make New York City our home.

Testimony of the Historic Houses
to the
New York City Council
Joint Committee of Finance and Parks and Recreation
March 22, 2023

Given by Kelsey Brow, Alison McKay, and Catherine Hughes

Good Afternoon Chair Krishnan and Members of the Parks Committee. We are happy to be delivering testimony on behalf of the following historic sites in the Historic House Trust network: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum in the Bronx; Hendrick I. Lott House, Old Stone House, and Wyckoff House Museum in Brooklyn; Merchant's House Museum, and Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum in Manhattan; The Bowne House, King Manor Museum, Kingsland Homestead, Lewis Latimer House Museum, and Queens County Farm Museum in Queens; Alice Austen House and Historic Richmond Town in Staten Island.

In our testimony at the November 18, 2020, Parks Committee Hearing on The State of Historic Houses Under the Jurisdiction of the Parks Department, we highlighted some of the funding issues our private nonprofits, which operate these historic sites, face. Today, we would like to expand upon those issues.

Our nonprofits need guaranteed direct support so that we can effectively fulfill our missions and respond to the needs of our surrounding communities. Investments in our organizations through both capital and operational support is an investment in New York City.

Our mission-critical work is not possible without ensuring the stability and maintenance of the historic structures that house our nonprofits. Members of the public and elected officials have frequently expressed concerns about the building conditions of our historic sites and have commented on the lack of attention that the structures receive from the City and the Parks Department. Currently, between the 23 historic sites in the Historic House Trust network, there is over \$50 million in capital funding allocated to these sites for unbuilt projects, some of which have been pending for two decades, further exacerbating the condition of these structures.

Sadly, and typical of the neglect shown these sites, in this year's 2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report discussing DPR, no mention is made of capital allocation for landmarked structures under the Historic House Trust umbrella. The only mention of Historic House Trust or the sites our Non-profit organizations run is part of the attendance record.

Our sites are City assets that necessitate regular preventative maintenance plans; sensitive historic structures demand a different approach to the capital process than other DPR facilities, like playgrounds and recreation centers. Completing these much-needed projects in a streamlined and efficient manner is critical for our sites to provide services for all New Yorkers.

Although we operate within city parks, our buildings are historic, landmarked buildings deeply embedded in the cultural sector. As cultural organizations, we frequently receive private funds to administer capital and interior renovation projects, all which still have to be run through the Parks Department, where frequent delays deplete the buying-power of monies raised and allow these nationally-significant sites to fall into states of disrepair. Compounding these problems, the drawn-out process and timeline results in a loss of trust and accountability with our funders and communities. Maintaining these relationships is essential to our operations as we receive only a modest percentage of operating funds through government channels, none of which is guaranteed.

Having the ability to utilize the resources of both the Parks Department and the Department of Cultural Affairs is critical to the operation and maintenance of our sites.

Despite being awarded capital allocations through the Department of Cultural Affairs, we are unable to proceed with these projects due to the current DPR guidelines that mandate capital projects be run through their channels and preclude certain project funding from moving forward.

As destination parks, direct operational support from DPR would allow us to better serve our communities. Our park sites are highly valued by our neighbors, and the value of which has only increased due to COVID restrictions. This demand presents additional challenges for our fiscal operations as our private nonprofit staff are the boots-on-the-ground, front-line workers who safeguard the sites. We have the expertise to operate and oversee these sites, but lack sufficient, sustainable support. The majority of our sites are located in underserved neighborhoods, where our historic buildings provide a sense of place, and our nonprofits provide a wide variety of critical resources from education and enrichment, to food distribution, to artistic engagements, and much more. However, this is not possible without city support and full recognition of the unique challenges and complexities we face as historic sites.

We thank the City Council for its continued support of our work and are happy to answer any questions you may have.



March 22, 2023

Council Member Shekar Krishnan
Chair, Committee on Parks and Recreation
250 Broadway, Suite 1817
New York, NY 10007

Re: Testimony, City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation, FY24 Budget Hearing

Dear Chair Krishnan and Parks Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the city's Fiscal Year 2024 budget and the need for at least 1% of the city budget to be allocated for NYC Parks. My name is Terri Carta and I serve as the Executive Director of Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy (JBRPC). Our organization is a project of the Fund for the City of New York and our office is located in the Rockaway Park community of Queens. JBRPC is a public-private partnership established in 2013 dedicated to improving more than 10,000 acres of public parklands, beaches, and wetland areas throughout Jamaica Bay and the Rockaway peninsula with our partners at NYC Parks, New York State Parks, and the National Park Service.

JBRPC is proud to be a long-time member of the Play Fair Coalition calling for at least 1% of the city budget for the Parks Department. This minimum level of funding is vital in order to provide equitable access to well maintained, resilient, safe green space, beaches, natural areas, and connective greenways.

Specifically, I want to highlight the need for increased funding to support and expand the Natural Resources Group (NRG) within NYC Parks. This very small team is focused on protection and restoration of our most vulnerable landscapes – forest, woodland, freshwater wetland, and salt marsh ecosystems.

For instance, NRG is restoring lost wetland habitat at Rockaway Community Park, which is literally on the front doorsteps of the Ocean Bay NYCHA campus, where JBRPC regularly facilitates outdoor environmental education and other free community programs. NRG is also replacing eroded sediment and planting grasses at Four Sparrow Marsh, hemmed in by Flatbush Avenue and the Belt Parkway on the northwest side of Jamaica Bay, where the Conservancy is helping to remove large marine debris and derelict boats with our local workforce of Wetlands Fellows. And NRG staff at the Greenbelt Native Plant Nursery in Floyd Bennett Field collect and propagate local seeds from native species, and grow them for restoration projects in the parks just referenced and at sites across the five boroughs.

This is cool stuff! And it's climate forward, locally focused, and exactly the kind of initiative that NYC needs to invest more in, not cut budget from. Allocating 1% of the NYC budget for the Parks Department is a bare bones minimum. We need to at least meet this threshold within the FY24 Budget.

The JBRPC team works every day to improve parklands in Queens and in Brooklyn, and provides free educational and public programs to park visitors and school students. JBRPC educators work with students and educators from over 30 schools, directly facilitating our hands-on inquiry-based Jamaica Bay Curriculum, engaging more than 2,500 students in our parks through more than 150 field trips, in-classroom, and virtual field trip programs for school day and after-school classes each year. This ever-expanding program is only possible through the support of private funders and the City Council, allowing us to serve schools from twelve school districts across Brooklyn and Queens.

Students and youth groups also participate in JBRPC's park stewardship projects, joining hundreds of community volunteers who collectively removed over 11,000 pounds of trash from our shorelines and parks last year. The connections participants make to their local parks and beaches through our education and stewardship programs directly carry through communities, as evidenced by family participation in our free programs co-hosted with community partners like kayaking, walking and biking tours, art festivals, film screenings, our beloved Jamaica Bay Festival, and other nature-based programs.

We also work to build nature-based career pathways for young people from the communities we work in. Building on prior program successes with internships and workforce development programs, this year JBRPC launched the Jamaica Bay Wetlands Fellowship to train the next generation of wetlands managers, building skills and defining a career path for young people from within the Jamaica Bay watershed. This paid 6-month program for young adults underscores the value of technical and stakeholder experience in building comprehensive knowledge and approaches toward nature-based solutions while building local leadership for the future.

As a public-private partnership, JBRPC raises private money to support our free programs and park improvements, and leverages those funds with public investment. Over the past few years, city and state elected officials have generously supported our work by providing much needed discretionary funding to our organization. This funding has allowed us to fill gaps of park agencies and provide vital services to neighborhoods and constituencies most in need. Using *Speaker Initiative*, *A Greener NYC* and *Parks Equity Initiative* funding, we have been able to expand education programs to serve more students from schools most in need of programming, engage more volunteer stewards in cleaning and restoring parks and shorelines, step-up our workforce development program, and build our capacity as an organization to bring in additional funding and support for our parks. This public-private partnership model is key to the success of healthy parks and open spaces in our city – including their vital role in education – and we are thankful for the support provided by the Council over the years.

As you know, Jamaica Bay is an important citywide resource for all to enjoy. Locally, the Bay ensures that shoreline communities have a healthy waterfront for residents and wildlife to enjoy. The Bay also offers an opportunity to highlight how complex ecosystems work and how actions within the Jamaica Bay watershed – miles from the shoreline – have an impact on our environment. This is only possible through education programs that engage students beyond the Bay.

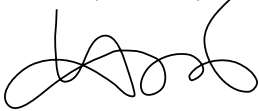
For Fiscal Year 2024, JBRPC, through our parent non-profit, the Fund for the City of New York, requested \$50,000 in City Council *Speaker Initiative* funding; \$25,000 in *A Greener NYC* and *NYC Cleanup*, and \$25,000 through the *Parks Equity Initiative*. If funding is secured, JBRPC will be able to continue providing critical nature-based education programs to students in Queens and Brooklyn, expand our stewardship opportunities and park improvement projects, and increase the number of

Wetlands Fellows we hire and train for nature-based jobs. I ask the Council Committee on Parks and Recreation to support our application to the Speaker for funding this year.

As a recipient of *Speaker's Initiative*, *A Greener NYC*, and *Parks Equity Initiative* funding in the past, we recognize the importance of these City Council Initiatives. This funding allows non-profit organizations like ours to provide services to local schools and after-school programs most in need and offer free programs that engage New Yorkers in their public lands and educate young people about their environment.

In closing, I would like to once again thank the Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and recognize three great local champions of our park-based education programs, Councilmembers Mercedes Narcisse, Joann Ariola, and Selvena Brooks Powers. With your support and partnership, we will continue to be great stewards of our parks and provide much needed free educational programming to Jamaica Bay and Rockaway residents and students.

Thank you for your time and support of education programs in our public parks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri Carta', with a stylized, cursive script.

Terri Carta
Executive Director

cc: Council Member Mercedes Narcisse, City Council District 46
Council Member Joann Ariola, City Council District 32
Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers, City Council District 31



City Council Parks Committee Budget Hearing March 22, 2023

Good morning, Chair Krishnan and members of the Parks Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Kathy Nizzari, Founder and Chair of Lights Out, a coalition of 50 animal welfare, environmental, scientific, legal, medical and design organizations and professionals dedicated to protecting New York's wildlife. Also members of the Play Fair Coalition, we urge you to allocate 1% of the City's budget to the NYC Parks Department. Funds that were promised and subsequently cut desperately need to be restored and increased, particularly for maintenance, messaging, and enforcement. Cities with far less populations commit larger portions of their budget to green spaces. New York considers itself a progressive leader, however, our parks have been operating with an austerity budget for [40+ years](#).

Due to continued budget cuts, parks are in their worst condition in two decades. They are chronically underfunded and understaffed: there are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe for humans and pets who visit and the wildlife who call them home. Additional cuts will result in continued dire circumstances. We deserve better.

It is important to acknowledge that Central Park has the most money and is in the best condition of any city park. The Central Park [Conservancy](#) aids the Parks Department in maintenance utilizing private funds. [Only a few](#) of our parks have conservancies or partners, found in more well-off neighborhoods, which point to environmental injustices. Further, it is problematic that the parks in the lower income and minority neighborhoods suffer the worst of these problems. The garbage, unregulated fishing and littered fishing gear, and injured wildlife are significantly higher in these parks, where people need these spaces the most.

The toxic trash - recently observed as several pieces per foot of park space - presents health and safety hazards to both animals and humans alike. From soiled diapers to used syringes, smoking materials, and so forth, improperly discarded park waste is actually worse than street trash, yet is given much less attention and coverage. Of particular concern to us is the derelict fishing gear – fishing wire and hooks that are discarded either in the water or along its edges – that cause harm and death to the many species of birds and other wildlife like turtles {as well as pets like dogs} who call these parks home {or visit}. We do not know if children or adults also suffer injuries since so little data is available.

One of our rescuers reported upwards of 250 birds, mammals and reptiles seriously injured from derelict fishing gear, and also off-leash dogs per year. Bear in mind, this is one small group in one park for roughly three hours per day. As 150 of our parks have bodies of water, the total number can easily be in the tens of thousands. Of that, roughly 2/3 of these injuries result in death.

The Parks Department has stringent [laws](#) regarding fishing: You must be licensed; you must properly dispose of fishing lines and hooks; you can only do catch and release; fish must be immediately released; and the use of lead weights {which are toxic}, barbed hooks and traps are strictly prohibited. Additionally, harming, stealing and dumping animals, which often result in death as well, are also prohibited by these and the [New York State Animal Cruelty Laws](#). All of these [violations](#) come with fines up to \$1,500 and/or jail time up to 20 days per offense. We doubt most people are aware of these rules. In order to save thousands of birds, turtles, other wildlife, pets, and possibly humans from unnecessary and preventable violence and death, we must be proactive in alerting park visitors of both the rules and penalties if they do not comply. Penalizing them afterwards does not protect our wildlife. With the City committed to reforming criminal justice, prevention not only saves thousands of avian and other lives, but is preferable to cash fines and/or jail time.

The Council should also consider the thousands of dollars that the necessary medical treatment costs. This is all selflessly paid out of the pockets of the rescuers who do this difficult and emotionally taxing work voluntarily without any personal gain. Perhaps a fund can be created to cover these costs which, of course, would not be incurred if we did more on prevention.

This is an issue that is not just important to a small group of advocates, but to the [literally four million New Yorkers who are birders](#). Ours is one of the best states for birding, most notably in parks, bringing in nearly [\\$2 billion](#) in ecotourism annually. However, the trash problem is rampant and harms both birds and other local wildlife recognized by the Mayor's Office as [New Yorkers](#).

We offer a few possible recommendations to consider:

- increased clean up of the large amount of trash that is not put into trash cans but instead deposited in the water and on the ground - especially in parks where people fish;
- to fund and empower employees who are responsible for surveillance and enforcement with the authority to issue summonses;

- to educate the public with adequate visible signage in multiple languages throughout the park warning that discarding trash improperly is subject to fines;
- Increase the number of trash receptacles throughout the park particularly near fishing areas with regular pickups to prevent overflow;
- surveillance cameras in the most vulnerable areas. This has been effective in reducing speeding on our city streets by [72%](#).
- Enforce fines for smoking in the park, use of prohibited fishing gear and practices, improper discarding of fishing wire or hooks;
- prohibit the use of cooking equipment and fires entirely in wooded areas like the Rambles;
- Designate a Clean our Parks Day, giving New Yorkers an opportunity to collect trash and put it in a designated area for pick-up by the Sanitation Dept;
- enforce fines for illegal releasing of animals;
 - and relocate these animals to wildlife rehabilitation centers or shelters where they can be properly cared for and examined for microchips or other means of identification. This also provides information to hold those offenders accountable

Fines may not be the popular choice for many, but sometimes are the only option that works. They provide both a deterrent and a means to fund these services. Without holding those accountable for disregarding the rules, the problem only worsens. NYC's parks and green areas not only bring the community together, but serve a vital role in climate mitigation, social equity, and provide [mental health oases](#). Allowing a free-for-all attitude when it comes to city property inevitably leads to other abuses and diminishes the spirit of respect towards our neighbors. Rules should be implemented to keep our parks safer and cleaner for everyone to enjoy.

Just as many people are unaware of the rules, we recognize many Council Members may not be aware of this problem and just how out of control it truly is. The recent hearing and media attention given to abandoned guinea pigs is just the tip of the iceberg. Recently a group stole a duck from a park pond and barbecued him. Another intentionally killed a swan. Men have been spotted inadvertently hooking ducks and swans with fishing lure yet, rather than help free them, they merely cut the line, tie on another hook, and continue fishing while these birds struggled. Turtles are poached from parks and there is a strong probability they and others might be offered for sale either as pets or food - which is a health hazard to humans. Should you like to learn more, we have much photo and video documentation that we are happy to share with you.

No animal is immune to the dangers of derelict fishing gear, neither wild nor domestic. A local dog group informed us about dogs visiting parks getting entangled in wire and being gored by hooks in their mouth and paws. This can be [fatal](#). To further illustrate the seriousness of fishing lure, the feline Instagram star [Mavi](#) suffered neurological distress from a hook. [Studies](#) have shown one-third of examined turtles swallowed hooks and different animals ingest hooks from fish who were caught and released. Many wild animals die after ingesting fishing gear while still others drown trying to free themselves, their bodies not discovered until it's too late. These instances that we are aware of are a mere fraction of the injuries that actually occur. So there is really no way to determine the actual extent this problem causes.

We are grateful that the Council recognized the maintenance problem in city parks by swiftly passing [Local Law 67](#) last year. This is a great first step that needs proper funding. We must do

more in the areas of education and prevention. These problems jeopardize our parks' safety and cleanliness for everyone. With the warmer weather now upon us, this problem will only worsen and many more animals will die.

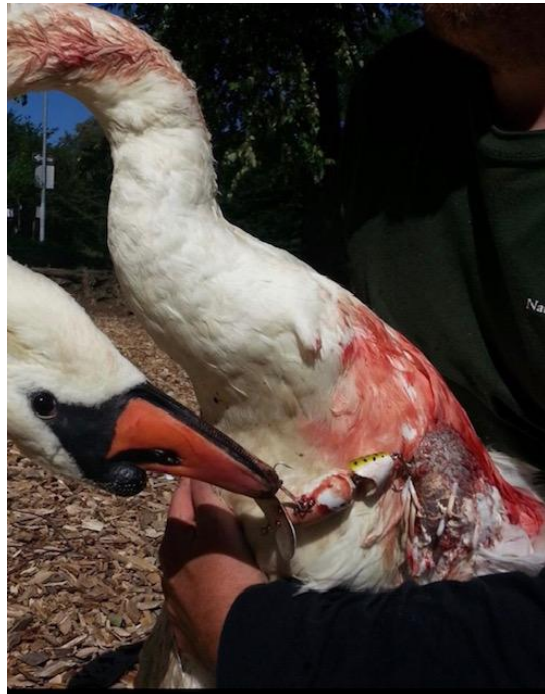
Lights Out Coalition believes equity also pertains to animals and that the path forward is applying the Buddhist concept of mindfulness. By creating new messaging that reflects this spiritual practice of oneness, park visitors will consider how their actions impact on other people and other living beings. We believe this is the truly compassionate and progressive way of changing behavior. We are ready to work with you on these initiatives.

We're New Yorkers. We can do this.

Please adequately fund our parks. Thank you again for your time.

Kathy Nizzari
Lights Out Coalition, Founder and Chair
kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com

Below are just a few photos illustrating the seriousness of this problem. We have dozens more...





Testimony of Joe Puleo
President of Local 983, DC 37
Before the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee
FY 24 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 22, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Krishnan and members of the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee. My name is Joe Puleo and I am President of Local 983 of DC 37. I represent the Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers, Urban Park Rangers (UPRs), Associate Park Service Workers (APSWs), and City Seasonal Aides (CSAs) in the Department of Parks and Recreation.

I come before you today to urge you to restore and request the administration to baseline the 80 PEP officers and 50 UPRs in the budget. These workers serve critical roles in parks throughout the city.

With safety on the minds of New Yorkers and the warm weather approaching, we need more patrols in the parks, not less. The Parks Department only has 300 PEP officers to patrol over 29,000 acres of parkland. Even with vehicles, it is difficult to cover all this land with only 300 officers.

The UPRs conduct educational programs in the parks and have extensive knowledge about history, astronomy, animals, and plants. They also lead family friendly tours in the parks throughout the five boroughs. Just recently, they were instrumental in capturing an alligator found in Prospect Park.

In a recent article the headline read "NYC Not A Great Place To Be Without A Bachelor's Degree:" as based on a study published by the federal reserve of Philadelphia.

That is why DC 37 Local 983 supports not only the funding requests to baseline the UPRs and PEP officers, as well as the 100 City Park Workers (CPWs) and 50 Gardeners, but also to Increase the baseline for "junior positions" within the Parks Department. What are junior positions? Junior positions are entry level jobs such as City Seasonal Aides and CPWs.

Most young adults in NYC don't have a driver's license and don't see a need to do so with our good transportation system. A City Seasonal Aide does not require a driver's license or a college degree. Similarly, a CPW does not require a college degree.

However during the course of their work, they will be exposed to other members who work in parks in many different titles at the union. The union and parks will provide training and education leading to a job and benefits where they can get a driver's license and CDL leading to more opportunities not only in Parks, but possibly in other agencies. One such agency is the Department of Transportation (DOT) where the Apprentice City Highway Repairer title is also represented by Local 983. This position leads to a prevailing rate job as a Highway Repairer with very good pay and benefits.

Furthermore, we worked with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to create an apprenticeship program for Watershed Maintainers where they will be trained and become Watershed Maintainers upon successful completion of the program. This job will lead to a stable income with even more opportunities for these CSA apprentices.

DC 37 stands ready to work with the NYC Parks Department and the Mayor, who has called for more opportunities like these, but we can't do it without additional funding. We support our Play Fair coalition partner's request to fund parks at 1%.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will take any questions you may have.

TESTIMONY OF:

**Lowell Barton, Vice President, and Organizing Director, Laborers'
Local 1010 for
Hearing before The New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing - Contracts
March 22, 2023**

Good morning, my name is Chris Loscalzo and I am providing testimony today on behalf of Lowell Barton, Vice President and Organizing Director for Laborers' Local 1010. Laborers' Local 1010's highly trained and uniquely skilled members perform on virtually every road, street, highway, and boulevard in New York City. Our contractors also work in NYC schools, parks, athletic fields, and playgrounds. A substantial majority of the work our members perform is subject to New York State prevailing wage requirements. Local 1010 is an affiliate of the New York State Laborers, a trade union organization that represents over 40,000 men and women across New York state and is a proud affiliate of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA).

Today we'd like to focus our testimony on procurement issues at the City's Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR") and reiterate ways we believe DPR can better utilize alternative methods of procurement to ensure the City is doing business in an efficient and cost-saving way, and with responsible contractors. We would like to thank the City Council members present at this hearing, especially Parks and Recreation Chair, City Councilman, Shekar Krishnan for holding this important hearing on how NYCDPR and their budget impacts the delivery of infrastructure for city residents.

One problem we see in DPR procurement is that site work is excluded from the city's Project Labor Agreements. We believe this is an oversight that should be corrected. We are unaware of any rational basis for why this portion of DPR work is excluded from the city-wide PLAs. **Project Labor Agreements are a benefit to working men and women (and their families), contractors, communities and taxpayers as these agreements: help ensure projects are completed on time and on budget, require employee training to protect workers safety and health while ensuring they receive proper wages and benefits, and ensure that public investment benefits local communities by keeping a large percentage of worker wages in the hands of local workers and their families.**

We would also like to discuss the use of the "Design Build" procurement method for DPR projects. Design Build is a proven design model that reduces the delivery time on projects. This is imperative for public parks in an urban setting where years-long projects remove valuable park resources from the communities they are supposed to serve. We support the recommendation made by the New York City Capital Process Reform Task Force that the City should advocate for State legislation to give City agencies the ability to use progressive design-build, which allows the City to quickly select a vendor before the full scope of the project has been established. This model of procurement facilitates early-stage

collaboration to investigate existing conditions, examine engineering and construction challenges, and agree on solutions before determining a final scope and price. DDC's current design-build projects are expected to cut years off a typical design-bid-build timeline, and progressive design-build will allow the City to see comparable time savings for a broader range of projects such as infrastructure projects with complex existing site conditions.

Finally, we ask that the DPR do business with responsible vendors. DPR' recently agreed to do business with a contractor that was debarred for felony acts involving a massive insurance and workers compensation fraud scheme. While the company was debarred from city work, there was an exception made for this one contractor to perform DPR work. There is no rational basis for the city to do business with such a company, especially when other City agencies refuse to do so. **While some have alluded to the fact that the vendor is a sole source vendor, that is simply not a basis to do work with such a vendor. In fact, work with these types of vendors is what drives out legitimate vendors. For years, legitimate contractors lost out on bids to this company, which law enforcement proved was cheating and undercutting competitors by using a massive insurance fraud scheme. The only way the vendor pool at DPR will improve is when other vendors know that they do not have to compete against such low-road vendors.** Laborers' Local 1010 attempted to alert DPR about this contractor and their history by submitting a bid protest under the Procurement Policy Board (PPB) rules. However, DPR refused to hear the bid protests based on DPR's interpretation of the PPB rules. Since DPR refuses to hear legitimate public comments on non-responsible contractors, the PPB rules must be changed to make DPR hear such valid objections. The current PPB rules limit all public information submissions to an agency during the procurement process. This includes information about a contractor's criminal history, prior acts of fraud, and other serious conduct that any agency should consider before it awards a bid.

Unionized laborers and signatory contractors, if provided the opportunity to fairly bid on and be awarded DPR capital projects, bring years of skilled training to the job which will help to complete DPR jobs on budget and in a timely manner. A trained workforce that receives area standard, prevailing wages is a huge benefit to City agencies as the quality and timeliness of the work performed will increase. Long delays on projects due to low-road contractors drain funds for such projects and limit opportunities for additional projects.

Laborers' Local 1010 is proud to represent members who work for over eighty (80) MWBE contractors. And through our partnership with the New York General Contractors Association, and our Independent Contractors, we currently have a signatory contractor base with over 250 companies. These signatory MWBEs thrive because they participate in a unionized apprenticeship program that is registered with the State Department of Labor. Our signatory contractors produce better work because of the productivity increases associated with a highly trained and skilled workforce. Furthermore, these MWBEs are able to pay the prevailing wage and continue to successfully operate, while providing quality careers and family-sustaining wages in the construction industry in New York City.

Parks built with well-trained labor should be the standard for acuity projects. Union jobs are safer, with non-union jobs accounting for eighty two percent (82%) of deaths on job sites.^[2] In November of 2022, a worker fell to their death on an unsafe, non-union worksite.^[3] At some point, we must question if people or profit are the primary motivators for what we do. As city agencies, people should always be the priority, including their safety and health. Safety is the responsibility of every employer, and it also includes the agencies that hire these firms. DPR should ensure this Council that they vet any outstanding violations of worker safety, wage theft, or other major workplace violations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope our recommendations are considered in this preliminary budget hearing. As a member and Vice President of a 2,700-member construction local, I request that DPR prioritize integrity and safety on all job sites when discussing the DPR budget and consider these common-sense modifications to DPR procurement. I appreciate your consideration of our comments.

^[1] https://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20180625/REAL_ESTATE/180629947/delays-in-parks-department-construction-add-millions-in-unnecessary-costs-report-says#utm_medium=email&utm_source=cnyb-dailyalert&utm_campaign=cnyb-dailyalert-20180625

^[2] <https://nycosh.org/resource/2023-deadly-skyline-report/>

^[3] [Construction worker falls to death outside Manhattan building - Gothamist](#)

**Testimony of Dilcy Benn, President of Local 1505, District Council 37
before the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
FY 2024 Preliminary Budget
March 22, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Krishnan and fellow members of the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee. 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.

Last year, the administration restored funding for the 100 CPW lines and added thousands of seasonal workers. In the Mayor's FY 24 preliminary budget, it does not include funding for the 100 CPW lines, as well as the seasonal lines that were funded through federal stimulus dollars.

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

I am here today not only to urge the City Council to request the Mayor to **restore and baseline the 100 CPW staff positions** in the Parks Department. Furthermore, we would not have to come back every year requesting these positions if the **Parks Department were funded at 1% of the city's total budget**. If this were to happen, these same workers would not have to worry about whether or not they will have a job after June 30th every year. No one should have to live like that!

Lastly, we would like to see 1000 junior entry level positions added to the Parks Department. This could be a pipeline for many people to gain full time employment working for the city.

Now that spring is here and many people are utilizing the city's parks, we need these City Parks Workers and seasonal workers more than ever. There is plenty of work to be done to maintain and clean these parks day in and day out.

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 more funding for parks and pushing for the one percent for parks. We will not stop until we get there!

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.



Hello,

My name is Karen Eichel. I serve on the board of Marine Park Alliance. We wholeheartedly support the 1% for Parks campaign and we are acutely aware of the specific needs in marine Park.

The system of leadership for NYC Parks flagship or regional parks varies from borough to borough. We have learned from the Parks Department's website and attendance at the Parks and Open Space Partners meetings that most boroughs have significantly more Park Administrators, often with dual capacities and support teams overseeing nonprofits, while Brooklyn only has one.

Many nonprofit organizations concerned with Brooklyn's largest park, which is Marine Park, notice the current lack of leadership dedicated to this regional greenspace. There is no Parks Department Administrator nor a support team for community engagement assigned to Marine Park.

The citywide distribution of Parks Department's 20 Park Administrators looks like this:

1. Manhattan has 7
2. Queens has 5
3. Bronx has 4
4. Staten Island has 3
5. Brooklyn has 1, yet Brooklyn has a larger number of residents than all other boroughs.

When the City does get closer to 1% for Parks, we do hope you'll consider funding an administrative team to southern Brooklyn to solve this problem of inequity, or perhaps moving one away from a well-to-do park that is surrounded by wealth to one that is not, such as Marine Park

New York City Council
FY 2024 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Parks Committee
Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023

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

Thank you Chair Krishnan and members of the Committee for allowing us to testify today. **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL** (legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**), as the nation's largest scholastic tennis program, looks forward to working with all of you on behalf of the youth of our city. For 50 years, with the Council as our partner, NYJTL has been a driving force for New York City's youth and tennis communities, traditionally reaching over **85,000** youngsters annually throughout the five boroughs.

It is our belief that talent IS universal BUT access and opportunity ARE NOT. That is why we have strived over the past 50 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.

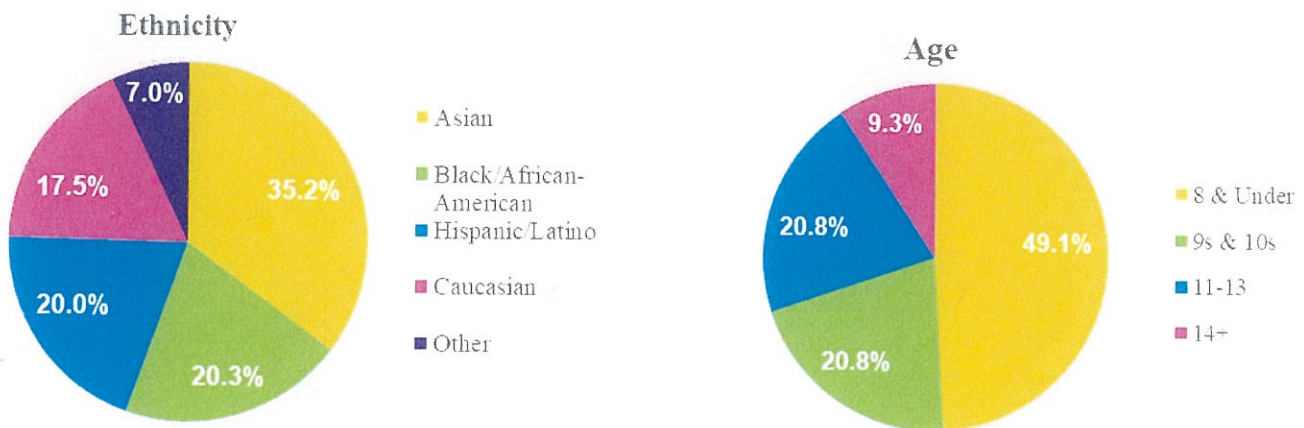
Traditionally, NYJTL runs the majority of our yearly programming at locations through NYC DOE or NYC Parks. This year, we expect to bring **FREE youth tennis programming to 23 parks** throughout the City as follows:

- **Bronx (3)**
 - Crotona Park
 - St. James Park
 - Williamsbridge Oval
- **Manhattan (2)**
 - Howard Bennett Park
 - Octagon Park
- **Brooklyn (4)**
 - Jackie Robinson Park
 - Linden Park
 - McDonald Playground
 - Andries Playground
- **Queens (12)**
 - Bayswater Park
 - Charles Park
 - Clintonville Playground
 - Cunningham Park
 - Det. Keith Williams Park

- Dutch Kills Playground
 - Forest Park
 - Juniper Valley Park
 - Pomonok Playground
 - Rochdale Village
 - Russell Sage Playground
 - Telephone Playground
- **Staten Island (2)**
 - Wolfe's Pond
 - Silver Lake Park

The overwhelming majority of the young people we serve are Black, Latino, Asian, and new immigrant populations. **Nearly two-thirds of our participants are 10 and under with many coming from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people lack access to the opportunities typically available only to youth in affluent neighborhoods, suburbs and private schools.**

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS¹



CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS continued¹

Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	35.2%	8 & Under	49.1%	Male	49.5%	New	69.3%
Black/ African-American	20.3%	9s & 10s	20.8%	Female	50.3%	Returning	30.7%
Hispanic/Latino	20.0%	11-13	20.8%	Non-binary	0.2%		
Caucasian	17.5%	14 +	9.3%				
Other	7.0%						

¹- Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 85,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually including its 30+ DYCD funded SONYC and Compass sites.

Funded under the Council's *Physical Education and Fitness Initiative*, NYJTL provides quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY borough throughout the city:

Community Tennis Program (CTP) - Reaches children ages 5-18 throughout all FIVE boroughs year round; Provides trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, & special events; Provides FREE tennis equipment and instruction to over 1,000 Special Population/District 75 children during the Summer; Offers educational supports, including FREE SAT Prep, as well as special Tournaments and Events, including trips to the US Open Qualifiers and to Arthur Ashe Kids Day and various pro events and tournaments.

Winter Weekend Indoor Program - Part of CTP - Enables players to continue their progress during this 20-week Indoor Season on Saturdays and/or Sundays; in addition to instruction there are 13 days of FREE tournaments for participants during the two school vacation breaks and the 3-weekend long culminating Hartman Cup tournament.

CTP+ – Located in Brooklyn & Queens, CTP+ is open to NYJTL participants from all five boroughs. The goal of CTP+ is to develop tennis skills of dedicated CTP participants at a higher level. It is designed for players who have demonstrated competitive ability and potential beyond the level of those at their current CTP location. At no cost to players or families, CTP+ provides extended hours of play and a smaller coach to student ratio.

School-Time Tennis Program (STP) - Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 250 teachers/schools. All teachers and school-based staff are given a tennis curriculum, lesson plans, tennis equipment (rackets & balls) and ongoing onsite support if needed and requested. NYJTL is a NYSED Approved provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit. Training participants each receive for FREE 6.5 CTLE hours.

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

This year we are seeking **\$1M** under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness* Initiative – an increase of \$200,000. **If allocated, it would be our first increase in 15 years.** In 2008 our citywide funding was reduced by 1/3 from \$1.2M to \$800,000 in order to fill a Mayoral created budget hole at DOE. Since then:

- 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**
- COVID-19 protocols have raised operating costs by at least **10%** across the board
- **\$1 today only buys 73% of what it could in 2008 & prices today (2023) are 1.38 times higher than in 2008**

Given years of rising costs as well as the impact of inflation and the pandemic on the economy, it is becoming increasingly challenging for NYJTL to continue to provide the level of youth tennis programming that it is known for to youth across ALL five boroughs with its current level of Council funding.

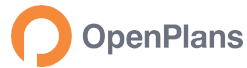
Funding of **\$1M** will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising staffing costs due to NYJTL's **minimum wage of \$18 (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

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 24 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.



Parks and Recreation NYC Committee Hearing

Wednesday March 22, 2023

Emily Chingay, *Citywide Engagement Advocate*

My name is Emily Chingay, and I am the Citywide Engagement Advocate at Open Plans. I want to thank the Parks and Recreation committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of why 1% of the city budget should be allocated to the parks department as championed by New Yorkers for Parks and the Play Fair Coalition.

As a part of the Play Fair Coalition, we are asking for the city to allocate 1% of our budget to parks so that all New Yorkers have a safe, clean, and joyful park to visit. Most major U.S cities spend well over .5% of their budget on parks, and it's time we reinvest in our parks to meet the moment. Parks and open spaces are extremely valuable to our city as they help mitigate the effects of climate change, bring communities together, support local jobs and more. We have some amazing parkies and volunteer groups that work to ensure these places are maintained, but they can't do it all with the current budget allocation. To enhance and help our parks thrive, 1% is critical funding we need for maintenance to keep them clean, safe and accessible.

At Open Plans, we believe that every New Yorker should have equitable access to safe and joyful public spaces in all neighborhoods. These are places where people can gather and build communities. They're where folks can attend dance classes, meet with friends or even explore nature and learn more about their environment. During the pandemic, we saw just how important these our parks were to New Yorkers. They became safe spaces for people to get some fresh air and safely gather with friends and family. Moreover, open and public spaces are critical for the physical, mental and social health for adults and children alike. However, historically underserved communities often have the least access to park space, which can often have long term health and social effects. Without the proper funding, it would be incredibly difficult for people all over the city to have equitable access to safe and clean parks.

Not only do parks and open spaces benefit the people who use them, they also serve as a vital part to fighting climate change. Parks are critical spaces for reducing the heat island effect and capturing rainwater during storms. Trees in parks provide clean air, shade, animal habitat, and space for native

plants to thrive - all helping to conserve our wildlife for the next generation. It's extremely important that we protect and invest in our green spaces if we want to protect our city from the effects of climate change. 1% for parks is crucial to our cities future and our fight for climate resilience.

For all the reasons above, I strongly urge you to continue fighting for the parks department to receive 1% of our budget. New Yorkers need this investment and they can't keep waiting for the funding they deserve. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



Jackson Chabot, Open Plans' Director of Advocacy and Organizing,

1% for Parks

March 23rd, 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Jackson Chabot, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Organizing at Open Plans, an over 20-year-old non-profit dedicated to safe and livable streets. We are proud members of the PlayFair coalition because not only do New Yorkers deserve access to safe and livable streets they also deserve access to safe parks and livable neighborhoods.

There are many reasons why we need 1% for Parks but I want to focus on park maintenance. Park maintenance is extremely important to ensure that our parks are clean, safe and accessible for all. While there are so many wonderful park's department employees and volunteer maintenance groups they can't do it on their own. They need additional resources to be able to keep parks trash free and things in good working order.

that already do some of this work, but they can't do it alone and neither can our parkies. I go to Washington Park, my local favorite, for the Sunday farmer's market nearby, to enjoy my coffee, and listen to the sound of children playing. Because of all of the investment in the park, much of it private dollars, it serves as a local community resource and gathering place.

We recognize that money is tight this year but know that every dollar you invest in our parks will reap a laugh from a child enjoying time on the swings, a smile from a senior have a peaceful moment talking with their friends, and a paycheck for a parkie. Your choice matters, we need 1% for Parks, this year!

**Testimony of Morgan Monaco, President, Prospect Park Alliance
Committee on Parks: Budget Hearing
March 22, 2023**

I am Morgan Monaco, President of Prospect Park Alliance, the non-profit organization that operates Prospect Park in partnership with the City. I am here today to support the efforts of the Play Fair campaign to advocate for critical funding for parks in the upcoming budget, and for the City to fulfill the Mayor's campaign promise of 1% of the city budget for parks. Thank you Chair Krishnan and Members of the Parks Committee for holding today's important hearing.

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

Since the pandemic, visitorship to city parks has increased significantly: in Prospect Park we have seen a record number of visitors to the park throughout the year, and the resulting impact in terms of 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, and Prospect Park Alliance relies on its partnership with the New York City Parks Department for essential maintenance, trash management and general upkeep.

Parks are essential infrastructure that are critical to our health and well being, and are drivers of social equity. NYC Parks have been operating with an austerity budget for more than 40 years, with historically only 0.5% of the city budget allocated to parks despite the fact that parks comprise 14% of city land. This chronic underfunding, with additional loss of staff and staff vacancies in recent years, has been devastating for our parks. While we applaud the City for allocating 0.6% of the budget in 2023, we are concerned about preliminary budget cuts of \$46 million to NYC Parks, which would eliminate hundreds of essential jobs that are already scarce, such as City Park Workers, Urban Park Rangers and Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers to care for our parks.

We implore the Council to increase funding for parks in this budget cycle. In FY23, NYC Parks lost more than 1,800 positions, including baselined positions and Cleaning Corps workers. We are asking for funding to baseline more than 1,000 NYC Parks positions in the city budget, including City Parks Workers, Urban Park Rangers and GreenThumb positions. We are also asking for the Council to fund 280 Play Fair Positions, including City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers and Park Enforcement Patrol officers, as well as Parks Equity and Natural Areas programming. We applaud the City Council for considering the critical need to increase funding for city parks in the upcoming budget cycle, and recognizing our parks as essential infrastructure by not only restoring budget cuts, but 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.

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

to the

New York City Council

Joint Committee of Finance and Parks and Recreation

March 22, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Krishnan and members of the Committees. My name is Jennifer Wainwright, and I am the Communications Manager for the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA). I am submitting this testimony on behalf of RIPA.

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

Sadly, NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed. There are not nearly enough maintenance workers and PEP officers to keep our parks clean and safe. Parks provide critical infrastructure for public physical and mental health and are drivers of social equity.

The funding of the parks in New York City should be a priority. In 2020, within months of budget cuts, our parks were in their worst condition in the past 20 years. This has created additional challenges and places an added burden on an already reduced staffing resource. NYC Parks have been operating with an unyielding budget for over 40 years, and just last year gained what was deemed a record high budget while still only .6% of the City budget. That is not enough to support a critical resource that continues to see record-breaking public use.

Currently, we are at a tipping point again, with citywide cuts this fiscal year, and the Mayor's preliminary budget proposes further cuts to the NYC Parks Department of close to \$50 million. Parks will lose critical maintenance and operations staff, at a time when heavy use is already straining capacity.

At this crucial point, it is imperative that NYC Parks receive 1% of the city budget. New Yorkers deserve a Parks system that shows that the City cares and is committed to the health and wellbeing of all of its citizens, through ensuring our access to safe, clean, and equitable public spaces.

Thank you.



Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition
<http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/>
New York City Council

Parks & Recreation Committee
New York City Hall
New York, NY 10007
March 20, 2023

To the Committee on Parks and Recreation,

Thank you for holding this hearing. My name is K Webster I am the President of the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. I have lived in and around this Park since 1978. Our Coalition has been here since the early 80's.

Out of a very hard beginning we built, and keep rebuilding, this unique park in cooperation with residents, non-profits, housed and unhoused volunteers, our local precinct and a dedicated Park staff led by Park Manager Jamil Phillips and our new Manhattan Parks Commissioner Anthony Perez.

We have a renewed sense of hope with the leadership of Commissioner Perez who has come in with an eager, fresh dedication, with a patient and listening ear, with common sense solutions, and with any changes that could be made to keep us safer - implemented immediately. We are grateful.

But I am here to testify about the impacts of a future without dedicated, promised, funding for parks like ours who continue to be in urgent need of help and as a park that has lived the reality of a NYC Parks system that has been operating with an austerity budget for 40+ years.

Funding that isn't baked into our City's DNA is not sustainable. Climate disasters - won't allow it, decades of inequality - won't allow it, our need to retain park staff that is *able* to care about parks because we made it clear that we care about *them* - will not allow it, and a city that doesn't rely on a zip code to ensure a decent life - won't allow it.

Parks are not an amenity, they are the life-blood of a city, our collective back yards, our democratic meeting spaces. Now more than ever we need NYC's Parks that bristle with joy and purpose and oasis of respite for our city. We can't endure another year like the last one.

Yours,

K Webster

President
Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition
<http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/> @SaraRPCC <https://www.facebook.com/StantonBldg>

MAS Testimony on the FY24 Budget for the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks)

March 22, 2023

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) supports the Play Fair Coalition's demand to increase funding to allocate 1% of the City budget, \$1 billion per year, to the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks). MAS has a long history of advocating for a more livable public realm, including a well-maintained and equitable system of parks and open spaces.

Generations of New Yorkers and visitors rely on parks for their wellbeing. Open space and greenery are essential for recreation and gatherings, respite, and peace. Our parks and recreation centers are among New York City's greatest assets. Our street trees are essential to mitigating the urban heat island effect and improving public health. And yet, NYC Parks has remained underfunded for decades, contributing to vast inequities across New York City. As a result, critical needs including maintenance are unmet, especially in underserved communities. A lack of maintenance can lead to damage that requires capital expenditure to repair, creating a spiral of demand for greater capital funding.

Both Mayor Adams and City Council Speaker Adams have expressed support for allocating 1% of the City budget to NYC Parks. Funding at 1% of the City budget will ensure that parks are maintained, provide safety and cleanliness, expand the tree canopy to improve public health and the environmental health, and increase community programs across the city.

This year, MAS supports Play Fair's intermediary goals of increasing Parks staff headcount, baselining 1,065 agency positions, adding \$5.59 million in funding for the Parks Equity Initiative and \$3.5 million for natural areas, forests, wetlands, and trails. This funding will leverage the investment of thousands of volunteers, stewards, and private commitment to our parks system.

If we continue to underfund our parks, we are hampering a vision for a broader connectivity and use of all our publicly owned assets; our beloved plazas and squares, gardens, nature trails, streets, and the needed expansion of the parks system itself. These are imperative to working towards an equitable open space system in New York.

For millions of New Yorkers who live in dense urban settings, parks are their backyards and streetscapes are their living rooms. The City budget must allocate 1% to NYC Parks to restore, maintain, and expand these vital public resources for all New Yorkers.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

Budget Hearing – New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

March 22, 2023

Testimony of Carter H. Strickland, Jr.
VP Mid-Atlantic and New York State Director, Trust for Public Land

Thank you, Chairperson Krishnan and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify at this oversight hearing on the FY 2024 budget proposal for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks).

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

Parks Are Critical Infrastructure that Provide Billions in Benefits for New Yorkers

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

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

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

Trust for Public Land released a report last spring, [Economic Benefits of Parks in New York City](#), that quantifies these many benefits. We looked at city, state, and federal parks together, but city parkland is the majority of park acreage in the city. Based on original research and a recent survey of New Yorkers, we found that residents alone visit parks in the city at least 527 million times every year, which is far greater than the number of visitors to the entire New York State and Federal park systems, combined. Residents' frequent use of parks meant that city residents received billions of dollars in benefits every year – in recreational value, over \$9 billion, in health care cost savings, over \$1 billion, and in stormwater management, well over \$2 billion. New Yorkers want to live near parks, which contribute over \$15.2 billion in increased property value that translate to at least \$101 million in annual property tax revenues for homes within 500 feet of parks.

Parks also significantly strengthen the local economy by attracting visitors from outside of the city, supporting local jobs, boosting spending at local businesses, and generating local tax revenue. Surveys and other data show that domestic travelers who visit the city at least in part to participate in outdoor activities spend nearly \$18 billion in a typical year. Residents also spend an estimated \$681 million annually on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment.

New Neighborhood Parks for Economic Development and Equity

These findings are highly relevant to initiatives to improve the City's economy. Parks and the vibrant social life they create can and should be one of the main attractions to bring companies and workers back to work in New York. As more jobs take place in homes or in business districts in outer boroughs, the City must create more of the live-work-play mixed use neighborhoods that have been successful over the past few years. New greenways and neighborhood parks play a key role in those vibrant communities and Trust for Public Land is eager to work with the City to identify new opportunities for open space and new amenities in parks.

New parks could also help address the park equity gap. New York City has fewer acres of green space per person than almost any other major U.S. city, the result of park construction not keeping pace with residential growth. The Trust for Public Land research finds that in New York City:

- communities of color have 33.5% less park space per person within a 10-minute walk compared to white communities, and
- low-income communities have 21.2% less park space per person within a 10-minute walk compared to high-income communities.ⁱ

In addition, many of New York's parks lack amenities according to TPL's ParkScore report, which compares features like playgrounds and recreation centers to those in the other top 100 cities. On a per capital basis in 2022, New York City's parks had fewer fields, diamonds, and courts than 33 cities, fewer playgrounds than 63 cities, fewer recreational and senior centers than 79 cities, and fewer restrooms than 81 cities.

These inequities have real consequences, from park overcrowding to making it difficult for residents to find cooling shade on hot days. To fix this problem we need to build new parks that will address inequitable distribution of parks, park size, and amenities. See Carter Strickland and Adam Ganser, *Build new parks where they're needed most*, New York Daily News (July 27, 2020), located at <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-build-new-parks-where-theyre-needed-most-20200727-lnueedoja5d5tbkl7j4aoud5e4-story.html>. New York City lacks an overall master plan for its park system such as the [City of Buffalo Parks Master Plan](#). Such a plan could have an overall goal of getting to 100% park access and increasing parkland area and amenities in neighborhoods where they are needed most.

Budget

As a city we should measure the NYC Parks budget against these structural needs, in addition to deferred operational, maintenance, and state-of-good-repair issues highlighted by other testimony. NYC Parks budget has not kept pace with these needs, growth in park space, an increased emphasis on horticulture and safety, or inflation, growing only 72% over the last 42 years, even as inflation increased 281% between 1980 and 2002.ⁱⁱ Over the same time the City has increased the police budget by 127%, the transportation budget by 130%, the sanitation budget by 148%, corrections budget by 165%, with an overall growth in the expense budget of 127%. Holding the parks budget below average does not reflect the priorities of New York residents and voters, who overwhelmingly support and value parks.

TPL is a member of the Play Fair coalition and supports its campaign for 1% of the City budget for Parks, up from a paltry 0.6% of the budget today. More funding means safer, cleaner, more interesting and accessible parks. More funding also means more gardeners, urban park rangers, enforcement patrol officers, and other city park workers, delivering on the green jobs that we need for our residents, who want to give back to their city and start public service careers.

We are far short of this goal, and only need to look to our peer cities. While some city budgets exclude education spending because school districts are independent, TPL has controlled for this factor by comparing overall park budgets for the 100 largest cities. Our data considers both operating and capital spending by all park agencies in a city, as well as private conservancies and even quantifiable volunteers' hours (but excludes professional sports stadiums, zoos, museums, aquariums, and cemeteries). In FY21, the last year for which data is available, New York City ranked 20th in spending per person at \$173 per person compared to \$445 in San Francisco, CA, \$325 in Minneapolis, MN, \$320 in Arlington, VA, \$314 in Seattle, WA, \$259 in Irvine, CA, \$257

in St. Paul, MN, \$252 in San Jose, CA, \$260 in Washington, DC, and \$194 in Cincinnati, OH; on a three-year rolling basis, FY19-21, New York City ranked 10th and spent \$204 per person compared to \$424 in San Francisco, CA, \$317 in Minneapolis, MN, \$360 in Arlington, VA, \$325 in Seattle, WA, \$247 in St. Paul, MN, \$284 in Washington, DC.ⁱⁱⁱ It is not surprising that all of those cities ranked higher than New York City in our annual ParkScore report. While there was some progress in additional NYC Parks funding last year, it has not been enough to make up for shortfalls in park amenities and quality, and NYC Parks is only ranked 10th best. We should strive to be the top park system in the country!

Capital Project Reform and Funding

Trust for Public Land would also like to work with this Committee and NYC Parks to improve capital project delivery and believes that reducing costs and project time by 25% is realistic and achievable. More efficient project delivery will facilitate more capital projects. There are billions of dollars for capital improvements at parks in the City's capital budget to help maintain and improve the quality of parks, but under the current inefficient delivery system, the commitment rate remains low at 40 percent in 2016, 60 percent in 2017, 47 percent in 2018, 86 percent in 2019, and 48 percent in 2020. In addition, often projects bid out by NYC Parks cost more than comparable projects.

Trust for Public Land has streamlined its procurement and management to achieve the fast completion of green schoolyards as well as larger parks such as Heritage Park on Staten Island using Port Authority funds and South Point Park on Roosevelt Island using funds from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. As the Department of Parks and Recreation seeks to more efficiently deliver capital projects, Trust for Public Land welcomes the opportunity to partner with the City to design and build projects on New York City parkland.

Our suggestions for reforming the capital delivery process include prompt payments to contractors, standardizing designs, creating dedicated project teams, and streamlining procurement. In addition, NYC Parks could use its relatively new design-build authority and increase its use of cost-effective public-private partnerships for capital projects. These steps would merely extend the well-established practice of relying on conservancies in big parks and "friends of" groups in smaller parks to fund or even undertake maintenance and operations. These changes would result in faster and less expensive capital improvements to parks.

Trust for Public Land applauds the Adams Administration for taking on this longstanding capital spending problem by convening the Capital Process Reform Task Force comprised of agencies, outside experts, labor, and M/WBE firms. Of 39 specific recommendations 30 are within City control and we understand that they are being implemented. Another 9 require State legislation, and TPL is supporting state law reforms that would allow the city to adopt one-step design-build procurement, online document storage, and other modern techniques that are commonplace in other states.

Fair Share of State and Federal Funding

Finally, we note that only a small portion of the Department of Park and Recreation's capital budget comes from State and Federal funding, and much of that is for minor items such as mandated surveys. A higher capital commitment rate will create the opportunities for attracting additional matching funds. There is a significant opportunity for the Department and Council to work with the New York City delegation to the New York State Legislature to get a greater and fairer share of the recently-passed \$4.2 billion State Bond Act as well as the annual Environmental Protection Fund, which is \$400 million per year or more (the Senate one-house bill current has increased the EPF to \$500 million). While the EPF has dedicated line items for parks and trails upstate, the line item for "Municipal Parks: Inner City and Underserved" is frozen at \$13 million for the entire state. The State does not systematically report how much State open space and parks money is actually provided to NYC Parks or even spent in New York City, but it appears to be very little.

The extreme discrepancy between where people live in the state and where the State Legislature spends environmental and other infrastructure funding cannot endure. Voters and advocacy groups have waited for years for a fair share of funding, but extraordinarily little is spent downstate. I note that New York City residents comprise approximately 44% of the state's population and 59% of the state's population in disadvantaged communities, our residents and business contribute 62% of the state's tax revenue, and our residents voted overwhelmingly for the Bond Act, providing critical support for that funding along with all other funding passed by our representatives in the State Legislature. The State's commitment to spending 40% of the Environmental Bond Act and other environmental measures, and to making outdoor spaces accessible and open to all, can only be met with targeted spending to the New York metro area. This Committee should work with the Adams Administration and the State Legislature to increase State funding for parks and open space in New York City.

Similarly, New York City gets little open space, park, and greenway funding from the Federal government, even as the Justice 40 initiative seeks to direct 40% of funding to disadvantaged communities. The Council and Administration should work with New York City's Congressional delegation to obtain funding for parks in the city from the billions of dollars in the new federal infrastructure bills and Land and Water Conservation Fund. On conservation funding generally and federal grant funding specifically, Trust for Public Land would be very eager to assist the Council and Administration in obtaining these funds.

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

ⁱ Our methodology was to measure the total park area within a 10-minute walk of compact census block groups of around 1,200 people, for neighborhoods of color (defined as the quintile of census block groups with the highest concentrations of residents self-identifying as non-white), majority-white

neighborhoods (the quintile of census block groups with the highest concentration of residents identifying as white), low-income neighborhoods (top quintile of census block groups with the highest concentration of households where the median income is less than 75% of the metropolitan area Median Household Income (MHI)), and high-income neighborhoods (top quintile of census block groups with the highest concentration of households where the median income is greater than 125% of the MHI). Our findings are the median neighborhood of color has access to 28.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 people within a 10-minute walk, compared to 44.8 acres per 1,000 people within walking distance of the median majority-white neighborhood. Similarly, we found the median low-income neighborhood has access to 35.3 acres of parkland per 1,000 people within a 10-minute walk, compared to 44.8 acres per 1,000 people within walking distance of the typical high-income neighborhood.

ⁱⁱ See <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/inflation-in-new-york-newark-and-jersey-city-metropolitan-area/> (access March 21, 2023).

ⁱⁱⁱ See <https://www.tpl.org/2022-city-park-facts> (accessed March 22, 2023).



::TESTIMONY TO THE NYC COUNCIL PARKS COMMITTEE::

Budget Hearing Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Thank you, Hon. Chair Krishnan, and members of the NYC Council Parks & Recreation Committee. My name is Tali Cantor, and I am the Director of Planning for the Union Square Partnership. We are the nonprofit business improvement district working to create a clean, safe, vibrant, and enjoyable neighborhood for Union Square's residents, businesses, and visitors. At our neighborhood's core is Union Square Park, where we provide stewardship and supplemental services, including cleaning, trash collection, landscaping, and free public programming.

Union Square Park is a critical open space amenity for our neighborhood and an important civic gathering place for the entire city. It is not only a green oasis in a bustling mixed-use district, but a site for free expression, and the chosen venue for hundreds of demonstrations, performances, and public events each year, as well as the City's flagship Greenmarket, operating four days a week.

As a consequence of this intensive use, the infrastructure beneath our beautiful park is aging and failing. It has been nearly 40 years since the park's interior was renovated, and the result is deteriorating plumbing and drainage systems that have caused sinkholes and eroding pathways. With failing irrigation, the park plantings rely on makeshift and expensive workarounds that have caused the landscaping to deteriorate. The current conditions in the park are not only a detriment to plant and tree health but create unsafe conditions for pedestrians. Furthermore, this park is located above the fourth busiest subway station in NYC. Rather than waiting for a disaster when water pipes break, we are calling for our city leaders to be proactive and fund these repairs before it is too late.

We are here today to advocate for funding to repair Union Square Park's plumbing and drainage systems and pathway reconstruction. We are asking the Council and the City to fund the full \$8.5M requested by the Parks Department to complete this project.

Our parks are essential public spaces for our city's health and sustainability, and so we urge the council and the City to ensure that funding is secured for the Parks Department in FY24 and beyond, including the 1% called for partners like New Yorkers for Parks and the Trust for Public Land. We look forward to the Council's support and to working with NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue on this effort.

Thank you.

UPPER GREEN SIDE

1136 First Avenue, Suite 7, New York, New York 10065 - 212-759-6895

March 22, 2023

Land Use Committee
New York City Council
City of New York
City Hall
New York, New York

Ladies/Gentlemen:

Please increase the monies allocated to our New York City Parks from the disgracefully small amount proposed by the present mayor to the 1% of the budget required to adequately care for and improve this all-important city space.

If there was ever any doubt as to the importance of public spaces to our quality of life, Covid has established this as fact beyond any doubt.

Throughout America, city upon city allocates funding for their parks far in excess as is the case in New York.

Let us remedy this shameful shortfall in 3023.

Most sincerely,



Sarah Woodside Gallagher

SWG:mf



CONSERVANCY

Thank you Council Members. I write today on behalf of Washington the Washington Square Park Conservancy, a nonprofit partner of NYC Parks, to strongly support the allocation of 1% of the city's annual budget to the Parks Department. As an organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing Washington Square Park, a vibrant public space enjoyed by New Yorkers from across the City, we know firsthand the vital role that public parks play in the health and well-being of our communities.

Access to outdoor space is essential for maintaining our physical and mental health, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parks provide a safe and accessible place for exercise, relaxation, and social interaction, all of which are critical for our overall well-being. As the weather improves and people look for ways to get outside and enjoy the fresh air, our parks are more important than ever. Our public parks are of critical importance, and yet NYC Parks is severely underfunded. Less than 1% of the city's budget for 14% of the city's landmass is starkly insufficient. As a result, many of our parks are in need of repairs and improvements, and do not have the resources necessary to meet the needs of their communities. This is especially true for parks that do not have the benefit of non-profit partners, like the Washington Square Park Conservancy, that can step in and make up funding shortages. We see firsthand everyday the benefits of added investments to vital public space.

Allocating 1% of the city's budget to NYC Parks would be a significant step towards ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe, well-maintained parks. This funding would allow the Parks Department to invest in much-needed repairs and improvements and hire staff, particularly in under-resources areas. We urge the New York City Council to prioritize funding for NYC Parks and to allocate 1% of the city's annual budget to this critical resource. This investment will help ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, well-maintained parks, and will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of our communities for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sheryl'.

Sheryl Woodruff
Deputy Director
Washington Square Park Conservancy

Dear City Council,

I am writing to you today as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. I have seen firsthand the dedication that volunteers bring towards the maintenance of our beloved parks, yet I also see firsthand how much more work there is to be done. It is unfair to place this burden on our fellow citizens and our city budget.

As President Biden said, "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." Our budget should reflect our values, and our values should include our parks.

Van Cortlandt Park is one of the largest and most historic parks in New York City. It is home to a variety of natural and cultural attractions, including the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail, the Van Cortlandt House Museum, and the Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course. The park is also a popular spot for recreation, with over 3 million visitors each year.

The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is a non-profit organization that works to preserve and enhance the park. We rely on volunteers to help with a variety of tasks, including trail maintenance, invasive species removal, and tree planting. Our volunteers are essential to the park's success, and we are grateful for their dedication.

However, we cannot rely solely on volunteers to maintain the park. We need the support of the city government to ensure that Van Cortlandt Park is properly maintained and preserved.

I urge you to restore the budget for NYC Parks. Our parks are essential to the quality of life for all New Yorkers, and they deserve the investment that they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Noel Hefe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noel Hefe', with a stylized, cursive script.

Testimony by Theodore Massiah, NYC Parks Super Steward and NAC Trail Maintainer
March 24, 2023

To the Committee on Parks and Recreation:

Parks are and have been vital part of my life for over 60yrs, and I'm a few weeks shy of being 63yrs old. Picnics in Van Cortlandt Park in the early 60s, playing in Crotona Park when the rowboats were there, highschool cross country races and practices in Van Cortlandt Park, grade school field days in Pelham Bay Park, visits to Far Rockaways in the 70s.

Today I am a NYC Parks Dept Super Steward. I am a Shorekeeper Soundview Salt Marsh my first love. Wetlands are an essential part of our ecosystem and provide so much knowledge, I am a Trail Maintainer with The Natural Areas Conservancy maintaining trails in Jamaica Bay, I am a NAVigator removing invasives inside our parks and a Care Captain caring for our street trees.

These activities help with my PTSD; United States Navy. I also am a Super Steward because someone else worked the parks I've enjoyed as a kid teenager and as an adult.

WE MUST DO ALL AND EVERYTHING TO ENSURE FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN AND
WILL IN THE FUTURE TALK ABOUT PARKS IN THEIR LIVES JUST AS I HAVE SPOKEN
OF AND ABOUT THE PARKS RIGHT NOW!
SAVE OUR 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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sue Donoghue

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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Therese Braddick

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: for Capital Projects

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Fochtt

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: Chief Operating Officer

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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Greenfield

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: for Environment & Planning

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Nelson

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: for Urban Park Service & Public Programs

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joy Wang

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner

Address: for Administration

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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Stark

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Executive Financial

Address: officer

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barbara Smith

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Assistant Commissioner

Address: for COPD

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matt Drury

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Parks Director of Government

Address: relations

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: Territ Carter

Address: _____

I represent: Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Boro

Address: Conshohocken

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 042 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SCOTT KADNEY

Address: 11th St

I represent: Brooklyn NY

Address: represent myself

**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: Tali Cantor

Address: 200 Park Avenue South Suite 1320

I represent: Union Square Partnership NY NY

Address: 10003

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zoe Sealy

Address: PS 46 Edward C. Blum

I represent: 100 Clearmont Ave BK NY

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: 3-22-23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Morgan Morala

Address: _____

I represent: Prospect Park Alliance

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: 3-22-23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Heather Tubak

Address: _____

I represent: City Parks Foundation

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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Diley Benn

Address: 125 Barclay St NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 1505, DC37

Address: CCPWS, seasonal workers

**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: 3/28/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Evangelina Meltrano

Address: Clermont Ave BK NY

I represent: PS 46 & Ft. Greene Brooklyn

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: 3/27/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daniel Clay

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 1507, DC37

Address: (Gardeners)

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: 3/23/2027

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Fred Blakeney

Address: 125 Barclay St NY NY 10007

I represent: Vice President, Local 1507, DC37

Address: (Gardeners)

**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: 3/27/2027

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eve Brooks

Address: 125 Barclay St NY NY 10007

I represent: Gardener, Local 1507, DC37

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: 3/22/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joe Puleo

Address: 125 Barclay St NY NY 10007

I represent: President, Local 983, DC37

Address: (PEP, UPRs, CSAs)

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. parks Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/22/23

Name: LYNN Kelly (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: new York restoration project

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: _____

Name: Chris Lescarzo (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Local 1010

Address: Whitestone Expy, Queens, 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: _____

Name: Brian Hedden (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Bklyn

I represent: Brooklyn Greenway Initiative

Address: 19 Morris Ave Bklyn

**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: 3-22-23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Charlop-Powers

Address: 1234 5th Ave 2nd floor

I represent: Natural Areas Conservancy

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: 3/23/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Terri Carta

Address: Brooklyn

I represent: Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks

Address: Conservancy

**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: Sarah Williams - Green Guerillas

Address: Bergen Street

I represent: Green Guerillas

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: EMILIA ALBERTO

Address: SAMARA COMMUNITY

I represent: SCHOOL

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: CAMILA Caminero

Address: SAMARA COMMUNITY

I represent: SCHOOL

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: 3/22/

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JERRICK MORALES

Address: SAMARA COMMUNITY

I represent: SCHOOL

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: March 22, 2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brad Taylor

Address: West 94th St -

I represent: Friends of Morningside Park

Address: 14 Morningside Ave 10026

**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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIK BERG

Address: W 137th St.

I represent: Harlem, Citizens of NYC

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: 3/22/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHANITA PHAIRE

Address: TREE CARE

I represent: COMMUNITY GARDENS & GREENSPACE

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: 3/22/23

Name: ALIA SOOMRO (PLEASE PRINT)

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: 3/22/23

Name: Giulietta Fiore (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Mott Street NY 10013

I represent: Historic House Trust of NYC

Address: Olmsted Center

**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: Catherine Hughes (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Jumel Terrace 10032

I represent: Morris Jumel Mansion

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: SPOTT DALL

Address: NYJTL

I represent: NYJTL

Address: 3636 - LIC

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: 3/22/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kelsey Brown

Address: 90th Ave.

I represent: Historic House Coalition

Address: 150-03 Jamaica Ave

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms