

This serves as just another example of the conflicting messages we get from City Hall. We get yards text for homeowners but city engineers and engineers on contract on city projects seem to get a (by)pass that allows them to avoid compliance, and perhaps even more important than the law in this case, protect our environment.

– Corey Bearak, President, Queens Civic Congress

Below find an email to the Best Management Practices Task Force established by City Hall as part of its PlaNYC.

RE: DDC CONTRACTS- PEDESTRIAN RAMP INSTALLATION
SUBJ: LOSS OF VITAL CURBSIDE GRASS / LAWN AREAS
DATE: JUNE 1, 2008

In the spirit of Best Management Practices I had hoped to receive a response from you on my earlier email regarding the irreversible damages to public trees and the lack of protection for them during public improvement projects. I and others still await a reply from you on that matter.

On a similar note, I offer other disturbing news that addresses the very topic discussed at a previous BMP Task Force Stakeholders' Meeting for Stormwater Management at NYU in late 2007. In fact in 2007, Queens County bore the greater burden of stormwater flood damage statistics than the rest of the City of New York. I contend that this stormwater flooding occurred because of the accumulative and excessive paving of otherwise permeable soil surfaces. While recent legislation addressed the matter of paving permeable surfaces on private property, the Commons remain vulnerable to paving. The need to preserve important curbside grass strips/lawn areas as a means for bioretainment of stormwater run-off and a means for recharging ground water are repeatedly compromised, reduced in area and paved by uninformed, rouge City engineers, their construction managers and contractors during sidewalk and pedestrian ramp installation projects.

By way of example and from my experience on DDC pedestrian ramp contracts, the name of the game for the contractor is CONCRETE and pave they must. However, the paving with concrete is often in far excess of what is actually required in a DDC contract spec for pedestrian ramp installation. See the [attached](#) NYC DOT spec for ped ramps that on average requires only a 12-foot radius for a ped ramp. I've observed 15-foot and greater radii at these locations. This involves a loss of as much as 20-25 square foot of grass area per pedestrian ramp, depending on the size of the engineer approved radius and the width of the curbside grass strip (see the attached photos of a proposed ped ramp, R=RAMP and the spray paint marking for planned removal and paving of grass area).

A 12-month DDC pedestrian ramp installation contract with 2000 locations with grass strips in any community board (in Queens) may yield a total of 40,000 square foot (1.0 acre) of ADDITIONAL and UNNECESSARY concrete paving by a contractor, paid for by the taxpayer.

Over a five-year period with renewable DDC contracts, communities could see the loss of 200,000 square foot of Common lawn areas, all approved by the DDC engineers-in-charge and their construction managers.

These curbside grass strips, as Common property are under the jurisdiction of NYC DPR Forestry as a landscape for new and existing street trees. While DPR extends its authority for protecting trees within this landscape, the DPR Chief Forester has been unwilling to provide me with a written DPR policy on the preservation of this landscape. It is dubious that such a policy even exists.

The management and control of stormwater run-off and the potential for damage to properties in the future will remain on the burner as a major topic of concern by Civic Associations and their leadership across our boro. As you are a key official at the Mayor's Office for Long-Term Planning & Sustainability I am hopeful that you will take this matter to the Commissioners (DDC/DOT/DEP/DPR) and their administrators who are responsible for managing this component of our urban infrastructure, take action and change the current policy as it applies to paving these grass strips.

If you have questions pertaining to this matter please feel free to contact me. Thank you and I wait for your replies.

Carsten W. Glaeser Ph.D, ASCA

Executive Director

Kissena Park Civic Association- Flushng NY,

Chair -Tree (and Landscape) Protection SubCommittee Queen Civic Congress,

Consulting Arborist, Queens Coalition for Parks and Greenspaces





Carsten also shared this [copy](#) of the William Elmendorf article on the Importance of Trees and Nature in Community from the International Society of Arboriculture members website.