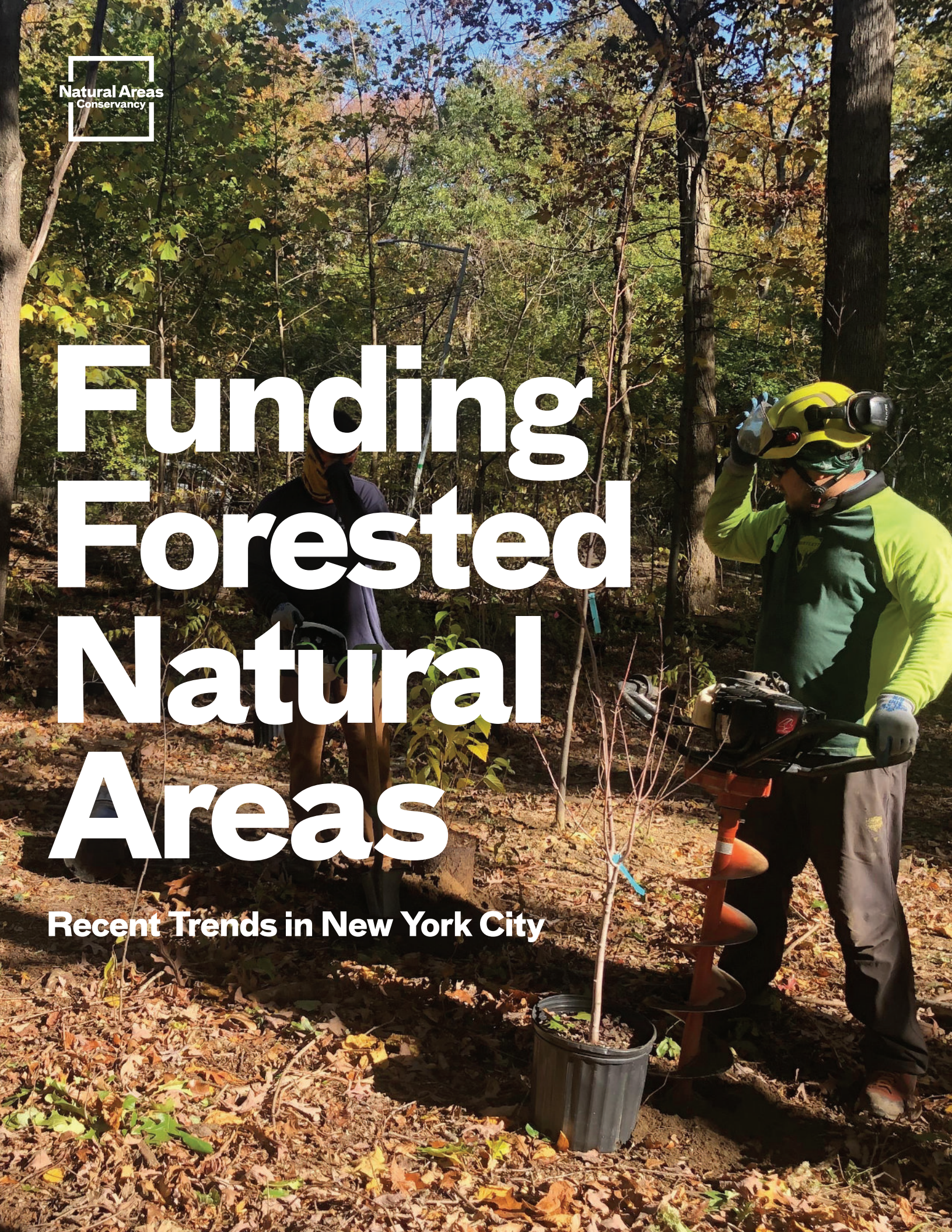




# Funding Forested Natural Areas

Recent Trends in New York City





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[www.naturalareasnyc.org](http://www.naturalareasnyc.org)

## COVER

Forest restoration work in Forest Park, Queens, New York

## BACK COVER

Mature oak forest, Cunningham Park, Queens, New York

The Natural Areas Conservancy champions urban natural areas in New York City and across the nation through innovative research, partnerships, and advocacy. We increase the health and resilience of urban forests and wetlands, catalyze connections between people and nature, and strengthen the environmental workforce.

Created in 2012, the Natural Areas Conservancy is a non-profit organization devoted to restoring and conserving New York City's 20,000 acres of forests and wetlands in close partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. In 2018, the Natural Areas Conservancy released NYC's first ever *Forest Management Framework for New York City*. Informed by extensive research, the framework is a 25-year roadmap for the management of NYC's forested natural areas.

# Executive Summary

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New York City's municipal forests, a resource valued by millions of people, are at risk due insufficient funding and unreliable City budget allocations. In 2018, the New York City Parks Department (NYC Parks) and the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) adopted the Forest Management Framework for New York City (Framework), a financial plan to invest in and care for New York City's 7,300 acres of forests. This groundbreaking, data-driven plan requires an investment of \$385 million over 25 years, but its implementation is in jeopardy without reliable, long-term funding to support the strategic management that our forests need.

Historically, NYC Parks has received an inadequate portion of the New York City budget relative to the size of the property the department manages. NYC Parks is responsible for the care of more properties than any other city agency, totaling 14% of New York City's land area, and yet surveys conducted for this study show that the department receives less than 0.6% of the city's expense budget. Insufficient funding for parks has resulted in limited maintenance of facilities, playgrounds, and recreation centers; reduced programming; and personnel shortages that make it challenging for NYC Parks to keep our parks healthy, clean, and accessible for all New Yorkers.

As a consequence of this underfunding for NYC Parks, and despite the resourcefulness and incredibly hard work of NYC Parks staff, individual divisions and programs within the agency are unable to productively conduct their work. In this report we document the pattern of funding for forested natural areas: parkland where the ecosystem is managed for the plants, animals, microorganisms, and people who rely on its services and which makes up 24% of the city's parkland portfolio. Our findings were stark. Forested natural areas receive an annual average of only 0.7% of the NYC Parks expense budget and 0.84% of staff resources to manage. Spread across NYC Parks's 7,300 forested acres, this averages to 0.0042% of the city budget or \$548 spent per acre annually, with the equivalent of one NYC Parks staff member for every 218.5 acres of forest.

Fortunately, nonprofit park conservancies embraced a model of public-private partnership to support the care and programming of public parks decades ago. As we've documented here, six nonprofit organizations raise private funds that account for 18% of all resources spent on forest care in New York City. While this approach is admirable, our city deserves public investment in our forests in proportion to the public benefits they provide.

Our forests offer economic, ecological, recreational, and health benefits to visitors and residents of the city. Our forests cool neighborhoods, reduce air pollution, capture stormwater, and serve as places to recreate and observe nature. With adequate funding for management, our forests will grow, be healthier, and provide greater benefits to New Yorkers.

New York City's forests require greater and more reliable resources so that long term planning, hiring, and management can be conducted strategically. If the pattern of investment that we've seen during the period of this study continues over the next twenty-five years, we may see an investment in the care of forested natural areas that could range from \$190 million to \$360 million, which will result in a funding shortfall of \$195 million to \$25 million. A failure to provide stable, multiyear funding for the care of forested natural areas will diminish the capacity of these 7,300 acres to help the city address tremendous threats from climate change including extreme heat and increased storms and flooding. It also represents a missed opportunity to advance park equity by improving the quality of and access to a quarter of the City's park system. And it would likely contribute to an irreversible loss of local biodiversity.

This report analyzes the recent trends in funding and resources for New York City's forested natural area care and the implications for successful future management. We also identify opportunities to better align needs and resources for forest management.

# Introduction

New York City's forested natural areas provide numerous economic and societal benefits to the city, including carbon storage, stormwater capture, cooling, increased property values and property tax revenue, tourism spending, and health care savings (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> However, despite their value, these forests are perhaps the most underfunded pieces of public infrastructure in New York City.

24% of New York City's parklands are forested natural areas (Figure 2). This type of parkland is found in all five boroughs and is more than just trees. Our forested natural areas are complex ecosystems dominated by large mature trees and younger saplings, but they also include multiple layers and stages of plant life: shrubs, vines, wildflowers, grasses, mosses, and ferns. The forests support a teeming soil full of fungi, bacteria, and microorganisms, and diverse wildlife from insects to birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. These are places where New Yorkers care for and manage nature and are in turn nurtured and supported.<sup>2</sup>

In 2018, the Natural Areas Conservancy and the New York City Parks Department released the Forest Management Framework for New York City, a twenty-five-year roadmap to invest in and care for the city's 7,300 acres of forests. This is the first comprehensive plan for the management of NYC Parks's forested natural areas.<sup>3</sup> Informed by extensive research, the Framework's robust metrics allow New York City to enhance biodiversity, adapt its forests to climate change, and expand its trails system. The Framework includes a financial strategy to achieve these management goals, with a total cost of \$385 million.

Since the Framework's release, NYC Parks has struggled to secure adequate multiyear funding to realize the plan. The first year of funding to implement the Framework was allocated through successful advocacy, notably by the Play Fair Coalition led by New Yorkers for Parks during fiscal year 2020.<sup>4</sup> However, due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for NYC Parks was reduced in fiscal year 2021, including wholesale cuts to NYC Parks forest management staff, leaving a

FIGURE 1

## New York City's Forested Natural Areas

New York City's five boroughs contain over 10,000 acres of forested natural areas, with 73% under NYC Parks's jurisdiction. These publicly accessible forests are places where New Yorkers and visitors enjoy walking on woodland trails together, observing abundant nature, and finding a healthy respite in our densely populated city.





skeleton staff and completely stalling these efforts. Despite the lack of long-term capital and expense funds from the City budget, there is a patchwork of other funding from sources that support the restoration and management of forested natural areas. More than a dozen nonprofit park conservancies are currently investing privately raised funds and the labor of conservancy staff to the management of New York City’s urban forest.

In addition to the lack of funding and the need to increase support, we recognized that we needed better understanding of the magnitude and details around current resource allocation for forested natural areas.

In the autumn of 2021, NAC developed and implemented a study to gather data on the most recent (fiscal year 2017–fiscal year 2020) funding and resources allocated for forested natural areas care in New York City. NAC developed a questionnaire for NYC Parks Division of Forestry, Horticulture, and Natural Resources (FHNR, now NYC Parks Environment & Planning) and a separate survey for local nonprofit organizations that work in NYC Parks with forested natural areas (Table 1). Full data for the years 2017 through 2020 was collected from all participants with NYC Parks providing supplemental budget data for fiscal years 2021 and 2022.

This report provides analysis of the recent trends in funding and resourcing for forested natural area care in New York City and the implications for successful future management.

**TABLE 1**  
**Park Conservancies that Participated in the 2021 NAC Survey**

Among the park conservancies contacted, the six listed here were able to provide full or partial data used in this analysis. The survey format and definitions used in the study are in the APPENDIX. Data for the Natural Areas Conservancy and New York Restoration Project are not included in this analysis.

Conservancy	Borough	Forested Acres
Greenbelt Conservancy	Staten Island	1,200
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance	Bronx	648
Forest & Highland Parks Trust	Queens	362
Prospect Park Alliance	Brooklyn	207
Riverside Park Conservancy	Manhattan	14
Central Park Conservancy	Manhattan	72
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>		<b>2,503</b>

**FIGURE 2**  
**Forested Natural Areas Make Up 24% of the Acreage of All NYC Park Property**



Source: Natural Areas Conservancy Ecological Coverture Map, 2014.



# Key Findings

## Overall Spending

Analysis of the four-year period from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2020 demonstrates the annual variability in funding for forested natural areas as well as the complex patchwork of funding sources that support this work. Across all sources and types of public and private funding, we found that an average of \$10.1 million was spent annually to care for 7,300 acres of forested natural areas in New York City (Figure 3). During this four-year period, the majority (70%) of these funds came from the NYC Parks budget, however these funds were primarily allocated as one-year expense funding, which led to a staccato approach to hiring and retaining staff, and to planning multiyear projects. The remainder of funding was contributed by nonprofit conservancies (18%) and other sources (12%), including discretionary funding from the New York City Council and New York City Borough Presidents, mitigation funds, and government grants. During this period, NYC Parks was provided on average \$7.1 million annually from the New York City budget.

## Less than 1% of the NYC Parks’s Expense Budget is Spent on Caring for Forests

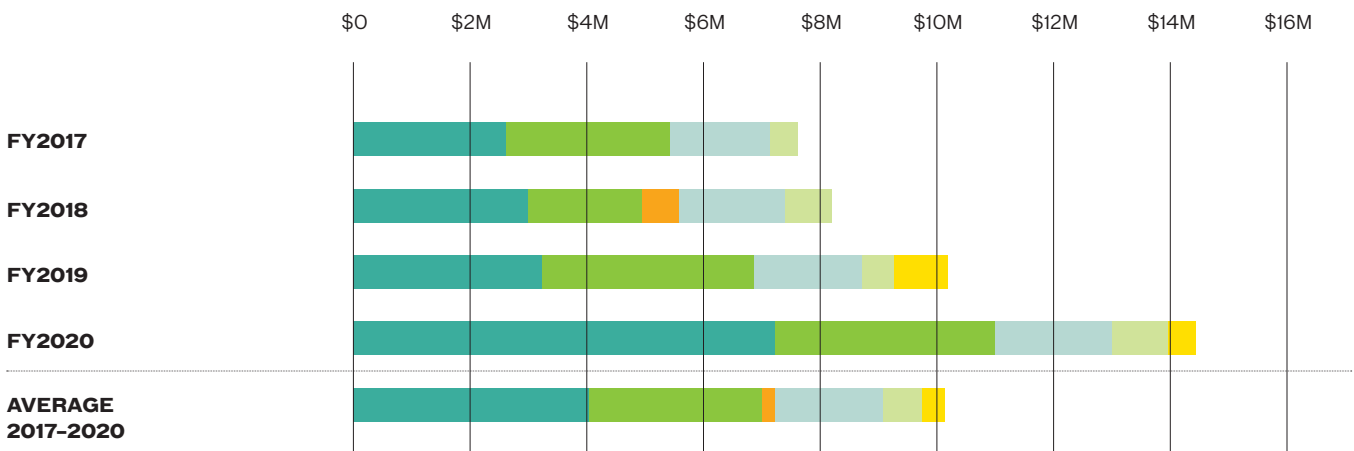
It has been well documented that NYC Parks is underfunded. Since the 1970s, NYC Parks’s expense budget provided by the City of New York has stayed around 0.6% of the total City budget.<sup>5</sup> Expense budgets fund the maintenance workers, gardeners, managers, scientists, rangers, and recreation workers (personnel) and the supplies, equipment, and materials needed to conduct work and programming in parks. During our study period of fiscal years 2017–2020, the average NYC Parks agency’s expense budget was less than 0.6% of the total municipal expense budget. Forested natural areas make up 24% of municipal parkland, totaling 7,300 acres. Yet, only 0.7% of NYC Parks’s expense budget went toward maintaining these lands (Figure 4). Over this period, expense funds ranged from \$2.7 million to \$7.3 million, and the average expense funding for forest care was \$4 million. However, it is notable that fiscal year 2020 (when the

FIGURE 3

### Allocated Funds for Forest Care in NYC Parks

Summary of all public and private annual funding sources for NYC forest care during fiscal years 2017–2020

■ NYC Parks Expense Funds 
 ■ NYC Parks Capital Funds 
 ■ NYS Government Grants 
 ■ Non-Profit Conservancies 
 ■ Resitution and Mitigation Funds 
 ■ City Council Member and Borough President Discretionary Funds





expense funding was \$7.3 million) included a one-time, \$4 million boost from the New York City Council to support the first year of the Forest Management Framework. Without this one-time increase, the average expense fund budget for forested natural area care was around \$3 million (Figure 3 and Table 2).

Additional information from NYC Parks for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 (Table 2), shows the unpredictable nature of city funding for forest care. In fiscal years 2021 and 2022 there was zero capital funding for forest care. For fiscal year 2021, expense funding dropped by more than 50% to \$3.4 million and then happily rose to \$10.1 million in fiscal year 2022. By examining these data with the additional two years of information included, we see an increase in the average of overall funding for forested natural areas care from all sources combined but a decrease in the proportion provided from the city budget from the previous 2017-2020 average of 85% down to a new average of 63%.

On average from 2017 to 2022, the New York City budget provided 63% of the financial resources for forested natural areas care by NYC Parks. This includes capital funding, which supports capital infrastructure improvements in parks. The portion of capital funds that relate to forested natural area care include planting and restoration funding for multiyear projects performed by contractors. In addition to capital and expense budget funding, NYC Parks FHNR has historically received discretionary funding from the New York City Council and Borough Presidents, been provided with funds as mitigation from damages to parkland and mitigation from tree removal, and been awarded government grants (See the APPENDIX for further definition of these terms).

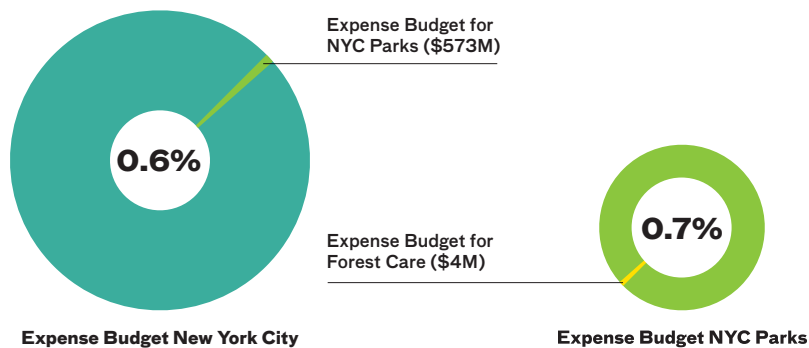
Public funding sources beyond City budget funds for the last six years (fiscal years 2017-2022) are detailed in Table 2. While these sources are valuable and FHNR was successful in applying for and receiving eligible funding for forest

**TABLE 2**  
**NYC Parks Public Funding Sources for Forest Care 2017–2022** ( Dollars in Millions )

Funding Sources	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Average	Average Percent of Funding
NYC Parks Expense Funds	\$2.7	\$3.0	\$3.3	\$7.3	\$3.4	\$10.1	<b>\$5.0</b>	<b>45%</b>
NYC Parks Capital Funds	\$2.8	\$2.0	\$3.6	\$3.7	\$0	\$0	<b>\$2.0</b>	<b>18%</b>
NY State Government Grants	\$0	\$0.68	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	<b>\$0.11</b>	<b>1%</b>
Mitigation Funds	\$0.43	\$0.85	\$0.58	\$0.99	\$7.4	\$11.3	<b>\$3.6</b>	<b>33%</b>
City Council Member & Borough President Discretionary Funding	\$0	\$0	\$0.98	\$0.46	\$0	\$0.46	<b>\$0.32</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5.9</b>	<b>\$6.5</b>	<b>\$8.4</b>	<b>\$12.5</b>	<b>\$10.8</b>	<b>\$22</b>	<b>\$11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**FIGURE 4**  
**NYC Expense Budget for Forest Care**

We graphically show the relationship among the average New York City expense budget, the NYC Parks budget, and the NYC Parks budget spent on forested natural areas in the years 2017–2020. Care for NYC Parks’ natural area forested parkland received only 0.0042% of the NYC budget. NYC Parks is responsible for the maintenance and management of 14% of NYC’s land including 7,300 acres of forests.





management, stewardship, and research for forests (exclusively from New York State grants), these funding sources are unpredictable and cannot be relied upon for use in supporting staff and longer-term initiatives, such as the Framework. During the study period mitigation funds rose from an average 9% of the total funds used in forest care in 2017-2020 to 33% when data from 2021 and 2022 are included. Funding from mitigation rose by an order of magnitude from an average less than a million to an average of \$3.6 million, the second greatest funding source for forest care, ahead even of capital funding. This cannot be considered a win for forest care. These funds originate from damages assessed from negative impacts to forested parkland and amount to minimal net improvements of forest conditions.

In addition to public funds managed by NYC Parks, many city parks are supported by significant funds from nonprofit park conservancies. In total, the conservancies with data provided an average additional 18% of funds used to care for the 2,489 acres of forests they manage during fiscal years 2017–2020 (Table 1 and Figure 3).

## Parks Staffing

In line with budget funds, staffing for NYC Parks has ebbed and flowed with the economic fortunes of the city. During our study period, the average number of full-time equivalent staff of all the NYC Parks agency was 3,958; the average number of personnel working in forested natural area care was 33 (Table 3). Forested natural areas make up 24% of NYC Parks parkland but receive less than 1% of the staff resources (0.84%). This averages out to one NYC Parks staff per 221 acres of forest to manage, restore,

and maintain. Imagine if all of Central Park was forested; there would be only four people working there.

The number of staff positions assigned seasonally to forest care is also quite low: an average of 14 seasonal staff, making up only 0.45% of the total seasonal hours allocated to all of NYC Parks.

As New York City develops programs to increase green jobs, maintaining staffing lines in NYC Parks is key in supporting this workforce. The best way to ensure that there are green jobs for trainees as well as efficiently implementing the Framework is to make temporary positions permanent (“baselined”) and increase the NYC Parks’s expense (personnel) budget.

## Conservancy Staffing and Volunteer Stewardship

Nonprofit conservancies provide a significant increase in staff for forested natural area care for the parks that they support. Six nonprofit groups provide an average equivalent of 39 staff annually for forest care, more than doubling the number of personnel hours worked in forests (54% of the total) (Table 3).

Conservancy efforts have also been very strong in providing volunteer stewardship in forested natural area care. Among the six organizations, the conservancies provided an additional 2.3 times the number of volunteers in the same period as NYC Parks alone for forest care activities.

**TABLE 3**  
**Public and Private Funding for Forest Care Staff**  
**Compared to All Other NYC Parks’s Staffing (2017–2020)**

Staffing (Fulltime Equivalent)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	Average	Percent
NYC Parks Forest Care	32	34	33	34	33	1%
Conservancies Forest Care	38	38	39	39	39	1%
NYC Parks Non-Forest Care	3,880	3,957	3,882	4,000	3,925	98%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,950</b>	<b>4,029</b>	<b>3,954</b>	<b>4,073</b>	<b>4,002</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Private Funding Supports Forest Care, But We Need Broader, More Equitable Solutions.

The conservancy model has been successful in moving private funds into New York City’s public spaces. Conservancies in New York City provide \$1.8 million for forest care, 18% of the funds that are spent annually in park forested natural areas in the city.

The greatest success cases are the Central Park Conservancy and the Prospect Park Alliance, with respective annual budgets of \$73 and \$10 million. All other New York City park conservancy organizational budgets are orders of magnitude lower. For example, in the Bronx, the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance average annual budget is \$520,000 (Table 4). The dollars spent on forest care varies among the groups ranging from a low of \$29,000 spent annually by the Greenbelt Conservancy to a high of \$850,000 by the Prospect Park Alliance. The average spending among the organizations for forests was \$260,353 with a median of \$40,000.

It is not the mission of park conservancies to focus exclusively on forest care, and conservancies do not all have the same acreage of forests in their park. In Table 4, we detail the acres of forest that each park conservancy is responsible for with the dollars spent per acre. The difference in scale is notable: among the park conservancies, the annual average spent per acre is \$3,080, with median spending of \$111 per acre. For comparison, NYC Parks annually spends an average of \$555 per forested acre of the 7,300 acres they are responsible for maintaining. The combined average spending of conservancies and NYC Parks is \$2,660 per acre, with a median of \$372 spent per acre. When we

compare the percentage of forest in each park to the percentage of conservancy budget spent on forest care, the average is 8.6% with a median of 8.3%.

There are many reasons for the differences in spending for forest care among conservancy organizations. Most notably, we are comparing organizations with varied capacities, income levels, and different overall organizational priorities and missions beyond their forest care work. The discrepancy between per acre spending on forested natural area care among conservancies mainly appears to be due to overall budget size. The conservancy model has been most successful in “closing the gap” between available public funds and perceived public resources in high-income neighborhood parks. This model is harder to sustain in moderate- or low-income neighborhoods where a wealthy funder base is not concentrated. The inequitable nature of wealth distribution in New York City makes the conservancy model unsuitable as a universal solution for forest care, but that does not diminish the important contributions of park conservancies.

**TABLE 4**  
**Conservancy Annual Funding and Spending on Forest Care (Average 2017–2020)**

Conservancy	Annual Budget	Forest Care Budget	Acres of Forest	Funds per Forest Acre	Percent of Budget for Forest Care
Central Park Conservancy (MA)	\$72,750,000	\$790,000	72	\$10,972	1%
Prospect Park Alliance (BK)	\$10,275,000	\$850,000	207	\$4,106	8%
Forest & Highland Park Trust (QU)	\$755,912	\$40,125	362	\$111	5%
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance (BX)	\$520,238	\$122,662	648	\$189	24%
Greenbelt Conservancy (SI)	\$510,056	\$28,625	1,200	\$24	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$84,811,205</b>	<b>\$1,831,412</b>	<b>2,489</b>	<b>\$15,402</b>	<b>NA</b>



## Challenges and Opportunities

Forested natural areas are the unsung heroes of New York City's infrastructure. They provide immense value to the people of New York City. As such, it is ultimately the responsibility of New York City government to provide funding that is adequate to maintain them most effectively. NYC Parks has done much with the historically unpredictable and low funding they have received. However, as our analysis shows, if funding is not increased to the levels indicated in the Framework, care will fall short and our forests will degrade. The clearest solution to caring for New York City's forested natural areas is to secure long term, sustained municipal funding. It is urgent to manage our municipal forests before they degrade further, losing biodiversity and functions that cannot easily be restored.

NYC Parks has adopted the Framework as the organizing structure to prioritize management in forested natural areas across all five boroughs. As a citywide plan, it allows NYC Parks to prioritize work based on forest conditions and park locations and maximize the use of public funds equitably. The Framework calculated spending amounts per acre based on the scope of forest management work to be accomplished.<sup>6</sup> There are differences in conditions among the city's forested natural areas. The costs for management are lowest in the healthiest and least threatened forests, and highest in the least healthy and most threatened forests.<sup>7</sup> The different costs per acre for forest management range from as low as \$1,037 for monitoring and maintenance of forests in the best condition to as high as \$42,076 for restoration in the most degraded forests (Figure 5).

Historically, the public-private partnership model as exemplified by park conservancies has also been a part of the funding solution for forest care in New York City. As we have already noted, conservancy funds are used in the individual parks where the conservancy is located, and forest care is prioritized and conducted only within that park. This inherently results in an unequal distribution of privately-funded care among parks, with some of the forests which are most in need of care without the additional benefit of private funding.

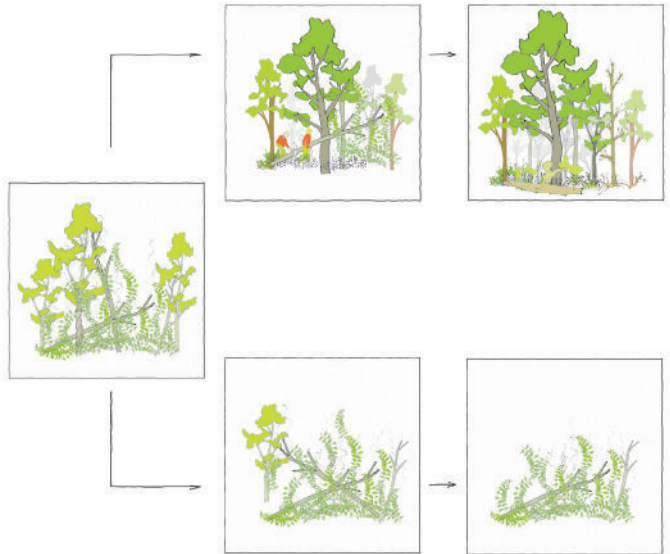
Opportunities to use other private investment sources for forest care can be an additional part of the solution reimagined as a citywide "fund" that investors can contribute to, with a per acre amount going to forested natural area management where it is needed. Private corporations can, and do, invest resources and funds to care for the urban forest. Corporate investment in forested natural area care can be increased with our greater ability to demonstrate the benefits to their sectors of interest. Currently, the NAC and partners are investigating the feasibility of these and other funding mechanisms in New York City.

FIGURE 5

## New York City's Forested Natural Areas Are at a Tipping Point.

Managing them now will keep them healthy and cost less in the long run. If they are not managed, forests will degrade and cost significantly more to restore.

**With Investment** forests will improve



**Without Investment** forests will decline



### High Health / Low Threat

Forests in this category are the highest quality. Less management intervention is needed, but monitoring is required to ensure that quality remains high and these forests are protected.

The healthiest Forests cost \$1,037/acre to maintain



### Low Health / High Threat

Forests in this category are the most degraded in NYC and require the most management. Management actions could range from invasive species removal, tree planting, and afforestation and may take several years.

Unhealthy forests can cost as much as \$42,076/acre to restore



# Conclusion

The future access and enjoyment of New York City’s forests is threatened due to inadequate funding and unreliable budget allocations by New York City for their management, protection, restoration, and care. Successful forest care requires long term, sustainable funding to support strategic implementation. In July 2022, the New York City Council approved the fiscal year 2023 budget for NYC Parks at half the funding of the previous year to implement the Framework (\$2.5 instead of \$4.5 million). In the coming years, NYC Parks is still uncertain what the future holds for the Framework’s implementation. Without a commitment to retain or increase the fiscal year 2023 allocations, trained staff will be lost, and the forest care they have undertaken will be halted. In the next budget cycle, NYC Parks will again be negotiating for funding to plan, train, and retain staff to perform necessary forest management.

Forest development and dynamics exist on a timescale of decades and centuries; the funding for forest resources need to match this timescale for best governance (Figure 6). If we continue on

a similar trend, over the next twenty-five years, NYC Parks will fall short of the Framework goal, leading to an irreversible loss of social and environmental benefits during a period when the city is increasingly challenged by the impacts of climate change including extreme heat and intense storms.

In addition to public funds, New York City park conservancies provide significant and valuable resources for forest care for the parks they manage. These private investments for forest care serve many purposes, among them providing localized opportunities for the public to engage with forest care and contribute to its management.

Ideally, the New York City budget for park management, and specifically our municipal forests, will be supported and recognized as the vital infrastructure that it is. Given current instability, however, it is worthwhile to explore new models and mechanisms for longterm, sustainable funding that can be applied equitably for forested natural areas across New York City.

FIGURE 6

## Investment in New York City’s Forested Natural Areas will Provide Benefits to All New Yorkers.



# Notes

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2. Auyeung, D.S. Novem; Campbell, Lindsay K.; Johnson, Michelle; Sonti, Nancy Falxa; Svendsen, Erika. 2016. *Reading the landscape: citywide social assessment of New York City parks and natural areas in 2013–2014*.
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4. New Yorkers for Parks Play Fair campaign, accessed October 5, 2022, <http://www.ny4p.org/what-we-do/play-fair>
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6. Pregitzer, Clara C., Helen M. Forgione, Kristen L. King, Sarah Charlop-Powers, and Jennifer Greenfeld. 2018. *Forest Management Framework for New York City*. Natural Areas Conservancy, New York, NY, accessed October 5, 2022, <https://naturalareasnyc.org/forests>
7. Pregitzer, Clara C., et al., *Forest Management Framework for New York City*.



# Methods and Participants

In the fall of 2021, NAC developed and implemented a questionnaire for NYC Parks Division of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources (FHNR), now Environment & Planning and a separate survey for NYC non-profit organizations that work in NYC Parks with forested natural areas.

NYC Parks FHNR provided data as requested in the questionnaire and in January 2023 provided an update for fiscal years 2021 and 2022. Among the park conservancies contacted, the six listed here in Table 1 were able to provide full or partial data used in this analysis.

Throughout this project we defined “Forested Natural Areas Care” as all support and activities conducted in forests including invasive species management; trail maintenance; planting; debris/litter removal in natural areas; public hikes/tours; research and monitoring; volunteer support; volunteer events; marketing; education; and training.

All six conservancy groups conduct forest management, forest restoration, trail maintenance and volunteer activities in forests. All but one group provide advocacy and planning for forests; four organizations conduct monitoring and education and only two conduct research in forests.

**TABLE 1**

Among the park conservancies contacted, the six listed here were able to provide full or partial data used in this analysis. The survey format used in the study are in the APPENDIX, Section 3. Data for the Natural Areas Conservancy and New York Restoration Project are not included in this analysis.

Conservancy	Borough
Greenbelt Conservancy	Staten Island
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance	Bronx
Forest & Highland Parks Trust	Queens
Prospect Park Alliance	Brooklyn
Riverside Park Conservancy	Manhattan
Central Park Conservancy	Manhattan

# NYC Parks Environment & Planning (Formerly Division of Forestry, Horticulture and Natural Resources (FHNR))

## Questionnaire and Data

### NYC Parks and FHNR Questions

Budget	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
<b>1. NYC Parks Total Annual Budget (\$)</b>	\$1,308,679,109	\$1,377,803,565	\$1,202,697,195	\$1,019,660,964	\$1,262,332,974	\$1,661,739,691
a. Capital Funds	\$767,670,752	\$808,797,950	\$616,877,624	\$424,325,823	\$697,460,455	\$1,026,049,287
b. Expense Funds (OTPS)	\$148,150,397	\$162,999,684	\$158,582,499	\$159,373,832	\$153,824,822	\$163,952,533
c. Personnel Funds	\$392,857,960	\$406,005,931	\$427,237,072	\$435,961,309	\$411,047,697	\$471,737,871
<b>2. NYC Parks Budget Funds for Forested Natural Area Care* (\$)</b>	<b>\$5,473,299</b>	<b>\$4,938,636</b>	<b>\$6,881,939</b>	<b>\$11,001,939</b>	<b>\$3,394,640</b>	<b>\$10,106,960</b>
a. Capital Funds	\$2,800,000	\$1,949,000	\$3,607,000	\$3,727,000	\$0	\$0
b. Expense Funds (OTPS)	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$4,050,000	\$50,000	\$4,050,000
c. Personnel Funds**	\$2,623,299	\$2,939,636	\$3,224,939	\$3,224,939	\$3,344,640	\$6,056,960
<b>STAFFING</b>						
<b>3. NYC Parks Permanent Staff (FTE) (hours)</b>	7,889,700	8,009,820	7,896,980	8,135,400		
<b>4. NYC Parks Permanent Staff (FTE) working in Forested Natural Area Care* (hours)</b>	64,480	68,380	66,300	68,120	66,820	70,460
<b>5. NYC Parks Seasonal Staff (FTE)(hours)</b>	6,564,740	6,306,300	6,333,600	6,004,180		
<b>6. NYC Parks Seasonal Staff (FTE) working in Forested Natural Area Care* (hours)</b>	21,060	24,700	33,020	33,020	37,700	118,820
<b>VOLUNTEERS</b>						
<b>7. Total volunteer hours spent in Forested Natural Area Care* (hours)</b>	11,801	10,976	8,168.5	4551.65	9,172.3	12,775.75
<b>CONTRACTS</b>						
<b>8. Contract Funds spent in Forested Natural Area Care* (\$)</b>	\$3,128,650	\$4,266,000	\$7,740,000	\$4,251,975	\$1,847,975	\$9,345,413
<b>FUNDING SOURCES other than NYC Parks Budget for Forested Natural Area Care* (\$)</b>						
<b>9. Government Grants (\$)</b>	\$0	\$680,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
a. Federal (\$)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
b. State (\$)	\$0	\$680,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>10. Restitution Funds applied to Forested Natural Area Care* (\$)</b>	\$427,000	\$853,000	\$580,000	\$993,000	\$7,406,000	\$11,345,000
<b>11. Mitigation Funds applied to Forested Natural Area Care* (\$)</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>12. Other Funding applied to Forested Natural Area Care (\$)**</b>	\$0	\$0	\$982,000	\$460,000	\$0	\$460,000

\* Forested Natural Area Care includes: invasive species management, trail maintenance, planting, debris/litter removal, public hikes/tours, research and monitoring, volunteer support, marketing events, education, training

\*\* Please specify

\*\*\* FY2021 and FY2022 based on average of \$32/hour, which was average for FY19 and FY20

# Survey for NYC Non-Profit Organizations that Work in NYC Parks with Natural Area Forests

**Contact Information: \***

Your Name:

Organization:

Email:

Phone:

1. Of the list below, which are your organization's main activities in forested natural areas? Please check all that apply \*

- Monitoring
- Management
- Restoration
- Education
- Advocacy
- Planning
- Research
- Trails Maintenance
- Volunteer Engagement
- None of the Above
- Other (please specify below)

Comments

**2. Budget:**

*Include expense, capital, personnel, other than personnel spending*

*Provide range where specific amount is unavailable \**

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Annual Conservancy Budget:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Budget Spent on Forested Natural Areas Care:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total funds spent annually on Contracts/Contractors in Forested Natural Areas Care:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comments

**3. Full time staff**

*Consider both conservancy-funded and NYC Parks staff that are working under the direction of the conservancy/park administrator. In the comments please list the number of staff that are NYC Parks-funded (by year if possible).*

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of full time staff	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total number of full time staff that work at least some portion of their time in activities that support Forested Natural Areas Care	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Estimated FTE (hours) in which staff actually worked in Forested Natural Areas Care activities: (hours worked per day x days worked per week) x weeks worked per year	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comments

**4. Seasonal staff**

*Report here the number of seasonal staff that don't work a full year. Consider both conservancy-funded and NYC Parks staff that are working under the direction of the conservancy/park administrator. In the comments please list the number of staff that are NYC Parks-funded (by year if possible).*

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of seasonal staff	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total number of seasonal staff that work at least some portion of their time in activities that support Forested Natural Areas Care	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Estimated FTE (hours) in which staff actually worked in Forested Natural Areas Care activities: (hours worked per day x days worked per week) x weeks worked per year	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comments



**5. Volunteer Efforts**

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Volunteers in Forested Natural Areas Care:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total Volunteer Hours in Forested Natural Areas Care:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comments

Do you conduct environmental education or public programming in natural areas? *If so, please describe* \*

**6. Funding Sources that support forested natural areas care (dollar amounts or ranges): \***

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Private Grants:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Individual Donors:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Government Grants (New York State):	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Government Grants (Federal):	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
City Council:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Concessions:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mitigation:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Restitution:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Comments

Do you plan to continue to raise private funds to support work in natural areas? \*

- Yes
- No
- NA

Comments

Do you have or plan to initiate a focused campaign to fund work in natural area forests? \*

- Yes
- No

Comments

7. Has your organization used or leveraged the NAC/ NYC Parks Forest Management Framework to apply for grants, inform work, or communicate about the need for natural areas care? Answer Yes/No and please describe. \*

Upload organizational budget or annual report for 2017 here (optional)

[Browse...](#)

Upload organizational budget or annual report for 2018 here (optional)

[Browse...](#)

Upload organizational budget or annual report for 2019 here

[Browse...](#)

# Definitions and Terms

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*The following are definitions and terms used in this report regarding funding in NYC:*

New York City's **Capital Budget** covers larger long-term investments in facilities & infrastructure, or Capital Projects. Examples include the construction of public schools, street maintenance, and parks improvements. From <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/>

The NYC **Expense Budget** covers the costs of running the city. It pays for the sanitation worker who picks up your garbage and powers the lights at your local library. Funds are set aside to operate each city agency. This also includes the Debt Service, the City's annual loan payment for long-term Capital Projects for which the City borrows State & Federal money. From <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/>

**Mitigation:** In the case of NYC Parks, local law requires replacement of trees removed by permit when there is an unavoidable conflict with construction and restitution for trees illegally removed, destroyed, or damaged. Replacement and restitution obligations may be met by the responsible party planting trees or providing Parks with funding to plant. See this link for more details for NYC Parks' replacement and restitution rules: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules/section-5>

**Grants** are defined as financial assistance support mechanisms providing money, property or other direct assistance in lieu of money, or both, to an eligible entity to carry out an approved project or activity in support of a public purpose and not the direct benefit of the government.

Each year the New York City Council awards **Discretionary Funds** to nonprofit organizations to meet local needs. The policies and procedures for applying and awarding funds can be accessed here: <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/discretionary-funding-policies-and-procedures/>





