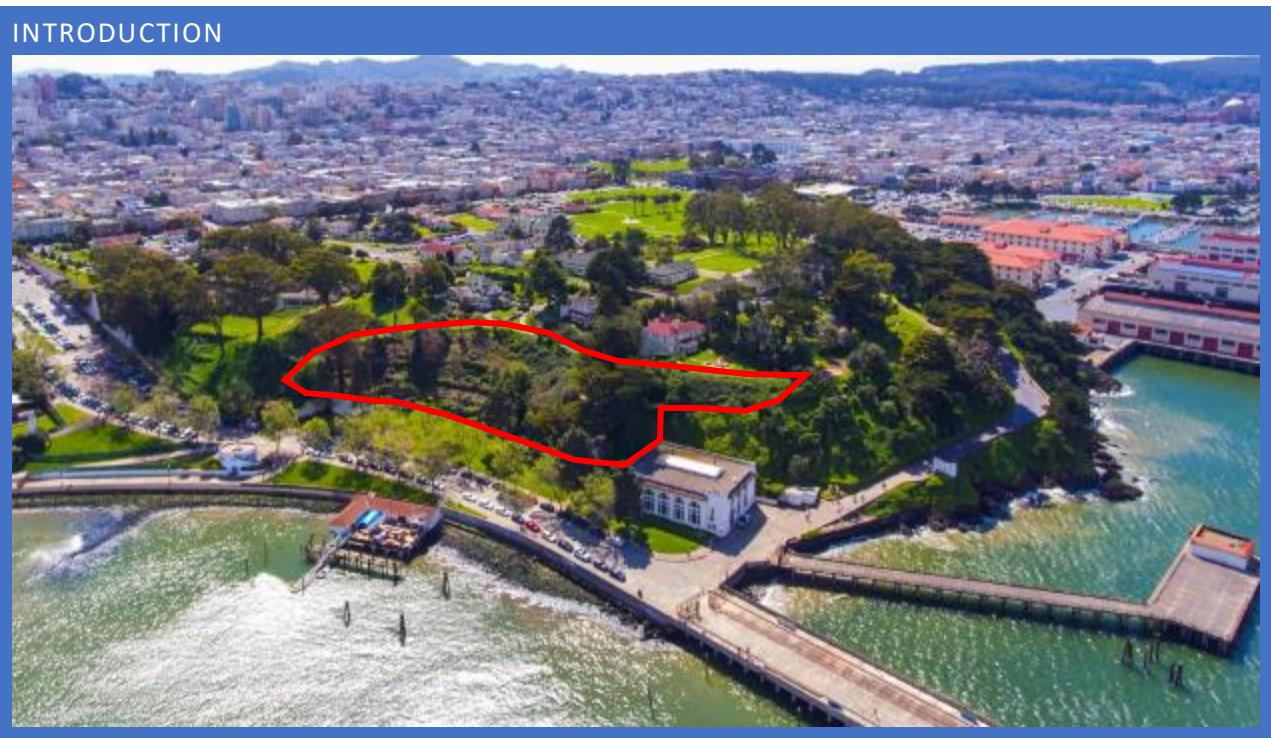


# BLACK POINT HISTORIC GARDENS

## CGCI GRANT PROPOSAL



The Parks Conservancy is asking the California Garden Club Incorporated (CGCI) to support the development of the historic Black Point Garden. In exchange CGCI's logo will appear on acrylic plant signs in the garden. CGCI will also be promoted on the Parks Conservancy's social media. Local CGCI clubs can also participate by growing plants for the garden, and adopting an area of the garden.

CGCI will agree to raising \$10,000 over the course of 5 years to support buying and growing plants and purchasing tools and supplies

Black Point Historic Gardens is an area just under one acre in size encompassing the hillside overlooking Aquatic Park. The area extends from behind the General's Residence north to behind Quarter's four and extends down the hillside to the lowest terrace where there is a flat lawn at the end of west side of Van Ness Street.

Black Point Historic Gardens is located at a junction of Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) land, San Francisco Maritime Museum land and the City of San Francisco land.

Black Point Historic Gardens is on an eastward facing section of the hillside that wraps around Fort Mason from the corner of Van Ness Street and Bay Street westward to the stairs that border the water pumping station.

#### CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



*John and Jessie Fremont lived in a cottage on the Point for a couple years. During this short time, she created strolling gardens across the hillside to have discussions of social topics of the day – slavery was a key topic.*

#### Periods of Significance

The information below is taken from the Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Mason: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, prepared by Amy Hoke and Eliot Foulds of the National Park Service in September 2004. The Cultural Landscape Report is divided into seven time periods: “Ohlone to 1850”, “1851 to 1870”, “1871 to 1905”, “1906 to 1919”, “1920 to 1945”, “1946 to 1972”, and “1972 to Present”, which we have used to determine significant eras in Black Point’s history.

#### Pre-Colonial Era [Ohlone-1776]

This coastal promontory, a rock outcropping formerly isolated between drifting sand dunes and the bay, has been both prospect and refuge supporting human life over thousands of years. During the past eleven-thousand years, the equivalent of yesterday in geological time, unremitting westerly winds have piled up volumes of sand against the region’s north-south ridgelines. A rim of wetlands once lined the Bay shore, and grasses and annual plants served as the dominant vegetation further inland. Shrubs

and trees thrived along the corridors of streams and grew freely in the moist soils of north and east facing hillsides.

Three separate plant communities would have been found at Fort Mason prior to its urban development: Coastal Bluff Scrub, Coastal Scrub, and Coastal Dune Scrub.

Near the topographic summit at Fort Mason, the native Ohlone people took shelter from the wind and sand, establishing what is believed to have been a seasonal village. Shell mounds, a cooking hearth, and fish and sea mammal bones have been discovered near the current parade ground and attributed to Ohlone occupation. Ohlone dwellings have been described as typically small hemispherical huts, thatched with grasses and reeds sheltering between four and twenty-four individuals. A seasonal encampment here was well placed to reap the benefit of its location, including a convenient supply of fresh water and access to a rich estuary immediately west, a source of diverse marine and terrestrial animals to supplement their diet. The waters of the bay further supported enormous flocks of ducks and geese, as well as steelhead trout and silver salmon. To this abundance was added the valuable skins and protein available to hunters of marine mammals such as seals and sea lions that may have once sunned themselves on the rocks just offshore. Trade between tribes surrounding the bay provided access to a wide variety of materials, including obsidian for arrows, pigments, bowstrings and basketry materials. With cliffs projecting over one hundred feet above the bay, any settlement located on this promontory provided the Ohlone an excellent vantage point west to the entrance of the bay.

### **Spanish and Mexican Colonial Era [1776-1848]**

In 1776, as independence from the British Crown was boldly declared in Philadelphia, the Spanish sailed into the San Francisco Bay, intent on colonizing Ohlone lands. By 1787, most members of the Yelamu tribe of Ohlone living on the San Francisco Peninsula were baptized, if not otherwise driven off or dead. Native peoples had ceased to represent any threat to Spanish settlement and attention was turned to the defense of the area from more distant enemies.

In 1794, the Spanish governor of California requested that a secondary battery of artillery be constructed east of the Presidio at Punta Medanos, or “Point Sand Dune.” This new battery, constructed on the north shore of the San Francisco Peninsula closer to the mission settlement, was built of bundled sticks and piled sand. It was intended to guard the Yerba Buena anchorage in the event that the English succeeded in evading the more formidable battery guarding the mouth of the bay.

Barely thirty years after colonists in eastern North America achieved independence from Britain, Mexico achieved independence from Spain (1821), and California

became its remote northern province. The Mexican military presence at the Presidio of San Francisco, including the battery at Punta Medanos, was in an inactive status, if not

quite abandoned, a little over ten years later. In 1848, Mexico ceded California to the United States as the price of military defeat.

### **Gold Rush and Gardens Era [1848- 1863]**

The booming Gold Rush economy of San Francisco understandably led to squatters, land disputes and rapid development. The need for coastal fortifications to protect the rich new state led the federal government to stake its own land claims. President Fillmore proclaimed the former Spanish defensive positions at Point San Jose and the Presidio as part of a new United States Military Reservation.

Presidential proclamations aside, the United States Military Reservation at Point San Jose, also known as Black Point, existed only on paper. The United States Army was later said to have slumbered on whatever legal rights it claimed for a period of fourteen years – until confronted by the emergency of the Civil War. This failure to take physical possession of the property in a timely way was later used in court against the government by so-called squatters, alleging that they had been relieved of their property without due compensation.

These “squatters” were the residents of the houses built by Leonidas Haskell and George Eggleton in 1851, along the edge of what we now know as Black Point. There were five houses along Black Point, behind which was a road and a high fence to protect from prevailing summer wind. In front of the houses, facing east, were flower gardens with walks that led through both native and non-native trees and shrubs, switching back and forth along the slope down to the water’s edge. The homes were occupied by wealthy civilians, including the notable Jessie Benton Fremont, who is credited with the development of Black Point’s walking gardens.

Jessie Benton Fremont (1824-1902) was the wife of John Charles Fremont and daughter of Missouri’s Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Mrs. Fremont first came to California for a visit during 1849. Following her visit, John Charles Fremont purchased the oldest of the Black Point dwellings known as the Porter’s Lodge on the point of the promontory. Jessie Fremont was a refined and literate woman. She worked alongside her husband on his political career, and she is credited with serving as host to “San Francisco’s first literary and political salons.” Though her time at Black Point was brief, Jessie certainly had an impact on the culture and landscape of

the site. Although Jessie put a lot of money and time into her gardens, she did not garden alone. Along with many unnamed helpers, the gardens were tended by a groundskeeper, Isaac, who by Jessie's account was of African American and Native American descent. She also had help from French gardener Pere Condet.

This era came to an end when the military took back Black Point for military use in 1863, at the start of the Civil War. Having moved east with her husband at the beginning of the war, the formidable Jessie Benton Fremont was not present to defend her Porter's Lodge, and its gardens from the occupation of the Army.

## **Military Era**

When the military took back Black Point at the start of the Civil War, they evicted the civilian residents and transformed the houses built in the Gold Rush era into an Officers' Row. The Fremont home was quickly replaced with a coastal battery. Despite the displacement of the former residents, the military maintained care and use of the walking gardens created and tended by Jessie Fremont. With the exception of luxuriant growth of ornamental plants introduced by former civilian residents on the east slope, vegetation at the post remained essentially as it was before occupation by the military.

After the threat of confederate invasion subsided, the military remained at their reclaimed posts at Black Point until the transfer of Fort Mason to the National Park Service in 1972.

## **National Park Service Era (1972-present)**

The National Park Service has been the land stewards of Fort Mason since the enactment of Public Law 92-589 on October 27, 1972. Specifically, with regards to Black Point, the lack of staff to properly tend and care for the gardens led to their decline. While the gardens surrounding the historic homes have been maintained, the hillside gardens were fenced off and allowed to go wild.

With the hillside becoming densely overgrown, trespassing and building of encampments increased. The NPS expressed interest in reviving these historic gardens and creating a community volunteer program to restore and care for them. This process is currently underway, and the site is expected to open back up to the public in August 2020.





***Before restoration work started thousands of San Francisco visitors would pass by not knowing that a garden use to be on this hillside.***

Starting in 2017 work has been done to clear way the over grown vegetation and make safe the walkways and staircases. What follows is a description of the site and pictures of the initial work that has been accomplished.

There is one main staircase transecting the slope that provides access from the bottom of Van Ness Avenue to the top of the hill that meets the perimeter walkway between the General's Residence and Quarter's 2.





Picture Above: Staircase 2017



Picture Above: Staircase 2020



There is one center walkway traversing the mid-hillside. At the northern end, this walkway splits into two walkways, one heads up a set of stairs connecting to the perimeter walkway, while the other remains level to meet the northern stairs by the water tanks. A variety of landscape retaining walls have been constructed to develop the pathways and reduce the steepness of the slope. These walls include grouted rock and concrete crib-type retaining walls which range in height from about 3 to 10 feet.



Above Picture: collapsed retaining wall 2017



Above Picture: rebuilt retaining wall 2020



An existing railroad tunnel is aligned beneath the slope and General's Residence. The tunnel's east portal is located at the south end of the concrete retaining wall, near the southeast corner of the site. The railroad tunnel and associated retaining walls were finished in 1914; the tunnel was last used in 1975 (John Martini). In addition, a welded steel access door, located farther north in the face of the concrete retaining wall, provides access to a subsurface mine control station that guarded the entrance of San Francisco Bay during World War 2, the extents of which are unknown.

Today, the terraced hillside of Black Point Historic Gardens supports a few native plants. For the most part, the hillside had become overgrown with invasive elms, ivy and grasses during years of neglect obscuring the pathways, terraces and views.



Above Picture: cape ivy and other vegetation have taken over the garden, 2017.



Above Picture: The staircase and walkway after vegetation cleared, 2020.

Notable native vegetation identified to date include *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, *Aesculus californica*, *Juglans californica*, *Scrophularia californica* and *Marah fabaceus*. A few ornamental horticultural plants still survive as remnants including *Chasmanthe floribunda*, *Chasmanthe floribunda* 'Duckittii', *Rosa* hybrid, *Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora*, *Leucosium sativum*, *Fuchsia magellanica*, *Euonymus*, *Vinca major*, *Narcissus* hybrid, *Cordyline australis*, *Phoenix canariensis*, and *Eucalyptus globulus*. See attachment 2 – Plants of Black Point Historic Gardens.

There is much debris left from encampments, including hypodermic needles, and other trash left from trespassers. Initial clearing began in August 2017 with goats to clear the hillside. Shortly after, contractors cut invasive elms and removed 2000lbs of garbage. Currently, a modest weekly volunteer program has begun to control overgrowth, utilize weed suppression and litter pickup.

Currently, thousands of visitors pass by the lower access daily, not even realizing the hillside is there, while the upper entrances, also closed, are more accessible to local residents. Opening the garden access will increase visitation to the hillside gardens. Increased pedestrian traffic near the housing rentals will need to be taken into consideration. Making the hillside garden accessible to those with mobility needs will need thought.

Construction to repair the walkways, stairs, and terraces are underway January 2020 with an expected finish date of late summer 2020.

#### PLANTING PALLETTE





*Here are some example pictures of gardens that are being used for inspiration*



A look at historic photos of Black Point Garden, from the time Jesse Fremont carefully managed the grounds, reveals only hints of what the gardens looked like in the past. What we do know is put together from bits and pieces—like a puzzle. One photo reveals sprawling roses, much like the historic roses discovered on site during restoration. Another, trimmed hedges neatly surrounding ornamental gardens. One story mentions the bright red flowers pouring down the hillside and another mentions the fruit trees growing at the crest of the hill. These pieces of inspiration are the guides for program managers in making decisions about what design choices will best carry on the story of these historic walking gardens.

Black Point Historic Gardens have been planned with function, beauty, and history in mind. The gardens will host a mixture of native and non-native ornamentals, with the intention of showcasing the creative possibilities of a drought-tolerant garden. Much of the first phase of garden development will showcase perennial grasses like *Nassella Pulchra*, *Deschampsia Cespitosa*, and *Bouteloua Gracilis* accompanied by California Native wildflowers. These plantings will expand to include bold color combinations, modern flowers like foxtail lilies, allium, and echinops, as well as edibles to be enjoyed by the public. Carefully trimmed boxwood borders and intentionally placed topiaries will add hints of formality to the garden and act as a nod to the gardens of the gold-rush era.

Here is a list of native California plants that will be planted in the garden		
Achillea millefolium (yarrow) 	Acmispon glaber 	Angelica hendersonii 



*Aristolochia californica* (vine)



*Artemisia douglasiana*



*Aquilegia formosa*



*Artemisia douglasiana*



*Baccharis pilularis* ssp. *Pilularis*  
(coyote bush)



*Castilleja affinis*











*Corylus cornuta*



*Diplacus aurantiacus*





	<p>Erigeron glaucus</p> 	<p><i>Eriogonum latifolium</i></p> 
<p>Eriophyllum staechadifolium</p> 	<p>Eschscholzia californica</p> 	<p>Festuca rubra</p> 
<p>Fragaria chiloensis</p> 	<p>Frangula californica</p> 	
<p>Holodiscus discolor</p> 	<p>Horkelia californica</p> 	<p>Iris douglasiana</p> 

*Juncus lescurii* or *Juncus patens*



*Lonicera involucrata*



*Lupinus arboreus*



*Lupinus bicolor*



*Lupinus chamissonis*



*Phacelia californica*





Scrophularia californica			
Stachys rigida		Syphyotrichum chilense	

## MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

***Time to fully restore the gardens is expected to take between five and seven years. The garden will be prioritized by sections to restore highly visible and easily accessed areas first.***

Our goal is to maintain Black Point Historic Gardens, within its historical context, as a site for public enjoyment and environmental and social education through community engagement. We aim to engage new and returning parks visitors with experiences that speak to the values of stewardship, community, diversity, education, resilience, and our shared responsibility to one another and the environment.

We aim to achieve this goal in part through the following objectives:

- Ensure that improvements are sustainable and can be maintained over time given the limited labor, resources, materials, and funds.
- Work directly with community partners to create relevant programming and resources
- Support interpretive themes that:

- Draw from diverse histories and experiences
- Speak to the resilience of the human spirit
- Foster learning and ask visitors to engage with their own experiences
- Protect and enhance NPS resources by recapturing a sense of the historic landscape

## **Implementation Plan**

The challenge of turning a neglected garden into an inviting public garden is exciting and daunting at the same time. Transforming the one acre-site will require a well-executed implementation plan. An implementation plan will consider several factors including:

- Funds
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Safety
- Time

Available funds will determine purchasing of materials needed as well as funds available for staff and intern wages. Volunteer assistance will greatly increase work accomplished, and staff time needs to be allocated to outreach for building a volunteer program. Safety of volunteers and staff while working on a steep hillside require pre-planning and determining where volunteers can work. In addition to working on slopes, there is considerable amount of walking up and down stairs while carrying materials.

Time to fully restore the gardens is expected to take between five and seven years. The garden will be prioritized by sections to restore highly visible and easily accessed areas first. Once an area is completed, the next priority area will be worked on while maintaining the previous area. Ideally, clearing overgrowth and sheet mulching will take place during the summer months, as allowed by songbird nesting season, with planting starting with winter rains.

The implementation plan also aims to connect the design of the gardens to community engagement goals.

Rehabilitation efforts need to address site issues including:

- Weed control
  - The neglect of Black Point Historic Gardens since 1972 has led to a significant seed bank of weeds in the soil. With soil disturbance and removal of the tree/shrub cover, the seeds will germinate. With traditional

winter rains prompting weed growth, weeding should be expected from the beginning of November through to May. While every effort is made to make this a wildlife friendly garden, it is acknowledged the use of herbicides is a tool that will be used for the removal of invasive blackberry and Siberian elm.

- Erosion
  - The majority of Black Point Historic Gardens consists of a slope inclined between about 1.5:1 (horizontal: vertical) and 2:1. There have been two notable landslides. The northern end of the site has succumbed to one landslide in the past with debris covering a retaining wall and walkway. A second landslide in the central section was caused by erosion and has undermined the retaining walls and walkways leading to their collapse. Overall, the steepness of the upper portion of the hill has resulted in slow downslope creep and has caused subsidence, cracking and tilting the pathways.
  - Sandy soils on moderately steep slopes or clayey soils on steep slopes are susceptible to erosion when exposed to concentrated surface water flow. There is potential for erosion during vegetation removal and any removal of root ball systems that are holding the soil in place. Where root balls are left in place, future settlements will be inevitable due to decay and decomposition of the organic materials. Regular monitoring should be performed to ensure that appropriate mitigation is provided for an increased risk of erosion and instability, especially during heavy rains and regular irrigation.
  - To date, slopes cleared of overgrown vegetation are being sheet-mulched using burlap fabric pinned into place. Plants with extensive root systems will be needed to maintain a stable slope.
- Water usage
  - Installation of irrigation is being performed by contractors as part of the construction project. The irrigation connects to Fort Mason's system to city water. While the gardens are being designed to use best practices of gardening in a Mediterranean climate, use of water will be needed to establish plants and to maintain the gardens throughout the year. A water budget is recommended for all plantings.
  - Rainwater collection is recommended as a future project.
- Compost /Vegetation Disposal
  - Currently, removed vegetation is taken to the Presidio compost yard using a pickup truck. This arrangement is a good solution to disposing of an abundance of vegetation.
  - An on-site compost bin may be a possible educational tool, however, finding a suitable site will need to be found, given views, proximity to rental



homes for smell and attraction of rodents, ease of access and if large amounts of biomass are produced, vegetation still may need to be composted at the Presidio Compost yard. For composting woody debris, purchasing a chipper would need to be considered, especially noise levels and finding suitable storage for the chipper and fuel.

- Staff/volunteer time to maintain the compost would need to be allocated.
- Once the garden moves into a maintenance phase, perhaps vegetation could be deposited with the Fort Mason Community garden green bin; or NPS compost/ green bins at Fort Mason.

## **Monitoring and Research**

The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy supports community stewardship and science within our sites. Black Point Historic Gardens offers a unique opportunity to study the transformation of an overgrown garden.

Monitoring the effects of a garden planted with ornamental and native plants on pollinators and wildlife in an urban setting is one aspect that will be studied. Beginning in 2019, transects were set throughout the hillside to establish a baseline noting species and counts of pollinators on plant diversity.

As planting continues more research topics can be explored, including:

- Which plants best attract pollinators
- Water wise gardening
- Becoming a certified pollinator garden
- Testing the range and success of various horticultural species
- Monitoring seeds that germinate from the soil

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Statement of intent**

Our goal is to maintain Black Point Historic Gardens, within its historical context, as a site for public enjoyment, horticultural, environmental and social education, community activation, and the arts. We hope to engage new and returning parks visitors with experiences that speak to the values of community, diversity, education, resilience, and our shared responsibility to one another and the environment.

## **Engaging marginalized communities**

In order to achieve our community engagement goals and maintain our expressed values, we move forward with explicit efforts to reach communities currently underserved by National Parks. These communities include but are not limited to: Black and Indigenous People of Color, youth (particularly Title 1 schools), English Language Learners, people experiencing houselessness, low income communities, and people with disabilities. The following considerations are intended to be applied to all engagement efforts, not only a select few.

### **Outreach**

Outreach for events and recreation will be done with intentional efforts to include marginalized communities. Through a combination of partnerships, increased accessibility, relationship building, and targeted advertising, we intend to invite in and include diverse audiences to Black Point Historic Gardens. A few tactics to begin our efforts are:

- Multilingual flyers to be posted in all neighborhoods in San Francisco (bus stops, community centers, libraries, laundromats, places of worship, YMCA)
- Accessibility information on flyers, media for events
- School visits/principal talks with priority to Title 1 schools (not limited to AP classes)
- Social Service Providers (flyers, contact program managers)
- Word of mouth with houseless community in area
- CCSF, SF State, Laney College, Merritt Community College, Berkeley City College environmental departments

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility must be taken into consideration for events at the site, in particular but not exclusive to physical abilities, language, financial access, and transportation. The following are recommended for increased accessibility:

- Designate flat and paved areas as alternative sites for people who cannot access the sloping gardens
- Multilingual signs and flyers
- Partnership with library shuttle system

- Availability of bus tickets for volunteers
- Accessibility to be listed on promotional information
- Acquisition of Porta-Potty
- Nutritious snacks provided at volunteer programs

### **Drop-In Volunteering**

Black Point Historic Gardens' drop-in volunteer programming will occur 9am-12pm every Tuesday and 3rd Saturday. This time frame should be revisited as the garden develops to meet the needs of the community and garden space. Volunteers will engage in a variety of tasks related to the stewardship of the gardens, as well as docent work with visitors.

### **Group Volunteering**

Group volunteering will be available to corporate and community groups on a Tuesday-Saturday schedule. In order to remain equitable it is suggested that there be two time frames available to groups: 9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm, and volunteer program sign-ups be limited to a controlled release (3 months at a time). Volunteers will engage in a variety of tasks related to the stewardship of the gardens, as well as cultural history and interpretation of the site.

### **Community Events**

Black Point Historic Gardens will host several community events related to the values of community, diversity, education, resilience, and our shared responsibility to one another and the environment. These will be tested as one-time events, with the hope of becoming recurring in some cases. Certain events may need special consideration with relation to noise, permitting, and partnerships.

Some suggested events are:

- Story Time in the park
- Volunteers or partners hold story time in the garden for youth, coupled with time for families to explore the garden space.
- Park Academy Series
  - Participants can volunteer or make a suggested donation to participate in various workshops in the garden. Workshop topics could range from perennial pruning, worm bin composting, ethnobotany, nature art, and beyond; all with the goal of giving participants relevant tools to use at home while fostering learning, community and engaging new volunteers.
- Docent-led garden walks



- Volunteer docents or interpretive rangers could use the newly established trails and gathering sites at Black Point Historic Gardens to lead educational walks, focusing on a variety of topics including but not limited to: history of the site, local bird populations, and native plant communities.
- Music in the Park
  - The stage at Black Point Historic Gardens could be used to create space for music events. This would require partnership with San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park to use the lower lawn area.
- Plays in the Park
  - Echoing the sentiment of Music in the Park, Plays in the Park could utilize the stage area and lower lawn area beneath the gardens (in partnership with San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park) for public or private performances.
  - Potential partner: We Players
- Youth-only volunteer program for High Schoolers
  - Several high schoolers in San Francisco are in need of volunteer opportunities, either to fulfill a school or sports requirement, for college applications, or as an afterschool opportunity. We propose creating a time slot that fits with SFUSD schedules to host a youth-only volunteer program that prioritizes stewardship, environmental education, and skills training. This could occur once a week or bi-weekly and should involve partnership with one or more high schools in the area.
- Bike Parties
  - SF Bike Party is a group that hosts bike rides for people of all ages and abilities to bike around San Francisco's bike routes in costume. They often have an end location at which to celebrate. As a site situated in the middle of a bike route, Black Point Historic Gardens has the potential for partnership with this organization for an event. This could be combined with another event to maximize engagement with the space.
- Community Speakers Series (Authors, intellectuals, inspirational speakers, etc)
  - One opportunity to align with the historic spirit of activism and intellectualism of Jessie Fremont's Black Point would be events centered around Community Speakers. This could be individual events or series of speakers, with the focus resting on the arts, educational engagement, and community activation.
- Yoga/tai-chi in the garden
  - Group outdoor recreation events like Yoga, Tai-Chi, and more could be held in partnership with experienced teachers from around the Bay Area
- Movie Night
  - Movie nights could be hosted at the lower lawn through a partnership with San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park. The retaining wall or a

portable screen could be used for projecting films. This event could be a monthly occurrence if successful.

- Off the Grid: Food Trucks
  - With permission from San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park, the lower lawn or end of Van Ness Street could easily be used as a site for Food trucks. This could be an alluring for visitors and residents alike. Off the Grid does their own publicity for events and has connections to several food trucks in the Bay.
- Sunset/Sunrise trail walk
  - These events would require a shift in schedule for Program Managers, however, would be a beautiful way to draw visitors to the newly established Black Point Trail. Trail walk could end with an option to volunteer in the gardens, with the promise of coffee and pastries to those who stay around. Partnerships can also be explored to lead trail walks with interpretive rangers, historians, etc.