

NYBG



BRANCHING OUT: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2024–2030



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Introduction: Branching Out

Since The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) was founded in 1891, each generation of leaders has had its own approach to planning for the Garden's long-term stewardship and enhancement. The most recent 30-year planning cycle helped bring this august institution back from the brink, rejuvenating our organization, beautifying its 250-acre site, and restoring its vibrancy and financial health. From this stable position, we are ready to look outward.

We formally launched the current strategic planning process in the Spring of 2022 with a staff appreciation week—*NYBG/2030 Week*—filled with meaningful opportunities for community-building, professional development, and deep engagement with the fundamental question: *Where are we going?* We invited all 500+ staff members at all levels and in every department to envision the future of NYBG. On a parallel track, the Board of Trustees participated in the same exercise and provided valuable insight and guidance. Five strategic objectives (page 5) emerged from this process. These statements represent our collective goals and reflect today's world.

In addition to strategic planning, *NYBG/2030 Week* marked the launch of a new series of employee engagement programs called *Branch Out*, designed to encourage staff to step out and gain exposure to all aspects of the Garden. We are branching out from our routines, meeting colleagues from other areas, and getting to know our institution beyond our individual domains. We are building connections and creating a strong network based on collaboration and shared mission. We now apply the principle of “branching out” to our organization as a whole, extending beyond our 250 acres, our laboratories, classrooms, and offices. Strong partnerships, within the institution and outside of it, will propel us forward on a trajectory for increased impact.

Branching Out builds on our strengths so that we will be just as relevant and essential in 2030 as we were in 1891. We are already widely recognized as a beautiful place of joy and respite, but that is not the full story. NYBG is a robust plant and fungal science organization, a center for scholarship and learning, and a community anchor in the Bronx. Through a more complete integration of all of these dimensions and a more expansive external profile, we will ensure that we are addressing the most pressing environmental and social issues of our time. We will branch out to make certain the full breadth of the institution is understood and our impact is maximized in the wider world.

November 16, 2023

Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Master Plan Processes

In the Spring of 2022, we launched parallel planning processes: Strategic Planning for our programs, representing our plans through the year 2030; and Comprehensive Master Planning, a road map for the development of our 250-acre site over the next 25 years. Each plan is designed to inform and support the other. For more information on Comprehensive Master Planning, see page 36.

We developed a phased process for Strategic Planning. Each phase engaged Staff at all levels as well as the Board of Trustees, with the Executive Committee of the Board in particular offering frequent counsel.

Phase 1: Where are we now?

Research and information gathering to establish a baseline understanding of the state of NYBG, including a Human Resources assessment, audience research study, Enterprise Risk Management assessment, and sustainability and carbon calculations.

Phase 2: Where are we going?

Development of the Strategic Objectives, incorporating input from Staff and Trustees.

Phase 3: How will we get there?

The longest and most involved phase of Planning, aimed at generating and refining the initiatives that comprise this Strategic Plan. The Ideation stage mobilized Staff in every department to brainstorm solutions to everyday problems as well as big ideas to propel NYBG forward. In Evaluation & Prioritization, senior leadership reviewed the 130+ proposals generated in Ideation and developed many of them into signature initiatives. Business Planning comprised budgeting and scheduling exercises for further prioritization.

Phase 4: Approval & Dissemination

Refinement and financial planning over the summer and fall of 2023. Multiple drafts were shared with Staff and Trustees between June and November.

**Phase 1:
Where are we now?**

Info Gathering &
Research

**Phase 2:
Where are we going?**

Objective Development

**Phase 3:
How will we get there?**

Ideation ▪ Evaluation & Prioritization ▪ Business Planning

**Phase 4:
Approval &
Dissemination**

**Comprehensive Master
Planning**

RFP and Engagement with
Partner

Discovery

**Project Concept
Development**

Finalization

**Brand
Refresh**

Select Firm

**Project
Work**

Finalization

**Launch and
Mini Brand
Campaign**

Strategic Objectives



Environmental Action

NYBG will investigate, elevate, and amplify the role of plants in solving the climate and biodiversity crises.



Bronx-Forward

NYBG will respond to the interests and opportunities of our borough—a diverse, vibrant, immigrant and multi-ethnic community that is emblematic of today’s America.



Power of Place

NYBG will inspire more diverse audiences to seek beauty, knowledge, and wellbeing in the natural world through education and experiences that can only be found at the Garden.



Digital Impact

NYBG will become a leading online global resource through our unparalleled collections, horticultural knowledge, and plant science expertise.



Management Excellence

NYBG will be a model in the cultural and nonprofit sector, making us a premier place to work and a highly resilient, environmentally sustainable, collaborative, and effective organization.

Signature Initiatives and Core Programs

Branching Out: A Strategic Plan for 2024–2030 comprises the programs that NYBG will invest in through the year 2030 in order to achieve our Strategic Objectives.

Signature Initiatives represent new or expanded areas of focus. They reflect the output of the Staff Ideation, Evaluation & Prioritization, and Business Planning exercises, as well as the ongoing counsel of the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees. Each signature initiative will require additional investment in budget, time, and effort. Some are anticipated to generate new revenue. These are outlined in a multi-year budget representing the plan period.

Core Programs are longstanding NYBG activities that strongly support one or more of the Strategic Objectives. As part of the administration of the Strategic Plan, Core Programs will be evaluated and re-evaluated each year as part of the annual budgeting process to ensure that they are well aligned with our strategic focus.

Many initiatives in the Plan address multiple objectives. Each is listed according to its primary Strategic Objective; secondary objectives are also indicated.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVES	Environmental Action	Bronx-Forward	Power of Place	Digital Impact	Management Excellence
Advance an Urban Conservation Strategy	●	○	○	○	○
Create a Bronx River Watershed Health & Resilience Program	●	○	○		○
Enhance High-Impact Research Collaborations	●	○	○	○	○
Lead the International Biological Collections Community to Leverage Data for Environmental Insights	●		○	○	○
Pilot Innovating New Research Projects	●	○	○	○	○
Train New Botanists and Mycologists	●	○	○		○
Double the Capacity of Bronx Green-Up	○	●	○		○
Enhance Career Pathways and Workforce Training		●	○		○
Expand Bronx Community Partnerships		●	○		○
Increase our Economic Impact on the Borough		●	○		○
Craft Special Experiences to Attract New Audiences	○	○	●		○
Create Inclusive, Accessible, and Multilingual Interpretation and Programming	○	○	●	○	○
Elevate Seasonal Interest Year-Round	○	○	●		○
Expand Reach of Branded Products and Exhibition Content			●	○	○
Make Online Learning Flexible	○			●	○
Modernize and Digitize the LuEsther T. Mertz Library	○		○	●	○
Relaunch NYBG.org	○		○	●	○
Activate the Climate Toolkit	○	○	○	○	●
Centralize Planning and Evaluation Functions	○	○			●
Enrich the Employee Experience and Invest in Professional Development		○	○		●
Implement Practical Measures for Financial Sustainability					●
Improve and Expand our Technology Infrastructure	○	○	○	○	●
Integrate Customer Insights				○	●
Upgrade our Safety and Security Systems		○	○		●

● Primary ○ Secondary

CORE PROGRAMS	Environmental Action	Bronx-Forward	Power of Place	Digital Impact	Management Excellence
Children's Education	●	○	○	○	○
Cutting Edge Laboratory Research	●		○		○
Humanities Institute	●	○	○	○	○
Institute of Economic Botany	●	○	○		○
Institute of Systematic Botany	●		○		○
Research Collections	●	○	○	○	○
School of Professional Horticulture	●	○	○		○
Affordable Housing Development		●	○		○
Bronx Community Farm Hubs	○	●	○		○
Community Events		●	○		○
Edible Academy	○	●	○		○
GEAR Up	○	●	○		○
Recognition Months		●	○	○	○
Urban Advantage	○	●	○		○
Exhibitions and Public Programming	○	○	●	○	○
Everett Children's Adventure Garden	○	○	●		○
Kids' Camps	○	○	●		○
Living Collections and Seasonal Displays	○	○	●		○
LuEsther T. Mertz Library	○	○	●	○	○
On-Site Continuing Education	○		●	○	○
THRIVE	○	○	●		○
C.V. Starr Virtual Herbarium	○		○	●	○
Hand Lens	○		○	●	○
Mobile Guides			○	●	○
Plant Tracker			○	●	○

● Primary ○ Secondary

CORE PROGRAMS (CONT.)	Environmental Action	Bronx-Forward	Power of Place	Digital Impact	Management Excellence
Branch Out Employee Engagement		○	○		●
IDEA Action Plan & Staff Committee		○	○	○	●
Integrated Pest Management	○	○	○		●
Peak Load Management	○	○	○		●
Storm Water Management	○	○	○		●
Volunteer Program	○	○	○	○	●

● Primary ○ Secondary



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Environmental Action



NYBG will investigate, elevate, and amplify the role of plants and fungi in solving the climate and biodiversity crisis.

Plants and fungi are critical to supporting all life on Earth. Robust natural biodiversity helps reduce carbon emissions and cool the planet. Plants and fungi restore damaged ecosystems, advance reforestation, and support animal species, including threatened keystone species, such as bees, that underpin the entire global food system.

NYBG is a world-leading plant and fungal research institution, holding globally significant biological collections and expertise in both modern and traditional plant knowledge. Our field, laboratory, and collections-based research on plants, fungi, and their habitats empower us to address climate change and its impacts on biodiversity and human wellbeing.

Our nature-based solutions activities involve partnerships in more than 40 countries worldwide. Our investigators and researchers are on the frontlines of efforts to conserve biodiversity in some of the world's most vulnerable forest areas. We work with communities to harness local knowledge and practices and design sustainable solutions.

Closer to home, our researchers study critical ecosystems such as our own Thain Family Forest, the coastal zones along New York Harbor, and the Hudson River that protect our communities and sustain habitats for plants and animals. Further, we curate the data and tools necessary for conservation efforts, create educational and outreach programs for the local Bronx community, and help train the next generation of environmental stewards.

Advance an Urban Conservation Strategy

Cities across the globe are grappling with the impacts of—while simultaneously contributing to—the unfolding biodiversity and climate crises. At NYBG, in the heart of the United States’ largest metropolis, we have a unique opportunity to act as a catalyst for innovation by leveraging our scientific and public platforms to propose solutions to these environmental challenges. We will develop an urban conservation research and engagement platform that shows how cities can be more resilient and livable by centering nature. Further, we believe that cities are an important part of the solution to our environmental crises, with great capacity to efficiently accommodate populations and minimize human impact on the environment.

In 2023 NYBG created the position of Vice President for Urban Conservation to drive this work as we contend with the environmental challenges in our own backyard. Research will emphasize the importance of nature to urban life and its role in addressing numerous global and local challenges, including climate change, health and nutrition, and even war. We will consider adapting natural processes for climate resilience, especially for storm-prone, coastal cities such as New York. The program for Urban Conservation Strategy will engage with local and international non-profit and research partners to advance urban resilience and assist decisionmakers across New York City—and in cities around the world—to address pressing environmental questions. NYBG and NYC have global reach and influence that can effect global change.

Create a Bronx River Watershed Health & Resilience Program

The Bronx River is a beloved natural feature of the Garden’s landscape, running for nearly one mile through the eastern side of the Garden. It is the heart of our 50-acre, old-growth Thain Family Forest. It is also an imperiled ecosystem that supports remarkable plant and animal biodiversity and provides millions of urban and suburban residents with access to nature. As a natural corridor connecting densely urban New York City to forested areas of southern Westchester, the Bronx River will play an essential role in supporting the northward migration of plants, animals, fish, birds, and insects in response to climate change. To protect our increasingly threatened native biodiversity, we must work with partners throughout the watershed to keep the Bronx River healthy now and into the future. This is also a proof-of-principle project for NYBG. If we can build a successful model for the Bronx River Watershed, we can consider expanding our efforts to other watersheds in the region and beyond.

From mixed borders, lawns, street trees, and rain gardens within the larger watershed to wetlands and riparian forests, diverse and sustainably managed plantings will be required to keep the Bronx River healthy. NYBG has the expertise in plant biodiversity, ecological restoration, and sustainable horticulture necessary to lead partners throughout the region in the development, communication, and implementation of strategies for ensuring the long-term health of the Bronx River.

Together with local government, non-profit, and academic partners, we will create a multifaceted, phased program to annually convene public and private stakeholders to identify priority projects and activities within the watershed; develop outreach programs to engage communities within the watershed and inspire a commitment to action; develop and implement plant-based strategies to

increase the health of the Bronx River; monitor results; and communicate and promote this initiative regionally and nationally.

Enhance High-impact Research Collaborations

The planet is facing an unprecedented environmental crisis, with climate change and biodiversity loss threatening the survival of one million species and the lives of billions of people. The recent United Nations Biodiversity Conferences COP-15 (on strategies to halt biodiversity loss) and COP-27 (on ramping up ambition to limit global warming to below 2°C and mitigating climate change) have paved the way to urgent commitments and rapid actions by society. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) outlines global targets to be achieved by 2030 and beyond to safeguard and sustainably use biodiversity.

The required actions include restoring our ecosystems and reversing nature loss, conserving biodiversity, and implementing climate- and nature-based solutions (NbS), where people work with nature to tackle socio-environmental challenges, including human health, food and water security, and disaster risk management. At NYBG, we will focus and enhance our research program to address these challenges across a range of areas where our institutional expertise and assets can be best applied, including nature protection and conservation (e.g., by contributing to the Key Biodiversity Areas and Important Plant Areas programs); ecological restoration and urban forestry (e.g., by understanding the benefits of urban forests such as the Thain Family Forest); and the sustainable utilization and management of ecosystems and species. This will especially focus on research that advances global sustainable agriculture, including wild species relatives to crops, research on food plants and fungi, agroforestry, bioprospecting, and bioeconomy.

NbS are most effective when led by meaningful, interdisciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations with various stakeholders and local communities. NYBG leads research at a global scale and we are committed to delivering impactful actions and NbS through enhanced research collaborations and partnerships on these areas, leveraging scientific knowledge, data, collections and expertise in plants and fungi.

Lead the International Biological Collections Community to Leverage Data for Environmental Insights

As the world adopts major new conservation goals like the 30x30 commitments and begins to address pressing environmental needs, such as restoring degraded ecosystems, data about plants will become increasingly important. At the same time, our ability to collect and synthesize complex data has increased exponentially, and new forums to aggregate biodiversity data are rapidly taking shape. Now is the time to ensure that the global conservation community is equipped with and informed by the robust data on plants and fungi contained in our collections and those of our peer institutions globally.

With nearly 8 million specimens, more than half of which are digitized, NYBG's William and Lynda Steere Herbarium holds a unique, large-scale, and globally invaluable dataset about historic and modern distributions, diversity, and behavior of plants and fungi. We are uniquely positioned

to inform environmental researchers about changes in biodiversity and the effects of climate change, and we have the institutional wherewithal to serve up insights about plants and fungi that may influence important conservation and restoration decisions.

NYBG has long played a leadership role in the biological collections community, most recently convening scientists from across the United States for a workshop to envision a National Biological Collections Action Center. We see an opportunity to connect to coalitions of conservationists and other decision makers to ensure that they are equipped with important insights from our collections. This opportunity is especially ripe as artificial intelligence enables us to analyze and extract insight from our collections at a speed and volume that was previously impossible. Further digitization of collections will be the first step in a multi-phase digital evolution of our collections in order to unlock the vast power of our data.

Pilot Innovative New Research Projects

This pilot program is dedicated to fostering innovation and exploration in the field of botanical science. Annual, internal grants will be issued to NYBG scientists to support groundbreaking research projects at their initial stages. Staff are challenged to pursue innovative ideas and hypotheses, test protocols and establish collaborations, as a precursor to prepare proposals for larger, external grants from entities such as the National Science Foundation. Ideal projects focus on interdisciplinary collaborations that bridge the gap between traditional botanical science and emerging fields, such as genomics, climate science, and biotechnology. The program supports research with the potential to drive innovation, solve pressing environmental challenges, and deepen our understanding of plant and fungal life.

Train New Botanists and Mycologists

There is a critical scarcity of plant and fungal scientists trained to conduct the necessary, rigorous research on plant diversity required to meet today's growing climate and biodiversity challenges. For five decades, NYBG has trained graduate students from around the world, including international citizens from countries where biodiversity is high, conservation needs are acute, and botanical expertise is in high demand. International NYBG alumni have returned to their home countries to do important botanical research, particularly in Latin America and with especially strong connections to Colombia (16 students) and Brazil (10 students). The presence of graduate students is a force multiplier for our curatorial staff, whose research is advanced through the support and collaboration of these students.

Despite the need for trained botanists and mycologists, many colleges and universities are reducing botany programs, either by consolidating them with biology departments, or eliminating them altogether because of a lack of faculty or funds. We will fill this critical gap by offering education and training to promising Ph.D. candidates in specimen- and field-based research and the application of cutting-edge molecular and genomic approaches to the plant sciences. We have active partnerships with six universities who send Ph.D. candidates for our training, including the City University of New York (CUNY), Yale University, Columbia University, New York University, Fordham University, and Cornell University.

Core Programs

Children's Education

Environmental lessons for the next generation of Earth's stewards and their teachers



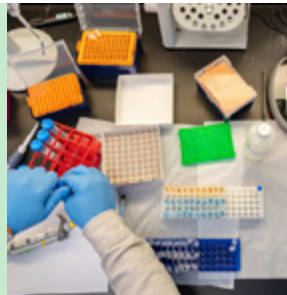
Institute of Systematic Botany

Documenting plant diversity as a basis for conservation



Cutting Edge Laboratory Research

Studying the evolution of plants to secure their future



Research Collections

A wealth of resources in the Mertz Library, Steere Herbarium, and other collections



Humanities Institute

Promoting innovation at the intersection of science and the humanities



School of Professional Horticulture

Training environmentally minded horticulturists



Institute of Economic Botany

Studying traditional plant knowledge around the world





Bronx-Forward



NYBG will respond to the interests and opportunities of our borough—a diverse, vibrant, immigrant and multi-ethnic community that is emblematic of today’s America.

As an anchor institution in the Bronx, NYBG is committed to improving our neighbors’ health and wellbeing. We serve multiple constituencies, and although we remain committed to visitors and stakeholders from near and far, NYBG was created within and remains firmly planted in the Bronx. Our 1.4 million Bronx neighbors desire a safe place to live and recreate, good jobs that provide opportunity for their families, and a high quality of life.

Our largest outreach program is Bronx Green-Up (BGU), established in 1988 to assist grassroots leaders in creating community gardens. Today, BGU supports a network of more than 2,000 Bronx gardeners. BGU’s community-led ethos has enabled the program to grow and endure over the past 35 years and will continue to distinguish it moving forward.

We apply this spirit across our Bronx-Forward programs, listening, helping, and supporting community members in realizing their own unique dreams and objectives. We will build on a history of successful partnerships with the local community through expansion of the flagship Bronx Green-Up program, enhanced employment opportunities that create defined pathways for economic growth, greater access to NYBG’s resources and facilities for Bronx residents, and evaluation tactics that will help us measure and increase our baseline economic impact.

Double the Capacity of Bronx Green-Up

Bronx Green-Up offers horticulture education, technical assistance, supplies, networks, and a host of other capacity development resources for Bronx community gardeners, schools, and other partner organizations. Bronx Green-Up is our most visible presence throughout the borough, inspiring and supporting Bronx residents in improving their communities through greening projects large and small. Over the past 35 years, more than 200 community gardens have been established through this program, enriching the lives of countless New Yorkers, from young children to senior citizens, who seek safe and accessible green spaces, fresh food, vibrant community, and all that urban gardens can offer.

For all that the program accomplishes, due to limited resources, BGU cannot respond to every request and turns away individuals and organizations each year. For example, due to current staffing limitations, BGU has not been able to provide regular support to greening and beautification initiatives in local parks or business improvement districts.

Our most immediate goal will be to double Bronx Green-Up's staff capacity, enabling the program to respond to more requests from our partner community gardens, to work with other interested partners on local beautification and greening projects, extending NYBG's horticultural excellence more broadly throughout the borough. Further ahead, we seek to improve Bronx Green-Up's presence onsite by improving the program's facilities and adding signage and digital interpretation that will increase visitors' awareness of NYBG's significant role in our community.

Enhance Career Pathways and Workforce Training

NYBG provides an abundance of opportunities for skills training and workforce development through internships in Science and Horticulture, hands-on horticulture instruction for students in the School of Professional Horticulture and Bronx Community College, participation in New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program, educational training in the teen Explainer Program, and many seasonal and part-time positions in our Visitor Experience department. Collectively, these programs engage more than 400 people each year, many of them Bronx youth, and represent a significant institutional investment in professional pathways.

While effective, these pathways are distributed across several NYBG divisions and managed by individual departments, each with its own short-term goals and approach to training. Formal coordination among these programs and tracking of long-term employment outcomes for participants will enable job seekers to maximize the potential of NYBG's significant investment in their future.

We will develop a formal Career Pathways program that will work internally across divisions, focusing on the Explainers and Visitor Experience positions, which together comprise approximately 250 participants each year. We will establish training and evaluation standards and track long-term outcomes for participants and externally with Bronx stakeholders to ensure the program best serves community needs.

Expand Bronx Community Partnerships

Connecting with and championing our Bronx community is a key value for NYBG. We believe that whenever feasible, Bronx residents and organizations should have enhanced access to enjoy the benefits NYBG offers.

Through our Bronx Neighbors Program, we offer free Grounds Access Pass admission to all Bronx residents. In fiscal year 2023, we estimate more than 40,000 visitors will take advantage of this program. A new street team initiative, staffed by part-time employees throughout the year and overseen by Community Relations, will target local communities for outreach to publicize our offerings and boost visitation by Bronx residents.

Expanding the Bronx Neighbors Program, we will develop a model to offer affordable space rental and catering options for local non-profits and school groups.

Increase our Economic Impact on the Borough

The Bronx is the poorest borough in New York City and home to the poorest Congressional District in the United States, per the 2020 census. More than one third of Bronx children live in poverty. NYBG makes a significant, positive impact on the local economy as an employer of more than 300 Bronx residents; as a tourist attraction that brings one million visitors, and associated spending, to our borough each year; and as a large-scale consumer of purchased materials and services. Further, using investments from NYBG's endowment, real estate developers are creating a new affordable housing development for Bronx seniors and families across the street from our site on Webster Avenue, helping to address the NYC and Bronx housing crisis.

An economic impact study commissioned in 2011 estimated more than \$300 million of value added by NYBG to the New York City and State economies. We will conduct a new study of NYBG's local economic impact, focusing especially on the Bronx, quantifying spending (staff salaries and benefits, local vendors, and more), and setting updated goals. We will refine our procurement practices to prioritize local buying when practical. Examples include the current practice of including Bronx artists in public programs and local products at our weekly farmers' market.

Core Programs

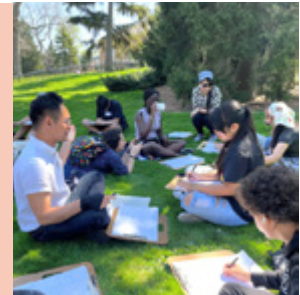
Affordable Housing Development

Providing vital housing units for seniors and families in our community



GEAR Up

Inspiring NYC students to become the next generation of conservationists



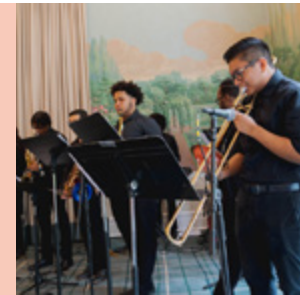
Bronx Community Farm Hubs

Growing and delivering fresh produce to nourish our neighbors



Recognition Months

Celebrating community histories and contributions



Community Events

Bronx Day, Tour de Bronx, Fiesta de Flores and other heritage celebrations



Urban Advantage

Providing Bronx teachers and students with a foundation in science education



Edible Academy

Teaching city kids to grow and prepare food





Power of Place



NYBG will inspire more diverse audiences to seek beauty, knowledge, and wellbeing in the natural world through education and experiences that can only be found at the Garden.

Visitors flock to NYBG for natural seasonal beauty, one-of-a-kind plant-based exhibitions, and rich educational offerings for children, families, and adults. We have reached new heights in visitation, exceeding one million visitors per year since 2016.* Even so, we can continue to attract new audiences, and enhance the experience of existing ones, by elevating the significance of plants and nature in our lives through all facets of the visitor experience.

Nature has the power to promote wellbeing. Studies demonstrate that spending time in natural settings reduces physical and psychological stress, actually slowing heart rates and reducing blood pressure. Launched in 2019, the Edible Academy's Therapeutic Horticulture and Rehabilitative Interventions for Veteran Engagement program (THRIVE) is assisting in the treatment of local veterans. Therapeutic horticulture courses in Continuing Education and standing Wellness Wednesdays programs for the public, offered on our free access day, likewise promote physical and mental wellbeing through experiences with plants.

All the while, the Garden is under-visited in the heat of summer and chill of winter. Likewise, while visitors crowd the highly developed western zone of the Garden, areas farther afield are less traveled. Innovative programs highlighting the importance of plants and the healing power of nature can attract new audiences at any time of year, in all corners of this magnificent site.

As our audience undergoes a generational shift, we will tailor new offerings to Millennial and Gen Z preferences and motivations. Additionally, we will intensify our programs for underserved audiences, specifically the Bronx and Accessibility communities.

* Visitation fell below one million visitors in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 during the height of the coronavirus pandemic and associated closures. In fiscal year 2022, visitation rebounded to again exceed one million visitors.

Craft Specialized Experiences to Attract New Audiences

In order to reach new audiences and generate added revenue, we will create special ticketed experiences designed to appeal to Millennial and Gen Z interest in unique, destination-driven, social events, complete with live entertainment and food and drink offerings. These will build on the success of existing programs such as *Orchid Nights*, but will take advantage of underutilized spaces and times, such as low-visitation seasons or late or early-morning hours.

To appeal to family audiences, we will similarly launch special ticketed events aimed at children and caretakers, such as children's performances and interactive workshops, as well as seasonal, family-friendly, special exhibitions in and around the Everett Children's Adventure Garden. New programs will emphasize hands-on experiences, which are highly desirable for Accessibility audiences, but also effective tools for educating all members of the public.

Create Inclusive, Accessible, and Multilingual Interpretation and Programming

Some who come to the Garden to experience its exhibitions, educational programs, or horticulture offerings leave without having connected with the breadth of the NYBG's scientific programs and collections or our deep roots in the Bronx. We can enrich their experience by reimagining our site-wide interpretive program to reinforce important storytelling about who we are and what we do, especially in regards to plant research and the environment. We also have an opportunity to deepen engagement with our Bronx neighbors. The Bronx is home to diverse communities with a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including populations for whom English is not their primary language. Comprehensive multilingual interpretation would serve these diverse audiences.

To better engage more visitors in the entirety of the Garden's program, we will develop an interpretive master plan that uses digital and analog tools to weave research and collections, environmental action, and Bronx narratives into the Garden experience while also improving wayfinding and overall ease of visitor navigation. This will be a natural extension of the Comprehensive Master Planning process, which has helped clarify plans for improved visitor orientation and engagement with the Garden writ large.

As the interpretive master plan takes shape later in the plan period, we will pursue a number of incremental measures to make our visitor experience more inclusive and comprehensive. We will establish strategies for incorporating multi-lingual interpretation and accessible text through our normal interpretive activities as a means of furthering connections to our Bronx neighbors. We are deepening our offerings for accessibility communities, including ongoing ASL-interpreted tours, Multi-Sensory Tours, and Low Sensory Mornings, or "Quiet Hours," primarily intended for but not limited to people with autism.

Elevate Seasonal Interest Year-Round

As the exhibition program and collections development over the last 20 years have created reliably high visitation in spring, fall, and the winter holiday season, peak visitation is stretching existing facilities and resources to their limits. Additionally, there is untapped potential to increase visitation during periods of poor weather or lack of “must-see” exhibits or seasonal blooms.

In addition to continuing our successful program of exhibitions, we will develop new attractions targeted at building audiences in the less-visited shoulder seasons, in underutilized spaces. These will include core horticultural content such as a summer-long Water-Lily and Lotus extravaganza in the Conservatory Courtyards and additional floral spectacles in the Conservatory Lawn.

Smaller-scale, indoor exhibitions in winter, which may highlight NYBG collection objects, artist interventions, low-tech interactives, videos, and panel exhibits (which could be leveraged as traveling exhibitions for other institutions, generating earned income), or traveling exhibitions developed by other institutions, will drive additional visitation in the low period of winter. New exhibitions and displays will continue to foreground plant science in accordance with our *Environmental Action* objective.

Expand Reach of Branded Products and Exhibition Content

Nearly 95% of NYBG’s one million onsite visitors hail from within a 30-mile radius of our Bronx location. Many more millions of visitors engage with the Garden from afar via the website, social media, and traditional press. NYBG’s profile has expanded around the globe thanks to the popularity and success of special exhibitions such as the long-running *Holiday Train Show* and blockbuster art and plant exhibitions such as *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*. Further, lifestyle trends and increased environmental awareness have generated a massive increase in interest in gardens and plants.

As our institutional profile grows and more people integrate plants into their daily lives, we will leverage the strengths of our assets into new lines of licensed products (including apparel, health, beauty, and decor) to new markets around the globe. Further, domestic and international interest in our world-class interdisciplinary exhibitions can be channeled into an additional revenue stream through traveling or licensed exhibition content, which can be packaged and marketed to other museums, gardens, and cultural institutions that would benefit from our robust programs and institutional expertise.

Core Programs

Exhibitions and Public Programming

Telling plant stories as only NYBG can



LuEsther T. Mertz Library

A wealth of historical treasures relating to botany and horticulture



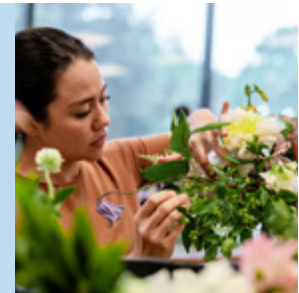
Everett Children's Adventure Garden

STEM learning through nature exploration



On-Site Continuing Education

Inspiring lifelong learners through hands-on experiences



Kids' Camps

Enriching school breaks with plant adventures on our site



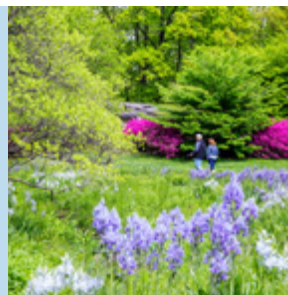
THRIVE

Healing veterans through therapeutic horticulture



Living Collections and Seasonal Displays

An urban oasis for diverse audiences





Digital Impact



NYBG will become a leading online global resource through our unparalleled collections, horticultural knowledge, and plant science expertise.

In today's interconnected world, particularly in the post-pandemic era of remote work and study, digital platforms are more essential than ever. Online platforms play a strategic role in enhancing our visibility and deepening engagement with diverse audiences to advance biodiversity and human wellbeing. Our digital evolution has parallel purposes: building relevance through technology and global platforms, creating potential for revenue and funding sources, and unlocking the power of our collections for study and research.

Through virtual tours, online classes, digitized collections and more, we have the ability to provide access to our diverse resources to anyone, anywhere, at any time. New tools provide the opportunity to personalize the visitor experience and deepen engagement with diverse audiences. By embracing digital innovation and staying at the forefront of emerging technologies, we can position ourselves as a leader in the field and a vital resource for plant lovers and conservationists around the world.

Make Online Learning Flexible

The expansion of this initiative is a key part of our educational strategy. Flexible, customizable, and more affordable than many traditional offerings, online courses provide students with a universe of knowledge at their fingertips. With a structured online learning program, we will tap into a global audience to fulfill our mission, expand brand awareness, and strengthen understanding of our core strengths in science, horticulture, landscape design, and botanical art, among other disciplines.

In spring of 2023, we implemented a Learning Management System (LMS) in order to build capacity for an expanded online education program and host video recordings for students needing flexible options. We will continue to expand our flexible online offerings over the next several years, adding fully asynchronous options to attract a new, broader audience than our on-site certificate programs.

Modernize and Digitize the LuEsther T. Mertz Library

The LuEsther T. Mertz Library is one of the largest and most comprehensive botanical libraries in the world, with a collection of more than twelve million books, manuscripts, journals, maps, photographs, and other objects related to botany, horticulture, and related fields. It is an invaluable resource to hundreds of researchers, practitioners and educators who visit us each year.

Like other libraries today, we must modernize our practices in order to increase access to the collections beyond our physical site, including digitizing key areas of the collection. Much of the Library archives are currently inaccessible to Staff and researchers. In order to prepare for a digitization of this collection, we will pursue a multi-phased initiative that includes a robust inventory and evaluation.

Relaunch NYBG.org

Last overhauled in 2017, the NYBG website was purpose-built to meet specific needs: to share information on exhibitions, events, and activities, sell tickets to those occasions, and address digital accessibility needs. However, a narrow focus has limited our ability to adapt to the changing expectations of the digital public.

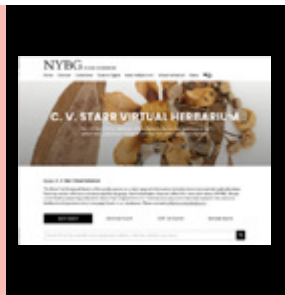
By using a research- and data-driven approach to redesigning the website, we can open opportunities not only to reach more people and build our global reputation, but also to present more of NYBG to the public and streamline the digital experience both internally and externally, creating a cohesive portal for our digital users.

We will redesign the website to match our users' needs with the rich content at our disposal, creating a superior and more modern navigation and visualization of resources; streamline search function of splintered databases to make information easier to find; and simplify and improve transactional interfaces. We are also working to codify Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) into our digital properties to ensure digital content is accessible to all.

Core Programs

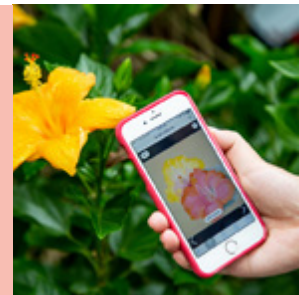
C. V. Starr Virtual Herbarium

Bringing Steere Herbarium collections to researchers around the world



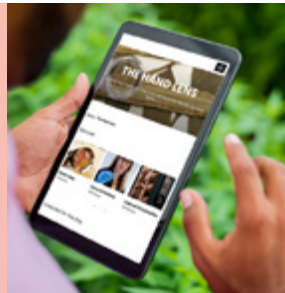
Mobile Guides

Translating the on-site experience through digital tools (e.g., Bloomberg Connects)



Hand Lens

Sharing highlights of our scientific research and collections



Plant Tracker

Enabling exploration of living collections





Management Excellence



NYBG will be a model in the cultural and nonprofit sector, making us a premier place to work and a highly resilient, environmentally sustainable, collaborative, and effective organization.

Management practices underpin all aspects of the Signature Initiatives outlined in this plan, and also support the ongoing development and stewardship of our Core Programs. Importantly, our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) programs have advanced substantially in the past several years and our IDEA objectives have significantly informed our priorities throughout this Plan.

In order to facilitate Management Excellence throughout the institution, we must enhance our administrative resources by investing in key areas: talent, technology, and operational effectiveness. Although we must “catch up” in certain areas to meet the needs of an institution that has grown and technologies and culture that have advanced, we must also jump forward and anticipate future needs in the coming decade.

Additionally, we will extend our commitment to mitigating environmental change through our business operations. Specific sustainability and carbon reduction practices will emerge from the finalization of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Activate the Climate Toolkit

The Climate Toolkit for Museums, Gardens and Zoos was developed by Phipps Conservatory, Pittsburgh, in partnership with the American Alliance of Museums, American Public Gardens Association, and Botanic Gardens Conservation International. It comprises 32 goals for addressing climate change, in nine focus areas including water, energy, and waste. Goals align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Project Drawdown Table of Solutions.

We have completed 12 goals so far and will pursue others that will lessen the environmental impact of our operations from horticultural practices to foodservice waste management. Additionally, specific sustainability and carbon reduction practices will emerge from the finalization of the Comprehensive Site Master Plan.

Centralize Planning and Evaluation Functions

The work of strategic planning will not end with the publication of this document. Rather, the work of administering the plan will be just beginning. A centralized Planning office will oversee the implementation of the above strategic initiatives, working closely with each department to coordinate special projects, assess programmatic success, and recalibrate when necessary to ensure steady progress toward the strategic objectives. As part of this function, the Planning office will help to implement systems for ongoing program evaluation.

As described in *Administering the Strategic Plan* (page 38), the Planning office will work with department heads on the development of new programs in pursuit of the objectives throughout the plan period. This office will work closely with the Finance and Budgeting teams on the long-range financial model as it evolves over time.

Enrich the Employee Experience and Invest in Professional Development

Building a rewarding employee experience will strengthen the institution, improving efficiency and effectiveness. Our employee experience must reflect the educational and philanthropic spirit of our institution, offering employees in all functions an opportunity to engage with our mission, building a supportive and mutually beneficial community, and providing ample opportunities for professional growth. Success in this arena will support our IDEA objectives and desire to create a strong sense of belonging for all NYBG employees.

Currently, training resources are disaggregated by department and the employee experience varies widely from one area of the organization to the next. Regardless of employees' roles, all must have an understanding of NYBG's mission; how that mission informs what we are doing and how we fit into it; that we are valued for our contributions; and that the institution is also valuable to us.

We will establish a consistent commitment to our mission by implementing a standardized, comprehensive orientation and onboarding program.

Quarterly management training in compliance, feedback mechanisms, and more will build the skills of new and continuing managers. Policy changes will enable staff, both union and non-union, across all departments, to pursue individualized training programs in order to enable development and advancement. Upcoming improvements to the intranet, changes to the annual review process, and pilots of upward evaluation models underscore our commitment to transparency and equity.

Implement Practical Measures for Financial Sustainability

As part of the planning process, we created multi-year operating, capital and endowment financial models to ensure that we can prudently and sustainably fund our core programs, new initiatives, and capital investments. This long-range approach to planning will enable us to implement practical financial management measures to improve processes, create efficiencies, streamline workflows, and leverage technology. We will use the multi-year models as ongoing management tools to ensure that we are proactively managing both short and long-term financial results, ensuring the ongoing financial health of the organization for many years to come.

Improve and Expand our Technology Infrastructure

Technology underpins all aspects of our operations; in turn, IT improvements will be required to enable all facets of the *Branching Out* Strategic Plan. Currently, many of our IT systems are outdated and many processes are manual (such as timecards and onboarding documentation). Multiple systems are decentralized across departments and incompatible with each other, making it hard to share information. Improvements to IT are central to improving our efficiency and increasing revenue.

As a foundation for all other technological improvements, we must stabilize basic services, building a standardized and best-practice technology ecosystem. This will include implementing new collaboration and automation tools (such as expanded timekeeping), identifying opportunities across the Garden for technology to reduce administrative pain points, and unlocking more capacity in existing tools, including HR and Finance modules in Unit4. As cyberattacks against public institutions are on the rise, we must build a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy, secure our data and systems, and standardize response protocols.

Integrate Customer Insights

The data stored in our multiple constituent databases comprise a major opportunity for deeper engagement with our mission areas, as well as revenue growth. We will explore and invest in tools to link our disconnected constituent databases (Ticketing, Fundraising, Continuing Education, Children's Education, Retail, Membership, and others). This will empower us to learn more about our customers and better serve their needs, connecting them to the areas of NYBG that interest them most, and, in turn, increasing opportunities for generating revenue to support our programs.

Upgrade our Safety and Security Systems

Protecting the Garden has grown in complexity and scope over the past decade. Hundreds of thousands of visitors are now present after regular operating hours as programs and events extend later into the evening. High-profile art shows have become standard annual offerings, necessitating a higher level of security requirements from lenders and insurance providers. The increased threat of active shooters, vandalism, and many other risks faced by institutions in major cities are a daily concern. Extreme weather events—such as hailstorms, tornado watches, heat advisories, flooding, and more—have become frequent occurrences and require consistent monitoring and fast response. Security upgrades are needed to meet these demands and help safeguard our staff, public, facilities, and collections.

We will expand security coverage through technology, including upgrades to our internal radio system and expansion of camera coverage and functionality. Implementing a keycard entry system for staff will improve staff and visitor safety. Upgrading mobile security documentation and report writing systems will improve Security staff efficiency.

Core Programs

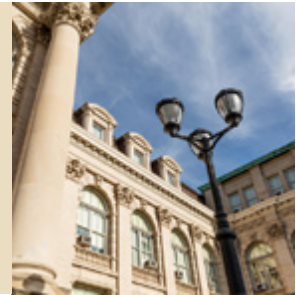
Branch Out Employee Engagement

Expanding Staff horizons and making connections



Peak Load Management

Reducing electrical power demand in NYC



IDEA Action Plan & Staff Committees

Collaborating to improve Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility



Storm Water Management

Integrating systems into a number of capital projects along the Bronx River



Integrated Pest Management

Caring for collections with care for the environment



Volunteer Program

Engaging a corps of Garden ambassadors



Comprehensive Master Planning

A 25-Year Plan for our 250 Acres

We engaged the landscape architecture firm Olin Studio to create a Comprehensive Master Plan to guide the physical development of the Garden. The plan is informed by the *Branching Out* Strategic Plan, but the time horizon stretches to 2050, considering both short- and long-term goals built around institutional carrying capacity and the timelines for realizing significant building and site improvements.

Our 250 acres are a verdant reserve of more than 50 gardens, including an impressive stand of old growth forest along the Bronx River. These natural landscapes, designed gardens, and curated living collections serve our research and educational missions and form an urban oasis in the Bronx. As we approach 2050, a series of adaptations will be planned for more sustainable and welcoming visitor experiences, a decarbonized campus, and a deeper connection to the natural assets of the place.

The necessity for planning reflects analysis that the Garden is at an inflection point of great opportunities and challenges in relation to its physical capacity from both the visitation and facilities standpoints. We recognize that such a high level of use exerts pressures on the campus that are beyond the institution's current capacity.

Phase I of the Master Plan comprises six capital projects that will be planned, funded, commenced, and/or completed in a ten-year period (FY 2025 – FY 2034). These have been selected to advance NYBG incrementally toward the full realization of the 25-year plan. They will solve practical problems, enhance the visitor experience and allow us to achieve visitation growth goals, contribute to the horticultural beauty of the site, improve our ability to steward our collections, and significantly boost our sustainability profile. At present, these projects are planned at a conceptual, big-picture level and will be refined as they enter the design phase. In addition, there is another set of projects in progress which are at varying levels of completion in the City funding cycle.

Note: The Comprehensive Master Plan is fully expressed in a separate document which outlines Phase I projects and the larger 25-year framework in detail.

Comprehensive Master Plan: Phase-One Projects



**Showcasing Nature-Based Solutions:
Eco Machine & Cafe**



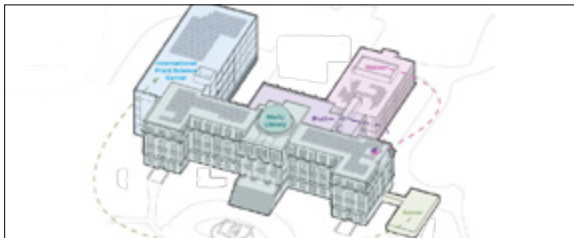
**Creating a New Welcome to Our Bronx
Community: Mosholu Entrance Access
Improvements & Welcome Center**



**Finishing the Historic Collections:
The Magnolia Collection**



**Creating Ecological Immersions:
South Forest Canopy Walk**



**Modernizing Our Collections:
Reconfigurations to the LuEsther T. Mertz
Library**



Garden-Wide Improvements

Capital Projects in Progress



Site Operations Center

Mertz Library Elevator Expansion



Everett Children's Adventure Garden

Mertz Library HVAC System Upgrades

Administering the Strategic Plan

The *Strategic Plan for 2024–2030* is a living document that will be adjusted over the course of the plan period.

Through the centralized Planning function described on page 32, we will conduct regular assessments of our progress and hold ourselves accountable to our annual goals. Enhanced evaluation systems and metrics will enable us to measure success and allow the flexibility to adapt our plans as needed over time.

We will reinvigorate the annual institutional budgeting process with incentives for programs that address the five Strategic Objectives, reinforcing the theme of *Branching Out* throughout our organization. This is in development and will be detailed during the Strategic Plan finalization process over the summer and fall of 2023.

Milestones for the implementation of each Signature Initiative will be plotted annually against revenue and expense targets. These milestones will be tracked through biannual reporting exercises, coinciding with the institutional budgeting process (January) and fiscal year close (July).

The development of this strategic plan has been marked by frequent and open communication with staff in all areas. We will continue to communicate key milestones and status updates on the ongoing administration of the plan to ensure that staff are invested in our progress and are recognized for their contributions.

Implementation Timeline

SIGNATURE INITIATIVES	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
Advance an Urban Conservation Strategy							
Create a Bronx River Watershed Health & Resilience Program							
Enhance High-Impact Research Collaborations							
Lead the International Biological Collections Community to Leverage Data for Environmental Insights							
Pilot Innovating New Research Projects							
Train New Botanists and Mycologists							
Double the Capacity of Bronx Green-Up							
Enhance Career Pathways and Workforce Training							
Expand Bronx Community Partnerships							
Increase our Economic Impact on the Borough							
Craft Special Experiences to Attract New Audiences							
Create Inclusive, Accessible, and Multilingual Interpretation and Programming							
Elevate Seasonal Interest Year-Round							
Expand Reach of Branded Products and Exhibition Content							
Make Online Learning Flexible							
Modernize and Digitize the LuEsther T. Mertz Library							
Relaunch NYBG.org							
Activate the Climate Toolkit							
Centralize Planning and Evaluation Functions							
Enrich the Employee Experience and Invest in Professional Development							
Implement Practical Measures for Financial Sustainability							
Improve and Expand our Technology Infrastructure							
Integrate Customer Insights							
Upgrade our Safety and Security Systems							





Questions or comments?
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NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN