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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**Mayor Fulop Announces Sustainability Initiatives with Community Partners to Reach Jersey City’s Public Health & Climate Action Goals**

*Jersey City Awarded Nearly \$3 Million in Grants to Boost Sustainability Goals with Tree Plantings, Seasonal Hires, and New Paid Youth Tree Ambassador Programs & Workforce Development*

**JERSEY CITY, NJ - Mayor Steven M. Fulop** announces several key sustainability initiatives this month, allocating nearly \$3 million in grants for critical environmental improvements to significantly boost quality of life, public health, environmental impacts, and economic opportunities. These efforts include *Youth Tree Ambassador Programs for community building, workforce development, expanding the Forestry team to sustain and grow the City’s tree canopy, and over 160 tree plantings for beautification, stormwater absorption, and improving public health.*

The City is prioritizing neighborhoods where additional trees will help with flood mitigation, lower energy costs, improve air quality, and reduce heat-related health concerns. Allocating a \$2 million grant awarded to the **Divisions of Sustainability and Forestry** by the **US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Urban and Community Forestry program**, the **MLK Drive Green Corridor and Outreach Project** will focus specifically on the Jackson Hill corridor along Martin Luther King Drive. Additionally, a grant of over \$800,000 from the **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Water Quality and Restoration Program** will help fund green infrastructure improvements on MLK Drive, including the installation of rain gardens and bioswales.

“This is an important investment in the future of our City. We will use the grant funding to help pay for over 160 trees and other green infrastructure improvements along Martin Luther King Drive as part of our ongoing work with community partners to help revitalize Jackson Hill into the thriving commercial corridor it once was,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “From improving public health to new economic opportunities, increasing tree cover in urban areas and equitable access to green spaces provides countless benefits for residents, businesses, and the community overall.”

A new equitable tree planting strategy designed for long-term resiliency planning will address mitigating stormwater flooding and urban heat island effects. The grant money will also establish different programs to maintain and expand the City’s urban forestry efforts:

- Hiring and training seasonal workers for Jersey City’s Forestry team, including a Junior Forester and tree maintenance staff.
- Creation of paid Youth Tree Ambassador Programs and Workforce Development Workshops to meaningfully engage residents.

The City is also working closely with community organizations, such as project partners **Sustainable JC** and the **Jackson Hill Special Improvement District (SID)**, to begin outreach and educational campaigns to engage key community partners and connect with local small business owners, cultural organizations, residents, and other stakeholders for project development.

"This USDA Urban and Community Forestry grant award is a really exciting opportunity to build momentum for tree canopy restoration and a green infrastructure conservancy initiative for Jersey City that will improve the quality of life here. SJC is pleased to partner on this grant to bring environmental education and community programming that will make Jersey City cleaner, greener, more sustainable, and resilient," added **Debra Italiano, Founder and Chair of Sustainable JC**.

As part of Mayor Fulop’s continued efforts to attract interest and investment to Bergen-Lafayette, the fourth and final City Hall Annex building located in the heart of Jackson Hill opened its doors earlier this year. The Fulop Administration’s vision of establishing an extensive municipal complex on MLK Drive is now a reality, with public-facing city services, thousands of jobs, and attracting investment into the south and west areas of Jersey City.



Jersey City strives to find new creative opportunities to create a more sustainable urban landscape for every resident, and the City’s existing and future efforts serve as a valuable example of what green infrastructure in urban areas can achieve.

“A key part of our urban forestry and green infrastructure initiatives is partnering with the community to help build resilient neighborhoods throughout our great City. With this grant, we can strengthen that partnership and offer residents meaningful ways to support this work through planting trees, increasing awareness, and amplifying the voices of communities experiencing the negative impacts of climate change.” **Barkha Patel, Director of the Department of Infrastructure**. “Tree planting and other resiliency projects can often be financially and operationally challenging for cities, but we are committed to prioritizing these efforts, which will result in long-term benefits for our residents, community, environment, economy, and beyond.”

Jersey City is already on track to plant over 350 trees citywide this year. The tree plantings and programs, led by the Division of Sustainability under the Department of Infrastructure and the Division of Forestry under the Department of Public Works, are essential to the ongoing, multi-faceted efforts in combatting climate change and improving residents' mental and physical health under the [Jersey City Climate and Energy Action Plan](#).

According to the USDA, research shows that trees in communities are associated with improving mental and physical health, filtering air and water, flood mitigation, combating extreme heat and climate change, increasing food security, building wildlife habitats, and creating new economic opportunities. The USDA grant will help the City implement new forestry operations and maintenance practices to improve the long-term sustainability of Jersey City's urban forestry.

**USDA Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack** announced the grants covered by the Justice40 Initiative and made possible by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate investment in history. "These investments arrive as cities across the country experience record-breaking heatwaves that have grave impacts on public health, energy consumption, and overall well-being. Thanks to President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are supporting communities in becoming more resilient to climate change and combatting extreme heat with the cooling effects of increased urban tree canopy, while also supporting employment opportunities and professional training that will strengthen local economies."

Anyone interested in volunteering for Jersey City's tree planting efforts can contact the Jersey City Department of Infrastructure at 201-547-4727.



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