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249 ACRES LOST FROM ORIGINAL 1,419

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# Balboa Park Changes Stir Opposition

By MICHAEL O'CONNOR

San Diegans have a "turkey on Thanksgiving" attitude about Balboa Park. It's traditional, well-liked and a hard thing to change.

The only sore spot in this analogy, however, is in change. The lush, green heart of the city has changed considerably from its original 1,419 acres dedicated in 1868.

In fact, 249 acres are tied up for non-park purposes, with an additional 29.7 acres used by lessees on a \$1-a-year basis.

Many individuals and many groups don't like this kind of change. One organization—the Balboa Park Protective Association—has usually been the first to tell anyone about it.

Two weeks ago the association decided to sponsor a city charter amendment on the Sept. 17 ballot to require a vote of the people before additional land could be taken for park road purposes. The association failed to win voter support for a similar proposal in 1961.

However, Mrs. Florence Abbey of 2408 Capitan Ave. thinks the 46,000 signatures the group obtained for an initiative petition in a two-week period in 1961 is a good gauge of sentiment on further encroachment of the park.

"We think the citizens should have a right to be heard on this," Mrs. Abbey said. "We have no objection to roads in the park for desirable purposes but there is a fear that

it eventually could lead to a few green islands surrounded by cement."

The association has not begun its signature-seeking campaign pending completion of an amendment draft.

"We think the City Council has the moral obligation to place this on the ballot but, if it isn't, we will start asking citizens to sign our petition," Mrs. Abbey said.

The latest spur in the association's flank regarding the park has been the controversial city proposal for development of Maple Canyon Road. The road, as outlined by City Mgr. Tom Fletcher, is designed to ease traffic between downtown and Hillcrest. It would take 2.4 acres of park land.

Mrs. Abbey and her association think this is not the best proposal because it would mean construction of an interchange at Quince Street and, under the first recommendation, a new road into the park off Palm Street.

Some criticism may subside if the City Council decides to eliminate the Palm extension into the park in favor of two two-way tunnels, between Fourth and Sixth Avenues on Quince Street, Fletcher has been asked to study this possibility.

Mrs. Abbey maintains that the amendment this year will be carefully worded to avoid the confusion in language which she said led to the proposal's defeat in 1961.

"We feel many people who voted just didn't understand (Continued on a-18, Col. 1)

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what they were voting for," she said. She believes the amendment would have passed then if it had not been for the wording.

She says, too, that the association is not attempting to muddle the work of the city in maintaining present streets in the park.

"We are not in favor of all of the city's plans for eventual development of the park but our amendment would not require them to go to the voters for every maintenance need," she said.

The city plans Mrs. Abbey referred to are included in

the Bartholomew Report, a recommendation on how the park can best be developed for future needs.

The Maple Canyon recommendation of Fletcher, coincidentally, calls attention to the heavy traffic on Laurel caused by motorists not visiting the park but trying to reach downtown.

## Closing Of Laurel Street Suggested

One recommendation is to close Laurel Street, main thoroughfare into the park, and replace it with two new winding roads around park structures.

"We are not in favor of closing Laurel Street and are even more opposed to the peripheral roads," she said.

Although there have been many individual uses proposed and granted on park property, none stirs up more controversy than roads. However, in most cases the park land has been turned over by a vote of the people.

One of the major exceptions to this was 72.9 acres released to the state Division of Highways for development of the U.S. 101-395 interchange in the park's southwest corner. Other street uses which started without voter approval were dedications for Sixth Avenue (7.2 acres in 1904), Upas and 28th Street dedications (6.9 and 6.5 acres in 1923), and Russ Boulevard dedication (9 acres in 1923).

The state got its biggest chunk of park land in 1941 when the city deeded 38.3 acres to the Division of Highways for development of U.S. 395 (Cabrillo Freeway).

Another big user is the Navy, which obtained 81.5 acres from the city as a gift in four portions from 1919 to 1938 for development of a hospital. A total of 7.2 acres was obtained by the hospital in 1961 under a lease arrangement.

## Schools Sites Using 51.6 Acres

The San Diego Unified School District is another big tenant with school sites covering 51.6 acres. This property is used by San Diego High and Snyder Continuation high schools, and Roosevelt Junior High.

Major leases are the Boy and Girl Scout buildings (18.5 and 11.9 acres); the Campfire Girls (6.1 acres); and the Blind Recreation Center (.4 of an acre).

If the amendment is successful it could possibly curtail city plans for road development in the park. However, the charter amendment would have no effect on state highway projects, according to Les Earnest, city park and recreation director.

Two other functions occupy a large portion of the park and one is the 202-acre Municipal Golf Course.

The other would get no argument from the antiroad groups or any other person who had been in San Diego at least a day. It is the Zoo, which provides a haven for animals, birds and fishes of the world on 94.2 acres.

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