



# HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Master Plan Development  
January 8, 2015

The Houston Botanic Garden (HBG) is seeking a master planner to develop a plan for the new Botanic Garden and the delineation of the Phase One development of an education, research and conservation oriented facility. The HBG is scheduled to contract with the City of Houston for the re-purposing of a public golf course to be the home of the HBG in late January 2015. (An aerial and lidar topographic maps are included with this RFQ for reference.)

The Houston Botanic Garden is a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation in Houston, Texas. The organization was formed in 2002 and has been on a site search since its establishment. The contract with the City will provide the HBG with a location which meets the goals established by the Board of the HBG.

The HBG has developed a mission statement and vision, both of which will be revisited in the development of the conceptual plan as the organization moves from a theoretical position to the actual development of the botanic garden.

**Mission:** To establish and sustain a premier botanic garden in order to promote public appreciation and understanding of plants, gardens, and conservation of the natural world through education, conservation, and scientific inquiry.

**Vision:** We will enrich people's lives through outstanding displays and programs, serve as a model for sustainability, and inspire all who visit to become environmental stewards as they learn more about plants and the entire natural world. In the fourth largest metropolitan area in the country, our gardens will be places of great beauty providing an oasis for quiet contemplation, learning, inspiration, and research.

A Planning committee has been created to act as the master planner selection committee and will provide a recommendation to the HBG Board. The Planning Committee will also provide interface and guidance to the master planning consultant on behalf of the Board. The ultimate acceptance of the conceptual plan will be the decision of the full Board of the HBG and will need to be submitted to the Mayor's office in October 2015 so that it can be reviewed and approved prior to the end of 2015.

It is the goal of this planning effort to develop the story that this botanic garden will tell so that the theme of the HBG is clear and is represented by the gardens constructed and programs offered.

As such, the items to be achieved in the master planning of the HBG are as follows:

1. Review the Mission and Vision statements with the Master Planning Committee and revise as needed to reflect the current thinking of the Committee and the Board.
2. Define the theme/story that the HBG wants to tell at the botanic garden which will also tie to the education and research programs of the HBG.
3. Provide a conceptual master plan of the ultimate garden concept and the Phase One components using traffic, parking, and drainage guidance provided by others. The site layout must consider the movement of people throughout the gardens as well as the movement of goods and materials for planting, programs, and events that are hosted in the Botanic Gardens. Propose a series of individual gardens that will be part of telling the story desired by the HBG. Prepare renderings of the ultimate garden concept and the Phase One components for use in the fundraising efforts of the HBG.
4. Address the freeway noise impacts on the site and identify methods to attenuate the noise.
5. Define the Phase One elements of the HBG and their relevance to the education, research, and conservation mission of the HBG.
6. Provide opportunities for community outreach particularly to those property owners in close proximity to the site to learn about and address community concerns.
7. Prepare attendance and membership projection scenarios to be used in the study of annual financial operations and staff development for the Phase One botanic garden.
8. Develop a staffing goal with identified positions and numbers of employees and volunteers for operation and maintenance of Phase One of the Houston Botanic Garden.
9. Prepare Phase One cost estimates for design/construction and annual operations and maintenance. Coordinate with the Development Committee and staff of the HBG to define naming opportunities and values associated with these opportunities.
10. Reconcile annual estimated operations/maintenance costs with the revenue projections from admissions and memberships for the Phase One Botanic Garden to determine the need for additional funding from other sources or a re-assessment of the extent of the Phase One gardens.

#### Selection Process:

This Request for Qualifications is distributed to a limited number of firms who have demonstrated credentials in the preparation of master plans for botanic gardens and arboreta. This is a “start from a blank piece of paper” effort with a Board and staff who will be developing a fundraising plan (capital and annual), an operations and staffing plan, and a business plan to

guide the creation of this new botanic garden. It is recognized that the master planning firms may need to partner with other consultants to provide some of the requested services. The HBG is interested in the firms that the master planner would suggest for this additional support.

The HBG intends to contract directly for traffic, parking, drainage, civil, environmental, geotechnical, and structural support services in the master planning phase. It is anticipated that this effort will commence prior to the engagement of the master planner to define constraints and opportunities that would be useful in the development of the master plan.

The primary point of contact for the HBG will be Jeff Ross, its President and CEO, who is also a licensed professional engineer in Texas. Mr. Ross worked for over thirty years as a consulting civil engineer on a variety of private and public projects including many parks in the Houston region. He brings a planning, design, and construction background to this endeavor.

The specific items to be addressed in the submittals of the master planning candidates are as follows:

1. Experience in the preparation of master plans for new or existing botanic gardens. Describe your approach to the master planning process and highlight your impression of the key challenges that you have come across in these efforts. Provide one or two examples of master plans that you prepared and describe the role that your firm took in addressing the challenges of these assignments.
2. Describe the information that you think is necessary to prepare a master plan. How would you propose to procure this information? Would you propose the engagement of consultants under your contract or prefer that the Owner provide certain information?
3. What are your plans to engage Houston area firms to support your activities? Identify firms that you would team with, and describe the services that they would provide. The lease contract with the City of Houston encourages a “best efforts” program for the attainment of the 24% goal for Minority and Women’s business participation for professional services contracts. How would you propose to reach this goal in the master planning effort?
4. Describe your firm’s organizational structure with respect to your approach to this master planning process. Who from your firm would be the project leader and why do you think this person would be the best service provider to the HBG?
5. How would your team define the project construction and operational costs at the HBG, particularly for the Phase One effort?
6. What, in your experience, would you propose as the package of deliverables for the Master Planning effort? What level of detail would you anticipate including in the master plan given the schedule allowed?

7. The goal of the HBG is to have the conceptual plan and Phase One delineation complete and deliverables available to submit to the Mayor's office for review and approval by October 1, 2015. What are your thoughts on this schedule? Please submit a bar chart schedule that highlights the critical path items that must be achieved to meet this schedule.
8. Based on your experience, what would you anticipate the range of fees could be for the desired services?

Please include a letter of interest with three references of botanic gardens or arboreta for which you worked on the preparation of a master plan and describe what makes them stand out as your references.

It is the intent of the HBG to narrow the short list to two or three firms and then to conduct interviews in Houston with the short-listed firms. The HBG will then proceed with the selection of the preferred firm and negotiate a fee for services. The HBG hopes to have the contract negotiation completed so that a notice to proceed can be issued in early March 2015.

The Houston Botanic Garden reserves the right to reject any and all submittals in response to this Request for Qualifications and has no obligation to engage the services of any firm.

The submittal schedule is proposed as follows:

RFQ issued	Early January 2015
RFQ response due	January 28, 2015
Interviews	Mid February 2015
Selection	By March 1, 2015

Your participation in this qualifications and selection process is most appreciated. The HBG understands the level of effort that is needed to prepare a response. Therefore, it is in our interest and hopefully, the Master Planner candidate interests that the submittals be kept brief and responsive to the particular questions raised.

Please submit three hard copies of all submittals and an electronic copy that can easily be routed to the Master Plan committee for review and evaluation.

Written questions should be sent to Jeff Ross at [jeross@houstonbotanicgarden.org](mailto:jeross@houstonbotanicgarden.org).