**MINUTES**
SPECIAL MEETING

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
**BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE**

September 23, 2010

**Meeting held at:**
Balboa Park Club, Ballroom
2150 Pan American Road
San Diego, CA 92101

**Mailing address is:**
Balboa Park Administration Building
2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101-4792

## ATTENDANCE:

| Members Present | Members Absent | Staff Present |
|---|---|---|
| Jeri Dilno | Scott Glazebrook | Kathleen Hasenauer |
| Jason Elrod | Don Liddell | Susan Lowery- Mendoza |
| Mick Hager | Rob Steppke | Bruce Martinez |
| Andrew Kahng | | |
| David Kinney | | |
| Mike McDowell | | |
| Michael Singleton | | |
| Don Steele | | |

## CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Kinney called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

## NON AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Harry Mathis provided comments on a Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) potential project. A feasibility study funded by a grant from Caltrans will be looking into the potential of bringing trolley services to Balboa Park. The use of vintage trolley cars from Downtown to Balboa Park is being considered.

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None

## WORKSHOP ITEMS

1. Balboa Park 2015 Centennial Improvements- Mark Johnson
   Mark Johnson of Civitas provided a consultant's overview of the project. The intent of the project is to reclaim the Plaza de Panama as a pedestrian space.

Project's Vision and Objectives are;

- Rehabilitate the Plaza de Panama
- Provide for Displaced Parking
- Improve Traffic Circulation
- Limit Pedestrian- Vehicular Conflicts for Comfort and Safety
- Increase Open Accessible Park Land
- Improve Transportation System
- Create Pedestrian Environments
- Build on Previous Park Planning
- Achieve the Improvements by December 31, 2014.

David Marshall was introduced as part of the design team. Mr. Marshall provided aspects of the project as they relate to the historic components of the Park. Mr. Johnson ended the presentation with a brief discussion about the review and approval process for the project. Mr. Johnson introduced the design team. The design team was made up of members from KCM Group, Rick Engineering, Civitas, Heritage Architects and Planning, and L.J. Black Consulting Group.

Committee Comments:

- Consideration of circulation with connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists to downtown parking should be kept in mind.
- Balboa Park Cultural Partnership has submitted a letter of support for the project. The institutions are generally supportive of the project at this stage.
- Mike McDowell stated he has accepted a position as a member of the Plaza de Panama Committee and that he would abstain from any voting relating to the projects as they come to the Balboa Park Committee.
- Supportive of the project.
- Coordination with Caltrans' Cabrillo Bridge project could provide opportunities to work together.
- One way circulation provides an opportunity to address circulation issues involving vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians crossing the Cabrillo Bridge.
- How historically accurate do we have to be with the Plaza? The original openness was part of its demise. Changes now should not let vehicles back in.
- Gold Gulch should be looked at and considered for a parking structure entrance.
- Removing vehicles from the Pan American Plaza should be considered too. Change in the surface of the Plaza de Panama could assist in keeping vehicles out.
- Supportive of project and private sector funding.
- Impacts to Palm Canyon are a concern as it is one of the most valuable and important plant collection within Balboa Park and damage can't be mitigated.
- No compelling reason to move the North Fountain. From the west it lines

up with the Bea Evenson Fountain and should be a focal point of a pedestrian oriented plaza. It is aesthetically beautiful.

- Plaza should not be seen as a commodity for adjacent institutions.
- Past discussions about a parking structure have revolved around the fallow area next to the Inspiration Parking Lot and the structure being served by a tram system. This area should be fully vetted to ensure long term positive consequence for all donors can be realized.
- Local companies with institutional knowledge of the Park could be helpful in making this plan the best possible.
- We are all here to be educated.

Public Comments:

- Like the conceptual plan for the Plaza, but have concern about potential paid parking.
- Disliked conceptual plan, concerns were expressed about closure to Laurel Street/El Prado and potential significant traffic impacts to adjacent neighborhoods. The Park itself and events will be impacted during construction. Distance to Plaza from parking structure would be too great for mobility challenged people. This should come up to a vote of all people.
- Accessibility, mobility and safety concerns were expressed.
- Phasing during construction should be taken into consideration as parking spaces will be lost during construction. Accessibility to institutions and safety concerns were raised.
- Tremendous mistake in planning is not asking people what they really need and building things to look pretty and sound reasonable. Closing of El Prado would isolate west side. Don't focus on placing parking in one place as it creates issues with ingress and egress. Don't funnel traffic.
- Support removing cars from Plaza and parking structure behind the Organ Pavilion. Access to structure should be from Park Blvd. When altering a national treasure might want to move in small steps to mitigate irreversible changes.
- If charging for parking, take into consideration impacts on seniors and patrons with limited income. Charges would impact activities.
- SOHO supports opening up and restoring of the Plaza de Panama, concerns were expressed with bridge and road connecting to Alcazar Garden, keep Plaza an open space for large public gatherings, parking structure location behind the Organ Pavilion seems reasonable, fountain in front of the Museum of Man would not qualify under National Historic District Guidelines, moving the fountain is ok just not in front of the Museum of Man, opening the Palisades is a terrific idea making that a pedestrian plaza as well.
- Thank the committee for considering the project. It's a fantastic project. Precedence for this type of project is Piedmont Park and their parking structure. One concern is bridge conflict between bikes, people, and cars. Big fan of one way traffic, a lane for cars, bikes and walkway for pedestrians.

- Key issue is access to the Plaza and getting people there. Having drop-off at the Plaza would be fantastic for mobility purposes. Deliveries to institutions need to be kept in mind.
- Full support of the project. The Plaza is very unsafe with pedestrians and vehicles. Support closing the bridge. Paid parking for premium spots in the middle of the park is fine as long as free parking available on the outskirts supported by a tram system and solving the public transportation problems.
- Like the Plaza for people but dislike the turnoff on the bridge. Bridge is an art object. Why are we putting more cars in the Park? More cars, more buildings, more stuff, then with a Plaza we'll have more programming and we'll need more staff for programming. Directions and educating the public on how to get here is key. You should shut the park down every Sunday and try it out. Get reactions, have a booth for information and get people to understand it.
- Appreciate the public process. Laurel Street being closed would create traffic problems elsewhere. We have to have alternate transportation added before we start limiting vehicles. Concerned about the bypass. Palm Canyon is a jewel. If you build a parking structure and it adds more parking I would not object to paid parking. Important factor is to preserve the Park for San Diegans of all economic status.
- We all feel a great appreciation for the Plaza de Panama Committee, the project really needs this type of leadership and philanthropy. I hope that this appreciation won't lead to decisions that may not be the best for the Park. More inclined to support one way traffic on the bridge. Consideration of day time closure of the bridge may be 8:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M. as initial step. The ramp on the bridge is a concern for historic designation. Public education of routes and entrances into Park by more signs and info is important.
- Don't look at landscaping with modern eye. Don't believe a parking structure belongs in the Park. Off ramp sounds extremely aggressive and non- reversible.
- Golden opportunity with the Mayor and the private sector coming together and having the cars removed from the Plaza making it a pedestrian plaza again.
- Look forward to supporting the Plaza Project. Agree that use of a local consultant familiar with the Park is beneficial. Most important to remember and understand is the historic fabric of the Park as this will guide you in the success you will have here.
- Agreement with the statements of conflict on the Bridge between pedestrians, bikes and cars. No problem with eliminating traffic from crossing the Bridge and would support at least reducing the traffic over it. Would not support any aspects of the project that would enhance traffic into Park. Forty (40) percent of traffic comes into Central Mesa from the Bridge, Sixty (60) percent from Park Blvd. Definitely in favor of anything that discourages traffic from coming in over the Bridge. Concerned with adding more cars in the Central Mesa and doing it in a way that is irreversible.

- Reclaiming the Plaza will make a wonderful change for the Park and pedestrian use. We should jump at the opportunity to reclaim the Pan American Plaza as well. Plenty of space in the new parking structure to accommodate those vehicles from Pan American Plaza as well. Improve public transportation to the Park bring in trolley or street car service. Committee of 100 supports this project enthusiastically.
- Removing the ability to drive into the Park and parking reasonably close would eliminate use of the Park for some. Parking structure concerned with costs to the City to maintain and to guard the structure. Concerned with the City's financial situation and their ability to accept such a donation that has costs associated with it. The donation should perhaps come with a foundation to maintain the facility.
- Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak. Parking structure is a good idea, biking transportation plan for Park should created, perhaps the best way would be to take the traffic underground. Preserve Alcazar Garden as it is a peaceful quite space.
- Use of contemporary materials, new techniques, and incorporate that into the planning process for a project that is for the next hundred years. Include new technologies and thinking out of the box concepts do not just look at what's somewhere else. If removing/moving vehicle access, than have alternative means to access areas for physically challenged to enjoy the Park. Visionary planning process should have long term vision not short term vision based on what is cheap or makes sense now.

Committee Follow Up Comments:

- Thanked everyone for all the comments.
- It is expected that at the November 4, 2010 Balboa Park Committee meeting we will have a report of progress and at that time more opportunity for public comment.
- Support Universal Access and the purpose behind it, that by increasing access everyone benefits. Do believe there is an opportunity for a drop off at the esplanade area as the road goes into the Alcazar Parking Lot. One way traffic does provide an opportunity to address conflict on the bridge. Could have one way traffic heading in different directions at different times of the day, that can be scheduled based on flow patterns. Top of the parking structure should be looked at in design as historically the area may have had a garden there. Like the idea of closing off the bridge and testing to see how it really functions. Opportunity to look at lower portion of parking structure access through Gold Gulch, it could be connected for ADA accessibility through elevator system.
- Opportunity for public education by use of signage, technology computer/internet and marketing. Use this projects and the events around the 2015 as a catalyst to re-educate our community to continue to improve access to the Park in a customer friendly way. Education is not part of the project but maybe it's an opportunity for a community project the Balboa Park Committee can take on.
- Concerned about design issue with the bridge and going over Palm

Canyon. Would like to see a more detailed traffic study to do with ingress and egress from the east entrance and exit to Alcazar Garden. Would like to see alternatives in traffic study to keeping the cars or a lot of them out of Park.

- Enthusiastically support removing the sixty one (61) parking spaces out of the Plaza de Panama. Circulation patterns need further study both from the west entrance and Park Blvd too. Idea of some signage particularly off I-5 could go a long way, would support a study being done.
- It would be very helpful over the next meetings to understand continually from the design consultant, the underlying data and design alternatives that are being considered and why the giving recommendations are thought to be the best and most viable choices not only looking backwards to 1915 but also forward.
- Encourage all to stay involved, to attend our meetings. Please continue to give us your input, that's what going to make this project work. The next meeting is Thursday, October 7, 2010. Regular meetings days are the first Thursdays of the month at 6:00 P.M. in the Santa Fe Room at the Balboa Park Club. Caltrans will be at the October 7, 2010, meeting to talk about their project on the Cabrillo Bridge.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Kinney adjourned the meeting at 7:57 P.M.

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, November 4, 2010
6:00 P.M.
Balboa Park Club, Santa Fe Room
2150 Pan American Road
San Diego, CA 92101

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Martinez
District Manager