



2026-2030 Strategic Plan



YERBA
BUENA
GARDENS
CONSERVANCY



Vision

A joyful and thriving place that inspires culture, connection, healing, and a feeling of community for all.

Mission

To provide arts, culture, recreation, and nature in beautiful, accessible, welcoming spaces for everyone.

Purpose

To program, operate, maintain, and improve the publicly-owned open spaces, cultural facilities, and related elements of San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens, working in conjunction with the Gardens' nonprofit cultural organizations, commercial tenants, and the City and County of San Francisco, for civic and public benefit and enjoyment by the City's visitors and residents.

Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy advances its mission and purpose through stewardship, collaboration, and innovation.

Values



SERVICE The Yerba Buena Gardens campus is a shared public space that belongs to the San Francisco community. We believe in **serving our community** by creating places, spaces, and programs that respond to local needs, foster connection and belonging, and invite collaboration.

CREATIVITY We believe **creativity, bold ideas, and imaginative thinking** fuel a vibrant, resilient, and thriving community.

INCLUSION Our campus thrives when diverse voices, cultures, and communities are engaged in shaping programs and experiences that are welcoming to all. We value making the gardens a **safe place for everyone in our community**. We believe in honoring, including, protecting, celebrating, and learning about the rich history, art, culture, and contributions of all communities in the City and the Bay Area.

EQUITY **Everyone should have meaningful access to the arts, culture, recreation, and outdoor spaces.** Due to structural inequalities, displacement, and other challenges, many communities face barriers to accessing Yerba Buena Gardens. Therefore, in addition to welcoming all community members, we believe in making meaningful and genuine efforts to engage and include those who were displaced by the development of the gardens, and residents and communities in San Francisco who lack access to open space for recreation, relaxation, reflection, and rejuvenation. We believe we have a responsibility to partner with communities who have been historically marginalized or displaced, and to address institutional, historical, and other barriers to their access and enjoyment of the gardens and facilities.

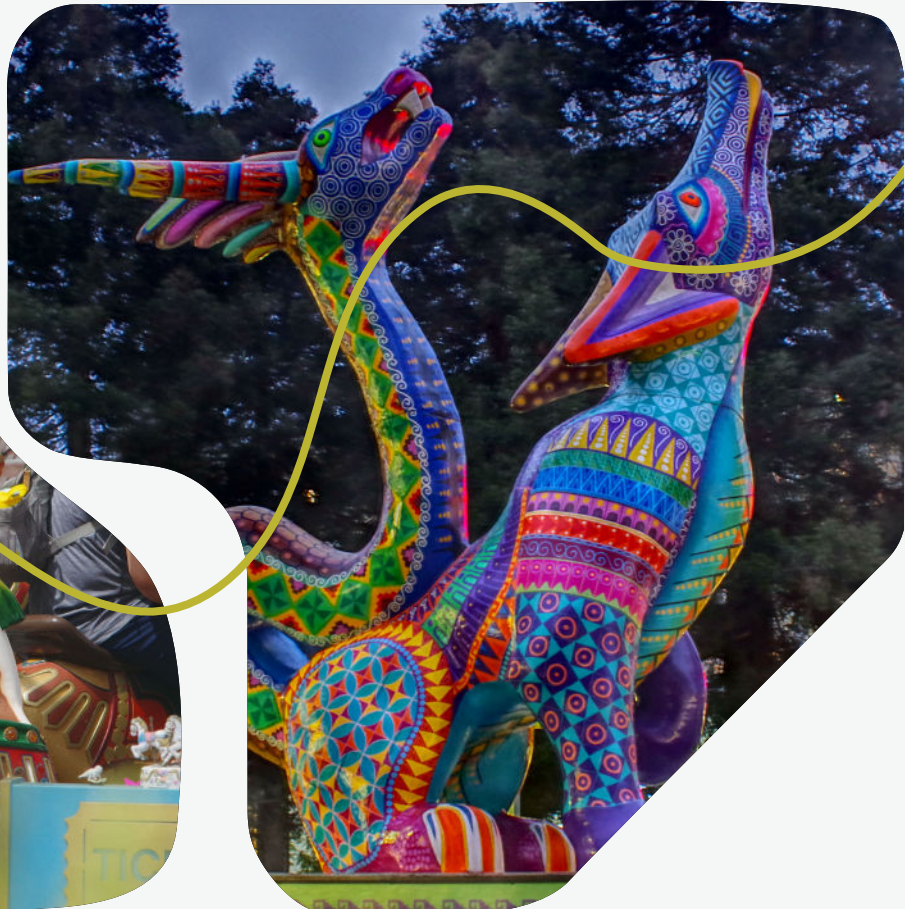
INTEGRITY We believe in stewarding Yerba Buena Gardens with **transparency, accountability, and honesty**.

SUSTAINABILITY The Yerba Buena Gardens campus deserves **care, planning, and ongoing investment** to ensure its beauty and vitality for generations to come.

Unique Role

The Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy (the Conservancy) leads the **cohesive vision and overall strategy of the Yerba Buena Gardens campus** and the coordination and collaboration of all its facilities, partners, cultural entities, and vendors. The Conservancy holds all of the leases and manages contracts with all partners on campus. It supports all the campus entities to succeed through collaboration, promotion of their programming, and coordinated efforts on campus. Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy helps preserve and share the history of the gardens and the South of Market (SoMA) neighborhood. The Conservancy also leads promotion of the campus and advances efforts to enhance the Yerba Buena Gardens.

In collaboration with its cultural entity partners and other community members and partners, the Conservancy also leads some programming, particularly programming that makes use of its assets, such as the carousel and ice arena, and when there is a gap that is not filled by existing organizations, or if there is a new idea to pilot. All Conservancy programming is free, however cultural entity partners on campus provide free and fee-based programming.



Strategic Pillars

To advance our mission and vision, we commit to these *strategic priorities*

CAPITAL STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Steward, improve, and grow our capital assets and infrastructure financing

ACTIVATION

Activate the campus, engaging community to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to our interwoven arts, nature, play, and cultural places and spaces

SYNERGISTIC PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

Nurture a collaborative, synergistic campus ecosystem of partners and programs thriving together



Strategic Pillars, Goals, Strategies, and Key Performance Indicators

STRATEGIC PILLAR:

Capital Stewardship and Financial Resilience

Steward, improve, and grow our capital assets and infrastructure financing

We will maintain safe, functional, vibrant, and accessible facilities that are responsive to current community needs and provide long-term community benefit. The Yerba Buena Gardens campus facilities are over 30 years old and require significant capital and other investments. In addition to stewardship, improvements, growth, and innovations to capital investments, we will also seek and develop infrastructure financing methods that enable us to continue to enhance our facilities so that they are resilient and future-proof places that the community can enjoy for years to come.

GOAL A:

Modern, Well-Maintained Capital Facilities

Proactively care for and improve facilities so they are safe, accessible, vibrant, welcoming, climate-resilient, innovative, and responsive to community engagement.

STRATEGIES:

- › Create a campus-wide plan to conduct renovation, rehabilitation, betterments, and maintenance activities
- › Invest in current and preventative maintenance needs of our campus
- › Update campus design plans (e.g., South Block design plan), including improvements to specialized gardens, Moscone Center pedestrian corridor, shade, wayfinding, visitor services and amenities, public art, and perimeter porosity
- › Review operating agreements with cultural entity partners, including exploring ways to work in partnership to support capital facility needs



GOAL B:

Sustainable Funding

Secure reliable funding mechanisms that address current and future capital, maintenance, and infrastructure needs.

STRATEGIES:

Institutional Fund Development Strategies

- › Invest in applying for applicable federal, state, and local grants
- › Conduct a feasibility analysis of a capital campaign
- › Explore possibilities for securing additional financing for long-term capital needs from the City and County of San Francisco budget (e.g., through a general obligation bond, a special increment financing arrangement, or other grants from the City or third parties) as permitted by our bylaws and current agreements with the City
- › Track and participate in City policymaking, for example, the planning of Infrastructure Financing Districts (IFDs) to seek potential parks and open spaces and/or infrastructure financing opportunities via the City or developer fees
- › Engage in neighborhood development conversations, including exploring possibilities for SoMA development impact fees or sources of funds
- › Demonstrate and communicate the Conservancy's positive community impact with the district supervisor and other City leaders to gain increased support for and engagement in the success of the Conservancy
- › Partner with the Downtown Development Corporation (and other similar organizations) to cultivate the Conservancy's involvement in future capital investments
- › Identify corporate sponsorship opportunities for campus assets
- › Engage board and staff to serve as ambassadors for the Conservancy, including to contribute and to rally others for resources and financial support, as appropriate
- › Maintain relationships with Planning Department and City leaders, including keeping them informed of the Conservancy's needs and keeping the Conservancy informed about City policies, community benefits, and other opportunities

Business Development Strategies

- › Implement a financial strategy and plan for the sustainability and success of the bowling center and ice arena as community recreational assets
- › Manage vendors and maximize revenue from vendors, including refreshing for-profit vendor agreements
- › Streamline private rental business, including redesigning a rentals process with a single point of contact for vendors
- › Explore flexible funding opportunities from revenue-generating facilities and financing for capital development

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs):

- › Secure at least \$500K annually in additional funding over the plan period to address campus infrastructure and maintenance needs
- › Remediate and resolve water drainage, pipe maintenance, and risks of water damage on campus
- › Complete all the actions listed in the campus-wide renovation and rehabilitation plan allocated through 2030
- › Address challenges of the Heat Island Effect by planting 10–15 large trees annually on our campus, offering additional food, shade, and allowing butterflies and bees to thrive
- › Establish and maintain operating reserves equal to at least 6 months of operating expenses by 2030





STRATEGIC PILLAR

Activation

Activate the campus, engaging community to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to our interwoven arts, nature, play, and cultural places and spaces

We will realize the full potential of all the Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy's facilities for the benefit of the community. We will design an active, well-utilized campus that reflects the cultural vibrancy, history, and future of San Francisco and that fosters engagement and connection for people of all ages. Programming on campus will include: free programs, fee-based, cooperative, and facilitative programs.

GOAL C:

Vibrant Community Gathering Place

Cultivate a thriving central community gathering place and space of beauty for meaningful interaction with nature, landscape, architectural design and materials, and art, and a place that is inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to all.

STRATEGIES:

- › Strengthen, grow, and enhance collaborations with organizations and communities to optimize use of space and bring free or subsidized cultural activities, events, and programs to our campus spaces (e.g., events for Day of the Dead, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Earth Day)
- › Deepen our collaborations with Moscone Center to engage conference attendees
- › Continue to host free events to engage community members on campus
- › Explore various ways to increase participation of the public on our campus, such as how we might contribute to growing nightlife and family activities in the neighborhood

- › Provide private rentals to activate the gardens with community programming throughout the year (e.g., carousel rentals; birthday party packages that are affordable and accessible)
- › Select vendors that align with our values and that contribute to community engagement and participation on campus
- › Develop a survey to track visitor satisfaction with programming and visitor demographics, leading to a needs assessment survey
- › Develop and implement a campus-wide marketing and promotion strategy (e.g., with paid ads, interactive screens with maps and promotional content on campus, “Summer Pass”); also develop promotional materials for shops, hotels, and residences to attract more local visitors and attract microtourism from across the Bay Area

GOAL D:

Community-Rooted Cultural Center

Cultivate cultural expression, enrichment, and innovation that honors both the past and present people and cultures of San Francisco and the SoMA neighborhood, including communities that have been displaced either directly or indirectly by redevelopment.

STRATEGIES:

Programming Strategies

- › Support, engage, and coordinate cultural entity partners to lead and steward campus programming and full activation of any indoor spaces
- › Define the Conservancy’s marquee annual free programming events
- › Management and activation of the bowling center and ice arena as year-round community recreation hubs
- › Recognize the important role of all local underrepresented communities and communities displaced by the development of the gardens, including Indigenous, African American, Filipino, and other communities, and deepen our cultural programming, including engaging community stories, artists, community leaders, and organizations from all communities
- › Support language accessibility, creating information (signage, website content, and program materials) about our services and programs for community members in all of San Francisco’s official languages
- › Provide reasonable accommodations for programming and access to facilities
- › Preserve and share the history of the Yerba Buena Gardens and SOMA neighborhood



Partnership Strategies

- › Create a shared, campus-wide program calendar and marketing funnel that promotes alignment and coordination on upcoming programs led by each campus partner
- › Collaborate and deepen our relationships with key strategic partners and neighborhood organizations, including the Yerba Buena Partnership, Moscone Center, Metreon, Jessie Square, Yerba Buena Lane, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD), TODCO, SOMA Pilipinas Filipino Cultural Heritage District, the school district, and other community and cultural organizations, and City departments to encourage participation in campus programming and events
- › Engage the immediate Yerba Buena and SoMA neighborhood community members as educators, leaders, participants, and contributors
- › Conduct outreach and engage with other arts organizations, including the 260 grantees of the City and County of San Francisco's Grants for the Arts and other San Francisco arts and cultural organizations to schedule programming at the gardens

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs):

- › Reach 6 million annual visitors, an increase of 40%, by 2030
- › Achieve attendance of at least 300,000 program attendees annually, an increase of 300% by 2030
- › Complete a shared, campus-wide annual program calendar at least one year in advance of each program year
- › Ensure over 90% of visitors report high satisfaction with the campus environment and programs
- › Ensure local community and historically underrepresented or displaced community members, including Indigenous, African American, and Filipino community members, participation/attendance is at least 30% of visitorship and programming content annually
- › Host free cultural programs and community-led events across organizations on the Yerba Buena Gardens campus at least once per week serving at least 100,000 people annually
- › Achieve recognition of Yerba Buena Gardens and its offerings by individuals, families, organizations, and artists in San Francisco as a place to spend time and to spend the day based on visitor reports





STRATEGIC PILLAR

Synergistic Partner Ecosystem

Nurture a collaborative, synergistic campus ecosystem of partners and programs thriving together.

We will maximize the impact of our unique campus, cultural entities, and collaborators and nurture the collaboration of our cultural, recreational, and community partners. We will serve as the campus leader that strengthens collaboration among partners and their diverse programs, fostering alignment, shared success, and meaningful execution of our collective commitment to serving the community.

GOAL E:

Collaborative, Partner-Engaged Campus

Create a collaborative and synergistic campus ecosystem that fosters and creates opportunities for innovative, meaningful, impactful, and complementary programming, cross-collaborations, and partnerships.

STRATEGIES:

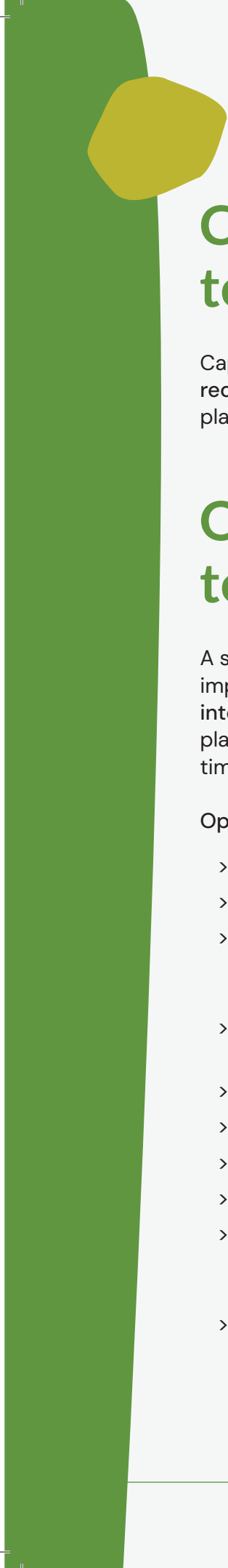
- › Establish a seamless experience for private rentals by creating a single point of contact for an integrated, easy access point for prospective campus rentals
- › Create a formal structure, building on our partnership principles, that allows for campus partners (cultural entity partners, vendors, and other partners) to collaborate more closely with the Conservancy, which includes:

- › Hosting monthly facilitated partnership meetings for Conservancy and cultural entity partners to align on understanding of roles and responsibilities on campus, conduct early ideation and planning for synergistic program opportunities, network, learn from each other about network cultivation and collaboration, and to coordinate operational needs; create a schedule of meetings that convene leaders from different levels, including board, executive, program, and operations leaders
- › Hosting semi-annual facilitated partnership meetings with the cultural entities, business tenants, and neighboring organizations to foster alignment and provide for the collective success of the campus
- › Conduct an annual partner survey to measure and improve partners' satisfaction with campus operations
- › Facilitate annual learning conversations to collaboratively assess funded cultural entity partners' performance as per the partnership principles performance monitoring process
- › Create a task force to investigate and determine how to unlock the potential of collaboration, including integrating and working with City Block One (CB1), Jessie Square, and Yerba Buena Lane along with Millennium Partners

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs):

- › At least 5 collaborative cultural and other programmatic events involving two or more campus partners take place annually
- › 80% of campus partners report high collaboration and satisfaction with campus coordination annually (measured through the annual partner survey)
- › 90% of private rental vendors rate their experience positively





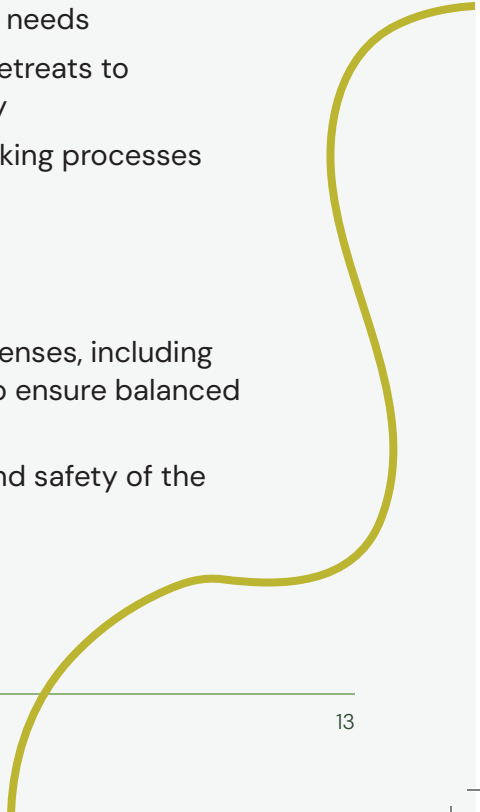
Capabilities Needed to Support Strategic Plan Pillars

Capabilities needed to support the strategic plan pillars include expertise in parks and recreation management, facilities and gardens management, financial management and planning, coordination and facilitation, cultural engagement, and community building.

Operational Activities to Support Strategic Plan Pillars

A strategic implementation plan will be created to determine how the Conservancy implements its strategic pillars. This will include a collaboratively developed and integrated multi-year programming plan and process for collaborative program planning. The strategic implementation plan will include implementation tasks and a timeline for year one of the plan.

Operational activities that will support the execution of the strategic plan:

- › Implement risk management assessments, systems, and procedures
 - › Collaboratively optimize office space allocations and usage
 - › Collaboratively explore options for restructuring/refreshing the programming and event management agreements between the Conservancy and Festival so as to best serve the public while supporting Festival and Conservancy needs
 - › Provide board development training and host facilitated annual retreats to support effective leadership and governance of the Conservancy
 - › Conduct inclusive and transparent governance and decision-making processes
 - › Address staffing needs
 - › Investigate the benefits of refreshing the bylaws
 - › Recruit, retain, and cultivate a diverse and engaged board
 - › Conduct financial planning and projections for revenues and expenses, including for new business ventures and capital stewardship costs so as to ensure balanced budgets each year
 - › Conduct ongoing management of the daily care, maintenance, and safety of the grounds and facilities
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Acknowledgments

Thank you to our leadership, staff, and partners for helping to develop and inform our plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN WORKING GROUP:

Marie Aubry, Finance Manager
Ken Bukowski, Chair
John Elberling, Honorary board member
Subhajeet Seve Ghose, Executive Director
Lawrence Li, Operations & Marketing Committee Chair/Vice Chair
Linda (Lulu) Lucero, Board member and Executive/Artistic Director, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival
Bunny McFadden, Administrative Services Manager
Prodan Statev, Board member
Victor Vazquez, Finance Committee Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS *(in addition to those on the Strategic Plan Working Group):*

Sarah Dennis Phillips, Board member
Kate Faust, Capital Committee Chair
Kristen Jacobson, Board member
Sally Oerth, Interim Capital Committee Chair
Raquel Redondiez, Board member
Jorge Rivas, Board member
Gayle Romasanta, Audit Committee Chair
Scott Rowitz, Nominating Committee Chair

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Cristina Ibarra, Managing Director, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival
Maricelle Robles, CEO, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

APA Heritage Foundation
Bayanihan Community Center
Bessie Carmichael Elementary School
Children's Creativity Museum (CCM)
City and County of San Francisco
Climate Action Youth Summit
Epic Church San Francisco
Jing Ying Cantonese Opera Institute
JP Morgan Chase Bank
Mechanics' Institute
Metreon
Millennium Properties
Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD)
San Francisco Environment Department
San Francisco Green Business Program
San Francisco State University
San Francisco Unified School District
South of Market Child Care, Inc. (SOMACC)
SOMA Pilipinas
TODCO
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)
Yerba Buena Gardens Festival
Yerba Buena Partnership

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANTS:

Belinda Lyons-Newman, Principal and Founder, Lyons-Newman Consulting
Erica Harrell, Senior Consultant, Lyons-Newman Consulting

About the Conservancy



The Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization tasked by the City and County of San Francisco to steward the 87 acres of two downtown blocks from Mission to Folsom Street and bounded by 3rd and 4th streets. The campus includes cultural organizations, vendors, and nearby affiliated cultural, artistic, and corporate businesses. All Conservancy outdoor spaces are free and open to all. Cultural entities and vendors on the campus offer free and fee-based specialized programming indoors.

History of the Gardens

Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco is the result of a decades-long transformation driven by the efforts of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA), community advocates, committed builders, arts institutions, and civic stakeholders. The area was targeted for urban renewal in the 1970s, including construction of the Moscone Convention Center and the creation of public gardens for all City residents. This redevelopment displaced residents of Indigenous, African American, Filipino, and other communities living in the area.

The Yerba Buena Gardens officially opened in 1993 as an urban oasis that integrates public space, arts, and culture. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) oversaw management and operations until 2012, when it was dissolved by the state. The state-authorized local successor agency, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (OCII), then assumed oversight. Between 2012 and 2019, the community, in collaboration with the city, worked tirelessly to create a new model for the governance, management, and operations of the gardens, and in 2019, the Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy assumed management, completing the transition to a collaborative partnership between the Conservancy and the City and County of San Francisco.

Today, the Yerba Buena Gardens is not only a major downtown destination but also a place of remembrance and cultural expression. Landmarks like the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and Fountain and the Oche Wat Te Ou Reflection Garden honor the area's diverse cultures and histories. Annual events such as the Pistahan Festival reflect the enduring presence and contributions of the Filipino community, even after displacement. The site continues to evolve as a hub for free public programming, cultural celebration, and community gathering while also acknowledging its complex history and committing to greater equity and inclusion for the communities that shaped it.

WHO WE ARE BY THE NUMBERS

YERBA BUENA GARDENS
CONSERVANCY

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RECREATION

2



PLAYGROUNDS



1 BOWLING
CENTER

1



CAROUSEL

California Historic Resource
and Point of Interest



1 ICE
ARENA

1 COMMUNITY
ROOM



+ CREATIVITY MUSEUM
& CHILD CARE CENTER

4 THEATERS

1 STAGE

GARDENS



20

SPECIFIC
GARDENS

87 TOTAL
ACRES

3 ACRES
OF LAWN

5 ACRES OF
GREEN SPACE



260 TREES



32 SPECIES

95 PLANT
VARIETIES



ART

14



PUBLIC
ART

+ Martin Luther
King Jr. Memorial



10 MURALS ON
DISPLAY

COMMUNITY



SF's 1st
ROOFTOP PARK

+ COMPLETELY ADA ACCESSIBLE

3m⁺ ANNUAL
VISITORS



1.6mi LENGTH OF
WALKWAY



6 DRINKING
FOUNTAINS

2 PUBLIC
RESTROOMS

+ BIKE PARKING

2 DOG
SPOTS

VOLUNTEER
PROGRAMS



FREE

WEEKLY SUMMER CONCERTS

YERBA BUENA GARDENS:

The **SOUL** of
downtown San Francisco

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic plan was developed through a thoughtful, inclusive, and collaborative planning process led by the Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy's Board of Directors, staff, and campus partners and facilitated by Bay Area social impact strategic planning consultants, Lyons-Newman Consulting. The process was designed to identify the Conservancy's strategic priorities for its next five years, clarify its role in programming, and define its approach to fostering inclusion and deepening engagement with the neighborhood's diverse cultural communities, including underrepresented groups and communities historically displaced by the development of the Yerba Buena Gardens. Central to the strategic planning process was a core question: how will the Conservancy maximize its relevance and impact in service of the community in the years ahead?

The planning process began in early 2025 with a discovery phase focused on understanding the needs, perspectives, and aspirations of the Conservancy's cultural entity partners and the communities they collectively serve. This phase included stakeholder engagement and analysis that led to the development of a set of partnership principles to guide collaboration across the campus.

Building on this foundation, a Strategic Plan Working Group was established to serve as the steering committee investigating strategic questions, shepherding the planning process, engaging the community in planning, and crafting the plan in collaboration with consultants. Throughout the process, board members, staff, cultural entity partners, and community members were engaged to provide input and feedback, ensuring the plan reflects a broad range of expert and stakeholder insights and perspectives.

Lyons-Newman Consulting conducted in-depth interviews with all board members, key staff leaders, and cultural entity partner leaders. These conversations explored community needs, the evolving local landscape, and opportunities and challenges facing the Conservancy over the next five years. Insights from these interviews were complemented by secondary research examining trends in arts, culture, and public space usage in the SoMA neighborhood and across San Francisco. Together, these inputs informed an initial framework for the strategic plan developed toward the end of 2025.

In March 2026, the Conservancy convened a day-long retreat bringing together board members, staff, and cultural entity partner leaders to explore strategic possibilities, refine key questions, and build alignment around emerging priorities. Following the retreat, the Strategic Plan Working Group, in collaboration with Lyons-Newman Consulting, developed a full draft of the plan. This draft was further refined through additional input from board members and partners. The working group reconvened in April 2026 to finalize the Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, which was formally adopted by the Board of Directors on June 17, 2026.

Campus Map





YERBA
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