

Dripping Springs Natural Area—*2018 Overview Plan*

Bureau of Land Management

April 19, 2018



Goal Statement

Preserve and protect the irreplaceable wilderness quality of the Dripping Springs Natural Area. Propose appropriate additions and renovations to the buildings and grounds that respect the fragility of this unique natural and historical setting, while also accommodating the growth in user demands.

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The plan will consider proposed and existing facility capacities, educational and recreational opportunities and the overall visitor experience.

BLM

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Dorothy Church

Jennifer Rogers

Limbacher & Godfrey Architects

Al Godfrey, AIA

Laurie Limbacher, FAIA

Coffee with Volunteers, Site Hosts and Partner groups *January 13, 2018*

Southwest Environmental Center
Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance
BLM
BLM Volunteers

ASA Architects
Limbacher & Godfrey Architects

QUESTIONS:

This plan is intended to accommodate substantial anticipated growth in user interest and demand.

How much new development is enough, and how much is too much?

If demand outstrips reasonable caps on new development, what alternative strategies should be considered for managing the difference?

Relocating site-host housing has been suggested.

To where should those volunteers be relocated?

Visitor amenities are currently provided in two zones, the La Cueva Loop zone and the Cox Visitor Center Compound zone.

Is there potential for adding a third zone?

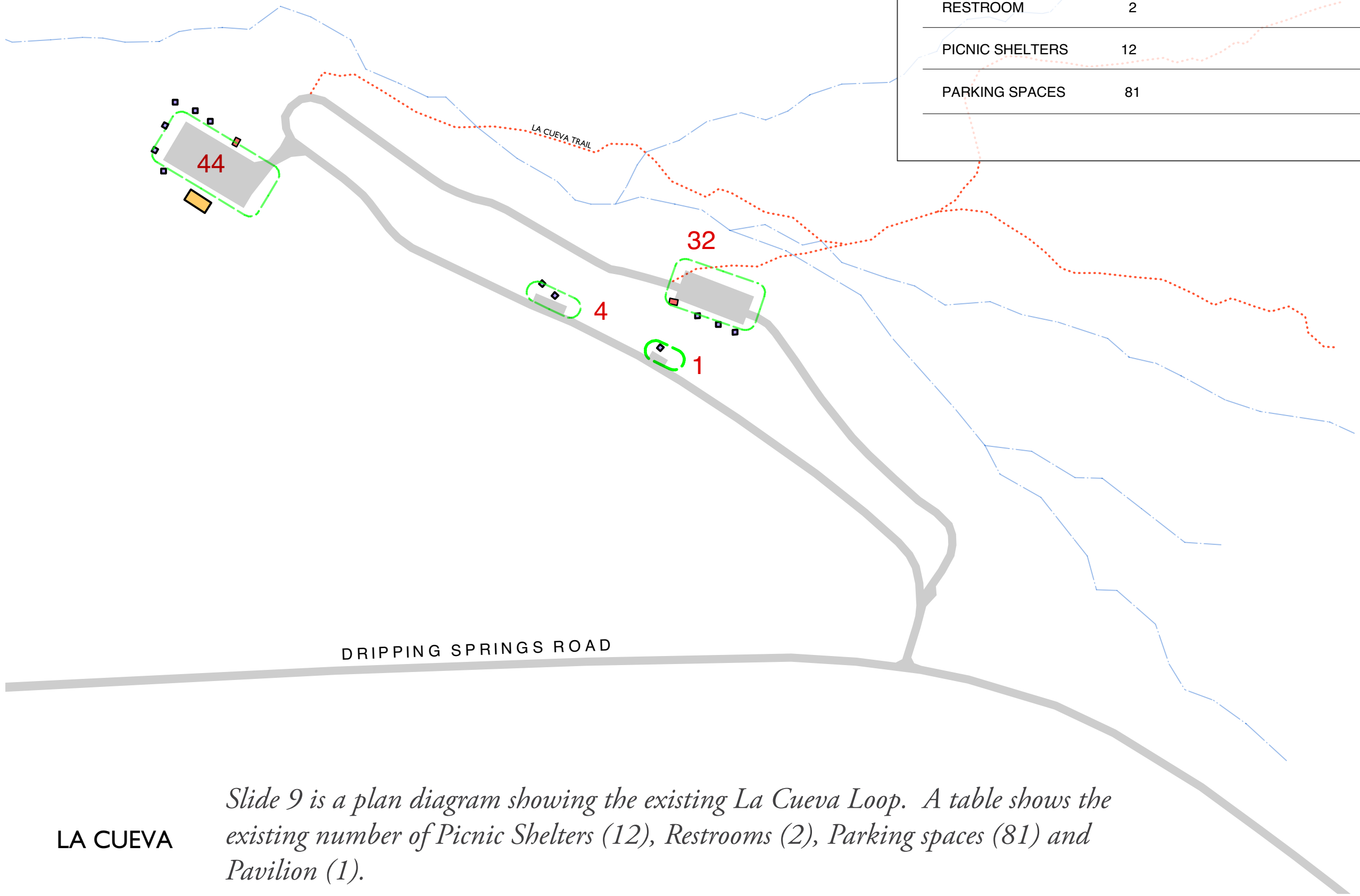
La Cueva

Create new parking and picnic sites without sacrificing the quality of the viewshed and or the fragility of the wildlife habitat.



Slide 8 is an aerial view of the existing La Cueva loop and parking areas. It shows the relationship of the loop, the two parking areas and the picnic shelters to La Cueva itself. It is also worth noting that the existing picnic shelters are loosely scattered on the land, and don't amount to a significant visual intrusion on the natural scene.

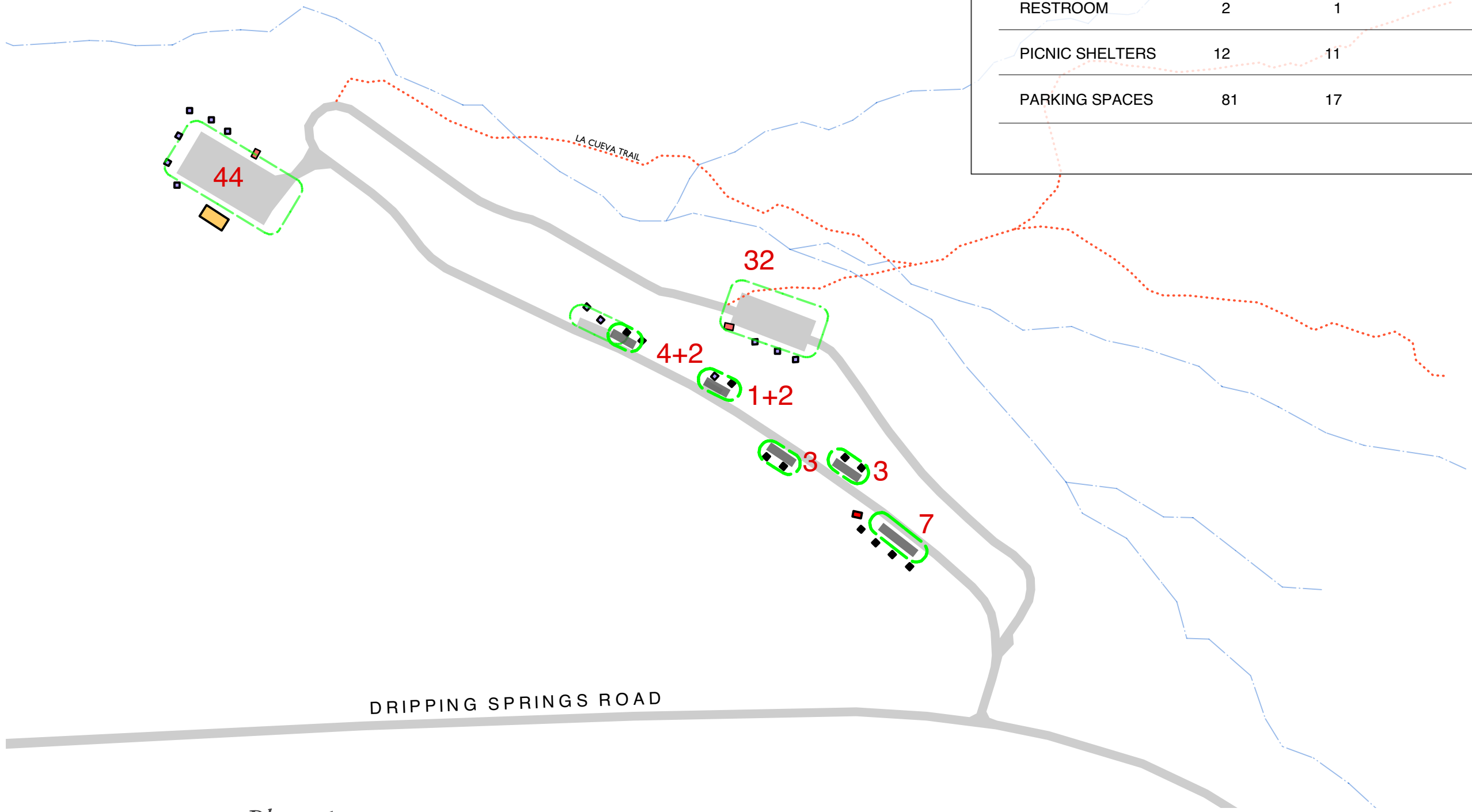
LA CUEVA AMENITIES <i>Existing</i>				
AMENITY	EXISTING	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	TOTAL
PAVILION	1			0
RESTROOM	2			2
PICNIC SHELTERS	12			12
PARKING SPACES	81			81



LA CUEVA

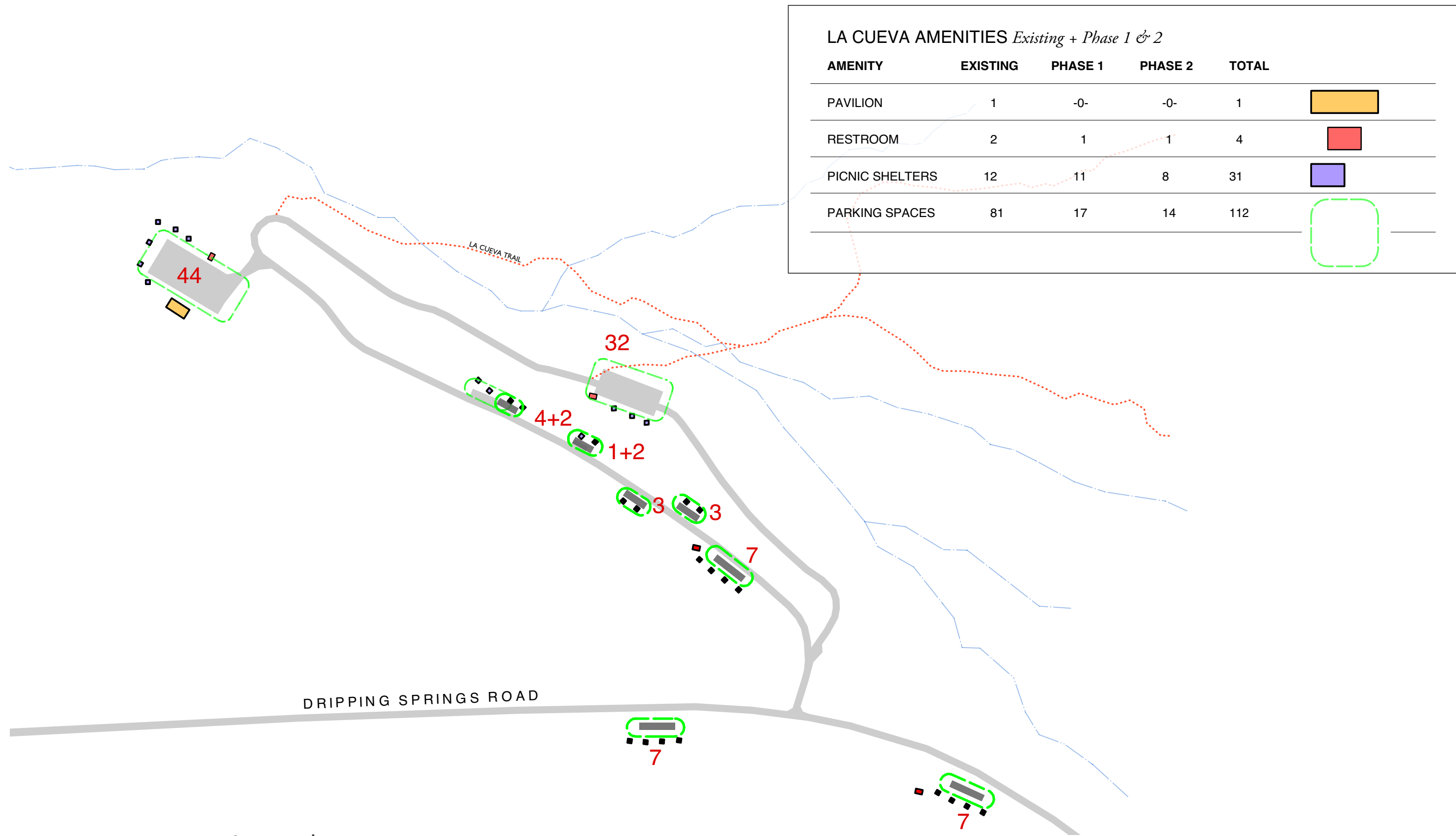
Slide 9 is a plan diagram showing the existing La Cueva Loop. A table shows the existing number of Picnic Shelters (12), Restrooms (2), Parking spaces (81) and Pavilion (1).

LA CUEVA AMENITIES <i>Existing + Phase 1</i>				
AMENITY	EXISTING	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	TOTAL
PAVILION	1	-0-		1
RESTROOM	2	1		3
PICNIC SHELTERS	12	11		23
PARKING SPACES	81	17		98



Phase 1




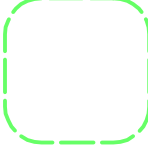
Slide 10, Phase 1 is a plan diagram of the existing La Cueva Loop with potential Phase 1 additions. A table shows the existing number of Picnic Shelters (12) would increase to 23, Restrooms (2), would increase to 3, Parking spaces (81) would increase to 98, and the Pavilion would stay at (1).

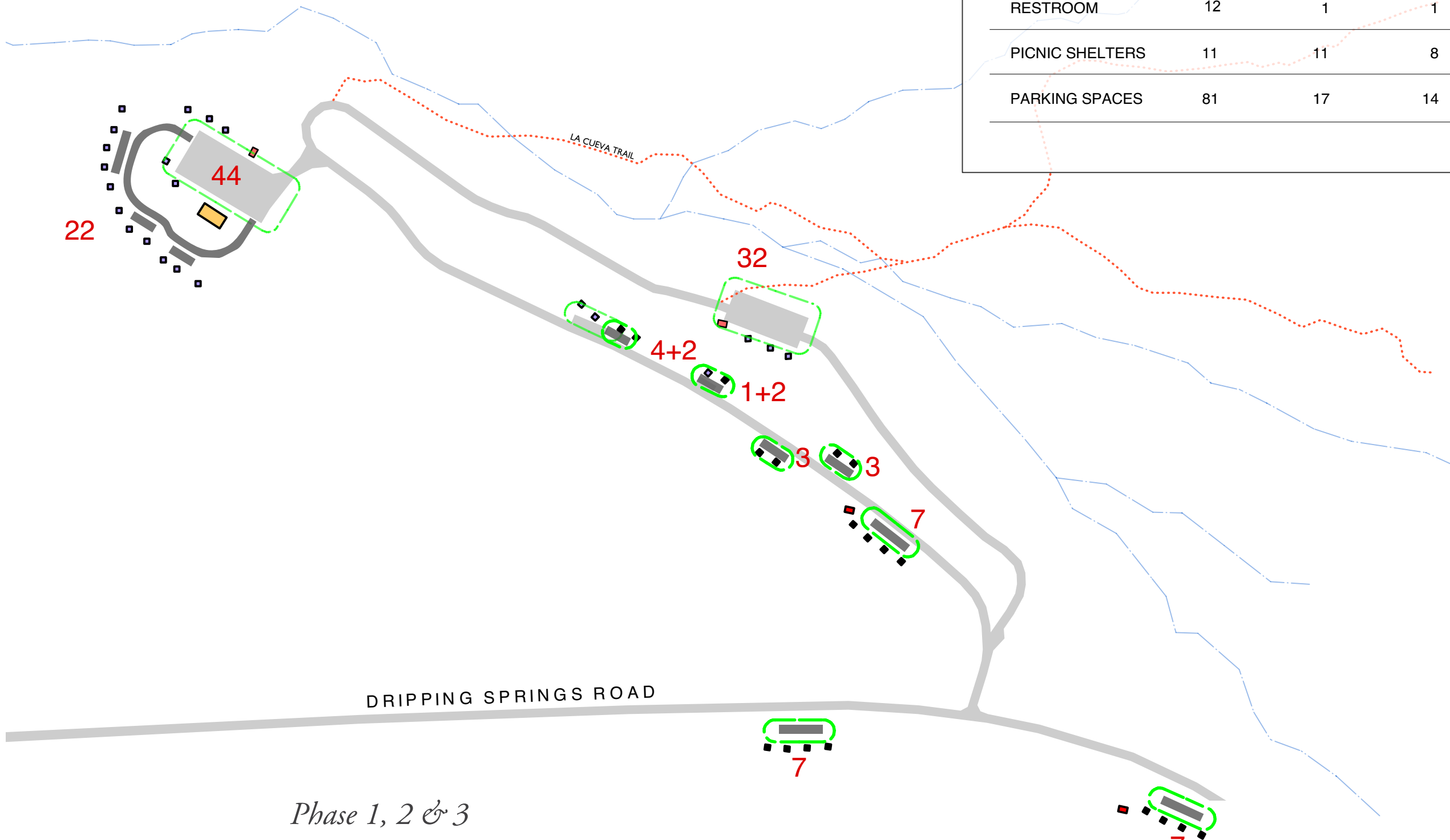


LA CUEVA

Phase 1 & 2

Slide 11, Phase 1 and 2 is a plan diagram of the existing La Cueva Loop with potential Phase 1 and Phase 2 additions. A table shows the existing number of Picnic Shelters (12), would increase to 31, Restrooms (2) would increase to 4, Parking spaces (81) would increase to 112, and the Pavilion would stay at (1).

LA CUEVA AMENITIES <i>Existing + Phase 1 & 2 & 3</i>						
AMENITY	EXISTING	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	TOTAL	
PAVILION	1	-0-	-0-	-0-	1	
RESTROOM	12	1	1	-0-	4	
PICNIC SHELTERS	11	11	8	11	41	
PARKING SPACES	81	17	14	22	134	



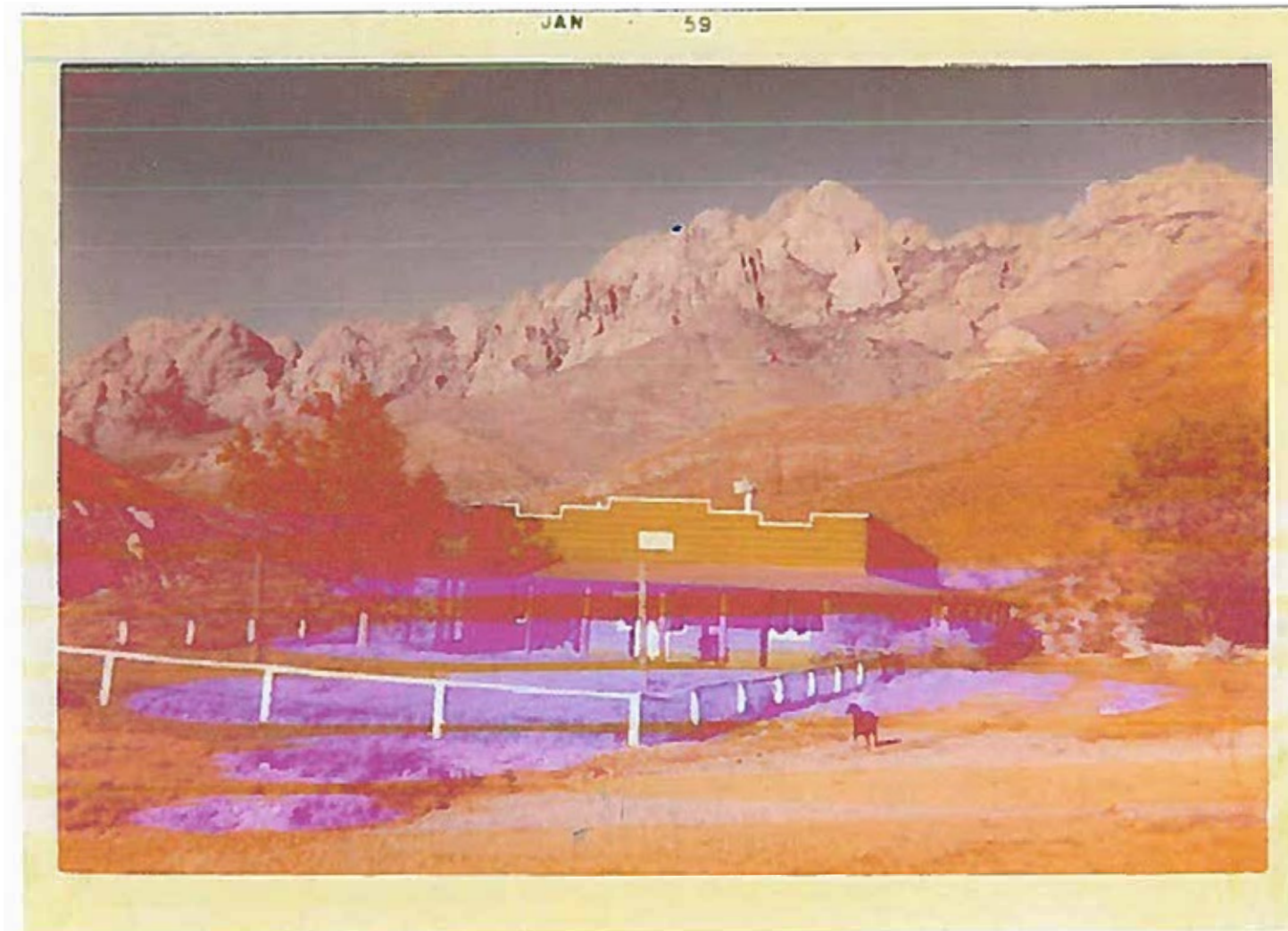
Phase 1, 2 & 3

Slide 12 shows plan diagrams of the existing La Cueva Loop with potential Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 additions. A table shows the existing number of Picnic Shelters (12) would increase to 41, Restrooms (2) would increase to 4, Parking spaces (81) would increase to 112, and the Pavilion would stay at (1).

LA CUEVA

Cox Visitor Center Compound

- Improve the vehicular access experience with additional parking and improved tour bus accommodation.
- Enlarge the Visitor Center experience to include ranch compound buildings and grounds by adding interpretive landscapes, better viewing amenities, event spaces, a bookstore and more.
- Relocate site-host residential accommodations to another location.



Slide 14 is a 1959 photo of the Cox Ranch House (now the Visitor Center).

1959



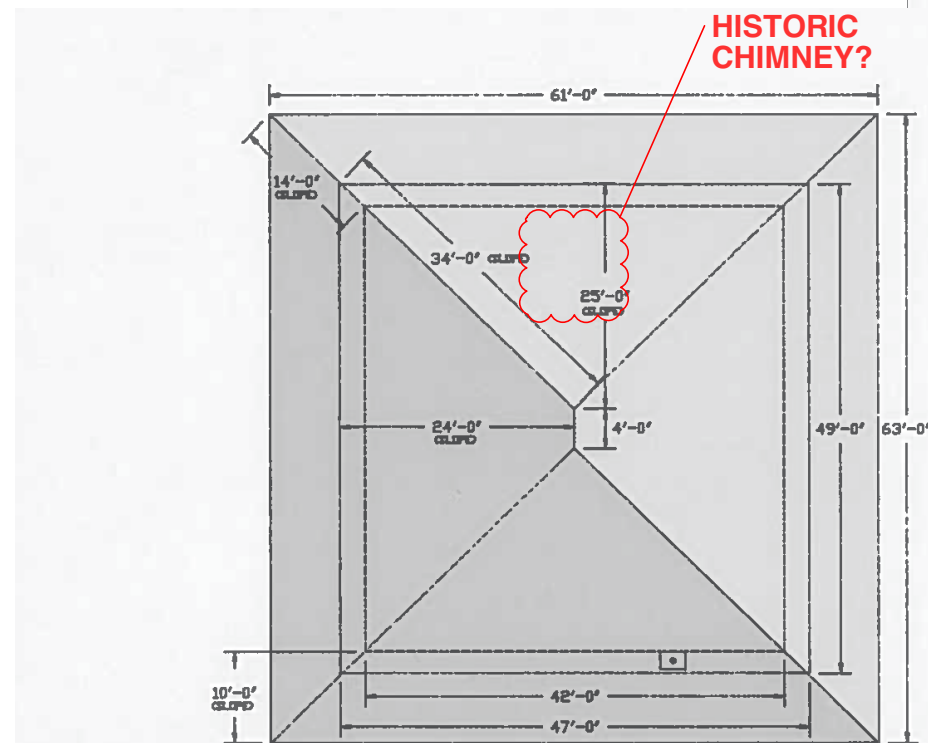
After 1959

Slide 15 is an aerial photo of the Cox Ranch Compound. The photo dated after 1959, includes the ranch house, out buildings and a fenced area. Note the presence of a house immediately to the right of the ranch house, and another, separate roofed structure immediately below it – neither of which were visible in the 1959 photograph. This photo shows a pattern of use with the compound, with paths of travel that arc from the ranch house to the out buildings in a way that leaves a large open area in the middle of the compound. It also shows a clearly defined fenced perimeter, with limited vegetation inside the perimeter and more natural vegetation outside the perimeter. The Ice Canyon development—swimming pool and artist's cabin are also visible.



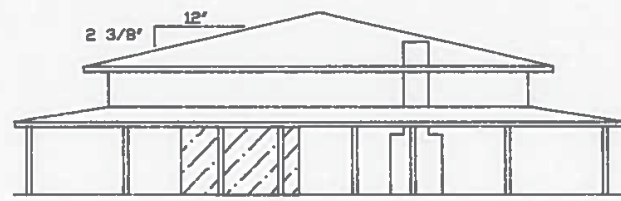
2017

Slide 16 is an aerial photo of the Cox Compound in 2017 showing existing conditions. It shows the additions to the earlier aerial photo in the previous slide (#15). A parking lot, a restroom building and an overflow parking area have been added. While the house immediately to the right of the ranch house remains, the roofed structure immediately below it is no longer there. Despite the addition of parking and a new restroom, the travel arc described in the previous slide remains intact. The fenced perimeter, clearly defined in the previous image, has been partially dismantled, and is now showing gaps.

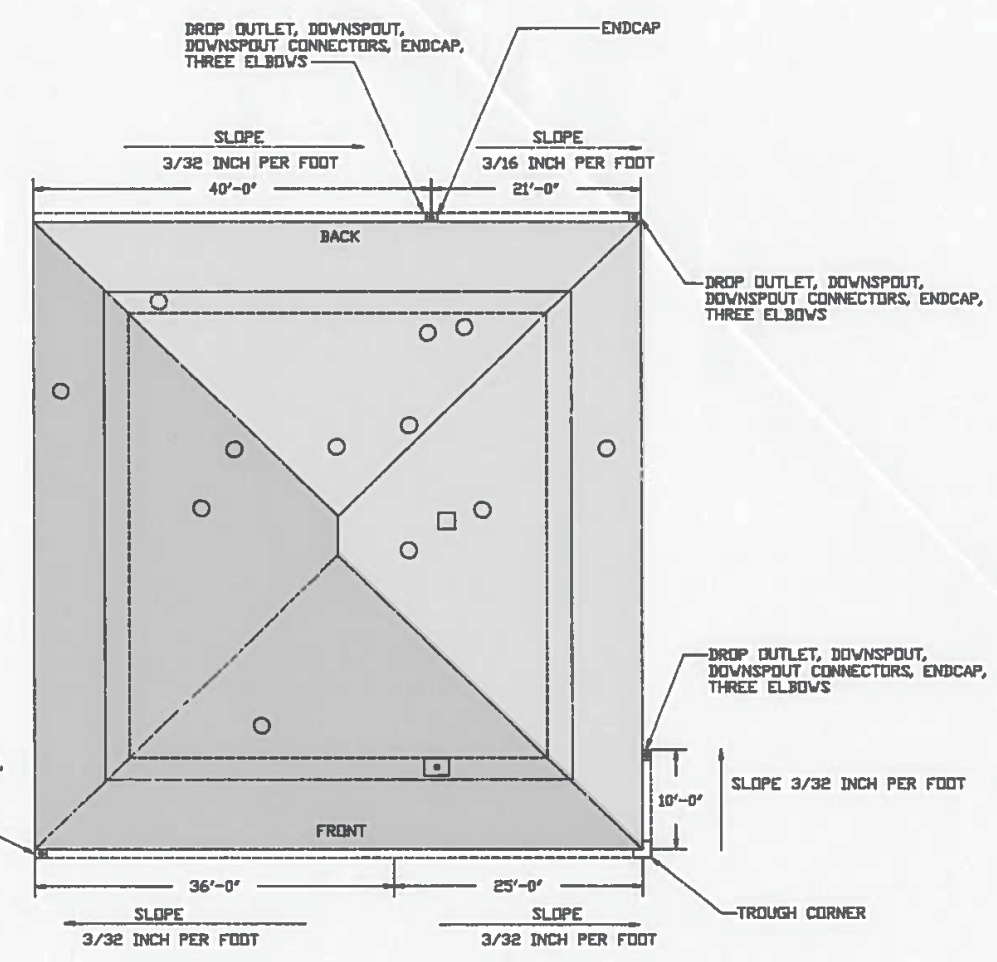
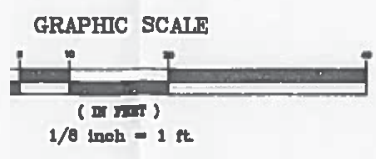


TOP VIEW

NOTE: ROOF GUTTERS NOT SHOWN IN THESE VIEWS



FRONT VIEW



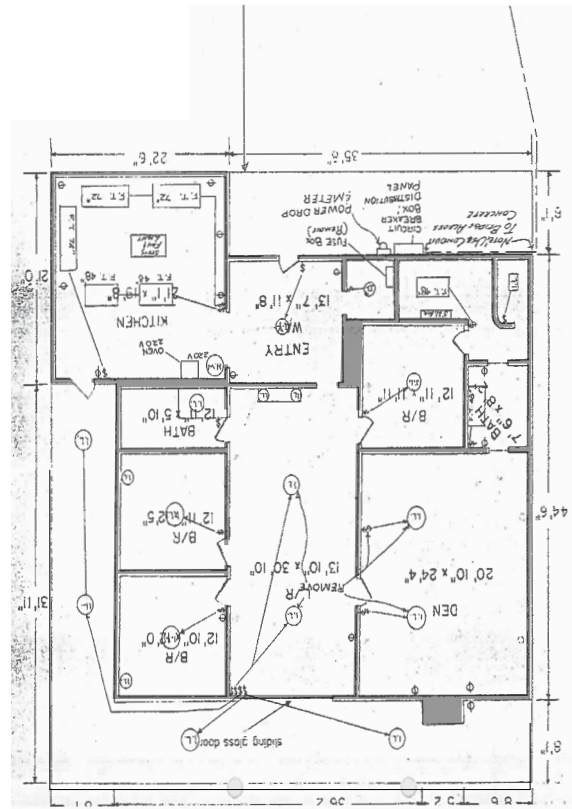
TOP VIEW

ROOF GUTTER DETAILS AND EXISTING ROOF PENETRATIONS

1992

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR	
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT	
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT	
ROOF RENOVATION	
ROOF DETAILS	
DESIGNED - B. LOPEZ	
REVIEWED - E. HANSEN	
APPROVED - B. VAITER	
DRAWN - F. SALAZAR	SCALE - AS SHOWN
DATE - 02/28/92	SHEET - 2 OF 2
PROJECT NO. - 101 F00 07301-2	

Slide 17 is a depiction of roof details from the 1992 roof replacement drawings for the Cox Visitor Center. Included are top views of the roof and a front view. Significantly, the front view shows the house in a traditional form with a wrap-around porch. The top view on the left (note from the consultant team) does not show the historic chimney.



from the Renovation
1989

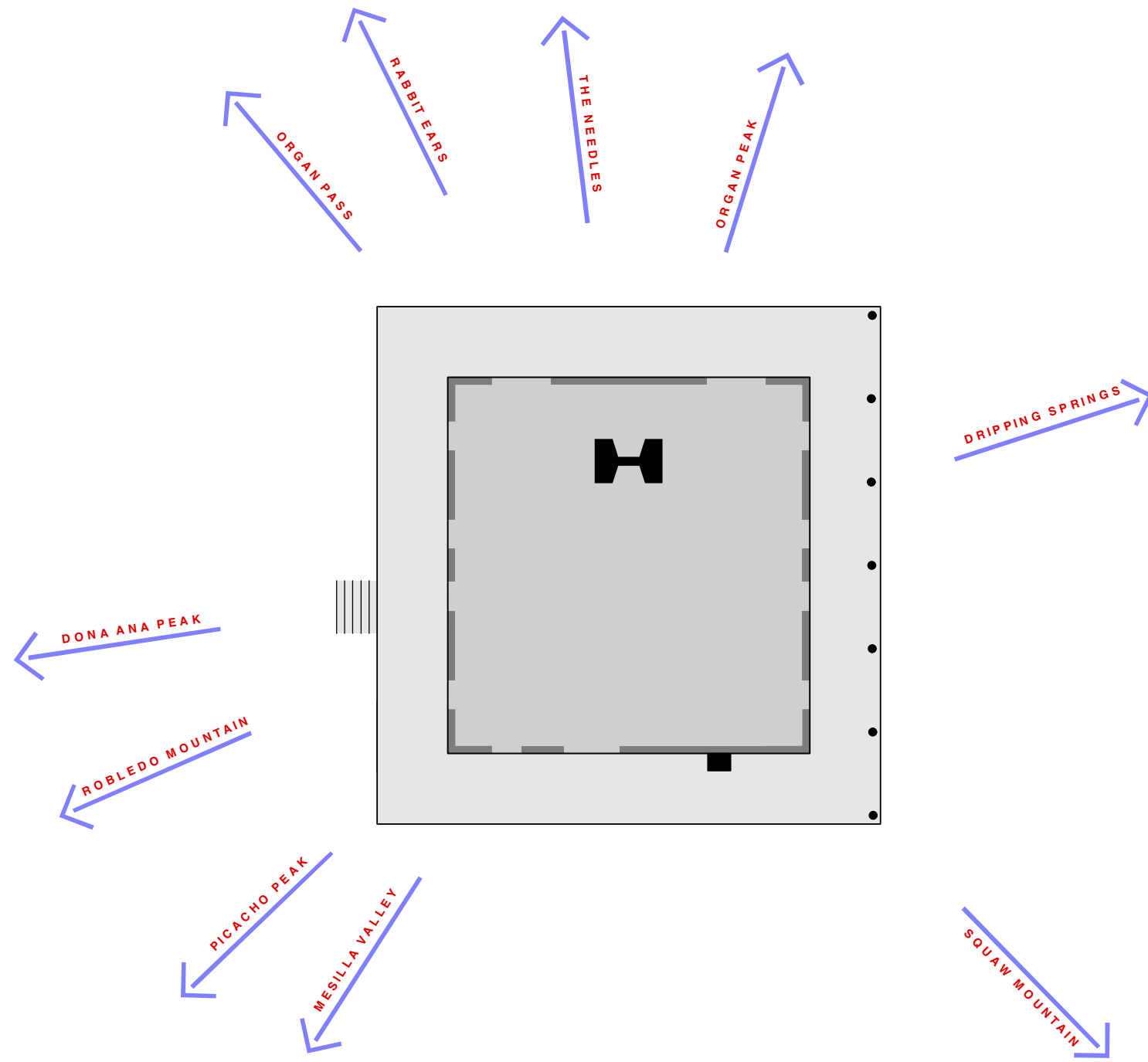
Slide 18 shows the Cox Visitor Center floor plan from the 1989 renovation. This plan illustrates extensive modification of the plan, with significant portions of the wrap around porch filled in.



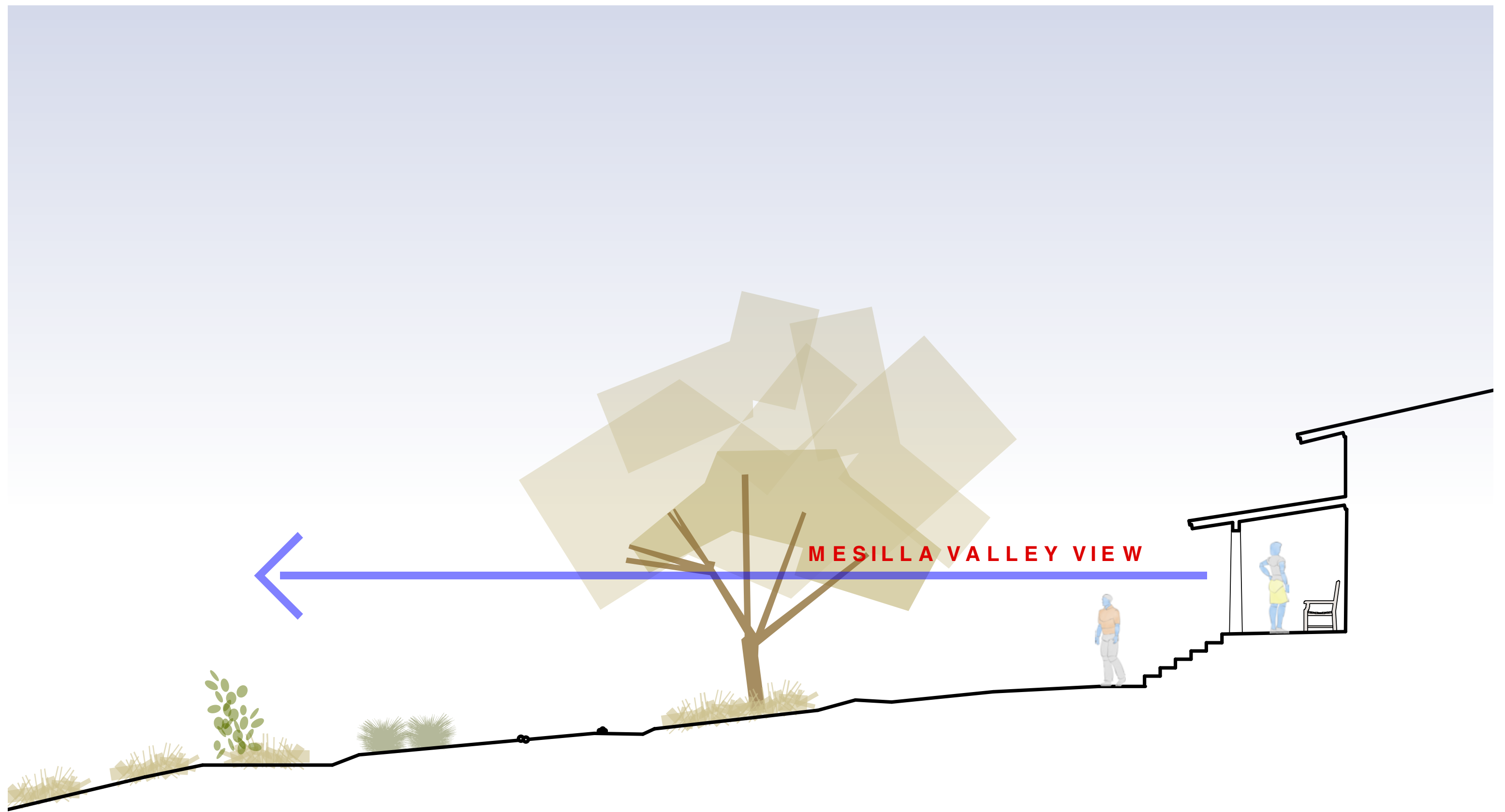
Slide 19 is a photo of the Cox Visitor Center, showing the southwest side of the building and part of the front south entry. The photo shows part of the filled-in porch where an apartment has been added. Also visible, is the addition of low masonry walls that define the front courtyard, and extend up onto the porch. These low walls create a sense of inward focus, and weaken the relationship of the house to its site—particularly to the views of the Mesilla Valley.



Slide 20 is an interior of the Cox Visitor Center, looking towards the historic fireplace. The image underscores the idea that the Visitor Center experience is an enclosed, inward focused experience. It is trying to address several sweeping interpretive themes in a constrained area. The consultant team believes that the visitor experience would be improved if the building could be made more open, and interpretive materials could be strategically dispersed throughout the compound.



Slide 21 is plan diagram drawing of the Cox Visitor Center, proposing a return to the wrap around porch. Also shown are view arrows in all directions to Organ Pass, Rabbit Ears, The Needles, Organ Peak as well as Dripping Springs, Squaw Mountains, the Mesilla Valley, Picacho Peak, Robledo Mountains, Dona Ana Peak. The plan indicates that by opening up the building and recreating its historic wrap-around porch, powerful visual connections to the site can be revealed, thus strengthening user experience.



Slide 22 is a section diagram showing the view potential to the Mesilla Valley from the Cox Visitor Center wrap-around porch.



Slide 23 is a photo of the south entry to the Cox Visitor Center. Of particular interest is the low masonry wall defining the perimeter of the front yard/courtyard. This element, circa the 1980s, weakens (the consultant team believes) the visual connection between the compound and the rest of the site.



Slide 24 is a photo of the Cox Visitor Center shows the east side of the building. Of particular interest is the use of ordinary wood privacy fences that are both visually confining and architecturally distracting.



Slide 25 is a photo shows the house, immediately east of the Cox Visitor Center, completely surrounded by ordinary wood privacy fences.



Slide 26 is a photo of the back of the house, immediately east of the Cox Visitor Center. It indicates that the house has been remodeled (and perhaps not sensitively) on multiple occasions.



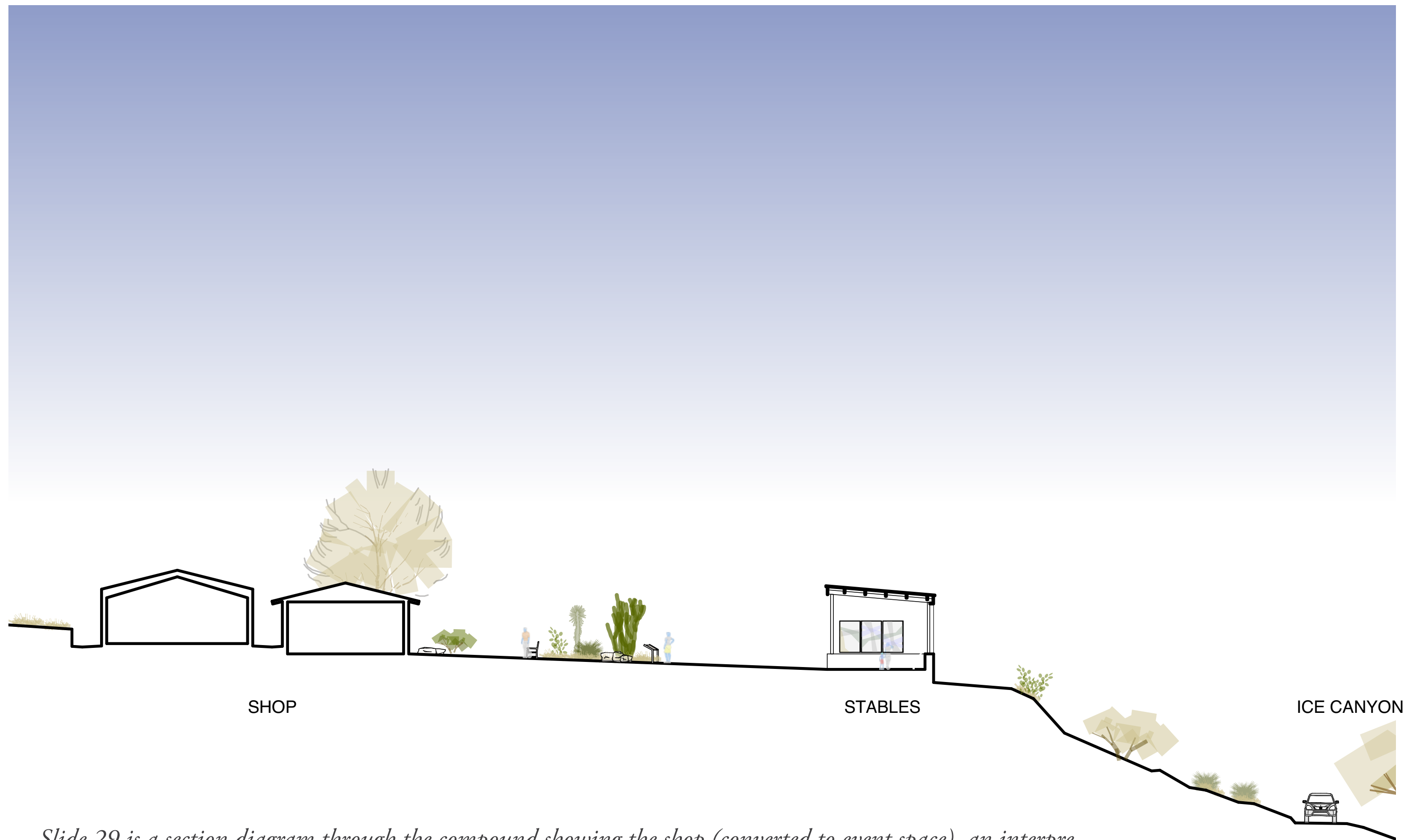
Slide 27 is a photo of that same house, showing what appear to be odd remodeling choices in the design of the roof and front porch. Also, clearly visible, the house is completely surrounded by ordinary wood privacy fences.



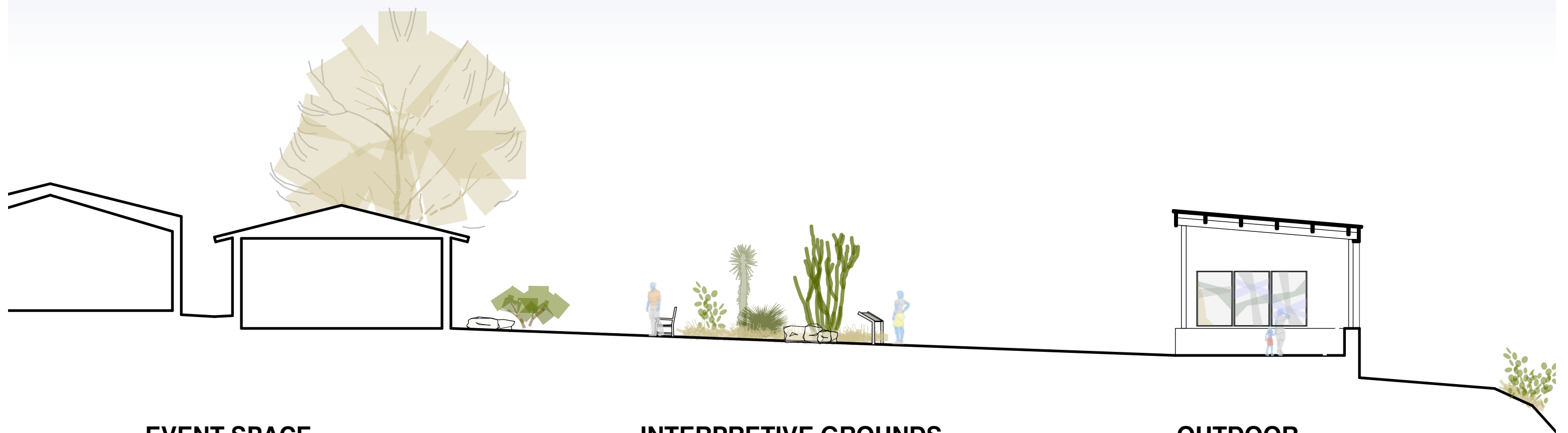
Slide 28 is a conceptual plan for a reimagined Cox Ranch Compound. In general, this plan extends visitor orientation and interpretation and education out from the ranch house into other parts of the compound. In addition to using the grounds themselves for outdoor interpretive messaging and interpretive landscapes, it also features a new event space, a covered outdoor interpretive gallery and shaded viewing stations. The plan also features a return to a more clearly-defined compound perimeter.

Additionally, the plan shows added parking (100 spaces total) with well-defined bus pick-up and drop-off locations. It shows the removal of the house immediately to the east of the Visitor Center and a relocated restroom building.

Also shown are two Site-Host recreational vehicle stations—one inside an existing building and one immediately adjacent. This idea accommodates BLM's management belief that having a 24-hour presence at the Compound is essential. This idea would require some remodeling of the existing building (large overhead doors, etc.) and the addition of a shed to protect and conceal the second RV. Also worth noting, this plan envisions moving the other Site-Hosts out of the compound to a less public location.



Slide 29 is a section diagram through the compound showing the shop (converted to event space), an interpretive landscape and the stable building, converted to an outdoor interpretive gallery.



EVENT SPACE

- EVENT/MEETING SPACE
- RESTROOM
- CATERING KITCHEN
- STORAGE

INTERPRETIVE GROUNDS

- GEOLOGY
- NATIVE PLANTS
- PALEOLITHIC ARTIFACTS
- RANCH LIFE

**OUTDOOR
INTERPRETIVE
GALLERY**

- GEOLOGY
- NATIVE PLANTS
- PALEOLITHIC ARTIFACTS
- RANCH LIFE

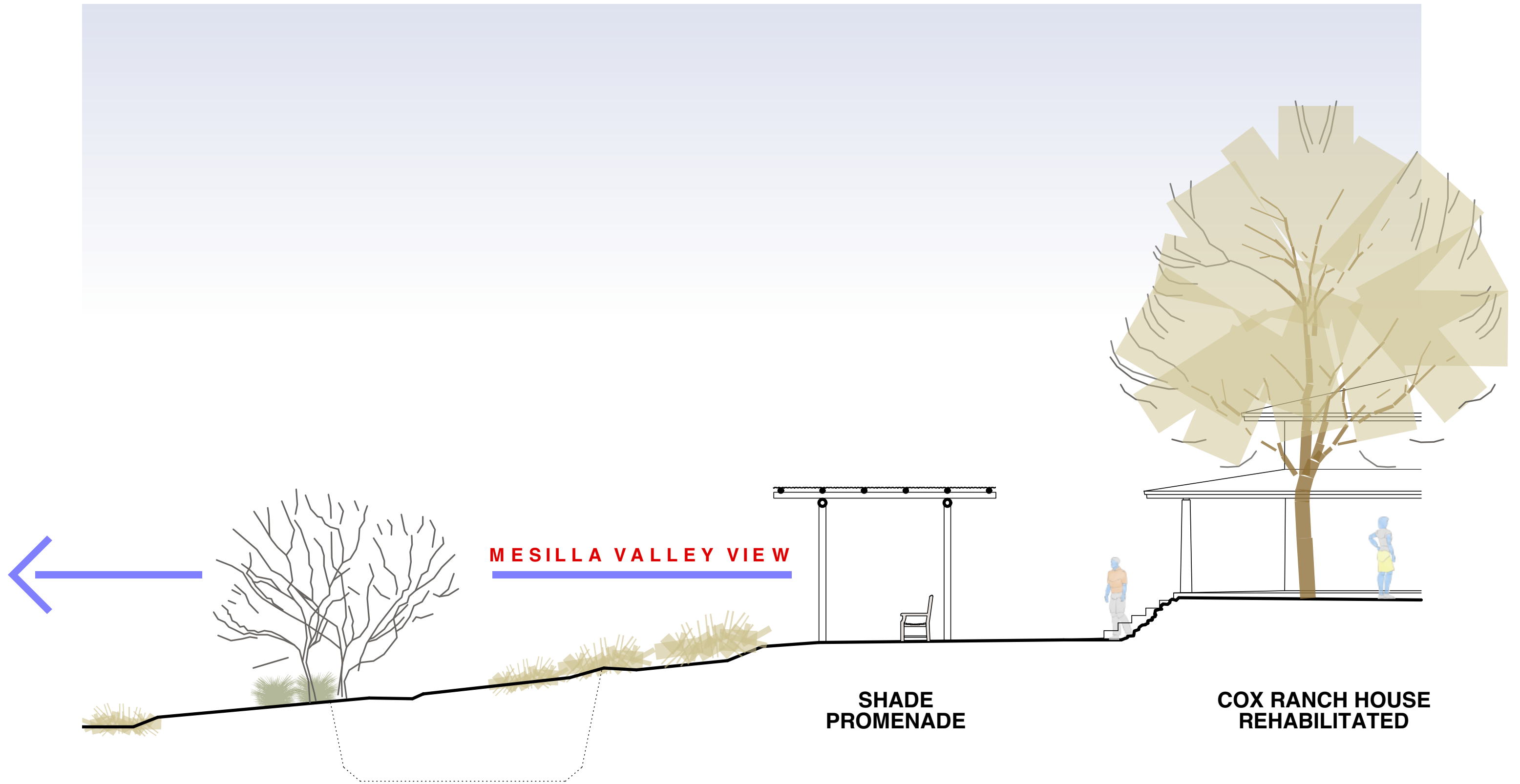
Slide 30 is a lose-up view of that same section diagram.



Slide 31 is a photo, taken at the Alamo, shows an example of outdoor interpretive panels.



Slide 32 is a photo of the Cox Visitor Center, taken from the southwest corner, shows the front and west side of the visitor center. Of particular note is the unused potential for visitor passage, and the possibility for a better linking of the La Cueva trail to the compound. This would take advantage of the view of the Mesilla Valley. Clearly visible are the low masonry walls that the consultant team believes should be removed.



Slide 33 shows the section diagram indicating the potential for a shade promenade along that same edge that could provide shaded com-fort to users, enjoying the view of the Mesilla Valley.

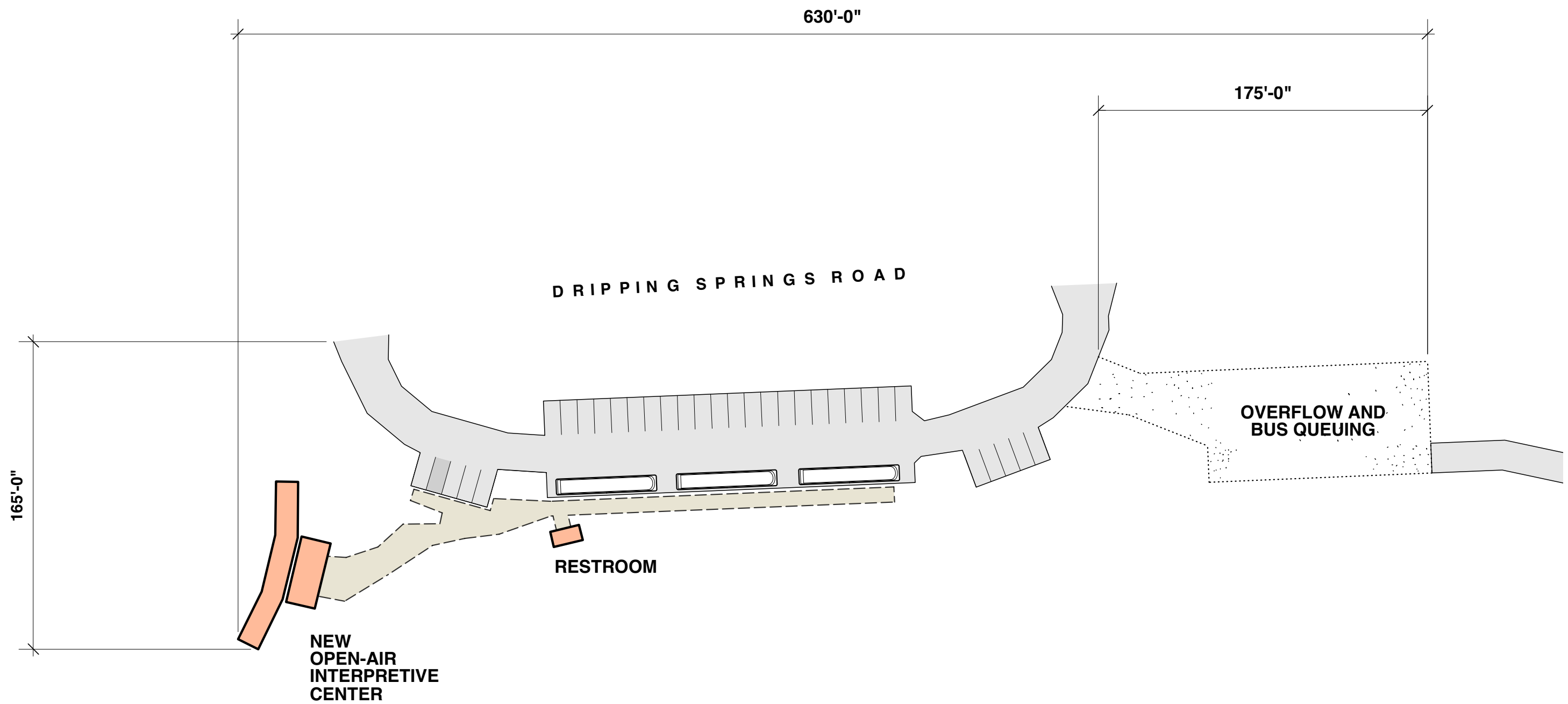
New Open-Air Interpretive Center

- Create a place that invites the visitor to enjoy majestic views across the valley to other parts of the Monument, and a place to learn about the richness and complexity of the entire Monument complex.
- Locate it at the site entry, to intercept as many visitors as possible. In this way, offer the visitor an introductory experience while at the same time dampening the traffic burden at the existing, over-burdened amenities.
- Establish enhanced traffic management strategies, particularly with regards to tour buses.

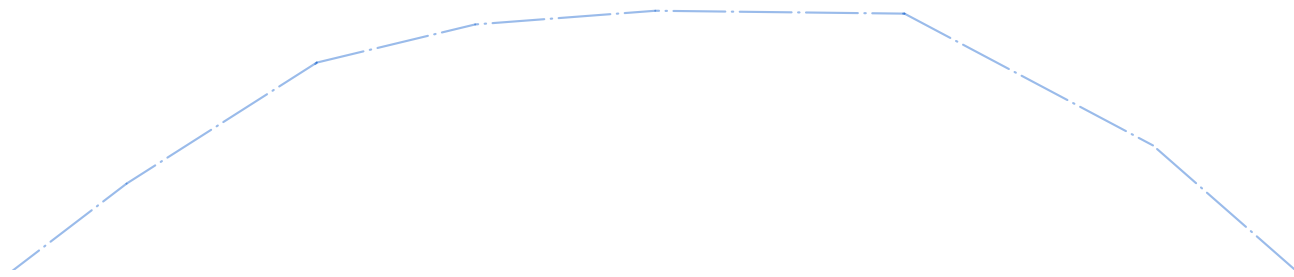


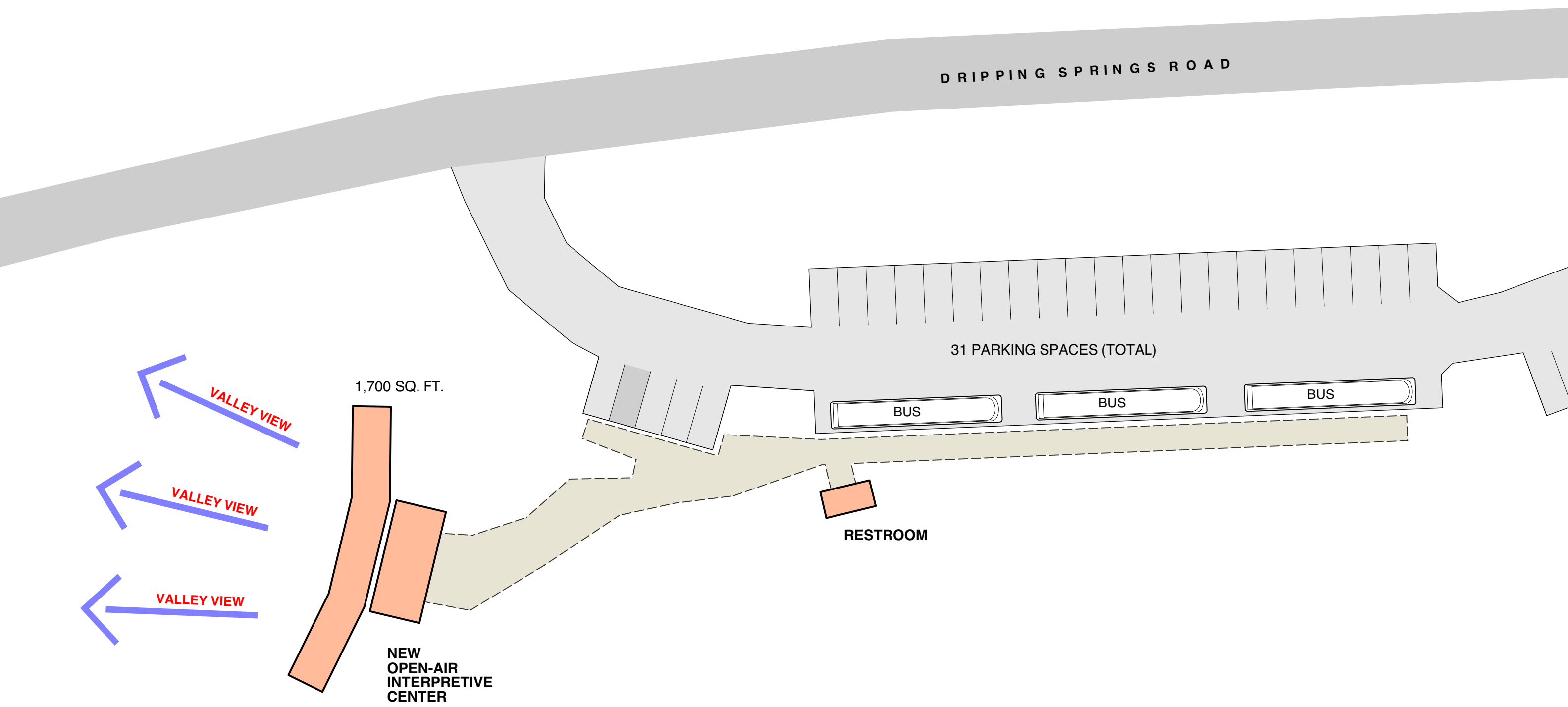
SITE + AREA

Slide 35 shows an Open-Air Interpretive Center location, as placed on a Google earth aerial image. The proposed location is along the south side of Dripping Springs Road near the current fire warning sign.



Slide 36 is a Plan Diagram of a New Open-Air Interpretive Center, with parking, overflow parking and a well-defined bus drop-off and pick-up area. The diagrammatic shape is intended to invite the visitor to enjoy a panoramic view of the other elements that constitute the monument. This center is seen as an important aspect in managing projected, future visitor demand.



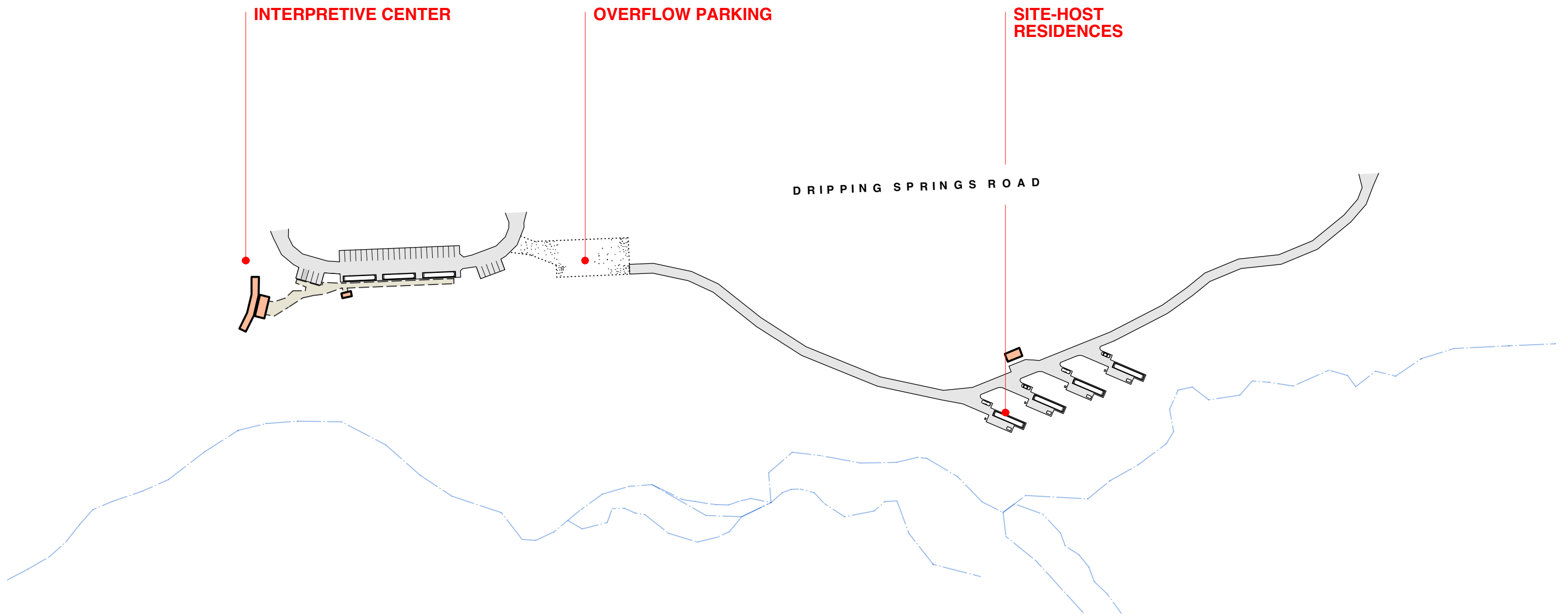


NEW INTERPRETIVE CENTER *Concept*

Slide 37 is a closer view of the plan diagram and includes view arrows to the valley below.



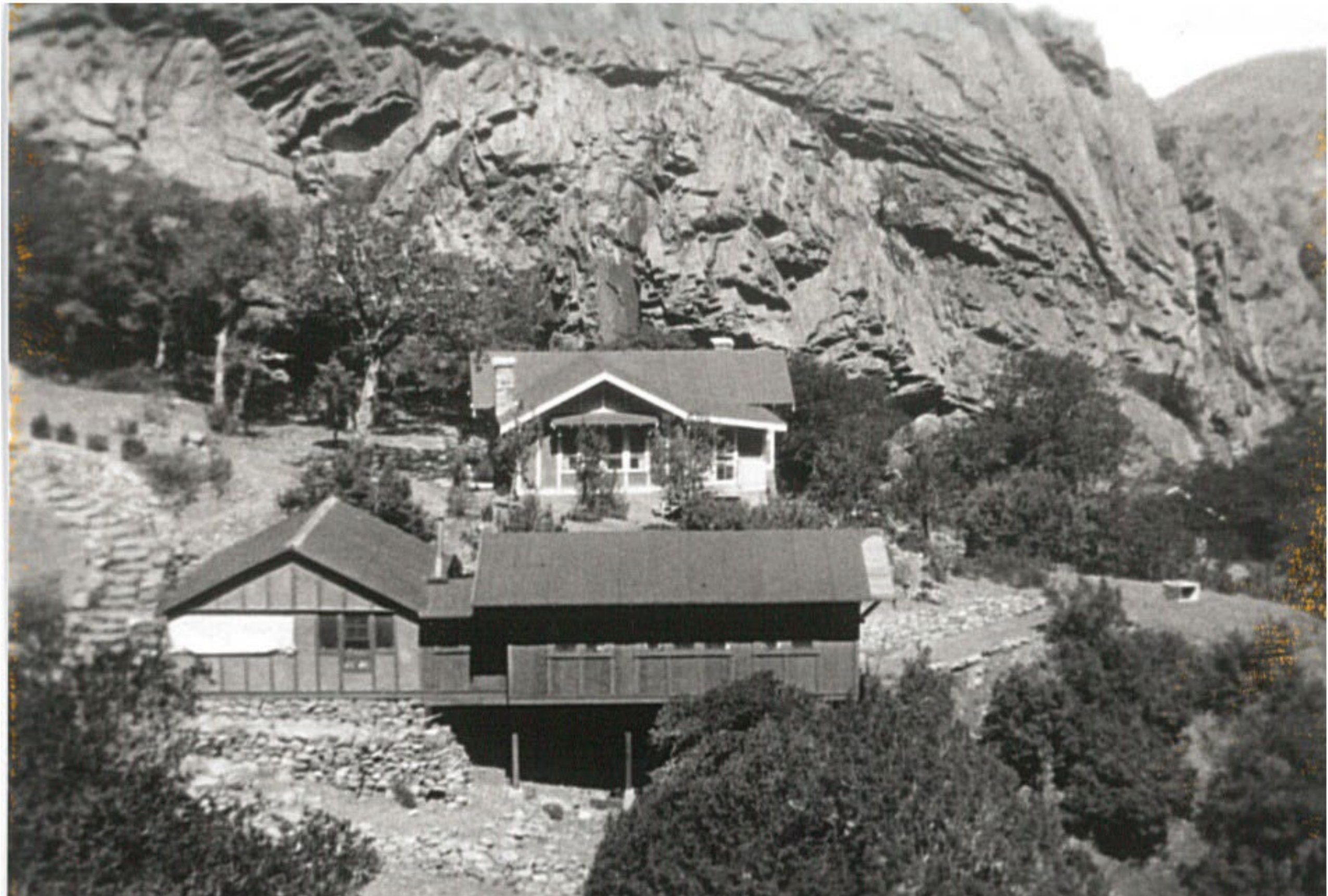
Slide 38 is a panoramic photo of the view from the recommended New Open-Air Interpretive Center.



Slide 39 is a Plan diagram that shows both the New Open-Air Interpretive Center and the new Site-Host residence locations. Note that this plan envisions all on-site, Site-Hosts living in recreational vehicles, relieving the BLM of significant landlord responsibilities.

The Ruins

- Continue the program of building protection and stabilization.
- Embrace the 100th anniversary of the end of the resort era to enrich the interpretive program for the Ruins.



Slide 41 is an historic, undated black and white photo of the two buildings that formed Boyd's Sanitarium. As the buildings seem to be in good repair, and the grounds appear to be well-maintained, this image probably dates to the 1920s or earlier.



Slide 42 is a current photo of Boyd's Sanitarium, showing its existing condition as a ruin. The photo suggests that maintaining its structural soundness as well as the roof might be considered in order to extend the life of the buildings.



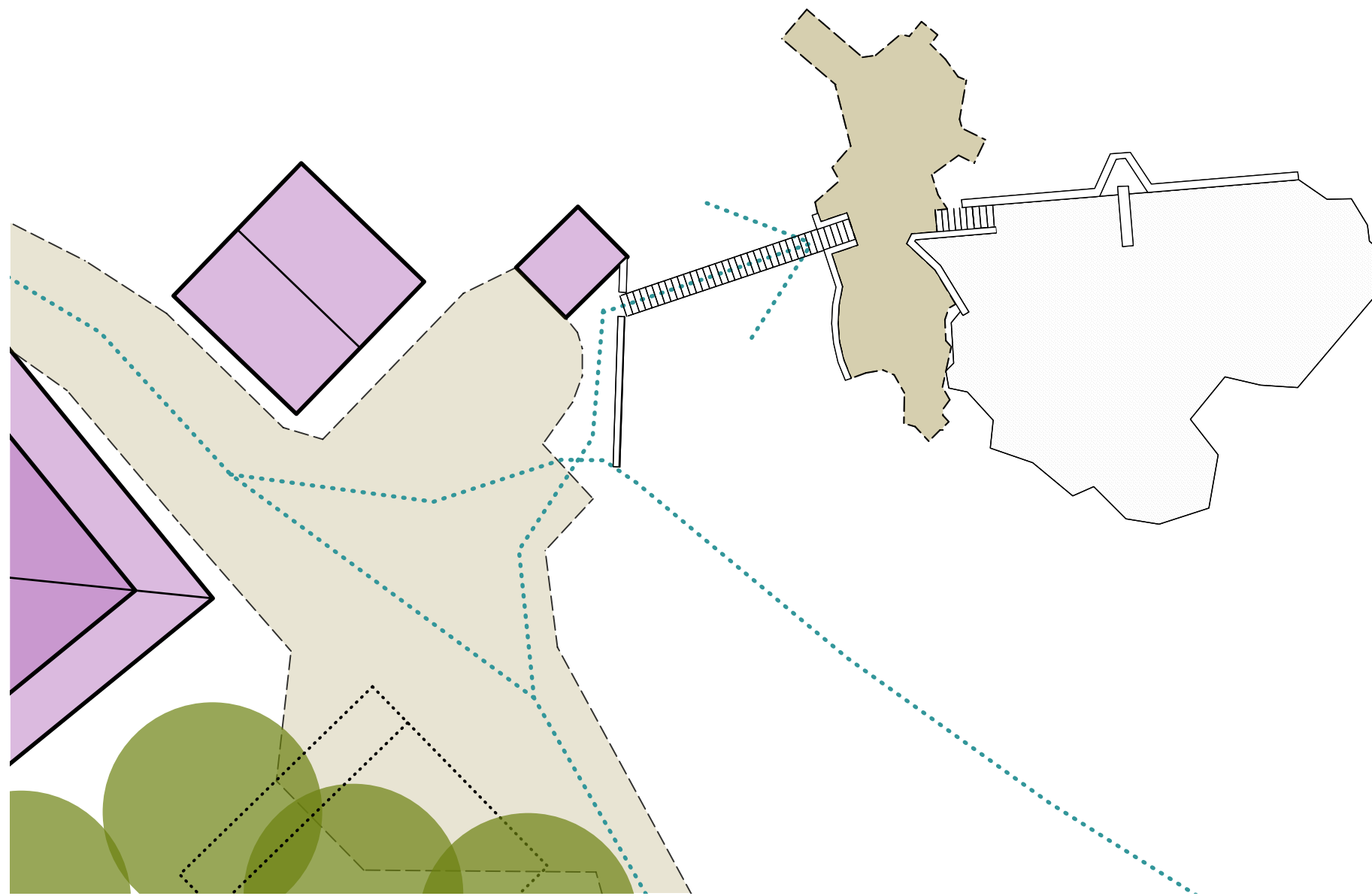
Slide 43 is an undated black and white photo of a group of adults and kids exploring the Dripping Springs resort area. The number of old cars might suggest some interpretive possibilities.

Ice Canyon

- Improve Ice Canyon to create a visitor opportunity. Add an accessible path as may be required.
- Interpret the leisure history of pre-BLM ranch life by restoring and/or rehabilitating the swimming pool infrastructure, including steps, guardrails, diving board, decks and the pool itself. Instead of water, consider filling the pool with gravel. Furnish the deck with “period” lawn furniture to encourage relaxed visitation, and to further convey the spirit of the time.
- Restore and/or rehabilitate the artist’s cottage.



Slide 45 is a current photo of Ice Canyon.



Slide 46 shows a diagram of the Ice Canyon area. The consultant team believes that the Ice Canyon swimming pool is an important piece of the Dripping Springs story, and efforts should be made to bring it into the visitor experience. The team recognizes that recreating the swimming pool is impractical. However, the swimming and leisure experience can and should be interpreted.



Slide 47 shows current photos of the Ice Canyon ramp and picnic area reveal that to completely bring Ice Canyon into the visitor experience, a new accessible route will need to be constructed in order to access the lower level swimming pool from the upper level Visitor Center.

Thank You

*If you would like to leave input on this presentation you may
send it via email to BLM_NM_LCDO_Comments@blm.gov*

Photo near the Ruins area of the Dripping Springs Trail looking west toward Las Cruces.