



MISSION CANYON ASSOCIATION

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

www.missioncanyon.org

Winter 2011



New Master Plan for Natural History Museum

by Jean Yamamura

It only took a few slides of chewed up and crumbling walls and roofs to convince viewers that the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History was in dire need of a makeover. The event was last April's Mission Canyon Association Annual Meeting and the presenter was Karl Hutterer, the Museum's executive director. Since this meeting, more concrete plans have developed for the layout of the new campus, as shown in the map to the right. The Museum appeared before the City of Santa Barbara's Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Committee, and subsequently received approval for up to 57,000 square feet in "preliminary economic development" from the City Council.

The Museum is one of the half-dozen anchoring institutions in the Mission area, and major changes to its campus and traffic flow will affect all of us. To their credit, the Museum directors continue to ask for and act on feedback to their plans, which are still not yet set in stone. Revisions to the current plan will arrive in April, but at the moment, the following are some of what is expected to stay, go, and change.

First, the Museum's stated goals guide the Master Plan to such an extent that they are worth repeating here:

- restore the riparian corridor along Mission Creek
- restore, conserve, and manage the woodland along Mission Creek
- rehabilitate and restore the historic architectural core
- manage storm water runoff from the site into Mission Creek
- achieve LEED Platinum standard
- deepen and integrate the Museum experience with nature
- improve the education facilities
- ensure the long term preservation of our irreplaceable archive of nature
- upgrade the research facility to state-of-the-art
- upgrade the buildings to comply with codes and professional museum standards
- improve visitor amenities



TOP: Museum of Natural History's new master building plan. BOTTOM: Museum's present building configuration.

SOURCE: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

- simplify visitor circulation and provide universal access
- reduce vehicular traffic impact on neighborhood
- create a safe pedestrian corridor
- provide better fire protection for the Museum and the neighborhood

The "architectural core" to be rehabilitated contains historic structures such as the Mammal, Cartwright (insect), and Gould (Chumash) halls, Fleischmann Auditorium, and the original central courtyard buildings.

SBMNH Plan (cont. p.2)

SBMNH Plan (cont. from p.1)

As Hutterer described it, the surrounding buildings, which are not necessarily new, were added on like accretions on a barnacle. The end result was to turn the museum inward, into a maze that often trapped its visitors, forming a blind expanse of walls to the creek and all the nature to be experienced there. Opening the campus to face the creek is one intent of the plan.

Broder Hall, across the creek, is also slated for removal to allow a 50-foot creek setback and better storm-water management. The asphalt in the entire 50-foot creek-side swath is to be replaced with a pervious surface. The most ambitious plan for the creek area might be the fire road, also paved with a pervious surface, to circle the entire new campus. Currently, the creek side of the museum cannot be accessed by fire trucks.

Students and visitors may have a longer walk, but it's likely to be a pleasant one, to reach the new galleries and classrooms that are envisioned to rest beyond, or west, where the current classrooms and planetarium are situated. That puts them squarely atop

the MacVeagh House (where MCA holds its monthly board meetings), which will be moved.

In all, the preliminary concept Plan adds about 42,000 square feet, though much of that is to go underground where the Museum plans to store its extensive collections. In terms of building footprint, that increases 11 percent, or from 66,100 square feet to 73,209 square feet. About 57 percent of the new square footage ends up being used for such needs as bathrooms, hallways, elevators, mechanical systems, and so on.

For all the extensive changes conceived for the Museum, Hutterer stated they had no intention of increasing attendance, that indeed their studies showed that their attendance was as high as it could be given current city size and tourism projections. And how long would this revamp take? From 10 to 20 years, possibly.

A larger issue that the Museum, together with a number of neighborhood groups including MCA, is bravely tackling is pedestrian access. In the case of the Mission area, that doesn't just mean widening a sidewalk. For one thing, there are hardly any side-

walks. It means moving utility poles and fire hydrants, widening Mission Canyon Road, rerouting historic stone walls, and involving private property owners and about 25 governmental and quasi-governmental groups ranging from Fish and Game to the Pearl Chase Society. This endeavor needs all the luck and patience its proponents can muster. A safe pedestrian walkway from the Rose Garden to the Museum would be invaluable to runners, walkers, school kids, and visitors.

So far, the loudest questions from onlookers have to do with the routing of traffic toward the Museum. Current plans make the block of Puesta del Sol Road at the Museum a two-way street (it is currently one way), which might mean a left-turn lane would be needed on Mission Canyon Road. Roadway, traffic, and pedestrian constraints aside, the melange of city and county agencies involved make this doubly difficult.

The Museum has tentatively scheduled two meetings to go over its latest plans on April 14 and 16. To get on the mailing list, please call the Museum at 682-4711, ext. 178.

Tooting Our Horn for Dues

By Laurie Guitteau and Alastair Winn

What's in it for me? That's the first question that pops into our heads when someone asks us for money. Well, we want you to know that your \$35 in Mission Canyon Association dues is one of the best bargains around. That \$35 per family benefits you directly.

Brush Day is the first benefit that comes to mind. Each year, resident members are encouraged to clear potential fire fuel by bringing it at no charge to Rockwood Woman's Club at the bottom of the canyon. MCA even arranges free hauling for those who lack resources to do it themselves. At Rockwood, volunteers help unload the brush, and MarBorg takes it to the dump gratis, where the County waives its fees. For some residents, the value of this free service is over \$500. Brush Day encourages people to clear their properties, which makes the canyon safer for everyone. Every year, more than 30 tons of fuel has been removed from the canyon on Brush Day.

This past year a weather station was installed in Mission Canyon to let the fire department and residents monitor our microclimate. Station 15 and Santa Barbara County Fire Chief Michael Dyer can now know more precisely when to call "red flag" alerts here and take extra precautions with visitors com-

ing into our canyon. The weather station was purchased with grant money that MCA worked to obtain, and the electricity and cable costs are donated by a board member, but there are ongoing repair and maintenance costs in addition to hours of volunteer time.

Another fire safety measure being added this year is a Webcam that will be mounted on the Mesa so that any fire activity in the foothills can quickly be spotted before it spreads. Again, the equipment was paid for with grant money, but insurance and maintenance costs come from MCA dues.

Your dues purchase the Mutt Mitts you see at the Tunnel Trailhead, in Rocky Nook Park, and along Montrose—a small price for cleaner trails, neighborhoods, and, ultimately, a cleaner creek and ocean.

This newsletter comes to you three or four times a year with what we hope is relevant information about important issues in our canyon. Though all the work on the newsletter contents is voluntary and free, the costs of paper, printing, and postage are not.

This year's dues also go toward keeping our evacuation routes and the canyon safer with the help of Fire Safe Council grants that an experienced grant writer has been hired to help us obtain. Mission Canyon is recognized as a unique leader in the county because of MCA's comprehensive fire management plan. These efforts have led

to wider streets, rational parking and traffic enforcement, goats eating unwanted underbrush from hillsides, and better drainage. A professional grant writer will give us a better chance at securing the scarce but necessary funding to continue the canyon's fire safety projects.

At the same time we are actively pursuing grant money, your MCA Board is working with Supervisor Salud Carbajal to assess the feasibility of a fire assessment district similar to the City of Santa Barbara's for a permanent source of funding to manage the vegetation overgrowth.

The MCA Board actively participates in land use issues that could have an impact on the canyon. Through MCA's successful advocacy efforts, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden's new Conditional Use Permit included increased measures to protect Canyon safety and preserve its rural ambiance. Noise, light, and fencing were successfully addressed, as well as the important issue of limiting how many people—particularly visitors unfamiliar with the canyon's winding roads—would populate the canyon at any one time.

MCA is currently working with CalTrans to install a crosswalk on Foothill Road. Parking Committee volunteers are working with

Dues (cont. p.3)

Dues (cont. from p.2)

the CHP and County Roads to resolve the very serious parking issues that affect everyone's safety, especially in Mission Canyon Heights. MCA hikers, bikers, and horse riders are represented during untold hours at Trails Task Force meetings to encourage cooperative efforts regarding safety issues and the many trail users, especially during periods of high fire risk.

Those of you who suffered losses from the fire know that your Mission Canyon Association acted quickly to provide resources and support after the fire. When emergencies arise, dues make it possible for MCA's volunteers to act quickly to aid those in need.

Of Mission Canyon's approximately 1,200 homeowners, only about a third pay Association dues. But everyone benefits from the work of the MCA.

You can see that your MCA volunteers don't just sit around and wish for solutions. There is real work to do, and it gets done. We hope that at some point each canyon resident will have time to participate, and absolutely invite everyone to do so, but no matter how busy we are, we all participate when we pay our dues. \$35 for a year's worth of work (and it's a lot of work), all to make our lives safer. What a great deal.

Dues statements were mailed in January. If you haven't sent your check in yet, do it now and mail it to:

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The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of Lee Anne Dollison, graphics, production and photography.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clean Up Our Gardens

Many of the things learned from the Jesusita Fire have been added to the Mission Canyon Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), a document written by MCA and County Fire that several communities in our county are using as a model to develop their own.

One paragraph in the CWPP stood out:

In spite of the Jesusita Fire, until the residents within Mission Canyon realize the danger that the over planting of ornamental vegetation creates, many structures within the canyon remain at extreme risk. During post-fire studies of both the Jesusita and the Tea Fire, it was determined that ornamental vegetation and the proximity of vegetation to structures were significant causes of structure loss and fire propagation. The potential for fire spread from the chaparral into the community due to ember propagation or direct flame impingement is significant. Because of the dense construction in some portions of the community and the lack of clearance, structure-to-structure ignitability is possible and quite probable in a wind-influenced fire.

This is a sobering reminder that we all need to take a careful look at our gardens and properties, and reduce the vegetation that could endanger us and our neighbors. MCA's annual Brush Day, will be held on Saturday, June 11. Mark your calendar now and plan your gardening.—LG

Barking and Parking

Now neighbors!!!

Even though we live in an idyllic setting, we still have neighbors, some closer than others. And sound can travel far. MCA has heard reports of barking dogs that are a serious nuisance. If you have an animal and you leave it at home all day, please take measures to be sure your dog is not barking for hours on end. It's not fair to the dog or your neighbors.

Parking is another neighborly issue. Especially in Mission Canyon Heights, parking is scarce. Officer Rob Stuva of the CHP attended MCA's January board meeting and talked with us about his role as a community resource officer. He hopes to work with us to resolve some of the most serious parking issues, but he is the only community resource officer between Ventura and Gaviota. The Mission Canyon Community Plan, which is beginning the final steps toward adoption, addresses the parking issue, and the County

has some specific plans, but funding, as always, is a problem. Meanwhile, please be considerate of your neighbors. See if you can make parking spaces on your property to get cars off the street. It's not just a matter of neighborliness; it can be a matter of life and death in an emergency.—LG

Jesusita Fire Update

You know from dodging all those construction trucks up and down the roads that more and more people are starting to rebuild. According to Petra Leyva of the Santa Barbara County Department of Planning and Development, 32 building permits have now been issued. We also have confirmed and unconfirmed reports of several people who have decided to sell and not rebuild, and still others who continue to struggle with their insurance companies. Hopefully, those cases will be resolved soon.

Per Santa Barbara County Fire Department, over 40 residents have had address changes though they have not moved. Several private lanes and roads were renamed and renumbered in the hope that firefighters from out of town will have an easier time locating addresses in the next fire. The new roads are Las Canoas Ridge Way, Memory Lane, Palomino Ridge Lane, and Tunnel Ridge Lane.

Another interesting tidbit that your newsletter correspondents discovered in updating the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is that the median price of homes here in Mission Canyon has dropped from \$1.2 million in 2006 to \$850,000 today. You might want to reassess your home and tax basis. Anyone who has even lost a garage in this fire will tell you that rebuilding costs for most lots here in the canyon are very high. The vast majority of fire victims are discovering that they do not have enough insurance coverage to enable them to rebuild as they wish. Home values have dropped, but construction costs have not. On top of this, building rules are much more rigorous and very expensive. Make sure you are adequately covered.—LG

New Webmaster

Recent visitors to *MissionCanyon.org*, MCA's home website, may have noted a fresh look to the page. Thanks to our new Webmaster, Alex Feldwinn, the site will soon be able to interactively make cappuccino and locate lost keys. No, just kidding. But the site will offer more frequent updates on the latest in MCA activities, canyon issues, and helpful links. Thank you, Alex!—JY



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Your MCA Newsletter Winter 2011

Natural History Museum
Mapped Out

MCA Toots Its Horn (page 2)

Dates for Mission Canyon Community Plan Draft EIR

The timetable is not yet certain for the Mission Canyon Community Plan's next phases, but will happen during the months of February through April. The sequence of events are as follows:

- Draft EIR (Environmental Impact Report) released for the Mission Canyon Community Plan (MCCP).
- For 45 days following the Draft EIR release, the public may review and comment in writing on the document.
- Midway through the public comment period, there will be a public hearing.

For the official announcement regarding dates, times, and locations, see: http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/mission_canyon/missioncanyon.php.

C A L E N D A R

- Feb. 2** **Annual State of the Museum Address.** 7:30-8 a.m. continental breakfast; 8-9 a.m. address by Dr. Karl Hutterer. Fleischmann Auditorium, S.B. Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol.
- March 1** **MCA Board of Directors Meeting.** All residents welcome. 7:30 p.m. MacVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History.
- March 4** **Jeffrey Gordon Smith Landscape Architecture.** Lecture and book-signing. S.B. Botanic Garden. 5:30-7:30 p.m. 682-4726.
- April 5** **MCA Board of Directors Meeting.** All residents welcome. 7:30 p.m. MacVeagh House, S.B. Museum of Natural History.
- April 14 & 16 (tentative)** **Update on Museum of Natural History Expansion Plans.** Farrand Hall, S.B. Museum of Natural History. Please call Museum at 682-4711, ext. 178 for latest update on dates and times.
- April 19** **MCA Annual Meeting.** 6:30 – 7 p.m. social time, 7 p.m. meeting. Fleischmann Auditorium, S.B. Museum of Natural History.
- April 30** **Fire Following: Longer Legacies.** Hike Alisos Loop of Los Padres National Forest (Santa Ynez) with Bruce Reed, SBBG arborist and nursery manager, to view effects five years after Zaca Fire. 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. 682-4726.
- May 21** **Butterflies Alive.** Returns to the S.B. Natural History Museum. Interested in volunteering? Call Rebecca at 682-4711, ext. 107.
- June 11** **MCA Brush Day.** S.B. Woman's Club parking lot, Rockwood. For MCA members only. Dues accepted at the parking lot (\$35). Residents using contractors, please come to Rockwood with the first load to verify residence. Volunteers welcome. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.