

LEE WICK DENNISON SUSTAINABLE GARDEN

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Lee Wick Dennison?

Lee Wick Dennison was a Town resident who died in August 2012 at the age of 60 after a brief illness. Lee's life reflected a belief that wellness in all its dimensions (physical, emotional, environmental, intellectual, social) and the arts enrich one's body and mind. Her accomplished career at the National Endowment for the Arts helped bring arts programming to communities all across our country. She was a student, staff member and then trustee at Interlochen Center for the Arts, a vibrant arts education institution in Michigan. Lee was also very active in our own community. She was a member of the Town's Traffic Committee and championed initiatives that promoted walking and pedestrian safety within the Town. She also served on the Town's Construction Committee, a thoughtful participant and always sensitive to the need for sustainable growth. Lee opened up the joyful gardens of her Victorian cottage on Leland Street for the Town's early garden tours. An avid walker, Lee often could be seen on our Town streets and in our parks with her dog, Quantum.

Lee left several legacy gifts reflecting her core values. Her gift to Interlochen created a year-round recreation and wellness center. An early supporter of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, Lee's contribution helped build the recently opened Neal Potter Plaza along the trail at River Road. And, Lee's extraordinarily generous \$100,000 bequest to our Town was given to support, *"the beautification and/or the maintenance of public space within the Town with the specific intent that these funds be used to augment, rather than replace, public funds."*

How will the bequest be used?

At a public hearing during its October 10, 2018 meeting, the Town Council formally approved the use of Lee's bequest for a sustainable garden. The garden will honor Lee by creating an additional public space of beauty in the Town. It will give Town residents a new green space for individual and community enjoyment while also providing an opportunity to learn more about sustainable landscaping practices that could be adapted in their own gardens. Lastly, in the centennial year of the Town, the garden will preserve our Town's natural ecosystem for future generations.

What is a sustainable garden?

Simply put, a sustainable garden is a garden that thrives in harmony with the natural ecosystem of a local area. It requires fewer interventions to maintain and avoids the negative environmental impacts of conventional landscaping practices. Sustainable gardening practices include: choosing native plants and trees that provide food for local wildlife and grow well in local climate conditions without supplementary watering; reducing lawn areas, which require mowing with power tools, by planting native groundcovers; re-channeling rainwater from downspouts to benefit garden beds; managing storm-water through rain gardens where feasible; and, avoiding pesticides and herbicides by using natural means of insect control and hand-pulling weeds.

How was Zimmerman Park selected as the site for the Lee Wick Dennison Sustainable Garden?

In early spring 2018, members from the Climate and Environment and Centennial committees discussed ways to use Lee's bequest. The consensus of the group was to pursue the creation of a sustainable garden during the Town's centennial year. This garden working group presented the idea to the Town Council at its April 23, 2018 meeting. The Council approved the concept and directed the group to move forward to develop more specific details. The group worked with the Town Manager to identify an appropriate site for a potential garden, including Tarrytown Park, Rosemary Triangle and Zimmerman Park. It also reviewed the qualifications of several landscape designers and consulted with two potential designers as to the suitability of these three sites.

At the Town Council's July 11, 2018 meeting, the garden working group reported that Zimmerman Park was the strongest candidate for consideration. The group further recommended that Backyard Bounty, a local landscaping firm with strong credentials in sustainable gardening design and storm-water management solutions, develop a concept sketch for a potential garden. The Council agreed both to the potential garden's location at Zimmerman Park and the hiring of Backyard Bounty to prepare a concept sketch. It also directed the group to hold a community forum in the fall to present the sketch to and solicit input from Town residents. The forum was held at the Lawton Center on September 22, 2018 following the Town's Chevy Chase Green Fair.

Why was Zimmerman Park selected as the site for the Lee Wick Dennison Sustainable Garden?

The garden working group sought to find a site in Town that would mirror the planting challenges many Town residents face on their own property and would be convenient and accessible to residents. The area along Maple Avenue from Lynn Drive to Aspen Street in Zimmerman Park proved to be an excellent location. This area offers a variety of growing conditions – from full sun to full shade, from dry areas to damp depressions, from hillside erosion to flat open lawn. It is large enough to include a path to traverse the garden and a gathering area for staging events and activities. The area has the additional advantage of attracting considerable Town resident foot traffic.

What will the Lee Wick Dennison Sustainable Garden look like?

The garden embraces a linear park concept. It is designed as a series of beautiful outdoor rooms. The first "room" is a formal front-yard-design of plantings around an oval flagstone patio. Benches/seating area allow for both individual enjoyment and community activities, such as demonstrations on landscaping practices that improve our environment. The second "room" is a woodland walk with plantings that thrive in shade. The third "room" is a meadow with sun-loving plantings that provide a habitat for bees, butterflies and birds. The fourth "room" is an area of conservation landscaping for storm-water management and erosion control. A compacted gravel ADA compliant walkway connects the different outdoor spaces and leads visitors through the garden. Quick Response (QR) stations providing information through smartphones and other information will be located throughout the garden, enabling people to learn about sustainable gardening.

As a tribute to Lee's passion for the arts and to mark the Town's 100th anniversary this year, it is anticipated that the garden will also include a sculpture.

When will the Lee Wick Dennison Sustainable Garden be installed?

At its February 13, 2019 work session, the Town Council voted to proceed with the development of final plans for Lee's garden and the solicitation of competitive bids for its installation. It is anticipated that a firm will be selected in late spring or early summer with installation of the garden to commence in early fall 2019. A garden dedication celebration is projected for mid-fall 2019.