



Potential Houston Botanic Garden  
Economic Impact and Site Considerations  
Presentation  
Quality of Life Committee  
March 26, 2014



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

- Background and definitions
- Citywide economic and community impact of a Botanic Garden
- Possible sites for a Houston Botanic Garden
  - Gus Wortham Golf Course
  - Glenbrook Park
- Pros and Cons for both sites



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## Public Gardens

- Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park
  - Display gardens for aesthetic collection of plants
- Arboretum in Memorial Park
  - Typically concentrates on woody plants, trees and shrubs
  - Includes research and educational components
  - Includes multiple nature and bayou connected trails
- Botanic Garden
  - “An institution holding documented collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, display and education”



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

- How many Botanic Gardens exist today?
  - 1800 botanicals around the world in over 150 countries
  - 200 in North America
  - Estimated 150 million visitors a year worldwide



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## The Modern Botanic Garden: New York Times

- Local Food
  - Cleveland Botanical Garden’s food festival “Ripe”
  - California’s Descanso Botanical Garden food and drink venue: Camelia Lounge
- Unique Events
  - Brooklyn Botanical Garden’s Tribute to Emily Dickinson
  - Atlanta’s Botanical Garden classes: photography, drawing, Tai Chi
- Sustainability
  - Cheyenne Botanical Garden encourages children to make art from reused material
  - Cleveland’s Botanical Garden teaches teenagers to grow corn and zucchini on urban plots



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## Competitive Gardens

- Dallas
  - Combined with the Dallas Arboretum
  - Garden is 65-70 acres with an estimated 500,000 visitors per year
  - Over \$45m of investment, \$15m sustainable revenue
- Atlanta
  - 30 acres with an estimated 500,000 visitors per year
  - Over \$80m in investment, \$10m sustainable revenue
- Chicago
  - 90 acres in Garden adjacent to 300 acre park with an estimated 900,000 visitors per year
  - Supported also by Cook County tax of \$10m per year
- St. Louis
  - 80 acre site with an estimated 900,000 visitors per year
  - Over \$125m investment - \$35m revenue per year
  - Also supported by regional Museum Tax



# Dallas Arboretum and Botanic Garden



DALLAS ARBORETUM  
AND BOTANICAL GARDEN

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DISCOUNTS



0



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GARDENS

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SUPPORT

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EDUCATION

PRIVATE EVENTS

SHOP

CONTACT

Arboretum Map



Driving Directions



Bathroom



Elevator



Water Fountain



Tram Stop



Vending, Food

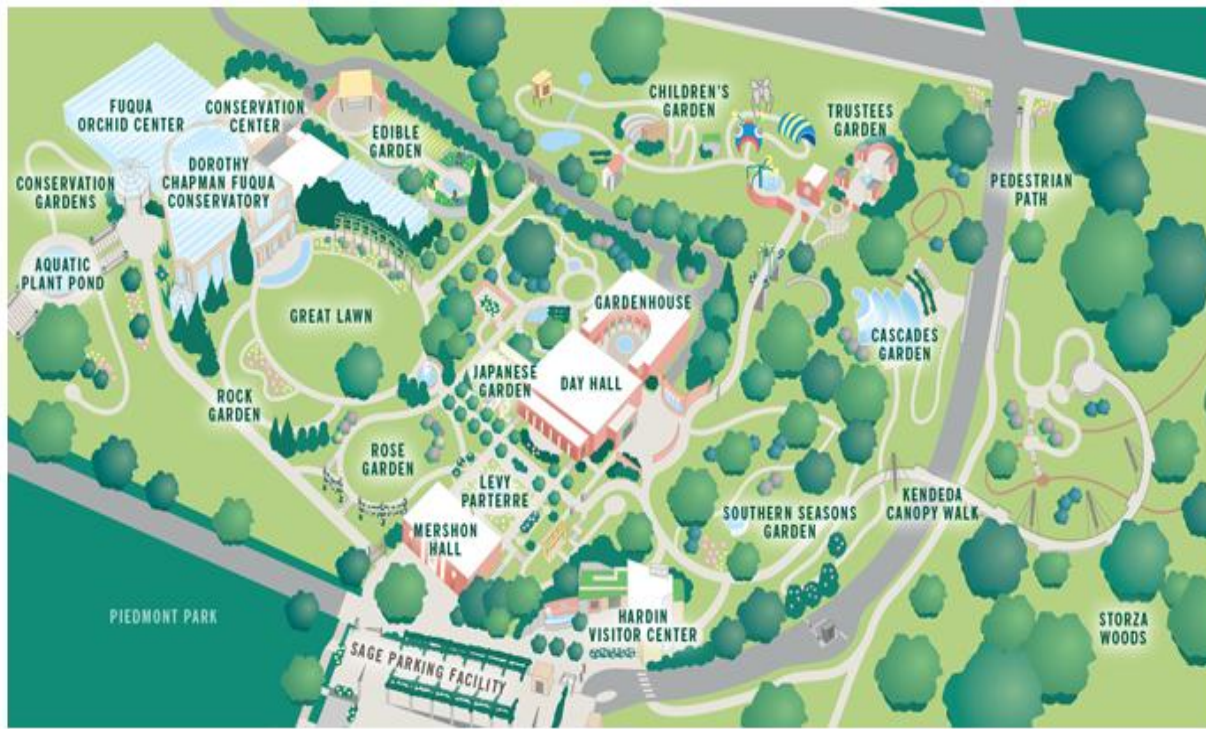
## Choose A Location

- 1 All America Selections Trial Garden
- 2 Alexander Camp House
- 3 Boswell Family Garden
- 4 Cissy Thomsen Welcoming Water Wall
- 5 Grape Myrtle Allee
- 6 Dann Talley Kincheloe Courtyard
- 7 DeGolyer Garden
- 8 Restaurant DeGolyer
- 9 DeGolyer Estate
- 10 DeGolyer Pergola
- 11 Fogelson Fountain
- 12 Ginsberg Plaza
- 13 Jonsson Color Garden





# Atlanta Botanic Garden



**500,000 Annual Visitors**





# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Benefit to Houston

Creates a unique public amenity that complements attractions:

1. Enhances overall quality of life with improvements in place or planned in the City
2. Potential significant visitor and tourist attraction
3. Potential to add significantly to Houston's economy
4. Aligns with exiting city sustainability initiatives



# Possible Houston Botanic Garden Benefit to Houston (1)

- Unique public amenity and quality of life enhancement
- Botanic Garden would be an excellent complement to existing private investment to two current public gardens
  - Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park (\$30m private) scheduled to open in 2015
  - Arboretum in Memorial Park – Planning proceeding for this 150 acre nature reserve. Currently fundraising with a 2017 target opening date
- Sites likely would be along Bayou System
  - Ties well to Bayou Greenway \$205m project



## Potential Houston Botanic Garden (2)

- Potential significant visitor and tourist attraction
- Over 5 million visitors to the city per year
  - Recent campaign to promote restaurant and cultural activities has been judged by Wall Street Journal as extremely successful
  - New York Times placement of Houston (#8) as one of the 50 best places to visit in the world opened many doors for future visitors and tourists
  - Houston as a sporting venue continues to grow – NBA All Star 2013, NCAA Final Four 2016 and Super Bowl 2017
- Currently Houston First has a thorough review underway of other means to attract tourists and visitors
  - Study being conducted by Parter International, Inc.
  - Early conclusions are that Houston is lacking attractions similar to San Antonio and Dallas; plans being developed for follow-up actions



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## Economic Impact (3)

- GHP and Dan Bellow led a task group in 2011 describing the economic value of supporting a Botanic Garden
- Botanic Garden adds significantly to our region's economic impact
  - Estimate of 300+ jobs and ultimately \$50+m of private investment
  - Study of property values in proximity to a Botanic Garden suggests significantly greater increase than a proximity to Golf Course
- Dallas performed an economic impact study of their Arboretum and Botanic Garden
  - Evaluated in 2011 it had \$50-100m a year impact on the region's economy
- GHP has undertaken to assess the overall economic impact in our region



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Alignment with Sustainability Initiatives (4)

## Turning Car City Into Green City

Houston may be a city built on the profits of oil and gas, but it has a green dream. The dream is to create a city that is "more liveable, walkable and bikeable," according to Laura Spanjian. Spanjian has been the director of sustainability for Houston since 2010.

## Green Building Resource Center

The City of Houston Department of Public Works and Engineering Green Building Resource Center was officially launched on Earth Day 2009. The center, under the Planning and Development Services Division, is located at the Houston Permitting Center Building at 1002 Washington.

## Mayor Announces Houston Drives Electric

The City of Houston announces a new partnership with Zipcar, Inc., the world's leading car sharing network, to launch a new **municipal electric vehicle (EV) green fleet** sharing program, called Houston Fleet Share. Through this program, 50 city-owned fleet vehicles – including 25 Nissan Leaf EVs and other plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles.

## Mayor Selected for Climate Preparedness Task Force

In recognition of Houston's leadership on sustainability issues, Mayor Annise Parker was selected today as a member of President Obama's Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience to advise the administration

## Wednesday Farmers Market at City Hall

The **City Hall Farmers Market** Spring 2014 season begins February 19. Mark your calendar for the market every Wednesday from 11 am to 1:30 pm. Over 30 vendors offer prepared lunch items and fresh, local produce for you to enjoy sitting by the reflection pond, at your desk, or at home. Don't forget to bring a reusable bag!



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Possible Sites Basic Considerations

- Size needed for current and future development matches general size of 18-hole golf course
  - A trend in Houston area is decreased number and demand for golf facilities (City purchase of Inwood Forest Golf Course)
- Access needed to Houstonians and visitors
  - Mass transit access would be beneficial
- Typical visitor use pattern is outside of traditional high traffic commuting times (10am – 3pm); and weekends
- Much like other privately managed public facilities we expect facilities would be available to special events at competitive pricing levels
- No public investment - the facility must be privately constructed
  - Must also be operated sustainably without city subsidy



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Possible Sites cont'd

- Two golf course sites are currently under consideration
  - Gus Wortham; Glenbrook Park
- In both cases there are no city funds available to rehabilitate these facilities and courses; concerns exist on both for long term financial viability and sustainability
- **Gus Wortham**
  - Estimate is \$14-15m is needed to rehabilitate Gus Wortham
  - Based on 2012 Parks Department estimates, Gus Wortham had a yearly loss of \$75,000
  - Fees will need to be increased substantially or the number of rounds increased above 75 per day to be sustainable after an injection of private capital for rehabilitation
- **Glenbrook Park**
  - Rehabilitation estimates not available – currently under contract with operator until 2015
  - Similar concerns on long term financial viability and sustainability



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Issues Surrounding Gus Wortham Site

Some early discussions were held on co-location of a Botanic Garden and a 9-hole golf course on Gus Wortham

- Carefully considered, however the Parks Department does not believe a 9-hole golf course is commercially viable or sustainable longer term
- An alternative has emerged to dedicate 125 acres to the Botanic Gardens and 25 acres to a public park along the Bayou
  - No specific details of the acreage for the park are yet available but this does reflect rough topography; other splits may be possible
  - A public Park along the Bayou could tie well to Bayou Greenway trail system and by a bridge connected to Mason Park
- Will consider this park related approach in further discussion on Gus Wortham





# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## Pros and Cons For Botanic Garden at Gus Wortham

### Pros

- Close to Central Business District; 75% of city population within 15 miles drive; access to bike and trail system
- Direct access to East End Light Rail Line from Downtown and elsewhere
- Mature trees/adjacent to Brays Bayou
- Creation of complementary 25 acre public park with potential amenities; direct tie to Mason Park possible
- Likely support for local business and redevelopment of Harrisburg for Transit Oriented Development/proximate to multiple schools
- Fundraising likely positive for Garden given proximity to City core

### Cons

- Some community opposition to changing from Golf Course
- Potential fundraising proposal from citizens group for Golf Course and facility rehabilitation
- Railroad crossing and impact of noise
- Separate entrance for Light Rail and automobiles will need to be created



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden

## Pros and Cons For Botanic Garden at Glenbrook Park

### Pros

- Potential single entry through existing park (Charlton Park)
- Park Place Blvd attractive entrance
- Natural Oxbow feature and garden would use both sides of Sims Bayou
- No basic local opposition has emerged, to date
- Audubon society could be natural partner
- Proximate to elementary school

### Cons

- Location further and less accessible to City core/fundraising for Garden will be more difficult
- Freeway noise will be an issue
- TxDoT changes to Park Place exit needed
- Large floodplain on northern portion of park
- Bike trail would have to be relocated



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Conclusions

- A privately financed and sustainably operated Botanic Garden would add significantly to Houston and estimates are it could economically contribute over \$50-100m per year to our economy
  - Adds to City's capability to attract conventions and visitors
- There is value to having the Botanic Garden tied directly to the Mass Transit System
- Significant investment is needed, but undefined to rehabilitate and operate either Gus Wortham and Glenbrook Park golf courses and facilities
- Significant private investments are needed to create the Botanic Garden and a solid plan is needed to operate it sustainably with no city subsidy
  - A contract to do this must be enforceable and require delivery of commitments



# Potential Houston Botanic Garden Timeline

- Town Hall meeting planned at EB Cape Center on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 6pm
  - Expect detailed presentation by several stakeholders
- Expect continued community dialogue during April
- Targeting Mayor's report at the end of April
- Targeting to bring appropriate contracts to City Council over the next 90/120 days