

My name is Aidan McKeever. I am ten years old. I live on Oak Street in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. I live two blocks from the East River and seven blocks in the other direction from the Sewage Treatment Plant on Newtown Creek. In the past 3-4 years the Sewage Treatment Plant has quadrupled in size and looks like a giant Mad Scientist's Laboratory gone crazy. Some days when the wind blows in our direction, the smell from the sewage plant makes me want to stay inside.

Other days, most days after school, I grab my baseball mitt and run to play outside. On my block of Oak Street alone, there are 36 kids under the age of 15. My friends and I like to play catch or running bases in the street. Obstacles include parked cars, building windows and pedestrians. The biggest and most dangerous of the obstacles are the speeding cars that whiz around the corner. One of the game participants always has to watch for vehicles and each time yell "CAR."

For the past 4 years I have played baseball in the Greenpoint Little League. Last year my team, the Yankees, won the championship. Although the fields are green and equipped like other Little Leagues, the surroundings are not like any others. The fields are on the other side of the BQE, on the edge of Bushwick, on land owned by Keyspan. When we look past the outfield we see factories with plumes of flame and smoke. Garbage trucks loiter in the narrow parking lot waiting to get into the near-by transfer stations. The smell of gas and smoke is ever present but it is the garbage smell that makes us gag.

I understand that the waterfront will be developed and that the empty lots and rotting factories that are now along the river will be cleared to make way for change BUT unless chunks of this land are reserved for parks and open space, the kids of North Brooklyn will continue to play in the street. 150 years ago the City Planners had the smart idea to reserve land for Central Park. New York City now has a similar opportunity in my neighborhood. Soon tall apartment towers will line the river. Please reserve the needed space for parks.

Don't make me play in the street.

Aidan McKeever, April 4, 2005