**Proposal for the Revitalization of Riverside Park: A Community Garden and Playful Learning Space**

**To:** Bethany Economic Development Authority (BEDA)

**From:** Barefoot Garden Hippie

**Date:** January 14, 2025

**Subject:** Transforming Riverside Park: A Proposal for a Vibrant Community Garden and Play Space

**Introduction**

Barefoot Garden Hippie proposes a revitalization project for Riverside Park in Bethany, Oklahoma, centered on the creation of a dynamic and sustainable community garden integrated with a nature-inspired play space. We envision a space where children and adults can connect with nature, learn valuable skills, grow fresh food, and cultivate a stronger sense of community. This project aligns with BEDA's goals of enhancing community spaces, promoting sustainability, and fostering a sense of place, with a particular focus on creating a family-friendly environment.

**Project Overview**

Our vision for Riverside Park includes:

* **Intergenerational Community Garden:**
  + A variety of plot sizes to accommodate individual and family gardeners, fostering a sense of ownership and community within the park.
  + Dedicated children's garden area with raised beds and interactive elements designed for young learners.
  + Demonstration gardens showcasing sustainable gardening techniques, including raised beds, water-wise landscaping, pollinator gardens, and accessible gardening designs.
* **Nature-Based Play Space:**
  + Update and enhance existing playground equipment with natural elements like logs, boulders, and sand.
  + Create a nature play area with features like a willow tunnel, a mud kitchen, and a sensory garden to encourage exploration and creativity.
  + Integrate play elements within the garden, such as a bean teepee or a sunflower house, to create a fun and engaging learning environment.
* **Educational Programs:**
  + Workshops, classes, and hands-on learning opportunities for all ages, covering topics such as organic gardening, composting, seed saving, and native plant propagation.
  + Special programs designed for children and families, focusing on nature exploration, healthy eating, and environmental stewardship.
* **Gathering Spaces and Amenities:**
  + Create welcoming spaces with benches, picnic tables, and shade structures to encourage community interaction and relaxation.
* **Greenhouse (Optional):**
  + A greenhouse structure to extend the growing season and provide space for starting seeds, propagating plants, and conducting educational workshops.
* **Food Forest or Edible Landscaping:**
  + Incorporate fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, and edible perennials into the park's landscape, providing food and educational opportunities.
* **Art and Nature Integration:**
  + Collaborate with local artists to create murals, sculptures, or interactive installations that celebrate nature and community.

**Benefits for Riverside Park and Bethany**

This revitalization project will bring numerous benefits to Riverside Park and the Bethany community:

* **Increased Park Usage:** Transforming an underutilized space into a vibrant and attractive destination for families and residents of all ages.
* **Intergenerational Connection:** Creating a space where people of all ages can interact, learn, and play together, fostering a stronger sense of community.
* **Educational Value:** Providing hands-on learning experiences about gardening, sustainability, and environmental stewardship for both children and adults.
* **Improved Aesthetics:** Enhancing the beauty and functionality of the park, creating a more welcoming and inviting space.
* **Environmental Benefits:** Promoting biodiversity, improving soil health, and conserving water through sustainable gardening practices.
* **Economic Impact:** Potentially attracting new residents and businesses to Bethany and supporting local businesses through partnerships and increased park activity.

**Sustainability Focus**

The Riverside Park Community Garden and Play Space will be a model of sustainability, showcasing best practices and inspiring residents to adopt environmentally friendly gardening methods at home. We will emphasize:

* **Organic Practices:** Avoidance of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, promoting healthy soil and ecosystems.
* **Water Conservation:** Utilizing efficient irrigation techniques, rainwater harvesting systems, and drought-tolerant plants to minimize water usage.
* **Composting:** Reducing waste and enriching the soil by composting garden and household organic materials.
* **Biodiversity:** Planting a variety of species to attract pollinators, beneficial insects, and wildlife, creating a balanced and resilient ecosystem.

**Community Partnerships**

We are actively seeking partnerships with local businesses and organizations to support the garden's development and sustainability. We are in conversations with:

* **Westlake Ace Hardware:** For potential sponsorship of tools, equipment, and gardening supplies.
* **The Produce Gal:** To collaborate on workshops, events, and potentially source produce from the garden for their farmers market.
* **Minick Materials:** For donation of soil, compost, and other landscaping materials.
* **Eco-X Pest Management:** For potential sponsorship of organic pest control solutions and expertise.

**Call to Action**

We are requesting the Bethany Economic Development Authority's endorsement and support for the revitalization of Riverside Park through this community garden and play space initiative. Your partnership will be invaluable in helping us secure funding, navigate any regulatory hurdles, and engage the community in this transformative project.

We are confident that this revitalized park will become a source of pride for Bethany and a shining example of how we can create a more sustainable, beautiful, and connected community.

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**Sincerely,**

Stephen and Sabrina Kumor

Barefoot Garden Hippie

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