

1 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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3 COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 5, 2025
10:00 a.m.

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9 PRESENT:

10 CHAIRPERSON JAMIE GAUTHIER

COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD

11 COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL

COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY

12 COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE

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15 MS. JONES, CHIEF CLERK

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: I now
note that the hour has come and this
hearing is called to order.

This is the public hearing of the
City Council Committee on the
Environment. The purpose of this public
hearing is to hear testimony on
Resolution No. 250126.

Ms. Jones, would you please call
the roll?

CHIEF CLERK: Councilmember
Ahmad?

COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:
Present.

CHIEF CLERK: Councilmember
Driscoll?

COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
Present.

CHIEF CLERK: Councilmember
O'Rourke?

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
Present.

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CHIEF CLERK: Councilmember

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Harrity.

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COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I am

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here.

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CHIEF CLERK: Chair Gauthier?

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CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:

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Present. Thank you,

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Ms. Jones.

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I note, for the record, that

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a quorum of this committee is present

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and this hearing is called to order.

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Welcome, everybody, to this

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meeting of the Committee on the

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Environment. Thank you for taking time

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out of your busy schedules to be here.

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The Philly Tree Plan was

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envisioned in 2019 and released in 2023

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as our city's best path forward to

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increasing the tree canopy and extending

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its benefits to all of our

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neighborhoods.

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From 2008 to 2018,

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Philadelphia lost 1,320 acres. That's

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2 six percent of its tree canopy,
3 primarily due to a lack of maintenance
4 of residential and street trees, the
5 removal of yard trees, and the effects
6 of climate change.

7 Philadelphia's urban forest
8 covers 20 percent of city lands, but it
9 is not equitably distributed. For
10 instance, only five percent of the land
11 in many neighborhoods of the 1st, 2nd
12 and 6th Council Districts are covered by
13 tree canopy, while other areas like the
14 8th district have greater than 50
15 percent tree canopy cover. This tracks
16 with broader research, which
17 consistently shows that low income and
18 communities of color have fewer trees
19 and are hotter than higher income
20 neighborhoods.

21 This is as much of an equity,
22 safety and health issue as it is a
23 sustainability one because the benefits
24 of trees are vast. Trees capture storm

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2 water and replenish groundwater. They
3 help clean the air and polluted areas,
4 improve mental health, and cool air and
5 surfaces of the built environment,
6 especially during heat waves that are
7 growing more intense and frequent with
8 climate change.

9 One study by the UCLA Luskin
10 Center found that shade can reduce heat
11 stress on the human body from 25 percent
12 to 35 percent throughout the day, and
13 has been correlated with a reduction in
14 gun violence. And we know that here in
15 Philadelphia, neighbors without a robust
16 tree canopy can get up to 10 degrees
17 hotter and heat kills.

18 Thanks to many of you in this
19 room, we are making important progress
20 in implementing the tree plan. In total
21 2,421 trees were planted across
22 Philadelphia by both the city and
23 partner organizations during FY 2023.

24 City Council is participating in

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2 tree planting efforts as well. Majority
3 Leader Gilmore-Richardson's Tree Canopy
4 Bill and Fully Tree Fund amended the
5 zoning code to enhance tree plantings,
6 create buffers between industrial zones
7 and residential areas, update parking
8 lot rules and eliminate exemptions for
9 tree replacement and parks in open
10 spaces.

11 It also establishes a Philly Tree
12 Fund collecting payments for trees
13 removed and not replaced on site with a
14 goal of incentivizing 30 percent canopy
15 cover aligning with the city's canopy
16 growth targets. While I celebrate how
17 far we have come, we cannot rest on our
18 laurels. So today we are here to
19 explore what is needed to do more to
20 achieve the tree plan's ambitious goals.

21 This conversation is more
22 important than ever because President
23 Trump has made it abundantly clear that
24 he does not care about the health and

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2 safety of our communities or the city's
3 ability to withstand global warming.

4 Trump fired EPA staffers working
5 on environmental justice in
6 Philadelphia, and he canceled a
7 \$75-million grant to the Arbor Day
8 Foundation, and other funding meant to
9 support forestry programs across the
10 nation.

11 While the federal government is
12 abandoning its duty, Philadelphia is
13 going to have to step up. And if we
14 have to do this work alone, we will,
15 because with so much at stake inaction
16 is not an option.

17 Do any of my colleagues have any
18 opening remarks?

19 Ms. Jones, will you now read the
20 title of the resolution?

21 CHIEF CLERK: Resolution
22 250126.

23 Authorizing the Committee on
24 the Environment to conduct a hearing to

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2 evaluate progress on the implementation
3 of the Philly Tree Plan, determine how
4 to expedite progress, and what, if any,
5 additional policies might promote the
6 city's sustainable greening goals.

7 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: The
8 clerk will please call the first panel
9 of witnesses to testify on the
10 resolution.

11 CHIEF CLERK: Susan Slawson,
12 Susan Buck, Erica Smith Fichman.

13 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
14 morning, Commissioner, and good morning
15 to the Parks and Rec team.

16 Please state your name, for the
17 record, and proceed with your testimony.

18 MS. SLAWSON: Good morning,
19 Susan Slawson, Commissioner of Parks and
20 Recreation.

21 Good morning, Chairperson
22 Gauthier and members. I have a little
23 cold, so forgive me this morning -- and
24 members of the committee on the

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2 environment. My name is Susan Slawson
3 and I serve as the Commissioner of Parks
4 and Recreation. With me today are
5 Deputy Commissioners Buck and Deputy
6 Commissioner Leanne Campbell and our
7 City Forester, Erica Smith Fichman.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to
9 provide an update on the Philly Tree
10 Plan. Philadelphia Parks and Recreation
11 is honored to be a partner in the
12 creation and implementation of the
13 Philly Tree Plan, a 10-year strategic
14 plan for the equitable growth and care
15 of our urban forests. We are grateful
16 for our partner organizations as well as
17 thousands of residents and community
18 members who came together to create and
19 advance the recommendations of the plan.

20 As the stewards of Philadelphia's
21 10,000 plus acre park system and the
22 130,000 street trees growing in the
23 right-of-way, PPR is the key city agency
24 focused on the growth and care of our

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2 public urban forest. We are proud to
3 report that we have planted 3,724 trees
4 along city streets and park natural
5 lands, and as part of the Yard Tree
6 Giveaway program in fiscal year '24.

7 Tree planting and care requires
8 specialized skills, and PPR is actively
9 growing our capacity to maintain our
10 street and park trees, handling
11 increasing numbers of storm emergencies
12 and integrate with existing workforce
13 programs like PowerCorpsPHL, to provide
14 a ladder of employment to cities -- to
15 city jobs and a steady stream of
16 qualified workers.

17 With recent increases to PPR
18 Street tree maintenance budget, we have
19 also increased the number of street
20 trees being pruned across the city.
21 Since 2023, there have been over 2,300
22 trees pruned and 2,700 additional trees
23 are planned to be pruned through July
24 2025.

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One of PPR's goals is

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implementing the Philly Tree Plan is to

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transition from a reactive to proactive

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inspection cycle for the City Street

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trees. Proactive maintenance of trees

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is crucial for trust building and with

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residents who are more willing to plant

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trees on and around their property when

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they know that those trees will be

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properly maintained.

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The first step in moving to a

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proactive inspection cycle is to assess

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the existing street tree inventory, and

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PPR staff are currently in conversations

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with USDA Forest Service researchers

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about this effort.

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Over half of Philadelphia's park

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system is composed of natural areas like

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forest, meadows and wetlands. Natural

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lands like this make up 40 percent of

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the city's tree canopy and provide

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crucial services like air and water

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filtration, oxygen production, wildlife

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2 habitat, and more.

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4 As part of implementing the
5 Philly Tree Plan, PPR staff are working
6 with the USDA Forest Service to create a
7 comprehensive assessment of the health
8 of these natural trees -- natural areas,
9 which is crucial to determining the
10 management strategies needed to keep
11 them healthy and protected. This work
12 is funded by the city operating budget
13 and with the support of the William Penn
14 Foundation.

15 In the two years since the
16 Philly Tree Plan was released, PPR has
17 brought on new staff in the urban
18 forestry unit dedicated to improving
19 coordination and communication about
20 trees within the city and between the
21 city and its residents.

22 The new City Forester position is
23 a central point of contact for all the
24 tree related programs and activities in
25 the city. Because of this new position,

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2 PPR is now working much more closely on
3 tree planting and care along with our
4 colleagues in Philadelphia City Planning
5 Commission, License and Inspections,
6 Office of Transportation and
7 Infrastructure Systems, OTIS, Department
8 of Commerce, Streets Department, Capital
9 Programs Office, and PECO.

10 PPR's Community Forestry Program,
11 Tree Philly, continues to work closely
12 with residents and priority areas of the
13 city as defined by the Philly Tree Plan.
14 These areas have the lowest tree canopy,
15 highest heat vulnerability, and lowest
16 air quality in the city among other
17 environmental justice criteria.

18 Tree Philly staff act as liaisons
19 to residents in these areas for all tree
20 related resources, bringing the benefits
21 of trees to residents who need them the
22 most and the ways that support them the
23 best. The Tree Philly program is
24 focused on building trust, providing

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2 support, and -- the Tree Philly program
3 is focused on building trust, providing
4 support, educational and material
5 resources to residents and empowering
6 them to welcome trees into their
7 neighborhoods.

8 Tree Philly staff work with
9 community partners in priority areas who
10 guide their neighborhoods. Tree Philly
11 staff, their planning and their care
12 projects from beginning to end. Since
13 launching this neighborhood focus model,
14 50 percent of trees distributed through
15 Tree Philly's yard tree giveaway events
16 are distributed in the priority areas of
17 the city. Green spaces and oasis in
18 areas where the city is densely built,
19 and the tree canopy supports areas that
20 have been identified as heat islands.

21 One of PPR's most recent
22 community forestry projects is the
23 Commercial Corridor Tree Planning and
24 Care program, a partnership with the

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2 Department of Commerce and the Taking
3 Care of Business, TCB program. Through
4 this program, PPR and Commerce are
5 planting trees on commercial corridors
6 in the Philadelphia Tree Plan priority
7 areas and training ambassadors from the
8 commercial corridors, the TCB program,
9 to care for these trees.

10 This program is responsible for
11 468 new trees and 40 trained TCB
12 ambassadors in the past two years.
13 Caring for trees in the first few years
14 after planting is necessary for the
15 long-term health and newly planted
16 trees.

17 We're expecting this initiative
18 this year with a new manager --
19 expanding this initiative this year with
20 the new manager being hired by the
21 Department of Commerce. PPR is also
22 partnering with -- in the creation of
23 the Philly Tree Coalition. A new entity
24 which will bring urban forestry

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2 stakeholders together around the
3 implementation of the Philly Tree Plan.

4 This coalition will be
5 administratively housed in the
6 Pennsylvania Horticulture Society and
7 have full-time staff who are -- who are
8 tasked with coordination, communication,
9 and fundraising for the implementation
10 of the Philly Tree Plan. Continuing
11 with the spirit of collaboration which
12 the Philly Tree Plan was created, the
13 staff will report to a steering
14 committee of subject matters and
15 residents from priority areas who will
16 guide the work of the coalition.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to
18 testify today. If you have any
19 questions, we will be happy to answer.

20 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you so much for your work and thank you
22 for being here to talk about it today.

23 So we're two years into the tree
24 plan. Are you -- are we where we wanted

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2 to be two years in? And what has been
3 most helpful to achieving the goals and
4 the plan and what have the biggest
5 obstacles been?

6 MS. SLAWSON: I think the
7 first thing that's most helpful is that
8 we were able to identify and hire an
9 urban forester who guides this project.
10 You have to have the necessary staff in
11 place and with her guidance, I think
12 we're moving -- this is a 10-year plan.
13 The heat density, the challenges that
14 we're having in our community, they have
15 been long term. And so that's why the
16 plan expands and extends out for 10
17 years, because we know and we knew that
18 replacing, maintaining, and ensuring
19 that communities that don't have the
20 trees would take some time.

21 Because you're not only planting,
22 you're maintaining, you're growing,
23 you're identifying, you're working with
24 the community. So I think we're in a

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2 good place based on the fact that this
3 is a 10-year plan.

4 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

5 Does anybody want to add to that?

6 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Sure. So
7 the plan is broken into short term, mid
8 term, and long-term goals within the 10
9 years. And the first -- the short term
10 goals are accomplished between, you
11 know, releasing the plan a three years
12 in. And we have accomplished -- we are
13 making progress toward a lot of those
14 short term goals and some of them have
15 been completed at this point.

16 And we're excited at the three-
17 year goal -- at the three-year mark to
18 release a report card that outlines in
19 detail everything that's been -- that's
20 been accomplished. And we're actively
21 making progress towards those short term
22 goals and some of the longer term goals
23 that we didn't expect to tackle so soon,
24 but with momentum, have been able to

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2 make progress towards.

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CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: What's
4 the timeline for that three-year report?

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MS. SMITH FICHMAN: We are
6 intending to -- so the -- the plan was
7 released in February of 2023, so we're
8 looking at the Spring of 2026 for the
9 three-year report card.

10

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Great.
11 Also, does she need to state her name,
12 for the record?

13

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Oh,
14 sorry.

15

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Also,
16 please say your name, for the record.

17

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Sorry.
18 Erica Smith Fichman, City Forester of
19 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation.

20

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:
21 Wonderful. Can you talk about what the
22 biggest obstacles or challenges have
23 been?

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MS. SMITH FICHMAN: You want

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2 me to take it? Okay. The biggest
3 obstacles to -- I can speak from the
4 perspective of the Parks Department.

5 This is an effort that includes many
6 different organizations and I'm excited
7 for you to hear from a lot of them
8 coming up.

9 But from the perspective of the
10 Parks Department, we are tasked with the
11 maintenance of all 130,000 street trees
12 and 10,000 acres of park land. We have
13 had a lot of retirements in our urban
14 forestry crews, and so we need to
15 increase our capacity in order to
16 maintain those trees. Not only with
17 increased funding for the contractors
18 who help us maintain that, but also with
19 increased skilled workers, who we are
20 actively working to recruit.

21 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.
22 Do you all already have the budget for
23 that and it's just about filling
24 vacancies?

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MS. SMITH FICHMAN: We do
have vacancies that we're looking to
fill right now, yes.

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: And then
in the plan we have within those 10
years, the recommendation to expand for
another crew. We have three to expand
to a four as well.

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

MS. SLAWSON: The answer is
yes, we do have the funding in our
budget.

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

Can you talk more about the Philly Tree
Coalition and how that will explicitly
help the city to achieve the goals of
the tree plan?

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Yeah, so
the coalition is one of the most
exciting things that we've been able to
make really big progress on. Because
the Philly tree plan is a joint effort

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2 between not only city agencies, but
3 local non-profits, national federal
4 agencies and state agencies, as well as
5 the most crucial people who are the
6 folks who live in the neighborhoods of
7 Philadelphia, we wanted to have a third
8 party entity that really advances it so
9 that everyone is working together.

10 And that communication is done
11 collaboratively. Fundraising is done
12 across the board to -- with the plan as
13 the -- as the thing that identifies
14 where the money goes, but with everyone
15 enacting it and getting the funding to
16 do that, the program partners.

17 And so the Philly Tree
18 Coalition is going to speak as one voice
19 for all of those stakeholders. And it
20 will be -- the staff of that coalition
21 will be housed at the Pennsylvania
22 Horticultural Society, but report to a
23 steering committee of subject matter
24 experts and residents from the seven

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2 priority areas that are outlined in the
3 plan, so that those folks have a
4 meaningful voice in the decision-making
5 of plan activities.

6 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Great.
7 Thank you. And then one last question
8 and then I'll open it up to my
9 colleagues. Commissioner, I love to
10 hear you talk about moving towards the
11 proactive inspections in order to build
12 trust because I find that when we face
13 resistance from neighbors around getting
14 trees planted on their blocks, it's
15 mostly because of their experiences with
16 trees in the past that haven't been
17 maintained. And so now, they don't want
18 to, you know, they don't want to
19 participate anymore because they've had
20 that negative experience. So I think
21 that the proactive inspections are
22 really important. When will that be up
23 and running?

24 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: That's

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2 already up and running, isn't it?

3 MS. SLAWSON: Well, let's --

4 if we could -- you and I spend some time

5 on one of the corridors in South

6 Philadelphia. Part of us being able to

7 ensure the health of the trees is to

8 hire people from the community to go for

9 two years and maintain to ensure that

10 the trees are healthy.

11 I think one of the biggest

12 pieces for community members to want to

13 have trees planted in their

14 neighborhoods is to ensure that they're

15 educated, and a big part of this plan is

16 education. And so you get an

17 opportunity to find out whether this

18 tree fits, whether you have to worry

19 about your cement being broken because

20 that's one of the big challenges.

21 People are concerned that, you know, 10

22 years later they're going to have issues

23 with the pavement outside of their

24 homes.

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2 And this plan provides education
3 for community members, it provides
4 interaction with the teams that are
5 going out and working in the community.

6 And so that's really huge when it --
7 we're talking about being proactive.

8 They're not just out there getting a
9 tree, planting it, and we leave and we
10 don't show back up. We show up for two
11 years.

12 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

13 So let me just make sure I understand.
14 When your -- in the testimony, it says
15 we're going to be moving towards
16 citywide, sort of, proactive inspection
17 of street trees. You're saying that's
18 already up and running?

19 MS. SLAWSON: No, I'm sharing
20 that we're already doing some things and
21 we are still moving towards that
22 proactive piece. I just wanted to share
23 that. Although we haven't started that
24 part of the plan, we're still doing

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2 things that 10 years ago, five years ago
3 that we did not do. So this is on top
4 of what Philly Tree -- the tree plan is
5 providing. Erica can speak to the
6 proactive piece, but I just want you to
7 know that we've already begun steps and
8 you actually were out there and you were
9 a part of that.

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Yeah.

11 Yeah, that was great. Thank you.

12 Erica?

13 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: So with
14 our street trees, the trees that are
15 planted in the right-of-way, we have
16 inspectors and contract managers who do
17 planting, pruning, and removal of those
18 trees. We do that by request from
19 residents. And the transition to
20 proactive requires us to know more about
21 the species, age, and health of our
22 system.

23 And we do know those things,
24 but we need to know based on that, what

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2 is the ideal cycle of proactive
3 inspection, so that we can have people
4 going out into all of the zip codes of
5 the city on a cycle, and we can
6 communicate that to people and say, your
7 trees will be looked at in, you know,
8 this quarter or this month of the year,
9 et cetera. So that's where we're
10 talking with the forest service about
11 doing that study, and then their
12 recommendations will inform how we
13 transition into, away from reacting to
14 people's requests to being a proactive
15 system.

16 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: What's
17 our estimate on the timing for moving
18 towards that type of system?

19 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: The goal
20 for the transition to proactive, I
21 believe is one of the longer term goals,
22 so I just need to remind myself.

23 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 You can look for that and I'll pass

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2 things off to Councilmember Harrity.

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MS. SMITH FICHMAN: It does
4 take -- it does take a little while to
5 make that huge jump from reactive to
6 proactive. So first, we have to kind of
7 know what we need, and then we have to
8 build up to that.

9

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you.

11 Councilmember Harrity?

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COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
13 you, Madam Chair. Good morning
14 everybody.

15

I want to start off by thanking
16 you first for your service. Big fan of
17 Parks and Rec. You guys do a lot with a
18 little. And this year is a lot, you
19 know, 130,000 trees to maintain
20 throughout the city is a lot of work in
21 itself, let alone all the other stuff
22 that you guys manage to do. So I thank
23 you for that.

24

The chairwoman had actually

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2 alluded to it in her opening remarks.
3 You know, I like acronyms. One of which
4 is KISS, it's keep it simple, stupid,
5 you know. For me, I got to remind
6 myself of that all the time. And the
7 good thing about the Internet is that
8 you can find information on anything on
9 there. And I'm one of those people, I
10 like to read and learn about a lot of
11 different things. And I'm a little bit
12 of a closet gardener. People -- some of
13 my colleagues know that. And I'm big on
14 urban gardening and the things of that
15 nature.

16 But I was just wondering if you
17 had seen any of the studies that have to
18 do with crime and trees? It's been
19 proven in studies that tree-line streets
20 actually have less crime. I don't know
21 why, but it seems to be the case. Has
22 that -- have you guys seen any of
23 that -- you're, you know, you're out
24 there, you're planting trees all the

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2 time. Have you seen where crime drops
3 in areas where you, let's say, beautify
4 it more, put more trees, flowers, stuff
5 like that?

6 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: I can
7 certainly say anecdotally that trees in
8 Philadelphia, as in many large cities,
9 signify a lot of other things in
10 neighborhoods. We have the maps to show
11 that they are correlated with race and
12 with poverty, right? So that is part of
13 it.

14 And we have amazing colleagues
15 at the Forest Service that are based
16 here in the city as well as at UPenn,
17 the health -- Penn Medicine that have
18 done those studies on the impact of
19 trees on crime in -- here in
20 Philadelphia.

21 I think the key part of that is
22 that those trees need to be well
23 maintained to have that effect because
24 poorly maintained trees have the

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2 opposite effect.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Yeah.

4 I've actually -- I like to observe. I'm

5 very observant and I've actually -- I

6 live in Kensington, so I've noticed

7 direct correlations between streets that

8 are well-maintained, you know, with the

9 help of the neighbors where there's

10 trees and flowers, kind of deters drug

11 dealers sitting up on things because

12 they know the neighbors have a little

13 bit of a sense of pride and they end up

14 reporting.

15 So definitely would like to see

16 more of that. And like you said, we

17 have made big steps in tree knowledge

18 because we know now that some trees, the

19 root systems are more evasive than

20 others with your pipes and concrete.

21 But we have trees now that you guys are

22 supplying or the Horticultural Society I

23 know is supplying, where the roots do

24 not grow like that.

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So just glad to see about the education part. And what can you tell us more about how you are educating people. And that's -- there's -- because that's a big deal, people don't want to put them on their pavement because they think in 10 years they're going to have this massive tree, but the fact of the matter is, we have trees that we're giving out now that don't get that big. It's still does the same thing that we're trying to do, which is clean the air and, you know, dust and pollutants, it's all eatened up by the trees.

So what can you tell me about the education part of it that you're doing?

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: We have our Community Forestry Program, Tree Philly. The power of that program is that we are working directly with communities to plant and care for trees in the ways those communities want us

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2 to. So in some communities, you know,
3 they don't have yards, they don't --
4 they are uncomfortable with street trees
5 in residential areas, that's where the
6 idea of planting the trees on commercial
7 corridors came from, because people in
8 those neighborhoods were most
9 comfortable with that. And so that's
10 where we started and it can expand from
11 there.

12 In Kensington, we have amazing
13 partners. You're going to hear from one
14 of them, Jacelyn Blank from Philly Tree
15 People. And her program -- her
16 organization is in partnership with PHS
17 and their tree tenders program, so we
18 all work together.

19 The education from tree tenders,
20 the support from those organizations and
21 the Tree Philly folks who are coming in
22 and finding out what resources does this
23 community want, and how do we implement
24 those projects from start to finish with

1

2 the residents participating and having a
3 say. So sometimes that's park tree
4 plantings, that's the commercial
5 corridor program that's giving away yard
6 trees, that's supporting street tree
7 planting.

8 One of the most exciting things
9 from the last six months is that we saw
10 that some of the zip codes with the
11 lowest tree canopy were requesting the
12 highest numbers of street trees, which
13 is really exciting for us to see. So I
14 think that's a testament to the work
15 that we're all collectively doing in
16 these neighborhoods.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

18 Great. And just one more
19 thing. Are you guys doing anything with
20 the, like, raised beds or anything like
21 that for -- in neighborhoods for
22 residential?

23 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: I think
24 that our Farm Philly program and the

1
2 director of -- our director of
3 agriculture of urban ag would probably
4 be best to speak to that. We, in the
5 urban forestry division are talking
6 about -- our focus is on trees planted
7 in the ground.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Okay.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:
11 Councilmember Ahmad?

12 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
13 you, Madam Chair.

14 Good morning. Thank you for
15 your testimony. I am so excited to hear
16 about going from reactive to proactive.
17 I think particularly in disinvested zip
18 codes where people, you know, they don't
19 -- after you've worked three jobs, you
20 don't have time to come and beautify
21 your street, right? So this is where a
22 government steps up to be a partner in
23 making sure that you have the same
24 benefits somebody with more resources

1

2 have in their communities. So I'm
3 really happy to hear that.

4 I had a question similar to what
5 my colleague, Jimmy Harrity, was saying
6 about knowledge base. What I've
7 encountered among constituents is
8 knowing that this tree is not going to
9 disrupt their plumbing, knowing that
10 there's going to be follow-up and follow
11 through from maintenance. Those are all
12 very important things to get buy-in from
13 people to participate. And clearly
14 you're getting that because you said you
15 have a request from places where didn't
16 have trees who are asking for them.

17 I also wanted to see to make sure
18 that they're also getting the message
19 about the health impact of these
20 canopies, you're creating tree canopies.
21 And I wanted to know if you are
22 concurrently measuring that as you are
23 doing this, so we have sort of a
24 evidence-based platform to say -- and

1

2 that will also help us in budgeting
3 processes to prove that and we
4 anecdotically understand that and know
5 that and there's been research,
6 Dr. South from Penn has done that on the
7 greening and correlation with violence.

8 I just wanted to see if we are
9 continuing with that sort of correlation
10 as we go forward, to see the benefits so
11 that we can share that with people who
12 might not be engaged in this process.
13 To really show it does make a difference
14 on health, on engagement, on crime, on
15 just the health -- mental health of
16 people. I'm just wondering if you have
17 something going along as you're being
18 proactive in this?

19 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: I think
20 those are really good points. We are
21 extremely grateful for our partners at
22 the Forest Service that are based here
23 in the city of Philadelphia. We have
24 one of the only urban forest -- urban

1
2 field stations of the U.S. forest
3 service here in our city. And those
4 researchers, along with our university
5 researchers, you're going to hear from
6 Dr. Pearsall later. Our partnerships
7 with them and our partnerships within
8 the city with the Health Department are
9 going to be crucial for that case
10 making.

11 At the Parks Department, what we
12 can do is be enthusiastic supporters and
13 contributors and to share our data so
14 that those research -- those research
15 efforts can happen. And we do that very
16 happily and proactively with those
17 partners.

18 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So I
19 just wanted to know if you already have
20 that in place to be collecting that
21 information? Another point is, of
22 course, as we mentioned, our President
23 might not be -- I don't know what he's
24 going to do with the forestry service.

1

2 I don't know if they're going to cut
3 this, right?

4 So we have to stand in that gap,
5 and I'm just wanting to know who we can
6 pull in anticipating that this is not an
7 area of interest for the 34 times
8 convicted felon who's leading our
9 country. So I'm just putting it out
10 there, how are we being proactive in
11 that measure so that we don't lose all
12 the work you're doing, and who might
13 those partners be, including the current
14 forestry service?

15 MS. SMITH FICHMAN:

16 Absolutely. We have a forest
17 asset management system that we use that
18 -- which we use to collect all of our
19 data on all of our trees in the park
20 system and in the street tree system.
21 And so that is the data that we
22 willingly share with and collaborate
23 with researchers from our universities,
24 researchers from the forest service, but

1

2 also our Health Department so that we
3 can do case making. And they can use
4 the information -- the data they have to
5 combine with the data we have.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: My
7 final note is to protect that data
8 because we are having a very vast, sort
9 of, removal of information from public
10 spaces. The CDC is not giving us
11 updates on what is happening on say, for
12 example, infectious diseases. So we
13 need -- I just hope all of us are
14 protecting these things because this is
15 serious in terms, not just in this
16 space, across the board, right? And so
17 I just wanted to make sure that we put a
18 pin on that and we're looking to really
19 preserve our information, our data, and
20 really impact the health and well-being
21 of our constituents. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Deputy
23 Whip Bass?

24 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank

1

2 you. Good morning.

3

4 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Good
5 morning.

6

7 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So I
8 just really wanted to say thank you. I
9 wanted to thank you for your work on
10 this issue and particularly Commissioner
11 Slawson, who I've known and have worked
12 with for years, and is the commissioner
13 now and was the commissioner, you know,
14 a few moons ago and came back under this
15 administration and for taking this
16 challenge on.

17 Trees are incredibly important
18 -- I mean, you know, like I --I'm not
19 telling you something that you don't
20 already know, but I'm just stating, for
21 the record, as the former Chair of Parks
22 and Recreation.

23 You know, listen, people love
24 their trees, they want trees in the
neighborhood, and the fact that y'all
have a handle on exactly what's

1

2 happening, how it's happening and making
3 sure that the care that's necessary to
4 make trees an asset and not a dangerous
5 liability is very, very important.

6 So I just really wanted to
7 commend you all for the work that you're
8 doing and thank you. And keep up the
9 good work and count on us for your --
10 for support. We'd be happy to support
11 all of the work you're doing on this
12 issue, so thank you.

13 MS. SLAWSON: Thank you,
14 councilmember Bass.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: You're
16 welcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:
18 Minority Whip O'Rourke?

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 Thank you, Madam Chair. And
21 thank you all for your work and your
22 service to the city. Certainly a lot
23 going on in the world, and we appreciate
24 all that you do to maintain and protect

1

2 our trees in our nature.

3

Quick question. What are the
4 current incentives, if any? The city
5 has to offer property owners, businesses
6 and developers to plant and maintain
7 trees. And what are the ways that we
8 can actually create or improve those
9 incentives?

10

MS. SLAWSON: Erica?

11

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: So we --
12 the Parks Department is responsible for
13 the street trees in front of someone's
14 property or, you know, alongside in the
15 right-of-way, and those trees are
16 planted and maintained for free. So
17 that's one incentive.

18

We also operate -- we also do a
19 yard tree giveaway program to provide
20 free trees that way. The update to the
21 -- to the zoning code that Councilmember
22 Gauthier mentioned includes a new
23 requirement for developers to plant yard
24 trees for every 1,600 square feet of

1

2 open space in a plan. And the number of
3 trees that are required to be planted on
4 developments for landscape buffers and
5 other things has been increased as well.

6 One of the big things that we
7 want to do through the Philly Tree Plan
8 is increase the support that people have
9 to maintain their large trees, and to
10 remove hazardous trees on private
11 property. As the Parks Department, we
12 don't manage private property trees, but
13 we have amazing partners who do that
14 type of thing. And we are all working
15 together to fund raise for hazardous
16 tree removal program -- programs to
17 support people to care for those trees.

18 Because one of the things we
19 learned with our tree canopy assessment
20 is that one of the biggest drivers of
21 trees -- of the increase in tree canopy
22 is big -- is trees getting bigger.
23 Because when you plant little trees, it
24 takes a while for them to get larger,

1

2 but those big trees can get bigger
3 much -- and provide those benefits much
4 more quickly.

5 So protecting existing tree
6 canopy, making sure we give away free
7 trees and providing support programs for
8 people to maintain those trees are
9 things that we are actively working to
10 improve with our partners. Where we
11 don't have jurisdiction and others can,
12 we support that work.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: It's
14 great to hear about the programs that
15 help support that maintenance of that --
16 of those. Are you thinking through
17 about how to make sure that folks are
18 aware that those programs are available
19 and how to get access to them?

20 MS. SMITH FICHMAN: A lot of
21 the work that we're doing is focused in
22 the priority areas that the tree plan
23 identifies. And those are identified
24 through looking at where the tree -- the

1

2 tree canopy is lowest, asthma rates are
3 highest, heat is highest, et cetera. So
4 those areas that we're focusing new
5 programs in are inherently the ones that
6 can benefit the most from the increased
7 tree canopy. Does that answer your
8 question?

9

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

10 Sure. I'll move on. Are there
11 any protections in place for our current
12 tree canopy? What I mean by that is,
13 are there any sticks to ensure that
14 developers or other folks are held
15 responsible for any big changes that
16 they make to the green landscapes? I
17 know that we have to -- we expect it,
18 but there -- is there any like paddles
19 to kind of hold them accountable to
20 that?

21

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: So the
22 Planning Commission is the entity that
23 is much more related -- is much more
24 involved in that work. We have been

1
2 involved in the tree aspects of the
3 zoning code and advising and pushing
4 through some of the changes that have
5 happened. So like the change that
6 happened in 2022, with Councilmember
7 Gilmore-Richardson, we increased the --
8 so there's now a fee. If you remove
9 trees and don't replace them, you pay
10 for those trees that you removed. That
11 didn't exist before.

12 There are -- we removed
13 exemptions from the tree requirements in
14 the zoning code. So that single family
15 homes didn't have to comply with them
16 before, now they do. So there are
17 things that we have changed in the
18 zoning code, but again, the Planning
19 Commission is the entity that is doing a
20 lot of that review and manages changing
21 the code.

22 We are working very closely with
23 L&I and Planning Commission to push
24 forward more changes to the zoning code

1

2 for developers. And we have quite a few
3 policy related recommendations in the
4 plan about how to do that more
5 specifically, and we're moving forward
6 with those.

7

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

8

Thank you very much. Thank
9 you, Madam Chair.

10

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank

11

you. I have one last question for the

12

panel before we move on. I know that

13

thankfully this work was supported by a

14

\$12-million grant from the prior federal

15

administration. To your knowledge, do

16

we have access to that funding?

17

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: The

18

Forest Service grant? The IR grant?

19

MS. SLAWSON: We do not.

20

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

21

So even more reason for the city to step

22

up and to step in the gap. Thank you so

23

much to all of you for being here today

24

and thank you so much for your work.

1

2

MS. SLAWSON: Thank You.

3

MS. SMITH FICHMAN: Thank

4

you.

5

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Will

6

the clerk please call the next panel of

7

witnesses to testify?

8

CHIEF CLERK: Paul Devine

9

Batone and Hamil Pearsall.

10

MS. PEARSALL: Hello.

11

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good

12

morning. Please state your name, for

13

the record, and proceed with your

14

testimony.

15

MS. PEARSALL: My name is

16

Hamil Pearsall.

17

MR. BATONE: My name is Paul

18

Devine Batone.

19

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Oh,

20

and I should say, we are somewhat

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constricted with time today, so we're

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going to be asking witnesses to take no

23

more than five minutes. We'll give you

24

a signal at the end of five minutes to

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2 kind of wrap things up. Proceed.

3 MS. PEARSALL: All right.

4 I'm a professor at Temple
5 University in geography environment and
6 urban studies. I'm an environmental
7 social scientist and my research
8 examines how cities can become greener
9 and more equitable. I also look at how
10 greening initiatives might have negative
11 impacts for some residents and how to
12 reduce those impacts.

13 I've worked with the U.S. forest
14 Service Philadelphia Field Station for a
15 decade on urban forestry research, and I
16 recently completed a study in
17 partnership with the Pennsylvania
18 Horticultural Society on barriers to
19 urban tree planting initiatives in the
20 Philadelphia metro area that is
21 particularly relevant to this hearing.

22 One thing that I've learned
23 through my work in Philadelphia is that
24 many urban residents love the city's

1

2 parks and trees. Despite this general
3 affinity, residents also raise questions
4 about the long-term care and
5 responsibility that comes with planting
6 new trees.

7 These questions are important
8 because residents often become the
9 stewards of Philadelphia's urban forest.
10 While many residents can get a yard or
11 street tree for free and have an
12 enthusiastic team help them plant it in
13 the ground, residents are often the ones
14 caring for the tree over the next
15 several decades.

16 Subsequently, residents want to
17 understand what kinds of costs they're
18 assuming for watering and pruning their
19 tree. They're concerned about their
20 liability and the event of a tree
21 falling on a neighbor's property. They
22 wonder if a tree they recently helped to
23 plant will simply be removed during the
24 next redevelopment project and are

1

2 frustrated over the lack of protective
3 tree policies in the city.

4 In my opinion, this is where the
5 Philly Tree Plan really shines. The
6 plan is rooted in community perspectives
7 and need evidenced by the 9,000 people
8 who were engaged through surveys,
9 community voices, steering committees
10 and neighborhood ambassadors. Because
11 residents are the primary stewards of
12 the urban forests, it is important to
13 have a plan that builds trust in
14 community.

15 The plan is clear that the goal
16 is to invest in people and communities.
17 The plan recognizes that growing the
18 urban forest requires tree planting and
19 long-term care and there is need to
20 reduce the burden of trees on residents.

21 The plan's goals revolve around
22 ensuring that residents receive the
23 benefits of trees, and above all, the
24 plan prioritizes planting trees in

1

2 neighborhoods where increased canopy
3 cover can provide the most benefits.
4 Namely, neighborhoods with high heat
5 vulnerability, high health risk, and
6 high poverty.

7 I would argue that the plan's
8 focus on growing canopy cover equitably
9 is key. Currently, there is
10 considerable variation in canopy cover
11 across the city with some neighborhoods
12 having over 50 percent canopy cover and
13 others having as little as three
14 percent. Tree canopy coverage
15 correlates with historical patterns of
16 urban development and redlining in
17 Philadelphia.

18 A map in the Philly tree plan
19 very clearly shows that historically
20 redline neighborhoods continue to have
21 lower levels of canopy covered today.
22 Sadly, this isn't limited to
23 Philadelphia and has been a persistent
24 trend in other U.S. cities. There is

1

2 need for effective interventions to
3 redress this long term and ongoing harm
4 to neighborhoods.

5 There's a very strong
6 relationship between green vegetation
7 and temperature. While densely built
8 neighborhoods with lots of impervious
9 surfaces have the hottest temperatures,
10 green urban parks have the lowest
11 temperatures. People living in
12 neighborhoods with low canopy cover and
13 limited green spaces suffer from hotter
14 temperatures during the summer, which is
15 a growing concern as temperatures rise.

16 Extreme heat events claim more
17 lives than any other weather-related
18 hazard. Heat is considered to be a
19 silent killer because people don't
20 realize how dangerous it can be.

21 A study I did in 2017, shows that
22 Philadelphia's temperature hotspots have
23 more families living in poverty, a lower
24 median household income, and a higher

1
2 percentage in non-white residents
3 compared to both the city average and
4 non-hotspot averages. These differences
5 were statistically significant and this
6 is a clear environmental justice issue.

7 I think the Philly Tree plan
8 holds promise for addressing key
9 barriers to growing canopy cover in low
10 canopy neighborhoods. This is an issue
11 that has persisted despite the fact that
12 Philadelphia has had strong neighborhood
13 led tree planting initiatives since the
14 1990s.

15 The plan dedicates key supports
16 to some of the areas that present the
17 main obstacles to increasing canopy
18 cover. This includes providing more
19 staffing to coordinate tree planting
20 across city sectors and agencies,
21 including a city forester, a utility
22 tree coordinator, staff for natural
23 lands and a sidewalk coordinator.

24 It also provides resources that

1
2 directly address resident concerns about
3 trees, including supports for
4 maintaining mature trees on private
5 land, supporting tree planting and
6 establishment care, pursuing proactive
7 maintenance inspections on public trees
8 and creating tree care and support
9 programs for residents.

10 The plant also provides support,
11 including stipends for volunteers doing
12 tree care work and paying community
13 groups doing tree care. I strongly
14 support the continued implementation of
15 the Philly Tree Plan because it will
16 deliver the benefits of trees to
17 Philadelphia neighborhoods, particularly
18 those who have been denied these
19 benefits for decades while also reducing
20 burdens for residents.

21 Thanks to the committee for
22 inviting me to give my testimony today.

23 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
24 you. Thanks for your work and for your

1

2 testimony.

3

4 Please state your name for
5 the record and proceed with your
6 testimony.

6

7 MR. BATONE: My name is Paul
8 Devine Batone, and I'm a pediatrician
9 who specializes in adolescent and young
10 adult health, as well as climate and
11 environmental impacts on health
12 injustice.

13 So as a healthcare provider -- I
14 know a lot of folks are going to speak
15 about, you know, some of the more ground
16 level aspects of trees in our city, but
17 I really want to spend my time grounding
18 the conversation in the health
19 disparities that our city faces.

20 So folks may know about social
21 determinants of health, things like your
22 education level, the house you live in,
23 your access to healthcare or foods. But
24 I think we've unrecognized how big the
25 impact these factors have is on our

1

2 individual and community health, and how
3 they are in large part the results of
4 racist policies and practices, like the
5 redlining that was just discussed, you
6 know, that have gone back decades in the
7 city and across the country.

8

 Here in Philadelphia social
9 determinants of health lead to
10 disproportionate burdens of asthma on
11 our Black kids, as well as metabolic
12 diseases such as high blood pressure,
13 diabetes, heart disease on Black adults.
14 And social determinants of health give
15 us the zip code effect, which is the
16 significant difference in life
17 expectancy that's seen between folks in
18 the same city from different zip codes.

19 So for example, in Society Hill,
20 which is zip code 19106, life expectancy
21 is about 88 years, while in Strawberry
22 Mansion, 19132, it's about 68 years. So
23 just four miles apart, same city,
24 someone is expected to live 20 years

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2 less.

3

Tree cover represents an environmental determinant of health. So because urban trees offer numerous physical and health benefits, some of them have already been mentioned, but we know that they have direct effects on our surroundings filtering out pollutants in the air we breathe, as well as the storm water runoff that runs into our drinking supply.

13

They also reduce street temperatures as was mentioned, so there can be, you know, more than 20 degree differences between neighborhoods with more asphalt, more concrete, more built environment and less green space.

19

So if you look at a day that's 85 degrees on Germantown Ave. out in Chestnut Hill, that same day can feel like 105 degrees on Germantown Ave. by Hunting Park.

24

As climate change and the climate

1

2 crisis continue to worsen, you know,
3 these temperatures are only going to get
4 worse, as will the very serious health
5 effects that they represent.

6 So in addition to the direct
7 effects that trees have, the direct
8 benefits that trees can provide,
9 research has shown us that trees have
10 many indirect benefits on health, some
11 of which have, again, also been
12 mentioned. But they lower blood
13 pressure -- they're associated with
14 lower blood pressure, frequency of
15 preterm birth and are very pertinent to
16 our conversations in this city, lower
17 levels of gun violence.

18 Trees also help people feel
19 happier, they help focus, especially on
20 our young people, and they lead to
21 dramatic improvements in feelings of
22 safety and security. Impact on any one
23 of these concerns can save lives, but
24 also can save significant health

1

2 spending.

3 And this is especially important
4 at this moment when the narratives from
5 the federal level are all about cutting
6 and limiting access to health funding.

7 In spite of their beauty and
8 benefits, as my panelists just noted,
9 trees are not spread evenly across the
10 city. Neighborhoods that have the least
11 tree cover are not coincidentally the
12 same neighborhoods that were redlined 80
13 years ago, and the same neighborhoods
14 that today have the highest rates of
15 childhood asthma, Type II diabetes, gun
16 violence and associated traumas.

17 So the scope of all these -- with
18 the scope of these health issues as well
19 as the racial and ethnic disparities
20 that they represent, the challenges are
21 daunting. Big solutions are needed,
22 many of which will require complex
23 infrastructure, major investment when
24 thinking about expanding healthcare

1
2 services, for example. But trees
3 represent a relatively simple, powerful,
4 cost-effective and honestly beautiful
5 part of this path that we can take
6 toward a healthier, more just
7 Philadelphia.

8 And in light of the dimming
9 prospects of -- the dimming prospects of
10 big federal action or any federal action
11 to represent health or the environment,
12 local community-based actions like what
13 we're discussing today are pivotal. And
14 so as a doctor, parent, a nature level
15 -- and a nature lover and a
16 Philadelphian, I just want to offer my
17 full support for the tree plan and, you
18 know, the work that folks have
19 mentioned. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you so much to both of you for coming to
22 support the plan, and for sharing the
23 data behind why the plan is so important
24 to the city. Is there anything that you

1

2 would like to see the city do
3 differently or better with regards to
4 the plan?

5 MS. PEARSALL: I guess I -- I
6 would just like to say that I think this
7 increased resources and staffing is so
8 important for the implementation, and I
9 think it's important to be able to
10 provide that over the long term.

11 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you.

13 MR. BATONE: And, you know,
14 it was mentioned earlier that one of the
15 most dramatic cuts was to any
16 environmental justice -- on the federal
17 level was to any environmental justice
18 initiative. And so, you know, just,
19 speaking to the justice perspective
20 here, we again know that the tree canopy
21 is leased in those areas that do have
22 the highest burden of chronic disease.

23 And so, not just in terms of, you
24 know, the healthcare savings, which of

1

2 course could be huge and very important
3 for all levels of government. You know,
4 it's also -- I just think important that
5 we focus even more on the environmental
6 justice aspects here, and I know that
7 was mentioned by the folks from Parks
8 and Rec.

9 But, you know, I think that that
10 is really what's going to help this plan
11 succeed is if folks can look at their
12 neighborhood and can recognize, you
13 know, the disparities that they see in
14 action, in their families, in their
15 communities every day and see that there
16 are benefits being provided.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
18 you. Minority Whip O'Rourke.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 Thank you, Madam Chair, and
21 thank you both for your testimony.

22 Based on your understanding of
23 the tree plan, what do you think the
24 city should prioritize as an important

1

2 next step, especially, from a public
3 health lens?

4 MR. BATONE: So there is some

5 data, you know, there's a lot of

6 research that's done on trees and

7 health, fortunately. And I guess I'll

8 just say really quickly that, you know,

9 I think these hearings are the reason

10 why the federal funding is being cut.

11 Because when we don't have research that

12 tells us that this stuff is helpful,

13 that these things are so important,

14 research that is very, very often

15 federally funded, then there's no

16 conversation about it. And folks who

17 have corporate power, folks who have,

18 you know, bigger say in some of these

19 things, get to do whatever they want.

20 So that's why I think it's, you know,

21 it's so important that we have research

22 on any level.

23 But to your question about

24 priorities. You know, some of the

1
2 research shows us that trees in public
3 spaces actually have greater benefit for
4 some of these health metrics, as opposed
5 to trees that are in private spaces. So
6 to the question that you asked the prior
7 panel, you know, certainly we should
8 support trees on all properties, but
9 really focusing our funding in public
10 spaces can be a very important piece.

11 And I'm also a member of the
12 Philadelphia Environmental Justice
13 Advisory Commission. And, you know, out
14 in community listening to folks,
15 specifically in Point Breeze and Grace
16 Ferry, a lot of the push back was about
17 things that have been mentioned about
18 trees and the way that they can disrupt
19 people's properties and leave people
20 feeling very unsupported by the city.

21 So, you know, I know that there's
22 discussion of a sidewalk coordinator. I
23 think that would be a great option
24 because that's something that, again, is

1
2 something that people see right in front
3 of them. They see the tree that's on
4 their block and they see the disruption
5 that it can cause. And so I feel like
6 those types of very targeted solutions
7 could really be helpful, again, thinking
8 about trees as this public good.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Are
10 there any national models at all that we
11 can -- at this point that we should be
12 following or just taking notes from?

13 MS. PEARSALL: So I think
14 from an environmental justice
15 perspective, what Philadelphia is doing
16 is very cutting edge and could become
17 the model. And so I think it's
18 important to be able to follow through
19 on that, because there's a lot of
20 research and understanding around how --
21 around how environmental injustices are
22 created. We understand that redlining
23 has led to persistent can be covered
24 inequities.

1
2 But I think there -- there's
3 fewer models out there for how to
4 address that. Like how do we promote a
5 more equitable and just canopy cover in
6 the city? And what I -- what I see
7 Philadelphia doing is beginning to
8 achieve that. So I would -- I would
9 love to see where it goes. I hope it is
10 able to receive the support it needs to
11 be successful.

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

13 That's a pat on the back. Thank
14 you for that.

15 MR. BATONE: I'll just add
16 that, I think in Baltimore and Portland
17 are two cities that have really
18 undergone very serious research on this
19 as well. And specifically thinking
20 about the gun violence question that one
21 of your fellow councilmembers asked.
22 And so, you know, I think that there's
23 -- definitely, again, there's -- there's
24 ample work being done out there, which

1

2 is great to see.

3

But I know in Baltimore

4

specifically they have really been

5

looking at where trees are planted,

6

which trees seem to provide, what types

7

of trees seem to provide the most

8

benefit for gun violence reduction and

9

finding some interesting things.

10

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

11

Thank you very much. Thank

12

you, Madam Chair.

13

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: We are

14

the model. I love that. So that means

15

we got to keep it up. So thank you so

16

much for your work and your testimony

17

and for being here today.

18

MS. PEARSALL: Thank you.

19

MR. BATONE: Thank you.

20

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Will

21

the clerk please call the next panel of

22

witnesses to testify.

23

CHIEF CLERK: Jacelyn Blank

24

and Dominique London.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good

3

morning.

4

MS. LONDON: Good morning.

5

MS. BLANK: Good morning.

6

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please

7

say your name, for the record, and

8

proceed with your testimony.

9

MS. LONDON: I am Dominique

10

London, director of UC Green. Okay.

11

Good morning, everyone, and

12

thank you so much for hearing my

13

testimony. I am a native to

14

Philadelphia, a gardener, planner by

15

education, and director of the largest

16

tree tender program in Philadelphia, UC

17

Green.

18

I've been director of UC Green

19

for three years, and under my

20

leadership, we've planted and maintained

21

over 250 trees while historically UC

22

Green as a community org has planted and

23

maintained over 5,000 of the trees that

24

you see in West Philly and Southwest

1

2 Philly, more specifically, 19139, 19104,
3 and 19142.

4 Before this role, I was asked to
5 be a neighborhood ambassador under the
6 Philly Tree Plan for the Kingsessing
7 area where I used to live, which
8 informed the Philly Tree Plan. My job
9 was to speak to neighbors about their
10 thoughts on trees if they wanted them,
11 why or why not? What they thought of
12 our neighborhood being a heat island or
13 one with shade. I recorded these
14 findings and reported them to the
15 leadership of our tree plan.

16 And what we found was that if
17 given the right resources and education,
18 people absolutely want to work, live and
19 play where there's dense tree canopy.
20 So how do I feel personally about the
21 tree plan? There's a Chinese proverb
22 that says, the best time to plant a tree
23 was 20 years ago, the next best time is
24 today. The tree plan was overdue. It

1

2 is a very thoughtful plan.

3 Philadelphia is the largest urban
4 park system in the United States of
5 America with an unequal distribution of
6 tree canopy and a 20-degree difference
7 from one part of the city to the next
8 because of this. The greatest thing
9 about this tree plan is that it aims to
10 correct this unequal distribution.

11 Philly is a city of firsts. It's
12 where our Constitution was ratified.
13 Look at our eviction diversion program.
14 The rest of the country looks at
15 Philadelphia for what -- to what we're
16 doing, so I want us to keep in mind that
17 there's a macro, sort of, vision to be
18 looking at right now.

19 Trees are the only urban
20 infrastructure that actually increases
21 in value and service over time. Not
22 your subway systems, not your buildings,
23 it is trees. They're your -- your air
24 purifier, your flood mitigator, your

1

2 wind barrier, your news reducer, your
3 traffic calmer, just to name a few of
4 the services and benefits that trees
5 provide.

6 What I've seen since the rollout
7 of the tree plan is a ramping up of
8 coalition building amongst many of our
9 constituents here, or community
10 organizations, people who have never
11 really worked together are now working
12 together, finding intersections of their
13 work. There's been an increase in tree
14 requests in neighborhoods like Cobbs
15 Creek, Kingessing, Mill Creek, Powelton
16 Village.

17 A wider understanding of the
18 barriers to planting trees and tree
19 denials, which I can get into, I'm sure
20 you'll ask me that. Community pride and
21 care and a desire to design the built
22 environment amongst residents,
23 commercial businesses, inquiring more
24 about trees, an increase in green jobs

1

2 and tree planting. And an increase in
3 education opportunity as it pertains to
4 trees, like tree tours and walks. More
5 engagement with the outdoors.

6 Some of the challenges that I've
7 been able to see during this time, build
8 environment issues that become cost
9 prohibitive to most residents, like
10 cracked sidewalks, dead trees that you
11 have to remove and tree stumps that need
12 to be ground down. All these are the
13 responsibility of the homeowner before
14 they can even get a tree.

15 We spoke about Councilwoman
16 Gilmore-Richardson's introduction to
17 some of the development standards. We
18 would love -- I would love to see sort
19 of how that's enforced.

20 Another barrier is the renter
21 versus homeowner situation. If you want
22 to get a street tree planted in
23 Philadelphia, you have to sign the
24 application. In order to sign the

1

2 application, you have to be the
3 homeowner.

4 So what UC Green is doing is
5 quite unique. We're actually engaging
6 more with property owners and landlords
7 on behalf of their tenants to say, hey,
8 you have about 10 tenants who are
9 requesting trees, you are the one that
10 needs to sign this. And so that's
11 something that we're working on.

12 Trust was mentioned here earlier.
13 We need our leadership, we need our
14 Mayor, we need you guys speaking
15 publicly about this tree plan and what
16 is happening in our neighborhoods.
17 Another thing I want to highlight is
18 putting the fire to large education
19 institutions and having them to continue
20 support the labor and operations of
21 their tree tenders by maybe PILT. Those
22 who are unfamiliar PILTs is payment in
23 lieu of taxes. I'll just stop there.

24 Access to hydrant keys. Some of

1
2 our tree tenders do have access to
3 water, but a lot of the hydrants are
4 being changed out. And so we need
5 access to water so that we can water our
6 trees for our neighbors. And I would
7 say using councilmanic prerogative to
8 moon -- to move land bank lots into a
9 land trust that can be used for further
10 greening like orchards and food
11 production would be very, very helpful.

12 While the tree plan from
13 inception to implementation is a large
14 undertaking, and I'm proud to be a part
15 of it, it is a small step towards a
16 holistic approach to what environmental
17 justice in Philly should look like. I
18 would be remiss if I did not lift up the
19 vision and the labor of Ash Richards and
20 her leadership on the Philly Urban Ag
21 Plan, a 10-year framework for investing
22 in agriculture and food justice. Both
23 of these plans are the seed to growing a
24 healthier, greener, safer, and more

1

2 self-reliant Philadelphia.

3 In the words of Lao Tzu, "To see
4 things in the seed, that is genius."

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
7 you so much, Dominique. We so
8 appreciate the work of UC Green in the
9 third district. Thank you so much. And
10 I also want to lift up that you taught
11 me a new term that I never let go of
12 during our work with the reparations
13 task force. You talked about
14 greenlining, right? We've been talking
15 a lot about redlining --

16 MS. LONDON: Greenlining.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: And
18 what it has meant for communities to be
19 starved of -- intentionally starved of
20 resources. And you were proposing that
21 in response to that we should do
22 greenlining, right? And to me, I
23 interpreted that as making sure that
24 those same neglected communities have

1
2 trees and are green, but also that we're
3 investing resources in so many other
4 areas. So thank you for the passion
5 that you bring to this work.

6 MS. LONDON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
8 state your name, for the record, and
9 proceed with your testimony.

10 MS. BLANK: I'm Jacelyn
11 Blank. Good morning, Philadelphia City
12 Council. Thank you,
13 Councilmember Gauthier for the
14 opportunity to testify today. I'm truly
15 honored to be considered an expert
16 witness to be able to share my lived
17 experiences and professional knowledge
18 and hopes to benefit my fellow citizens
19 of Philadelphia through continued
20 advocacy for the necessary funding to
21 further the implementation of the Philly
22 Tree Plan.

23 My name is Jacelyn Paige
24 Blank, and after 47 rotations of the

1
2 sun, my page has certainly not been left
3 blank. In the earliest years of my
4 introduction to urban living, I
5 navigated my way around this city by
6 bicycle, bus, car, and train, while
7 dodging the myriad pothole streets of
8 Kensington down to fit Grays Ferry up
9 and through the northeast and back
10 across Broad Street to Strawberry
11 Mansion.

12 At the end of my day, I would
13 strip down in my East Kensington
14 backyard naively thinking that I would
15 avoid bringing bedbugs into my home. As
16 an early intervention specialist, I had
17 permission to walk through the doors of
18 the homes and schools of many of
19 Philadelphia's neediest children.

20 It was behind the walls of those
21 buildings and my travels on those
22 treeless streets that I learned the
23 naked truth about redlining. I was
24 smacked in the face with the vile

1

2 repercussions of systemic racism that
3 led to the economic and environmental
4 injustices of my non-white fellow
5 humans.

6 After seven grueling years of
7 working full-time, and taking classes at
8 Temple University, I finally received my
9 master's in education with teaching
10 certifications in elementary and special
11 education. I learned more from all
12 those difficult work experiences than I
13 ever did behind the desk at Temple
14 University, but I gripped tightly to
15 that well fought degree regardless.

16 Philadelphia has punched me in
17 the face, kicked me in the gut, dragged
18 me through the gutter, hosed me down by
19 the powerful spray of a fire hydrant,
20 and hung me over the telephone line to
21 dry by the forceful gritty air of a gas
22 powered leaf blower. Metaphorically
23 speaking, of course.

24 I may not have been born here,

1

2 but because of and despite my 20 years
3 in Kensington, I certainly have been
4 raised here. My genetic data is forever
5 altered. These past two decades have
6 groomed me to be a vocal and staunch
7 community activist.

8 I have led countless groups of
9 suburban college students and cleanups
10 of my neighborhood as a board member of
11 the East Kensington Neighbors
12 Association. I have stood arm in arm
13 with my neighbors tirelessly advocating
14 for the revitalization of our beloved
15 Haggard Street playground. I have put
16 up a fight in order to save what little
17 green space we have left after the lead
18 laid and dust settled behind the
19 relentless years long development.

20 The development that dredged deep
21 moats through and around the community I
22 was beginning to call home. Bridges
23 were built over those moats that
24 appeared to only be privy to the

1

2 seemingly endless traffic of electric
3 vehicles that parade passed our bodegas
4 feeling entitled to park in a crosswalk
5 while clamoring for a seat at Port
6 Fishington's hottest new five-star
7 restaurant.

8 I am not only an educator and
9 community activist, I'm a steward of the
10 Rainbow Garden, which has to be the
11 Philadelphia's tiniest preserve
12 neighborhood gardens trust lot. I am
13 co-founder of the Friends of HA Brown
14 Elementary, one of Philadelphia's
15 emeralds in the rough of public schools
16 located across the street from the
17 Rainbow Garden.

18 Back in 2018, when I became
19 steward, my first action was to have the
20 lot cleared to improve sight lines. And
21 then it sat for years because of the
22 homeless encampments, flagrant drug
23 abuse and increased prostitution. HA
24 Brown is where I completed my student

1

2 teaching in 2012, and where my son
3 attended as a student for five years.

4 I'm a pollinator partnership --
5 certified pollinator steward.

6 I'm also a survivor of Hepatitis
7 A and I am one tough mother of an even
8 more resilient, wide-eyed and
9 emotionally conflicted 11-year-old who
10 has witnessed more about being human
11 than I ever imagined when I was his age.

12 I am known by some as their
13 preschool child's teacher and known by
14 others as someone who will stand up for
15 what is right and who is certainly not
16 afraid to speak truth to power.
17 However, I am more well-known for the 18
18 years of volunteer work.

19 I just dedicated to the planting
20 and care of thousands of street trees
21 through Philly tree people, the not-for-
22 profit volunteer operated tree tender
23 organization I co-founded back in 2007.
24 I am a proud graduate from the class of

1

2 that year from the Pennsylvania
3 Horticulture Society Tree Tender
4 Program. This certification led me down
5 a splintered path to becoming an
6 international society of a bar culture
7 certified arborist.

8 Philly Tree People operates in
9 19125 and 19134 neighborhoods of
10 Kensington yet reaches a wide audience.
11 In partnership with PHS and Philadelphia
12 Parks and Recreation, Philly Tree People
13 has facilitated the planting of over
14 2,000 street trees since our inception.
15 We have also provided educational events
16 on the vital maintenance and pruning of
17 our youngest trees to share the
18 knowledge to others on what is needed
19 for them to survive and thrive.

20 We have built lasting
21 relationships with many of our local
22 public schools and friends of groups for
23 local parks, and worked with civic
24 associations to spread the word about

1

2 the importance of trees within our urban
3 environment.

4 We have gathered hundreds of
5 volunteers to assist us in the planting
6 of these trees because this act is an
7 immediate gratification for our quick
8 Sunday morning. We have spent countless
9 hours working side by side with
10 Philadelphia youth, teaching them the
11 skills we have gained and hopes that
12 they will perpetuate the good work in
13 their communities and demonstrate that
14 the trees are something of value and
15 they are necessary for everyone to
16 survive and thrive.

17 We have led, although
18 unfortunately a lot fewer groups of
19 volunteers to prune, provide tree care,
20 tree pit maintenance and collect data on
21 the health and well-being of the trees
22 we have planted as well.

23 I can't. I have to say that all
24 of this work has been an unpaid labor of

1

2 absolute love for trees. However, I
3 cringe when people clap and cheer in
4 response to our statistics because I
5 know that many of those trees needed to
6 be replanted many times because people
7 have just destroyed them.

8 Let's not forget about also the
9 old oak tree within the -- with a 3-foot
10 diameter that a neighborhood had just
11 cut down this past summer, no permit, no
12 fines, no means of retribution as the 20
13 young trees down the street at another
14 public school kept -- keep getting
15 backed into ripped of their limbs and
16 left on water during a long -- a month
17 long drought.

18 I have been knocked down many
19 times, but for whatever reason I picked
20 myself back up each day after licking my
21 wounds and steadfastly got back to work
22 planting and tending to the necessary
23 care of thousands of young trees. But
24 despite the unfortunate news in 2018 at

1

2 the first ever tree summit, I learned
3 that after a 10-year study tracking the
4 planting of trees across the city that
5 we actually lost canopy cover.

6 Many were sick and dying, others
7 were nuisance, invasive, made way or cut
8 down to make way for development. And
9 our youngest weren't big enough to show
10 an impact. However, I persist. Surely
11 things would get better.

12 For the next several years myself
13 and other like-minded Philadelphians
14 spent hours on Zoom calls at the
15 community voices steering committee
16 meetings, helping to shape plan to bring
17 back the canopy we so desperately needed
18 planning to engage every neighborhood,
19 ambassadors are paid and talked to in
20 the hardest hit neighborhoods.

21 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Can
22 you take sort of -- sorry, can you take
23 like the next 10 seconds and complete
24 your testimony?

1

2

MS. BLANK: In late February

3

of 2021, I was stunned not at the fact

4

that the Philly Tree plan had been

5

published, but rather that a blog had

6

been posted about the destruction of

7

hundreds of trees at Cobbs Creek.

8

I can go on and on about that,

9

and what others seem to think is fine to

10

do, I drove away in dismay after being

11

on that property, and I can't believe

12

that my city simultaneously working with

13

us to create the Philly Tree Plan also

14

made deals to eradicate the majority of

15

what was being planted.

16

My 2,000 trees over 20 years is

17

negated when those trees are removed.

18

So I simply wish to get my -- simply get

19

to my wish list for Philly Tree Plan. I

20

want to keep planting more trees, but I

21

also feel like desperately giving up. I

22

want actual laws to protect our heritage

23

trees, I want laws to protect them all,

24

I want those who are destroying our

1

2 trees to be fined and educated on how to
3 properly prune and take care of and
4 plant, I want the community members who
5 are working hard to be paid and cared
6 for and understood, I want the -- I want
7 community members who are going to be
8 caring for these trees to be trained by
9 professional ISA certified arborists.

10 I want my city to stop making
11 deals with the devils and to actively
12 listen to and adopt the collected
13 knowledge of the folks who have been
14 doing this work for free. I want
15 funding. I want there to be a priority
16 because protecting successively planting
17 and continually maintaining our urban
18 forest has scientifically proven to be
19 one of the most-simplest solutions to
20 our most pressing issues. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
22 you so much for your work and your
23 passion and for being here today. I
24 have a -- a couple of questions, but

1

2 first, I'm told that we have some
3 visitors and I want to recognize them.

4 So we have Samuel Gompers School and
5 Potter Thomas joining us today. Hi.

6 Thank you so much. Thank you so much
7 for coming to see your government in
8 action. I hope I don't embarrass her
9 too much, but I think I see the majority
10 leader's daughter as well. Thank you so
11 much for joining us. It's nice to see
12 you. So that's a reminder of why we're
13 doing this right, and why it's
14 important.

15 So Dominique, you mentioned
16 during your testimony, that you might
17 want to get more into sort of why there
18 are denials and why people refuse trees
19 in your work. Do you want to talk a
20 little bit more about that?

21 MS. DOMINIQUE: Yes. So, I
22 meant to -- in my nervousness, I meant
23 to hand -- I have maps for you all, but
24 I can give them to you afterwards but a

1

2 map of UC Greens catchment area. Where
3 we started it's very purple, which means
4 it's a low priority. And then outside
5 of that University City area, everything
6 is red and orange and yellow, and that's
7 because we need to continue moving out
8 to plant more trees.

9 So some of the challenges that I
10 -- and I'll go more into the weeds about
11 it. I'll mention one is -- is just
12 built environment issues. If you have a
13 cracked sidewalk, you have to have that
14 sidewalk repaired before you get the
15 tree. And depending on your income,
16 that just might not be something that
17 you can get done. And so with the help
18 of our William Penn Grant we're able to
19 have what we call an equity fund, which
20 are going to help with the cost of that
21 for residents that actually really need
22 it.

23 The second thing is tree stump
24 removal and dead tree removal. We have

1
2 a wonderful partner named Tree Ken who
3 is also someone who helps with our
4 pruning. He's been involved with UC
5 Green since before I came on obviously
6 but Tree Ken really provides affordable
7 tree removal, and again if it's
8 something that is still cost
9 prohibitive, then UC Green fills in that
10 gap as well. Some of the other issues
11 are just addressing myths.

12 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.

13 MS. DOMINIQUE: And calming
14 concerns and so one is, I don't want the
15 tree to mess up my pipes.

16 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Yeah.

17 MS. DOMINIQUE: I always show
18 residents -- I do something called
19 design charrettes where I'm meeting with
20 the entire block and we go through the
21 city approved species list. And I say
22 before you could just plant a London
23 plane anywhere. London planes I call
24 them blockbusters. They belong in

1

2 cemeteries and parks. They don't belong
3 -- they don't belong on your -- on your
4 sidewalk.

5 And so I show them the city-
6 approved species list which is organized
7 by height. We walk the block and we go
8 over, do you have overhanging wires?
9 How wide is your sidewalk? How far is
10 it from the -- from the -- from the
11 corner, or a stop sign or a bus stop?
12 And I show them how things are different
13 from how they used to be and so that
14 sort of calms them.

15 And then during the design
16 charrette process, the neighbors are
17 actually able to design what they want
18 their block to look like. Ari, who's on
19 our board and with Hinch Collective then
20 will produce a rendering of what the
21 block looks like with those trees that
22 they've selected and at maturity. And
23 so when they look at it they're like,
24 oh, this is what a Eastern Redbud looks

1

2 like in bloom and spring. And so it
3 gives them the visual and then they can
4 make a decision as to what they want to
5 plant or not.

6 But, yeah, the build environment
7 issues, the myths, people being
8 concerned about having their pipes
9 destroyed. And I tell people, tree
10 roots don't destroy pipes. They take
11 advantage of pipes that are already
12 destroyed.

13 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you. Thank you for that. Ms. Blank,
15 you gave a very thorough testimony with
16 a very thorough wish list, but I wanted
17 to ask you, if you could name one thing
18 that you would like to see the city do
19 better as it relates to -- relates to
20 the tree plan, what would that be?

21 MS. BLANK: I would like for
22 the city to take this very seriously.
23 All members, not just our environment
24 committee. You're here for a reason.

1

2 And fund the people who are doing the
3 work. Don't recreate the wheel.

4 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
5 you so much. Minority Whip o'Rourke.

6 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: No
7 questions. Just simply one to one thank
8 you, Ms. Blank, for your advocacy as
9 chairwoman said, your passion on this
10 matter, but also to you, London, for the
11 work that you do. The education that
12 you provide in real sense. I've known
13 your work for some time and just
14 thankful for what you bring to the city.
15 You are a bright spot in our society.
16 Thank you very much for your education
17 and your advocacy.

18 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:
19 Councilmember Harrity.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Yes.
21 I also want to thank you for your work.
22 You're in Southwest, Southwest Philly
23 and West Philly and Kensington, I live,
24 but I'm from Southwest Philly. I was

1

2 born and raised there and I always --

3 they've heard me tell the story before.

4 Before I moved to Southwest I

5 lived at 17th and Mifflin, which is very

6 landlocked. There's no -- it's not even

7 really a park. There is one, but it's a

8 bocce ball court for the old Italian

9 people when I was a kid and you weren't

10 really allowed in there. They didn't

11 like kids playing on the playground

12 because they were playing bocce and we,

13 I guess, distracted them.

14 But I always say when I first

15 moved to Southwest Philadelphia, I

16 thought I'd moved to the suburbs because

17 I had never seen grass and trees and I

18 get out there and everybody had lawns

19 and, you know, and I'm not just talking

20 like in the neighborhood, I first moved

21 there I was in Bartram Village, and

22 there was a lot of green.

23 I remember going back in Bartram

24 Gardens when it snowed and sledding on

1

2 the hill there down to the river. But
3 it always struck me of how nice it was
4 and as a kid how proud I would've -- of
5 my neighborhood because of how it looked
6 and how pretty it was when everybody's
7 flowers bloomed, and in the summertime
8 everybody's lawn was cut.

9 And as a kid I just remember that
10 feeling, you know, of thinking, wow,
11 this is a lot different, this is nice.
12 You know what I mean?

13 And I'm a firm believer in those
14 kind of simple things that actually give
15 pride to a neighborhood. You know, like
16 I said, I live in Kensington now, and I
17 live on a street in a neighborhood that
18 is decimated by the opioid epidemic.

19 But if you come to my street in
20 the summertime, you'll see flowers
21 everywhere because, you know, I go back
22 and forth to New Jersey to the shore in
23 the summertime and I drive passed the
24 farms and I pick up the flats of flowers

1

2 and I started making little baskets for
3 a couple of the neighbors, the seniors.
4 And then next thing you know, this one
5 asks, that one asks, this one asks. And
6 now almost every house on my block has
7 flower pots out in front that bloom with
8 roses in the summertime.

9 And, you know, just seeing the
10 kids' reaction to all that is something
11 to see. So I just want to commend you
12 on your work and I get it, funding is
13 what we need. Some more funding.

14 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: That's
15 wonderful, Councilmember.

16 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: And
19 thanks to the -- go ahead. Do you want
20 to respond?

21 MS. DOMINIQUE: Yeah. There
22 were just a few things that I think
23 Councilmember Harrity and maybe yourself
24 had asked some of the other folks

1

2 testifying that I wanted to build on --

3 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Go

4 ahead.

5 MS. DOMINIQUE: -- and speak

6 to and it was about like the proactive

7 measures that we have.

8 So one thing to note about UC

9 Green is that UC Green is steered by one

10 employee and a lot of volunteers. So

11 the 5,000 trees that have been -- that

12 are planted and stewarded are because of

13 the people who dedicate their labor

14 voluntarily. Some of the proactive

15 things that UC Green does, trees that we

16 plant two to three years ago, we go back

17 and we do structural pruning to make

18 sure they actually survive.

19 Every single year we do

20 something called tree checkers. Tree

21 checkers is going back to the previous

22 year of all of the trees that we planted

23 and checking them for, if they're

24 surviving, if they've been watered

1
2 properly, if there's been a drought.
3 We're checking for all of these things.
4 If there are pests, and then we provide
5 a report card to the resident. And then
6 by year two or three that we're coming
7 back to that same tree and that we're
8 doing structural pruning for them. UC
9 Green also acts as a liaison between
10 institutions and residents.

11 The 60 -- the 200 block of
12 63rd Street is considered a highway. It
13 is a pilot program for one of the first
14 design charrettes that I was able to do.
15 And mostly every single resident on that
16 block has agreed to a tree because of
17 the process that I told you about having
18 the rendering and trees are traffic
19 calming.

20 And so when trees grow on a
21 wide street, it makes the block look
22 narrower and inadvertently causes people
23 to drive slower. And that particular
24 stretch of street is very loud. People

1
2 speed all of the time and there's a lot
3 of pollution. And so I'm looking
4 forward to the next two to three, maybe
5 five years seeing how much that canopy
6 grows as well. I'm trying to think.
7 Was there any --

8 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:

9 Thanks.

10 MS. DOMINIQUE: Yeah. Go
11 ahead. That's it. That's it.

12 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thanks
13 so much to both of you. Will the clerk
14 please call the next panel to testify?

15 CHIEF CLERK: Justin Trezza
16 and Nate Hummel.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
18 morning. You both have five minutes
19 each for your testimony. Please state
20 your name for the record and proceed.

21 MR. TREZZA: Good morning,
22 council members. My name is Justin
23 Trezza. I'm the Senior Director of
24 Healthy Neighborhoods at the

1

2 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. At
3 PHS we believe that planting and caring
4 for trees across our city offers an
5 affordable, effective, attainable
6 opportunity to significantly improve
7 quality of life, safety, economic and
8 health outcomes across the city.

9 Importantly, expanding tree
10 planting and care efforts will have
11 disproportionately positive impacts in
12 neighborhoods facing the most
13 challenging economic and health outcomes
14 today, because these are the
15 neighborhoods where urban trees and our
16 benefits are most absent today.

17 We are committed to realizing
18 this potential through the ongoing work
19 of our tree tenders program and our new
20 role as the home of the Philly Tree
21 Coalition. We need city council's
22 support and financial investment to
23 realize the potential of trees to
24 strengthen our city.

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Increasing tree canopy reduces violent crime, cuts asthma rates and can help reduce the urban heat island effect in low canopy neighborhoods. U.S. forest Service researchers estimate that achieving 30 percent tree canopy would prevent 400 premature deaths per year in Philadelphia. Despite this, Philadelphia has not historically invested in trees.

In 2018, the city commissioned a study that found tree canopy, the area shaded by mature trees at 20 percent, having declined 6 percent from 2008 to 2018. In some neighborhoods, tree canopy was as low as two percent against a benchmark goal of 30 percent canopy coverage to access health and safety benefits like reduced crime and reduced asthma rates.

In response to these findings, the city led the creation of the Philly Tree Plan in close collaboration with

1
2 partner stakeholders including PHS. The
3 goal of the plan was simple, to charter
4 -- to chart a clear path to expand and
5 grow a healthy urban forest for
6 Philadelphia. At the end of the
7 planning, partners agreed best way to
8 implement the plan was in a public
9 private joint venture collaboration in
10 order to go big rather than fragmented
11 for funding as invest in spreading the
12 word and fundraising and keeping the
13 partners in lockstep coordination around
14 the care and growth of the tree canopy.

15 Through joint venture whole
16 becomes greater than the sum of parts.
17 The Philly Tree Plan was developed by
18 the city and partners and provides a
19 road map to achieve healthy canopy cover
20 goals and disadvantaged neighborhoods
21 through continued partnership among
22 government, non-profits, community
23 organizations, and most importantly
24 residents.

1

2 Our city's liveability depends on
3 healthy and well-care for trees that
4 protect us from heat, improve mental and
5 physical health and combat climate
6 change.

7 To realize this vision, the city
8 PHS and other partners joined forces to
9 establish the Philly Tree Coalition
10 housed that PHS. The coalition is
11 inspired by models and other cities,
12 including the powerhouse Casey Trees in
13 Washington, DC. The coalition has a
14 simple purpose; ensure delivery of the
15 Philly tree plan by coordinating and
16 integrating work planning,
17 implementation, fundraising and
18 awareness building.

19 If we grow in reach and health,
20 together, the coalition secured -- or
21 no. If we are successful, Philly Tree
22 Canopy will become an understood civic
23 asset like the library system and will
24 grow in reach and health.

1
2 Together, the coalition secured a
3 \$12-million grant from the federal
4 government, which unfortunately has been
5 frozen, support from individual donors,
6 and recently a near \$2-million grant
7 from the William Penn Foundation. We
8 are currently hiring a director to lead
9 the coalition and work with partners to
10 build a strong governing structure for
11 the coalition. This builds on existing
12 work to care for and grow the canopy --
13 tree canopy by PHS and many other
14 partners.

15 For decades, PHS's tree tenders
16 program has worked across the city hand
17 in hand with volunteers and neighborhood
18 leaders to plant and steward street
19 trees. All told, close to 6,000
20 Philadelphians have been trained as a
21 tree tender by PHS. Today there are
22 over 80 active volunteer driven tree
23 tender groups.

24 Together, these groups plant more

1

2 than 2000 trees per year. To realize
3 the untapped benefits of trees, we
4 prioritize our tree plantings in low
5 canopy high priority neighborhood in
6 line with the tree plan's goals.

7 At PHS we believe that we must
8 shift perceptions of trees from nice to
9 have amenities enjoyed predominantly by
10 largely white wealthy neighborhoods, to
11 a vital and fundamental element of every
12 Philadelphia neighborhood. All
13 Philadelphians, no matter what their zip
14 code is, deserve to live in a clean,
15 green, and safe environment. Trees are
16 a huge piece of this equation in
17 addition to the obvious environmental
18 and climate benefits.

19 As we move forward, we ask for
20 city council support in four ways: One,
21 establish the Philly Tree plan as
22 policy. Charge the Philly Tree
23 Coalition as a driver of implementing
24 the plan. Invite the Philly -- and

1
2 invite the Philly Tree Coalition to
3 provide an annual update on impact,
4 financial needs and resources for the
5 next year and then -- and the next set
6 of work that needs to be done. It's
7 important to keep implementation
8 centralized in this unified body which
9 works closely with partners and
10 community groups.

11 Two, partner with the Philly Tree
12 Coalition and its members to educate
13 neighbors about the value of trees and
14 champion trees as vital neighborhood
15 assets. To honor the legitimate
16 concerns of residents, invest heavily,
17 not only in tree planting but more
18 importantly in maintenance. And then I
19 could summarize.

20 Two, invest significantly in
21 trees, you know, work with the coalition
22 to raise funds as well as having the
23 city invest in it.

24 And then fourth, PHS and the city

1
2 together have done with the land care
3 program, use investments in trees to
4 create new opportunities for small
5 businesses and more jobs for
6 neighborhood residents. This requires
7 long-term sustained funding not
8 historically the kind of funding trees
9 have received, and a commitment to
10 structuring procurement and payment to
11 match the needs of small businesses.
12 Trees have enormous untapped potential
13 for Philadelphia, and we thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
15 you so much. We value the work of PHS
16 so much. Thank you for all you've done
17 to plant trees in neighborhoods across
18 our city and to train our neighbors on
19 how to care for them. And also I'm very
20 excited about the Philly Tree Coalition
21 and it sounds like a great vehicle to
22 move the plan forward. So thank you.
23 Hi, Nate.

24 MR. HUMMEL: Hello.

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CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please

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state your name for the record and

4

proceed with your testimony.

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MR. HUMMEL: Nate Hummel from

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University City District and I promise

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to be brief. Good morning, council

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members.

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Thank you for the opportunity to

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testify today on the importance of tree

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maintenance in our city for resolution

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250126. My name is Nate Hummel,

13

director of Planning and Design for

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University City District, and I'm here

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to speak about how strategic investment

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in tree care can enhance our

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neighborhoods, improve our environment,

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and create meaningful economic

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opportunities.

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University City District was

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founded in 1997 by partnering with world

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renowned anchor institutions, small

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businesses and residents to improve

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economic vitality and quality of life in

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2 Philadelphia's University City.

3 Our primary mission is community
4 revitalization. We work within a place-
5 based data-driven framework to invest in
6 world-class public spaces, address crime
7 and public safety, support small
8 businesses along our commercial
9 corridors, connect low-income
10 Philadelphians to careers with employee
11 partners and promote job growth and
12 innovation. University City is often
13 celebrated for its tree lined streets
14 contributing to its desirability as a
15 place to live.

16 The presence of large mature
17 trees is a key factor in making a
18 community more livable, providing shade,
19 improving air quality and fostering a
20 sense of place.

21 When asked when a neighborhood
22 should be designated as historic, a
23 historic preservationist once told me,
24 when the trees get big. However, many

1

2 trees never reach maturity because of
3 inadequate maintenance, particularly in
4 their critical first few years. Later,
5 branch and root pruning are needed to
6 prevent property destruction.

7 Proper maintenance during the
8 first two to three years after planting
9 is essential to a tree's long-term
10 health. Supplemental watering in the
11 first year is particularly important yet
12 often overlooked. Unfortunately,
13 maintenance budgets are frequently
14 insufficient leaving young trees
15 vulnerable and reducing the overall
16 effectiveness of tree planting efforts.

17 If we genuinely want to expand
18 and sustain Philadelphia's urban tree
19 canopy, we must ensure that maintenance
20 is prioritized and adequately funded.
21 One way to address this issue is to
22 reframe tree maintenance as an
23 environmental necessity and an economic
24 opportunity.

1
2 Our organization has a landscape
3 division called Green City Works, a
4 landscape social enterprise that hires
5 individuals who have experienced deep
6 cyclical poverty and barriers to
7 employment. Through our skills
8 initiative, formerly the West
9 Philadelphia Skills Initiative, radical
10 rebranding there, we provide
11 foundational skills training and hands-
12 on landscaping experience enabling
13 individuals to build stable careers
14 while caring for our city's trees in
15 green spaces.

16 This model is scalable and has
17 the potential to create widespread
18 benefits. The areas of Philadelphia
19 most in need of street trees are often
20 the same neighborhoods where economic
21 hardship is most concentrated. By
22 expanding this approach, we can
23 simultaneously grow and sustain our tree
24 canopy while creating jobs for those

1

2 needing it most.

3 I urge the council to consider

4 policies and funding strategies

5 supporting tree maintenance and

6 workforce development. Investing in

7 tree care is investing in our

8 environment, communities and residents.

9 Thank you for your consideration. I

10 welcome any questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank

12 you so much for your work at University

13 City District and thank you for

14 highlighting Green City Works as a

15 model. I agree with you that it is more

16 than appropriate to not only plant trees

17 in the most under served neighborhoods,

18 but to use that as a workforce and

19 employment opportunity and potentially a

20 business opportunity for people in those

21 communities as well. Thanks so much to

22 the both of you.

23 MR. HUMMEL: You're welcome.

24 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank

1
2 you. Okay. We are going to move to
3 public comment. I think we have 14 or
4 15 people for public comment. I'm going
5 to give everyone two minutes to complete
6 their comment. You will hear a timer go
7 off at the two-minute mark, and then I'm
8 going to ask you to summarize. I'm
9 going to be slightly strict about this,
10 so please help me.

11 Clerk, can you please call the
12 first person for public comment?

13 CHIEF CLERK: Gian Morthy and
14 Anisa George and Kat McCanus can come up
15 as well.

16 MR. MORTHY: All right. Good
17 morning.

18 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
19 morning. Please state your name, for
20 the record, and proceed with your
21 comment.

22 MR. MORTHY: My name is Gian
23 Morthy and I represent Philly Trees.
24 We're an urban greening and park cleanup

1
2 organization housed within the
3 University of Pennsylvania Parlin School
4 of Medicine. And our sincere thanks to
5 city council for working with us to put
6 this hearing together.

7 So as a medical student and
8 future pediatrician, my inclination is
9 to focus on the health benefits of
10 trees, particularly on children with
11 asthma at risk of heat related injury,
12 and also even through reduced incidents
13 of child abuse and maltreatment.

14 But we've heard today from people
15 far more qualified than I am on those
16 very subjects so I'll focus instead in
17 our community work. We volunteer with
18 various neighborhood tree tender groups
19 planting and pruning trees in
20 undertreated neighborhoods, building
21 bonds of trust between medical students
22 and Philadelphians that percolates up to
23 how we actually do work in the clinic.

24 Recently extensive door-to-door

1
2 canvassing has helped us identify
3 several areas for improvement pertinent
4 to tree planting and maintenance. Some
5 of this canvassing has taken place as
6 formal research into resident attitudes
7 vis-a-vis trees. We actually presented
8 preliminary results at the Our Planet,
9 Our Health: 2025 Climate Action
10 Convention this weekend.

11 Residents that we've spoken to
12 highlighted many benefits of trees
13 including to their mental health or
14 shade for their kids and pets as well as
15 fostering community and pride at a
16 broader level. Areas for improvement,
17 however, included communication and
18 education on the maintenance of trees as
19 well as sidewalk damage and direct
20 support.

21 So we've worked with engineering,
22 architecture and business students from
23 across the university who are part of
24 the climate leaders at Penn Program to

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2 generate policy ideas and produce
3 reports evaluating some of these policy
4 points.

5 One ongoing area of investigation
6 is the impact of the exemption to tree
7 planting requirements outlined in
8 Section 14-705 of the city code near
9 certain affordable housing developments
10 denying the benefits of trees to this
11 already vulnerable population. We
12 welcome the opportunity to partner with
13 community leaders and city council going
14 forward to more closely examine this
15 affordable housing exemption as well as
16 other exemptions. And I know we've
17 talked today some of those have already
18 been done away with and we're very
19 excited to hear that.

20 There are also intriguing ideas
21 to offset the difficulty of tree
22 maintenance for residents following into
23 that direct support bucket that I
24 highlighted earlier. That might include

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2 a storm water tax relief for maintaining
3 a tree and the hiring of a sidewalk
4 coordinator as Dr. Pearsall and Batone
5 suggested in which Parks and Rec has
6 long requested to better assess tree
7 health at a neighborhood level and
8 ensure Americans with Disabilities Act
9 compliance.

10 And this could be a part of that
11 shift from reactive to proactive that
12 was stigmatized here today. So thank
13 you so much for the opportunity to talk
14 about that.

15 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
16 you so much for your work and for
17 working with us on this hearing and
18 thank you for your recommendations. We
19 would be happy to talk to you further,
20 particularly about the affordable
21 housing piece. I think that's an
22 unintended -- I think that probably that
23 policy happened to try to save money to
24 develop more affordable housing units

1

2 but it has an unintended outcome and
3 impact that we need to address.

4 MR. MORTHY: Certainly.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
7 state your name, for the record.

8 MS. ANISA: Is it my turn?

9 Hi.

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
11 state your name, for the record, and
12 proceed with your comment.

13 MS. ANISA: Hi. My name's
14 Anisa. I'm an environmental educator.
15 I love the plan. I'm here to say though
16 that actions speak louder than words and
17 what we're seeing happen at the ground
18 in places like FDR Park does not in any
19 way mirror the goals set by this plan.

20 The plan says protect the
21 existing urban forest. And I have seen
22 over 77 acres clear cut at FDR in the
23 last three years, 20 of those have gone
24 down since the plan was released. If

1

2 the plan for FDR is completed, we stand
3 to lose a total of 150 acres. That's
4 the equivalent of 37 city blocks.

5 And I think we should all take a
6 moment of silence just to imagine that
7 scale of loss. I have never seen
8 ecological devastation like this in my
9 life. It's heartbreaking and I hear
10 city officials telling the public sorry,
11 that this plan for FDR is actually
12 expanding the canopy for FDR. This is
13 very upsetting on three points. One,
14 time. We don't have it. The climate
15 crisis is now.

16 We do not have time to go back on
17 80 plus years of carbon sequestration
18 that is rooted in the trees at FDR Park.
19 Two, the Philly tree inventory does not
20 mark or map any trees on the western
21 side of FDR Park. How does the city
22 know whether it is expanding or not
23 expanding the canopy for FDR if it has
24 not done that accounting in the

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2 inventory? If that survey has been
3 done, why is it not being shared with
4 the public?

5 Three, the canopy at FDR has been
6 expanding spontaneously through the
7 process of natural succession over --
8 since 2020. And there are dozens and
9 dozens of trees over 10 feet tall that
10 are doing the work of the Philly tree
11 plan for not a cent that have not been
12 counted that should be counted.

13 So we have a great plan, but we
14 also have a terrible double standard.
15 Because the city has shown us that it
16 will cut what it wants, where it wants,
17 and it is not setting a model for the
18 developers and the individuals and the
19 corporations to follow.

20 And so -- one more -- one more
21 word. Like, what hope is there for the
22 Philly Tree Plan if the city itself is
23 not following its own plan? That's what
24 I have to say. Thank you for your time.

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CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank

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you so much for your comment and your

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efficacy. Please state your name for

5

the record and proceed with your

6

comment.

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MS. MCCANUS: Hi. My name's

8

Kat McCanus, I live in Francisville and

9

I'm a registered tree tender and I'm

10

jointly running the Francisville Tree

11

Tenders Group. Thanks for the

12

opportunity to speak. I am an

13

enthusiastic supporter of the Philly

14

Tree Plan and I offer just some

15

observations and vignettes as a resident

16

and volunteer tree tender.

17

When I began volunteering as a

18

tree tender I thought it was just public

19

service. When I realized that to ensure

20

the survival of the trees near me I'd

21

have to haul five gallon buckets of

22

water to 10 different trees within a

23

quarter mile of my house for two or more

24

summers, I understand why more people

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2 don't do it.

3 In a harsh city environment, it's
4 clear that urban trees require our
5 support to survive their early years.

6 And I want to point out that I have seen
7 more crews out doing maintenance lately
8 as the plan is suggesting need to
9 happen. I also imagine that trees were
10 inoffensive and unobjectionable and
11 maybe even apolitical, but while
12 watering for newly transplanted trees on
13 a church corner in my neighborhood, I
14 heard a voice, Are these your trees?
15 It was the pastor. He hadn't requested
16 the trees. He didn't want them. Take
17 them out, he yelled. He didn't say it.
18 He definitely yelled it.

19 He just had the old tree removed
20 at great expense to his church. The
21 leaves had clogged the gutters flooding
22 the church's interior, an extreme
23 expense for a small congregation and he
24 griped that the wet leaves were a hazard

1

2 and they raised his insurance rates.

3 Though I didn't and don't agree
4 with his stance, it was hard not to see
5 his point. Why wasn't he open to new
6 trees? Easy. He knew the city wouldn't
7 maintain them. So we really have to
8 reduce that burden on city residents.
9 It's clear we do have a ways to go on
10 this front.

11 Last summer, as I was watering
12 outside my local corner store, a young
13 man of about 17 came out and asked me
14 about my water -- watering. And then
15 wonderingly observed that the petals,
16 the leaf stalks were red. When I told
17 him it was a red maple. He made the
18 connection. Is this where maple syrup
19 comes from? You could see the amazement
20 on his face growing as I explained the
21 use of a style to extract sap.

22 At that moment, I just wished I
23 could invite him onto a -- onto a crew.
24 We need people like him. We need power

1
2 core. We need bigger initiatives than
3 that. We need a newly created -- the
4 newly created City College for Municipal
5 employment, for instance, to bring tree
6 related stuff into their pipeline of
7 programs. So we can expand the city's
8 pool of future arborists and even offer
9 opportunities for small business
10 creation.

11 My biggest hope is that the
12 foundation of this plan, which is
13 building trust with Philadelphia's
14 neighborhoods is that the city will do
15 what it says it wants to do. Trust is a
16 little like trees, right? Very slow
17 growing, but priceless once you have it.
18 William Penn envision Philadelphia as a
19 green country town and he had the right
20 idea. The tree plan is a modern
21 extension of Penn's vision with an
22 explicit emphasis on extending the
23 benefits of greenery to all of
24 Philadelphia's residents.

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But the plan is not a set it and forget it kind of a thing. To truly reap the benefits, council must fully fund its priorities and the money must not be solely forgetting trees in the ground, but for their ongoing maintenance. Planting trees and expecting them to flourish without regular care is like having kids and expecting them to raise themselves.

Finally, a word about the future, as we approach the US' 250th anniversary, it seems only fitting that we should honor this historic milestone with no, not another metal monument slouched by tourists as they go to Independence Hall or flexed in front of Lake Rocky, but with a real monument that truly enriches all Philadelphians, a robust ever greener and well cared for tree canopy. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your testimony. You had

1

2 a lot of good analogies in there. I
3 like trust is like trees.

4 MS. MCCANUS: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
6 you for being here today and for your
7 work in the community.

8 MR. MCCANUS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Where
10 -- will the clerk please call the next
11 person for a public comment?

12 CHIEF CLERK: Hal Rosner and
13 we have Raphael Alvarez and Robert
14 Karsnak.

15 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
16 afternoon.

17 MR. KARSNAK: Good afternoon.
18 Hi, Your Honor.

19 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
20 state your name for the record and
21 proceed with your comment.

22 MR. KARSNAK: My name is
23 Robert Karsnak, I'm a member of the
24 Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. I

1

2 am a -- I sit on the conservation
3 committee and the leadership council.
4 I'm also a guide -- bird guide for the
5 Bird Philly initiative, which I do a lot
6 of walks at FDR.

7 So we often also coordinate with
8 other groups in the city, like there's
9 the Feminist Bird Club, the Philly Queer
10 Birders. And In Color Birding, we
11 pretty much want to like share birds in
12 nature with like the city. You know,
13 community's important.

14 There's been a lot of research
15 that has been done about the positives
16 trees provide. One such a study was
17 conducted actually in this city by a
18 diverse group of academics from like
19 Columbia, University of Penn, Rutgers.
20 And they focused on vacant and blighted
21 land and they kind of randomly went
22 through the city and greened up certain
23 areas to see how like residents would
24 respond.

1

2 And mostly it was all positive.

3 There was like a 58 percent reduction in
4 people's fear going outside and more
5 people spend time outdoors. It was like
6 78 percent.

7 One concern I noticed in the
8 study was residents would often be
9 concerned about trees because they were
10 worried about like gentrification. And
11 it's -- my family is on a fixed income,
12 so I like totally understand that. You
13 know, it's ways when you have leaves if
14 you get priced out. Sorry. So on a
15 more personal level a friend of mine is
16 a -- worked for a veterans' nonprofit
17 called CompeerCORPS, and he came to me
18 because he knew that like birds, and
19 he's read an article about how
20 therapeutic nature can be. So he asked
21 me if I would take some of the vets out
22 that he worked with and these vets were
23 suffering from PTSD, drug addiction.

24 So, you know, I took them out and

1

2 I got like one really good positive vibe
3 from them. But like, you know, it helps
4 when you're struggling to have something
5 that you could disconnect from, like no
6 internet, just go outside, listen to the
7 birds, look at trees.

8 And on a personal level, I've
9 known several people who use nature as a
10 way to maintain sobriety. It's not easy
11 and considering like Philadelphia opioid
12 addiction, it -- whatever can help
13 people out is worth it. And, like, we
14 were very happy to hear like the, you
15 know, Mayor Parker's safer, cleaner,
16 greener Philadelphia, you know, in order
17 to do that, this tree canopy, as
18 everyone here has talked about needs to
19 be, you know, expanded and, you know, a
20 greener city will help us, help the
21 birds and help what other -- what other
22 animals could be around.

23 And it's not just parks where
24 amazing like bird events can happen,

1

2 like I did an event over at Hallahan
3 High School, which is closed in
4 September and the chimney up there at
5 night during fall migration tracks like
6 thousands of chimneys swifts.

7 So I hosted a pair of nights and
8 we had like 70, 80 people show up, and
9 even the Inquirer sent a reporter, Frank
10 Kumar, over to write a story about it.
11 And, you know, we'd be thrilled to do
12 whatever we can as a bird organization
13 to help make this plan a reality, and
14 I'd love to have any member of council
15 join us in one of our bird walks and
16 thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Yes, I
18 would love to come. Sign me up. And
19 thank you so much for your work with
20 vets and people dealing with substance
21 use. That's really beautiful. Please
22 state your name for the record and
23 proceed with your comment.

24 MR. ROSNER: Thank you. Good

1
2 morning. My name is Hal Rosner, I'm
3 going to start off with a quick vigil --
4 visual. I didn't bring a tree. Look at
5 -- this is a three-inch diameter tree
6 and look at this, it's a 36-inch
7 diameter tree. So thanks for having me.

8 I'm seeing a fruitful morning
9 with many positive incomes and our city
10 will be made greener as a result. I'm
11 hopeful and optimistic. Philly Parks
12 and Rec and the Horticultural Society's
13 tree tenders program are the strong
14 infrastructure and leadership we need.
15 It's going to happen.

16 I'm credentialed by the
17 International Society of Arboriculture
18 Board certified Master Arborist. I'm
19 also on the fifth year of co-hosting The
20 Plant A Trillion Trees Podcast, which is
21 at 200 episodes and counting. We'd
22 welcome you as a guest.

23 I have dedicated my career and
24 professional life to planting and caring

1

2 for urban trees and I've seen firsthand
3 what tree planting and greening efforts
4 can do to transform historically under
5 served neighborhoods, citizens with
6 less.

7 I'm proud of the Philly Tree
8 Plan, talented committed urban foresters
9 have created a document that now
10 receives national attention from others
11 in the field. It is a road map to a
12 greener, cooler, atmospherically safer
13 and spiritually grounded city.

14 Objectively speaking, and I'm not
15 an alarmist, the mission to grow and
16 protect our urban forest is existential.
17 The unfolding climate catastrophe is
18 shortening lives and killing our
19 citizens. Heat kills the elderly and
20 poor air quality gifts our children with
21 pediatric asthma.

22 The tree plan's blueprint maps
23 out the way forward. For it to achieve
24 its objectives, we cannot cut corners,

1

2 we cannot make deals, and we cannot be
3 cowed by dollars. We cannot bend.

4 Last spring, the Philly Tree Plan
5 stumbled out of the blocks. So here's a
6 meme for all of us. FDR Park must never
7 happen again. FDR is representative for
8 all our green spaces, Fairmount Park,
9 Cobbs Creek, Pennypack Park, the
10 Wissahickon and others and not our --
11 not for our precious street trees. Our
12 urban park space is the lungs of our
13 city and it's not for sale.

14 The effort to preserve canopy and
15 save hundreds of trees at FDR Park
16 failed. The tree plans protections were
17 ignored. Who suffered this? The trees,
18 obviously. But because South Philly's
19 only significant green space, South of
20 Market Street, was largely clear cut.
21 I'm again feeling some sadness, pain,
22 and regret for its citizens. The city's
23 ZBA plan paid no heed to the Philly tree
24 plan. FDR must never happen again.

1
2 A fundamentalist understanding
3 that needs to be examined is the tree
4 replacement formula arguably weak and
5 vulnerable to loopholes. Accordingly,
6 it's clear that in no way was canopy
7 expanded at FDR where many of the lost
8 trees were over 80 years old. That's 80
9 years of hard work, carbon
10 sequestration, air cleansing, cooling,
11 shading.

12 The formula reads like this: The
13 total caliper inches of all replacement
14 trees shall be no less than the total
15 inches of DBH of all trees removed from
16 the lot. Each replacement tree shall
17 not be less than 2.5 caliper inches at
18 planting. Think of 36 inches, think of
19 36 of these, which would you rather
20 have?

21 It does not make sense in terms
22 of public health impacts and the
23 undeniable facts of climate science.
24 Again, the most important principle in

1

2 this plan is the protection of our
3 existing canopy. Given the gravity of
4 the climate crisis and the fact that
5 this year, 2025, is the year that the
6 IPCC has set for the world's population
7 to reach peak commissions. The cutting
8 must stop. FDR must never happen again.
9 In fact, I respectfully --

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Can I
11 -- can I ask you to take just the next
12 20 seconds or so --

13 MR. ROSNER: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: -- to
15 summarize.

16 MR. ROSNER: I'm sorry.

17 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
18 take the next 20 seconds or so to
19 summarize your testimony.

20 MR. ROSNER: To wrap it up.
21 Yeah. Here's my last sentence. I -- in
22 fact, I respectfully asked today that
23 council reconsider and reevaluate
24 current work at FDR and put the brakes

1

2 on the tree removal work. It would be
3 an extraordinary gesture to honor the
4 Philly Tree Plan.

5 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
6 you so much. Thank you for your work
7 and your advocacy and your testimony.

8 MR. ROSNER: Thank you for
9 having the event today.

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER:
11 Absolutely. Will the clerk please call
12 the next public commenter?

13 CHIEF CLERK: Linda Knapp,
14 Robin Miller and Rich Gerella.

15 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
16 afternoon.

17 MS. KNAPP: Hello.

18 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Please
19 state your name, for the record, and
20 proceed with your comment.

21 MS. KNAPP: She's going to go
22 first.

23 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 That's totally fine.

1

2

MS. MILLER: Okie dokie.

3

Here we go. Sorry about that. Good

4

morning.

5

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good

6

afternoon now.

7

MS. MILLER: Afternoon,

8

right? True that. Members of city

9

councils, neighbors and friends. My

10

name is Robin Miller and I'm a volunteer

11

with Mount Airy Tree Tenders and East

12

and West Mount Airy Neighbors Project,

13

the Northwest Philly Tree Equity

14

Project. Also --

15

CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Can

16

you just pull the mic a little closer so

17

we can make sure we can hear you.

18

MS. MILLER: The North -- the

19

Northwest Philly, I'm a volunteer with

20

tree tenders and the East and West Mount

21

Airy Neighbors Project, Northwest Philly

22

Tree Equity Project, also known as

23

Cooldown Northwest Philly. I'm pleased

24

to offer this testimony from my

1

2 experience as it relates to the ways
3 we're supporting the goals of the Philly
4 Tree Plan, particularly as it relates to
5 planting new trees and how essential
6 this plan is to Philadelphia's future.

7 A lot of things have been said
8 very eloquently by others who have
9 testified before me, so I'm wondering
10 about reducing mine and trying to cut to
11 things that might be additive as far as
12 strategies that we have found, made an
13 impact.

14 Together with several of my
15 neighbors, I've been going door to door
16 sharing information about how to get
17 free -- a free street tree. Last fall
18 we knocked on over 800 doors on heat
19 island blocks in East Mount Airy in
20 Germantown. We've been doing this
21 canvassing spring and fall for the past
22 three years. This has been a volunteer
23 effort until this past year when East
24 and West Mount Airy neighbors received a

1

2 grant from the Pennsylvania Department
3 of Environmental Education. It's very
4 cool.

5 It's a one year grant and it
6 provides for a tree equity fellow who
7 expands our outreach to faith
8 communities, block captains, establishes
9 -- is establishing a tool lending
10 library, hosting events and printing and
11 distributing materials. Through this
12 effort we've been trying to grow the
13 urban tree canopy more equitably with a
14 clear focus on environmental justice and
15 echo the importance placed on this goal
16 as expressed by the Philly Tree Plan.

17 We've had a surprising amount of
18 success with our efforts and I think
19 because so much of our energy is spent
20 generally -- trying to generally
21 communicate with our neighbors about why
22 it's so important to have a tree.

23 And again, our work aligned with
24 the Philly Tree Plan. When canvassing

1

2 most people open the doors to us. We've
3 met older residents who remember back
4 when their streets were tree lined. One
5 gentleman told us he doesn't understand
6 why some folks don't like trees.

7 Little children get very excited
8 about getting a new tree to play in and
9 as an early childhood educator and an
10 early interventionist, I can testify to
11 the multiple year round opportunities
12 for science education with our youngest
13 children.

14 Some people really appreciate the
15 idea that their homes will be cooler in
16 the summer and that their property value
17 will go up. Some people love burbs,
18 others care about climate change. When
19 people say yes to the tree, they apply
20 online through the PHS tree tender
21 program. And if approved, we plant
22 their tree the next season.

23 We've planted over 300 trees
24 since COVID through this effort. We

1

2 found that above and beyond getting a
3 free tree for folks, they -- folks need
4 and appreciate useful timely information
5 about the benefits of trees. People on
6 small streets need to be able to get
7 yard trees if their sidewalks are too
8 narrow for a street tree.

9 And I think the biggest message I
10 have is that tree planting is not once
11 and done. It's the education and the
12 pre-work and then the follow-up work,
13 both in education and in the maintenance
14 of trees. And the maintenance and care
15 of the trees across the lifespan, if we
16 want these trees to live and do what we
17 hope is essential.

18 We've learned that the number one
19 reason people do not want a new tree is
20 the financial burden it places on them.
21 Homeowners whose doors we've knocked on
22 have described -- have described older
23 trees that they had to get pruned or
24 removed, poorly maintained trees that

1

2 have fallen on cars, the roof of their
3 home, broken up the sidewalk or pipes
4 and cost them a lot of money.

5 And that again, is why we need
6 the Philly tree plan and why it's
7 focused on reducing the burden of trees
8 on homeowners is the only way to ensure
9 that we can continue to nurture and grow
10 our urban tree canopy.

11 This might be a little additive.
12 We have implemented strategies to
13 support homeowners and to increase the
14 likelihood of survival for the trees.
15 We have planted, including the purchase
16 of two 100-gallon tree bladders and a
17 bike hitch, which -- with a solar pump,
18 which allows us to go around and water
19 recent planted -- recently planted trees
20 especially during the heat of the
21 summer.

22 We also purchased 100 tree
23 diapers so that every newly planted tree
24 comes with tree diapers that can ensure

1

2 the growth and the success of the tree.

3 A final point, as volunteers we
4 invest a lot of time and effort into new
5 trees planted. It's very demoralizing
6 when developers, businesses and
7 apartment owners or the city itself just
8 come and cut down mature shade trees.

9 Just last week, the city approved a
10 local business cutting down a heritage
11 tree to make room for a parking lot.

12 In closing, I'd like to say that
13 we're encouraged about how many people
14 are tree people. I'm encouraged by the
15 new ideas that I've gotten today from
16 other folks to take back. And I hope
17 that the city will find further ways to
18 support the Philly Tree Plan. Thank
19 you.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

21 Well, thank you. Thank you for your
22 testimony. Please state your name and
23 begin yours.

24 MS. KNAPP: Yes. Thank you.

1

2 All members of the committee on the
3 environment, my name is Linda Knapp, I'm
4 a PHS certified tree tender, a member of
5 Mount Airy Tree Tenders, and I have
6 served as group's pruning club
7 coordinator since 2022.

8 Mount Airy Tree Tenders has been
9 planting and working to maintain street
10 trees for many years. I tried to figure
11 out the exact date. It's been so long
12 now, and I don't think anyone really
13 kept a record of it. Robin just talked
14 about the Northwest Philadelphia Tree
15 Equity Initiative, which is really
16 taking root and being very successful.
17 And as she said, it includes door to
18 door canvassing, encouraging tree
19 planting in neighborhoods where there
20 are lower tree canopies.

21 Since 2023, Mount Airy tree
22 tenders has been successful in enlisting
23 a larger number of volunteers who
24 effectively are now planting an average

1

2 of 120 trees a year. A dramatic
3 increase in the number of annual tree
4 plantings. So given this increase on
5 tree canopy, the Mount Airy tree tenders
6 pruning club is working to ramp up our
7 efforts to make sure we can care for
8 more of the trees.

9 So we're really happy to see the
10 increase, but it makes our work harder.
11 So -- but we really are taking up the
12 challenge. We are very fortunate to
13 have two excellent certified arborists
14 who volunteer a few times a year to lead
15 dedicated volunteers in pruning older
16 tree tender planted trees, street trees.

17 And as a previous speaker said,
18 trees really need care especially in the
19 first two or three years. So over 30
20 years plus, PHS has established
21 excellent practices and trainings for
22 tree tender groups to care for trees
23 throughout the city.

24 As the committee on the

1
2 environment, I strongly encourage you to
3 support these practices in the
4 implementation of Philly's tree equity
5 plan so we are not just planting trees,
6 but we are working to ensure they can be
7 maintained well over time as so many
8 people today have said.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: In
10 keeping with the Madam Chairs request to
11 hold tightly to the two minutes, so if
12 you could take about the next 20 seconds
13 to wrap up your testimony --

14 MS. KNAPP: Okay. So
15 homeowners understanding in their
16 application that they need to sign off
17 that they're taking responsibility,
18 someone else is taking responsibility
19 and that could be a city program.
20 Trained volunteers doing annual tree
21 checking as has been spoken about
22 before, it's really critical.

23 We -- you know, after one year
24 you check all the trees that have been

1

2 planted in the previous seasons.

3 Pruning tree with the capacity to

4 address the needs of our growing tree

5 canopy over time and having a system in

6 place for identifying tree problems

7 because we can't reach all the existing

8 trees if we can figure out which ones

9 need help.

10 And then finally, as climate

11 change is increasing, the need to come

12 up with better watering systems to care

13 for the trees over time. Thank you for

14 the opportunity to be here today.

15 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

16 Thank you both of your testimony.

17 It does sound as if chairman --

18 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: A

19 small question about the education part.

20 I -- as I said before, I like that. Is

21 there -- in your, you know, experience,

22 is there -- does -- is there a chance

23 that the insurance goes up on the

24 property if they put the tree in or is

1

2 that a -- not the case?

3 MS. KNAPP: We don't know.

4 That's a good question.

5 MS. KNAPP: We're not --

6 we're not aware of that. I mean, it

7 hasn't come up for us, but that doesn't

8 -- I mean, we could check into that for

9 you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Yeah,

11 I -- just with the other question is

12 that would be too is maybe in the

13 education process having some kind of if

14 we find out what we have to do in order

15 to not get it on your insurance maybe

16 some kind of stick that we could give to

17 people to say, Hey, you say this. You

18 know what I mean? Non-evasive roots,

19 yada, yada, yada. Maybe something like

20 that. I'm not sure.

21 MS. MILLER: Particularly --

22 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I'm

23 just curious because --

24 MS. MILLER: Particularly

1
2 landlords as mentioned previously, like
3 when we try to go to the worst of the
4 tree deserts, we find that a lot of the
5 housing is not owned by the individuals
6 living there. So some -- a carrot for
7 them would be really nice. I would love
8 to see us create a carrot for our
9 youngest citizens by developing a
10 program where we plant a tree at every
11 early care and education program in the
12 city.

13 And then the children, parents
14 and teachers get the education and then
15 the -- would they get some type of
16 acknowledgement from the mayor in the
17 form of a plaque and maybe a visit from
18 their local city council person that
19 would just really instill these values
20 at such a young age. That's my little
21 fantasy. Thank you.

22 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank

1

2 you so much to both of you for your
3 comment and for your work. Will the
4 clerk please call the next public
5 commenter?

6 CHIEF CLERK: Rich Gerella,
7 Robert Karsnak, Alice Elaine Jensen. He
8 already went. Okay. Sorry. Okay.
9 Alice Elaine Jensen, Raven Arnold Green
10 and Sean Saberino.

11 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Good
12 afternoon. Please state your name for
13 the record and proceed with your
14 comment. Whomever wants to go first.

15 MR. SEAN: My name is Sean.
16 I'm lead organizer for the Brewerytown
17 Tree Tenders chapter, and the Lemon Hill
18 Neighbors Park Friends Organization.

19 A lot has been said that I've
20 already kind of wanted to say, but I did
21 want to just add a couple of things just
22 from my perspective as a person who has
23 been organizing in his neighborhood for
24 the last nine years.

1
2 Is that, you know, we are kind of
3 making the decisions here in the city to
4 regulate ourselves out of canopy, the
5 people in other departments and the
6 citizens at large over all of the years
7 of what we would call tree trauma,
8 negative experiences with trees, have
9 put trees as an afterthought. And that
10 makes it -- and also as an
11 inconvenience, something that's getting
12 in the way. Because trees are not
13 thought of as public infrastructure.
14 They're kind of thought as fancy
15 embellishments, d cor.

16 So -- but they need to be kind of
17 thought of and actually, like, put into
18 some kind of language officially as
19 public infrastructure. They're not
20 different from the street, the telephone
21 poles, the pipes underground. They are
22 absolutely part of it because they serve
23 a function.

24 And the other thing is that the

1
2 divestment over the decades of parks,
3 and this is kind of part of a broader
4 trend in the country at large,
5 regardless of, you know, who's in
6 charge, is to defund public spaces,
7 defund our public departments, and try
8 to find ways to maximize and externalize
9 the costs of things, and that falls back
10 on us as organizers because this city
11 has become very reliant and comfortable
12 and it has become the standard to
13 exploit the willingness, the love, the
14 care, and the labor, and even the funds
15 of its residents to do not just tree
16 work, but all sorts of work in the
17 communities. And that's a failure of
18 government and that's why people have
19 these trust issues.

20 So I recommend that we really
21 look into doing something like expanding
22 the TCB program to include basic tree
23 work, unskilled labor, mulching,
24 weeding, watering, anything like that so

1

2 that we start, you know, developing a
3 workforce for our trees.

4 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
5 you so much for that thoughtful comment.
6 Please state your name, for the record,
7 and proceed with your comment.

8 MR. GREEN: So my name is
9 Raven Green, and yeah. So I'm currently
10 the tree program coordinator at Bartram
11 Gardens, born and raised in this city,
12 25 years old. And granted, throughout
13 this hearing there's been many
14 testimonies and many great points that
15 talk about like the tangible results of
16 trees, the tangible benefits of trees.
17 But I kind of want to talk a little bit
18 about the things that we can't track and
19 the unseen benefits that comes with
20 them.

21 So I currently work at Bartram
22 Gardens, but I was recently or formerly
23 a tree program -- tree program assistant
24 with the Philly Tree Program. And

1

2 throughout my childhood, throughout my
3 youth, I used to walk around the city
4 with my dad and I remember the city
5 being completely different than how it
6 is now. Specifically, being, it was a
7 lot more trees.

8 We used to go to parks, we used
9 to go down the block and as a point of
10 education, he would ask me, all right,
11 what do you see about these trees? What
12 do you notice about them? And it was
13 like a really big and part of my youth
14 growing up.

15 And so looking now at the city
16 when I'm 25, after going through school,
17 coming back, leaving the city and
18 eventually coming back again, it's
19 completely different. I see less trees
20 on the block, some of the blocks where I
21 used to live, trees are completely gone.
22 And I think about it and I ask residents
23 and neighbors like, what happened? Why
24 was this a case?

1

2 Throughout my work and just my
3 personal things and many experiences
4 that you-all heard today with my
5 sidewalk, my infrastructures, it cost
6 too much, trees are just a burden that
7 as I'm getting older I don't want to
8 take care of.

9 And as I've like thought and
10 listened to these experiences, it
11 brought me again back to my youth when I
12 was a kid and riding a scooter and I
13 accidentally tripped and fell over a
14 busted concrete that a tree, a London
15 plane, ended up busting up. And in that
16 point in time where I was scared while I
17 was in pain because of the scab that I
18 had of like bruise on my knee, I never
19 once thought that tree as being a burden
20 because I have a lot more fond memories
21 of sitting under that tree, sitting
22 under the canopy summer nights, waiting
23 for the ice cream truck to come, raking
24 the leaves with my dad and like

1

2 neighbors on the block, because again,
3 it was more so like a thing to bring the
4 community back together.

5 And like in my work now, that's
6 the thing that I'm trying to strive to
7 at least get it. And again formally
8 working with tree fairly formally seeing
9 just the work that they put in and the
10 connections and the impact that they
11 have on the community, yeah, that Philly
12 Tree Plan is important in more ways than
13 one.

14 From being able to just, again,
15 look at trees, study trees, I've been
16 able to go to school, work at Yale,
17 work, go to Brandeis, and like every
18 step of the way trees have been a part
19 of that project. Whether it was
20 learning how trees work in our
21 communities, educating people how to
22 identify trees or even just cutting and
23 maintaining them myself.

24 So thinking about how that

1
2 connection has kind of like stayed with
3 me, in Bartram, I run a youth program
4 now and one of the things that my
5 students said to me like a month or two
6 ago was that, oh, I'm looking to go into
7 college, but to be honest I might just
8 get into this tree work. And seeing
9 again how that cycle continues of
10 investing in the trees that will once
11 again invest in communities that will
12 once again invest in people within those
13 communities.

14 Trees not only transform the
15 community; they have a heavily impact on
16 the people within them as well. And
17 again, with the efforts of the Philly
18 Tree Plan, we already have that plan.
19 We've already done the research. It's
20 just now doing that work and having the
21 support of the city with -- I mean with
22 the people who's already been doing this
23 work for decades. So, yeah, I'm just
24 here to show my support and thank

1

2 you-all for giving me the opportunity to
3 talk.

4 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
5 you. Thank you so much, first and
6 foremost, for coming back to the city,
7 right, to be a part of the change that
8 needs to happen, for mentoring other
9 young people and getting them into the
10 world of trees and for your work at
11 Bartram's Garden, which is a part of my
12 district that's near and dear to my
13 heart. And thanks for testifying today.

14 Good afternoon. Please state
15 your name, for the record, and proceed
16 with your comment.

17 MS. JENSEN: I'm sorry. I
18 looked at the list over there and I
19 thought that I didn't make the cut, so I
20 didn't think I was actually talking, so
21 --

22 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: No.
23 You're in. You're in. Go for it.

24 MS. JENSEN: Thank you for

1

2 having this meeting, COUNCILMEMBER
3 Gauthier. I live by Clark Park. My
4 name is, yeah, Elaine Jensen. I know it
5 says Alice Elaine Jensen. That is my
6 name. I was afraid I wouldn't get in
7 with my real ID if I didn't have the
8 name match.

9 I volunteer at Clark Park. One
10 of the things that I'm concerned about
11 in the Tree Plan Philly, by the way, I
12 think it's great. I had the opportunity
13 of meeting the other co-founder whose
14 name I can't remember at the moment and
15 standing with her at the press release
16 down in FDR Park parking lot in front of
17 the clubhouse after Parks and Rec and
18 Conservancy destroyed a whole bunch of
19 them. Made my little t-shirt, Save
20 them.

21 And I didn't know about Tree
22 Plain Philly before then, but it's great
23 and one of the things that I'm concerned
24 about is the maintenance that other

1

2 people have mentioned. Living by Clark
3 Park, I have volunteered with UC Green
4 planting trees for many years, so was my
5 daughter. She's turning 28. She was
6 actually this big with Tree Ken, Sue
7 McQueen, the previous folks.

8 And with a past -- with the past
9 hot summers, my husband bought a wagon
10 and I don't know how many gallon water
11 thingy, and I had to go to AutoZone and
12 get some kind of hose so it would hook
13 up to the dog watering station by the
14 shed in Clark Park. And he went around
15 every day and watered the trees.

16 So if you think about all the
17 volunteers that Ms. Dominique said she
18 has at UC Green, and they have all those
19 places across the city that they've --
20 it's just the -- it's staggering, the
21 responsibility of maintaining the trees.

22 And the huge example is what they
23 did at FDR Park. So they cut down all
24 these things, you know, Pennsylvania

1
2 hornbeam. Who knew we even had a
3 Pennsylvania hornbeam heritage trees. I
4 didn't know what heritage trees were. I
5 just know that I went during the
6 pandemic and I walked in there and it
7 was great. And I had just read in Grid
8 Magazine that they were talking about.
9 I just heard about the plan and I
10 started crying.

11 Anyway, they planted a little
12 tiny -- bunch of tiny trees and saying,
13 that's going to come -- make up for
14 clear cutting. No. If it takes all
15 this work for UC Green and half a block
16 from my neighborhood, these little
17 saplings that are -- where's the guy
18 with the 36-inch waist and the -- and
19 the bottle. I'm talking -- these are
20 the saplings that are down there now are
21 as big around as my thumb. They're not
22 going to last.

23 Anyway, I just -- we -- it's
24 green, it's unconscionable what they

1

2 allowed to have happen at FDR Park.

3 Please don't let them do it anymore.

4 And I didn't even know that it happened
5 at Cobbs Creek, but I walked with WeWalk
6 PHL. I went up to Haddington Woods and
7 I was like, oh, that's where used to be
8 trees. And it's just no more. We can't
9 have anymore.

10 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you so much, Ms. Jensen, for your
12 comment and thanks for all of your
13 advocacy and volunteer work. Will the
14 clerk please call the next person for
15 public comment?

16 CHIEF CLERK: Madam Chair,
17 that's it. No more.

18 CHAIRPERSON GAUTHIER: All
19 right. Is there anyone else that wishes
20 to testify on the resolution?

21 Seeing no one else here to
22 testify on the resolution, this
23 concludes the business of the committee
24 on the environment today.

1

2

The public hearing on resolution

3

No. 250126 is recessed to the call of

4

the chair. Thank you all very much for

5

your attendance, your work and your

6

participation. Have a great day.

7

(Proceedings concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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Samanda J. Rios

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I hereby certify that the proceedings and
evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes
taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a correct
transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios
Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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