

Strategic Plan, 2013 – 2018

The Arboretum

The University of Kentucky/Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Arboretum

The State Botanical Garden of Kentucky

Recommendation submitted to the Dean of the College of Agriculture, March 11, 2013

In the fall of 2012 the Commission on Arboretum Strategic Planning was formed by the Dean of the College of Agriculture and the UK Vice President for Facilities Management in conjunction with The Arboretum Advisory Committee to provide input for a 2013–2018 Strategic Plan. The Commission was co-chaired by Dewayne Ingram and Marcia Farris with an Executive Committee consisting of Lisa Collins, Danielle Clore, and Betsy Kephart. The Commission membership included thoughtful leaders from across the commonwealth, local government, state government, and UK. Members of the Commission are listed in Appendix A of the Supplemental Materials document. A committee structure was formed to address groups of issues formulated during the Commission’s first meeting. Those committee reports can be found in their entirety in Appendix B of the Supplemental Materials.

The Arboretum is known for excellent collections and programs and well-maintained facilities. The 2013-2018 Strategic Plan will provide the basis for future development and direction for programs and management of this state treasure.

Mission and Values

Mission Statement

The Arboretum showcases Kentucky landscapes and serves as a resource center for environmental and horticultural education, research, and conservation.

Vision

The Arboretum belongs to the people of Kentucky and should be maintained through recurring funding by its founding partners, the University of Kentucky and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG), and later the Commonwealth of Kentucky, as well as support through private grants and philanthropy. Stable funding that allows increases in permanent staff positions and expanded infrastructure will enable The Arboretum to maintain and further develop excellence in several unique program areas, including:

- Demonstration plantings that allow visitors to experience native and non-native species in designed landscapes;
- A unique and comprehensive living collection of the native flora from the seven physiographic regions of the Commonwealth of Kentucky;

- Designed features that offer emotional and physical respite for visitors;
- Engagement in the teaching, public service, and research programs of the University of Kentucky;
- Engagement of the community through accessible opportunities for passive education, active teaching/learning, and passive recreation;
- Active promotion of The Arboretum’s educational, aesthetic, and cultural opportunities to Kentucky and beyond.

Values

Decisions on programs, projects, and events at The Arboretum are based on the following values and expectations:

- Fiscally and environmentally sustainable programs;
- Enhanced discovery in a living natural laboratory;
- Conservation and stewardship of nature, natural diversity, and physical resources;
- Initiative, innovation, and creativity;
- Environmental enhancement and urban remediation made possible by public horticulture gardens and plant collections;
- Collaboration and teamwork of diverse disciplines, cultural institutions, government agencies, and environmental organizations;
- Importance of serenity, beauty, and solitude for personal development;
- Outreach to diverse audiences while strategically targeting specific clientele groups including children and young adults;
- Fostering appreciation of formal and informal research and informing visitors of research activities involving staff, grounds, and collections of The Arboretum.

Initiative I. Organizational Structure and Partnerships

The Arboretum has evolved with support from UK, LFUCG, private donations, volunteers, and much collaboration and in-kind support. This support structure has been a strength and a weakness of The Arboretum. This support model has been essential to The Arboretum’s development to this point, but a more concrete organizational structure with defined partner responsibilities is necessary for The Arboretum to advance in the future. Priority objectives in this area include:

- A. Revision of the UK-LFUCG agreement to:
 - Update and redefine the property boundaries;
 - Extend the agreement for at least 100 years from the date of the revision;
 - Reflect the future shared role of UK and LFUCG in operation and maintenance;
 - Change the name of the Advisory Committee to the Advisory Board, adjust its composition and clarify its role;
 - Include a Friends of the Arboretum representative as a formal member;

- B. Study the options available to establish the property as The Arboretum “in perpetuity” by the University;

C. Create a document similar to “Rules of Procedure” for operations, organizational structure, and administrative responsibilities within UK, including approval by the Dean of the College of Agriculture:

- Establish that the Director should always be a UK employee;
- Clarify the role of the Director and relationship with UK administration, the Advisory Board, LFUCG, and the Friends;
- Incorporate UK standards into The Arboretum Rules of Procedure relative to managing UK funds only by UK employees;

D. Study the potential benefits and pitfalls of creating a Kentucky non-profit corporation or establishing an inter-local cooperative agreement to operate, maintain, control, and/or manage The Arboretum.

Initiative II. Funding, Financial Management and Fundraising

The fact that The Arboretum is a unit of the University of Kentucky, administered by the UK College of Agriculture but supported by other units at UK (particularly the Physical Plant Division), creates several funding and financial management advantages and disadvantages. Critical changes are necessary to increase efficiency and provide a financial base for long-term maintenance and enhanced program delivery. Priorities for this five-year period include:

A. Reallocation of the “support budget” provided by UK PPD (\$290,000) to The Arboretum as a unit within the College of Agriculture. This would allow Arboretum staff to more accurately plan and control the annual budget with increased efficiency and also facilitate the application for 501(c)3 grants which require a detailed budget summary;

B. The role of the Director in relation to the College and UK Development Office priority-setting and support must be reviewed, documented, and followed;

C. Obtain additional revenue by instituting entrance fees to The Arboretum. The grounds are presently unfenced and restricting entrance to The Arboretum is currently impossible; however, a plan for future perimeter fencing to protect the plant collections and generate revenue should be put in place;

D. Other possible sources of income include: parking; receiving an allocation from the existing UK student recreation fee (UK students use the Arboretum for health and recreation, student organization activities, and formal classes) or sustainability fee; plant sales at various events in cooperation with other groups; corporate sponsorships; admission charges for special outdoor exhibits (perimeter fence required); enhanced facility and equipment rentals (additional staff and equipment required); retail gift shop (additional staff and space required); and concerts and other events (perimeter fence, additional staff, and equipment required);

- E. Champion major fund-raising priorities at the University and College levels to focus on expansion of the visitors' center to include office, meeting, and educational space and the creation of a maintenance and enhancement endowment;
- F. Pursue high-priority funding status for The Arboretum within the community and state, including both public and private entities;
- G. Explore the creation of an Arboretum Philanthropic Council.

Initiative III. Marketing and Outreach

The Arboretum must educate partners, policy makers, users, and the general public about The Arboretum's mission, its organization, and support structure. In addition to advertising events and opportunities at The Arboretum, efforts must continue to attract new users, to instill The Arboretum's message to the full range of constituents, and to define financial needs using proven and new methods:

- A. Expand use of social media to connect the brand of The Arboretum to increasingly diverse audiences;
- B. Use all available advertising methods since potential audiences get information from a myriad of sources;
- C. Pursue corporate and other business sponsorships;
- D. Educate the general public and targeted audiences (such as college students and children), as well as local and state policy makers, as to the mission, programs, and values of The Arboretum to the Commonwealth.

Initiative IV. Human Resources: A Staffing Plan for the Future

Current staffing is inadequate to maintain current facilities and provide excellent programming. For The Arboretum to continue its pursuit of excellence, as well as meet current needs and opportunities in a sustainable manner, additional staff and re-organization of staff responsibilities will be required. The Staffing Plan must reflect the action plan of the Strategic Plan and existing and potential resources – both human and financial:

- A. Describe existing and future positions in detail and develop priorities for new positions;
- B. Address important issues in a unified Staffing Plan including separation of leadership and daily management responsibilities currently in the Director position into two or more positions; increase efficiency by improving the line of personnel supervision, budget

management, and facility management; hire additional personnel to address unmet needs in programming, fund raising, collection management, garden maintenance, facility maintenance, and continue feature development, i.e. the Walk Across Kentucky. The Staffing Plan should include paid and volunteer positions.

Initiative V. Master Plan Update

The Master Plan was developed during the late 1980's by Environmental Planning and Design, Pittsburgh, PA, confirmed in 1988, and revised in 2000. Environmental Planning and Design defined the space for important elements of the design, but only provided "construction level" details for a few of the features. It was anticipated that details for individual gardens and features would be developed as needed, possibly using local landscape architecture and engineering firms. This has occurred. Priorities for this five-year period are:

- A. Revisit, affirm, and adjust the Master Plan as appropriate. Secure funds to employ the original designers to contribute to this update.
- B. While many priorities and possibilities exist for future development of features at The Arboretum, the obvious next steps in facility development should include suitable office space, meeting space, and additional restrooms. Current office and meeting space is woefully inadequate to support current activities and programs, much less new ones. Excellence in programs and facilities require excellence in office and meeting space.
- C. Reconsider the concept of a lake in the design plan for several reasons including potential maintenance costs, liability issues, and the geology of the site. Reconsider the appropriateness of a Japanese Garden.
- D. Embellish the Master Plan to include an irrigation plan, connecting paths and additions to the Walk Across Kentucky feature, a compost/mulch pad, a production greenhouse, and overflow parking.

ACTION PLANS

The staff will lead an effort to develop action plans, including budgetary impact, for completion of this Strategic Plan. The Action Plan should be in place and reviewed by UK administrators and the Advisory Board by July 1, 2013.