

The pending privatization of Balboa Park. 12/17/08

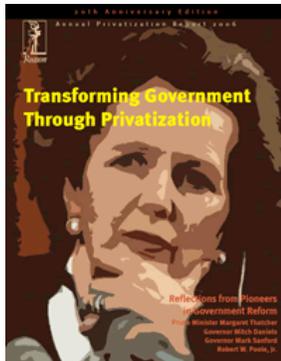
by Pat Flannery

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"The City cannot provide the necessary funding for Balboa Park today, and is not likely to be able to do so in the future. **New sources of revenue** and a sharing of **public and private responsibilities** will be required to provide the "necessary support" for Balboa Park in the future."

So says a verbose, government-bashing, doctrinaire right-wing, privatization-sponsoring, privately-funded (by the [Legler Benbough Foundation](#), the [Parker Foundation](#) and the [San Diego Foundation](#)) "Report" called "***The Future of Balboa Park***" [released today](#).

It should be dumped in the nearest trashcan where it belongs. It is a blatant land grab by private interests who want to take over our world-class public park for their own private enrichment and enjoyment. It is as simple as that.



Every argument the report puts forward is standard privatization-of-government rhetoric, straight out of [The Reason Foundation](#) and [Privatization.org](#). It could have been written by Maggie Thatcher herself.

It extols a world full of limo-driven Rancho Santa Fe philanthropy types, cavorting together in an elegant Balboa Park - if only the snakes, rodents and lesser human beings like you and I can be driven to the surrounding canyon bottoms where we all belong.

Today's report is based upon a previous "Report" called "***The Soul of San Diego***", which if implemented would have conclusively proven that San Diego does not actually have a soul, or if it does it has sold it to the devil.

I attended several Balboa Park Committee meetings during 2007 and 2008. You can read the minutes of 15 such public meetings [here](#) on the Mayor's web site, together with three very biased "reports". This whole "investigation" into the viability of Balboa Park was initiated by ex-Councilmember Tony Atkins. She got the Mayor to co-sponsor her plan to have the Balboa Park Committee (BPC) answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the City's ability to provide the necessary financial support for Balboa Park in the future?
- (2) Even if the city can tackle the challenge on its own, should it?
- (3) Should management and governance be expanded and, if so, how?

Not surprisingly the mayoral-hand-picked compliant BPC came up with exactly the answer Atkins wanted. And so today: "*As a result of its deliberations, the BPC recommends that the City of San Diego further study, and consider formation of, a new public benefit non-profit entity to assist the City with governance, fund-raising and management of Balboa Park through a contractual agreement with the City.*"

Of course this "***new public benefit non-profit entity***" will require a highly-paid **Executive Director** experienced in the politics of public/private shenanigans. I can't imagine anybody more qualified than **Toni Atkins**. She knows exactly how to reward her backers and create a job for herself.