

MAS Testimony on the FY26 Budget for the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks)

March 20, 2025

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) has continually advocated to ensure that New York City's public realm is designed equitably and holistically to meet the needs of New Yorkers across all five boroughs.

The City must fund parks and open spaces as public infrastructure to ensure that they can be useable, maintained, and safe. Sufficient funding is needed to begin to address the growing public realm inequities that have been worsened by decades of underfunding to the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks). The recent announcement for the City of Yes for Families initiative, which will encourage the creation of more public spaces, makes this funding even more important. Further, a functional and resilient system of parks and open spaces is critical in improving health outcomes and in our city's fight to address climate change, including lowering emissions and mitigating flooding and the heat island effect.

The proposed funding in the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Preliminary Budget cannot adequately provide the maintenance and care needed for our city's 30,000 acres of parkland and the expansion of tree canopy. We support our partners at the Play Fair for Parks and Forest for All NYC coalitions and their demands to allocate more funding to NYC Parks as part of the FY26 City Budget.

The City must allocate \$79.7 million in the budget, restoring and baselining 795 NYC Parks staff that have been cut in previous years. Additionally, with the upcoming release of the Urban Forest Plan from the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), the City must increase NYC Parks funding to fulfill its commitment to a 30% tree canopy coverage by 2035 in an equitable manner.

MAS is proud to stand with our partners at Play Fair for Parks and Forest for All NYC to call on the City to reaffirm its commitment to New York's public realm. Our city's parks, plazas, recreation centers, and playgrounds are essential to our well-being, health, and climate resiliency, and the FY26 City budget must expand and maintain these spaces to uphold this critical public infrastructure for the future of our city.

Sincerely,



Keri Butler
Interim President, Municipal Art Society of New York