



“So, you want to build a Botanical Garden?”

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FRPA
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LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Learn the history of the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens property and the required changes to the property's State approved master plan

Learn the challenges of bringing a new facility on-line during the height of a national economic recession

Learn the importance of properly staffing a public gardens and the many benefits of incorporating a volunteer group to assist with the daily programming and operations





PUBLIC GARDENS ON THE TREASURE COAST

Heathcoat Botanical Gardens – Ft. Pierce

- 5 acres
- Started as a commercial nursery 1960

McKee Botanical Garden - Vero Beach

- 18 acres
- Opened in 1932 as “McKee Jungle Gardens”, a roadside tourist attraction

Mounds Botanical Garden – West Palm Beach

- 14 acres
- Opened in 1954 as a tropical fruit tree arboretum

Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens

- 20 acres
- Opened 2010





Project History

2002 – Property was purchased by City of Port St. Lucie in cooperation with St. Lucie County, and with grant funding assistance provided by the Florida Communities Trust

The property was purchased *“to protect an ecologically diverse mosaic of natural plant communities adjacent to the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, through the application of management strategies that integrate the restoration, enhancement, and maintenance of the park’s natural biological diversity while providing compatible recreation”*

2002 Westmoreland River Park Management Plan



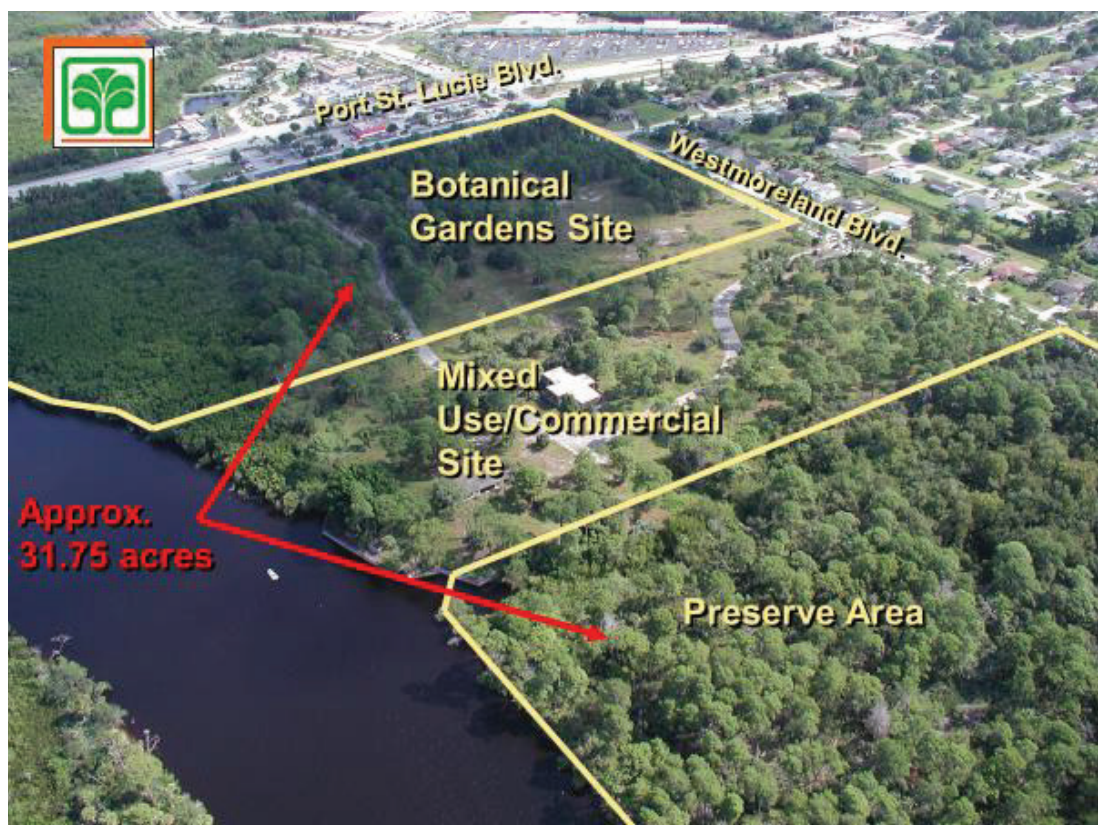


2002 – Original master plan submitted to Florida Communities Trust

Originally known as Westmoreland River Park

Two parcels totaling 31.75 acres, connected along the river by a 100' public easement

Original site plan called for trails, playground, group and single-family pavilions, baseball backstop, tennis courts and open play area all located around existing trees and vegetation





2005 – A plan was conceived to develop a portion of the acquired property as a botanical garden, utilizing the sites natural plant communities as the ecological foundation of the proposed garden

2006 – A formal request to redesign the property to include a botanical garden was submitted to the Florida Communities Trust. An amendment to the original property management plan was submitted to the State for review and approval

2007 – The amendment to the management plan was approved, authorizing the development of a public botanical garden





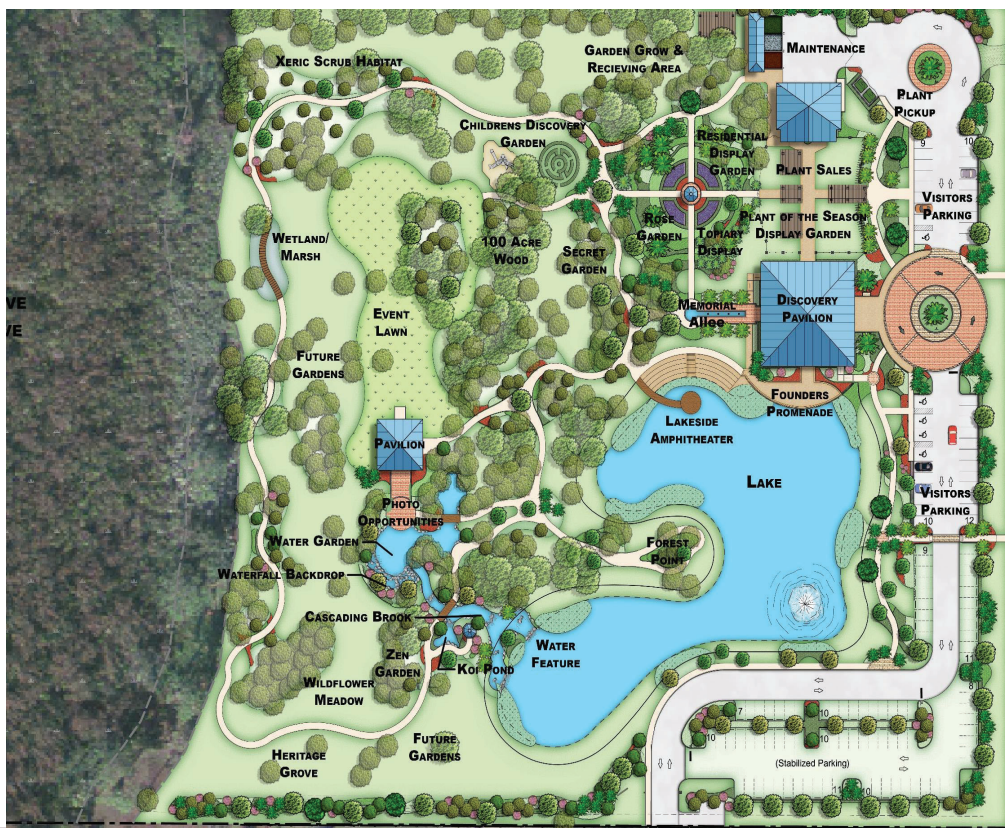
2007 – Project was approved by City Council

2007 – The process to select a landscape architect and professional land planning firm was completed

2007 – 2008 – Project planning and design phase incorporates public and stakeholder input, staff visits to other public gardens and input and approval of City Council

2008 – Permit applications submitted to regulatory agencies

2009 – A General Contractor began project construction





February 2010 – Lease Agreement
between City of PSL and “The Friends
of the Port St. Lucie Botanical
Gardens” was executed

March 6, 2010 – Grand Opening

Final Construction Cost: \$3,077,678





Project budgeting challenges during the Great Recession 2007-2009

- All bids came in higher than approved project budget of \$3,300,000
- Solution: Staff worked with contractor to “value engineer” the project to get within budget
- Project elements “lost” during the VE process included perimeter fencing, pavilions, water features, outdoor electric and lighting, outdoor restrooms, and specified botanical display areas





Staffing challenges during the Great Recession 2007-2009

- 2008 – PSL Parks & Recreation reduced it's work force by 41 employees
- Original staffing plan identified 7 FTE positions including:
 - 1 Botanical Gardens Director
 - 1 Botanist/Horticulturist
 - 1 Volunteer Coordinator
 - 4 Maintenance Workers
- City Council approved 1 FT Maintenance Worker position
- Solution: Volunteer staff and work force





Friends of the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens, Inc.

A Florida non-profit Corporation with approximately 400 members. Approx. 120 members are actively involved in daily operations of the gardens

The "Friends" staff the pavilion, program all activities, operate the gift shop, plan new garden "rooms", run special events and provided volunteer labor to maintain the planted areas of the gardens





Friends of the Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens, Inc.

In Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2022, over 100,000 people visited the Gardens to participate in various programs, seminars and special events

The “Friends” operate the Botanical Gardens under a Lease Agreement with the City as an independent volunteer organization

Per the Lease Agreement, the Friends are to staff and provide a minimum of 6 “free” public events per year





Lessons Learned

Review and know your project Bid documents so that surprises during construction are minimized

Prioritize site control (fencing), storage and security (cameras)

Anticipate public use and size your public buildings and spaces accordingly

Proper Staffing is critical for efficient daily operations, public education and future planning





QUESTIONS?

