

June 25, 2021  
NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson  
City Hall Office  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Johnson,

As New York City recovers from the COVID-19 crisis, our organizations and businesses, which are some of the members of [Forest for All NYC](#), recognize the significant role of the natural environment in ensuring a clean, safe and healthy New York City. Recently, Forest for All NYC launched the [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#), which calls for increased funding for the urban forest in NYC, among other key actions.

The people of New York City rely on the trees around them as critical living infrastructure that provides a multitude of economic, environmental, and public health benefits. Trees make our city livable, improving our quality of life and wellbeing. They clean and cool our air, reducing heat-related illness. They help us tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, protecting our shoreline and absorbing stormwater before it pollutes our waterways. By 2080, the frequency of heatwaves is expected to triple and extreme precipitation events are expected to increase by 50%. In a single year, the city's 7+ million trees absorb more than 500 million gallons of stormwater and significantly reduce temperatures during dangerous summer heatwaves. ***In short, the health and sustainability of New York City's trees matter more than ever.***

Trees serve as crucial public health and climate resiliency infrastructure and should be treated as such. In FY21, the Parks Department was disproportionately impacted by cost-cutting measures, receiving the second largest cut of any agency. We are concerned about the impacts of continuing to put our city's parks and trees at risk, especially given our increasing reliance on them during this health crisis. We request that you restore and increase the City's budget for trees.

Trees in NYC are an asset conservatively valued at \$5.7 billion by the USDA Forest Service, and programs supporting trees are already underfunded given the many services they provide. Trees require regular care to ensure they survive and thrive in order to provide their myriad benefits to New Yorkers and to help the city become more climate resilient. Essential forestry activities include but are not limited to: planting efforts, monitoring and management of invasive pests, pruning to ensure safety in parks and along sidewalks, occasional tree removal, and natural area forest management to ensure a healthy forest and accessible, well-maintained trails. ***A robust and well-resourced forestry operation is an essential City service and should be funded accordingly.***

We understand that urban forestry programs suffered a 90% cut last year, accounting for inflation, from \$25.1M in FY2020 to \$2.6M in FY2021. We strongly encourage you to fully restore the forestry budget for FY22 and to fund the requested \$8 million for nature and resiliency in the Play Fair campaign for several key reasons:

- This money includes funding for green jobs for New Yorkers. We encourage the City **to restore all viable green jobs to aid our economic recovery.**
- In addition to their standing value, we need to sustain the **more than \$250 million in services provided by trees annually.**

- Healthy streets, parks, and natural areas are more important than ever. The city has already experienced its first heat wave of the year, with more extreme heat events expected to occur. **Healthy, well-managed trees along streets and in parks enhance the quality of life** in the city by providing shade, cooling, and mental and physical health benefits.
- While short-term needs are critical, disinvesting from forestry, especially invasive pest monitoring, forest management, and street tree maintenance will **cost us more in the long run.**

We are happy to discuss this at your convenience. Please contact Emily Nobel Maxwell, Cities Program Director at The Nature Conservancy at [emaxwell@tnc.org](mailto:emaxwell@tnc.org) if we may be of any assistance.

Thank you for considering New York City's trees and all the benefits they afford New Yorkers as you continue to work on the next city budget.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

American Society of Landscape Architects, New York Chapter  
Broadway Mall Association  
Con Edison  
Gowanus Canal Conservancy  
Green-Wood Cemetery  
Jackson Heights Beautification Group  
Love Your Street Tree Day  
Natural Areas Conservancy  
New Yorkers for Parks  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
NYC Soil and Water Conservation District  
The Nature Conservancy  
Trees New York  
Tri-Lox  
Urban Systems Lab, The New School  
West 80s Neighborhood Association

Individuals:

Matthew I. Palmer, Ph.D., Columbia University Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology

CC: Councilmember Daniel Dromm, Committee on Finance  
Councilmember Peter Koo, Committee on Parks and Recreation Chair  
Councilmember Mark Levine, Committee on Health Chair