



Do yoU's Enlightenment & Cultural Empowerment Services Inc.
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RE: Starting a Community Garden in Ocean Hill Brownsville

Prepared for: Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee of CB#16

Prepared by: Christian Charles (Acting Corporate Secretary of D.U.E.C.E.S. Inc.)

Approved by: C. Aaron Hinton (Executive Director of D.U.E.C.E.S. Inc.)

Dear Community Board #16,

D.U.E.C.E.S. Inc. is a nonprofit community based organization that is geared towards **Youth Empowerment and Community Development**. Our mission, our motto and goals are all the alike: To **Save our Youth, Save our Streets, Squash the Beef** and to **Increase the peace**, not only in Brownville but in underserved communities. The primary purpose of our organization is to promote a proactive approach to rebuilding poverty stricken communities by attending to the common needs and interests of young people in said communities. We also intend to promote and foster civic responsibility and respect for family and peers within these communities. In the past we have come to you asking for support in our Youth Empowerment Programming, however, today we come to you asking for support in our first ever Community Development Project.

The history of the lot in question is as states: It is Brooklyn block 1538, lot 43 at 45 Somers -- a vacant public lot in the inventory of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). It is part of the Saratoga Square urban renewal area plan, which was adopted in 1992 and is still active. In this plan, it is designated as Open Space. It once served this purpose as part of the "Lots for Tots" program under the former Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYC - now known as GrowNYC). This was in partnership with the daycare next door. However, this lot has been in some state of abandonment for several years now. It is currently in the inventory of the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (public).

First and Foremost, we would like to name this vacant lot, "An E.D.E.N. Garden. "Eden being an acronym for {Empowered, Developed and Enlightened Neighborhood, garden}. We love this name because it furthers the purpose we serve by having young people intricately involved in a community development project. Furthermore, this is a perfect opportunity for us to begin intergenerational works in the community knowing that we will need the assistance of elders in the community it will help to bridge the gap of the youth and the seniors in our community by having a space where the elders can come in and educate us on the importance of being well versed in the fields of harvesting, agriculture and horticulture.

Our primary interest at "An E.D.E.N. Garden" is to specialize in various Herbs and Species to obtain seasonings for the foods that other community gardens grow. We would love to have different equipment for the youth to play with, such as swing sets made of tires and even a spin wheel in the middle of the garden. Also in the garden we'd like to have reserved areas for children specifically pertaining to interactive arts, crafts, musical and cultural development. We would love to see mini (play) gardens for these youths as well so that they may see what they can grow on their own when mixing and matching different resources and materials that already exist in the garden. Quite naturally we would like a small outdoor shed to store the things we harvest when we would like to make space to plant other things. Lastly, our garden would contain a variety of foods such as fruits, and/ or fruit trees, berry's, tomatoes, corn, etc.

Membership of this garden will be open to anyone in the community provided there is enough space available and shall consist of a yearly due payment which will be determined by the organizers at a later date. In addition to the membership dues there will be registration forms and an agreement made to follow all rules and regulations that exist in the Bylaws of the garden, which also will be formed and printed out at a later date. Once becoming a member, you would be granted access to the garden during all hours of operation. We will have three (3) different types of memberships noted by color... Silver (general), Gold (advanced) and Platinum (premium). Platinum members will be the only members that will be granted keys to the garden and will assume full responsibility when accessing and/or allowing others to access the garden for any reason. If a person in the community is not able to afford the membership dues they will be allowed to have the dues waived by volunteering 5-10 hours a week in the garden. Also we will be giving accredited community service hours to volunteers that come from various schools and/or probation. These are many of the ways this space will help out the community at large.

We plan to have the garden opened for an average of 25 hours every week. The hours of operation for “An Eden Garden” will be as follows:

- Mondays: 3pm-8pm
- Wednesdays: 10am-3pm
- Thursdays: 3pm-8pm
- Fridays: 4pm-9pm
- Saturdays: 12pm-5pm

We will be closed every Tuesday and every Sunday. We are currently aiming to have a steering committee to monitor our production in the garden so that no one can come in and take without permission and another committee to help plan out plantings and harvesting as well. Due to weather conditions our scheduled times would be subject to change (less hours in the winter time and more in the summer time of course) to ensure the success and continuity of our community garden.

We are here today requesting a letter of support from our local Community Board to include in our application for the NYC Parks department. The letter should support the plan to have this lot transferred from DCAS to NYC Parks so that we can steward it as the space we are planning through Green Thumb. If this transition is successful we will be teaming up with GrowNYC, and neighboring community gardens as well as local food rescue, food pantry and food distributing organizations to maintain our endeavor. We thank you all in advance for any and all consideration and time that you place into this matter. The youth of the community will take great pride in the upkeep of this garden because it is something that they have worked to create themselves. They are especially proud of becoming an intricate part of the community as a whole. Thanks again for your assistance in helping us to be the catalyst in creating a new character for the young people of the Ocean Hill/Brownsville Community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. C. Aaron Hinton
Executive Director D.U.E.C.E.S. Inc.