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Flower show to bloom again at lake

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An indoor late-winter refuge full of daffodils, tulips, azaleas and gardening know-how will return to the city in March.

The Chicago Flower & Garden Show, which left its 10-year home at Navy Pier for the convention center in Rosemont two years ago, will be back on the lakefront March 7-15.

It also is back in Mayor Richard Daley's good graces. At a news conference Thursday morning, he said, "The Flower and Garden Show is a perfect example of our goal of making Chicago the most environmentally friendly city in the world."

The show changed hands and moved to the suburbs after the city held its own flower show in Grant Park in May 2006. At the mayor's behest, the Garden in a City show, originally planned as a

yearly event, drew many top landscape designers to create elaborate gardens, but it had major logistical problems and drew few visitors.

Responsibility for another edition passed from the Chicago Park District to the Mayor's Office of Special Events.

Meanwhile, the flower show, with less-elaborate exhibits, was held in Rosemont. At last spring's flower show, the city approached its sponsors about returning to Navy Pier, said Sheila King, spokeswoman for the operator, Special Events Management.

With the potential competition now gone, the Chicago Flower & Garden Show on Navy Pier will have more and grander gardens, flat-rate parking and plenty of hands-on instructional exhibits, said Tony Abruscato, president of Special Events Management.

On Thursday, he and Daley

promised a strong environmental focus.

"We share a vision," Abruscato said.

About 36,000 people attended the show each year in Rosemont, he said, about half of what the previous show had drawn in its best years at Navy Pier. The Rosemont show drew a higher proportion of suburban residents.

Abruscato said that returning to a city site with higher visibility will allow better marketing that he hopes will increase attendance. He also is looking to add an opening-night charity gala, such as the ones the mayor and his wife, Maggie, hosted before the rift in 2006.

Daley said he expects the show to draw visitors because "gas is going up and many people can't travel farther, so we encourage them to come into the city."

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