

FY 2028 Borough Budget Consultations

Manhattan – Department of Parks and Recreation

Meeting Date: October 7, 2026

AGENDA ITEM [1]: Impact of Measures to Close Budget Gaps and Threatened Funding Cuts on the Budget For FY 2028 and Beyond

Mayor Mamdani's Administration took office while facing a reported \$5.4 Billion budget gap for Fiscal Years 2026 and projected FY 2027. While the current Fiscal Year budget gap is reported to have been closed, the Mayor's Administration continues to prioritize finding savings and efficiencies in a variety of agency operations and is convening a charter revision commission to expedite certain efforts to secure and implement those savings and efficiencies.

There are potential severe cuts to or elimination of funding and other resources from the federal government for a host of programs and initiatives. These are exacerbated by actual or virtual elimination of certain federal agencies that supported services for the most underserved.

With these developments in mind, please answer the following questions:

1. Has the funding for any programs or initiatives at your Agency allocated for FY 2026 or projected FY 2027 been cut or reduced as a result of the efforts to close City Budget gaps in FY 2026, FY 2027 or projected FY 2028? **No**
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please identify the program or initiative, and
 - ii. Please provide an estimate of the amount of the funding cut or reduction in both absolute and percentage amounts.
2. Has the funding for any programs or initiatives at your Agency allocated for FY 2026 or projected FY 2027 been cut or reduced as a result of actual or threatened cuts to or reductions in funding or subsidies directly or indirectly attributable to the federal government for FY 2026, FY 2027 or projected FY 2028? **No**
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please identify the program or initiative, and
 - ii. Please provide an estimate of the amount of the funding cut or reduction in both absolute and percentage amounts.
3. Has any State or federal funding streams previously earmarked or allocated for programs or initiatives at your Agency been redirected or re-allocated to other uses in order to:
 - a. Close the City Budget Gap for FY 2026, FY 2027 or projected FY 2028? **No**
 - i. If yes, please provide an estimate of the funding cut or reduction in both absolute and percentage amounts.

- b.** Prepare for or respond to actual or threatened cuts to or reductions in funding or subsidies directly or indirectly attributable to the federal government for FY 2026, FY 2027 or projected FY 2028? **No**
 - i. If yes, please provide an estimate of the funding cut or reduction in both absolute and percentage amounts.
- 4. Have any programs or initiatives, including scheduled or planned expansions of existing programs or initiatives, at your Agency been frozen, postponed, suspended or abandoned as a result, directly or indirectly, of measures taken to address either the City Budget Gap or the threats to cut or reduce federal funding in FY 2026, FY 2027 or projected FY 2028? **No**
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Please identify such programs or initiatives, and
 - ii. Please provide an estimate of the funding needed to restore or continue those programs and initiatives as planned.
- 5. What other measures is your Agency taking in connection with:
 - a. The calls for greater efficiency in City government operations, or
 - b. Actual or threatened cuts to or elimination of federal funding?
- 6. What is the current level of vacancies for positions in your agency? **We currently have a 3% vacancy rate.**

AGENCY RESPONSE:

We are always looking at our operations and seeing how we can be more efficient.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [2]: 1% FOR PARKS INITIATIVE

NYC Parks' direct agency budget remains far below the long-standing 1% for Parks goal. Last year, parks represented approximately 0.55% of the city budget. Although the FY27 adopted budget restored funding for Parks Enforcement Patrol, GreenThumb, and stump removal, Parks remains at roughly 0.56% of the city budget and is projected to fall to about 0.51% in FY28. How will the administration baseline additional park funding in the outyears to move closer to the 1% target, particularly for maintenance, staffing, forestry, PEP, GreenThumb, stump removal, and capital projects?

What additional amount would Parks need to receive to reach 1% of the city budget?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

This is a subject of ongoing discussions. Funding for various staff (73 M&O staff, 100 PEP officers, 50 Park Rangers, 15 GreenThumb staff and 32 Forestry staff) previously provided by the Council one year at a time was not simply restored in the FY 27 Adopted Budget. This funding was baselined so these positions would no longer be left up in the air waiting for the necessary funds to be added to the budget at the last minute.

\$549,491,996

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [3]: COMMUNITY PARKS INITIATIVE

What are the FY27 and projected FY28 budgets for the Community Parks Initiative (CPI), including the Manhattan allocation, compared to prior-year allocations, including the previously reported \$2.253M allocation, \$20.8M in FY25, and \$27.275M in FY26 for Manhattan CPI projects?

Please provide an updated status in writing for all Manhattan CPI projects previously reported, including:

- Percy Sutton Playground (CB 10) – Substantially completed
- Frederick Johnson Playground public restroom building (CB 10) -- Completed
- McCray Playground (CB 10) -- Completed
- Anibal Aviles Playground (CB 7) -- Completed
- Detective Omar Edwards Park (CB 11) -- Completed
- St. Nicholas Playground South (CB 10) – Design - \$5.913M
- Renaissance Playground (CB 10) Design - \$4.691M

Please also provide updates in writing on CPI projects newly reported or added since last year, including:

- Holcombe Rucker Park Playground (CB 10) – Post-Design - \$9.12M
- Peter Minuit Playground (CB 11) – Design - \$6.39M
- Nathan Straus Playground (CB 3) – Design - \$7.505M
- East River Playground (CB 11) – Post-Design - \$8.412M
- McKenna Square (CB 12) – Pre-Design -- \$19.417M
- Vladeck Park (CB 3) – Pre-Design

- St. Nicholas Park 133rd Street Playground (CB 9) – Pre-Design - \$15.3M
+++
- Dr. Ronald E. McNair Playground (CB 11) – Design - \$8M
- Harlem Art Park (CB 11) – Design - \$4.5M
- ABC Playground (CB 3) – Post-Design - \$6.058M

Has the following been considered for CPI funding:

- Petrosino Square (CB 2) -- No

For each project, please indicate the current phase, anticipated construction start date, projected completion date, total project cost, FY27/FY28 funding amount, and whether all necessary funding has been secured.

Please also indicate whether any additional CPI sites are planned for Manhattan in FY28, and whether any existing CPI projects face funding gaps, delays, scope changes, or pending interagency approvals.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

There is \$11.399M in FY27 in new funding for all of the CPI projects citywide, including \$2.779M for Manhattan.

All necessary funding for these projects has been secured.

It is expected that additional CPI sites will be selected in FY 27 and FY 28.

The Holcombe Rucker Park Playground and St. Nicholas Playground South projects are being delayed until after new public restroom buildings are built in those parks. The scope of the McKenna Square project is being changed; the street work in St. Nicholas Avenue will now be undertaken by DOT.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [4]: RESTROOMS

1. Restoration and renovation of restrooms in parks is a borough-wide priority for community boards. What are the FY27 and projected FY28 budgets for the restoration and renovation of such facilities?
2. Please provide a list of new restrooms planned and funded in Manhattan by district, and the cost associated with each one.
3. Which Manhattan parks require restrooms or restroom renovations that are not yet funded?
4. What is the average cost to add a restroom to a Manhattan park? To renovate an existing restroom? How is Parks working to reduce these costs?
5. Has Parks considered adding high-quality modular/portable restrooms to parks on a permanent basis?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

1. Currently NYC Parks is pursuing new Public Restroom Buildings throughout the city, with very few reconstructions of existing PRBs due to many regulatory constraints and the cost/benefit of reconstructing these existing buildings. For a new PRB in FY27/28, the standard cost is approximately \$5M. This number varies if we need to demolish an existing building, there is extensive site work, or the project has extremely long utility line runs.
2. We are still working on confirming all the sites for FY27/28.
3. Coleman Oval, DeWitt Clinton Park, Chelsea Park, Carl Schurz Park, Riverside Park South, Matthew Sapolin Playground, Happy Warrior Playground, Alexander Hamilton Playground, Poor Richard's Playground, Jackie Robinson Park, St. Nicholas Park – Arlington Edinboro Playground, Fred Samuel Playground, Fort Washington Park, Inwood Hill Park – Payson Playground.
4. As noted above, the average cost of a new restroom building is approximately \$5M and varies depending on site conditions and utility connections. We are currently very selective in which PRBs we are able to reconstruct, and many of our existing PRBs need to be demolished and new ones built in their place. We are always looking at many ways to reduce the costs and to deliver them efficiently. We are looking into bundling multiple PRBs and delivering them through alternative methods such as Design Build. We are also looking to streamline the number and type of materials used in the PRBs to limit the amount of trades required and expensive custom materials, and we are working to combine PRBs with other site work to share efficiencies with adjacent projects. We are also working to build modular buildings to afford cost efficiencies of scale.
5. If this is referencing the pilot program now being implemented by DOT at 17 locations throughout the city, Parks is not currently considering them. The pilot needs to be conducted to see how these restrooms work out. Note: these types of restrooms are not designed to be permanent.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [5]: STAFFING; HIRING FREEZE

1. Please provide an update on the status of the hiring freeze from previous fiscal years.
2. What are the full-time, part-time, and seasonal general workers, apprentices, plumbers, gardeners, skilled trades, forestry, and staffing numbers for FY26 and projected FY28 budgets for Manhattan, by district?
3. Please provide details of staffing needs by community (or parks) district, and indicate the vacancies projected for FY 27 and FY 28. What is the staffing need by district?
4. Has the forestry budget changed for staffing? Is this the same as arborists?
5. What is the turnaround time for responses to complaints about dangerous tree safety?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

1. The hiring freeze has been lifted, and we are able to hire up to our budgeted headcount.
2. See attached chart for current FY 27 staff numbers by district. We do not have information on the projected FY 28 budget at this point.
3. We do not have details of staffing needs by district, nor can we project future vacancies. In general, we can use M&O staff and gardeners.
4. There have been no changes to the forestry budget for staffing in the last fiscal year. "Arborist" is not a title, but many of our staff hold the "Certified Arborist" credential through the International Society of Arboriculture. These titles include Foresters, who inspect trees, manage contracts, and issue permits; and Climber & Pruners, who perform tree pruning and removal work.
5. Parks prioritizes tree work based on a technical tree risk assessment process. During inspections, we assess the risk posed by a tree's condition, determine whether work is necessary and assign a priority ranking:
Category A (Extreme Risk) - addressed within 7 days of inspection
Category B (High Risk) - addressed within 28 days of inspection
Category C (Moderate Risk) - addressed when resources allow
Category D (Low Risk) - addressed when resources allow

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [6]: WI-FI IN PARKS

What funding is needed in FY 28 to bring WiFi to all Manhattan Parks sites, and has the Parks Department found any new partnerships to fund this expansion?

Are you depending entirely on private partnerships, and what programs or initiatives are planned or in place to create new partnerships?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

We have Wi-Fi available to the public at 39 parks and recreation centers in Manhattan. It's not possible to estimate the cost of providing Wi-Fi at all Manhattan parks because each park is different, and different ways would have to be figured out to bring coverage to each one. Installation methods and network speed/ consistency would vary, along with costs. We have not found any new partnerships to fund an expansion.

Yes, we are depending upon private partnerships to expand our Wi-Fi program. We're exploring this with fresh eyes amidst renewed interest from the private sector, so maybe next year we'll have something more to report.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [7]: PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATES AND CAMP STAFF

1. What are the FY27 and projected FY28 budgets for playground associates and camp staff?
2. What is the source of this funding?
3. How many associates and camp staff will this fund, and at which Manhattan locations?
4. How is funding allocated to rec center staff?
5. How many Manhattan playgrounds could still benefit from having an associate?
6. Last year, you expressed difficulty finding qualified associates—do you have an update on practices and the success of identifying qualified candidates?
7. Please provide a list of playgrounds that had playground associates in calendar 2026 (FY 2027) and are projected to have them in calendar 2027 (FY 2028). How many playgrounds meet the criteria for an associate but lack them?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

1. Approximately \$350,000 has been allotted to support various Playground Associates and other seasonal staff related to Kids in Motion and Summer Camp programs in Manhattan. We expect that FY 27 funding will support comparable seasonal staffing levels, but the budget has not been determined.
2. Our seasonal staffing plan is funded by the Mayor, sometimes with additional funding provided by Council Members. In FY27 one Council Member funded a Playground Associate.
3. For FY27 there were 15 Playground Associates at Kids in Motion sites and 25 Summer Camp staff.

The following sites have been assigned Playground Associates this year:

Anne Loftus Playground
Bloomingdale Playground
Anibal Aviles Playground
Columbus Park
Gertrude Ederle Playground
Mathews-Palmer Playground
Seward Park
Sol Lain Playground
Tompkins Square Park

Samuel Seabury Playground
Carl Schurz Park
Carmansville Playground
Poor Richard's Playground
Matthew Sapolin Playground
Cherry Tree Playground

Summer camps were held at the following recreation centers:

Alfred E. Smith Recreation Center
Chelsea Recreation Center
Constance Baker Motley Recreation Center
J. Hood Wright Recreation Center

4. Funding is allocated for recreation center staff based on the agency-wide staffing levels. To the best of our ability, we assign staff based on the usage levels for each center and hours of operation. Manhattan Recreation currently has about 110 staff total, including administrative staff, to run 11 sites.
5. In an ideal world, we would like to have a PA working at every playground with a public restroom building, organizing recreational activities for children and helping to maintain the playground. We have approximately 65 playgrounds with public restrooms that possibly would be eligible for a seasonal PA.
6. The FY27 hiring season was not as much of a challenge. We conducted increased outreach and attended more job fairs than in the past, which yielded good results. Though we did better this year, the job market continues to be very competitive. With so many options in the private sector, we find it hard to get and keep the quality and quantity of applicants we need.
7. See answers to #3 and #5.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [8]: LIFEGUARDS

1. Please provide an update on the Lifeguard program. Please include the current pay scale for lifeguards and the amount by which that pay has increased in recent years. What is the projected pay scale for lifeguards for FY 2028 (Summer 2027)?
2. How have staffing numbers changed in recent years? To what extent does Parks believe this change to be attributable to changes in pay?
3. Are further pay increases for lifeguards in FY 2028 (Summer 2027) necessary to meet hiring goals?
4. Please provide a breakdown of lifeguards on staff in Manhattan during FY 2027 (Summer 2026) and the projection for FY 2028 (Summer 2027) by district.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

1. New Lifeguards are paid \$22/hour. Pay is based on years of service, with bonuses provided to returning lifeguards. At this point we assume the pay scale will remain the same in FY 28.
2. The staffing numbers have been steadily increasing, undoubtedly due at least in part to the increased pay.

Season	Beaches	Pools	Total
2023	420	405	825
2024	409	521	930
2025	443	639	1082
2026	479	680	1174

3. Pay increases are negotiated through collective bargaining.
4. These are the numbers for last summer:

Pool	Returning & YR* Recertified	New Certified	Totals
Asser Levy	16	2	18
Dry Dock	7	1	8
Gottesman	15	7	22
Hamilton Fish	17	3	20
Highbridge	13	8	21
Jackie Robinson	10	5	15
John Jay	9	6	15
Marcus Garvey	8	5	13
Sheltering Arms	8	0	8

Thomas Jefferson	8	4	12
Wagner	9	1	10
Abe Lincoln	4	1	5
Frederick Douglass	8	3	11
Tompkins Square	9	2	11
Vesuvio	1	2	3
*Year Round	142	50	192

It is too soon to have projections for next summer.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [9]: PEP OFFICERS

What are the FY 27 and projected FY 28 budget and staffing levels for PEP officers in Manhattan?

Please distinguish between PEP officers funded through the city budget vs. those privately funded through grants or other sources, such as park conservancies and “friends-of” groups.

How many teams and shifts are deployed in FY 27 and projected for FY 28 at the current funding levels?

What funding is needed to ensure sufficient PEP coverage for *all* Manhattan parks?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [10]: CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

1. Are there capital equipment needs that would improve quality of service or efficiency?
Please provide a breakdown for Manhattan, including estimated costs and the location(s) to be served.
2. What additional funding would be needed for such equipment?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

Our capital equipment needs are covered by the existing budget. There is a cap on the number of vehicles that are assigned to the borough, so that each time a new vehicle is obtained, another one is salvaged. For instance, in cases when an elected official might allocate funding for a packer (garbage truck), one is removed from our inventory when a new one is purchased. Given a choice, therefore, we would generally prefer that funding be allocated for other purposes.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [11]: CAPITAL PROJECTS AND RENOVATIONS

Please provide a list by Community District of Capital Projects in Manhattan Parks for FY 27 and projected FY 28, and please include

- The Community District(s) in which such capital projects are located.
- In what phase is each project (e.g., design, bidding, active construction)?
- The cost for each project in FY 27 and projected FY 28, and the estimated total cost of each project.

The source of funding for each project, to the extent it is funded by grants, elected official allocations, conservancy or partner allocations, or other non-city sources.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

See attached spreadsheets

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [12]: Urban Forest Plan

What funding is allocated and what funding is needed to achieve the 30% urban tree canopy coverage for the city outline in the Urban Forest Plan.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

NYC Parks is just one of many stakeholders across the city working to achieve the 30% canopy goal. In addition, NYC Parks only has jurisdiction over about half of the existing tree canopy.

NYC Parks' forestry budget has not changed since the plan was released and the agency continues to assess and seek funding for maintenance of existing trees. In addition, as outlined in the Urban Forest Plan, NYC Parks will assess the resources (staffing, equipment, facilities) needed to effectively manage the proposed expansion of tree canopy under its jurisdiction.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS:

AGENDA ITEM [13]: Maintenance and Beautification Contractor

How does Parks utilize contractors for maintenance and beautification? How has the budget for contractors changed in recent years?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

We don't utilize contractors for this work – we use our own staff. Some of our partner organizations, such as conservancies, employ contractors.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

AGENDA ITEM [14]: Wish List

For community board advocacy, we need to know which important programs or projects are most in need of funding. If your agency were given a large amount of money, to which staffing need, program, or capital project would you assign it?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

NYC Parks is committed to delivering on its mission to plan, build and care for vibrant parks for all New Yorkers with whatever resources are provided. However, this Administration very clearly recognizes the importance of parks and open space, and the current FY 2027 Adopted Budget provides us with our highest operating funding levels in recent memory, and a capital budget of over \$12 billion. Since the agency's operational purview is vast and varied, ranging from playgrounds and ballfields to recreation centers and waterfronts, it can be difficult to identify a single funding priority. Were the agency to receive a large increase in expense funding, the agency would seek to build upon its operational and programming priorities – maintenance staff, recreation specialists, Parks Enforcement Patrol officers, community outreach coordinators, etc. The agency similarly targets capital investment towards properties most in need (e.g. Community Parks Initiative projects), but there is no shortage of parks in need of renovation. Were a large amount of new capital funding to be made available, which we could allocate at our discretion, potential priorities with high-cost needs could include the construction or renovation of public restroom buildings, the reconstruction of the East River Esplanade, the Marcus Garvey Park Acropolis, the St. Nicholas Park staircase at W. 134th Street, Amelia Gorman Park, Union Square Park, City Hall Park) and Foley Square.

MEETING NOTES:

NEW INFORMATION:

FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS: