Welcome Centers for Armenia

December 6, 2009
WELCOME CENTER

LOCATION: P’TGHЕVAN
SCHEDULE: 8 months

- Building: 70.2 m²
- Arcade: 88.76 m²
- Surround: 96.8 m²
- Total: 255.76 m²

^Construction and Outfitting

Construction: $30,123,295
Heating, A/C, fixtures: $3,500,000
Furniture, equipment: $3,000,000

Operation (est.)

Staff: $4,284,475
Utilities, running costs: $3,020,320
Maps, brochures: $2,265,240

Community Programming

Staff: $17,439,734
Running costs: $3,664,412
Supervision, training, etc.: $10,694,906

TOTAL: $75,970,351

^Construction includes state and local permissions.

*Hwy approach, parking donated by Ministry of Transport

WORKING PARTNERS:
- Local Community
- Honorary Consul for Italy in Giumri
- Arminco Communications
- Armenian Travel Bureau
- Ministry of Transport
- Democracy Today
- Armenian Green Cross

OPERATING PARTNERS:
- RoA Tourism Agency
- Local community
- Sponsor(s)

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM

One of the most common complaints by visitors to Armenia is the lack of quality information and accessible clean facilities at tourist rest stops or welcome centers. Another is the lack of service or understanding of the products, services, or their presentation and packaging, international tourists expect.

The result is that the legendary hospitality Armenians are known for in their private lives is not transferred to the tourist experience, and so they are frustrated in their search for information, to buy Armenian local products and use Armenian tour services. This is a loss to the country.

We propose to create a public-private initiative to alleviate this problem by erecting rest stops and welcome centers along motorways and primary destination spots in Armenia.

This is also an income-generation project, combining public-private funds to achieve a country-wide series of welcome centers serving both international and local travelers, local communities and individual sponsors.

Parallel to our ongoing Silk Road Rest Stop component, we want to create an all-season center with clean facilities, an interior space for tourist information and the sale of local community crafts and products and tourist services.

Sponsoring entities can use the space for their own services as well, in exchange for maintaining and covering running costs, plus donating an annual fee for access to the site. For example a cell phone carrier can use the building to sell its services while distributing tourism information.

SILK ROAD REST STOPS

These are small (open kiosks) rest stops along the Silk Road serviced by adjoining vulnerable communities. Villagers create produce and crafts that are sold at the stop, as well as provide local tour services (home stays, hiking, horseback riding). The income is regenerative and enables poor villages to improve their living standards by maintaining the rest stop.

To date, AMAP has begun working with two vulnerable communities on this project, at the Georgian Border (P’tghevan-Noyemberian) and Noratus. Communities are responsible for site preparation and participating in training. AMAP contributes seed-funding for materials, including construction, first season’s packaging, and training in how to serve tourists and prepare products for their tastes. We also work wit communities in establishing benchmarks and programs for income generation that benefits the entire community.

Donated by others

- Cty land (50 yr. lease): $126,000,000
- Site Preparation: $4,200,000
- Landscaping, planting: $2,520,000
- Hwy approach, parking: $5,040,000

137,760,000

*Land donated by community
*Landscape donated by Green Cross NGO
The packaging component was funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and is supported by working partners Democracy Today and Armenian Green Cross, to train local communities in services and craft packaging, and in environmental protection of sites with endemic endangered species of trees and plants.

**WELCOME CENTERS**

Our project includes the planning, preparations and construction of Welcome Centers that would then be operated by local communities with the assistance of qualified partners, plus the general sponsor.

**WELCOME CENTER DESIGN**

The centers expand on the Rest Stop idea with large, all-weather buildings that include clean facilities, a large open space to distribute maps, brochures, tour information, and to sell local products.

The centers are designed according to traditional Armenian houses, the “hazarashen”: The plan is a square, the roof supported by four pillars topped by a central aperture, the “yertik”. Surrounding three sides is an open arcade that will support grape and other vines. The geometric design inside the space features a star pattern made from the intersection beams supporting the roof.

The design for this proposal shows a large 255.76 m² center. It can be modified into a center roughly half the size for about two-thirds of the cost.

**Large and small centers** We envision eventually a combination of large and small centers to cover the country. This is more economical, and takes into account the relative number of visitors at candidate sites, as well as logical stops on Armenia’s highways.

Large centers will be at primary crossing points into the country and the most populace and/or evenly spaced stopping points. They are filled in with smaller centers that include facilities but will serve a smaller group of visitors. Combined, they evenly cover the country and provide a stopping point about every 1.5-2 hours from the last stopping point.

**WELCOME CENTER SERVICES**

A large desk will wrap around the four pillars so that staff can access the public on all sides, giving out maps, brochures and as possible, arranging for tour services, making reservations, etc.

**WELCOME CENTER OPERATIONS**

The center will support three main activities: tourist information center with clean facilities, sale point for local products, crafts and tour services, and as a sales point for the general sponsor.

The costs for running the center are estimated and will be born by a general sponsor and/or community.

The packaging component was funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and is supported by working partners Democracy Today and Armenian Green Cross, to train local communities in services and craft packaging, and in environmental protection of sites with endemic endangered species of trees and plants.

Since the space is shared with that for tourism and sale of local community income (souvenirs, handcrafted goods), it indicated the sponsors commitment to development while capturing a coveted market—the international and local traveler who will use the welcome center to get information and have access to clean facilities

**SPONSORSHIP LEVELS**

**Shared Access** Total (exclusive) sponsorship reserves part of the space for use by the exclusive sponsor (shared use of the main desk inside the welcome center, the other part used to distribute tourist information and handle sales of local handcrafted items and products).

**Partial sponsorship** does not give the sponsor access to the space for their business purposes, but entitles them to recognition on signage at the site.

**Note:** Exclusive Sponsorship that includes the cost of construction and set up of the center entitles exclusive sponsor to shared access to the center for 2 years.

Afterwards an annual access fee will be negotiated between AMAP and the exclusive sponsor for continued shared access. If no agreement is made, the right of use will be offered to other sponsors. These funds will be used to help create new welcome centers in Armenia.

For centers already built, exclusive sponsors can negotiate an annual access to the site provide there are no other exclusive sponsors for the site.

Partial sponsorship will entitle the sponsor to one-year branding at the site, which can be renewed
annually with new donations (negotiated between AMAP and the sponsor).

WELCOME CENTER LOCATION
The Pilot Project will build one Welcome Center, at P’tghevan (Georgian border), where we have already established a rest stop pavilion. The new permanent building will serve both to enhance income chance for the community but also serve as a proper welcome center for the nation.

We feel P’tghevan (Georgian border at Sadakhlo) is the best choice, for these reasons:

1. It is the most widely used point of entry to Armenia, with the highest profile.
2. The community is supportive and is already donating its land to our 2009 Rest Stop program, which can easily upgrade to a Welcome Center.
3. The location is near Noyemberian, a depressed vulnerable area that can use the economic activity.
4. Local crafts and produce are already at a high level, and AMAP training with locals in packaging and tourist standards is at a good level.
5. There is the opportunity to support handicapped children at the Noyemberian School for handicapped, which has a growing ceramic and crafts area that can benefit from sales of its goods at the welcome center
6. Business wise this gives the sponsor and excellent chance to introduce itself and sell its services to people entering the country.
7. What is learned at this center can be more easily duplicated at other locations, including other entry points (land and air).

Long Term Sites include all open borders and at key spots along major roadways. It can also include well-visited major destinations.

A network of 10-12 welcome centers of different sizes is envisaged. A proposed map showing development over 5 years is in the next section of the proposal.

BUDGET
The budget is a turn-key solution that includes the cost and obtaining of all building, usage and other local permissions, architectural drawings, schematics and engineering preparation, all construction and detailing (wiring, plumbing, fixtures) and connection to local utilities (budget includes taking plumbing and wiring 2 meters from the building for connection to local system).

It does not include property rights or site preparation which will be the contribution of the community or landholder. It does not include asphalt access or parking lot, which will be the contribution of the Ministry of Transport.

Plantings and landscaping will be the contribution of our Eco Partner, Green Cross ecological NGO.

SCHEDULE
2011: 1 Pilot Site
2012-2013: 2 Sites each year
Construction Schedule:
For the Pilot Phase (1st year), opening of site and allied activities can be achieved within 10 months of receipt of funds to pay for the site. For example, funding provided by January, 2010 will ensure opening of site by October of same year. This is a conservative estimate to insure successful completion of construction and integration of the community support activities and the shared use of the space between the exclusive sponsor and the community and the tourist support agency (if warranted).

After the pilot phase, the process can speed up so that Welcome centers will open within an estimated 6 months from donation of all funds for the budget of each welcome center.

ROLES
This is a Pilot Phase project, funded for one (1) Welcome Center, during one (1) year.

- AMAP will prepare in cooperation with the relevant Partner a list of sites to be included in the project phase. These will include all details to be included in the final presentation.
- SPONSOR will provide technical assistance in the kind of expertise and support within its sphere of experience to the project.
- AMAP will act as contractor and work with subcontractors to construct the Welcome Center, as outlined above. Primary Sponsor will manage and run the site, including staffing and supplies, paying a donation to AMAP for access. Such donation will be dedicated to AMAP programming.
- Armenian Green Cross will landscape and provide plantings to the site
• The Ministry of Transport or its contractors will provide and pave hwy access and parking lot for the space.
• AMAP will provide training, signage and initial investment for materials, plus monitor site activities.
• Community will provide exclusive use of the land to the center and AMAP and SPONSOR(S).
• Community will prepare site for construction and provide local workers to the project, as requested by AMAP or contractors.
• Community will provide staffing to the Welcome Center including tour information staff, cleaning and security.
• Staff will be directly hired by SPONSOR and under their control in providing their services. They will be trained and supervised by AMAP in providing tourism information and related services at the center.
• For Welcome Centers, local communities will manage Rest Stop facilities, services and items to open and operate the center as per agreement with SPONSOR.
• Community will have access to the site to sell local handcrafts and products provide they are trained by AMAP and its partners in international standards on items to sell, packaging and sales.
• AMAP will arrange presentations for sponsor(s). Sponsors will pay for presentations by their own donations, attendance and promotional activities.

• AMAP will create brochures to be distributed at the site, using AMAP created content approved by relevant Partner.
• AMAP will monitor project progress for donors to insure the project is implemented according to plan.

WORKING PARTNERS
The Ministry of Com. & Transport (MOT)
The MOT is another important working partner. The MOT installs roadside signs and asphaltling in-kind donation to the project and secures right-of-way and other services to AMAP. The MOT has indicated its continued support for the project.

Honorary Consulate for Italy in Giumri
The Honorary Consulate promotes friendship and cultural exchange between Italy and Armenia. The consulate also supports efforts to unearth record and promote Armenian culture in Armenia and Italy. Led by Mr. Antonio Montalto, Honorary Consul for Italy, the consulate serves as an active supporter for the AMAP project, with focus on Giumri. Montalto will assist with technical assistance and product and packaging training to local community, as well as setting up sales area of the center.

Democracy Today
Democracy Today NGO is involved in two tasks; women’s rights and rural community development. Both are relevant to our project as the successful correction of one problem alleviates the symptoms of the other. DT has or is working with 48 economically depressed villages in business development, culture and tourism opportunities. For the project AMAP will cooperate with DT in developing local capacity to serve visitors with locally produced items and services, raising the income and economic viability of the community.

Armenian Green Cross
Armenian Green Cross supports the revitalization and preservation of Armenian forests and wilderness areas. Its members include environmental and botanical specialists from governmental, educational and private sectors and AGC continues to support the re-greening of the country through its nurseries and ongoing programs in education, alternative energy, ecotourism and prevention of natural disasters. AGC will as its contribution provide landscaping and plantings to the site. The seedlings will beautify the site and additionally promote tree planting in Armenia, assisting in the preservation of one of Armenia’s natural monuments; its arboreal population.

TourArmenia
TourArmenia began publishing material about Armenia in 1996, and has one of the most popular web sites about Armenia on the Internet, with more than 7 million visitors and 60 million page views. The web site (www.TACentral.com) has over 1000 pages of information about the country, including detailed chapters for each region, maps, plans and articles. TourArmenia is in final preparations for publication as a book. TourArmenia will participate in the project by lending original content including graphics, maps and plans, and in providing copyrighted material as a donation to the project.

MANAGEMENT TEAM
Rick Ney (President, AMAP; Chief of Party, Project
Executive Director: project implementation and overall supervision, English language content)

Rick first came to Armenia in 1992 to work at the American University of Armenia. In 1993 he began his work in humanitarian aid and development for USAID-
funded projects at the Armenian Assembly of America (1993-1994) and Fund for Democracy and Development (1994-1995), the latter as Caucasus Region Director. For these projects Rick was Finance Director and then Project Director for the distribution of $70 million dollars of humanitarian aid for Georgia and Armenia, and schools throughout the country. Rick is President and Chief of Party for Armenian Monuments Awareness Project (AMAP)

Bella Karapetyan (Vice-President, AMAP: Executive Associate Director, Research and implementation coordinator, Government Liaison, Museum Coordinator, Russian language translations, project assurance)

Bella started her career at the ArmStateDesign Institute as an Information Assistant and Translator working with foreign professionals. Projects included rehabilitation of the earthquake zone, “Europolis” International City of Peace, and the Campus of the American University of Armenia (AUA). At AUA Bella also served as a Faculty Service Manager and Special Events Coordinator. Bella worked for 12 years at the UN WFP/Armenia office, in Administration, then responsible for the Program Coordination and Monitoring of all food assistance and community development projects countrywide.

Rafael Torossian (Vice-President, AMAP: Executive Associate Director for Design, quality assurance)

Rafael served as the assistant to the Head of the Committee for Sports and Youth from 1974-1998, where he was responsible for the overall management of the committee. He joined the Armenian Assembly of America and Fund for Democracy and Development as Assistant Finance Director and then Finance Director for USAID and UNHCR funded projects to distribute humanitarian aid to Georgia and Armenia (1993-1995). Rafael is Vice-president of TransWorld Resources Int’l Inc (TWRI), which offers consultant services, Internet and informational services, publishing and web design. Work includes multi-function databases for Armenian Airlines business plan and investment prospectus; Aeroflot regional marketing and web consultancy (UK, Japan, and Moscow), online publishing interfaces and a variety of web sites and IT productivity components.

Ashot Yervandyan (Associate Director, Manufacturing and Installations Supervisor, government and community liaison)

Ashot is a founding member of AMAP’s team and has extensive logistics work beginning with Armenian Assembly of America (1992-1993 Winter Warmth) and Fund for Democracy and Development (1993-1994 Winter Warmth), where he worked as a monitor. He has work experience in local construction, manufacturing and logistics and is a key member of our team to insure the smooth manufacturing and installation of all panels.

Vardan Khatchmanyan (Project Associate, Silk Road Rest Stops, Braille panels, Laminates, community development, French Translations)

Vartan worked at the RA Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Foreign Affairs department of the Yerevan Municipality, working closely with European partners on a wide variety of projects. Vartan also served as the representative for the French-Armenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the city of Marseilles in Armenia. Vartan works with the “Democracy Today” NGO as a member of organization council and head of the “Investing in community education – creating new livelihood” program.

Harutiuin “Sayat” Tadevosyan (Project Associate, Installations & liaison, rural Armenia)

Sayat graduated from Yerevan State Pedagogical Institute, Department of General technical subjects. Studied English at the University of Birmingham in UK. Specialized training includes Project Design and Management (US Peace Corps), Effective Negotiation Skills (TD and GTZ), Labor Legislation (BSC/Yerevan), Financial Management and Administrative Compliance requirements (NATBA CPE/Italy) and Leadership Development (CORDAID & CTC/Georgia). From 1997-2002 Sayat worked in Armenian Caritas Benevolent NGO as an Office Manager, Deputy Director, Acting Director, and Assistant to the Executive Director. At present he is an Executive Director of “Kamar” social-educational NGO and a member of the Board of Trustees of MDF Kamurj.

Christine Bessalyan (Project Associate, communications and PR)

Christine is a graduate of Yerevan State University faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology, English Department. From 2000-2005, she was professor of English at Interlingua Linguistic University, Yerevan. Since 2006, she has been Editorial Assistant at ArmeniaNow.com Internet journal, where she is in charge of daily operation of the newsroom and is also a translator/interpreter.

Other positions

The project will include a professional accountant, implementation managers and Office Assistants. Other positions include full-time consultancy by ICOMOS/Armenia (see partners), temporary translators, foreign language proofreaders, researchers, photographers, and office driver / manufacturing coordinator.
WELCOME CENTER
Front facade with arcade
Lateral facade
Front facade