



Cox Foundation Awards Garden \$25 million for Expansion to Beltline

ATLANTA (November 21, 2022) – The Atlanta Botanical Garden has been awarded a \$25 million gift from the James M. Cox Foundation that will allow the Midtown attraction to expand to the popular Atlanta BeltLine, making it the city’s first cultural institution directly accessible from the 22-mile loop.

By acquiring commercial property along Piedmont Avenue, the Garden will expand by about 7 acres, making it contiguous to one of the nation’s most popular urban revitalization projects and adding a second entrance dedicated to walkers and bikers.

“The Atlanta Botanical Garden is a key destination in the Atlanta community,” said John Dyer, a James M. Cox Foundation Trustee and Garden board member. “The garden helps people stay healthy and bring joy to the lives of so many. The Foundation was pleased to support the expansion, in addition to the many other ways it helps the city of Atlanta.”

The project is aimed at creating a more walkable, bikeable and livable urban environment, with reduced reliance on automobiles as Atlanta’s population continues to grow.

Expansion efforts began in 2018 when the City of Atlanta invested \$20.4 million in the acquisition of retail and mixed-use property near Piedmont Avenue and Monroe Drive earmarked for future expansion of neighboring Piedmont Park. Since then, the Garden has purchased commercial parcels with private funds for its own future expansion. Ultimately, the dual expansions would create a convergence of three of the city’s most popular greenspaces – the Garden, park and BeltLine.

“The Cox Foundation’s amazing gift is truly transformational as it enables the Garden to acquire and develop an entrance on the BeltLine that is focused on the most sustainable form of transportation – walking and biking,” said Mary Pat Matheson, the Garden’s Anna and Hays Mershon President & CEO. “The foundation’s commitment to greenspace, sustainability and the Garden converge with this remarkable gift. They are truly visionary and generous leaders in our city.”



With the \$25 million gift along with \$10 million in other donations, including a \$5 million gift from Garden Trustee and United Parcel Service CEO Carol Tomé, the Garden seeks to raise an additional \$17 million to complete the land acquisitions, which would expand the 30-acre Garden by about 25 percent.

Once the necessary land is acquired, the Garden will launch a capital campaign for developing the property, with a goal for completion by 2026. The additional entrance from the BeltLine would allow guests to access new garden spaces, including a visitor center, water features, display gardens and exhibition areas. For example, some of the Garden's iconic topiary-like mosaiculture sculptures could be displayed – and be even visible from BeltLine passersby.

“Imagine the Phoenix, a 20-foot-tall planted bird sculpture that represents our city's endurance, rising over the BeltLine to the delight of all who walk by the Garden,” Matheson said. “And a new conservatory that displays flowers from regions around the world would welcome new BeltLine friends to enjoy the bounty of the Garden.

“I think the Garden will be to the BeltLine what The Whitney Museum is to New York City's High Line, and we plan to bring our pioneering spirit to this new part of the Garden, combining art, water and gardens in compelling and beautiful displays.”

The James M. Cox Foundation has been a longtime supporter of the Garden as well as the Atlanta BeltLine. In May, the foundation announced a \$30 million donation to the BeltLine and PATH Foundation that will provide the remaining philanthropic funding needed to complete the Northwest trails. When combined with an earlier gift from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, funding is now in place to complete the BeltLine by 2030.

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The mission of the Atlanta Botanical Garden is to develop and maintain plant collections for display, education, research, conservation and enjoyment. The Garden is located at 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE. For information, visit atlantabg.org or phone 404-876-5859.

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