

Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory

DOMES

Information Session & Community Discussion

- 20-minute Presentation
- Questions & Answers
- Discussion Period
- Next Step

Why are we talking about the Domes?

Community asset

50+ years old

Need substantial repairs = Lots of \$\$

Opportunity for community to weigh in

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- **Share the background and current state of the Domes**
- **Outline possible options to move forward**
- **Gather feedback to help narrow range of possible options**

We're talking with citizens and with key stakeholders, including horticulture, neighborhood, preservation, civic, and philanthropic groups

What's a Conservatory?

Milwaukee has had one since 1898

THE CONSERVATORY: Milwaukee's Story

- Conservatory = “Garden under glass”
 - Unique and rare plant displays for entertainment and education
- 1898: Original, Victorian-style conservatory built in Mitchell Park, home to 75,000 plant specimens
- 1955: Original, Victorian-style conservatory in poor repair and demolished
- 1959-1967: Second conservatory, “the Domes,” built
 - Show Dome (1964) – seasonal display changing 5 times a year
 - Tropical Dome (1966)
 - Arid/Desert Dome (1967)
 - Temperate Dome (never built)



THE CONSERVATORY: Our Collections

- **Three Domes**
 - Same size; different uses, costs, and popularity
 - Show Dome – 5 changing seasonal displays
 - Tropical Dome – Over 1,200 plants from the rain forest
 - Desert Dome – Plants from Madagascar, Africa, the Canary Islands, South America, and North America
- **Plants valued at \$3.2 Million**
- **Desert Dome plants most rare**
- **Supporting Space: Classroom, Gift Shop, Offices**



THE CONSERVATORY: Our Facility

Our Domes are *Conoidal: Cone or Egg Shaped*

- Only conoidal structures in United States
- Windows are different sizes to create cone shape

Other Conservatory Domes are *Geodesic Spheres*

- Spherical or circular shape
- Windows are all same shape and size



Milwaukee, WI



Omaha, NE

THE CONSERVATORY: Our Programming

General Visitors

- 240,179 total in 2015, with 206,973 paid
- 14th most popular area attraction

Educational Programming

Guided Tours

Classes – hands-on experiences

Align School / Class Curriculum

Workshops

Self-guided Materials

Community Camps and Outreach

Weekly Storytime

Audio Tours and Scavenger Hunts

Interpretive Signage

Volunteer Orientation and Training

Create Exhibits and Programs

Park / Complex Historical Archives

Special Events Programming (open to the public)

Ethnic Festivals (Polish, German, Irish, Turkish, Chinese)

Plant Shows (Orchid Show, Bonsai Show, Ikebana)

All-Scale Train Exhibit

Gardens & Gears Steampunk Day

Very Fairy Princess Day

Cupcake Fest

Jewelry at the Domes

Urban Garage Sale

Tori Gate Festival

Holistic Health Fair

Green Living Festival

Pollinator Week

Music Under Glass Winter Concerts

Milwaukee Winter Farmer's Market



Private Events

Why Were the Domes Closed?

Leaking windows

Falling concrete

DRAFT

CONDITION OF THE DOMES

- The Domes are structurally sound and safe for occupancy (confirmed by the City of Milwaukee's Department of Neighborhood Services)
- Glass system covering the Domes is past its useful life, and all Domes have **major leaking water issues**
- Leaking water is causing **small pieces of the concrete frame to flake off**, creating falling hazards inside the building
 - This is why the Domes closed in January 2016

PROTECTIVE NETTING: Temporary Safety Solution

- Installed during 2016
- Protective netting catches falling pieces of concrete
- Netting doesn't "fix" the structure
- Major issue is the window system

Protective netting buys up to 5 years

➤ We need a plan soon!



Other Structural Issues

- **Domes do not meet:**
 - **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements**
 - **Fire code requirement for access**
- **Concrete frame has never been repainted**
 - **Painting keeps concrete from crumbling**
 - **Original paint was scheduled for replacement by 1980**



Functional Issues with the Domes

- **Inadequate space for some functions**
 - **Classroom space: Can only accommodate 35 children (on the floor!)**
 - **Food space: no cafeteria, restaurant or kitchen**
 - **Gift shop is small**
 - **Ticket booth and entry way is small**
- **Parking inadequate for large events**



Does / Can the Conservatory pay for itself?

Let's look at expenses & revenues

DOES THE CONSERVATORY MAKE MONEY? No...

Domes Operating Costs (5-year average)

- Revenues average about **\$800,000** / year
 - ✓ Friends of Domes contribute 10% of gift shop proceeds and significant volunteer labor
- Expenses are about **\$1.4 million** / year
 - ✓ County contributes average of \$600,000 to annual operating costs from taxes

Domes Major Repairs & Capital Investments (5-year average)

- County invested average of \$123,000/ year through 2015
- Netting in 2016 added (~\$1M)
- (In addition to operating costs)

What Will Happen to the Domes?

That depends – what does Milwaukee want?

POTENTIAL DIRECTIONS

Three big decisions:

1. What functions do we want?
2. What structures do we want?
3. What costs and revenues do we want?

FUNCTIONS: Do we need / want a conservatory?

- **The current conservatory?**
- **Expanded conservatory functions?**
 - ✓ **Enlarged plant display areas?**
 - ✓ **Related education and research?**
 - ✓ **Urban agriculture?**
- **Expanded social gathering functions in conservatory setting?**
 - ✓ **Private events?**
 - ✓ **Dining?**
 - ✓ **Playgrounds?**
- **Other attractions?**
- **No attraction?**

STRUCTURES:

- **The current Domes structures?**
 - ✓ **Renovated / repaired / compliant with ADA & codes?**
- **Enhanced current structures?**
 - ✓ **Keep one or more Domes along with new construction and/or expansion?**
- **New structures?**
 - ✓ **Icons and landmarks, basic, traditional?**
- **Same or different location?**
 - ✓ **With botanical gardens? Or somewhere else?**
- **Other?**

FINANCES:

Costs:

- ✓ \$1.4 million in annual operations
- ✓ \$600,000 taxpayer subsidy
- ✓ Capital repair and refurbishing
- ✓ Can we spend more to earn more?

Revenues:

- ✓ X% from attendance, Y% from special events
- ✓ Can / should we raise fees?
- ✓ Can we earn more?

OPTIONS: functions, structure, costs, revenues

1. REPAIR existing “cone-shaped” Domes

2. ADD to Existing Facility

- a. Add space for education, community gathering, revenue-generating functions.

3. BUILD a New Facility

- a. With “geodesic” Domes and REMOVE all Domes.
- b. With a different “landmark” structure, and REMOVE all Domes.
- c. With a different “landmark” structure and RESTORE one or more Domes for different revenue generating uses.
- d. With a different structure outside of Mitchell Park, and RESTORE one or more Domes for different revenue generating uses.

4. OTHER?

Note: All options assume plants are saved and transferred to the extent feasible.



What might it cost us?

That depends on what “it” is.

HOW MUCH MIGHT WE NEED TO SPEND?

If we **fix** the Domes (still need safety mesh)

- Simplest repairs would be \$X with lifespan of #, or \$Z per year
- More extensive repairs would be \$X\$X with lifespan of #, or \$Z per year

If we **restore** the Domes to original condition (wouldn't need safety mesh)

- Full Restoration would be \$A with lifespan of #, or \$Z per year

If we **build new** addition or 3-part horticultural facility

- It depends!
- Could be \$X to \$Y with lifespan of #, or \$Z per year

HOW MUCH REVENUE COULD WE RAISE?

■ Operating Revenue

- ✓ *Can we do better with existing facility?*
 - *Ticket sales?*
- ✓ *Could we do better with an addition / new facility?*
 - *Restaurant?*
 - *New uses?*

■ Construction Costs

- ✓ *How might we fund construction?*
 - *Private fund raising?*
 - *Public / private partnerships?*
 - *Other?*

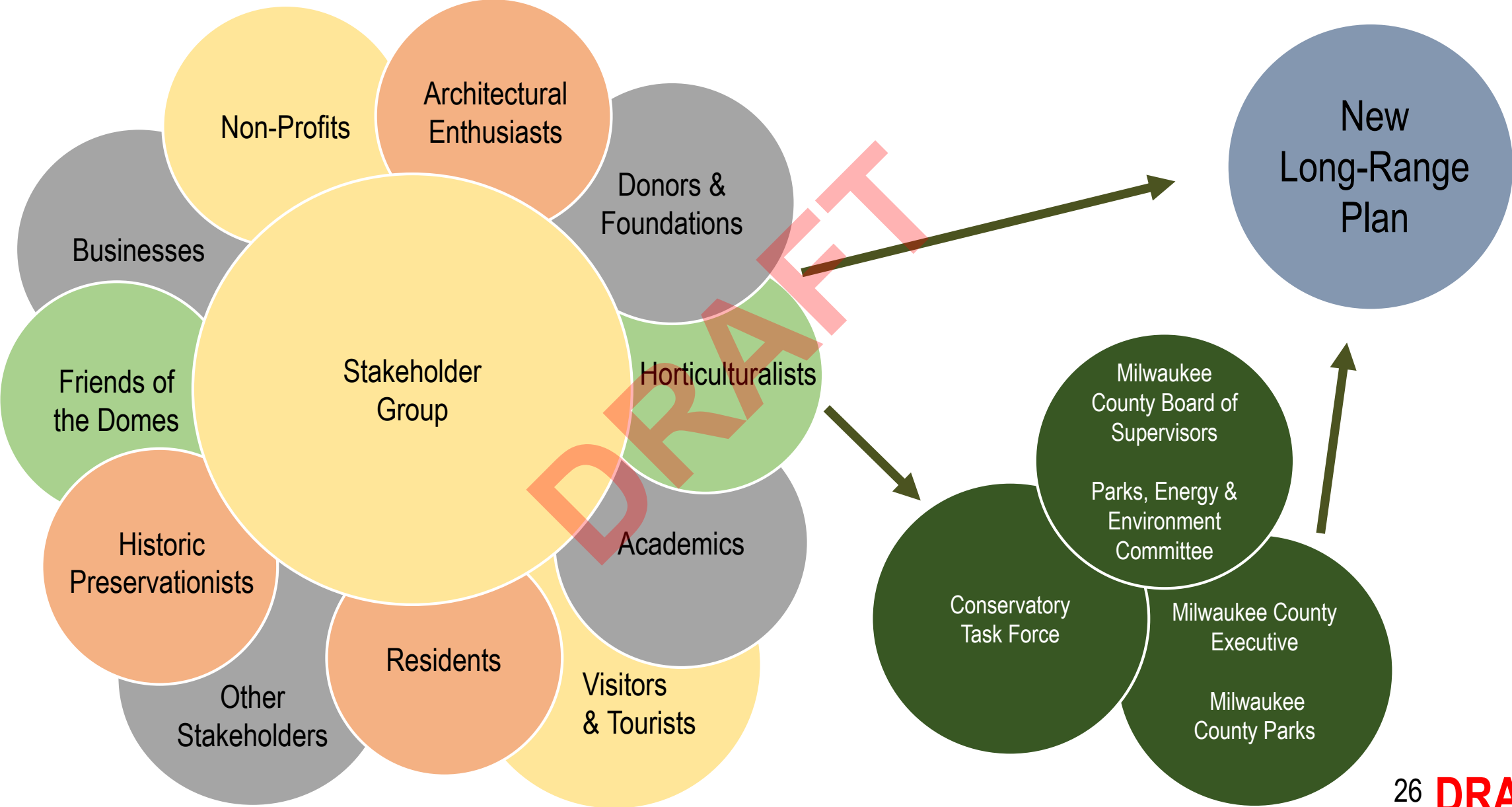


Who decides?

Why are we here?

What can we do?

ENGAGE: Community Residents & Stakeholders



PLANNING TIMELINE

2016 - 2017

SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
<p>Phase 1: Exploring Ideas & Options</p> <p>All options on the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reach across the community for ideas and input○ In-person meetings with key constituent groups○ Town hall meetings for public○ Online surveys & comments○ Task Force formation and meetings○ Regular County Board updates <p>OUTCOME: Narrow options for further study</p>		<p>Phase 2: Choosing a Direction</p> <p>Task Force to study 1-3 options for feasibility, cost, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Further community vetting & input○ Regular County Board updates <p>OUTCOME: Develop a request for proposal to develop a specific plan</p>	

PLANNING TIMELINE

2017



HOW SHOULD THE COMMUNITY DECIDE?

- Impacts on plant collections?
- Educational opportunities?
- Destination for families and visitors?
- Cultural impacts?
- Architectural significance?
- Environmental sustainability?
- Costs to repair / build?
- Costs to operate / tax subsidies needed?
- What else?

What do you think?

DRAFT

Group Discussion

1. What are your initial reactions to our options?
2. How do we prioritize these considerations?
3. What do you think should be our decision criteria?
 - Architectural landmark & history
 - Cost to build
 - Cost to operate and maintain (cost efficiency and not losing money)
 - Education opportunities
 - Environmental sustainability – saving energy and water
 - Family and cultural destinations
 - Revenue opportunities
 - Saving the plants

Group Discussion

4. Do we want / need a horticultural conservatory?
5. Do we want / need to preserve any or all of the Domes?
6. What kind of programming would you like to see at the conservatory?
7. What kind of programming is most important to you at the conservatory?
8. Are there limitations to these type of programming with our existing facility?
9. Would you support private/corporate funding or businesses on-site to provide services and/or revenue to help maintain the conservatory?
10. What's missing from the discussion?

Thank You For Participating in Today's Discussion

Learn More:

www.county.milwaukee.gov/Domes

