



Community Board 5
61-23 Myrtle Avenue
Glendale, NY 11385

Re: Testimony at the Community Board 5 Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Hearing, September 9th, 2009

My name is Christina Wilkinson and I am the President of the Newtown Historical Society.

I am testifying in favor of allocating capital funds towards the creation of a park and community center at the former site of St. Saviour's Church in West Maspeth (Address: 57-40 58th Street).

It has been three years since the proposal was first made for the City to acquire the land and church building and turn them into a park and community center. Community Board 5 listed a community center for Maspeth as a priority in past years and suggested this very location, which is in an area that is underserved in many ways. While the church building has been saved, there is still more work to do in order to be able to call this endeavor a success.

Just this past month, Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe sent out a letter indicating that the Parks Department was now receptive to the proposal that they take possession of the property so long as funds were allocated for its acquisition and maintenance by local officials.

Council Member Elizabeth Crowley and Borough President Helen Marshall are currently working on acquiring the site at minimal cost and we have a free offer of clean fill from a local company which would be used to repair the land. However, the funds for design and construction of park amenities and a community center, adequate fencing and landscaping are funds that will still be needed.

I request that you continue to list this project as a priority because now we are closer than ever to making this proposal a reality. The property is still available and the elected officials are on board and actively working to make this happen – something which was not true in the past.

This full block of open space represents the last sizeable tract of undeveloped land in Maspeth. As you are no doubt aware, an added bonus is that this site is historic. Year after year, Community Board 5 loses historic structures and open space to development and we have only 12 acres of park land in Maspeth to serve more than 36,000 residents. As the opportunity to create a decent sized park in our area may never come again in our lifetime, we request that you list this project as one of your highest priorities for the Fiscal Year 2011 budget.

Thank you.

Christina Wilkinson
President