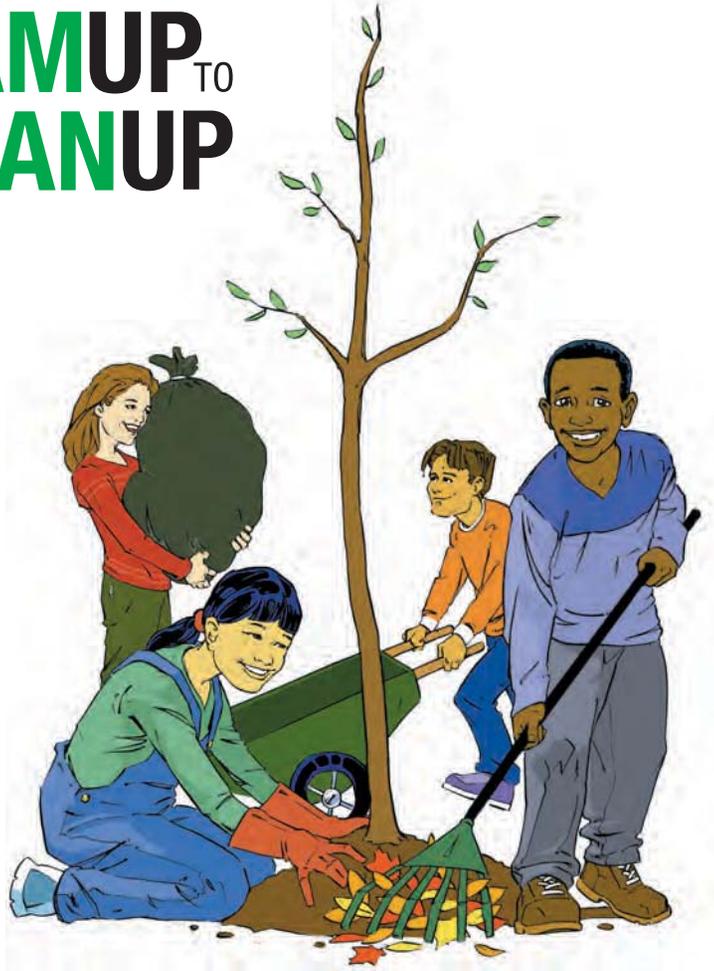


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Citywide Winner
Elementary Division

PS 146
Brooklyn New School

2016 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

This certificate is awarded with the sincere appreciation and esteem of a grateful Department and City in recognition of your school's efforts to help make New York City shine.

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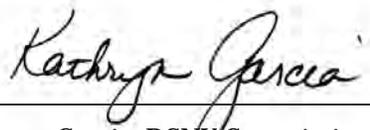
PS 146, Brooklyn New School



The New York City Restoration Project and the New York City Department of Sanitation present this certificate in recognition of your outstanding efforts in transforming your school's blacktop play yard into your "BNS Farm" and "green recess" area.

Your creativity, as well as your beautification efforts, helps make New York City a cleaner and more beautiful place.

Awarded this 10th day of June, 2016



Kathryn Garcia, DSNY Commissioner



Bette Midler, Chair, NYRP



School Information

- School Number: PS 146
- School Name: Brooklyn New School
- School Address: 610 Henry Street
- School City: Brooklyn
- School Zip Code: 11231
- School Population: 662

Contact Information:

- Principal Name: Anna Allanbrook
- Coordinator Name: Barbara Taragan
- School Phone Number: (718) 923-4750

Contest Entry:

- Contest Grade Division: Elementary
- Contest Entry Title: BNS is Lot Greener
- Contest Entry Summary: The BNS community turns a schoolyard parking lot facing a highway and tunnel entrance into a green space that includes farm beds, beneficial plants, a farm yard, a rainwater catchment system, and an outdoor classroom.



Who We Are – Introduction

Brooklyn New School, P.S. 146 (BNS) is a PreK to Grade 5 school in the Carroll Gardens neighborhood of Brooklyn. We have a diverse study body from all over Brooklyn because our lottery-based admission process is open to any child in one of four districts in the borough.

At BNS the 3 “R’s” are taught through the context of the 3 “S’s”: Science, Social Studies, and Sustainability. Our inquiry-based curriculum encourages students to be independent thinkers who develop an understanding of problems facing our city, country, and world—among them polluted oceans, habitat loss, and climate change. More importantly, our kids work on solutions to these problems. Some solutions are just hypothetical plans, like our 4th graders’ proposed designs for mini-ecosystems to be launched around the Gowanus Canal. Some solutions start as dreams and become lessons in the politics of greening, like claiming a concrete lot and working with many stakeholders to turn it green. Some solutions are put right into action, like planting pollinator plants to attract monarchs and other butterflies. All these projects create a sense of hope and a belief in the possibility for change in our students. They learn early on that they can be upstanders for the environment and beautifiers of their everyday spaces, which at BNS are becoming greener and greener each year.

We are presenting for the 2016 Golden Apple Award two projects that both relate to greening, beautification, and reclamation of our urban environment.

Yard Reconstruction Project — BNS Farms

Why a Farm?

When Brooklyn New School (BNS) moved to 610 Henry Street in 1999, our school surroundings were a bleak concrete scape bound on two sides by a highway and an overpass. Our school yard was literally a parking lot filled with staff cars. Plastic bags were the only fruit hanging on the few trees near our school. Because our harsh asphalt world held little that was alive, we took trips to Prospect Park, the Botanic Gardens, and Added Value Farm in order to introduce our children to gardening, ecosystems, insects, and plants.

Over the years we began more and more to realize that for BNS to achieve its mission of teaching students through authentic, hands-on, real world education, we needed to put greening our world at the center of our school's foundational goals. But how could we connect children with the natural world at a school that is perched above the Brooklyn Queens Expressway and surrounded by blacktop? How would we combat the effects of the now widely accepted theory that a lack of connection with the natural world is contributing to, among other things, obesity and attention deficit disorder? We had to allow more space for the kids to get wet and dirty. To make that goal a reality, we had to create opportunities for students to put their hands in soil, to do the wet, dirty work right here at BNS.

With student, family, and staff support, step by step, concrete block by block, our community has transformed our space and made it green. The change has been slow, taking years to make a real difference. First we installed trough planters at the school entrance. Our next move was to create tree pit guards to protect the soil we were regularly aerating and planting with daffodil bulbs. Then we built movable planters and filled them with edibles, Three Sisters, and pollinator gardens. Our compost center was built as an integral part of our garden plan, so that the children could see their cafeteria waste transform right into plant food.

And over the past year and a half, our longtime dream to make part of the blacktop play yard into a permanent working farm with dirt beds for growing and messy play we call "green recess" is finally becoming a reality. Now every grade takes part in enjoying and maintaining our green spaces as they learn about environmental issues.

What Did We Do? — The Long View

In 2004 we formed the BNS/BCS Green Committee, made up of staff and parents. Our mission was to "create an environment that connects our students to the natural world through plantings and gardens so that they can learn and work in balance with the natural world." And by creating this environment we hoped we would meet another goal: "to ensure that people learning and working in the school have healthy air to breathe." Our 100-year-old building, with its windows opening onto the congested and

polluted roadways that divide Red Hook from Carroll Gardens, worried families and staff members. We wanted to have a bamboo screen along the fence that separates us from the BQE to keep highway fumes out of our classrooms.

And so the journey began...not always straight ahead, with detours and road blocks for sure, but steadily and with vision of grand projects and small. Trying to put a green roof over our gym was the first project we explored, and it is still being explored to this day. But we also wanted immediate visual change, a welcoming green element to our building, and our first planters were bought—3 galvanized troughs to live at our school entrance. Three were purchased, one disappeared over the summer, and two of them remain today, always full of something colorful, thanks to the 4th and 5th grade classes who maintain them.



By

2008 BNS Farms started taking root. Students, families, and staff built moveable wooden beds that provide 400 square feet of gardening space in our large play yard bordering Rapelye Street. On the Cole Street side of our school building, boxwood shrubs were removed so that we would have space for more raised beds. Fifth graders designed and researched water catchment systems, and the winning design was soon installed to catch water from the roof of the vermi-compost shed that we built in the same year. This system is still in place today and provides us with an important source of water for the thirsty garden beds.



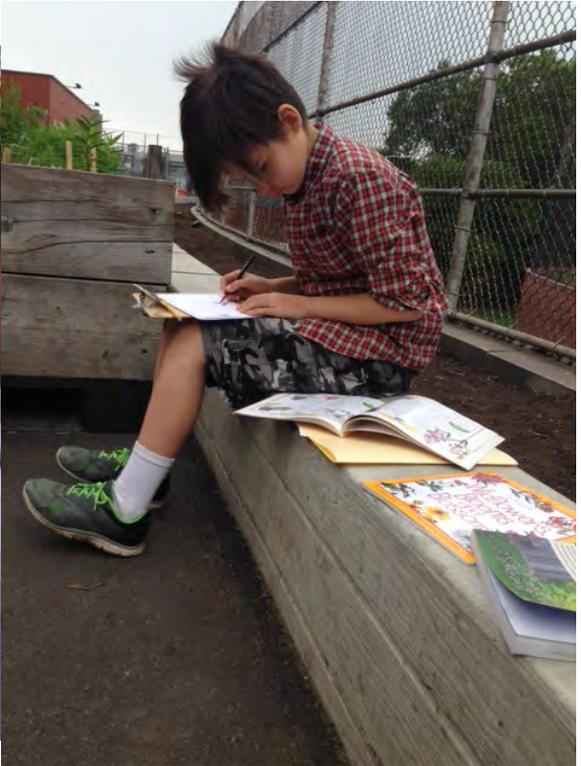
The outside of our school was enhanced around the same time by the addition of expanded tree pits. Thus began the tradition of planting and caring for these mini-gardens by first and fourth grade students.



It took some convincing of the community and custodians to break up the concrete, but we succeeded in getting NYC's Million Trees project to plant 7 trees around the edge of our smaller school yard, starting what we hoped would be eventually become a think green buffer to the highway.

In 2011, we added more movable beds, but instead of edibles we planted pollinator gardens, which are planted and cared for by fifth graders, who study the life cycle and migratory path of the monarch butterfly. Below are fifth graders working on labeling the beds and creating pollinator guidebooks to teach the younger students about what they're observing in the beds.







The pollinator garden's success is proven by all those who visit, human and insect.





In 2011, our Green Committee also won a grant from Lowe's to build an outdoor classroom from a used shipping container. We call this the Eco-Casita, and as a teaching space and farmhouse it became the anchor for our yet to be built farmyard.



At long last, in 2014 we were able to begin work with the School Construction Authority to completely redo our large schoolyard, making room for in-ground beds, permeable surfaces, and a space for a meadow of bamboo to shield our eyes, ears and throats from the BQE. It was shockingly beautiful to see dirt instead of blacktop.

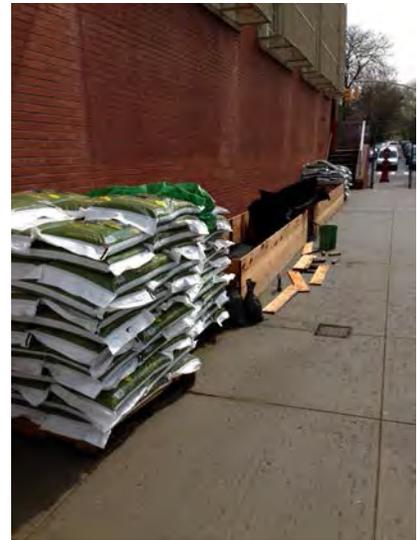
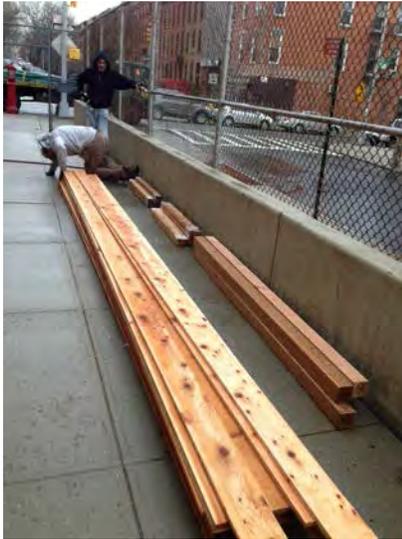


In 2015, our farmyard is completed with in-ground beds, permeable surfaces, and...



the original Green Committee dream come true: a screen of bamboo!

At the same time, the Cole Street beds were rebuilt to make permanent homes for our Three Sisters Gardens and other edibles.



The original moveable planters were moved once again, and now they form a meadow of wild flowers along Rapelye Street, greeting members of the school and the wider community.

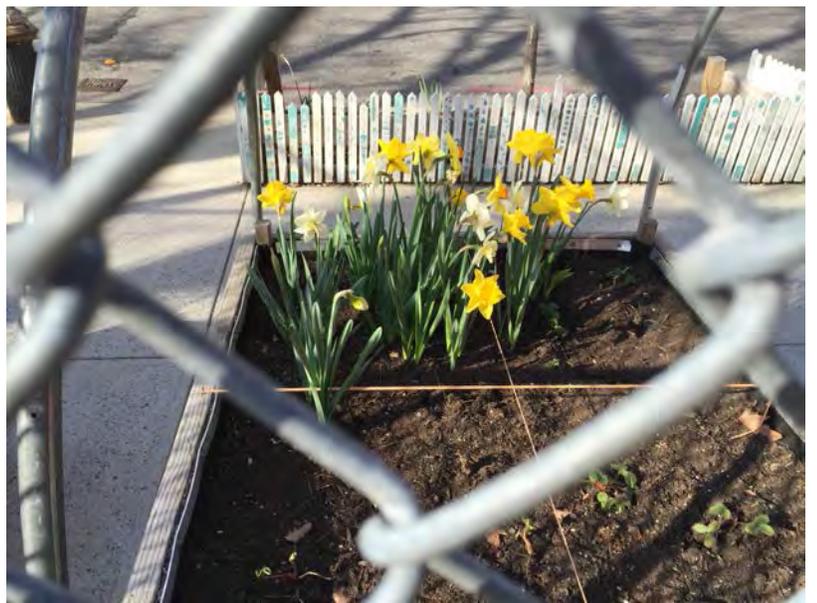




This beautiful vine beautifies a fence at BNS. Neighbors have been collecting seeds to start their own cypress vine.



We have received hundreds of daffodil bulbs the past few years from the New Yorkers for Parks 9/11 Daffodil Project. Our 1st and 4th graders put them in planters, in tree pits, anywhere there is earth!





Since September of 2008, the BNS administration has supported the position of Sustainability Coordinator. The planning, designing, construction and maintenance of 610 Henry green spaces is carried out by this educator. Working with the entire community, including educators, custodial staff, families, the Green Committee, the 5th Grade Green Club, and our sister school, the Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies, the Sustainability Coordinator is responsible for our ability to green our space.

Not limited to our school community, the Sustainability Coordinator has collaborated with a number of outside organizations to get the funding and technical support to enhance our outdoor space including:

- Toshiba
- Lowe's
- Green Thumb
- Million Trees NYC
- Eco-Schools

Added Value Farm
Edgemere Farm
National Wildlife Federation
529 Acres
The Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Balmori Designs

Our objective for BNS Farms and for the surrounding green projects has always been to integrate the work into the school's science and social studies curricula. To be meaningful and long-lasting and to motivate classroom teachers to use the space, everything had to be designed with the curriculum in mind. BNS Farms is now integral to each grade's inquiry-based learning.

The green spaces also had to incorporate students' developmental needs—the need to play, to imagine, and to get wet and dirty and work outdoors in nature.

Educational Components

What follows is a description mainly of how science, social studies, and sustainability intersect in the curriculum. However, if we look at the students' work, it is clear how closely art, ELA, mathematics, and technology are also interwoven.

Fifth Grade

For fifth graders, the overarching theme for the entire school year is learning to use your voice to be an active citizen... to be an upstander for a just cause. In social studies, they learn about bullying and the role of the upstander through the context of WWII and The Holocaust. In science the focus is on climate change and its impact on humans, animals, and the environment. To the fifth graders, the potential impact of climate disruption and shrinking habitats is introduced through their study of the monarch butterfly and its migration. Thus, the planting and maintenance of the pollinator garden beds falls on their shoulders.





Students learn about the lifecycle and migratory patterns of the monarch and how closely tied their success is to the success of the milkweed and other plants' lifecycles. They realize how interconnected these species are. (LS2 Ecosystems: Interdependence.)

A group of 5th graders from the Green Club got firsthand experience with what it means to be environmental upstanders through their work on the Cole Street Triangle. This work is described in a separate section below.

Fourth Grade

The polluted Gowanus Canal cuts through our school's neighborhood and stitches together 4th graders' study of historical New York. It is through this creek turned canal that students compare and contrast the environmental impact of Indian nations such as the Lenape with that of the Dutch. By the end of the year, this waterway unites our efforts to leave our community a bit greener.

We start by using historical maps of Brooklyn (images created by the Mannahatta



Project) and trips to Jamaica Bay and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden's Native Flora garden to help students visualize the New York of 400 years ago. Students label nearby sidewalks with chalk to indicate where wetlands and forests once stood. We zoom in on what was the Gowanus Creek, now a Superfund Canal, and question how it got polluted and whether it can be made healthy again. Students answer: No Forests! No Wetlands! Dumping toxic waste nearby or directly in waterways! Combined sewer overflow! They meet with environmentalists and experts from the EPA and the DEP to learn about combined sewer overflow and other issues.

Fourth graders also take a 2-night overnight to Ashokan Camp, where the concept of a watershed is made concrete as students connect their upstate New York trip with the trip our city's drinking water takes—albeit in reverse! They touch water that might eventually wind up in their water bottles. These experiences help students gain a deeper awareness of the importance of protecting our watershed. When we return, students are motivated to work on issues such as: storm water run-off, artificial wetlands, sustainable use of water, protecting forests, renewable energy, and fracking.

The fourth graders' role in our local green space is caring for the tree pits in and around our school...turning them into absorbing, filtering 'wetlands.' They clean up pollution and prevent it from going into the drains that go directly to the waterways. Overheard conversation during a work session...

"Look, this tree pit is healthy. It is working like a wetland. Look how it is absorbing the water. Wow. So cool." Another replied, "Yep, just like the olden days."



In honor of their work, each year, each student creates a picket with a message about



the importance of water conservation, trees, and wetlands and forests. Together they form a guard to protect our trees and to promote environmental stewardship.

Additionally, our fourth graders grow, harvest, and maintain our Three Sisters gardens...a metaphor for their work as a team made up of individuals that support each other much as corn, squash, and beans support each other's growth. Their work supports their study of Native Americans. (LS1; Organisms have a unique and diverse life cycle but all have in common birth, growth, reproduction and death.)



This year, students are also working on creating solutions for combined sewer overflow, including floating islands and constructed wetlands that can be placed in and around drains that lead directly to waterways. Some students are moved to educate the mayor on the issue of CSO and offer their suggestions:

Dear Mayor DeBlasio,

This year, I have studied the New York City water system in science. My class has visited many places, such as:

- The Queens Botanic Garden
- The Gowanus Conservancy
- Carroll Gardens city streets
- Lowe's parking lot

On these trips we have learned about permeable tiles, greenroofs, eco-sausages, bioswales, and much more. One thing I think is really important to helping the environment, is bioswales.

Bioswales help the environment, because they are shaped like a bowl, so they collect water. The water then seeps into the soil, making it so that it won't run all over the city, collecting trash and pouring it into the sewers. Because the sewers can only hold three inches of water before they overflow-

dumping trash into rivers, lakes, and oceans- bioswales also help the environment by slowing down storm runoff, making it harder for the sewers to overflow.

So now, you see why I think there should be more bioswales in New York City. And I hope you consider my advice.

Sincerely,

Delilah ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
P.S. 146

Third Grade

Third graders study the history of China, its culture, geography, and inventions. Part of this unit is an intense study of silk and the moth that makes it. Students discover the mysteries of a tiny black dot that eventually becomes a larva and then an adult moth. And they learn about this creature's dependence upon one plant—the mulberry.

As part of the China unit, they also discover and test the properties of paper (invented in China) and make their own recycled and plant-based papers from leeks. They also use traditional ink brush drawing to draw the bamboo plant, important in Chinese culture. As part of BNS Farms, we are planning to use the bamboo that we have already planted and are also going to plant mulberry for raising our silkworms and also leek plants to harvest and make paper with.

Second Grade

Second graders study the history of New York City by going "back in time." They design solutions to living on an island using simple machines and mechanical energy including collecting, filtering, and transporting drinking water. Gardening connections include using pipes and gravity to irrigate our garden beds.

First Grade

First graders are the BNS farmers who raise early spring and late summer/ early fall crops. Lettuce, herbs, tomatoes, beans, radishes—all are planted, maintained and harvested, and eaten by these students. Working in both small and whole class groups these students discover the life cycle of plants as they see for themselves a bean or strawberry flower turning into the fruit. In the second half of the year, these farmers learn about the inter-connections between helpful and harmful insects in their farm beds. How cool to watch a food chain in action as plants are eaten by aphids who are in turn eaten by ladybug beetles.



And how rewarding to find yourself part of that food chain as our students partake in



preparing greens for salad feasts that are shared at Farm to Cafeteria Day, Ecorama (our June earth day), and other harvest celebrations.





Not content to wait for insects to find our farms, this student also refurbished the Bug Hotel to attract helpful residents to our farm.

Kindergarten

Water, its properties and importance, is the focus of Kindergarten's year long inquiry, and what better place to muck around with water than our farmyard and adjoining green spaces? Here they are at work during “green recess.” Tasks include watering plant beds, digging up soil, putting mulch on beds, hiking through the “meadow.” Then pulling up the weeds to make space for fruit trees and using the weeds to make a weaving!



Pre-K

Forests and trees are the focus of this grades' inquiry based curriculum. Logs and tree trunks brought back to our school yard not only beautify the space and create a habitat for helpful organisms; they provide a natural environment that can be reimaged each time students play with it, bringing beauty to our play.



All Grades

BNS Gardens is our living laboratory for teaching about health, nature, and sustainability. It is a place filled with surprises that motivate learning, even (especially?) during recess. On their own, students discovered monarch caterpillars, praying mantises and other critters this fall. Other students discovered that arugula tastes good. And that basil makes salad dressing taste better. Fairy houses appear in and around our planters. Come during recess and find kids sweeping, watering, and learning that working outdoors is rewarding and fun. In short, the entire community benefits from

being outdoors even in an urban setting right off of a highway.

Project Analysis

When we first started our work, we realized that if we didn't take into account the entire community's needs, we would fail. We needed to win the support of the custodial staff, BNS and BCS teaching staff, and the residents of the streets around our school. Vermicomposting had to be done so that we would remain a rodent-free zone. The schoolyard not only had to house our young farmers but had to accommodate middle school students who wanted to play basketball and soccer. We learned that whole class farming works sometimes, but the most effective farming took place in small groups.

We had to have a place for young students dig, or they would dig in beds filled with our seedlings. Students wanted to walk in and explore our new widened wooded area—we had to replace the fragile sedum with tall grasses. We had to tell staff when it was okay to harvest fruits and vegetables; otherwise, a lesson on flowers turning to fruits might have to be taught with purchased plants. Our educational programming had to fit around the social studies and science themes as well as practical matters such as prep schedules and lunchtime recess realities. Our wildflower beds had to appeal to homeowners who lived across the street. In short, what wouldn't work was a narrowly focused point of view about what beautifying and greening meant at 610 Henry Street.

Applicability to other schools

Our advice to other schools is to create a dedicated position. Without a full-time gardening leader or sustainability coordinator this work cannot be maintained and used to its utmost potential. Other advice includes: Figure out how to collaborate with experts and organizations who want you to succeed. Form a committee. Get parents involved. Meet. Dream big but plan to carry out small steps. Keep minutes. Reach out to the community. Use people's strengths to make parts of the dream happens little at a time. Integrate and involve teachers at every step of the way. Don't forget out of class staff, including art and music teachers. Be patient and persevere!

Measuring Success

At each step of the way, we measure success by the respect our students and the wider community have for the farm and plant beds. By neighbors stopping and asking for the name of a vine creeping up our fence. Or asking for seeds so that they can plant their own. We measure success by watching children eat fresh herbs and vegetables, even as they name the plants and their parts.

Future Plans

Contest prize funds could go towards our goal to plant pollinating plants to attract beneficial insects along our fence facing the Cole Street Triangle and, if we are

eventually allowed, part or all of the Cole Street Triangle. Depending on the amount of funding, we would also like to build a cold frame to extend our growing season and extend our pollinator plants to turn Henry Street into more of a plaza. We never stop dreaming, and the work can always expand.



Here is a reference timeline of all the projects, events, and collaborations that lead to having a real working farm in our school play yard.

- 2006: Kids cooking class, using locally sourced ingredients, begins
- 2006: "Portable" farmers markets are set up at BNS in order to bring locally sourced food to the community
- 2006: First cafeteria recycling of beverage containers
- 2007 to present: The first BNS/BCS Earth Day celebration happens - zoologist bring animals and speak to the kids about the importance of species diversity...this event continues as Ecorama a during the school day event
- 2007: BNS/BCS wins the \$7,000 Golden Apple Award from DSNY; both schools start a composting program and expand cafeteria recycling to include paper as well as metal and plastic
- 2008: 1000 daffodil bulbs are planted in the newly expanded tree pits on Henry St
- 2008: Million Trees NYC plants seven trees in the small yard
- 2008: BNS participates in the first Garden to Cafe event - a milestone on the road toward the office of School Foods sourcing locally produced food
- 2008: School wide composting and recycling program implemented on a large scale; BNS upper grade students rotate a grade at a time to supply volunteers to help during lunch recycling.
- 2008: Rainwater catchment researched and designed by grade 5
- 2008: 400 sq feet of garden built by BCS Green Club and BNS parents
- 2008: BNS garden is awarded Green Thumb Community Garden Status
- 2008: \$13,000 in grants are awarded to the green committee this allows the school to

build the rainwater catchment system as well as large scale vermi-composting system

2008: Second annual Earth Day is celebrated - local foods, up-cycled crafts and a composting demo presented by BBG make for an exciting evening

2008: Position of Sustainability Coordinator is created. Works closely with science coach and teachers to incorporate sustainability literacy into curriculum across the grades

2009: Green 15 Newsletter is founded by BNS parents as a way to connect eco-minded folks throughout the district

2009: BNS becomes a DSNY composting educational site

2009: Second year of Garden to Cafeteria event

2009: Rainwater catchment system built on the first Earth Day of Service

2009: BCS students build 100 sq. feet of garden space

2009: Outdoor classroom - Eco Casita - is conceived; a \$50,000 grant is awarded to build the project

2010: BNS is featured on the 'Lazy Environmentalist' highlighting vermi-composting system

2010: BNS partners with a farmer (within the community) and forms a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

2010: BNS celebrates the steps it is taking toward Educating for Sustainability by having an "Earth Day Museum"

2010: Kid's Kitchen is built with the help of \$7,000 grant; cooking classes begin

2010: An additional \$50,000 grant is awarded to finish the Eco -Casita

2010: Brad Landers awards BNS \$5,000 to support sustainability efforts

2010: BNS wins \$5,000 from the NYC for implementing energy saving initiatives

2011: Construction of Eco-Casita begins

2011 to present: BNS composts 2 tons of the food waste generated by the students. It is processed by BNS/BCS students and used in the school gardens

2011 to present: BNS/BCS recycles 60% of the building's waste

2011 to present: Food is produced in gardens on school grounds for Garden to Cafe event as well as classroom activities

2011 to present: 100 sq feet of garden space is dedicated to create a pollinator garden - it is planted by the 5th grade

2011: BNS is featured on News 12 highlighting green initiatives

2011 to present: The Green Studio—a sustainability resource room—is created out of an underutilized space

2012 to present: Third Graders plant sea grass at Plumb Beach supported by their K buddies

2012 to present: Ecorama Blog is started to document student work and our Sustainability Efforts

2013 to present: BNS becomes a Green Thumb school

2014: BNS is awarded an Eco-Schools Green Flag

2015 to present: Green recess is run out of the Eco-Casita led by Sustainability Coordinator

2015 to present: Our new farm with in-ground beds is built in our large playground

2015 to present: We place movable planters on Rapelye Street to create a butterfly "meadow"

2015: BNS is awarded a DOS Golden Shovel award for recycling and a Golden Apple Award for Recycling and Repurposing

Cole Street Triangle Reclamation Project

What it is:

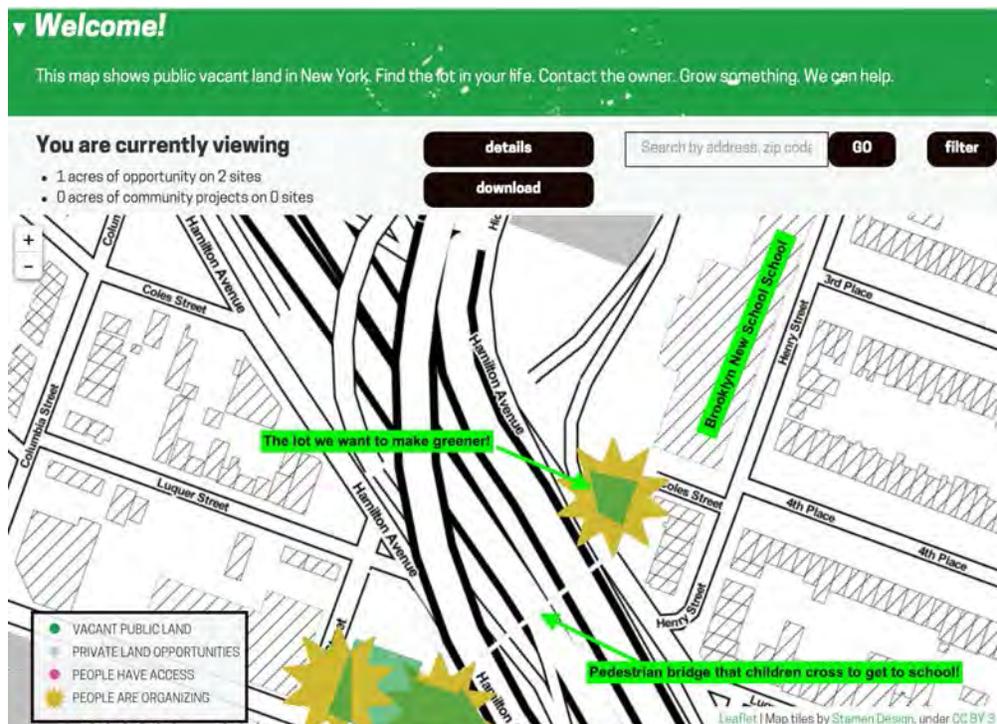
The Cole Street Triangle is a vacant lot that is wedged between our school building and the BQE overpass leading to the Battery Tunnel. It is a noisy, blighted pad of concrete that students pass every day coming over the pedestrian bridge that leads to the school from Red Hook, and we want to make it a green space!

What we did (and are still doing):

We have been wanting to beautify the ugly, unwelcoming, concrete Cole Street Triangle for years. Then in December 2014, we saw the lot featured on a map made by a nonprofit organization called 596 Acres. 596 Acres is an advocate for community land access in NYC, and they identified the Cole Street triangle (which they call “unmapped lot# 1”) as having potential for development as a community space. Ever since our sustainability coordinator Johanna reached out to them, 596 Acres has been giving advice to BNS students and staff about organizing an awareness-building campaign, helping write a proposal to the Department of Transportation about what we want to do with the space, and reporting on their blog about the intricate political process of getting permission to use public land.

Here is a link to “our” lot at 596 Acres: <http://livinglotsnyc.org/lot/6000030001/>

And here is a screenshot of the map showing the site where “People are Organizing.” BNS is those people!



This project has turned into as much a lesson in political advocacy for beautiful spaces as it has been physical work to make a neighborhood place greener. Here is an action timeline:

Step 1... Build Awareness and Dream

Building awareness started out pretty straightforward. The 5th Grade Green Club didn't have a lot of gardening to do in the cold winter months, so they stayed indoors and made a dream banner. Then they hung it on the outside of the school yard fence that borders the Cole Street Triangle for all the pedestrians and BQE traffic to see. The idea was to educate anyone who passed by the triangle, letting them know that it was public land and had the potential to be changed into something beautiful.



As the weather warmed up, so did the Green Club. They brought more kids down to the Cole Street Triangle, armed with chalk and some inspiration in the form of a movable planter bursting with green.



Despite having this capable wheeled pallet mover, it was hard work getting the planter down from the school yard to the triangle.

The kids painted questions on the sides of the planter to pique neighbors' and drivers' curiosity: "Want it Greener?" they ask.





Teamwork was required to chalk a big sign for all to see, pedestrians and vehicles alike.



The chalk sign along the pedestrian walkway reads:
BNS & BCS 596 ACRES I can be a “lot” greener.

Science teacher Barbara then had the idea to share the Green Club’s Cole Street Triangle plan with 4th graders, because there was a clear curricular tie-in. The 4th grade studies water systems, combined sewer overflow, and how important bioswales and permeable surfaces are to help curb polluted runoff into the city’s waterways. Since part of the plan for the Cole Street Triangle was to argue for

the need to break up concrete and make more permeable land, the 4th graders got involved, paid a visit to the site, and wrote their own aspirational messages on the pavement:



Let's Grow More Green



We want this! More trees

Step 2... Make a Plan and Share It

The Green Club reached out to more peers in the 5th Grade Government Club to help them generate ideas for building more community awareness. The clubs also combined their efforts to write a proposal to the Department of Transportation detailing what they'd like to see at the Cole Street Triangle.

The kids and Johanna started by drafting their vision and 529 Acres posted it on their blog so it could be shared with the BNS and BCS school communities. We knew early on that any changes we could make to Cole Street Triangle would benefit both our schools, so we got the middle and high school on board.

Here is 529 Acres' post:

Mary @ 596 Acres uploaded

DOT Vision Process Draft by BNS / BCS

Here's what the schools are working on so far!

We were also talking all along with helpful aides in our City Councilmember Brad Lander's office to help advocate for our cause and give us advice about who to talk to in the Department of Transportation.

And we shared our work on the BNS Ecorama Blog as well:

<http://bnsecorama.blogspot.com/2015/07/a-midsummer-nights-dream.html?m=1>

As part of our proposal package we were developing for the DOT, we needed to show community support for the plan. So the Green and Government clubs planned a petition signing party! Out came the chalk again, and kids dotted the pedestrian walkway to Red Hook with plants and drawings to grab some folks' attention and get them to sign.



You can see our petition and the signatures we collected in the final proposal attached below.

At the party, we served lemonade with fresh garden mint and collected over 100 signatures! That pushed our overall signature collection to about 400 names.



Step 3... Persistence—Continuing the Work

There are many positive educational outcomes we can point to that came from this work. We explored what it is to be an informed citizen, what it is to exercise our rights to petition and have a voice in our government. We learned that collaboration with other organizations and among different groups within our communities is necessary for making change. We learned that sometimes change takes a long time, and we have to be patient and persistent.

Initially, the Department of Transportation heard our voices and responded, yes, we can make the Cole Street vacant Triangle into a community green space! But then things became more complicated. We learned in the fall that the city and state transportation authorities overlap in this area because of the highway, which is regulated by the state. Once the state was notified of our plans, they immediately refused to turn the property over. According to the state, the lot is periodically used for “staging” during road construction.

So where do we go from here? It is a tricky convergence of two different levels of government - city and state. We took a break this fall to figure out a game plan, and the current 5th graders have planned a meeting this week with our Councilman Brad Lander to get recommendations on how to proceed and make this project a reality.

In the meantime, a tiny island of green remains as a beacon of hope for our kids.



Here is the full proposal we sent to the NYC DOT:

BNS Green Club

April 15, 2015

Dear Department of Transportation Official Polly Trottenberg:

We are from the Brooklyn New School (BNS) and the Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies (BCS) at 610 Henry Street. BNS is a Pre-K to 5 school; BCS has students from 6th through 12th grade. We are seeking your permission and support in creating a green space just outside of school property. The place we are hoping to transform is currently an abandoned lot at the end of Cole Street. It is adjacent to the BQE overpass bridge that connects our school building to Red Hook. Seeing that very unattractive empty lot is a depressing way to start the day for those who walk across the bridge from Red Hook to school every morning.

The garden we want to create in the space would be a public space, not just for our schools. Neighbors could stop by the space and it would just be a pleasant place to spend time. Our schools could benefit from it too. The middle and high school students can eat lunch there with their teachers' permission and supervision, of course. We have signed petitions that include BNS/BCS staff, children, and families as well as community members neighboring the lot.

The green space wouldn't be used to grow produce; it would be a place where native plants could thrive, mostly on their own, with a little help from students once in a while. We could also install self watering planter systems to help out.

Most importantly, we will be seeking help from organizations such as Green Thumb, Parks Department, Kids Gardening, and Grow Green. We are also reaching out to government officials including Mayor de Blasio. 596 Acres is helping us to reach our goal to convert this space into a green space, and with their support and your permission, we hope to change an empty lot into a beautiful green space.

Here is the link to our blog to see what we have done so far:
<http://bnsecorama.blogspot.com/2015/04/green-club-hanging-banner.html>

Sincerely,

Green Club Student Members:

Talya Karmen-Chan *Talya Karmen-Chan*

Anna Kabwa *Anna Kabwa*

Government Club Student Members:

Selena Ishikawa *Selena*

Marlen Popkin *Marlen*

Copy: Johanna Esteras, BNS Sustainability Coordinator

Anna Allanbrook, BNS Principal *Anna Allanbrook*

Scill Chang, BCS Principal *Scill Chang*

610 Henry Street . Brooklyn, New York 11231 718-923-4750

The Brooklyn New School (BNS)/Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies (BCS) Vision for the Cole Street Triangle.

The Cole Street Triangle is right outside of our schoolyard gate. Presently, when we look out through the fence we see barren concrete, hear (and smell) cars and trucks heading toward the BQE and the Battery Tunnel. It is a blighted view. How amazing to have a butterfly pollinator garden to muffle and mute and screen the smells and sounds and sights. So that even when we weren't in the triangle a green space and all that a green space can bring--birds and butterflies and other insects--it would be visible to our staff, students, the wider community. Even the people in the passing vehicles would be able to appreciate a natural space.

Our Track Record: BNS/BCS has been farming at our school for over 10 years using our own composting and rain watering harvesting system and other sustainable practices. Our produce is eaten by our students regularly including at formal events such as Farm to Cafeteria Day and our Earth Day Celebration. We are a Green Flag school that has won numerous other awards for our environmental work. All of our gardening work is closely connected to our science and social studies curriculum. For details please visit: <http://bnsecorama.blogspot.com/>

We envision:

- A fenced-in area that contains native plants that attract pollinators such as the endangered monarch—a butterfly sanctuary. (No edibles.)
- Benches for residents to use to sit and enjoy nature because the highway sounds and sights are muted or blocked.
- High school and middle school students eating lunch there with adult supervision.
- First graders hunting for insects there as part of their science work.
- Fifth graders cultivating and watering milkweed plants.
- A green welcome to foot traffic coming from Red Hook, our sister neighborhood.
- A rain barrel and self-irrigating planters making watering more sustainable.

The process will involve the school and wider community. We will involve neighbors, staff, and students from our Pre-K through 12th grade school population.

Here are potential steps:

- Meet with the BNS/BCS Green committee to draft hopes and dreams for types of fencing, beds, irrigation system, and so on.
- Consult with parent landscape designer and other experts.
- Hold meeting with local business owners, neighbors, staff, custodian, students, and Green committee to review plans.
- Submit initial plan to DOT. Revise and resubmit plans if necessary.
- Submit final plan to local businesses owners, neighbors, staff, custodian, students, and Green committee.
- Contact organizations such as Green Thumb, Build-it-Green to get materials and funding.
- Fundraise for other monies by holding bake sale, writing grant proposals.
- Break project into phases. For example: 1. Security issues such as signage and fencing first.
2. Build beds.

- Hold a build day on a weekend. Try to get volunteers from New York Cares as well as neighbors, students, and their families.
- Grand opening celebration.

Why Should I sign this petition?

If you sign this petition, you will be supporting the 5th Grade Green Club in their efforts to create a greenspace in a vacant lot.

The Vacant lot is an empty, ~~un~~ unattractive lot in between the small yard and the walking bridge from Redhook to school.

Some of you may know it better, when it ~~was~~ is referred to "the Triangle."

5th Grade Green Club

5th GRADE GREEN CLUB



TALYA KARMEN-CHAN, ANNA KABWA, BROOKLYN JOHN, ISA GRUMBACH-BLOOM

Petition to Create a School and Community Pollinator Garden



We, the undersigned students, staff, parents, and neighbors of the Brooklyn New School and the Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies, at 610 Henry Street, petition the Department of Transportation and Mayor di Blasio to give BNS/BCS permission to turn the unmapped parcel of land under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation and next to our school into a Pollinator Garden. The lot is on Cole Street and is next to entrances to the heavily trafficked Brooklyn Queens Expressway and Brooklyn Battery access roads and the pedestrian bridge that goes over these roads. Adding more green space will mitigate the traffic sounds and pollution. By turning this lot into a pollinator garden, we will be creating a green link between two physically divided neighborhoods—Red Hook and Carroll Gardens, providing a buffer between pedestrians and traffic, and creating a haven for pollinators including the endangered monarch butterfly.

Name	Signature	Parent, Neighbor, Student, Staff?	Date Signed
		Parent Staff	
Manna Est	Johanna Esteras	Staff Parent	4/14/15
Regina Cama Formisano	Regina Cama Formisano	Neighbor Staff PARENT	4/15/15
Amonia Pennington	AP	Staff	4/15/15
Janine Harder	JH	stuff	4/15/15
E. WILLIAMS	E. Williams	STAFF (security)	4.15.15
Shirley Soo Ho	SH	Staff	4.16.15
AnnMarie Matara	annmarie matara	parent	4.16.15
Greta Schwerner	GS	Teacher & Parent	4.16.15
Maria Cadilla	Maria Cadillac	Teacher	4-16-15
Ruby Perez	Ruby Perez	Student teacher	4-16-15

Here is the 529 Acres blog record of the Cole Street Triangle project:

LIVING LOTS NYC BY 596 ACRES











Leaflet

Brooklyn, unmapped lot #1

Organize Find lots nearby Is this an active project? Have we made a mistake?

Share

Information about this lot

Address: (street address unknown), Brooklyn, 11231

Area: 0.86 acres (37416 square feet)

Political Boundaries

City Council District 39 represented by [Brad S. Lander](#)

Community District [Brooklyn 6](#) (info@brooklyncb6.org /

718-643-3027), district manager: Craig Hammerman

Find all elected officials for this lot at [Who Represents Me? NYC](#)

Why is this lot here?

Government Agency

NYC Department of Transportation (public)

Contact: Brooklyn Borough Commissioner Keith Bray (646-892-1350)

16 Court St., Brooklyn, NY, 11241

Borough Commissioner - Keith Bray

Fax: (718) 222-7256

Pathways

Here are some pathways you might follow to use this piece of land legally:

- [Access to NYC Department of Transportation Land](#)
- [Getting Help from 596 Acres](#)
- [Getting Help from NYC Department of Cultural Affairs](#)

News feed

[Add a note](#) [file photo](#)

Oct. 22, 2015, 2:26 p.m.

paula at 596 acres said

School is back in session and the new Green Club is going to keep working on getting permission to garden in the DOT Plaza here. All they need is permission to use the space!

I spoke with Johanna today and she is ready to work on this next week. She and the students are planning to follow up with Council

Member Brad Lander's office, the Brooklyn Borough office of the DOT and the State DOT and will keep us posted!

July 31, 2015, 1:55 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

Johanna and I updated the proposal package to include the new signatures and she's delivering it to the DOT herself on Monday morning!

Check out this totally cute blog post with more photos from Monday's event:

<http://bnsecorama.blogspot.com/2015/07/a-midsummer-nights-dream.html?m=1>

July 28, 2015, 5:10 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres posted



PS 146 Brooklyn New School hosts an event to gather petition signatures!

We also dotted the pedestrian walkway to Red Hook that begins at the lot with plants and chalk drawings to grab some folks' attention and get them to sign!

July 28, 2015, 5:06 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres posted



PS 146 Brooklyn New School hosts an event to gather petition signatures!

This photo will totally get sent to DOT :)

July 16, 2015, 4:14 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

MONDAY, JULY 27TH AT 6 PM

We're meeting in front of the lot to get more signatures and draw neighborhood attention to the vision of the students of PS 143 to this space! There will be some fun little family activities and refreshments, too. Council Member Lander has been invited as well and will get back to us next week if he can attend.

June 24, 2015, 1:14 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

See what the students of the Green & Government Club at PS 146 in Red Hook are envisioning for this DOT-controlled triangle next to their school!

<http://bnsecorama.blogspot.com/2015/06/fourth-graders-started-school-year.html?m=1>

Working on planning a neighborhood event to draw attention to the space!

June 10, 2015, 3:01 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

I shot Hannah Holland and Vicki Sell an email to see if they're still bugging DOT for us...! They are! They said that the proposal is making its rounds with the right people!

June 1, 2015, 10:39 a.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

Johanna and I have been checking in with Ms. Holland at the CM's office. This morning I got a hold of her. She says that she hasn't gotten any word from DOT but that she thinks the person went on vacation. She's going to circle back with them today and said she understands the clock is ticking since school is almost out. I told her to let us know if there's anything else we can do. So, let's give her a call in a week.

May 1, 2015, 6:07 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres uploaded

Proposal Package for DOT Triangle Next to BNS/BSC

From: Mary Elizabeth Prall <mary@596acres.org> Date: Fri, May 1, 2015 at 6:05 PM Subject: Proposal Package for Transforming the DOT Triangle Next to PS 146 BNS/ MS 448 BCS To: "Holland, Hannah" <HHolland@council.nyc.gov>, Victoria Sell <VSell@council.nyc.gov> Cc: Johanna Esteras <johanna@bns146.org>, "Paula Z. Segal, Lead Facilitator, 596 Acres" <paula@596acres.org>, 596 Acres <organizers@596acres.org> Ms. Holland and Ms. Sell, I'm attaching a PDF package created by students and educators at PS 146 Brooklyn New School and MS 448 Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies. Included is a letter addressed to DOT Commissioner Polly

Trottenberg, a proposal and work plan for creating the garden, and hundred of signatures of support from parents, teachers, and students. We hope you can direct this into the right hands! Let us know if we should have another meeting, or provide any additional information at this time. Again, thanks so much for assisting the schools in making their vision a reality! Best, Mary Elizabeth Prall Organizer | 596 Acres' NYC Community Land Access Project 596 Acres, Inc. 540 President Street, 2E Gowanus, Brooklyn NY 11215 718-316-6092 x 3 mary@596acres.org

April 25, 2015, 9:11 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres uploaded

DOT Vision Process Draft by BNS / BCS

Here's what the schools are working on so far!

April 14, 2015, 4:04 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

Johanna, Paula (the director of 596 Acres) and I had a lovely phone chat with Hannah Holland (DOT Liaison) and Vicki Sell (Education Liaison) who both work in Council Member Brad Lander's office. Johanna and I will work on crafting a proposal - and the Green & Government Club is working on collecting signatures of support) and Ms. Holland and Ms. Sell will work on getting it to the right people at DOT (something we've struggled with) and see what can happen!!!!

April 2, 2015, 1:04 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres posted



A banner with students!

An awesome sign that BNS students made to hang on the school's fence that borders the space.

April 2, 2015, 1:03 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres posted



A banner!

An awesome sign that BNS students made to hang on the school's fence that borders the space

March 24, 2015, 1:55 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

I called Ms. Balonso's office today and was connected with Hannah Holland (HHOLLAND@COUNCIL.NYC.GOV, 718-499-1090) who is in charge of connecting with the DOT staff in their office and seeing what can happen in terms of a transfer of this property. She says they have been busy but can hopefully get some info in the next few days. She has the initial email that I sent to Ms. Balonso that has Ms. Johanna CC'd. I also let her know that the Mayor would be getting a letter from the school sometime soon :)

March 10, 2015, 1:10 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

I met with Johanna and the Green & Government Club at PS 146 to talk about what 596 Acres does as an organization and the next steps to trying to get access to this space! The club is going to collectively

write a letter to DiBlasio and the DOT Commissioners and get lots of signatures from other students and parents.

This school has had a successful gardening program for over ten years where they compost and grow veggies. Their vision for the new space is to grow low-maintenance native plants and provide a space that the general public, as well as older students in the middle and high schools in the same building, can enjoy. The space is huge and would be a warm welcome to those crossing the food bridge across the expressway from Red Hook.

Previously, I received this response from the DOT Commissioner's office:

"Dear Mrs. Prall:

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the request to use vacant land for a gardening program.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is committed to maintaining and improving the transportation network that serves all New Yorkers and visitors. Under Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero Plan, DOT is making a bold, new commitment to improve street safety in every neighborhood and every borough. For more information on the Mayor's Vision Plan, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/visionzero/pages/home/home.shtml>.

Your request has been assigned to the appropriate Operational Unit and has been given case # DOT-252375-Z0X1 . The Brooklyn Borough Commissioner will provide you with our recommendations by mid-March.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with us.

Customer Service Unit

NYC Department of Transportation"

So....it's almost mid-March! Today I called the new Brooklyn Borough Commissioner Keith Bray's (718-222-7259) office who directed me to speak to Mr. Tikka Garung (212-839-6959) in the section of the office that deals with land. I left him a message.

March 5, 2015, 10:56 a.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

I chatted with Basilisa Alonso a week or two ago and followed up with an email asking what the Council Member's office can do to help. Haven't heard back so I sent her a follow up email this morning....

Feb. 5, 2015, 3:48 p.m.

someone posted



Feb. 5, 2015, 3:47 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

An email I sent to Johanna:

"Hi Johanna,

I spoke to a super helpful person named Kyle Daniels (212-386-0486) at DCAS who let me know that we would need to connect directly with DOT about this space. I also filled out a contact form on the DOT site: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/contact/contact-form.shtml>. You can fill it out, too. (My case number is DOT-252375-Z0X1)

I'm also emailing Parks about this and will loop you in."

Feb. 3, 2015, 11:16 a.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

I was away for a few weeks, so my calls to Ms. Smith were stalled. BUT I left her a message again today...

Jan. 6, 2015, 9:20 a.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

Once a week I've been leaving Jonnie Smith at DCAS messages!
Today I also followed up on the original email I sent her. I also spoke with Shirley in Christopher Nesterchuk's office (Acting Assistant Commissioner, Acquisitions & Leasing(212) 386-0363) who said she would personally pass on the message.

Dec. 18, 2014, 12:59 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

Yesterday I got a hold of Jonnie Smith, who wanted me to follow up with an email with an image of the space. I sent her some details so she could fully understand where this is. I left her a message today checking in!

Dec. 11, 2014, 1:04 p.m.

Mary @ 596 Acres said

When I got a hold of the DOT they said I needed to contact the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, as they're the ones who lease out DOT property. I've been leaving LOTS of messages for the woman we normally work with at DCAS (Jonnie Smith, 212 386 0593 but she's unresponsive. I also left a message for their Assistant Commissioner of Planning & Research Randal Fong (212) 386-0618 who can hopefully give me the info I want or pass me along to someone else!

We'll get to the bottom of this!

Number of organizers: 2

HEY ORGANIZERS!

The organizers who chose to share their information are below. Feel free to reach out directly to contact them individually. All organizers get email updates when new notes, files and pictures are posted on this page. Post on the page to reach everyone.

BNS-BCS Schools

johanna@bns146.org, 646-808-5595

Bleakley McDowell

bleakleym@gmail.com, 718-782-5115