



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 23, 2016

TO: The Balboa Park Committee  
Agenda of April 7, 2016

FROM Herman D. Parker, Park and Recreation Director

SUBJECT: Statue and Informational Plaque of Vasco Nunez de Balboa

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SUMMARY

Issues - Should the Balboa Park Committee:

1. Advise the proposed statue of Vasco Nunez de Balboa (Balboa) is consistent with the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan; and
2. Recommend approval of the proposed statue and plaque of Balboa; and
3. Recommend the proposed location be permanent?

Department Recommendations:

1. Advise staff the proposed statue of Balboa is consistent with the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan; and
2. Recommend approval of the proposed statue and plaque of Balboa.

Fiscal Impact - The cost of design, fabrication and installation of the proposed statue and informative plaque will be borne by the House of Spain, a member nation of the House of Pacific Relations in Balboa Park. The cost of long term maintenance will be borne by the City of San Diego.

Environmental - The City of San Diego, as lead agency, will review the Project and prepare any required CEQA documentation per State CEQA guidelines.

## BACKGROUND

The Plaza de Balboa is located at the east end of El Prado in the East Prado area of Balboa Park. The Natural History Museum is located to the north, the Ruben H. Fleet Science Theater to the south, and Park Boulevard to the east. Buildings to the west along El Prado include the Casa de Balboa and the Casa del Prado.

The area currently occupied by the Plaza de Balboa was the original entrance to the exposition grounds from Park Boulevard. Park Boulevard was originally aligned through the current Plaza de Balboa but was realigned to the east in 1967. The Plaza de Balboa as seen today was first developed in 1972.

A San Diego Union article from 1913 indicated there was an intent to erect a statue of Balboa on the east end of El Prado, to be surrounded by a semicircle of columns. The cost was to be \$15,000; however this vision was never implemented.

The Central Mesa Precise Plan includes an enlarged graphic of the Plaza de Balboa. The graphic includes enhanced access to the Plaza from Park Boulevard as well as a new pedestrian bridge to connect to the Rose Garden on the east side of Park Boulevard. A statue of Vasco Nunez de Balboa is not indicated in the graphic.

The Central Mesa Precise Plan does include a provision for a statue of Vasco Nunez de Balboa to be located in the Palisades area of Balboa Park. This area is currently occupied by parking and, while the Precise Plan shows reclamation of this area, funding has not been identified for implementation.

## DISCUSSION

The House of Spain is proposing to install a statue of Balboa in the Plaza de Balboa area of Balboa Park. The statue would be made of bronze and would be approximately 9 feet tall. The statue would be placed on a concrete pedestal abutting an existing seat wall immediately east of the Bea Evanson Fountain. The pedestal would be the same height as the seat wall (approximately two feet tall) and would match the seat wall in color and texture. A small informative plaque would be placed on the concrete pedestal.

Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1002 addresses "Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land." A copy of this policy is attached. The policy provides criteria for the evaluation of proposals. The following are the criteria as well as staff's evaluation of how the proposal meets the criteria.

- a. *Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?*

Staff believes a well-designed statue of Vasco Nunez de Balboa will add to the attractiveness of the park much as the statue of El Cid at the south end of the Plaza de Panama adds to the attractiveness of the park. There is historic precedence for anchoring a major plaza with a sculpture of a renowned figure.

- b. *Does it commemorate an individual, group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?*

Staff believes a statue of Balboa is appropriate as he is the namesake of Balboa Park. Additionally, the Casa de Balboa and the Plaza de Balboa bear his name. Balboa is

credited with being the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, and he did so in the country of Panama. His name was chosen for the park because of his association with Panama and the opening of the Panama Canal. These events led to the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition.

- c. *Is the individual, group or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?*

Staff believes Balboa is worthy of commemoration for the reasons listed in item b.

- d. *Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?*

This item is not applicable.

- e. *If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?*

This feature does not provide a direct service. Please see the fiscal impact statement at the beginning of this report for additional information.

- f. *Will proper maintenance be feasible?*

Yes, proper maintenance is feasible. As an example, the statue of El Cid in the Plaza de Panama is made of bronze and has been intact since the 1920s.

- g. *Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make cleanup of vandalism easier?*

The feature will be made of high quality bronze, which is a durable and maintainable material.

- h. *To what extent has the person, group or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?*

Staff is not aware of any other statues of Balboa in the San Diego region. Balboa Park, the Casa de Balboa and the Plaza de Balboa all bear his name.

- i. *Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?*

The statue is proposed to be in Balboa Park, more specifically in the Plaza de Balboa. The location adds significance to the memorial.

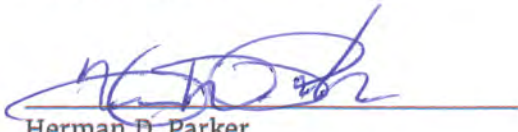
As noted previously, the Central Mesa Precise Plan identifies a location for a statue of Balboa in the Palisades area of the park. However, this area has not been redeveloped per the Precise Plan; it is currently occupied by an asphalt parking lot. The statue could be relocated to the Palisades if the area is ever redeveloped per the Precise Plan.

The Plaza de Balboa does not include a statue of Balboa. If the Plaza de Balboa is ever redeveloped per the Precise Plan, the proposed statue may be in conflict with the proposed pedestrian bridge to the Rose Garden; adjustment in its location may be required in the future or the statue could be incorporated into the final design.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Advise the statue of Balboa in the proposed location is NOT consistent with the Balboa Park Master Plan Central Mesa Precise Plan.
2. Do not recommend approval of the proposed statue and plaque of Balboa in the proposed location.
3. Recommend approval of the proposed statue and plaque of Balboa in the proposed location as a temporary site until such time as the Palisades area of the park is redeveloped, at which time the statue may be relocated.

Respectfully submitted,



Herman D. Parker  
Park and Recreation Director



Prepared by: Charles Daniels  
Park Designer, Administrative Services

HP/cd

Attachments: Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1002  
Central Mesa Precise Plan – East Prado  
Central Mesa Precise Plan – Palisades  
Central Mesa Precise Plan – Plaza de Balboa  
House of Spain Proposal

cc: Council District 3 Office

PARK AND RECREATION BOARD POLICY

SUBJECT: Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land

BACKGROUND: Public parks have as a primary function, the provision of outdoor recreation in spacious, landscaped surroundings. Special architectural features, such as water elements, sculpture, and other works of art add significantly to the parks by the enjoyment derived from experiencing the beauty of the feature. All features must be consistent with applicable Park Master Plans and General Development Plans.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria for design, placement and acceptance of architectural, artistic and commemorative features within parks or other City-owned land, and to maintain same.

- POLICY:
1. The City of San Diego shall encourage community groups and individuals to donate "special features" which will add to the interest and attractiveness of the parks, or be of service to patrons of the parks, i.e., drinking fountains, benches.
  2. Proposals for "special features" and their locations shall be reviewed by the Park and Recreation Board and submitted by them to the City Council with recommendations in accordance with Council Policy 100-2 (City Receipt of Donations).
  3. Proposals for special features shall be coordinated for review with the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.
  4. A "special feature" may serve as a recognition to an individual or group; living or dead, who have made a significant contribution to a specific park or community; commemorate an historic occasion; or acknowledge interest of a group or individual in a park.
  5. All "special features" proposed as memorials shall add to the attractiveness or usefulness of the park area or be of unusually significant historical value.

6. The initial costs of development and placement of a decorative memorial or commemorative feature shall be borne totally by private funds. Costs may be shared by the City if the "feature" provides a service to park patrons. The City will assume ownership and maintenance, if accepted, and place in a public park. The City will not assume responsibility for replacement of "features" removed due to vandalism or lost to theft. Proposed "special features" which pose an unusual risk of vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance due to design or location, shall not be approved unless the private sponsors make financial arrangements, satisfactory to the City, for replacement, repair or removal of the "feature" due to vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance.

7. "Living Memorials," features or facilities which (in addition to their inherent beauty) provide an opportunity for active recreation, shall be encouraged.

8. The Park and Recreation Board shall evaluate each individual memorial feature on the following basis:

a. Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?

b. Does it commemorate an individual group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?

c. Is the individual, group, or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?

d. Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?

e. If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?

f. Will proper maintenance be feasible?

g. Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make the cleanup of vandalism easier?

POLICY: (Continued)

No. 1002

h. To what extent has the person, group, or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?

i. Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?

SUBSTANTIATION:

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/12/65

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 3/15/77

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/19/94

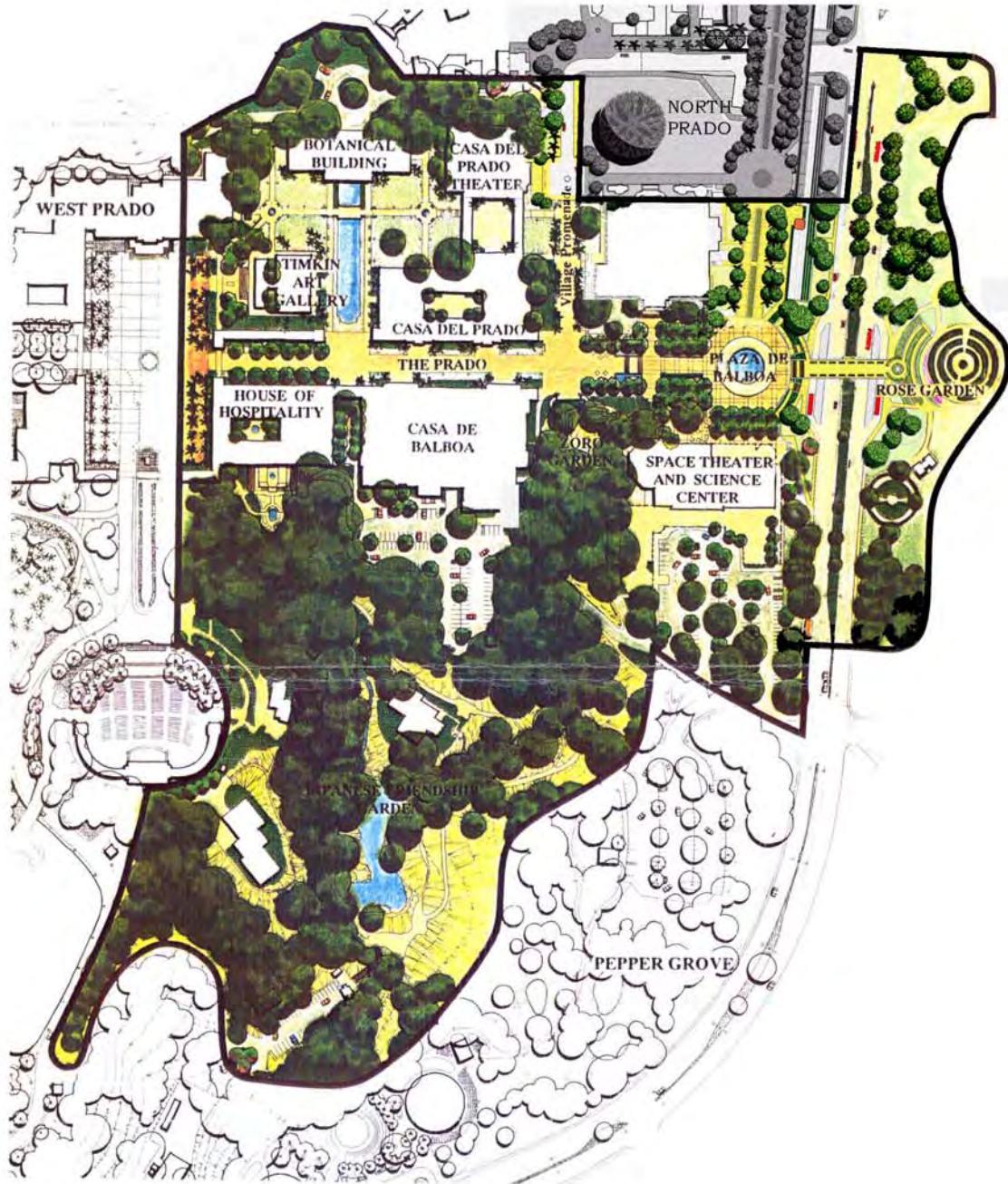
Public Facilities and Recreation Committee Minutes of 6/22/94



### *East Prado*

The House of Hospitality will benefit from a complete reconstruction and will accommodate a new full spectrum visitor center and other visitor oriented services. The Natural History Museum and the Fleet Space Center will expand their facilities. ~~Stairways from the Plaza de Balboa to Park Boulevard will descend to a pedestrian drop-off area on Park Boulevard and reinstate the traditional east entry to the Prado.~~ The traditional east entry to the Prado will be reinstated. The Plaza de Balboa will be connected to the Rose Garden across Park Boulevard by a pedestrian bridge. A public transit station will be located at the bridge. Pedestrian circulation will be restored to Village Place creating a north connection of the Prado promenade with Spanish Village. Other landscape improvements include a regrading and reconfiguration of Casa de Balboa parking lot to improve drainage and vehicular access, improvements to the south entry to the Prado located between the House of Hospitality and Casa de Balboa, and improvements to Zoro Garden.





**East Prado**

revised May 2003 **Figure 30**



Trees

Groundcovers



Lawn

Paved Pedestrian Areas



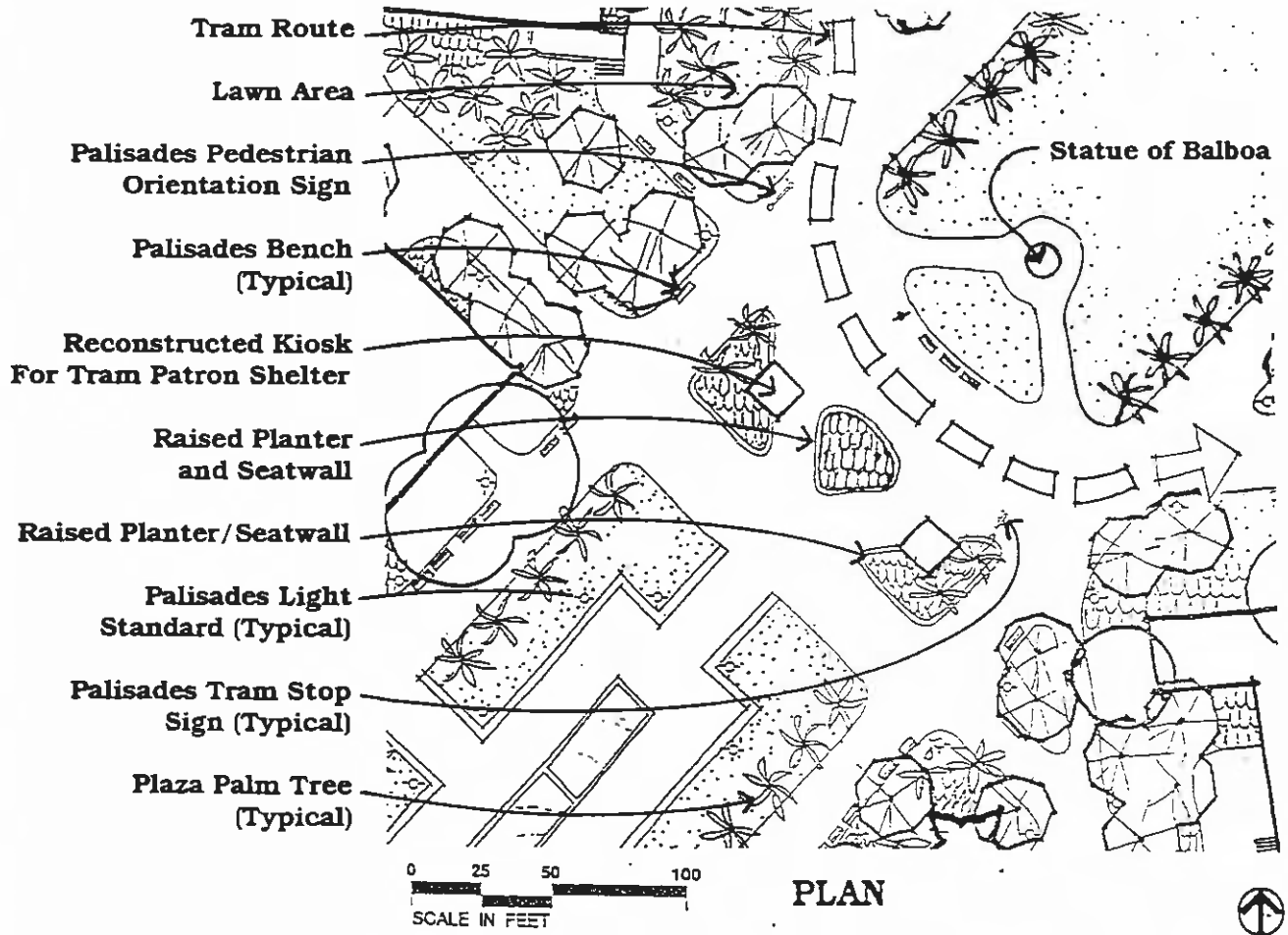
**ESTRADA** Land Planning



## 6. Palisades Tram Stop\*

### Design Objective:

Provide a safe loading and unloading area for the Park Tram and include sheltered seating for Tram patrons.



### Recommendations:

- Conduct a partial reconstruction of the 1935 speaker kiosks in the location shown on the plan to serve as open air shelters. Adapt the kiosks to be open on two sides facing the tram staging area and provide seating inside.
- Incorporate raised seat walls into the kiosk seating.
- Provide walkways to a statue of Vasco Nunez de Balboa, namesake of Balboa Park.
- Include orientation signage, a public information kiosk, and drinking fountains in the design for this area.

Plaza Palm Tree: *Arecastrum romanzofianum* - Queen Palm

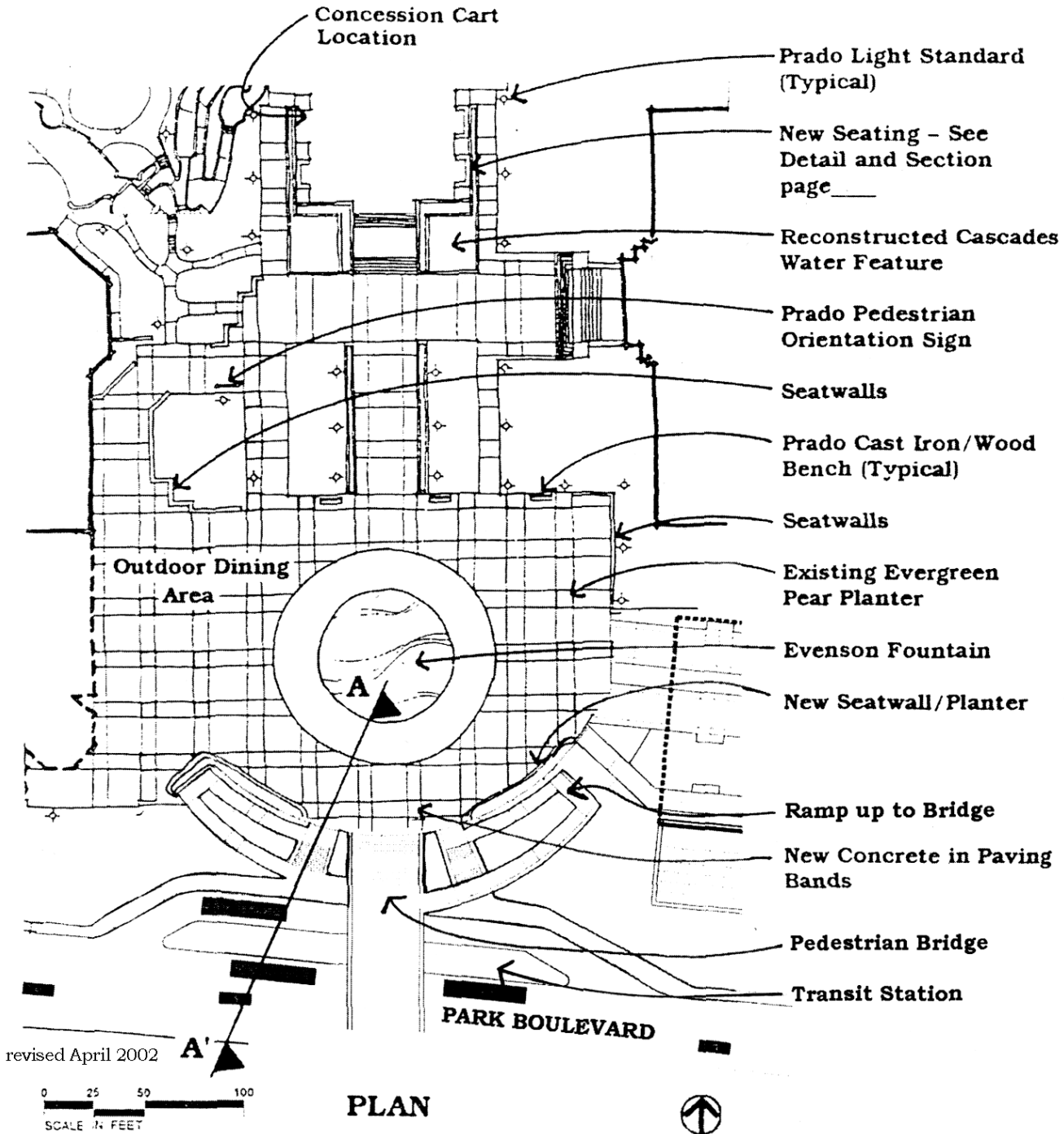
\*proposed name for a new feature.



## 8. Plaza de Balboa

### *Design Objective:*

Enhance Plaza de Balboa to serve the future needs of Park visitors. Create a pedestrian bridge that will connect Plaza de Balboa with the Rose Garden and provide enhanced views of the Rose Garden and mountains to the east. Integrate the design of the new pedestrian bridge with a public transit station on Park Boulevard.



# BPC Presentation

## April 7, 2016

Balboa Statue



VASCO NUÑEZ DE BALBOA.

*Descubridor del Mar del Sur. Nació en  
Berz de Extremadura en el año de 1475  
y fué muerto en Acla en 1517.*

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- He was born in Jerez de los Caballeros, Badajoz, Spain in 1475.
- He grows up in a town where Jews, Muslims, Arabs, Blacks from Africa and other ethnicities coexist.
- Sails from the port of Cádiz, Spain in 1501 at the age of 25 to the New World.

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- Arrives at Salvatierra de la Sabana, La Española, today known as the Dominican Republic and Haiti.
- After 9 years as a farmer and in debt, he decides to leave the island. Balboa escapes from La Española, as a stowaway on a ship headed to what today we know as Panama (Gulf of Urabá).

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- Balboa becomes a friend of the native people.
- Balboa marries Princess Anayansi, daughter of the leader of the Tribe Careta.
- He marries Princess Anayansi to create a union between Spain and the natives of the new land.



# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- Early in 1513, Balboa learns of the existence of the South Sea on the other side of the continent.
- Balboa organizes an expedition on September 1, 1513 with 190 Spaniards, hundreds of natives and his dog, Leoncico. Ponquiaco, son of the native leader Comogre, led Balboa to the South Sea.

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- On September 25, 1513, Balboa sees the South Sea for the first time.
- On September 29, 1513, Balboa takes possession of the South Sea in the name of the King of Spain by planting the flag of Spain in what is known today as the Pacific Ocean.

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- As a human rights advocate, Balboa had secretly written personal letters to the King of Spain complaining of cruel treatment of the natives of Panama by the governor Pedro Arias de Avila.

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- Balboa and four of his men were wrongly convicted and executed by Pedro Arias de Avila (Pedrarias).
- Balboa died January 12, 1519, at the age of 44 along with four of his faithful friends.

# Balboa's life (1475-1519)

- Balboa is the first European to see the Pacific Ocean.
- Balboa was a human rights advocate for the natives in the American Continent.

The third day of the celebration (of Carnival Cabrillo from September 24 to 27, 1913) was named "Balboa" in honor of Vasco Núñez de Balboa, the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, and as an acknowledgment of the Panama-California Exposition which was to be held in Balboa Park, San Diego, beginning January 1, 1915. Citizens were to erect a monument to Balboa costing \$15,000 at the east end of El Prado that would be surrounded by a semicircle of columns. Believing that mentioning the sum needed would produce the reality, promoters of the monument considered it unnecessary to specify a source.(79)

*The San Diego Union*, September 26, 1913.

## Original Park Planners' Intention:

- “Citizens were to erect a monument to Balboa costing \$15,000 at the East end of El Prado that would be surrounded by a semicircle of columns.”

# Supporters

- The San Diego Natural History Museum
- The San Diego History Center
- Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO)
- Betty Peabody – Founder, Friends of Balboa Park
- Dr. Iris Engstrand, USD historian and author
- Robert Price, Founder, School in the Park
- Thomas Workman, Cabrillo National Monument
- Maria Angeles Olson, Hon. Consul of Spain
- House of Spain, Casa de España in San Diego
- Lemon Grove Historical Society
- City of San Diego International Affairs Board





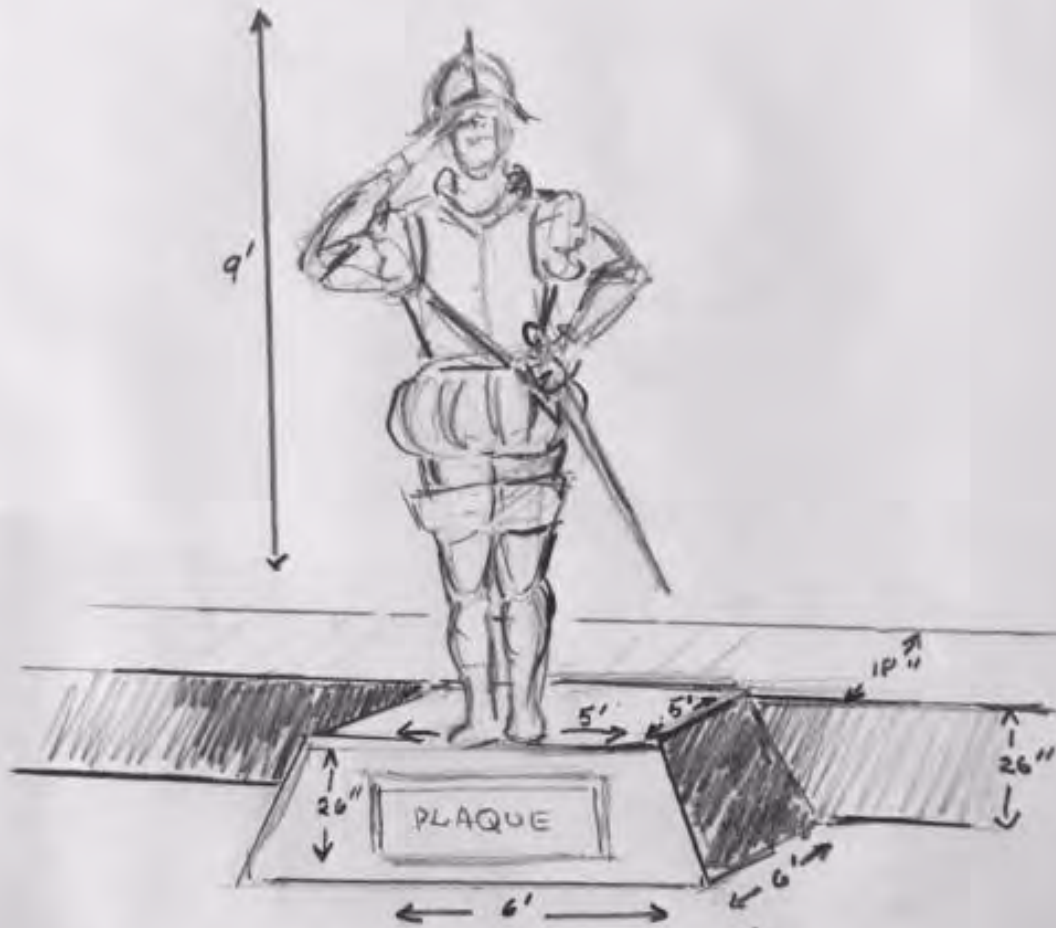
# Bea Evenson Fountain











Galban  
Historical  
Sculpture  
2010

# Plaza de Balboa



# Plaza de Balboa





## **Vasco Nuñez de Balboa – 1475 – 1519**

First European to discover the Pacific Ocean on September 29, 1513. City Park was renamed Balboa Park in his honor in 1910.

Balboa led 190 Spaniards and 1,000 native porters and guides, along with his dog Leoncico, through the jungles and mountains of Panama to plant the flag of Spain on the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

# Quote from Armando Hinojosa

- Balboa statue 1 1/2 life size.
- Approximately 8.5 to 9 feet tall.
- Approximately 2.5 to 3.5 feet wide.
- Approximately 1.5 to 2.5 feet in depth.
- Includes 3 X 2 feet plaque
- Total cost of around \$325K
- The approximate weight will be around 900lbs.
- Highest quality bronze (95% copper, 4% silicon, 1% manganese)

# House of Spain

- House of Spain is asking for your support on this project so that the original intent of the early founders of Balboa Park can be completed. To have a statue of the person that carries his name and for whom the Park was renamed in 1910 is finally implemented.

Questions?