

After More Than 17 Years, a Community Garden Is Rebuilt

The Carmen Pabon garden opened Wednesday to the public, named after the activist who founded the original garden that was bulldozed in 2000.

By [Sarah Kaufman \(Patch Staff\)](#) - October 26, 2016 5:11 pm ET

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EAST VILLAGE, NY — A new community garden officially opened up Wednesday afternoon at the site of an old East Village garden that was bulldozed in 2000 to make way for an apartment building.

The new garden is named after Carmen Pabon, the Puerto Rican community activist who founded the original garden in the late 1970s. Pabon's garden lasted for 22 years before it was bulldozed.

The new public site was constructed by developers of the new buildings that went in the garden's place, BFC Partners and L+M Development Partners, and the unveiling was also attended by Councilwoman Rosie Mendez. It is at the site of the old community garden formerly known as El Bello Amanecer Garden, on Avenue C between East 7th and 8th streets.

"This garden, named after my mother, will do two things: one, it will create a lasting family legacy in a neighborhood that my family deeply cherishes and, two, it allows a community to recapture one of its open spaces as a permanent community garden," said Inis Arroyo, Pabon's daughter, who was in attendance at the opening Wednesday. "My mother held the Lower East Side dear to her heart and I look forward to this garden serving as a memory to all the wonderful things she did in her life and that others have done for this community."

Paul Castrucci, an architect who has lived on the Lower East Side for 35 years, designed the garden. Castrucci told Patch a team of community gardeners that included Isabel Pabon was involved in requesting certain plants and designs of the garden.

"We arranged everything so that there would be as much sunlight as possible," Castrucci said.

BFC Partners bulldozed the original historic garden to build the current building on the property, Eastville Gardens, in 2000. Furious [protests](#) over plans to destroy the garden began as early as 1998. BFC Partners then made a deal with the community in 2000 that they would rebuild the greenspace, an L+M spokesperson told Patch. L+M bought Eastville Gardens in the spring of 2016 from BFC Partners for \$44 million. The two developers together worked with a nonprofit called Carmen Pabon Del Amanecer Garden, Inc. to build the new garden, the L+M spokesperson said.

"At the end of the day, and after 17 and a half years it adds up to a lot of days, we resolved all the problems that existed," Mendez said. "The act of coming together finally enabled the garden association to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization and obtain its 99-year lease. Finally, we can move forward. This community garden will be enjoyed by many in the years to come and that's something we can all be proud of."

Photo credit: Google Maps