

September 20, 2018

City of San Diego Planning Commission

Chairperson Haase and Commissioners,

I am Rob Hutsel, President and CEO of The San Diego River Park Foundation

I am excited to be before you today as you consider our project.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and philanthropic partners, we ask for your support of this project today.

We are excited to be working with Kotaro Nakamura and RNT Architects as our Lead Architect and our design team. We have a great team. I will turn it over to them to make the presentation, but if it is okay I wanted to first make a few comments.

The Discovery Center at Grant Park has been the dream of our organization and many others for more than a decade.

We set out to create a special place which is a celebration of our namesake river, a place to promote its stewardship, and a place to play.

A place which embraces the City's San Diego River Park Master Plan and becomes a catalyst for a new relationship to our historic river.

We set out early to have the community help shape this project: trailside table outreach, presentations and workshops at residential complexes.

Over and over again the neighborhood wanted some public green space. A place to meetup, enjoy a lazy weekend day or push a stroller to. They wanted a design that fit into their community while being a beautiful and in harmony with nature. This project received unanimous support from the Mission Valley Planning Group.

We set out to improve the health of the river ecosystem – we received unanimous support from the City’s Wetlands Advisory Board and the San Diego River Coalition.

And after much work, study and thoughtful design, we received concurrence from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

We engaged the San Diego Natural History Museum, Project Wildlife, educators and others to determine how best to tell the river story and promote its stewardship, with a particular focus on kids.

Of course, this all started and was made possible by the donation of this 17 acre property by a wonderful family. In many ways, they wanted a place where people could be along the river, perhaps play

hide and go seek behind a tree, or simply get their feet wet as they remember doing while they were kids growing up in San Diego.

I want to thank the Grant Family for sticking with us and this vision for these many years.

I also want to thank City staff who worked with us over these four plus years, with a special thanks to Martha and Liz for guiding us and working so hard to get us to this hearing today.

We certainly have had our fair share of challenges but we believe the result is an incredible project.

A project that will inspire stewardship of our river, provide a place for the neighborhood to play and provide a venue to learn about the amazing resource that is the San Diego River.

Behind me is a representation of the community of people looking forward to this project.

You will get an opportunity to hear from a few of them but I want to thank them all and especially our philanthropic partners who have provided the funds to advance this project to this point.

Finally, I want to thank Dusty Ucker, our project manager.

And with that I will turn it over to Kotaro.

Thank you.