



# MITCHELL PARK HORTICULTURAL CONSERVATORY

Report: APGA's Symposium On Development & Membership

DOMES TASK FORCE

Jay Burseth, Milwaukee County Parks'  
Development Officer

Sandy Folaron, Horticultural Services Director

Jeremy Lucas, Milwaukee County Budget &  
Management Analyst

# BACKGROUND

The **American Public Gardens Association** is the leading professional organization for the field of public horticulture.

APGA serves public gardens and advances them as leaders, advocates, and innovators.



**American  
Public Gardens  
Association**

# BACKGROUND

Development & Membership Symposium is a biennial 3-day symposium concentrating on how botanical gardens and conservatories can:

- Grow their revenue through membership growth
- Build a major donor program
- Generate programmatic income
- Create corporate partnerships

Taking place in Dallas & Fort Worth, this year's Symposium included presentations on:

- Membership metrics
- Donor cultivation
- Volunteer engagement
- Fundraising leadership
- Corporate sponsorships

Along with opportunities to engage with presenters and attendees about our challenges and needs

2017 Development & Membership  
Symposium



February 15-17, 2017

*Hosted by the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden; Fort Worth Botanic Garden;  
and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)*

*Building Blocks: Growing Future Gifts*



# BRIEF TAKEAWAYS

Domes' situation is unlike any other that organizations attending Symposium have gone through:

- Few entities are ran by a department of a municipality
- Infrastructure issues never as severe
- Most gardens are built with growth in mind

Based on the initiatives and programming of similar entities, the Domes have a lot of potential for success in the future



# CURRENT LIMITATIONS

## Conservatory's mission is at plateau

- Lack of space is limiting:
  - Number of students that can use education facilities
  - Size of groups to rent space
  - Scope of events
  - Ability to host multiple groups without disrupting standard operations
  - Revenue capacity
- Not having physical room for growth has led to the Domes being at a standstill



# WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

## Expanding capacity for renting facility

- Dallas Arboretum's Rosine Hall:
  - Created with charitable donations
  - 5,000 sq. ft. exclusive space used for special events and meetings
  - Space rental is reliable source of revenue



# WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

## Expanding revenue-generating commodities

- Expanding gift shop and merchandise sales
- Adding café or restaurant
- Meeting rooms available to public



# WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

## Expanding space to expand programmatic ability

- More events = more engaged members of the public and more revenue
- Current room size limits group size & whether classes are able to use them
- Currently no space for some basic necessities





# WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

## Expanding availability for naming rights

- Facility is currently limited in how donors and members can be recognized
- Sections of flower beds with annual renewal
- Each room of the building
- Construction/renovations possible with the naming rights to contributor(s)



# WHAT SUCCESS COULD LOOK LIKE

## Growing Conservatory's membership

- The more that the conservatory has to offer, the more that can benefit members
  - Members-only events or sections (children's garden)
  - Special reservations for members
- Friends of the Domes are devoted to expanding membership



# QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

- How is the Conservatory a part of the bigger landscape of what is viable in Milwaukee?
- Is there capacity for support to reconstruct the Domes or to build a new building?
- How might changes to the Conservatory impact the Annex?
- What is the long-term viability for the Conservatory to be a part of the Milwaukee Park System? Or what would it take for it to be its own entity?
- How does it currently impact the neighborhood and region? What impact could a conservatory with broader programming and capability have on the neighborhood and region?
- Is there enough demand for a conservatory?

# CONTACT

Jay Burseth, Development Officer at Milwaukee County Parks:

[jay.burseth@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:jay.burseth@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

Sandy Folaron, Horticultural Services Director at Mitchell Park Horticultural

Conservatory: [sandra.folaron@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:sandra.folaron@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

Jeremy Lucas, Budget & Management Analyst at Milwaukee County Department of

Administration Services: [jeremy.lucas@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:jeremy.lucas@milwaukeecountywi.gov)