



August 23, 2010

The Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

As you are aware, the City's plan to remove 80 trees as part of the Pelham Parkway Reconstruction project has galvanized the communities we represent. While most neighborhood leaders and residents welcome repairs to this heavily used thoroughfare, we join a growing contingent of residents who find completely unacceptable the extent of the City's tree removal plan, and we urgently seek your help in resolving this matter.

Pelham Parkway is one of the Bronx's most prized natural assets. Hundreds of century-old trees line the roadway in both directions, creating a series of wooded canopies that are essential to the beauty and appeal of neighborhoods on either side. The removal of 80 mature trees from this unique continuous stretch of parkland would have a detrimental, long-term impact on both the character and livability of surrounding communities.

We are aware that a major objective of the Pelham Parkway Reconstruction is to improve traffic safety by installing a guardrail along the length of the parkway. We have been told that up to 50 healthy trees must be removed to make way for this guardrail. Yet we are confident that with enough thought and dedication, the City can find a way to make Pelham Parkway safe without removing so many otherwise healthy trees.

We were encouraged by the announcement Friday of a Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Technical Working Group to re-evaluate the need to remove trees along Pelham Parkway. That is a good start. Yet we feel the City could further demonstrate its goodwill by taking the following four steps:

- 1) **Incorporate community voices into the newly formed DDC Technical Working Group.** Allowing three representatives of the Pelham Parkway Preservation Alliance to sit on the Working Group would lend invaluable local knowledge to the architects and arborists who compose the group, while adding legitimacy to DDC's effort in the minds of neighborhood residents.
- 2) **Address the assertion that an alternate guardrail design could save dozens of trees.** Former New York City Parks Commissioner Henry Stern, an undisputed expert on New York City's tree network, has stated that repositioning the guardrail at certain locations could save most if not all of the approximately 50 healthy trees slated for removal. Commissioner Stern has described the current plan as a function of convenience and cost containment rather than necessity. Any redesign that would save healthy trees must be considered regardless of cost.
- 3) **Consider redesigning the sewer reconstruction project on the Pelham Parkway South service road.** Commissioner Stern has also suggested that current sewer reconstruction plans for Pelham Parkway South could unnecessarily compromise the roots of street trees. The disruption of tree roots

must be avoided wherever possible, especially if such disruption will compromise the viability of otherwise healthy trees.

- 4) **Immediately re-evaluate the decision to remove 30 to 40 trees designated by the Department of Parks & Recreation as unhealthy or deceased.** Several reports have indicated that many “sick” trees designated for removal by the Parks Department have the potential to survive for more than a decade if left untouched. Only trees that pose an immediate public safety risk should be removed as part of the Pelham Parkway Reconstruction.

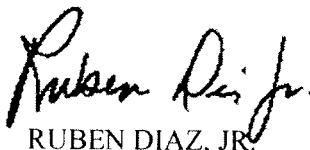
Mr. Mayor, in recent years, your Administration has taken the lead nationally in promoting an environmentally sustainable urban agenda, a major part of which is the ambitious campaign to plant 1 million additional trees throughout New York City. We know you understand the importance of mature, healthy trees to our City’s aesthetic desirability and ecological wellbeing. We ask that you consider this letter in the context of our shared vision for a greener New York.

Thank you for your time and attention. We ask that you address this matter with this utmost sense of urgency. Please feel free to contact our respective offices to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully,



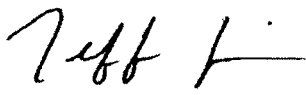
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cc: Hon. Stephen Goldsmith, Deputy Mayor, City of New York
Hon. Janette Sadik-Khan, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Hon. Adrian Benepe, Commissioner, Department of Parks & Recreation
Hon. David J. Burney, Commissioner, Department of Design & Construction