



PRINCIPAL PLANNERS  
SUZANNE ELLEDGE • LAUREL F. PEREZ

16 November 2010

Santa Barbara City Council  
City of Santa Barbara  
630 Garden Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**RE: 2559 Puesta del Sol –Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History – Master Plan  
Community Priority Request**

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, we are pleased to submit this letter requesting a dual designation allocation of Community Priority and Economic Development floor area for your consideration.

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History – Mission and Master Plan

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's (the Museum) mission includes reaching out to its communities and delivering education that connects its visitors to the unique environment of Santa Barbara in which it operates. As a steward of the natural world, the Museum is very passionate and dedicated to its role.

The Museum's goals for the future campus are to integrate with the site's natural setting, embrace the specific history of its place, and embody a model of sustainability. The master planning effort has been comprised of a comprehensive assessment of needs for this institution that has served Santa Barbara for almost 100 years; as a result of this effort, the Museum will be able to continue to serve the community for the next 50-100 years.

General Site Background

The Museum grounds are composed of five parcels encompassing approximately 17 net acres of land. Two of the five parcels are developed with residential structures and two of the western properties are located in the County of Santa Barbara's jurisdiction.

Since the inception of the Museum, all structures have been altered to some degree and/or received additions. However, during the last decade the majority of Museum

construction has focused on repair and maintenance. New construction has consisted of the installation of a temporary Butterfly exhibit biannually and a small raptor facility, which received temporary use permits in 2008 and 2009 respectively and were determined to be in substantial conformance with the Museum's existing Conditional Use Permits.

#### Master Planning Process

Over the course of the last three years, the Museum has been in the process of developing a Master Plan and has consulted with various City departments to determine applicable regulations and code requirements, conducted neighbor and HOA outreach, including newsletters and meetings, and has assembled the project team which includes an extensive list of technical consultants.

The Museum can no longer function sustainably as an institution without expanding its facilities. The current collection of buildings on the Museum campus consists of structures with construction dates that range from the 1920s to the 1990s. Many of these structures do not meet contemporary building codes in terms of universal accessibility, nor do they provide adequate visitor services amenities, such as restrooms. The Museum's galleries do not meet contemporary institutional standards for exhibit facilities, and its temporary exhibition gallery is not large enough to accommodate many travelling shows. Additionally, there is not adequate classroom space to support the Museum's highly successful education programs.

Further, the Museum's current facilities are not themselves sustainable in terms of functionality and design. The existing buildings do not reflect the commitment of the institution to sustainability and the stewardship of the natural environment. For example, structures encroach upon the banks of Mission Creek, large areas of the site are paved with asphalt, and there is no campus-wide storm water management strategy. Indoor spaces are served by multiple and inefficient mechanical systems and the aging buildings are suffering from termite and water damage, which routinely prompt prompt expensive and unplanned repairs.

On July 21, 2010, the Master Plan vision was presented at a joint hearing to the Historic Landmarks and Planning Commissions. Both Commissions expressed positive and encouraging comments and communicated their desire to see further development of the Master Plan concepts. The Museum and the project team continue to meet regularly to refine the Master Plan and are working toward a subsequent joint HLC/PC hearing in January 2011 and commencement of its formal application process mid-year.

### Proposal

The total floor area for the proposed Master Plan is approximately 135,000 square feet (gross) and 128,105 square feet (net). The existing campus has a total floor area of approximately 82,000 square feet (gross) and 71,036 (net). In accordance with municipal code section 28.87.300, the difference between the existing and proposed net floor area (in this case 57,069 square feet, rounded down to 57,000) is subject to the provisions of Measure E. The Museum qualifies as both a Community Priority and Economic Development project as defined in the municipal code and we therefore respectfully request a dual designation allocation of 57,000 square feet. Approximately 35% of this floor area ( $\pm$  20,000 square feet) is dedicated to support functions such as restrooms, janitors' closets, mechanical rooms, electrical rooms, etc.

### Community Priority and Economic Development Justification

The guiding principles of the Museum are (1) To inspire an awe for nature and a thirst for discovery – to make science fun and accessible, (2) To promote sustainability and to acknowledge the preservation of the Earth's natural systems as an urgent priority and collective responsibility, and (3) Connecting our communities by providing a community resource using a full range of the human experience to reach and connect people of all ages, backgrounds, transcending geographic, economic and cultural boundaries.

The guiding principles and goals of the Museum are aligned with both the intent and purposes of a Community Priority and Economic Development project as set forth in the municipal code. A Community Priority project must be found to meet a "present or projected need directly related to public health, safety or general welfare." The municipal code also defines general welfare as a community priority project which has a broad public benefit, for example, a museum, and which is not principally operated for private profit (the Museum is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization). An Economic Development project is defined as a project that will strengthen the local or regional economy and one that will provide new recreational, education, or cultural opportunities for City residents and visitors.

The Museum benefits the community in many tangible and intangible ways. The project meets the foregoing criteria given that for almost 100 years, the Museum has provided an opportunity to experience and learn about our natural environment to a broad cross section of the community and the region. Among others, the Museum creates new knowledge about our environments through its scientific research; it provides critically important educational services to about 30,000 K-12 students

annually; it contributes to the conservation and restoration of local environments; and it provides cultural stewardship services

The proposed plan includes the following components to further improve public safety and further protect the site's natural resources:

- An emergency fire access road which loops around the built areas of the main parcel providing full access to emergency vehicles serving to protect property which stands between the residences in Mission Canyon and the historic core of the City of Santa Barbara.
- Restoration of the riparian corridor along Mission Creek and an improved storm water management system which will facilitate the overall health of the creek and its inhabitants in this critical stretch.
- The restoration and enhancement of an existing oak and sycamore woodland, furthering the density and health of our urban forest.

The Museum also provides some very concrete economic benefits for the community and the State. Among them are:

- The Museum's annual budget of about \$5 million is spent almost exclusively on local employment and the purchase of goods and services from the local economy.
- The Museum employs the equivalent of approximately 70 fulltime employees who contribute to the economy through their household spending and tax payments.
- The Museum's diverse and rich program support local tourism by extending stay time of visitors.
- The Museum is a critical provider of high quality science education, building the strength of our next generation work force.
- As one of Santa Barbara's premier cultural institutions, the Museum adds to the high quality of life in our community and is demonstrably used by local employers in recruiting top level employees to Santa Barbara.

In conclusion, the Museum's existing spaces do not adequately meet its needs. As a central component of its long range plan, the Museum is rethinking its campus comprehensively with the goal of providing improved visitor experience in

adequately sized and universally accessible buildings on a sustainably-designed and managed site. In order to accomplish this goal, and to continue to sustain itself as a valuable community resource, the Museum needs to expand its facilities.

On behalf of the applicant and project team, we thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

**SUZANNE ELLEDGE**  
**PLANNING & PERMITTING SERVICES**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trish A.", written over a faint, illegible background.

Trish Allen, AICP  
Senior Planner