



New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Hearing: Oversight – Update on the Parks Department’s Equity Initiatives
February 28, 2018
Lynn Kelly, Executive Director

Good morning, my name is Lynn Kelly, and I am the Executive Director for New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). I would like to thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting us to speak on this important issue today and congratulate its new Chair, Council Member Barry Grodenchik. As the citywide independent organization committed to research and advocacy for parks and open spaces we are supportive of the City Parks Initiative (CPI) and Anchor Parks Initiative, its progress thus far, and hopeful for its future.

We have previously supported past phases of the CPI and Anchor Parks and we are pleased to see the Committee recognizes the importance of and value in this initiative. However, NY4P remains concerned that despite recent changes NYC Parks has made to the capital process, it still remains a broken one, and the topics being discussed today reflects that deep frustration shared by every day New Yorkers, members of the City Council, and the agency itself.

NYC Parks’ effort with the Capital Tracker Tool deserves praise in its attempts to be transparent regarding the capital process. This tool provides invaluable information to the public and helps them understand the process of how a park is built, what to expect in terms of timing, and when they can see their park project completed. However, we would encourage NYC Parks to make this tool more easily accessible to all, particularly by putting it prominently on the homepage of the NYC Parks website, as it is currently not clear where to find this tool within the site. In addition to this step, we would encourage that NYC Parks update its CPI and Anchor Parks website page. While this page is helpful in that it provides a brief summary of this program, it has not been updated in some time.

NY4P is also concerned with another key aspect of the CPI and Anchor Parks program as well. As one can see from the Capital Tracker there are many small and neighborhood-sized parks that are in great need of improvement and may even be in the project pipeline but do not receive the injection of funding or priority focus due to the strains on NYC Parks’ budget. We would like to see real resources brought to NYC Parks so that they can immediately address the backlog for capital projects on these smaller parks.

Commissioner Silver has made it clear that it behooves the City to better maintain its existing open spaces rather than create new ones. NY4P does not disagree but we believe that any

capital infusion in a park no matter how large or small is moot unless a comparable maintenance allocation is made in the budget for NYC Parks to properly staff and care for these beloved spaces.

Before concluding, NY4P would like to note that unfortunately the newly formed Parks Committee no longer represents our City's parks users or its executive management as there are no women on this committee. Did you know that most of the City's largest parks are run by women? In fact, nearly 25 of the City's largest parks, programmatic entities, park improvement and advocacy organizations are all run by women. We are aware that the Council has less women than previously but we would hope to work with this Committee going forward to ensure that all New Yorkers are adequately represented.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak and I welcome any questions you may have.

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For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. www.ny4p.org