

# Growing Better and Getting Wetter

By  
splurge

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Yawn! Begging your pardon, but surely there is no other way to describe Piedmont, Oklahoma, than as a sleepy crossroads on the outskirts of town. The dusty, wind-swept high ground overlooking Oklahoma City could not possibly have much to offer, right?



Well, that depends upon what you are looking for. For example, if you want to live in the best town in Oklahoma for young families (according to consumer advocacy website NerdWallet), Piedmont is the place for you. If you like having all of the convenience of a big city without all the traffic and hassle, Piedmont is the place for you. If you want great schools, a terrific series of festivals and celebrations, a lovely little library and local police and fire service, Piedmont is the place for you. And yes, if you want cows for neighbors, Piedmont is the place for you.

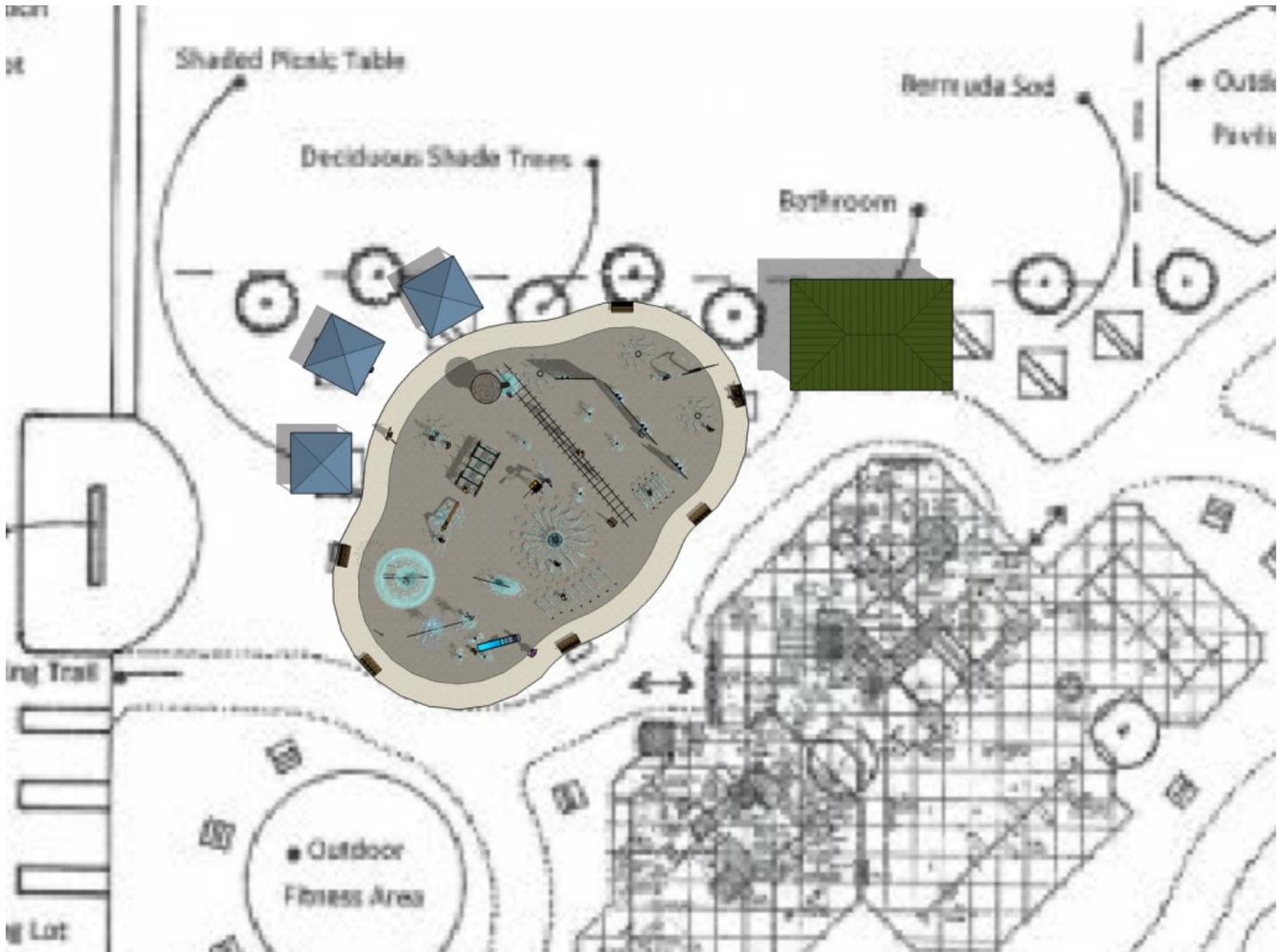
For a little town with so many things to offer, Piedmont somehow manages to fly under the metro radar. As neighboring communities push in from the east (Edmond, Deer Creek) and south (Yukon, Mustang), Piedmont's days as an afterthought may soon be over. And that's just fine with Rebecca Anderson, a Piedmont native who moved away before returning home to raise her family. Anderson is heading up the grassroots fundraising efforts for the Piedmont Park Project, a combination "splash pad" water playground, traditional playground and community amphitheater all rolled into one. "The best place in Oklahoma is just getting better," Anderson says.

Anderson's fundraising foray is fueling the park project that grew out of a 2008 community survey. "It's not an original idea," says Eric Anderson, Rebecca's husband and a co-coordinator of the project with Dr. Paul Francel. When surveyed, Piedmont residents listed a community swimming pool or splash pad at the top of their wish list. Other desires of the local denizens included a playground, bike or jogging path, and outdoor entertainment and exercise spaces. The splash pad is just the first phase of the park project. "We took the top seven ideas [from the survey] and put it all into this design," Eric says.



As the top choice in the survey, starting with the water park makes sense. The design is also sure to make a splash with local residents and visitors. “It’s going to be a go-to place,” explains Francel. “It will be in the top five splash pads in America.” The proposed park cleverly incorporates Piedmont and Oklahoma history into the design. “You literally walk through the history of Piedmont as you come in,” says Francel. Some of the anticipated custom components include a covered wagon, railroad train (with a caboose—remember those?), and a longhorn whose horns spout water when you pull its tail.

Ensuing phases of the park project will include a traditional playground, an ergonomic outdoor exercise area and an amphitheater. Ithaca, New York-based Leathers and Associates is planning the playground. The company has installed over 3,000 community-built playgrounds in all 50 states and 8 countries in the past 40-plus years. “They know what they’re doing,” Eric laughs.



When it’s built, the playground will be a community effort. “It will take 400 volunteers working three shifts over five or six days,” to install the playground, says Eric. “The goal is to bond the community through this project. Everybody can rally around it,” he continues. “This will change Piedmont’s growth for the next 10-15 years.”

Interest in the project is piquing. Earlier this year, the city ceded just under two acres of land for the park, and fundraising is heating up with the summer months. Corporate sponsorships from F&M Bank, Waste Corporation of America and Sundance Airport have led the way so far. “Corporate donor packets are printed and ready to go,” says Rebecca. Meanwhile, she has been busy drumming up residential support. Individual donors can support the project

by purchasing paver bricks, pickets, benches and even shade trees. Splash park and playground components are available for sponsorship as well. If you have ever dreamt of taking a water-spouting bull by the horns, this is your chance. Figuratively, at least.



After a solid week of fundraising, the nonprofit corporation formed to manage the project should be about 60 percent of the way to their goal of \$250,000. “I’m waiting for the latest report from the treasurer,” says Eric. “Once we get the community motivated, we can get it done,” he continues. Anyone interested in helping out financially or otherwise can visit the project’s website at [piedmontparkproject.weebly.com](http://piedmontparkproject.weebly.com) to find out how to pitch in.

There are plenty of small towns in Oklahoma, but only one is the best place for families with young children. And that place is about to get a little wetter—and a lot better.

BY Sean Becker

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Renderings provided by Piedmont Splash Park