



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

March 15, 2023

Hon. Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Million More Trees Initiative

Dear Borough President Levine,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) thanks the Manhattan Borough President's Office (MBPO) and The Nature Conservancy for the presentation to the Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee on February 9, 2023 regarding the Million More Trees Initiative which aims to plant 1,000,000 new trees across the five boroughs.

We appreciate that your office, along with that of the other four Borough Presidents, are seeking to enact a community informed and engaged project to increase our urban forest and make our neighborhoods greener. In that joint spirit, at the March 1st Full Board meeting, by a vote of 36 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions and 0 present but not eligible, MCB4 is furnishing this friendly letter of support with the following additional comments.

Background

MCB4, specifically the Hell's Kitchen and Clinton Special Zoning District, has historically lacked an appropriate tree canopy to counter the area's carbon emissions, which ranks as the 3rd most polluted air in all of New York City. Additionally, our district is documented as having the least amount of designated green space per capita on the island of Manhattan. The Board has memorialized our support for tree plantings and preservation throughout our district in past resolutions as part of a long-standing mission to improve the quality of life within Community

District 4.^{1 2} Additionally we have worked with our past representatives in the NYC Council to address the illegal removal of our treescape by landlords and property developers.

Board Comments

We ask the MBPO to consider the following as we positively move forward with an NYC Urban Forest Agenda:

1. Prioritization of geographic areas based on “green need.”

The MBPO’s presentation delineated our district as having some of the lowest canopy cover in all of the city. We hope that fact alone would prioritize our neighborhoods, specifically including those with low zone development such as West, North and South Chelsea, Clinton, public school areas, CUNY John Jay College and NYCHA developments (Harborview, Chelsea-Elliot Houses and Fulton Houses). The office of Council District 3 has developed a comprehensive list for tree feasibility and placement which can be shared to ensure that any execution of the initiative has long term success in Community District 4. The WPE committee also recommends looking at block by block solutions, as you have estimated MCB4 has a “Practical” Canopy growth of 3.6-6.2%, in order to increase the opportunities for planting and improving the growth of new trees. With pedestrian expansions on the northern Eighth and Ninth Avenue corridors, we believe there are unexplored opportunities for tree planting and growth in those new areas and medians.

2. Engineering opportunities

As The City faces increased threats of flash flooding due to warming temperatures and because rain runoffs aid in the alleviation of the city’s sewage and drainage system, we ask that the project managers include this engineering solution as a part of their required construction where and when applicable. We stress the need for rain runoff cuts in our district and we hope a block-by-block approach to identify locations with strong opportunity for alternative planting is utilized. This request does not prioritize alternative planting over new trees, only that the initiative considers all possibilities when planning and citing to meet the initiative’s goals.

3. Financial funding

The Board would appreciate a greater understanding of how the city intends to fund this project. With NYC Parks’ Forestry Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) budget at 0.04% of the total city budget, we encourage supplemental funding to secure the success of this ambitious initiative.

¹ <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/02/18-WPE-Letter-to-Meatpacking-BID-re-Planters-and-Trees-on-14th-St.pdf>

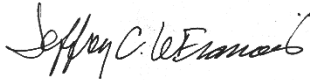
² <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/downloads/pdf/july-2017/36-WPE-Letter-to-the-Friends-of-the-High-Line-re-DOT-Trees.pdf>

4. Opportunities to ensure long-term success

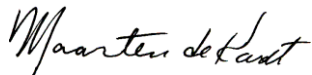
- MCB4 asks tree guards and sidewalk cuts to be included when considering the planting and growth of old and new trees to improve the net change in tree canopy. The budgeting for and placement of tree guards will help ensure longevity of the plantings.
- Recognize the need for consistent watering and monitoring.
- Examine protocol changes for displaced trees (both private and public). We ask that any tree removed must be replaced.
- Consider the threat of invasive species, such as the spotted lantern fly, and its impact on the project's success.
- Please consider "outside the box" opportunities such as floating or barge forests³
- Tree preservation: A drastic reduction in permits given to remove trees and insist on building design that preserves existing trees.
- Tree maintenance: Planted trees and tree pits be better protected by changing sidewalk cafe rules to protect all trees from pedestrians stomping on the tree pits
- Tree replacements: If a removal permit is granted, increase the number of trees that must be planted and ensure that all planting takes place in the same community district, with Community Board consultation.

We once again thank you for your presentation and look forward to collaborating on the initiative in the future.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Maarten deKadt
Co-chair
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee



Leslie Boghosian Murphy
Co-chair
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee

CC: Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Steve Simon, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Parks

³ <https://www.swaleny.org/new-page>