

MAS Testimony on the FY25 Budget for the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks)

March 21, 2024

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) is a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and the NYC Forest for All Coalition and supports our partners in their demands to allocate 1% of the City budget to the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) and to fund our urban forest. For the past 130 years, MAS has advocated on behalf of the city's public realm, including an equitable and resilient system of parks and open spaces, and adequate funding to ensure these public assets thrive. The importance of our city's parks and urban green spaces cannot be overstated, as they are essential to our wellbeing and health, and are critical infrastructure in the fight to address climate change and support our long-term sustainability goals.

In addition to providing maintenance to 30,000 acres of public parkland, NYC Parks also operates community and recreation centers that are part of the city's lifeblood and administer crucial public programs to New Yorkers of all ages. Further, NYC Parks maintains the city's urban forest which helps improve public and environmental health by mitigating the heat island effect, lowering emissions, and supporting biodiversity. Thus, it is vital that NYC Parks is sufficiently funded to serve New Yorkers across all five boroughs, across all seasons, and for years to come.

The continued underfunding of NYC Parks has contributed to growing inequity across our communities. Parks are the backyards for millions of New Yorkers, but to be useable they need to be maintained. The City budget must allocate 1% to NYC Parks and retain pre-pandemic staffing levels to effectively uphold these vital public resources. Further, meeting Forest for All's demands for the City to fulfill its commitment to a 30% tree canopy coverage by 2035 necessitates investment now to return greater cost-savings in the future.

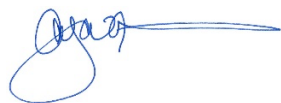
While Mayor Adams pledged 1% for NYC Parks in his initial campaign, the Adams Administration has reversed this assurance. NYC Parks faces devastating budget cuts with even less funding than in Fiscal Year 2024. These cuts will widen systemic inequities, diminish public health, eliminate parks programs, limit accessibility, and add to the already-present overburden on NYC Parks staff and resources.

MAS stands by Play Fair and Forest for All in calling on the Adams Administration to reevaluate these detrimental cuts and renew its commitment to NYC Parks; issuing the 1% funding commitment needed, increasing Parks staff headcount to pre-pandemic staffing levels, baselining 300 agency positions, and creating an urban forest plan to ensure our public spaces are clean, green, and resilient and so that NYC Parks can maintain our city's critical public realm for generations.

Yours truly,



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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Goldstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Elizabeth Goldstein
President, Municipal Art Society of New York