December 20, 2017

Fiona Akins, AICP
Deputy Director
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

RE: Design for new public park at Nameoke and Augustina in Downtown Far Rockaway (Queens block 15534, lot 70)

Dear Ms. Akins,

We are thrilled that a new public park is coming to the corner of Nameoke and Augustina Avenues in downtown Far Rockaway as part of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project! This results from over a year of advocacy by local residents, Allison Jeffrey and Travis Anderson, who identified a vacant public site on their block as a great location for creating the community open space they know their neighborhood needs, and who prevented the city from selling it as originally proposed by NYCEDC. Their campaign brought together hundreds of neighbors, winning the support of Council Member Donovan Richards (cc’d), who are are thankful championed their vision through the ULURP process!

The neighbors whose advocacy resulted in this future park are in the best position to continue leading its design; they know most intimately what will best serve the needs and wishes of their neighborhood! Rebecca Gavert of NYCEDC (cc’d) mentioned you are working on planning this future park, and I have also cc’d Senior Project Planner Mitchel Loring because we spoke about this potential location for a park earlier this year. Attached, please find local advocates’ design for the future park, the outcome of a design charrette they led at the local library this month.¹ We are requesting that the future park follow the enclosed design which was created by the people who know best what their neighborhood needs. As you will see, the future park, which neighbors named Reckowacky Park & Community Garden after their Native American ancestors and the peninsula’s original inhabitants, includes both a passive recreation space that will be created and maintained by NYC Parks staff, and a community garden area that will be created and maintained by neighbors via NYC Parks GreenThumb. In addition, it has a third area that they wish to continue serving as a community parking lot (the school and church across the street have historically used it this way), updated and managed by NYC Parks, also serving park-goers. (As inspiration for NYC Parks that include both passive recreation space maintained by NYC Parks and

¹ The design is also available online at http://596acres.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=521273298f7846709a5d7bc323677033
community gardens maintained by neighbors via GreenThumb, please see the design for Little Claremont Park in the Bronx, enclosed, and the plan for Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn.)

Longtime Downtown Far Rockaway residents Allison and Travis, who each wrote a letter enclosed, have lived near this unused Department of Sanitation lot for decades. Allison has lived directly next to it, and it is her vision and advocacy that exposed the potential of this location as open space to everyone else.

Developing plans with dozens of neighbors and winning support from hundreds more, their grassroots advocacy is what prevented the lot’s disposition and got it written as a future NYC Park into the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project plan.

My organization, 596 Acres, has helped residents transform 37 vacant lots across NYC into thriving community open spaces, and stands ready to continue supporting these residents in helping design and steward this future public park so it becomes a sustainable and thriving local institution.

I suggest we all meet in the next weeks so Allison and Travis can present their design in person, and we can move forward in planning this future park together! Please contact us using the information provided in the letterhead.

Thank you in advance for working towards making these local leaders’ vision for a community open space here a reality!

Sincerely,

Mara Kravitz  Stephanie Alvarado

Directors of Advocacy and Partnerships, 596 Acres

Encl:

Part 1: Community-Proposed Design for Future NYC Park at Nameoke and Augustina Avenues (Queens block 15534, lot 70), Downtown Far Rockaway

\[^2\] \(\text{https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker/project/7408}\)

\[^3\] \(\text{https://www.nycgovparks.org/news/press-releases?id=21450}\)
Letter from Allison Jeffrey RE: Design for new public park at Nameoke and Augustina in Downtown Far Rockaway (Queens block 15534, lot 70)

Letter from Travis Anderson RE: Design for new public park at Nameoke and Augustina in Downtown Far Rockaway (Queens block 15534, lot 70)

Drawing of proposed Reckowacky Park & Community Garden created via community design charette, winter 2017

Design from Little Claremont Park from NYC Parks website (example of resident-stewarded community garden within NYC Parks-staff maintained park)

Photographs from design process

Part 2: Advocacy campaign that prevented disposition of Queens block 15534, lot 70 to create NYC Park instead

Proposal for “Far Rock Garden” with mission, vision, description and sketch; GreenThumb registrations form including contact information for at least ten neighbors ready to steward a community garden here; editorial in City Limits by Allison Jeffrey, 250+ petition signatures in favor of a community growing space, and letters of support from NY Mechanical Gardens and Green Map Systems

Testimony from Allison Jeffrey and Travis Anderston (local residents) and Mara Kravitz (director, 596 Acres) for City Planning Commission ULURP 170248 PPQ hearing

“Late Edition to Rockaway Plan Stirs Concerns at Queens BP Hearing,” City Limits (April 28, 2017), spotlighting local campaign to make this lot a park instead (emphasis added)

“Far Rockaway Rezoning Sails Through City Planning Commission,” City Limits, July 10, 2017, quoting Commissioner Levin being influenced to stop the disposition of these lots in response to local residents’ advocacy (emphasis added)

Resolution No. 1655 in which the disposition of this lot is removed

“The de Blasio Administration and Council Member Richards Announce Approval of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project,” NYCEDC, September 7,

4 Watch Allison testify in the City Planning Commission hearing video here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTSuygx9EJQ&feature=youtu.be&t=5430
2017 (emphasis added)

Photographs from advocacy process

cc: NYC Councilmember Donovan Richards (31st District), Rebecca Gavert (NYCEDC), Mitchel Loring (Senior Project Planner, NYC Parks), Dorothy Lewandowski (Queens Commissioner, NYC Parks), Mitchell Silver, FAICP (Commissioner, NYC Parks)
Part 1:

Community-Proposed Design for Future NYC Park at Nameoke and Augustina Avenues (Queens block 15534, lot 70), Downtown Far Rockaway
December 20, 2017

Fiona Akins, AICP
Deputy Director
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

RE: Design for new public park at Nameoke and Augustina in Downtown Far Rockaway (Queens block 15534, lot 70)

Dear Ms. Akins,

My name is Allison Jeffrey and I, along with the residents of Far Rockaway are thrilled that you are planning to develop a park at Queens Block 15534 Lot 70 at the corner of Augustina and Nameoke Avenues. I have lived in Far Rockaway for the past 30 years with my parents and siblings, all nearby. Over a year ago, it was my vision to start a community garden to address the food desert that is Far Rockaway. Through the past year’s journey, neighbors and I have collected over 400 signatures online and on paper, met in the local library to discuss and share ideas, and advocated at City Hall, Queens Borough Office, City Council Member meetings, and Community Board meetings. Queens Block 15534 Lot 70 is source of our vision for a community garden and playground.

Although the lot has been abandoned by the City for years, the space is important to us and we deem it vital in impacting the landscape and health and lives of ALL residents of our community. We stand to benefit from the gardening and composting that will be produced from the land. We are also thrilled that now our children will have a safe place to play.

The attached package is a repository of artifacts and information that I and other community members would like to share with you in support of our vision for the development and use of this space.

Thank you in advance for your time and collaborative efforts in preserving and beautifying our community.

Regards,

Allison Fiona Jeffrey
Far Rockaway Community Member
afionaj@gmail.com
646-653-9813 (mobile)

cc: NYC Councilmember Donovan Richards (31st District), Rebecca Gavert (NYCEDC), Mitchel Loring (Senior Project Planner, NYC Parks), Dorothy Lewandowski (Queens Commissioner, NYC Parks), Mitchell Silver, FAICP (Commissioner, NYC Parks)
December 20, 2017

Fiona Akins, AICP
Deputy Director
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

RE: Design for new public park at Nameoke and Augustina in Downtown Far Rockaway (Queens block 15534, lot 70)

Dear Ms. Fiona Akins,

My name is Travis Anderson and I am a current resident of Far Rockaway. Since graduating the Master Composters Course hosted by NYC Compost Project in 2016, I thought of the lot on the corner of Augustina Avenue and Nameoke Avenue as a place to compost. Since there was a sign on the fence of the lot stating that the Department of Sanitation owned it, I figured that it would be possible to use it for composting; however, that was not the case.

A year later, local residents, Allison and myself, have managed to convince local officials and city officials to recognize the importance of a public owned lot being utilized as a productive and entertaining green space rather than another impermeable structure. I have gotten positive reviews from neighbors I know who signed the petition and are excited to see something close by that offers the same benefits as if visiting Bayswater Park. I personally know that having this space remain a public space will ensure a more happy and robust Downtown Rockaway community. Please see the enclosed design we created for the space.

Regards,

Travis Anderson
Far Rockaway Community Member
t.andersoncap@gmail.com

cc: NYC Councilmember Donovan Richards (31st District), Rebecca Gavert (NYCEDC), Mitchel Loring (Senior Project Planner, NYC Parks), Dorothy Lewandowski (Queens Commissioner, NYC Parks), Mitchell Silver, FAICP (Commissioner, NYC Parks)
Little Claremont Park Playground Reconstruction

This project will reconstruct Little Claremont Park Playground.

Project Update: This project is in active construction.

Project Timeline

**Design**
- Start Date: January 2015
- Projected Completion Date: December 2015
- Completion Date: January 2016

**Procurement**
- Start Date: January 2016
- Projected Completion Date: October 2016
- Completion Date: April 2017

**Construction**
- Start Date: April 2017
- Projected Completion Date: April 2018

Funding
- Total Funding: $3,331,000
- Funding Source: Mayoral

Location

Little Claremont Park
Park Avenue and Claremont Parkway, Borough of the Bronx.

Project Staff

Project Liaison: Michelle Martell

Contact NYC Parks about this project tracker/contact/7408)

Last updated: 12/20/2017
Community Design Charette at Downtown Far Rockaway Library, November 27, 2017
Community Design Charette at Downtown Far Rockaway Library, November 27, 2017
Part 2:
Advocacy campaign that prevented disposition of Queens block 15534, lot 70 to create NYC Park instead
Far Rock Garden

Mission Statement

Far Rock Garden is a thriving urban garden, compost site and welcoming community space at the corner of Nameoke and Augustina, Queens block 15534, lot 70. The site will be a community garden where residents grow healthy produce in raised beds together. We will promote healthy eating and sustainable practices that will benefit the neighborhood, as well as a green, safe space where neighborhood children can play and learn.

From vacant lot to community garden

Identifying the Need

This garden will help eliminate the food deserts currently in the Far Rockaway community. All local supermarkets and Delicatessens (Delis) provide substandard offerings of produce and food to the people in this community from the lower Beaches to Beach 60. The closest supermarket with average to above average produce is located at Beach 70, 3 miles from the core Mott Ave and Central Ave. area; while the next closest supermarket is located in Inwood, Long Island, 1.2 miles away from this same intersection. Currently there are several supermarkets with substandard offerings: Bravo, Compare Foods, Food Dynasty, Keyfood, and other smaller, privately-owned supermarkets. Currently the following is available for food alternatives: multiple Popeye's, McDonald's, multiple Dunkin Donuts, Checkers, an abundance of Chinese Food establishments, Golden Krust, KFC, Little Caesars; all while the single and closest farm is located at Beach 45th Street. In light of the current gentrification efforts currently in place in the Downtown Far Rockaway community, we are organizing to save land for the People's health and wellness.

April 2017
Current Conditions:

April 2017
How the Garden Will Be Used

Garden membership will be open to all interested community members. All members will have keys to the garden so it's easily accessible. There will be a mix of private garden beds and community garden beds. Private beds will be assigned first-come, first-serve with bi-annual group check-ins to ensure everybody is using their assigned beds, and transferring them to other gardeners waiting for private beds if they have been absent.

It will host an affordable farmers’ market twice a week, once on a weekday and once on a weekend from April to October. Gardeners will harvest rainwater to water crops (in addition to using the fire hydrant). A local Master Composter, graduate of the Queens Botanical Gardens’ NYC Compost Project program will help neighbors transform food scraps into a sustainable, nutrient-rich growing medium for the gardeners using 3-bin and Windrow systems. He will organize a sub-group of neighborhood composters who will take care of the compost systems on a rotation. Community members in conjunction with Queens Botanical Garden will host workshops on environmental stewardship for neighbors and youth on topics including gardening, cooking, rainwater catchment, composting and more.

*Transformation of food scraps in action:*

STAGE 1: Worm buddies break down food scraps

STAGE 2: Food scraps have been transformed to nutrient rich soil

STAGE 3: Soil becomes medium for growing food -- like mixed lettuce!

(photos from successful composting by future community garden member)

April 2017
Garden Design
GreenThumb Garden Registration 2015-2019

Garden Name  For Rockaway Garden

Block 15534 Lot 70 CB 14 Jurisdiction DOS

Two members must provide full contact information on the license agreement, including phone numbers, addresses and emails. These primary members phone or email information will be given to potential new members.

* All garden groups must register every year with GreenThumb in order to be eligible for materials and services. License agreements will be renewed every four years.

* Complete all sections of this packet.

* You may either fill out the membership list or attach a printed copy.

* Garden groups must provide GreenThumb with two sets of current keys once they are registered and licensed.

* Please bring your post marked GreenThumb registration letter with you to a registration session in your borough.

GreenThumb: Transforming vacant lots into gardens since 1978
Membership Procedure

Far Rockaway Garden

Garden Name

14
CB
Block/Lot(s)

Please check all that apply below or attach a copy of your membership procedure. It is paramount that potential new members understand a fair and simple way to join the garden, insuring all well meaning people access.

How do new people join your garden? They can...

☐ Call a garden representative.
   Name_________________________ Phone_________________________
   Email_________________________

☑ Come to a garden meeting.   ☐ weekly   ☐ biweekly   ☑ monthly
   When are your meetings?

☐ Pay a membership fee.   How much is the fee per year?________
   Is there a student or senior discount?

☐ Volunteer first.   How many hours must they volunteer?________

☐ Sign a work agreement.   What must a member agree to?
   Minimum hours of work per month?________
   Hosting open hours?________
   Maintaining common spaces?________
   Attend garden meetings?________
   Other?________

☑ Is there a waiting list for a garden plot? Yes How many total plots are there?____

☐ Other membership requirements specific to your garden?


☑ Bylaws

We want all GreenThumb gardens to operate to their highest potential. Creating bylaws for your garden group will provide the structure for your community to know exactly what is needed of them so everyone can enjoy a safe, rewarding community garden space. Please submit a copy of your bylaws with this registration packet.

We will work on our bylaws once we have access to the space. We want to include as many people in the process of creating them as possible.
**Garden & Contact Information**

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<th>Garden Name</th>
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<th>Block/Lot(s)</th>
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<td>13534/170</td>
<td>CB</td>
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**Garden Information**

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<tr>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>Cross Street(s)</th>
<th>Website/Social Media/group email</th>
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<td>Augustina Ave</td>
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**Contact Information**

**Primary**

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<th>Work Telephone</th>
<th>Cell Telephone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>917-836-0688</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Queens</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>11691</td>
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Check here to receive the quarterly program guides by e-mail instead of postal mail. Complete address line at right.

**Secondary**

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<th>Last Name</th>
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<th>Cell Telephone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>(646)-662-0585</td>
<td>(646)-662-0585</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>11691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check here to receive the quarterly program guides by e-mail instead of postal mail. Complete address line at right.

Email Address: andersoncp@gmail.com
Registered GreenThumb Gardens are required to be open at least TWENTY (20) regularly scheduled hours per week during the season (April 1 - October 31). Gardens are required to post an “Open Hours” sign on the gate. Because the garden MUST be open during the hours posted on your “Open Hours” sign, please limit the number of hours you post on the sign to only the hours per week that you can 100% guarantee to be open. Please specify AM and PM.

**HOURS OPEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE</th>
<th>8 am – 12 noon and 3 pm – 7 pm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>8 am – 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td>2 pm – 7 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
<td>10 am – 4 pm</td>
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<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>2 pm – 7 pm</td>
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<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td>9 am – 12 noon</td>
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<td>SATURDAY</td>
<td>8 am – 5 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
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**Sample Sign**

Visitors Welcome to
La Casita Verde Community Garden

Open Hours

Friday 3pm – 5pm   Sat & Sun 10am – 2pm

Or whenever the gate is open, weather permitting
Neighborhood View: Farms for Far Rockaway

RESIDENT SAYS PLANNERS SHOULDN'T NEGLECT FOOD JUSTICE WHEN THINKING ABOUT HOW TO REDEVELOP THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

The redevelopment of Far Rockaway could establish ways for residents to grow their own food and create other opportunities to improve access to nutritious food. Or it could worsen existing food-access issues.

BY ALLISON F. JEFFREY

Pause for a moment and consider, “What is the most sacred thing to mankind after breathing”? It’s food (and water of course)! We must eat and drink in order to live. Now consider a people forced to consume unhealthy and dangerous foods. How might this impact their daily lives? How might their impact their education, finances, housing, access to health, access to resources? How might this impact their culture, how they treat each other, how they see themselves, and how they learn? Can this be considered trauma? After all, poverty is a form of trauma.

These questions can and must be applied to the more than 120,000 American citizens residing in the neighborhood known as Far Rockaway. Far Rock, as it’s affectionately called, is isolated from the rest of the five boroughs. Despite being surrounded on most of its sides by water, Far Rockaway is a notorious food desert.

According to the USDA, food deserts “are defined as parts of the country void of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and healthy food providers.” According to Rockaway Rising.org, Far Rockaway, despite its beautiful beaches, “is a neighborhood which has the second highest density of public housing of all five boroughs.”

With 43 percent of its population living at or below the poverty line, Far Rockaway’s food desert is worsened by the copious fast food restaurants, particularly in the Downtown Far Rockaway area. Within a 10-block radius of the Mott Avenue and Beach 20th/Central Avenue intersection there’s a McDonald’s, three Popeyes, a Checkers, three Dunkin Donuts, multiple Crown Fried Chicken establishments, multiple corner bodegas, Chinese restaurants and pizzerias. This food desert is worsened by substandard grocery stores and supermarkets in the neighborhood. The results are clear: Obesity and high-blood pressure are far higher in Far Rock than the rest of the borough and the rate of death from heart disease is 78 percent higher in the Rockaways than it is in Queens County overall.

How can we eliminate this food desert? We can start by empowering the residents with access to resources such as free, publicly owned land where they can grow their own food—food without pesticides and hormones, that’s not downtrodden and depressing in appearance, that’s organic. A community farm is needed in the Downtown Far Rockaway area since it is located more than 30 blocks from the closest community farm at Beach 41st Street.

The publicly owned land at the corner of Augustine Avenue and Nameoke Street is the best solution to this serious food epidemic. The land is currently owned by the Sanitation Department and has been unused for more than a decade. This land can easily be transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation for maintenance, and access given to the residents of the area for farming, composting, or food co-op development. Instead, the city plans to sell the land for cheap to real estate investors that probably do not live in the area.

As the city moves toward rezoning Far Rockaway, there are many questions to be answered. One of the key ones is, if not through a community farm, how do you planners and elected officials propose to healthily feed approximately 52,000 impoverished Far Rockaway residents, given the poor health statistics and food desert? Other questions include:

- How many acres of green space will the proposed rezoning set aside to address food and health needs?
- Compared with concerns like housing, parking, recreation and libraries, what level of priority do you place on addressing the Far Rockaway food desert?
- Given the environmental damage from Hurricane Sandy, what precautions will you take to reduce the impact this development/revitalization will have on the ecosystem?

Excited? Worried? How do you feel about the proposed rezoning of Far Rockaway?

Tell us Today
zone@citylimits.org
844-ZONE-NYC

Do you think Far Rockaway is a food desert?
If so, how do you think it should be addressed?
Tell us at zone@citylimits.org.
Petition: Esther Brunner, Downtown Far Rockaway wants to keep its pu...  https://www.change.org/p/esther-brunner-downtown-far-rockaway-wants...
Green Space for Downtown Far Rockaway

Allison Jeffrey  Far Rockaway, NY

104
Supporters

We, the Community Members of Far Rockaway want Queens Block 15534, Lot 70 to remain public.

To share this petition, here’s a shortened URL:

www.tinyurl.com/farrockgarden

As part of the current redevelopment plans for Downtown Far Rockaway, the City is requesting approval to dispose (sell or give away) the City-owned lot at Queens Block 15534, Lot 70. This lot is currently not being used and is owned by DSNY, the Sanitation department. The lot is zoned for 1 and 2 family homes; so, the City is seeking approval to sell it to a private developer so that more houses can be built. HOWEVER, We, the residents of Downtown Far Rockaway, want to keep this land public so
that the Community can benefit from a green space.

We want the City to remove the disposition of Queens Block 15534, Lot 70 from the current DOWNTOWN FAR ROCKAWAY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT DRAFT SCOPE OF WORK FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT CEQR NO. 16DME010Q document found here:

http://livinglotsnyc.org/media/files/16DME010Q_Draft_Scope_Of_Work_08192016_1.pdf under sub-heading DISPOSITION OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY


This 14,000 square feet of land can be best served by creating a public-use space such as a community garden and compost. Far Rockaway is a notorious food desert. The substandard local groery stores and supermarkets have lackluster produce offerings. The more than 20 fast food restaurants also do not serve the community’s best interest. The Downtown Far Rockaway area has a significant empowered population - 43% of the families make $30,000 or less per year. A community garden would offer all residents a healthy and organic food resource. A community garden would be a vested asset to community youth who can learn how to grow their own food. Community schools can also participate in said green space.

Once this publicly owned land is transferred to private hands, the people can never benefit from it again. We thank you for your continued support.

This petition was delivered to:

- Mayor’s Office of Sustainability,
  Esther Brunner

Read the letter

Letter to
Mayor’s Office of Sustainability, Esther Brunner

Green Space for Downtown Far Rockaway

OK

- organic farming
- compost
- organic gardening
- green space
- public lands

Allison Jeffrey started this petition with a single signature, and now has 104 supporters. Start a petition today to change something you care about.

Start a petition

Updates

1. 6 months ago
   100 supporters
2. 7 months ago
   Petition update
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
September 26, 2015

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 to 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. The Draft Plan, on page 15, describes its lease or sale to a private developer for "new as-of-right residential uses pursuant to existing R3X zoning." More importantly: this land is public land. There is no reason at all for the City to transfer it to a private developer to create 10 new suburban-style market-rate housing units. A lot more people will benefit if the City keeps the site and allows it to be developed for public use by resident leaders.

Our organization is based on the Lower East Side, where gardens and open space are vital to community cohesiveness. Gardens Rising is a GOSR-funded program that is increasing stormwater retention and value to the city is of a type that will be lost in the Rockaways if Queens block 15534, lot 70 is developed as residences.

The parcel should be a key asset in what will become a dense neighborhood as planned. It can be transferred to the NYC Parks Department for use as a GreenThumb garden or for the creation of a new Downtown Rockaway Park or Playground. Not only will it supply key social infrastructure for the development of resilient communities, it will divert water from our overburdened sewers, remove tons of waste from landfill by redirecting organics into soil production via composting and provide space for cultural activities.

I urge 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 in parallel with community planning for the transformation of this public lot into a resource.

Sincerely,

Wendy Brawer  
Founding Director
My name is Allison Jeffrey and I and my parents and sisters have lived in Far Rockaway for the past 30 years.

We the People refers to a group of Community members in Downtown Far Rockaway opposing ULURP #170248PPQ (disposal of Queens Block 15534 Lot 70 within ULURP C 170245 HGQ). We have gathered 300+ paper and online signatures also supporting this effort.

We the People want this lot to remain public and green and for ownership to be transferred from NYC Sanitation to NYC Parks so that it may be used as a community playground, garden and compost. We the people have written a document proposal describing such use and plan to submit to Green Thumb, if presented with the opportunity.

Far Rockaway is a federally designated food desert with 43% poverty and a high heart disease rate. There are no supermarkets with fresh or organic offerings; instead Downtown Far Rockaway is inundated with Bravos, Compare Foods, Keyfood, Food Dynasty and C-Town which all offer lackluster and sometimes expired food products, while other, more affluent nearby neighborhoods, such as Arverne by the Sea, and Inwood and Cedahurst, Long Island, benefit from stores such as Stop and Shop, Trader Joe's and Foodtown. This neighborhood also suffers from scores of fast food establishments.

Community members want a safe space where they can collaborate, learn and grow their own healthy foods in order to combat several disparities that are clearly tied to an area with several low socioeconomic indicators.

We ask that the committee vote no on Item 22 - ULURP #170248PPQ. We ask that the committee instead have this publicly owned land be protected from future harm by those wanting to make it private, namely the Economic Development Committee. The proposed revitalization of Downtown Far Rockaway needs amending so that disenfranchised people are not further neglected or alienated through promulgation of a project that will result in the loss of 11 acres of green land.

Thank you for your continued support.

Regards,
Allison F. Jeffrey
Downtown Far Rockaway Community Member
My name is Travis Anderson and I have lived in Far Rockaway my whole life of 25 years. For the last 4 years I have pursued the Agricultural Field and have found myself completely engrossed in the information and simplicity of Agriculture. Having the Lot on Nameoke Ave and Augustina Ave become a fun, productive and educational green space for the local residents would greatly serve every generation in Downtown Far Rockaway.

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Thank you for your continued support.

Regards,
Travis Anderson
Downtown Far Rockaway Community Member
My name is Mara Kravitz and I am the director of partnerships of 596 Acres, New York City’s Community Land Access Advocacy Organization. I am submitting my testimony to oppose land use application ID C 170248 PPQ (ULURP # 170248 PPQ) on behalf of 596 Acres, Inc. and neighbors who live and work in Far Rockaway.

ULURP # 170248 PPQ calls for the disposition of Queens block 15534, lot 70, a city-owned property on the corner of Nameoke and Augustina Avenues in Far Rockaway pursuant to zoning. The inclusion and disposition of this City-owned lot are both inconsistent with the strategy of the rest of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project. The lot is outside the targeted area and the development proposed for this site does not fit with the proposed building envelope. The current zoning, R3X, would allow approximately 8-10 apartments to be built here in attached single- and two-family detached homes.

More importantly: this land is public land. There is no reason at all for the City to transfer this public land it to a private developer to create 10 new suburban-style market-rate housing units, especially when there is a predicted deficit of 11 acres of open space in the draft EIS for the Downtown Far Rockaway plan. Queens Community Board 14 agrees, writing in their official ULURP comments that “a Park/ play ground…shall be built on the old Department of Sanitation Site as identified in 170248 PPQ et al. Therefore there shall not be a disposition of this property.” The Queens Borough President has seconded their recommendation in her official ULURP comments as well: "location of a park or playground on a former Department of Sanitation site instead of disposing it as proposed.”

A lot more people will benefit if the City keeps the site and allows it to be developed for public use by organized resident leaders. Their proposal for Far Rock Garden, shared with the City Planning Commission at the public hearing on Wednesday, May 24 (also available for download at livinglotsnyc.org/lot/4155340070/) includes space to grow and distribute healthy produce, to transform organic waste into healthy soil via composting, and to create play areas for local children. This land can be respite for young and old alike, as well as host to community composting, food production, farm markets, pop up libraries, science classes and many other overlapping community-enriching activities. This could be achieved if the land was transferred to NYC Parks and stewarded by these committed neighbors via the GreenThumb program. But none of this will be possible if we give away this precious public land.
596 Acres has facilitated the transformation of over three dozen vacant lots like this into community stewarded open spaces throughout the five boroughs. These oases provide key social infrastructure for the development of resilient communities as people get to know their neighbors, share skills and build strengths. They also grow healthy food, teach science to schoolkids, 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.

We urge you to vote no on ULURP # 170248 PPQ. My organization, 596 Acres, and residents of Far Rockaway stand ready to facilitate a productive use of the public land at Queens block 15534, lot 70.
Late Addition to Rockaway Plan Stirs Concerns at Queens BP Hearing

By Abigail Savitch-Lew | April 28, 2017

The Economic Development Corporation’s proposed rezoning for Downtown Far Rockaway is making its way through the seven-month public review process known as ULURP. In March, Community board 14 approved the rezoning with a host of conditions, from lower densities to the creation of a new school, and sent it to Borough President Melinda Katz for review.

At a hearing on Thursday, Katz indicated support for the overall objectives of the plan, calling the planning partners “wonderful agencies” and noting she understood the “importance” of the project, but she said she wanted to explore the density issues raised by the community board and was disturbed by a point of process she found unusual: At eight o’clock the night before her hearing, she said, the de Blasio administration had announced changes to the rezoning.

“I don’t recall this ever happening before,” she said. “I just want somebody to explain to me the technicality of this and how this happens.”

The changes were made through an “A-Application”—an amendment to the rezoning proposal, which is permitted so long as changes occur ahead of the City Planning Commission hearing on the Environmental Impact Statement, according to John Young of the Department of City Planning.

City representatives explained that they were slightly expanding the borders of the rezoning area after hearing about two sites that property owners wanted to develop with an upzoning. The city is also preserving a commercial overlay that the original proposal was slated to remove.
The city also made adjustments to respond to community concerns about height, such as by adding new building height limits along Mott Ave, Nameoke Street and Redfern Avenue. The amendments also introduce rules to allow flexibility that will improve the design of the developments, the city says. In one place, a revision will reduce the required amount of publicly accessible open space.

Altogether, the changes are expected to result in the addition of 96 units of housing and almost 12,000 square feet of retail, as well as a loss of almost 6,000 square feet of open space (though one of the owners on the newly added sites has suggested he might voluntarily provide more than 6,000 square feet of open space). According to the EDC’s environmental analysis, the proposal will not result in any additional environmental impacts, but as the original proposal already had a significant adverse impact on open space, the amendment will likely raise some hairs. There will be an opportunity for the community board to make comments on the changes, but not to vote again.

Katz noted that the community board had already called for fewer housing units.

“You’ve got to figure out where to take it from, guys,” she said, recommending the city find a way to reduce density in another part of the proposal.

Devaney Brown, representing Councilmember Donovan Richards, and Assembly member Stacy Amato offered conditioned support for the proposal and an interest in seeing the community board’s priorities addressed. Brown raised concerns about building heights, school seats and open space, while Amato mentioned schools, parking, traffic, and how the city would ensure a diversity of retail establishments.

“When you do something at eight o’clock at night, you just kicked confidence out of the conversation,” she added.

Several residents in the audience expressed greater consternation in their testimonies.

“My fear is that the plan is going to...basically leave my community just like Harlem...very gentrified and very exclusive feeling,” said resident Alexis Smallwood, who said she used to live in Harlem and no longer feels welcome there. She called for the use of a community land trust to ensure continued affordability, and for a reduction in new buildings, which, in addition to causing gentrification, she said would change the character of the community.

She was also one of four residents who testified against the city’s proposal to give a vacant lot owned by the Department of Sanitation to a developer for the creation of eight units of below-market housing. The group said they have collected 400 petitions in favor of a proposal to turn the land over to the Parks Department for the creation of a community garden, compost space, and play space for children. They said their proposal jives with the community board’s vision of using the space as a playground or park.

“The community needs an opportunity to grow their own food. A green space would allow community members to come together to do this so they can change the course of their health. It’s a dire need,” said resident Allison Jeffrey.

Another group of four residents—one from Far Rockaway, and the other three from low-rise neighborhoods farther west on the island—expressed opposition to the rezoning on the grounds that the area doesn’t need any more housing density. They presented their own power point presentation, “The Far Rockaway Village: Destruction of a Town.”

“People said we need parking, we need better access to downtown. Nobody said we need housing,” said Eugene Falik, the Far Rockaway resident. He said that the city did not have a sufficient plan to meet other goal of the plan like revitalizing commerce or improving transportation, and that the additional housing would exacerbate the area's lack of parking. With Rita Stark, owner of the long-abandoned shopping center in the area, now deceased and her estate showing a willingness to fix it up, he also questioned the necessity of the city getting permission to take the area by eminent domain (the city says it need all the tools in its toolbox to revitalize the site).

Fellow presenter Phyllis Rudnick put it in financial terms: “If I have to sell my house, what could I possibly say to a buyer?” she said.

Support for the plan came from the Queens Chamber of Commerce and Eiden Consulting, a firm specialized in energy-efficient design and urban renewal, both of which heralded the opportunities for revitalization. A representative from the property workers union 32BJ also supported the plan and asked for commitments that new buildings pay prevailing wage.

EDC representatives said they were continuing to engage with the community board and had committed to the creation of a community advisory group to monitor development going forward. They said they had spoken to the garden advocates and were “hopeful that we can find a way to accommodate some of the community’s needs” on the vacant Department of Sanitation site. While they chose to defend their plan for parking, they noted they were working with the MTA to find mitigations to impacts on transit, potentially by adding another bus. And they said their plan would contribute to commercial revitalization because that they had special control over the retail offerings in the Urban Renewal Area portion of the project. On prior occasions, the city has said that residential density is necessary to support commercial growth.
Smallwood’s concerns about the potential gentrification of the area were not discussed. It is yet undetermined how much of the new housing will be rent-restricted, but the community board has asked that 60 percent be below-market, while EDC’s figures appear to indicate that slightly less than half the housing will be.

*A City Planning Commission hearing on the proposal is expected to take place on May 24. Stay tuned for more details.*
Far Rockaway Rezoning Sails Through City Planning Commission

By Abigail Savitch-Lew | July 10, 2017

On Monday, the City Planning Commission (CPC) voted unanimously to approve the administration’s proposed rezoning of downtown Far Rockaway with no modifications. One commissioner, Michelle de la Uz, was absent.

“It’s exciting to be here on this second of our comprehensive rezonings,” said Marisa Lago, Chair of the City Planning Commission and director of the Department of City Planning. “Far Rockaway was established first as a summer resort, and the fortunes of this town have gone up and down like a roller coaster and I’m confident that with today’s actions Far Rockaway will once again be on the rise.”

The proposal, one of the roughly dozen neighborhood rezonings under discussion or approved as part of the mayor’s affordable housing plan, would increase housing and commercial development in the long-neglected core of Far Rockaway and would accompany a suite of $91 million in city investments.

It’s the second neighborhood rezoning, after East New York, to enter the formal public review process, and compared to other rezonings has encountered less resistance. Both Queens Community Board 14 and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz approved the rezoning, though with a substantial list of conditions including less density and a new school. Residents have voiced concerns about too much density, the need for local, well-paying jobs, and gentrification.

“Today’s vote marks another major step towards bringing transformative investment to Downtown Far Rockaway. We were grateful to receive the support of the City Planning Commission and look forward to continuing to work with Council Member Richards and other community leaders as we move forward with this historic effort to revitalize Downtown Far Rockaway,” said Anthony Hogrebe, NYCEDC Senior Vice President of Public Affairs, in a press release.

* * * * *

Read more (http://citylimits.org/neighborhoods/far-rockaway/)
Before casting her vote, Commissioner Ana Levin said she would have preferred if the commission were not voting on one particular land use action encompassed within the rezoning proposal: the disposal of a lot owned by the Department of Sanitation to a private developer.

“I think we heard compelling testimony from many folks in the community about the importance of keeping the sanitation site in city-ownership until appropriate use for that site is determined,” she said, referring to the calls of community activists to use that site for an urban farm and community garden rather than housing.

On June 28, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which is spearheading the rezoning, wrote in a letter to the City Planning Commission that “Prior to any disposition of the site, [EDC] will meet with community members and stakeholders to gather feedback about what uses are desired.”

EDC, in another document, says that it will “inventory City-owned property within Downtown Far Rockaway as well as throughout the peninsula that would be suitable sites for community farming or gardening.”

That document, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (https://www.nycedc.com/Downtown-Far-Rockaway-Environmental-Review) (FEIS), was released on June 29 and provides a window into how EDC’s rezoning proposal has changed—or not changed—as a result of community feedback over the past few months. EDC has pleased the community board by adding buildings height limits on certain streets and adding new design requirements, but, to the board’s frustration, has also expanded the rezoning to two more development sites that will result in a net increase in apartments generated by the rezoning.

The FEIS also provides updates on the strategies the city will use to mitigate the projected negative effects of the rezoning, such as an expected deficit of 209 childcare seats. The city has not budgeted for the creation of a childcare center in the area, but will encourage developers applying to build in the Urban Renewal Area (URA) to include a childcare facility. The FEIS says that existing schools will be able to accommodate the population increase, despite community members’ arguments to the contrary.

The city does not propose a strategy to mitigate the deficit of open space in the area, but says it will continue exploring strategies to address the issue. There will also be some unmitigated negative impacts related to traffic and construction. The city is hoping the MTA will add new buses to relieve potential overcrowding on public transit.

Next, the City Council subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, which happens to be chaired by Rockaway councilman Donovan Richards, will host a hearing on the proposal on Thursday July 27, 9:30 am at City Hall.

It is likely that Richards, whose leadership has been key to the rezoning proposal’s creation, will support the initiative while also calling for changes and investments to meet community demands.
THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RESOLUTION NO. 1655

Resolution approving with modification the decision of the City Planning Commission on Application No. C 170248 PPQ, for the disposition of two city-owned properties located on Beach 21st Street, south of Mott Avenue (Block 15705, Lots 59 and 69) and on the northwest corner of Augustina and Nameoke avenues (Block 15534, Lot 70), pursuant to zoning, Community District 14, Borough of Queens (L.U. No. 726).

By Council Members Greenfield and Richards

WHEREAS, the City Planning Commission filed with the Council on July 10, 2017 its decision dated July 10, 2017 (the "Decision"), pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, regarding an application submitted by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, for the disposition of two city-owned properties located on Beach 21st Street, south of Mott Avenue (Block 15705, Lots 59 and 69) and on the northwest corner of Augustina and Nameoke avenues (Block 15534, Lot 70) (the "Disposition Area"), pursuant to zoning. This disposition, in conjunction with the related actions would facilitate the Downtown Far Rockaway Development Plan, a comprehensive planning, zoning, and redevelopment strategy aimed at supporting Downtown Far Rockaway’s growth and vitality by fostering a vibrant mix of residential, commercial, and community facility uses on vacant and underutilized sites near mass transit resources and along the area’s primary corridors, (Application No. C 170248 PPQ), Community District 14, Borough of Queens (the "Application");

WHEREAS, the Application is related to applications C 170243 (A) ZMQ (L.U. No. 721), a zoning map amendment as modified; N 170244 (A) ZRQ (L.U. No. 722), a zoning text amendment as modified; N 170245 HGQ (L.U. No. 723), designation of the Downtown Far Rockaway Urban Renewal Area; C 170246 HUQ (L.U. No. 724), Downtown Far Rockaway Urban Renewal Plan; and C 170247 HDQ (L.U. No. 725), disposition of City-owned property within the Downtown Far Rockaway Urban Renewal Area;

WHEREAS, the Decision is subject to review and action by the Council pursuant to Section 197-d(b)(3) of the City Charter;

WHEREAS, upon due notice, the Council held a public hearing on the Decision and Application on July 27, 2017;

WHEREAS, the Council has considered the land use implications and other policy issues relating to the Decision and Application; and

WHEREAS, the Council has considered the relevant environmental issues, including the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for which a Notice of Completion was issued on June 29, 2017 (CEQR No. 16DME010Q), which identified significant adverse impacts with respect to hazardous materials, air
quality and noise which would be avoided through the placement of (E) designations (E-415) and the Technical Memoranda dated April 26, 2017, and August 31, 2017, (the “Technical Memoranda”);

RESOLVED:

Having considered the FEIS and the Technical Memorandum with respect to the Decision and Application, the Council finds that:

(1) The FEIS meets the requirements of 6 N.Y.C.R.R. Part 617;

(2) Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations, from among the reasonable alternatives thereto, the action is one which minimizes or avoids adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable; and

(3) The adverse environmental impacts disclosed in the FEIS will be minimized or avoided to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the approval, those mitigation measures that were identified as practicable; and

(4) The Decision, together with the FEIS and the Technical Memorandum, constitute the written statement of facts, and of social, economic and other factors and standards that form the basis of this determination, pursuant to 6 N.Y.C.R.R. §617.11(d).

Pursuant to Sections 197-d and 200 of the City Charter and on the basis of the Decision and Application, and based on the environmental determination and consideration described in the report, C 170248 PPQ, incorporated by reference herein, the Council approves the Decision with a modification to remove Block 15534, Lot 70 from the Disposition Area and approve the disposition of Block 15705, Lots 59 and 69.

Adopted.

Office of the City Clerk, }
The City of New York, } ss.:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a Resolution passed by The Council of The City of New York on September 7, 2017, on file in this office.

........................................................................
City Clerk, Clerk of The Council
The de Blasio Administration and Council Member Richards Announce Approval of the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project

September 07, 2017

NEW YORK, N.Y. – The de Blasio Administration and Council Member Donovan Richards today announced that the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project has been approved by the New York City Council, the final necessary vote of the City’s Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) process.

This marks the de Blasio Administration’s second neighborhood rezoning to be approved by New York City Council, along with the East New York Neighborhood Plan.

The interagency project will revitalize Downtown Far Rockaway with the neighborhood’s first rezoning since 1961 and $288 million of investments to bring new commercial space and small business support, affordable housing options, open space, new connectivity to transit, improved infrastructure, and community facilities to the area.

“The de Blasio Administration is investing big in Downtown Far Rockaway. After hearing the community’s vision for their neighborhood, City agencies and local elected officials came together to deliver a transformative plan that’s going to drive economic opportunity, create affordable housing, unlock open space, improve infrastructure, and make Downtown Far Rockaway a better place to live,” said NYCEDC President and CEO James Patchett. “I want to thank Council Member Richards for his leadership in driving this historic investment forward, and to HPD, DCP, and all of our partner agencies who never wavered on their commitment to revitalize this neighborhood.”

“Today, we begin the journey of building on the progress we have made over the past four years, by infusing hundreds of millions of dollars into infrastructure, quality jobs, parks, streetscape, transit improvements, and both community facility and open space,” said Council Member Donovan Richards. “These investments will ensure that Far Rockaway benefits from the amenities that so many other communities in our city enjoy. I’d like to thank Mayor de Blasio, EDC, HPD, DCP, Speaker Mark-Viverito, the Council Land Use staff and all of the other agencies involved in these negotiations.”

“What a great day to be a part of. I grew up in Far Rockaway, and I can tell you we’ve needed this kind of structural change to our zoning for the longest time.
It's also very much a team success. At the head of that team, Council Member Donovan Richards has taken a passionate, patient and inclusive approach to leadership, making real progress by inviting the whole community to the table. The Administration has given a gazillion presentations, taken the time to break everything down and incorporated our feedback, which we appreciate. And the folks who stood up and got involved — you made sure revitalization not only happened, but was sustainable, taking every contingency into account,” said Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato.

“This plan represents the promise of what we can achieve when we come together to ensure that our neighborhoods are vibrant places of opportunity for current and future residents. Working across agencies, in lockstep with the community, we’ve created a blueprint for the future of Downtown Far Rockaway as a dynamic hub for the region, with strategies to develop and safeguard affordable housing, protect tenants, improve infrastructure, and grow the local economy,” said Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer. “I want to thank Councilmember Donovan Richards for his visionary leadership and my colleagues across city government for their commitment to ensuring Downtown Far Rockaway continues to thrive for generations to come.”

“City Planning is pleased to be part of this multi-agency initiative, which was so ably spearheaded by Councilmember Donovan Richards. The initiative will bring much-needed affordable housing, economic development and city resources to a neighborhood that has suffered from disinvestment for many, many years. While the fortunes of this community have gone up and down over the decades, I’m confident that with the City Council’s approval, Downtown Far Rockaway will once again be on the rise,” said Marisa Lago, Chair of the City Planning Commission.

This comprehensive plan involves efforts from a range of City agencies, including the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC); Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD); Department of Transportation (DOT); Department of Small Business Services (SBS); Department of City Planning (DCP); Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA); and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Today’s approved plan was developed based on community recommendations and contain more than $288 million in Rockaway investments, including federal and private funding, with the City Committing more than $126 million in new funding.

Highlights of Far Rockaway investments include:

- Building a new park on the site of a vacant, City-owned lot.

- Piloting a ferry service shuttle from Downtown Far Rockaway to the current NYC Ferry landing at Beach 108th Street.

- Building a new Queens Public Library branch at the corner of Mott and Central Avenues.

- Upgrading sewer infrastructure, expanding sidewalks, and creating new public plazas.

- Making 100% of new housing built on public land affordable, and setting aside new units that could be created on the Urban Renewal Area for extremely low and very low income households.

- Providing free legal services for Rockaway residents facing unlawful evictions and tenant harassment.

- Supporting existing businesses through free legal services and other business outreach efforts.

- Investing $10 million in upgrades to existing schools’ playgrounds, libraries, auditoriums, and science labs, and securing a portion of the Urban Renewal Area for a new school if needed as the neighborhood grows.

- Grants for cultural organizations and increased arts programming.

- Installing real-time bus arrival displays at key bus stops.

“With this new park at Nameoke Avenue and improvements at Redfern and Bayswater, never before have our parks in this neighborhood seen such substantial influx of funding at one time,” said NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, FAICP. “This funding will allow us to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities and build parks for present and future generations.”

“The Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project will make significant investments in the Far Rockaway community, including its small businesses,” said Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services. “This project will bring new commercial space and small business support to the area, and I am proud to back this plan. I congratulate Council Member Donovan Richards, Mayor Bill de Blasio, and all of the government and community partners for making this happen.”

“DOT is proud to be part of this multi-agency effort to improve infrastructure, transportation and quality of life in the Rockaways,” said DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. “From new plazas to new Select Bus Service, this great community should be seeing positive transportation changes as soon as this year -- and then for years to come. Congratulations to Council Member Richards for his leadership on this project.”

“DEP is proud to support Council Member Richards and the redevelopment of Downtown Far Rockaway,” said DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza. “We will work to improve the infrastructure that will support so many other important quality of life improvements for the neighborhood.”

“Far Rockaway is home to a creative community as vibrant as the neighborhood itself, and we’re proud to work with partner agencies, area leaders, and residents to expand support for cultural programming that engages locals and attracts visitors,” said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl.

“The board is excited that this project has the potential to revitalize the downtown Far Rockaway area. We believe over the next 5-10 years exciting things will happen,” said Jonathan Gaska, District Manager, Queens Community Board 14.

“The Downtown Far Rockaway Development Plan represents a major shift from previous administrations’ lack of capital investment in areas such as Far Rockaway. I applauded Mayor de Blasio, the City Council, the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group and our community champion, City Councilman Donovan Richards, Jr. for having the fortitude to support this community-driven plan that truly reflects the majority of community stakeholders who participated.
in the year-long planning process. It seems only equitable that those who have voiced their pleas for revitalizing Downtown Far Rockaway for so many decades should be the voices that we listen to the loudest - in my opinion the Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Plan got it right,” said Kevin Alexander, RDRC President & CEO.

“The JCCRP believes the Rockaway Redevelopment project will transform our downtown area and will provide safe residential housing for all while opening up opportunities for small businesses to flourish. The planned expansion of our transportation infrastructure will ease the burden for hundreds of commuters who live in Far Rockaway,” said Moshe Brantisderfer, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula (JCCRP).

“This vital redevelopment will bring enormous resources to the Rockaways and St. John’s is proud to work in collaboration with Councilmember Donovan Richards, NYCEDC and the Far Rockaway community to ensure a successful completion,” said Gerard M. Walsh, CEO, St. John’s Episcopal Hospital.

“Our library in Far Rockaway is a vital part of the community and inspires individuals to learn, discover and grow,” said Queens Library President and CEO Dennis M. Walcott. “We are grateful to Mayor de Blasio and the City of New York for the opportunity to contribute to the revitalization this rezoning will bring to Far Rockaway.”

The Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment Project was developed based on the vision of the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group—a team of local stakeholders convened by Councilman Donovan Richards in 2015—to develop a set of goals and recommendations to support the revitalization of the neighborhood.

The Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group received input from over one hundred community members and delivered their recommendations to Mayor de Blasio in February 2016, asking that the City activate long-vacant sites, increase access to housing and retail opportunities in the neighborhood, and help the area realize its potential as the commercial hub of the peninsula.

About NYCEDC

New York City Economic Development Corporation (/) is the City’s primary vehicle for promoting economic growth in each of the five boroughs. NYCEDC’s mission is to stimulate growth through expansion and redevelopment programs that encourage investment, generate prosperity and strengthen the City’s competitive position. NYCEDC serves as an advocate to the business community by building relationships with companies that allow them to take advantage of New York City’s many opportunities. Find us on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/nycedc) or follow us on Twitter (http://www.twitter.com/nycedc), or visit our blog (/blog) to learn more about NYCEDC projects and initiatives.

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Far Rock Garden
Downtown Far Rockaway, Queens

Lives near this vacant public lot on Nameoke and Augustina Ave

The lot on Monday, Sept. 26, 2016

Mara, 596 Acres posted

The lot on Monday, Sept. 26, 2016 by Mara, 596 Acres
Far Rock Garden

Mission Statement

Far Rock Garden is a thriving urban garden, compost site and welcoming community space at the corner of Nameoke and Augusta, Queens block 15634, lot 70. The site will be a community garden where residents grow healthy produce in raised beds together. We will promote healthy eating and sustainable practices that will benefit the neighborhood, as well as a green, safe space where neighborhood children can play and learn.

From vacant lot to community garden
Neighborhood View: Farms for Far Rockaway

RESIDENT SAYS PLANNERS shouldn’t neglect food justice when thinking about how to redevelop the neighborhood.

The redevelopment of Far Rockaway could establish ways for residents to grow food independently and access fresh produce.

Petitioning Mayor’s Office of Sustainability, Esther Brunner

Green Space for Downtown Far Rockaway