

Newsletter from the
NYC Coalition
for the Preservation
of the Gardens

August 1997

Our Garden's Gate

photo credit: Rev. Finley Schaefer



About NYC Coalition for the Preservation of the Gardens

NYC Coalition for the Preservation of the Gardens was formed in November 1996 in response to the bulldozing of several gardens, and the current threat to many more, by development plans throughout New York City. NYC Coalition is a city-wide network of gardeners, community members, schools, and organizations working together to preserve community gardens in all 5 boroughs.

While community gardens occupy less than 1000 city owned sites, there are over 11,000 vacant lots and countless abandoned buildings in the City's inventory in all five boroughs. Because of the current administration's mandate to sell off city-owned property, city agencies have chosen to look at property with thriving community gardens and instead of seeing community resources, they see only vacant developable lots.

Most of the 50 gardens on the Lower East Side of New York City, 25 gardens in Harlem and Coney

Island, and 20 more gardens in Brooklyn and the Bronx are slated to be bulldozed, destroying the gardens and potentially displacing the low-income population of these neighborhoods.

The City has failed to acknowledge that community gardens represent more than the temporary use of vacant land. Community gardens have become important meeting places for New Yorkers, producing much needed green space, promoting environmental education, encouraging intergenerational and intercultural friendships, and helping to reduce crime by being the eyes and ears of our communities.

NYC Coalition is working for the volunteer gardeners and the communities that benefit from these gardens. On February 13th, 1997, we sponsored the Save Our Gardens Day Rally, which drew over 500 people, and hand delivered hundreds of letters and petitions to elected officials. The rally generated response letters from Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, Mayor Giuliani, and democratic mayoral candidate Sal Albanese. It helped to postpone the destruction of several gardens in Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and the Lower East Side, and generated media coverage, including a major article in The New York Times, March 27, 1997.

Although we have had some successes, the City continues to add gardens to the list of lots to be sold or auctioned in the next year, and moves ahead with plans for market-rate development on many garden sites. *(continued next page)*