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“THIS GARDEN IS A TOWN”

A Publication of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan

Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania

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*Dedicated to the gardeners who have made these places and who inspire us all.*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Project Director (1987-1989): W. Gary Smith  
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This publication was written by Anne Whiston Spira and Michele Pollio, but it represents the summary of work to which many others contributed. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project is a three-year community development and research project funded by the J.N. Pew Charitable Trust and conducted by the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. The Organization and Management Group, and Philadelphia Green under the auspices of the West Philadelphia Partnership.

The investigation of the eight gardens was initiated in Summer 1988 by W. Gary Smith. Smith selected the gardens and supervised their investigation by graduate students in landscape architecture (Kate Deregius, Michele Pollio, Jeffrey Poor, Karen Reuling, John Widrick, and Laura Will). These research assistants visited the gardens, interviewed gardeners, took photographs, and prepared measured plans of each garden. Artist Bilge Friedlander, with research assistant John Widrick, studied the gardens as an expression of dwelling and folk art and documented them in photographs and poetry. In July and August 1988 Anne Whiston Spira worked with research assistants, John Widrick, Karen Reuling, Laura Will, Kate Deregius, and John Berg in the early development of the design language. Michele Pollio supervised the organization and production of the exhibit for which this publication is a catalogue, assisted by research assistants Mark Cameron, Geoffrey Anderson, Elissa Sharp, Bob Eck, Tara Agrana, Anurada Mathur, and Manesha Patel. Tony Oates, Karen Reuling, Michele Pollio, and Kate Deregius prepared the ink drawings of the gardens. Pat Wesley was responsible for the graphic design of this report

Most of the gardens discussed here were built under the auspices of Philadelphia Green of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Three of these gardens—Pennsgrove, Westminster, and Aspen Farms—were designed and constructed or received improvements as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project. Improvements to Aspen Farms were designed by John Widrick, as part of a landscape architecture course at the University of Pennsylvania taught by Anne Whiston Spira and W. Gary Smith. The design for Pennsgrove was developed by Gary Smith and for Westminster by research assistant Ruth Loewe. The design and construction of all three of these projects were supported by a grant from the J.N. Pew Charitable Trust.

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## OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES:

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan  
Shaping The Block  
Landscape Projects as a Catalyst for Community Development  
Vacant Urban Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods  
The Computerized Landscape Plan: A Users' Manual

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# THE WEST PHILADELPHIA LANDSCAPE PLAN

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The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project is a three-year community development and research project funded by the J.N. Pew Charitable Trust and conducted by the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, The Organization and Management Group, and Philadelphia Green, under the auspices of the West Philadelphia Partnership.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan is based upon the conviction that many individuals, groups, organizations, and public agencies have a role in shaping the landscape of the city. Incremental improvements to the urban landscape by individuals and small groups can have an enormous, cumulative effect on the city and how it looks and functions. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan seeks to encourage and support such incremental improvements, as well as to identify large-scale projects that must be accomplished by neighborhood-wide organizations and city-wide or regional public agencies. Landscape planning and the design and construction of small, neighborhood landscape projects have proceeded simultaneously and have informed one another throughout the project.

The scope of this plan is more comprehensive than what are commonly referred to as "greening" projects, for the landscape of West Philadelphia is more than parks, gardens, and street trees. The urban landscape embodies the total physical environment within which built structures fit. It includes the framework of streets, sidewalks, and public utilities which structures the city and through which people, water, wastes, and energy flow, as well as all the playgrounds, parking lots, plazas, private yards, and

vacant lots that fit within that larger framework. The major transportation and stream corridors thus provide a neighborhood-wide structure that serves both local and regional needs, while smaller, more discrete projects may be tailored to suit the needs of local residents.

West Philadelphia is a multi-racial, multi-cultural inner-city neighborhood. Crime, rising drug use, unemployment, poverty, and the physical deterioration of housing and public infrastructure are pressing issues. These are fundamental problems that any plan for West Philadelphia must address, including a plan for landscape improvements. Clearly landscape development alone cannot solve these problems. Successful landscape projects can serve, however, as catalysts for other community development projects and as important adjuncts to a wide variety of social programs, such as education, job training, employment, and community organizing. The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan addresses these social issues, as well as environmental problems, such as land subsidence and flooding in areas over buried streams and filled land.

The products of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan are six reports and a computer database that integrates text, statistics, maps, and drawings. "The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan" provides an overview of the plan and "Landscape Projects as Catalysts for Community Development" describes successful examples that have already been built and draws lessons for similar projects that could be undertaken in West Philadelphia. "Shaping The Block" focuses on the block as a significant unit of neighborhood and explores how residents can reshape

the block they live on to better support their needs, values, and activities. "Vacant Urban Land: A Resource for Reshaping the City" analyzes the different types of vacant urban land that occur in West Philadelphia, how they may be reclaimed, and how they fit into the larger natural and social systems of the city. "The Computerized Landscape Plan: A User's Manual" describes the computer database and its potential uses.

"This Garden is a Town" explores the community garden as a microcosm of community and a model for neighborhood planning and design. It compares eight existing community gardens in terms of their form, decision-making structure, motivations and values of the gardeners, and the impact the gardens have had on the surrounding neighborhood. The report also describes common patterns underlying the gardens' diverse forms and introduces the idea of a common language of design that applies to the scales of garden, neighborhood, and city.

# "THIS GARDEN IS A TOWN"

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"This garden is a town—we have everything but a penal colony." Hayward Ford's remark about his community garden alludes to a major premise of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan, that the community garden is a microcosm of community and that there are lessons to be learned from these gardens for designing the larger neighborhoods and cities in which we live.

The community garden provides a setting for most of the physical and social needs essential to human life. Most obviously community gardens are a place for planting, growing, and harvesting food, but they are also the locus for many other life processes: for sharing and trading, for meeting and play, for making and building, for dreaming and worship. They are the scene of cooperation and conflict.

## Garden Forms and Gardeners' Values

Eight community gardens, selected for their diversity in terms of how they were formed, how they operate, and how they look, provide a glimpse of what different places such gardens can be. The gardens range from a tiny, intricate garden to a huge, amorphous one, from ones tended by one or two individuals to others that accommodate fifty people or more. Community gardens embody the values of those who garden there, thereby creating a variety of physical forms and organizational structures; yet certain elements and motivations are common to all.

## Community Structure and Garden Form

The community garden contains many elements that define "community" at any scale, from

physical features such as territories, boundaries, paths, and gateways, to organizational features like methods of decision-making, division of responsibilities and resources, and the relationship of individual and group. These elements take different forms, each reflecting the individuality of the garden's "community."

Like a neighborhood, a community garden embodies both individual territories and common ground. The Schuylkill Park Community Garden, for example, actually looks and functions like an urban neighborhood. The garden plots are laid out in a grid, divided by straight, paved paths, much like Philadelphia's streets. Each individual plot has a relationship to the community garden as a whole, just as each individual private property relates to its surrounding neighborhood in the city. Schuylkill Park Community Garden is part of a public park. The City built it and imposed the regulations by which it is governed. Just as property changes hands in the city, so do the gardeners change, but the boundaries of the plots remain the same year to year.

Political structure influences the form a community garden takes. The gardeners at Schuylkill Park do not own or control the land. They may decide what to plant in their own own plot, but they may not alter the form of the garden or change the rules. At Aspen Farms, a large garden in the Mill Creek neighborhood, the gardeners set their own rules and elect their leaders. The gardeners built this place over fifteen years, with whatever resources they could garner. Although originally laid out with parallel plots divided by small paths and one, large, central path, the garden's form has continued to

evolve, year by year, according to individual initiatives, informal negotiation, and group decisions. The form of the garden mirrors the give-and-take of its social structure.

Garden plots of similar shape and size and paths of regular pattern are a sign that someone has laid out the garden prior to planting, be it the city or the gardeners themselves. The Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden exhibits no such regularity. Each garden plot merges into the next, with barely discernable borders. The plots are of varying shapes and sizes and are distinguished primarily through the types of plants each gardener grows and how they are cultivated (e.g. whether they are laid out in rows or mixed together). The plots themselves are carved out of a weedy meadow of grasses and wildflowers which still thrives at the edges of the garden and on untended plots, and which grows out over the fence and sidewalks to form a freely-growing border for the garden as a whole. This seeming chaos reflects the garden's anarchist political structure, where gardeners act as free agents, governed not by a set of specific rules, but by common values.

Gardeners invest time and care in their gardens; these become special places, expressive of the gardeners' personal values. While some community gardens show the mark of many individuals, each contributing something of themselves in the fences and gates they build, the containers they use for flowers, and the decorations they display, other gardens are clearly the expression of a single, strong-minded individual—a benevolent dictator. Blanche Epp has dedicated the Geitsemame garden to healing. She runs the garden, admits only people who have a

health problem, and plans for them a garden plot which will yield a diet appropriate to their disorder. Most of the plots are not clearly differentiated and the garden has the appearance of being governed by a single hand.

#### Motivations and Benefits

Beautification, recreation, food production, neighborhood renewal, and grassroots political organizing represent different types of motivations that spur the formation of a community garden. The garden's sponsor is often a key to which motivation is primary. The Spruce Hill Garden Club, for example, is an organization dedicated to the beautification of the Spruce Hill neighborhood in West Philadelphia. The Club launched its first project in 1959—the conversion of a vacant corner lot into a garden with trees, lawn, and flowerbeds. There are no vegetables in the garden, which is maintained by a single volunteer. The garden's location along a major route through this densely-built neighborhood makes it a bright, colorful landmark for the many people who pass on their path to and from work or school everyday. Thousands of people have appreciated its beauty over the years.

Beautification and neighborhood renewal were also driving motivations behind Westminster and Pennsgrove, two gardens built in 1988 as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan. Since the completion of Westminster, an adjacent vacant lot and several nearby lots have been turned into gardens, radically changing the street's appearance. The garden at Pennsgrove was the culmination of several other block projects.

The benefits of community gardens extend

far beyond beautification, recreation, and food production. In neighborhoods where economic resources are scarce, where abandoned and deteriorated buildings and vacant lots are a sign of neglect by their owners, and where poorly maintained streets and playgrounds are a sign of the inability of government to provide adequate public services, community gardens testify to the power of the individual to seize control and transform a nuisance into something of beauty. Community gardens are a model for how to care for a place.

The process of establishing a community garden creates a reservoir of experience and skills. Community gardeners know how to build things, how to maintain them, and how to get things done. The gardens therefore often lead to other, more ambitious community projects. For the 2500 block of Hope Street in North Philadelphia, the transformation of vacant lots into individual and community gardens has resulted in public investment in new sidewalks, curbs, and streets. In this narrow street of row houses with no front yards, the street and sidewalk are paths that connect this small neighborhood to the rest of the city, but they are also a social space and playground. In 1984, many of the house lots on the street were abandoned and trash-filled, the street and sidewalks dilapidated. Residents of the block negotiated a deal with the city whereby they obtained ownership of the vacant lots by cleaning and fencing them, all for the cost of the paperwork involved. Each of these lots is now a garden. Most belong to individuals, and each is expressive of the owner's hobbies and family life. A few lots are communal—a lot lot, for example. Once the lots were cleaned up and the gardens built, the block applied for street improvements. Previously

denied, the improvements were finally implemented. Neighborhood change such as that spurred by Hope Street and Westminster often owe their initial impetus to a single, energetic individual. But as change occurs and the positive effects become visible, other, new leaders emerge. The successes of one block or garden are often an inspiration to others. Hope, knowledge, and determination are passed on from one individual and one group to another.

An additional, important benefit of community gardens is the connections they afford between the gardeners and nature in the city. Many gardeners speak of the pleasures they gain from planting a seed and watching it grow, from gathering flowers or harvesting vegetables and fruit. They speak of the seasons and the effects of rain, drought, and pollution. The gardeners in the Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden compost garden clippings and garbage in order to fertilize their fields, since they use no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. The garden has new fruit trees, which the gardeners attribute to seeds dispersed by birds.

Community gardeners also see a less benign, more violent side of nature. Many community gardens in West Philadelphia owe their existence to the destructive force of the Mill Creek. Although this stream was buried a hundred years ago and now flows in sewers, beneath streets and houses, its floodplain is still prone to flooding and subsidence of land. Houses once stood where vacant lands now mark the old stream course. Gardeners at Aspen Farms know that there is a buried stream in their neighborhood; they see its effects in and around their garden. Houses across from the garden have sunk several feet, and the plots in the back corner where



the garden slopes toward the old streambed need water less frequently, since the soil is often moist. The Spruce Hill Garden was built where a house subsided over a tributary to the Mill Creek. Today, a crack spans the entire height of the house across the street from the garden; the building has subsided over that same old streambed. Just one block away, 43rd Street floods every time it rains; it is a low point in the landscape. The Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden also lies over a stream—in this case a former tributary of the Schuylkill River. Although environmental protection was not a conscious motive in the formation of these gardens, this does serve the additional benefit of occupying land which may be poorly drained and unstable.

Form conveys meaning. The ridge lines and meandering valley once cut by Mill Creek speak of its presence, even though the stream is no longer visible above ground. The overall pattern of Schuylkill Park with its regular, rigid boundaries and the seemingly amorphous plots and freely-growing edges of the Powelton/Summer-Winter garden each speak eloquently of their distinctly different political organization and the values of the individuals who garden there. The Spruce Hill Garden, with lawn and flowerbeds that flow into one another, forming a unit, and Aspen Farms, with its many, clearly divided plots, speak of the mark of one versus many hands and minds at work. The flowers planted along the sidewalk outside Westminster and Penningsgrove gardens are evidence of their gardeners' strong desire to beautify the neighborhood.

### Common Patterns

Underlying the diverse forms that commu-

nity gardens take are common patterns. Each entails the demarcation of territory through the cultivation of the land and through the construction of boundaries and gateways. Each has a path or is bordered by paths; and each has a meeting place. All contrast with their urban surroundings, and afford a sense of refuge to both gardeners and passersby. Many have a prospect, a place from which one can watch the street or the entry to the garden. All have a source of water; all are a source of pride; many are a source of food. All contain signs, whether a literal sign that announces the name of the garden or cites a passage from the Bible or a more subtle sign like the carefully-tended flowers which signify care or the choice of plants which recall childhood memories and racial or ethnic heritage.

Together these common patterns comprise the elements of the places we live in. One finds these patterns not only in gardens, but also in buildings, neighborhoods, and towns. The City of Philadelphia is a political territory whose boundaries are marked by signs, both literal ("welcome to Philadelphia") and referential (Noguchi's sculpture of Ben Franklin's kite). The statue of William Penn atop City Hall Tower is a landmark, a different sort of sign. The Delaware River is both path and boundary; the Benjamin Franklin Bridge forms a gateway. Fairmount Park is a refuge; the steps of the Museum of Fine Arts provide a prospect from which to get an overview of the city. Despite very different forms and sizes, the same elements at the scale of a city or a garden serve similar functions. The Franklin Bridge and the gate to Aspen Farms, for example, serve similar functions of movement, control, and communication. The community garden is smaller and less

complex than a neighborhood or city and therefore provides an ideal place to study and understand these basic patterns and their relationships and overlaps.

These elements—territory, boundary, gateway, prospect, refuge, meeting place, source, and sign—are among the basic building blocks of the habitats we create. They derive from the physical, social, and spiritual needs we share as humans and the cultural processes that have evolved to fulfill them. Some of these needs are basic to survival: sustenance, stimulation of the senses, reproduction, growth, control, and movement. Other cultural processes embody social needs that mediate among individuals and groups: identification or belonging, communication, making-building, trade, play, learning, and conflict. We also have spiritual needs like dreaming and worship. The places we dwell—be they gardens, homes, neighborhoods, towns, or cities—must, at the very least, satisfy these needs.

Each feature of the garden serves one or more of these needs, and this overlap enriches the appearance and experience of the garden. A garden's boundary fence and gate, for example, direct movement and control where one enters or leaves; their material and form communicate how the gardeners feel about the community outside. When fences and gates are built by hand and decorated, they give the garden a special quality that expresses the identity of the maker and his or her dreams. Most community gardens evolve over time, with gates, paths, borders, meeting areas, and signs built by individuals from whatever materials are at hand. The sum of these constructions gives each garden a particular identity. The basic elements and the similarity of the functions

they serve account for the common patterns among the gardens.

### Designing the Community Garden

Some community gardens are designed by landscape architects, but most are not. A professional designer can play a significant role, but it is important to remember that a major benefit of the community garden is the opportunity that it gives the gardeners to create their own place. This requires a sensitivity on the part of the designer, a willingness to relinquish control of the final details, and an acceptance that the design will be open-ended. The designer must listen carefully and "read between the lines" to elicit the gardeners' needs, hopes, dreams, and hidden agendas. The designer's greatest contribution is to translate those values into form. When designing for a group of community gardeners, there are often conflicting values and agendas and the designer can help the group achieve consensus by presenting multiple alternatives, so that each concern is manifest and can be discussed.

Of the eight gardens discussed here, four employed the services of a landscape architect. Schuylkill Park Community Garden was designed as part of a public park, while Pennsgrove, Westminster, and the new additions to Aspen Farms were all designed and constructed as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project.

The city was the client for Schuylkill Park. The budget was much larger than for most community gardens, and the city controlled design and construction. Here the gardeners are more like tenants than owners. The result is more like a public park than a community garden. The design is closed;

new construction by the gardeners is prohibited by the city's regulations.

Pennsgrove and Westminster were the first community gardens designed and constructed as a collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Green, and community gardeners. In both cases, the work began with a vacant lot and a newly organized group from which a dominant leader emerged as spokesman. Both were designed much the way a landscape architect would design for a private client, but with an attempt to create an open-ended design, a skeleton for the gardeners to fill in and embellish. A "finished" designed was deliberately avoided, partly because of the small budget, but mostly to permit the gardeners to personalize the place. Westminster has been particularly successful in this regard. The framing of gate, fence, and trellis have served as a structure for climbing vines and for gardeners to hang all sorts of collected objects.

Aspen Farms presented a much more complex design problem. There were fifty gardeners, and the garden had already existed as a community for more than ten years. The gardeners were skilled, experienced, and articulate. Ten students each produced designs. The diversity of the alternatives aided the gardeners' deliberations and helped them to reach rapid consensus. The scheme they chose employed the design language described earlier, as a means of understanding the garden as it was, as a point of departure for the redesign, and as a way of presenting the proposal to the group.

Talking about the community garden in these terms led readily to a discussion about the physical structure of the larger neighborhood and

how it might be modified. An appreciation of the common patterns that underlie the community garden and all our living environments and an acknowledgment of how each place becomes special through the individual expression of those who make those places points to a new way of designing gardens, neighborhoods, and cities.

## Aspen Farms

The Aspen Farms Community Garden and the blocks around it are a well-cared for island in the midst of trash-filled vacant lots, deteriorated buildings, and poorly-maintained public housing. The garden takes up half a block, and it seems like one or more of the forty gardeners are always there doing something—digging, planting, or harvesting; cleaning, weeding, or building; or perhaps just talking, resting, or watching. A fence borders the sidewalk, setting off the territory of the garden from the surrounding neighborhood. Two gates, one on Aspen Street and the other on Folsom Street, lead into the wide path that forms the “main street” of Aspen Farms. Smaller paths lead off this central path to the garden plots, each of which belong to a single person or family. These smaller paths and groups of garden plots form little neighborhoods within the larger garden, and over the years there has been friendly competition among them. There are also meeting places and shared resources like the Aspen House, a greenhouse. The gardeners recycle their waste in a common compost pile, and they even have a common water supply system. Aspen Farms looks like a miniature farm in the middle of the city, but it is really more like a town than a farm.

Aspen Farms is a testament to the talent, knowledge, and energy that exists within this community and a model of what the Mill Creek neighborhood could be. In 1975 the land now occupied by Aspen Farms was a vacant lot much like many others in the neighborhood. In that year, Esther Williams cleaned up that lot across from the front door of her home and, with the help of neighbors, established a garden that filled half the lot. By 1980, the garden had expanded to cover the entire vacant lot.

Year by year, the garden has changed. “If you can’t improve each year, why be here?” This statement by Hayward Ford sums up a fundamental philosophy that has underlain the gardeners’ actions within both the garden and the surrounding neighborhood. The list of improvements is impressive. A large mural of a red barn with cows grazing and horses playing in a pasture was one of the first additions and has become the garden’s signature. In 1987 Hayward Ford installed a sophisticated irrigation system down the central core of the garden. In 1986 the Aspen House was built, and in 1989 it was decorated with a mural of Aspen, Colorado. In 1989 the gardeners also added a butterfly garden planted with brightly colored flowers and with a birdbath in the center. In 1989 the “main street” was redesigned and rebuilt, along with a new boundary fence and gate.

The gardeners range in age from children who care for the youth garden to a ninety-two year old. Most of the gardeners, however, are over sixty. “It’s an outlet for us senior citizens. It’s real therapy—you don’t have to take medicine when you’re gardening,” notes Charles Clark. Other gardeners agree: “this is magic therapy,” says Joenelle Grayton, “it would hurt if I didn’t do anything.” Most of the gardeners have many years experience, and the garden is a link to their childhood. “I’ve gardened from a youngster. My father was a landscape gardener, and I loved helping him,” remarked Rebecca Melvin.

The gardeners have reached out to the youth of the neighborhood: they host field trips to the garden for schools in West Philadelphia and have established a scholarship for a worthy kid at the local

school. The gardeners also give to the neighborhood in other ways. They host several annual neighborhood parties and give away much of their harvest of fruits and vegetables. They tend flowers outside the garden’s gate and have encouraged the pink hollyhocks which grow along the interior of the garden’s fence to creep through the fence and decorate the sidewalk.

A hand-made, hand-painted, wooden sign tucked away in the garden is a clue to the character and philosophy of the gardeners. The sign simply says—Deut. 24:19. The reference is not spelled out, the gardeners know its words and its message full well:

*When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*

## THE GARDENS

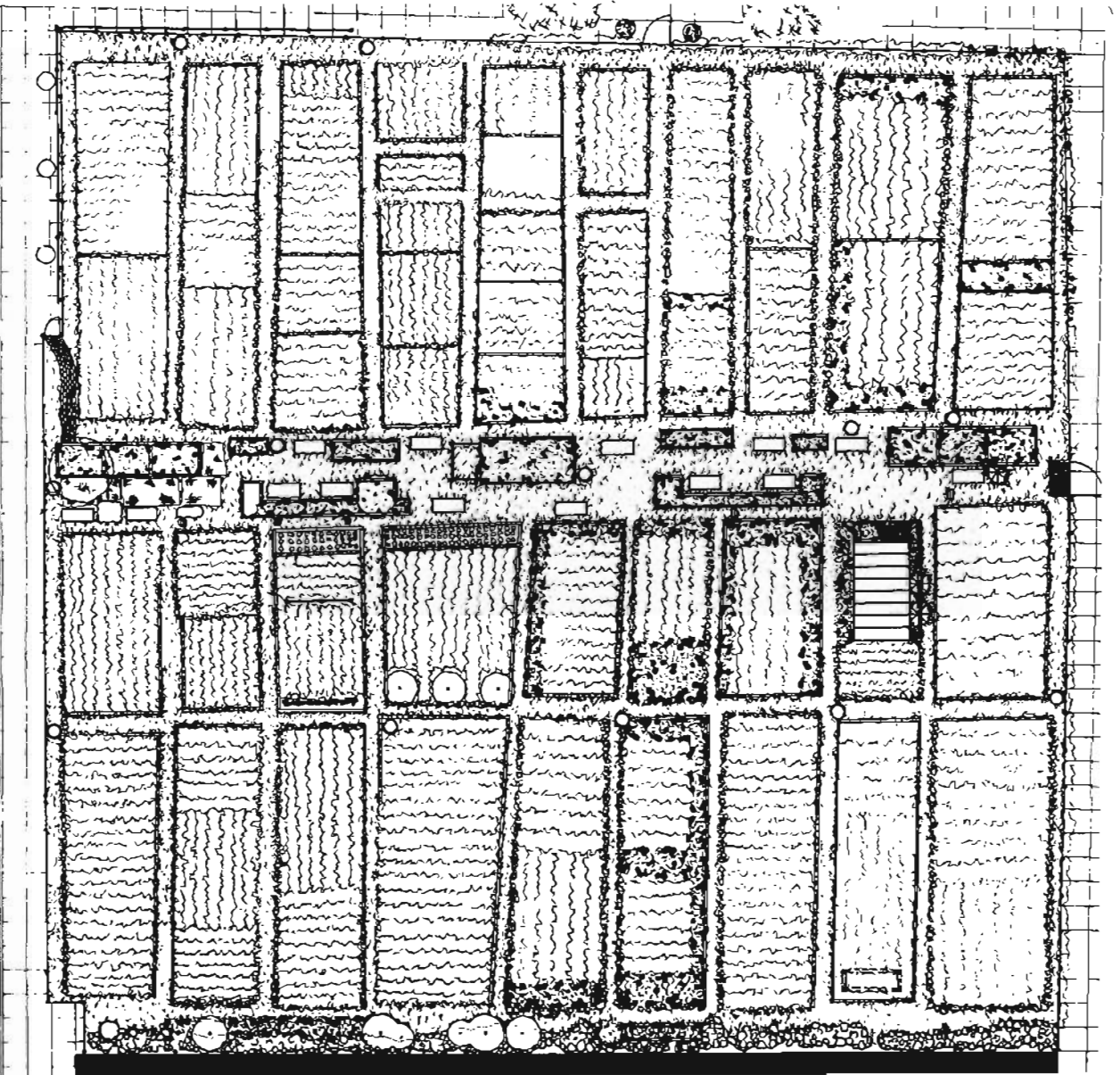
"This garden is a town—we have everything but a penal colony."  
Hayward Ford

"It was an eyesore, had been for years, smack dab in the center of our neighborhood. We just got sick of looking at it!"  
Esther Williams

"If you can't improve each year, why be here?"  
Hayward Ford

"This is magic therapy. It would hurt if I didn't do anything."  
Joellen Grayton

"It isn't all fifty beds of roses. There are fifty different people with fifty different ways of seeing things and fifty different ways of doing things. And everybody, of course, is always right."  
Hayward Ford



### A New Main Street for Aspen Farms

The redesign and reconstruction at Aspen Farms in 1988-89 was a collaboration between the gardeners, students and faculty from the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, and staff of Philadelphia Green, as part of the West Philadelphia Plan and Greening Project.

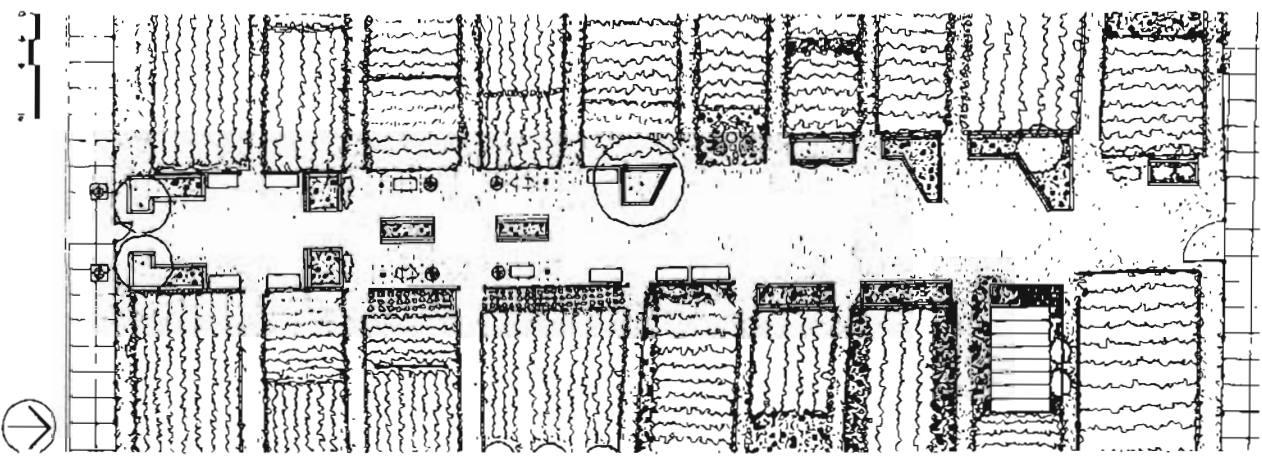
First, the gardeners gave the students a tour of Aspen Farms, talked about what they had done and what they hoped to do, and welcomed them into their homes for an overnight stay. The next day, back at Penn, the students set to work on designs which they presented to the gardeners several weeks later, as alternatives from which to choose.

At first glance, the designers' task seemed simple. The gardeners had asked for a meeting place for themselves and for the tours from local schools; the garden also needed a new boundary fence. Several constraints quickly emerged, however: the small budget and the gardeners' reluctance to change. In formulating their designs, the students had to decide whether to concentrate improvements in a small area or to spread them around. Concentrating the resources seemed a good idea, but then not all the gardeners would benefit equally. The students also soon realized how strongly the gardeners felt about their own plots where they had improved the soil over time and formed friendships with neighboring gardeners. Relocation or the loss of even a small portion of their territory was a traumatic prospect. The strategies chosen by individual students diverged, and the gardeners were presented with a wide range of alternative designs. Some devoted the entire budget to a new boundary fence and gates; others

concentrated on a new, interior meeting place.

Ultimately, the gardeners chose a design that created a "main street" meeting place by widening the central path, thereby changing the boundaries of individual plots as little as possible. The designer, student John Widrick, returned to the garden again and again. As he got to know the gardeners better, he realized that what at first seemed one big community, was actually composed of several smaller groups, each with its own territory and leaders. Widrick proposed that the central path become the meeting place so that each group's territory would border that space. The central path is now like a small street with benches where people can come out of their garden to sit, rest, watch, and chat. Raised flowerbeds and benches form a boundary between the public path and more private, adjacent garden plots and provide an opportunity for individuals to show off their skills. Small openings form gateways between the path and the plots beyond. The design provides only a minimal framework, permitting the gardeners to embellish it with their talents for making, building, and cultivating. The "main street" connects two gates of the garden, so most people entering and leaving the garden move through this place. Since the alterations were completed, the gardeners themselves have raised additional money to install new gates and a new fence around the entire garden.

Aspen Farms is a successful community. Conflict and competition are inevitable, as they are in every community. When turned into a positive force, however, the entire community benefits, and this is what the design for Aspen Farms' new "main street" does.



## Schuylkill Park Community Garden

This garden started out, as many community gardens do, on vacant land along the Schuylkill River which the gardeners, members of the Center City Residents Association (CCRA), leased from the City for one dollar per year. A park had long been envisioned on this land, and a community garden was not part of the original plan. When construction on Schuylkill River Park began, the gardeners' lease was therefore revoked. After a long struggle, the CCRA succeeded in persuading the City to include the garden as part of the new park.

The crafted, gate that marks the entrance to the Schuylkill Park Garden is a sign that this is an unusual community garden. The dimensions and material of gates, walls, paths, plaza, and fountain signal money spent. They are not built from recycled bricks and cobbles or treasured discards, but rather from new, purchased materials. The gate, the iron fence, with its massive, brick piers, the straight brick and concrete paths, laid out so solidly and evenly, are the product of skilled workmen's hands.

This community garden is like a new town that was built first by workmen, then occupied later. In fact, the garden was designed by landscape architects, and a contractor did build the paths, the fence, the central plaza with its trellis and fountain which serves as a source of water, community notice board, tool shed, and wooden compost bins. Wide paths lead from the two gates to the central meeting place; these are bordered on each side by small, square gardens, individual territories separated by straight paths. When it was completed in 1988, the gardeners took possession.

Struggle for existence in the face of devel-

opment is a problem that confronts many community gardens. Here, a compromise was reached. The City permitted the community garden to stay and paid for the construction of new facilities. In return, the City asked the gardeners to maintain flowers along the boundary of the garden and to abide by certain rules. Originally, the City created a highly detailed and comprehensive set of rules that outraged many of the gardeners. Although these have now been simplified, they have resulted in a highly organized political structure with elected officers, committees, and schedules.

The struggle had its bright side, however. It brought people together over a common cause. Mostly, members are grateful that they still have a place to garden. Like community gardeners everywhere, they are enthusiasts: "It's a passion. I've been gardening since I was twelve years old," says Janet Dinglee. "It's the one hobby that goes across the age span. We even have infants come in and look around." The garden is both a refuge and a meeting place. "The garden is where I come to find peace. It's also nice because you get to meet people and chat with people you would never get to talk to."

Park and community garden are now mutually beneficial. The gardeners have gained permanence and facilities that they could not have afforded otherwise. Visitors to the park enjoy watching and talking to the gardeners. The long flowerbed that marks the garden's boundary is unusual for a neighborhood park. The tall grasses and flowers require a degree of care most neighborhood parks do not receive. They are the gift of the gardeners to their neighborhood.

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*"It's been a lot of red tape. It's a little exasperating that something so nice and simple can become so complicated. The city has made us liable for any accidents that happen within the garden, yet they force us to allow the public in."*

Lawrence Bass

*"We had such a struggle that everyone became palsy-walsy."*

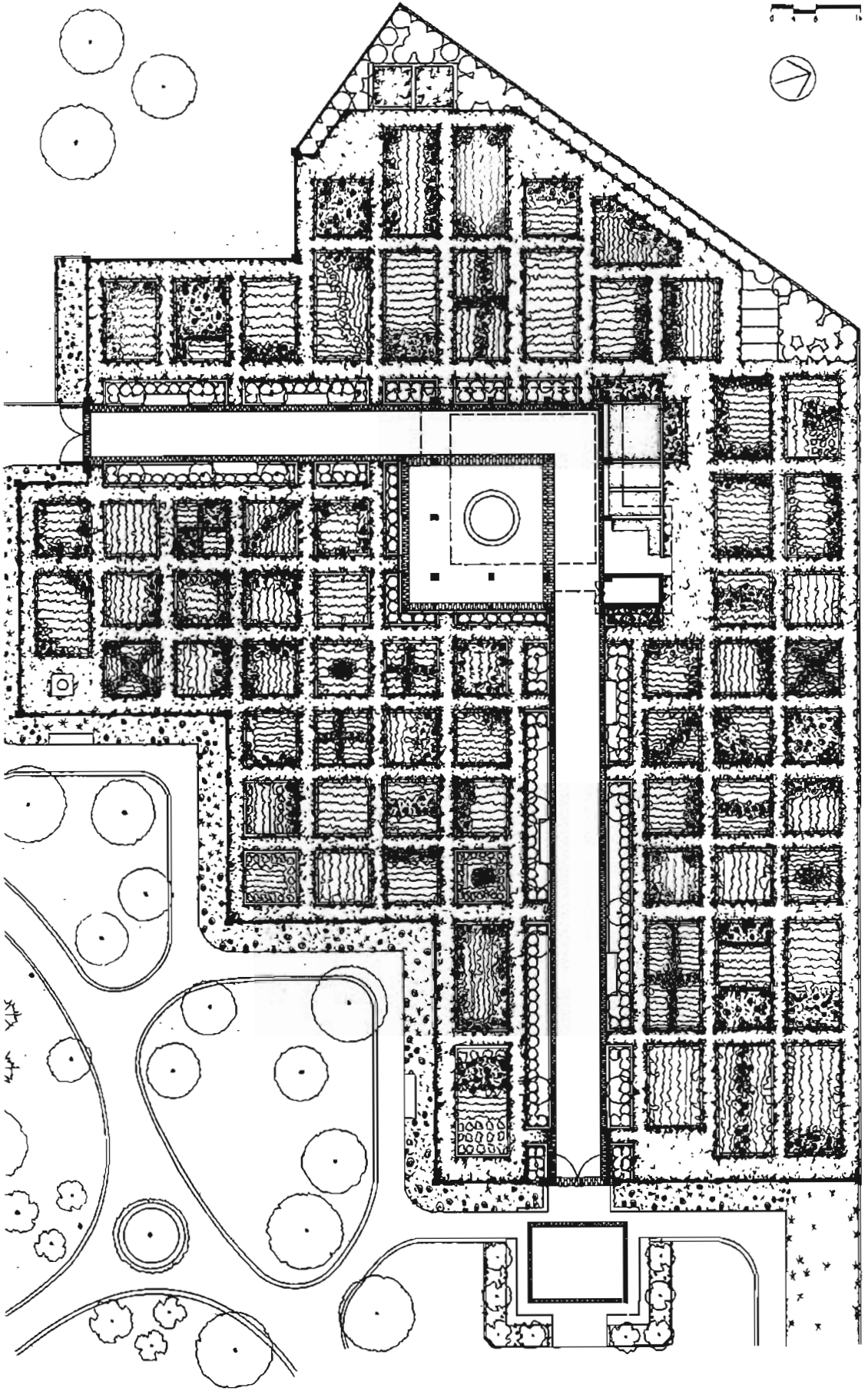
Janet Dinglee

*"This is a god-send. I only have a 10' x 15' backyard."*

Sharon Dooley

*"This garden is where I come to find peace. It's also nice because you get to meet people and chat with people you would never get to talk to."*

An Anonymous Gardener



Schuylkill Park Community Garden

## Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden

The Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden is on the corner of 33rd and Race Streets, at the heart of an area that has been the scene of a struggle between neighborhood residents and Drexel University for more than twenty years. The garden was started in 1977 by a group of about ten families from Summer and Winter Streets after the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) demolished the houses and industrial buildings that had stood there. Later, a second neighborhood group, the Powelton Pruners, expanded the garden to fill the entire lot.

The dominant impression of the garden is one of free expression, playful invention and easy give-and-take. A wide, generous path that cuts diagonally through the heart of the garden is a central feature. The path is open at both ends to the surrounding neighborhood, and those who stroll in gain a sense of casual welcome. The path is soft underfoot. Its edges are marked by stones, tall grasses, railroad ties, fence fragments, and hand-crafted gates. These boundaries are irregular: a piece of the garden juts out here, pops out there, spills over somewhere else. Down the path is a meeting place with a tree stump for a table and two benches which afford a prospect of downtown Philadelphia. Nearby are wooden storage bins and a bulletin board, the only official signs of the garden's organization. The individual plots on either side of the path have much the same qualities as the path's border. Their boundaries are loosely defined, discernable largely through variations in cultivation methods and the type of plants grown.

The gardeners describe themselves as "environmentally conscious," so fertilizers are

discouraged and the use of mushroom soil, which contains chemicals, has been discontinued. A common compost pile located prominently at the garden's entrance, is a sign of the mindful economy practiced by the gardeners. Another sign of their environmental values is the garden's boundary of freely-growing grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and small trees that make the garden virtually invisible to those who drive by in cars. Thirty-third Street is a major commuting route through West Philadelphia, but few commuters are aware of the garden's existence.

This land has seen much change in the past 200 years. In the early nineteenth century, a spring-fed stream flowed beneath the southwest corner of the garden, a tributary to the Schuylkill River. By the late nineteenth century, this land was covered with buildings and roads, but by the 1960's, several buildings and numerous lots were vacant. In 1974, a vacant house stood on the southwest corner of what is now the garden; one could hear the stream flowing within, feeding the trees which grew out of the open roof. On the opposite corner, a vacant warehouse owned by the PRA was adopted by neighborhood residents for a food co-op. Today that land is vacant and a new dormitory has replaced houses across the street. The gardeners at Powelton/Summer-Winter Garden fear a similar fate to previous occupants of the area. The Summer-Winter Association and the Powelton Village Civic Association are both actively lobbying the city government and Drexel University to maintain the site as a garden.

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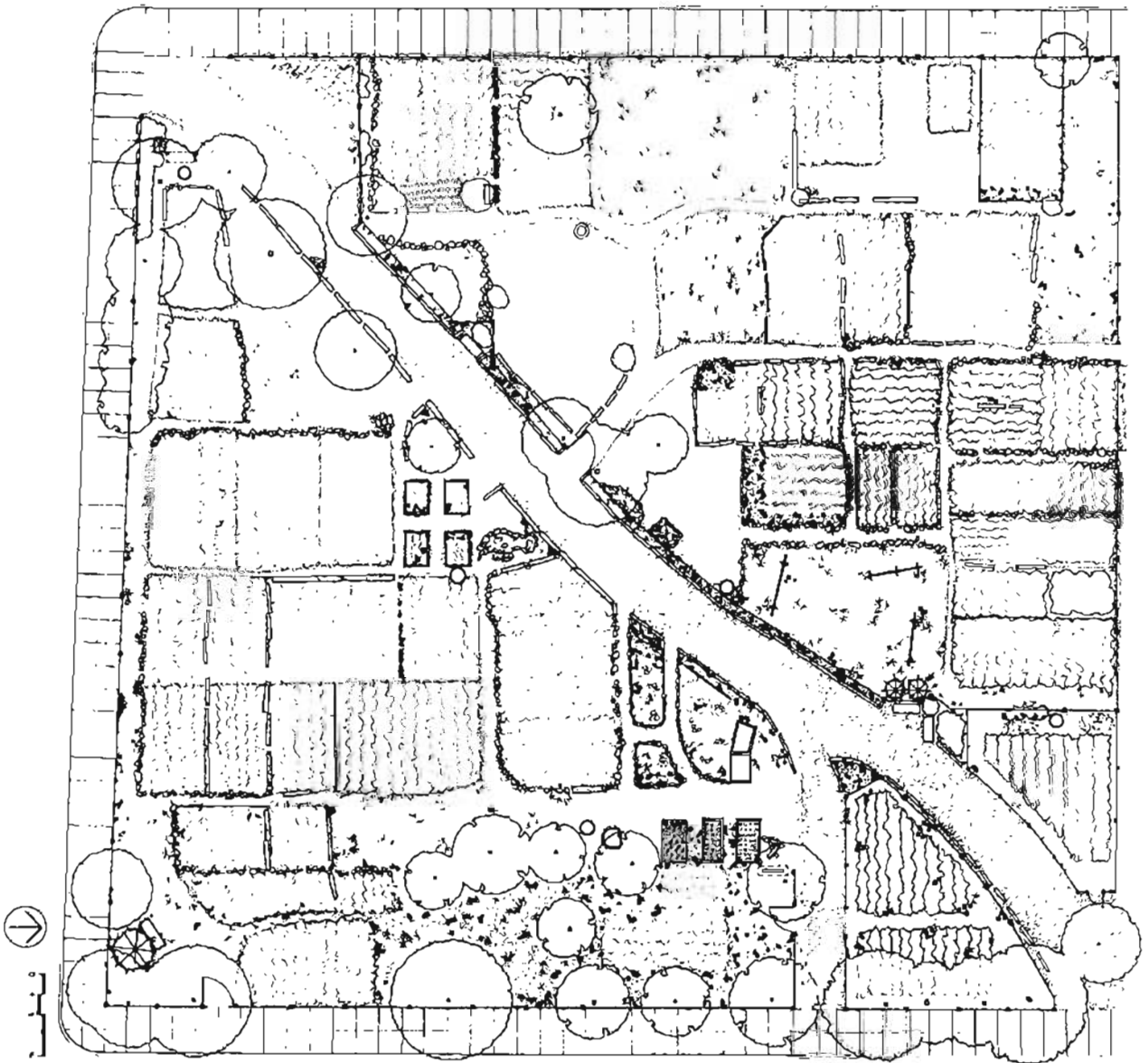
*"The bad thing about clean-ups is you could easily slash a praying mantis case. They're a wonderful benefit for a garden. They'll eat anything that moves with legs. There are a lot of good garden creatures out there. We've got a lot of ladybugs; they're good garden friends."*

Joe Revlock

*"When you see these children stealing from you, it really makes you mad. If you close yourself off to it and get angry, you're not going to open things up for these kids. But if you just talk to them, we both come out of it with greater insight. The kids want to help, and the fruit from the trees, that's there to taste."*

Joe Revlock.





Gesthemane

The Gethsemane Garden, on the corner of Vine and Conestoga Streets, is dedicated to healing. Thick vines cover the front fence, forming a green boundary. You can pull apart the vines and peer in or peek through the gate. Inside the garden, bright flowers, medicinal herbs, and vitamin-rich foods are abundant. They are a source of both pleasure and health. The neighborhood outside, with its trash-filled sidewalks, abandoned cars, and closed fire station, is not a welcoming place. The garden is a refuge.

Blanche Epp organized this garden in 1980. She runs the garden with a firm hand, strong ideas, a generous heart, and a sharp mind. The garden is for people with health problems, and Blanche helps them plan a garden plot which will meet their dietary requirements. She refers affectionately to “the cardiac case,” “the diabetic,” and the woman who is “just not well.” Other gardeners include people with cancer and psoriasis, an alcoholic, and a woman who was in a trolley accident.

The path leading from the gate into the heart of the garden is lined by a row of flower-filled tire planters on one side and a wooden fence on the other. Blanche planted a row of trees, “the dedicated walk”, in honor of deceased gardeners: “This is the first tree. I put it in for my mother and father.”

Another special plot near the garden’s gate contains old bathtubs and sinks, each filled with soil and each containing a different vegetable. The gardener is a blind woman whom Blanche has taught to garden by feel. The blind woman knows that the bathtub has sweet potatoes and the sink has carrots. Blanche also grows peanuts, collards, and cotton—signs of her

southern background.

A meeting place lies near the center of the garden. The vine-covered trellis forms a shady roof over the table and benches underneath, creating a sense of refuge, while the open sides provide a prospect over the garden for those seated within.

The only gardeners in Gethsemane who are not sick are Blanche’s grandchildren who care for a flower garden next to the garden’s meeting place. Here Blanche teaches her grandchildren all she knows about gardening. Blanche uses the garden to pass her knowledge, experience, and heritage to her grandchildren and the other gardeners.

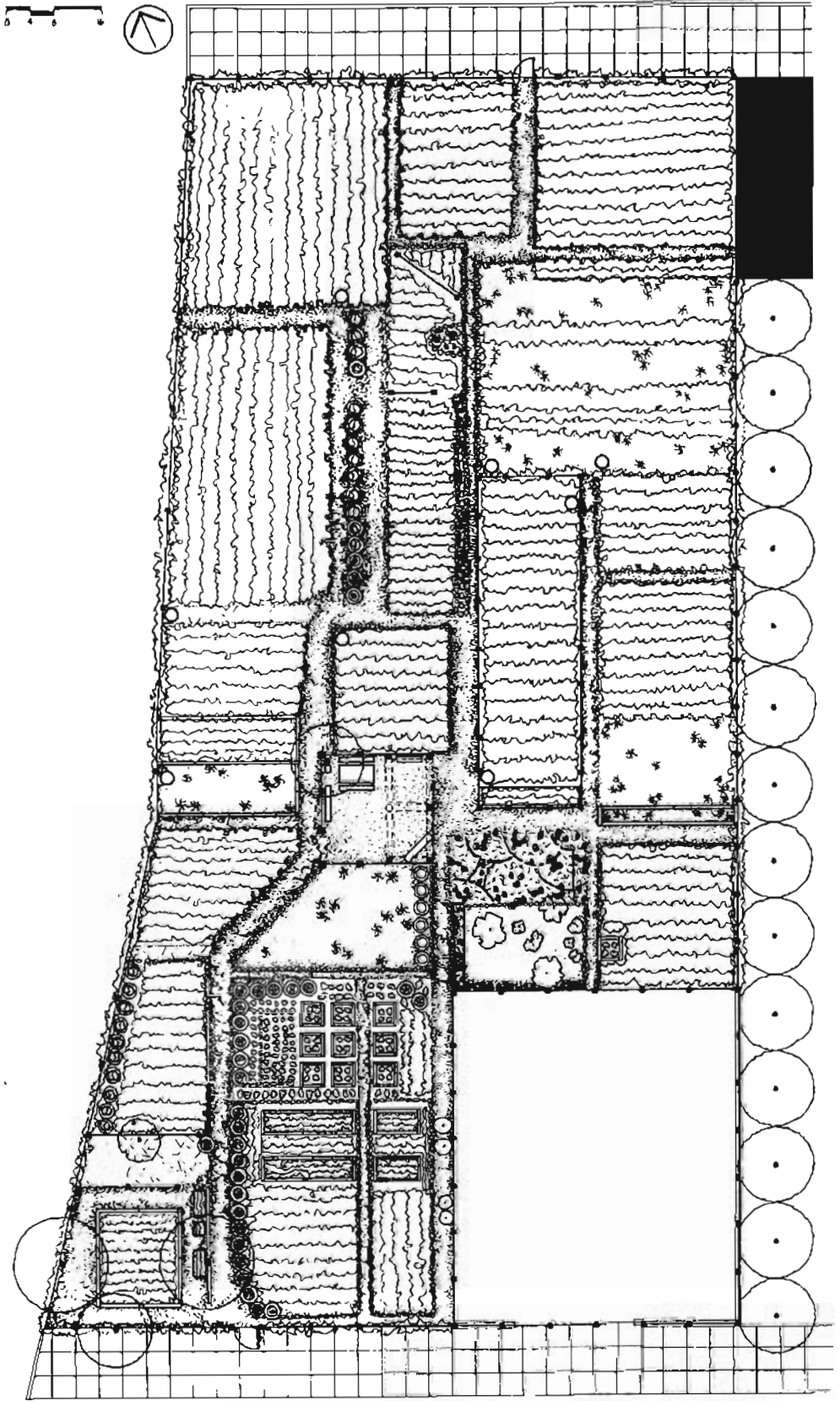
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*“I get vegetables without a lot of chemicals. I get part of my youth, heritage, and folklore, plus I’m able to pass that on to my grandchildren.”*

Blanche Epp

*“When you go to a farm these days, you don’t see farming, you see machines. Farming’s not for machines, it’s for people. There’s no part of a person, no feeling, being put into the ground. You just can’t feel it in the food you buy.”*

Blanche Epp



## Spruce Hill Community Garden

Adam Levine cares for the Spruce Hill Garden on the corner of 44th and Locust Streets in West Philadelphia. The garden, with its three-foot high, chain-link fence, its flowerbeds, lawn, and ornamental trees has the appearance of a private, well-tended territory, a yard that belongs to someone. Locust is a major path to and from work and school for many people, and many others go out of their way to pass the garden.

The garden is a meeting place, but the meetings take place mainly across the boundary—three-foot high, chain link fence—as conversations between the gardener and passersby. Few people actually enter the garden. Probably because its gate is hidden, and the garden looks just like a well-tended, private side yard. Only the sign announcing its sponsorship by the Spruce Hill Garden Club gives a clue to its semi-public function.

The Spruce Hill Garden Club, which sponsors the garden, was formed as a committee of the Spruce Hill Community Association in 1958 to promote beautification in the neighborhood. The committee soon became an independent club and look on several projects, including the Spruce Hill Garden. The primary focus of the Club today is garden-related activities such as plant sales, seminars, and workshops, a yearly tour of the Spruce Hill Garden, and block improvement projects. The Club's overall goal is, in the words of Joe Moloznik, charter member and former president, to "band together to improve the quality of life in this area."

Local residents say that the Spruce Hill Garden was once the site of two houses, which collapsed over an underground stream, ultimately

leaving a vacant lot. When the Club originally started the Spruce Hill Garden, the members designed the garden and tended it communally, making decisions by vote. Gradually, however, the gardeners dwindled to one. The current gardener, Adam Levine, became involved in the 1980's: "I used to walk by the garden all the time and there was this little old man taking care of this beautiful garden, and I figured that has got to be a story. And there was." Levine started helping that older man, then joined the Garden Club, and now is himself the gardener.

As the garden has passed from one hand to another, there have been small changes: a new, curving stone wall and a rock garden. Many neighborhood residents pass the garden every day, watch it as it changes—daily, seasonally, and yearly, and protect it. The tradition is now thirty years old, but as Levine notes, "There's always change, that's part of any garden anywhere."

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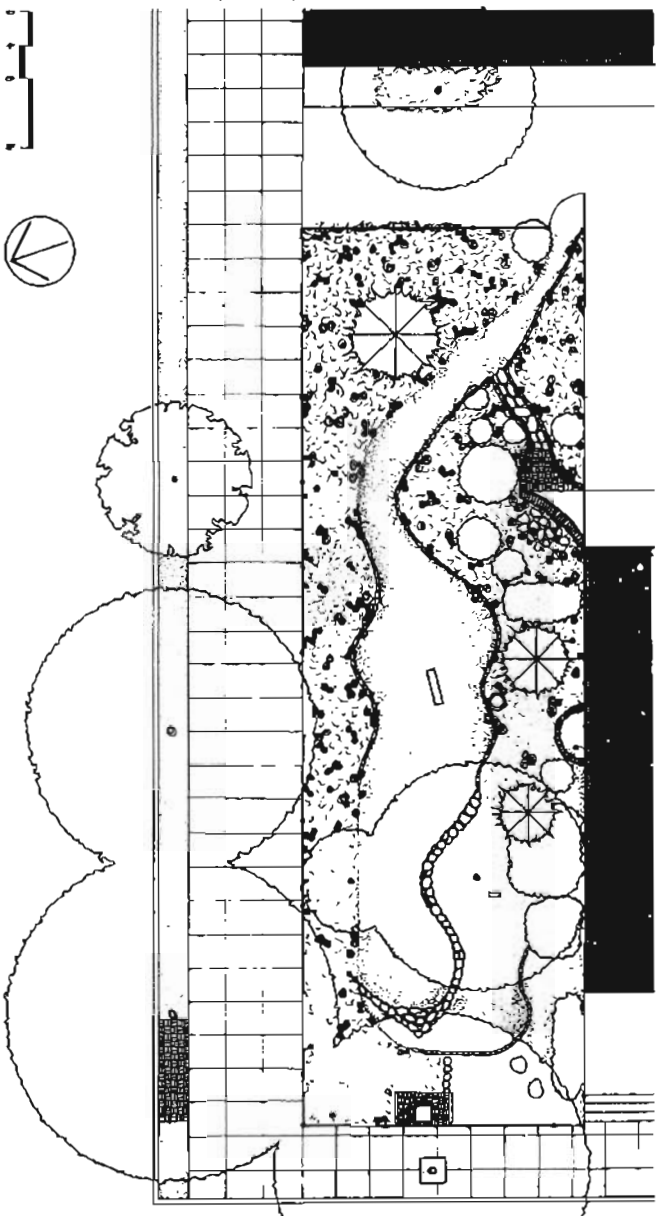
*"Half the reason I garden here is because it's not just for me, but for everyone who walks by."*

Adam Levine

*"People will tell me what is going on in their garden and what they are doing and ask me about this or that. I don't know if I would like gardening in my backyard, it would be pretty, but no one would see it."*

Adam Levine

Spruce Hill Community Garden



## Westminster

The lot on the corner of May and Westminster Streets had been vacant for many years, full of accumulated junk and abandoned cars, when Jean Reid was elected block captain in 1984. About the same time, Mrs. Reid saw a Philadelphia Green sign on a garden down the street and decided to call them about the vacant lot across from her house. Today, that lot is a garden, designed and constructed as part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Project. One person got it all started, then others pitched in.

The process of creating the garden began with a meeting between eight neighborhood residents, Philadelphia Green staff members, Denise Jefferson and Susan Ross, and Ruth Loewe, a graduate student in Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. The neighbors wanted flowers and vegetables, a barbecue pit, a tool shed, and a place to sit. Loewe designed a garden with a curved path surrounded by flowers that leads to a meeting place in the center under an arbor. In back of this enclosed "outdoor room" are the vegetable plots.

Neighbors, including several children, worked with the Philadelphia Green construction crew and Penn Landscape Architecture students to build the garden in early summer 1988. By June, the gardeners planted flowers and vegetables and three months later reaped a rich harvest. That fall, Mrs. Reid, Mr. Jim Alston, and Claudette Brooks searched through dense mats of plants to find the many, hidden ripe vegetables. As they gathered tomatoes, zucchini, eggplants, and peppers, they talked about the transformation the garden had brought to the street. "We had no idea a year ago. Coming from rubbished lot with needles... it happened overnight," said Mrs. Reid.

At first glance, Westminster does not look

like it was designed by a landscape architect. In fact, the design was more of a framework for the gardeners to embroider upon than a "finished" design. It was intended to change; and so it has. Mrs. Reid loves to shop at flea markets, and she has personalized the garden with many treasured objects: a ceramic dragon, a birdbath, a concrete bench with a lion's claw base, an old porch chair, a grill, and an umbrella for shade. She embellished the entrance to create a welcoming gateway; two sections of wrought-iron fence now stick out from the garden gate like outstretched arms. To the right of this gate, she put an old mailbox and painted it white. At the back of the garden, Mrs. Reid hung an old black kettle in which she hopes to make stew. The pot reminds her of her childhood in the South. Mrs. Reid also raised an American flag and nailed a horseshoe on the arbor that marks the entry to the garden's meeting place, a refuge at the center. These personal touches are all signs that this place belongs to someone. The overall message is one of welcome, but by invitations only.

Changes go beyond the fence that marks the garden's boundary. Shrubs planted in barrels line the sidewalk alongside the garden. Mrs. Reid found a fallen "one-way" sign and installed it on May Street so that people would not drive down the street and run over the shrubs.

Within months of the garden's construction, Mrs. Reid and her neighbors were already planning new projects. In 1989 they extended their territory onto an adjacent vacant lot, which they cleared and planted. An old car in the middle of the lot did not discourage Reid, who said she would just turn it into a huge planter for flowers. However, they did manage to get the car removed. To Mrs. Reid, the

importance of the garden goes beyond a pleasant place to sit or to grow vegetables: "It's doing something for the neighborhood." As people have seen the results of the first garden, she has found increasing support for further projects: "Even the drunks, they want to help me do another one."

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*"I said come on Jim, come help, and he said, you start and I'll help you."*

Jean Reid

*"We had no idea a year ago. Coming from a rubbished lot with needles.. it happened overnight."*

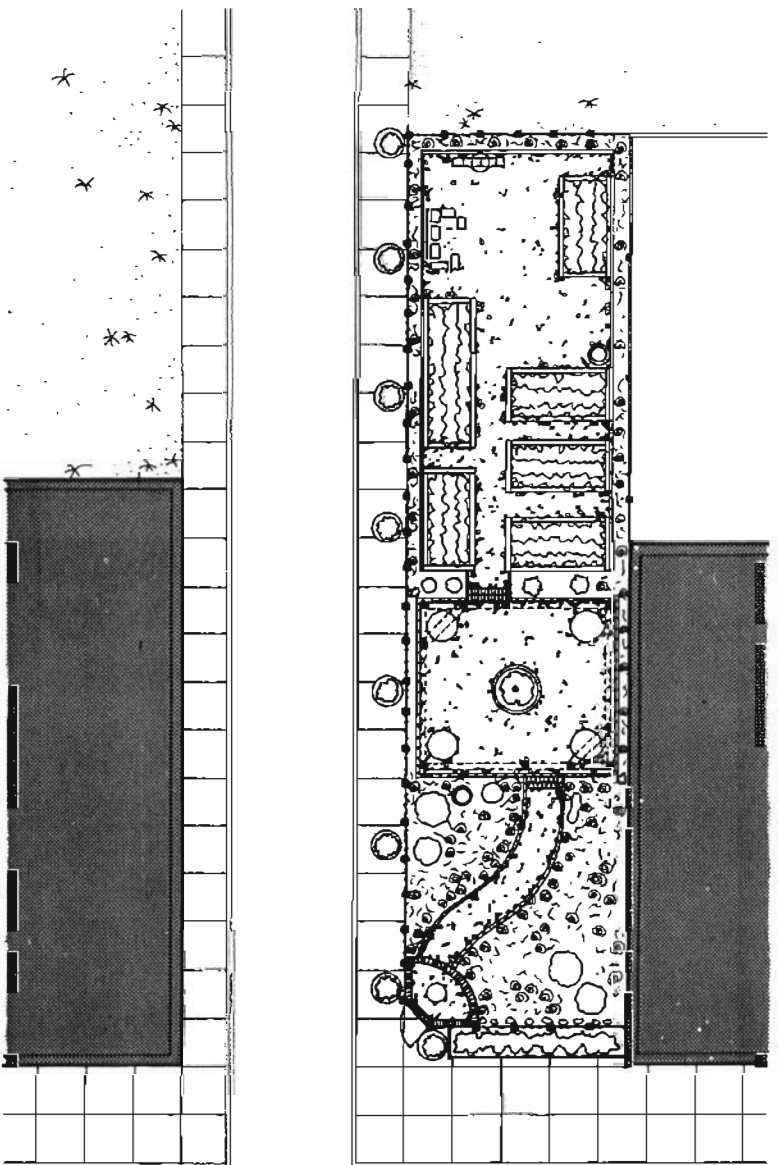
Jean Reid

*"It's doing something for the neighborhood."*

Jean Reid

*"It's just a part of me. When I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is come into the garden. Even in the rain I come in. I talk to the plants. Maybe they know, I think they hear me."*

Jean Reid



## Pennsgrove

On a hot, June day in 1988, residents of Pennsgrove Street, Landscape Architecture students from the University of Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia Green staff all pitched in to construct a new community garden on the corner of Pennsgrove and Holly Streets. They staked out the future paths with string, dug through the rubble of the vacant lot, shoveled sand and gravel, and edged the paths with boards and bricks. The children all helped; even a little boy who could barely lift the shovel managed to scoop some gravel and strained to lift it above his shoulders into the wheel-barrow. Later in the day, people coming back from work stopped by to shout encouragement or to help.

Building and planting in the garden has been ongoing since that day. Flowers poke through the wire fence that encloses the garden and marks its boundary, spilling out over the sidewalk. A meeting place in the center of the garden now has chairs and a wooden picnic table with benches. Behind that area, next to the garden's only shady spot, the gardeners built a trellis.

The 4100 block of Pennsgrove Street is an oasis surrounded by abandoned houses, stripped cars, trash-filled streets, and vacant lots. The clean street and sidewalks, the street trees, flower-filled window boxes, and the sun-burst mural radiating from behind the colorful garden all provide striking contrast to nearby blocks. These are all signs of an active, organized block of multiple, joint projects and the sustained efforts of effective, energetic individuals.

When Maddie Williams and Madeline Brundage each petitioned Farmmount Park for street trees in 1985, they set in motion the first in a series of improvements to the block. The three maple trees,

which Mrs. Brundage waters and weeds, are the result of their actions. Next, as participants in the "Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee," residents cleaned up the street with supplies provided by the City. Under that program, each block must elect a block captain: Mrs. Williams was the original block captain, and Mrs. Brundage is the current one.

Spurred on by this initial success, the block applied to Philadelphia Green's garden block program, and in Spring 1988 received window boxes and whiskey barrels which they filled with flowers. At this point, the block felt ready for a more ambitious project and applied to Philadelphia Green for help in creating a community garden on the corner vacant lot. Based upon their demonstrated ability to manage such a project, the Pennsgrove Community Garden became part of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan and Greening Projects, and W. Gary Smith, a landscape architect in the Penn faculty, worked with block residents to design the garden.

Plans for future neighborhood projects are already in the works. Mrs. Brundage would like to turn the vacant lot next to her house into a grove of trees. She has already convinced the City to install stop signs at the intersection of Pennsgrove and Holly Streets. Brundage is proud of her block and defends this territory fiercely. She would like to put a roadblock at the end of Holly Street so that it couldn't be used as a through-street. In fact, Brundage feels that anything beyond the block "is New Jersey as far as I'm concerned.



## Hope Street

Until several years ago, there were no gardens on Hope Street. The 2500 block of Hope Street, with its three-story row houses, each with a stoop on the sidewalk, is home to a small group of families. The stoop and surrounding sidewalk form an extension of the house, while the street itself is a pathway, a common meeting place, and a playground. On one hot day, the children—black, white, and hispanic—played in the water from a fire hydrant, while the adults sat on the stoops or in chairs on the sidewalk watching their children and grand-children play. In front of one house, a toddler splashed in a small, plastic pool. There was shade from the newly-planted street trees, and many of the houses had a side garden.

Hope Street is in North Philadelphia. The gardens, curbs, sidewalks, and street surface are new. In 1984, this block was like so many others in the neighborhood, with half of the house lots abandoned and collecting trash. In 1985, Walter Ney, a resident of Hope Street and a member of the West Kensington Neighborhood Advisory Council, applied to the Council for funds to improve the curbs and sidewalks on the block. To qualify for the funds, Hope Street residents were required to clean up their block. Residents cleaned up the vacant lots on their block, installed chain-link fences, and planted gardens. For improving this previously vacant property, they received the lots for the cost of the paperwork involved in processing them, a total of about \$40. Hope Street is now a block of houses and gardens. One garden is a playground, another — Jardín de la Comunidad—is tended by hispanic residents. Other gardens reflect the personalities and interests of their owners. In America's garden, for

example, the flowers grow in exuberant profusion, poking through the fence out onto the sidewalk. The heart of her garden is filled with vegetables and spices for which America knows only the Spanish names because she uses them in Puerto Rican dishes. A scarecrow stands duty, but doesn't keep the birds out of the vines growing up the side of the house, for which America is glad. "Birds come in and stay cool in the leaves. Makes me happy."

The Trimbacks' Garden is easily identified by the wooden sign carved with their name. Next to the sign is a small wishing well and a flower border. The Trimbacks added a swimming pool, so that their grandchildren could swim when they come to visit. The Neys also have a swimming pool in their garden. Behind the pool, a mural of a rocky mountain stream fills the wall. The Neys' teenage foster child painted the scene from a photograph taken on a family vacation. Green lawn and rose bushes complete the idyllic setting. Flora has the largest garden on Hope Street. Her house is on the next block and this garden is now her backyard. She grows vegetables near her house and has made a sitting area in the part that fronts on Hope Street. In some ways, the whole of Hope Street is like other community gardens. The street down the center of the block is like a garden path that also functions as a meeting place. Each private garden is like an individual plot in other community gardens. Since the boundary of each garden is marked by a transparent, low fence, the interiors are all visible from the street. The stone stoop in front of each front door is a seat that provides a prospect from which to view the theater of street life. The street itself is a path that links this block to the rest of the city, and

the ends of the block are gateways to the city beyond. Anyone who steps across that threshold into this clearly cared-for block recognizes it as a special territory. The block itself has become a community of homes and gardens.

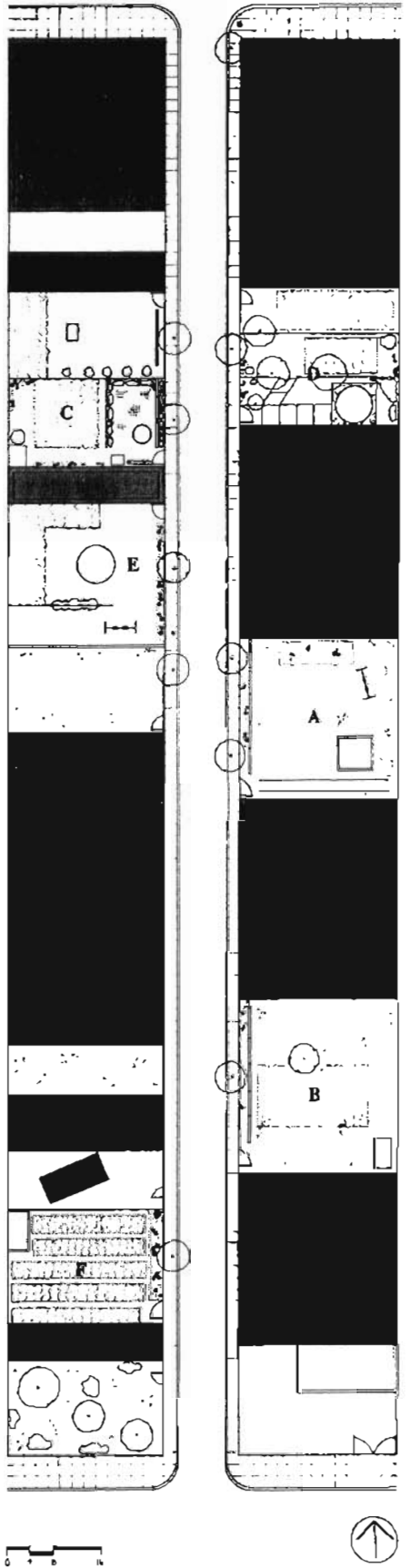
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*"I never worked in a garden. We didn't have them as a kid, growing up right in the city. It looks so good, watching things grow and blossom and even eating vegetables. I just love it!"*

Betty Anne Nay

*"Birds come in and stay cool in the leaves. Makes me happy."*

America Villanueva



# THE GARDENS AND THE CITY

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How can communities be designed to meet basic human physical and social needs and to express the values and dreams of the people who live there? How can individuals shape the neighborhoods within which they live? What are the personal qualities, skills, and knowledge someone needs to assert effective leadership in shaping his or her community, and how can these be developed? What are the respective roles of individual citizens and public agencies in shaping the city and how can the energy and knowledge of individuals be tapped? What is the role of the professional designer or planner in shaping the city? How do we assess different strategies for urban redevelopment: when and where are incremental improvements best, or wholesale replacement? What role can landscape change play in addressing the social, economic, and environmental problems of the inner city?

Community gardens afford insights and some potential answers to these pressing issues. They are one of the few remaining places where a group of individuals can build a community with their own hands. The "pioneer" gardeners who clean and clear the vacant lot, who lay out the paths and plots, build a fence, improve the soil, and who work out among themselves the structure by which they will make decisions are much like the pioneers who came to North America in small groups to clear the wilderness and build a community that reflected their ideals. The vacant land that exists in parts of West Philadelphia and other inner-city neighborhoods affords a rare opportunity for people to shape their own community. Although many vacant lots will someday be rebuilt with houses, others occupy hazardous ground over filled-in floodplains, quarries,

and dumps. Most of West Philadelphia is densely built with row houses with tiny private yards and no parks or playgrounds nearby. Some vacant lots in these neighborhoods are therefore best left open to be adopted as a yard by someone who lives next door or as a garden or playground by a group of neighbors.

Community gardens are an important training ground for community leaders. Most community gardens are born from the energy, determination, and vision of a single individual who persuades others to share and help accomplish these goals. The implementation of a community garden requires the ability to find and obtain resources, as well as skills in negotiation and coordination. Sustaining a community garden develops diplomacy and the ability to make decisions in a group, to set and achieve goals, and to visualize the physical realization of those goals. Experienced community gardeners know their way through the city's bureaucracy: which city agency to call for sidewalk repair, for street tree care, for water, for trash removal. They are also skilled in basic construction, horticulture, and landscape management. Success builds confidence and pride and often leads to new projects outside the garden. Organizations like Philadelphia Green which help new groups get started on a project, provide technical assistance, advice, and modest resources for materials and construction, provide invaluable support for the development of new leaders. Philadelphia Green also has a series of programs that permit groups to gradually take on more ambitious projects and an annual Harvest Show and Garden Contest that provide a forum for rewarding success and building confidence.

An individual or small group can accom-

plish a major transformation of their immediate neighborhood, but the role the individual can play diminishes at the scale of West Philadelphia as a whole, the City of Philadelphia, or the region. At this scale, public agencies must respond to diverse groups and interests to coordinate changes that affect multiple blocks and neighborhoods. Some community gardeners, however, by virtue of their personal abilities, as well as the skills and knowledge gained through their leadership in community gardens, have an important perspective to contribute to urban design and city planning. \_\_\_\_\_, a community garden leader for — years is a member of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

The lack of a common language is an obstacle to effective communication between community leaders and urban designers and city planners. It is our hope that the patterns we have identified here, which are based on basic human physical and social needs, will provide a language with which to describe local needs and desires in terms of urban form and to evaluate how well a proposal meets those objectives. While this language was conceived, tested, and refined through its application to community gardens, we have subsequently explored its application to the more complex nature of neighborhood dynamics and design. (This work is summarized in other reports: "The West Philadelphia Landscape Development Plan" and "Shaping the Block".)

The professional designer or planner retains an important role in shaping the city. While this common design language may facilitate communication of needs and desires and evaluation of proposals, it is the designer who can envision the forms that the

fulfillment of such desires might take and develop concrete proposals from which the city and its citizens may choose.

A redesigned and reconstructed urban landscape will not solve all or even many of the city's problems. It can, however, serve as a catalyst for larger physical, social, and economic renewal. It takes less time and less money to build a community garden than new homes, institutions, and businesses. The gardens are visible and tangible evidence of the energy, skills, and vision that exists within a community. People with relatively few resources can, within a short time, transform the appearance of their neighborhood and shape their own local community.