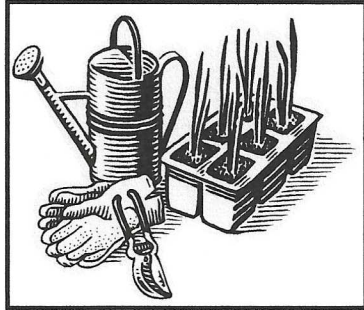


HISTORY OF A COMMUNITY GARDEN



*A Visit to the W. 104 Street
Community Garden and A
Discussion on NYC's Local
Gardens by Member*

Jean Jaworek

Sunday, September 19, 2pm

6-10 W. 104 Street

[Between Central Park West and Manhattan Avenue]

FREE | Limited to 30

Reservations: info@columbusamsterdambid.org

**Sponsored by Park West Neighborhood
History Group & Columbus Amsterdam BID**



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Jean Jaworek

Presentation Sept. 19, 2010 – History of W. 104th St. Garden and Community Garden

Welcoming Remarks to seated group in East lot of W. 104 Garden

Introductions

Outline of talking points and tour:

- Origins of Community Garden -Overview through time
- Origins of Community Garden-Overview in NYC & OGT
- Development of W. 104th Garden related to NWCPMBA Inc., CB 7 planning & construction
- Walk around tour beginning with West then returning to the East side garden
- Overview of membership and administrative of garden
- Discussion of programming through time and community facilities available, handouts
- Challenges, past, current, future
- Light Refreshments/ Q & A

I ORIGINS OF COMMUNITY GARDENING

A: Response to Collective Need

1. Saxon England-Community lands
2. Dutch/English in USA
 - a. Common lands for recreation – E.g. Bowling Green, NYC
 - b. Common lands for grazing- E.g. Plat =City Hall Park NYC
3. 19th Century Allotments, healthful activity for lower classes (supplying fresh food; viewed as particularly good for children=diminution of fidgeting.)
4. Canning gardens WWI & Victory Gardens WWII

B: De-Industrialization of America; Urban Blight & Decline 1970's In USA including NYC
E.g. Depopulation & Property Abandonment

1. Vacant lots & dumping
2. Crime increases
3. Spawning of community activism: vigilantism (E.g. Newark, NJ & ACG movement)

C: First Nat'l Conference of Community gardens 1978 with 150 participating gardens

D. ACGA formed 1979 as a national non-profit

II ORIGINS OF COMMUNITY GARDENING IN NYC & OGT

- A. Response to property abandonment and vacant lots in most blighted areas E.g. Lower East Side, Harlem, some Brooklyn and Bronx neighborhoods
 - 1. Fiscal Crisis of NYC
- B. 1973-1974
 - 1. Bowery Houston Garden founded by Liz Christy, young Lower East Side Painter/Artist ; garden later renamed after her
 - 2. First NYC lease is given to this community garden 1974
 - 3. Liz Christy founds Green Guerillas
 - 4. Success leads to followers
- C. OGT is established in NYC as part of Dept. of General Services in 1978
 - 1. Administers community garden program for the City
 - 2. Issues interim leases for gardens on city owned lots many controlled by Dept. of Housing Preservation & Development
 - 3. Offers some long term leases to properties with values of <\$20,000
- D. By 1999 – OGT has 700+ community gardens in NYC and is the largest program of its kind in the country

III PRE-DEVELOPMENT OF W. 104TH ST. COMMUNITY GARDEN

- A. Overview of NWCPMBA Inc. history and goals
 - 1. Advantages of sponsorship by another organization
 - 2. Compare W. 102nd Garden to W. 104th Garden
- B. Garden begun as project of organization
 - 1. Jesse Crawford identifies two city owned empty lots on W. 104th St.
 - 2. Community support through NWCPMBA and signatures
 - 3. Support of Community Board 7 solicited
- C. Site secured 1993
- D. First clean up of site organized by NWCPMBA 1994 of association
 - 1. Members and neighborhood volunteers lead by Betty Hornick
 - 2. Removal of tires, garbage, drug paraphernalia, a car, water heater

E. Local Landscape architecture student, Len Greco, agrees to draw up design plan for Western lot.

1. Solicits input from NWCPMBA members, neighbors and W. 102nd St. Garden
2. Plan submitted for OGT for comment and approval
3. 1/1995 NWCPMBA W. 104th St. project is officially an OGT garden

IV DEVELOPMENT OF W. 104TH ST. COMMUNITY GARDEN

A. Construction begins with all-volunteer labor force from local community

1. Group of regular volunteers works weekends and evenings for months to remove bulldozed rubble from top layer of soil
2. Rubble is worked into design as we go.
3. Construction of eighteen raised beds is undertaken in spring 1995
4. By summer first beds are completed and filled with clean topsoil, first Garden BBQ is held

B. OGT supplies some basic materials: pressure treated lumber, nails, fencing, soil, water barrels, tools like shovels and hoes, some tech support for hydrant access and garden info and printed materials, seed, bulbs, plants

1. Local people and landlords supply some power tools & electrical hookups

C. NWCPMBA offers some money for insurance and misc. supplies

D. Overview of key OGT rules, four don'ts and guidelines

1. Open hours four public
2. Vegetables to be planted in clean soil only
3. Area must be fenced off and secure
4. OGT contact person
5. Four don'ts: no casitas, active play equipment, parked cars, animals

(GROUP WALKS OVER TO WEST SIDE OF COMMUNITY GARDEN)

V. W. 104TH ST. COMMUNITY GARDEN FEATURES – WESTERN LOT

A. Formal layout: Greco/Roman Influence

1. handicapped accessibility of paths

B. Private and Shared or Communal Spaces

1. Individual raised beds- freedom to plant what you wish if legal & no danger
 - a. water lily pond; solar aeration system

2. Communal spaces worked by committees. Show:
 - a. flower beds and trees, point out American Elm.
 - b. Crawford Rose Arbor and Minoan maze
 - c. communal herb bed and adj. cold frame
 - d. patio and bbq area
 - e. shade garden
 - f. shed construction and redo 2007
 - g. fig tree E.g. Micro climate

C. Cat Project 2009 from rodent problem E.g. Group problem solving

D. Water Harvesting System installed spring 2010

1. GrowNYC formerly NYC Council on the Environment.

E. Wall reconstruction and new fence – Parks Dept. early spring 2010

F. New bed space and replacement beds later spring 2010 – Garden Community

(GROUP WALKS OVER TO EAST SIDE OF COMMUNITY GARDEN

Note: As group walks back mention of tree guards & bike racks, community svc.)

V. W. 104TH ST. COMMUNITY GARDEN FEATURES – EASTERN LOT

A. Looser layout as a result of survey feedback from gardeners and NWCPMBA Inc. and community oriented features

- E.g. Open space for event and stage w/seating area for performance

B. Gazebo

C. Composter

D. Peach tree- annual harvest event

E. Sheds (long term, short term) and potting area

F. Handicapped accessible picnic table 2009

G. Handicapped accessible raised garden bed 2010

H. Stage and seating area:

1. Theater, dance performance & music (free for community)
2. Meeting space

VI. W. 104TH ST. COMMUNITY GARDEN MANAGEMENT & ADMIN

A. Growth and change

1. Conflict over development plans and oversight 1995-1996
2. Movement away from direct oversight by NWCPMBA Inc. suggested by parent organization's treasurer Fred Charles 'garden to be run by gardeners'; proposes separate membership
3. Steering Cmt. Concept suggested and appointed by NWCPMBA Pres. Vernetta Chesimard with a garden member to report back to parent association periodically with updates
4. Steering cmt. Is charged with helping set up rules for administer garden and setting up meetings
5. Muriel Johnson, new garden appointed OGT contact gets rules used by Brooklyn Bears
6. Rules are modified and adopted for W. 104th St. Garden
 - a. Guiding principle: key decisions about design and functioning of garden to be made by the garden group as a whole; NWCPMBA for support & advice

B. Membership (possible handout of app and rules)

1. Annual – must sign up every year; review types of membership
2. Needs based sliding fee structure
3. Agreement to rules:
 - a. open hours staffing
 - b. committee participation
 - c. work days and
 - d. 3 strikes policy for rules violators
4. Members drawn from local area and other parts of Manhattan, but open to all

C. Funding

1. annual membership dues
2. flea markets
3. grants & awards
4. TV shoots E.g. Law & Order
5. movie shoots E.g. The Brave One
6. donations

D. Types of Events held through time (free or contribution accepted):

1. BBQ's
2. Kids parties
3. Evening Yoga – 2010
4. Theater regular and in the round
5. Movies

6. Halloween Party for kids
7. Spring Easter Egg Hunt for kids
8. Montessori School Graduation
9. Winter Solstice Tea Canned Drive for City Harvest
10. Day of Music
11. Street Party
12. Art shows:
 - a. Summer 2010 art installation by David Bard
 - b. Fall 2010 possible installation by Norbert Attard

E. Organizations that have helped us in the past with additional labor:

E.g. CASES, Young Presidents, Junior League Done in a Day Program
Columbia University Freshman Orientation Program

F. Special Program: 2010 Farming Concrete

VII CHALLENGES PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE

A. Real Estate Market Value Changes

1. citywide
2. Manhattan Valley

B. Administrative Changes

1. Compare and Contrast, Koch years through Bloomberg
2. Open space definition issues
3. Is *the* business of NYC real estate?

C. During Giuliani Admin: Transfer of OGT to Parks Dept in July 1995; long term leasing ends and licensing of gardens begins

D. Spring 1996 Parks begins discussing transfer of some gardens to more permanent status

E. Spring 1996 Trust for Public Land begins meeting monthly to discuss garden issues

1. Discuss relation to La Perla

F. NYC Coalition for the Preservation of Gardens forms Nov. 1996

1. grassroots group from Lower East Side quickly draws members from throughout the city

G. 1996 NYC begins revoking garden licenses; through 1997 when HPD announces they plan to develop all the garden sites in the next five years; strife between agencies

H. First Citywide Save the Gardens Rally 2/1997 at City Hall.

I. Negative feedback and questioning of garden sales and bulldozing begins

J. May 1998- City plans for 36 gardens to be transferred to Parks Dept. and OGT is not defunded; still bulldozing continues through 1999

K. May 11, 1999 Attorney Gen. Spitzer files suit questioning legality of garden lot sales and stop garden auctions

L. July 1999 34 of 36 gardens promised to Parks are transferred. W. 104 Garden is one

M. Settlement reached Sept. 18, 2002 and MOA

1. 3000 units of housing to be built
2. 500 of former 700 gardens to be saved; 200 to be sold for housing.

N. MOA expiration after 8 years - now

O. 2010 City charter revision; possible change in Parks relationship with gardens

wording changes could make more gardens vulnerable to development without community input. Licenses could be revoked with little warning.

1. One public hearing scheduled for public comment August. 2010; access limited

P. The future of community gardens in NYC is unknown but concept is likely to continue

1. Economical way to improve quality of life in a community
2. Open space and positive example of cooperative community enterprise with grassroots support
3. Compare attempts at demonization of gardeners in 1990's to present
4. Land Trusts and other possibilities

Addendum:

announcement from Parks on updated status of OGT gardens that is holds like W. 104.

Organization Key:

NWCPMBA Inc, Northwest Central Park Multiblock Association Inc.; community organization to address quality of life issues between CPW and Amsterdam Ave; W. 100th and W. 110th Streets

OGT, Operation Greenthumb: NYC unit administering community gardens, now under Parks Dept.

CASES, Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services organization innovating programs for youth and adults with special needs in New York City's courts

GrowNYC (formerly NYC Council on the Environment): GrowNYC is a hands-on non-profit which improves New York City's quality of life through environmental programs

ACG, American Community Gardening

ACGA, American Community Gardening Association: Nonprofit organization, national organization to advocate and encourage community gardens

Green Guerillas: Nonprofit organization helping hundreds of grassroots groups in New York City to establish and maintain community gardens

The Trust for Public Land: A land conservation and open space resource for landowners, government agencies and community groups interested in protecting land for human enjoyment.