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 Sharon Griffin. I live and work in Highbridge in the South Bronx. I am testifying about the impacts of inaccessible Parks Department properties located at West 170th Street (Bronx block 2520, lot 19) and at W 169th Street (Bronx block 2519, lot 32), both between Shakespeare and Nelson Avenue.

Since 1978, I have lived in the neighborhood, right near these properties. They have been abandoned the whole time.

The one on W 169th street has a sign that says Corporal Fischer Park. There used to be a building on this site. Once it was demolished, the site was abandoned. It has been vacant for over 20 years. There has never been a park here, but there has been the Parks Department sign. It is has never been accessible.

My neighbor Dian has been inquiring about how to transform the vacant lots in the neighborhood into green community space for years, attending Community Board 4’s Parks Committee meetings. She found out this lot is already in the Parks Department, and began organizing for community access to an open green space here starting last spring. Now we are coming together to plan what kind of park we want it to be.

I am eager for these abandoned NYC Parks properties in my neighborhood to become real parks. I definitely want community green space – a tranquil environment for seniors to gather and children to play. I want a picnic area with nighttime lighting, flower beds, and space to grow food.

Thank you for holding this Oversight Hearing to examine Parks Department properties currently inaccessible to the public. Though there is inaccessible and underutilized NYC Parks property in my neighborhood, I wouldn’t have known about this hearing without an invitation from 596 Acres. Turning these properties into real parks in collaboration with local residents will ensure their lasting benefit to our neighborhoods.