Restoring the Palisades

Three years ago our board of directors decided to concentrate our efforts in Balboa Park's Palisades. Today's Automotive Museum building and Municipal Gymnasium lost their temporary ornamentation early on. Never before has there been an attempt to restore these buildings to their 1935 appearance, despite a Master Plan and Precise Plan calling for restoration of the Palisades buildings and the Pan American Plaza—now an unsightly parking lot. The Plaza should be reborn as a beautiful, public space with state-of-the-art fountain on the site of the 1935 Firestone Singing Fountains. We have begun design work for reconstruction of the missing Maya-style ornamentation on the Auto Museum building, which will look much as it did during the 1935 exposition.

The Committee of One Hundred envisions a restored Palisades as an important step in making Balboa Park into a world-class destination.

Mike Kelly
president@c100.org

San Diego Automotive Museum Tile Project

The Committee of One Hundred was recently awarded a matching grant from The Parker Foundation to support this project. Donations from new donors—and donors who have not donated in the past 18 months—will be matched dollar for dollar. Thus $125 will buy a $250 border tile; $250 will buy a $500 tile. Donors will be recognized with their name or message—see link below.

Donor recognition will continue, even after we've raised enough funds for the tiles. Additional funds will be allocated to the reconstruction of the Maya-style ornamentation that originally graced this building in 1935 for the California Pacific International Exposition.

Buy-A-Tile

Donate online or mail check to:
Committee of 100, 1649 El Prado, Suite 2, San Diego CA 92101
http://c100.org/murals.php
Balboa Park After Dark: A New Fun Zone for San Diego
by Roger Showley

Anyone who has traveled abroad—or to American centers of urban activity, like New Orleans, Times Square and Miami’s South Beach—invariably comes home raving about the sidewalk cafes, public markets, street entertainers and nighttime lights and bands. The European Christmas markets, the Middle Eastern and North African souks, the Asian and Latin American public squares offer examples to

But come 5 p.m. things in the park close down and the crowds disappear. It’s like many cities’ central business districts where office workers depart for home and the streets and buildings are left behind quiet and lifeless.

Perhaps the biggest potential space for evening activation is the Pan-American Plaza. Most of the time it serves as an asphalt parking lot for 240 cars. How many more people could enjoy the Pan-American Plaza's international cottages quiet at night. Photo by Roger Showley

It’s the space between the buildings that offers new opportunities for what planners call “activation”—turning passive, unassigned squares, plazas, parks and sidewalks into active, lively nodes where people eat, drink, and dance or watch performers on the public stages around them. The goals are no secret: bring more people to a place more often and make the experience so memorable and enjoyable that they extend their stay. That explains the vibrancy of Little Italy, the vibe of Pacific Beach, the electricity of Avenida Revolución in Tijuana or the crush of people on Fifth Avenue in the Gaslamp Quarter.

If Starlight Bowl springs back to life, a year-round slate of events could bring new visitors to the Palisades area. And don’t forget what a jolt of activation will come when the Comic-Con Museum opens in the Federal Building. It will be a popular culture venue that is sure to draw hundreds of thousands a year to exhibitions and special events—at night as well during daylight hours. Its planners are already thinking of ways to extend the experience beyond the walls of the building.

American cities that so often overregulate or misuse the public realm that they have ruled out spontaneity and joy. And somehow these other places draw visitors who find a way to get there without insisting on guaranteed free parking ten feet from the front door. Imagine the abundant opportunities in San Diego’s cultural crown jewel. Balboa Park isn’t just about beautiful buildings, lush gardens and carefully curated collections. It’s also about places and people—nearly 1,200 acres of land where residents and tourists make memories on every visit.

Balboa Park's international cottages quiet at night. Photo by Roger Showley

Plaza space reconfigured with landscaping, a monumental fountain and outdoor dining?

The existing institutions could capitalize on this opportunity to expand their own food and beverage operations into these public spaces and share a sample of their collections—with more to see inside.

It just takes some entrepreneurial minded museum directors and the City of San Diego to allow them to expand their leaseholds in exchange for a share of the gross revenue.

In short, Balboa Park could be transformed into San Diego’s most happening place.

Activation of outdoor spaces

Old Town Square in Prague. Photo by Roger Showley
The Committee of One Hundred
for the Preservation of Spanish Colonial Architecture in Balboa Park

1649 El Prado, Suite 2
San Diego, CA 92101

Murals were gone in this WWII photo of California State Building.


*Donations of the last year are listed here.

Donate directly from your IRA: If you are 71 or older, you may avoid income tax on your Required Minimum Distribution by making a donation directly to a non-profit. Just have a check sent directly from your retirement fund to The Committee of One Hundred. Please consult your accountant or tax advisor.