

Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy
Strategic Planning Retreat
October 30, 9-4 pm
SPUR, 654 Mission Street, SF

Attendees:

Board

- Ken Bukowski
- Carol Tang
- David McKenzie
- Lawrence Li
- Kate Faust
- Gayle Romasanta
- Scott Rowitz
- John Elberling
- Linda Lucero
- Andrico Penick
- Sarah Dennis Phillips
- Ralph Remington
- Raquel Redondiez
- Jorge Rivas

Staff

- Seve Ghose
- Matt Chu
- Leo Diaz
- Angelo Ferreras
- Andrew Gillespie
- Devon Katzner
- Bri Maughan
- Dr. Bunny McFadden
- Anthony Mellado
- Tony Pellegrini
- Luis Perez

Facilitator

- Renee Rubin Ross

Desired Outcomes - By the end of this retreat, we will have:

- Built community - gotten to know board and staff members
- Created a practical vision for YBGC in the next 3 years
- Drafted goals for each strategy

Pre-Retreat Briefings:

- YBGC [Strategic Plan](#) (high level, created in 2022)
- Draft goals for each of four strategic areas

Meeting Agreements:

- We acknowledge one another as equals
- We try to stay curious about each other
- We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners and to act with more courage
- We slow down so we have time to think and reflect
- We have the courage to interrupt if something is going amiss or being left unsaid; we make the invisible visible
- We remember that conversation is a natural way humans think together
- We expect it to be messy at times

Source: The National Equity Project



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TIME	TOPIC/ACTIVITY	PROCESS
8:30 am	Arrivals	Coffee and breakfast available
9:00 am	Opening	Renee: Overview of the agenda Welcome, Outcomes Agreements
9:15 am	New YBGC Brand	Web Site and Branding Presentation by Creative Mint
9:45- 9:55	Break	
9:55	Community Building	Small group conversations – Why are you connected with YBGC?
10:05 am	Build Practical Visions	Create Board & Staff practical vision: What do we want to see in place in the next three years as a result of our actions?
11:35 am	Break	
11:45		Open time if other issues emerge
12:00	-Approve Audit -Approve Board Leadership Change	Discussion
12:15 pm	Lunch Break	Catered lunch
1:15	Review Strategies	Board members review proposed strategies coming out of the Practical Vision
1:45	Goal Setting	Break into four groups, refine 3-year goals and one-year goals. Report back
2:45 pm	Open time	Open time if other issues emerge
3:30	Closing & Next Steps	Retreat closure, evaluation and next steps



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4:00 pm	End of Retreat	
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**Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy
Discovery Report from 2023**

Data Gathering

- In November and December 2023, in preparation for upcoming strategic planning meetings, Dr. Renee Rubin Ross interviewed Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy board members Ken Bukowski, Carol Tang and David McKenzie and staff members Matthew Chu, Angelo Ferreras and Andrew Gillespie.
- On January 24, YBGC staff met to share their input on vision for the strategic plan and how the board can support YBGC.

Seven key ideas emerged in the interviews and the staff retreat; they are explained in more depth below.

1. YBGC should explore stronger and clearer collaboration with surrounding organizations.
 - Arts and events team is a different organization. Several organizations are trying to coordinate on an event and it is hard to streamline. Sometimes people reach out to Conservancy, sometimes reach out to Arts and Events. It will be helpful to clarify responsibilities.
 - Another opportunity would be a monthly or quarterly meeting among tenants to get on same page, or more coordination among the four organizations working around YBG.
2. The organization could expand its leadership and visibility.
 - Currently the organization's leadership may not be commensurate with the real estate controlled by YBGC. There is more opportunity.
 - Also there are opportunities to increase visibility, similar to the Presidio Trust or GGRA. This may include working with city partners, encouraging more school field trips, and advertising & marketing on behalf of conservancy as well as tenants.
 - Need to clarify role of Conservancy in advocacy.
3. Leadership should take some time to define equity.
 - There are opportunities to define equity and determine concretely how it can be enacted in who gets to use the gardens: While some people believe that Yerba Buena belongs to all, others have complained that it is viewed as a corporate resource and mostly used by those who use the Convention Center.



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- “The Gardens take pride in being inclusive – but it has been difficult to get benches for seating or places for seniors to exercise.”

- 4. There are opportunities and the desire for more community engagement.
 - The role of the Conservancy in the larger community is still being defined. How should the Conservancy/Yerba Buena Gardens serve the surrounding community?
 - There is opportunity for even more community engagement.
 - Board members could do more community building. They may need more guidance to do this.
 - There is a desire for more year-round programming.

- 5. The role of board members could be clarified, also need succession planning.
 - There are many powerful people on the board. Board members are also busy, with many commitments. Board members could use more clarity on how they can support the organization.
 - There is a need to discuss leadership succession since Board president will complete his term soon.
 - Some board members are new so are less connected and invested in the current plan.

- 6. The organization must plan for long-term financial challenges.
 - The current budget includes funds for operations. Long term, there are not enough funds to maintain physical structures, such as replacing the fountain. More money needs to be raised for capital projects.
 - It may be helpful to recruit board members who can bring increased financial support.

- 7. The current strategic plan needs to be revisited and built out.
 - The strategic plan exists on the website at a very high level. It is not something that the board and staff refer to regularly. It needs to be fleshed out in more depth.
 - It would be helpful to define what equity means and how it is operationalized in the organization’s work.

Next steps

- Board members met on **February 7 from 9am – 4pm** for a strategic planning retreat.
- After the retreat, board and staff members developed draft goals in four areas: Programming, Branding, Equity, Finance & Governance.

