



Hoyt  
Arboretum  
Friends

Strategic Plan  
2023-2027



## Introduction

Hoyt Arboretum is poised for transformation. Visitors have always found peace and connection to nature on the Arboretum's trails and among our global tree collection. The number of park visitors was growing before 2020 and the pandemic accelerated that growth with many new users.

Other significant changes are also underway: Our communities are becoming more diverse, and there is growing recognition of the historical inequities that continue to keep many people away from outdoor places. And today, more than ever, the science is clear that children benefit from and need opportunities to spend time in nature. Finally, our climate is changing, impacting our tree collections and our human communities.

Working in partnership with Portland Parks & Recreation, Hoyt Arboretum Friends will meet this moment by improving our facilities to sustainably serve even more visitors across the nearly 200 acres we steward.

We will invite youth to spend more time outdoors at Hoyt with expanded educational offerings and family-friendly events. We will make sure the Arboretum is a resource and a refuge for people of all backgrounds, including new

partnerships with groups serving multicultural and cultural-specific communities and people with disabilities. And, as our region experiences the very real impacts of climate change, we will steward the Arboretum's tree collection to be more resilient for decades to come.

To help chart our course for the future, we gathered input from teachers who've brought their students to our outdoor classroom, as well as our members, neighbors, donors, volunteers, regular park visitors, and partner organizations. These valuable conversations inspired this strategic plan.

The Arboretum is a treasured community resource - the past two years have made that even clearer than it was before the pandemic. Hoyt Arboretum Friends welcomes the challenge to continue to steward this beloved greenspace while introducing the park to more people who will benefit from time spent in nature. We hope you will join us as we prepare Hoyt Arboretum for the next 100 years.

— Doug de Weese, Board Chair and  
Anna Goldrich, Executive Director  
Hoyt Arboretum Friends



**"Our kids left with a sense of pride and accomplishment. They said things like "I can't believe we just walked in a forest!""**

**-J.J. Alto, 1st Grade Teacher, Lewis Elementary**





## About Hoyt Arboretum and Hoyt Arboretum Friends (HAF)

Hoyt Arboretum is a living museum, a historical landscape, an outdoor laboratory, and a curated woodland – all in one park. As one of our volunteers noted, “It is distinct as an Arboretum in that it is wild, not a tame, tidy, groomed, tree space with concrete sidewalks and cut grass everywhere.”

This distinctiveness comes from the rich and varied history of the land, and from the unique partnership in which management of the Arboretum is shared by Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) and HAF. This partnership ensures that the Arboretum’s world class global tree collection is cared for and accessible to local residents and visitors from around the world.

Hoyt Arboretum is one of the top 100 arboreta in the world. As part of Washington Park, the Arboretum is a destination that attracts visitors from points around the globe as well as the Portland metro area. HAF is highly respected as a friends organization due to its unique scope and scale.

Through significant fundraising and a robust volunteer program, HAF’s staff and volunteers enhance visitors’ on-site experiences, provide a range of educational opportunities around the Arboretum’s tree collections, engage in important

advocacy in support of the park, and raise critical funds for capital improvements.

Early in the Arboretum’s history, the park was “discovered” by Portlanders when travel opportunities were limited by World War II. The COVID-19 pandemic, which similarly limited travel, has also brought an influx of new visitors to join the already devoted users of the Arboretum.

Even before this recent attendance increase, HAF and PP&R have prioritized ensuring sustainability and equitable and inclusive access to the Arboretum. HAF has been making progress in expanding its capacity through staffing, programs and new partnerships—but more change is needed.

HAF and PP&R are now experiencing a strain on the existing physical spaces, including the outdoor pavilion, and the visitor center that also houses the staff offices. Current and projected growth of visitorship has brought into focus the need to create more accessible trails, develop culturally responsive signs and programs, and redouble efforts to steward and grow the collections.



## Strategic Planning Process

In spring and summer of 2022, HAF undertook a strategic planning process, beginning with information gathering to develop a shared understanding of the current state of the Arboretum and HAF, and to surface ideas for the future. We received a wealth of input through small group listening sessions, one-on-one interviews, and surveys that involved more than 140 diverse stakeholders: HAF staff, board, volunteers and donors; PP&R leadership and staff; park visitors, teachers, community partners, and Arboretum neighbors.

Guided by what we heard from stakeholders, and a series of planning workshops, the HAF staff and board explored the organization's operating environment, core values, vision for the future, and overarching strategies and goals. Our process culminated in the development of this new strategic plan, which will serve as a touchstone for evolving HAF's programs, partnerships, operations, and governance for the next five years.

**“I was so glad to have a structured activity to bring the boys to that would encourage wonder and excitement for the outdoors, trees, forests, and nature. Tree Time! is great because the walks are more or less the same every week, but they build upon one another, and I’m definitely noticing the lessons sinking in over time.”**

**–Travis Docktor, Member and Tree Time! father of two**



**“I’m so excited with how the program continues to evolve. The field trip curriculum continues to improve with teacher feedback, which then seems to improve engagement and drive more thoughtful feedback.”**

**–Eric Mitchell, Board of Directors and Volunteer Nature Educator**

## Mission, Vision and Values

**Our Mission:** Hoyt Arboretum Friends brings people and trees together. We create meaningful learning experiences in a unique global tree collection that we nurture in partnership with Portland Parks & Recreation.

**Our Vision:** Hoyt Arboretum Friends is an innovative leader in climate-forward place-based education. Our living classroom is a public refuge for global plant biodiversity that is a welcoming and accessible place for all people to connect with nature. The trails at Hoyt Arboretum are a gateway to discovery, where students, scientists and individuals from near and far are inspired to actively participate in tree conservation as we grow together towards a climate-resilient future.

### **Our Core Values:**

- **Learning and Wonder:** The Arboretum inspires a sense of wonder and awe in people of all ages. We engage in environmental and botanical education, working with diverse partners to create fun learning opportunities that highlight the intersection of botany, conservation, and people.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** We recognize that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have historically been marginalized and excluded from outdoor spaces. We strive to create a welcoming environment—collaborating with and listening to communities of color—so all people can experience the Arboretum’s health benefits and educational resources.
- **Invitation and Openness:** We invite people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to enjoy the Arboretum—including all-user trails, field trips, guided tours, community gatherings, and enrichment activities.
- **Resilience and Community:** We create a sense of community among our volunteers, visitors, staff, board, supporters, and partners. We foster biodiversity and resilience by strengthening human connections to nature and taking a climate forward approach to our global tree collection.



## Operating Environment

Several key trends shape HAF's operating environment. Climate change is an overarching trend that is already affecting the Arboretum. Another significant trend is growing interest in spending time outdoors, which was spurred by the global pandemic that saw many more people making use of parks and public lands.

Individual and collective healing will be a focal point of the coming post-pandemic era, based on a greater awareness of the connection between human health and spending time in nature. Fortunately, as inflation and price increases have created barriers to many recreational activities, admission to the Arboretum remains free.

Maintenance of the trees and grounds of our nearly 200 acres and diverse collections is an ongoing challenge with current staffing levels for HAF and PP&R. Climate change and intense weather events are exacerbating this issue.

Hoyt Arboretum is a regional destination in the Portland parks system, but for many years has felt like more of a neighborhood park for westside communities. Eastside communities, which are home to many BIPOC and

low-income individuals, have historically seen little investment in parks and natural areas, a trend that is now changing as local governments prioritize funding for eastside greenspaces.

Historical exclusion and systemic racism cause many people of color to feel reluctant to visit natural areas. In response, we, along with other public parks, are increasingly advancing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) practices.

Finally, greater accessibility is a continuing need that is supported by universal design principles, which seek to create environments that work for all abilities and learning styles. New digital tools also provide opportunities to improve trail access, multilingual wayfinding, and online resources.



## Strategy and Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

Informed by our operating environment, and the knowledge and passion of our staff, board, and community, we will move toward our vision with the following broad strategies and goals:

### **Create a signature facility and grow our capacity to steward the Arboretum**

We envision a new Visitor Center that is a physical manifestation of our commitment to sustainability, climate resilience, education, equity, and inclusion. This signature facility will welcome a growing number of visitors and students, including greater racial and cultural diversity. The center will include space for classes, research activities, an expanded plant nursery, the herbarium, offices for our growing staff, and outdoor covered gathering spaces dispersed around the park. To bring this new facility to fruition, we will undertake a capital campaign in cooperation with key partners and donors. As we expand and improve the Arboretum's physical infrastructure, we will also build the diversity and capacity of our staff, board, and volunteers to steward the park and its distinctive collections.

### **Empower and engage youth and the broader community through education**

We will further develop our education programs with community partners, schools, educators, and youth-serving organizations. We will continue to reach out broadly with the goal that every Portland school child has the opportunity to visit the Arboretum while strengthening relationships with schools and groups who want deeper experiences, such as sequential or more intensive opportunities. Based on teacher and partner feedback, we will refine our programs, including further development of non-school programs such as family and drop-in educational offerings. Finally, we will explore, with our partners, ideas to encourage green sector career paths for BIPOC and other underserved youth.

### **Expand access and optimize the visitor experience**

We will create a continuum of experiences to actively welcome and engage visitors, connecting them with specific trails and/or activities that match their interests and goals. Guided by universal design principles, we will continue efforts to work with PP&R and other partners to increase



**“We perceive that, as our society grows in appreciation of the environment and concerns about climate change, the Arboretum shines more and more brightly as a serene gem for connecting with and learning about nature, and preserving a healthful environment for present and future generations.”**

**–Arlena Barnes, Member and Volunteer Community Scientist**

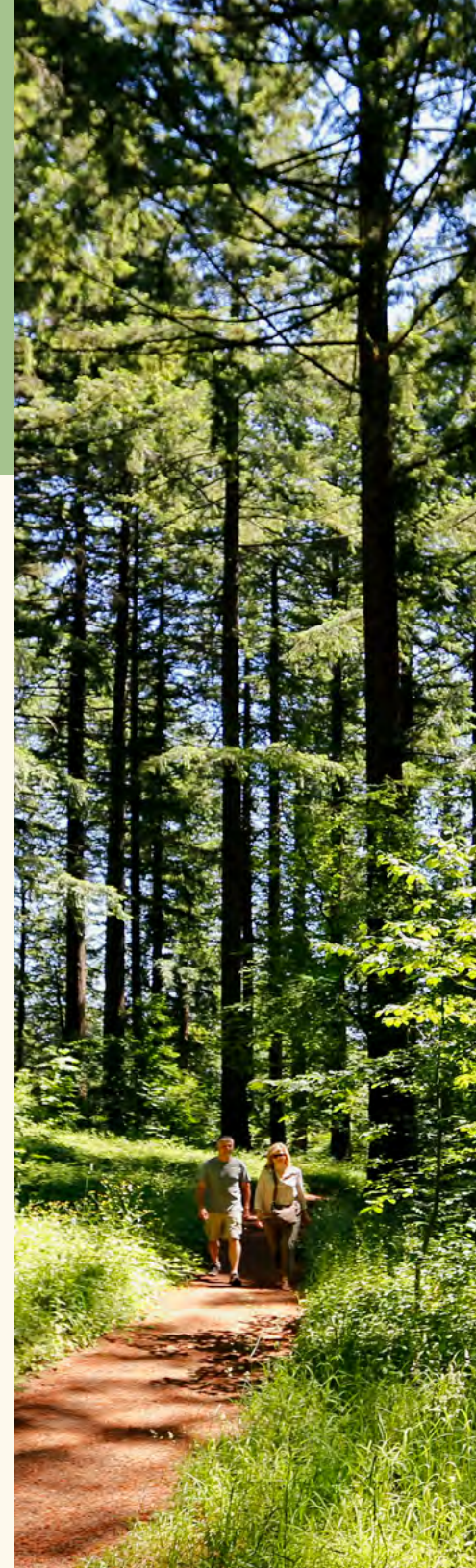
the number of all-user trails in the Arboretum, develop multilingual materials, and improve our website, maps, guides, and signage—including more fully utilizing digital tools to enhance the visitor experience.

### **Strengthen and grow our cultural connections**

We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging at the Arboretum. Using an environmental justice lens, we will continue to deepen our learning and more fully operationalize DEAI and antiracist principles and practices within our organization, programs, and partnerships. To encourage greater racial and cultural inclusion at the Arboretum, we will build relationships and collaborate with partners to create opportunities for culture-specific groups and others who have been historically marginalized.

### **Address the impacts of climate change across our collections, programs, and operations**

Our facilities and operational practices will reflect our commitment to climate resilience. Hoyt Arboretum’s herbarium, plant database, and collections play an important role in maintaining the biodiversity of our region and beyond. We will continue to lead in species conservation, collaborating with researchers and other arboreta, and managing the Arboretum’s unique global tree collections to be climate resilient. We will create opportunities for diverse local communities to learn about climate change through community science projects, new programs, and signage. With partners, we will collaborate on species research and preservation efforts, charting a course to become one of the nation’s top 40 (Level 4) arboretums as defined by ArbNet.



# Planning Cycle: A Living Plan

Our planning cycle promotes action, reflection, and accountability.

We recognize the need to stay flexible, taking advantage of emergent opportunities as well as planned activities. We will regularly review our progress at Board meetings, and each year we will take time to celebrate our accomplishments and update our actionable milestones.



**“The kids were excited to learn about trees and learn the terminology then follow through with the field trip. They felt very empowered knowing a lot about the Arboretum and how it came to be. They came back after a 3 day weekend and were still talking about it!”**

**–Mollie Yand, 5th Grade Teacher, North Gresham Elementary**





## Implementation Plan

### Strategic Directions and Supporting Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

#### **Create a signature facility and grow our capacity to steward the Arboretum**

- Establish and implement a capital campaign with input from key partners and donors
- Grow relationships in the community to expand our volunteer stewardship
- Build our Board, staff, and volunteer base to reflect the diversity of our community and the capabilities needed to fulfill our mission

#### Actionable Milestones (within 18 months)

- Vision for facility refined; capital campaign plan and timeline developed
- New partnership agreement with PP&R that aligns our interests and goals for a new visitor center
- Relationship building with culture specific partners and exploration of meaningful stewardship opportunities
- Continued investment in staff through increased pay, using our new equitable payscale framework and new positions to meet our goals

### Strategic Directions and Supporting Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

#### **Empower and engage youth and the broader community through education**

- Provide opportunities for deeper relationships with some school and community partners through new programs
- Continue to make use of teacher and partner feedback to refine and evaluate programs
- Expand our educational offerings to welcome new audiences
- Collaborate with partners to encourage green sector career paths for BIPOC youth

#### Actionable Milestones (within 18 months)

- Underwriting continued for any school that needs financial support to visit the Arboretum
- Youth field trip program updated in response to teacher input
- Sequential, seasonal visits piloted with at least two schools
- Plant-based climate curriculum developed for middle schoolers
- Paid internships explored for BIPOC youth

**"Being there almost everyday, I see how tirelessly the staff and volunteers work to keep the trails clear and the trees so happy and healthy."**

**–Jennifer Evans, Member and park neighbor**





## Implementation Plan [CONTINUED]

### Strategic Directions and Supporting Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

#### Expand access and optimize the visitor experience

- Increase the number of all-user trails and improve accessibility of maps, guides, and signage (including digital)
- Create a continuum of experiences to anticipate and welcome visitors

#### Actionable Milestones (within 18 months)

- Current info about trail conditions incorporated within our website
- Spanish language trail map available at the visitor center and online
- New digital tools tested such as welcome videos, digital educational interactions at signs, and audio tours

### Strategic Directions and Supporting Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

#### Strengthen and grow our cultural connections

- Deepen DEAI and antiracism learning and action across the organization with an environmental justice lens
- Collaborate to create customized opportunities with culture-specific and other historically marginalized groups, creating long-term authentic relationships

#### Actionable Milestones (within 18 months)

- Board-staff retreat to advance learning and update DEAI and antiracism goals
- Continued relationship building with new partners; jointly pilot and evaluate 5 partner events
- Consider new routes/brochures piloted to highlight specific cultural connections to global tree collections

**“My students are from East Portland and rarely travel across the river. The whole trip, including the drive, is a new experience for many of my students. Quite a few had never been on a forest trail, some had never been on a bus. This is a great opportunity to experience Portland in addition to the Arboretum, which I think is an important Portland park.”**

–1st Grade Teacher, Jason Lee Elementary

# Implementation Plan [CONTINUED]

## Strategic Directions and Supporting Goals (3 to 5-year horizon)

### Address the impacts of climate change across our collections, programs, and operations

- Evolve the Arboretum's collections to be resilient in a changing climate
- Engage the community in learning about climate change and contributing through community science projects, signage, and programming
- Become one of the nation's top 40 (Level 4) arboreta accredited by Arbnet.
- Ensure that our facilities and operational practices will reflect our commitment to climate resilience.

### Actionable Milestones (within 18 months)

- Tree risk assessment and irrigation plan developed
- Support Curator to expand research into new species that can thrive at Hoyt in a warmer, drier climate.
- With partners, opportunities created for diverse local communities to learn about climate change
- Potential university partnerships explored to expand research capacity (fellowships, community science, etc.)



**“By stewarding Hoyt toward greater climate-readiness, HAF and PP&R will continue to lead in species conservation. With partners in climate-focused education and community science, we will demonstrate how arboreta can contribute to understanding and mitigating the impacts of climate change on trees.”**

**–Martin Nicholson, Hoyt Arboretum Curator**

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