

# The Village Lincroft News



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## GRASS ROOTS GROUP SAVES OPEN SPACE

**LINCROFT GRASS ROOTS GROUP SAVES LAST OPEN SPACE ON ROUTE 520 -- VOWS TO REPRESENT LINCROFT ON LAND USE MATTERS**

*By Marianne Kilgman*

"Thank God for George Toop!" Lincroft Village Green organizer Mary Ellen Hintz emphatically stated. It was long-time resident and town benefactor George Toop who first alerted his neighbors of Brookdale's intentions to sell its 5.8 acres on Route 520 for commercial development. Neighbors concerned about the over-development and high-volume traffic on Rt. 520 were enraged that their neighbor, Brookdale College, would contribute to the problem. They were further upset that a government entity would seek to sell off public lands for financial gains.

Anthony Grigoli, a leader of the neighborhood revolt stated, "We appreciate Brookdale wanting to improve its facility (to build a student union), but not at the expense of the quality of life in Lincroft. I was always proud to have Brookdale as my neighbor. I sent two children to that college, however, this was not a neighborly thing to do." Quickly, almost at lightning speed, a "grass roots" organization took flight.



Members of the Lincroft Village Green, who successfully fought the commercial development of the triangular open land on Rt. 520 (L to R.): Winnie Scuteri, Mary Ellen Hintz, Francine Herrick, Marsha Grigoli and Carol Baker. (Standing L to R.): Sue and Andy Wilmoth, Roger Foss, George Toop, Angelo Grigoli and Joseph Romeo.

Brookdale had already secured two bids for the 5.8 acres, one for a tempting \$1.5 million from the developing entity of Commerce Bank. People's fears envisioned another strip mall anchored by a bank, creating additional dangerous curb cuts in and out of Rt. 520. Volunteers walked the little league fields gathering signatures for a petition opposing the development. Petition sheets left at key merchants in the Village quickly filled up. Over 1,500 signatures in all were gathered and presented to key public officials. George Toop elaborated, "We had a gal standing at the Acme with petitions. Our volunteers went house-to-house. Forty-four merchants were behind us." The organizers also received much support from neighboring communities: residents from Tinton Falls, Holmdel and Colts Neck phoned opposition organizers seeking to aid Lincroft in preserving the area as open space.

"Middletown Township Deputy Mayor Joan Smith was instrumental in getting the attention of the politicians," Mrs. Hintz volunteers. "After she got involved, other politicians started to return our phone calls." Mrs. Smith introduced the citizens' concerns to the township committee along with the quickly-gathered petition.