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***Mayor Fulop and the Jersey City Parks Coalition Announce
BIGGER DIG 2020 Partnership to Plant 2,020 Trees Over Next Five Years***

***Initiative Builds Off Annual BIG DIG Beautification Project that has seen More than 238,000
Tulips and Daffodils Planted Citywide; City to Commit \$300,000***

JERSEY CITY – The BIG DIG just got a whole lot bigger and taller this year thanks to an expanded partnership between Mayor Fulop’s administration and the Jersey City Parks Coalition that will see **more than 2,020 trees planted citywide** over the next five years.

The Parks Coalition has set as a goal to plant 2,020 trees over the next five years as part of the Bigger Dig 2020, with the first several trees being planted today in Arlington Park. The City has committed \$60,000 each year for five years toward the partnership, which in year one will focus on tree planting in city parks and other open spaces.

“Green, open spaces are absolutely essential for any city, which is why we’ve been expanding parks over the past two years,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “Now, we’re making sure to keep our city beautiful and green with thousands of new trees.”

The Parks Coalition will determine the planting locations based on a recent Tree Canopy Study commissioned by the Jersey City Environmental Commission that found Jersey City had a significant tree shortage, as well as through GIS mapping technology provided by New Jersey City University.

“Our parks and streets have been losing trees these past few years at an alarming rate without replacement,” said **Laura Skolar, President of the Jersey City Parks Coalition**. “After our members listened to the Jersey City Environmental Commission’s report on the poor quality of our tree canopy, we thought to turn the BIG DIG into a project that could address the critical need of replacing the trees. And since we have built an army of over 2,500 volunteers over the BIG DIG’s past four years, we will invite them to train as tree guardians and caretakers known as the JCTLC, Jersey City Tree Lovers Crew, that will monitor and maintain our public trees.”

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Launched by the JCPC with support from the City of Jersey City in 2011, the BIG DIG has been an annual community-service and beautification event that won national recognition and an award in Washington, D.C. its very first year. Four years and 238,000 daffodils and tulips later, the Parks Coalition and the City are going bigger and taller with a plan to fill parks, streets and public spaces with more than 2,020 trees by 2020.

The initiative will also include a fundraising effort for the citywide tree-planting project that will begin next October 2016 and continue through 2020. Complementing the tree planting will be the ongoing training of the JCTLC volunteers beginning in spring 2016 and continuing throughout the year.

Both the Coalition and the City are planning to partner with the New Jersey Tree Foundation, Rutgers Cooperative Extension/Master Gardeners Program, Jersey City and Hudson County Environmental Commissions, New Jersey City University, Hudson County Community College, School of High Tech and many of the Corporate Sponsors that have supported previous BIG DIG efforts.

“From the very first year of the BIG DIG, the Coalition has set a goal that was exceeded in what we planted and the volunteers who came out to help,” said **Skolar**. “We see this as a partnership with everyone in the City; local government, educational institutions, residents, small businesses and local corporations all working together to make Jersey City a greener, healthier and more beautiful city.”

ABOUT THE JERSEY CITY PARKS COALITION

The Jersey City Parks Coalition is a 501(c)3 New Jersey non-profit representing 24 community and parks groups that steward the care and maintenance of their local municipal or county park, historic cemetery or open space. Its mission is to empower and engage the residents in the planning, implementation and care of Jersey City’s parks and open spaces. The BIG DIG, in partnership with the City of Jersey City, is always held on Make A Difference Day in October as a day of service project that engages volunteers to plant in various locations throughout the City. Previous years have been in parks and open spaces, public schools and public housing. Last year over 80,000 daffodils were distributed free of charge to homeowners for their own front yards to join the prolific spring bloom of daffodils that took place citywide in spring 2015.

Social media tags for the Bigger Dig 2020 are: @JCParksCoalition, @JC_GOV, #BIGGERDIG2020, #JCTLC, #JerseyCity #JCMakeItYours, and #MoretreesJC

To contribute to the effort, email BiggerDig2020@gmail.com or call Laura Skolar at 201-259-1800. Free training classes for the JCTLC will begin in April 2016 and continue throughout the year - email or call to register.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at jenniferm@jcnj.org or 201-376-0699 or Laura Skolar, President of the JC Parks Coalition at 201-259-1800.////