What to do with Vacant Lots...

ReNU Niagara, in partnership with over 20 organizations and residents of Niagara Falls, recently received the approval of the Planning Board and City Council for an initiative that would allow block clubs, churches, other community organizations and residents the opportunity to convert a blighted, city-owned, vacant lot into a functional and attractive space. What started as an informal discussion, between ReNU staff and City of Niagara Falls officials around the theme of urban agriculture, has quickly blossomed into a full-blown project with a newly created entity that will be charged with ensuring the projects longevity and success.

This new organization, known as Greenprint Niagara, will be responsible for overseeing all elements of the initiative. This will include: working with the City’s Planning Department to determine appropriate sites for vacant lot reclamation projects, providing members with resources to assist with their projects (i.e. soil, plants, raised bed kits, etc.), and, most importantly, providing liability insurance to cover all members and volunteers doing work on approved city-owned vacant spaces.

Greenprint is currently seeking individuals and organizations who are interested in becoming members of the Greenprint Niagara network. Whether it is a community vegetable garden, a native habitat, or some other creative approach, we want to hear more about it and see how Greenprint Niagara can help!

For more information, feel free to email: GreenprintNF@gmail.com

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Signature Projects

Creating A Healthier Niagara Falls: A Neighborhood Empowerment Approach

Greenprint Niagara: Vacant Lot Coalition

GreenRoots Leadership Development Program

Highland Community Greening

Niagara University Campus Garden

ReNU Riddle

A traveler starts a journey. For the first week he goes east. The second he goes in all directions. The third he flies up into the sky. In the fourth he comes back down. Who is the traveler?

<Answer on Page 2>
Center Court Residents Celebrate ‘Rebirth’

In 2011, members of the Center Court Tenant’s Association participated in ReNU’s GreenRoots Leadership Development Program, a program that aims to identify and build the capacity of new leaders in the City of Niagara Falls. GreenRoots seeks to assist with, and provide start-up support for, the development of a community improvement project based on the issues and interests of the participants.

Participants from Center Court took on the task of reclaiming, cleaning up, and enhancing their community park, know as D’Amelio Park, after portions of the park were reduced during the construction of the Hope VI housing units. The residents have coined this project, “Rebirth 2012”; which represents the return of activity in the park and the potential return of more culturally significant events that the park had hosted for years prior to the Hope VI construction.

The project kicked off last year when residents planted a small wildlife habitat garden in the park. This summer, the project intensified when resident, and GreenRoots participant, Joe Hamilton (photo: top-left) painted a vibrant and impactful mural on one side of the handball wall located in the park. Joe said his inspiration for the mural was to reflect the “Rebirth of the area; with new houses, a new attitude, new life, and just a brand new vibe than what it used to be.”

On July 27th, GreenRoots, in partnership with the Highland Community Action Plan Committee, hosted an event in celebration of Joe’s mural and to kick off the theme of “Rebirth” in the community. Both youth and adult residents of the neighborhood were invited to come out, enjoy a hot dog and some snacks, and get to know their neighbors - as many of the residents of Hope VI have just recently moved into their new homes.

Still Growing In Highland

Although the Highland Community Vegetable Garden has been plagued with a lack of rain this summer, our dedicated youth volunteers from the Kalfas Magnet School, Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, and Center Court Tenants Association have been watering and weeding vigorously. Thanks to all of the volunteers, ReNU Niagara is proud to announce we have a very prosperous garden for Summer 2012!! With input from community members, we have been able to plant and grow a variety of vegetables. We have an abundance of healthy and colorful vegetables. They include but are not limited to tomatoes, eggplants, cantaloupe, carrots, radishes, beets, collard greens, parsley and cabbage.

During August and September, there will be a variety of workshops held during the watering times at the Highland Community Vegetable Garden beds. Staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County will present live, hands-on lessons based on the produce from the garden and interests of the community. These workshops will range from cooking tips, healthy food and nutrition, composting and other garden focused areas.

Are you looking for something fun to do before the summer is over? If so, please feel free to contact the ReNU office at 205-0287 or email us at tlowe@niagara.edu.