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**Design Trust for Public Space Testifies To Support NYC's Urban Forest**

_NYC City Council holds hearing on new legislation increasing tree cover_

**New York, NY, —** Two bills were introduced today to strengthen the city’s commitment to tree canopy, a crucial tool for climate resilience. As a part of the Forest for All NYC coalition, the Design Trust testified in favor of an urban forest master plan.

Elana Ehrenberg, Senior Policy Manager at Design Trust for Public Space, submitted this written testimony to the Committee on Parks and Recreation:

I would like to thank the Committee on Parks and Recreation for hearing Int 1066-2023 and Int 1065-2023, regarding the urban forest and inviting this testimony. Advancing this important legislation to monitor, protect and grow the NYC tree canopy in an equitable way will improve the city’s sustainability which improves the quality of life for us all.

The Design Trust has been a member of the Forest for All NYC coalition since its inception. This coalition of over 90 organizations across business, nonprofit, conservation, and environmental justice sectors has been working to educate New Yorkers and its leaders about the importance of the urban forest. We’re encouraged to see these newly introduced bills are actions directly from the coalition’s Agenda. We understand that public spaces like parks, urban forests and open green areas are critical tools for the city’s response to the effects of climate change. There is a clear link between proximity to green space and overall community health, from cooling in extreme heat to cleaner air.

In New York City, an individual living in the South Bronx has a life expectancy of 69.5 years, while a resident of the Upper East Side has a life expectancy of 89.5 years, 20 years longer. 80% of health outcomes depend on our physical and social environment—the world and people around us shape our well-being. Our Restorative City initiative was dedicated to exploring how public space and the built environment can be used as a tool to advance health equity, a concept which means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Where we live matters, equal access to green space, transportation, adequate housing, and other basic resources can drastically change the quality and longevity of our lives.

We are in support of Int 1066-2023 which would require the Office of Long-term Planning and Sustainability to consider the role of trees, tree canopy, and vegetation in its response to climate change, the most pervasive and persistent public health crisis across the globe. Our urban forests and tree canopy are a key tool for understanding and addressing climate vulnerability across the five boroughs.
We are also in support of Int 1065-2023 which would require the City to create an Urban Forest Master Plan, aimed at protecting and increasing the City’s urban forest to 30% canopy cover. However we believe requiring a clear timeline and allocating funding to support the Department of Parks and Recreation in this important endeavor is crucial to its success. The plan should explicitly address environmental justice, climate change, health equity, access, and the full life cycle of trees in our city.

Passing these bills are good for the urban forest, good for New Yorkers’ health and well-being, and essential to meeting Mayor Adam’s recently announced PlaNYC 30% canopy goal citywide. This and the long overdue consideration of trees in the City’s long-term planning will help promote equitable health outcomes in every neighborhood.

We thank the City Council for their leadership on this issue and thank you for your time and consideration today.”

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**About the Design Trust for Public Space**

The Design Trust for Public Space is a non-profit organization that unlocks the potential of New York’s public spaces. Our unique model catalyzes design ideas into action for a more just and equitable city. In our 28-year history, we’ve taken on over 40 projects across all five boroughs with project partners including city agencies, community groups, and private sector experts, inspiring replicable models for urban issues and advancing the role of public space as a driver of long-term equity and social justice globally.