



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: April 1, 2022

TO: The Balboa Park Committee
Agenda of Thursday, April 7, 2022

FROM: Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation
Department
Via Andy Field, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Creation of Design Review Assistance Subcommittee of Balboa Park Committee

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Parks and Recreation Department pursue the creation of a proposed Design Review Assistance Subcommittee of the Balboa Park Committee?

Department Recommendation – Provide feedback of the proposed conceptual plan for the creation of a subcommittee of the Balboa Park Committee to incorporate design review expertise into the project review process for Balboa Park in accordance with Parks Master Plan Parks and Programming Policy PP 13.¹ Key questions for the Committee to consider related to this proposal include:

- Should the Balboa Park Committee recommend formation of a Design Review Subcommittee?
- Should the Balboa Park Committee recommend amendment of San Diego Municipal Code 26.30(b) and Balboa Park Committee Bylaws to incorporate design review expertise into the makeup of existing Balboa Park Committee and require this expertise of a portion of its membership?
- How should the design review expertise be integrated into Balboa Park Committee membership?
- Should the Balboa Park Committee retain its current membership, modify existing membership, or recommend amendment of San Diego Municipal Code 26.30(b) and

¹ The San Diego Parks Master Plan (adopted August 2021), Parks and Programming Policy PP13 states, “Consider forming a Park Design Review Board based on current practices for Boards and Commissions to review proposed landscape architectural designs for parks. A Design Review Board should be comprised of Landscape Architects, Park and Recreation professionals, and citizens that are representative and reflective of the demographics of the City’s population.” (See <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/parks-master-plan-adopted-2021.pdf>, page 93.)

Balboa Park Committee Bylaws to increase the number of members to allow for the addition of members who hold design expertise?

The Department anticipates this matter to be a workshop item for the April 2022 meeting and an action item for the second meeting, which is anticipated for May 2022.

BACKGROUND

Prior to 2016, the City's Park and Recreation Board had a standing Design Review Committee consisting of volunteer design professionals. Efforts to streamline the delivery of park capital projects, as noted in Report to City Council #15-097, "Park Capital Improvement Program – Public Input Process Streamlining" dated November 2, 2015, resulted in removal of the Design Review Committee through a change effective on January 28, 2016, to Council Policy 600-33.² The approved Council Policy 600-33 no longer provided for a role for the Design Review Committee under the premise its elimination would streamline the public input review process by focusing on input received from community recreation groups and advisory bodies, prevent process bottlenecks, and improve project delivery schedules by removing a step in the public input process. Report 15-097 (page 4) states:

The Design Review Committee consists of design professionals from throughout the region, including architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, and civil engineers. As a subcommittee of the Park and Recreation Board, its role is to provide a more technical peer review of new and amended [general development plans]. Under the proposed CP 600-33, this role would be eliminated. Historically this additional step has resulted only in minor changes and tweaks to the overall conceptual plan that was developed by a registered landscape architect under contract with the [Engineering and Capital Projects] Department. It is likely that the Design Review Committee would no longer serve a purpose after removal of the GDP review function, and if the updated CP 600-33 is approved, the Park and Recreation Board may decide to eliminate it.

Since that time, several Balboa Park projects have advanced through the established public input process outlined in Council Policy 600-33. Design advocates noted during several public workshops that there continues to be unmet need for design review input on Balboa Park projects, particularly on projects that do not require a GDP amendment. Further, the Parks Master Plan, which was approved by the City Council in August 2021, notes that design review is necessary to ensure park projects are reviewed by park industry professionals such as landscape architects, design professionals, recreation professionals, and user groups. This process would be additive to the existing review by the community recreation group and established advisory committee, as noted in Park and Programming Policy PP13. Consistent with this need, Department staff agreed with design advocates to initiate an informal Design

² Council Policy 600-33, "Public Notification and Input for City-Wide Park Development Projects," can be found here: https://docs.sandiego.gov/councilpolicies/cpd_600-33.pdf. It no longer provides for a role for a design review committee in the creation of general development plans, but CP 600-33 does not prohibit one either.

Review Exploratory Working Group (DREWG) to evaluate project processes and to propose solutions for greater design input, focusing on Balboa Park.

The DREWG sought to learn from the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the former Design Review Committee and to leverage this knowledge into the creation of a Design Review Assistance Subcommittee (DRAS) for Balboa Park. Through its research efforts as noted in the March Balboa Park Committee meeting, the DREWG believes the DRAS can offer design consultation services to applicants of park improvement projects and would:

- Provide professional advice to ensure projects fit visually and physically in the park, comply with existing park plans and design guidelines, and enhance the park experience
- Reduce design-related impediments to the progress and completion of projects

Potential Benefits: According to the DREWG, the goal of creating the DRAS would be to seamlessly integrate supplemental design advice into Balboa Park project review and planning processes while not needlessly delaying delivery of projects and services. Success of the proposed DRAS would be measured by its ability to expedite the process for reviewing and approving park projects. As a subcommittee, the DRAS advise the Balboa Park Committee on recommendations of park design.

Potential Drawbacks: It is unknown at this time whether or not the creation of a DRAS would streamline and expedite project reviews as intended. The creation of a subcommittee would add another layer of review and approval to the project delivery process – both for the project applicant and City staff – and could defeat the goal of expediting projects. It could potentially increase the overall project cost and lengthen the project schedule for projects required to gather additional input from DRAS.

The Department recommends the Balboa Park Committee consider all these factors, including potential benefits and drawbacks, when evaluating whether to recommend creation of the DRAS.

As with any effort to review and modify business practices of the Department, numerous stakeholders participated in meetings and research to help the DREWG reach its conclusion. Staff thanks the DREWG membership, which included:

- Michael Stepner, Chair, Urban Designer and Former City Architect
- Michelle Abella-Shon, Asset Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
- Kevin Carpenter, Architect, The Miller Hull Partnership, Former Design Review Board Member
- Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department
- Jackie Higgins, Landscape Architect, Director of Planning, Design and Programs, Forever Balboa Park
- Jim Kidrick, President and Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Air and Space Museum
- Bill Lawrence, President/CEO, San Diego History Center

- David Marshall, Architect, President, Heritage Architecture & Planning
- Connie Matsui, Board Co-Chair, Forever Balboa Park
- René Smith, Parks Advocate

DRAS Roles and Responsibilities

If adopted, the proposed DRAS would become part of the public input process for park projects consistent with the Parks Master Plan, Council Policy 600-33, and the Consultants Guide on Park Design and Development. Council Policy 600-33 does not prohibit formation of the DRAS, and the Parks Master Plan recommends review and study of the DRAS concept. A good pilot project for DRAS could be achieved in Balboa Park before applying that role to other parks elsewhere in the City.

If the DRAS were approved, projects would be reviewed at the conceptual, schematic, or predesign phase in accordance with the Parks Master Plan, Balboa Park Master Plan, Balboa Park Specific Plans, general development plans, and other relevant plans and policies. DRAS would consider a project with the applicant no more than once unless the applicant voluntarily seeks additional guidance. DRAS may not require ongoing subsequent reviews. Both the Balboa Park Committee and the DRAS are advisory groups and may only recommend and not require design modifications on any given project.

The proposed DRAS would meet at the request of the Balboa Park Committee, which would adopt a calendar of DRAS meetings for the year. Staff recommends that the DRAS meet three weeks before regularly scheduled Balboa Park Committee meetings to allow staff adequate time to prepare for upcoming monthly meeting of the Balboa Park Committee. The DRAS should conduct regularly scheduled meetings (i.e. the first and third Monday of the month). Meetings may be cancelled due to lack of agenda items, failure to reach quorum, or other similar reasons. Meetings are publicly noticed and must be held in compliance with the Brown Act and thus are open to the public.

Scope of Work

Staff and/or the Balboa Park Committee would refer incoming Balboa Park improvement projects to the DRAS. Projects should focus on public spaces within Balboa Park within the following guidelines:

- **Operational Projects and Routine Facility Maintenance:** DRAS would not provide input on operational projects or routine facility maintenance issues. Examples include:
 - Placement of Big Belly Trash Cans and Trash/Recycling containers
 - Maintenance and planting of Adopt-a-Plot Landscaping
 - Placement of donor benches and trees

- Overlay, slurry sealing, and resurfacing of pavement (asphalt and concrete roadways, parking lots, driveways, plazas, etc.)
- Roof Replacement
- Painting
- Window Replacement
- Door Replacement
- Lighting Replacement

In addition, the DRAS recommendations cannot impede in the Department's operations and maintenance requirements.

- **Signage:** DRAS would not provide input on signage review; all signage must be consistent with approved Sign Manual.
- **Landscaping Projects:** DRAS would not provide input on landscaping projects. Examples include:
 - Tree Planting, such as Arbor Day
 - Moreton Bay Fig Tree Planting/Care
 - Planting areas at leaseholds that do not represent a major change in palette
 - Planting at City-operated buildings that do not represent a major change in palette
 - Special garden re-plantings such as the Rose Garden, Alcazar Garden, Zorro Butterfly Garden, etc.
 - Routine grounds maintenance projects
- **Leaseholds and Facilities:** DRAS would not provide input on the interior of museum and cultural institution buildings unless specifically requested by the leaseholder.
- **Precise Plan:** DRAS would not provide input on operational elements of the existing Precise Plan that are operational. Examples include: benches, trash cans, bike racks, and other similar amenities, unless implementation requires a General Development Plan (GDP).
- **Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects:** DRAS may review and provide input on the proposed DRAS. It would provide input on general CIP issues and provide aesthetic-related feedback on components of CIP projects. The DRAS would not

provide input on utility projects. Examples of past projects that would have been eligible for DRAS review include the GDP for the renovation of the House of Charm/Mingei Museum, GDP for the Natural History Museum Landscape and Gardens, Palisades Plaza Reclamation, GDP for the New International Cottages, Golf Course Drive Improvements, Pershing Bikeway Project, Restroom Projects, GDP for the renovation of the Botanical Building, Park Board Policy 1001 on Naming of Park Facilities, and policies related to Donor Acknowledgement.

DRAS Creation and Membership

A subcommittee must be comprised of members of the existing Balboa Park Committee. No outside members (non-members) may serve on subcommittee or be appointed to a subcommittee.

Requiring board members to be experts in particular fields is common in most City advisory boards and committees; however, it is not a current requirement for the Balboa Park Committee. Four Parks and Recreation Advisory Boards are listed under San Diego Municipal Code Section 26.30: the Park and Recreation Board, Balboa Park Committee, Mission Bay Park Committee, and the Municipal Golf Committee.

San Diego City Charter Section 43(a), "Advisory Boards and Committees," states that City Council may create and establish advisory boards by ordinance and that all members of such boards shall be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.

Currently, San Diego Municipal Code requires the 12-member board to include:

- Three members appointed from a list of at least four nominees provided by the Councilmember representing the majority of Balboa Park (currently Council District 3)
- Four members appointed from adjacent community planning groups
- One member from the Balboa Park/Morley Field Community Recreation Group
- One member representing a large institution in Balboa Park
- One member representing a small or mid-sized institution in Balboa Park
- Two at-large members (unspecified)

The DRAS may consist of existing members of the Balboa Park Committee. Section 26.30(b) of the Municipal Code states BPC provides advisory input on "policy issues relating to the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of Balboa Park," which is consistent with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for design review.

Alternatively, staff recommends consideration of another pathway forward by amending San Diego Municipal Code Section 26.30(b) to incorporate the design review elements into the

already existing Balboa Park Committee by adding new members beyond the current 12 members. This would expand the role of the Balboa Park Committee to add members who are more specifically “design review” within the parameters of the DRAS as identified by the DREWG. Additionally, an amendment to San Diego Municipal Code Section 26.30(b) could include adding specific expertise requirements for Balboa Park Committee member participation. This would be consistent with how other boards and commissions are established. The Balboa Park Committee bylaws would also need amending to conform to the proposed revision to the San Diego Municipal Code.

Additional professional qualifications that the Balboa Park Committee could consider might include knowledge and interest in Balboa Park, licensed professional certification related to park design and development, and knowledge of the Balboa Park Master Plan and Precise Plans. Other professional positions suitable for proposed subcommittee may include historic preservationist, landscape architect, horticulturist, historic preservationist, arborist, architect, park planner, civil engineer, and/or urban designer.

With the proposed changes outlined above, a DRAS can then be formed from its expert members and design review can be incorporated into the Balboa Park Committee’s regular meetings. Any professionals or experts appointed to the Balboa Park Committee and to the proposed DRAS may not be able to participate in forthcoming Balboa Park projects that come before the DRAS or committee due to conflict of interest laws.

Staff Support

The Parks and Recreation Department will assign a staff representative who will be responsible for noticing and documenting meeting minutes and votes, per the Brown Act requirements. Staff assignments will be at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director, reporting exclusively to the Department.

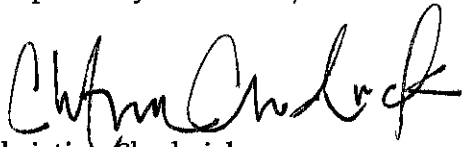
Fiscal Impact

Consistent with the need to assign staff support for this proposed subcommittee, the Department is currently evaluating the fiscal impacts to the overall project cost and the associated staff needs.

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. The recommendation of the Balboa Park Committee will inform potential changes to the San Diego Municipal Code and Bylaws of the Balboa Park Committee. If you have specific questions or comments about this proposal, please contact me at chadwickc@sandiego.gov or Parks and Recreation Director Andy Field at afield@sandiego.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Chadwick', written in a cursive style.

Christina Chadwick
Assistant Deputy Director
Parks and Recreation Department

cc: Honorable City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, District 3
Karen Dennison, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Mike Tully, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Kristina Peralta, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Steve Hill, Policy Advisor, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria