

**CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
M E M O R A N D U M**

DATE: June 25, 2007

TO: Balboa Park Committee, Agenda of July 5, 2007

FROM: Carol Wood, Acting Deputy Director, Park Planning and Development Division

SUBJECT: The Old Globe Theatre – Conrad Prebys Theatre Center

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**SUMMARY**

Issue - Should the Balboa Park Committee recommend approval of the proposed general development plan for The Old Globe Theater Campus?

Deputy Director's Recommendation - Recommend approval of the proposed general development plan for The Old Globe Theater Campus with the condition that the signage and donor recognition program return to the Committee as an action item when it has been finalized.

Other Recommendations - The Historical Resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee has reviewed the proposed general development plan for conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and has determined that the project is consistent with these standards.

Fiscal Impact - Funding for design, construction and maintenance of the new building and plaza will be provided by The Old Globe Theatre.

Environmental - The City of San Diego, as lead agency, will prepare CEQA documentation per State CEQA guidelines. This project is consistent with the Central Mesa Precise Plan, which has an associated Supplemental Environmental Impact Report dated July 28, 1992, and certified by City Council on October 20, 1992 (R-280919). That document is supplemental to the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Balboa Park Master Plan, dated November 6, 1986, and certified by City Council on July 25, 1989 (R-274089).

## BACKGROUND

The Balboa Park Master Plan, adopted by City Council on July 25, 1989, guides overall development of Balboa Park. That document also recommends preparation of Precise Plans for areas of Balboa Park that require a greater level of detail. To that end, the Central Mesa Precise plan was prepared, and subsequently adopted by City Council on October 20, 1992.

The Central Mesa Precise Plan is divided into sections that address the various geographic regions of the Central Mesa. These areas include the West Prado, East Prado, North Prado, War Memorial & Zoo Parking Lot, Pepper Grove, and Palisades. The Old Globe Theatre complex is located in the West Prado area of Balboa Park.

Under the Architecture section of the Precise Plan for the West Prado area, Item #10 outlines design objectives and recommendations for the Cassius Carter Theater (Precise Plan, Page 217). This item provides for the removal and replacement of this facility.

Under the Specific Recommendations section of the Precise Plan for the West Prado area, Item #4 identifies Old Globe Plaza (Precise Plan, Page 286). The specific recommendations provide general guidance for the Plaza, including paving, landscaping and site furniture. The plaza portion was implemented by The Old Globe in 1993. Staff understands that The Old Globe was influential in the design of the plaza as shown in the Precise Plan.

## DISCUSSION

The Old Globe Theatre was originally constructed for the 1935 California Pacific Exposition. Since that time, the Cassius Carter Theatre and the Lowell Davies Festival Theatre have been added to the venue. This combination of stages has resulted in The Old Globe being one of the largest theater companies in the country.

The Old Globe Theatre has embarked on an endowment and capital campaign to make improvements to the existing Balboa Park campus. The main goals of the campaign are to reconstruct the Cassius Carter Theatre (to be re-named the Conrad Prebys Theatre) and to reconstruct Copley Plaza, the main plaza serving the three theatres.

### Cassius Carter/Conrad Prebys Theatre

The Cassius Carter Theatre was originally constructed in 1969 as a re-model of the Falstaff Tavern restaurant. The venue was intended to create a more intimate theater experience, with attendees being no more than four rows from the stage. Having been a re-model of a restaurant, the theater has not provided the best venue for plays. The existing facilities have several shortcomings that limit the experience. These shortcomings include poor lighting, no traps for actors and sets, and poor dressing room facilities. Reconstruction of the facility will provide the following enhancements

- Access to the theatre will be enhanced to current standards
- Lighting for productions will be enhanced with higher ceilings and catwalks
- Productions will be enhanced with the addition of a trap level below the stage
- Accessible restroom facilities will be provided
- Dressing rooms will be added
- Education facilities will be added

The new facility will be four stories tall, with two stories being below grade. The four stories will include the Trap Level, the Stage Level, Level 1 (at plaza grade) and Level 2. The Trap Level will contain utilities, and will provide access to beneath the stage for the raising and lowering of actors and props. The Stage level will contain the main stage and approximately 86 seats. This level will also have restrooms and dressing rooms. Level 1 will contain the majority of the seating, and will include a Control Room, Green Room, restrooms, and food service. Level 2 will include classrooms and access to the catwalk and lighting. Including all four levels, the new facility will be approximately 24,000 square feet.

The new facility will be constructed in the same location as the current Cassius Carter Theatre. The footprint will remain essentially the same, with some minor expansions and reductions. The attached drawings indicate the existing building footprint overlaid with the proposed building footprint. The proposed facility will remain within the existing leasehold for The Old Globe.

The new facility is designed in the Elizabethan style, remaining consistent with the other buildings on the campus. The colors and materials will also be consistent with the existing architecture. The new facility abuts The Old Globe Theatre, as does the existing facility, but will remain subservient to The Old Globe. In accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the building will be compatible in size, scale, style and materials with existing architecture, but will not attempt to represent itself as an original structure.

Signage on the new facility is intended to be consistent with the existing signage found on the campus. The existing style is raised lettering with gold leaf. The final details of the signage program have not yet been finalized, and may require further review by the Committee at a future date.

### Copley Plaza

Copley Plaza was constructed in 1993 in accordance with the Central Mesa Precise Plan. Staff understands that the plaza was designed in conjunction with The Old Globe during the preparation of the Precise Plan. The current plaza design is not representative of any historic elements of the theater complex. The plaza design indicated in the Precise Plan indicates predominantly hardscape in the plaza, with a triangular planter at the center. The planter divides the space and provides a barrier between the theaters.

The proposed design for the plaza removes the existing planter and provides a more continuous gathering space. Removal of the planter also opens up the view to the buildings within the theater complex. A new paving pattern is also being proposed to replace the existing concrete.

A tower with signage is being proposed for the plaza. Details of this element are not available at this time, and may require further review by the Committee at a future date.

The proposed plaza design includes the addition of a trellis, intended to be used for outdoor dining. The trellis will be of heavy wood timber construction to be compatible with the existing architecture and Lowell Davies Festival Theatre. The roof lines of the trellis reflect the roof lines of the proposed Conrad Prebys Theatre Center. Signage indicated on the trellis elevations is not available for review at this time, and may require further review by the Committee at a future date.

## ANALYSIS

### Cassius Carter/Conrad Prebys Theatre

The existing Cassius Carter Theatre is not an original structure, and is not a reconstruction of the original facility. It is a non-historic structure that contributes to the National Historic Landmark District. The Central Mesa Precise Plan provides for the reconstruction of the facility with the following recommendations:

- Preserve the existing building footprint and exterior elevations
- Preserve historic site relationships while providing for lower level access from outside.

The proposed facility remains substantially within the footprint of the existing structure. While there are minor changes to the actual footprint of the proposed facility, the square footage does not change substantially.

The actual building elevations differ from the existing facility. The existing theater is approximately 20 feet tall, and the new theater will be approximately 32 feet tall. The Old Globe structure is approximately 48 feet tall, approximately 50% taller than the proposed theater. The proposed theater is designed in the Elizabethan style and is consistent with the other buildings on the campus. Also, the scale and massing of the proposed facility keeps the building subservient to The Old Globe Theatre. The Historical Resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee has reviewed the proposed design and believes it is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Staff believes that the proposed design of the Conrad Prebys Theatre Center substantially conforms to the recommendations of the Central Mesa Precise Plan.

#### Copley Plaza

The current design of the Copley Plaza is not historic. The current design divides the space and reduces the usability of the plaza. Removal of the triangular planter will open up the plaza space and will be more in keeping with the open feeling of the plaza as designed for the 1935 Exposition.

The Central Mesa Precise Plans identifies one of its land use goals as "creating multiple use outdoor plazas to accommodate cultural activities." Removal of the triangular planter will open up the plaza space and provide greater flexibility.

Staff believes that the proposed plaza design substantially conforms to the recommendations of the Central Mesa Precise Plan. While the plan differs from the Precise Plan in actual design, the intent of the plaza remains the same and flexibility is enhanced.

#### Operations

The Old Globe Theatre currently rents space from the House of Charm for rehearsals. The Globe's facilities are also used by outside groups such as the PlayWrights Project and the San Diego Shakespeare Society. The new theater complex will better consolidate and facilitate these activities.

Currently, all sets for plays are fabricated on-site in Balboa Park in The Old Globe's scene shop. Under this new program, the scene shop will be relocated off-site in conjunction with their storage facilities. This programming change will reduce the demand for parking in Balboa Park. The current scene shop and loading dock area will be cleaned up.

Signage/Donor Recognition

As noted previously, the signage program for this project has not yet been completed. Also, there has been no discussion of donor recognition. It is staff's recommendation that these items be brought back to the Committee as an action item when the program has been finalized.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend approval of the proposed general development plan for The Old Globe Campus with modifications.
2. Do not recommend approval of the proposed general development plan for The Old Globe Campus.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wood  
Acting Deputy Director, Park Planning & Development

CW/cd

Attachments:

1. Excerpts from the Central Mesa Precise Plan
2. General Development Plan
3. Building Plans & Elevations