

Chicago Botanic Garden
2016 Operating Plan
Visitor Experience

The Chicago Botanic Garden will deliver a profound and inspiring on-site experience to visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. This Garden experience will create a sense of pleasure, relevance, and belonging that will bring visitors back to the Garden or to its website time and again. This will build the Garden's effectiveness at generating loyalty, driving attendance, increasing earned and raised income, and motivating the public to protect nature.

Goal	Objectives	Deliverables
<p>1. The Chicago Botanic Garden will provide a visitor experience that excels in customer service, hospitality, amenities, and overall value. Staff and frontline operating partners (at the Garden View Café and Garden Shop) will consistently represent the Garden's high standards and goals.</p>	<p>1.1 Customer Experience 2020. Started in 2010, the Customer Experience 2020 project seeks to define the Garden's standards for a "five-star" visitor experience, utilizing many of the models in the retail world, such as Four Seasons and Nordstrom.</p>	<p>Implement a new CRM (client record management) and ticketing software to replace the Patron Edge/Patron Edge Online.</p> <p>Radio-frequency identification (RFID) system at Gatehouse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further develop reports from the Trackstar/RFID program to give the Garden valuable information about members, such as how often each individual comes and when they come. This information can be used for targeted marketing and program development. <p>Customer Call Center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on call reports, improve answer times and reduce drop calls by retaining and expanding current seasonal staff hours on weekends and peak weekdays. <p>Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to evaluate long-term parking plans and monitor the effectiveness of logistical procedures to support a smooth entry visit, both for members and visitors. - Continue to restrict access on the Visitor Center/Annex Road to ensure safety of bikers/walkers from the North Branch Trail. - Refine valet offerings to focus on peak weekends and holidays during the busy season. - Improve bus parking for self-guided groups in Parking lot 3. <p>Emergency Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement a Garden-wide annual emergency exercise to raise staff awareness of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery actions. - Investigate training options for other threats.
	<p>1.2 Expand options to further connect with visitors of all abilities and proactively exceed the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).B24</p>	
	<p>1.3 Make the Garden View Café experience seamless to the overall Garden experience, with the highest of standards for customer service and courteousness toward all visitors.</p>	<p>Ensure that the quality and presentation of the food at the Garden View Café matches the expectation visitors and staff have of the Garden itself—second to none.</p> <p>Expand the offering of Garden Saison, the Garden's craft beer brewed and flavored from rhubarb and strawberry harvested from the Regenstein Fruit & Vegetable Garden.</p> <p>Continue to market the "new" Garden View Café and Garden Grill through digital advertising and the Garden's own collateral (e-newsletters, social media, etc.).</p> <p>Ensure the Café consistently appears organized and clean, and presents itself as a place in which visitors want to spend time and relax.</p> <p>Ensure that Café staff is part of a Garden customer-service training program.</p> <p>The Café staff is perceived to be Garden staff by customers and should represent themselves in a similar manner.</p>
	<p>1.4 Make the Garden Shop experience seamless to the overall Garden experience, with the highest of standards for customer service and courteousness toward all visitors.</p>	<p>Create a five-year strategic plan for the Garden Shop, with financial goals and implementation plan.</p> <p>Create a yearlong marketing plan for the Garden Shop, integrating membership and marketing to drive customers and to further promote the Shop as a premier shopping experience with unique gift items and special events.</p>

		<p>Ensure that Event Network's e-commerce platform can support any marketing efforts (i.e., live links to the "12 Days of Christmas" promotion items).</p> <p>Ensure that the quality and presentation of the merchandise matches the expectations visitors and staff have of the Garden itself—second to none.</p> <p>Ensure that the Shop's offerings reflect the mission and programming of the Garden. For instance, the Shop would not sell paper plates or napkins or promote local vendors and artisans.</p> <p>Ensure that the Shop staff is part of a Garden customer-service training program..</p>
	1.5 Work with staff from the Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School to ensure that logistics for rerouted programs work seamlessly and safely for all visitors so they are not adversely affected by the construction of the Regenstein	<p>Continue the pick-up and drop-off plans for school field trips and Camp CBG implemented in 2015.</p> <p>Reroute delivery traffic on the Annex Road so trucks and other vehicles are not using the road when school and Camp CBG programs are in session.</p>
2. The Chicago Botanic Garden will be a four-season destination by creating year-round programs that give visitors the opportunity to experience and understand nature and the natural world, indoors and out.	2.1 Continue to analyze the fully loaded profits-and-loss statements of each major visitor event (including marketing, print materials, overtime, etc.) to ensure that each event meets the following criteria: 1) Advances the mission of the Garden, 2) Increases attendance and builds new audiences, 3) Increases earned income; and 4) Raises awareness of the Garden through public communication.	<p>Continue to work with Horticulture, Marketing and Communications, and other Garden departments to implement a successful third Orchid Show. Include the Membership and Development departments, the Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School of the Botanic Garden, Private & Corporate Events, group visits, the Garden Shop, and Sodexo/Culinary Landscape in the planning and development of related revenue-producing programs and products.</p> <p>Continue to plan and implement the Antiques, Garden & Design Show for 2016 both as logistics manager as well as exhibitor liaison/show producer.</p> <p>Host the second American Craft Expo (ACE) in late September. Use this event to drive new audiences for visitors, members, and donors.</p> <p>Host Bike the Garden for the second year.</p>
	2.2 Implement new visitor events, including a series of tastings that involve wine, beer, and spirits.	<p>Plan and implement a new music program in partnership with Valslist to draw in new audiences. This ticketed concert series begins with an evening in conjunction with the Orchid Show.</p> <p>Consider hosting a Bloody Mary Brunch, wine pairing dinner, or other food-related public program, if there is sponsorship to underwrite the costs.</p>
	2.3 Implement the currently planned calendar of visitor events for 2016, including but not limited to the following: the Orchid Show; American Flower Show Series; Antiques, Garden & Design Show; Evenings; Tuesday Morning Music; Farmers' Market; Art Festival; Kite Festival; Fall Bulb Festival; Autumn Brews: Seasonal Beer Tasting in the Garden; HallowFest; Spooky Pooch Parade; Fine Art of Fiber; and Wonderland Express.	<p>Use "attendance drivers" to increase membership or drive current members to renew or extend their memberships.</p>
	2.4 Promote the existence and usage of the North Branch Trail addition.	<p>Work with the Forest Preserves of Cook County to refine the on-site bike rental program.</p>
	2.5 For all visitor events (on-site or off-site), work with the Marketing and Communications department to develop appropriate digital advertising and marketing strategies and messaging for each target audience, with the goal of driving attendance to events that financially benefit the Garden.	<p>Continue to refine analyses coming from the Garden's digital marketing and advertising efforts to better hone in on customer data.</p> <p>Work with Marketing and Communications on the Predictive Analytics project, which seeks to use all the Garden's current data on customers to better segment the marketplace and define how to create more targeted marketing messaging.</p>
3. A visit will inspire general audiences to create a relationship and affinity with the Chicago Botanic Garden, driving them to visit more often, become members, engage further, and support its mission.	3.1 Welcome 1,100,000 visitors, with 60 percent members and 40 percent nonmembers, to the Garden in 2016.	
	3.2 Signage.	<p>Replace the Tooling Up and Greenhouse/Potting Shed exhibits in the Regenstein Fruit & Vegetable Garden. Refresh design and update copy on exhibit panels.</p> <p>Serve on interdepartmental team to develop interpretive and wayfinding signage for the new Regenstein Learning Campus building and garden areas for September 2016 opening.</p>

	3.3 Interpretive volunteers' and programs' administration.	Plan and implement second World Bonsai Day program with bonsai curator. Create new series of four Pepper Sundays at the Regenstein Fruit & Vegetable Garden in conjunction with the International Herb Association Year of the Pepper initiative. Plan and implement second Harvest Weekend program at Regenstein Fruit & Vegetable Garden. Collaborate with School of the Chicago Botanic Garden and Visitor Programs & Events to add new apple cider programming.
	3.4 Tram tours.	Refurbish the Bright Encounters Tour vehicle to maintain the standard of Garden aesthetics. Continue to identify grants/sponsors to contribute to the capital expense of replacing our two Sunliner trams.
	3.5 Permanent and temporary exhibitions.	Develop and host Hidden Art of Trees exhibition in Joutras Gallery. For Model Railroad Garden: Landmarks of America, focus on making infrastructure replacements and replacing aging landmarks. For Butterflies & Blooms, complete second year in temporary location and prepare for 2017 move to permanent location at the new Learning Campus.
4. The Garden will make notable advancements toward making its visitor operations a model for being as waste- and emissions-free as possible and will serve as a leading educational resource by conducting programs that visitors can participate in, learn from, and model at home to live more environmentally conscious lives.	4.1 Oversee the relationship between Sodexo and Community Gardening to ensure they work together to provide as much product as possible from those community sites to the Garden View Café.	Look for more on-site opportunities to message the relationship with Windy City Harvest and the products that are in the Garden View Café.
	4.2 Make the Garden's sustainability message pervasive in the Private & Corporate Events and Group Tours programs.	Work with housekeeping to implement a food-scrap composting program for event rentals (e.g., create bins for guests to deposit their food scraps).
	4.3 Plan and implement the seventh World Environment Day program for June 4.	Add new keynote format with film screening/discussion of Jens Jensen documentary. Collaborate with existing and new event corporate sponsors for their on-site programming. Continue vase recycling in partnership with Random Acts of Flowers. Expand number of performances for family entertainment stage.
	4.4 Maintain trolley service to and from the Glencoe Metra Station on Sundays, May through September, to encourage the use of public transportation to and from the Garden for visitors.	Continue to message the Garden's free admission and availability of public transportation options. Promote Metra's reduced rate weekend passes on the Garden's website.
5. The Chicago Botanic Garden will create new programs, garden areas, amenities, and services (on-site, online, or at satellite locations), employing the best new technology, to increase revenue, improve visitor experience, and expand opportunities for environmental education.	5.1 Look at new and existing programs to determine their financial longevity at the Garden.	Wonderland Express - Begin the process of researching alternatives and/or tweaks to this exhibition to be implemented in 2017. HallowFest - Research ideas to make the event more aligned with the Garden or consider pumpkin carving exhibition as replacement.
	5.2 Pilot nature-related visitor programs, in particular around Halloween, as a possible replacement to HallowFest. Develop new programs for 2016 to attract audiences and strengthen collaborative opportunities.	Expand program opportunities with National Park Service beyond current participation. Offer seasonal, nature-themed "fireside chats" utilizing McDonald Woods' shelter/fireplace. Complete service as a North American Japanese Garden Association (NAJGA) board member (manager, Interpretive Programs). Serve on the Education Section committee of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA) to host a symposium for educators in February 2016 (director, Interpretive Programs).
	5.3 Work with Marketing and Communications to enhance resources available to visitors online.	Improve the senior and ADA visitor experience by creating pre-visit suggestions via the website and on-site materials.

		Create various visitor-suggested itineraries that focus on the Garden's no-admission fee and highlight the "value" of the Garden, including add-ons like tram tours and the Model Railroad Garden.
		For the website, continue to improve current tour pages to create enticement for future visits, including web views designed to enhance the experience for all visitors.
	5.4 Conduct full evaluation of all traveling exhibitions to determine rental viability and then market determined profitable exhibitions as a part of the Chicago Botanic Garden's traveling exhibition program. Promote this program to other institutions throughout the country.	
	5.5 Develop business plans, then evaluate and implement those that are feasible from a list of possible earned-revenue opportunities.	

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