



Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc.

P.O. BOX 53

SCARSDALE, NEW YORK 10583

March 21, 2018

Dear Mayor and Trustees,

The undersigned members of the board of directors of the Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc.¹ are writing in support of the proposed amendment to the Village Code, Chapter 281, Trees, Grass, Brush and Weeds, Articles I-V, §281-1, et seq. The proposed changes further the Village commitment to protect public health, safety and welfare,² while seeking a balance between the rights of residential property owners and the need to protect the environment and Scarsdale's healthy tree canopy.

We also support the proposed clarifications to the Code that were discussed by the Village Board at its March 13, 2018 public hearing relating to public "as of right" removal of dead, dying or hazardous trees and related exemptions from fees and replacement burdens, in addition to any other corrections to Chapter 281 that you deem necessary for reasons of accuracy and to achieve the goals of the statute.

Most if not all of Scarsdale's neighboring municipalities have regulations governing trees, and research demonstrates the vital role of trees in our environment and economy deserving of such procedures and protections:

¹ FOSP is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, incorporated in New York State in 1957, whose purposes include supporting "the preservation, restoration and conservation of existing public park land, public gardens and other public open green space areas in order to maintain the ecological integrity and beauty of Village of Scarsdale owned land."

² See J. Hamblin, "The Health Benefits of Trees" (The Atlantic 2014), at <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/07/trees-good/375129/>, citing D. J. Nowak, et al., "Tree and forest effects on air quality and human health in the United States" (Environmental Pollution Journal, 2014), at (http://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2014/nrs_2014_nowak_001.pdf ("trees remove substantial amounts of pollution and can produce substantial health benefits and monetary values across the nation, with most of the health values derived from urban trees.")).

“1. **Clean Air.** Researchers at the Davey Institute found that urban trees and forests are saving an average of one life every year per city because of the particulates that they remove from the air. A study in the Journal of Preventative Medicine found that people experienced more deaths from heart disease and respiratory disease when they lived in areas where trees had disappeared. Trees are often referred to as the “lungs of the planet” because of the oxygen they provide to other living things.

2. **Jobs.** According to the U.S. Forest Service, recreation visitor spending in National Forests amounted to nearly \$11 billion in 2012. All that economic activity sustains about 190,000 full- and part-time jobs. And that’s just in our National Forests!

3. **Clean Water.** Forests provide natural filtration and storage systems that process nearly two-thirds of the water supply in the United States. When you drink a glass of tap water in a New York City restaurant, you’re drinking water that was filtered largely by the forests of upstate New York. The forests do such a good job that the city only needs to do a minimum of additional filtering.

4. **Carbon Sequestration.** Burning fossil fuels puts heat-trapping carbon dioxide into our atmosphere, changing our climate in dangerous ways. Planting trees can slow down this process. A tree can absorb as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, and can sequester one ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years old.

5. **Reduced Crime.** Neighborhoods with abundant trees have significantly fewer crimes than those without. Researchers think that this is because green spaces have a calming effect and encourage people to spend more [time] with their neighbors outdoors, bolstering community trust.

6. **Increased Property Values.** People are drawn to homes and businesses near trees. The proof is in the prices: property values are 7 percent to 25 percent higher for houses surrounded by trees and consumers spend up to 13 percent more at shops near green landscapes.

7. **Mental Health.** Feeling down? Take a walk in the woods. Several studies have found that access to nature yields better cognitive functioning, more self-discipline, and greater mental health overall. One study even found that hospital patients who can see trees out their windows are hospitalized 8 percent fewer days than their counterparts.

8. **Temperature Control.** The shade and wind-breaking qualities that trees provide benefit everyone from the individual taking shelter from a hot summer day to entire cities. The annual mean air temperature of a city with 1 million people or more can be 1.8–5.4°F (1–3°C) warmer than its surroundings. Planting trees reduces this “heat island effect”. And households with shade trees could spend 12% less on cooling costs in the summer.

9. **Flood Control.** Trees can hold vast amounts of water that would otherwise stream down hills and surge along rivers into towns. That’s why trees are such an important part of stormwater management for many cities.

10. **Wildlife Habitat.** Wildlife use trees for food, shelter, nesting, and mating. These habitats support the incredible variety of living things on the planet, known as biodiversity. By protecting trees, we also save all the other plants and animals they shelter.”³

The need to achieve the appropriate balance between the rights of homeowners and the community interest in managing our tree canopy and ecosystems has become a subject of renewed study in view of problems caused by recent storms. Other critical issues include managing the potential for circumvention of the code during major renovations and new construction. We hope that in your final review of the proposal you will consider all relevant public comments before adoption.

Respectfully submitted,

Members of the Board of Directors, Friends of the Scarsdale Parks, Inc.

Betsy Bush
Kay Eisenman
Madelaine Eppenstein
Daniel Gerardi
Bart Hamlin
Dorothy Kroenlein
Amy Laartz
Diane Morrison
Helen Oja
Cynthia Roberts
Tara Smith Tyberg
Todd Wolleman
Julia Zimbalist

³ EarthShare, at <http://www.earthshare.org/2013/07/treebenefits.html>, citing Arbor Day Foundation, “The Value of Trees to a Community,” at <https://www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm>; American Forests, “Forests and Cities,” at <http://www.americanforests.org/explore-forests/forest-facts/>. See also L. Marritz, “Urban Trees: Let’s Grow Old Together” (NextCity, 2012), at <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/urban-trees-lets-grow-old-together> (citing USDA Forest Survey study finding that large trees over 30 inches in diameter “remove 70 times more air pollution annually” than small trees under 3 inches in diameter); Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., “Benefits of Urban Trees,” at <http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/411348/> (“Trees properly placed around buildings can reduce air conditioning needs by 30% and save energy used for heating by 20-50%.”).