



February 1, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the establishment of the Ed Reed Foundation's new safe space project, the REED HOUSE, within our community. As the Executive Director of the Upton Planning Committee and an active member of our community, I recognize the invaluable need for such a space, and I am fully behind the efforts to bring this project to fruition. Upton Planning Committee is thrilled to partner with the Ed Reed Foundation to bring the project to life and support them through both the process. As a previous recipient of the Community Catalyst Grant, we look forward to offering our guidance and helping to increase the capacity of the project.

The Ed Reed Foundation has been supporting our local community through their commitment to Booker T. Washington Middle School for over 21 years. They have built a foundation of trust in Upton and families have greatly benefited from their support. We have collaborated with the Ed Reed Foundation on multiple projects, including launching the Community Reinvestment Fund to support home renovations for local legacy homeowners in 2019. We have also partnered with them on their annual Holiday Helpers program fulfilling gift wish lists for local families, annual Thanksgiving Blessings program providing full holiday meals to 10,000 community members to enjoy in their own homes and their annual Fitness Day event at Booker T Washington Middle which provides wellness guidance and mentorship to local youth.

In today's world, where individuals from all walks of life face various challenges and adversities, especially the youth in our local community, having a safe and supportive environment is paramount. The REED HOUSE project not only addresses the physical safety of youth but also fosters emotional well-being and a sense of belonging.

Our community is making enormous strides to make Upton a highly desirable place to live, work, pray and play and the REED HOUSE will be an incredible asset helping youth to feel included and supported. The establishment of this safe space will serve as a beacon of hope and solidarity for those who may feel marginalized or vulnerable. It will provide a platform for individuals to seek support, guidance, and companionship without fear of judgment or discrimination.

Furthermore, I believe that this project aligns perfectly with our community's values of compassion, empathy, and social responsibility. Having ongoing programming during out-of-school time will be a vital part of the Upton Planning Committee's 2026 Master Plan. The opportunity for youth and other community members to engage in the food access/nutritional education classes, extended learning initiatives and wellness activities will be invaluable to Upton's families.

We are honored to support their ongoing efforts to engage the community through feedback and listening sessions and guide them through the development process.

I commend the dedicated individuals and organizations involved in spearheading this initiative. Their vision, passion, and commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive community are truly inspiring. I am confident that with the collective effort and support from our community, this project will thrive and make a significant positive impact. By supporting initiatives like this, we not only enrich the lives of individuals directly involved but also contribute to the overall betterment of our society.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if there is anything I can do to further support this endeavor. I am more than willing to lend my assistance in any way possible. Thank you for your tireless efforts in making our community a better place for all.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wanda Best". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wanda" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Best".

Wanda Best
Executive Director