

September 19, 2007

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

On Monday night Commissioner Benepe spoke at our meeting of civic presidents from throughout Queens. It was an excellent discussion of issues facing our parks. Commissioner Benepe presented the one million tree program to make New York green. We are in total support of your program ascetically and environmentally.

The irony we raised to Commissioner Benepe is despite the city doing its part, we now see private owners cutting down trees and paving over large portions of their properties which traditionally would have remained covered with grass or scrubs. The city can only plant grass and trees on the land it owns which frankly is limited as compared to amount of private land in this city.

Vegetation is not only ascetically pleasing; but it cools the environment, produces oxygen, and provides drainage for rain runoff. The recent flooding experienced in Queens was in part due to excessive runoff into city catch basins. If you were to do a comparison aerial map over ten, five years and today on the loss of porous ground in Queens due to excessive paving, you will see a dangerous trend.

We have urged the Department of City Planning to issue stricter rules on how much of R1, R2, R3, and R4 properties can be paved, but have seen no movement. Some might argue that this is a denial of property rights. We believe the rules should be reasonable. However, this is an environmental health issue affecting the lives of millions of people. The law has long recognized that riparian rights are not absolute, for example one can change the grade of ones land to flood a neighbor.

We urge you to form a task force consisting of City Planning, Environmental Protection, and Parks to oversee reforms to the Zoning Resolution to complement and ensure your greening of the city. We look forward to working with such a task force to enact responsible land use regulations.

Very truly yours,

SEAN M. WALSH
President