



FRIENDS OF
FRIENDSHIP PARK
San Diego-Tijuana

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FRIENDS OF FRIENDSHIP PARK APPLAUD CBP DECISION TO PAUSE CONSTRUCTION AT FRIENDSHIP PARK

Community Coalition Greet "First Step" with Cautious Optimism

SAN DIEGO, CA: The Friends of Friendship Park applaud the [recently announced decision](#) by Customs & Border Protection Commissioner Chris Magnus to halt construction at Friendship Park, the binational meeting place at the western-most end of the US-Mexico border just south of San Diego.

“We consider this a step in the right direction,” said John Fanestil, convener of the Friends of Friendship Park. “We look forward to hearing from CBP and US Border Patrol staff. We hope that our request for a pause of 120 days will be honored, and that this will lead to authentic conversation and collaboration with the many stakeholders of Friendship Park.”

The Friends of Friendship Park met last Wednesday (July 27) with U.S. Border Patrol officials and at this meeting requested a 120-day pause in construction. The request was supported by 15 members of Congress, the leadership of the California Latino Legislative Caucus, County Supervisor Nora Vargas, City officials from San Diego, Imperial Beach and Chula Vista, over 160 faith leaders, and 80 community-based organizations.

“Today’s response from CBP is a response to a vast and growing groundswell of support,” Fanestil said, thanking all who have spoken out in defense of the park. “Friendship Park is a cultural treasure and a symbol of the border that so many people know and love,” he said. “It is a place of unique and enduring value not just to the people of San Diego and Tijuana, but to the peoples of the Californias and of the entire US-Mexico border region.”

“The Friends also have already initiated plans to convene a Stakeholder Summit in early September,” added James Brown, a member of the Friends of Friendship Park Steering Committee and Creative Scholar in Art and Design at San Diego State University. At its meeting with US Border Patrol, the Friends of Friendship Park shared an [initial list of stakeholders](#) to illustrate the breadth and depth of concern for this unique location.

Brown said the community coalition would release plans for the Stakeholder Summit next week. “We will extend a genuine invitation to CBP and U.S. Border Patrol officials, and we hope they will participate in this process,” he said.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas had previously announced plans to erect two new 30-foot walls across the top of Monument Mesa, where Friendship Park is located. If completed, these walls -- designed in the Trump Administration -- would radically alter the experience of Friendship Park [in the United States](#) and [also in Mexico](#), further undermining its historic purpose of bringing people together across the international boundary.

The Friends of Friendship Park also expressed grave concern at CBP's declaration that "upon completion of the barrier construction in the Friendship Park area, CBP is committed to opening the park a minimum of two days each month, allowing members of the public back into the park for the first time since 2019." This would represent a 75 percent reduction from even the most restrictive terms of access in the last decade, and makes no allowance for the ongoing use of the park by participants in the [Binational Friendship Garden of Native Plants](#), [The Border Church/La Iglesia Fronteriza](#), and the dozens of events that are requested each year by community groups and organizations.

"This declaration reflects CBP's lack of understanding of the diversity of stakeholder concerns and the need for extensive consultation," said Dan Watman, a member of the Friendship Park Steering Committee. "I'm grateful they appear to be open to learning," he added. "Friendship Park is much more than a gate in a wall."

Members of the Friends of Friendship Park Steering Committee will now await formal communications from U.S. Border Patrol staff, as was promised at last week's meeting.

"We hope this proposed engagement with community stakeholders is not another step in the long process by which U.S. Border Patrol officials have continually [ratcheted back public access](#) across the last fifteen years," said Pedro Rios, Director of the American Friends Service Committee and another member of the Friends of Friendship Park Steering Committee.