

For Immediate Release:

Statement from the Plaza de Panama Committee

San Diego, CA - April 18, 2019 – With great sorrow, the Plaza de Panama (PdP) Committee today notified the City that it is terminating the public-private Cooperation Agreement approved 8-1 by the City Council in 2016 given that the low bid for the construction contract exceeded the \$75 million maximum contract amount authorized by the City Council. Previously, in 2012, the Council had approved by a 7-1 vote a similar public-private agreement intended to complete the project in time for centennial celebration of the 1915 Panama California Exposition. In both cases following the vote, the project was delayed by lawsuits, ultimately decisively won by the City and the Committee. In both council approvals, the PdP project was strongly supported by District 3 Councilperson Todd Gloria, whose district includes Balboa Park, and by substantially all of the Park Institutions.

The PdP project when complete would remove all vehicles from the Plaza de California, West El Prado, Plaza de Panama, Esplanade, and Pan American Road and replace the asphalt parking lot behind the Organ Pavilion with an underground 3 level garage topped by a landscaped park, together adding approximately six acres of car-free parkland and 350 parking spaces in the core of the park.

To proceed with the project at this time, the Committee with the mayor's support did investigate implementing the PdP project in two stages, with the first remaining a public-private program and the second philanthropic only. The first stage would implement the entire plan except leaving unchanged, other than the absence of cars, the surfaces of the existing plazas, roads, and Esplanade and limiting landscaping upgrades to the rooftop park lawn. The second stage would accomplish the remainder of the project. The first stage was designed to be completed for under the contract limits imposed by the City Council.

The mayor and the Committee planned to bring the two-stage plan to the City Council for approval of the revised plan. First, however, the Committee felt it important to again gain the support of the District 3 Councilperson. Unfortunately, we were unable to gain the support of Councilperson Chris Ward. In view of his lack of support, the Committee reluctantly voted to terminate the Cooperation Agreement.

About: The Plaza de Panama Committee is a 501c3 non-profit established to create visionary and transformational vehicle free spaces in Balboa Park and improve access and parking.