How the Gardens Grew

Strict rules about parking and home improvement are just a few details that set Forest Hills Gardens apart.

By Sarah Shaphir

It may be one of the city’s best-kept secrets. For a mere 15 minutes from bustling midtown lies a sleepy hollow where little is heard but the song of a bird and the sigh of an aged tree.

Fondly referred to as "the modern Garden City," Forest Hills Gardens is a serene community that has retained its Old World charm in the shadow of New York City.

Purchased in 1899 for $150,000 per acre (well over $100,000 per acre in today's dollars), the 142-acre tract made up of 1160 lots was the brainchild of architects, gardeners, and city planners. It was the first of its kind, featuring planned and landscaped public parks, libraries, churches, schools, and homes. The community was designed to provide a balance between nature and urban living, with a focus on creating a sense of place and community.

The sign is along the Long Island Railroad station, left. Across the street, the Forest Hills Gardens subway, located at Greenway Terrace.

The sign also marks the end of the line. Although the community has undergone new developments, including a new housing complex, the overall character and charm of the neighborhood remain intact.

For the residents, Forest Hills Gardens is a community that values its history and traditions. It is a place where families have lived for generations, and where the sense of community continues to thrive.

The community continues to grow and evolve, but the essence of the Garden City remains true to its roots.

Distinctive architectural styles of Forest Hills Gardens are represented by homes on Sheepscot Road, above, an interesting North, left, and the former residence of Virgil L. Sabin, where the garden was created by resident E. H. Shaw.

The Garden City approach emphasized the integration of nature and architecture, creating a sense of harmony and balance. This approach is still evident today, as the community continues to grow and change.

Forest Hills Gardens continues to be a source of inspiration for urban planners and architects around the world. It serves as a reminder of the importance of creating communities that are both functional and beautiful, and that value the environment and the people who inhabit it.

The story of Forest Hills Gardens is one of resilience and innovation, as the community continues to adapt to the changing needs of its residents while preserving its unique identity.

Forest Hills Gardens is a testament to the power of community and the importance of planning and design in shaping the future of urban areas.