

From: [Chena Popper](#) on behalf of [Michael W. Hager](#)
To: [DSD EAS](#)
Cc: [Lightner, Councilmember Sherri](#); [Faulconer, Council Member Kevin](#); [Councilmember Todd Gloria](#); [Young, Anthony](#); [DeMaio, Councilmember Carl](#); [Zapp, Council Member Lorie](#); [Emerald, Councilmember Marti](#); [Alvarez, Council Member David](#); info@plazadepanama.org
Date: Thursday, March 01, 2012 3:37:54 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

March 1, 2012

E. Shearer-Nguyen, Environmental Planner
City of San Diego Development Services Center
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear E. Shearer-Nguyen,

I am writing to you concerning the Plaza de Panama EIR on behalf of the San Diego Natural History Museum. In doing so, I am expressing the view of the majority of the 30 members of our Board of Directors, 120 staff members, and our Museum membership of approximately 8000.

The Natural History Museum is located on the East Prado which has been closed to automobile traffic since the 1970's. The pedestrian plaza around the Bea Evenson Fountain is always filled with children, families and park visitors enjoying the Park without automobile traffic. It would be unthinkable to return it to automobile use, as it was prior to the 70's, and like the West Prado is today.

Our Museum has followed the Plaza de Panama project from the beginning because of the positive visitor experience that will be possible with the removal of cars from the cultural core of the Park. We have studied the various alternatives and believe that closure of the Cabrillo Bridge would be extremely harmful to the cultural institutions that rely on visitors to stay in business and it would be detrimental to the nearly 50% of visitors that enter the Park from the west. We also believe closure of the Cabrillo Bridge would adversely impact businesses and residents on the west side who are already impacted with traffic and parking.

The alternative that allows cars on the West Prado and through the corner of the Plaza de Panama is also not acceptable to us because it would not allow full pedestrian use of the Plaza de California, the West Prado and a portion of the Plaza de Panama. It will also lead to more congestion as cars and people attempt to use the same space. The East Prado, which we currently enjoy free of cars, should be the model for the West Prado as well.

The Plaza da Panama project, as proposed, would restore 6.3 acres to pedestrian use and greatly improve visitor experience in Balboa Park. It provides the opportunity to restore the historic fabric to the Park but also maintains access from both sides of the park and increases parking. This balance is critical to the continued success of the 26 cultural institutions in Balboa Park.

Balboa Park is also a place of community use for large events such as December Nights and we

anticipate huge crowds for the 2015 Centennial Celebration. The cultural core of Balboa Park needs more space for people and less automobile traffic. That will be accomplished by the Plaza de Panama project as proposed.

The San Diego Natural History Museum strongly supports the Plaza de Panama project and finds all other alternatives inadequate.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Hager, Ph.D.

President & CEO

San Diego Natural History Museum

Now open for the first time in San Diego: Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition!

Phone: 619.255.0216

Fax: 619.232.0248

Email: mhager@sdnhm.org

Mailing address: PO Box 121390, San Diego, CA 92112-1390

Street address: 1788 El Prado, San Diego, CA 92101

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