

DATE ISSUED April 7, 2004 REPORT NO. 04-073

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council,
Docket of April 13, 2004

SUBJECT: PARK BOULEVARD PROMENADE PROJECT,
BALBOA PARK MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT, CENTRAL MESA
PRECISE PLAN AMENDMENT, PROGRESS GUIDE AND GENERAL
PLAN AMENDMENT AND SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT
PROJECT NO. 2147, COUNCIL DISTRICT 3, PROCESS 5

REFERENCES:

1. Planning Commission Initiation Hearing of June 3, 1999; Planning Commission Initiation Report dated May 29, 1999 No. P99-084.
2. Natural Resources and Culture Committee Meeting of October 3, 2001; Natural Resources and Culture Committee Report dated September 27, 2001 No. P01-203.
3. Natural Resources and Culture Committee Meeting of January 25, 2002; Natural Resource and Culture Committee Report dated January 30, 2002 (Joint Meeting with the Planning Commission), No. P02-026.
4. Planning Commission Workshop of July 3, 2003; Planning Commission Workshop Report dated June 3, 2003 No. P-03-177.
5. Planning Commission Workshop of October 9, 2003; Planning Commission Workshop Report dated October 16, 2003 No. P-03-243.
6. Planning Commission Recommendation Hearing of January 22, 2004, Planning Commission Report dated January 15, 2004 No. P-03-338.

OWNER/
APPLICANT: City of San Diego/Zoological Society of San Diego

SUMMARY

Issues- Should the City Council certify the Environmental Impact Report and approve amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan, Central Mesa Precise Plan and Progress Guide and General Plan and, a Site Development Permit to implement the Park Boulevard Promenade Project?

Manager's Recommendation -

1. CERTIFY the final Environmental Impact Report No. 2147, ADOPT the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program and ADOPT the Environmental Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations.
2. APPROVE the amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan (BPMP), Central Mesa Precise Plan (CMPP) and the Progress Guide and General Plan No. 48082 (Attachment 1 – BPMP Revised Draft Amendments dated January 2004; Attachment 2 – CMPP Revised Draft Amendments dated January 2004; Attachment 3 – Community Plan Amendment Resolution.
3. APPROVE Site Development Permit (SDP) No. 48083 with conditions (Attachment 4 – SDP Permit; Attachment 5 – SDP Resolution).

Planning Commission - On January 22, 2004, the Planning Commission heard the project and recommended approval by a unanimous vote of 7-0 with recommendations. A discussion of their recommendations and staff's response to those items is provided in the Discussion Section VI of this report. The action minutes from the hearing are included in Attachment 19.

Community Planning Group Recommendation - The Balboa Park Committee recommended approval of the plan amendments by a vote of 7-3 on September 17, 2003 with recommendations (Attachment 6). Staff analysis of their recommendations is provided within the Background section of this report.

Other Recommendations -

1. Design Review Committee - The Design Review Committee of the Park and Recreation Board recommended approval of the amendments with recommendations on October 8, 2003 by a vote of 5-0 (Attachment 7). Staff's analysis of their recommendations is contained within the Background section of this report.
2. Historical Resources Board - The Historical Resources Board (HRB) considered the project on October 23, 2003. A copy of the HRB staff report is provided in Attachment 12. After hearing public testimony, the HRB discussed various aspects of the project. Concerns were raised with regard to the proposed

modification of the historic district boundary, and what was described as the EIR's inadequate evaluation of impacts on the historical landscape as defined by CEQA and on the historical State Route 163 (sic). Based on their discussion, the HRB voted 5-3 to recommend that the City Council not certify the EIR and not approve the project. The action minutes from the meeting are included in Attachment 8.

3. Park and Recreation Board - The Park and Recreation Board was presented the project on October 30th 2003. At that meeting, the item was continued to November 20th as the Board requested additional information, specifically, copies of the Final Environmental Impact Report. On November 20th, the Board discussed the project, but continued the item to January 15, 2004, as some members requested additional information on project financing. The Society forwarded a memorandum entitled "Balboa Park Improvements Financing," a discussion of financing options, to the Park and Recreation Board. A copy of this is included as Attachment 9.

On January 15, 2004, the Board recommended approval of the project amendments by a vote of 6-2-1. However, the motion indicated that the recommendation was to "...approve the proposed amendments...as amended by the exclusion of Sheep and Goat Canyon..." The action minutes from the meeting are included in Attachment 18.

4. Community Forest Advisory Board - The City of San Diego's Community Forest Advisory Board submitted a memorandum to the Planning Commission on October 15, 2003 outlining their concerns regarding the proposed project and potential impacts to mature trees in Balboa Park. The 45-day public review period for the Draft EIR ended on June 26, 2003. However, in accordance with Section 128.0307 of the Land Development Code, public review was extended an additional 14 days to August 25, 2003. The Final EIR was distributed on September 26, 2003. As a result, the Board's comments were not included in the Responses to Comments in the Final EIR. Nevertheless, City staff reviewed the Board's comments and provided responses (Attachment 10). While City staff believes that the EIR and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) fully address the urban forestry issues raised by the Board, staff recommends, and the Zoological Society has agreed to include two additional provisions relating to reforestation as conditions of project approval (Reference the Community Plan Resolution, Attachment 3).

NOTE: Staff has prepared a matrix of all of the recommendations from the Design Review Committee, the Balboa Park Committee and the Planning Commission in Attachment 13. This matrix identifies each item along with staff's response and the implementation mechanism where appropriate.

Fiscal Impact - None with this project. Issues related to project financing are not a part of

the proposal at this time.

Code Enforcement Impact - None with this action.

Housing Impact Statement - Not applicable with this action.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION HEARING JANUARY 22, 2004:

The Planning Commission recommended unanimous approval of the project. The Planning Commission concurred with the staff recommendation on the various project components as outlined in this report, with the exception of the number of parking spaces within the proposed four level, underground parking structure. Staff recommended a parking space range of 3200 to 4800 parking spaces, while the Commission felt that the parking structure should be limited to a maximum of 3900 parking spaces. The Commission's motion included additional suggestions to the City Council on design issues related to the parking garage, specifically, the proposed light and air wells along Park Boulevard, biomass concerns, the boundary of the historic district, and costs associated with relocating the carousel.

A detailed description of their motion and staff's response follows in the Discussion Section VI. The report is organized in this manner in order to provide the City Council with staff's analysis of some of the key issue areas as they were presented to the Planning Commission in the staff report prepared for the January 22 recommendation hearing.

As noted in the Attachments Section of this report, several additional documents have been distributed to you so that you have comprehensive background information. They include the following:

- The Balboa Park Master Plan
- The Draft Balboa Park Master Plan Amendments
- The Central Mesa Precise Plan
- The Draft Central Mesa Precise Plan Amendments
- The Working Group Final Report
- Staff Reports from the Natural Resources and Culture Committee Meetings and Planning Commission Meetings

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Zoo is owned by the City of San Diego and operated by the nonprofit Zoological Society of San Diego (Society). The Society proposes amendments to implement the Park Boulevard Promenade Project. The project proposes several elements which are noted below. For a detailed description of the project components, please reference the Final Environmental Impact Report. The project requires amendments to both the Balboa Park Master Plan adopted in 1989 and the Central Mesa Precise Plan, adopted in 1992 (Plans).

1. A four-level, underground parking structure
2. Removal of several surface parking lots
3. New Zoo Exhibit Space
4. A landscaped pedestrian promenade and greenbelt along Park Boulevard

5. Relocation of the Carousel and Miniature Train
6. Surface parking lot for employees off of Richmond Street

The perimeter of the San Diego Zoo proper (zoological gardens) is reflected in the Precise Plan, however, there is no detail provided within the interior of the Zoo. The existing parking lot in front of the zoo is located entirely within the Precise Plan boundaries. The Zoo was excluded from the 1992 Central Mesa Precise Plan study area while the parking lot (the largest in the park) was included because of its importance in park policy, administration, and design development. The City, as a matter of public policy, does not regulate the programs and activities of the various park institutions within their facilities except as stipulated by lease agreements.

The Society is requesting several modifications to their leaseholds in order to implement the project and these leasehold changes would be considered as a future City Council action. The Zoo's leasehold currently consists of 124.1 acres consisting of 99.43 acres of zoological gardens and 24.67 acres of the public parking lot in front of the zoo. The proposed changes to the leasehold would result in 123.08 acres of Zoo leasehold and include the existing and expanded zoological garden area totaling 120.20 acres, and a modified, 2.88-acre public parking lot south of the War Memorial Building. The proposed underground parking structure would not be a part of the Zoo's leasehold.

Project History:

The Society submitted their application in 1999 and the original proposal to amend the Plans was initiated by the Planning Commission in June 1999. At that time, the project proposed the demolition of the War Memorial Building, expansion into the Archery Range, construction of a parking structure, and modifications to the Miniature Train and Carousel leases. At the Planning Commission Initiation hearing, and at a subsequent public workshop, numerous organizational representatives, community planning groups and citizens, raised a variety of concerns about the proposed project.

In response, the Society placed its project on hold in order to undertake a collaborative process that would allow more direct public input into the project. In February 2000, the City of San Diego formed the Working Group, a 39-member citizen group consisting of representatives from a variety of organizations. After a year-long series of bi-monthly meetings which also included a Design Charrette, the Working Group memorialized their efforts in a report titled "The Final Working Group Report" dated December 2000. The report includes a Legacy of Rights which establishes what the public should expect with regards to Balboa Park and a section entitled "Generalized Criteria for Evaluating Proposed Amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan." Staff believes that the Society and their consultants have complied with the pertinent criteria in the preparation of the project and the associated Plan amendments as outlined by the Working Group.

The project has been presented before numerous community groups, committees, Balboa Park institutions and museums in order to seek input and keep them informed of the project status (Attachment 11). Several workshops before both the Natural Resources and Culture Committee and a joint meeting of the Natural Resources and Culture Committee and the Planning Commission were held, as well as two subsequent workshops with the Planning Commission in

July and October 2003.

Balboa Park Committee/Design Review Committee Recommendations/Planning Commission:

Staff has prepared an outline of the recommendations from the Balboa Park Committee, the Design Review Committee of the Park and Recreation Board and the Planning Commission in Attachment 13. In summary, the Balboa Park Committee recommended approval with a list of 41 recommendations as noted in Attachment 6. The Design Review Committee recommended approval, endorsing all of the recommendations from the Balboa Park Committee, and, added five additional recommendations as identified in Attachment 7. Staff and the Society are in agreement with all of the recommendations from both committees. The Planning Commission recommendations to City Council are discussed further in the Discussion Section, “Planning Commission Motion” section of the report.

DISCUSSION

The Discussion section of the report has been organized to provide detailed analysis and focus in the areas of **Policy Issues, Historic Resources, and Design Features**. The Discussion section also contains a summary of the **Environmental Impact Report Issues and Mitigation, a Parking and Circulation Summary, and the Planning Commission Motion of January 22, 2004**. Additionally, updated strikeout/underline versions of the Plan amendments have been distributed along with this report. The revised draft documents incorporate staff’s final required text and graphic revisions, as well as those recommendations from the Balboa Park Committee, the Design Review Committee and previous Planning Commission workshops.

I. POLICY ISSUES: The Park Boulevard Promenade Amendments have raised several policy issues which are summarized below. Each of these items is discussed under separate subheadings.

1. Financing and Implementation of the Park Boulevard Promenade Project
2. Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study Compatibility
3. Land Use - Free and Open Parkland
4. Land Use - Parking
5. Transit

1. Financing and Implementation of the Park Boulevard Promenade Project

In response to concerns the City Manager’s office initially had about the timing of the overall Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study and how it would relate to the Zoo’s proposal, the Society sent a letter to the City Manager’s office that addressed, among other concerns, the financing issues (Attachment 17a). The letter and subsequent response from the City Manager’s office dated March 17, 2003 (Attachment 17b and 17c) summarily states that, public and/or private financial considerations required for project implementation would not be a part of the proposal at this time.

The proposed project includes various public improvements outside of the applicant’s current leasehold and the City has undertaken a Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study (“Study”), the actual implementation of the Park Boulevard Promenade

project would not occur until the Study is complete and an overall financing plan is approved. Recognizing that these two planning efforts would coincide, the City Manager's Office, in consultation with the Mayor's office and Councilmember Atkins, evaluated the issues related to the processing of both planning efforts. Also, acknowledging the fact that the City Manager does not have the independent discretion to simply stop processing a project application, the City Manager directed staff to continue processing the Zoological Society's proposal provided that the Society agree to the following three provisions which would be conditions of approval.

Public Financing Plan - The implementation of the Park Boulevard Promenade Project cannot be started until a financing plan is approved, which could take several years. Delaying discussions of public financing options until after the results of the Study are known, enables the City to consider a wider range of park improvements which could include the ultimate implementation of the Park Boulevard Promenade Project. No new zoo exhibit areas within the existing parking lot, no discussions as to potential changes in the leasehold boundaries, and no parking improvements can be started until an ultimate financing plan is approved. Any issues related to the actual construction, operations, maintenance, and lease amendments would be addressed at the implementation stage, after a financing plan is approved.

Leasehold Boundaries/Lease Terms Amendments - Any discussions or negotiations on proposed changes to the Society's existing lease will not occur until after the ultimate financing plans are approved. Until such time, the Miniature Railroad lease would remain on holdover and no discussion or negotiations would occur with regard to the Society's leasehold boundaries or lease terms. However, the one exception to this provision would be if the Society decided to construct the Zoo Employee Parking Lot within their current leasehold in Sheep and Goat Canyon. The City would be willing to discuss any minor lease adjustments or other mechanisms needed with regard to constructing the employee parking lot at that time. All costs associated with constructing the employee parking lot in Sheep and Goat Canyon would be the Society's responsibility.

Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study Coordination - The Zoological Society shall agree to work closely with all of the Balboa Park institutions, City staff and interested members of the public on the Study. The Society recognizes that approval of their proposed project in no way forecloses any of the opportunities or recommendations that result from the upcoming Study. The Society also acknowledges that they are incurring a certain risk by proceeding with the project before the Study is complete. The risk is that if alternative parking solutions result from the Study, sections of the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan that pertain to the Park Boulevard Promenade Project would have to be amended again to reflect the outcome of the Study. In which case, the Park Boulevard Promenade Project as proposed and approved would have to be revised to reflect the recommendations of the Study.

2. Compatibility with the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study

The Park Boulevard Promenade Project proposes a parking structure of up to 4800 spaces in a centralized location to serve Zoo and North Prado users in a new multi-level subterranean structure south of Zoo Place. The Park Boulevard Promenade project also includes a Zoo employee parking lot on the northwestern edge of the existing Zoo leasehold.

The Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study Preliminary Draft recommends: a) multiple structures for visitor parking to be distributed at east and west Prado and Inspiration Point, b) employee and volunteer parking to be relocated to more distant locations, including the surface parking lot at Richmond Street, c) an efficient shuttle system to link the park destinations with parking locations and d) a plan to reduce vehicle traffic and enhance the pedestrian character of the plazas and corridors throughout the park. The Preliminary Draft for the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study proposes an initial implementation phase that would include comprehensive parking management for the Central Mesa and Inspiration Point areas along with expansion of the Park shuttle. Future phases would include construction of new parking structures at the site of the existing Zoo lot (3200-3500 spaces, mostly for Zoo visitors), in the vicinity of the archery range to the west of the Museum of Man (700-750 spaces, mostly for Prado visitors), at Inspiration Point (1500-2000 spaces, for park and institution employees, overflow from all sites, and for Palisades visitors), and a Zoo employee parking lot on the northwestern edge of the existing Zoo leasehold as proposed in the Park Boulevard Promenade Project.

The two planning efforts are compatible in that: 1) a large parking structure is desired and needed in the North Prado, 2) a Zoo employee parking lot is recommended to be located in the northwestern corner of the existing Zoo leasehold, 3) a green belt/pedestrian Promenade is recommended along Park Boulevard, and 4) a large portion of the existing Zoo parking lot could be returned to park use, which could include Zoo exhibits.

The size of the Park Boulevard Promenade parking structure is proposed by the Zoo to be 4800 spaces based on parking demand studies and input from stakeholder groups as part of the Working Group process. The Park Boulevard Promenade parking structure proposal addresses the parking needs of the Zoo and the North Prado area and was never intended to be a park-wide solution.

The Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study proposes to place two parking structures along with parking management and expanded shuttle service in the Prado area to satisfy parking demand. Future parking demand studies conducted as part of the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study will produce more refined alternatives on where to place parking for visitors and employees. These future studies will also be looking at traffic impacts, visual quality issues and other similar considerations. If the studies show that the option of the three structures reduce the parking need for the Zoo, the Park Promenade structure could be reduced from the proposed 4800 maximum spaces to approximately 3200-3500 spaces.

In recognition of the importance of these future studies, staff recommended that for the

interim, both the Preliminary Draft for the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study and the Park Boulevard Promenade project show the North Prado parking structure size as 3200-4800 spaces. However, during the January 22nd Planning Commission recommendation hearing, the Commissioners passed a motion that the number of parking spaces within the structure be reduced to a maximum of 3900. This issue is discussed further in the “Planning Commission Motion” section of this report.

3. *Land Use - Free and Open Parkland*

One of the primary Land Use goals of both the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan is the preservation of free and open parkland (page 7 of both existing Plans). The proposed amendments to the Plans would allow the Society to convert approximately 24 additional acres of land that is presently used for public parking, to expanded zoological gardens, including 17.12 acres of exhibit areas. The remaining approximately seven acres would be devoted to the Miniature Train leasehold, the greenbelt adjacent to Park Boulevard and the War Memorial Building parking lot. The conceptual plans indicate that approximately 94 percent of the area identified as new zoological gardens would be used for animal and botanical exhibits, and guest and support services, while the remaining approximately six percent would be used for gift shops and restaurants.

Expanding the zoological gardens in Balboa Park is a significant policy issue that has been discussed during the last four years of processing the Park Boulevard Promenade Project. This issue was the reason the Working Group was formed and the City Council Natural Resources and Culture Committee have discussed this issue at workshops. During the Design Charrette for the Working Group in August 2000, 15 of the 16 Charrette teams proposed that the Zoo be allowed to expand. Two of the 16 teams proposed consideration of expansion outside the Zoo’s leasehold. A majority of the design options detailed a mix of Zoo use with parking and open space.

On October 3, 2001, the NR&C Committee voted 5-0 to support the concept of pursuing more space for the San Diego Zoo. Additionally, while not a member of the NR&C committee, Councilmember Toni Atkins spoke from the audience in support of the motion.

Over the last several decades, the Zoological Society has shown a commitment to the development and maintenance of a world class Zoological Garden. During this term, they have demonstrated an ability to effectively and efficiently utilize their leasehold, maximizing the benefits to the animal collection and serving the community. With this track record and the continued commitment to maximize the utilization of space (commitment that 94 percent of additional space will be used for animal and botanical exhibits, guest and support services) staff believes the conversion of the public parking lot to zoological gardens is appropriate.

Both the Master Plan and the Precise Plan include goals and recommendations to preserve and increase free and open parkland, also referred to as open public parkland. The EIR analyzed a comparison of the "planned" open public parkland identified in the

current Precise Plan and the "planned" open public parkland as a result of the proposed plan amendments included with the proposed project. In both cases, the Precise Plan calls for open public parkland to be "recovered" from other uses, such as converting asphalt parking or roadway areas into parkland.

In the Precise Plan, the areas adjacent to the existing Miniature Train are proposed to be recovered as public parkland. This would not be accomplished with the proposed project because the new Zoo entry would be constructed at that location, however, with the proposed relocation of the Miniature Train adjacent to Park Boulevard, a portion of the existing Zoo parking lot would be recovered to create open public parkland between the relocated train and Park Boulevard. The Natural History Museum parking lot, and the North and south Carousel parking lots were identified for retention as parking areas in the Precise Plan. Under the proposed project, development of the parking structure would allow for recovery and conversion of these parking lots to open public parkland and exhibit space, therefore, increasing the amount of proposed open public parkland over that proposed in the Precise Plan. Losses of existing open public parkland associated with the proposed project would be minimal and would primarily result from the new intersection on Park Boulevard south of War Memorial and an area west of the current train leasehold which is inside the current Zoo leasehold, but is mapped in the current Precise Plan as "existing open public park land."

Figure 4.1-7 of the EIR provides a comparison of the open public parkland under the current and proposed plans, by demonstrating the net gain of open public parkland that would result from the proposed project (Attachment 14). These figures show that the proposed project would result in an increase of five acres of open public parkland over that proposed in the current Precise Plan. The primary areas of change are the Natural History Museum parking lot, and the North and South Carousel parking lots, which would be converted to the promenade, the greenbelt which is proposed between Park Boulevard, and the relocated Miniature Train.

Although the proposed project would result in a change to the planned open public parkland identified in the Precise Plan and would involve conversion of some existing open public parkland to roads and restricted use, the proposed project would result in a greater amount of open public parkland in the project area than proposed in the Precise Plan and would be consistent with the goals and recommendations related to the expansion of public parkland. Furthermore, the planned open public parkland and the conversion of existing public parkland that would result from the proposed project, does not contain any unique values that can't be duplicated elsewhere in the Park. Also, the proposed project would not affect accessibility to other adjacent open public parkland. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the Precise Plan and would not result in a significant impact to free and open parkland.

4. Land Use – Parking

The Balboa Park Master plan identifies parking as another key land use policy issue. Specifically, this document states that no expansion of existing parking areas can occur and no new parking facilities located within the Park unless:

....it is demonstrated that off-site parking and/or transportation alternatives have not, after an adequate period of testing and use, provided adequate accessibility; and an equal or greater amount of useable open parkland is recovered through the provision of parking facilities...

Two fundamental questions have arisen as part of the proposed plan amendment review: Is additional parking needed in Balboa Park, and, how do the proposed amendments comply with the existing policy documents? The following is staff's analysis of these issues.

Is additional parking needed in Balboa Park?

Projected visitor demand studies for the Park indicated that additional parking is needed. The following information outlines community discussion and research regarding the issue.

Projected visitor demand and parking space needs throughout the park were examined and discussed as part of the Working Group process in July and September of 2000. Subsequently, in October 2001, the Zoo retained Economic Research Associates (ERA) to conduct a parking demand analysis. Specifically, ERA reviewed current and historical Zoo attendance patterns and updated resident and tourist market information. The following is a summary of the conclusions:

1. Currently, there are about 6,650 parking spaces in the Central Mesa area including the Prado area, the Zoo, the Palisades and Inspiration Point.
2. General recreational park users (playground, picnickers, etc.) require 2,538 spaces based on the National Recreation and Park Association standards, as presented to the Working Group.
3. The Zoo based its parking demand on an ERA analysis of population/tourism growth projections in the market areas and the market penetration rates projected to 2020. The Zoo anticipates a 33 percent increase in Zoo visitors between 2000 and 2020 (3.5 million to 4.426 million). The Zoo employee and visitor demand will be 3,900 spaces, assuming 20 percent of visitors come by means other than private car with 3.3 people per car, which are aggressive assumptions.
4. Other large park institutions estimate their parking demands, collectively, will be equal to the Zoo's meaning another 3,900 spaces for them.
5. Total demand for a typical busy day is estimated to be 10,338 in 2020. This

serves the park 90 percent of the time, additional overflow parking would be needed for the remaining 25 days a year that are busier. For the Zoo alone, this is up to an additional 1,000 spaces.

2020 Overall Parking Demand (spaces)
(based on a typical busy day B "design day")*

General Park Users	2,538
Cultural Institutions	3,900
Zoo	3,900
Total Demand	10,338
Total Supply (including the 5,352 spaces proposed in the Park Promenade project)	8,718
Potential Short Fall	1,620

* This serves the park 90 percent of the time, additional overflow parking would be needed for the remaining 25 days per year that are busier. For the Zoo alone, 1,000 additional overflow spaces would be needed.

The Park Boulevard Promenade project proposed a total of 5,352 parking spaces:

- a) The proposed 4,800 maximum space, public parking structure, (assuming the higher end range results from future amendments);
- b) The 99 public parking spaces adjacent to the War Memorial Building; and
- c) The new 450 space employee parking lot off of Richmond Street.

A total of 3,293 surface parking spaces would be eliminated with project implementation.

As proposed, the garage would provide up to a total of 4,800 spaces, however, staff recommends that a range of 3200 to 4800 parking spaces be stipulated to be consistent with the options range identified in the preliminary Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study. Based on the analysis prepared as part of this project, as well as the preliminary information developed as part of the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study, staff supports the proposed increase in parking and the development of a multi-level, underground parking structure in this area of the park.

How does this project comply with the existing plan’s policies regarding parking?

The proposed project includes new and expanded onsite parking facilities that would replace and expand upon the existing parking in the North Prado and Zoo Parking Lot areas. Prior to development of the proposed project plan amendments, extensive analysis was conducted that addressed a variety of transportation and parking alternatives, which concluded that these alternatives would provide less than adequate accessibility for the major uses within the Central Mesa area of Balboa Park. These studies and a summary of

their key contents are listed below.

Working Group: Final Report of the “*Working Group for the Proposed Balboa Park Master and Precise Plan Amendments and the Zoological Society of San Diego Leasehold*” (December 14, 2000) which includes the following information:

Park-wide Parking Needs: Current parking demand and future parking needs presented by representatives of City College, Park and Recreation Department, Naval Hospital, Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB), Zoo, Center City Development Corporation (CCDC), and Balboa Park cultural institutions.

Current Parking Lot Use: Charts and graphs on current parking spaces at various locations including percent and number occupied on an hourly basis for both a weekend day and a week day.

Existing Traffic Patterns: Diagrams of existing roadway conditions (number of lanes) and current Average Daily Traffic on road segments throughout the Central Mesa.

Detailed Zoo Visitor Attendance Information: Group size, transportation mode, transit use habits, hotel visitor access characteristics, peak hourly admit, peak hourly exit, peak admit time, and peak exit time.

Transit Access: Time/distance from various hotel areas and neighborhoods to the North Prado.

Design Charrette: More than 100 citizens, including Working Group members, collaborated on land use and parking options for the Central Mesa, and subsequently discussed the pros and cons of the 16 design concepts.

Inspiration Point/Remote Parking Feasibility Studies: Detailed information on costs, configuration and physical requirements for a monorail system to connect Inspiration Point and the North Prado. Prepared by Lea+Elliott, (January, 2001) and given to the Balboa Park Committee on August 1, 2002.

Preliminary cost estimates and parking structure size/location: Prepared by San Diego Zoological Society in January 2001 using information from Lea+Elliott and International Parking Design which was shared with the public in May 2001 and given again to the Balboa Park Committee on August 1, 2002.

Analysis of the efficacy of creating a primary parking facility at Inspiration Point - people moving requirements and effects on park usage: Prepared by Alan Hoffman of The Mission Group in June 2002 and given to the Balboa Park Committee on August 1, 2002.

Transit Study. Analysis of the opportunities for improving transit to Balboa

Park and transit rider-ship: Prepared by Alan Hoffman of The Mission Group and presented to the Natural Resources and Culture Committee in January 2002 and given to the Balboa Park Committee on August 1, 2002.

In summary, staff believes that the Park Boulevard Promenade Project is consistent with the intent of the existing Master Plan policy regarding parking and therefore, the proposal requires no change to this section. The draft Plan amendments include a new preface entitled the “Purpose of the Park Boulevard Promenade” on pages i through vi, which provides additional language regarding the increase in parking in the Central Mesa area and the determinates for the size of the parking structure.

5. **Transit**

During the October 16th Planning Commission Workshop and the January 22nd Planning Commission recommendation hearing, several comments were noted regarding transit as a consequence of the Society’s promenade proposal and the need to relocate or rebuild the exiting pedestrian bridge across Park Boulevard. On January 22nd, the Commission included a motion that directed staff to consider incorporating suggested language from SANDAG staff regarding implementation of transit related uses. A discussion of this motion is contained within the Planning Commission Motion section of this report. The pedestrian bridge would need to be relocated or demolished and reconstructed to implement the proposed Park Boulevard Promenade Project. Discussions regarding the transit system stem from the necessity to address alternative modes of transit to the Park because of the recommendation to build the 4,803 space parking garage. There have been several presentations to the Natural Resources and Cultural Committee, the Planning Commission, the Working Group and other advisory committees of the City regarding transit and the need to improve transit. Again, these presentations reflect that consideration is paid to transit in the analysis of how park users arrive at the Zoo/Park and what number of parking spaces should be provided based on current and projected transit use.

However, the Society does not propose to amend the existing Precise Plan Circulation Element, Objectives or Recommendations Sections as they relate to transit. The Precise Plan currently calls for the following Objectives and Recommendations:

Objective:

Conduct a special focus study for Park Boulevard when long range transit plans for the area have been finalized.

Recommendations:

Determine the feasibility of new pedestrian overpasses across Park Boulevard.

Develop an integrated plan to locate bus stops, intra-park tram stops, off site parking shuttle service stops, and LRT stations along Park Boulevard.

Assess the visual impact of catenary poles to the Park environment to determine if

an alternative technology solution would be more desirable than light rail transit.

Objective:

Encourage the use of public transit as a primary means of access to the Central Mesa.

Recommendations:

Improve public transit service to the Park during peak visitor periods.

Expand bus services on Park Boulevard.

Ensure that all means of public transportation will accommodate bicycles, strollers, wheelchairs and walkers.

Other issues addressed in the Plan are the enhancement of the tram system, providing shared use facilities and utilizing the Inspiration point area for employee/volunteer parking.

Because the Park Boulevard Promenade Project is not proposing to build a new transit/bus stop, staff is not recommending that the Precise Plan language related to transit be amended. The Metropolitan Transit Development Board is attempting to coordinate their Showcase Transit First planning effort with the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study effort. It is possible that the current Precise Plan language can either be implemented or amended through this planning effort.

In summary, there is no proposal to integrate transit planning with this project or to provide new street layouts which anticipate the Metropolitan Transit Development Board's future proposal. Regarding the ability to provide a street level crossing at the proposed transit stop, moving the transit stop closer to the intersection at Village Place allows for a direct and safe street level crossing at the intersection traffic signal. The exact location of the transit stop is still undetermined, however, staff supports moving the location of the pedestrian bridge further north on axis with the front of the Junior Theater building (Attachment 15a). This would move the future transit stop closer to the intersection and a safe and viable street level crossing.

II. HISTORIC RESOURCES

Resources and Permit Requirements

There have been multiple historic designations of resources within Balboa Park, including: being the first locally designated historic site of the City of San Diego; the National Register of Historic Places designations of El Prado, the California Quadrangle, the Ford Building and most recently, the Veterans War Memorial Building and the National Historic Landmark designation.

Figure 4.3.4 of the EIR shows the boundaries of the local historic resource designation

and the National Historic Landmark (NHL). The NHL includes only those properties constructed or since historically reconstructed from the 1915-16 and the 1935-36 International Expositions.

In 1988, the Historical Site Board amended the City's original 1967 historic designation of the El Prado area of Balboa Park to include all of the resources included within the NHL designation and to add the Carousel and Miniature Train as "contributing elements" (historic sites) within the City's (effectively) historic district designation. There was also an unsuccessful attempt to amend the NHL boundary to make it co-terminus with the local boundary and to correct the record regarding the list of buildings which contributed and did not contribute to the NHL designation.

Because the Central Mesa Exposition buildings and grounds are a National Historic Landmark and locally designated site, the amendment of the Master and Precise Plans require the preparation of a Site Development Permit (SDP). The proposal to relocate the Carousel and Miniature Train, two locally designated resources, requires the approval of supplemental SDP findings to deviate from the City's Historical Resource regulations (Section 143.0251(a) of the Land Development Code):

...It is unlawful to substantially alter, demolish, destruct, remove, or relocate any designated historical resource or any historical building, historical structure, historical object or historical landscape located within a historical district except as provided in Section 143.0260...

Section 143.0213 of the Land Development Code requires that land use plan amendments involving areas with historical resources may either be processed with a Site Development Permit (SDP) or not, depending on the level of detail available pertaining to the project. If sufficient information is submitted with the land use plan amendment to evaluate potential impacts to historical resources then subsequent development proposals within the plan area are reviewed by staff in accordance with substantial conformance procedures. If the implementation/development conforms to the land use plan and any required mitigation is provided, then no subsequent SDP would be required for the development. If the proposed development does not conform to the approved land use plan, then a subsequent SDP would be required and the land use plan may require amendment.

On the other hand, if a SDP is not requested concurrently with the land use plan, the land use plan has to state how the plan will conform to the historical resources regulations and guidelines and either a Neighborhood Development Permit or a SDP would be required for every individual project/ development that implements the plan. A concurrent SDP is being processed with the proposed Master and Precise Plan amendments.

When design plans to implement the various projects/developments are prepared in the future, staff would review the plans in accordance with the amended Master and Precise Plans and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in accordance with substantial conformance procedures. As always, staff has the ability to seek input from the

Historical Resources Board on the design of projects. Any elements that do not conform to the amended Master and Precise Plans, including the specific design guidelines, or are not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards would require a subsequent SDP and potentially a further plan amendment.

The proposed project and amendments to the Master and Precise Plans have been reviewed by City staff to ensure that no future project or development that would implement the plans would be inconsistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. In applying the Secretary's Standards, some of the primary issues of concern are: the scale, character, materials and design of the new Promenade elements and their inclusion within the NHL boundary; their juxtaposition with specific and identifiable resources (such as Spanish Village); whether or not the relocation or removal of existing resources (Carousel, Miniature Train, trees) constitutes adverse impacts to the historic resources; and ensuring that the historic character of the park - its features, spaces and spatial relationships are retained and preserved and no false sense of historical development is created through implementation of the projects. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties speaks directly to all of these points.

1. **Promenade/Garage**

Staff has determined that the construction of the parking garage and associated Promenade with its vehicular accesses, landscape treatment and accessory buildings and structures would, as stated in the EIR, conform to the National Park Service guidelines for new construction within Landmarks and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Standards for Rehabilitation. The parking structure, being placed underground, would be as unobtrusive as possible and development of the Promenade is intended to implement a current recommendation of the Precise Plan- to improve the access/connection between the Prado and the Zoo by creating an axial landscaped walkway consistent with the historic design themes of Goodhue and Requa.

2. **Pedestrian Bridge**

With regards to the proposed location of the pedestrian bridge across Park Boulevard, both the staff of the Historical Resources Board and its Design Review Committee, as well, as other City Committees have recommended that the bridge be relocated from its proposed location on axis with the Prado and the Rose Garden. It was felt that the height of the bridge would impinge on the viewshed to the east from farther down the Prado and from the Bea Evanson Fountain. A suggested alternative proposed by the Zoo's consultant (Alternative 1b) is now recommended by City staff (Attachment 15a). This alternative would relocate the pedestrian bridge on axis with the entrance to the Junior Theater and closer to the Village Place intersection.

3. **Carousel and Miniature Train**

The EIR states that, the project would result in potentially significant impacts from the dismantlement and storage of the Carousel during construction and its relocation and reconstruction after construction is completed. In addition, the proposed project would result in a significant impact to the location, setting and feeling of the Miniature Train as a result of its relocation and reconfiguration. Moving and relocating historic resources requires approval of a deviation to the City's historic resource regulations and full mitigation for the impact to the resource. There is an extensive Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program proposed for the documentation, care and treatment of both the Carousel and the Miniature Train.

The EIR and associated Historical Resources Technical report make note that the Carousel has been relocated at least three times already but that such moves during the history of its use are "... compatible with its design and historical context as a Carousel." In spite of the moves, the Carousel is probably still eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Relocation to its proposed new site at the east side of Spanish Village moves it adjacent to the facade which has few or no elements from which this complex of structures derives its contributing National Historic Landmark status, so its presence adjacent to Spanish Village would not adversely impact either resource.

During the October Planning Commission Workshop, the Zoo's consultants provided a revised graphic to the Planning Commission which showed a dedicated service road to the relocated Carousel. This graphic was prepared at the request of the current Carousel owner, Mr. William Steen. However, Commissioners expressed a concern about the access and staff were directed to review other alternatives (Attachment No. 12, Item No. 6). Additionally, subsequent to the hearing, Mr. Steen provided a revised sketch showing an alternative access.

The Zoo's consultant has indicated to staff that the parking structure could structurally support a fire engine. Additionally, there are several other available access points for getting service vehicles to the Carousel without having to create a special driveway and to construct large retaining walls as proposed by Mr. Steen.

Staff does not support the proposal for an exclusive driveway for service vehicle use for the Carousel. Service vehicles can access the Carousel by driving along the west and north sides of Spanish Village or by driving up onto the Promenade from a service driveway located to the north of the Zoo Place entrance.

Subsequent to the Planning Commission, staff have worked with Mr. Steen regarding his concerns for access to the Carousel and have established what we anticipate will be, the primary service access from Village Place (Attachment 15b). Both the Society and Mr. Steen are in agreement with the revised access.

The Miniature Train opened in 1948 with an oval track configuration that lasted at least until 1958. At some time after 1958 the track configuration was changed to the current figure-8 alignment. The original engine and cars were replaced in 1996 with a restored set from a San Francisco amusement park. The train has no historical association with

the period of significance of the park but its more than 50 years of operation in the park, the contribution of the train to the broad patterns of Balboa Park's history as a recreational area and the declining number of these trains nationally make it significant at the local level.

The project would move the train to the north of Zoo Place along the west side of Park Boulevard. Relocation would have an impact on the location, setting and feeling of the resource. The integrity of the train's design, setting and feeling has been altered over time with changes to the alignment, landscaping, physical appearance and hardware. Project mitigation includes landscaping at the new location to approximate the park-like feeling and setting; documentation of the existing layout, landscape plan and appearance; and use of the train engine and cars as well as incorporation of original ride elements into the new location design including a tunnel and viewing opportunities to watch and photograph passengers. With these mitigation measures, the new location of the train will have a similar design, setting and feeling as the historic location. The train will also continue its historical function of providing an active recreational amenity within Balboa Park.

4. **Trees**

Though the EIR states that some of the botanically significant trees that the project would relocate are designated as historically significant trees, they have actually never been historically designated by any action of the City and they are called out as historic in error. However, all the measures outlined in the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program regarding landscaping including use of the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Landscapes shall be utilized as applicable, in the removal or relocation of any significant trees.

III. **DESIGN ISSUES - A number of specific design issues and alternatives have been discussed and analyzed as part of the proposal. Each is discussed below under separate subheadings**

1. Zoo Drive/War Memorial Building Parking Lot
2. Employee Parking Lot
3. Pedestrian Promenade
4. Parking Structure
5. Biomass Issues
6. Park Boulevard Greenbelt
7. Village Place
8. Parking Structure Light Well

1. **Zoo Drive/War Memorial Building Parking Lot** - Zoo Drive, located north of the War Memorial Building, is currently a two-way street. The project proposes to make Zoo Drive a one-way street from Park Boulevard heading westbound, then southbound, providing access to the new War Memorial Building parking lot and Roosevelt Junior High School drop off and pick up area. Vehicles would then exit from the signalized intersection proposed south of the War Memorial

Building. Adjacent to the parking lot is a proposed new group entry for the loading and unloading of buses and vans.

Staff Recommendation:

To assure the availability of parking for the War Memorial Building, staff recommends that a parking management plan be implemented to limit the duration of parking in this location. Staff also recommends that the group entry area be used for loading and unloading only with buses and vans parking in the proposed transportation area of the parking structure. Small groups with limited supervision should go directly to the structure and walk to the group entry.

- 2. Employee Parking Lot** - The Society proposes the conversion of an underutilized area of the leasehold to employee parking. This area, known as sheep and goat canyon, will be regraded to accommodate 450 employee vehicles on a surface parking lot. Access to the area is proposed off Richmond Street.

Staff Recommendation:

This particular location chosen for the employee/volunteer parking lot is not well suited for exhibits. It's unusually steep terrain makes it very difficult to comply with the current standards for Public access to exhibits. The proposed parking lot would be located adjacent to Scenic Highway 163. The EIR analyzed this issue and mitigation measures are included which require a planted crib wall adjacent to the parking lot. Staff supports the mitigation measures outlined in the EIR that reduce the visual impact of the proposed grading. These measures include, utilizing contour grading and enhanced landscaping of the slope areas and planted crib wall.

- 3. Parking Structure** - The proposed amendments allow for the removal of the largest parking reservoir in the park. In order to replace this lost parking and to expand parking capacity, the proposed amendments show the creation of a new underground parking structure that will accommodate up to 4,800 parking spaces. Staff recommends that the final number of spaces be determined following the results of the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study.

A garage of this size is a significant policy shift from the parking issues considered in the original plan, however staff supports the proposed parking garage because it would replace the existing parking, expand parking close to the Zoo, Spanish Village and North Prado areas, and allow for the development of additional park land.

Staff Recommendation

The proposed garage does have several significant issues which will need to be addressed subsequent to future project level approvals and implementation. These issues include; how will the parking garage be funded, how will it be maintained and operated, who will be allowed to park in it? (employees and visitors or just visitors), how will the light well areas be implemented and how will the structure be designed to accommodate trees and shrubs which are consistent with the size and intensity of Balboa Park Landscaping? Each of these issues will need considerable research and discussion as the project design

evolves.

4. **Pedestrian Promenade** - A landscaped pedestrian walkway is proposed on the roof deck of the parking structure, parallel to Park Boulevard, connecting the new Zoo entry south to the Prado. This walkway would have a landscape character designed to achieve a scale consistent with Balboa Park, including large-scale trees as well as furnishings, fountains and vegetative buffers. The promenade would be separated from Park Boulevard by a light-well which will provide ventilation for the parking garage, as well as a focal point for parking structure users. The proposed new promenade would provide a new location for the Carousel. This new location would be southwest of the current site adjacent to Spanish Village.

Staff Recommendation:

The promenade provides a much improved link between the Prado and the proposed Zoo entry Plaza, as well as improved connections to Spanish Village. Staff recommends that, if the ultimate size of the structure is reduced in this location, then the design should eliminate the southern extension of the garage to maximize efficiency of the parking layout, reduce the need for retaining walls along the south side of Village Place, improve the ability for large-scale tree planting along Park Boulevard and maximize the reduction of the light-well.

5. **Biomass** - The construction of the Promenade would remove a large number of trees. The Commission asked for assurances that an equivalent amount of biomass would be attainable by the planning of new trees, and that the area of biomass be calculated by the volume, rather than in plan view. (Reference the Planning Commission Motion section of the report). The following information was provided by the consultants, as well as, a graphic depicting existing and proposed tree cover (Attachment 16):

An evaluation of tree canopy area was conducted using the total square feet of tree canopy in the affected area for both the existing conditions and the proposed plan. The total canopy area impacted by the Promenade project is approximately 44,000 square feet (3.3 acres). The total canopy of proposed trees at maturity is 255,000 square feet (5.8 acres). The canopy of proposed area does not include the landscaping in the proposed zoo expansion area.

Also, the following mitigation measure is included with the project's Draft EIR:

To reduce significant impacts to historically significant landscaping to below a level of significance, the project builder shall, prior to the City's first pre-construction meeting or the issuance of a building or grading permit, whichever is applicable, provide a summary table and graphic indicating the location, height, trunk diameter, and type for all trees which will be removed, relocated or impacted by the proposed project. The project builder shall relocate and replant the significant trees in conformance with the Central Mesa Precise Plan Landscape Planting

Guidelines. If the relocated trees are placed within the National Historical Landmark boundary, then the replanting shall conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Landscapes including the provision of a treatment plan for all trees to be replanted.

6. **Park Boulevard Greenbelt** - The project proposes the creation of a pedestrian greenbelt varying in width between approximately 80 to 200 feet beginning at Zoo Drive and extending north to the new Zoo Place intersection with Park Boulevard. The greenbelt would contain the Miniature Train, picnic areas and a meandering pedestrian and bicycle path.

Staff Recommendation:

This element has consistently been identified during the review of the Park Boulevard Promenade Project and during the Balboa Park Circulation, Land Use, and Parking Study as a significant issue. As proposed, it would improve the existing park condition through the construction of a pedestrian walk along Park Boulevard.

7. **Village Place** - The project proposes to shift the Village Place cul-de-sac as shown in the current Precise Plan. This shift is due to the proposed parking garage and the new access from Village Place, which would run through the first level of the structure. With this proposed change, the cul-de-sac must be relocated to the west to allow for the required grade transition. The applicant has investigated many options and has recommended the extension of Village Place to the Junior Theater entry.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff supports the extension of Village Place to an area near the existing terminus of Village Place and recommends that the street area running north and south along the edge of the El Prado Building be redesigned to identify it as a pedestrian environment and, that parking in this area be restricted to drop off and pick up and/or disabled parking only (Attachment 18).

8. **Parking Structure Light Well** - The proposal for the parking garage includes a four story light well along the east side of the parking garage. The concept proposal is that the light well would be planted/landscaped in order to soften its appearance and provide visual and psychological relief from being in a large parking garage. It may also benefit from some public art projects as well. Most elevators and escalators would be located within the light well and garage patrons would walk towards the light to get to the top of the promenade.

During the October 2003 Workshop, concern was expressed that the light well constituted too much of a visual and physical disruption to the park environment and created safety concerns as well. In addition, comments have been made that the light wells may create maintenance and safety issues. At the January 22 Planning Commission recommendation hearing, the Commission asked that the location of

the light and air wells be modified so that they would not be continuous along Park Boulevard. (Reference the Planning Commission Motion section of the report).

Staff Recommendation:

Staff's analysis is that light well will help to ameliorate the fears and concerns that the public could potentially have about parking within a large, four-story, underground garage. The light wells also would serve to improve an otherwise less than pleasant parking experience. The height and type of fencing and landscaping at the top of the Promenade, are important factors to make the light well safe. Without the light wells, the proposed garage would be a large, cavernous structure which does little to enhance the Park experience.

Staff believes that the parking garage is enhanced with the light well and concerns about safety and maintenance can be resolved through design and landscape solutions.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT SUMMARY

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) when there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record, that a project may have a significant impact on the environment (Section 21080(d)). As a result, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared and distributed on December 19, 2001. In addition, two public Scoping Meetings were held on July 17 and August 14, 2002 to solicit input from the public regarding the preparation of the EIR for the proposed project and plan amendments. All written and verbal comments obtained as a result of these meetings have been addressed in the EIR. The following issues were determined to be potentially significant and were addressed in the EIR:

- Land Use
- Transportation and Circulation
- Historical Resources
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Recreational Resources
- Aesthetics/Neighborhood Character
- Paleontological Resources
- Utilities
- Noise
- Air Quality

Other mandatory sections of the EIR required by CEQA include a discussion of cumulative impacts, growth inducement, unavoidable and irreversible significant environmental effects, and alternatives to the proposed project.

The Draft EIR was distributed for a 45-day public review period on June 26, 2003. A 30-day extension of the DEIR was requested by the Balboa Park Committee during the

public review period. However, in accordance with Section 128.0307 of the City's Land Development Code, the public review period was extended for an additional 14 days to August 25, 2003. Responses to written comments received during the public review period have been included in Volume 1 of Final EIR.

An abbreviated version of Table S-1 from the Final EIR identifies Significant but Mitigated Impacts for the issue areas identified below, as well as, a Significant and Unmitigated Impact to Transportation/Circulation. A significant cumulative impact was calculated for the freeway segment of State Route 163 (SR-163) northbound from Interstate 5 to Washington Street. The proposed project would add 65 P.M. peak hour trips to this freeway segment, which would result in a change in the V/C ratio by more than 0.01 under Level of Service F (LOS) conditions. In order to mitigate for this significant cumulative impact, two additional northbound travel lanes would be required to bring the freeway operations to an acceptable LOS. However, even without the proposed Project's addition of 65 P.M. peak hour trips, SR-163 would operate at an unacceptable LOS F. Currently there is no adopted Caltrans program to widen SR-163 at this time, and the requirement to provide two additional northbound travel lanes in order to mitigate the significant direct and cumulative impact cannot be accomplished with this project. Therefore, the impact is considered Significant and Unmitigated requiring the preparation of Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be adopted by the decision maker.

The Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program included in Volume 2 of the Final EIR ensures that the mitigation measures detailed in Table S-1 would reduce the impacts for the following issue areas to below a level of significance:

- Land Use (Direct)
- Transportation/Circulation (Direct and Cumulative)
- Historical Resources (Direct)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Direct)
- Recreational Resources (Direct)
- Aesthetics/Neighborhood Character (Direct)
- Paleontological Resources (Direct)
- Utilities (Direct)
- Noise (Direct)
- Air Quality (Direct)

Pursuant to Section 15126.6(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, EIRs are required to evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project. Based on the State CEQA Guidelines, the following seven project alternatives to avoid or reduce significant project impacts were identified and are addressed in the EIR:

- No Project
- Inspiration Point Parking Structure Alternative

- City Maintenance Yard Parking Alternative
- Zoo Parking Lot Parking Structure Alternative
- Reduced Parking Project Alternative
- Community Plan Consistency Alternative (Environmentally superior alternative)
- Parking Fee Alternative

Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations have been prepared and are attached separately to Volume 2 of the Final EIR.

V. TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

The Park Boulevard Promenade project proposes several substantial changes to the transportation and circulation system in the Central Mesa area of Balboa Park. The majority of these changes would result from the proposal to replace several asphalt parking lots in the area with a large parking structure south of the existing parking lot adjacent to the Zoo and reorient the main Zoo entrance to the east of the existing Zoo entrance. A secondary group entrance to the Zoo is proposed near the War Memorial Building. Specific changes to accommodate this would include:

- ② Modification of the existing two-way Zoo Drive in front of Roosevelt Junior High School into a one-way southbound roadway that would lead to the Zoo's proposed group entrance and a 99-space public parking lot south of the War Memorial Building. A new signalized access point is proposed onto Park Boulevard at the northeastern corner of the existing War Memorial parking lot. A drop-off area for the junior high school would be maintained, as well parking spaces along Zoo Drive.
- ② Reconfiguration of the Park Boulevard/Zoo Place intersection to serve as the primary entrance to the proposed 4800-space public parking structure.
- ② Modification of Village Place to maintain access to Spanish Village, the Natural History Museum, and the Junior Theatre, including maintenance of a drop-off area and provision of a vehicular turnaround. The Park Boulevard/Village Place intersection would also serve as a secondary access to the parking structure, with a designated area for taxis, shuttles, etc. and a designated area for a Natural History Museum loading dock.
- ② Elimination of the existing 2831-space parking lot currently serving the Zoo and War Memorial Building, the 103-space North Carousel parking lot, the 215-space South Carousel parking lot, and the 101-space Natural History Museum parking lot. These spaces would be replaced by the 4800 space parking structure and by the landscaped promenade area.
- ② Additionally, the project provides opportunities for a transit station and new pedestrian bridge crossing Park Boulevard in the area of the Natural History

Museum which would connect to the proposed pedestrian promenade. One other proposed change to vehicular circulation would be the addition of a 450 space employee parking lot accessed via Richmond Street.

The impacts of these transportation changes were evaluated in the EIR and mitigation measures are proposed for all but one of the identified impacts. The unmitigable impact would be a horizon year impact to State Route 163, which would be cost prohibitive for this project to mitigate. The project's mitigation measures include: installation of new traffic signals at Park Boulevard / new access point near the War Memorial Building and at Florida Drive / Zoo Place; intersection improvements at the existing signalized intersections of Park Boulevard / Zoo Place and Pershing Drive/ 26th Street; a parking management plan during construction, and an ongoing separate parking management plan for the War Memorial / Group Entry area.

It should be noted that the current East Mesa Precise Plan concept of vacating/closing North Florida Drive would have its own transportation impacts, which would require widening of Zoo Place from two to four lanes between Florida Drive and Park Boulevard as mitigation.

VI. PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION ANALYSIS

Planning Commission Recommendation Hearing:

After considerable public testimony both in favor and in opposition of the Society's proposal, the Planning Commission approved the project with eight recommendations. A summary of those recommendations is provided in Attachment 19. The following is a list of those items, along with staff's response to each.

- 1) The obligation of moving the carousel should be the Zoo's and that should occur pursuant to condition No. 4 during the construction phase.***

Staff Response:

The carousel is currently owned by a private citizen and the Society proposes to relocate it as part of these amendments. Costs associated with its relocation will be addressed in future lease negotiations.

- 2) The Zoo should provide a parking garage that implements the concept of replacement parking to only include the ultimate growth of the Zoo up to 3900 spaces.***

Staff Response:

Staff does not concur with this recommendation to limit the parking structure to a maximum of 3900 spaces. A considerable part of the Planning Commission deliberation focused on their concern that the size of the proposed parking structure needed to be reduced, both with respect to the number of parking spaces and the structure footprint. Considerable discussion occurred over the issue of parking demand specifically for the Zoo, and generally, for the other institutions and museums in the Park. As discussed at the Planning Commission hearing, parking demand was analyzed in reports prepared and

presented to the Working Group, public testimony, as well as, the proposed draft plan amendment language amendments section entitled, “Purpose of the Amendment” for both the Balboa Park Master Plan, and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. In this section, the Society summarizes their parking demand analysis.

Another issue raised was a concern about the potential placement of multiple parking structures in various locations within Balboa Park. This concept was discussed as it related to the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study, currently underway with the Park and Recreation Department. The Park and Recreation Department has conducted two workshops with the Planning Commission on the Study. The Study recommends a parking structure at the Society’s proposed location, with a parking space range of 3200 to 4800 spaces. One commissioner expressed a concern about “parking creep into the core of the park.” Another commissioner suggested that the size determinant of the parking structure should consider “carrying capacity” - what is the number of parking spaces that can be accommodated within this location?

There was lengthy discussion and consensus among the commissioners about transit and the overall need to support public transit in the City of San Diego. It was stated that policy makers should not encourage “planning ...to accommodate the car....”

Commissioners concluded that the parking structure should be restricted to a maximum of 3900 spaces, as opposed to the range of 3200 to 4800 spaces as recommended by staff. The 3900 space limitation would provide for replacement parking to accommodate those spaces lost by the Park Boulevard Promenade Project (approximately 3,000 spaces) and, the Zoo’s projected demand for the year 2020 (an additional 1,000 spaces). The Commission also clarified (when asked by staff) that this number was exclusive of the proposed Zoo employee parking lot off of Richmond Street.

Staff does not concur with the recommendation to limit the parking structure to a maximum of 3900 spaces. The parking space range was recommended to the Society by City staff in an effort to provide consistency with the recommendations and objectives of the Balboa Park Land Use, Circulation and Parking Study. The Society agreed to this recommendation. This range will allow the necessary flexibility to adjust the parking structure size in this location based on the overall Park parking solution.

- 3) ***The actual design of the parking garage should consider both the “alternative to the trench enlargement” option, as well as the Zoo’s current proposal. The design of the air and light wells located on the east edge of the parking garage should be designed to be capped intermittently to allow expansion of the promenade across the air and light wells at regular intervals. The transit uses that are proposed south of Village Place should be incorporated into the reduced size parking structure.***

Staff Response:

Alternative Design - The parking garage proposes a continuous light well adjacent to Park Boulevard which would serve as a hanging garden area and provide for light and air to each level. The light well would be located between Park Boulevard and all levels of the parking garage. The referenced alternative design was prepared by a local Landscape Architect, Mike Singleton (Attachment 20). His proposal was sent directly to members of the Planning Commission prior to the October 2003 workshop. Mr. Singleton expanded upon his design alternative during public testimony. Some members of the Planning Commission felt that certain elements of the design had merit, specifically, in that there were no light wells proposed along the Park Boulevard frontage, and, the proposed pedestrian exiting area from the garage would be relocated so that it would front upon the Zoo entry. The Zoo entryway would also be relocated with Mr. Singleton's proposal. This design alternative was not submitted to City staff, therefore, it was not analyzed during the environmental review process. During the upcoming, April 13, 2004 City Council Hearing, the Society will be prepared to respond to the "Singleton" alternative design.

Below Grade Parking/Light Wells - Staff concurs that all parking should be below grade, as it is proposed with the underground parking structure. Staff would not be opposed to a modification in the placement of the light wells and this is an issue that could be addressed during the design development phase of the project.

Transit Uses - With respect to the "transit uses" described in the motion: The project proposes a transportation center for bus and cab loading and unloading within the first, below grade level of the parking structure. The Commission wanted to ensure that this component of the garage would not be eliminated. Staff concurs with this recommendation.

4) *Bio-mass definition should be calculated volumetrically as opposed to in plan view.*

The Park Boulevard Promenade Project would eliminate several significant trees and other landscaped areas along Park Boulevard. During the October 2003 PC Workshop, the Planning Commission wanted to be assured that there would not be a loss of bio-mass (the area covered by natural and urban landscaped areas) with the proposed project. During the recommendation hearing, they proposed the above recommendation to ensure that the biomass was would be of equal or greater area than currently exists, and that it be calculated by volume rather than plan area. Staff concurs with this recommendation.

5) *The public facility financing plans should include not just the construction, but the operation and maintenance.*

Staff Response:

Staff concurs with this recommendation.

6) *The Historical landmark boundary should be maintained per the Historic Resource Board's recommendation.*

Staff Response:

The Society originally proposed that the historical landmark boundary be adjusted to incorporate the relocated miniature train. Some members of the Commission felt that the boundary should not be adjusted to accommodate a change in the “land use”. Staff agrees that there should be no change in the boundary.

- 7) ***Pending staff determination that no additional environmental review is necessary, the changes recommended by SANDAG (MTDB) be incorporated into the program including bus rapid transit as opposed to light rail transit.***

Staff Response:

Subsequent to the final review of the project and during their review of the draft staff report to the Planning Commission, staff from SANDAG suggested changes to pages 194 and 195 of the Central Mesa Precise Plan language as noted below in strikeout/underline format:

Objective:

~~Conduct a special focus study for Park Boulevard when long-range transit plans for the area have been finalized.~~ Incorporate the Transit First Showcase Project on Park Boulevard within Balboa Park, including transit priority lanes and stations.

Recommendations:

Determine the feasibility of new pedestrian overpasses across Park Boulevard.

Develop an integrated plan to locate bus stops, intra-park tram stops, off site parking shuttle service stops, and LRT bus rapid transit stations to the park’s activity centers.

Assess the visual impact of catenary poles to the Park environment to determine if an alternative technology solution would be more desirable than light rail transit.

Staff Response:

Staff did not receive a formal recommendation from SANDAG on this issue. During the Planning Commission recommendation hearing of January 22, 2003, staff from SANDAG provided testimony reiterating their suggested changes to the plan amendments. Staff response at the hearing was that SANDAG’s suggested changes were not analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report, and, that the language changes would require additional environmental review and, potentially, recirculation of the EIR. Staff also responded that those modifications suggested by SANDAG would be addressed as part of the overall Balboa Park Land Use Circulation and Parking Study. The Planning Commission directed staff to follow up on this issue. Staff have confirmed with environmental staff, transportation development staff and the EIR consultants, that the above changes suggested by SANDAG

staff would necessitate adding a dedicated travel lane along Park Boulevard and would result in the loss of 225 existing parking spaces. This impact was not analyzed in the Park Boulevard Promenade EIR and would require further review and possible revisions to the technical report and FEIR. Therefore, staff recommends that there be no change to the plan language as suggested by SANDAG staff.

CONCLUSION:

The Park Boulevard Promenade Project is consistent with many of the existing goals and objectives of the existing Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. The Balboa Park Master Plans gives definition and guidance to the future development of Balboa Park. Several goals are identified that set for the vision for future development and they include the following:

- ② *Create a more pedestrian oriented environment*
- ② *Improve public access through an integrated circulation system, deemphasize the automobile while increasing public access*
- ② *Preserve, enhance and increase free and open park land*
- ② *Preserve and enhance the mix of cultural recreational uses*
- ② *Restore or improve existing buildings and landscapes*
- ② *Preserve the Park as an affordable park experience for all San Diegans*

The Park Promenade Project will provide for a pedestrian promenade which will provide a connection between the War Memorial Building and the Prado. Opportunities will be created that will enable Spanish Village entries to be enhanced. The proposed parking garage will provide for parking ingress and egress within a centralized area and, will result in the removal of several surface parking lots along Park Boulevard. Free and Open parkland will be increased as a result of the proposal.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve Balboa Park Master Plan/Central Mesa Precise Plan/Progress Guide and General Plan Amendment No. 48082 and Site Development Permit No. 48083 with modifications.
2. Deny Balboa Park Master Plan/Central Mesa Precise Plan/Progress Guide and General Plan Amendment No. 48083 and Site Development Permit No. 48083, if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina P. Christiansen, A.I.A.
Development Services Director

Ellen Oppenheim
Park and Recreation Department Director

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
Assistant City Manager

CHRISTIANSEN/SMT

Note: All attachments are available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments:

1. [Balboa Park Master Plan Amendments dated January 2004](#)
2. [Central Mesa Precise Plan Amendments dated January 2004](#)
3. [Community Plan Amendment Resolution](#)
4. [Site Development Permit](#)
5. [Site Development Permit Resolution](#)
6. Balboa Park Committee Vote dated 9/17/03
7. Design Review Committee Vote dated 10/23/03
8. Historical Site Board Minutes from 10/23/03 meeting
9. Balboa Park Improvements Financing Document
10. Community Forest Advisory Board – Correspondence/Staff Response
11. Community Contact List
12. [Historical Resource Board Report No. P-03-289](#)
13. Matrix of Recommendations from the Balboa Park Committee/Design Review Committee/Planning Commission
14. Open Parkland Graphic (excerpt from EIR)
15. Pedestrian Bridge/Carousel Graphics:
 - a. Pedestrian Bridge Alternative 1b
 - b. Carousel Alternative Access
16. Biomass Graphic
17. Correspondence between the Managers Office and the Society:
 - a. February 7, 2003 Letter from the Zoological Society
 - b. March 17, 2003 Letter from the City Manager’s Office
 - c. March 26,, 2003 Letter from the City Manager’s Office
18. Park and Recreation Board January 15, 2004 Recommendation Hearing Minutes Excerpt
19. [Planning Commission January 22, 2004 Minutes](#)
20. “Alternative to the Trench” Plan (aka Singleton Plan)

21. [Planning Commission Report No. P-99-084 \(May 1999 PC Initiation Hearing\)](#)
22. Natural Resources and Culture Committee Report No. P-01-203 (September 2001 ,NR&C Meeting)
23. [Natural Resources and Culture Committee Report No. P-02-026 \(January 2002, NR&C Meeting, Joint Meeting with PC\)](#)
24. [Planning Commission Report No. P-03-177 \(July 2003 Workshop and Field Visit with PC\)](#)
25. [Planning Commission Report No. P-03-243 \(October 2003 Workshop with PC\)](#)
26. [Planning Commission Report No. P-03-338 \(January 2004 PC Recommendation Hearing\)](#)
27. Background Materials – A limited distribution was made of the following documents which are referenced in this report. They are available for viewing upon request:
 - a. [Balboa Park Master Plan](#)
 - b. [Central Mesa Precise Plan](#)
 - c. [Working Group Final Report](#)

NOTE: Please reference the staff binder titled “Park Boulevard Promenade City Council,” for attachments numbered 1 through 26. Please call Sandra Teasley at 619.446.5271 or Mark Marney at 619.525.8242 with any questions.

All attachments are available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.