



PHOTO: J. JAWDA

THE BQLT NEWSLETTER IS PUT TOGETHER BY VOLUNTEERS. WE NEED GARDEN STORIES TO FILL THESE PAGES.

TELL US YOURS!

negotiated with the city to purchase many established gardens for continued community use.

Now, we must continue to build a strong organization which shares its commitment to open space

with all our neighbors who share the same goals.

The Trust for Public Land looks forward to the time when we are an independent entity who will serve as a support and guide for all those member gardens entrusted to our care. In time we hope to increase our membership as open space becomes available and gardeners wish to join us.

Now we are a small, barely known group supported by volunteers; a group of our neighbors from all over Brooklyn and Queens who saw the need and came forth to try to meet it. They attend the meetings, chair the committees, develop the plans, set the objectives, and try to meet the goals of the organization.

In the last several years volunteers established by-laws designed to guide the organization in its various activities. A mission statement was developed to explain our purpose and reason for being. Committees were established where most of the work of the organization is done. They have made an effort to reach out to member gardens to let them

TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, GARDEN UPDATES AND PRESERVATION NEWS, CONTACT US AT 718 482-3140 OR EMAIL ????@BQLT.ORG

CAN YOU HELP BQLT AT THE GREENTHUMB GROWTOGETHER? WE NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE BQLT TABLE

LOOK FOR US ON THE WEB: WWW.BQLT.ORG

know we exist and wish to help when they need us. In return we expect individual gardens to be available to the communities in which they are located. That is a part of our mandate.

The Garden Operations Committee visits and offers assistance to member gardens, the treasurer acts as the financial officer keeping a close watch on our very small bank account. Although small this account has been used to sponsor various BQLT events with the assistance of its members. The Communications Committee has put us on the "WEB". With the help of some of our Resource People the committee is developing a BQLT logo. We hope our logo will serve as a familiar symbol identifying us as the supporter of community gardens and open space.

Our organization is supported by several other committees where much of the work of the agency is accomplished. The Office Space Committee is busy looking for a space to call home where the staff can be found. The Personnel Committee is busy locating staff and participating in developing personnel policies. Last, but just as important is The Nominating Committee.

This is just a quick summary of what BQLT is about. Come find out more about us and our hard working committees or just attend a Board meeting. The members are your representatives and would like to see and hear from you. Your input is welcome and important in the running of BQLT.

Remember, we're a member organization. Without our members we're an empty shell. We need you. ■

Winter 2005



The way we were

Following is a timeline of the "pre-history" of BQLT.

December, 1998 – HPD announces plans to auction 120 Gardens. Thanks to a tip from the Brooklyn Borough President's office, garden groups learn that, sometime in May, the Mayor plans to auction off over 300 "vacant" lots – 126 are community gardens.

January 13, 27 and February 10, 1999 – Auction Public Hearings. Reade Street becomes the center of the garden world's auction protests. Gardeners citywide testify to save their gardens.

March 22, 1999 – A Land Trust grows in Brooklyn. As a strategy to offer the city an option to the auction, meetings begin to create one unified trust.

May 5, 1999 – Earth-Shaking Protest and Civil Disobedience to Stop the Auction. Gardeners protest outside the pre-auction seminar. Over 60 people were arrested in a show of support for gardening in New York City.

Brooklyn Queens Land Trust

WHAT'S THE MISSION OF BROOKLYN QUEENS LAND TRUST?

1. Establish a community of gardeners in Brooklyn and Queens to:

* Educate and inspire people of all ages to become successful and environmentally responsible gardeners;

* Support community involvement in community gardening, and neighborhood beautification and open space enhancement through activities and programs; and

* Promote the interests of community gardens.

2. Preserve, support, manage and enhance community gardens, and areas of similar natural or recreational value such as neighborhood open spaces, greenways and playgrounds for the benefit of the general public; and

3. Act as steward of the open space properties that it owns (including properties in Brooklyn and Queens purchased by or donated to it in the future) for the aforementioned purposes.

A community of gardeners

BY CONSUELO HUDGINS, BOARD PRESIDENT

Welcome to our first newsletter. The Brooklyn Queens Land Trust has progressed from the hope of a few activist community gardeners to a family of gardens which includes thirty-four gardens in Brooklyn and Queens supported by over three hundred devoted member gardeners.

As president of the BQLT, I'm excited and proud to be a part of this dynamic, challenging time. I feel that we're on the threshold of great things for Brooklyn and Queens as we encourage and support the gardens under our trust.

Preserving open spaces for public use is not a new idea although we are a young organization. It became the goal of nature lovers many years ago. Like so many ideas its acceptance was a struggle involving many like minded people throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

Many of you already know how The Trust for Public Land learned of our struggle, came to the rescue, and successfully

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Spring Fest at 615 Green (Sixth Avenue at 15th Street)

BQLT Incorporators signing, 2004



May 11, 1999 – Auction lawsuits Filed. The New York State Attorney General, Green Guerillas and The Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund separately file lawsuits on behalf of the gardens questioning the legality of the sale pending further environmental reviews. An injunction is granted the day before the proposed auction.

May 12, 1999 – The Auction is Stopped! The Mayor's office announced that it reached an agreement with

Trust for Public Land and The New York Restoration Project to sell the garden parcels to these nonprofit groups for \$4.5 million dollars to be preserved as gardens in privately run land trusts.

November 13, 1999 – The first BQLT meeting. After the city completed the transfer of gardens to Trust for Public Land, gardeners began working toward creating our land trusts.

Following is the current list of active gardens in the NEW Brooklyn Queens Land Trust:

6/15 Green
South Slope

Brooklyn Bear's Pacific Street Garden
Park Slope

Central Bainbridge Street Comm Garden
Bedford-Stuyvesant

Classon Ful-Gate Block Assn Garden
Clinton Hill

Clifton Place Block Assn Garden
Clinton Hill

Contented Garden
Bushwick

David Foulke Memorial Garden
Boerum Hill

Dunton Block & Civic Assn Garden
Jamaica

Euclid/Pine Street Block Assn Garden
East New York

Flushing Avenue Tenants Assn Garden
Bushwick

Garden of Angels
Bedford-Stuyvesant

Green Space @ President Street
Park Slope

Greene Garden
Fort Greene

Hart Street Community Garden
Bedford-Stuyvesant

Hollenback Community Garden
Clinton Hill

John the Baptist Community Center
Bedford-Stuyvesant

Lakewood Garden of Eden
South Jamaica

Lincoln-Berkeley Community Garden
Park Slope

Mama Dee's Garden
Crown Heights

McIntosh Neighborhood Assn
East Elmhurst

Merrick-Marsden Neighbors Assn Garden
South Jamaica

Northside Community Garden
Williamsburg

Patchen Avenue Garden
Bedford-Stuyvesant

People's Garden
Bedford-Stuyvesant

Ralph Lincoln Service Center Garden
Weeksville

Rogers/Tilden/Veronica Place Garden
East Flatbush

Sheffield South Block Assn Garden
New Lots

St. John's Place Renaissance Garden
Weeksville

St. Marks Ave/Prospect Hts Comm Garden
Prospect Heights

The Malcolm X Garden
Corona

United Herkimer Garden Club
Crown Heights

Warren/St. Mark's Community Garden
Park Slope

Westbrook Memorial Garden
Crown Heights

Woodbine Street Block Assn Garden
Bushwick

We're Making History

THE ROOTS OF THE BROOKLYN QUEENS LAND TRUST are grounded in 34 gardens stretching across two boroughs in the City of New York. In May 1999, 32 of the 34 gardens were threatened with destruction through former Mayor Giuliani's auction of publicly-owned properties — part of a group of 114 throughout the City (2 of the BQLT gardens, not owned by the City, were already protected or soon would be). The auction took place at a time when City officials failed to understand and appreciate the critical role of community gardens in the social fabric of urban neighborhoods.

A grass-roots, City-wide campaign of community gardeners, greening organizations and advocates of open space came together to build public support for saving the gardens from the auction. Many of the volunteers who campaigned against the destruction of the gardens took their protests to the streets during rallies and marches, and to the halls of City government during public hearings. Some lost their freedom when arrested and jailed for openly advocating to "Save the Gardens."



Signs of Spring (soon to appear again) in the Pacific Street Brooklyn Bear's Garden

The 34 Brooklyn Queens gardens, all originally established under the City's GreenThumb gardening program, were saved from the auction after The Trust for Public Land ("TPL"), a nonprofit, land conservation organization, reached a last-minute agreement with the City to purchase the properties for permanent preservation as public, open space.

The members of the 34 gardens represent an extraordinary group of racially, culturally and economically diverse people. All of the BQLT gardeners, despite this diversity, share a common bond that runs across artificial borders separating neighborhoods and communities — the recognition of the worth of public, open spaces, especially community gardens, to improving the quality of city life.

Soon after the crisis of the auction had passed, the work began with TPL of organizing the members of the 34 gardens to form the BQLT. This work required

- 1) Building commitment among the gardeners to the principles and operation of a land trust as a way to protect all of the BQLT gardens as private properties held in trust for public use;
- 2) Creating a new "community of gardeners" by familiarizing gardeners with one another on a personal level so they could work closely together as a cohesive group;
- 3) Educating gardeners on the specific issues and procedures related to forming and governing a new, nonprofit land trust; and
- 4) Increasing the "comfort level" of gardeners, as grassroots, community people, in owning numerous open-space properties, and in taking a critical leadership and management role in governing one of the largest urban land trusts in New York City and the United States.

A uniquely dedicated, core group of garden leaders, demonstrating extraordinary patience and perseverance, worked with TPL and took on the principal responsibility as volunteers of forming the BQLT. This was accomplished with the establishment of a number of working groups, created during different times in the land trust formation period, and included the Steering Committee, Garden Operations Committee, Nominations Committee, Events Committee, Communications Committee, Bylaws Committee, and Board of Directors Search Committee ■

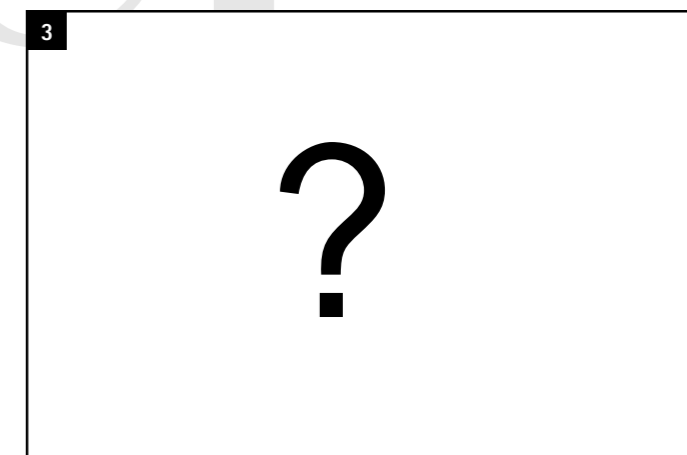
"When open space is available for parkland, we grab it! Because when it's gone, it's gone forever."

— PARKS COMMISSIONER, ADRIAN BENEPE

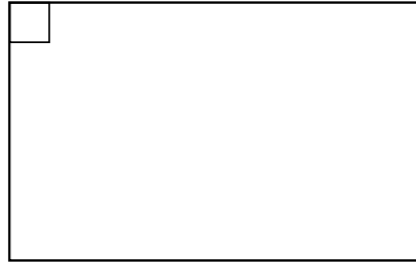
...so how should we look?

LOGO CONTEST

The BQLT Communications Committee has been busy narrowing down the choices for our new identity. Now it's your turn to help us decide the winning logo to identify us to the world. Enclosed you'll find a postcard you can use to vote. Fill in and sign the card and mail it in by February 23, 2005 or, attend the Annual General Membership Meeting on February 26th, and cast your vote.



Check the box next to the logo idea you think will best represent the BQLT.
Put your name and garden information of the opposite side of this card, and
mail in your vote no later than February 23, 2005.



Please provide the following information:

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIP
YOUR GARDEN NAME
SIGNATURE

Please
place
stamp
here

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