



## ENC EXPANSION

**Overview:** The Environmental Nature Center (ENC) shares a property line with 745 Dover Drive. The land has been vacant for some time and has recently become available for purchase. The ENC's vision is to incorporate the 1.3 acre parcel into an extension of the Nature Center to provide additional education resources for our community. The expansion will increase the learning opportunities for our student and family visitors while increasing resources to provide the hands-on experience with nature so needed in today's world. Improvements to the site will include expansion of the ENC's natural habitat, creation of a nature play area and the construction of our community's first nature based pre-school.



**Cost:** The list price of the land is \$3,150,000.

## ENC PRE-SCHOOL: A nature based early learning center

**Mission:** to provide education and nature exploration for the young children of Orange County in an effort to increase early environmental awareness and appreciation.

**Vision:** The ENC Nature Pre-school will educate up to 48 children per year, engage parents in active learning, serve as a model nature pre-school, provide a research forum on early childhood and environmental education and contribute financially to the ENC. Parents will actively seek out the ENC as a premier pre-school for their children.

Introduction: Current literature (Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods*, David Sobel's *Beyond Ecophobia*, Robert Michael Pyle's *The Thunder Tree*) supports a thesis that children today are growing into environmentally illiterate adults because of nature deprivation. These children are simply not spending time outside exploring, playing, and investigating. There are a number of factors contributing to this lack of "nature exposure": overly protective parents, city life, destruction of natural places, technology, etc. There are some professionals (Ken Finch with Green Hearts, David Sobel) that claim a step in the right direction is early exposure to nature and much unfacilitated nature play. Thus, in developing a Nature Pre-school, the stakeholders must have buy-in to the aforementioned basic claim. There are plenty of child care providers and pre-schools. A nature pre-school must be compellingly different. There are a number of reasons for a nature pre-school. Young children today are missing the marvels of the natural world around them in exchange for video games, the school system has become so structured and test oriented that kids are not living but rather performing ritual and as our society has advanced, and the disconnect to life's basic needs has become so great that children think food only comes from the grocery store.

What does a Nature Pre-school look like?

A Nature Pre-school:

- has play areas but no playgrounds
- recognizes that unfacilitated outdoor experiences are a crucial form of learning for children
- has qualified early childhood educators and environmental educators
- teaches all the basics of a typical preschool and more
- has children who spend the majority of the day outdoors
- has indoor spaces that are warm, welcoming and conducive to learning
- meets all the state requirements for licensure
- is an integrated part of the Environmental Nature Center
- is multi-sensory and recognizes multiple intelligences

**Scope:** The ENC pre-school will offer programming for students 3-5 years in age. The ENC Pre-school is a means by which the ENC can further its mission while also creating revenue to support other operations. The ENC Pre-school would advance the Center's mission while also fulfilling the mission of the school. Membership to the ENC would be a requirement of registering a child for the ENC Pre-school.

**Site:** 8,000 sq./ft. school with accompanying Nature Playscape built on expansion property at 745 Dover Drive. The school and playscape will have access to the ENC site through the Redwood Forest.



**Building:** All construction will meet or exceed the sustainable building guidelines incorporated into the existing LEED Platinum certified ENC facility. It is the goal of the project to achieve certification through the Living Building Challenge.

The Living Building Challenge is a philosophy, advocacy tool and certification program that addresses development at all scales. It is comprised of seven building performance areas: Site, Water, Energy, Health, Materials, Equity and Beauty. These are subdivided into a total of twenty Imperatives, each of which focuses on a specific sphere of influence. The purpose of the Living Building Challenge is straightforward – it defines the most advanced measure of sustainability in the built environment possible today and acts to diminish the gap between current limits and ideal solutions. The Living Building Challenge provides a framework for design, construction and the symbiotic relationship between people and all aspects of the built environment.

### An Interactive Learning Environment

Imagine a school that caters to the natural curiosity of an active pre-schooler through daily outdoor exploration and hands-on fun. Can you teach decomposition, poetry, seed travel, photosynthesis, number concepts, and art appreciation from a book? Yes. But wouldn't you better understand and longer retain those concepts by digging your hands into the earth, touching a fuzzy sycamore leaf, listening to the wind in the trees, feeling the tickle of a ladybug on your arm, painting a living cactus or by hopping, swooping, skipping and zigzagging down a trail?

By encouraging free play and integrating nature into the daily curriculum, the ENC Preschool will provide the ideal atmosphere for early brain development and lifelong appreciation for our natural world.

**plan**

1. Site Entry
2. Staff Area/ Office
3. Classroom
4. Storage
5. Snack Shelter
6. Kitchen
7. Nature Play
8. Garden
9. Cistern

VIEW FROM DOVER

VIEW FROM NATURE PLAY

**Estimated Construction Costs:**  
\$5,000,000

## Pre-school Operating Budget:

The budget plan allows for the Nature Pre-school to be self-supporting in addition to subsidizing ENC operations.

### Environmental Nature Center Nature Preschool Program Budget

|   | <u>Budget</u>         |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FEES</b>                               |                       |
| Program Fees (48 student max/\$10,000 annual tuition @ 90%) | 432,000               |
| Fund Raising  | 25,000                |
| Fund Raising Expense  | (2,500)               |
|   | <u>454,500</u>        |
| <b>PRESCHOOL PROGRAM EXPENSES</b>                           |                       |
| Salary and Benefits (Director, 4 Teachers and Assistant)    | 270,000               |
| Advertising   | 2,000                 |
| Consultants   | 3,000                 |
| Dues & Subscriptions  | 500                   |
| Educational Materials - Consummable                         | 3,500                 |
| Educational Materials - Non-consummable                     | 3,500                 |
| Educational Materials - Animal Supply                       | 1,500                 |
| Snacks  | 10,000                |
| Insurance (Building and Liability)                          | 8,000                 |
| License and Permit Fees                                     | 2,500                 |
| Office Supplies   | 2,000                 |
| Postage   | 500                   |
| Printing  | 2,000                 |
| Copier  | 3,000                 |
| Janitorial Services   | 7,000                 |
| Custodial Supplies  | 1,500                 |
| Utilities   | 3,000                 |
| Staff Development   | 2,000                 |
| Telephone   | 1,200                 |
| Travel  | 1,000                 |
| Miscellaneous   | 1,000                 |
| Overhead allocation   | 15,000                |
|   | <u>343,700</u>        |
| <b>TOTAL NATURE PRESCHOOL</b>                               | <u><u>110,800</u></u> |

Regulations: In the state of California pre-schools are licensed as a child care provider by the CA Department of Social Services.

## Staffing:

- To be staffed independently of ENC with ENC Naturalists routinely visiting the school. Ideal staffing would have teacher teams of 1 environmental educator with 1 early childhood educator
- The Pre-school Director develops curriculum, supervises pre-school staff and manages day to day operations

Supporting Information:

Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

<http://www.nhnature.org/preschool.html>

South Shore Natural Science Center

<http://www.ssnc.org/preschool>

New Canaan Nature Center

<http://www.newcanaannature.org/programs/preschool/index.php>

Dodge Nature Center

<http://www.dodgenaturecenter.org/Preschool>

Schlitz Audubon Nature Center

<http://www.schlitzauduboncenter.com/natpre.htm>

Chippewa Nature Center

<http://www.chippewanaturecenter.com/naturepreschool.htm>

Kalamazoo Nature Center

<http://www.naturecenter.org/Preschool.aspx>

Green Hearts

<http://www.greenheartsinc.org>

CA Department of Social Services

<http://cclld.ca.gov/PG487.htm>