

Executive Summary of the Case for Support

“You are welcome to Flamingo [Gardens], and are invited to spend as much time as you desire, my only request being...that you help us preserve this beauty spot for others.” - Floyd L Wray, 1939

Purpose

Originally founded in 1927 as Flamingo Groves, a citrus grove and experimental garden, by Floyd and Jane Wray, Flamingo Gardens was established as a non-profit in 1969 to preserve the core property for future generations “as a museum and botanical garden, emphasizing the history of the Florida Everglades.”

Flamingo Garden’s 60-acre botanical gardens contains over 3000 tropical and subtropical species of plants and trees, and boasts the largest single collection of State Champion trees which are the largest tree of their species as determined by the Florida Forestry Service. Flamingo Garden’s Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary gives residence to permanently injured or non-releasable Florida native wildlife and is home to almost 400 birds and animals representing over 90 native species. It is the largest collection of Florida native wildlife in the world. The Wray Home Museum gives visitors a glimpse of life in the 1930s and the property is a Broward Cultural Heritage Landmark.

Each year Flamingo Gardens is visited by over 150,000 visitors, including over 30,000 school children, educating them on the beauty and diversity of flora and fauna in the Everglades and the rich cultural heritage of South Florida.

Mission

Flamingo Garden's mission is to depict, preserve, and provide education about the natural and cultural heritage of South Florida and the Everglades in our botanical gardens and wildlife sanctuary. We do so:

- by providing a repository for endangered plant and wildlife species and a living library of specific taxa available for research and education.
- by inspiring an appreciation for the beauty and diversity of tropical and subtropical plants from around the world that can be grown in our area.
- by guiding the public in environmentally responsible, and aesthetic horticultural practices.
- by encouraging environmental awareness and Everglades preservation to visiting tourists, residents, and school children.

Value

In the midst of Broward's urban sprawl, Flamingo Gardens stands today as a true oasis filled with the fragrance, sounds, and beauty of the tropics.

- Stuart B. McIver, "The Florida Chronicles Vol. 3: Touched by the Sun", 2001

Flamingo Gardens is one of the last natural jungle growths in South Florida and one of the oldest botanical gardens and attractions in the state. The property is part of Long Key, a naturalized oak hammock which was once part of a series of islands surrounded by Everglades marshes, as recently as a century ago. Long Key encompasses some of the most significant archaeological, historical, and ecological resources in the county. Parts of the hammock at Flamingo Gardens remain untouched much as it was when the area was inhabited by the ancient Tequestas and the more recent Seminoles. It serves as an important habitat for wildlife and is one of the last remaining stands of upland hardwood forest in Broward County.

Flamingo Garden's history is significant to Florida. Wray Botanical Collection, started in 1927, is one of the oldest botanical gardens in Florida, pre-dating Fairchild's Tropical Botanical Gardens and McKee Jungle Gardens. Flamingo Gardens is one of the first and few botanical gardens to focus on the Everglades. Its founder, pioneer citrus grower Floyd L. Wray, was known as "one of the men who made Florida." Wray was one of the area's leading civic and business figures, and ceaselessly promoted Florida's beauty and the citrus industry.

Uniqueness

Flamingo Gardens is often called "a hidden gem" and a "valuable cultural asset." This assessment is easily quantified by several factors that make Flamingo Gardens unique:

- **Flamingo Gardens is one of the only botanical gardens sited in the Everglades.** It is one of the few botanical gardens dedicated to preserving Florida native plants and animals, and educating the public about the Everglades ecosystems.
- **Flamingo Gardens holds the distinction of having the largest collection of towering Florida Champion Trees**, twenty in total, as certified by the Florida Forestry Service as the largest of their species, including the largest tree in Florida.

- **Flamingo Gardens was once the national repository for the International Heliconia Society**, and hosted the organization for ten years. It has an astounding array of heliconia and ginger species represented throughout the gardens.
- **The Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary is home to one of the largest collections of Florida native wildlife in the world.** The 25,000 square foot free-flight Aviary, housing one of the largest collections of wading birds in America with over 250 birds representing more than 45 species native to Florida.
- **Flamingo Gardens is one of the few botanical gardens that also serves as a wildlife rehabilitation center.** Each year over 200 birds and animals are rescued, rehabilitated and released back to the wild.
- **Flamingo Gardens is one of very few botanical gardens that is also a wildlife sanctuary and is a historical site.** Many botanical gardens contain a historical house, or serve as a wildlife sanctuary; but few encompass all three.

Needs

As Flamingo Gardens observes its 90th Anniversary year, we have much to celebrate. 2016 saw record attendance. Revenue doubled over the past five years, from \$1.27M in 2011 to \$2.7M in 2016. It is highly regarded and has a loyal following of patrons and members and visitors. Its collections and programs are respected and continue to grow to serve the community. And yet, the organization has much room to improve.

The growth of Flamingo Gardens' collections, its programs, and professional capacity has brought a great deal of pride to the board, staff, volunteers, and donors who have led the efforts. However, Flamingo Gardens successful growth has brought growing pains and attrition that have not been matched by an equal and parallel growth of its financial resources and donor base. Attendance has surpassed parking and restroom facility capacity, and education has outgrown its classroom. Requests for exhibition and meeting space exceed availability, and traffic has taken its toll on paths and trails. This, coupled with the property's aging infrastructure, has led the staff and Board of Trustees of Flamingo Gardens to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats and opportunities that may face them going forward.

Through a series of strategic planning sessions, the leadership of Flamingo Gardens has developed a ten year strategic plan to address the challenges that lie ahead; and has led them to plan for a Capital Campaign for a new Welcome Center.

Vision

The leadership of Flamingo Gardens is taking steps to ensure that this unique property with its valuable collections and significant history continues to grow and serve the international community of guests, visitors, and dedicated members into the next decade and beyond.

A vision has emerged of a fiscally astute, professional organization with updated and expanded facilities for outstanding educational and cultural programming. Strategic plans include four specific areas of professional and programmatic expansion in the next ten years:

1. **Acquisition:** An acquisitions plan to strengthen Flamingo Gardens permanent collections- the Wray Botanical Collection, Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary, Wray Home Museum. All collections need to be continually updated and expanded to maintain its unique place among its peers, and add targeted collections to strengthen its holdings. The acquisitions plan includes a master plan for the future expansion of the gardens and wildlife sanctuary collections as well as updates and repairs to the existing exhibits. Specific plans include a new walking path that connects the front arboretum to the back wetlands with new gardens and animal habitats along the way, as well as new trams and a new tram road.
2. **Professional Staff:** Expand staff and implement new data management systems to ensure careful management of the collections and maintain them to best practice standards. Specific plans include paid curatorial positions for horticulture and a Historical Archivist.
3. **Education Programs:** Core education programs to service the local community, develop new audiences and attract new members and donors. The educational programming plan must include plans for classroom and meeting space, as well as expanded restroom facilities and parking, with nighttime access, to sufficiently accommodate the educational programming.
4. **Professional Exhibition Space:** Museum quality exhibition space to support the installation, borrowing, and creation of relevant exhibitions that pertain to Flamingo Gardens mission while helping to attract new and diverse audiences. Specific plans include a new entrance to the Aviary with new exhibit space specific to birds of the wetlands, with a new small wading birds area, and a permanent exhibit about the history of Flamingo Gardens and contributions of the Wrays.

Capital Campaign

Toward this vision, one project is of particular importance and urgency; that of a new 10,000 square foot Welcome Center for visitors. The current building is 67 years old and its original wood frame construction is in severe disrepair. Its facilities are outdated and inadequate, and no longer meet the current needs of the 150,000 plus annual visitors to Flamingo Gardens.

A new Welcome Center will provide a new entrance and signage from the road, expanded parking, new and larger toilet facilities, customer service center, ticket booth, gift shop, administrative offices, new kitchen and dining area(s), meeting space(s), and exhibition space(s). A new facility will help meet the vision for Flamingo Gardens in numerous ways:

1. **Reception- A new Welcome Center will provide a more welcoming and inviting entrance to Flamingo Gardens**, providing curb appeal with new signage and landscaping, and improved interface with the public. The new entrance will help re-brand Flamingo Gardens as a legitimate and professional, cultural institution.
2. **Accessibility- The new Welcome Center will provide improved access to Flamingo Gardens**, with expanded parking and a clearly defined path and signage to the ticket booth and garden entrance. Parking will be expanded with clearly marked spaces and will include a drop off area(s), expanded handicap parking, bus drop-off and parking, and a bicycle area. The new building will provide easier access for the elderly, strollers, and those with disabilities and provide larger and better toilet facilities built to the latest ADA codes. The new building will also allow for easier (and safer) access to facilities for after-hour events, meetings, or classes.
3. **Professional Staff- New centralized administrative offices will consolidate staff** in one area for improved inter-department communication. New facilities will also allow for better telecommunication technology integration, as well as centralized database systems.
4. **Professional Exhibition and Education Space- The new Welcome Center will contain new exhibition and meeting space.** Professional gallery space will allow for permanent and traveling exhibits, and multipurpose space will allow for classroom space for the Education Department or meeting space rental for the public.

Goal

The Board of Trustees has set an ambitious goal of \$2 million for the new Welcome Center building and parking. The project will be split in three phases- the new Welcome Center, Classrooms, and Parking Improvements.

Flamingo Gardens has already raised \$225,000 toward the initial Phase I goal of \$1 million for the new Welcome Center. The Board of Trustees of Flamingo Gardens has donated over \$95,000 toward this endeavor, and the Floyd L. Wray Memorial Foundation has set aside an additional \$100,000 for the project. Friends of Flamingo Gardens has pledged an additional \$30,000 over the next three years, bringing the total to \$225,000 toward the initial Phase I goal.

Flamingo Gardens has identified over \$1 million in potential funding from various Foundations from which they will be requesting funding. The project also qualifies for a Cultural Facilities matching grant from the State of Florida for up to \$500,000 and an additional \$500,000 Tourist Development Tax Capital Challenge Grant from Broward County. The development staff at Flamingo Gardens is already working at securing funding from these sources.

Phase I: New Welcome Center (2020).....\$1,000,000
Complete buildout of new 6,500 sq. ft. Welcome Center, adjacent to existing Gift Shop, by December 2020. New building is to include ticket booth, gift shop, offices, restrooms, kitchen and dining space, and permanent exhibition space. Will also include new entrance signage. Project will include new entrance into, and new exit from, the garden.

Phase II: Classrooms (2021).....\$500,000
Teardown of existing Gift Shop building and build new 3,500 sq. ft. multipurpose classroom/meeting space with additional restrooms and exterior courtyard and eating area.

Phase III: Expanded Parking (2022).....\$500,000
Expand overflow parking area with new additional paved parking area and new landscaping.