



The Rise and Fall of the Olmsted Plan, An Optimistic Proposal – quoted from Gregory Montes

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On July 9, 1909, at a meeting of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, its President, banker G. Aubrey Davidson, proposed to his fellow directors that San Diego celebrate the official opening of the Panama Canal, scheduled for January 1, 1915, by holding an international exposition in their City Park. Davidson noted that a world's fair could help boost San Diego's population and economy, both lagging since the Panic of 1893, and also help finance extensive landscaping of City Park, which so far seemed beyond the town's capacity. The Chamber President declared that after the exposition, most of its buildings could be demolished while the walk ways, gardens and surrounding landscaping would remain to adorn the park.

The Chamber members soon saw Davidson's point that with the Panama Canal opening, completion of the San Diego and Arizona Railway begun in 1907, and contemplated port development in San Diego's large natural harbor, their city, the first American port north of Panama, could become a commercial hub for shipping goods to and from much of the United States' developing Southwest. The businessmen realized that if you have a good product, service or situation, you can gain the best profit from it only with good advertising. An exposition could provide that advertisement and also bring more settlers to San Diego and the area to be served by its port -- Southern California and the Southwest.