



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan
Public Gardens/Community Gardens Focus Group
September 1, 2010

What are the key strengths of public gardens?

- Accessibility for many cultures and disabilities
- Great, enthusiastic staff
- Atmosphere
- Provides substantial framework for the broader horticultural community
- Strong educational programs – especially adult, but also children’s
- Attitude of staff – courteous
- Effective use of volunteers
- High caliber volunteers
- Well-maintained
- Year-round interest regarding programming
- Opportunities for self-directed study of landscape design
- Gardens provide a demonstration and educational resource for gardeners
- The move to use of more native plants, with a focus on ecosystems
- Information provided on invasive plants
- Changing displays and themes
- Emphasis as a model for storm water management
- Emotional/mental/physical health retreat
- Reputation for excellence extends beyond immediate area – model for other institutions
- Light display – talent of staff designers
- Biologically driven
- Well-integrated into the park system
- Integration of the arts into the programming – provide an arena for a wide variety of subjects/themes
- Destination for people beyond our immediate area
- Green Matters symposium

What do you believe to be the most essential services of public gardens? Why?

- Plant collections
- Growing our connection to the earth
- Mental health – respite from urban weariness
- Classes and guest lecturers – welcoming to the community
- Beauty and enhanced commitment to green space
- Creating a legacy of appreciation and awareness (of nature?)
- Great event space
- Gathering space for the community
- Ecosystem services

What are the opportunities to improve public gardens?

- Parking
- Accessibility to public transit
- Shuttles for events
- Make better use of McCrillis Gardens
- Ban smoking in the outdoor areas
- Attract a more diverse audience for programs (immigrant groups, civic associations)
- Translate interpretive materials into Spanish (other languages?)
- Outreach to schools – bring the programs into the schools
- Work with school facility staff on landscaping school grounds
- No pesticide use in the gardens – use organic methods
- Better promotion – Brookside Gardens is better known outside our area than locally
 - Senior day care centers
 - Create button for volunteers to wear, “Ask me how you can volunteer here, too!”
- Virtual gardens – promote to the online garden gaming community (“now get your hands dirty”)
- Audio tours/cell phone tours
- Improve relevancy to potential donors
- Look for in-kind opportunities
- Teach the next generation how to garden (vegetable gardening)
- Sponsorship opportunity: virtual garden donations
- Online classes
- Full refund without a surcharge
- Urban greening – outreach to Wheaton Redevelopment group
- Up county garden
- Grounds of libraries and community centers – need outreach from BROOKSIDE GARDENS
- Promote Brookside Gardens at booths at farmers’ markets
- Farmers’ market at BROOKSIDE GARDENS
- Bring 4-H kids in to help teach other kids – at Children’s Day
- Plan for future denser development and increased population – teach container gardening (“bucket” gardening) and small space gardening
- Copy Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s composting program – has a community outreach aspect
- Incorporate the benefits of the natural world related to the physical/mental health of the community when soliciting funds

Are there any other things to be aware of moving forward in this planning process?

- Use research to inform our decisions and see Brookside Gardens to politicians and funders
- Need more staff and space in the future
- Need grant writing staff
- Need fundraising staff
- Examine the budget for profit generating programs and opportunities
- Be aware of the large immigrant population – there’s a disconnect between what American gardeners and farmers are doing compared to what is being done on the ground – immigrants who work in the landscape field; provide educational programs and certifications in languages other than English and through the community college and UMD extension (benefit to Brookside Gardens will be new immigrant audiences)
- Cheap promotional opportunities: local parades, radio spots
- Guarantee continued existence of the gardens no matter how County organization changes (rumors of Commission dissolution)

- Don't neglect the fact that people don't need to come to Brookside Gardens to receive benefits (ecosystem services)

What are the key strengths of Community Gardens?

- Willingness to innovate
- Creatively leverage resources
- Placement in economically challenged areas
- Keeping fees affordable
- Supporting the local food movement
- Open to new ideas and projects
- Good demonstration of organic methods
- Enforcement of rules (keeps up the quality of the gardens)
- Good gardening practices
- Adds to civic pride
- Provides alternative to creepy conventional industrial food systems

What do you believe to be the most essential services of community gardens? Why?

- Education: where food comes from
- Mental health: respite from the urban environment
- Physical resources available that are provided by Parks
- Legacy: providing an opportunity to create a legacy for children to learn about gardening and care about it in the future
- Staff management of gardens provides oversight and expertise
- Educating each other: cooperative practices among the gardeners

What are the opportunities to improve community gardens?

- Accessibility to public transportation
- Working with MCPS
- More places for community gardens: retirement centers, churches, Leisure World, hospitals
- Immigrant organizations: reach out to different populations
- Good Counsel Site (the Rafferty Center green space)
- Broadcast that you are looking for space
- Rooftops
- Promotion: how important, demand is high
- Educational outreach
- Urban greening
- Libraries and community centers
- Partnerships with corporations

Are there any other things to be aware of moving forward in this planning process?

- Use research to inform our decisions and see Brookside Gardens to politicians and funders
- Need strong grant writer
- Analyze costs, turn into profits
- Large immigrant populations
- Aging in place initiative