

# SILAINIAI GARDENS

MILITARY LAND RECLAIMING PROCESS THROUGH COMMUNAL GARDENING



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RECLAIMING PROCESS THROUGH  
COMMUNAL GARDENING

Cover picture by G. Česonis 1999

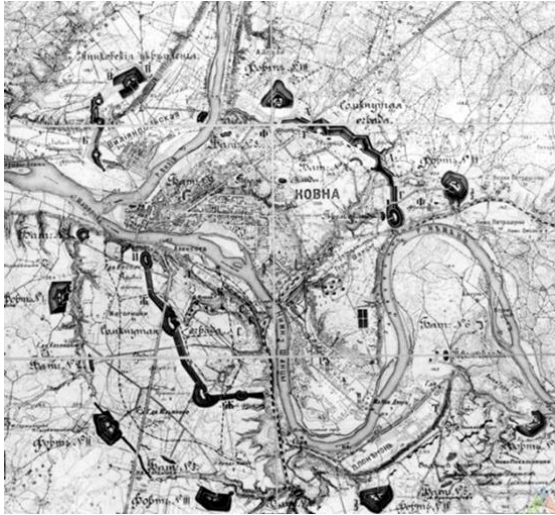
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17 Gardeners

December, 2018  
Silainiai, Kaunas, Lithuania

## KAUNAS FORTRESS



Kaunas Fortress is the remains of a fortress complex in Kaunas, Lithuania. It was constructed and renovated between 1882 and 1915 to protect the Russian Empire's western borders, and was designated a "first-class" fortress in 1887. Same as most of military heritage, preservation of Kaunas Fortress brings up conflicting ideologies when it comes to discussing Lithuanian patriotic values. Military heritage is associated with war, death, loss, and human tragedies. It is believed that maintenance of foreign heritage can contribute to the creation of new, tolerant and peaceful European culture. When local communities clean, take care and maintain fortresses they create an emotional connection to the place and in this way the negative ideological weight of the place is neutralised, object finishes its military service and becomes a part of historic architectural heritage.

*Information from „Concept of Kaunas Fortress Regional Park 2016“*

## VIII FORTRESS



During 1890 work began on an eighth fort, known as Linkuva; new construction techniques were introduced, particularly reinforced concrete.[12] The Linkuva fort became the most modern entrenchment, equipped with electricity, sewerage, and casemates for a garrison of 1,000 personnel. Unfortunately today most of the fort is flooded and in a very poor condition. Kaunas Fortress association has a vision to develop this area into a park where different events and artistic exhibitions could take place. There are no plans for big investments but the main objective is to keep the territory of the fort safe, clean and accessible to the public. It is acknowledged that, at the moment, illegal gardening is does not have negative effects but should be legalised and organised. We think there should not be any buildings, tall trees and access to the site should be made safe.

*Information from „Concept of Kaunas Fortress Regional Park 2016“*

## SILAINIAI



Construction of Silainiai neighbourhood started in 1984. It is the newest and the biggest housing estate in the city of Kaunas. This area is dominated by apartment buildings and is home to 50 thousand people. Area is characterised as a sleeping neighbourhood because there is a lack of high quality public spaces and other services needed to have a multifunctional outer city centre. At the moment estate is receiving more attention from the city municipality and some of these issues are being addressed but at the moment the only non-commercial local community gathering space is a public library. Seniors have built a strong community and are initiating many events. From 2015 a local artist is developing a creative initiative called 'Šilainiai Project'. The focus of the activities is the involvement of different parts of the community through various creative processes – landscape exploration walls, photography workshops, exhibitions, artist residencies, talks and events in unconventional spaces.



1900 – When the VIII Fortress was completed the surrounding area was dominated by farmland.



In the year 1984 after the construction of Silainiai started, farming territories were reduced and this led people to rediscover the fortress. Through this migration fortress presented the opportunity to stay connected to nature and food.



At the moment gardening in this territory is experiencing crisis which was caused by ineffective sharing of information, lack of communication and absence of shared vision.

## GARDENING IN SILAINIAI

Majority of the people who moved in to the new estate came from small towns or villages where gardening has always been an inseparable part of life. Living in an apartment building made people recognise how much they were missing this activity that they left behind. New comers noticed the fort territory and even though it was abandoned, run down and full off bushes and Sosnowsky's hogweed they started to prepare it for gardening.

People were continuously cleaning the territory, planting trees and establishing community gardens. Around year 1999 gardens were quite well established with active community and community events.

During the years a lot of original gardeners retired and gardening became one of the most important activities during the warm seasons. Unfortunately at the same time there started to appear more robberies and random destructions. This led to reduced feeling of safety and combined with old age some gardeners stopped their activities. In the spring of 2018 there was a try to forbid gardening in general. During the summer some greenhouses were burned. Gardening community is feeling frightened but the wish to work the land stays strong even though the vision of the fort is unclear.

In the autumn of 2018 different stakeholders, groups and community representatives started the work on clarifying the vision of the VIII Fortress and Gardening in the area. Meetings are being held, gardening history is being written down and plans to save and support gardening are being drafted.



*„I garden because its health and exercise. It is a pleasure to enjoy vegetables that I grew myself“*

*Teresė, 67 year old*



*„I love land. When it is warm I spend 4 hours gardening daily. Fresh air. There I rest and recharge. I prolong my life in the garden“*

*Senior Ona – Zita*



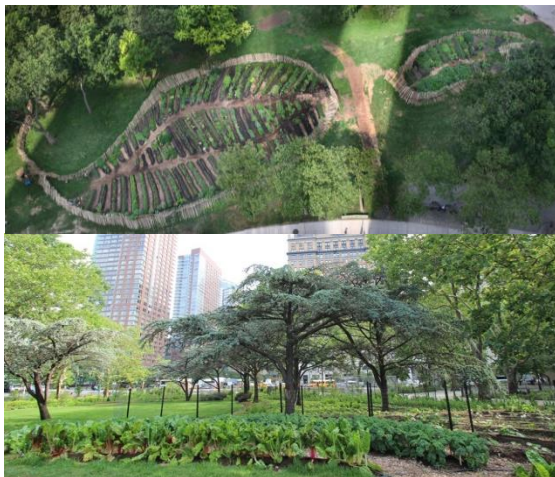
*„Here I can be in nature, listen to singing birds, watch blooming apple and plum trees, sit and rest on the grass, talk to my colleague gardeners“*

*Ona, 71 year old*

### Battery Urban Farm/ New York City / USA

The Battery is a 10 ha public park located at the southern tip of Manhattan Island in New York City facing New York Harbour. The park and surrounding area is named for the artillery batteries that were positioned there in the city's early years to protect the settlement behind them. The Battery Urban Farm is an educational farm where New York City's students, residents, and visitors experience sustainable farming, enjoy tasting organic fresh foods, and learn environmental stewardship. The farm was developed in 2011 by The Battery Conservancy in response to a request for a vegetable garden by eight students from neighbouring Millennium High School. From those eight students, we now engage over 5000 students from over 100 schools and community volunteers who annually grow thousands of pounds of vegetables, fruits, herbs, grains, and flowers.

<http://thebattery.org/destinations/urban-farm/>



### Lasnaidee Laagna Garden / Tallinn / Estonia



Lasnaidee association is gathering people who actively want to participate in the creation and improvement of their living environment. The purpose of the organisation is to create high quality living spaces that are oriented towards people. Laagna garden is one of the projects encouraging people to garden in cities and especially around apartment building.

<https://lasnaidee.ee/laagna-aed/>

### Aleksandri Community Garden / Tartu / Estonia

Aleksandri Community Garden is an example how we can manage the city in an economic and communal manner. It is a second project of this kind realised in the city of Tartu. The first project was Vaksali Community Garden which purpose was to show that even if the project is short term it can become the centre of community life and inspire for collaboration. The goal of the organisers is to create as many of such places in the city of Tartu as possible.

<https://www.facebook.com/AleksandriAvatudAed/>





### GARDENING BENEFITS TO A HUMAN

**FOOD:** Fresh, seasonal, organic, nutritious.

**HABITS:** Eating seasonally, healthier eating habits, productive exercise and time outdoors.

**HEALTH:** Decreased risk of diseases related to obesity, blood pressure stabilisation as a consequence of being in nature, physical health, reduction in stress levels, mental health, nature therapy, increased freedom and happiness.

**COMMUNITY:** Increased feelings of belonging to the community and place, crime prevention, increased choices in free time activities for different age and social groups.

**ECONOMICS:** Growing food reduces stress on family budget, increased health reduces expenses on medicine and health care, free education, entertainment and nature therapy.

**EDUCATION:** New skills, better concentration, knowledge about food, nature and human footprint, planning and problem solving skills, increased awareness and creativity.



### GARDENING BENEFITS TO THE CITY

**CITY UTILITIES:** Composting eliminates organic waste, significantly reduced need for packaging, reduced pressure on waste collection and transportation, reduced illegal dumping.

**SAFETY:** Crime prevention, increased physical and perceived safety, safe environment increases chances of communication and reduces social isolation.

**CITY ASSETS:** Effective use of land, increased asset value.

**SOCIAL BENEFITS:** Safe and clean environment reduces alcohol consumption and drug use, increased variety of free time activities to choose from, increased human visibility and possibilities for communication and new connections.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** Reduced heat island effect, slowing down of water to increase infiltration, rehabilitation of the soil, increased resilience in food system.

**ECONOMICS:** Small business incubator, innovation, increased local economic activity, value generation, reinvestment in local activities.

**ŠVIETIMAS, KULTŪRA IR SPORTAS:** New space for various event, educational programmes, community initiatives and free time activities.



### GARDENING BENEFITS TO THE WORLD

UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development:

GOAL 1: No Poverty

GOAL 2: Zero Hunger

GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being

GOAL 4: Quality Education

GOAL 5: Gender Equality

GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

GOAL 13: Climate Action

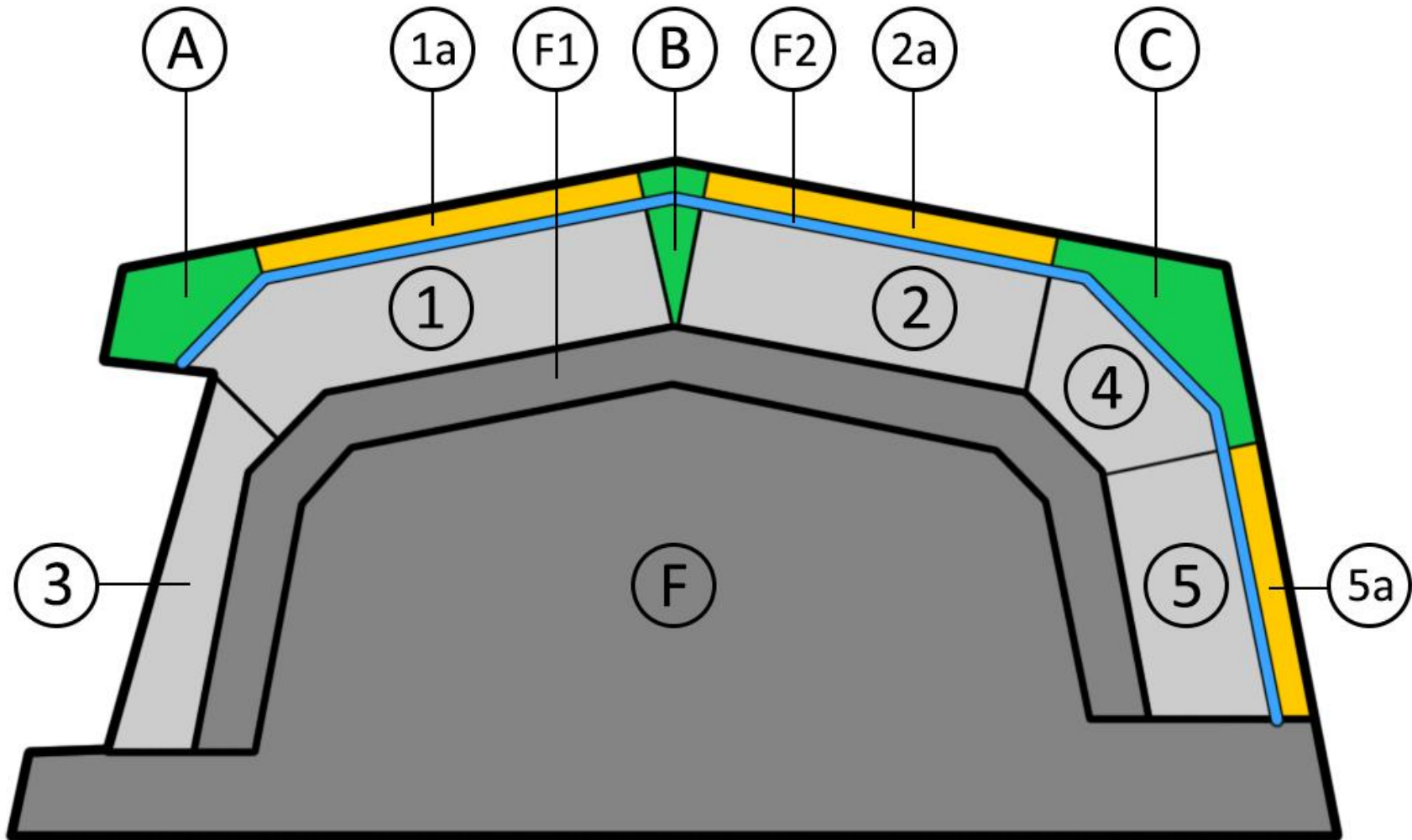
GOAL 14: Life Below Water

GOAL 15: Life on Land

GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

The benefits of urban gardening are very complex and varied. We believe that by facilitating responsible and inclusive planning process we will be able to contribute towards the realisation of the 17 Global Goals.



**GARDENING ZONES: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5**

We aim to bring some logic and order to these zones. We are aiming to resize the existing plots according agreed minimum and maximum sizes. Building proper composting stations and creating a walking path net which at the moment does not exist.

**PUBLIC SPACES A, B and C**

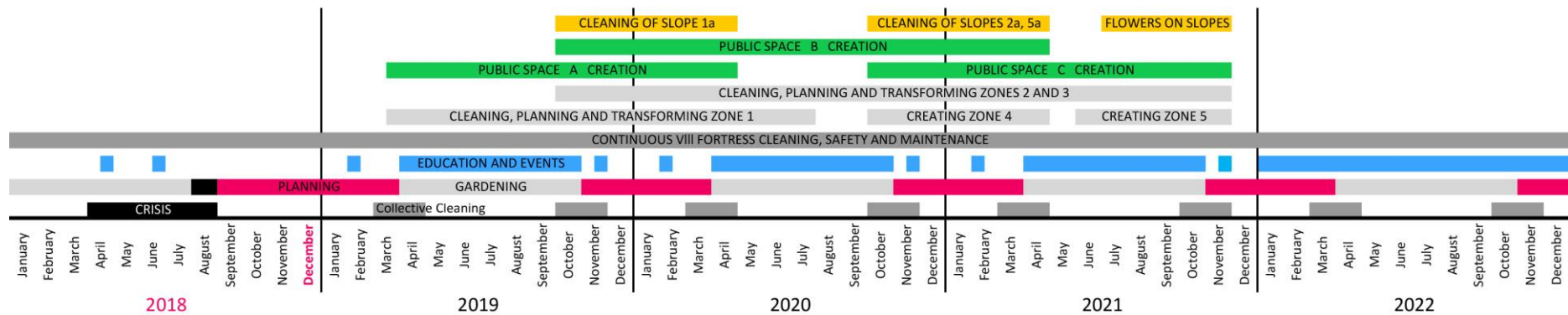
We aim to locate public spaces at the sloped corners of the site. We need to create a safe and comfortable access to the site through these sloped edges. These will be places to relax, rest, meet and develop social entrepreneurship activities.

**SLOPED EDGES 1a, 2a and 5a**

Main objective is to clean these areas and reestablish the original VIII Fortress edge form. After the cleaning process we will encourage to use these areas for bee keeping and plant these slopes with flowers and herbs. Building of educational stands.

**FORTRESS TERRITORIES F, F1 and F2**

Continuous cleaning and maintenance of the territory. At the intersection of zones F1 and B there is a need to create safe staircase to access the Fort. Canal (F2) will be cleaned and made safe. We will aim to create a water management plan.



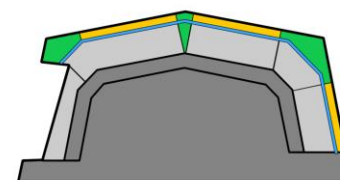
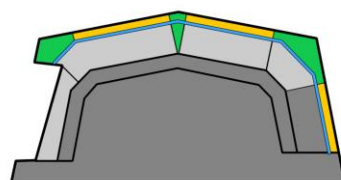
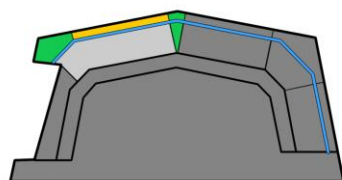
- Start of collaboration
- Assembling project team
- Involvement of gardeners
- Writing down garden history
- Meetings and conversations with gardeners
- Clarifying the need for gardening opportunities
- Communication with groups involved developing the VIII Fortress
- Collection of existing information
- Identification of challenges
- Clarifying and specifying goals
- Coordination of interests
- First measurements of gardens
- Creating a list of existing gardeners
- Idea creation
- First preliminary layout
- Preliminary process plan
- Layout and process plan presentations

- Year 2019 process plan development
- Year 2019 cleaning process planning and discussions
- Continue adjustments to existing gardeners list and measure individual plots
- Workshop: Plot sizes
- Research: Plot sizes
- Workshop: Garden rules
- Research: Garden rules
- DAROM 2019 planning and plan confirmation
- Garden rules and plot sizes confirmation meeting
- 6th of April – Meeting
- DAROM 2019
- Project: Educational garden bed
- Gardening
- 2019 year analysis

- Plan and process creation based on year 2019 analysis
- Preparation for taking in of new members
- Planning of the zones 2 and 3 with old/new gardeners
- Expansion of educational program
- Garden excursions
- Concentration on cleaning and shaping sloped edges
- Fixing staircases
- Analysis of the ramp idea
- Creative workshops focusing on public space designs
- Detailed planning of spaces A, B and C
- Water system analysis
- 2020 year analysis

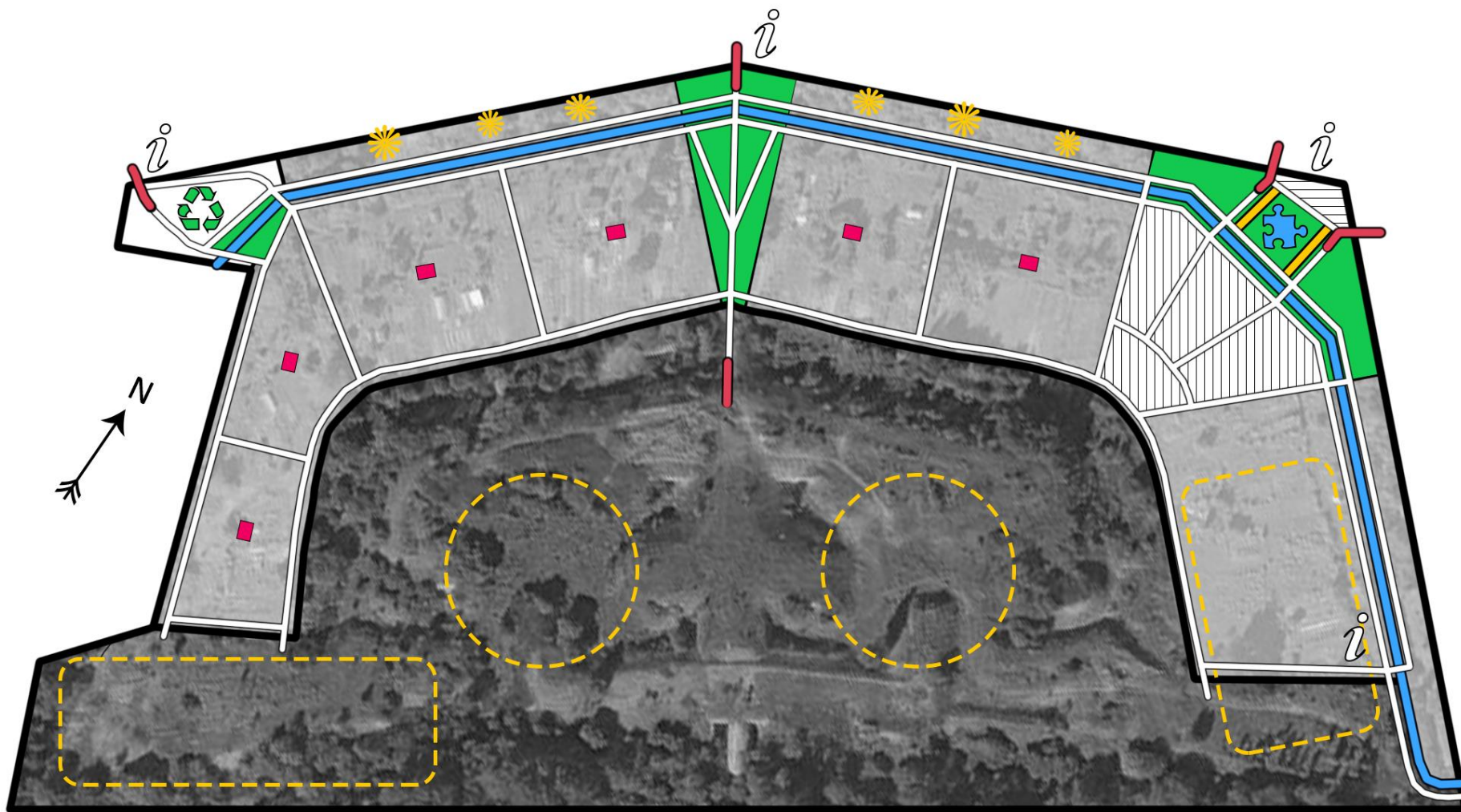
- Plan and process creation based on year 2020 analysis
- Support for gardeners
- Publicity of the project
- Expanding educational program to zone 4
- Public garden creation in zone 5
- Maintenance of the territory
- Creating public spaces and implementing necessary adjustments
- Planting flowers and creating bee heaven
- Bee keeping project implementation
- Cultural events
- 3 year project analysis
- Preparation and planning for year 2022

- Continue all the successful activities from previous years
- Project representation year
- Marketing of the project and introduction to wider society
- Participatory events
- Intensive educational program
- Focus on social entrepreneurship
- Conference on urban gardening
- November – reflections with garden community on the effects of intensive cultural activity and events on the quality of the environment
- Preparing and planning for the new project period where big attention will be given to continuously support the activities in the garden and equip the community to establish successful social entrepreneurship practices





# THE VISION OF SILAINIAI GARDENS



- |               |                      |                     |                         |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| WALKING PATHS | INFORMATION POINTS   | BEE KEEPING         | RECREATIONAL ZONE       |
| STAIRS        | CORES OF GARDENS (1) | RECYCLING POINT (2) | SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP |
| SLIDES        | FAMILY ZONE          | EVENT ZONES         | EDUCATIONAL ZONE        |
| WATER CANAL   |                      |                     |                         |

(1) - In every garden zone there will be boxes to safely store tools and gardening equipment. These areas should also provide basic shelter from sun and rain.

(2) - Here we will encourage to bring broken or spare gardening equipment and materials to promote sustainability. Recycling point will be routinely cleaned and we will aim to bring all materials and tools back to effective use. Upcycling will be highly encouraged.

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