



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
Hearing on Parks Without Borders and Int. 1411 Relating to Pedestrian Access to Parks
Facilities
February 13, 2017
Lynn Kelly, Executive Director**

Good afternoon, my name is Lynn Kelly, and I am the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks. I want to thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting us to speak on this issue today.

NY4P has supported the Parks Without Borders initiative since it was announced in 2015. We know that the value of a park to the surrounding community is greatly reduced if community members are unable to easily access the space, and proximity does not necessarily mean accessibility. One of the great benefits of this initiative is that the city now measures accessibility using the same metric we had long endorsed: that residents should be within a one-quarter mile sidewalk route to a park entrance, not just the park itself. By improving entrances and creating more access, the city will encourage usership and make each park more inviting and safer.

As an organization that seeks to support park stewards and community groups, we welcomed the process for selecting the eight parks that received \$5 million each in capital funds. By encouraging the public to submit their ideas for which parks should receive this funding, NYC Parks was able to engage community members directly in the decision-making process, which is a powerful gesture that we hope will ensure long-term community stewardship of these spaces once they are complete. We also applaud the inclusion of \$10 million for parks projects already in the capital pipeline that required more funding, and were good candidates for edge redesign. As the Council well knows, many parks projects fall short of achieving all necessary improvements because of a lack of funding, so this commitment to fill in funding gaps through Parks Without Borders is a welcome component of the program.

It is also encouraging to hear that NYC Parks is committed to including the design and access concepts of Parks Without Borders in all future capital projects as applicable. As always, New Yorkers for Parks encourages the Council and the Mayor's office to complement these visionary capital initiatives with much-needed maintenance funding. In order for capital programs like Parks Without Borders, the Community Parks Initiative, and the Anchor Parks program to have a true long-term impact, there must be more baselined permanent maintenance and operations staff, without which we the risk of undoing the important infrastructure work being completed by NYC Parks.

With regards to today's legislation, we support the idea that recreation facilities that currently lack adequate public pathways should have these vital pieces of infrastructure installed where possible and appropriate. It is our understanding that the number of parks and facilities impacted by the lack of pathways is fairly limited, but for the community members who live in parts of the city where there aren't adequate pathways installed, this can be a tremendous barrier to access and use of these spaces. We hope the Council and NYC Parks will work to identify where pathways are lacking, and move forward with a budget and plan to increase access for all New Yorkers in the neighborhoods that currently lack this infrastructure.

In closing, I want to encourage the Council and the administration to continue finding ways to fund creative initiatives, like Parks Without Borders, that improve the quality and condition of parks throughout the five boroughs. Although we know the budget may be impacted by actions at the federal level, we believe public open space remains as critical to the health of our neighborhoods, and our city, as ever. Without meaningful funding to continue these visionary capital programs, or the funding needed to ensure that there are enough staff at NYC Parks oversee critical day-to-day maintenance, our communal open spaces will suffer.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, 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.

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