



Growing Opportunities:

Investing in, revitalizing, and sustaining
Allan Gardens

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Toronto Alliance for
Better Parks





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Allan Gardens**

**Martin Prosperity Institute and Toronto Park People
May 2014**



Toronto Alliance for
Better Parks



Toronto Park People is Toronto's catalyst for better parks. Its motto is simple: when residents get involved in their parks, parks get better. By working with the community, city staff, and private enterprise, Park People facilitates neighbourhood engagement in local parks, provides resources on park best practices, brings public attention to park issues, and highlights the importance of parks to the social, environmental and economic well-being of residents.

The **Martin Prosperity Institute** is the world's leading think-tank on the role of sub-national factors—location, place, and city-regions—in global economic prosperity. It takes an integrated view of prosperity, looking beyond traditional economic measures to include the importance of quality of place and the development of people's creative potential.

This report was authored by Dave Harvey and Jake Tobin Garrett of Toronto Park People and Kevin Stolarick and Garrett Morgan of the Martin Prosperity Institute.



Founded in 2002, the **Friends of Allan Gardens (FOAG)** is now a registered non-profit made up of neighbours and citizens concerned with actively promoting the vitality of Allan Gardens park. This volunteer group's mission is to revitalize the park through creative strategies that will improve open spaces, nurture local culture and attract a larger and more diverse group of users. FOAG is dedicated to working collaboratively with community stakeholders, city staff and elected officials to create effective and sustainable programming and management solutions.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the oldest parks in the City of Toronto, Allan Gardens and its historic conservatory provide a unique space in the heart of downtown Toronto amidst a diverse and bustling neighbourhood. The conservatory, with its six connected greenhouses, offers a welcome dose of green and warmth during long winters and a space of architectural and horticultural excellence. With these assets, Allan Gardens represents an unparalleled opportunity in the city to create a truly vibrant, active public space for the surrounding community, the wider city, and visitors to Toronto—an opportunity that a renewed focus and energy can help bring to life.

The key to unlocking Allan Gardens' potential is in establishing a new governance model for the park. This new and creative partnership is needed to not only deliver the capital improvements required, but to activate the space with rich community-based programming around horticulture, food, and the arts. A new partnership dedicated to Allan Gardens would help focus community input in the park and drive new investment into both capital improvements and programming.

This report explores opportunities for a new partnership in Allan Gardens between the City and community, drawing on examples of park partnerships and governance models from both Toronto and North America. These partnerships range from small, ad hoc arrangements with resident-led park friends groups all the way up to contracted services and management with a non-profit operator. There is no one solution and much depends on the local political, community and park context to define the right kind of partnership at the right scale.

The report recommends that a new partnership model focus on the conservatory and adjacent gardens, with a full-time project manager needed to engage with the community, the City, and potential funders to lay the necessary groundwork for a success. It also recommends a governance structure that includes both city staff and the local councillor, as well as the creation of a community advisory committee to facilitate community input and ensure a wide range of voices. Finally, it recommends that any agreement with the City should be flexible enough to allow the partnership to evolve over time, while laying out a shared vision for the park to guide future activities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Vision: This document is meant to provide a vision of how the Friends of Allan Gardens could help make Allan Gardens an even greater asset for the City of Toronto.

Public: Allan Gardens is and must always be a “public good”, something of value for the City and all its residents that is always available for public use.

- **Location:** Allan Gardens’ location, including the Jarvis cultural corridor, offers an opportunity for creativity and leverage.
- **Community:** Any plans, activities, or developments must engage and involve the surrounding residents, institutions, and other organizations.

Supporting Existing Community: Any improvements to Allan Gardens must recognize and support existing residents from all backgrounds surrounding the park and provide a net benefit, improving economic, educational, social, and recreational opportunities for all community members.

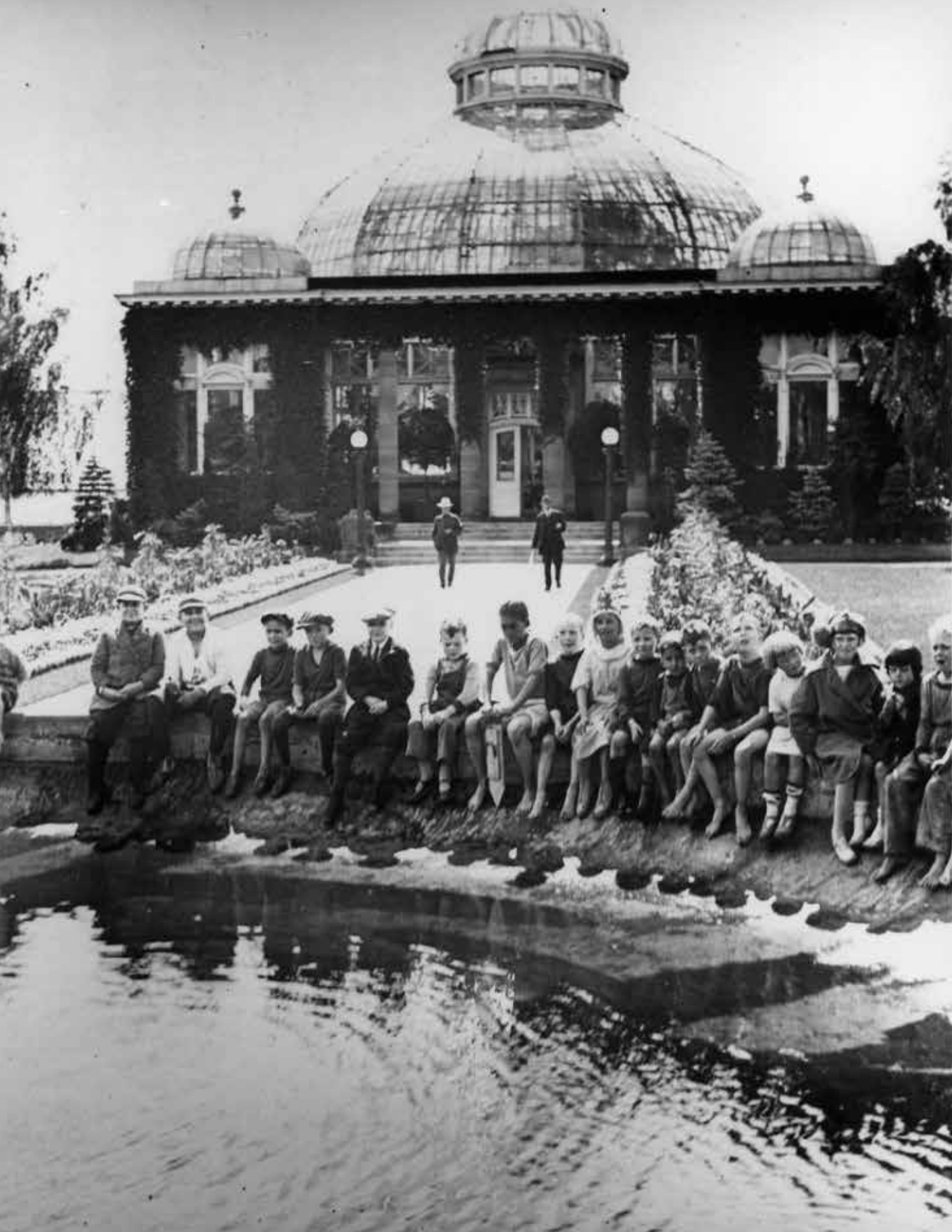
City Partnership: Any options to be more fully developed or pursued must be in partnership with the City of Toronto. This includes the local councillor(s) and city staff.

Collaboration: Friends of Allan Gardens cannot do anything alone. Successful implementation of any ideas will have to be undertaken as a collaborative effort with other stakeholders.

Sustainability: Sustainability must be more than a “buzz word”—it must be at the heart of all recommendations.

- **Funding/Finance:** Financial sustainability is not just establishing a stream of money to the City for the Gardens. Financial sustainability is about creating conditions that lead to long-term financial stability and growth.
- **Projects:** Projects to be undertaken must be feasible through all stages from initiation to completion.
- **Programming:** Any programming recommendations to be developed must likewise consider feasibility throughout the entire lifetime of the activity.
- **Environmental:** Environmental sustainability and sustainable products and processes are an absolute requirement.
- **Maintenance:** Allan Gardens is one of numerous parks in the city and any developments must consider the long-term maintainability and effort that will be required to keep it in a state of good repair.

Heritage: Allan Gardens is itself historic as are its existing structures and horticulture. The history of the park, its location, and the Conservatory and its horticultural heritage must be recognized and celebrated.



1. THE NEED FOR ACTION

HISTORY

Allan Gardens owes its name to George Allan, who gifted five acres of his downtown Toronto estate, which had been in the family since 1819, to the Toronto Horticultural Society in 1858. The society constructed a horticultural pavilion in 1879 that was much-used as well as a 25 foot tall fountain with a large stone base that provided the park with a new focal point.¹ The society operated the land as a private botanical garden before selling it to the City of Toronto in 1888 due to financial issues. Combined with five acres of land that the City had already acquired from the Society, the now 10 acre unified park was officially named Allan Gardens in the early 1900s.

The City used the horticultural pavilion as a source of revenue, renting it out for concerts and other events, until a fire destroyed it, as well as part of the conservatory, in the summer of 1902.² In 1910, the Palm House, a replacement building designed by City architect Robert McCallum, opened and is now considered an architectural and heritage gem in the city protected under the Ontario Heritage Act.

In the first half of the 20th century, the City constructed additional greenhouses and expanded the park to the west to Jarvis Street, bringing the total acreage of the park to 13 with six interconnected greenhouses. As the Jarvis Street frontage was not included in the original design of the park, it currently leaves this space with a “backdoor” feel that could be better integrated with the rest of the park. An opportunity going forward is that Jarvis Street was identified as a cultural corridor in the City’s Waterfront Cultural and Heritage Infrastructure Plan, which proposed a framework for connecting the city’s waterfront with heritage and cultural assets in the core.³

In the 1950s, Parks Commissioner George Bell removed the original 1879 fountain and implemented a park renovation plan by J. Austin Floyd that resulted in the construction of a

new fountain in front of the Palm house, among other improvements. Unfortunately, this new fountain was removed in 1995 due to maintenance issues. Currently, the only water-related feature in the park is a drinking fountain installed in 1961 as a commemorative memorial to literary figure G. Mercer Adam. The last major addition to the greenhouses was made in 2004, when TD Bank provided funds to the University of Toronto to move a greenhouse from its Botany Building to Allan Gardens. This new facility is now the children’s conservatory.

Owing to the park’s unique architectural offerings, as well as its centrality in the development of the city, Allan Gardens has hosted many cultural and political events. In 1959, for example, the park was the location of seven concerts held throughout July and August as part of the Toronto Summer Music Festival. The park has also been an anti-establishment focal point. During the G20 in 2010 it was the gathering place for many anti-poverty protestors.

The park sits within the Garden District neighbourhood, which contains a diversity of both land uses, people, and community groups, including Ryerson University as well as many social service agencies and shelters, such as Seaton House. There is also a concentration of Aboriginal services near the park including Anishnawbe Health Toronto and the Native Women’s Resource Centre. Located just to the south of Toronto’s gay village, the park also has an important historical and contemporary connection to Toronto’s LGBT community.

MASTER PLAN

In 2006, a consultant team delivered a Master Plan for the revitalization and management strategy of Allan Gardens to the City.⁴ The Master Plan examined the current state of the park and focused on capital improvements. The impetus for the master plan was a realization that the park was not living up to its potential as a city-wide attraction and unique space within Toronto. It noted that further investment was needed to raise the park’s profile to be in line with its true value as a heritage and horticultural landmark.

The plan envisioned Allan Gardens as a place of horticultural excellence and community gathering that reflects and honours the heritage of the site by providing educational opportunities for both adults and children, attracting tourists and residents alike.

The proposed capital projects in the Master Plan would result in new outdoor gardens, improve the integration of the conservatory buildings with the surrounding park, and provide increased locations for community gathering and events.

The primary recommended capital improvements are:

- Fountain Terrace
 - A new fountain installed in its historical location to be the main social hub and surrounded by movable seating.
- Conservatory Terrace
 - Extension of the Palm House podium east to provide space for café-style seating, events, and a grand staircase centred on the Palm House.
- Century Common
 - An open lawn in the eastern section of the park that would be the park's main passive area and a space for special events.
- Southern Terrace
 - A new signature garden to replace the current children's play area that will be a new attraction to bring visitors to the park.
- Courtyards and Artist's Gardens
 - The conversion of the existing storage yard into two feature artist gardens within north and south courtyards.
- Children's Gardens
 - An outdoor garden to provide educational opportunities in horticulture and environmental skills for children with spaces for gardens to be harvested by children.
- Children's Playground
 - A new playground that features whimsical structures and a water feature.
- Off-leash dog area or dog-run

The total project cost for the redevelopment of Allan Gardens, including soft costs, was put at between \$12.5 and \$14.5 million in 2006 dollars, with 50 percent expected to be raised through fundraising.

The City has built, or is in the process of building, a number of elements from the Master Plan. An off-leash dog area located south of Carlton Street was constructed in 2008. Construction on a new children's playground in the western portion of the park is scheduled to begin in spring 2014 with an anticipated completion date later in the fall.

A number of smaller projects are beginning their design work. Once design is complete, the City has set aside capital dollars for these projects and work should be completed in the next few years.

- New washrooms in the conservatory, which will see their relocation to another area of the building and may free up some programming space.
- New interior doors to improve accessibility in the conservatory.
- The Artist's Garden.

The majority of projects in the Master Plan have still not been built and no private funds have been raised to date for the work. The Master Plan also focused heavily on capital improvements rather than potential park programming, such as native arts and food. Going forward, there will be a need to revisit the 2006 plan to see if it is still relevant to the changing neighbourhood and the needs and desires of park users. As well, the lack of outside funders stepping forward to support the projects in the Master Plan speaks towards a need to reengage the philanthropic community in new ways to potentially support projects in the park.

CURRENT STATE OF THE PARK

At 13 acres in size, Allan Gardens is one of the larger parks in the downtown and one of three conservatories owned and operated by the City of Toronto, along with Centennial Park Conservatory in Etobicoke and Cloud Gardens in the downtown financial district. Bounded by Carlton, Sherbourne, Gerrard, and Jarvis Streets, the park is located at the eastern edge of Ward 27.

The park and conservatory are owned and operated by the Parks, Forestry, and Recreation division of the City of Toronto. Admission is free to the conservatory, which is open seven days a week from 10am to 5pm, and consists of 16,000 square feet of indoor space in six connected greenhouses: the central palm house, two tropical houses, an arid house, a cool house, and a tropical landscape house. A children's conservatory, which is not open to the public, runs educational horticultural programming for children. The conservatory runs seasonal shows in spring, summer, and fall, as well as specialty shows for Christmas and Easter.

... the Master Plan would result in new outdoor gardens, improve the integration of the conservatory buildings with the surrounding park, and provide increased locations for community gathering and events.

Planned storm water improvements for 2014 will necessitate construction along Horticultural Lane from north of the greenhouse down to Gerrard Street. Currently, part of the southeast section of the park is closed for a major water main replacement project, with an anticipated completion date of Spring 2015.

The park is well situated in relation to downtown amenities and transit access, with a streetcar line along Carlton Street and a cycle track along Sherbourne Street. It is also located within walking distance of the College subway station along the Yonge line.

Below Aerial view of Allan Gardens, 1959, Archives of Ontario, C30-IES12-340



2. CONSIDERING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

WHY PARTNERSHIPS

More and more, cities across North America are turning to innovative partnerships with non-profits in city parks. Healthy partnerships increase a park's potential by allowing for more flexibility and creativity in funding and programming, but also by offering a way for the community to have a more direct role in their parks. As an organization often involved with a single park, non-profit partners are well positioned to focus attention and respond to local needs, providing a centre for community input and stewardship.

Park partnerships are not about supplanting a parks department or removing parks from public oversight. Successful partnerships start when a non-profit partner can identify the gaps between the park's current state and its potential. In other words, what can the non-profit partner bring to the park that the city is not providing already? Often this gap is in community programming and park activation, but it can also be capital improvements or better maintenance or horticulture. In this sense, many non-profit partners are "topping up" parks, by responding to local needs and desires for the park.

Across North America, non-profit partners work with city parks departments to do a variety of tasks at a variety of partnership scales from small, ad hoc relationships all the way up to contracted services and management.⁵

Fundraising

- Non-profit partners can act as a driver for private fundraising for capital improvements and operations. They are more flexible than city parks departments in the type of funding they are able to access and are often more attractive to donors because of their focused attention on one park. Many funders and private individuals are more comfortable providing donations to non-profit partners rather than the city.

Community engagement

- The safest, most vibrant parks are those where residents are involved in both animating and caring for their parks. A non-profit partner can help build and focus this energy, attracting and organizing volunteers who help support the park through activities such as gardening and maintenance, programming and soliciting donations.

Programming

- By creating or adding programming, partners can help activate a park by attracting new and more park users at different hours of the day. A park that is well programmed and active can energize a neighbourhood as it both draws new users to the park and increases safety through more "eyes on the park."

Planning and design

- Partners are able to support, or in some cases even lead, planning and design work for park improvements. Non-profit partners can help by advocating for more locally-specific and creative design ideas as opposed to the standardized, city-wide approach that a parks department may use.

Maintenance

- Some non-profit partners also take on maintenance and operational roles, allowing for targeted investment in upkeep and horticulture with staff that are responsible for a specific park rather than city crews that often move through several different parks.

PARTNERSHIP MODELS

The range of partnership possibilities in city parks is vast and depends on the objectives of the partner, individual park characteristics and history, and city governance context. As outlined in the book edited by Andrew Schwartz, *Public Parks, Private Partners*, on one end of the partnership scale are informal partnerships with local resident volunteer groups, while on the other end are organizations that take on the role of park management, operation, maintenance and sometime even policy and security.

These partnership structures can be roughly broken up into several categories.

Community groups

- Often under the “friends of the park” moniker, these volunteer-led resident groups represent an informal, grassroots partnership in a local park. While they do not have any formal responsibilities for the park, they often work with the city by fundraising for park improvements, holding events to encourage park activation, performing light maintenance and natural stewardship work, and being a voice for the needs of the park in the community.
- Example: Friends of Trinity Bellwoods in Toronto

Leasers

- In this arrangement, a city-owned structure in a park is leased to a non-profit or other private operator such as a concession that takes on a management and operational role, while the city manages the surrounding parkland. Formal lease agreements are signed with the city that lay out responsibilities, but there is often minimal operational and management overlap between the parks department and operator.
- Example: Artscape Wychwood Barns in Toronto

Collaborative managers

- These groups have a formalized relationship with a parks department, taking on responsibility for some park operation and management in collaboration with the city. Some groups employ joint-staff positions with the city parks department. They often also fundraise for both operational and capital improvement projects. How the organization shares responsibility over these activities varies from park to park and city to city. Some groups are responsible for maintenance and construction projects, while others are involved in operations and programming. Whatever the role, however, overall park policies and security typically remain the city’s responsibility.
- Example: Garfield Conservatory in Chicago

Sole managers

- In these cases, a public park is entirely operated and managed by a non-profit group with little to no involvement by the city. These groups are responsible for everything from programming to capital planning and construction to maintenance and operations. Sole managers often are responsible for park policy and security.
- Example: Bryant Park in New York City

PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES

According to Chris Walker’s report, *Partnerships for Parks*, addressing organizational and financial capacity are the main challenges that park partnerships face.

Organizational challenges typically arise when a non-profit partner cannot deliver on its commitment because of an issue such as a lack of dedicated staff or volunteers. Financial challenges arise when funding is inadequate for a non-profit to carry out its tasks and responsibilities. Other challenges can arise from communication problems, where such things as objectives and vision are not aligned between the partners.

In order to address these challenges, it is important to clarify roles and responsibilities between the partners so tasks, objectives, and visions are laid out. This helps facilitate the planning necessary to avoid capacity issues later on. Though some partnerships start with a more fluid process as partner roles are tested, in order to ensure long-term success of a park partnership an agreed upon division of labour and responsibilities is key.

GOVERNANCE

Good governance begins with a clear vision for the park articulated by both the non-profit partner and the city that guides the partnership. A memorandum of understanding is often drafted that outlines the responsibilities of each partner, while remaining flexible enough to allow for evolution of the partnership over time.⁶

The non-profit partner should also remain accountable and transparent to the local community through mechanisms such as open meetings or a community advisory committee where the community is included in the decision-making process. The inclusion of a city councillor and park staff on the board ensures that public oversight remains.

A non-profit partner’s focus often in a single park means greater accountability for the public, donors, and government because the chain of responsibility for the park is clear and easily traced. As well, a non-profit’s dependence on revenue generated from park use, donors and government funding keeps the non-profit partner accountable to the actual needs and desires in the park as its organizational success is linked to the success of the park and the partnership.

3. TORONTO PARK PARTNERSHIPS

While Toronto does not have a park partnership on the scale of New York's Central Park Conservancy, there are examples of less formal and more targeted partnerships between community groups, non-profits and other organizations in the city's parks. Generally, aside from the few cases where a non-profit has leased land or structures within a park, such as Artscape Wychwood Barns, the role of a non-profit or community partner tends to be non-formal and focused solely on fundraising for park improvements and programming.

Friends of the Park groups

Toronto has over 100 "friends of the park" groups, which are community-based volunteer groups formed to activate, care, and advocate for a particular park. A version of these groups are found in many other cities in North America, including New York City, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco.

In Toronto, volunteer-led park friends groups have no formal status with the City, but they often have strong relationships with their local councillor and park staff. These groups organize community events such as movie nights and picnics as well as natural stewardship activities such as clean-ups and gardening. Since they have no formal status with the City, they are often required to obtain a permit as any other groups planning an event in a city park would.

Some groups also take on the role of fundraising, usually for capital improvements such as a new playground. The Friends of the High Park Zoo, however, took it a step further and successfully fundraised the operating money needed to keep the zoo open after the City cut it from the budget in 2012.

Money fundraised for park improvements and operations are transferred to the City which manages the project. The Partnership Development Unit within Parks, Forestry, and Recreation facilitates this process with community groups.

Tennis Clubs

Community tennis clubs are volunteer-led non-profit organizations that obtain a yearly permit from the City to operate public tennis courts. These organizations do not need to be incorporated, but they must have a written constitution. Annual permit costs are set by the number and type of tennis courts. Tennis clubs charge membership fees that help cover operational costs and capital reserve funds for any proposed improvements by the club.

The division of responsibility for tennis court operations and management is outlined in the City's policy for outdoor tennis

clubs approved by council in 2004.⁷ In short, tennis clubs are responsible for general cleanliness of the courts during the tennis season, while the City is responsible for capital repairs and maintenance of clubhouses and outside the courts.

Any capital improvements proposed by the tennis club that are above and beyond the city standard (improved court surface, extra lighting, new building, etc.) must be funded solely by the club. Projects are submitted to city staff for approval before the tennis club can approach any contractors. Projects are conducted under the supervision of the City and signed over to the City after completion.

Other privately operated sporting clubs

Yacht clubs lease land and buildings from the City, or, in the case of water lots, either the City or the province. They pay market rent and are responsible for paying property taxes and for site maintenance.

Lawn bowling clubs operate on a yearly permit like tennis clubs and charge membership fees, but lawn bowling clubs pay a flat permit fee. Unlike for tennis clubs, there is no official lawn bowling club policy, however, generally the clubs are responsible for maintaining the court greens during the operating season, while the City performs annual maintenance of the greens. The City is also responsible for maintaining the surrounding areas and any capital repairs to the clubhouse.

Concessions

Concession operators in city parks are chosen through a request for proposals (RFP) process. The City puts out a letter to community groups first, but there is no rent discount for community groups. If community groups are not interested, the concession would then become part of an RFP and open to all proponents. Concessionaires are responsible for

maintenance of everything inside the concession building and to keep it in a state of good repair as well as their hydro and gas. Concessionaires can implement capital improvements, however, they must be submitted to the City and approved by city council.

Artscape Wychwood Barns

Chosen through the City's request for proposals in 2004, the non-profit organization Artscape led a community-based revitalization of the TTC maintenance sheds located in what is now Wychwood Park. The result was the opening of the Artscape Wychwood Barns in 2008, which hosts live/work and work studio artist units, a community gallery, office and programming space for arts and environmental non-profits, a large community event space, and, in partnership with The Stop, an educational food centre.⁸

Artscape leases the barns from the City in a 50 year, \$1 a year lease arrangement⁹ and is responsible for all management elements of its operations, including revenue-generating initiatives, budget management, programming and maintenance of the barns plus access to 20 metres outside the barns in the park. Programming is done by Artscape itself, The Stop, and other tenants of the building, while outside organizations can rent the main covered street barn to host their own events. The volunteered Wychwood Barns Community Association also helps program the site by curating the community gallery, programming community events, and engaging with residents.

The barns are financially self-sustaining through revenue generated by tenant leases and event rentals. Rentals for private uses in the covered street barn are balanced against the desire for the barns to remain a community hub open to the public. Private events are usually scheduled for hours when the public does not typically use the barns (i.e., most community events happen during the day on the weekends.) To manage the venues and programming, Artscape employs two on-site staff at the barns.

While the City doesn't provide any on-going operational funding for the barns specifically (Artscape does receive an operating grant from the City for which it submits an annual application), it has provided some money from *Section 37* funds, targeted specifically towards capital improvements that benefit all

tenants and community members of the barns. The city has also exempted public portions of the barns, such as the covered street barn, from property taxes through a municipal capital facilities by-law. In 2013, that exemption was extended to cover the green barn operated by The Stop, as it met the criteria as a community space.¹⁰

Evergreen Brick Works

In 2003, after being chosen in a request for proposals process by the City, the national non-profit environmental charity Evergreen led a \$55 million revitalization of the Don Valley Brick Works to convert the neglected industrial pad into an environmental community centre. This culminated in the clean up and repurposing of the old brick making factory, as well as the construction of the LEED platinum (candidate) Centre for Green Cities, a campus which includes a weekend Farmers' Market, restaurant and café space, event space and gardens. Evergreen Brick Works was fully opened to the public in 2010.¹¹

While the land is owned by the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA) and managed by the City, it is leased to Evergreen in a 21-year lease that began in 2009. Certain portions of the building are exempt from property taxes through a municipal capital facilities by-law, which covers 88 per cent of the space Evergreen operates.¹² While Evergreen maintains the grounds and buildings, the City is responsible for the maintenance of the quarry lands surrounding Evergreen's site.

Evergreen raises approximately \$3 million per year towards on-going operations through event rentals, programming, on-site parking, and fundraising and tenant leases in the Centre for Green Cities, where environmental non-profits and eco-friendly businesses rent space.¹³ Cash flow from earnings go towards site programming (for example, wood bake oven, skating rink, kitchen), routine and capital maintenance, and construction loan repayments.

On-site programming, filtered through an urban sustainability lens (food, children, urban ecology), is varied and includes activities such as a farmer's market, winter skating, demonstration gardens and urban gardening workshops, an active children's program, flea market, and large-format art installations.

Toronto Botanical Garden

Established in 2003 when the former Civic Garden Centre in Edwards Gardens changed its name and mission, the Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) operates and maintains a four-acre garden and an administrative/educational facility known as the George and Kathy Dembroski Centre for Horticulture. The facility and lands are owned by the City, but leased to the Toronto Botanical Garden free of charge in an agreement that expires in 2024. The City provides an annual grant to TBG of \$25,000, as well as providing \$150,000 within the City's budget towards utilities and facility maintenance. The rest



of TBG's annual \$2.1 million budget is covered through donations, retail sales at an onsite store, programs, event rentals and memberships.

TBG offers onsite programming for both adults and children that range from lectures and horticultural classes to yoga, drawing and painting workshops—approximately 10,000 adults and 6,000 children participate annually. TBG also hosts a free summer music series. TBG offers offsite programming at the Allan Gardens children's conservatory in an agreement with the City and tours at Allan Gardens and the Toronto Music Garden. TBG's facility serves as the home to the Garden Club of Toronto, Milne House Garden Club, Canada Blooms and Toronto Master Gardeners, as well as the site for the meetings of many other flower societies and garden clubs.

In 2012, TBG requested additional financial support from the City to assist with the organization's on-going financial issues. In a letter from TBG to the City, it stated these difficulties were due to their inability to generate revenue from on-site parking, the free admission policy, and "the lack of a dining facility within our building, as mandated by our management agreement."¹⁴ TBG requested an increase in the City's annual grant from \$25,000 to \$160,000 to help cover the cost of maintaining both the building and the gardens, which TBG estimates to be \$380,000 per year. The City responded with a one-time grant of \$75,000 and outlined recommendations in a city staff-written financially sustainable operating plan for TBG.¹⁵ However, TBG did not feel that the recommendations were aligned with its core mandate and business. The one-time grant of \$75,000 was not renewed in 2014.

Toronto Music Garden

Based on a collaboration between cellist Yo-Yo Ma and designer Julie Moir Messervy, the Toronto Music Garden transforms music by J. S. Bach into a public park.¹⁶ The park was conceived as a partnership between the public and private sector. In a fundraising process led by philanthropist James Fleck, private

individuals and the Weston Foundation contributed \$1.3 million towards the cost of building the park, with the City of Toronto working closely with Mr. Fleck to ensure the design process connected with the fundraising effort. Mr. Fleck continues to hold an annual meeting with City and Harbourfront Centre staff to make sure that there is funding available for innovative musical programming and that the park is maintained at the high standard to which it was designed.

An important part of the Toronto Music Garden is the Summer Music in the Garden programming series that Harbourfront Centre has been managing since the park opened. The programming is funded through contributions from Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Cultural Services at the City of Toronto, Harbourfront Centre as well as a combination of private donations and sponsorships. Part of the City funding is derived from a modest programming endowment fund that was established after the garden was constructed.

In terms of park maintenance, the Toronto Music Garden has dedicated city gardeners that work in the Music Garden and in surrounding parks. Dedicated gardeners are required in situations where intensive horticultural maintenance is required.

Above Photo by Fraser and Sons (1884). Toronto Reference Library, Special Collections, T11688

4. PARTNERSHIP MODELS FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Bloedel Conservatory/VanDusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver

VanDusen Botanical Garden¹⁷ and Bloedel Conservatory¹⁸ are owned by the City of Vancouver but jointly managed through the Vancouver Park Board and the registered charity VanDusen Botanical Garden Association. The Park Board is responsible for handling lease arrangements with the two separately owned and operated restaurants as well as the following staff departments: gardening, maintenance, front office administration, admissions, retail, facility rents, and events management. Complementing the responsibilities of the Park Board, the VanDusen Botanical Garden Association is responsible for programming which includes education, fundraising (both annual and capital), marketing and media relations, membership and volunteer management, and development of the library and resource center. This governance model has the Park Board handling the day to day operating and maintenance tasks, while the Association leverages the social and financial capital of members, volunteers, and the general public to raise money, program events, and build the park's brand.

Garfield Conservatory, Chicago

The Chicago Park District owns and operates the Garfield Conservatory while the Garfield Conservatory Alliance is responsible for programming, fundraising, and strategic planning.¹⁹ The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance is a partnership of organizations including the Chicago Park District, Friends of the Parks, and area schools, museums, conservation organizations, and community groups. The Alliance has 15 full-time staff. Over the past 20 years, the two organizations have turned the Garfield Conservatory into one of the best conservatories in the US and provided a mutually beneficial partnership model between city parks and community members.

Post Office Square (Norma B Leventhal Park), Boston

Post Office Square in Boston is open to the public but privately owned and operated by the Friends of Post Office Square Trust.²⁰ The trust is supported by the revenues from 1,400 parking spaces built in the parking garage beneath the park. Legal agreements were reached with the City to deed the ground level of the park to the city under the condition that future development will not occur on the site. The partnership model is successful due to the revenues generated from the parking garage underneath. This 'ground-lease' model works best when an element of financially sustainable infrastructure, such as a parking garage, is incorporated into the construction of the park.

Bryant Park, New York

The Bryant Park Corporation is a non-profit, private management company that independently owns and operates the park in mid-town Manhattan adjacent to the New York Public Library's 42nd Street Branch.²¹ The corporation provides sanitation, security, maintenance, marketing and communications, and strategic visioning services both internally and through partnerships with the City of New York and a surrounding Business Improvement District. It also oversees popular programming in the park as well as concessions and cafes. The corporation was created concurrently with the 1990s private-sector revitalization efforts that transformed the park into the 'world's best public space.' The City of New York plays a cursory role in the park's operations and a 'Friends of Bryant Park' organization does not exist, as the corporation coordinates all volunteer activities.

Assiniboine Park Conservancy, Winnipeg

Founded in 2008, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy is a public-private, not for profit charitable organization tasked with developing, governing, managing, and most importantly, fundraising and improving infrastructure, of a 1,000 acre urban park.²² While the City of Winnipeg retains ownership of the park and built assets, the Conservancy runs the park as the City lacks the resources to properly maintain and operate the grounds and facilities. The Conservancy's 10-Year, \$200 million redevelopment plan, relies on private-sector led restoration of existing assets, primarily the park's pavilion, the expansion

of the zoo, and the construction of a new conservatory. The Conservancy has both a full time executive team as well as a board of directors with leaders from local universities, businesses, community activists, and city and provincial staff. In this model, the City of Winnipeg has ceded all operating, funding, and expansion capacity to the Conservancy, retaining only ownership of the land.

Golden Gate Park Conservancy, San Francisco

The Golden Gate Park Conservancy's primary responsibilities are fundraising and membership development to support programs and operations at the park including assets such as the California Academy of Sciences and Conservatory of Flowers in addition to acres of parkland and recreational spaces.²³ Working with the National Park Service, The Presidio Trust, and Friends of The Golden Gate, the conservancy leads capital and operating fundraising campaigns, manages volunteers and educational programs, and publishes annual reports on activities in the park. Friends of the Golden Gate is a group of volunteers who host hikes, pop-up concerts, and educational programs designed to develop a culture of stewardship among emerging civic and business leaders. The conservancy does not own or operate any parkland or facilities, but provides park tours and operates several park bookstores and cafes, produces educational programs and merchandise.

Advisory Council, Conservatory of Flowers, San Francisco

The mission of the Advisory Council to the Conservatory of Flowers is to provide support, advocacy, and stewardship for the Conservatory.²⁴ Board members consist of horticulturalists, retired professionals, artists, local business leaders, and marketing and fundraising specialists among others. Board members work with a dedicated, full-time staff at the Conservatory, which includes botanists, executives, and event coordinators. The City of San Francisco Parks Department retains ownership of the property, while Conservatory of Flowers staff operates the facility.

Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York

The Madison Square Park Conservancy is responsible for raising funds to contribute park maintenance, security, and programming.²⁵ Part of the popular programming in the park is rotating public art installations. The New York City Parks Department owns, operates, and maintains the park's facilities and grounds.

Prospect Park Alliance, New York

The Prospect Park Alliance was founded in the late 1980s to fundraise for the park's operating budget, capital improvements, and educational programs.²⁶ Working in partnership with the New York City Parks Department, which provides basic services, today the Prospect Park Alliance augments City resources by overseeing the day-to-day operations of the park including landscape care, maintenance, and garbage removal. To further involve the local community in the park's management and operations, the Prospect Park Community Committee was established. This committee meets monthly with park management to provide feedback on capital projects, rules and regulations, as well as general feedback about the health of the park. The three tiered governance structure of the park includes the New York City Parks Department which owns the land and contributes to operating expenses, the Prospect Park Alliance which operates and fundraises for capital improvements and operating costs, and the Prospect Park Community Committee.

Pittsburgh Park Conservancy, Pittsburgh

Operating across four of the city's regional parks, the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy is a public-private partnership with the mandate to fundraise for capital improvements, manage volunteers, program, and stewardship across the parks.²⁷ The Conservancy is responsible for all aspects of the parks management and daily operations while the City retains formal ownership of parkland. Additionally, the Conservancy works with the Pittsburgh Greenspace Alliance, which includes eight non-profits in the city, including friends groups and community development organizations, to develop and champion city-wide park policies.

5. PARK PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN TORONTO

In addition to the existing partnerships in Toronto's parks, there are a range of parks where a new partnership model might potentially benefit the park. A formalized partnership between FOAG and the City could become a model and inspiration for creative partnerships to revitalize and improve these public spaces. In each of these examples, there is an organization that is considering new ways to support the park. By FOAG breaking new ground, they may ease the work of these organizations as well as create positive momentum in the philanthropic sector for funders to support creative park improvement projects in Toronto.

Grange Park

In February 2014, the Art Gallery of Ontario announced that W. Galen Weston had committed financial support to the AGO to redesign and revitalize Grange Park—part of a project between the AGO and the City of Toronto. The AGO owns the land for Grange Park but leases it to the City for the City to operate the park.

Waterfront Parks

Waterfront Toronto has built a series of exciting, high design parks—Sherbourne Common, Corktown Common, Sugar Beach, Underpass Park and others. Once built, Waterfront Toronto transfers these parks to the City of Toronto for operation and ongoing maintenance. These high design parks are expensive to maintain and the City has been pressed to find the resources to properly take care of these parks. As residents move into these new neighbourhoods, pressures on the parks will only increase. The thinking is only in the early stages, but Waterfront Toronto has been exploring if there might be partnership models that would allow for improved maintenance and programming in these parks.

Fort York

The Fort York grounds now comprise 43 acres of core downtown green space. Fort York is operated by the Arts and Culture Division of the City of Toronto as a museum. In June 2012, the W. Garfield Weston Foundation announced a grant of \$1 million to the Fort York Foundation, an independent charity that is raising money to support the redevelopment of Fort York. The grant will support the rehabilitation of Garrison Common, a key park space at the Fort York site. The foundation also raised money to support the construction of the \$25 million Fort York Visitor Centre.

Cloud Gardens

In February 2014, the Financial District BIA released a report on improving the public realm in the downtown area.²⁸ Part of the report included recommendations for the BIA to support City investments in improving the Cloud Gardens, the only city park in the area. The BIA is contemplating starting with ideas to program the space.

College Park

The Downtown Yonge BIA has been organizing programming in College Park. The park has been redesigned and work on park improvements is set to begin soon. With the new park, the BIA is potentially considering taking on a larger partnership role.

High Park Zoo

Responding to a proposed elimination of City funding for the Zoo, in December 2013, The Friends of High Park Zoo proposed the establishment of a new public-private partnership model—the High Park Zoo Conservancy—where the City of Toronto and Friends of High Park Zoo would partner to deliver a zoo in High Park. The proposal is still in its preliminary stages.

Toronto Zoo

Discussions have been held by the Toronto Zoo Board around potentially creating a non-profit conservancy to operate the zoo in a similar fashion to the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, the San Diego Zoo or the Bronx Zoo. Responding to ongoing financial challenges, in 2012 the City of Toronto issued a “request for expressions of interest” for outside operators

to operate the Toronto Zoo. Concerned that the zoo might be sold to a private company, the proposal was rescinded by city council within days.

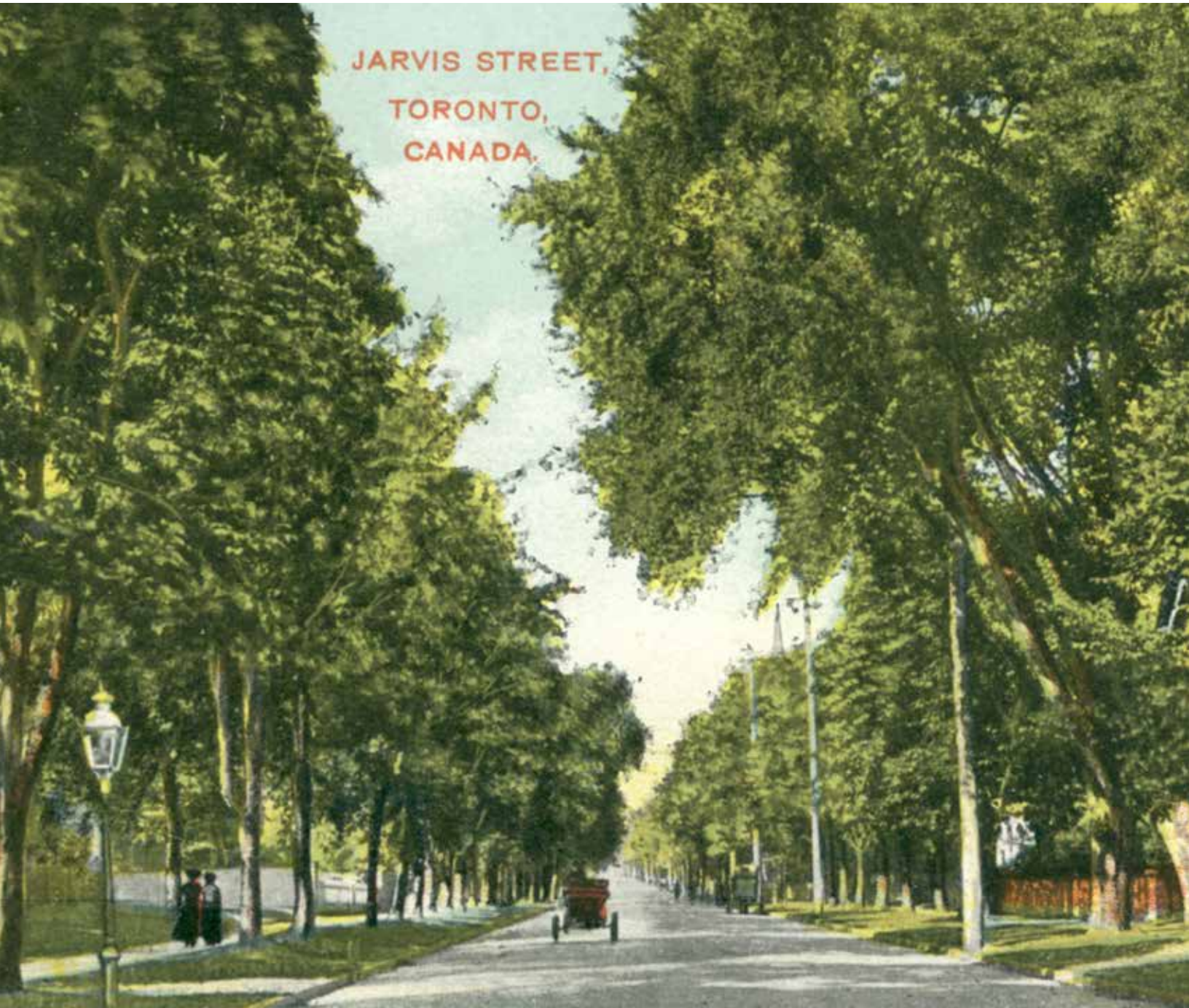
Riverdale Farm

In March 2013, the City of Toronto appointed a new nine person Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group to work with city staff to enhance the farm's programming opportunities and ensure the farm has a sustainable business model.

Below Jarvis Street, as illustrated in a 1907 post card <http://chuckmanothercollectionvolume5.blogspot.ca/2010/05/postcard-toronto-jarvis-street.html>

Guild Park

Guild Park is an 88-acre site on Lake Ontario that includes a sculpture garden featuring important art works as well as a range of architectural remnants saved from dozen of Toronto's heritage buildings demolished in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, the park includes the important heritage building that was the former Guild of All Arts and Guild Inn that has been shut since 2001. The Friends of Guild Park is working on efforts to partner with the City to improve, enhance and protect the park and gardens, including programming walks and events in the park and fundraising.



6. ALLAN GARDENS OPPORTUNITIES

Based on input from a range of public meetings hosted by FOAG, conversations with city staff, the local councillor, neighbourhood organizations and agencies, and many others, this section identifies the opportunities that exist to improve Allan Gardens. As a downtown park and unique horticultural destination with historic architecture, Allan Gardens is positioned, with investment in both capital improvements and programming, to transform from a good park to a great one. The success of a new partnership and revitalization of Allan Gardens could eventually help link with nearby Moss Park and present an opportunity for wider neighbourhood revitalization.

The opportunities identified below build on the groundbreaking report Dave Harvey prepared for the Metcalf Foundation in September 2010, *Fertile Ground for New Thinking: Improving Toronto's Parks*. The report was the catalyst for the formation of Toronto Park People and a swelling of public and philanthropic interest in Toronto's parks. The core opportunities for improving parks in the city were identified as:

- Put the community first—ensure Allan Gardens is meeting the community's needs and that community is connected to the park.
- Move from a culture of no to a culture of yes—the City needs to be open to experimenting with new ideas in Allan Gardens and ways of partnering and working with community.
- Capitalize on creative funding ideas—the City needs to embrace the community's energy, ideas and funding.
- Use food as a tool to engage people in parks—Allan Gardens needs to include new ways to use the growing, cooking and eating of food as a way to connect people to each other and the park.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Opportunities in the Master Plan

Many elements of the approved 2006 Master Plan for the park remain unfunded and unconstructed. The City has identified the fountain terrace, south garden terrace and artist's gardens as the top priorities in the Master Plan as these would have the greatest impact in attracting attention to and building the profile of the park.

Fountain Terrace

- The fountain terrace represents an ideal project for FOAG because such a visible improvement with historic ties is likely to be enticing to potential funders and individual donations.
- This project is one that city staff indicated would be their top choice for an outside group's fundraising focus.
- The fountain terrace would also reintroduce a focal point to the park and provide a space for community gathering and events.
- The project's cost is estimated to be \$1.3 million in 2006 dollars.

South Garden Terrace

- The south garden terrace is the Master Plan's most expensive and complex capital improvement.
- It would result in a new outdoor signature garden meant to draw people into the park and include different grades, seating areas and a water feature.
- The project's cost is estimated to be \$1.97 million in 2006 dollars.

Artist's Gardens and Courtyard

- The artist's gardens and courtyard would replace the parking lot and storage yard currently on the west side of the conservatory at the north end of Horticultural Lane.
- A new entrance on the west side of the conservatory would lead out into this new space.
- The gardens could be programmed annually or bi-annually with art shows.
- \$300,000 plus \$30,000 for design work is included within the 2014 capital plan for Parks, Forestry and Recreation for this project.²⁹ City staff indicated that FOAG will be consulted during the design process.

Opportunities in the conservatory

There are also several opportunities for capital projects and improvements related to the conservatory buildings themselves.

Horticultural displays

- In order to raise the bar in the current conservatory, FOAG could fundraise for planting and display improvements. The City has already completed some of the design work.

Greenhouse extensions

- There is little room in the current greenhouses for programming or events. However, there is an opportunity to expand greenhouse space while also creating more indoor space that could host events and programming. This could allow FOAG to run its own programming and fundraisers, but could also work as a revenue generating space if rented out for private functions as done at Wychwood Barns and the Toronto Botanical Garden.
- One option is a north-south link on the west side of the conservatory, which would close the loop of the current greenhouses and encircle the planned artist's gardens and courtyards. A second option for expansion is an enlargement of the east-west greenhouses into the planned courtyards.
- City staff indicated that fundraising for a greenhouse expansion would be a viable project and that the development of the courtyards and artist's gardens planned for the park would not inhibit this type of expansion.

PROGRAMMING

Based on the examples of other park programming and conversations with city park staff, there are a number of opportunities to activate Allan Gardens and the conservatory. An activated park with a variety of programming can help draw new users at different times of the day, which helps position the park as a place of social interaction, but also contributes to park safety. Well thought out programming that responds to the local context can also help solidify the park as a community hub.

Programming can be done in two different ways. One way is to plan several one-off events per year and obtain the necessary permits and insurance in order to host those events or work with the councillor's office and park supervisor to waive those fees. The second involves establishing relationships with the City to allow for regular programming of the conservatory or related park spaces.

An example of this is the Summer Music in the Garden series that Harbourfront Centre has run in the Toronto Music Garden for over 14 years. The free concerts happen twice weekly on

Thursday and Sunday. The program is produced by Harbourfront Centre, while funding for the program comes from the City as well as corporate and individual donors.

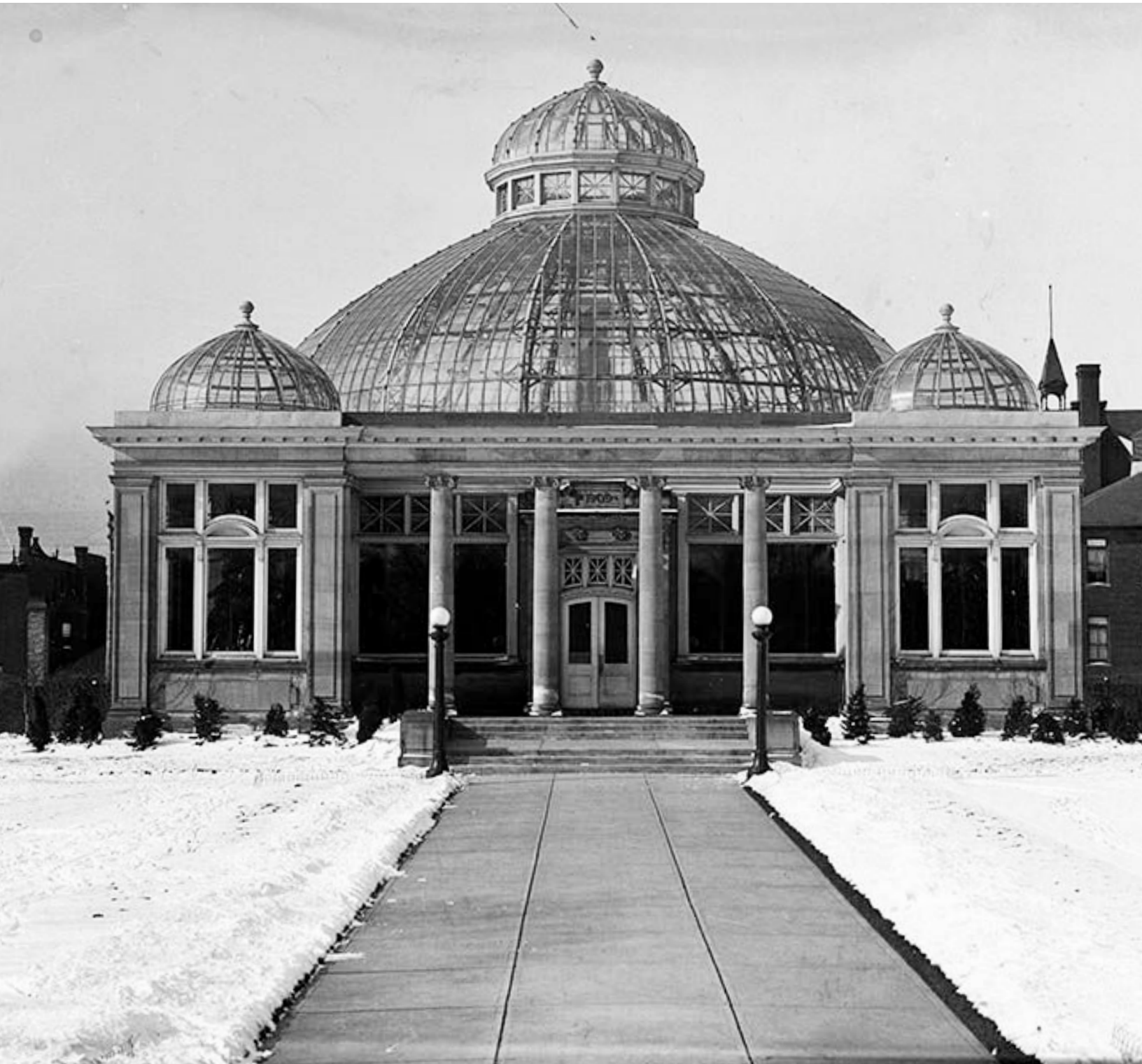
Specific programming opportunities:

- City staff have noted the artist's gardens and courtyard, which are included in the City's capital plan, offer a chance for an on-going programming relationship. This could involve working with the City and other partners to line up and organize art installations and other programming and events related to curating this space.
- Opportunities also exist in the conservatory through guided tours and other educational programming related to horticulture. With funding from the City, Toronto Botanical Gardens operates gardening programs for school groups in the winter. Green Thumbs Growing Kids also provides programming in the spring. As well, the Toronto Botanical Garden offers guided tours through the conservatory at \$8 for adults and \$5 for children and seniors.
- Several local residents are interested in organizing an event in Allan Gardens that will feature poetry readings and theatrical performances that would take place in the park. However, the work is in the very early stages.
- Programming centred around the growing, cooking, and eating of food would connect with the park as a centre of horticultural excellence and provide a space for both social interaction and education. Ryerson faculty and students are interested in potentially using some greenhouse space for the growing of food and/or educational programming. A farmer's market could be very popular as well.
- The National Ballet School is very close to the park and there could be an opportunity to partner for a dance event.
- Music or theatre events could be held in the greenhouse or outside.
- Festivals could be done focusing in on spring and fall.
- Tours could be done focusing on history, gardening or trees.

Any programming and events would need to respect several boundaries in order to be acceptable at the City:

- Free admission.
- No alcohol sales.
- Frequency and scale needs to respect the public nature of the park and conservatory by balancing public access with any events.

Below "Allan Gardens Palm House," 18 February 1913, City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, Item 541



7. PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS FOR ALLAN GARDENS

The goal of the partnership should be to create a focus and leadership role around which community members can gravitate to create ownership over the park within the neighbourhood. Any partnership is dependent upon collaboration with both the community and the City as well as open, transparent decision-making integrated with opportunities for on-going community input.

PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS

Park partnerships from other cities are based in part on how the division of responsibility and collaboration works between the non-profit partner and the city and what roles each of these entities plays in the park. Partners can take responsibility for a variety of park operations and management, including programming, fundraising, capital planning and construction, maintenance and operations. It is important to note that no matter what partnership option is pursued, a key element is meaningful engagement with the community.

The earlier section **Considering New Partnerships** identified four broad categories of park partnerships: community groups, leasers, collaborative managers, and sole managers. These categories are not meant to represent hard divisions. Many park partnerships, roles, and responsibilities evolve and shift over time.

Community group

In this partnership option, FOAG would take on the activities that many other park friends groups and community groups have done successfully in the City of Toronto. FOAG would continue to be an open group that other members of the community could join to have input into what they would like to see in the park.

FOAG would focus more on park programming and events in the park, such as arts programming for the artist's gardens, community picnics, educational or training programs in the gardens, movie nights, and clean-ups. FOAG would need to obtain permits from the City, either on a case-by-case basis for one-off events or through an arrangement for seasonal permits for on-going programming.

On the capital side, FOAG could fundraise for capital improvements in the park as other park friends and community groups in the city have done. For example, FOAG could choose one of the projects in the 2006 Master Plan and fundraise for the

project. The City encourages groups to choose projects that are already included in the City's ten-year capital plan. FOAG would raise the funds and provide them to the City for them to construct, operate and maintain the project.

If FOAG proposed a project not within the Master Plan then the process is a bit more complicated:³⁰

- No projects can be added to the City's capital plan until they are fully funded.
- A reserve account can be opened at the City with council approval that would hold funds until the goal is reached. Alternatively, an account can be created through the City's arms-length non-profit parks agency the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation.
- Any new capital projects must be submitted for review to be included in the following year's capital plan in the spring, with a deadline usually in April or May (e.g., a project submitted for review in Spring 2014 would be for the 2015 capital plan.)
- The capital plan is voted on by council in January or February.
- It is possible to add capital projects to the current year, but only if they fit within the work schedules of staff and receive council approval through a report.

This partnership option provides FOAG with no formal decision-making power regarding the park, the conservatory and its operations, placing it in an advisory and advocacy role for the park.

Leaser

This partnership option depends on FOAG negotiating a lease arrangement for the conservatory in Allan Gardens. FOAG would operate, maintain and program the space inside the conservatory as well as the grounds surrounding the greenhouses. The City would maintain the remaining grounds of the park

and set certain guiding principles for the conservatory, such as open and free access to the public.

The notion of a non-profit leasing and operating a city building in a park is not a novel one in Toronto. The Artscape Wychwood Barns and Toronto Botanical Garden are two examples. However, in the past the lease arrangement was often coupled with a proposed revitalization or expansion of the facilities and an open Request for Proposals from the City to find an operator. The City has also negotiated many long-term leases with companies operating restaurants in parks.

Taking over the conservatory in a lease would allow FOAG more control over the operations and programming of the conservatory, but would necessitate complex negotiations with the City regarding funding and the use of unionized city staff. Depending on how the lease was negotiated, it may also allow FOAG to propose and carry out capital improvements to the conservatory and perhaps an expansion of the greenhouse space.

For this option, FOAG would need a high level of organizational and financial capacity and so may want to reach out to potential partners such as Ryerson University or Toronto Botanical Garden to assist in the operation of all or part of the conservatory.

Collaborative Manager

As a collaborative manager of Allan Gardens, FOAG would work in partnership with the City to share responsibility for certain roles in the park's programming, operation, maintenance, and capital improvement. This arrangement would depend on a negotiated memorandum of understanding between FOAG and the City that outlined a shared vision for the park and a division of responsibilities that is flexible enough to evolve over time. Some of the dedicated staff for Allan Gardens could be joint-staff between the City and FOAG, which would ensure open communication in the management of the park between the two partners.

In this collaborative management role, FOAG could take on the responsibility for programming in the park and conservatory. For example, FOAG could curate exhibits in the outdoor artist's gardens with the community and other partners or plan day camps, music, theatre or other events that work to knit the conservatory with the wider park.

Regarding capital improvements, city staff indicated that the city's preference would be that any fundraising would be turned over to the City which would then manage implementation. However, there may be community and funder interest in FOAG managing the construction of a project funded by a combination of both City and private funds if it meant that the project could be implemented in a timelier, more responsive manner. This collaborative management partnership could allow for this shared role in planning and executing capital improvements in the park. For example, FOAG could take on elements of the park's master plan or proposed new capital projects such as an expansion of the existing greenhouses. Any proposed capital changes to the park or conservatory would require extensive community consultation and public input and approval from the City.

Sole Manager

As the sole manager of Allan Gardens, FOAG would take on responsibility for all of the park's operations, maintenance, capital projects, and programming. While some parks in the United States are operated under this model, such as Bryant Park in New York City, it would be a novel proposal for Toronto. Executing this partnership would likely be the most difficult both in negotiating with the City and in ensuring community buy-in as some would raise the concern that the park is being "privatized." Furthermore, as noted earlier, successful park partnerships focus on the non-profit partner filling a gap between the park's current state and its potential and in this model, FOAG would be assuming responsibility for a number of functions that would more productively be left with the City such as waste collection, grass mowing and tree maintenance.

This partnership option would provide FOAG with the most control over the park's operations and allow it to execute both capital improvements and programming in consultation with the community. However, it would also require the most robust organizational and financial capacity to be sustainable. If this partnership option was considered for Allan Gardens it would likely be further into the future after other more collaborative partnerships had been tested.

8. THE BUSINESS CASE

Based on the experience of other park partnerships in Toronto and elsewhere in North America, this section outlines a number of potential revenue and funding options to support the activities of the Friends of Allan Gardens.

Private donors are often more inclined to provide funding for capital improvements rather than to on-going operations, programming and maintenance. Creating an opportunity for FOAG to generate revenue in the park beyond donations and grants will be key to the ongoing financial stability of the organization.

Earned income

- Special event permit revenue from events in the conservatory or other spaces in the park could be a helpful source of income if FOAG managed the permit process in partnership with the City. Permit revenue could then be recycled back into park operations.
- Some parks run through a non-profit partnership rely on revenue from concessions and cafes as a source of earned income. The non-profit may keep all the money from concession leases or it may keep a portion of concession revenue with the rest going to the City. FOAG would not have to run any concessions in Allan Gardens itself, but handle the lease and collect all or part of the rent. There may be community support for a concession or cafe operating in the park that was community-run, creating a source of local employment and economic development.
- Another good source of earned income is through rentals of space for private events. While the current conservatory has limited indoor space sufficient for private events, the construction of an additional greenhouse on the west side of the park could include event space. Much like Wychwood Barn's covered street barn, this event space could be rented out for both public and private events.

City funding

- Depending on the nature and details of the partnership, in some cases governments pay fees or provides grants to non-profit partners for services such as delivering programming or handling maintenance. For example, the TBG receives approximately \$150,000 from the City annually for its operations.

Private contributions

- It is important for FOAG to obtain charitable status to make itself more enticing for private donations.
- Though the conservatory should remain free and open to the public, installation of on-site donation stations may help encourage visitors to make a small donation during their visit. These stations have been installed at the TBG and were part of the City of Toronto's recommendations in its sustainable operating plan.
- FOAG could also offer memberships to Allan Gardens as the TBG does. Membership would need to be associated with some kind of benefit with different tiers at different prices offering a range of membership benefits. For example, members of the TBG, depending on which membership tier is selected, get discounts at the retail store and plant sales and lower rates for events and programming as well as other perks.
- In-kind contributions can take the form of professionals, organizations, governments and businesses offering their services free of charge in addition to the 'sweat equity' that non-profit organization's can tap into with a dedicated base of volunteers.
- Overall, evidence in North America shows that individuals, corporations and foundations are more likely to donate to dedicated non-profit entities fulfilling a function in a park rather than contributing charitable dollars to the municipality fulfilling the same function. This is reflected in no outside fundraising dollars coming in to date to support projects in the City's 2006 Master Plan for Allan Gardens, despite having a target of \$6-7 million.

Capital fundraising

- Fundraising for a capital project, such as the central fountain identified in the Master Plan or an expanded greenhouse, would come from a combination of private and City funds. If FOAG were to enter into a partnership with the City to fundraise, design, build, and operate the new facility, the advantage is that the process for a non-profit to undertake the work is usually far quicker than the City's own capital planning and construction process. Additionally, as noted above, funders are more likely to donate to a non-profit rather than to the City. In particular, large funders like the idea of donating to a non-profit for a capital project if they know the non-profit is invested in operating and maintaining the new facility to a high standard.
- There is local frustration in the amount of time taking the City to undertake capital projects in the park. There may well be local support for providing capital funding from the City to a non-profit partner, if they demonstrated the organizational ability and could show the project being carried out in a timely manner.
- Some non-profits raise funds for an endowment along with a fundraising campaign for a capital project to ensure that there is money dedicated to ongoing programming or maintenance after project completion.

Potential corporate and foundation funders

- FOAG is well positioned to access funding through the Weston Family Parks Challenge. Criteria for this program is that projects should be nature-focused, build community connection and engagement with a local park, be sustainable for the long-term, and utilize new, innovative partnerships that could be a model for elsewhere in the city.
- A range of additional funders have shown an interest in investing in good city park projects in Toronto, including TD Bank, Metcalf Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and many others.

- Fundraising for park projects in Canada is relatively new whereas there is a strong history of this in the US. But in Canada, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy in Winnipeg has shown this can be done by raising more than \$40 million from private sources in the last two years.

Supporting partners

- Ryerson University, which is located directly to the west of the park, could be an important partner for FOAG in providing programming, operational and funding support. The university is looking to expand its current greenhouse space in order to create gardens and horticultural labs, which an expansion of the greenhouse at Allan Gardens could help provide.
- Another potential partner is the Toronto Botanical Garden, which already has more than 20 years of experience in operating and programming related to botanical gardens. It may make sense for FOAG to partner with TBG to share expertise and avoid organizational duplication.
- There are two churches attached to the park and an additional church across the road.
- The Native Women's Resource Centre is located adjacent to the park and is a centre for aboriginal women for skills development, cultural program and life-enhancing resources. There is great potential to integrate their programming into the park.
- The Garden District Residents Association is already active in Allan Gardens organizing park clean ups and community building events.
- The Sherbourne Health Centre faces the park and provides a wide range of health services to a broad set of populations and there may be opportunities to better use the park for their programming.
- The College Francais is a French language public school steps from the park. Students at the school are already involved in maintaining one of the gardens at Allan Gardens.
- Outside the immediate vicinity of Allan Gardens, there may be opportunities to link with groups such as:
 - Downtown Yonge BIA or the Cabbagetown BIA
 - Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group
 - Tourism Toronto
 - Cabbagetown Preservation Society
 - Garden Club of Toronto

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Based on our research, analysis, and discussions with FOAG and many other key actors in Allan Gardens and parks in Toronto, we believe that there is a significant opportunity for FOAG to move forward on developing a partnership with the City of Toronto that would result in a major rejuvenation of Allan Gardens bringing significant benefits to the neighbourhood and the city. This rejuvenation must support the existing community of the park and provide opportunities for residents of all backgrounds to enjoy and benefit from any park improvements.

Over the past several years, FOAG has been building a great deal of momentum for a new vision of the park and new opportunities to work with the City to improve the park. Our analysis supports what FOAG has been hearing from the community and many others—that Allan Gardens possesses enormous potential to re-emerge as a major cultural destination and lush green, natural oasis in the heart of the city. For most of its 150 years as a public horticultural garden, Allan Gardens has been a place of creativity, education, natural beauty (indoors and outdoors), and influence—a fountainhead for new ideas to be explored and demonstrated, ideas that go on to shape the surrounding city.

FOAG is very well positioned to become a driver for new positive change in Allan Gardens and become a model and inspiration for new partnerships to creatively support innovative community building projects in Toronto's parks.

The core of this long-term plan is to expand and enhance opportunities for a broad range of visitors to experience nature and beauty at the heart of the city. This would happen through innovative new facilities and programs that centre on food, art, and horticulture experiences year-round. The plan is shaped around the core elements in Dave Harvey's September 2010 report, *Fertile Ground for New Thinking: Improving Toronto's Parks*:

- Put the community first
- Move from a culture of no to a culture of yes
- Capitalize on creative funding ideas
- Use food as a tool to engage people in parks

The other central framework for the recommendations is the core principles laid out in **Guiding Principles** section of this report.

RECOMMENDED PARTNERSHIP MODEL— A COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT TO ALLOW FOAG TO FUNDRAISE, DESIGN, CONSTRUCT AND JOINTLY OPERATE AND PROGRAM THE CONSERVATORY AND GARDENS IN ALLAN GARDENS

We recommend that FOAG establish itself as a non-profit organization and enter into an agreement with the City with the goal of FOAG taking on the task of rejuvenating the conservatory and adjacent gardens for the long term. Key suggested elements would include:

- **Capital improvements:** FOAG would take on the task of fundraising, designing and overseeing construction of improvements to the conservatory building and adjacent gardens. It would be hoped that significant City funding would also be dedicated towards the capital improvements.
- **Operations:** FOAG should take some role in the ongoing maintenance of the conservatory and adjacent gardens, but this role should be carefully arranged with the City and with a goal of ensuring a sensible and workable division of responsibilities.
- **Programming:** FOAG should take on the responsibility of programming and activating the conservatory and adjacent gardens.

This recommended model could include projects such as an expansion of the park's existing conservatory complex through a new 'link' building along the Jarvis Street frontage. The expansion would animate the park's frontage along Jarvis Street, fully enclose two internal courtyards that would be developed as part of an expanded innovative garden program, and could house new facilities such

as event space, a café, and expanded garden program spaces. These are just broad recommendations—the purpose of this report was not to make specific design recommendations for changes to the park or conservatory. The details of which capital improvements FOAG should make a priority will require extensive community consultations, expert design advice, and discussions with the City.

Beyond the conservatory complex, a range of additional capital improvements such as improved gardens and expanded programs could be implemented over time.

It is our recommendation that FOAG focus on the conservatory and adjacent gardens instead of taking a major partnership role in the entire park. We see the primary value-added opportunity for a new partner to augment and add to existing city resources in the park to be focused on the building and gardens with the City keeping the primary role in the rest of the park. That relationship could evolve over time with FOAG eventually taking on programming, capital or operating functions.

Our recommended model builds on existing partnership models in the City of Toronto, such as the Artscape Wychwood Barns and Toronto Botanical Garden. It also replicates models for conservatories in other North American cities, such as Vancouver’s Bloedel Conservatory, Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park Conservatory, Chicago’s Garfield Conservatory, and San Francisco’s Conservatory of Flowers.

The key to unlocking Allan Gardens potential is in establishing a new governance model for the park. As has been demonstrated by a number of successful and innovative examples in major US cities, new types of public/private partnerships create otherwise unavailable opportunities for major fundraising campaigns, the implementation of significant capital improvements and richer park programs, opportunities for deeper community involvement, and more sustainable management practices.

NEXT STEPS

It is going to take resources and significant effort for the necessary extensive community engagement and dialogue, planning, fundraising and discussions with the City to implement this new model.

GOVERNANCE

FOAG should seek charitable status in order to become more attractive to individual, foundation and corporate donors.

The non-profit board should be composed of individuals with fundraising capacity, expertise in leasing/partnerships, park design and working with the City. City staff and the local councillor should also be invited to sit on the board.

As well, building on the successful model used in places such as Prospect Park, FOAG should establish a community advisory committee with community members that represent the different communities around the park (e.g., Ryerson University, Seaton House, Garden District Residents Association, Native Women’s Resource Centre).

In Prospect Park in New York, in addition to the board, the Prospect Park Alliance has a Prospect Park Community Committee, which consists of representatives from the surrounding community, including elected officials. This committee meets monthly and plays an advisory role in the park. The Alliance specifically hired a person for the purposes of understanding community culture and engaging with groups to join the committee. As Kathy Blaha writes,³¹ the community committee allowed groups that did not have the time or capacity to join the board a chance to provide input.

These measures are critical to ensure openness, accountability and a connection to the community for the organization. Allan Gardens will always remain a public space and FOAG’s work and governance must take that into account.

HIRING A FULL-TIME PROJECT MANAGER

FOAG’s work has been generously supported by volunteers and staff from ERA Architects. For the next phase of their work, we believe that FOAG will require a full-time project manager. This staff person will spearhead continued community outreach and efforts to build support among other organizations and potential funders. They can coordinate paid or pro-bono expert advice from lawyers and consultants for this precedent-setting creative solution for Allan Gardens. They could also lead some initial positive community building events in the park and conservatory (e.g., Fall Festival, movie night, picnic, clean up).

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Consultation with the community is critical in creating buy-in for a partnership between FOAG and the City, and ensuring that community members’ input is incorporated into any agreement with the City, future park programming, and capital improvements. This will help address potential concerns that could arise over the “privatization” of a public park and conservatory and misunderstandings about the nature of the partnership.

The surrounding area contains many social, medical and housing service organizations, including shelters and organizations geared towards the Aboriginal community. Patrons of these services also make up a large portion of the current user base within the park. Community leaders should be included on the FOAG advisory committee in order to ensure that the community's diverse voice is represented.

Organizations in the area include:

- *Faith:* Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Estonian Lutheran Church, St. Luke's United Church
- *Social service:* Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto People with Aids Foundation, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training Centre, Seaton House, Street Haven at The Crossroads, Operation Springboard, Robertson House
- *Institutional:* Ryerson University, St. Michael's Hospital Detoxification Centre, Ecole Francais
- *Resident:* Garden District Residents Association

NEGOTIATING A FORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITY

FOAG will need to work towards achieving a public/private partnership agreement with the City that will bring new programming, resources, and visitors to the park. FOAG will establish an innovative governance model at Allan Gardens that can ultimately be used for other public spaces in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada.

Many non-profit groups in the United States start with a flexible memorandum of understanding or other agreement.³² FOAG could work out a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City that would outline general responsibilities of each partner (i.e., programming in and around the conservatory, fundraising and capital project management, maintenance of the gardens, etc.) The MOU should be flexible enough to allow change in the partnership over time as FOAG grows in capacity. Depending on the capital improvement work FOAG may wish to take on and the desired on-going role in the conservatory, a lease may also be required to be negotiated with the City.

The MOU should outline a joint vision for the park agreed upon by FOAG and the City to act as a guide to further park activities and development and to help foreclose future misunderstandings or miscommunication between partners regarding the role of FOAG in the park's overall vision. The City should agree to maintain stable funding for the park so private donors can be assured that their donations to FOAG will not crowd out public funding.

FOAG board and advisory committee members should include city staff as well as the local councillor in order to ensure open communication and accountability with the City.

The conservatory at Allan Gardens has excellent, knowledgeable staff, who have worked in the facility for many years. They will have excellent input and thoughts on future ideas for the facility. It is essential that they play an important role in discussions on any new partnership agreement with the City and that they continue to play a key function in any new partnership.

DEVELOPING A FUNDRAISING PLAN AND BUSINESS PLAN

In conjunction with engaging the community and negotiating an agreement with the City, FOAG will need to begin to plan for a major fundraising campaign to implement their capital and programming vision for the park. FOAG may consider hiring a fundraising professional. In addition, the plan needs to include on-going revenue streams identified earlier in the paper to ensure that the partnership model and park improvements are sustainable.

Left "Allan Gardens pavilion (1878–1902) interior," c. 1890, Toronto Reference Library, E 5-99e



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The content of this report was informed by conversations with city staff, the local councillor, community members, and key individuals from relevant organizations.

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Front, inside, and back cover "Fountain and Pavilion,
Horticultural Gardens," c. 1880, Toronto Reference Library,
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