



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27, 2016

Contact: Laura Mecoy
310.546.5860
laura@mecoy.net

Catalina Island Conservancy Celebrates Groundbreaking for New Visitors' Center *The Trailhead Will Foster Community Involvement and Ecological Education*

AVALON – The Catalina Island Conservancy celebrated another major milestone in **IMAGINE CATALINA**, its long-range strategic vision and master plan, with a groundbreaking ceremony on Friday for its new visitors' center, The Trailhead.

A crowd of supporters – including Avalon leaders and the Conservancy's Board of Directors, Members and staff – attended the event at the site of the new center on Crescent Avenue, the main thoroughfare for visitors arriving by ferry from the mainland.

"The Trailhead is a flagship project for **IMAGINE CATALINA**, a long-term strategic vision to guide the Conservancy for the next 20-plus years," said Ann M. Muscat, PhD, Conservancy president emeritus. "The Trailhead will be a game-changer for the Conservancy, dramatically increasing the organization's presence in Avalon. It will give us the opportunity to share with visitors and residents the uniqueness of Catalina, why it is an ecological treasure and how they can participate in taking care of it."

The innovative three-story building will feature educational exhibits and programs to provide visitors and residents with insights into the Conservancy's mission and work and the Island's natural history, ecology and geology. The Trailhead also will provide a portal to the wild side through the Conservancy's popular, naturalist-led Jeep Eco Tours, the Wildlands Express Shuttle Service, the Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden and its nature centers in Avalon and the Airport in the Sky.

The Trailhead will supply a new community gathering spot while also providing users with information about hiking, biking and camping. The 9,000-square-foot building will have three decks offering sweeping views of Avalon, the bay and the surrounding Island. Multi-purpose meeting spaces will be available for Conservancy events, community activities, corporate meetings and weddings. The Trailhead also will feature a mission-related retail space and a café.

The Trailhead will be Avalon's first LEED-certified building. To fulfill the green-building standards for LEED certification, The Trailhead will have a state-of-the-art water-saving and management system, which will include a water harvesting system to capture and reuse rain water for landscaping and other non-potable uses. The Conservancy also proposed the installation of a local desalination unit to convert saltwater to drinkable water and will be seeking the necessary approvals for it.

At least 30% of The Trailhead's energy will be generated by solar panels attached to the roof of the building, and all systems will be energy efficient. The heating and air conditioning units, for instance, will exceed current energy efficiency standards by at least 25%. All the materials used in building will have high recycled content. Among the recycled content will be lumber from the Catherine Hotel, the former occupant of the site. The lumber will be used for concrete forms and other construction uses.

The anticipated opening date for The Trailhead is the summer of 2018. The Conservancy is also slated to celebrate the launch of **IMAGINE CATALINA's** next major project in October 2016: Trekking Catalina – A Master Trails Plan. This is a comprehensive plan for a sustainable master trails system, which will create a world-class hiking experience. It will be the biggest addition to the Island's trail system since the opening of the 37.2-mile Trans-Catalina Trail in 2009.

“We are so grateful to our generous donors and supporters who have made The Trailhead and Trekking Catalina possible,” said Muscat. “Their gifts are helping us fulfill one of the major goals of **IMAGINE CATALINA** by creating opportunities for people to connect to the land through nature-based recreational and educational opportunities.”

About the Conservancy

Formed in 1972, the Catalina Island Conservancy is one of California's oldest land trusts. Its mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation. Through its ongoing efforts, the Conservancy protects the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Santa Catalina Island, stewarding approximately 42,000 acres of land and more than 60 miles of rugged shoreline. It provides an airport and 50 miles of biking and nearly 150 miles of hiking opportunities within its road and trail system. The Conservancy conducts educational outreach through two nature centers, its Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden and guided experiences in the Island's rugged interior. Twenty miles from the mainland, the Island is a treasure trove of historical and archaeological sites. It also contains numerous rare and endangered animals and plants. The Island is home to 60 species – and counting – that are found only on Catalina. For additional information, please visit www.catalinaconservancy.org.



An artist's rendering of the Catalina Island Conservancy's new visitors' center, The Trailhead. (Courtesy of the Catalina Island Conservancy)



From left, participating in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Catalina Island Conservancy's new Visitors' Center, The Trailhead, were Catalina Island Conservancy Board Members Blanny Avalon Hagenah, John P. Cotton and Stephen Chazen, PhD; Conservancy President Emeritus Ann M. Muscat, PhD; Conservancy Benefactor Member Alison Wrigley Rusack; Conservancy President and CEO Tony Budrovich, and Avalon Mayor Anni Marshall. Photo by Robb Rosenfeld.