DATE ISSUED: July 3, 2003 REPORT NO. P-03-177 PTS No. 2147

ATTENTION: Planning Commission, Agenda of July 10, 2003

SUBJECT: PARK BOULEVARD PROMENADE - PROJECT NO. 2147
PROCESS 5

REFERENCES:
1. Planning Commission Initiation Report dated May 1999; No. P99-084 (Attachment 1)
2. Natural Resource and Culture Committee Report dated September 2001; No. 01-203 (Attachment 2)
3. Natural Resource and Culture Committee Report dated January 2002 (Joint Meeting with Planning Commission); Report No. 02-026. (Attachment 3)

OWNER/
APPLICANT: City of San Diego/Zoological Society of San Diego

SUMMARY

This is a field trip and workshop for information only. No action is required on the part of the Planning Commission.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROJECTS/STUDIES WITHIN THE CENTRAL MESA OF BALBOA PARK:

In response to a commissioner comment and a request made during the June 26, 2003 Planning Commission Hearing, an overview of Park and Recreation Department's projects and studies underway within the Central Mesa area of Balboa Park is included in Attachment 15. The intent is to set the context for the Zoo's proposal and to discuss potential interrelationships if any, between these efforts and the Zoo's proposal.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Zoo Project History

In April 1999, the Zoo submitted an application for a proposed expansion project to the City of San Diego. At that time, the project included but was not limited to a new parking lot adjacent to the Zoo, demolition of the War Memorial Building and expansion into an area currently used for the Archery Range.

In June 1999, the project was initiated by Planning Commission (Attachment 1). However, in response to public testimony at this meeting and a subsequent public workshop held in September 1999, the Zoo elected to put the project on hold in order to work with various interest groups and allow more direct public input into the process.

In February 2000, the City of San Diego formed the "Working Group", a 40 member citizens group consisting of representatives from various organizations. The stated purpose of the Working Group was to "develop options which integrate the needs and interests of the Zoo, other Balboa Park Institutions, users and neighbors and the San Diego Community at large." The Working Group held a series of year-long public meetings and their work concluded with the preparation of a report entitled "The Final Working Group Report" dated December 2000. (This report was recently distributed to the Planning Commission in project binders and can also be access on the City's web site at http://www.sandiego.gov/zoo-lease/.

In October 2001, staff began its review of the revised project. The project no longer proposes the demolition of the War Memorial Building nor inclusion of the Archery Range. A specific project description is contained in the Discussion section of this report. The proposal still requires amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan, but now includes a Site Development Permit in accordance with Land Development Code Section 143.0210, Environmentally Sensitive Lands regulations for potential impacts to Historic Resources. Specifically, the development would modify the local historic landmark boundary as changes to the Zoo Entry, Carousel and Miniature Train are proposed.

Natural Resources and Culture Committee Meetings

In October 2001, staff presented the project to the Natural Resources and Culture Committee (NR&C) in order to seek policy guidance on the Zoo's proposal, specifically within the areas related to Land Use, Parking, Circulation and Historic Resources (Attachment 2). In January 2002, staff presented the project to a joint meeting of the NR&C and the Planning Commission. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a status update of the proposal (Attachment 3).

During these meetings, staff were given direction in several areas. The results of those meetings and the direction to staff were summarized by the committee consultant to NR&C within an agenda titled "Committee on Natural Resources and Culture, Actions" (Attachments 4 and 5).

A response and status of each of those items is contained in Attachment 6 of this report.

Park and Recreation Department's Parking, Circulation and Land Use Study ("Study")

As mentioned above, the Park and Recreation Department is undergoing an endeavor to study potential parking lot/structure locations, land use, traffic and circulation issues within the Central Mesa and Inspiration Point. In response to this, there has been a significant amount of discussion in various forums between the Zoo, staff, members of the public as well as the City Manager's Office regarding the Zoo's proposal and its relationship to the Study. Some members of the public have suggested that the Zoo's proposal be placed on hold and processing held in abeyance until such time as this study is either well under way or completed. However, the City Manager's Office in memorandum dated March 26, 2003 directed staff to continue processing the Zoo's proposal (Attachment 7).

City Manager Task Force Formed

In November 2002, the City Manager's Office created a Task Force consisting of City staff from various departments at the Deputy Director and Director level, as well as other agencies including the Metropolitan Transit Development Board and the San Diego Unified School District. The purpose of the Task Force was to facilitate the review of policy level issues that emerged during the review of the Zoo's proposal, including discussion of potential public financing of the project. This Task Force may also be used as appropriate to address issues resulting from the overall Parking, Land Use and Circulation Study.

Financing Issues

In April 2003, the Zoo and their financial consulting team sponsored an informational meeting on the various public financing options that could potentially be used in financing a public/private proposal such as the Zoo's. This was not a city-sponsored meeting.

In response to concerns the City Manager's office initially had about the timing of the overall Parking, Land Use and Circulation Study and how it would relate to the Zoo's proposal, the Zoological Society sent a letter to the City Manager's office that addressed, among other concerns, the financing issues (Attachment 8). The letter and subsequent response from the City Manager's office dated March 17, 2003 (Attachment 9) summarily states that, public and/or private financial considerations required for project implementation would not be a part of the proposal at this time. Actions related to financing options, as well as required lease negotiations, will be a subsequent action before City Council. (One exception to this is the proposed Zoo employee parking lot off of Richmond Street which may require a minor lease adjustment and would be the financial responsibility of the Zoo).

DISCUSSION

In October 2002, the Zoo submitted Plan Amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan (BPMP) and the Central Mesa Precise Plan (CMPP) to implement modifications to their leasehold (Attachments 10 and 11 - Bound Draft Plan Amendments to the BPMP and to the CMPP. Note: Due to the size of these documents, a limited distribution was done, however, these documents may be viewed on the City's web site at http://www.sandiego.gov/zoo-lease/).

Notable components of the revised master plan and precise plan include the following:

A. A four-level, below grade parking structure located in the approximate location of the existing parking lot and continuing south to the Bea Levenson Fountain.

B. A new Zoo entry.

C. A landscaped pedestrian promenade along Park Boulevard.

D. New Zoo exhibit space adjacent to Park Boulevard.

E. New employee parking on a parcel off of Richmond Street.

F. Modifications to the local historic boundary and the Historic Landmark Zone, specifically, relocation of the existing Zoo entry, and relocation of the Carousel and Miniature Train.

A more specific project description is contained in Attachment 12, an excerpt from the Environmental Impact Report (EIR):

Current status/upcoming scheduled actions

Plan Amendments - In June 2003, staff completed their final review of the proposed draft amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. All of staff's concerns and requested revisions have been addressed. Now, the public review process of these documents begins and the documents will be presented to the Balboa Park Committee for their formal review within the next few weeks. (The draft amended plans may be viewed on the City web site at .

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) - On June 26, 2003, the EIR was distributed for a 45-day public review period. The draft EIR (DEIR) analyzed the environmental impacts of the proposed Park Boulevard Promenade project and concluded that the project could result in significant impacts in the following areas: Land Use, Transportation/Circulation, Historical Resources, Hydrology/Water Quality, Recreational Resources, Aesthetics/Neighborhood Character, Paleontological Resources, Utilities, Noise and Air Quality. The public review period ends on August 9, 2003. Responses to comments on the DEIR submitted during public review will be

compiled and reviewed by City staff and incorporated in the document.

Future Reviews - Between July 2003 through October 2003, the Zoo's proposal is tentatively scheduled for review before the following required recommendation bodies/decision makers:

1. Subcommittee of the Historic Resources Board - July 2003
2. Design Review Committee of the Park and Recreation Board - July 2003
3. Balboa Park Committee - August 2003
4. Park and Recreation Board - September 2003
5. Historic Resources Board - September 2003
6. Commission for Arts and Culture - September 2003
7. Planning Commission Recommendation (September 2003)
8. Natural Resources and Culture Committee (October 2003)
9. City Council (October 2003)

Community Outreach/Review

During the Planning Commission Initiation hearing and subsequent Natural Resources and Culture Committee meetings with the Planning Commission, a wide variety of issues were raised associated with the project. One primary issue included the need to take extraordinary efforts to involve the public in the Zoo's proposal. The Zoo has initiated numerous contacts with various community groups, committees and Balboa Park institutions and museums. A list of their outreach efforts is contained in Attachment 13. City staff have also undergone efforts early in the process to keep the citizens informed of the Zoo's proposal:

Greater Golden Hill Planning Committee - February 2002
Uptown Community Planning Committee - March 2002
Greater North Park Planning Committee - March 2002
Balboa Park Committee - March 2002

Other mechanisms incorporated to keep the public involved was the formation of the Working Group described above, created to represent a wide array of interested parties. A City web site has also been created for the proposal in order to provide updated information to the public at project milestones. Information on the proposal such as the Land Use Documents (BPMP and the CMPP), project site plan, and periodic overviews are forwarded to the City Service Centers and maintained for local citizens to access. The web site and Service Center information will continue to be updated throughout the processing of the project. Two Environmental Impact Report Preparation meetings were conducted to ensure that any interested members of the public had the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIR.

CONCLUSION:

If approved by City Council, no subsequent discretionary site specific development permits would be required to implement the proposal. Financing of the project as well as the

modifications necessary to the existing leases would require subsequent City Council actions. However, final review of the design construction drawings would be required by the Park and Recreation Department and appropriate Park Department and Historic Resources Board committees to ensure consistency with the amended plans (which will incorporate design guidelines), as well as the mitigation measures of the EIR. Ultimately, the resulting approval would be the amended land use plans, a certified EIR and a Site Development Permit with specific project conditions relating to historic resources.

Staff will be present during both portions of the field trip and workshop to answer questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments:

1. PC Report No. P99-084 and Resolution
2. NR&C Report No. 01-203 (October Meeting)
3. NR&C Report No. 02-026 (January Meeting)
4. NR&C Action Agenda 10/01
5. NR&C Action Agenda 1/02
6. NR&C Action Agenda Motion and Staff Response
7. March 26, 2003 Letter from the City Manager's Office
8. February 7, 2003 Letter from the Zoological Society
9. March 17, 2003 Letter from the City Manager's Office
10. Balboa Park Master Plan Draft Plan Amendments
11. Central Mesa Precise Plan Draft Plan Amendments
12. Environmental Impact Report Excerpt of Project Description
13. Park Boulevard Promenade Community Outreach
14. Zoo Plans
15. Balboa Park Projects/Studies

Note: Due to the size of Attachment No's. 10 and 11, only a limited distribution was made. Copies of these attachments are available for review in the Office of the Clerk and on the City of San Diego Web Site at http://www.sandiego.gov/zoo-lease/