

**BALBOA PARK BOTANICAL BUILDING
MAP INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Botanical Building of San Diego's Balboa Park represents a unique horticultural and architectural tribute to the history of the Park's origins. It also serves as well as a place of learning and respite in an urban setting. The following institutional assessment serves as an entry portal to the many activities that the Botanical Building staff will need to accomplish on their route to accreditation by the American Association of Museums. As a city-run institution, the Building benefits from a large support structure that under girds its efforts. At the same time, the immediate staff and auxiliary support groups will need to continue working together to both identify and document its best practices for a public, visitor based institution.

The Botanical Building operates well within most categories addressed in this assessment. The primary areas needing improvement are in institutional planning, collections stewardship, management, education, and interpretation. In addition, all areas of this review indicate that the staff and management must perform a systematic documentation of standard practices and annual performance. However, the level of technical and professional knowledge of staff is uniformly high and motivated. The lack of a written institutional plan though impedes the Botanical Building from working strategically toward creating a strong, distinct identity within the constellation of cultural entities found within Balboa Park. Because of this review, the Botanical Building MAP team conducted a visioning process to identify a mission statement and source of identity. This process yielded excellent results. It also provides a template for further long-range and

strategic planning. Throughout this assessment, and within the appendices, recommendations are given for sources of information or technical assistance that will guide and aid the Botanical Building towards its goal of becoming ready to pursue accreditation.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings of the surveyor's review of the Botanical Building in Balboa Park and its supplementary documents, completed Self-Study Workbook, and site visit to the Botanical Building on November 16 and 17, 2006. During this visit, the surveyor met with staff members, governing authorities, and representatives of two volunteer support groups: City Beautiful, and Friends of Balboa Park. Information or staff members were readily accessible and helpful. The surveyor also had the opportunity to examine other institutions and gardens within Balboa Park and a nearby botanical garden that may either compete for visitors to the Botanical Building or serve as an addition to a day's outing to Balboa Park. After meeting with staff, division management, and volunteer groups, the surveyor toured the grounds, buildings, and nursery collections to observe the overall operation of the Botanical Building and discuss future goals and objectives.

The Botanical Building is an historic structure within the City of San Diego's Balboa Park. Balboa Park is the largest urban cultural park in the United States. In addition to the botanical building, and numerous public gardens, the Park is home to 15 major museums, theaters, and the San Diego Zoo. The original design of the Botanical Building was as a display museum for the 1915 exposition. At the time of construction, it was the largest wood lath building in the world. Although it no longer holds this distinction, it continues to inspire its visitors with its unique architectural design as well as serve as a movie and TV commercial backdrop and would be recognizable to many in and outside of San Diego.

As a public garden, the Botanical Building is free of admission, and open all-year. The plant displays are predominantly tropical with a small area focused on miniature plant landscapes of Vietnam. During some holiday periods, staff changes the displays to reflect traditional holiday flowers such as Poinsettias or Easter Lilies.