



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Hearing on Int. 737
November 12, 2015
Tupper Thomas, Executive Director**

Good morning. I am Tupper Thomas, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks. I want to thank the Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting me to speak today on this important issue.

NY4P supports the creation of a task force to study the effects of shadows on New York City parks and open spaces. Over the years, we have seen many examples of high rise buildings completely changing the nature of our open spaces through shadows. The impacts of shadows can have profound effects on our public parks and gardens: they change the microclimates that sustain plant life, plunging active spaces into darkness well before the sun has set.

We know that this issue is a citywide concern. The city seeks to increase the density of neighborhoods across the five boroughs to allow for more growth and more affordable housing. We need to ensure that the immediate result of these rezonings, higher buildings, will not create adverse effects on the hundreds of parks and open spaces, including community gardens and street trees, in these neighborhoods. Keeping these neighborhood green spaces clean, well-maintained, and abundant with sunshine will be even more important as they serve an ever-larger number of local residents. It is crucial that our communities be able to balance more housing units with the appropriate kinds of neighborhood infrastructure and services that create truly livable neighborhoods: well-lit open spaces are key to this conversation.

The creation of a task force to monitor this issue will go a long way in helping to protect the sunlight available in neighborhood green spaces. Our hope is that the task force will also have some authority in keeping the development around these spaces limited to a reasonable building height. While the creation of such a task force would be an important step toward protecting the sunlight that so many park-goers cherish, there must be a way for the recommendations put forth in the annual report to be put into action. In a city as dense and highly built as New York, we must not lose what

precious light we have available to us. We hope this task force will be an opportunity to protect this most basic and vital of resources.

Thank you.