

By Debra Knight

PIECE BY PEACE COMMUNITY GARDEN PROPOSAL

Prepared For :
NINE RED Presents... (CIC)

"With a culture of mistrust,
how do we create
community? How do we
find common ground?
Common ground."
Paicia Monley,

OUR COMMON SPACE

Since signing the agreement with LBC in November 2021, and in line with NINE RED Presents...(CIC)'s commitment to help deliver **"Our Shared Vision for Luton"**

"Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty" - Luton's Strategic Vision for 2020-2040.

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Helen Nellis formally launched The Piece by Peace Community Garden and Hub on June 26th 2022, since then the Theatre Garden has:-

- 1.Beautified the Landscape;
- 2.Made Fresh Home-grown Produce Accessible;
- 3.Promoted Healthier Lifestyles;
- 4.Helped Clean Up the Environment;
- 5.Helped Build Stronger Communities;
- 6.Provided Opportunities for Learning;
7. Helped Relieve Stress and Increasing Wellness.



"The true meaning of life
is to plant trees, under
whose shade you do not
expect to sit."
- Nelson Henderson

Piece by Peace

OUR COMMON SENSE

The Piece by Peace Community Garden can mitigate some problems plaguing urban areas like those surrounding Legrave Park.

The Theatre Garden @ Legrave Park has been a beneficial addition to the communities surrounding Legrave Park by increasing the availability of nutritious foods, strengthening community ties, and creating a more sustainable system. Our garden can help reduce negative environmental impacts by promoting sustainable agriculture. Urban agriculture, such as the Theatre Garden, benefits humans, plants, and animals because it creates habitats and improves the ecology of the area.



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Our community garden is an integral part of economy sharing and allows numerous people to benefit from an asset such as the land. These benefits are not limited to just the gardeners but to the community generally.

Our garden has created a sense of community among residents who are increasingly disconnected from each other and created opportunities to provide healthy options in communities that are often food scarce.

MEETING THE VISION

HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE

The people working in the garden benefit from exercise and sunshine, as well as the therapeutic benefits of working in a garden.

Weeding a garden is particularly effective in stress relief and provides mental health benefits to participants.

Our garden contributes to a healthy lifestyle by providing fresh, safe, and affordable herbs, fruits, and vegetables.

People becoming more active helps improve overall physical health. Increasing wellness and helping to reduce stress.

The Theatre Garden provides ample social opportunities that build a sense of community and belonging. Urban gardening gives all people a chance to enjoy the fresh air and healthy outdoor exercise; whilst also providing a peaceful retreat from the noise and bustle of an urban neighbourhood, easing stress for residents.

Studies have demonstrated that people consume more fresh fruits and vegetables when there is a community garden in a neighbourhood. Our community garden gives people an opportunity to learn and share knowledge on gardening, nature, and cooking.

The garden has created a safe and beautiful place to gather for humans and beneficial plants, insects, and animals.



STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Social ties are essential to the well-being of people in a community since they can bring positive health effects and community involvement. Our Community Garden allows for creating social ties and building a greater feeling of community. These connections help reduce crime, empower residents, and allow them to feel safe in their neighbourhoods.

The Piece by Peace garden brings people together and may reduce crime rates in the neighbourhood by increasing visibility and engaging citizens in positive initiatives. Sharing a community garden gives people a chance to connect with their neighbours. Gardeners also feel more personally invested in the places where they live, gaining a sense of ownership and community spirit.

Also, because they get people out of their houses, where they can keep an eye on the street, community gardens can help reduce crime in the surrounding area.

Community gardens offer unique opportunities to establish relationships within and across physical and social barriers, including:

- Inter-generational exposure to cultural traditions
- Cultural exchange with other gardeners
- Access to non-English speaking communities

A recent study found that compared to residents living near barren areas, those closer to common green spaces are more likely to use them and, as a result, more likely to interact with neighbours.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Community gardens improve the availability of fresh and high-quality foods, which can help cut down on food costs and increase food security for those who need it the most.

Studies have shown that those who cultivate their own food tend to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables and can improve their eating practices. Finally, gardening boosts physical activity, while also improving your mental health and relaxation.

RELIEVING STRESS AND INCREASING WELLNESS:

Modern life is stressful. Most people race from one activity or item on their to-do list to the next without reflecting on why they are doing what they are doing. Gardening is an invitation to slow down, connect with nature, and foster relationships with like-minded individuals.

It creates an opportunity for people to think about all of the other items on their to-do list and decide which ones are really important and meaningful. Accordingly, a community garden is a place that helps people to relieve stress and increase their overall sense of wellness.

PRESERVES GREEN SPACE:

Maintaining and developing garden space is cheaper than other options. This is partly because gardens aren't as big and also because the majority of the cost comes from labour. Gardens for community use are an opportunity to escape the bustle and noise of urban areas, transforming empty space into a lively, green heart of a community.

The plants naturally provide fresh air people breathe. While doing so they help to create clean air by eliminating pollutants from the air.

The plants also absorb rainwater, which means there's less runoff on the streets. This is a result that fewer pollutants get washed into streams, rivers, and lakes. Community gardeners also reduce waste overall. This is due to the fact that things like leaves and tree trimmings are able to be converted into powerful fertilizers.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are many educational opportunities in the community garden. Its been an excellent space for people to get to know and interact with others who may come from different social, cultural as well as religious backgrounds.

Furthermore, getting together in the garden is a good opportunity to discuss environmental issues and to lead a more healthy lifestyle.

The people share the knowledge they've gained on developing better and more powerful products and also gain knowledge about the business world and working in a team.

Gardening in a community has been a great opportunity to teach children about the source of their food and to gain a fundamental introduction to the environment, work abilities, and basic business principles. It is also a great way to educate adults too.

This Community garden has provided people with opportunities to connect with and understand neighbors with different backgrounds, which includes individuals of various age groups, races in addition to social strata.



ENVIRONMENT

Environmental benefits also include the increase of pollinator plants that can improve conditions for bees and other endangered pollinators.

Plants also reduce the overall temperature compared to paved spaces, so these gardens are especially beneficial in urban areas. The environment of a community is improved by having an element of natural beauty so that rather than empty lots in some neighborhoods, the space between buildings can be filled with flowers or even food.

MEET OUR TEAM

The community garden is developed and maintained by the Piece by Peace Managerial Committee that comprises of a number of well-established community organisations including:-



NINE RED Presents... (CIC)

Queens Award Winning

Community Interest Company

Ran by interdisciplinary artists that permanently or temporarily update spaces; and change people, places and spaces with intriguing, thought-provoking and intricate designs and art medicine.



Friends Of Leagrave Park

A community organisation.

A community group led by Martin Rogers, who want to make Leagrave Park thrive. A voluntary group formed of local residents that run regular litter picking, conservation and park improvement projects.



Ray's Health & Wellbeing

Holistic Therapies

Ray's Health and Wellbeing Association provides a variety of holistic health therapies. Including seated NO HANDS® Chair massage, Talk Therapy and Calicise with Ray Denny



Natures Way

Holistic Therapies

Natureway encourages and supports individuals to achieve holistic health and wellbeing, via education regarding healthy nutrition for mental and physical health.

MEET OUR NETWORK

The projects managerial committee were born in Luton or have lived in Luton for over 40 years; as such, we have become part of the fabric of Luton's Grassroots community. We immerse ourselves in the local community, attending meetings and functions held by various Trusts, Associations and community and voluntary groups within Luton and Bedfordshire.

In line with this, we have worked with: The University of Bedfordshire, Luton Culture, Luton Borough Council, The UKCCA, The Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership, The Emerald SARC, Senior & Carer's clubs, after school and Saturday school clubs, Lea Manor High School, Barnfield South Academy, diverse arts organisations, youth lead projects, Carnival arts projects, NHS community development workers, Local Authority staff, funders and trusts, Local schools, various local community and cultural groups, artists and individuals.

Working in this way has enabled us to create a network delivering co-creative and collaborative projects; while simultaneously building up a profile of the needs and wants of residents. This network and style of work enables us to recognise and meet community needs more effectively.

With the Sundon Park Piece by Piece Project we are working in partnership with Luton Borough Council and Sundon Park Residents, including the Local Counsellors, Friends of Leagrave Park, LBC Parks Dept, and local community groups, trades and individuals.

We are also, working in partnership with Dee Perkins, Chief Superintendent of Bedfordshire Police and Woman of Colour in Policing (WoCip) to deliver: A Womans' Listening Circle and A Narrative Psychology Multi-media performance project, working with women engaging with police-led projects.



OUR ACTIVITIES

DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE DID LAST SUMMER?

Many of our Workshops are run by Women of Colour or immigrant women and in so doing, feed into the vision of Luton as a town built on Fairness and Social Justice; as these services support and promote equality, diversity and social inclusion by providing services specific to these needs.

Additionally, our services meet the vision against health inequalities because Piece By Peace Community Hub and Garden helps improve health inequalities by supporting individuals with their mental and physical health; whilst teaching the benefits of wholesome, nutritious foods on fitness, wellness and good mental health.

The hub was created to provide community space offering services; the specific services detailed below directly respond to residents impacted by the two visions outlined above, provided in a therapeutic setting in addition to more general community activities.

Piece By Peace Community Hub and Garden project began in March 2022, starting with the construction of a theatre garden by residents and volunteers to host the Midsummer Jubilee festival on June 26th.

Our first week open to the public was May 8th to 13th, when we hosted activities and workshops supporting Mental Health for Mental Health Week. This included a series of practitioners offering Reiki, No Hands Massage, Tai Chi, Narrative Psychology and Talk Therapy. These practitioners then offered weekly sessions through the summer, ending on 30th September 2022.



ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

The Midsummer Jubilee festival in June saw almost 1000 residents attend during the day and was visited by many of Luton and Bedfordshire's VIP's. The festival hosted a Queens Green Canopy (QGC) tree planting ceremony with H.M Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Hellen Nellis and one of her deputies, Deborah Inskip, H. M Vice Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, Morcea Walker and the Mayor of Luton, where nine trees were planted with residents.

The festival ran from 2pm and spanned Leagrave Park, from the Sportsplaying Field across to Marsh House; there was entertainment and a 10m stage in the Theatre Garden, Cricket on the Sportsfield, Gaelic Football on the small field, a 25m bounce palace, stalls, performances, workshops, art displays and a history of the Commonwealth exhibition.

In July, we began a series of talking circles, beginning with the Women's Listening Circle with Chief Superintendent of Bedfordshire Police, Dee Perkins. This initial circle has led to NINE RED Presents... (CIC) working in partnership on several campaigns and projects with Bedfordshire Police, including a review of the Domestic Abuse Police Engagement policy; the launch in February 2023 of a police engagement campaign for women of colour victims of Domestic Abuse called "Don't Shut Up, Don't Put Up!"; the start of an Art Therapy performance piece project with Domestic Abuse Victims using Narrative Psychology to share their stories and drive change in the cultural approach to domestic violence amongst oppressed women; the inclusion of NRP on police scrutiny panels and the police making more referrals to grassroots organisations.



ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

This community hub has provided a host of community activities and workshops and is a meeting place for all. We have provided art, culture, well-being, advisory and signposting workshops and provided the services that residents would expect from their community hub and are continuing to respond to meet these needs.

Other activities include:-

- The Colours of Mourning (A Narrative Psychology Bereavement Circle) The circle helps residents Remember Life and includes a QGC memorial garden. there is a reason why the word "mourning" sounds like "morning"; its to signify a new dawn and anew beginning. The circle helps residents Remember Life. The memorial garden that accompanies the circle was developed by fate. Our Jubilee Festival included the planting of The Queens' Green Canopy trees. Some of these saplings were too small to be placed outside the fence of the Jubilee garden, so on June 23rd, my sister's birthday, I planted them in the wildflower garden section of the Jubilee garden. Given the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and these being QGC trees, this garden section is now rightly named the "Memorial Garden" section.
- Conservation and Gardening Circle - On December 6th 2022, we received a donation of 600 fruit and nut trees, plants and shrubs from The Conservation Volunteers. These plants will be used as part of the Morning Garden and Circle, but primarily as part of our Youth-Led Wildlife and Conservation project, which includes river monitoring, understanding ourselves as part of nature, and our impact on our surroundings.



ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

- Woman's Listening Circle with guest host – Launched by Chief Superintendent of Bedfordshire Police Dee Perkins, a regular guest host. The circle is designed to raise issues concerning women and girls (including Women of colour) with statutory agents and receive health and well-being advice from appropriate practitioners.
- Queendom – A circle to discuss issues affecting Women of Colour
 - Sexual racism - A specific form of racial prejudice enacted in the context of sex and romance;
 - Sexism related to Race - A specific form of sexism that is race-specific;
 - Racism related to Gender - A specific form of racial prejudice that is gender specific;
 - Sexist Racism - A specific form of racial and sexual prejudice that is hard to quantify
 - Sexism and Racism resulting in Mental Health Issues.
- The Other 33 – A circle to discuss issues affecting Caribbean descendants whose culture, traditions, language and history is omitted from the mainstream notion of “Caribbean” culture. Discussing the impact of having an island culture and history where upper British Middle Class values were enforced, leading to the challenge of being born and raised in England to parents and elders expecting their children to adhere even more so to those middle-class values, when mainstream society only permits one dominant Caribbean culture and fails to recognise the other 33 Caribbean Cultures across the other 33 Caribbean islands.

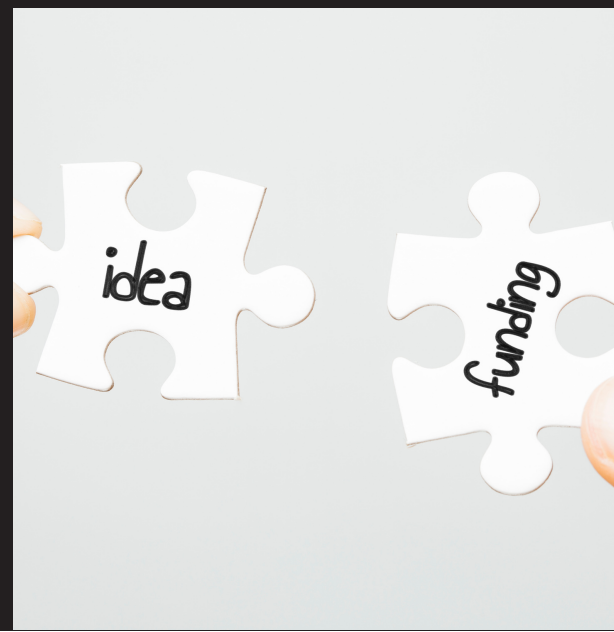


FUNDING & FUTURE

During the Financial Year October 2021 - September 2022 we received £18,250 in grant funding, contributed £27,375 from our own sources and received £110,975 in in-kind support from Tesco, Grosvenors Casino's and other local businesses, volunteer time and donations. All totaled there has been an investment in excess of £156,000. Enabling the creation and running of this Piece By Peace Community Hub and Garden.

The Piece by Peace Project is a 3-5 year programme designed to create site-specific, temporary public art that will enliven Leagrave Park and the surrounding area and create a community hub with community ran and led activities. This project is specifically designed to benefit the North of Luton, where very little happens in terms of Art, Culture, Heritage and Well-being.

A North Luton project that creates art and cultural experiences that can help improve health and well-being and can result in benefits that range from the physiological to the emotional. Piece by Peace provides space for local visual artists, sculptors, sound artists, performing artists, photographers, filmmakers, and others to exhibit in Leagrave Park, including pop-up art and performances.



FUNDING & FUTURE

Working in partnership with LBC, Parks. Dept., Cricket organisations, Football organisations, Friends of Leagrave Park and the local community. The intention is to build a fit-for-purpose, purpose built Community and Sports Centre on the site of the current pavilion, which will be community led.

The plan is to develop the community and use the garden to assist in generating the income to ensure that the community has the running costs and their share of building costs for the new integrated building.

Currently, it costs £13,050 per month to run the hub, garden and activities. As you can see from the figures outlined above, the majority of this cost is being met by the managerial committee, community volunteers and in-kind donations.

As the Piece By Peace Community Hub and Garden has already opened to the public and has been largely self-sustainable in running activities, there is no funding required at this stage.

Although moving forward there is a possibility of a combined application to grant making trusts from multiple organisations across a variety of disciplines for the funding for a Combined Community and Sports building.



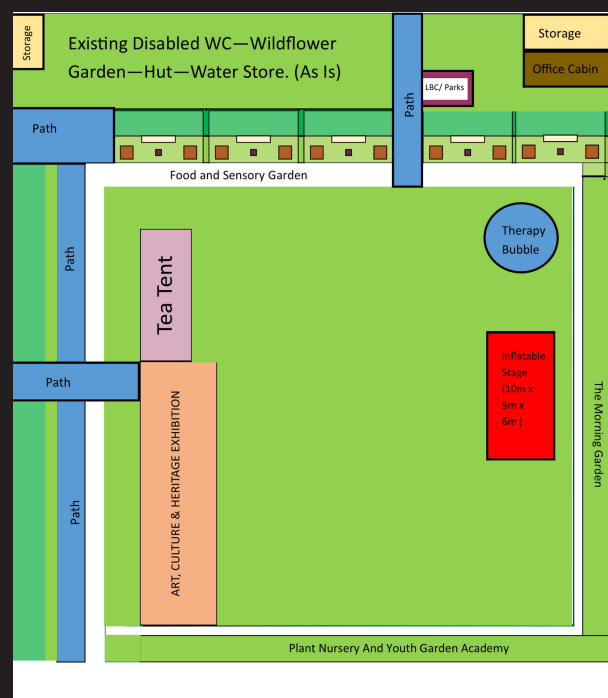
SITE & PHYSICAL PLANNING

The Theatre Garden – Taking inspiration from historic African nomadic tribes who lived naturally and in harmony with the land, leaving no permanent trace of their settlements. We are creating a temporary Theatre Garden in the former bowling green.

Creating a series of cultural gardens in portable raised beds; containing herbs, spices, fruit and vegetables from around the world that are indigenous to England.

Including cultural art pieces, water features and incense waterfalls

With an audience seating area, stage, exhibition and tea tent.



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GET IN TOUCH

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COMMUNITY
PROPOSAL

