



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: October 21, 2009

REPORT NO: 09-153

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Chairperson and Committee Members

SUBJECT: Authorization for Exclusive Lease Negotiations with Save our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) for the Marston House

REFERENCE:

REQUESTED ACTION:

Authorize exclusive negotiations with SOHO for the lease of the Marston House and grounds located on the east side of Balboa Park.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize exclusive lease negotiations with SOHO.

BACKGROUND:

The Marston House is situated on 4.5 acres located at 3525 Seventh Avenue in an early twentieth century historic district on the east side of Balboa Park. Built by department store owner and founder of the San Diego Historical Society, George Marston in 1905, it was George Marston's home until his death in 1946. Designed by Irving Gill in the Craftsman style, the Marston House is listed on the National Register of Historic places and the local register of historic sites. In 1974, the Marston House was conveyed to the City by George Marston's daughter Mary Marston, to be dedicated in perpetuity for public park purposes.

In April of 1976, the City and the San Diego Historical Society (SDHS) entered into an agreement for Operation and Maintenance of the Marston House. The Agreement was for an indefinite period and stipulated that the Society would operate the house as a historical museum and as a center for the development of recreational, educational, cultural, social and historical activities beneficial to the general public. The SDHS was responsible for maintaining the building and garage and the City was responsible for maintenance of the outbuildings and grounds.

The agreement provided that "Both City and Society have an absolute right to terminate this Agreement upon ninety (90) days written notice to the other Party." In February 2009, the SDHS notified the City that effective June 30, 2009 it would exercise its right to terminate the agreement for use and occupancy of the Marston House due to financial considerations.

In April 2009, Bruce Coons, Executive Director of Save our Heritage Organisation, (SOHO) approached the City regarding SOHO's interest in assuming operations of the Marston House. SOHO operates the Whaley House in Old Town and currently has an agreement with the City to operate the Old Adobe Chapel located at 2476 San Diego Avenue in Old Town. In July 2009, the City and SOHO entered in to a seven (7) month Special Use Permit effective July 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010 for purposes of operating a Historical House Museum for the public, historical interpretation of the house and grounds, and holding public and private events at the Marston House.

In considering a long term operator for the site, Park and Recreation wanted to ensure that the most qualified operator was selected. In August 2009, the City placed an advertisement in the San Diego Daily Transcript (Transcript) soliciting responses to a Request of Interest (ROI) for the operation and maintenance of the Marston House, Carriage House and grounds. Qualified operators were invited to submit letters of interest conveying their expertise in the areas of recreational, educational, cultural, social and historical interpretative programs of houses and gardens.

The advertisement ran in the Transcript for two (2) consecutive Mondays on August 17 and 24, 2009. One letter of interest was received, which did not meet the minimum qualifications stated in the advertisement in addition to the letter of continued interest from SOHO expressing their desire for a long term partnership with the City of San Diego.

Additionally, letters were sent to six (6) organizations (The AIA Foundation, California Polytechnic State University, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles Conservancy, The San Diego Architectural Foundation, and The San Diego Foundation) suggested by Historical Resources Board staff soliciting their responses to a ROI as advertised in the Transcript. The Gamble House, USC was contacted regarding the agreement that they have for operation of the historic Gamble House which is of the same era as the Marston House. They too were sent the ROI as advertised in the Transcript.

Park and Recreation staff contacted the Union – Tribune Balboa Park staff writer regarding the City's intent to seek a qualified operator for the Marston House. She wrote two (2) articles which were published on July 11 and September 9, 2009.

Founded in 1969, SOHO is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support preservation of the architectural, cultural landmarks that contribute to the community identity and character of the region. Park and Recreation believes that SOHO has the qualifications and experience to operate the Marston House. Staff recommends that the City enter into exclusive lease negotiations with SOHO for the Marston House and grounds.

SUMMARY: The Marston House is a valued historical and cultural amenity to the City. Park and Recreation's goal is to keep the Marston House open to the public. Park and Recreation staff does not have the expertise to undertake the management, operation and preservation of this historic resource. SOHO has experience operating historic sites, conducting public tours of historic sites and ensuring that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are

complied with. For these reasons, staff recommends the City enter into exclusive lease negotiations with SOHO.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: The City does not have the resources to manage or operate the Marston House. Having SOHO as operator of the Marston House would ensure that the Marston House stays open to the public and is financially self-sustaining without additional financial burden on the City.

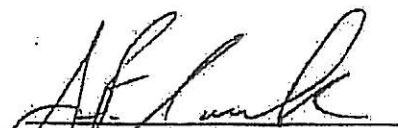
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: At the May 7, 2009 City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board - Balboa Park Committee meeting it was moved "to have the City work with SOHO toward an agreement for SOHO to manage and operate the Marston House and grounds for the mutual benefit of the public and the protection and management of the historic resources."

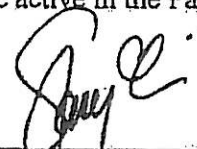
KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department – A new lease will increase promotion, access and visitation to the Marston House and gardens. SOHO has the historic preservation experience to restore the house without financial impact to the City.

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board – Balboa Park Committee- Supportive of SOHO as the operator of the house museum to promote and preserve the Marston House.

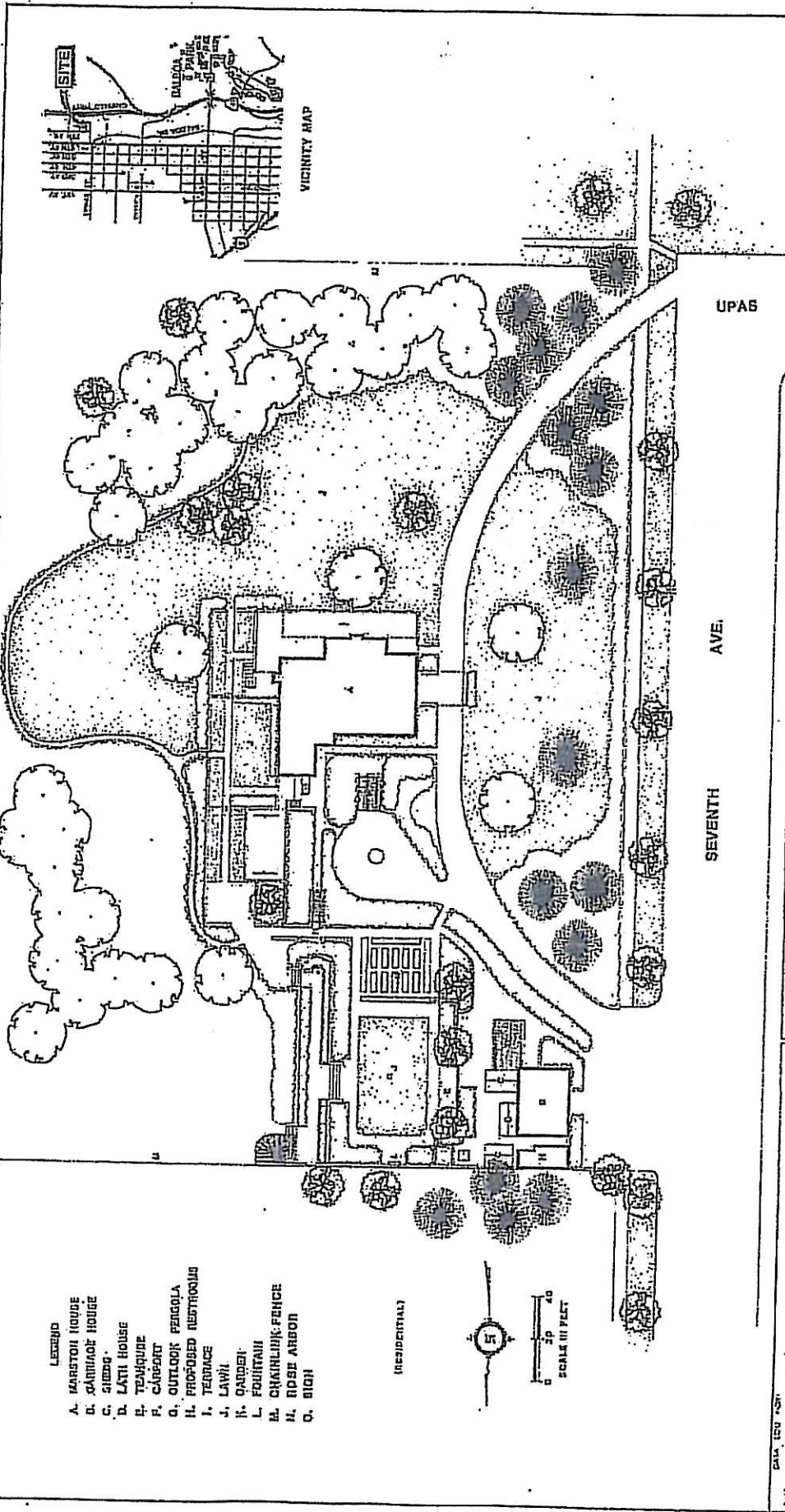
Friends of the Marston House – Have a working relationship with SOHO and have similar goals for the house as SOHO.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Operation of the Marston House will bring visitors interested in touring historic homes and gardens to the Park which will increase visitor ship to the Park. SOHO is actively reaching out to the cultural institutions to become active in the Park.


James Barwick, Director
Real Estate Assets Department


Stacey LoMedico, Director
Park and Recreation Department

Attachments: Exhibit "A" – Site Map
Aerial Map



LEGEND

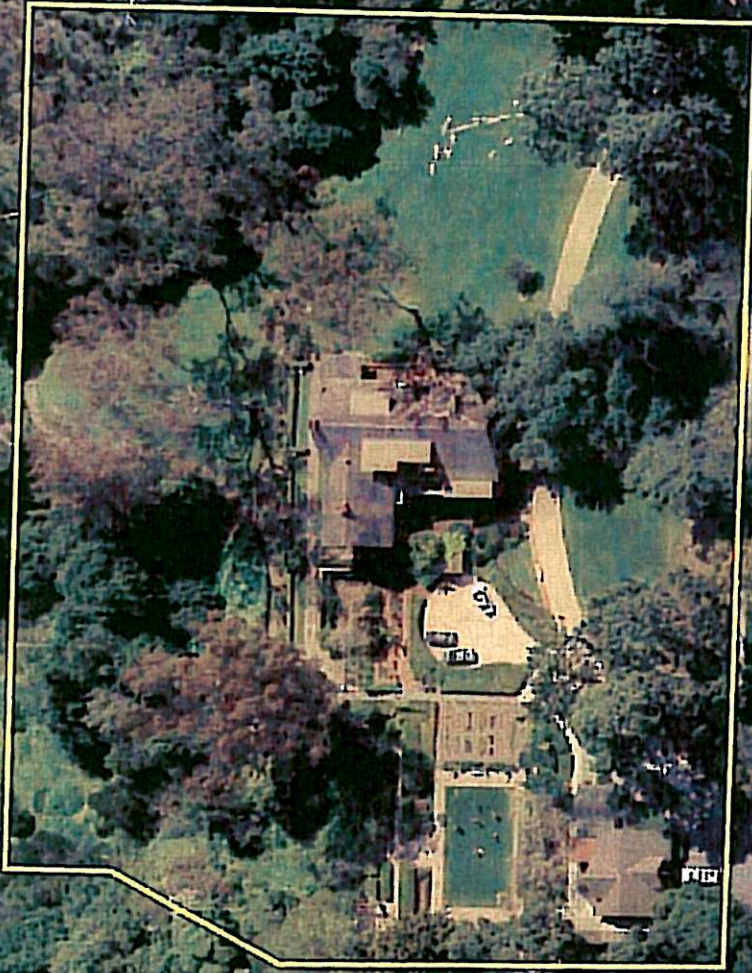
- A. MARSTON HOUSE
- B. ANNEX HOUSE
- C. GARAGE
- D. LATH HOUSE
- E. TERRACE
- F. PORCH
- G. OUTLOOK PORCH
- H. PROPOSED RESTROOM
- I. TERRACE
- J. LAWN
- K. GARDEN
- L. FOUNTAIN
- M. CHAINLINK FENCE
- N. ROSE ARBOR
- O. BIGH

(RESIDENTIAL)



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| <p>CITY OF SAN DIEGO PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT</p> <p>MARSTON HOUSE (a portion of Baboá Park)</p> <p>DATE: MAY 23, 1951 DRAWN BY: J. H. HARRIS CHECKED BY: J. H. HARRIS</p> | | <p>PROJECT NO. 580</p> |
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Marston House



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