

## **2012: YEAR OF THE RANCHOS**

**Rancho Los Cerritos + 4600 Virginia Road, Long Beach, CA 90807 + (562) 570-1755 + [www.rancholoscerritos.org](http://www.rancholoscerritos.org)**

### **Rancho Los Cerritos Master Plan**

In September, 1997, the Rancho Los Cerritos Foundation contracted with a consultant team led by Architect Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA (the current State Historic Preservation Officer), to prepare a comprehensive master plan for Rancho Los Cerritos Historic Site. The plan is designed to serve as a guide for site development and interpretation, and includes sections on structural and landscape restoration, maintenance, educational programming, visitor amenities, and staff and collections needs. The plan provides for phased development over a 25-year period. In 1999 the plan was honored as a *Save America's Treasures* project by the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and it also received a 2001 Design Award from the California Preservation Foundation and a 2002 Award of Merit from Long Beach Heritage.

### **Rancho Los Cerritos Phase One Master Plan Implementation**

The City of Long Beach completed Phase I projects, the seismic retrofit of the adobe and various maintenance repairs, with FEMA, State and County funding. The Rancho Los Cerritos Foundation played an important role in supporting the County bond act. At the same time, the Foundation raised funds for restoration of the 1931 orchard and for refurbishment of the adobe house following seismic work. In 2007 the Foundation paid for the reconstruction of the historic water tower and tank, and it recently underwrote repair work on the veranda.

### **Rancho Los Cerritos Phase Two Master Plan Implementation**

Phase II projects were designed to improve the visitor experience by providing crucial orientation and expanded historical information for visitors touring the house and grounds, and introducing "Visitors from the Past" living history tours on a regular basis. Through improved educational offerings and expanded living history tours, audiences will gain a stronger understanding of the community's history and culture. Since the Rancho's story reflects the history of Southern California, visitors will also gain a greater appreciation of the human forces that shaped our State's growth and development. The completion of Phase II will result in greater use of the historic site and museum by students, educators, researchers, and the broader public. Audiences will grow along with the site's reputation for quality experiences, and the Rancho and City of Long Beach will benefit from the appeal of heritage tourism. Daily living history tours will encourage repeat visits, and the incorporation of a broad spectrum of characters into the living history program – Mexican vaqueros, Chinese cooks and Basque shepherders, as well as an expanded emphasis on the lives and contributions of ranch workers, will more broadly reflect the diversity of the students and audiences who visit the site.



The Rancho Los Cerritos “Strong Roots, New Growth” capital campaign to implement Phase II recommendations raised \$4.5 million. The Foundation entered into an agreement with the City of Long Beach to underwrite several Phase II projects including a new visitor center, new entryway, and rehabilitation of the arroyo. The Phase II projects funded by the Foundation help ensure proper restoration and use of the original historic site so that more of it can be made available for public viewing and interpretation. Importantly, they also provide a richer educational experience for visitors and appropriate restoration and interpretation of this unique cultural and historical site, and enable the site to assume a more prominent role in the cultural life of the City, as well as attract travelers from outside of our area.



Rancho Los Cerritos' new visitor center will open in May 2012. A modest building, the adobe structure is modeled after a two room adobe dwelling built by Rancho Los Cerritos owners Guillermo and Manuela Cota around 1835. To accommodate visitor needs, the building takes advantage of its hillside location--it includes a lower level that is not visible from the front or side. The ground level contains a welcome desk, orientation exhibits, the museum shop and a small office. A small video

theater, area for changing exhibits and costume storage are downstairs. Over the next months, museum staff will be installing interior exhibits and furnishings. Opening celebrations will occur May 9-13, and include a Grand Opening Festival, special tours, a theatrical performance, public concert and Mother’s Day Brunch.

The visitor center is adjacent to the newly restored arroyo habitat, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre property planted with California natives. A pathway from the road meanders through the arroyo, leading to the visitor center and enabling visitors to enjoy the plants and views. As part of this project, the Rancho also sports a new and exciting entryway. Just outside the driveway gates, colored concentric circles of stamped concrete announce that one has arrived someplace special — at Long Beach's *only* National and State Historic Landmark. Brick pilasters and a monument wall with signage, reproduction light fixtures, a built in mailbox and call box, and new wooden and wrought iron gates for both cars and pedestrians add to the visual appeal. Prior



to the grand opening, the Rancho will install irrigation and California natives at the entryway.