



Eric Adams  
Borough President

# COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

1291 ST. MARKS AVENUE • BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11213

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**Nizjoni Granville**  
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June 10, 2015

Honorable Bill diBlasio  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Vicki Been  
Housing Preservation and Development  
100 Gold Street  
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mayor Blasio and Commissioner Been,

Community Board No. 8 supports using vacant lots owned by the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development as community gardens. As such, we are writing to ask that permission be granted for the establishment of two new community gardens and the maintenance of an existing community garden on public land under HPD's jurisdiction in Community Board 8. At the June 11, 2015 general meeting, members voted 35 in favor, 1 opposed, with 3 abstentions to support the use of the following three plots of land as community gardens:

- Since July 2012, Pastor Timothy Olatokun of Celestial Church of Christ (located at 173 Buffalo Avenue, Brooklyn) has been working to transform the lot next door to his church at 175 Buffalo Avenue (Brooklyn Block 1363 Lot 7) into a temporary garden. We wholeheartedly support this transformation as Buffalo Avenue is a dreary block in need of the vibrancy of a community garden.
- Liesl Zitman, a teacher at P.S. 335 Granville T. Woods School (located at 130 Rochester Avenue), has compiled and received support for a proposal for a temporary education garden shared by the school and neighbors to replace the vacant lot across the street from her school 1662 Bergen Street (Brooklyn Block 1356, Lot 6) since early 2014. The use of

this lot by the school would provide invaluable educational enrichment services to the students of PS 335.

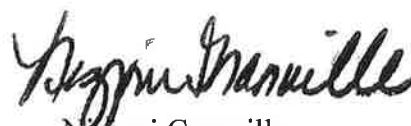
- Imani Garden, located at 87-91 Schenectady Avenue, has operated for a number of years. The garden contains 13 raised beds for the cultivation of crops used by the community, currently has 15 active members with an additional 60 people on its mailing list, and is open for sitting and relaxing over 30 hours per week. The garden is a valuable commodity in a neighborhood filled with disadvantages as it is in close proximity to two NYCHA housing developments.

Both of these future gardens have the potential to address several issues present in our community and Imani Garden already addresses these issues while providing a respite from blight. In addition to increasing **access to open space**, the potential gardens could encourage neighborhood organizing and instill **a sense of participation and leadership in residents** of the community, act as a place to **educate neighbors about environmental issues**, and **be a safe space for neighbors to gather in**. Both gardens have the overwhelming support of the community as does the existing Imani Garden, which currently offers all of these things and more to the community.

The two neighborhood groups seeking to use the vacant lots continued their organizing efforts around these spaces because they heard from HPD that the sites in discussion were available for interim use. PS 335 had already submitted their application to GreenThumb before this policy reversal was announced in January 2015; the Celestial Church of Christ was already in the site visit stage with GreenThumb to discuss the garden layout in March 2015. Although both lots are included in the recent Request for Qualifications for the New Infill Homeownership Opportunities Program (NIHOP) there is the possibility that no developer will be chosen for the sites. If developers are selected, we believe there is ample time between negotiation and groundbreaking for community use.

We urge your office to allow temporary use of the two vacant lots so that they can become valuable neighborhood resources and hope that Imani Garden will be allowed to continue to operate and provide valuable resources. We believe that every opportunity should be reviewed individually and that land should be made available for community use until a final disposition becomes a reality. We hope you will view this request favorably.

Sincerely,



Nizjoni Granville  
Chairperson