



Mara Dawn Kravitz
Director of Partnerships
540 President Street #2E
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 316-6092 Ext. 3
mara@596acres.org

Testimony for City Planning Commission on ULURP # C 170248 PPQ (under “lead” ULURP # C 170245 HGO) against the Disposition of Queens block 15534, lot 70

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 the 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.