

Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens Summary of Significant Changes and Capital Requests for FY 23-24

Significant Changes: The Bartlett Arboretum Association, through a lease agreement with the City of Stamford, maintains a city-owned park open to the public, dawn to dusk, free of charge, 365 days per year. In 2022, the Arboretum installed a new security gate system that included the ability to count cars visiting the arboretum. As a result, we've been able to determine the Arboretum annual attendance more accurately. What was once estimated to be 60,000 visitors is over 100,000; many coming at dawn before the staff arrives and many more coming in the evenings, particularly in the summer months.

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 25% of the Arboretum's proposed operating expenditures for FY23-24. The remaining revenue comes from a combination of earned income, memberships, and private donations and supports programming for the Stamford Public Schools, the public and agencies and organizations who serve families with low incomes and/or special needs.

The Arboretum's Business Manager retired in November 2022 and with that change, the organization decided to outsource its bookkeeping services and upgrade our part-time membership and events coordinator to full-time. The current staff includes 6 full-time and 4 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.

We are pleased to report that in May of 2022, the Arboretum received accreditation from ArbNet, an interactive, collaborative, international community of arboreta and tree-focused professionals.

The Arboretum's Capital Request includes \$550,000 to create a new conservatory and greenhouse structure within the Arboretum's planned **Horticulture Complex**.

The existing greenhouse was retrofitted from a salvaged sewer cap brought to the site in the 1970's. While it was at one time a valuable addition to the Bartlett, the old, inefficient systems and the single-pane, non-tempered glass make it expensive to heat and impossible to accommodate the distinct climate conditions vital to our permanent collections of cacti, orchids, and tropical plants. The site lacks handicap access and adequate space for teaching and propagation. Due to safety concerns, the greenhouse was closed to the public in 2022.

After extensive study, it has been determined that the most cost-effective way to update our greenhouse facilities is to build a new one consisting of a Conservatory, and two working greenhouses. The Conservatory will provide public access to the Arboretum's extensive plant collection. The two working greenhouses will provide separate climate control spaces to support our education programs with local schools and the general public. They will also enhance our plant propagation efforts to support the City's native landscape programs as well as the Arboretum's annual plant sale. The former provides a savings to the City and the latter generates revenue for the Arboretum. The Bartlett Arboretum Association has raised \$570K in private donations in support the estimated \$1.12M cost of the Greenhouse project.

We respectfully ask that the Board of Finance keep the mayor's recommendations for capital and operational funds in the budget for 2023-2024.