

# HARTFORD BOTANICAL GARDEN



The Hartford Botanical Garden is a project to develop, plant, and manage a botanical garden and conservatory in Colt Park. The project will utilize about 18 acres of the westernmost parameters of Colt Park and include a series of indoor and outdoor garden spaces and restored historic buildings. The area and buildings that may be included in the garden are shown below.

## Location

**25 Stonington Street:  
HBG Office and  
The CT Creative Store**



**Colt Park**



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## *Site History*

Hartford is the birthplace of American landscape architecture pioneer Frederick Law Olmsted. The city possesses more urban parkland than any other city in New England and has a rich history of public horticulture.

Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt (1826-1905), widow of inventor and manufacturer Samuel Colt (1814-1862), was one of Hartford's chief benefactors and will serve as the inspiration for this project. An avid horticulturalist herself—Elizabeth traveled extensively with her husband and saw the beauty of botanical retreats in Europe and other exotic places. Married for only six years at the time of her husband's death, she led the Colt Firearms Company for decades afterwards and rebuilt the factory after it burned down in the early 1860's. Armsmear, the Colt estate on Wethersfield Avenue, featured a number of conservatory wings and a complex of elaborate gardens and greenhouses.

At the time of her death, more than four decades after her husband's passing, she bequeathed the bulk of her land holdings to the city for public use. Combined with gifts such as the Church of the Good Shepherd, its Parish House, and a priceless collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century American art to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Colt Park remains a testament to her extraordinary philanthropy. The year 2005 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death as well as the centennial of Theodore Wirth's plan for Colt Park.

The proposed botanical garden will sustain Elizabeth Colt's park gift, celebrate the Colt history, and provide a host of attractions that both recognize Hartford's extensive history of horticulture, architecture and landscape design as well as encourage the development of new horticultural knowledge and a focus on sustainability.



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## *Project Timeline*

**1998:** Established The Hartford Botanical Garden Project's board/planning committee

**1999:** Became a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation

**1999:** Received funding from the State of Connecticut to commission a feasibility study. Study completed by Urban Strategies Inc., Bartram and Cochran, and Childs Associates.

**Determined that the Greater Hartford region was ideally suited for the establishment of a botanical garden.**

**2000:** The Project received additional state funding through the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection for site evaluation and explored a number of Hartford sites before identifying the Colt Park parcel.

**2001:** Established an office in Hartford and employed an Executive Director

**2003-2004:** Hired Patrick Cullina, Vice President of Horticulture and Facilities, Brooklyn Botanic Garden and botanical garden consultant to assist the board in fine-tuning the project's vision and to craft initial Colt Park site plan and garden programs.

**2005:**

- Entered into an agreement with the City of Hartford to occupy 25 Stonington Street for the HBG office.
- Hired Ryan Marketing Partners of Farmington to prepare a marketing plan.
- Selected a Master Planning Team led by Tai Soo Kim Partners.
- Formed a collaborative with State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture to re-open the CT Creative Store at 25 Stonington Street. The store provides operating funds for the organization while educating the public on the wide use of botanic goods, promoting Connecticut-made products, and supporting Connecticut farmers and artisans.

**2006:** Master Planning held May to June. Technical Team: Tai Soo Kim Partners, architects and planners; Carol Johnson Associates, landscape architects; Sylvia Corwith Winter, horticultural consultant; Fuss & O'Neill, civil engineers; Building Conservation Associates, historic building surveyors. Bill Hosley, Colt expert, is the Colt historical consultant to the project.

**2007:** Master Planning Phase II



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## *Partners*

The City of Hartford, Office of the Mayor and the Parks and Recreation Division of the Department of Public Works

State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection

State of Connecticut, Department of Agriculture

The Coalition To Strengthen The Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood

## *Board Members 2006*

Lisa Musumeci, Board President

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Linda Osten

Leslie Larson

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Frank Gagliardo

Mary Sherwin

Philip A. Schonberger

Jane Nadel-Klein

Patrick Pinnell

## *Contact Information*

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## *How You Can Help*

*Volunteering, In-Kind, and Monetary Contributions:* Your time volunteering on the garden project board and/or committees is crucial to the project. In-kind contributions of materials, services, publicity, and fund raising are also most welcome. And monetary donations of course are terrific.

Please contact us (see above) to volunteer or donate.