



Tishman Environment
and Design Center



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Creating Public Land Access for Resilient and Healthy Communities





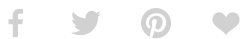


By Tim Nottage

This summer I had the opportunity to intern with [596 Acres](#), an organization in Brooklyn that provides land access advocacy and organizing tools for neighborhoods all over New York. Primarily, they identify underutilized places and spaces that could be community-controlled, such as vacant lots that neighbors want to turn into a community garden, or public resources like post offices that have been sold to private entities. Founding Director Paula Z. Segal does a great job of explaining it [here](#); by utilizing public records, the open-source mapping technology of Oasis and Google Maps, and on-the-ground experience, 596 Acres created Living Lots, a networking and organizing tool. Most of my work consisted of sifting through public data identifying buildings in NYC Parks, and helping identify sites that might benefit from advocacy and mapping these sites in Living Lots. Then, residents near the site can organize through Living Lots, and have access to a wide range of public support. For instance, NYC

Greenthumb is doing remarkable work supporting community gardening; community gardens contribute not only to the human health of neighborhoods with fresh, organic produce and green space for relaxation and community events, but also collect and process compost, create habitats for pollinators, and educate both young and old about ecology, food production, sustainability, and waste management. 596 Acres is also part of the Legacy Lead Consortium of NYC, a group of city employees, scientists, advocates, and greening organizations working to assist communities in remediating their soil, improving the ecological health of our city. In my neighborhood community garden, we have used these resources to not only gain the purchase of our land by the Parks Department, but to build compost bins, create connections between new and longtime residents, and remediate our lead-laden soils through mulching and flower-beds, making the garden a healthier place for children to play. Furthermore, my experience with 596 Acres has taught me a lot about what it means to empower and learn from communities of color; honoring the local knowledge and experience of elders, and acknowledging that beneficial environmental policies and public resources have often excluded

working class and minority communities. I see this work as part of an intersectional environmental justice tradition, across America and the world, started by communities of color fighting for better health and equal access to resources, who have held a disproportionate ecological and financial burden through polluting incinerators, waste and transportation facilities, public-sector cuts, and resource extraction. I am grateful to see firsthand how these values can be practiced and eager to bring this knowledge and experience to my work at The New School and the Tishman Center. Read more about my experiences from this summer at 596 Acres, [here](#) and [here](#). *Tim is a designer and aspiring urbanist from Oakland, California. He is passionate about making equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities. He also creates interactive sculpture and designs scenery for theatre and film with reclaimed or sustainable materials and practices. He is a graduate student in Theories of Urban Practice at Parsons.*



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