

## AMAZING PORT STREET COMMUNITY GREEN



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When Reverend Karen Brau decided not to erect a fence around the green space that she, her congregants and neighborhood residents reclaimed and beautified, she differed from most neighborhood greening activists. She also made a bold statement of faith in the goodness of people, exclaiming, “all of us are worthy of this beauty and that’s why it’s been left open.”

Like many other greening projects, the seed for the Amazing Port Street Community Green was planted when a house behind the church was demolished in the late 1990s. The progress that has been made since 1999 is a testament to Reverend Brau’s belief that great things can be accomplished when people work together. The green site boasts a stone labyrinth used for meditation, a park bench, ornamental plantings and a variety of colorful murals.

The project’s 15 active volunteers have shown that beauty can exist in places that were often neglected in the past. Reverend Brau notes that although several community members and neighborhood

youth are connected to the space, the more beautiful the project becomes, the harder it is to maintain and protect it. Consequently, persistence has become a hallmark of this group’s efforts. Faith, and a belief that each of them is doing God’s work, is a driving force for the volunteers. Reverend Brau defiantly stated that, “if somebody rips this up, I’ll just go out there and build it again.”

The project’s volunteers have been successful in leveraging funds from many sources to create a place of beauty and to overcome, to some degree, drug activity that has plagued this particular Baltimore City neighborhood for years. In addition, their impending ownership of several lots within the community green will allow the volunteer group to continue fulfilling its vision for the green space. When asked what they’d like to see happen at the Amazing Port Street Community Green in the future, several volunteers mentioned that they hope to transform the green space into a living laboratory, providing training for young people by teachers whom are willing to use the site as an outdoor classroom with their students.

### **WHO**

Reverend Karen Brau

### **WHAT**

Amazing Port Street Community Green

### **WHERE**

Port Street, behind Amazing Grace  
Lutheran Church on McElderry Street

### **WHEN**

Volunteers have been active since 1999

### **WHY**

To show that “there can be beauty where  
there was none before”

