

C-3 LETTER RE PROPOSED MOU WITH PLAZA DE PANAMA COMMITTEE

TO: Mayor Jerry Sanders and San Diego City Council Members

RE: Proposed Memorandum of Understanding on the proposed Balboa Park Plaza de Panama Circulation and Parking Structure Project ("Plaza de Panama Project")

Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 ("C-3") was established in 1961 to develop an informed populace on planning and land use issues within the San Diego region. Our Mission is *"To strive for the conservation and improvement of the quality of the environment in the San Diego region. To present objective information, constructive opinion, and educational programs, reflecting the deliberation of its members. To weigh all matters in the view of the contribution toward achieving the highest standards of environmental quality, physical design, economic benefit and social progress."*

Balboa Park has been a primary interest of C-3 throughout our 50-year history. In the 1960s, C-3 defended Balboa Park against an intrusive widening of SR 163 through Cabrillo Canyon and, in 1967, obtained a grant to develop a daylong program titled "Explore Balboa Park Day". In the early 1970s, C-3 championed the closure of the East Prado to through-Park traffic. Also in the 1970s and early 1980s, C-3 fought with numerous other organizations to forestall the Navy's plans to build a new Naval Hospital deeper in the heart of Balboa Park, and C-3 members began to take part in the 10+-year Balboa Park Master Plan review process, advocating for many key elements which were adopted in the 1989 Balboa Park Master Plan.

C-3 is here today to express our opposition to the City Council entering into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the Irwin Jacob's project development team. Entering into an agreement at this time, PRIOR to the initiation, much less the completion of the E.I.R., is improper and circumvents established public process for projects proposed in City parkland. Any such agreement can only predispose the City Council to approve the project as designed by the Irwin Jacob's project development team. The team has consistently failed to broaden the discussion to other possible alternatives to achieve its stated goal, i.e., the elimination of automobiles from the Plaza de Panama, instead presenting an either/or scenario wherein the Cabrillo Bridge must be closed or a bypass bridge must be constructed, with its attendant impacts on many other elements of Balboa Park's Central Mesa.

Approval of the MOU may also establish a troubling precedent for future park projects. By bringing forward the MOU at this time, the Plaza de Panama Committee is attempting to incrementally lock in the commitment of the City Council to the design option that it has steadfastly argued for since it was presented to the public in August, 2010. A project design option that was presented fully developed without public consultation, at orchestrated "sales" meetings and not true participatory forums. A project design option that does not follow the approved Balboa Park Precise Plan for the Central Mesa, arrived at after a decade of intensive public process and participation. A project design option that has encountered very strong public opposition to one of the option elements, i.e., the bypass bridge off of the historic Cabrillo Bridge.

We strongly urge you to not approve the proposed MOU and, as did the City Planning Commission when granting the right to initiate amendments to the adopted Plans, that you ensure that equivalent planning attention and review is given to alternatives to this massive proposal.

Sincerely,

Susan Tinsky  
2011 C-3 President