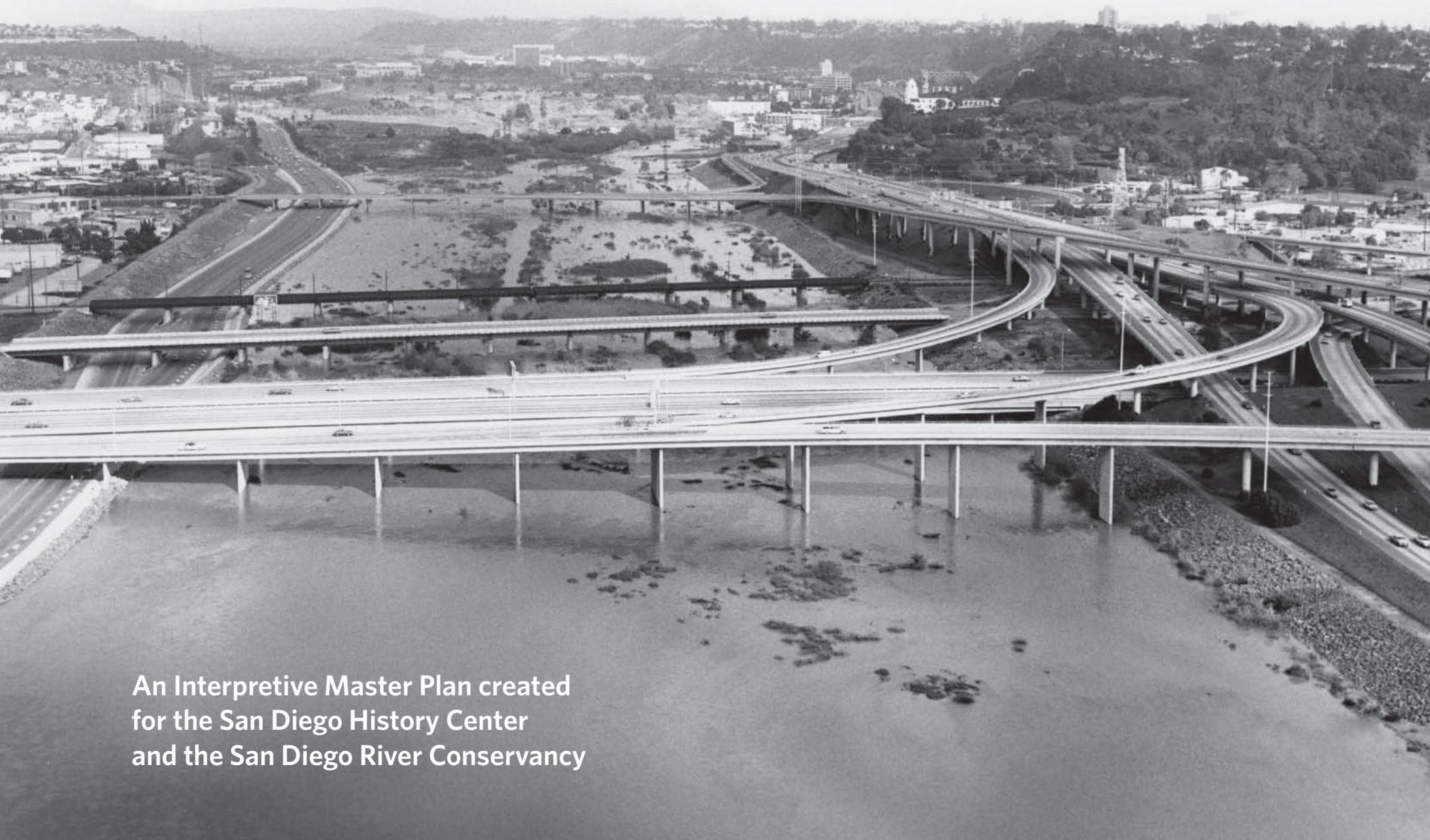
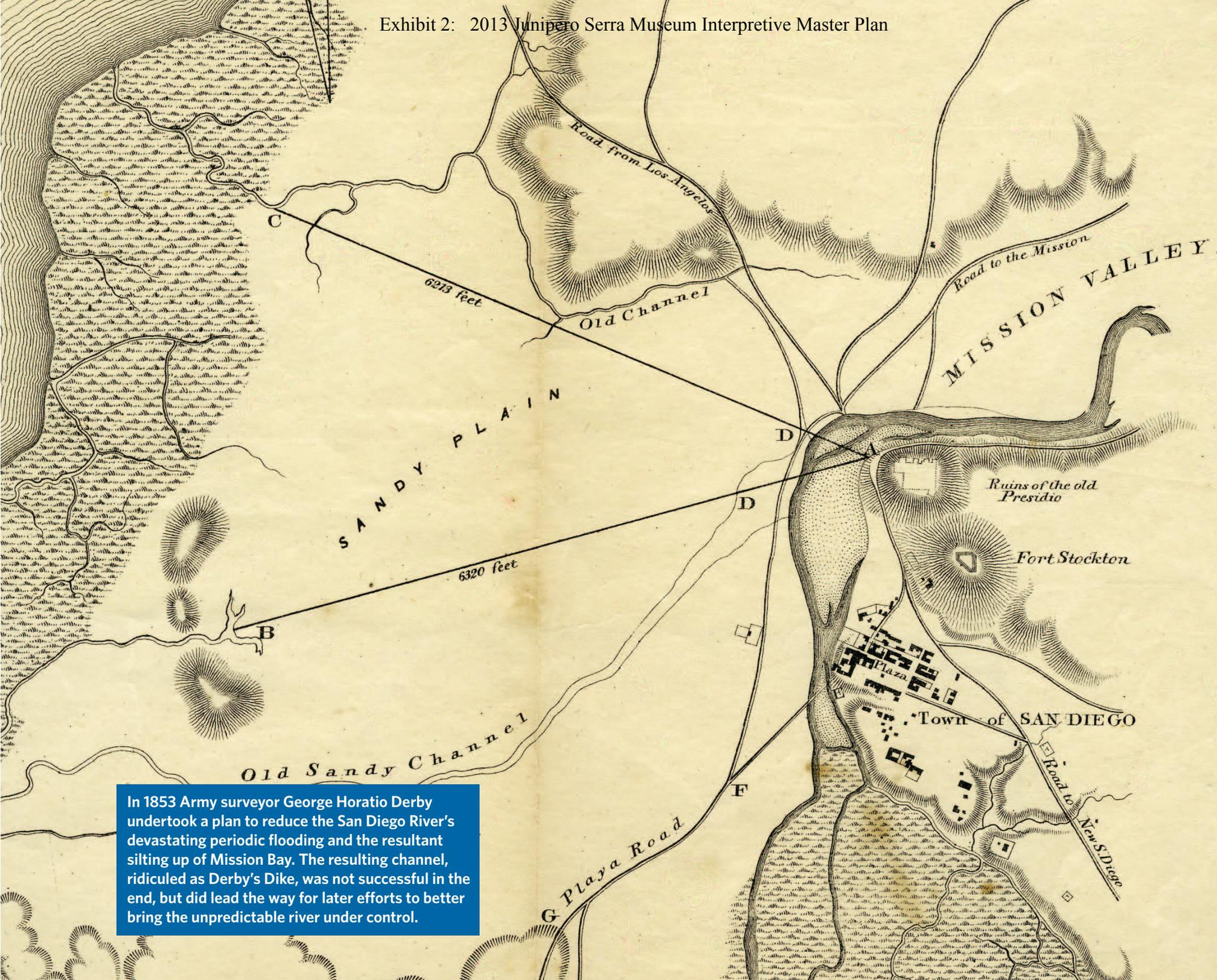


THE JUNÍPERO SERRA MUSEUM



An Interpretive Master Plan created
for the San Diego History Center
and the San Diego River Conservancy



In 1853 Army surveyor George Horatio Derby undertook a plan to reduce the San Diego River's devastating periodic flooding and the resultant silting up of Mission Bay. The resulting channel, ridiculed as Derby's Dike, was not successful in the end, but did lead the way for later efforts to better bring the unpredictable river under control.

THE JUNÍPERO SERRA MUSEUM

**An Interpretive Master Plan created
for the San Diego History Center
and the San Diego River Conservancy**

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Presidio Hill, with the existing Spanish ruins, 1874

THE JUNÍPERO SERRA MUSEUM

A New Interpretive Vision
San Diego History Center
San Diego, California



George Marston dedicating the Serra Museum on July 16, 1929

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Removing the Presidio Hill Reservoir, 1925

Exhibit 2: 2013 Junipero Serra Museum Interpretive Master Plan

ADVISORY BOARD

Many of the approaches presented in this volume derive from content and discussion generated at highly successful workshops hosted by the San Diego History Center in June and October, 2012.

Over multiple days C&G Partners' team met with SDHC board members and a carefully selected team of urban planners, geologists, historians, archaeologists and other valuable stakeholders from within the greater San Diego community. We wish to thank this dedicated group for their vision and commitment to bringing a new vision for the Junipero Serra Museum forward.

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John Nolen's 1927 Plan for Presidio Hill Park

PRESIDIO HILL PARK
SAN DIEGO-CALIFORNIA
PREPARED FOR
GEORGE W. MARSTON
1927

SCALE
ONE INCH EQUALS FIFTY FEET

Exhibit 2: 2013 Junipero Serra Museum Interpretive Master Plan

THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

The San Diego River Conservancy was established by an act of the California Legislature (AB 2156, Kehoe) to preserve, restore and enhance the San Diego River Area. The Conservancy is a new, independent, non-regulatory agency within the Resources Agency of the State of California. The Conservancy's 13 member Governing Board consists of both state and local representatives, creating a partnership which reflects the diversity and dedication to conserving this highly valued resource of statewide significance.

As an independent government agency our mission, the restoration and conservation of the San Diego River Area, is accomplished by (1) acquiring, managing and conserving land; and (2) protecting or providing recreational opportunities, open space, wildlife species and habitat, wetlands, water quality, natural flood conveyance, historical/cultural resources, and educational opportunities. One important Conservancy goal is to build, in conjunction with our partners, a River-long park and hiking trail stretching fifty-two miles from the River's headwaters near Julian to the Pacific Ocean.

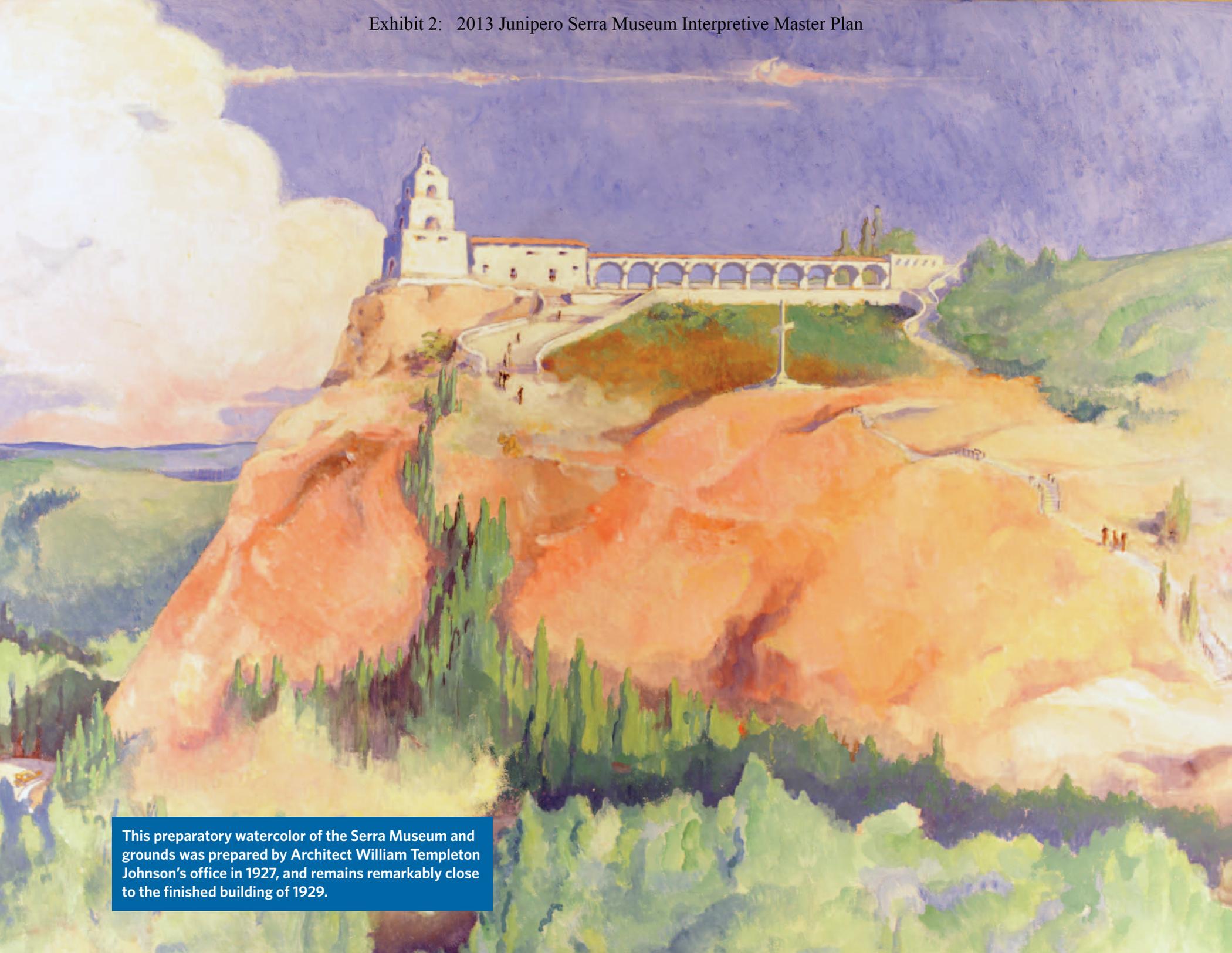
BOARD

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Ann Miller Haddad	Public at Large: Appointed by the Governor
Andrew Poat	Public at Large: Appointed by the Governor
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Gary Strawn (non-voting)	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

STAFF

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The San Diego River Conservancy governing board is comprised of 13 members, 11 voting and 2 non-voting members who are appointed or are designated by virtue of the office they hold: local, state and federal. The Conservancy has no power of condemnation or authority over city zoning law.



This preparatory watercolor of the Serra Museum and grounds was prepared by Architect William Templeton Johnson's office in 1927, and remains remarkably close to the finished building of 1929.

MASTER PLANNING TEAM OVERVIEW

Led by Partners Keith Helmetag, Jonathan Alger, Maya Kopytman and Amy Siegel, C&G Partners is recognized for communication design that expresses valuable ideas across multiple media. Clients who aspire to clarity, distinction and memorability are drawn to the firm's heritage of designing iconic, timeless solutions. By integrating interdisciplinary practice areas – exhibits and environments, branding and print design, interactive media and websites, and signage and wayfinding – we ensure that each user experience expresses our client's vision and key messages with equally high levels of focus and creativity.

The firm has a long tradition of planning and designing content-rich exhibits. CGP's history-based commissions include the American Institute of Architects 150th Anniversary, the National D-Day Museum, and the Star Spangled Banner at the National Museum of American History. Major scientific installations encompass a vast expansion and renovation of the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles; NOAA's Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples, Florida; the New York Hall of Science's *kidpower!*, while experiences created for the Serra of American Finance on Wall Street; the Erie Canal Harbor Project in Buffalo, New York; the Nemours Mansion & Gardens Visitor Center in Wilmington, Delaware speak to the firm's cultural interests.

The firm's recent masterplanning efforts include a comprehensive study for the historic Maryland State House in Annapolis, currently being implemented over a two-year phase; a NEH-funded master plan for the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin; and a wayfinding and interpretive study for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad, for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Scenic Byways Program.

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The Junipero Serra Museum under construction, 1928

Averett
STUDIO
15784-2

INTRODUCTION

The San Diego History Center (SDHC) was founded in 1929 by philanthropist George Marston at the Junípero Serra Museum, erected on the site of the founding of Alta California in 1769 by a delegation of Spanish missionaries, soldiers and colonists. Originally called the San Diego Historical Society, the organization spent more than 50 years headquartered in the Serra Museum, before relocating to its flagship location in Balboa Park. An enduring symbol of the city from its heyday of progress and growth, the Serra has remained under the stewardship of the History Center and City of San Diego for nearly 85 years, offering exhibitions, public events and school programs that serve the San Diego and visitor community.

The Serra remains an iconic landmark – generations of families continue to trek up to Presidio Hill for the compelling views across Mission Bay to Point Loma and beyond, and for the spell of its architecture. One of the city’s foremost photo venues, the Serra is regularly visited by bridal groups and amateur shutterbugs. With its evocative interior space the Serra Museum has also become a coveted location for weddings and private events. Yet most of these visitors have little notion of the complex history and archaeological heritage that lies just below the verdant grass.

The city of San Diego, in many ways, has grown up around the Serra. The nonstop construction and urban expansion of the second half of the 20th century effectively isolated Presidio Park from much of the city’s daily life. Yet the Serra Museum continues to preside over its environs, overlooking Old Town and the ever-flowing traffic of Interstates 8 and 5.

The time has come for the Serra Museum to reassert its rightful position as one of San Diego’s most beloved landmarks, and for Presidio Park (a National Register Landmark) to again be appropriately recognized as a heritage site of national importance.

SDHC has, for the last three years, undertaken a strategic partnership with the San Diego River Conservancy to achieve these goals, centering a suite of state-of-the-art exhibits on San Diego’s early history around the San Diego River and the nearly 200-year effort to bring much-needed water to the citizens, farmers and industries of our arid paradise. These exhibits will draw from the History Center’s incomparable collection of artifacts, historical documents, films and photographs, along with the contemporary voices of ecologists, urban planners, anthropologists and historians, adding contemporary contexts and perspective. The plan also updates the Serra’s classroom facilities to better fulfill and expand upon our educational mission, while outlining a more active role in local communities and perspectives. Equally important, the plan strongly advocates for physical repairs and enhancements that can bring the Serra more fully into the 21st century as a public building, while preserving its iconic architecture.

This Interpretive Master Plan is a major step forward in our institutional partnership with the San Diego River Conservancy, and has emerged from a fruitful collaboration between the creative consulting team of C&G Partners, a robust community advisory committee, and dedicated History Center staff and Trustees. While this plan will continue to be refined by the History Center and its partners going forward, we offer it to the wider community to underscore our commitment to rejuvenating the Serra, elevating its cultural significance, and bringing our city’s history vividly to life for future generations. We stand closer than we ever have to fully realizing George Marston’s founding vision: the time is ripe for the Junípero Serra Museum to once again take its place among our most cherished public treasures.



Charlotte Cagan
Executive Director



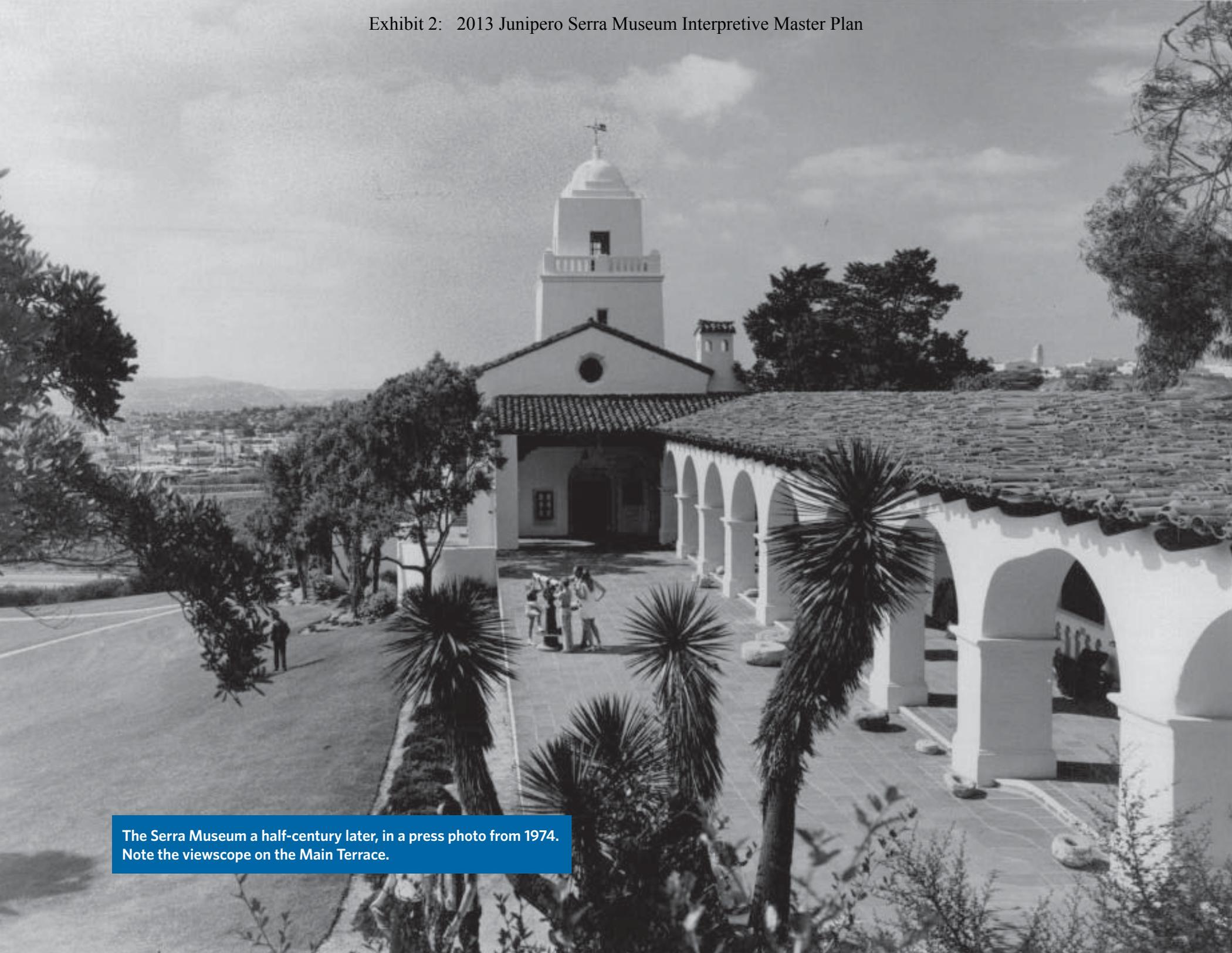
Serra Museum Dedication, seen from
Juan Street in Old Town, July 16, 1929

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Interpretive plan sets forth goals that the San Diego History Center has long sought to realize. Today, with the continued advocacy of the San Diego River Conservancy and the support and guidance of the project's Advisory Board, these goals are positioned to be realized and exceeded, from the framework that follows. These include:

- A restoration of many of the Serra's interior spaces and their layouts that thoughtfully evoke their spare, opening day elegance
- A centering of exhibits around the unifying theme of the San Diego River and the continued management of this precious resource
- Ensuring that Presidio Hill receives proper recognition as one of the key archaeological heritage sites in California, and that Presidio Park celebrated as one of the City's great public spaces
- Interpretation of the Serra Museum itself, both as an architectural marvel and as one of the great surviving early buildings of the Mission Revival Style in Southern California
- A tribute to philanthropist (and SDHC founder) George Marston, who wedded characteristic Golden State optimism with a vision for real social progress: and then brought the country's greatest architects, planners and horticulturalists together to realize it
- A temporary and changing exhibition gallery that reflects the many distinctive voices and perspectives of San Diego's vibrant ethnic and social communities
- An improved and expanded educational curricula that provides unforgettable experiences for younger visitors and their teachers, while moving beyond existing paradigms for teaching history
- Well-planned renovations and enhancements that can better preserve the Serra as a physical structure, modernize its amenities, and provide access for all visitors
- An operating plan that expands Museum hours, staff, and oversight as part of a robust expansion of its institutional culture





The Serra Museum a half-century later, in a press photo from 1974. Note the viewscope on the Main Terrace.

BACKGROUND

On July 16, 1929, seventy-eight year-old George White Marston, San Diego's leading merchant, reformer, and philanthropist, presided over the daylong dedication of his Junípero Serra Museum and Presidio Park. It was a triumphant conclusion to Marston's twenty-two years of patient work to privately buy, develop, and preserve the land at the site of the first Spanish foothold in what would become California. One hundred and sixty years earlier, separate Spanish forces, one from the sea and two from the land, had met near the bay of San Diego and encamped on high ground at the southwest corner of the San Diego River valley. On July 16, 1769, the Franciscan missionary Fray Junípero Serra had blessed the site as the first mission in Alta California while the soldiers established the first presidio, or fort. A subscriber to the romantic myth about Spain's colonial empire in the New World – so pervasive in the early twentieth century – Marston conceived of the new park and its museum as tributes to those valiant Spaniards and the arrival of European civilization and Christianity.

The building is concrete with white stucco walls, tile roof, and rough-hewn open timber ceilings. The large Main Gallery evokes the feeling of entering the nave of an old Spanish church with its red tile floors, plain white walls, high beam ceiling, and clerestory type windows. An open terrace surrounds the building and provides views of Mission Valley and the mountains to the east, Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the outlying mesas to the north. A long arcade, partly covered by an open arched portico, vividly recalls the architecture of the original California missions. From its opening in 1929, the Serra Museum served as the nascent home of the San Diego Historical Society, founded by Marston, and was the Society's home and principal exhibit space for more than 50 years. The Society, now the San Diego History Center (SDHC), moved its collections and administration to Balboa Park in 1982, while continuing operation of the Serra Museum by an agreement with the City which continues to this day.

The Junípero Serra Museum remains the finest example of Mission Revival architecture in San Diego. A truly beautiful structure with an appealing simplicity of design and resolute character, it reflects the strong cultural sense of Spanish colonials who had a firm understanding of their place in the world and their duty in life. Its architect, William Templeton Johnson, wrote of his work that "the Junípero Serra Museum is designed in close sympathy with the spirit of the architecture of the missions, [which] all had thick walls and simple masses, and a sturdiness and frankness in design which gave them much charm." Johnson considered it among his finest achievements, and architectural historians since have repeatedly agreed with his judgment.

It remains a vital priority to give the architecture and grounds the detailed attention that a site of such historical importance requires. In 2010, Trustees of SDHC, in partnership and with support from the San Diego River Conservancy (SDRC), initiated efforts to create a comprehensive interpretive Master Plan that centers the region's history around the San Diego River – a life-giving resource for tribal groups in this region for millennia, long before the arrival of Spain's religious and military colonizers, and its later role as the American West's first major seaport – while honoring George Marston's still-stunning philanthropic efforts, his lasting vision for the City of San Diego and the institution it sponsored, and the region's compelling history and cultural ecology.

The Junípero Serra Museum remains among the finest examples of Mission Revival architecture in California

THE SERRA MUSEUM AND THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

The San Diego River watershed in the Cuyamaca Mountains, seen from the air., April 9, 1931

ERIC
8076

THE SERRA MUSEUM & THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

In 2010 the San Diego History Center and the San Diego River Conservancy began to formulate how the Junipero Serra Museum might serve as a key interpretation point to study the ecological and human history of the San Diego River over time. The proposed exhibits would in turn refresh and modernize the Serra and its interpretive approaches, while drawing more public attention to the historic and cultural importance of the San Diego River and the Presidio site, and to the stewardship and conservation efforts ongoing today. Updating the Serra to focus on the ecological and cultural resources of the River will help SDRC address one of its statutory obligations to protect and interpret cultural and historical resources of the River. This interpretive master plan is the culmination of that effort, and will advance that partnership going forward.

The Serra's location near the flood-plain of what is arguably the State's most historic river makes an ideal focal point for interpreting the story of water in San Diego. Educating the public about its ecological and cultural significance within the framework of California's past, from prehistory to today, can frame a far wider cultural ecology.

This collaboration between SDHC and the San Diego River Conservancy seeks to present a fresh new vision for the Serra's exhibits – using current technologies, ecological timelines and the vast archival resources of SDHC itself – to tell a much more comprehensive and multi-faceted story of the city. This effort is guided by a wider, targeted Advisory Board, comprised of noted local historians, emeritus professors, urban planners, archaeologists and scientists, as well as representatives from other local advocacy groups, chief among them the San Diego River Park Foundation, who are also engaging in parallel efforts to create a Visitor Center nearby and several interpretive zones along the course of the river itself. The goal is to synthesize these efforts wherever possible.

The Plan will also benefit from the results of a related collaboration involving the History Center, San Diego State University, the San Francisco Estuary Institute, and the Balboa Park Online Collaborative, aimed at developing software capable of combining visualizations of historical data created by historical ecologists and those created by history museums to enhance public understanding of the past – and in particular, the process of change over time. These programs are also supported by recent California State Water Bond Measures.

The goals of the new Serra Museum exhibits are to make the insights of historical ecology accessible to students and the general public through an interdisciplinary method that educates and entertains. The Plan will inform people that human culture and the environment are in a continuous dialogue and that this relationship between people and landscape should be viewed holistically. In sum, with the completion of relevant research and creation of this Plan to guide the development of compelling new visitor experiences, the Serra has the potential to become a vibrant cultural attraction in San Diego – one that can help fulfill the educational missions of both the History Center and SDRC while providing enjoyable experiences for a wide range of visitors, and enhancing the enormous historical importance of the site.

Presidio Park found itself at the center of San Diego's massive growth in population and urban infrastructure during the 1960s and 1970s

PRESERVING AN ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL

PRESERVING AN ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL

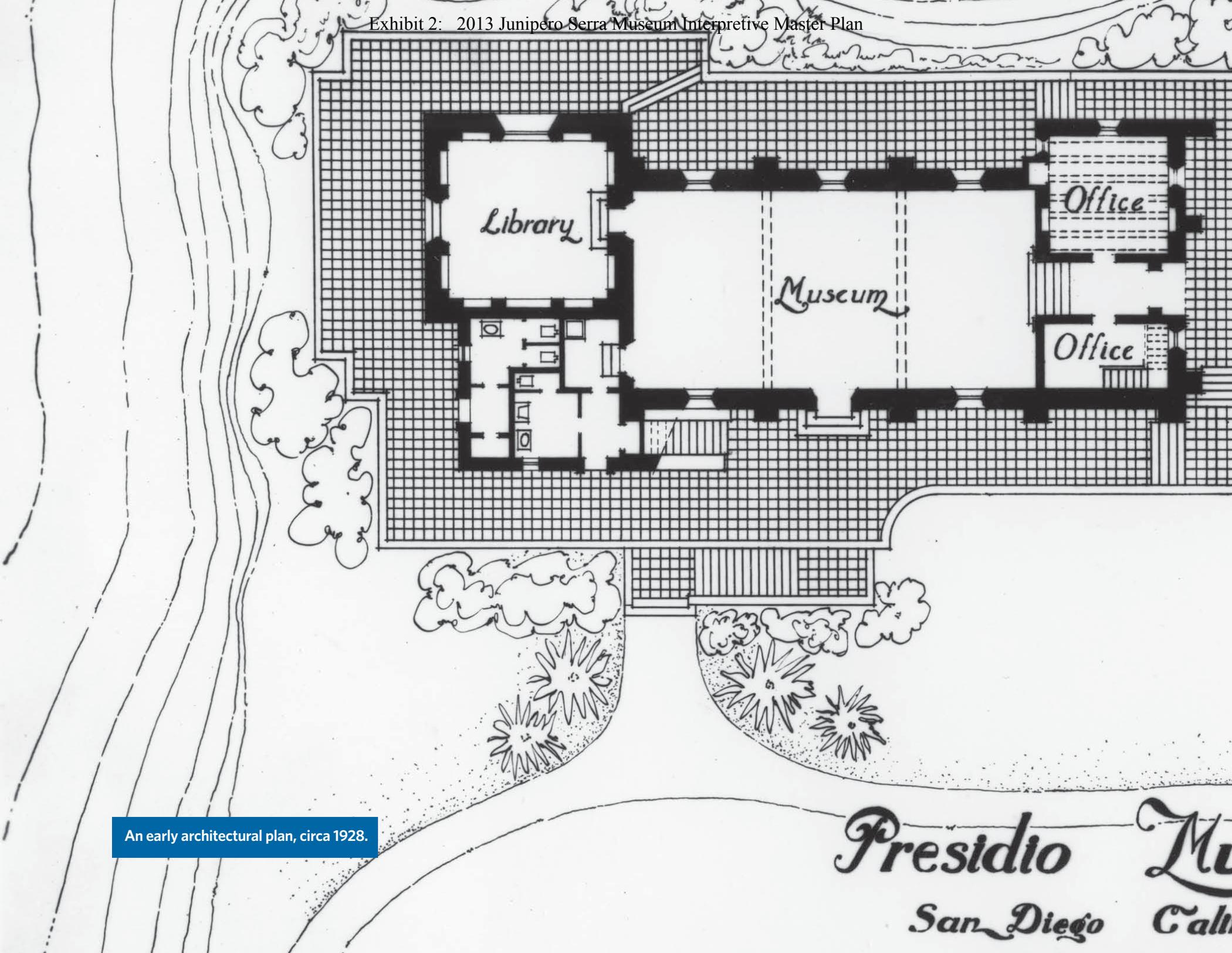
While still dominating its modest promontory over Mission Bay and Old Town, the Serra Museum and its surroundings are, however, showing their age. The moving of the SDHC and its collections 30 years ago to Balboa Park has left the building operating primarily as a static museum space, comparatively understaffed, and with dated interpretation. When the Serra opened to the public in 1929, the serene space seemed of another era, and reflected current thinking on civic and cultural spaces popular at the time. George Marston's vision for the Serra Museum was driven by the pure ideals of the state's Missions, crafted by artisans working in the still-living traditions of adobe construction, and with a sturdy skeleton of modern steel. This purity of purpose lent the Serra an aura that radiates even today. However, this also meant that the building lacked contemporary amenities – heating, comprehensive electrical wiring, modern lighting – even at its dedication. Ensuing advances in construction and the evolving operational culture of public museums have largely passed the Serra Museum by, and, though its beauty is undiminished, the need is particularly acute for ADA-compliance, centralized security measures, electrical rewiring, and climate control.

The City of San Diego, facing budget constraints and many competing priorities, has provided minimal maintenance and upkeep of the building and its exterior. Likewise, there has been little discretionary funding provided by the City for modernization, including up-to-date plumbing, wiring and HVAC. The lack of ADA-compliance has also severely limited access for many visitors, and prevented the Presidio Park and Serra Museum from being designated stops on the Old Town Trolley and other tourist services because of the State Historic Parks' requirements. Budget constraints and management changes within SDHC itself have frequently, and understandably, shifted internal focus and resources away from the Serra Museum and towards the collections management and public programs of its Balboa Park location.

Thus, while widely recognized as a San Diego landmark, the Serra Museum is currently underutilized, drawing approximately 6,500 visitors per year. The Museum and Park also suffer from a lack of civic attention and stewardship. Much of this stems from their increasingly isolated location, surrounded by the bustling I-5 and I-8 Freeways, the emergence of Hotel Circle and the continued development of Mission Valley. The park remains a hidden treasure for many residents of the adjacent Mission Hills community, lovingly looked after by a passionate local volunteers and a City Parks department operating with a minimum of resources. But for the majority of San Diegans, access remains problematic, and the park's entry-points are not well-aided by signage or local maps. While for all purposes adjacent to the wildly popular attractions of Old Town, Sea World and other destinations, the physical perception is rather more remote.

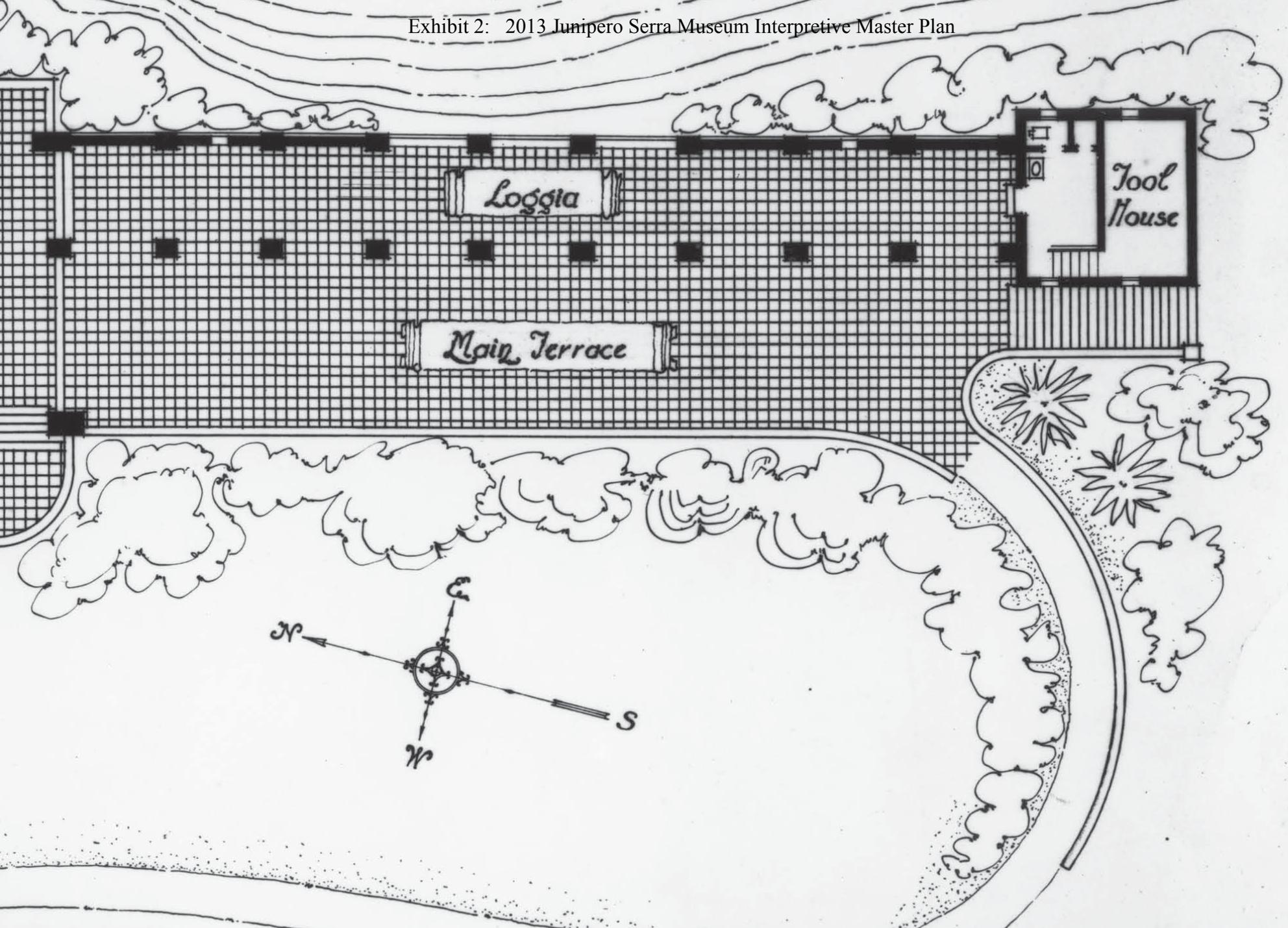
Clearly, something needs to be undertaken to increase awareness of its importance, and to bring San Diego's diverse communities back to Presidio Park, encouraging investigation and participation for all. Only then can the Presidio really benefit from the pride and stewardship it merits. It remains a vibrant historic site of unparalleled importance.

Presidio Park remains a vibrant historic site of unparalleled importance.



An early architectural plan, circa 1928.

Presidio Museum
San Diego California



Museum
California

Wm. Templeton Johnson, Architect

THE MAIN GALLERY



W0EST 12

THE MAIN GALLERY

A Dramatic Central Museum Space

The Main Gallery is a large, sweeping physical space within the Serra Museum, a cornerstone of the Mission Revival style in California architecture, and a signature interior space. A new permanent exhibit will center the story of San Diego around the theme of water. As a temperate desert, changed over time by human civilization and imported resources, the harnessing of the San Diego River and other water sources was a key driver to the region's settlement from the earliest prehistory, whether for the region's many tribal groups, the Spanish colonizers, the Mexican *rancherías*, and its early American settlers. Water remains central to the city's story today.

Current Conditions

The Main Gallery served as the central exhibition space for the San Diego Historical Society (now the San Diego History Center) for more than fifty years, from 1929-1982. Even today the Serra retains much of its original architectural detailing. With the exception of the later addition of an interior staircase – somewhat offsetting the original room's symmetry – and the covering over of one of the Serra's principal entrances, the room still looks much as it did in the luminous photographs of its dedication ceremony.

The Main Gallery has proved increasingly popular as a wedding, special event and performance space, often used by outside parties along with the Serra's exterior and portico. These short-term rentals provide significant revenue and underscore its attractiveness as one of San Diego's most picturesque locales.

The Serra's existing furnishings – 16th and 17th century Spanish pieces collected by SDHC founder George Marston – and many other artifacts that once formed the core of the collection have long since been removed to the Balboa Park facility. Because of the fluctuating temperatures and humidity levels in the unheated galleries, much of this relocation has occurred to ensure their preservation.

Current exhibits have been organized without a core interpretive plan, and do not make for a satisfying, well-rounded story in their present condition. Many artifacts – an antique wine press, millstones from various archaeological excavations, and others – once located along the Serra's exterior portico were brought indoors to prevent their suffering from vandalism and weather damage. The famous "El Jupiter" cannon, a cherished artifact of the Presidio's earliest history, is perhaps the most valuable and "exhibitible" artifact currently found in the space. We advocate that it remain on site, either within a case in the exterior portico or within the planned exhibition spaces.

The post-1929 additions include the interior staircase linking the Main Gallery to upper floor classrooms and Tower (originally reached from an exterior staircase, which still exists); an elevated tile platform on the North Wall (constructed around the exhibit location of SDHC's most renowned artifact, the Mission-era mural of *Madre Santissima de la Luz*, which hung there for decades); the covering-over of the Serra's second entrance on the west wall; and gates at the main entrance. A core need is for the permanent exhibits, and the interpretive vision driving them, to be worthy of the architecture they reside in; to tell the story of a cultural ecology that can't be found anywhere else; and to reflect the incalculably rich heritage surrounding them in Presidio Park, which deserves to be widely recognized and celebrated as the birthplace of California.

The Main Gallery still looks much as it did in the luminous photographs of its dedication ceremonies

Recommendations

The layout of the Main Gallery at its 1929 opening – a spare, symmetrical floor with a minimalist array of George Marston’s early Spanish furnishings and fixtures – remains a key element of its legacy, and a direct, visceral link to Marston and to the founding of SDHC. There seems to be an opportunity to return the Serra itself to some of its opening-day glamour, and tie its future interpretive direction to bringing the Main Gallery back to some semblance of its initial state.

The furniture itself, in SDHC’s collection storage at the moment, is in disrepair, whether from climate, humidity or insect damage. Additionally, the positional flexibility required – allowing the furniture to be easily moved into storage or along the gallery’s perimeter, freeing up floor space for private functions, performances, etc. – would be impossible to undertake with these very old and delicate furnishings. Using them as active interpretive zones is even less feasible.

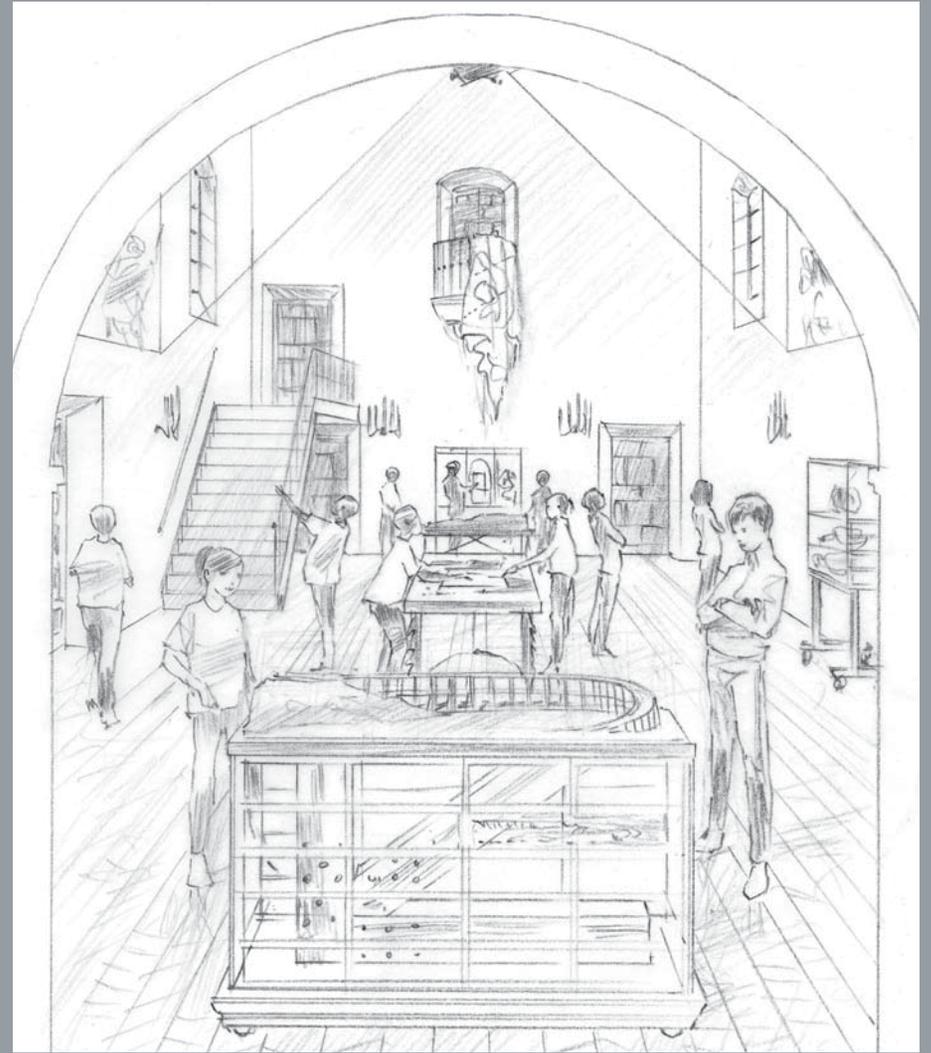
Our recommendation is for close replicas to be recreated from selected pieces of the original furniture – from cast resin, acrylic, glass and aluminum, painted wood, or other materials – and activated as interpretive zones throughout the gallery, adhering to their original positioning from 1929. A central interactive table – modeled on Marston’s large 16th c. Spanish table that dominated the exhibition floor for decades – will drive the Main Gallery’s audiovisual content from a user-controlled touchscreen, while other reproductions will fan out across the room around it, containing artifacts, touchscreen guides, and embedded graphics. A tapestry that hung from the room’s balcony for many years (still kept in the SDHC archives, but no longer displayable) will be replicated at size and rehung from the balcony, its face printed with an image that ties the gallery together as a water-centered story (options might be one of the early Coastal Survey Maps, Derby’s 1852 map of the San Diego River, False Bay, Mission Bay, and the early San Diego settlement at Old Town, or some other graphic).

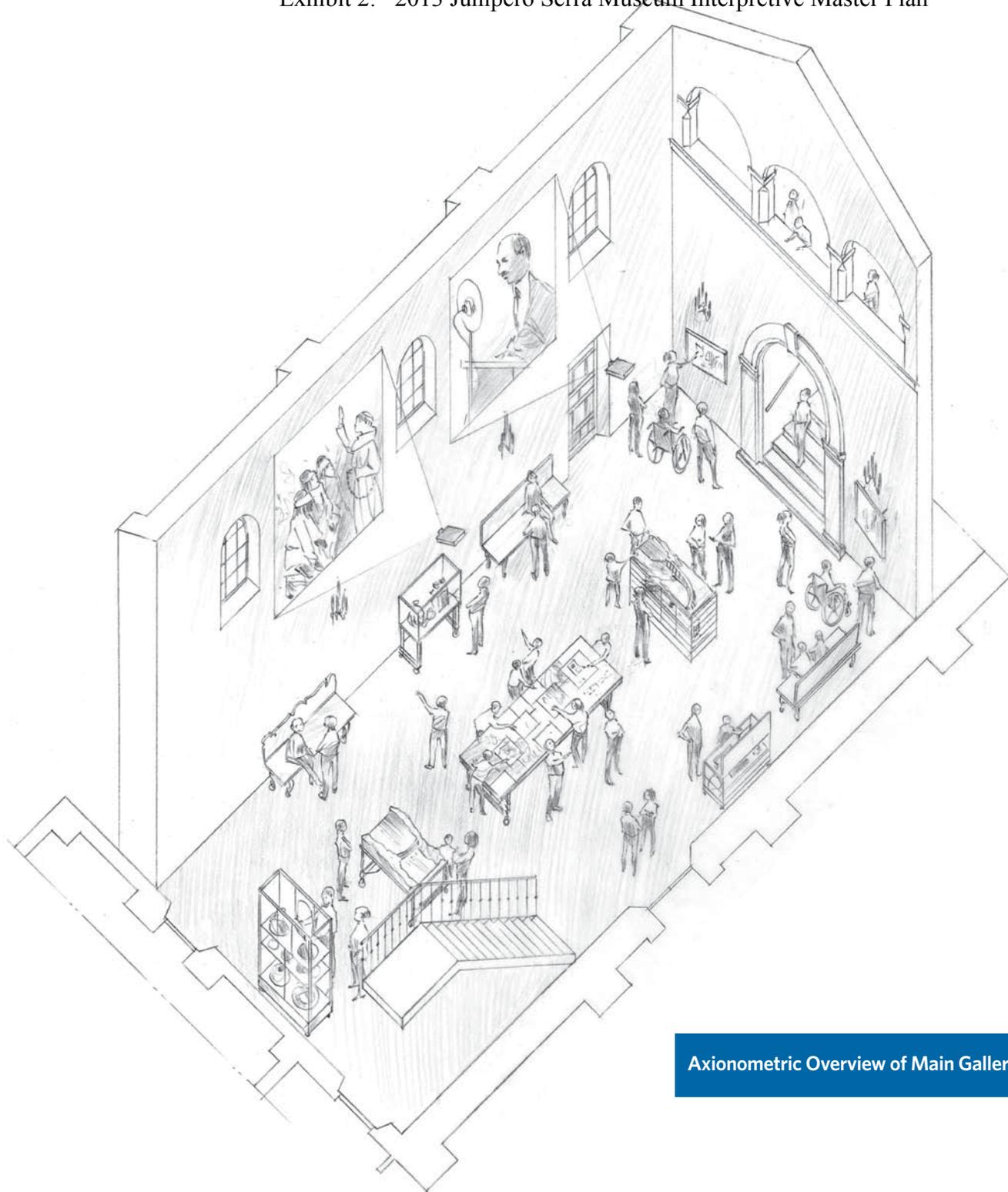
The effect of this treatment is to offer visitors a view of the Main Gallery that, at first glance, is almost exactly aligned to the existing images of its 1929 layout, utilizing the space much as George Marston, and architect William Templeton Johnson, intended, and restoring much of the Serra’s spare, symmetrical beauty.

In line with these thematic recommendations, we also advocate (as we mentioned in an earlier section) the restoration of the covered-over West Wall entry doors, which lead directly into the center of the Main Gallery. Whether this access point is actually used as a visitor entrance going forward, is used only for special events, or merely glassed-over to allow exterior views and light into the Main Gallery, is yet to be determined. Among preservation architect David Marshall’s recommendations for ADA-compliance is an access ramp that runs clockwise from the northwest corner of the building exterior, allowing disabled access through the east wall of the Main Gallery (see *later chapter*). For that purpose, an additional doorway will also be constructed, directly across from the historic west entrance.

We also recommend the removal of the raised platform on the West Wall, adjacent to the Library/Education Room – particularly if the original herringbone pattern tile remains intact beneath it – to broaden the available floor space for visitors and exhibits.

The interior staircase – added circa 1950 to allow Tower and upper-floor access from within the building – is not aligned with the architectural vision of the building, throwing off its composition and symmetry. However, its removal, while a logical part of the restoration, would also effect a host of security concerns (through the upper-floor access gate to the exterior stairs and park), climate-control issues, and ADA compliance. At this time, while we advocate the eventual construction of a lower-profile replacement, or even its removal entirely, that recommendation does not serve an active role in this planning document.





Axonometric Overview of Main Gallery with installed components

Recommended Components

Central Interactive Table

In the center of the Main Gallery is the Central Interactive Table, constructed to the exact dimensions of the original table (as described above), is on durable casters, and driven by multi-user touch screens that together comprise an interactive space of approximately 36" x 96". This table is the central "engine" of the Main Gallery interpretation. The default image on the central touch screen is an overhead digital rendering of the San Diego River watershed, from the Peninsular Range to the sea. We begin with this landscape because it will be the focus and continuing thread throughout the presentation, while also serving as a contemporary reference point for the historic maps and surveys that will partially illustrate the interactive scripts. This "screen-saver" image stays as the default program until approached or touched by a visitor; at that point the programming interface is initiated.

The "screen saver" image, once activated by the visitor, expands into three interpretive layers. The first layer is a more detailed overhead rendering, outlining key locations in the San Diego River watershed and other manmade features integral to the water story. These locations may include Cuyamaca Reservoir, El Capitan Reservoir, San Vicente Reservoir, Mission Trails Regional Park, Mission Dam, San Diego Mission, Mission Valley, the Colorado River, Presidio Hill, Mission Bay, San Diego Bay, Point Loma, Old Town, and New Town. These "hotspots" activate silent images and graphics on the screen that expand upon touch. This will allow multiple users to interact with the touchscreen even as the table's primary, wall-projected media pieces are in progress. In addition, by widening the story of the San Diego River in the modern era to encompass the elements and infrastructure of the region's contemporary water system, the exhibit also becomes a useful tool for education in the physical sciences, potentially opening up the program for further funding opportunities through the San Diego County Water Authority, the City of San Diego, and from other donors.

Two identical timelines comprise the second interpretive layer. They each have five sections: Geologic Era, Native California, Frontier Era, Modern Era, and Future. Visitors selecting any of these five eras

initiates a projected multimedia show focused on that time period. Shorter program durations are not recommended, as each show should have an approximately three to five minute duration to avoid a jumble of short elements launched by haphazard touches to the screen. The goal is to create a balance between visitor-driven interactivity and produced media elements that will engage all visitors in the space, and not only those actively driving the content.

Overhead Video Projectors and Support Equipment

These projectors, initiated by the touchscreen program of the Central Interactive Table, drive synchronized programs on the North and/or South wall. They can be controlled independently, allowing utilization for lectures, performances and weddings, while increasing revenue from these events. In the same spirit, we also advocate that a conference-center quality podium, public address system, and low-profile flush-mounted speakers be added to the existing equipment, allowing greater flexibility to the Serra's potential as an event venue, more amenities for its potential clients, and increased revenue from their use.

Table-Top Reproductions

Flanking the central interactive table along its axis, these two portable pieces extend the water story with physical models and interpretation and, like the Central Interactive Table, are exact-scale reproductions of the original Marston pieces that stood at their location in 1929: a 17th c. Spanish oak chest, intricately detailed, and a 16th c. refectory table and censer from Majorca. Their surfaces could showcase table-top displays of scale models of the Old San Diego Dam (1774) and the San Diego Flume (1888), along with small (iPad) touchscreens and/or interpretive panels. Display space below the San Diego Flume model, through the clear panels of the chest, might center on artifacts, original photographs and other documentary information on the San Diego Flume Co. and its visionary entrepreneurs. These models allow for more hydrographic-centered interpretation, explaining the principles behind dam construction, early efforts at irrigation by the Mission community, and the incredible labor required to bring water to the fledgling city via elevated aqueducts. They bring a physical component to bear on the water-centered stories of the central table, and bring a more scientific principle to bear in showing how these waterworks functioned.

Artifact Cases

Two further reproductions of the Marston furniture collection serve as dedicated artifact cases on the North Wall and West Wall, also adhering to the Main Gallery's opening layout. The *bargueño* and cabinet facsimiles will be fitted out with shelves, spot-lighting, and interpretive iPads fixed to the exterior with armatures, allowing easy navigation to the artifacts' stories. For these cases in particular, we advocate that some measure of security protocols, climate control and UV protection be installed. This, we feel, will allow a much higher standard of artifacts to be displayed from SDHC's collections on a permanent or rotating basis – precious objects that can truly tell the earliest history of San Diego and its people – providing a richer interpretive experience. It may also be that the guiding

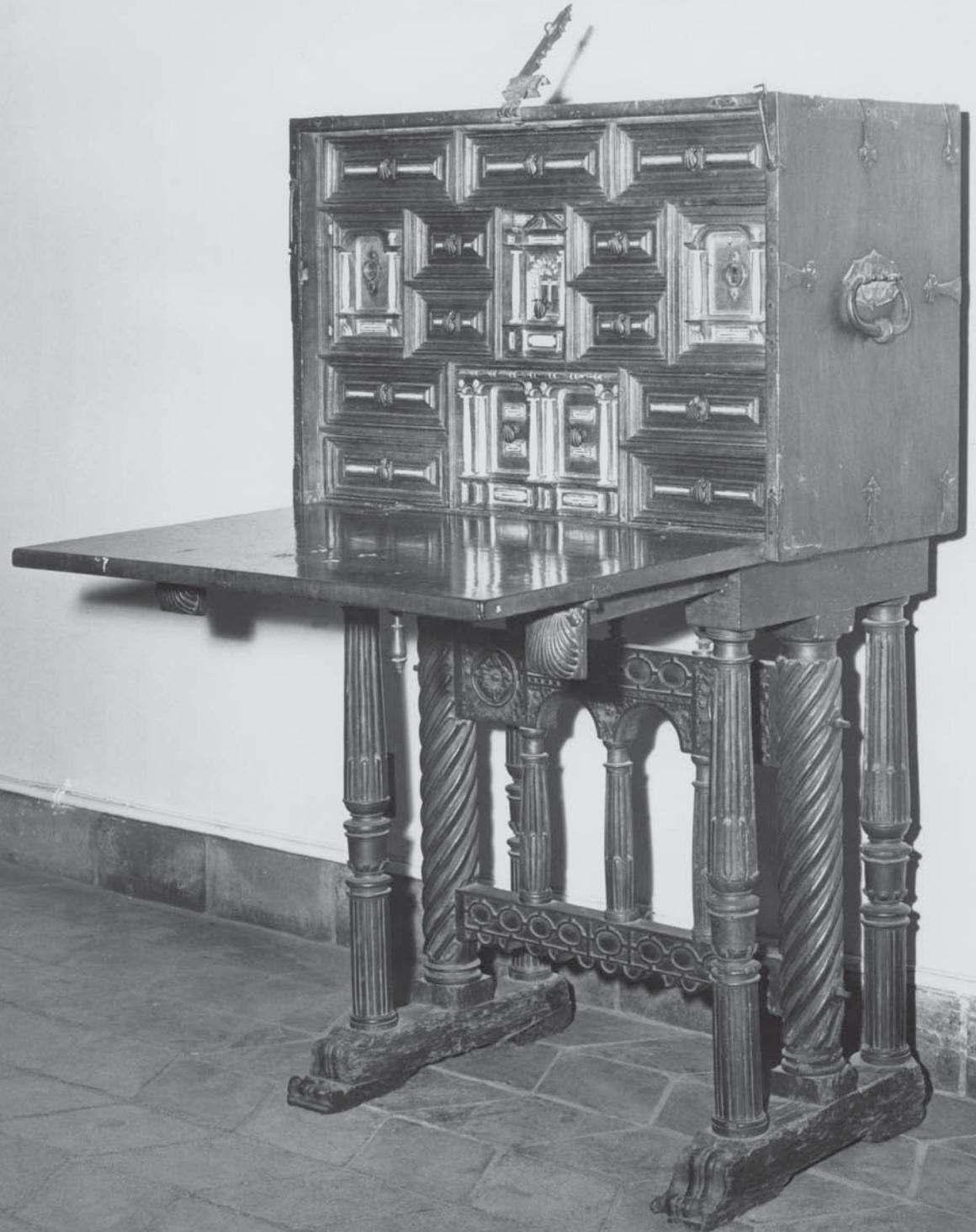
Artifact Trunk

A facsimile of Marston's 16th c. Spanish utility trunk will serve as a more child-friendly collection of pull-drawers, containing touchable objects that allow closer, more tactile study. Thematically, the objects might pertain more to earlier Native American culture in San Diego, finds from digs on and around the San Diego River, fossil reproductions, etc. The important feature is the act of reaching in and closely studying, absorbing object-driven lessons to answer questions posed in the attached interpretation, aided by attached magnifying glasses and a glossary. This also allows SDHC's educators to use the artifact trunk as an additional teaching zone for school-groups and young visitors.

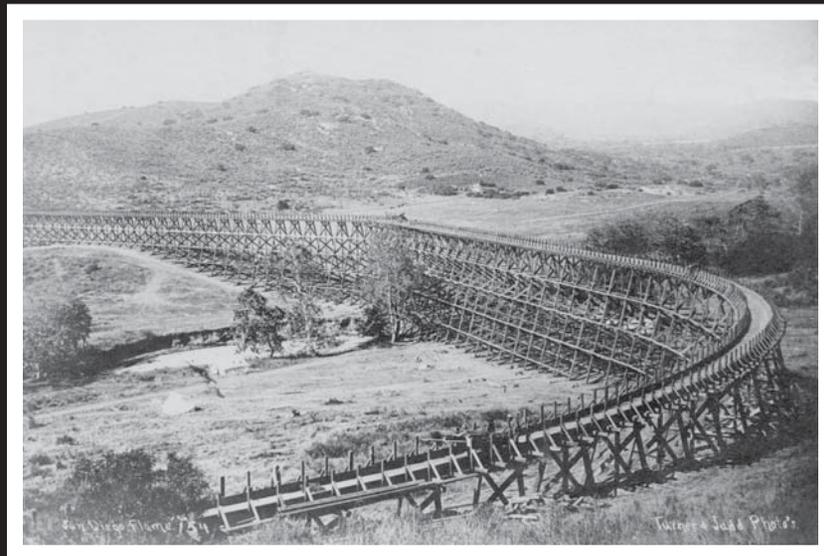
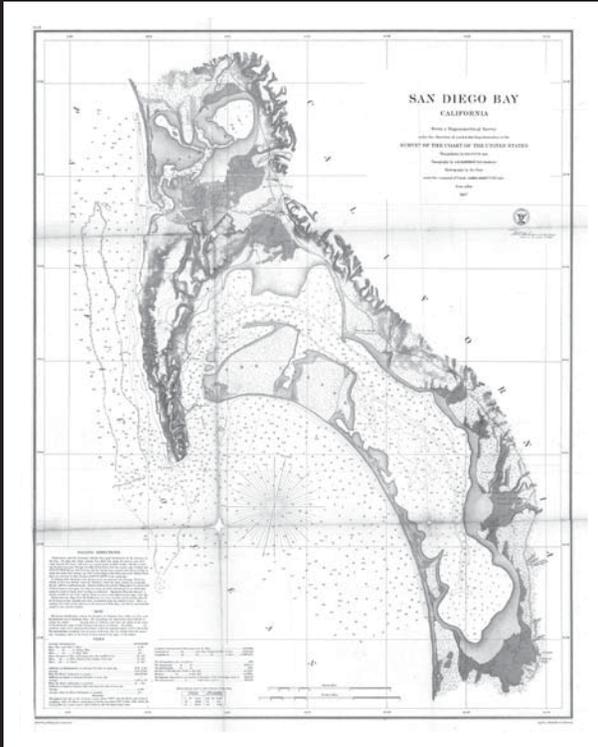
Donor Benches and Chairs

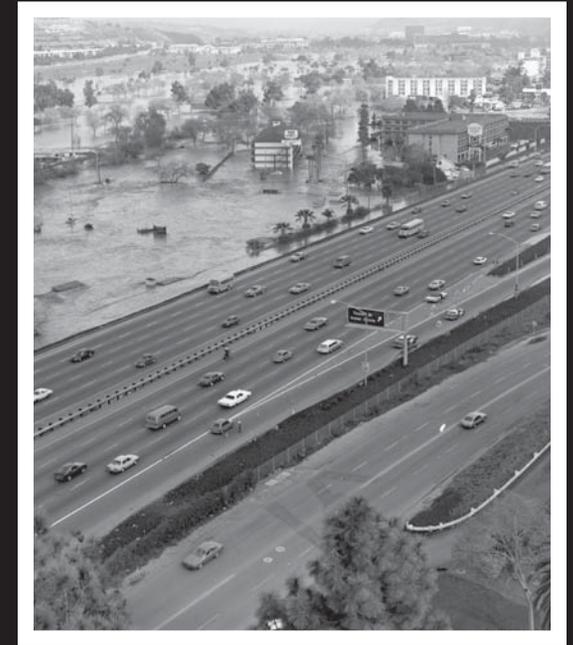
Also reproduced from the existing 16th c. Spanish pieces (two benches and two chairs) these portable seating elements also honor the program's individual and organizational donors, activating sponsorships that can add a "naming" allure to potential benefactors. It may prove that only the upper-tier donors can be so recognized in the available seating space, creating the need for more traditional donor recognition elsewhere in the Main Gallery or near the Visitor Entrance. Naming opportunities might also be explored for entire zones within the Serra – the Mezzanine Gallery, the Library, the Main Gallery, Mr. Marston's office, and the Tower.

The Main Gallery, restored to its 1929 layout, will utilizing the space much as George Marston, and his architect, William Templeton Johnson, intended, restoring a spare, symmetrical beauty



A 17th c. Spanish oak chest (*above*) and a 15th c. *bargueño* from Toledo (*right*) are two pieces from George C. Marston's Serra Museum collection to be recast as interpretive cases in the Main Gallery





The Interactive Displays center San Diego's story through the perspective of its river, driven by SDHC's considerable photographic and document archive, bringing history to life with incomparable detail.

Perimeter Interactive 1: Portraits of a Growing City

Flanking the entryway into the Main Gallery are two large touchscreen monitors that will carry a large portion of interpretive content. The first examines many key personalities behind San Diego's early growth, centering around Kosa'aay Village, the Presidio and Mission, unified in the story of the growing region's need for water. Laid out on a grid on the screen, their portraits, when selected, launch a short audiovisual program of voiceovers, illustrations, and animations, with optional quizzes and comprehension exercises for younger visitors and educators.

Some examples of these key personalities might include:

- A Kumeyaay storyteller or elder
- Fray Junipero Serra
- Juana Wrightington (provided medical care for Native Americans in Old Town)
- Presidio Comandante Pedro Fages
- James McCoy (California's first sheriff and an early Old Town settler)
- Richard Henry Dana (who wrote an early, vivid account of San Diego as a seaman involved in the hide trade)
- "Rainmaker" Charles Hatfield
- Entrepreneur and mogul John D. Spreckles
- Juan Francisco Lopez (one of the first Spanish soldiers to occupy the Presidio, and later, one of Old Town's first settlers)
- Richard Freeman and Allen Light (early San Diego African-Americans and Old Town shop owners)
- Pio Pico, the last Governor of Alta California under Mexican rule.
- *Ramona* (the fictional heroine of Helen Hunt Jackson's famous novel)
- Early water mogul Ed Fletcher
- 'Melchior', the christianized Kumeyaay whose grave lies in Old Town's Campo Santo Cemetery.
- Don Miguel de Pedorena (early Mexican citizen who saved the Serra's Jupiter cannon during the U.S.-Mexico War; Captain in the U.S. Army)
- Felipa Osuna (the 'Oldest resident of Old Town' who came from a long line of Mexican *Californio* loyalists (in contrast with Sr. Pedorena))
- Surveyor and humorist George Horatio Derby
- Lydia Knapp Horton (pioneer, early feminist, and wife of A.E. Horton)
- Water official Henry Griffen
- SDCWA General Manager Maureen Stapleton.
- Eva Salazar, a modern-day Kumeyaay/Tipai basket-maker, based in B.C.

Perimeter Interactive 2: ADA Equivalency Station & Monitor

To satisfy ADA requirements, an equivalent display of the Mezzanine Gallery's content will need to be accessible on the Main Gallery Floor. This will be an interactive station - like the *Portraits* interactive, a 42" touch-screen monitor, mounted horizontally and flanking the Main Gallery entrance - providing a host of resources for physically limited visitors, while also serving as greater content portals for SDHC and the Serra Museum's online collections and archives. As an equivalency station, the monitor provides displays of the content elsewhere in the Serra, switching between a live video feed of the Mezzanine Gallery, the Marston Office, Tower Gallery, and other hard-to-reach areas of the Serra; a navigable program of the current exhibit content of the Mezzanine Gallery; and an information portal for the Serra and SDHC overall. This can be accomplished by reproducing the respective exhibit panels onscreen; by networked webcams offering live-feeds of the aforementioned exhibit spaces and the vistas from the four corners of the Tower summit; and by offering supplementary content to the installed exhibits, bringing non-disabled visitors to the station as well. These touchscreens could also reproduce content from the Central Interactive Table, offering an additional viewing zone for overflow museum traffic.



The San Diego Flume in 1890

DRAFT TREATMENTS: SELECTED MEDIA PIECES



Re-enactment of the "Founding of California" at the Serra Museum dedication, July 16, 1929

Introduction

The following selected treatments are intended to indicate how elements of the media content might be developed with SDHC's curators and staff. These are certainly preliminary concepts; their purpose is to suggest an approach that can be developed in much greater depth and detail in any implementation phase, and to suggest the layers of programming that might be experienced in the Main Gallery.

Central Interactive Table

Timeline Layer

Theme 1: *Geologic San Diego*, running time, 3-5 minutes.

Location footage, graphic animations, interviews with Phil Pryde, David McArthur, and other authorities on the subject.

McArthur, looking out across the landscape from high within the Peninsular Range:

San Diego is not confined within one major watershed...It boasts three quite different landscapes – coastal terraces, inland valleys, mountains, and deserts.

Animation Elements

Building the Watershed: a Geological Map of San Diego County with fault motion animation; a planar map showing major faults morphs into profile map as faults shift and uplift, forming major geographic features of the region; a timescale clock shows the vast geologic periods illustrated, and the pace of these changes.

Climate and Rainfall: Rainfall patterns across the region and their relationship to geography. Why San Diego is such a unique, “temperate desert” climate, and how has that climate affected the native landscape. Why this has always made water such a key factor in the city's history and its patterns of growth.

Digital Animation: Climate variation through Southern Oscillation, Pacific Decadal Oscillation, and other short-term and long-term climate fluctuations.

Digital Animation: San Diego River course changes frequently over time.

Digital Animation: Shoreline and estuary changes over time.

Theme 2: Native San Diego, running time 3 to 5 minutes

Contemporary location video, interviews with Native elders and historians, historic photographs, archival film, possible animation:

Creation Stories:

Kumeyaay Elder

Look to the sky and we will start with the Southern California region we are in now, Ipai-Tipai, Kumeyaay land...In the beginning, there was no form or shape. The Sky-Power Father and Earth Mother, Sinyohauch, gave issue to two sons: Tuchaipa, the first born, and Yokomatis, the younger. The brothers created man, the sun, the moon, and the stars. First, they sent the sky up by blowing tobacco into the air. The Creator, Tuchaipa, made hills and valleys, which had low places for water to pond up. He took mud from the ground and made the first man and first woman. The Indians were made first, then other people. The people walked to the east in darkness until he made light for them. Tuchaipa was poisoned by a frog, who was angry that he was made so ugly and that people were laughing at him. During the time he was dying, he taught people about their world. When he died, he departed through Pamu (in the mountain foothills of San Diego near Ramona) to San Diego Bay, went along the beach, and then into the water where he disappeared. As he stepped through the countryside, his footprints left impressions on the mountains and rocks. When he was thirsty, he marked a bowl-shaped area in a rock, and this filled with water. He left these marks, which are still there today, so that his children would see evidence that the Creator had been there and had traveled from the mountains to the ocean.

Native Waterscape, images, objects, and new location footage:

Fishing

Ollas

Acorn leeching

Medicinal and nutritional plant harvesting, uses and storage

Soundscapes of unspoiled riverine environment, natural ambient sounds, pierced by passages Luiseño *bird song*.

Contemporary Ethnohistorian (Overlooking Chaparral Landscape)

Indigenous management practices enhanced the growth and diversity of various suites of habitats across the landscape and contributed to rich crops of nuts, seeds, grains, and greens. Intentional burning of habitats increased the density of deer, rabbits, quail, and other important species.

San Diego's indigenous peoples are often grouped under one name - the Kuma'aay - but in reality there are many distinct groups with deep roots and traditions who have called the region home for millennia. Not only Kuma'aay, but Diegueño, Luiseño, Ipay, T'ipay, and many others. These divisions were themselves imposed upon the tribes by the Spanish Colonizers, who found the native vernacular unpronounceable. While most grew to accept these enforced labels, the reality of constant change leads to a central question of identity, one that many tribal descendants struggle richly with today. Who are we? We are too light-skinned to be stereotypical "indians" or Sonoran Mexicans, too dark-skinned to be Caucasian. This question lies at the heart of tribal identity.

Native Elder, Gathering Willow-Branches in Wetlands

Before we gather, we sing and we pray. We take only what we need. We take with a please and we give back with a thank you.

Contemporary Archaeologist (Overlooking Excavation Site or Wider Landscape)

The earliest inhabitants of the region, such as those that lived at the *San Dieguito* and *La Jolla* complexes, lived a complex existence very close to the land, adjusting their lives and diets to the bounty of the seasons and to the often harsh physical conditions.

Theme 3: *Frontier San Diego*, running time 3 to 5 minutes

Contemporary location video, historic prints and drawings:

European Explorers, Descriptions and Accounts

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's three ships approach San Diego from the south

[Consider using contemporary footage of the San Salvador replica now under construction]. Voiceover narrates quotations from Cabrillo's reports:

"...[A] good country from the looks of things. There are broad savannas and the vegetation is like that of Spain...[F]locks of animals, like cattle,...roam by the hundreds.... [There are] very beautiful valleys, groves of trees, and low, rolling countryside....' On the 28th of September, the explorers discover a spacious natural harbor: "a sheltered port and a very good one." The Indians at first are cautious, but eventually they come out to the ships. They tell of bearded men across the inland deserts, armed with crossbows and swords. "They made gestures of the right arm as though they were using lances, and they ran about as though they were riding horses." These first encounters give the Spanish authorities hope that the northern regions could be conquered for God and empire, but it would be centuries before they begin the effort in earnest.

Soundscapes of unspoiled riverine environment, natural ambient sounds, pierced by passages of flamenco guitar, Luiseño *bird song*, and mariachi.

Colonization

Contemporary historian, looking out across the San Diego landscape: "Crucial to Spain's successful colonization of California was an acute sensitivity to water as a means of imperial expansion..."

Fray Juan Crespi, voice-over footage of plodding donkey hooves and boots in a dry sandy landscape: "We had not water here except what [we] carried."

Reaching the San Diego River: "We came upon a large river....good arable land [and] many large villages of heathens."

Mission and Presidio

Building of Old Mission Dam

Old Flume

Crops and Trade

The Hide Industry

Historian Standing by Mission Dam

"Under Spanish law, water was to be held by the crown and used for the common good." The Viceroy of New Spain instructed the new missions and presidios of Alta California to create irrigation systems for farming and trade. Viceroy in voice over: "As the mission settlements are hereafter to become cities, care must be taken in their foundation."

Tensions between Church and Military

Rising International Trade

Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s Two Years Before the Mast

Old Town Emerges

The U.S.-Mexico War

Archaeologist in Presidio Park

Presidio Park, and Old Town below us, are complex sites that have seen many layers of habitation and cultural influence [accompanied by images of early 1930s excavations by Marston collaborator Percy Broell, along with those of more contemporary excavations, and digs in Old Town.]

Mission Valley, during the calamitous flooding of the San Diego River in 1916. By this date, more than half a century had been spent seeking a solution to these periodic deluges, with little success. The 1916 flood left what was then a small farming community, on the outskirts of Old Town, in tatters.





Theme 4: A City Rises, running time 3 to 5 minutes

Historian overlooking the city: "Americans of the mid-nineteenth century were confident, impatient, entrepreneurial, defiant of life's limitations and determined to possess and develop the enormous expanse of land that had now opened up before them."

Soundscapes of train tracks being lain and hammered in. Sounds of blacksmiths, horses, militia trumpets, dancehalls and mining equipment.

Archaeologist overlooking the perfectly-aligned, gridded streets of Downtown San Diego: "We're standing on what was once the center of a risky entrepreneurial decision. After many failures to expand San Diego beyond the confines of what is now called Old Town, A.E. Horton made a huge gamble on May 10, 1867, buying a huge swath of undeveloped land along San Diego Bay and gridding it out for development. Well, it was certainly developed, and much of the grid of Horton's Addition, as it was soon called, exist as the street-plan of modern San Diego. Horton's gamble paid off, and spectacularly."

Stage

Rail

Shipbuilding and Aviation

Growth of New Town

A Great Military Seaport

Theme 5: Future San Diego, running time 3 to 5 minutes

Phil Pryde: "The feeling definitely exists that the San Diego environment has somehow survived urbanization better than any of the four counties to the north and a strong desire exists to keep it that way."

Soundscapes of modern construction, passenger jets taking off and landing, vehicle traffic, station identification of television channels, etc.

Water Conservation

Water Reclamation

Multiple Species Conservation Plan

San Diego River Conservancy

Mission Trails Regional Park

Each succeeding generation will need to continue the conservation work...

Perimeter Interactive 1: Portraits of a Growing City

Sample Personal Narrative: Charles Hatfield

Historian, narrating over historic photographs: "Hatfield attributed his success to a mixture of nearly two dozen secret chemicals that he 'aged' for several days and then poured into pans and placed atop towers where they would evaporate and, so he claimed, bring rain."

Footage of the 1956 Burt Lancaster vehicle *The Rainmaker*, inspired by the Hatfield Story, based on the R. Richard Nash play.

"The odor produced by the chemicals, according to one spectator, resembled "A limburger cheese factory...broken loose." Another noted, "These gases smell so bad that it rains in self defense!"

In December 1915 Hatfield, a self-proclaimed "moisture accelerator", promised officials of drought-stricken San Diego, "I will fill Morena Reservoir to overflowing between now and next December for the sum of \$10,000..." Within a month record rains not only filled the reservoir but also washed out rail lines, bridges, crops, streets and houses with loss of lives and damage claims of \$3.5 million. Announced one exasperated farmer, "Lets pay Hatfield \$10,000 to quit!"

Additional Sources

The Wizard of Sun City: The Strange True Story of Charles Hatfield, the Rainmaker Who Drowned a City's Dreams, Garry Jenkins (2005)
Prints & Photographs Collection, Library of Congress



Charles Hatfield in 1915

THE MEZZANINE GALLERY



THE MEZZANINE GALLERY

A Temporary and Changing Exhibition Space

The “Mezzanine” gallery, a dramatic space overlooking the Serra’s Main Gallery, is one of the most architecturally intact spaces within the Serra, preserving much of Templeton Johnson’s original detail, a bright rose window, and fine views over the balustrade. The area currently serves as a spillover storage for back-of-house equipment, paperwork, and other material space.

Current Conditions

Much of the Mezzanine’s limited use likely stems from access issues. Reachable only from a staircase leading up from a storage room for educators and staff, it is not a natural space for visitors to frequent, and any curiosity about it brought on by the view up from the Main Gallery floor is muted by the lack of any intuitive access.

However, by relocating the Serra’s existing retail and ticketing space from its current location – Mr. Marston’s office – across the hall, and removing later additions of shelving and other fixtures, the floor plan widens, and the clearer sightlines and wayfinding elements should encourage visitation.

Because of its direct visual link to the Main Gallery, the limited floor space, and because of ADA-related limitations, we advocate that the Mezzanine Gallery serve as a temporary exhibition space, bringing the Serra into a wider dialogue with San Diego’s diverse communities, different historical perspectives, and viewpoints.

In the Main Gallery, state-of-the-art technology and thoughtful reproductions adhere to the spare, monumental layout of the Serra’s early years, featuring sturdy, portable exhibit furniture and hardware. The Mezzanine Gallery will also retain this flexibility by featuring a set array of casework, furnishings and seating that can be easily reconfigured to accommodate the changing requirements of the temporary exhibits and also to be used as additional reception, performance and audience space. It should be said that the Mezzanine is also a particularly strong acoustic space, ideal for musical and vocal accompaniment to the adjacent Main Gallery, which increases the need for its flexibility.

Recommended Components

Main Exhibit Table and Casework

This table, modeled and cast from the dimensions of one of Mr. Marston's existing 16th c. furniture pieces, will offer 1-2 monitors able to run pre-programmed content, and an acrylic- or glass-topped case to display pertinent artifacts and documents relating to the current exhibition. We also recommend that this table be constructed in a modular fashion, allowing some reconfiguration of its dimensions to accommodate changing curatorial requirements. This table will be set onto lockable casters, and can be rolled away and set into the existing architectural niche when not required.

Seating

Limited seating – whether benches or chairs – will be similarly “donor-branded” pieces, derived from existing Marston furniture, designed to surround the main exhibit table or to be set around the Mezzanine's perimeter, depending on the exhibit's current requirements.

Wall Graphics

As much as possible, we advocate keeping the wall-space free of permanent hardware, to allow temporary visual “skins” – containing content, supergraphics or other visual information – to be applied on a temporary basis, maximizing the limited space. Otherwise the walls can remain “Mission White”, preserving their visual integrity.

Bilingual / Trilingual

We strongly advocate that all the Serra's exhibit texts and labels, wherever possible, be bilingual (Spanish and English). Here, where temporary exhibits might touch on other important cultures in San Diego (tribal groups, Filipino-Americans, Japanese and Portuguese fishermen, etc.) we recommend those languages be touched on as well. Multilingual interpretation can bring wider potential audiences and community participation, increased sponsorship opportunities, university affiliation, and early language comprehension for young visitors. These benefits are considerable. Multi-lingual interpretation can also be a base feature of future programming enhancements at the Serra: audio guides, headsets, and smart-phone apps.

Floor & Ceiling Graphics

To augment the available display space in this limited space, we advocate that the Mezzanine Gallery walls be prepared to accommodate visual “skins” that can be applied and removed with little effort. The floor in particular, overlooking the permanent installations on the Main Gallery below, might also be an apt location schematic graphics. When the temporary exhibits feature audiovisual content that might conflict with the ongoing programming in the Main Gallery below, we recommend that temporary wall-to-wall carpeting can be utilized (and stored when not in use), further insulating the room acoustically.

Infrastructure

Much as in the other areas of the Serra, updated electrical and data-transfer capabilities will need to be installed within the space, guided by the project's preservation architect. Adjustable position lighting will be added discreetly into the ceiling, along with low-profile acoustic baffling to underscore the Gallery's flexibility as a standalone auditory space.

Interpreting Communities and Shared Histories

The Serra has always been viewed with different perspectives by San Diego's diverse communities. Kumeyaay and other tribal groups, for example, have traditionally viewed the Presidio as a troubled place, not only for its symbolism as a site of their subjugation and near-extinction as a culture, but as a sacred hill and burial place that was systematically built over by the Spanish, the Mexican Republic and Western settlers in succession. Mexican-American residents have their own perspectives of the hill's story and importance as a sentinel overlooking the river and the surrounding *rancherías*.

And while the general restoration and implementation of the Main Gallery and other spaces of the Serra will bring it fully into the 21st century, and increase public curiosity, we feel that a robust program of changing exhibits, tied to multiple perspectives or even "in the words" of individual communities themselves, can strengthen the bond between San Diegans and the great cultural legacy that crowns Presidio Hill. And keep them returning to discover what's new in the Serra Museum.

Potential Themes

As the Main Gallery's proposed permanent exhibits use the story of the San Diego River – and the water story in general – to stitch together many historical perspectives into a meandering 'tapestry' of the city's history; and because the Mezzanine Gallery overlooks these exhibits, we would advocate that changing exhibits initially be related to this overriding theme, allowing for the displays to holistically realize greater thematic potential over time.

The Serra's Advisory Board reacted strongly and positively to a precedent project by the Design Team – the "community-sourced" changing exhibit system we designed for the El Paso Museum of History, *Neighborhoods and Shared Memories* – that seems to point the way to a bilingual, community-driven (or at least community-centered) program of potential changing exhibits for the Mezzanine Gallery. This approach might also help SDHC's development teams find financial support, sponsorships or even full underwriters for the Mezzanine Gallery exhibits, or additional funding for the Serra Museum overall.

Art Exhibits

At the Balboa Park Museum, SDHC has experienced success sponsoring temporary art exhibits alongside its more established history-based showcases. Quite often these art exhibits are culled from SDHC's own considerable collections, and are always tied to a historical period, landscape and/or personage of San Diego's history. Equally often, these art exhibits also tie back to current or past history-based exhibits, extending and humanizing interpretive efforts. This programming is a model practice for SDHC and should be considered for the temporary exhibitions in the Mezzanine gallery, particularly when grouped around themes that can then be tied into the Serra's overarching story of water. However, to exhibit paintings, certain lighting improvements and security concessions will have to be considered before these more valuable artifacts are to be exhibited.

Residencies and Partnerships

San Diego is blessed with an abundance of universities and public foundations that offer acclaimed programs in archaeology, anthropology and the natural sciences. These programs often focus their studies on the landscape of San Diego itself, sponsoring digs, historical reconstructions, and ecological surveys. The University of San Diego and San Diego State, for example, have collaborated with SDHC in the past, and the three organizations share many faculty and board members. There has been some discussion as to the potential of the Serra Museum, and the Mezzanine Gallery, to serve as a presentation and study space for a rotating "residence" in the sciences and humanities. While temporary exhibits might interpret recent field seasons of Kosa'aay village settlements by SDSU, for example, graduate students or lecturers in the department might also serve as weekend docents on site, enriching the content on display, and using the Serra as a base for group excursions to live sites along the San Diego River. These partnerships can allow institutions to strengthen their alliances, provide shared exhibition and public programs space, and expand the interpretive programs immeasurably.

On the following page are outlines for several potential temporary exhibits. They are meant as a planning guide, and will be far more nuanced and relevant when guided by SDHC's curators, administrators and programmers.

Pi'yi Nkueth / I Live Here

This exhibit will offer a focused view on early San Diego history – and a nuanced counterpoint to the Main Gallery exhibits – from the perspective of the numerous bands of the Kumeyaay and other San Diego tribal groups. Centering on the San Diego River and the Presidio geographically (much how the Main Gallery is organized) the exhibit will survey, in the tribal elders' own words and oral histories, the story of how their peoples lived in this region, from the Paleo-Indians of remote prehistory, the earliest interventions and irrigation efforts along the San Diego River, and how the river and the seasons dictated the placement of their portable villages. This rounded view of pre-Spanish Contact life and tradition – utilizing many of the Serra's existing tribal artifacts, oral histories, and with items on loan from Kumeyaay organizations and individuals – reaches a breaking point when the story of Cabrillo's voyage appears on their historical timeline. The second 'half' of the exhibit details the experiences of the Spanish colonizers, the emerging post-revolution Mexican settlements, and the westward rush of the 19th and 20th centuries – entirely from the tribal perspective, detailing the colossal changes wrought by missionaries, soldiers, settlers and speculators on Kumeyaay lands, traditions, and their survival as a group.

Rainmakers, Speculators and Saviors: The Wild Story of Water in San Diego

This exhibit begins by taking a wider survey of the personalities, visions and schemes that, from the 1850s until the 1920s, guided the development of San Diego county's flumes, dams, and public-private partnerships, providing water to the city during its years of exponential growth. Working with armies of hardened laborers and often comical designs, these men – like George Horatio Derby, Colonel Ed Fletcher, rainmaker Charles Hatfield and sugar heir John D. Spreckels – evoke an era of outsize personalities, civic struggles, and a burgeoning regional identity. While many of these figures and their stories are touched upon in the Main Gallery exhibits, this exhibit will offer a far more rounded view of San Diego's water story, with a timeline leading right up into the present day's highly complex network of flood prevention safeguards, dams and reservoirs, hydroelectric stations, new movements in desalination, etc. Supplemented by period-era

graphics and newspaper headlines (Spreckels used his ownership of the *San Diego Union* and *San Diego Evening Tribune* newspapers as colorful propaganda arms for his various civic and industrial ventures), the exhibit also features scale models of the dams, flume systems and industrial waterworks they and their legacy companies created, and the creation of public utilities and agencies that better governed the region's resources. The emphasis on the water story running into modern times also opens the possibilities of corporate underwriting and targeted sponsorships for the exhibition.

Barrio Logan: De Colores

This community-driven exhibit explores the rich Chicano history of one of San Diego's most storied central neighborhoods and a key symbol of the city's Mexican-American heritage. Originally laid out around the proposed terminus of a transcontinental railroad line by famed Illinois Senator John A. Logan, the railroad never materialized, and the predominantly residential neighborhood was transformed by thousands of Mexican refugees following the 1910 Revolution. A strong Chicano identity has endured there for more than a century, even as the urban environment surrounding the neighborhood has changed drastically. This exhibit interprets the many radical changes that Barrio Logan has long endured, from the expansion of the adjacent Naval Station to the extensive program of freeway overpasses, the Coronado Bridge, and other additions to the urban infrastructure. The struggles of its citizens to maintain its singular identity throughout this period of phenomenal growth is explored in the residents' many years of non-violent protests that resulted in the creation of the city's famous Chicano Park. The stories of those protesters, lifelong residents, business owners and artists are told in their own voices, illustrated with contemporary news broadcasts, reproductions of the district's famous murals and street art (such as the work of Salvador Torres) and with photographs and artifacts drawn from the community itself, *Barrio Logan: De Colores* takes a revelatory look at a key San Diego community, seen through the eyes of those that have done most to preserve and maintain it.

Implementation

Opening the Mezzanine Gallery in a manner commensurate with the fresh vision of the Serra Museum is not simply about repainting walls and installing a few exhibit panels. A fresh notion for a changing exhibit gallery requires real interior enhancements: lighting, signage, flexible wall-mounting systems, even localized climate control. In an ideal funding world, base capital would be in place to implement comprehensive interior enhancements and exhibit infrastructure, improvements that can be applied to every changing exhibit going forward. However, the Serra is owned by the City, and a balance will need to be struck between SDHC and the City to best approach these necessary improvements. And while each changing exhibit will require its own respective planning and production in addition to its unique content, these protocols should be streamlined over successive exhibits, as curators and installers become more familiar working within the space and with the hardware options available there.

Interior Enhancements

The Mezzanine Gallery has a modest footprint and commanding overlook of the Main Gallery. The space has been used for offices and storage, experiencing some resultant wear and damage. Restoration of its handsome surfaces – ceiling, walls, rails – should not be extensive. More pressing will be the installation of modern electrical infrastructure, data lines and exhibit lighting that respects the architectural legacy. The grilles and storage door also need to be restored and updated for active use.

Exhibit Infrastructure

While the Mezzanine Gallery is envisioned as a changing exhibit gallery, our recommendation is to create a few resident elements that will accommodate rotating displays with minimal construction requirements from exhibit to exhibit. A central table will be built around modular casework, pull-out drawers with modifiable inserts for hands-on displays, and framework for additional armatures. Resting on the table will be a two-sided monitor, allowing integration of media or motion graphics to the tactile and interpretive exhibits.

Changing Exhibits

Each exhibit will require a unique visual treatment, based on content and the show's respective display requirements. While well-planned hardware and casework will go some ways towards reducing the staff and material impact for install, breakdown and physical modifications, there are always some expenses incurred when an exhibit is rotated. The hope is that an endowment, retainer funding or a rotating program of sponsorships and underwriters might allow quarterly or biannual changing exhibits to be consistently installed, drawing new and repeat audiences to the Serra, and contributing to a full calendar of SDHC programming.

MR. MARSTON'S OFFICE



MR. MARSTON'S OFFICE

Exploring the Serra Museum Story and the life of SDHC Founder

The gift shop and admissions area of the Serra Museum occupy the former site of George Marston's office, where from 1929-1945 he attended to the affairs of the Serra and his newly founded historical society. From this office he also oversaw the massive planting and landscaping project that – with a small army of planners, gardeners and laborers – undertook to transform a barren, parched hillside into the Presidio Park we see today. The small (12' x 16') room will be restored to its layout during Mr. Marston's lifetime, and, using photographs, models and archived footage, a modest permanent exhibit will tell the story of the Serra Museum, the creation of Presidio Park, and the philanthropic, social-welfare and commercial efforts of Mr. Marston and the nascent San Diego Historical Society.

Current Conditions

As the Serra's primary shop and admissions office for decades, the room has seen many alterations since 1929. These additions have been largely superficial: shelving units and display cabinetry, several coats of paint, rewired lighting, etc. As far as a guide to these restorations, some additional effort will need to be expended; unlike most of the other zones of the Serra Museum, which were copiously photographed and documented over the years, little visual evidence or written description of Mr. Marston's office has been located at this time. The Marston family and their archival holdings may help to fill out the picture of what the office appeared like in Mr. Marston's lifetime.

Recommendations

While there is little pictorial evidence of Mr. Marston office as it appeared from 1929-1945, it is not likely that it was furnished with the lavish pieces seen in the rest of the Serra: a 1931 inventory of the antiques, and their mapped placement, does not mention the office as a location at all. It is more likely that Mr. Marston favored a large executive-style desk of sober design, along with a spare layout of seating and other furniture. It's likely that further research will clarify this layout.

The recommended treatment is a modified approach to that undertaken in the Main Gallery. Rather than recasting furniture pieces in resin or some other material, a desk and table that approximate the originals (in case the originals no longer exist or are too valuable) will serve as nominal interpretive surfaces, either for casework containing pertinent Marston and SDHC artifacts, interpretive panels, or small, iPad-driven interpretives. The bulk of the storytelling, however, should take place on the office walls, utilizing SDHC's sizable photographic, cartographic, and documentary archives. The entire journey of the Serra Museum, from idea to institution, is comprehensively rendered, and often stunningly photographed. In fact, the current Museum's store already features a photo gallery of the early days of the Serra Museum. This story will flesh out that notion considerably.

The retail and admissions operations will be moved directly across the hall to a finished space, from within which a stairway leads to the balcony-level Mezzanine Gallery.

Recommended Components

Marston Desk and Casework

Mr. Marston's actual desk – or a reproduction/existing approximation, in the Federal style – is laid out as though still occupied by the Serra's founder, with an inkwell, appointment ledger, and other typical accoutrements, implying that Mr. Marston is still hard at work on behalf of the historical society. Shallow inset or surface casework displays artifacts and documents that illustrate and deepen Marston's personal story, his lifetime during the years of San Diego's unprecedented growth, and the vision behind Presidio Park. Sample artifacts might include original or facsimile versions of the land deed for the acreage that became Presidio Park, the original SDHC charter, documents from the Marston Department Store's long presence in San Diego, and other elements that might be furnished by the Marston family.

Office Table

This plain table serves as a plinth for a supplementary plexiglas artifact/document case.

Coat Rack

Contains Mr. Marston's hat, coat, and, below it, briefcase.

Flatscreen Monitor

A small, flush-mounted screen plays a short loop of programs that supplement the wall-mounted text and image panels: primarily the 16mm footage shot at the Serra's opening ceremony, dedication and historical pageant on July 16, 1929. A fresh video transfer is recommended (this was last done in 1985), with either supplementary titles added in postproduction and/or voiceover narration, amended with the extant audio recordings of the speeches and ceremonies of the Serra's opening day.

Note: while the film footage is striking, the historical re-enactments may require additional guidance to place them in the proper context of their time period. The option should also be available, as in all media programs, for any titles/narration to be presented in Spanish.

Donor Bench Seating

Visitor seating in Mr. Marston's Office should be minimized because of the room's small size. However, limited seating will be needed in order to view the video content. Our recommendation is that an additional casting be made of one of the "Spanish benches" from the Main Gallery and placed here. This also allows a potential donor presence in the Office in addition to the existing naming opportunity.

Text and Photo Panels

The bulk of the interpretation in the office will be covered by wall-mounted image and text panels, utilizing SDHC's vast archive of photographs, primary documents and recorded personal accounts.



The historical "pageant". re-enacting the meeting of the Kuma'ay and the Spanish colonizers, was seen by thousands of San Diegans.

Sample Interpretive Themes

July 16, 1929: The Opening

Examines the decades-long effort by Mr. Marston to transform a neglected hillside into a place universally recognized as the “birthplace” of California. Illustrated with copious photos of the Serra’s dedication ceremonies – attended by thousands of San Diegans – the Serra’s opening established a pride of place, and a city’s sense of itself, that continues in San Diego to this day, with the Serra Museum as one of its lasting symbols.

A critical companion narrative to these opening ceremonies should serve as a sidebar to the interpretation, carefully situating the staging and evident stereotypes among the stylized pageantry of its time, while also underscoring how progressive Marston’s views were on issues of diversity, equal opportunity, and minority and women’s rights.

Presidio Park

George Marston and his landscape architect oversaw a massive effort to plant Presidio Park with tens of thousands of native (and non-native plants), requiring millions of labor hours and resources. The project also added the strain of a massive new infrastructure on a young city, that needed water, access roads and utilities to the then remote site. Seen through today’s perspective, the costs and benefits of such an endeavor are weighed again, illustrating the massive civic and environmental costs of importing hundreds of thousands of plants from far wetter climates, and how that caused a strain to the city’s water supply (at the time, still largely furnished by the San Diego River and its dammed reservoirs). This ties the story of the Serra Museum further with the narrative requirements of interpreting the San Diego River and the story of the City’s water.

The San Diego History Center

Explores the story of the founding of SDHC, which began as a small group of civic leaders, amateur historians, and collectors, led by George Marston, and later expanded into the institution San Diegans are familiar with today. The evolution of SDHC happened alongside major changes in how history is studied and interpreted, the bolstering of college history departments, major refinements in fieldwork and artifact handling, and the emergence of new voices, perspectives, and critical theories. This exhibit will examine the changing face of twentieth century history and its interpretation paralleled by the growth of the San Diego History Center as an institution.

In the Spanish Fashion: Early 20th Century California Style

At the turn of the 20th century, California experienced a significant shift. The opening of the Panama Canal and the overwhelming success of the novel *Ramona*, set in Alta California, seemed to influence the popular culture to increasingly identify with its Spanish ancestry, whether real or imagined, and fostered a certain nostalgia for the era of Spanish and early Mexican occupation. This obsession played out in a number of significant ways. In movies, novels and fashion, this romantic vision took on a uniquely Californian identity all its own. Architecturally, the development of the Spanish Colonial Revival style – perhaps seen most acutely in the *Churrigueresque* detailing of Balboa Park – served as a baroque antidote to the stolid Beaux-Arts style of the Eastern cities, and to the more sober Mission Revival that had emerged in the Southwest in the 1890s. Still a strong influence today, the Spanish Revival is as notable for what it omitted – recognition of California’s Native American tribes and their culture precontact, minimizing of Mexican influence, etc. – as for the Romantic myths it perpetuated.

RETAIL & ADMISSIONS SPACE



This rendering shows a Templeton-influenced mitered "ticket window" facing out onto the Serra's entryway, with a curved reception desk and retail wall.

RETAIL AND ADMISSIONS SPACE

The Serra Museum's Portal

The retail and admissions area of the Serra Museum currently occupies the former site of George Marston's office; this space will become a permanent exhibition that interprets Mr. Marston's philanthropic life and his vision for the Presidio Park, Serra Museum, and for the San Diego Historical Society (now SDHC) that he founded. Across the entry hall from the existing retail area, an underused storage and administration space - also the access point for the Mezzanine Gallery directly above - is the ideal candidate to serve as the new admissions and retail area of the Serra. As a less distinctive architectural space, the room can be somewhat modernized, and architectural modifications undertaken to improve circulation and the access stairway - without major ramifications to the historic building.

Current Conditions

Originally designed as an office for Marston's receptionist, this small (8' ¹/₂' x 15'), somewhat dim room is currently underutilized by SDHC. An administrative spillover space for the Serra Museum, subsequent additions to its 1929 layout have been largely superficial: lightly hung shelving, paint layers, and some electrical configuration. The existing second floor staircase is attractive in its details, but makes for a very tight ascent. The project's preservation architect will need to consider its viability going forward. It is not expected that ADA-requirements will be conformed to within this space.

Recommendations

While the new space affords significantly less display area than the previous store, the design team found that the majority of displays were not retail items and publications, but rather, photographic reproductions, maps and historic photographs relating to the Serra Museum itself. While the store will never have the large selection of items and publications found at the Balboa Park location, there should be more than adequate retail space for a targeted selection of publications, souvenirs and reproductions pertaining to the Serra itself, the Mission Era and early California (and San Diego) history, and the interpretation found within the Serra. We also recommend that the existing shelving and wall units be removed entirely; this will increase circulation area within the space, and allow for lower profile shelving and display units to be installed.

Recommended components would include a basic retail/ticket area that replaces the current desk. Because of the room's small dimensions, and the need to have sightlines with visitors entering the Serra, we also advocate cutting out a small, mitered "ticket window" for transactions. Additionally, the staircase to the Mezzanine Gallery may need modifications or replacement for safety and access reasons, although full ADA compliance won't be achievable within the space. Arrival signage should also clearly indicate where tickets need to be bought and what is on display in the Serra. This information should be front and center right as visitors enter the building. Clear signage should also direct visitors to the Mezzanine Gallery exhibits directly above the space (which also encourages additional circulation through the retail space).

THE LIBRARY, UPPER GALLERY, EDUCATION PROGRAMS & OFFICES

The Library on Opening Day, 1929

THE LIBRARY, UPPER GALLERY, EDUCATION PROGRAMS & OFFICES

Interfacing with Young Visitors

The Serra's Library (now called the Education Room) opened as one of the Serra's signature interior spaces: contemporary photographs of the 1929 opening depict a sparsely furnished, vaulted room with nearly empty perimeter shelves and judiciously positioned antique fixtures. As SDHC evolved and began to fill the Serra's rooms with its burgeoning collection, from the late 1940s the Library became the home for the archives, its shelves filled to capacity with original records, catalogued photographs, and other artifacts of San Diego's history.

After 1982, the Library gradually became the Serra's *de facto* meeting space, used for screenings, lectures and other public programs. Renamed the Education Room, it also became home to the Serra's school programs, targeted history-driven curricula for elementary school students (4th-6th grade) who visit the Serra Museum as a city-funded field trip.

Gradually, exhibits and interpretive graphics have been installed in the Education Room to assist instructors as they conduct their activities on site. These daylong field trips for area students have become one of the Serra Museum's most important programs, even in California's fluctuating budgets for educational outreach, with several thousand students taking part in these programs annually.

SDHC's Education Room is not the only area within the Serra where these activities take place. The programs have evolved over the years to encompass more of the building and grounds. When weather permits, much of the day's programming takes place on the historic grounds of the Serra and Presidio Park, while, within the Serra, one of the children's most popular activities involves student reenactments of historical moments using props and costumes, and utilizes the Upper Gallery and its theatrical seating. The Tower ascent is another key location for youth-themed exhibits, and is explored more fully in the next chapter of this plan.

Current Conditions

The Library/Education Room remains one of the Serra's signature spaces, retaining its airy, vaulted feel and generous proportions even after 8+ decades of intensive use. Set aside for presentations, video screenings, and meetings both for SDHC and for outside groups, its "multipurpose" flexibility is somewhat limited by the presence of dated exhibits created for school groups in the early 1990s. These exhibits, cabinets and drawers are primarily installed in the niches occupied, until the early 1980s, by the Library's original shelving systems.

Much of the Library's original fixtures remain in place, or can be easily revealed on the removal of largely superficial layers of drawers, shelving and graphic panels. Just three short steps down divide the room from the Serra's Main Gallery, but these are significant, as they prevent disabled visitors from accessing the room and exhibits therein. The lighting within the space is currently somewhat limited; a more successful multipurpose and exhibit space will certainly need better spot and overall lighting to enhance displays and reduce eye fatigue during meetings and presentations.

Interviews with SDHC's education director and senior-level teaching staff have indicated that the exhibits within the Education Room - and the room itself - have over time been used less and less by the visiting school groups. Teachers prefer to conduct their lessons in other areas of the Serra and grounds, and to use the Education Room primarily for screening videos. Existing teaching materials lack the desired portability for instructors to bring their lessons outside to the Museum exterior and to the various archaeological sites around it.

The adjacent Upper Gallery, with raised-tier seating and cross-beams, remains in very good condition, and is a key space for educators. It needs little more than a general freshening up of its surfaces, carpeting for floor seating, and some replacements for the lighting grid.

A little-used storage space on the upper stairway serves as a fine candidate for a future office/administrative space. Spacious but low-ceilinged, the room will need superficial construction and updated electrical and data ports, but is otherwise quite serviceable.



The Library, as seen during regular museum hours

Recommendations

For the Library, our recommendations are built around improving the space's multipurpose flexibility, allowing it to remain the Serra's designated area for presentations, meetings, and additional programming related to the core or temporary exhibits. Like the Mezzanine Gallery, the Library is viewed as a space that can foster more community presence within the Serra: hosting storytelling nights, movie screenings, lectures by invited authors, historians, scientists, etc. This more thoughtful interior fit-out will also allow the Library to serve as additional spillover and reception space for weddings and other revenue-generating events, maximizing the Serra's facility-rentals income and bringing the room to the "conference center" benchmark also advocated for the Main Gallery.

SDHC's education team have remarked on numerous occasions on their vision of the Library as an "artifact center", allowing young students to "think like a historian", using the modern-day B.A.R.F. (bones, artifacts, relics, and fossils) teaching methods to better understand history and important themes.

To that end, our recommendation is that, like the Main Gallery, every effort be taken to restore the space to its original 1929 state. These are not major renovations being advocated, but merely the restoration of the room's original color, and the removal of all "niche" exhibitry, displays and didactic interpretation. A few well-chosen enhancements can then be installed to increase the room's flexibility.

We feel that a good balance should be struck between the showcasing of artifacts – key to SDHC's educators – and the decor of a proper meeting room. The educators have remarked on the dearth of artifacts at the Serra: from the Presidio's archeological digs, from the Mexican period, and from Spanish Era San Diego. For these valuable artifacts to be presented, some measure of security protocols, lighting and interpretation will be required. For this, we advocate one or more of the Library's now-empty alcoves be fitted out with contemporary,

lockable cases – built flush to the room's perimeter dimensions – containing gridded arrays of these valuable artifacts. With low-profile fiber optic lighting, the artifacts will be handsomely illuminated and presented to the visitor. Interpretation can be treated in a minimal fashion: spare, low-profile labeling or, as seen in the Main Gallery, small touchscreens/iPads on adjacent armatures.

These cases will add to the room's interior ambiance as a meeting and event space, while providing considerable content for Museum visitors during regular hours. By being confined to the perimeter and existing alcoves, the casework also maximizes available floor space for audience seating, additional dining tables for receptions, etc. We also advocate switching the Library's screening system from the oversized monitor currently in place to an HD-compatible overhead projection system, with a mechanized screen and low-profile speakers. A higher-quality screening and audio capability, with available seating for 40 or more, allows the Serra to schedule programming that complements current and temporary exhibits, while attracting non-traditional audiences at non-traditional hours.

For more tactile "teaching tools" in the Library – touchable artifacts and tools, charts and graphic interpretation, key to SDHC educators and their lesson plans – we recommend that one of the alcoves be converted into a 'false cabinet': a teaching station that, when not rotated out for use, becomes a seamless element of the perimeter wall. This cabinet will contain a carefully-selected array of fossil and artifact reproductions, graphic panels, charts, and other teaching tools, refined with the collaboration of SDHC educators and staff.

Recommendations (continued)

Another need educators and staff have expressed is for experiential exhibits that can teach the water story to the students, emphasizing modern (and ancient) technologies San Diegans have used to bring water to homes and businesses. This adds a science-based curriculum to the existing history-driven lessons, increasing the Serra's funding sources for school programs and overall student visitation.



The Library, with school group on site and opened-out education cabinet

The Main Gallery exhibits have been formulated with these recommendations in mind, telling the water story from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The Central Interactive table features programs and animations targeted to young visitors, and is supplemented at either end by physical, scale models of the Old Mission Dam and the San Diego Flume: two of the most remarkable examples of San Diego's early water story. Also helpful for children is the repurposed "teaching trunk" along the south wall (cast from the existing 16th c. Spanish furniture) with its multitude of pull-out drawers, touchable replica artifacts, and other tactile elements, keyed to the teachers' programs.

Finally, we recommend that the Upper Gallery retain its tiered seating, and perhaps even be decorated as a "stage" with a colorful backdrop and/or video projections that evoke early San Diego. This stems from what teachers insist is the most popular activity of all: costumed role-play. Students assume historic roles – George Marston, Fray Serra, and others – and act out key scenes from the past. These costumes need to be refreshed and updated, and new characters created to bring the program in line with today's curricula (such as Kate Sessions, the horticulturist who helped create the plantings around the Serra Museum and Balboa Park, or Mary Chase Walker, Old Town's first schoolteacher). Enhancing the Upper Gallery scenic elements is a cost-effective way to increase students' absorption of key themes, while designating the room as a *place for children* that, well away from the Serra's ground level, lets the Serra's other programming continue uninterrupted by schoolgroups. This will become an important consideration when the Serra Museum expands its public hours after renovation.

Recommended Components (Library)

Alcove Exhibit Cases

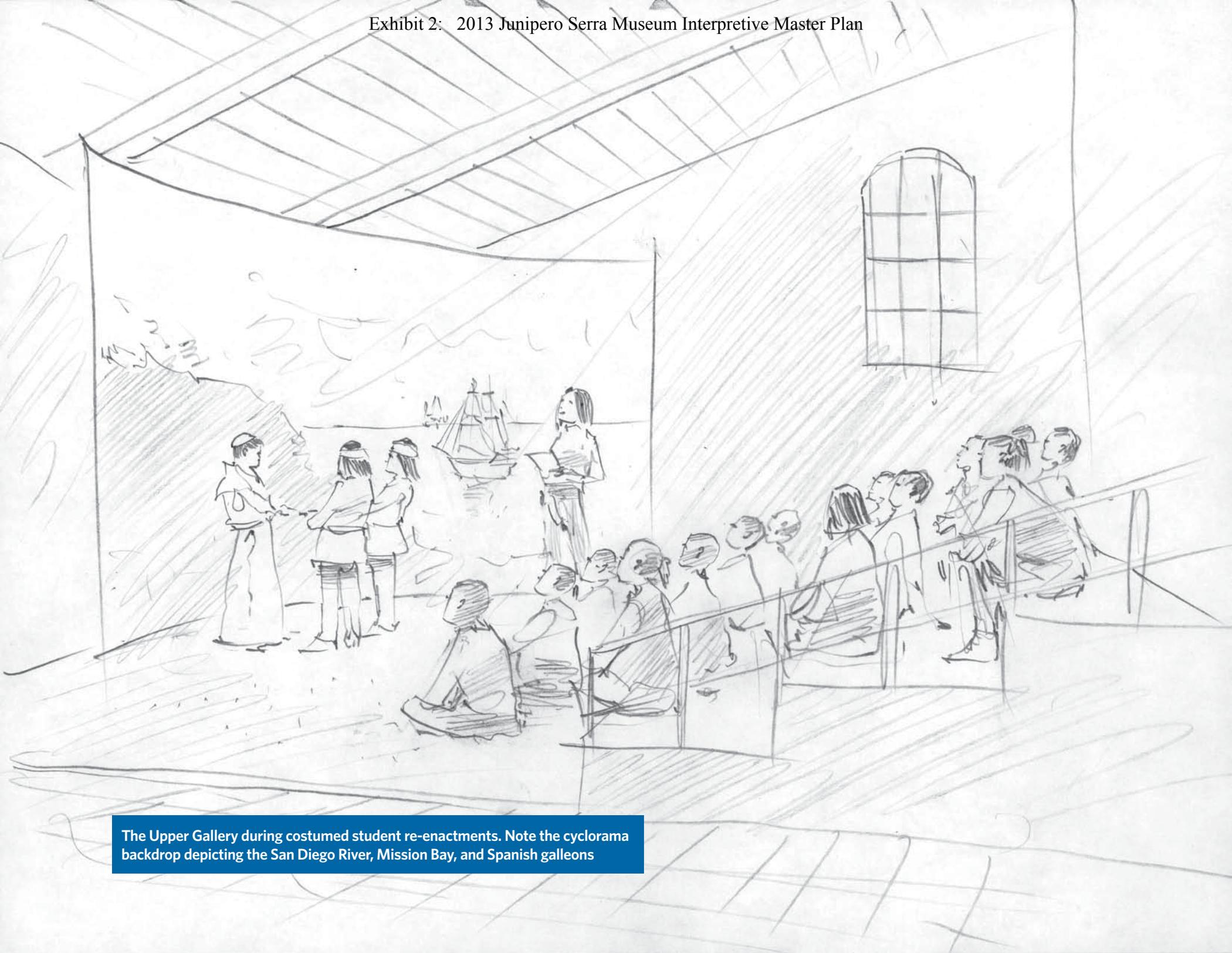
These artifact cases (one to three stations) will be positioned within the existing Library alcoves, and can be based on the original forms of the 1929 library's shelving to fit the Main Gallery's array of facsimile reproductions/castings. The cases will be secure, with fiber optic interior lighting, and hold artifacts from SDHC collections (and possibly from SDSU as well), focusing on the archaeological excavations in the Presidio and Old Town, as well as early-American, Spanish- and Mexican-Era artifacts of the city's history. Attached iPads or other small-scale touchscreens will furnish simple keyed interpretation of the artifacts.

"Hidden" Teaching Cabinet

We recommend building this display into the large alcove above the Library's doorway on the east wall. Consisting of lesson-driven exhibits, touchable artifacts, charts and other teaching tools, this cabinet becomes a central gathering area for the students. When not in use, the cabinet can be closed flush into the wall, but easily opened by on-site staff for younger visitors interested in viewing the exhibits outside of school-group hours.

HD Projection and Audio

We recommend a mechanically-controlled screen be placed into the large central alcove on the Library's south wall, replacing the existing freestanding monitor. Flanked by flush-mounted low-profile speakers (complemented by rear units on the opposite wall), this system can provide HD-resolution projection for meetings and presentations, exhibit-related documentaries, video content for outside rentals, etc. Additional hardware might also be set into an additional "hidden cabinet" alcove, and contain various media players, connection hardware, sound-board, etc.



The Upper Gallery during costumed student re-enactments. Note the cyclorama backdrop depicting the San Diego River, Mission Bay, and Spanish galleons

Theatrical Backdrops, Lighting and Costumes (Upper Gallery)

Used as a 'theater' and activity room by SDHC educational staff, the Upper Gallery needs few enhancements to become a more suitable space for these activities. The existing risers may need to be reframed and strengthened in places, and the carpeting replaced. The room's lighting is rather dim and unattractive, and will benefit from a track of ceiling-mounted spot- and flood-lights. We also advocate a thicker, more colorful carpet for the gallery's floor, so that children and "actors" are more comfortable seated on the ground, and that the gallery's walls be enhanced on two sides (the "stage") with a simple painted or wall-graphic backdrop - set back from the historic walls. This backdrop might be a scene of early San Diego, with the river running into Mission Bay and Spanish ships seen arriving into the harbor from the sea. Other treatments might include a curved, reflective screen that can accommodate projected backdrops via laptop input.

Portable Teaching Tools

Instructors in the Serra Museum's school programs plan much of their student visits around outdoor activities, visiting key sites around Presidio Park while learning about the archaeological significance of this landscape. To augment this experience, it will be extremely effective to have a few "teaching tools" in place that instructors can bring with them from the Serra. Based on the popularity of the Presidio model currently installed in the Main Gallery, we advocate that a smaller, portable version be produced that reflects the current understanding of the structures and their locations beneath grade, allowing children to visualize the layout of the buildings and to more clearly imagine how these soldiers, missionaries and Kumeyaay residents of the fort lived their daily lives. Additional aids might include a large-scale flip-book of overlaid transparencies, showing how the Presidio changed over time and how the site has been used over successive centuries.



The Library, configured for presentations and screenings

THE TOWER: ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION



THE TOWER

A Vertical Architectural Journey

The Serra's Tower crowns the building with its trademark weather-vane, and has always been among the museum's most distinctive features. The Tower was originally accessed from an exterior staircase (now gated shut) that wound up around the square interior before leading to a windowless peak reminiscent of the classic bell-towers of 18th century mission churches. The 1950s addition of an interior access staircase from the Main Gallery, effectively doubling the Serra's available interior space to accommodate SDHC's expanding collections. Windows were added to the Tower's two 'floors', and the resultant rooms gradually contained a wide variety of exhibits and displays, a layout that continues to this day. A narrow perimeter balcony opens out from the north-facing window atop the Tower, offering majestic, if somewhat obstructed, views out onto many of the City's landmarks.

As it was originally created as an exposed, all-weather space, the Tower is constructed sturdily, if bare, with many exposed beams, cornices and stairs. With thinner concrete walls and a profusion of windows, the Tower is one of the cooler areas within the Serra during the winter months, and can be equally stuffy and hot on sunny, breeze-free days in the summers.

Current Conditions

The Tower's windows are 1929 originals, and while they've stood up admirably, are showing their age: these lack UV protection for the displays and let in more of the elements than would contemporary glass. The ascending staircase is solidly built, perhaps too solidly, of thick uninsulated concrete capped by a considerable steel handrail. The lighting of the Tower floors is somewhat minimal, provided by an exposed track light grid with several floodlight bulbs.

The exhibits themselves offer many different displays and interpretive styles, but have aged in their frames, with much sun-bleaching. The mural that runs up the stairs from the Upper Gallery to the Tower's lower floor is colorful, but painted directly onto the uneven stucco wall-surface; the stairwell is also too narrow to view it properly, while pausing there creates congestion for others. The lower-floor case-work and exhibits are from different eras, seeming to clash in their graphic approach and themes: a flip-book timeline game seems the most recent installation, which abuts a photo and document display that has faded from years of direct sunlight. The displays don't appear attached to any single historic theme, but rather about providing contexts - popular songs, clothing styles, entertainments - of San Diego in the time of the Serra Museum's 1929 opening, alongside large-format photos of its dedication ceremony and its "Founding of California" pageantry. Much of this subject matter will be addressed by the interpretive programs planned for the ground floor, detailed in previous chapters. A targeted mini-exhibit on the lower floor is much more successful, using cutaway full-scale elements to explain the Serra's unique construction methods, which, among other innovations, combined poured concrete and rebar with the more handcrafted methods of Mexican craftsmen, who were imported specifically for their expertise in traditional adobe construction. The top floor currently has (locked) access to the perimeter balcony, and features one enclosed exhibit case and two wall-mounted panels, in worn condition.



Portrait of Serra architect William Templeton Johnson, circa 1930

Recommendations

Based on the success of the construction-methods exhibit on the Tower's lower floor, and the Tower's status as an iconic feature, we feel that this zone is an ideal location to showcase and interpret the architecture. The absence of drop-ceilings and inner wall construction highlights much of the interior coffering and structural beams, and show how the Serra was actually constructed. An expansion of the existing exhibit on the Serra's building materials will provide richer insights into its unique combination of historic and modern craftsmanship and design, all anchored by Johnson's 1927 scale working model of the Serra Museum. The model still exists in SDHC collection storage, in remarkable condition for its age, and served as a near-exact blueprint of the final building.

And by focusing on the architectural story of the Serra, its surroundings, and key figures – architect William Templeton Johnson, visionary urban planner John Nolen, and horticulturalist Kate Sessions – a much wider net is cast. The Serra is not only a showcase example of an architectural movement – specifically Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival – which had a profound effect on Southern California still felt today: it's also been essentially unaltered in any way since its 1929 opening. Viewing the Serra as a living time-capsule of architectural practice, the interpretation will also explore the work of Johnson, Sessions, Nolen and others in larger contexts. John Nolen in particular, as a famed proponent of the City Beautiful movement and follower of Frederick Law Olmstead, brought San Diego into the national spotlight as a planned paradise, and is revered in San Diego even today as much for the projects he wasn't able to realize here as for the work he completed.

As a physical space, the Tower does have its limitations. The natural light streaming in the windows is brilliant, but also damaging, and even with added UV gels we would not advocate exhibiting any valuable paper or photographic artifacts (those currently on display exhibit significant sunbleaching damage), but rather reproductions, large scale wall-graphics, etc. To this array we would simply add 1-2 of the cast 'donor benches' for seating, as previously described in the *Main Gallery* and *Mr. Marston's Office* chapters.

We also suggest removing the existing staircase mural from the Upper Gallery level to the Tower. While colorful and well-liked by visitors, it is painted on an imperfectly-prepared surface, and is beginning to flake and fade. It makes the approach to the Tower floors claustrophobic within the narrow stairwell, while also not entirely covering up the doorway to a “hidden” alcove storage area (now planned for administrative offices and storage for supplies).

The Tower’s upper floor has been the subject of frequent discussion by the planning team, with no real consensus on a preferred approach. As the ‘top’ of the Serra, it has been suggested that it could serve as a potential, revenue-generating observation deck experience for San Diego, with its views out onto San Diego from all sides. However, the views themselves are partially obstructed, both by the elevation and tree height of Presidio Park around it and by surrounding landscape. The views from the Tower are actually less spectacular than that offered on the portico terrace (where a sturdy viewscope was mounted in the 1960s-1970s.)

Whether or not well-planned tree-trimming will improve the view, there is also the public safety issue of allowing visitors out into the open air of the perimeter balcony. As described before, the exterior stucco and paint are in disrepair, and there may be significant load requirements required for exterior access that are beyond the scope of the Serra as built: adhering to code may require that the building be physically altered, which of course should be avoided entirely.

We recommend that, for the “bell-tower” space on the upper floor, physical exhibitry be kept minimal. The narrow space is cramped for even 4-5 visitors, and any artifacts are in danger of becoming as light-damaged and faded as those one floor below. To unite the Tower with themes found throughout the exhibits, we suggest creating an ‘augmented-reality’ view through the four windows. These will first need to be repaired/replaced with thicker, tempered glass for better insulation, along with a basic UV coating added to reduce glare. Graphically stylized line drawings can then be applied directly onto the glass, depicting the landscape of San Diego as it appeared precontact: the original course and breadth of the San Diego River, the presettlement coastline of Mission Bay and its wetlands, and the

surrounding hills and mesas before the age of large-scale landscaping, housing developments and Mission Valley’s superstores. These stylized “outlines” will not block the viewshed in any way: they’ll enhance it. The visual juxtaposition of eras shows (rather than describes) the massive physical effect of mankind on the landscape and its ecologies, and encourages a far more visceral viewing experience. In some ways this effect can be seen as the summit of the interpretive exhibit programs visitors have encountered on their way to the Serra’s ‘peak.’ And, much like the view the etched lines represent, the message is communicated completely without the modern technologies seen elsewhere in the Serra’s interpretation. Accompanied by simple wall-texts that describe the process behind the illustrations, this can become one of the Serra’s most impressive, and cost-effective, interpretive offerings, and a truly contemplative space.

Recommended Components and Actions (Lower Floor)

Mural Removal

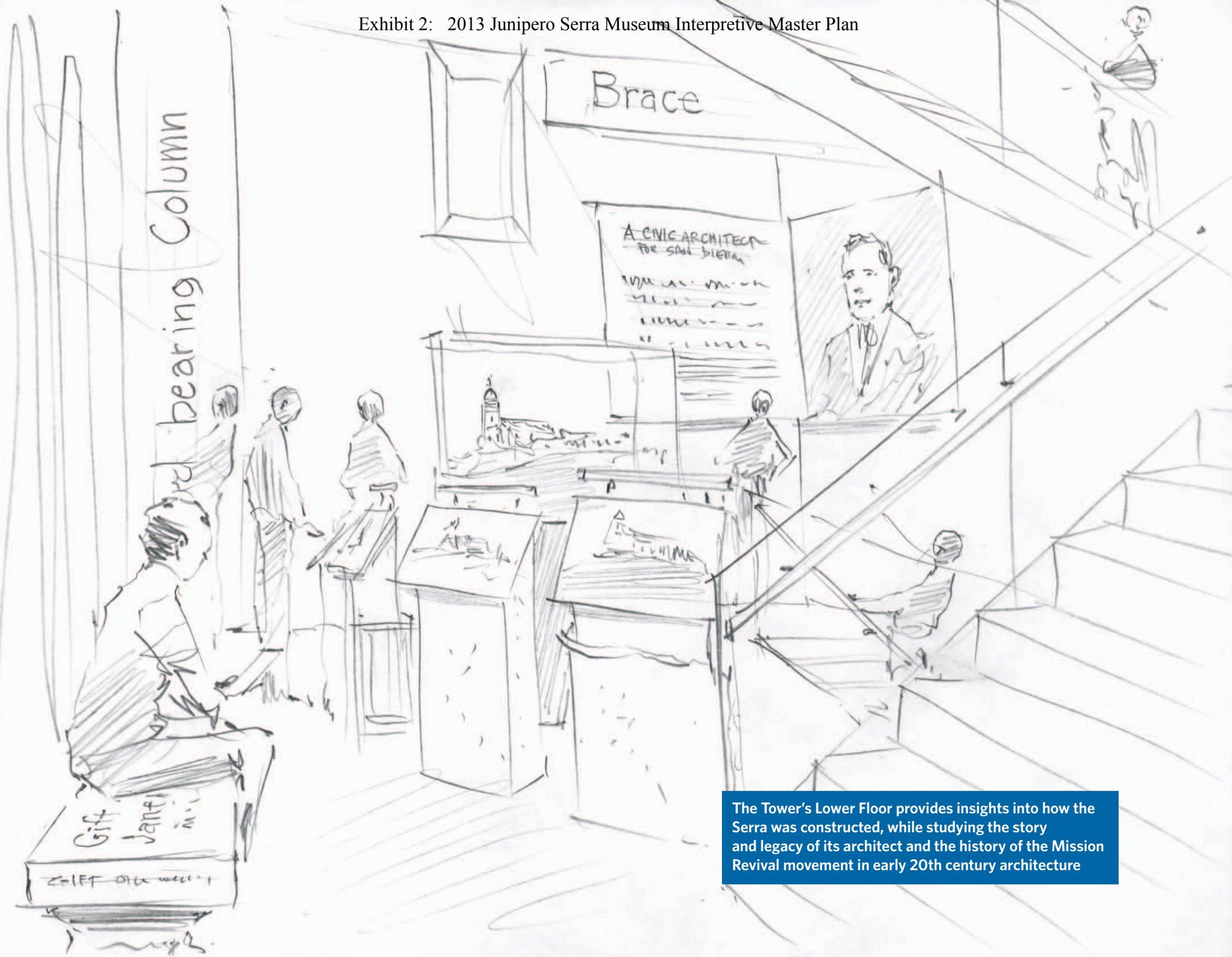
The existing color mural on the lower stairwell will be removed and the wall repainted. To limit the amount of light pollution streaming down above, this paint might also be most effective in a darker, less reflective color.

Window Repair and Replacement

With the assistance of the Serra’s preservation architect, the four windows of the upper level will be repaired and/or replaced. Thicker, tempered glass will provide better insulation from heat and cold, and a UV coating will mitigate sunlight damage and eye fatigue.

1927 Serra Model, Case, and Interpretive Panels

William Templeton Johnson’s scale architectural model of the Serra will be exhibited in a protective, pedestal-mounted UV glass case in the center of the room. Interpretive panels will be affixed to a rail on all four of the case’s sides, depicting the original buildings and conceptual drawings that inspired Johnson’s ‘collage’ of visual styles behind the Serra, and examining the effect this style had on the greater Mission Revival style of the American Southwest. The model remains in fine condition currently, but will need some superficial repairs, repainting and the replacement of several brittle scale topiaries.



The Tower's Lower Floor provides insights into how the Serra was constructed, while studying the story and legacy of its architect and the history of the Mission Revival movement in early 20th century architecture

The Serra: A New Paradigm

Using and expanding on the Tower's existing exhibits that demonstrate the Serra's unique building methods, these displays take a look at the museum's structural innovations, fusion of heritage adobe craftsmanship with modern concrete-and-steel framework, and the enormous infrastructure required to bring water for the museum and the thousands of plants introduced on the bare hillside by Marston and his team of horticulturists and gardeners. The physical exhibits are also aided by the many callouts that draw attention to the Serra's complex system of armatures, beams and supports, elements that are highly visible in the Tower in particular.

John Nolen: Making (and Unmaking) San Diego

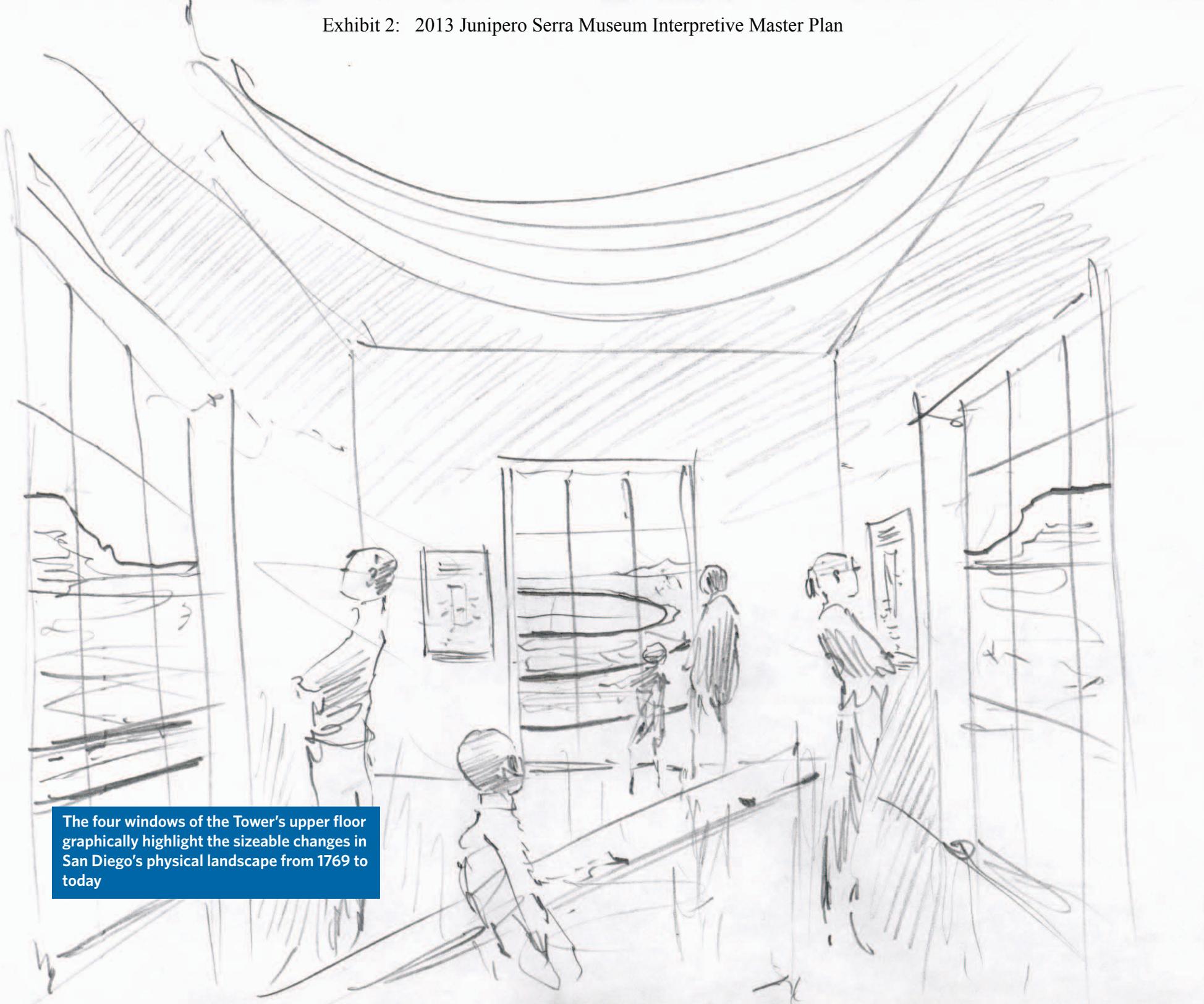
Nolen's working concepts for Presidio Park and Balboa Park are seen within his wider vision for San Diego (drawn from his 1908 and 1924 urban plans, sponsored by George Marston), and his prolific town planning work for cities such as Madison, Wisconsin and Mariemont, Ohio. Predominantly a mural-based display, this exhibit will be mounted floor-to-ceiling on one or more of the level's walls.

Donor Bench/Benches

An exact casting from one of George Marston's 16th c. Spanish furnishings - whether from resin, aluminum or other materials - these benches will provide limited seating while also opening up the potential for donor recognition or corporate sponsorships. It may also prove that the entire lower floor can also be a sponsored experience, acknowledged in the wall graphics or other mounted media.



Templeton Johnson's existing model of the Serra Museum anchors the story of its innovative design and construction methods.



The four windows of the Tower's upper floor graphically highlight the sizeable changes in San Diego's physical landscape from 1769 to today

Recommended Components and Actions (Upper Floor)

Window Repair and Replacement

With the assistance of the Serra's preservation architect, the four windows of the upper level will be repaired and/or replaced. Thicker, tempered glass will provide better insulation from heat and cold, and a UV coating will mitigate sunlight damage and eye fatigue.

Two Vistas

These detailed line drawings are applied directly to the treated glass on all four windows of the Tower's upper floor, and illustrate how the landscape, river course, shoreline and bay appeared in the year 1769, just before contact with Spanish soldiers and missionaries occurred on the Serra Museum site. Accurately researched and depicted, and arranged to the same forced perspective created by the viewing angle. through the windows themselves, the image is a powerful display of civilization's incalculable impact on this landscape and its ecological fabric. The display will be accompanied by small wall-mounted panels for each of its four views, which will call out particular contrasts between ancient and modern San Diego: the drastically different shoreline, the disappearance of marshes and wetlands, sculpting of the hillsides, etc.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING, EXHIBITS AND SIGNAGE



Opening Ceremonies, July 16, 1929

EXTERIOR LIGHTING, EXHIBITS AND SIGNAGE

Making a Memorable Place

When the Serra Museum opened in 1929, it was widely acclaimed as a powerful symbol for the young, vibrant port city. Though austere in its design, a style largely derived from the blocky, utilitarian construction of the Spanish-Era missions, it was lit with all the Art Deco flourish of its day, emphasizing every corner and detail, and towered over San Diego like a beacon. It could be seen from miles in any direction, and was the key directional landmark for the sparsely developed area.

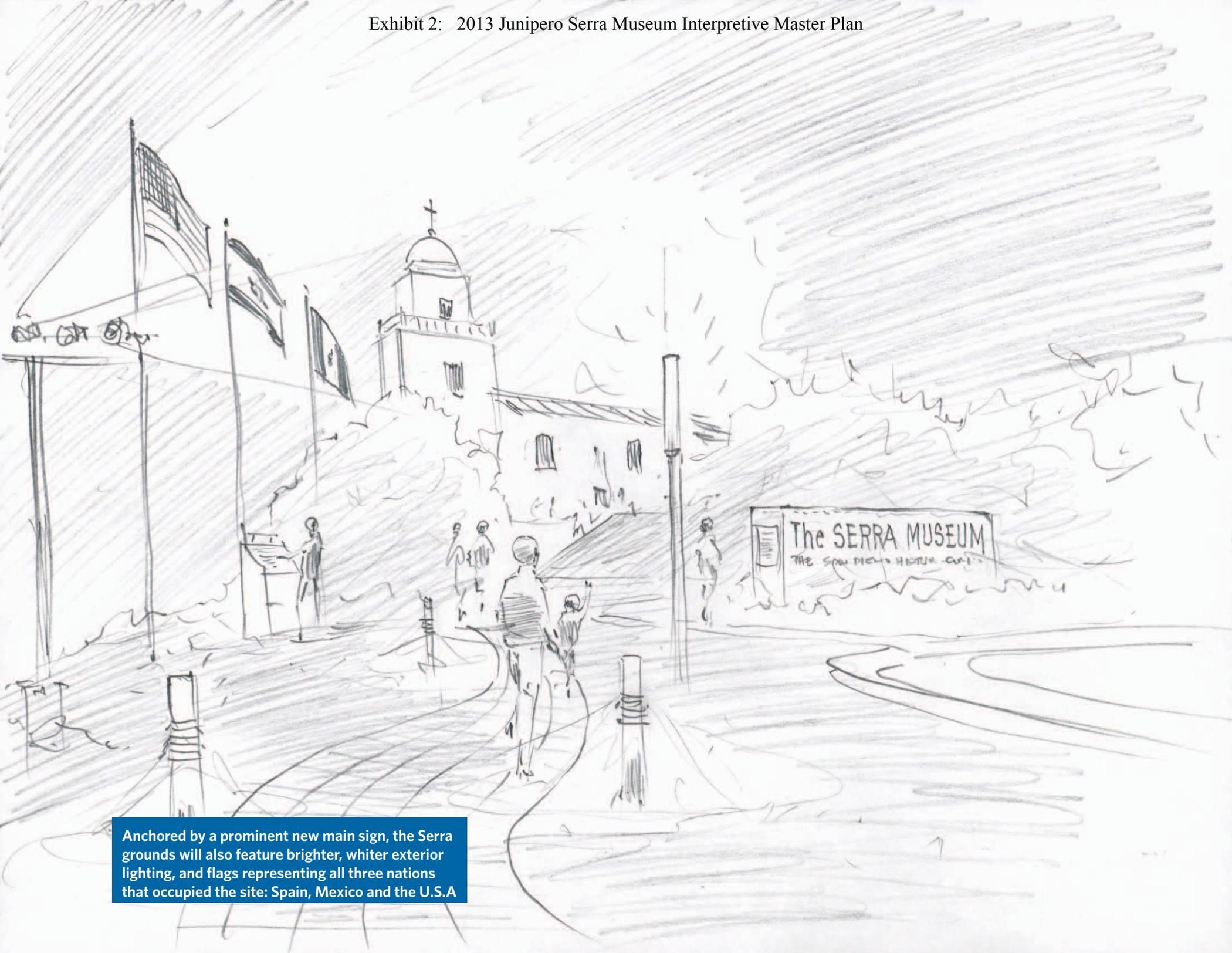
Ensuing decades witnessed intensive growth around the Serra Museum and Presidio Park. By 1965 the famous hill was literally “walled-off” by the construction of the I-5 and I-8 freeway interchanges, industrial development along the nearby waterfront, and commercial and residential expansion deep into Mission Valley. New landmarks – universities, housing tracts, retail corridors – arose on the surrounding hilltops, and the Serra eventually became one of many architectural sights in the city’s center. These developments cut the Park off from much of San Diego’s daily life and rhythms. Today, while still viewed as a secret oasis for many visitors, the Serra Museum remains a difficult place to access for many visitors. Measures need to be taken to improve access to the Park and visitors need a better grounding in the rich history and natural wonders that surround them. While thousands of plants and flowers have been lovingly maintained, on the most spartan of budgets, by Parks & Recreation Department and a cadre of devoted volunteers, a new, focused program, emphasizing access and infrastructure as well as landscape maintenance, should be considered a priority. Once they’ve arrived, many visitors also can’t often get a clear picture of what the Serra Museum *is*, and often as not return to their cars after ascertaining that the building they assume is the old Mission de Alcalá was, unfortunately, closed.

Current Conditions

Whether approaching Presidio Park from Old Town, from the freeways or from surrounding Mission Hills, access today is far from intuitive. There is little city signage that directs motorists to the site from the freeways or from Taylor Street (the most direct route), and no indica-

tion, anywhere in Old Town, of what the towering white building in the background might be. The turnoff to Presidio Drive isn’t signed from Taylor Street, and motorists who guess correctly also pass several ballfields, a recreation center, and a Kosa’aay village marker before finding a small, slightly askew sign pointing them uphill towards the Museum. The parking lot, while ample, misses the opportunity to orient visitors, identify the building and its hours of operation, and hint at the Park’s singular historical legacy. Several well-intentioned programs of site identification and interpretation have accumulated over recent decades, but these signs do little to create a comprehensive understanding of the Serra Museum; with their mixed hardware, messaging and general state of disrepair, their effect is rather of the opposite.

The Museum’s exterior lighting, seen so brilliantly on the facing page, no longer projects the Serra’s tower and architectural profile for miles around. While the hardware still exists, and the poles and fixtures remain in place, only one of the three lighting arrays is presently used by the City: only the Serra’s northwest corner is clearly lit at night. The park’s predominant sodium vapor lighting – used both for the exterior arrays and for various fixtures on the building and grounds – looks increasingly dated, and the yellowish hue they cast over the building in is unattractive. And while the Serra’s portico and south stairway entrances are reasonably well-lit, much more of the building and grounds are decidedly underlit and murky once the sun goes down. This lack of lighting is even more pronounced in the surrounding park, where at night, even on the access road, the landscape is nearly featureless, with little vehicle traffic and almost no visible police presence. That, combined with the area’s lack of foot traffic and the nearby homeless encampments, makes visiting the park after dusk an unappealing prospect. Brighter, more thorough lighting will help make people feel more secure at the park at all times, increasing the length and frequency of their visits, and stitching the Serra more fully into the city’s daily life.



Anchored by a prominent new main sign, the Serra grounds will also feature brighter, whiter exterior lighting, and flags representing all three nations that occupied the site: Spain, Mexico and the U.S.A

Recommendations

Major improvements to roadway and freeway signage – likely involving sustained efforts with the respective city, state and federal agencies – will require a long, bureaucratic process, and thus lies outside the scope of this document. Yet a simplified intuitive wayfinding and directional signage program can increase visitor traffic to the Park and Museum, streamline orientation, and minimize confusion. While a comprehensive, multi-agency effort will need to involve input from the wider community – including the Old Town SHP planning board, the City’s Department of Transportation, and Mission Hills and Mission Valley Community Planning Groups – we also feel they should also be consulted for our minimum recommendations. These include a medium-sized identification sign at the corner of Taylor Street and Presidio Drive, a larger directional sign at the base of the hill, and a directional for the parking lot turnoff. Additional distance and directional signs – at the Old Town Transportation Center; near the Taylor Street “Hotel Circle” exit off I-8 (Morena Blvd.) on the east side of Presidio Park; and at Taylor and Juan Streets – added later, can further direct and choreograph the arrival experience for visitors.

Once they’ve arrived, visitors face a core ambiguity: *what is this place?* Certainly, to a careful eye, the identity of the Serra Museum and Presidio site can be picked out from the various signs, bulletin boards, and (on the building itself) commemorative plaques. But the reality is that many visitors, even lifelong San Diegans, believe that the Serra is actually the old Spanish mission itself. Our recommendation is to address this confusion with a bold, well-lit main sign for the Serra Museum at grade: either on the grass median between the parking lot and Presidio Drive on the approach to the entrance (where the current bulletin board is located), or on the grassy slope of the west lawn. This sign will need to be carefully constructed, and can’t compromise the architectural setting and contexts. It will also be a significant expense – doubtless requiring a below-grade archaeological survey – but will go a long way in expressing the Museum’s identity, alleviating confusion, and underscoring the perception of place. The sign should also project Museum hours, a capsule version of Presidio Park’s history, and even directional information to the park’s other historic sites, while also adding its own illumination after dusk.

The Museum’s two distinct approaches from the parking lot – the lit staircase to the Portico/Main Entrance and the northwest staircase leading to the Terrace and Tower exterior – also create some initial confusion as to the proper entrance. This might be addressed with small directional signs for better clarity as part of the current recommended modifications or as part of a later phase.

For the Serra’s exterior lighting, we advocate that all three existing poles and fixture arrays be utilized. A brighter, “whiter” halogen or LED lamp system will not only reduce the power requirements and electrical expenses for the City, they will also cast the museum in a much more pronounced light, and far easier to identify in the busy cityscape. The Serra will be far more visible from directions other than the northwest (i.e., from I-8, Mission Hills, and the east side of Old Town). To bring out the architectural details of the building itself, we also advocate a modest system of up- and spot-lighting. These all-weather fixtures would be best placed on the Serra’s sloping roof; from the balcony rails of the tower; and near the famous weathervane crowning the Tower. Underlighting from the North Terrace would add an “Art Deco” luster, while also creating sufficient ambient light to view the rail-mounted interpretive panels, facing the San Diego River, planned for the West Terrace.

Near the one working lighting array are three flagpoles, two of which dramatically flutter the colors of the United States and Mexico, with Point Loma in the distance. The third flagpole stands empty. To lend an additional sense of authenticity and place, we advocate that a third flag be added. Whether that of Colonial (18th c.) Spain or the the country’s modern-day flag (the politics of this salutary usage are murky), flying the flags of all three nations that have owned this landscape would lend strong, symbolic power, particularly each July 16th, when the “founding of California” is celebrated at Presidio Park. A fourth flag, representing the Kumeyaay tribal groups, would be even more affecting, and should be strongly considered. Even with limited funds for on-site interpretive signage, we advocate that a small sign be attached or place near the flagpole array, describing the hill’s long history across these respective cultures and its symbolic importance. This grounded interpretation is the essence of placemaking.



As seen in this photograph from 1935, the Serra Museum's exterior portico exhibited many of the larger artifacts in SDHC's collections.

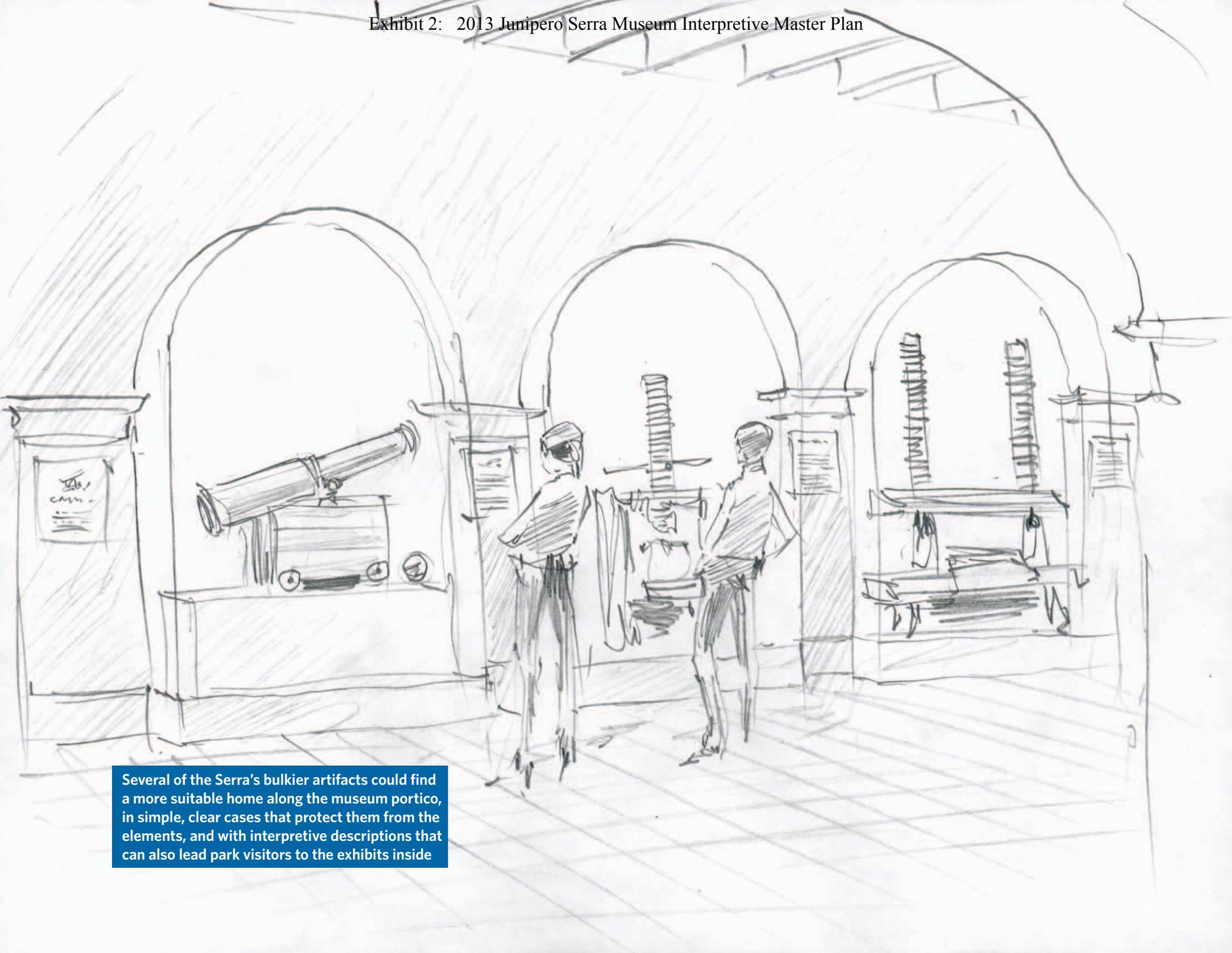
While exterior interpretation should be minimized – too much bolted and affixed signs and panels can dilute the fluidity and impact of the architecture, and invite vandalism – they should be part of any exterior renovations. Some recommended elements are simply versions of exhibits that have come and gone from the Serra’s exterior over the past decades. Well into the 1970s, the exterior portico not only held the ancient Spanish wine press seen today, but also many of the millstones, wooden artifacts and other objects now found in the Main Gallery. As seen at left, these were arranged along many of the portico’s columns. And while today’s San Diego is perhaps more severe than those simpler times when artifacts could be left ‘lying around’, we do advocate that some objects might be preferred in an outdoor setting. The “Jupiter” Cannon, for example, a Mission-Era artifact now flanking the entry to the Main Gallery; it would be better served as an exterior display, whether lining the portico or even as an accompaniment to the flagpoles previously described. As a key placemaking artifact, it will arouse greater curiosity on the grounds, and a small interpretive panel can underscore its role in the Presidio story. We also advocate that the wooden press now on view in the Main Gallery join its more aged sibling as displays in the “covered” arched portico walls.

For many years in the 1960s and 1970s, a mounted viewing scope stood on the Serra’s Main Terrace, offering phenomenal images of Mission Bay, Point Loma, and the harbor. It was placed there for a fine reason, as, even today, many couples and families hike up to the terrace at dusk for its great views of the City, as their children roll playfully down the hill below them. Combined with the viewing areas planned for the Tower (detailed previously), the scope can underscore the perception of the museum as San Diego’s “viewing deck”, and be an additional attraction during off-hours (whether operated by coin slot or not). To facilitate the famous “rolling” down the grass hill, we also advocate a small staircase down to the grass from the scope’s position, to make the process safer for children and their parents.

The Serra’s North Terrace – tucked around the rear of the museum, and little visited today – will hold a row of rail-mounted interpretive panels (and potentially viewsopes) that face out onto the channel of the San Diego River adjacent to Presidio Park. These exhibits, rather than addressing historical importance of the river, will examine the river as it exists today, weaving in the ongoing narrative of conservation, restoration and land and water health that SDRC advocates with its acquisitions and programs. Here, viewers will learn see how nonstop freeway traffic, urban infrastructure and intensive commercial development have restricted the river’s natural course and floodplain, and why that reduction has caused such frequent flooding, erosion, and damage over the years. Narratives will also examine the many changes being enacted due to the efforts of the SDRC and other like-minded organizations, what the future holds for the San Diego River and other vital county waterways, and what interested visitors can do to help these projects come to fruition.



The North Terrace is ideally positioned to look out onto the San Diego River and the modern forces that have shaped its current appearance.



Several of the Serra's bulkier artifacts could find a more suitable home along the museum portico, in simple, clear cases that protect them from the elements, and with interpretive descriptions that can also lead park visitors to the exhibits inside

Recommended Components

Directional Signage

These signs can be freestanding or, depending on cooperation from the respective agencies, placed on existing hardware. These signs guide motorists, cyclists and pedestrians more clearly to the Serra Museum from Taylor Street, Old Town Transit Center, from the base of Presidio Drive, and from nearby "Hotel Circle".

Main Sign

This large, internally-lit sign identifies the Serra Museum and SDHC. Additional side panels provides basic museum information – hours, collections, etc. – while leaving a 'lightbox' area to promote changing exhibits, special events, even wedding announcements.

Exterior Lighting

The three existing light poles will be capped with new LED or halogen fixtures, significantly improving overall coverage and increasing the Serra's visibility from distance. To highlight the building's architectural detail, various "key lights" will be placed on the exterior: as a raking light across the clay roof-tiles, on the Tower balcony and weathervane, and as uplighting from the terrace and portico walkways. Existing fixtures should be rewired to accept halogen/LED fixtures, while additional fixtures should be added for greater overall illumination.

Flags of Four Nations

To the existing flags of the United States and Mexico we recommend adding the flag of Spain to the third, unused pole. A flag flying the colors of the Kumeyaay should be strongly considered, along with a small mounted descriptive panel.

Portico Exhibits

The exterior portico is a popular spot for sightseers, photo sessions, and receptions. While we recommend that several artifacts – the *El Jupiter* cannon and the Main Gallery's large olive press, for example – be placed there, these displays would be set against the portico's railing, alongside the extant wine press, so as not to inhibit crowd flow, and will be accompanied by small interpretive panels. Some consideration should be given returning some of the bulkier artifacts – grinding stones, pestles, etc. – to their previous outdoor arrays.

Viewscope and Stair Access

Positioned at the same location it occupied in the 1960s and 1970s, this rotatable viewscope (we recommend SeeCoast or a similar heavy-duty brand) can look out on Mission Bay, the harbor developments and beyond, from the fine perspective the Serra's situation affords. Whether it's a 'pay-per-view' or free-use exhibit is yet to be determined. From there, a short staircase will lead from the portico terrace to the famous grass hill, where children can roll gently down the slope, much as their parents like did when they were young.

North Terrace Interpretive Exhibits

Along the terrace's low white wall, this series of rail-mounted porcelain enamel panels brings the San Diego River story into the modern era, and looks towards its current and future health. The North Terrace faces directly out onto the busy traffic of I-8, the river channel, and into Mission Valley. Aided by some judicious tree pruning to clear up sightlines, this will be an ideal place to flip the story around: rather than interpreting how the river helped sustain and provide for early San Diego, we see what the modern city's phenomenal growth and dense infrastructure have done to the river. By studying the region's all-too-frequent floods that have persisted well into the current century, these exhibits transition into more scientific viewpoints covering the importance of wetland environments, land and water health. Narrative sidebars detail the mission and activities of the San Diego River Conservancy and its affiliated organizations, along with what courses of action are being planned today and in the future to make the river play a larger part in the daily lives of San Diegans. These exhibits could also be augmented by locked- or free-position scopes that let viewers focus in on the issues expressed by the interpretation: the artificial narrowing of the San Diego River's natural floodplain by development in Mission Valley, the reduction of wetlands around its terminus in Mission Bay, and the intensive impact on the river's course by support structures of the I-5 and I-8 freeways, among other developments. Ideally, these exhibits will clearly tie San Diego's urban culture to its ecology, working to foster a greater awareness of the river, and of the continuing importance of improving its health and that of the landscape around it.



Mission Valley, viewed from the Serra's portico terrace in 1929

San Diego History Center

A Note on the Sefton Room

The Sefton Room, originally designed as the “Tool House,” across the portico from the Main Entrance (see pages 22-23), is another of the Serra’s signature architectural spaces. With its elegant, vaulted ceiling, it is similar in proportion and detail to the Library, yet the room has persisted since the Museum’s 1929 opening as an unfinished affair, and has never been able to be properly utilized by SDHC or its staff.

This unfinished quality is due to its construction. For reasons that remain unclear to this day, the slope of the hillside leading down toward the Serra’s site was never fully excavated on its southern end, meaning that the Sefton Room was built literally into the hill. This necessitated a staircase to divide the room into two levels, featuring a small entryway at grade and a staircase leading to an upper platform of two raised “mezzanine” floors. This divides the room’s 16’ x 16’ layout into three small spaces on multiple levels, and made it difficult to program the space, or to utilize it for much more than Museum offices and storage.

The staircase remains in place today, and the room’s utility has diminished. It’s no longer used as dedicated office space, and instead has become an all-purpose catering prep area and electricity source for outside events and caterers, with a small sink and bathroom for their use. Even this use is presently suspect – the electrical utility box used by event staff and DJs has been rent from the wall and lies uncovered on the entry landing. Events along the Serra’s portico generally use electricity brought from the box to outdoor fixtures and equipment via multiple, consumer grade extension cords. This is necessary because the portico itself is inadequately wired, with only one working AC outlet spanning its length. With water also constantly being carried back and forth above the junction box and power cords, it represents a serious safety hazard.

The same hill that cuts into the Sefton Room also comes quite close to the south side of the Serra’s roof, making it dangerously easy to access for vandals and other explorers. However, the city’s solution – barbed and razor wire strung across an aging chain-link fence – is not only dangerous, it lends a foreboding atmosphere to the rest of the Museum site, and is the first thing a visitor encounters when reaching the Museum’s upper stairs from the rear slopes of Presidio Park.

Recommendations

While the Sefton Room’s upper walls, vaulted ceiling and architectural details mark it as the equal of any other space in the Serra, its bi-level platform makes access awkward and dilutes any spatial unity. In order to use the Sefton Room’s floor plan as designed, a major effort would need to be undertaken: demolition of the Museum’s eastern side, the excavation of many cubic yards of earth, a new foundation, and extensive repairs and construction, a task that could easily reach into the upper six figures, and well outside the purview of this plan.

However, some alterations are not only recommended, but, in light of this document, absolutely necessary. The utility box will need to be removed from its resting place on the floor, next to the sink and toilet: no city inspector would permit it, for multiple reasons of code adherence. The wiring will need to be checked, grounded and stabilized. In addition, several more dedicated electrical outlets should be added to the portico for outside events and receptions, negating the need for multiple extension cords to be run out from the Sefton Room, and its attendant hazards.

The stacked razorwire and barbed-wire barrier will need to be seriously considered, and the costs weighed between the Museum’s security and insurance requirements and the negative aesthetic effect of its placement. Ideally, some sort of less imposing measure – a small retaining wall, better fencing, etc. – will need to be explored.

For the interior, we advocate a minimum of intervention. The Sefton Room currently serves as a caterer staging and storage area in a somewhat haphazard fashion. The removal of worn shelving and other fixtures should be accompanied by new shelving units for storage on the entry-landing and lower platform, a new sink, and a dedicated area for table and chair storage. The Sefton’s upper platform could easily be utilized going forward as supplementary office and storage areas for the Museum and its event planning staff, effectively doubling the administrative space (when added to the “stairway office” between the Upper Gallery and the Tower) made available in this plan.

THE JUNÍPERO SERRA MUSEUM: A NEW IDENTITY

THE JUNIPERO SERRA MUSEUM: A NEW IDENTITY

Underscoring a New Interpretive Vision

When, in 1982, SDHC moved to its Balboa Park facility, the Serra Museum had seen more than 50 years of intensive use as SDHC's exhibition space, collection storage, working library, and administrative center. During this period, the Serra Museum naturally became strongly identified with SDHC and its collections, and was seen as a key symbol of the organization. In the thirty years that have followed, however, the public association of the Serra with SDHC has naturally diminished, and its perceived mission made more diffuse.

The programs of new exhibits and renovations detailed in this planning document are outlined to make the Serra more of an active institution and key landmark for San Diego, and for Presidio Park to be cherished and recognized as the birthplace of what would become California. However, to really fulfill its new role and potential the Serra's strong interpretive vision also needs to be wedded to a unique identity that reflects the building and its sense of place. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, *there needs to be a there there*.

However, several recent initiatives by SDHC must be considered before going forward. SDHC itself is still feeling the effects of its own very recent rebranding efforts. As many are well aware, SDHC had long existed as the San Diego Historical Society before being recently rebranded as the San Diego History Center, with a logo and color palette. This fresh identity and institutional name is still very much a "new" direction in the public perception, and should guide any new directions taken on behalf of the Serra Museum.

A natural approach might be to design a graphic identity and/or wordmark that can be derived from the SDHC logo, uniting the Serra graphically as part of the SDHC 'family'. However, the design of the existing wordmark adds some inherent difficulty to that proposition. The long wordmark and blue globe act both as identity *and* graphic logo for SDHC, and there is no real intuitive place to append the Serra Museum within the identity that doesn't detract from its design.

While the design of an actual logo is not within the parameters of this planning document, careful attention will need to be paid to 'brand positioning' and perception throughout the renovation and implementation process.

A few creative approaches can be mentioned here as potential directions for future study. The signature SDHC blue is accompanied in the graphic design template by several complementary colors (which also frequently appear in this document). These could be utilized in concert with the existing typography to build a Serra Museum logo that works convincingly off the what's been developed for SDHC but can also serve as a standalone wordmark. A brief sample sketch to illustrate this idea:



The SERRA

Beyond a new wordmark, the Serra Museum benefits from a strong public identification with its iconic white tower and dome, and any graphic approach to the identity design could certainly make use of that existing image capital.



This speculative illustration shows how a logo for the Serra Museum might be accommodated within the existing graphic framework of the San Diego History Center's existing, recently re-branded identity.

THE SERRA  MUSEUM

VISITOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

ADA COMPLIANCE AND RELATED STRUCTURAL RENOVATIONS

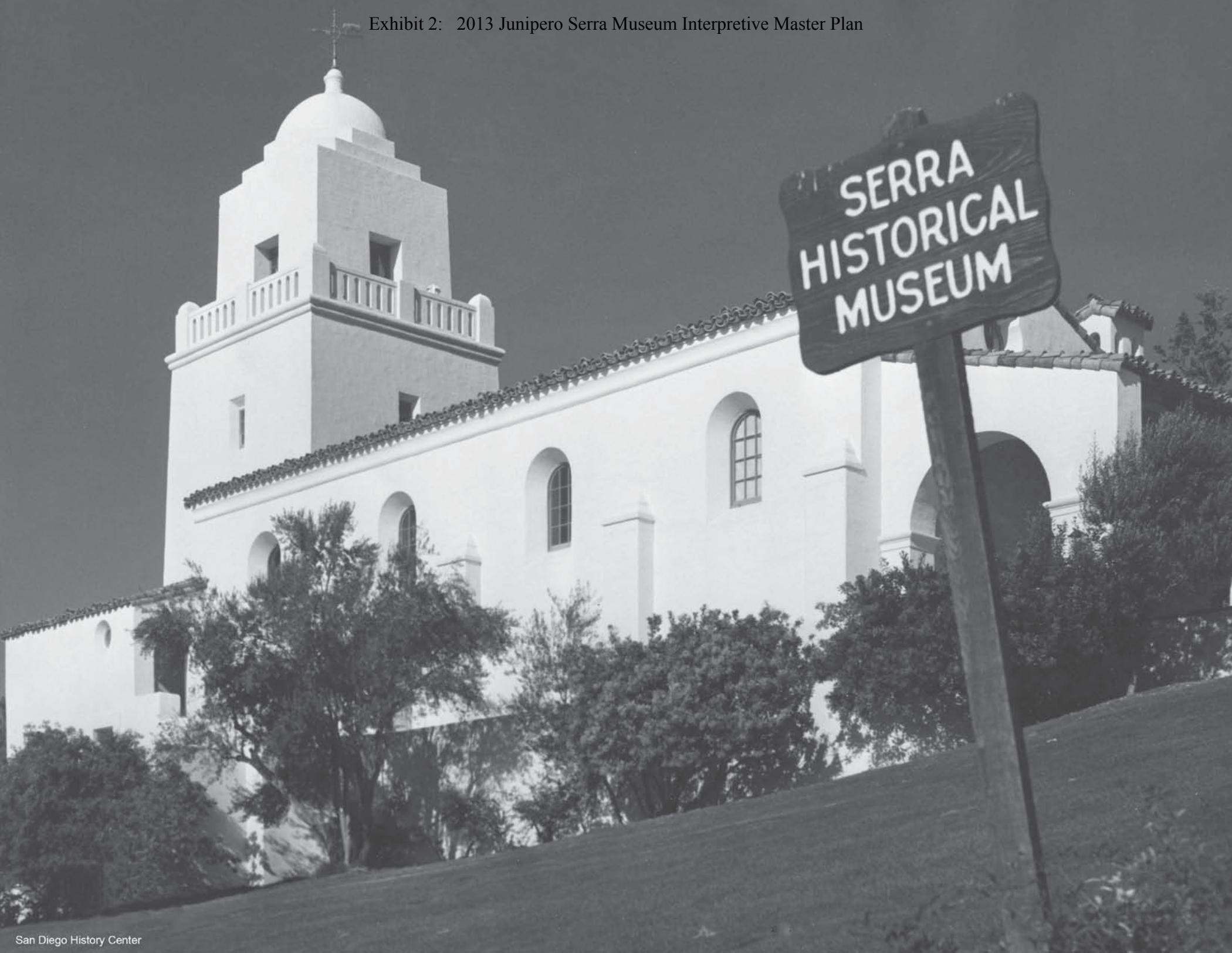
The Serra Museum, June, 1960



Set dramatically atop Presidio Hill, and sporting multi-level terraces, galleries and viewpoints as major elements of its distinctive architectural footprint, the Junipero Serra Museum has presented challenging access issues virtually since the time of its construction in 1929.

As part of the Interpretive Planning process, C&G Partners contracted with Heritage Architecture and Planning for a preliminary review of accessibility needs at the Serra, primarily to determine to what extent, if any, the proposed Interpretive Plan might be impacted by these issues. The results of this review regarding interior impacts were taken into account as part of the planning process.

While outside of the scope of this Interpretive Plan, improved accessibility and full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act remain a key priority for the San Diego History Center. As the Junipero Serra Museum is owned by the City of San Diego, and because of the historically-important nature of the building and site, the issue of accessibility will require its own complete study, implementation and funding plan.



CONCLUSIONS

This Interpretive Master Plan has come together with wide-ranging input from a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines and, while no means exhaustive, presents a detailed zone-by-zone approach to refreshing and refocusing the Junipero Serra Museum's curatorial and administrative approaches. While exterior renovations lie predominantly outside of the scale of this document – due to the landmark status of the museum's architecture and Presidio Park's status as one of the state's key archaeological sites – the interior renovations have been guided by the principle of returning the Serra to the spare, pristine public space of its 1929 opening, reframed through current practices, technologies and materials.

The recommendations for the programming have adhered to tenets created through the San Diego History Center's vital institutional partnership with the San Diego River Conservancy. The Serra has long stood as a sentinel over the course of the river as it heads to sea from Mission Valley and beyond, and we have accordingly centered the interpretive programs – both physically and thematically – around this *spine* of the San Diego River.

The Serra is also a lens gazing clearly into the past. One of the key landmarks of the Mission Revival style in architecture in Southern California, it has stood essentially unaltered since its dedication ceremonies of July 16, 1929. While this has created some structural (and infrastructural) anachronisms that will require careful future study and careful application of modern renovations, the building has proved exceptionally durable over many decades of intense use. Some superficial additions – expanded interior and exterior lighting systems, repainting, electric cabling, and limited climate control – are advocated here. A more robust series of interventions – stabilization, ADA-compliance, reconfigured restrooms, etc. – lie beyond the directives of this Master Plan, and will require careful future collaborative study by the City of San Diego, the San Diego History Center, and with local communities, sponsors and stakeholders.

The recommended additions and interventions will nevertheless incur considerable costs, with these programs divided into phases that will require respective capital campaigns and public-private funding, along with concentrated curatorial and design efforts. These plans will also require significant changes to the SDHC's existing administrative plan, and draw significant resources for staffing and operations, which the proposed exhibits, programs and raised public profile have been designed to offset, and ideally, exceed.

The goals for this Interpretive Plan are multifaceted, and while a planning document of this kind is inherently created to accommodate later changes, additions and clarification as its proposed exhibits and treatments are refined from concepts to actualities, it is our shared belief that the core principles that inspired it will remain constant. That the Junipero Serra Museum stands today as one of San Diego's most valuable cultural resources, a key icon of its signal eras of growth and maturation as a major port city and cultural center; and that Presidio Park, and the incredible archaeological legacy that lies beneath its slopes, is now, more than ever, needs to be assume its place alongside the most important historic sites in the Western United States.

