



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 1, 2022

TO: The Balboa Park Committee
Agenda of Thursday, December 8, 2022

FROM: Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation
Department

SUBJECT: Creation of Design Review Assistance Subcommittee of Balboa Park Committee

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Parks and Recreation Department pursue the creation of a proposed Design Review Assistance Subcommittee of the Balboa Park Committee?

Department Recommendation – Department recommends creation of a proposed Design Assistance Subcommittee of the Balboa Park Committee comprised of existing Balboa Park Committee members and who possess qualifications in the areas of design and development.¹

BACKGROUND

Prior to 2016, the City's Park and Recreation Board had a standing Design Review Committee consisting of volunteer design professionals. Efforts to streamline the delivery of park capital projects, as noted in Report to City Council #15-097, "Park Capital Improvement Program – Public Input Process Streamlining" dated November 2, 2015, resulted in removal of the Design Review Committee through a change effective on January 28, 2016, to Council Policy 600-33.² The approved Council Policy 600-33 no longer provided for a role for the Design Review Committee under the premise its elimination would streamline the public input review process by focusing on input received from community recreation groups and

¹ The San Diego Parks Master Plan (adopted August 2021), Parks and Programming Policy PP13 states, "Consider forming a Park Design Review Board based on current practices for Boards and Commissions to review proposed landscape architectural designs for parks. A Design Review Board should be comprised of Landscape Architects, Park and Recreation professionals, and citizens that are representative and reflective of the demographics of the City's population." (See <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/parks-master-plan-adopted-2021.pdf>, page 93.)

² Council Policy 600-33, "Public Notification and Input for City-Wide Park Development Projects," can be found here: https://docs.sandiego.gov/councilpolicies/cpd_600-33.pdf. It no longer provides for a role for a design review committee in the creation of general development plans, but CP 600-33 does not prohibit one either.

advisory bodies, prevent process bottlenecks, and improve project delivery schedules by removing a step in the public input process. Report 15-097 (page 4) states:

The Design Review Committee consists of design professionals from throughout the region, including architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, and civil engineers. As a subcommittee of the Park and Recreation Board, its role is to provide a more technical peer review of new and amended [general development plans]. Under the proposed CP 600-33, this role would be eliminated. Historically this additional step has resulted only in minor changes and tweaks to the overall conceptual plan that was developed by a registered landscape architect under contract with the [Engineering and Capital Projects] Department. It is likely that the Design Review Committee would no longer serve a purpose after removal of the GDP review function, and if the updated CP 600-33 is approved, the Park and Recreation Board may decide to eliminate it.

Since that time, several Balboa Park projects have advanced through the established public input process outlined in Council Policy 600-33. Design advocates noted during several public workshops that there continues to be unmet need for design review input on Balboa Park projects, particularly on projects that do not require a GDP amendment. Further, the Parks Master Plan, which was approved by the City Council in August 2021, notes that design review is necessary to ensure park projects are reviewed by park industry professionals such as landscape architects, design professionals, recreation professionals, and user groups. This process would be additive to the existing review by the community recreation group and established advisory committee, as noted in Park and Programming Policy PP13. Consistent with this need, Department initiated an informal Design Review Exploratory Working Group (DREWG) to evaluate project processes and to propose solutions for greater design input.

The DREWG sought to learn from the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the former Design Review Committee and to leverage this knowledge into the creation of a Design Review Assistance Subcommittee (DRAS) for Balboa Park.

The Department recommends the Balboa Park Committee consider all these factors, including potential benefits and drawbacks, when evaluating whether to recommend creation of the DRAS.

Potential Benefits: According to the DREWG, the goal of creating the DRAS would be to seamlessly integrate supplemental design advice into Balboa Park project review and planning processes while not needlessly delaying delivery of projects and services. Success of the proposed DRAS would be measured by its ability to expedite the process for reviewing and approving park projects. As a subcommittee, the DRAS advise the Balboa Park Committee on recommendations of park design.

Potential Drawbacks: It is unknown at this time whether or not the creation of a DRAS would streamline and expedite project reviews as intended. The creation of a subcommittee would add another layer of review and approval to the project delivery process – both for the

project applicant and City staff – and could defeat the goal of expediting projects. It could potentially increase the overall project cost and lengthen the project schedule for projects required to gather additional input from DRAS.

Design Review Assistance Subcommittee (DRAS) Roles and Responsibilities

If adopted, the proposed DRAS would become part of the public input process for park projects consistent with the Parks Master Plan, Council Policy 600-33, and the Consultants Guide on Park Design and Development.

If adopted, park projects would be reviewed at the conceptual, schematic, or predesign phase in accordance with the Parks Master Plan, Balboa Park Master Plan, Balboa Park Specific Plans, general development plans, and other relevant plans and policies. DRAS would consider a project with the applicant no more than once unless the applicant voluntarily seeks additional guidance. DRAS may not require ongoing subsequent reviews. Both the Balboa Park Committee and the DRAS are advisory groups and may only recommend and not require design modifications on any given project.

The proposed DRAS would meet at the request of the Balboa Park Committee, which would adopt a calendar of DRAS meetings for the year. Staff recommends that the DRAS meet three weeks prior to any regularly scheduled Balboa Park Committee meetings to allow staff adequate time to prepare. Meetings may be cancelled due to lack of agenda items, failure to reach quorum, or other similar reasons. Meetings are publicly noticed and must be held in compliance with the Brown Act, and therefore, open to the public.

DRAS Scope of Work

The Balboa Park Committee may refer incoming Balboa Park projects to the DRAS, which would be set forth to review and provide feedback on Balboa Park capital projects in early stages of planning and development. This includes new or updated park policy documents, new or updated general development plans (GDPs), building upgrades beyond building systems replacement, playground improvements and upgrades, new planting palettes that vary significantly from existing palettes, projects that will change use of sections of the park, and other projects that the Committee believes would require additional design input.

Examples of past projects that would have been eligible for DRAS review include:

- House of Charm/Mingei Museum renovation GDP
- Natural History Museum Landscape and Gardens GDP
- Palisades Plaza Reclamation
- New International Cottages GDP
- Golf Course Drive Improvements

- Pershing Bikeway Project
- Restroom Upgrade Projects
- Botanical Building GDP
- Park Board Policy 1001 on Naming of Park Facilities
- Donor Acknowledgement policies

Areas Outside DRAS Scope of Work

More routine maintenance and repair would not be included in the DRAS purview as noted below:

- **Operational Projects and Routine Facility Maintenance:** DRAS would not provide input on operational projects or routine facility maintenance issues. Examples include:
 - Placement of Trash/Recycling containers
 - Maintenance and planting of Adopt-a-Plot Landscaping
 - Placement of donor benches and trees
 - Overlay, slurry sealing, and resurfacing of pavement (asphalt and concrete roadways, parking lots, driveways, plazas, etc.)
 - Roof Replacement
 - Painting
 - Window Replacement
 - Door Replacement
 - Lighting Replacement
 - New or Replacement Signs
- **Landscaping Projects:** DRAS would not provide input on landscaping projects, such as:
 - Tree Planting, such as Arbor Day
 - Planting activities that do not represent a major change in palette
 - Special garden re-plantings such as the Rose Garden, Alcazar Garden, Zorro

Butterfly Garden, etc.

- Routine grounds maintenance projects
- **Leaseholds and Facilities:** DRAS would not provide input on the interior of museum and cultural institution buildings unless specifically requested by the leaseholder.
- **Precise Plan:** DRAS would not provide input on the operational elements of the existing Precise Plan such as benches, trash cans, bike racks, and other similar amenities, unless implementation requires a GDP.

DRAS Creation and Membership

A subcommittee must be comprised of members of the existing Balboa Park Committee. No non-board-members may be appointed to a subcommittee.

The DRAS may consist of existing members of the Balboa Park Committee. Section 26.30(b) of the Municipal Code states BPC provides advisory input on “policy issues relating to the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of Balboa Park,” which is consistent with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for design review.

Requiring board members to be experts in particular fields is common in most City advisory boards and committees; however, it is not a current requirement for the Balboa Park Committee. Four Parks and Recreation Advisory Boards are listed under San Diego Municipal Code Section 26.30: Park and Recreation Board, Balboa Park Committee, Mission Bay Park Committee, and the Municipal Golf Committee.

Professional qualifications that the Balboa Park Committee could consider for those committee members interested in serving on DRAS might include knowledge and interest in Balboa Park, licensed professional certification related to park design and development, and knowledge of the Balboa Park Master Plan and Precise Plans. Other professional positions suitable for the DRAS may include historic preservationist, landscape architect, horticulturist, historic preservationist, arborist, architect, park planner, civil engineer, and/or urban designer.

If approved, the Balboa Park Committee Chair will seek input and nominations from existing members for participation on the subcommittee. At this time, the DRAS is intended to have a membership of three committee members.

Staff Support

The Parks and Recreation Department will assign a staff representative from the Park Asset Management section who will be responsible for meeting coordination efforts. These efforts include preparing and noticing the meeting agenda, documenting meeting minutes, tabulating votes on action items, providing written reports, coordinating presentations from

project managers, ensuring Brown Act compliance, providing technical assistance with Robert's Rules of Order, and answering questions to assure a smooth meeting.

Fiscal Impact

Creation of the DRAS will result in the following fiscal impacts:

- Meeting coordination efforts as noted in the "Staff Support" section would be handled by Park Asset Management staff. Funding for this effort would come from the Department's operating budget and absorbed into existing workload for the impacted staff.
- For projects reviewed by DRAS, the associated project management staff and consultants would participate. Funding for this effort would come from the project budget and absorbed into total project cost and schedule for the affected project.

Neither of these cost impacts have been quantified.

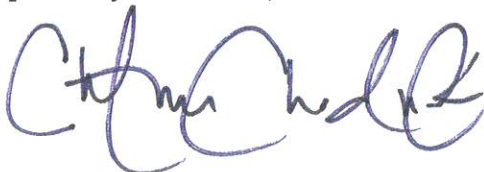
Conclusion

As with any effort to review and modify business practices of the Department, stakeholders participated in meetings and research to help the DREWG reach its conclusion. Staff thanks the DREWG membership, which included:

- Michael Stepner, Chair, Urban Designer and Former City Architect
- Michelle Abella-Shon, Asset Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
- Kevin Carpenter, Architect, The Miller Hull Partnership, Former Design Review Board Member
- Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department
- Jackie Higgins, Landscape Architect, Director of Planning, Design and Programs, Forever Balboa Park
- Jim Kidrick, President and Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Air and Space Museum
- Bill Lawrence, President/CEO, San Diego History Center
- David Marshall, Architect, President, Heritage Architecture & Planning
- Connie Matsui, Board Co-Chair, Forever Balboa Park
- René Smith, Parks Advocate

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. If you have specific questions or comments about this proposal, please contact me at chadwickc@sandiego.gov or Parks and Recreation Director Andy Field at afield@sandiego.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



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Parks and Recreation Department

cc: Honorable City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, District 3
Kristina Peralta, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Steve Hill, Policy Advisor, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria