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**TRANSFORMATIONAL \$35 MILLION GIFT FROM THE WOLFE FAMILY WILL REVIVE
ICONIC PALM HOUSE AT THE CONSERVATORY**

Columbus, OH – Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens announced a landmark philanthropic gift from the Wolfe family that will restore and enhance the historic architectural icon intended to delight visitors. This anchor project is the central feature of the ambitious North Star Master Plan, revealed May 2024, designed to elevate the Conservatory to international prominence as a premier botanical garden destination.

The gift, the largest in the Conservatory’s history, and one of the largest to an arts and culture organization in Columbus, will launch a full renovation of the John F. Wolfe Palm House—named in 2008 to recognize John’s leadership in past restoration efforts.

The Palm House and connecting Dorothy M. Davis Showhouse are the oldest portions of the Conservatory. Built in 1895 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1974, they are one of only six remaining Victorian-era glass houses in the U.S. The project scope addresses both buildings and the surrounding Wolfe Terrace, each home to hundreds of events and community gatherings, each year. Renovations to the Palm House are included as part of the North Star Master Plan, ensuring this historic centerpiece continues to welcome visitors for generations to come.

Leveraging the Conservatory’s historic foundations, after two years of community research and visioning, the North Star Master Plan outlines more than 15 transformational projects to enhance the visitor experience and foster stronger collaboration with Columbus Recreation and Parks across the shared 88-acre property. With a new entrance and visitor center and six acres of immersive gardens surrounding the Palm House, the plan could triple the Conservatory’s economic impact and jobs.

“Supporting the Conservatory through this evolutionary period is both a privilege and a continuation of our family’s nearly century-long commitment,” said Ann Wolfe. “We hope this gift serves as a catalyst for the Conservatory’s bold vision, positioning it among America’s top public gardens.”

For more than a century, the Wolfe family has shaped Columbus through journalism, civic leadership, and philanthropy. As longtime publishers of The Columbus Dispatch, they coupled their role in the city’s public life with an exemplary commitment to giving. Their leadership and

generosity have strengthened not only the Conservatory but also the Columbus Zoo, and other cultural institutions, helping shape the city's identity as a community engagement hub.

"The Wolfe family's enduring friendship and support is a gift to Columbus," said Bruce Harkey, president and CEO of the Conservatory. "Their generosity will nurture the development of an expansive urban oasis here. By investing in the Conservatory, the Wolfe family is driving a great civic endeavor, one that benefits current residents, embraces newcomers and welcomes visitors from all walks of life."

The Wolfe family's commitment to the Conservatory also spans nearly nine decades. Their involvement began with Harry P. Wolfe's creative "zookeeping" at the Conservatory in the late 1920s and continued through leadership in creating the beloved Hat Day fundraising event and spearheading the acquisition of the Dale Chihuly art glass collection.

Community excitement for assets like the Chihuly collection and the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden have elevated the Conservatory's ability to serve the community through significant gains in membership and annual attendance revenue. As a result, the Conservatory's commitment to community access through innovative programs like Community Days and participation in Museums for All has dramatically expanded free and reduced-price admissions—growing from just 2% in 2017 to 25% of total attendance in 2024.

The Palm House, Showhouse, and Wolfe Terrace renovations will begin January 5, 2026. The restored Palm House, Showhouse, and Wolfe Terrace will be unveiled in the summer of 2027. Renovation highlights of the Palm House include:

- A return to the elegant Victorian-era curved glass panels, approved by the State Historic Preservation Office and a 1,000% increase in ventilation
- Energy-efficient upgrades, including tinted glass, environmental and lighting controls, and lighter structural materials
- An expertly curated collection of nearly 50 unique palms from around the world
- Improved accessibility throughout the space and to the Wolfe Terrace, featuring a curved bridge
- Preservation of the more than 100-year-old fiddle-leaf fig tree and expanded permanent planting beds, elegant water features, and enhanced guest seating

Beyond the arts, the Wolfes have made substantial contributions to health care, education, and community well-being. Their support has advanced Columbus Zoo, Nationwide Children's Hospital, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and numerous civic organizations.

For more information and updates on the Conservatory, please visit [fpconservatory.org](https://www.fpconservatory.org) or follow the Conservatory on [Facebook](#), or [Instagram](#).

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Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens offers world-class horticulture, art and nature-based exhibitions, and educational programs for all ages. Situated on 40 acres on the eastern side of Franklin Park, the Conservatory features the historic 1895 John F. Wolfe Palm House; 83,000 square feet of glasshouses; botanical gardens including the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden; and meeting and event spaces. The Conservatory owns the largest collection of glass artwork by Dale Chihuly in a botanical garden and is home to internationally recognized light artist James Turrell's Light Raiment II, which illuminates the John F. Wolfe Palm House every evening from dusk until dawn.

