



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 20, 2009

**TO:** Redwood Grove Subcommittee Members

**FROM:** Dave Brees, Special Projects Manager

**SUBJECT:** **REDWOOD GROVE NATURE CENTER RENOVATION STAFF ANALYSIS AND RENOVATION OPTIONS**

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This report is intended to provide useful information for the decision making process by identifying options and providing associated cost estimates for the improvements. Fundamental operational questions will need to be addressed prior to the selection of one of the renovation options. These questions include why we need to keep the building and what it will be used for in the future. These questions tie into the vision for the park, its programs, and the scope of this project. Key considerations for the decisions are access for users with disabilities, user parking, program noise and impacts on park neighbors, maintenance, security and other park infrastructure elements such as restrooms, teaching stations, or the Ohlone village.

The information below has been collected by staff with the assistance of professionals in the field. Costs are approximate and will likely change as a result of the refinement of the scope of the project.

Historic Resource. The Nature Center is located near the center of the City's five-acre Redwood Grove Park. The Center was originally designed as a private residence and has seen many uses over the years. The building is also known as the Halsey House and has been identified by the City Council as a local landmark. The 3,650 square foot facility is approximately 80 years old and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems have outlived their operational use. Little, if any, maintenance work has been performed on the building for the past several years.

The Halsey House has a current score of 95 on the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI). It was given Local Landmark Status by Council action in 1981. The Municipal Code requires owners of historic resource properties to perform certain duties to preserve and protect the building. These code sections are included as Attachment A. At a minimum, if the structure is to remain, it will need to be decommissioned to prevent their decay or destruction.

The structure's HRI score is currently under review. The results of this re-evaluation may have considerable impact on the range of options available for future modification to the building. Should the score remain high (85 points or higher qualifies for Local Landmark Status), it could lead the Subcommittee in the direction of building preservation. A significant reduction in the HRI score would allow for a wider variety of options, including possibly removal or replacement of the building.

Fire Code. Since the building will be used for educational programs involving children, it has an E Occupancy rating. This rating is used to determine the systems required for the building's operations. It is assumed the program capacity will not exceed 50 persons inside at one time. Additional system improvements will be required should it be desired to accommodate more than 50 people in the building. E Occupancy requirements include:

- Fire alarm system installed throughout the building.
- Illuminated exit signs.
- A minimum of two exits with one being accessible.
- Exit door hardware openable from the inside without a key or special knowledge or effort.
- Room capacity is based upon 20 square feet per person.

Environmental Concerns. The Nature Center and Staff House buildings were evaluated by environmental health professionals. Tests were conducted on both the Nature Center and the Staff House. Bulk samplings, surface tests, and fungal air samplings were collected. Moisture tests were also conducted. Below is a brief summary of the results found.

- Asbestos – Found in various floor tiles, floor tile mastic, acoustical ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, sink undercoating, dry wall and drywall joint compound, and roof penetrations.
- Lead –Detected in the paint (exterior & interior), window glaze, and kitchen ceramic tiles.
- Mold –Evidence of water damage in the Nature Center building especially in the rear wing. Evidence includes plaster collapse in ceilings, dirt above stucco line in several locations surrounding the foundation, strong sense of odor in the carpeted rooms, carpet water stains in rear room. Infrared thermograph testing was conducted and elevated readings were found in several exterior walls. Visible mold was present in the southwest corner of the storage room.
- Animal/Rodent Feces – Evidence of animal & rodent feces present in the attic, t-bar ceilings in the front two rooms, and under the house.

Building Code. Since many of the building systems are either original or have been modified by individuals throughout the years, most are in need of replacement. The structure was originally intended for use as a residence and therefore significant improvements will be required to be able to operate as a public facility. Below are the major items identified by initial inspection. A comprehensive analysis including exploratory investigations will likely reveal additional renovation needs.

- Electrical - Ground & bond main panel
  - Raise weatherhead
  - Replace knob & tube wiring
  - Ground all outlets
  - Replace interior lighting
  - Install new exterior lighting
- Mechanical – Install new HVAC system
  - Install & plumb new hot water heater to building
  - Remodel restroom to meet ADA requirements

- Structural - Replace doors & thresholds utilizing tempered glass
  - Replaster/sheet rock walls & ceilings in rear wing
  - Repair cracked foundation in rear room
  - Install new windows to meet Title 24 energy efficiency requirements
  - Address possible wood rot in floor joists, subfloor, and cripple walls
  
- Painting - Encapsulate or remove lead paint throughout the building
  - New paint exterior
  - New paint interior

We have developed five renovation options for consideration. Each option has costs and considerations associated with it. Determination of short term or long term goals should be taken into account in deciding the most appropriate option to pursue.

Option 1 - Renovate the entire Nature Center building

Cost: \$1.5-2 million

Considerations: This option provides for the complete renovation of the Nature Center. New mechanical, electrical, and operating systems would be installed throughout the building. All environmental issues would be addressed. Access and program needs would be addressed. The cost estimate may be modified significantly as a result of a comprehensive analysis and exploratory investigation. Based on square footage, the building occupancy would be 180 people.

Option 2 – Renovate the Nature Center to allow for use of the front room.

Cost: \$115,000

Considerations: Renovation work would include new doors, windows, fire exit access, electrical & lighting upgrades to the main panel and front room via exposed conduit, fire alarm, painting of interior room & exterior, environmental testing and wing decommissioning. Hillside grading and landscaping not included in the initial cost estimate. This option assumes restroom facilities would continue to be provided via a port-a-pottie service. The cost estimate is subject to increase should building conditions dictate (i.e. extensive dry rot around door thresholds). Maximum 43 person capacity.

Option 3 – Demolish/Decommission Nature Center and renovate Staff House

Cost: \$225,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action for demolition. Decommissioning cost for the Nature Center is dependant upon estimated length of closure - the longer the closure the more extensive (& expensive) the preservation effort. Staff house would need to be modified to accommodate ADA access, new roof, restrooms and address environmental issues. Living room and front bedroom would be combined to accommodate a maximum of 25 people.

Option 4 – Demolish the Nature Center and replace the facility

Cost: \$500,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action. Replacement facility cost estimate is based upon similar structure located at Pearson Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto. The Center has a 32 person capacity.

Option 5 – Demolish the Nature Center and restore the area to a natural environment

Cost: \$40,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action.

The next steps of the project will be determined by the renovation and/or demolition option approved. Based on cost estimates received, a comprehensive building analysis and exploratory investigation is \$10,000 to \$35,000 depending on the extent of the structural analysis and testing desired. Additional costs will be associated with renovation design plans subject to the option selected. Once a final option is identified, a Capital Improvement Project should be developed and Council approval secured.