



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: February 2, 2018

REPORT NO.: 202

ATTENTION: Parks and Recreation Board  
Agenda of February 15, 2018

SUBJECT: Balboa Park Moreton Bay Fig Observation Deck

### SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE BOARD.

### BACKGROUND

Balboa Park is located in the heart of San Diego, immediately north of the downtown area. 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 the park has to offer.

Development, maintenance and management of Balboa Park are governed by the Balboa Park master Plan (BPMP), the Central mesa Precise Plan (CMPP), the East Mesa Precise Plan (EMPP) and subsequent amendments to these documents. The Master Plan and Precise Plans are part of the City's Progress Guide and General Plan (General Plan), and implement land use policies for Balboa Park.

The BPMP was adopted by City Council on July 25, 1989 (Resolution No. R-274090). The BPMP addresses the entirety of Balboa Park and provides general guidelines for development and management. The CMPP was adopted by City Council on October 20, 1992 (Resolution R-280920) and addresses the central portion of the Park in greater detail.

A large portion of the Central Mesa, including the proposed project area, is within a designated National Historic Landmark District (NHLD). The District is approximately bound by SR 163 to the west, Interstate 5 to the south, Park Boulevard to the east and the San Diego Zoo to the north. A portion of the District extends westward to encompass the Cabrillo Bridge and guard houses, and northward to encompass Spanish Village, the carousel and the miniature railroad. Any redevelopment within the NHLD must meet the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation and redevelopment.

The Friends of Balboa Park (Friends) is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of Balboa Park through education programs, maintenance programs and capital improvement projects. Their mission statement; “We preserve Balboa Park’s legacy for future generations through park-wide projects.” The organization has been in existence since 1999, with roots that go back even further. The Friends is a well-known and respected Park institution with an excellent history completing improvement projects in Balboa Park.

There is a very large and well known Moreton Bay Fig tree located north of the Natural History Museum and south of Spanish Village in the North Prado area of the park. This tree was reportedly planted for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, making it over a century old. It is one of the largest of its species in California. A chain link fence was placed around the tree in 1989 to protect it from soil compaction and damage to its aerial roots. Many people still flock to the tree, which results in turf damage and soil compaction outside the protective fence.

The Friends of Balboa Park proposes to construct a new elevated observation deck to the northwest of the tree and to replace the existing chain link fence with an ornamental iron fence. This tree is indicated in the CMPP but there is no special treatment specified other than replacement of the fence.

## DISCUSSION

### Project Description

The proposed observation deck would be located to the northwest of the Moreton Bay Fig tree and adjacent to Village Place. The deck would be arc shaped and span approximately one quarter of the circumference of the tree. The deck would be elevated no more than two feet above grade to clear the existing tree roots. Access stairs would be located at each end of the deck, and an accessible ramp would be located along the outside edge. There are three extensions of the deck area toward the center of the tree. Two overlooks (one at each end) are for observation use and gain a closer proximity to the underside of the tree canopy and root structure. A central extension is a curvilinear form that can be used for educational and event oriented presentations.

The deck will be constructed of an engineered steel substructure support system that is designed to support the decking over the existing surface root structure. The deck materials would be a combination of composite wood and recycled wood deck panels. The perimeter of the deck will have an ADA compliant railing system comprised of a metal picket rail with top and bottom rail design. A similar designed fence system will replace the existing chain link perimeter fence as indicated in the CMPP. Minor concrete improvements will be done to gain access to the deck’s stairs and ramp.

There will be several interpretative signage exhibits set within the deck that provide horticultural educational information on the tree, history of the placement and local habitat information. Donor recognition will occur as an integrated part of the interpretative signage exhibit structures as appropriate. All donor recognition signage will follow City policy.

### Planning Documents

The CMPP does not identify any improvements to this area other than replacement of the existing chain link fence with a wrought iron fence. While the proposed observation deck is not indicated in the CMPP, its purpose is to enhance the park visitor experience. The space occupied

by the proposed deck is, and will remain, free and open park land. In addition, the construction techniques proposed will make the deck completely reversible. The construction of an observation deck at this location is identified on the Parks and Recreation Department's Unfunded Park Improvements List, and was placed there in 2001 by the Balboa Park Committee.

### Historical Resources

On October 4, 2017 the proposed project was presented to the Historical resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee (DAS). In general the DAS feels the proposed project is consistent with Secretary of the Interior Standards, and provided the following comments. These comments have not yet been incorporated into the plans.

1. *Reduce the length of the ramp to what is necessary to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements (ADA).*

Staff Response: The length of the ramp can be adjusted when exact grades are determined. In addition, the City strives to exceed ADA requirements; providing a longer and gentler (flatter) slope is easier to navigate.

2. *Reduce the number of pickets in the guard rails since the deck is less than 30 inches above grade.*

Staff Response: While the reduction of pickets could be allowed by code, staff needs to consider the family nature of the park and provide a safe environment. Also, spacing pickets further apart could encourage people to slip through the rails and trample the landscape rather than take the prescribed path of travel.

3. *Reduce the number of entry points.*

Staff Response: There are two sets of stairs and one ramp, which does not seem excessive. However, staff will work with the FoBP and Historic resources staff to resolve any concerns.

Staff and the Friends of Balboa Park will work closely with Historic Resources staff to assure the project complies with preservation standards.

### Park and Recreation Board Policy

Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1002 addresses "Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land" (see Attachment B) The policy provides criteria for the Park and Recreation Board to evaluate proposals, which are as follows:

- a. *Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?*

Staff Response: Staff believes the proposed observation deck does add to the attractiveness and usefulness of Balboa Park.

- b. *Does it commemorate an individual, group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?*


Staff Response: The proposed observation deck will not commemorate an individual, group or event.

- c. *Is the individual, group or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?*  
Staff Response: This item is not applicable.
- d. *Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?*  
Staff Response: This item is not applicable.
- e. *If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?*  
Staff Response: Funding for the design and construction will be provided by the Friends of Balboa Park.
- f. *Will proper maintenance be feasible?*  
Staff Response: Based on the construction techniques proposed, staff believes the proposed observation deck will require minimal maintenance.
- g. *Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make cleanup of vandalism easier?*  
Staff Response: Similar to Item f, staff believes the proposed construction methods will require minimal maintenance and minimal effort to abate vandalism; no changes should be necessary.
- h. *To what extent has the person, group or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?*  
Staff Response: This item is not applicable.
- i. *Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?*  
Staff Response: The location of the observation deck is intended to allow park visitors to better appreciate the Moreton Bay Fig tree without compacting soil or damaging turf.

Committee Action

On January 4, 2018 the Parks and Recreation Board's Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously to advise the proposed project is consistent with the Master Plan and Precise Plan, and to recommend approval of the concept plan for the observation deck.

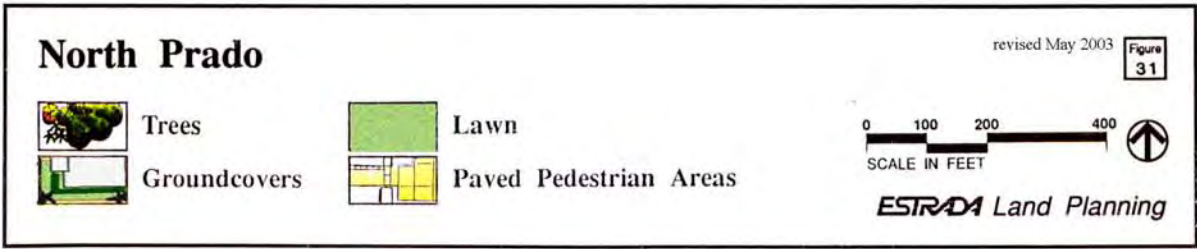
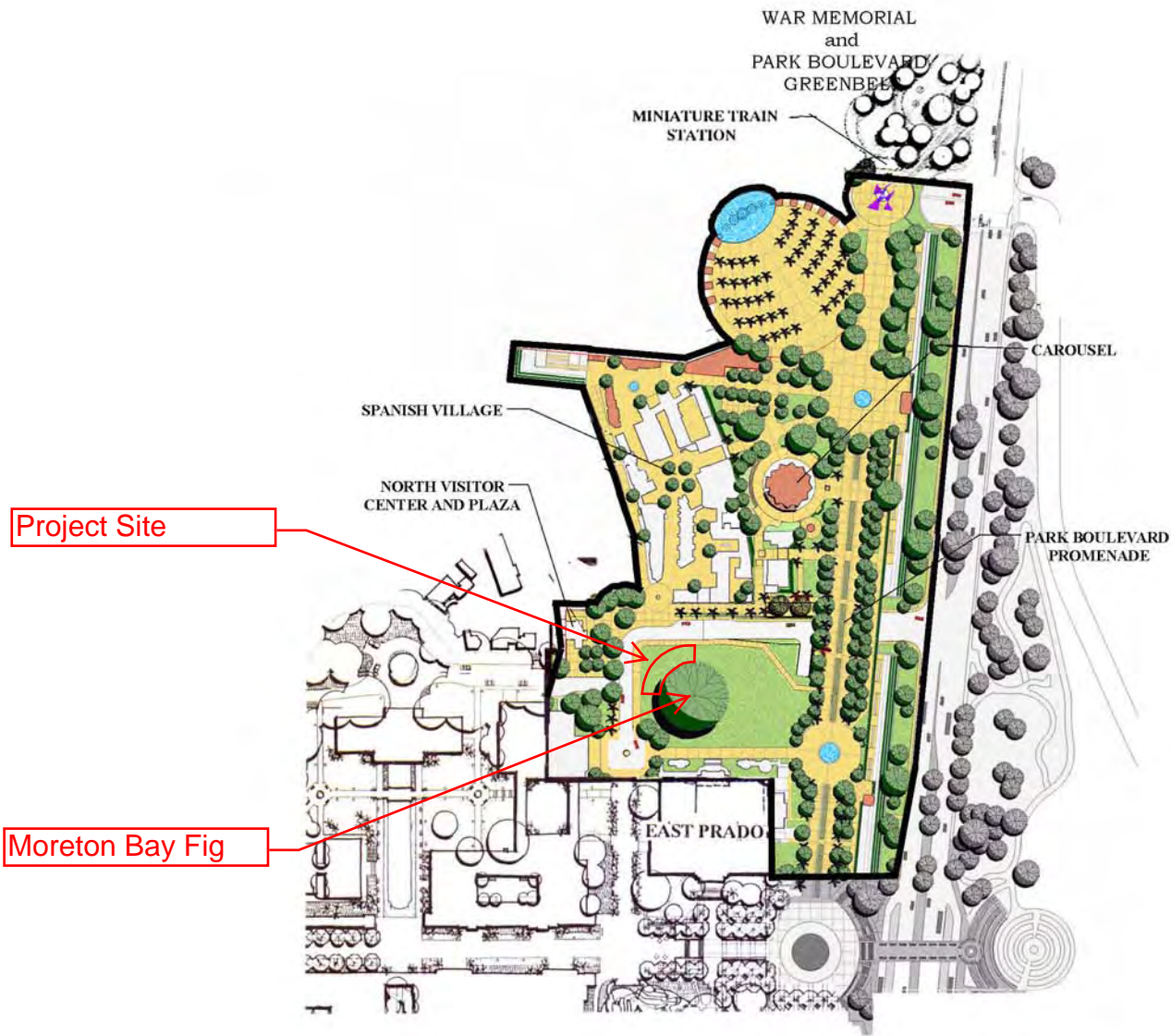
Respectfully submitted,

  
Bruce E. Martinez  
Deputy Director, Developed Regional parks  
BEM/cpd

  
Prepared by: Charles Daniels  
Park Designer

Attachments: A – Excerpts from the CMPP  
B – Parks and Recreation Board Policy 1001  
C – Excerpt from the Unfunded Park Improvements List  
D – Observation Deck Concept Plan

cc: Council District 3 Office

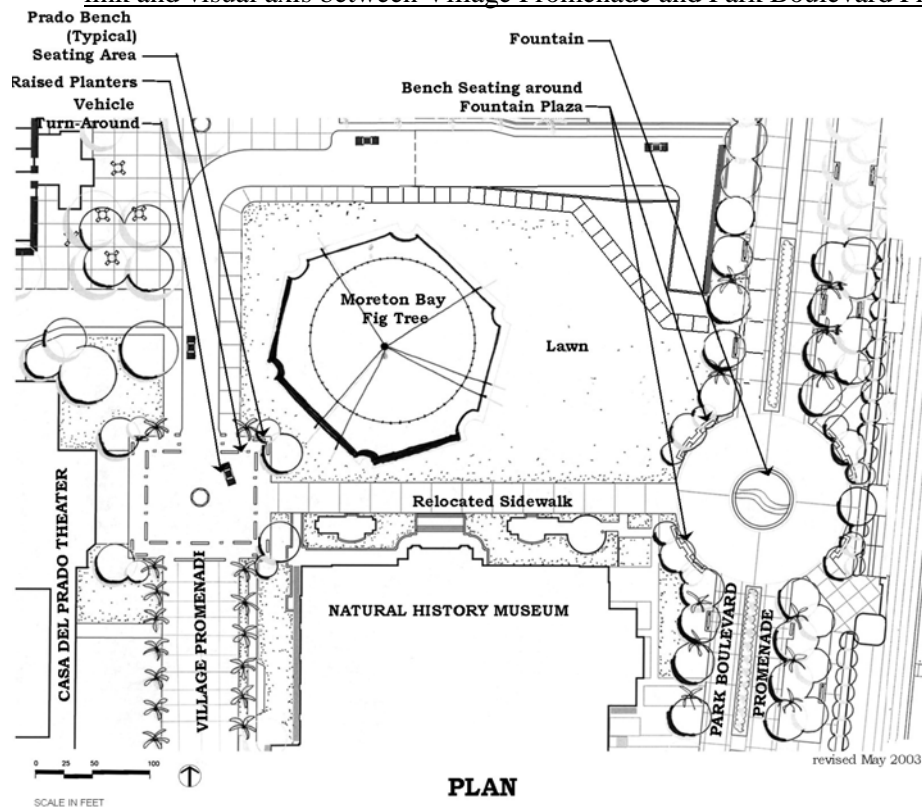




## 1. Village Promenade/Park Boulevard Promenade Pedestrian Link

### Design Objective:

Emphasize the entry experience to the North Prado for the pedestrian arriving on public transportation from Park Boulevard. Create a pedestrian link and visual axis between Village Promenade and Park Boulevard Promenade.



### Recommendations:

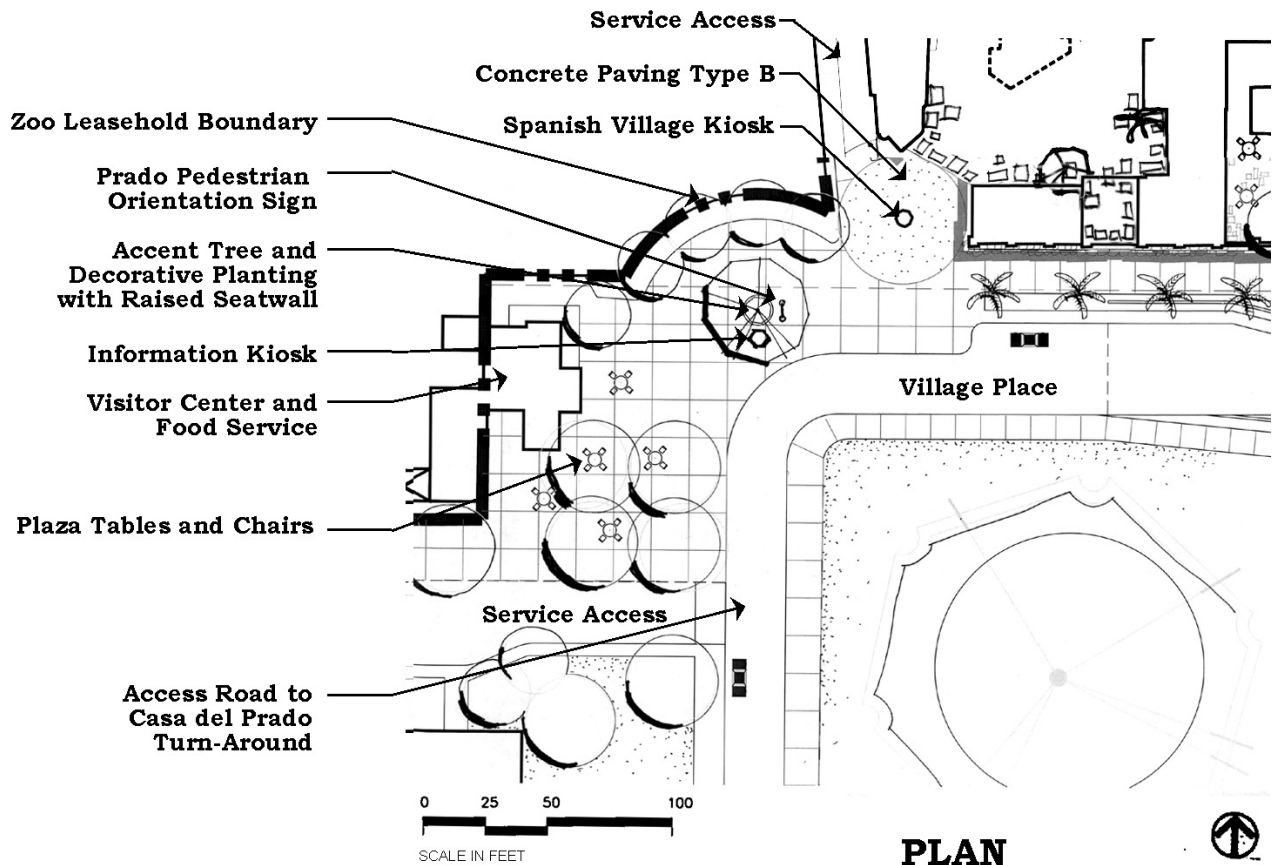
- Replace the existing sidewalk from the Natural History Museum parking lot to the Casa de Balboa Theater with a new walkway on axis with the entry to the Theater. This walkway will connect the Theater entry plaza with the ~~transit stop on Park Boulevard~~ Park Boulevard Promenade.
- Create a Theater entry plaza that includes a vehicle drop-off and turn-around. The plaza shall be rectangular in shape and of decorative paving in the same type as used on the Prado. Use seating, lighting, paving, and other vertical elements to reinforce the rectangular shape of the plaza. In order to provide enough room for pedestrians, vehicles should be confined to a turn-around area with bollards and planters. This vehicular area should read as being subordinate to the overall rectangular plaza.
- Construct the walk of type C concrete. The color should complement surrounding architecture.
- Extend the concrete paving through the Natural History Museum parking lot and flank the walkways with landscaped planters when it intersects parking rows. Develop a Fountain Plaza along Park Boulevard Promenade on axis with the walkway to the Casa del Prado Theater.
- Include a seating areas ~~across from~~ adjacent to the Casa del Prado Theater entry plaza and around the Fountain Plaza as shown on plan.



### 3. Spanish Village South Entry Plaza\*

#### Design Objective:

Because of its significant location, this plaza presents an opportunity to create a festive gathering place at a major crossroads area of the Park. It will include a major visitor service center and provide a vital link between Spanish Village and the Prado. It will be a visual focal point from the Prado and the Village Place ~~cul-de-sac~~ along the Village Promenade.



#### Recommendations:

- Provide an outdoor dining area with plaza tables and chairs. Include accent trees in grates.
- Increase the lawn area on the northwest side of the Moreton Bay Fig.
- Replace the existing chain link fence with one of decorative wrought iron.
- Create an additional lawn area near the visitor center. Include a three foot high wall to serve as a visual barrier between the plaza and the service access to Spanish Village. Provide palm and theme trees.

\*proposed name for a new feature

PARK AND RECREATION BOARD POLICY

**SUBJECT:** Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land

**BACKGROUND:** Public parks have as a primary function, the provision of outdoor recreation in spacious, landscaped surroundings. Special architectural features, such as water elements, sculpture, and other works of art add significantly to the parks by the enjoyment derived from experiencing the beauty of the feature. All features must be consistent with applicable Park Master Plans and General Development Plans.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria for design, placement and acceptance of architectural, artistic and commemorative features within parks or other City-owned land, and to maintain same.

- POLICY:**
1. The City of San Diego shall encourage community groups and individuals to donate "special features" which will add to the interest and attractiveness of the parks, or be of service to patrons of the parks, i.e., drinking fountains, benches.
  2. Proposals for "special features" and their locations shall be reviewed by the Park and Recreation Board and submitted by them to the City Council with recommendations in accordance with Council Policy 100-2 (City Receipt of Donations).
  3. Proposals for special features shall be coordinated for review with the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.
  4. A "special feature" may serve as a recognition to an individual or group; living or dead, who have made a significant contribution to a specific park or community; commemorate an historic occasion; or acknowledge interest of a group or individual in a park.
  5. All "special features" proposed as memorials shall add to the attractiveness or usefulness of the park area or be of unusually significant historical value.



POLICY: (Continued)

No. 1002

6. The initial costs of development and placement of a decorative memorial or commemorative feature shall be borne totally by private funds. Costs may be shared by the City if the "feature" provides a service to park patrons. The City will assume ownership and maintenance, if accepted, and place in a public park. The City will not assume responsibility for replacement of "features" removed due to vandalism or lost to theft. Proposed "special features" which pose an unusual risk of vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance due to design or location, shall not be approved unless the private sponsors make financial arrangements, satisfactory to the City, for replacement, repair or removal of the "feature" due to vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance.

7. "Living Memorials," features or facilities which (in addition to their inherent beauty) provide an opportunity for active recreation, shall be encouraged.

8. The Park and Recreation Board shall evaluate each individual memorial feature on the following basis:

a. Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?

b. Does it commemorate an individual group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?

c. Is the individual, group, or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?

d. Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?

e. If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?

f. Will proper maintenance be feasible?

g. Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make the cleanup of vandalism easier?

POLICY: (Continued)

No. 1002

h. To what extent has the person, group, or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?

i. Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?

SUBSTANTIATION:

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/12/65

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 3/15/77

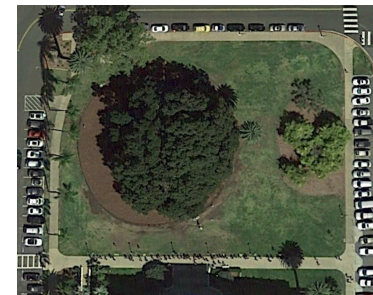
Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/19/94

Public Facilities and Recreation Committee Minutes of 6/22/94

2016 Unfunded Park Improvements - Balboa Park

Attachment C

Name / Address		Council District	Community Planning Area	Project Description	Deferred Maint.	CDBG Eligible	Cost Range	Date of Request	Request Source	Remarks:
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Inspiration Point - construct a Veterans' Memorial Garden.	No	No	F	2001	BPC	Phase I (Air Garden) complete. Land and Sea Gardens require funding.
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Irrigation central control system - replace and automate.	No	No	F	2001	BPC	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House - replace deteriorated garden walls and brick retaining wall.	Yes	No	E	2001	BPC	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House addition - rebuild historic pergola.	No	No	C	2001	BPC	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House - re-point all brickwork in on main house and carriage house.	Yes	No	B	2010	P&R	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House - install new roofs for main house and carriage house.	Yes	No	B	2010	P&R	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House: Restoration of historic canyon garden.	Yes	No	D	2013	P&R	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Marston House: Paint exterior of main house and carriage house Repair all exterior woodwork.	Yes	No	D	2013	P&R	
<b>Balboa Park:</b> Russ Blvd. to Upas Street/6th Avenue to 28th Street		3	Balboa Park	Moreton Bay fig tree, north of Natural History Museum - design and construct a viewing platform or deck and interpretive program.	No	No	C	2001	BPC	



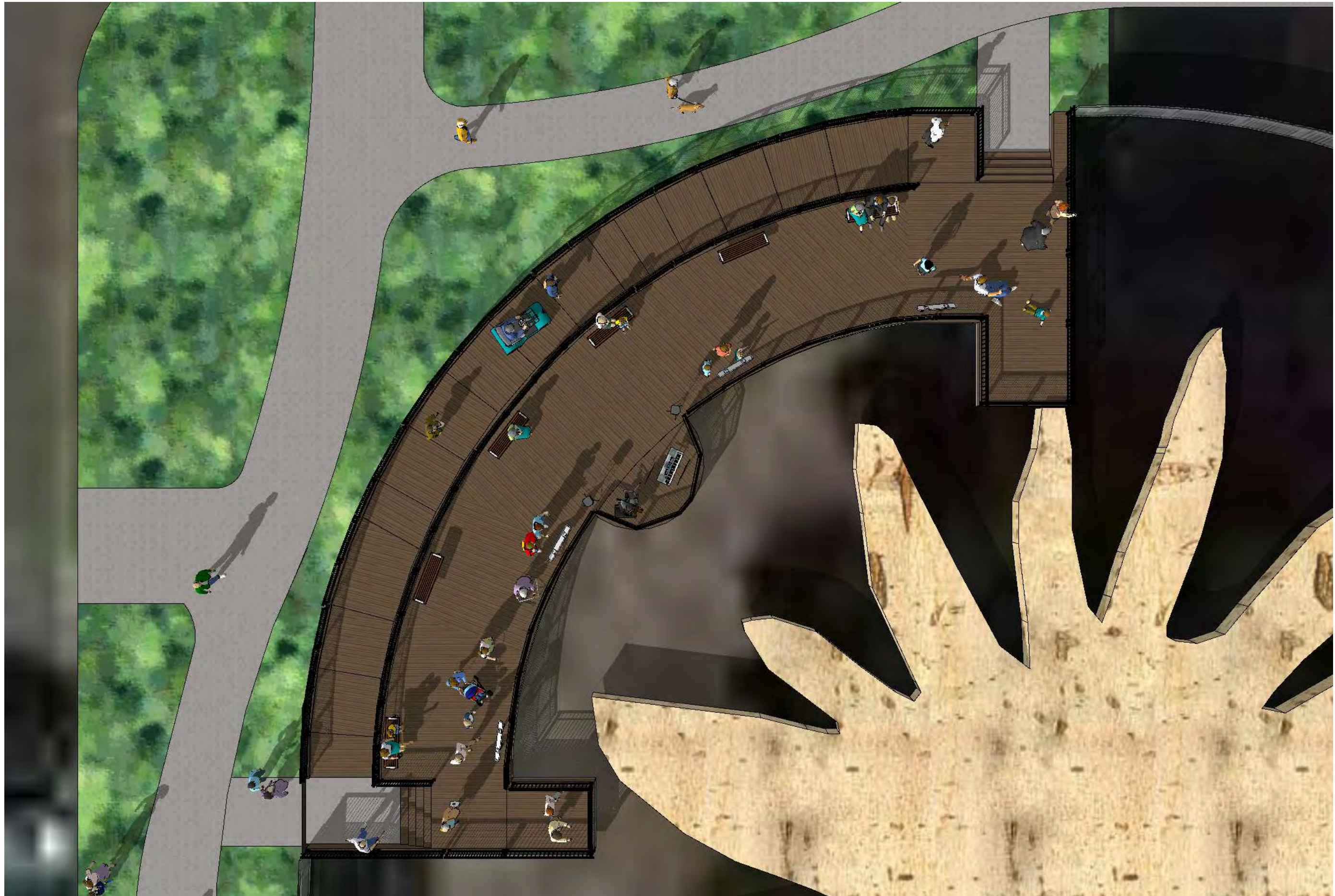
AERIAL VIEW OF EXISTING LOCATION



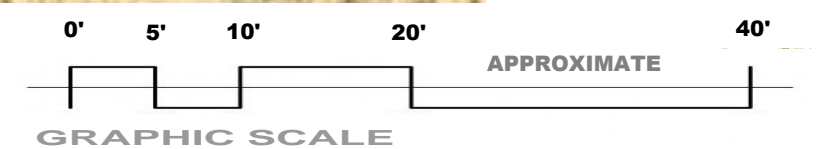
Wimmer  
Yamada  
and  
Caughey  
Landscape Architecture  
Environmental Planning

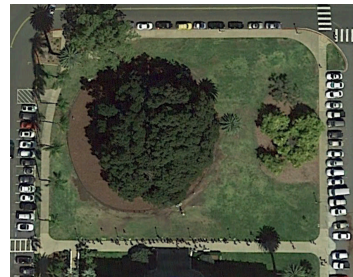
3067 Fifth Avenue  
San Diego, California 92103,5840  
T 619.232.4004 F 619.232.0640  
www.wyac.com

November 20, 2017



PLAN VIEW  
BALBOA PARK - MORETON BAY FIG - VIEWING DECK WITH SEATING & EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE - UPDATED





AERIAL VIEW OF EXISTING LOCATION



PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

Parks and Recreation Department

Balboa Park

Moreton Bay Fig Observation Deck

Parks and Recreation Board

Item 202

February 15, 2018





# Previous Action

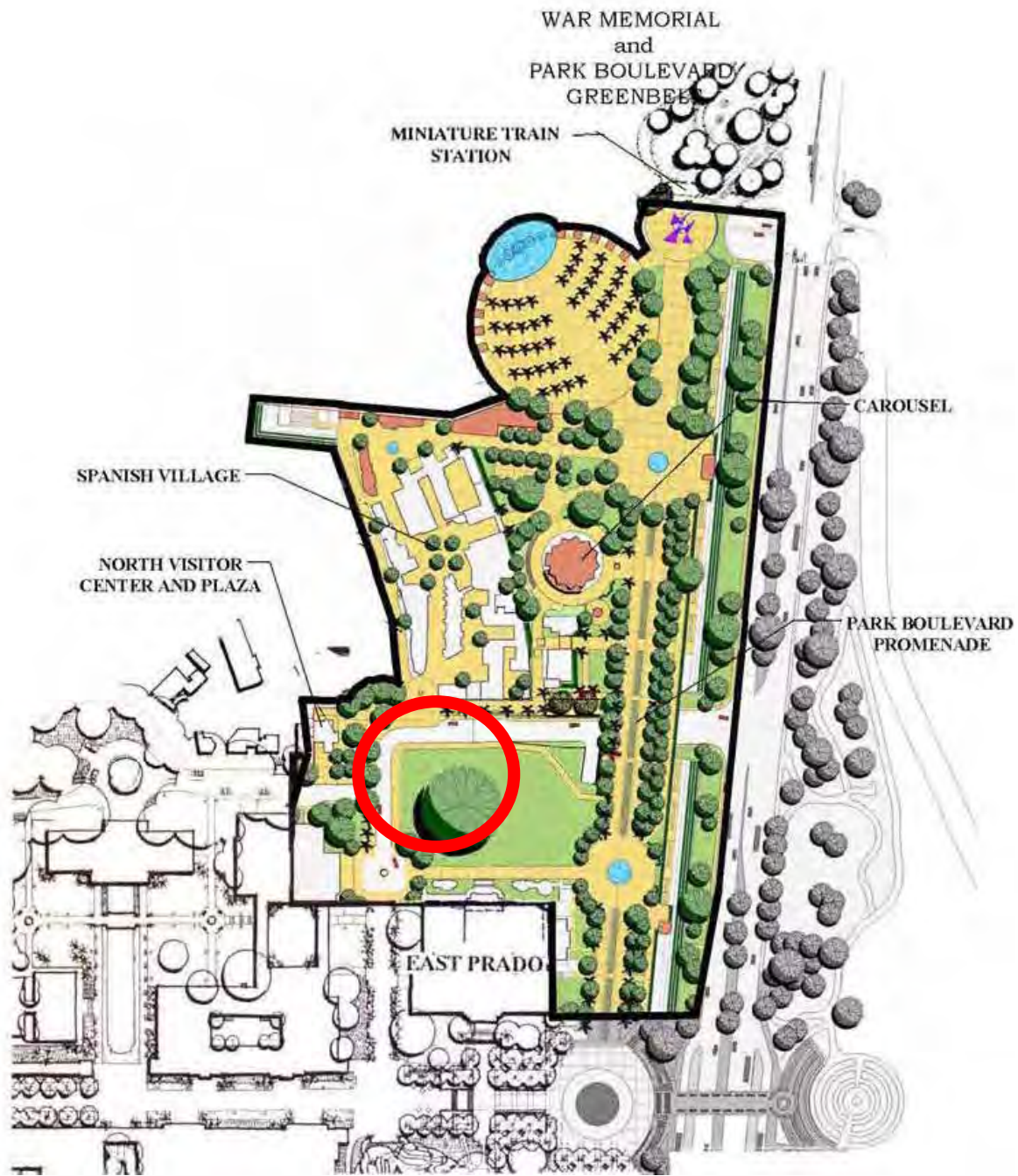
- The Historical Resources Board's Design Assistance Subcommittee has reviewed the proposed concept plan and found it to be consistent with preservation standards.
- On January 4, 2018 the Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the concept plan.

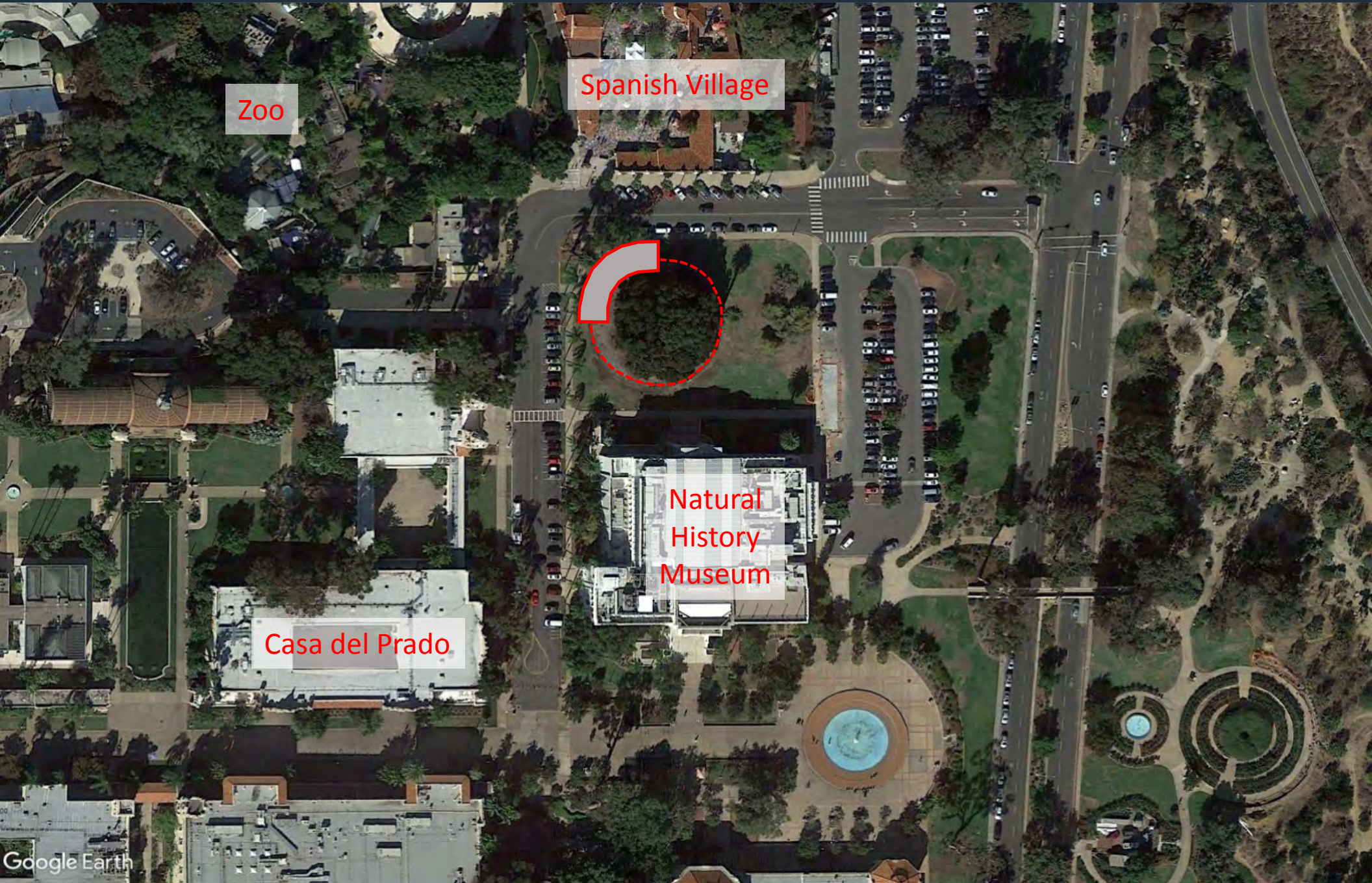


# Parks and Recreation Board Policy

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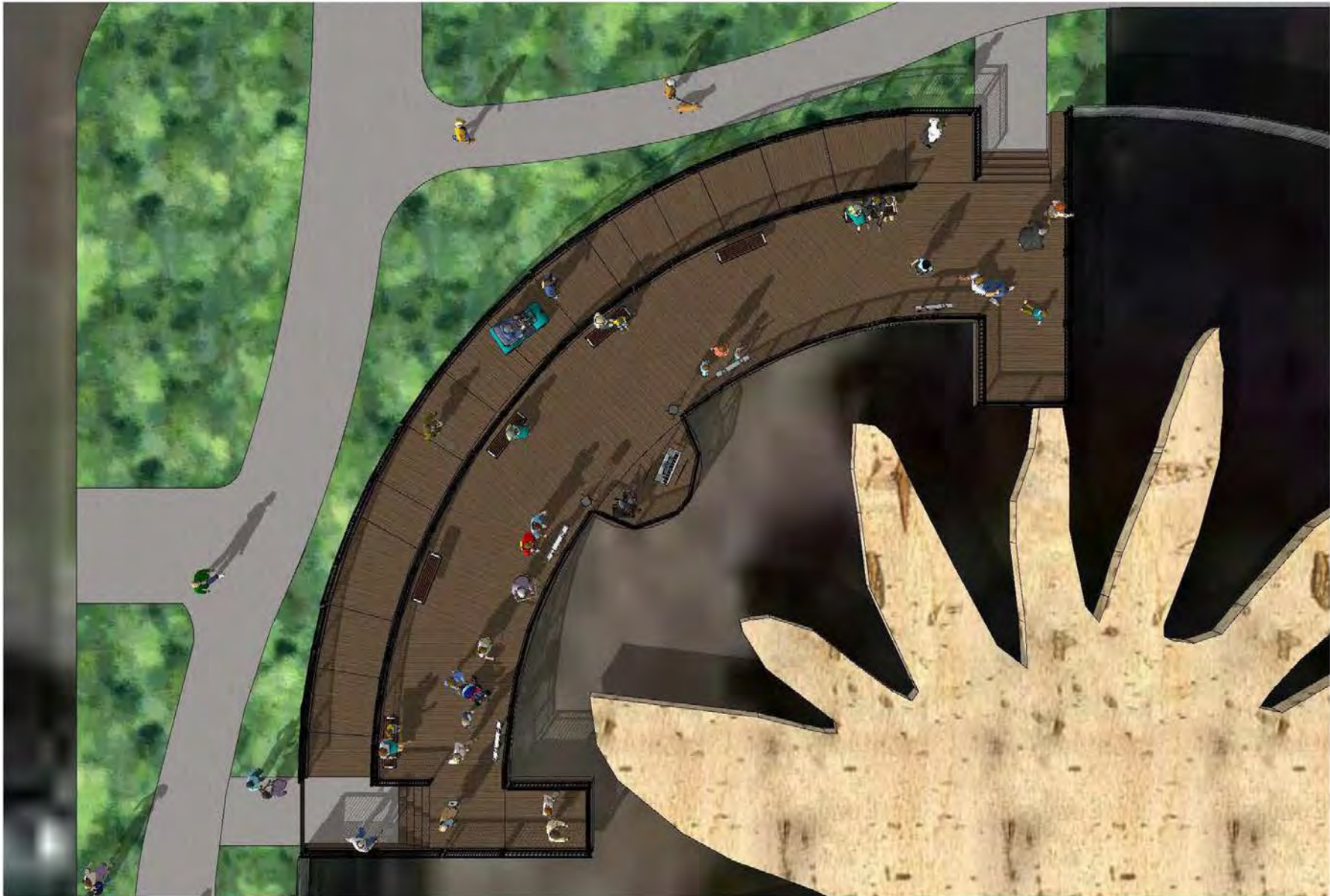
Zoo

Spanish Village



Natural History Museum

Casa del Prado



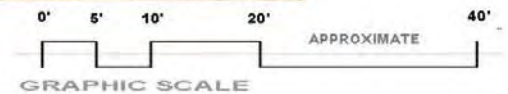
AERIAL VIEW OF EXISTING LOCATION



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San Diego, California 92103-5850  
619-232-4004 | 619-232-0640  
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November 20, 2017

PLAN VIEW  
BALBOA PARK - MORETON BAY FIG - VIEWING DECK WITH SEATING & EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE - UPDATED













# Unfunded Park Improvements List

<small>           ADA=Americans with Disabilities Act            BPC=Balboa Park Committee            Estimated Cost Ranges:            CAC=Citizens Advisory Committee            CDBG=Community Development Block Grant            A = \$0-\$50,000            B = \$50,001-\$100,000            CD=Council District            MBPC=Mission Bay Park Committee            C = \$100,001-\$250,000            D = \$250,001-\$500,000            P&amp;R=Staff            RC/CPG=Rec Council/Commi. Planning Group            E = \$500,001-\$1 million            F = &gt; \$1 million         </small>									
Name / Address	Council District	Community Planning Area	Project Description	Deferred Maint.	CDBG Eligible	Cost Range	Date of Request	Request Source	Remarks:
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# Friends of Balboa Park

- John Bolthouse, Executive Director
- Pat Caughey, FASLA, Board Member