

From: George Corey [grcorey@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Tuesday, May 15, 2007 10:52 PM
To: cityclerk
Subject: Desiderio

To: City Clerk

Please distribute to all concilmembers and so that it can be posted on the website for the May 21 meeting.

Thank you,

George Corey

Dear Councilmembers:

The Planning Commission and City Council have studied the Desiderio issue and unanimously agreed upon Scheme A, which clearly includes demolition of the existing non conforming structures. They have awarded the principal built component to the Habitat project with the balance going to open space and a center for the Arts and Environment.

The issue is that of the existing buildings and their location on the site. When the buildings were constructed as an armory, the primary concern was placing them in the most practical location, providing ample parking facilities for military vehicles and building them in the simplest, sturdiest, most cost effective manner for their intended purpose. The site was stripped of trees and vegetation and the majority of the open space paved. At that time, massiveness, vistas, architectural, spatial and environmental compatibility with the neighborhood were not a priority if even a consideration. Now that the Army has decided to turn the property over to the community we have the opportunity to correct this oversight.

No one questions the validity of adaptive re-use or re cycling of existing structures, in fact that has been my profession for close to 30 years, but the issue here is context. Were these buildings in an industrial or commercial part of town there would be no question of their renovation. Where they are sited, however, they are out of scale and character to the local environment. They are also sited in such a way that they block the vistas of the historic bridge which the City deemed worthy of spending substantial funds to restore. That they are there is not adequate justification for their continued presence. The Council, after listening to input from the community and deciding that the primary components of the usage of this property should be an affordable residential development combined with 75% open space and a properly scaled arts and environmental center, has come to the unavoidable conclusion that the existing structures are inappropriate and should be removed.

Even the truncated existing structure, as proposed by staff in response to concerns by the ACAE, after the decision to demolish was made, would still overpower the site, squeeze the Habitat Court into an unsupportable configuration and reduce the open space component, and still leave a tall poorly placed structure on the site. The 2 story bunker like configuration of the existing structure might be embellished with a tile roof and other architectural details, but its height and visual impact would not be diminished.

Reducing it to one story would be financially impractical. These alternatives have been and should continue to be rejected.

The question that remains is the size and placement of the new structures. The court configuration for Habitat is historically and architecturally compatible and best sites the project with the adjoining streets. The open space component is most appropriate to the site as it is the northern gateway to the lower arroyo. The spatial needs and community usage of the Arroyo Center for the Arts and Environment need to be more clearly defined.

We shouldn't repeat the mistakes of the past by allowing the structures to continue to overpower the site. The structures should stay to the southeastern corner of the property to preserve the views of the bridge and retain as much contiguous passive open space as possible. Any center for the Arts and Environment component including access and parking should be kept separate from the residential component and all properly scaled.

Respectfully submitted,

George R. Corey
487 California Terrace
Pasadena, CA 91105-2450
626.792.5594 ph/fax

May 17, 2007
136 S. Arroyo Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91105

The Honorable Bill Bogaard and
Members of the Pasadena City Council
100 N. Garfield Ave.
Pasadena, California 91109

Regarding: Desiderio Army Reserve Center

Sirs and Madams:

Having reviewed the recently completed Reuse Plan for the Desiderio Army Reserve Center site, I'd like to commend you and city staff for having arrived at a reasoned and well-considered approach for land use of this site. Your plan appropriately balances two top priorities for the city, the need for open space in an increasingly dense urban environment, and for affordable housing that makes home ownership possible for the less-advantaged members of our community. Furthermore, the plan offers the opportunity for a deserving arts group and/or environmental education entity to create an appropriately scaled bungalow (not a looming cold-war bunker) that would serve as a locus for community celebration of the Arroyo, its history, natural environment, and aesthetics.

As an immediate neighbor of the Desiderio site I've followed the debates taking place within the Planning Commission and Council with interest. The public and open process, with which a wide range of viewpoints and opinions from the community were aired and debated, was commendable. The appointed and elected representatives of the community made good judgments about the relative merits of contending arguments advocating use of the site for green space, for affordable housing, for the narrow arts niche of California Impressionism, and for free office space for an environmental nonprofit. No one can legitimately complain that members of the Council have not listened to their constituents. Only a tiny but loud fringe element of our neighborhood in the lower Arroyo views the unanimous action of the City Council as unfair, because the irate few somehow don't comprehend that open space, available for all Pasadenans instead of for members of a private club and for the staffs of nonprofit entities, is in fact a public use of land.

I'm looking forward now to a successful outcome from the federal process. The National Park Service, which oversees the public benefit conveyance of closed Army bases for park use, has routinely approved base reuse for parks and open space, but never for museums or tourist attractions or private clubs.

I do also hope that in time the city will identify a local arts group with broad public appeal (one, for example, that provides arts education for disadvantaged youth and for the diverse populations within Pasadena, rather than a private academy for affluent elites) that could successfully take on the challenge of funding the construction and operation of a community-oriented Arts Casita.

Sincerely,



Lewis Hashimoto

Jomsky, Mark

From: Ann Scheid [alund.ann@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, May 18, 2007 10:45 AM
To: Jomsky, Mark
Subject: Desderio

Dear Mark,
Thanks for distributing and posting this.

Please distribute to all Members of the City Council

Dear Members of the Pasadena City Council:

I urge you to approve the staff recommendation for the Desderio site that will be presented to you at the May 21 meeting. The concept plan before you, which represents a compromise of earlier proposals, achieves a balance between the demonstrated needs for affordable housing and for open space for all to enjoy. Unlike competing proposals, this combination of a 9-unit bungalow court and over 3 acres of open space on the banks of the Arroyo not only addresses Pasadena's needs, but also respects the adjacent residential neighborhood, enhances the natural environment, and makes the best use of a rare opportunity to reclaim a major portion of the land for public use and benefit.

The proposal is also fully in accord with similar transfers of federal land under the Federal Lands to Parks program administered by the National Park Service, which has transferred thousands of acres to cities for park uses.

The Council has approved this land use concept twice, affirming the Planning Commission's original recommendation. The West Pasadena Resident's Association has endorsed it. It is now time to send this on to the federal government for its consideration and eventual approval.

Sincerely,

Ann Scheid
Founding Member
Lower Arroyo Neighborhood Coalition for the Environment

130 S. Arroyo Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91105
May 18, 2007

City of Pasadena
Pasadena City Council Members
Pasadena, CA

RE: DESIDERIO REDEVELOPMENT

Dear Sir/Madam:

As the immediate neighbors to the Desiderio site, we support the council's decision – the adoption of Habitat for Humanity's Scheme A with a basement for the Arts Casita and the complete removal of all existing buildings before the commencement of any construction.

Having attended many of the planning commission and council hearings, I believe the council made the best decision in light of all the competing interests. No one group got everything that it desired while everyone came away with something. The community as a whole will benefit from your decision.

Some may argue that your decision is not supported many of the area residents, including many of the immediate residents. This is simply not true. The Lower Arroyo Neighborhood Coalition for the Environment have previously submitted a petition signed by over 60 of the area residents with over 10 neighbors living within one block of the site stating explicitly that we support the council's decision to remove all the existing buildings. The West Pasadena Residents Association (WPRA) has also endorsed your decision. The support for your decision cannot be clearer.

Some groups may continue to disagree with your decisions because they did not completely get everything that they wanted. In our opinion, this is unfortunate because throughout the whole process, the city council and planning commission have repeatedly accommodated these groups despite their unwillingness to compromise. Your courage to make the correct decision in the face of unfair and unwarranted criticism is commendable and appreciated by many of the immediate residents that support your decision.

Best regards,

Alex Yap and Teresa Sun

Vice Mayor Steve Madison
P.O. Box 7115
Pasadena, CA 91109-7215

5/15/2007

Dear Steve,

We, the Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment, were shocked at the decision of the City Council on April 9th, to demolish the existing buildings at Desiderio and virtually kick us out of the project. What happened to the “three-legged stool” you mentioned in the previous city council meeting, March 19th? The three legs being, of course, affordable housing, the Arroyo Center and open space. Without us in the picture, the proposal loses an important educational benefit to the neighborhood and to the public.

With the city’s present proposal, there will be very little active public benefit and the immediate neighbors have only slightly better sight lines to the bridge. Ironically, however, most of the immediate neighbors want to retain some portion of the existing buildings and want us to occupy them. I believe the West Pasadena Resident’s Association (WPRA) was only able to pass its eleventh-hour resolution to demolish the existing buildings by spreading rumors, half truths, and downright lies about our organization. One untruth printed the WPRA Spring Newsletter, authored by Ann Sheid, was that the Arroyo Center would “exhibit and sell art on premises,” and indicated we would provide Rose Bowl parking – both untrue.

But what disappointed us the most, Steve, was that the City Council didn’t seem to take seriously the environmental importance of saving part of the Desiderio building for adaptive reuse, nor did they seem to take seriously the staff’s recommendation. The criticisms we did hear about the staff’s recommendations, was that the space was too crowded.

5/21/2007
6.D

If that is true, three better alternatives would be:

- If the main Desiderio was cut down 75 feet, and the nine housing units were aligned along the eastern border as seen in scheme D2, the closest home to the building would be approximately 110 feet away.
- If the building were cut down 100 feet and the houses realigned, the closest home would be more than 130 feet away and create tremendous sight lines to the bridge and a feeling of much more open space.
- Also, if the building were cut down 100 feet, the courtyard could be re-installed with a road completely encircling the nine houses with no garages separated from the house's property lot (see scheme E)

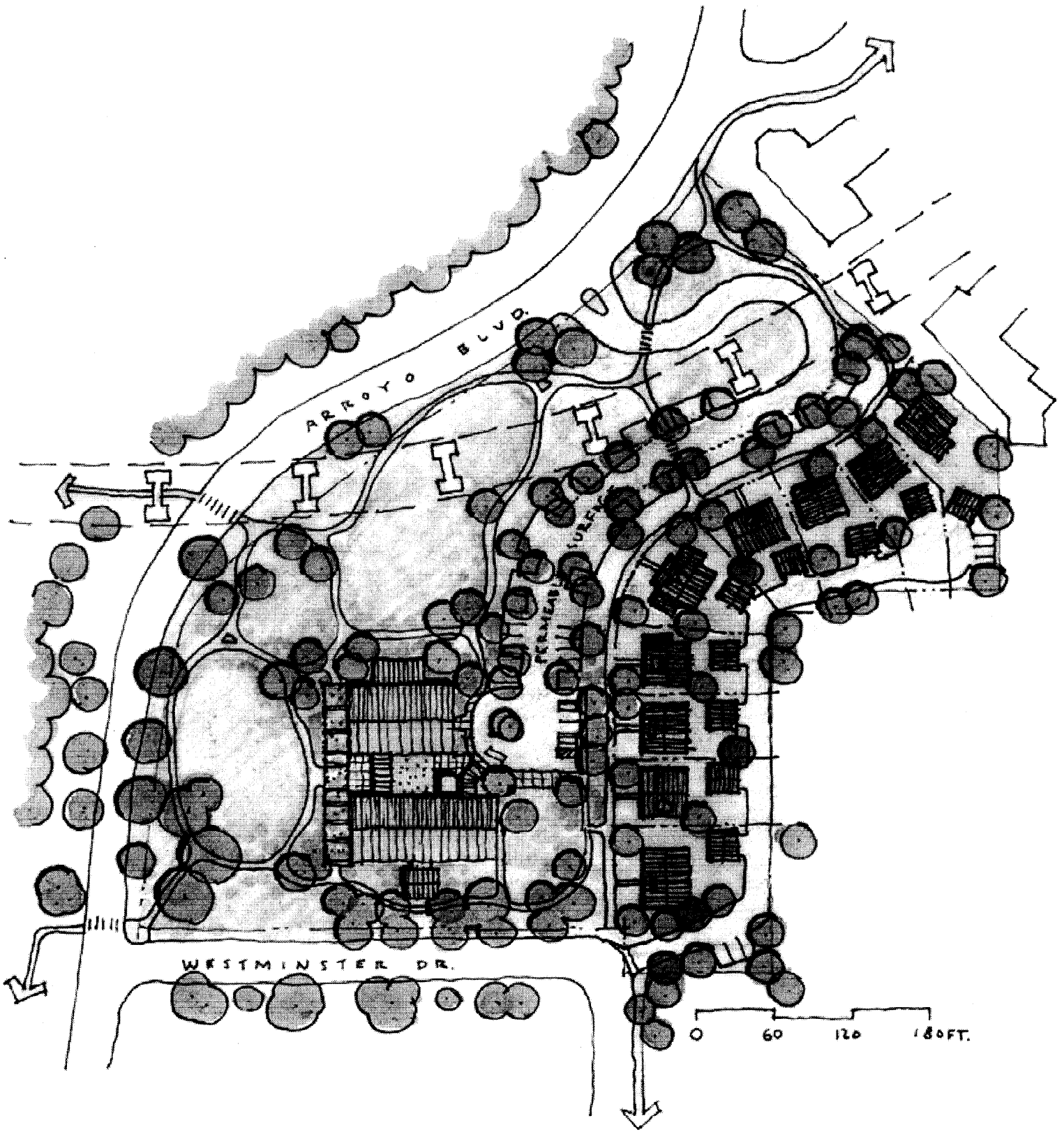
Please let me know if we can meet to discuss these very pressing concerns. We are having a meeting to discuss the Desiderio Project on Thursday night from 6-8 p.m. on the second floor of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (490 E. Union). We would love it if you could join us and view our *96th Annual Gold Medal Juried Exhibition* before it closes Monday.

Thank you.

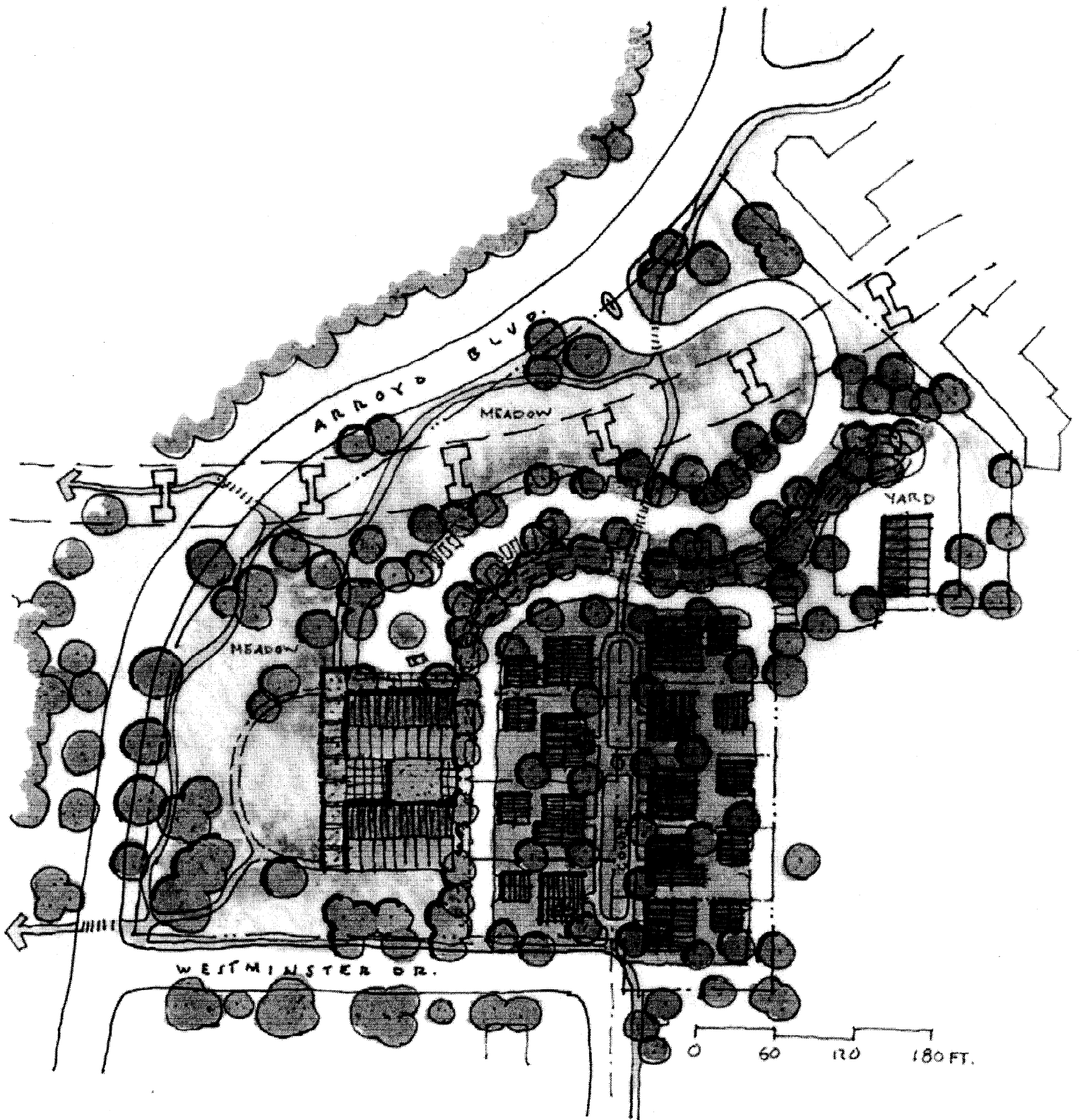
Sincerely,

Peter Adams

cc: Mayor Bogaard
City Council Members
City Officials



SCHEME D.2 RTKL MARCH 30, 2007



SCHEME E

Jomsky, Mark

From: Elaine Adams [info@americanlegacyfinearts.com]

Sent: Sunday, May 20, 2007 8:11 PM

To: MartynBelmont@aol.com

Subject: To be sent to Mark Jomsky for public record

We continue to be outraged and concerned that the immediate neighbors, the Pasadena community at large, and the local cultural institutions have been ignored. The City failed to conduct an environmental impact review of their action to adopt a plan that requires removal of a historic structure. I attach my cover letter explaining the reason for forming the Citizens for Public Use of the Arroyo along with our statement, which was previously sent to you.

Martyn Belmont

Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment

May 21, 2007

The City's recommendation to the Department of Defense mischaracterizes the situation concerning the Desiderio site. "The recommended plan includes a community building intended to house arts and environmental activities in celebration of the Arroyo Seco natural environment. ... It was originally designed with the intention of housing a specific non-profit arts and environment organization who is no longer interested."

It is not from lack of interest that the Arroyo Center is not participating. It is because the City adopted an unworkable plan that requires the construction of an expensive new building, instead of the adaptive reuse of an historic building that is already perfect for the purposes of the Arroyo Center for Art and the Environment.

If the City insists on their recommended plan for use of the Desiderio Army Reserve Base, they are not including a broad public use of the site that would fully take advantage of this unique site in Pasadena.

Peter Adams

President
California Art Club

Elaine Adams

Executive Director
California Art Club

Tim Brick

Managing Director
Arroyo Seco Foundation

05/21/2007
6.D. 7:30 P.M.