

# Parker School – Suggett Park Neighborhood Pilot Garden *Garden Plan*

*A neighborhood garden at Suggett Park, open to Parker Elementary students, their families and the surrounding neighborhood*

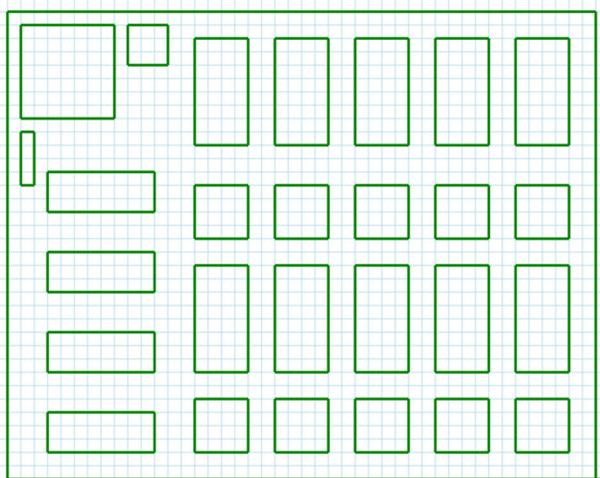
## About

As a neighborhood garden set in a public park, Suggett Park, near an elementary school, Parker Elementary School, a main garden audience will be the school community (school classes and families). Because of this, the garden will need to be kid and family friendly – it will be organic (pesticide-free) and have kid appropriate tools for gardening. There will be four raised beds dedicated solely to eight classes interested in incorporating the garden into their curriculum.

The garden will be open to the entire community. The plan is to have 10 4x4 plots and 10 4x8 plots to meet various needs of community members, but will adapt based on the interests of community gardeners. Some of the residents who live near the garden location have expressed interest in having a garden plot. Other city residents interested in gardening a plot live in nearby neighborhoods.

## Size and Location

The garden will be fenced in and will measure approximately 35 ft by 48 ft.



The school plots will be located on one side of the garden so that students have room to explore the garden without disturbing the community plots.

The proposed garden will be located in a sunny, low traffic and secure section of Suggett Park (see green arrow below), based on the suggestion of John McNerney.

The area currently pursued is in a large open space, near houses and with a light that secures the area at night (see right).



The Garden Committee has gone door to door to gain the support of neighboring residents and address any concerns.

These are two views from the area being pursued:



### **Fence and Shed**

The garden will be fenced in to secure the area, preventing animals and outsiders from damaging the property. We have estimates for three different fence options.



The main structure in the garden space will be the tool shed. The shed will store gardening tools and other materials. We have chosen a shed that will not only serve this purpose but that will also be esthetically pleasing and durable.

We do not want the shed to block the view of the park for neighboring houses and so are open to the option of having the shed off a side of the park, a short distance from the plots. This shed measures 7.5 by 7 feet and will cost approximately \$1000. The garden committee and community members will help assemble the shed. The shed will be locked to ensure that tools are not stolen. Gardeners (those renting a plot) will have a key, including the school.

There will be no grass within the fenced in area. All the grass will be removed. Around the raised beds there will be mulch or another natural material. The garden is responsible for upkeep and will assure this with Garden Rules that members sign at the beginning of the season (see below).

### **Raised Beds**

The garden will be comprised of raised beds (see page 1) built by the Master Gardener Volunteers, led by Claudia Hitt of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). Community members looking to garden will have the opportunity to choose between 4 x 4 or 4 x 8 plots. There will be 10 of each, totaling 20 community plots. There will be 4 school plots, each measuring 3 x 12.

Claudia Hitt of CCE will also test the quality of the existing soil to ensure that it is suitable for growing vegetables. Additional soil and compost will be brought in to fill the raised beds.

Primarily vegetables will be grown in the garden. Flowers and other decorative plants will be used around the perimeter and around the shed to beautify the area. Our long-term goal is to work

with a landscaper to further improve the area. The produce from the garden plots will go to each gardener responsible for the plot. Parker School children will use the produce from the school garden plots. Options for school use of the produce include, organizing a Harvest Dinner at the school, class tastings of produce, etc. See Appendix 1 for planting schedules for produce ready in the spring and the fall while school is in session. Any surplus produce will be donated to the appropriate families or organizations.

### **Water**

There is access to water at the Rotary Shelter. When the Rotary Shelter is rented out, gardeners will not be able to access the water there. A rain barrel from Cortland Soil and Water Conservation District will help ensure that gardeners have adequate water for plants. Efforts will be made to fill the rain barrel to ensure gardeners have access to adequate water. Our long-term goal is to build a water line to the garden. There is also the possibility of making changes to a water foundation that currently exists but does not work, in the area near the Rotary Shelter.

### **Security and Liability**

In order to protect the garden, it will be enclosed with a fence and will be in a location that is lit at night. A "tasting garden" will be planted near the entrance, and will be marked with a sign: "Plant and food inside the fence belong to people in your neighborhood. Please be respectful of the hard work of the gardeners here by leaving their plants to grow. If you would like, you are welcome to sample and taste produce from this box only that is outside the fence." - or a sign with similar wording.

We are currently in discussion with the City regarding the issue of liability and insurance.

### **Funding and Support**

The start-up funding will be provided through Seven Valley Health Coalition's NYS Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play Grant. The funding is only available until March 31, 2013. The funding will cover any costs mentioned in this document (excluding those labeled as long-term goals). The funding needed is currently estimated at between \$3,000 and \$5,000, depending on fencing choices.

The garden will be self-sustaining and community members who wish to have a garden plot will be asked to contribute a small amount to the garden each season, averaging \$15-20 with a sliding scale model. This will go into a garden fund that will pay for future garden needs.

The garden will be supported by Sustainable Cortland, the City of Cortland's Environmental Advisory Committee, Parker School, the Master Gardener Program and the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps Program. The support of these groups will ensure the sustainability of this project. Claire LeRoux-Watrous has offered to contribute time to this project as a Master Gardener Volunteer. SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps Volunteers plan to work in the garden in the spring.

The garden organizing committee is currently comprised of:

- Anna Ehrlich Bennett (EAC member and future Parker School parent)
- Sara Watrous (Program Coordinator, Sustainable Cortland, and EAC member)
- Nick Kline (Parker Elementary Gym Teacher)
- Julie Bird (Ward 1 Alderman)
- Sarah Coye (Parker Elementary 2nd grade teacher)

- Laura Spencer (Parker Elementary staff)
- Patti Irish (Community Member)
- Carissa Smith (Community member)
- Bethany Michales (Parker Elementary teacher)
- Kevin Yard (Parker Elementary School Principal)
- Robin Nauseef-Cataldo (PTO president)
- Gwen Barbato (Parker Elementary Speech-Language Pathologist)
- Linda Kirsch (Parker Elementary staff)
- Susan Williams
- Karen Diescher
- Diane Shaffer
- David Magin (parent of Parker Elementary student)

### **Garden Rules**

Each gardener must agree to the following:

- To contribute a small fee of \$15-20 each season (year) to help cover garden expenses.
- To have something planted in the garden by June 1st and keep it planted all summer long.
- To notify the Garden Committee if a plot must be abandoned for any reason.
- To keep weeds at a minimum and maintain the areas immediately surrounding their plot.
- If plot becomes unkempt, gardeners will be given 1 month's notice by the Committee to clean it up. After that time, it will be re-assigned or tilled in.
- To keep trash and litter out of the plot, as well as from adjacent pathways and fences.
- To participate in the fall cleanup of the garden.
- To not plant tall crops that would shade neighboring plots.
- To only pick your own crops unless given permission by another plot user.
- To not use fertilizers, insecticides or weed repellents that will in any way affect other plots.
- To volunteer hours toward community gardening efforts and help with the upkeep of the School Garden plots.
- To not bring pets into the garden area.

*I understand that neither the Garden Committee nor owners of the land are responsible for my actions. I therefore agree to hold harmless the garden group owners of the land for any liability, damage, loss or claim that occurs in connection with the use of the garden by me or any guests.*

Gardeners will also sign a waiver that holds the city harmless.

### **Timeline**

January/February: Garden Committee meets to draft Garden Plan.

March 31: Deadline by which garden must be approved in order to be eligible for funding from SVHC. The Garden Committee will develop a complete list of items needed by mid March.

Early April: Children will start seeds in their classrooms.

March/April: Gardeners will be preparing the soil, building the raised beds, installing shed, etc.

May/June: Gardeners will start planting the garden.

**List of Garden Materials Needed** (separated by monthly budget)

- February: Shed, Tools, Trays, Soil (small quantity for starting seeds), Seeds, Rain Barrel
- March: Fence, Raised Beds, Compost/Soil, Cold Frame, Mulch
- April: Baskets for Harvesting, Plant Labels, Garden Sign, Watering Hose/Can, Wheel Barrow, Gloves, Tools (more) and other various items.