

Franklin Park Conservatory & Botanical Gardens: 2020 vision[©]

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Franklin Park Conservatory, 1777 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio, USA.

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is an architectural landmark, a work of art, a place of discovery. People stroll through the gardens to appreciate beauty and celebrate nature's diversity. They come to see butterflies and they learn about our world and themselves.

Since 1896, the Franklin Park Conservatory's Palm House has been a centerpiece of the 88-acre Franklin Park. In the 1990s, after hosting the AmeriFlora '92 exposition, legislative action conferred ownership of the Conservatory and 28 acres around it to a Board of Trustees.

In the years since, the Conservatory has dedicated itself to the following mission and vision:

- **MISSION:** inspired by horticulture, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens elevates quality of life and connects the community through educational, cultural and social experiences.
- **VISION:** to establish a new paradigm for the role, community contribution, and performance of a mission-driven organization.

The Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens opened to the public in 1993. In its first decade, it saw the debut of much of its signature programming in exhibitions, community outreach and education. In 1994, the first exhibition of *Blooms & Butterflies* was held, becoming an annual tradition now celebrating its 21st year. In 2000, the community-gardening program *Growing to Green* was established. Beginning with an exhibition in 2003-2004 and continuing through additional exhibitions in 2006-07 and 2009-10, the Conservatory amassed the largest collection of Chihuly artwork owned by any botanical garden in the world.

In 1999-2000, work began on Phase One of the Master Plan. When completed, the Conservatory was a place of pride for the community and set a new standard for public gardens and community education. Ground was broken in 2007 for several "Growth By Design" projects: additions to the Palm House, the Scotts Miracle-Gro Community Garden Campus, and the new production greenhouse. Master Plan Phase One was completed in August, 2011.

These new additions to the Conservatory allowed for further expansion in exhibitions, programming, and community outreach. Cutting-edge exhibitions included:

- Aurora Robson; *Sacrifice & Bliss* (2013).
- The award-winning Bruce Munro; *Light at Franklin Park Conservatory* (2013-14).
- Most recently David Rogers's *Big Bugs* and Samuel Jaffe; *Life on the Leaf Edge* (2015).

The Conservatory also established its horticulture-training program, Green Corps, in 2010 that prepares participants for careers in green, environmental, and agricultural industries. A neighborhood farmers' market was initiated in 2012. The Conservatory was also the host of the American Public Garden Association (APGA) Conference in 2012 as well as the Directors of Large Public Gardens Conference (DLG) in 2015.

As a result of these new facilities, programs and exhibitions, the Conservatory was able to grow earned revenue from projects from 48% in 2008 to 60% in 2014.

Energized by the completion of the first Master Plan, Conservatory leadership undertook a comprehensive review of the original Master Plan in 2012 and concluded that several projects needed to be revised, updated or removed, due to new priorities and the current economic climate. Master Plan 2.0 retains the key components of the original master

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plan, preserving historical structures, water features and trees, pastoral green space and passive recreation, as well as paths and playgrounds. It will offer visitors a transformational experience through world-class botanical gardens with an emphasis on children, families, and STEM education. It will also ensure the Conservatory's long-term sustainability and continued impact on economic development in Columbus.

Projects for Phase One of MP 2.0 are as follows:

- An 11,000 square-foot, 200-year-old Ohio barn, containing space for the Conservatory's community outreach and education programming and Conservatory events (completed October, 2015);
- An aesthetic and functional "refresh" of the Conservatory's Grand Atrium, including replacing the roof lining and updating 20-year-old design elements;
- A new entrance and lower lobby remodel;
- A dedicated butterfly biome;
- A children's discovery place connected to the butterfly biome;
- A children's garden;
- World class display horticulture, established in a defined Conservatory footprint. Exhibitions such as the current Fall Mum Display and upcoming 2016 Spring Bulb Show demonstrate the potential for the Conservatory, via this expanded horticulture experience, to make Franklin Park Conservatory a destination garden.