



**City of Santa Barbara
Library Department**

Memorandum

DATE: January 22, 2014

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Irene Macias, Library Director

SUBJECT: Draft Concept Design for the Library Plaza Improvement Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission review the draft concept design for the Library Plaza Improvement Project and provide comments to the Historic Landmarks Commission.

DISCUSSION:

I. History of Central Library and Library 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 Central 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 either listed or candidates for inclusion as City landmarks. 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 History

The Concept Design for the project was approved by the Street Tree Advisory Committee on November 3, 2011 and the Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed and commented on November 16, 2011. The Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) reviewed the design on November 30, 2011 and provided the following feedback:

- 1) Renovation of the Library Plaza is long overdue
- 2) The lack of formality to the Faulkner Gallery is perplexing
- 3) The Faulkner Gallery should be celebrated
- 4) Original library entrance should not have any added art placed in front of it
- 5) Better visibility of the original library entrance is paramount
- 6) Pay attention to the balance of opening up the visibility of the original library entrance and the blank walls
- 7) Explore visibility of the whole library building
- 8) Keep planted and built items in the space low and sight-lines open
- 9) Provide a demolition and tree removal plan
- 10) Proposed landscape plan is not compliant with El Pueblo Viejo Guidelines and is too contemporary
- 11) The majority of the Commission would like the applicant to continue to study the retention of the Eucalyptus trees. Skyline trees are important in the downtown area
- 12) Lighting fixture style should be exemplary for this space
- 13) Original Faulkner fountains should be looked at as an element to be re-implemented
- 14) Safety of the pool or fountain needs to be considered

City Council voted on October 23, 2012, to landmark five of the Eucalyptus Citriodora trees, three trees located in the Library Plaza near the Anapamu Street entrance, and two trees outside the Library Avenue Plaza entrance.

In June 2013, the scope of the project was expanded to include the entire Library parcel, including the south entrance along Library Avenue and Library Avenue Plaza (the area between the Library and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art). At present, much of the site is not in compliance with current ADA and building code requirements. Essential to the expanded design is providing ADA compliant equal paths of travel and gathering spaces throughout the entire site, including along Library Avenue, the existing paseo, the north and south entrances to the Library and Faulkner Galleries, Library Avenue Plaza and Library Plaza, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and La Arcada.

The original concept plan proposed to reduce 49 trees in the project area to 30, a reduction of 19 trees. With the expanded project area and scope of work, the concept plan now proposes to reduce 75 trees located in the project area to 56, a reduction of 19 trees.

IV. 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 proposal is to upgrade both the landscape and hardscape area around the perimeter of the

Santa Barbara Central Library and Faulkner Gallery (bounded by E. Anapamu and Anacapa Streets, and Library Avenue). The improvements would include approximately 3,200 square feet of additional hardscape, 750 cubic yards of imported fill, a reduction in turf area, and the provision of a new fountain, seating, artwork display areas, lighting, and approximately 4,500 square feet of activity space. An ADA compliant access would be added to the south Library entrance and all the other hardscape, both new and existing, would be ADA compliant. Of the 75 existing trees, 34 would be removed (22 of which would be relocated off-site), and two other trees would be relocated on-site. Fifteen new trees would be planted, for a total of 56 trees on the library parcel. No changes to the building are proposed, nor will the project obscure or have a negative impact on the City Landmarks on the site. The Santa Barbara Central Library building, constructed in 1917, the Faulkner Gallery, constructed in 1931, and five Eucalyptus Citriodora trees planted in 1931 are designated City Landmarks. Also, the Santa Barbara Central Library is listed on the State Inventory.

The proposed concept envisions removal of walls and hedges, and minor grading, to open sightlines and create a flexible, large flat space for a variety of uses. The amount of grass area will be reduced and hardscape expanded which will contribute to reduced maintenance costs. The simplified design, materials and plant pallet anticipates incorporation of art either in the design or as separate discreet elements, and will provide a pleasant, unobtrusive background for Library and community events. To increase visibility and a functional flat open space, the project proposes to remove a variety of trees in the project area, although some of those would be transplanted while others would be replaced.

In response to HLC, City Council, and the increased scope of the project, the following changes are being made:

- 1) Five existing Eucalyptus Citriodora trees landmarked by the City Council have been retained in the new concept design;
- 2) The water feature was redesigned to respond to the HLC request to bring back the original reflecting ponds;
- 3) The paseo along the SBMA was developed;
- 4) An ADA ramp was added to the south Library Avenue entrance;
- 5) Improvements to the Library Avenue Plaza were added;
- 6) An ADA compliant paseo with a dedicated pedestrian pathway was added along Library Avenue between the Library and La Arcada;
- 7) A monument sign was added to Library Avenue entrance.

The table below quantifies the changes proposed. Attachment 2 identifies specific trees to be removed, replanted, replaced or added.

Site 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	75	56

To summarize the table, the proposed Library Plaza Improvements will 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, legally accessible and useable flexible space for library and community activities, and greater visibility for the library entrance. The proposed changes likely will 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.

V. Process to Develop Concept

The architectural and landscape architectural firm of Campbell & Campbell were selected through a competitive process late in 2010 to prepare the concept and preliminary designs.

The design was 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, 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 had 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 and Recreation and Public Works. The Community Development Planning Division also provided early input.

Public Participation Process. The consultants conducted two public workshops to gain the public's input to the design concept. Approximately 30 members of the public attended the first workshop which was to prepare a set of guidelines for the concept plan. 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, SBMA and La Arcada representatives, and, literally, people off the street. The design concept submitted largely reflects the public input received through the two workshops, plus changes recommended by HLC.

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

VI. Concept Design

The conceptual design 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 (~4,500 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
- D. Widens the pedestrian paseo to make it more inviting and provides improved lighting
- E. Replaces the existing fountain with a design to recapture Faulkner's historic reflecting pools
- F. Provides ADA access to the historic Faulkner Gallery doors, allowing Faulkner events to spill out into the plaza
- G. Provides for provision of portable seating in the plaza for use by more people
- H. Opens up the view of the original library door on Anapamu Street
- I. Identifies several locations that could be suitable for art works, and/or installations relating to the library or literature
- J. Relocates bicycle parking to a more visible locations
- K. Includes a kiosk, for library or arts announcements, and visitors' information
- L. Provides for an ADA ramp to the south library entrance on Library Avenue
- M. Allows for equal access circulation around the entire library parcel
- N. Adds a dedicated pedestrian path from Library Avenue to Library Avenue Plaza, SBMA, and La Arcada
- O. Widens the sidewalk along Library Avenue, thereby enhancing access from Anacapa Street and the transit stop
- P. Avoids visual obstruction of the SBMA's east wall to allow for art installations and/or outdoor movie nights
- Q. Complies with Storm Water Management Plan requirements through the use of permeable pavers, and at-grade planted areas

- R. 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.

VII. Street Tree Advisory Committee Recommendation

The Street Tree Advisory Committee received a presentation on the proposed project at their January 9, 2014, meeting. The Committee provided comments which are outlined in the attached memorandum (Attachment 4). The Committee moved to endorse the proposed plan and forward it to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

VIII. Next Steps

Review of concept design.

- Parks & Recreation Commission on Wednesday, January 22, 2014
- Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) on Wednesday, February 12, 2014

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.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Library Parcel and Project Area
2. Tree Removal and Relocation Diagram
3. Library Planting Plan
4. Street Tree Advisory Committee Comments