



**Christopher Ackerman-Avila**, Policy Advisor  
City of San Diego  
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January 4, 2023

Dear Mr. Ackerman-Avila:

On behalf of the San Diego Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Regional Design Advisory Council, we applaud the work of the Civic Center Revitalization Committee—a renewal of the Civic Center is a long-awaited benefit and much needed improvement for the community.

Civic Centers are at their best important symbols of cultural wealth, knowledge, and places to gather; their prominence provides a significant opportunity to showcase design excellence. For these reasons, we write to express our support of the 'Manifesto for the Heart of San Diego,' authored by the Design Urban Roundtable. Furthermore, we request that the Manifesto be referenced and incorporated into the committee's final report and used as guiding principles for the implementation of your report's recommendations.

The principles identified within the Manifesto offer depth, soul, and substance to subsequent actions. This is especially true of Point M: Demand Design Excellence, which references an Appendix citing outstanding examples of civic design and which states, *"To earn an honored place in history, every aspect of design must celebrate our unique San Diego personality and climate. The Civic Center must be an authentic expression of ourselves and our place."*

It is well documented that the value of well-designed, activated civic spaces is conveyed to the real estate around them. Yet the value created is beyond economic – it is the civic and cultural image of the city – a much greater value proposition. It is our hope that the City of San Diego will firmly establish the significance of placemaking as a criterion for selection in its future development RFP so that bidders respond to create not just worthy real estate, but a worthy place that current and future San Diegans will cherish.

Government centers and the public places within them represent a city's past, present, and future. Not every generation has an opportunity to create one. In the words of the Manifesto, *"We have ONE CHANCE to get this right; a legacy project that is an opportunity to level up the city's economic, aesthetic, and societal value."* And there is a saying in response to questions of why design matters to which the response is, *"To lift our hearts and inspire us!"* The thoughtful design of our Civic Center will make a strong statement about who we are as a community and how we value the structure of our society.

Sincerely,

Leigh A. Eisen  
Executive Vice President & CEO | AIA San Diego

Katee Chard, AIA  
Chair of the Regional Design Advisory Council