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Revised Signage Letter Evaluating Proposed Museum Wayfinding Concept Designs for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Project

Introduction

This Letter Report evaluates revised conceptual Signage Program for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Master Plan was the focus of a Phase 2 Historic Structures/Sites Report, which evaluated the Master Plan project and determined the proposed project, which met the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, would have a less than significant impact to significant historic resources. Conceptual plans for Museum signage were prepared by Hunt Design in 2015. While not required by City Staff, the applicant consulted with Post/Hazeltine Associates, the historian of record for the project during the design process to ensure that the conceptual plans are consistent with the guidance set forth in the Phase 2 HSSR and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The conceptual plans prepared by Hunt Design and a letter evaluating the conceptual plans prepared by Post/Hazeltine Associates were reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission on November 18, 2015. The commission made the following comments regarding the conceptual plans:

- 1. The Commission finds the proposed signage to be incompatible with this unique building and site.*
- 2. Commissioner Shallenberger complimented the study that has gone into the proposal. He suggested that the main entry parking sign might include the international "P" symbol, as used by the City Wayfinding Signage Program.*

He encouraged the use of natural materials. He also advised reconsideration of the signage font to be more unique to the site.

- 3. Commissioner Orías is not in favor of pole signs, stating that they are inappropriate for El Pueblo Viejo.*

4. Commissioner La Voie stated that for the transparent exhibit banners in the corridors, the plastic material is not appropriate; a fabric like canvas is more suitable.

5. Commissioner Winick suggested that the applicants review the El Presidio signage program, as this site is also historic and campus-style, and its signage utilizes natural materials. He further suggested that if a banner sign is to be used, it might be placed near the entrance instead of the front of the building.

6. Commissioner Drury stated that some signs are too large and intrusive. He emphasized that the proposed red color is too aggressive, and a more recessive value should be used. He also expressed disfavor of welcome banner signs with vertical text.

7. Commissioner Veyna suggested that the existing accessible pole signs may be modified by removal of galvanization.

The revised signage plan which is the focus of this letter addresses the comments made by the HLC at their November 18, 2015 meeting.

Analysis of Conceptual Plans

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (the Standards) were applied to the project. Projects that meet the Standards are considered to have a less than significant impact to significant historic resources.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property shall be used as its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If

such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Additional guidance for guiding changes to properties within a cultural landscape can be found in: "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes." Generally, the guidelines encourage the retention of historic features, spaces and materials that characterize a resource while providing "the highest level of access with the lowest level of impact on the integrity of the landscape" (<http://www2cr.nps.gov/hh/introguid.htm>).

Programmatic Intent

Currently, the Museum's signage includes a variety of design types from traditional routed wood signs in the parking lot to Spanish Colonial Revival inspired ceramic donor plaques and more contemporary signage and banners in and around the buildings. Existing material types include glazed ceramic tile, routed wood and metal. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History proposes replacement of almost all of its existing site signage in order to enhance the visitor experience by providing a consistent and informative path of travel to the Museum historic front door and to the various exhibit halls and outdoor activity areas. This would be accomplished through the implementation of a unified vocabulary of signage, text and visual imagery that is respectful of the historic and natural setting of the Museum while allowing the institution to install signage that is unique to its identity and mission. The City of Santa Barbara's "Guidelines for the El Pueblo Viejo District", the Sign Committee's "Sign Review Guidelines" and "Santa Barbara Colors: A Guide to Painting Buildings" were consulted during the design process. The following provides an analysis of the revised plans for signage developed by Hunt Design for the project intended to address the Commissioner's comments made at the November 18, 2015 HLC meeting.

Analysis

The proposed signage plan requires exemptions for the proposed pole signs, banners signs and a small overage for the total square feet of frontage signage. The revised signage can be divided into several types including Museum identification signs, directional signs, identification signs and miscellaneous signs (see Sheet 2.0). Signage materials include wood, metal and glazed metal with screen-printed text (primarily Columbus font style) and graphics. Wood signs would be incised and/or painted (see Sheets 5-24). Signage would be mounted on walls, hung from exterior corridor ceilings and freestanding and would be located on the exterior of the buildings and within the landscape (see Sign Location Plan).

Museum Identification Signage (Sign Types 10, 11, 15, 17, and 20)

These signs are needed to direct the visitor from property entry points to the historic front

door/admissions office. They would employ a revised version of the Museum's new logo which features a whale overlaid with the text "Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History" (see Sheet 3.0). The font style for the text is inspired by the existing font style of the metal signage over the main entrance dating from the late 1950's which reads "Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History." Secondary messaging on the signs such as the word "welcome" would be Myriad Pro font (see Sheet 4). Colors for the identification signage have been revised to be softer and less intense with MP 14402 (red) substituted for the more saturated Pantone 1807 (red) for the background and Cool Gray 2c for the whale logo; these colors are integral elements of the Museum's new logo. Identification signage would include the following:

- Main ID Sign Outside of Lot: Sign at the entrance to the parking lot on Puesta Del Sol Road (Sign Type #10, see Sheet 2.0, 5.0, 6.0 and Sign Location Plan). This would be a 2.6-foot tall sandblasted wood sign panel emblazoned with the logo including the words "Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History" on a MP14402 (red) background. The sign would be supported by four-inch square wood posts with flat caps that would be four-foot, nine inches in height. The entire sign including the sign panel and wood posts would be three-foot, four-inches in length. The logo element of the sign would feature incised letters on a sand-blasted wood panel (see Sheet 7.0).
- Main ID, Street Entrance (Puesta del Sol, adjacent to Main Entrance): The applicant proposes to maintain the existing six-foot, nine-inch tall sign pole and metal wrought-iron hanging hardware while replacing the existing wood panel with a new one-foot, eight inch square sand-blasted redwood sign panel emblazoned with "Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History" over the whale logo). The background color would be MP 14402 (red) with the edge painted flat black. (Sign Type #11, see Sheets 2.0, 8.0 and Sign Location Plan)
- A second sign of the same type as the above sign would be placed on the inside of the new pedestrian entrance through the Hazard Estate wall that was approved in the 2014 Phase 2 HSSR (Sign Type #11, see Sheets 2,12,13 and Sign Location Plan).
- ID Entrance Banner, and ID Entrance Directional Banner). The ID Entrance Banner, located in the parking lot, would be composed of a 10-foot tall metal pole topped with a ball finial (Sign Type #15, see Sheet 2.0, 9.0 and Sign Location Plan). The dye sublimated fabric banner would be two-foot, six inches tall and one-foot, seven inches in width with a background colored Pantone PMS 7638C. The Museum logo would screen printed in Cool Gray 2C (whale), and the word "Welcome" would be emblazoned on a brown (PMS 2320C) background, all text is white. This sign would be located near the east end of the parking lot in a landscaped area between rows of parking stalls). The ID Entrance Directional Banner is slightly longer at three-feet than the ID Entrance Banner but would be printed with the word "Entrance" with a directional arrow (Sign Type #17, see Sheets 2.0, 10.0, 11.0 and Sign Location Plan). The sign pole would be 12-foot tall so visible over the parked cars, SUV's and vans using the ADA accessible parking spaces. This sign would be located at the entrance to the walkway from the parking area leading around the outdoor whale exhibit to the entry plaza). All of the banner poles would metal painted flat black to match the Museum's historic wrought-iron gates. The signage/banner poles would be capped by a ball style finial. The banners will result in the ability to remove several existing ground mounted signs.

- Promotional/Exhibit Banners would be placed on either side of the gated entrance to the Fleischmann Loggia (Sign Type #20 see Sheet 2.0, 13.0, 14.0, 15.0 and Sign Location Plan). The single-sided dye sublimated fabric banners would nine feet tall and three feet wide. They would be attached to the building by ¾-inch diameter support rods attached to the building by circular three-inch diameter steel plates painted flat black to match the color and texture of the adjacent Fleischmann gates. The banners would be periodically changed-out to highlight rotating exhibits and events.

Analysis

The revised scheme for the Museum's identification signage can be divided into three types, wood panel signs attached to square wood posts, canvas signage attached to metal poles and two fabric banners attached to the side of Fleischmann Auditorium. The wood panel signs attached to wood posts embody the design aesthetic of some of the campus' existing signage and are in character with the type of signage employed at the nearby Mission Historical Park and Mission Santa Barbara. Therefore, this type of signage which perpetuates the type of signage long-used in the Mission Canyon area and its environs, would not impair the semi-rural setting of the campus or the setting of the surrounding cultural landscape since the signage is modest in size, limited in number and in employs natural materials such as wood.

The proposal to install two canvas banner signs on metal poles would employ a sign type not previously found on the property (Banner signs have been used in the area of Fleischmann gates for a number of years). While the parking lot pole banners represent a change it does not necessarily imply that this change would impair the historic setting of the historic building or the surrounding cultural landscape for the following reasons: 1) the two banners will be hung from metal poles finished to emulate the appearance and color of wrought-iron; 2) the poles will be 10 and 12 feet tall and will be located in landscaped areas so that they will not project above the tree canopy or background landscaping to minimize their visual intrusiveness; 3) the canvas banners will be a natural material colored red and brown; and 4) the Museum campus is a more than seven-acre property and the insertion of two pole banners no more than 12 feet tall in or adjacent to a landscaped area already developed with hardscape, walkways and other facilities does not have the potential for substantially impairing the cultural landscape, adjacent natural features or the street frontage on Puesta del Sol.

The proposal to replace the two existing synthetic material promotional wall banners with two wall mounted canvas banners does not have the potential for substantially impacting the integrity of adjacent significant historic resources which include the main Museum building, the Hazard Estate wall and surrounding cultural landscape for the following reasons: 1) the wall banners are modest in scale and confined to the minimum required to highlight changing exhibits or programs and will help to reduce visual clutter by reducing the need for ground-mounted signage; 2) the banners will not significant architectural elements of the building; 3) the banners are represent a small portion of the main Museum building's street façade which is more than 80 feet long; 4) The banners would be located in an area that is already developed with paving, and other built improvements and not in an undeveloped area, which minimizes visual impacts to the surrounding semi-rural setting.

Consequently, the installation of the new signage described above, would not impair the setting

of the historically significant elements of the main Museum complex, MacVeagh House and cottage or the surrounding significant Cultural Landscape thereby meeting Standard 9. Standard 10 is met because the signage could be removed in the future with no impact to significant historic resources or contributing elements of the surrounding Cultural Landscape.

Directional Signage (Sign Types 12, 13, 30, 32, and 35)

Four types of exterior Directional Signage including Vehicle Directional, Pedestrian Exterior Directional, Trail Directional and a Pointer-Style Directional Style are proposed . All but the Pointer-Style sign would be composed of painted wood signs attached to square wood posts. The brown background color palette (MP13200 and MP01433) with white text/arrows/ADA graphics is consistent for each of these four types of Directional Signage.

- **Vehicle Directional:** One wood sign placed at the entrance to the parking area and one within the parking area (Sign Type #12, see Sheet 2.0, 5.0, 9.0 and the Sign Location Plan) include “Museum Parking” on a brown MP 13200 background. The sign would be composed of a one-foot, 10-inch tall wood panel by three-foot, 6-inch wide panel attached with four-inch square wood posts with flat caps. Also within the parking lot is the MacVeagh House Identification sign (Sign Type 13, see Sheets 2.0, 24.0 and Sign Location Plan). This sign would emulate the materials and design of the vehicular directional sign but would be composed of a 1-foot, five-inch tall by four-foot long painted wood panel supported by two four-inch square posts that would be three feet tall.
- **Exterior Directional Signage:** The 11 wooden pedestrian signs (two of which would be two-sided) would be five-foot, three-inch tall square wood posts with a pyramidal cap supporting a modest one-foot, six-inch by one-foot, four-inch painted wood sign panel with a background painted MP 13200 (brown). The intent of the signage is to guide visitors through the Museum property (Sign Type #30, see Sheets 2.0, 21.0 and Site Location Plan).
- **Trail Directional Signage:** Very modest in scale (Sign Type #32, see Sheets 2.0, 22 and Site Location Plan), these 11 wood signs (of which six would be two-sided) with one-foot, 10-inch tall wood post (pyramidal cap) support a four-inch by one-foot, 3-inch wood panel painted MP13200 (brown). The signs are used in the cultural landscape to direct visitors to the Museum’s “Backyard” and around the public “Woodland Loop.”.
- **Pointer Style Directional:** One “village style” pointer style sign would be located just southeast of the Educational Building (Sign Type #35, see Sheet 2.0, 20.0 and Sign Location Plan). The sign would be composed of a round metal pole capped by a ball finial painted black supporting a number of two-sided screen-painted 4 inch metal panels, mounted more than six feet in height, with a directional arrow pointing the way to various Museum exhibits and outdoor areas. The single pointer style sign will allow the removal of several existing signs.

Analysis

The revised scheme for the Museum's Directional Signage would employ wood, which is a natural material frequently employed for signage in parks, open spaces and cultural venues in and adjacent to Mission Canyon and is appropriate for the semi-rural setting. The signs are small in scale, and while 22 are proposed, they would be placed along trails and pathways on the Museum's multi-acre parcel which would preclude the potential for visually cluttering the facility or its setting. The scale and placement of the signage, which is modest in size, would not impair historic vistas towards or away from the historic buildings. The installation of wood signs that are modest in size and placed to minimize their visual obtrusiveness would negatively affect the semi-rural setting of the historic resources or the surrounding historic landscape since the number and scale of the signage is modest enough that it would not impair the existing landscape which is characterized by informal plantings of mostly native trees and shrubs set amongst outcroppings of sandstone boulders. Moreover, as noted above, the use of wood signage of this type is characteristic of other cultural venues in and adjacent to Mission Canyon including Mission Santa Barbara, Mission Historic Park and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Consequently, the installation of the new signage described above, would not impair the setting of the historically significant elements of the main Museum complex, MacVeagh House and cottage or the surrounding significant Cultural Landscape thereby meeting Standard 9. Standard 10 is met because the signage could be removed in the future with no impact to significant historic resources or contributing elements of the surrounding Cultural Landscape.

Identification Signage (Sign Type 40, 42, and 50)

Two types of exterior corridor signs are proposed, the Hanging Gallery Identification banner and the Corridor Directional wall plaques (including one hung from the ceiling).

- Hanging Gallery ID banner: The gallery banner signs would be printed, double-sided four-foot by six-inch long by two-foot tall double-sided Artex canvas banners attached to the ceiling by cable hanging systems whose rods would feature decorative finials emulating motifs found on the Fleischmann gates (Sign Type #40, see Sheet 2.0, 19.0 and the Site Location Plan). The banners would feature graphics thematically related to the exhibition halls they identify.
- Corridor Directional (hanging) sign: The single "Exit Museum Store" ceiling hung directional sign would be a double-sided, four-foot long by one-foot, seven-inch tall sign metal panel sign with a flat black border hung from black steel cables from the corridor ceiling at the location of the interior entrance to the Museum Store (this also serves as the main exit from the Museum (Sign type #42, see Sheets 2.0, 18.0 and Site Location Plan).
- Corridor Directional Wall Plaque: The ten wall panel signs would be one-foot, eight-inch tall by one-foot five-and-a-half inch wide metal panels embellished with a black border would feature screen-printed graphics and text (Sign Type #50, see Sheets 2.0, 16.0, 17 and Site Location Plan). The tops of the panels' metal frames would feature a winged egg motif in etched metal inspired by the decorative cast-concrete winged egg above the main entrance to the Museum. The panels would be attached to the wall with metal anchors. The intent of the signage is to provide wayfinding information while minimizing the visual

obtrusiveness of the signs in the context of the building's Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. While all of these signs have been located on the Sign Location Plan further detail will be provided for the exact placement of the individual sign location conditions in a later submittal. However, sufficient information is provided to evaluate the concept for this class of signage.

Analysis

After receiving comments from HLC and to ensure adherence to the EPV guidelines, the design of the banners has been revised to substitute natural canvas for a synthetic material and the banners will be opaque rather than transparent to be more traditional in appearance. The banners would be hung from metal poles with decorative wrought metal finials designed to emulate the appearance of traditional ironwork which will help ensure they do not distract from the historic architecture. Because of these changes, the revised scheme for the banners would not substantially impair the integrity of the building's historic architecture.

The previously proposed minimalist scheme for the wall signage has been replaced with a new wall plaque design that draws its inspiration from the decorative motif over the main entrance to the Museum. Moreover, the material selection has been revised to feature a frame element of etched black metal rather than a borderless plaque which was more contemporary in appearance. The revised design for the wall signage, which is more traditional in appearance, recalls, but does not copy, the building's historic decorative motifs, therefore, meets Standard 9 since it is sympathetic to the building's Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture without imitating original architectural elements. Standard 10 is met because the signage could be removed in the future with minimal impact to significant historic resources.

Miscellaneous Signage

Because the 5-acre woodland portion of the Museum grounds are open to the public, a small exterior sign is required to alert visitors they are entering the fee area of the Museum campus. Five signs (Sign Type 05, see Sheets 2.0, 23.0 and the Site Location Plan) consistent with the other Directional Signs are proposed. This sign would be a nine-inch tall by one-foot, five-inch wood sign attached to a one-foot, ten-inch tall square wood post with a pyramidal cap painted MP13200 and MP01433 (brown colors).

Analysis

This sign would employ wood, which is a natural material frequently employed for signage in parks, open spaces and cultural venues in and adjacent to Mission Canyon. The sign is small in scale, and would not impair historic vistas towards or away from MacVeagh House or MacVeagh Cottage. Moreover, as noted above, the use of wood signage of this type is characteristic of other cultural venues in and adjacent to Mission Canyon including Mission Santa Barbara, Mission Historic Park and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Consequently, the installation of this sign would not impair the property's historic resources or the surrounding significant Cultural Landscape thereby meeting Standard 9. Standard 10 is met because the signage could be removed in the future with no impact to significant historic resources or contributing elements of the surrounding cultural landscape.

Analysis of Requested Sign Exceptions

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is requesting the following exceptions from the City of Santa Barbara Sign Regulations:

- A total frontage area sign area square footage over the allowable 90 square feet (for a commercial project with a street frontage of over 100 linear feet). The total signage area being requested is 103.5 square feet, a total of 13.5 feet over the 90-foot maximum;
- A total of five Pole Signs;
- A total of nine Banner Signs (including the five Gallery ID signs in museum corridors).

As noted above in analysis of the proposed signage program the number and size of the new and replacement signage is modest in scale when measured against the size of the Museum property and has been designed in materials, placement and scale to be respectful of the institution's semi-rural setting while allowing this cultural venue to adequately guide visitors through the complex and inform the public about their changing programming. The insertion of several pole and banner signs does not have the potential for substantially affecting the historic character of the Museum or its semi-rural setting since the signage is modest in scale and with the exception of the existing pole sign on Puesta del Sol has been set well back from the street frontage within the entrance plaza, parking lot or at the rear of the main building to minimize visual impacts to the significant cultural landscape. After installation of the signage the Museum property and the surrounding cultural landscape would retain their physical and visual integrity, thereby meeting Standard 9. The signage is reversible and could be removed in the future with no impact to the physical integrity of significant historic resources, thereby meeting Standard 10.

CONCLUSIONS

This letter has reviewed the revised Sign Program proposed for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History site and determined that the conceptual plans would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and would not impair the surrounding significant cultural landscape.

8.0 LIST OF RESOURCES CONSULTED DURING THE PREPARATION OF THIS LETTER

Post/Hazeltine Associates

- 2009 Historic Structures/Sites Report for MacVeagh House, Cottage and Garage. Prepared for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.
- 2011 Phase 1 Historic Structures/Sites Report for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.
- 2012 Historic Structures/Sites Report for 653 Mission Canyon Road. Prepared for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.
- 2014 Phase 2 Historic Structures/Sites Report for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

2015 Letter Evaluating Museum Wayfinding Concept Designs for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Project. October 29, 2015.

Suzanne Elledge Planning and Permitting Services, Inc.

2014 Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History 2014 Master Plan Applicant Report. March 17, 2014.