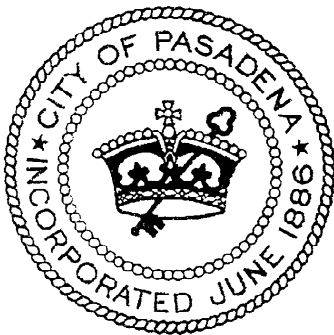


**Attachment D**  
**March 19, 2007 Report to City Council**



# Agenda Report

March 19, 2007

TO: City Council  
FROM: City Manager  
SUBJECT: Clarification of Land Use Concept for Reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council provide clarification of the February 5, 2007, action approving a concept land use plan for reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center. Specifically, staff is seeking further direction regarding:

1. Retention of the existing buildings;
2. Relocation of the housing units;
3. Impacts on the Draft Hahamongna Master Plan.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On January 24, 2007, 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 Art and the Environment in a new building, and a parking grove similar to the grove at the Huntington Library and Gardens.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

On February 5, 2007, City Council approved a concept plan for reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve site. The concept, Scheme A, included a nine-unit bungalow court to be built by Habitat for Humanity, a large bungalow to house the Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment (comprised of the Arroyo Seco Foundation and the California Art Club), and open space to be developed by the City. While Habitat for Humanity is supporting a modified version of the Scheme A, the Arroyo Center is seeking consideration of a new alternative plan that retains the existing buildings on site for their use. This is a deviation from City Council direction and staff is seeking clarification from Council as to whether or not the existing buildings may be considered for retention and if the bungalows may be rearranged from a court format into a linear plan. If these changes are not to be considered in the final plan, the Arroyo Center has stated that they will withdraw from the process. If these changes are to be considered and an environmental education center is developed on the site as part of the Arroyo Center,

staff is seeking direction regarding the inclusion of another environmental education center in the Hahamongna Annex.

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 5, 2007, after reviewing eleven proposals and recommendations from four advisory bodies, City Council approved a concept plan for reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve site. The approved concept, referred to as Habitat Scheme A (also recommended by the Planning Commission), requires a partnership between Habitat for Humanity, the Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment, and the City.

Although this partnership had been contemplated by all three parties, the feasibility of an integrated concept had not been fully explored. After receiving Council direction, the three parties met to discuss a plan to work together. These discussions raised the possibility of an alternate site plan that retains the existing buildings on site and relocates the bungalows. Habitat for Humanity and the Arroyo Center are advocating for a different plan, each supporting the plan that best meets the priorities of their organizational mission.

Both plans comply with the land use vision in the West Gateway Specific Plan for low density residential or a charitable, cultural or government institution. They also comply with the additional plan goals that new development be in character with the surrounding residential areas, respect the peaceful quality of the area, and minimize traffic and impacts on the Arroyo Seco.

*Scheme A.1- Habitat Preferred Plan*

City Council approved and the Planning Commission recommended Scheme A (attached) that includes nine single-family bungalows in a court formation facing Westminster Drive and California Terrace. The housing would occupy approximately 25% of the site with the remainder of the site to be City parkland and open space. The open space area included a heavily planted parking grove on the east and new construction of a large bungalow to house the Arroyo Center for the Arts and Environment at the apex of the bungalow court. As proposed, the Arroyo Center bungalow would be 6,000 to 8,000 square feet and all existing buildings would be demolished.

Scheme A.1 was developed in response to concerns that the new building would be too close to the bridge and might block scenic views. In this scheme, the new building and associated parking lot were shifted to the east corner of the site allowing unobstructed vistas.

Habitat for Humanity supports Scheme A.1 for several reasons. They have stated that the courtyard format creates a stronger sense of community and links better to the existing single family neighborhood along California Terrace. Staff concurs that this plan is based on proven urban design principles for creating neighborhood cohesiveness and sense of community. In addition, Habitat believes that creating open vistas to the historic bridge and parkland should be a priority and is seeking the greatest

amount of open space on site. These goals are best achieved by the removal of the existing buildings. Habitat has concerns with the alternate scheme (Scheme D.1) because it would require the central courtyard of the bungalows to be smaller, would place a parking lot in front of several of the bungalows, and would reduce the overall amount of open space.

*Scheme D.1 – Arroyo Center Preferred Plan*

The Arroyo Center has stated that they cannot support Scheme A.1 because the cost to them for a new building would be prohibitive. In addition to cost issues, the Arroyo Center has determined that construction of a new building would be incongruent with their organizational mission and goals. They have stated that the existing buildings are solidly constructed and provide a good shell for adaptive reuse. The retention of the buildings is therefore more environmentally responsible than new construction and they are advocating for an alternate plan that retains the existing buildings for their use.

To accommodate retention of the main building, the alternate plan would demolish the garage and accessory structures and the nine bungalows would be relocated in a linear form along the east border of the site, facing the Arroyo. (Scheme D.1) In addition, a portion of the existing building (35 feet) would be removed to create more front yard space for the bungalows. The Arroyo Center believes that for the residents of the bungalows, the view from this configuration will be superior. As in Scheme A and A.1, the percentage of the site dedicated to housing would remain at 25% with the remainder of the site as open space including a parking grove and building for the Arroyo Center. However, the footprint of the Arroyo Center building would be larger than proposed in Scheme A and the open space would be reduced by 6% and reconfigured in a more linear plan.

The Arroyo Center proposes interior and exterior renovations to the remaining building (after 35 feet are removed on the east end) as well as landscaping with native plants and trees. Improvements would include removal of industrial elements such as exterior lighting fixtures and doors that would be replaced with architectural enhancements to entryways, the roof and other parts of the building. Windows and skylights would be added to enhance natural lighting, improve ventilation, and reduce energy consumption. Porticos, trellises and vines would also be added to enhance the design of the building. If this plan is selected the Arroyo Center would contract with an architect to draft plans to achieve Gold LEED criteria in keeping with the City's green building policies.

The Arroyo Center has budgeted \$3.86 million for improvements to the existing building and is requesting that the City fund the costs of removing the east end of the building and demolishing the existing parking lots. The remaining Arroyo Center work would be completed in phases as funding is identified.

A traffic study prepared by Linscott Law and Greenspan, at the request of the Arroyo Center, found that on a typical day the site would generate approximately 68 vehicle trips per day (34 trips inbound, 34 trips outbound). This calculation allows for eight full-time and one part-time staff, several daily volunteers, and approximately 45 visitors per

day. In addition, the study considered the impacts of group tours, school field trips, and special events. It is anticipated that no more than three group/school events would be held per month, generating an additional 60 trips on those days, if visitors arrive by car rather than bus. No more than five special receptions would be held per year, generating an additional 100 trips on those days. The study also found that 30 public parking spaces would be adequate with the addition of 12 spaces for staff.

#### Impacts on Hahamongna Watershed Park

In November, 2005, the City purchased 30 acres of land previously owned by the Metropolitan Water District adjacent to Hahamongna Watershed Park. Following acquisition the City initiated an extensive community participation process to identify priorities for use of the site. After multiple workshops, an environmental education center was identified as the preferred use for the former Forest Service site which includes approximately seven acres and several buildings suitable for this function. This use has been incorporated into the Draft Hahamongna Plan scheduled to come before Council in the next few months. If the Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment is to be located at the Desiderio site, staff is requesting further direction regarding the inclusion of a second environmental education center in the Draft Hahamongna Plan. It is unclear if there is adequate demand for two such centers within the City in addition to the Eaton Canyon Nature Center. Further, the two centers could end up competing for limited grant funds and volunteer resources.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

##### Scheme A.1 – Habitat Preferred Plan

Under Scheme A.1, the City would bear the costs of demolishing the existing buildings and grading the site for park construction. Total costs for preparation of the site are estimated at between \$650,000 and \$773,000 including demolition, mitigation of hazardous materials, removal of asphalt and grading. The City would also bear the costs of park design and construction, estimated by City staff at \$1.7 million.

The Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment would be responsible for funding the design and construction of a new educational building. The cost for new construction of a building shell and tenant improvements meeting LEED standards is estimated at \$400 per square foot. Costs for an 8,000 s.f. building as proposed in Scheme A would be \$3.2 million; cost for an 18,000 s.f. building as required by the Arroyo Center would be \$12 million.

##### Scheme D.1 – Arroyo Center Preferred Plan

As proposed by the Arroyo Center, the City would bear the costs for demolition of 35 feet on the east end of the building, the accessory structures, and the existing asphalt parking lots. Total cost for the demolition cannot be calculated at this time as the details of removing a portion of the building have not been examined. The City typically has not funded building improvements for non-city agencies. However, if this plan is selected, staff recommends placing a cap on the dollar amount to be expended. In the prior approval of Scheme A, City Council supported the expenditure of \$600,000 for

work to prepare the site for a new building. This same amount could be applied to preparing the site for renovation of the existing building.

The Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment would be responsible for renovation of the remaining building. They are anticipating raising \$3.86 million for this work, which would result in expenditure of roughly \$200 per square foot. If this proposal is selected, staff will recommend an agreement between the City and the Arroyo Center including a capital improvement plan and a completion schedule. Non-performance conditions could then be included in the lease agreement protecting the City in case of default on the part of the Arroyo Center.

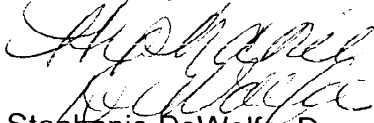
As in Scheme A, the City would also bear the costs of park design and construction. Because the open space would be 6% smaller, the City's costs would be reduced proportionately to \$1.6 million.

Respectfully submitted,



CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Prepared by:



Stephanie DeWolfe, Deputy Director  
Planning & Development

Approved by:



Richard Bruckner, Director  
Planning & Development

Attachments:

- A. Prior approval plan: Scheme A
- B. Habitat preferred plan: Scheme A.1
- C. Arroyo Center preferred plan: Scheme D.1
- D. Correspondence from the Arroyo Center