

Community Garden Initiative, West Seneca

Proposed by: Scarlett A. Hanley

Introduction: West Seneca, NY, is a vibrant community with a strong spirit of collaboration. In the coming years, a focus on enhancing our neighborhoods and promoting mutual aid within our community is necessary. We propose the establishment of community gardens in one or several key locations across the town. These gardens will serve as gathering spaces, educational hubs, and sources of fresh produce for residents. By harnessing the power of community engagement and local partnerships, we aim to create beautiful green spaces that benefit both individuals and the environment.

Objectives:

- Establish community gardens in Sunshine Park and/or Centennial Park (or other proposed spots by the council or community)
- Foster a sense of community ownership and pride in these public spaces.
- Promote sustainable gardening practices and environmental education.
- Provide residents with access to fresh, locally grown produce.
- Enhance the aesthetic appeal and functionality of the community.

Purpose of the project:

[Research Paper regarding a NYS study of gardens](#)

This article discusses the specific populations that community gardens impact most greatly, including the elderly and youth population. Providing a community garden allows for a source of nutrition, exercise, and mental stimulation.

[Overview of Benefits](#)

Social engagement in special populations: Many retirees or elderly citizens do not receive the proper amount of social engagement, community gardens provide a source to meet this need. Having a network of positive social connections amongst isolated populations is imperative to decreasing the high depressive rate of these groups. [Isolation in Older Populations](#). A similar rate of depression, lack of social skills, and delinquency in disadvantaged youth is reported. With the implementation of a garden, that again, facilitates positive relationships and community engagement. With a heightened rate of engagement will also follow high civic engagement and mutual trust. When community and neighborhood attachment increases, crime (specifically vandalism) decreases. [Crime Prevention through Environmental Design](#)

Beautification: Through the creation of a community garden, we not only find function, but beauty. Via wide pathways and raised beds designed to promote accessibility to our disabled residents, we allow beauty to be within reach. These gardens can also provide an area for presentation of art, West Seneca presents many wonderful artists who may have outdoor pieces

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to display. Seating within these gardens allows a moment of viewing for art, community, nature, and growth.

Education about local flora and wildlife: A community garden drastically increases the educational resources surrounding local wildlife and plantlife. Not only does this provide a low cost field trip for children in our schools learning about the food web, nutrition, and the history of our town, but it gives people a place to watch birds and animals in their habitats. There are many benefits to spending time outdoors, and appreciating and understanding the biodiversity surrounding West Seneca is the first step towards that. When people are educated about their ecosystem, they grow an appreciation for it, and begin to take care of it for others and future generations.

Increase nutritional understanding: In the United States, obesity has become an epidemic, and is at an all time high. Nutrition education is an imperative tool to ensuring the health of our citizens. Not only will a garden provide access to fresh food, but it also promotes learning cooking skills, rather than having to rely on fast food due to its easy accessibility and cost effectiveness. As previously stated, the garden also provides physical activity which promotes heart health. The community garden actively targets populations vulnerable to lack of education surrounding food: namely, the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and children. This is a necessary implementation that will aid longterm in our fight against misinformation.

Implementation Plan:

1. Site Selection:

- Sunshine Park and Centennial Park have been identified as suitable locations for the community gardens.
- Each site will be evaluated for sunlight exposure, soil quality, and accessibility.

2. Community Engagement:

- Host town hall meetings and information sessions to solicit input and involvement from residents.
- Recruit volunteers to help plan, design, and maintain the gardens.
- Establish a community garden committee to oversee the project and ensure ongoing collaboration.

3. Partner Engagement:

- Reach out to local businesses for donations of materials and resources.
- Collaborate with nurseries, seed suppliers, and landscaping companies to provide mulch, seeds, plants, and other necessary supplies.

4. Garden Design and Implementation:

- Work with local landscapers to design a garden accessible to young children, the disabled, and the elderly.

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- Install raised beds, pathways, composting areas, and other essential features.
- Organize community workdays to prepare the sites and plant the first crops.

5. Maintenance and Management:

- Develop a maintenance schedule and recruit volunteers to tend to the gardens on a regular basis.
- Provide training and support for gardeners, including workshops on organic gardening, pest management, and composting.
- Establish guidelines for garden use, including rules for harvesting and sharing produce.

6. Educational Programming:

- Offer workshops, classes, and demonstrations on gardening, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.
- Partner with local schools, libraries, and community centers to integrate garden-based learning into educational programs.
- Create signage and interpretive displays to educate visitors about the plants, wildlife, and ecological benefits of community gardening.

7. Celebration and Outreach:

- Host opening ceremonies and seasonal celebrations to showcase the gardens and recognize the contributions of volunteers and partners.
- Use social media, newsletters, and local media outlets to share updates and success stories with the broader community.
- Encourage residents to visit the gardens, participate in events, and get involved in ongoing initiatives.

Thank you and finalities: By creating community gardens in Sunshine Park, Tim Russert Park, Westgate Playground, and/or Centennial Park, we have the opportunity to transform underutilized spaces into vibrant hubs of activity and growth. Through the collective efforts of residents, businesses, and community organizations, we can cultivate healthy fruits and vegetables, and a stronger sense of connection and belonging. We look forward to working together to make this vision a reality and to sow the seeds of a brighter, greener future for West Seneca. Thank you for considering our proposal.