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THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MARGARET S. CHIN
COUNCIL MEMBER, 1ST DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

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May 8, 2015

Vicki Been, Commissioner
NYC Housing Preservation & Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Re: Request to transfer HPD properties to NYC Parks and Recreation
181 Stanton Street (Block 344/ Lot 153)
137 Attorney Street (Block 344/ Lot 158)

Dear Commissioner Been,

I write to you regarding two city-owned lots in the Lower East Side in my district, which are located at 137 Attorney Street and 181 Stanton Street. They are currently under the jurisdiction of HPD. Since 2012, these two lots have been occupied and used by Siempre Verde Garden through a temporary GreenThumb license. Based on the garden's long history in the community, I am requesting that these two properties be officially transferred to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

For about two decades, Siempre Verde Garden has been maintained by community members on the two lots owned by HPD. Both 137 Attorney Street and 181 Stanton Street have been underdeveloped since at least the 1980s. Adjacent to these properties is a privately owned lot at 139 Attorney Street, which has also been vacant for a number of years.

Last year at its October 2014 full board meeting, Manhattan Community Board 3 (CB3) voted to oppose a proposal for the disposition of HPD's properties, along with the privately owned lot, for the development of luxury housing. The proposal also requested for a 421a tax abatement to support inclusion of limited units of affordable housing. Members of the garden and community advocates attended multiple CB3 meetings, including testifying at its Land Use Committee meetings, in support of preserving the garden. The public also indicated that the amount of affordable housing proposed as a part of this disposition plan was not worth the loss of open space.

The resolution to oppose this plan was unanimously supported by CB3, the gardeners, and active neighbors who have demonstrated their involvement and commitment to this open space for the past twenty years. For your reference, enclosed is a copy of the CB3 Resolution that supports the transfer of these lots from HPD to DPR.

I have also met with members of Siempre Verde Garden and share their sentiments about preserving the garden, which has been a part of the Lower East Side for decades. Particularly given the limited number of affordable units that could practically be developed on this site, we do not believe there would be a community benefit from this proposed development equivalent to the loss of community space.

Since it seems unlikely that there will be further discussions on the development of these two lots, I ask that you transfer both lots to the Dept. of Parks and Recreation, so that members of Siempre Verde Garden can continue to preserve this public open space and provide free community-based programming for the neighborhood.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact my Director of Housing, Persephone Tan, at (212) 788-7259.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Margaret S. Chin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret S. Chin
New York City Council Member
District 1 – Lower Manhattan