The James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center and Trail is named after the beloved and celebrated American writer (1924 – 1987) and DeWitt Clinton High School graduate ‘42. Baldwin once said, “It is the responsibility of free men to trust and to celebrate what is constant - birth, struggle, and death are constant, and so is love, though we may not always think so – and to apprehend the nature of change, to be able and willing to change.” What better place to witness these constants than in garden spaces where they are always at play?

The re-imagination of our beautiful and productive school grounds as public space is a project that we feel James Baldwin would have loved and celebrated - especially as we explore its capacity for functioning as a diverse and accessible cultural meeting place, and a nexus for social, environmental and food justice.
OUR VISION

School Grounds as a Next Great Public Space

Imagine a neighborhood, centered around a public school, where students, teachers, families and community members are inspired to collaborate on gardening, healthy eating and holistic environmental sustainability.

The James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center and trail, designed by Marpillero Pollak Architects, transforms the grounds of DeWitt Clinton High School into a destination for learning, growing, health, and community, connected by a half-mile accessible trail (in orange). In the “Community Hub,” neighbors will engage in permaculture practices. The “School Hub” will be a versatile education and garden space including the “Welcome Table.” We envision a model community school that inspires resiliency, sustainability, and personal responsibility.

While Norwood has one of the highest percentages of green spaces in New York City, these spaces remain largely inaccessible: intersections are unsafe to navigate by foot and bike, development of hospitals and housing has cut the area into sections, and highways criss-cross the neighborhood. The Baldwin Trail will link these spaces to one another and to a full range of educational, creative and life-sustaining activities to empower and enrich the school and surrounding community.

Community-envisioned Baldwin Trail in the 3rd community workshop.
OUR WORK SO FAR


The Clinton Garden is started with 4 raised beds, soils and plants donated by Montefiore Medical Center to address high levels of diet-related health diseases in the Bronx.

Clinton Garden expands from 4 raised beds.

2014

Clinton Garden wins the Golden Apple and Golden Shovel awards for beautifying the campus and for composting operation (Best in Borough and Best in City)

With crowdfunding resources and in collaboration with the Dept. of Health’s Active Design Team and Grow to Learn, we join forces with Marpillero Pollak Architects to create the James Baldwin Memorial Outdoor Learning Center Planning Team

Presentation at FitCity in October

Community Visioning Workshop 1, June 2015 - “Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter”

Community Visioning Workshop 2, July 2015 - “Welcome Table”

2016

National Endowment for the Arts Grant for Design of the James Baldwin Memorial Outdoor Learning Center

Community Garden is constructed with funding from United Way and sponsored by Good Shepherd Services

Community Visioning Session 3, November 2016 - “Community Garden”

High Production Indoor Hydroponic Farm currently under construction in collaboration with Teens For Food Justice, and Funding from Office of City Council Member Andrew Cohen, to be completed by Fall, 2017.

Planting of 35 fruit trees to establish Edible Forest, June 2017 - “Plentitude”

Dedication of the Community Garden in the memory of Megan Charlop, June 8, 2017

Official Opening of the Sun Club Teens for Food Justice Hydroponic Farm.

James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center is incorporated.
The James Baldwin Memorial Outdoor Learning Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to strive for inquiry and project-based solutions at the juncture of food, environmental and social justice. We have been working with Marpillero Pollak Architects on the realization of The Baldwin Center and Trail.

To learn more or get involved with the project: visit jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org or contact Founder and Director Ray Pultinas at ray@jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Environmental Affairs Club (EAC)
The Custodians, Teachers, Administration and Staff of DeWitt Clinton High School
Montefiore Medical Center
Teens for Food Justice
Friends of Mosholou Parklands
Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ)
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Citizens Committee of New York City
Good Shepherd Services
Fruit Tree Planting Foundation
GreenThumb
Change by Us
NYC Compost Project in the Bronx
Grow NYC/ Grow to Learn/ Garden to Café/ Recycling Champions
Bronx Green Up
The Butterfly Project
Bronx River Alliance
New York Botanical Garden
Community Board 7
DOE Office of Sustainability
Gotham Grazers/ Earth Day Initiative
NYC Department of Sanitation
National Wildlife Federation
IOBY
School Garden (Google) Advocacy Group
Teachers College, Columbia University
Alumni Association of DWC
Walrath Family Foundation
Chefs’ Consortium
Behind the Book
DeWitt Clinton High School Chorus

SUPPORT

Grow to Learn Gardening Grants (4)
Citizen’s Committee for New York City - Neighborhood Grants (4)
(IOBY) In Our Back Yard
Change by Us
National Endowment for the Arts
United Way
Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation
Walrath Family Foundation (2)
NYC City Council
Fruit Tree Planting Foundation
Catskill Watershed Corporation