

Bolz Conservatory Permanent Fee Proposal

Olbrich Botanical Gardens requests support from the Board of Parks Commissioners to permanently increase the admission fees for the Bolz Conservatory. The current temporary increase is approved through May 31, 2022. The proposed permanent fee structure is similar to the current structure with a few minor changes to accommodate lower rates for children. The current temporary and proposed permanent fee structures are:

	Temporary Fee Structure (ends 5/31/22)	Proposed Permanent Fee Structure
Admission	\$6.00 for ages 6 and up, increased from \$2.00 in October 2020	\$6.00 for ages 13 and up \$3.00 for ages for 6-12
Scholarships	Free passes available, no questions asked	Free passes available, no questions asked
Free Entry	Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 10am-noon	Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 10am-noon
	American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Program – Members from participating gardens enter for free.	American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Program – Members from participating gardens enter for free.
	Olbrich Botanical Society members enter for free.	Olbrich Botanical Society members enter for free.
Cashier	Paid OBS employee	Paid OBS employee
Revenue Share	50% of the net revenue split between the City and OBS	50% of the net revenue split between the City and OBS
Exceptions	17% revenue share to the City for special events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orchid Escape (February) • Blooming Butterflies (July) 	17% revenue share to the City for special events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orchid Escape (February) • Blooming Butterflies (July)
	Flat rate of \$5000.00 for Holiday Train Show plus 50% of the net revenue of Conservatory admissions.	Flat rate of \$5000.00 for Holiday Train Show plus 50% of the net revenue of Conservatory admissions.
Process	OBS collect admission fees, report to City, and send a monthly check	OBS collects admission fees, report to City, and send a monthly check

Why should this fee structure be made permanent?

The permanent increase of Conservatory admissions will result in higher revenue streams for both the City of Madison and OBS while at the same time providing our visitors with a higher quality experience at Olbrich.

- Staffing:
 - The fee increase enables OBS to hire and employ conservatory cashiers. This staffing structure is more consistent and reliable than the previous structure of volunteers filling the cashier positions.

- Volunteers have yet to return to pre-pandemic staffing levels for positions that are inside the lobby so relying on volunteers for front-facing visitor experience positions is not reliable.
- Staff that fill the conservatory cashier positions are reliable and present a consistent message and service to all visitors.
- Fee Structure:
 - The current \$6.00 admission rate has been in place since October 2020. In this time frame there have been very few complaints about the increase from \$2.00 to \$6.00.
 - New is the lower fee rate for children ages 6-12 years old. This provides families with a lower rate of admission for their children.
 - OBS will continue to support the scholarships offered for any visitor that requests them. No questions asked. No one is turned away for the inability to pay the admission fee.
 - There are two opportunities a week for free entry on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.
 - Olbrich is a top tourist destination in Wisconsin; many paid admissions are from out of town guests who express gratitude that the outdoor gardens are free and willingness to pay the \$6 admission. This fee is comparable to neighboring conservatories:
 - Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (Milwaukee), \$8
 - Greater Des Moines Botanical Center, \$10
 - Nicholas Park Conservatory (Rockford), \$7/\$9
- Revenue:
 - Revenue allocated to City of Madison will meet or exceed 2022 Parks budget revenue projections (\$80,000). See chart below detailing 2021 revenue and attendance numbers.
 - Increased admission fees in 2021 generated a revenue of \$85,594 which is more than the 5 year total of revenue generated in 2015-2019 of \$84,000.
 - Attendance in 2022 is expected to reach pre-pandemic numbers (300,000) based on 2021 attendance which was 290,000 visitors.
 - Revenue allocated to OBS will cover cashiering expenses and support. These resources will also be used by Olbrich's Community Engagement & Inclusion Working Group who has been working to reduce access barriers (2019-present) and will be proposing ways to make all community members feel like they belong and want to make Olbrich a regular destination.
 - The \$6 admission has not been a barrier for access to the conservatory; about 44% of visitors paid no admission in 2021.

2021 Bolz Conservatory Admissions and Revenue for Jan-Dec 2021

Month	Total Revenue	Credit Card Exp	Wages & FICA	Paid to City	TOTAL Attendance	Paid Admission	Free Admission
Jan 2021	\$9,312	\$197	\$1,940	\$3,588	3161	1550	1611
Feb 2021	\$21,264	\$366	\$2,099	\$3,615	7093	3536	3557
Mar 2021	\$14,808	\$310	\$1,420	\$6,539	4728	2453	2275
Apr 2021	\$18,264	\$376	\$2,071	\$7,908	5600	3061	2539
May 2021	\$24,930	\$476	\$2,309	\$11,072	7081	4183	2898
Jun 2021	\$21,048	\$389	\$2,830	\$8,914	6063	3516	2547
Jul 2021	\$29,136	\$490	\$3,549	\$12,549	8083	4860	3223
Aug 2021	\$24,234	\$435	\$2,571	\$10,614	6450	4043	2407
Sept. 2021	\$14,466	\$308	\$2,813	\$5,673	4182	2410	1772
Oct. 2021	\$13,752	\$269	\$2,603	\$5,440	3956	2056	1900
Nov. 2021	\$12,354	\$271	\$2,780	\$4,652	3656	2046	1610
Dec. 2021	\$4,824	\$106	\$4,656	\$5,030	1910	811	1099
Jan-Aug 2021	\$208,392.00	\$3993.00	\$31,641.00	\$85,594.00	61963	34525	27438

*Added \$5000 for Holiday Train Show Guests

- Additional Benefits & Reasons
 - The point of sale system was upgraded in 2021 along with the addition of credit card sales in 2020 (previously only cash was accepted). These changes, along with paid staff serving as the cashiers, have resulted in higher membership sales and donations at the cashier. A stronger OBS membership and donation base only strengthens Olbrich Gardens as a City of Madison public garden.
 - At the \$6/\$3 admission rate the slight increase in admission fees makes an OBS membership a bit more appealing and valuable which provides free admission to the Conservatory.
 - The extra revenue provides Olbrich Gardens with more capacity to host higher quality events and exhibitions like Orchid Escape and Blooming Butterflies.
- Future
 - We're looking into other possible partnerships that would provide free admission into the Conservatory such as a memberships available for check-out at local libraries.
 - We're continuing to increase community partnerships to bring in new audiences into the Conservatory and gardens.
- Reviews – below are public reviews shared online after visiting the Bolz Conservatory.
 - *“Best botanic venue summer or winter. Seeing it in all seasons has been fun. They have art installations you can walk throughout the gardens, and some special events. It’s a great venue for weddings - having attended some I can say they make for some lovely photos. Winter indoor garden is pretty cool too - warms your body and soul during endless cold months. You can see blooming plants as well as some small birds and creatures. It’s one of the best community venues; mostly free or fairly low cost fees. Go, take family and friends and enjoy!!!”* – by Barbara Gulten (Google)

- *“Friendly and helpful staff members made this beautiful experience the best! Beautiful plants inside and out - so much to see at your own pace. The paths in the greenhouse are easy to navigate and pretty accessible to everyone. This is a must see.”* – by Talkie Toaster (Google)
- *“Stunning botanical gardens completely free to the public. There is a tropical conservatory in the property that only costs \$6 for admission and is completely worth it. You can spend several hours wandering the many paths or just find a pleasant place to sit and enjoy a leisurely time among the flowers and foliage.”* – by Glori Cosio (Google)
- *“We stopped in to tour the conservatory. The plants were well tended to. It was a nice reprieve from the cold snowy weather. Definitely worth the money.”* – by luzalma (Trip Advisor)
- *“Took a walk into the conservatory on a cold and dreary winter day and immediately felt transported to another place. The warmth, incredible plants and the resident birds made this a great stop even in winter! Even the walks around the garden were cleared for a nice brisk walk around the grounds. Love this place.”* – by Suzanne H (Trip Advisor)
- *“This is a delayed review for visiting in early October, whoops! It was an unexpectedly warm, sunny day to stroll through the gardens. I can't believe I've never been here before. Definitely felt like a hidden gem to me, because when you're driving past it, you wouldn't really know what you've missed. There are two parts to the botanical gardens - the outdoor gardens, which is free for all, and the Bolz Conservatory, which is free on Wed & Sat 10am-12pm (otherwise it's \$6, not bad at all). Both were wonderful to meander through, and it's definitely a great place to spend the morning. I look forward to returning in the spring & summer to see what new plants have blossomed.”* – by Allison H (Yelp)
- *“Beautiful, well maintained garden that's open to the public and free! (Donation suggested) The climate-controlled green house has different, more tropical species of plants and has a modest fee. Late Spring/ early Summer is a great time to check out the blooming flora. I recommend a stroll to reconnect with nature!”* – by Chris T (Yelp)