

## Santa Fe Botanical Garden is an oasis on the horizon

### Nonprofit unveils its vision for \$7.5 million project on Museum Hill

By Shaun Griswold | The New Mexican

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Photo by: [Clyde Mueller/The New Mexican](#)

Gary Smith designed the Santa Fe Botanical Garden at Museum Hill with an artist's cognizance.

"I like to say the garden is more like dance or more like music, in that it has rhythm and meter and it happens over time," he said. "Garden design is the slowest of the performance arts."

The landscape architect on Tuesday unveiled designs for the project, which will contain four different gardens — orchard, naturalistic, courtyard and arroyo trails — on more than 12 acres across Camino Lejo from the Museum Hill complex.

Smith, an award-winning designer, brings more than 25 years of experience to the project. He has designed gardens in Austin, Texas, New York City and Florida.

He was hired by the nonprofit group Santa Fe Botanical Garden, an organization with more than 300 volunteers that was established to promote Northern New Mexico horticulture.

Now that the five-year, \$7.5 million project has its vision, construction will start in August as volunteers and construction crews begin groundwork on the orchard, the project's first phase.

Once the project is complete, visitors will be greeted by a garden of thyme, agave and pistachios. They will walk along a path to the orchard's apple, peach, pear and cherry trees, Smith said. The project also will have a dry garden section with a goal of zero irrigation.

A Santa Fe company, Green Forward, helped choose the local plants that will go into the garden, said its owner, Tracy Neal. Decisions were based on the botanical garden's mission to provide local homeowners with ideas for building their own gardens, he said.

"We're looking for varieties that a home grower could use and not have a whole orchard to get a harvest," he said. "Varieties that are self-fertile and ripen well in our climate."

Of the \$2 million needed to complete the orchard construction, \$1.6 million has been raised by the board of directors of the Santa Fe Botanical Garden. A total of \$330,000 was appropriated for master planning through a state capital-outlay appropriation. The rest has come from private donations.

The master plans took into account lighting and noise concerns from area residents, said Cathy Kalenian, the board's vice president. "We've made a point of adhering to certain policies that make the neighborhood happy, such as no nighttime lighting and no water structures that would obstruct their views."

Also, fencing will be placed around the garden to help keep trespassers off the property after hours, which will match the museums' hours.

The second phase will involve installing Kearny's Bridge, an abandoned bridge built in 1913 in Las Vegas, N.M., that will be brought to Santa Fe and placed on a path that connects the various gardens.

The Bibb family donated the bridge, which will span an arroyo that separates the orchard and naturalistic sections. The bridge should be installed by the completion of the first phase.

Later phases will complete work on the courtyard section, which will be available to host large events, Smith said.

"It's hard for people to believe Santa Fe doesn't have a botanical garden," he said. "We will really open up Museum Hill to whole new audience."

Contact Shaun Griswold at 986-3052 or [sgriswold@sfnwmexican.com](mailto:sgriswold@sfnwmexican.com).