

LOCAL NEWS

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Bronx neighborhood's hopes of open space are dashed by a new NYPD parking lot



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The empty lot, located at the rear of 1932 Arthur Ave, has been permanently forked over to the NYPD, against the community board's advocacy. From Google Maps pictures in 2022.



By **JOSEPHINE STRATMAN** | jstratman@nydailynews.com | New York Daily News

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A city agency has permanently forked over a rare piece of open space in the Bronx to the NYPD for extra parking — stirring anger among community board members who say they've been trying for years to use the space [as a park or a plaza for the community to enjoy](#).

Five years ago, the city paved over a previously grassy lot in East Tremont and started shuffling NYPD vans in for parking. It was supposed to be a temporary setup, until the city could reach an agreement on what to do with the space.

The local community board threw out ideas: A public plaza, open air market or a playground — echoing a common refrain in a city starved for open, walkable spaces.

But for years, no changes were made.





Google

The lot in 2014, before the NYPD moved in.

Then, on Friday morning, the Community Board finally met with [Department of Citywide Administrative Services](#), the agency responsible for the lot. Speaking to the Daily News before the meeting, Rafael Moure-Punnett, the district manager for Community Board 6, said he was hopeful the city would work with him to brainstorm a better solution.

Instead, Moure-Punnett learned that the lot had been permanently [handed over to the NYPD](#).

The community board is furious.

“Who should have the most valued input?” said Isaac Bowen, a resident of the area and member of the board’s housing and land use committee. “Is it the people from the community? Or is it the agency head that feels the need to park cars is more important than what’s going on for the people?”

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"We have a lot of different needs: Economic needs, social needs, garden spaces, to fix the air," Bowen, 41, said. "Needs for children. There's so many different needs that this lot could be used for, other than having vehicles that's owned by the city, that could be parked pretty much anywhere they want."

Open, undeveloped space is perhaps the most rare and sought-after asset in New York City. And yet, across the city, the NYPD has dozens of vacant plots and parking lots — mostly located in communities of color like East Tremont, where this lot is located.

There are [145 vacant lots and parking lots](#) used by the NYPD, according to a survey by the [East New York Community Land Trust](#) last year. That number may be higher now, given that this count does not include the lot at 1932 Arthur Ave.

According to the 2022 paper, 73 of the [NYPD lots citywide](#) were underutilized and most of them not well-maintained.

Since COVID, there's been a growing movement to transform vacant lots into [affordable housing](#), community centers, local businesses, public outdoor spaces — nearly anything except for a vacant, unused piece of land. In this never-ending fight over public space, some organizations have leveled their aim at [lots used by the NYPD](#).

"Is there really nothing else to do with this lot?" Moure-Punnett asked. "This can't be the best possible solution."

DCAS did not immediately return a request for comment.

In 2018, DCAS presented to the community board two proposals for the space that included both public open space and parking for city employees. The community board [voted both proposals down](#), instead asking for the whole space to be handed over to the public.

The community board then asked DCAS to consider other options, like a public plaza or open air food market or a playground.

"This vacant land represents a blank city-owned canvas and is a rare opportunity to develop city land for a unique use that benefits the one of the most underserved communities in our city," former District Manager John Sanchez wrote at the time. "We ask that you help us reimagine what this vacant lot can become, and work with us to ensure that the lot's transformation aids our neighborhood's continued revitalization."

Not everyone sees more development as a solution. John, who declined to share his last name, works at Rugtronics, a video game store around the corner from the parking lot. He said he's happy with the lot the way it is — changing it could bring even worse outcomes.

"There are a lot of homeless shelters around, a lot of crazy people," John said. "It could attract drug dealers... I would prefer to keep it the way it is. Listen, at least it's a controlled environment."

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