

# **Cedar Valley Arboretum & Botanic Gardens SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**Based upon Site Development Committee Recommendations**

**May-September 2010**

**Approved by the Board of Directors, November 11, 2010**

This Site Development Plan (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”) is a result of review of the original master plan and the most recent site plan, brainstorming, on-line and other research, visits to other public gardens, review of the arboretum’s mission and values, and systematic rankings by the committee of generated ideas. The committee consisted of members with a variety of backgrounds and experience at the Cedar Valley Arboretum and Botanical Gardens (CVABG).

While developing this Plan, the committee took into account the fact that development & maintaining of current hardscapes and softscapes requires volunteer/staff time, as well as funding. Therefore, the emphasis of this committee and its resulting Plan is to present recommendations that will enhance, not eliminate, existing features of the arboretum, while taking into consideration that funding and time are requirements for current and future hardscapes and softscapes.

This Plan sets forth recommendations for future development and planning of the Cedar Valley Arboretum & Botanic Gardens for the next three to five years. The Plan is divided into two types of development; hardscapes and softscapes.

The Plan was presented to arboretum stakeholders and feedback obtained concerning The Plan. Stakeholders included volunteers, staff, individual donors, foundations, HCC staff and board, educators, and other community leaders.

The Plan incorporates stakeholder feedback which was presented to the board of directors and approved by said board on November 11, 2010. The plan will become a major part of the strategic planning session which will be held January 29, 2011. At that time concrete plans will be made to initiate the implementation of the site development plan, under the umbrella of the arboretum’s strategic plan.

## **SUMMARY OF SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **Hardscape consists of buildings or other structures**

1. Visitor Comfort/Accessibility (pave existing paths, benches, shade structures, path network development)
2. Direction/Educational Signage (visitor directions, plant identification)
3. Visitor/Event Center (long term permanent structure)
4. Office Space/Information Center (present head house location)

### **Softscape consists of plantings & organization of planting areas**

5. Tree Collections (existing inventory, future expansion)
6. Collection Gardens (specific plan for additions of like varieties)
7. Small Event Garden (site development for specific requests such as small weddings)
8. Wild/Natural Areas (development of areas with emphasis on making it child friendly)
9. Shade Garden (enhancement of existing garden)

The following pages outline further details for the above items, including the features, benefits, and recommendations for future CVABG hardscapes & softscapes.

# Hardscapes

## 1. Visitor Accessibility, Safety, and Comfort

### **Purpose**

Improve visitor accessibility, safety and comfort to various areas of the arboretum. Paths throughout the arboretum should provide access and direction to designated areas of the entire grounds. The paths and trails should also provide comfort to those moving on them and be safe for all visitors, in all types of weather. Increase the number of benches, chairs, and tables and structures with seating.

### **Features**

- Renovate all current limestone paths into non-slippery concrete paths.
- Provide adequate shade, seating, and points of interest.

### **Benefits**

- The renovation of paths to concrete will reduce repair costs and time.
- Concrete paths will provide more even surfaces, less slippery surfaces, and allows better wheelchair accessibility. The paths will provide direction for visitors as they guide visitors to specific areas of the arboretum.
- Shade structures with seating will provide places to rest and to reflect on the beauty of the surroundings.
- Points of interest lend excitement to strolling the grounds and provide conversational topics for visitors to tell their friends about the arboretum. (These points of interest could possibly be changed every so often.)

### **CURRENT**

The arboretum has crushed limestone paths to the Arrival Garden, Community Gardens, Display Gardens, Enabling Garden, and Children's Garden. The one mile Walking Trail is mostly mowed grass. There is a concrete path to the Shade Garden; with a wood chip path within the Shade Garden. The Rose Garden has concrete paver paths. There are some areas with wood benches and chairs and some tables. In addition there are a few shade structures; the pergola in the Rose Garden, the nylon tarp and wooden cottage structure in the Enabling Garden. The Education Center can be used by visitors for shade.

### **FUTURE**

- A. Pave all current limestone and other non-mowed paths with concrete.**
- B. Develop a plan for any paths and trails that may be added to the site. This plan would include; where the path would begin and end, how it will be marked or identified, what seating will be provided along the path, what type of shade will be used, and what if any points of interest will be installed.**

## **2. Directional/Educational Signage**

### **Purpose**

Signage is the connecting link between a public garden and its visitors by relaying facts and meaning of our natural world. The approach to communication can be done in a variety of ways, both temporary and permanent.

### **Features**

- Promotes the mission of the Arboretum
- Educates and encourages discussion and stimulates new ideas.
- Informs the public of new developments while gaining public support, & fundraising
- Provides visitor connection when staff and resources are limited
- Assists school teachers and self-guided groups to make sense of the gardens
- Communicates the rules of the garden and garden etiquette

### **Benefits**

- Signage is enjoyable, attention grabbing, and provokes visitors to engage in their surroundings
- Signage is relevant; information is timely and relates to the visitor's personal experience
- Signage is organized and flows in an understandable manner while not interfering with surrounding landscape. Information is creative, yet to the point.
- Signage has a theme and information is presented as thought-out cohesive ideas.

### **CURRENT**

Since signage can be a significant investment in time and money, the Arboretum has cautiously added more signage over the past several years. Directional signs are currently used to identify the Rose Garden, Children's Garden, and the Education Center. Metal green signs are found throughout the grounds to direct visitors to the parking lot and main areas as well as to describe major points of interest. Plant identification labels are used to mark tree collections and several of the perennial flowerbeds.

### **FUTURE**

**Going forward signage will fall into one of five categories:**

- A. Temporary Identification-** used for annual plant identification tags. These can be made from less durable materials.
- B. Permanent identification-** used for herbaceous and woody plant identification tags, garden descriptions and recognition. These would be made from durable material that would withstand four season exposure.
- C. Directional-** orientates visitors with the Arboretum as a whole as well as small spaces within the grounds. These would include the standard Arboretum format and logo. Example: Need large directional signs to children's garden.
- D. Special Events-directional & promotional.** Includes arboretum logo/format.
- E. Interpretive –** this would include signs and displays that would interpret particular parts of the garden, particularly related to specific themes. These could either be temporary signs, interpreting a seasonal theme, or could be permanent, carrying out a specific educational/experiential purpose for the visitor's enjoyment.

### **3. Visitor/Event Center**

#### **Purpose**

This structure would encompass an area to welcome visitors, provide them with information and provide necessities such as rest rooms. It also provides an indoor space for occasions (wedding receptions; reunions; graduations) and meetings.

#### **Features**

- Full kitchen facilities
- Bathrooms (must be able to accommodate group events)
- Gift Shop with items related to horticulture, nature, and features of the arboretum
- Vending area to provide drinks and snacks to visitors
- Welcome area staffed or un-staffed to provide information
- Audio/Visual Equipment available for meetings
- Room for gatherings, meetings that is large enough to accommodate 120 people.
- Weather Shelter

#### **Benefits**

- Promotes the mission of the arboretum
- Creates a memorable first impression for new visitors
- Enhances the ability of the arboretum to generate revenue through events and fundraising
- Expands the present area for education and information

#### **CURRENT**

The arboretum currently utilizes volunteers to greet and provide information to visitors on a part time basis. Kiosks are located at the parking lot entrance and the handicap/drop off entrance for information to visitors.

#### **FUTURE**

**The new visitor center would be the starting point for visits and would be open during hours that we would be able to staff it with volunteers. The outdoor informational kiosks could remain for times when the visitor center is not open. The ability to handle group events opens up more opportunities for weddings during inclement weather, becomes a meeting center for groups, and becomes more of a gathering place for graduation, reunions, and receptions. The center would provide a first class space for rentals, which would promote the ability to generate rental income for the arboretum.**

- A. Develop architect's plan for center**
- B. Review location of visitor center- committee recommendation is south of the rose garden.**
- C. Establish fundraising campaign**

## **4. Head-house Remodel**

### **Purpose**

Provide a temporary visitor's center and office space as well as a volunteer training and gathering space, weather shelter, class room.

### **Features**

- Two offices for CVABG administration
- Restroom (two if possible)
- Visitor information area
- Small lounge
- Weather Shelter

### **Benefits**

- Central location for administrative offices on the arboretum grounds
- More focused entry point for visitor information
- Space for volunteers to relax or to conduct small classes

### **CURRENT**

The head house is a 24 X 24 foot building that houses most of the maintenance vehicles, tools, and workbenches. It contains one office space and one bathroom.

### **FUTURE**

**Plans for a new maintenance building have been approved by the board and funding is in place. Once this new building is completed the head house will become available for the uses outlined above.**

**Preparation for these uses would require:**

- A. general interior cleanup, floor degreasing,**
- B. review of electrical and task lighting needs.**
- C. The overhead door would be removed and the wall framed in.**
- D. New paint throughout and all-weather floor covering would be done. Also a combination heating/air conditioning unit would be installed.**

### **ADDENDUM**

**If more space for this short-term use of the head-house is explored two possibilities are suggested;**

- a. Add more space to the west of the building**
- b. Add more space to the east of the building**

# Softscapes

## 5. Tree Collection

### **Purpose**

This plan is to inventory the present tree collection and develop a vision for future plantings.

### **Features**

- Educational signage will be added for groups of trees
- Existing individual labels will be standardized and updated as needed
- A tree section of the website will be created & will feature identification of trees.
- A general plan for future planting will be developed, including a proposed timeframe.

### **Benefits**

- Provides information to visitors and students. This will generate interest and acquaint people with the arboretum.
- Provide a cohesive plan for what signage is needed and where it should be.
- Consolidate a plan for where to put new trees in order to be able to present it to contributors.

### **CURRENT**

A written tree inventory exists in the Arboretum records.

Memorial trees have signs (some do not identify the species of tree)

There are two signs that identify and explain about the sesquicentennial forest.

Some trees have name labels but these have faded out.

### **FUTURE**

- A. As part of the present collection inventory, a photo of the tree and a close-up of the leaf will be taken. This photo will be labeled with the tree name and posted on the arboretum web site.**
- B. Create committee for future tree planting. Recommendations will be made with regard to areas for future planting of trees. Present signage will be evaluated and future needs assessed in this area.**
- C. In the near future, create a map showing trees with numbers that have been located by the trees. Defines type of tree, scientific name, picture of leaf. Clean & straighten existing signs.**

## **6. Collections Gardens**

### **Purpose**

Plan for the collections of plantings to enhance the overall value and appeal of the Arboretum. To provide better criteria for moving forward with planning for future gardens and to improve the existing ones

### **Features**

- Develops a collections policy
- A development plan with clear vision and objectives
- Defines acquisition criteria
- Outlines Maintenance procedures

### **Benefits**

- Education of various varieties of plantings
- Increases visitor audience size
- Encourages research programs

### **CURRENT**

The Arboretum has some very fine collections and gardens including the hosta collection & the day lily collection.

### **FUTURE**

- A. Identify current plant collection that meet the proposed policy criteria and bring those collections in line with the criteria.**
- B. Create signage for current collections to explain the collection and individual signs to identify plants.**
- C. Develop descriptions, maps, detail of plants and include as handout to visitors and add to collections section of the website.**
- D. Create a timeline for development of additional collections to the arboretum.**
- E. Determine acquisition criteria and outline maintenance procedures for collections.**

## **7. Small Events Garden**

### **Purpose**

There may be times when people want to plan an event that does not require a large area and/or structure. The desired location may be a natural area supported by a smaller hard scape like a gazebo or arbor. This plan would be to provide this by either creating an area or modifying an existing one.

### **Features**

- Attractive space provided by plantings
- Some type of shade; can be a structure or natural
- Area for some seating
- Suitable location convenient to parking

### **Benefits**

- Revenue generation for small events such as weddings.
- Provides the ability to meet the needs of a wider cross section of the population
- Adds interest and beauty to new or existing areas

### **CURRENT**

There is not currently an area that has been developed with small events in mind, although there are several areas that could serve that purpose.

### **FUTURE**

- A. Identify and develop several areas that could be created or re-worked to meet the criteria set forth. These designated areas could then be advertised for small events.**
- B. Construct small shade gazebo for weddings/events.**
- C. Review area between lower parking lot &HCC property, south of Head House for a small events area. Area needs to be separate from rose garden so that more than one event can be occurring at the same time.**
- D. Seek board approval in 2010, with committee formed soon after approval. After board approval, committee formed to research design and funding opportunities. Construction to be completed by volunteers. Cost to be covered by donations.**

## **8. Wild/Natural Areas for Children**

### **Purpose**

Recent studies show that children are increasingly disconnected with nature. Public gardens nationwide are moving toward providing areas and activities for children to enjoy nature in an unstructured way and in a natural setting. We need to create these types of areas or modify existing ones that would be designated as such (“where the wild things are”)

### **Features**

- Trails running through the woods or corn fields or prairies
- Unstructured play areas
- A safe place to explore
- A comfortable area near by for parents to sit and wait while the children play

### **Benefits**

- Promotes a life-long conservation ethic
- Can reduce stress, obesity, symptoms of ADHD in children
- Can improve creativity in children & direct connection with nature
- Increases the attractiveness of the Arboretum as a destination
- Will add to a positive image of the facility

### **CURRENT**

The children’s garden is a hugely popular area of the Arboretum, along with the corn maze. Both areas provide a natural play area. There are paths and trails that children could explore but they are not necessarily thought of as children’s areas.

### **FUTURE**

- A. Look at existing areas that could be developed into wild areas geared to children.**
  - a. The existing prairie might be one as well as the area to the East of the creek.**
- B. Create a time-line to develop a plan for equipment needs and installation**
- C. Develop signage and information that pertains to the area. Signs could be added to existing areas such as the corn maze.**
- D. Plan for school field trips to introduce the areas.**
- E. Have Education Committee assist with development of these areas.**

## **9. Shade Garden (enhancement of existing garden)**

### **Purpose**

The shade garden was created under a grove of existing locust trees, as a destination for those strolling in the forest who were in need of a shady place to rest and relax. This garden needs some further improvement in order to continue as a popular place to visit in the Arboretum.

### **Features**

- Expand the current square footage to provide additional room to add to the collection
- Develop a walking path through the garden with accompanying seating and meeting areas
- As part of the collection enhancement; add more shade plants and understory trees
- Develop signage to showcase the Shade Garden
- Prune the existing locust trees for improved tree health and aesthetics

### **Benefits**

- A more desirable and attractive destination for visitors
- Education on plant varieties that can be planted in shade
- Comfort and relaxation for visitors
- May be one of the existing areas looked at for a small events garden.

### **CURRENT**

A shade garden with a grove of trees and an array of hosta plants exists. This area also has the Stout day lily collection in the southeast corner. In 2009 a cement walking path was added to connect the activity lawns and main gardens to the shade garden.

### **FUTURE**

- A. Expand the current plant collection. A timeline must be created for the expansion of the gardens. The policies and criteria developed by plant collections committee must be followed.**
- B. Types of hardscapes must be planned for (benches etc), develop walking path in garden.**
- C. Work groups must be recruited for the pruning and continued maintenance planned for.**
- D. Work with the small events committee to determine if this garden may work for their needs and if so coordinate the plan to accommodate the needs of the small events garden.**
- E. Investigate an irrigation system for the hosta garden.**

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

**The Site Development Committee has the task of carrying on the vision that was set forth by CVABG founders and volunteers. In order to extend their vision into the future, the Site Development Committee has laid out their vision in this Plan for the next 3 to 5 years at the CVABG. It is the responsibility of all to create a place of beauty and environmental sustainability and to help the CVABG continue to grow and become an even bigger asset to the community.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Site Development Committee  
September 28, 2010**

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