



May 12, 2021

Lenue H. Singletary III, Chairperson
Brooklyn Community Board 2
350 Jay Street, 8th floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Chair Singletary:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the constraints related to the naming of the site currently known as Willoughby Square at Block: 146; Lot: 16 which was referenced in your letter dated October 18, 2019.

There have since been several meetings, presentations, and discussions with Brooklyn Community Board 2 about the different aspects of this project including design of the open space and selection of the artist. Our last meeting with the Community Board 2 Parks and Recreation Committee on March 15, 2021 focused on discussing the idea of renaming this area "Abolitionist Place Park." In the course of this discussion, we listened and heard several thoughtful perspectives from Board members and the public about a desire to ensure that this open space will remain dedicated publicly accessible green space for this community. We also heard the importance of preserving and honoring this site's role in abolitionist history. We share this commitment to the community for Willoughby Square to be a long-standing public open space to serve this neighborhood and be a marker of the abolitionist past.

During this meeting we identified what made this site different from others. One of the most crucial factors is that Willoughby Square is not parkland. For the word "park" to be included in the name it would imply that it is parkland within the jurisdiction and managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation, which Willoughby Square is not. This site was part of a broader Downtown Brooklyn neighborhood plan that included development on adjacent parcels using a portion of the development rights from this site to 420 Albee, which would not have been allowed if this were parkland. Furthermore, the City intends to preserve the remaining development rights. We have shared the feedback from Community Board 2 and have conferred with City Law and Department of Parks and Recreation that "park" is not appropriate to be included in the name of this open space.

After further discussion with Community Board 2 leadership, it seems wise to look at this area holistically to tie in the various aspects of the history to create a true sense of place honoring abolitionist history. There was a suggestion to explore the possibility of renaming both streets around the site Abolitionist Place West (a portion of Duffield Street co-named Abolitionist Place) and Abolitionist Place East (a portion of Gold Street co-named Albee Square W) and renaming Willoughby Square "Abolitionist Square" or "Abolitionist Plaza." This proposal retains the open space and honors the role Willoughby Square plays in abolitionist history.



We look forward to continuing this discussion with Community Board 2 and hope to settle on a name that could be announced this summer with a timeline for construction to deliver the open space that this neighborhood has fought for and deserves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eleni DeSiervo', written over a horizontal line.

Eleni DeSiervo
Vice President
Government and Community Relations