



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 26, 2014

TO: The Balboa Park Committee  
Agenda of December 4, 2014

FROM: Bruce Martinez, Deputy Director, Park and Recreation Department

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

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**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. Advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have been met; and
2. Recommend initiation of plan amendments.

**Other Recommendations** - On March 6, 2014 the Balboa Park Committee voted to table this item until such time that the applicant could address issues with staff. Please see the Discussion section for additional information.

**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 (R-299666); 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.

A large portion of Balboa Park's Central Mesa is included in the federally designated National Historic Landmark District (District). As such, any improvements within the District must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Determination of compliance is made by the City of San Diego Historic Resources staff and the Historic Resources Board.

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 named 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 on a rotating basis. 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 three new duplex cottages and one triplex cottage, which will house nine additional member nations. The total square footage of the proposed cottages would be approximately 3,800 square feet; exterior courtyards would be shared space and open to the general public daily, and therefore not included in the square footage of the cottages. Three duplex cottages would be added just south of the main cottage complex in a space that is currently covered with mulch and some turf. The triplex cottage would be added just north of the Hall of Nations Building and House of Iran in an area currently covered in turf. A central courtyard at each location, and additional walkways to the new cottages, would be included. The architectural style of the new cottages would be compatible with the existing cottages.

***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 meet 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 would provide better pedestrian connections between the International Cottages and the Organ Pavilion, and between the International Cottages and the Balboa Park Club. Automobile traffic would not be impacted by the proposal.

- ❖ ***“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 pedestrian connections between the International Cottages, Organ Pavilion and Balboa Park Club should be improved by the proposal.

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

The proposed additional cottages would reduce the amount of free and open parkland. However, two new courtyards with enhanced paving and landscaping would be added to the International Cottages complex. The areas proposed for the new cottages are rarely used, and no existing user groups would be displaced.

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

While the addition of new buildings would reduce the amount of landscape (open parkland), the areas of proposed expansion are rarely used and existing park users would not be impacted. The landscape associated with the new cottages would be improved as a part of the proposal.

- ❖ ***“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, and they would be able to have permanent exhibits to educate visitors about their cultures. The proposed expansion would preserve and enhance the cultural activities of Balboa Park, and in specific the House of Pacific Relations. The expansion would also enhance the recreational uses of the Park.

- ❖ ***“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.

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 House of Pacific Relations has modified their proposal to minimize the amount of free and open park land used for cottage expansion. The areas of expansion have been revised to areas that are rarely used by the public, and no current users will be displaced. New courtyards will be open to the public daily.

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. However, the amount of space being used has been minimized, and the areas of expansion are rarely used by the general public. No existing user groups would be displaced. The land being used is partially turf and partially mulch (un-vegetated).

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 may increase with additional cottages, however it will be specifically addressed during the amendment process.

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, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> 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. The newer structures would require little maintenance initially.

### ***Previous Issues***

This item was last heard at the March 6, 2014 Balboa Park Committee meeting at which time the Committee voted to table the item until such time that the applicant could satisfactorily address issues with staff. Since that time the applicant has worked with staff to resolve issues as described herein.

The location(s) of the cottages has been revised to avoid displacement of existing users. The areas of proposed expansion are rarely used, and minimal useable turf will be impacted. The original CMPP (see Attachment B) indicates cottage expansion in essentially the same area as the northern triplex cottage. Relocation of the cottages has also reduced the impact to mature Palm trees, and avoids blocking views into the park.

Closure of Pan American Place in association with cottage expansion has been postponed until such time as the current Precise Plan is implemented. This eliminates concern regarding tram route issues associated with routing trams along Pan American Road West.

The size of the cottages has been modified to be consistent with the original cottages. This was accomplished in part by eliminating individual patios in lieu of larger central courtyards that will be open to the public.

The revised configuration has eliminated the numerous individual walkways and simplified the landscape planters. The simplified layout will make landscape maintenance more manageable.

Issues regarding security and building maintenance will be addressed in the plan amendment process should plan amendments be initiated by the Planning Commission.

### ***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
- Maintenance and Security

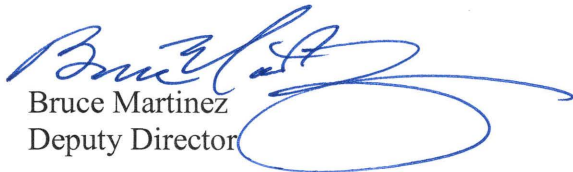
### **CONCLUSION**

As outlined herein, staff believes the proposed plan amendments meet the above criteria as described; therefore, staff supports initiation of amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan for the proposed expansion of the International Cottages area of Balboa Park.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Advise the Supplemental Criteria identified in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Planning Element have not been met, and do not 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.

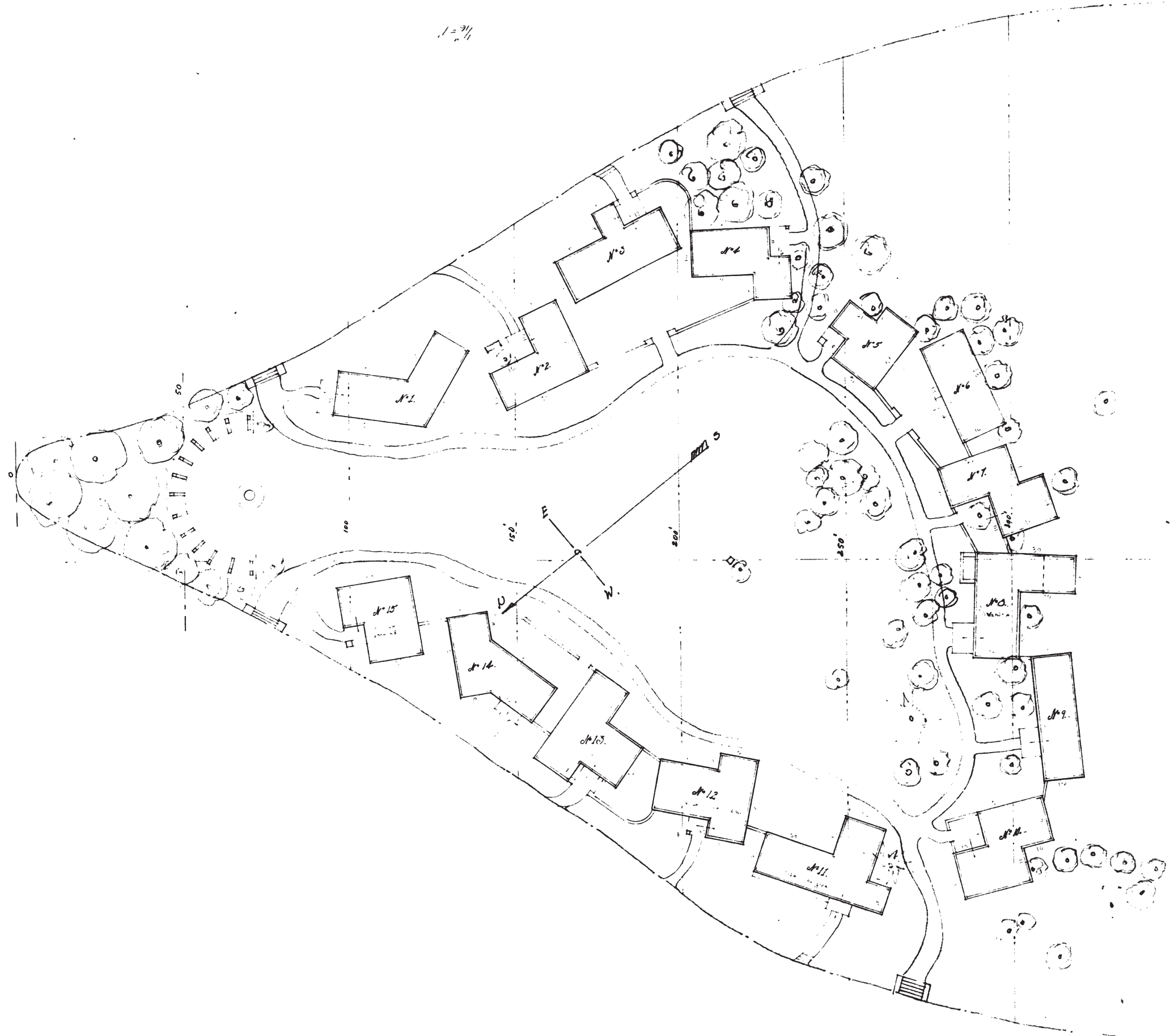
Respectfully submitted,

  
Bruce Martinez  
Deputy Director

BEM/cpd

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 – Conceptual Plan for 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 <b>HOUSE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS</b>	
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: 1/6" = 1'-0"

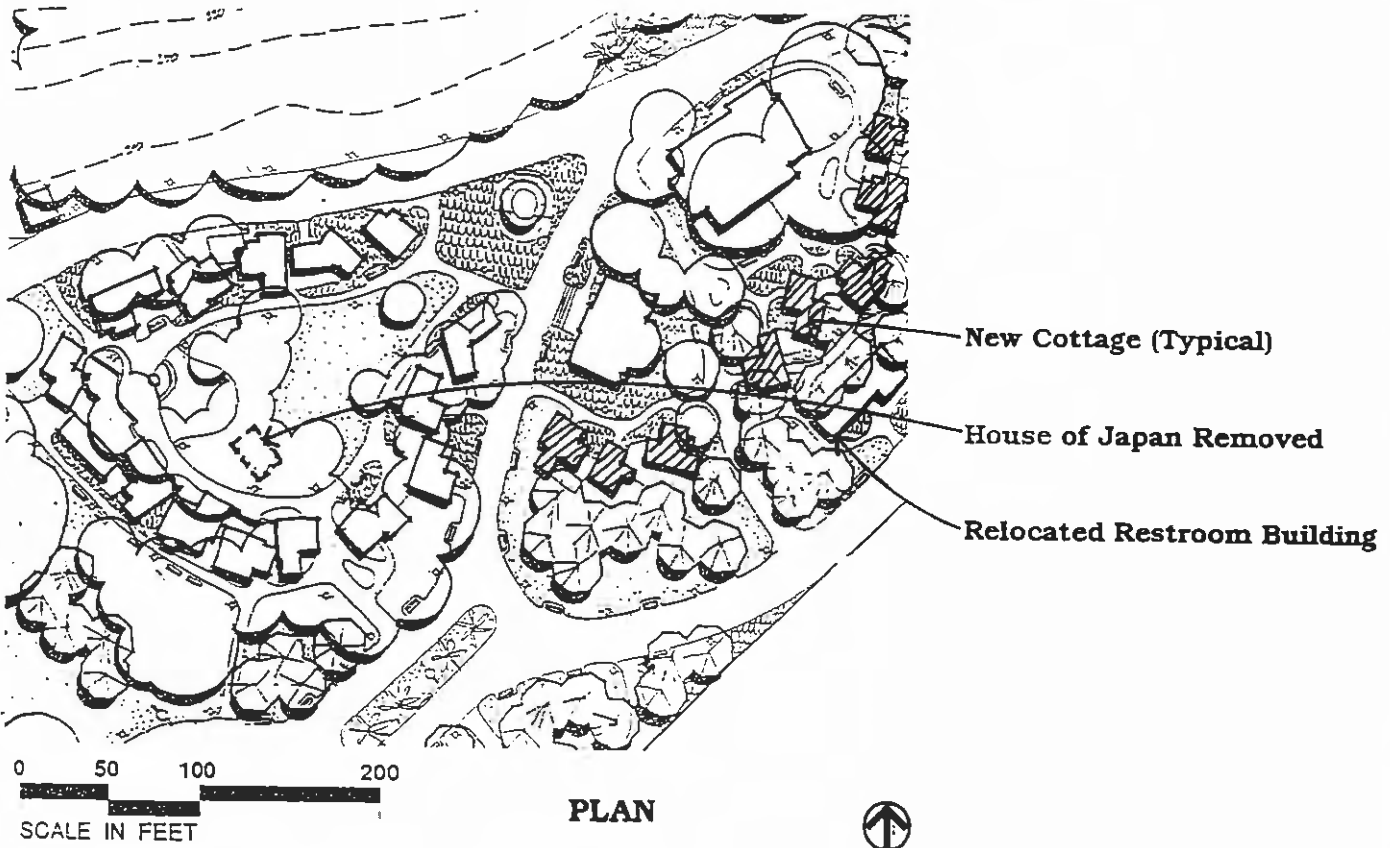
CALIFORNIA PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION 1935 SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 1935		
PLOT PLAN D FOREIGN NATION HOUSES		
Drawn by Traced by Checked by Approved Date: 11/10/34	ARCHITECTURAL DEPT C. S. HARPER DIRECTOR OF WORKS	JOB NO. C-4 SUPERVISING ARCHITECT RICHARD S. REQUA SHEET NO 1-A



## 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:

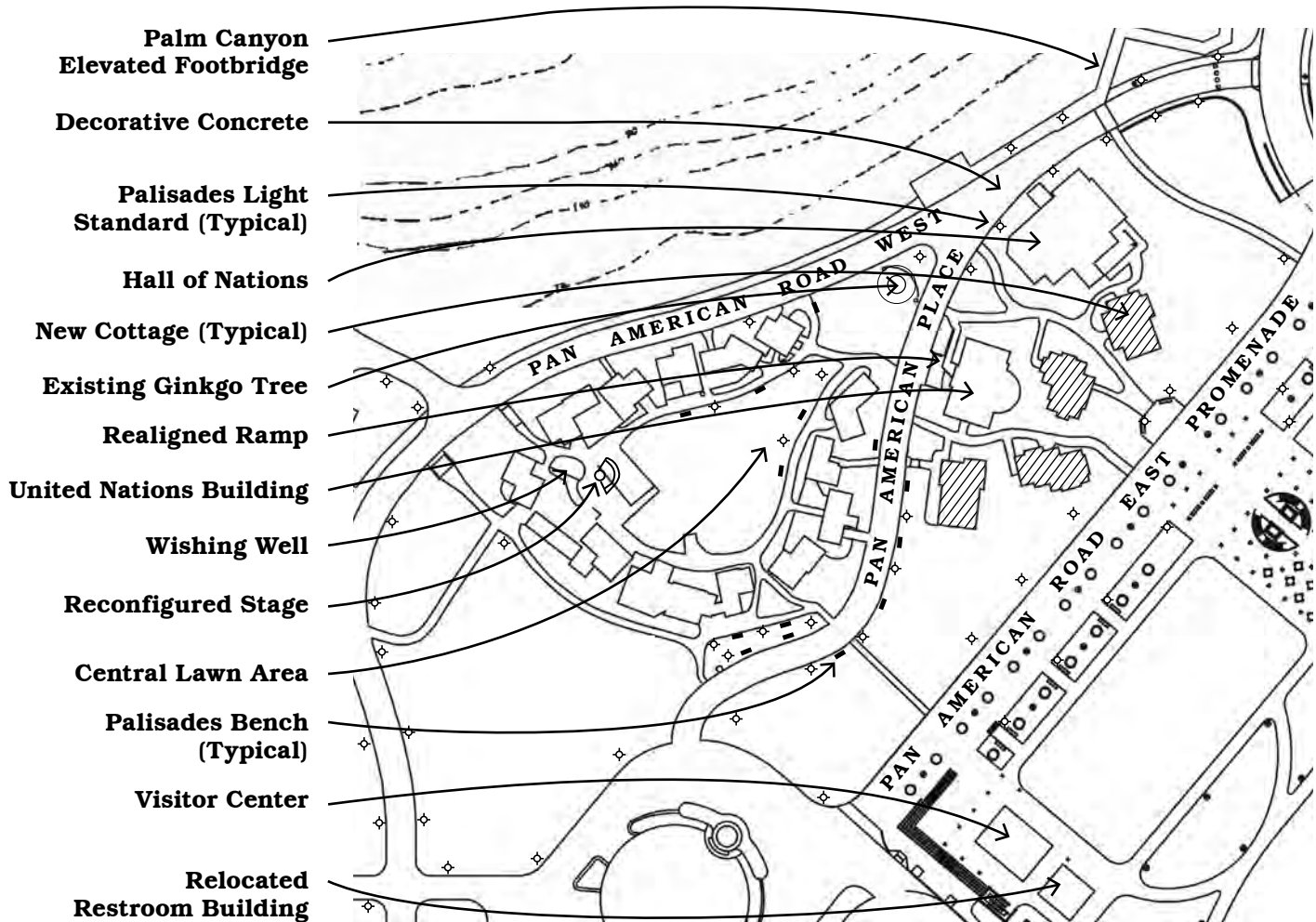
Remove the non-historic House of Japan addition and relocate the organization in one of the new cottages.



## 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.





Palisades Building / Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre

Palisades Building / Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre

100 St. Armands

100 St. Armands

100 St. Armands

100 St. Armands

# Conceptual Site Plan House of Pacific Relations

