

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, July 29, 2022

Mayor Gloria and Senate Leader Atkins Unveil Progress of Botanical Building Renovation in Balboa Park

PROJECT UNDERWAY TO RESTORE ICONIC HORTICULTURAL
LANDMARK WITH \$21 MILLION IN CITY AND STATE GRANT FUNDING

SAN DIEGO – Today Mayor Todd Gloria and Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins joined City staff and representatives from Forever Balboa Park to unveil progress of a \$21 million renovation project on Balboa Park’s Botanical Building. Recognized as one of the most treasured and uniquely constructed buildings in San Diego, preliminary work is nearly complete in preparation for major renovation work to begin in the coming months.

“This project aims to restore one of the most iconic structures in our city’s crown jewel as faithfully as possible to what was built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. “The historic reconstruction of our beloved Botanical Building is a more than \$21 million effort that would not have come to fruition without the \$8 million state grant made possible by Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins. We are deeply grateful for this critical funding support.”

The building has been closed to the public since January 2022 to remove and relocate many of the plants to an offsite nursery and to prepare the interior for renovation. Reconstruction work will begin later this year and is anticipated to be completed in December 2023.

As part of today’s event, Mayor Gloria and Senator Leader Atkins removed and potted a lady palm sapling (*Rhapis Excelsa*) that was discovered growing in the exposed soil during construction. The sapling will be housed in the City nursery and replanted inside the building once construction is complete.

“Balboa Park has been appropriately referred to as the ‘crown jewel’ of San Diego, and one of the most picturesque buildings in the park is the Botanical Building,” said Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins. “It was heartening to have been able to help secure \$8.26 million in state budget funding back in 2019, and it’s wonderful to see those funds being put to work for this icon, which was facing structural deterioration. It’s essential that we preserve this treasured landmark for San Diego and all who will come here to enjoy it.”

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 building 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. Prior to the start of the construction project, more than two thousand plants were held inside.

The renovation project will be completed in two phases. Phase I is expected to cost \$21,453,000 and includes restoration and structural improvements to the building, replacement of the redwood lath, reconstruction of the historic window arcades, planter upgrades, accessibility improvements and more. Phase II, which will be handled by the City's nonprofit partner [Forever Balboa Park](#), an organization dedicated to the care and enhancement of Balboa Park, will feature improvements to the exterior landscaping and irrigation, as well as reconstruction of the historic pergola.

For more information about the Botanical Building project including construction updates, please visit sandiego.gov/botanicalbuilding.

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