



**City of Santa Barbara**  
Community Development Department

**Memorandum**

**DATE:** August 15, 2007

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Michael Berman, Project Planner *MBS*

**SUBJECT:** Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens Vital Mission Plan Draft  
Environmental Impact Report

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**Purpose**

As you may be aware, County projects within the City's Sphere of Influence are routed to the City for review and comment. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Vital Mission project was recently completed and given to the Planning Staff for review. Due to the proposed size of the project, the likelihood of significant environmental impacts as identified in the DEIR, and the potential for impacts to City residents, the Planning Staff felt that the DEIR should be brought to the Planning Commission for review and discussion. The DEIR was provided to members of the Planning Commission previously.

Planning Staff has drafted a letter from the Planning Commission to the County case planner for the project (Exhibit B). The purpose of the letter is to provide input to the County staff as to whether or not the analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the project contained in the DEIR is adequate.

Planning Staff has concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts in the areas of Wildland Fire/Emergency Evacuation, Traffic, Water Service, Sewer Service, and Water Quality.

**Project Description**

The proposed project site is approximately 78 acres in size, and is located in Mission Canyon in unincorporated Santa Barbara County. The project is located north of Foothill Road on the east and west sides of Mission Canyon Road. The site is near to the City boundaries and is not clearly visible from most public vantage points within the City.

Much of the site is already used as a botanic garden that operates under a Conditional Use permit within the County. The project would expand the area that would be used by the project from 65 acres to 78 acres. The proposed project includes approval of: a

Revised Conditional Use Permit, Development Plan Approval, a rezone of two parcels from Single Family and Agriculture zones to a Recreation zone, and a General Plan amendment from residential and agriculture land use designations to Recreation/Open Space designation.

**Building Demolition/Relocation:** There are 30 existing structures on the site including approximately 40,082 square feet (sf) of floor area. Seven buildings, including two residences, with a total floor area of 7,917 sf would be demolished. Three existing structures including a cottage, and two sheds would be relocated on the site.

**New Structures:** Twenty-two new structures with a floor area of 45,699 sf are proposed. Total proposed project floor area would be 77,798 sf. The project would result in a net increase of 37,716 square feet of structures. This would include 14,225 square feet of new structure for 8 new employee residences (4 existing), 6,593 sf for plant propagation, and 17,625 sf for conservation, research and education.

**Parking and Access:** Parking and access would be modified to provide 119 parking spaces (116 spaces currently exist) for an increase of three parking spaces and a large vehicle turnaround. The access road east of the Mission and Hansen sites would be paved and rerouted.

**Employees:** The project would expand the number of employees from 32 full time, 15 part time, one intern, and 31 instructors to 37 full time, 24 part time, four interns, and 32 instructors. Twenty volunteers would continue to be utilized. Project staff levels would increase by 5 full time, 9 part time, three interns and one instructor.

**Educational Opportunities:** The project would increase the number of daytime classes offered at the site from up to 90 classes (225 sessions) to up to 100 classes (250 sessions) with attendance per class increasing from up to 20 persons to up to 22 persons. Nighttime courses would increase from up to 35 classes (90 sessions) to 40 classes (100 sessions). Master Gardener, Docent Training, and Lecture series classes would remain as they are, except that there would be an increased attendance of 55 people at the 7 sessions (a 55 person increase).

**Special Events:** The DEIR is not very clear on what increases are associated with special events. The DEIR summary indicates there would be an increase in attendance of up to 200 people per event and would occur up to eight times a year, an increase of four times a year.

**Grading:** An estimated 12,593 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 7,646 cy of fill and export of approximately 4,947 cy of soils is proposed. A trail would be extended into the 13 acre Cavalli site. Most of the project site would be used for trails, plantings and gardens.

**Water and Sewer Service:** Expanded water and sewer service would use City of Santa Barbara wastewater treatment facilities and domestic water supplies. The project would tie into existing lines on Mission Canyon Road, near the project site.

### **Next Steps**

After this meeting, the Planning Commission's comments will be added to the letter and sent to Alex Tuttle, the Santa Barbara County case planner for the project. In addition, the letter will be copied to the County Planning Commission, who will ultimately certify the EIR. The public review period will close on September 7, 2007.

### Exhibits:

A. Draft Letter from the Planning Commission to County Staff and Planning Commission

### cc:

Mayor and Council  
Jim Armstrong, City Administrator  
Steve Wiley, City Attorney  
Paul Casey, Community Development Director  
Santa Barbara County Planning Commission





# City of Santa Barbara

## Community Development Department

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August 15, 2007

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Mr. Alex Tuttle  
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Planning and Development Department,  
123 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara CA 93101

**DRAFT**

Subject: Comments on the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Vital Mission Plan Draft EIR (SCH# 2006041027)

Dear Mr. Tuttle,

The City of Santa Barbara appreciates the opportunity to comment on the adequacy of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Vital Mission Plan Draft EIR. Generally, the EIR appears to be well prepared. Our comments are organized according to the Department or Division that provided the comments and are provided below.

### Planning Division Comments

**Archaeology:** Archaeological monitoring is proposed only within the project site. The project would include extending utilities within existing road right-of-way. The DEIR indicates that, since the proposed improvements would be within a roadway, this would ensure that no impacts would occur. In addition, the water line would be extended a greater distance than anticipated in the DEIR. However, undisturbed archaeological resources may occur underneath the disturbed portion of the roadway and they could be impacted by proposed utility trenching. We recommend that the County extend archaeological monitoring along roadways that are archaeologically sensitive (i.e. within 300 feet of a creek or drainage or known sites) and where sewer lines and water lines are proposed unless prior ground disturbance to the level of proposed excavations can be demonstrated.

**Flooding:** Mission Creek within the City of Santa Barbara is currently unable to convey the 25-year storm without flooding adjacent areas of the City. The increase in project site runoff during the 25-year storm event, due to the project addition of impervious surfaces, should be retained on the project site. This will ensure that the project does not contribute to flooding in the City of Santa Barbara

**Water Quality:** Additional measures to reduce pollutants in runoff from project horticulture including pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers (mainly nitrogen), should be incorporated into the project to improve downstream water quality. Monitoring soil moisture content and watering only when soil moisture content is low, and use of fertilizers that are matched to the soil deficiencies to avoid excess use of fertilizer should be incorporated into the project to improve the quality of runoff from the site by minimizing excess nutrients in the fertilizer. Also, pesticides should be applied judiciously and more natural means of pest control should be considered for use first. City Staff recommends that the applicant establish an Integrated Pest Management Plan that prohibits pesticide use except in specified special circumstances.

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**Traffic:** The Draft EIR requires intersection improvements at Foothill Road and Mission Canyon Road to address capacity deficiencies at the intersection. These improvements include adding turning lanes that would widen the paved surface of the roadways. However, there are drainage ditches, hardscape, and trees in the area where the road widening would occur. The drainage facilities should be relocated or placed underground and native trees removed should be replaced.

**Fire Impacts:** The Wildland Fire planning proposed would be approved by staff after the EIR has been certified. It is not clear how this plan would reduce the cumulative and project impacts due to a wildfire and associated evacuation. The plan should be circulated for public review and comment prior to EIR certification so that it is clear or not clear if this mitigation measure would in fact be capable of reducing project impacts to less than significant levels.

### **Creeks Division Comments**

**Creek Biology:** Creeks Division Staff recommends a minimum setback of 100 feet from the top of bank for Mission Creek and Las Canoas Creek within the project area. No hard structures should be built within this 100 foot setback in order to avoid water quality impacts to the creeks. This minimum setback is recommended because the project area is located within the upper watershed of Mission Creek where more sensitive habitat occurs and must be protected. The City of Santa Barbara has several planned and partially funded multi-million dollar projects that focus on protecting and improving creek habitat for steelhead fish and other sensitive riparian species. Therefore, projects proposed in the upper watershed must demonstrate good stewardship and creek protection measures by implementing setbacks and designs that capture and treat water runoff.

**Water Quality:** The proposed project would almost double the building footprints at the Botanic Gardens. This increase in impervious surfaces and potential pollutant loads should be mitigated with water containment and treatment designs. The three proposed detention basins and oil and grit filtration systems are good measures to implement to address these impacts. However, it seems that the proposed project presents an opportunity to design and implement more above-ground, natural treatment devices, such as bioswales and/or rain gardens, that can serve as functional water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs) as well as excellent water quality treatment demonstrations to garden visitors. Only installing a couple of bioswales along the road rather than in the main garden area seems to minimize the potential for educating the public about the function and benefits of natural water quality treatment designs.

Water quality data indicates that fecal coliform levels, as well as other constituents of concern, significantly increase downstream of the Garden. One possible contributor to the degradation of the Mission Creek water quality below the Garden may be due to the use of pesticides, herbicides, and/or fertilizers. The Garden's management practices for these pollutants should be reviewed and clearly disclosed in the EIR, and best management practices should be revised and implemented to avoid their discharge and/or filtration into the storm drains or creeks.

### **Water Resources Division Comments**

The EIR contains information that has been further clarified below. Generally, the clarifications can be summarized that the City reviewed a proposal for extension of private fire service only, with no additional domestic use, for 750 gpm at 20 psi residual pressure for 2 hours during maximum day demand. The discussion below outlines where this fire connection tie-in is

allowed, and what additional measures would be required for increased fire flow or domestic usage, and clarifies comments made in the EIR about existing water pressure conditions in the area.

Page 1-5 Executive Summary. Under Water and Sewer Service – the Botanic Gardens is served by a private well and the City of Santa Barbara's municipal water system (not Santa Barbara Water District).

Page 1-31 Executive Summary. Private fire system is proposed at 750 gpm at 20 psi residual pressure for 2 hours at max day demand, not 1250 gpm as indicated in the table.

Page 1-31 Executive Summary. Proposed mitigation suggests increase water supply and pressure. The proposed fire service extension does not increase pressure on the system, only extends fire service to the Botanic Garden area

Page 1-31 Executive Summary. Reference was made to County Fire. It is the City's understanding that the private fire system proposed by Botanic Gardens meets County Fire standards for existing conditions.

Page 1-31 Executive Summary. The impact Page herein states "substandard water flows and pressure at various locations throughout the canyon." The City meets all requirements for American Water Works Association (AWWA) fire flow requirements and does not consider the flows and pressures as existing to be substandard or inadequate.

Page 1-32 Executive Summary. The proposed private fire system will increase fire protection in the area.

Page 1-40 Executive Summary PF-2. The mitigation measure indicates that "the applicant shall fund and construct any upgrades necessary to the City of Santa Barbara's existing water system..." and further outlines the extent of such improvements. The City concurs with the mitigation measure for any future expansion of water use. The plans currently reviewed by the City are for extension of a private fire system for existing uses only. Any future demands or increased fire protection will require additional system improvements, such as a 12-inch pipeline extension from the water main on Tunnel Road to the existing fire hydrant at Las Canoas and Mission Canyon Roads. The Botanic Garden shall relinquish ownership of the newly constructed main to the City, and dedicate a 10-foot wide maintenance easement at no cost to the City for the section of water main on the Botanic Garden's private property.

Page 1-41 Executive Summary. The City has supply and capacity to meet existing conditions for domestic water and fire protection. Additional demands without consideration of infrastructure improvements could possibly result in deficiencies without additional pipeline improvements. This potential increase in water use and its impacts should be discussed in the EIR.

Page 2-15 Project Description. Change "City of Santa Barbara Water District" to "City of Santa Barbara's municipal water system"

Page 2-16 Project Description. The existing proposal for private fire service expansion to include 5 new fire hydrants at 750 gpm is reviewed by the City as existing service expansion only. The City has not been involved in reviewing a Master Plan for the Garden expansion related to water

and sewer services. If the Garden proposes additional demand at a later date, there will be additional infrastructure improvements required for increased demands on the existing water pipelines. This EIR states that the water line and fire protection is considered to be processed as apart of the Vital Mission Plan. The City, as the water purveyor, has only been asked to consider extending private fire protection, not increased demand or increased fire flow protection for development. This should be considered in the EIR.

Page 4.9-2 Public Facilities. Change "City of Santa Barbara Water District" to "City of Santa Barbara's municipal water system." Change "reclaimed wastewater" to "recycled water." Change "Laurel" Reservoir "to "Lauro Reservoir"

Page 4.9-8 Public Facilities. Add to mitigation PF 2-1e last paragraph – The Botanic Garden will be required to construct water system upgrades per the direction of City of Santa Barbara Water System Staff necessary to support the Botanic Garden's proposed development and not to negatively impact the City's existing water system. The Botanic Garden shall construct a 12-inch water main that will extend from the 12-inch main on Tunnel Road, to the fire hydrant on Las Canoas and Mission Canyon Roads. The Botanic Garden shall deed ownership of the water main to the City and grant the City a no-cost maintenance easement for the section of water main on the Botanic Garden's private property.

### **Wastewater Division Comments**

Page 2-17 Water and Sewer Line Map. Where does the short stretch of "proposed water line on the Cavali Site" connect to the City's system? Show all existing water mains. What size is the proposed wastewater line? Any lines in the public right-of-way should be 8-inch at a minimum.

Page 5 Fire Protection Plan. Reference is made to the Water Supply Page and clarification made to the language presented in this page. Existing fire and water protection generally in this area is served by a hydro-pneumatic pressure zone dependent on mechanical measures to maintain pressure and flow. This zone consists of one pump with emergency back-up power. The first proposal from the Botanic Garden's agents was to tie a private fire system off of this pumped zone. The City discouraged the use of this zone due to the capacity of the pumps and dependence on mechanical measures for fire flow pressures. The proposed private fire system currently being reviewed by the City involves extension of a private pipeline on Mission Canyon Road from a gravity-fed pressure zone that is supplied water by Tunnel and El Cielito Reservoirs. It will allow for the use one fire hydrant without direct mechanical pumping measures to maintain flows of 750 gpm at 20 psi for 2 hours during maximum day demand.

Page 6 Fire Protection Plan. Reference is made to the sentence stating, "A water connection may be placed on Mission Canyon Road, which will allow the Fire Department to boost pressure to the entire on-site water system." The City is unaware what this statement is referring to. Connection on Mission Canyon Road is allowing for a connection to a gravity fed system for water flow. This will not change the water pressure characteristics.

Conditions of Approval, Land Use Permit. The City is allowing for 750 gpm fire flow without additional upgrades to water pipelines in the area for the water line extension application already submitted to the City.

The section of collection system that the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens will tie their new main into is owned by the County of Santa Barbara and maintained by the City under the terms of an

MOU. The EIR should clearly reflect this as it is currently very vague about this. It should clearly indicate that the sewers will be deeded to the County for operation and maintenance by the City. Because the City will be doing operation and maintenance, the sewers should be constructed to City standards.

All new sewer lines that will become public should be built to current City of Santa Barbara standards. The minimum size for a sewer main is 8". Public sewer mains must be in deeded easements in paved streets. Lines not located in paved streets shall be private laterals. If more owner is served by a private lateral a lateral maintenance agreement should be recorded. The Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens is considered a commercial establishment under the terms of the City's lateral inspection program and private laterals must be inspected every ten years after they reach an age of 20 years.

Septic systems are being proposed for this project but mitigation measure PF 3-1 requires the Cavelli Site portion of the project to connect to the wastewater treatment system. This is appropriate. Septic systems, particularly in developed areas such as Mission Canyon, are really only an interim approach to wastewater management, until municipal sewers and treatment facilities can be constructed. Given the proximity of a municipal sewer system and the existence of a wastewater treatment plant, connecting to the sewer is the most sustainable approach for serving this project.

### **Fire Department Comments**

Fire Department comments, following the format in Section 4 and Appendix E, will be broken down into two areas: "Requirements" and "Recommendations". The project, were it to take place in the City of Santa Barbara, would be located in the Extreme Foothill Zone as delineated in the City of Santa Barbara Wildland Fire Plan.

The Fire Department has no recent experience with commercial or institutional development in the Extreme Foothill Zone, but would first apply code requirements for such things as access and water in a manner consistent with requirements for development elsewhere in the City. We would then comment on the high fire hazard area aspects of the project site, such as high fire hazard area construction. Mission Canyon presents extraordinary challenges for development and some of our comments will apply to the overall fire safety of the canyon and residents therein. Any intensification of development of Mission Canyon increases the already challenging problems associated with a large evacuation of the area, should it become necessary, and therefore all recommended mitigation measures should be carefully considered.

#### ***Requirements:***

##### **Access:**

1. The City Fire Department requires that roads and driveways serving this type of project must be a twenty feet wide, all weather driving surface capable of supporting 60,000 lbs. The driveways must extend to within 150 feet of all exterior walls of any proposed structure. Turnarounds designed according to Fire Department standards must be located whenever a driveway exceeds 300 feet in length.
  - a. The project as designed appears to meet the basic Fire Department requirements.
  - b. The City Fire Department supports the recommendation of the DEIR that roads conform to Santa Barbara County requirements, described as 32 to 40 feet in width.

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## Hydrants

Commercial: A commercial type fire hydrant is required for this project. The hydrant must be located within 300 feet of all exterior walls by way of access. It must be provided with one (1) four inch (4") and two (2) two and one half (2 1/2") outlets and must have a fire flow in excess of 1250 gallons per minute at a residual pressure of 20 PSI.

New hydrants will need to be added to meet this requirement. The report also points out that extension of the existing fire line will not meet the County requirements, which are similar to City Fire Department requirements. The City Fire Department would not approve the project until an adequate water supply was secured.

## High Fire Hazard Construction Requirements

City High Fire Hazard Area Construction requirements are currently adopted as amendments under California Building Code Section 3703. As of January 1, 2008, they will be adopted under the 2007 California Building Code, based on the 2006 International Building Code, under Section 7A. The current high fire area construction requirements are as follows:

### Exceptions:

1. Detached accessory buildings and attached or detached patio and carport covers which are constructed entirely of non-combustible materials.
2. Decks designed with a skirt enclosure and constructed of materials which are the same as those used for exterior wall protection.
3. Patio covers, garden pergolas or open lattice shade covers constructed of minimum two (2) inch thick (nominal) materials and not exceeding 200 square feet.

### 3703.1 Exterior Walls. Exterior walls shall be constructed as follows:

1. 7/8" minimum thick stucco or;
2. 1/2" minimum gypsum board under minimum 3/4" wood drop siding or 3/8" exterior grade plywood.
3. Treated or untreated wood shingle or shake siding shall not be permitted, except on existing buildings where less than 20% of the existing shake or shingle area is being replaced due to maintenance, provided such replacement is fire retardant.
4. All exterior glass shall be double glazed unless the Chief Building Official or Fire Chief approve a limited application or acceptable alternatives.

3703.2 Roof Coverings. Roof coverings on new buildings shall be class A noncombustible in accordance with adopted UBC Standards or otherwise as may be approved by the Chief Building Official. Roof coverings shall be class A or noncombustible fire retardant materials on existing buildings and additions or repairs to existing buildings.

### 3703.3 Roof eaves, decks and other horizontal projections.

3703.3.1 Roof eave minimum requirements: 7/8" thick stucco or 1/2" gypsum board under 3/8" minimum finished wood or exposed two (2) inch thick (nominal) tongue and groove decking over minimum 3 x 6 rafters.

3703.3.2 Structural support beams and posts minimum requirements: 4 x 6 supporting roof

loads, 6 x 6 supporting floor and deck loads, joists supporting deck floors may be a minimum of two (2) inch thick (nominal) materials.

Exceptions:

- 2.1 Balconies and decks constructed entirely of noncombustible materials.
- 2.2 Balconies and decks more than eight (8) feet above grade, not attached to the ground and where the width is not more than four (4) feet and the total area is not more than 40 square feet.

3703.3.3 Balcony and deck flooring shall be a minimum of two (2) inch thick (nominal) material with spacing no greater than  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Deck flooring less than three (3) feet above grade shall have a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick solid skirt enclosure as a draft stop.

3703.3.4 Handrails and guardrails shall be a minimum of two (2) inch thick (nominal) material or non-combustible material.

3703.4 Fire extinguishing systems. Fire extinguishing systems shall not be substituted for the fire retardant roof or vertical and horizontal projection requirements.

3703.5 Ventilation openings and louvers. Ventilation openings and louvers are prohibited in soffits, between rafters, or at any other overhanging areas measured three (3) feet vertically and horizontally from any window or door opening.

3703.6 Spark Arresters. Spark arresters shall be provided on chimneys serving any fireplace, barbecue, incinerator, or any heating appliance in which solid or liquid fuel is used, and shall be made of heavy gauge wire mesh or other noncombustible material with openings not to exceed a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in any dimension.

3703.7 Alternatives or waivers. Alternatives or waivers from the High Fire Hazard District requirements shall be submitted to and approved by the Chief Building Official and the Fire Chief. Alternative methods may also be appealed to the Building and Fire Code Board of Appeals.

#### Fire Protection Systems

1. Fire Sprinklers will be required for structures over 5000 Square feet. Upon local adoption of the California Fire Code on January 1, 1008, this will include all structures.
  - a. Depending on the type and placement of the individual structure, the Fire Department may also require exterior "exposure" heads for exterior walls and eaves.

Additional construction alternatives are available that would enhance the fire resistive aspects of new structures. See recommendations below.

#### ***Recommendations***

The City Fire Department generally agrees with the recommendations of the EIR, but would add the following:

#### Defensible Space

1. In the Extreme Foothill zone, the Santa Barbara City Fire Department recommends a

minimum of 150 feet of defensible space. If slopes within the project area are greater than 30%, the City may recommend a minimum of 200 feet defensible space.

2. The City Fire Department recommends greater enforcement of current defensible space requirements for Mission Canyon property owners.

#### Evacuation Preplanning

Mission Canyon presents a unique set of challenges for evacuation in the event of a wild fire. In addition to the recommendations of the DEIR, the City Fire Department recommends greater attention to evacuation preplanning for the canyon as a part of the overall wildland fire planning. This may include an update of the 2001 Evacuation Planning Task Force study, consideration of secondary egress and the concept of "maximum occupant load" of the canyon and similar high fire hazard areas (For a discussion of that concept as it applies to Mission Canyon, see "Public Safety in the Urban-Wildland Interface: Should Fire-Prone Communities Have a Maximum Occupancy?" Thomas J. Cova, Natural Hazards Review ASCE, August 2005).

#### Landscape sprinkler systems

The DEIR recommends landscape sprinkler systems for fire protection around all structures for a distance of 100 feet. During wind driven fires these systems may not be effective and have the potential to drain the existing water system. Such systems would need to be designed with the available water supply in mind.

#### Riparian Vegetation

Depending on the condition of the riparian vegetation, it is unlikely to slow down fire spread. In a wind driven fire, these areas will funnel the wind, preheating and drying vegetation.

#### High Fire Construction

Although not required, new structures would be more easily defended if they were of Type I or Type II (noncombustible) fire resistive construction.

#### Shelter in Place

Generally, the City Fire Department does not recommend shelter in place for this area, except when no other alternative exists. In the event that a building or buildings are designated for that purpose, we recommend the type of construction listed above, combined with automatic sprinklers.

#### During Construction

Consider stopping construction operations during Extreme Red Flag Alerts to avoid potential fire starts and allow for unimpeded evacuation if needed.

#### Benefit Assessment District

If Mission Canyon were within the City of Santa Barbara, it would be within our Foothill and

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Extreme Foothill Zones under the Wildland Fire Plan. As such the canyon area, would also be a part of our Wildland Benefit Assessment District. A similar plan could be implemented in Mission Canyon, subject to approval by voters. Such a plan would have the potential to enhance vegetation management, defensible space and evacuation preplanning. Consider requiring the Garden to assist in establishing such a district.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the adequacy of this Draft EIR. Please contact Michael Berman, Project Planner at 805 564 5470 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Michael Berman, Project Planner/Environmental Analyst

Cc:

Mayor and City Council  
Planning Commission  
James L. Armstrong, City Administrator  
Paul Casey, Community Development Director  
Bettie Weis, City Planner

