



The Economic and Tourism Case

A garden that draws about 275,000 visits a year, and sends most of their spending into downtown Boulder.

Boulder's visitor market is already large

3.3M

Visitor-days a year in Boulder

1.2M+

Visitors to downtown each year

\$999M

Visitor spending in Boulder County (2022)

41%

Of downtown visitors from out of state (summer 2024)

Out-of-state visitors spend nearly double per visit downtown what locals spend. The garden needs only about 4% of Boulder's visitor-days to reach its base case.

Expected visits

VISITOR GROUP	LOW	BASE	HIGH
Boulder County residents	90,000	105,000	120,000
Rest of Colorado	50,000	55,000	60,000
Out of state and international	60,000	90,000	120,000
Core visits	200,000	250,000	300,000
With CU families, Folsom Field concerts and Sundance	212,000	275,000	337,000

What it returns

MEASURE	ESTIMATE	BASIS
Garden revenue	\$7.5M–\$9.5M a year	Business plan, across visitor scenarios
Spending in Boulder's economy	\$13.5M–\$31.3M a year (base case)	Olbrich (\$54 per visit) to Coastal Maine (\$125 per visit)
State and local taxes	About \$0.9M a year	At Olbrich's rate per visit
Jobs	50–60 staff; about 100 supported	Business plan; Olbrich's jobs per visit

What the research shows

- **Public money returns several times over.** Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus returns \$3.50 for every public dollar, and \$10.17 in local output for every dollar of City operating support.
- **Visitors spend outside the gate.** In Philadelphia, non-local garden visitors spend about \$391 per trip. At Coastal Maine, \$5.8 million a year goes to restaurants and \$3.1 million to lodging.
- **Gardens create trips.** About 45% of surveyed Olbrich visitors traveled to Madison specifically to see the garden.
- **Tourism is the lever.** Each percentage point of out-of-state visitors adds about \$1 million a year in output at Franklin Park.

One downtown, two districts

The garden gives downtown a second district: Pearl Street for shopping, dining and coffee, and a Creekside District for the garden, the Creek Path, the library, the Farmers Market and the Dushanbe Teahouse. A few minutes' walk apart, they turn a short stop into a full day, and spending flows both ways. The City is already seeking a partner to make the Civic Area's East Bookend a year-round destination; the garden anchors the creek's other end.

Built for Boulder's calendar

- **Sundance:** 86,000–125,000 attendees a year arrive each late January, when the Conservatory and Festival of Lights are built to draw them.
- **Folsom Field:** stadium concerts bring 100,000–150,000 tickets in a big year; multi-night fans have free days.
- **CU families:** 13,592 out-of-state undergraduates bring families for move-in, Family Weekend and commencement, outside the summer peak.
- **After graduation,** when Visit Boulder says a third of the city leaves, the garden's summer concerts and festivals keep visitors coming.

THE ASK

Write a letter of support, share your visitor data, and help fund a feasibility study, ideally an independent economic impact study by CU's Leeds Business Research Division.

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BoulderBotanicalGardens.org

Sources: Visit Boulder; Colorado OEDIT and Dean Runyan, 2022; Downtown Boulder Partnership, 2024 Intercept Survey; Olbrich economic study, 2025; MaineBiz on Coastal Maine, 2022; Franklin Park Conservatory Economic Impact Study, 2026; Econsult, Greater Philadelphia Gardens, 2016; WKOW; Visit Boulder, Sundance; Folsom Field (Wikipedia; Denver7); University of Colorado, Fall 2026 enrollment; City of Boulder, Civic Area partnership, 2026; Boulder Botanical Gardens Visitor Report and Business Plan, October 2026. All projections are planning estimates.