



## OCT. 2024 - FEB. 2025 Request for Proposals

The University of Texas at Austin's Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center seeks proposals from creative individuals, groups, firms and students to design, construct and display forts as part of its recurring temporary outdoor exhibit Fortlandia. Forts should inspire an appreciation of our natural environment through innovative and sustainable designs, materials and construction, while evoking childhood memories of escaping into nature to build structures and play with friends.

### **ABOUT THE WILDFLOWER CENTER**

The Wildflower Center is the Botanic Garden of Texas and is dedicated to inspiring the conservation of native plants. Founded in 1982, it is one of the leading voices for native plants and sustainable landscapes in the country and welcomes more than 246,000 guests annually. Its 4.5-acre Luci and Ian Family Garden opened in 2014 to connect children and families to the natural world by providing interactive and educational features, emphasizing natural materials.

### **EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION**

Many children grow up exploring the outdoors and using their sense of imagination to build forts using found and gathered materials. Fortlandia seeks to tap into those memories and bring to life forts of all kinds. Fort designers and builders will be evaluated by a jury of professionals. Seven forts will be selected for inclusion in the exhibition.

#### **Winning designs will:**

- Gracefully integrate into the Center's varied landscapes
- Inspire playful interaction and provoke the imagination
- Promote sustainability through the use of sustainable products and locally-sourced, recycled, and repurposed materials
- Inspire interaction with nature and the environment
- Be structurally sound, safe and resilient to weather, climbing and other high impact activity

### **KEY MESSAGES**

#### **The Wildflower Center would like to convey the following messages with this exhibition:**

- To create emotional souvenirs through the interaction with forts created with natural materials and inspired by childhood memories.
- To inspire children and their families to explore their environment.
- To highlight environmentally responsible designs and materials and how they relate to the landscape.
- To create nostalgia for childhood time spent exploring and building forts.

## **EXHIBITION OBJECTIVES**

- Engage people's sense of adventure and imagination by seeing forts as a special place to celebrate plants, wildlife and nature.
- Demonstrate how the built environment can complement the landscape.
- Create and promote partnerships with architects, students, artists, designers/builders and cultural organizations.
- Increase awareness and understanding of public art, architecture and design.
- Provide a showcase for local, regional and national designers, groups and firms.

## **STIPEND AND RECOGNITION**

Selected designers will receive a \$20,000 stipend for exhibiting their work for the duration of the show. A third (34%) of the stipend is awarded upon signing the Exhibitor Agreement, a third (33%) is awarded after installation is satisfactorily completed and the remainder (33%) once the fort is removed upon completion of the exhibition. All structures must be completed prior to the exhibition opening in October 2024 and remain displayed through February 2025. Before any payments are processed, all designers must be set up as vendors with The University of Texas at Austin (Center staff will assist with this process).

Fort designers & builders will be listed in printed exhibition materials, on exhibition panels and in other appropriate media. All designers & builders will be provided a code for 20 free passes to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center during the exhibition.

## **SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

To ensure the highest quality exhibition, designs will be chosen by a panel of jurors which includes architects, arborists, landscape architects, engineers, playground risk assessors and child behavior specialists. Judges will rate each fort based on the overall design, connection to the theme, materials, impact on the environment, safety and durability. Chosen fort builders will work closely with Wildflower Center during the construction, installation and removal process.

### **Please consider the following criteria for the design:**

- Incorporation of native plant materials and native plant themes
- Connection to themes of childhood, nature and sustainability
- Engaging for the entire family
- Encourages imaginary play, inviting children to imagine they are completing grown-up tasks
- Ideal forts can be crawled through, played around and climbed upon safely (up to, but no higher than, 6 feet by children and adults)
- Site-specific integration
- Durability of structure for weather and heavy use by children and adults (Designers are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of their forts)
- Creative use of materials that have minimal impact on the environment (e.g. recyclable, not adding to the waste stream, etc.)
- ALL forts must be built modularly (Built in pieces and assembled on site)

- ALL forts must be free standing (No anchors can be driven into the ground)
- Range of accessibility for all guests (ADA accessibility desired)
- Sensitivity to public safety of all guests (It is best practice to follow – and reference often – the Playground Standards of Austin, Texas)

**The following materials are not allowed:**

- Artificial turf
- 50 lb. plastic cable ties (any cable ties used must be rated at least 200 lb.)
- Imported soil
- Live plants and non-native plants.
- Bamboo
- Hay (straw will be considered on a case by case basis)
- Easily removable materials

**Qualified fort builders must have:**

- Experience designing and constructing functional structures
- Interest in working as part of a creative team that will include Wildflower Center and staff

**Each submitted design requires the following:**

- A narrative of the design concept.
- Design in the form of digital rendering, schematic, architectural drawing or other image, showing the project's scale. 3D models and other graphic representations are welcome but not required.
- Estimated budget for the fort.
- General statement of materials, construction methods and construction equipment needed for installation.
- Identification of desired fort location and consideration of whether the design is flexible for other locations. (See map on p.8.)
- An explanation of the source of inspiration for the fort design and any stories the fort may tell.
- A description of the ultimate fate of the fort and fort materials after the exhibit is over. Will the fort be capable of being relocated permanently to another site? Will materials be repurposed, reused or recycled? Will materials end up in a landfill?

**Submission process:**

To submit a fort proposal, please complete an online application [here](#) **by Wednesday, April 10, 2024**. Details of the information required for the proposal are found below in the Proposal Checklist. Any questions should be sent to [pmoran@wildflower.org](mailto:pmoran@wildflower.org).

The Wildflower Center reserves the right to use any and all images, renderings and models for the promotion of the exhibition in print or electronic formats.

## **Fort Exhibition Guidelines and Responsibilities**

The health and integrity of the plants in our living collections is vital to the Wildflower Center's mission and institution. It is necessary to protect and maintain our collections by adhering to the following guidelines for construction, installation and maintenance of all forts.

- Fort structure must be original and suitable for outdoor display in adverse weather conditions (high winds, rain, heat, sun, freezing temperatures and ice).
- Forts will be located in high traffic areas with an unsupervised audience and must be soundly constructed of durable and safe components to last the duration of the exhibition.
- Potential fall heights must be limited to 6 ft. above ground. A clear 6 ft. radius on potential fall zones must also be observed.
- Forts must be appropriate for viewing and interaction by guests of all ages.
- Chosen fort builders (hereafter referred to as "Exhibitor(s)") are responsible for all costs, equipment and labor necessary for the delivery, installation, maintenance, and removal of the fort, materials and rubbish. Exhibitors assume all risk and damage to the work before and during installation and during and after removal. Wildflower Center staff may provide installation, maintenance, and removal assistance of forts on a limited basis with prior arrangement or notification.
- The exhibition is in an area accessible to the public during all open hours. Throughout installation and removal, a safe and hazard-free work area must be maintained at all times.
- Wildflower Center staff must be notified no later than 15 days prior to the installation date of any changes to proposed designs during fabrication so that the changes may be approved.
- Exhibitor must provide proof of insurance (Workman's Comp, Liability).
- The Wildflower Center is not responsible for damage of the structures due to weather, vandalism, theft or misuse by guests.
- The exhibition will be accessible to the public daily during regular business hours 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., during Tuesday Twilights until sunset, and for special evening events open to the public. Private event clients may also view the forts after hours during the contract period.
- The Wildflower Center reserves the right to photograph and reproduce images of the forts for marketing and educational materials. Private event and photography permit clients may also photograph the forts as stated in their contract.
- The Wildflower Center will promote the exhibition with events, website promotions, social media posts, media releases, brochures, advertising, and calendar listings.
- Exhibitors are welcome to photograph or video their fort. Drone use at the Center is allowed only by permit and exhibitors must follow University policies as found [here](#).
- Exhibitors are highly encouraged to attend the opening reception and participate in interviews or other promotional activities during the installation process and exhibition.
- Exhibitors must be present at their fort on the first weekend the exhibition is open to the public in order to observe how guests interact with their fort in case of unforeseen dangerous interactions that need to be addressed.
- Exhibitors are also highly encouraged to participate in programs around Fortlandia such as designer talks, member and special events, Fortlandia opening weekend, and other programs and events that are planned.

## **Installation Criteria**

- The site of the fort shall be chosen after consultation with, and the approval of, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. A fort must be able to be installed on available sites, some in grassy areas, both rocky and flat. Final location of forts in the Family Garden is determined by the Center.
- No digging is permitted due to irrigation lines, tree roots and existing utilities. Exceptions to this rule may be granted on a limited basis and with written permission and approval.
- Delivery of materials will be supervised by the Center. We reserve the right to restrict construction activities due to site conditions caused by weather (rain). If conditions prevent access to the site, the installation period will be extended.
- Exhibitors must specify if their fort will be constructed on site, off site, or partially constructed on site. Specific details as to which sections will be constructed on site must be provided in advance.
- It is the responsibility of the Exhibitor to arrange for the installation of their fort on weekdays during September 23 - October 3, 2024 and for complete removal during February 3 - 7, 2025. All installation and removal activity must take place during daylight hours. If weekend dates are needed, special requests may be submitted to Center staff.
- Generators and batteries are allowed only during construction and removal.
- Access to the Family Garden for fort installation must be coordinated with Center staff. Traffic on the Family Garden access road is permitted. Access to areas not accessible by the road are allowed but will be limited to reduce impact and damage to soil and vegetation. Center staff will provide details as to which routes are accessible and when access is permissible. Exhibitors are responsible for communicating this information to everyone on their crews.
- Exhibitors must take any and all precautions to protect all plant material directly adjacent to and surrounding the installation area.
- All interaction of the fort with trees or other plants must be approved by Center. In general, no exhibition element may rub or attach to any part of any tree. Nails, screws, hooks or anything that penetrates the bark of a tree will not be allowed.
- No removal of plant materials will be allowed without approval by Wildflower Center.
- No permanent or invasive devices will be allowed to be attached to trees or in planting areas.
- Nothing can be applied which girdles the tree or rubs the bark as this may can result in irreparable tree damage.
- No painting, staining or coloring of trees or other plants will be allowed.

## **Maintenance**

- Exhibitor is responsible for any repairs and upkeep to the forts during the exhibition. Repairs and upkeep must be completed within a reasonable period after notification by Center staff.
- Exhibitor is responsible to make fort modifications deemed necessary by the Center for the safety of guests.

## Removal

- It is the responsibility of the Exhibitor to transport and deliver any fort sold as a result of the exhibition. No fort may be pulled from the exhibition early because of a sale.
- Exhibitors may bring interested parties to Fortlandia to see the fort.

Upon notification of selection, Exhibitors will be required to sign an Exhibitor Agreement. The Center will work with the Exhibitors on scheduling construction and installation with final approval being made by the Center. Up to three entries per prospective Exhibitor are accepted.

## Exhibition Schedule

<b>Applications Due</b>	April 10, 2024
<b>Selections Completed</b>	May 1, 2024
<b>Installation of Forts</b>	September 23 - October 3, 2024
<b>Preview Party</b>	October 4, 2024
<b>Opening Weekend</b>	October 5 - 7, 2024
<b>Exhibition Closes</b>	February 2, 2025
<b>Removal of Forts</b>	February 3 - 7, 2025

## Contact Information

Please direct inquiries to:

Patrick Moran

*Exhibitions Coordinator*

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

**[pmoran@wildflower.org](mailto:pmoran@wildflower.org)**

# FORT LANDIA

YOUR SECRET HIDEOUT AWAITS

FORT LOCATIONS 2024-25



# **FORTLANDIA**

## **Exhibition Proposal Checklist**

The following information is required for all Fortlandia proposals. The electronic submission form is found [here](#). Proposals are due by April 10, 2024.

### **Contact Information**

- ☐ Designer/Group Name
- ☐ Address
- ☐ Construction/Fabrication Name
- ☐ Primary Contact Person
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email

### **Fort Details**

- ☐ A narrative of the design concept
- ☐ Inspiration behind the design
- ☐ Design in the form of digital rendering, schematic, architectural drawing or other images with plan view showing scale. 3D models and other graphic representations are welcome but not required.
- ☐ Estimated budget for the fort.
- ☐ General statement of materials, construction methods and construction equipment needed for installation.
- ☐ Preferred location for fort.
- ☐ Identification of desired fort location and consideration of whether the design is flexible for other locations. (See map on p. 8.)
- ☐ A description of the ultimate fate of the fort and fort materials after the exhibit is over. Is the fort capable of being relocated permanently to another site? Will materials be repurposed, reused or recycled? Will materials end up in a landfill?

### **Designer Qualifications**

- ☐ Description of your background and experiences
- ☐ Reference list of successful exhibits and/or projects
- ☐ Photos of past projects
- ☐ Any additional details that support your interest in this project