



**New York City Planning Commission
Public Hearing on the East New York Community Plan
January 6, 2016
Tupper Thomas, Executive Director**

Good morning. I am Tupper Thomas, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks. I want to thank the City Planning Commission for inviting me to speak today on an issue that is of great importance not only to residents of East New York, but to every New York City community.

Parks are critical to healthy neighborhoods. The Mayor seeks to increase affordability for New Yorkers in this community and elsewhere, a sentiment we support. We evaluate the East New York Community Plan with a critical eye on how well parks are planned and provided for amidst this potential change. The City's own analysis of the Plan shows that support for parks is lacking: in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the City identified that the Plan would create a significant adverse impact on open space in East New York.

The City's calculations show that current conditions in East New York are inadequate for parks and open spaces. A portion of the rezoning area is already identified as underserved by open space. In addition, the rezoning area does not meet the *City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual* guidelines for open space: there currently exist only .69 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, compared to the 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents recommended in the manual. An increase in residential density without an adequate corresponding increase in open space would significantly exacerbate this problem. Yet the Plan does not include any provisions for new open space. The City's guidelines recommend 2.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents; the proposed actions under the rezoning proposal would leave East New York with only 0.56 acres per 1,000 residents, barely 1/5 of what the City itself recommends.

Additionally, East New York is losing a community garden which will be converted into affordable housing under a recent agreement made between the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and NYC Parks. This loss of community green space will be keenly felt by residents who are already severely underserved by parks and open spaces.

The Coalition for Community Advancement made excellent points in their response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Among these were the recommendations to make schoolyards available to the community after school hours, and that new open space should be added to the neighborhood whenever possible. The proposed new school on Atlantic Avenue is a great opportunity to increase active open space by including a large playground open to the public.

New Yorkers for Parks supports the creation and preservation of affordable housing for New Yorkers, but not at the expense of all other essential infrastructure and services that make a neighborhood truly livable and healthy. Therefore we cannot support the East New York Community Plan as it currently stands.

To support the Plan we need to see an increase in parkland along with the increase in density, to meet the city-wide standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Residents should live within a 10 minute walk to a park entrance, in keeping with the citywide standard.

We do hope that these changes will be made to the Plan so that New York can continue working to create vibrant, livable neighborhoods for all residents.

Thank you.