

HARLEM GROWN 134TH. ST

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Developed park in 2024



Early site pre-2011

The lot of 116 W 134th St. has been zoned and used as outdoor recreational space since as early as 1910. Despite existing for over a century, the small lot used as a park or for gardening is left with a miniscule historical trace on how the community has interacted with it.

In 2011, Tony Hillery founded Harlem Grown transforming the park into an urban garden, providing access and knowledge of healthy foods for local residents and youth programs. Harlem Grown is an example of a development inspired by a community-serving site prone to a natural erasure, providing a foundation for new history.

ERASURE AND FUTURITY

How can architects and users of the city reconcile with pre-existing spaces that have evaded an established history?

Unlike buildings or traditional architectural spaces, small parks and informal spaces or dwellings are often overlooked for their historical significance. When intervening or redesigning these spaces, it is important to acknowledge the potential natural and active erasure of their identity. In this case, while the lot of 134th St. may have no record of its previous users or gardeners, this site redevelopment builds upon its vague roots, creating new opportunities for communal activity and future documentation. By transforming the informal and involving its neighborhood for interaction and education, the founders at Harlem Grown have managed to expand on and perpetuate the livelihood of parks and informal spaces throughout the city.