

Notes from GROW Workshop 2  
(note: a final version of this workshop 2 report is forthcoming)  
November 15, 2000  
East Side Community High School

Present: Steve Romaleski (CMAP), Christy Knight (CMAP), Renee Muir (ENYUYC), Matt Arnn, Kisasi (Parks Council), Brian Fahd (NYRP), Haja Worley (Project Harmony), Emily Chan (NYCEJA), Wendy Brawer (Green Map), Lou Sones (Red Hook GAGs)

## Community Presentations

### 1. Lou Sones (Red Hook GAGs)

- + This summer, GAGs conducted Research With An Attitude! that surveyed the residential uses, commercial uses, non-compliant uses, vacant lots and abandoned buildings within the designated residential zone in Red Hook
- + GAGs major focus is to get more housing in Red Hook - if the neighborhood has more housing, and compliant uses within the residential zone, then it will be less likely to be sited for any more garbage facilities
- + GAGs completed map and statistics portraying the land uses and zoning in Red Hook:
  - > there is no residential vacancy in Red Hook
  - > of the non-compliant uses in the residentially zoned land area: 14% are vacant lots with nothing on them; 14% are vacant lots with storage/parking/dumping on them; 12% are commercial non-res. uses; 9% are mixed commercial /res.; 45% have single/multi. family homes (excl. low-income project housing); 2% are vacant buildings; 4% are community facilities.
- + The research shows that comprehensive planning is needed that includes plans for the future, quality and protection of open space. Open space planning needs to look at all existing uses, down-zoning of industrial areas surrounding underserved residential neighborhoods. Research needs to consider the potential as green space in each vacant lot, surveying the sunlight, access to water for irrigation, noting whether paved and potential contaminants. This research is an example of community-based information that serves to correct and qualify the city's data.

Lou provided photographs and maps to GROW

### 2. Renee Muir (East NY Urban Youth Corps)

- + ENYUYC has built over \$62 million of housing and re-development including creation of open space: they operate four community gardens and one park.
- + the prospect of having a one-stop shop for open space-related data is exciting! It will mean no more rummaging through old data.
- + ENYUYC conducted a survey of local gardeners to identify: current technical resources and skills of ENY groups, and the information priorities of ENY Greening groups.
- + Renee called over 95 people and completed a survey that included the following questions:
  - Do you have access to the internet?
  - How efficient is your access to information on the internet?

How would this site (OASIS) be useful?  
What kind of information would you like to see on OASIS?

+ Results: 30% have www access; 60% have access at home through a family member; 40% have library access to www; 1% are www proficient; 10% ok proficient; 80% consider themselves part of the greening community; types of information that survey participants would find useful:

1. location of garden supply/retail stores
2. funding resources
3. volunteer resources
4. contact information to others in the greening community/gardeners
5. demographic information of garden users

Community board is the primary source for most people for information about land use. Most surveyed were middle-aged and elders that rarely used the internet through their family members. They responded that the library was inconvenient to use the www because of wait time and hours of operation.

+ Survey recommends that OASIS needs to consider: varying degrees of access to www; need for training; community-based resource center or hub needs to provide on-site training. Community-based partner is vital for OASIS to be successful so that it can serve as a physical place that people can go to get open space information.

+ Comprehensive broad-based planning does not exist for ENY, and it is needed to create open space in ENY - OASIS can be an important resource to mobilize this process.

Renee's survey could be model for other communities, as it factors in the age of respondents, whether food or flowers are being grown, etc., and could be used as a benchmark. All communities are different, and needs should be assessed. A copy of the survey was provided to GROW.

### 3. Haja Worley (Project Harmony)

+ A summer survey by Earthwatch 2000, a youth team found a number of concerns about Harlem's environment.

+ One of the main concerns is the extensive commercial development along 125th St. that encourages in and out shopping and leaving because there are no inviting spaces to relax and enjoy the environment. The plaza at the Jr. State Office Bldg. is neither inviting or green. There is no open space along the commercial strip on 125th St.

+ There are an inordinate number of vacant lots and abandoned buildings in Harlem. Vacant lots are blighted land. In essence, they are 'toxic fields' that are dumping grounds and exacerbate rodent infestation. Project Harmony promotes the creation of green open space on those lots as small and medium sized places for children to play on the block. Right now, children can't play on the block because the streets are dangerous. Would like more sites where people can sit on the block.

+ Currently, there are 16 sites for development in Central Harlem, and 5 are on 122nd St. block (where Project Harmony is located).

- + People do not have front or backyards which further disconnects people from the natural environment.
- + Showed two maps showing land use and open space in Central Harlem.
  
- + Current development plans do not consider open space creation at all. Focus is on in-fill housing. Knowing who is the owner of the land will help community members act on their plans, and OASIS should readily provide that information. It can also help determine who is responsible for development.
  
- + Project Harmony provides information resources to link different neighborhoods. Would like to learn whether a similar development strategy to Central Harlem's is spreading to other communities.
  
- + Would like information from OASIS for open space activism and community planning. Looking forward to using it for "What if" scenarios to map the community's vision for the future.
  
- +Some questions: how regularly will OASIS be updated? Who owns it?

Haja provided copies of the Earth Watch 2000 survey to GROW.

Two of the Community Partners were not able to attend, brief reports of their activities and outcomes will be added shortly.

#### CMAP's Presentation

Christy & Steve presented screens of OASIS in process: What does the city see in my neighborhood? What is actually there? What do we want to be there and how can we get things to change?

Notes on the community partners' Response:

More detail needed on garden and vacant lot status and physical features. Add value to the data. Serve both the lowest common denominator and specialized information seekers.

Provide other data that's more informative than the City's. How can community partners and OASIS help NYC's records be brought up to date? When can more of the CBO's staff and network see and use OASIS?

Parks Council has playground survey data, what other data does OASIS need? answer: Quite a bit! See CMAP's report of 11-20-00 for list of missing data.

How will OASIS help CBOs view progress over time? Will an archive be created so comparisons can be readily made?

What can we do to bring more CBOs in on the development of OASIS? We discussed marketing plans, submitting information to the website, surveys with CECNY's Plant-A-Lot, etc. Can OASIS facilitate CBO's capacity to build up this information?

Listservers already in existence will be linked in, rather than to generate OASIS only discussions. Perhaps OASIS can help build up these existing open space services and coalitions.

Trainers: Americorps or similar tech training project could provide OASIS resources to CBOs, working with Citizens Committee of NYC for a scheduled training session or offering brief trainings at community fairs and organizational open houses.

Lastly, the website should include a bit of OASIS's history, explain what is open space and why and information system is needed to enhance it. How the project was framed, how its usability will be tested. GROW should be presented and the final report available as a download.