



MCINTIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

VISION STATEMENT

AND PLANNING OBJECTIVES

VISION STATEMENT

To enhance the existing parkland with plantings of trees, shrubs and perennials to create a sustainable landscape garden that is inviting, educational, and reflects the unique character of the Charlottesville community.

MISSION STATEMENT

“To create a public garden in McIntire Park that inspires and educates visitors through exploration and enjoyment of plants and nature”

GOALS OF MCINTIRE BOTANICAL GARDEN

The goal of the McIntire Botanical Garden is to provide enjoyment and education for visitors about plants, gardening, horticulture and ecology through display, active and passive education, and conservation

Display – To design a landscaped garden of trees, shrubs and perennials that complements the existing parkland and enhances the sites topography to create a setting that is beautiful and attractive to all the senses

Education/Teaching – To create a garden that is a place of discovery for all visitors through active and passive programs of interpretation and education

Conservation/Stewardship – To preserve and enhance the existing features of the site while designing and planting gardens that complement the natural character of the park

RATIONALE - Why A Botanical Garden In McIntire Park?

It is known that Paul Goodloe McIntire made many gifts of parkland to Charlottesville to promote culture, education and community recreation. McIntire Park is located only a mile from downtown Charlottesville. The McIntire Road extension of Meadowbrook Parkway, the planned interchange, pedestrian and bike trails, as well as trolley service, will increase accessibility and invite the community to enjoy the east side of the park, which is currently underused due to limited access. Along with the planned changes comes the opportunity to expand the program of the park as well. A botanical garden in McIntire Park will fulfill a vision the city of Charlottesville first proposed in the early 1990's that now aligns perfectly with the City's 2025 Vision Statement.

HISTORY OF MCINTIRE PARK

McIntire Park was gifted to the City of Charlottesville in 1926 by philanthropist Paul Goodloe McIntire. His first acquisition, now the center of the eastern segment of the park, was the Mason Farm. The home site and water tower stood at the crest of the hill above the 250 By-Pass, where the remnants of the driveway leading to the home are still visible in the Park today. This parcel primarily comprised the location of McIntire Park Golf Course which functions as a nine-hole “pasture” sand green golf course. All of the parcels that make up today’s McIntire Park were assembled by 1941.

Although the land comprising McIntire Park was intended to remain a park in perpetuity, McIntire Road and the Route 250 By-Pass were constructed in 1952 through the southern portion of the Park. A portion of the divided park became a new, smaller park named Greenleaf. Today, the east side of the park contains the golf course, and the west side features playing fields, picnic shelters and the new Charlottesville YMCA. The proposed Parkway and Interchange will once again reduce the size of the park.

The McIntire Botanical Garden, a non profit 501(c)(3) organization, first proposed bringing a botanical garden to McIntire Park in 2008. Once there was a kind of botanical garden in McIntire Park. Between May 1937 and October 1939 a six-acre wild flower and bird sanctuary was created by women of the Charlottesville community. This project was supported and funded by the Works Progress Administration. Today, there is no physical evidence of this sanctuary, but documents describe the area as located behind the current softball fields on the west side of McIntire Park.

The proposed site of the McIntire Botanical Garden Project, within McIntire Park, is located on the Northeast side of the City of Charlottesville. The site is bounded on the west side by Norfolk Southern railroad tracks and the south side by the Route 250 By-Pass. The area at the northwest edge of the site provides access to Melbourne Road and was formerly a leaf dump used by the City of Charlottesville. The former leaf dump is anticipated to be the automobile entrance and parking location. The McIntire Botanical Garden project will create recreational and educational opportunities for all people and the garden will be a boon to tourism by adding another regional attraction within the City.

The Board of Directors and supporters of McIntire Botanical Garden have spent three years studying the potential for this green space, informing the public about this opportunity, and building a list of interested citizens that now exceeds 900. We recently conducted an e-mail survey to see what citizens think of and want in a botanical garden. This information will be very useful in the forthcoming master planning process, scheduled to begin this autumn.

PREVIOUS MASTER PLANNING EFFORTS

We are not starting this process at ground zero. At least four times plans have been produced for the City, proposing uses for the east side of McIntire Park. The first time was in 1972, when Mitch Van Yahres was the mayor. This plan featured a 4-lane Parkway with vehicle access to the Park, trails for various recreational activities, a central plaza with 'civic' fountain, picnic shelter, 'play environment' for children, chess tables and benches. This plan was never implemented.

In the early 1990’s, a second plan was prepared which proposed an arboretum, trails, a conservatory flanked by fountains and an allee of trees.

In 2000, Rieley & Associates proposed a landscape park and arboretum with a large pond in the location of the former leaf dump, near Melbourne Road. This plan included the parkway, reduced from 4 lanes to 2 lanes, with pedestrian and bicycle access to connect both sides of the park.

In August of 2004, the City’s Master Planning Committee delivered its report that recommended an arboretum, gardens, trails, and pedestrian access over the Parkway and the Southern RR tracks. None of these plans was implemented

Prior needs assessments from both Charlottesville and Albemarle County identified trails and passive recreation as the most requested amenities. The pedestrian and bicycle access connecting the west to the east side of the park over the Southern railroad, initiated in 2010, will be completed in 2012. In September of 2011, the master planning process for McIntire Park will begin anew.

MOVING FORWARD

It appears that the time has finally come for the City to begin the long awaited process of planning for this incredibly valuable green space in the heart of our city. As reported in the media, the contract for the City's portion of the Parkway will soon entered into and construction should begin shortly. A visitor survey conducted in the spring of 2011 indicates that the majority of respondents still favor a botanical garden today. It is time to fulfill the dream of a botanical garden in the center of Charlottesville, a dream first proposed over 20 years ago!

AUDIENCE AND CONSTITUENTS

- Charlottesville city residents
- Albemarle County residents and residents of surrounding jurisdictions
- Out of town visitors, both national and international
- Students of all ages
- Green industry professionals
- Design professionals
- Home gardeners, master gardeners
- Garden clubs, plant societies and other specialty societies

SITE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

A central location in the city of Charlottesville in easy walking or trolley distance from the Downtown Mall

Easy access to Charlottesville's pedestrian and bike trail system

The ability to create a garden that is uniquely reflective of, and appropriate to its place, in the Charlottesville community

The dramatic topography of the site is its greatest asset, but also its greatest limitation. The circulation system must be carefully designed to provide full handicapped accessibility

The mature trees that crown the knoll are magnificent and must be preserved and incorporated into the garden without damage or removal

The varied topography provides an opportunity to grow a wide range of plants that require different light, soil and moisture conditions

EXPANDED GOALS

DISPLAY

- Display plants in designed and natural settings
- Emphasize regionally native plants throughout the garden
- Design landscapes with the highest degree of horticultural excellence
- Create spaces for gathering and garden observation/enjoyment
- Unite the site through architecture of the highest standard and regional appropriateness

EDUCATION

- Serve as an educational resource for schools K-12, colleges and universities, emphasizing the disciplines of horticulture, botany, ecology and evolutionary biology
- Provide educational and interpretive labeling in the appropriate portions of the garden. This may be through actual labels or technologies such as cell phone interpretation
- Coordinate with and support the environmental education programs in local schools
- Present adult and children's symposia, workshops and classes
 - Biodiversity
 - Environmental, ecological and agricultural education
 - The art and science of horticulture
 - The sciences of botany, ecology and evolutionary biology
 - Fine art
 - Design
- Design and interpret demonstration gardens, display gardens, special exhibits and native habitats
- Sponsor cultural events

CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

- Manage the site and its resources in a sustainable manner, including soil, vegetation and water resources, using maintenance techniques appropriate to naturalistic settings or native plant communities as distinct from ornamental or horticultural gardens
- Implement a financial model that supports a public/private partnership and ensures sustainable funding
- Design in a sensitive manner to enhance the habitat value of the site by the addition of plants that support the food web

PLANNING OBJECTIVES

The planning process is based on comprehensive research and site analysis, considering the history and influences that have shaped the site. Natural history, cultural history, current influences, site context, and programmatic goals all inform the master plan development.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Regional and Local Site Context
- Geology
- Soils
- Hydrology
- Vegetation and Habitat
- Cultural Features and Resources

OBJECTIVES

- To create a garden that acknowledges and incorporates features that provide experiences for visitors of all ages.
- To provide a sensory experience throughout the garden to awaken a feeling of wonder in visitors
- To provide an experience that enriches children's imaginations and sense of wonder in the natural world and in gardens by providing an environment abundant in sensory experiences and botanical diversity.
- To choose an architectural vernacular in keeping with the character of the Piedmont landscape of central Virginia
- To use materials of the highest quality that reflect the character of the Piedmont landscape of central Virginia
- To employ regionally native plants wherever possible and appropriate

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

VISITOR SERVICES

- Parking area designed with bioswales and other sustainable technologies
- Visitor Center and Public Education Building, LEED Certified - including public facilities, auditorium, meeting rooms, gift shop, staff and volunteer offices
- Outdoor spaces for gathering, relaxing and education
- A circulation system, often envisioned as a spiral, that creates a sense of order and hierarchy, and provides access to all the gardens and significant site features
- Full handicap accessibility

GARDENS

- Home demonstration gardens suitable for different types of soil and solar exposures and various sizes of home landscapes. Includes small scale garden design, vegetables, trial beds for new introductions and display of plants
- Display gardens of trees, shrubs and perennials woven into a tapestry of landscape experience
- Features throughout the garden to delight and engage children
- Pond and water features
- Native plant and habitat gardens including woodland and meadow as the matrix in which display gardens are imbedded
- Public events space
- Outdoor spaces and seating within the garden for gathering, relaxing and passive education
- Relocation and enhancement of the Vietnam Memorial
- Partnerships with the Sister Cities of Charlottesville

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- Working greenhouse, volunteer and staff facilities
- Maintenance facilities
- Service area including composting/soil storage facilities

SUMMARY

In presenting our vision and objectives, the Board of Directors and supporters of McIntire Botanical Garden propose a unique garden that takes its place among the premier contemporary and historic gardens of the region. We are excited about the prospects of offering this extraordinary amenity to the Charlottesville community.