



**Joint Hearing before the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance / Committee on Parks & Recreation  
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget  
May 27, 2026**

**Testimony By: Tricia Shimamura, Commissioner, NYC Parks**

Good afternoon, Chair Lee, Chair Hankerson, members of the Finance Committee and Parks Committee, and other members of the Council. My name is Tricia Shimamura, and I am pleased to be here today to testify as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation regarding the agency's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, and to be joined today on this panel by several members of our agency's senior staff leadership.

Firstly, I want to recognize the Council for its continued support for our city's open spaces and for championing the importance of parks for all New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on our agency's efforts to build and maintain a healthy and thriving park system. The arrival of warmer weather in the spring means we're heading into our peak season, when our city's green and open spaces truly come alive, and more people get outdoors to take advantage of our amazing parks, beaches and pools to lead happier, healthier lives. In the two months since we appeared before the Council to discuss the Preliminary Budget, we have been busy -- delivering results for New Yorkers, striving for excellence in the public realm, and proving each and every day that our parks and open spaces are a crucial component of the Mayor's vision to make this a more affordable city -- because parks are for everyone.

Our playgrounds are for every child, so over the last month we have been proud to unveil the fully reconstructed children's play area at Hamilton Fish Park in Manhattan and the full renovation of Cuyler Gore Park in Brooklyn, and break ground on a full reconstruction of Captain Mario Fajardo Playground within Kissena Corridor Park in Queens. These projects are creating new play areas for different age groups and abilities, providing exciting new opportunities for children to explore, move, and play together.

Our basketball courts are for everyone, and basketball is the lifeblood of this city - Let's Go Knicks! - so we were thrilled to open fully reconstructed basketball courts at Fort #4 Playground at Washington's Walk in the Bronx, made possible with support from Council and Mayoral funds. We also unveiled the newly reconstructed Grant Park, also in the Bronx, a \$17 million capital project made possible through the Jerome Avenue rezoning initiative, converting a former roadbed and unused lots into a 4.7-acre park with an open lawn area, basketball court, and other amenities.

Our cultural institutions, like our City's incredible botanical gardens, are for everyone, so we recently completed a \$4 million project to transform the pedestrian overpass over the Bronx River Parkway, connecting Bronx Park East residents to the New York Botanical Garden - one of the world's most distinguished botanical gardens and a New York cultural treasure.

Our city's waterways and shorelines are for everyone, and they are critical for the health and safety of New Yorkers and marine wildlife alike, so our Office of Marine Debris Disposal and Vessel Surrendering has been keeping our city waterways clear of marine hazards. We just announced the expansion of our marine vessel turn-in program, so we can take in vessels that owners can no longer care for, before they come derelict, building on the great progress we've already made, cleaning up over 120 derelict vessels clogging up our waterways.

Our public art is for everyone, so we unveiled the first new permanent commemorative public artwork in a New York City park in over 5 years, installed in Elizabeth H. Berger Plaza in Manhattan, to celebrate the literary



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legacy of New York's first Arabic-speaking community and shine a light on an often-forgotten facet of our city's diverse history.

Our urban forest is for everyone, and it serves as essential living infrastructure to keep our city cool and resilient, so we were proud to stand alongside the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and other partners to announce the City's first-ever Urban Forest Plan, a comprehensive roadmap to preserve our tree canopy, plant more trees and cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship. The Plan laid out the City's goal of achieving 30% tree canopy by 2040, so that every New Yorker can enjoy the vital benefits that trees provide – advancing environmental justice, mitigating heat impacts and improving our quality of life.

Our recreation centers are for everyone, so we have been extremely gratified to see how quickly the local community has embraced the newly-opened Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center in Brooklyn, where we have already enrolled over 11,000 new members. Later this year, we look forward to opening the brand-new Mary Cali Dalton Recreation Center in Staten Island, as well as reopening well-loved recreation centers after extensive and much-needed renovations, including Lost Battalion Hall in Queens, Owen Dolen Recreation Center and St. Mary's Recreation Center in the Bronx, and Sunset Park Recreation Center in Brooklyn.

Last but not least, our City's swimming beaches are for everyone. Though the weather was not quite what any of us had hoped for this Memorial Day Weekend, it was still a great start to the season, as we opened all of our public beaches for swimming. Our tireless maintenance and operations staff are out in full force, keeping our beaches and boardwalks clean, and our dedicated Parks Enforcement Patrol officers are keeping swimmers and beachgoers safe, as are our incredible beach lifeguards. We are pleased to report that over the weekend, the agency's active lifeguard corps currently stands at 370, a significant increase over this point in time last year. As we continue to train and certify additional new and returning lifeguards, our staffing levels will increase, typically reaching their peak around July 4th, after our outdoor pools have opened, and we hope to ultimately exceed last year's staffing peak of 1,082 lifeguards citywide.

We were especially thrilled to reopen the beautiful and historic Orchard Beach Pavilion to the public for first time since 2009. This \$114 million reconstruction project, advanced in partnership with the New York City Economic Development Corporation, restored the historic architecture of the landmarked building, provided greater ADA access, and revamped concession and community spaces enhancing the visitor experience. We are proud to have restored the Pavilion to its historic glory, with a level of investment that properly reflects this incredible beach's place in the hearts of Bronxites and all New Yorkers.

Turning to the specific topic for this hearing, the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget reflects the Administration's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility amid the ongoing economic and fiscal challenges facing the city while maintaining critical services for all New Yorkers and investing in a greener, healthier city. The operating budget for our agency in the FY27 Executive Budget is \$685.4 million dollars, a \$31.4 million dollar increase from the Preliminary Budget, reflecting the addition of significant new need expense funding, including \$15 million dollars in baseline funding for "one-shot funded" staff lines in our Natural Forest Management, Maintenance & Operations, and Ranger divisions – the first time in recent memory that this funding, typically provided one Fiscal Year at a time, has been Mayorally baselined before budget adoption. The FY27 Executive Plan also provides new funding for a continuation of our In-House Tree Planting Pilot Program, so we can continue exploring ways to more efficiently green our City and grow our tree canopy, as well as an expansion of our seasonal staffing plan, to support increased park usage during this summer's World Cup and Sail4th 250 festivities. Our agency's 10-Year Capital Plan is \$12.1 billion dollars, including over \$93 million dollars in new additional funding to complete necessary repairs on park bridges around the city, which will be managed by our sister agency partners at NYC DOT.

Though I am still new in my tenure leading this agency, I could not be prouder of the dedicated Parkies that give their all to make our park system the very best it can be, and I could not be more excited about this



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coming summer. I'll end my testimony with a short history lesson. In the Summer of 1936, ninety years ago, New York City held a series of opening ceremonies for eleven new gorgeous outdoor pools, funded and constructed by the WPA, or Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency that employed millions of Americans during the depths of the Great Depression, lifting families out of poverty while delivering sorely-needed public infrastructure projects to underserved neighborhoods. These eleven majestic pools are still beloved and enjoyed by local New Yorkers, but they also stand as a testament to what government can achieve when it marshals the political will and resources to deliver for its constituents – a level of commitment that our agency strives to honor and embody every single day. We're going to be celebrating this historic anniversary in some fun and unique ways as our outdoor pool season kicks off in late June, so please stay tuned for more details, as I hope you can all join us and enjoy some fun in the sun this summer. I want to thank the Council for its support in improving our parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers, and for the opportunity to testify today. We would now be happy to answer any questions that you may have.