

EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 1, 2020 Noon

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: *Jon Bailey* (619) 865-3382, jonb@62above.com
Stephanie Thompson Communications (619) 840-7353,
stephanie@stephaniethompson.com

BALBOA PARK CONSERVANCY ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP CHANGE

San Diego—The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Balboa Park Conservancy announced today that President and Chief Executive Officer Tomas Herrera-Mishler has resigned his position with the organization.

Herrera-Mishler was appointed in July 2015 as the Balboa Park Conservancy's first CEO. Previously, he was President and CEO of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy in Buffalo, New York.

Established in close collaboration with then Mayor Jerry Sanders, the Balboa Park Conservancy was formed in 2011 as a public-benefit 501(c)3 nonprofit organization to develop public-private partnerships between the City of San Diego, Balboa Park stakeholders, and the philanthropic community to address long-term funding and park management challenges.

"We are very appreciative of the role Tomas has played in our organization's evolution during his tenure," stated Joyce Gattas, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "Tomas oversaw the first significant efforts in building our organization and there have been impactful projects and collaboration over the past several years as the Balboa Park Conservancy staff, volunteers and Board of Trustees have worked together diligently to guide our growth."

Most recently, the Conservancy helped secure an \$8.26 million grant from the State of California and a \$257,000 federal grant from the National Park Services, for the restoration of the park's iconic Botanical Building and gardens. Other recent successes include a partnership with the Central Park Conservancy in New York City as part of the Institute for Urban Parks' new Partnerships Lab program. In addition, a three-year, \$378,000 Cal Fire (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) grant enabled the Conservancy in partnership with the City of San Diego, to help reforest the park's tree canopy with more than 600 new trees and launch a Tree Stewards program to monitor and maintain the new plantings. Additional programs underway include the implementation of an updated parkwide Signage and Wayfinding program, a new Garden Stewards initiative and an expansion of placemaking into the Palisades area of the park.

The CEO transition will be managed by the Board of Trustees and led by Chair Joyce Gattas and Chair-Elect Connie Matsui. Gattas will assume primary responsibility for the organization during this interim period, assisted by Matsui. On July 1, Matsui will become Chair assisted by Gattas and former Past-Chair Carol Chang. Senior staff members Sarah Beckman, Director of External Relations; Jackie Higgins, PLA, ASLA, Director of Planning, Design and Programs; and Elizabeth Porter, CPA, Director of Finance and Human Resources will jointly assume responsibility for the organization's operations.

In addition, retired City of San Diego Assistant Chief Operating Officer and former Director of Parks and Recreation Stacey LoMedico will serve as Strategic Advisor to the Board of Trustees and management team, particularly as liaison between the Balboa Park Conservancy and the City of San Diego.

The Conservancy adopted a strategic plan in late 2019 to determine its future direction. Four Guiding Principles were established in this process: Organizational Excellence; Relationship Building; Projects, Programs and Placemaking; and Adding Value to Our Community. Board Committees and staff responsibilities will be aligned under these Guiding Principles.

The Conservancy's Executive Committee is currently assessing next steps to fill the organization's top leadership role. Priorities in this next phase of the organization's trajectory will focus on fundraising to successfully renovate the historic Botanical Building, strengthen partnerships with the City of San Diego and Balboa Park organizations, and continue the development of high-value park programs.

The Balboa Park Conservancy provides expertise, advocacy, and resources to envision, enhance, and sustain Balboa Park for all visitors in partnership with the City of San Diego and in collaboration with other organizations in the Park and the community.

www.balboaparkconservancy.org

###