

2021-25

# INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

DENVER BOTANIC  
GARDENS





## MISSION

The mission of Denver Botanic Gardens is to connect people with plants, especially plants from the Rocky Mountain region and similar regions around the world, providing delight and enlightenment to everyone.

## VISION

To create gardens and experiences for all people.

## CORE VALUES

**Sustainability.** We are devoted to institutional, environmental and human sustainability.

**Diversity.** We champion inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility for all we encounter, and also support programmatic, ecological and plant diversity.

**Relevance.** We make connections with all people using a lens of inclusion, equity and responsiveness.

**Transformation.** We believe ever-evolving public gardens change the world and lead to positive transformations of human spirit and knowledge.



## DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHATFIELD MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

*Re-position Chatfield Farms for broader and more multi-faceted impact through funding and executing the Master Development Plan*

### Sustainability:

Establish Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms as a leader in regenerative farming and ecological restoration and at the center of the food-water nexus

- Refine best practices in regenerative farming to benefit onsite growing and to serve as a replicable model
- Expand the reach and impact of Community Supporting Agriculture including the addition of new sources and partners
- Implement soil health program to effectively raise soil organic matter content
- Establish an arboriculture program at Chatfield Farms to support new woody plant additions and properly maintain extensive riparian area
- Expand restoration of Deer Creek riparian corridor to upper reaches of creek to facilitate year-round flow and expand prairie restoration to the north and south of the main site

## Diversity:

With the institutional goal of growing member households to 50,000, establish new/expanded membership benefits with Chatfield/south metro orientation

- Expand educational programming focusing on differentiated offerings from York Street (agricultural, historical)
- Leverage Veterans Farm Program to improve and expand relationships and engagement with local veterans
- Expand private event offerings, leveraging new and improved event sites
- Expand public event offerings with increased capacity, new events
- Build partnerships with south metro organizations that work with the underserved

## Relevance:

Establish value proposition for Chatfield Farms with multiple audiences – public, academic and research institutions, corporate entities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Identify promotional/funding/programmatic partners for mutually beneficial collaborations centered around Chatfield Farms
- Strengthen south metro/southern Colorado sphere of influence for Chatfield Farms
- Use the new education building and farmland to become a centerpiece of regenerative agriculture training and demonstration, creating opportunities for experiential learning

## Transformation:

Create transformative impact on individuals and ecosystems near and far

- Expand opportunities for year-round engagement and impact in the design, construction and operation of new facilities laid out in the Master Development Plan
- Leverage and expand Urban Food Initiatives programs toward greater-impact opportunities through broad application of research, testing and demonstration
- Leverage and expand relationships with key partners (including CO Dept. of Agriculture, USDA, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado State University, University of Colorado Denver, local and regional farmers, United National Food & Agriculture Organization and others) to impact food systems in Colorado and in other semi-arid urban areas nationally and globally
- Use riparian and prairie restoration to teach a global audience about biodiversity
- Build new assets included in the Master Development Plan to support experiences for visitors, researchers, students and staff





## EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY (IDEA) PRINCIPLES

*Engage the public and lead cultural and scientific institutional peers in establishment of Denver Botanic Gardens specifically and public gardens generally as places for and of all people*

### Sustainability:

Ensure that environmental and social aspirations are aligned

- Implement Interpretive Master Plan to address priority topics and themes of human health and well-being, cultural connections, biodiversity and conservation
- Integrate IDEA principles throughout the organization, focusing especially on human resources and recruitment
- Work with indigenous representatives to better understand and implement traditional land management systems
- Establish and/or expand working relationships with targeted K-12 schools focused on sustainability/"green" education

## Diversity:

Address gaps in engagement by expanding/creating programs and initiatives

- Further leverage the Board IDEA Committee to impact internal and external audiences
- Expand Spanish-language marketing and consider additional languages as appropriate
- Develop bilingual (Spanish-English) onsite and traveling exhibitions and interpretive displays
- Create opportunities for multiple staff members to conduct outreach to organizations throughout the country to use the Gardens' experience to help other institutions
- Leverage ongoing and create new opportunities to engage, empower and connect through the Gardens' food access initiatives
- Offer educational programming that can be accessible regardless of economic status



## Relevance:

Create easier access to all Gardens experiences and programs

- Utilize individual board members and others to build meaningful connections with community groups
- Create more access/visibility to field work, international efforts, work with botanic gardens in other countries, sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship/climate change
- Leverage both York Street and Chatfield Farms public and private events as pipeline for new audiences
- Increase the reach and impact of public horticulture outreach throughout Colorado
- Establish new sites (managed by or with input from Denver Botanic Gardens) that are appropriate and viable
- Establish winter performing-arts series in Freyer – Newman Center and/or Mitchell Hall with diverse local artists

## Transformation:

Expand broad definition of who public gardens are "for"

- Improve coordination of institutional storytelling to link broad range of environmental and social impacts of the work we do and why it matters
- Develop financial assistance for low-income guests so that they are able to engage in a fuller array of activities
- Actively diversify volunteer base
- Expand resources and offerings for teachers and schools that support their work
- Empower the Helen Fowler Library as an accessible and trusted community resource and gateway to the Gardens
- Communicate the restorative power of the Gardens as a place of balance with oneself and nature to new audiences



## STRENGTHENING OF THE INSTITUTIONAL POSITIONING AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND SCIENCE

*Root Denver Botanic Gardens' identity at the intersection of art and science across all locations, leveraging both outdoor and indoor spaces and facilities as well as both living and non-living collections*

### Sustainability:

Establish national identity as “the” museum and “the” public garden innovating and adding value on global environmental issues

- Make science at the Gardens accessible and understood by a range of audiences (professional and lay) – through conservation, horticultural and agricultural research, initiatives and events/publications
- Develop robust and formal partnerships with local universities to establish systems to train and support students
- Nurture and provide opportunity for volunteers, adjunct researchers and visiting researchers; see them as assets and tap into their expertise
- Leverage Freyer – Newman Center’s LEED Gold certification to walk the walk/talk the talk in sustainable facility construction and management across the institution
  - HVAC / Lighting Controls
  - Custodial
  - Green Team
  - Water management
  - Preventive maintenance

## Diversity:

Re-shape definition of who works in our fields (public gardens, museums, agriculture, horticulture, science)

- Leveraging Urban Food Initiatives and current strengths in regenerative farming practices, expand Chatfield Farms' regenerative agriculture programs to new audiences through partnerships with universities, government agencies, NGOs, etc.
- Establish regenerative horticulture program based at York Street in partnership with universities, government agencies, NGOs, etc.
- Further expand reach and delivery of School of Botanical Art & Illustration (SBAI) programs through online delivery and contracted services

## Relevance:

Create a seamless relationship between art and science for Denver Botanic Gardens' audiences

- Build a documentary production team at the Gardens to release original material globally
- Invite relevant films and film festivals to maximize use of the Sturm Family Auditorium
- Develop and host biennial Science-Art symposium for scholars, students, professionals; conduct and support artist-scientist research in this cross-disciplinary space
- Offer annual multi-disciplinary artist residencies in response to the natural world (visual art, music, literature, poetry, dance)
- Develop and host regular Meet the Scientist programs in conjunction with exhibitions and interpretive displays
- Highlight connections across living and non-living collections
- Leverage Freyer – Newman Center's high standards in AV and technology as model for expanded and improved institutional onsite and remote engagement
- Enhance the demonstrations and resources within the Science Pyramid and the Freyer – Newman Center, linking to both indoor facilities through interpretation in the gardens

## Transformation:

Achieve American Alliance of Museums re-accreditation, incorporating measurable impacts

- Use reaccreditation for continued refinement and improvement of collections management.
- Conduct regular focus groups to facilitate two-way communication with communities, especially BIPOC groups and other traditionally under-represented individuals
- Invite international delegations to a variety of programs to position the Gardens as the center of steppe research, IDEA work and innovative use of technology





Denver Botanic Gardens will remain flexible and adaptive to respond to changing conditions and opportunities. The Gardens will continue to ensure institutional financial security, support the growth of the Endowment, and build pay equity and career opportunities for staff.

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