

## **General Comments on Free Garden Area Options:**

### **Pros:**

1. Would allow all citizens and visitors to have a free experience and some access regardless of income.
2. Could be designed for easy access for quick breaks or frequent visits.
3. Could help make the public more aware of currently underused parts of the Garden and educate them on all services provided by a botanical garden.
4. Could provide impetus for developing sections of the Garden not currently well utilized.

### **Cons:**

1. Increases the costs for implementing an admission fee due to a lot of additional fencing, gates, security provisions, etc.
2. Some of the natural security benefits of controlled access will not be realized, resulting in the continued challenge of vandalism.
3. By default, you are making significant parts of the garden more difficult to access for every visitor. It makes reaching free areas more confusing and difficult for guests paying admissions and leaves visitors to free portions of the Garden unable to access most of the primary attractions. A solution that addresses how to make all parts of a unified garden accessible to all guests is a better option for assuring the best experience for everyone.
4. By separating a significant part of the garden from the primary experience, the ability to disperse guests is reduced, particularly as visitation grows. This may result in crowding, impacting the visitor experience and causing people to create cattle paths, inadvertently trample plantings, etc.
5. A significant impediment to lower income residents visiting is transportation which this solution does not address. However, adequate revenue for a stable business model will make soliciting sponsorships to provide transportation easier. Many gardens use this approach to help address this concern.
6. Things that are free are often viewed as of lower status and less desirable. So, as services are improved in the ticketed area, free areas even if maintained as well or better than currently will still be considered a lesser experience. Research indicates that locals are not likely to use free areas as much as expected.<sup>1</sup>
7. Anecdotal experience further suggests that separate, free areas are not heavily used when paired with more desirable adjacent attractions. Visitors come to see primary attractions and don't typically extend their stay for a second experience of perceived lower value or interest.
8. If we're successful in overcoming these obstacles and creating a popular free experience in the Garden, it will likely have an impact on membership revenues and gate fees. So, we'll be taking on more maintenance and overhead costs while reducing our earning potential.
9. Reconfiguring the Garden will disrupt certain objectives of the master plan including a contiguous looped path and people-mover system.
10. Wayfinding signage would be more complex and possibly costly.
11. Wildlife traveling in the garden will be limited by fence barriers.
12. The public would likely still expect free/reduced cost options for the paid portion of the Garden.

<sup>1</sup>*The Downside of Free. Richard Heaton*

## **Alternative #1: Garden Gateway/Grove**

### **Pros:**

1. Includes some historic parts of the Garden.
2. Would include many of the current educational assets of the garden.
3. Adjacent to existing and recently improved parking with easy access of I-30.
4. Could provide impetus to develop a current idea for a “teaching and research zone” in this area of the Garden.
5. Natural arboretum and green space already existing in this area.
6. Would be less costly and much easier to fence this area.

### **Cons:**

1. Would complicate managing the weekend lot. This would make the entry experience much more confusing for guests entering from the overflow parking and wishing to visit the entire garden.
2. Divides the primary east west vista of the Hare & Hare plan between the ticketed areas (Rose Garden, Reflecting Pond, and East Vista) and the free section (Horseshoe, Trial Garden, and Grove). This would significantly impact the historical character and experience of this area.
3. Complicates implementation of the approved master plan, likely requiring revisions to the location of the new Visitor/Welcome Center disrupts the proposed circulation patterns, particularly the tram route.
4. May affect the potential relocation of the maintenance facility.
5. Paid school programs currently utilize this area and student access could be negatively affected.

## **Alternative #2: Trinity River Woodland (University Woods)**

### **Pros:**

1. Easily accessible from two locations (existing Garden Center Parking and South Gate).
2. Adjacency to main parking.
3. Beautiful existing forest cover that with some work could be the basis of great nature walk.
4. Water features present that could offer a range of aesthetic opportunities.
5. Potential for collections development with woody plant collections along new nature walks.
6. Could link Trinity Park to Trinity River Woodland by continuing bike and hiking trails.
7. The free park could remain open with extended hours from the paid admission garden.

### **Cons:**

1. The northern half is under lease to the Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. (TCG) in association with their state headquarters building. A revised agreement with TGC would need to be negotiated.
2. Complicates the proposed future tram transportation system, which would then have to visually intrude on the historical vistas significantly.
3. Inconvenience to users of the ticketed portion of the Garden, who would have to return to the Garden Center to access this section in most scenarios.
4. Significant impacts on the production of major current events for Concerts in the Garden and proposed future musical events in the vista as the service and tram transportation routes need to pass through this area. Several back of house functions also occur in this area to be out of sight and avoid impact to daytime visitors. Those services would need to be moved to more visible areas.
5. Major cleanup of invasive exotics necessary before most of the site could be easily accessed.
6. Much of the area is former flood plain and is low and wet. Expensive to develop due to poor sub-base conditions.

7. Segmenting this site would greatly complicate security.
8. A lot of expense would be needed to add facilities and fencing, including a second gate on Rock Springs Road.
9. Many aging and declining trees, so a lot of the current canopy may be lost during the initial stages of opening this up for more use.
10. A pedestrian bridge or underpass somewhere to cross Rock Springs Road would eliminate many of the concerns for service access, etc. but would be very expensive.
11. Encroachment on wildlife. The garden is a bird sanctuary and we have bluebird habitat migrating into this area from south along the Trinity River. Fox and raccoon currently transverse the property throughout the seasons.
12. Trees would probably need to be cut down to accommodate a reasonably straight fence.

### **Alternative #2A: Smaller Footprint of Woodland near Texas Garden Club**

#### Pros:

1. Easily accessible from main garden entry and existing parking
2. Includes some very nice existing trees, some interpretive signage, and naturalistic gardens
3. Access to creek presents some great aesthetic options featuring water at reasonably low cost.
4. At approximately 4-6 acres the plot is large enough to provide a very good guest experience.
5. Potential for development as an arboretum collection featuring shade loving Texas adapted plants due to existing cover.
6. Relatively small impact on overall character and use of the Garden. No current event areas are included in this proposal except one small wedding venue where impacts are manageable.
7. Lower initial costs for fencing, security, and other improvements

#### Cons:

1. Currently under use agreement to Texas Garden Clubs and would require approval by their board and negotiation of new agreement.
2. Most of the property would require clearing of invasives and site restoration before development of public venue could begin.
3. Would complicate the return route of proposed tram route, although that could be addressed by rerouting from this area to existing roadways.
4. Would require construction of all trails, as none with carrying capacity for major visitation exist in this area.
5. Would reduce area available for proposed Trinity River Woodlands section of master plan.
6. Impact on wildlife using this area, though less than Option 1.
7. Development would have to be sensitive to prevent visual impacts to historic North Vista and associated views.

### **Alternative #3: Develop Gardens/Arboretum in Trinity Park**

#### Pros:

1. The site is immediately adjacent to the Botanic Garden for easy access.
2. There would be no impact on the current or proposed future functions, circulation, or character of the Botanic Garden.
3. Instead of dividing and reducing the impact of the Botanic Garden, we would be adding a new amenity for Fort Worth.

4. By developing displays and collections on both sides of University, we would be creating a second gateway to the Cultural District and West 7<sup>th</sup> as is currently developing on Montgomery.
5. Activities like picnicking that have negative impacts on the Garden could be encouraged here.
6. Would provide space for new collections (true arboretum) which doesn't exist anywhere in the DFW area.
7. Ample parking, trails, and other infrastructure is already available, reducing costs of developing some options in BG.
8. Would provide overflow activities and parking on busy days in the Garden
9. Would beautify and increase the appeal of existing trails and amenities in Trinity Park including the improvements around the Van Zandt Cottage.
10. Grows the vision and increases the appeal to prospective donors from more diverse backgrounds.

**Cons:**

1. Increased staff and maintenance would be required.
2. Separation of services and maintenance access by University Drive.
3. Special amenities like arbors, pavilions, and water features would be absent or have to be added at considerable cost.
4. Less secure than the current Botanic Garden, with no perimeter fence, etc.
5. Might encourage more people to cross University, increasing traffic impact and safety issues unless crosswalks, tunnel, or bridge is provided.
6. Possibly there would still be lesser perceived value than the ticketed part of the Garden across the street, although as a separate entity this might be reduced significantly.
7. Possible substantial impact on Mayfest and other events that are currently held in Trinity Park.