

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

Baltimore Green Space

Baltimore, MD

443-695-7504

info@baltimoregreenspace.org

www.baltimoregreenspace.org

Mission: Baltimore Green Space is a land trust that partners with communities to preserve and support community gardens, pocket parks, and other community-managed open spaces. We aim to protect the social and environmental benefits that residents create through their sweat equity investments in their neighborhoods.

Baltimore Green Space (“Green Space”) is the result of a partnership with Baltimore City’s Office of Sustainability to preserve and encourage community gardens in the 30,000 vacant lots in the city, 11,000 of which were owned by the city. Green Space is a Community Land Trust. Green Space assisted the City of Baltimore to establish the criteria for a community-managed open space to be transferred to a land trust for \$1 per lot.

Green Space has primarily acquired land from the City of Baltimore. The process for acquiring city land is outlined on a flow chart on their website (http://www.baltimoregreenspace.org/downloads/CMOSguide_000.pdf).

Gardens start the application process by filling out an application form. They must identify a site manager and a partner organization, such as a community organization, umbrella organization, religious, social institution, or school.

The criteria for participation in the land trust include the following:

- Requests for preservation must come from the people involved with the site
- The community must demonstrate a capacity for long-term management of the site
- The open space must have a strong function in at least one community use
- The land must demonstrate a match between identified environmental risks and how the site is used

If the above listed criteria have been met, and Green Space approves the application, there is an intense period of review and evaluation requiring the involvement of the Office of Sustainability, Department of Housing and Community Development, the Planning Department’s Comprehensive Planning Division, Comptroller’s Office, and the Board of Estimates. The land will then be transferred to Green Space from the city or donating private owner. The site manager and Green Space then enter into a management agreement.

Green Space’s duties pursuant to the agreement initiative are as follows:

- Hold the deed to the site permanently for use as community-managed open space
- Ensure that all real estate taxes are paid or exempted
- Provide basic liability insurance
- Respond to requests for assistance with issues at the site with referrals to an appropriate organization or company for any maintenance or management issues
- Provide annual site monitoring and follow-up as needed

The Site Manager’s general duties include:

1

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

- Organize support and involvement for the maintenance and operation of the site as a community-managed open space
- Be an accountable liaison, working with BGS staff to provide updates
- Provide day-to-day maintenance and management of the site
- Notify Green Space of any injury, accident, fire, damage, toxic waste, or hazardous materials on the site
- Follow all Green Space guidelines as outlined in the agreement and on the website

Partner Organization duties include:

- Support efforts of the Site Manager, and in the event that the current site manager can no longer perform their duties, partner with BGS to find a new site manager
- Identify and secure resources to support the on-going maintenance of the site
- If possible, provide office space, phones, internet, meeting space, or any other specific resources to coordinate community engagement and secure the success of the site as a community-managed open space

Currently, Green Space has three sites, containing 47 lots total. There are 2 more parcels in the process of review, and 2 others still in the application process. In addition to gardens, Green Space has title to a horseshoe pit and a green space with a seating area.

In addition to creating support for gardens through liability insurance, technical support, and advocacy, Green Space recently surveyed Baltimore through a garden census. With volunteers armed with Smartphones, Green Space recorded addresses, and geo-coded photos of 462 lots in communities.

Green Space only acquires land that is already being stewarded by gardeners and does not have a strategic plan to acquire more land. They only assess applications as they are submitted to them, and do not have the demand for a plan or pace for growth. Their support is mainly in the way of protecting and preserving the land in perpetuity, they do not provide technical garden growing support.

Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust

Brooklyn, NY

www.Bqlt.org

Mission: Establish a community of gardeners in Brooklyn and Queens to educate and inspire people of all ages to become successful and environmentally responsible gardeners; support community involvement in community gardening, and neighborhood beautification and open space enhancement through activities and programs; and promote the interests of community gardens.

Preserve, support, manage and enhance community gardens, and areas of similar natural or recreational value such as neighborhood open spaces, green-ways and playgrounds for the benefit of the general public; and act as steward of the open space properties that it owns (including properties in Brooklyn and Queens purchased by or donated to it in the future) for the aforementioned purposes.

The saga of the Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust (BQLT) and Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts begin in 1999, when New York City Mayor Giuliani announced plans to auction off 112 community gardens. Through lawsuits, community organizing, philanthropic donations, and support from former State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer, the Trust for Public Land

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

negotiated with the City of New York, paying \$3 million to save the community gardens. The Trust for Public Land invested in physical improvements and organized three borough-based land trusts (the BQLT and the Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts) to take care of the gardens. In 2004, BQLT was incorporated to manage 34 gardens, 29 in Brooklyn and 5 in Queens, with a plan to eventually own the gardens. 32 of the gardens were acquired by the Trust for Public Land in the original purchase from NYC in 1999. The Trust for Public Land officially transferred title to the land to BQLT in 2012. Currently, BQLT has a total of 37 community gardens.

BQLT is a gardener-led organization. Each property of BQLT must have a “garden group” consisting of at least 5 active members of local, hardworking, and dedicated volunteers. These members are leaders and managers of their individual gardens, are able to serve on the BQLT Board of Directors, and have voting rights for matters in their own garden and in selecting their “Garden Representative.” The “Garden Representative” is voted on by the Member Gardeners, and acts on behalf of the community garden in the Membership Body. The Membership Body is comprised of all of the Garden Representatives from each Member Garden, and is the decision-making group of the BQLT.

The Board of Directors is also a decision-making body, comprised of 15 individuals. The Membership body elects 5-7 members to the Board of Directors on the basis of their professional skills, talents, or expertise. These elected individuals are “Resource People” while the remaining spots are other Member Gardeners, but not the “Garden Representatives.” This unique organization ensures a democratic decision-making process, fosters communication between different garden leaders and volunteers, and promotes the interests of community gardens.

Each garden must enter into an agreement, which three members of the Garden Group must sign, agreeing to certain restrictions and policies of BQLT. Through this agreement, the BQLT owns the land, but its use is dedicated for public use and preservation. The BQLT also provides standard liability insurance to its gardens.

Bronx and Manhattan Land Trusts

Bronx, NY, Manhattan, NY

www.bronxlandtrust.org

www.manhattanlandtrust.org

<http://landtrusts.wordpress.com/>

Mission: The Bronx and Manhattan Land Trusts are grassroots non-profit organizations made up of 32 permanently preserved community gardens located throughout the Bronx and Manhattan. We focus on mobilizing communities and developing garden leaders. We empower gardeners to better manage and shape the future of their gardens and their communities.

Bronx and Manhattan Land Trusts were created to protect the community gardens purchased from the city in 1999. Unlike BQLT, however, these land trusts have not developed a strategy or plan for attaining more gardens, mainly due to the limited amount of available land in Manhattan and the City’s resistance to giving land over in “perpetuity.”

Manhattan and Bronx Land Trust manage 32 gardens in total, 14 in Manhattan, and 18 in the Bronx. These sites are all community-run gardens, varying in organization and size. The gardens are incorporated into the land trust.

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

The Manhattan and Bronx Land Trusts provide technical assistance through community organizing, basic liability insurance, and water access. Their mission is to preserve, improve, and promote community-managed open spaces, and to do so through strong development of community garden leaders. They have no plan for growth, one, because they are not in the financial situation to acquire land, and two, because the city is not willing to give more land to CLTs. Thus, there is no application process for existing gardens that want protection, or communities that are interested in finding land for a garden.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens

Milwaukee, WI

www.milwaukeeurbangardens.org

Mission: *Milwaukee Urban Gardens is a nonprofit land trust dedicated to acquiring and preserving land and partnering with neighborhood residents to develop and maintain community gardens that improve the quality of life.*

Established in 2000, the mission of Milwaukee Urban Gardens (MUG) is to support community groups who wish to start or sustain a community garden. They negotiate long-term lease agreements with the City of Milwaukee, purchase lots to save them from development, and assist with permits for water from city hydrants. Milwaukee Urban Gardens also offers technical and financial assistance, gardening classes, seed exchange, and assistance with community organizing.

MUG currently holds title to five gardens, but leases the land for 26. Their total acreage does not exceed 10 acres. Their inventory consists of community gardens with individual plots, as well as shared or community plots. There are currently no sales from any of the sites, but MUG is working towards produce sales as a goal.

This list of gardens and partners shows the diversity of gardens under the MUG umbrella:

- **Greenfolks Garden:** community garden and space, individual plots for vegetables and flowers, communal Strawberry patch, kids yoga and education
- **Village Roots Garden:** perennial flower beds, fruit trees, raspberry patch, individual raised plots, sculptures, stage area, strong gay-lesbian presence (operated by Bay View Garden and Yard Society)
- **Cluster Two Play and Grow** (operated by the Cluster Two Neighborhood Association with Groundworks Milwaukee)
- **Amaranth Garden-** (operated by Amaranth Bakery and Café)
- **KRIC Garden-** (operated by Groundwork Milwaukee)
- **Concordia Garden-** (operated in partnership with the Victory Garden Initiative and Transition Milwaukee)
- **All People's Garden-** summer youth employment opportunities (operated by All People's Church)

MUG has generally acquired land from the City of Milwaukee. The process begins when the City issues a Seasonal Garden Permit for one season to see if a gardening group can make it work. After several years of success, with a two-year minimum, the City may lease the land to the garden under a 3-year lease. This new procedure for land acquisition was due to a move toward urban agriculture policy reform, led by MUG in 2009. Different city departments and quasi-public agencies (e.g. park district, sewer district, school district, housing authority, redevelopment authority) have different procedures for leasing land.

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

MUG will purchase land if the community is committed to it and has adequate funding. The procedure is similar for privately owned land, but this occurs less often.

In order for MUG to become involved with a garden, a community group must express interest to them about leasing or acquiring a property. MUG will help the group develop a plan if necessary. MUG has a form in which the garden lists contact information, leadership, and plans. The MUG board must approve the acquisition, and then MUG uses the seasonal permits and 3-year lease to gauge the community interest, and the garden's ability to succeed.

MUG itself does not work to preserve land in anticipation of development, because they are more community-driven. The plan and pace of MUG's growth is largely dependent on the interests of the community and the ability to raise funds. However, a coalition of urban agriculture groups are working with the Public Works Department to identify properties for permanent neighborhood green space and gardens.

Mosaic Community Land Trust

Pottstown, PA

www.pottstownclt.wordpress.org

Mission: MCLT believes that Pottstown will succeed in its revitalization efforts through the involvement of the entire community, which requires productive partnerships among citizens, government, schools, non-profit institutions and the private sector.

MCLT is in its formative stages as a Community Land Trust. Its major mission is to develop affordable housing. However, MCLT is also planning to start a community garden this spring, with a \$30,000 grant from Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. The land was given to the Pottstown CLT by the Pottstown School District.

Neighborspace

Chicago, IL

www.neighbor-space.org

Mission: NeighborSpace is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to acquire and support the community based management of small parks, gardens, natural areas, river edges, and scenic landscapes in the City of Chicago for preservation, conservation, and educational public open space purposes.

NeighborSpace primarily focuses on those parcels where community groups have established gardens or parks. These groups apply to NeighborSpace so the site can be owned by a nonprofit that has a mission to preserve and protect these urban "Edens." This type of support can ease the burden of community leaders and community organizations wanting to ensure the survival of their hard work without having to shoulder the responsibilities of acquisition, ownership or liability for the site.

In response to a study ranking Chicago 18th out of 20 cities in the ratio of open space acres to population, the City of Chicago, Chicago Parks District, and Forest Preserve District of Cook County partnered to establish NeighborSpace as a nonprofit in 1996. These three agencies continue to provide NeighborSpace with leadership and support.

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

NeighborSpace owns 57 sites, and holds long-term leases for an additional 4 sites. They acquire land for community use to preserve space for conservation, recreation, preservation, community food production, and beautification. Of their sites, there are ornamental gardens, community gardens, as well as some urban farms with farmers markets. Most of the food produced is for individual consumption, with donations of their surplus. One garden property works directly with a local food pantry.

For its sites, NeighborSpace provides basic liability insurance and water, holds title to the land, and provides referrals to partner organizations able to supply materials, funding, technical assistance, and training for managing community open spaces.

NeighborSpace prefers acquiring city-owned land because it is easier to negotiate. Transferring the deed is easier because the land is either owned by the Planning Department of the CDOT or the Department of Transportation. Within the City, support from the local alderman is important. If he or she wants to reserve the land for development at some point, the project will not move forward. Privately owned land is more difficult to acquire because of NeighborSpace's limited fiscal resources.

There is an application process for sites beginning with four basic criteria.

- Feasibility for site acquisition,
- Long-term viability of the land depending on local need for space,
- Sustainable resources and leadership, and
- Environmental integrity of the land.

The application includes a cover sheet, site narrative, 5-year partnership agreement, letters of support from an organizational partner and the alderman (if land is city-owned), design/layout of the site, photos of the site, and additional support documents like articles or event flyers. Application review can take anywhere from 4-6 months, but can be fast tracked if a garden or park is threatened by land sale or redevelopment. After a site is accepted, there is an acquisition process which can take anywhere from a few months to 2 years. The applicant must enter into a long-term management agreement and becomes a "NeighborSpace Garden Leader," committing to providing local leadership for the continued use of the land. The non-profit partner becomes a "NeighborSpace Community Organizational Partner" by entering into a partnership agreement.

NeighborSpace has a partnership structure, which includes 3 garden leaders, a community organizer partner, and ten garden stakeholders. The community organizer partner is key because they provide resources and support for the individual garden, helping to get donations, take community ownership of the land, and opening the door to other partnerships. These elements were established in order to ensure a strong garden group in the face of transitions. This ensures continuing leadership for the garden. They have a Partnership Agreement, which lays out the roles and responsibilities of all parties included in the incorporation of a garden.

Southside Community Land Trust Providence, RI

www.southsideclt.org

Mission: Southside Community Land Trust provides access to land, education and other resources so people in Greater Providence can grow food in environmentally

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

sustainable ways and create community food systems where locally produced, affordable, and healthy food is available to all.

SCLT started in 1981 when Southside neighborhood was sinking into economic and environmental decay. Due to low land values, SCLT was able to buy a huge vacant parcel, previously a chop shop for cars, and partnered with neighbors to clean up the lots to create a community garden. Southside CLT's City Farm is located on this site, as well. In addition to this $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre City Farm, they have 14 other community gardens, totaling less than 5 acres. Of these gardens, SCLT holds fee simple title to all but two of the garden, which they rent, and to two of the lots in the City Farm, regarding which they have an informal arrangement with the owner, who is affiliated with SCLT. SCLT also has a 50-acre suburban farm, which they lease from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. Seven independent farmers collaboratively manage this farm, with an annual fee to SCLT. Lastly, SCLT coordinate a citywide network of 30+ community gardens, including their own 14. These gardens are managed by community partners (e.g. Providence Parks and Recreation, Housing Authority, churches, affordable housing agencies).

SCLT provides extensive educational programming for gardeners of all ages; access to resources like seeds, compost, and tools; and community organizing and group facilitation, facilitates a policy-making coalition. They also provide liability insurance for all of their properties.

In attaining land, each lot has its own story. Privately owned lots are sometimes donated, or purchased at cost. The Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA) allows non-profits to purchase public property owned by the PRA for 50% the assessed value. The City of Providence does look favorably on urban agriculture, and has supported it through passing the hen ordinance, providing free space to Community Growers Network events at the Botanical Center, and providing trucks that deliver compost to all Network gardens. In addition, the Providence Department of Parks and Recreation has been most helpful. At the state level, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management provides technical assistance on a range of issues and policies, and funding for acquisition from their Open Space Bond Funds.

Troy Gardens Madison, WI

Jill Jacklitz, Executive Director
jill@troygardens.org
www.troygardens.org

Troy Garden is a parcel of land owned by the Madison Area Community Land Trust (MACLT). The entire area is 31 acres, 5 of which are devoted to co-housing, with the remaining preserved as open space. Community Groundworks is a non-profit company that manages the open space, by leasing the land from MACLT for \$1 per month.

Troy Gardens is comprised of 330 individual community garden plots, a 5-acre organic farm that feeds 160 CSA members and produces some wholesale produce.

The Troy Gardens story of land acquisition is very unique, and there have been few other efforts like it in Madison. It was attained through the collaborative efforts of Northside Planning Council, Madison Area Community Land Trust, The Urban Open Space Commission, and the Community Action Coalition Garden Program, after the city added these 31 acres of

Urban Community Garden Land Trust Case Studies

open space and neighborhood gardens on the surplus list for sale to private, and public developers. Neighbors of the land had been gardening on four acres of it for 15 years, using the rest as open space. The Coalition developed a proposal for an integrated land use combining open space, affordable housing, and agricultural areas. The Center for Resilient Cities (who holds the conservation easement for Troy Garden and is one of the core organizers of the project) is currently working on a new project that brings together an environmental middle school, urban agriculture, and a community center on a space of a vacant school.

CGW is slowly looking at new projects off of the land at Troy Gardens. They see potential for agricultural use within the county parks system. There is also at least one developer in the area looking at a mixed-use model that includes a small farm in it. Community Action Coalition of South Central, WI is the key player in converting land to community gardens. They support grassroots groups who identify land they want to use.

Other Models:

- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Boston, MA) -- housing CLT that incorporates gardens and open space
- Growing Power (Milwaukee, WI) – National urban farming organization that has land trusted gardens in Milwaukee
- Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (Atlanta, GA) – holds title and provides capacity building for the creation of other land trusts
- P-Patch Trust (Seattle, WA) – “offers support, advocacy and legal shelter for securing [garden] land” of P-Patch gardens
- South End Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust (Boston, MA) – “owns, protects, and manages 16 community gardens and pocket parks in the South End and Lower Roxbury”