

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

Dedicated to the Preservation of Spanish Colonial Architecture in Balboa Park



Position Statement: February 4, 2011

From: Michael Kelly, President

Re: Balboa Park Plaza de Panama, Circulation and Parking Structure Project

The Committee of One Hundred supports the goal of reclaiming the public spaces of Balboa Park's Plaza de Panama, west El Prado, Plaza de California, and Esplanade from the automobile. Dr. Irwin Jacobs' vision for restoring the heart of Balboa Park will be a wonderful gift to the people for the 2015 Centennial.

Construction of the proposed bypass bridge, however, is not in keeping with the historic designation of Balboa Park as a National Register Historic District. Pursuit of this bypass plan will result in protracted delays, excessive costs, and the likelihood the proposal will be rejected by the City's Historical Resources Board, the State Office of Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service. The Committee of One Hundred believes there is a better way to achieve these same goals without changes to the Cabrillo Bridge, the canyons, or the historic views of our Dream City.

The City of San Diego should close the Cabrillo Bridge to traffic, adding it to the reclaimed public space. Returning the Cabrillo Bridge to pedestrians will remove any need for a bypass bridge; vehicular traffic will enter and leave the Central Mesa from the east side. Traffic turnarounds for passenger drop-off and frequent tram service across the bridge will make it easier than it is now to get to the theatre, museums, and events from the west.

We support the proposed three-level parking structure, topped with green space at ground level, as a satisfactory solution for close-in parking. It can also address concerns for handicapped and valet parking. Innovative public transportation choices for getting people to and from Balboa Park will reduce the need for parking spaces.

A well-designed, well-managed tram system is critical to the success of any plan to remove traffic and parking lots from the public spaces that we hope to reclaim. Reliable and convenient trams to and from their destinations will make peripheral parking practical for employees, volunteers, and Park visitors. Funds not used for a bypass bridge could be redirected to extend the new tram system to bus stops and parking lots.

All this can be completed for the 2015 Centennial celebration.