

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND
RECREATION

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June 13, 2023
Start: 10:19 p.m.
Recess: 1:24 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM-CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishan,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- David M. Carr
- Eric Dinowitz
- Robert F. Holden
- Linda Lee
- Christopher Marte
- Julie Menin
- Francisco P. Moya
- Mercedes Narcisse
- Lincoln Restler
- Sandra Ung
- Majorie Velázquez
- Erik Bottcher
- Gale A. Brewer

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jennifer Greenfeld
Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning
at NYC Parks

Ben Osborne
Assistant Commissioner of Forestry and
Horticulture

Marit Larson
Assistant Commissioner of Natural Resources and
Planning

Matt Drury
Director of Government Relations

Fredrick Nass
President of Wild Ones Long Island

Joseph Charap
Vice President of Horticulture at the Green Wood
Cemetery

Melba Kirman
Resident of Bronx District 11

Don Shanley
Resident, West 74th Street

Nicolas Guntli
Senior Director of Horticulture at the
Horticultural Society of New York

Chrissy Word
Education Director for City Parks Foundation

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

Eric Goldstein
Natural Resources Defense Council

Jack Bolembach
Retired New York City Department of Environmental
Protection Employee

Katie Danny Horowitz
Executive Director of the North Brooklyn Parks
Alliance

Frida Nyman
Nyman Project

Fay Hill

Georgia Silvera Seamans
Washington Square Park Eco Projects

Victoria Sanders
Testifying for Shavante Conica (SP?)

Natasia Sidarta
Community Stewardship and Operations Director at
Gowanus Canal Conservancy in Brooklyn

Siero Garino (SP?)

Wendy Andringa
Founder of Assemblage Landscape Architecture

Rami Dinnawi
Environmental Justice Campaign and Policy Manager
at El Puente

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

Lan Modi Ochi

Board Member of the Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

Melissa Elstein

West 80s Neighborhood Association as well as Love
Your Street Tree Day

Justin Green

Big Reuse

Kevin O'Keefe

Founder of the St Vartan Park Conservancy in
Manhattan

Julia Ann Ashcraft

Resident of Manhattan

Allie Ryan

Harry Hirshorn

Emily Maxwell

City's Director at The Nature Conservancy in New
York

Alia Soomro

Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the
New York League of Conservation Voters

Lynn Kelly

Executive Director of the New York Restoration
Project

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

Sherrise Palomino
New Yorkers for Parks

Corey Hasson
Testifying on behalf of Lynn Kelly, Executive
Director

Morgan Monaco
President of the Prospect Park Alliance

Sarah Balistreri
Environmental Educator with Trees New York

Emily Walker
Senior Manager of External Affairs of the Natural
Areas Conservancy

April Bovet Krishnan
Tribeca resident and a founding Board Member of
the City Hall Park Conservancy

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Today's date is June 13, 2023.

3 Today's hearing is on the Committee on Parks and
4 Recreation being recorded in the Chambers by Keith
5 Polite.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
7 the New York City Council hearing the Committee on
8 Parks and Recreation. At this time, can everyone
9 please silence your cell phones. If you wish to
10 testify, please come up to the Sergeants desk to fill
11 out a testimony slip. Written testimony can be
12 emailed to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

14 At this point and going forward, please, no one
15 is to approach the dais. Thank you for your
16 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Sergeant
18 [GAVEL] Good morning everyone. I am Shekar Krishnan,
19 Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation and
20 I'd like to welcome everyone who has come to
21 participate in today's hearing on how we can improve
22 the city's long term environmental quality.
23 Specifically, by better planning and caring for our
24 city streets and it's great to see the wonderful
25 turnout that we have today too. And everyone here

3 who is passionate about our urban forest and tree
4 canopy.

5 Now, we held a similar hearing on the importance
6 of growing and maintaining the city's tree stock
7 almost a year to date and in fact, what I learned
8 afterwards was that was the first hearing ever on the
9 tree canopy in the history of our New York City
10 Council.

11 So, this hearing is a bit of a follow-up with
12 accompanying piece of the legislation as keeping a
13 close eye on the progress we make on caring for the
14 city's streets is a critical focus of this Committee.

15 The critical need of properly growing and
16 maintaining the city's tree stock is obvious. Trees
17 improve water quality by filtering and diverting
18 storm water runoff, filter high frequency noises,
19 provide habitats for wildlife, mitigate the urban
20 heat island effect, foster strong connections with
21 nature, keep the air cooler in warm weather and
22 provide better air quality by reducing the presence
23 of many air pollutants.

24 Ensure our trees are connected intimately to our
25 climate, to our public health and yes, to our mental
health too. It has been estimated that the city's

3 trees reduce annual residential energy costs by \$17
4 million per year and reduce runoff by 69 million
5 cubic feet per year. The process involves in
6 maintaining trees by the Parks Department has been
7 facets that I'm sure Parks will speak to in greater
8 detail during their testimony. Briefly, the process
9 includes a block by block pruning schedule,
10 contracting with various businesses to maintain
11 trees, engaging nonprofit organizations to help plan,
12 preserve and protect trees and an inspection process
13 through the Park Inspection Program or PIP in which
14 inspections on Park properties, including trees are
15 carried out routinely.

16 As we see, caring for our tree canopy is
17 fundamentally a citywide effort. Involving work by
18 our Parks Department, citizen pruners and each and
19 every one of you in this room. Over recent years,
20 the Departments budget for maintenance has suffered
21 ups and downs, as the pruning cycle had to be
22 increased from once every seven years to once every
23 fifteen years and back once again to seven years and
24 it's my hope in their testimony today, the Parks
25 Department give a clearer sense of what that process

3 looks like and the reason the timeline is what the
4 timeline is.

5 With recent budgets, some of those funds have
6 been restored but issues still persist. For example,
7 four of the top five categories of Parks related 311
8 calls involve complaints about trees, including
9 concerns over premature deaths in new trees, broken
10 tree limbs and sidewalk damage resulting from growing
11 tree routes. All of us as Council Members know
12 intimately while that across our districts, as by the
13 data from 311, one of the top concerns we get always
14 is, our trees, caring for our trees, removing dead
15 trees, making sure there's enough support for our
16 street trees.

17 Additionally, numerous instances over the years
18 have sadly occurred. Bystander's have been injured
19 and even killed from falling tree branches, many from
20 trees that have been weakened due to severe weather.
21 This will be a major problem that needs to be
22 addressed as climate change is going to leave the
23 city more vulnerable to severe weather and storms as
24 we've already seen and city trees and the benefits we
25 derive from them will increase and be at risk if we
don't maintain them in smart way.

3 In fact, I would also argue the opposite. That
4 our tree canopy is essential to fortifying our city
5 and protecting our city from the harshest impacts of
6 climate change. We know very well looking across our
7 city that some neighborhoods have an immense amount
8 of tree canopy and are green and others, like my own
9 in District 25 in Jackson Height Elmhurst, don't have
10 nearly enough tree canopy they need. And the impact
11 that that has in the South Bronx and the upper west
12 side are in immense disparities in surface
13 temperatures, especially during the hot summer
14 months.

15 So, I would say if we are to emerge from this
16 climate crisis and solve it and make sure New York
17 City's on the frontlines of doing so, then our tree
18 canopy has an essential role to play. And this is
19 also why our advocacy to ensure that we finally get
20 one percent of our city budget for its parks, which
21 again, is no radical notion but catching up to other
22 city's across the country, a huge part of it is to
23 make sure that we have the funding and resources we
24 need to care for our city's urban forest.

25 At today's hearing, we will also examine how we
can take significant steps to expand our tree canopy

3 equitably as I mentioned before, to ensure more
4 communities, especially those underserved
5 communities, which have historically suffered from
6 the lack of green space and have been particularly
7 vulnerable to heat island dangers no longer have
8 their environments neglected. In fact, studies have
9 indicated that the urban forest is unevenly
10 distributed, contributing to general inequity across
11 communities.

12 Generally, research shows that the most
13 vulnerable communities, those with lower average
14 incomes, high percentages of people of color and
15 higher rankings on the heat vulnerability index
16 tended to have the lower tree canopy. And I want to
17 thank our Councils data team for putting together
18 excellent maps in the past for our hearing that
19 really demonstrate the disparities when it comes to
20 the tree canopy coverage in New York City across
21 communities.

22 In terms of where our city's trees are, just over
23 half of the canopy is managed by the Parks
24 Department, which includes about 28 percent park land
25 and 25 percent street trees and other rights of way.
One-third of the canopy is on private land and the

1 remaining 11 percent on land that is owned by
2 various other government entities. And I also want
3 to highlight here the crucial role, often not well
4 known but its extraordinarily crucial role is that
5 NYCHA plays when it comes to our tree canopy.
6

7 I've had the immense privilege of joining green
8 city forests and NYCHA residents to tour Queens
9 Bridge houses and to see the way in which so many
10 NYCHA residents are involved in maintaining the tree
11 canopy there. And what it says about the way in
12 which our public housing plays an essential role in
13 making sure that we have proper tree and quality tree
14 canopy coverage in New York City.

15 The lowest tree canopy cover – sorry, the highest
16 number of tree canopy cover is typically in areas
17 with large parks, and in neighborhoods that have
18 lower population density levels. The lowest tree
19 canopy cover was in heavily developed areas. Now,
20 many advocates have been working for years on this
21 issue. For example, the Forest For All Coalition has
22 done extensive and excellent work in studying our
23 urban forests to help inform city policy makers and
24 advocates alike on the best steps forward to protect
25 and grow our tree canopy.

3 Some of those steps include goals to expand the
4 canopy coverage to 30 percent by 2035. Up from the
5 current 22 percent, so we still got some work to do.
6 Strengthening career paths to jobs in urban forestry,
7 developing a master plan to better coordinate care
8 and maintenance of the urban forest and increasing
9 public investment in care for the city's trees. I
10 certainly support the extraordinary efforts of the
11 coalition and I'm proud to work alongside them and
12 our advocacy for 30 percent tree canopy coverage by
13 2035, as well as any efforts that aim to increase the
14 quality and quantity of city trees and have the city
15 strategically plan for the long-term future of the
16 urban forest.

17 Policy makers on all levels of government need to
18 get serious in treating our tree stock as crucial
19 infrastructure that must be supported with sufficient
20 resources and importantly equitably distributed to
21 all parts of the city. We deserve no less and the
22 wellbeing of our environment and the help of each and
23 every single New Yorker depends on it.

24 Today, we'll also consider three pieces of
25 legislation. Two focused on improving the planning
and accounting for the quality of the city's tree

3 stock. The other bill is our Semiannual Street Co-
4 Naming Bill. Importantly the first two pieces of
5 legislation address an essential aspect of caring for
6 our tree canopy, which is to make sure that we are
7 tracking carefully the progress of planting of
8 planning, making sure that we are caring for our
9 trees with a larger vision in mind.

10 First, Intro. Number 1065, sponsored by my
11 colleague Council Member Bottcher along with Council
12 Member Brewer and myself, would require the Parks
13 Department in consultation with other appropriate
14 government agencies and non-profit groups to create
15 an urban forest master plan. Which would be aimed at
16 protecting and increasing the city's urban forest, as
17 well as increasing tree and vegetation cover across
18 the city through a comprehensive plan. It would also
19 establish goals to expand and protect the urban
20 forest and would have to be updated every five years.

21 Second, Intro. 1066, sponsored by Council Member
22 Brewer along with Council Member Bottcher and myself,
23 would require the Administration to consider the
24 roles of trees, tree canopy, and vegetation in its
25 long-term sustainability planning as part of its
Local Law 84 of 2013 reporting on sustainability.

3 Finally and apart from our tree legislation
4 today, we'll consider a bill that will ceremonially
5 co-name 112 thoroughfares and public places
6 throughout the city. Co-naming bills, which I've
7 always said, are crucial because they permanently
8 change the landscape of New York City to honor
9 individuals that have played an extraordinary impact
10 or had an extraordinary impact in our communities and
11 our city are the result of the Council's periodic
12 process where we seek to honor individuals and
13 organizations that have made lasting contributions to
14 our city.

15 I am proud to have in the past sponsored
16 legislation to just to rename Woodside Avenue, Little
17 Thailand Way, 73rd Street, Bongo Day Street and most
18 recently on 41st Avenue and 75th Street Tenzing Norgay
19 Sherpa Way.

20 Of the many honorees proposed by this piece of
21 legislation today, I'd like to call attention to a
22 couple of co-naming's that I am proud to have co-
23 sponsored. My first nomination is for Janet Kelly,
24 who is an important civic leader in my district in
25 Jackson Heights. She served as the Director of the
Jackson Heights Beautification Group which does

3 important work caring for our tree canopy everyday in
4 our community and was the leader of the Garden Club,
5 which was very involved in beautifying the community
6 and improving our 34th Avenue open street our gold
7 standard open street in New York City.

8 She was also active in so many various community
9 activities as she was the founder of the Jackson
10 Heights Knitting Group, taught knitting at the
11 Catherine Sheridan Senior Center, and was the key
12 organizer of the Beautification Groups annual
13 Halloween Parade for Children in Jackson Heights.

14 My other nomination is for Mike Crowley, who is
15 the founding member and president of a Jackson
16 Heights Beautification Group. Under his leadership,
17 JHBG helped to landmark Jackson Heights as the
18 historic district. He was instrumental in so many
19 other activities that helped to improve our community
20 in so many ways, including establishing the first
21 ever community based Anti-Graffiti program in the
22 city, the JHBG Architectural and Good Neighbor
23 Awards. The JHBG Halloween Parade, the Garden Club
24 and created the Friends of Travers Park and a
25 community newsletter that we still all receive and
read.

3 I'd like to welcome all who have come to
4 participate in this hearing and speak on behalf of
5 the various nominees. Of course, a hearing like
6 today's in addition to all the excellent advocates
7 and our Parks Department staff who are here too,
8 would not be possible without our Council Staff who
9 do an extraordinary job each time, making sure that
10 our hearing goes smoothly, that we're all prepared
11 for it.

12 So, I'd like to thank in particular Kris Sartori,
13 Patrick Mulvihill, Michael Sherman, Rose Martinez,
14 and Anne Driscoll for all your work for today's
15 hearing, including putting together the great,
16 helpful data as well.

17 And of course, I'd also like to thank my own
18 staff our Legislative and Budget Director Greg Clark
19 and our Chief of Staff Chuck Park for all their work
20 for today's hearing. I'm also thankful to our
21 colleagues who have joined us today too. We have
22 Council Member Ung, Council Member Lee, Council
23 Member Menin, Council Member Holden, Council Member
24 Moya, Council Member Narcisse is on to or will be
25 soon enough. Council Member Narcisse virtually.

3 And at this time, I'd like to turn it over to our
4 Committee Counsel Kris Sartori to swear in the
5 witnesses.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Will
7 members of the Parks Department please raise your
8 right hand if you're able. Do you affirm to tell the
9 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
10 your testimony before this Committee and to respond
11 honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you.

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Good morning Chair Krishnan,
13 members of the Parks Committee and other members of
14 the City Council. I am Jennifer Greenfeld, Deputy
15 Commissioner for Environment and Planning at NYC
16 Parks. I'm pleased to be joined today by our
17 Assistant Commissioner of Forestry and Horticulture
18 Ben Osborne, and our Assistant Commissioner of
19 Natural Resources and Planning Marit Larson, as well
20 as our Director of Government Relations Matt Drury.
21 I want to start by noting our appreciation for the
22 Council's continued advocacy for our city parks, and
23 for the resources and support it has provided for our
24 forestry efforts.

25 The urban canopy is one of the most vital
resources the city has in ensuring our neighborhoods

1
2 are healthy and thriving. It provides numerous
3 measurable benefits to our five boroughs, including
4 improving human health and wellbeing and I'm very
5 proud of the work our parkies do every day to grow
6 and protect our city's trees.

7 In my testimony today, I will provide information
8 about New York City's extensive tree canopy, the
9 administration's work to expand and care for the
10 urban forest, and a snapshot of some of our strong
11 partnerships supporting this work.

12 New York City's 42,656 acres of tree canopy is a
13 full 22 percent of the city's' land cover and is best
14 defined as the cover or shade provided by our city's
15 trees. We are excited to report that the city's
16 canopy grew by 3,252 acres from between 2010 and
17 2017. This robust urban forest provides an
18 incredible array of environmental, social, and
19 economical benefits that you've already heard, such
20 as reducing storm water runoff, shading buildings,
21 conserving energy by reducing heating and cooling
22 costs, traffic calming, protecting city pavement from
23 rain and sun, noise mitigation, increasing property
24 values and of course, cleaning and colling the air.
25 The importance of which became all too clear last

3 week, as we were all reminded of the vital role that
4 air quality plays in our overall health and well-
5 being.

6 New York City is responsible for just over half
7 of the city's tree canopy, over 22,000 acres. Within
8 that portfolio, NYC Parks manages 7,300 acres of
9 natural area forests, estimated at nearly 5 million
10 trees, over 156,000 park trees and over 666,000
11 street trees. The rest of New York City's canopy
12 grows on a combination of private and public land
13 parcels, such as residential and front and back
14 yards, cemeteries, vacant land, and on NYCHA campuses
15 and other public land not managed by NYC Parks.

16 NYC Parks has taken a strategic, proactive
17 approach to managing the canopy under our
18 jurisdiction. For example, for over 35 years, we
19 have characterized, monitored and actively managed
20 our 73 acres of natural area forests, which are
21 spread across over 90 parks in every borough.

22 In 2018, NYC Parks worked in partnership with the
23 Natural Areas Conservancy to develop the Forest
24 Management Framework, to guide forest restoration,
25 management and community stewardship of areas under
Parks jurisdiction. Thanks in large part to the

3 generous support of the City Council, from FY20 to
4 date, Parks has initiated restoration and management
5 across 2,000 acres of natural areas across all five
6 boroughs, including over 850 acres in areas that have
7 not been cared for in the ten years prior to this
8 investment. We planted over 394,000 native trees,
9 shrubs, and herbs, with an additional 44,000 planted
10 just this spring. To accomplish all this, we deploy
11 a team of dedicated professionals, providing
12 incredible green job opportunities and continuity of
13 care for a valuable resource that requires informed
14 and adaptive long-term management.

15 NYC also takes a proactive approach to managing
16 our tree canopy outside of our natural areas. The
17 trees that lines our city streets and grow in the
18 actively used areas of our parks. These trees play a
19 vital role in keeping New Yorkers cool and healthy
20 and our latest street and park tree census confirmed
21 that this population is healthy, growing and
22 diversifying over time.

23 The trees along our city streets are purposefully
24 distributed across every neighborhood because of
25 targeted planting in areas with high asthma rates and
high vulnerability to heat, helping to reverse

1 historical disinvestment in underserved
2 neighborhoods.

3
4 This Administration is investing further in the
5 expansion of New York City's street tree canopy,
6 adding over \$136 million dollars in tree planting
7 funds over four years. FY22 was a milestone year for
8 street and park tree planting as we successfully
9 planted 13,000 new street and park trees, the highest
10 number of plantings since FY16. I'm pleased to add
11 that we have just surpassed that milestone in FY23
12 and are on track to plant nearly 15,000 new street
13 and park trees this fiscal year. All New Yorkers
14 deserve to enjoy the benefits provided by trees, so
15 our planting program takes an equitable approach,
16 prioritizing neighborhoods suffering from extreme
17 heat that have not been well-served in the past, as
18 well as planting trees in locations requested by
19 local New Yorkers.

20 As important as it is to plant new trees, it is
21 equally important that we maintain our existing trees
22 and preserve the vital benefits provided by our tree
23 canopy in every neighborhood. The most marked
24 increase in tree canopy comes from the natural growth
25 of existing trees. In fact, our partners at The

3 Nature Conservancy identified that up to 87 percent
4 of the canopy increase that occurred between 2010 and
5 2017 was from the growth of existing trees. Needless
6 to say, public safety is foremost on our minds in our
7 approach to caring for the trees growing along our
8 streets and in the active areas of our parks.

9 In caring for the trees, we employ an innovative
10 Risk Management approach to prioritize the conditions
11 that present the most risk to New Yorkers and address
12 those immediately. This involves a rigorous
13 inspection program by responsive in-house inspection
14 program by some of the most qualified and
15 credentialed foresters in the country, accompanied by
16 response in-house crews and complimented with
17 contractors who focus on proactive maintenance
18 including neighborhood block pruning, pest and
19 disease control and tree preservation during sidewalk
20 repair.

21 Our baseline level of annual funding allows us to
22 maintain a professionally recommended block pruning
23 cycle of seven years and consistent treatment against
24 pests. In the FY24 Executive Budget, we were
25 thrilled to receive new Mayoral baseline funding to
add to that to further support our tree maintenance

3 programs. That includes \$2.7 million for tree risk
4 management to inspect and identify concerns before
5 they become major problems and perform more
6 systematic and preventive tree care, as well as \$3.3
7 million for a new Climber and Pruner Training
8 Program, which will help to grow the next generation
9 of forestry professionals within the agency.

10 As a demonstration of our agency's commitment to
11 transparency and efficiently, I also want to remind
12 the Council of the great ways we communicate
13 information to the public about our urban forest.
14 These include our popular online tree map, where you
15 can learn about the trees on your street or in your
16 park, and from which you can submit a service request
17 directly to the agency.

18 The tree work hub, the maps and lists planned and
19 completed work including pruning, planting, trees and
20 sidewalks repair and stump removal, and the ever-
21 expanding maps of formalized trail networks in Parks'
22 natural areas. The program which also received
23 additional funding in the FY24 Executive Budget and
24 is governed by a Strategic Trails Plan developed with
25 our partners at the Natural Areas Conservancy.

3 I would also love to highlight that in May, Parks
4 launched the Great Tree Search 2023, inviting New
5 Yorkers in every community to tell us about
6 exceptional trees that represent their neighborhoods,
7 tell their stories and contribute to our city's rich
8 cultural histories. New Yorkers can use the online
9 tree map to nominate historically, botanically and
10 culturally exceptional trees so the winters can be
11 celebrated and their stories preserved.

12 The success of our continuously improving canopy
13 would not be possible without the diligent work of
14 our numerous Parks stewards and volunteers groups who
15 generously donate their time and energy to looking
16 after our trees with our Stewardship Team. NYC Parks
17 has worked hard to encourage a culture of caring for
18 trees and actively involve New Yorkers in that
19 process, including partner organizations. We are
20 active participants in the Forests for All NYC
21 Coalition and appreciate their advocacy for the Urban
22 Forest Agenda, including the goal to increase New
23 York City's canopy cover to 30 percent.

24 Regarding the Parks-specific legislation being
25 heard today, we appreciate the intent behind both
bills. NYC Parks is constantly working toward

3 creating a more robust urban forest and recognizes
4 the significance of Intro. 1065. We look forward to
5 discussing this legislation further with Council and
6 working together to increase tree and vegetation
7 cover across the five boroughs. Intro. 1066 would
8 amend the City Charter to require the role of trees
9 to be added to the universe of considerations
10 addressed by the City's sustainability planning
11 mandated by Local Law 84 of 2013.

12 As you've heard today, NYC Parks clearly agrees
13 that our city trees are vital infrastructure,
14 providing an incredibly wide array of benefits for
15 New Yorkers and we've worked closely with the Mayor's
16 Office of Climate and Environmental Justice as they
17 have led the city's sustainability planning efforts.
18 They're here in attendance with us today, and we'll
19 defer to them to formally comment on the legislation.

20 We again want to acknowledge the continuing
21 support of the Council, which has generously helped
22 provide dedicated funding for tree guards, tree
23 planting and tree related sidewalk repair. We also
24 want to recognize the advocacy of the Forest for All
25 Coalition and the Play Fair Coalition, which led to
funding which has contributed directly to the

3 previously mentioned Forest Management Framework and
4 other investments in tree planting and tree care.

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

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Deputy
9 Commissioner and thank you for all your great work in
10 leading the tree forestry division and all the work
11 that Parks Forestry Division is doing every day for
12 our trees. I know we've had many conversations,
13 collaborations together too and we appreciate the
14 attentive detail that you pay to our tree canopy.

15 I know my colleagues have questions and I have
16 some, so maybe I'll start with some and then turn it
17 over to them and then come back to a few more. But
18 just to begin with, at a very, very baseline. One of
19 the biggest issues and we've talked about this before
20 too, is with all the work that Parks is doing, there
21 is a difference or a gap in perception between all of
22 the programs you all have to care for our trees and
23 also our understanding at the public level of what
24 exactly is involved to inspect the trees, the
25 schedule they're on, the timeline, how planting
works. So, if you could just give and I think it

3 would be very helpful for all of us because there are
4 concerns that many have of course that you know, it
5 takes a long time to plant, inspect the trees. I
6 think I would love to hear a very, kind of simplified
7 explanation for all of us, how Parks goes about its
8 inspection process? Why is the timeline what it is?
9 And just kind of in a plain language summary of the
10 work that Parks does to care for our trees, our
11 street trees in particular.

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Alright, thank you very much
13 for that question. So, our inspection process first
14 of all, is carried out by a number of different
15 professionals, including as you mentioned our sort of
16 every day inspections that take place by supervisors
17 who are in the park every day. And everything that
18 we do is driven by our Tree Risk Management Program
19 and Tree Risk Management as we talked about before is
20 driven by inspections. Identifying issues and
21 looking at the tree to analyze them and identify what
22 that potential risk is to the public. So, we have
23 different types of levels of inspections. The ones
24 that are sort of every day people need to be looking
25 up at the trees. Those are the Park Inspectors but
we also have highly qualified forestry professionals

3 who have inspections that are sort of driven from two
4 different ways. One, primarily from 311, from
5 service requests that we receive from the public.

6 And second of all, as they are driving around, they
7 also identify or pick up inspections along the way.

8 In addition, through our Block Pruning Program,
9 so Block Pruning gets a lot of attention or sort of
10 we call it a Block Pruning Program but you in fact
11 can't prune a tree until you inspect it first. So,
12 that means that while we're pruning one-seventh of
13 the tree population every year, we're also inspecting
14 every single one of those trees. One-seventh of the
15 tree population every year. So, those are the main
16 ways that inspections are triggered through the city.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what about the pruning
18 cycle? So, as I mentioned before in my opening
19 statement at some point because of budget reasons, it
20 went up from seven years to fifteen years, it's back
21 down to seven years. How does that compare to the
22 industry standard? Seven years seems like a long
23 time but would love to hear more from you all, why is
24 that the timeline for pruning and do you feel like
25 that is an adequate timeline for the pruning cycle?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.

4 We feel very comfortable with that timeline. It's
5 based upon professional recommendations and the tree
6 population obviously is very diverse. And so, we
7 have to identify very efficient and effective way of
8 moving through neighborhoods, so that really its been
9 – our best years have been between five and seven
10 years pruning rotation and we don't want it to be any
11 shorter than that because tree pruning in and of
12 itself, has while it's really important to reduce the
13 risk to the public of any potential defects in a
14 tree, it also is cutting a piece of the tree off and
15 it requires some reaction from the tree, a response
16 to sort of repair that pruning cut and you need to
17 give time for a tree to respond to that in between
18 the pruning rotations. So, in fact, you don't want
19 to do proactive tree pruning any more often than what
20 we're doing now.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I also want to
22 recognize that we've also been joined by Council
23 Member Restler and Council Member Narcisse now
24 virtually as well. One more fact I wanted to point
25 out to you just to give a sense of how important
trees are for our City Council and for our

3 communities too are, my office did a – you know many
4 offices participated in participatory budgeting in
5 our Council and I think we in this survey work that
6 we did of Council offices about ten percent or so of
7 Council offices that participated in participatory
8 budgeting had trees as one of their top priorities,
9 mine included. So, it gives you a sense of how much
10 everyone in New York City cares about our trees.
11 Now, how does the Parks Department – shifting gears a
12 bit too, how does the Parks Department prioritize the
13 areas of the city that should be targeted with
14 increased tree plantings and what are some of those
15 areas?

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, thank you for that
17 question. Primarily through the Cool Neighborhoods
18 Program, NYC Parks plants trees in areas that rate
19 the highest on the heat vulnerability index that was
20 developed by Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.
21 So, since the beginning of Cool Neighborhoods, the
22 programs planted 15,000, over 15,000 new trees in the
23 highest neighborhoods. There are five different
24 rankings, HVI 1-5 and so, now even with new
25 additional money of \$136 million that I mentioned
earlier, allocated by the Adams Administration for

3 tree planting, Parks expects to fully fill every
4 viable location in all HVI 4 and 5 neighborhoods by
5 2026. So, that's how we really look at how to target
6 our tree planting to both as best as we can, directly
7 improve public health and also try to shift that
8 historical disinvestment that we've seen over the
9 years.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Can you just give a few
11 examples of the neighborhoods that have scored higher
12 in that index that are targeted for plantings?

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, I mean, I have like 20
14 different neighborhoods in the Bronx, Williams
15 Bridge, Woodland, East Chester, Eden Wall, Soundview,
16 Morris Park, Norwood. In Brooklyn, East Flatbush,
17 Bushwick, Crown Heights, Flatland, Sunset Park,
18 Canarsie, Fort Greene. Manhattan, Central and East
19 Harlem, the Lower East Side, Hamilton Heights, in
20 Manhattanville. And in Queens, Hunters Point,
21 Sunnyside, Long Island City Elmhurst, Laurelton,
22 South Ozone Park, the Albin, Flushing, Woodside.
23 These are neighborhoods; you actually can go online
24 and see them. You can see the neighborhoods very
25 specifically laid out and that's what we do. We just

3 use DOH and H's sort of guidelines to direct the
4 planting to those neighborhoods.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And last year, numerous
6 city officials, borough presidents, myself and others
7 also called for implementing a new one million trees
8 initiative. Has the Administration given any thought
9 to restarting this initiative?

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Well, thank you for that
11 question. We are absolutely supportive and
12 appreciative of the Mayor's continued commitment to
13 Parks and a greener and more equitable future for our
14 parks system. At NYC Parks, our goal is to plant as
15 many trees as possible to expand and maintain a
16 healthy resilient tree canopy and so, we are
17 supportive of initiatives that seek to aid to this
18 goal.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how about the urban
20 forest agenda's call that we strongly support of a 30
21 percent tree canopy cover by 2035? Has the
22 Administration given any thought to this proposal?
23 How they plan to achieve it or you know other
24 thoughts as to how to make this realistic and
25 achieved?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Great, uhm, great question,
4 thank you. Our latest work has actually been focused
5 on establishing a canopy goal. Looking at canopy not
6 individual tree as a goal and this work was as a
7 result of our work with the Forest For All NYC
8 Coalition and involve the latest release of Plan NYC,
9 so the 30 percent goal is in PlaNYC and that is to
10 increase canopy up to 30 percent from our current 22
11 percent and that can be achieved, and it has to be
12 achieved by both planting new trees and protecting
13 the existing trees. We know that the canopy
14 increase, as I mentioned earlier from 2010 to 17 from
15 19 percent to 21 percent was 87 percent attributed to
16 the growth of existing trees.

17 So, we also know based on that - so, as you
18 mentioned slightly more than 50 percent of New York
19 City's canopy is under Parks jurisdiction and the
20 Nature Conservancy's analysis shows that we can only
21 get about half way to that 30 percent goal on park
22 land and along streets.

23 So, it really is something that needs to be
24 achieved to increasing canopy cover can only be
25 achieved by cooperation with both NYC Parks, other
jurisdictions and private and other public land.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: That is a crucial goal for
4 this too, is that it's by letter that we send you all
5 from numerous Council Members who sign onto it. So,
6 we're going keep pushing for it to as long as all the
7 advocates who are here as well. Would you say we're
8 on track? We're at 22 percent now, 30 percent in 12
9 years' time. Would you say we're on track to achieve
10 that goal? And does the Administration feel that we
11 will get there by that time?

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
13 We think it's a feasible goal but it is a very
14 ambitious timeframe.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Well, if it's feasible; we
16 like ambitious, so let's - I very much hope that we
17 can get there because feasible was the key word. So,
18 thank you for recognizing that and look forward to
19 our work together to keep doing so.

20 I'm going to stop here because I know we've been
21 also joined by Council Member Carr and Council Member
22 Bottcher and I wanted to turn it over to Council
23 Member Bottcher for an opening statement on his
24 legislation.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you so much Chair
Krishnan. Thanks for your leadership in helping us

3 expand the tree canopy in New York. I really want to
4 thank all my colleagues too for their partnership in
5 this. I'm very excited about the legislation that
6 we're hearing today, Intro. 1065. When we think
7 about, when most people think about tree coverage,
8 they think about the aesthetics and that's really a
9 big part of why we plant trees but the truth is they
10 absorb rainwater runoff, which is more important now
11 than ever. They cool neighborhoods, they slow
12 traffic, streets that are treelined have slower
13 traffic speeds. They provide habitat for birds and
14 insects. So, it's so important that we grow the
15 city's tree canopy and I really want to thank
16 everyone at the Parks Department for your work on
17 this and all the advocates who are here today.

18 The master plan is going to be so important to
19 helping us achieve this goal. So, I just want to
20 really thank everyone who's been part of this and
21 looking forward to today's hearing.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Council
23 Member Bottcher and thank you for your leadership
24 with this excellent legislation. Just a few more
25 questions from me, then I'm going to turn it over to
my colleagues as well, and a few more specific

1
2 questions. If a tree pit is deemed no longer
3 suitable for a tree, does Parks allow other items to
4 be planted there?

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Excuse me if a tree bed is
6 no longer suitable for planting?

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Planting, yup. Does
8 Parks allow other items to be planted there?

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Great, thank you for that
10 question. Let me take a second, so once – uhm, so to
11 be direct, Parks doesn't have jurisdiction over empty
12 tree beds and we defer to our colleagues and other
13 agencies for suitable planting recommendations. So,
14 we are very focused on the health of the tree and the
15 tree itself is our jurisdiction.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And so, who has
17 jurisdiction in those? Is it DOT or who's got
18 jurisdictions in those situations?

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: That's a very good question
20 and we recognize that there is some question about
21 who has jurisdiction. Certainly, what can be done on
22 a sidewalk is regulated by DOT and we recognize that
23 we need to do some work to coordinate a little bit on
24 that.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I think that would be key
4 and you know I know there's more testimony coming
5 later on some of these issues and we've done some
6 work together in the district too on that, which has
7 worked out very well. But I think the importance of
8 having an interagency coordination is really
9 important when it comes to tree plantings because the
10 jurisdictional issues shouldn't get in the way of
11 addressing them but I appreciate hearing that you all
12 are tuned to that issue as well when it comes to
13 interagency communication.

14 Often times after storms, we'll see fallen large
15 branches on sidewalks. Does Parks drive around post
16 storm to see if there are damaged left-over trees
17 that need to be taken away? Does sanitation notify
18 you of those fallen trees or assist in removal? How
19 does that process work?

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for that
21 questions Council Member. So, during and after storm
22 events of significant magnitude, Parks does do -
23 sorry, I sort of lost my place for a second. We do
24 direct staff to conduct post storm sweeps. We did
25 that following Super Storm Sandy and Tropical Storm
Isaias. So, in those two storms, Parks Staff drove

3 around and noted debris that remained that had not
4 been reported before. But 311 service requests have
5 become really more accessible and familiar to the
6 public, so we largely rely on the public to guide our
7 inspections and have found this to be the most
8 effective method.

9 We do work with the Department of Sanitation.
10 They are a member of the Down Trees Taskforce, which
11 may be convened by New York City Emergency Management
12 or any member of the Down Trees Taskforce. It's a
13 mouthful DTF. This interagency committee, when it
14 anticipated that a storm response may exceed the
15 capacity of New York City Parks resources. So,
16 similar to our coordination with many other entities
17 on the DTF, we actually have systems that can
18 exchange data on work orders and completion of work.
19 And that includes DSNY and don't forget that Parks
20 and Fire, sorry Police and Fire also play a big role
21 in response to fallen trees and limbs. They are
22 first line responders to 911 calls and life-
23 threatening conditions.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you and I do
25 appreciate in our district when those issues have
come up, the responsiveness to Parks to address the

3 removal of trees that have fallen down. Just a
4 couple more from my end too. Has DPR along with
5 other agencies looked into expanding the protections
6 offered by special natural area district that have
7 regulations on the removal of certain privately owned
8 trees into other areas of the city?

9 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
10 So, we defer to our colleagues at the Department of
11 City Planning in terms of any questions about the
12 special natural areas districts. We have consulted
13 with them in the past when DCP was considering
14 updating this non zoning tax.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you and has Parks
16 thought about developing strategies to diminish the
17 number of privately owned trees that are cut down
18 unnecessarily. I mean they play a crucial role of
19 course in our tree canopy too. So, what measures can
20 we take to ensure that they're not destroyed or
21 damaged or cut down?

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, thank you for that
23 question. So, Parks does not have jurisdiction over
24 privately owned trees.

25 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right.

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: And has not developed any
4 policies governing their preservation or removal
5 other than the consultation with City planning on
6 regulations for the special natural areas district.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But are there ways to – I
8 understand there is no jurisdiction there but are
9 there ways to engage homeowners or you know other
10 private land owners to exercise more care for their
11 trees, to not cut them down unnecessarily because
12 they both, they play overall an important role in our
13 tree canopy. Parks has a sizable but limited amount
14 of jurisdiction over our tree canopy but we look at
15 the big picture overall, private land plays a key
16 role too. So, has Parks given thought to how to
17 engage homeowners or property owners otherwise on the
18 best practice to maintain their trees and not cut
19 them down unnecessarily?

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, that's a great
21 question. I would say that the way we – how we sort
22 of interact with that is in two different ways. One
23 is that we provide a good example for how you care
24 for trees in the public right of way. We have a lot
25 of great information on our website that's very
applicable to private homeowners, and also, we're

3 active participants in these partnerships like Forest
4 for all that. Their job is really looking at the
5 entire canopy. So, we contribute our expertise to
6 those efforts.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. I also want to
8 recognize that we've been joined by Council Member
9 Brewer as well. Council Member, do you want to give
10 an opening statement for your legislation?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, I'm sorry, I'm
12 dealing with people moving into shelters on the Upper
13 West Side. I don't know why no other district gets
14 every press person in the world to discuss it.
15 Anyway, thank you very much Intro. 1066 and I think
16 as you I heard I was listening to your wonderful
17 discussion both from the Chair and members and the
18 Parks Department. We do love the Parks Department.
19 We don't love all agencies but we do love the Parks
20 Department. And so, I think it would require the
21 Office of Long-Term Planning assisting the ability to
22 consider as we have heard earlier, tree canopy and
23 trees and all these important issues that we care so
24 much about. And we do care about our sustainability
25 goals to be aligned with protection and preservation
of trees.

3 I remember when Mayor Bloomberg, because I've
4 been around for a long time, launched the Million
5 Tree Initiative and there wasn't a requirement
6 outlined for the city to make progress on the
7 initiative. And I think that's partly why we're here
8 today. We also thank Mayor Adams for PlaNYC talking
9 about growth and sustainability and I look forward to
10 working with you on 1066 and the amazing work that
11 the Chair, Council Member Bottcher are doing to talk
12 about long term impact for our city regarding canopy
13 number one.

14 I want to thank Forest For All Coalition and
15 Sheila Putter from my office. I do want to mention
16 that all of us who put money in for these trees; two
17 things, one we do not quite understand as I heard the
18 Chair talk about the plan and when the timing takes
19 place. My block managed to get a freaken tree before
20 the \$250,000 that I put in, so I don't know how my
21 block got a tree first but they did, so I want to
22 understand that.

23 Also, when the block had a tree guard, the tree
24 guard wasn't put in with the tree, so all of that,
25 how does that all happen because I can't walk down my
block now without being asked that question. Also,

3 96th Street is a subway. It's a large broad way mall
4 space but I believe in this particular area, the
5 Parks Department is in charge of the trees, 96 and
6 Broadway. Most of them are dead and I think it's
7 because they weren't watered. And then finally, I do
8 want to say Dee Dee Ford, one of the Street Naming,
9 she was a wonderful teacher at a child care center in
10 the area, African American work at River Park Nursery
11 School and there are 150 signatures for support of
12 the Co-naming for her.

13 So, thank you very much. I really appreciate
14 this discussion. It's the first time I think its
15 taken place in the City Council. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much
17 Council Member Brewer and thank you for your
18 leadership with your legislation as well. I'll now
19 turn it over to Council Member Menin.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great, thank you so much
21 Chair and thank you for holding this important
22 hearing. So, I had a number of questions. How many
23 trees were planted last year? I know you talked
24 about the percentage of tree canopy but I'm curious
25 how many trees were planted last year and how does
that compare to the past five years?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you Council Member for
4 that question. So, the street and park trees, which
5 is the number that really gets a lot of attention.
6 Last year, we reached 13,000 trees, which is the
7 highest number over the last six years. We haven't
8 seen numbers like that since the Million Trees sort
9 of era. This year, we are very close to hitting
10 15,000, which again is a great number for us.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay and in 2017, your
12 testimony indicated that 22 percent of New York City
13 was covered by Tree Canopy. What is that percentage
14 today?

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
16 We don't have an updated number. We would need to
17 rerun the exact same analysis again and there
18 actually are plans in the works to be doing that.
19 We're looking at working with our partners at the
20 Nature Conservancy and to redo that assessment, so we
21 can have another sort of piece of data.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, yeah, I'd be very
23 interested in seeing that. And then lastly, how many
24 contractors involved with street canopies are MWBE's?

25 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
Let me see if we have it. I'm going to ask. We can

3 get that to you if we don't have it right here. I do
4 know for certain that we have seven new MWBE vendors
5 who are part of our tree planting program but over
6 the entire tree maintenance and planting program, I
7 don't have that number for you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, yeah, I'm very
9 interested as Chair of Small Business in getting
10 that, because right now we're at two percent of
11 overall contracts right now or MWBE's, so we really
12 need to do a lot of improvement on that

13 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you. Matt, do you
14 want to mention where we are?

15 MATT DRURY: No, yeah, just broadly speaking
16 Parks is actually quite proud on its record. You
17 know large, including our capital division and
18 others, so we're happy to follow up with you. You
19 know routinely when the Comptroller puts out those
20 assessments and reports, we're usually in that sort
21 of number two, number three spot in terms of all city
22 agencies. In terms of our MWBE performance, so
23 overall, we're very, very proud of our record.
24 That's also especially true in the tree realm.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you. Thanks.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Council Member
4 Restler.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chair
6 Krishnan. I think you know you deserve a great deal
7 of credit for continuing to focus on this issue and
8 really appreciate your leadership of this Committee
9 and lifting up the importance of trees in our urban
10 forest. And I do want to thank Deputy Commissioner
11 Greenfeld and the whole Parks Department for their
12 partnership and leadership. I think they really have
13 been doing a good job and we've enjoyed partnering
14 with you in the 33rd Council District. Where with
15 your vision, we developed a plan together to fill
16 every available tree bed over the next four years.
17 3,400 trees are getting planted in District 33, which
18 we're really excited about. Trees are really nature's
19 solution to the climate crisis and we need a whole
20 lot more of them.

21 We've also been focusing on tree care and we do
22 tree you know bed, maintenance events every week or
23 every other week across our district trying to get
24 more and more neighbors involved. Could you speak a
25 little to what Parks is doing to keep - to get
communities more engaged in tree care maintenance and

3 how we can encourage more neighbors to support the
4 health and wellbeing of the trees on their blocks and
5 in their communities?

6 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question
7 and it has been a pleasure and an honor to be able to
8 work with you on your tree plans. We have an active
9 stewardship program in my division that has events
10 every week that encourages people either to sort of
11 drop in to a tree care event, a street tree care or a
12 park tree care event. We also encourage and have a
13 whole program to empower individuals to become what
14 we call super stewards, so we train them to be our
15 eyes and ears expanded because we can't do, I mean
16 there are 666,000 trees on the street. We can't be
17 everywhere at once, so we really need to be able to
18 figure out how to leverage our expertise. So, we
19 identify and train super stewards and they attend an
20 event. They go to a training. They identify blocks
21 that they want to be able to take care of, so those
22 are sort of our formal programs and then informally
23 our tree map is sort of our kind of entry way for
24 engaging New Yorkers. So, anybody can go look up a
25 tree, learn about it. That's number one, just notice
that tree on your block. And then number two, they

3 can learn what they can do to protect that tree and
4 then actually record it right there in that map and
5 then they can like get a snapshot of what they've
6 been doing. Who might be taking care of the tree in
7 their neighborhood, so we're doing this sort of all
8 around very proactive targeted care and engagement of
9 volunteers, as well as sort of making sure if
10 somebody's ready to do it they can. Also, the
11 Commissioner announced just a couple of weeks, last
12 week I think, our new initiative to engage a record
13 number of volunteers to help care for city parks.
14 And street trees and trees in general is part of
15 that. We're never going to - we know we need that to
16 be a piece of that puzzle too.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's great and I
18 appreciate you articulating all of that so well for
19 the benefit of my colleagues and the public. You
20 know we've been trying to partner with you on each of
21 those, on many of those different pieces. We've done
22 a couple pruning classes across our district, which
23 have been great to empower some pruners that I think
24 people are really excited about and we took your
25 street tree map and working with BETA NYC created a
District 33 version of it and have been encouraging

3 neighbors to adopt a tree or more or two on their
4 block and take responsibility and care for it. One
5 of our neighbors recently adopted 34 trees around
6 their development, so they got the gold star in
7 Concord Village.

8 So, thank you to them and to everyone who has
9 been working on it. We've also developed a tree
10 care, a street tree fund where we're raising money
11 for neighbors in our community to support the
12 planting of more trees, which has been great. I will
13 tell you one of the things that the costs just are
14 mind boggling to me though and they're really
15 frustrating and we talked about this at a hearing
16 last year that Chair Krishnan convened for tree
17 planting. But also today, I wanted to dig in on tree
18 guards. I think that if I have this right, it's
19 \$1,640 for a tree guard, which is just so darn
20 expensive and if we don't have that tree guard in
21 place than every dog is in their peeing and people
22 are putting trash in there and making a mess and it
23 really undermines the health of the tree. The
24 likelihood that's it's going to be offering long term
25 benefits to our blocks and communities and our air
quality.

3 I'm really, I know that there are some kind of
4 secret DIY tree guard strategies that you share with
5 your tree captains but I really want to figure this
6 out with you all. We started talking to some
7 nonprofit partners and carpenters about new tree
8 guard approaches that we can try and pursue in our
9 communities. Could you just speak to your openness
10 to try to think about how do we have more affordable
11 options, so that people can protect the trees on
12 their blocks and in their communities. Because 5 for
13 8,200 is just too darn expensive for anybody to
14 afford.

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Great, thank you for that
16 question and I will say we absolutely support tree
17 guards. We think they're fantastic. They you know
18 remind people the tree is there. That's like the
19 number one thing, see the tree and we do have
20 standards that we permit and that we would build
21 ourselves if we're putting them in and they are, they
22 are significant pieces of infrastructure. There are
23 steel, any cost is based upon whatever the cost of
24 the market is but I hope it's not secret. We
25 certainly don't mean to have these sort of DIY
options hidden away. We're happy to identify other

3 ones. We've worked, maybe Ben can mention to you
4 that you know we've worked with different vendors,
5 with different creative folks to look at ways of
6 building cheaper tree guards or more interesting tree
7 guards. We permit them but really what we care about
8 is that the tree guard does not damage the tree or in
9 fact the growing area of the tree. It's kind of a low
10 standard and it has to be safe. So, we're open to
11 it, absolutely.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great, well, we would
13 love to explore that together and I'd really love to
14 explore with you trying to build nonprofit capacity
15 in our tree contractors, so that we can find mission
16 driven, values driven, more affordable options for
17 planting trees that could save money. I'm looking at
18 the North Brooklyn Parks lines out in the back here
19 at the hearing today. Would love to see them as a
20 partner for the Parks Department planting trees in
21 our community. I know that they could do it much
22 more inexpensively and frankly more ethically to our
23 last hearings point, you know to our budget hearings
24 point than some of the contractors that currently
25 work with the Parks Department.

3 And so, I hope this could be an area of
4 exploration for us to work together as well. And
5 thank you for everything you do. Thank you Chair
6 Krishnan.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks so much Council
8 Member Restler and thank you for your great work for
9 the tree canopy in your district. Showing me up as
10 Parks Chair but one thing I want to follow up on that
11 Council Member Restler asked at the end there too
12 about tree guards was, we get these requests a lot
13 from constituents about trees on their block that
14 need tree guards and they're very important for their
15 protection. So, does Parks have a way for people to,
16 for constituents to call in and say hey, we'd like a
17 tree guard here and what is that process? How long
18 does that take?

19 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for that
20 question. I'm going to defer that to my colleague
21 Ben Osborne.

22 BEN OSBORNE: Thank you Council Member. So,
23 there are a couple of mechanisms through which
24 constituents can obtain tree guards. You know one is
25 through private funding and working with you know
either a private contractor or another nonprofit or

3 our nonprofit program Tree Time that you know, they
4 can make a donation and have the tree art installed.
5 The other mechanism is through our contracts and that
6 is generally done through our tree planting contracts
7 using capital dollars. So, capital funding has
8 restrictions you know, the tree guard needs to be
9 installed with a new tree or as part of a group of
10 new trees if capital funding is used.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But my understanding also
12 is that you know the feedback can be received from
13 Parks but that ultimately if it comes to the
14 contracts, they're not targeted to specific - say if
15 a constituent reaches out and says you know I need a
16 tree guard here, uhm, can that request be honored by
17 Parks or no, right or it has to go through a larger
18 process?

19 BEN OSBORNE: Right, yeah, there is no mechanism
20 for kind of one-off tree guard installation under our
21 contracts. You know we do sometimes receive
22 discretionary allocations that we can you know
23 install tree guards through you know a business
24 district or something like but the one offs; we don't
25 have contractual numbers.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right, that's what I
4 figured and also, right it could come through our
5 discretionary allocation. I would just urge Parks
6 also and this is part of what I alluded to earlier in
7 my opening statement to is, if we want to bridge that
8 gap between how the tree process and maintenance
9 works, you know with Parks and on the ground level,
10 our constituents and a lot of the tree advocacy
11 groups and citizen pruners and others who are here,
12 they're the first line of you know, defense so to
13 speak or the one's on the ground who know the
14 neighborhoods best, know the streets and blocks were
15 issues. They come up to us, we push them as Council
16 Members but if there is a way to make the process
17 more interactive for members of the public and
18 constituents participate that know best when there
19 are issues with their trees, when tree guards are
20 needed, it would go a long way to addressing that
21 issue. Because we look to our constituents, they
22 tell us, they point things that maybe we haven't seen
23 but I think there's an important gap to be bridged
24 there when it comes to tree guards in particular.

25 Now, I'll turn it over to Council Member Lee for
questions.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi everyone, thank you so
4 much. This is probably, I think trees whether you're
5 talking about tree pruning, tree roots, any kind of
6 tree issues are probably one of the top issues that I
7 get in my district because I would say mostly
8 residential. A lot of homeowners, co-op, condo
9 owners and so, we have a ton of trees in my district,
10 which I'm thankful for and love and so do our
11 neighbors but I think especially as I've been walking
12 the streets lately, one of the things, the biggest
13 complaints we hear about is that, we have folks that
14 have lived in their homes for like 18, 20 years and
15 have never had their trees pruned and now the issue
16 is that now the branches are going into the windows
17 in the homes and the siding of the houses and they
18 call 311, try to get something. They've actually
19 spoken to folks at Parks and the response they
20 usually get is, "well, is it in danger of?" And I
21 literally saw the guys branch. If it falls, it could
22 seriously injure somebody on the sidewalk. And his
23 response was, "okay, well, if it's not dangling, you
24 know then it's not considered; we can't really do
25 anything about it."

3 So, I guess my question is, you know what are
4 sort of the requirements of when something could be
5 deemed like where it needs to be pruned more
6 immediately versus not immediately and you know, what
7 are the sort of standards or requirements or those
8 things that can be looked at? Because we've had a
9 lot more heavy storms, rainfall lately and that has
10 been negatively impacting our neighborhoods as well.

11 And so, just wondering what the standard for that
12 is and also, there's a lot of tree stumps that I've
13 been noticing that are dead and have been dead for a
14 very long time. And it's funny because some of the
15 homeowners take potted plants and put it in the tree
16 stumps to make it look prettier but uhm, you know and
17 they want the trees. You know, they would love to
18 have the trees replaced but they said that again,
19 they've been calling 311 and requesting one that's
20 going to happen, especially when it uplifts the
21 sidewalks and you know raises up the streets next to
22 their property.

23 So, you know I have a lot of older adults in my
24 district, so that's something that I hear a lot of,
25 so just wondering if you could speak to that?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, thank you very much
4 for your questions. Lets see, I'll start with
5 standards for pruning. I think you do have a good
6 idea that we have both sort of proactive and reactive
7 and I think your question is how do we determine what
8 we react to as opposed to wait for the next cycle to
9 come through.

10 First of all, if there is somebody whose told you
11 that they have never had their pruned in 18-20 years,
12 please send us that address because that shouldn't be
13 unless it was really too small for one cycle. I
14 don't know, it doesn't quite true, so we'd love to
15 find out that would help us make sure we haven't
16 missed anything by accident. And I'll let
17 Commissioner Osborne tell you a little bit about the
18 standards about you know when do we send a crew out
19 there versus say, you know this is about proactive
20 not reactive.

21 BEN OSBORNE: Yeah, so when it comes to you know
22 managing risk, which is I think really fundamentally
23 what you're asking about here. Uhm, you know our
24 inspectors are trained in our tree risk management
25 protocols and you know they perform and detail the
assessment of the tree. They look at the problem and

3 you know the likelihood of that tree or tree park
4 failing and what should happen should that actually
5 take place. And that risk assessment goes into a
6 ranking system.

7 And so, we do dispatch our crews to the highest
8 rated risk conditions first and you know we afforded
9 the categories A-D and the extreme risk category A,
10 we get to very quickly within seven days. Category
11 B, we respond to within 28 days. And then Category
12 C, we have to prioritize as resources allow.

13 And then, you know a lot of what is perceived as
14 a high-risk condition by the property owner, because
15 they see it every day. Of course, that's what they
16 notice may not rise to that level of something that
17 we respond to or need to respond to in very short
18 order.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, uhm, oh sorry and then
20 the other question I have was related to this, which
21 is around the workforce because I'm just thinking of
22 my district alone and we like a tremendous number of
23 trees that are on public properties and so, I can't
24 even imagine the amount of workforce that it takes to
25 take care of the trees, make sure that they're being
you know pruned and taking care of properly. So,

3 just wanting to know with the current staffing that
4 you have available and apologies because my brain is
5 not functioning correctly these days but you know I
6 know this brought up and touched upon during the
7 budget hearings but just wanted to for my own self go
8 back into two things, which is number one, the
9 staffing that you have now, is it enough? If not,
10 how many more would be enough you think for that for
11 all the trees that need to get taken care of in the
12 city? And then the second question I have was around
13 the contracting because I can't remember what the
14 stance was for Parks Department but I know that
15 there's been lags in hiring time because the process
16 in and of itself takes awhile for folks to get hired
17 because they have to get approved by OMB and then
18 there's this back and forth and by the time folks
19 actually get the word that they are going to be
20 hired, they may have already moved onto a different
21 job or something else.

22 And because the Parks workers tend to be more
23 seasonal, would it be helpful to have multiyear
24 contracts for some of these people that we hire, to
25 say it's not just like a one-year term. But so that
they don't have to go through that process over and

3 over again year over year? So, just wanted to get
4 your thoughts on that too.

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Okay, so thank you very much
6 for that question. So, there are a few things I
7 heard about staffing. Our Park workers are amazing.
8 They do a great job. They work hard and we feel very
9 confident that we're getting to – we're doing an
10 excellent job at managing for risk in the urban
11 forest with the people we have. And we do a great
12 job at sort of matching the workforce to the work
13 that is there. So, our highly technical specified
14 time sensitive work is done by our in-house staff and
15 then that's complimented by our contractors and
16 that's how we can expand our reach by doing both at
17 the same time. So, we feel very good about that.

18 In terms of bringing new people on, I do want to
19 clarify that the forestry program does not depend
20 upon seasonal workers. While Parks overall, there is
21 a significant piece that is seasonally higher but our
22 foresters, our climbers and pruners and other support
23 folks, those are year around permanent staff.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, sorry, so for the ones
25 that are seasonal, could you go into that a little
bit more? Like, what are the types of work that you

3 do typically as for seasonal as well as how would it
4 be you know beneficial to have? Because that was
5 something that I remember we discussed during the
6 budget hearing, unless I'm going crazy, but you know
7 because in my mind, just knowing as a nonprofit
8 person formerly, the contracting process is crazy and
9 the hiring process can be crazy and so, I guess from
10 my perspective as a Council Member, I'm thinking
11 okay, so what are ways that maybe we can help so that
12 it is not such a cumbersome process for people to get
13 jobs?

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, thank you for that
15 question. So, the contracting, we definitely look at
16 ways of having multiyear contracts and having
17 renewals as opposed to completely rebidding each time
18 and that's something we take full advantage of. And
19 then in terms of staff, the seasonal staff at the
20 Parks Department is primarily in our maintenance and
21 operations division, which I would have to defer to
22 my colleague and we can get you more information
23 about that but as I said before, primarily there are
24 full time staff in caring in the forestry program.
25 With the exception, I would say the one exception is
the annual funding that the City Council has been

3 very generously allocating through the Play Fair
4 Program for our Forest Management framework.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you Council Member
6 Lee. Just two follow-up questions from Council
7 Member Lee's question. So, one of them was you know
8 understanding the workforce within the forestry
9 division, I think you just mentioned at the end,
10 there are what we call one shots that we provide,
11 City Council does to keep some of the work going for
12 tree stump removal, for example. There's a larger
13 issue, it doesn't effect forestry in particular but
14 seasonal workers also that are on one-shot lines as
15 well.

16 So, I guess my question is, wouldn't you say that
17 it would be more effective and more helpful to rather
18 than have one-shot funding to have permanent baseline
19 staff, which perhaps could be used, staff that could
20 be ultimately trained and specialized to become
21 pruners in the long-term if you had a larger baseline
22 city parks worker staff and also the one shots for
23 tree stump removal for example. If those are
24 baselined too, it seems to me like that would be a
25 more effective sustainable model than every year us

3 having to fight to make sure those one shots are
4 restored.

5 BEN OSBORNE: Thank you Council Member for that
6 question. You know obviously our year-round
7 employees are sort of the you know the backbone of
8 this agency and in fact, this active fiscal year here
9 marked a really significant increase, over 700
10 baseline individual increase in headcount for year-
11 round employees and so, as Commissioner Greenfeld
12 noted, obviously there is the nature of Parks in
13 terms of that seasonal ebb and flow that's obviously
14 an important part of the agency operation. But in
15 previous years, there's also been very generously
16 with the support and advocacy of the Council what we
17 call one shot funding coming in you know sometimes
18 for specific initiatives like tree stump removal. In
19 other cases, attached actual headcount hires. And I
20 think the answer is you know we welcome these
21 resources in whatever manner they're available and
22 certainly, the agency has placed a premium on
23 encouraging what we might call year around permanent
24 you know longer term employment. And in fact, we're
25 actually quite proud of our record in taking a good
number of those one-shot funded employees and

3 actually as openings become available, you know come
4 and join sort of what you might call the conventional
5 baseline headcount.

6 So, I think we see it as sort of a pipeline into
7 which it's actually an excellent mechanism to recruit
8 new employees and get them you know involved with
9 Parks culture, have them become familiar with the
10 agency. So, I think we found one shot funding to be
11 well, A, it's additional resources which is never a
12 bad thing. And B, I think we've actually seen it as
13 sort of a pipeline essentially to kind of engage with
14 new pockets and new individuals and introduce them to
15 the agency.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you and one more
17 question before turning it over to my colleagues as
18 well. Is one other focus of as the Council has been,
19 the school yard community playgrounds and the way in
20 which there you know school yards off school hours,
21 it could be turned into community playground like in
22 my district. And frankly, I think all of us want
23 more of them in the program because they're very
24 effective ways of creating public space and park
25 space where none may exist.

3 Sometimes those school yards can be full of
4 asphalt for example and it's important that they also
5 get shade too and have trees. So, if in those models
6 if more trees were planted in school yards too,
7 presumably that would help add to the tree canopy
8 coverage as well, right?

9 BEN OSBORNE: Yeah, as Commissioner Greenfeld
10 signified, noted earlier, there is a significant,
11 whether it's NYCHA or other sort of you know public
12 partners that have that sort of capacity, tree
13 capacity for any public space to the degree that can
14 be explored and I think the school yards, the
15 playgrounds initiative is a great example of where
16 we've worked with agency partners to provide some
17 guidance. In a few cases, there have been funding
18 that kind of came through Parks to help provide for
19 some capital improvements on that site and that's
20 included tree planting in many cases. So, by and
21 large, school yards, playground is a DOE initiative.
22 Kind of, you know they are the leaders on that front
23 but we've worked in close partnership with them and
24 provided that guidance and I think there have been
25 opportunities in the past for expanded tree canopy on

3 DOE property and we always encourage and try to
4 support that wherever we can.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Hmm, hmm. Yeah, it seems
6 like there's some opportunities there too. Now, I'll
7 turn it over to Council Member Carr.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you so much Chair
9 Krishnan for your leadership and for having this
10 really important hearing. Deputy Commissioner,
11 always great to see you and the team. I want to
12 associate myself with the comments of the Chair and
13 Council Member Lee regarding regularizing the funding
14 and operation of tree stump removals. I think we've
15 seen in some years there's been great progress but
16 year to year its safe to say it's uneven, which is
17 the nature of one-time funding. So, I agree with
18 that wholeheartedly and I think it applies also to
19 the tree and sidewalk program to some degree, at
20 least on the funding side, and I hope we can work to
21 improve that over the long term. But my questions
22 today are going to focus a little bit on the
23 survivability of trees. And so, as part of your
24 census right, you count the number of trees that
25 don't survive. Is there a leading you know top five

3 culprit for street trees not making it into a new
4 year? Do you count the cause of death, so to speak?

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for that
6 question. It's a good one. Trees are really
7 complicated living thing and when we do our census,
8 we do count dead trees but we don't indicate the
9 reason for death. You can't always tell. What would
10 you think? Probably, I don't know. What do you
11 think Ben? I know this is on the record but it's
12 really trying to think what we think in like the -

13 BEN OSBORNE: If we're speculating about like the
14 highest, the trees that we most commonly find dead
15 currently, you know Norway Maple is certainly one of
16 them that was historically planted in large numbers
17 and is no longer planted because it really isn't a
18 great urban tree. So, you know there are a
19 significant number of those that we are as they are
20 declining and dying, removing and taking out of the
21 population.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: So, would you say a
23 majority of the time you can't pinpoint a specific
24 cause?

25 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, I mean trees die
because they're aging, right? And very old trees as

3 they, their growth slows down, they're unable to
4 support the continued growth. They need to keep
5 growing in order to live and so it's sort of a
6 natural cycle of life. So, but just because a tree
7 is old doesn't also mean that it's like time to come
8 down. So, it's basically and species are all very
9 different and trees die because there's decay inside
10 of them and decay comes from sort of open wounds,
11 pruning cuts, people cut roots sometimes and we can't
12 see that and sometimes that's sort of an entryway for
13 decay. They are over I'm trying to think what else
14 causes it. I mean, there are occasions where you
15 know specifically why a tree died because you could
16 see the roots were cut because you feel a hot
17 sidewalk and you know there was a steam leak. And
18 there is some evidence of that looking at the wood
19 inside. It has like some coloration that indicates
20 there was gas there.

21 So, there are few things like that that are very
22 obvious but other than that, it's just part of the
23 natural population. In any population, you're going
24 to have a specific, a general percentage of which
25 one's are alive, in good health and dead or dying.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Right, I ask because if
4 we're trying to protect the city's investment and
5 then also avoid situations where we have stumps and
6 tree beds for long periods of time. I'm looking to
7 see if there's maybe some reason other than old age
8 that would lead to the cause of a death of a tree
9 that we could kind of plan for, anticipate and maybe
10 prevent. And so, I just want to talk a little bit
11 about one of them that you know we can debate about
12 whether or not it's a cause is the spotted lantern
13 fly infestation that we saw very highly last year and
14 I assume we're going to see again this summer.

15 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question
16 and I do understand that the spotted lantern fly is a
17 nuisance in a lot of neighborhoods. However, it's
18 not a direct threat to trees. It's different than
19 some of the other pests that we've seen over the last
20 10, 20, 30 years in New York City. In that it's
21 really a threat to agriculture crops like vineyards
22 and hops. But not the trees that we have in New York
23 City and so, we're not managing it directly because
24 again, it's an inconvenience yet it's not a threat to
25 the health of or safety of a tree. There are other
pests like the Emerald Ash borer, which is a threat

3 to New York City's trees. It only hits ash trees and
4 that's about four percent of our population across
5 the board and we do have a very active management
6 program for emerald, both tree emerald ash borer in
7 ash trees to remove trees that are killed by the EAB
8 and to treat them when we have healthy trees.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I ask that question because
10 you know you talked a few minutes ago about how open
11 wounds in trees can lead to rot and cause instances
12 where a tree would die. I've seen pictures from
13 constituents of lantern flies having been born of
14 trees, a street tree particularly also in the Green
15 Belts, in the heart of Staten Island. We are blessed
16 with a beautiful canopy in our borough and so, that's
17 leaves me to think that there is possibly a
18 connection in some cases between the health of a tree
19 and whether or not it was recently the site of
20 spotted lantern flies and their nesting.

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, no, thank you. I
22 think it's a good question. It's certainly
23 reasonable and it's, it's, we take the same approach.
24 We'll inspect a tree. If we think, if there's
25 indication that the tree is damaged, that you're
seeing decay in the wood or some sort of defect that

3 may have been caused by the spotted lantern fly, but
4 that's what we go by. The health of the tree, not
5 the presence of the lantern fly itself.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay, I appreciate it. I
7 have a couple of new plantings in my backyard. We'll
8 see how I do and if they make it to next year but
9 thank you Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Council
11 Member Carr. I also want to recognize that we were
12 joined by Council Member Velázquez and Council Member
13 Dinowitz has joined us too. Now, I'll turn it over
14 to Council Member Brewer.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I
16 have a question about how the grouping goes. In
17 other words it's my understanding and if you covered
18 this, I apologize but the reason that trees under
19 participatory budgeting for instance don't get
20 planted sooner its because you're trying to group and
21 you know do a lot more ordering so to speak.

22 So, is that true and the same thing for trees
23 guards because I want to understand why it takes so
24 long and maybe that's a legitimate reason but I want
25 to understand it.

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
4 I'll just say overall, as we talked about before, the
5 tree planting allocations are part of the capital
6 program and it is a lengthy procurement period. And
7 so, it is subject to the same regulations and
8 procurement rules that any other capital project is
9 part of and I'll see if Commissioner Osborne has
10 anything else to add? Okay, thank you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But then, I mean I
12 understand for the tree guards, you could have if you
13 just needed one or two you could do it through the
14 Job Order Contract. In other words, if you don't
15 need to order a whole lot of, you could do it for the
16 same amount of money. Is that something that you do?

17 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Right, so if we are given
18 expense funding through the participatory program or
19 an allocation because it's not capital, then yes, we
20 have to have a procurement for that expense funding
21 and if it's a small amount, it takes less time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and so, how far
23 behind are you for last year in terms of
24 participatory budgeting trees being allocated? Is
25 there some timeframe? Is it a couple of years?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It's a year to two between
4 when the fiscal year the money is allocated in and
5 when the contract is active.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

7 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It's about one year for
8 procurement.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, when Jeanette signed
10 with the bike lanes and she promised me trees. Most
11 of them are dead. So, how does the bike lanes? Is
12 that just still part of your contract same issue like
13 a street tree, no different?

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Uhm, it's a good question,
15 thank you very much. But I think it would be best if
16 we look at the specific location for you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Everywhere in Manhattan.

18 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, we'll take a look at
19 it. I don't know if we planted them or they were
20 part of some DOT installations. I think they're
21 different based on the scale and we can look into it.
22 There is a tricky place to put a tree.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but I'm just saying
24 the bike lanes exist. They have vacant tree pits for
25 lack of a better word. People are trying to put in
some flowers but a lot of them are full of garbage

3 and so, you're saying it could be DOT or it could be
4 Parks, not clear.

5 JENNIFER GREENFELD: No, sorry if I was unclear.
6 I'm not sure who installed them but if you want them
7 replaced, it would be us.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But you would have to be
9 replacing them.

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Correct, we would be
11 replacing the trees.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so I could get the
13 whole list for you but it is very long.

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Uh yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, the other question
16 I have is the 1066 would require all of us to
17 consider trees, canopy and so on. And we talked
18 about it and you did as part of the long-term
19 sustainability and you mentioned Local Law 84, 2013.
20 I was here when it was passed. What data as it
21 relates to trees is currently included in that report
22 on sustainability?

23 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for your
24 question. Right now in the most recent PlaNYC
25 report that was issued, there are two indicators or
metrics in their tree canopy coverage and the

3 increase that I had spoken about and the number of
4 street trees pruned. Those are the two indicators
5 that that are currently in this Plan NYC.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright. Thank you
7 very much Mr. Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Council
9 Member Brewer. One more question I have before
10 turning to Council Member Bottcher was just about the
11 bill in the Urban Forest Master Plan. What does the
12 Department think is needed to make the master plan
13 successful?

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for your
15 question. It's a great question. I think that uhm,
16 well first of all, we have taken a very strategic
17 approach to our and a sort of proactive and strategic
18 approach to managing the canopy under our
19 jurisdiction and I think that's something that's
20 important for the entire canopy.

21 It starts with a comprehensive understanding of
22 what we manage. So, we've done it through ecological
23 assessments of natural areas forest and complete
24 counts of trees along the street and in parks. And
25 we have a good start with the State of the Urban
Forest Report that the Nature Conservancy produced.

3 And then based on that information, those assessments
4 for us, again, we incorporate information from those
5 assessment and patterns of public service requests.
6 So, you have to sort of bring all that information
7 together and that in and of itself drives how you
8 allocate resources, where we deploy staff, cycles of
9 maintenance and treatment and how we manage our
10 progress over time.

11 And I think the value of a – an added value of a
12 management planning process is engagement with
13 communities along the way.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Council Member
15 Bottcher.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you so much. I
17 also want to compliment Council Member Restler on
18 everything he is doing on trees. I thought I was Mr.
19 Tree and then Council Member Restler announced 1,000.
20 He's embarrassing all us over here. How much did you
21 announce, like 4,000?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 3,400.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: 3,400, so I think we
24 might do that actually.

25 JENNIFER GREENFELD: It's custom designed. It's
not one Council District fits all.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHE: We might do 3,400
4 because we announced 1,000. We've already planted
5 almost 500 in the year and a half that we've been in
6 office.

7 I want to focus on the issue of unplantable tree
8 pits that Chair Krishnan mentioned earlier. And this
9 is a chronic issue that we've been struggling with in
10 our district when we have many, many perhaps hundreds
11 of tree beds that are unplantable. Either they have
12 infrastructure underneath or they're too close to
13 another tree bed. So, they're under the canopy of
14 another tree.

15 I would like to see the Parks Department; I'd
16 like to see you concern yourself with that somehow,
17 even though you're only responsible for the trees
18 themselves. Not these empty pits, so it's really no
19 one's problem right now and our options are limited
20 when we talk about these. We could have them paved
21 over, which no one wants. But even that is a
22 challenge because whose responsibility is that? It's
23 really the property owner who abuts the tree bin.

24 Shrubs, other kinds of plantings, are something
25 that I've always wanted to explore for these other,
these unplantable tree beds because if you could

3 plant a shrub or a bush, something that could absorb
4 the rain water or could be esthetically advantageous,
5 that would be great. But the Parks Department can't
6 do that, am I right? You're only allowed to plant
7 trees.

8 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you for that question.
9 As you know because we've worked a lot with your
10 office on this issue and really appreciate your
11 attention to it. I think our sort of coordinated
12 approach to saying okay isn't plantable, how can you
13 work with it. I know you're working with court and
14 it's an excellent model for other districts. And you
15 know honestly we're happy to participate in a
16 conversation with our other agencies who look at the
17 public right of way and have their own sort of
18 regulations and policies about that place and that's
19 true is that we are only going to plant the tree.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHE: What about planting
21 things other than trees in tree beds?

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I think again, I think
23 that's a great starting point for a discussion with
24 some other agencies along with Parks to see how we
25 can do that as a broader greening program.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: At one point, I believe
4 I was told that the City Charter says you can only
5 plant trees. Is that right?

6 BEN OSBORNE: Well, the City Charter only grants
7 Parks with jurisdiction over street trees and the
8 right of way but that sort of surrounding right of
9 way around that tree by and large, is under the
10 jurisdiction of DOT. So, I'm not trying to split
11 hairs but that essentially means that the tree in and
12 of itself is our primary concern but I think it's as
13 Commissioner Greenfeld noted, I think this
14 Administration is you know making huge strides in
15 terms of thinking of the public realm more
16 holistically and encouraging you know more
17 interagency coordination. You know there's now a
18 chief of the public realm and etc., etc.. So, I
19 think there are a lot of exciting opportunities for
20 increased coordination on that front.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: When you work on this
22 urban forest master plan that is the subject of
23 Intro. 1065, could this be incorporated into it?
24 This question of the unplantable tree beds? Could
25 that be factored into that Urban Forest Master Plan?

3 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Yeah, thank you for that
4 question and we're certainly open to considering that
5 as part of the Master Plan.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Council
8 Member Bottcher and now, I have two questions from
9 Council Member Narcisse. So, the first one is,
10 what's the regulations for sidewalk size and width?
11 Sorry, let me make sure I got it right here.

12 Right, so what is the regulation for a sidewalk
13 size and width with the ADA and tree planting? So,
14 for example, in Council Member Narcisse's district,
15 she says we have trees in Garrison Park and by
16 Canarsie Park where there doesn't appear to be enough
17 room for a wheelchair or even a stroller to pass on
18 the sidewalk due to the trees. So, how does Parks
19 consider you know the balance of accessibility and
20 tree planting?

21 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, thank you for that
22 question. We definitely follow ADA standards and
23 I'll let Commissioner Osborne give you a few more
24 details for that.

25 BEN OSBORNE: Sure, so ADA requirements are
generally 36 inches or greater.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: 365 inches?

4 BEN OSBORNE: Correct but we don't go any lower
5 than 39 in any case and generally, we try to leave
6 larger space and we've work closely with the DOT on
7 these basic requirements.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, so I urge you all to
9 follow up also with Council Member Narcisse to on
10 those parks in particular.

11 And then the second question from Council Member
12 Narcisse was, when residents request trees, can they
13 also request the type of tree that be planted?

14 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much for that
15 question Council Member Narcisse. They can suggest a
16 type of tree but we do need to leave it to our
17 professionals to really match the tree that is going
18 to provide the most benefits to the city as a whole
19 with the very specific needs of that site. So, it's
20 constrained by certain things, whether it's how much
21 overhead space, below space, sidewalk space. What
22 fits in from aesthetic perspective but our goal is to
23 plant a tree that provides the most benefits, which
24 is usually a larger canopy tree. But if somebody has
25 a preference, we're certainly open to considering it.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you and then my
4 final question just going back is something we talked
5 about earlier with tree guards and you know the
6 capital contracts for tree guards. Obviously with
7 big capital purchases, it's not going to be one off
8 tree guard purchases, so what typically, what other
9 kinds of capital contracts besides those contracts
10 for tree guards that you all are purchasing when it
11 comes to tree guards?

12 JENNIFER GREENFELD: I'm not sure what you're
13 asking. Do you mind repeating that?

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I guess more specifically,
15 you know you're not buying one off tree guards right
16 with the capital contracts, it must be bulk
17 purchases, so are these large contracts for tree
18 guards and if so, how much are they or how are you
19 ordering them?

20 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure, I'll let Ben Osborne
21 give you an idea for that. How we integrate tree
22 guard into our contracts.

23 BEN OSBORNE: Yeah, so tree guards are generally
24 included in our planting program in two different
25 ways. They're either as part of the tree planting
contracts, so you know we have an option to install a

3 tree guard along with the tree and you know maybe at
4 the same time or maybe a few months or we also have
5 some stand-alone tree guards contracts that will
6 follow tree planting and install tree guards but it's
7 still associated with the tree plants.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what are the size of
9 those contracts?

10 BEN OSBORNE: I don't have the number with me but
11 we can follow up on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay if you can let us
13 know too. Just because I think it's important to
14 have sense in the capital budget how it fits in as
15 well.

16 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Sure and I will note that
17 tree guards in particular are great ways to
18 incorporate MWBE vendors into the program. So, it's
19 actually often a subcontractor. MWBE subcontract on
20 some of the larger tree planting contracts.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it, okay.

22 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Some of these guys will -
23 some of these companies will subcontract the tree
24 guard piece of it and some of them do it themselves.

25 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: If you can send over the
information afterwards, we'd appreciate it, just some

3 basics about the contracting and the MWBE's that are
4 used and the size of those contracts. Uhm, well, I
5 want to thank you all. We'll now turn it over to
6 public testimony, so I want to thank you all in the
7 Administration for your testimony, for your work and
8 look forward to our continued work together to get to
9 that 30 percent tree canopy cover by 2035. That
feasible goal.

10 JENNIFER GREENFELD: Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. And now, for
12 our first panel of public testimony, we'll call up
13 Emily Maxwell and Alia Soomro. Is Alia Soomro here
14 too? Welcome Emily, you may start. Sorry Emily, do
15 you mind moving the mic closer and speaking into it?
16 Much better.

17 EMILY MAXWELL: Okay, sure, good morning -

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Is your mic on?

19 EMILY MAXWELL: Shall we try that again.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Uh.

21 EMILY MAXWELL: I'm so sorry, it's funny to hear
22 yourself echoing back at you, so good morning
23 Committee Members, advocates, Committee Chair. Thank
24 you for holding this hearing and having me. I'm
25 Emily Nobel Maxwell. I am the City's Director at The

3 Nature Conservancy in New York. The world's largest
4 conservation organization. We have 35,000 members
5 here in New York City.

6 We're a proud leading members of Forest For All
7 NYC, a coalition of over 90 organizations. We
8 authored the State of the Urban Forest in NYC, co-
9 released the New York City Urban Forest Agenda, and
10 conducted an analysis of local tree canopy potential
11 that shows we can expand canopy in every neighborhood
12 across New York City.

13 We're here today to enthusiastically support
14 Introduction 1065 and Introduction 1066. Thank you
15 to the Chairman, the Committee and the sponsors for
16 your leadership in advancing this important
17 legislation to expand New York City tree canopy to 30
18 percent cover in an equitable way. Tree canopy is
19 crucial for the health, safety and livability of New
20 York City, especially in the face of increasing
21 extreme heat and flooding. And we need canopy to be
22 equitably and justly distributed, which it is not.
23 These bills are also essential to achieving the
24 PlaNYC 30 percent citywide canopy goal recently
25 announced by Mayor Adams.

3 We offer a few potential ways to strengthen
4 Intro. 1065, although we do fully support it. The
5 Urban Forest Plan should be sure to address
6 environmental justice, climate change adaptation and
7 mitigation, equitable canopy access and workforce
8 development, as well as accounting for the whole life
9 cycle of trees from seed to salvage. The 30 percent
10 goal should be tied to a timeline and we suggest
11 2035, which has been endorsed by 28 City Council
12 Members, all five Borough Presidents, many Community
13 Boards, as well as the Members for Forest For All
14 NYC.

15 And the plan will need interagency across
16 jurisdictional leadership. As we heard here today,
17 Parks is responsible for 53 percent of the current
18 canopy but a huge portion is under other
19 jurisdictions both public and private, as well as the
20 huge amount of the potential. So, we need that plan
21 to truly have that cross jurisdictional leadership.
22 We also of course have to make the call for
23 sufficient resourcing for Parks and the agencies
24 tasked with making this plan to ensure sufficient
25 resource for developing and implementing the plan as
well as caring for our existing canopy.

3 I will note that these bills enjoy significant
4 and broad support in a pole we commissioned by global
5 strategy group in late 2022, New York voters
6 overwhelmingly said 97 percent of them that they
7 would support efforts to protect, maintain and expand
8 the New York City urban forest. You will also hear
9 or receive testimony from over 40 organizations as
10 part of Forest For All NYC under our collective
11 banner on behalf of their own organizations.

12 I know my time is up, so a huge thank you to the
13 Chair and the Committee and the sponsors for hosting
14 this hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Emily.
16 Thank you for the Nature Conservancy's work and of
17 course Forest For All's work too on this really
18 important issue. I just have one question which is
19 just, we talked a bit before about 30 percent tree
20 canopy cover by 2035. You all have been
21 extraordinary in pushing for it. How crucial is it
22 to achieve that tree canopy cover for the wellbeing
23 of our city and our climate?

24 EMILY MAXWELL: It truly is essential, so the New
25 York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's
own researchers have released a paper in the past few

3 years that shows that in order to actually mitigate
4 extreme heat with greening, we need to be achieving
5 at least 32 percent or more vegetation cover in our
6 neighborhoods. Tree canopy is only one part of
7 vegetation but it's a big and important part. And
8 so, we set the target of 30 percent so that it can
9 contribute to that true coin. If we're not reaching
10 those numbers, we're not going to see the actual
11 benefits of cooling and we will perpetuate the
12 inequities that we see now.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And do you also feel that
14 it's feasible to achieve to achieve that goal by 2035
15 as Parks testified to?

16 EMILY MAXWELL: I will say I agree with
17 Commissioner Greenfeld. It is ambitious and it is
18 feasible. It will take the engagement of agencies
19 beyond the Parks Department. It will take the
20 leadership of the Mayor and it will take the
21 activation and engagement of the private sector but
22 it is feasible.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much.
24 Alia.

25 ALIA SOOMRO: Thank you. Good afternoon, my name
is Alia Soomro and I'm the Deputy Director for New

3 York City Policy at the New York League of
4 Conservation Voters. Thank you, Chair Krishnan and
5 members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation for
6 the opportunity to testify today.

7 We have submitted longer written comments. NYLCV
8 is a member of Forest for All NYC, a diverse
9 coalition collaborating to support the city's urban
10 forest and equitably achieve 30 percent tree canopy
11 cover by 2035. We are a member of FFANYC not only
12 because trees and vegetation help mitigate a variety
13 of environmental and public health challenges,
14 including fighting air pollution, reducing carbon
15 emissions, improving stormwater runoff and the urban
16 heat island effect, but because the coalition centers
17 equity and environmental justice in its advocacy.

18 Recognizing that parks, green spaces, and trees
19 are not equitably distributed due to structural
20 racism and historic disinvestment, the coalitions
21 advocacy promotes New York City's urban forest so
22 that it benefits all New Yorkers in a way that is
23 just and equitable. NYLCV supports both bills being
24 considered today because they directly advance the
25 goals outlined in the NYC Urban Forest Agenda. Intro
1065, sponsored by Council Member Bottcher, would

1
2 require New York City Parks to create an Urban Forest
3 Master Plan and Intro. 1066, sponsored Council Member
4 Brewer, would require the city to consider the role
5 of trees, tree canopy, and vegetation in its long-
6 term sustainability planning.

7 Passing these bills are good for the urban
8 forest, good for New Yorkers' and essential to
9 meeting Mayor Adam's recently announced PlaNYC 30
10 percent tree canopy goal.

11 Like Emily said, we support Intro. 1065 and we
12 offer the following suggestions: We want to ensure
13 that NYC Parks is supported and resourced in the
14 planning of the master plan. So, we suggest that the
15 legislation take into consideration listing other
16 city agencies or by establishing an interagency
17 public, private taskforce.

18 The legislation should also establish a timeline,
19 ideally by 2035 and as Emily also mentioned, we
20 really suggest that the legislation explicitly
21 account for equity, environmental justice mitigating
22 climate change and public health.

23 And lastly, I just want to give a shout out and
24 you know we would be remiss if we didn't mention the
25 importance of time in this legislation with more

3 Parks funding. We're cofounders of the Play Fair for
4 Parks Coalition and we urge the City Council and
5 Adams Administration to increase the New York City
6 Parks budget to at least one percent of the city
7 budget. We really appreciate these bills being
8 considered and you know, this Committees advocacy.
9 Chair Krishnan, your advocacy about Parks. We look
10 forward to working with the City Council
11 Administration Forest For All Coalition to advance
12 this legislation. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Alia and
14 thank you for League of Conservation Voters. Great
15 work for our climate and for our parks. The next
16 panel is a virtual one it is Lynn Kelly from New York
17 Restoration Project and Sherrise Palomino from New
18 Yorkers for Parks.

19 COREY HASSON: Thank you Council Member Krishnan.
20 I'm Corey Hasson, I'm going to be testifying on
21 behalf of Lynn Kelly, our Executive Director. Good
22 afternoon. My name is Lynn Kelly, and I am the
23 Executive Director of the New York Restoration
24 Project. Thank you for the opportunity to provide
25 testimony this afternoon, Chair Krishnan.

3 NYRP is a proud member of the Forest For All NYC
4 coalition, the Play Fair Coalition and a founding
5 member of Parks and Open Space Partners. I am here
6 today in support of the two pieces of legislation up
7 for discussion: Intro 1066 would require the Office
8 of Long-term Planning and Sustainability to consider
9 the role of trees, tree canopy, and vegetation in its
10 sustainability planning and Intro 1065 that would
11 require the Department of Parks and Recreation in
12 consultation with other appropriate government
13 authorities to create an Urban Forest Master Plan.

14 Simply put, NYRP knows trees. For over 26 years,
15 NYRP has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored
16 parks, and transformed open space for communities
17 throughout New York City. NYRP leveraged the power of
18 public and private partnerships to spearhead and
19 successfully complete MillionTreesNYC with the Parks
20 Department. MillionTreesNYC was a citywide movement
21 that engaged and energized New Yorkers of every
22 background. The millionth tree was planted on
23 October 2015 in The South Bronx, completing this
24 historic effort.

25 Today, NYRP continues to steward and care for
thousands of trees planted during the MillionTreesNYC

3 era. These now mature trees help keep city streets
4 cooler, sequester carbon, and beautify neighborhoods.
5 Recently, NYRP concluded our popular Free Tree
6 Giveaway drive throughout all five boroughs where we
7 gave away over 3,500 native New York tree species
8 with over 20 partner organizations including elected
9 officials.

10 We know you are well-aware of the importance
11 trees and the Urban Forest in fighting the Urban Heat
12 Island Effect, sequestering excess carbon, and
13 absorbing excess rainwater. Last week New York City
14 had the worst air quality out of any major city
15 globally.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 COREY HASSON: Extreme weather is now the norm,
18 and the Urban Forest is the first line of defense.
19 Intro's 1066 and 1065 are the first steps toward
20 ensuring New York City achieves 30 percent canopy
21 coverage by 2035. An Urban Forest Master Plan helps
22 ensure that we have accountability as we consider
23 future budget issues. When creating an Urban Master
24 Plan, the Parks Department must be supported and
25 receive resources while being allowed broader

3 jurisdictional authority throughout the planning
4 process.

5 The Parks Department manages 53.5 percent of the
6 total urban forest canopy in the city. Despite all
7 their efforts, they are still chronically
8 underfunded. Future budgets must baseline one
9 percent for Parks, while also addressing
10 environmental justice, climate change, public health,
11 and equitable access to green space. Thank you for
12 considering these crucial pieces of legislation.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much for your
14 testimony. I just want to say a special thank you to
15 Restoration Project to for one thing that we talked
16 about earlier in the hearing was that you know
17 communication between agencies to make sure that
18 jurisdictional issues don't get in the way of tree
19 plantings and our other parts of urban forest and I
20 appreciated how your partnership working together on
21 a 34th Avenue open street where the medians we were
22 able to plan with amazing planters. It's been a huge
23 success and I know it was a unique project that we
24 undertook together with the Parks Department and DOT
25 with your leadership, so I just want to thank you all
for doing that and it really sets an example of what

3 is possible when we all work together. They've been
4 a huge success in our neighborhood on the part of the
5 Open Street where we have those great plantings. So,
6 thank you all so much.

7 Next we have Sherrise Palomino from New Yorkers
8 for Parks.

9 SHERRISE PALOMINO: Good afternoon, my name is
10 Sherrise Palomino, and I am the Director of Advocacy
11 and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks. We are
12 members of Forest for All NYC Coalition. Thank you
13 for the opportunity to testify. New Yorkers for
14 Parks is a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition
15 that advocates for parks and open space and includes
16 over 400 organizations. I also want to thank Chair
17 Krishnan for his leadership on the important issue of
18 improving tree canopy.

19 New Yorkers for Park and the Play Fair coalition
20 support each of the three bills being heard today.
21 These bills will create a NYC urban forest plan,
22 vital tree canopy monitoring and the long overdue
23 consideration of trees in the city's long-term
24 planning. Passing these bills are good for the urban
25 forest, good for New Yorkers' health and well-being,

3 and essential to meeting Mayor Adam's recently
4 announced PlaNYC 30 percent canopy goal citywide.

5 We believe the city needs to set a goal of at
6 least 30 percent canopy cover by 2035. New York
7 can't wait. We are in the midst of a climate crisis.
8 New York City's urban forest plays an important role
9 in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Urban
10 forests capture atmospheric carbon dioxide. Trees
11 help reduce air and water pollution and cooling costs
12 by acting as energy savers.

13 The Parks Department plays a critical role in
14 managing the urban forest but nearly half is outside
15 of their jurisdiction. The urban forest needs better
16 protection and management. The City Council has an
17 extraordinary opportunity to demand a comprehensive
18 plan that allows for meaningful investments in the
19 management, protection, and expansion of our urban
20 forest. This is possible with the City Council
21 making a commitment to allocating one percent of the
22 city budget to NYC Parks.

23 We are overdue for transformative investment in
24 our parks system, one percent of the city budget for
25 parks could ensure that our urban forest can be
resourced to support New York City during this

3 climate crisis. This is one of the many reasons why
4 NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition are calling for a
5 commitment to increase the Parks budget to one
6 percent of the city's budget, a call that the
7 majority of City Council support along with Speaker
8 Adams. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Sherrise
10 and to New Yorkers for Parks and the Play Fair
11 Coalition for all your critical work on that,
12 especially for achieving a long overdue one percent
13 of our city budget for our parks.

14 Next up we'll call an in-person panel Morgan
15 Monaco, Sarah Balistreri and Emily Walker.

16 MORGAN MONACO: Hi, good afternoon. I am Morgan
17 Monaco, I am the President of the Prospect Park
18 Alliance, the non-profit organization that operates
19 Prospect Park in partnership with the city. I am
20 here today to voice my support and thank the Council
21 for its leadership in advancing the legislation to
22 monitor, protect and grow New York City's urban
23 forest.

24 The urban forest is critical public
25 infrastructure and does not receive the resources it
needs to serve New Yorkers equitably. This

3 legislation will impactfully advance the City's Urban
4 Forest Agenda. Prospect Park Alliance is a member of
5 the Forest for All NYC Coalition, which seeks to
6 justly and equitably protect, maintain, expand and
7 promote the New York City urban forest. The urban
8 forest matters to our community because Prospect
9 Park's 585 acres are home to 30,000 trees of more
10 than 175 species. We at the Alliance are charged
11 with maintaining the park's woodlands and natural
12 areas, which represents 350 acres of important
13 wildlife habitat that is home to many species of
14 mammals, birds, and insects.

15 This work to sustain Brooklyn's last remaining
16 forest is critical in ensuring the health and
17 longevity of Prospect Park and the overall prosperity
18 and well-being of our city. As Brooklyn's Backyard,
19 Prospect Park serves as an accessible gathering space
20 for all of New York City and the diverse Brooklyn
21 communities that border the Park.

22 As you well know, the urban forest plays a vital
23 role in maintaining the health of our city. Trees
24 help regulate the temperature during hot summer
25 months, reduce air pollution, which given the air
quality crisis we just experienced is of significant

3 importance, they help manage stormwater, and provide
4 beautification. Trees are the lungs of our city and
5 should be treated as important as a fire hydrant or
6 lamppost.

7 Despite the importance of the urban forest and
8 its perennial need for stewardship, there is no
9 dedicated, long-term funding or committed plan for
10 managing New York City's trees in the years ahead.
11 These bills will create a New York City urban forest
12 plan, vital tree canopy monitoring, and will ensure
13 that trees are considered in the city's long-term
14 planning efforts.

15 Passing these bills are good for the urban
16 forest, good for New Yorkers' health and well-being,
17 and essential to meeting Mayor Adam's recently
18 announced PlaNYC 30 percent canopy goal citywide.
19 While we support the legislation to create an urban
20 forest master plan, there are some specific
21 opportunities for improvement. First, ensuring NYC
22 Parks is fully resourced, and has support from other
23 agencies with broader jurisdictional authority.

24 And second, establishing a timeline for achieving
25 this goal by 2035. And lastly, ensuring the plan
explicitly accounts for and improves environmental

3 justice, climate change, health, access and workforce
4 development goals. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHANAN: Thank you so much for
6 your testimony and all your leadership to the
7 Prospect Park Alliance and your great work to ensure
8 that we have the tree canopy cover support for our
9 parks that we need.

10 Next, we have Emily from the National Areas
11 Conservancy.

12 EMILY WALKER: Thank you Chair. My name is Emily
13 Walker and I am the Senior Manager of External
14 Affairs of the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you
15 to the Members of the Committee for the opportunity
16 to speak today. As a proud member of the leadership
17 committee of the Forest For All NYC coalition, the
18 NAC is in support of the intent of Intro.'s 1065 and
19 1066 and efforts to expand the canopy coverage of our
20 urban forest to 30 percent of NYC's land by 2035. We
21 offer the following points of feedback for
22 consideration: Urgent protection is needed for our
23 existing urban canopy, particularly our natural
24 forested areas. Of the seven million trees currently
25 in NYC, approximately five million are located within
forest and natural areas. And it's worth noting that

3 these five million trees store almost 70 percent of
4 the city's carbon, providing an outsized level of
5 value relative to other portions of our urban canopy.

6 We ask that the Council and the Administration
7 properly allocate the funds necessary to care for the
8 existing canopy forested natural areas, as this
9 funding has been stagnant for years and we run the
10 very real risk of losing spots of our natural
11 forested areas as we continue this level of
12 disinvestment.

13 We believe the success of the urban forest plan
14 rests on the ability of the public to have high
15 quality access to the urban forest itself. The Mayor
16 recently allocated funding in the FY24 Executive
17 Budget to improve and promote the use of 300 miles of
18 nature trails, which presents a very real opportunity
19 to bring more New Yorkers into our invaluable
20 forested natural areas. While we celebrate this
21 funding, it's critically important that the FY24
22 budget include funding for parks in the urban forest
23 including \$3.5 million to continue to work with
24 caring for our forested natural areas.

25 We believe this plan should not be the exclusive
responsibility of NYC Parks. The agency has vital

3 expertise and guidance on how to properly expand and
4 care for our urban forest, however, as was noted
5 earlier, about 53 percent of the urban canopy falls
6 under their jurisdiction with 47 percent remaining.
7 Canopy falling on land belonging to other agencies or
8 private property owners. We recommend that the plan
9 be completed in tandem between another mayoral agency
10 and parks to help elevate its importance and the
11 success of its implementation.

12 We also think the plan should be intentional
13 about including considerations of environmental
14 justice, climate change and workforce development.
15 The current gaps in our urban canopy, existing
16 community citywide that have been subject to historic
17 redlining and discrimination and these neighborhoods
18 remain our most valuable and vulnerable, excuse me
19 with respect to climate change and stand to benefit
20 the most from a targeted expansion of our urban
21 forest. We also believe that the expansion of the
22 urban forest represents an opportunity to create
23 reliable and quality green jobs for New Yorkers.
24 This legislation is an exciting opportunity to
25 contemplate the entire life cycle of our urban forest
and the multitude of benefits to New Yorkers. Thank

3 you again for your leadership and for the opportunity
4 to testify today.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Emily.
6 I will now call up our next panel Sarah Balistreri
7 followed by April Bovet Krishnan.

8 SARAH BALISTRERI: Hello, my name is Sarah
9 Balistreri. I am an Environmental Educator with
10 Trees New York, a nonprofit organization whose
11 mission is to plant, preserve, and protect New York
12 City's trees. Thank you to the Committee for
13 inviting testimony today about Intro.'s 1065 and
14 1066.

15 For over 45 years, Trees New York has engaged
16 volunteers across New York City in planting,
17 stewardship and education. For the past two years,
18 Trees New York has been a proud member of the Forest
19 For All New York City Coalition, a group whose
20 achievements in these short two years are a testament
21 to what can happen when over 90 organizations across
22 business, nonprofit, conservation and environmental
23 justice sectors galvanized toward a shared set of
24 urban forest goals.

25 On behalf of Trees New York and as someone who
works to educate New Yorkers about the countless

3 benefits of a healthy urban forest, I would like to
4 express my support for both bills, Intro.'s 1065 and
5 1066.

6 In particular, I support the bills inclusion of
7 regular data collection and monitoring to access the
8 growth or loss of canopy cover. Among other things,
9 this data will likely highlight the enormous
10 importance of stewardship, not only planting and
11 realizing the goal of 30 percent canopy cover. We
12 often say that it takes five years to plant a tree.
13 About an hour to put it in the ground and the
14 remaining time to ensure that it becomes properly
15 established through watering, soil management and
16 responsible pruning.

17 Urban trees that survived their first crucial
18 years in the ground are much more likely to grow to
19 maturity and provide the maximum benefits of canopy
20 cover, heat reduction, carbon sequestration and
21 stormwater interception. One element that is
22 currently absent from the language of Intro. 1066,
23 1065 is a mention of environmental justice.

24 We encourage the Committee to explicitly require
25 the urban forest master plan to set and monitor goals
that ensure equitable expansion of canopy cover

3 across neighborhood, including those that have been
4 historically under resourced when it comes to green
5 spaces and trees.

6 Again, on behalf of Trees New York, I thank the
7 Committee for inviting this testimony about these
8 bills that will be good for the urban forest, good
9 for New Yorkers health and essential to meeting the
10 goal of 30 percent canopy cover citywide. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much.

12 Alright, thank you so much. It's so good to see a
13 fellow Jackson Heights constituent here and thank you
14 for your work in our neighborhood and our district
15 and across our city for urban forest and green space.
16 Now, we'll hear from April Bovet Krishnan. Great
17 last name if I do say so myself.

18 APRIL BOVET KRISHNAN: Hello, my name is April
19 Bovet Krishnan, unrelated and I'm a long-time Tribeca
20 resident and a founding Board Member of the City Hall
21 Park Conservancy. Thank you to Chairman Krishnan and
22 the Committee for hearing our testimony and inviting
23 us in.

24 The Conservancy is a volunteer-led non-profit
25 organization that works towards helping the Park
maximize its potential through horticultural

3 initiatives and free programming. We are proud to be
4 a member of the Forest for All New York City
5 consortium, as we feel strongly about the importance
6 of protecting and expanding the urban forest in an
7 equitable way. Tree canopy monitoring and the
8 creation of a New York City forest plan is a long
9 overdue initiative in the city's long-term planning
10 and will directly benefit all New Yorkers. We see
11 the benefits of tree cover right outside these
12 windows in City Hall Park every day, providing shade
13 and shelter to thousands. We are lucky to have an
14 extraordinary collection of London plane trees,
15 gingkos, American elms and many others in City Hall
16 Park but we need more and better care.

17 More street trees could create green connections
18 northeast towards Columbus Park and Collect Pond,
19 west along Chambers Street to the river and south
20 towards Bowling Green. These bills will be essential
21 to meeting Mayor Adam's 30 percent canopy goal
22 citywide in the updated PlaNYC.

23 We strongly support Intro.'s 1065 and 1066, which
24 will increase consideration for the role of trees,
25 tree canopy and vegetation. For Bill 1065 in
particular, we would like to request that

3 consideration be given to ensure that the DPR is
4 supported and appropriately resourced in planning and
5 has a co-lead with broader jurisdictional authority,
6 as well as the time and funding to accomplish this
7 effort.

8 As others have mentioned, we believe a timeline
9 of achieving 30 percent cover by 2035 would also be
10 beneficial and we also support adding language which
11 explicitly accounts for and improves environmental
12 justice, climate change, health, access, workforce,
13 and addresses the full life cycle of trees. I want
14 to thank the Committee again for hearing our thoughts
15 and opinions supporting this bills. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much. Now,
17 our next panel is Fredrick Nass and Lucy Koteen.

18 FREDRICK NASS: Good morning Mr. Chairman and
19 Members of the Committee. Thank you for the
20 opportunity to provide testimony this morning on your
21 two city bills 1066 and 1065, which we support
22 wholeheartedly.

23 My name is Fredrick Nass, I'm President of Wild
24 Ones Long Island. We are part of a national
25 organization of over 100 chapters across the United
States that encourage and promote the use of native

3 plants and landscaping by homeowners and any groups
4 that want to see a healthier environment around them.
5 Your two bills are important to our members because
6 while our name incorporates Long Island, we do cover
7 geographically the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and
8 Staten Island with our membership. So, we have an
9 obligation to support this legislation as steps going
10 forward towards creating a healthy tree canopy and
11 tree population as well as a healthy environment for
12 wildlife, insects and our human species as well, both
13 physically and emotionally.

14 I won't elaborate on previous commentary from
15 members of your committee and other testimonials. It
16 is all important commentary and all truthful
17 commentary. I will say that in our travels to other
18 areas of the world, we have researched and looked at
19 other programs that major metropolitan areas have
20 been incorporating for maintaining and improving tree
21 canopy. Paris France has a program called Green
22 Paris which is I believe over ten years planning on
23 planting, 175,000 trees. Barcelona has their
24 superblocs program to remove vehicular traffic on
25 certain areas and create tree neighborhoods and even
architecture of the kind, the Bosco Verticale in

3 Milan. Italy is what I would call the contemporary
4 hanging gardens of Babylon. A building that
5 incorporated terraces for residents to have trees and
6 shrubs and perennials, which has provided an immense
7 amount of habitat and recorded the re-invitation of
8 bird and insect species.

9 So, I will finish up with certainly supporting
10 these important pieces of legislation going forward.
11 Some suggestion on our part would be that the text
12 would incorporate to say that the use of native trees
13 and plants would be of super importance to create the
14 proper habitat for wildlife and insects to come back.
15 And also it would be in the idea of perhaps raising
16 trees from local tree stock and shrubs and plants to
17 preserve the genomic heritage and also, to look at
18 removing any invasive species plants where they are
19 found to replace them with native species as well.
20 Thank you for the time today.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much for your
22 testimony. Lucy Koteen. No, okay. Next panel is
23 Joseph Charap and Melba Kirman.

24 MELBA KIRMAN: Thank you. My name is Melba
25 Kirman, I live in Bronx District 11. I am in favor
of the legislation with a couple of modifications.

3 So, first of all my background is in tech. I've
4 worked at Microsoft for several years and I keep
5 track of the urban tech space and I've written two
6 books on emerging technologies and more recently I
7 have been following around with the huge events in
8 some artificial intelligence and the huge growth in
9 urban data.

10 So, this is brainfood to the data and the value
11 of data and furthering transparency and
12 accountability. So, I don't think it's so much a
13 matter of funding and this previous discussion today
14 was very illuminating for me. I think it's a matter
15 of using money better and organizing this so that we
16 can actually get more traction on the problem of
17 planting more street trees.

18 So, just as an example, I did my own inventory.
19 I'm not as lucky as you are on the upper west side
20 that you have a mature effort on this and in just a
21 few blocks I discovered 50 empty tree beds that need
22 trees but the question is now what? Who's going to
23 plant those and how do I get their attention? The
24 other is, and speaking of accountability, the cost is
25 exorbitant. It's \$3,500 for one tree bed and that's
just to start. So, this brings me back to data

3 transparency and I really recommend that the
4 Committee educate itself about remote sensing and new
5 forms of computer vision because lighter is just one
6 tool in one much bigger toolbox.

7 The second is that you consider giving funding
8 and control of this at the district level, not to the
9 New York City Parks Department because that agency is
10 very difficult for regular people to communicate
11 with.

12 And finally, speaking of transparency, every
13 district should be required to share its results,
14 it's granular block level tree bed data and that way
15 when everything is put on a public portal, we can
16 actually see which districts are following through
17 and which districts are not. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much.
19 Joseph.

20 JOSEPH CHARAP: Good afternoon Chair Krishnan and
21 members of the Committee. My name is Joseph Charap,
22 and I am the Vice President of Horticulture at the
23 Green Wood Cemetery. Founded in 1838, we are a 478-
24 acre National Historic Landmark and arboretum in the
25 heart of Brooklyn. And as the sticker on my Lapel

3 suggests, we are also a proud member of the NYC
4 Forest For All Coalition.

5 We are here to voice our enthusiastic support for
6 Council Member Bottcher's bill 1065 to create an
7 Urban Forest Master Plan. This plan would be a vital
8 first step to ensure that we achieve the Coalition's
9 goal to create a healthy, biodiverse, accessible, and
10 resilient urban forest for all residents of New York
11 City. We also strongly endorse Council Member's
12 Brewer's bill 1066. One of the city's greatest
13 assets is its tree canopy, vital for the city's
14 resilience to not include trees in the city's long
15 term sustainability planning would ignore all they do
16 for us, which others have eloquently enumerated
17 today. I'll just simply add that they're our oldest,
18 largest friends and they deserve our gratitude and
19 consideration. We're also here to issue a call to
20 arms for any and every private landowner throughout
21 the city big or small to ensure we reach the city's
22 goal for canopy cover. The nature conservancy looked
23 at all the areas in New York City where trees could
24 be planted and 68 percent of that land is private.
25 The take away is clear, if we're going to get to 30
percent canopy cover by, we need private landowners

3 to step up. As New York's largest continuous private
4 landowners, we are committed to leveraging our
5 acreage to support the goals of the coalition and the
6 resilience of the city. We have 8,000 trees and will
7 plant 2,000 more over the next five years. Growing
8 our canopy cover from 32 percent to 35 percent.

9 You may ask who benefits from a cemetery in
10 Brooklyn planting more trees? Green with boarder
11 directly adjacent to Sunset Park, a thriving
12 community in an environmental justice area,
13 underserved, economically, culturally and
14 environmentally for decades. What happens at
15 Greenwood does not just affect us but all of those
16 who live around us.

17 We may be private but we are dedicated to helping
18 the public good. I'd like to invite members of the
19 Committee to visit Greenwood and see how our actions
20 reenforce our Committee to the goals of the
21 coalition. My contact information is in the printed
22 testimony and I look forward to welcoming you all to
23 Greenwood soon. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
25 your testimony and thank you. Having been to
Greenwood myself too, I know how important in the

3 role it plays too in the green space and also the
4 surrounding communities as well. So, thanks for your
5 testimony. Next up on the panel, we have Ryan
6 Mahoney and Donald Shanley.

7 DON SHANLEY: My name is Don Shanley, I live on
8 West 74th Street. I do not belong to any
9 organization, I'm just an individual who takes care
10 of a ginkgo stinko tree in front of my building.

11 I have been doing this for over 20 years. There
12 are people on my block who do the same thing
13 individuals. They aren't associated with any
14 organization. They just do it because they want to
15 keep the tree alive.

16 West of me, every tree has been cut down because
17 they weren't being taken care of and some of the
18 trees east of me had been removed and replaced. The
19 problem is, I can't afford and most of my friends who
20 do this can't afford \$1,000 for a tree God. This is
21 something I'm going to suggest the city covers for
22 any viable tree because if they're not being taken
23 care of and they're not being protected, they're not
24 going to be around very long. I mean, my tree is
25 probably 50 years old. I've been on my block since
it was planted and the other thing I'd like to see is

3 signs that ask for dog owners to curb their dogs,
4 signs that call attention to protecting trees be put
5 back up. There haven't been curb your dog signs up
6 for decades. I don't know why they were taken down.

7 But since the pandemic, we've had probably double
8 the number of dogs on my block from six in the
9 morning till midnight. You're talking about probably
10 a couple hundred dogs back and forth and if the tree
11 bed isn't protected, it becomes a bathroom floor for
12 them. This needs to be addressed and one way is to
13 get tree rods placed on every tree bed where there's
14 a viable tree and not expect people like me to pay
15 for it. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you for your
17 testimony. Now, we have Ryan Mahoney.

18 RYAN MAHONEY: Thank you. Thank you for the
19 opportunity to testify today. My name is Ryan
20 Mahoney, I'm the President and Principal Biologist at
21 Gotham Bat Conservancy. A wildlife conservation
22 organization that focuses on the conservation of bat
23 species and the critical habitats that they have.

24 We are a member of the Forest For All Coalition
25 dedicated to the protection, maintenance expansion
promotion to the urban forest and a member of the

3 endangered species coalition dedicated to stopping
4 the human cause extension of our nations at risk and
5 endangered species to protect, restore and enhance
6 their habitats and to guide their populations along
7 the road to recovery. I'm here to express our
8 support today for the bills that we've been
9 discussing today.

10 Gotham Bat Conservancy spends much of our time in
11 the urban forest locating and identifying the
12 presence of bat species that have decimated by
13 disease and habitat loss over the past two decades,
14 decreasing in numbers by over 90 percent since 2008.
15 All parts of the urban forest serve as vital habitat
16 for the species. Why does this matter? Like why is
17 the bat man here talking to everybody today about the
18 forest? At large, bats perform a variety of services
19 to the environment ecology and economy, such as pest
20 oppression, seed dispersal and pollination.

21 In New York City, we're supporting a burgeoning
22 urban agricultural movement. Bats perform up to \$50
23 billion worth of agricultural pest management in the
24 United States every year, highlighting their
25 significance to agriculture, community gardening,
26 food security and the reduction of pesticide

3 application. In addition to these services that bats
4 provide, bats are, they have clear reactions to
5 alterations in the environment, making them a highly
6 important bioindicator. Indicating the health of the
7 environment.

8 Changes in the presence in abundance of bat
9 species indicate changes in the environment, in the
10 environmental health. Tracking bat populations
11 during the process of restoration and enhancement
12 projects, like the one that we're talking about today
13 serves as an important indicator of the impact of the
14 work. In addition to our support of these bills
15 regarding the urban forest, I'd like to express our
16 desire to collaborate in evaluating the health of the
17 New York City urban forest with biological metrics in
18 addition to lidar as an interested non-governmental
19 party. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you for your
21 testimony. Our next panel is Nicolas Guntli and
22 Chrissy Word. You may begin.

23 CHRISSY WORD: Okay, thank you. Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Yup.

25 CHRISSY WORD: Thank you. Good afternoon and
thank you so much for the opportunity to give

3 testimony today Chair Krishnan and Committee Members.

4 I'm Chrissy Word, Education Director for City Parks
5 Foundation. As members of Forest For All New York
6 City, we care about the city's urban forest because
7 we are acutely aware of the essential benefits for
8 all living beings that trees provide us.

9 In addition to the vast environmental benefits
10 trees have for our city, filtering air, sequestering
11 carbon, absorbing stormwater and supporting wildlife
12 habitats, trees also provide vital connections for
13 people to the natural world, which can help improve
14 mental health.

15 Time spent in forest reduces stress, lowers blood
16 pressure, decreases anxiety and depression and
17 strengthens our immune systems. We also know that
18 neighborhoods with plenty of healthy trees experience
19 higher real estate values and lower crime rates.
20 Yet, New York City, one of the healthiest city's in
21 the world, wealthiest excuse me, wealthiest city's in
22 the world lags in many areas in its canopy cover and
23 general care for trees. We believe the city needs to
24 set a goal of at least 30 percent canopy cover by
25 2035.

3 To help reach this goal, we support the City
4 Council's legislation to create a master urban
5 forestry plan and ask the city to provide the funding
6 needed for New York City Parks to support this
7 program in collaboration with sister agencies.

8 Through our environmental education and community
9 building programs, we have worked with thousands of
10 youth and adults to assist in providing access to our
11 city parks.

12 Our community building programs including
13 partnerships for parks, build and support a network
14 of people who care for their trees and their local
15 green spaces throughout New York City. While our
16 school-based youth programs include curricula about
17 trees and their ecosystem services.

18 Our Green Girls program in particular integrates
19 deep education about trees and tree stewardship
20 through the lens of environmental justice. Our
21 students surveyed over 300 trees during the last
22 trees count community survey and are preparing for
23 the next one. They have assisted in protecting
24 hundreds of trees in their neighborhoods and parks
25 through tree pit improvement, evasive plant removal
and advocacy campaigns to reduce litter. These many

3 stewardship opportunities are more than just
4 community service. Caring for trees while learning
5 about the ecosystem services they provide to us and
6 to our city, results in more New Yorkers becoming
7 advocates for their neighborhoods and for our
8 environment.

9 Participants truly come to understand that trees
10 are our living partners. We could not do any of this
11 work without New York City Parks, the agency that
12 plays a vital role in managing the urban forest.

13 However, nearly half of our tree canopy falls outside
14 of New York City Parks prevue and isn't well
15 protected, managed or planned for. Our city's canopy
16 needs protection, a plan and investment in management
17 and expansion. This is why city parks foundation
18 recently requested federal support from the U.S.

19 Department of Agriculture to fund small grants to
20 communities across the city that are most in need and
21 that wish to undertake improvements to our city's
22 tree canopy and why we are very supportive of the
23 Councils proposed legislation to improve planning and
24 strategy. Thank you for the opportunity to submit
25 testimony. We appreciate your efforts to build

3 legislative and budgetary momentum for this vital
4 element of our city.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much for your
6 testimony. Now, we've got Nicolas Guntli.

7 NICHOLAS GUNTLI: Good afternoon Chair Krishnan.
8 Can you hear me now? Good afternoon Chair Krishnan
9 and members of the Council. Thanks so much for
10 holding this hearing today on improving our city's
11 tree canopy. My name is Nick Guntli and I'm the
12 Senior Director of Horticulture at the Horticultural
13 Society of New York, also known as the HORTS. As a
14 service provider with 120 years of experience tending
15 to New York City's natural environment, the HORT
16 would like to advocate for expanding and supporting
17 our vital urban tree canopy. Our mission at the HORT
18 is to improve human life through horticulture. For
19 most New Yorkers, contact with nature happens on the
20 go. In planters, tree pits and other small in
21 between areas, incidental or planned that provide
22 access to the earth.

23 The HORT plants seeds in between even though its
24 considered unplatable, which we mentioned earlier in
25 the hearing. We believe that these small, planted
spaces add up to provide city dwellers with the

1
2 people plant connection essential for a healthy
3 society. At the HORT, we work in more than 350 job
4 sites in low to medium income neighborhoods across
5 the five boroughs. We cultivate and maintain more
6 than 1,100 trees and tree pits. Our crews provide
7 water, remove weeds, waste, lay down mulch and
8 install plantings in order to sustain the holistic
9 health of our urban forest.

10 We plant trees as well as install tree guards in
11 many of these pits to help promote the health of our
12 city's tree canopy. As the number of trees in NYC
13 continues to grow, we all need to advocate for tree
14 health from the ground up. As many people mentioned
15 today, there's a number of environmental benefits and
16 a healthy tree canopy will work to mitigate the
17 effects of climate change on New Yorkers and their
18 neighborhoods.

19 We all know how much our tree canopy nurtures
20 physical and mental health, as an organization that
21 has pioneered and advanced the field of horticultural
22 therapy for 30 years. The HORT has directly observed
23 the psycho social benefits that trees and plants
24 bring to communities. Access to nature reduces
25 stress as measured by reduced heart rate and blood

3 pressure. In addition, green spaces offer cultural
4 gathering spaces, oasis for contemplation, and
5 powerful analogies of growth and endurance that can
6 be applied to human life.

7 Trees and plants help activate our city making
8 neighborhoods safer by bringing people together on
9 tree lined streets and providing economic benefits
10 through increased business activity on commercial
11 corridors. In addition to its environmental, social
12 and economic benefits I've discussed, there are many
13 benefits of the urban tree canopy still being
14 discovered, such as providing a habitat for wildlife
15 and serving as an essential ecological pathway for
16 pollinators and birds. Our tree canopy nourishes a
17 more resilient vital and healthy New York and we
18 strongly believe in the need to bolster the quantity
19 of trees and quality of their care.

20 We all benefit from this increased connection
21 with nature in our city. We know this benefit is
22 recognized by New Yorkers because people always thank
23 us when they see us bring plants and trees into their
24 community.

25 Thank you for allowing us to give our testimony
as you discuss bills to increase our urban canopy and

3 codify its importance in our city's planning
4 practices.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much and
6 thank you to HORT to for all your great work in our
7 public spaces across our city too, including in my
8 district and the City Parks Foundation for all of
9 your free public programming in our public spaces.
10 Thank you both.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can I just add to the
12 HORT end everyone else? Riverbank, thank you and if
13 the HORT wasn't on 84th and Amsterdam, I would kill
14 myself. Thank you.

15 NICHOLAS GUNTLI: Can I quote that?

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And our next panel is Eric
17 Goldstein and Jack Bolembach. Eric Goldstein.

18 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good afternoon Chair Krishnan
19 and Council Member Brewer and intrepid staff. I'm
20 Eric Goldstein from the Natural Resources Defense
21 Council. I'm going to summarize my written testimony
22 today. Rarely have a I heard a legislative hearing
23 where the testimony was more unanimous and so, I will
24 just join in the echo. The climate crisis is real.
25 One of the impacts is extreme heat. The impacts of
extreme heat aren't equally shared throughout the

3 city but full disproportionately, low-income
4 communities and communities of color. A vibrant tree
5 canopy is part of the answer. A Montreal study found
6 that a broad tree canopy there could reduce air
7 temperatures as much as four degrees centigrade. A
8 Lancet study found that up to 40 percent, 40 percent
9 of extreme deaths, in European cities could have been
10 prevented if the tree canopy were increased to 30
11 percent. And here in New York City, while some
12 progress has been made on this issue much more is
13 needed.

14 Intro.'s 1055 Council Member Bottcher, and 1056
15 Council Member Brewer are sensible measures that
16 would move us in the right direction. The proposals
17 are also consistent with the Mayor's own
18 sustainability plan recently released which at least
19 pledged to move in the direction of 30 percent tree
20 cover. We offer friendly amendments to 1056, we
21 suggest adding a new subset in six, a specific
22 directive that the urban forest manage and plan
23 include a focus on environmental justice in no income
24 neighborhoods where residents are particularly
25 vulnerable to the impacts of extreme heat and to
prioritize those neighborhoods as the plan

3 implementation moves forward and we also endorse the
4 broadly sounded message that there be a 2035 date by
5 which this effort would be achieved.

6 Finally, time is of the essence not only because
7 the climate crisis isn't going anywhere but because
8 swift action by New York City can enhance the changes
9 of securing federal funds. Under President Biden's
10 Inflation Reduction Act, over \$1 billion in grants is
11 available to increase equitable acres of trees in
12 urban and community forests and we ought to be taking
13 advantage of that grant program. This of course is
14 no substitute for city funding but added it and so,
15 again we endorse the call that you and others have
16 made that one percent of the city budget funds go to
17 the Parks Department to address such issues as tree
18 care, tree pruning, tree efforts and the like and we
19 thank you for your attention, and for moving this
20 legislation forward.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks so much for your
22 testimony. Jack Bolembach.

23 JACK BOLEMBACH: Yes, thanks a lot. Thank you
24 Mr. Krishnan and City Council. I'm a retired New
25 York City Department of Environmental Protection
employee but I was in the electrical end. But after

3 the destruction of Mount Reeser, a 15-acre old forest
4 that was destroyed on Staten Island, I got involved
5 with volunteering for the environment. I belong to
6 six different environmental organizations including
7 the protectors of Pine Oak Bridge, which is Staten
8 Island's largest. And all the testimony today was
9 excellent. I just wanted to say that a couple ways
10 to save some of the trees at minimum cost would be if
11 we could plant trees along the highways. For
12 instance, by the bridge, there's a lot of grass line.
13 It costs the city money to cut the grass and a lot of
14 times they don't. There's a lot of garbage that
15 builds up. It's an eyesore. Why not plant trees
16 around those grasslands? It would help mitigate the
17 pollution but you could look at a map and see where
18 trees need to be planted along the highways. That's
19 one way of doing it, to find places to plant.

20 Another way is, in wake of what happened at Mount
21 Morris in Graniteville where 30 some odd acres of
22 forest was destroyed, we developed a project over the
23 last three years of identifying unprotected open
24 green space. And we have a list. We narrowed it
25 down to the top six but number one on that list is
the Serpentine Bridge, located by Stapleton,

1
2 Tompkinsville, Clifton on Staten Island and in New
3 York State, DEC recognized these sites as
4 environmental justice communities. So, people don't
5 have access to nature preserve. This ridge is like
6 300 feet high has tree, is tree covered. It has
7 trees already there. Six acres belong the city.
8 It's DCAS property. Why can't those six acres at no
9 cost to the taxpayer be protected?

10 Someway in registration and City Council and
11 there's a couple privately owned lots owned by a
12 union. We'd like to get them protected but we would
13 need the New York State Department of Environmental
14 Conservation. We would need them to get involved
15 with the New York State Environmental Barn Act that
16 was just passed in November to get that money
17 appropriated to protect that land. That's number one
18 our list of the sites and we found other city owned
19 properties on that list that's tree covered. So, we
20 already have tree covered areas. That's very, very
21 important. So, why can't we look at that, assess it
22 and see if it's worth saving and we'll save money and
23 it will also be great for the environment. So,
24 that's kind of my project here that we've been
25 working on three years. It's all volunteer and we

3 really think that it's a way of helping the
4 environment and the quality of life for the citizens,
5 especially in Stapleton.

6 If you look at the community, they desperately
7 need an open green space that's protected. For the
8 children and the way of doing it would be to protect
9 as much of the property as we can on the Serpentine
10 Bridge, which is actually included in the Hillside
11 Preservation District.

12 So, that would help us too in that respect but we
13 need the state to get involved but we would love to
14 have the city's support in this. At least to right
15 some kind of support letter to the state to look into
16 these properties to see if they can be protected.

17 And I have a letter from the president of Protectors
18 Pine Oak Woods, Cliff Hagan which I could, I'll send
19 it to you by email. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much.
21 Thank you for your work and at our last Council, we
22 actually passed a bill that I had spearheaded to
23 require these agencies to study more ways to expand
24 green space, including looking at highway entry and
25 exit ramps for more vegetation green space.

3 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: I can also send you the
4 information on the Serpentine and we do have a 20-
5 minute video we made of the six top properties if you
6 reach it. So, we could cut it down to each section
7 like three minutes, four minutes.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure.

9 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: You might be interested in
10 seeing what we've been doing.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Absolutely, sure, send it
12 over. Thank you very much for your testimony.

13 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Our final in-person panel
15 is Katie Danny Harowitz.

16 KATIE DANNY HAROWITZ: Is it on? Good afternoon
17 Committee and Chair Krishnan. It's Katie Danny
18 Horowitz. I'm the Executive Director of the North
19 Brooklyn Parks Alliance. I am lucky enough to be in
20 the 33rd District with Council Member Restler but
21 also serving all of Community Board 1 as New York
22 City's only districtwide Parks conservancy. Working
23 with parks and DOT and other agencies to service
24 public spaces throughout the community board. Also,
25 the Co-Chair of the Parks Committee for the Community
Board.

3 I'm going to deviate a little bit from my
4 testimony, just to talk a little bit about some
5 things that I've heard today with the legislation at
6 hand, which of course I am fully supportive of. As
7 Northern Brooklyn Parks Alliance is a very proud
8 member of Forest For All over the last year or two
9 since they've been created and working with Council
10 Member Restler on his Street Tree Fund. We are the
11 fiscal sponsor and wholeheartedly support the
12 expansion of tree canopy and we've talked a lot today
13 about the expansion and the feasibility of that. A
14 little bit about the maintenance of it. I also was
15 at New Yorkers for Parks more than a decade ago
16 during the Bloomberg Administration during Million
17 Trees and at the time, we talked a lot about the
18 maintenance of those trees and the fact that even
19 though one million trees maybe had the feasibility to
20 be planted, maintaining them and keeping them alive
21 was paramount. And I think as we talked about the
22 tree expansion now, a lot of folks have talked about
23 how this has to be considered in combination with the
24 Play Fair Coalition, which is a huge compliment and a
25 necessary component of this, so that the maintenance

3 funding for the tree care can be put in place as
4 we're expanding.

5 I think that I am one of a chorus of voices
6 behind me to support the expansion of the tree canopy
7 but also to dedicate maintenance funding to keep them
8 alive because not only is the existence of the canopy
9 but also as a local resident, walking by the street
10 trees on your local block is a quality of life issue
11 as well and when our street trees, which is our only
12 sometimes experience with a small plot of green land
13 or green opportunity, one that is either caring a
14 dead tree, caring a sick tree, or caring a lot of
15 weeds and liter, not only is an impediment to our
16 combined efforts for climate change but also for the
17 moral of the neighborhood. So, please keep in mind
18 the maintenance funding as well as the expansion of
19 the canopy overall. Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you for your
21 testimony and all your work with North Brooklyn Parks
22 Alliance.

23 Uhm, now, we'll go over to our virtual witnesses.
24 And we've got first up Frida Nyman.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

FRIDA NYMAN: Hi there, can you hear me?

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Yes.

4 FRIDA NYMAN: Hi, I'm sorry my video just stopped
5 working. I don't know what's wrong with my laptop
6 but I'm here to testify not for the Cabby bill but
7 for a [02:32:52] project.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure, you may proceed.

9 FRIDA NYMAN: Okay, thank you. So, I'm speaking
10 on behalf of the Nyman family. My mother is Dr.
11 Paula Nyman who passed away in October of 2019. Was
12 a pediatrician in the Pelham Parkway neighborhood of
13 the Bronx. Her office for primary care, pediatric
14 office was located at 2110 Barrington Avenue, the
15 block of Barrington Avenue between Brady and
16 [02:33:25] avenue, which for those of you who know
17 that neighborhood is very bustling both combination
18 residential and commercial neighborhood at the time.
19 Her office was in the bottom floor lobby apartment,
20 right next door to our synagogue, which was the
21 Pelham Parkway. That building has now been turned
22 into a public school.

23 A project has been underway for several months
24 now to rename that block after Paula Nyman Way. This
25 project has been supported obviously by the name of
the family but also by Rabbi Berry Katz who is a

3 rabbi in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, who new
4 my mother very well when he had one of his first
5 pulpits in New York where my mother at the time had
6 retired and she spent many of her summers there.

7 So, just a word about my mom. She was a
8 holocaust survivor. She came after surviving
9 concentration camp close to Brooklyn and to the upper
10 west side on Riverside Drive and then ultimately when
11 she finished her residency, they moved to the Pelham
12 Parkway area where she was on faculty, both of the
13 Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Jacobi
14 Hospital. She and my dad were huge educational group
15 proponents and they -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired. Thank you.

17 FRIDA NYMAN: Excuse me?

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: The times expired but you
19 may wrap up and conclude.

20 FRIDA NYMAN: Yeah, so I just wanted to say that
21 it would be I think a very important thing in support
22 of immigrants, in support of proponents of education
23 and support the women in science and women as
24 community leaders to dedicate that block in her
25 memory.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much and
4 thank you for your testimony. We'll next call our
5 next witness and I just ask for the virtual witnesses
6 to because we've got another hearing starting here
7 soon to please do your best to stick to the time
8 limit. Next, we have Fay Hill.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time. Okay, we'll
10 move to the next one.

11 FAY HILL: Fay Hill, this is Fay Hill. I sent in
12 my written testimony, so you guys are supposed to
13 have it. Thank you for recognizing me. I did send
14 in my testimony, okay. I on another Zoom call right
15 now. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you and thank you
17 for submitting your testimony too. Next, we'll go to
18 Silvera Seeman's.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 SILVERA SEEMANS: Hi, good afternoon. Can you
21 hear me?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we can hear you.

23 GEORGIA SILVERA SEAMANS: My name is Georgia
24 Silvera Seamans and I am representing Washington
25 Square Park Eco Projects. We are a member of the
Forest For All NYC Coalition and I am here in support

3 of both Intro. 1065 and Intro. 1066. People, plants,
4 wildlife and infrastructure are the beneficiaries of
5 trees living their lives. The signs are as clear as
6 we've heard. There are positive effects of trees on
7 air quality, urban heat, hydrology, mood,
8 neighboring, habitat and more. Today, I would like
9 to bring three needs to your attention. One is long
10 term sustainable funding for tree care. Two,
11 managing trees in small to medium size landscape
12 parks and three, trees at intersections at
13 [02:37:12].

14 So, one, it is irresponsible, negligent to plant
15 trees without an appropriate level of funding to care
16 for trees throughout their lifespan. Two, the city's
17 oldest small to medium size landscape parks have
18 large older trees. Big trees provide the most
19 benefits. They also might have needs, example
20 structural pruning that might have been overlooked
21 because these parks don't have management plans.

22 Also, who is planning for the replacement canopy
23 as older trees decline and die? Small and medium
24 size landscape parks are the places where many New
25 Yorkers who regularly experience local nearby nature,
including the birds associated with these trees.

3 And finally, in the summer, intersections and bus
4 shelters can be intensely hot for people. Think of
5 them as low hanging fruit to cool people and
6 infrastructure. Thank you for this opportunity to
7 present my testimony. Next up we have Shavante
8 Conica(SP?).

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 VICTORIA SANDERS: Hello, I am presenting on
11 behalf of Shavante Canica. Good afternoon Chair
12 Krishnan and members of the Council. My name is
13 Victoria Sanders and I'm testifying on behalf of the
14 New York City Environmental Justice Alliance or
15 NYEJA, which is a citywide membership network linking
16 grassroots organizations from low-income communities
17 of color and their struggle for environmental
18 justice. As a major proponent of creative and
19 multifaceted great infrastructure solutions for
20 mitigating both flooding and heat risk in New York
21 City's most environmentally burdened communities.
22 NYEJA supports those bills 1065 and 1066.

23 With scientists and researchers predicting warmer
24 summer temperatures in the years ahead, we must look
25 to more nature-based solutions that are equitably
implemented to address the severe conditions that lay

3 ahead. Each summer, an estimated 370 New Yorkers
4 died prematurely because of extreme heat in NYC.

5 Black New Yorkers are more likely to die from
6 heat stress with death rates two times higher than
7 among White New Yorkers. In addition, Black and
8 Brown communities in New York have access to 33
9 percent less park space than residents in largely
10 White neighborhoods. The disproportionate heat
11 burden and risks that EJ and frontline communities
12 experience due to the lack of trees and green space,
13 increased pavement and air pollution, underscores the
14 significance of and need for great infrastructure in
15 these neighborhoods.

16 While we are very supportive of the intention of
17 Intro. 1065, we believe that the efficacy can be
18 strengthened by improving the language with a few key
19 additions and caveat. Bill 1065 covers many key
20 points in relation to the need for a citywide urban
21 forest plan and reaching 30 percent canopy cover in
22 NYC but the critical component of equity for
23 environmental justice groups is not currently
24 reflected in the bill language. For example, an
25 authentic equity analysis should prioritize expanding

3 canopy cover among other things in environmental
4 justice in Black and Brown communities first.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

6 VICTORIA SANDERS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Next up, we've
8 got Wendy Brower. And again, just urge everyone to
9 please stick to the time limit because we have
10 another hearing starting soon and more witnesses to
11 get through. Wendy Brower.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time. Wendy Brower
13 not on? Okay, Anastasia Galkowski.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Anastasia? Okay, we'll go
16 to the next one. Natasia Sidarta.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 NATASIA SIDARTA: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
19 you for the opportunity to testify. My name is
20 Natasia Sidarta. I am the Community Stewardship and
21 Operations Director at Gowanus Canal Conservancy in
22 Brooklyn. I oversee community stewardship and
23 volunteer programs and empower local stakeholders and
24 greenspace stewardship.

25 We're a proud member for Forest For All New York
City Coalition because we are committed to ensuring

3 that our urban forest supports health, quality of
4 life, resilience and justice for all New Yorkers and
5 we are here to support both Intro.'s 1065 and 1066.
6 I want to echo all of the critical ecosystem services
7 that the urban forest provides, particularly
8 addressing the urban heat island effects and also in
9 particular absorbing stormwater. In Gowanus, over
10 365 million gallons of combined sewer overflow enters
11 the canal per year and trees help mitigate that
12 pollution.

13 I also want to underscore the importance of
14 making sure that the urban forest survives to
15 maturity. In particular, I want to echo the note
16 that around 80 percent of the canopy increase from
17 existing street trees and when these trees survive to
18 maturity, these benefits, these ecosystem benefits
19 will grow exponentially.

20 And trees will always need maintenance as many
21 other of my colleagues have mentioned and although we
22 work with volunteers and other small community
23 organizations, we need that baselined funding from
24 the city.

25 And lastly, I do want to echo the amendments.
Although we support the bills that DPR must be

3 supported and resourced and that there is a timeline
4 for achieving that 30 percent cover, ideally 2035.

5 Thank you to the City Council for your leadership and
6 advancing support and legislation. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much. Next
8 up is Siero Garino.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 SIERO GARINO: Thousands of dollars of tree pits
11 in the City of New York. We removed the obsolete
12 blocks, make tree pit fences from them by mulch and
13 turn the dirt over and add woodchips to the trees.
14 One of the Committee Members asked, "how do the trees
15 die or what is the major cause?" There are two major
16 cause of the trees dying, neglect and abuse. Neglect
17 by lack of water. People will not come out and water
18 the trees. Abuse, abuse by the schools of New York
19 that chain their garbage bins to the trees on the
20 street of New York, so that they won't be stolen.
21 So, therefore the trees are being damaged by the
22 chains. People who barbeque in the summer dump their
23 ashes in the tree pits on the streets. They barbeque
24 on the streets. They destroy the trees by barbeque
25 and dumping the hot coals into the tree pits.

3 Forestry does not come to the Bronx to cut down
4 trees. There are 20-to-30-year trees that are in the
5 Marshal Lou Park Garden of the 52nd Precinct that has
6 not been down. Two trees have been there for over 15
7 years to be cut and Forestry will not come to cut
8 them because they are not considered a danger. That
9 is the problem. Forestry cuts trees only when they
10 are a danger, therefore instead of coming to a
11 neighborhood and removing all the dead trees at one
12 time in one location and save time from traveling
13 from one location to another, they can get more
14 efficiency done. They also should have the tree pit
15 stumps, I'm sorry, stumps removed by the stump
16 company to travel with the cutting of the trees.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 SIERO GARINO: So, therefore you do it in one
18 full swap. Before you stop planting new trees, you
19 need to maintain the trees you have on the streets.
20 There is no penalty on people who fill in the tree
21 pits with blocks, concrete.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Can you just
23 finish up because we're almost out of time. Thank
24 you very much. And you know just going forward, any
25 one who is virtual, I'm going to give a 30 second

3 warning when your time is about to expire so you have
4 some notice too. Just because we have another
5 hearing starting, that should have started at one
6 o'clock.

7 Okay, next on virtual, we have Wendy Andringa.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 WENDY ANDRINGA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: You may begin.

11 WENDY ANDRINGA: Thank you. Good afternoon.

12 Thank you to the Committee for hearing these
13 important bills and inviting testimony. My name is
14 Wendy Andringa, and I am the Founder of Assemblage
15 Landscape Architecture, based in Brooklyn. I am a
16 coalition member of Forest For All New York City and
17 I'm a volunteer urban tree steward and citizen tree
18 pruner.

19 As many speakers have already noted, our stealth
20 and silent urban forest goes under-appreciated for
21 all of the services and benefits it gives us, and
22 these bills can help make change. For Intro 1066
23 will you please suggest taking these points into
24 consideration? Ensure that New York City Parks is
25 supported with time and funding of one percent for
Parks to do this work and has a co-lead with broad

3 jurisdictional authority. Establish a timeline for
4 achieving 30 percent cover, ideally by 2035. Ensure
5 the plan improves environmental justice, climate
6 change, health, access to canopy and workforce
7 potential, ensure the plan improve maintenance of New
8 York City's existing valuable trees and accounts for
9 the full life cycle of all trees.

10 As a member of the Forest For All New York City
11 coalition, Assemblage supports both bills and we're
12 committed to ensuring this important legislation
13 becomes law. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
15 your testimony. Next, we have Catherine Sullivan.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Catherine Sullivan.
18 Alright, we'll move to – next we have Rami Dinnawi.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Rami Dinnawi?

21 RAMI DINNAWI: Yes, good afternoon. My name is
22 Rami Dinnawi and I am the Environmental Justice
23 Campaign and Policy Manager at El Puente. A
24 community-based organization working at the nexus of
25 environmental justice, social justice, youth
development, and the self determination of all

3 peoples and we've been doing it now for over four
4 decades.

5 Thank you for giving us the time to be here and
6 to testify on these bills. We are a proud member of
7 the Forest for All Coalition, a coalition of over 90
8 organizations in the city that came together aligned
9 to actively and effectively call for an equitable and
10 just implementation of an urban forest that counters
11 our concrete jungle and the racist infrastructure
12 that has plagued our communities and caused extreme
13 heat, stormwater flooding and hazardous air quality.

14 We thank you for the leadership of this body in
15 advancing these pieces of legislation, not only to
16 grow and expand our tree canopy but to do so with
17 oversight mechanisms to ensure that it is done in an
18 equitable and just fashion. This is in line with the
19 NYC Urban Forest Agenda developed by our coalition in
20 recent years. With these bills, the city's trees
21 will be guided by a master plan and will be folded
22 into long term consideration and sustainability
23 efforts. This is a step in the right direction but
24 it is definitely not a panacea.

25 We need to ensure that the right agencies, namely
the Department of Parks, receive the necessary

3 support and funding to plan and execute its mandate
4 in the proposed bills. Furthermore, to stay true to
5 the spirit of accountability intended in these bills,
6 there needs to be a timeline for achieving the
7 promised 30 percent canopy, ideally 2035.

8 I will close with this reminder: " There is no
9 sustainability without Environmental Justice. There
10 is no Environmental Justice without the historically
11 disadvantaged communities. And there is no Equity
12 without Accountability. And so, we need to center -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 RAMI DINNAWI: That have been harmed by the
15 policies historically and thank you for the time and
16 opportunity.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much and
18 thank you, a former client of mine for your great
19 work for environmental justice in our city. Next up
20 we have Lan Modi Ochi.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 LAN MODI OCHI: I want to thank the Council
23 Committee and Committee President Krishnan, my
24 Council Member for considering this legislation. I'm
25 Lan Modi Ochi, a Board Member of the Jackson Heights
Beautification Group. We're a civic arts and

3 environmental nonprofit in Queens, now on its 35th
4 year. JHBG is a founding member of the Forest For
5 All NYC Coalition and fully supports the urban forest
6 agenda goal of at least a 30 percent tree canopy by
7 2035.

8 The all-volunteer JHBG's tree LCT team is the
9 most active tree stewardship group in our city since
10 2021. We, JHBG, supports Intro bills 1065 and 1066
11 with additions concerning environmental justice. We
12 endorse the comments you've heard today, including
13 the many environmental benefits that come from trees
14 in the city and how those benefits have not been
15 parceled out equitably.

16 I want to add that trees are mother natures air
17 conditioners, keeping our city habitable in the face
18 of global warming. All New Yorkers, especially
19 children deserve to fall under the spell of the
20 natural world every day. Nature should be available
21 too outside of parks and the gardens of our leavier
22 neighborhoods. In bits and pieces that we can see
23 every day outside our doors, on the way to the store,
24 school or subway. If you look for nature, you will
25 see bees and butterflies lured by flowers to tree
beds. Just out of site, under a thin layer of soil

3 are earth worms, pill bugs, and many other creatures.
4 It's a mini wildlife refuge.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: 20 second.

6 LAN MODI OCHI: Then there are the trees
7 themselves, perhaps the most crucial part of nature
8 in our city. They're the biggest organisms on line,
9 practically ecosystems onto themselves. They are
10 home to caterpillars, a variety of bugs and bigger
11 critters. I have a little homework assignment for
12 our Council Members and their staffs. It's not
13 painful, it might even be fun. On your way home
14 today -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

16 LAN MODI OCHI: Let me just finish up here.

17 Where it is and where it isn't. Then imagine what it
18 would mean to New Yorkers to live in a city that is
19 more bountiful in its green space. If we give it a
20 chance, nature will flourish here and we will be
21 happier and healthier for it. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Lan.

23 Thank you for your great work in Jackson Heights and
24 the Jackson Heights Beautification Group for taking
25 care of the trees of our community. Next up, we have
Melissa Elstein.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

4 MELISSA ELSTEIN: Hello, my name is Melissa
5 Elstein, I'm with the West 80s Neighborhood
6 Association as well as Love Your Street Tree Day. I
7 want to thank the New York City Council, the
8 Committee on Parks and Recreation, Chair Krishnan, as
9 well as my Council Member Gale Brewer and Eric
10 Bottcher as well for the introduction of these bills,
11 which we support.

12 As part of the West 80s Neighborhood Association,
13 we started Love Your Street Tree Day, a large
14 coalition in order to host large community events
15 that focus on proper tree stewardship, including
16 demonstrations. We educate on street tree issues and
17 benefits and we provide free tree care tools and our
18 doubled sided Love Your Tree Day sign and collapsible
19 watering buckets. We also have on our website and
20 You Tube channel instructions on how to properly take
21 care of trees.

22 We realized after the completion of the Million
23 Trees Plan, started under Mayor Bloomberg, just
24 planting trees was not sufficient. These expensive
25 new trees needed proper care in order to survive
often harsh New York City conditions, such as rat

3 borrows, compacted soil, items in the trunks, dog
4 waste, cigarette butts, garbage, lack of tree guards
5 or improper tree guards. Our logo even has trees and
6 this was given before the Million Trees Initiative.

7 So, we support these bills and we also urge to
8 realize the culmination of the 30 percent tree canopy
9 by 2035. We also thank Mayor Adams and his
10 administration for the inclusion of that tree canopy
11 in the updated plan NYC. I would also like to uhm,
12 request that there be included some kind of
13 pollinator-friendly plan as well. Maybe not in these
14 bills but think about that in the future, because I'm
15 also part of the New York City Pollinator Working
16 Group Coalition.

17 So, I'll leave it at that. All of the benefits
18 of the street trees have already been discussed many
19 times and I'll end my statement early. Thank you so
20 much.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much for your
22 work and testimony. Next up, we have Justin Green.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 JUSTIN GREEN: Thank you. Thanks Chair Krishnan
25 for having us. Big Reuse is an environmental
nonprofit and a member of Forest For All. We're

3 really excited and support 1066, 1065 and reiterate
4 everything else that people have talked about.

5 I want to talk about soil. None of the trees and
6 the benefits from the trees can happen without
7 quality soil and that's what Big Reuse does. We
8 combat climate change through community-based
9 initiatives. One of our biggest initiatives is our
10 community-based composting system in Long Island City
11 and Gowanus. We've utilized those systems to partner
12 with nine Council Members to apply compost to street
13 trees in nine different districts and are expanding
14 our work to other districts to apply compost. The
15 soil around trees is totally key to their survival.
16 Adding compost has microbes, nutrients, organic
17 matter, improve soil structure, enhances nutrient
18 ability, increases water retention. It's really key
19 to consider what's going to happen to all the leaf
20 and yard waste that comes from the trees we're
21 planting and the real solution is right in front of
22 us. It's community composting, so we'd love to
23 connect with your office Chair Krishnan to talk about
24 our community composting site in Long Island City and
25 retaining that and keeping on our work with Parks in
Western Queens.

3 Thank you for allowing us to testify in support
4 of these bills.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure, happy to talk and
6 thank you so much for your testimony and for your
7 work. Next, we have Kevin O'Keefe.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 KEVIN O'KEEFE: Thank you Chair Krishnan. Yes,
10 I'm Kevin O'Keefe and I'm here in my role as Founder
11 of the St Vartan Park Conservancy in Manhattan.
12 First, thank you to the groups and individuals who
13 are looking to make a strong urban forest master plan
14 a reality. Now, some of the concerns that we have
15 been nicely addressed today but another specific
16 concern was touched on about five speakers ago for a
17 few seconds but we believe has been underdiscussed
18 today. It may sound simple but it's crucial and
19 that's the need to adequately budget for the watering
20 of trees. My conservancy colleagues and I have been
21 volunteering to properly help meet this need and
22 we've seen up close how last years reality hurt many
23 new city plannings. Underwatering is a culprit for
24 sure.

25 We recently read a drought related report from
the US Forest Services conducted last year. It

3 surveyed tree canopy across California. The report
4 found about 2.6 million acres of dead trees,
5 representing some 36.3 million dead trees in that
6 state. Now, of course climate change is making the
7 need for more water significant. Our warmer
8 temperatures reduce service water and dries out the
9 soil and vegetation. As we know, trees in their
10 first three to five years need a lot of water but
11 even mature trees reliance on ground water needs help
12 during droughts. Droughts and I should say mega
13 droughts response and relevant monitoring data should
14 be an integral part of any urban forest master plan.
15 Thank you for listening.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
17 your testimony. Next is Julia Ann Ashcraft.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 JULIA ANN ASHCRAFT: Hello, I am Julia Ann
20 Ashcraft. As a resident of Manhattan, I respectfully
21 request that 1065 be amended to remove the phrase,
22 light detection and ranging from the text and remove
23 the word lidar from the summary. FAA Advisory
24 Circular 2183 states that lidar uses laser to perform
25 ranging by measuring the reflected return of a
projected laser beam. Light hazard, lidar lasers can

1 be especially hazardous because the beam is invisible
2 and there is no blink reflect reaction to protect the
3 eye, so eye exposure may initially go undetected.
4 Exposure to lasers operation within the info red
5 specter, it can cause retinal eye damage. Laser
6 equipment that operates in red spectrums can damage
7 the cornea, lens or both. Lidar deploys lasers from
8 airplanes, helicopters or drones, all of which make
9 noise and people naturally look towards the source o
10 noise, so their eyes would be hit by invisible
11 lasers, hazardous lasers. Therefore the inclusion of
12 lidar in Intro. 1065, recklessly endangers millions
13 of people and animals in New York City.

14 Not only can lidar lasers permanently blind
15 people, lidar also heats up skin and penetrates human
16 skulls and brains and induces brain waves making them
17 drowsy. Lidar also penetrates glass, invading the
18 privacy of people in dark rooms. I do not consent to
19 this hazardous procedure and violation of the Fourth
20 Amendment.
21

22 Instead of Lidar, please consider Google Street
23 View as a means of gathering visual data about trees,
24 including street sides and leaves and tree bed
25 conditions. Google Map Street View can also document

3 plants and interior spaces, providing more complete
4 documentation of plants in New York City. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
6 your testimony. Next is Allie Ryan.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 ALLIE RYAN: Hello, the smoke winds of Canadian
9 forest fires reminded me once again how important it
10 is to protect our trees. It has been hard to breath
11 outdoors as well as indoors. In fact, when I visited
12 a library last Wednesday, a librarian abruptly
13 announced that the library was closing in ten minutes
14 to the poor air quality. We are called upon to stand
15 with the trees, because they give us clean air to
16 breath.

17 Recently an East Side Coastal Resiliency
18 representative admitted an ESCR advisory group public
19 meeting that the projects leaders don't know when the
20 infill will settle and that the work is behind
21 schedule and missing promised benchmarks. In
22 conjunction, some neighboring Jacob houses residents
23 are still experiencing water problems and the New
24 York State is now preparing to remediate the toxic
25 contaminated soil on their property.

3 Meanwhile, one neighborhood north, Stuy Town has
4 quickly received an eight-foot seawall, running along
5 the noisy and polluting FDR that accomplishes the
6 exact same task with a cheaper price tag. In fact,
7 noise suppressing wall along the FDR would have made
8 the East River Park and its forest qualities even
9 nicer if any commonsense had prevailed.

10 I believe we have an opening to save a park in an
11 environmental justice area. Please hold an oversight
12 hearing and consider reintroducing the city and the
13 community led, less destructive flood prevention plan
14 to preserve the remaining 505, 84-year-old healthy
15 trees standing above Houston Street -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

17 ALLIE RYAN: Which is one-third of East River
18 Park itself. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
20 your testimony and our last witness is Harry
21 Hirshorn.

22 HARRY HIRSHORN: Hi, I'm in a very windy place.
23 I don't know if you can hear me.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: We can hear you.

25 HARRY HIRSHORN: Okay. Yeah, I am on the same
page as Allie Ryan. I just want to say that New York

1 City is responsible for having destroyed 700 mature
2 healthy trees over the last two years in East River
3 Park and intends to destroy another 504 of them. By
4 numbers are slightly different than Allie's because I
5 watched them destroy the 505th tree. All I really
6 want to say is that if we're serious about you know
7 having a decent tree canopy, it's more important to
8 preserve the one we've got and conserve it than it is
9 to expand it, although expanding it is a great idea
10 and I'm obviously for both of these bills. I just
11 feel like it's really important to point out to all
12 of you on the City Council that you can do something
13 to stop this tree massacre. And it's just been, it's
14 been horrendous for the live on the lower east side.
15 It's traumatic to watch construction workers chop
16 down and mulch 80-year-old healthy oak trees. Oak
17 trees, which were a keystone species because they
18 harbor so much habitat. It'd devastating and below
19 all of this tree destruction, there are different
20 kinds of flood barriers already erected and above the
21 tree destruction, they've already finished with the
22 gates, the flood gates. So, I don't understand why
23 the only place where there's a healthy tree canopy is
24

3 the only place where you can't put in place a
4 different solution to protecting us from floods.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much for
6 your testimony. That concludes all of our public
7 testimony. I just want to thank everyone from all
8 the advocates who are here, the Parks Department and
9 everyone for their great questions, passion and care
10 for our trees and look forward to working together to
11 get to our tree canopy coverage of 30 percent by
12 2035. Thank you so much everyone.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 7, 2023