



New York City Community Garden Coalition

Questionnaire for Mayoral Candidates **2013**

[Small font - zoom in for larger text]

<p>NYC Mayoral Candidates Responses to Parks & Community Gardens 2013 --by NYCCGC.</p>	<p>1. Do you support the permanent preservation of all community gardens in NYC? How will you achieve this as mayor (zoning, public private partnership, municipal land trust, etc.)?</p>	<p>2. A number of longstanding community gardens are being threatened with destruction; will you protect these gardens by transferring them into the Parks Department? How will you balance the transfer of the gardens to the Parks Department while still encouraging city agencies to allow communities to start new gardens?</p>	<p>3. Do you agree that all community gardens transferred to Parks Department under the 2002-10 Community Garden Agreement are permanently preserved?</p>	<p>4. How would you ensure that community gardeners become the majority decision-makers over community garden policy? How would you increase the transparency of and public participation in community garden policy?</p>
<p>John Liu</p>	<p>Yes. Community gardens help create needed green space in many areas of the City that lack parks. I would explore the City's options, including the ones you mention, and possibly explore laws to permanently preserve community gardens.</p>	<p>Yes. I would protect longstanding community gardens. To ensure that public space is used properly, I would draft guidelines providing for a process for communities to start new community gardens.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>City-wide guidelines on community gardens should make community gardeners the majority decision-makers. To increase transparency and public participation, community gardeners' meetings should comply with the State's open meetings law, which require notice of such meetings.</p>
<p>Bill de Blasio</p>	<p>I support working with neighborhoods to make community gardens permanent, though given the diversity of circumstances across the City, I cannot commit to permanency in all cases. I will use a mix of all of the above options to achieve this goal.</p>	<p>I am committed to preserving community gardens and providing a voice for stakeholders in the process.</p>	<p>I will revisit community garden rules and identify ways of better supporting and maintaining community gardens.</p>	<p>One of my core principles is inclusion. You can see it in my work in education where I've made including parents a major part of everything I've done. As Mayor, I would apply the same principle to community gardens and work to ensure that people from the community, not just the organized community gardeners, but other community representatives, are involved in preserving, building, and expanding and all the key decisions around our community gardens. I would also work with the organized community garden community to develop the best means for not just permanently protecting the gardens we have, but expanding them and developing the best possible governance model that, again, makes inclusion fundamental. Green space of all kinds is essential to making a city livable.</p>
<p>Christine Quinn</p>	<p>As Speaker, I have worked with the NYCCGC to determine how best to permanently preserve most existing community gardens, which are incredible assets for communities throughout New York. Working with NYCCGC, my staff developed a proposal that would protect the land through a new land trust entity. The city would enter into a long term preservation agreement in which as long as the land in the trust is used for open space it is preserved in perpetuity. As Mayor, I will be committed to working with gardeners, and the Parks and Law Departments to determine how to develop and operate this structure in NYC.</p>	<p>I believe that city-owned plots that have been used long-term as community gardens should be transferred to the Parks Department for preservation. At a certain point, gardens become more than just an important amenity - they become an integral part of the fabric of the community, and removing that garden would significantly harm the neighborhood. In addition, I would direct other city agencies to develop mechanisms for short-term contracts with community gardeners. That way even if we have plans to ultimately develop a piece of land for another important purpose, that land can be used as an asset for and by the community for whatever period it remains available.</p>	<p>I believe for any of these plots to be developed, there would have to be alienation legislation passed by both the City Council and the state legislature. And as noted in my earlier answer, I favor the permanent preservation of these gardens through a trust-style mechanism.</p>	<p>I support the creation of an oversight body for community gardeners through legislation or other means, so that they are able to play a greater role in creating new gardens, ensuring that there are responsible gardening groups for existing gardens, and ensuring that gardeners have a say in the day-to-day policies of the City's community gardening program. This oversight body would increase communication between the City and gardeners, which would be especially helpful in preventing unnecessary defaults.</p>
<p>Anthony Gronowicz</p>	<p>Yes. As mayor I will support and advocate for current legislation that I understand was drafted with the help of NYCCGC; we can revise zoning rules to insure that existing gardens are protected; we can pursue different funding sources and programs in addition to the municipal land trust; we can also allot a larger portion of the budget to preserving and maintaining community gardens. I would not support any partnerships with private entities.</p>	<p>Existing community gardens must be permanently protected from any kind of destruction. The benefits to the community, and the time and effort that residents put in to building these gardens must not be dismissed. If gardens are transferred to the Parks Dept., then they must be reclassified as park lands and afforded all the protection and resources available to public parks. I suggest creating a dedicated community gardens agency within the Parks Dept. to facilitate the development of new gardens and streamline the approval process.</p>	<p>No. It's clear from the 2002 agreement that the permanent preservation of community gardens wasn't the objective. Again, I support the current legislation that is being proposed that recognizes the importance of community gardens to the life of a community.</p>	<p>I would appoint a majority of gardeners to any committees deciding garden policy. We need to ensure that communities hold regular meetings, announced well in advance and publicized as widely as possible. Meetings must be open to the public, and all decisions and minutes made readily available to the public.</p>
<p>Sal Albanese</p>	<p>Yes. In NYC and nationwide, we have a long tradition of community gardening. In cities like New York, they play an especially important role in providing affordable access to fresh fruits and vegetables, which are especially tough to find in low-income neighborhoods and food deserts. I would maintain and enforce existing NYC laws that protect the use of vacant lots for gardens. I would also explore additional zoning changes and public-private partnerships with nonprofit organizations to acquire, preserve, and operate space for community gardens.</p>	<p>As the only Mayoral candidate not taking money from developers, I'm liberated to make decisions about land use on the merits. I would consider transferring threatened gardens to the Parks Department, so long as they remained open to community groups who would continue to be the primary decision-makers.</p>	<p>I interpret the CGA as permanently preserving community gardens, though, unfortunately, it excluded many gardens that have since been developed.</p>	<p>I would support establishing a community gardens policy committee, comprised of community gardeners from across the five boroughs as well as city Parks officials, to establish policies and operating rules for community gardens. I would charge such a committee with collecting and maintaining a user-friendly digital inventory of community gardens and public land open to community garden use.</p>
<p>Randy Credico</p>	<p>Not only do I support the preservation of all community gardens, I support an extensive expansion of these gardens as well as using more land for local organic farming. I would do this with the money raised from an ironclad progressive real estate tax, a major wall street transaction tax, a tax on public institutions who use buildings that are not related to education and a tax on non tangible property such as stocks and bonds.</p>	<p>That is a very tricky one because a future Parks Commissioner under a reactionary Mayor could very easily do what Giuliani did to community gardens in the 90s. I would have the most progressive commissioner. We could make great strides. They would have to be encoded in law in a way in which they would be unassailable in court. I have seen too many gardens and too many hospitals turned into land for real estate development. It would come to a hasty end under my stewardship.</p>	<p>They should be but it is always open to Interpretation by the powers that be and you see time and again administrators and public officials not living up to the spirit nor the letter of these agreements. Under a Credico administration, with lawyers out of the Center for Constitutional Rights, we would use all legal means at our disposal to enforce the agreement.</p>	<p>I plan to open an office of whistleblower and transparency run by WikiLeaks Julian Assange and call it the Bradley Manning office</p>

<p>NYC Mayoral Candidates Responses to Parks & Community Gardens 2013 --by NYCCGC.</p>	<p>5. What actions would you take to create more community gardens and urban farms?</p>	<p>6. As mayor, will you increase funding for the Parks Department? Will municipal funds be used to support the Greenthumb program of the Parks Department, which currently operates on funding from federal Community Development Block Grants?</p>	<p>7. How will you increase safety, long-term employment, and maintenance in public parks?</p>	<p>8. How will you increase public green open spaces in underserved neighborhoods, which are many times below the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) open space recommendation of 2.5 acre per 1000 persons?</p>
<p>John Liu</p>	<p>The City needs to do a comprehensive survey of all of its unused properties and abandoned private property. Suitable properties from this survey, especially in areas without access to parks, should be offered to community gardeners.</p>	<p>Yes. Parks have been underfunded for too long. I would support using municipal funds to expand the Greenthumb program to encourage more community gardens.</p>	<p>All of these problems would be solved if the Parks were adequately funded. Adequate funding ensures adequate numbers of Parks officers, increasing the number of parks employees to an adequate number to maintain the parks and better morale, which leads to employees staying longer.</p>	<p>As discussed above, the City needs to do a comprehensive survey of all of its unused properties and abandoned private property. Suitable properties from this survey, especially in areas without access to parks, should be offered to community gardeners.</p>
<p>Bill de Blasio</p>	<p>I support neighborhood efforts to promote and expand community gardens and urban farms. We need to make better use of underutilized and vacant space across the city, while pushing for expanded green space with new developments. I will actively identify underutilized city-owned land and assess whether it should be converted to community garden and urban farms.</p>	<p>While it is certainly true that Parks have been underfunded for many years, given the City's current financial condition and the still weak economy, it may not be possible to increase funding at this time. I will hold the line on further budget cuts to Parks. I think we have to continue to be creative about finding new ways to find financial support for the parks. However, I am also troubled by the fact that some parks in more affluent areas have strong private support, other parks suffer from the lack of such support. While we certainly don't want to discourage private support, we should try to find a way to share that support with more parks. Given our limited resources, any time we can receive federal funds for City projects we should happily accept them.</p>	<p>Having parks doesn't mean much if people can't use them. Protecting the parks has to be an integral part of the PEP and NYPD's overall crime fighting efforts, but the NYPD still does not report crime in parks consistent with Local Law 114. I will change this, while pushing for greater interagency coordination in the interest of safety, employment, and maintenance. And as noted above, we also need to hold the line on budget cuts for the Parks Department and continue to seek other creative ways to finance park operations.</p>	<p>First, I will preserve community gardens that are already established in communities. Second, I will identify unused city properties that might be viably converted into parks, gardens, or open space. Third, when there are rezonings in the area, I will look to use density bonuses for providing open space – similar to the plaza program that we already have.</p>
<p>Christine Quinn</p>	<p>As part of my comprehensive FoodWorks agenda, I passed Local Law 48, which creates a database of city-owned vacant property, and examines whether any of that land is suitable for urban agriculture. We are working with the Bloomberg Administration to expedite that process, as various agencies have taken stock of their land holdings and determined whether that land is suitable for gardening or agriculture. As Mayor, I would make sure that land is regularly assessed for a variety of community uses, particularly for open space, and would then work with advocates and gardeners to make sure they had access to those plots. In addition, I would expand that process so that rooftops of city-owned properties are similarly considered, and I would conduct similar efforts with the private sector, to make sure that more vacant land – whether it's vacant for the long or shorter term – is made available for urban farms and community gardens.</p>	<p>Last year the City Council restored nearly \$38 million to the Parks Department's budget, including \$33 million for maintenance and operations and \$2 million for tree pruning. In January, I was pleased to see the Mayor's Preliminary Budget contained funding for 414 additional Parks personnel, but we will need to work to add even more funding once again. As Mayor I would build on that commitment to funding the Parks Department, and that includes supporting the Greenthumb program. Greenthumb does amazing work with a very small amount of federal money. They support our communities, they support our gardeners, and in order for them to keep doing the amazing work that they do, I would work to increase their funding where possible.</p>	<p>Parks are a vital refuge for residents across the city, and it is critical that they are safe and well-maintained in every neighborhood, regardless of their size, location or number of amenities. When we don't provide equal resources throughout the parks, we are hurting local residents who may no longer view their park as a place for exercise, relaxation or community engagement. I recently wrote Commissioner White requesting additional Parks Enforcement Patrol officers to ensure the safety of our park users, and believe very strongly that every park must be a safe haven for every New Yorker. As mentioned, I have a long record of restoring funding to the Parks Department, including \$38 million last year alone. Keeping our parks as safe, well-maintained centers of community activity also has the opportunity to employ New Yorkers – as patrol officers, construction workers, gardeners, teachers of group exercise lessons, and many other opportunities.</p>	<p>Space is at a premium here in New York City, but as difficult as it is to secure access to open space, it is vital that the City aggressively increase public green space for residents throughout all its neighborhoods. I'll take steps to secure access to that space through a variety of measures: working with all agencies, like NYCHA or DOE to make their land open, accessible, safe and green; devoting resources to developing underutilized or vacant properties into green space; and working to ensure that the rules that regulate publically owned private spaces are enforced so that these spaces remain open and accessible to the public. That means equitably distributing resources so that all kinds of open space – including pocket parks, playgrounds, or community gardens – are safe and quality open spaces. It also means making sure that these spaces are open during public hours, and that there is easy pedestrian and bike access to these spaces throughout the neighborhood.</p>
<p>Anthony Gronowicz</p>	<p>Refer to some of the previous answers. We need to let community residents have a greater say and more leeway in determining what areas in their communities could be used for these purposes.</p>	<p>Yes and yes.</p>	<p>I would hire more full time parks employees for those purposes and keep parks open longer so that more people utilize them at any given time.</p>	<p>We need to revisit CEQR and PlaNYC as per the recommendations of New Yorkers For Parks. While the goals for providing open space are commendable, it's clear the assessment of community needs is lacking.</p>
<p>Sal Albanese</p>	<p>Thousands of New Yorkers have attempted to establish community gardens and urban farms. While many have succeeded, others have run into policy obstacles that have prevented them from cultivating food for themselves. I would work with community gardeners, urban farmers, parks advocates, and community-based organizations to eliminate unnecessary roadblocks and zoning rules so no one who wants to improve access to healthy food is forced to fight through a bureaucratic fog.</p>	<p>As New Yorkers learned more than 150 years ago when the city awakened to find itself lacking enough green space for its growing population, parks are essential to healthy neighborhoods. I will do everything in my power to increase funding to parks and related programs that preserve, restore, or add green space to our neighborhoods.</p>	<p>As part of my public safety plan, I have called for the hiring of 3,800 police officers, most of whom would be assigned to patrol neighborhoods, including local parks. Obviously, any increased funding to parks should be directed to maintaining the workforce and the quality of our parks.</p>	<p>All too often, we have seen wealthy contributors support well-funded parks while green spaces in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx have been left to fend for themselves. No one would benefit more from expanded green space than low-income New Yorkers. I would work with schools and community-based organizations to make room in vacant spaces, public right-of-ways, and new pedestrian plazas so that no New Yorker is denied the benefits of quality green space in their neighborhoods. I would also encourage private donors to contribute to a citywide parks fund.</p>
<p>Randy Credico</p>	<p>I would create a new agricultural tsar position staffed and like the Parks Department it would be run and staffed by environmentalists, organic food growers and progressive green groups and NYCCGC.</p>	<p>Yes Yes Yes. The Green Thumb program is a great example of what can happen with community activism. This is one of the best programs the federal government funds. But it is not enough. There needs to be more. I would take money from the taxes I outlined in question</p>	<p>As part of a massive jobs program created by my team of progressive economic advisors led by Richard Wolff, we would create a local CCC Civilian Conservation Corps into effect and use community policing to insure public safety. There are tens of thousands of unemployed young New Yorkers and this CCC would provide the opportunity to not only work get closer to nature.</p>	<p>Via Verde is one of the successes in the Bloomberg years. The expansion of Via Verde type project particularly in areas in the Bronx where asthma is epidemic, would be a priority. I would also take Rikers Island, and turn it into a community garden, and it would be managed and operated by prisoners in what would be an alternative to incarceration program. They would be paid as well. I have a lot of creative initiatives and with NYCCGC directly involved with the mayor's office we can realize all that we aspire.</p>

<p>NYC Mayoral Candidates Responses to Parks & Community Gardens 2013 --by NYCCGC.</p>	<p>9. How do you envision new housing incorporating accessible community green open spaces and encouraging green initiatives? How would you make policy to integrate community gardens, urban farms, green roofs and other green initiatives in all housing, especially in low-income neighborhoods where it is most needed?</p>	<p>10. The Bloomberg administration has sold and still is selling off parks and key public spaces to developers (Yankees, Ratner, Private Restaurants, NYU, USTA,...) during his reign. What would your policy be towards selling or alienating city-owned land that is currently being used as parks, community gardens, NYCHA public open spaces and other passive and active open spaces?</p>	<p>11. How would you use public open space for both economically developing our food sector and providing healthy food access for our people? What policies would you pursue that would advance this idea, especially in areas that lack food access?</p>	<p>12. How will you encourage partnership between schools and community gardens, as well as the establishment of new school gardens, for use in public curriculum and in school lunches?</p>
<p>John Liu</p>	<p>As the Via Verde project shows, public housing does not have to resemble the boxy, uninspired public housing that is prevalent throughout the City. When building new housing, I would work with HPD and the Housing Authority to expand upon the great ideas used to build Via Verde.</p>	<p>I would stop the alienation of public land. This City is made vibrant by having a good mix of private buildings/property, public parks, community gardens and other public open space. It would be a mistake to believe that the public amenities that we all enjoy will continue to be available to the public if put into private hands.</p>	<p>Public open space can be used for more community gardens, where suitable and also as places where farmer's markets can regularly sell their goods.</p>	<p>Encouraging partnerships between schools and community gardens is an excellent idea that will teach and hopefully inspire students to want to garden and eat healthy. It will also help guarantee another generation of urban gardeners. Working with Parks' Greenthumb program, we can identify community gardens near schools and encourage the schools to work with those in the community. It is a win-win situation for both the school and community gardeners.</p>
<p>Bill de Blasio</p>	<p>Via Verde shows that this model can work. As Mayor, I would work with developers and architects and other experts to figure out the best way to incentivize this type of new construction and also how to best add these kind of elements whenever possible when renewing existing buildings.</p>	<p>Land is obviously a limited resource and that is especially true for parks and green space. I don't think you can say you will never sell any park or green space, but I would have a firm policy that says 1. The first principle is that park and green space must be preserved; 2. Any proposal to build on current park or green space would have to result in not just the same amount but more park or green space that was just as or more useable to the same community; and 3. Even if a project would result in more park or green space there would have to be a compelling reason why the project had to be built on that space, solid evidence of a search to find alternate space, and clear and compelling benefits specifically to the community affected.</p>	<p>By combining community gardens with farmers markets it will be possible to provide more access to fresh foods – and I believe we need more urban agriculture projects particularly in low-income areas that have limited green space and access to healthy food. I am also inspired by recent innovations in public parks that focus on learning gardens and expanded food access, such as Seattle's Food Forest.</p>	<p>As Mayor, I would encourage every school that can include a garden on its grounds to create one. Gardens are a great means for educating children and getting them interested and excited about eating fresh food. In addition, school gardens should be open to parents and other community members so they can care for the gardens during the summer and school holidays. This should be part of a broader effort to connect schools with communities.</p>
<p>Christine Quinn</p>	<p>Incorporating green infrastructure and open space into our neighborhoods through housing development is an important tool for promoting a healthier and more sustainable New York City, and I am committed to exploring a range of mechanisms to better achieve that goal in neighborhoods throughout the city. When it comes to publically owned land, HPD should make the inclusion of green space one of its selection criteria in RFPs, so that innovative projects like Via Verde are the norm, not the unique exception. For private affordable housing development, the City's Qualified Allocation Plan to distribute Low Income Housing Tax Credits should use open space as part of its points system, so that developments that include new green projects – or promise to create substantial programming links to the green assets in the local community – are awarded additional points. Lastly, the City should work to provide technical assistance for those developers that are interested in incorporating green projects into their plan, yet don't necessarily have the background to do so.</p>	<p>My goal is always to preserve or increase the amount of open space available to New Yorkers, which can be seen through my record of protecting and expanding parks and community gardens. In our efforts to bring new jobs, affordable housing, and other critical amenities to neighborhoods, there may be times when we need to consider modifying open spaces in a way that better serves all the needs of a community. But this should only be done with full community input, and with a clear plan in place, where feasible, to replace or expand on the open space that may be displaced.</p>	<p>As Mayor I will continue to promote farmers markets in underserved communities, as I have done throughout my time as Speaker by funding Greenmarkets and Harvest Home. Not only do markets bring commerce and vitality to the surrounding community, they also serve as a critical food access point in communities that often lack other fresh food opportunities. They are also vital markets for locally grown and processed food, so the easier it is for markets to start up, the more we will provide economic opportunities for those in the regional food industry. As I have done through my FoodWorks initiative, I will continue to promote programs that support the development of both local farmers – through programs like GrowNYC's New Farmers Development Program – and food manufacturers. I would also like to see more technical assistance support for those community gardens that want to develop capacity in terms of food processing and selling of their local produce.</p>	<p>We know that incorporating gardens into school programming and schools meals can impact everything from encouraging healthy eating, to illustrating science lessons, and reconnecting young people to the environment. As mayor, I would continue to fully focus on the goals of the admin's grow to learn program by systematically integrating school gardens into doe's daily operations. That can take a variety of shapes, but certainly starts by bringing together DOE and NYCCGC to discuss how to create productive partnerships between schools and their local community garden, so that the partnerships are mutually beneficial for both entities. Additionally, I would continue to develop the Grow to Learn program, so that there are clear standards on how administrators, facilities managers, teachers and gardeners work together; how to approach soil quality so that produce grown onsite can be safely and regularly consumed without delay; and the development of garden/nutrition curricula that could be used by all interested schools.</p>
<p>Anthony Gronowicz</p>	<p>Refer to above answers concerning rezoning, pending legislation and recommendations by New Yorkers for Parks.</p>	<p>I will not allow privatization of any of the above.</p>	<p>I would recommend that portions of community gardens, if they don't already do so, be reserved for growing food for the community, schools and for sale to the public. I would work with gardeners and groups like New Yorkers For Parks to develop those policies.</p>	<p>Schools could "adopt" a local community garden or convert under-utilized spaces for their own community gardens and farms. Explore the many different and creative ways to build gardens and find the one that works for a particular school. Allow students to suggest school lunches based upon what they've grown. Make food safety and production a required part of the curriculum and have students learn hands on from gardeners as an extra-curricular activity. Have schools partner with local CSAs and take field trips to the farms.</p>
<p>Sal Albanese</p>	<p>I've committed to maintaining the public spaces that are so essential to densely-populated public housing complexes. I have also made clear that I support moving NYC toward a zero waste future, in which innovative recycling and composting, as well as energy efficient buildings with green roofs, will play a major role.</p>	<p>As the only Mayoral candidate not taking money from developers, I'm uniquely qualified to make decisions about new developments on the merits. While in rare circumstances private development of public land can yield a net gain for communities, I'm generally opposed the selling off of public assets - be they hospitals, libraries, or park spaces - to private developers.</p>	<p>Whoever becomes Mayor, small-scale food processing jobs will likely play a big role in putting New Yorkers back to work. I would work with my Department of Health, restaurant groups, grocers, schools, and community gardeners to determine how we can establish a pipeline of safe, locally-produced foods from NYC-based gardens and farms to NYC supermarkets, food processors, and cafeterias.</p>	<p>Successful models of school-community garden partnerships already exist in NYC and should be expanded. In my neighborhood of Bay Ridge, a local Jewish center and public school have developed a program for students to learn gardening skills as part of the classroom curriculum. I would like to explore how such programs could safely produce food for local greenmarkets and school lunches.</p>
<p>Randy Credico</p>	<p>There would be a major project initiative focusing on green open spaces under a Credico administration. Green spaces and community gardens are as fundamental to the city as water and clean air.</p>	<p>It would come to an immediate end. It has been an outrage what this administration has done for private developers and sports teams. We will not only end what Bloomberg has done we will roll back big time!</p>	<p>We would mandate that these public spaces our used to benefit all New Yorkers. Gardens and community farms would be one of the centerpiece priorities of my domestic economic and healthy environment development agenda.</p>	<p>No garden left behind in our public schools!</p>