



TORONTO BOTANICAL GARDEN



*Towards a New Garden:
Integrated
Conceptual
Proposals*

TorontoBotanicalGarden.ca
January 2015

Toronto Botanical Garden

Integrated Conceptual Proposals

Mission: *Transforming our city by connecting people to plants and the natural world.*

Vision: *Sustainable in its practices and support, TBG will be renowned as a centre of excellence for learning about plants and the natural world, and for the outstanding display of their beauty.*



Message from the Executive Director



Toronto Botanical Garden is renowned as a beautiful small garden with broad community support and a proud 50-year history of providing nature-based education to our city. Our achievements are especially remarkable given that there is no botanical garden in North America smaller than ours and no garden so lacking in the normal sources of revenue that any cultural institution requires to survive and thrive.

The transition from a precariously funded four-acre botanical garden is underway. We are very fortunate in our location adjacent to a 30-acre City park that connects to the Don River ravine system. The varied topography of Edwards Gardens has inspired the illustrious garden designer, John Brookes, to suggest a unique organizing scheme for the new botanical garden – City, Country and Wild. These broad themes encapsulate our city's and, indeed, Canada's experience of nature.

TBG has engaged one of North America's foremost botanical garden master planners, W. Gary Smith, along with PMA Landscape Architects, to create these "integrated conceptual proposals". The proposals evaluate a number of challenges posed by the site, and they reveal the exciting potential of creating a true botanical garden within our city. Inspired by a compelling vision and a persuasive business case, TBG will be encouraging support from all who share our vision of a city transformed by its botanical garden.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Jongerden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

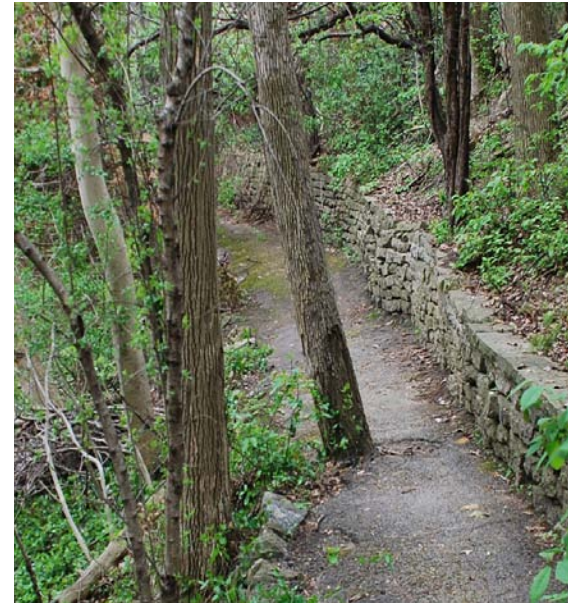
Harry Jongerden, Executive Director

SECTION 1

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



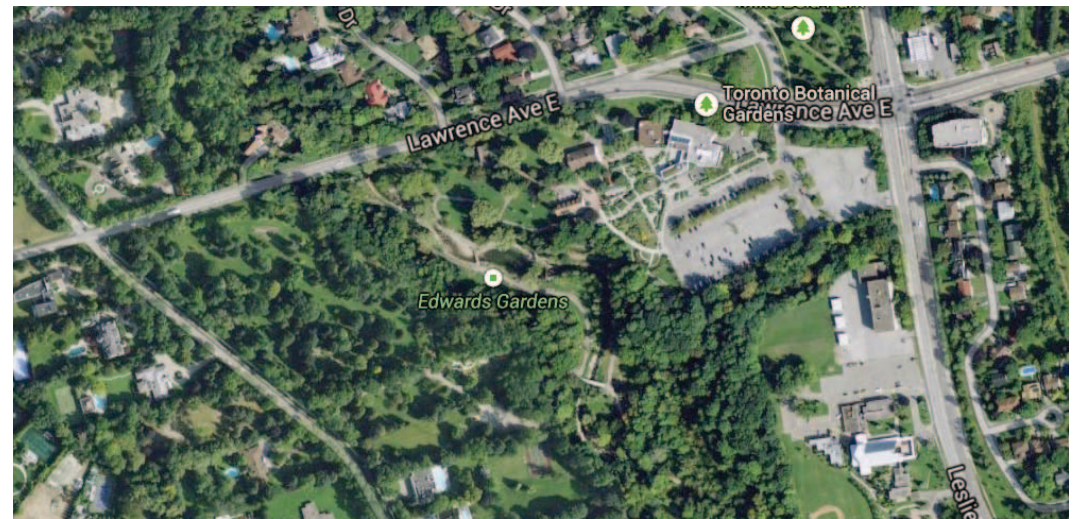
Section 1 describes the existing conditions of the site, including slopes and surface drainage, vegetation, visitor circulation, views and vistas, educational programming, and built components such as benches and paving.





Location

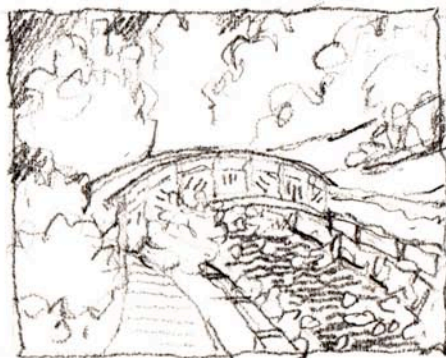
Toronto Botanical Garden is adjacent to Edwards Gardens, a City park located at the southwest corner of Lawrence Avenue and Leslie Street in Toronto's North York neighborhood. Edwards Gardens currently comprises approximately 30 acres, while Toronto Botanical Garden is approximately four acres, including the footprint of its buildings. Combined, this presents a uniquely attractive offering to garden and nature lovers, including Toronto residents and visitors.



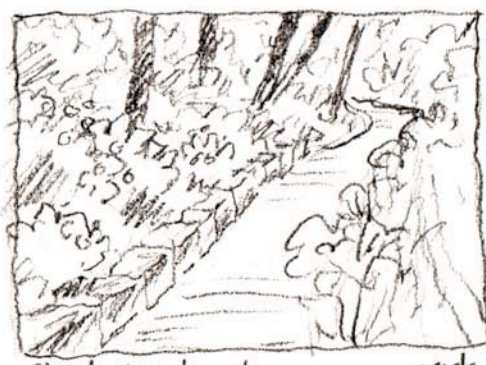
The site is located on Wilket Creek, a tributary of the Don River West Branch.



cherry on a mound by the creek



Romance

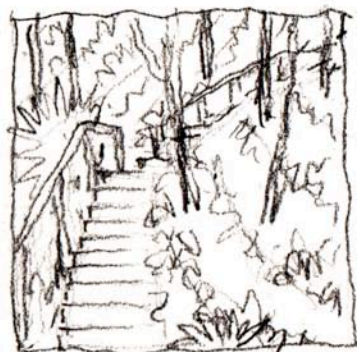


Rhode woods edge

creek →



Scruffy island between path & creek



Galvanized pipe rail + conc. steps up into the woods.



tree coming out of center of path on wooded slope



rustic octagon in woods



thickets and thinnets



rolling lawn w/ trees -
-Arboretum

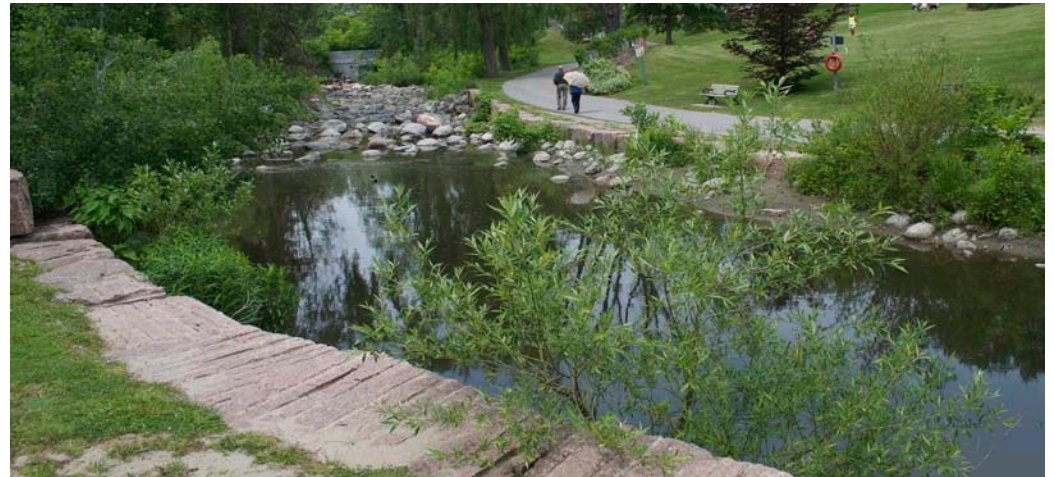
Slopes & Surface Drainage

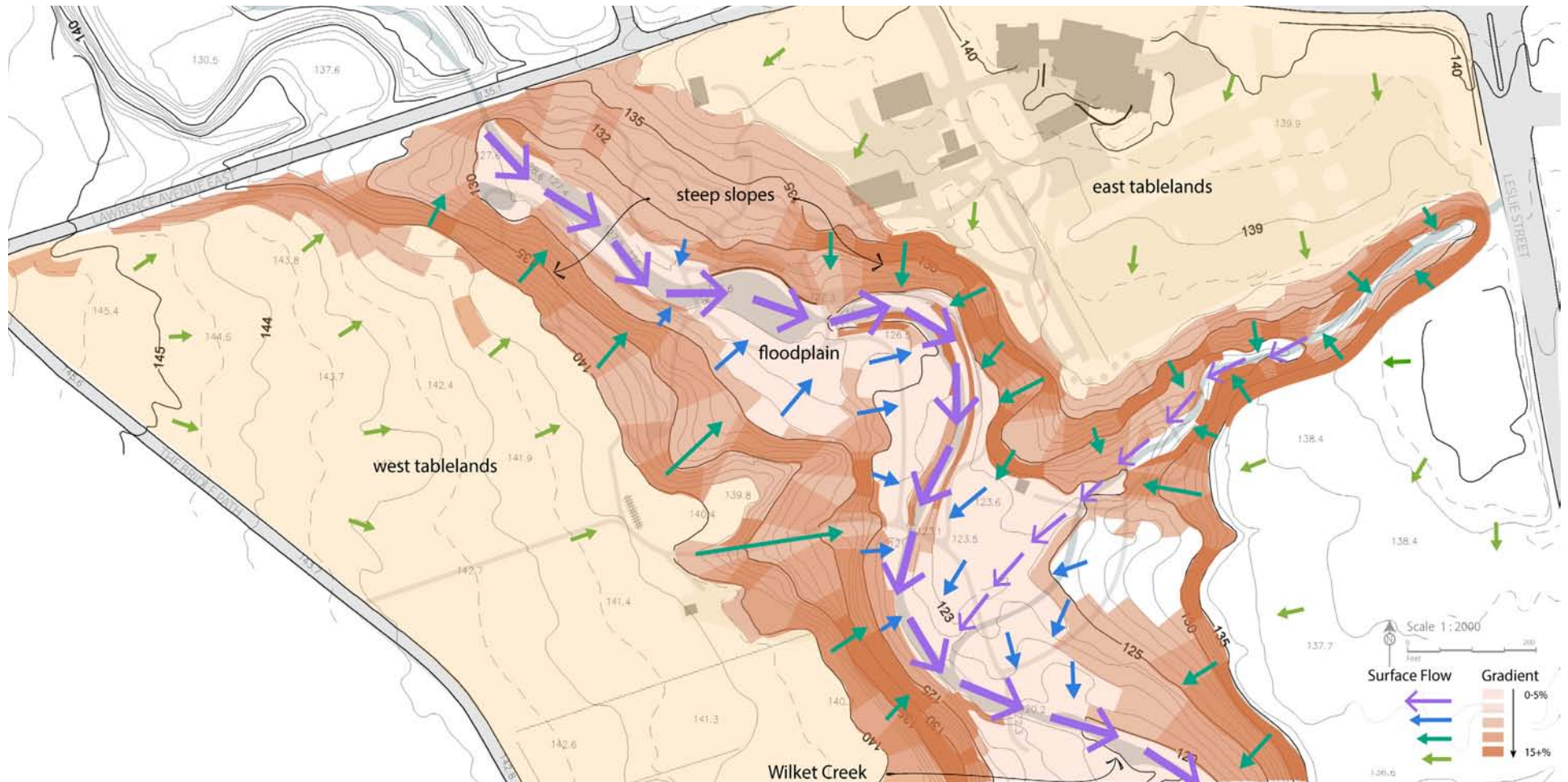


Not only is the buildup of flood debris frequently an unsightly mess, it is also unsafe for visitors and staff, and it has often damaged built elements such as the “honeymoon bridge”.



This photograph from the 1950's illustrates the impact that periodic flooding has had on the creek edges, and also how the creek could once again appear: inviting, safe and cared for.

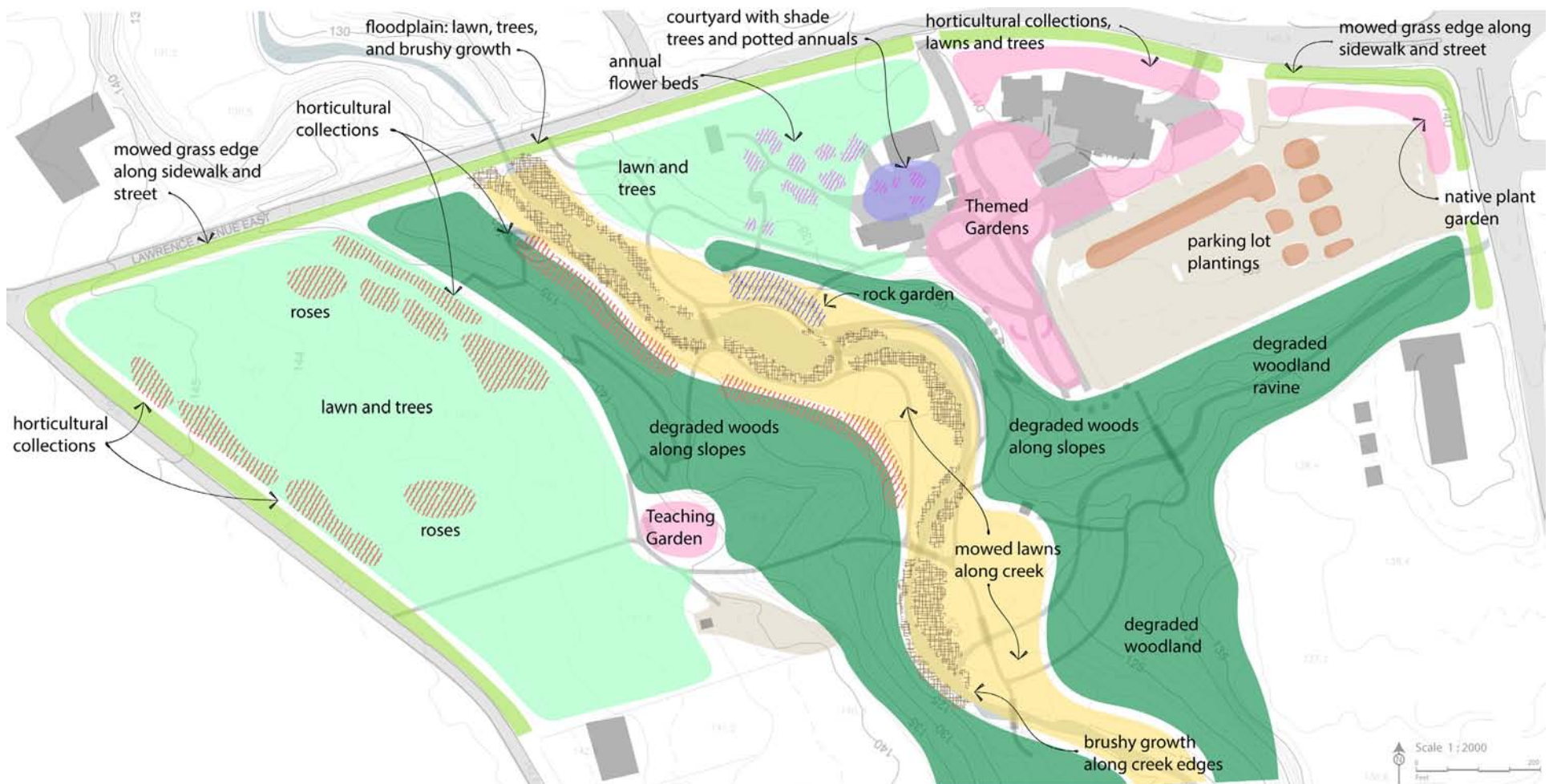


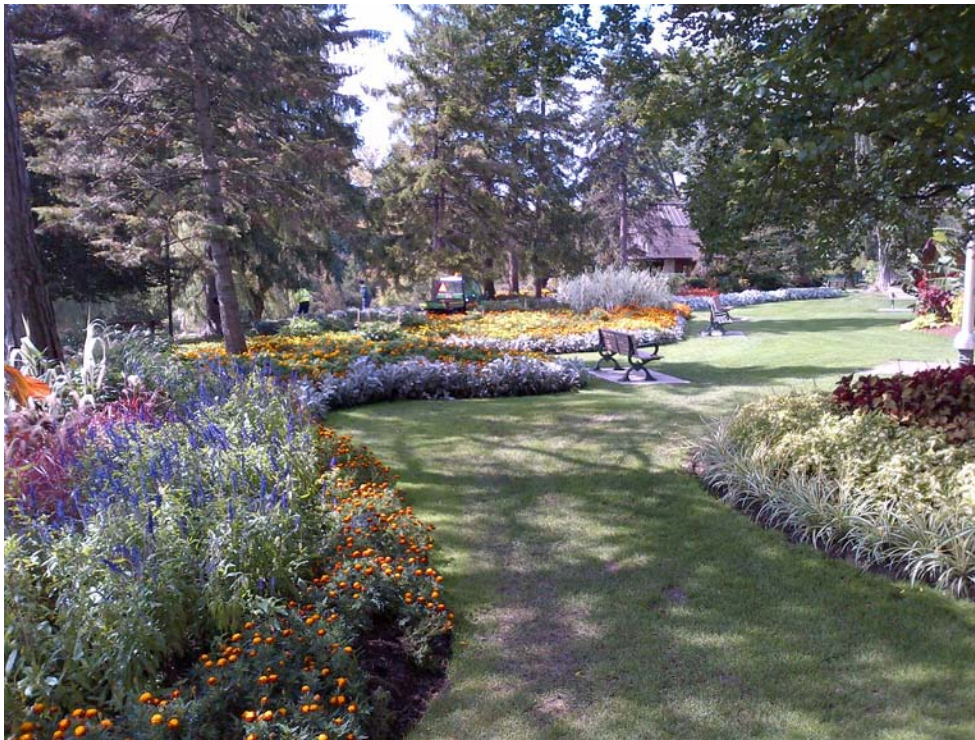


Slopes and surface drainage are organized in three distinct zones: the tablelands, the steep slopes that lead down into the ravine, and the Wilket Creek floodplain. Up on the tablelands, storm water flows mostly as surface water, rather than recharging into the subsoil. The steep slopes have been severely eroded from water moving rapidly over them in recent years. Down in the floodplain, the area has been affected by frequent and intense flooding, in particular after heavy rains.

Existing Vegetation

The site has a wide variety of vegetation types, with little design continuity from one part of the site to the next. Wooded slopes along both sides of the ravine are severely degraded. The banks of Wilket Creek are overgrown with brush, blocking views up and down the waterway, and repeated flooding has damaged lawns on the floodplain. The quality of horticultural plantings varies from disrepair to state-of-the-art.





On the eastern tablelands, horticultural plantings generally are in excellent condition. The Themed Gardens offer leading-edge horticultural design, and the colourful bedding plants between the Barn and the Moriyama Pavilion are a popular attraction. Rolling lawns between the Pavilion and the creek are in beautiful condition.



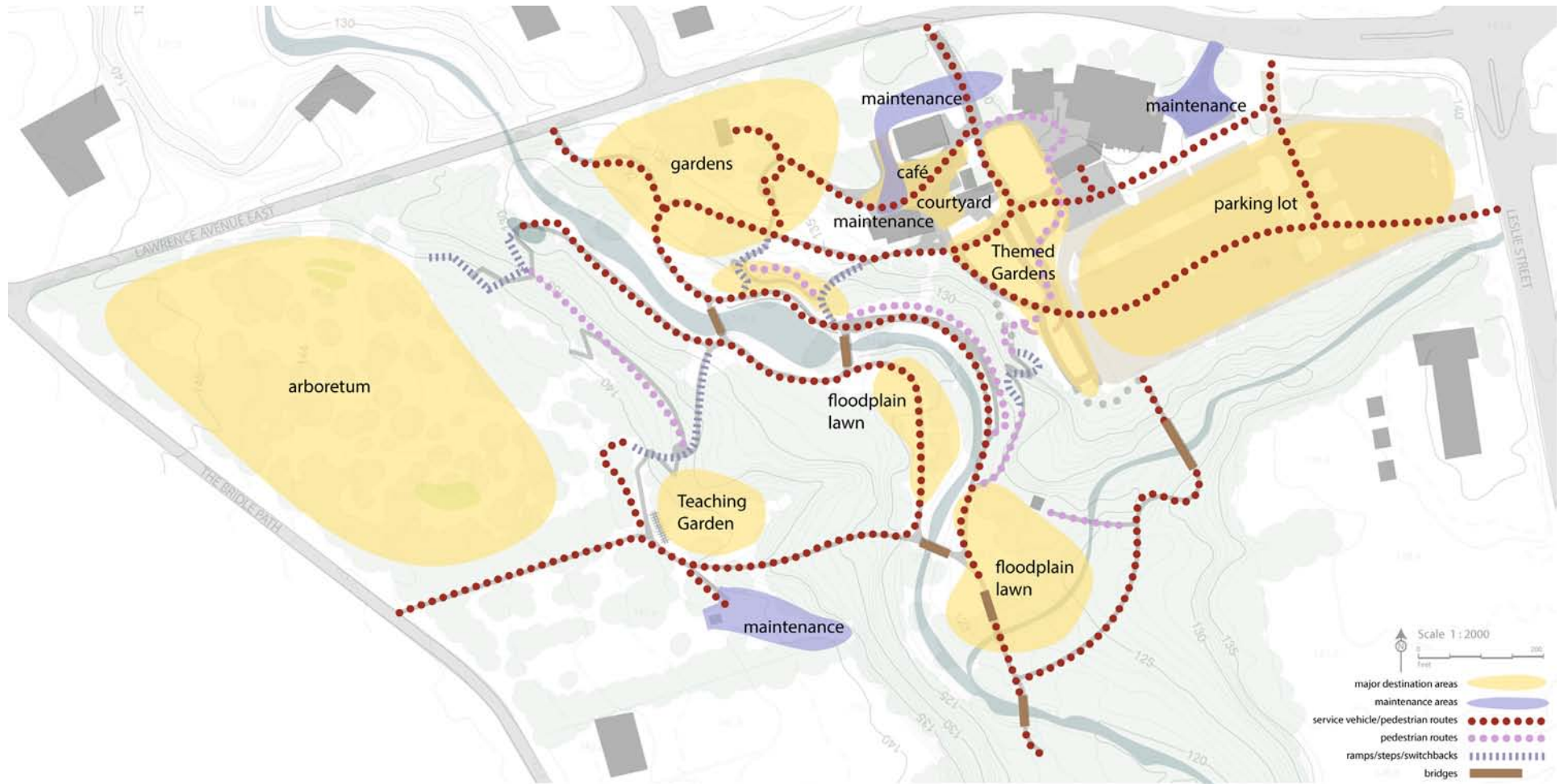
Visitor Circulation

Visitor orientation and circulation patterns require an extensive overhaul throughout the site. Poor hierarchy in path widths and a lack of clear directional signage make navigating the site confusing, especially for first-time visitors. Mobility-impaired visitors find much of the site difficult or impossible to navigate. Many paved surfaces are in disrepair, some to the degree that they have become difficult and even unsafe to traverse. Lack of separation between pathways for pedestrians and service vehicles is inconvenient for both, and unsafe for visitors.



The central maintenance facility is in direct conflict with the area around the barn and café. Access for wedding photography – a favorite activity – is difficult. Stairways are in serious disrepair. Access to the Visitor Centre is safe and convenient, although the entrance to the gardens is poorly defined.





Existing signage
does not facilitate
enjoyment of the site.

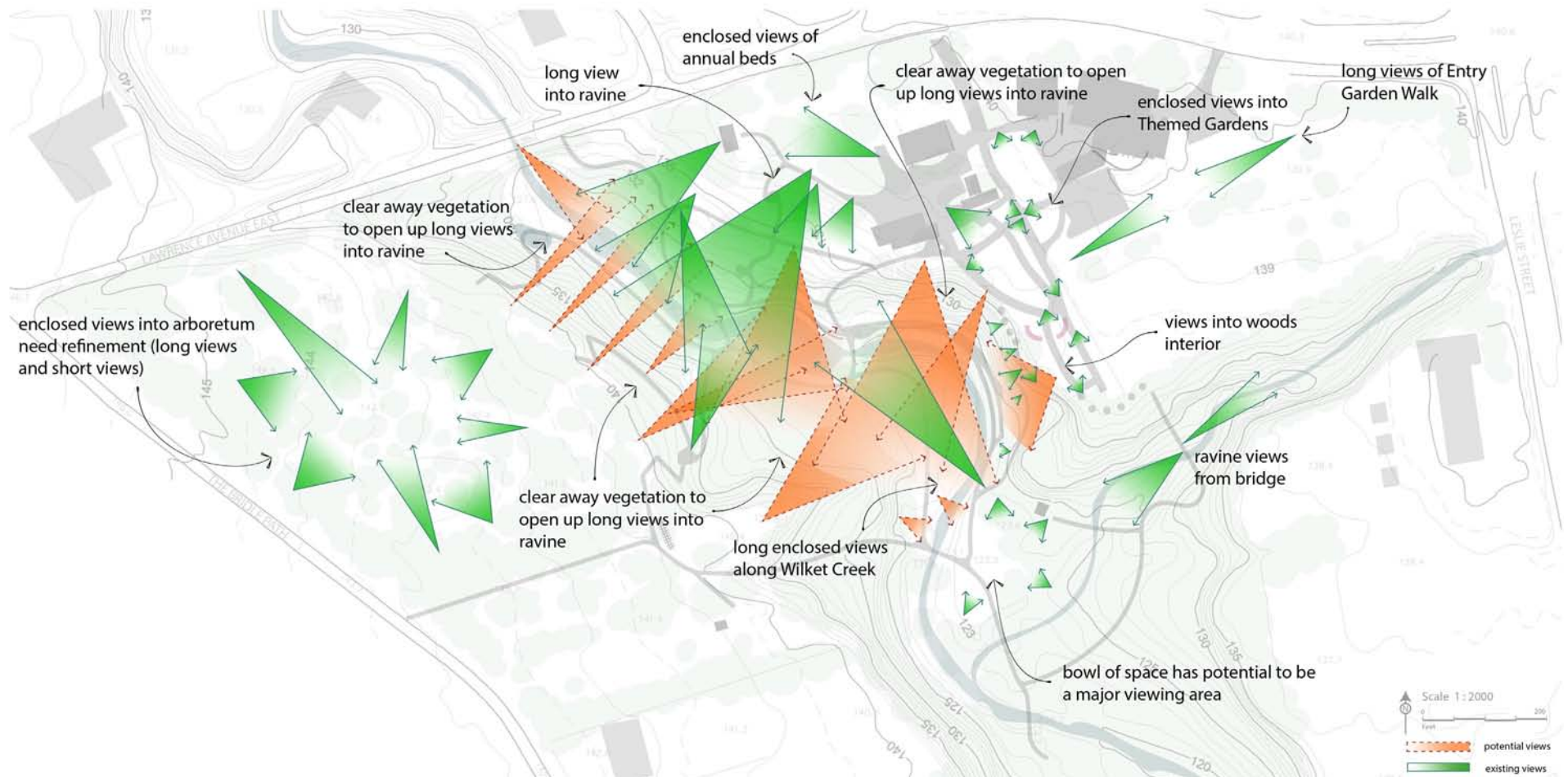
Views & Vistas

The majority of high quality views are contained within and seen from the eastern tablelands. The western tablelands, on the other hand, contain several potential long views down into the ravine that are blocked by dense vegetation. On the floodplain, interior views up and down Wilket Creek are obscured by disorganized and shrubby growth.



Many of the benches throughout the site are oriented poorly and do not take advantage of existing high quality views.

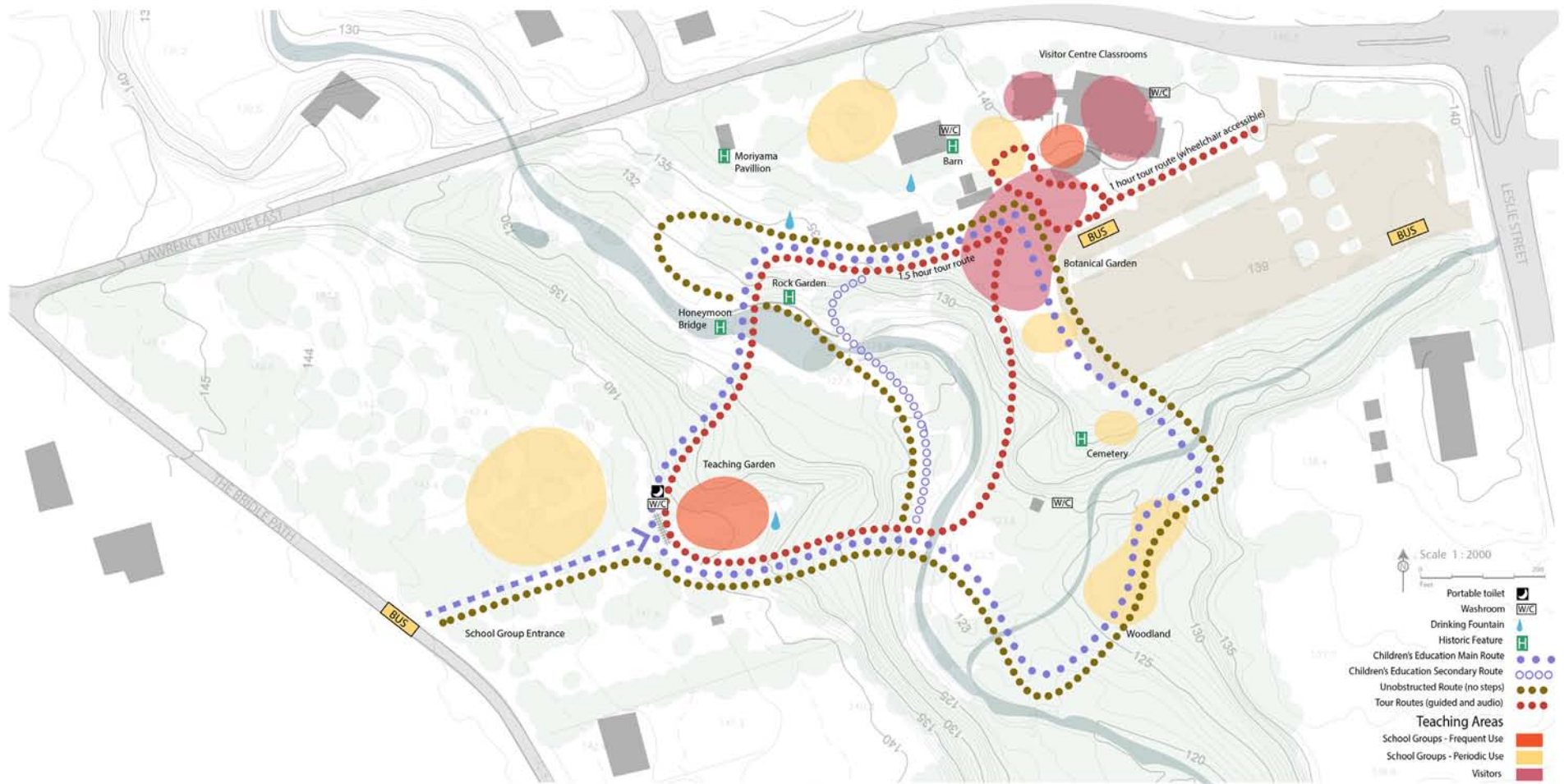




There are several spaces throughout the site that have great potential to be major viewing areas.

Educational Programming (Existing)

Existing educational programming in the garden is robust, active, and successful. The Visitor Centre classrooms and the Teaching Garden are the two primary locations for educational activities. Secondary teaching areas include the Themed Gardens, western tablelands, an area near the cemetery, and the woodland adjacent to a washroom building down in the floodplain. Bus drop-offs are currently located in front of the Visitor Centre, at the entrance of the parking lot, and along the Bridle Path at the western entrance to the site. There are drinking fountains in multiple locations: the Teaching Garden, the barn, and along the walkway below the Moriyama Pavilion.





The audience is composed of school groups, and groups of adults and families. Of the several tour routes that are used for education, there is a complete loop that begins and ends at the Visitor Centre, a wheelchair accessible loop that passes through the whole site, and several secondary routes that filter through areas such as the tablelands, floodplains, and Entry Gardens adjacent to the Visitor Centre.



Built Elements

There is a confusing diversity of built elements throughout the site, including benches, paving, walls, and stairways. Many of these features are in poor condition.



Benches



Paving



Walls



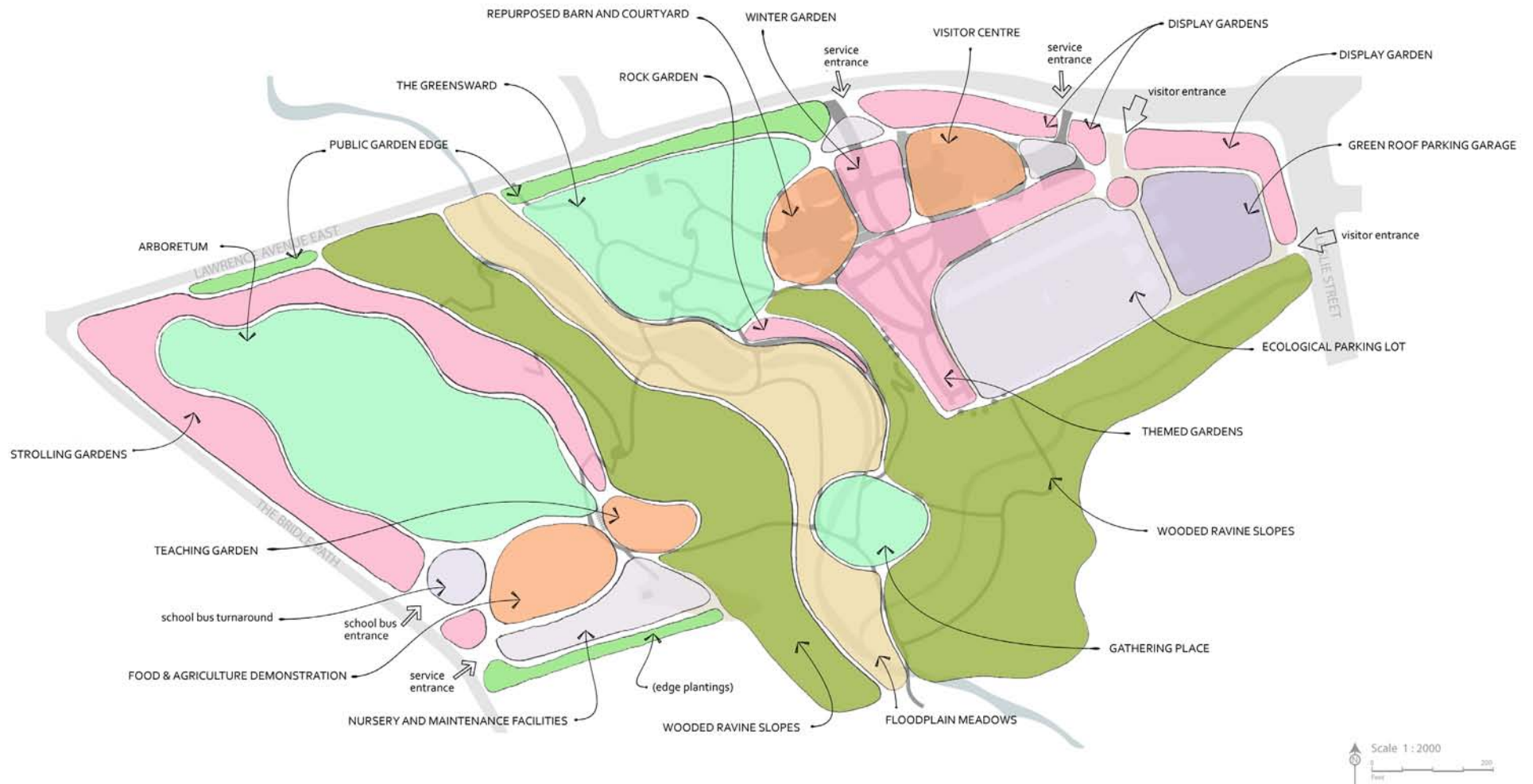
Stairs

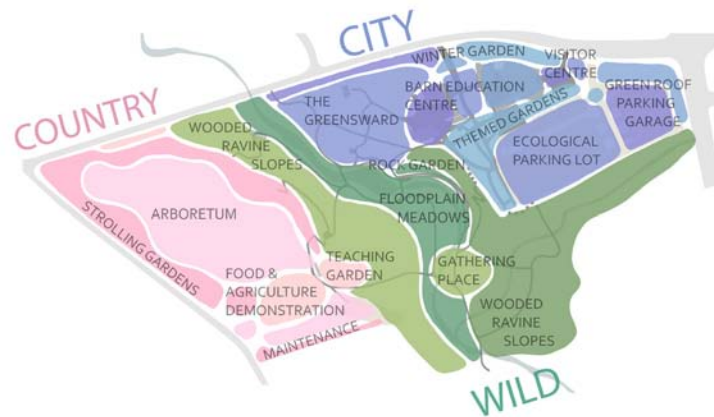
SECTION 2

PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Integrated Conceptual Proposal Map





The overall site would be divided into three zones, each with distinct character and theme: City, Country and Wild.

Country

ARBORETUM

- apply collections policy criteria to the maintenance and preservation of woody specimens and species
- redefine as an event space
- renovate lawns

STROLLING GARDENS

- relocate horticultural plantings from floodplain
- create visual screening along road edges

TEACHING GARDEN

- accommodate school groups and summer camps
- location for staff-directed programming and activities
- construct new permanent washrooms

FOOD & AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION

- illustrate the story of food production in Canada

NURSERY AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

- provide storage for maintenance vehicles and materials
- develop nursery production facilities
- include staff facilities (washrooms, lunchroom, etc.)

Wild

WOODED RAVINE SLOPES

- remove invasive/exotic species
- develop healthy, ecologically resilient woodlands
- improve stormwater management
- restore soils

GATHERING PLACE

- upgrade existing washroom building
- construct retractable stage for educational and cultural programming
- renovate existing lawn
- enrich edge plantings

FLOODPLAIN MEADOWS

- develop native wildflower/wildlife habitat
- reduce mowed lawn areas
- relocate horticultural plantings to the arboretum area
- make visitor accessways safer and more convenient

City

THE GREENSWARD

- restore Moriyama Pavilion
- create an outdoor ceremonial space
- restore/replace existing water feature

ROCK GARDEN

- restore rockwork and plantings
- improve visitor access

REPURPOSED BARN AND COURTYARD

- provide facilities for children's education, special events, and exhibitions
- new Nature Education Centre

WINTER GARDEN

- include winter displays and programming

VISITOR CENTRE

- develop as major location for adult education
- provide space for meetings and conferences
- enhance library
- relocate Garden Café and outdoor dining
- relocate Garden Shop
- expand rental facilities within footprint
- accommodate administrative offices

DISPLAY GARDENS

- develop additional plant collections and display areas
- feature more native plants

GREEN ROOF PARKING GARAGE

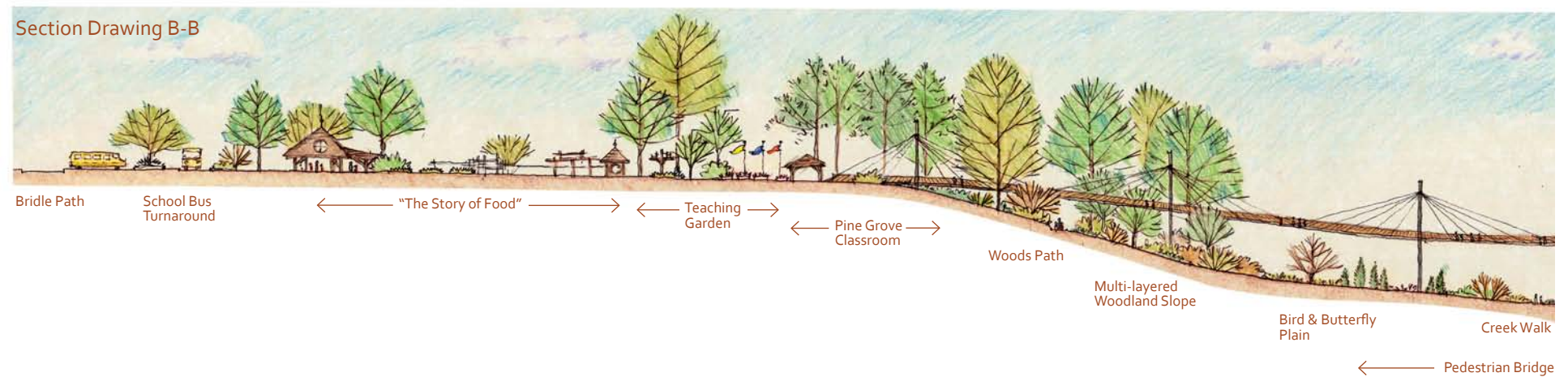
- develop an ecological roof garden
- provide stormwater catchment
- maintain a low profile: maximum two stories above ground

ECOLOGICAL PARKING LOT

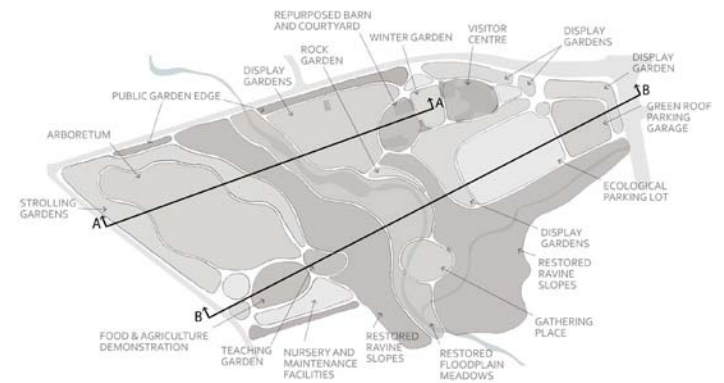
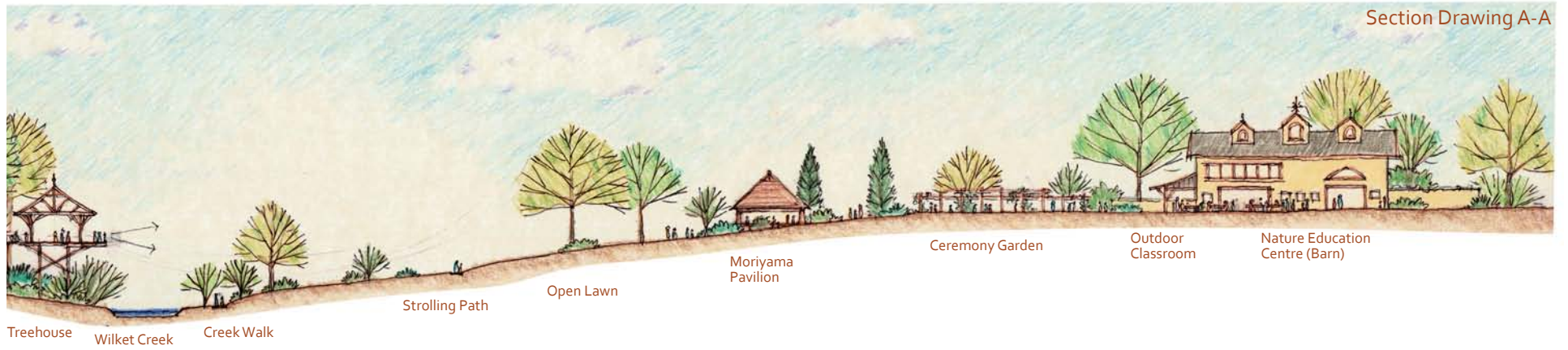
- enhance median plantings

THEMED GARDENS

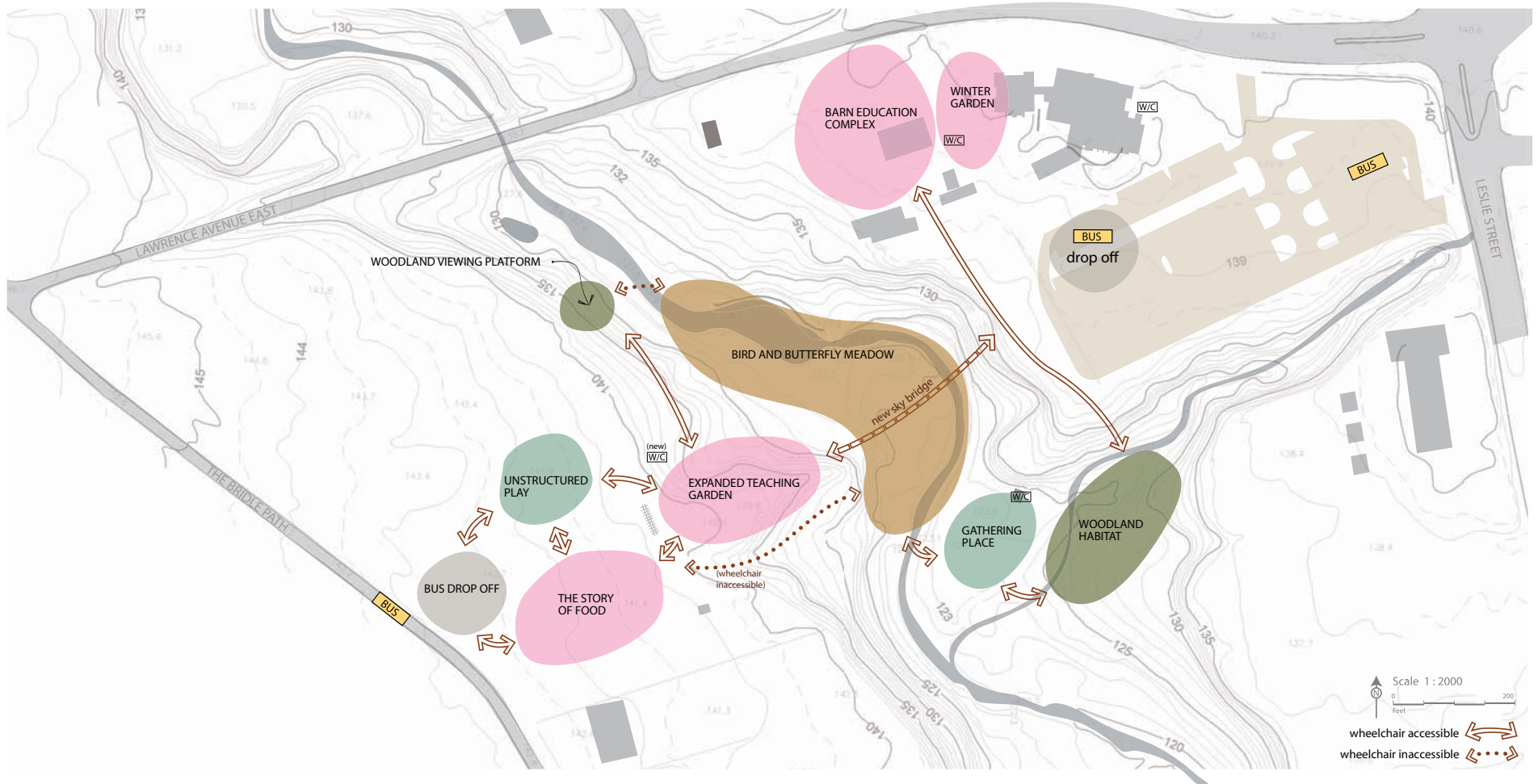
- reorganize and refine existing gardens



Integration of Edwards Gardens within Toronto Botanical Garden will provide significant opportunities for restoring and enhancing the site. Active garden spaces are proposed on the tablelands, while natural habitats would be emphasized along the ravine's wooded slopes and floodplains. These drawings show how new features and existing destinations can be connected and integrated from the west side of the ravine to the east. Existing features to be improved would include spaces on the western tablelands, woodland slopes, Moriyama Pavilion, Visitor Centre, and Display Gardens. The most dramatic proposed new features are the pedestrian bridge spanning the ravine, The Story of Food exhibit, and the Eco-Garage and Wildlife Roof Garden. Other significant new features include the Treehouse, the Ceremony Garden, and the Nature Education Centre in the existing barn.



Education: School Groups





WOODLAND HABITAT

- enrich natural habitat for woodland birds and animals
- focus on native plant associations
- restore soils and control erosion

GATHERING PLACE

- renew existing washroom facilities, adding retractable stage for educational and cultural programming
- make places for groups to gather and begin structured activities
- develop active play area

EXPANDED TEACHING GARDEN

- provide guided horticultural programs
- expand outdoor classroom
- focus on garden themes that appeal to children

THE STORY OF FOOD

- tell the story of food production in Canada for school groups and families

WOODLAND VIEWING PLATFORM

- provide views across Wilket Creek
- provide educational programming for woodland gardening



BIRD AND BUTTERFLY MEADOW

- develop habitat for birds and butterflies
- include native wetland and streamside plants

BUS DROP OFF

- remove buses from Bridle Path to within the gates
- provide safe access for school groups

UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

- provide space to release excess energy from bus ride
- create an active play space
- make places for groups to gather and begin structured activities

WINTER GARDEN

- focus on winter activities
- teach about gardening for winter interest



BARN EDUCATION COMPLEX

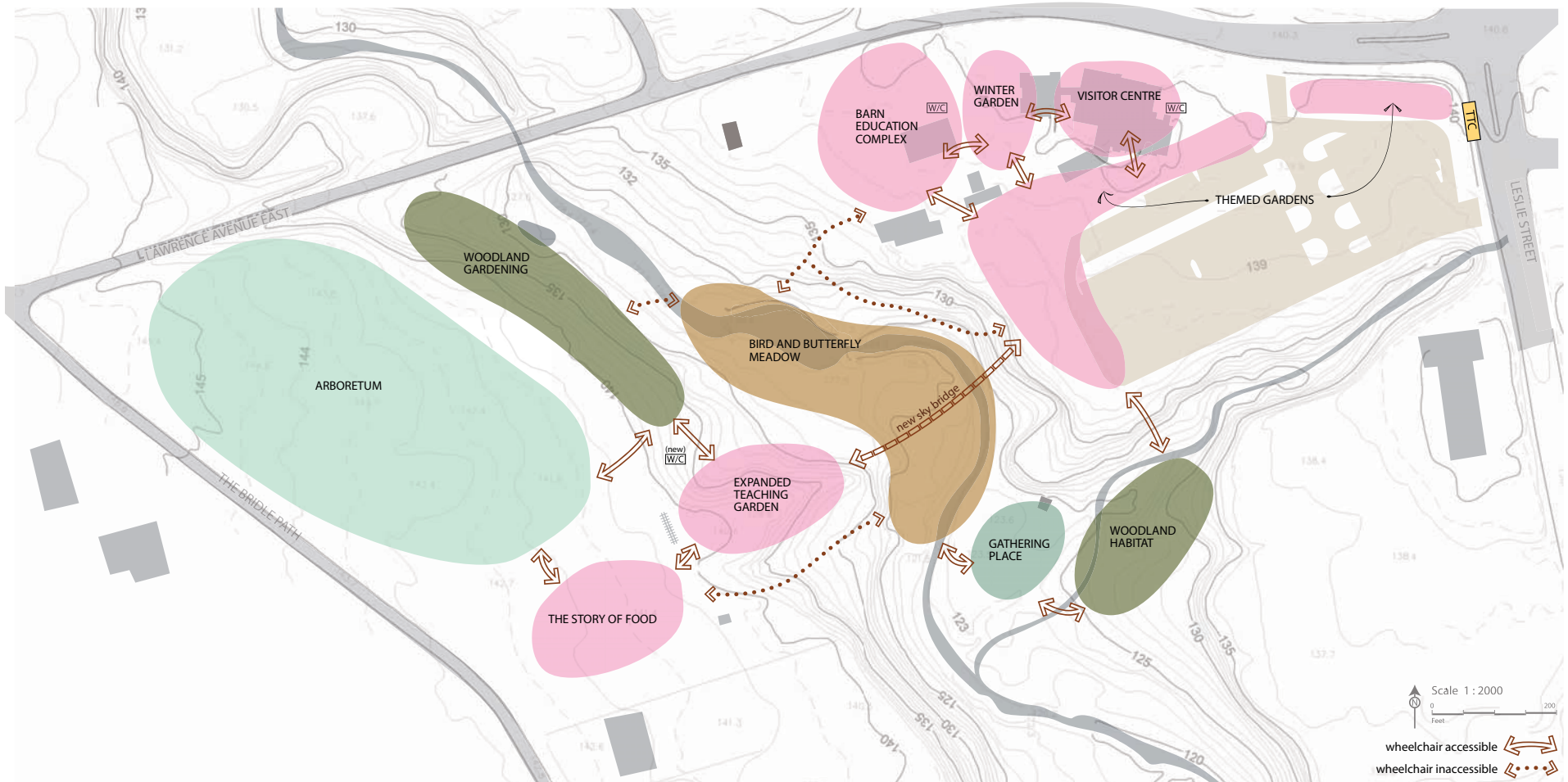
- relocate Children's Education Centre from the Visitor Centre to the barn
- develop outdoor classrooms
- provide indoor exhibit space
- feature an urban kitchen garden
- focus on multicultural food plants
- provide storage for educational materials and for special events



Existing educational programming at Toronto Botanical Garden is highly successful, and there is a growing need for more. The primary factor limiting its expansion is physical space. The Story of Food, illustrated below, is an example of a major new educational feature that could be used for school groups as well as families.



Education: Adults & Families



BARN EDUCATION COMPLEX

- develop major new classrooms
- provide for special events
- create space for changing exhibits
- develop urban kitchen garden
- focus on multicultural food plants
- provide new outdoor classrooms
- include storage for educational materials

VISITOR CENTRE

- facilitate visitor orientation
- relocate Café
- relocate Garden Shop
- enhance library
- provide beginning point for guided and audio tours

THEMED GARDENS

- continue to enrich existing exhibits
- clarify visitor entrance
- focus on native and non-native plants while avoiding invasive species

WOODLAND HABITAT

- develop natural habitat for woodland birds and animals
- focus on native plant associations
- restore soils and control erosion

GATHERING PLACE

- renew existing washroom facilities, adding retractable stage for educational and cultural programming
- provide map for visitor orientation

EXPANDED TEACHING GARDEN

- create interpretive displays for self-directed education
- provide guided horticultural programs
- create outdoor classroom

ARBORETUM

- display trees, shrubs, and ground covers for home use
- incorporate native and non-native plants while avoiding non-native invasive species
- demonstrate environmentally sound practices

WOODLAND GARDENING

- demonstrate ecological gardening for ravine edges and wooded slopes
- focus on horticultural design
- include native and non-native plants, while avoiding non-native invasive species
- improve soil, control erosion

WINTER GARDEN

- emphasize gardening for winter interest

THE STORY OF FOOD

- tell the story of food production in Canada

BIRD AND BUTTERFLY MEADOW

- develop habitat for birds, butterflies, and pollinators
- feature native wetland and streamside plants



Vegetation

- revitalize the densely wooded slopes leading down to the creek
- create a resilient ecosystem in the floodplain
- edit the invasive vegetation that has flourished along the creek edges
- establish design continuity between eastern and western table lands

Views & Vistas

- open up long views into the ravine from both sides
- improve major viewing areas such as clearings along the floodplain
- refine views within and into the western tablelands
- relocate benches throughout the site, improving access as well as views





Precedent studies from other public landscapes.

Circulation

- make the site more accessible for mobility-impaired visitors
- reorganize path hierarchy according to function and frequency of use
- create clear distinction between pedestrian and service vehicle pathways
- unify paving types across site
- repair pathways that are in poor condition
- institute a clear directional signage program





Precedent studies
from other public
landscapes.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the process of creating these Integrated Conceptual Proposals for the Toronto Botanical Garden.

Integrated Conceptual Proposals Committee, Toronto Botanical Garden

- Harry Jongerden, Executive Director
- Paul Zammit, Director of Horticulture
- Liz Hood, Director of Education

TBG RFP Committee

- Allan Kling, Board President and Co-Chair
- Colomba Fuller, Director
- (and the above TBG staff)

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- Richard Ubbens, Director, Parks
- Michael Schreiner, Director, Parks Development and Infrastructure
- Garth Armour, Manager, Horticulture and Greenhouse Operations
- Bob Crump, Manager, North York District
- Roger Macklin, General Supervisor, North York Parks

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

- Brian Denney, CEO
- Adele Freeman, Director, Watershed Management
- Carolyn Woodland, Director, Planning and Development
- Patricia Newland, Supervisor, Project Planning and Monitoring
- Arlen Leeming, Project Manager, Don & Highland Watersheds



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