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Friends of the Villa Montezuma, Inc. (FOVM) Comments on The San Diego Historical Society to give up stewardship of the Villa Montezuma Museum

Today it was announced that the San Diego Historical Society would no longer continue its stewardship of the Villa Montezuma and the Marston House. This news was expected to us since we have been closely involved with the Historical Society over many, many years, but it is still sad news.

For 35 years the FOVM has been dedicated to the Villa Montezuma, first as an auxiliary of the San Diego Historical Society, then independently as its own 501-c-3 nonprofit corporation. The FOVM incorporated in 2006 to best help with the future of the Villa Montezuma Museum, the unique historic house museum that is the jewel of the Sherman Heights Historic District of downtown San Diego. The Villa Montezuma is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is owned by the City of San Diego.

In the past three years the FOVM has taken the lead in working extensively with the City of San Diego, Center City Development Corporation (CCDC), elected officials, and restoration professionals to find funding and pro bono engineering and construction assistance so that the City-owned Villa Montezuma can be restored and reopened to the public, even during these challenging economic times. Due to the FOVM efforts and the help of our elected officials, we've achieved the following: the Villa underwent a complete structural analysis, which was necessary before any work could proceed; the work to repair the Villa tower was started, funded by a State grant; a grant to replace the nonhistoric backyard fencing was secured (work will start later this spring); and the CCDC Budget Committee approved \$550,000 to be transferred to the City to help with the foundation repair. We've networked with the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and other organizations, and now several major engineering firms are working on aspects of the Villa's needs on a pro bono basis. We've worked very hard the past three years and we're proud of what we've accomplished, although there is more work to be done.

At no time did the Historical Society give temporary management of the Villa to the FOVM; per the operating agreement with the City, the Historical Society could never do that. All groups who wanted to help the Historical Society were encouraged to do so, and the FOVM stepped up to the plate. We applaud the dedicated efforts by past and current Historical Society staff members and Trustees who have loved this beautiful 1887 Palace of the Arts.

The mission of the Friends of the Villa Montezuma, Inc. (FOVM) is to raise funds for the preservation and operation of the Villa Montezuma, to enhance public education about this architectural and cultural resource, and to operate the museum under the Accreditation Standards of the American Association of Museums (of which the FOVM is a member organization). **The FOVM will continue all its work to get the Villa restored, and then to get it fully reopened in order to operate the museum.**

For more information about the FOVM and the Villa Montezuma, to download our 2008 Year In Review, or to join our efforts to restore the Villa, please see www.VillaMontezuma.org, send an e-mail to Friends@VillaMontezuma.org, or call the FOVM at 619-255-9367.