



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

**MEMO**

**DATE:** January 12, 2011  
**TO:** Historic Preservation Commissioners  
**FROM:** Mary Brown  
Preservation Planner  
**RE:** Golden Gate Park Article 10 Designation Update

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

At its October 20, 2010 hearing the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) directed Planning Department (Department) staff to undertake preliminary research and documentation of issues related to Article 10 designation of Golden Gate Park. The HPC was particularly interested in the potential feasibility of using the existing National Register nomination form as a basis for Article 10 designation. The Department was directed to identify areas that are missing or undeveloped within the National Register Nomination Form. Designation of Golden Gate Park is one of the items identified as part of the HPC's preliminary Landmark Designation Work Program for FY2010-2011.

Golden Gate Park is under the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. At 1,017 acres, Golden Gate Park is the largest of the Recreation and Parks Department's properties, comprising over 30% of the area of its properties within the City limits.

## INVENTORY AND STATUS

### Existing Article 10 Landmarks

There are 43 buildings in Golden Gate Park, eight of which are currently listed as Article 10 Landmarks. These include the Conservatory of Flowers (Landmark No. 50), Sharon Building (Landmark No. 124), McLaren Lodge (Landmark No. 175), Beach Chalet (Landmark No. 179), Lawn Bowling Clubhouse and Greens (Landmark No. 181), Park Emergency Aid Station (Landmark No. 201), and the Murphy's Windmill and Millwright's House (Landmark No. 210). In addition, the Music Concourse (Landmark No. 249) contains many contributory landscape features, objects, and sculptures.<sup>1</sup> The Francis Scott Key monument is both an individual Landmark (No. 96) and a contributing feature of the Music Concourse designation.

Of the approximate 50,000 trees in Golden Gate Park, just a few clusters are currently listed under Article 10 of the Planning Code. Several groupings of trees are listed as contributory features of the Music Concourse Landmark designation. These include the pollarded trees (primarily London plane trees and Scotch elms) within the concourse bowl, a Cypress tree, and the Eucalyptus trees located on a berm behind the Spreckels Temple of Music.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Civic Art Collection section below for more details on contributing features of the Music Concourse.

### **National Register**

Golden Gate Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) as a historic district in 2004. The National Register nomination was developed by the consulting firm Royston, Hanamoto, Alley, and Abey for the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department in 2004. It was officially designated a National Register Historic District that same year.

The Golden Gate Park Historic District National Register Registration Form (National Register nomination) lists 133 contributing and 56 non-contributing features. Contributing features include 37 buildings, 47 sites, 13 structures and 36 objects. Features identified as non-contributing include 20 buildings, 12 sites, 20 structures and 4 objects. Two buildings were previously listed on the National Register: the Conservatory of Flowers and the Beach Chalet.<sup>2</sup>

As noted in the National Register nomination, Golden Gate Park was developed over many years, but it was conceived as a single creation that we now consider an historic designed landscape.

### *Status*

The Planning Department has reviewed the National Register nomination and agrees with the list of contributing features. The Department will recommend accepting all National Register listed contributory buildings, structures, objects, and sites as contributors to the Article 10 Historic District. There are, however, several features constructed during the Period of Significance, which are not mentioned in the National Register nomination. The Department is in the process of identifying and evaluating these missing features. Examples include several meadows, the Redwood Memorial Grove, historic flag poles, light standards, and signage.

### **Period of Significance**

The National Register nomination identifies an 1871-1943 Period of Significance (P.O.S) related to the themes of Landscape Architecture and Social History. This P.O.S. covers the years from the start of construction, overseen by Superintendent William Hammond Hall – who created the overall master plan for Golden Gate Park – through the 53-year tenure of Superintendent John McLaren. The P.O.S. end of 1943 also marks the World War II years that brought an end to the New Deal construction projects.

### *Status*

The Department is currently reviewing options to expand the P.O.S. If expanded, the P.O.S. could potentially encompass Midcentury features and developments related to the Park including the construction of additional “Rationalistic Park” features. Features that are currently under review and for which no determination has been made at this time include the Stow Lake Boat House, Tennis Clubhouse, Golf Clubhouse, and the County Hall of Flowers Building. Other buildings, such as the maintenance and repair facilities were also constructed in the 1950s. In addition to buildings, the Department is in the process of identifying and evaluating the structures, sites and objects built between 1944 – c1965, including several entrance gates; sculptures and monuments; the 1951 Golf Course; the Strybing Bench, placed in 1951; the 1961 Rose Garden; and the major remodel of Strybing Arboretum in

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<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Alford Bridge was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1970 by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

1964. The Department is in the process of pulling building permits to determine construction dates, architects, and history of alterations.

#### **Civic Art Collection**

The Civic Art Collection holdings in Golden Gate Park include 45 sculptures and monuments ranging from an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Buddha sculpture to contemporary works. The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) has jurisdiction over the monuments and sculpture in Golden Gate Park that are included in its Civic Art Collection. Proposals to relocate, demolish, alter or remove these works require review and approval by the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Many of the sculptures included in the Civic Art Collection in Golden Gate Park are Article 10 Landmarks and therefore are concurrently under the jurisdiction of the HPC and SFAC. These include the Francis Scott Key memorial (Landmark No. 96) and sculptures identified as contributing elements of the Music Concourse (Landmark No. 249). The Music Concourse designation includes 18 contributing sculptures, monuments, and fountains.

#### *Status*

Given that the SFAC and HPC have jurisdiction over the same sculptures and monuments in Golden Gate Park, a clear process for the review of proposed changes to these objects should be developed. The Department is currently exploring these options.

#### **Inventory & Classification of Park Features**

The Department is in the process of completing an inventory spreadsheet of Golden Gate Park buildings, structures, objects, and sites. The inventory includes existing National Register status; existing Article 10 status; proposed Article 10 status; park features (buildings, structures, objects, and sites) that require further evaluation; and pipeline projects that involve demolition, alteration, or renovation as proposed by the Recreation and Parks Department.

#### *Status*

The Department has begun photographing contributing features, reviewing select building permits, and linking the inventory spreadsheet to a GIS-compatible format.

The Department is currently exploring various options for the appropriate review of proposals that may affect Golden Gate Park's historic resources. These options include a combination of Certificates of Appropriateness, Administrative Certificates of Appropriateness, Design Guidelines, and Letters of Notification. The Department has begun the process of classifying park features and the appropriate level of review required for minor alterations, major alterations, or demolition. The Department will further define minor and major alterations in the coming weeks. The goal is to create a transparent, predictable process that ensures sufficient review, while at the same time not placing an undue burden on the HPC or any City agency.

#### *Design Guidelines*

The Department is exploring the concept of design guidelines for specific property types. Development of design guidelines could reduce the level of required review. For example, restrooms – many of which were constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) – comprise nearly half of the park's

historic building stock. Design guidelines for WPA restrooms could provide direction for future ADA-related renovation and reduce the level of required HPC review. Design guidelines could focus on the following property types: WPA restrooms, meadows, signage, and preservation maintenance.

### **Golden Gate Park Master Plan**

The Recreation and Parks Department embarked upon a master planning process from 1992-1995. The Master Plan was then adopted by the Recreation and Park Commission on October 15, 1998. It built upon several previous planning efforts including a set of Objectives and Policies adopted in 1979, a 1980 forestry management plan, and a transportation management plan of 1985. Elements of the Master Plan include Objectives & Policies, Park Landscape, Circulation, Recreation, Visitor Facilities, Buildings and Monuments, Utilities and Infrastructure, Maintenance and Operations Areas, Park Management, Park Funding, Special Area Plans, and Implementation.

The Department is currently exploring the potential to incorporate language from the Golden Gate Master Plan into the Article 10 Historic District designation. Many of the recommendations related to the preservation of buildings, landscapes, and spatial configuration and the management of forests and vegetation should be considered as the basis of an Article 10 designation. The Department is also identifying sections of the Master Plan that might conflict with the Article 10 designation, such as proposals to demolish or renovate historic buildings or structures.

### **Non-Contributing Features**

There are hundreds of non-historic structures, objects, and sites in Golden Gate Park. These non-historic features, which are unaffected by Article 10 designation, include trash cans, benches, picnic tables, grills, non-historic flag poles, dumpsters, curbs, drinking fountains, and street signs. In addition, policies such as temporary or permanent road closures would be unaffected by designation.

Although signage – including street signs, way-finding signs, and traffic regulatory signage – is a non-contributing feature, in the coming weeks, the Department will explore options for signage design guidelines in order to provide consistent signage that is compatible with the historic district.

### **Archeology**

Potential archeological resources and/ or remnants of historic retaining walls or other infrastructure located within Golden Gate Park are fairly limited. Known examples include the original path of Huntington Falls, though it is possible that there are archeological resources related to the 1894 Mid-Winter Fair, early trails, removed structures, or other below ground cultural resources. The Department is exploring options and language for Article 10 protection of potential archeological resources.

## **LANDSCAPES**

Naturalistic parkland comprises the largest land category in Golden Gate Park and should be preserved to protect the pastoral character of the park and to ensure the retention of park open space. Naturalistic parkland – woodlands, scenic lakes, ponds, marshes, watercourses, and wildlife habitats – is the

predominant landscape of the park and gives the park its visual character.<sup>3</sup> Major meadow and lawn areas include many of the largest open spaces within the park and host both passive and active recreation uses.<sup>4</sup>

The Department is currently exploring options for review procedures to ensure that naturalistic parklands, meadows, vistas, and the relationship between open spaces and the park's woodlands and buildings, are documented in the Article 10 Historic District designation.

### **Trees**

There are approximately 60,000 trees in Golden Gate Park and the tree maintenance needs of the Park are unique. According to a recent report commissioned by the Recreation and Parks Department, of the 1,285 requests for maintenance over the past 3 years, 465 (36%) have come from Golden Gate Park. Of tree-based legal claims (1999 to 2008), 33 of 83 (40%) were associated with Golden Gate Park. The Park had 519 of the 738 (70%) tree failure reports (1991 to 2006) contained in the California Tree Failure Report Program's database.<sup>5</sup> Specimen plants and trees help define the character of cultural landscapes and contribute to the significance of a historic property. Field conservation techniques can extend the lifespan of individual trees, but ultimately, due to safety concerns, specimens will need to be removed from the landscape.

### **Examples of San Francisco Tree Designations: Significant and Landmark Trees**

An understanding of the definitions of and current policies regulating "Significant Trees" and "Landmark Trees" is necessary to understand the issues surrounding potential Article 10 designation of trees in Golden Gate Park.

#### *Landmark Trees Program*

Landmark Trees are considered extraordinarily special due to the rareness of the species, their size or age, or extraordinary structure, or ecological contribution. In addition, historical or cultural importance can qualify a tree for Landmark Tree status. Landmark Tree designation – a separate process from Article 10 designation – is granted after public hearings at both the Urban Forestry Council and the Board of Supervisors. Landmark Trees have the highest level of protection in the City. In San Francisco, there are 19 Landmark trees or groups of trees, these include the cluster of Eucalyptus Trees planted by Mary Ellen Pleasant, the Moretown Bay Fig planted by H.H. Bancroft, and the Palm trees located on the Dolores Street Median. Property owners, any member of the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, and/or directors of a city department may nominate trees on public or private land to protect and preserve their value and presence in the community under the San Francisco Landmark Tree Program.

The San Francisco Landmark Tree Program is not covered under Article 10 of the Planning Code, nor is it under the jurisdiction of the HPC. Rather, it is covered by Article 16 of the Public Works Code and

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<sup>3</sup> Golden Gate Park Master Plan, Section 3, page 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Tree Hazard Area Prioritization Background, Criteria and Recommendations to San Francisco Recreation & Park Department, February 4, 2010

administered by the Department of Public Work's Bureau of Urban Forestry Council.

*Significant Trees*

Significant Trees, by definition, are located on private property and are defined by size, rather than cultural or historical associations. Significant Trees must meet minimum size requirements as established by the Urban Forestry Ordinance (revised 2007) of the Public Works Code<sup>6</sup>. These size requirements are as follow:

- 20 feet or greater in height,
- 15 feet or greater canopy width, or
- 12 inches or greater diameter of trunk measured at 4.5 feet above grade.

There are no Landmark Trees (regulated by Article 16 of the Public Works code) in Golden Gate Park, nor in any other public park in San Francisco. However, thousands of trees within the Park would meet the minimum size criteria for Significant Trees, and some would also qualify as Landmark Trees due to the rareness of the species, their size or age, extraordinary structure, ecological contribution or historical and cultural importance.

*Status*

Given that the review and management of Golden Gate Park's vast forests is beyond the scope and expertise of the Historic Preservation Commission, Department staff is currently exploring various options regarding tree designations, preservation maintenance guidelines, jurisdiction, and review procedures.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Department has developed a preliminary list of potential Article 10 contributing trees and groves to document and evaluate. This list focuses primarily on unique trees or and groves that may be significant for historic associations.

**Trees**

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McLaren Lodge "Uncle John's Tree"

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George Washington Elm Tree

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Herbert Hoover Tree

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Liberty Tree

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Panhandle Specimen Trees

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Colonial Historic Trees

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**Groves**

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Heroes Redwood Grove

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Music Concourse Pollarded Trees

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Music Concourse Eucalyptus Trees

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Redwood Memorial Grove

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George Washington Bicentennial Grove

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Oak Woodland Grove

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<sup>6</sup> "Significant" trees, as defined in the Public Works code are those located on private property.

<sup>7</sup> Various publications have been reviewed including the Golden Gate Park Master Plan, Forestry Hazard Prioritization Plan, and Elizabeth McClintock's *The Trees of Golden Gate Park*.

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Chinese Friendship Pine

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Moon / Apollo Tree

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Specimen trees that are rare, extraordinarily large, older than 100 years. Specimen trees, culturally or historically important

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Australian Tree Fern Dell

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Ocean Beach windbreak trees

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### **Preservation Maintenance**

Preservation maintenance is the practice of monitoring and controlling change in the landscape to ensure that its historic integrity is not altered and features are not lost. Field techniques that effectively integrate traditional horticulture practice with preservation objectives can ensure that important resources are protected and landscape character is preserved over time.<sup>8</sup> The Department is currently exploring ways to incorporate preservation maintenance guidelines in the Article 10 Historic District nomination. The Department will consult with Recreation and Parks Department staff and arborists during this process.

### **Outreach & Coordination**

The Department has identified several agencies, commissions, and citizen advisory groups that currently have jurisdiction or review over various aspects of Golden Gate Park's ongoing maintenance, capital improvements, planning, and oversight. These entities include the Board of Supervisors, the Recreation and Parks Department, the Recreation and Parks Commission, the Golden Gate Park Music Concourse Authority, the Park, Recreation, and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC), the San Francisco Planning Department, the San Francisco Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the San Francisco Arts Commission.<sup>9</sup> Interdepartmental notification and coordination will ensure that vested entities are engaged, as appropriate, in the Article 10 designation process.

The Planning Department, in consultation with Recreation and Parks Department staff, is developing a list of stakeholder groups and will notify these groups in all required mailings regarding related public hearings of the HPC. In addition, the Department will notify persons and organizations listed on the adjacent 311 notification lists as well as interested persons upon request.

### **Hearing Schedule**

Department staff is scheduled to present at the February 1, 2011 hearing of PROSAC and the February 2, 2011 hearing of the Recreation and Park Commission's Capital Committee. The Department will return to the HPC for the initiation hearing of Golden Gate Park at the February 16, 2011 HPC hearing.

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<sup>8</sup> Clippings, National Park Service Publication

<sup>9</sup> Additional oversight by state and federal agencies is required in specific instances, primarily related to projects involving lakes or specific habitats. Such agencies include the California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and the Army Corps of Engineers.