



OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER TONI ATKINS
DISTRICT THREE
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 2, 2001
TO: Members of Natural Resources and Culture Committee
FROM: Councilmember Toni Atkins *Toni Atkins*
SUBJECT: Item 1, NR&C meeting of October 3, 2001: Zoological Society of San Diego's Proposed Master Plan and Precise Plan Amendment Project

For your review and consideration, this memo outlines my positions on the proposed zoo project in relation to the policy directions requested by the Manager.

When considering the proposed zoo project and the policy questions for which city staff seeks direction, three questions are foremost in my mind:

1. Will this project be of benefit to the whole of Balboa Park?
2. Is it consistent with the broader themes and objectives of the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan?
3. Is input from the community being respected and incorporated?

The proposed project meets many of the objectives and long term needs identified in the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. It will create a much more accessible link between the zoo and the North Prado. It will also increase public open space, beautify the Park Boulevard Corridor, create much-needed public parking that can be conveniently used by patrons of the Prado's cultural institutions as well as zoo patrons. Additionally, it will preserve historic landmarks, create pedestrian plazas, and is contained almost entirely within existing zoo leaseholds.

City staff has asked for direction on 6 policy questions. My analysis is as follows:

Land Use Issues:

1. Should the zoo leasehold be permitted to expand beyond their current leasehold?

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The proposed project merits the minor adjustments proposed to the current leasehold areas, and should be given full consideration.

2. *If so, what are the primary Land Use Goals which should be used to measure the appropriateness of the expansion?*

In order to ensure that the project benefits the whole of Balboa Park, I believe the following land use goals should be considered:

- The project should be demonstrated to efficiently and effectively use land within the existing leasehold before a Plan Amendment is granted.
- The project should accomplish the minimum goal of "no net loss" of free and open parkland, and, if possible, increase public open space.
- The project should improve the public experience of Balboa Park.
- The project should be complimentary with adjacent uses.

Parking and Circulation Issues:

1. *What would be the criteria for the location and size of the proposed parking structure? :*

The location and size of the structure should take into account the overall parking needs of the park, as well as those of the zoo. Physical constraints, aesthetics and cost should also be taken into account.

2. *Who should have access to the structure?*

The structure should be open to the entire public.

Historic Resource Issues:

1. *Should the City consider plan amendments that could alter or impact the National Historic Landmark District?*

Yes. The Park's historic carousel and miniature train are respected and enhanced by the proposal.

2. *If so, should the City re-map the District maintaining the same acreage and historic thresholds?*

These historic resources should be redrawn into a new historic district that includes their new

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locations.

I am certain that the NR&C meeting of October 3 will be the first of many steps in the Council's involvement with this project. I hope the committee will choose to receive regular updates as the project moves forward through the planning process. As we are very early in the planning process, it can be anticipated that many relevant issues will be explored and resolved throughout the EIR and review processes.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in endorsing the conceptual plans that the zoo has presented after their year-long efforts with the community-based working group.