

Why Westminster's Butterfly Pavilion is partnering with a high-end Caribbean development

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The main pool at The Strand development
PROVIDED BY THE STRAND

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Westminster's Butterfly Pavilion has entered a partnership with a high-end development in Turks and Caicos that adds to its growing list of international projects and agreements with business interests that are expected to bolster both its reputation and its stream of revenues.

The deal comes as the sometimes under-the-radar tourist attraction prepares to move from its existing 34,000-square-foot facility to an 81,000-square-foot home in Broomfield that is being built beside a school in a new community. And it furthers CEO [Patrick Tennyson](#)'s efforts to make the only invertebrate facility accredited as an

Association of Zoos & Aquariums member into a world-leading voice in research on pollinators.

Under the agreement, Butterfly Pavilion is working with Denver-based developer [John Fair](#) on preserving habitat for butterflies, bees and birds in The Strand, a residential community that will stretch along 2,230 feet of shoreline on the island nation's Cooper Jack Bay. Horticultural experts already have begun studying the existing pollinator population at the site and are working with Fair Capital LLC to put in plants that will attract birds and bees and educate local officials and schoolchildren about the importance of creating such habitat.

Tennyson has spoken throughout his 12-year tenure at Butterfly Pavilion about the importance of working with private-sector partners like builders, even as some conservationists push for the preservation of all habitats rather than the improvement of areas under development. By doing so, the organization can aid conditions for pollinators in real-world settings and can bring in much-needed income that helps it boost its research and make it a zoo that's being called for help now by governments ranging from Indonesia to Tanzania.

"I think some conservation organizations might find it odd to team up with the business community, but we do not," Tennyson said. "We don't mind being that guy on the island because we believe everybody will come along with us. Preservation only goes so far. You can only set so much land aside."

In addition to offering families a zoo-like atmosphere at its facility where they can view fish and insects, let Rosie the tarantula crawl on their arms and stroll among a butterfly-laden forest, Butterfly Pavilion works with communities across the state to improve pollinator habitats. Its current work in the Caribbean, however, is the first instance in which it's created a pollinator district outside of this country.

Fair learned that one of those local districts was at the [1,200-acre Baseline community in Broomfield where Butterfly Pavilion is setting up its new home](#), and he contacted Tennyson about doing the same thing for his 46-property resort, his second development on the island. Not only did he want to create an environmentally sustainable project, he said, but he reasoned that homeowners and the guests they rent to would find the space more appealing if they could walk among birds and butterflies and feel they were part of the ecology of the island.

"It's just enhancing what is there, to make it even better. That's one of the things that is interesting about thoughtful development done right," Fair said of his property, which also will include tennis and pickleball courts, a small marina and a beach club. "If you do things like what we're doing with the Butterfly Pavilion, we will dramatically enhance not only the butterfly population but the bee population and the bat population."



Three-bedroom villas at The Strand development
PROVIDED BY THE STRAND

In July, Butterfly Pavilion Horticulture Director [Amy Yarger](#) flew down to Turks and Caicos with target species manager [Lorna McCallister](#) to survey the property and its vegetation and begin the development of a plan to enhance the animals flying around it. But they also met with national officials to explain why such work could aid the island and brought school children onto the property to teach them about the importance of ecosystem diversity and about why the wasps in the area can sustain that with being stinging menaces.

In the spring, Butterfly Pavilion officials will return to study more and to see what differences they've made already by recommending what plants should be added or kept in place with the development of The Strand, which will be completed over the next three years. But she is excited by the interest they've already received, not just from Fair but from island officials.



Students in Turks and Caicos tour a pollinator district created by Butterfly Pavilion.
PROVIDED BY BUTTERFLY PAVILION

“People want to live where there are butterflies, and people want to live where there are birds and flowers and those things that connect us to nature,” Yarger said, emphasizing the improved quality of life that can come from a carefully maintained pollinator district. “That’s very attractive to potential clients.”

Butterfly Pavilion’s expanding list of clients ranges far and wide.

In Mongolia, it is working with the national government and with nongovernmental organizations on conservation of an endangered species of Parnassian butterfly and is helping them to create a guide for their national park service on the importance of that creature. In Tanzania, it is building fence lines of beehives around local farms, which keep bee-averse elephants from crossing the lines and stomping crops while also providing farmers with additional revenue when they sell the honey.

The mission of Butterfly Pavilion is to foster an appreciation for the invertebrates while educating the public about preserving their habitats — a goal that is met by these projects in Asia, African and the Caribbean, Tennyson argued.

“It’s quite an honor that we are embraced by the business community to help them do a great job or a better job. And it means a great deal to us that we’re really able to spread our wings and be able to work in places like Turks and Caicos that haven’t really thought about ways to do this,” he said. “At first, even the government there was like, ‘What are we talking about here?’ But once we explained it, they rallied around it.”