



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON

January 17, 2025

Mayor Eric Adams
Office of the Mayor
City Hall Park
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mayor Adams,

While we are grateful for the strides being made to increase New York City's tree canopy coverage through the city's Urban Forest Plan, the City must commit to fully funding the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation with an investment of at least 1% of the City's Fiscal Year 2026 budget to ensure the equitable and fair planting and maintenance of trees in all five boroughs. To achieve the stated goal of increasing tree canopy coverage from the current 22% to 30% of the city's area, more investment must be made with a particular emphasis on ensuring that every borough gets its fair share of new trees.

Due to climate change and the Urban Heat Island Effect that causes temperatures in urban environments to soar 10 to 20 degrees higher than in suburban and rural communities, the urgency to increase our tree canopy coverage is at an all-time high. The time to act is now, and lives are on the line. According to a report released by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in June 2024, an average of 350 New Yorkers die from heat-related illnesses each year, with Black New Yorkers at disproportionate risk.

With 132,615 mapped trees in the Bronx compared to 213,475 in Brooklyn and 294,517 in Queens, we must do all we can to protect the health and safety of our residents, especially Black and Brown residents in neighborhoods where asthma and diabetes rates are among the highest nationally. While we are the "greenest" borough with the largest proportion of parkland compared to other boroughs, there are also densely populated communities, particularly in the South Bronx, with little to no tree coverage resulting in an unequal distribution of trees that has contributed to increased health risks and mortality for those living in neighborhoods with low canopy coverage.

In September, I was proud to join President of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality Robert Fanuzzi, Co-Founder of South Bronx Unite Mychal Johnson, Environmental and Construction Manager at WM Jay Kaplan, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Natural Areas Conservancy Sarah Charlop-Powers, Founder of Loving the Bronx, and President of Friends of Pelham Bay Park Nilka Martell, in a call for the City to increase tree canopy coverage in Bronx Community Boards 1-6. Together, we planted a ceremonial tree on Lincoln Avenue off Bruckner Boulevard in Bronx Community Board 1, which has one of the lowest levels of tree canopy coverage in the city, at only 14%, with only neighboring Bronx Community Board 2 lower at 8%. The goal of this

planting was to highlight the benefits trees offer, while once again urging the City to do the right thing by fully funding the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

Sincerely,



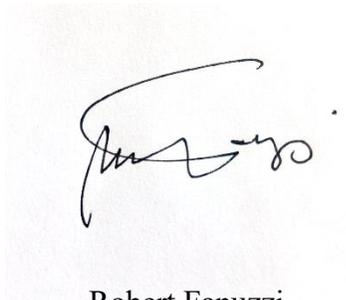
Vanessa L. Gibson
Bronx Borough President



Nilka Martell
President
Friends of Pelham Bay Park



Aycan Kaptaner
Community Relations manager
WM Greater Mid-Atlantic



Robert Fanuzzi
President
Bronx Council for Environmental Quality
Board of Directors



Mychal Johnson
Co-Founder
South Bronx Unite



Sarah Charlop-Powers
Executive Director
Natural Areas Conservancy

cc: First Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer
NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donaghue
OMB Director, Jacques Jihad