Mapping, Restoring and Educating: A Framework for Making NYU’s Urban Green Fabric More Biodiverse

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Abstract

The history of New York University (NYU) is closely intertwined with that of New York City. The populations of both NYC and NYU have rapidly increased since their respective establishments, and both continue to grow. In order to host and accommodate so many residents and students, the landscapes of NYC and NYU have morphed from salt marshes to farmlands to built-up urban centers. Although NYC is the densest city in the United States, and NYU lacks space for a typical, expansive-green-lawn college campus, both seem to have disregarded their natural ecosystems in favor of the acquisition and construction of new buildings. This decision comes with a social and environmental price tag. Urbanization puts pressure on natural landscapes and endangers both human and non-human urban residents by causing biodiversity to decline. Biodiversity, the variety of all living things on earth, such as plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi, is a critical resource. It is “the infrastructure that supports all life on Earth.” This paper thus aims to provide a three-step framework for NYU to render its urban green fabric more biodiverse by acknowledging its environmental landscape and protecting it. Using the City of Paris 2018-2024 Biodiversity Plan as a case study, this paper will suggest how NYU could map and restore its green spaces and educate its student body on their campus’ ecology. These suggestions are aimed at creating a healthier student body and upholding NYU’s responsibility to help its city conserve a crucial and endangered resource and prepare for future challenges, such as climate change.

Key words: New York University, Biodiversity, Urbanization, Ecosystem Services, Green Spaces.