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Subject: SAVE OUR HERITAGE ORGANISATION (SOHO) PHASED ALTERNATIVE DESIGN  
FOR THE PLAZA DE PANAMA, CIRCULATION AND PARKING PROJECT.  
BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.

Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO) is pleased to present an alternative plan that consists of a low-cost, reversible, and phased design approach for the Plaza de Panama, Circulation and Parking Project that complies with the existing Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan. Through public input and a coalition of over 20 groups and organizations, the majority of parties agree that the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan for the Plaza de Panama to remove parking for automobiles and to create a pedestrian square at the center of the public plaza to revitalize Balboa Park for pedestrian use is a good idea. The SOHO PPL plan is easily adjusted to accommodate any desired improvements to the plan. It is also completely compatible with future phases of the Central Mesa precise plan and in fact is a component thereof. The goal to remove the current 54 public parking spaces from the Plaza de Panama, including 20 Accessible spaces can best be accomplished with the SOHO Plan.

The Circulation and Parking elements of the publicly funded \$40 million proposed “Jacobs Plan” and the contemporary design elements of the Plaza de Panama to celebrate the Centennial of the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 does not have the public’s support nor the support of the 20 member coalition made up of historical societies, community & neighborhood activists, and preservation and environmental stakeholders.

The SOHO alternative plan as shown in Figure 1 for the Plaza de Panama Circulation and Parking Project has no significant adverse effects, a limited amount of proposed changes, and is reversible; therefore this alternative project could proceed without the need for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Instead, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) prepared in accordance with CEQA can be approved within 30 days of the draft MND. This short 30-day approval window would allow the first phases of the SOHO Plan to be implemented immediately after sources of funding are identified. Each phase is independent of the other and can be accomplished at the same time or separately, depending on costs.

The SOHO Plan for Circulation is to route two-way vehicular traffic along the southwest corner of the Plaza de Panama, adjacent the Mingei International Museum. A valet and passenger drop off would be provided on both sides of through traffic. In addition, a new entrance driveway would be provided from the west Esplanade going north to the Alcazar Garden parking lot. The SOHO Precise Plan lite does not call for the construction of a new two-lane roadway between the West Esplanade and the Alcazar parking lot. It only modifies the Southern exit road to accommodate two-way traffic instead of one-way traffic. The SOHO Plan for Parking will replace all 54 current parking spaces in the Plaza de Panama, including the 20 accessible spaces, by creating new public parking spaces in existing parking lots behind park institutions and streets through limited grading on relatively flat surfaces, enabling more direct access for visitors and the disabled (see Figures 2 through 4).

The SOHO plan meets the goal of converting the Plaza de Panama to pedestrian use while retaining the maximum degree of flexibility, programmability and access to all and would allow for managed traffic on the Cabrillo Bridge when appropriate or desired. All of this achieved at the lowest cost, with the least impact to the park and the national historic landmark district.

## **1.0 SOHO PLAN PHASE 1 - CIRCULATION**

The SOHO Plan for Vehicle Circulation is shown on Figure 1. Vehicle Circulation would consist of two-way vehicle traffic along the southwest corner of the Plaza de Panama, adjacent the Mingei International Museum. A Valet and passenger drop off area would be provided on both sides of through traffic for those who prefer the luxury of paid parking or for the general drop off of passengers. In addition, for visitors entering the Central Mesa from the east through President's Way, a new driveway would be provided from the West Esplanade going north connecting to the Alcazar Garden parking lot.



Figure 1 – The SOHO Plan for Vehicle Circulation would free the Plaza de Panama of parking, and the majority of traffic circulation, at minimal cost, except to restripe traffic lanes.

A total roadway width of 28 feet minimum is required to allow two-way bicycle traffic to share a road with vehicles. The East Cabrillo Bridge entrance is only 21 feet in width and currently allows shared bicycle and vehicle use. The width of the two way traffic in the West Esplanade is 27.25 feet. Alternatively bicycle lanes could also be accommodated by routing bicycle traffic on the east side of the esplanade, avoiding traffic limitation altogether in this area.

## **2.0 SOHO PLAN PHASE 2 – PLAZA DE PANAMA AND EAST ESPLANADE OPTIONS.**

Phase 2 of the SOHO Plan is to eliminate the asphalt surface in the Plaza de Panama and East Esplanade by covering the asphalt surface with concrete stabilized decomposed granite. This phase also includes options for seating areas and movable/portable furniture to allow flexibility at the public square with limited effort for exhibitions and/or special events.



### **3.0 SOHO PLAN PHASE 3 – REPLACEMENT PARKING SPACES.**

The SOHO Plan includes the replacement of the 54 parking spaces that will be removed from the Plaza de Panama, for a result of zero net parking spaces. The Replacement Parking Spaces would be created using limited grading and reconfiguration of existing parking lots behind park institutions and streets including Alcazar Garden (Figure 2), Organ Pavilion, behind MOPA and the Model Railroad Museum (Figure 3), adjacent the southern border of the San Diego Zoo (Figure 4), and Old Globe Way. A new paid parking structure is outside of the scope of the SOHO Plan.



Figure 2a – Alcazar Garden Parking Lot – Northwest corner

Relocate the Maintenance Shed to create at least two new Accessible parking spaces.



Figure 2b – Alcazar Garden Parking Lot- Southern boundary.

Relocating the Maintenance Shed closer to the Archery Range, removing parallel parking, and use of limited grading could create a row of approximately 8 new parking spaces.





Figures 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d – Parking Lot South of MOPA and the Model Railroad Museum - Reconfigure the existing parking lot and using limited grading for approximately 20 new spaces.







Figures 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d – Road and Parking Lot located at Old Globe Way, at the southern border with the San Diego Zoo, and behind the Botanical Building to create at least 24 new parking spaces to complete replacement of the 54 parking spaces lost at the Plaza de Panama from the removal of parking in the public square.





#### 4.0 SOHO PLAN PHASE 4 – ELIMINATION AND THINNING OF EUCALYPTUS TREES AT THE CABRILLO BRIDGE.

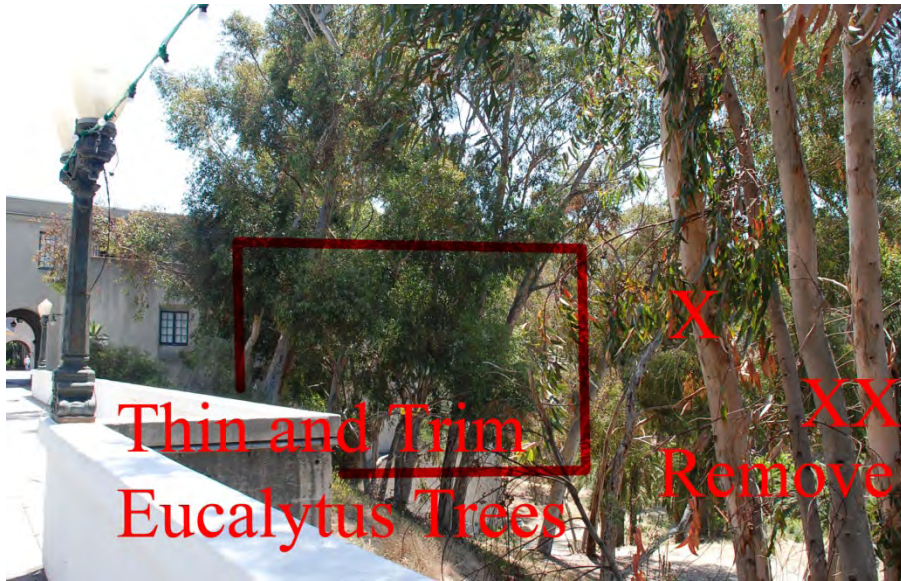


Figure 5a – Current view of the southwest façade of the California Quadrangle is obscured by a grove of Eucalyptus trees that block the historic view of a “fortified European town.” Large Eucalyptus trees are prone to falling over. Replacing Eucalyptus trees park-wide is part of the overall Balboa Park landscaping plan.



Figure 5c – Selected tree trim trimming and removal.

The issue of the Eucalyptus trees blocking the historic view of the southwest façade of the California Quadrangle is a landscaping issue that can be resolved through thinning and removal of selected trees. The trees are not a structural issue. Advocates for the Jacobs Plan have stated since the 1930s, the iconic view of the entrance to the Cabrillo Bridge has been “completely obscured by a dense wall of trees. Even long-term San Diegans are not aware that these facades exists.” Figure 5b is a historical photograph that shows where the landscaping was maintained to show the southwest building facades. Figures 5c and 5d are examples of selected Eucalyptus tree trimming and removal at the new Japanese Friendship Garden Expansion Project at Gold Gulch Canyon.

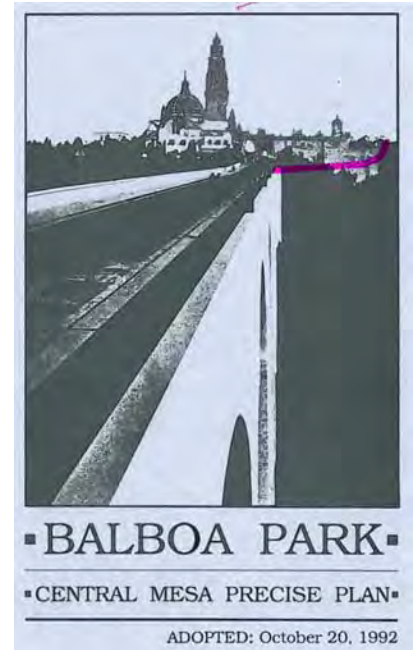


Figure 5b – Cover Page of the 1992 Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan.



Figure 5d – View to Japanese Friendship Garden.

## **5.0 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES-TAX INCREMENT AND TRANSIT OCCUPANCY TAX.**

Legal Opinion 2010-6 entitled “*Use of Redevelopment Agency Funds to Pay for Debt Service for Phase II Expansion of the San Diego Convention Center or Future Convention Center Projects,*” dated November 24, 2010; and “*Report to the Members of the Land Use and Housing Committee – Use of Redevelopment Funds for Historical Designation Incentive Programs,*” dated March 7, 2007 should be studied as the basis for allowing Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) Redevelopment Agency Tax Increment to fund improvements in contiguous areas to downtown San Diego. Balboa Park is located Contiguous to CCDC’s downtown Project Area, and is separated only by Interstate 5.

Through Redevelopment Law California Health and Safety Code Section 33445(a), Legal Opinion 2010-6 allows the use of CCDC Redevelopment Tax Increment for funding project sites contiguous to CCDC's downtown Project Area, after certain findings are made by the City Council (aka Redevelopment Agency).

City Attorney Goldsmith defined: “*“Contiguous” means “that the parcel on which the building, facility, structure, or other improvement that is publically owned is located shares a boundary with the Project Area, or is separated from the Project Area only by a public street or highway, flood control channel, waterway, railroad right-of-way, or similar feature.” California Health and Safety Code Section 33445(f).”*

The referenced legal opinion and report can be used to claim that leased buildings and property within the city-owned Balboa Park can use CCDC Redevelopment funds, especially for Historic Preservation projects such as the Plaza de Panama Circulation and Parking Project after findings are made.

Other sources of funding for Balboa Park improvements include the General Fund’s Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) (10.5 %) and the Tourist Marketing District (2 %). The purpose of the TOT is “*to advance the City’s economic health by promoting the City of San Diego as a visitor destination in the national and international marketplace, supporting programs that increase hotel occupancy and attract industry, resulting in the generation of TOT and other revenue, developing, enhancing, and maintaining visitor-related facilities, and supporting the City’s cultural amenities and natural attractions.*”

## **6.0 CYCLE ISSUES FOR PROJECT NUMBER 233958 - THE JACOBS PLAN.**

On April 20, 2011 the City of San Diego Development Services Department (DSD) under Mayor Jerry Sanders issued their first Cycle Issues report for Project Number 233958 entitled “*Balboa Park Plaza de Panama,*” also known as the Jacobs Plan.

The 25-page Cycle Issue Report prepared by the City of San Diego Development Services Department (DSD), dated April 20, 2011 for the Balboa Park Plaza de Panama project identifies many outstanding issues regarding the Jacobs Plan for a Bypass Bridge, Grade Separation, and paid Parking Structure including the following:

<http://tinyurl.com/20110420a>



- Mayor Sanders' Historic Resources staff has reviewed the project proposal for consistency with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and has found that the project is not consistent with the standards and will result in substantial alternations to the Historic Landmark District that will have an adverse impact on the resource. Therefore a Site Development Permit (SDP) will be required for the proposed project consistent with SDMC Section 143.0210(e)(2).
- The construction of the bypass bridge results in an intrusion into the district that adversely impacts the setting and feeling of the Historic District and alters Historic spatial relationships.
- The 40-foot wide Bypass Bridge from the Cabrillo Bridge to the Alcazar Garden Parking Lot has to comply with Standard commercial local streets per the city's street design manual with a parkway width of 20 feet. Therefore, the 40 foot width of the Bypass Bridge should be increased to a width to be determined.
- Staff has concerns regarding pedestrian/bicycle/vehicle conflicts at the intersection of the bypass road and El Prado. Vehicles turning onto and off the bypass road will conflict with pedestrians and cyclists continuing east and west along El Prado and the Cabrillo Bridge.
- The construction of the road necessitates substantial land form alternations through extensive grading and use of retaining walls.
- The slope at the bridge abutments are too steep to install as non-irrigated. Provide irrigated re-vegetation compatible with the Archery Range area.
- The top of the paid parking garage includes new miscellaneous retail spaces. City Staff does not support miscellaneous new commercial retail space as part of the new parking garage.
- The proposed project requires an amendment to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan, and a Site Development Permit for development on premises containing Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Historic Resources.
- The conceptual grading plan needs to have a completed grading data table with cut/fill/export quantities, and slope gradients.
- Fire access roadway plan and turn radius for fire apparatus need to be identified in accordance with FHPS Policy A-08-1.
- Access to the Archery Range appears to have been eliminated, and the Archery Range layout will be impacted. How will this be mitigated?
- In the Alcazar Garden parking lot, one public restroom and one Park and Recreation maintenance shed is being removed. Also one maintenance shed access is being hampered. Staff-only parking spaces for park maintenance need to be identified. How are the losses of these maintenance facilities being mitigated? Where are the replacement restrooms and maintenance shed being located?



- In the Alcazar Garden parking lot the southern parking aisle width is listed at 21.5 feet. A minimum aisle wide of 24 feet is required per code.
- The Alcazar Garden parking lot will generate much more noise than it does currently. This will make the Alcazar Garden a much less desirable location for weddings and similar events, which the serene Garden currently hosts. What is the mitigation for this?
- There is an existing Kauri Pine (*Agathis australis*) at the southeast corner of the House of Charm. This tree is extremely rare and valuable, and needs to be protected in place. The proposed retaining wall along the west side of the Esplanade will have a severe impact on this tree.
- A large portion of the retaining walls along the Esplanade appear to be unnecessary and may not be an appropriate addition to the National Historic Landmark District. Retaining walls and free-standing walls should be minimized.
- Large crews are required to plant Alcazar Garden 4 times a year. It takes 6 to 10 truck delivers. How will planting and maintenance activities of Alcazar Gardens be preserved?
- The Jacob tram system runs only from the Tram turn-around located at north end of the Palisades Parking lot to the Plaza de Panama. Please indicate the proposed tram route on the plans.
- The proposed Tram does not appear to address park-wide tram circulation needs. Also, the Tram turn-around unnecessarily impacts 24 existing accessible and standard parking spaces, usable turf/open space, and Palm trees.
- The route of the park tram must be accommodated to the West Mesa. How will the tram route be extended to the West Mesa?
- Where are the new Bus and Limousine drop off areas for weddings and special events?
- Staff supports keeping the existing fountain in its current location in the Plaza de Panama. Staff does not support vertical water jets.
- The new restroom located at the top floor of the proposed paid parking structure is located too far, approximately 400 feet, from the Organ Pavilion.
- The rooftop garden design needs to incorporate maintenance vehicle access. Maintenance vehicles need to access lighting, restrooms, information center, elevators, etc. The same access should also be provided for event related vehicle access.
- A transportation impact analysis is required to analyze the impact of any additional trips and redistribution of existing trips due to this development on the nearby intersections, street segments, and freeways. This study should also discuss and analyze the existing versus proposed parking in terms of numbers, type and location of spaces, including the proposed Valet parking operations, and the impact of potential paid parking.



## 7.0 VISUAL IMPACTS OF THE JACOBS PLAN.

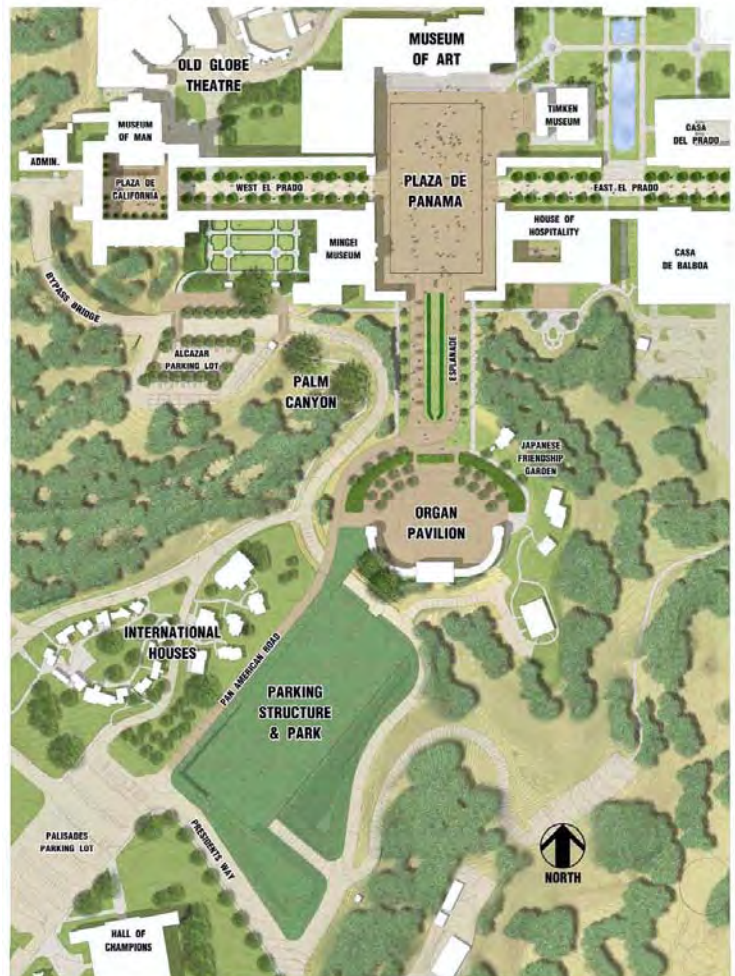
Although a public controversy exists, the original designs for the \$40 million Jacobs Plan of a Bypass Bridge, Grade Separation, and a paid Parking Structure behind the Organ Pavilion have not changed or utilized any public comment. The Heritage Architecture and Planning (HAP) report to the City of San Diego, Historical Resources Board entitled “*Balboa Park Plaza de Panama, Circulation & Parking Structure Project*,” dated January 13, 2011 (HAP Project No. #10031) depicts the many great visual impacts of the Jacobs Plan including the reclamation of the full Plaza de Panama, West El Prado, Plaza de California, and the Esplanade areas for pedestrian use only. In addition, paid parking will be introduced to Balboa Park with the construction of a new three-level subterranean parking structure, which includes a new 2-acre roof top park.

Image 1 from the HAP report, shows the Jacobs Plan for the Plaza de Panama Circulation and Parking Structure. Structural elements include a new Bypass Bridge off the Cabrillo Bridge, reroute traffic just east of Palm Canyon with the use of retaining walls to a maximum height of 20 feet, construct a three-level paid parking structure with a roof top park land, and divert traffic to the east side of the parking structure. Image 7 shows the banning of through-traffic, and restoration of the Plaza de California, El Prado, Plaza de Panama, Esplanade, and the Pan American Road to pedestrian use and park use only.

Image 31 from the HAP report shows the new 3-level parking structure with 2-acre roof top park. With thru-traffic on Presidents Way being diverted to the east side of the parking structure, with Grade Separations for vehicle traffic under Pan American Road. A total of 2,600 feet of new retaining/cribs walls are planned, including maximum cut and fill slopes of 30 and 25 feet.



**Image 7:** Conceptual bird's eye rendering of the rehabilitated Plaza de Panama, looking southeast, showing the option of new trees. (Note: The paving grid will not be done.)



**Image 1:** Overall concept plan view of the proposed project.

Image 1 from the HAP report does not include the proposed Tram Turn-Around at the Palisades Parking lot which unnecessarily impacts 24 existing accessible and standard parking spaces, usable turf/open space, and Palm trees south of the International Houses.



**Image 31:** Rendered aerial view of the proposed park atop the parking structure.



Image 19 from the HAP report, shows the view of the California Quadrangle looking northeast. Including the proposed Bypass Bridge from the Cabrillo Bridge Abutment to the Alcazar Gardens Parking Lot.

*“The entrance was approached across a long bridge across a canyon up to what appears to be a fortified European town - - the California and Fine Arts building dominate the view.” -*  
Bertham Goodhue

Mayor Sanders’ Historic staff has determined that the construction of the bypass bridge results in an intrusion into the district that adversely impacts the setting and feeling of the Historic District and alters Historic spatial relationships.

Image 15 from the HAP report, showed mature trees, but not the view of the proposed Bypass Bridge.

The new Bypass Bridge and column supports in pink from Cabrillo Bridge to Alcazar Gardens are superimposed on Image 15.

Goodhue’s plan to depict the approach to a *“fortified European town”* is interrupted.

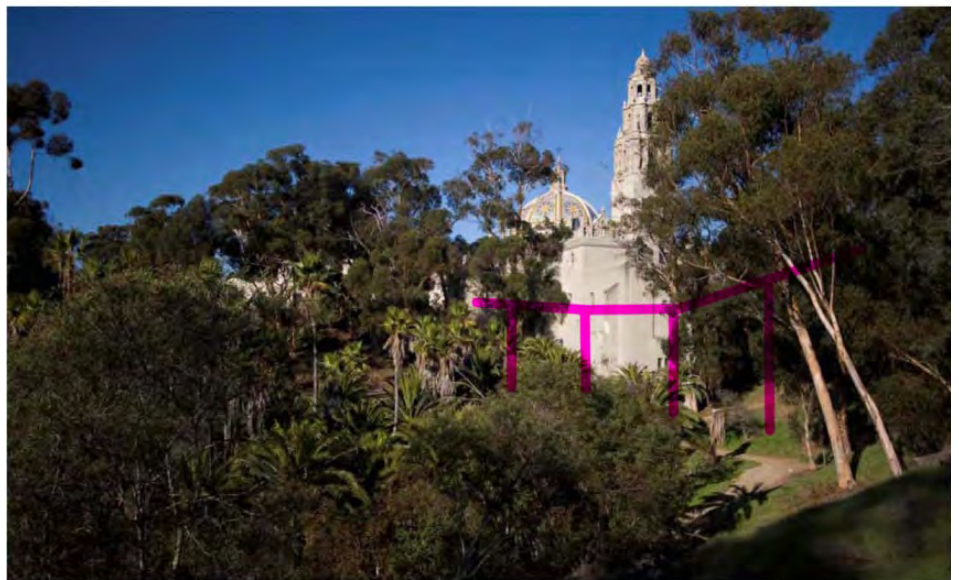
Image 12 from the HAP report, showing the location along the Cabrillo Bridge Abutment where changes are proposed in red, but does not include the Bypass Bridge.

Therefore, the proposed Bypass Bridge and column supports from Cabrillo Bridge to Alcazar Gardens are superimposed on the HAP Image 12 in pink.

SOHO contends that any bridge across the southwest façade is unacceptable and is contrary to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.



**Image 18:** Conceptual bird’s eye rendering, looking northeast, showing the bypass bridge and related abutments. This drawing shows the general size and location of the bridge.



.Images 15 and 12 from the HAP report.

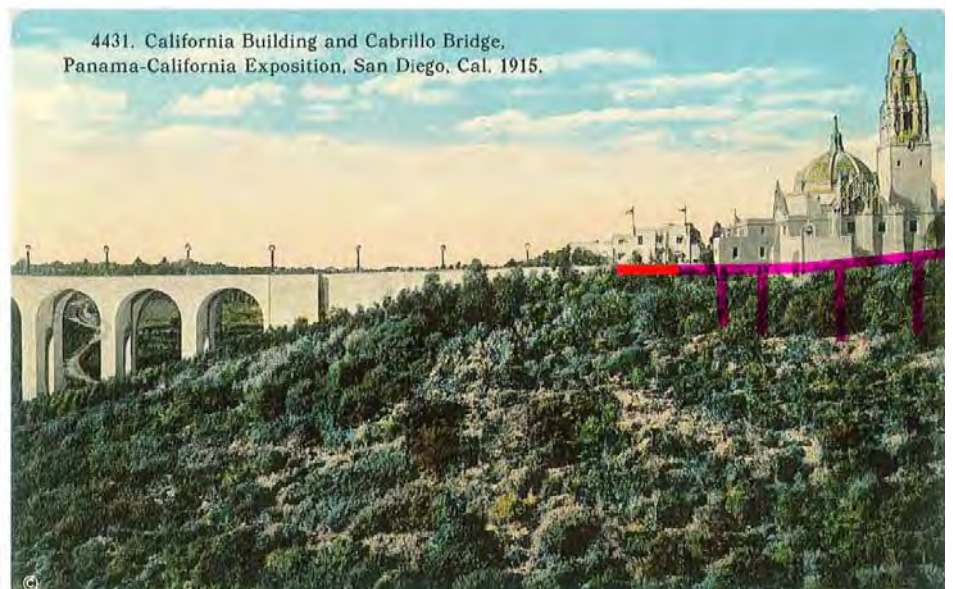






Figure 6 – Proposed Bypass Bridge and Abutments, east side of Cabrillo Bridge to Alcazar Parking Lot.

Figure 6 is a depiction from SOHO of the proposed Bypass Bridge and abutments at the east side of the Cabrillo Bridge, showing two-way traffic blocking the iconic view of the California Quadrangle

Figures 7 and 8 show the approximately location of the proposed new two-way vehicle access Grade Separation road from the Alcazar Garden parking lot, along the east side of Palm Canyon, ending at the proposed three-level paid parking structure. Plans for the Grade Separation include approximately 2,600 linear feet of retaining walls and crib walls, with maximum cut and fill slopes of 30 and 25 feet respectively.

The new walls, up to 20 feet in height, are required to create a Grade Separation and vehicle roadway from the Alcazar Garden Parking lot, through the east side of Palm Canyon, under Pan American Road, to a new subterranean entrance to the proposed 3-level parking structure.

The new Grade Separation road under Pan American Road would include the removal of the public restroom west of the Organ Pavilion, and turf/open space at the northeast corner of the International Cottages. Thus removing areas where additional International Cottages could be located in the future adjacent the Organ Pavilion.



Figures 7 and 8

