



**April 23, 2025**

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

**Oversight: Improving Recreational Access to Athletic Fields and Playgrounds**

Testimony by: Margaret Nelson, NYC Parks, Deputy Commissioner for Public Programs and Community Engagement

Good afternoon, Chair Krishnan, members of the Parks & Recreation Committee and other Council Members. I am Margaret Nelson, Deputy Commissioner for Public Programs and Community Engagement at the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, and I'm joined by Matt Drury, our Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs. Thank you for inviting us to testify today regarding recreational access to athletic fields and playgrounds.

At NYC Parks, our mission is to offer clean and safe parks, public spaces and recreational amenities for New Yorkers to enjoy. Making our athletic facilities available to the public is a significant way in which we fulfill that mission, as is the care and maintenance of those facilities. We are the stewards of over 1,000 athletic fields and over 4,000 athletic courts. In 2024, the agency issued over 14,000 athletic field permits to nearly 3,500 organizations and individuals, representing over 900,000 hours of playing time.

Our agency provides athletic permits to hundreds of schools, youth leagues, and adult recreation leagues for use of fields all over the City. The universe of our athletic field permit holders is as vast and varied as the population of New York City - approximately 1,000 youth leagues, 513 schools enrolled in the Public School Athletic League (PSAL), an additional 400 schools affiliated with leagues other than PSAL, and 600 adult leagues, all hosting games and practices for a wide variety of competitive sports. We permit the use of our fields and courts for over 18 different sports. Our athletic permit offices receive requests for tournaments, competitive and recreational youth leagues, adult recreational leagues, sports clinics and camps, competitive travel leagues, and much more.

We strive to offer a simple and straightforward permit system for New Yorkers to use. Each of our three permit seasons - Fall, Winter, and Spring/Summer - has open application periods, where anyone interested in obtaining a permit can go to our website and apply. We also accept paper applications at our ballfield permit offices located in all five boroughs, if needed.

As you all know, our athletic fields and courts are extremely popular with New Yorkers, and very well-used. NYC Parks takes every opportunity to invest in the renovation and construction of our athletic facilities to better serve local communities. These projects can range from natural turf field renovations to allow for better drainage, the full refurbishment and replacement of synthetic turf fields, or the installation of sports lighting, which significantly expands the playable hours at a field or court for leagues and other visitors to enjoy. Our Citywide Services division also performs targeted repairs and upgrades at our synthetic turf sites and deploys a dedicated turf maintenance team, to provide preventative maintenance at our turf locations around the city, to help extend the useful life of these valuable assets. In 2024, this team cared for hundreds of fields, redistributing infill, standing up matted turf fibers, patching surfaces, repairing seam separations and painting lines. The team also delivered in-house turf field upgrades at sites including Leif Ericson Park in Brooklyn and McNair Playground in Harlem and we have replacement projects planned for sites including Millbrook Park in the Bronx, Elmhurst Park in Queens and Riverside Park in Manhattan.

Since the beginning of this Administration, we have also invested over \$200 million dollars in 70 comprehensive field and court reconstruction projects, led by our Capital division. The recently-installed turf field at the Greenbelt Recreation Center in Staten Island included new sports lighting, allowing us to expand



the permitted hours of the field, which is now striped for football, soccer, and lacrosse. Other capital projects in active design, like the Baisley Pond Park track and field facility in Queens and Quarry Ballfields in the Bronx, are responding to community needs to serve multiple sports, serving as multi-purpose athletic fields striped for football and soccer.

To help expand the impact of our City capital dollars, we also explore every opportunity to leverage private philanthropic funding as well. In 2024, we refurbished 25 fields and courts throughout the city through our Adopt-A-Park program, including 8 basketball courts renovated thanks to Brooklyn Social Justice Fund and two ballfields refurbished with the support of the New York Mets organization. Later this year, we look forward to opening the renovated multi-sport fields at Brigadier General Charles Young Playground along the Harlem River, a \$9 million-dollar project that represents a creative public-private approach, made possible through partnership with the NYPD and Manhattan District Attorney's Office, along with private funding generously provided by several foundation donors. With this incredible project, we'll be delivering sorely-needed improvements to these popular multi-sport fields, including a new drainage system, drinking fountains, a misting tower, new fencing, dugouts and backstops and new sports lighting that will provide for over 5,000 additional permit hours for sports leagues and teams to enjoy.

Despite this dedicated effort to increase and improve our portfolio, there will always be far more demand for the use of our athletic fields and courts than we can accommodate with existing space, so we do our best to prioritize requests fairly and thoughtfully. We are proud to share that in recent years, the agency has made significant strides in making the athletic field permitting process less cumbersome, more transparent, and more equitable for our users.

In 2022, we improved our user-friendly searchable field and court availability map on our agency website. This tool gives permit applicants and permit holders the ability to see current usage and real-time availability for a field or court. In addition, the tool allows community members to see when their local field is unpermitted and therefore available to use for recreation.

In 2023, the agency initiated an athletic permit inspection program to address various concerns raised by permit holders such as fields and courts being unused during permitted times. Since its launch, members of the Parks team, including athletic permit coordinators and our Parks Enforcement Patrol officers, have conducted approximately 6,725 inspections, identifying and addressing roughly 1,500 instances of unused permits. During these inspections, we also ensure that permit holders are in compliance with Parks permitting rules and regulations, verifying that permitted organizations are using field or court in accordance with the approved permit. As a result, permit holders are in greater compliance with Parks rules and regulations, and we're seeing a significant decrease in unused permitted time, which allows us to reallocate permitted hours to deserving applicants.

In November 2024, we updated our agency rules and permit fee schedule to allow for more equitable access for non-profit community organizations, increasing transparency and improving customer service for in-demand ballfields and courts. Through these changes, we have sought to address the dominance of for-profit organizations that often have greater resources to obtain permitted space, as we strive to ensure better equity and fair access. Non-profit 501c3 youth sports leagues and schools maintain their priority status in the application period, and continue to be exempt from athletic permit fees, while other youth sports leagues now pay a modest hourly athletic permit fee.

We also sought to reduce or eliminate empty permitted fields and discourage permit holders from requesting unneeded space, ensuring greater access for local community residents. The rule changes introduced defined "Game" and "Practice" categories and also clarified that sustained non-usage of a permit and the provision of false information in a permit application are grounds for revocation, so we can get permits in the hands of the



groups that need them and actually use them. Lastly, we adjusted our fee schedule to properly reflect the various ways in which our different types of athletic fields and courts are requested and used.

We have instituted all of these reforms and process improvements in close coordination with long-term permit holders, to make sure the implementation of these new policies goes as smoothly as possible. The rule changes were instituted very recently, but we're encouraged by the initial feedback so far, especially from newer organizations that previously felt frustrated by the complexity of the permit process and now have greater access to the fields they need. I want to specifically thank our dedicated Ballfield Coordinators and our Citywide Athletic Permit Coordinator, who work very closely with leagues and other permit applicants to provide helpful guidance and customer service, because this certainly would not have been possible without them.

New Yorkers are passionate about living active, healthy lives. From soccer in the Bronx, flag football in Brooklyn, basketball in Manhattan, cricket in Queens, and youth baseball on Staten Island, our fields and courts are put to use every single day in every corner of the city. We are proud of the steps our agency has taken to make the permitting process for athletic fields more accessible, transparent, and equitable, and we'll continue to assess our policies and practices to make sure they best serve the people of this city.

Turning to the legislation being heard today, Intro 566 would require NYC Parks, in consultation with NYC Schools, to submit an annual plan to expand public access to school playgrounds, prioritizing properties that are located in environmental justice areas. Opening schoolyards to the public outside of school hours has served as an excellent way to increase New Yorkers' access to green and open space for decades. We are thankful to our sister agency colleagues at NYC Schools for their partnership and we are proud to work closely with them to identify potential schoolyard access opportunities that can help achieve the City's goal of having 85% of New Yorkers living within walking distance to a park or open space by 2030, as established by "OneNYC" strategic plan in 2015.

Though NYC Parks is broadly supportive of expanding public access to schoolyards outside of school hours, it is important to keep in mind that NYC Schools retains the ultimate authority to determine when and where it is appropriate to open a given property to the general public. Further, when broader access to schoolyards is facilitated, those spaces remain under the care and management of NYC Schools.

In a similar fashion, Intro 643 would require NYC Parks, in consultation with NYC Schools, to create and implement a plan to facilitate the use of indoor basketball courts, including those in privately owned gyms as well as gyms under the jurisdiction of NYC Schools, for use by organized basketball leagues when the use of outdoor basketball courts is impacted by weather.

NYC Parks has 36 recreation centers around the city, many of which have very popular indoor gymnasiums, including basketball courts which are enjoyed by thousands of New Yorkers every day, along with facilities such as indoor pools, weight rooms, dance studios, art studios, game rooms, and media labs. We are very proud of the fact that our recreation centers offer a range of programs for people of all ages and interests, and our memberships are completely free for New Yorkers aged 24 and younger, and extremely affordable for other adults and senior citizens. Our gymnasiums operate with a rotating programming schedule that is posted at each location and on our agency website, and though we strive to offer a balanced diversity of fitness and sports activity at all of our locations, basketball is definitely one of the most popular uses of our gyms. On any given day at our recreation centers, you can find adult pickup basketball games, youth open basketball play like our "Saturday Night Lights" program, drop-in basketball instructional clinics for youth and adults, and scheduled league play like our Junior Knick Basketball League for boys and girls ages 8 through 17. We know these recreation centers are vital resources for our communities, so we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in completely reconstructing existing facilities like the Brownsville Recreation Center, as well as opening



brand new facilities like the Mary Cali Dalton Recreation Center in Staten Island and the Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center in Brooklyn, which we look forward to opening to the public later this year.

Given the robust offering of programming at our recreation center gyms, we do not have the capacity to make those spaces available for private permitted use, but when outdoor basketball enthusiasts are faced with a rainy day or rising temperatures, our indoor courts are an incredible resource for anyone with an NYC Parks recreation center membership, which, again, is available to all New Yorkers for a very low cost or no cost whatsoever.

In regards to both of these bills, we are always supportive of increasing access to open recreational spaces where New Yorkers can play and exercise, but it would be inappropriate and infeasible for NYC Parks to undertake the creation of a strategic plan relating to properties that are not under our jurisdiction, whether that's property under the jurisdiction of NYC Schools or privately-owned property, and therefore we oppose Intro 566 and Intro 643 as they are currently drafted.

Intro 573 would require NYC Parks to conduct a recurring evaluation of the need for drinking fountains in sections of Parks property that are adjacent to non-park land and further require the installation of additional drinking fountains in those areas. NYC Parks maintains over 3,400 exterior drinking fountains throughout our parks and playgrounds, making us far and away the largest provider of clean drinking water for New Yorkers, and our dedicated staff works extremely hard to keep them in good working order. As a general practice, we incorporate new and replacement water fountains into the design for nearly all of our park renovation capital projects, making sure they are thoughtfully located to best serve park visitors, whether it's used by kids at the playground on a hot day or a jogger taking a break to fill their reusable water bottle. We appreciate the intent of this legislation, but it should be noted that its primary goals seem largely duplicative of the mandate that will be imposed by Intro 900, a bill which is slated to be passed by the Council at tomorrow's Stated Meeting.

Thank you for allowing us to testify before you today and for all of your continued advocacy for our city parks. We will now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.





April 23, 2025

Stephanie Kranes, Senior Budget and Policy Analyst, New York City Independent Budget Office on  
Expansion of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation

Good afternoon, Chair Krishnan and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. I am Steph Kranes, Senior Education Budget and Policy Analyst at the Independent Budget Office (IBO). I appreciate the opportunity to testify today regarding Intro 0566-2024, which prioritizes the expansion of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program for at least 25 additional schoolyards located in environmental justice areas. My testimony focuses on all available schoolyards and builds upon IBO's recent [analysis](#) requested by Council Member Brewer. In that letter, published in January 2025, IBO summarized the cost of keeping all outdoor schoolyards open to the public after school on weekdays and for full eight-hour days on weekends based purely on the price of labor. IBO estimated this cost for schoolyards that were not already participating in the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program. IBO previously estimated this cost [in 2022](#) and found an increase by 8 buildings participating in the Playgrounds Program since then, from 260 up to 268.

### **The Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program**

The Schoolyards to Playgrounds program, which began in 2007, is co-managed by the Department of Education, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Trust for Public Land and allows public access to playgrounds on weekends. The Mayor's Preliminary budget, [released](#) in January 2025, added \$770,000 to fiscal years 2026 and beyond. The Administration indicated these funds will support an expansion of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program by 11 additional schoolyards, a 4% increase from the 268 buildings that currently participate.

### **IBO's Estimate of Additional Costs**

IBO assumes the cost to keep playgrounds open on a weekend would be to pay a custodian for eight hours, and on a weekday after school for three hours, at \$44.95 (\$29.97/hour plus time and a half based on the [Prevailing Wage Schedule](#) beginning July 1, 2024). IBO's estimate did not account for other costs such as playground improvements. Based on publicly available data as of December 2024, IBO used this hourly rate to estimate the labor costs for one additional playground as follows:

- 1) One weekend day would be \$360, or \$37,440 per year for both weekend days, including summer months;

- 2) One weekday after school would be \$135 per weekday, or \$35,100 per year for all five weekdays, including summer months;
- 3) Those weekend and extended weekday costs amount to a combined total of \$72,540 per year for one playground.

### **Counts of School Buildings with Outdoor Yards**

There are 946 buildings that have outdoor yard(s) according to the most recent Report on Physical Education Pursuant to Local Law 102 of 2015, which was released for the 2023-2024 school year. Of these, per the program's most recent Schoolyards to Playgrounds program [dataset](#) on Open Data as of December 2024, 268 buildings were participating in the program and had an open outdoor yard. Two buildings did not have an address. This leaves a total of 676 buildings that have outdoor yards but are not part of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program and therefore are not open to the public during after-school hours. If all 676 buildings were kept opened on weekends and extended weekday hours, the total annual cost would be about \$49 million. IBO's analysis is based on program participation at the building level. In cases where a school has multiple uniquely identified campuses in different buildings, only the building with an available yard is counted.

### **Distance**

IBO also examined the average distance that students would need to travel to the nearest City park, for schools with a yard and for schools without a yard. IBO found that for the 676 school buildings with a yard that are not currently open during non-school hours, students would need to travel 0.26 miles or 5.2 blocks on average to the nearest park. The maximum distance would be 2 miles or 40 blocks in Staten Island, and just over one mile or 21 blocks in Queens and in the Bronx. For the 431 school buildings *without* an outdoor yard, students would need to travel 0.29 miles or 5.8 blocks on average to the nearest park. The maximum distance would be 1.6 miles or 32 blocks in Queens and 1.4 miles or 28 blocks in the Bronx.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. IBO welcomes your questions.





**Testimony from New York Communities for Change in Support of  
Intro 0573 and Intro 0566 Sponsored by Councilmember Gail  
Brewer**

My name is Santosh Nandabalan and I am the Senior Climate Campaigner at New York Communities for Change. New York Communities for Change is a community organization based with over 22,000 members, mainly low to middle income Latino and Black New Yorkers. We advocate for policies that push forward for economic, racial and climate justice to make New York more livable for all of us.

Today, I'm submitting this comment in support of Councilmember Gail Brewer's two pieces of legislation, Intro 0573 and Intro 0566, which are important and simple measures we need to make water and public space more accessible to New Yorkers throughout the city.

On the first bill, Intro 0573, increasing the number of water fountains adjacent to public parks and greenstreets is a much needed step to making our city more equitable and climate friendly. Everyone has the right to access clean drinking water regardless of where they live. By adding more water fountains in these areas, people will rely less on single-use plastic water bottles. Less plastic pollution is good for the environment and clean water is a human right, not something that anyone should have to spend money on when they are going to the park. Furthermore, the benefits of moving away from plastic are clear for our climate and any policies that further this directive like this one and the Hydration for All Act should be enacted.

Secondly, Intro 0566 is a simple, common sense measure that would provide more public access to school playgrounds on weekends and after school hours, particularly in Environmental Justice areas. Many NYCC members and city residents at-large don't have lush backyards with swing sets or space for children to play. Our school playgrounds are currently being underutilized and opening up these spaces will give children and families an opportunity to play and connect with others in their neighborhoods. This especially true in dense Environmental Justice areas, where there are more likely to be more low to moderate income folks that would benefit from access to these playgrounds. Building community and giving our children an outlet to play in these areas are the right things to do and it's on the City Council to ensure our Parks and Rec Department and the Department of Education to implement this type of an initiative.

All New Yorkers have the right clean water, healthy environment and vibrant communities. Intro 0573 and Intro 0566 does just this and prioritizes the needs of those in Environmental Justice neighborhoods, who stand to benefit the most from increased public access to water fountains in the parks and open spaces. New York Communities for Change supports these two pieces of legislation and urges the City Council to swiftly pass and enact these bills introduced by Councilmember Gail Brewer.



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Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Parks  
and Recreation Oversight Hearing  
04/23/2025

Thank you, Chair Krishnan and members of the Parks Committee, for convening this oversight hearing. I am Lynn Bodnar Kelly, the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). This year, we are celebrating our 30th year anniversary of transforming NYC, bringing green spaces to the communities that need them the most. At NYRP's core, we believe that all New Yorkers deserve access to high-quality public green space and that access to nature is a fundamental right.

I am here today advocating in support of Council Member Brewer's pieces of legislation, Int-0573 and Int-0566, which would increase the number of drinking fountains adjacent to public parks and which would expand access to school playgrounds on weekends and after school hours with emphasis on playgrounds located in environmental justice communities.

Int-0573 would increase the number of drinking fountains adjacent to public parks and green streets. This bill aligns fully with our mission statement, as we believe that all New Yorkers deserve access to clean, free public water, regardless of where they live. In addition, this would help decrease the amount of plastics and waste we find in our parks. In 2024 alone, NYRP removed over 116,415 pounds of trash.

With our Parks Department facing over 40 years of disinvestment, leading to staffing shortages, this legislation can go a long way in helping clean up our parks and taking some burden off our overworked and understaffed Parks workers.

Additionally, we are in full support of Int-0566, which would expand the public's access to school playgrounds on weekends and after school hours. We also acknowledge how this legislation would focus on at least 25 environmental justice areas, expanding access to the



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communities that need them the most. According to the Trust for Public Land, spending time outdoors provides a platform to bolster social connections, which improves health outcomes. Beyond physical health benefits, spending time outdoors improves mental health by reducing anxiety and depression.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We encourage our partners in the City Council to support these crucial pieces of legislation that put us on a path to make both water and public open space more accessible to all New Yorkers.



**Testimony of Deaunte Johnson, Policy Fellow  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation  
Oversight - Improving Recreational Access to Athletic Facilities and Playgrounds  
April 23, 2025**

My name is Deaunte Johnson and Policy Fellow at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you Chairperson Krishnan and members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation for the opportunity to comment.

As a baseline, equitable access to parks and open spaces is essential for the overall health of our city and is one of NYLCV's top priorities. Parks increase quality of life, promote climate resilience, and foster economic growth in every borough. NYLCV serves as a Play Fair for Parks co-founder and demands that the City allocate 1% of the annual City budget for NYC Parks.

NYLCV supports Intro 566, sponsored by Council Member Brewer, which would require the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to create an annual plan to expand public access to school playgrounds. The New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) conducted an [analysis](#) looking at 676 school buildings not in the existing "Schoolyards to Playgrounds" program. Students in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx account for three-quarters of these schools with outdoor yards that are not open to the public during non-school hours. Citywide, IBO found that on average, students need to walk between 0.14 to 0.49 miles to reach the nearest park.

For these reasons, NYLCV supports DPR and DOE working together to develop a plan to open more schoolyards in environmental justice communities. This plan must be intentional in ensuring this plan prioritizes low-income neighborhoods that have fewer resources in their schools.

The current drafting of the bill requires a plan for a list of 25 school playgrounds that could be open to the public and maintained by DPR and DOE with estimates for cost and implementation challenges. Although not specifically part of Intro 566, NYLCV emphasizes that we do not support involving DPR in the maintenance of DOE schoolyards, with the exception of JOPs. As a Play Fair for Parks co-founder that advocates for increasing the City's Parks Department budget, we want to be cognizant of requiring DPR to take on more responsibility in the future without sufficient funding. With that said, NYLCV supports increasing DPR's annual budget for the PlaNYC Schoolyards to Playgrounds program.

NYLCV also supports Intro 573, sponsored by Council Member Brewer, which would increase the number of drinking fountains adjacent to public parks and greenstreets. Access to drinking water and drinking fountains in New York City are often inaccessible to the public and difficult to find [as seen on this map](#) of fountains in NYC Parks. Many drinking fountains are located in larger parks such as Manhattan's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

By expanding drinking fountain access, more New York City residents will have access to New York City's drinking water, reducing the reliance on single-use plastic bottles. Single-use plastic products, which are designed to be used once and thrown away afterwards, contribute to our reliance on fossil fuels and threaten the health of our residents, local wildlife, and waterways. Intro 573 will decrease our City's carbon emissions by reducing plastic pollution, bringing us closer to reaching our zero waste goals.

Intros 566 and 573 are important steps in making our built environment work for all New Yorkers, promoting the greater health of the City and everyone who lives in it.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**Testimony on 4/23/25 Committee  
on Parks and Recreation Hearing**

Open Plans writes today regarding the Committee's hearing on 4/23/25. In our dense city, it's essential to utilize any unused space for residents, particularly those who may not have sufficient access to open spaces in their neighborhood. That is why we support Int. 566 to expand the use of playgrounds. More detailed comments on these points and others are below:

- **We support Int. 566 to expand the use of playgrounds outside of school hours and on the weekends.** Access to open space is essential to the healthy development and wellbeing of children of all ages. Often, a playground is the closest, most convenient, or even only public space available nearby. By allowing children and families to use playgrounds outside of school hours and on weekends, New York City will literally unlock public space that is already there and untapped. It is an easy, cost-effective way to expand access to open space. We also believe it's important that these spaces are adequately maintained — a space is at its best when it's well-maintained, beautiful, and safe. Along with the bill's passage, we believe a sufficient budget allocation must be allotted in order to maintain these spaces. New York City will only reach its full potential if we have the proper framework and budget for public space management. Playgrounds are an essential component of this future.
- **We support Int. 573 to expand access to water fountains in parks and green streets.** Access to basic amenities like restrooms and water fountains is foundational to well-used public space. In particular, spaces that encourage play and physical activity require easy access to hydration. Ensuring that there are water fountains that are both adequate in number and actually functioning is vitally important. We urge the Council to pass this bill and make New York City tap water readily available in our well-used and well-loved public spaces .

Respectfully,  
Open Plans



Sara Lind  
Co-Executive Director  
sara@openplans.org

Jackson Chabot  
Director of Advocacy and Organizing  
jacksonchabot@openplans.org

Michael Sutherland  
Senior Policy & Legislative Analyst  
michael@openplans.org

Carl Mahaney  
Director of StreetopiaUWS  
carl@openplans.org

**Testimony of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA)  
to the  
New York City Council  
Committee on Parks and Recreation Oversight Hearing on Improving  
Recreational Access to Athletic Fields and Playgrounds  
April 23, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Krishnan and members of the Parks Committee. My name is Deborah Maher and I am President of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA).

Randall's Island Park is located in the East River between East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens and serves as vital green space for these communities. As the dedicated steward of Randall's Island Park, the Alliance sustains, maintains, develops and programs the Park to support the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.

As the President of RIPA, I applaud the Council for holding this hearing highlighting the importance of access to athletic fields and playgrounds for all New Yorkers. RIPA supports Intro 566 as well as Intro 643 which requires the City to expand access to existing facilities. The City can expand access to New Yorkers for recreation through targeted investments. Lighting and staffing existing spaces is a key way we can work to address the demand for recreational spaces.

In addition to looking at playgrounds and indoor courts, we ask that the Council encourage the City to look at lighting athletic fields as a way to expand access. For example, a \$5.2M investment by the City to light four of the over sixty playing fields at Randall's Island Park would add approximately 6000 additional playable hours annually. These additional playable hours would provide over 200,000 kids with the opportunity to get outside and play each year. Lighting these fields would be a significant way to improve the use for City's athletes, particularly young athletes from adjacent communities in East Harlem and the South Bronx.

We thank the Council for your leadership in holding this hearing and encourage members of the Committee to continue to look at ways the City can make additional investments in existing infrastructure to provide enhanced recreational access to all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.

**Riverside Park Conservancy Public Hearing Testimony  
before the NYC Council Committee on Parks & Recreation  
in Support of Int 0573-2024 and Int 0566-2024  
April 23, 2025**

My name is Merritt Birnbaum, and I'm the President & CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy. I'd like to thank Councilmember Brewer, who represents the southern portion of our park, for introducing these crucial bills that will help make both drinking water and public open space more accessible to all New Yorkers.

Riverside Park Conservancy cares for five parks along the west side of Manhattan, from 59th to 181st Street, in partnership with the NYC Parks Department. This includes six miles of public parkland, featuring 16 playgrounds, 10 athletic fields, 6 basketball courts, 3 volleyball courts, 3 tennis courts, 3 handball courts, a pickleball court, a skatepark, a running track, and 3 outdoor gyms. Our greenway, which spans the entire park, is used by cyclists and pedestrians year-round.

People of all ages use the park every day – rain or shine, in the snow, and through the heat of summer.

As climate change brings more extreme heat and drought conditions, access to drinking water becomes even more crucial. It's a basic human right, and a key element in keeping people safe, especially during outdoor activities. In a park with so many opportunities for sports, exercise, and play – and a summer sports camp that hosts thousands of children – we are particularly concerned about the lack of drinking fountains. By increasing the number of drinking fountains near parks and green streets, bill Int 0573-2024 will ensure people can stay hydrated and cool in our public spaces.

This bill also helps reduce plastic pollution by decreasing the need for single-use plastic water bottles. Every year, Parks Department workers, Conservancy staff, and volunteers collect tons of trash, including plastic bottles, from our parks. Additional drinking fountains would not only reduce waste but also free up time for maintenance staff to focus on other park needs.

The second bill, Int 0566-2024, aims to expand the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program, making school playgrounds available after hours and on weekends, with a focus on environmental justice communities. We are grateful that children near Riverside Park can access our playgrounds every day. However, this isn't true for all children in the city. According to a recent analysis by the NYC Independent Budget Office, kids in 676 schools not participating in this program must walk up to half a mile to reach a park. This

Working  
side by  
Riverside

Riverside Park  
Conservancy

gap disproportionately affects children in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.

Outdoor recreation is a fundamental right for every child, critical for their physical, mental, and social well-being. We want all children to have the same access to parks and playgrounds that we enjoy in Riverside Park. Passing Int 0566-2024 would help bridge these access gaps.

Drinking water and safe spaces for play are essential to a livable and sustainable city. These bills are investments in public health, sustainability, and future generations, and Riverside Park Conservancy strongly supports their passage. Thank you.



**Testimony of the Trust for Public Land to the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation Committee, Oversight  
Hearing on Access to Athletic Fields and Playgrounds**

April 23, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairs Brewer and Krishnan, and members of the Parks Committee. My name is Sophie Stelboun and I am a program coordinator for Trust for Public Land.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of two bills introduced by Council Member Gale Brewer pertaining to access to athletic fields and playgrounds and the installation of drinking fountains near such facilities.

Since 1996, the Trust for Public Land has partnered with city agencies and many City Council Members to convert over 230 asphalt lots into vibrant school-community playgrounds. These sites feature shade trees, gardens, athletic courts, running tracks and outdoor classrooms, and provide close-to-home places to gather, exercise and play for students and neighbors alike.

Numerous studies show that access to outdoor play and nature relieves stress, increases physical activity, improves mental health, and decreases social isolation for both adults and youth. These playgrounds depend on annual custodial funding to ensure they remain safe, clean and accessible to the community outside of school hours.

While roughly 300 sites receive this essential funding for maintenance through PlaNYC and annual City Council allocation, there is potential to open more than 300 additional sites to the public, through baseline funding for custodial support. The Division of School Facilities allocates \$70,000 per year to open a schoolyard to the public. Adding 25 per year would cost the city a mere \$1.75M at today's prices - an easy, cost-effective way to increase play space within a walkable distance from home.

Trust for Public Land wholeheartedly supports bill 0566 requiring DPR and DOE to create a plan to fund the opening of additional schoolyards for public use each year, prioritizing those in environmental justice areas. Parks and playgrounds are more crucial than ever: offering cost-effective, research-based solutions to public health and loneliness.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to address this committee this afternoon. We greatly appreciate your attention to these important issues.



**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation in Support of Int 0573-2024 and Int 0566-2024**

**April 23, 2025**

Good afternoon, Council Chair Krishnan and esteemed members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. My name is Kit Greenberg, and I am a Senior Coach with *Wellness in the Schools*, a national nonprofit committed to creating healthier environments for children to learn, live, and thrive. I'm honored to testify in strong support of Council Member Gale Brewer's proposed bills—Int 0573-2024 and Int 0566-2024.

Every day in my role, I work with students across New York City public schools to promote wellness through nutrition, fitness, and healthy habits. These bills represent essential steps forward in ensuring that all children, regardless of zip code, have equitable access to the resources that support their health and development.

**Int 0573-2024**, which would increase the number of drinking fountains adjacent to parks and greenstreets, is more than a matter of convenience—it's a matter of health equity. Too often, the students and families we serve in under-resourced neighborhoods lack access to clean, public water when they're outside enjoying green spaces. This bill affirms a basic truth: that hydration is a human right, and that free, accessible water must be available in every corner of our city, not just in well-funded districts. The increased availability of drinking fountains supports children's physical activity and reduces reliance on sugary beverages, a key contributor to childhood obesity and preventable illness.

**Int 0566-2024** would create an annual plan to expand public access to school playgrounds, with a focus on environmental justice communities. This could not be more aligned with our mission. Safe, outdoor play is foundational to a child's physical and emotional well-being. And yet, for many families, especially in communities of color and low-income areas, access to green and recreational space remains limited after school hours and on weekends. By prioritizing the opening of at least 25 schoolyards each year in these areas, the City would take a powerful step toward reclaiming school playgrounds as true community spaces—where children can run, play, build social-emotional skills, and simply be kids.

We at *Wellness in the Schools* believe that wellness must be integrated into the very fabric of children's daily lives. That means clean water to drink when they're at the park. That means safe



places to play when the school day ends. And that means recognizing that public resources should serve public needs, equitably and consistently.

Council Member Brewer's proposals reflect a deep understanding of these needs and a commitment to the health of our children, families, and communities. I urge this committee to advance both bills and help New York City lead the way in creating a healthier, more equitable urban environment.

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

Sincerely,

**Kit Greenberg**

Senior Coach

*Wellness in the Schools*

Statement for City Council

April 23, 2025

Dear City Councilmembers,

I am from Local Nature Lab. We are a community organization with a focus on advocacy, education, and promoting access to local nature and outdoor spaces. We believe that the proposals presented today (Int 0573-2024, Int 0566-2024) will promote people's greater health and recreation opportunities in diverse New York City communities.

Access to schoolyard playgrounds can increase the extent of public open space especially in neighborhoods with low park acreage. Though, these spaces should be considered complements to rather than supplements to increasing greenspace in communities that have experienced underinvestment in parks. Many communities do not have easy access to urban parks, or play spaces that provide activities for teens and tweens, a demographic that we've seen is sometimes overlooked in NYC parks planning. Schoolyards are often designed for these age groups. They usually include basketball hoops and open areas for active play. This will support neighborhoods by providing children with safe and productive places to play. It may also take pressure off wild and planted areas, which are often designed as passive spaces, but used as active spaces when high use play areas are not available in a community.

Additionally, we believe that greater access to clean, drinking water in NYC public spaces is essential. Not only will this keep people safe and hydrated in the hottest months, it provides a way to reduce plastic pollution as people may move away from buying bottled water. Local Nature Lab believes that education about the quality of NYC drinking water, combined with access, will increase the quality of life for NY'ers throughout the five boroughs, while supporting environmental initiatives. Clean and publicly accessible drinking water is a public health issue especially during extreme events, which are increasing in frequency and in duration, and in heat vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

Robert Seamans, Board Member  
Local Nature Lab  
110 Bleecker St  
New York, NY 10012



**From:** [Al Morales](#)  
**To:** [Clark, Gregory](#)  
**Cc:** [NYC Council Hearings](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 4/23/25 Parks Public Hearing Testimony  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 10:06:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [April 23, 2025 City Council Hearing Testimony.pdf.pdf](#)

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Hi Greg.

Enclosed is our testimony .

Thank for giving us the time to submit.

Adolfo Al Morales  
President, YSA  
Chairman,UAA



***"Teamwork makes the Dream Work"***

[ysaleagues.com](http://ysaleagues.com)

[uaasports.org](http://uaasports.org)

This letter proposes a solution for a more equitable and fair distribution of Parks venues and permits for a variety of sports our NYC recreational community is vested in. I am putting forward a proposed solution that appears at the end of this letter.

What follows next is a brief description of the problems encountered by traditional sports' leagues which have been serving many of the City's residents well for decades. Recently, the Parks Dept. reduced very active baseball/softball play from Dewitt Clinton park on the westside of mid-Manhattan. These dedicated baseball and softball oval shaped fields were reclassified on paper and suddenly became rectangular fields. Unfortunately, for the many City's residents who have historically used these fields for baseball and softball, the Parks Dept has reduced their use for this purpose even during their now referred to priority seasons, Spring and Summer.

The Parks Dept has indicated that, beginning this coming Fall, it intends to remove all renewal rights for softball, contrary to an email we received stating that all sports can be permitted and played out of season, soccer and football are now playing in Spring and Summer and doing so on Baseball and Softball fields. While those sports permits were reduced, long-standing City baseball and softball leagues are now having trouble rescheduling rainouts and, in one case that we know of, they will not be able to finish the season because they were informed only a few weeks ago that one field will be closed for construction in July two thirds of the way into the season. With no replacement offered or available on their site, that league will most likely end prematurely.

There was no mention that baseball, softball would be reduced and removed, in the Spring, Summer and Fall. There seems to be no real priority season for baseball and softball they are being reduced and removed in all seasons and depriving large numbers of City residents from participating in these popular sports. They are doing this in some creative ways, and this needs a closer look.

Such policy, made by the Parks Dept. permit office in Manhattan and, by extension citywide have adversely affected the recreational community. We received a letter from the former parks commissioner's office guaranteeing that dedicated baseball/softball fields will continue to be used for baseball/softball and that multi-purpose rectangular fields could be use for multiple sports including softball. It is not clear why the Department is now seemingly ignoring that

guarantee.

I commend the Parks Dept. and community leaders for advocating for the youth and citizens of NYC who seek out the well known benefits of recreational sports participation and encourage the Department to not minimize its commitment to those who are actually playing stick and ball sports.

This letter proposes a solution equitable to all parties involved:

The Parks Department's removal of previously issued permits at dedicated baseball/softball fields, adversely impacting the numerous citizens who participate in recreational baseball/softball leagues, becomes unnecessary if the Department does a better, much more transparent job of allocating the fields. Most of us organizing youth and adult recreational sports have no idea why, how these decisions are being made and by whom.

In keeping with the Parks Department mandate and mission of providing all citizens and communities with open space and recreational outlets, and while keeping all involved parties informed about park utilization, we propose that a Parks Department form an advisory committee of respected recreational sports ambassadors,\* which would recommend ideas and solutions to equitably meet the needs of the NYC sports community, the end users and most affected by the current changes that has many scrambling unnecessarily to get games played and complete the a season.

Recreational organizations are requesting the Parks Department facilitate the forming of such a committee of respected, trusted recreational sport leaders in our community that can help address and highlight the actual needs and issues, and to provide valuable input representing the citizens served by the city's parks and playing fields.

Such input will be helpful to the Parks Department's mission to build good will with the City's recreational athlete populations. A committee such as the proposed above will work collaboratively with City Parks Department, and recreational organizations representing the interest of all users, and will service as a model of good governance.

In closing.

Sports leagues playing on proper fields, equitably allocated among the various sports, will serve the City's recreational athletes well, help protect the good and safe condition of playing fields, and will reduce maintenance and replacement costs.

Councilmember Gale Brewer  
New York City Council District 6  
563 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10024

RE: Int. No. 0566-2024 Annual plan to extend access to school playgrounds

Councilmember Brewer,

We urge the City Council to exclude Davis Playground, located at 55 Layton Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10301, as a candidate for extended after hours use.

PS 031 William T. Davis school children can safely utilize the less than one acre playground, by using the main entrance of the playground, which is closest to the school building.

The second access location to the playground, Bismark Ave, is a busy, active vehicular street with residential garages near both sides of the park secondary access point. It is not safe for these gates to be opened for neighborhood children, due to vehicular traffic. People recklessly make u-turns on this narrow street, nearly hitting pedestrians several times a day. Construction vehicles utilize the street for nearby school/park/residential repair as well as teachers and students from nearby Curtis and McKee high schools, neighbors and medical personnel. During the evenings, police vehicles sit nearby.

The Bismark Ave gates have been closed off to the public for over 20 years. Historically, since the closure of the Bismark Ave location, drug, sexual activity and homeless people living in the park has been controlled.

Currently, PS 031 school is undergoing a two year construction repair of brick work and roof work.

Mahoney Park, which is located 50 feet from Davis Playground, is a large, community park. At 2.21 acreage, the playground improvements included a new spray shower and basketball court, upgrades to handball courts and play equipment, and the addition of a camel and seal play features. In 2011 a once-barren asphalt expanse was transformed with a multi-use recreational field, new basketball courts, and a spray shower with a misting station.

After Hurricane Sandy, improvements to the basketball courts and play area were sponsored through public-private partnerships with the Knicks' Basketball in the Boroughs program and the National Football League in 2013.

A rain garden in the park was rebuilt in 2018, and the synthetic turf field was reconstructed in 2022. In 2025, the playground's basketball courts were rededicated to Sandy Brock (1977-1997). In 2026, the playground's "tot lot" for young children will be redesigned with new landscaping, play equipment, ground-level activity areas, and painted games.

Mahoney Playground continues to be the best community park for all children of all ages. Please continue to keep Davis Playground for PS 031 school use and Bismark Ave location closed.

Respectfully,  
Crescent Avenue Residents  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
April 23, 2025

via USPS and Email: [district6@council.nyc.gov](mailto:district6@council.nyc.gov)

**From:** [John Pizzi](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Riverdale Country School - EW YORK CITY COUNCIL HEARING - COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION - 4/23/25 – 1PM – COMMITTEE ROOM AT CITY HALL  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 6:49:50 PM

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Hi,  
We would like to submit the following letter for the hearing on 4/23, as we are not able to attend.  
Thank you,  
John

Dear NYC Parks Department,

First and foremost, we want to express our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support of our community's athletic endeavors. The availability of the park fields is truly the foundation upon which our extensive athletic program thrives. We deeply appreciate this crucial partnership, which benefits our dedicated student-athletes across 9 soccer teams, 3 football teams, 3 field hockey teams, 6 lacrosse teams, 3 baseball teams, and 3 softball teams.

We also want to acknowledge the dedicated work of our own maintenance staff, who, with your prior approval, take great pride in the upkeep of the fields at Van Cortlandt Park. Their commitment to lining, mowing, grooming, using Turface for drainage, and ensuring the fields are clean after each game reflects our deep respect for these shared resources.

It is with this spirit of partnership and a focus on the well-being of our students that we now bring to your attention a significant challenge we are facing regarding the current field permit regulations. We are encountering considerable difficulties in securing consistent access to athletic fields, and we believe a thoughtful revision of the existing rules would greatly benefit our student-athletes and promote greater equity within the borough.

Our understanding is that while schools based in Manhattan have the opportunity to obtain permits for fields across all five boroughs, including the Bronx, Riverdale Country School, despite being a proud member of the Bronx community, is restricted to applying for permits solely within the Bronx. This creates an imbalance, particularly when scheduling conflicts arise due to Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) games.

We were hopeful that the renewal process, designed to offer reciprocal permits on a year-over-year basis, would provide the consistency needed to plan our athletic seasons effectively. However, we have experienced instances where our previously secured renewal permits have been adjusted or "bumped" to accommodate PSAL games. While we

fully recognize and respect the importance of PSAL programming, the current system unfortunately leads to inconsistent field access for our student-athletes, impacting their ability to practice and compete reliably. This situation is further compounded by the fact that schools from outside the Bronx do not face the same limitations when seeking permits within our borough.

This disparity in permit eligibility and the resulting disruptions to our scheduled field times are significantly hindering the continuity of our athletic programs and, more importantly, affecting the positive experiences we strive to provide for our students. We sincerely believe that a more equitable system is possible, one that thoughtfully considers the needs of all schools within the Bronx, regardless of their specific designation.

With this in mind, we respectfully request that the NYC Parks Department consider a review and revision of the current permit regulations to:

- Extend eligibility for field permits across all five boroughs to schools located within the Bronx, such as Riverdale Country School, mirroring the access currently afforded to other schools and organizations operating outside of the Bronx.
- Implement a more transparent and predictable process for scheduling PSAL games, one that thoughtfully minimizes disruptions to previously issued permits for non-PSAL school programs.

We are genuinely eager to collaborate with the NYC Parks Department to identify a solution that fosters fair and consistent access to athletic fields for all schools within the Bronx community. We are confident that a revised policy would cultivate a more balanced and supportive environment for youth sports throughout our borough.

Thank you for your time, your thoughtful consideration of this important matter, and for your ongoing commitment to our city's young athletes. We look forward to the possibility of discussing this further with you.

Sincerely,

John

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**John Pizzi**  
Director of Athletics  
[jpizzi@riverdale.edu](mailto:jpizzi@riverdale.edu)



April 24, 2025

Councilmember Gale Brewer  
New York City Council District 6  
563 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10024

RE: Int. No. 0566-2024 Annual plan to extend access to school playgrounds

Councilmember Brewer,

Contrary to our very strong support for the expansion of community access to Department of Education facilities, especially in Designated Disadvantaged and Environmental Justice Areas such as ours, we urge the City Council to exclude Curtis High School, located at 105 Hamilton Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10301, as a candidate for extended after hours use of its athletic facilities. Further, the St. George Civic Association has appealed directly to the Principal and Athletics Director for limited access to the track, indoor pool, and gymnasium, only to be told that PSAL use of the facility is at maximum capacity.

Yet, non-profit youth teams use the athletic field without access to appropriate amenities such as toilets, dressing rooms, appropriate parking, and a designated meeting area. Daily use of the field during the summer and fall months by the high school and these outside organizations means fourteen-hour long days of traffic, illegal parking, crowds, loud public announcements, explicit music, and trash. Cars and buses idle for hours creating health concerns in a Designated Asthma Corridor. The NYPD120 will not enforce illegal parking that causes emergency vehicles and MTA buses to be delayed.

Curtis High School's sheer size defined by its physical presence and over-enrollment, sets the tone for our neighborhood. The institution has been insensitive to the tight urban context and direct adjacency to historic residential properties, plus low- and mid-rise apartment buildings of affordable housing. The administration has ignored and been unresponsive to requests made by its neighbors for years.

New stadium lights – installed in 2021 – evaded the protections of the School Construction Authority Design Requirements and were installed by an unqualified electrician without proper equipment. Many of the fixtures are aimed directly at residences. The luminaire height and intensity create blinding glare for residents, players and audience, pedestrians and vehicles navigating our streets from 8 - 24 times the acceptable limits of light trespass and spill.

The new synthetic turf – installed in 2022 – magnifies even incidental sounds from the field to a nuisance level inside our homes. Conversations on the field are audible inside our homes. Amplified sound from the athletic field routinely exceeds legal limits as defined by the NYC Noise Code, often measured at over 100 decibels inside our homes. Loud explicit music and announcements reflect off the mid-rise buildings to nearby homes causing complaints from three blocks away.

DOE District 31 tells us we must assume the risk of living near a school, while the school refuses to abide by the rules and regulations of the Department of Education and the laws of the City of New York. Until the Curtis High School administration demonstrates its ability to manage its own use of the field to minimize impact on the surrounding neighborhood, we cannot support any additional use of the athletic field.

Respectfully,

Special Committee  
St. George Civic Association  
Staten Island, NY 10301



RE: Int. No. 0566-2024 Annual plan to extend access to school playgrounds

## TESTIMONY

Good afternoon. I represent a diverse group of homeowners and renters who live adjacent to the Curtis High School athletic field on Staten Island.

While we very strongly support expanding community access to Department of Education facilities, particularly in designated disadvantaged and environmental justice areas such as ours, we must oppose Curtis High School as a candidate for extended after-hours use of its athletic field.

Our civic association has repeatedly approached the Principal and Athletics Director requesting limited access to the track, indoor pool and gymnasium, only to be told that PSAL usage has maximized their capacity.

Yet, a youth football league uses the athletic field regularly without access to essential amenities such as toilets, dressing rooms, proper parking, and a designated gathering area.

During summer and fall, the facility operates for approximately fourteen hours daily, using non-compliant stadium lights, generating excessive traffic, constant crowds, unpermitted amplified announcements and music that exceed city code limits, and litter.

Vehicles frequently idle for extended periods, raising environmental and health concerns; and

Despite our reports, NYPD120 has not addressed illegal parking that impedes emergency vehicles and disrupts MTA bus service.

DOE District 31 has suggested we must accept these disruptions as an inherent risk of residing near a school. Meanwhile, Curtis High School has not demonstrated compliance with Department of Education regulations or New York City ordinances.

We cannot support expanded use of this facility until Curtis High School demonstrates its ability to manage current operations in a manner that respects the surrounding neighborhood and addresses these ongoing concerns.

Thank you.

Suzanne Dvells  
Co-Chair, Special Committee  
St. George Civic Association

Hello, my name is Suebeen Kim. I am currently enrolled in a fellowship program under a local non-profit known as the Natural Areas Conservancy. After completing my environmental undergraduate track in 2023, I have had the privilege since last summer to conduct field botanical work across the city's natural areas alongside the NAC's longtime partner, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I am writing today to voice my full support in raising the FY26 budget for NYC Parks and alleviating its historically underfunded resourcing. I continue to stand behind the Play Fair for Parks Coalition in their request to raise the NYC Parks allocation of the total city budget from 0.6% to 1%. I would like to lend particular support in allocating funds towards restoration of the many positions and programming that have been cut from NYC Parks since FY23. Among them include:

- \$ million for 51lost Natural Resources Group staff
- \$2.4 million for the permanent, baselined funding of the citywide Trail Formalization program

In anticipation of the NYC Urban Forest Plan to release this year in accordance with Local Law 148, I additionally urge the City Council to consider the following requests:

- \$1 million for final stage development and implementation of the Urban Forest Plan
- \$500 thousand for updating NYC's LiDAR dataset to monitor tree canopies
- Fund and baseline 148 forestry staff to properly equip Parks to care for and maintain existing tree canopy

7,300 total acres of natural area forests are under the care of NYC Parks. Not only were our forests one of the few publicly available spaces of respite for citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they also remain one of our strongest lines of defense against heat sickness and devastating flooding, particularly within our most vulnerable communities. As each year brings record-breaking heights in temperature, intensified storms, and rising sea levels, proper protection and maintenance of these fragile ecosystems has become increasingly urgent. Despite that, the current projected headcount of NYC Parks is over hundreds fewer than that of pre-COVID years and even FY23. This is unacceptable. It simply cannot be expected for this city to outpace its many environmental challenges when those responsible for doing so experience such constant losses. Initiatives such as the Urban Forest Plan cannot achieve their full potential for the same reason. It is only consistent, adequate funding that will enable the staffing necessary for both widespread and thorough restoration work.

I, myself, have been able to become deeply familiarized with the state of many parks in my home borough, Staten Island, through recent work with the Natural Areas Conservancy. Starting last May, I was hired for four months onto their second Forest Ecological Assessment: a decadal study, conducted in collaboration with NYC Parks, researching the health and flora composition of forests across NYC. Every day, my team and I would venture into park forests to measure, categorize, and assess the plant life of our given sample areas, in all aspects from the dirt to the canopy. Over the months, I witnessed firsthand the problems these forests face – pits of trash by park margins; forest floors left barren by the Island's deer; complete takeovers by invasive species, some strangling trees decades older than me. Investigating the spaces I have visited since childhood in this way has allowed me to feel closer to them than ever, but it also forced me to acknowledge that drastic improvements are necessary for many's survival.

It was also during this time that a number of my colleagues on the Ecological Assessment were directly affected by the budget cuts of FY25. Having been employed via annual funding to NYC Parks' Natural Resources Group, which was not renewed, the duration of their positions were abruptly thrown into uncertainty. With the Ecological Assessment's teams comprising only three people, their possible loss further jeopardized the project's completion, affecting the scope of our data to guide future environmental management efforts. Ultimately, my colleagues were able to remain aboard the Assessment through rearranged funding sources. However, after working together through blistering heat and at times dangerous terrain, the prospect that they could be dismissed so unceremoniously left quite an impression. It was a sobering reminder that not everyone believed in the value of our cause.

On the surface, parks may seem a luxury. They are areas primarily for rest and play close to nature. Yet there is purpose to their structure, the influences of which are sprawling and serve to benefit all walks and forms of life. It is because they are public and precisely for relaxation that parks become lively neighborhood hubs, key to building closer, safer communities. Trail systems allow citizens to safely travel and immerse themselves in park forests, concurrently keeping excess foot traffic from damaging its younger, delicate layers. And these forests – protected, themselves teeming with centuries of history – protect us in turn: from heat, from floods, from polluted air. Urban forests have in fact shown greater efficiency at carbon dioxide capture than their rural counterparts, as their trees may grow larger due to stricter limitations on access.

I believe parks are a major pathway to raising equity in NYC and fulfilling our responsibilities to this planet. Although more abstract, I also cherish parks for what they represent. They are spaces without expectation, somewhere one goes to simply bask in the feeling of life. Perhaps a growing necessity in the modern day. As our climate-oriented deadlines approach, the priority of parks, too, becomes ever more critical. There is no better time than now to make changes accordingly.

Thank you for reading. I sincerely hope for your consideration to NYC Parks this coming fiscal year.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 04/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KIT GREENBERG

Address: [REDACTED] NEW YORK NY

I represent: WELLNESS IN THE SCHOOLS

Address: 31 W 125th ST NEW YORK, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

nerter Date: 4/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steph Krane

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

I represent: NYC Independent Budget Office

Address: 110 William Street NY NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Avery Wallace

Address: [REDACTED] New York NY, 10010

I represent: NYC H2O

Address: 410 E 85th St, 210, New York, NY, 10009

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

3

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0573 2079 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor    ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Seamans

Address: 110 Bleecker St NYC 10012

I represent: Local Nature Lab

Address: 110 Bleecker St NYC 10012

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor    ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SOPHIE STELBOUM

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

I represent: TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 566 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor    ☒ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SUZANNE DVALLS

Address: [REDACTED] ST

I represent: Hamilton Ave Neighbors

Address: 105 Hamilton Avenue

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0573-2024 Res. No. 0566-2024  
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Mercat Burchbaum

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

I represent: Riverside Park Conservancy

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Ker Conyers

Address: NYC Parks, 830 F.H.A. Ave, NY, NY

I represent: "

Address: "

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/23/2025

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Sharon Brown

Address: [Redacted] Rm 91036

I represent: Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Address: [Redacted]

BRUNY NY 11036  
Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matthew D. [unclear]

Address: NYC Parks, 830 Fifth Ave, NY, NY

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: 11

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

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Nelson

Address: NYC Parks, 830 Fifth Ave, NY, NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 11

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/23/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Belley Pierre

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

I represent: All Access Golf

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 643 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: Keeps Act

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sommer Omar

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

I represent: Coalition to Save the Public Rec Center

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

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