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DATE: September 5, 2013

TO: Mike Geisel, Director of Public Services
Tom McCarthy, Parks & Recreation Director

COPY: Mike Herring, City Administrator

FROM: Libbey Tucker *Libbey*
Community Services & Economic Development Director

RE: Recommendation to Participate in BioDiverseCity-a program of the Missouri Botanical Garden

The Citizens Committee for the Environment (CCE) requests that the Parks & Recreation Committee approve the City's participation in a new initiative being offered by the Missouri Botanical Garden (MoBOT) called BioDiverseCity St. Louis. Quite simply, it is a plan to promote, protect and plan for biodiversity throughout the greater Metro area. Mr. Bob Ernst, a member of the CCE, attended a summit at MoBOT regarding this effort and brought forth the recommendation to the CCE that the City participate. The Committee unanimously voted to make this request of City Council.

Mr. Ernst and CCE Chairperson, Darcy Capstick have prepared a summary of the BiodiverseCity St. Louis project, as attached. Essentially, CCE feels that the City is already several steps ahead of most communities in this effort and could actually serve as a leader within this effort. Under the leadership of the Botanical Garden, participants are asked to help with several areas including public awareness, engagement, & education and action project among other initiatives.

The committee feels that Chesterfield is already a leader in this effort due to now over 22 years of celebrating Earth Day, being the first and only Certified Community Wildlife Habitat in the State of Missouri (in 2005), hosting several recycling opportunities and encouraging improvement in curb-side recycling, helping companies like Monsanto reach their certification goals with the Wildlife Habitat Council, and helping with the planting of several pollinator gardens in our parks and encouraging residents and businesses to do so as well. The Committee and the City already have a special relationship with the Butterfly House, a division of MoBOT, for these efforts as well.

There is no financial commitment to this program, only the time of the Committee and planning of future programs and educational outreach that will evolve. As the staff liaison to the CCE, I join them in recommending Council's approval of the City joining the BioDiverseCity St. Louis program.

August 19, 2014

Summary of the BiodiverseCity St. Louis Project

By CCE Members Bob Ernst & Darcy Capstick

BiodiverseCity St. Louis is a community initiative to promote, protect, and plan for biodiversity throughout the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area. On May 15, 2013, community stakeholders with a shared interest in urban biodiversity participated in a summit held at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The Summit celebrated the existing efforts and projects already underway across the St. Louis region to promote and protect biodiversity and also identified critical gaps and needs in the areas of biodiversity understanding, awareness, and willingness/incentives to act.

Summit participants urged the development and implementation of a regional biodiversity initiative that reaches across political boundaries. It is in that spirit that BiodiverseCity St. Louis will shape its priorities and programs.

Summit participants acknowledged that in addition to needing engaged people who want to get involved, help, and recruit others to do the same, the initiative will need an organizing body to initially convene, connect, facilitate, and propel the efforts forward. The Missouri Botanical Garden is committed to serving in that role.

BiodiverseCity St. Louis calls for everyone in our shared community — city governments, corporations, non-profit organizations, universities, schools, scientists, concerned citizens, homeowners, families, and community leaders — **to get informed, get involved, and take action.** To more formally shape and steer the initiative groups will be formed on the following fronts:

- Strategic planning, development, and leadership
- Public awareness, engagement, and education
- Research and data gathering
- Economic and policy incentives/opportunities
- Action projects

The Chesterfield Citizens Committee for the Environment is proposing that the City of Chesterfield officially become a participant of this effort. Other cities in the metropolitan area that have already committed to participating in the Program include:

Belleville, IL
Columbia, IL
O'Fallon, IL
Des Peres, MO
St. Louis, MO
St. Peters, MO

Following is more information about the effort and why we believe Chesterfield is already a leader in this area.

Chesterfield Is Already Ahead of Other Cities in the St. Louis Metro Area in Environmental Actions

In a world where the human species has touched and changed just about every place on the globe, in many instances we must now intervene to help restore balance and quality to the diversity of life. As human populations grow, we have an on-going obligation to manage forests and all natural areas responsibly. **We have since our first Tree Day, now Earth Day, been responsibly and continually providing for the quality reforestation of Chesterfield, calling on all families, businesses, and subdivision trustees; we give away native, understory trees/woody shrubs particularly supportive of our smaller native birds and pollinators.** It's the diversity of life forms in the tree canopy, on trunks, on branches/leaves and roots that so very much life exists and depends, which explains why we have always chosen native trees/woody shrubs for the reason of 'supporting the diversity of life.' Native trees/woody shrubs do the best job of holding the soils, generating oxygen, sequestering carbon dioxide, and, indeed, helping with fresh water systems.

Our CCE Logo speaks volumes about the butterfly, most beautiful of pollinators as well as the most sensitive to environmental factors, reminding us to help take care of our natural world (biodiversity). And, to further CCE's, and our City's, science-based conservation, we propelled the 1990s 'Grow Native!' effort to the forefront in our City's pursuit of our National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat Certification with quality education about 'native ecology,' that which embraces native flora and fauna and the inextricable link each has with the other. This was manifest with our smaller native birds and pollinator diversity, the 'front-and-back-end' of the 'delivery system' for the continuation of native habitats. This entails the 'whole' of healthier, systemic biodiversity.

In 2005, through the sustained efforts of the CCE, families, businesses and subdivision trustees, **the City was named a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat™ by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).** Chesterfield was the 9th certified Community Wildlife Habitat™ in the Nation, and remains the first and *only* in Missouri; so, the City was a pioneer in the St. Louis metropolitan area and far ahead of its local peers in terms of biodiversity, sustainability, and gardening for wildlife. The three-acre native tall-grass prairie at Governor Bates' home in Faust Park is an important illustration, the anchor project of that biodiversity effort. **Chesterfield is one of fewer than 75 communities across the United States to hold this National Certification.** We have suggested that the NWF and its 'child,' the Conservation Federation of Missouri, embrace this concept, too, as it would help to 'uniquely disperse' and encourage partnerships.

CCE uniquely continues to achieve '**post-certification goals**' of our City's NWF Certified Community Wildlife Habitat every year since first Certified in Spring 2005. What this means is for eight years families, businesses, subdivision trustees, schools, houses of worship, and city places have added their native habitat/sustainable gardening practices to Chesterfield's Certified Community Wildlife Habitat. Events and education materials also have contributed to this growth year-by-year, to more care being given to not just sustainability, but biodiversity and its partner, restoration ecology. More measurable native areas exist now than in Spring 2005, reaching into all sectors of our community, hence, 'unrolling' the natural world tapestry-of-biodiversity right in front of our eyes.

Several times, CCE has **helped the Pfizer/Monsanto Chesterfield campus get recertified** with the Wildlife Habitat Council in Washington, D.C. They have recognized CCE's abilities and metrics achieved in conserving biodiversity, quality native ecology.

Through the decades, the CCE has pursued **excellence in recycling**, as has been acknowledged by MORA, St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District, and St. Louis County – DOH – Waste Management Group more than once. By improving recycling opportunities and events for that which is collected for proper recycling/reuse, the CCE has created *A Responsible Contemporary Community Model* that other communities and organizations now use to engage all sectors of their communities to follow, known as the 5 R's.

The CCE continues to **work with and educate residents** about biodiversity, including sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, and composting. CCE creates handouts/flyers to promote this quality nature education. The CCE and the City recently hosted its 22nd Annual Earth Day Event to this end, and continues to work with its many green partners and Community Stewardship Team on grant projects through the Missouri Department of Conservation. It is easier to be attractive to Conservation Partners if we have the measurability and sustainability we do.

As a result of collaboration among Chesterfield Arts, Inc., the City's Beautification Committee, and the CCE, the **Chesterfield Signature Garden Program** was initiated for residents, subdivision associations or businesses showing how to use native plantings and sustainable gardening practices in landscapes. That effort continues bringing biodiversity to residential neighborhoods as well as commercial-retail areas throughout the City. Complementing that Program was The Wild Ones/Shaw Nature Reserve/Missouri Botanical Garden's The Landscape Challenge that the Rose Family won, demonstrating native flora can be landscaped and not look 'weedy.'

Another example of the City's leadership in biodiversity and environmentally responsible actions involves the CCE's **ongoing work with The Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House and Education Center/Missouri Botanical Garden and the National Wildlife Federation**. Our efforts regarding pollinator gardening for residents and property owners culminated in the butterfly gardens established in Eberwein Park, Central Park, and Dierberg Meditation Park as well as the Grow Native! Demonstration Garden (one of four in the State) CCE competitively-won and installed behind the Butterfly House at the entry driveway to Gov. Bates' home. The butterfly/pollinator gardens were designed and planted with the help of Scouts, community volunteers, and CCE members. The City's 25th Anniversary Signature Garden Model Helps Pollinators Flyer is fully endorsed by and being used by one of our original NWF Community Wildlife Habitat Team Partners, The Butterfly House, in quality conservation education.

The City is also on *The Leadership Edge* in terms of sustainability through **installation of solar thermal panels on City-owned facilities** (City Hall and CVAC bleachers) and **planting native vegetation** on public property. Native hardy sedum also provides the 'green roof' at our Amphitheater.

Our evolving Parks System is further on *The Leading Edge* of only three **nationally-accredited CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) park systems** in our State with the significant requirement of sustaining and improving environment/quality green space/habitat and native ecology for recertification every three years. Sustaining biodiversity is a 'critical path' to recertification in our Park System just as it is with sustaining quality life.

Why Chesterfield Should Participate in BiodiverseCity St. Louis

One of the purposes of the Project is for stakeholders to get informed, get involved, and take action. **The City has already taken a Leadership Role in all of those elements**, especially

through the coordinated efforts of the Chesterfield Citizens Committee for the Environment (CCE), Beautification Committee; Arts, Inc., Parks and Recreation Department/Citizens Advisory Committee, elected officials, and our community at large.

The BiodiverseCity St. Louis Project is an excellent vehicle the City can use to further its interests in providing exceptional “green” opportunities to further improve the environment for residents, property owners, businesses, and visitors. The Project has the potential of becoming **another “Partner” in the City’s ongoing efforts** in the conservation of native, natural and energy resources; habitat restoration, and sustainable gardening while expanding our ‘community’ horizon through providing opportunities to cooperate with adjacent cities, regional agencies like the Metropolitan Sewer District, Ameren, and a wide variety of other interested parties.

By agreeing to participate in BiodiverseCity St. Louis, the City of Chesterfield commits to participating in and supporting the community initiative with the intent of helping to promote, protect, and plan for urban biodiversity throughout the region. But, by becoming an active member and a Leader in BiodiverseCity St. Louis, Chesterfield will be able to strengthen its existing environmental programs and has the **potential of creating new and exciting relationships with other Project participants**, including adjacent local political jurisdictions, county and state agencies, businesses, educational institutions, environmental organizations, as well as involving more interested citizens-stakeholders due to the publicity that will be generated by the Missouri Botanical Garden’s support of Project efforts.

If the City elects not just simply to participate in the Project but to take an *Active Leadership Role*, aided by involvement of CCE members and others, we greatly increase the potential of **raising our visibility** in the Metro Area, country and world, as an exceptional, environmentally progressive and enlightened community that is both business and family-oriented with attractive, desirable neighborhoods, nationally-accredited parks and natural areas. **External validation by a globally-recognized, research-oriented Botanical Garden** to us would be as good as our City lending its award-winning regional, state and national conservation credibility to them. To the CCE, it seems like a win-win-win situation.

The few examples briefly reviewed demonstrate that our City is ‘well ahead of the curve’ in terms of bringing biodiversity, restoration ecology and responsible environmental actions home to its citizens and property owners, including residents and businesses and young people as well as adults. Our existing programs are oriented to science-based, effective environmental actions on private and public property. Of course, improving upon what all of us have accomplished with the conservation of native, natural and energy resources is what continually ‘drives’ CCE to try for a greater, sustainable, conservation good. Joining the BiodiverseCity St. Louis Project has the potential of helping those efforts immeasurably and is strongly recommended by the CCE.

Respectfully Submitted by the Citizens Committee for the Environment (CCE).