

June 19, 2017

Maria Torres- Springer  
Commissioner  
New York Housing Preservation and Development  
100 Gold Street  
New York, NY 10038

Re: Nelson Mandela Garden Request for Jurisdiction Change from HPD to DPR

Dear Commissioner Torres-Springer,

Manhattan Community Board (CB) 10 is writing this letter in support of jurisdiction change from Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to New York City Parks and Recreation (DPR). The active three year old garden consists of three HPD lots; block 1932, lot 5 (269-67 West 126<sup>th</sup> Street, block 1932, lot 7 (265 West 126<sup>th</sup> Street) and block 1932, lot 107 (263 West 126<sup>th</sup> Street). The address of the garden is listed as 265 West 126<sup>th</sup> Street. The HPD combined sites are 0.15 acres (6693 square feet in area).

The garden was slated by HPD in January 2017 for development by Lemor Realty, a MWBE. The proposed development will include 29 units of proposed affordable housing, a restaurant and space for a tech company. No ULURP has been officially filed to date.

The Mandela Garden provides a myriad of environmental, economic, and social benefits to CB 10, in which it thrives; slowing the flow of storm water into the water system as well as the sewage system, providing habitat for migrating birds and various other biodiversity, and removing of organic waste from the waste stream through composting. This beacon of green space within CB 10's expanse of asphalt and buildings, provides participants and visitors with the psychological and physical health benefits of nature. The garden functions to restore the aquifer and curates a unique environment that supports bio-diversity.

Scores of volunteers from the local community and from all over the city began a year long process of de-paving it by hand. In summer 2016, it blossomed into a dedicated pollinator garden filled with thousands of native North American flowers. It is touted as the only native North American Wildflower Meadow in New York City. The garden serves the community by creating a focal point where New Yorkers young and old of all creeds and colors collaborate to create a better city for everybody; passing on to the next generation the value of community engagement and service.

While CB 10 wholeheartedly appreciates the perspective of the ongoing need to develop affordable housing and acknowledges the pre-agreed understanding by community gardens that the land could be recouped for development by HPD, we also recognize the significant benefits that this community garden provides to CB 10. Communities are central to developing solutions for the future of their neighborhoods. The community is promoting their goals, concerns, aspirations, values, priorities, and vision based on their

first-hand knowledge of the neighborhood. This invaluable community advocacy is in line with HPD policy and is an opportunity to effectively incorporate community wishes into planning and investments that meet community needs. Whether it is planning at the neighborhood level, or for specific, city-owned properties, HPD's Community Visioning Program advocates the importance of ensuring that publicly-supported development achieves community objectives to promote the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and structures. The community has met extensively with CB 10; attending Parks and Recreation Committee meetings on March 8<sup>th</sup>, April 12<sup>th</sup> and a Land Use Committee meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup> as well as a specially held CB 10 Community Forum on June 5<sup>th</sup> (hosted by the Parks and Recreation and Housing Committees) to express their extreme concerns and efforts to preserve the Mandela Garden.

In view of the vociferous public opinion it is the recommendation of Manhattan CB10 that in light of its flourishing status and benefit to the community that the preservation of Mandela Garden be evaluated for a jurisdiction change from HPD to Parks.

Sincerely,

Cicely Harris  
Chairperson  
Manhattan Community Board 10

Karen Horry  
Chair  
Parks and Recreation Committee  
Manhattan Community Board 10

cc: Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks  
& Recreation  
Bill Perkins, NYC Council Member  
Inez Dickens, NY State Assembly Member  
Adriano Espaillat, Congress Member  
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President