



Master Plan – Version 1.5

A Vision for Meher Mount – Now and for the Future

VERSION 1.5 ADOPTED May 5, 2012

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary purpose of Meher Mount is to provide for the betterment of mankind by implementing the teachings of Meher Baba.¹

PURPOSE OF MEHER MOUNT

Meher Mount is a universal spiritual center in Ojai, California, dedicated to Avatar Meher Baba. Visitors come to Meher Mount on pilgrimage for celebrating Divine Love and Oneness, for loving God through nature, and for service.

Meher Mount is 173 acres at the 2,500-foot level atop Sulphur Mountain. It overlooks the beautiful Ojai Valley backed by Chief Mountain on the north, the Pacific Ocean and Channel Islands to the southwest, and Topa Topa Mountain in the Los Padres National Forest on the northeast. Meher Baba sanctified the property when He visited Meher Mount on August 2, 1956.

When Meher Baba and His party arrived on the mountain, a fog had settled in over the Ojai Valley. Baba gestured to Agnes Baron, the then owner and caretaker of the property, and said, “I love Meher Mount very much and feel happy here.”²

A Place of Pilgrimage

Followers of Meher Baba come from all over the world in honor of Him, to walk in the footsteps of the Avatar of the Age, and to feel His presence. Other visitors – who may know nothing of Meher Baba – also come on pilgrimage, sometimes for unknown reasons or because they have heard that Meher Mount is a sacred place.

Divine Love and Oneness in Avatar Meher Baba

For those who visit, there is often a connection to something larger than themselves. There is a special, sometimes indescribable feeling of joy, peace or contentment. There is a sense of feeling and celebrating Divine Love.

Several times during His visit, Meher Baba emphasized the opportunity at Meher Mount to relax and enjoy being in the Avatar’s company. At one point, Meher Baba said, “You are so lucky to be with me so closely...”³

At another time during the day, Baba smiled and said, “This afternoon, you all have a chance to laugh and feel relaxed. Baba also has a chance to relax here for five minutes... here today, we feel relaxed, happy. I come down to your level so that we can laugh and be free together; but do not forget at the same time that I am the Highest of the High.”⁴

¹ Articles of Incorporation.

² The account of Meher Baba’s visit to Meher Mount was described in *The Awakener*, written and edited by Filis Frederick, and later included in the multi-volume biography of Avatar Meher Baba, *Lord Meher* by Bhau Kalchuri.

³ *Lord Meher*.

⁴ *Lord Meher*.

Meher Baba also stated, “I want you all to close your eyes for five minutes. Do not think of anything, just think of Baba.”⁵

It is said that the Chumash Indians consider Sulphur Mountain a place where the blessings of heaven are brought down to mankind. Meher Baba’s presence made Meher Mount a place where the eternal and the temporal meet.

“This land is very old, I have been here before,” Meher Baba said during His 1956 visit. Later, He cryptically remarked, “I will come here again.”⁶

Loving God through Nature

During His visit, Meher Baba gestured toward the outdoors and said, “Now, go out and see the view and try to love Baba through nature. This is all due to my love. This whole creation, this nature, all the beauty you see, all came out of me.”⁷

Visitors come to Meher Mount to enjoy the natural setting. They are fortunate to hear the birds sing, to catch a glimpse of a bobcat or a mountain lion, and to share the land with the deer, the snakes, and even the gophers.

The symbol of Meher Baba’s visit – a Coast Live Oak known as Baba’s Tree – is part of the natural beauty and for many is a means for remembering Meher Baba. During Meher Baba’s visit, He “...went into the ten of leafy branches and sat down on a bed of dry leaves. He signaled that no one else should sit down. His eyes shone in the half-light, and He made a sign that He was happy.”⁸

Service to Meher Mount

From Meher Mount’s earliest days, there have been opportunities for service by helping to support and maintain the property honor of Meher Baba. While over the years, the tasks have changed, Meher Mount still depends upon volunteers for its maintenance and stewardship.

Agnes Baron, the former owner, caretaker and Meher Mount’s self-described “watchdog” struggled to keep the property for Meher Baba. She was particularly interested in selfless service or *karma yoga*. She urged all to volunteer their time and energy in service at Meher Mount.

At one point, Agnes wrote to Meher Baba stating, “If you want me to keep Meher Mount, I will keep it for you through hell, fire and damnation!”⁹ Meher Baba replied that she should keep it for Him by all means, and He sent His love.

Each generation continues with that responsibility to hold Meher Mount for the Avatar and to preserve Meher Mount for future generations.

⁵ *Lord Meher.*

⁶ *Lord Meher.*

⁷ *Lord Meher.*

⁸ *Lord Meher.*

⁹ *Lord Meher.*



VISION STATEMENT

The vision for Meher Mount is to preserve the beauty and integrity of Meher Mount, particularly those spots touched by Beloved Avatar Meher Baba; to maintain the natural beauty of Meher Mount and facilitate loving God through nature; to enable pilgrimage to this land made sacred by His presence; to provide opportunities for service; and to express Meher Baba's universal love in welcoming visitors regardless of backgrounds and faiths.

The special atmosphere of Beloved Baba's presence and the quiet beauty of Meher Mount is maintained and nurtured by operating primarily as a place for day visits. Meher Mount offers special programs and meetings focused on Avatar Meher Baba's message of Love and Truth.

The development of buildings, programs and activities is undertaken with environmental sensitivity. Any project or activity that is not essential to this vision, that is significantly less costly or more practical to do elsewhere, and/or would have a significant impact on Meher Mount's environment, should be done at a location other than Meher Mount.

Meher Mount is primarily a place for day pilgrimage. During His visit, Avatar Meher Baba said, "I would like to have spent the night here, but there is no time."¹⁰

Meher Mount affords all the opportunity to "...try to love Baba through nature," actively nurturing the natural environment including plant and animal life. There are trails providing the opportunity for the appreciation of the beautiful natural settings.

To accommodate day pilgrims, Meher Mount has a central building or Visitor Center that houses offices, a library of publications about Meher Baba, selected archives, an orientation exhibit, guest registration and orientation, and room(s) for informal gatherings and meetings. There are a limited number of simple, modest places for visitors to sleep for short stays.

There are also specific outdoor gathering areas both large and small. In addition, there is an ancillary agricultural facility with a work area and sufficient room to house tools and equipment necessary for maintaining Meher Mount. Separate Manager/Caretaker quarters provide a home for the volunteer caretakers who manage Meher Mount on a daily basis.

Meher Mount offers opportunities for active love and service in Beloved Avatar Meher Baba's name by involving all in one or more aspects of maintaining and developing Meher Mount in accordance with the Mission, Vision and Master Plan. Individual service is in Beloved Baba's name and in the spirit of selfless service.

Meher Mount regularly communicates through newsletters, the internet and the mailing of programs and special announcements. Meher Mount makes information available about Avatar Meher Baba as well as key facts about Meher Mount and Agnes Baron.

Meher Mount operates under fiscally responsible policies and procedures for long-term stability.

Meher Mount is organized and run in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, periodically reappraising governance structures and processes. There is an active and

¹⁰ *Lord Meher.*

effective board supported by specific committees; experienced, responsible and dedicated Manager/Caretakers; and committed volunteers.

The Board of Directors, the Manager/Caretakers, and the Meher Mount community honor their role as stewards of the land honoring legal requirements, building good relationships with the neighbors, and safeguarding the property for future generations.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the Master Plan is to fulfill the Mission and Vision of Meher Mount, specifically:

- **Facilitate the Remembrance of Avatar Meher Baba**

Maintain Meher Mount as a medium for remembering Avatar Meher Baba and honoring His presence at Meher Mount.

- **Nurture Divine Love & Oneness through Nature**

Preserve the natural environment and support opportunities for loving God through nature.

- **Support Pilgrimage to Meher Mount**

Facilitate day pilgrimage of visitors with the least impact to Meher Mount.

- **Provide Opportunities for Service**

Honor Agnes Baron's legacy by creating opportunities for selfless service.

- **Be Good Stewards**

Preserve Meher Mount for future generations with thoughtful and careful stewardship.

ROLE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The role of the Master Plan is to provide a framework for planning, operations and future development of programs, activities and infrastructure. On the one it hand, it is designed to be broad enough to encompass all elements and aspects of Meher Mount. On the other hand, it is focused enough to provide consistent direction and guidance.

The Master Plan incorporates and synthesizes the decisions, ideas and plans developed to date, while allowing for future action within the guidelines outlined. It does not include every detail about every aspect of Meher Mount. Those details will be developed project by project over time. Annual goals and budgets are developed in the context of the Master Plan.

FOOTPRINTS ON THE LAND

Because of Meher Baba's presence, Meher Mount is often viewed as a gateway to God – a place where visitors make a connection to the inner, spiritual aspect of themselves, a connection to the Divine within. Meher Mount is also the outer, physical realm which is perceived by our five senses – a place where people live, work and support the land.

As such, Meher Mount has both temporal and eternal aspects. There are the ephemeral and temporal footsteps of the limited lifetime of a pilgrim; and there are the eternal footsteps of God. The design of the Master Plan takes into consideration both the temporal and eternal aspects of Meher Mount.

There are areas of the property that support Meher Mount's operational functionality and man's temporal footprint, and there are areas of the property that are eternal and focus on God's footprint. Throughout, there are gateways, paths and connections between all aspects of Meher Mount.

The Eternal Realm

The timeless or eternal realm represents a connection that goes beyond sight and hearing; it is an inner connection. It is a place that particularly celebrates the connection to the Beloved. It is a place that has always been and will always be here.

The eternal realm is created over a long period of time and goes past a single lifetime. The eternal connects to everything and has a different feel. And when a stone is moved or placed, the thought is about each stone as it has always been and will always be. Our footprint on the land should be small and adaptable.

In planning for the eternal realm some consideration should be given to: What are the places of stillness and silence? How can they be nurtured? What are the places of communion? What communal activities will take place? How many will be accommodated?

The Temporal Realm

In the temporal realm, Meher Mount accommodates functional activities. There are water systems, an ancillary agricultural facility, dwellings, places to picnic, and the infrastructure to support day-to-day living and interaction with the property. All are related to the cycle and rhythms within our mortal existence and timeframe.

In the temporary/temporal realm, residents and visitors live lightly. Within a limited timeframe, things come and go at quicker rate. Buildings and landscapes are created in a fashion that may last a lifetime, but speak more to the temporary than the eternal. There is an attitude of relating to what already exists – a historical representation of ways of building that are picked up and used in the future.

Gateways to Mark Transitions

Gateways indicate transitions and are an important part of the Meher Mount pilgrimage. When pilgrims enter Meher Mount, there is a gateway to signal a change and the entry onto a place of pilgrimage. Within Meher Mount there are gateways to signal movement from one aspect of Meher Mount to another.



REMEMBRANCE OF AVATAR MEHER BABA'S PRESENCE

When Avatar Meher Baba visited Meher Mount on August 2, 1956, Darwin Shaw, one of His followers who visited Meher Mount on that day, noted that Meher Baba left “an invisible fountain of spiritual energy.”

Because of this invisible fountain of spiritual energy, Meher Mount has become a site of world pilgrimage for followers of Avatar Meher Baba and for those who know nothing of Meher Baba but are drawn by a special feeling.

The Master Plan includes the preservation and identification of specific areas on the property touched by Meher Baba.

Baba's Tree

At the point overlooking the Pacific Ocean on the property, there is a Coastal Live Oak tree known as Baba's Tree. “Baba sat under it on the bed of dry leaves. He signaled that no one else should sit down. His eyes shone, and he said he was happy. Then he rose swiftly and led the group back down the dusty trail.”¹¹

For many visitors, Baba's Tree is the main point of pilgrimage – whether or not they are followers of Avatar Meher Baba. Many visitors revere the feeling they get when they visit this tree. One visitor, not knowing about Meher Baba, referred to it as “that cathedral tree.”

a. Preservation of Baba's Tree for Its Natural Lifetime

There are hundreds of Coastal Live Oaks, *Quercus Agrifolia*, at Meher Mount, including Baba's Tree. The spot where Meher Baba sat under Baba's Tree will always be of special significance, and the health of the tree itself is to be maintained insofar as is possible.

The preservation includes the hiring of a professional arborist to assess the health of the tree and make recommendations for maintaining and caring for Baba's Tree.

b. The Journey to Baba's Tree – The Walkways

When Meher Baba visited in 1956, the walk to Baba's Tree highlighted not only Baba's Tree at the point, but also the views of the tree covered valleys, the agricultural plains and the ocean beyond. Since that time, neighboring development has increased, distracting from those views.

To recreate that focus on Baba's Tree and on the natural setting as visitors walk to the point, there is an additional walkway *to* Baba's Tree that keeps the tree in focus, takes advantage of the views, and minimizes the man-made distractions. The path *from* Baba's Tree continues to follow in n Meher Baba's eternal footsteps.

c. Commemorative Markers under Baba's Tree


¹¹ *Lord Meher.*

Meher Baba sat alone in silence under His tree for several minutes on that August day. A marker in His memory and fitting for the site is to be created and placed on the spot where He sat.

There is also a marker under Baba's Tree in memory of Agnes Baron, "Baba's watchdog," who managed Meher Mount for 48 years and kept it for Him through "hellfire and damnation." This marker is to be refurbished and secured in place.

d. Gathering Area Outside Baba's Tree

To provide for small gatherings near the tree that take advantage of the views, the Master Plan calls for a more formalized seating/meditation area *outside* and behind Baba's Tree. That area can be used for small gatherings in order to limit the activity under the tree, particularly if such activity poses a threat to the long-term health of Baba's Tree.

 **Fireplace & Courtyard**

When Meher Baba visited, He spent time in what was then the "guest house" on the property. "When all the visitors had arrived, Baba called them all into the 'Babaroom' of the guest house and said, 'next to Myrtle Beach, I love this place best.' Baba added, 'This land is very old, I have been here before.'"¹²

The guest house building was destroyed in a fire on October 16, 1985. The only remnant of that building is the fireplace near the spot where Meher Baba and His followers sat. Many pilgrims consider that area around the fireplace one of the places He sanctified.

a. Preservation of the Fireplace


The first objective is to identify ways in which the fireplace structure can be reinforced and preserved. The second objective is to determine under what circumstances, if any, a fire could burn in the fireplace. If fires were allowed in the fireplace, there could be specific *dhuni* programs at Meher Mount.

b. A Courtyard around the Fireplace

To commemorate Meher Baba's presence in the guest house and to facilitate usage of the area around the fireplace, the Master Plan calls for building a surrounding courtyard to be used by pilgrims.

c. A Marker Where Meher Baba Sat

To honor and memorialize Meher Baba's presence in the guest house, a marker is to be put in the area where He sat.

 **Pool Hill**

a. Top of the Hill

¹² *Lord Meher.*

The original owners of the property built a swimming pool on the top of a hill. For the past 45 years, the pool has served as a reservoir for water pumped up from the well. There is currently a water treatment system next to the pool.

When the water system needs to be replaced at some future date, it can be replaced at a new location. The pool area could then be converted to a Meher Baba site, possibly with a covered area for group meetings and/or facilities for individual picnics, meditation, and the enjoyment of the view and natural surroundings.

b. Area Below the Pool

There is a flat area and indentation below the brow of the pool hill that has been cleared for visitors to sit and look at the valley and ocean views, meditate, and spend time with Baba's Tree in view. This is not particularly a picnic area.



History & Archives Project

a. Meher Mount History & Artifacts

This project has the ultimate goal of capturing and preserving the history and chronology of Meher Mount, collecting and presenting individual personal stories, and preserving physical memorabilia and photos.

There are an endless number of stories about Meher Mount – its relationship with Avatar Meher Baba, the history of its founding, how it has touched individual visitors, and the lives and influence of the various individuals who have lived at Meher Mount and cared for the property, particularly founder and lifetime caretaker Agnes Baron. All of these stories need to be identified and recorded.

In addition, there are references in various materials about Avatar Meher Baba that need to be collated and cross-referenced.

Also, there are a few artifacts, documents and photos – anything that was not destroyed in the 1985 New Life Fire – to be collected, catalogued and preserved.

Once the materials and information has been collected it needs to be preserved and stored, possibly in a variety of media, for future access and information. The collection, organization and presentation of this information in multiple media forms will serve current and future generations.

b. Meher Mount “Business” Documents

In order to maintain institutional knowledge and benefit from the activities of those who have worked for and contributed to Meher Mount, it is important to identify those documents that need to be retained, to store them for posterity, and to have them in an easily accessible location.

- *Types of Documents.* The types of business and operations documents include, but are not limited to: (a) minutes of the board of directors meetings; (b) financial statements; (c) communications archives; (d) fund raising archives; (e) policies and procedures; (f) tax filings; (g) and major documents, such as the By-Laws, Articles of Incorporation, IRS 501(c)3 designation, and so on.

- *Storage & Retrieval.* These documents need to be stored in three places: (a) online storage “in the cloud”; (b) CD disk; and (c) paper copies at Meher Mount or in storage.



LOVING GOD THROUGH NATURE

When Avatar Meher Baba visited Meher Mount, He gestured toward the outdoors and said: “Now, go out and see the view and try to love Baba through nature. This is all due to My love. This whole creation, this nature, all the beauty you see, all came out of Me.”¹³

In keeping with this directive to love God through nature, the Master Plan focuses on specific activities that preserve the natural setting, wildlife and resources. The objective is to *minimize* the long-term impact of development and usage on the land, while at the same time creating a *maximum* opportunity for visitors to enjoy nature and to love Meher Baba through nature. In addition, wilderness safety is carefully considered in all activities.

Meher Mount is at the summit of Sulphur Mountain in the California Coastal range at about 2,500 feet above the Pacific Ocean. Most of the easily accessible property, and that traversed by Meher Baba, occurs as a ridge line above two ravines to the East and West that descend South and West to the Pacific Ocean.

To the North, the grade drops steeply away into the upper Ojai valley. This flattened ridge area of Meher Mount is characterized by gently sloping grasslands punctuated by small clusters of native oak trees and some planted trees.

The South end of the ridge provides expansive views of the Santa Clara River Valley, the Ventura/Oxnard Plain, and the Pacific Ocean including the Channel Islands. The North end is essentially a gently flattened mountain top with expansive views into the Upper Ojai Valley 1,100 feet below and across to the granite formations called the Topa Topa on the mountains opposite.



Preservation of the Natural Environment

As Southern California continues to grow in population, more and more open space – particularly open space along the coast – is given over to development.

Thus, an area of 173 acres of open space, which is a natural habitat for all types of flora and fauna, becomes even more precious and rare. The Master Plan focuses on maintaining this open, natural space and preserving, as much as is feasible, the natural environment.

The natural order of the mountain top is best characterized by limitations rather than abundance. Rainfall is minimal and the mountaintop has no springs or rich soil. The only utility services to reach the mountain top are telephone and electricity. Water must be generated on site. Sewage must be treated on site. Solid waste must be transported down the mountain.

¹³ *Lord Meher.*

The limitations of water supply and sewage treatment are seen as intrinsic aspects of the natural order of Meher Mount. They impose inherent constraints on the intensity of use by people at Meher Mount.

The catalog of planned activities seeks to include opportunities for Meher Mount to serve individuals and the community without placing undue stress on the natural order of the mountaintop. This means limiting the ultimate size and duration of communal celebrations and gatherings. This means planning for daytime visitation and limiting overnight accommodations.

α. Restoration of the Habitat

In conservation terms, Meher Mount is currently identified as “disturbed rangeland.” The objective is to restore as much of the indigenous plant life, as practical, with particular attention to drought-tolerant and fire-retardant foliage.

Conversely, the objective is to eliminate plants that are not appropriate for Meher Mount due to water requirements, fire hazard, health hazard (poison oak), and difficulty in maintaining due to heat, sun, soil, and wild animals.

β. Preservation of the Coast Live Oak Trees

Part of the richness of Meher Mount is the live oaks surrounding the Visitor Center. In fact, it was this stand of oak trees seen from Highway 150 that impelled Agnes Baron and those with her to turn up Sulphur Mountain Road in search of a suitable site for a Meher Baba center.

In recent years, mistletoe – which is a parasite – has infested some of the trees. This situation is compounded by the current severe drought in which the trees’ resistance has declined. There is a need to hire a professional arborist to advise on management of the mistletoe.

γ. Management of Native, Non-Native Species

Ventura County periodically provides technical assistance and funding for habitat restoration for old farms and ranches. Their priorities are:

- *Restoring fields with native grasses*, which help with fire management and wildlife support.
- *Getting rid of Vincko* under the oaks trees, which is a highly toxic and invasive weed that prohibits oak re-seeding. Vincko is eradicated with a herbicide. The objective is not to let it regenerate itself.
- *Re-seeding Oak trees on the property*. Meher Mount could implement a small program by planting acorns with volunteers with the objective of recovering one oak tree for every 100 seeds. The project would occur away from areas around buildings.

δ. Property Hydrology and Water System

There is a limited supply of potable water at Meher Mount, which necessarily influences the development and use of the property. Rainfall is minimal, and there are no natural sources of sweet water. Sewage must be treated on site. These limitations impose inherent constraints on the intensity of use by people at Meher Mount.

In conjunction with these limitations, Meher Mount has an opportunity to create environmentally friendly and more sustainable facilities that support the use of grey water, the treatment of black waste water, and a composting system.

ε. Fire Prevention

The entire Ojai Valley and mountains are very susceptible to brush and forest fires. All the structures at Meher Mount were destroyed when a fire swept through on October 14, 1985. That happened to be near the anniversary of the start of Meher Baba's "New Life," (October 16, 1949), and it was a landmark event for a "new life" at Meher Mount.

In the "fire season" of 2006, the Manager/Caretakers twice fully evacuated themselves and key treasures and possessions from Meher Mount due to the imminent threat of fire. Fortunately, the fires were contained in both instances.

Fire abatement and protection are an ongoing concern and a daily focus of activity at Meher Mount.

- *Fire Evacuation Plan:* Based on previous experience, the need to evacuate Meher Mount in the event of fire is not "if," but "when." The Manager/Caretakers are developing a Fire Evacuation Plan which needs to be communicated, published and regularly updated. This plan includes persons and pets, personal belongings, Meher Mount records and artifacts, tools and equipment, and other important items.
- *Storage:* Fire management includes storing specific items, documents and other items in fire-resistant containers or buildings – onsite or offsite.
- *Fire Prevention:* Meher Mount continues to develop plans, policies and procedures that reduce fire risk.

φ. Erosion Control & Soil Management

Ventura County has engineers who can provide technical assistance for erosion control and walking trail layout. Using the County's maps, Meher Mount can determine if there are any formal landslide areas identified on the property. County engineers may be able to help to determine erosion and landslide prone areas and make recommendations.

γ. Landscaping Guidelines

The general guidelines for landscaping are for plants that are native to the area, drought-tolerant, fire-resistant or fire-adaptable, and require a minimum of ongoing maintenance by the Manager/Caretakers.

It should be noted that this approach is different from many types of flower and/or vegetables gardens which are agriculture, and are not necessarily supported in a more natural, wild environment.

- A “book” of *landscaping guidelines* to include: (a) a palette of plant materials; and (b) materials; and (c) general layout, e.g., where stonewall boundaries and pathways would be located. The plant palette should give consideration to: irrigation required vs. those not requiring irrigation; native vs. non-native species; size; speed of growth; what burns and what does not; deer resistant; frost-resistant; color; and general lifespan of plant.

η. Preservation of Existing Flora

As is feasible, extra care and effort should be undertaken to preserve the existing flora, particularly those oak trees that survived the 1985 fire. Because of their ability to survive Meher Mount’s difficult circumstances, they hold special characteristics that should be nurtured.

ι. Agricultural and Domestic Animal Policy

There is a small, fenced area on the property that can be used as a personal garden by the Manager/Caretakers at their discretion. Otherwise, larger scale and/or volunteer-dependent agricultural projects are not encouraged or planned for. Agricultural projects are often in conflict with the natural setting.

In addition, Meher Mount does not support farm animals or animal husbandry. The Manager/Caretakers can have pets, particularly cats who help control the mice and gopher population. Pets of any kind belonging to visitors are not allowed on the property.



The Experience of Nature

It is important that visitors have the opportunity to enjoy and experience nature at Meher Mount while at the same time, minimizing the impact of their footsteps on the land.

α. Pathways & Hiking Trails

The Master Plan includes activities and projects that enhance the experience of nature, including hiking trails and pathways. There are a number of existing trails or pathways that are currently used by visitors. A more detailed plan for walkways and hiking trails is to be developed, including the following specific trail enhancements.

▪ *The Hidden Trail*

The “hidden trail” – which has been identified and flagged – follows an old oil road below Sulphur Mountain Road. This trail creates an opportunity to explore the land and still contain visitor activity in a safe, protected area minimizing the impact to the land.

The board is developing specific guidelines for this and other trails on the property including usage, safety and security considerations, environmental impact, and ongoing maintenance and monitoring.

- *Topa Topa Pathway*

There is a partially developed “ring road” just below the hill on which the Visitor Center stands. This “road” provides an opportunity to create a continuing walkway around the brow of the hill facing Topa Top Mountain, thus providing expansive views of the mountain and the valley below.

β. Flora and Fauna Identification

The Audubon Society of Ventura County has already visited Meher Mount several times for bird watching hikes and to conduct their annual Christmas bird census. They have assisted the Manager/Caretakers in creating a Meher Mount bird list.

Over time, additional groups are to be invited to Meher Mount to assist in identifying other species of flora and fauna present at Meher Mount. This information is made available to interested visitors.

γ. Outdoor Facilities

To facilitate and encourage additional time spent outdoors, the Master Plan calls for small patios, gathering areas and seated areas in selected spots on the property. The first area of focus is the Topa Topa Patio located near the AgShed that takes advantage of the view of Topa Topa Mountain and provides some basic picnic and BBQ facilities.

SUPPORT FOR PILGRIMAGE

The Master Plan identifies those structures, roads and parking areas necessary to the day-to-day support of Meher Mount and its visitors. All structures are carefully considered for their impact on the surrounding environment, the required long-term upkeep and maintenance of the property, the harsh weather, the impact of bugs and rodents, and the location within the overall footprint of the property.

1. AgShed¹⁴

In the past several years, Meher Mount has acquired – through the generous donations of supporters – several key pieces of equipment, including a ride-on mower and a tractor with implements.

When Meher Mount received the donation to purchase a tractor and implements, the donor requested that Meher Mount build a fireproof ancillary agricultural facility (AAF) to house the tractor and provided additional funds to be used for building the facility.

The facility provides for equipment storage, allowing for sufficient space and height to house large equipment, a workspace, and the storage of tools and supplies.

¹⁴ Ventura County refers to these structures as Ancillary Agricultural Facilities. Meher Mount adopted AgShed, as short for a simple agricultural building.

2. Manager/Caretaker Quarters

The Board of Directors has identified the building of Manager/Caretakers quarters – separate from the Visitor Center – as top future priority.

Preliminary discussions indicate that the Manager/Caretakers quarters would be no more than 1,200 square feet. In considering the size of the quarters, it is important to provide facilities for a small family as several of the Manager/Caretakers have had children.

The Manager/Caretakers quarters could include two bedrooms, two baths, kitchen and dining area, laundry area/room, living room, minimal storage, and work/ office area. In addition, there needs to be a parking area/carport for two cars.

3. Traffic Flow & Management

The more people that visit Meher Mount, the more important it is to manage their entry and their experience. There needs to be an area for visitor sign-in for liability, orientation and the quality of visitor experience. In addition, it's important for safety, liability and management reasons to not have unknown visitors floating around the property.

There needs to be a clear guidance that does not only rely on signs, but provides an intuitive sense of direction. The more cues we can give to visitors, the easier it is to manage the traffic flow and the visitors, moving people in a way that we think is best.

4. Stand-alone Visitor Center

Once the separate Manager/Caretaker Quarters have been built, the existing house/Visitor Center becomes a stand-alone Visitor Center. The existing Visitor Center either will be expanded or torn down and rebuilt.

The future Visitor Center is to include the following:

α. Reception Area

A dedicated area in the building to greet guests. Here they sign the guest books, receive and sign the liability waiver, and receive a short orientation about visiting Meher Mount. There are also informational materials about Meher Mount available, as well as an opportunity for making donations and updating their information on the Meher Mount mailing list.

β. Library

There is an area or a room dedicated to information about Avatar Meher Baba, including books and magazines as well as video and audio equipment to see/read/hear information about Meher Baba.

γ. Display Area

There is an area which displays information about the history of Meher Mount, the stewardship of Agnes Baron and an overview of Avatar Meher Baba. Meher Baba artifacts may also be on display.

δ. Quiet/Meditation Area

There is an area or room reserved for meditation or quiet reading, writing and/or contemplation.

ε. Indoor Gathering Space

There is space for meetings, workshops and group events indoors that can house approximately 50-75 or a number in alignment with Meher Mount's parking capacity.

φ. Communal Kitchen & Indoor Dining Area

There is a fully equipped communal kitchen for visitor use. This kitchen is available for those having picnics as well as use for events and overnight guests. There is a dining/eating area in the kitchen.

γ. Two or Three Guest Bathrooms

There are two or three full guest bathrooms with one of them being handicapped accessible.

η. Short-term Overnight Visitor Accommodations

Accommodations for a limited number of overnight guests will be provided, in recognition of the fragility and special atmosphere of the Meher Mount environment, the difficulties in providing adequate quality water and sewage, periodic fire hazards, County land use restrictions, and the management issues associated with larger operations.

There are two to three bedrooms that can accommodate short-term, overnight guests. These rooms are not open to the public, but can accommodate special guests, friends and family of the Manager/Caretakers, board members and other volunteers, and out-of-town visitors. A donation will be expected for any overnight use of these rooms.

ι. Administration Office

There is an area or room to use as an on-site office for Meher Mount. In this room, there is at least one desk with appropriate equipment (computers, printer, fax, telephone, etc.) as well as room for storage of current Meher Mount documents.

5. Entryway & Parking

α. Outside Entry Gate

The entryway to Meher Mount is a gateway from the “outside” world to a place of spiritual pilgrimage. The signage, the landscaping and the gate are designed to signal that transition. The landscaping is welcoming and fits with the overall approach to native, drought-tolerant plants.

It would be helpful if there were a chime system at an entryway gate to notify the Manager/Caretakers that guests/visitors have arrived.

β. Parking Area

Once inside the gate, there is a clearly marked parking area for visitors. The parking lot, if feasible, manages 50 cars (currently the parking area can handle about 35 cars).

γ. Inside Entry Gateway and Walkway

Upon leaving their automobiles, visitors walk toward a second gateway. There is signage to orient visitors as they move from the parking area into the Meher Mount facilities. They pass a signpost and walk around the “ring road” pathway to the Visitor Center reception area.

6. Roads

 Ring Road

There is an existing partial road below the brow of the hill to be used as a walkway/entry way to the Visitor Center and as part of the Topa Topa Pathway. This pathway has excellent views of the Upper Ojai Valley.

As is feasible, the road is renovated to extend to another access road on the property to provide for service trucks and equipment. There is a “seat wall” of 18 includes along the walkway that helps to manage erosion, create a defined space, and provide visitors with a stopping point to view the Upper Ojai Valley.

 Emergency Access Gate

In order to facilitate service truck access as well as provide an emergency exit, the back road is to be re-graded and maintained. In addition, the back gate is replaced to prevent unknown persons from wandering on the property with their vehicles.

 Drop-off Area

There is an automobile access road to the Visitor Center to a drop-off area, not only for handicapped or frail visitors, but also for supplies and equipment for the Visitor Center.

7. Amphitheater – Meeting Area

The area across the driveway from the Visitor Center creates a natural setting for an open-air amphitheater, which could be expanded as needed and used for talks, musical programs and other activities.

8. Gateways

Gateways are important signals of transitions. The major gateways at Meher Mount are the front gate signaling the entry to Meher Mount; a gateway indicating a transition from the parking lot deeper into Meher Mount; and a gateway from the Visitor Center area to the more eternal realm leading to Baba’s Tree.

9. Buildings & Materials

Unified Approach

In designing and constructing buildings, walkways, gateways and so on, it is important to create a unified look and approach. The overall objectives are consistent structures and building philosophy.

Environmentally Sensitive Considerations

In general, Meher Mount wants to be environmentally sensitive in the construction of buildings, including their impact on the land, the fit with the topography, and taking advantage of natural features of light, water, and so on.

In general, it is felt that the look and feel should: (a) blend into the landscape as much as is feasible creating a low profile on the land; (b) have a “natural” look and feel; (c) take into consideration the harsh conditions at Meher Mount, including heat, cold, wind, sun, and fire; and (d) take into consideration termites, rats and mice, and the continual presence of pests.

Practical and Historical Considerations

In addition, as is feasible, the objective is to: (a) maintain and keep those things that are currently integral to Meher Mount; and (b) keep from trucking items on and off Meher Mount. To the extent that we do not have to take away or bring on materials, and to the extent we can maintain and use materials that are at Meher Mount, we are philosophically living closer to the natural order.¹⁵

10. Naming of Meher Mount Site Destinations

When discussing and identifying specific locations or sites at Meher Mount in conversation and in publications, it is helpful, more descriptive and less cumbersome to have a name for that spot. It is also important that the names of the locations carry meaning for Meher Mount and be part of an overall direction in site naming.

Criteria

Naming criteria include: (a) The name should take into consideration the purpose, role and/or location of the site; and (b) the name should communicate a message to the visitor about that site.

The role includes (but is not limited to): practical use (e.g., patio), related to nature (e.g., Topa Topa), and/or related to Meher Baba’s visit (e.g., Baba’s Tree) and His message.

Existing Names

¹⁵ October 17, 2009 Board meeting discussion.

- *Baba's Tree* which is the Coast Live Oak Tree under which Meher Baba sat alone during His 1956 visit to Meher Mount.
- *Topa Topa Patio* which is the patio (to be constructed) where visitors can have a picnic and see the views of the Topa Topa Mountain across the Ojai Valley.



Place Names & Places to be Named

- Chimney area near where Meher Baba gave *darshan* in the then Guest House
- Spot and indentation below the brow of the pool hill
- Overlook point where Baba's Tree is located

11. Communications

It is important to keep friends and supporters of Meher Mount informed about activities, programs and plans for Meher Mount. In addition, it is necessary to provide information about Meher Mount to the general public.

a. Identity Package

In the fall of 2008, Meher Mount created an identity package that included a logo, corporate colors, and type fonts. That identity package is used in all Meher Mount communications: Web site, email announcements, social media, signage, letterhead and business cards, brochures and so on.

b. Database

In February 2009, Meher Mount received a grant donation in the form of customer relationship management (CRM) software from the Salesforce.com Foundation. The value of that donation is approximately \$15,000 per year. It provides for usage of their software for up to 10 people working on behalf of Meher Mount. It is renewable annually.

Through the use of this database/donor software programs, Meher Mount tracks donations and maintains a database of supporters and interested persons. Volunteers regularly update and the database to ensure that the database is current and complete and contains a record of donor history.¹⁶

c. Communications

- *Brochures:* Visitors to Meher Mount often request a brochure or information that they can take with them. Meher Mount provides printed information about Meher Mount, its history and visitor guidelines, about Avatar Meher Baba, bird watching, and other related information. It is periodically updated, as needed.
- *Website:* Meher Mount currently has a website at www.mehermount.org. This website provides similar information contained in the brochures, as well as other features that enhance the Meher Mount experience.

¹⁶ The Board affirmed the following regarding the Meher Mount database/donor list: (a) the database is permission-based; (b) the information is confidential; and (c) it is to be used for Meher Mount-related information only and available only to Meher Mount. (January 16, 2010)

- *Social Media:* As is appropriate and as there are sufficient volunteers, Meher Mount participates in appropriate social media in order to keep individuals informed and involved with Meher Mount and to reach out to those who may not be familiar with Meher Mount.
- *Ongoing Communications:* Periodic communications from Meher Mount are designed to help visitors take advantage of programs, keep them informed about Meher Mount projects, and to assist in fund raising.

Meher Mount continues to write and distribute an Annual Report that identifies major activities and milestones of the previous fiscal year. This Annual Report also serves as a historical record of Meher Mount.

- *Outside Signage:* Generally, there are two types of “signs”: (a) way finding and informational; and (b) place makers.

For way finding, there are other features that help individuals find their way at Meher Mount, including: marked walkways, stone walls, gates, light fixtures, and so on. All should be taken into consideration when helping to guide visitors. In general, these items need to integrate into the landscape, be weather proof, be harmonious with the beauty of nature, and give meaning as well as information.

For an informational signage, there needs to be a sign near the second gateway area to provide information to help a first-time visitor answer the questions: “Should I continue?” “What is this place?” “Am I interested?”

- *Indoor Signage:* Indoor signage or displays help to provide information about Meher Baba and about Meher Mount and its history.

Indoor/outdoor signs are all part the same informational package and should be designed and created as a unit. In addition, the signage would also help information the design and construction materials for similar signage in the future.

12. Visitor Guidelines & Restrictions

The board continues to refine the visitor guidelines to ensure visitor comfort and safety, to minimize adverse impact on the land, and to support the best usage of Meher Mount. In general,

- Meher Mount is not an event venue for the general public.
- Meher Mount is not a public picnic ground.
- Meher Mount is open to all during the open hours; and it cannot be closed to visitors, even if there is a Meher Mount-sponsored event.
- The Board and/or Manager/Caretakers can sponsor or co-sponsor specific events that fit with the feeling and purpose of Meher Mount and will be deemed Meher Mount-sponsored or co-sponsored events. Events must fit with the mission, purpose and long-range plan of Meher Mount.

SERVICE

One of the roles Meher Mount plays is offering an opportunity for service. This service to Meher Mount means doing what Meher Mount needs versus what those providing the service need or want.

A Manager/Caretaker noted that, “we think we’re going to guide Meher Mount, but Meher Mount (Meher Baba) guides us. This land, imbued with the spirit and presence of Avatar Meher Baba, magnetizes the things it needs, and throws out what it doesn’t need. It is a fragile and sensitive environment.”

The Master Plan provides the medium for rendering service to Meher Mount in both the development and the implementation of the plan. Throughout the process, individuals are encouraged to participate, to contribute their knowledge and expertise, to work together as harmoniously as possible, and to remember Avatar Meher Baba.

Meher Baba said, “If a person wishes to do anything for others, he must do it sincerely. And having done it, he should not worry about the results, for results are not in human hands. It is for humans to do, for God to ordain. Try to attribute all your acts to God and let results be His.”

It is important to note that service to Meher Mount, whether as a board member or as any other volunteer worker, is *not* an exchange; providing service to Meher Mount does *not* create special privileges or entitlements regarding Meher Mount. It is a privilege to be able to serve Meher Mount. Agnes Baron often quoted from the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Lord Krishna says, “You have only the right to work, but none to the fruit thereof.”

1. In-Residence Program

Given the many inherent limitations at Meher Mount (water, sewer, roads, zoning, terrain, etc.), Meher Mount is not likely – at least in the near future – to be an overnight retreat center for large numbers of visitors. However, with the proposed availability of one or two guest rooms, there is an opportunity to develop other programs that are specifically suited to Meher Mount.

An In Residence Program provides the opportunity, when appropriate facilities are available, to invite guests to visit and stay at Meher Mount – for limited time periods – and bring their individuals skills and knowledge Meher Mount in a mutually beneficial way.

The individual would have time and space to work on a project and, in return, to provide a service to Meher Mount. Such a program could include artists, writers, musicians, and others who would benefit at being at Meher Mount, and who would also do workshops and/or events related their area of interest. It could also include individuals who need/want to be on site to work on specific Meher Mount projects.

STEWARDSHIP

The role of stewardship of Meher Mount is to preserve and protect Meher Mount as a Meher Baba site of world of pilgrimage.

As such, this role includes practical, specific activities that maintain and preserve the physical aspects of the property as well as attitudes and approaches that maintain and preserve the spiritual aspects of the property.

As stewards of the land, a responsibility of the Board, and hence the Master Plan, is to ensure that the property and its rights and obligations are fully understood, protected and implemented.

1. Limitations of the Site

The limitations of water supply and sewage treatment impose inherent constraints on the intensity and type of use by people at Meher Mount. This means limiting the ultimate size and duration of communal gatherings, planning for daytime visitation and limiting overnight accommodations.

2. Ongoing Site Management

a. Operations Manual

As Meher Mount operations have grown in sophistication and complexity, the job of managing Meher Mount on a day-to-day basis has also grown in size, sophistication and complexity.

To ensure that institutional knowledge is not lost in transitions, there needs to be an Operations Manual, recognizing that such a manual is an evolving document. A manual capturing the current practices should be developed as soon as possible.

b. Development & Site Management Considerations

As new projects are considered, it is necessary to identify the ongoing management needs and to make sure those needs can be met before initiating a new program or project.

Some of the management considerations include: How manageable is the activity/building with existing resources? What are the future operational, repair, and maintenance costs? Can the current water and sewer system support the activity building? What is the long-term benefit? What is impact on daily operations? How does the program/activity/building affect current management level? Does it support the mission/vision? How does it fit with the Master Plan?

3. Governance

The governance structure, policies and procedures are reviewed periodically by the Board of Directors and updated as is deemed appropriate.¹⁷

In 2009, the Board conducted a review of the Meher Mount Corp. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, originally filed in 1989, and identified the updates needed due to changing practices or laws or changes for consistency.

¹⁷ The Board adopted the duties and qualifications of Meher Mount Board members. (January 16, 2010)

4. Fiscal Responsibility & Fund Raising

Meher Mount's financial plan includes budgeting and raising funds for ongoing operations as well as new projects and activities. The general guiding principle is to undertake new projects only if sufficient funds are available – both for the implementation of new projects and ongoing maintenance.

Meher Mount is careful to try not to overlap its own fund raising activities, to be clear on how the funds are used, to track and thank all donors, and to provide feedback to the community on the fund raising results, and to celebrate the completion of the specific projects. Meher Mount limits the number of fund raising activities in favor of fewer and larger campaigns versus many small efforts.

Meher Mount is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and, as such, all donations are tax-deductible to the donor as provided under current 501(c)3 IRS guidelines.

a. Annual Fund Campaign

In September/October of each year, Meher Mount conducts an Annual Fund Drive to generate donations to support the ongoing operations of Meher Mount. The goal for the Annual Fund Campaign is based on budgetary needs and reasonable expectations for success. The timing of the campaign is always the same, and there is a campaign every year regardless of circumstances.

Meher Mount has developed an Annual Fund Handbook to guide volunteers in conducting the campaign. The handbook needs to be regularly updated to keep track of changing practices.

b. Endowment/Quasi-Endowment & Planned Giving Program

As some Baba Lovers prepare their wills and, to the extent funds are available, make bequests¹⁸ to various Meher Baba charities, it is important for Meher Mount to be considered one of those charities.

Additionally, as Meher Mount works each year to raise money for operations, it should also begin thinking about building a reserve fund that can build over time, generate investment income, and provide future funds for improvement and operations.

Thus, as part of the Master Plan, Meher Mount is undertaking the process of setting up an endowment¹⁹ and/or quasi-endowment²⁰ fund, developing the related policies and procedures, and implementing and communicating the program.

¹⁸ A bequest is the act of giving or leaving personal property (stocks, bonds, or any other assets) by a will.

¹⁹ An Endowment Fund is an investment fund in which withdrawals from the invested capital are used for ongoing operations or other specified purposes. There are three main components to the typical endowment fund: investment policy, withdrawal policy; and fund usage policy. <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/endowment-fund.asp#axzz1mgeyouUN>

²⁰ A Quasi-endowment is also known as a board-created endowment or board-designated endowment. The Board has the option to create an endowment fund from an unrestricted bequest gift or a surplus from operations. The fund is established to preserve assets to increase the long-term stability of the organization. If the board later choose to use the money it has set aside, the board can vote to do so. http://www.janetdoolin.com/endowment_e-ideas/2006-10_quasi_endowment_fund.htm

c. Special Projects/Capital Campaigns

For larger, one-time only projects, Meher Mount conducts special fund raising efforts. Traditionally, these campaigns have been based on asking for donations for specific projects. As individual elements of the Master Plan are implemented, the Board will need to raise funds for those activities.

d. Grants

Grants are not seen as a major source of financial support. However, there may be public grants in support of activities at Meher Mount that benefit the greater good, particularly in the area of land management, conservation and habitat restoration.

e. Donation Policies

- In accepting any donations for a specific purpose, the Board makes all reasonable efforts to honor the intentions of the donor. If the Board cannot honor those intentions, the Board communicates that situation to the donor and determines if there are other options. If there are no other options and the Board cannot honor the intentions of the donor, the donation will not be accepted.²¹
- α. The Board reserves the right to refuse any gift – including both goods and cash – if it does not fit with Meher Mount’s operations, philosophy, goals and/or provides additional, inappropriate responsibility on the management of Meher Mount.

5. Community Relations

An integral part of managing Meher Mount now and for the future is developing an understanding of the greater community and making and maintaining connections with key organizations that have similar interests. By understanding their goals and objectives and by sharing Meher Mount’s role, these organizations can find ways to assist and help one another and work together in a spirit of mutual cooperation, when the need or opportunity arises.

These organizations include: (a) spiritual and metaphysical organizations in the Ojai Valley²²; (b) arts organizations; (c) environmental and nature-related organizations.²³

6. Boundary/Topographical Survey Project

As part of its stewardship role, the Board of Directors undertook a Boundary/Topographical Survey Project in 2007/2008.

The purpose of the Boundary/Topographical Survey Project was: to answer Avatar Meher Baba’s 51-year-old question regarding the boundaries of the property; to create tools to be used in Meher Mount’s long-range planning process, including the design

²¹ Board policies adopted February 16, 2007.

²² Including but not limited to: The Krishnamurti Foundation, The Ojai Foundation, Meditation Mount, Krotona Institute.

²³ Including but not limited to: The Audubon Society, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy.

and construction of buildings, roads, walkways, trails, and so on; to be good stewards of the land by resolving or improving any existing or potential land use, legal and/or boundary issues, including those contained in the current title report; and to be good neighbors and to coordinate well with Ventura County through appropriate channels.

The project included the following components which were completed as identified: (a) Boundary Survey of Meher Mount's 173 Acres; (b) Monumentation of the Corners of the Property; (c) Record of Survey for Meher Mount in Ventura County; (d) Aerial Topographical Map of Meher Mount; (d) Review of Current Title Report with Recommendations on Action Items to Clarify Any Outstanding Title Issues; and (e) Final Title Report and Title Insurance.

7. Boundaries

One of the purposes of the survey was to alert the Board to any potential boundary problems.

α. Fence Repair & Replacement.

Replace and repair the perimeter fences, many of which were built in the 1930s, in line with the 2008 Recorded Boundary Survey, including the clarification of any boundary issues.

The fence accomplishes two things. First, the property is clearly delineated and marked. Secondly, it provides an opportunity for building and enhancing Meher Mount's working relationship with its neighbors.

8. Zoning

Meher Mount is affected by three different types of Ventura County zoning according to County records updated in 2006.

The Boundary Report and Survey indicated that while it is clear that those three County zones affect Meher Mount, it is not exactly clear where those zones are on the property. In Ventura County, there is a provision that states if boundaries are uncertain, the Planning Director will clarify those boundaries for the property owner.

Meher Mount is to clear up any issues related to the location of zoning and formally record the resolution of those issues with the County of Ventura.

α. Open Space (OS)

The OS zone refers to retreat zoning and identifies such factors related to construction on the property such as limitations to the height and square footage of buildings.

β. Scenic Resource Protection (SRP) Overlay Zone

The SRP zone focuses primarily on the protection of the trees along Sulphur Mountain Road and could come into play near and around the entrance to Meher Mount.

χ. Agricultural Exclusive (A-E)

The A-E zone covers items such as minimum lot size and set backs and does not necessarily seem to provide significant limitations for Meher Mount, but needs to be taken into consideration in planning at Meher Mount.

δ. Clear Air Ordinance Boundary

Meher Mount is also affected by a zoning restriction from the City of Ojai which limits the pace at which single family homes can be built. The ordinance does not appear to be of significant concern to Meher Mount.

9. Resolution of Title Issues

One of the responsibilities of good stewardship is to clear-up any outstanding Title issues, as is feasible, so that future generations do not have to handle these issues. Additionally, a clear Title Report lays the foundation for future activities and development at Meher Mount.

Thus, based on the recommendations coming from the Boundary/Topographical Survey Project, the Board has identified those issues which can be disposed of, resolved, and/or minimized as part of this Master Plan process. The objective is to eliminate, clarify or reduce as many Title Exceptions as is feasible.



PHASED DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MASTER PLAN

In order to accomplish all of the goals identified in this Master Plan, it is necessary to divide the plan into smaller projects – both for completing the projects and for raising funds. For specific information on completed projects see: <http://www.mehermount.org/master-plan-projects/>

	Master Plan Components	Start/End Dates	Costs	Donations & Interest	Status
Project 1	Boundary Survey/ Topographical Map Project: Conduct and record boundary survey, create a topographical map, review Title Report.	Sep 07 – Apr 08	\$33,917	\$33,917	Completed
Project 2	Trailer Removal	Sep 07	\$4,000	\$4,000	Completed
Project 3	Identity Package: Create logo, colors and type fonts; implement with business papers, fund raising, communications	Sep 08 – Jun 09		Donated designer services	Completed; Use on an ongoing basis
Project 4	Database Management: Obtain, install and use software; Salesforce.com grant.	February 2010	\$15,000 grant per year	\$15,000 grant per year	Completed; Ongoing Use

Project 5	AgShed: Finalize plan and get bids for an ancillary agricultural facility; build structure.	2007-2012 Passed County Inspection May 3, 2012	\$123,668	\$123,668	Completed
Project 7	Topa Topa Patio: Create outdoor picnic and BBQ area	Oct 07 -- xx		\$20,000	To begin 2012
Project 8	Update By-Laws: Review & Update	Restated By-Laws Adopted September 19, 2009			Completed

APPENDIX 1: The Visitor Experience

Universal

- Individuals have their own experiences at Meher Mount. There is something innate within Meher Mount that everyone discovers for themselves. No one interprets their experience or tells them what to experience.
- A large proportion of current visitors have not heard about Meher Baba nor are they specifically followers of Avatar Meher Baba.
- Aspiration – uniting with the Divine Beloved. There are many paths to that union.
- Welcoming, accepting and balancing between different cultures and walks of life.
- There is an opportunity to help define what “universal” is.
- For many, Meher Mount is a hidden gem. There is a magical aspect, and being involved with Meher Mount can be transformational.

Pilgrimage Destination

- Meher Mount is a pilgrimage destination for followers of Meher Baba from all over the world because Baba spent time on the property.
- Ojai itself is a pilgrimage destination for all kinds of seekers. And in that context, Meher Mount is one of the Ojai pilgrimage spots attracting non-Baba followers who find a connection with the property and the atmosphere, even if they do not embrace Meher Baba.
- Provides an opportunity to share Avatar Meher Baba and to tell the Divine story with all visitors.
- Meher Mount also draws visitors who are not specifically on a “pilgrimage” but whose car “just turns into the driveway.” It serves those who visit, but do not know why.

Natural Setting

- Meher Mount is located in Southern California, which is becoming more and more developed and urbanized. As a result, a place that is natural and underdeveloped and provides an opportunity for visitors to touch nature, becomes more and more special.
- Meher Mount affords the ability to enjoy the views: the ocean, the valleys, the mountains and the sky. Able to see a vast array of God's creation.
- When Meher Baba visited: Gesturing toward the outdoors, Baba said, "Now, go out and see the view and try to love Baba through nature. This is all due to my love. This whole creation, this nature, all the beauty you see, all came out of me."



Physical Limitations

- In some ways, Meher Mount is also shaped by its physical limitations, including the basic requirements of water and sewage, easy access and well maintained roads, but also based on the fragility of the natural landscape.
- Thus, a guiding principle can be that anything that is cheaper, more efficient and more cost effective to do elsewhere, should be done offsite.
- The physical limitations imply that Meher Mount is probably not a retreat center and/or a highly developed meeting center, thus playing a different role in the Baba Community from Myrtle Beach, the Heartland Center, the AMBCSC and Meherana.
- The physical limitations also serve to limit the distractions at Meher Mount.
- The spirit of Meher Mount does not have limitations.



Selfless Service – Karma Yoga

- Service to Meher Mount provides the opportunity to tell the story of Agnes Baron.
- Service facilitates sustainability.