



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 25, 2013  
TO: Balboa Park Committee, Agenda of December 5, 2013  
FROM: Kathleen S. Hasenauer, Deputy Director, Park and Recreation Department  
SUBJECT: Old Globe Way Improvements and San Diego Zoo Employee Parking Structure

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**SUMMARY**

Issue - Should the Balboa Park Committee:

1. Advise that the proposed Old Globe Way improvements and access to the Zoo employee parking structure are in substantial conformance with the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan; and
2. Recommend approval of the proposed General Development Plan (GDP) for Old Globe Way improvements?

Department Recommendation – Advise that the proposed Old Globe Way improvements and access to the Zoo employee parking structure are in substantial conformance with the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan and recommend approval of the proposed General Development Plan for Old Globe Way.

Other Recommendations

None.

Code Enforcement Impact – None with this action.

Housing Impact - The proposed Project would primarily consist of improvements related to pedestrian and vehicle circulation and would not result in the removal of existing dwelling units, the creation of new dwelling units, or a net gain in dwelling units within the area.

Fiscal Impact – Old Globe Way improvements are anticipated to cost approximately \$2 million. If implemented, the San Diego Zoological Society (San Diego Zoo Global), a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, would fund the construction of the proposed improvements.

The City's Park and Recreation Department would be responsible for maintaining the improvements along Old Globe Way. A majority of these improvements would be improvements to existing park facilities such as enhanced paving, enhanced landscaping and new light fixtures; these improvements would reduce the amount of deferred maintenance expense for Old Globe Way. However, there are new improvements that would add to the long-term maintenance costs of Balboa Park. These elements include, but are not necessarily limited to, additional site furniture including benches, trash receptacles and light standards. Additional maintenance costs are expected to be negligible and would be incorporated into the existing operating budget.

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

## **BACKGROUND**

Balboa Park is located in the heart of San Diego, immediately north of the downtown area. 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 the park has to offer.

Development, maintenance and management of Balboa Park are governed by the Balboa Park Master Plan (BPMP), the Central Mesa Precise Plan (CMPP), the East Mesa Precise Plan (EMPP) and subsequent amendments to these documents. The BPMP is a part of the City's Progress Guide and General Plan (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 Central Mesa Precise Plan is divided into sub-areas that address the various geographic regions of the Central Mesa. These areas include the West Prado, East Prado, North Prado, War Memorial and Park Blvd. Greenbelt (formerly named War Memorial & Zoo Parking Lot), Pepper Grove, and Palisades. Old Globe Way is located in the West Prado, East Prado and North Prado areas of the park.

Old Globe Way is a meandering access road that runs from The Old Globe Theater east to Village Place, north of the Museum of Art, Botanical Building and Casa del Prado Theater. The Central Mesa Precise Plan identifies it as a service road. The road is used to access the Botanical Building Parking Lot, the San Diego Zoo's hospital building, and loading docks at The Old Globe Theater, the Museum of Art, the Botanical Building and the Casa del Prado Theater. Old Globe Way and the Botanical Building Parking Lot are used for drop-off at the Casa del Prado Theater. Minimal staff parking to these institutions is accessed via Old Globe Way. The Zoo has a service access gate located along the western edge of the Botanical Building Parking Lot.

The Zoological Society of San Diego, also known as San Diego Zoo Global, was first established in 1916 to care for animals collected for the 1915-16 Panama-California International Exposition. Balboa Park has been home to the San Diego Zoological Society since 1921. Since then the organization has grown worldwide to be a leader in the field of wildlife conservation and includes four branches: the San Diego Zoo, the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research and San Diego Zoo Global.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### Parking Structure

The San Diego Zoological Society wishes to construct a 650-car parking structure within their leasehold north of Old Globe Way, just northeast of The Old Globe Theatre's Lowell Davies Festival Theatre. The parking structure would be rectangular in configuration with a footprint of approximately 36,960 square feet, and would be six stories. There would be parking located on the top level of the parking structure. The top of the parking structure would be located approximately ten feet below the level of Old Globe Way. Solar panels would be installed on the top of the parking structure, and would be on a similar level as Old Globe Way.

The parking structure is within the footprint of the Zoo leasehold, which is excluded from the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa precise Plan. However, the parking structure can still have an impact on view sheds from the park. Views of the parking structure from Old Globe Way will be mitigated by constructing a solid wall that extends from the upper level of the parking structure to a height of approximately eight feet. Vegetation will be planted in the sloped area between the parking structure and Old Globe Way.

The proposed parking structure would provide 650 parking spaces primarily for Zoo employees. However, the San Diego Zoological Society has been discussing possible joint use of the facility for valet parking for Old Globe patrons. It is possible other nearby institutions such as the Museum of Art, Timken Museum or Museum of Man may wish to use the facility for special event valet parking.

### Old Globe Way

The Zoo proposes to implement improvements to Old Globe Way as a component of the overall Project. Improvements are to be in substantial conformance with the Central Mesa Precise Plan. Improvements include enhanced paving, lighting, site furniture, accessible parking and landscaping.

The segment of Old Globe Way between Village Place and the Botanical Building Parking Lot would be reconfigured. The road would be widened to 26 feet per the Central Mesa Precise Plan. The road bed would be asphalt while pedestrian paving would be enhanced concrete. A drop-off area would be incorporated into the south side of the street to accommodate Casa del Prado users. The Botanical Building Lot would be reconfigured for better circulation and to create a central landscaped island that would also serve as storm water retention. The existing *Ficus sycomorus* tree would enjoy a larger planting area and greater protection. The parking lot

would accommodate Botanical Building staff parking and accessible parking only. Walkways would be added to the south side of the road only, and enhanced paving would be provided at key locations. Improved lighting would increase security and safety along Old Globe Way.

The segment of Old Globe Way between the Botanical Building Parking Lot and The Old Globe Theater would be used for light vehicular, delivery and pedestrian access. Only authorized vehicles would be allowed in this area. The existing asphalt road would be replaced with enhanced paving; the overall road width would remain the same. Additional lighting, benches and trash receptacles would be provided to create a more pedestrian environment. The area would be re-graded to meet accessibility requirements.

The Zoo currently has an access gate located on the west end of the Botanical Building Parking Lot. This gate is primarily used for service access by Zoo staff only. This access point would be the new entrance to the Zoo employee parking structure. A turn-around would be located at the gate, including a drop-off area that could be used for valet staging. A pedestrian link between the turn-around and Old Globe Way would be provided to facilitate possible valet use of the parking structure. A small guard house would be located at the center of the turn-around to monitor access to Zoo grounds. The guard house would be located on the Zoo leasehold but would be located outside the realigned fence.

The fence delineating the Zoo leasehold would be replaced. A portion of the fencing would be realigned to the north and west, setting the fencing further back from the pedestrian areas and increasing the amount of landscaping outside the fence. The fencing would be a combination of stucco finished wall, ornamental iron fence and chain link fence. Stucco finished walls will be used where screening is required. Ornamental iron fence will be used where screening is not required but is still in general view of the public. Chain link fence will be used in areas unseen by the public, primarily north of the Lowell Davies Festival Theatre where chain link fencing is currently used.

Existing Park and Recreation maintenance sheds would be replaced on the northern side of the parking area. Existing trash facilities would be placed in enclosures, improving aesthetics of the area.

New landscaping would be planted throughout the Project area. The landscaping would be drought resistant and low maintenance while still meeting soil stabilization, screening and aesthetic requirements. Landscaping would be used in conjunction with solid walls described herein to screen views of the proposed parking structure from Old Globe Way. A new irrigation system would provide efficient, low precipitation watering for the new landscape.

## ANALYSIS

### Parking Structure

The parking structure is located within the Zoo leasehold and outside the purview of the Central Mesa precise Plan. However, its location and access would have an impact on the park in terms of views, noise, headlights and traffic. A solid wall will be added to the top of the parking structure to mitigate views, headlight glare and noise. Landscaping will be added to provide visual screening of the parking structure and wall.

The proposed parking structure will provide 650 parking spaces for Zoo employees. These employees currently park primarily in the main parking lot along Park Boulevard. These employees will be relocated to the proposed parking structure, freeing up spaces for Zoo and park visitors. This should also have the effect of reducing overflow parking along Park Boulevard and in the surrounding community. Parking at the War Memorial Building to the north of the main parking lot should also be improved.

The San Diego Zoological Society has discussed the possible joint use of the parking structure for valet use with The Old Globe Theatre. As noted, it is possible other nearby institutions may also wish to use the valet service for special events. If the proposed parking structure is used for valet service then traffic in the core of the park along Pan American Road and El Prado should be reduced since visitors using valet would use the current service provided adjacent to the House of Hospitality.

### Old Globe Way

Old Globe Way improvements are identified in several areas of the CMPP. Under the Specific Recommendations for the North Prado area, Recommendation 7, North Prado Way and Old Globe Way (Attachment A) shows the eastern portion of Old Globe Way between the Botanical Building Lot and Village Place (North Prado Way). This graphic shows the reconfiguration of the Botanical Building Parking Lot to a cul-de-sac configuration with staff and accessible parking, and pedestrian drop-off on the south side of Old Globe Way. While the configuration of the cul-de-sac varies in the proposed GDP, the function is essentially the same and a greater amount of accessible parking can be provided. Also, the amount of space provided for the existing *Ficus sycomorus* is increased.

The graphic for the cul-de-sac does not indicate access to the Zoo leasehold. However, this access currently exists and is an essential link for Zoo staff to this area of the zoo grounds. In any proposed configuration it is unlikely the existing access would be severed.

Improvements to the western portion of Old Globe Way are not specifically indicated in any graphics within the CMPP. However, the concept is addressed on page 193, Objective recommends development of a comprehensive system of pedestrian walkways. Additionally, Figure 4 of the Balboa Park Master Plan (Attachment B) identifies Old Globe Way as “*enhanced pedestrian/service access.*”

The addition of the proposed employee parking structure with access from the Botanical Building Parking Lot was not anticipated in the CMPP. Old Globe Way is identified as a service road and is not intended to receive vehicle traffic from routine park visitors. However, Old Globe Way does receive traffic due to limited parking facilities located in the Botanical Building Parking Lot, at the Museum of Art and at The Old Globe Theatre. Access to the Zoo employee parking structure by zoo employees would be consistent with the existing and proposed use; however, the amount of traffic generated would be greater than anticipated in the CMPP. The attached traffic report indicates the increased level of traffic anticipated by this Project (Attachment C).

The San Diego Zoological Society states the proposed parking structure will be used primarily by Zoo employees. There is the possibility of valet use as well, possibly by The Old Globe Theatre patrons. Zoo employees would arrive at early morning hours before park visitors arrive, and would arrive at staggered hours. However, Zoo employees would depart during mid afternoon hours through early evening hours. The departure hours would also be staggered. It is unlikely all 650 (maximum) vehicles would leave at the same time. Valet use, particularly by The Old Globe Theatre patrons, would be in the evening hours, with the exception of weekend matinees, when the Zoo employees have departed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed parking structure is located within the Zoo leasehold and is not in the study area of the Central Mesa Precise Plan. The Balboa Park Master Plan only identifies the Zoo as a land use and does not provide any specific recommendations for development. Visual and noise impacts by the proposed parking structure are being mitigated by a solid screening wall and enhanced vegetation. Additional parking within the Zoo leasehold should improve parking for Zoo and park visitors in the Zoo's main lot, which is shared by the War Memorial Building.

Proposed Old Globe Way improvements appear to be consistent with the intent of the Central Mesa Precise Plan and Balboa Park Master Plan. The proposed improvements do not create a substantial burden on maintenance staff, and will eliminate deferred maintenance expense for Old Globe Way. Accessibility, security and aesthetics will be improved along Old Globe Way.

Traffic will increase on Village Place and a short section of Old Globe Way. However, there will be a proportionate reduction in traffic at Zoo Drive and Zoo Place.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the Department's recommendations with modifications.
2. Do not approve the Department's recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen S. Hasenauer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kathleen S. Hasenauer  
Deputy Director

KSH/cd

- Attachments:
- A. CMPP - North Prado Way and Old Globe Way
  - B. BPMP Figure 4- East Prado and Spanish Village Conceptual Master Plan
  - C. Traffic Report
  - D. General Development Plans