





THE NEW YORK MECHANICAL GARDENS BIKE CO-OP

Putting the tools for happiness
in the hands of every New Yorker

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September 26, 2015

Ms. Esther Brunner
Mayor's Office Of Sustainability
253 Broadway – 7th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Comment on Downtown Rockaway Redevelopment Plan (CEQR NO. 16DME010Q)
Draft Scope of Work for EIS – Remove the disposition of **Queens block 15534, lot 70**

Ms. Brunner,

I am writing on behalf of NYC Mechanical Gardens Bike Coop, a collectively-run nonprofit dedicated to sharing bicycle maintenance and traffic-navigating skills with New Yorkers of all income levels, located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. We request that **Queens block 15534, lot 70** be removed from the Downtown Rockaway Redevelopment Plan prior to determining the final scope of work for the Environmental Impact Study.

We understand that on page 15 of the Draft Plan, the lease or sale to a private developer is described for "new as-of-right residential uses pursuant to existing R3X zoning." R3X zoning allows for the construction of single and two-family detached homes. The current zoning would allow approximately 8-10 apartments to be built on the site. The architects' rendering in the draft does not include the new buildings on this lot. Neither the inclusion nor the disposition of this City-owned lot is in keeping with the strategy of the Redevelopment Plan. The lot is outside the targeted area and the development proposed for this site does not fit with the proposed building envelope.¹

But a much more significant issue is that this land is public land. We believe that the City should not transfer the land to a private developer to create as many as ten new suburban-style market-rate housing units. Many more New Yorkers will benefit if the City keeps the site public and allows it to be developed for the use of the neighborhood by community leaders and local residents.

¹ Figures in the Draft Scope do not actually illustrate the proposed disposition. Figure 13 shows the building envelope of a structure that used to be on the site but was demolished by DSNY last year. In Figure 14, the lot is shown without structures at all.

Public land is rare and precious in New York City. On this issue, NYC Mechanical Gardens stands in solidarity with 596 Acres, which has facilitated the transformation of over three dozen vacant lots like lot 70 into community-stewarded open spaces throughout the five boroughs.

These oases provide key social infrastructure for the development of strong communities. They become places for people get to know their neighbors, share skills, and build resiliency. On these once-vacant lots, New Yorkers grow healthy food, teach science to school kids; divert water from our over-burdened sewers; remove tons of waste from landfill by redirecting organics into soil production via composting; and provide space for cultural activities – such as community-based bicycle cooperatives.

The Rockaway community will only get the opportunity to determine the best possible use of this public asset if this lot is not privately developed.

NYC Mechanical Gardens urges you to remove the disposition of **Queens block 15534, lot 70** from the Draft Scope of Scope of work for the Downtown Rockaway Redevelopment Plan so that the redevelopment of the vacant private properties in the area can proceed along with community planning for the transformation of this public lot into a resource.

NYC Mechanical Gardens stands with 596 Acres and the residents of Downtown Rockaway to work toward a more productive and community-minded use of the public land at Queens block 15534, lot 70.

Collectively, we thank you your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Alexis Danzig,

on behalf of the NYC Mechanical Gardens Bike Coop