



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

DATE: November 16, 2011
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Community Development Department
SUBJECT: Draft Concept Design for the Library Plaza Improvement Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the report and attachments, and provide guidance for the Library Plaza Improvement Project.

DISCUSSION:

I. History of Library and Plaza

The Central Library was built on its current site in the early 1900s, opening in November 1917. In 1926, the adjoining vacant property was bequeathed to the City, and the Faulkner Gallery was soon built, opening in 1930. Since the late 1970s, following extensive remodeling of the library including connecting it to the Faulkner Gallery with a shared entry foyer, Library Plaza has served as the main entrance to the library and gallery. This public open space is situated in the heart of the City's cultural district. In addition to the library and Faulkner Gallery, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art next door, other nearby cultural opportunities include the County Courthouse, Channing Peake Gallery in the County Administrative Building, the Granada and Arlington theatres, and numerous private galleries and bookshops.

The Central Library, Faulkner Gallery and Museum of Art, are all eligible for inclusion in the State Register of Historic Resources. The proposed project does not include these buildings.

II. Project Goals

Library staff have for years contemplated renovating Library Plaza to create a more friendly and useable space. The current project proposes to upgrade both hardscape and landscape areas within the project site to provide a public gathering space better integrated with the Library and with its neighborhood, the city's cultural district.

The goals of the Library Plaza Improvement Project are to:

- 1) Create a public open space that is safe and inviting;
- 2) Create an open, more visible main entrance to the Central Library and Faulkner Gallery;
- 3) Enhance the paseo between Anapamu Street and La Arcada and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art;
- 4) Develop the entry grounds as a community gathering place for enjoyment of nature, art or a good book, stimulating activities, and the company of others;
- 5) Reduce maintenance costs.

III. Project Description

The Santa Barbara Central Library and Faulkner Gallery are set on a 1.4 acre-parcel (APN 039-232-002) located at 40 E. Anapamu Street in downtown Santa Barbara's cultural district. The project area, comprising 23,200 sq.ft., or 38% of the parcel, consists of the plaza and paseo between the Central Library and Faulkner Gallery and Anapamu Street frontage, and a portion of the library frontage along Anacapa Street (Attachment 1).

The proposed concept envisions removal of walls and hedges to open sight lines, and approximately 500 cubic yards (cy) of fill to create a flexible, large flat space for a variety of uses. The amount of grass area would be reduced and hardscape expanded. The simplified design, materials and plant pallet anticipates incorporation of art either in the design or as separate discreet elements, and would provide a pleasant, unobtrusive background for Library and community events. To increase visibility and a functional flat open space, the project proposes to raise the sunken lawn area, and remove a variety of trees in the project area, although some of those would be transplanted while others would be replaced. The table below quantifies the changes proposed. Attachment 2 identifies specific trees to be removed, replanted, replaced or added.

Plaza & Paseo Area:	Existing Sq. Ft.	Proposed Sq. Ft.
Hardscape Area	8,800	12,000
Planted Area	8,100	8,500
Grass Area	6,300	2,700
	Existing	Proposed
Trees	49	30

To summarize the table, the proposed Library Plaza Improvements would increase hardscape area to approximately 52% of the project site, increase planted area slightly to 36%, reduce grass area to 12%, and decrease the total number of trees by 19. These changes contribute to several of the goals: improved safety, providing a large, flat, flexible space for library and community activities, and greater visibility for the library entrance. They likely would reduce the cost of maintenance as well.

There is much more to the proposed improvements, however, which may be best appreciated through the process used to develop the concept.

IV. Process to Develop Concept

The Santa Barbara Central Library is located in the City's Redevelopment Plan Area. On February 15, 2011, the Council approved the contract for design of the Library Plaza Improvements Project and made the Health and Safety Code Sect. 33445 findings for expenditure of redevelopment funds on this project.

The architectural and landscape architectural firm of Campbell & Campbell was selected through a competitive process to prepare the concept and preliminary designs.

The design is being developed in four phases: 1. Public participation, in conjunction with Library and Parks and Recreation staff review, to develop the design concept; 2. Concept review by the Street Tree Advisory Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Historic Landmarks Commission; 3. Public participation to develop the preliminary design; 4. Review and approval by the Historic Landmarks Commission. The first phase has been completed and the project is now embarking on concept review.

City Department Consultation. Phase 1 included internal city coordination and consultation as well as public participation. In December 2010, an initial project meeting was held to identify the concerns City department staff has with the existing plaza and library grounds and their suggestions for improvement. The meeting was attended by staff from the RDA and Library Department, and from Parks and Recreation Department, Police Department and Public Works Department. Additional communication was received from Planning Division. The notes from that meeting were provided to the consultants as a starting point.

The project team includes the consultants and staff from RDA, Library, Parks & Recreation and Public Works.

Public Participation Process. The consultants have conducted two public workshops to gain the public's input to the design concept. Interestingly, the public offered many of the same concerns and suggestions as had staff. (See Attachment 3.) Approximately 30 members of the public attended the first workshop which was to prepare a set of guidelines for the concept plan (Column 2 of Attachment 3). Attendees were provided with plans of the existing project area and asked to answer eight questions and provide any other ideas they had for improving Library Plaza. At the second workshop attendees were provided two conceptual plan options developed from ideas in the first workshop, and asked to provide more definition of features or make other adjustments as they saw fit. The participants included local business people, library users, Art

Museum and La Arcada representatives, and, literally, people off the street. The design concept submitted largely reflects the public input received through the two workshops.

Their collective vision would ideally:

- Make the space more inviting with better lighting and sight-lines
- Improve universal access to the library and situate bike parking more appropriately
- Include a large flat area for activities and functions
- Attract people and be well populated
- Incorporate color, temporary or permanent artworks, and a water feature
- Provide opportunity for a refreshment cart and an info kiosk
- Have comfortable (shaded) places to sit (but not lay down) for people to visit, have lunch, hold small group discussions or readings, or just people watch and relax
- Incorporate sustainable/eco-friendly concepts, for instance, using drought-tolerant species

V. Concept Design

The conceptual design (Column 4 of Attachment 3) accomplishes the following:

- A. Improves visibility and open sightlines throughout by removing walls, hedges and small trees
- B. Creates a level, flexible, inviting-to-all plaza (~5,200 sq.ft.) for daily life and special events, and if permitted, could also contain a small coffee or refreshment cart
- C. Improves the visibility of the library entrance and signage and provides a more direct pathway to the entrance from Anapamu Street (Attachment 4 shows current entrance.)
- D. Widens the pedestrian paseo to make it more inviting and provides improved lighting
- E. Replaces the existing fountain with a design to eliminate splashing while recapturing a sense of the Faulkner's historic reflecting pools
- F. Provides seating in the plaza for use by more people
- G. Opens up the view of the original library door on Anapamu Street, and creates a second, smaller sitting area that could also contain a sculpture.
- H. Identifies several locations that could be suitable for art works, and/or installations relating to the library or literature
- I. Relocates bicycle parking to a more visible location
- J. Includes a kiosk, for library or arts announcements, and visitors' information
- K. Avoids visual obstruction of the Art Museum's east wall to allow for art installations and/or outdoor movie nights

- L. Complies with Storm Water Management Plan requirements through the use of permeable pavers, and at-grade planted areas
- M. Incorporates water conserving plant species such as non-fruiting olive trees and aloe vera plants

Apart from the improvements to the functionality of the plaza, the concept also reintegrates the Library and Faulkner aesthetically within their site and with their history, as well as with the neighborhood both physically and culturally. The concept plan and elevations are provided in attachments 5 and 6. Attachment 7 overlays the proposed concept on the existing facilities and vegetation in the plaza.

VI. Next Steps

Review of concept design. The concept is being reviewed by three City entities:

- Street Tree Advisory Committee on Thursday November 3rd
- Parks and Recreation Commission on Wednesday, November 16th
- Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) on Wednesday, November 30th

Depending on the initial vetting of the concept, the design may be developed further or move into the preliminary design phase.

At this point, the concept has been reviewed by the Street Tree Advisory Committee. The project team's notes from that meeting and site visit are included in Attachment 8.

Preliminary design. Following concept development, preliminary design and a construction estimate would be undertaken with additional public participation for review and approval by the HLC. That is the final product of the design team's contract, estimated to conclude in Spring 2012. During this phase, the project will also undergo environmental review.

Final design and construction. If Council finds the preliminary design and construction estimate are acceptable, the project could enter the final design phase in preparation for construction bidding.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Library Parcel and Project Area
 2. Tree Chart
 3. Comparison Chart of Project Guidelines
 4. Photo of Library Entrance and Eucalyptus Trees
 5. Library Plaza Improvements Concept Plan
 6. Library Plaza Improvements Concept Elevations
 7. Library Plaza Improvements Concept and Existing Conditions
 8. Notes from the Street Tree Advisory Committee meeting
11/3/2011

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