

Royal Botanical Gardens Reveals Early Design Concepts as part of a Bold Master Planning Initiative

25-year plan to equip RBG in addressing critical environmental pressures while elevating destination experience

BURLINGTON ON, November 21, 2019 – Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) together with primary consultant MT Planners, shared today, new developments of its 25-year master planning initiative as part of the *Seeding our Future Public Open House*. RBG’s impact and value to southern Ontario was made clear along with the critical role RBG plays in addressing the environmental pressures facing the region.

As a core environmental system within the fastest growing region in Canada, RBG’s 2,700 acres of environmentally sensitive areas (including nature sanctuaries, cultivated gardens and an arboretum), make up the last ecological corridor between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment and contain biologically diverse Carolinian Forest that is home to the highest concentration of wild plants in the country — 20% of Canada’s wild plant population — as well as 58 species-at-risk. These areas are threatened with potentially devastating habitat loss stemming from environmental factors that include climate change and urbanization.

“While RBG serves as a significant tourist and cultural destination, and the need to achieve financial sustainability is clear, our intrinsic value is to affect real and positive change in how humanity interacts with our environment,” said CEO Mark Runciman. “We have pledged to take full advantage of our resources, knowledge and reputation in order to achieve our vision”.

The plan will define RBG’s diverse geographic impact as:

- a community hub and daily centre for immersion and refuge in nature, educating the local community to develop daily practices that benefit the health of people and local ecologies
- a regional resource and tool for action and partnerships to protect and enhance natural systems
- a provincial partner with institutions, agencies, organizations and businesses to create collaborative offerings, attractions and educational programming for Ontarians and tourists
- a national laboratory for ecological research
- an informed global citizen that responds to challenges with science-based input to drive global initiatives for a better future for our planet.

The plan’s framework has been developed through an extensive company-assessment and benchmarking exercise that includes case studies on trending product, programming, natural systems and infrastructure development. Key areas of aspiration have been identified to build the financial strength to serve RBG’s future, including enhanced programming, infrastructure and amenities to attract diverse audiences from local, national and international markets.

A “new” Royal Botanical Gardens would connect its diverse properties to create a unique set of destinations and new experiences that connect visitors to all our green spaces. RBG revealed very early design concepts of several potential long-term projects aimed to transform the Gardens into a world-leading tourist, conservation and environmental education destination, some of which include:

- A reimagined Arboretum serving as the gravitational centre of RBG, connecting more people to its natural lands
- A wellness retreat
- A new Hendrie Park and RBG Centre featuring world-class horticultural attractions, a conservatory, amphitheatre and special facility for senior's programming
- An escarpment retreat
- A rejuvenated Laking Garden
- New community hub featuring such amenities as community gardens, farmer's market, and community centre.
- A Trail System Master Plan that includes upgrades to improve accessibility, elevated trails, canopy experiences, lookouts, and connection to the larger national trail system.
- Comprehensive transportation plan connecting all points throughout RBG
- Accessibility integration, property wide.

"The opportunity to transform, not only RBG, but make significant positive change in our community, region and beyond is truly inspiring," said Runciman. "To make these ambitious goals a reality, RBG will be launching a major capital fundraising campaign. The implementation of the plan will involve input from all stakeholders in determining the future direction of RBG and deepen partnerships with municipalities, conservation authorities, commissions, and other provincial institutions."

The completed plan will identify short-term capital projects to be addressed in the next five years as well as the longer-term projects for the next 25 years while imagining RBG's role as an environmental steward for several generations. The plan will be completed at the end of February 2020 and approved by RBG's board of directors in mid-March 2020. The project is managed by Colliers Project Leaders. The Master Plan is being developed by a team of consultants led by the Primary Consultant, MT Planners.

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To arrange an interview and obtain further project details, please contact:

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About Royal Botanical Gardens

For eight decades, Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) has connected people to the plant world. We do this not only to awaken people to plants' beauty, diversity and necessity, but also to serve as a beacon for an increasingly urgent movement to preserve plant species and habitats and, by extension, our planet.

Recognized as a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO, RBG plays a vital role in this region, protecting and preserving 2,700 acres of environmentally sensitive areas (including nature sanctuaries, cultivated gardens and an arboretum), to improve the ecosystem from Lake Ontario to the Niagara Escarpment; ensuring a balanced relationship between people and nature, and, connecting natural spaces where wildlife can thrive.

Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) is the largest botanical garden in Canada, a National Historic Site, and registered charitable organization with a mandate to bring together people, plants and nature.

Mission

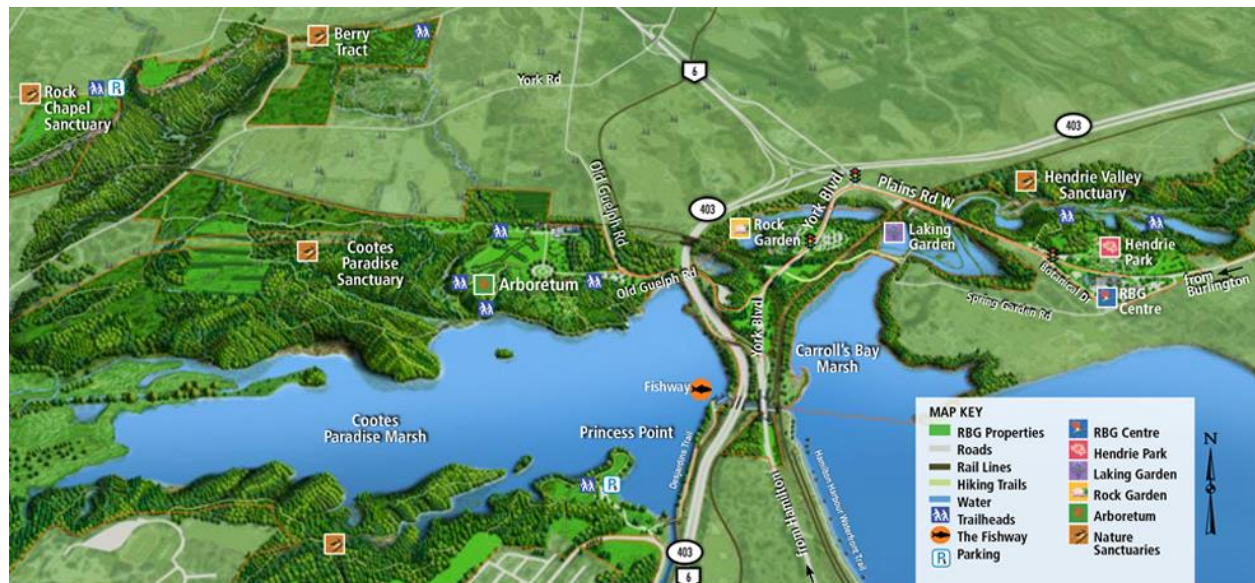
We dedicate our expertise in horticulture, conservation, science and education to connect people, plants and place for the purpose of nurturing and preserving healthy growing life on our planet.

Vision

A world in which everyone is awake to the beauty, diversity and necessity of plants, and from that consciousness more actively works together to protect and preserve plant species and habitats and, by extension, our planet.

Charitable donations help RBG to:

- Protect and restore 2,700 acres of environmentally sensitive areas including nature sanctuaries (where approx. 58 species-at-risk have made their home), cultivated gardens and an arboretum;
- Teach the public and educate school children about the importance of plants and nature, and how to be environmental stewards in their community;
- Create display gardens which beautify our region's landscape and teach people how to transfer best practices into their own backyard;
- Host events that celebrate our landscape and highlight our conservation activities (Fishway demonstrations, nature sanctuary guided tours, children's winter exhibits); and
- Engage in research projects and networks to pursue environmental sustainability;



About MT Planners

Moriyama & Teshima Planners is an internationally renowned design firm specializing in landscape architecture, urban design and environmental planning. We are a team of designers committed to the process of creating the environments needed to sustain humanity in the 21st century.

Over the past 45 years our firm has focused on a natural systems approach to city design addressing the critical issues that face our world. Our projects range in complexity, scale and are developed with an unyielding commitment to resilient and socially transformative results.

Each of MTP's projects is driven by a vision of a unique people and a unique land. We think about the people, their communities and their future generations who will be the benefactors of a healthier environment. Our projects share a common goal to repair and enhance the natural systems that support us all.

About Colliers Project Leaders

Colliers Project Leaders is part of Colliers International Inc., a global leader in commercial real estate services. Colliers Project Leaders provides end-to-end solutions to meet capital project needs across Canada.

Master Planning Leadership Team

Mark Runciman, CEO, Royal Botanical Gardens

Mark Runciman was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) in 2006 after twenty-two years as director of physical plant, operations and corporate projects. He is responsible for leading RBG in its mission to be a global leader in how it uses plants and the natural world to connect people, place and sustainable behaviors.

Mark has led RBG through major organizational transformation, stabilizing the operation and moving the organization towards sustainability while managing a variety of major capital projects. In 2010, he successfully completed a \$16 million physical transformation to RBG Centre and is currently leading the single largest capital project in the Gardens' history, the \$20 million rejuvenation of its iconic Rock Garden.

Mark is an architectural technology graduate of Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology (1977). He was a recipient of the Mohawk College Alumni of Distinction Award (business category) and the Queen's Jubilee Award in 2012. He serves on numerous boards and committees in the Hamilton and Burlington communities.

Born and raised in Hamilton Ontario, Mark now resides in Stoney Creek, Ontario with his wife Kathy. They have two grown children, Kyle and Sarah.

Drew Wensley, CEO, MT Planners Ltd; Primary Consultant

During the 18 years that Drew Wensley has been with MTP, he has transformed the environmental design & planning group into an internationally esteemed, innovative and award-winning firm. With strong focus on a natural systems approach to city design his projects range in complexity, scale and are developed with an unyielding commitment to sustainable, resilient and socially transformative results.

Today Drew is contributing to some of the largest and most significant city building initiatives around the world including work in over 33 cities in 15 countries. These projects share a common goal...to repair and enhance the natural systems that support us all.

Drew's current work in North America includes the implementation of the Niagara Parks Commission Master Plan as well as the development of the Royal Botanical Gardens 25-year Master Plan within the region of Halton.

Drew is a graduate of the Urban Design, Landscape Architecture Program from Ryerson University in Toronto.

Leslie Camm, Senior Project Manager, Colliers Project Leaders; Project Manager

During a career of more than 30 years in the construction development industry, Les Camm has been responsible for the delivery of a wide variety of construction projects ranging from diverse municipal buildings to large parkland and waterfront developments. He has experience in the three primary methods of project delivery, but most recently has demonstrated significant success using the Design-Bid-Build methodology for municipal clients.

His strength lies in the leadership of the team, the ability to identify and alleviate the concerns of all stakeholders, and an ability to develop consensus on design solutions. Les has been responsible for key tasks relating to all stages of a major project and is comfortable carrying out work on-site or presenting conceptual designs and reports to elected officials and facility stakeholders.

Timely, clear, and concise communication between all parties and team building, starting from the initiation of the project, is critical to success; Les consistently demonstrates these skills and traits, placing an emphasis on these aspects in his integrated project management approach.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Masters Project Management, Schulich School of Business, York University, 1997
- Business Management, Sheridan College, 1995
- Landscape Architectural Technology, Ryerson University, 1983
- Project Management Professional, Project Management Institute
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional

Recent Press Coverage

[How experts tag monarch butterflies at Royal Botanical Gardens and how you can help](#)

Date: September 19, 2019

Source: CBC Hamilton

[Baby snapping turtles released in Cootes Paradise as part of RBG's turtle recovery plan](#)

Date: September 6, 2019

Source: Global News

[Royal Botanical Gardens plans to become Canada's leading environmental centre](#)

Date: June 11, 2019

Source: CHCH

[Agave's Last Gasp](#)

Date: January 24, 2019

Source: The Hamilton Spectator

[Gardening more important than ever in the era of climate change](#)

Date: October 23, 2018

Source: The Hamilton Spectator

[New Report from Greenbelt Foundation and Royal Botanical Gardens Shows How Climate Change Impacts Gardening](#)

Date: September 25, 2018

Source: Greenbelt.ca

[Ontario's New Massive Rose Garden Opens Next Month](#)

Date: May 23, 2018

Source: Narcity

[Water quality at one of Hamilton's summer hot spots](#)

Date: May 23, 2018

[In the Garden: Rock gardens rock](#)

Date: February 19, 2018

Source: The Hamilton Spectator

[200K Christmas trees used to fight invasive carp — and the RBG needs more](#)

Date: January 4, 2018

Source: CBC

[Doctors write 'park prescriptions' to get patients moving](#)

Date: June 4, 2011

Source: The Hamilton Spectator

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