

CITY OF PASADENA
LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

DESIDERIO ARMY RESERVE CENTER

REUSE PLAN



DESIDERIO ARMY RESERVE CENTER
FINAL REUSE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Base Closure Process

The Desiderio Army Reserve Center was recommended for closure by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission in November 2005. The recommendation was approved by Congress and the property was made available to Federal agencies for a period of six months. No agencies filed interest in the property and it was subsequently declared surplus property. At that time the city was notified of its availability and advised of opportunities to participate in planning for reuse of the site.

Local Redevelopment Authority

In May 2006, the City was designated by the Department of Defense as the Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) responsible for the drafting of a reuse plan for the site. The reuse plan is essentially a recommendation to the Department of Defense stating how the City would like to see the property used and who could best implement that plan. Federal regulations define the responsibilities of the LRA and require that the reuse plan be developed through a community planning process. A summary of community outreach and planning activities is included later in the report.

Description of Facilities

The Desiderio site is a 5.1 parcel located at 655 Westminster Drive in Pasadena, California. The site was formerly the grounds and recreation area of the Vista del Arroyo Hotel and Resort complex. The hotel property was acquired by the U.S. War Department in 1943 to serve as hospital facilities for servicemen during WWII. In 1956, the site was divided and the Desiderio Army Reserve Center was built on the western lot at the bottom of the grade. Facilities at Desiderio consist of a two-story classroom building that includes a large drill hall and kitchen, as well as a large garage, two small accessory structures, and paved parking. Desiderio has been in continual use by the Army as a training facility for various military reserve units, including intelligence units. Few improvements have been made to the site since the original construction.



housing, with the shift continuing through the 1990s. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in multifamily dwellings, particularly developments containing five or more units per structure. This trend is expected to continue given land values, the lack of available sites for single-family homes.

A total of approximately 59,500 housing units may be projected for 2015, with an increase of ten percent over the 54,132 units in 2000.

Employment

Employment projections for the region and local area are extremely variable due to the restructuring of the national economy. In addition, accurate information concerning local employment totals is not presently available. It is estimated that 2000 employment in Pasadena totaled 94,600 jobs. Pasadena will provide approximately 111,500 jobs in 2015, as a reasonable projection.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site History

The 5.1 acre Desiderio site was formerly the grounds and recreation area of the historic Vista del Arroyo Hotel and Resort complex built in 1903. The entire site was acquired by the U.S. War Department in 1943 to serve as hospital facilities for servicemen during WWII. In 1956 the Desiderio Army Reserve Center was built on the western half of the property below grade from the hotel buildings.

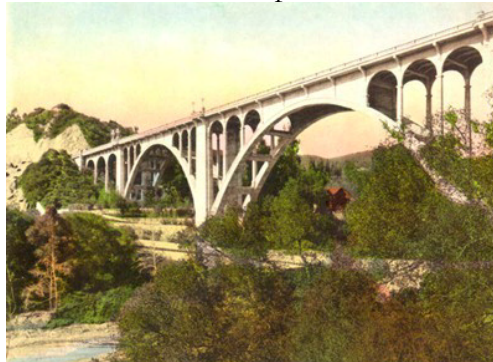
Historic Buildings

The remaining hotel buildings, immediately east of the Desiderio site, include the main hotel and several smaller bungalows. All have been restored and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Federal government still owns the main building housing the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and several bungalows that house non-profit agencies. The remaining bungalows were sold to a private developer who is developing the site as condominiums.



Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal, formerly the Vista del Arroyo Hotel

Along the northern portion of the site is the Colorado Street Bridge built in 1913 and also restored and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge is one of the most painted and photographed features in Southern California. The property includes an easement under the bridge to allow access for repairs.



Colorado Bridge

Immediately south of the Desiderio site is a low-density historic single-family neighborhood built largely between 1890 and 1930. Portions of the area are listed on the National Register with the majority of the remaining buildings being eligible for listing.

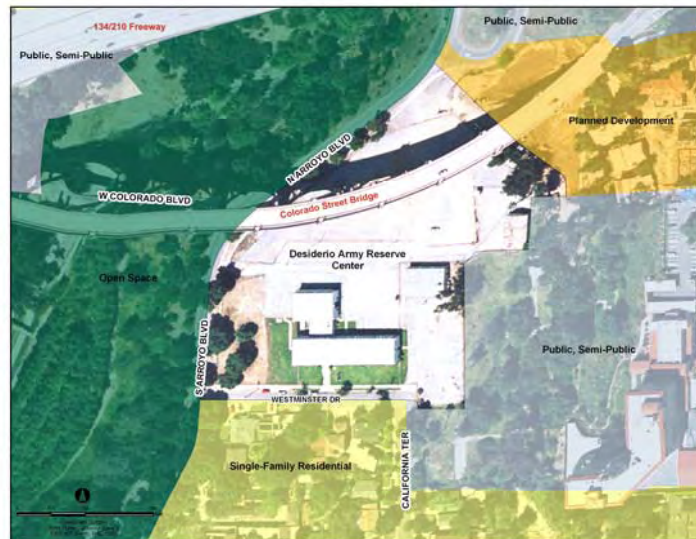
Natural Environment

This quiet neighborhood and the Desiderio site are bordered on the west by the Arroyo Seco, a natural watershed and major tributary of the Los Angeles River. This deep canyon is the City's largest natural open space, stretching eight miles through the City and 22 miles in total linking the San Gabriel Mountains to downtown Los Angeles. Pasadena and other communities along the Arroyo have worked diligently to protect and restore this important natural environment for future generations.



Lower Arroyo Seco

Adjacent Land Uses



PUBLIC OUTREACH

Process Overview

Under Federal regulations the City of Pasadena, as the LRA, was required to publish a legal notice in local newspapers announcing a 90-day period during which interested parties could submit proposals. Notices were published in three local papers on June 8, 2006, and special outreach was made to homeless services providers as required by the regulations. The LRA was also required to conduct at least one workshop that provided an opportunity for interested parties to learn about the reuse process and to tour the buildings on the Desiderio site. This workshop was held on site on June 30, 2006 and representatives of more than 75 organizations attended. On September 8, 2006, the submittal period closed and eleven proposals for redevelopment of the site were received. Under Federal regulations, the City is given nine months to review the proposals and develop a recommended Reuse Plan through a community planning process.

Community Participation

A web page dedicated to information regarding the Desiderio site was posted on September 19, 2006, including all eleven proposals (excluding the financial information.). The page includes background information and photographs of the site, information on the process, and regular updates regarding meeting schedules, commission recommendations and plans. Information was also regularly shared with the community through the City's semi-monthly community newsletter.

On October 12, 2006, a general information meeting was held to allow the community to become familiar with the proposals prior to the start of the planning process. Each of the eleven proposal teams presented their plan, answered questions and distributed materials to a group of approximately 80 attendees. The meeting was promoted through press releases, notices to all neighborhood associations, postcards mailed to addresses within 1,000 ft radius of the site, postcards placed at public counters, notice posted on the local cable channel, and information posted on the City's web page. These same tools were used to notify the community of additional commission and City Council meetings.

In October 2006, the Pasadena City Council designated the Planning Commission to act as the official advisory review panel to evaluate the proposals and recommend a conceptual land use plan. The Planning Commission was deemed to meet several important criteria which qualified it to act in an advisory role on this issue. By nature of their appointment to the Commission, Planning Commissioners possess technical expertise and experience in evaluating master plans and balancing land use-related concerns. In this case, several diverse proposals needed to be evaluated for compliance with existing City plans and codes, as well as for compatibility with the unique character of the site. The Planning Commission is experienced not only with the current plans and development standards for the community, but also with the community concerns and priorities regarding new development. In addition, the membership of the Commission is representative of a cross-section of the community, thereby providing a diverse range of perspectives.

The City Council also directed that the eleven proposals be reviewed by three advisory commissions including the Community Development Committee, the Recreation and Parks Commission and the Transportation Advisory Commission. These groups assessed the open space, housing, and traffic impacts of the 11 submitted proposals respectively. Each of these commissions reviewed the proposals, heard public testimony and forwarded a list of recommended projects to the Planning Commission for their consideration.

The Planning Commission reviewed the eleven proposals over the course of three public meetings. On November 1, 2006, presentations were heard and public testimony taken. On December 6, 2006, the Commission again heard public comment and selected four finalists from among the eleven proposals. Each of the four was asked to consider partnering with each other, or other agencies, to create a more balanced project. On January 24, 2007 revised proposals were submitted by three of the finalists, however no new partnerships were presented. Public testimony was heard and a final proposal was selected for recommendation to the City Council.

The City Council considered all eleven proposals, recommendations from all four advisory bodies, and public comment on February 5, 2007. A concept plan was selected that would combine two proposals and staff was directed to return with final documents for approval. On March 19, City Council considered, at the request of the participants of the plan, possible modifications to the approved concept plan and public comment was heard. Staff was directed to prepare additional plan variations and return to Council for further action. On April 23, staff returned with a revised plan as directed; after reviewing the alternative and hearing public testimony, City Council affirmed their original decision of February 5, 2007.

SELECTION OF FINALISTS

Review Considerations

Federal Criteria

Neither the Federal regulations nor the Department of Defense specified criteria for the selection of land uses for the site. However, an Army representative stated at the June 30, 2006 information meeting that their chief priority was that the recommended plan have strong community support. It is with this understanding that the LRA has proceeded in good faith toward selecting an appropriate land use concept for the Desiderio site.

Local Land Use Codes

The West Gateway Specific Plan is the current long-range planning document for the site. Adopted in 1998, the plan is the product of several years of community participation and includes specific recommendations for the Desiderio site. It states that the preferred community vision for the site is for a charitable, cultural or government institution, but that low density residential (6 DU/acre; 36' height limit) would also be acceptable. The plan further states that in either case the new development should be in character with the surrounding residential areas, respect the peaceful quality of the area, and minimize traffic and impacts on the Arroyo Seco.

Description of Proposals

On September 8, 2006, eleven proposals for redevelopment of the site were received ranging from recreational use of the site to high-density housing, including six housing developments, two schools, and three multi-purpose proposals combining outdoor recreation uses with an art academy, a float building facility for the Tournament of Roses and a public safety training facility for the City of Pasadena. A summary of each is shown in the matrix below.

	Organization(s)	Land Use	Acquisition Type
1	Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment	Art Academy and Museum Environmental Center Natural Open Space	Parkland PBC
2	Beacon Housing	Mixed Affordability Housing (18 single family homes, 32 townhomes)	Market Purchase
3	Century Housing	58 Workforce, Multifamily Housing Units	Market Purchase
4	Century Housing	Charter School Public Parkland	Education PBC

	Organization(s)	Land Use	Acquisition Type
5	City of Pasadena	Public Safety Training Facility Recreation Center Parkland	Parkland or Homeland Security PBC
6	Habitat for Humanity	9 Affordable, Single Family Housing Units	Self-Help Housing PBC
7	Lambert Development & IHC Community Housing	50 Multifamily Housing Units	Market Purchase
8	Moule & Polyzoides	20 Single Family Housing Units	Market Purchase
9	Tournament of Roses	Float Construction/Staging Parkland	Market Purchase
10	Union Station Foundation	Affordable, Multifamily Housing	Market Purchase
11	Westminster Academy	Private Day School Mixed housing Parkland	Education PBC

Selection of Finalists

Recreation and Parks Commission

On November 29, 2006, the Recreation and Parks Commission heard presentations and reviewed the eleven proposals. The Commission voted to consider the merits of the proposals within the context of three principles: provision of the most park, open or recreational space; greatest benefit to the community as a whole; and compatibility with the adjacent neighborhood. Using these principles, the Commission recommended the following four proposals to the Planning Commission without priority:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment
- Moule & Polyzoides
- City of Pasadena

Community Development Committee

On November 20, 2006 the Community Development Committee heard eleven presentations and evaluated the proposals within the spirit and intent of their mission to a) preserve and expand the diversity of housing and economic development for a broad mix of persons of different ethnicities and income levels; and b) to address the Issue of homelessness in Greater Pasadena. The Committee stated a desire to recommend the proposals that provide the greatest amount of housing directed to the population(s) with the greatest need and voted to recommend to the Planning Commission the following projects in priority order:

1. Union Station Foundation
2. Century Housing - Housing Proposal
3. Lambed Development/IHC Housing Corporation
4. Habitat for Humanity
5. Moule & Polyzoides

In addition, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to incorporating the Arroyo Center for the Arts and the Environment into a joint development arrangement.

Transportation Advisory Commission

On January 12, 2007, the Transportation Advisory Commission reviewed the eleven original proposals and the updated site plans submitted by two of the proposals selected as finalists by the Planning Commission. TAC voted to concur with the Planning Commission on the selection of the four finalists and further recommended the following:

1. Pedestrian and transit access should be considered;
2. Parking and mobility impacts should be addressed through neighborhood protections for the surrounding areas;
3. Access to public uses should be directed from Arroyo Drive;
4. Adequate ingress and egress should include consideration of the bridge, the incline of Arroyo Drive, and the road alignments.

Planning Commission

On November 1, 2006, the Planning Commission heard presentations from the development teams of each of the eleven proposals and took public comment. On December 6, 2006, the Planning Commission again heard public comment and selected four proposals as finalists for further consideration. Those finalists were:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment
- Moule & Polyzoides
- City of Pasadena

The finalists were asked to consider partnering with other proposal teams and were invited to submit updated proposals. On January 24, 2007, the Planning Commission heard updated proposals from each of the four finalists, took public comment for a third time, and deliberated on a final recommendation. The Commission ultimately considered the proposals in the context of two criteria: 1) broad community support as required by the Department of Defense and 2) compliance with the West Gateway Specific Plan. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend the Habitat for Humanity "Scheme A" that includes nine single-family units, 75% open space, inclusion of the Arroyo Center for the Arts and Environment in a new building, and a parking grove similar to the grove at the Huntington Library and Gardens.

Description of Finalists

Of the eleven proposals, four were selected by the Planning Commission as finalists for further consideration. The Recreation and Parks Commission and the Transportation Advisory Commission recommended the same four proposals as finalists. Two of the four, Habitat for Humanity and Moule & Polyzoides, were also recommended by the Community Development Committee. Descriptions of the final four are as follows:

Habitat for Humanity

The original proposal from Habitat for Humanity included 22 attached single-family homes leaving the remainder of the site for either public parkland or the development of market rate single family homes. In response to community concerns, Habitat submitted an updated proposal reducing the number of units to nine single-family bungalows in a court formation occupying approximately 25% of the site. The bungalows would be constructed through a sweat equity program and sold at affordable rates up to 80% of area median income. Habitat proposed three alternatives for the remainder of the site. Scheme A, recommended by the Planning Commission, proposed that most of the site remain as open space with a heavily planted parking grove similar to that at the Huntington Library. It also proposed a large bungalow, sited as an aesthetic focal point framed by an arch of the bridge, to house the Arroyo Center for the Arts and Environment. Access to the parking would be from Arroyo Boulevard thus minimizing impacts on the adjacent neighborhood.

This proposal meets the development standards of the West Gateway Specific Plan and current zoning. It also complies with the statements in the Plan that development on the site "should be in character with the surrounding residential areas, respect the peaceful quality of the area, and minimize traffic and impacts on the Arroyo Seco." In addition, it furthers the goals of the Housing Element to provide affordable housing, the Draft Green Space Element for preservation and acquisition of open space in or adjacent to the Arroyo, and the Cultural Nexus Plan to provide space for the cultural and creative sector, to expand cultural and heritage tourism, and to communicate Pasadena's unique cultural identity to the region and world. It is also in alignment with the City's focus on protection of the environment.

The land would be transferred to the City and Habitat for Humanity at reduced or no cost through Public Benefit Conveyances for parkland and self-help housing respectively. The Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment would occupy the site through an agreement with the City.

Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment

The Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment is a joint venture of the Arroyo Seco Foundation and the California Art Club. Both are local non-profits established in Pasadena more than 100 years ago. The Arroyo Seco Foundation works to preserve and promote the Arroyo Seco; the California Art Club provides education and support for traditional fine art, particularly painting in the "plein air" tradition for which the Arroyo Seco has served as inspiration since the turn of the century. Their proposal seeks to celebrate nature and art in the Arroyo through restoration of natural vegetation on most of the site and reuse of the existing buildings as an art museum and academy, a library of Arroyo history, and a center

for environmental education. Improvements to the buildings would include state-of-the-art energy and environmental design and LEED certification. The proposal is in compliance with the West Gateway Specific Plan and is conditionally permitted under the current zoning for the site.

The land would be transferred to the City through a Public Benefit Conveyance for parkland and occupied by the non-profits through an agreement with the City.

City of Pasadena

The City of Pasadena proposal was submitted by a four-department team including Fire, Police, Public Works and Human Services and Recreation. The proposal seeks to provide both a regional public safety training facility in the existing structures and new park/open space opportunities on the remainder of the site. This use is in compliance with the West Gateway Specific Plan and is conditionally permitted under the existing zoning.

The land would be transferred to the City under a Public Benefit Conveyance for parkland and/or homeland security. It is believed that Homeland Security dollars could be secured for facility renovation.

Moule & Polyzoides

Moule & Polyzoides, a local architecture firm noted for its focus on "new urbanism", originally proposed 22 single family homes to be sold at market rate as well as a one acre neighborhood park with a small community building at the center. In an updated proposal, intended to address the priorities set forth by the City's advisory bodies as well as community input, the number of units was reduced to 20, the size of the park increased to 1.75 acres, and two workforce units were added to the three affordable units required by the inclusionary housing ordinance. The proposed use would require a zone change and Specific Plan Amendment for a Planned Unit Development (PD) that would allow flexibility from the current zoning and development standards for the site.

The land would be purchased by Moule & Polyzoides at market rate, as assessed at the time of transfer, directly from the Department of Defense. This proposal was withdrawn by the applicant before being considered by City Council.

RECOMMENDED PLAN

Plan Summary

The recommended plan includes nine single-family bungalows in a court formation occupying approximately 25% of the site. The bungalows would be constructed by Habitat for Humanity through a sweat equity program and sold at affordable rates up to 80% of area median income. The remainder of the site would remain as city parkland/open space with a heavily planted parking grove. It also includes a possible center for celebration of the Arroyo Seco. Access to the parking would be from Arroyo Boulevard thus minimizing impacts on the adjacent neighborhood.

This proposal meets the development standards of the West Gateway Specific Plan and current zoning. It also complies with the statements in the Plan that development on the site "should be in character with the surrounding residential areas, respect the peaceful quality of the area, and minimize traffic and impacts on the Arroyo Seco." In addition, it furthers the goals of the Housing Element to provide affordable housing, the Draft Green Space Element for preservation and acquisition of open space in or adjacent to the Arroyo, and the Cultural Nexus Plan to provide space for the cultural and creative sector. It is also in alignment with the City's focus on protection of the environment.

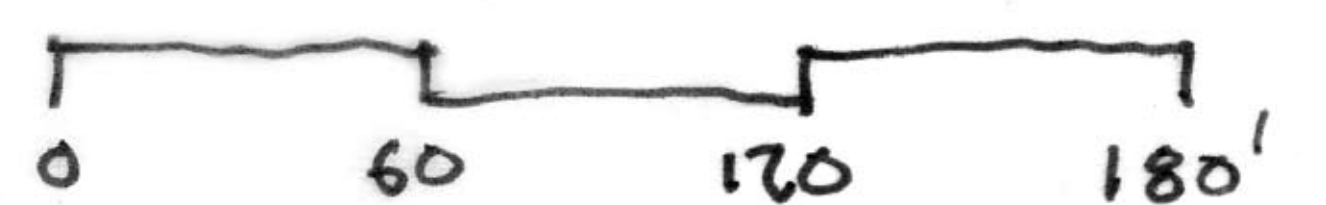
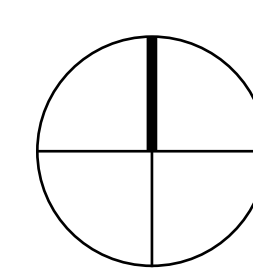
The land would be transferred to the City and Habitat for Humanity through Public Benefit Conveyances for parkland and self-help housing respectively. The community bungalow would be occupied through an agreement with the City.

The recommended plan responds to two critical priorities for the City of Pasadena - affordable housing and public parkland. It also responds to a community priority to create more opportunities for the celebration of arts and culture.



FINAL PLAN ATTRIBUTES:

- NINE UNIT BUNGALOW COURT WITH SIX VISITOR PARKING SPACES
- OPEN SPACE AND PLAYGROUND, PATHWAYS AND CONNECTION TO ARROYO TRAIL SYSTEMS AT WESTMINSTER DR
- PUBLIC PARKING WITH PERMEABLE PAVING FOR 20 CARS WITH FUTURE CAPACITY FOR ADDITIONAL 15 SPACES
- POSSIBLE FUTURE COMMUNITY BUILDING



FINAL PLAN 05.04.2007



Affordable Housing

California is facing an affordable housing shortage of crisis proportions across the state. Pasadena faces several challenges in providing housing, including the following priorities outlined in the City's Housing Element of the General Plan:

- Maintaining the diversity of the community;
- Ensuring the affordability of its housing stock;
- Addressing individuals and families with special housing needs;
- Focusing reinvestment in poorer areas of the community, and;
- Balancing growth with preservation of the unique aspect of Pasadena.

The City is at the forefront of seeking solutions for the creation of affordable housing to the extent that it recently hosted a series of forums and research seminars with the Urban Land Institute. Despite operating a variety of affordable housing programs a critical shortage of affordable housing remains within the community.

The Desiderio site is a difficult development site because it is surrounded on all sides by sensitive land uses including significant historic buildings and a protected natural habitat. The community found that high-density multi-family development would not be appropriate for the site and would have significant impacts on these important community resources. However, the desire to include affordable housing was strong, even when balanced with the need for community parkland.

The recommended project is compatible with the surrounding land uses and the City's affordable housing goals. The final plan includes nine affordable single-family ownership units in a bungalow court format. This project will help achieve the City's affordable home ownership goals and accommodates the need for larger family units. The design references Pasadena's historic building plans, compliments the surrounding historic buildings and creates linkage with the adjacent single-family neighborhood. The axis of the court is aligned to continue the view corridor of the existing street and the frame the view of the historic Colorado Street Bridge. The plan essentially expands the existing neighborhood with affordable homes.

Public Parkland

It is a priority of the City to "create, maintain, protect, and restore an interrelated system of parks, trails, and natural open spaces. To provide recreational opportunities which sustain a vibrant and healthy community with an emphasis on ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education."

Findings from a recent study identified existing deficiencies in the City's inventory of parkland and a need to create additional urban open space and parkland to accommodate growth. The City's draft Green Space Element of the General Plan recommends that the following measures be considered to alleviate this need:

- Acquire properties adjacent to existing parks as they become available.

- Encourage the development of publicly accessible urban open space areas throughout the city, both public and privately owned.

The Desiderio site is immediately adjacent to the Lower Arroyo, a natural watershed and major tributary of the Los Angeles River. This deep canyon is the City's largest natural open space, stretching eight miles through the City and 22 miles in total linking the San Gabriel Mountains to downtown Los Angeles. Pasadena and other communities along the Arroyo have worked diligently to protect and restore this important natural environment for future generations.

Because of this location, many in the community believe that the site is a rare opportunity to expand the city's inventory of natural open space and that the entire site should be preserved as parkland. It meets the goal of acquiring properties adjacent to existing parks as they become available. It is unlikely that other parcels adjacent to the Arroyo and suitable for park development will be available at any time in the near future.

In addition, the neighborhood surrounding the Desiderio site is not currently served by a "Neighborhood Park." A neighborhood park is defined as serving a neighborhood within a ½ mile radius, or a typical walking distance, with amenities such as tot lots and picnic facilities.

The green space portion of the recommended plan will consist of a Neighborhood Park to be characterized as a passive retreat for individuals, families with small children, walkers, and visitors to the Lower Arroyo. This park is not intended, nor shall it be designed to accommodate large groups or organized sports activities. The following list of amenities proposed for Desiderio Park is consistent with the minimum standard set of amenities for Neighborhood Parks, as proposed in the City's draft Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Master Plan (items in parentheses further define the features proposed for Desiderio Park):

- Open Turf Area ("Meadow")
- Trees
- Security Lighting
- Walkways that loop around and through park amenities
- Picnic Tables (scattered throughout)
- Benches
- ADA compliant Play Equipment (small "Tot Lot")
- ADA compliant Drinking Fountains
- Waste and Recycling Receptacles

In addition to the elements listed above, the size, topography, and setting of Desiderio Park make it ideal for the following additional features:

- Native grasses and plantings consistent with the Lower Arroyo
- Naturalistic play elements dispersed throughout the park (e.g. Huntington Children's Garden)
- Small Picnic Ramada (family scale; 2 tables)

- Street crossing across Arroyo Blvd from Desiderio Park to Lower Arroyo trails (at Westminster Dr.)
- Restrooms (incorporated into side of “Arts Casita” structure on the eastern edge of the Site, with exterior access)
- 25-30 parking spaces

City Council has directed that the park be named Desiderio Park in honor of Captain Desiderio.

Arts & Culture

The City recently adopted Cultural Nexus a plan for the support and expansion of cultural opportunities throughout the City. Among the priorities of the plan are to provide space for the cultural and creative sector.

The recommended plan includes a community building intended to house arts and environmental activities in celebration of the Arroyo Seco natural environment. The building would be no more than 8,000 square feet in footprint and could have one additional story underground. It would be situated to create maximum view of the historic bridge and the historic Vista del Arroyo hotel.

An arts and culture center was originally included in the plan with the intention of housing the Arroyo Center for Arts and Environment, one of the four finalists. That organization however has stated that they are interested in participating only if they can preserve and rehabilitate the existing buildings on site, rather than build new construction. Without the participation of this group, the potential remains that the building could be built at a future date to house similar activities by other organizations. The building remains only an alternative at this time, if the City can identify the appropriate use and funding mechanism. The creation of space for the cultural use would meet the priorities of the City’s cultural plan.