

PARKLAND STRIPS ON THE SUPERBLOCKS



History of City-Owned Parkland Strips on the Superblocks

- There were 6 approx. 50' wide original strips from Houston Street to Washington Square Park on LaGuardia Place and Mercer Street.
 - Parkland from the Education Block on LaGuardia was conveyed to NYU in order to build Bobst Library
 - Open Space privatized to the library's atrium
 - Gould Plaza required in exchange for parkland
- Two strips run east/west between Mercer Street and LaGuardia Place
 - Bleecker Street and West 3rd Street

History of City-Owned Parkland Strips on the Superblocks

- There have been several attempts to re-map the parkland from DOT (Department of Transportation) to DPR (Department of Parks and Recreation)
 - Repeatedly blocked by adjacent landowner: NYU
 - Borough President's Task Force recommendations state that NYU should **not** seek to acquire the city-owned parkland strips, and should support remapping from DOT to DPR.
- NYU is now attempting to obtain all but the LaGuardia Corner Gardens and Time Landscape
 - NYU plans include buildings on the parkland strips:
 - Mercer Street side of the South Superblock
 - Both sides of the North Superblock
 - NYU's Co-Gen facility is under the strip on the Education Block.
 - The "Fourth Tower" (if approved for the landmarked site) would sit partly on the Bleecker Street strip.

History of City-Owned Parkland Strips on the Superblocks

- In 2007, NYU agreed, for its use of the strip on Mercer Street in the Education Block, to **support the remapping of the parkland strips to DPR.**

From the minutes of CB2 Full Board Meeting, March 22, 2007

- **WHEREAS**, NYU, in addition to its intention to partner with the community in designing a new Mercer Park **as compensation for this project's disruptive impact**, has expressed its willingness to work with the community to examine **provision of further benefits to offset the burden of the lengthy construction period and continued operation of the power plant**, such as enhancement of Gould Plaza [...] and **supporting community efforts to transfer authority from DOT to the Dept. of Parks of this area**, as well as of the Mercer St. and LaGuardia Pl. strips, and increasing the days and hours of community access to Coles gym



Current City-Owned Parkland Strips on the Superblocks

- The 5 remaining north/south strips serve vital community uses:
 - LaGuardia Park
 - LaGuardia Corner Garden and Time Landscape
 - Mercer Plaza above Co-Gen
 - Mercer Playground
 - Mercer-Houston Dog Run
- East/west strips provide space, trees, light, air
 - Bleecker Street mature tree grove
 - West 3rd Street wider at Washington Square Village

LaGuardia Corner Garden

presented by Ellen Horan, LCG Vice President



LaGuardia Corner Garden

History

- Previous location was established in 1973
 - On the SW corner of West 3rd St.
 - Eliminated by development
- The Garden moved to the current 45' x 250' location in 1981 after CB2 approval.
- Current location was an empty lot
 - LCD volunteers built the paths and the shed, installed the plumbing and did all other tasks
- Planting began, and an empty lot slowly became the Corner Garden you now know



Current view of what was the first Garden site, now developed

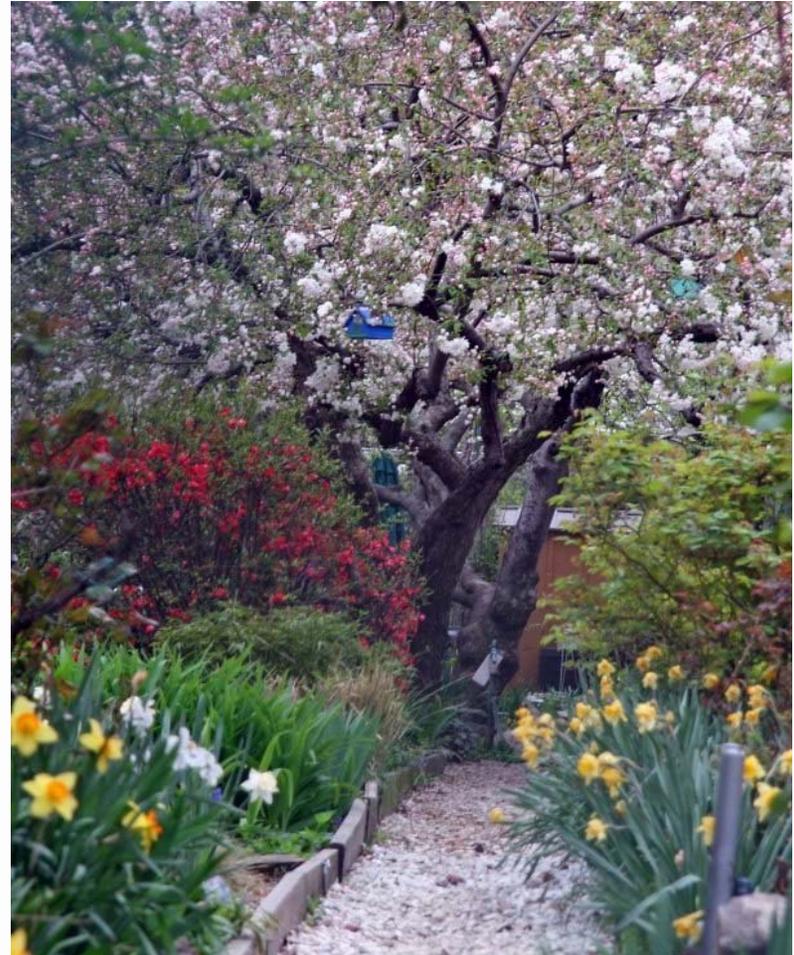
LaGuardia Corner Garden



LaGuardia Corner Garden

Current Uses

- LCG members are all volunteers and carry out a range of duties
 - snow removal, plumbing, keeping sidewalk swept, open garden duty, administration meetings, paying annual dues as well as gardening a plot
- The Garden welcomes people from not only Greenwich Village, NoHo, SoHo and nearby neighborhoods, but also many international visitors every year who take photos as a memento of their visit and discuss gardening with our volunteers
- Our space is small for a community garden in NYC -- but highly visible, and a noted example of a mature garden with fruit and shade trees, interesting specimen plants, and a shaded seating area



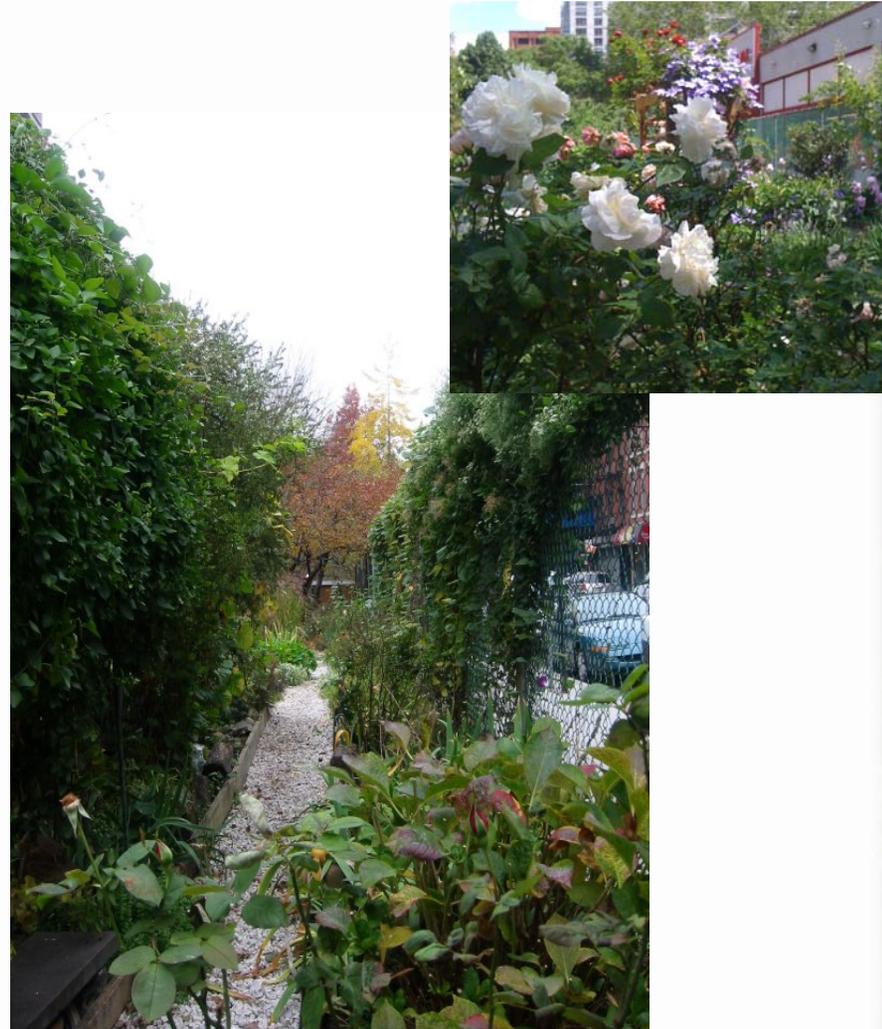
LaGuardia Corner Garden

- LCG offers a range of events and programs including concerts, art groups, school groups and more



LaGuardia Corner Garden

- LaGuardia Corner Garden is not covered by any protections, our license subjects us to development at no notice, (unlike other community gardens, which have various protections from eviction)
- The **“Ribbon of Green”**
 - The parkland strips of Greenwich Village’s Superblocks are closely interrelated
 - Concentrated urban areas need city-wide 'green belts' of protected open spaces.



LaGuardia Corner Garden



Mercer-Houston Dog Run

presented by Beth Gottlieb, MHDRA President



Mercer-Houston Dog Run

History

- Site was once home to tenement buildings which were razed decades ago.
- **1960's:** Neighborhood families with dogs banded together informally to use the empty lot.
- **January 2, 1979:** City Planning Commission certified an amendment to an Urban Renewal Plan allowing NYU to build the Coles Gymnasium.
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- **February 15, 1979:** CB2 approved the amended Urban Renewal Plan, predicated in part by the fact that **“NYU has offered to develop and maintain the rundown Mercer St. strips in keeping with City Requirements and community preferences.”**
- **June, 1979:** Parks & Recreation Committee Report acknowledged NYU's offer to build a dog run, a play area and sitting area, and maintain the Mercer Street strip.

Mercer-Houston Dog Run

History (continued)

- **1981: NYU's Coles Sports Center and dog run constructed**
 - **October 13: MHDRA Incorporation** - Filed with NY State as a volunteer, not-for-profit corporation.
- **1990s: Maintenance and Repairs Needed** - Over time, the run fell into significant disrepair with a tendency for sidewalks and the dog run to periodically sink in spots



Mercer-Houston Dog Run

History (continued)

April 22, 2008: New MHDRA Board sends letter to President Sexton requesting they honor their commitment

March, 2009: Contract signed with NYU to repair asphalt surface to an even grade with adjustments for proper drainage, and an interim site during renovations

July 15, 2009: Official Reopening

Current Uses

Our Members

270 families from the Village, Soho and Noho

315 dogs: MHDRA does not discriminate re: pure breeds, mixed breeds, age, size, grooming, doggie breath, athletic ability

Mercer-Houston Dog Run

Current Uses

- **Requirements for Membership**

- Anyone may apply
- Current inoculations for Rabies, Distemper/Parvo, & Bordetella
- NY State (or other locale) Dog License required
- Annual dues: \$50 (\$25 for Seniors) – covers insurance, hoses, tennis balls etc.
- Compliance with Code of Conduct: requirements to behave in a cooperative & amicable way, to maintain safety, cleanliness, and a stress-free environment for dogs and people

- **Amenities**

- Lights at night
- Hoses for cleanup and scent control
- Two dog-bone shaped doggie pools (one small, one large)
- Annual class pictures of pups under our mature, flowering cherry tree

Mercer-Houston Dog Run

MHDRA: An Asset to the Community

- MHDRA is unusual in maintaining safety and cleanliness
- Aggression is not tolerated
- Non-dog community “regulars” come by to watch after work
- Overwhelming membership response to tragedy in Haiti; thousands of dollars donated for canine rescue teams

The Future of the Mercer-Houston Dog Run

- After 29 years, we are a vibrant and valued facet of the community

Mercer-Houston Dog Run



Mercer-Houston Dog Run
Association

LaGuardia Park

presented by Larry Goldberg, President,
Friends of LaGuardia Place



LaGuardia Park

LaGuardia Place between Bleecker and W. 3rd Streets

History

- Incorporated in **1986**, the Friend's goal was the creation of the Park, to be centered with a statue of the legendary Mayor who helped the city out of the Depression by promoting public works, schools, civic enhancements and honest government.
- In **1995**, the dedication of the LaGuardia statue and park took place. Local dignitaries, Mayor Giuliani and former mayors Abe Beame, Ed Koch and David Dinkins were in attendance.
- The park and statue were wholly commissioned and are maintained by the **Friends of La Guardia Place** membership, consisting of neighborhood residents, businesses, and community leaders who work on a volunteer basis to raise the funds that keep the park healthy.

LaGuardia Park

Current Uses

- In 2008, LaGuardia Park served as the site of an installation of one of the original domes by Buckminster Fuller

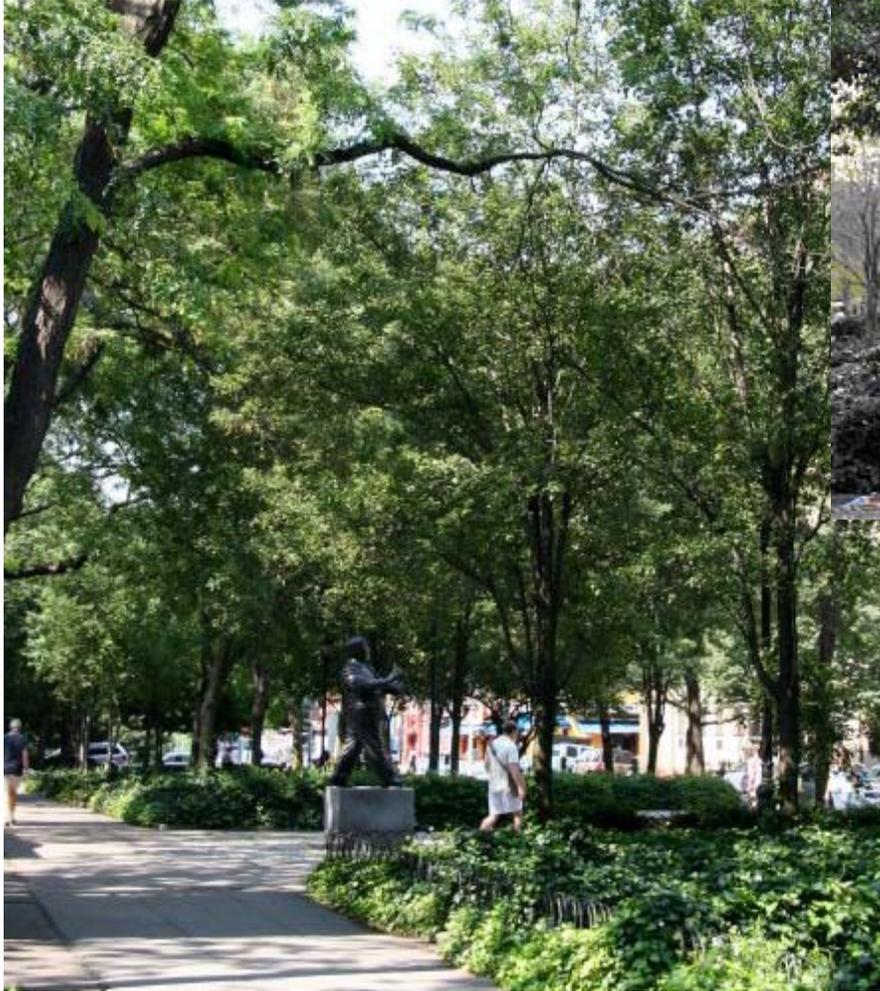


LaGuardia Park

Current Uses (continued)

- Four years ago, Friends of La Guardia Place considered freshening up the 20-year-old site. The result has been Adrienne's Garden, a new toddlers garden to be built on the site.
- Over the last two years, Adrienne's Garden has received approval and encouragement from Community Board #2, the Department of Parks, the Department of Transportation and the Public Design Commission.
- Ground was broken on September 15, 2010.

LaGuardia Park



Mercer Playground

**presented by Enid Braun, President,
Lower Manhattan Neighbors' Organization for Parks**



Mercer Playground

History

- LMNO(P) began as a grassroots effort in 1991 because of the need for parks and playgrounds for families living in SoHo, NoHo, Little Italy and the Village
- The strip on **Mercer Street between Bleecker and W.3rd Streets** was simply an open paved space, traditionally used by the community for children to learn to ride bicycles, play ball, and skate.
 - No other areas existed for activities for older children – after “toddler” years
 - NYU submitted a proposal to the Parks Committee to construct fenced-in “viewing gardens” on the strip. Community members objected to NYU de facto privatization of the strip
 - Tony Dapolito set up a task force that included him, LMNO(P), the WSV Tenants’ Association and Bob Cohen from NYU.
- The Task Force met from 1991 through 1992, leading to a series of meetings with DOT and the Parks Department. Local architect Peter Wormser did drawings of the envisioned park.
- LMNO(P) became a 501-c and began to fundraise while advocating for other playgrounds in the area. We were able to get repairs to the strip next to Coles gym as well as trees planted there, and successfully advocated for a much-needed renovation of DeSalvio Park in Little Italy.

Mercer Playground

History (continued)

- LMNO(P) raised \$198,350 from 1992 to 1996, which includes \$20,000 from awarded by the CB2 Archive Fund, \$75,000 from Scholastic Publishing, \$50,000 from the Horace Goldsmith Foundation, \$2,000 from the New World Foundation, and over \$26,000 from local residents and businesses.
 - Council Member Kathryn Freed allocated capital funds of \$246,000 for construction of the park.
 - LMNO(P) funds paid for the fence, which was designed by two members, Kate Hamilton and Marthe Jocelyn.
- The award-winning final design of the park by Chris Crowley, Parks' architect, worked within parameters negotiated with NYU to eliminate their opposition. This included the two end gardens which required additional fencing, no permanent plantings or structures adjacent to the WSV property line, two large swinging gates at the street for the fire lanes and placing the entrance gates at either ends.
- Mercer Playground held its official opening ceremony on May 15, 1999

Mercer Playground

Public Art Installations

- Part of the vision for Mercer Playground included public art
 - In 2001, Stuyvesant High School students painted two 12' x 80' murals in Mercer Playground, the only space large enough to accommodate these pieces, to express their feelings about the 9/11 attacks
 - In 2004, TransCultural Exchange sited one of 100 international art installations, "The Tile Project," on the Mercer Playground fence
 - In 2006, several artists worked in Mercer Playground to show children and other visitors how different types of art are created



Mercer Playground

Current Uses

- As LMNO(P) envisioned, children use Mercer Playground to
 - Ride bicycles, scooters, rollerskates and more
 - Make up their own games or use bubbles or sidewalk chalk
 - Beat the summer heat in the sprinkler at the north side of the park
 - Take long straight runs in a safe, fence-protected site
 - Have play dates and parties
 - Get much-needed exercise
- Community residents and visitors enjoy Mercer Playground
 - Seating areas for reading or quiet reflection
 - Sun in the central area, or shade from the mature trees
 - Light and air, as well as pollution-cleaning greenery

Mercer Playground



NYU incoming student team-building exercises, Summer, 2010
– more than 200 students and 80 parents

Mercer Playground





Moving Forward

presented by Terri Cude,
Co-Executive, Superblocks Coalition

- The CB2 area has the second-**lowest** amount of Open Space in all of Manhattan
- The city-owned parkland strips provide light, air, space, play opportunities, beautiful plants, exercise location for family pets, seating areas and mature trees to clean our air of pollution
- They are well-served by city ownership and overseen by dedicated volunteer groups

Moving Forward

- City-owned parkland strips not specifically discussed but also important:
 - Mercer Plaza, between West 3rd and West 4th Streets, featured approx. 20 trees, 40'–60' tall. It is now a newly planted roof garden atop NYU's Co-Gen facility.
 - Bleecker Street between Mercer St. and LaGuardia Pl. is a tree-lined walkway that provides shade, air-cleaning for the entire Superblock area, and the antithesis of the “concrete canyons” of Midtown.
 - West 3rd Street between Mercer St. and LaGuardia Pl. is currently hosting NYU construction vehicles and equipment.



Moving Forward

- NYU has agreed to maintain public facilities in the past, and their history with that land gives us no reason to expect that they will be good stewards of public property
 - The parkland strip in front of Coles: maintenance of this land was a promised as part of the agreement to build the Coles Gym.
 - Both the playground (above) and reflecting garden (below) have been locked for years, as they are unsafe and unusable by the community. Yet the apron in front of the Coles Gym is pristine and the Dog Run land was repaired, so there *are* solutions.



Moving Forward

- To build the Coles Sports Center, NYU took parkland from the community.

–“Replaced” it with a rooftop playground which was inaccessible to parents with their children, and eventually closed.

–Therefore, NYU still “owes” the community the open space that the rooftop playground was supposed to “replace.”



Moving Forward

- Gould Plaza was provided as public Open Space in exchange for the strip taken to build the Bobst Library
 - The parkland strip that existed on LaGuardia before Bobst was built was green; Gould is not
 - Often, no seating available
 - Used mostly as a pass-through by NYU students
 - No trees for shade; heat issues
 - Sculpture was removed
 - Slippery glass section makes crossing dangerous in the rain
 - Not at street level; accessibility issues on West 3rd Street side



Moving Forward

- The Greenwich Village community has endured many decades of “as of right” or “purchased property that needs a variance or special permit”
 - Complaints about NYU changing the character of the Village date back to the 1940s
- NYU’s attempt to obtain the city-owned parkland strips is neither as-of-right nor explained.
 - CB2 has asked for a justification of why NYU wants/needs this land, and has not yet received one. NYU has stated that they do not need the land for open space requirements. If that’s true, then why try to take our parkland away?
- Putting parkland between additional buildings **does not** make it more accessible. The parkland strips are currently in the most accessible locations.

Moving Forward

- Attempts were made, in 1967, 1979, 1995 and at other times, to remap the city-owned parkland strips from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Parks and Recreation.
- NYU has continuously blocked the transfer.
- Rather than seeking ownership of this parkland, it's time for **NYU to support remapping to Parks** as the community desires and the Borough President's Task Force recommended.

Moving Forward

- The city-owned parkland strips are needed, desired, and well managed by community volunteers.
- NYU has repeatedly stated that they are seeking to build on the Superblocks only on “their current footprint.” The city-owned parkland strips are **NOT** the University’s current footprint.
- The parkland is not NYU’s property to “negotiate” with during ULURP. They belong to New York City, and are not NYU’s to take or give away.
- **NYU should not seek to acquire the city-owned parkland strips as part of their ULURP, and should instead support their remapping to the Parks Department.**

PARKLAND STRIPS ON THE SUPERBLOCKS

On behalf of the community:
the children, adults, seniors, pets and
visitors, that need and treasure our
precious open space...

THANK YOU.

