

## The Chihuly Effect and Lessons Learned

The Chihuly exhibit at Denver Botanic Gardens, no doubt, became a phenomenon. This coincided with the construction of two new buildings at the Gardens and the construction of an apartment complex adjacent to the Gardens.


Attendance through the York Street Visitor Center ran between two and over three times last year:

Weekday average from June through August	2013 – 1,489	2014 – 4,148
Weekend average from June through August	2013 – 1,948	2014 – 6,275

Meanwhile, other measures of visitation were stable compared to 2013

Non-Gatehouse York Street (primarily education, events, free days, etc)	-1%
Chatfield and other	+8%

Here is a breakdown by category from 2010 through 2014

	 York Gate	York Non-Gate	Chatfield/Other	Total
2010	293,836	310,205	215,222	819,263
2011	299,636	314,229	187,411	801,276
2012	319,678	316,606	214,609	850,893
2013	294,799	306,395	258,659	859,853
2014 thru Aug.	493,577	130,418	148,764	772,759
2014 est.	717,724	288,331	279,351	1,285,406

Data received from other gardens that recently hosted a Chihuly exhibition indicates that the Chihuly effect is a one year aberration:

	Year Before Chihuly	Chihuly Year	Year After Chihuly
Phoenix	177,471	432,339	159,181
Dallas	662,269	943,911	714,048
Atlanta		339,951	147,234

Denver Botanic Gardens expects a return to equilibrium with visitation levels similar to the years preceding 2014. In addition, there are no planned construction projects slated or anticipated for at least two years aside from repair projects and interior garden rehabilitations.

That said, Denver Botanic Gardens will take measures to address the intensity of its impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

1. The Gardens will return to normal seasonal hours. In Phoenix, for example, the Desert Botanical Gardens accommodated the requirement of allowing illuminated Chihuly viewing by extending its hours to a midnight close. Denver accommodated it by scheduling two months of Chihuly nights when dusk arrives early enough to allow a 9 PM close. There are no exhibits on the docket at Denver Botanic Gardens that require or are even served by illuminated viewing.
2. Several years ago, Denver signed up for what was thought to be a modest Lego exhibit to be staged in the Mordecai Children's Garden in August and September of 2015. It involved botanical and agricultural figures made of Legos. Based on lessons learned this year, this exhibit at York Street was cancelled after word came that the show was becoming like a "mini-Chihuly." A lesson about scale and capacity has been learned and there is more sensitivity to not only the impacts on the Gardens, but also the neighborhood.
3. Based on experiences this year to remove as much staff and volunteer parking as possible from the parking structure and neighborhood, the Gardens now has significant new tools to deploy as needed in the future.
4. Security also took center stage this year. It turns out that aside from people attempting to steal Chihuly, it is a long tradition of many, especially teenagers, to try to hop the fence and get into the Gardens. Significant enhancements to security systems have been and will be installed.