

October 21, 2010



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Dear Balboa Park Committee:

**Re. Current Balboa Park Plans**

The San Diego Council of Design Professionals and the San Diego Chapter of the American Institute of Architects have formed a task force to review the preliminary plans by Civitas with the purpose of developing a position for consideration by your committee, the Park and Recreation Board, national and local historic review boards, the Planning Commission, and the San Diego City Council. We are very pleased that the City is addressing the long standing problem of traffic and parking in Balboa Park and we strongly support the concept of a parking garage behind the Organ Pavilion. In this case the at-grade rooftop would join adjacent reclaimed parkland, an exciting premise!

However, we do have concerns about the current proposal, which can be summarized into three primary areas:

**1. The severe environmental and aesthetic impact that the changes to the bridge will have on the use and image of the park:**

The original design of the Cabrillo Bridge, the California Tower, and entry arches was to create a singular magic through a striking, grand entryway into the park. If cars are directed into the park before entering through the arches, that intent is lost. In addition, adding a modern "appendage" bridge to access the park before entering the arches is not only costly, it also compromises the design of our beautiful, historic Cabrillo Bridge.

We suggest that two-way vehicular traffic across Cabrillo Bridge be preserved as the "ceremonial entrance" to the park. It's a wonderful "top down" automobile tour (The congestion and supposed conflicts with pedestrians and bicycles are grossly overblown). This roadway should continue to circulate past both the Plaza de Panama and Pan American plaza to provide glimpses of an enriched core. Once the "search-for-surface-parking" traffic is eliminated the congestion will be significantly reduced.

**2. The impact of park traffic on the surrounding community:**

The circulation plan does not correctly tie in with the park, surrounding community and urban zone. What is needed is a circulation plan that coordinates with the Center City's circulation and parking element. In addition, Park Boulevard to Presidents Way should become the primary access to the central core, as mentioned by both Civitas and by our 1987 task force.

**3. The East Mesa should be considered integral to the whole:**

The East Mesa should be finished as a passive, open park of spectacular scale, visually grand from the central mesa and socially relevant as an inner city relief.

**We also recommend the following:**

1. Develop an Art Museum-Timken "piazza" the size of similar large European plazas and create an El Cid island, or "Isla del Cid," We feel the Plaza de Panama in its entirety at some 70 yards by 140 yards, would be uncomfortably large and would render the museums remote when cut off from all passing traffic and from convenient drop-off zones.
2. Include a car-free PanAmerican Plaza, which, interestingly, is exactly the size of the dramatic Piazza Navona in Rome.
3. Whereas passenger drop-off areas should be provided near the theaters and museums, we believe that both main plazas should be permanently closed to parking. We also recommend that the Alcazar Gardens parking lot remain as a drop-off area and parking for handicapped.
4. Establish the shuttle system.
5. Remove the utility truck parking lot on the East Mesa to feature a landscaped vista seen from the central core as a spectacular backdrop to the main attractions along the Prado.

In making these suggestions, we refer to the work of an earlier task force of the San Diego AIA and their recommendations. Please refer to the letter prepared for the City Council in 1987. We look forward to addressing these issues at an appropriate hearing.

In sum we enthusiastically support the planning effort sponsored by a philanthropic San Diegan and respect the process by which we might enrich our park significantly in time to celebrate its centennial.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

San Diego Council of Design Professionals

Howard Blackson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Howard Blackson', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

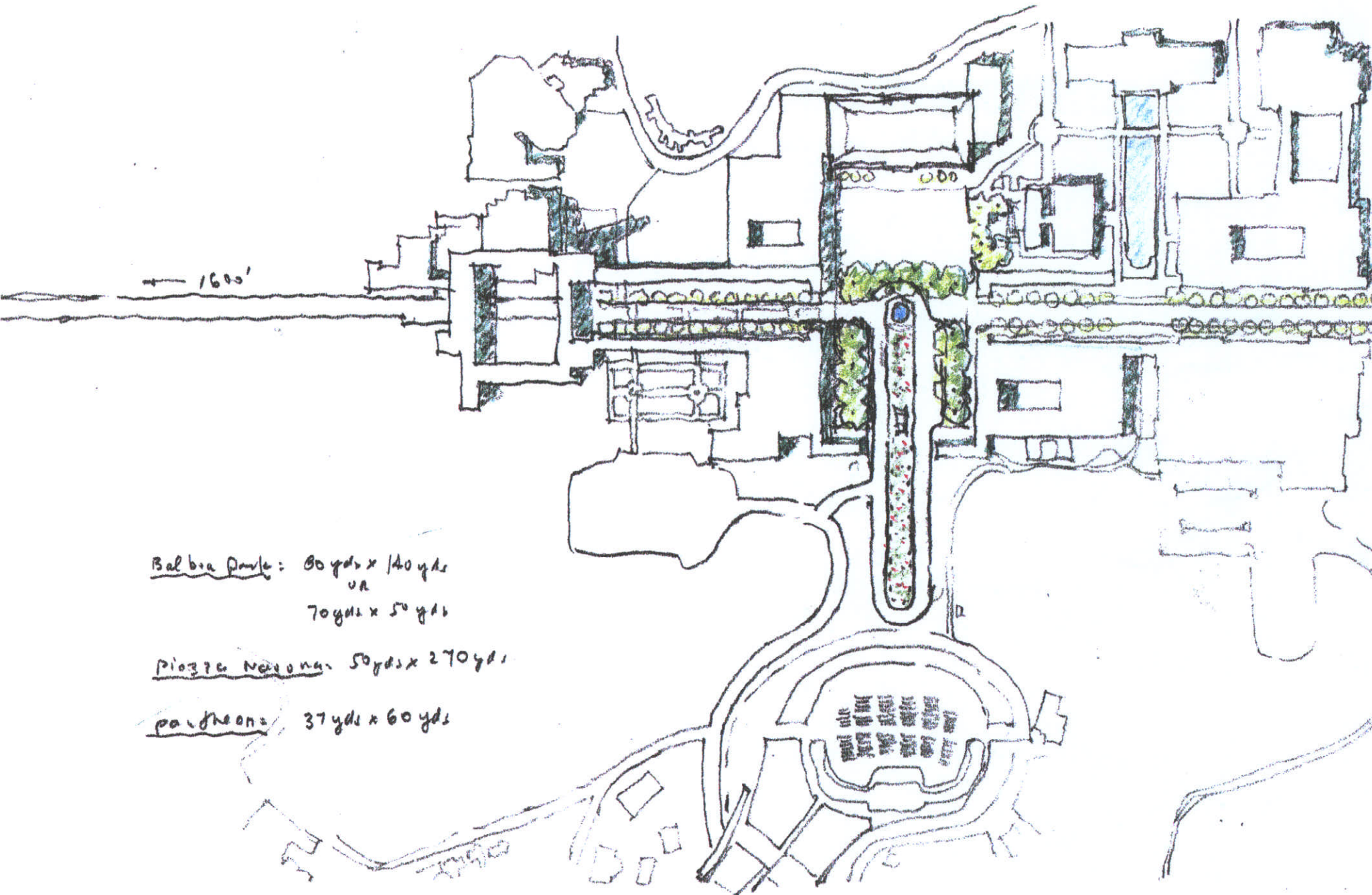
Co-chair

Nicholas DeLorenzo

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Co-chair

Please see attachment of our proposed design.



Balboa Park: 80 yds x 140 yds  
 or  
 70 yds x 50 yds

Piazza Nazionale: 50 yds x 270 yds

palazzina: 37 yds x 60 yds