

## **CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# **W17a**

**A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Passon Substantial Conformance Review)**

**December 14, 2022**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

December 9, 2022

Re: **Item 17a: Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)**

Chair Brownsey and Commissioners,

### **The Salk Experience**

To understand this appeal, one must understand the experience of the Salk Institute. To understand the Salk experience, one must visit the site and travel thru its physical space from east to west, from the continent thru the tree grove onto the original courtyard to the ocean and sky. To truly experience the Salk, one should be there on the equinox. At the spring and fall equinox, the sun sets on the channel of “water of life” that flows thru the courtyard of the original Louis Kahn/Jonas Salk architecture forming this bond that we, as humans, have with the natural world around us and which Louis Kahn intentionally created.

But one cannot be there in the courtyard at that time. The Salk institute has closed the courtyard to visitors during these two days of the year. One seeking this setting sun alignment must wait patiently on North Torrey Pines Road and catch a view as the sun sets on the western horizon perfectly aligned. And it is there, on North Torrey Pines Road, that the new East Torrey Pines Building, with its glass enclosed roofed atrium, is being constructed, forever restricting this special moment in time. This view of the setting sun at the original Kahn/Salk Institute will be permanently blocked as well the original Kahn/Salk designed structure. It is as if Stonehenge has had a wall erected around it so one can never see or truly appreciate human and nature’s connection during its own equinox alignment. The view is definitely impacted.

As a professional architect, historian, preservationist and participant in both the City of San Diego local designation and the documentation for its eligible status on the National Register, these changes should be considered substantial. It should be noted that the City of San Diego Substantial Conformance Review was at the “ministerial” or staff level. There was no review by the City’s Historical Resources Board (HRB), the public body that determines historic significance. As my request to the City Planning Commission that these changes be reviewed by the HRB was ignored, my appeal moved to the next stage: appeal to the Commission.

Completed in 1965, the Salk Institute site has enjoyed almost 60 years of unobstructed views to the ocean and in the 30 years since its designation as a local historic site, unencumbered views of the historically designated Salk Institute itself from North Torrey Pines Road. The staff report acknowledges that, while the permit has been vested, the majority of the development approved in 2008 has yet to be constructed. In the 14 years since, the recognition of Kahn and his work and especially of the design and natural physical setting of the Salk Institute has increased nationally and internationally.

In no way would I urge or encourage a return to the 2008 design which, with its fixed glass atrium walls and roof, would be even more problematic of public viewing of the coast and the designated historical resource.

## **The Four Issues**

The staff report limits your decision of this appeal to four elements that have changed since the 2008 approval: 1) the addition of wood elements to the glass atrium and the bridge connecting the second floors between the atrium, 2) the reduction in height of the structure and bridge by one foot, 3) the changes to the roof design and 4) revising the glass fronting the atrium to be retractable.

Using Staff Report Exhibit 7 - Visual Rendering of the Torrey Pines East Building in 2008 I will address the components of the appeal:

Appeal item 4) revising the glass fronting the atrium to be retractable.

There are two issues. Without an understanding of the glazing being proposed for these movable walls, the reality of solar reflectivity during the morning and afternoon sun are probable thus further restricting an already limited view.

Although the retractable walls are a significant improvement over the fixed glazed walls of the 2008 design, as movable walls they seem not necessary. The coast in this area has a micro climate with fog and breeze that would most likely keep these walls shut more often than open. If the walls are retractable, the conclusion is they are no longer needed. Any return to the fixed glazing of the 2008 design is unacceptable.

Appeal item 3) the changes to the roof design

It is not clear how the roof slot functions. Is it open to the weather or is it glazed as well? Using the argument that the walls are no longer necessary as they are retractable, the roof then serves no other purpose. Returning to the 2008 approved design for the continuous solid roof is not an option.

Appeal Item 1) the addition of wood elements to the glass atrium and the bridge connecting the second floors between the atrium, and Appeal Item 2) the reduction in height of the structure and bridge by one foot.

The bridge has moved further east, closer to North Torrey Pines Road. Its new location, along with the additional wood material and lowered elevation, now appears to fall at the horizon line of the view corridor (see Exhibit 7 of the staff report). This appears to create a new barrier to the visual connection that is required by the mitigation measure referenced in the staff report from the original 2008 approval:

“The final design for the Torrey East Building shall feature a ground-level, two-story transparent atrium space designed to permit limited visibility along the same axis as the courtyard of the original laboratory building.”

What was intended to be limited visibility is now constricted. Returning to the 2008 approved design for the bridge is not an option as it is more intrusive and restrictive of the coastal and historic view. These substantial issues open the entire concept of the design of the atrium and its components to reconsideration and review.

### **There are Substantial Issues**

The Coastal Commission should find substantial issues with these changes and direct staff to engage with the Salk Institute to improve upon the proposed new design so as to enhance the original intent of the original Louis Kahn/Jonas Salk design. The Salk Institute has been recognized for its stewardship of the original buildings by undertaking conservation efforts for the teak panels and the concrete elements. They should now reconsider this new design in a manner that gives the public the opportunity to continue to understand and experience this remarkable site and views by revising the proposed atrium design to allow the continuous flow east to the west thus engaging the human spirit with the sublime order of the earth, ocean and sky as intended and envisioned by Louis Kahn and Jonas Salk.

Charles Kaminski, Appellant



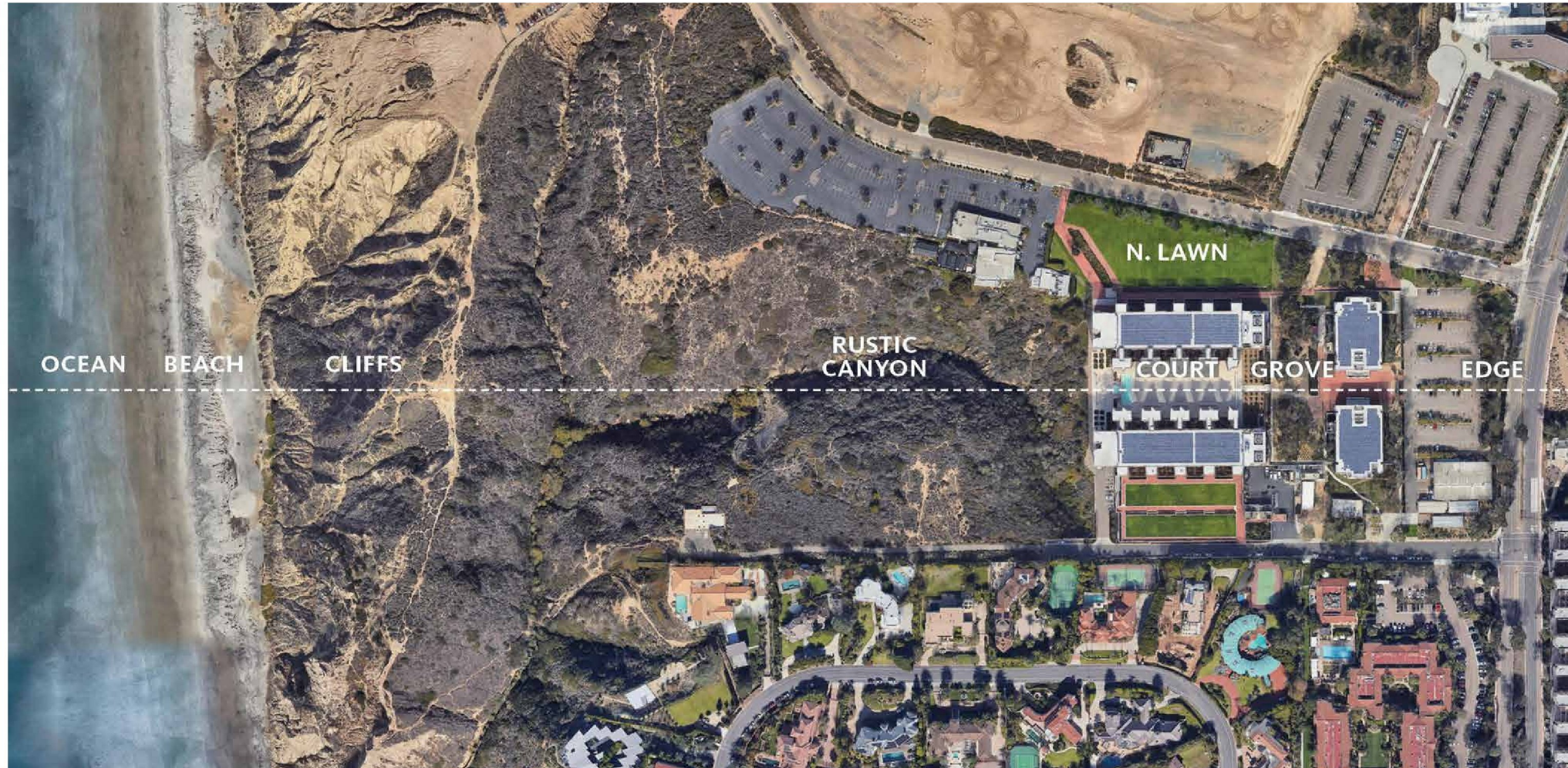
“OUR  
GREATEST  
RESPONSIBILITY  
IS TO BE  
GOOD  
ANCESTORS.”

Jonas Salk

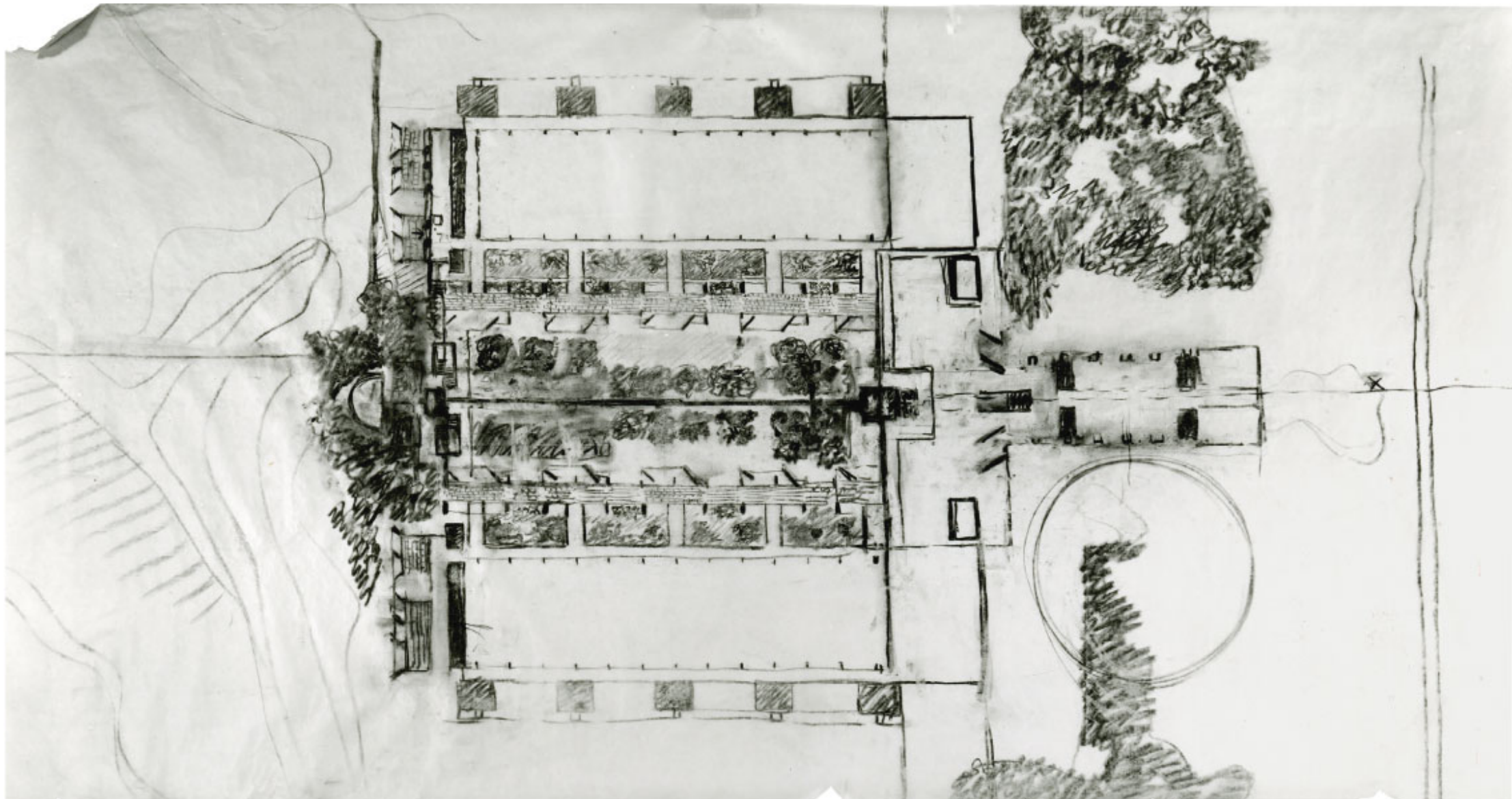


# Campus Experience

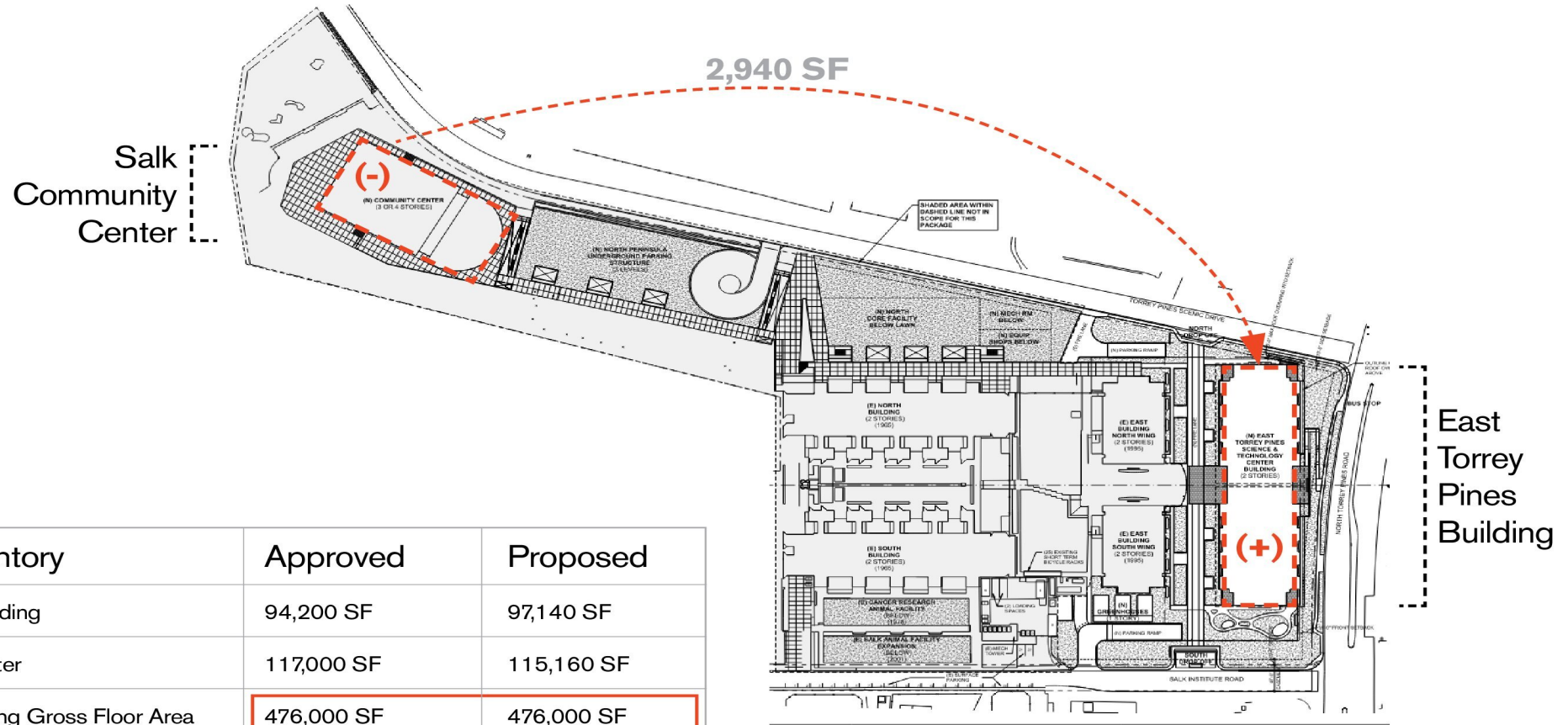
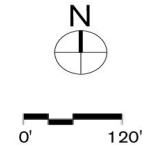
Salk Institute for Biological Studies







## Net Zero Change In Total Gross Area

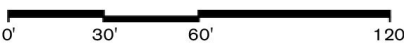


Gross SF Inventory	Approved	Proposed
East Torrey Pines Building	94,200 SF	97,140 SF
Salk Community Center	117,000 SF	115,160 SF
Total Proposed Building Gross Floor Area	476,000 SF	476,000 SF

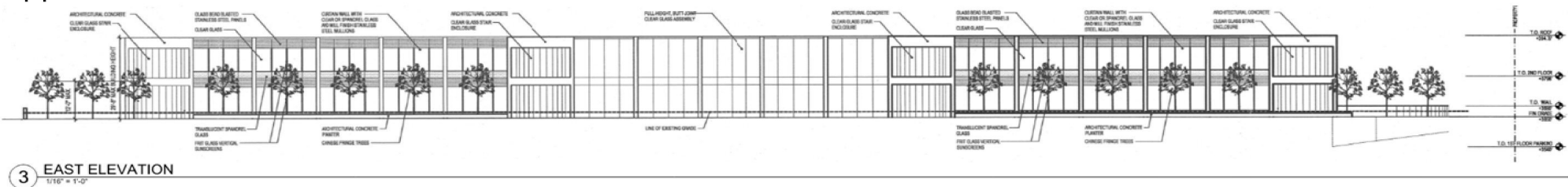


# Building Elevations

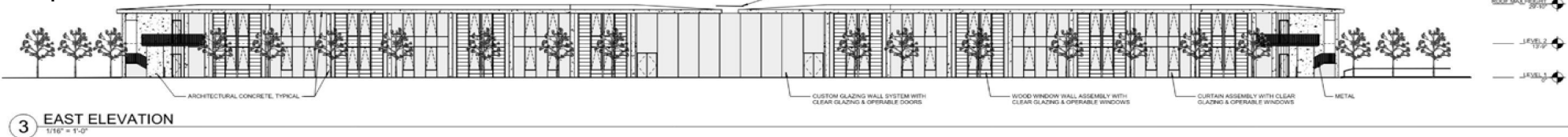
## The New Front Door from North Torrey Pines Road



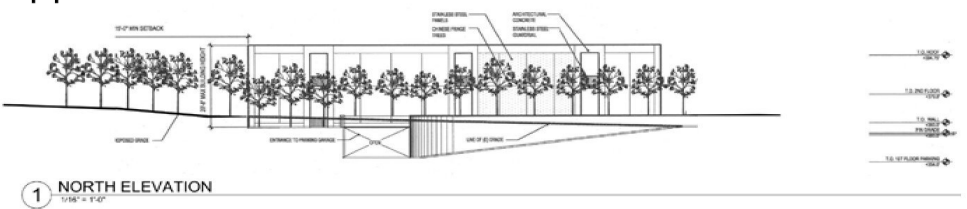
Approved



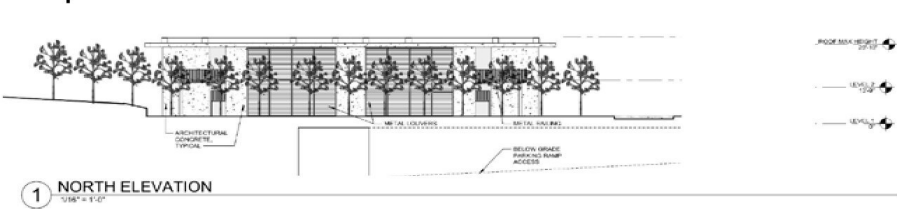
Proposed



Approved



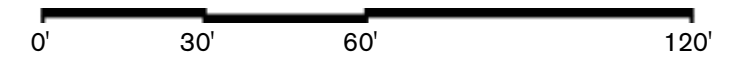
Proposed



The building elevations contain less glazing and more wood and better mimic the materials palette of the original Institute building.

# Exhibit 1

## Plan-Historic Issue 8: Exterior Finish Materials



Approved

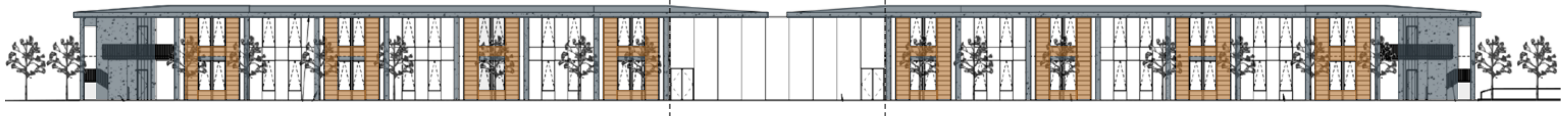
View Corridor (63FT)



East Elevation

Proposed

View Corridor (70FT)



East Elevation



VIEW FROM NORTH TORREY PINES ROAD

2008 (APPROVED):



2022 (PROPOSED):



 California Coastal Commission	EXHIBIT NO. 7
	APPLICATION NO.
	A-6-NOC-22-0023
	Visual Rendering



















# Campus Experience

Salk Institute for Biological Studies









# Save Our Heritage Organisation

*Protecting San Diego's architectural and cultural heritage since 1969*

December 1, 2022

Re: Coastal Commission Meeting, Dec. 15, 2022

Item 17a Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)

Members of the Coastal Commission and staff:

The Salk Institute is by far one of San Diego's most important architectural icons, if not the most important. When considering alterations of its world-renowned monumental buildings and their stunning relationship to nature, it demands the utmost care and consideration.

The famed primary design of the Salk Institute hinges on the linear visual and mental connection of the eastern mountains through the bluff-top site to the sea. SOHO continues to assert that the new Torrey Pines East Building needs to be two separate buildings joined by an open-air plaza. This arrangement would be consistent with the original design and maintain the crucially important east-west view axis.

A masterpiece of Modern architecture that is eligible for the National Register of Historical Places, the 1963 Salk Institute was ingeniously designed by the internationally acclaimed architect Louis Kahn in close collaboration with Dr. Jonas Salk and influenced by the renowned Mexican architect Luis Barragan. The harmonious complex of twin buildings facing each other across a long plaza leads the eye and the imagination to merge sea and sky into infinite dimensions. The 1995 East Building, with its two mostly underground wings, conforms to Kahn and Salk's design by elongating the plaza and framing the essential view to the west.

However, the proposed Torrey Pines East Building would irreparably damage this beloved open-air continuity by introducing glass infill. The applicant suggests the glass would "disappear" from view, but, especially in a sunny climate, glass is never transparent. Its distracting reflections and glare would interrupt and ultimately sever the view axis, destroying the 1963 design intent and meaningful visitor experience from the plaza.

SOHO continues to strongly oppose the closed-glass atrium design of the Torrey Pines East Building and maintains it should follow the Salk's own precedent of two separate buildings with an open-air plaza.

Please honor the Salk's inspiring architecture and the profound experiences it offers tens of thousands of visitors by protecting its greatness. Please grant this appeal.

Bruce Coons  
Executive Director

**From:** [SanDiegoCoast@Coastal](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@Coastal)  
**To:** [Ross\\_Toni@Coastal](mailto:Ross_Toni@Coastal)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a - Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)  
**Date:** Friday, December 2, 2022 10:53:40 AM

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**From:** dwood8@cox.net <dwood8@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 2, 2022 9:58 AM  
**To:** SanDiegoCoast@Coastal <SanDiegoCoast@coastal.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a - Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)

Chairperson Brownsey, Commissioners and Director Ainsworth:

I am writing in support of item 17a of your December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego, the Appeal of Charles Kaminski from decision of City of San Diego authorizing substantial changes to the coastal development permit (CDP) to allow the construction of a new 20,000 sq. ft. building and a new 578 parking structure at the east end of historic and iconic Salk Institute on the La Jolla bluffs above Torrey Pines State Beach.



The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla California is a world-famous research institute that opened its doors in 1963 under the watchful eye of Jonas Salk, who is credited with developing the first safe and effective polio vaccine.

The proposed new architectural additions and changes would block world renowned views from the east end of the



complex to the Pacific Ocean, and constitute new and substantial issues.



They would also block access, preventing pedestrians from walking to the west end of the plaza area of the complex to view the ocean. These additions would irrefutably damage this historically significant architectural gem which has been recognized and awarded worldwide.



Jacob Bronowski, Scientist, writer, inventor, poet and presenter of PBS 'Ascent of Man' TV series, Jacob Bronowski, sitting outside the Salk Institute, San Diego, California, 1973.



Louis Vuitton international fashion show, Summer, 2022

I urge you to accept this appeal, reject any proposed Coastal Development Permit (CDP) changes, and direct your staff to conduct a more detailed investigation of this proposed CDP amendment request, then order your staff to ensure that the proposed desecration of this historic, architecturally significant, and globally beloved structure is not allowed.

Future generations will thank you.

Don Wood  
4539 Lee Avenue  
La Mesa, CA.  
619-463-9035  
[Dwood8@cox.net](mailto:Dwood8@cox.net)



**From:** [SanDiegoCoast@Coastal](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@Coastal)  
**To:** [Ross, Toni@Coastal](mailto:Ross_Toni@Coastal)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT (FW: December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a, Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023)  
**Date:** Monday, December 5, 2022 9:24:05 AM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Marilyn Field <[marilynfield@icloud.com](mailto:marilynfield@icloud.com)>  
Sent: Saturday, December 3, 2022 2:39 PM  
To: [SanDiegoCoast@Coastal](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@Coastal) <[SanDiegoCoast@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@coastal.ca.gov)>  
Subject: December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a, Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023

.Dera Commissioners,

I am writing to support the appeal of Charles Kaminski from the decision of the City of San Diego to permit changes to the Coastal Development Permit to allow the construction of a new building and parking structure at the East end of Salk Institute. These structures would block the iconic views and access through the view corridor created by the design of the Salk Institute which frames the Pacific Ocean.

The Salk Institute structure was created in the early 60s by architect Louis Kahn and is probably pictured in every architectural text book as a design masterpiece. It's world renowned view through the structure to the Pacific has a spiritual quality. This structure and the view have attracted admirers from every part of the region, the State and the world for almost 60 years. It would be an architectural crime to permit the proposed structures to be built which would block this view and It would contravene everything the Coastal Commission stands for. Please grant the appeal filed by Charles Kaminski.

Marilyn Field,  
Coronado, California

**W17A**

December 6, 2022

California Coastal Commission  
Donne Brownsey, Chair  
455 Market Street, Suite 300  
San Francisco, CA 94105

SUBJECT: City of San Diego, Salk Institute Substantial Conformance Review Determination  
Appeal A-6-NOC-22-0023

Dear Chair Brownsey and Members of the Coastal Commission:

On behalf of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, I am writing to express our strong support for your staff's determination that there is no substantial coastal issue related to our proposed East Torrey Pines Science and Technology Center. We appreciate your staff's thorough analysis and request that you approve their recommendation.

As the Staff Report notes, the project does not create any inconsistencies with the Local Coastal Program or the Coastal Act. Historical resources on the site are protected by previously approved mitigation measures and the project has no impacts on protected public views.

*THE INSTITUTE*

The Salk Institute for Biological Studies is known for groundbreaking innovations in a variety of scientific research areas including aging, brain science, cancer, and plant biology. The campus contains state-of-the-art facilities designed to inspire scientific discoveries contained in two above ground structures built in 1964 and 1990. The buildings honor and respect the natural beauty of the site.

*THE NEW SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER*

The Institute has always been dedicated to superior architectural standards and continues to explore cutting edge building technologies. Development of this third structure, the East Torrey Pines Science and Technology Center (formerly the Torrey East Building) is ready to commence and expand the Institute's research capabilities. As the new front door of the Institute, the proposed East Torrey Pines Science and Technology Center is intended to continue this legacy of inspirational architecture and groundbreaking scientific research. The East Torrey Pines Science and Technology Center has also been designed to incorporate mandatory and voluntary Tier 1 and Tier 2 measures of the California Green Building Code Standards, qualifying the project for the City's Sustainable Buildings Expedite Program.

*CONCLUSION*

On behalf of the Salk Institute's Trustees, faculty, staff, and volunteers, we urge the Coastal Commission to support the staff recommended motion finding the appeal raises no substantial coastal issues.



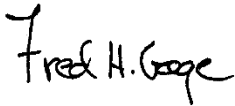
California Coastal Commission  
Donne Brownsey, Chair  
December 6, 2022  
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This project is of utmost importance to Salk's ongoing research and discoveries. To overcome the profound challenges facing humanity, the pursuit of science must evolve, and Salk is leading the way. Salk must expand its faculty, both in size and expertise, recruiting a new generation of biologists, engineers, and information theorists to discover new insights and facilitate dynamic collaborations that evolve with the research goals. We do this by leveraging and advancing technologies and placing computational biology and deep learning at the center of scientific research across disciplines.

The Salk Institute is revolutionizing biological research and driving new approaches to solve scientific challenges. We need our new Science and Technology Center for its critical research space and application of emerging technologies to scientific challenges. This Center will continue our historic contribution to San Diego's leadership in the biotech industry.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred H. Gage". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "F".

Fred H. Gage, PhD  
President

**From:** [SanDiegoCoast@Coastal](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@Coastal)  
**To:** [Ross, Toni@Coastal](mailto:Ross.Toni@Coastal)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday, 17a- Appeal No-A-6 NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute)  
**Date:** Monday, December 5, 2022 9:24:33 AM

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**From:** Cathy O'Leary Carey <ccathycaper@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 3, 2022 10:50 PM  
**To:** SanDiegoCoast@Coastal <SanDiegoCoast@coastal.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday, 17a- Appeal No-A-6 NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute)

To Chair Brownsey, Commissioners and Director Answorth,

We support item 17a of your December 14th meeting, Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute San Diego), the appeal authorizing change to allow the construction of a new building and parking structure at the east end of the iconic Salk Institute.

The Salk Institute, an historic landmark and one of the most unique architectural sites in the United States and must be protected from any Coastal Development permits changes.

Thank you for your attention to our comments.

Cathy O'Leary Carey and John Carey  
17696 Cumana Terrace  
San Diego, CA 92128  
858-385-0419



**From:** [SanDiegoCoast@Coastal](mailto:SanDiegoCoast@Coastal)  
**To:** [Ross\\_Toni@Coastal](mailto:Ross_Toni@Coastal)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a - Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)  
**Date:** Monday, December 12, 2022 11:09:37 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)

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Good morning Toni,

Please see below for public comment.

Thank you!

*Adriana Palato*  
Management Services Technician  
California Coastal Commission  
7575 Metropolitan Drive #103  
San Diego, CA 92108

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**From:** Mike Barbera <mbarbera@intersectmanagement.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 9:32 AM  
**To:** SanDiegoCoast@Coastal <SanDiegoCoast@coastal.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Comment on December 2022 Agenda Item Wednesday 17a - Appeal No. A-6-NOC-22-0023 (Salk Institute, San Diego)

I realize that this comes late, but I just heard that this amazing new, proposed building at the Salk Institute is being contested.

As a 20-year professional member of the Torrey Pines community, I have reviewed the Salk plans and renderings. There is no doubt in my mind (and I know many others agree) that this project will add incredible value to the Torrey Pines life science community and high-end architectural aesthetic.

I don't believe external views will be obstructed, but also believe that people are going to be more focused on the beautiful new architectural wonders that will further support Salk's long-standing history of creating an amazing skyline, while being a dominant member of the life science community. Very responsible.

Please deny this appeal and allow Torrey Pines to continue to evolve responsibly.

Thanks,  
Mike



MIKE BARBERA

President

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