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*****Press Release*****

**Recreation and Park Department and San Francisco Botanical Garden Society Propose
Unified Management of Golden Gate Park Gardens**

Change would streamline management and provide enhanced visitor experience

SAN FRANCISCO, CA– In a move to improve visitor services and position the “Gardens of Golden Gate Park” as a one of the top cultural and environmental institutions in the country, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department this week will seek approval to merge admissions, education and outreach programs at San Francisco Botanical Garden, Conservatory of Flowers and Japanese Tea Garden under the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society.

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission will vote Thursday whether to recommend the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approve an amendment to expand the nonprofit’s current lease and management agreement of the San Francisco Botanical Garden to include the Conservatory of Flowers and the Japanese Tea Garden.

While all three institutions are overseen by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and are located a short walk from one another, their admissions, fundraising, and visitor experience functions have historically been operated by different organizations.

Under the proposed agreement, the three gardens would have a campus feel while keeping their individual legacy names. Together, they would be recognized and marketed as the “Gardens of Golden Gate Park,” a regional organization with national and international recognition and partnerships. The merge would eliminate nonprofit redundancies, estimated to save approximately \$400,000 a year while allowing visitors, volunteers, and schoolchildren to experience a combined educational and cultural experience and attracting greater philanthropic support for capital improvements at each location.

The Gardens of Golden Gate Park would seek to establish itself as a top 10 botanical garden in the country over the next five to 10 years through new collections and exhibits, expanded public programs and a larger role in worldwide conservation efforts, including:

- More diverse gardens with new plant collections such as an African cloud forest garden
- Expanded global plant conservation efforts protecting biodiversity in the face of climate change and the extinction crisis

- Upgraded accessibility and improved garden designs, pathways, and maintenance
- More public programs with existing and new community partners like Flower Piano at the Botanical Garden and Night Bloom at the Conservatory of Flowers
- Improved interpretation and educational resources including new digital tools
- Major capital projects such as a new Children’s Garden in the west end of the Botanical Garden – building off momentum of recent projects like pagoda restoration at the Japanese Tea Garden and Celebration Garden and new plant nursery at Botanical Garden
- A smoother, more cohesive experience for visitors and volunteers at each location

The San Francisco Botanical Garden Society has managed San Francisco Botanical Garden’s educational programs, volunteer efforts, visitor programs, youth programs, special events and unique horticultural library since 1954. The San Francisco Parks Alliance has provided similar functions at the Conservatory of Flowers after raising \$25 million for its restoration and 2003 reopening.

The San Francisco Botanical Garden Society has also operated admissions to the Japanese Tea Garden since July of 2020--something handled by Rec and Park prior to the pandemic. Friends of the Japanese Tea Garden provides fundraising support, while a separate concessionaire operates the garden’s tea house and gift shop.

Under the proposed merge, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department would continue to oversee maintenance and horticulture at all the gardens. All revenue from admissions would be forwarded to Rec and Park, which would then reimburse the Botanical Garden Society for its approved expenses. The city department and nonprofit would coordinate management of plant collections. Visitors would enjoy a simpler ticketing system and staff at each site ensuring a positive experience.

“The San Francisco Botanical Garden Society is a highly qualified, longtime city partner with a strong track record. It has guided the San Francisco Botanical Garden’s evolution into a world class attraction,” said San Francisco Recreation and Park Department General Manager Phil Ginsburg. “Merging these gardens under the same successful operation will create organizational and operational efficiencies, inspire philanthropy, and deliver on our mission to connect people to nature and each other.”

Since 2010, the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society’s management has increased annual visits to the Botanical Gardens by 135 percent. More recently, the San Francisco Botanical Society developed the plan and raised the funding to rebuild the San Francisco Botanical Garden nursery as a 34,000 square foot complex that will allow the Garden to acquire rare species and support global conservation efforts. The project broke ground Oct. 13.

“Our vision is that the Gardens of Golden Gate Park will become a leading cultural and conservation institution over the next decade with new partnerships, master plan, interpretive plan, museum accreditation, enhanced visitor experience, and robust community engagement,” said San Francisco Botanical Garden Society Executive Director Stephanie Linder.

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