

# LOTS OF IDEAS NEWBURGH



COLUMBIA  
**GSAPP**  
HUDSON VALLEY  
INITIATIVE



# LOTS OF IDEAS NEWBURGH

A TOOLBOX FOR TURNING VACANT LOTS INTO  
VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOOD SPACES

COLUMBIA  
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# IDEAS FOR LOTS

## INTRODUCTION

This TOOLBOX is a comprehensive overview of the goals, policies and processes for activating city-owned vacant lots into temporary or permanent neighborhood resources. Residents of Newburgh can use this toolbox to explore different IDEAS and mechanisms for design, stewardship, programming and long-term maintenance of these LOTS.

Many of these lots attract dumping and pest. They add a burden to the city's already strapped tax base and often contribute to a perception of blight and public safety concerns. Studies have shown that even basic improvements to vacant lots in neighborhoods reduce crime<sup>1</sup> and improve public health.<sup>2</sup> Cities like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Detroit have all implemented similar programs to encourage neighborhood residents to participate in the clean-up, activation and landscaping of these sites.

The toolbox offers guidance how to transform lots in your neighborhood from vacant to vibrant. Through the toolbox you'll learn more about how to gain legal access to vacant lots, how to include your neighbors and other community members, how to develop a design for your lot and how to find resources to establish and maintain your lot.

Compiling resources needed to reclaim public spaces, this toolbox aims to turn possibilities into action. With your participation and feedback, this toolbox can continue to be a valuable resource to individual residents and the city.




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1 Penn Medicine News, "Adding Windows to Vacant Houses and Clearing Vacant Lots Reduces Gun Violence, Saves Money" <https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-releases/2016/october/adding-windows-to-vacant-house> (October 2016)

2 Eugenia C. South, Bernadette C. Hohl, Michelle C. Kondo, "Effect of Greening Vacant Land on Mental Health of Community-Dwelling Adults: A Cluster Randomized Trial, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2688343> (July 20, 2018)

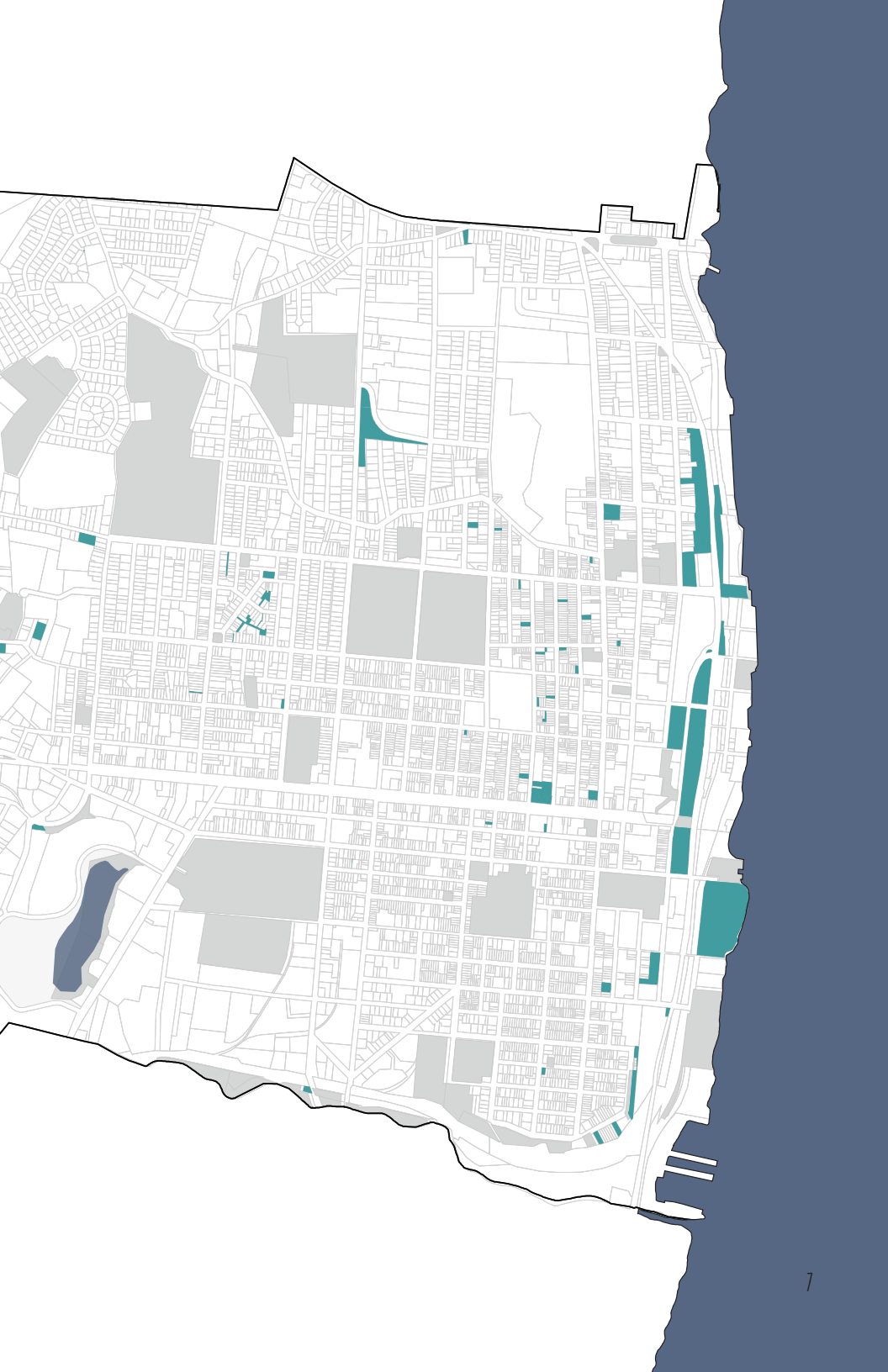
# VACANT LOTS IN NEWBURGH

There are over 50 city-owned vacant lots in the City of Newburgh. They range from small parcels, where buildings were recently demolished due to safety concerns to large sites that have been vacant for decades as a result of urban renewal in the Mid-20th century.

 CITY OWNED VACANT LOTS  
 WATER  
 PARKS

0 0.2 0.4 0.6  
 Miles







A black and white photograph of a vacant lot. In the background, there are several large, leafy trees. To the left, a portion of a multi-story building is visible. To the right, a brick wall or building corner is seen. The foreground is a grassy, open area. A sidewalk runs along the bottom edge of the lot.

## 01 RECENTLY DEMOLISHED LOT

## TO... COMMUNITY MEETING SPACE?

Recently Demolished .....191 South Street

**WHAT IF...** this became the site for a neighborhood Pop-up Park? See the **SOCIAL LOT** plan in this toolbox for a step-by-step process on its transformation from vacant lot to active meeting space.

Every site is different and requires different considerations, but there are some common characteristics you find in Newburgh. Knowing this may help you determine what you can do on these lots and how long you may be able to 'adopt' them. Newburgh has many vacant buildings. Unfortunately, some are in unsafe condition and require the city to demolish them and clear the site. They are often in residential neighborhoods and typically the size of one lot. While the future of these sites is uncertain, they provide opportunity as gathering spaces

## 02 URBAN RENEWAL SITE



TO... COMMEMORATIVE EVENT SPACE?

Urban Renewal Site ...Colden & Washington Street

**WHAT IF...** this empty lot suddenly bore signs of the memories embedded in it? You would probably look at all of these properties in a new way, as places, rather than as gaps. See the **MEMORY LOT** plan in this toolbox to consider incorporating traces of a site's history into the design or event.

on a block or can be improved with simple means to prevent vandalism or dumping. Newburgh also has some fairly large vacant sites in central location as a result of urban renewal in the mid-20th century. While these await future development, most likely determined by a public Request for Proposal process, temporary activation of these sites through events or smaller installations provides an opportunity for Newburgh residents to come together and reintegrate these sites into their city.

### 03 VACANT BROWNFIELD LOT



TO... BUTTERFLY GARDEN?

Brownfield Site 7-11 Johnes Street

**WHAT IF...** this empty lot was used by butterflies instead of parked cars? Sunflowers and butterfly bushes not only reduce the pollution in the soil, they also improve the air quality, reduce stormwater runoff and are a pleasure to look at. See the **POLLINATOR LOT** plan in this toolbox to learn how to create a pollinator garden.

Some sites are in industrial neighborhoods or previously housed industrial uses. Due to contamination from those uses in the ground, you may be limited in what you can do on these sites in the interim. While the future of these sites is uncertain, they can be improved with simple means to remediate the site. Several of the city-owned vacant lots have little potential for redevelopment. Shape and location might make it unlikely. They are often located in lower density neighborhoods and are in need of a long-term plan and permanent maintenance agreements.





## 04 LONG-TERM VACANT / UNDEVELOPABLE LOT

TO... CLEAN AND GREEN?

Long-term Vacant 360 First Street

**WHAT IF...** we could simply clean and green them? A clean and cared for lot is less likely to attract littering or dumping and can improve the overall experience on a block. See the **CLEAN & GREEN PLAN** in this toolbox for the most basic and affordable process to improve the vacant lot on your block.

# CASE STUDY: PHILADELPHIA LAND CARE PROGRAM



Philadelphia LandCare Program



Before



After

The LandCare program transforms vacant lots using a “Clean and Green” treatment that includes removing all debris and weedy vegetation, adding compost-enriched topsoil, planting trees, sowing grass seed, and installing a fence.

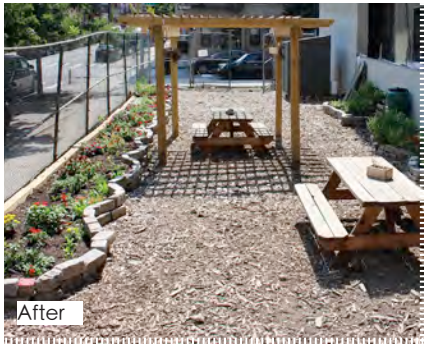
## CASE STUDY: 596 ACRES



596 Acres, Hooper Grove



Before



After

596 Acres is a community land access advocacy program that connects neighbors with the resources they need to take part in shaping the urban landscape. They use signs and other print materials to get the attention of a community. Through collaborative organizing, residents become active stewards of urban land.



# HAVE AN IDEA

## ADOPT-A-LOT TIMELINE

DEVELOP YOUR IDEA



THERE MAY BE  
REVISIONS

DECEMBER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

FIND A LOT

SUBMIT PERMIT APPLICATION  
& DISCUSS YOUR PROJECT  
WITH CITY STAFF

SCHEDULE A CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION FOR APPROVAL

SIGN 1-3 YEAR LEASE

IMPLEMENT

VISIT [WWW.CITYOFNEUBURGH-NY.GOV](http://WWW.CITYOFNEUBURGH-NY.GOV)  
FOR A MAP OF ALL CITY-OWNED VACANT LOTS

# FOR A LOT NEAR YOU?

**"ACTIVATE"** is an event permit program where organizations or businesses can apply to host an event on a city-owned vacant lot for one day or one weekend. Organizations must show proof of liability insurance and submit an event permit describing the event at least two weeks prior to the event date. You can apply to "Activate" a lot any time of the year.

**"ADOPT-A-LOT"** is a program where individuals, organizations, businesses or block associations adopt a vacant lot for one year or more years with the option to renew. Groups must show proof of liability insurance and submit a description of planned improvements and programming as part of their application.

Applications to "Adopt A Lot" are accepted every year from **January 15 - April 15**. This is to ensure that you have gotten all the approvals and are ready to use your lot for the upcoming summer.

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
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• WITH PROOF  
OF INSURANCE

ENJOY YOUR LOT



YOU CAN APPLY TO RENEW  
YOUR LICENSE

IT PLAN \_\_\_\_\_

MAINTAIN LOT FOR DURATION OF LEASE \_\_\_\_\_



# EXPLORE AVAILABLE LOTS

You can go to [www.cityofnewburgh-ny.gov](http://www.cityofnewburgh-ny.gov) for a map of all city-owned vacant lots to see if the lot you are thinking of is available for any of the three programs described above through the LOTS OF IDEAS program.

Submit an initial inquiry via email or via the application form (described on page 42) to the City's Planning Department to get some feedback on the general availability of the lot. This is the beginning of your application process, in which you discuss your ideas with the City. At this initial step, you will find out whether or not the lot is available for temporary use, and if there are any restrictions to what you can do on the lot. This is not an approval of your idea yet. Once staff at the City Planning Department thinks your proposal is feasible, you will have to schedule to present at a City Council Work Session and present it. City Council may have questions, but if they approve, the City will then send you License Agreement to sign. Note that this process can take several months.






◀ Zero Waste with  
Greenway Topsoil  
& Compost



P-TECH high school  
students assemble pop-  
up park at 191 South St ▶

# FORM PARTNERSHIPS

We recommend that you reach out to neighbors of the lot, discuss your ideas and form partnerships to collaborate or to simply understand if there is support for your idea. You can download and print the “NEWBURGH IDEA LOT” sign and use it to notify your neighbors of your idea or suggest a meeting to plan together. Speak to direct neighbors of the lot about your idea. They may have some suggestions and you will want their support.



The city will require you to provide liability insurance for the lot for the duration of your project. If you don't have one, partnering with a business or organization that does, might be helpful. An agency such as a community group, neighborhood association, the Greater Newburgh Parks Conservancy, the Newburgh Urban Farm and Food Initiative, a social service organization, or local church might be able to provide this type of support.

# 5 IDEAS

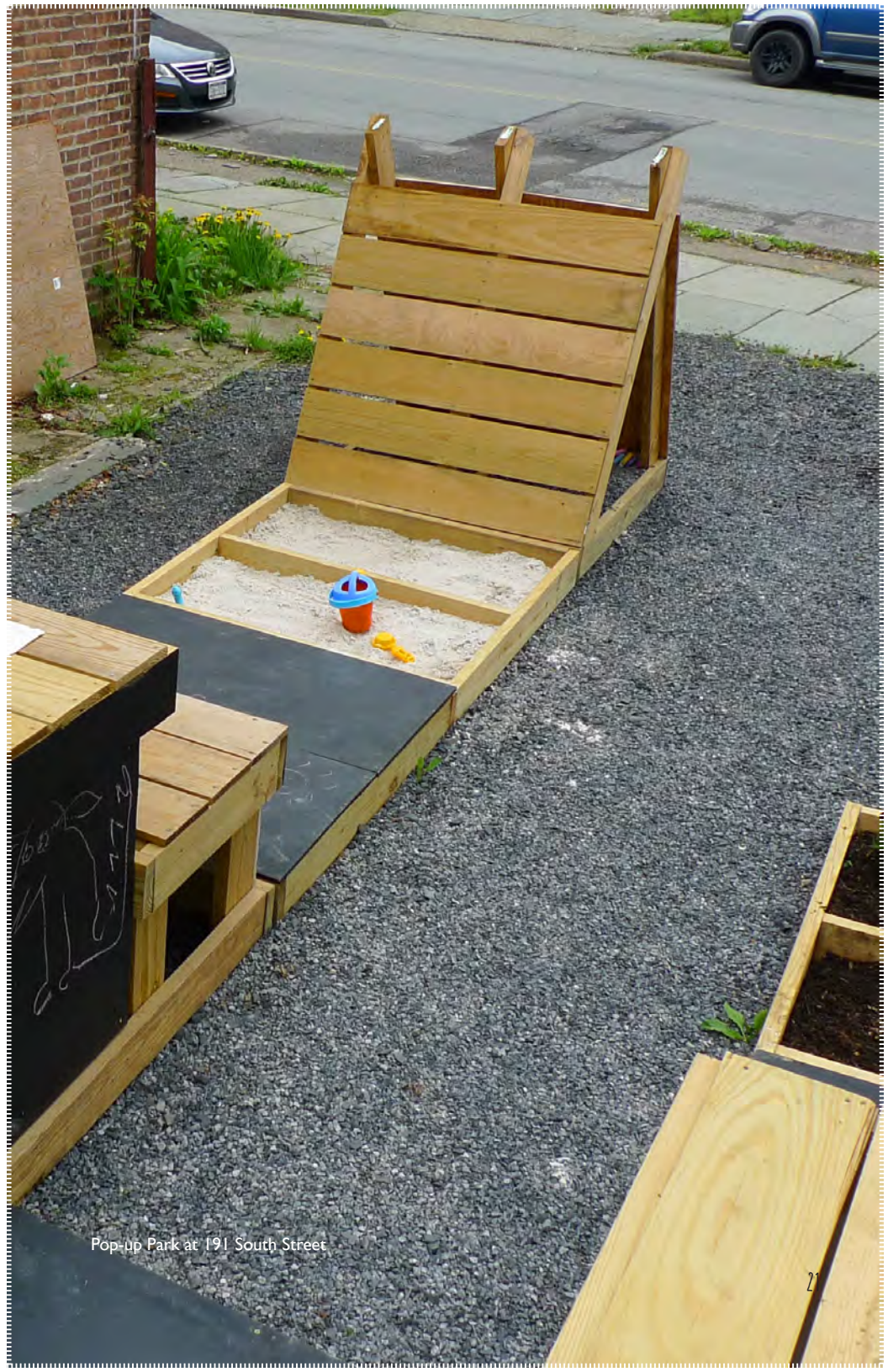
# FOR VACANT LOTS

PREPARE A PLAN / DESIGN

- CLEAN & GREEN
- THE MEMORY LOT
- THE SOCIAL LOT
- THE FARM LOT
- THE POLLINATOR LOT

You probably already have lots of ideas how to use the vacant lot on your block, but here are a few general ideas together with the associated costs and considerations to make them happen. Use these as guidance to plan your own project and refer to the “Resources” section at the end of this toolbox to identify means of putting it all together. What you can do will depend on the condition of the lot, any use restrictions that may apply and your own capacity.





Pop-up Park at 191 South Street



# CLEAN & GREEN

A photograph of a residential yard. In the foreground, there is a wooden fence made of two horizontal rails and vertical posts. Behind the fence is a grassy area. A large, leafy green tree stands in the middle ground. In the background, there is a house with light-colored siding and a chain-link fence. The sky is not visible.

REMOVE LITTER, IMPROVE SOIL AND COVER WITH A LOW-GROWING GRASS

COST.....	\$50 TO \$1,000 (FOR A TYPICAL 100x25' LOT)
PEOPLE.....	Volunteers/ Beginners
UPKEEP.....	Low Maintenance
CONDITION/ LOCATION.....	Anywhere (sun, shade, partial sun)
BENEFITS.....	Improves soil quality, Discourages dumping, Absorbs rain water, Improves appearance of block, Improves mental health & well-being of neighbors

This idea can prepare any lot for a happy, healthy and lower maintenance future. Work with local residents and community organizations to perform collective landscape maintenance. It is the most simple of the ideas described here and can be used to prepare a lot for additional improvements or activities down the road.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS EXACTLY?

### 1. Assess your lot to make a work plan

(Are there trees or trash? What is the ground like?)

Depending on the state of your lot, and with the help of your friends, family or neighbors, you may be able to 'Clean & Green' a lot in one weekend, one afternoon, or sometimes, for the really tough lots, multiple weekends in a row. This depends largely on the amount of debris you may need to remove as part of the "clean" process.

### 2. Remove Debris and unwanted vegetation

Be mindful of different types of waste and their respective disposal.

Standard Refuse: Plastic, paper, boxes, metals, glass, etc. Yard Waste:

Organic materials such as leaves, branches, and twigs. Bulk Refuse:

Furniture, appliances, air conditioners, hot water tanks, mattresses, large toys, doors, etc.

### 3. Prepare the Soil

Till soil at approximately six to eight inches deep if the soil is compacted, in poor condition, or if you are working with a lot that has a recently completed demolition or another soil disturbance event. Once the lot is tilled, rake, and remove all clumps of existing vegetation. If there is existing vegetation that you would like to keep, then till around it. Otherwise remove all pre-existing grass or weeds prior to tilling. Make sure there is no large debris, gravel or concrete left after the clean-up as that can ruin your tiller.

### 4. Create Healthy Soil

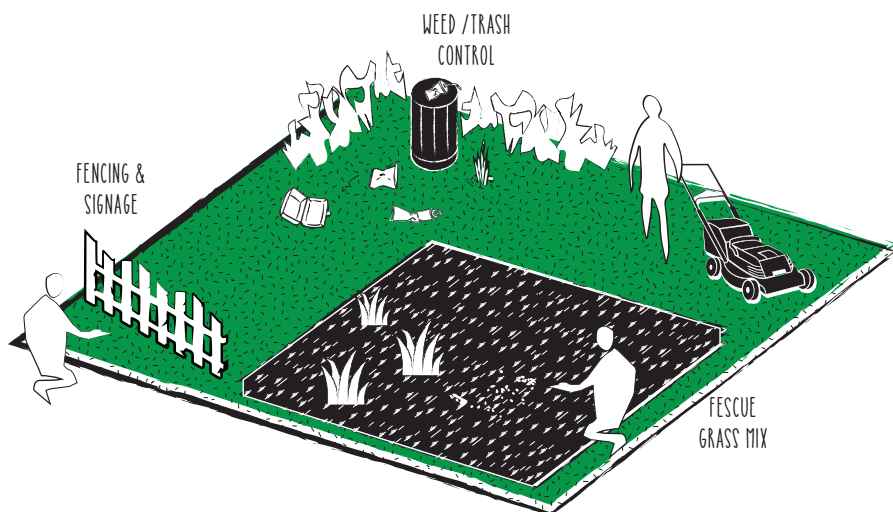
Soil contains a mix of microorganisms and a network of fungi which can mobilize nutrients and assist with the distribution of water - both necessary for the health of your plants. To improve the health of your soil, you can apply a mycorrhizal inoculant on your lot. It comes in a bag or a jar. If your lot is bare of plants, you can mix it into the seeds you are planning to sow. If you would like to fortify existing lawn or plants, mix it with water and distribute it.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER:

What type of soil and vegetation is already there?

Is there any water? Power lines? Light?

Who keeps an eye on it when you are not around?





## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE COSTS?

The cost is in part dependent on the condition of the lot and the number of volunteers and their resources. You will have to consider the cost of trash removal, waste disposal, equipment rental (like a mulcher and a tiller) and one “green” flourish—a soil amendment to ensure healthy soil metabolism. It is possible to save money by renting or borrowing any necessary equipment. The minimum cost assumes that residents or volunteers have access to basic safety gear and garden tools and volunteers to establish and maintain the lot.



## INSURANCE – \$1,000

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has insurance that can cover it, assume an additional costs of up to \$1,000 per year.

## 5. Green your Lot

For low maintenance, choose a fescue grass mix that will not grow very tall and will only need to be mowed once a year in the early Fall. Fescue can be established in full sun to shade and should be seeded in spring (mid-March to mid-May) or fall (August to September). Seed mix should be applied to a damp lot. Sow seeds by using a seed spreader or by hand evenly across the lot. You may need to do this several times to get even coverage. A seed rate of five pounds per 1,000 square feet is recommended. You can place a thin layer of straw or a germination blanket over the area to protect seeds from wind and birds. Water seedlings daily until they are 4-6 inches high.

## 6. Maintain the Lot

This idea requires very low maintenance. Fescue is very drought resistant and does not grow tall. You have to mow once a year in the early Fall. You can place a sign on the lot facing the sidewalk to ask others to be respectful of your time and investment and keep it clean. If you decide to not renew your license with the city, and you did not add anything to it beyond the grass, you will not be required to remove anything at this point.

# THE MEMORY LOT



INCORPORATE MATERIALS AND TRACES OF THE SITE'S OR THE CITY'S PAST

INTO THE DESIGN OF THE LOT

Flow - Hudson River of Bricks  
by Julia Whitney Barnes

COST.....	\$50 TO \$2,500 (FOR A TYPICAL 100x25' LOT)
PEOPLE.....	Volunteers/ Beginners, Some Professional Help
UPKEEP.....	Low Maintenance
CONDITION/ LOCATION.....	Anywhere (sun, shade, partial sun)
BENEFITS.....	Discourages dumping, Absorbs rain water, Improves appearance of block, Improves mental health & well-being of neighbors, Encourages Contemplation and Learning

Newburgh is a place full of memories. Each of these vacant lots and their city blocks have a history. This idea encourages residents to share memories in a vacant lot to remember, remind and acknowledge the many stories behind these sites and the city. Using simple designs and material, you can inspire your neighbors to learn about Newburgh's history, add a more multifaceted view to existing heritage sites and tours and encourages passersby to reflect.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS EXACTLY?

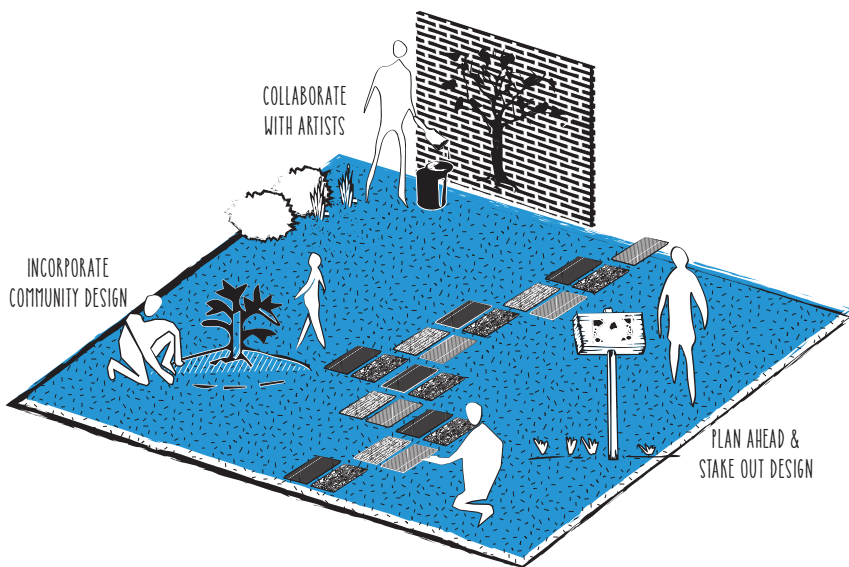
### **I. Assess your lot to make a work plan**

(trees, trash, unwanted brush, ground condition)

Depending on the state of your lot, and with the help of your friends, family or neighbors, you may be able to prepare your Memory Lot in one weekend, one afternoon, or multiple weekends in a row. Take note of the current ground conditions and what unwanted material/garbage may need to be removed.

## 2. Develop A Design

- Before you begin to prepare your lot, you want to establish the design and material needed.
- Do you already have an idea for an event, place, group or person to commemorate?
- Are you planning a collaborative design process with your community? Host a design charrette to gather community input.
- Who will visit the lot, and how will the event, place, group or person be commemorated? Is it a quiet place of reflection or a place of life and activity?
- Do you need permission of the adjacent building owner to use his/her wall for a mural?





## WHATS INCLUDED IN THE COSTS?

Depending on your idea for a design or material to highlight a memory, much of the cost and process are similar to the “clean and green” idea. You will have to consider the cost of trash removal, waste disposal, equipment rental. To incorporate historic elements, you may need professional help or equipment (to lift heavy boulders or weld metal parts for instance). It is possible to save money by renting or borrowing any necessary equipment. The cost assumes that residents or volunteers have access to basic safety gear and garden tools and volunteer to establish and maintain the lot with some professional help depending on the design.



## INSURANCE – \$1,000

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has insurance that can cover it, assume an additional costs of up to \$1,000 per year.

### 3. Create A Material List

Once the design is established, consider what materials you want to build with. Create a materials list and be sure to include building tools (nails, screws, hammers, hand drills, tape measure etc.). For complex designs, work with an artist or local contractor/ woodworking company, who can supply and pre-cut material for assembly. Ask if the pre-cut material can be delivered to the site. Also consider professional help to level the ground and provide ground cover options. Consider a model or partial mock-up to test your design and to provide a building template for others.

### 4. Assemble

After your materials are purchased, pick a weekend to gather friends and volunteers to help build. Depending on the size of the materials, some things may need to be built on site, others can be prepared off-site and installed later. Enlist a local community group or high school student group to help build. Measure and stake out the design layout on site before building. Provide a clear list of assembly instructions and/or assembly sketches for volunteers to build from.

# THE SOCIAL LOT



CREATE A MEETING SPACE FOR THE BLOCK AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH  
SIMPLE OUTDOOR FURNITURE

COST.....	\$2,000 TO \$10,000 (FOR A TYPICAL 100x25' LOT)
PEOPLE.....	Volunteers/Some Skills, Some Professional Help
UPKEEP.....	Medium Maintenance
CONDITION/ LOCATION.....	Anywhere (sun, shade, partial sun)
BENEFITS.....	Creates Neighborhood Gathering, Discourages dumping, Improves appearance of block, Improves mental health & well-being of neighbors, Creates Spaces For Children

What if that empty lot around the corner collecting trash, suddenly became a space to gather your friends and family? Or perhaps it became a space to picnic or even throw a block party? Using simple designs and material, this lot design idea encourages residents to build their own pop-up park.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS EXACTLY?

### 1. Assess your lot to make a work plan

(trees, trash, unwanted brush or trees, ground condition)

Depending on the state of your lot, and with the help of your friends, family or neighbors, you may be able to prepare your Social Lot in one weekend or a few weekends in a row. Take note of the soil and ground conditions that are already there, and what needs to be removed before you begin.

### 2. Remove Debris and unwanted material

If you have found any conditions that need to be dealt with, such as buried garbage, concrete, brickwork, blacktop, or pernicious weeds to be removed, make a list and allot time for the cleanup stage. Be mindful of different types of waste and their respective disposal. Standard Refuse: Plastic, paper, boxes,

metals, glass, etc. Yard Waste: Organic materials such as leaves, branches, and twigs. Bulk Refuse: Furniture, appliances, air conditioners, hot water tanks, mattresses, large toys, doors, etc.

### 3. Develop a design

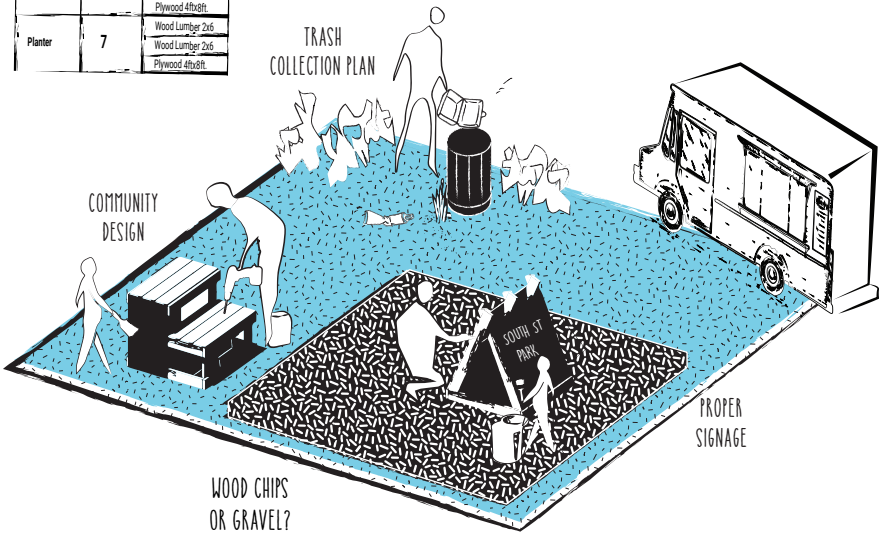
Before you begin to prepare your lot, establish what activities you want to happen there. Do you already have an idea for an event, or a group that would regularly use the lot? Will your lot provide programs for young and old, and could it have places or equipment for play? Maybe it could be a pop-up market or a space for food-trucks.\* Host a design charrette with your neighborhood to gather community input and design ideas. Depending on your design, consider whether grass, gravel or wood chip base is most suitable for the lot design.

	#(ELEMENTS)	MATERIALS
Platform	20	Wood Lumber 2x6
		Wood Lumber 2x6
		Playwood 4ftx8ft
Planter	7	Wood Lumber 2x6
		Wood Lumber 2x6
		Playwood 4ftx8ft



*\*If you plan to propose any vending of food or other goods, make sure to describe it in your application to the city and get a Peddler License.*

TRASH  
COLLECTION PLAN



### 4. Create a material list

Once the design is established, consider what materials you want to build with. Create a materials list and materials budget. In the material list, be sure to include building tools (nails, screws, hammers, hand drills, tape measure etc.). Keep in mind weather resistant materials, pressure-treated wood and other durable materials that can withstand weathering. For complex designs, identify a local contractor/ woodworking company, who



can supply and pre-cut material. Ask if the pre-cut material can be delivered to the site. Also consider professional help to level the ground and provide ground cover options. Consider a partial mock-up to test your design and to provide a building template for others.



### WHATS INCLUDED IN THE COSTS?

The cost is in part dependent on the condition of the lot and the number of volunteers and their resources. You will have to consider the cost of trash removal, waste disposal, equipment rental (like a mulcher, tiller, or material lifting equipment). Depending on the design, you may want to consider the help of a professional contractor. It is possible to save money by renting or borrowing any necessary equipment. The minimum cost assumes that residents or volunteers have access to basic safety gear, building tools and volunteers to establish and maintain the lot.

### INSURANCE – \$1,000

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has insurance that can cover it, assume an additional costs of up to \$1,000 per year.

## 5. Assemble on site

After your materials are purchased, pick a weekend to gather friends and volunteers to help build. Depending on the size of the materials, it may be easier to build on site, rather than building off-site and installing later. Enlist a local community group or high school student group to help build. Measure and stake out the design layout on site before building. Provide a clear list of assembly instructions and/or assembly sketches for volunteers to build with, as well as the adequate amount of tools.

## 6. Develop a plan to Maintain the Lot

Make sure to address who is going to keep the space clean and well maintained and how. Is there trash collection on the site? Are there garden beds to attend to? Form a group to take charge of the project. Invite the people who show the most interest and have the most time to invest to become your SOCIAL LOT ambassadors. Make a list of the tasks you think will need doing—funding, publicity, partnerships, construction etc—and ask users to sign up to be responsible for at least one. Make sure all members have each other's contact info.

# THE FARM LOT

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a red and black striped tank top and blue jeans, is watering plants in a raised garden bed. She is holding a large green watering can. The garden bed is made of wooden planks and is filled with various green and red leafy plants. In the background, there is a white plastic-covered structure, possibly a greenhouse or a covered walkway, and a chain-link fence. The scene is outdoors and brightly lit.

BUILD SOME GARDEN BEDS TO GROW EDIBLE PLANTS

Downing Park Urban Farm

COST.....	\$500 TO \$2,500 (FOR A TYPICAL 100x25' LOT)
PEOPLE.....	Volunteers/Some Skills, Some Professional Help
UPKEEP.....	Medium to High Maintenance
CONDITION/ LOCATION.....	Sunny, Access to Water
BENEFITS.....	Builds Community, Discourages dumping, Improves appearance of block, Improves mental health & well-being of neighbors, Provides Fresh Food

When choosing a lot for your FARM LOT, consider: What type of soil and vegetation is already there? Consider what was on your lot before (an existing structure, existing perennial plants, trees, shrubs, etc.) Do a quick soil test for heavy metals. Depending on whether the levels are low, medium, or high you can create a garden plan accordingly.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS EXACTLY?

### I. Survey your lot to make a work plan

Depending on the state of your lot, and with the help of your friends, family or neighbors, you may be able to build a Farm Lot in several weekends or several months. This depends largely on the state of the lot, soil conditions, and the type of farm you want to build. Contact the Newburgh Urban Farm and Food Initiative (NUFFI) for advice and coordination.

## 2. Remove Debris and Unwanted Vegetation

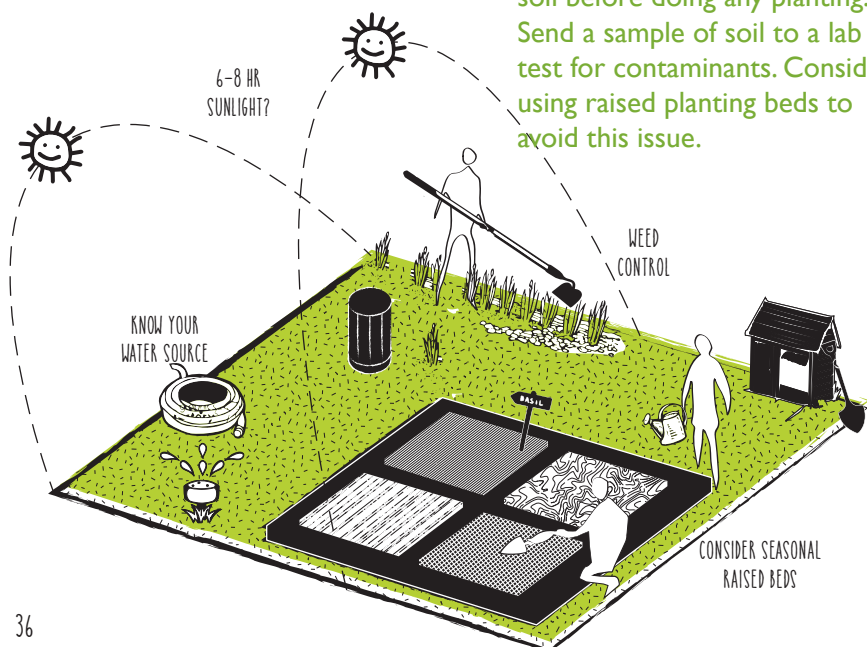
If you have found any conditions that need to be dealt with, such as buried garbage, concrete, brickwork, blacktop, or pernicious weeds to be removed, make a list and allot time for the cleanup stage. Be mindful of different types of waste and their respective disposal. Standard Refuse: Plastic, paper, boxes, metals, glass, etc. Yard Waste: Organic materials such as leaves, branches, and twigs. Bulk Refuse: Furniture, appliances, air conditioners, hot water tanks, mattresses, large toys, doors, etc.

## 3. Prepare the Soil

Till soil at approximately 6-8 inches deep if the soil is compacted, in poor condition, or if you are working with a lot that has a recently completed demolition or another soil disturbance event. Once the lot is tilled, rake, and remove all clumps of existing vegetation. If there is existing vegetation that you would like to keep, then till around it. Otherwise remove all pre-existing grass or weeds prior to tilling. Make sure there is no large debris, gravel or concrete left after the clean-up as that can ruin your tiller.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Lead is very common in urban soil, so it is important to test the soil before doing any planting. Send a sample of soil to a lab to test for contaminants. Consider using raised planting beds to avoid this issue.







## WHATS INCLUDED IN THE COSTS?

The cost is in part dependent on the condition of the lot and the number of volunteers and their resources. For example, you may discover a large continuous slab on the lot that you may need to remove or build your garden on top of it. The cost of removing large materials i.e. gravel, blacktop, or concrete can be expensive. A cheaper option is to build taller boxed beds over your lot. Construction materials for beds, benches, bins, and more, as well as equipment rental are all factors to consider when preparing your Farm Lot layout. Other costs include the tools: Everything from spades and gloves, watering cans, hoses and wheelbarrow to the actual seeds and fertilizers. Keep in mind, a few packets of seeds costing less than twenty dollars can produce enough vegetables for a year's worth of eating.

## INSURANCE – \$1,000

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has insurance that can cover it, assume an additional costs of up to \$1,000 per year.

## 4. Create Your Farm Lot

Raised beds are highly recommended. Consider the size/shape of your beds. Perhaps a vertical growing structure or trellis is ideal. If you are working with a larger site, you may want to break up the work into phases, with certain beds harvested or planted in different seasons. You may even consider ready-mades such as milk crates for your growing beds.

## 5. Building Materials, Tools & Supplies

Beyond the basic gardening tools (shovels, hoes, rakes, shears, trowels etc.) you will have to consider what materials to use to build growing beds, storage bins, tool sheds, and garden paths. Will you use brick, stone, or even wooden pallets? When planning what building materials, tools and supplies you need to create your 'Farm Lot', consider reusing discarded materials from urban-waste streams or even the site itself. To find

free or affordably priced second-hand materials, some good places to start looking are salvage yards, second-hand stores, big trash pickup days.

## **6. Plan what to Grow**

Planning what and how much to grow will largely depend on how much gardening space you have available. For example, having a small space, you may want to consider growing higher-yielding crops such as cooking greens, beans, and peas. Ask yourself, do you want your Farm Lot to produce food for yourself, local residents or to be sold at local markets? Check with your locally owned plant nursery, ask around among other gardeners, or ask your farmers' market vendors for the best crops and varieties for your region. Since specific crops are bred for different seasons, make sure that what you are growing and the time of year are a good match.

## **7. Maintain the Lot**

You can place a sign on the lot facing the sidewalk to ask others to be respectful of your time and investment and keep it clean. A sign is also a wonderful way for the neighborhood to know what you're up to!

### **THINGS TO CONSIDER: SUN AND WATER**

Does your lot get 6-8 hours sunlight a day? Note the partial/ full shade areas. Perhaps removing or trimming certain trees, bushes, or vines will create adequate sunlighting.

Look for existing water sources. If you can't find a water source, contact the local water utility to ask if the property has a water meter. If your site has had water service in the past, it should be relatively inexpensive to get a new water meter installed (if you need one).



Downing Park Urban Farm

# THE POLLINATOR LOT



IMPROVE SOIL & SOW A MIX OF NATIVE WILDFLOWERS FOR BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES

Clay Soil Meadow, Detroit Future City  
Field Guide to Working with Lots



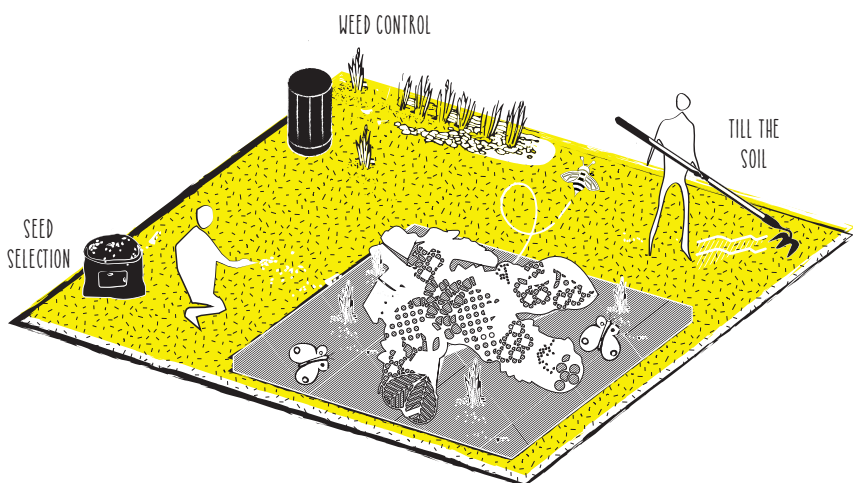
COST.....	\$50 TO \$1,000 (FOR A TYPICAL 100x25' LOT)
PEOPLE.....	Volunteers/Beginners Some Professional Help
UPKEEP.....	Low Maintenance
CONDITION/ LOCATION.....	Sunny, Access to Water
BENEFITS.....	Improves Soil Quality Discourages dumping, Improves appearance of block, Improves mental health & well-being of neighbors, Absorbs Rain Water, Provides Habitat for Pollinators

A pollinator friendly design offers a cheap and low maintenance option to brighten any lot. Choose flowers and native plants that are easy to grow, and will add color to your block while also creating a habitat for birds, bees and butterflies.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS EXACTLY?

### 1. Assess your lot to make a work plan

Depending on the state of your lot, and with the help of your friends, family or neighbors, you may be able to prepare your Pollinator Lot for planting in one weekend, one afternoon, or multiple weekends in a row. Take note of the soil and vegetation that is already there, water access, sunlighting and ground conditions.



## 2. Prepare The Soil

Remove any unwanted grass, vegetation and weeds by either digging it up by the roots or covering your lot with cardboard or a plastic tarp to smother the grass. It will take several weeks, but after being covered, the dead grass will be easier to remove. Then, till the soil at approximately six to eight inches deep, especially if the soil is compacted, in poor condition, or if you are working with a recent demolition or other soil disturbance to the site. Once the lot is tilled, rake and remove all clumps of existing vegetation. If there is existing vegetation that you would like to keep, then till around it. Make sure there is no large debris, gravel or concrete left after the clean-up as that can ruin your tiller.

## 3. Create Healthy Soil

Soil contains a mix of microorganisms and a network of fungi which can mobilize nutrients and assist with the distribution of water - both necessary for the health of your plants. To improve the health of your soil, you can apply a mycorrhizal inoculant on your lot. It comes in a bag or a jar. If your lot is bare of plants, you can mix it into the seeds you are planning to sow. If you would like to fortify existing lawn or plants, mix it with water and distribute it. Make sure to create a smooth surface to insure good seed to soil contact.

#### 4. Plant Selection

Native wildflowers are usually the best sources of nectar for native pollinators, and they are more likely to attract native bees and to support a high diversity of butterflies and moths. With a diversity of seed shapes and sizes, generally planting large-seeds separately from small-seeds on the lot will allow a more even distribution. It is also useful to include at least one native bunch grass or sedge in your seed mix, comprising of no more than 25% of the mix. Grasses and sedges are great host plants for some butterflies, and also provide nesting and overwintering sites for some bumble bees and other insects. The grasses and wildflowers together also form tight living mats that resist the encroachment of weeds.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. Maintain The Lot

The Pollinator Lot requires a medium level of maintenance to thrive. Maintenance includes weeding and watering, particularly during the first two growing seasons while the lot establishes itself. When deciding which weed control method to use, consider project time and budget constraints. In general, herbicide free methods are usually more expensive and labor-intensive, whereas non-persistent glyphosate herbicides are a low-cost and non-labor intensive approach to weed control. The Pollinator Lot should be mowed once a year in the late fall or early spring.



#### WHATS INCLUDED IN THE COSTS?

The cost is in part dependent on the existing conditions of the lot, the number of volunteers and the seed mix you choose to use. You may have to consider the cost of trash removal and equipment rentals (like a mulcher and a tiller). It is possible to save money by renting or borrowing any necessary equipment. The cost assumes that residents or volunteers have access to basic safety gear and garden tools to establish and maintain the lot.

#### INSURANCE – \$1,000

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has insurance that can cover it, assume an additional costs of up to \$1,000 per year.

<sup>1</sup> ESTABLISHING POLLINATOR MEADOWS FROM SEED  
<http://rightofway.erc.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1A6-EstablishingPollinatorMeadows.pdf>

# APPLY FOR A LOT

ADD WEBLINK

## SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

Depending on whether you plan an event or plan to adopt a lot for a year or more, you will have to fill out the respective application form. For a 1-day event, see the [City's Event Permit application](#), which can also be used for events on city-owned vacant lots.

Application forms for "ADOPT A LOT" or "MOW TO OWN" can be found here: \_\_\_\_\_

The Application Form will ask you specific questions about:

- Description of what you plan to do

- Site Plan

- Existing Photos

- Maintenance

- Proof of Insurance

- Timeframe for which you are planning to use the Lot

You can submit an application to the Planning Department any time between JANUARY 15 - APRIL 15.



**CITY OF NEWBURGH  
PERMIT APPLICATION**  
**(JANUARY 15 - APRIL 15)**

1. Check where applicable. Complete all questions. Print or type.

2. \$50.00 fee must be submitted with application.

3. Permit must be submitted at least two weeks prior to event.

1. NAME OF ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_ club

2. TYPE: not for profit \_\_\_\_\_ community \_\_\_\_\_ church \_\_\_\_\_

3. ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of permit submission \_\_\_\_\_

4. TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ same \_\_\_\_\_

5. NAME OF OFFICER OR DIRECTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

6. CONTACT PERSON: \_\_\_\_\_

7. TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

8. ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

9. TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

10. E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

11. REASON FOR PERMIT: \_\_\_\_\_

12. LOCATION (exact): \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

13. DATE OF ASSEMBLY: \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have submitted this form, city staff will review it and might call you to answer questions. A staff member will provide you with feedback and will discuss a date to present your idea at one of the next City Council Work Sessions. The Council may voice concerns, or have suggestions. If they approve of the idea, then you will receive a license agreement from the City's General Counsel. Read over it carefully to understand all the obligations you agree to by signing the license agreement. It will state the time period for which you can occupy the lot you applied for. Keep in mind that the process described above can take several months.

# RESOURCES

## NEWBURGH CITY GOVERNMENT AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The City of Newburgh's [Department of Planning and Development](#) administers this program. You can find links to the forms mentioned in this toolbox and the map of available vacant lots here.

The [Greater Newburgh Parks Conservancy](#) is a private, not-for-profit organization that advocates for the development and maintenance of parks, open space, community gardens, street trees, and green space throughout the City of Newburgh and surrounding communities. Reach out to the conservancy about your project and discuss how they might help with expertise or funding.

[Newburgh Urban Farm and Food Initiative](#) has a lot of experience in building and managing community gardens. Reach out to NUFFI, if you plan to create a community garden to take advantage of this resource in planning your project.

[Awesome Newburgh Foundation](#) distributes \$1,000 micro-grants, no strings attached, to projects and their creators. Applications are due on the first Monday of every month.

## DESIGN & INSPIRATION, LANDSCAPING & GARDENING

**KABOOM!** is a national non-profit dedicated to promoting the design of active play spaces. Among many other resources, it offers **downloadable step-by-step instructions** for building outdoor furniture and equipment. It also **offer grants for playgrounds** and play equipment.

**The Better Block Project** offers tools and resources to reshape and reactivate the built environment. You can order the better block in a box or download wikiblocks, open source instructions for creating your own elements for creative placemaking.

**The National Gardening Association** offers resources and recommendations for landscaping and gardening. You will find garden planting calendar, gardening calculators tools, gardener's dictionary and others.

**Community Garden Start-Up Guide** is produced by the University of California Cooperative Extension. This Start-Up Guide provides lots of great info about planning, building, and troubleshooting a community garden; it also offers a sample member contract.

**The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA)** seeks to build community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across the US. ACGA counsels that garden groups seek leases of at least three years in length: starting and maintaining a winning community garden does not happen overnight.

**The Hart Seed Company** Donation Department provides free seeds for classroom projects or school garden, church missions, community gardens, and other charitable organizations. You will need to fill out a form and send it to them, by fax, email or mail.

**Fruit Tree Planting Foundation** provides orchard donations for recipients who pledge to care for the trees and utilize them for a charitable purpose. FTPF programs strategically donate orchards where the harvest will best serve communities for generations, at places such as community gardens, public schools, city/state parks, and low-income neighborhoods.

## INSURANCE, FISCAL SPONSORSHIP & FUNDING

You will need liability insurance. Unless your organization has a liability insurance that can cover your project, [William A Smith and Sons](#) is a Newburgh-based insurance company that can help you find insurance. When reaching out for a quote, make sure to describe your plans as specific as possible.

### [The New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Community Guide](#)

Sometimes, it may make sense to work with a fiscal sponsor. A fiscal sponsor is a tax-exempt non-profit that can accept tax-deductible donations from private donors. This guide offers information on how and why to obtain fiscal sponsorship for your project.

[EcoSolution™ Grants](#) by the Captain Planet Foundation range from \$500-\$2,500 and are intended to support solution-oriented, youth-led projects that result in real environmental outcomes. EcoSolution™ Grants are available to educators working with youth in the United States.

[Fiskars Project Orange Thumb Garden Grants](#) are open to non-profit organizations in North America later in the year. Grant recipients are typically announced in the spring of the following year.

[Go Fund Me](#) is an online crowdfunding platform that allows you to raise funds from friends and family for a cause you care about.

[IOBY](#) stands for “in our backyards”. In addition to providing a platform for crowdfunding, ioby offers support to craft effective campaign, fundraising plan, timeline and budget.



## FUNDING CONT'D

[SeedMoney](#) a program of Kitchen Gardeners International, is a crowdfunding site exclusively for food garden projects. In addition to crowdfunding, it offers grants to during certain challenge periods.

### [Wells Fargo Foundation Grants](#)

support organizations working to improve communities with low- to moderate-income. In particular, the foundation strives to improve education, community development, and environmental health, ensure access to health and human services, and to bolster civic engagement.

### [Urban and Community Forestry Grants](#)

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation annually announces the availability of community state assistance grants for tree planting and urban forestry projects. These grants are reimbursement cost-share grants that must be equally matched by local resources.

### [Home Depot Community Impact Grants](#)

award up to \$5,000 to 501c designated organizations (recognized and in good standing with the IRS for a minimum of one year) and tax-exempt public service agencies in the U.S. that are using the power of volunteers to improve the community. Grants are given in the form of The Home Depot gift cards for the purchase of tools, materials, or services and are required to be completed within six months of approval date.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The LOTS OF IDEAS NEWBURGH toolbox was produced by the Hudson Valley Initiative at Columbia University GSAPP. It is part of a larger effort by Scenic Hudson and the City of Newburgh to develop a city-wide Community Green Space Plan. Over the course of 15 months in 2018-2019, the Hudson Valley Initiative designed and built a pilot pop-up park on a vacant lot in Newburgh. Lessons learned from this pilot as well as research of precedents in other American cities informed the content of this guide.

Thank you to all who have participated in the development of this toolbox and pilot. Your dedication, insight, and commitment have contributed tremendously to the creation of the toolbox and improving Newburgh's neighborhoods. We are especially grateful to:

Blacc Vanilla Coffee shop  
City of Newburgh, Department of City Planning and Development  
City of Newburgh, City Council  
Columbia University  
Greencastle Building Solutions  
Loveland Technologies  
Newburgh Armory Chess Program  
Newburgh Free Academy P-Tech  
Newburgh Free Library  
Newburgh Urban Farm and Food Initiative  
Scenic Hudson

and all the Newburgh residents who offered support, advice, came out to survey vacant lots and dedicate their time to making Newburgh shine.

This guide is made possible with support from the Open Space Institute.

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COLUMBIA  
**GSAPP**  
HUDSON VALLEY  
INITIATIVE

