



HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN MEETING CHALLENGES & EXPANDING HORIZONS

From [WEST 8](#) & [HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN](#)

West 8's Master Plan for Houston Botanic Garden articulates the potential future for the Garden over the next 20 to 30 years. The Plan takes its inspiration and structure from the best qualities of the existing site, and gives forethought to the biggest environmental challenges: flooding and intense weather events.

First and foremost, Sims Bayou and the Bayou Meander serve as framing devices that create a truly unique experience, one that protects and enhances the experience of the bayou. With these water bodies as site-organizers, the Garden is divided into two main precincts: the Island and the South Gardens. In today's condition, much of the Island is susceptible to flooding.

The design proposes lifting the existing topography to elevate the gardens and permanent structures out of the flood plain. It sculpts the topography in the South Gardens to create a series of freshwater ponds which capture stormwater runoff that is used for on-site irrigation.

The South Gardens is the place of arrival for all visitors, where guests park their cars and walk through gardens to a small visitor center with a café. It features an open lawn which is a relaxing, day-to-day place for picnics and strolling, but also supports community events like movies and small concerts, private functions, and food festivals.

A hike/bike trail (to be constructed by the Houston Parks Board) extends along Glenview Drive, with a conceptualized reach along the south bank of Sims Bayou that would connect the Garden to the extensive network of Greater Houston hike and bike trails. At the western edge of the site is the Garden's operations and education area where visitors can learn about composting, soil production, operations and maintenance, and plant nurseries.

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The Island will be dominated by gardens, both naturalistic and cultivated. These gardens provide year-round beauty, delight the senses, and educate young and old alike. A conservatory building extends the plant repertoire to provide a setting for exotic plants from tropical climates.

Visitor-oriented amenities like educational facilities, an events pavilion for weddings and community receptions, a café, and a lecture hall, are strategically located to provide destinations and provisions for guests. Administrative offices and research facilities are also located on the Island, so that the horticultural, research, and administrative staff are immersed in the gardens and in the visitor experience. All of these are linked by an extensive network of pathways, many of which offer shade and are weather-protected by colonnades.

By weaving together shady pathways, a mosaic of ever-changing gardens, the bayou and other water bodies, West 8's Master Plan for Houston Botanic Garden amplifies the potential of the site's qualities and unites the site into a coherent, "only-in-Houston," garden experience.



Left, the Botanic Mile (brown strip) runs from upper left to lower center, over Sims Bayou. Center, color planned for "the mile." Right, "flood zone" areas will be utilized in the design. All renderings courtesy of West 8.

Links for more details:

* <http://www.houstonbotanicgarden.org>

* http://www.west8.nl/adriaan_geuze/

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