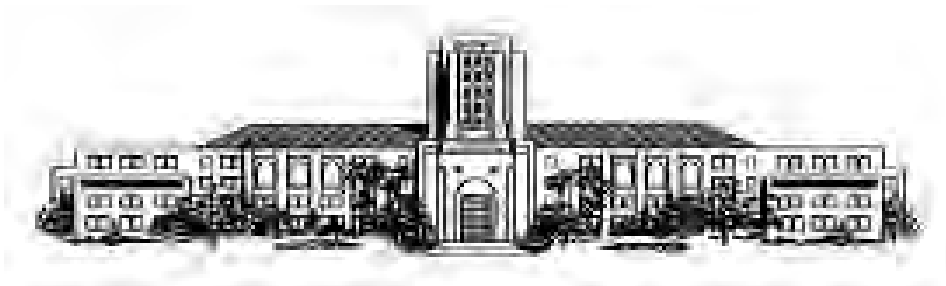


Bridging the Centuries: The Jewel on the Bay



**Commemorating the History of the
County Administration Center**

3rd Edition



***Bridging the Centuries: The Jewel on the Bay* is the third edition of the history book about of the San Diego County Administration Center.**

Beginning in 1902, San Diego's civic leaders crossed many hurdles before construction could begin on this public building. *Bridging the Centuries* examines its history and gives us a glimpse into the region at that time. It also commemorates the many San Diegans who held to their vision and overcame numerous obstacles in bringing this grand building to reality. This building's legacy began in 1938 with its dedication by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The County Administration Center stands as a testament to the strength, vitality, diversity, livability and beauty of this region.

This book tells its story.

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, County of San Diego,
July 2025

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Preface

Originally published in 1998 and updated in 2012, this revised 3rd edition commemorates the continuing history of the San Diego County Administration Center (previously known as both the Civic Center and the City and County Administration Building). It is intended to serve as a general resource for all who are interested in the history of San Diego's jewel on the bay.

This book began as a project of the Clerk of the Board in 1996. Much like the planning and construction of the County Administration Center, it has been made possible through the commitment, hard work, and support of many people and organizations. In the first edition of this document, covering the first sixty years through 1998, the core narrative was prepared by Sara Kendall, a resident of San Diego County and an undergraduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, while serving as an intern in the Clerk of the Board's office. Ms. Kendall conducted extensive research, weaving together a variety of sources that not only provide a history of the County Administration Center, but also give us a glimpse into the growth and change in the region. It also commemorates the many San Diegans who held to their vision and overcame numerous obstacles in bringing this grand building to reality.

The San Diego History Center, The San Diego Union-Tribune, and the City of San Diego Central Library were magnificent resources for information, drawings and photographs. The San Diego County Credit Union generously sponsored the printing costs, and Partner Press printed the book and donated a portion of its services, making it possible for every school, library and historical society in the county to have a copy of the original 1998 publication in their collections.

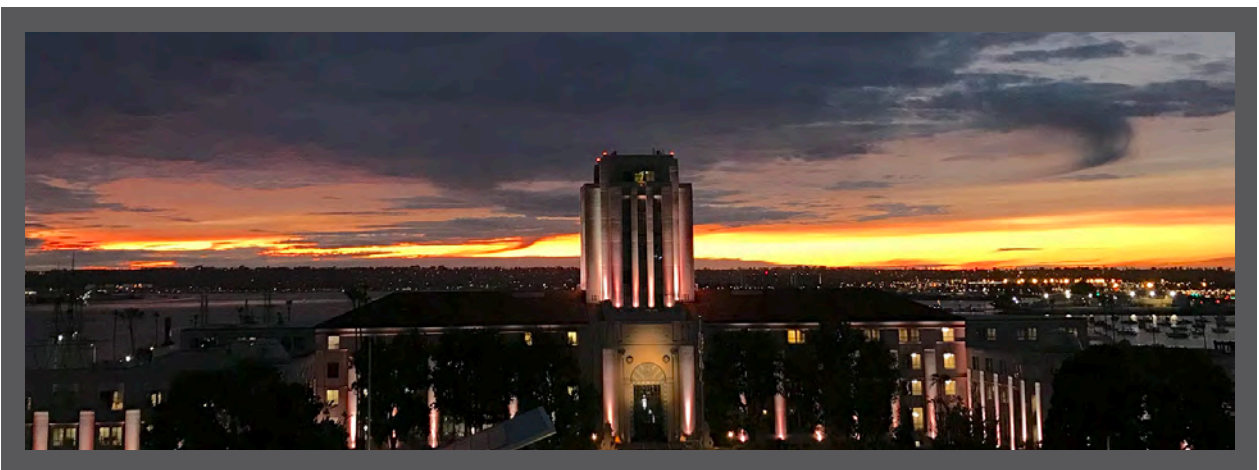
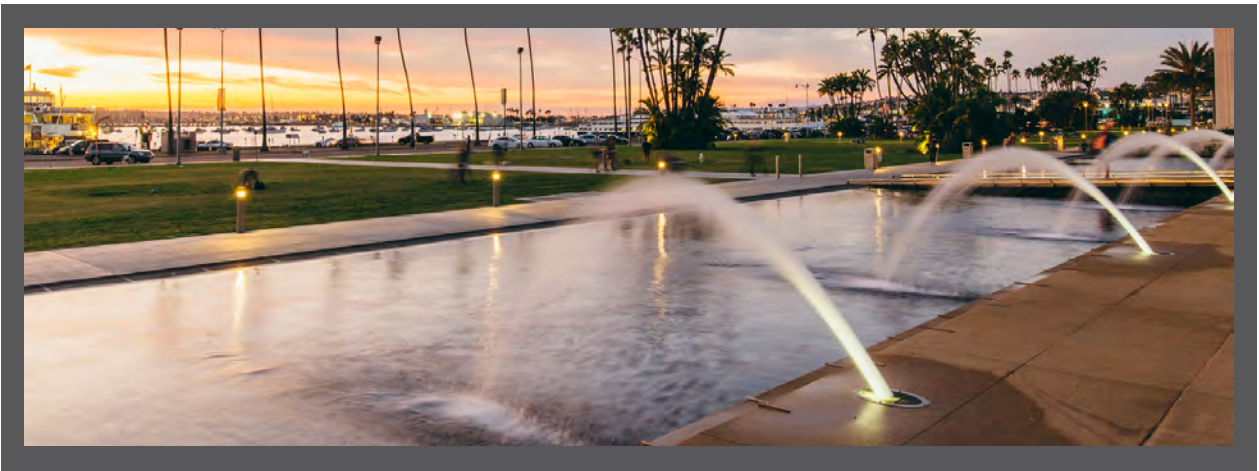
This revised edition was created by Garrett Henderson, a resident of San Diego County and an undergraduate student at California Polytechnic San Luis Obispo, while serving as a student worker in the Clerk of the Board's office. This edition provides

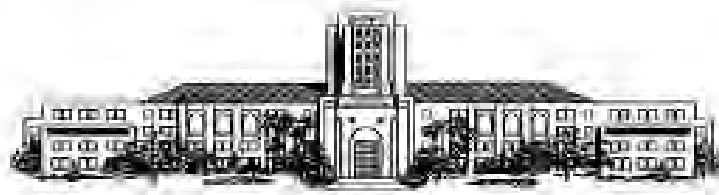
updates on the County Administration Center's major historical renovation, as well as the significant capital improvements that have ensured the preservation of this important structure. It also reflects the recent focus on sustainability to ensure the conservation of the region's natural resources. Details regarding the historic art collection and the novel Waterfront Park are also included. With new technology, this updated, interactive version, which includes interesting video clips, is now available to the world on the internet.

The County Administration Center stands on the bay, welcoming residents and visitors alike, symbolizing the highest aspirations and ideals of public service – that “the noblest motive is the public good.” The County Administration Center serves as a bridge between the centuries – a rich past coupled with a sense of hope and excitement for the future. We honor the people who helped construct the building and those who continue their legacy of public service today.

Andrew Potter
Executive Officer
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors







City planners began dreaming about the construction of a Civic Center for San Diego not long after the turn of the century. The aesthetics of such a project may have originally driven affluent city leaders, but it soon developed into an administrative necessity. As the region grew, both City and County government services expanded and offices were scattered throughout downtown San Diego. Many government officials and the public-at-large believed that concentrating offices in one location would improve the efficiency of government. For about a decade, the question of whether the Civic Center would be built occupied many City and County proceedings, and even made its way in front of the voters. Timing was the project's worst enemy, with World War I and the Great Depression diverting public attention and support. But while the Depression dashed hopes of funding the project locally, it would eventually be the impetus for the Civic Center's construction, as the center became one of the largest federal projects to be built in the state of California. The completion of the Civic Center, now known as the San Diego County Administration Center, brought with it the success of creating a source of civic pride in the midst of the Depression.

The Era Preceding Construction

Conception of the Dream

"The present outmoded and inconvenient Civic Buildings of both the City and County do not reflect the progressive sentiment of the majority of the Citizens of this County, and hinder, rather than help the development of our great agricultural, scenic and maritime resources." Claude Wilson, president of the Northern San Diego Chamber of Commerce, August 9, 1937.

As early as 1902, civic leaders began voicing their desire for a building to house both City and County offices. The old City Hall on Fifth Avenue was quickly becoming too small; and the County didn't even have a main building. County Supervisors met in an old courthouse, with other offices housed in the Spreckels Theater Building on Broadway. Other offices for both the City and County were spread out throughout the downtown area. One citizen summarized the situation by complaining that "our city hall building is an old rattle-trap, dilapidated, dangerous, disgraceful; that our courthouse is utterly inadequate for the county business. We are in desperate need of a Civic Center of new modern buildings to house the greatest business of the community, our government work."¹

In 1907, a group of citizens formed the Civic Improvement Committee (later known as the Civic Center Committee) that would greatly influence public support on this project. The first president of the committee, community activist George White Marston, brought in an up-and-coming city planner from the East Coast to evaluate the situation. This planner, John Nolen, published

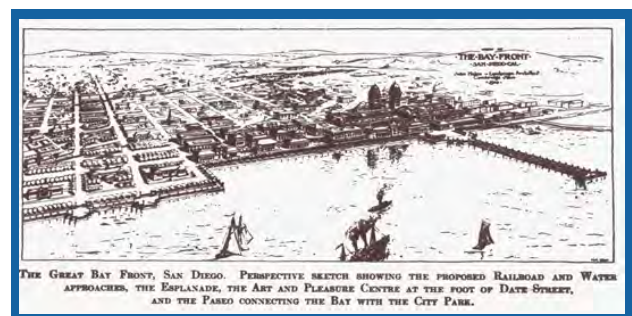
his first evaluation of the city in 1908, which was financed almost exclusively by Marston. Nolen would later become a common reference in San Diego civic planning; his work provided the basis for numerous waterfront development proposals and provided the framework that initiated Civic Center construction. The plan, which called for a Civic Center in the heart of downtown San Diego, was able to capture the attention of so-called "progressive" citizens, but it failed to rally the support of the public at large. Five years later, proponents reintroduced Nolen's 1908 plan, but shifted the site to a less expensive location. This, too, failed as the public was distracted by the threat of war in Europe and the plans already underway for the 1915 Pan-Pacific Exposition. City officials held back considering this or any other plans for almost a decade.

After World War I (1914-1919), the Navy began expanding its military installations in San Diego, boosting the city's economy. This led to a revitalized interest in the Civic Center as citizens united to form a Civic Association, again headed by George Marston. At Marston's request, the ideas of the Nolen Plan were resurrected in 1923.² Recognizing the growing interest, the Board of Supervisors passed Resolution #39993 in January 1924, which officially invited the Common Council of the City of San Diego to confer with the Supervisors to discuss the possibility of a combined City/County building. The City agreed to appropriate \$10,000 for an updated study by Nolen. The city planner went to work again and recommended in 1926: "San Diego has needed a Civic Center for a quarter of a century or more, and should begin building it now. Such action would not merely give the city the buildings necessary for its municipal life, but would transform the civic spirit of the community, raise the civic pride of the citizens and attract favorably the attention of visitors."³



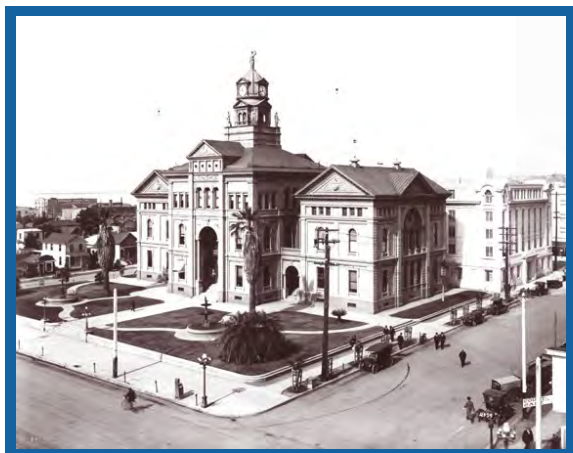
San Diego History Center

George Marston (center), along with John Nolen (right) and Ed Fletcher (left).



San Diego History Center

An illustration from the Nolen Plan showing the Civic Center along the waterfront.



San Diego History Center

The old County Courthouse as pictured in 1915.

Catalyzed by the work of John Nolen, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in 1926, acknowledging “the necessity for the erection of a public building or buildings in said city for municipal purposes and that the public convenience requires that said City join with the County of San Diego.”⁴ The Board believed that in consolidating two separate branches into one building, the citizens would benefit by conveniently conducting their municipal and county business in one location.

Not only would it be conveniently located, a new center would also make economic sense. Collectively, the City and County were paying annual rent of \$44,650 for the scattered government offices. If that money was used instead to help finance the construction of a Civic Center, the cost would be just \$43,000 per year. This also protected the County and City from increased costs in the form of higher rent. The rent issue served as a powerful campaign instrument for the proponents of the Civic Center plan. By 1927, official documents were circulating that referred to “the joint construction, erection and ownership of a building by the County of San Diego and the City of San Diego.”⁵

Examination of potential construction sites

Once the need of a combined structure was firmly established, it was time for taxpayers and the administrators to agree upon a location. Possible locations had been under discussion since 1908, when Nolen suggested the construction of the Civic Center near the Ulysses S. Grant Hotel, between “C” Street and Broadway. When Nolen originally presented his ideas to the city in 1908, the site that now houses the County Administration Center had been submerged by the

harbor. It wasn’t until 1914 that harbor dredging made construction a possibility.

In 1911, the tidelands of the San Diego Harbor had been granted by the State of to the City of San Diego on the condition that the city expend \$1 million for harbor improvements. As part of those improvements, the bulkhead was established and the harbor was dredged. The dredging materials were placed behind the bulkhead to fill in submerged tidelands, which eventually became the CAC property. By that time, the discussion of a civic center had fallen by the wayside. Nolen’s report in 1926 took into account the new developments, recommending that:

The best practical solution can be found in using the tide lands site between Atlantic Avenue [now Pacific Highway] and Harbor Drive as the Civic Center for San Diego. There is great distinction in such a site, and if properly worked out, the result cannot fail to be gratifying in many particulars. The disadvantages that attach to inharmonious surroundings can, by careful planning and control, be gradually overcome.⁶

Nolen envisioned the Civic Center as the cornerstone of a grouping of public buildings on the San Diego waterfront; the center would serve as the western anchor of a grand promenade that would link the bay with Balboa Park. His plan helped secure the City’s support of the site on the waterfront, and it was officially listed for the first time on March 8, 1926, when the city plan was adopted. A year later, citizens were given a choice between a site near the courthouse and the waterfront site in an election held on March 22, 1927. The majority of the voters approved the waterfront location.

Yet this was merely the beginning of a long series of decisions regarding location. The majority in the March election was very slight, and by no means was a final decision within sight. By April, the County had already altered its position, ordaining that “a public building for County and Municipal purposes be constructed, erected and owned jointly by the County of San Diego and the City of San Diego on the site known as the County Courthouse site.”⁷ One month later, the City followed the County’s lead with an ordinance adopting the courthouse site.

This drive for the courthouse location proved to be short-lived; by 1928 both County and City once again favored the tidelands plan, and attempts were made to finalize the choice. A bill introduced into the state legislature and signed by the governor on June 11, 1929,

provided that the land, owned by the state of California, was to be granted to the County of San Diego and City of San Diego as joint owners. Specifically, the legislation stated that the property be used for municipal purposes — such as erecting and maintaining county and city buildings upon that land — with payment of a sum of \$1,000 to the state of California.⁸

A bond election was held in 1930 to approve funding for construction on the tidelands site. The ballot measure failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority vote. In October 1931, with support from both the Board of Supervisors and the City Council, a Joint City and County Building Committee set out to “take into consideration any other site, in the City of San Diego which might be available for the purpose of a civic building.”⁹ This opened up the question of location again and, as before, the decision was turned around entirely.



San Diego History Center

San Diego Harbor as the dredging project began.

In 1932, a committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors suggested that “a building be constructed on the unoccupied portion of the Court House Block,”¹⁰ leading the City and County administrations to adopt that sentiment as well. The Board of Supervisors endorsed the courthouse location because members believed that separating administrative and judicial departments would result in a “less economic and less efficient administration of justice in San Diego County and would be detrimental to the interests of the citizens of San Diego County.”¹¹

Yet even this decision lacked finality. The joint committee researched numerous suggestions for potential sites, investigating the seven most viable. They set up rules for site selection, including being located on the fringe of, but not in the heart of, the high-value

business district. The three most feasible sights were described in a Civic Center Report submitted in August 1933. Excerpts read:

(A) COURTHOUSE SITE.

This property has long been occupied by the San Diego County Court- house. It is located between Broadway and “C” Street from Front to Union Street. It is limited in size. . . If it were to be incorporated in a Civic Center plan, it would be necessary to acquire at least four city blocks. This necessity of acquiring additional land, at heavy expense, is considered a most serious objection to this site.

(B) THE BALBOA PARK SITE, SIXTH AVENUE & DATE STREET.

This site received careful study, since its use for Civic Center purposes has been advocated by many people. It has the advantage of comparative nearness to the downtown business district. Analyzed exhaustively, the site presents serious defects. Steep topography would make construction of a harmonious group of buildings difficult. The cost of grading would be heavy, parking facilities would be inadequate, and there would be scant room for future expansion.

(C) THE WATERFRONT SITE.

This site, chosen by John Nolen, eminent City Planner, comprises about eighteen acres of land on San Diego Bay, from Ash Street to Grape Street and from Atlantic Street to Harbor Street on the bayfront. There is ample space here to provide for a magnificent group of public buildings, each one of which will enhance the appearance of the others, with ample facilities for parking and expansion. This area is available now for building without further legislation, and, in the words of the City Attorney in a recent opinion, “It appears that no impediment exists to the erection on this site by the City and County of such public buildings as they may desire.”¹²

The joint committee contended that the waterfront site was the best possible location. Of the three, it came nearest to fulfilling the committee’s own rules for site selection, which included a location on the fringe of, but not in the heart of, the high-value business district. This report played a large part in the final decision of City and County administrative bodies. While some of the opposition to the waterfront site came from citizens who felt that the alternate locations offered a more logical choice, others were concerned about potential hazards. Elmer G. Johnson, representing a group of public employees, stated:

To build a civic center on water-soaked, filled-in tideland, amid railroad tracks, shipping, fish canneries, sea gulls, and unpleasant bay odors and dampness, where women and girls will have to pass through tough parts of town (railroad yards, shipping and warehouse districts,) (8 murders not accounted for,) is not a very pleasant prospect. Public employees should vote AGAINST the civic center on the tidelands.”¹³

In addition to these concerns, many citizens viewed the waterfront site as a “perilous location” because of the height of the building and its proximity to the flight path of Lindbergh Field. Protests of the site went so far as to demand legal attention (see Entitlement Challenge section).

Securing the waterfront site

One strength of the waterfront proposal was its many prominent supporters. The San Diego Union, the Citizen’s Civic Center Committee, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and influential citizens such as George Marston all supported the project.

The Union blatantly expressed its support of the site in a series of editorials published in 1933. A December 15 editorial made the following arguments to reinforce the newspaper’s position: (1) the site was given to the city of San Diego for the purpose of building a civic center; (2) loans from the federal government would come only if it were demonstrated that there was a consistent, planned development; (3) the tideland was the only available site large enough for a civic center; and (4) the harbor site was recommended by one of the world’s leading city planners (John Nolen).¹⁴

The proponents succeeded in influencing both City and County administration. In October 1933, the County Board of Supervisors resolved that the courthouse site was “now wholly and entirely inadequate and insufficient” to house the administration building. On December 19, citizens reaffirmed that sentiment by voting for a second time to have the Civic Center constructed on the tideland site rather than the courthouse or park sites. With the support of the voters backing the decision, the location was secured on March 25, 1935, when the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution stating:



San Diego History Center

An aerial view of the future home of the Civic Center.

If the County of San Diego and the City of San Diego erect a joint building for County and municipal purposes, that then and in that event said building should be located and constructed upon that certain parcel of land described as that portion of the tidelands of the City of San Diego, lying between Ash and Grape Streets, and Atlantic and Harbor Streets, in the City of San Diego, a more particular description of which may be found in Chapter 778 of Statutes of 1929 of the State of California.¹⁵

From this point forward, the question of where the Civic Center was to be located was no longer an issue at the administrative level. The attention previously devoted to the location of the building was redirected towards finding a successful means of financing its construction.

Entitlement Challenge

While the waterfront site had many influential supporters, it also had its share of opponents. In 1934, a lawsuit made its way to the State Supreme Court that sought to prevent construction on the tidelands site. The case named City and County auditors, Chauncey R. Hammond and G. Frederick Waterbury, as defendants because they were responsible for carrying out the Board and City Council ordinances that approved transferring funds to the state to purchase the land. Under the 1929 legislation — which set the waterfront site aside for Civic Center purposes — the County and City had five years to pay for the land. If the lawsuit was settled in favor of the plaintiff, it would prevent the transfer of funds, and the land would remain under the ownership of the state.

In *Frank E. Atwood v Chauncey R. Hammond*, the plaintiff claimed that Chapter 778 of the Statutes of 1929, which set the land of the waterfront site aside for Civic Center purposes, violated Chapter 700 of the Statutes of 1911. At that time, the land had been “conveyed” to the City of San Diego, to be used for navigation, commerce and fishing. Although San Diego had permission to make improvements, such as railroads or piers, they did not have the right to transfer title of the tidelands. The plaintiff contended that the land belonged to the United States government and that the state of California had no authority to convey that property to “any person or corporation, municipal or otherwise,” and whoever held the land became charged with the obligation to make all the improvements in trust for navigation, commerce and fishing. According to the suit, constructing a building on that land would not fit into those specifications.

The appeal to the State Supreme Court asked for a permanent injunction to restrain the City and County from building on the tidelands site. Justice C.N. Andrews complied by granting a temporary restraining order, which prevented the payment of funds.¹⁶

The tidelands opponents jumped at this chance to criticize the harborfront site decision. One citizen of San Diego, Donald MacArthur, maintained a favorable judgment in the suit would relieve the City and County “from the disgrace of having a Civic Center built by the freight yards and the cream of our harbor industrial lands taken for an alien purpose.” The case was seen by some as an opportunity to rectify the decision of the governing bodies; proponents of other sites grew hopeful that the administration would be forced to reconsider their choice.

The suit also prolonged the process of securing funding for the planning stages. Civic Center planning was to be financed in part by the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA). Citizens expressed concern that SERA funds would be wasted on plans for a site that wouldn’t be approved during an era when funding appropriations were in high demand. One letter sent in protest to SERA stated:

On behalf of thousands of our fellow-citizens, we wish to enter a strong protest against any such SERA financial appropriations or work assignment, for the following valid reason: “As you will note from the enclosed Transcript on

Appeal to the Supreme Court of the State of California, said court is being asked for a permanent injunction to restrain the City and/or County of San Diego from using the so-called tidelands site for municipal and/or county purposes. “Our attorneys firmly believe that the Supreme Court will grant this permanent injunction, which naturally would nullify any and all work the SERA may be asked to undertake in this connection.”¹⁷

The San Diego Union

Wednesday, October 24, 1933

Shall We Build? Or Quit?

THE PEOPLE OF SAN DIEGO have had the courage and foresight and good sense to approve the Nolen plan of city development. They have displayed those constructive qualities in voting for the harborfront location for the civic center—the unique and outstanding feature of the city plan they adopted. The question today is merely whether they will vote the money to go ahead with the project they have undertaken, or whether they will back down and permit the city’s growth to progress at haphazard for another two years or so.

Nothing is less relevant to the issue than the desultory talk and the endless counterpropositions dealing with other possible sites for the civic center.

There is one and only one site under consideration now. It is the site suggested by the nation’s most eminent city planner, Mr. John Nolen, situated on the harbor esplanade that is also a feature of his plan, looking out over the harbor that is the city’s characteristic, valuable and most beautiful single possession. It is the site already approved by popular vote.

The question is whether we shall appropriate money to develop this site, to obtain the civic buildings so sorely needed—and to finance this construction at a time when new building can be done most economically and with the best general effect on the community.

If the people of San Diego wish now to re-open the whole question of possible civic-center sites, it is their privilege to do so. But to do it would be to discard all past progress, to abandon the consistency and sense of direction that comes of planned development, and to abandon all hope of actual construction for many years to come.

If we are to go back to the business of suggesting possible sites to each other, we shall find enough to keep us busy for a long time—busy, but getting nowhere.

There are some earnest advocates of a site in Balboa Park—Balboa Park is full of sites. For any one that is ever put on a ballot, there are half a dozen waiting to be exploited by earnest insurgents. In the letters appearing in one page of *The Union* on one day, Balboa Park—exact location not specified, in most instances—Old Town, Golden Hill, Twenty-first and J streets, lower Broadway and upper Broadway were suggested as potential civic center sites. The city is full of possible locations. Any spot between the new State college and the Coronado ferry slip will find its advocates.

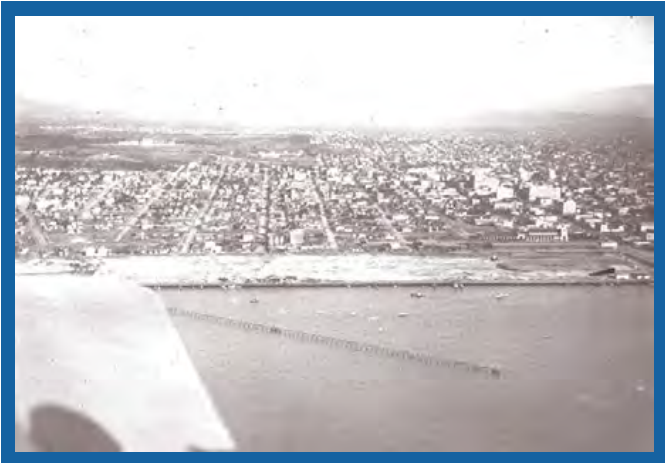
It is not an unfair restriction—it is a great mercy and a blessing—that these alternatives are not up for consideration on Tuesday’s ballot.

The one question before us next Tuesday is whether we shall go ahead or whether we shall quit.

Shall we undertake to build our new civic center, or shall we abandon all plans of actual construction and go back to arguing!

San Diego Union-Tribune

One of the four editorials published in *The San Diego Union* in favor of the waterfront site.



San Diego History Center

A dispute over the tidelands site made its way to California's Supreme Court.

But despite the strength of conviction of those opposed to the tidelands site, the case was dismissed because the California Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the 1929 legislation that provided for the transfer of the land. Since the harbor dredging, the property in question no longer retained water frontage. The legislature said that the property was, by the harbor improvements, "cut off from access to navigable waters, and is no longer required for navigation, commerce or the fisheries."¹⁸ The property had been declared free from the tidelands trust and conveyed to the County and City "to be used only for county and municipal purposes, including the erection and maintenance thereon of county and municipal buildings."



San Diego History Center

With the Depression at hand, San Diegans were unwilling to pass a bond measure to pay for the Civic Center.

Applying for aid

The public may have been in full support of the Civic Center idea, but they were far from ready to spend taxpayer money to develop the site. The special election in 1930 proposed issuing \$500,000 in bonds to pay for half the cost of the building, but did not receive the two-thirds majority needed to pass. This fiscal caution among voters most likely was the result of the state of the economy, as the nation was plunging into the Great Depression.

In 1932, the Civic Center Committee pointed out that "financial conditions have so changed throughout the country, as to cause considerable alarm, and at the present time it is very difficult, if not impossible, to sell bonds backed by the best of security."¹⁹

Recalling the fiscal deadlock, architect Samuel W. Hamill, who later became chief designer for the project, reflected that "discouraged committeemen and officials saw the Civic Center development facing an impasse that seemed insurmountable. The community refused to vote funds, and further progress seemed at a standstill."²⁰

Since taxpayers were unwilling to allocate local funds, the federal government seemed to be the only viable alternative. The passage of the National Recovery Act in 1933 sparked hope that the federal government might be interested in partially funding construction. In June of 1933, City Attorney C.L. Byers informed the Board of Supervisors that:

"It appears that neither the City nor the County has available any bonds or funds with which to participate in the erection of such a building [Civic Center]; nor is either in a position to agree at this time to repay any funds spent in its erection; that the only advisable procedure for securing the erection of such a building is to apply to the President's Emergency Administrator of Public Works, under the provisions of the National Recovery Act."²¹

To secure the funding, the City and County had to apply to the Federal Emergency Administration and present a convincing argument that the Civic Center qualified as a Public Works Project. The Federal Public Works Administration policy was to approve only projects that were part of a comprehensive community development plan and the application required architectural plans to be drawn up for the building site before appropriations would be considered.

At this point the chairman of the State Relief Commission, Ralph E. Jenney, assumed the responsibility of communicating between the City, the County, and the federal government. When Jenney requested a loan application, he was told funds were already depleted and applications were not being accepted, but there was a good chance that additional funds would be appropriated for Public Works. The Federal Emergency Administration expressed that:

A city or county building is, in our opinion, an ideal type of project, fulfilling requirements as to economic and social desirability and putting to work men in the building trades who have been very badly hit by the Depression. I can assure you that if we do receive additional funds, we would be glad to entertain an application from San Diego for such buildings.²²



San Diego History Center

Plans had to be drawn up for the Civic Center before San Diego could be considered for WPA funding.

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had earlier provided some reassurance stating that the federal government would support projects such as the Civic Center because of its size, the employment opportunities it would offer, and the long-range benefits it would provide for the community.²³ T.C. MacCauley, a member of the County Planning Commission, and others involved in generating the committee Civic Center Report appeared before the Board of Supervisors and remarked that in all probability the federal government would approve their application.

As soon as funding became available, the Civic Center application was completed and sent to the Works Progress Administration. City and County officials collectively held their breath as they awaited the results. At first the federal government turned over only enough money to pay for architectural drawings of the proposed Center. Then Jenney, who reportedly was personally acquainted with the President Franklin D. Roosevelt, went to Washington, D.C. to confer with government officials regarding four different applications he was representing.²⁴ Jenney's persistence was fruitful, for just one week after the president personally toured the site and a mere month after the City and County filed the application for the project, Roosevelt approved nearly \$1 million in start-up funds in October 1935.²⁵ Federal funding was formally authorized for the Civic Center in late November. The state WPA director Frank Y. McLaughlin announced that the San Diego Civic Center project had been approved, and the federal contribution of \$989,528 was in a bank in San Francisco ready for the district director of WPA to use. The remainder of the cost was to be borne in equal amounts of \$250,000 by the City and the County of San Diego.²⁶ McLaughlin commented, "I have taken more interest in this San Diego project than any other in the state of California," and he urged the architects working on the project to expedite their work so that the actual construction of the building would get under way.

Planning for the Future

The Federal Government is contemplating the appropriation of funds for an extensive plan for the construction of large public buildings. It was the consensus of opinion of the members of the Board that in the event such funds are released, complete plans and specifications should be in readiness in order that an application may be made for funds for the construction of the Civic Center.²⁷

In order to complete the WPA application, San Diego City and County officials needed to have plans and specifications drawn up. Three San Diego architects — William Templeton Johnson, Richard S. Requa, and Louis J. Gill — offered their professional services to supervise draftsmen in the early stages of architectural planning. During the summer of 1934, the City and County appropriated funds to finance the Civic Center project plans prepared by 30 draftsmen and engineers. The chief architects were paid a total of \$36,000 of Works Progress Administration funding for their completed architectural plans.

The Board of Supervisors then requested the appointment of a Design Committee consisting of members of the San Diego chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The AIA considered holding a competition for membership on the committee, but eventually abandoned Nolen's idea of a "national competition" in order to prevent an outsider (non-San Diegan) from winning. They chose instead to have an internal vote to fill the positions. The AIA selected the three architects already familiar with the project (Johnson, Requa, Gill) and Samuel Hamill. Jenney placed Hamill in charge of the Design Office for the building

because Requa was occupied with the 1935 World's Fair Exposition, Johnson (the originally-selected architect) was ill, and Gill preferred to work with the bookkeeping of the office.

Jess Stanton, an architect from Chicago and an executive of the Gladding-McBean Tile Company, designed the delicate inlaid tile work on the Civic Center. Hamill gave credit to Stanton as one of the most important contributors to the project.

Requa, Gill and Johnson appeared before the Board of Supervisors in early 1935 with a model of the proposed Civic Center. The model was then displayed at the World's Fair Exposition held in San Diego from 1935-1936 accompanied by Requa and Johnson, who were architectural consultants for the Exposition. After noting a positive response to the model, the Board requested that the committee of architects submit an estimate of the cost of preparing Civic Center plans. A State Emergency Relief Administration grant (# 38-A1-30) funded the preparation of plans, estimates and models of the Civic Center. The City of San Diego sponsored the project and the City and County appropriated money for the necessary supervision. SERA commissioned sketches of the Civic Center, which had been completed earlier by French architect George Palliser. Hamill later credited Palliser as the "the chief designer of the original layout."²⁸

Design work alone took more than a year to complete. In 1936, jurisdiction of the site had been released to the federal government under the Works Progress Administration and National Unemployment Relief Program. As a result, the federal government was in complete control of the hiring and discharging of employees, the regulation of working hours and work conditions, and the actual construction of the building. The City and County shared joint obligations to furnish plans, specifications and architectural drawings, together with monies or materials amounting to one-tenth of the total cost, or approximately \$100,000.²⁹ Except for the foundation of the City-County building, which was to be built mostly by common labor under a WPA force account, construction of the building was to be done by contract. This was customary for public work projects, with the prevailing wage scale paid to all skilled workmen.³⁰ Ralph Jenney quickly arranged for office space to accommodate 100 workers in a vacant building in Balboa Park, and at this point the planning stages of Civic Center construction were well under way.



San Diego History Center and Georgette Hamill Serrano

Civic Center architects William Templeton Johnson, Richard S. Requa, Louis J. Gill and Samuel Hamill.

Civic Center Design Approval

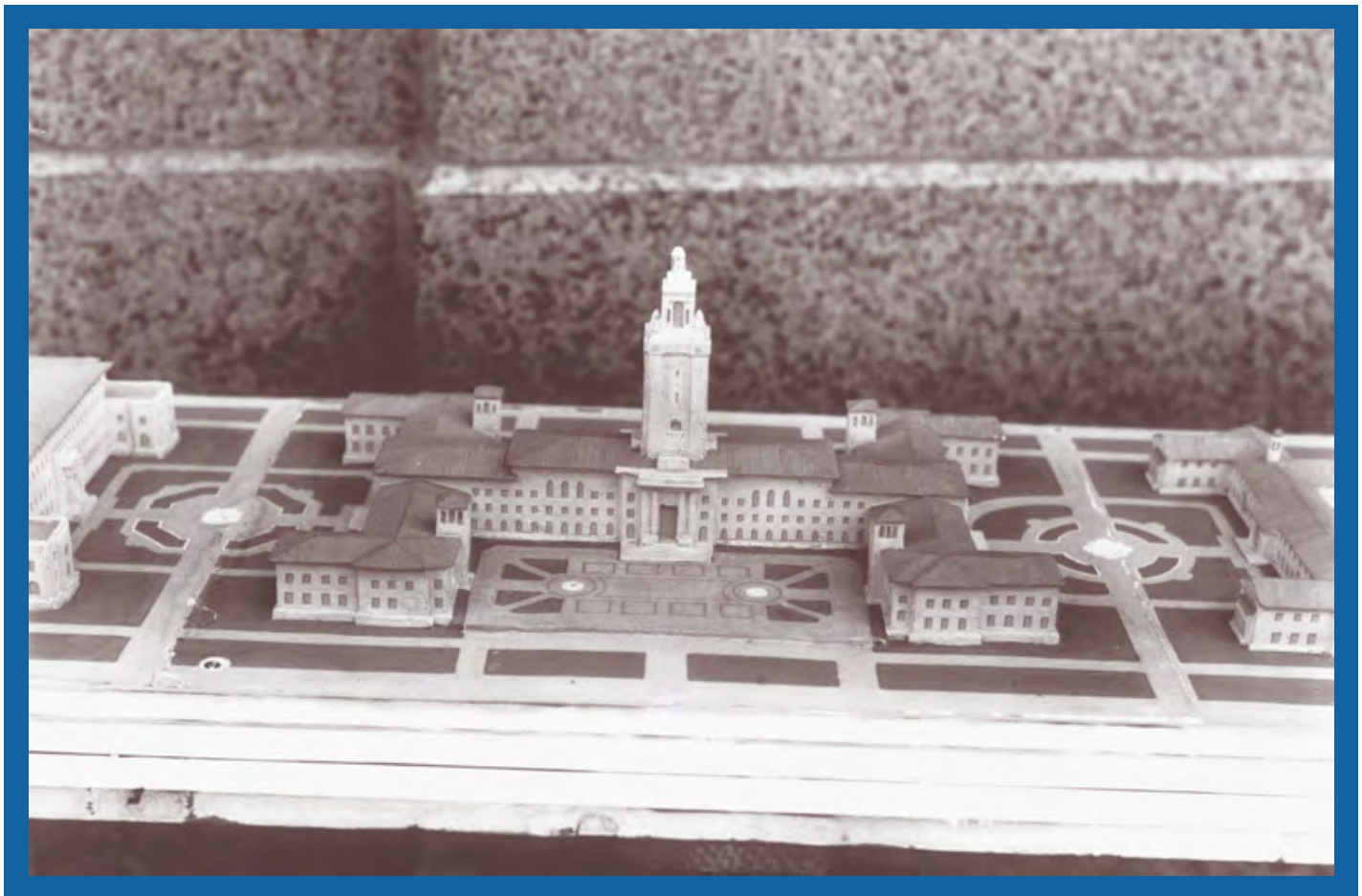
After considering the original Nolen Plan for city development along with several other alternatives, a modified Spanish Colonial style with ornamentation of gold and azure tiles was chosen for the Civic Center.³¹ During the design phase, the Spanish Renaissance motif originally favored by the architects had given way to the sleeker moderne style popular in the 1930s.³²

The design of the central tower was revised several times during planning; architects originally envisioned a soaring 225-foot elevation, which proved unfeasible due to cost and the proximity to Lindbergh Field. Rueben Fleet, manager of Consolidated Aircraft, threatened to sue the City because the tower would interfere with landings at his airfield. Because of this, the tower design was modified to rise just 150 feet.

The original building design included the extension of wings to the east and west, forming an “H”

configuration when viewed from above, yet the final design included only two wings. Original plans also called for a service building, state office building, hall of justice, civic auditorium and health services building; but due to conflicts between the City and County governments, it was decided not to proceed with the additional buildings at that time. Toward the close of 1935 everything had fallen into place to begin construction on the new Civic Center. When Works Progress Administrator Frank McLaughlin sent written authorization, his telegram stated: “This wire will be your authority to proceed at once in the most expeditious manner possible with the work on the Civic Center project.”³³

Finally, after close to two decades of planning, the building process could finally begin.



This model shows the original tower design, which was later modified to accommodate the building's proximity to Lindbergh Field.

San Diego History Center

Construction of the Civic Center

Groundbreaking Ceremony

Just three weeks after the receipt of the telegram, the groundbreaking ceremony commenced at the site on the morning of December 5, 1935. George Marston was chosen to turn the first earth with a golden shovel. He stated:

"We have met here to inaugurate the building of the Civic Center of the County and City of San Diego. Although these exercises are very informal and simple, the occasion itself is one of profound significance. In your name and behalf, I now lift the first bit of earth on the foundation of the Civic Center."³⁴

About 200 people including city, county, state and federal officials observed the ceremonies at the waterfront site. For many of them, this ceremony symbolized the realization of efforts that had been expended for decades. Actual construction would begin a month later on January 4, 1936.



County of San Diego

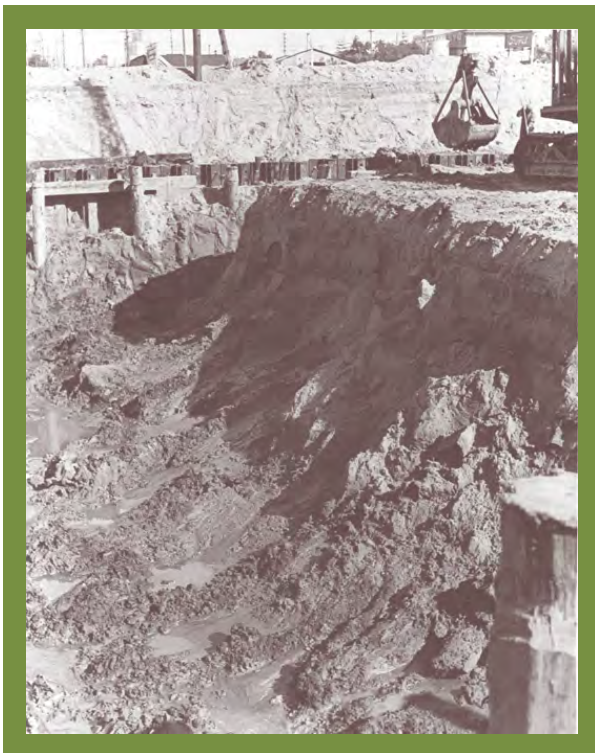
The Civic Center site as construction began.

Making Engineering History

The tidelands site, like that of Lindbergh Field, consisted of leftover fill from dredging projects. There had been considerable concern that the site was incapable of supporting a large, heavy structure, in part because the site had been submerged prior to 1914. This, in addition to the earthquake concern, demanded that construction begin in a scrupulous fashion. The Long Beach earthquake of 1933 influenced engineering design; the devastating quake had called into question existing building techniques, meaning that any major new project required a new approach. Hamill commented in retrospect that:

"Local architects didn't believe [the Civic Center] would ever exist. One reason they didn't take it too seriously was the Long Beach earthquake. That put a death sentence on a lot of buildings."³⁵

The demand for safety overrode economic concerns in virtually every element of construction. Engineers planned for steel pilings, rather than wood pilings, to prevent shearing in the event of an earthquake. Structural engineer H.H. Davies brought in more than 1,500 H-shaped steel pilings (varying in length from 32 feet to 35 feet) that were driven deep into the ground to support the weight of the building. Load tests were undertaken to determine the security of the foundation; the first piles that were driven in revealed



County of San Diego

Excavation gets under way.



San Diego History Center

State Relief Commission Chairman Ralph Jenney, WPA Administrator Frank McLaughlin, Mayor Percy Benbough and Supervisor Ed Hastings worked to ensure that San Diego's Civic Center would be built.

that foundation conditions were better than had been expected. Opponents of the tidelands site had claimed that the pilings would have to be driven to tremendous depths in order to secure a firm base; this would have been a costly and impractical method of constructing the building. Fortunately, firm sandstone was encountered under the dredging fill, and the test borings went 40 feet into the sandstone area with no indication of finding the bottom.³⁶

The Civic Center received substantial recognition for the construction of the site, as it was considered to be on the cutting edge of engineering developments. On one occasion the San Diego Union proclaimed:

[The steel pilings] are alternated and reinforced in all directions so that, should an earthquake occur, they will be able to withstand more strain than any type known to exist in any other building, anywhere. The stress and strain have been figured out in thousandths of an inch, not only on paper but by actual tests.³⁷

The Civic Center project was virtually making engineering history for using steel pilings to bear lateral stresses for the first time in the history of construction.³⁸ The piles were capped with concrete below the water line and connected with concrete beams to form a continuous grid under each section of the building.³⁹

The building's tower was designed to rest on a reinforced concrete slab six-feet thick that was set on

hydraulically compacted sand for further support. The foundation and frame were built with reinforced concrete; the building itself was constructed in five separate sections. The gaps between the various sections were closed with metal accordion and slip joints so that each section could move independently in the event of an earthquake.

From the Ground Up

The WPA was responsible for the design, grading and preparation of the site, in addition to the foundation and construction of the basement and first floor of the building.⁴⁰ The first portion of the project consisted of excavating test pits for the foundation. The construction of the Civic Center was affected by the shallow water table, which was only three feet below the level of the basement. This high level required that the first floor be built partly above the ground in a style that was considered slightly outdated. By the time the surface was poured on the first floor, the structure reached the 13.5 foot level.

The jurisdiction of the WPA ended with the completion of the foundation, and the construction of the remaining four stories of the building was placed in the hands of local contractors.⁴¹ Roosevelt turned the balance of the WPA money over to the City and County administrators to finish the project.



County of San Diego

A close-up look at the steel pilings used in building the Civic Center.

As soon as it was determined that private contractors could complete the job, closed bids were given, and the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, B.O. Larsen Construction Company (with a bid of \$449,900). Under regulations set by the WPA, B.O. Larsen was required to do at least 25 percent of the remaining work, and dozens of San Diego businesses that served as subcontractors were to complete the remaining 75 percent.

The construction of the Civic Center did not always run as planned; work on the project certainly had its setbacks. The first was the result of a labor problem that had little to do directly with the Civic Center. A dock strike had tied up shipping from San Francisco to San Diego,⁴² and as a result of the strike, lumber destined for San Diego remained aboard ships docked in the harbor. Work at the Civic Center had to be halted, generating a layoff of more than 40 people. After a two-month standstill in construction, a local lumber company agreed to furnish the lumber needed for the project.⁴³ Another problem arose out of a misunderstanding when the city jail had originally been included in plans for the Civic Center. As the time approached for the jail to be built, a number of influential San Diegans spoke in opposition to the proposal; they apparently felt that it would detract from the surroundings of the new Civic Center. Finally the Harbor Commission, City Council, and City Planning Commission approved another location for the jail, which (along with a new courthouse) was scheduled to begin construction in 1938 through WPA funds.⁴⁴

Despite the delays during construction, the work was undertaken with a thorough and precise approach that gave the finished product a lasting distinction. Especially notable was the attention to detail, such as the decision to cover the building with cement painted by hand rather than use modern spray guns. In addition, the desire to bring down the cost of construction sparked considerable inventive energy; the general superintendent of construction, H.E. Moore, remarked that on no other large construction job in San Diego had so much of the equipment and tools been manufactured on the site as they were needed.⁴⁵ An example was the idea of producing “powered buggies,” converted Model-T chassis with planetary gears and foot pedals, to haul

concrete around within the structure. This greatly eased the workload, since concrete had been hauled manually by carts prior to this innovation. Flexibility and resourcefulness of those in charge helped contribute to the eagerness and high morale of the construction workers. In January 1936, The San Diego Union noted:

They are doing more than merely working on a job. They are constructing a building in which they are taking pride. This is evidenced by the attendance at the weekly “school” that is maintained on the site. For two hours each Wednesday night, the workmen are invited to attend a class where they are instructed in the phase of work they are doing at that particular stage of the project. Attendance is voluntary, and no pay is available for those who go, but out of the 200 men on the job, the attendance ranges from 100 to 156.⁴⁶

Enthusiasm for the project appeared strong on all fronts: workers relished the employment opportunity in the midst of the Depression; the citizens of San Diego were interested in watching their Civic Center take shape on the harborfront; and County and municipal administrations were pleased with the outcome of years of planning. Contractor Charles Hoskins completed the last construction phase 90 days ahead of schedule. The San Diego City and County Administration Building cost \$1,730,474 and its construction provided employment for more than 300 people.



County of San Diego

The Civic Center project made engineering history with its use of steel pilings.

Dedication Ceremony for the Civic Center

Before the Civic Center's completion, local officials began thinking ahead to the building's dedication. The newspaper had reported that President Roosevelt was leaving from San Diego for an equatorial cruise on July 16, 1938. Because of the role Roosevelt played in the Civic Center's start, officials wanted him to dedicate the building. In recognition of Jenney's efforts to obtain federal aid, the County Board of Supervisors and the Council of the City of San Diego had commissioned him to extend the invitation. The President accepted the offer, and Jenney agreed to chair a group of City and County leaders welcoming Roosevelt to town.

On the day of the dedication, Roosevelt arrived by train to Los Angeles, then boarded an automobile at the head of a 25-car motorcade bound for San Diego. In preparation for the president's arrival, many stores throughout the city closed their doors that afternoon. In addition, because military aircraft would be flying in formation for the ceremony, all of Lindbergh Field's commercial air traffic was halted from noon until after the ceremony. President Roosevelt arrived at the dedication site around 3 p.m. before an estimated crowd of 25,000 spectators. The presidential car stopped on the dedication ramp, where the president was greeted with honors from the army and Marine guards and a 21-gun salute. He received greetings from dedication chairman Ralph Jenney and Mayor Percy Benbough. Mary Marston, granddaughter of George W. Marston, also presented him with a golden key to the building.⁴⁷



An estimated crowd of 25,000 people gathered for the Civic Center's dedication.

The San Diego Union

Roosevelt gave a short speech in which he remarked about the engraved quote above the building's western entrance:

"I would like to say that I like especially the sentiment expressed on the face of [the portal], 'The noblest motive is the public good.' I think if we all carry that motto in our hearts, in every city and community in the land, there is no question but the proper thing, American democracy, will survive."⁴⁸

After the ceremony, President Roosevelt left aboard the U.S.S. Houston for his equatorial fishing cruise. Although the visit had been brief, Roosevelt's dedication of the building was the figurative icing on the cake for many citizens of San Diego. They had not only received a stunning new Civic Center for governmental business that would serve as an aesthetic landmark, but had also been visited by the man who had worked so hard to stabilize the nation's economy through public employment. It was the kind of gesture that a poverty-stricken nation could look to with a mixture of appreciation and hope, and San Diegans showed this through the tremendous turnout at the dedication ceremony.



San Diego History Center

President Roosevelt dedicates the new Civic Center from his car.

Occupation of the New Building

The dedication ceremony took place five months prior to completion of the building, which was celebrated by opening ceremonies on December 23, 1938. The County and City employees slowly began to trickle in; the City offices were to occupy the southern side of the building, and County departments would be housed in the northern half. Despite the increased room of the new facilities, not all governmental activities were centralized at the Civic Center when it was completed. The City Council and the County Supervisors selected the departments that would relocate.

While every office previously housed in City Hall would move, the list of offices that were to remain where they were was extensive: all courts, both Municipal and Superior; the County Clerk; part of the District Attorney's office; the Sheriff, Probation and Welfare, as well as the Grand Jury. The City and County virtually vacated rented downtown quarters, with departments moving to either the Civic Center or to the courthouse.

As a result of constructing the new Civic Center, more government offices were housed at one location than ever before in San Diego history, but with a wider geographic spread of administrative and judicial activity.⁴⁹

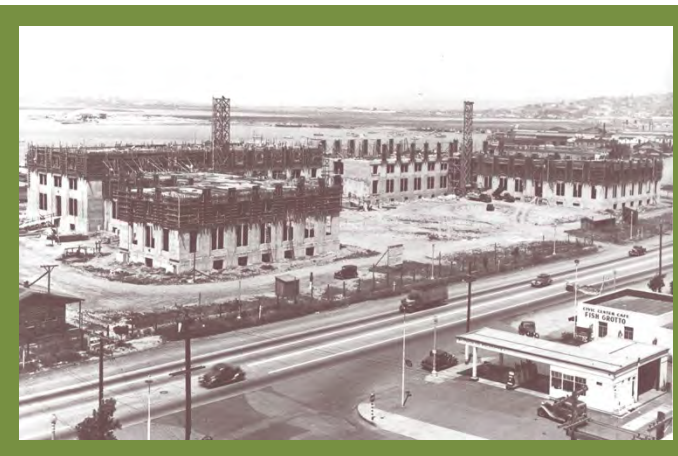


A group photograph of the County's Assessors Office, soon after moving into their new offices in the Civic Center.

Photograph courtesy of former County employee Cathleen (Jean Speir) Gray (pictured center, first row standing).

**These photos are part of a
series chronicling the
progression of the building.**

Photos courtesy of the County of San Diego



The Design of the Building

Architecture and Ornamentation of Exterior

At the 1935 World's Fair Exposition, plans for the San Diego City and County Administration Building were hailed as a prototype of American civic center architecture. The Civic Center's location on the bay was intended to provide a welcome to seafaring travelers; keeping with John Nolen's desire that the city make effective use of its natural waterfront, the building design assumed an impressive, aesthetic approach that has since remained unparalleled in the construction of government buildings.

Intended to complement Balboa Park's structures, the exterior of the building is a vast display of intricacy. Exterior concrete walls are covered with a white cement wash that is embellished with 40 separate cast cement figures; consisting mostly of eagles. Large pillars portraying the federal emblem guard the steps of the Civic Center, fusing intricacy with authority by incorporating shields with detailed designs. the architecture of the Civic Center is Spanish Revival in style with a strong Beaux Arts classical influence. Architect Samuel Hamill claimed that the initial inspiration for the blueprints came from the Nebraska State Capitol, which had been designed by New York architect Bertram Goodhue. Goodhue had already made a significant impact on San Diego with his designs for the 1915 Pan Pacific Exposition in Balboa Park, which had spawned the popularity of ornate Spanish Revival design in the region.

The four Civic Center architects had exhibited an affinity for the Spanish Revival form of design through other structures they had designed, and this provided the artistic foundation for their planning. Hamill and his associates softened the classical aspects characteristic of Goodhue's work, adding touches that gave the building more of a southwestern feel: a red Mission tile roof, glazed Franciscan inlaid pottery tile, and arched door and window openings.⁵⁰ The building's

design also included the authoritative elements of P.W.A. Moderne (with the central office tower symbolizing the efficient business of government) combined with the detail of ZigZag Moderne (evident through the recessed windows in vertical patterns, smooth-surfaced columns, and ample ornamentation).⁵¹

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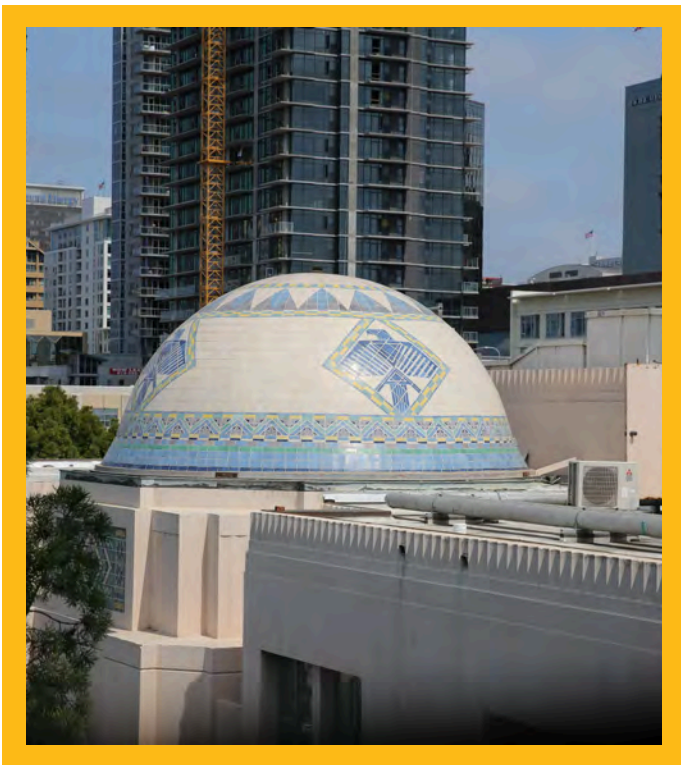
County of San Diego



County of San Diego

as is the inlaid arch above the doors. Such ornamentation was unusual for government buildings. Images on the central panel above the west entrance symbolize the history of San Diego, beginning with the date of discovery and working upward to a fish, a naval vessel, the California tower, and finally an airplane bearing the date of construction. The County and City seals appear over both the west and east entrances and huge pylons frame the entryways. Cement figures of a battleship, the dove of peace and an old-time clipper ship are set above the pylons. Inscriptions grace the entrances: on the western side, "The Noblest Motive is the Public Good," and to the east, "Good Government Demands the Intelligent Interest of Every Citizen."⁵²

Movable partitions of wood and glass separated offices. Mahogany staircase handrails extend from the basement to the top of the tower and at the ends of the wings. Most interior woodwork found in offices and hallways of the building is also of Philippine mahogany.⁵³ The terrazzo floors evidence the extreme attention to detail by which the Civic Center was designed; thin bands of brass were inset between slabs of the stone. Floors in the lobby and corridors are constructed of terrazzo with office space incorporating brown, marbled asphalt tile, which in many cases has been replaced by carpeting. Long, narrow halls and a spacious interior feeling reaffirm the inherent Beaux Arts influence in the structure.



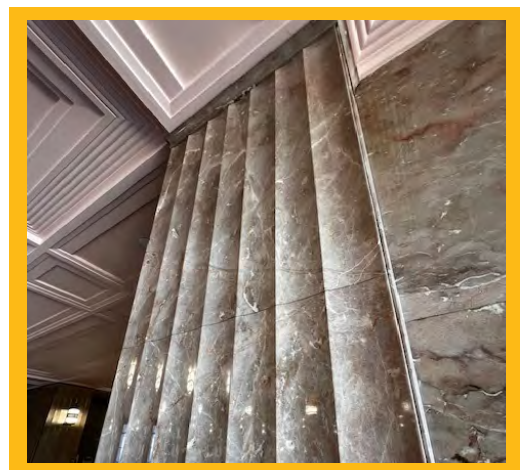
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Interior Adornments

WPA grants allowed for the use of marble, bronze and mahogany to give the interior of the Civic Center building a polished appearance. The main and second floor lobbies display rich Tennessee Roseal and Verde Antique marble walls. Bronze elevator doors and bronze detailing adorn entrance doors and the second floor lobby area. Original light fixtures of wood and glass still remain in these parts of the building.

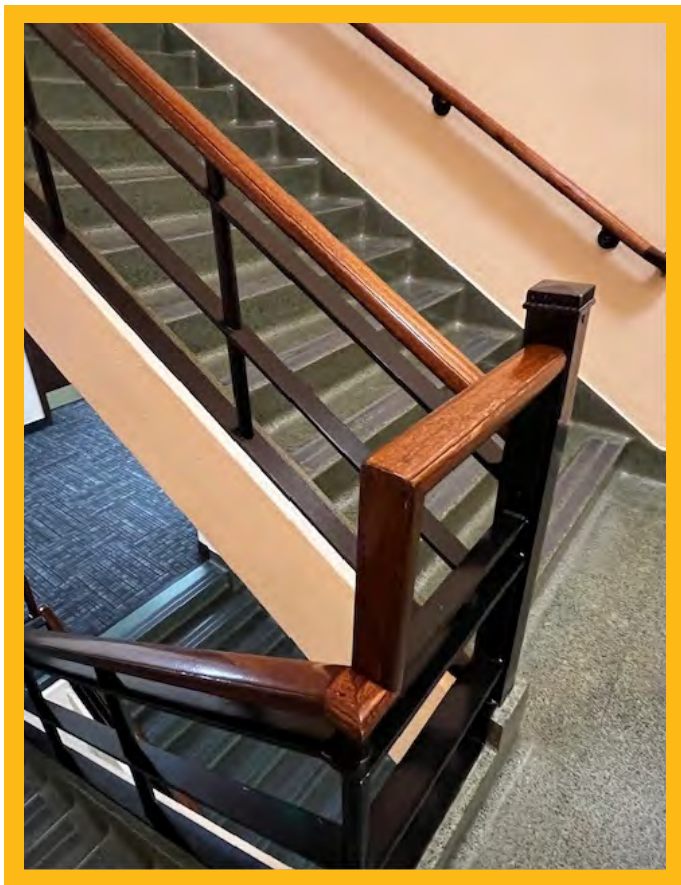


County of San Diego

Marble columns adorn the central lobby of the building.



The County Administration Center contains remarkable attention to detail.



County of San Diego



County of San Diego

Interior Artwork

Some of the most prominent artistic features of the interior of the building are the murals in the County Supervisors' North Chamber and the former City Council Chamber. Murals were considered fashionable for public buildings during the era of Civic Center construction, especially during the Depression as they provided a means for employing local artists. A WPA Federal Art Project commissioned several Southern California artists to create mural panels that would be painted with egg tempera (a water medium used by Italians from the 13th to 15th centuries), which was considered to be the oldest and most durable of all painting mediums. Artists Arthur Ames and Jean Goodwin completed the three County murals. Each depicts a different aspect of life in San Diego County: recreation, agriculture and conservation.



County of San Diego

This is one of three murals featured in the Board of Supervisors' North Chambers.

The County Seal

Architect Samuel Hamill also designed the seal of San Diego County, which was explained in detail by the Board of Supervisors:

The central element of the seal is a fasces, a double-headed axe rising from a bundle of sticks, which served as a symbol of authority in ancient Rome. Also included in the seal are the stars and stripes of the United States, a stylized dolphin representing the fruits of the sea, and a horn of plenty representing the fruits of the land. A clipper ship recalls San Diego's historic background of the sea, and the airplane looks into the future. Mt. Palomar Observatory represents a world renowned achievement in science and San Diego's position on the threshold of scientific history. The observatory overlooks an orange grove, which reflects the agricultural riches of the county. Encircling the seal is the motto "The Noblest Motive is the Public Good"—a quotation from Virgil that was chosen by the Building Committee as the motto to adorn the Civic Center Building.⁵⁴

The choice of this design confused many citizens who did not understand what it was meant to represent. One citizen commented "this emblem which is to adorn the Civic Center... represents nothing in the Heavens above, nor the Earth beneath, but is an object of mirth to you men. Still since it is to cost the taxpayers 1,000 bucks it is nothing to make merry over."⁵⁵ Despite such complaints, the Board of Supervisors officially adopted the seal in 1937, replacing an earlier version chosen in 1933. The seal adorned the northern entrance to the Civic Center until the City moved out in 1964, when it was also placed over the southern entrance.

The Guardian of Water

The "Guardian of Water" sculpture fountain on the harbor side of the building began as a separate project prior to completion of the Civic Center. Local resident Helen Towle willed more than \$30,000 to the San Diego Fine Arts Society, \$6,000 of which could be used exclusively for purchasing "works of art of a permanent nature, to be given to the people of San Diego."⁵⁶ It was decided that the funds would be best put toward the



The County Seal.

creation of a public sculpture. The Works Progress Administration supplied the remaining \$14,000 necessary to fund a commissioned sculpture by prominent local artist Donal Hord.

In July 1937, a 22-ton granite block from a Lakeside quarry was delivered to Hord's studio. Hord labored over the sculpture for two years, shaping the block into a figure of a pioneer woman holding a water jug, symbolic of San Diego's guardianship over one of its most precious resources: water.

Mosaic tiles, also designed by Hord, cover the base of the statue. The mosaic symbolizes clouds in the form of kneeling nudes, who pour water





pioneer. These women contended that “since Aztec civilization was not endemic to San Diego or California, we feel that the proposed statue is not suitable and would create a wrong impression so that the public would be misled relative to historical facts.”⁵⁸ In response to the protest, a preview of the statue was arranged by WPA Art Supervisor Thyrsis Field to silence skeptics; Chairman John Siebert of the Civic Center building committee ended the controversy by expressing his approval of the statue.⁵⁹ Officials endorsed the features of the pioneer woman and defended the sculpture as an appropriate symbol of the spirit of water conservation.

In 1960 a replica of “Guardian of Water” was sent to Yokohama, Japan as a gift from the San Diego-Yokohama Friendship Commission and emphasizing the sculpture’s significance in San Diego history. Hord’s work remains a source of regional pride and a tribute to fine arts. Mechanical difficulties plagued the fountain in the early 1990s. The water was turned off for five years, but the majestic fountain was restored in early 1996.

Layout of the Grounds

Initially, the Civic Center grounds included mostly donated plants, including an array of species such as Birds of Paradise, Japanese Cherry Trees and twenty-six Washingtonia Palms. But the grounds were not receiving the care they needed; that became apparent when the palms trees started dying. A landscape architect was hired to oversee the completion of the grounds in 1938 and finished a year later. The entire landscaping project cost \$129,944 (of which \$100,000 was funded by the WPA). On the eve of its 50th anniversary, a national historic site nomination form described the 1939 grounds as follows:

Various varieties of palm trees, varnish trees, Australian tea-trees, podocarpus, and scarlet bottle-brush were planted. Shrubs such as natal plum and windmill jasmine were embedded. Annuals such as calendulas and jobelias surrounded east-facing borders. Scotch and German marigolds filled the borders around the north parking lot. Flower beds of schizanthus, snapdragon, stock daisies, pansies and petunias surrounded the building and when they died out, they were replaced with zinnias, carnations, gypsophila, asters

from jars over a dam which flows into a conventionalized citrus fruit orchard. Shapes of dolphins and fish were carved into the interior basin, which measures 17 feet, 6 inches in diameter. The circumference of the basin bears a design of sea snails. When asked to explain the meaning behind the mosaic patterns, Hord claimed that it was his idea to produce these different areas almost as though a pebble were dropped in the water; the water first coming from the clouds, giving life to the land, then spilling over into the sea, which was represented by fish forms, and finally ending on a shoreline in the drawing of sea snails.⁵⁷ The combined statue and base rise 22 feet, 3 inches, with the statue itself reaching a height of 13 feet, 3 inches. The “Guardian of Water” was dedicated on June 10, 1939, in a ceremony at the new Civic Center.

Interesting to note from the history of the “Guardian of Water” was the general confusion regarding the ethnicity of the woman featured in the statue. During the its construction, complaints were voiced by the Native Daughters of the Golden West, a group of women who felt the statue represented a person of Aztec descent rather than an American

and ornamental dahlias. All annuals, under the supervision of head gardener, Pietro Farina, were developed from seed in a county owned lath house.⁶⁰



County of San Diego

The grounds of the building served as a figurative window into the state of the County. The disorder of the original landscape reflected the challenges of a new site, which was then modified to exhibit the grandeur of yet another WPA project. In 1943, during World War II, Victory Garden beets were grown in the flower beds lining the eastern side of the Civic Center; the vegetables were donated to the Convalescent Children's Aid Society in San Diego. Cabbages were planted on the western side of the building for the same purpose, demonstrating how San Diegans felt united under the common apprehensions of wartime America.

New palms and other varieties of trees, shrubs and flowering plants have been added over the decades, but the overall aesthetics of the layout design still prevail. During the 1980s, a heightened awareness for water conservation led to the exchange of some green for cement. The County installed a low-use water demonstration garden on the east side of the complex in 1984 to serve as an example of xeriscape techniques for local landowners to utilize. The garden made use of indigenous plants and others that adapted well to San Diego's semi-arid climate. Half a century after its

completion, the grounds fuse the initial luxuriance of WPA-era splendor with the contemporary demand for water conservation.

In recent years, water conservation has been a major priority for the County of San Diego. To this end, new developments at the County Administration Center have made liberal use of drought tolerant and low water plants. Artificial turf replaced the grass in the northeastern corner of the front courtyard. Additionally, with the development of the Waterfront Park, a Mediterranean Garden was cultivated with plants that thrive in San Diego's dry climate. Irrigation systems have been modernized with new technology such as pressure regulators in order to further reduce water wastage. The County has done a remarkable job maintaining the beauty of the property while remaining considerate of water usage and drought conditions.



County of San Diego

The County Administration Center: 1963 - 1998

The Civic Center Becomes the CAC

County offices occupied the northern side of the Civic Center building upon its completion, and the City offices took up residence in the southern side of the building. Soon, the space issue that had plagued governmental offices for so long prior to the completion of the Civic Center resurfaced in the new building. During the 1950s, new municipal and County programs created this need for more space. The City and County began building or renting additional facilities including the courthouse annex, the county operation center and two welfare district offices. Concerned that the disorder of the early 20th century was recurring, administrators authorized a study to determine the severity of the need for more space. A report prepared by the Joint Committee on City-County Office Space declared that the Civic Center was too small; it recommended that the City consider relocating its offices. The County Chief

Administrator agreed with the recommendation, adding that the City's need was more immediate than the County's.

In 1962, two appraisers were hired to determine the value of the Civic Center. The findings were used to determine how much the County should pay the City for its share of the building. One year later, the City and County entered into an agreement to convey the City's remaining interest in the property to the County.

The original 1929 legislative grant conveying the Civic Center property to both the City and County had been amended twice for essentially the same purpose: to authorize either the City or County to convey to the other its interest in the property.⁶¹ An amendment in 1961 cleared the way for selling the property to the County. The original appraisal of \$7 million was lowered to an actual purchase price of \$3.3 million, and signing of the agreements took place on July 17, 1963. Speaking to Mayor Charles C. Dail after the signing took place, Chairman Robert C. Cozens of the Board of Supervisors quipped "we promise not to evict you until you're packed."⁶²

The two parties agreed that the City could lease space as needed, but the need never arose as the City began moving to its new offices at the Community Concourse on November 13, 1964. Three decades after designing the County Administration Center, Samuel Hamill supervised the construction of this \$21 million civic complex.

Following the move, officials renamed the building the "San Diego County Administration Center" (commonly referred to as the CAC) and mounted a new sign over the old inscribed letters above the east entrance which previously read "San Diego City and County Administration Building." After the City's departure, many of the sections of the building that had formerly belonged to the City were closed off for some time, but expanding County offices gradually restored life to the southern side of the building. The County finished payments on the building in 1967.



San Diego History Center

Dave Bird, Mayor Charles Dail, Supervisor Bob Cozens and Dan Rossi participated in the signing of the agreement that turned over ownership of the building and property to the County.

Building Expansions

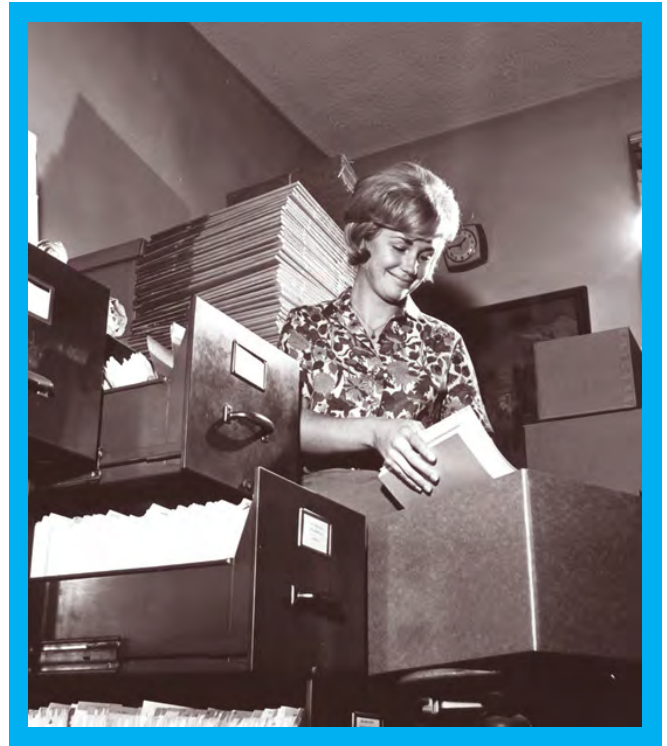
Prior to the City's move to the Community Concourse, expansions had been completed in an attempt to alleviate the Civic Center space problem. A Health Center was constructed on the northwest corner of the site in 1958. Many thought it detracted from the beauty of the administration center, as the designers only halfheartedly incorporated elements of the main building's architecture. The Health Center had been intended as a temporary structure, but is still a part of the complex.

The Civic Center was constructed so that the north and south wings could support the weight of an additional floor if the need for such space arose. In 1958, a north wing on the third floor was added for the Board of Supervisors' offices and in 1960 a similar expansion had been undertaken for the mayor's office. After the city's departure from the building in 1964, expansion needs settled down for a time as County offices grew into the City's old office space. Yet in less than a decade the need for more space surfaced again; just six years after the city moved out, a third floor was added to the northeast wing of the building in response to a faster-growing county government.



San Diego History Center

Part of the 1974 renovation project included installing an air conditioning system.



San Diego History Center

City worker Darlee Hassmann packs for the move to the Community Concourse.

In 1974, the largest expansion ever to take place on the building since its construction was proposed and was slated to take eight years.⁶³ The County appropriated funds to add 21,000 square feet of additional space to the building. Included among the projects were: third and fourth floor additions and remodeling, southeast and southwest wings added to the third floor to match architecture on the north side, and a cafeteria constructed on the south end of the fourth floor. Office interiors were modernized, lighting was updated, and ventilation was improved. During the midst of this construction other space alternatives were considered for County offices, such as remodeling the Port District headquarters (described as an uninspiring building with no windows), or constructing a new building in the downtown area (where land had become too expensive to justify such a plan). Neither idea was approved, and the remodeling plan continued.

The top four floors of the tower were declared a fire hazard in 1978 because there was only one stairway serving them. Departments occupying the tower relocated to other parts of the main building, as the

County did not have the funds to construct a second stairwell to meet fire codes.⁶⁴ After expansions were made to the fullest extent that the building could support, County Administration continued to relocate offices to other parts of the County.

additional revenue through more intense utilization of all county properties....One such property is that upon which is located the County Administration Center in down- town San Diego. – Donald L. Clark, County Counsel, 1981.⁶⁵



County of San Diego

An architect's rendering of a 1984 proposed private development of the County's parking lots.



County of San Diego

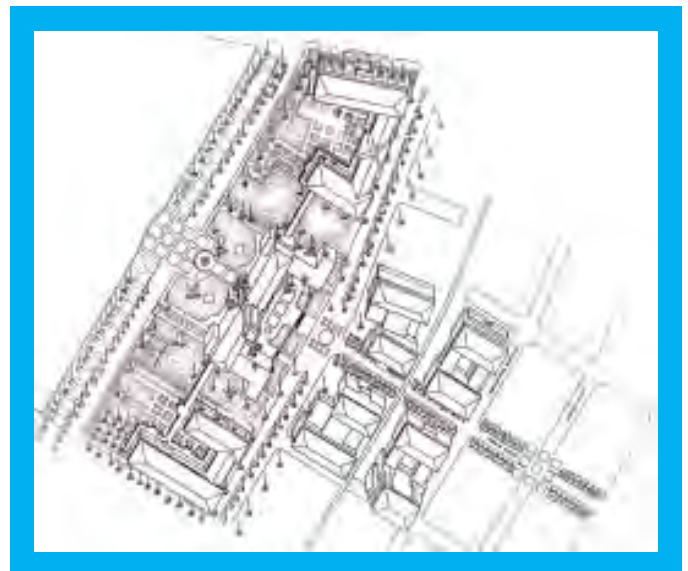
The County's health building, built in 1958, was meant to be a temporary structure.

New Considerations for CAC Development

With County revenues decreasing and costs of county services increasing, the County of San Diego is facing a fiscal dilemma. In response, the Board of Supervisors proposes to generate

During the 1980s, discussions arose to open up CAC land for commercial leasing. Since the property was declared free from the tidelands trust through 1929 legislation, and the only limitation imposed on the property was that it be used for County purposes, some County officials believed that generating revenue from leasing the property would be considered a County purpose. The Board of Supervisors decided to review the possibility of building hotels on the more than nine acres of parking lots attached to the County Administration Center.

A task force began considering development plans for the parking lots on either side of the County Administration Center. One member brought up the idea of leveling the entire complex, claiming that it was "terribly inefficient" and "functionally obsolete." The task force reviewed proposals to build high-rise hotels, shops, condominiums, and offices on the parking lots; models were constructed and displayed for the public to view. The Board was persuaded to scrap the proposal in 1985,



County of San Diego

A 1988 proposal included reviving the Cedar Street Mall idea from the Nolen plan.



County of San Diego

James Roosevelt (center), son of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, helped celebrate the 50th anniversary of the building, along with the unveiling of the plaque commemorating its placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Joining Roosevelt are then-Supervisors Susan Golding, Brian Bilbray, George Bailey, Leon Williams and John MacDonald.

with arguments that it failed to provide enough open space and would overwhelm the County building.

In the wake of the failure to develop the site commercially, the Board of Supervisors revived the idea of creating the Cedar Street Mall. The foundation for this idea had been part of the Nolen Plan, which suggested a complex of government buildings and parks extending from San Diego Bay to Balboa Park. Supervisor Brian Bilbray suggested the Cedar Street Mall at a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the Civic Center; he urged the City of San Diego to develop new offices next door to the CAC to replace what had already become an undersized City Hall. A 1988 County-commissioned report written by urban designer Gerald Gast and architect Daniel Hillmer urged development of a government and office complex near the County Administration Center, which would enlarge space for both City and County offices. The proposed development encompassed a minimum of four blocks immediately east of the County Administration Center, with CAC parking lots developed into three and four story County office buildings linked by courtyards. The proposed plan would have cost about \$132 million if it had been approved, yet like many other development aspirations, it did not receive the necessary backing.⁶⁶ San Diego Mayor Maureen O'Connor and other city officials presented yet another idea; they wanted the

County to team up with the City for a new civic center on another site. If this move had been completed, the mayor suggested that the CAC could be turned into a museum.⁶⁷

Proposals came and went, yet the Civic Center itself remained virtually untouched.

Historic Designation of the County Administration Center

Spurred on by the comment that the CAC should have been torn down and replaced with a bigger and more utilitarian edifice, a group of 400 locals known as Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 dedicated themselves to the preservation of the County Administration Center. Catalyzed by the Board proposals to commercially develop the parking lots, they sought to obtain National Historic Site status for the complex. Obtaining historic status would ensure the County Administration Center a higher degree of protection. Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 researched the history of the building and submitted a nomination form to the National Register of Historic Places. While awaiting the federal response, the City Historic Site Board approved the CAC as a historic site on October 22, 1986. Finally, on May 16, 1988, the site received recognition on the national register.



County of San Diego

The County Administration Center was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

North Embarcadero Alliance Visionary Plan

The North Embarcadero Alliance:
Center City Development Corporation
City of San Diego
County of San Diego
San Diego Juried Port District

County of San Diego

In January 1996, the Board of Supervisors appointed the Clerk of the Board to serve as administrator of the County Administration Center. Major improvements have had been made to the building and grounds. The Board approved funding for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to make the building more accessible, and other infrastructure and retrofit projects have been completed.

Also in 1997, the Clerk of the Board established a tower task force to review building and historical codes. This task force brought forward the recommendation to re-open the County Administration Center's tower, which had been closed 20 years earlier. On January 27, 1998, Supervisor Greg Cox delivered the Chairman's State of the County address, stating:

On February 10, our Board will prioritize capital projects, and allocate the proceeds from the sale of our trash system. High on my list is the renovation of our historic County Administration Center of Pacific Highway. Sixty years ago this year, President Franklin Roosevelt dedicated what remains today the most distinguished public building in the region. It is the centerpiece of the North Embarcadero, an area considered by many to be San Diego's "front porch." It is a beautiful waterfront landmark that deserves restoration, preservation and full accessibility to the people of our County. I will ask my colleagues to support a major renovation of this jewel on the harbor, and reopen the tower, which has been off limits for years.

It's an integral part of our North Embarcadero planning effort, a unique collaboration between the County, the City of San Diego, the Centre City Development Corporation, the Port and the Navy to revitalize one of the finest pieces of real estate in California.

The Board allocated \$3 million for restoration of the tower, repair of the red tile roof, and repairs and painting of the exterior.

Celebrating 60 Years

On July 16, 1998, sixty years to the date, Chairman Greg Cox presided over the re-dedication ceremony of the historic County Administration Center and commemorated President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's visit. Hundreds of people attended the outdoor event and, under a cloudless sky, were transported back to the 1930s.

Each member of the Board of Supervisors arrived in a vintage automobile, much like President Roosevelt had in 1938. They mingled and shook hands with the crowd as patriotic music played while they made their way to the stage. A vintage car show featuring vehicles from the 1930s turned the parking lot into a showcase. San Diego's Big Band Music Makers kept toes tapping before



County of San Diego

The County Administration Center was adorned in flags for the festivities.

and after the official program, and the dancing Parasol Strutters brought smiles to everyone in the crowd.

The program began with the presentation of the colors by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and 14-year-old Jessica Kloor's rendition of the "Star-Spangled Banner." The international-award winning barbershop quart, Revival, performed a gospel medley and the crowd-pleasing "Sittin' on Top of the World." The County's own Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Walt Ekard, also led the audience in "God Bless America." Former County Supervisor Roger Hedgecock, and a former radio talk show host in San Diego, was on hand to broadcast his show live from the CAC and interview members of the Board and other county officials.

Several San Diegans who attended Roosevelt's dedication or worked in the building during 1938 were also honored, including one man who, as a young boy, came with his father to witness Roosevelt's visit. Another attendee had been a member of the Marine Band that performed at the 1938 dedication; at the re-dedication he performed again, this time with the Music Makers.

Each member of the Board of Supervisors shared his or her vision for the future before cutting the red ribbon to officially rededicate the County Administration Center.



County of San Diego

Supervisors Dianne Jacob, Pam Slater, Greg Cox and Bill Horn participate in the ceremonial ribbon cutting at the 60th anniversary celebration.

Vice Chairwoman Pam Slater noted: "This building—a legacy of our past—will remain the legacy of our future. All of us here today will continue to dream and to build with the same confidence and optimism as the men and women who placed the bricks and mortar on the foundation of our future here at the County Administration Center."

Supervisor Dianne Jacob highlighted the fact that "many individuals—from County employees to local historians—have preserved the County Administration Center for the present and future."

Supervisor Ron Roberts remarked that the preservation of the historic County Administration Center represents our commitment to restoring the aesthetic value of public buildings. The County Administration Center reflects the richness and diversity of San Diego's architecture, and is the center- piece of the unparalleled San Diego skyline.

Supervisor Bill Horn reminded the audience of the importance of agriculture to the San Diego economy, and the planting of victory gardens on the CAC's grounds. He noted that the "building and its grounds symbolize the rich and diverse cultural heritage of our region." The ceremony also officially kicked off the \$3 million renovation of the County Administration Center.



County of San Diego

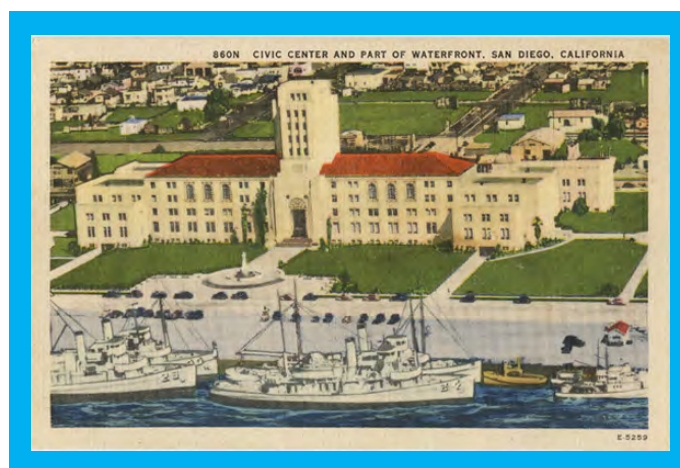
Hundreds of people turned out to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the building.

As Chairman Cox noted in his remarks at the ceremony: "Because of the vision and drive of those San Diegans who preceded us more than a half century ago, we have this wonderful jewel on the bay. Let their story inspire in each of us the ability to look beyond the present and into the future... and let us build a better city and a better region for our children and for our children's children in the days and years to come."



County of San Diego

Among those celebrating the 60th anniversary were Ailene Smith (front row, center) who worked for the County when the building opened in 1938, and Max Morgan (front row, right) who was a courier for Western Union at Roosevelt's dedication visit.



County of San Diego

A vintage postcard from the early 20th century depicting the CAC was displayed during anniversary festivities.

Looking to the Future

Since originally publishing, *Bridging the Centuries: The Jewel on the Bay* in 1998, the County Administration Center has undergone significant improvements. Improvements have included a \$3 million renovation, security enhancements, refurbishment of historic art, and water conservation efforts. The Board of Supervisors has continued to support efforts that ensure the County Administration Center remains a regional jewel.

Restoring the Jewel

The most significant project began in 1998 with the Board of Supervisors authorizing \$3 million to renovate the County Administration Center. This project included four elements:

1. Renovation of the County Administration Center tower

The towers had not been occupied since 1978 due to noncompliance with fire exiting code requirements. Prior to the 1960's, the eighth floor housed the Office of the Mayor for the City of San Diego. The sixth and seventh floors housed support staff. When the City of San Diego vacated space in the County Administration Center, the tower rooms became office space for County staff. The rooms, facing east, provide beautiful views of downtown San Diego. In 1978, the tower offices were vacated and the rooms became storage facilities for County equipment and supplies. The goal of the renovation project was to add a second exit stairway and remodel the sixth, seventh, and eighth floors to provide multi-use meeting and event rooms.

2. Restoration of the red-tiled portion of the roof

The historic red-tiled portion of the roof of the County Administration Center is an important aspect of the character of the facility. In the late 90's, the roof began to deteriorate. Tiles were missing, chipped, and failing. The renovation project completely restored the roof. In order to maintain the historic character, new tiles were used as the pan tiles (bottom tiles) and existing tiles were used as the roll tiles (top tile).⁶⁹



3. Painting the entire exterior

The building was originally finished with a thin coat of warm, white plaster over concrete walls and was later painted. The paint contained lead and the plaster coating underlying the paint contained asbestos. In 1998, the exterior walls had damaged areas, mainly due to spalling from rusty reinforcing steel, and there were many areas where paint was loose and flaking. The renovation project provided for the removal of all hazardous paint and to repaint the facility to more closely match its original color.⁶⁹

4. Installation of air-conditioning in portions of the first and second floors

The original building heating system consisted of steam boilers, located in the sub-basement serving steam heated cast iron radiators throughout the building.

Steam piping and condensate return piping were concealed within building construction, with the main pipes located in the basement ceiling spaces. Expansion of the steam heating system in subsequent years included addition of fan operated unit heaters, heating coils in air handling units, and steam heating coils in ductwork as additional air handling systems were installed. The building was cooled by natural ventilation through operable windows on the exterior walls, and transom windows above corridor doors to allow circulation throughout the building. For much of the year, this passive cooling was adequate to provide reasonable comfort conditions for employees and visitors. However, as building occupancy increased, additional equipment was installed such as copiers, personal computers, improved lighting, the need for mechanical cooling became significant.⁶⁹

Large portions of the first and second floors did not contain air conditioning. These floors housed the primary offices for public interaction, including submitting or researching recorded documents, applying for a marriage license, and paying property tax bills. The renovation project allowed for replacement of steam heat and installation of air conditioning to provide an efficient system that cooled and heated the entire County Administration Center.

Selecting the Architect

The project began with the selection of an architect. Because the County Administration Center is a designated historic landmark, it was important that the selected firm have experience with the design and renovation of historic buildings. The renovation project was required to conform with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as well as meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the State of California Administrative Code Title 24. This was a tall order for an architect.

On September 15, 1998, the Board of Supervisors authorized the award of a contract for architectural and engineering design services to Architect Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, Inc. Mr. Donaldson was familiar with the facility. Holding a license from the National Council



The red tile roof was replaced in 1998.

of Architectural Registration Boards, he served as president of his architectural firm from 1978 to 2004. In 2004, Mr. Donaldson was appointed as the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the State of California. The SHPO serves as chief administrative officer of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento and as Executive Secretary of the State Historical Resources Commission. Most recently, in 2010, President Barack Obama named Mr. Donaldson to be chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). Donaldson was re-appointed in 2013 for another term and served until 2019.

On October 28, 1998, Mr. Donaldson and fellow architect Juan Silva presented the County Administration Center renovation project to the City of San Diego Historic Site Board. The Site Board unanimously endorsed the project, congratulated Mr. Donaldson on a job well done, and commended the County for undertaking the project.

The Renovations

The project began with excitement as the building was draped in scaffolding and encased in shrink wrap to secure lead paint and asbestos. As noted in the May 1999 edition of the newsletter, "CAC Voice," Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, Chairwoman in 1999, stated:

"As the focal point of the North Embarcadero, this project is one of the first major activities of revitalization along San Diego's front porch."

Next, a second fire exit stairway was constructed to reoccupy the upper floors of the County Administration Center tower. The second stairway complied with the State Historical Building Code. This allowed the sixth, seventh, and eighth floors to be reoccupied. The fifth, ninth, and tenth floors continued to be used for mechanical, communications, and storage space. The new stairway merged with the existing terrazzo stairway that continued down to the main lobby. A portion of the new stairway from the fourth floor is visible to the public from the fourth floor hallway. It was designed to comply with the existing 1938 stair design, including design elements such as terrazzo stairs and landing, metal stair railings, and hardwood hand rails.⁶⁹

The sixth, seventh, and eighth floors were reoccupied as meeting space for County staff and public meetings. Historic light fixtures and pendants in the rooms are consistent with those seen in historic photographs.

In August 2000, the renovation project was completed. With remaining funding, the Clerk of the Board began a Phase II refurbishment project to include painting the basement, third and fourth floor corridors, painting additional restrooms, minor lighting improvements, and installation of monument signs.



Newly renovated conference room in the Tower.



The CAC undergoes refurbishment.



Celebrating 150 years of County Government

On February 18, 2000, the County of San Diego celebrated its Sesquicentennial, recognizing 150 years of its establishment by the legislature. As one of the

original 27 counties in the State of California, this milestone was celebrated at the seat of County government, the County Administration Center (CAC). The event provided an opportunity for the public to celebrate 150 years of the County and to view the newly renovated tower and historic artwork throughout the CAC.

At the celebration honoring this occasion, the Clerk of the Board department was recognized for its leadership and efforts in the reopening of the tower and renovation of the historic CAC. The Clerk of the Board provided tours of the CAC to highlight the historic renovation efforts and give the public a close-up look at the Jewel on the Bay. The following opening remarks were offered by Thomas J. Pastuszka, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, at the Sesquicentennial:

Good afternoon, and welcome to the County of San Diego's Sesquicentennial Celebration. In his book, *Markings*, Dag Hammarskjöld wrote a simple prayer, - "For all that has been, Thanks; For all that shall be, Yes." These graceful words express the essence of this occasion. Today we celebrate our thanksgiving for the past and our enthusiasm for the possible. Today, we look back one hundred and fifty years, and give honor to those who laid the foundation for our way of life. This building, whose proud tower we re-open today, and whose face has been refreshed, reminds us of the wisdom exercised long ago in the founding of our beautiful and welcoming county. In this historic building, we can glimpse our predecessors' hopes and dreams, their hard work and sacrifice. All that we have today has been built on the contributions of those who came before us. And so we give thanks to them. One hundred and fifty years later, we can only be amazed at the growth and change that has come to this place. From a people of thirty five hundred, we have grown to nearly three million. From a government first recorded with quill pens, we have come to be accessible on the Internet. The torch has been passed to us to maintain and to build on the foundations that have been laid. We are now the keepers of the flame, the guardians of the water. On this day, the threshold to the next one hundred and fifty years, we face a

challenge as great as our forebears did. Like them, we will need to exercise the best of our human spirit. We will have to emulate their courage to risk the unknown path, their compassion to embrace differences, and their wisdom to work and sacrifice and invest for the future. May we stand firmly on the foundations of our predecessors and welcome these changes warmly. May we have the grace to look up and out, and into our sister's eyes, and into our brother's face. May we be people who say, with hope, "For all that shall be, Yes!"






Just as the federal Works Progress Administration employed the workers who built the City and County Administration Center during the depths of the Great Depression, the WPA also employed artists. Across the country, thousands of artists found work under the Federal Art Project of the WPA. The vast majority of the artwork created was destined to decorate public buildings such as the County Administration Center. Among the more familiar works on display here at the CAC are three murals in the meeting chambers of the Board of Supervisors, and "Guardian of Water," the sculpture fountain (jointly funded by the WPA and the San Diego Fine Arts Society) that looks out to San Diego Bay from the west plaza.

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors is pleased to present an exhibit of the County's other WPA artworks in the newly renovated tower during today's celebration of the County's Sesquicentennial.

For their generous contributions to today's event, the County of San Diego wishes to thank:

T.B. Penick & Sons, Inc.
Milford Wayne Donaldson Architect



Pam Slater *Greg Cox*

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors

welcomes you to a
celebration of the county's

James J. ... **Sesquicentennial**

and the reopening of the tower
and renovation of the historic
County Administration Center

Bill Horn *...*

February 18, 2000

The County of San Diego was established by the Legislature on February 18, 1850, as one of the original 27 counties of California.

A Court of Sessions was created that same year to handle administrative affairs of County government, but was replaced in 1852 by a five-member Board of Supervisors. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors held its first meeting on January 3, 1853.

At the time of its creation, San Diego County had an estimated population of at least 3490. According to historians, this estimate included 798 settlers, as well as approximately 2692 Native Americans in the County. The newly created county covered nearly 40,000 square miles. Included in the original county boundary were the present counties of San Diego, Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, and the eastern portion of Inyo County.

Today, San Diego County covers approximately 4,261 square miles - 65 miles from north to south and 86 miles from east to west. San Diego County is the second largest in the state with a population of more than 2.8 million.

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was the first European to reach this region, sailing his ship into what is now San Diego Bay in September 1542. Although Cabrillo named the area San Miguel, it was renamed 60 years later by Spaniard Don Sebastian Vizcaino. He chose the name San Diego in honor of his flagship and a favorite Catholic saint, San Diego de Alcala.

San Diego County Sesquicentennial Celebration

Music	United States Navy Band Southwest
Welcome	Thomas Pastuszka, <i>Clerk of the Board of Supervisors</i>
Flag Raising	San Diego County Sheriff's Department Color Guard
Pledge of Allegiance	Ron Roberts <i>Vice Chairman</i>
Remarks	Dianne Jacob <i>Chairwoman</i> Ron Roberts <i>Vice Chairman</i> Greg Cox <i>Supervisor, District 1</i> Pam Slater <i>Supervisor, District 3</i> Bill Horn <i>Supervisor, District 5</i> Milford Wayne Donaldson <i>Project Architect</i>
Closing	Dianne Jacob <i>Chairwoman</i>
Ribbon Cutting	Board of Supervisors
String Quartet	San Diego Youth Symphony

Following the ceremony, the public is invited to tour the tower and enjoy the artworks on display. Tours begin at the information booth in the main lobby.
Building illumination at dusk.

Restoring Historic Art

The County Administration Center is home to a number of historic art dating back to the era of the Works Projects Administration of the 1930's when local artists were commissioned to create oil paintings of the area's architecture, landscapes and seascapes. In 2004, the CAC historic art collection was restored and reframed. Over the years the art had been marred by nicotine damage, dust and discoloration as well as acid leach from the board supports and iron leach around the nails in the frames. Each piece was cleaned, stabilized and encased in custom gold gilded, Plein Air style frames by award-winning conservators and frame makers in a process overseen by the Clerk of the Board, with the financial backing of the Treasurer/Tax Collector and Supervisorial District 4 Community Projects Funds. The following is a summary of the historic art in the County Administration Center.

Charles Reiffel

Charles Reiffel was born in Indiana in 1868 and worked as a lithographer in the United States and in England. After receiving international acclaim for his modern approach to painting, Mr. Reiffel moved to San Diego in 1925 and resided here until his death in 1948. There are a number of Reiffel's paintings throughout the County Administration Center.

"The Invasion"

This work is a vertical view of the County Administration Center (CAC) in its early years (late 1930's, early 1940's), with a bustling pre-Colonial Native American village scene of agriculture and trade in the lower foreground. In the midground, a vista towards the CAC fades to the hills showing San Diego as a thriving, growing city. This is a statement of optimism captured in the architecture of the CAC and the social optimism of San Diego's WPA artists, such as Reiffel, who played an integral role in the design of the building. Note the forward looking progress of time as it relates to the city's early inhabitants which calls to symbolically look upwards to the future of San Diego as represented in modernity. The philosophical focal point of this optimism is the Civic Center, which is the former name of the CAC.



"The Invasion," by Charles Reiffel
Details: 42" X 48", 7/25/38

This painting is a tangible and fine example of the belief in civic unity, which underlies many of the commissions of the WPA artists in civic buildings throughout the United States. Also of connection to other WPA works in civic buildings is the positive and uplifting use of regionalism, native roots, and the progress of civic life through the hands of men as exemplified in agriculture, architecture and industry. Ironically, the title "The Invasion," calls into question just what or who was invading and may possibly be a tongue-in-cheek reference to the social optimism of the prescribed WPA style.



"In the Street," by Charles Reiffel
Details: 42" X 48", oil on upson board, labeled "Picture
#1379-36, 6/16/38 Project #9141"



"La Jolla Cove," by Charles Reiffel

Details: July 20, 1939, oil on upson board, 23" X 29", Project #9701-D, 7-20-93, Asset #150135

"La Jolla Cove"

Reiffel's "La Jolla Cove," is thought to be a 1940's version of La Jolla's rocky shoreline and cliffs, often referred to as the, "Tide Pools." The foreground depicts a mass of stony outcroppings with a foreshortened, chopped aerial perspective, frothy water meeting spit, and flowering to the midground with calmer waters and a sandy beach with strong dual horizontals. The distant cliff is backed by delicate frosting of green vegetation and the background shows the turquoise sea and beyond. The light source is from behind the artist's perspective, showing late afternoon on the horizon line.



"Highland Dairy," by Charles Reiffel

Details: 47" X 34", oil painting depicting a mountain scene.



"Marine," by Charles Reiffel

Details: 20" X 30" oil painting

"Marine"

Charles Reiffel had some notoriety painting seascapes like this one in his early years, as a lithographer in Buffalo, New York, and while living in the artist colony of Silvermine, Connecticut. In 1921, he abandoned lithography for easel painting. The effect of the Eastern marine painters, notably Winslow Homer, seemed to influence Reiffel throughout his life. This painting currently hangs in the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors legislative services office.



"In Old National City," by Charles Reiffel

Details: 32" X 36", oil on upson board, labeled "Picture #1395-38, 7/25/38 Project #9701-D"



"Moonlight on the Sea," by Charles Reiffel
Details: 32" X 38", oil on upson board, WPA tag removed,
dated 7/31/39.



"Waterfront," by Charles Reiffel

"Waterfront"

Depicting a harbor scene of San Diego, the foreground includes fishing boats with slips along side a strong horizontal raised pier in the midground with four fishermen upon it. The background depicts a rocky shoreline and skips with rolling hills and recognizable San Diego landmark buildings. Painted with impasto staccato brushstrokes, with a pallet of true San Diego greens, blues, and ochre. Charles Reiffel is best known for both his landscapes and harbor views. He is sometimes referred to as a California Plein Air artist who loved to paint the sea. This harbor scene is a fine example of his bold, modernist style, which he perfected upon his move from the East Coast in 1925 to San Diego.

This work is an example of San Diego's inspiration in Reiffel's bright landscapes, which brought him national fame.

Charles Fries

The painting, "When the Cows Come Home," depicts five cows and a man in a field. Born in Ohio in 1854, Charles Fries spent his life primarily as a painter and lithographer. He studied lithography and portraiture in Cincinnati, and working from a studio, he traveled and sketched throughout the Southwest. He later moved his studio to New York City and enjoyed success as an illustrator and portraitist. In 1896, he and his family headed west and upon arriving in Southern California, temporarily lived in the ruins of the then unrestored mission at San Juan Capistrano. The family eventually settled in San Diego, where he remained active in the art world until his death in 1940.



"When the Cows Come Home," by Charles Fries
Details: 30" X 36", dated 8/06/36, Labeled "Picture #31, Project
#2324"

Recreation, Agriculture, and Conservation

The three murals in the Board Chamber of the County Administration Center were completed by Jean Goodwin and Arthur Ames in 1939. Commissioned by the WPA, they were painted in egg tempura on muslin over a gesso surface. The artists were assisted by Alloys Bohner, William McAulby, and Hazel Scheckler. The panels represent three aspects of life in San Diego County - Recreation, Agriculture and Conservation. Inside the Board Chamber, the murals are arranged with Recreation to the far left, Agriculture situated in the middle, and Conservation to the right. The murals are owned by the Federal Government, and on permanent loan to the County. Due to the Federal loan, the paintings can not be altered, removed, or replaced. The murals have recently been a source of some controversy as they do not accurately reflect the diverse population of San Diego County. In 2023, the murals underwent restoration to return them to their WPA-era splendor.





These paintings are thought to be studies for the much larger, completed murals. They are far smaller than the final artworks. These works are on display at the County Administration Center, 1600 Pacific Highway, 4th Floor, Conference Room 402a. Compared to the full size murals, they are significantly smaller. They depict very similar scenes, with corresponding themes of Recreation, Agriculture and Conservation and are surrounded by dark wood frames.



The murals were restored in 2023.

Portrait of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Donald Armand Luscomb painted this portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1937 for a contest sponsored by the historic Spreckels Theatre in downtown San Diego, this portrait was exhibited briefly in the mezzanine balcony of the Spreckels Theatre, and later displayed in the foyer of the Cabrillo Theater near old Horton Plaza as a tribute to President Roosevelt. Mr. Luscomb's children donated the painting to the County Administration Center art collection in 2006. The painting was restored and reframed with funding from the District 4 community projects fund. Display of the portrait at the County Administration Center serves as a fitting tribute to our nation's 32nd president, given his role in authorizing funding for its construction. It hangs behind the security checkpoint at the East entrance.

Donald Armand Luscomb (1913-2004) was born in San Diego's Golden Hills neighborhood and grew up in the city's Burlingame and South Park communities.



From an early age, Mr. Luscomb's artistic interests were nurtured by his mother, Norla, herself a talented and prolific painter of local landscapes and waterscapes. His skills were further honed at San Diego State College where he studied art and sculpture in the 1930's. Among his tutors were Everett Gee Jackson and Donald Hord, both renowned artists of international acclaim. Mr. Hord's sculpture, *The Guardian of Water*, graces the Harbor Drive entrance to the County Administration Center. Proficient in the use of various media such as pen and ink, pencil, oils, acrylics and copper plate etching, Mr. Luscomb generally preferred to express himself through humorous cartoons, comical illustrations and limericks. A man of many talents, Mr. Luscomb was also an accomplished golfer and claimed the 1938 men's championship at San Diego's Balboa Park Municipal Golf Course.

The Board of Supervisors acknowledges and thanks the Luscomb family for their gift of this portrait to the County Administration Center permanent art collection.

Remembering Fallen Heroes

On May 6, 2009, the County unveiled the San Diego County Regional Law Enforcement Memorial. More than 500 people attended a dedication ceremony on the southwest lawn of the County Administration Center. The special memorial was built to honor the brave men and women of law enforcement who died in the line of duty; it includes the name of every fallen police officer, Sheriff's deputy, and state and federal law enforcement officer in the San Diego region.

Securing The Jewel on the Bay

For close to 75 years, the County Administration Center has been a place where the public gathers for ceremonial events, as well as a facility where County business is transacted. Public access to the County Administration Center has always been freely permitted. With the high volume of activities that occur at the County Administration Center, security is a high priority for the County.

On September 11, 2001, the sense of safety and security long held dear by Americans was forever altered by the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. Not since the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, had Americans felt so vulnerable, especially in places where the public gathered for work or entertainment. Every citizen was on the alert for anything out of the ordinary



The San Diego County Law Enforcement Memorial honors the brave men and women of law enforcement who have died in the line of duty.



All visitors to the County Administration Center are screened, following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

or anything that may have appeared threatening.

Immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Board of Supervisors took steps to close the East and West entrances to the County Administration Center and re-route traffic to the North and South entrances of the building. In addition, security officers were placed at the North and South entrances where a system for checking bags, purses, packages and briefcases was instituted. Since that time, additional security measures have been added, including the hiring of private security, the procurement of metal detectors and X-ray devices, and steps to secure the building's heating and ventilation systems. These steps and others are focused on addressing the threat of terrorism aimed

at the County Administration Center, the historic and highly visible public building that is the seat of regional government in San Diego County.

Until 2012, close to 1,000 staff members worked in the County Administration Center, with hundreds of visitors each day. To ensure County staff working in the County Administration Center were knowledgeable of the security practices and procedures, the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors developed a "Tenant's Guide to the County Administration Center," in 2004. The Guide focused on issues such as security, use regulations, the cafeteria, vending machines, parking regulations, emergency procedures, and more. Then, in 2010, with the assistance of the County Communications Office, the Clerk of the Board developed a short security video specifically for tenants. The video highlighted emergency evacuation procedures, alternate emergency exit locations, ID card access, etc. The video enhanced the communication of emergency procedures to ensure a safe environment for tenants, staff, and visitors at the County Administration Center.



In 2009, County departments that operated in the County Administration Center were invited to participate on a security team to discuss cost effective ways to enhance security. The recommendations for the security enhancements were made by representatives from the Chief Administrative Office, County Counsel, Treasurer/Tax Collector's Office, and the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk's Office. The enhancements were part of an overall security project, along with other necessary enhancements such as access control to offices and conference rooms, acquiring emergency evacuation chairs for the disabled, and parking lot illumination.

Award for Preserving the Jewel

In 2004, the County Administration Center was honored by the Building Owners and Managers Association as the Office Building of the Year in the category of Historical Buildings. Founded in 1967, The San Diego chapter of the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) is the largest local professional association devoted exclusively to the office building industry. Members of BOMA San Diego represent all facets of the industry and include property managers, facility managers, owners, asset managers, engineers and leasing brokers. Combined, these individuals represent more than 25 million square feet of office space in San Diego.

BOMA San Diego hosts an annual awards competition to recognize excellence in the commercial building management industry. The Office Building of the Year (TOBY) competition is held in conjunction with BOMA International. The prestigious TOBY Award is bestowed as the highest mark of excellence for office building management and is the most all-inclusive program in the commercial real estate industry. All facets of a building's operations are thoroughly evaluated during the judging process by a panel comprised of industry professionals, including architects and commercial building managers. The evaluation criteria for the TOBY Award includes tenant relations programs, community involvement, emergency evacuation procedures and continuing education for building personnel.



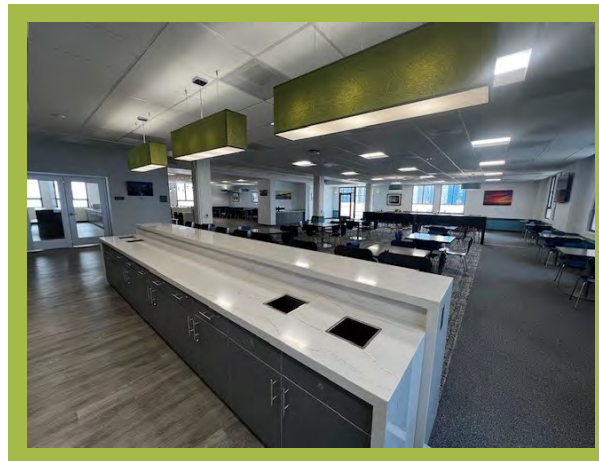
Marking the reopening of the CAC cafeteria on January 21, 2003, are Chris Monroe, Vice President Premiere Foods, Steve Rodriguez, Chef Manager, 2003 Chairman of the Board Greg Cox, Supervisor Ron Roberts, and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Thomas Pastuszka.

A Place to Enjoy Lunch

Since 1977, the County Administration Center cafeteria was operated by the State of California Department of Rehabilitation. In October 2002, through various surveys and a Cafeteria Advisory Committee, it was requested that a request for proposals be issued to solicit a private vendor to operate the cafeteria. The County's first private vendor was Premier Food Services Management Group. From October to December 2002, the cafeteria was closed for renovation.

The cafeteria was redesigned by Eric Davy Architects. The cafeteria, originally constructed in the early 1970's, was completely remodeled to meet current health codes with all new energy efficient equipment. On January 21, 2003, a grand opening ceremony was held for the newly refurbished cafeteria. Large windows offer a panoramic view of San Diego Bay and Downtown. It also overlooks the recently completed Waterfront Park. The cafeteria remains a popular place for employees and the public to eat, socialize, and have meetings. Additionally, an old mailroom and vacant room was combined to create the CAC Wellness Center. The Wellness Center is available to all County staff as part of an ongoing effort to promote employee fitness and health; it contains a variety of cardio and weightlifting machines. The fitness center is very

popular before and after work, as well as during lunch hours. Renovations of the Wellness Center began in July 2025 and are scheduled to complete in December.



The renovated Community Cafeteria 1600.



The cafeteria overlooks the Waterfront Park and San Diego Bay.



The CAC Wellness Center.

Preserving Precious Resources

Water, Land, Environment

As the steward of the 360,600 square foot County Administration Center, the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors staff is constantly searching for ways to conserve the limited natural resources that are utilized for operating and maintaining the County Administration Center.

On July 16, 2008 the Clerk of the Board held a celebration to commemorate the 70th birthday of the dedication of the County Administration Center. Supervisor Greg Cox, Chairman of the Board in 2008, presented a proclamation to impart how the County Administration Center symbolized the highest aspirations and ideals of public service.

Nearly a year later, June 10, 2009, marked the 70th anniversary of the dedication of the “Guardian of Water” sculpture by Donal Hord on the west plaza of the County Administration Center. The Clerk of the Board held a celebration on the west plaza recognizing this historic sculpture. The day also marked the 70th anniversary of the completion of the County Administration Center landscaping by landscape



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Thomas Pastuszka celebrates the 70th anniversary of the dedication of the “Guardian of Water” sculpture by Donal Hord with Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, Supervisor Greg Cox, Chief Financial Officer Don Steuer, and Supervisor Dianne Jacob.

architect Roland Hoyt. The focus of the “Guardian of Water” celebration was on water conservation. During the week surrounding the event, County staff in the County Administration Center received daily e-mails about the “Guardian of Water” sculpture, with important water saving tips. At the event, the Clerk of the Board Facilities Team surrounded the fountain with 70 drought tolerant plants that were planted around the County Administration Center. Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Chairwoman of the Board in 2009, presented a proclamation commemorating the statue’s presence as a “symbolic protector of our precious natural resources for the past 70 years.” At the event, the fountain was turned off to comply with the City of San Diego’s level two drought alert. At that time, the City of San Diego had mandatory water restrictions, including the limitation of using water with ornamental fountains.



Supervisor Greg Cox commemorated the 70th birthday of the dedication of the County Administration Center.



The "Guardian of Water," by Donal Hord, was dedicated on June 10, 1939.

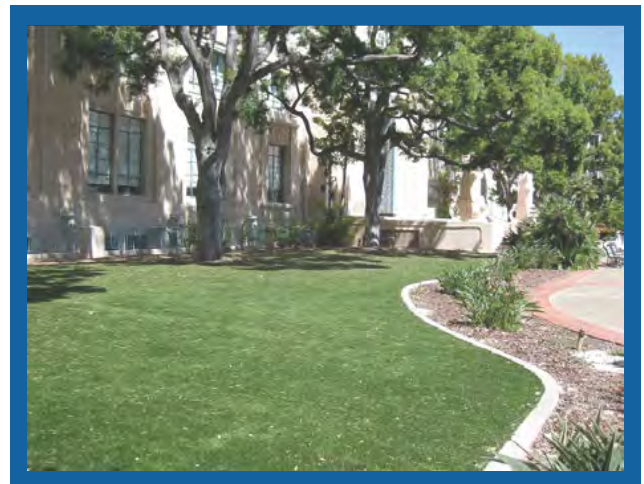
With over 212,000 square feet of landscaping, the Clerk of the Board Facilities Services increased the use of drought-tolerant plants and materials in landscaped areas and gardens to reduce reliance on water resources. Staff also applied mulch to improve moisture retentiveness of soil and prevent erosion. Finally, pressure regulators were installed on landscape sprinklers. Pressure regulators helped to ensure consistent water flow throughout the sprinkler system, reducing over and under watering in particular areas.

In October 2009, the lawns adjacent to the building on the East Plaza were replaced with waterless turf. These areas were selected as a pilot project to test the reliability, aesthetics, and maintenance of a waterless lawn. The waterless lawn brings many environmental benefits, such as drastically decreased water requirements, elimination

of greenhouse gasses and fuel supplies from lawn maintenance equipment, elimination of the need for fertilizers and pesticides, and a reduction of allergens. The product installed on the East Plaza was composed of 100% recyclable material, was lead-free, and had a 10-15 year expected life span. That equated to more than a decade without mowing, watering or fertilizing. It was estimated that the waterless lawn would save over 5,000 gallons of water per month. This not only conserves an important natural resource, but also reduces utility costs at the County Administration Center.

The Clerk of the Board implemented many water conservation projects to reduce water usage inside the County Administration Center. Foremost, all water faucets in the restrooms of the County Administration Center were replaced with motion-sensor faucets. These motion sensors helped reduce water consumption by 10%. In 2009, the Clerk of the Board began a pilot program to test the use of waterless urinals in the first floor restrooms. The pilot program was successful; therefore, in May 2010 the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors completed replacement of all urinals in the County Administration Center with waterless urinals. The waterless urinals are expected to save approximately 740,000 gallons of water per year.

Improving water use during a time of serious water shortage was an important responsibility and the Clerk of the Board is proud of its continued success in this regard.



Artificial turf on the East Plaza.

Controversy and Change

Immediately following the 2014 opening of the Waterfront Park (see section The Waterfront Park and Renovation), the County faced a difficult predicament. In 2015, State Governor Jerry Brown issued Executive Order B-29-15 (EO) in response to the severe drought conditions in the state.⁷⁰ This called for statewide water conservation efforts for the duration of the severe drought being experienced at the time. While the County sought water conservation methods at many levels, the Waterfront Park became a very visible use of potable water, and therefore the recipient of much criticism. Many members of the public saw it as setting a bad example during a time when so many people were asked to cut back on their water use.

A Grand Jury in 2016/2017 investigated why the Waterfront Park was not included in the County drought-management plans. The Jury did recognize the water conservation efforts elsewhere in the county, resulting in some 25% savings between 2013 and 2015. They found that the recreational status of the Waterfront Park made it exempt from the Executive Order. However, the Jury recommended some changes such as control of evaporation rates and active fountain management based on public demand. In response, the County replaced filters with more efficient and less water-intensive models, and has limited fountain operation hours to peak, daytime use only.



The CAC sits on and maintains 16.7 acres of waterfront property.

County of San Diego

Setting for the Future

Waterfront Park and Renovation

The San Diego County Administration Center sits at the heart of the North Embarcadero, a scenic waterfront area widely seen as San Diego's front porch. The County Administration Center bayside setting on the western edge of downtown represented a rare and exciting opportunity for creation of a park that would provide precious open space in the downtown area and appropriately showcase the historic character of the County Administration Center.

The 1998 North Embarcadero Alliance Visionary Plan was instrumental in establishing a common series of guidelines, goals and objectives for development of the North Embarcadero. The Plan was the result of an unprecedented cooperative planning effort between the five agencies comprising the North Embarcadero Alliance: the Centre City Development Corporation, the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the San Diego Unified Port District, and the United States Navy. The North Embarcadero area is bounded by Hawthorn Street on the north, the railroad right of way to the east, Market Street to the south and the bulkhead line of San Diego bay to the west. The following is a summary of the Visionary Plan's fundamental goals that impacted the planning and design of County Administration Center Waterfront Park:

- Establish the North Embarcadero as a public precinct and front porch to the whole community, creating attractions that draw people to the bay front
- Establish the North Embarcadero as an active, vibrant area, particularly along the bay front
- Encourage development that is economically viable and increase the economic and social vitality of the bay front
- Provide for uses and amenities that celebrate the San Diego community
- Preserve, enhance, and celebrate the area's marine uses, architecture, art, and culture
- Make the bay front accessible to all, including those with disabilities - on foot, bicycle, boat, transit, and auto.

For nearly 12 years, the County continued to pursue development of the County Administration Center Waterfront Park. Finally in May 2011, the Board of Supervisors approved the construction plan for the Waterfront Park. The project transformed the property surrounding the historic County Administration Center into the most significant waterfront open space in Downtown San Diego. The Waterfront Park converted eight acres of surface parking to large civic greens, children's play area, intimate garden rooms and an expansive interactive fountain. Parking is now provided in a new underground parking garage. Sustainable design features have been incorporated into the project with the goal to certify portions of the project under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program and minimize ongoing costs. In preparation for this major project, in July 2011, the Board of Supervisors transferred responsibility for administering the County Administration Center from the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to the Director of the Department of General Services.



Plans for the Waterfront Park redevelopment.

This action was to ensure the administration and management of the County Administration Center and surrounding property are coordinated seamlessly during construction of the Waterfront Project and after its completion. The Board commended the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors department for its exceptional work in maintaining the historic building over the past 15 years.

Demolition and Construction

On October 26, 2011, then-Chairman of the Board, Bill Horn, and the Board of Supervisors kicked off demolition of the County's vacant downtown health building by pulling down the Health and Human Services Agency sign above the door. It fell with a clatter, signaling an excavator to start ripping down the building. The demolition of the 1958 J.B. Askew Building at the County Administration Center made way for an expansive waterfront park. Construction started in the spring of 2012; with the park intended to open by late 2013. Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Horn said:

"A lot of good work's been done in Askew, but it was intended as temporary office space, and we can look forward to something far better replacing it."

The Askew demolition was visible from Harbor Drive and Grape Street. Public parking and other business at the County Administration Center was not affected during the tear-down, which finished in December 2011.



Architectural Rendering of the Waterfront Park.



From left to right: Supervisor Greg Cox, Supervisor Ron Roberts, then-Chairman Bill Horn, Supervisor Dianne Jacob, and Supervisor Pam Slater-Price kick off the demolition of the J.B. Askew Building.

The building was renamed in 1980 after the County's second public health officer J.B. Askew, who was a passionate advocate for public health in his 25-year career before he retired in 1975. Vice-Chairman Ron Roberts remarked:

"The County Administration Center has been called the 'Jewel of the Embarcadero,' but it's really going to sparkle when the park, 830-foot fountain and gardens surround it."

An underground parking garage was built off Ash Street to replace above-ground lots. The park includes an expansive fountain and splash feature where kids frolic and adults dip their toes; civic greens for picnics, large special events, sports and lounging; and several themed gardens, including a Mediterranean garden and a children's play garden. "The Waterfront Park will join with the first phase of the North Embarcadero Visionary Plan and under-construction Ruocco Park to transform our waterfront and further elevate San Diego on the list of world-class cities," said Supervisor Greg Cox. Funding for the improvements came from the general fund, bond proceeds, and the County Redevelopment Fund. "The County's fiscal prudence and consistent AAA credit rating put us in an excellent position to provide this treasure for County residents to enjoy far into the future," said Supervisor Dianne Jacob. The project was designed with sustainable elements including low-water irrigation, drought-resistant landscaping, low-energy lighting and permeable ground coverings to reduce storm-water



County of San Diego

Demolition of the J.B. Askew building was completed in 2011.

runoff into the bay. "This is a sustainable, model project that will also be a hub of recreation and culture," said Supervisor Pam Slater-Price.

As the County restored the open space around the County Administration Center, there were opportunities to transform the uses of the interior of the Center. Many County departments temporarily moved staffing and operations to the County Operations Center in Kearny Mesa, freeing up space in the County Administration Center.

The Park Ten Years Later

Today, the Waterfront Park remains a popular as ever. Over the summer, families, out of town visitors, and school groups come to the park to relax and enjoy the San Diego weather. Children splash in the fountains, people picnic on the grass, and friends play grass volleyball. On weekends, the area is frequently rented



County of San Diego

Former Supervisor Ron Roberts celebrates the opening of the Waterfront Park in 2014.



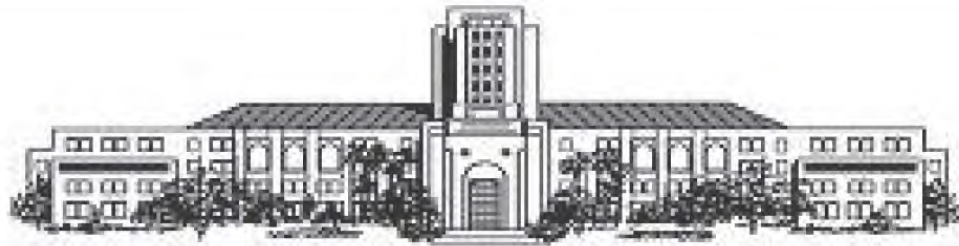
County of San Diego

Movies in the park are a popular summer attraction.



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
PARKS & RECREATION

out as a concert, festival, or wedding venue. The park serves as everything from an outdoor summer movie theater, to the start line for marathons. In July 2024, the north side of the park was remodeled into a new Active Recreation Area. Basketball and pickleball courts were built, along with exercise stations and a dog park.⁷¹ Equipment such as paddles and balls are available for checkout so that anyone can enjoy the new features. The Waterfront Park is open to reservations for birthdays, farmers markets, anniversaries, and more. Across from the park along the embarcadero is the Maritime Museum, along with a host of restaurants and shops. The Waterfront Park and its characteristic fountains have become a landmark icon of San Diego, truly exemplifying the County Administration Center's role as the "front porch."



While the functions inside the County Administration Center have changed over time, the civic pride for the Jewel on the Bay has remained constant.

The County Administration Center remains the seat of County government and a monument for citizen involvement in local government. It remains a focal point of history in local government in San Diego.

The County Administration Center will continue to serve residents. As President Roosevelt said in 1938 at the dedication of the County Administration Center, "The noblest motive is the public good. I think if we all carry that motto in our hearts, in every city and community in the land, there is no question but the proper thing, American democracy, will survive."

Chronology of the County Administration Center

- 1902** Initial interest expressed in the construction of a Civic Center.
- 1907** Civic Improvement Committee established. Later changed name to Civic Center Committee. As a result of George Marston's work on this committee, John Nolen was brought to San Diego to work on first plan.
- 1908** First Nolen Plan completed; recommended the construction of a Civic Center in the heart of downtown.
- 1909** *January 1:* Nolen report submitted to the public.
- 1911** Statute issued granting the tidelands property to the City of San Diego on the condition that it be used for navigation, commerce and fishing and that it make \$1 million in harbor improvements.
- 1913** Renewed interest in the Nolen Plan; a Civic Center plan based on the Nolen Plan, but modified to lessen the cost of land, was put before the City Council, but did not generate enough interest to be implemented.
- 1914** As part of the improvements under the Statutes of 1911, the bulkhead was established and the harbor dredged. The dredging materials were used to fill in the submerged tidelands from which the CAC site emerged this year.
- 1915** Pan Pacific Exposition in Balboa Park. Designs for exposition buildings in Balboa Park spawned the popularity of ornate Spanish Revival architecture in the San Diego area.
- 1924** *January:* Board passed resolution #39993, which officially invited the San Diego City Council to confer with Supervisors to discuss the possibility of constructing a combined City/County building.
- 1926** Second Nolen Plan submitted to the City Planning Commission; recommended the waterfront site for the Civic Center.
March 8: Civic Center site officially listed for the first time; city plan adopted.
December: Board of Supervisors passed resolution declaring "the necessity for the erection of a public building" for both the City and the County.
- 1927** *March 22:* San Diego voters approved the waterfront location through a countywide election.
- 1929** Objections raised about the waterfront site led to a bill introduced in the state legislature that set aside the land for Civic Center purposes.
June 11: Governor approved and signed the bill that conveyed the CAC property to the County and the City of San Diego as joint owners upon payment of \$1,000 (Chapter 778 of Statutes of 1929).
- 1930** *November 4:* A special election was held to vote \$500,000 in bonds to pay half the cost of the Civic Center building. The necessary two-thirds majority was not obtained, and the issue did not pass.

- 1931** *October:* A resolution of the Common Council of the City stated that other locations would be considered as possible sites for the Civic Center.
December: In a countywide election, voters favored the plan to build the center on the tidelands site.
- 1932** *January:* The Civic Center Committee suggested that the building be constructed on the unoccupied portion of the courthouse block. The committee pointed out that financial circumstances would make it difficult to sell bonds backed by the best of security; the Depression prevented economic certainty.
- 1933** A bond issue that had been organized by the Citizen's Civic Center Committee was defeated. Payment was finally made for the tidelands site by the city and county (\$1,000) to secure ownership under Chapter 778 of the Statutes of 1929. Passage of the National Industrial Relief Act revived hope for possible construction of a Civic Center.
June: The City Attorney informed the city and the county that there weren't enough funds available to erect the building, then advised that an application be made to the Federal Public Works fund.
August: A Civic Center Report submitted by joint committee composed of the City and County Planning Commissions advised that the waterfront site be chosen for the location of the Civic Center.
October: Board of Supervisors resolved that the courthouse site was inadequate for a Civic Center.
December 19: Citizens voted to construct the Civic Center on the tidelands site rather than the courthouse or Balboa Park sites; the tidelands site won by a narrow margin.
- 1934** *January 11:* Ordinance authorizing payment of the County's \$500 to secure the site voted by Supervisors. The City's ordinance was passed four days later.
February 10: State Supreme Court case of *Atwood v Hammond* commenced and was dismissed on March 19th; the waterfront site was declared free from the tidelands trust of 1911.
May: Civic Center Committee was established, comprised of councilmen and supervisors.
Summer: City and County appropriated funds to be used to pay for architectural plans for the Civic Center.
- 1935** Architects Johnson, Requa and Gill appeared before the Board of Supervisors with a model of the proposed Civic Center.
January: The administrator of the Federal Emergency Public Works informed the City and County that federal funds were depleted, but still encouraged San Diego to apply for assistance in the event that more funding would be appropriated.
March 25: Waterfront site decision secured through resolution adopted by Board of Supervisors.
April 9: County resolved to construct the Civic Center at a total cost of no more than \$1 million.
April 23: One million dollar bond issue presented to voters; a two-thirds majority was not obtained. It was decided that the only remaining option would be to apply to the federal government for aid.
August 28: Request made for \$1 million Public Works Administration project to start construction; City and County filed application for PWA project.

- 1935** *September:* President Roosevelt authorized \$1 million to be granted from the Works Progress Administration one week after a personal tour of the site.
November 12: City Manager signs architects' contract.
November 19: Architects' contract signed by every member of the Board of Supervisors. Contract gave architects \$36,000 for planning and \$14,000 for supervision; cost was shared by both the City and the County.
End of November: Works Progress Administrator Frank McLaughlin sent a telegram authorizing the commencement of construction.
December: McLaughlin announced that the Civic Center project had been approved, and the federal contribution of \$989,528 was in a bank in San Francisco.
December 5: Groundbreaking ceremony took place at site, with the first earth turned by George W. Marston.
- 1936** *January 4:* Actual construction began.
October 8: Bidding for private contractors opened; jurisdiction of the WPA had ended with completion of the building's foundation.
October 28: Contract for completion of remaining four stories awarded to B.O. Larsen Construction. Soon after, the remainder of the WPA money was conveyed to the City and County of San Diego.
- 1937** *June 28:* Board of Supervisors approved specifications of Donal Hord's "Guardian of Water" fountain.
June 29: City Council followed county in approving specifications.
July: A 22-ton granite block delivered to Donal Hord's studio to begin construction of the fountain.
October 29: Luncheon held to celebrate completion of the building's exterior.
- 1938** *May 24:* Contract for completing building awarded to Charles L. Hoskins.
July 6: Telegram sent to Ralph Jenney requesting that he act as chairman of a welcoming committee for the president; Jenney formally accepted the following day.
July 16: President Roosevelt arrived in San Diego in order to dedicate the Civic Center; about 25,000 people attended the ceremony.
November: County and City agree to sponsor a WPA Federal Art Project that will finance the painting of three mural panels each for the Board Chamber and the City Council Chamber.
December 19: City Hall offices were moved to Civic Center building.
December 23: Civic Center opening ceremonies; building officially opens for business.
December 27: First official meeting held in Civic Center. Roland Hoyt hired as landscape architect for \$100,000 WPA project to redesign the grounds (at a total cost of \$129,944).
- 1939** *February:* WPA weaving project arranged to produce a series of three historical tapestries for the interior of the Civic Center.
May: Designs for mural panels approved.
June 10: Dedication ceremony held for Hord's "Guardian of Water" sculpture. Landscaping of grounds completed by Hoyt.
- 1945** Statutes of 1929 amended to provide that the land was conveyed to the City and County as co- owners rather than joint owners, and the co- owners could convey interest in property to each other. This provided part of the foundation for the transfer of the City's land to the County.

- 1956** Building construction: third floor area extended over west branch of north wing, adding to the chambers of the Board of Supervisors.
- 1958** Health Center constructed on northwest side of building.
- 1960** Replica of "Guardian of Water" sculpture completed; the San Diego-Yokohama Friendship Commission accepted it and shipped it to Yokohama. Third floor expansion undertaken to move the mayor's office there from the eighth floor.
- 1962** Two appraisal reports commissioned in preparation for the sale of the City's share of the building to the County. Appraisals were in the vicinity of \$7 million.
- 1963** *July 17:* County acquired City's remaining interest in Civic Center; cost set at \$3.3 million.
- 1964** *October:* The County paid its first installment of the \$3.3 million to the City.
November 13: City began moving out. Move completed in January of 1965.
- 1967** The County finished paying the \$3.3 million bill to the City.
- 1969** Third floor northeast wing added at cost of \$500,000 to house the Clerk of the Board. Nighttime lighting system set up on the western side of the building.
- 1974** An extensive improvement project was undertaken to modernize the CAC. Additions built on top of the third floor at north end and another on top of the second floor of southeast wing. Cafeteria constructed on south end of fourth floor. Would add 21,000 square feet at a cost of \$10.1 million.
- 1984** Low-use water demonstration garden installed on the eastern side of the complex.
- 1986** *October 22:* City Historic Site Board approved CAC as a historic site.
- 1987** Board of Supervisors revived idea of Cedar Street Mall (complex of government buildings from the bay to Balboa Park), a take-off on the Nolen Plan.
- 1988** *May 16:* National Register of Historic Places recognized the CAC as a national historic site.
July 11: Ceremony for historic designation; in addition, celebration of the 50th anniversary of the building's original dedication.
- 1989** *December:* Relighting of Center (at night) as a result of campaign by Citizens Coordinate for Century 3.
- 1996** *January 30:* Board of Supervisors appoints the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to serve as administrator of the County Administration Center.
February 27: After a 5-year-long dry spell caused by mechanical problems, the "Guardian of Water" sculpture fountain was turned on again.
- 1997** The Board of Supervisors takes leadership in the development of the North Embarcadero planning process through membership in the North Embarcadero Alliance, an interagency collaboration between the County, City of San Diego, Centre City Development Corporation, Port and the Navy.
- 1998** *February 10:* Board of Supervisors appropriates \$3 million for the restoration of the tower, repair of the red tile roof and repair and painting of the exterior.
July 16: Sixtieth Anniversary celebration held on the west side of the building with bands, vintage cars and festivities.

- 2000** *August:* The Clerk of the Board completed the historic renovation of the CAC.
February 18: the County celebrated the Sesquicentennial at a celebration at the CAC, opening the historic tower and revealing restored historic art work. Also, this year, the CAC received a Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO) award and an Orchid Award.
- 2001** The East and West entrances to the CAC were closed following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. All public access was re-routed to the North and South entrances where security officers screen visitors.
- 2003** The CAC Cafeteria was remodeled to meet current health codes.
January 21: The CAC cafeteria was reopened to employees and the public.
- 2004** The CAC was honored by the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) as the Office Building of the Year in the category of Historical Buildings. Also, the CAC historic art collection was restored and re-framed.
- 2006** The department conducted a Property Condition Assessment and created a Major Maintenance Plan for the CAC. The project evaluated the current condition of the building and looked prospectively at the projects needed to preserve it for the enjoyment of future generations.
- 2008** *July 16:* County staff celebrated the 70th birthday of the dedication of the CAC.
- 2009** *June 10:* County staff celebrated the anniversary of the dedication of the "Guardian of Water" sculpture by Donal Hord. The Board of Supervisors turned off the fountain to comply with the City of San Diego's level two drought alert.
October: the Clerk of the Board installed a waterless turf on the east plaza.
- 2011** *May:* the Board of Supervisors approved the construction plan for the CAC Waterfront Park.
July: the Board of Supervisors transferred responsibility of the CAC from the Clerk of the Board to the Department of General Services to facilitate coordination of the CAC Waterfront Park.
October 26: the demolition of the County's Health and Human Services building, the J.B. Askew building, began.
- 2014** *May 10:* The grand opening of the Waterfront Park takes place with a community kickoff party featuring live performances, a classic car show, farmers market, and more.
- 2016** A Grand Jury examines the County's water use at the Waterfront Park and recommends changes to better conserve the precious resource.

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Resource Catalogue

Sources and Locations

1. Board of Supervisors Records: Located in the Clerk of the Board office on the fourth floor of the County Administration Center.
2. Department of Media and Public Relations: Located on the second floor of the County Administration Center.
3. Central Library: Located at 7th and E Streets in downtown San Diego. The majority of relevant information is maintained in the California Room.
4. Archives of the San Diego History Center: Located on the bottom floor of the Casa de Balboa in Balboa Park.

Available Information

Board of Supervisors Records:

The file used is titled County Administrative Center: Acquisition of Site. The bulk of the file consists of letters between county departments, city departments, planning committees, state and federal offices, local architects, and residents of San Diego. Also included is a volume titled A Civic Center Report (1933), which contains useful information about the location of the site. In addition, a bound volume from the State Supreme Court Case of Atwood v Hammond is useful when discussing the entitlement difficulties of building on the waterfront site. The majority of information in this file is pre-construction, and most of it is in the form of official documents or letters between officials (both city and county). It is especially useful if there is a need to show primary documents (such as resolutions and ordinances, which are either included or referred to) or to indicate how various citizens expressed their support or disapproval of the plans for the Civic Center. The most recent documents are statements of expenses from President Roosevelt's dedication ceremony in the summer of 1935.

Other files from Records pertaining to the County Administration Center:

1. Administration Building-Civic Center. Bronze Plaque-Fountain Statue and Murals. Resolutions and written correspondence regarding the bronze plaque placed near the entrance to the CAC; approval of the "Guardian of Water" specifications and correspondence regarding the ethnicity of the model for the statue; resolutions dealing with the appointment of artists to complete the WPA mural project.
2. P.W.A General Services: County Admin. Center (Misc.) 7/24/62. Contains two appraisals of the CAC; one conducted by John Cotton and the other by Ewart Goodwin and Thomas Sandmeyer. These appraisals were commissioned in order to assess the monetary value of the Civic Center so that the City could transfer its share of the building to the County.
3. Co. Admin. Center: Miscellaneous File No. 2. 5/31/61 to 7/3/73. Correspondence regarding dwindling space at the CAC. Contains consideration of improvement proposal [what would become the extensive 1974 renovation project]. Contains copies of the quitclaim deed by which the county acquired the city's share of the Civic Center.
4. General Services: Co. Admin. Center Construction Misc. 10/4/55 to 12/21/64. Mostly records of alterations to the building. Includes some information about constructing additional space.

Media and Public Relations:

This office is an excellent resource both for researching the history of the building and in locating pictures of the site. There is also a copy of the 1926 Nolen Plan available (see library section for description of Nolen Plan).

1. The green file folder titled Civic Center: Administration Building/County Administration Center contains mainly newspaper clippings, in addition to one document by Cynthia Malinick which summarizes part of the history of the building. Portions of this document have been used in this document.

2. Two manila folders contain original photographs (and negatives) from construction and dedication of the building. The first folder, titled CAC Construction, etc. 1934-36: Historical Copies/ Historical County Buildings contains numerous copies of three important photographs: 1) FDR at the microphone during the dedication ceremony (seated in car, close range); 2) Civic Center from a distance, showing the crowd of thousands gathered for the ceremony; and 3) FDR in car during the dedication ceremony (taken from the crowd's perspective). The second folder, titled CAC Construction 1936-, contains a series of photos that are useful in showing the progress of the building construction.
3. A large photograph of the original 1938 painting of the Civic Center by Charles Reiffel.

Resources in the Central Public Library:

Nolen Plans: Located in the California Room on the second floor. They cannot be removed from the room. Call number RCC 352.7.

1. San Diego: A Comprehensive Plan for its Improvement, 1908. Nolen was brought out to San Diego from the East Coast and commissioned by George Marston to publish this plan. Includes sketches of the proposed Civic Center in a different site than the waterfront location. This was the earliest documentation of Civic Center planning; it helped contribute to the awareness of the growing need for a civic center.
2. A Comprehensive City Plan for San Diego, California, 1926. Includes an extensive map of Nolen's ideas for the city, including reference to the waterfront site as its proposed location. This document was commissioned by the City, and a result of Nolen's recommendations in this plan, the waterfront site became the site selected by the City and County governments.

Unbound Periodicals:

Also located in the California Room; periodicals are in file drawers in the back of the room and can be accessed without the librarian. The files titled Civic Center - San Diego (City) and County Administration Center - San Diego (County) contain newspaper clippings dating from pre-construction to recent events concerning the

CAC; in particular, there is a lot of information about the City's relocation in 1963 and the proposed development of the CAC parking lots during the early 1980's. Also included is information about the historic designation of the site and the celebration of its 50th birthday in 1988. There is an original invitation to the historic designation ceremony, and many of the newspaper clippings feature photographs of the CAC.

Rising Tide: The History of San Diego: Richard Pourade, 1967. Published by the Union-Tribune Publishing Company. Located in the California Room, call number RCC 979.498/Pourade. Contains information about the historical aspects of San Diego, with a small amount of attention devoted to the Civic Center. One picture shows the dedication ceremony, and there is also a collection of three sketches of the proposed Center, indicating the architectural changes that it underwent during the design phase. Excellent background information and attention devoted to key civic leaders such as Marston.

Resources in the Archives of the San Diego History Center: Journal of San Diego History: "The Silent Sentinel: Samuel Wood Hamill, F.A.I.A." by Laura Young. Issue from Winter, 1985. Contains information about Sam Hamill's participation in the Civic Center project, as well as extensive biographical information.

Master's Thesis by Pamela Hart Branton: The Works Progress Administration in San Diego County, 1935-1943. Half of a chapter in this thesis (pp. 80-87) is devoted to the construction of the Civic Center in the context of a WPA project. It is basically a summary of the process of obtaining aid. Some of this information is included in this document.

George White Marston Papers: Contain a significant amount of information about Marston's role in building the Civic Center. Located in Box 1 File 8.

Blueprints, presentation drawings: The archives store a large quantity of architectural drawings of the building. Below is a list of visuals, located by archive call numbers.

#AD 1050-004 F6-D6: Drawing of proposed Civic Center: watercolor on heavy board (30"x 40"). No date.

#AD 1050-002 F3-D1: Three partial sheets of details of the tile pattern design on various exterior parts of the building. Authors: Gill, Johnson, Requa & Hamill.

#AD 1050-003 F6-D6: Eight sheets of blue-prints (30" x 47") in excellent condition from 1934. Authors: Requa, Jackson & Hamill; William T. Johnson; Louis J. Gill.

#AD 1001-000 Photo Collection: "Films of Richard S. Requa, AIA, 1920s through 1937." A collection of Requa's personal films (18 reels) that contains some footage of the early foundation construction of the building (on reel 31).

#AD P 1050-006 F6-D12: Presentation drawing of Civic Center. Pen and ink on paper; original drawing of east elevation.

#AD P 1050-007 F6-D12: Presentation drawing showing west elevation.

#AD 1050-009 F3-D4: Bound, mimeographed volume containing the complete set of standard contractor's specifications from February of 1936. Gill, Johnson, Requa and Hamill.

#AD 1050-014 F6-Ds2: These are the floor plans (blueprints) with specific city and county office and department space allocations penciled in. January 1936. Gill, Johnson, Requa and Hamill.

#AD 1050-000: File of 44 construction photos from the series of 70 photos taken by Requa.

#AD 1050-008: This is a professionally-produced documentary of the design, construction and dedication of Donal Hord's statue, Guardian of Water. It shows his sketches, live models, quarrying the stone, roughing out the figure, finishing, moving into place, design of the tile fountain, details of the tile installation and dedication on June 10, 1939. It is a VHS videocassette titled "A Symphony in Stone," 15 minutes long.

Extracts from County Records

The following documents were used from County files as resources for this book.

- *December 20, 1926*: Resolution of the Board of Supervisors addressing the necessity for constructing a building to serve County purposes; accepts City's offer for joint ownership.
- *September 8, 1933*: County Planning Commission report to Board of Supervisors recommending the construction of the Civic Center on the waterfront. Rent argument presented. Recommended submitting application for \$1 million loan; advised preparation of plans.
- *January 21, 1935*: Letter from G.A. Davidson to Board of Supervisors. Indicates correspondence with Federal Emergency Administration; positive feedback about Civic Center idea. Includes letter from the administrator of the FEA mentioning that federal funds were depleted, but the administration considered the Civic Center an "ideal" type of project.
- *July 5, 1938*: City Council resolution to appoint Ralph Jenney as chairman of a group of officials designated to welcome the president at the dedication ceremony.
- *August 23, 1938*: Invoice from presidential visit showing expenses for the dedication ceremony.
- *December 23, 1938*: Program from Civic Center's opening ceremonies.
- *December 14, 1966*: Copy of Quitclaim Deed involved in transfer of ownership from City to County.
- *June 16, 1988*: Notice from State Historic Preservation Officer that the Civic Center was placed on the National Register. Letter to Bob Lerner, Public Affairs Officer.
- *June 18, 2002*: The Board of Supervisors approving the Master Plan for the CAC Waterfront Park.

3 WHEREAS, The Common Council of the City of San Diego has
4 adopted a Resolution declaring the necessity for the erection of
5 a public building or buildings in said city for municipal purposes
6 and that the public convenience requires that said City join with
7 the County of San Diego in the work and expense incident to the
8 making of an agreement between said City and said County, and,

9 WHEREAS, said City has agreed to reimburse the County of
10 San Diego to the extent of one-half of the amount of money paid
11 by the County as reasonable compensation for the services of an
12 attorney, architect, and other persons employed by the County
13 in the matter of entering into said agreement, subject to a limit
14 of \$3000.00 as to the City's share, therefore,

15 BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County
16 of San Diego:

17 1. That it is necessary that a public building for County
18 purposes be erected by the County of San Diego in the incorporated
19 City of San Diego;

20 2. That the offer of the City of San Diego to join with
21 the County of San Diego in the work and expense preliminary and
22 incident to the making of a contract between said governing
23 bodies for the joint erection, construction, ownership and con-
24 trol of a public building or buildings for County and Municipal
25 purposes, be, and said offer is hereby accepted;

26 3. That Albert J. Lee, an attorney at law, be, and he is
27 hereby employed to take all necessary legal steps and prepare
28 all necessary legal papers incident to the making of an agreement
29 for the erection of such joint building or buildings. Such services
30 to include the drafting of city or county ordinances and state
31 legislation, such as legislation providing for the excluding of the
32 amount of bonds voted by either the City or County for the cost
33 of such building from the limitations now provided by law upon

12/20/26

1 the bonded indebtedness of the City and of the County; all paper
2 so prepared shall be submitted to the City Attorney of The City
3 of San Diego and the District Attorney for the County of San
4 Diego for their approval; said attorney to be paid such reason-
5 able compensation as in the judgment of the Board would be
6 right and equitable based upon the nature and character of the
7 services rendered and the time required therefor and in addition
8 thereto reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the matter
9 of rendering such services.

10 4. That the Auditor be, and he is hereby, requested and
11 directed to draw a warrant against the Court House Building Fund
12 in favor of said attorney for the sum of \$5000.00, to be applied ;
13 payment of the services of such attorney, and that the Clerk
14 of the Board notify the City of San Diego of such payment.

15
16 Passed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the
17 County of San Diego, this 20th day of December, 1926, by the
18 following vote:

19 Ayes: Supervisors Greene, Hornbeck, Foster, Good & Hurley.

20 Noes: Supervisors None

21 Absent and not voting: None.

22
23 *Joseph Foster*
24 Chairman Board of Supervisors of
25 the County of San Diego, State
of California.

26 Attest: J. B. McLees, County Clerk and
27 ex-officio Clerk of the Board
28 of Supervisors of the County of
San Diego,

29 By *Le Buckner* Deputy
30
31
32



COUNTY of SAN DIEGO

San Diego, California

OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
BALBOA PARK

September 8, 1933.

ANDREW T. WILSON, CHAIRMAN
ESCONDIDO
T. C. MACAULAY, VICE CHAIRMAN
IMPERIAL BEACH
WALLACE A. WALTER, SECRETARY
PACIFIC BEACH
CAYE J. COUTS, VISTA
FRED J. HANSEN, LA MESA
ALFRED STAMER, JR., SAN DIEGO
CL OFFICIO
EDGAR F. HASTINGS, SUPERVISOR
SAN DIEGO
ERNEST R. CHILDS, COUNTY SURVEYOR
SAN DIEGO
THOMAS WHELAN, DISTRICT ATTORNEY
SAN DIEGO
L. DENING TILTON, CONSULTANT
L. W. DEEWALL, ENGINEER
M. CLAIRE FRISKE, OFFICE SECRETARY

Honorable Board of Supervisors,
Courthouse,
San Diego, California.

Gentlemen:

Replying to your communication of April 22, 1933, regarding a site for a new Courthouse and City Hall, this Commission submits with its endorsement the accompanying Report. The principal recommendations of this Report are as follows:

- 1 - That the Board of Supervisors and City Council of San Diego adhere to the principle, already endorsed by the voters of the City, of building the administrative buildings of city and county in a civic center, according to the Nolen Plan adopted March 10, 1926.
- 2 - That city and county officials unite in an aggressive, conscientious effort to secure funds immediately for the construction of the first unit of the civic center on the now available, adequate and publicly-owned property on the waterfront, comprising approximately 18 acres with over 50 acres contiguous available for future expansion.

The importance of prompt action on this matter cannot be too strongly emphasized. Every day's delay increases the likelihood that San Diego County may lose the many advantages and the savings to local taxpayers which will flow from participation in the Federal public works fund. Information received from offices of the State Advisory Board indicates clearly that time is an important element in this matter and that further efforts to promote projects which do not qualify as part of a comprehensive, carefully-studied plan do represent a loss of precious time. The Civic Center plan, being the approved plan, is the only one which can secure prompt approval of Federal authorities.

The plan of financing recommended is that which avoids the necessity of a bond-issue election. The Public Works Administration

September 8, 1933.

has provided that loans may be made on a lease-purchase plan. The site is transferred to the Federal government, the buildings are erected by the Government according to plans mutually satisfactory and leased for an annual sum sufficient to pay the interest and amortize the loan and recover the property within a stated period of years. The present yearly rental that is being paid by city and county amounts to \$44,650. At this rate over a period of 30 years the rental would amount to \$1,339,500. On a Federal government loan for a \$1,000,000 project, the total cost to the local governments over a period of 30 years would be \$1,290,000 - a total saving of \$49,500, plus a million dollar investment fully paid.

This Commission, in view of the above facts and the announced policy of the Federal Public Works Administration - to approve only those projects which are part of a comprehensive, approved community development plan - urges immediate action along the following lines:

- 1 - Submit jointly by city and county an application for a loan of \$1,000,000, on a lease-purchase basis, for construction of needed administrative buildings, comprising 200,000 square feet of floor space, sufficient to house all city and county activities, on the waterfront site. There is no need for this matter to go to a popular vote again. Under recent legislation (Senate Bill 1222) there is authority to transfer title of the Civic Center lands to the Federal government - which is a basic condition for a lease-purchase agreement.
- 2 - Prepare with aid of local architects general plans of buildings for waterfront civic center. Activity along this line should start at once. Architectural services may be secured by (a) selection of local firms to have full responsibility for preparation of all plans; (b) selection of supervising architect for general plan and main building and associates for supplemental work; (c) holding a competition for a general civic center plan and principal details of buildings. This latter will involve considerable time to be worth while and will require appointment of a paid advisor to determine the rules of competition and establishment of prizes, the cost of which may be deducted from the fees to be paid eventually to the successful architect. In any event, the early selection of an architect is of great importance, for the cost data required in the loan application and lease agreements between city and county depend largely upon the building plans.
- 3 - Extend the utmost cooperation to the State in its plans as recently announced by Governor Rolph for the erection of a \$150,000 National Guard Armory at San Diego through Public Works funds, constructing this building as a part of the general Civic Center plan, on the waterfront location.

September 8, 1933.

It is a conviction of the citizens comprising the two planning commissions of city and county, shared also by many other citizens, that this is a golden opportunity for San Diego to realize its long-cherished dream of a civic center on the waterfront. Here would be the legislative and administrative units of city and county governments, in a magnificent building or group of buildings visible from the harbor, the airport, the railroad, the main highway from the north, and a large section of San Diego City. For the time being the city and county could use certain existing county buildings to avoid the necessity of scrapping those buildings and adding to the cost of buildings in the civic center.

Such a plan as is suggested will have the approval of the Federal Public Works administration, if any public building projects (which are not on the preferred list of types of projects for the public works program) secure approval anywhere. There is reasonable certainty that attempts to substitute alternative plans for the approved civic center plan will bring only delays and eventual disapproval from Federal authorities.

Therefore, the immediate need is for whole-hearted, united, community effort in behalf of the civic center on the waterfront. Building trades can be put to work just as effectively in this location as elsewhere. And the whole county will respond and be proud when a group of majestic buildings rise on the waterfront. No city on the Pacific Coast has such a glorious opportunity as San Diego.

Your Planning Commission begs you to use your fullest influence to capitalize this opportunity. It means not only doing a big fine thing for this wonderful county; it means ultimate savings to the taxpayers running into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Respectfully submitted,

SAN DIEGO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

By *Andrew S. Wilson*

Andrew S. Wilson, Chairman.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D. C.

January 21, 1935

Mr. Ed Hastings,
Board of Supervisors,
San Diego, California.

My dear Ed:

I am greatly interested and pleased to note from press reports the favorable attitude of the Board of Supervisors toward the Civic Center project.

Having in mind the possibility of putting this up to our people for a vote at an early date, George Burnham and I discussed with officials of the Federal Emergency Administration the question of Government support. I am enclosing copy of letter from Major Fleming, Acting Deputy Administrator, from which you will note his statement that this kind of improvement is an "ideal" type from the Government's standpoint.

We told Major Fleming that the project might cost up to two million dollars and that a bond issue would be self-liquidating, in that the amounts that San Diego City and County are now paying out for rental of outside space would pay off the entire sum in a period of years.

If, as it appears, the Government is to make available large sums for Public Works Projects, it would seem that in the interest of good business San Diego should assure to her citizens the completion of this necessary project.

It would also serve to furnish employment following the termination of our Exposition construction program, which is going to be a vital matter with labor in our community.

I believe I can also see a possibility of other construction projects which will help in that regard.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



G. A. Davidson
kp

FEDERAL EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION

OF PUBLIC WORKS

COPY

January 11, 1935

Washington, D. C.

Honorable George Burnham
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Burnham:

A few days ago you called upon me in company with Mr. G. A. Davidson, reference certain proposed public works projects in the vicinity of San Diego, California. One of these referred to city and county buildings for which I understand the voters of San Diego are soon to have a bond election.

Confirming statements made to you by me at the time of your visit in my office, the Public Works Administration under our present policy and with funds depleted cannot accept an application for loan on a new project at this time. However, there seems to be a possibility of an additional appropriation of Public Works funds and if such an appropriation is received we will undoubtedly open up our State offices to the receipt of new applications.

A city or county building is, in our opinion, an ideal type of project, fulfilling requirements as to economic and social desirability and putting to work men in the building trades who have been very badly hit by the depression.

I can assure you that if we do receive additional funds, we would be glad to entertain an application from San Diego for such buildings.

Sincerely yours,

Philip B. Fleming
Acting Deputy Administrator

17004

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS the Federal Government made possible the Civic Center Building now nearing completion and

WHEREAS the President of the United States will be in San Diego in the near future and,

WHEREAS Judge Ralph Jenney, more than any other local person, is responsible for the aid received from the Federal Government, thereby making possible the edifice; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of San Diego respectfully request the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County to join with it to invite and designate Judge Jenney to act as Chairman of a proper group of local officials and citizens to properly welcome the President and request the President to honor this County and City by dedicating the Civic Center:

AND FURTHER, in the event Judge Jenney is so designated, that the Clerk of the City Council and his staff especially, and the City Manager and all other City employees generally, aid him in every way possible to make effective this resolution;

AND FINALLY, that a copy of this document be forwarded immediately to the Board of Supervisors.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO

I N V O I C E

Invoice No. 388

8-23-38

Prepared By A. Curtis

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
COURTHOUSE
SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

CHARGES RELATIVE TO PRESIDENT'S VISIT JULY 16, 1938 (City Council
Resolution No. 68111)

	LABOR	MATERIAL	EQUIPMENT	TOTAL
Labor, material, equipment used for dedication	267.58	972.22	44.98	1284.78
Wiring Speakers' platform	32.64	17.27	2.44	52.35
Secretary Stenographer (for Judge Jenny)	48.40			48.40
Telegrams & Long Distance Calls		41.22		41.22
S. D. Sport Service		3.00		3.00
Key to Civic Center		25.75		25.75
Decorating Civic Center & Entrances (Contract)		361.00		361.00
Bunting		118.78		118.78
Printing Invitations		50.89		50.89
Flags		283.25		283.25
Exclusive Florists & Miscellaneous		5.95		5.95
	348.62	1879.33	47.42	2275.37
Less charges absorbed by City:				
Lumber	649.15			
Flags	283.25			
				932.40
Balance to be charged to Presidential Visit				1342.97
City's share of bill				671.49
County's share of bill				671.48

PUBLIC WORKS

ROOM 201, CITY HALL, SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

JL 24 1938 Minute Vol. 101. Page 417

OPENING

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

CIVIC CENTER

Friday, December 23, 1938

PROGRAM

1:45 to 3:00 P. M.	Band Concert East Front	Federal Band Carl Kuehne, Director
2:00 P.M.	Flag Raising Ceremony	Officers, men and band from Marine Base. City & County Officials, Harbor Board, Officers Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Civic Center Committee, commercial and civic organiza- tions.
2:15 to 5:30 P.M.	Building open to Public	
3:00 to 4:30 P.M.	Band Concert East Front	Merkley's Musical Maids Walter P. Reeves, Director
5:30 to 10:00 P.M.	Illumination	
7:00 to 9:30 P.M.	Building open to Public	
7:30 to 9:00 P.M.	Band Concert East Front	North Park Boys Band C. E. Romero Director

My dear Roy: suits - it
Hope this
that best to make
informal without
speeches - Wish Board
you would ask to be
officials to be
at flag raising
JHS

QUITCLAIM DEED

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO, a municipal corporation, in the County of San Diego, State of California, for valuable consideration, DOES HEREBY QUITCLAIM to the COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, a body politic and corporate, a 3/66th undivided interest in the Civic Center parcel, being more particularly described as follows:

All that portion of that certain parcel of land in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California which lies Northerly of Ash Street, Westerly of Pacific Highway, Southerly of Grape Street and Easterly of Harbor Drive as said streets, Highway and Drive, are located and established as of the date of this instrument being a portion of the San Diego Municipal Tidelands as conveyed by the State of California to the City of San Diego and County of San Diego as joint tenants for municipal and County purposes by Chapter 778, Statutes of 1929, as amended by Chapter 693, Statutes of 1945 and Chapter 479, Statutes of 1961 described as follows:

Beginning at the point of intersection of the Westerly prolongation of the Northerly line of Ash Street with the Westerly line of Pacific Highway (formerly Atlantic Street); thence Westerly along the Westerly prolongation of the Northerly line of Ash Street to an intersection with the Easterly line of Harbor Street; thence Northerly along the Easterly line of Harbor Street to an intersection with the Southwesterly prolongation of the Southeasterly line of Grape Street; thence Northeasterly along the Southwesterly prolongation of the Southeasterly line of Grape Street and the Southeasterly line of Grape Street to an intersection with the Southwesterly line of Pacific Highway (formerly Atlantic Street); thence Southerly along the Westerly line of Pacific Highway (formerly Atlantic Street) to the point of beginning.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The City of San Diego has caused this deed to be executed by its Mayor and City Clerk, pursuant to resolution of the Council authorizing such execution, this 14th day of December, 1966.

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

By

Frank C. Curran
Mayor of said City

ATTEST:

OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

POST OFFICE BOX 942896
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 94296-0001
(916) 445-8006



June 16, 1988

Bob Lerner
Public Affairs
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway, Rm. 361
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Lerner:

RE: San Diego Civic Center

The National Register of Historic Places Program is administered in California by the State Office of Historic Preservation. The property indicated above was placed on the National Register May 16, 1988.

Placement on the National Register affords a property the honor of inclusion in the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation and provides a degree of protection from adverse effects resulting from federally funded or licensed projects. Registration provides a number of incentives for preservation of historic properties, including special building codes to facilitate the restoration of historic structures, and certain tax advantages. There are no restrictions placed upon a private property owner with regard to normal use, maintenance, or sale of a property listed in the National Register; however, proposals to demolish registered properties may require a standard review in compliance with local ordinances or the California Environmental Quality Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Kathryn Gualtieri'.

Kathryn Gualtieri
State Historic Preservation Officer



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GREG COX
First District
DIANNE JACOB
Second District
PAM SLATER
Third District
RON ROBERTS
Fourth District
BILL HORN
Fifth District

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DATE: June 18, 2002

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER (CAC) WATERFRONT PARK AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY KETTNER/CEDAR PROPERTY (District: One, District Four)

SUMMARY:

Overview

The action before the Board recommends that the Board accept the County Administration Center (CAC) Waterfront Park Master Plan prepared by Hargreaves Associates/Davis & Davis Architects and hear a presentation from this design team. There was an extensive public input process that occurred via three community workshops during the preparation of the Master Plan. Funding has been provided to complete schematic design of the park this fiscal year. In addition, it is recommended the County proceed with the development of the County owned property at Kettner/Cedar by issuing a Request for Proposals. The Kettner/Cedar site would provide 500 parking spaces and possibly other office retail or residential development.

Recommendation(s)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Hear a presentation on the CAC Waterfront Park Master Plan.
2. Approve in concept the Master Plan for the CAC Waterfront Park.
3. Authorize the issuance of a Request for Proposals for development of the Kettner/Cedar property for up to 500 parking stalls and the potential of other office, retail and residential uses.
4. Approve and authorize the Director of General Services to search for replacement office space for the Askew Building occupants, and to lease temporary parking spaces during construction of the Waterfront Park.
5. Find, in accordance with Section 15262 of the State of California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA), that approval in concept of the master plan and issuance of a Request for Proposals is exempt from CEQA in that it consists solely of planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions which currently have not been funded, do not have a legally binding effect on later activities and will not have a significant impact on the environment.

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER (CAC) WATERFRONT PARK AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY KETTNER/CEDAR PROPERTY (District: One, District Four)

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Fiscal Impact

The total project cost of the Waterfront Park could approach \$34 million if the maximum number of underground parking stalls is constructed. The cost of providing replacement parking could be 40 to 60 percent of the project costs. This figure does not include the costs to relocate the occupants and services of the Askew Building. Project design and administrative costs for the preparation of construction documents during FY 2002/03 are estimated to be \$2.9 million. The remaining funding estimated to be \$30 million would have to also be identified in FY 2003/04 to begin construction of the park.

Relocation costs of the Askew building and the replacement parking at Cedar/Kettner property are unknown at this time, but preliminary program estimates for development of parking and related improvements range from \$29.6 million to \$32 million. The costs of replacement parking at Cedar/Kettner property will be clarified during the site search process, which will consider the Kettner/Cedar site, and other available alternatives. The value of private mixed use development rights are not part of these estimates.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

While no formal advisory panel exists, extensive community and inter jurisdictional input was sought during the master planning process from such groups and entities as the Centre City Development Corporation, Little Italy Association, the San Diego Unified Port District, City of San Diego, and the Downtown San Diego Partnership. Three community workshops were held during the master planning process.

BACKGROUND:

Hargreaves Associates will present the master plan to the Board. The key elements of the master plan are as follows:

Garden Rooms adjacent to Pacific Highway. Garden Rooms are separated from Pacific Highway by a 2.5-3.0 foot grade elevation increasing the opportunity to view the water. They consist of dense vegetation and could accommodate organized activities, such as weddings, holiday celebrations, music events, and some passive activities, such as botanical tours. Some could contain sculptures.

Upper Promenade/Overlook Terrace. This is a contemplative space between the Garden Rooms described above and the Civic Green described below. It would contain commanding views of the Bay and contain passive recreation activities such as people watching, sitting or walking. There would be ample back-to-back benches and pedestrian scale lighting. Fountains would also be located in this area.

Civic Green. This is a large open area to the west of the County Administration building. It would be predominantly green and very public. Some trees would provide shade without filling the space. It would contain active recreation space for kite flying,

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER (CAC) WATERFRONT PARK AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY KETTNER/CEDAR PROPERTY (District: One, District Four)

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Frisbee and croquet, as well as, passive recreation space for walking, sitting, and picnicking.

The consultant also suggested there be a plaza/festival area adjacent to the Park along Harbor Drive and within the North Embarcadero public improvement area. This area could contain, for example, a Farmers Market and would interface with the activities of the park.

The preliminary schedule for Park development is as follows:

Completion of schematic design	Summer 2002
Completion of construction documents	Spring 2003
Construction of Phase I parking structure	Spring 2004
Removal of Askew Building to allow Phase II construction	Summer 2004
Construction of Phase II parking structure and Park improvements	Summer 2005

Construction of the Park and underground parking will occur in two phases in order to; reduce construction impacts on the public operation of the County Administrative Center, reduce public exposure to deep excavation along Harbor Drive, and extend occupancy of the Askew Building as long as possible prior to demolition.

The Board has funded the original Master Plan (\$200,000), and schematic design and related consultant costs for such items as geotechnical work, environmental assessments, traffic studies and civil engineering additional master planning work, and staff/miscellaneous expenses related to the project (\$694,000). A request will be presented to the Board in July 2002 to authorize funding for professional design services to complete design and construction documents for the project.

CEDAR/KETTNER SITE DEVELOPMENT

On December 4, 2001 (12) the Board directed that the Chief Administrative Officer return to the Board with a report on the options for mixed use development on the Kettner/Cedar site including retail, County office, parking and residential development and the effects of current market conditions on each option. An analysis was completed which reflects that residential has best potential at this site. Response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) from the development community will demonstrate the most viable mix of improvements at this location given current real estate market conditions. Recommendation #3 will allow the issuance of an RFP and staff will return to your Board within 150 days with the results and recommendations.

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER (CAC) WATERFRONT PARK AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY KETTNER/CEDAR PROPERTY (District: One, District Four)

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The County owned site bounded by Kettner, Cedar, Beech, and the railroad right of way is two blocks from the County Administration Center and near the heart of the Little Italy community. This site has in the past been identified for a number of uses including residential, retail, office, hotel, and parking uses. The Board was presented an array of these development options on September 19, 2000 (15).

It is appropriate to assume that for master planning purposes that this site could house a significant amount of parking associated with the County Waterfront Park. In addition, options to maximize revenue, including development of residential and other mixed uses to offset project costs can also be considered. The rationale is as follows:

- The costs per space of constructing above grade parking at this site could be significantly lower than the County Administration Center site. The cost per space for entirely below grade parking at the CAC is estimated to be over \$34,000, whereas above ground parking at this site could be approximately \$22,000 per space.
- Little Italy needs nighttime and weekend parking which could "reservoir" at this site. The Little Italy Association is supportive of this concept.
- The parking could generate revenue to the County from paid weekend parking.
- There is the possibility that parking meter revenue that is generated in the Little Italy area and under the control of the Centre City Development Corporation could be used to offset some parking structure construction cost. This revenue is estimated to be \$800,000.
- County employees would use the Kettner/Cedar lot, which would be a two-block walk from the CAC.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The approval in concept of the master plan and issuance of a Request for Proposals is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act in that they consist of planning and feasibility studies of a waterfront park project that has not yet been fully defined or funded. Upon completion of the schematic design, staff will undertake an environmental review of the proposed project under CEQA. An Initial Determination Study and Environmental Assessment will be prepared to determine the scope of environmental review required for the project after authorization by the Board in July 2002 of funding for completion of project design,

CONCLUSION

Proceeding with this project is recommended because the CAC Waterfront Park has garnered considerable interest and support from the community, particularly from the Little Italy Association. The CAC Waterfront Park will integrate with the North

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF MASTER PLAN FOR THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION
CENTER (CAC) WATERFRONT PARK AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
COUNTY KETTNER/CEDAR PROPERTY (District: One, District Four)

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Embarcadero project to create a park environment similar to the design envisioned for the CAC over 60 years ago.

The recommended action will continue the planning process and will allow the Park's schematic design to be completed by July 2002. At that point, the Board will have the flexibility to proceed with the construction of the project as economic conditions permit. The issuance of a Request for Proposal for the Kettner/Cedar property will allow for the possible relocation of CAC parking displaced by the Park development.

Respectfully submitted,


For WALTER F. EKARD
Chief Administrative Officer



San Diego History Center

An image of the County Administration Center parking lot in January 1949 with snow on the ground following a rare storm.



San Diego History Center

The Civic Center at night, 1938.



San Diego History Center

Roosevelt addresses the crowd and dedicates the Civic Center from his car in 1938.



San Diego History Center

An amphibious plane floats in front of the recently opened Civic Center, late 1930's.



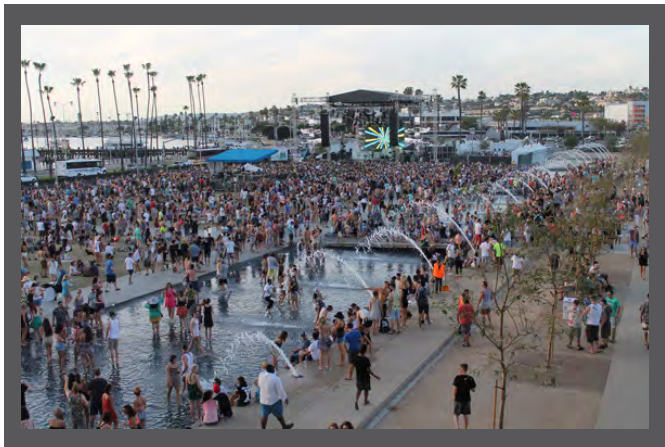
San Diego History Center

An aerial view of the harbor front, downtown, and the Civic Center, 1946.



San Diego History Center

A view of the building from the waterfront, 1950.



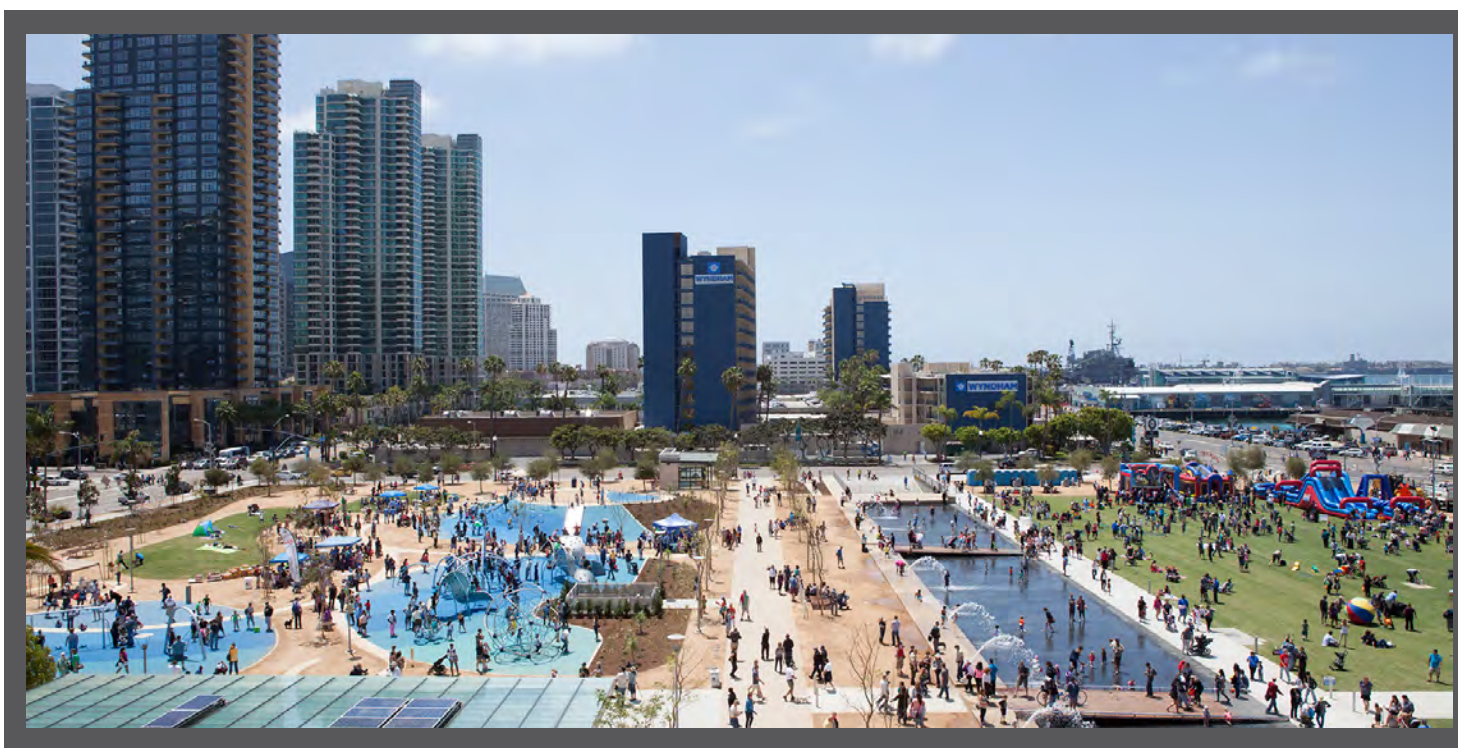
County News Center

A music festival in the Waterfront Park, 2016.



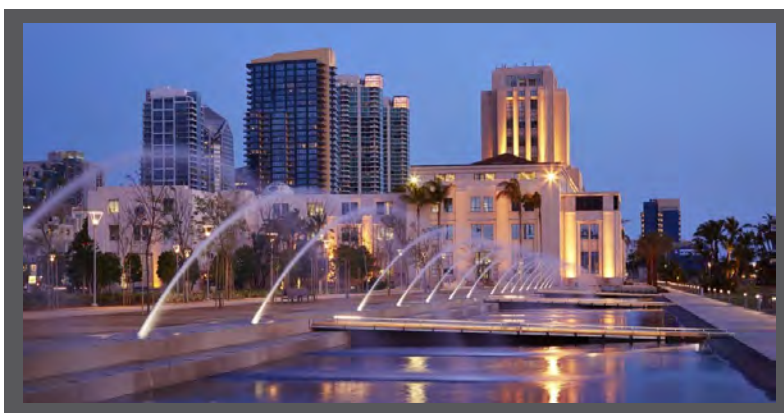
County of San Diego

The County Administration Center illuminated at night, 2022.



County of San Diego

People celebrate the grand opening of the Waterfront Park in 2014.



County of San Diego

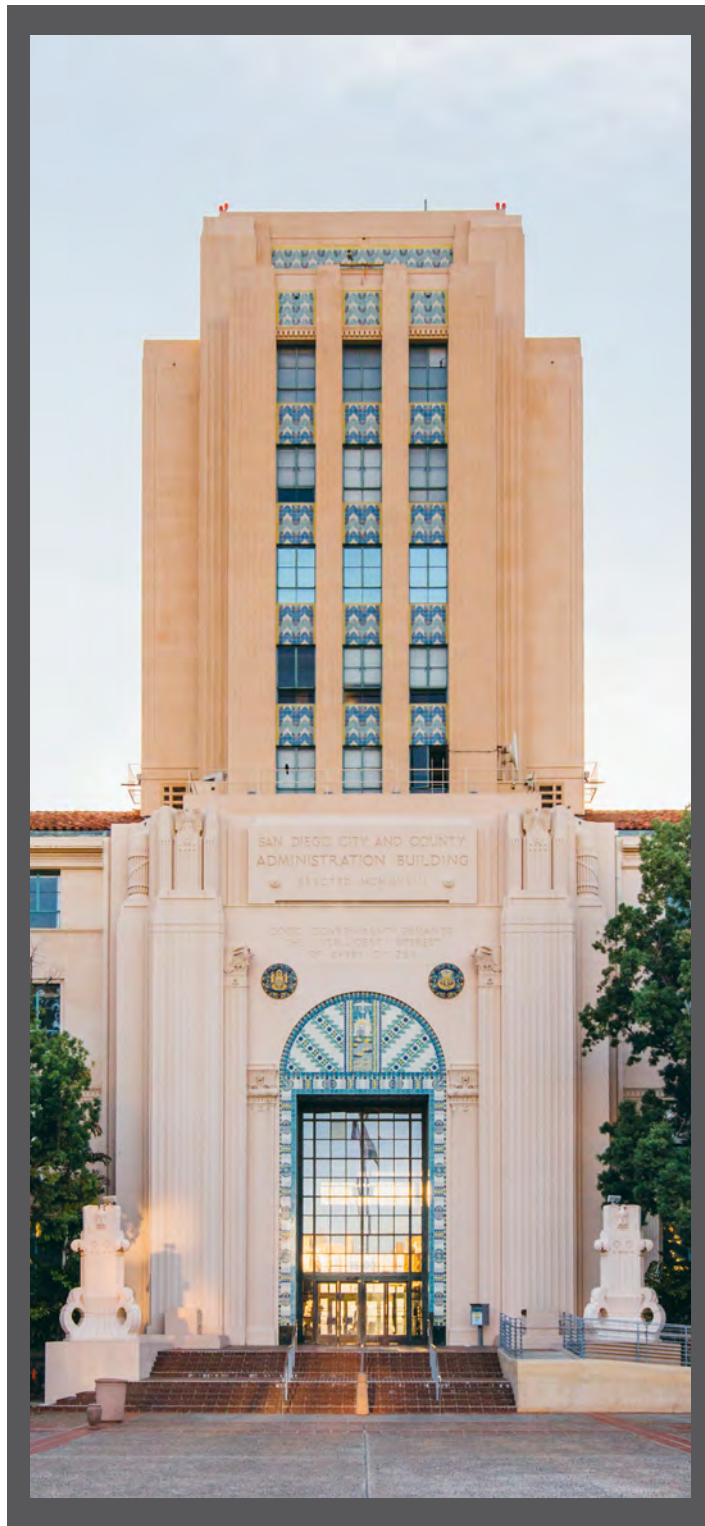
The Waterfront Park at dusk, 2022.



County of San Diego

Pickleball and Basketball courts in the new Active Recreation area of North Waterfront Park, 2024.





COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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