

Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Inc. 500 East 4th Street Fort Worth, Texas 76102

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**Botanical Research Institute of Texas Broke Ground for its \$48 Million, 69,000-Square-Foot Facility on Monday, Dec. 14, 2009; International Cultural and Scientific Center for Conservation to Seek LEED Platinum Certification**

*FORT WORTH, Texas* – The Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT), an international cultural and scientific center for conservation ([www.brit.org](http://www.brit.org)), held the ground breaking ceremony today for its \$48 million, 69,000-square-foot facility, which will be located at 1800 University Drive (at the southwest corner of Harley Avenue and University Drive) adjacent to the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

BRIT will seek the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ Platinum certification for its new facility, which would be the first at that level in Fort Worth and Tarrant County, the second in the North Texas area, and the fifth in Texas. BRIT's new home will be one of the first buildings in the region to have a “living” roof, and it will be planted with flowering plants of the Fort Worth Prairie variety suitable for the climate.

Participants in the ground breaking included Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief; Tim McKinney, chair of BRIT's Board of Trustees; Edward P. Bass, vice chair of BRIT's Board; Elaine Petrus, a Board member and head of BRIT's long-range planning committee, and S. H. Sohmer, Ph.D., director and president of BRIT. For the unique ground breaking, the participants performed the ceremonial first planting for the living roof of the new building using Little Bluestem, *Liatris aestivalis*, Seep Muhly, Scribner's Rosettegrass, and Cedar Caric Sedge, which are representative of the carefully chosen plants for the new roof. More than 200 city leaders, major donors, members of the Board, and other supporters attended the event. Guests received a memento, a flower press, which ties in with BRIT's mission.

BRIT's new home in Fort Worth's Cultural District will be built on a 5.2-acre site leased from the City of Fort Worth. H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture LLC (H3) is the design architectural firm for the project, and Balmori Associates, Inc., is the landscape design firm, both of New York. Completion is scheduled for early 2011.

“BRIT's new home will be the embodiment of BRIT's mission: to conserve our natural heritage by deepening our knowledge of the plant world and achieving public understanding of the value that plants bring to our lives,” said McKinney.

Dr. Sohmer said, “Our new facility will demonstrate our commitment to sustainable design and environmental responsibility. It will have a proper environment for our priceless herbarium and library and a fascinating atmosphere for botanical study for the researchers, educators, and the thousands of schoolchildren whom BRIT serves annually.”

The new facility will include the Suzanne Rall Peacock Learning Center, a new program endowed by The Rainwater Charitable Foundation— and named in memory of its late executive director— for educators to learn how to teach their students about conservation and nature.

## **About the Building's Configuration**

BRIT's new building will be organized into two parts. The Archives Block will house BRIT's herbarium in a two-story, 20,000-square-foot, climate-controlled space, with the remaining 5,000 square feet for research and BRIT's library. This volume of space will be constructed of tilt-up concrete and partially topped with a solar-paneled roof. The 44,000-square-foot Think Block for the education, exhibit, and administrative areas will be filled with natural light through floor-to-ceiling glass on the north façade. The design allows for future expansion of 15,000 square feet. The living roof will cover the Think Block.

## **About the Landscape Plan**

Highlights of the working landscape include the living roof, overlapping vines of the region to cover the walls of BRIT's herbarium, and a parking lot with water-cleaning plants. An integration of landscape and parking occurs with the design of planted research fields within the parking bays. The roof, walls, and braided pathways will showcase some of BRIT's areas of research as well as floral representatives of the Fort Worth Prairie such as Mealy sage (*Salvia farinacea*), Purple-fruit prickly pear (*Opuntia phaeacantha*), Narrow leaf gayfeather (*Liatris mucronata*), Indian Blanket (*Galliardia pulchella*), and Penstemon (*Penstemon triflorus*).

## **The Living Roof**

An extensive living roof system will be installed for the BRIT facility. Living roofs offer significant climate regulation for buildings and, through the absorption of solar energy, help to mitigate a site's heat-island effect. The living roof will improve the sustainability of the project and will serve as an educational tool for BRIT.

## **Braided Pathways**

A braided landscape system made up of paths, water, and a shady walkway lined with trees will create a cool, welcoming environment. While one main path will provide access from BRIT to the lecture hall of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden (FWBG), another will wind toward the Garden's entry. Concrete pavers and crushed limestone will differentiate the two paths as they wind together toward BRIT's entry. Secondary braids of gravel will lead to views of special small-scale areas. The wider path will move through the lobby and exhibit area of BRIT's facility, winding through the planted Fort Worth Prairie on the north side of the facility.

The children's classroom door will open to a path leading to an outdoor classroom located south of the BRIT facility. Plants and colorful flowers will surround the winding path leading to a grass oval where students will gather for activities. The geological strata of the Fort Worth Prairie of thin limestone and sand will be recast as a set of ledges for outdoor seating.

## **About LEED Certification**

The U.S. Green Building Council developed the LEED rating system to encourage and accelerate global adoption of sustainable green building practices by creating a recognized standard for measuring building sustainability. The system offers four certification levels for new construction, Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, which correspond to the number of credits earned in five categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. To meet LEED Platinum certification, BRIT's building and landscape features will include both a living roof and walls and a solar-paneled roof, which are

described above, energy conservation, bio-based materials, reduced site disturbance, and storm water management.

To conserve energy, the building's geothermal system will use the constant temperature characteristics of the earth as heat sink in summertime and heat source in wintertime. The energy model for the BRIT building shows significant savings in energy use compared to a baseline of a building with a typical commercial heating and cooling system. The environmental benefits of this include reduced loads on energy-generating plants and therefore reduced emissions.

Bio-based materials including bamboo ceilings, cork wall coverings, and wool carpets will be used in various parts of the design.

In order to achieve one of the LEED goals, a large portion, approximately 93.4 percent, of the materials that have been removed from the site (steel beams, joists and decking, aluminum, concrete, and brick asphalt) will be recycled and used in a land reclamation. This recycling greatly reduces the amount of materials to be disposed of in a landfill and reduces the demand for virgin materials. The reduction in the environmental impact associated with the resource extraction and processing will make it possible in turn to extend the lifetime of existing landfills and avoid the need for expansion into valuable green space. To further reduce site disturbance, the building has been carefully sited to preserve as many existing trees as possible.

A shared parking arrangement with the FWBG will allow for flexible use of parking spaces to minimize the parking areas. The existing parking lot will be augmented and redesigned to serve both BRIT and the FWBG; its 266 parking spaces will include the 126 existing FWBG spaces and an additional 140 BRIT spaces for visitors and staff. The storm water management system will direct water to flow across pervious paving in sidewalks to "rain gardens" between the parking spaces. The rain gardens, filled with native plants with low water demands, will gather, filter, and reuse rainwater for watering. They will overflow to a retention pond, which will be the source of water for irrigation. Rainwater is also collected off of roof areas and channeled to the pond. The pond is topped up during dry periods using ground water from a well that taps into an underground stream.

### **The Consultants**

In addition to H3 and Balmori Associates, consultants include Corgan Associates, Inc., the architect of record, Dallas; The Beck Group, the construction manager at risk, Fort Worth; L. A. Fuess Partners, the structural engineer, Dallas; Hart, Gaugler & Associates, the civil engineer, Dallas; Summit Consultants, the mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer, Fort Worth; the Green Team, LEED consultant, Tulsa; and The Projects Group, the owner's representative, of Fort Worth.

### **BRIT's Capital Campaign**

A team of community leaders, headed by Judith Sear, has organized a capital campaign steering committee to raise \$48 million: \$35.5 million to fund the construction of BRIT's new home and \$12.5 million to fund an endowment for maintenance, capital improvements, and the Suzanne Rall Peacock Learning Center. To date the committee has raised \$42,528,000 or 89 percent of the \$48 million goal. Mr. Bass is the honorary chair, and members of the committee in addition to Mrs. Sear are Jeffrey P. Fegan, Darlene Mann, Mr. McKinney, Therese Moncrief, Stephen Murrin III, Mary G. Palko, and Rosalyn Rosenthal.

## **About BRIT**

The mission of BRIT is to conserve our natural heritage by deepening our knowledge of the plant world and achieving public understanding of the value that plants bring to life. BRIT fosters respect for ecological balance and the interconnectedness of all living things, the conservation of biological diversity, the integrity of scientific investigation and intellectual pursuits, and the desire to discover the unknown to expand humankind's knowledge and understanding of plants in our natural environment.

Opened to the public in 1991, BRIT has one of the largest herbaria in the United States, the largest independent herbarium in the Southwest, and one of the world's best collections of Texas plant specimens. Its herbarium contains more than one million dried plant specimens representing most of the Earth's plant families. Its 100,000-volume library includes books, periodicals, and journals from more than 100 countries. The basis for BRIT's herbarium and library is the Lloyd H. Shoiners Collection in Systematic Botany, which is on permanent loan to BRIT from Southern Methodist University, where it originated in 1943. BRIT's staff has conducted extensive research in Texas, much of North America, and in the tropical rainforests of the Philippines and Costa Rica. Currently the staff is studying the flora/fauna connection in the rainforests and tracking the diversity of and identifying new plant species in Peru and Papua New Guinea.

At its Fort Worth headquarters, BRIT's staff presents workshops and educational programs and provides consultation to vineyard owners, ranchers, veterinarians, farmers, research scientists, students, teachers, artists, plant enthusiasts, homeowners, gardeners, lawyers, physicians, businesses, government agencies, museums, schools, arboreta, hospitals, and poison control centers.

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