

**PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD
FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY**

Jean Franczyk, President and CEO

Chicago Botanic Garden

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Ribbon cutting of the Chicago Botanic Garden's Regenstein Learning Campus
September 8, 2016



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Good afternoon President Preckwinkle, Chairman Goslin, Commissioners, and General Superintendent Randall. My name is Jean Franczyk, and I am President and CEO of the Chicago Botanic Garden. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of the Garden as part of the budget process and to answer any questions you might have.

With me today are several other members of the Garden's staff: Tom Nissly, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Ginny Hotaling, Vice President, Government Affairs; and Beth Dunn, Government Affairs Director and Coordinator of the Garden's Supplier Diversity Initiative. Earlier you heard from our colleague, Eileen Prendergast, and Ph.D. candidate, Alicia Foxx.

The Chicago Horticultural Society is proud to partner with the Forest Preserves to provide all of the people of Cook County with one of the world's finest botanic gardens as well as a leading center for science, education, and community engagement. Serving as a model to others throughout the region, the nation, and the world, this relationship is a perfect example of a highly successful public/private partnership – and one which we routinely and proudly highlight to our visitors, Board members, donors and others.

Since my arrival at the Garden in mid-April, I have enjoyed visiting with many of you and have appreciated the opportunity to get to know both you and your staff. I have listened to your suggestions and hopes for the Garden's future, because like any good partnership – especially one like the Garden and the Forest Preserves share - listening and working together are essential elements to a successful relationship.

As you know, the Garden occupies 385 acres in northern Cook County. This living museum is the platform upon which all of our work rests. Half of our site is devoted to science research in conservation and restoration and the other half is devoted to beautiful display gardens created in partnership with outstanding landscape architects; the entire campus supports the School of the Botanic Garden with a full range of continuing education courses for adults and programs for children, beginning with 3 year-olds in nature preschool.

Less known are our community programs: The Garden reaches into Chicago neighborhoods with science enrichment for Chicago Public School youth, teacher professional development programs, and, most significant for today's conversation, our urban agriculture program that runs 13 urban farms, 12 of which are in the City of Chicago and, combined, generate nearly 100,000 pounds of produce a year.

We do our work because we believe plants matter to the healthy life of this planet and its people.....we believe that people live better, healthier lives when they can create, care for, and enjoy greenspace, especially gardens..... everything we do aligns with our mission to cultivate the power of plants to sustain and enrich life.

The Garden, as a proud member of the Forest Preserves' family, recognizes the importance of the Forest Preserves' Next Century Conservation Plan. Along with other partners, members of the Garden's senior staff have been active participants in the planning and activities needed to achieve



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the goals set forth in the Plan. Garden staff members are actively involved on the Steering Committee as well as on the Nature, People, Economics and Leadership Committees and are partnering with Forest Preserves staff to restore and protect our Preserves, expand educational and recreational opportunities to diverse and underserved communities, and make the preserves welcoming to all.

The Garden continues its commitment to serve the people of Cook County. In 2015, for the third time in our 43-year history we welcomed more than one million visitors to our Glencoe campus. The Garden is on track to maintain these strong numbers again in 2016 – in fact last Sunday we exceeded the one million mark. One of the reasons the Garden attracts such a large, diverse audience is that we remain admission-free, 365-days a year. While we do charge a parking fee, which is reduced for Cook County residents, any number of people can arrive in a car and pay one flat fee. In addition, we are pleased that many of our guests enter the Garden free of charge via bicycle, public transportation or on foot. We believe that free admission makes the Garden one of the best values in the Chicago area. Our 2017 budget is based on continuing this admission-free model.

These million-plus visitors represent varied ethnicities, ages, and abilities. They travel to the Garden from a wide geographic area and represent diverse cultures and economic backgrounds. People come for free music programs on Tuesday mornings and summer evenings. Earlier this year, 28,000 escaped the cold and enjoyed the breath-taking beauty of 10,000 orchids during our winter Orchid Show. They came this fall to hear Cheryl Strayed and Ruby Bridges during the sold-out Garden Talks series aligned with the opening of the new Regenstein Learning Campus. More will come in 2017 when we welcome speakers, Scott Sampson and Sam Kass. And of course, visitors came for the Garden's annual holiday favorite, Wonderland Express, which opens to the public again this year, the day after Thanksgiving.

A new public program in 2016 was "Night of 1,000 Jack-o-Lanterns," which during four nights in late October, thrilled, excited and captivated the hearts of nearly 21,000 visitors. On Sunday, October 23, exceptional fall weather during the day and the 1,000 Jack-o-Lanterns Halloween display in the evening combined for an all-time, one-day Garden attendance record of over 12,500 people. Another record was also set on Sunday, November 6 when perfect late autumn temperatures and the last remnants of fall color combined as we welcomed more than 9,000 visitors, the largest November day in the Garden's history.

And, of course, they come to walk the woodland, the prairie and enjoy the beauty of our 27 display gardens, and, throughout the Garden, to experience the healing and inspiration that nature provides during times of joy and sadness. Our guests enable us to live our mission every day, and we believe and hope that our visitors leave the Garden with a deeper appreciation of the power and importance of plants.

Sometimes we have the opportunity to share something special from our Garden with others. As was mentioned at last year's budget hearing, the Garden had two titan arums, or corpse plants, on display in 2015. During that time nearly 181 million people around the world learned about corpse flowers through various media sources and more than 100,000 people came to see both plants, fondly named Spike and Alice. This spring the Garden again had two more titan arums bloom.



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One corpse flower, dubbed Sprout, bloomed and again delighted Garden visitors. The other plant was given to the Chicago Park District and was placed on display at the Garfield Park Conservatory. We were pleased to share this unique phenomenon with residents on Chicago's west side who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to come to the Garden to see the titan arums in bloom.

Two major construction projects highlighted last year's long list of capital projects. Construction of new greenhouses and a head house production facility, the next phase of the Kris Jarantoski Campus, began this summer. When completed, the new facilities will allow us to maintain, and even redefine, the horticultural excellence for which we are known. It will also ensure the Garden's ability to support advanced plant conservation research and expand our highly successful plant-based education programs. Once the fundraising is complete and the final phases of the Jarantoski Campus constructed, the south end of the Garden, which is little known to many visitors today, will be transformed into a destination in itself.

As Eileen shared with you, the other major construction project, and a highlight of this past year, was the September opening of the seven-acre Regenstein Learning Campus. This new campus signals unequivocally the Garden's role as a learning institution that serves students of all ages, background and abilities, and delivers on the promise of our mission. We have set a new standard for learning at botanic gardens and we set a high bar for ourselves. If you haven't visited the new Learning Campus I encourage you to do so – we would love to give you a tour.

Both of these construction projects – on the Jarantoski Campus and the new Regenstein Learning Campus - and all of our capital projects for that matter, improve the Forest Preserves holdings and are made possible only through extensive fund raising efforts from both public and private sources. The funding the Garden receives from the Forest Preserves through its annual allocation helps to leverage these fund raising efforts and allows us to enhance the Garden we create and curate for the Forest Preserves.

As part of these construction and capital projects, as well as purchases for goods and services, the Garden continues to emphasize expanding expenditures with minority- and women-owned businesses. As a result of this effort, our combined spend in 2015 with minority and women-owned businesses reached \$6.2 million or over 29 percent. These numbers doubled the Garden's 2014 expenditures. Through the end of September 2016, the Garden's numbers are equally strong, with \$6.5 million, or a little more than 34%, spent with MBE/WBE firms. In reviewing the expenditures associated with the new Learning Campus over the last three years, \$6.9 million, or 36%, of the expenditures were with minority and women-owned businesses – 21% with minority owned businesses and 15% with women owned businesses.

We will also continue to strive to grow the composition of our staff, volunteer corps, and vendors to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We can always do better, and we are committed to doing so. The Garden understands this is an important aspect of our work and we are committed to our supplier diversity program and intend to continue to incorporate individual goal setting for all our projects.



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The Garden's new Regenstein Learning Campus, which Eileen described earlier, compliments the Garden's active research in plant science. As a modern botanic garden we have become a world leader in plant conservation science, as our scientists help to conserve, protect and restore native habitats. We also use science as a way to serve and educate as we seek to heal our environment both locally and around the world. The Garden's conservation scientists study what is happening to plants, what changes can result from a loss in plants and healthy habitats, and then seek to discover ways to mitigate the damage that has been done.

Our Plant Conservation Science Center is home to conservation science research projects as well as the Garden's programs in seed banking, land management and restoration, shoreline restoration, and our joint master's degree and Ph.D. program in plant biology and conservation with Northwestern University that Alicia discussed earlier. In 2015 more than 140 college graduates participated in the Garden's Conservation and Land Management program in 12 western and four eastern states, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management and other federal agencies. In addition, 25 students in the National Science Foundation funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates program worked alongside Garden scientists and graduate student on plant biology and conservation projects, and low-income African-American and Latino students from Chicago Public Schools helped prepare for STEM careers through the Garden's Science First and College First programs.

Closer to home, last summer we were proud to have had the opportunity to share our expertise in horticulture, conservation and education with a crew of teenagers and leaders involved in the Forest Preserves Conservation Corps who worked alongside members of the Garden's staff. In collaboration with the Friends of the Forest Preserves we hope to continue this program in 2016.

In both Cook and Lake counties, the Garden continues its Windy City Harvest youth and adult urban agriculture and jobs training programs. Our focus through these programs is to improve the employment opportunities for the participants – many of whom are hard-to-employ, looking for new careers, or have been involved with the justice system – and to help broaden access to fresh produce for low-income households. Currently the Garden is working in partnership with the Lawndale Christian Health Center to open the "Farm on Ogden." This new food hub and community wellness center will expand urban agriculture training and production capacity year-round and create education and job training opportunities in North Lawndale. Perhaps most importantly, the Farm on Ogden will help improve community health by providing free Veggie Rx, or food prescription boxes of healthy, organically grown produce to patients served by the physicians at the Lawndale Christian Health Center.

In addition to this very positive report are the realities of costly capital needs and infrastructure repairs that face our institution. Beside ongoing repairs to parking lots, paths, and bridges and the need to replace aging vehicles and equipment, this year we are facing another unexpected, and very expensive project. Zebra mussels have invaded the Garden's water system and lakes and emergency remediation is needed to prevent further damage. This project is estimated to cost more than \$850,000.



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Another necessary and very costly project we are embarking upon is the modernization of our constituent relationship management, or CRM system. With a price tag of \$1.5 million this complex technology will improve web-based customer service and update business operations. Like so many infrastructure projects, which are vitally important to the day-to-day Garden operations but never seen by visitors, this is something that donors are unlikely to fund.

A challenging aspect of preparing the 2017 operating budget is the ongoing need to control expenses. Costs of energy, technology, and health services, make it difficult to achieve a balanced budget each year. Cutbacks at the state and federal levels, and the financial challenges that we all face, are realities that the Garden is doing its utmost to address. Leveraging the allocation from the Forest Preserves to secure funding from private donors, corporations, and foundations remains an ever-present aspect of our work.

President Preckwinkle, Commissioners, and General Superintendent Randall, the proposed 2017 Forest Preserve District budget and the allocation the Garden receives and spends wisely will help enable the Chicago Botanic Garden to continue its high level of public service. I appreciate your leadership and friendship, your visits to the Garden, your counsel, and your support. The Garden's Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and I look forward to continuing the positive work we are doing together to serve all the citizens of Cook County.

Thank you – are there any questions I can answer for you?