

MANHATTAN:

Harlem Garden Alliance (HGA): The HGA, meeting regularly through the Fall, embarked on a comprehensive yet targeted campaign to reach out to all gardens in Central/East Harlem within HPD jurisdiction. This was prompted by a recognition of the importance of building its strength by linking up with other organizations through the Coalition and by the ground-swell of concern regarding the upcoming City Council vote on the future of 9 Central Harlem gardens, known as L.U. Pre. 010098 HAM.

A further 6 Central Harlem gardens received notice that HPD terminated their GreenThumb Leases as of October 1, 1997. The City conducted soil tests for future construction on one of these, the **129th Street Block Association Garden**, on November 11. Also, the HGA has reached out preemptively to 14 East Harlem gardens it has learned have a projected GreenThumb Lease termination date (as per HPD notification) of Fall, 1998. In addition, construction work proceeds on three sides of the **Project Harmony George W. Brown Garden**: the fences have been removed and the beautiful Chinese Empress Tree (*Polonia*) has been destroyed.

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Lower East Side Garden Preservation Coalition (LESGPC): The LESGPC actively supported the **Chico Mendez Mural Garden** and the **10 BC Garden (El Jardin 10)**, especially since it learned of

the May, 1997 City Council vote releasing them for development, a vote taken unfortunately with no notice given to the gardeners. Despite the city-wide Coalition's law suit still pending in the Appellate Division, First Department, the two gardens were bulldozed on the morning of December 30, 1997.

The Rodriguez Community Garden was also released for development by the City Council in the Fall of '97 despite the protests and testimony on its behalf at Community Board 3 and City Council hearings by gardeners, community members, and Coalition members.

On January 15 at the CB3 Housing/ Land Use Committee meeting, Developer Donald Capoccia of BFC requested site control over two more LES gardens, **Bello Amanecer Borincano Garden** (117-121 Ave. C, B. 390, L. 30, 32) and **Jardin de la Esperanza** (223-225 E. 7 St., B. 390, L. 40, 41) for development with Gethsemane Garden Baptist Church of market rate housing, church facility, and some sort of "open space." The LESGPC has already begun to mobilize the garden community in response to this latest outrage by the same developer who bulldozed the four gardens on East 11th Street just before New Year's.

The LESGPC is collecting complete garden inventories from all gardens located within CB3 and closely tracking all developments regarding a total of 12 more gardens released by Community Board 3 for development in September '95 and '96. Special

attention will be paid to a further 21 community gardens with HPD jurisdiction or holds for development.

Earth Celebrations' annual "Let the Gardens Live" Winter Pageant takes place on Saturday, January 31, 1998 on the LES. The illuminated pageant of giant puppets, spectacular glittering costumes and candle lanterns celebrates the gardens and their struggle to survive.

Earth Celebrations' "Rites of Spring and Save Our Gardens" Benefit and Dance will be held on Saturday, March 21, at CHARAS, 605 East 9th Street. For information or tickets, call (212) 777-7969.

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Upper West Side Garden Group: On January 7, 1998 a bulldozer and a hacksaw put the final touches on the destruction of the **7-17 West 102nd Street Garden**. This garden was one of the last remaining community gardens on the Upper West Side. **The West 102nd Street Garden** was long-considered a model for how people of all ages and backgrounds could work together democratically and create an oasis of beauty and abundance. Founded in the summer of 1991 on the site of a junkyard, the garden in its last season was primarily a "city farm," producing hundreds of pounds of tomatoes, beans, corn, eggplant, squash, peppers, edible greens, flowers and herbs for 40 local families. The garden was host to numerous species of birds and insects, as well as a sanctuary for homeless cats. The elder gardeners participated in mentoring programs for the local

youth and children, who were given the opportunity to grow their own plants and learn about the wonders of nature.

The not-for-profit West Side Federation for Senior Housing is constructing a 54-unit, 7-story building on this site, using funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program.

Ironically, this developer called a meeting to speak to the local community *after* the bulldozer and the chainsaw held their meeting in the garden. What kind of dialogue can take place now?

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According to GreenThumb Director Jane Weissman, all gardens on HPD property are in extreme danger and may not be able to be transferred to Parks Department jurisdiction.

*The NYC Coalition is active also on behalf of those gardens certainly worthy of preservation but not "deemed eligible" for transfer to Parks. "For instance, a garden everyone would consider a success and worthy of preservation, but not park-like enough, is one that grows only vegetables, has a very active membership, and serves as a neighborhood center in an area underserved by the traditional park system."** On the official level, alternative mechanisms for preserving such gardens have been only informally discussed.

NYC Coalition for the Preservation of the Gardens
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