



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Requested Board Meeting Date: November 22, 2016

Title: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum -Hidden in the Midden Project

Introduction/Background:

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) is designing and building a new 3800 square-foot underground interpretive play space located along the award-winning Desert Loop Trail. The building is located between "Life on the Rocks" and the "Coati Clubhouse Field Station". It will develop a learning/play space such as an "Alice in Wonderland" experience, wherein children will feel like they are packrats entering their nest, climbing up, around and through a number of mesh tubes and chambers, where they encounter a variety of items that packrats, as well as other animals might steal away from the open desert to hide away in a nest. The space will be designed so that it can be used as both a self-guided play and discovery space, or for more structured, guided lessons.

It will also provide a large, climate controlled space that will increase the draw of the Museum visitors during inclement weather and include space for food and gift vendors, with a small area nearby for parents to rest and watch while their children burn off excess energy. This will also be a potential event space for birthday parties.

Discussion:

This highly interactive children's experience is sure to delight ASDM visitors, give them another reason to visit the Museum, positively impact visitation, and provide the Museum with sustaining revenue, so all operations and maintenance costs are covered. The capital costs for the exhibit, is budgeted at \$800,000 and has been completely underwritten through private donations. Due to being built in-house, this saves Pima County money.

Conclusion:

A new children's interactive exhibit will be open to the public at the Desert Museum. The project cost is budgeted at \$800,000. The exhibit will be built with donor funding at no cost to Pima County in its design, construction, operation and maintenance.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approving the addition of this new year-round, children's participatory, educational exhibit at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum that will be open to the public attending the Museum regardless of the weather; designed, built and paid for by the ASDM with no additional cost to their visitors.

Fiscal Impact:

ASDM staff believe this new exhibit will generate new and repeat visitors to the Museum during good or inclement weather. Additionally, the exhibit will be a revenue generator as visitors will be able to buy food and gifts at a nearby food and gift vendor area or plan their children's birthday parties.

Board of Supervisor District:

Board of Supervisor District:

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Department: Attractions and Tourism

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Department Director Signature/Date:

Thomas R. Muller 11/9/2016

Deputy County Administrator Signature/Date:

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County Administrator Signature/Date:

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HIDDEN IN THE MIDDEN

Project Overview

Hidden in the Midden (The Midden) will be located in a 3800 square-foot underground space that is located along the award-winning Desert Loop trail, an area that highlights and interprets the Arizona Upland desert scrub portion of the Sonoran Desert region. The building is located between *Life on the Rocks*, and the *Coati Clubhouse* field station. The structure that will house the exhibit was built earlier, due to construction accessibility of the location. *The Midden* will provide us with an interactive learning-at-play space, which will appeal to children and families, afford us the opportunity to interpret a variety of natural history topics, ranging from packrats and commensalism to the fossil record and climate change. It will also provide us with a large, climate-controlled space that will increase the draw of the Museum to visitors during inclement weather and will include space for food and gift vendors, along with a small area for parents to sit and watch their children at play, as well as (potential) event space for birthday parties.

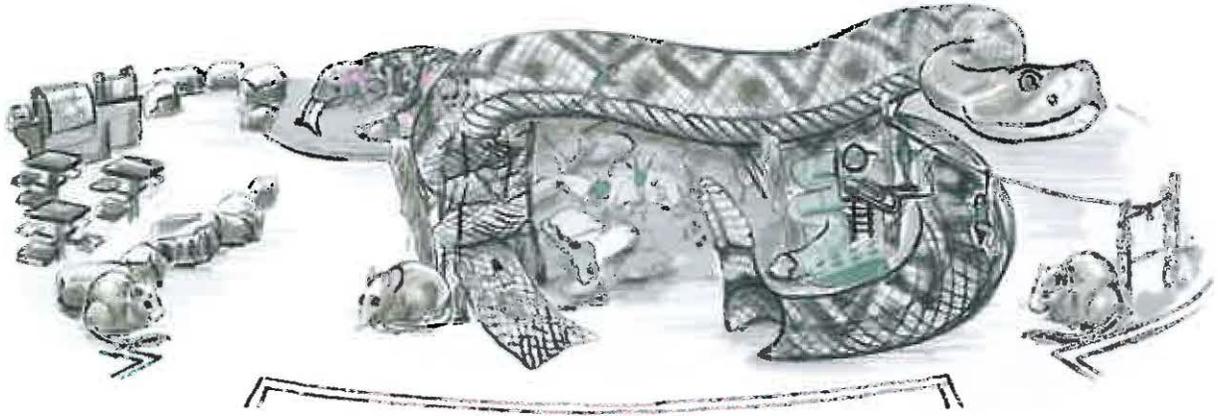
The Midden's main physical feature will be an artificial, human-sized packrat midden. This exhibit (essentially, Alice in Wonderland Meets the Packrat) will explore the world of the little-loved packrat (a.k.a. White-throated woodrat), including its home, friends and enemies, parasites and predators, all of which will be presented as if we have shrunk to the size of our host, the packrat. Visitors will come face-to-face with massive representations of animals, like Western diamond-backed rattlesnake, the Gila monster, mice, geckos, spiders and beetles, in an engaging indoor learning space sure to enthrall and enlighten all who are brave enough to enter. At the same time, visitors will engage in learning what packrats really do for a living (aside from chomping on the wiring of their cars!) and how this little collector's way of life has helped inform us about the history of the Sonoran Desert and may be cataloguing our own existence for others to review centuries from now.

The space will be designed so that it can be used as both a self-guided play and discovery space, or for more structured, guided lessons. The Science skills and practices emphasized will be:

- Observation
- Comparison and Classification
- Making Claims based on Evidence

We will develop content focused on climate literacy that will be adapted for children and parents. We will discuss how this part of the Sonoran Desert used to be a woodland, as opposed to the desert we see today. We will use a variety of techniques and materials – artifacts, signage and interactive components – within the space to discuss potential impacts of climate change on the Sonoran Desert specifically, and related ASDM research.

Hidden in the Midden



Concept Sketch ||| Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum