

STRATEGIC PLAN

AN INSPIRED
WORLD WHERE
PEOPLE & PLANTS
THRIVE



2025

HARRY P.
LEU GARDENS

2029



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Welcome to Harry P. Leu Gardens new Strategic Plan 2025-2029! I'm delighted and honored to present the Gardens strategic goals for the next five years. Inspired by the Gardens history, botanical beauty, being a place for all people and our ability to create magical experiences, we look forward to transforming the Gardens through the power of our new shared vision that aligns with our core values and mission to make a lasting impact in our community and beyond.

Our strategic planning process has been thorough and inclusive, involving a broad spectrum of voices from within and outside our organization. Working with our consultant partners at CSR, we have conducted extensive research, engaged in meaningful dialogues, and gathered invaluable feedback from our dedicated staff, board members, volunteers, partners, and the communities we serve. This collaborative effort has ensured that our plan is both comprehensive and reflective of our collective aspirations. This strategic plan is more than a document; it is a renewed commitment to ensure Harry P. Leu Gardens fulfills its mission and makes a meaningful difference in our community.

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and hard work of everyone involved in this process. Together, we can build on the successes of the Gardens last 64 years and forge a new path forward.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership.

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark green background. The signature reads "Jennifer D'hollander" in a cursive script.

Jennifer D'hollander
Executive Director of Harry P. Leu Gardens





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan sets forth new strategic planning priorities for Harry P. Leu Gardens. Working together with the CSR consulting team, the primary goal of this initiative was to assess the Gardens current operational health and develop a strategic plan that aligns the organization for long-term future success.

The process analyzed past and present challenges and successes of Harry P. Leu Gardens through discussions, workshops, interviews, community forums, and surveys from the City of Orlando leadership, the board of directors, staff, and community stakeholders. The most critical issues and opportunities from this process form strategic areas of focus for the next five years, as well as, a new mission, vision, and values for the organization. These new fundamentals will inform our decision-making process and strengthen the foundation of the Gardens for years to come.

Harry P. Leu Gardens strategic plan was developed in partnership with CSR consultants with the City of Orlando, the Board of Trustees, Harry P. Leu Foundation, staff, visitors, volunteers, and community stakeholders.

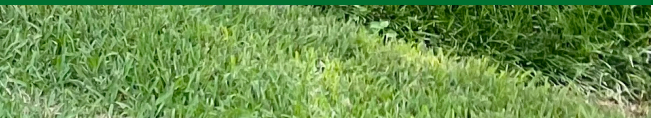
City of Orlando Leadership
 Mayor Buddy Dyer
 Commissioner Robert Stuart
 Commissioner Patty Sheehan
 Allen Johnson, *Chief Venues Officer*
 Charlie Leone,
Deputy Chief Venues Officer
 Craig Borkon,
Deputy Chief Venues Officer

Harry P. Leu Gardens Board of Trustees
 James Whited, *Chairperson*
 Adilia Richemond, *Vice Chairperson*
 Audrey Jones, *Director*
 Paul Oppedisano, *Director*
 Gabrielle Russon, *Director*
 Angela Territo, *Director*
 Richard McCaffrey, *Director*

Harry P. Leu Foundation
 Joseph Stine, *Founder & President*

Staff Leadership Team
 Jennifer D'hollander, *Executive Director*
 Jonathan Rodriguez, *Facility & Rental Manager*
 Tracy Micciche, *Marketing & Event Manager*
 Alyssa Taylor, *Education Manager*
 Colin Worley, *Visitor Services Manager*
 Debra Seay, *Accounting Manager*
 Eric Schmidt, *Interim Horticulture Manager*

	Special Thanks	Rosie Tchekmeian	Cole NeSmith	Frank Billingsley	
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ORGANIZATIONAL POSITION

Since 1961, Harry P. Leu Gardens has been devoted to inspiring people's love of nature and plants, preserving our historic landscape, and sharing outdoor experiences with the public. Originally donated to the City of Orlando by Harry P. and Mary Jane Leu, the Gardens is a fifty-acre botanical oasis and living museum featuring dozens of plant collections and displays, landscaped grounds, lakes, and trails shaded by more than 200-year-old oak trees.

The art of horticulture is central to the Gardens purpose and long-term success. For the past 63 years, Harry P. Leu Gardens has steadily expanded its programs and services, becoming a cherished destination for both local residents and visitors from around the world. The Gardens have welcomed more than 10 million visitors to date, reflecting its

significant role in the community and its appeal as a premier cultural attraction.

Harry P. Leu Gardens is overseen and guided by the board of trustees, City of Orlando leadership, and a dedicated staff team led by the executive director, Jennifer D'hollander. Prior to her appointment, the Gardens was led by



Robert Bowden, the longtime director of the Gardens, who retired after nearly three decades of service. A network of enthusiastic volunteers provides invaluable support annually. The Friends of Leu Gardens, Inc. and the Harry P. Leu Foundation provide further guidance and support to the organization.

The Gardens campus consists of dozens of Southeastern horticultural collections and botanical displays, the Historic Leu House Museum, the Welcome Center, a 22,000 square foot event venue and main entrance hall, and a handful of operational and program support

buildings. The Welcome Center was built in 1995 and the Historic Leu House Museum, originally built in 1888 is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since the gardens opened in 1961 as a horticultural showcase of Mr. & Mrs. Leu's world-wide plant collection, it has evolved into a resource center for horticultural education for all ages, hosting outdoor exhibits, large music and festival events including a long-running plant sale, and has become a premier wedding and private event destination in Central Florida. Annually, the gardens average 275,000 visitors.

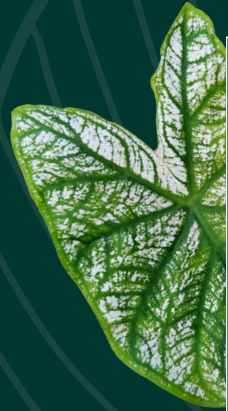
LOOKING AHEAD

Harry P. Leu Gardens is now looking ahead to embrace opportunities and meet challenges using the organization's foundation of past successes. The new strategic plan emphasizes building infrastructure, community engagement, and fundraising, while strengthening its world-class plant collections and capitalizing on Orlando's tourism economy to secure a vibrant and sustainable future.



METHODOLOGY

To better understand the perception of the Gardens in the community, CSR solicited feedback from a broad range of individuals from the Orlando community by conducting individual interviews with key stakeholders, community forums, focus groups, and surveys. A SWOT analysis provided a framework to identify the Gardens internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities and threats. Staff discussions were conducted throughout the process, and a culminating strategic planning workshop took place in May of 2024. The results yielded an inspiring new framework for the mission, vision, values, goals, and objectives. Staff leadership will develop annual working plans from the framework set forth in the new strategic plan.



mission

To create inspiring experiences about the natural world for all people.

vision

A world where our diverse communities thrive.

VALUES

Stewardship.

The Gardens believes in preserving, protecting, and celebrating the gifts of the garden and estate given by Harry P. and Mary Jane Leu.

Discovery.

The Gardens believes in the ability to learn and gain knowledge through inspiring experiences.

Belonging.

The Gardens believes all people are welcome and a valuable part of our community.

Inspiration.

The Gardens believes in creating beautiful, cultural, and moving experiences that inspire people's love of the natural world, the art of horticulture, and our cultural heritage.

Sustainability.

The Gardens believes in institutional, environmental, and human sustainability.

GOALS

ENGAGE.

Deliver high quality experiences, exhibits, events, and programs that engage audiences of all ages and abilities and enhance the Gardens visitor experience.

PROMOTE.

Increase the Gardens national presence through awareness and visibility as a cultural leader and tourism destination in Orlando.

GROW.

Strengthen and build the Gardens excellence, sustainability, and infrastructure.

PRESERVE.

Steward the cultural assets of the Gardens botanical collections, displays and historic context.

2025-2029

STRATEGIC PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

ENGAGE

PROMOTE

GROW

PRESERVE





GOAL: **ENGAGE**

Deliver high quality experiences, exhibits, events, and programs that engage audiences of all ages and abilities and enhance the Gardens visitor experience.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Create an annual schedule of exhibits, events, and programs that support the Gardens mission and fiscal sustainability

- Create new and evaluate continuing exhibits, events, and programs that support mission, brand, audience development, sustainability, and revenue generation
- Enhance horticultural-forward designs for holiday light shows within Memoir partnership
- Build an ongoing calendar of changing internally-created and traveling exhibits
- Create and install a new origins exhibit in the Welcome Center
- Build partnerships and relationships with community organizations to carry out programs
- Evaluate and measure the qualitative and quantitative impact, visitor satisfaction, operational needs and successes of events and programs

OBJECTIVE 2:

Establish an interpretive plan for the Gardens

- Utilize the Gardens 4 educational pillars to expand stories and key themes within: Science & Nature, Art & Design, Culture & Heritage, Health & Wellness
- Assess visitor wayfinding and signage, and make recommendations for wayfinding and interpretive enhancements throughout the Gardens
- Create and install a new origins exhibit in the Welcome Center
- Explore multi-language, audio-visual and other technology to enhance the visitor experience for all
- Ensure interpretive content and exhibit presentations depict authenticity and stories of belonging

OBJECTIVE 3:

Establish a life-long learning plan for all ages

- Develop a new suite of free, curriculum-based field trip opportunities for K-8th grade students
- Redevelop and establish new expert and organizational partnerships to offer classes for all ages
- Reestablish and expand UF/IFAS/Extension to offer learning opportunities

- Establish partnerships with higher educational institutions to create internship program, conduct research, and share horticultural and cultural resources

OBJECTIVE 4:

Recruit and establish a more robust team of volunteers and docents

- Develop a new volunteer program guide and handbook with job descriptions and benefits
- Promote volunteer opportunities for individuals 15 years-old and up
- Promote and work with student groups

OBJECTIVE 5:

Establish a plan for excellence and accessibility in guest services

- Establish a new Guest Services department to carry out the daily operations of the Gardens and attend to daily visitor entry/exit, experiences, and needs
- Redesign and construct a quality, welcoming and efficient ticketing area
- Establish a membership sales area in the lobby
- Redesign and implement a new arrival garden
- Enhance the exterior patio seating area for increased use and visitor comfort
- Research and implement modern constituent management and ticketing software
- Train staff and volunteers on procedures and customer service expectations
- Expand the Gardens retail and food services working within Foxtail partnership
- Write a statement of belonging that creates opportunities for universal design
- Develop partnerships with diverse audiences and affinity groups
- Audit ADA compliance and accessibility and recommend enhancements
- Develop multi-language visitor media and signage
- Evaluate and measure visitor satisfaction, operational needs and successes





GOAL:

PROMOTE

Increase the Gardens national presence through awareness and visibility as a cultural leader and tourism destination in Orlando.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop and implement a multi-faceted brand and marketing plan to communicate with established loyal stakeholders and attract new audiences

- Create unified botanical and cultural attraction brand that can be used online, in print materials, and in building signage
- Identify key audiences
- Identify effective, efficient and affordable marketing and promotional opportunities
- Cultivate relationships with media and promotions organizations
- Create collateral materials to support fundraising and operational activities
- Design and distribute successful print materials
- Create an annual marketing plan

OBJECTIVE 2:

Build partnerships with local, state, and national hospitality and tourism partners and DMOs

- Reestablish working partnerships with DMOs, tourism, and other leading public gardens organizations
- Formulate an outreach schedule of talks and presentations at area events and programs
- Send out regularly scheduled press releases and cultivate bloggers, travel writers, tourism bureau

OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop a user-friendly and exciting virtual presence online

- Research and implement an updated website
- Create a digital marketing and media plan utilizing modern social and digital media resources
- Invest in outside services to support graphic design and digital media
- Publish and distribute regular print and e-newsletters
- Research visitor behavior and benchmark other institutions to understand successful strategies

OBJECTIVE 4:

Reestablish the cultural and horticultural leadership of the Gardens

- Continue and establish working relationships with other community businesses, nonprofits, cultural and service groups.
- Participate in and promote horticultural advancements for businesses and homeowners
- Participate in community events and programs and become a vital component at them
- Host cultivation events for city, chamber and county leadership
- Regularly communicate news and events with city, county and state legislators
- Participate in professional development



GOAL: GROW

Strengthen and build the Gardens excellence, sustainability, and infrastructure.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Assess and strengthen the Gardens long-term business operating structure

- Assess the Gardens governance structure and warranty deed, and recommend enhancements
- Clarify and fortify the role and responsibilities of the Friends of Leu Gardens, Inc. (Friends) by updating the bylaws and working partnership between the Gardens and the Friends
- Collaborate with the Board of Trustees and the Friends on infrastructure revisions that align with the Gardens ability to achieve the success envisioned in this plan
- Maximize working relationships with the City of Orlando Departments that enable the Gardens to expand its reach, impact, and support

OBJECTIVE 2:

Establish a fundraising plan

- Establish a new Development department to implement long-term fundraising at the Gardens
- Write and implement a donor bill of rights and fundraising operating plan
- Research, identify and cultivate new and ongoing donors and grants
- Develop new corporate and individual giving opportunities and benefits
- Build constituent database (donors, members, volunteers, vendors, etc.)
- Develop a new membership program that adds value, streamlines levels, increases benefits and is easy to use
- Implement an annual appeal program
- Research current, successful fundraising events and activity types
- Develop a plan for a signature fundraising event

OBJECTIVE 3:

Expand and diversify the Gardens revenue model

- Assess market comparisons and implement a pricing plan for the Gardens that is responsive to current trends and the Gardens value to consumers
- Expand low-cost educational and value-added programming to increase daily visitation
- Create a new group sales program
- Implement sales strategies for new wedding and rental pricing, and enhance online sales materials

- Create membership upsell and increased renewal strategies with new membership program benefits
- Develop further collaborations with Foxtail partnership for food and retail opportunities
- Develop add-ons that drive revenue through VIP experiences at events and programs

OBJECTIVE 4:

Build internal institutional capacity and infrastructure

- Implement museum best practices as established by the AAM National Best Practices & Standards and American Public Gardens Association
- Remodel and modernize the Gardens staffing structure to support strategic goals, and conduct a staffing needs assessment and gap analysis to address staffing needs, gaps in service, required skills, and timeframe for hiring
- Attract, develop and retain experienced and qualified employees and volunteers
- Modernize internal operations and use of technology for efficiency and effectiveness that increases staff productivity, connectivity, and information sharing
- Write and implement new organizational policies and procedures within the Gardens and City of Orlando operating activities
- Write work plans and budgets to align with the goals and objectives of Strategic Plan
- Create a facilities plan that assesses deferred maintenance and addresses long-term needs
- Evaluate space needs for staffing, storage, service, parking, and programs

OBJECTIVE 5:

Create and implement a new Gardens master plan

- Define long-term infrastructure needs and engagement opportunities to enhance the Gardens operations and visitor experience, long-term sustainability, and audience development
- Hire and partner with a qualified landscape design team to create a concept and schematic master plan for the Gardens
- Conduct a feasibility study of projects for fundability and campaign readiness
- Conduct full design development and complete construction documents for phase one of the master plan.
- Implement the first phase of the master plan.





GOAL:

PRESERVE

Steward the cultural assets of the Gardens botanical collections, displays and historic context

OBJECTIVE 1:

Continue to expand, protect and preserve the Gardens botanical collections and displays

- Optimize the Gardens ability to grow, collect, and share plants and trees from around the world and represent the extensive diversity of the collections through more than 25 display areas
- Utilize botanical records to promote the diversity of the Gardens collections through educational programs
- Work to understand the effects of changing environmental factors on plants and trees, and our Central Florida environment
- Work with other public gardens to share plants to protect and enrich collections
- Modernize and enhance the Gardens horticultural facilities, nursery and greenhouse to adequately house, improve the health of, grow, protect, and display our diverse living collections.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Establish a standard of design, care and identity of the Gardens horticultural displays and collections

- Develop and implement a land management plan that includes a horticultural collections policy and care plan with sustainable and eco-friendly gardening practices and techniques
- Working with horticultural designers, redevelop the displays and collections identity areas that showcase the botanical diversity and historical significance of the Gardens with emphasis Florida-based plant climate and zone
- Update the horticultural displays and collections to enhance the visitor experience and ability to showcase plant and tree specimens

- Assess horticultural service, nursery, and greenhouse facilities, and make recommendations for updates and enhancements to maximize the Gardens plant growing and care abilities.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Establish a comprehensive preservation and use plan for the Historic Leu House Museum and Mizell-Leu Historic District

- Develop and implement a preservation plan that includes a collections policy for living and non-living collections including objects, documents, photographs, books, artwork, plants, and trees
- Develop and implement a new management plan to increase visitor access and experience
- Enhance the presence of historic sites in brand identity
- Conduct facilities and maintenance projects for long-term preservation
- Write a long-term preservation and maintenance plan for historic buildings
- Assess exterior horticultural areas to enhance historical context
- Work with the City of Orlando archives and records department to inventory, digitize, and properly store museum collections

OBJECTIVE 4:

Develop and implement a sustainability plan

- Conduct a sustainability audit to identify areas for improvement
- Identify ways to align with the City of Orlando sustainability goals



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HARRY P
LEU GARDENS

LEUGARDENS.ORG

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