



**THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK**

May 12, 2017

Jacques Jiha
Commissioner
Department of Finance
One Centre Street 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

RE: Imminent Tax Lien Sale

Dear Commissioner Jiha,

On May 12, 2017, the City of New York is poised to give private speculative investors leverage over hundreds of properties in all five boroughs via the Department of Finance (DOF) Tax Lien Sale. By selling the right to collect unpaid taxes on community gardens, churches, day care centers, and locations owned by community-based charity organizations, the City is putting these hundreds of key community places at risk of foreclosure by private debt collectors and risking their transformation into private, for-profit development sites.

By selling that right for vacant lots in the same transaction, the City gives up its power over the future of our neighborhoods and transforms unpaid property taxes into a “private” debt to be enforced by private debt collectors.

For the first time ever, in response to the requests of advocates, this year the DOF created lists of recently-exempt properties and vacant land heading to the May 12 sale. We urge you to remove all recently-exempt properties DOF identified from this sale. Charity properties are entitled to be free from paying property tax under the New York State Constitution; including them in the lien sale puts them at risk of closing their doors and being sold to speculators.

We also urge you to remove all vacant land DOF identified from this upcoming sale. Allowing private debt to compound the pains of neighborhoods that have been abandoned by absentee property owners will not lead to responsible development of gardens, community centers, and housing. The City retaining leverage over these properties is vital for our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Ben Kallos

Council Member Ben Kallos
5th District

Stephen T. Levin

Council Member Stephen Levin
33rd District

Corey Johnson

Council Member Corey Johnson
3rd District

Laurie F. Cumbo

Council Member Laurie Cumbo
35th District

Chaim Deutsch

Council Member Chaim Deutsch
48th District

Carlos A. Menchaca

Council Member Carlos Menchaca
38th District

Margaret Chin

Council Member Margaret Chin
1st District

Ritchie Torres

Council Member Ritchie Torres
15th District

Antonio Reynoso

Council Member Antonio Reynoso
34th District

Deborah Rose

Council Member Deborah Rose
49th District

Rafael Espinal

Council Member Rafael Espinal
37th District

Mark Treyger

Council Member Mark Treyger
47th District

Robert Cornegy

Council Member Robert Cornegy
36th District

Daniel R. Garodnick

Council Member Daniel Garodnick
4th District

Rosie Mendez

Council Member Rosie Mendez
2nd District

Bill Perkins

Council Member Bill Perkins
9th District