



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 25 2014

TO: The Balboa Park Committee
Agenda of March 6, 2014

FROM: Andrew Field, Interim Park and Recreation Director

SUBJECT: Plan Amendment Initiation – House of Pacific Relations International Cottages

SUMMARY

Issues – Should the Balboa Park Committee:

1. Advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met; and
2. Recommend initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan for the addition of cottages to the International Cottages area of Balboa Park?

Department Recommendations

1. Do not advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met; and
2. Do not recommend initiation of plan amendments.

Other Recommendations – None.

Fiscal Statement – There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

Environmental Review – Initiation of a community plan and general plan amendment is not a "project" pursuant to CEQA Section 15060(c) (2) and as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section §15378(c). Once initiated, the project will be submitted to the Development Services Department and will require preparation of an environmental document in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. This determination is

predicated on Section 15004 of the guidelines, which provides direction to lead agencies on the appropriate timing for meaningful environmental review.

Code Enforcement Impact – None

Housing Impact - None

The initiation of a plan amendment in no way confers adoption of a plan amendment, and neither staff nor the Balboa Park Committee is committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.

BACKGROUND

Balboa Park is located immediately north of downtown San Diego. The Park is surrounded by the communities of Golden Hill, North Park, Uptown and Centre City. Balboa Park is one of the City's largest developed parks at 1,172 acres and is host to numerous passive and active recreational activities, cultural and educational institutions, and special events. Over 12 million visitors come to Balboa Park each year to enjoy the diversity of activities the Park has to offer.

Development, maintenance and management of Balboa Park are governed by the Balboa Park Master Plan, the Central Mesa Precise Plan, the East Mesa Precise Plan and subsequent amendments to those documents. The Balboa Park Master Plan is a part of the City's General Plan, and implements land use policies for Balboa Park. Therefore, amendments to the Master Plan and its Precise Plans must follow the Land Use and Community Planning Element of the General Plan.

The Balboa Park Master Plan (BPMP) was adopted by City Council on July 25, 1989 (Resolution No. R-274090). Subsequent amendments to the BPMP have been adopted by City Council on December 9, 1997 (R-289537); on May 4, 1998 (R-290039-1); on April 13, 2004 (R-299084-1); on September 21, 2004 (R299666); and on July 9, 2012 (R-307555-1). The Master Plan addresses the entirety of Balboa Park and provides general guidelines for development, maintenance and management.

The Central Mesa Precise Plan (CMPP) was adopted by City Council on October 20, 1992 (Resolution R-280920). Subsequent amendments to the CMPP have been adopted by City Council on May 4, 1998 (R-290031-2); on March 19, 1992 (R-296206); on April 13, 2004 (R-299084-2); and on July 9, 2012 (R-307555-2). The CMPP addresses the central portion of Balboa Park in greater detail than does the BPMP.

The House of Pacific Relations complex was originally constructed for the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition and included 15 small structures (see Attachment A). The cottages are fairly small in size and, while being similar in architectural style, each has its own unique details.

The Hall of Nations building, originally the Kansas state building, was constructed for the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition. The building is now a part of the International Cottages complex and is used by numerous House of Pacific Relations members for meetings and other events.

The CMPP identifies expansion of the International Cottages by 4,000 square feet (see Attachment B, original CMPP graphic). The graphic indicates eight structures with a size of approximately 500 square feet each. This is consistent with the small size of the original cottages. To date, four cottages have been constructed, consuming the 4,000 square foot allowance provided in the CMPP. These include the House of Hungary, the House of Iran, the House of Puerto Rico and the House of Spain. Please note the original graphic of the CMPP indicated eight new structures. The plan amendments processed for the Plaza de Panama Project in 2012 revised this graphic to reflect actual conditions (see Attachment C).

Membership in the House of Pacific Relations is greater than the number of cottages available. Nations without a cottage of their own meet in the Hall of Nations building. The House of Pacific Relations proposes to amend the BPMP and CMPP to allow for construction of additional cottages to house their membership.

DISCUSSION

Project Definition

The House of Pacific Relations proposes to amend the BPMP and CMPP to provide additional cottages for their membership. The proposal includes five new duplex cottages, with each duplex housing two member nations. The total square footage of the proposed five cottages would be approximately 8,200 square feet inclusive of enclosed courtyards. The central road, Pan American Place, would be resurfaced with enhanced paving and available for pedestrians and service/emergency vehicles only. Additional walkways to the new cottages would be added.

Plan Amendment Initiation Requirements

The Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan serve as community plans for Balboa Park. Any substantial deviations from these adopted policy documents require plan amendments. The Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan identifies criteria for initiation of plan amendments.

The proposed amendments do not meet the requirements for a Technical Amendment Initiation (General Plan Section LU-D.6). However, the Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan identifies three criteria to be met for initiation of plan amendments by the Planning Commission (General Plan Section LU-D.10). The criteria are as follows:

- a. *The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria; and*
- b. *The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design; and*
- c. *Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.*

The following identifies how the proposed amendments compare to the criteria identified in the Land Use & Community Planning Element of the General Plan.

Criterion a: *The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria.*

The Balboa Park Master Plan implements the General Plan land use policies for Balboa Park. The Balboa Park Master Plan identifies six major goals. These goals are identified below, including staff analysis of how the Project Definition meets the goals of the Master Plan.

❖ ***“Create within the Park a more pedestrian oriented environment. Reduce automobile and pedestrian conflicts. Minimize through traffic.”***

The proposed amendments close Pan American Place to vehicular traffic; this is consistent with the CMPP. This road, as well as Pan American Road West, are signed for “authorized vehicles only.” However the roads are commonly used by those accessing the Balboa Park Club, Recital Hall and cottages.

Pan American Place is also the main southern route for the park’s tram system, with a tram stop by the Organ Pavilion restroom facilities. Rerouting the tram along Pan American Road East would necessitate the elimination of the Organ Pavilion stop. Rerouting the tram along Pan American Road West could result in delays in tram service as this road is often congested by Balboa Park Club users and, to a lesser degree, Recital Hall users. In addition, House of Pacific Relations members often park along this road and constrict traffic.

Closure of Pan American Place may create a more pedestrian oriented environment within the International Cottages area. However, the amount of through traffic would not be reduced, and would likely result in an increase in traffic on Pan American Road West. It is likely automobile and pedestrian conflicts would increase along Pan American Road West. The tram route in the CMPP as amended by the Plaza de Panama Project in 2012 runs the tram along Pan American Road East, which is a pedestrian promenade.

- ❖ ***“Improve public access to the Park through an improved integrated circulation system, convenient drop-off points, better parking management, improved signage and increased security. The improved circulation system shall de-emphasize the automobile while increasing public access to the Park and Park facilities.”***

As noted above, the closure of Pan American Place to vehicular traffic, including the park tram vehicles, may have a deleterious effect on the efficiency of the tram system. The trams would likely encounter increased congestion along Pan American Road West while rerouting the trams to Pan American Road East would necessitate the elimination of the Organ Pavilion tram stop. Implementation of the Plaza de Panama Project would route the tram along Pan American Road East, avoiding congestion in this area.

- ❖ ***“Preserve, enhance and increase free and open parkland and establish a program of ongoing landscape design, maintenance and replacement.”***

The proposed plan amendments propose to increase “free and open parkland.” This is accomplished by closing Pan American Place to vehicular traffic. Impacts to current tram operations are noted above. Also, the CMPP (see Attachment C) already provides for enhanced paving along Pan American Place. Therefore the proposed plan amendments do not increase “free and open park land” above what is already identified in the CMPP. The addition of cottages would reduce the amount of “free and open park land” from what is identified in the CMPP.

- ❖ ***“Restore or improve existing building and landscape areas within the Park.”***

The addition of new structures would reduce the amount of landscaped area in the park. In addition, three of the cottages are sited within a grove of mature Queen Palms. These trees would need to be removed to make room for new cottages; relocation of trees of this size is not feasible, resulting in a loss of a significant landscape feature of Balboa Park. Two of the cottages are located close to an existing Oak tree. Impacting the root zone of this tree would likely have a deleterious effect.

Improvements to Pan American Place would restore this currently paved roadway. However, this improvement is already identified in the current CMPP.

- ❖ ***“Preserve and enhance the mix of cultural, and active and passive recreational uses within Balboa Park that serve national, regional, community and neighborhood populations.”***

The addition of cottages would expand the space allowed for the House of Pacific Relations. Those members that currently use the Hall of Nations would now have a meeting space of their own.

Existing activities that use the spaces where cottages are proposed would have to be relocated. These activities include:

- Picnicking for Organ Pavilion concerts (the northern lawn is a designated alcohol use area)
- Spreckels Organ Society Bach Dinner
- Earth Fair
- San Diego County Art Mart
- House of Pacific Relations Ethnic Food Fair
- House of Pacific Relations International Christmas Festival
- Balboa Park 8 mile and 3 mile Race

❖ ***“Preserve Balboa Park as an affordable park experience for all citizens of San Diego.”***

Balboa Park is a public facility free to all City residents and visitors. While not all attractions in Balboa Park are free, the majority of the Park and its recreational resources will remain so. The proposed cottages would be open from noon to 5:00 PM on Sundays at no charge to the public. However, additional cottages would reduce the amount of park land available for daily use. These uses are identified under the previous goal.

The Land Use element of the CMPP states the following goal:

❖ ***“Park land to be converted for building expansions, roads, parking areas or restricted uses should be minimized to preserve the historic resource and maintain existing relationships between the natural and built environment.”***

The addition of new cottages in a heavily used landscape area appears to be contrary to this goal. Historic Resources staff has expressed the concern of blocking views to the original 1935 cottages.

Criterion b: *The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design.*

The proposed amendment removes free and open parkland and increases the amount of restricted park land. While the cottages are open to the public for free, they are only open four hours each Sunday. In its current state the public has access to the parkland at all times. Also, use of this parkland for cottages would preclude current users.

Criterion c: *Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.*

Balboa Park is currently adequately served by major public services such as water, sewer, electrical, telephone and other utilities. Due to the limited operational hours of the International Cottages it is unlikely there will be significant added demand to these services.

Police service currently serving the Park overall is adequate. The Park Ranger staff also provides an additional level of security to the Park during daytime hours. However, International Cottages residents regularly complain of homeless issues they have, including break-ins, encampments and clean-ups. This issue is likely to increase with additional cottages.

The Park is currently well served by freeways and roads, and no additional roads are anticipated at this time. Public transit improvements in the form of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) are currently being planned by SANDAG, and are anticipated to be in place in the near future. BRT lines are proposed for Park Boulevard, 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue.

Building maintenance services are provided by the City's Facilities Maintenance Division of Public Works. Facilities Maintenance staff are limited in their capacity to respond to service requests. Additional cottages would fall under their purview for maintenance, and would add to an already burdened work load.

Grounds Maintenance is conducted by Park and Recreation staff. The areas proposed for new cottages is open turf with a Palm grove in one area. Maintenance of the turf areas is relatively simple with weekly mowing and occasional edging. The proposed cottages would result in smaller and fragmented planting areas more suitable for shrubs and groundcovers similar to the more recent cottage additions. Staff feels the smaller planting areas with shrubs and groundcovers will increase the amount of maintenance required.

Balboa Park itself can be considered a public service, providing recreational opportunities to adjacent communities, regional visitors and tourists. The proposed decrease in free and open park land could be viewed as a reduction in public services.

Other Issues

The following issues have been identified with the initiation request. If initiated, these issues, as well as others that may be identified, will be analyzed and evaluated through the plan amendment review process:

- Historic resources protection
- Universal accessibility
- Availability and accessibility of parking
- Traffic circulation and pedestrian safety
- Displacement of current users

CONCLUSION

As outlined herein, the proposed plan amendments do not meet all the above criteria as described; therefore, staff does not support initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met, and recommend initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed addition of cottages to the International Cottages area of Balboa Park.
2. Advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met, and recommend initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed addition of cottages to the International Cottages area of Balboa Park with conditions.

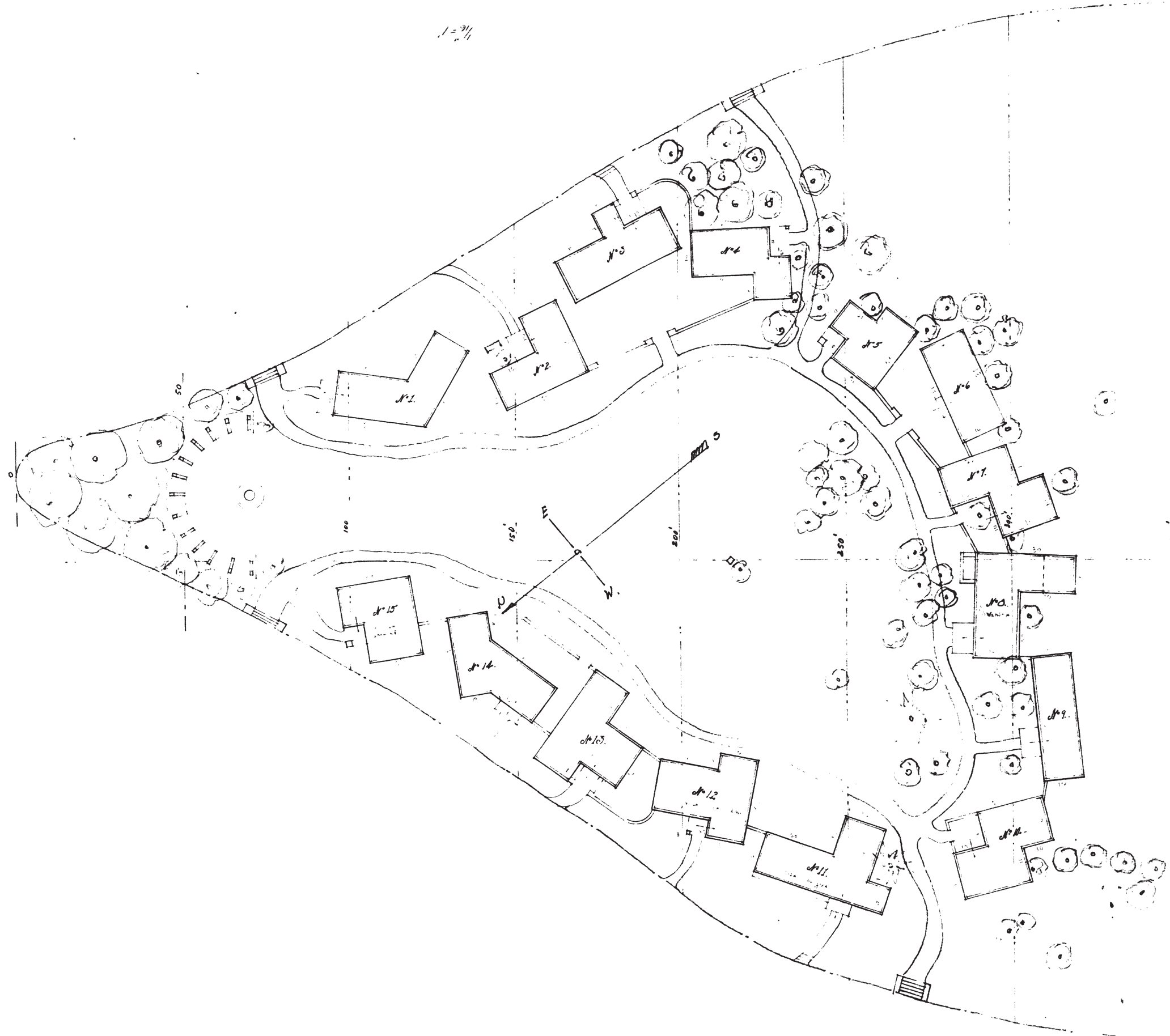
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Field". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrew Field
Interim Park and Recreation Director

AF/cd

Attachments: Attachment A – Original International Cottages Site Plan
Attachment B – Original CMPP Graphic for House of Pacific Relations
Attachment C – Amended CMPP Graphic for House of Pacific Relations
Attachment D – Proposed Amendments to the CMPP



CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA PARKS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT SHEET 1 OF 30 SHEETS	
INVENTORY OF BALBOA PARK CONSTRUCTION DURING PERIOD OF 1900-1948 COMPILED APRIL 1972	
PROJECT TITLE HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS	
PLOT PLAN SHEET TITLE	1A DATE 11-10-34
204-1721 LAMBERT COORDINATES	8033-1 -R

Approved by
Executive Manager:
Supervising Architect:
Director of Works:
S.E.R.A. Director:

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

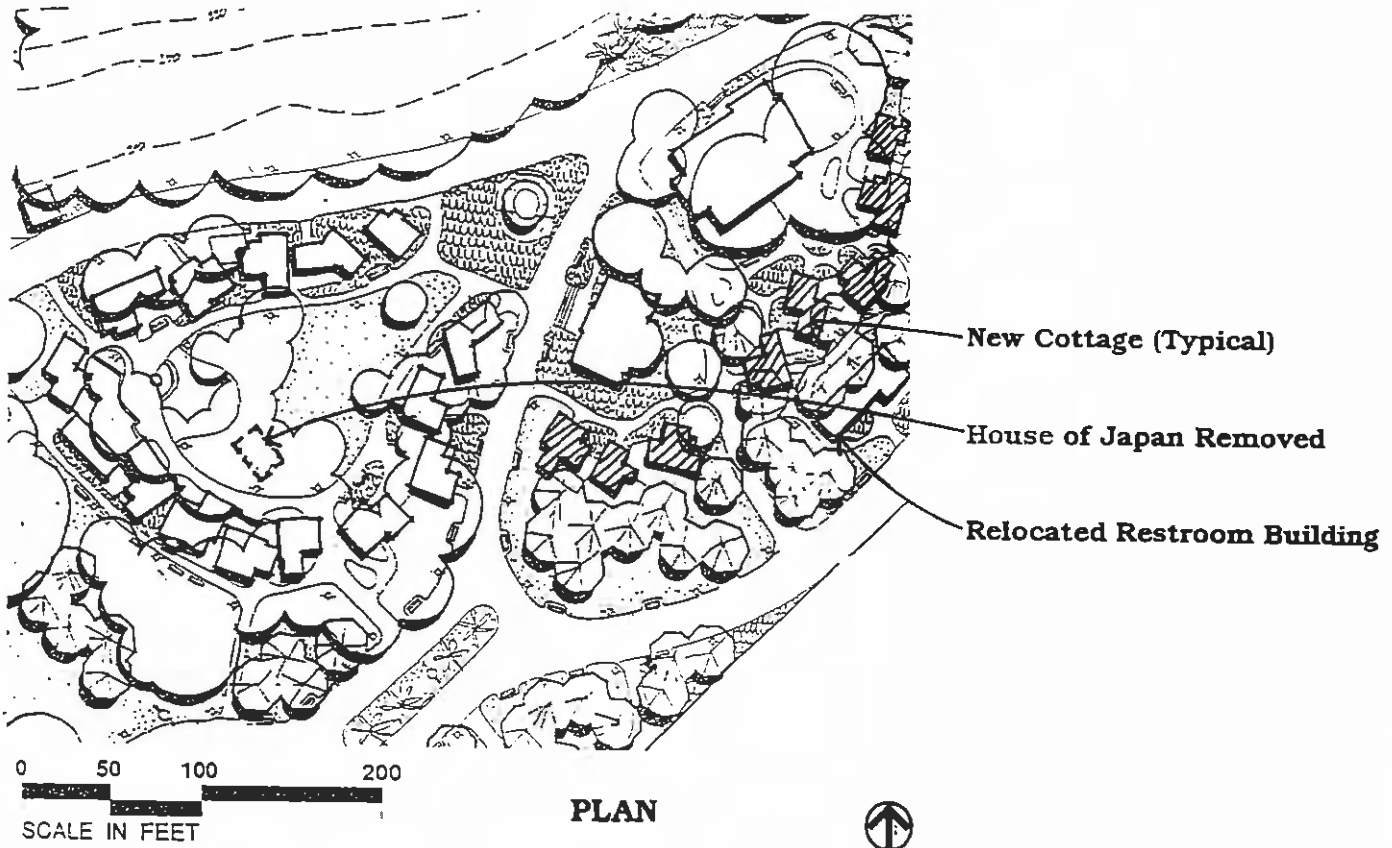
CALIFORNIA PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION 1935 SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 1935		
PLOT PLAN D FOREIGN NATION HOUSES		
Drawn by: ZH	ARCHITECTURAL DEPT	JOB NO. C-4
Traced by:	C. S. HARPER DIRECTOR OF WORKS	Richard S. Requa SUPERVISING ARCHITECT
Checked by:		SHEET NO. 1-A
Approved: [Signature]		
Date: 11/10/34		



28. House of Pacific Relations

Design Objective:

Add additional cottages while preserving the existing group of 1935 Exposition cottages intact.



Recommendations:

- Arrange new cottages on the site as shown.
- Retain the same scale, forms, details, trim, materials and colors as the existing cottages.
- Add a storage and changing room within the expansion.
- Limit the total square footage of expansion to 4,000 square feet.

29. House of Pacific Relations - House of Japan Cottage

Design Objective:

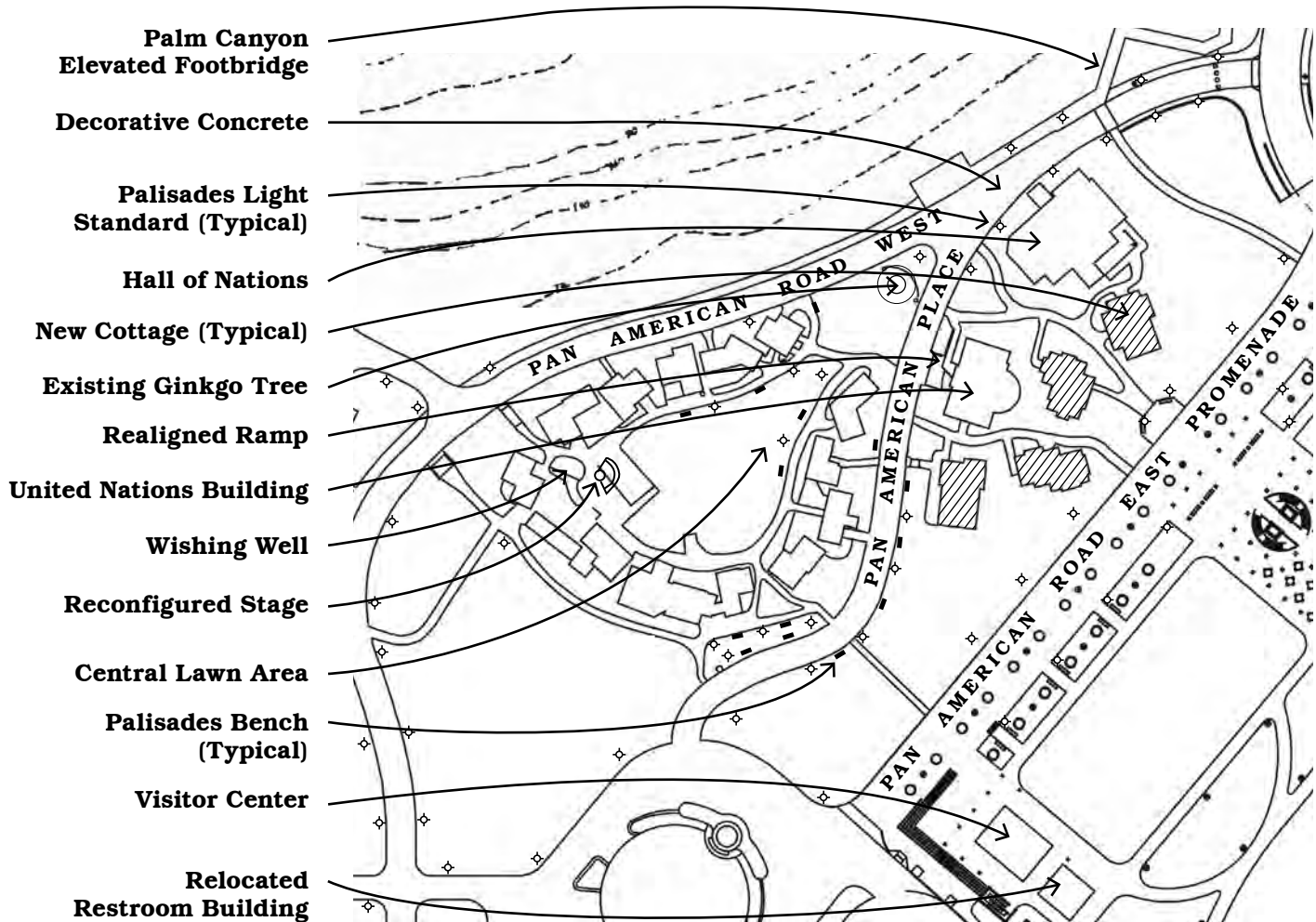
Remove the non-historic House of Japan addition and relocate the organization in one of the new cottages.



1. House of Pacific Relations

Design Objective:

Present the wooded secluded quality of the village, enhance pedestrian enjoyment of the area and provide pedestrian access to the proposed additional cottages.



PLAN



Recommendations:

- Reconfigure the existing concrete performance platform as shown on the plan. Supply the platform with electrical service for sound and lighting equipment. Preserve the wishing well in present location.
- Provide new pedestrian walkways to proposed new cottages as shown on the plan.
- Remove the non-historic House of Japan and relocate the organization in a new cottage within the Village.
- Locate all new cottages and walkways in a way that preserves existing plant material as much as possible.
- Replace asphalt on Pan American Road and Pan American Place with decorative concrete to visually define them as pedestrian walkways.



PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR PROPOSED EXPANSION
OF COTTAGES
HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS
Existing Aerial Photograph

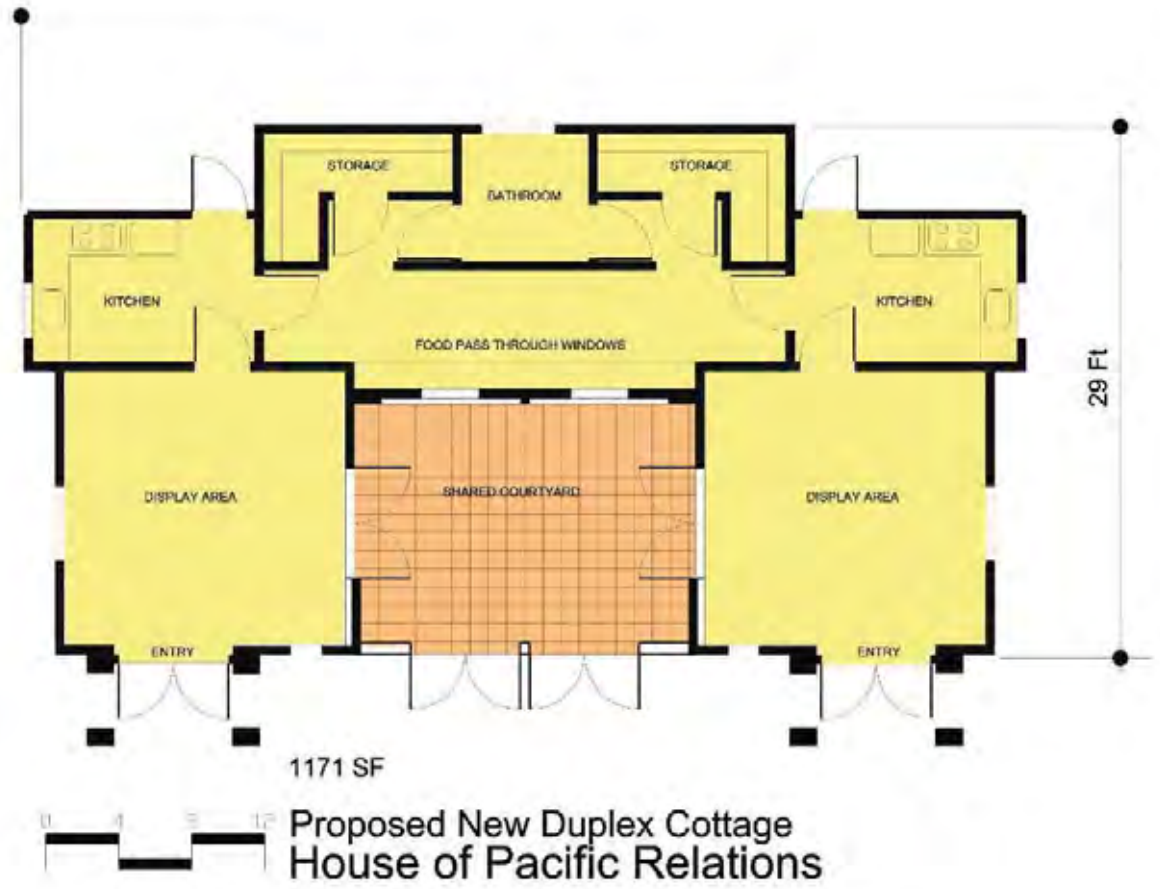
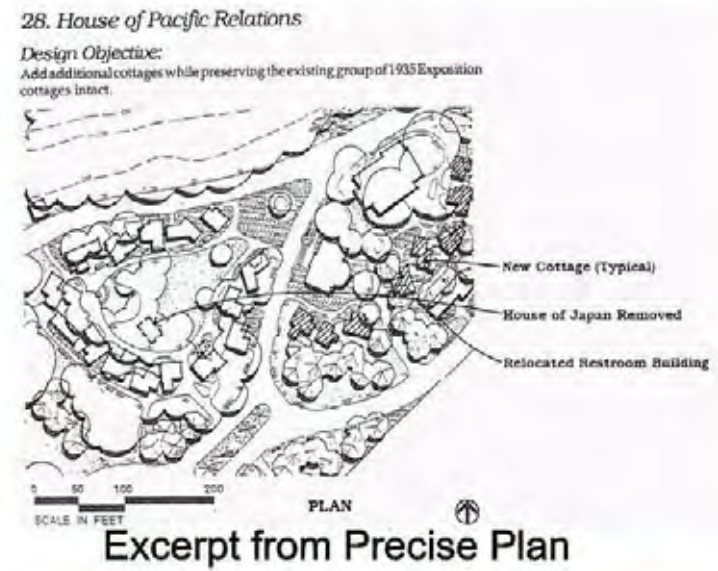




View of Previous New Houses Looking West Looking North toward Proposed New Houses



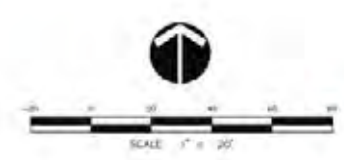
1935 View



Birdseye View Looking Northwest



Birdseye View Looking Northeast

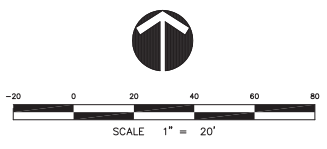


PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR PROPOSED EXPANSION OF COTTAGES
HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS
 Images and Floor Plans
 MARCH 31, 2010





PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR PROPOSED EXPANSION OF
 COTTAGES
HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS
 Location Plan
 JANUARY 31, 2011





PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN FOR PROPOSED EXPANSION OF
COTTAGES

HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS

OCTOBER 27, 2010



SCALE 1" = 20'



EXISTING



PROPOSED

HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS PHOTO SIMULATION
VIEW 1



KEY MAP





EXISTING



PROPOSED

HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS PHOTO SIMULATION
VIEW 2



KEY MAP



- AREA 1 - 19,105 SF
- AREA 2 - 18,045 SF
- EXISTING BUILDINGS - 19,100 SF

SITE TAKEOFFS

HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS

February 01, 2011



EXISTING FREE AND OPEN PARK LAND - 109,486 SF

NEW FREE AND OPEN PARK LAND FROM ROAD - 1383 SF

New Buildings - 7,026 SF

OVERALL INCREASE IN FREE AND OPEN PARK LAND - 357 SF

SITE TAKEOFFS

HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS

February 1, 2011