



OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
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Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I write to discuss the recent media availability your office hosted earlier this month regarding a homeless encampment, located at St. Ann's Avenue and East 150<sup>th</sup> Street, on a portion of rail right-of-way owned by CSX.

Of course, my office and all Bronxites are appreciative that this site, which had been home to a homeless encampment and was regularly used as a space for drug sale and abuse, has been cleaned up and its former occupants have been offered assistance. Though this site was not visible from the street and did not receive as much media attention as other encampments have received in recent months, such as those more noticeable in Penn Station or Downtown Brooklyn, it was still a considerable nuisance to the local community.

However, the best way forward on this site is not a temporary cleanup, but the development of a permanent use. There is a significant missed opportunity for housing along this rail right-of-way. This is especially disconcerting as the zoning for most of this trench is quite generous for housing. Already, portions of the trench have been repurposed with renowned housing developments, including the internationally-heralded Via Verde; and the final major pieces of Melrose Commons, notably Bronx Commons, which is being developed jointly by BlueSea Development and WHEDco. These mixed-income projects should serve as a model of what could be accomplished.

In addition, many members of the Mott Haven community have called for the CSX right-of-way trench to be turned into a "Lowline" park. Such a project would connect Mott Haven with Melrose with new open space, and would be a model for the future reuse of the many miles of essentially abandoned railway that is spread across the five boroughs. Both Hunter College and City College have conducted feasibility studies on this proposal that I would be happy to share with you, if you are not already in possession of these documents.

Together, in consultation with our elected officials, community boards, businesses, non-profits and the community-at-large, we can develop a plan for this site and the connecting right-of-way that would leave a lasting impact on my borough, rather than provide one day of media coverage.

I look forward to speaking with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Ruben Diaz Jr.