



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 3, 2019

TO: Casey Smith, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department

FROM: Alyssa Muto, Deputy Director, Planning Department

SUBJECT: Inspiration Point Land Use and Environmental Constraints

There has been much discussion over the years about the use and opportunities within the Inspiration Point area of Balboa Park. The Planning Department has reviewed the following documents for policies which may be applicable to the future redevelopment of Inspiration Point. While not exhaustive, this review provides an overview of key themes to consider for design and subsequent implementation.

City of San Diego General Plan (2008)

The General Plan (<https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/genplan>) includes the following themes related to the Inspiration Point project:

- Utilize barrier-free design principle for new park facilities
- Privatization/commercialization of parks should not affect public recreation uses/benefits
- Development within parks should not damage significant features/resources
- LEED Silver certification for new City buildings and major remodels
- Reduce noise exposure to park users through site planning
- Protect and preserve historic elements such as sidewalk stamps

Balboa Park Master Plan (1989, amended 1997)

The Balboa Park Master Plan

(https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/bpmasterplan_0.pdf) includes the following themes related to the Inspiration Point project:

- Development of Inspiration Point as “free and open park land emphasizing multi-use play, picnic and passive uses”
- Inspiration Point North plan calls for realignment of Presidents Way east of Park Boulevard, allowing for reclaimed park land with “exceptional views of the bay, Coronado Islands, downtown, and Point Loma...”
- Inspiration Point North plan calls for retaining large parking lots south of area noted above for public parking, for use with intra-park tram system.
- Expansion of uses/activities/buildings will not encroach upon open park land, landscaped areas or plazas
- Expansion of uses/activities/buildings will occur following adoption of the Master Plan and area specific Precise Plans

- Park tenants should contribute to visitor experience, support services and/or on-site operations and maintenance
- Recommended review of parking facilities at Inspiration Point for return to park land following provision of adequate access to the park via tram/transit/shuttle system development
- Expansion/rehabilitation/construction will follow adopted design guidelines
- Follow Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation for historic structures
- Recommend review of parking facilities at Inspiration Point South for return to park land following provision of adequate access to the park via tram/transit/shuttle system development
- Recommendation to convert Inspiration Point South as open park land for passive recreation uses
- Retention of Administration Building for use of Parks and Recreation Department staff offices

Decision Process for Proposed Projects in Balboa Park

Per the Parks and Recreation Department's procedure *Overview of Decision Process For Proposed Projects in Balboa Park*, the project falls into Process E. Process E states that "Projects not contained within the Park Policy Documents, or modify said documents, require amendment to those Policy Documents. See Municipal Code Chapter 12, Article 2, Division 1 for plan amendment procedures."

Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for San Diego International Airport

Any proposed update or amendment to the Balboa Park Master Plan, Balboa Park Inspiration Point Precise Plan, or Inspiration Point General Development Plans would be subject to the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for San Diego International Airport and will require a consistency determination by the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Board serving as the Airport Land Use Commission. The ALUCP addresses density/intensity of land uses and types of land uses within the safety zones shown in the ALUCP. A portion of Inspiration Point is within safety zone 4. The ALUCP contains noise contours and requires noise interior attenuation to reduce noise for certain uses based on the exterior noise level. Most of the southern portion of Balboa Park is affected by noise levels between 60 and 70 dB CNEL. Proposed new structures could be subject to maximum above ground height limits established by the ALUCP and the FAA based on their location.

Final Environmental Impact Report, Inspiration Point Precise Plan/Balboa Park Activity Center, November 21, 1997

The EIR that studied the Balboa Park Activity Center, a 26,000 square-foot recreation center, found that the center would be a deviation to the Balboa Park Master Plan. The EIR contains useful information on the study area relating to land uses, historic resources, visual quality, noise and parking/traffic circulation. While the EIR analyzed key issue at Inspiration Point, it should be noted that the EIR is over 20-years old and its focus was narrowly placed on the Balboa Park Activity Center, which was built in 2000.

General CEQA Considerations

Noise

Inspiration Point lies adjacent to the I-5 Freeway and is within the San Diego International Airport's 60, 65, and 70 dB CNEL noise contours as identified in its Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The combination of traffic and aircraft noise could potentially expose

future development to noise levels as high as 75 dB. Future development should consider potential noise impacts when siting noise-sensitive uses so as to avoid conflicts with the City's Noise Ordinance and the City's General Plan Noise Element.

Visual Effects

The 1989 Balboa Park Master Plan contains language regarding the "Exceptional views of the bay, the Coronado Islands, downtown, and Point Loma..." from Inspiration Point. Future development should consider siting potential structures such that they do not alter or block public views identified in the Master Plan.

Paleontological Resources

Pursuant to the San Diego Municipal Code Section 142.0151, future development is required to screen for grading quantities and geologic formation sensitivity and apply appropriate requirements for paleontological monitoring.

Historical Resources

Although not listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or the City of San Diego Register of Historic Resources, Building One and the chapel in the former Naval Hospital complex are over 45 years of age and are considered to be of historical value. Future development should evaluate these structures to determine their eligibility for listing in the national, state, or local historical resources registers, and to determine potential impacts that could occur from future project implementation.

Cultural Resources

Given the potential for future development to encounter subsurface prehistoric or historic deposits during construction activities, future development should include monitoring to prevent and/or reduce potential impacts to cultural resources.



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