



DDC/Desert Edge History & Issues

MSC Stewards

8/31/2017

Why are we Here?



- “ You all have heavily invested in the Preserve.
 - . Dedicated your time to maintain the Preserve, educate others about the Preserve, and/or help with research in the Preserve.
- “ Regardless of our contribution or experience in it, we all share a deep love of the Preserve
- “ Anyone who spends time in it can't help but to love it, residents, stewards, tourists, & other visitors.
- “ The proposed DDC/Desert Edge is a threat to the Preserve we all love.

Preservation



” Throughout its history, we have always tried to keep it a Preserve, true to the meaning of the word.

- . It was formed specifically to keep human development off the land, preserving native plant and animal life.
- . The City Charter and Preserve Ordinance were written to maintain a Preserve, not a park.
- . Preservation was the #1 priority, not recreation.
- . “Appropriate” public Access was provided so people could experience and appreciate the Preserve.
 - ” Builds future Preserve advocates
- . **Chet Andrews “it is a Preserve NOT a park”**

What Is the DDC/Desert Edge?

“ Conceptually

1. A center to educate residents and tourists about the desert.
2. A Center for research about the desert.
3. A tourist DESTINATION

“ Note: *The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy (MSC) already does both 1 & 2 at NO cost to the city, with NO buildings, AND in full compliance with the Preserve Ordinance.*

“ It already is a tourist attraction & destination, **goal satisfied.**

“ The DDC/Desert Edge is not **needed** to satisfy goals of education, research and/or support of tourism.

Early Preserve/DDC History

	Year	Event	DDC Location	WOW Factor
	1986	Rhodes/Dahl Study 23 acres, cost not known	Pinnacle Peak Park	Desert provided THE experience, The Education, The "wow" factor
	1988	ERA & Associates Destination Attraction Study		
Citizen Driven	1990	Preserve movement starts		
	1993	Desert Task Force Study	Preserve (Gateway)	
	1994	Preserve & MSPC created		
Public Vote	1995	Voters approve funding (Land Acq ONLY)		
	1997	Tourism staff moves DDC to Preserve. Approved by council on consent agenda. Langdon Wilson hired for study	Preserve (Gateway)	
Public Vote	1998	Charter amendment & expanded RSB approved by voters DDC advisory committee established		
	1999	Langdon Wilson Report 15,800 sq ft, \$4.3M		
Citizen Driven	2000	Preserve Ordinance drafted and approved. No exceptions to rules for the DDC		

Study #1

Study #2

Current Preserve/DDC History

			DDC Location	WOW Factor
Public Vote	2004	Not much went on 2000- 2004 Voters approve additional sales tax for land acquisitions AND "improvements thereto"		Desert provided THE experience, The Education, The "wow" factor
	2006	Nichols Tourism Group & Weddle Gilmore study 19,665 sq ft, \$15.4M COS staff business plan Study #3		
	2007	MUMSP for Gateway approved (consent agenda) 22,000 sq ft buildings, 524 parking spaces		
	2008	City buys Gateway land from Toll at \$81.9M ConsultEcon Report Alt 1 - 20,000 sq ft, \$23.4M Study #4 Alt 2 - 53,000 Sq Ft, \$56.9M		
Public Involvement	2010	City hires Swaback Partners for study (\$500,000 from Preserve Funds) 72,072 sq ft, \$74M Study #5	Preserve (Gateway)	DDC provided THE experience, The Education, The "wow" factor
	2012	RFP Issued for operators NO respondents		
	2013	Swaback Partners report on alternate sites.		
	2015	City Issues another RFP DDCS Formed and incorporated. ONLY respondent to the RFP		
	2016	City gives DDCS \$1.7M for new study How big and how much will it cost now? Study #6		
		2 Public Meetnngs Held, Public Expresses concerns about locating it in the Preserve		

History Landmarks

- “ Desert Task Force report – 1993
 - . Mentions there MAY be an educational center, ramadas, picnic tables, etc. {park type amenities}
- “ DDC moved to Preserve - 1997
- “ Access Area Report – 1999
 - . Mentions there MAY be an educational center, ramadas, picnic tables , etc. {park type amenities}
- “ Preserve Ordinance – 2000
 - . Prevents Preserve from being morphed into a park
 - . Prohibits concessions, food, nighttime operations, liquor, sound amplification, etc.
 - . Negates earlier studies, NO exclusions for a DDC

See the Myth Busters table for details

Main Issue

- “ The prime issue is the proposed location, at the Gateway trail head IN THE PRESERVE.
 - . The Gateway is the most heavily used trail head in the Preserve.
 - “ Will conflict with existing users of the Preserve, including tourists.
 - “ Will degrade the Preserve experience at our most popular trail head.
 - . The DDC will violate many Rules in the Preserve Ordinance. (See Myth Buster table)
 - . The DDC will set a major precedent.

Major Precedent

- “ Once the DDC is allowed in the Preserve, it sets a precedent and opens up the Preserve up to more development.
 - . Already there is talk of more “active” labs for ASU in the Preserve.
 - . No matter what the initial size of it is, it will encourage expansion and more development in the Preserve.
 - . Promises to limit activity will be broken to increase income.
- “ There are viable and even better sites outside the Preserve, some city owned.
 - . Eliminates ALL the problems with putting it in the Preserve

DDC Possible Sites



IF In the Preserve

- ” The DDC must be owned and run by the city.
 - . City must pay for design and construction.
 - ” Plan is to steal Preserve funds for this.
 - . City must absorb all cost overruns and yearly operating overruns.
 - ” Preserve funds CAN NOT be used for operational costs or overruns.
 - . It will compete with the education and research activities the MSC already does in the Preserve

Problems with the DDC in the Preserve

- “ The Preserve Ordinance and City Charter will limit what the DDC can be and can become making it less likely to succeed.
 - . City must own it and must operate it, can't rent or lease it to another operator.
 - “ Could NOT find an operator for the previous plan.
 - . Structures will need to be smaller and shorter to appear to be compatible with the Preserve.
 - . Have to physically separate paying public for the DDC and normal users.
 - . Why would anyone pay to go in the DDC when they can experience the Preserve for free?

Benefits Outside the Preserve

- “ Public opposition virtually disappears.
- “ The city doesn’t have to take on all the financial responsibility.
 - . The DDC can be owned by anyone and operated by anyone.
- “ DDC can become whatever it needs to be, and managed anyway it needs to be, to be successful and sustainable.
 - . Can be as big and impressive as it needs to be
 - . Night time operations
 - . Events
 - . Full scale restaurant
 - . Other venues
- “ The DDC could **complement** MSC’s operations, not **compete** with them.

Location Outside the Preserve

- “ DDC can be located near West World where it will get more exposure to tourists.
 - . Over 1 million people go through West World now, and that number is going up.
 - . Would increase attendance.
 - . Makes concessions more viable.
- “ The ONLY downside? **They can't use Preserve funds to pay for it.**

Remaining Funds



<u>Detail of Preserve Tax Funding and Endowment Concept Costs</u>	<u>Current Projections</u>	<u>Early Bond Payoff</u>	<u>Early Bond Payoff & NO Tax on Food</u>
Current projected uncommitted cash from Preserve Taxes thru 2034	\$178M*	\$185M*	\$142M*
Current projections for planned land acquisitions and improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planned Land Acquisitions - \$48M* projected 2. Planned Preserve Improvements - \$17M* projected 	- \$65M*	- \$65M*	- \$65M*
Projected uncommitted cash after planned land acquisitions and improvements	\$113M*	\$120M*	\$77M*
Projected Use of Remaining Uncommitted Cash from Preserve Taxes	\$113M*	\$120M*	\$77M*
1. Preserve operations & maintenance annual annuity (or similar) Estimated @ 3% = \$1M*/yr in perpetuity <i>If approved, concept anticipates fund expenditures to be reviewed through the yearly City budget process</i>	- \$34M*	- \$34M*	- \$34M*
2. Research & education annual annuity (or similar) Estimated @ 3% = \$120K*/yr in perpetuity <i>If approved, concept anticipates a process for yearly award of funds to include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Projects to be based on Ecological Resource Management Plan b. Grant funding thru the yearly City budget process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Requires support from the Conservancy Field Institute ✓ Requires recommendation from: MSPC, Preserve Director, City Manager and City Treasurer ✓ Requires approval by City Council 	- \$4M*	- \$4M*	- \$4M*
Remaining Uncommitted Cash Preserve Land and Improvement Uses	\$75M*	\$82M*	\$39 M*

*Dollar figures will vary based upon sales tax collections, bond interest rates and rates of returns and final costs of land acquisitions and improvements.

Public Involvement

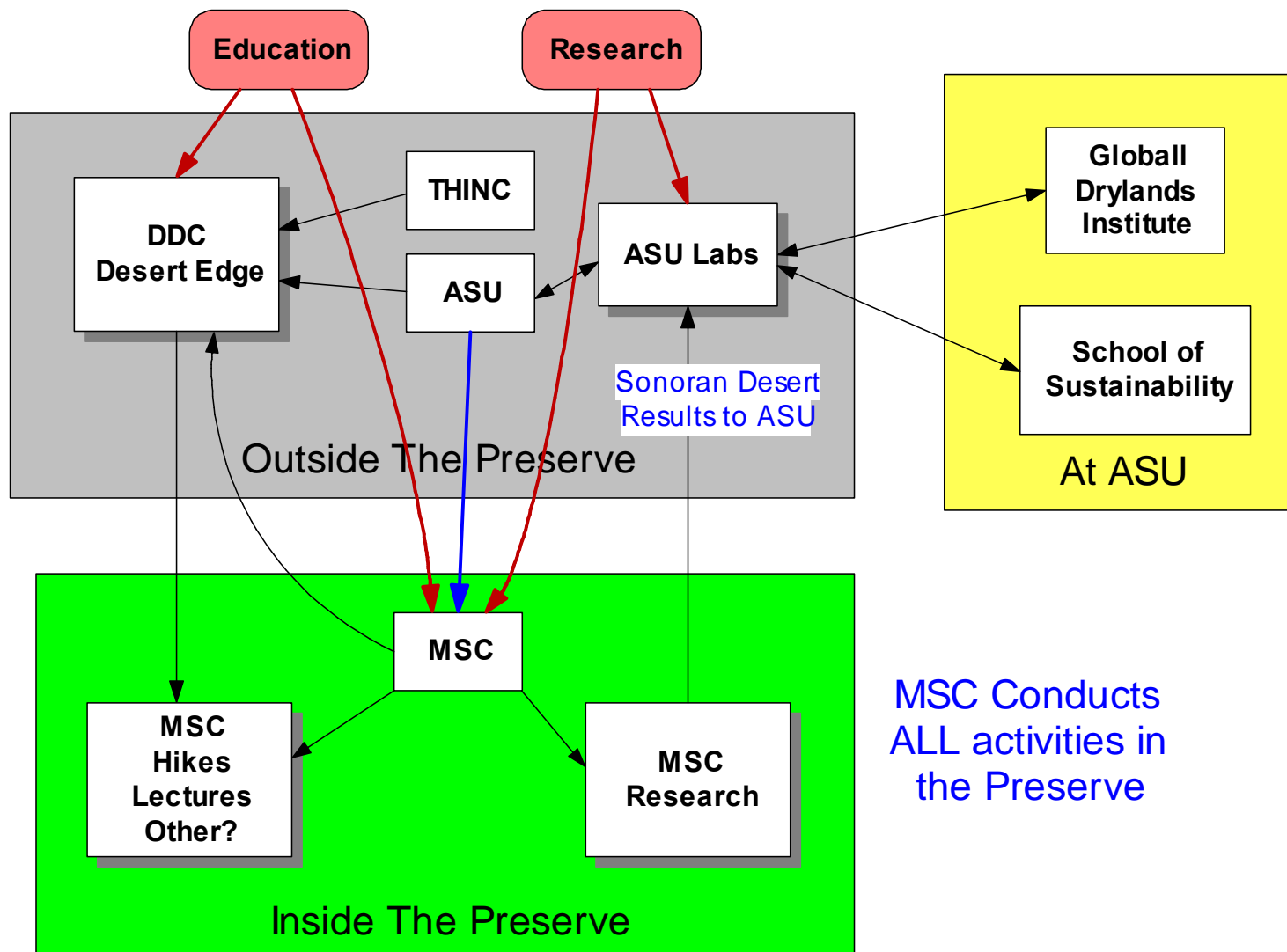
- “ The public has been kept in the dark ever since the DDC was moved into the Preserve in 1997.
 - . Most people don’t know this is even being planned.
 - . There was NO mention of a DDC, or anything like it, on the 2004 ballot or pamphlet.
 - “ That vote allowed funds to be used for “improvements thereto”.
 - . At the 2 open houses held this spring, and 3 surveys the city ran, residents were clearly against putting the DDC in their Preserve (over 80%).
 - “ First real resident input.
 - “ DDCSI would not listen to ANY comments on location.

Impact on the MSC



- “ ASU is being touted as the PRIMARY partner for Education And Research:
 - . Both education and research functions are currently done by the MSC.
 - “ Full compliance with Preserve Ordinance
 - “ Already in cooperation with ASU.
 - . ASU Research – Labs IN the Preserve.
 - “ Violates Preserve Ordinance
 - “ After hours operations?
 - “ What is MSC’s Role?
- “ What is MSC’s Future?
 - . Unknown – MSC was not a major participant in DDC talks.
 - . ASU taking over education and research IN the Preserve.
 - . Loss of funding, grants, and donations to DDC & ASU

Possible MSC Involvement



What Are We Doing



- “ Inform the public – make them aware.
 - . Most people don’t know this is happening.
 - . Most people are opposed when they learn about it.
- “ Try to change the location
 - . Talk to DDC supporters, DDCSI officials, City Council
- “ Get a public vote required.
 - . Tried a petition to the council – eventually failed
 - . Mark Stuart’s ballot initiative (2018 ballot).
- “ Legally challenge the city.
 - . Legal effort underway, to challenge the council’s authority to allow building in the Preserve without a public vote.
 - . Getting donations to the legal fund.
 - . Already in the 2nd phase, informed the city of our intent to legally challenge what they are doing.

Legal Basis



” Violation of Charter

- . Removing the Preserve designation from Preserve land without a public vote.

” Violation of voter intent

- . Clear that voters did NOT approve construction in the Preserve OR use of funds for anything other than trails and trail heads with 2004 approval.
- . Voters expected Preserve Ordinance would limit what could be done in the Preserve.
- . Seek judgment on the definition of “improvements”.

Questions?

Learn More at: ProtectOurPreserve.org

What you can do

- “Get Involved

 - “Sign up for updates

 - “Contribute to Legal Fund

 - “Sign Petition

- “Voice your opinion to MSC

 - Board needs to know what stewards think