

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of San Diego to Assume Management of Balboa Park's Starlight Bowl

PLANS UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY, CITY TO SEEK FOOD SERVICES VENDOR TO ACTIVATE SPACE

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego is ending its lease negotiations with Save Starlight, a nonprofit organization that had been seeking to repurpose the historic Starlight Bowl. The City's Parks and Recreation Department will secure the site and maintain the Starlight Bowl.

In the coming weeks, the City will issue a new request for proposals for a food service vendor to activate the upper concourse area of the amphitheater, facing Palisades Plaza. Additionally, resources will be allocated to address landscape maintenance and security staffing for areas within and around the amphitheater.

"The Starlight Bowl is a landmark of Balboa Park and a beloved part of San Diego's history," said Mayor Todd Gloria. **"This part of the park should be cared for, active, and welcoming to the public — and my administration remains focused on practical steps to make that happen."**

The City of San Diego will initiate an update to the Balboa Park Master Plan later this month, which envisions the preservation, revitalization and enhancement of San Diego's historic Balboa Park.

Starlight Bowl and the amphitheater structures require extensive infrastructure repairs, as the facility has not undergone any significant improvements since it was closed as a performance venue in 2010.

In 2017, the City issued a special-use permit to Save Starlight as an attempt to bring the facility back into beneficial use. Work began on accessibility and restroom improvements. When it came time to renew the special-use permit, the City became aware Save Starlight was operating without a nonprofit license for a period of time.

Subsequently, in 2024, the City initiated a request for proposals for managing the Starlight Bowl. Save Starlight was the sole bidder, and was selected and entered into exclusive negotiations with the City.

In August of this year, the City received notice of concerns related to the Save Starlight Board of Directors and financial controls. The City's decision follows a review of Save Starlight's response to those concerns.

After providing Save Starlight with the opportunity to respond, the City has determined that the concerns could not be resolved to a standard that would justify continued negotiation.

Originally built in 1935 as part of the California Exposition, Starlight Bowl hosted some of the world's top musical acts and theater performances – including the Rolling Stones, Ella Fitzgerald, Bob Dylan, the Ramones and Diana Ross – over the decades until it fell into disrepair. In 2014, the City published a condition assessment on the property, confirming the venue was in poor physical condition and would require tens of millions in rehabilitation costs to address serious structural, electrical, acoustic and accessibility issues.



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