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The Balboa Park Conservancy Supports Revitalization of Balboa Park Palisades

The following position statement and quote can be attributed to Tomás Herrera-Mishler, President and CEO of the Balboa Park Conservancy in San Diego, CA:

The Balboa Park Conservancy supports the City of San Diego’s plan to revitalize the pedestrian plaza in the South Palisades area of Balboa Park, part of a National Historic Landmark district. As advocates for the greater good of Balboa Park, we encourage a collaborative, data-driven process for the planning and implementation of all park projects to ensure successful outcomes for the park’s many stakeholders.

The restoration of the Palisades is not only in accordance with the park’s master and precise plans, it increases the safety and accessibility with plans for an improved shuttle stop and comfort station. Investment in park infrastructure and placemaking helps connect our community to the cultural organizations that make our park so unique.

“What people love about Balboa Park is this rich mix of arts and culture, community, architecture, recreation, and nature. We have it all right here! You can see some of this in the original vision for the Palisades, known in 1935 as ‘Pan American Plaza.’ There were sidewalks, lawns, and the ‘Firestone Singing Fountain’ featuring colorful lights and music. Now, there is a parking lot. We can do better than that! This reminds us that when public spaces are thoughtfully designed and activated, they add value to the place itself and strengthen community connections.

“For Balboa Park to truly thrive, we must gather data, create a shared vision and develop a strategic plan. To do this, you need transparency and collaboration--the City, the community, AND the cultural organizations who contribute significantly to the complete park experience.”

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

Tomás Herrera-Mishler, President and CEO of the Balboa Park Conservancy, is available for interview or comment on this subject and any other pertaining to Balboa Park, urban landscaping, park management and other land use issues.

BACKGROUND

The \$9.2 million originally allocated by the City of San Diego to the Plaza de Panama project was successfully retained for Balboa Park through the advocacy of park stakeholder groups for critical infrastructure investments. \$1.2 million of this is earmarked for the partial restoration of Pan American Plaza, located in the Palisades area of the park.



The Palisades is the home of the future Comic-Con Museum, and is where Starlight Bowl and the Air and Space Museum are located (just off President’s Way, near Park Boulevard). Originally known as the Pan American Plaza, this area was designed for pedestrians, with sidewalks, lawns, and the “Firestone Singing Fountain.” Sometime after the 1935 Exposition, the buildings were repurposed and the plaza was replaced with an asphalt parking lot.

Finalized in 1989, the Master Plan for Balboa Park calls for the removal of the parking lot and restoration of the original 1935 pedestrian spaces, including a version of the famous fountain. Today this area lacks landscaping, proper sidewalks, a safe shuttle stop, and an updated comfort station along with other visitor amenities.

About the Balboa Park Conservancy

The Balboa Park Conservancy is the City of San Diego’s private partner in advocating for the greater good in Balboa Park. It provides expertise, advocacy, and resources in partnership with the city and other park and community organizations to achieve the best version of Balboa Park possible for current and future generations. This private/public partnership’s mission is to bring Balboa Park to the level of excellence our community and visitor population deserves.

For more information or interviews please contact Sarah Beckman, (619) 331-1109, or Stephanie Thompson, (619) 840-7353.

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