

RESTAURANTS AND PARKS

We live in a community where many people live and work, but with little open space. Every bit of park is a blessing to us. We cannot afford to give up even one inch.

New York City's Parks Department has been under-funded for years. Whenever there is a need to cut the budget, our parks are the first to suffer. To make up for the shortfall in funding, the Parks Department allows restaurants and cafes to be built in parks. These commercial enterprises bring revenue to the city. One might forgive the city for wanting to increase its revenues to fund parks, but giving away our parks is not the way to do that. To make matters worse, the money earned by leasing to restaurants is not used for parks. It winds up in the city's general funds.

New York State statute requires legislation when a municipality leases parkland for other uses. The statute calls it alienation. To avoid the required legislation, the city says it is not leasing the parkland, rather, it is only allowing a concession which can be terminated at any time. Yet the concession is given for many years, nine in the case of Union Square Park, and the concessionaire is required to spend vast sums in exchange. We know that the concession will not be terminated, and that what is offered is a lease. The lease requires legislation. We have a way to protect our parks and I promise to do just that.