



Community Outreach Planning Toolkit

Commitment to improving outreach
programs and service to the community

IDEA Center Cohort Project
Wing Haven
2024-2025



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Goal

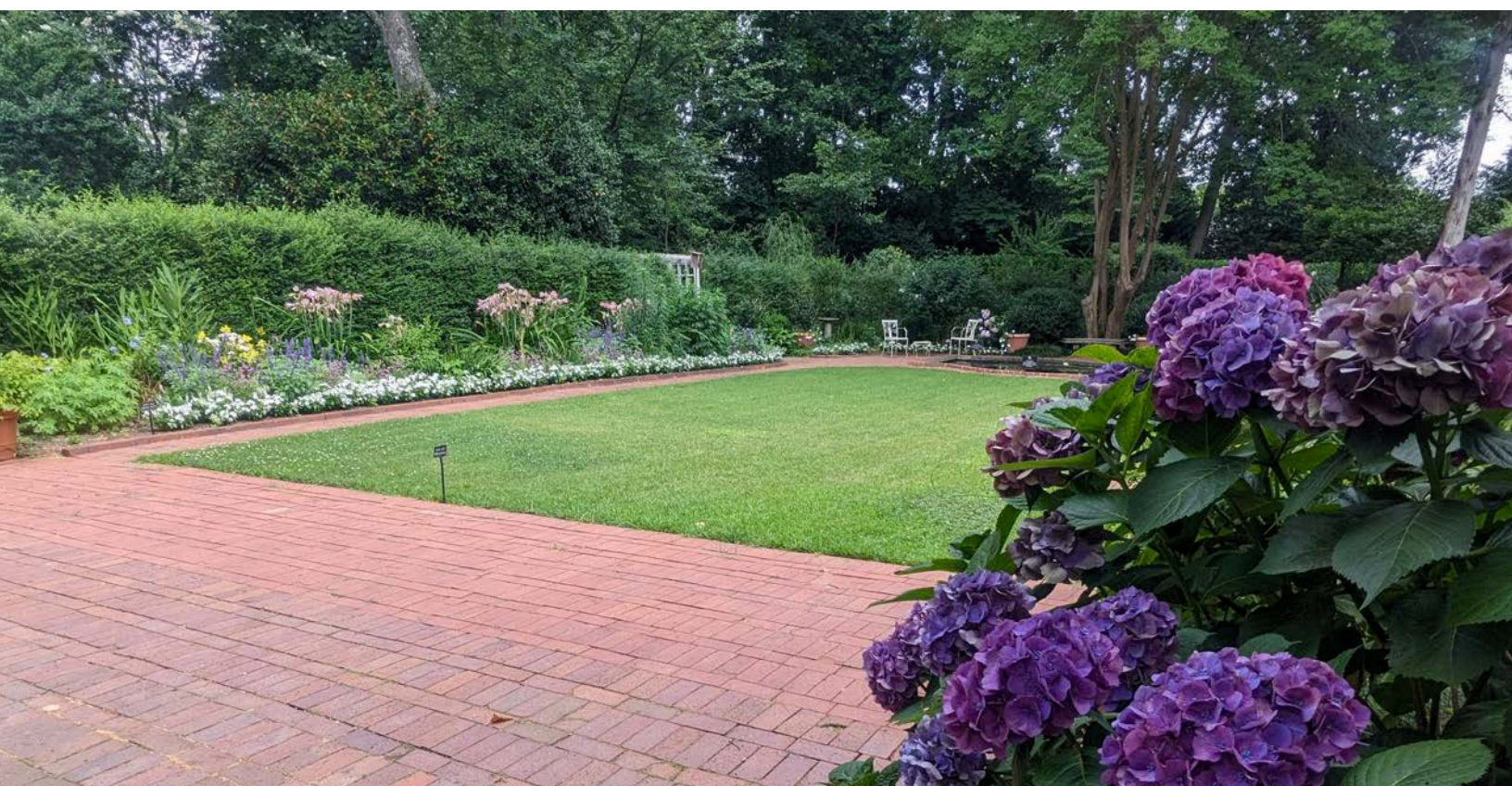
Participating in the American Public Gardens Association (APGA) IDEA Cohort was a way for Wing Haven to gauge how we could improve engagement with a broader audience. We wanted to hear from different groups of people and converse with gardens across the country in order to hear different perspectives and learn best practices.

The ultimate goal of our IDEA project is to enhance Wing Haven's accessibility. We want our beautiful gardens to be available to and engaging for *all*. It's important that everyone in our community feels a sense of belonging when they enter our gates. We are hoping to increase overall audience and visitors at Wing Haven through easier access to our space.



Approach

- Complete an audit of Wing Haven's gardens and website to create a more accessible physical and virtual space
- Create list of community partners, schedule one-on-one meetings to increase outreach
- Hired employee specifically to take charge of expanded outreach initiatives
- Created a new auxiliary volunteer position who will work with new Development & Engagement Manager under the direction of the Director of Education & Community Engagement to spearhead IDEA/Outreach initiatives
- Created a post-visit survey to gather feedback about changes
- Plan future panel discussion





Impacted Groups

With our goal being to expand accessibility and reach a broader group of people, our approach is largely geared towards populations experiencing a disability, whether that be physical, mental, or something else. We would like to ensure that these groups of people, who may struggle in many public places due to lack of accommodations, do not run into those same issues at Wing Haven.

That being said, another part of expanding accessibility means taking a closer look at our typical demographic and diversifying that when possible. The benefits of nature are universal; therefore, our project is large in scope with our goal to expand our audience.



Pictured left: A group from Monarch - Charlotte Arts Center enjoyed a tour of Wing Haven's gardens and were the first to fill out and give impactful feedback on our post-visit survey.

Pictured right: Elizabeth Lee and Shaketa Wright from the Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte visited Wing Haven to meet on ways to collaborate as community partners.



Challenges

Wing Haven's main challenge is maintaining our historic integrity while also becoming more accessible for all. In 2017, we audited our brick pathways during a Path Accessibility Project and successfully widened the majority of the main paths in our historic garden Wing Haven Garden & Bird Sanctuary; however, our second historic garden, the Elizabeth Lawrence House & Garden, still has several accessibility barriers.

As with most nonprofits, other challenges included time restraints, our annual budget, and juggling events, internal changes, seasonal programs, etc. alongside the project. Luckily, this is an ongoing project with no end in sight!

In addition, we were fortunate to hire an additional staff member to help spearhead this project, the Development & Engagement Manager who works closely with the Director of Education & Community Engagement. They are now in charge of planning and executing new or enhanced outreach ideas.

We also created two new Auxiliary outreach volunteer positions who will work alongside the Development & Engagement Manager along with the Director of Education & Community Engagement on these initiatives.



Current Progress

- Post-Visit Survey (see next slide)
- Preliminary audit of heavily-trafficked brick pathways in gardens (see next slide)
- Created a new [accessibility webpage](#) that highlights important information for visitors before they visit
- FY25 Outreach Highlights
 - Increased attendance at off-site outreach events to hear from and plan with community partners
 - Hosted Monarch - Charlotte Arts Center for a tour and program, an organization that serves developmentally disabled adults
 - Provided free admission passes for families at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Charlotte
 - Continued to participate in Museums for All and Blue Star programs
 - Spanish learning elements were added to children's outreach programs
 - 330 Children's Outreach Program experiences that served 698 children
 - Continued volunteering partnership with Phillips Academy (serves students with disabilities)



Current Progress

Wing Haven Post-Visit Survey

Demographics and Background

Age
Your answer

Gender
Your answer

Race
☐ Black or African American
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ White

FY24GGT_M

Section 4 of 7

Comfort
Description (optional)

How comfortable were you/your group in the different areas of the garden?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Comfortable ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very Comfortable

Were there adequate seating areas or places to rest available?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Were there any areas where you/your group felt uncomfortable or unsafe due to environmental factors (e.g., sun, heat, lack of shade)? Please provide details.
Long answer text

Were there any aspects of the garden that you/your group found particularly enjoyable or challenging in terms of access and comfort? Please provide details.
Long answer text

IDEA Pro

How could we improve visits to Wing Haven?
Long answer text

How helpful was the staff during your visit?

1 2 3 4 5
Not helpful at all ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very helpful

Was the information and signage adequate?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Check the gardens you were able to visit.
☐ Wing Haven Garden & Bird Sanctuary
☐ SEED Wildlife & Children's Garden
☐ Elizabeth Lawrence House & Garden





Takeaways

Utilize your community partnerships. Get advice from those who have done something similar, initiate conversations with other organizations and partners, listen to the group you're trying to target.

Increasing the accessibility of an organization is not a one-and-done project. It's an ongoing improvement process as you learn from those around you, receive feedback from visitors, and participate in conversations from community partners.

Next Steps

- Continue to learn and adapt as needed. This project does not have an endpoint!
- Target groups in the community that would benefit from visiting Wing Haven and proactively meet with them to learn how we can adapt to fit their needs.
- Continue to follow up with visiting groups from various communities to learn ways we can improve.
- Continue audit of Wing Haven's physical and virtual spaces to find areas for improvement.