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**** **PRESS RELEASE** ****

Jersey City to Form Shade Tree Committee to Strategically Plant and Maintain Tree Canopy Citywide for Healthy Living and Environmental Benefits

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Fulop announces a new ordinance co-sponsored by Ward B Councilwoman Mira Prinz-Arey to create an environmentally friendly and responsible Shade Tree Committee tasked with expanding and maintaining tree stock throughout Jersey City. The planting of hundreds of trees will not only be for beautification purposes, but will also improve water retention, reduce storm water runoff, and maintain biodiversity throughout the region.

The formation of a Shade Tree Committee will take its first major step in becoming law in Jersey City this week during its initial reading before the Municipal Council Wednesday night.

“The benefits of having thousands of healthy trees in any community are endless,” **Mayor Fulop** said. “But like any great natural resource, smart planning for it only ensures its growth and success into the future. This is another example of community members working with the City combining strengths, professional experience and concerns to solve multiple issues and plan for future generations to benefit.”

The ordinance authorizes a seven-member committee of city staff members, community members, tree professionals, the City Environmental Commission, a City Council member, and a member of the Jersey City Parks Coalition.

Jersey City has also recently acquired two new foresters to working in conjunction with the Committee detailing tree planting and removal standards, preserving the tree infrastructure, revising the landscape to consider environmental and physical stresses, among other aspects to enhance the City’s overall tree canopy.

“The new Shade Tree Committee will be working closely with the new foresters along with various City Departments, including Planning and Parks and Forestry,” said **Councilwoman Prinz-Arey**. “An advisory committee allows for greater cooperation between residents, environmental professionals, and City officials to make significant change in the City’s tree canopy.”

Research has proven that healthy trees improve communities in many different ways. In addition to filtering air pollution from cities, creating oxygen and adding to the community’s overall aesthetics, trees assist in lessening flooding due to absorption of runoff storm waters, and thereby reducing non-point source pollution of waterways enjoyed by citizens as clean water recreational areas. Trees are also benefit residents by providing shade to keep neighborhoods and residences cool in the summer, and by blocking noise pollution and even cold winds in the winter months.

“Planting and maintaining trees throughout the City is advantageous in so many ways,” said **Katherine Lawrence, Director of the Office of Sustainability**. “Our trees help manage storm water, clean the air, shade our streets and connect individuals to nature in an urban environment. This Committee is a great way to involve the community in the care and management of our City trees.”

The New Jersey Shade Tree Federation, to which Jersey City will become a member once the committee is formed, is a nonprofit organization that has been assisting those individuals and agencies entrusted with the selection, planting and care of trees, since 1926. With more than 250 municipalities as members, its objective is to educate our members by providing the latest up-to-date information and techniques relating to the care and maintenance of shade trees, in order to provide tree-lined streets for future generations.

“Through our City of Trees Initiative (a goal to plant 5,000 trees by 2020) for the last four or five years we’ve wanted to increase the Jersey City tree Canopy,” said **Laura Skolar, President of the Jersey City Parks Coalition**. “This committee could serve as a central point or one voice for the many groups that have been working to give trees a voice for years. Improving forestry standards and for all to become one voice for the enhancement and protections of trees in the city is a good thing.”

The ordinance will go before the council next month for a second and final reading before its vote for adoption. Upon its inception, the Jersey City Shade Tree Committee shall be comprised of community members, tree professionals, a member of the Environmental Commission and Parks Coalition, a Councilperson, and representatives from the Division of Park Maintenance and the Division of Planning. The Committee shall meet monthly and receive legal counsel from the municipality. The Committee will work with relevant departments and organizations in requiring tree planting and protection of said trees as part of development and redevelopment projects. The committee can make suggestions and monitor the planting, removal or replacement of trees in various projects throughout the City.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Wallace-Scalcione at KWallace@jcnj.org or 201-376-0699. ////