

Brookside Gardens



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ITEM #8

April 12, 2002

MEMORANDUM

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

Via: Ken Ernst, Chief, Natural Resources
David Vismara, Horticultural Manager, Brookside Gardens

From: Stephanie Oberle, Horticulturist, Brookside Gardens *sgo*

Subject: Work Session, Master Plan for Brookside Gardens

Requested Board Actions:

1. Approval of the Staff Draft Master Plan for Brookside Gardens.

Overview

The Master Plan for Brookside Gardens was initiated by staff to articulate the need for a renewed facility to meet the needs of present and future visitors. The Plan creates a timeline to guide our work, including prioritizing essential maintenance, planning renovations to existing structures, and anticipating the development of new amenities and facilities.

Brookside Gardens is a unique facility of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a "living museum" with a dynamic collection of plants arranged in an artfully designed landscape. The mission to promote the art of gardening and science of horticulture inspires our visitors to not only enjoy the gardens during their visit, but to re-create their own visions of beauty at home.

Our most frequent users are our closest neighbors, who enjoy the beauty of the Gardens on a daily basis for relaxation and rejuvenation. As the Wheaton community enters a period of county-supported redevelopment, the Gardens should become a cornerstone of the renewal efforts. For county residents, the Gardens are known as a site for not only beautiful gardens, but stimulating educational programming. Within the region, Brookside Gardens has become renowned for its special events, including the summer Butterfly Show and winter Garden of Lights. Our staff has worked hard to attract the attention of our peers by hosting national professional meetings.



Background:

The Staff Draft Brookside Gardens Master Plan was presented to the Planning Board on October 18, 2001 and approved for distribution as the Public Hearing Draft. The Public Hearing was held on November 15, 2001, and written testimony was accepted for the official record until November 29, 2001. A work session was held on December 13, 2002. While a number of the questions raised at the public hearing and by the Planning Board were answered satisfactorily, the Planning Board requested additional information on the four following topics:

1. A plan to incorporate more garden renovations in the earlier phases of the master plan, rather than waiting until Phase IV.
2. A parking management plan to accommodate large events and days of high visitation.
3. Justification for the Event House, based on current needs and uses, and projecting potential income after improvements are made.
4. Overall funding plan for the Master Plan, including potential funding sources and cost of necessary improvements if plan is not implemented as recommended.

Board approval is requested for the concepts embodied by the master plan. The next step for each phase will be facility planning, which will allow for the opportunity to re-evaluate and fine-tune the concepts proposed by the master plan and the sequence in which they occur in each phase.

1. Incorporate more garden renovations earlier in the process

The Commissioners recommended incorporating more garden renovations earlier in the process, rather than leaving a large component until the last phase. The original Master Plan recommendations, are summarized below:

Phase I:

Buildings: Visitors Center Renovation and Addition, New Conservatory

Gardens: Entrance (front gates, gatehouse, driveway), parking lot, Visitors Center gardens, Conservatory (interior gardens), and Hilltop Pond.

Phase II:

Buildings: Maintenance and Propagation Area

Gardens: no garden renovations scheduled

Phase III:

Buildings: Event House

Gardens: Entrance, arrival circle, event garden court, and container garden.

Phase IV:

Buildings: none

Gardens: Formal Gardens, Dendritic Gardens, Woodland Gardens, Aquatic Gardens (Naturalized, Habitat and Gude Gardens).

A revised sequence would merge Phase IV into the three earlier phases. In determining the revised three Phase plan, two factors were considered: addressing critical needs and being least disruptive to operations, programs, visitors, and circulation patterns. Through initial CIP funding of Phase IA, the Gude Garden, the county can demonstrate its commitment to the

renovation of Brookside Gardens and the Master Plan. Initiating work on this garden will allow the necessary time to develop revenue streams to fund the rest of the master plan.

Phase IA: Gude Garden: Year 1-5

Cost: \$2 million

Buildings: Park Overlook at Pine Lake Gate

Gardens: The Gude Garden, Park Overlook at Pine Lake Gate, Naturalized and Habitat Gardens at the perimeter of Gude Garden.

Parking: No disruption.

Sequencing: During this phase, only the area of the Gude Garden, its perimeter service road, and the access to Pine Lake will be affected. Construction equipment directed through the Maintenance and Propagation area will minimize traffic impact on the other public areas of the Garden. All other Gardens functions will be unaffected. Renovations will include repair of the dams, stabilization of eroding pond edges, a dedicated pedestrian path and planting enhancements. At the same time, the Park Overlook at Pine Lake will be built, creating a wayfinding station to orient visitors entering the Gardens from Wheaton Regional Park.

Note: The dams in the Gude Garden are in critical need of repair. The landscape with its Japanese Tea House is one of the Garden's most recognized features, and one of landscape architect Hans Hanses' most successful designs.

Phase IB: The Visitors Center and New Conservatory: Year 1-5

Cost: \$11.9 million

Buildings: The renewed Visitors Center and new Conservatory will serve as the organizational and geographical "heart" of the Garden. Additionally, a gatehouse will be built at the entrance at 1800 Glenallan Avenue, and the Anderson Pavilion will be renovated.

Gardens: During this phase, the original recommendations of the master plan will occur, including renewal and creational of gardens at the Entrance (front gates, gatehouse, driveway), parking lot, Visitors Center gardens, Conservatory (interior gardens), and Hilltop Pond. In addition, the remaining Aquatic Gardens, including Habitat and Naturalized gardens, will be renovated.

Parking: A third parking bay will be added to the existing parking lot, increasing the number of spaces available at the Visitors Center from 117 to 165. The parking lot at the old Conservatory will also remain open.

Sequencing: During the renovation of the Visitors Center and Construction of the new Conservatory, some services will be affected. The first step will be construction of the third parking bay. This will allow use of one parking bay for staging of materials during construction.

Within the Visitors Center, the following sequence is planned. Restrooms, giftshop, offices, library, auditorium, and information desk services will be available at all times. The adult classroom will remain open for programming. The children's classroom will be closed while the addition is built. Children's programs will be coordinated with adult programs, sharing the adult classroom.

The new addition will include two new classroom areas, a display corridor linking the Visitors Center to the new Conservatory, utility and storage area for Conservatory, and the Conservatory.

Once the addition to the Visitors Center is complete, the renovations will occur. The gift shop will move to the former adult classroom. The entrance will be oriented towards the current

Atrium. Offices will expand into the lobby area in front of the former information desk. The move of the library to the former auditorium will be delayed until the Event House is built. The final step in this phase will be demolition of the old Conservatory. Adult and children's programs will be housed in the two new classroom areas.

Renovations to gardens will include the Visitors Center entrance, gatehouse, driveway and parking lot. Additionally, the Aquatic Gardens, including the naturalized and habitat gardens will be renovated. The stream bank along Glenallan Avenue will be stabilized and the stream adjacent to Wheaton Regional Park will be enhanced by native plants. The Taxodium Terrace and an extension of the existing boardwalk will complete a new loop path at the east end of the property and reaffirm the pedestrian link to Wheaton Regional Park and Brookside Nature Center with an orientation station.

Phase II: Propagation & Maintenance Area and "Informal" Feature Gardens: Year 6-10

Cost: \$10.2 million

Buildings: The improvements to the Propagation and Maintenance Area will occur as outlined in the master plan. This includes the growing greenhouses, maintenance and equipment storage, composting bins, bulk materials storage, staff offices, Beech Hill/Friends of Brookside Gardens office, and intern housing at Stadler House. The Tree House will be built, and the Azalea Garden Gazebo renovated.

Gardens: The "informal" feature gardens, including the Woodland Gardens and Hillside Garden, will be renovated. A new network of ADA accessible paths will create a circulation pattern that would allow pedestrian traffic to bypass construction around the Event House in the final phase.

Parking: Parking for staff and volunteers at the Propagation and Maintenance Area will be consolidated into one 50-space parking lot. Construction of the 50-space overflow parking lot adjacent to Beech Hill will allow for additional visitor parking when the parking lot adjacent to the Event House is under construction in Phase III. The distance between the overflow parking lot and the Visitors Center is approximately 700 feet, via the ADA accessible Hillside Ramble.

Sequencing: Construction in the Propagation and Maintenance area will not affect visitor services, garden experience or circulation.

Renovations to the Woodland Gardens will not affect visitor programs or services, but some disruption of circulation patterns and gardens will occur. An ADA accessible service road linking the Visitors Center to the Event House will be built. A secondary paved pedestrian path, also ADA accessible, will be built along the eastern edge of the Woodland Gardens, through the Hillside Garden. These two routes will allow visitors to by-pass the gardens while they are under renovation.

Phase III: Event House and Formal Gardens: Year 11-15

Cost: \$9 million

Buildings: The Event House, Gate House, and several garden gazebos.

Gardens: The original phasing of the Event House and associated gardens included the entrance, arrival circle, Event Garden Court and Fountain Garden. The remaining formal gardens will also be renovated at this time, including Rose Garden, Fragrance Garden and other identified feature gardens.

Parking: The parking lot will be available until construction of the new Event House begins, when materials will be staged in the parking lot. Visitors will be directed to the Visitors Center parking lot, with overflow parking available at Maintenance & Propagation Area.

Sequencing: During construction of the Event House and associated gardens, visitor services and programs will not be affected. Educational programs and rentals will occur in the Visitors Center auditorium and classrooms. The boardwalk to the east and the Hillside Walk to the west will allow pedestrian traffic to by-pass construction in the Garden, or provide access to Wheaton Regional Park via the Nature Center gate.

As stated earlier, the old Conservatory will be demolished when the new Conservatory opens at the Visitors Center. Construction on the Formal and Dendritic Gardens will be phased to allow visitors access both across the spine of the Formal Gardens and between the Conservatory and the terminus of that garden axis at the Taxodium Terrace. When the Event House is opened, the final renovations in the Visitors Center can occur, moving the library to the former auditorium and converting the former library to additional office and storage space.

2. Parking Plan

The use and opening of designated parking areas will be determined by the number of events per day, the attendance at each event and anticipated heavy garden visitation days. The Visitors Center parking lot will be open 365 days a year from sunrise to sunset providing visitors access to the main hub of the Garden. Carpooling will be encouraged for Commission and rental events. Over flow parking in the maintenance area will be available for public use during high visitation days to lessen neighborhood impact. The distance from the overflow parking lot at the Propagation and Maintenance Area to the front door of the Visitors Center is about 700 feet, or a 5 minute walk. The Events House parking lot priority will be for event users. Overflow will be sent to the Visitors Center or Brookside Nature Center lot in close cooperation with the Nature Center program staff. The lot will be available for public use during non-event, high visitation days.

According to county zoning ordinances, parking standards for community centers community centers, libraries and museums, is 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Another source recommends for libraries or museums 1.0 space per 300 square feet. Parking standards recommended for auditoriums allow for a minimum of one parking space for 4 seats. However, these parking standards do not have a category of space use that corresponds to “public garden.” Parking allowances must be made for visitors who come to use the Gardens, exclusive of the facilities.

Using the above standards, the minimum number of parking spaces required for the 28,500 square foot Visitors Center & new Conservatory would range from 72 to 96. The minimum number of spaces for the 11,800 square foot Event House would range from 30 to 40 based on assessment as a “community center” or a minimum of 63 spaces based on the needs of a 250 seat auditorium.

These parking standards recommend a minimum number of spaces. However, based on experience with Gardens events and carrying capacity, the actual number of spaces required is much higher, as determined by the Master Plan.

3. Justification for the Event House

The Event House is designed primarily to serve the needs of the Gardens in its horticultural and educational mission, but also to be appealing and marketable for popular use.

Rental income will be expected to cover the direct operating costs, but not debt service. Prior to facility planning, a comprehensive marketing study should be undertaken, and at that time the feasibility of the Event House should be determined, given market conditions.

Current use and income

Currently, meeting facilities at Brookside Gardens are used by four types of groups: 1. Brookside Gardens staff-planned events and educational programs; 2. Commission meetings and events; 3. community and horticulture-related nonprofits; and 4. renters. The total number of programs in FY2001 was 690, almost two per day. In the same period, the rental program generated \$96,880, with a net profit of \$47,050.

Use of Meeting Facilities at Brookside Gardens, FY2001

User	Number of Events	Percent of Events
M-NCPPC: no fee		
* Brookside Gardens: meetings	51	7.4%
* Brookside Gardens: Adult Education	104	17.6%
* Brookside Gardens: Childrens Education	172	24.9%
* Brookside Gardens: Open to public	92	13.3%
* Commission Events and Meetings	106	15.4%
Subtotal M-NCPPC events	525	76%
Community: fee-reduced	66	10%
Rental: full fee	99	14%
Total Number Events	690	100%

Projected use and income

With the improvements recommended by the Master Plan, demand for the new facilities of the Event House by all user groups will increase. The rental program, even when aggressively marketed, will never reach the occupancy rate or income levels that may be found at properties (Newton White, Rockwood, etc.) whose primary purpose is as a meeting facility. Allowing for use of the facility on peak (weekend) and off-peak (weekday) days for Gardens, Commission and community/non-profit events, we project an increase in rentals by 25%, or a total annual income \$125,000.

Comparisons:

In surveying comparable public gardens with rental facilities in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Chicago, it was found that while rental income covered direct costs (staff, custodial maintenance, utilities, supplies), facilities were not required to cover their indirect costs (facility construction and capital improvements). The Montgomery County Recreation Department also schedules its fee structure to cover direct costs for its facilities.

	Chicago Botanic Garden	Lewis Ginter Botanic Garden	Meadowlark Gardens	Brookside Gardens
Direct costs	Event staff: custodial services, security, set-up and take down	Security, custodial services, set-up and clean-up, utilities	Event staff, security, custodial services, utilities, regular maintenance	Event staff, custodial services, set-up and take down
Indirect costs	not charged back	not charged back	not charged back	not charged back
Revenue last fiscal year	\$450,000	\$500,000	\$457,000	\$96,880
Profit last fiscal year	\$350,000	\$260,000	\$343,000	\$47,050
# Rentals: full-fee	80	174	not available	99
# Rentals: reduced fee	40	62	not available	66
# Garden events: no fee	800	195	not available	526
Rental fee range	\$250-\$11,000	\$50-\$2850	\$100-\$5,000	\$200-\$2200

Again, the distinction should be made between those facilities whose primary function is as a rental facility, and Brookside Gardens, whose primary function is as a horticultural and educational facility, with the rental program as a secondary function to augment the operating budget. Perhaps the greatest value of the Event House in its rental capacity is as an enhancement to the services the Gardens already offer, allowing use of the unique garden setting in a new way by a different segment of the community than our existing garden users.

4. Funding the Master Plan

Cost of necessary improvements if Master Plan not implemented as recommended:

It was determined that the renovations to the Visitors Center, Service Hill, and the Gardens are critical to meet identified needs for maintenance, renovation and improvement of visitor services. However, by renovating the existing Conservatory, two main goals of the master plan are defeated: first, to make the Visitors Center the geographic and programmatic “heart” of the Garden by locating visitor parking, services and attractions there; and second, to move rental events to a more private location. Two summary cost estimates are shown below,

first for refurbishment of necessary renovations and second for the master plan in full. Complete figures are given on pages 9-11 of this report.

Refurbishment: Cost: \$28 million

Buildings: Renovate and expand Visitors Center; renovate Conservatory at existing site; renovate Service and Maintenance Area.

Gardens: Renovate gardens as recommended.

Master Plan in full: Cost: \$33 million

Buildings: Renovate and expand Visitors Center; build new Conservatory; build new Event House; renovate Service and Maintenance Area.

Gardens: Renovate gardens as recommended.

Funding Plan

Based on preliminary research about trends in giving in Maryland, to cultural organizations in Montgomery County, and at other public gardens, it seems feasible that the Brookside Gardens Master Plan be funded through a combination of state, county and private dollars. Given that the Gardens serves a regional audience, as shown through registration records and visitor surveys, there is a strong case for state funding/bond money. A potential partnership with the Parks Foundation could give the Foundation the visibility of a high-profile project, and the Gardens the benefit of their fundraising experience.

In Montgomery County, eight cultural organizations are currently engaged in capital campaigns. Campaign goals, for both capital projects and endowments, range from \$4.2 to \$120 million, with the average goal at \$10 to \$12 million. Many of these institutions rely heavily on funding from the state and county for up to 60% of their campaign goals.

A model, based on other Montgomery County organizations, could be one-third from the state, one-third from the county, and one-third from private donors. An audit of current funding streams and a capital campaign feasibility study should be conducted to determine the appropriate ratio of state, county and private funding.

Brookside Gardens Master Plan Cost Estimate: Master Plan in Full

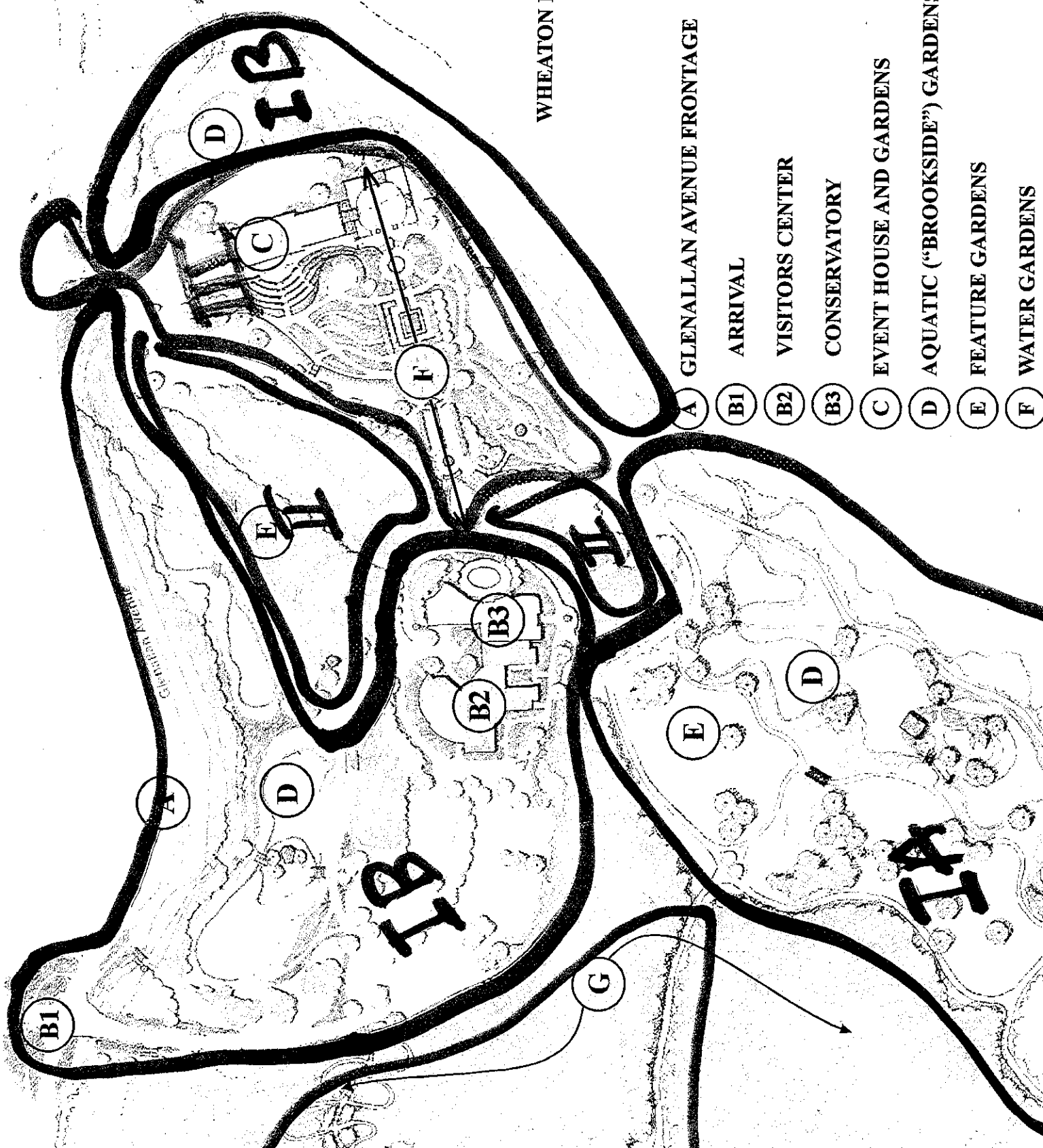
PHASE I:			
Visitors Center, New Conservatory, Gude and Aquatic Gardens			\$13,877,761
	Preparation of Design Guidelines:	\$75,000	
	General Site:	\$201,415	
	Utilities:	\$281,500	
	Buildings & Exhibits	\$5,687,000	
	Aquatic Gardens	\$2,171,722	
	Display Gardens:	\$1,119,750	
	Subtotal Phase I	\$9,536,387	
	Permits	\$50,000	
	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,907,277	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$2,384,097	
	Total Phase I	\$13,877,761	
PHASE II			
Propagation & Maintenance Area and Woodland Gardens			\$10,233,006
	Woodland Gardens:	\$509,725	
	General Site:	\$375,740	
	Utilities:	\$716,660	
	Demolition:	\$172,000	
	Buildings and Structures:	\$5,224,500	
	Subtotal Phase II	\$6,998,625	
	Permits	\$50,000	
	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,399,725	
	Floodplain & wetland delineation study/survey	\$35,000	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$1,749,656	
	Total Phase II	\$10,233,006	
PHASE III:			
Event House and Formal Gardens			\$9,029,567
	General Site:	\$151,055	
	Utilities:	\$287,250	
	Demolition:	\$25,000	
	Buildings and Structures:	\$2,322,000	
	Display Gardens:	\$3,407,500	
	Subtotal Phase III	\$6,192,805	
	Permits (FEMA, Corps, and Local)	\$50,000	
	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,238,561	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$1,548,201	
	Total Phase III	\$9,029,567	
		TOTAL	\$33,105,334

Brookside Gardens Master Plan Cost Estimate: Refurbishment

PHASE I:			
Visitors Center , Gude Garden and Aquatic Gardens			\$9,906,621
	Preparation of Design Guidelines:	\$75,000	
	General Site:	\$187,025	
	Utilities:	\$140,750	
	Buildings & Exhibits	\$1,871,000	
	Aquatic Gardens	\$2,171,722	
	Display Gardens:	\$1,119,750	
	Subtotal Phase I	\$5,565,247	
	Permits	\$50,000	
	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,907,277	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$2,384,097	
	Total Phase I	\$9,906,621	
PHASE II			
Propagation & Maintenance Area and Woodland Gardens			\$10,233,006
	Wodland Gardens:	\$509,725	
	General Site:	\$375,740	
	Utilities:	\$716,660	
	Demolition:	\$172,000	
	Buildings and Structures:	\$5,224,500	
	Subtotal Phase II	\$6,998,625	
	Permits	\$50,000	
	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,399,725	
	Floodplain & wetland delineation study/survey	\$35,000	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$1,749,656	
	Total Phase II	\$10,233,006	
PHASE III			
Conservatory Renovation and Formal Gardens			\$8,143,617
	General Site:	\$151,055	
	Utilities:	\$287,250	
	Demolition:	\$5,000	
	Buildings and Structures:	\$1,731,000	
	Display Gardens:	\$3,407,500	
	Subtotal Phase III	\$5,581,805	
	Permits (FEMA, Corps, and Local)	\$50,000	

	Contingency (20% of subtotal)	\$1,116,361	
	Design/Management Fees (25% of subtotal)	\$1,395,451	
	Total Phase III	\$8,143,617	
		TOTAL	\$28,248,244

WHEATON REGIONAL PARK



A GLENALLAN AVENUE FRONTAGE

B1 ARRIVAL

B2 VISITORS CENTER

B3 CONSERVATORY

C EVENT HOUSE AND GARDENS

D AQUATIC ("BROOKSIDE") GARDENS

E FEATURE GARDENS

F WATER GARDENS