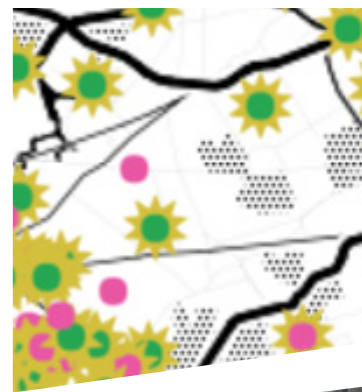
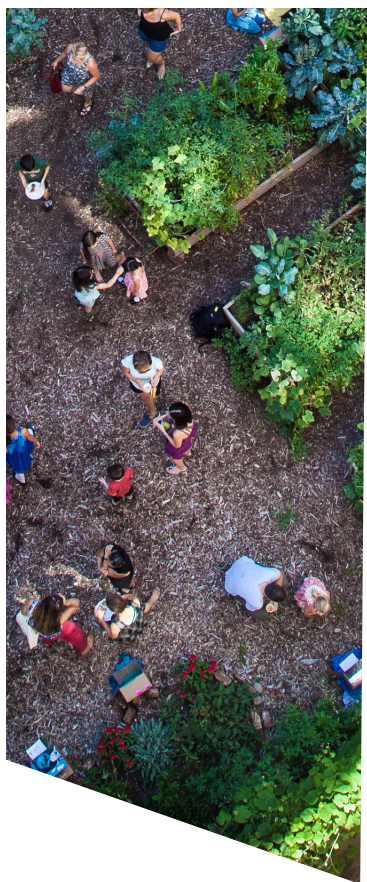


**596
ACRES**



2017 IMPACT REPORT

Stories from the Acres





NOTE FROM THE TEAM

To our supporters, friends, and community:

Thank you for continuing to support community land access! Community-based power, access to the political process, advocacy for government transparency and thriving community gathering spaces are crucial for the vitality of our cities. Those are exactly the things we fight for. In a city facing rapacious, profit-driven development, we help regular New Yorkers make space for community by supporting local land access advocates organizing in our neighborhoods, in the courtroom, and at City Hall.

By supporting resident stewardship of land, you are giving communities the tools to build shared infrastructure for resisting injustice and displacement. Resident stewardship of land is part of the recipe for strong and resilient communities. Strong and resilient communities make for fair and equitable cities.

Thanks to your support, our team has grown to three staff members, allowing us to strengthen and continue this work. We achieved inspiring victories this year, and we are excited to share a few of them with you in this report. We enter 2018 ready to meet the many challenges that face our cities with renewed energy, humor, and love.

In Solidarity,
Stephanie, Mara, and Rachel
Your 596 Acres Team



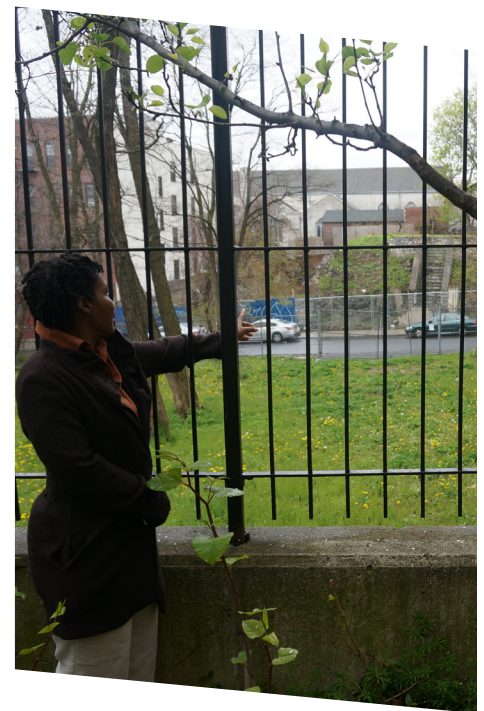
ABOUT 596 ACRES

596 Acres champions resident stewardship of land for just and equitable cities.

We believe that residents should be central to deciding how the land in their neighborhoods is used. Decisions about land use in our city tend to exclude the average resident. The murkiness of how place-making decisions are made arises out of a history of biased land use policy. Our work of Community Land Access Advocacy takes direct aim at this murkiness and this bias, and changes the narrative.

Community land access advocates illuminate pathways for community members to take part in shaping their neighborhoods and their cities. We encourage broad participation in the process of making our cities and work to place control of the process in the hands of residents, particularly centering the voices of long-time neighborhood residents and people of color. As a result of our work, neighbors and decision-makers at all levels are thinking differently about vacant urban land.

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Maple Street Community Garden

SAVED FROM FRAUDULENT “OWNERS” AND ON ITS WAY TO PERMANENT PUBLIC SPACE!



Maple Street Community Garden began as a vacant lot strewn with trash and overgrown with weeds. In 2013, residents on the block got together to clean up the lot and turn it into a garden for the whole community. Almost as soon as they began, they encountered harassment, threats of litigation, and illegal padlocks on the garden from a development company that claimed to own the land. The neighbors did some research and found that the alleged owners' claims were dubious, and with organizing help from 596 Acres and legal representation from the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center, they campaigned to preserve their garden.

After four years of hard work, the gardeners achieved a stunning result in 2017 - the city government agreed to a plan by the Parks Department to buy the land, permanently protecting this community space as a public place for everyone.

“Maple Street Community Garden is an impressive example of the ways in which communities are empowered to come together to beautify and give back to our shared outdoor spaces. We celebrate the dedicated volunteers and community activists that have made Maple Street Community Garden thrive, and we thank Borough President Adams, Council Member Eugene, and 596 Acres for recognizing the importance of keeping this site intact.”

- NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP

“I think it’s one of the best things that happened on the block. It was once a place with car tires, people tripping over the sidewalk and littering. Now it’s a place for everyone.” -

Prospect Lefferts Gardens resident Sean Henry



Green Valley Farm

BROWNSVILLE INSTITUTION SAVED FROM \$1 SALE, SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN 2017

“Through this farm, our community and neighbors are benefiting from the land — instead of developers reaping in profits at the expense of our community.”

- Brenda Thompson-Duchene, Isabahlia Ladies of Elegance Foundation, Green Valley's lead gardener and farmer's market organizer

This year, our collective advocacy saved a 20 year old community farm and farmer's market space from being sold to a private developer for \$1. This was not the first time Brownsville neighbors had to organize to save this vital community space -- 596 Acres had previously supported their organizing to have the space removed from another proposed sale by the city.

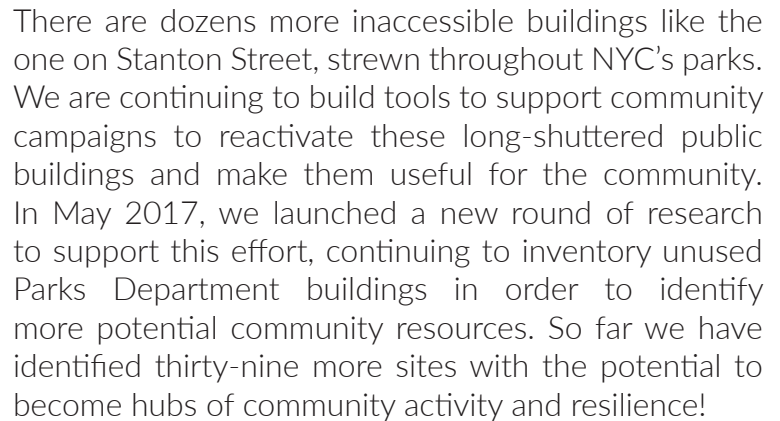
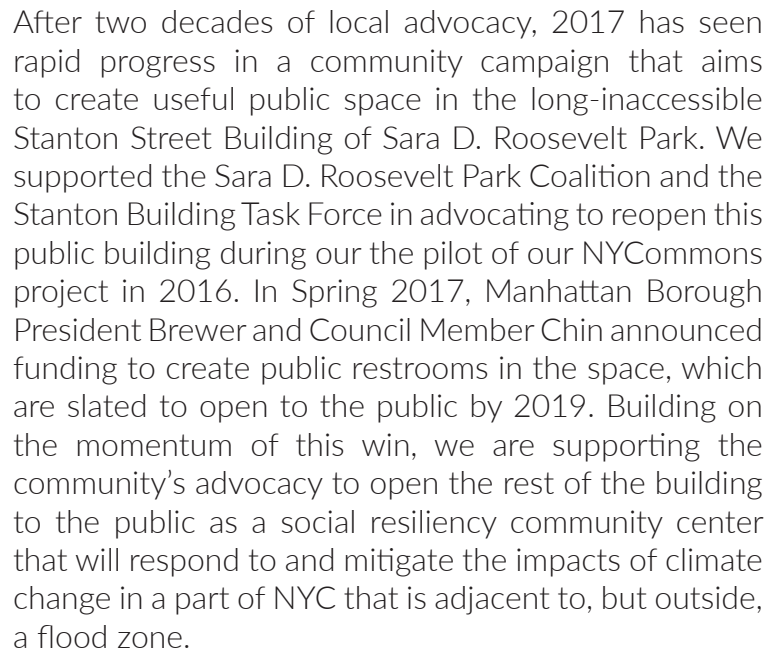
In January, just days before an eviction deadline, Mayor Bill de Blasio took heed of the powerful resident-led campaign, supported by 596 Acres and the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center, and announced that the city would not be destroying Brownsville's Green Valley Farm. Green Valley Farm headed into Spring with a renewed sense of security and purpose, ready to extend the garden to include a new aquaponics system.



“Green Valley gardeners have been tilling the soil with one hand and reading eviction notices in the other for the last two years. Our victory means we can turn our energy back to healthy foods that help Brooklyn residents thrive and continue to ensure our garden is an oasis for all our Brownsville neighbors and New York City residents.”

- Brenda Thompson-Duchene

HELPING NEIGHBORS ACCESS UNUSED BUILDINGS IN NYC PARKS



Reckowacky Park & Community Garden

COMMUNITY'S DREAMS ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY!



596 Acres became involved in the campaign to create a garden in Far Rockaway when long-time local resident and backyard gardener Allison got in touch. She and her neighbors sought a place they could garden together and share the bounty. Allison was particularly concerned about the lack of healthy food options available in local stores.

"The preservation of land to farm in the lower Rockaways is imperative for the proper sustainability of the people."
- Allison Jeffrey, Far Rockaway

Allison had been trying for a long time to transform an abandoned city-owned lot on her corner into a community space that could fill these needs, and found out about the service we provide: bridging the gap between the public and their ability to make decisions about public land in their lives, especially when it's been neglected by the City. We helped the group flesh out their plans for the space. When it became apparent that the city intended to sell this lot for private development, we helped make sure that the community's voices were heard and their needs were listened to as the city launched its Downtown Far Rockaway Redevelopment plan.

We advised and supported the neighbors as they submitted over 250 comments asking the city to keep the lot public, rather than selling the lot to a private

developer as part of the Redevelopment Plan. We guided, advised, and testified alongside the residents as they appeared and offered testimony at the Community Board's hearing, the Queens Borough President's (BP's) Public Land Use Hearing, and all the way to City Council.

In September 2017, the City Council's Land Use Committee honored the neighbors' request that this lot not be sold to a developer.

With the land no longer under threat of being sold, the neighbors are leading the design of the future community green space, with our support.



Protecting Our Places

TOGETHER, WE HELPED PROTECT 360 COMMUNITY SPACES FROM THE CITY'S TAX LIEN SALE



Every year, NYC Department of Finance sells tax debt owed to the city to private speculative debt collectors in the tax lien sale. This sale routinely includes active nonprofits, even though they are exempt from paying taxes as per New York State law.

In February, in direct response to our advocacy, the NYC Department of Finance published a list of charity properties with recent tax-exemptions heading to the 2017 Tax Lien Sale. There were 536 nonprofit-owned places on that list. We made a map and called for

people to publicize this information so that affected organizations could petition to be removed from the list. This successful campaign brought together grassroots and elected advocates to protect community properties from the annual sale and to champion new legislation that will stop this problem in future years. As a result, 360 community properties were removed from the list prior to the sale.

But its not over yet! There remain hundreds of non-profit owned properties who were erroneously included in past sales and now are under threat of foreclosure. We are now reaching out to support the groups who own these at-risk community resources in protecting their places.

Community Land Trusts

A STRATEGY FOR A MORE RESILIENT NYC



In October 2015, NYC's Department of Housing Preservation and Development invited 596 Acres to be a community partner on the Resilient Edgemere Community Planning Initiative, an initiative that would revise the Edgemere Urban Renewal Area Plan. This planning effort built on conversations 596 Acres started with residents, nonprofits and city agencies about updating the active Edgemere Urban Renewal Area Plan immediately following Hurricane Sandy's devastation in 2012.

At a series of public workshops and meetings, 596 Acres advocated that resident-led campaigns to create community gardens be included in the plan. We also amplified residents' demands for a community land trust to allow long-term community stewardship of land.

This March, we learned that the final version of the Resilient Edgemere Community Plan protects existing community space resources, identifies community gardens as a strategy for communities to adapt to increased flood risk, including the Edgemere Coalition Garden on Beach 43rd Street, and includes a community land trust as strategy to facilitate long-term affordability and resilient stewardship.

We are thrilled to see the City embrace community land trusts as a strategy for a more resilient Edgemere and NYC. In coming years we hope to support New Yorkers in advocating for community land access to be central in future city planning.