

E. Supplemental Findings – Historical Resources Deviation for in Substantial Alteration of a Designated Historical Resource or Within a Historical District (126.0504(i)):

- 3. The denial of the proposed development would result in economic hardship to the owner. For purposes of this finding, “economic hardship” means there is no reasonable beneficial use of a property and it is not feasible to derive a reasonable economic return from the property.**

The Plaza de Panama, Circulation and Parking Structure project is intended to restore pedestrian and park uses to the core of the Central Mesa area of Balboa Park, provide a net increase in parking spaces in close proximity to the core of the park, while also alleviating pedestrian/vehicular conflicts.

Denial of the development would not allow the City to take advantage of donations offered to design and construct the project, as well as to fund a substantial portion of the development, which is estimated to cost \$40 million.

While reasonable economic returns are typical considerations for private properties and a variety of publicly-owned properties, the desire and assumption of a reasonable economic return is generally not contemplated when considering uses of public park land, which typically contain few profit-making ventures. Therefore a reasonable economic return in these circumstances, a public improvement in Balboa Park, is a very minimal amount. The adopted plan goals for Balboa Park do not specify the desirability of deriving a reasonable economic return for uses within the park. Rather, the goals are essentially to preserve, enhance, restore, improve and create park features for the citizens of San Diego.

Denial of the development would prevent the City from fulfilling a stated plan goal of providing “new and redeveloped facilities on the Central Mesa that will be designed to accommodate multiple uses, including special events and maximum public access,” due to the continued loss of the Plaza de Panama area to pedestrian use and the lost opportunity for additional park land in the location of the Organ Pavilion parking lot. Even though Balboa Park is not intended to generate a large economic return, there are several examples throughout the nation of a trend toward improving the pedestrian experience within prominent public spaces to increase the economic success of the region. The State of Massachusetts has created the Massachusetts Pedestrian Transportation Plan to guide land use policies at all levels to develop more walkable communities across the state. Similarly, the planning department of the City of San Francisco created the Downtown Pedestrian Program to provide guidelines and specific recommendations for investing in a more walkable City. A New York “Mainstreet” newsletter article states “residents are back to

beautifying the community centers to erase decay and attract economic development.” A study performed by Muse Architecture/Planning, Inc. titled “A Downtown Pedestrian Improvement Program for the City of Saratoga Springs” concludes that improving the pedestrian environment is not just a transportation project or an attractive amenity, it makes good economic sense, and that economic viability of the downtown area is dependent on the quality of the experience of the shopper, office worker, conventioner, and tourist. Many cities are creating planning manuals for improving the walkability of their communities with the intent to revitalize neighborhoods. The strategy for most of the revitalizations is for an integrated plan that moves towards intermodal thinking, transit and pedestrian-friendly communities, with both public and private support.

Denial of the development would also prevent the City from being able to return El Prado, Plaza de Panama, Plaza de California, and the Mall to pedestrian use without conflicts with vehicles, while still providing vehicular access and parking to the Central Mesa, thereby preventing beneficial use of the property. By restoring these areas to pedestrian uses and re-creating a grand ceremonial plaza for recreation and civic activities, the project creates additional park acreage, and ensures the continuing vitality of Balboa Park, which will contribute to the economic well being of the City and the region as it continues to attract tourists and visitors to enjoy the unique public space. As discussed within the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the project (Item 4.4.1.7), the Plaza de Panama experiences significant pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. In addition, members of the public have commented on seeing frequent pedestrian and car near-miss accidents almost daily in the park. Without the development, the current pedestrian/vehicle conflicts would continue, resulting in an undesirable park experience. There is a national trend toward reducing automobile and pedestrian conflicts in parks. The Urban Land Institute and the Trust for Public Lands have both been studying this topic. The Trust for Public Lands has established analytical measures that include findings regarding vehicle and parking issues in the nation's large parks and has found a trend toward minimizing vehicle/pedestrian conflicts. Central Park and Prospect Park in New York have both made physical improvements in recent years to reduce or eliminate conflicts including removal of roads and pavements, curtailed vehicle hours and pedestrian safety and walkability improvements. Golden Gate Park has made improvements to reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflicts while simultaneously adding expanded museums, a parking garage and parking charges in the core of the park. Chicago's Grant Park is currently in design of major improvements to eliminate vehicle/pedestrian conflicts while maintaining a massive underground parking garage beneath North Grant Park.

It is not likely that there would be public funds available for improvements to resolve Balboa Park's long-standing traffic circulation and pedestrian conflicts. Various studies, such as the 2004 Jones and Jones Study (City of San Diego

Planning Commission, November 18, 2004, Resolution No. 3598-PC) and the July 2006 Tilghman/Civitas Inc. Parking Management Action Plan prepared for the City Park and Recreation Department, both identify the existing traffic circulation and parking issues within the core of the park and have had no available funding to implement proposed solutions. The Central Mesa Precise Plan has been in place for 20 years and no funding has been available to pay for the implementation of this component of the Plan. The Balboa Park Plaza de Panama Project is intended to be the catalyst for private investment in the park, enabling the newly created Balboa Park Conservancy to continue such efforts.

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