

## **Prepared Statement Introducing the Community Gardens of Morrisville, PA. (06/11/14)**

Thank you for allowing me the time to present to you this Proposal for establishing a Community Garden in Morrisville. After my presentation I will provide Council with a document that adds more details and background to support this proposal. Please anticipate the delivery of a supplemental document containing information that was not available in time for this meeting. If you have questions after this meeting you can forward them to me directly via email. My email address is in the document you will receive.

To avoid misperceptions:

This is NOT a proposal to build a "community farm."

This IS a proposal to create a "**Botanical Garden**" where food is also grown.

This is a **Low Cost** venture that offers large, very real benefits to our community. Additionally, while competing proposals may offer opportunities to specific groups, this proposal offers opportunities for everyone - our families, friends, neighbors - everyone will benefit.

For those of you who are not familiar with the benefits of community gardens, I offer this brief list for you to consider:

Community Gardens :

- Improve people's quality of life by providing a catalyst for neighborhood pride and development and instill a sense of "shared community."
- They Stimulate lasting social interactions among residents whether they are active garden members or simply neighbors exploring and enjoying a shared space filled with beauty and verdant life.
- They can encourage a renewal of self-reliance and independence among residents who may now find private gardening too much of a challenge or for those who cannot secure permission from landlords as well as for many others who recognize the need to preserve wooded or deeply shaded land that makes up their own property.
- Community Gardens beautify neighborhoods, reduce crime and increase property values.

## **Prepared Statement Introducing the Community Gardens of Morrisville, PA. (06/11/14)**

- Unique gardens, such as this, attract tourists and other visitors who can be encouraged to spend money at our local businesses.
- Produce fresh and nutritious foods grown locally and create opportunities to provide fresh food assistance to our neighbors in need.
- Community Gardens reduce family food budgets.
- They conserve resources and minimize pollution associated with the global transport of produce.
- They create opportunities for both active and passive recreation. They promote exercise, therapeutic meditation and reflection and afford a personal familiarity with nature that has lasting affects on families, individuals, seniors and youths.
- A garden such as this can be put in place quickly (even in mid season), and is scalable, meaning it can be phased-in, allowing the maximization of safe land usage while returning many benefits to the community quickly and inexpensively.

For our Community Garden we encourage you to support its creation at the location of the defunct pool in Williamson Park. This is a particularly special location, and, for the following reasons, I feel it is the best location. The swimming pool area of Williamson Park offers:

- High Visibility. This promotes public awareness, public involvement and reciprocal local business support. Such visibility also serves as a wonderful promotional vehicle for the Borough as an community that is actively and positively engaged with its residents.
- It's Central Location is easily accessible by the public and has ample parking as well as adequate access for deliveries by vehicle.
- This location is adjacent to several Paths with high rates of daily pedestrian traffic. This can be leveraged to benefit local businesses and for fundraising opportunities as well as expanding ongoing recreational and educational uses.
- Utility services for water and electricity currently exist.
- The area is fenced and while some repair is needed, this will greatly discourage vandalism and theft as well as keep deer out of the garden.
- Storage facilities already exist for tools, equipment and supplies. Even those buildings

## Prepared Statement Introducing the Community Gardens of Morrisville, PA. (06/11/14)

that require remediation for safety concerns offer a valuable foundation to be built upon.

- This park area is easily and readily patrolled by our Borough's police force and is very visible from the road and nearby residences - all of which can be counted on to discourage vandalism and theft.
- This area offers an opportunity for carefully planned and quickly executed beautification. For several years this pool has been non-operational and a very visible eyesore. A Community Garden can fix that quickly by offering both passive and active recreational opportunities, restoring usefulness to this space and making it a living testament of Morrisville's Community Pride!

I want to take this moment to briefly discuss a few concepts of the agricultural design methodology known as **Permaculture**. Permaculture contains a broad set of methods and practices that should be used in the Community Garden of Morrisville whenever possible. One of the **key guiding principles** of Permaculture is to make the most use out of the existing environment in an effort to cause the least disturbance to existing features. This principle encourages us to look for ways to take advantage of both things and conditions currently there - and minimizes unnecessary costs and efforts.

Additionally, the Community Garden of Morrisville will strictly practice **Organic Gardening** methods. The idea is to make better use of the land - not to poison it. Furthermore, because the garden is open to the public and very near to where our children play, we want to ensure that nobody is exposed to any harmful chemicals.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Organic Fertilization methods will be used when preparing garden beds for planting. Using organic amendments and proper composting methods will promote a healthy micro-ecology providing for a rich and nutritionally well balanced medium to grow fruits and vegetables and the other botanicals. Plants grown using such methods are less likely to succumb to many plant diseases because they are growing as a part of a supportive eco-system where the earth itself is alive with beneficial bacteria, fungi and animals.

**Specific Site Remediation Requirements.**

The first step in making use of this space is the requirement that the large pool's bottom be broken up - without damaging the surrounding cement decking - and then filled in with clean fill. It is important that the bottom of the pool be broken so that water can drain into the earth below. If the pool is filled with dirt and the bottom is not completely broken, then this area will quickly become a stagnant swamp - potentially posing a greater hazard than it does in its current state.

The cement deck that surrounds the pool should be preserved. Doing so will greatly aid access to the garden for people who are faced with mobility challenges. The deck is solid, level and provides wide pathways for wheelchairs and walking aids. This area will also be a useful space for groups attending classes, workshops or fundraising soirées.

The Wading Pool should be preserved. This existing feature has been incorporated into the garden design as well.

I understand that there are other safety concerns regarding the existing buildings so I hope that a comprehensive assessment of these will be released to the public soon so that these too can be considered.

**Features of the design. \*\*\*Show Art Design Poster\*\*\*\***

**Ornamental and Flowering Plants** will be distributed throughout the Community Garden to attract pollinators and to provide us all with attractive vegetation to enjoy. These ornamentals will mostly consist of plants that are native to our region and will be selected under the guidance of our Master Gardner partners who are also residents of Morrisville. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> I have already received several offers from Morrisville residents eager to donate flowering native plants from their home gardens.

## **Prepared Statement Introducing the Community Gardens of Morrisville, PA. (06/11/14)**

Located on the inner perimeter of the pool will be the **ADA-Compliant Raised Garden Beds and Teaching Beds**. These beds can be built to accommodate a variety of needs.<sup>3 4</sup>

**Standard Raised Garden Beds** will be distributed in the grassy field which will facilitate drainage and make good use of the available space and sunlight. This area will easily accommodate between 40 and 50 beds while allowing for adequate space to work and move supplies between beds.

The addition of **Park Benches and Picnic Tables** will allow for passive recreation throughout the Community Garden. These areas are intended to be open to the public so that the garden can be enjoyed by everyone.

**Rain Water Collection Stations**, will allow gardeners to irrigate their beds while minimizing the need for metered water. Two watering stations are proposed.<sup>5</sup>

**An Experimental Small-Container Garden** will be located in the far north-east corner of the garden. These plants can be held and nurtured there and made available for fundraising purposes.

A **Lawn and Leaf Compost Station** will be added as a collection point for any weed-plant

---

<sup>3</sup> These beds are typically higher, and potentially narrower, than standard beds to facilitate access to those with limited reach. Elevated beds can also be installed so that wheelchairs can be parked under a bed allowing a person to get very close to their garden. Several designs that meet a variety of specific needs are available online and it is possible that these could be built in partnership with the aid and supervision of teachers and students from the Bucks County Technical High School.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the BCTHS: I have been invited to return to the school in September to discuss the needs of our garden with teachers in the building and horticultural trades. Teachers and Administrators have expressed an encouraging willingness to form a partnership.

<sup>5</sup> Clean rain water can be collected from the existing breezeway structure located on the south end of the garden and will primarily service the ADA garden beds.

A second rain water collection station consisting of a small corrugated plastic roof covering a wooden post structure (a structure without walls) will be constructed on the large cement pad near the north-east corner of the park. This station will primarily service the standard garden beds.

This small structure will also provide some shaded and dry space under which gardeners can work at a small table. A dedicated work table space such as this is highly recommended in order to keep picnic tables and benches clean and free to be used by the public.

## **Prepared Statement Introducing the Community Gardens of Morrisville, PA. (06/11/14)**

materials removed from the Community Garden, as well as leaves from adjacent trees and clippings collected from early spring grass cutting.<sup>6</sup>

A **Water Garden** feature will be added to the Community Garden in the location of the wading pool. It can be lined and fitted with a solar powered filter and pump to keep the water clean, oxygenated and cool. Water Gardens are always a welcome highlight in any garden and the location of this pool, under the shade of nearby trees, will be a popular place for guests to relax with the soothing sounds of gently splashing water.<sup>7</sup>

**Pathways** will encourage visitors to explore all of the features of interest throughout the Community Garden. Along these paths, vegetables, bushes, shrubs, flowers and trees will all be identified using easy to read signs and labels<sup>8</sup>.

A few **other features** not specified in the drawings include a **notice board** for gardeners and visitors, a set of **shared garden tools** and movable **cold frames**.

A **website and email list** will be created so that we can share our Community Garden with the rest of the world and provide notice for group work days, fundraising events and educational opportunities for our children and workshops for interested gardeners in the area.

Thank you again for your time. I hope you will consider carefully the content of the proposal document and keep in mind the very positive impact that a garden such as this will have on our residents, our community, our local businesses and our environment.

---

6 The composting of food materials will generally be discouraged unless and until we can be certain that the composting practices put in place are able to break down those materials quickly and efficiently without producing unwanted smells or attracting pests. There are certain closed composting systems that are available that will be considered for purchase in the future as funding becomes available for them. Until that time, we will rely on the expert advice from the Penn State Agricultural Extension and guidance from certified local Master Gardeners and other practiced experts who have agreed to join us as members or consultants and assist us in educational outreach endeavors.

7 The American white water lily, spatterdock, common arrowhead, pickerelweed, sweetflag grass, water smartweed and blue flag iris are all beautiful and hardy shallow pond and bank plants that are native to our area and offer a variety colorful flowers.

8 Labels will include digitized QR codes that will link to detailed online references indexed on the Garden's website. These references may include voice recorded descriptions for visually impaired visitors and signage should include braille. The longer range goal would include translations to multiple languages for both written and spoken word.