



**June 16, 2026**

**New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation**

**Legislative Hearing: Int. 89, Int. 576, Int. 666, Int. 859, Int. 864 & Int. 880**

*Testimony by: Matt Drury, Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs, NYC Parks*

Good afternoon, Chair Hankerson, members of the Parks Committee, and other members of the City Council. My name is Matt Drury, the Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs for NYC Parks, and I'm joined by Benjamin Osborne, our Assistant Commissioner of Forestry. We are pleased to be here to testify alongside our fellow agency partners to discuss the various pieces of legislation being considered today.

First, since three of the bills being heard today are related to forestry and our City's urban tree canopy, I'd like to provide a quick update on the tree impacts that resulted from the numerous storms the city has experienced in recent weeks, including the June 6<sup>th</sup> storm, which produced the most significant tree impacts we've witnessed since Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020. We are grateful to our expert forestry crews at Parks, and to our partners on the Downed Tree Task Force, including NYC Emergency Management, Department of Sanitation, FDNY, NYPD, Con Edison, and PSE&G, who all helped address tree-related storm conditions. Since May 20<sup>th</sup>, we have received more than 4,500 storm-related service requests, which led to over 3,500 inspections, resulting in the creation of over 2,500 work orders for damaged and fallen trees and branches, including roughly 100 blocked streets and 60 trees on houses. Our first priority following any storm event is addressing life safety hazards, especially those blocked streets and trees on houses, which we aim to complete as quickly as possible using all available resources, including our emergency contractor and partner agency crews at the City and State level. As of today, all work orders resulting from these storms have been completed except for roughly 200 low-priority jobs remaining from the June 6<sup>th</sup> event and another thunderstorm on June 12<sup>th</sup>. To be clear, resolving tree-related conditions can be complex, challenging and highly dangerous work, especially in stormy or excessively hot conditions, requiring the use of heavy equipment and large vehicles, so we thank New Yorkers for their patience and support as this work continues.

Beginning with Introduction 89, this legislation would require Parks to identify tree beds located on streets and in landscaped parks and display them on the City's online tree map, noting whether each tree bed contains a tree. To be explicitly clear, the presence of an empty tree bed along a street has no bearing on whether that site is viable for planting, because planting standards evolve over time and new infrastructure conflicts can arise. Similarly, the absence of a pre-existing tree bed bears absolutely no relation to whether a tree can be planted at that location. We recognize that empty street tree beds which are no longer viable for tree planting can become unsightly and inconvenient over time. So, through our Neighborhood Tree Planting strategy, while we assess each and every block in New York City for street tree planting opportunities, we identify any empty street tree beds that are no longer viable for planting and, unless the bed is being maintained as a garden, revert them back to sidewalk alongside the other tree-related work to be done along that block, in hopes that these situations can gradually become increasingly rare. The citywide canvassing and geolocating of tree beds on streets and in parks, as proposed by the bill, would be a massive logistical undertaking and investment of finite agency resources, with little to no practical public benefit, and the dataset would become outdated nearly immediately after such a canvass were to be completed, leading to unnecessary public confusion. We are always happy to work with the Council to discuss ways in which the agency can best engage with local residents regarding our new approach to street tree planting and the improvements it will bring to our city streetscape, but we oppose this legislation as it is currently drafted.

Next, Introduction 576 would require applicants seeking NYC Parks' authorization for a tree removal, to provide the name of a certified arborist who will conduct the proposed tree removal. It would also require the agency to report annually on trees under Parks' jurisdiction that have been removed in the previous year. We appreciate the apparent intent of this bill, as our agency is keenly focused on growing and protecting our urban tree



canopy, and we only approve tree removals in very select circumstances. To be clear, NYC Parks is the sole authority that can allow the removal of a tree under our jurisdiction. We take the decision to allow the removal of a tree very seriously, and tree removal proposals are rigorously reviewed by our agency's highly qualified technical staff. We do not currently require tree removal work to be performed by an ISA-Certified Arborist, which is a credential more applicable to the decision-making pertaining to the care, maintenance, and preservation of trees than the physical work of removing a tree. It is worth noting that additional regulatory requirements for tree removal permits could inadvertently encourage parties to avoid seeking formal approval from Parks, which would result in the unauthorized removal of healthy City trees that would not otherwise have been allowed. As for the reporting requirement imposed by the legislation, Parks is committed to public transparency and is happy to look more closely at the types of datasets that can best inform New Yorkers looking to learn more about our tree management efforts, in an efficient and productive manner. To this end, we would like to discuss this bill further with the sponsor to learn more about its intended outcomes, so we can work together towards the goals we clearly share.

Introduction 666 would require NYC Parks publish any current maintenance prioritization rating assigned by Parks to each tree under its jurisdiction, pursuant to a tree inspection, and the reason for that rating on our interactive tree map website. We make a robust set of information available on our agency website to anyone looking to learn more about the individual street and park trees in our canopy, including their species, inspection and work order status, and the ecological and economic benefits provided by each individual tree. We support the intent of this legislation and are happy to work with the sponsor to discuss the ways in which the legislation can best help achieve our shared goals, while providing sufficient time for any mandatory website development updates, which are a time-intensive undertaking.

Turning to Introduction 859, this bill would authorize the relevant agency or office to conduct its own historical research while posting biographical information related to individuals or entities for whom streets and parks have been co-named via Local Law, when no biographical information can be found in the legislative record. NYC Parks already routinely provides biographical and historical information related to the persons or entities in whose honor our parks are named – both via our historical interpretative signage physically installed at park sites, as well as robust information available on the webpages dedicated to individual properties on our agency website. We believe our current operational practices already largely comply with the spirit of the bill and look forward to working with the sponsor and our colleagues at DORIS to ensure that the legislation can best help achieve our shared goals.

Lastly, we'll turn to two bills regarding the presence of dog waste in our public spaces. We appreciate the Council's advocacy and efforts to help educate dog owners about the importance of picking up after their pets, as just about every New Yorker has had an unpleasant encounter with this persistent inconvenience at one time or another.

Introduction 864 would compel Parks to establish a two-year pilot program to collect dog waste from dog runs located within parks, for the purposes of processing that waste into compost, and submit a report on the operational results of that pilot, including the amount of dog waste processed into compost, and how or where any resulting compost was utilized. We share the Council's support for sustainable practices, and we work closely with DSNY and other partners in a variety of ways to ensure that organic materials, such as park yard and leaf waste, can be kept out of landfills. We currently host nearly 90 formalized dog runs throughout our park system, a list of which can be accessed on our agency website, as well as information about areas in parks that allow dogs off-leash during early morning and evening hours. To be clear, dog run trash receptacles are placed outside of each dog run, and Parks employees do not enter dog runs to perform routine cleaning or maintenance, though we work closely with the dog owners at each dog run as we advance necessary repairs and other substantial site improvements. In accordance with existing guidance from DSNY related to organic waste collection, dog owners visiting a dog run are expected to place their dog's waste in the adjacent trash



NYC Parks

bin. Though we appreciate the broader ecological goals of this legislation, we do not support this bill as it is currently drafted, since the processing of organic waste into compost lies outside of our agency's mission and expertise, and the pilot program and related reporting that would be mandated by this bill would be incredibly resource-intensive in the context of our exceedingly finite agency resources.

Introduction 880 would require NYC Parks to post park signage, related to agency rules prohibiting persons from leaving dog waste on the ground and the associated penalties for violation. We believe all New Yorkers should have clean parks, and our Maintenance and Operations staff work tirelessly to clean our park properties every single day, to keep these spaces enjoyable for everyone, so we want dog owners and their furry friends to do the right thing and responsibly enjoy our city parks. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol officers enforce park rules related to picking up after dogs, and they routinely educate dog owners and other park visitors about the importance of following park rules. We install standard consolidated rule signage in multiple languages at the entrances of each of our parks, including a reference to picking up dog waste, and we install specific signage at dog runs, to outline the specific rules and policies in place at those features. We very much support the intent of this legislation, though we do have some technical and operational concerns regarding the way in which the bill is currently drafted, which we look forward to discussing further with the sponsor.

We would like to additionally note that Intro. 880 would also create a new signage mandate for New York City Department of Transportation outside of parks. While we defer to our sister agency on that aspect of the legislation, they have shared that it would create severe operational concerns to require an open-ended number of signs at any 311 complaint location. Dictating signage siting via 311 complaints would result in thousands or tens of thousands of mandated signs, particularly since the complaints may be unverified or will likely get resolved before signage installation. DOT has further expressed concerns regarding the likely impact this legislation would have on their capacity to install life-protecting safety signage, such as stop signs or other traffic control signage.

Thank you for allowing us to testify before you today and for your continued advocacy and support for our city parks. We would now be happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding the legislation being heard today.



**The New York City Department of Records and Information Services**

31 Chambers Street, Room 305, New York, NY 10007

Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, Commissioner

[ssmithcruz@records.nyc.gov](mailto:ssmithcruz@records.nyc.gov)

(212) 788-8607

**Testimony for NYC Council Hearing – June 16, 2026**

RE: [Int. No. 859](#)

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Shawn Smith-Cruz, and I have had the privilege of serving as Commissioner of the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) since May 18, 2026. Having joined City government only about a month ago, I come to this work with a professional background as a librarian and archivist, and I appreciate your patience as I continue learning the culture and processes of municipal government.

In reviewing prior City Council hearing records, I understand that about twice each year the Council recognizes New Yorkers through honorary street co-naming's. In 2023, the Council enacted Local Law 104 to support and strengthen this commemorative process.

Earlier local laws enacted in 2002 and 2003 named more than 400 streets in honor of first responders who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. However, many of those commemorative street designations did not include accompanying biographical information documenting who these individuals were and why they were honored.

Over the past year DORIS developed the Honorary Street Naming Project to support the creation of an interactive public map documenting more than 4,200 New York City Street co-naming's from 1902 through 2026. The purpose of this project is not only to document where honorary street designations exist, but also to preserve and share with the public the stories behind them.

The interactive map was developed using ArcGIS mapping software and incorporates City Council legislative records from 1998 through 2026. To expand and enrich the historical record, DORIS also incorporated Municipal Library archival resources, including pre-1998 proceedings, local laws, and microfilm collections.

To date, DORIS has researched and completed approximately 393 biographies connected to 9/11-related co-naming's and an additional 28 biographies for co-naming's dating from 1940 through 1981. This work includes:

- 2002 – 176 biographies
- 2003 – 116 biographies
- 2004 – 73 biographies
- 2005 – 22 biographies
- 2006 – 5 biographies

- 2008 – 1 biography

Int. No. 859 would provide guidance regarding the posting of biographical information for individuals honored through street and park naming actions when that information is not available in the legislative record.

Importantly, this legislation recognizes the value of archival and historical research already conducted by DORIS and allows that independently researched content to be incorporated into the public-facing website, with sourcing information included where available.

This legislation strengthens the historical record, enhances public understanding of those being commemorated, and helps ensure that future generations understand not only the names on signs, but the lives and contributions those names represent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome any questions.

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Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Parks and  
Recreation Oversight Hearing  
06/16/2025

Thank you, Chair Hankerson and members of the Parks Committee, for convening this public hearing. I am Cory Hasson, Government Affairs Manager at the New York Restoration Project (NYRP). For over 30 years, NYRP has been committed to transforming New York City by bringing green spaces to the communities that need them most. We believe that all New Yorkers deserve access to high-quality public green space and that access to nature is a fundamental right.

I am here today in support of Intro 89-2026, sponsored by Council Member Brewer, which would require the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation to identify and map tree pits citywide on the City's existing online tree map, and to update that map annually to reflect changes in tree pit status and the creation of new tree pits.

Intro 89-2026 would bring much-needed transparency to this process. By requiring the Parks Commissioner to catalog all tree pits, noting whether each contains a tree and, if not, the reason for its disuse, and to display this information on the City's Tree Map, the bill would consolidate critical greening data in one accessible place. This would empower New Yorkers, block associations, and community organizations like NYRP to better understand local opportunities for greening and to direct their energy where it can make the greatest impact.

With our Parks Department facing decades of disinvestment and chronic staffing shortages, tools that increase efficiency and reduce duplicative constituent requests are more important than ever. This legislation is a smart, low-barrier step toward a greener, more equitable New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We urge our partners in the City Council to support Intro 89-2026 and to continue investing in the transparency and accessibility of our city's green infrastructure.

**Testimony for the NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation RE: Int. 89 of 2026**  
**Tami Lin-Moges, Director, NY Cities Program, The Nature Conservancy**  
**June 18, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Hankerson, and members of the Parks Committee, for the opportunity to testify. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, whose mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have 90,000 members across New York, 35,000 of whom are in New York City. In New York City, we convene the 200+ member [Forest for All NYC](#) coalition, and we are leading practitioners on the science and policy of the NYC Urban Forest.

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I want to express our conditional support for Introduction 89 of 2026. As a science-based organization committed to equitably [growing tree canopy to at least 30%](#) across New York City, The Nature Conservancy appreciates the value of data on the NYC urban forest. We also strongly commend the bill's ultimate goal of greening NYC by understanding where there are empty tree beds in streets and City parks and ensuring they are replanted.

However, we are concerned about the potential burden of Int. 89 on NYC Parks, which has been a chronically underfunded agency. [NYC Parks testified](#) that conducting a citywide systemic data collection effort of vacant tree beds as prescribed in Int. 89 would be a considerable logistical undertaking that would be expensive and pull an already strained workforce away from other work, such as maintenance. The Nature Conservancy has advocated for years for the Mayor and City Council to allocate greater funding to NYC Parks to rebuild, sustain, and grow the workforce that cares for the NYC urban forest (see our most recent [Action Page for the FY27 budget](#)). Also, given the new NYC Parks Neighborhood Tree Planting Program will reach and aim to re-plant and expand tree beds wherever possible in every neighborhood by 2035, any collected and reported information on vacant beds may be outdated quickly.

To ensure this legislation achieves its intended goals without unintended consequences, we suggest removing the requirement for NYC Parks to publish a full census of all vacant tree beds citywide, but instead enable the following:

- Add a feature to the [NYC Tree Map](#) enabling community members to report vacant tree beds, just as they are currently able to report tree care activities they perform. While this feature does not guarantee a complete dataset, it enables motivated

communities and districts to ensure public record of their own assessment of vacant tree beds.

- Also on the NYC Tree Map, add info from the Department of Buildings and NYC Parks of any new street tree beds that are created as a result of new building development projects that adhere to the Street Tree Planting Requirement in the City Zoning regulations and indicate that a new tree will be planted there. Many of these tree beds are vacant for a while until the developer plants a tree.

Beyond the scope of this legislation, but in the same spirit of planting more trees, we would also welcome efforts to accelerate the Neighborhood Tree Planting Program and shorten the timeframe from nine years so that all empty tree beds may be filled sooner. Of course, this will also necessitate increased funding for NYC Parks, which we wholly support.

With these modifications, we would be pleased to offer our full support for Int. 89. Last, we would like to echo our FY27 budget testimonies and once more urge the Council and the Administration to allocate \$150 million in FY27 to start to rebuild NYC's urban forest workforce and kickstart the implementation of the [Urban Forest Plan](#). The Nature Conservancy stands ready to continue offering technical expertise, community partnership, and support for the City's efforts to grow the urban forest.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.

June 16, 2026

## Written Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation

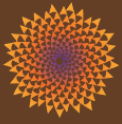
Public Hearing on Intro 89-2026

Testimony of Dr. Shahar Sadeh, Founding Director, Adamah NY

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. My name is Dr. Shahar Sadeh, and I am the Founding Director of Adamah NY. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Intro 89-2026. Adamah is the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America, mobilizing a Jewish response to the climate crisis. Adamah's mission is to cultivate vibrant Jewish life in deep connection with the earth, catalyzing culture change and systemic change through climate action, immersive experiences, Jewish environmental education, and leadership development. I have the honor of leading Adamah NY, our national group's largest and most active Community Impact Hub. Adamah NY works with over 140 local Jewish institutions on climate mitigation, adaptation, nature connection, environmental education, and community building.

In New York, Adamah NY helps communities connect more deeply with nature, with one another, and with our collective responsibility to care for the places we share. We partner with institutions, educators, youth, civic leaders, and neighborhood groups to advance environmental stewardship and climate resilience through hands-on service, environmental education, and community engagement. Our work brings people out from classrooms and into parks, from synagogues onto city streets; and such efforts create meaningful opportunities to experience nature as part of everyday urban life. We strive to build a more just, connected, and resilient future by helping New Yorkers care for trees, green spaces, and the local environment together.

We put this commitment into practice through on-the-ground work across New York City. Adamah NY has helped lead and support volunteer initiatives throughout the city, including Street Tree Care programs with the support of Council Member Gale Brewer and other local



partners. These efforts strengthen stewardship of the urban canopy. They help residents understand how trees contribute to public health, climate resilience, cooling, stormwater management, and neighborhood well-being. And, they unite the block, literally and figuratively under the shade of the oxygen-producing neighborhood fixture.

Our experience has shown that New Yorkers are eager to care for their blocks and participate in local greening efforts, when they have clear information, meaningful opportunities for involvement, and the support to do so. Intro 89-2026 would ensure that the city provides such information, opportunities, and support, so as to engender more greenery, and greater civic activity.

Intro 89-2026 would simply require the Department of Parks and Recreation to identify tree pits on streets and in landscaped parks, display them on the City's online tree map, then update that information annually. The map would indicate whether each tree pit currently contains a tree -- and, when it does not, explain *why* the site is not in use. We support this bill because it would bring much-needed transparency to local greening opportunities. It would reduce confusion around vacant tree beds, and help communities, block associations, and residents better understand which sites may be viable for planting, and which are constrained by conditions such as sidewalk width, accessibility requirements, or underground infrastructure. By consolidating this information in one public, accessible place, Intro 89-2026 would make it easier for New Yorkers to work with the City to expand the urban canopy – and, just as importantly, to explore complementary greening strategies where tree planting is *not* feasible.

Adamah NY is proud to be part of the Forest for All Coalition, and we celebrate the City's new Urban Forest Plan released in 2026. We also recently joined America the Beautiful for All, a national network of over 300 organizations dedicated to simultaneously protecting nature and advancing environmental justice; among its main priorities is ensuring access to urban greenspace, especially in underserved and under-canopied communities. These partnerships reflect our belief that environmental action must be both community-rooted and equity-driven, and that access to healthy, thriving green spaces is essential to a just city.

For all these reasons – ecological and social, civic and justice-minded, scientific and spiritual – Adamah NY strongly supports Intro 89-2026. We urge the Council to advance this legislation as an important step toward greater transparency, stronger community stewardship, and a healthier, more resilient urban forest for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your consideration.

**From:** [Matt Malina](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Avery Wallace](#); [Ryan Brenner](#); [David Chuchuca](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for June 16 Parks Committee meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 17, 2026 7:05:10 AM

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**Matt Malina, Director & Founder, NYC H2O**

Good afternoon Chair Hankerson and members of the Committee.

I'm Matt Malina, founder of NYC H2O, an environmental nonprofit connecting New Yorkers with our waterways and green spaces.

For six years, our team has restored the Ridgewood Reservoir in Highland Park — clearing two acres of invasive Phragmites, planting more than 300 native plants across 12 species, and training 34 young adults. The result is a healthier wetland and a better park for East New York, Cypress Hills, Bushwick, and Ridgewood.

This work delivers real value: a restored wetland that supports habitat and stormwater resilience, a better green space for thousands of park visitors, and paid environmental training for local youth.

This season we have seven returning interns ready now and eleven more starting June 30. The work is fully funded through grants and staffed by our own paid crews — it costs the City nothing in labor. And it's fully permitted: NYSDEC has issued the wetland permit, which Parks holds.

One thing stands in our way: a written authorization from Parks. They've confirmed there's no legal or liability barrier — it's only paperwork. Meanwhile the season slips away. Phragmites grows aggressively all summer, and every week off-site erodes years of progress.

We're grateful for Parks' partnership, and we're not asking for money or a policy change — just help with one administrative step. My request is simple: please urge Parks to issue interim authorization so our ready, funded crews can resume work now.

Thank you.

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Matt Malina  
Director & Founder [NYC H2O](#)



**From:** [David Chuchuca](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Hickey, Ryan](#); [Avery Wallace](#); [Matt Malina](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for June 16 Parks Committee meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 17, 2026 5:35:54 PM

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**David Chuchuca, School Programs Director, NYC H2O**

My name is David Chuchuca, and I am the School Programs Director at NYC H2O. I have been involved with the Ridgewood Reservoir restoration project since 2019 and now help lead our summer crews in the hands-on stewardship of this unique wetland.

Each summer, our crews remove invasive *Phragmites australis* from the freshwater pond to make room for the native plants and wildlife that have been crowded out over time. This work is restoring a healthier and more resilient ecosystem while reconnecting people to one of New York City's most unique natural areas.

Our work is about more than removing invasive species. Every summer, we invest in young adults by teaching them field skills, environmental science, and what it means to care for public land. Many of our interns are experiencing ecological restoration work for the first time and beginning to see themselves as environmental stewards and future leaders in the green sector.

Our crews are funded, trained, and ready to work. We will have new interns this year eager to learn and contribute, but without authorization from Parks, we cannot begin. Every week of delay is a week of paid training, mentorship, and hands-on experience that these young people lose.

At the same time, the restoration work we planned for this season sits undone. The *Phragmites* grows aggressively throughout the spring and summer, and every delay allows it to reclaim ground that volunteers, interns, and staff have spent years restoring. Each season of inaction risks undoing years of incremental progress.

I respectfully ask the Committee to help us obtain the necessary authorization from Parks so our crews can get to work restoring this landscape and cultivating the young people who are committed to its future.

sincerely,  
David Chuchuca  
School Programs Director  
[NYC H2O](#)

**From:** [Maia Bromley-Dulfano](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ridgewood Reservoir Restoration June 16 Parks Committee Hearing  
**Date:** Thursday, June 18, 2026 12:01:09 PM

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Dear Parks & Recreation Committee Chair Hankerson,

My name is Maia Bromley-Dulfano. I am the Education Programs Manager at NYC H2O. I am an assistant manager helping to lead the intern crews who carry out hands-on restoration work at the Ridgewood Reservoir. I see this project up close every week.

A central part of my role is helping young adults to build real world work skills, deepen their understanding of the environment and discover their responsibility as stewards of it. These are highly sought after positions, more than 70 people apply each year. Every week we cannot work is a week of paid training and mentorship these young people lose.

One of my students from an After School program with Grover Cleveland High School who has visited the reservoir on field trips every year told me he could see the difference (in only 3 visits) that our interns have made by removing Phrag from the Reservoir. He told me he is inspired to join the crew. This is why this work matters. We have already trained and assembled our team. Equipment is prepared. Everything is in place to begin but without authorization from the Parks Department, we cannot start. The delay costs these young people directly, and it costs the reservoir too.

I have watched this wetland recover over three years, seen native species returning,

the landscape slowly healing. But I have also watched the Phragmites creep back every season that we are not working.

As you have heard in their testimony, our interns want to be doing this work. The Ridgewood Reservoir is their local greenspace, and they are ready to protect it.

I am asking this Committee to help us get the green light from Parks so our crews can get back to work.

Respectfully,

Maia Bromley-Dulfano

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Maia Bromley-Dulfano (She/Her/Hers)  
Education Programs Manager



My name is Alike Tandon Vieira, and I have been working as an educator and stewardship staff at NYC H2O for over a year. During my time at this organisation, I have worked closely with the team of Eco-Interns, as they have laboured tirelessly to restore the Ridgewood Reservoir. For the interns, this job reflects not only their commitment to protecting nature, but also a broader sense of responsibility to their neighbourhoods and communities. Watching the team work together, chest-deep in the reservoir, pulling invasive phragmites by hand, I have seen the difference their intervention has made - with native plants returning and the wetland growing healthier and more resilient. It has also left me with a sense of hope: watching these young kids from the city spend their summers protecting and stewarding their local ecosystems has been nothing short of inspiring.

This season, however, the interns have been unable to continue this critical work. The longer they wait, the quicker the phragmites grow back, undoing years of hard work. In writing this testimony, I ask that the Parks Department grant NYC H2O the green light to resume their work in the Ridgewood Reservoir.

**From:** [Jordan Casalinova](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYCH2O written testimony for 6/16/2026  
**Date:** Friday, June 19, 2026 12:41:35 PM

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Nice to meet you all. My name is Jordan Casalinova and I've been an intern at NYCH2O for 3 years now. I was born and raised in Bushwick currently living in East New York and I'm a freshman at Brooklyn college persuing exercise science.

I know exercise and the environment are relatively different, but it just shows how much I enjoy being here. This place and this team has really made the past three years my most memorable, even in a place I wasn't very interested in. I've learned countless things regarding our environment, plants and water systems. I've seen the impact that we have on all these things and have even began applying my knowledge outside of work. It's very influential and I would love to keep this opportunity in the future.

Highland park is my home away from home, and I've been tending to this place by cutting Phragmities since day one. We've made a greater difference than we expected. It's not just a visual difference. We have native plants such as cattails returning and thriving.

Our full team is ready to get back into action. We're ready for travel time to the park, ready to work throughout the heat, even during the rain. It's something we do out of love for the environment, but right now we're unable to. Please help us get the green light to not just allow us to do what we love, but to allow us to make our world a better, healthier place.

**From:** [Kiki Tarr](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony for June 16, 2026 Committee on Parks and Recreation - Please urge Parks to green light NYC H2O's work at the Ridgewood Reservoir  
**Date:** Thursday, June 18, 2026 10:28:23 AM

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Good morning,

I am the Stewardship Manager at NYC H2O and work closely with our restoration projects at the Ridgewood Reservoir. I help lead our Eco-Interns, who do the hands-on work of removing phragmites from the middle basin pond.

We have a new cohort of Eco-Interns starting June 30th, all of whom have expressed excitement to begin work at the reservoir. We also have a crew of returning interns who have worked there for several seasons and are currently unable to begin the prep work needed to set our new cohort up for a strong start.

Our crews are trained, equipped, funded, and ready to work. Without authorization, we can't start. Right now, we are redeploying staff who should be at Ridgewood while the work we planned for this season sits undone.

I see firsthand the impact this work has on young people. They describe the reservoir as a second home. They talk about the life lessons in strength and perseverance the work teaches them, and a deeper connection to the natural world than they've ever experienced. Every week we can't work is a week of paid training and mentorship these young people lose.

I'm asking the Committee to help us get the green light from Parks so our crews can get to work and give these incoming interns the experience they've been looking forward to.

Thank you,

**Kiki Tarr** (she/her/hers)

Stewardship Manager, [NYC H2O](#)





June 16, 2026

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**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
to the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation in  
support of Introduction 0089\_2026**

Dear Committee Chair Hankerson, and Committees on Parks and Recreation:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) is writing to testify on the need to invest in the City's future by funding environmental and climate policies and programs. Founded in 1988, WE ACT is a community-based organization in Harlem, New York City. At the city, state and federal levels WE ACT has been fighting environmental racism – racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, enforcement of regulations and laws, and targeting communities of color for toxic waste disposal and siting of polluting industries. We recognize and advocate for community-driven solutions that can remedy the institutionalized harms associated with unjust urban planning policies that have plagued communities of color for generations. Likewise, WE ACT stands firmly amongst 215 organizations in our commitment to justly and equitably protecting, maintaining, expanding New York City's urban forest, and promoting the NYC Urban Forest Plan as a member of [Forest for All NYC](#). Toward that end, WE ACT supports Introduction 0089-2026.

Intro 89 would require that the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation identify tree pits located on streets and in landscaped parks and display them on the City's online tree map within 3 years after the effective date of the bill. The Commissioner would thereafter have to update the map annually to reflect changes to tree pits and the creation of new tree pits. The map must note whether each tree pit contains a tree, and if a tree pit does not contain a tree the reason for the disuse of the tree pit. Our goal is to add transparency to opportunities for greening locally while also consolidating this information centrally on the City's Tree Map.

The passage of this bill would help contribute to a foundational understanding of tree loss for the Department of Parks and Recreation, conservancy collaborators, academic partners, and residents. The tree pit map would be a key reference point to be consulted as part of [Objective 5.2](#) (page 62) of the Urban Forest Plan (Advance urban forest monitoring and research to inform canopy protection, maintenance, and expansion). The data collected about the discontinued use of empty tree pits would reveal trends in preservation challenges and prevent residents from spending their time reporting pits that are currently not viable for a new planting. It may



open opportunities for residents to propose alternative uses for empty tree pits that serve different community needs.

Intro 89 also has synergy with [Objective 7.4](#) (page 67) of the Urban Forest Plan ( Maximize tree-planting opportunities in the public realm by convening a task force on subsurface conflicts and opportunities). This Objective 7.4 calls for MOCEJ, DEP, DOT, NYC Parks, and utilities companies to convene a task force to identify opportunities for future tree planting. The task force will investigate design, operational, and budgetary solutions to limit infrastructure conflicts that require the removal of existing trees and the elimination of future tree-planting opportunities. Communities like East Harlem, with busy, unshaded corridors like E. 125th Street might be able to explore innovative methods to expand tree canopy or alternative shade structures as part of community benefits agreements with development projects accompanying the extension of the 2nd Ave Subway. Likewise, considering how subsurface conditions impact opportunities for tree preservation and planting are part of a [broader need for subsurface mapping](#) that can improve emergency management and potentially save the city millions of dollars due to more efficient operations, reduced disruption and damage to infrastructure.

The more information at our disposal to meet the aims of the Urban Forest Plan, the better. Introduction 0089-2026 is part of critical intelligence gathering and transparency that will help city agencies and community stakeholders develop effective strategies to optimize the use of empty tree pits citywide. Likewise community members deserve to know why trees are not viable at certain locations so they can be engaged in opportunities to otherwise activate tree pits in their neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Caleb Smith**  
New York City Policy Manager  
646.983.7288  
[caleb.smith@weact.org](mailto:caleb.smith@weact.org)  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice



June 19, 2026

Re: Written testimony in support of Intro 89-2026

Dear NYC Council Members,

We are a nonprofit all-volunteer community group (501c3 nonprofit) based on the Upper West Side, and NYC Council Member Gale Brewer represents our district. The West 80s Neighborhood Association was initially formed to help create an extended historic district along West End Avenue, Riverside Drive and Broadway as well as the side streets and cross streets, and that expanded historic district was signed into law by Mayor Michael Bloomberg (as well as the individual landmarking of special buildings such as West Park Presbyterian Church). Our neighborhood association then began engaging in more environmentally focused issues, as well as addressing neighborhood quality of life concerns, which we have been focusing on for the past 20 years or so.

As part of our environmental initiatives, we created a coalition of various stakeholders around the issue of street tree care; we coined it "Love Your Street Tree Day". Our educational community events often attract a hundred New Yorkers eager to learn about best practices of street tree care and to receive free gardening tools and supplies, including our "curb your dog" signs.

We are also founding members of the NY Nature Conservancy's "Forest for All NYC" coalition. I trained to be a volunteer tree steward with Trees NY, and am a volunteer super steward with the NYC Parks Department. We helped in the 2015 Tree Census in our UWS neighborhood collaborating with CB7 and NYC high school students to do the tree survey in the West 80s.

Protecting, properly caring for and maintaining the existing NYC street trees (over 600,000 currently) is the main part of our Love Your Street Tree Day mission. Please see our websites below for more information on our volunteer community work.

In addition to advocating and educating on the proper care and "adoption" of NYC street trees, we also wish to see more street trees planted, expanded tree beds for street trees, tree guards around street trees, rat burrows remediated, and beautification of our sidewalks and common spaces. That would include empty tree beds (sometimes called tree wells or tree pits too, but we find the word "pit" has negative connotations, so we use "bed" to encourage community members to see the soil area around the tree as the tree's home needing care and beautification like our homes!). Unfortunately, too many tree beds across the city are empty, abandoned, collecting litter, and people are not sure as to who can

plant there, and if a tree is able to be planted there. Many of these tree beds have become overgrown with weeds (some invasive) and are eye sores in the neighborhood.

We support Council Member Gale Brewer's new bill Intro. 89-2026 to address these problems with empty tree beds/pits. If passed, it would quantify and catalog the problem and help the NYC Parks Department with solving those problem areas. It would be an additional resource for the community as well, including block / neighborhood associations like ours to assist in our volunteer efforts and community outreach.

We urge you to pass Intro. 89-2026 as it is common-sense legislation and fills a gap in the current NYC tree map database.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our letter in support.

Yours truly,

Melissa Elstein  
Secretary, West 80s Neighborhood Association  
Note the new email: [west80sneighborhood@gmail.com](mailto:west80sneighborhood@gmail.com)  
[www.west80s.org](http://www.west80s.org)  
[www.loveyourstreetreeday.com](http://www.loveyourstreetreeday.com)

**Testimony for the NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation RE: Int. 89 of 2026**  
**Samuel Bishop, Education Director, Trees New York**  
**June 18, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Hankerson, and members of the Parks Committee, for the opportunity to testify. Trees New York was founded in 1976 as a volunteer response to New York City's devastating cutbacks in forestry and tree-related community services. Trees New York has 50 years of experience in community tree planting, stewardship and education projects. In partnership with the New York City Parks Department we run the Citizen Pruner Program, which teaches and licenses volunteers to care for and prune New York City street trees. Since its founding, Trees New York has trained over 13,500 Citizen Pruners and 9,000 youth in tree care and stewardship. In the past 10 years, Trees New York has planted over 5,000 trees in underserved communities throughout New York City. Trees New York is also an active member of the [Forest for All NYC](#) coalition.

On behalf of Trees New York, I want to express our conditional support for Introduction 89 of 2026. We appreciate the value of data on the NYC urban forest, and use the Parks Department's existing publicly available data, including [NYC Tree Map](#) and the [Tree Work Hub](#) in our work. We support Int. 89's goals of enhancing public transparency for the city's urban forest.

We are concerned about the potential burden of Int. 89 on NYC Parks, which has been a chronically underfunded agency. [NYC Parks testified](#) that they do not have all the data requested and collecting it would be a major undertaking that would divert resources from their ongoing operations, including [NYC Parks Neighborhood Tree Planting Program](#) (NTTP). It seems most or all of the data requested in Int. 89 would have to be collected by the Parks Department as part of the NTTP. A possible solution is letting the Parks Department report the data from the NTTP within a reasonable time after it is collected.

We also encourage the Mayor and the City Council to provide the Parks Department with the support and resources to continue to expand our urban forest and enhance all the other vital public services that the Parks Department provides to all New Yorkers.

Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to share a testimony of how changing the use change of the Oval at Mount Prospect Park from a free open space to a skate park will negatively impact the community. One of the special features of MPP is that the oval is large enough to accommodate several different activities at the same time. As the designers have stated, the center brown space is there b/c of overuse b/c it is a well used park.

On any given afternoon, you can find parents playing catch with their children, an afterschool program practicing drills with the kids, children playing kickball or tag, dog walkers playing, couples and friends sitting on a blanket, all at the same time without disturbing or interrupting one another. This is true diversity: 5 very different types of community groups all playing at the same time in the center oval of the park, in peace as one community.

At the same time, older folks find respite from the loud, obtrusive noises of Eastern Parkway and find peace in the low humming sounds of birds, dogs, children, and people laughing, in the background. No one noise overtaking the other or breaking the peaceful humming of this natural space. These are the sounds of a truly healthy and vibrant community interacting which produces peace in the hearts of those who call this park home. This isn't a once in a while occurrence; this is a common experience because residents of community boards 8, 9, and 6 use this space as a living space. And this is the type of park space the City wants, should cultivate and protect.

Replacing 56% of the common use section of the park would significantly alter the overarching purpose, feel and use of the park by the current community groups. The current design changes the park in that:

- 1) I sent a screen shot of a google maps where you can trace a space and get accurate measurements. The screenshot I attached shows a trace of the center oval at 96,000 sqft and the proposed area as 54,000 sq ft not 29,000 sq ft as they have stated.
- 2) I also want to note that they are proposing 56% of the center oval will now be a "single use space". Replacing this much of the oval would create competition that does not currently exist and prohibit the current diverse activities from taking place at the same time. If this design replaces the existing green space in the oval, only 1 or 2 community groups of the five I listed could use the remaining green space at the same time.
- 2) The new design would make 56% of the oval space limited to use by one type of community group for one activity: the one who not only owns a skateboard, but who also knows how to use it and can use it on ramps and do, or attempt to do, tricks. This is a very narrow band of the community: the skateboarder. And what's worse is that when it's raining or snowing or cold, (and now we know, at night) this space will be unutilized by anyone. Instead, today, this space is used by the entire community whether it's raining, snowing or sunny and warm after dusk.
- 3) I want to highlight we are not against a skate park, just not in this peaceful and well used park. Another reason, is that as a neighbor noted the other day, the vibe doesn't match. Common sounds of a skatepark would disrupt the original design intention of the park: which is for quiet contemplation. Sounds like:
  - The clatter of wheels rumbling on pavement
  - Scraping Sounds
  - The hollow thud of boards hitting the ground after a trick
  - Industrial Clang: The metallic clang of trucks grinding on rails or ledges

- Wind Swish as a skater carves across the pavement

These sounds, combined with the visuals of skateboarders performing tricks, often falling, jumping or gasping from not completing a trick, can produce excitement for some but high stress and PTSD for others. Several community groups which currently visit Mount Prospect Park for the peaceful nature of the park would be unable to use it.

Groups such as:

- Young children
- Older people looking for a peaceful space
- Nanny's eating lunch while baby's sleep
- Dog walkers
- Friends sitting together to talk

That's 5 community groups that would be displaced by the change in the park. 5:1 is not diverse and it's not equitable.

I hope you understand that the arguments we are presenting to you are real and would have a very real impact on the communities that currently use the park for its intended purpose.

I also hope you understand, that we are not against skateparks, instead calling attention to our request to use the \$11 million taxpayer dollars to fix and upkeep the current skateparks which have been left to disrepair and are no longer used; and or to provide Brooklyn with an additional park (rather than taking one away) for the growing constituents of our borough.

**"Please do not vote for this project. The City should halt planning and construction pending an investigation for violations of City law and policy, including the Adopt a Park law and other environmental inequities."**

Cristina Pastrana

Resident of Community Board and Community District 8.

Figure.7\_Google.Earth.Oval.and.Skate.Park.Tracing

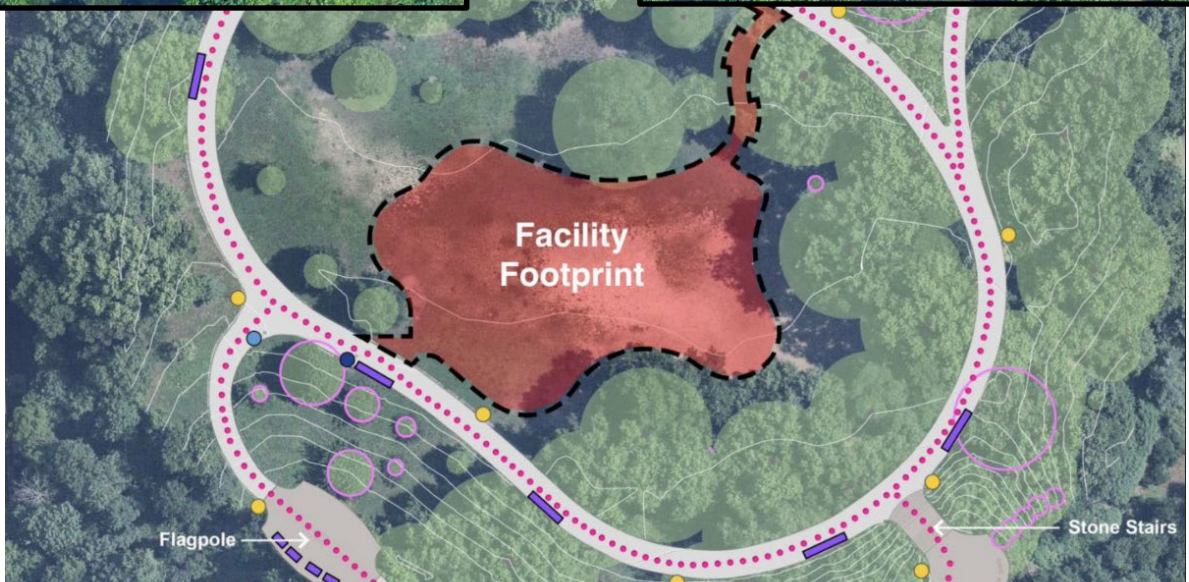
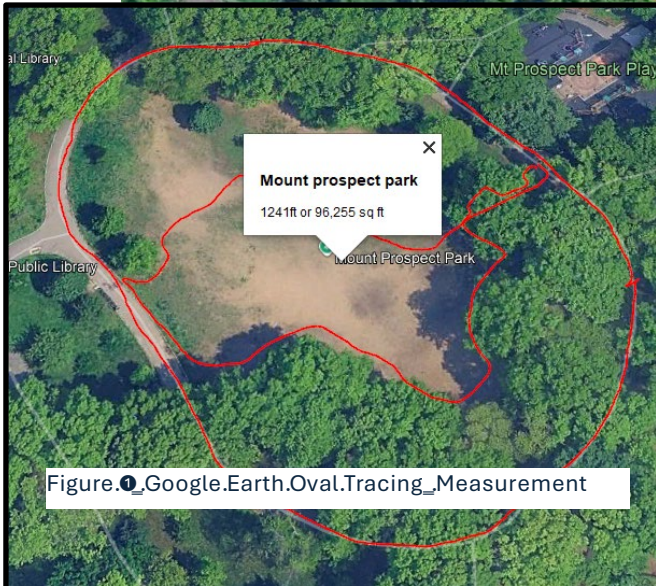


Figure.9\_The.skatepark.official.design.drawing

**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: 6/16/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Benjamin Disbush, AC of Forestry

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC PARKS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/16/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MATT DRURY, Chief of CLA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC PARKS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/16/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shaunta Smith-Cruz

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DORIS

Address: 31 Chambers St

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: Matt Maling

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St, NY 10009

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St

**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: Henry Villa

Address: [Redacted] 11414 Howard Ave

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St

**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: Seth Serridy

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St, NY 10009

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: [Redacted]

**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: 06/16/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Chuchuca

Address: [Redacted] Woodside, NY 11377

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> Street

**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: N'kosi Newton

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St

**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: 6/16/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sophia Hart

Address: [Redacted] Staten Island, NY, 10305

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup> St

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**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: 6/16/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jordan Casalino

Address: 499 New Jersey Avenue

I represent: NYC MAC

Address: 410 E 6<sup>th</sup>

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Scott Keatney (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 639 11th St

I represent: WYSCIF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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