



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, Dec. 6, 2024

# City of San Diego Reopens Historic Botanical Building in Balboa Park in Time for December Nights

RENOVATED STRUCTURE RETURNED TO ORIGINAL DESIGN FROM 1915 PANAMA-CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION

SAN DIEGO – Mayor Todd Gloria was joined today by State Assemblymember Chris Ward, City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, City staff and members of the Balboa Park community to announce the reopening of the renovated Balboa Park Botanical Building.

**“The Botanical Building is one of San Diego’s most iconic landmarks,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. “This restoration honors the legacy of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition and ensures that this cherished structure—a backdrop for countless photos and one of the key images that come to mind when people think of our city—will continue to inspire and delight future generations. I’m grateful to Senate President pro Tem Emerita Toni Atkins, Forever Balboa Park and all our partners who helped make this historic project a reality.”**

Phase I of the Botanical Building renovation project restored the building to its original design from the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. Work included restoration and structural improvements to the building, replacement of the redwood lath, reconstruction of the historic window arcades, planter upgrades, accessibility improvements and more. The total cost was more than \$26.45 million, which was supported by \$8 million in state grant funding.

**“As a longtime supporter of Balboa Park, I was proud to secure \$8.26 million in the 2019-20 state budget for the Botanical Building renovation project,” said Senate President pro Tempore Emerita Toni Atkins. “It was an honor to help preserve this treasured landmark so it can be enjoyed by future generations. This reopening is truly a holiday gift to the residents of San Diego and other Balboa Park visitors.”**

The Botanical Building is one of the largest remaining structures in the world using lath, the thin strips of wood that form the large exterior arches of the building’s roof and center rotunda. Built with the adjacent Lily Pond, it is one of only four structures in Balboa Park that were designed to remain as permanent features following the 1915 Exposition.

**“The newly enhanced Botanical Gardens at Balboa Park will be a beloved destination for many generations to come,” said Assemblymember Chris Ward (D-San Diego). “As a cherished landmark of San Diego, these gardens will serve as home to more than 2,100 plants, showcasing a stunning array of botanical diversity from around the world and a vibrant display of nature’s beauty that anyone can experience up close.”**

The iconic landmark hosts thousands of visitors every year and was designed to showcase the importance of horticulture in California, featuring an eclectic variety of rare, tropical and indigenous fauna. During construction, many of the building's plants were removed and relocated to an offsite nursery and returned to the building upon completion.

**“The reopening of the Botanical Building is a significant milestone for Balboa Park and our city”, said City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, who represents District 3. “This iconic landmark has long been a symbol of our city’s natural beauty and rich history, and with its restoration, it will continue to inspire residents and visitors alike. I look forward to seeing the Botanical Building flourish as a space for education, sustainability, and enjoyment for current and future generations”.**

Phase II of the project will be overseen by the City’s nonprofit partner, [Forever Balboa Park](#), an organization dedicated to the care and enhancement of Balboa Park. Their work will feature improvements to the exterior landscaping and irrigation, as well as reconstruction of the historic pergola.

**“A gift to the people of San Diego, the reopening of the Botanical Building is a glimpse of what can be achieved through the partnership between Forever Balboa Park and the City of San Diego,” said Katy McDonald, president and CEO of Forever Balboa Park. “Committed to historic preservation aided by modern innovation, together, we have ensured one of Balboa Park's most iconic landmarks will continue to inspire San Diegans and our visitors for generations to come.”**

For more information about Phase II of the project, visit [foreverbalboapark.org/projects/botanical-building](https://foreverbalboapark.org/projects/botanical-building).

The Botanical Building will be open during December Nights on Friday, Dec. 6, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturday, Dec. 7, from noon to 6 p.m. The building will be closed on Sunday, Dec. 8, and regular operating hours, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day except holidays, will begin on Monday, Dec. 9.



###