



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Tuesday, March 22, 2022
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Adam Ganser, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks**

My name is Adam Ganser and I am the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We have been advocating for parks and open space for more than 115 years and are a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today.

We thank the Council Committees for the opportunity to speak today. I also want to thank Chair Krishnan for his leadership and partnership in the Play Fair Coalition and to the many other council members that joined us this morning on the steps at City Hall.

The last two plus years have made crystal clear the critical importance of New York City's parks for the health and safety of our citizens. Covid has ALSO shined a bright light on the fact that this city has disinvested in parks for more than 40 years, exacerbating tragic inequities in our parks system...in access to parks and in the conditions of our parks.

In response to these conditions, the Mayor and many members of the city council had the bold vision to commit to a clear policy priority - to dedicate 1% of the city budget to parks. Yet, the Mayor's preliminary budget cuts the parks budget by \$60M dollars.

This cut would effectively reduce the number of parks workers by 3500 from a year ago. That includes the 250 positions recently eliminated, the 3200 cleaning corps positions that were federally funded, and the 335 one shote council funded Play Fair positions that are set to expire at the end of the year.

I want to make clear that despite the party line you are hearing from parks, these cuts will be devastating. The parks department is nimble and has been trained for 40 years to operate under austerity conditions. But I want to also remind the council that just two years ago a similar cut left the city's parks system in the worst conditions seen in 20 years.

New Yorkers deserve more – our parks deserve more. Now is the time to follow through on the bold commitments to the health and safety of this city, and to its future. To commit to 1% of the city budget for parks. We look forward to working with the Mayor, the administration and the council to meet those commitments.

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