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CITY OF SAN DIEGO**

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NEWS RELEASE

## **Elevation of Balboa Park Continues with \$1 Million Grant from James Irvine Foundation**

*Funds Will Help Double WiFi Coverage throughout Park and Enhance Visitor Experience*

San Diego, CA – Today Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer and City Council President Todd Gloria were joined by several organizations with ties to Balboa Park to announce that the James Irvine Foundation has given a \$1 million grant to elevate Balboa Park for the 2015 Centennial and beyond.

The money will be used to double the size of the WiFi network in Balboa Park, making it one of the largest and fastest free public WiFi spots on the West Coast. In addition, the grant will support a new initiative to use technology – interactive kiosks and smartphone apps -- to enhance the visitor experience at Balboa Park.

**“The momentum is building for a fantastic 2015 Centennial thanks to generous contributions like this from the James Irvine Foundation,” Mayor Faulconer said. “This grant will fund improvements to elevate Balboa Park, create more opportunities for visitors and ensure Balboa Park remains San Diego’s crown jewel for the next 100 years.”**

**Council President Gloria said, “This substantial upgrade to Balboa Park’s wireless network, coupled with other visitor-centered projects, will provide greater access and engagement to park institutions for San Diegans and other patrons.”**

The grant money will be used by the Balboa Park Online Collaborative (BPOC), the Balboa Park Conservancy (BPC) and the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership (BPCP) for technology upgrades, including:

- Doubling the coverage area for Balboa Park’s existing WiFi network to roughly 250 contiguous acres. It will ensure coverage from outlying parking lots, gardens and the West Mesa all the way to the doorsteps of various cultural attractions in the park. *BPOC.*
- Creating a self-guided tour smartphone app that will include specific tour options to guide visitors around the park, its museums and cultural institutions. *BPCP and BPOC.*
- Installing self-service kiosks in museums and other park locations that will allow users to purchase or renew a Balboa Park Explorer Pass. *BPCP and BPOC.*
- Elevate the visitor experience by updating the park’s web interface, developing of a mobile Explorer Pass and allowing online users to create their own tours through the park. *BPCP, BPC and BPOC.*

**“The upgrades funded by the Irvine grant will improve access for everyone while providing the backbone for future projects that will enhance the visitor experience well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” said Carol Chang, president of the Balboa Park Conservancy.**

**Deborah Klochko, chair of the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, said, “As the cultural heart of San Diego, Balboa Park welcomes millions of visitors and by improving their experience through the use of technology we will make sure they keep coming back again and again.”**

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**The James Irvine Foundation** is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful, and inclusive society. The Foundation’s grantmaking focuses on three program areas: Arts, California Democracy and Youth. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided over \$1.3 billion in grants to more than 3,500 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With about \$1.8 billion in assets, the Foundation made grants of \$69 million in 2013 for the people of California.

**The Balboa Park Conservancy** is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization responsible for raising funds, developing public-private partnerships, and collaborating with Balboa Park stakeholders to implement capital projects, address deferred maintenance needs, and seek solutions to accessibility needs in the Park. It operates as partners with the City, which owns Balboa Park, and with other park stakeholders to carry out its mission. For more information, visit <http://www.balboaparkconservancy.org>.

**The Balboa Park Cultural Partnership** is a nonprofit organization through which 28 arts, science, and cultural institutions in Balboa Park collaborate to achieve shared goals. By helping these groups achieve greater organizational efficiency, innovation, and excellence, it seeks to contribute to the vitality and sustainability of Balboa Park. For more information, visit [bpcp.org](http://bpcp.org).

**The Balboa Park Online Collaborative** provides technical support, technology management, digital collections access, and new media services to more than twenty art, science, and cultural organizations in San Diego. BPOC’s mission is to foster a culture of innovation and collaboration among nonprofit organizations through technology, with a focus on Balboa Park. To learn more, visit [www.bpoc.org](http://www.bpoc.org).