

Desert EDGE Alert



2017 - An Exciting Year for Scottsdale's Long-planned Desert Education Center

The Consultant Team headed by the Desert Discovery Center Scottsdale, under contract to the City of Scottsdale, unveiled The Desert EDGE July 31, 2017, with the formal submittal of comprehensive reports by:

- Thinc Design: *Experience Concept Design*
- Consult Econ, Inc: *Operating Plan*
- ASU: *The Desert as Living Laboratory -- The Global Drylands Center*
- Swaback Partners: *Desert Discovery Center Architectural Final Report*
- DDCS: *Presentation of The Desert EDGE*

The Desert EDGE's mantra of Small Footprint/Big Vision is evidenced by:

- Site location moved away from the existing Gateway trailhead to south of the maintenance building to maintain the current Gateway trailhead experience
- Substantially lower elevation, minimizing visual impact with buildings that recede into the desert, less than 24' in height and lower than the existing Gateway trailhead building, barely visible to the surrounding neighborhoods
- Linked pavilions with retractable door and window systems, blurring the lines between indoors and outdoors with specific Preserve views tied to interpretive experiences
- Energy-efficient building materials and orientation to sun angles, combined with new solar collector sun-shading fabric to demonstrate state-of-the-art environmentally sensitive, desert-compatible building design
- Overall site footprint reduced to 5.34 acres
- Conditioned square footage reduced to 47,586 square feet
- Materials and architectural theming similar to the current Gateway and to other trailhead buildings in the Preserve including rammed earth, weathered steel, desert roof and low reflective glass, assure The Desert EDGE is compatible with existing Preserve architecture

The new Desert EDGE concept also includes enhanced Sonoran Desert experiences:

- Arizona State University Global Drylands Center offers guests face-to-face encounters with world-class researchers and a global connection to transformative research
- STEAM learning opportunities for children and families are integrated within the experience design
- Experiences take guests through engaging interpretations designed with state-of-the-art technology, imaging and interactive elements, all designed to be deep, expandable, accessible, immersive and firmly grounded in a "sense of place" in the Sonoran Desert
- Journeys include a trip through the biome, flying the nectar corridor, building

an ecosystem, smelling and seeing the desert at night and during a storm, traveling through geological time and participating in a research project

The Desert EDGE reflects the comments and concerns expressed in numerous community meetings and the final reports were reviewed in hearings by the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission, the Tourism Development Commission, the Development Review Board and the Planning Commission as well as in two Work Study Sessions by the City Council. The Tourism Development Commission recommended the use of bed tax funds for the project and both the Development Review Board and Planning Commission approved The Desert EDGE Municipal Use Master Site Plan amendment. The City Council accepted the reports with positive comments and directed staff on the next steps to move the project forward.

In their discussion of the next steps, the Council members asked staff to review potential alternative locations as part of their due diligence to assure there is no better location for the project than the Gateway; to clarify the participation agreements with ASU and other potential partners; to continue exploring funding options as well as reviewing capital, operating and maintenance costs; and to provide time for the citizen initiative petition process to be completed before moving forward. The DDCS will continue its education focus offering its pilot education teacher training workshop, working with ASU and its global drylands symposium, cultivating major donors and more.

The community's generosity and commitment to The Desert EDGE allowed the DDCS to raise more than double the required contract amount. Substantial contributions to The Desert EDGE came from individuals, businesses, corporations, community/civic organizations, Native American communities and foundations plus in-kind contributions, primarily from the hospitality community, as evidence of strong and widespread community support for the project. The Desert EDGE is proposed to be built with existing dedicated City funding sources, combined with DDCS private sector 10% contribution, thus requiring no new taxes.

Desert Discovery Center Scottsdale, Inc. (DDCS) is the non-profit organization under contract to the City of Scottsdale to undertake planning for the City's long-envisioned Desert Discovery Center project at the Gateway Trailhead in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The DDCS Board is comprised of long-term environmentalists and preservationists dedicated to fulfilling the Preserve vision of offering an educational/interpretive center in the Preserve. DDCS contract employees and consultants went above and beyond in their work in the development of the project. We thank them for their dedication and talent – Randy Schilling's contract concluded in July, The Person Group and Cece Riviere in September.

Our vision is that The Desert EDGE will inspire residents and visitors of all ages from children to seniors to fall in love with the Preserve and the Sonoran Desert. As they deepen both their knowledge of the desert and their feeling of connection with it, they will be strengthened in their commitment to protecting and preserving this unique land for future generations.



To learn more about Desert EDGE, please visit scottsdaledesertcenter.com



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