



# Fort Worth Botanic Garden Strategic Plan Overview September 20, 2016





## Botanic Garden History

The Fort Worth Botanic Garden is the oldest botanic garden in Texas, the original 37.5 acres having been purchased in 1912. Park system plans, completed in 1930, called for the development of Rock Springs Park (now the Tinsley Rock Springs Garden) as well as rose gardens.

A creation of the Great Depression, the rose gardens were crafted by stonemasons, carpenters, and laborers working for \$2.00 a day, paid in meal tickets. These workers donated the first roses for the rose ramp. The rose gardens were dedicated in 1933, and in 1934 the area was officially named the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

Building on the dream of “an outdoor library of plants,” 1935 saw the establishment of the first garden center in Texas, complete with offices, a horticultural library, and a greenhouse.

The garden center building at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden (currently the Rock Springs building) was enlarged in 1950 to

accommodate new uses. The old greenhouse was converted to an assembly room, and a new greenhouse was constructed to the west. Select specimens from the garden’s begonia collection are now displayed there.

In 1973, the Japanese Garden opened after years of planning and construction to transform an abandoned gravel pit into a masterpiece.

As the Garden grew, a larger garden center was needed to house staff and hold events. In 1986 the Botanic Garden Center, with a conservatory and lecture hall, was built.

In 2009, a portion of the Garden was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Rose Garden, Rock Springs area, the Horseshoe, Vistas, and the original garden center and greenhouse are included in the designation.

In 2014, the Garden’s renowned begonia collection was accredited by the North American Plant Collection Consortium.





**Rose Garden:** Nestled in the heart of the Botanic Garden, this is a system of interconnected rose gardens and features. The colors, textures, and fragrances of roses have delighted visitors since 1934. Sadly, an incurable virus, rose rosette disease, infected a majority of the rose collection in 2015. To prevent spread of the disease, all roses were removed. Plans are in place to re-plant roses in combination with perennials and grasses, providing an attractive, diverse environment.



**The Gardens Restaurant:** A visitor favorite, serving delicious lunches and offering event catering.



**The Garden Center:** Offers space for meetings, conferences, and receptions in a uniquely beautiful setting.

## Specialty Garden Highlights

### *Gardens within the Garden*



**Japanese Garden:** 7.5 acres of koi pools, waterfalls, Japanese-inspired structures, manicured evergreen shrubs, and vibrant fall foliage.



**Fuller Garden:** Blending light, architecture, and generous splashes of botanical color, it depicts the stages of life's journey.



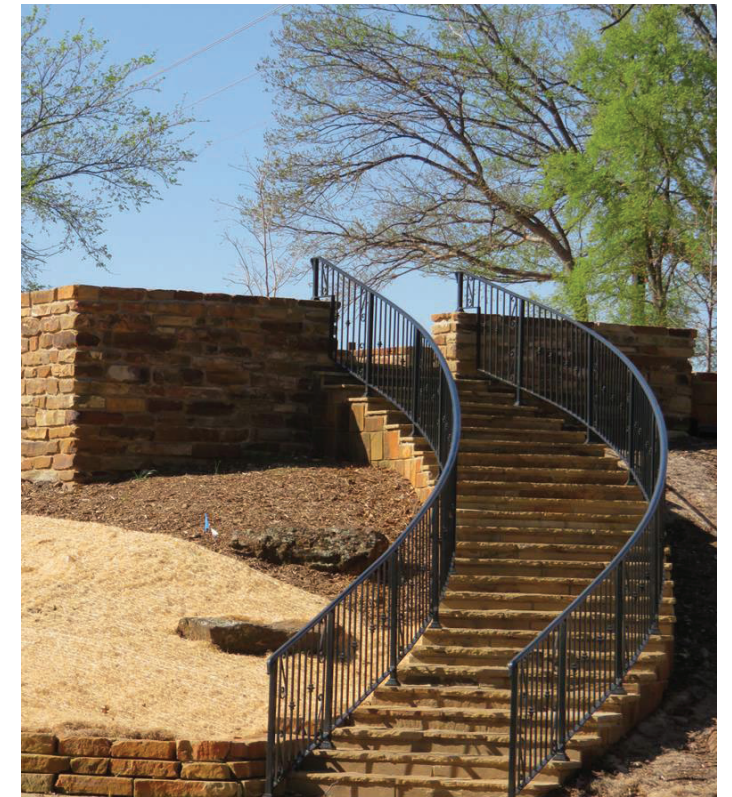


**Vistas and Woods:** These expansive areas offer respite and relaxation, and are home to much of the Garden's wildlife.

## Specialty Garden Highlights

*Gardens within the Garden (continued)*

**Victor and Cleoyne Tinsley Rock Springs Garden:** Showcasing the native plants of north central Texas, this is a restoration of the oldest part of the Botanic Garden.



**Texas Native Forest Boardwalk:** An interactive education on the importance of forests and the interdependence of plants and animals.





## Specialty Garden Highlights

### *Gardens within the Garden (continued)*



**Conservatory:** This 10,000 square foot greenhouse is home to the Garden's tropical plant collection. Visitors can see the plants that produce coffee, tropical fruits, and chocolate.



**Backyard Vegetable Garden and Compost Outpost:** Programs at these gardens give students hands-on experience in horticulture.



**Perennial Garden:** A sunken garden packed with flowering perennials and shade-loving beauties. Water features and sculpture complete the design.



**Water Conservation Garden:** Water-thrifty, colorful, wildlife-friendly plants abound in this low maintenance garden.



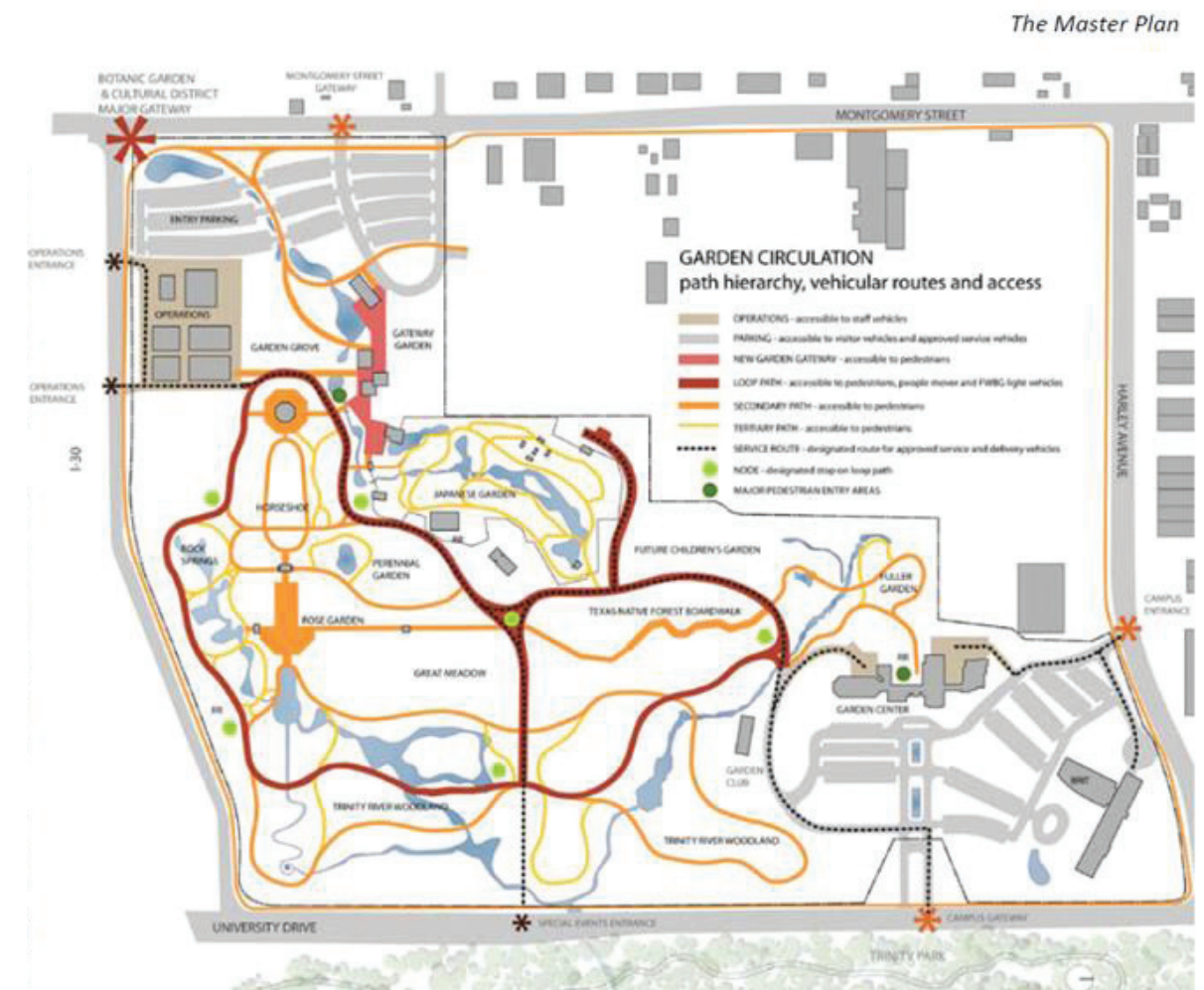
## Why was this study needed?

The Fort Worth Park and Recreation Department, in partnership with the Fort Worth Botanical Society and the Fort Worth Garden Club, determined that a comprehensive study of the Garden was needed to provide guidance on its long-term direction, financial support, organizational and operational needs, and its standing in the botanical garden community. A review of the 2010 master plan was also deemed to be beneficial.

EMD Consulting Group was selected to conduct the study, with Studio Outside as reviewer of the master plan. Numerous planning sessions were held with key stakeholders. Public input was actively encouraged at all stages of the process.

The study is made up of four parts:

- Strategic Plan—provides guidance for the Garden into the future. It states the mission and guiding principles, and the Garden's strategic advantage that sets it apart from other venues. Goals are set that are meant to transform aspects of the operation.
- Financial Analysis—with benchmarks comparing the Garden to its peer institutions. Capital and operational needs are assessed, and recommendations given for future financial stability.
- Organizational Analysis—evaluating the current structure, consideration of four options to improve efficiency with a recommendation of a preferred option.
- Master Plan Review—discussing adjustments to the plan in the context of the Garden's future.







Staff and volunteers collaborate in the care and management of many of the Garden's plant collections, such as begonias, orchids, and cacti.



## Mission Statement

*Engage, inform, and inspire with plants, landscapes, and nature.*

## Guiding Principles

*Create a culture of collaboration.*

*Create a culture of accountability.*

*Create a culture of creativity and innovation.*

*Reach our full potential as a botanic garden.*

*Be affordable to all our citizens.*

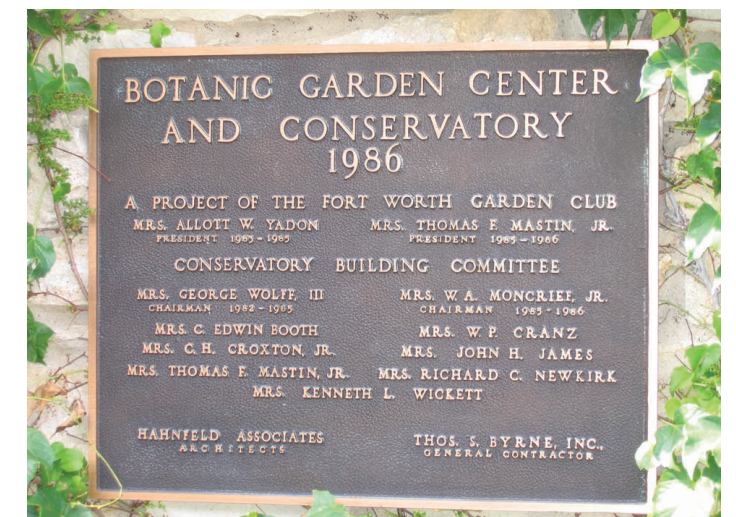


## Strategic Competitive Advantage

The Fort Worth Botanic Garden is a major public garden offering a unique combination of ornamental gardens, specialty plant collections, and naturalistic landscapes. These displays are complemented by education programs and cultural programs such as concerts. Research and conservation programs are being developed in collaboration with the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

## Financial Strategy

To build on the support of the City of Fort Worth, the strategy is to increase private support substantially through increased earned revenue and contributions and to build the endowment.





## Transformative Goals

1. Transform the guest experience.
2. Establish the Fort Worth Botanic Garden as a leader in public programs.
3. Implement key parts of the Master Plan.
4. Repair, renovate, and improve gardens, features and facilities.
5. Reorganize support groups and increase private support.

## How will Fort Worth residents and visitors to our city benefit?

- The Garden will reach its potential as a leading cultural institution in Fort Worth
- Enhanced standards of excellence in gardens and programs will be adopted
- Garden becomes a major education resource with new programs and collaborations
- Visitor experience dramatically improved with single entry point for orientation, information, volunteer and membership opportunities
- Garden becomes pedestrian friendly throughout and retail and food service moves to Garden Center main entrance
- Parking is analyzed and improved
- Infrastructure brought up to acceptable and safe standards, all features working and reopened
- New private philanthropic support to ensure the Garden remains a Fort Worth cultural treasure for future generations
- All employees treated equitably and with City standards
- All residents continue to have access while private support increases
- Tourism increases as marketing improves resulting in new revenues to Garden and City
- Garden reaches the standards of other Fort Worth leading cultural institutions with commensurate quality improvements, greater diversity of programs and features, and opportunities





## Botanic Garden within the Cultural District



The Garden's adjacency to numerous Cultural District museums, the Botanical Research Institute of Texas, the Will Rogers Complex, historic Trinity Park, the Fort Worth Zoo, Log Cabin Village, theaters, and nearby thriving urban developments, position it to be unique among its botanical garden peers. With a solid plan for future maintenance and development, the Fort Worth Botanic Garden could achieve world-class stature.



**The Botanic Garden:** Home to several works of art, including 'Solar Disc' by Charles Williams.



# Executive Summary

The strategic plan was developed to answer two compelling questions. Where are we going? How are we going to get there? All elements of the strategic plan were developed to increase the Garden's ability to serve the public by inspiring them with exceptional, world-class gardens and displays, developing education programs particularly for school kids, and providing unique experiences for residents and tourists.

Today, the Garden has two underlying weaknesses. First, there are serious financial limitations to the Garden's ability to meet on-going operating needs and fund a serious backlog of capital repairs. The Garden needs \$1.5 million in additional annual operating support and about \$15 million to bring the infrastructure up to reasonable standards. Second, the current organizational structure with three separate organizations - each with budgets, two with independent staffs, and with no integrated management, budgeting, or financial oversight prevents strategic budgeting, management and decision-making.

By addressing these two needs, Fort Worth can have a botanic garden worthy of being a member of the other great cultural amenities in Fort Worth that are vital to the quality of life and economic vitality of Fort Worth. The public will be served with diverse, high-quality gardens, exhibits, and programs lifting them from today's low standards of performance and care.

Candidly expressed, the quality of the botanic garden grounds and its programs are below reasonable standards for a city of Fort Worth's stature. For example, the grounds are maintained generally at a level that is not up to national botanic garden standards; the education programs, particularly those for children and schools, are inadequate at best. The infrastructure is seriously deteriorated from under-funding and attention, and the level of private support is one of the lowest in the country for a major garden.

Without addressing these needs, the Garden will languish and continue a decline in quality of gardens, services and programs. The public is not being presented with a quality institution. While some residents no doubt feel it is acceptable, the objective truth is that by any national benchmarking standard, the Garden is not living up to its potential to serve Fort Worth. The serious backlog of infrastructure needs will mean that safety could become compromised and some buildings and features may need to be closed. The longer the status quo is allowed to continue, the further behind the Garden will fall, resulting in much larger issues the City will have to address in the future.

Fort Worth's Botanic Garden is poised to become one of America's great gardens. With the strategic changes recommended in the Plan, the Botanic Garden can reach its potential to serve both residents and tourists for generations to come.



Missouri Botanic Garden



Fort Worth Botanic Garden





For additional information:

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