

CITIZENS + VACANT LOTS = COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

A Case Study of the Union Settlement Community Garden

East Harlem, New York City.

by

Susan Wambogo Mugo

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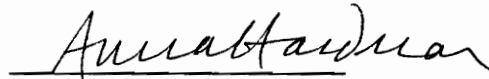
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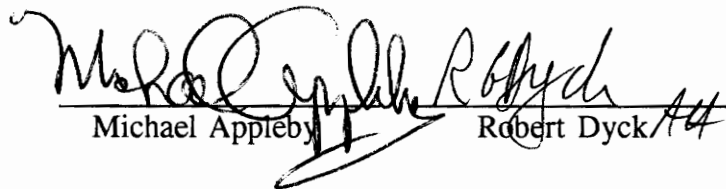
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Anna Hardman, Chair


Michael Appleby Robert Dyck

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(ABSTRACT)

Communities have responded to an alarming increase in the number of vacant lots in the inner-city by initiating the design, development and maintenance of community open spaces. This paper addresses the historical development of community gardens in the U.S., their benefits, and studies in more detail the case of the Union Settlement Community Garden in East Harlem, Manhattan, New York City, to show the process by which a community garden comes to life. Other issues discussed are the potential uses of community gardens as alternative public recreation spaces, and the role of public participation in the potential success of community controlled open spaces, as opposed to less participatory traditional parks.

The paper is based on my experience working as a summer intern in community gardens in New York City in 1991 and 1992, and on a field study conducted in December 1992. The study involved interviews with the personnel of five different public and private non-profit agencies dealing with community gardening in New York City, Union Settlement Association personnel, and with some of the gardeners. The Union Settlement Garden is typical in that it is an example of private, public, and local partnerships to provide public and private services to the citizens. The garden provides public recreation facilities for the citizens and private vegetable plots for individual use.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community action groups have promoted the development of thousands of community gardens on vacant lots in US cities in the last twenty years (Raver 1992). A survey in 1987 found that more than 91,000 acres of city land in the US were being used as community gardens (Cashdan, Lee and Stein 1987). An estimated one million households in the United States are involved in community gardening (National Gardening Association 1985, 7). Urban gardening generally yields positive effects for the community by converting unused land into productive green space using land that would otherwise become unsupervised garbage dumps.

Most of these community gardens were developed as a self-help response to the need for urban recreation amenities in fiscally-tight times. Communities have responded to an alarming increase in the number of vacant lots in the inner-city by initiating the design, development and maintenance of community open spaces. The creation of community open spaces has been supported by both public and private organizations, which provide technical assistance for the projects. The last decade has seen growing public support from all levels of government to ensure the success and permanence of these spaces. These community open spaces are emerging as an alternative to parks systems in many urban areas (Hiss 1992, 101).

The study will focus on the Union Settlement Community Garden in East Harlem, New York City, as a case of local, federal, state, and private cooperation,

and will look at role of community gardens as alternatives or complements to traditional parks, and as a way to use abandoned vacant lots in areas that lack recreation amenities. This paper focuses on a case in New York City. It is based on my experience working as a summer intern in four community gardens in New York City in 1991 and 1992, and on a field study conducted in December 1992. The study involved interviews with the personnel of five different public and private non-profit agencies dealing with community gardening in New York City, Union Settlement Association personnel, and with some of the gardeners. The Union Settlement Garden is typical in that it is an example of private, public, and local partnerships to provide public and private services to the citizens. The garden provides public recreation facilities for the citizens and private vegetable plots for individual use. The City of New York owned over 3,000 acres of vacant land in 1987 (Lee 1987, 5). In 1991 there were over 1,237 community gardens on city owned land in New York City (ACGA 1992).

This paper uses the terms community open spaces and community gardens interchangeably based on the American Community Gardening Association's (1992) definition of community open spaces:

Land set aside for community members to grow edible or ornamental plants. The land may also include active or passive recreation space or other amenities.

The term, garden, has different meanings depending on the cultural context. The Webster's dictionary defines a garden as "a plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers or vegetables are cultivated". A garden is also defined in Webster's as "a public recreational area or park usually ornamented with plants and trees" (Webster's 1990). The latter definition is more related to formal botanical gardens or formal European gardens.

Traditionally, gardening has been considered as "an activity associated with the landscaping and the culture of plants on the land or premises around the individual home" (Wearne 1979). However, this "backyard mentality" has changed as people's lifestyles have changed with more people living in urban areas and in multi-unit dwellings without individual private spaces. However "the self-fulfilling desire and need for the rewards of gardening still exists" (Wearne 1979, 3).

Community gardens in the United States combine two ideas: first, that of public parks, and second, allotment gardens, or small private spaces used for individual vegetable growing. Community gardens thus combine public and private open space use. A community garden provides public space for members of the community and sets aside some land for individual private use. The private areas usually take the form of planting boxes.

Community gardening has become an alternative for urban people with the desire to garden. A typical community garden in New York City is established on city owned vacant land, leased to the community members for \$1.00 per year through

Operation GreenThumb, a city agency. These vacant lots were at one time used mainly for housing but different circumstances such as tax foreclosures, abandonment, and arson have led them to be in city ownership.

Within the community gardens, the land is divided into plots, typically about 8 x 4 feet, that are allocated to individual members of the community garden. These plots or planting boxes are mainly used for food production. Also incorporated in the garden are public spaces that are used as children's play areas or recreational areas and as communal flower beds. The flower beds are maintained by the garden members. Though the responsibility for maintaining the garden may be held by a few community members, the gardens are usually open to all members of the community. Appendix 1 shows a plan of a typical community garden (Appendix 1).

1.1 Community Open Spaces and Traditional Parks

The primary difference between community open spaces and traditional parks is that, while community open spaces are designed, developed and managed by the community, traditional parks are professionally developed and managed. In addition, community gardens are usually spontaneous developments, resulting from community concern about vacant hazardous lots and the lack of adequate neighborhood open space. Traditional parks, in contrast, are planned developments (Cashdan, Francis and Paxson 1984, 11).

What further distinguishes the two is the different uses to which they are put. While traditional parks mainly provide open space and play areas, community spaces provide additional services as well. For example, community gardens often provide vegetable planting plots used for food production. They also provide community gathering spaces and additional recreation facilities like picnic tables and barbecue facilities. Traditional parks are almost always bigger while community gardens may be as small as 5,000 square feet (Operation GreenThumb 1992).

While traditional parks mainly provide passive recreation, community gardens provide active and passive recreation. Community gardens are focal points in the community. Though the maintenance of the garden may be the responsibility of a handful of gardeners, they are usually open to the rest of the community for meetings, picnics or recreation especially in the summer (Operation GreenThumb 1992).

It has been widely acknowledged that in many cities traditional open spaces have failed to serve the people they were intended for (Francis 1983, 14). For example, in New York City many public parks have been abandoned because they have become so closely associated with drugs and crime. There is a general consensus among designers and managers of public spaces that these spaces need to be redesigned, to make them socially acceptable and to ensure that they meet the needs of their users (Francis 1983, 15). At the same time, local governments in the 1990's face fiscal constraints, it is viewed as essential that public spaces be designed to impose few costs on the local government resources and to require low maintenance.

Community gardens are maintained by the community members and therefore do not require city maintenance. Such spaces are also low-cost because they are designed, planned and constructed by the community members using locally available supplies. In 1989 the cost of creating a 5,000 sq.ft. garden in New York City was estimated at \$5,000 in 1989 (Shepard 1989).

Studies have shown that professionally designed and publicly managed parks and playground often fail to serve the needs of the users because they usually to seek resident input into the design and management of space created for them (Kaplan 1980, 495). Seymour Gold (1972, 369) suggests that urban designs should be sensitive to the needs of the users of small-scale parks:

A new spirit of self-help, community involvement and consciousness is emerging in many places. The spirit recognizes the limits of governments in solving many human problems and it senses a degree of common commitment, responsibility and resourcefulness that can be used by people to help design, develop and maintain urban parks.

This paper addresses the historical development of community gardens in the U.S., their benefits, and studies in more detail the case of the Union Settlement Community Garden in East Harlem, Manhattan, New York City, to show the process by which a community garden comes to life. Other issues discussed are the potential uses of community gardens as alternative public recreation spaces, and the role of public participation in the potential success of community controlled open spaces, as opposed to less participatory traditional parks.

2. THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY GARDENING

This chapter will discuss the history of community gardens, suggesting that the contemporary community gardens in cities in the United States today have their roots in the allotment gardens movement in Europe, and have parallels with traditional urban agriculture still seen in many African urban areas.

2.1 Urban Agriculture

Cities are not usually identified with production of food, they are regarded rather as food consumers. However, given the cost of food in urban areas, "city soils, if carefully tendered, can be profitable" (Lado 1990, 260). Freeman (1991) in a study of urban agriculture in Nairobi found that urban poor families are willing to "defy local by-laws and cultivate lands in order to try to feed their families".

Urban agriculture, which usually means the growing of food in kitchen garden plots, is common in several cities around the world (Lado 1990, 257). In Nairobi, for example, even in the heart of the central business district, small vegetable plots are seen interspersed in the urban landscape (Freeman 1991, 2). During the peaks of rainy seasons, many third world urban centers are transformed into flourishing gardens, and vegetables and food crops are grown on most of the open land, for example, beside roads, and railroad tracks and along river banks.

Some countries, such as, Papua New Guinea give support and encouragement to their city farmers through land-use regulations that set aside some urban land for agriculture. In other countries such as Kenya, urban gardeners are considered a nuisance in the city and are subject to constant harassment by the city administration (Lado 1990, 262).

Freeman (1991, 112) outlines the benefits of urban gardening in third world cities:

- 1. Contribute to the aggregate urban productivity.*
- 2. Generation of urban employment*
- 3. Provision of a point of entry for females into the entrepreneurial milieu and urban labor market.*
- 4. Filling vacant niches in the supply of goods and services and valorization of urban waste land.*

He concludes that "the benefits of incorporating urban agriculture into the economic structure must surely outweigh the disadvantages" (Freeman 1991, 122). This is parallel to the growing of vegetables in community gardens created from vacant city lots as is shown in the case study of the Union Settlement Garden in New York City.

2.2 Public Gardening in England and the United States

Records from as early as 1731 in England show flourishing systems, known as allotment gardens (Coe 1978, 11). These were, and are, city plots provided to low-income citizens to supplement their low incomes. With urbanization and

commercialization of agriculture, the peasants lost their access to land: these "allotments" were a way providing land to urban dwellers of rural origin.

The development of money-based economies throughout the world continued to break down traditional agriculture in many areas (Naimark 1982, 12). This was further accelerated by the industrial revolution. In the early industrial revolution in England a lot of farmland was taken over. Prominent industrialists provided allotment space near to their factories to improve the living conditions of the workers. In an attempt to retain their ties to the land, public gardens were created by some rural settlers in the urban areas who rented plots of land on the urban fringe. As the urban areas continued to develop in the 18th century, the lack of open space in the overcrowded cities came to be seen as a health hazard and thus attempts were made to provide open space.

In England, the Allotment Acts of 1887 and 1890, and the Local Government Act of 1894 were a result of the "government's acknowledgement of the need for human closeness to nature despite industrialization" (Coe 1978, 11). These laws required sanitary authorities to provide allotment spaces where they were required. The small holdings and Allotment Act of 1907 and 1908 further reinforced this by making mandatory the provision of plots of 500 square yards each to citizens without access to gardening (Coe 1978, 12).

In England three different types of sites could be used for allotments: temporary, statutory, and private. Cities and boroughs purchased private or temporary

sites for allotment plots which then became statutory or permanent sites according to the Allotment Acts. The success of community gardens in England has been attributed to their having permanent sites that have been gradually improved over the years to what are now known as the leisure gardens (Coe 1978, 14).

Community gardening was introduced to the United States from Europe. In the United States in the 19th century, as in Europe there was a movement to improve the unsanitary conditions of cities. One element was public access to open space and eventually gardening space. Unlike the European gardens which were institutionalized early in their history, American community gardens have evolved under different themes. Public gardening in the US can be described more as "movements" influenced by political and economic periods such as the Great Depression and the two World Wars (Basset 1979, 4).

Some major events influenced the shaping of public open spaces and consequently community gardening. Frederick Law Olmstead, a landscape architect, contributed greatly to the design of open-spaces in the United States. His work was influenced by the movements in England. His plans were based on his theory of open green space being "the lungs of the city" (Levy 1991). His initial plans included Central Park and Prospect Parks in New York City. He then planned major park systems for Chicago, Boston and other cities in the United States (Levy 1991).

The "City Beautiful Movement" of the early 20th century brought neighborhood parks into the city and town landscapes (Cranz 1982, 84). These parks

were created to be "refuges for the city children" (Cranz 1982, 85). This idea was to be further incorporated into community gardening and allotment gardens that were used for private food production. Allotments regained strength in time of war and depression both in the United States and Europe. These gardens had their peaks in 1918 and 1944 during both world wars.

In America, community gardening, or the original "allotments," can be divided into seven distinct though overlapping periods or movements. These have been nicknamed as, Potato Patches (1894-1917), the School Gardens (1900-1920), the Garden City plots (1905-1920), the Liberty Gardens (1930-1939), the Victory Gardens (1941-1945) and the Community Gardens (1970-present) (Basset 1979, 4).

The *Potato Patches* (1894-1917) originated in Detroit in 1894 during a period of slow industrial production and high unemployment. The Mayor, Hazen Pingree started a program known as Poor Relief. Garden plots were provided on municipally owned and privately donated vacant land. These one half or one third acre plots were created for several purposes. They provided food, supplemented income and also relieved the city's "poor commission relief fund" (Basset 1979, 4). The aim of this program was also to "promote self-respect and independence, and to encourage the jobless to remain useful to the society as producers" (Basset 1979, 4). Allotment gardening was also a way of assimilating immigrants into the American community (Basset 1979, 4).

By 1895 the allotment gardens made up 455 acres. The main crops grown were potatoes, turnips and beans; thus the name "potato patches". The program got a lot of publicity when they had a record crop valued at \$28,000 (Basset 1979, 4). The success of the Detroit allotment program led cities to follow their example of allotment plots.

Early in the twentieth century through World War I, the gardening wave was picked up in schools. Educators believed that city life stunted the growth of the children. As in England civic improvers throughout the US saw "congestion and the absence of nature in the urban world as a blight that impaired the physical, mental and moral development of its residents" (Basset 1979, 4).

This viewpoint resulted in establishing the *School Gardens* (1900-1920). These gardens were seen as a way to "reestablish the contact with nature" and at the same time build children's work and social habits (Basset 1979, 5). Children were given responsibility for individual plots, ranging from 3ft x 5ft to 8ft x 10ft, depending on the age of the children. The school programs were modeled like miniature cities with pathways being the streets and the plots households (Basset 1979, 5).

The "city beautiful movement" and greening campaigns by civic leaders since the 1890's influenced the *Garden City Plots* (1905-1920). During this period gardening was aimed at "greening the urban blemishes" in the big American cities. Households were encouraged to grow vegetables in backyards and vacant lots that were viewed as unsightly. (Basset 1979, 5).

A shortage of food during World War I led to establishment of the *Liberty Gardens* (1917-1919). This movement was led by the National War Garden Commission organized in 1917. This movement taught the "American Patriot" to "plant for freedom" and "hoe for liberty" by making idle land productive (Basset 1979, 5). Children were mobilized into gardening with the formation of the US School Garden Army. In this army, the children earned a higher by converting vacant land into productive use.

The Great Depression marked a major crisis in American history. *Relief Gardens* (1930-1939) appeared on the scene in big American cities as a response to the economic and social turmoil of that period. These were gardens based on economic need, were bigger than previous garden plots of the school gardens (50 x 100ft), and produced mainly staple foods. These gardens were also associated with maintaining the mental and physical health of the unemployed (Basset 1979, 5).

During World War II there was a shift in the values of gardening seen in what were the *Victory Gardens* (1941-1945). The National Victory Garden Program was directed by the War Food Administration. These gardens encouraged the people to grow their own food so that food produced commercially would be available for the armed forces. Local food production was also directed at freeing the railroads from transporting supplies that were not war related. The people were also encouraged to preserve their own food to reduce food processing materials that were needed for the war. Another benefit of these gardens was to boost the morale of Americans at

home. At the peak of the Victory Gardens in 1944, it was claimed that twenty million gardens produced 40% of the fresh vegetables produced in the United States (Basset 1979, 5).

2.3 Post World War II Gardening

Public gardening declined gradually in the nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties and was mainly concentrated in private and school programs. A renewed interest in community gardening has been influenced by two main factors. A rise of environmental awareness in the late 1960's and 1970's has led to many people being interested in nature and consequently gardening. Also, inflation and unemployment have created an economic incentive for gardening (Basset 1979, 6). The victory garden flame is being rekindled with various organizations sponsoring different kinds of gardening programs on vacant city lots. By 1975 it was reported that every state in America had some kind of community garden program (GFA 1976). In the lead was Pennsylvania which established the "Anti-inflationary seed and gardening program". By 1976 it was assisting over 300,000 gardeners in with 5,600 community gardens established on state land (GFA 1976).

Advocates of community gardening describe it as a vehicle to reach different people in the community with education on environmental consciousness. Community gardens have been seen to revitalize neighborhoods, strengthen families and have also

helped in crime prevention. In 1976 Congress allocated \$1.5 million to the Department of Agriculture to encourage gardening in the city (Mazza 1992; Appendix 2).

Lisa Miller of Cornell Cooperative Extension related that, "Currently a wide variety of community gardens are cultivated. Varied groups are involved in gardening. The young, the elderly, poor, well-to-do, student, handicapped and imprisoned" (Miller, 1992). The incentives include ecology and economics. Since World War II, nutrition education has received a lot of attention. It has become an important consideration for federal funding of community garden programs (Mazza 1992).

American cities saw a lot of physical and social changes in the period from the end of World War II to the mid 1970's. Since World War II a combination of different factors encouraged the flight of the middle-class from the cities to the suburbs. This has resulted in isolating the poorer populations within the city (TPL 1992). Urban renewal, suburban growth, and the decline of the central business districts, led to residential abandonment in many inner city residential areas. Arson, housing abandonment, middle-class exodus, unfinished Urban Renewal projects and declining city services and budget cuts resulted in growing areas of vacant land in the center of American cities (Cashdan, Francis and Paxson 1984, 2).

In New York City alone, in 1991 there were over 25,000 city owned vacant parcels of land and these continue to increase (TPL 1992). Vacant land is most

common in the same inner city areas which most desperately need public open space (TPL 1992). The residents in the inner cities have become more frustrated with these urban eyesores that dot their neighborhoods (Operation GreenThumb 1987). The rubble-filled lots are both a health hazard and are associated with crime. This lands are seen as "a waste of potentially valuable resources in areas where the need for recreational amenities is crucial" (Cashdan, Francis and Paxson 1984, 5). The development of community gardens provides alternative public recreations spaces by involving the citizens.

3. THE CURRENT ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY GARDENS AND OPEN SPACES

This chapter examines the current role of open spaces and more specifically community gardens in urban areas. The theory of participation is applied to show why traditional parks have failed and why community planned, designed and maintained open spaces are more likely to succeed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the work of some agencies involved in community gardening in New York City. These agencies include: Operation GreenThumb, The Council on the Environment Of New York City, The Trust For Public Land (TPL), and Cornell Cooperative Extension. These agencies played an essential role in the planning and development of the Union Settlement Community Garden.

The focus of public community gardening has changed over the years. During difficult times, for example, during the two world wars and the great depression, gardening has been a source of food production. Since the late 1960's community gardening has changed direction. More people now garden because of their preference for the taste of fresh, homegrown fruits and vegetables. Gardening is more associated with both mental and physical well-being and also to save money. In a study examining the reasons why people garden, two-thirds of the gardeners reported that saving money was their primary reason for growing vegetables (Sommers 1984, 10). This tends to vary with the gardener's social and economic background.

The benefits associated with gardening include economic, psychological, community cooperation and environmental aspects. The various themes of gardening throughout contemporary history such as liberty gardens, relief gardens and victory gardens highlight the economic, social and political importance of gardening (Sommers 1984, 1).

With increasing urbanization, having green spaces in the built environment becomes more important. Evidence of the natural environment's importance is seen in the existence of city parks, tree-lined streets, and flower boxes. Incorporating nature into the built environment contributes to both the social and the psychological well-being of the inhabitants. When most people think of an urban area, the first things that come to mind are traffic, noise, and stress. The idea of peace usually is not associated with urban life (Kaplan 1984, 190).

The psychological and ecological importance of open space in every day life has long been recognized. It has also been recognized that environmental preference is influenced by vegetation (Manzer and Sheets 1991, 302). It was demonstrated that people prefer urban settings with vegetation over those where it is absent. Vegetation, therefore, is an important element in the urban environment in that it improves the peoples preference for an area. Kaplan (1984), surveyed over 4,000 members of the American Horticultural Society. The gardeners identified the personal quality of peace

and tranquility as most important among gardener's benefits and satisfactions. She concludes:

To think of gardens as a food source is reasonable enough as long as one does not stop with that. For the rich and poor alike, the smells and colors are fulfilling. The sense that one is a part of the process of growth and in tune with nature is gratifying and recuperative.

Human responses to vegetation are not merely in terms of aesthetics. For example, Manzer and Sheets (1991, 302) found that people viewing urban scenes expressed negative feelings, while nature scenes elicited positive ones. The natural environment has a powerful impact on an individual's satisfaction with the neighborhood in which they live (Manzer and Sheets 1991, 301). Most people associated places with vegetation as better, safer and cleaner places in which to live or work. Such places also have a therapeutic effect, as Kaplan (1987, 196) explains:

Trees and flowers, landscaped areas, and even very small parks provide opportunities for mind-filling moments. They provide patterns that humans attend to effortlessly and, in the process, they permit moments of recovery from the strains of the day.... As one tends the soils and nurtures the plants, their awareness and their appreciation for living things is increased. This is also tied into the individual's psychological, spiritual and physical well being. Stress and anxiety are easily retracted by the peace and tranquility of a garden.... The garden provides an unique opportunity for self expression and creation, and accomplishment.

Psychologists have provided evidence that the gardening experience of planning, designing, planting and watching the plants mature helps individuals build

their respect and confidence (Sommers 1984, 1). Other benefits are associated with community gardens because they result from joint cooperation between supportive gardeners, neighbors, and local, state and federal agencies. Thus community gardens create new networks of people. These relationships can extend further to strengthen community efforts. Within this network, community members find themselves in new roles. Skills such as leadership, organization, fund-raising and public relations can be gained and passed on to future generations as the garden continues to prosper (Sommers 1984, 1).

3.1 Theory of Participation

An important characteristic of community gardening is democratic management. Democratic management is characterized by the involvement of members in the planning of their own garden and achieving self-sufficiency (Cashdan, Francis and Paxson 1984, 11) In a study of citizen participation in the design of local parks, Kaplan, (1980, 505) found that people were more likely to use a park when they had been involved in designing it. She notes that "the sense of ownership that some feel about the park could be turned to good use and even enhanced by encouraging them in their efforts to help them care for the park," and concluded that "citizens are delighted to participate in the affairs that affect their lives."

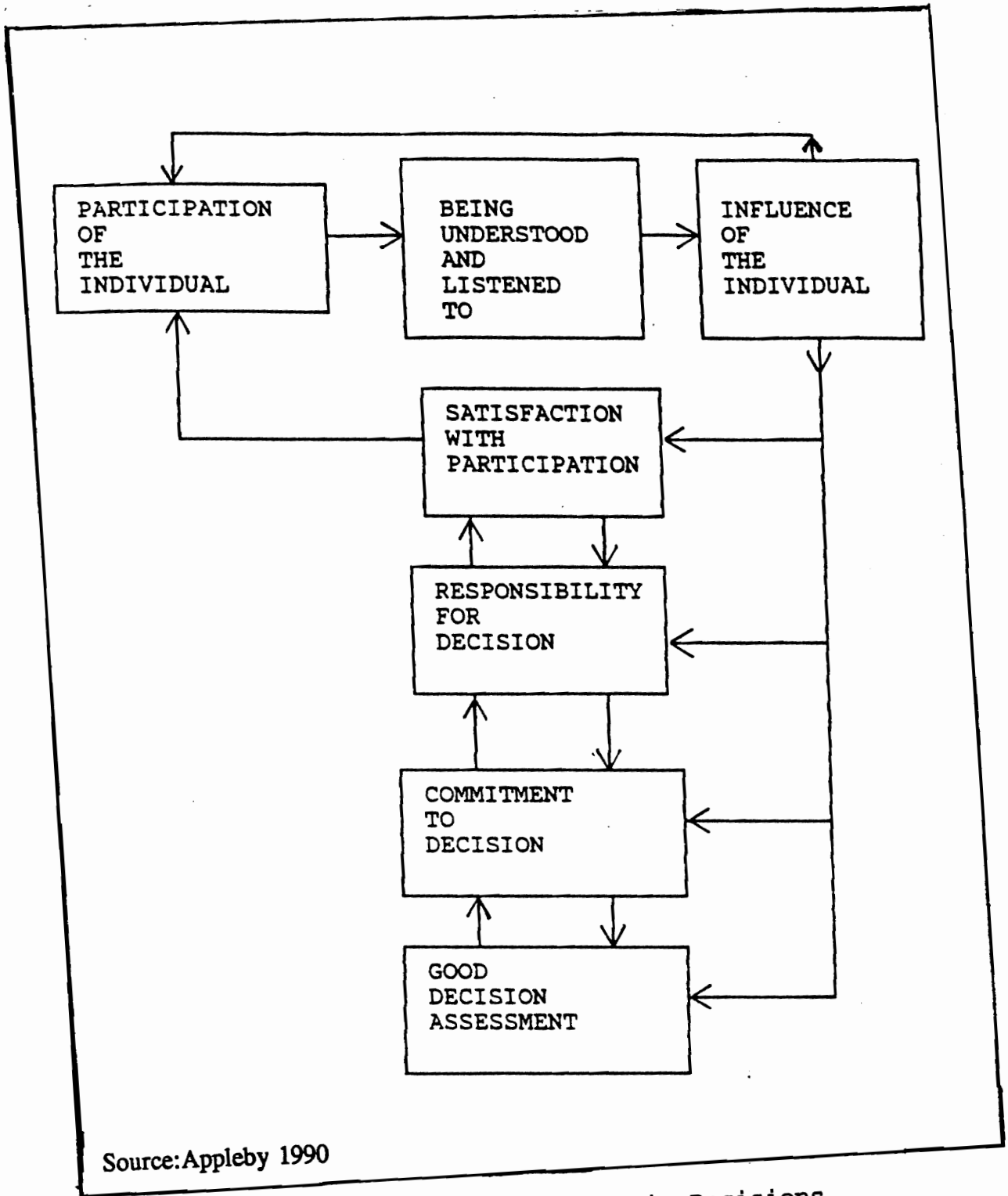
People are more likely to support plans in which they have been involved (Appleby 1990). The converse is also true: when people are not involved in planning a project, they are less likely to support the idea. This theory of participation can be used to explain why community gardens are likely to succeed as alternative to the traditional park systems. The behavioral theory of participation supports the notion that:

The exercise of individual influence in a problem-solving or design effort strongly affects a person's level of satisfaction, willingness to support and/or to implement that resulting solution or design. Accordingly, the way in which a process is organized to facilitate or exclude participant influence will determine, to a large extent, individual responses to the result. (Appleby 1990)

The presence of an individual is not enough: they have to be involved. The concept is that shared ownership in the design results in support for the decision. Figure 1 illustrates "A Model of Shared Ownership In Design and Decisions" (Appleby 1990). The idea is that if an individual is listened to and understood then they are likely to participate in group decisions. Participation leads to a sense of satisfaction and one feels responsible for the final action.

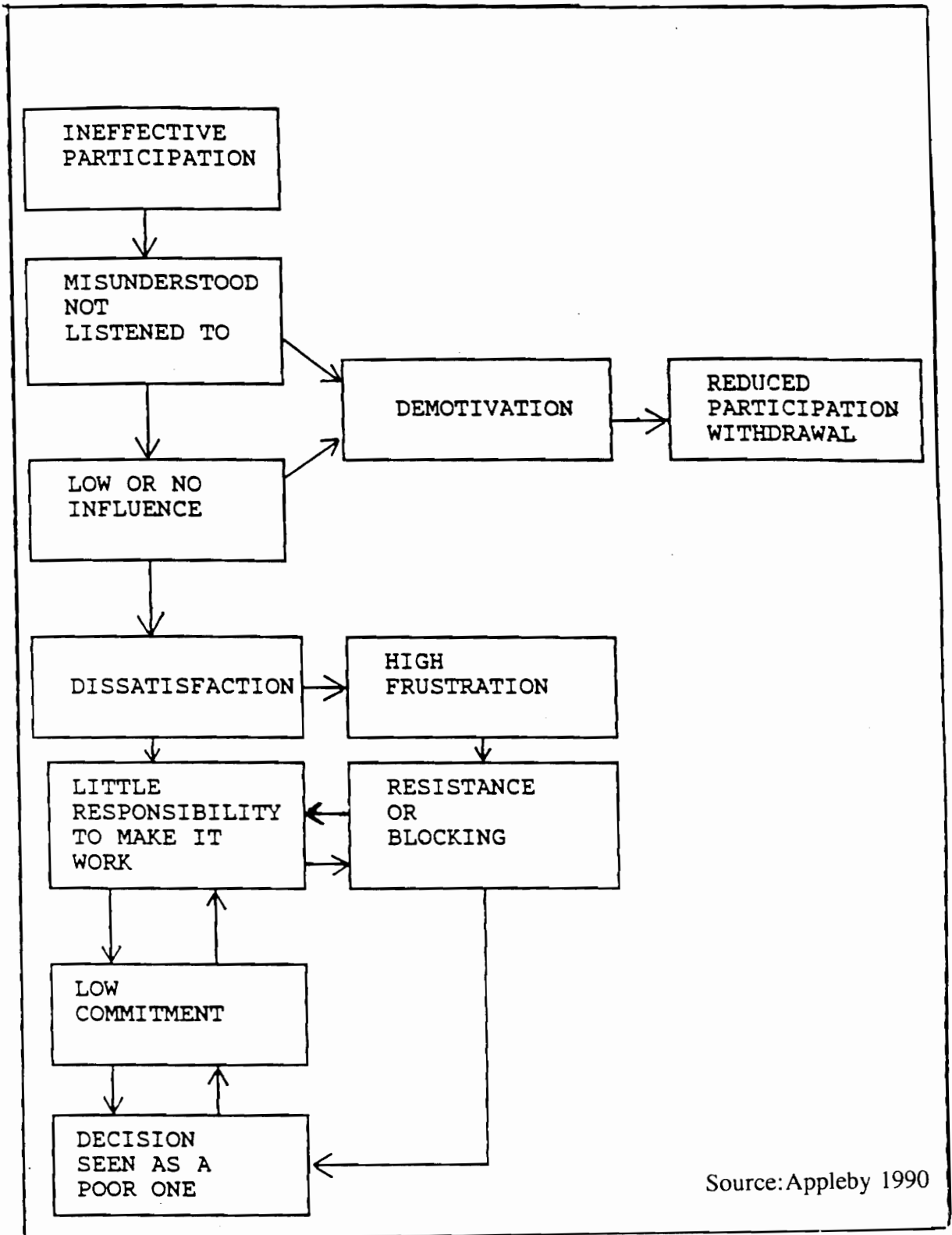
Community gardens are usually designed with the input of the community members. Their participation is an important element because it gives a "sense of ownership" and "satisfaction". Therefore, these gardens which are also community open spaces are more likely to succeed. Success means that they are used in the ways they were intended for: recreational activities for the public.

The failure of traditional parks can be explained by the concept of "implied participant influence." This is illustrated by Figure Two. Failure to involve participants in decision making can lead to rebellion and withdrawal: "indifference, lack of cooperation, engaging to peripheral activities, and blocking the group progress" (Hall 1971 in Appleby 1990). This helps to explain the misuse of traditional parks. The lack of a sense of ownership can lead to rebellion as is demonstrated by vandalism and criminal activities in parks.



Source: Appleby 1990

Figure 1: Model of Shared Ownership in Decisions



Source: Appleby 1990

Figure 2: The stacked Deck (implied influence)

In relation to the Union Settlement Community Garden, this theory can be used to explain the commitment of the gardeners. They were involved in the planning, designing, and management of the garden. They therefore have a sense of ownership and promote the development of the garden. Table 3.1 sums up the differences between community gardens and traditional parks.

Table 3.1: Key Differences Between Community and Traditional Open Spaces

Community Gardens	Traditional Parks
<i>Small scale (less than one acre)</i>	<i>Large or medium scale (> one acre)</i>
<i>Low-cost development</i>	<i>High-cost development</i>
<i>User developed and maintained</i>	<i>Corporate or professionally maintained</i>
<i>High to moderate use</i>	<i>Moderate to low use</i>
<i>Utilize appropriate technology</i>	<i>Utilize high technology</i>
<i>Often do not follow building code requirements</i>	<i>Required to meet building codes</i>
<i>Result of process and action-oriented local effort</i>	<i>Result of product-and-project- oriented professional effort</i>
<i>Concerned with use, meaning, and productivity</i>	<i>Concerned with form, style, and visual quality</i>
<i>Result of bottom-up design approach</i>	<i>Result of top-down design approach</i>
<i>Initiated by community residents and park users</i>	<i>Initiated by professionals designers and city officials who may not live in community</i>
<i>Democratic decision making</i>	<i>Authoritative decision making</i>
<i>Locally controlled</i>	<i>Publicly Controlled</i>

Source: Adapted from M. Francis, "Community design," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 37(1), 1983.

3.2 Local, Public and Private Cooperation in New York City

In recent years, several programs have attempted to deal with the problems of vacant lots, lack of recreational areas and open spaces, and the general decline in the quality of life in urban neighborhoods (Raver 1992, C1). The establishment of the Union Settlement Community Garden was supported by various non profit, private, federal and city agencies. Though there are several agencies involved in community gardening in New York City, the following agencies were involved in the Union Settlement Garden, Operation GreenThumb, Council on the Environment of New York City, The Trust for Public Land, and Cornell Cooperative Extension (Appendix 3).

3.2.1 Operation GreenThumb

Operation GreenThumb is New York City's community gardening program. The program is sponsored by the Department of General Services, and was initiated in 1978 in response to the increasing requests of residents for permission to garden on city-owned vacant lots. Operation GreenThumb currently leases city-owned vacant lots to non-profit groups for use in establishing community vegetable and flower gardens. In addition, these gardens may provide community meeting places and picnic and barbecue facilities.

Operation GreenThumb is funded by federal community development block grants and is the largest municipally-run community gardening program in the United States. Currently, GreenThumb leases over 1000 lots, comprising about 125 acres, to over 600 community groups in 39 of New York's 59 community planning boards. (Operation Greenthumb 1992). The importance of GreenThumb community gardens cannot be overlooked. The community gardens play an important role in the New York City landscape. The gardens not only beautify the city, but also annually produce an estimated \$ 1,000,000 worth of fruits and vegetables. They are a source of community pride, providing gathering places for the young and old and "safe havens from the harsh city streets" (Operation Green Thumb 1992).

A wide range of groups sponsor community gardens in New York City. Operation GreenThumb caters to block and tenant associations, churches, community centers, schools, hospitals, drug rehabilitation programs, day care centers and senior citizen groups. GreenThumb provides the technical and material assistance, but the actual establishment of the garden and the day-to-day maintenance is the gardeners responsibility. Usually GreenThumb gardens are started by citizens who have grown tired of neighborhood eyesores, which are typically dumping grounds for garbage, breeding grounds for rats and places for drug deals and for other illegal activities.

Usually, the lots are first fenced off, to prevent further dumping of trash. Operation GreenThumb works with New York City's Department of Sanitation to help take away the trash, once the lots are fenced off. This is important because often

there is tons of debris, ranging from abandoned cars, tires, rubble from torn down buildings and household furniture and appliances. The gardeners are then provided with materials for the construction of picnic tables and planting boxes, as well as top-soil and gardening tools.

3.2.2 The Council on the Environment of New York City

This is a privately-funded citizens' organization that operates from the office of the mayor of New York City was formed in 1970. The aim of the council is to make a difference in New York City, making it a better place to live. This is done through its numerous environmental programs that include: the Open Space Greening Program which has several components, the Green Market program, recycling and environmental improvement training in schools and colleges.

The Open Space Greening Program is materialized through a program called Plant-A-Lot, which provides services known as Green Bank, Lot-for-Tots and Grow Truck. The main goal of such programs is to provide materials and technical assistance to groups sponsoring community gardens. Green Bank provides matching grants that are awarded to the community gardening groups. The funds are used for purchasing garden supplies (e.g., mulch, watering hoses, lawn mowers, lumber for garden boxes and furniture and garden tools). Grow Truck is a service through which

well equipped trucks are used to distribute borrowed tools to gardening groups all over the city. Along with the tools, the truck crew provides technical assistance.

Lots-For-Tots helps community members to build playgrounds as part of the garden in lots that are adjacent to day care centers (Appendix 4). Lots-for-Tots is a collaboration among several city agencies, including: The Human Resources Administration, Agency for Child Development, Council on the Environment of New York City, the City Volunteer Corps (Appendix 5), the Mayor's Inter-Agency Task Force on Vacant Land Utilization, and the Departments of General Services, Sanitation, Transportation and Health. These agencies contribute land clearing, surveying, extermination, architectural and other services (CENYC, 1992).

3.2.3 The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), is a non-profit organization active in land conservation. Its work is not limited to the urban settings but, extend to suburban and rural areas too. The trust work is done to improve public access to public lands and also to encourage community-owned or maintained parks and gardens, and help establish them as local and land conservation land trusts. TPL concentrates its efforts in helping people to "act locally". The role it plays in urban horticulture is parallel to their other interests in saving land in urban America and training in the protection of

the land, through the formation of land trusts. The TPL been instrumental in the securing of over eight hundred properties for public since its beginning in 1973.

Land trusts are legal entities organized to hold land or the rights to land for community purposes (TPL 1992). Since the 1970's TPL has been a pioneer in the protection of urban community gardens applying their expertise in land trusts. Since 1978, TPL has assisted over seventy community groups in New York in establishing gardens, securing their land through long term leases, or purchasing, and has also helped them in organizational skills. They have worked in corporation with the other agencies.

The plan for TPL in the future is to strengthen local leadership and help build a consensus on open urban spaces. This would be helpful in protecting properties that can be public spaces that benefit the city dwellers, "promoting healthy humans by promoting a healthy human habitat, making cities more livable, by interlacing the pavement with a fabric of green" (TPL 1992).

3.2.4 Cornell Cooperative Extension

In 1976 a federal funded pilot program was developed in New York City to encourage gardening in the city. This program was implemented under the federal government's Cooperative Extension program. The Cooperative Extension was first mandated by federal legislation in 1914. It was designed to disseminate knowledge

and expertise from land grant universities to the surrounding rural farmlands. The Urban gardening program was administered through the New York States land grant university Cornell University. The program initially provided gardeners with soil, seeds and fencing supplies, as well as educational, technical, horticultural and nutrition advice. (Mazza 1992).

The program aimed at starting with five gardens in the first year, but the program attracted a lot of interest and by the end of the first year there were ten gardens. This was enough to convince the legislators in Washington DC to approve \$1.5 million in federal funds for Urban Agricultural Extension in five cities. In 1991 Cornell Cooperative Extension's Urban Gardening Program catered for 235 community gardens totaling 2,606 plots.

Every August in Brooklyn, Cornell Cooperative Extension program sponsors the biggest event of the summer. The City Harvest Fair brings together community garden members from all over New York. There are competitions for prizes for the best garden produce, entertainment, and a variety of agencies have information booths to inform gardeners of the services they offer.

4. THE UNION SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY GARDEN

4.1 Introduction

This study is based on my experience as a summer intern working at the Union Settlement Community Garden in the summers of 1991 and 1992, and on a subsequent visit to the garden in December 1992. The research was conducted through participant observation, and through a series of interviews with gardeners, with the personnel of the Union Settlement Association, and with people working for other agencies involved in community gardening in New York City.

The Union Settlement Community Garden is situated on 104th street between Second and Third Avenues in East Harlem, Manhattan (Appendix 6). The case study described and analyzed in this chapter was designed to examine the Union Settlement Community Garden in order to shed light on the creation of community gardens, their benefits and their operations and potential as alternative public recreation space. Three aspects will be discussed: the design of the study, the creation of the garden and the results of the study. The Union Settlement Community Garden demonstrates how a combination of community efforts, public sector resources and the determination of the gardeners has attracted private contributions of both money and labor and the support of federal, state, city and private agencies in order to create a multipurpose open space for the community.

The Union Settlement Community Garden had a serendipitous beginning. It was never planned in detail in the form it would ultimately take. As the garden started to take shape, a lot of community support was required and was generated to develop the garden. The enthusiasm of the gardeners and the networking of the agencies have been the force behind the tremendous success of this community garden.

4.2 Design of the Field Study

The field study was designed as a series of unstructured interviews. Due to limited time and resources the study was designed to interview key informants familiar with the Union Settlement Community Garden or with community gardening in New York City. The interviews sought information about community gardening in New York City in general, and more specifically information on the Union Settlement Community Garden. My personal experience working at the Union Settlement Community Garden and other community gardens in the summers of 1991 and 1992 gave me a strong background in understanding community gardening.

I remember the first time I visited the Union Settlement Community Garden on a hot day in mid-June 1991. A few days earlier I had received a call from Lisa Miller, a horticulturist with Cornell Cooperative Extension, offering me a summer internship at the garden. As I struggled through the morning rush at Grand Central Station, I wondered what I was getting myself into.

It was early in the morning and I was already drenched with sweat in the crowded subway. As I emerged from the subway at 102nd St. and Lexington Ave, I was greeted by the hectic, noisy streets. The traffic was bumper to bumper, with angry drivers honking and shouting mercilessly. I looked around at the dilapidated buildings, walls filled with graffiti, and trash-strewn streets. Although this was not my first visit to Harlem, after having been away in Blacksburg, Virginia, a quiet and immaculate place, Harlem seemed worse than I had remembered it. To me, the ugliness of much of Harlem is something that one never gets used to.

I arrived at the garden to be welcomed by the summer morning's cool breeze. Birch trees provided shade and the huge sunflowers dotted the garden. My apprehension wore away and I knew I had done the right thing. The vegetable boxes were filled with huge tomatoes, collard greens, cabbage and swiss chard. The colorful flower beds and the well-tended vegetables created a complete contrast to the high-rise apartments, cement and asphalt surrounding it (Appendix 7).

The garden was something I had not seen before in Harlem. The area is usually associated with crime and drugs, but here something good was happening. The rear of the garden had not yet been cleaned up. The accumulating trash and tall weeds gave me an idea of what the lot had looked like before.

I was hired as an assistant to a paid garden supervisor who oversaw all the activities in the garden. My internship for both summers was funded by Citibank. My duties included planning and conducting gardening workshops mainly for children,

and organizing other recreational activities in the garden such as picnics, arts and crafts. We organized trips to botanical gardens and other places of interest for the children. Other duties included helping the gardeners in the maintenance of the communal flower beds and assisting some of the gardeners not familiar with gardening.

Working at the Union Settlement Community Garden was an exciting experience for me. I had been in the US for two years, and that had been quite a change from my rural upbringing in Kenya, East Africa. I grew up in a farming community in Embu, Kenya and always loved gardening. I came to the US in 1989 to major in horticulture at Virginia Tech, and went to work for the Union Settlement Community Garden after graduating in 1991 and again during the summer after my first year as a Masters degree student in urban planning also at Virginia Tech.

Despite my relatively high level of education, I was accepted as a member of the community. This acceptance was partly due to my racial background, and also because the people were interested in learning about my African culture. This positive experience led to my deeper interest in knowing more about community gardening. I saw community gardening as a useful tool for not only beautifying neglected areas of the city, but also as a way to maintain, enhance, or even create a sense of belonging and connectedness among neighborhood residents.

My initial feeling of hopelessness was replaced with a passion for Harlem and hopeful optimism. Now I feel a special attachment of my own to that community.

4.3 The Union Settlement Association

The Union Settlement Association played a major role in helping to establish a community garden at 104th street between second and third avenues in East Harlem in 1986. It is one of the largest settlement associations in New York City, with programs that serve over 8,000 clients of all ages. The settlement provides a range of programs that provide important services to the low-income population of East Harlem. An estimated 110,00 people live in the area served by the Union Settlement Association, the area between 96th and 125th street east of Fifth avenue in New York city. The major ethnic groups living in the area are Hispanics, African Americans, and Italian-Americans.

Union Settlement was founded in 1895 by the Alumni Association of the Union Theological Seminary "in response to the desperate conditions of immigrants struggling to make a new life for themselves in this country" (Union Settlement 1992). Union Settlement continues "to nurture human potential and foster self-help" (Union Settlement 1992). Union Settlement provides several services for the community, including programs in education, health, job training, counseling, literacy, child care, the arts, and economic development.

East Harlem, in Community District (CD) No. 11 of the borough of Manhattan is an area characterized by a high unemployment rate of 12.2%, ranking 12th highest out of 59 Community Districts in NYC. A large proportion of families,

12.9%, rely on public assistance, ranking 10th highest in the 59 districts. There is a high teenage pregnancy rate at 18.6% of total births, ranking fifth in the city. Crime is also a problem in the district, which has a homicide rate of 108.4 per 100,000 for males 15-24 years old, compared to a high of 324.6 in Brooklyn CD. No.16 and a low of 0 in Manhattan CD. No.4. The area also has deteriorating housing and low literacy levels and a notorious problem of drug abuse (Appendix 8).

4.4 The Union Settlement Community garden

The Union Settlement Association's garden replaced a rat and garbage infested lot. It is now described as "an oasis in the mean city streets," and a "vibrant resource which is largely self-policing due to its high level of community participation" (Union Settlement 1992). The garden is also a tremendous educational resource, offering gardening workshops in the summer, and serving as a living laboratory for environmental, horticultural and nutrition education (Union Settlement 1992).

The garden serves East Harlem residents of all ages. The garden is open to anybody in the community who wishes to participate in cultivating the garden. There are more than 500 children including preschoolers in the Head Start programs, day care centers, and children in after school programs. It also serves 75 teenagers, 50

adults and 30 senior citizens who are actively involved in the garden, and hundreds of community members who come daily into the garden to admire or relax in the garden.

These people use the garden on a regular basis for educational, recreational and social activities. The garden also offers a six month gardening education program beginning in early spring and continuing to late fall. The program caters for the children in the Union Settlement day care centers, after school programs, youth, and local adult and senior citizens. The garden has three parts, the raised garden plots where vegetables are grown individually, an extensive flower border maintained collectively by the community members and paid staff in the summer, and the multipurpose recreational area including, a children's play area and picnic area. From April through September, community residents and Union Settlement's program participants are involved in regular weekly gardening classes. Through cultivation, of vegetables, herbs, and flowers in the gardens, the gardeners learn horticulture, nutrition, and environmental education.

Many children in Harlem have never seen vegetables grown from seed and rarely eat fresh produce. Adults and senior citizens, many of whom are immigrants from agricultural communities bring valuable knowledge to the garden and are provided with the special opportunity to be "City Gardeners".

Table 4.1 Chronology of Events of The Union Settlement Community Garden

Year	Event
<i>1960's</i>	<i>Private Tenements torn down</i>
<i>1980</i>	<i>Parking lot Proposed Lot taken over by the city</i>
<i>1980-1984</i>	<i>Proposal for homeless shelter Proposal for private tenements</i>
<i>1985</i>	<i>Department of Sanitation clean-up Initial contact with Operation GreenThumb</i>
<i>1986</i>	<i>Community Garden Started</i>
<i>1987</i>	<i>Demonstrations by Lisa Miller</i>
<i>1989</i>	<i>Step Stones Project Lots-for-Tots proposed</i>
<i>1990</i>	<i>Establishment of communal flower beds</i>
<i>1992</i>	<i>Mural painted Construction of playground started and finished Opening Ceremony for playground in November</i>

4.4.1 Alternative Plan for the Garden

Eugene Sklar, the executive director of the Union Settlement Association initially had different ideas for the vacant lot. He visualized it as a perfect location for a transition home for the homeless. However, in 1980, the local El Barrio development cooperation had been pushing to have the lot developed as a parking lot for the Third Avenue store owners for which there would be a small fee. Mr Sklar

opposed this through the New York City Controls office. He argued that given the already existing traffic congestion in the area, providing a parking lot would only worsen the situation in an area that has an enormous number of elderly and children.

The Union Settlement Association managed to prevent the creation of the parking lot. Instead, the Association proposed to build housing for the homeless. The home would be designed to house about one hundred people at a time for a period of six months while they were waiting to be placed in permanent housing through city agencies. The proposal was presented to the Settlement's board and after a careful analysis of the plan, it was dropped because they foresaw a long run problem: the city would not be able to place the occupants promptly in adequate permanent housing.

A new plan was proposed for the plot. The plan was to build affordable rental housing supported by the settlement. As ideas for the site were being researched and formulated the vacant "eyesore" became everybody's concern because it had accumulated garbage and created a serious health hazard. When the idea of using the lot for a garden was first raised, the director was skeptical. He believed "there was no way anything would ever grow in the poisoned lot" (Sklar 1992). So much garbage had been piled over the rubble in the lot that no amount of clearing would ever be helpful.

4.4.2 The Beginning

Sally Yarmolinsky, the Director for Development for the Union Settlement Association, remembers walking past the appalling vacant lot adjacent to the settlement every day on her way to work in 1985. She could never get over the awfulness. It was filled abandoned refrigerators, car parts, beds and decaying household refuse. The lot originally accommodated private tenements that were torn down in the 1960s, was reposed by the City of New York due to failure to pay taxes. The lot had remained vacant and accumulated garbage over the years. As the situation worsened it became an open bathroom. The repulsive smell forced her to walk on the other side of the street to avoid it.

One day in 1985, as Sally Yarmolinsky was walking by the lot, she saw a huge truck from the New York City sanitation department clearing the debris. It turned out that this was a routine operation that the city department carried out for the numerous city owned vacant lots. Ms Yarmolinsky was so grateful that she felt she had to express her appreciation for the clearing of the lot which by then had been more and more unbearable. When she spoke to the sanitation employee, he told her of Operation GreenThumb, the city agency which helps community members to create community gardens out of vacant lots. This was the beginning of what was to become a city showcase.

Though initially skeptical, Eugene Sklar nevertheless came to support the idea of the garden. He believed there was nothing to lose and that the presence of a garden would prevent other potential users from claiming the lot. He saw the garden as a short term solution while major plans were being negotiated. The garden was therefore started without much enthusiasm from the gardeners and the administration of the Union Settlement Association and grew slowly in its initial years.

4.4.3 Creating The Garden

After initial contact between the Union Settlement Association and Operation GreenThumb, the pace of subsequent development was slow and frustrating to the gardeners and the Union Settlement administration. A number of meetings took place to organize a team and agree on the design. Establishing the garden turned out not to be an easy endeavor. The first step involved attempting to fence off the lot with chicken wire provided by Operation GreenThumb. This is usually the approach GreenThumb uses because fencing off of a lot prevents it from further throwing of trash and also gives the lot the appearance of being owned and cared-for. Fencing the lot did not happen as anticipated, as the wire was too weak. To further complicate the situation, the equipment available to the small group of gardeners was not suitable for digging in the metal posts. Their hard work was not very successful.

The process for the development was slowly losing momentum because of the fencing problem. However, luck was on the side of the Union Settlement gardeners. The police department, unaware of their problems, incidently was also faced with the need to fence off the same vacant lot. Ms. Yarmolinsky came back from vacation one day to find the lot nicely fenced with a strong permanent fence and gate. The police department had fenced it off because they were concerned about the drug problem and criminals hiding in the lot. It was also was seen as a health hazard to the community.

A nutrition teacher Bonnie Meikie from one of the Union Settlement Association's programs took an interest in the garden in the summer of 1986 and seized the opportunity to develop the fenced off lot. A lot of planning was involved in this. Through GreenThumb she acquired top-soil and then mobilized and organized the local citizens interested in gardening. The major constraint at this point was money. She got a grant from the Family New York Nutrition Education program she was able to conduct workshops for the children of Union Settlement. At this time there was hardly any money to support community gardening.

Bonnie Meikie used her own initiative to create raised boxes in a star shaped design. She then established the golden shovel award to motivate the gardeners who came from the community. Sally Yarmolinsky (4 January 1993) told me "that the beauty of that first summer was to see three generations from one family all work hand in hand at the garden".

Through the GreenThumb network, Lisa Miller of Cornell Cooperative Extension (she has been described as the garden's "fairy godmother") came into the picture. Lisa saw the garden as an opportunity to create a demonstration plot with help from Michael Levine who worked for the Central Park Conservatory Garden. They utilized left over plant material from the Conservatory Garden. They continued with the nutrition education program. At the same time they initiated an official application for the approval of the garden.

In the summer of 1989, Ann Evans, an artist specializing in mosaic and clay sculpture for public spaces, led the "step stones project". This was a mosaic pathway created from leftover tiles by the children, adults, and senior citizens of the Union Settlement Association. This was an important event that brought more focus and interest to the garden and it involved a cross section of the community. At this time the Council on the Environment of New York City proposed their idea of Lots-for-Tots. This program assists community gardens that are adjacent to day care centers to develop part of the garden into play areas for children.

In the summer of 1990 work continued to complete the communal flower border. Like the summer before, the plants were donated from Central Park's Conservatory Garden. Work on the garden was and is supervised through a community advisory board that included the heads of the day care centers, gardening experts and the local citizens.

The summers of 1991 and 1992 were an active time for the garden as plans for the playground were further developed. The children's summer workshops were improved and children from the Union Settlement Association continued to participate in the summer gardening program outlined above. During these two summers, grants from Citibank, City Gardens Club of New York, New York Community Trust for Nutrition Education, and the Trust for Public Land helped the garden to hire a garden supervisor and two assistants for the summer.

The summer of 1992 brought dramatic changes at the garden. Construction of the Lots for Tots playground finally started after three years of planning. In late spring the children involved in Union Settlement programs took part in the design of a mural that would be the back drop of the new playground. An artist was hired to recreate the children's pictures on the wall. The children with the help of the artist and the City Volunteer Corps coordinated by the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), painted and completed the mural during the summer.

After the mural was completed, the playground area was sealed off and the heavy equipment came in to start the construction. A stone amphitheater and stage, a water column, and a gazebo were installed. Once the ground had been excavated and the drainage system and all the cement work completed, volunteers and community members came in to help with installing the play equipment. The CENYC then helped the gardeners landscape the play areas and community garden. Grass was planted

along with trees and perennial shrubs. As a summer intern I was involved in the construction of the playground and helped coordinate the activities.

Though the idea for the Lots-for-Tots was first proposed in 1989, the actual construction did not start until 1992. A lot of planning and regulations had to be adhered to before the construction could start. The following is an outline of the Procedure for planning and construction of the Lots-for-Tots playground.

Step 1

Once the Council on the Environment of New York identified the presence of a community garden adjacent to a day care center through Operation GreenThumb they contacted the director of the Union Settlement Leggett Day Care Center, Mrs. Sabera. In the first meeting a presentation of designs and pictures was given about the Lot-for-Tots program. They planned a formation of a Parks Committee that would help plan the playground. They also sought the center's input into the playground design.

Step 2

A sub-committee was formed for the design of the playground. This committee worked with a city architect. The architect combined the ideas of the citizens taking into consideration regulations set by the New York Art Commission that reviews any

work done on city property and the City Building Commission. A meeting was planned for this sub committee to decide on the plan the design for the garden.

Step 3

The third step was a review of the design by the Art Commission, which is a panel of 15 of artists, planners and architects. The plan was than presented to Union settlement for final changes and then back to the Art Commission for a final review.

Step 4

The plan was presented to the Building's Commission. All documents at this point had to be ready and with specific information about construction materials. The application was filed in microfilm in the departments archives and an appointment was made with the plan examiner for approval. An application for a permit was filed. This permit had to be displayed when construction began to show that the construction was approved.

Step 5

Construction documents describing the project and drawings were sent out for bids. Separate contracts were made for portions of the work, plumbing, concrete and supply of play equipment. Contracts were then awarded. As this process continued, fund-raising was done through the Union the Settlement and the Council on the

Environment of New York. The mayors office contributed \$ 100,000 towards the construction of the playground.

Labor was provided by City Volunteer Corps (CVC) as the construction work was going on. They worked from 9-5, 17-20 year olds in groups of 12. The CENYC provided refreshments, lunch and first aid and supervised them. The day care center provided lunch for the volunteers for some of the days. They worked at more than one site at the same time and their activities were coordinated with what happening at the construction site. Parents and other volunteers excluding the CVC's were involved on Saturdays. Usually volunteers affiliated with community service organizations came from other areas of the city. Children were involved in planting and mulching.

When the construction and all work was completed, the day care center planned the opening ceremony. They contacted the mayor's offices, agencies involved, and the funders, planned and mailed out programs and invitations and organized refreshments. They also planned entertainment and arranged for police to close the street.

4.4.4 The Garden Today: Lots-for-Tots "El Sitio Feliz" (The Happy Place)

Tuesday, November 17th, 1992 marked the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Union Settlement Community Garden that has now been named " El Sitio Feliz". The garden has been further developed into a multipurpose community space incorporating the new playground. The garden now has a 100-seat stone amphitheater and stage, an 8-foot tall water column, play equipment, a gazebo, a mural painted by the children of the Union Settlement Association, and a fruit orchard. The garden is now open daily for children and is used in the evening and weekends for other community purposes. Appendix 9 shows the plan of the complete community garden w including the playground.

An important event at the garden in 1992 was the AIDS march in November. The procession went through Harlem and ended at the garden where a special tree had been designated as a memorial. It was to bear witness to all who are affected by AIDS, including victims, families and friends. The tree in the garden was decorated with lights to symbolize growth and life.

An outgrowth of the garden is the "Sanctuary Garden". This is a smaller, enclosed, shady garden in the backyard of the AIDS outreach program office. This program is a branch of the Union Settlement Health Services, located at 104th street between First and Second Avenues. It is not a community garden, but is primarily a

flower garden with picnic tables. The garden is used for AIDS/HIV support group meetings and provides privacy and welcome shade during the hot summer. The word "solitude" describes the shady garden, with its thriving beds of impatiens and hosta.

Another event that has become a tradition for the garden is the annual Fourth of July Pig Roast. The garden members contribute money for the two day event that is a continuous party where the gardeners are joined by family and friends for the celebration. A lot of preparation goes into the preparation for this event and it is a good opportunity for the community members to get together.

4.4.5 A Typical Day at the Union Settlement Garden

As early as 6:00 am a few gardeners trickle in to water and tend the garden before they go to work. Some gardeners also prefer to work in the morning when it is cool and quiet. By 8:30 am the garden supervisor arrives to prepare for the day's activities . This includes cleaning and filling the water barrels and putting out the watering hose and gardening tools. They then check the schedule and confirm with the groups coming to the garden. This is usually Head Start classes attending the summer workshops, or a youth group, senior citizens, after school and summer programs. Materials are set up depending on the type of workshops being conducted.

By 9:30 am, community members walk in and out of the garden to either visit or work on their plots while the workshops start. For example, the lesson may be on

planting, after explaining to the children the basics about planting, they then get practice by working on the plots. Usually there are plots set aside for the children and other groups. After the planting is over, the children are set free to play in the garden. Each group stays for about 30-45 minutes. Five to six groups may visit the garden in a day. The groups visit the garden once or twice in the week but the garden is open for visit any times.

In the afternoon the workshops continue and community members come into the garden to visit or relax at the picnic tables. There are visitors for example, donors, photographers, or news reporters who may visit the garden. Picnics may be organized, for example, by the senior citizens, youth, or other programs related to the Union Settlement Association. On a hot day portable pools are set out for the children to play in. Activities continue into late evening as the gardeners tend their plots or sit and chat in the garden. Every member of the community garden has a key to the garden. The garden is usually closed when there is nobody around, whether day or night. However closing during the day is rare because there are usually people around.

4.4.6 Profiles of Gardeners

The garden's membership is composed of different types of people, each using the garden to capture one or more of the benefits of community gardening discussed

earlier in the paper. The personal profiles that follow gives some indication of the people involved and what they bring to, and get out of, their participation in the Union Settlement Community Garden (Appendix 10).

José

José is an immigrant from Puerto Rico, a retired senior citizen with a rural background. Because sunflowers are a symbol of good luck in Puerto Rico, José feels "lucky" in the garden amidst the forest of sunflowers. He also loves to cook, using the juicy tomatoes grown in his vegetable box. José's desire to garden lies in his rural upbringing where cultivation of food is a way of life.

Mrs. Robinson

Gardening takes Mrs. Robinson, a cheery middle aged African American, back to her childhood days in the South. She remembers frequently visiting her grandfather's farm. Mrs. Robinson comes to the garden faithfully every morning and evening to water and care for her garden plot. The highlight of her summer was the day she harvested her first crop in 1992. Wearing a straw-hat and carrying a bunch of collard greens that day, she beamed and said, "I am a farmer in New York City." Being able to garden in New York City was a special opportunity for Mrs. Robinson, who lives in a high-rise New York City Housing Authority apartment. The garden is one place where she is able to enjoy the weather and a peaceful day. After working

hard on her plot, she sits under the shady trees on the side of the garden at the picnic tables to relax.

At the beginning of the season, she was unsure about how to garden, but with the encouragement of the other gardeners and her son, she gradually overcame her hesitation and developed her gardening skills.

Sanford

Sanford is an easy-going, retired senior citizen, who has lived most of his life in East Harlem. Like most of the other gardeners, he faithfully visits the garden every day. He is always ready to chat and greeted me cheerfully each day.

Sanford's vegetable box was a major attraction in the garden this summer, because of the size of his tomatoes. His vegetable box is one thing he has control over in his life. His patience and hard work paid off, and at the end of the summer he could enjoy the fruits of his labor.

For Sanford, this is a place of hope. The garden is a place of solitude where he can escape from the problems of his life. He lost one son to AIDS, one son is an alcoholic, another is a drug addict, and yet another is serving time for crime. His grandchildren were placed in foster care because his daughter, a drug addict, was incapable of caring for them.

Patty

Patty is an African-American senior citizen who is actively involved with other community services. Every day she helps serve hot meals provided by a program called Meals on Wheels that provided food to senior citizens who are not able to make their own food. Both her husband and son died within a few months of one another in the summer of 1992. The garden provides her with an escape. To her, gardening is therapeutic and seeing things grow from seeds gives her a feeling of hope. Patty visits the garden frequently, not only to garden, but to relax as well.

Pete

Pete has become the leader of the Union Settlement Garden. He coordinates and oversees the gardening activities. Pete is able to work frequently at the garden because he works as a superintendent for the Union Settlement Association. He is popular at the garden because of he is knowledgeable of plants and generous with seeds and fresh vegetables, and is a teacher for the other gardeners. The garden has become an essential part of his life. Early in the spring, he starts preparing for his plot by germinating the seeds at home. As soon as it is warm enough, he is able to plant them.

Pete is an expert, having gardened for the past six years and after growing up on a farm in the South. In the summer of 1992, his gigantic collard greens could have been prize winning. His expertise and sequential planting provides him with a

constant supply of vegetables until late fall. Pete makes great use of his fresh vegetables, cooking gourmet meals for whoever is around.

Pete is proud of the garden because he feels it is something "of our own". He believes that the gardeners have made the garden what it is today.

4.5 Conclusion

Mr. Sklar

Although he is not a gardener, Eugene Sklar, the executive director of the Union Settlement Association, is as much a part of the garden as any of the gardeners. He strolls through the garden frequently and proudly takes visitors around the garden. Mr. Sklar describes the garden as "something beautiful in the midst of the madness and craziness." He believes that the garden is "real development" because it helps both the adults and children in the area develop skills and encourages self confidence. Mr. Sklar noted that, "there is something optimistic about the growing of plants" and equates the gardening experience with sailing, providing serenity "to help one keep in touch with the inner self."

The garden has brought together a large number of people and groups. This was evident during the opening ceremony of the garden's Lots-for-Tots playground, where an endless list of people were thanked (Appendix 11). Mr. Sklar noted that Lisa Miller of Cornell Cooperative extension has been instrumental in making this

happen, acting as a "conductor of the band and ring master of the circus." Lisa Miller and Sally Yarmolinsky's persistence, in combination with the gardeners' determination and perseverance have led to the success of the garden. In addition, the work of the personnel of the CENYC, led by Gerald Lordhal, the director of the greening program, made the playground "a dream come true".

The Union Settlement Community Garden demonstrates how a combination of community efforts, public sector resources and the determination of the gardeners has attracted contributions and the support of federal, state, city and private agencies to create a multipurpose open space for the community.

The Union Settlement Community Garden portrays the use of community open spaces as an alternative for public recreation. The garden shows that the involvement of the people in planning, designing and development of their own recreation facilities has led to their support for the garden. The garden can be rated as a success on the criteria that it is used for the purpose it was intended for and there continues to be a lot of activities that are supported by the community members.

Sally told me that there constraints in developing the garden: there were disputes because there was not enough money; it was also difficult to agree on the design. While some members felt they should go along with a simple plan and eliminate the fancy extras, for example the gazebo, amphitheater and water feature, others were ambitious and wanted the playground to be glamorous and felt they should work harder and raise more money.

Sally feels that the end result is due to the loyalty of the gardeners, who have amazed staff from the different agencies involved. It is also due to the institutional connection with Union Settlement Association. This connection has also prevented strong personalities from controlling the garden. She also sees the potential for future problems in that a lot of time, energy and money has been invested which could be lost if community efforts are not maintained.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In New York City, the availability of city-owned vacant lots and a need for public space has provided an opportunity for community members to develop community gardens which provide gardening space as well as public open space. As more vacant lots are taken over and converted into gardens, they are beginning to create a new system of community recreational facilities that can be recognized as an alternative park system.

5.1 Lessons Learned from the Study

Though this a case study of one community garden the Union Settlement Community Garden, the lessons learned from this single study can however be generalized to community gardening in New York City and beyond. To be able to develop a community garden, to start with there has to a determined and devoted community group with a strong desire to make a difference.

There is then a need for city agency such as Operation GreenThumb in New York City. Such an agency helps identify the ownership of the vacant lots and also grants permission, and leases the land to the gardeners. Operation GreenThumb also provides resources that the gardeners do not have easy access to such as top-soil, timber for construction of planting boxes, picnic tables and fencing materials. This agency also helps the gardeners design the community garden and get started.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Urban Horticulture program provides technical and educational services for the gardeners. This includes directing the community gardeners to resources of which they may not be aware.

The Union Settlement Community Garden demonstrates how a combination of community efforts, public sector resources, and the determination of gardeners and organizers has attracted private contributions and the support of federal, state, city and private agencies to create a multipurpose open space for the community. The support provided by the different agencies has been instrumental in the development of the gardens.

However much as community members may want "to make a difference", this is usually not easy for them to do alone. For example, the vacant lots usually have a lot of accumulated debris that may not be possible to clean. It is therefore helpful if the city's Department of Sanitation can help to clean the lot. The community members may also not have access to some essential resources such as top-soil. A city agency such as Operation GreenThumb therefore comes in and assists the community members. The cooperation of citizens, private/not-for-profit, federal and state agencies is therefore critical in the success of community garden.

Many big cities in the United States have had an increasing number of vacant lots especially in their inner cities. Traditional parks in these areas have often failed to provide services for the intended beneficiaries. At the same time the areas which lack recreational facilities also have the largest number of vacant lots which are

usually owned by the city. With the number of vacant lots, the need for recreational amenities, and the interest of citizens, there are adequate resources to provide recreation facilities. Community gardens should therefore be given serious consideration as an important issue in city planning.

5.2 Topics for Further Research

Community gardening is an approach that needs to be further explored and encouraged as a means of creating recreation facilities in areas where these facilities are lacking. This would be cost effective in that the citizens would provide the labor and the support to create and maintain facilities for themselves. The citizens would be more likely to support these gardens because they have been involved in the development and they can claim it to be "theirs". Data for comparison were not available on this topic, which needs further study.

Another area for future research is the long-term viability of community gardens. In a survey conducted by the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA 1992) on site security, six cities of the 24 surveyed reported that they have lost a significant number of gardens. The total number of gardens lost was greater than 8% of current totals. The cities not reporting lost sites, however, considered site security to be a significant issue. From this report, it seems that though organizations

may claim long-term security of the gardens, only 7% of the gardens surveyed are long-lasting sites.

Countrywide, there is a concern about the permanency of these open spaces. Protecting the gardens from being taken over for development is therefore an important issue. In New York City, most of the gardens do not actually belong to the gardeners and may not be legally leased. In some cases, such as Houston, verbal leasing has appeared to work to this point (Herrick 1987). However, there is question as to whether gardeners should take steps to ensure the permanence of their gardens. In areas where real estate values have been increasing, the gardens on these lots are more at risk (Bryant & Lee 1987).

In the United States the creation of some permanent sites through legislation would be a way of creating low-cost or self-sustaining recreation given the current economic crisis in the cities. The reason why community gardens have continued to flourish in Europe, for example, has been because of the security as permanent parts of the cities. This needs further research as well.

Are community gardens a cost-effective way of providing public open spaces in times of economic crises in New York City? One might expect that such gardens are especially desirable and feasible in low-income, inner city neighborhoods that lack open spaces and also have many vacant city owned lots. Therefore, given most big cities' limited capacities to provide and maintain recreational facilities for the public, community open spaces appear to be a cost-effective way of providing additional

recreational facilities. There is, however, a question of the permanence of these gardens. A major concern community members would be the future of these gardens as a permanent part of the urban landscape. As more people become environmentally conscious they are more likely to object to development and to fight to protect the open spaces.

The Union Settlement Community Garden is widely viewed in the settlement and the community as a success. However there has been no formal evaluation of the impact of the garden on the community. An evaluation would be necessary to determine the success of the garden. This evaluation would analyze the impact of the program on the target population. It would gauge the extent to which the program is causing change in the desired direction, the effectiveness of the program and the client satisfaction with the program.

This information will be useful for future program planning and improvement so that it meets the needs of the target populations and will have a positive effect on the participants. The information could be used to improve on the management of the garden, based on the outcomes of the evaluation. This information would also be important to other community gardening programs in the New York City as well as other cities. The evaluation would show how successful the program has been and the potential use of community gardens as alternatives or complements to traditional park systems.

5.3 Summary

In chapter two a history of public gardening set the context for the contemporary community gardens movement in the US cities. The roots of community gardening were traced to allotment gardens started in the late nineteenth century in the United States and further back to the "allotments" of England.

As more community gardens are established in cities around the United States, there is a need to incorporate these community open spaces in city comprehensive plans to make them a permanent part of the urban landscape. In some US cities, including San Francisco, Denver, Trenton, Seattle, and Dayton, community open spaces have been included in the city master plan. This ensures that the sites for community open spaces are considered as permanent elements in the city and will be protected when future land-use decisions are made (ACGA 1992).

Relatively secure tenure of the land is important for community gardening. Arrangements for long-term control of the land could further motivate community members to be devoted and committed to the garden. "Acquiring ownership or long-term use of the land are ways to ensure survival of the garden and can be a step toward community self-determination" (Gerson 1987). The provision of some permanent sites is a factor that could contribute to the future success of community gardening in the United States.

However, the success of community gardens lies in the ability to identify and form appropriate agencies that can support the gardeners. For example, Operation GreenThumb is a city agency that identifies and leases city owned land to groups interested in developing community gardens, and also starts the gardeners off by helping with fencing the lot, designing the garden, construction of the vegetable boxes, picnic tables and top-soil. Federal agencies such as Cornell Cooperative Extension should also be identified and encouraged.

Another important factor in the success of community gardens is the identification of already established organizations such as the Union Settlement Association that are community service based. This is appropriate to create a more elaborate community garden especially where there are lots adjacent to day care centers and where there are already existing community action groups that could support gardening. Established organizations also have better access to funds and are able to develop more programs for example, nutrition education.

This study of the Union Settlement Community Garden has shown the benefits associated with community gardening and gives an example of how community gardens develop. The study also demonstrates how determined community, given support, can provide services for themselves that are not normally available. At the same time, it also shows how vital public agencies can be in support of such efforts.

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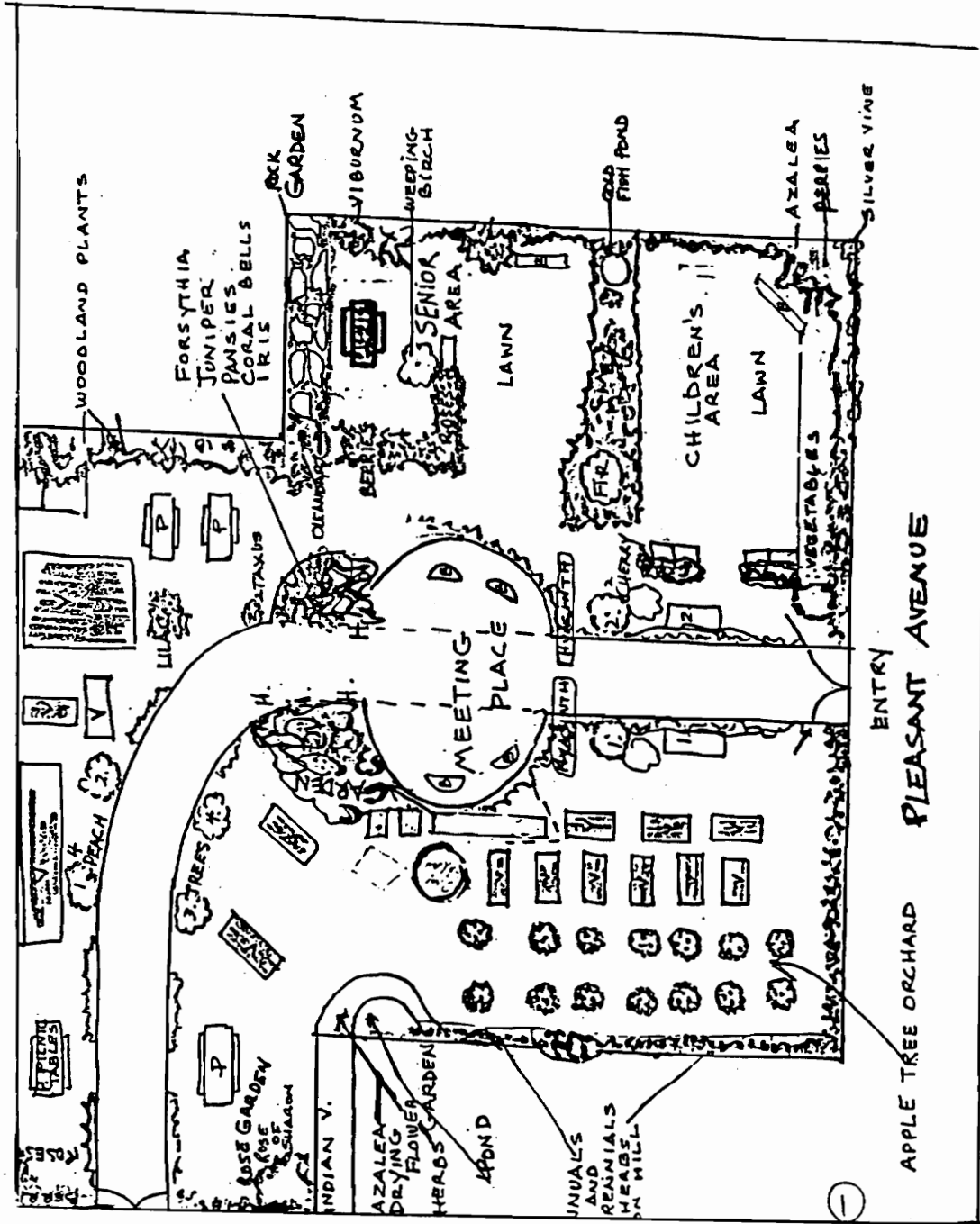
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Typical Community Garden



Appendix 2: List of People Interviewed

Headen, P. Gardener, Union Settlement Community Garden. 1992. Interview with author 29 December. New York City.

Kum, L 1992. Gardener, Union Settlement Community Garden. Interview by author, 27 December. New York City.

Lordahl, Gerard. 1992. Director, Open Space Greening Program, Council On The Environment Of New York City. Interview by author, 28 December. New York City.

Mazza, Charlie. Urban Horticulturist. Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1992. Interview by author, 29 December. New York City.

Miller, Lisa. Urban Horticulturist. Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1992 Interviews by author, December. New York City.

Robinson, M. Gardener, Union Settlement Community Garden. Interview by Author, 27 December. New York City.

Sklar, Eugene. Executive Director, Union Settlement Association. 1993. Interview by the author, 6 January. New York City.

Stone, Andy. 1992. The Trust For Public Land. Interview by author, 28 December. New York City.

Weismann, J. Director, Operation GreenThumb, 1992. Interview by author, 31 December, New York City.

Yarmolinsky, Sally. Director of Development, Union Settlement Association. 1993 Interview by author, 4 January, New York City.

Appendix 3: Agencies Involved with Community Gardening in New York City

New York City Department of General Services
49 Chambers Street, Room 1020, New York, New York 10007 (212) 233-2926

4th Edition

March 1992

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR OPERATION GREENTHUMB GARDENERS

The following resource organizations offer technical and educational assistance to public gardeners. For more information about the range of services, please call the groups directly.

HORTICULTURAL ASSISTANCE



OPERATION GREENTHUMB - NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

49 Chambers Street, Rm. 1020, New York, NY 10007.

Contact: Jane Weissman (212) 233- 2926. Leases vacant city-owned property to community groups for gardening. Provides free technical and design assistance, fencing, tools, lumber, soil, fruit trees, shrubs, special assistance to educational garden projects.

BRONX GREEN-UP PROGRAM

New York Botanical Garden, Rm 317, Watson Bldg., 200th Street & Southern Blvd., Bronx, NY 10458.

Contact: Terry Keller or Rose Murphy (212) 220-8995. Provides free on-site technical assistance, resource referrals, Volunteer Training Program. Truck service for garden materials; compost, seeds & plants given away when available. **FOR BRONX SITES ONLY!**

THE PARKS COUNCIL

457 Madison Avenue, 6th Floor, NY, NY 10022.

Contact: Joseph Pupello (212) 838-9410, EXT 231. Provides technical assistance to community volunteers in parks, school greening initiatives and public service facilities. Has a free bulb giveaway.

COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEW YORK CITY OPEN SPACE GREENING PROGRAM

51 Chambers Street, Rm. 228, New York, New York 10007.

Contact: Gerard Lordahl (212) 566-0990. Provides advice and workshops on gardening. Gardening library open Tuesday and Friday mornings by appointment. Grow Truck (a tool lending service) and Green Bank Program (matching funds) also available.

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - NEW YORK CITY URBAN HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

Provides technical assistance and workshops on gardening; soil testing available. Call phone numbers below for more information.

Manhattan: Lisa Miller, 15 E. 26th St. 5th Fl., NY, NY 10010. (212) 340-2930.

Bronx: Phil Warner, 965 Longwood Avenue, Rm 216, Bronx, NY 10459. (212) 328-4800.

Brooklyn: John Ameroso, 1360 Fulton Street, Rm 400, Brooklyn, NY 11216. (718) 783-2722.

Queens: Eric Meyer, 161-10 Jamaica Avenue, Room 216, Queens, NY 11432. (718) 526-3490.

GREEN GUERRILLAS

625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Contact: Barbara Earnest (212) 674-8124. Organization of volunteers providing technical assistance to gardeners, distributing free shrubs, trees, bulbs, flowers and containers. Special assistance to Manhattan's Lower East Side to preserve and enhance local gardens. Seasonal meetings, workshops and newsletters.

THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

128 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019.

Contact: Arthur Sheppard (212) 757-0915. Provides horticultural advice.

MAGNOLIA TREE EARTH CENTER

677 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11216.

Contact: Sophie Johnson (718) 387-2116. Provides horticultural and educational technical assistance. Offers workshops for school classes, sponsors local garden club and provides occasional seasonal special events. Call for details.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION - CENTRAL HORTICULTURE
1234 Fifth Avenue, Rm. 239, New York, NY 10029.

Contact: Thomas Ching (212) 360-1410. Provides technical assistance, cultural recommendations and design plans for urban gardeners; plants and tools to community groups working in parklands. Plants include perennials, annuals, groundcovers and bulbs. Coordinates two city-wide plant distributions to volunteers in spring and fall. Conducts soil tests and volunteer training & educational workshops, insect and disease identification.

NEW YORK CITY STREET TREE CONSORTIUM
44 Worth St. The Mezzanine, New York, NY 10013.

Contact: Barbara Eber-Schmid (212) 227-1887. Individuals can learn proper care for trees by taking the consortium's Spring and Fall tree care course costing \$45 for 12 hours over a four week period. Graduates can join a city-wide network of tree care volunteers. Literature on street trees is also available. Call for more information.



PUBLIC GARDENS

THE CONSERVANCY GARDEN

830 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021. [The garden is located on 5th Avenue between 104th & 105th Street]. *Contact:* Sarah Price (212) 860-1382, or 360-2766 (Winter). Offers educational tours. No admission, open every day of the year.

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

200th Street & Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. *Contact:* Marge Kiely (212) 220-8748. Provides educational tours, and a reference library. Every Saturday morning free admission to conservatory.

QUEENS BOTANICAL GARDEN

43-50 Main Street, Flushing, NY 11355. *Contact:* Fred Gerber or Plant Information Staff (718) 886-3800. Provides specific plant information Monday through Friday from 10 AM to 4 PM. Occasional workshops & lectures, call for schedule.

BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN

1000 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11225. *Contact:* Lucy Jones (718) 941-4044. Offers educational tours, workshops and seed packets. The Education Department has extensive programs for children, including the BBG Children's Garden.

WAVE HILL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY CENTER

675 West 252nd Street, Bronx, New York 10471. *Contact:* Kate French (212) 549-2055. Provides classroom gardening program, with teacher training. Detailed "Indoor Gardening" curriculum for children also available.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROUPS

COMMUNITY PLANNING BOARDS - CITY WIDE

For information call the MAYOR'S COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE UNIT (CAU), 51 Chambers Street, Rm. 608, New York, New York 10007.

Contact: Mildred Duran (212) 566-1553. The CAU serves as liaison for citizen's groups to city agencies and city's 59 community planning boards. Ask to speak with your borough coordinator. Community planning boards resolve complaints about city services from residents and organizations. Your local planning board has applications for permits to close streets for block parties and street fairs. Your CB influences city decisions on local land use issues, allocation of city resources and programs, placement of GreenThumb sites, etc. CB's offer other organizational support. Call yours for more information.

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR NEW YORK CITY

3 West 29th Street, 6th Floor, New York, New York 10001. *Contact:* Steve Frillman (212) 684-6767. Cash awards up to \$350.00 for local beautification projects provided through Mollie Parnis "Dress Up Your Neighborhood" contest. Technical assistance and borough-wide training sessions available to help make your community group work better.

NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACE COALITION

72 Reade Street, 5th Floor, New York, New York 10007. *Contact:* Anne McClellan (212) 513-7555. Provides liability insurance at a cost of \$210 a year for gardeners.

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND - NYC LAND PROJECT

666 Broadway, 9th Floor New York, New York 10012. *Contact:* Geraldine Wang (212) 677-7171. Assists local community garden preservation efforts with incorporation procedure and other managerial and organizational support. Provides grants to gardens for organizational development and community outreach programs.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION

325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19106-2777. *Contact:* Sally McCabe or Jeff Myers of Philadelphia Green (215) 625-8280. Provides Quarterly Journals, Annual Conferences and membership. For further information please call.

NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

180 Flynn Avenue, Burlington, Vermont 05401. *Contact:* Larry Sommers (802) 863-1308. Provides publications to assist community gardeners and classroom teachers, promotes indoor gardening through its Grow Lab program. Call for details and costs.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEW YORK CITY - ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (TSO)
51 Chambers Street, New York, New York 10007.
Contact: Michael Zamm (212) 566-0990. Provides training and curriculum assistance to NYC school teachers. Written curriculum includes ideas for community and class environmental projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COALITION
625 Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10012
Contact: Nancy Wolf (212) 677-1601. Has largest general environmental library in region, open Monday & Friday. Provides information on recycling and urban forestry, including in-school programs. Gives courses for teachers and students.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT - HOUSE SENSE
100 Gold Street, New York, NY 10038.
Contact: Dr. James Story (212) 978-6197. Program provides teacher training and 2 volume detailed curriculum with lesson plans. Covers pests and their control, parks and their importance to a neighborhood, home safety and more. Curriculum available on request.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION - URBAN PARK RANGERS
830 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10021
Contact: Director's Office (212) 360-2775. Rangers lead nature tours in parks. Provide environmental education programs for school groups. Call for phone numbers for Borough Offices.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Hunters Point Plaza, 47-40 21st Street, L.I.C., NY 11101.
Contact: Laurel Remus (718) 482-4942. Provides technical assistance for all aspects of "urban forestry", staff will make site visits if needed. Free publications and tree seedlings available on request. Teacher training workshops given for Arbor Day and Project Learning Tree environmental curricula. Call for details.

SIDEWALK AND ROADWAY COMPLAINTS

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
THE PRIOR NOTICE UNIT**
Mail written complaints about sidewalk repair and maintenance problems to: The Prior Notice Unit, Department of Transportation, 295 Lafayette Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10012. Also notify your community planning board! For more information call Operation GreenThumb (212) 233-2926.

GARDEN BUILDING AND CLEANING HELP

CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (CASES)
346 Broadway, 3rd Floor, NY 10013
Contact: Joan MacDonald (212) 732-0076 Crews available to help with garden construction, eg: fences, growing beds, planting [CASES was formerly known as the Vera Institute of Justice].

CITY VOLUNTEER CORPS
838 Broadway, 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10003.
Contact: Michelle LeMay Santiago (212) 475-6444. Enrolls young people to work on teams of 10-15 volunteers on community service projects for government and non-profit agencies. These volunteer teams work on human and physical service projects throughout NYC. CVC assigns a field supervisor to each team to assist community groups with their garden projects. Community groups using CVC must be able to provide training of volunteers and additional full-time supervisors for teams.

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION
COMMUNITY LIAISON UNIT**
125 Worth Street, New York, New York 10013.
Contact: Ms. Sandy Torrence (212) 788-3794. The Office of Community Service can provide information regarding service availability and technical assistance.

WE CARE ABOUT NEW YORK, INC.
1 Madison Ave, Suite 6A, New York, New York 10010.
Contact: Emory Jackson (212) 686-1001. Helps groups with anti-litter campaigns. Provides tools and promotional items, organizational development advice, courses and workshops.



PEST CONTROL

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, NYC
280 Broadway, Rm. 301, New York, NY 10007.
Contact: The Central Complaint Office (212) 693-4637. Stay on the line until you get an operator, then request rat or vermin control. Make sure you have the site address before you call!

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION ASSISTANCE

THE BIG APPLE HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

NYC Department of Transportation,
40 Worth Street, Room 1031, New York, NY 10013.

Contact: Lorraine Motola (212) 566-3613. Interested citizen's groups can adopt and maintain highway right-of-way by applying to DOT. Previously donated materials and funds may be available to assist these projects. Call for more information and application.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION - VOLUNTEERS

830 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Contact: Sara E. Levine (212) 360-1330. Coordinates and assists in volunteer efforts to beautify park land through tasks such as: planting, painting, raking, cleaning and pruning. Horticulture training is available at some locations. Call for contacts in your borough and information on training workshops.

NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY GARDENING PROGRAM

250 Broadway, Rm 1500, NY, NY 10007.

Contact: Program Director (212) 306-4181. Tenants at NYCHA facilities can apply through local management office for \$35 grant, site preparation assistance and loan of tools. Annual Tenants Gardening Competition in July, also winter workshops and horticultural bus trips.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION PROGRAM

100 Gold Street, New York, NY 10038.

Contact: Carol Marker (212) 978-6570. NPP assists tenants with housing problems through legal means, with loans and through technical assistance. Local offices conduct workshops on energy conservation, home repair, loans, real estate tax. Call above number for your neighborhood office.



OPERATION GREENTHUMB

49 CHAMBERS STREET, RM 1020
NEW YORK, NY 10007

Appendix 4: Lots-for-Tots

THE LOTS-FOR-TOTS PROGRAM

HISTORY

Lots-for-Tots are beautiful green park/playgrounds for children in child care centers and for community residents when the center is closed. A program of the Human Resources Administration's Agency for Child Development, Lots-for-Tots is a collaborative effort of the Council on the Environment of New York City's (CENYC) Plant-A-Lot Project, the City Volunteer Corps and the Mayor's Inter-Agency Task Force on Vacant Land Utilization.

The Lot-for-Tots Program began in 1984 as a unique solution to several problems. The Agency for Child Development was looking for alternatives to using the rooftop of child care centers as play areas. State law mandates that child care centers must provide outdoor recreation on nice days.

CENYC's Open Space Greening Program was searching for new sites for the Plant-A-Lot Project. Plant-A-Lot assisted gardens are built for the long term on vacant or under-utilized land. It is difficult to find lots for which the city is willing to grant a long term lease.

New York City owns several hundred acres of vacant land scattered through the city, some adjacent to child care centers. In 1987, an Inter-Agency Task Force was established and two sites next to centers, one in the Bronx, the other in Brooklyn were developed as showcase examples for the Lots-for-Tots Program.

PROGRAM

Lots-for-Tots contain play equipment, picnic areas, nature trails, lawns, trees, flowers, gardening areas and amphitheaters.

Child care center staff and children, as well as adults and children from the neighborhood, work with CENYC Plant-A-Lot staff to assess the needs of the neighborhood and center, to design the park/playground and build and maintain it.

With private and more recently also with public funding, CENYC's Plant-A-Lot project provides trees, shrubs, soil, benches and other amenities and technical assistance to the park/playgrounds.

The Department of General Services makes the vacant lots available at no cost, provides the required fencing as well as design assistance. The Department of Sanitation clears, cleans and grades the lots. The Department of Transportation assists in land surveys and the Department of Health baits the lots for rodents. The City Volunteer Corps provides much of the physical labor transforming the vacant lots so they are safe for toddlers.

Appendix 5: City Volunteer Corps



CITY VOLUNTEER CORPS
838 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10003
(212) 475-6444
Fax (212) 475-9457

Herbert Sturtz
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Fred Wilpon
VICE CHAIRMAN

BOARD MEMBERS
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Stanley Litow
Barbara A. Margolis
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Luette Nieves
Sonia Ospina
Charlotte V. M. Otley
Orlando Rodriguez
Nolly Russell
Edward L. Sadowsky
Robert Sienigut
Most Rev. Joseph M. Sullivan

Toni D. Schmiegelow
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CVC AND LOTS FOR TOTS

The City Volunteer Corps is New York City's national service program. Founded in 1984 to demonstrate that young people in urban areas can work together to help their communities while building skills and confidence to succeed as adult citizens, CVC works toward several goals:

- giving a wide range of service to New Yorkers in need;
- enrolling young people from all backgrounds to work cooperatively on teams;
- helping the volunteers make a successful transition to adulthood through learning from service and through a specially-tailored education program; and
- promoting federal support of national service.

Like the Peace Corps, CVC taps into our youth as a valuable resource, but enables them to serve their country by serving here at home, working on such projects as tutoring children, caring for the elderly and people with disabilities, and creating gardens and playgrounds out of vacant lots. Each year, CVC enrolls 675 young people, aged 16 to 20, who work in teams of 10 to 15 people, together provide 350,000 hours of service and each of whom gain substantial work experience serving on eight or nine different projects. While in the Corps, volunteers pursue individualized educational goals, including a special corpsmember development training component and academic coursework through the City University of New York, and upon completion of 1,660 hours of service are eligible for either a \$5,000 scholarship or a \$2,500 cash grant.

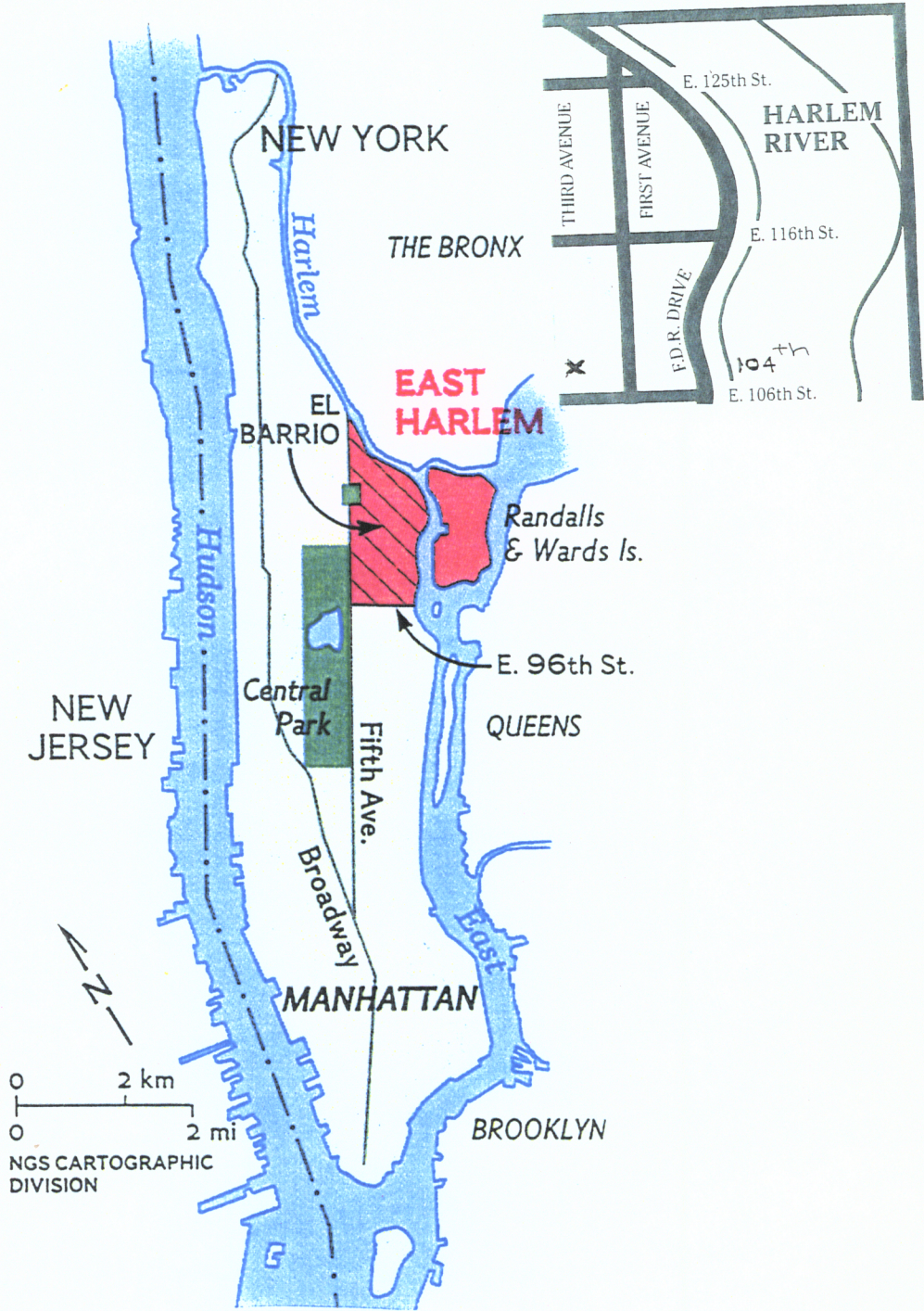
Teams of City Volunteers working with the Lots for Tots Program, under the supervision of the Council on the Environment of New York City, have turned City-owned vacant lots into playgrounds for children in adjacent day care centers and have spruced up existing sites. Over the past year, City Volunteers were a vital labor force at 10 sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, cleaning lots, laying sod, planting trees, grass and flowers, repairing fences and installing play equipment.

The City Volunteer Corps has been awarded federal funding under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, a portion of which we will use to continue our commitment to the Lots for Tots Program, and to build in a curriculum that will help the City Volunteers connect their service on this project to their formal studies.

For more information contact: Lois Whipple
Director of Planning, Governmental and Public Affairs
(212) 475-6444

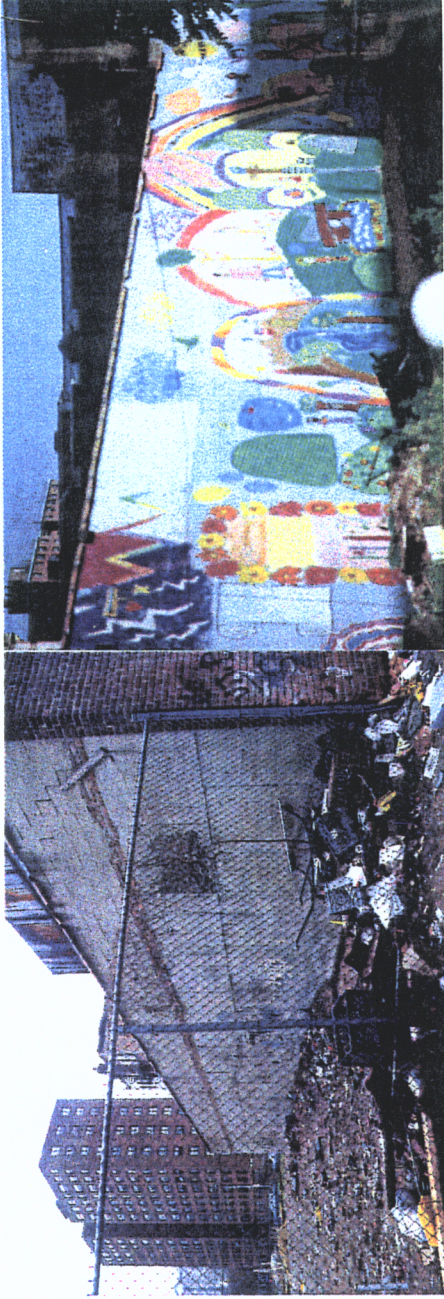
A DEMONSTRATION OF NATIONAL SERVICE

Appendix 6: Location of Union Settlement Community Garden in New York City



Source: National Geographic, Vol.177. No.5, May 1990

Appendix 7: Photographs of Union Settlement Community Garden and Other Activities

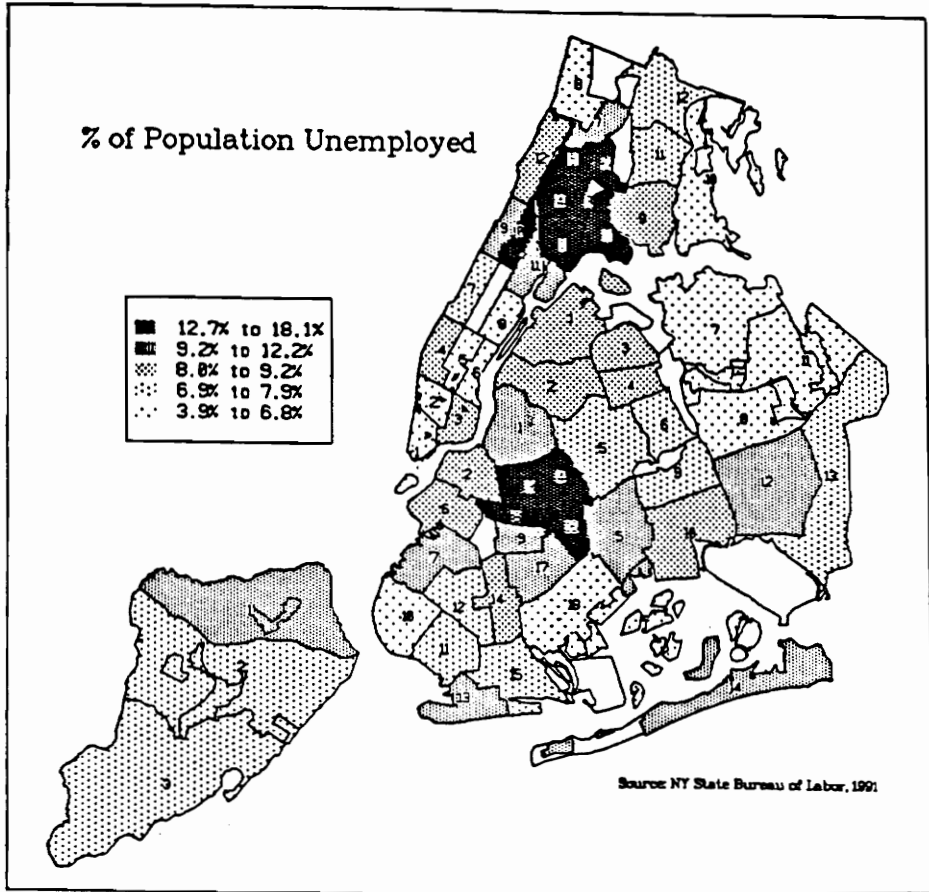


The vacant lot (top left); Lots-For-Tots Children's Mural (top right); City Gardeners' Harvest Fair (bottom right); Children from the Head Start Program attending a workshop (bottom left).



The Council on the Environment of New York, Grow Truck (top left); The City Gardeners' Harvest Fair (top right); The garden in the winter showing the planting boxes (bottom right); The flower beds in summer (bottom left).

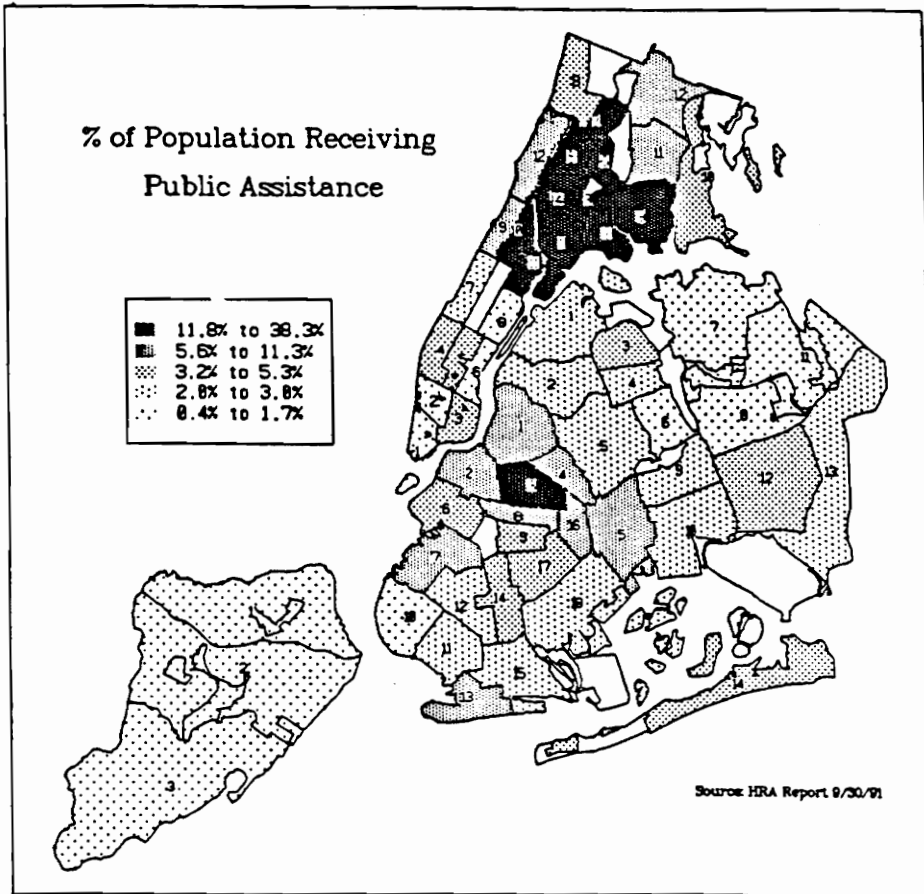
Appendix 8A: Unemployment in Community District 11 of the Borough of Manhattan, NYC



% of Population Unemployed

Borough	CD	1990 Population (1)	Unemployment Percent (6)	Rank
Bronx	1	77,214	18.1	1
Brookly	16	84,923	17.8	2
Brookly	3	138,696	16.2	3
Bronx	3	58,345	15.7	4
Brookly	4	102,572	15.5	5
Bronx	5	118,435	15.4	6
Manhatt	10	99,519	15.2	7
Bronx	4	118,779	14.3	8
Bronx	6	68,061	14.0	9
Brookly	8	96,896	12.8	10
Bronx	2	39,443	12.7	11
Manhatt	11	110,508	12.2	12
Brookly	5	161,300	11.3	13
Queens	13	177,535	11.3	14
Brookly	1	155,972	10.5	15

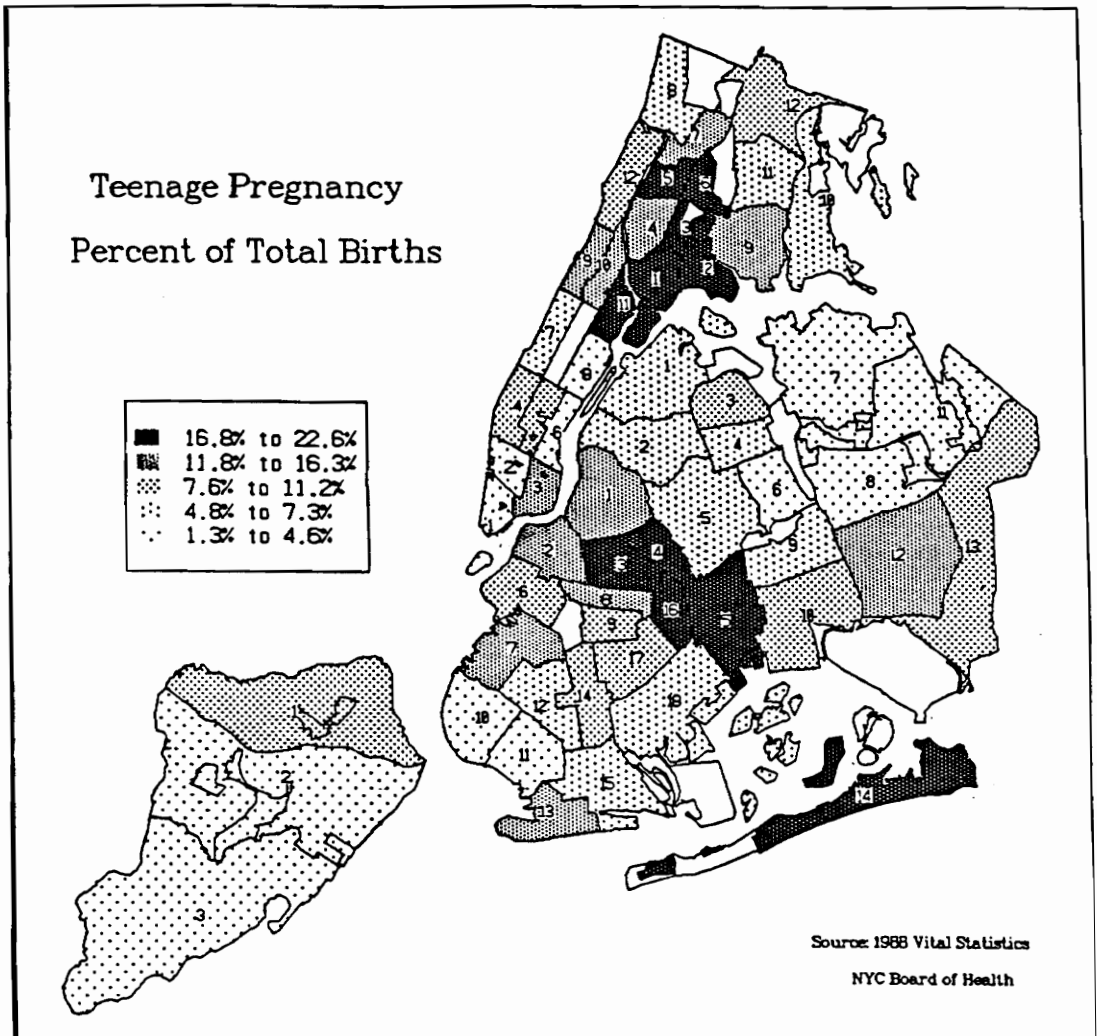
Appendix 8B: Public Assistance in Community District 11 of the Borough of Manhattan, NYC



% of Population on Public Assistance

Borough CD		1990 Population (1)	% on Public Assistance (2)	# on Public Assistance (3)	Rank
Bronx	1	77,214	38.3%	29,539	1
Bronx	2	39,443	35.7%	14,070	2
Bronx	3	58,345	33.6%	19,610	3
Bronx	6	68,061	32.2%	21,896	4
Bronx	5	118,435	29.7%	35,166	5
Bronx	4	118,779	28.2%	33,514	6
Bronx	7	128,588	17.2%	22,111	7
Bronx	9	165,743	16.0%	26,450	8
Manhatt	10	99,519	14.1%	14,011	9
Manhatt	11	110,508	12.9%	14,280	10
Brookly	3	138,696	11.8%	16,317	11
Brookly	16	84,923	11.3%	9,583	12
Brookly	4	102,572	11.0%	11,318	13
Brookly	5	161,350	9.2%	14,880	14
Bronx	12	129,620	9.0%	11,697	15

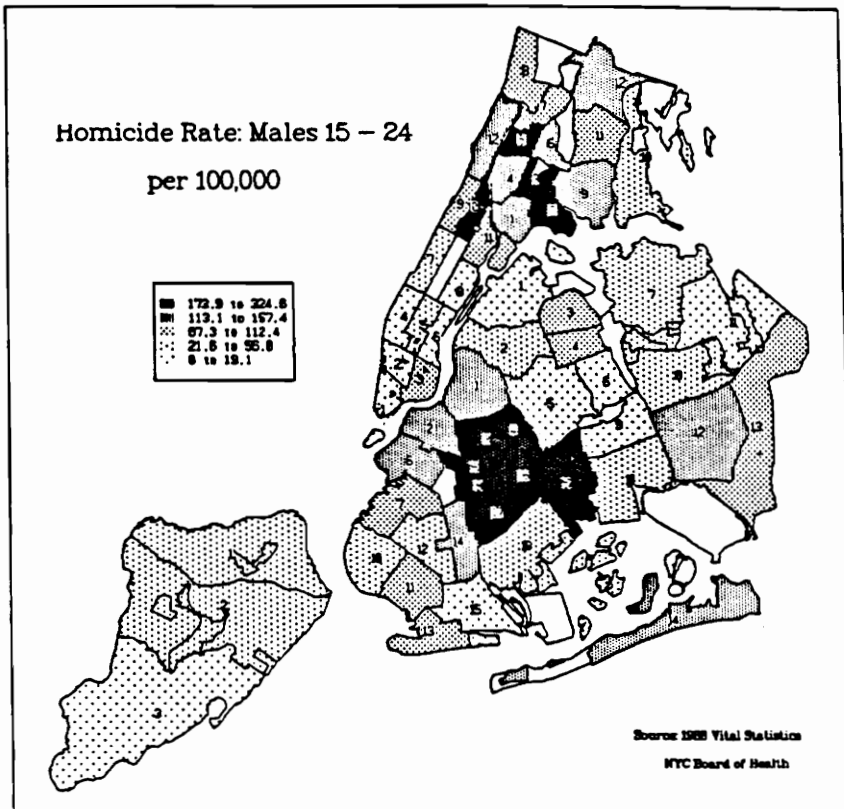
Appendix 8C: Teenage pregnancy in Community District 11 of the Borough of Manhattan, NYC



**Teenage Pregnancy
Percent of Total Births**

Borough CD	1990 Population (1)	% Teen Mothers (4)	Rank
Brookly 16	84,923	22.6%	1
Bronx 3	58,345	21.5%	2
Brookly 3	138,696	20.3%	3
Bronx 1	77,214	19.8%	4
Manhatt 11	110,508	18.6%	5

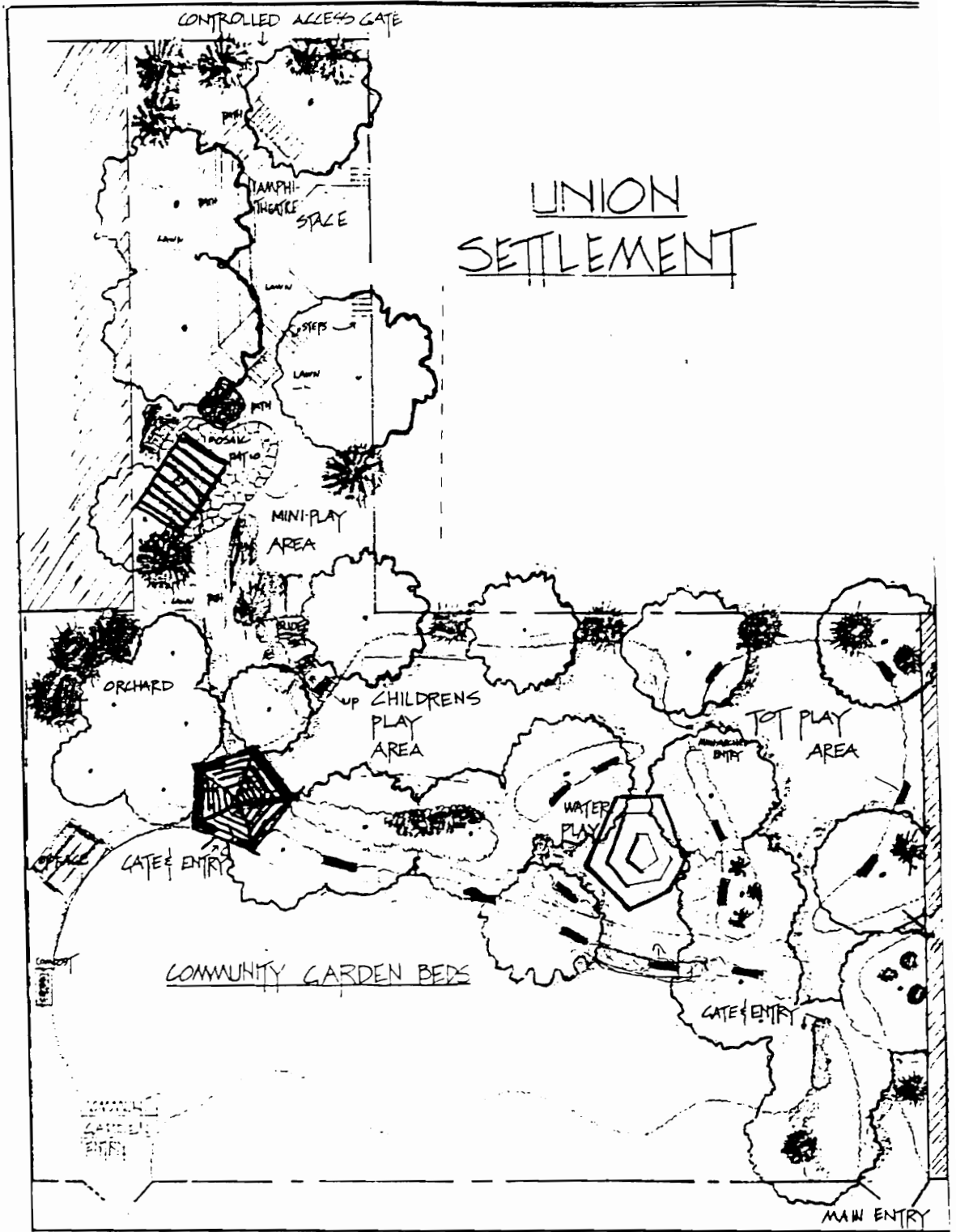
Appendix 8D: Crime in Community District 11 in the Borough of Manhattan, NYC



Homicide Rate:
Males 15 - 24
per 100,000

Borough	CD	1990 Population (1)	Homicide M 15-24 (5)	Rank
Brook	16	84,923	324.6	1
Manha	10	99,519	303.9	2
Brook	8	96,896	299.9	3
Bronx	2	39,443	267.5	4
Brook	5	161,350	245.9	5
Bronx	3	58,345	229.4	6
Brook	17	161,261	226.2	7
Brook	3	138,696	208.5	8
Brook	4	102,572	198.9	9
Bronx	5	118,435	179.7	10
Brook	9	110,715	173.9	11
Queen	12	201,270	157.4	12
Bronx	9	165,743	155.2	13
Brook	14	159,825	148.1	14
Bronx	6	68,061	129.7	15
Bronx	4	118,779	123.0	16
Brook	6	102,228	120.6	17
Manha	12	198,192	118.6	18
Brook	2	94,534	117.3	19
Bronx	1	77,214	117.2	20
Queen	14	100,596	116.6	21
Brook	1	155,972	115.9	22
Bronx	12	129,620	113.1	23
Manha	9	106,978	112.4	24
Manha	11	110,508	108.2	25

Appendix 9: Lots-for-Tots "El Sitio Feliz"



Appendix 10: List of Union Settlement Community Gardeners

This is a list of gardeners with plots allocated in summer 1992. Fewer gardeners were allocated planting boxes in 1992 than in previous years because work on the garden was interrupted by the construction of the Lot-for-Tots playground.

Mr. E-Gray Johnson
Ms. Carol Johnson
Ms. Johnson
Mrs. Robinson
Mr. John Head
Ms. Daisy
Mr. Bob
Mr. Pete Headen
Mr. Moses Ponder
Ms. Barbara Davis
Mr. Richard Forbes
Ms. Delores Leftwich
Mr. Moody Saton
Devon and Shantil Saton
Mr. Robert Davis
Mr. Best
Ms. Doris
Mr. Scottie
Ms. Viola Davis
Mr. Eddie Green
Ms. Pat
Mr. Butch
Ms. Yvonne
Ms. Kam
Mr. Rodriguez

Appendix 11: List of Contributors

**The Board of Directors of
Union Settlement Association's
Leggett Memorial Children's Center
and
Head Start**

The Manhattan Borough President

**The Human Resources Administration's
Agency for Child Development**

Council on the Environment of New York City

City Volunteer Corps

**The Mayor's Inter-Agency Task Force
on Vacant Land Utilization**

**NYC Department of General Services/
Operation GreenThumb and
Bureau of Building Design**

NYC Department of Health

NYC Department of Sanitation

NYC Department of Transportation

The Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation

The Louis Calder Foundation

Greenacre Foundation

Hasbro Children's Foundation

The Hyde and Watson Foundation

Manhattan Community Arts Fund/ NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs

and

NY Foundation for the Arts