



# THE PARKSIDE LEARNING GARDEN PROJECT

Project Title: Parkside Learning Garden  
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## - INTRODUCTION -

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Parkside Business & Community In Partnership (PBCIP) wishes to enhance Camden City's greater food system in two ways. First, providing greater access and education in healthy fresh foods for all ages. Second, creating a trained urban agriculture workforce that can meet the demand for these foods at local restaurants and neighboring institutions. PBCIP must take an innovative approach to advance these priorities, leveraging a network of private backyards into a consortium of healthy food production business incubators. Implementation requires garden training, education and food access all converging at one centralized location. Referred to as the Parkside Learning Garden (Learning Garden), PBCIP is requesting \$60,000 of funding to match an existing \$35,000 of seed money for the construction and operation of this planned, designed, and resident supported facility.

The Learning Garden will serve the neighborhood and greater Camden residents as a highly visible and accessible location for participants to gather, learn, organize and teach one another about food system-related activities. Using the "language of food", programming at the Learning Garden will improve community action and behavior, education, as well as strengthen local businesses and entrepreneurship.

**The mission** of the Parkside Learning Garden Project is to help Camden residents create a healthy and sustainable food system by themselves and for themselves.

**The Project Timeline** is ongoing.

**The Project Goals Include:**

- Eliminate entry barriers preventing Camden households from becoming independent food growers either for profit or for personal consumption;
- Educate families and adults about food nutrition as well as the importance of a healthy food system and food security;
- Increase access to local and affordable healthy foods; and,
- Increase opportunities for employment and commercial exchanges within the City of Camden using the local food system and food economy.

**The Project Objectives include:**

- Construction of the Parkside Learning Garden;
- Administer gardening training and classes, nutrition education, sustainability workshops as well as operate exhibit space.
- Create 15 backyard gardeners, with at least three (3) growers generating income from crops; and,
- Introduce vegetable gardening into curriculums and or after school programs of every school in Parkside.

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### **Parkside Learning Garden** // Perspective



-Groundswell Design Group

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## - PROJECT DESCRIPTION -

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### **Summary**

Parkside Business and Community in Partnership (PBCIP) is requesting a \$60,000 grant from the Community Foundation of South Jersey (CFSJ) Fund to construct and operate its proposed Parkside Learning Garden (the Garden). This community facility will administer programs, workshops, and exhibits to community residents and visitors alike. Learning Garden activities will assist families and individuals interested in healthy food education, access, and any potential new economic opportunities associated with a healthy food system.

PBCIP is interested in improving the local food system and economy by investing directly into what it considers this burgeoning sector's future—its people. Without an adequately educated consumer and trained workforce, successful increases in fresh foods demand, production and sales in Camden will continue to face significant challenges. By investing in backyard gardening, PBCIP is effecting a positive change in the food growing capacity and dietary practices of the community. Following construction, the Garden will strengthen Camden's food system by inspiring its neighbors to get more involved in the future of their own food security. Keeping operational and administrative expenses low, the Garden's design will support a flexible layout capable of hosting existing agriculture and nutrition programs throughout the Delaware Valley.

The real value of this facility will depend on the amount of vested interest it receives from the community after opening to the public. Strengthening public involvement is an important and ongoing process. Currently, PBCIP is recruiting ten (10) interested gardeners in the formation of the Learning Garden's steering committee. The committee will help shape the development of the Garden while also increasing local awareness. In addition, PBCIP will supply its committee participants with their own raised growing beds, soil, and vegetable transplants.

Among the steering committee, additional sponsorship and attention will be allocated to three (3) households by PBCIP as pilot "gardening entrepreneurs". With support from several local restaurants, these gardeners are expected to supply at least one neighborhood business with weekly fresh produce (restaurant ingredients, wholesale produce, etc.) within 18 months.

Ensuring that the viability of this Project is self-sustaining, PBCIP is also working with its neighborhood schools to get youth excited about eating healthy and the benefits to gardening. Already, faculty from Cooper B. Hatch and Forest Hills schools are partnering with PBCIP to create school gardens at each campus for classroom and afterschool programs.

### **Location & Service Area**

The Learning Garden Project is located at 1220 Haddon Avenue; abutting the Parkside and Whitman Park neighborhoods in the City of Camden. This site is also in close proximity to several of Camden's major assets and institutions including Cooper University Hospital, 1 mile northwest on Haddon Avenue; Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center at ½ mile southeast on Haddon Avenue; and, PATCO rail service at approximately ¾ mile southeast via Ferry Avenue Station. The organization's primary population includes residents of Camden, particularly those in closest proximity in the Parkside neighborhood.

The Parkside community continues to be one of Camden's most stable neighborhoods, with a small but solid base of middle class families who are primarily African American. It is a neighborhood of tree-lined boulevards, a large park and institutions including a Boys and Girls

Club and six schools ranging from an early childhood development center through to high school, in addition to Lourdes Medical Center. Encompassing a 55-block radius, the Parkside neighborhood continues facing many socioeconomic challenges. According to the 2010 US Census, Parkside's population of 4,494 residents was supporting a significantly lower median household income than surrounding Camden County (\$39,027 vs. \$60,813 annually). The majority of households also were earning less than \$40,000 per year as compared to the County, in which 60% of households earn over \$50,000 per year. According to the same Census, 14.7% of Parkside's workforce is unemployed and 27.37% of the neighborhood lives below the poverty line.

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## **- ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND -**

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### **PBCIP History & Mission**

Parkside Business & Community In Partnership is a resident-led, 501c3, community development organization with the resources to revitalize the Parkside neighborhood in a manner where residents are living more productive and sustainable lives. PBCIP is pursuing this goal by ensuring residents of varied income levels can all find opportunities and tools to build wealth, sustain health and live in a positive environment.

Its 20-plus year history began when a group of residents chose to combat their neighborhood's decline after organizing a single anti-drug march. The success of this march led to a community-wide meeting to explore long-term solutions to neighborhood blight. The meeting, in turn, led to the formation of this non-profit organization that for most of its existence was run solely by volunteers. Today, the goal and vision of PBCIP is to use creative and entrepreneurial strategies to accomplish lasting and long-term change. Through advocacy, collaboration and commitment, PBCIP will realize its mission of building a vibrant neighborhood in Parkside.

### **Organizational Capacity & Community Impact**

PBCIP is the only community development organization in the Parkside neighborhood, taking a leadership role in organizing the community to address specific issues. The organization's approach is grass roots driven and holistic in its method of revitalizing, rather than replacing the Parkside neighborhood. They now operate with a \$6 million budget, including a \$3 million housing program and \$2 million in resources dedicated to commercial revitalization. Demonstration of expertise and success in community revitalization includes the rehabilitation and selling of 43 single family homes, constructing a 51-unit senior rental housing project, and comprehensive improvement to the Haddon Avenue business.

PBCIP also has a track record of working cooperatively and inclusively with other institutions in and around the community including neighboring Community Development Corporations (CDC)'s, social service agencies and health and service providers. What PBCIP does not provide for residents it seeks out through partnerships. In this way, available resources are maximized to the community while maintaining the organization's strengths in areas of housing, financial education, economic development and community organizing expertise.

## Key Organizational Personnel

PBCIP is flanked by professional staff and expert consultants to implement its role as a successful community development entity. The management and staff of PBCIP can be defined by the following characteristics:

- Firm commitment to the residents of Camden
- Experienced, qualified and integrity based
- Goal and task oriented
- Extensive track record in community economic development field
- Highly driven and intrinsically motivated

Staff members that are key to successful implementation of PBCIP's Parkside Learning Garden Project:

**PBCIP Executive Director, Bridget Phifer:** Ms. Phifer has worked as Executive Director of PBCIP since 1999. Major responsibilities include staff management, organizational planning, resource development, fiscal management and program development. She received her Masters in Public Management from Rutgers University and is experienced in establishing and managing non-profit organizations. Since joining PBCIP, she has grown the organization's budget tenfold. Staff has increased from one (herself) to ten as commercial development activity continues expanding, affordable housing and homeownership education increases, as well as marketing and neighborhood planning programs have been created. Strategic partnerships with foundations, other community development organizations, corporations and government agencies have also been critical to this success.

**Economic Development Consultant, Craig Sawyer:** Mr. Sawyer joined PBCIP in 2007 as a Project Manager Staff Consultant. He has over fifteen years of community economic development experience. Craig has helped to secure over \$25 million for business retention and expansion as well as helped plan and develop several job creation, real estate and workforce development initiatives. He has direct experience successfully managing three OCS funded community economic development projects, including a Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individual (JOLLI) grant. In his various capacities, he has started several social enterprise ventures and developed several commercial development projects, including the Venture Center incubator in New York City, a previously funded OCS funded project. Craig holds an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) designation from the National Development Council and is currently pursuing his professional designation as a Certified Economic Developer (CED) from the International Economic Development Council. Craig also attended Rider College for his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Rutgers University's Graduate School of Management for his M.B.A in Finance.

**Parkside Learning Garden Project Manager, Jonathan Wetstein:** Mr. Wetstein has spent the past ten years committed to the fields of urban planning and sustainable development. He joined PBCIP in 2011 after completing a research project in planning and developing a 'green' urban farming business model for the purpose of local job creation and greater access to healthier and more nutritious foods. At PBCIP, Mr. Wetstein provides expertise in public involvement, project management in urban agriculture, land use planning and urban design within the realms of community economic revitalization.

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**- PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION -**

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### **Funding Strategy**

Implementation of the Parkside Learning Garden Project requires a **\$60,000** investment for its design and construction plus an additional **\$85,000** to operate both facility and programs through year 2016. Totalling **\$145,000**, PBCIP already allocated \$15,000 in soft costs. PBCIP is also committing \$35,000 for the construction of the Garden. This seed money was drawn from NRTC and OCS Funding awarded in 2013. Along with the funding request to the Community Foundation of South Jersey, \$35,000 in additional funding is committed through NRTC funding.

**A Summary of the Project Budget is as Follows:**

<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>	<b>OCS Funds</b>	<b>NRTC Funds</b>	<b>Innovation Food Funding</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Soft Costs</b>	\$15,000	- -	- -	<b><i>\$15,000</i></b>
<b>Hard Costs</b>	- -	\$35,000	\$10,000	<b><i>\$45,000</i></b>
<b>Operating Costs FY 2014-2017</b>	- -	\$35,000	\$50,000	<b><i>\$85,000</i></b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><i>\$15,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$70,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$60,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$145,000</i></b>

**OCS Funding** from the federal Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services (OCS) supports funding for local job creation. In 2013, PBCIP received a grant award under the OCS Health Foods initiative to support the PBCIP's Healthy Living Initiatives. This effort includes the Learning Garden's construction as well as a proposed demonstration kitchen and healthy programming initiative. OCS supports the Learning Garden's planned entrepreneurial urban agriculture program enabling residents to grow produce for sale to local restaurants, stores and institutions as a means of income.

**The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program (NRTC)** provides business entities a 100 percent tax credit for funds provided to nonprofits carrying out comprehensive revitalization plans. Nonprofits are required to use at least 60% of the tax credit funds for housing and economic development; the remaining funds may be used for supportive services and other activities that promote neighborhood revitalization. Since 2008, NRTC funding continues allowing PBCIP to strategically leverage support from other sources. A mix of funding from individuals, corporations, private foundations as well as federal, state and local government combines to create broad, comprehensive programs that accomplish transformative change in the neighborhood.

## **Programming & Partners**

PBCIP envisions its Learning Garden will host a variety of living exhibits and programs to meet the various needs of its diverse population. Gardening workshops will demonstrate the nutrition and financial potential of cultivating specific vegetable, herb as well as fruit types within a typical Parkside or Camden City backyard. Educational workshops will give instruction on the importance of a healthy natural environment, food nutrition, and the importance of sustainability with respects to a desired quality of life. All of these programs will explore gardening techniques that are innovative in their methods, capabilities in crop yields, and financial ease when replicated at the home.

PBCIP and its Learning Garden partners will administer these programs through its proposed Learning Garden, upholding an aesthetic format intended to leave its visitors and participants inspired. The Garden's initial partners include the New Jersey Tree Foundation and the Delaware River Keepers Network. Over the next 6 months, PBCIP will continue to increase its list of partners to include organizations it already holds a working relationship with. These partners include the Camden City Garden Club, the Food Trust, Rutgers University Cooperative Extension, and New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids.

**The New Jersey Tree Foundation (NJTF)** will oversee the soil testing, ordering, delivery and planting of one fruit tree and fifteen fruit bearing shrubs in addition to conducting training to educate the garden caregivers on tree and shrub maintenance. These sessions will include printed materials that will guide the garden caregivers in watering, mulching, pruning, and protecting their new fruit tree and shrubs. Additionally, the NJ Tree Foundation will invite the garden caregivers to attend a new educational series called the Fruit Tree Farmer Workshops. The NJ Tree Foundation is developing these new workshops with funding from the Campbell Soup Foundation.

**The Delaware River Keeper Network (DRKN)** will provide planning and consulting services to PBCIP in the development of a sustainability exhibit at the Learning Garden. The specifics of this component will inform visitors about information regarding the importance of protecting local waterways, mitigating stormwater issues, and helping to present this information in a dynamic and understandable manner. All of the exhibit information will tie back to the importance of a healthy ecosystem as it relates to a stronger local food system.



## Project Timeline

### Project Goals, Activities, & Outcomes

GOALS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
<b>Eliminate entry barriers preventing Camden residents from becoming independent food growers either for profit - or- for personal consumption.</b>	Administer urban farm training for residents at the Learning Garden that will establish a consistent set of entry, training and certification activities for gardeners that will be sensitive to the challenges and needs of farmers with limited growing space.	Establish partnerships for farm program administration with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden City Garden Club, 4-H Club, and the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Program by <b>Fall of 2014</b>.</li> <li>At least 3 gardeners to receive their USDA GAPS Certification as growers by <b>Fall of 2015</b></li> </ul>
	Ensure participants have necessary resources to practice gardening on own property.	Enlist 10-to-15 residents into the Learning Garden's farm training program; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supplying each with personal raised gardening bed(s), soil, and free vegetable and herb transplants by <b>Summer of 2014</b>.</li> </ul>
	Encourage collaborations among resident farmers through Learning Garden classes and workshops, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to coordinate larger scale production to meet produce demands from specific customers, businesses, and institutions.</li> </ul>	Require each gardener to participate in at least weekly workshops administered at the Learning Garden as well as establish a neighborhood-supported Parkside Urban Gardening Committee that will meet at a minimum of once per month <b>ongoing</b> .
<b>Educate families and adults about a healthy food system and the importance of food security and nutrition;</b>	Host healthy-eating programs like Farm-to-Table workshops at Learning Garden. Provide hands-on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learning about the importance of a healthy food system and ensuring adequate food security in Camden.</li> </ul>	Establish partnerships for nutrition program administration with the Food Bank of South Jersey, the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids, the Food Trust, and Rutgers University Cooperative Extension by <b>Winter of 2014</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minimum of 10 Camden Households will receive graduation certificates in food nutrition, entitling them to 1 full-year of discounted fresh produce by <b>Spring of 2016</b>.</li> </ul>
	Partner with local schools to integrate Learning Garden exhibits, programs and activities into classroom health and science curriculums.	Establish educational partnerships with 3 of Parkside's 6 schools, construct 1 satellite garden at each school, and appoint a coordinator to administer education and gardening course material to school educators through the 4-H Club by <b>Spring of 2015</b> .
	Support interactive exhibits at the Learning Garden to teach visitors at all ages about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>importance of environmental sustainability and stewardship with respects to growing produce and over-all community health.</li> </ul>	Employ the The Delaware Riverkeeper Network to develop informative displays regarding the local watershed and the importance of protecting local water quality and habitats from pollution by <b>Fall of 2014</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit group tours and participation from school field trips, to private organizations and religious institutions by <b>Fall of 2015</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase access to local and affordable healthy foods;</b>	Operate a portion of the Learning Garden as a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local food aggregator to connect the community with locally-grown food.</li> </ul>	Employ 1 part-time Garden liaison to coordinate local produce supply and demand by <b>Spring 2016</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a fresh produce storage facility in close proximity to the Learning Garden by <b>Fall 2016</b>.</li> </ul>
	Make local produce available at neighborhood corner stores, local markets and eateries.	Enlist 2 corner stores in the Parkside/Whitman Park neighborhoods to carry locally grown produce with technical assistance through the Food Trust by <b>Spring 2016</b> .
	Offer free nutrition education classes in conjunction with Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and School of Nursing. Our Lady of Lourdes will develop health metrics to measure and track the health of Camden residents.	The targeted areas to be measured will be: obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke and other diet-related health indicators. Attain a 15% reduction in obesity rate, 10% reduction in hypertension rates within the Parkside/ Whitman Park by <b>Fall 2017</b> .
<b>Increase opportunities for employment and commercial exchanges within the City of Camden using the local food system and food economy.</b>	Connect local and regional businesses with neighborhood growers.	Invest in 3 of the 15 participating households who are interested specifically in local food production as a potential business income by providing them with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key business skill training to encourage entrepreneurship in local food production. Allocate any additional resources necessary to meet the production needs of at least 1 participating neighborhood eatery <b>Ongoing</b>.</li> </ul>
	Promote diversity among entrepreneur gardeners.	Introduce a greater diversity of home-made products like soaps, oils, seasonings, and other goods through additional crop types including fruit and herbs at the Learning Garden by <b>Summer 2015</b> .
	Support marketing and sales of locally-grown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Produce along Haddon avenue from the Learning Garden.</li> </ul>	City approvals to construct one farm stand for the selling and distribution of locally grown produce at the Learning Garden <b>Fall 2016</b> .
	Attract outside visitors Haddon Avenue business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>community and introduce them to the local food economy and .</li> </ul>	Provide lease opportunities to 3 regional institutions and organizations (per year) at the Learning Garden as a part-time hourly venue for special events by <b>Summer 2015</b> .

- APPENDIX -

## Organizational Budget

Parkside Business & Community In Partnership, Inc		
2013 Budget		
<b>Income</b>	<b>2013</b>	
Wells Fargo Regional Foundation	75,000	
Camden County United Way	44,000	
NCRC	10,000	
Bank Contributions	15,000	
NRTC (salary & community programs)	130,000	
Home Counseling Fees	1,000	
Developer Fees (Renew, Phase IIIA and B)	337,000	
OCS	108,500	
Membership Dues (100 members)	1,200	
<b>Total</b>	<b>726,700</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>		
Staff	252,900	
Fringe (15%)	37,935	
<b>Supplies</b>		
Office/Consumable Supplies	93,283	
Internet Service	1,000	
Postage & Shipping	2,400	
<b>Occupancy Costs</b>		
Rent at Renew Building	15,000	
Custodial/Maintenance	8,500	
Utilities	16,250	
Telephone	4,000	
Insurance	7,500	
Security System	1,500	
<b>Contractual</b>		
Copy Machine	7,800	
Audit Fee (audit + cost cert Phase IIIB)	20,000	
Accounting & Payroll Services	2,000	
Legal	5,000	
Bank Fees & Interest Expense	17,250	
Fiscal Management	50,000	
Commercial Revitalization Specialist	42,000	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
Auto Expenses	3,200	
Advertising/Marketing	2,500	
Directors & Officers Insurance	3,850	
Training & Development	2,500	
Equipment & Technology	6,000	
Dues, Registrations & Subscriptions	3,500	
<b>Community Service</b>		
Block Captain Chair	5,000	
Christmas Baskets	400	
Community Program Expenses (various)	26,100	
Maintenance & Improvements	5,000	
Newsletter	2,500	
Hope Institute	10,000	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 654,868</b>	
<b>Reserve/ (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 71,832</b>	

## Project Budget (Start-Up for Year 2014-2017)

### SOFT COSTS

Activity	Cost	Funding Source
Architectural and Engineering		
Groundwell Design Group Learning Garden De	\$4,250.00	
NJ Tree Conservation Staff Consultanting	\$2,500.00	
Delaware River Keepers Sustainable Watershed Exhibit Design	\$2,250.00	
Survey	\$500.00	OCS FUNDS
Legal Fees	\$1,725.00	
Utility & Hook-up Costs	\$1,225.00	
Permits and Fees	\$1,000.00	
Financing Fees and Other Costs	\$0.00	
Contingency 10%	\$1,550.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>	

### HARD COSTS

Activity	Cost	Funding Source
<i>Infrastructure (with labor)</i>	<b>\$8,000.00</b>	NRTC FUNDS
<i>Construction Labor as 30% of \$16,625.00 (\$5,500)</i>	<b>\$22,000.00</b>	NRTC FUNDS
<i>Landscaping Labor as 30% of \$11,920.00 (\$4,080)</i>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>	NRTC & Innovation Food Funds
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$45,000.00</b>	

### OPERATING COSTS for YR 2014-2017

Activity	Cost	Funding Source
<i>Garden Programming</i>	<b>\$20,000.00</b>	
<i>Garden Administration</i>	<b>\$35,000.00</b>	
<i>Garden Marketing</i>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>	NRTC & Innovation Food Funds
<i>Garden Utilities</i>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	
<i>Gardening Supplies</i>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$85,000.00</b>	

# Learning Garden Proposed Site Plan

