Oral and Written Testimony on Parks Department Properties
Currently Inaccessible to the Public

December 1, 2016 NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation Oversight Hearing

My name is Sabeena Prescod. I live in West Concourse. I am here to testify about the impacts of inaccessible parks department properties located at Block 2519, Lot 32 and Block 2520, Lot 19 located at W 169th and W 170th Streets between Shakespeare and Nelson Avenues. I live near and bike past these properties, and they are sadly abandoned, fenced off, and full of potential -- especially in an area that already has many new multifamily buildings and will continue to see an influx of new residents in the coming years but lacks adequate greenspace for everyone to comfortably enjoy.

The properties are and have been Parks Department properties for at least 6 years. Previously, city records show that any buildings that were on these lots were demolished by 1981, and they have been empty ever since.

I am eager for the land at Block 2519, Lot 32 and Block 2520, Lot 19 to become open parks with resident participation in planning. Locals are already organizing to create a vision for this park. We would like green space for communal vegetable and flower gardening, picnic space, and a space for children to play. We are also set on having space accessible and safe for the many seniors in who live within a block of either lot. A space with a combination of active and passive uses would be ideal. We also have connections to community members and organizations vested in establishing long term community projects that will create employment and educational opportunities for residents of all ages.

Thank you for holding this Oversight Hearing to examine Parks Department properties currently inaccessible to the public. Even though I live near two of these properties, I would not have known about today’s hearing if not for the assistance of 596 Acres. More needs to be done in the future to advertise these hearings to the public which offer valuable insight into the process and limitations of making iconic and important public spaces accessible. Turning the properties in my area into real parks in collaboration with local residents will ensure their lasting benefit to our neighborhoods and City.