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My name is Paul Graziano and I am an urban planning and historic preservation consultant and a life-long resident of Queens. I am also the 1st Vice President of the *Historic Districts Council* – the grassroots advocate for New York City’s historic neighborhoods – and the Landmarking and Preservation Chair of the *Queens Civic Congress*, the umbrella organization for over 110 civic and homeowner associations in Queens County.

I am writing this letter in an urgent request to Community Board 5 to place the former St. Saviour’s parcel in Maspeth as its #1 funding priority.

When St. Saviour’s Church was endangered by demolition, I stood with those residents and organizations – most importantly the Newtown Historical Society – that spent countless hours trying to save it against the actions of a corrupt elected official and his immoral business associates. At the last press conference that I attended, it was made clear that, while St. Saviour’s was to be deconstructed and moved, the property should still be used for a public park instead of for 100 units of market-rate housing or yet another industrial building for Maspeth.

It has now been more than a year since that press conference occurred. St. Saviour’s sits in storage. The property has still not been developed. In fact, contrary to some recent misinformation, it is still for sale.

This is a prime opportunity for the public to reclaim this land, which should never have been sold to developers in the first place. The purchase of this land by the City of New York – at a reasonable price – for parkland would be the corrective move for all of the indignities and suffering this corner of Maspeth has had to put up with for years. Also, a public park at this location is needed as this part of Queens has the smallest percentage and least access to public parkland in the borough.

And, if the developers who own this property don’t play fair, the City could actually use eminent domain proceedings for the correct purpose – for a public benefit – as opposed to taking property and handing it over to other developers for private gain, as is in the case currently at Willets Point.

In summary, I personally support the fight to get something positive for Maspeth and a totally appropriate use for this now much-abused historic site – a new public park. Community Board 5 can help make it happen.

Very Truly Yours,

Paul Graziano