



Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens

Board of Finance
Budget Request
Submission/Presentation
2022-2023

Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens Summary of Significant Changes and Capital Requests for FY 22-23

Significant Changes: The Bartlett Arboretum Association, through a lease agreement with the City of Stamford, maintains a city-owned park open to the public, free of charge, 365 days per year (366 days on leap years). The property features 93 acres of irreplaceable open space, magnificent award-winning Champion trees, 13 gardens, wildflower meadows & red maple wetlands, 2.5 miles of woodland walking trails, varied wildlife and native habitats, and the City of Stamford's historic Potter's Field (cemetery).

The Arboretum's request for operating support recommended by the Mayor will be used primarily for maintenance and upkeep of the grounds and facilities. It accounts for 28% of the Arboretum's proposed operating expenditures for FY22-23. The remaining revenue derives from a combination of earned income, memberships, and private donations and supports programming for the Stamford Public Schools, the general public, and agencies and organizations who serve families with low incomes and/or special needs.

Despite the pandemic, the Arboretum was able to maintain its headcount and increase one part-time educator position to full-time. With the departure of Jane von Trapp in June of 2021, the Board conducted a national search and hired its new CEO who started in July.

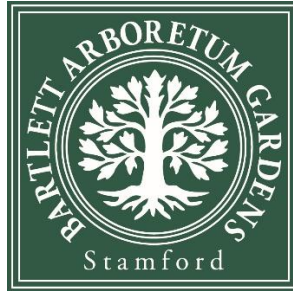
The current staff includes 7 full-time and 3 part-time employees, supported by more than 200 volunteers, many of whom are graduates of the UConn Extension Master Gardener program hosted by the Arboretum.

Recently, the City of Stamford was awarded a USDA grant to create a public private partnership to establish a food waste composting site in North Stamford. When the original partner on the grant application backed out, the Arboretum stepped in to assist the City with the project. Our operating request for 2022-23 includes funds to help defray the costs to supervise the drop-off process and operate the composting machine.

The Arboretum's Capital Requests include \$50,000 for its Pavilion project and \$50,000 for Site & Infrastructure Improvements. The Pavilion project currently has \$360K available through a combination of City, State, and private funding. In reviewing the original site proposed for the structure, the City engineering department expressed concerns about costs to relocate existing utilities and mitigate impacts of slope and proximity to wetlands. To resolve these concerns, the Arboretum now plans to include the pavilion as part of its new greenhouse/horticulture complex. The requested funds will be used to support the design and installation of a new septic system near the existing greenhouse, the site of the proposed **Horticulture Complex**.

The Arboretum's other capital request seeks an additional \$50,000 for Site & Infrastructure improvements. The fund currently has a balance of \$91,831.31 but falls short of the cost to address current infrastructure needs. Given increased use by residents during the pandemic and damage and erosion resulting from increasingly frequent severe weather, the requested funds will be used to improve trail conditions and replace several footbridges damaged or swept away by recent storms. The bridges are being designed meet USDA Forest Service standards to withstand flood force conditions.

We respectfully ask that the Board of Finance keep the mayor's recommendations for capital and operational funds in the budget for 2022-2023.



Memorandum To: The Honorable Caroline Simmons, Mayor
The City of Stamford, Connecticut
From: Bartlett Arboretum Association, Inc.
Date: January 7, 2022
Re: FY 2022-2023 Operating Budget Request

Dear Mayor Simmons,

Thank you for the opportunity to request operating funds in support of the Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens. We respectfully request funding of \$339,000 for support and maintenance of this unique City-owned Park property. This request includes current level funding of \$329,000 with an additional \$10,000 for a new initiative to assist the City of Stamford in operating a Food Waste Reduction pilot program for City residents at our site.

The Arboretum property is a tremendous asset owned by the City of Stamford and operated by the Bartlett Arboretum Association, Inc. for the benefit of Stamford residents and neighbors. As society faces increasing threats due to climate change, the Arboretum will become increasingly critical to Stamford residents both for its role in Carbon sequestration and as shaded outdoor refuge for residents vulnerable to extreme heat events. Assets maintained and managed include:

- Historic 1880s Homestead building
- Silver Educational Center
- Greenhouse
- Maintenance Building
- 93 Acres of habitat (91 acres owned by the City)
- 10 acres of trails and wetlands
- 90.8 percent tree canopy on 93 acres of land in proximity to the reservoir, providing significant annual environmental value for CO₂ storage, ozone, and carbon monoxide removal, as well as storm water capture and filtration. In addition to these “soft” values, the estimated asset value of our tree collection is at least \$5 million, as confirmed by an inventory performed by F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company using USDA statistics.

Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens Mission:

To cultivate and develop a diverse collection of trees, gardens, and plants for all to explore, enjoy and study; and to provide through education and stewardship, a greener, healthier, more beautiful environment.

We accomplish this by:

- Linking all visitors from our surrounding communities to the natural environment through our grounds, exhibits, and programming.
- Building a community that welcomes and respects the diversity of all visitors, staff, volunteers, donors, and advocates creating an inclusive environment.
- Providing comprehensive environmental, horticulture and plant science educational programs for children and adults of all ages and abilities.
- Preserving the historical significance of the Bartlett Arboretum for current and future generations.
- Creating opportunities for inspiration, recreation, enjoyment, and exploration of the natural world for all who visit.
- Maintaining plant collections that celebrate biodiversity and reflect the ecology and character of our region.
- Promoting conservation and principles of sustainable landscape management.

Vision:

To be a nationally recognized center of living collection expertise, education, stewardship, exhibition, and horticultural best practices.

Program History and Description:

In 1913, Francis A. Bartlett, a well-known dendrologist and founder of the internationally known F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company, acquired 30 acres of North Stamford farmland to use as his residence, training school, and research laboratory for his successful tree-care company. Over the years, he assembled a large number of woody plant specimens on the property from all over the world, in particular from North America, Europe, and Asia.

By 1965, Dr. Bartlett's research laboratory had moved to North Carolina and his Stamford home, which then covered some 64 acres, was purchased by the State of Connecticut in November of 1965 under the Federal Open Spaces Program. At this time, the property was designated the Connecticut State Arboretum. Acquisition of this land by the State and the subsequent development of the Bartlett Arboretum was spearheaded by a local community group of volunteers. This group of citizens who initially banded together to preserve what Dr. Bartlett had created formed the nucleus of what is now the Bartlett Arboretum Association.

When the Bartlett Arboretum was opened to the public for the first time in 1966, the grounds and facilities were under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Protection while the

operations and programming were managed by the University of Connecticut's Department of Plant Science. In 2002, the title to the land was transferred to the City of Stamford with the Bartlett Arboretum Association responsible for all managerial and operational oversight of the property. An additional 27 acres of adjacent city property was added to the Bartlett's existing property.

Today, nestled among the historic landscape of Southwestern New England, the Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens is a natural preserve unparalleled in the region. The property features 93 acres of irreplaceable open space highlighting the best of what Connecticut's native landscape has to offer: magnificent award-winning Champion trees, charming gardens, wildflower meadows, red maple wetlands and boardwalks, woodland walking trails, varied wildlife, and native habitats. A wonderful getaway from the hustle and bustle of daily life, we serve as a leading recreational and educational resource for area residents and visitors of all ages. From weekend gardeners to budding young botanists, the Bartlett offers a place to relax, learn, and unplug.

While most programs have been virtual this year, the education program has offered STEAM-based botanical education for all Stamford public (and many private) school students, including our signature second grade Plant Life Cycle Program, nature-based summer camps, and drop-in programs for families. Bartlett educators provide after-school programming at Inspirica and daytime programs at Apples, the Stamford pre-school program. It is also the base for one of the UConn Extension Master Gardener training programs, graduating up to 30 interns per year. Each winter, professional landscapers and arborists study for state certification in one of our programs.

More than 2,000 native plants are propagated annually in the Bartlett Greenhouse and distributed to area parks, Arboretum property, and are sold at the annual plant sale in May. The Greenhouse will be the home for the propagation of Stamford City trees in the future and in a collaboration with DSSD, the future home for the propagation of plants for downtown parks and planters.

The Silver Educational Center houses a collection of more than 3,000 preserved herbarium specimens which was digitized by Yale University botanists and linked to a nationwide database.

Master Gardeners teach adult classes, provide docent tours, and work in the gardens all summer long. Gardens are open to visitors 365 days per year, dawn to dusk. Ten hiking trails provide recreational opportunities for humans and leashed canines year-round.

Maintaining and preserving this property provides immeasurable benefits to the health of the residents of the City of Stamford and beyond, including a critical role in ensuring a clean water supply and air quality.

Challenges:

The pandemic continued to provide challenges for organizations like ours. Just as we thought COVID cases were on the decline and we were hopeful that school field trips to the Arboretum would begin again, the new variant hit our region. It has also impacted our ability to conduct indoor, in-person fundraisers so critical to the support of non-profit operations.

In spite of the pandemic, over the past year we have been able to focus on what is doable and accomplish the following:

- Provide a “sanctuary” for outdoor recreation and relaxation for more than 60,000 visitors;
- Serve more than 6,500 children through the Bartlett Arboretum’s programs, both virtual and in-person (when Covid protocols allowed) including 650 children who received scholarships for summer camp and other educational programs;
- Grow and donate fresh, organic produce harvested by volunteers and distributed to hundreds of Lower Fairfield County residents;
- Create three (3) new community gardens off-site for partner organizations, benefiting more than 500 individuals;
- Provide 150 programs to 10 community organizations, reaching over 1,400 people of all ages and abilities through our GrowMobile outreach program;
- Conduct an outdoor summer concert series that provided a variety of musical entertainment and a cooling venue to more than 1,200 attendees;
- Hold our second Honey Harvest Festival attended by over 1,500 children and adults;
- Host more than 75 adult education webinars reaching more than 3,000 attendees; and
- Provide 77 on-site programs for senior adults and people with special needs.

The Bartlett Arboretum Association is proud to be the caretaker of an invaluable City asset; however, it takes significant funding both to maintain the site and provide and grow recreational/educational services for the public. We employ one groundskeeper, a Certified Connecticut Arborist, at \$25 per hour. Regular grounds maintenance alone costs us an additional \$28,000-\$50,000 per year (we contract with an outsourced landscape management company chosen through a multiple bid process). It is of concern to the Association that although the Arboretum is City property, the operating funding we have received has not

compared favorably with other community non-profits, some of which are privately owned properties with no assurance of remaining in the public domain.

Projected goals and accomplishments for FY2022/23:

- Initiate Food Waste Reduction pilot program in partnership with the City's Recycling Program
- Continue trail improvements with capital funding including bridge replacement necessitated by the remnants of Hurricane Ida
- Complete capital campaign and begin construction related to the development of the horticulture/greenhouse project
- Expand the Community Garden program to include three additional locations
- Diversify and increase revenue streams to address annual operating needs
- Build staff and revise operational plan to provide greater interaction with the arboretum's weekend audience.

Looking Ahead:

Support from the City of Stamford allows us to manage the City's assets effectively and provide residents with the opportunity to gain an appreciation of the natural world and their role of stewards of our environment.

We ask you and the City of Stamford to endorse our initiatives by maintaining level funding with the addition of \$10,000 to support our partnership to launch the City's Food Waste Reduction pilot program. We are at a milestone in the history of this valuable City asset, and your support will help us to grow and sustain our community's environment and health.

We are excited to engage with you and your administration to serve the people of Stamford. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

The Bartlett Arboretum Association, Inc.