

BRIDGEPORT

THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT SUCCESS STORIES

No.
291



COMMUNITY GARDENS

Bridgeport, CT

Open Space
Acquisition



The Bridgeport Community Land Trust is an urban green organization that facilitates community gardening in Connecticut's largest city. BCLT is composed of talented and committed community gardeners who have revitalized the **Bridgeport Urban Garden** over the past several years, helping to sustain it into perpetuity. Through the efforts of the BCLT, neglected neighborhoods with vacant and overgrown lots are transformed into beautiful green spaces for the benefit of all.

In 2007 and 2010, with the assistance of over \$200,000 in grants from the DEP Urban Green and Community Garden Program, funded through the **Community**



Investment Act (CIA), the BCLT undertook multiple community garden projects, including the rehabilitation of twelve existing community gardens and the construction of two new community gardens.

CIA funds helped leverage in-kind contributions of \$88,000 as well as helped to pay for contracted services including sidewalk construction and water line and fence installations. Other improvements include new raised beds, water lines, composters, mulch and pea gravel, sheds, topsoil and development of perennial plantings.

The impact of these community garden projects upon the residents of Bridgeport is best summarized by Bob Halstead, BCLT President:

"People of little means have an opportunity to eat the same quality food as people from [wealthier cities]. All it takes is a little digging, a little loving care and an opportunity to add some other ingredients and you have the same gourmet meal right in your own back yard. This is especially valuable to children who otherwise would not see where their food comes from. Our goal is to educate children that they can attain these moments of pleasure and life lessons with little or no money."

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The Community Investment Act, enacted in 2005, stimulates private investment to protect our natural, agricultural, and historic resources, and to assist affordable housing. CIA funds come from a surcharge on real estate document recording fees. They are then invested in agriculture viability, dairy farm support, historic preservation, open space, farmland, affordable housing, Local Capital Improvement Projects and Town Clerk records management.