



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**New York City Council
Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams
Committee on Parks and Recreation
March 27, 2018**

Good afternoon Chair Grodenchik and the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks). Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee on New York City's Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) Budget.

Parks are the lifeblood of any city. Parks give us recreation and respite in an otherwise chaotic city. Parks give us a place to meet neighbors and make new friends. I recognize this along with millions of Brooklynites, New Yorkers, and visitors who frequent our parks every year. The people who truly understand this notion are the thousands of NYC Parks staff and volunteers who help keep our parks beautiful and clean throughout the year.

To better understand Brooklyn parks, I released "The Pulse of Our Parks: An Assessment of Brooklyn's Open Space" on Monday, March 26, 2018, which analyzed 270 of the borough's parks that are over half an acre in size to determine access to activities, comfort stations, drinking fountains, friends-of groups, programming, and publicly accessible Wi-Fi. I aim for this report to help guide my capital budget process as well as empower friends-of groups, non-profit partners, and residents across the borough to advocate for increased funding to parks.

Results from the survey provided numerous takeaways on the state of parks in Brooklyn and the need for more equitable attention. Notwithstanding parks that fall in overlapping community district designations or in no community district at all, I found that:

- **73 percent of parks are not affiliated with a non-profit or formal community group**
- **11 percent of parks lack access to a drinking fountain**
- **40 percent of parks do not have a comfort station**
- **88 percent of parks do not have access to publicly available Wi-Fi**
- **19 percent of parks do not have more than one active uses within their borders**

However, this report does not take into account broken infrastructure, which is part of the reason I am submitting testimony today.

For too long, we have failed to prioritize the NYC Parks in the budget, and overly relied upon other methods of funding for capital projects and annual maintenance (e.g. public-private partnerships and Reso A capital funding). While these methods may work for some parks in some neighborhoods, we cannot rely upon a one-size-fits-all approach to address the massive

backlog of maintenance to our open spaces. That is why I am calling on the City Council and Mayor to implement a percent for parks model that would peg the NYC Parks budget to one percent of the total annual budget for the City of New York. If applied to the preliminary FY19 budget — \$88,670,000,000 — this proposal would raise investment in NYC Parks by an additional \$384,765,000. This increase in funding could be used for initiatives and projects including, but not limited to, additional Partnership for Parks staffing, expansion of Wi-Fi accessibility in parks, the expansion and repair of drinking fountains, as well as expansion and repair of comfort station facilities.

While the lack of funding is certainly part of the problem, it isn't the only problem. If elected officials are to allocate millions of dollars toward an NYC Parks project, it is imperative that projects be completed in a timelier manner. According to a 2014 New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P) report, it was shown that other City agencies were often able to complete capital projects quicker and under-budget than NYC Parks. There is no excuse for a timeline of three-plus years to build a new comfort station or rehabilitate a dog run. How is it that a residential skyscraper developer can build two stories per week, but it takes more than three years to build a comfort station the size of a studio apartment? The whole process must be streamlined and a capital project tracker has to be only a first step forward in restructuring how we deliver parks projects on time and under-budget.

Much like our subway system, just because the MTA provides countdown clocks doesn't solve the chronic subway delays. It only makes people more furious about the delays that happen day in and day out. I call on NYC Parks to conduct a comprehensive review of their capital delivery process starting with the innovative and strategic recommendations found in the 2014 NY4P report. Only then will the public have faith in our parks and the investment we make on their behalf.

Thank you.

###