



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: December 23, 2014

REPORT NO. PC-15-006

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of January 22, 2015

SUBJECT: Initiation of Plan Amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan for the incorporation of the Balboa Park House of Pacific Relations Expansion

**OWNER/
APPLICANT:** House of Pacific Relations

SUMMARY

Issues – Should the Planning Commission:

1. Find the Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met; and
2. INITIATE amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan to allow for expansion of the House of Pacific Relations in Balboa Park?

Staff Recommendations

1. Find the Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met; and
2. INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: On December 4, 2014 the Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously (5-0-1) to advise the Criteria have been met and to advise initiation of Plan Amendments for the Balboa Park House of Pacific Relations Expansion.

Fiscal Statement: Processing costs would be paid by the applicant.

Environmental Review: Initiation of a community plan and general plan amendment by the Planning Commission is not a "project" pursuant to CEQA Section 15060(c) (2) and as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section §15378(c). Once initiated, the project will

be submitted to the Development Services Department and will require preparation of an environmental document in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. This determination is predicated on Section 15004 of the guidelines, which provides direction to lead agencies on the appropriate timing for meaningful environmental review.

Code Enforcement Impact: None

Housing Impact: None

Approval of this initiation request does not constitute an endorsement of the project proposal. A staff recommendation will be developed once the project has been fully analyzed. This action will allow the staff analysis to proceed.

BACKGROUND

Balboa Park is located immediately north of downtown San Diego. The Park is surrounded by the communities of Golden Hill, North Park, Uptown and Centre City. Balboa Park is one of the City's largest developed parks at 1,172 acres and is host to numerous passive and active recreational activities, cultural and educational institutions, and special events. Over 12 million visitors come to Balboa Park each year to enjoy the diversity of activities the Park has to offer.

Development, maintenance and management of Balboa Park are governed by the Balboa Park Master Plan, the Central Mesa Precise Plan, the East Mesa Precise Plan and subsequent amendments to those documents. The Balboa Park Master Plan is a part of the City's General Plan, and implements land use policies for Balboa Park. Therefore, amendments to the Master Plan and its Precise Plans must follow the Land Use and Community Planning Element of the General Plan.

The Balboa Park Master Plan (BPMP) was adopted by City Council on July 25, 1989 (Resolution No. R-274090). Subsequent amendments to the BPMP have been adopted by City Council on December 9, 1997 (R-289537); on May 4, 1998 (R-290039-1); on April 13, 2004 (R-299084-1); on September 21, 2004 (R-299666); and on July 9, 2012 (R-307555-1). The Master Plan addresses the entirety of Balboa Park and provides general guidelines for development, maintenance and management.

The Central Mesa Precise Plan (CMPP) was adopted by City Council on October 20, 1992 (Resolution R-280920). Subsequent amendments to the CMPP have been adopted by City Council on May 4, 1998 (R-290031-2); on March 19, 1992 (R-296206); on April 13, 2004 (R-299084-2); and on July 9, 2012 (R-307555-2). The CMPP addresses the central portion of Balboa Park in greater detail than does the BPMP.

A large portion of Balboa Park's Central Mesa is included in the federally designated National Historic Landmark District (District). As such, any improvements within the District must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Determination of compliance is made by the City of San Diego Historic Resources staff and the Historic Resources Board.

The House of Pacific Relations complex was originally constructed for the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition and included 15 small structures (see Attachment A). The cottages are fairly small in size and, while being similar in architectural style, each has its own unique details.

The Hall of Nations building, originally named the Kansas state building, was constructed for the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition. The building is now a part of the International Cottages complex and is used by numerous House of Pacific Relations members for meetings and other events.

The CMPP identifies expansion of the International Cottages by 4,000 square feet (see Attachment B, original CMPP graphic). The graphic indicates eight structures with a size of approximately 500 square feet each. This is consistent with the small size of the original cottages. To date, four cottages have been constructed, consuming the 4,000 square foot allowance provided in the CMPP. These include the House of Hungary, the House of Iran, the House of Puerto Rico and the House of Spain. Please note the original graphic of the CMPP indicated eight new structures. The plan amendments processed for the Plaza de Panama Project in 2012 revised this graphic to reflect actual conditions (see Attachment C).

Membership in the House of Pacific Relations is greater than the number of cottages available. Nations without a cottage of their own meet in the Hall of Nations building on a rotating basis. The House of Pacific Relations proposes to amend the BPMP and CMPP to allow for construction of additional cottages to house their membership.

DISCUSSION

Project Definition

The House of Pacific Relations proposes to amend the BPMP and CMPP to provide additional cottages for their membership. The proposal includes three new duplex cottages and one triplex cottage, which will house nine additional member nations. The total square footage of the proposed cottages would be approximately 3,800 square feet; exterior courtyards would be shared space and open to the general public daily, and therefore not included in the square footage of the cottages. Three duplex cottages would be added just south of the main cottage complex in a space that is currently covered with mulch and some turf. The triplex cottage would be added just north of the Hall of Nations Building and House of Iran in an area currently covered in turf. A central courtyard at each location, and additional walkways to the new cottages, would be included. The architectural style of the new cottages would be compatible with the existing cottages.

Plan Amendment Initiation Requirements

The Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan serve as community plans for Balboa Park. Any substantial deviations from these adopted policy documents require plan amendments. The Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan identifies criteria for initiation of plan amendments.

The proposed amendments do not meet the requirements for a Technical Amendment Initiation (General Plan Section LU-D.6). However, the Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan identifies three criteria to be met for initiation of plan amendments by the Planning Commission (General Plan Section LU-D.10). The criteria are as follows:

- a. *The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria; and*
- b. *The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design; and*
- c. *Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.*

The following identifies how the proposed amendments meet the criteria identified in the Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan.

Criterion a: *The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria.*

The Balboa Park Master Plan implements the General Plan land use policies for Balboa Park. The Balboa Park Master Plan identifies six major goals. These goals are identified below, including staff analysis of how the Project Definition meets the goals of the Master Plan.

- ❖ ***“Create within the Park a more pedestrian oriented environment. Reduce automobile and pedestrian conflicts. Minimize through traffic.”***

The proposed amendments would provide better pedestrian connections between the International Cottages and the Organ Pavilion, and between the International Cottages and the Balboa Park Club. Automobile traffic would not be impacted by the proposal.

- ❖ ***“Improve public access to the Park through an improved integrated circulation system, convenient drop-off points, better parking management, improved signage and increased security. The improved circulation system shall de-emphasize the automobile while increasing public access to the Park and Park facilities.”***

As noted above, the pedestrian connections between the International Cottages, Organ Pavilion and Balboa Park Club should be improved by the proposal.

- ❖ ***“Preserve, enhance and increase free and open parkland and establish a program of ongoing landscape design, maintenance and replacement.”***

The proposed additional cottages would reduce the amount of free and open parkland. However, two new courtyards with enhanced paving and landscaping would be added to

the International Cottages complex. The areas proposed for the new cottages are rarely used, and no existing user groups would be displaced.

❖ ***“Restore or improve existing building and landscape areas within the Park.”***

While the addition of new buildings would reduce the amount of landscape (open parkland), the areas of proposed expansion are rarely used and existing park users would not be impacted. The landscape associated with the new cottages would be improved as a part of the proposal.

❖ ***“Preserve and enhance the mix of cultural, and active and passive recreational uses within Balboa Park that serve national, regional, community and neighborhood populations.”***

The addition of cottages would expand the space allowed for the House of Pacific Relations. Those members that currently use the Hall of Nations would now have a meeting space of their own, and they would be able to have permanent exhibits to educate visitors about their cultures. The proposed expansion would preserve and enhance the cultural activities of Balboa Park, and in specific the House of Pacific Relations. The expansion would also enhance the recreational uses of the Park.

❖ ***“Preserve Balboa Park as an affordable park experience for all citizens of San Diego.”***

Balboa Park is a public facility free to all City residents and visitors. While not all attractions in Balboa Park are free, the majority of the Park and its recreational resources will remain so. The proposed cottages would be open from noon to 5:00 PM on Sundays at no charge to the public.

The Land Use element of the CMPP states the following goal:

❖ ***“Park land to be converted for building expansions, roads, parking areas or restricted uses should be minimized to preserve the historic resource and maintain existing relationships between the natural and built environment.”***

The House of Pacific Relations has modified their proposal to minimize the amount of free and open park land used for cottage expansion. The areas of expansion have been revised to areas that are rarely used by the public, and no current users will be displaced. New courtyards will be open to the public daily.

Criterion b: *The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design.*

The proposed amendment removes free and open parkland and increases the amount of restricted park land. However, the amount of space being used has been minimized, and the areas of expansion are rarely used by the general public. No existing user groups would be displaced. The land being used is partially turf and partially mulch (un-vegetated).

Criterion c: *Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.*

Balboa Park is currently adequately served by major public services such as water, sewer, electrical, telephone and other utilities. Due to the limited operational hours of the International Cottages it is unlikely there will be significant added demand to these services.

Police service currently serving the Park overall is adequate. The Park Ranger staff also provides an additional level of security to the Park during daytime hours. However, International Cottages residents regularly complain of homeless issues they have, including break-ins, encampments and clean-ups. This issue may increase with additional cottages, however it will be specifically addressed during the amendment process.

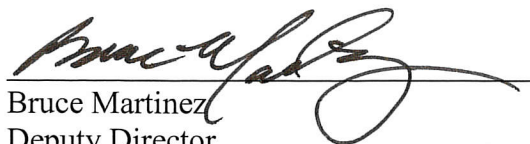
The Park is currently well served by freeways and roads, and no additional roads are anticipated at this time. Public transit improvements in the form of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) are currently being planned by SANDAG, and are anticipated to be in place in the near future. BRT lines are proposed for Park Boulevard, 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue.

Building maintenance services are provided by the City's Facilities Maintenance Division of Public Works. Facilities Maintenance staff are limited in their capacity to respond to service requests. Additional cottages would fall under their purview for maintenance. The newer structures would require little maintenance initially.

CONCLUSION

As outlined herein, staff believes the proposed plan amendments meet the above criteria as described; therefore, staff recommends initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed Balboa Park House of Pacific Relations Expansion.

Respectfully submitted,



Bruce Martinez
Deputy Director
Park and Recreation Department



Charles Daniels
Park Designer
Park and Recreation Department

BEM/cd

Attachments: Attachment A - Vicinity Map
Attachment B - Original International Cottages Site Plan
Attachment C - Original CMPP Graphic for House of Pacific Relations
Attachment D - Amended CMPP Graphic for House of Pacific Relations
Attachment E - Conceptual Plan for Proposed Amendments to the CMPP
Draft PC Resolution

BALBOA PARK

ADJACENT PLANNING AREAS

2015



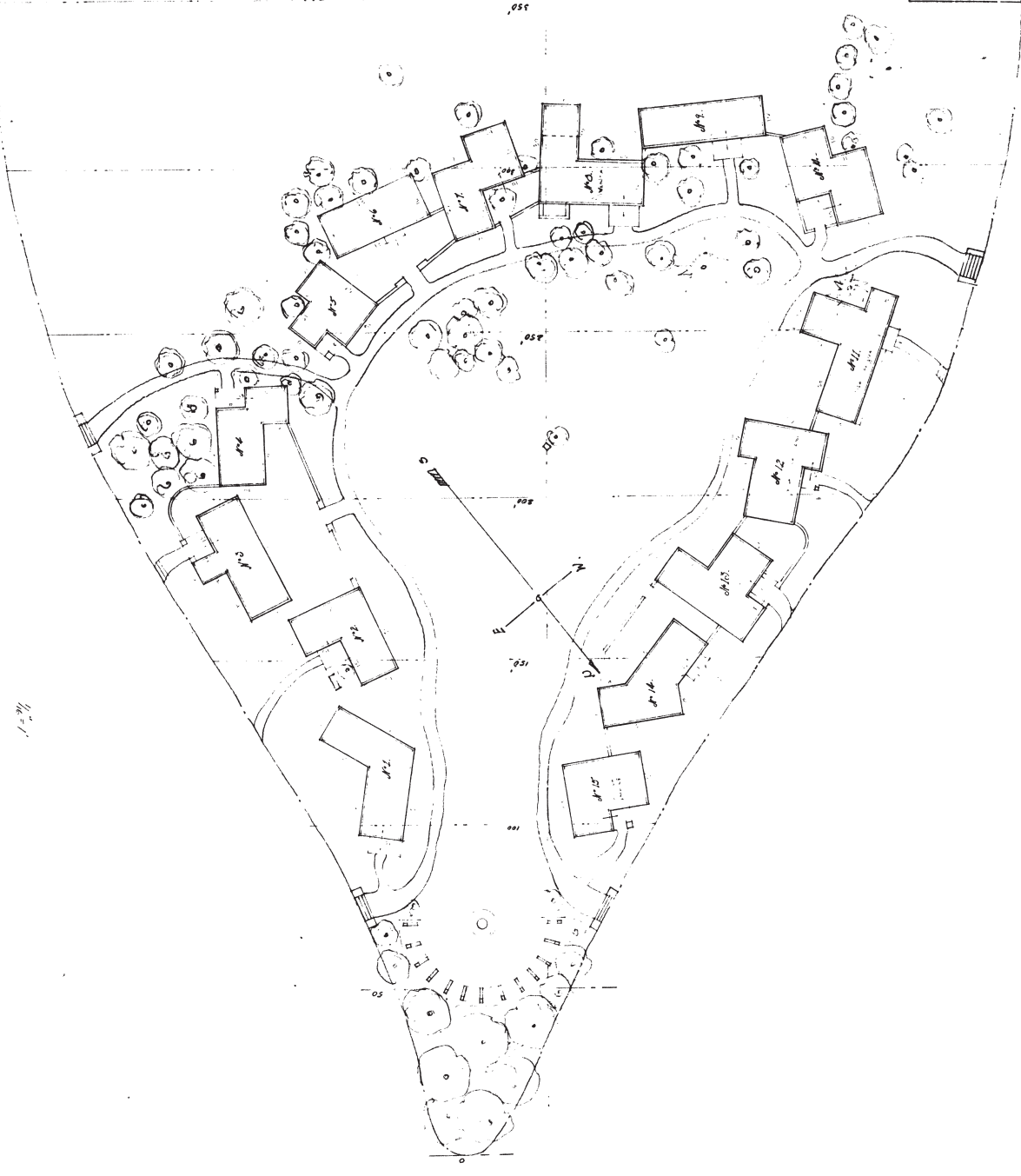
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ATTACHMENT A



CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA PARKS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT SHEET 11 OF 30 SHEETS INVENTORY OF BALBOA PARK CONSTRUCTION DURING PERIOD OF 1950-1948 COMPILED APRIL 1972	
PROJECT TITLE HOUSE & PACIFIC RELATIONS	
PLOT PLAN SHEET TITLE	11-10-34 DATE
204-1721 SHEET NUMBER	8033-1-R SHEET NUMBER

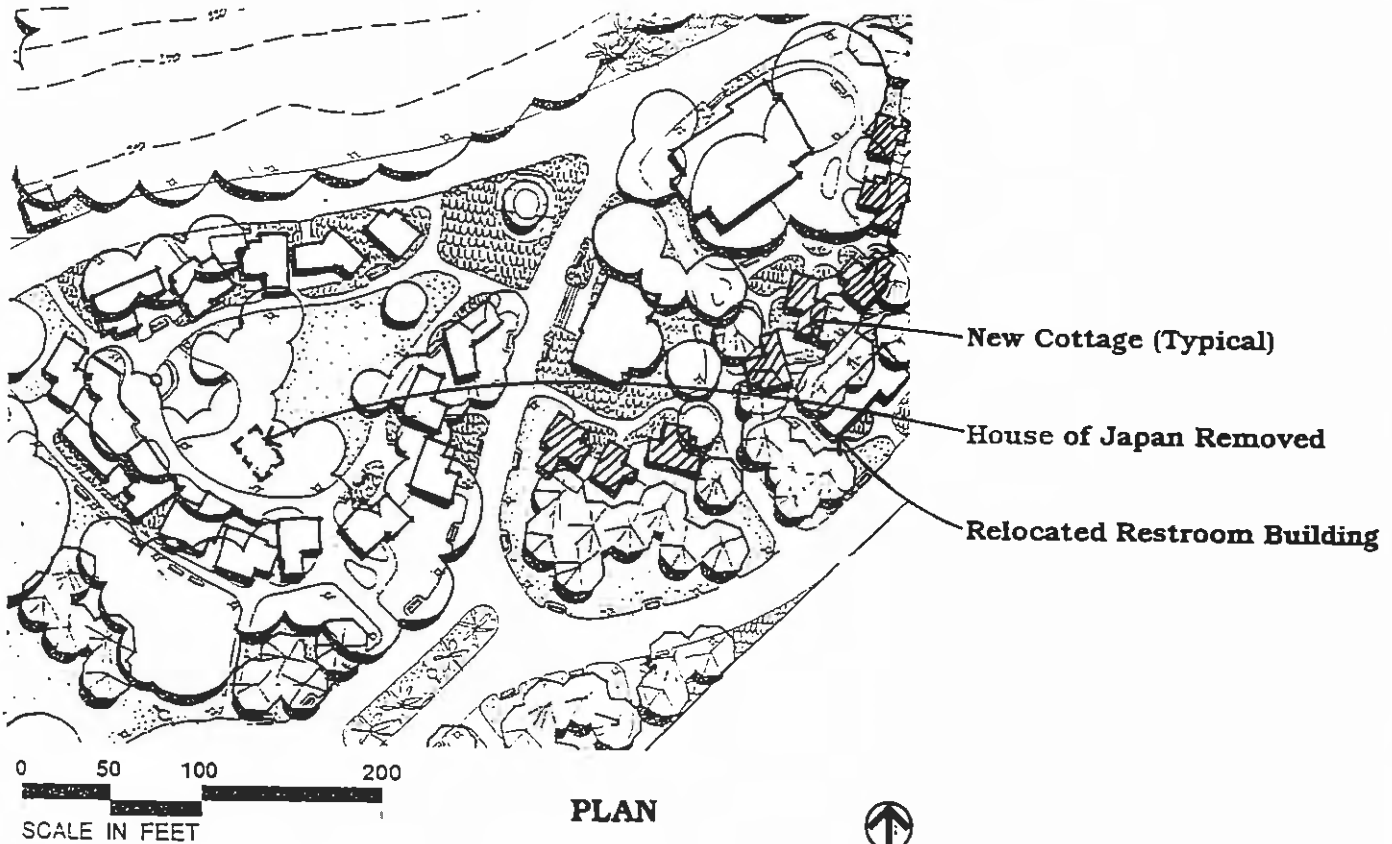
CALIFORNIA PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION 1935 28 SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 28 1935	
PLOT PLAN ARCHITECTURAL DEPT C. S. HARPER ARCHITECT Checked by Approved Date 11/10/34	
Approved by Executive Manager Supervising Architect Director of Works S.E.R.A. Director	



28. House of Pacific Relations

Design Objective:

Add additional cottages while preserving the existing group of 1935 Exposition cottages intact.



Recommendations:

- Arrange new cottages on the site as shown.
- Retain the same scale, forms, details, trim, materials and colors as the existing cottages.
- Add a storage and changing room within the expansion.
- Limit the total square footage of expansion to 4,000 square feet.

29. House of Pacific Relations - House of Japan Cottage

Design Objective:

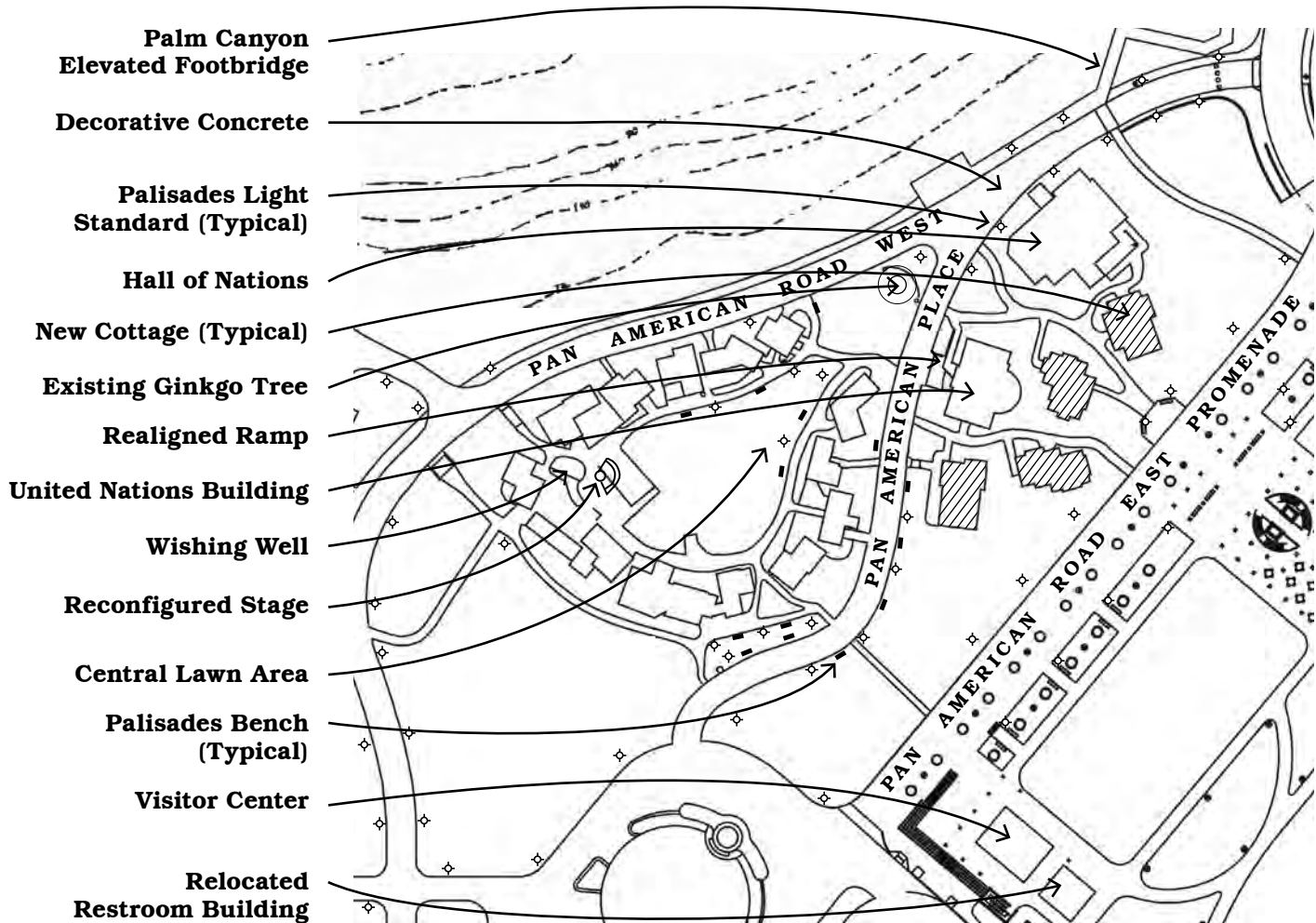
Remove the non-historic House of Japan addition and relocate the organization in one of the new cottages.



1. House of Pacific Relations

Design Objective:

Present the wooded secluded quality of the village, enhance pedestrian enjoyment of the area and provide pedestrian access to the proposed additional cottages.



PLAN



Recommendations:

- Reconfigure the existing concrete performance platform as shown on the plan. Supply the platform with electrical service for sound and lighting equipment. Preserve the wishing well in present location.
- Provide new pedestrian walkways to proposed new cottages as shown on the plan.
- Remove the non-historic House of Japan and relocate the organization in a new cottage within the Village.
- Locate all new cottages and walkways in a way that preserves existing plant material as much as possible.
- Replace asphalt on Pan American Road and Pan American Place with decorative concrete to visually define them as pedestrian walkways.



Conceptual Site Plan
House of Pacific Relations



ATTACHMENT E

a Park

allisades Building /
Marie Hitchcock
uppet Theater

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PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. ____-PC

INITIATING AN AMENDMENT TO THE GENERAL PLAN, THE BALBOA PARK
MASTER PLAN AND THE BALBOA PARK CENTRAL MESA PRECISE PLAN

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2015, the Planning Commission of the City of San Diego held a public hearing for the purpose of considering a request to initiate amendments to the General Plan, the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments would allow for expansion of the House of Pacific Relations cottage complex; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of San Diego considered all maps, exhibits, and written documents presented for this project, and had considered the oral presentations given at the public hearing; NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of San Diego, that the initiation of plan amendments in no way confers adoption of a plan amendment, that neither staff nor the Planning Commission is committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment, and the City Council is not committed to adopt or deny the proposed amendment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission of the City of San Diego determines that the proposed plan amendment meets the three criteria for initiation as described in section LU-D.10 of the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

- a) **The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria**
- b) **The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design**
- c) **Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process**

The following land use issues have been identified with the initiation request. These standard plan amendment issues, as well as others that have been and/or may be identified, will be analyzed and evaluated through the community plan amendment review process:

- Historic resources protection
- Traffic circulation and pedestrian safety
- Maintenance and Security

Charles Daniels
Park Designer
Park and Recreation Department

Carmina Trajano
Legislative Recorder

Approved on January 22, 2015
Vote: X-X-X

cc: Legislative Recorder, Development Services Department