

**CITY OF ALBANY
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: September 12, 2012

SUBJECT: Study Session on Master Plan for Pierce Street Park, City Maintenance Center, and Shared Use Bicycle Path

REPORT BY: Jeff Bond, Community Development Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Provide direction to the design team and staff.

BACKGROUND

Since the removal of the Pierce street ramp to Interstate I-80 in the late 1990's, the Pierce Street Project has been a long desired Capital Improvement Project for many years. In the early 2000's a preliminary engineering study sketched out potential space for a park that included a level ball field. Based on this possibility, and prior to City purchase, the mid section of the 4.4-acre parcel was graded by Caltrans to provide a level area. However, the transaction as delayed for many years as the City and Caltrans struggled to find a mutually agreeable price. The neighbors living near the parcel were actively involved in promoting the ultimate location of a park in this area, and expressing their frustration with the delays. Ultimately, it was the neighborhood's agreement that a maintenance center could be located on a portion of the site that enabled the city to propose combining park/trail and maintenance center funding sources and purchase the parcel.

Preliminary studies supported the feasibility of a maintenance center, park and trail combination on the parcel. However, the use of the site for active playfields for children has been discouraged by the Bay Area Air Quality Board due to air quality concerns related to the immediately adjacent freeways. For this reason, a passive use park is envisioned at this time.

Following the purchase of the Pierce Street parcel in June of 2011, the city commenced a comprehensive process to select a design team. Requests for Qualifications from architectural firms were solicited in the fall of 2011. Twenty-two proposals were received and based on the recommendation of a selection panel, the Berkeley-based firm of BurksToma Architects was the selected. For landscape design, the firm of "The Planning Center/DC&E" was chosen as a sub-consultant.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

A working group of neighborhood representatives has been working with the design team and two alternative master plan scenarios have been developed by the group. The Parks and

Recreation Commission is expected to review the programming and design of the park. In addition, the Traffic and Safety Commission will be reviewing the shared use bicycle path. The Planning and Zoning Commission will be responsible for review of the design of the new maintenance center. In addition, it is anticipated that amendments to the City's zoning map will need to be amended to designate the property as "Public Facility." Furthermore, the Commission will be involved with the preparation of the environmental review of the proposed project pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

At this time, direction from the Commission on any aspect of the project will be welcome. Of particular help would be Commission feedback on the massing and urban design aspects of the maintenance facility in relation to nearby residences and the shared use bike path. In addition to providing guidance to the design team, the Commission's feedback will be provided to the City Council at their upcoming briefing.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The project meets a number of sustainability goals, including increasing park and open space, additional plantings of trees and other Bay Friendly landscaping, storm water and pollution prevention improvements, promoting alternative transportation via bicycle and pedestrian trails, and greater energy and water efficiency for City Facilities. It should also be noted that moving the City's maintenance center to the parcel would enable additional economic activity at Cleveland Avenue. From a safety perspective, having the maintenance center in a modern code-compliant facility east of the Freeway may prove important in the event of a significant earthquake and damage to highway infrastructure.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Attachments:

1. Handout for Working Group Meeting #2
2. Working Group Meeting #2 Meeting Summary



Working Group Meeting #2 August 30, 2012

Agenda

- Project Recap
- Conceptual Maintenance Facility Alternatives
- Conceptual Park Alternatives
- Discussion
- Next Steps

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Project Team

- City of Albany Staff
 - Judy Lieberman, Projects Director
 - Penelope Leach, Assistant City Manager, Community Services Director
- BurksToma Architects
 - Karen Burks, Architect, Project Manager
 - Andy Drake, Project Architect
- The Planning Center | DC&E
 - Sarah Sutton, Principal-in-Charge
 - John Hykes, Landscape Architect, Project Manager
 - Sadie Mitchell, Urban Designer

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Project Overview

- Goals

- *Provide a new Maintenance Facility for the City of Albany Public Works*
- *Enhance connections to the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Ohlone Greenway*
- *Create a Passive Use Recreation Park*

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Working Group Meeting #1

- Introduction to Project
- Recap of the Parks & Rec Commission & Site Walk
- Discussion of Opportunities and Constraints of the Site
- Discussion of Maintenance Facility Requirements
- Discussion of Potential Site Programming
- Small Group Design Exercise



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Group #1



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Group #1

- Minimal Northern Parking
- Experiential entrance from Street
- Asian-inspired plantings
- Trellises, water feature, Picnic tables & benches
- Playgrounds, with adjacent restrooms
- Community Gardens
- Half-sized Basketball court
- Bocce Court



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Group #2



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Group #2

- No on-site parking, ADA parking from Calhoun Street
- Viewing platform at Pierce Street
- Par-course stations and walking path
- Multi-use field
- Demonstration garden, native plant area
- Remove vegetation along Pierce Street and integrate site into neighborhood
- Multiple Entrances



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



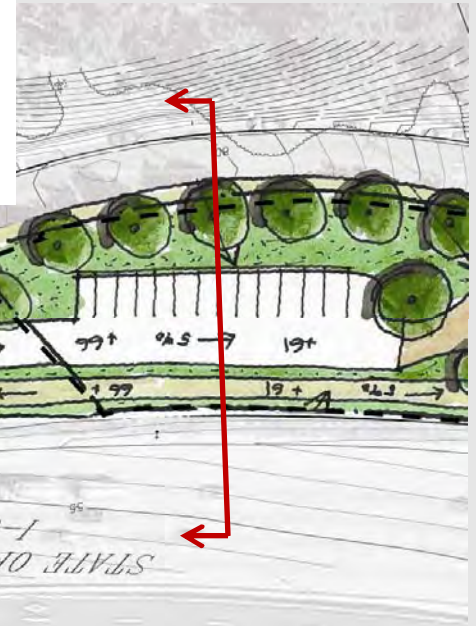
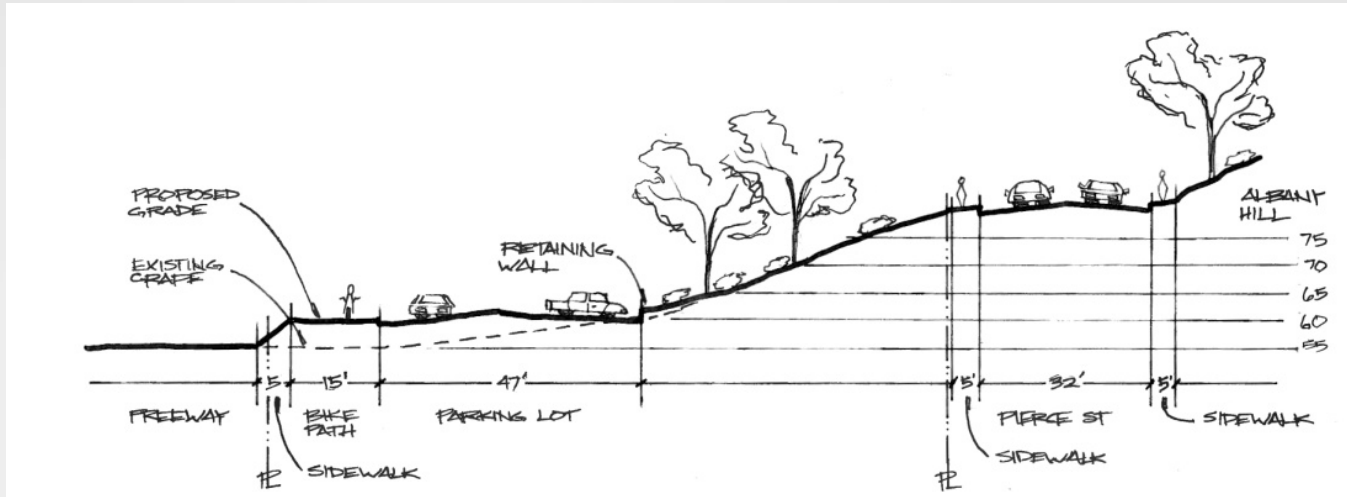
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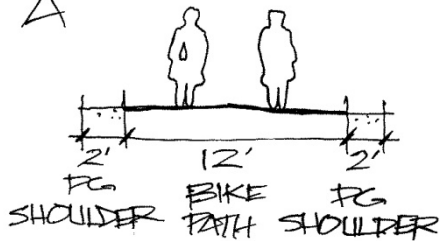
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



ALTA



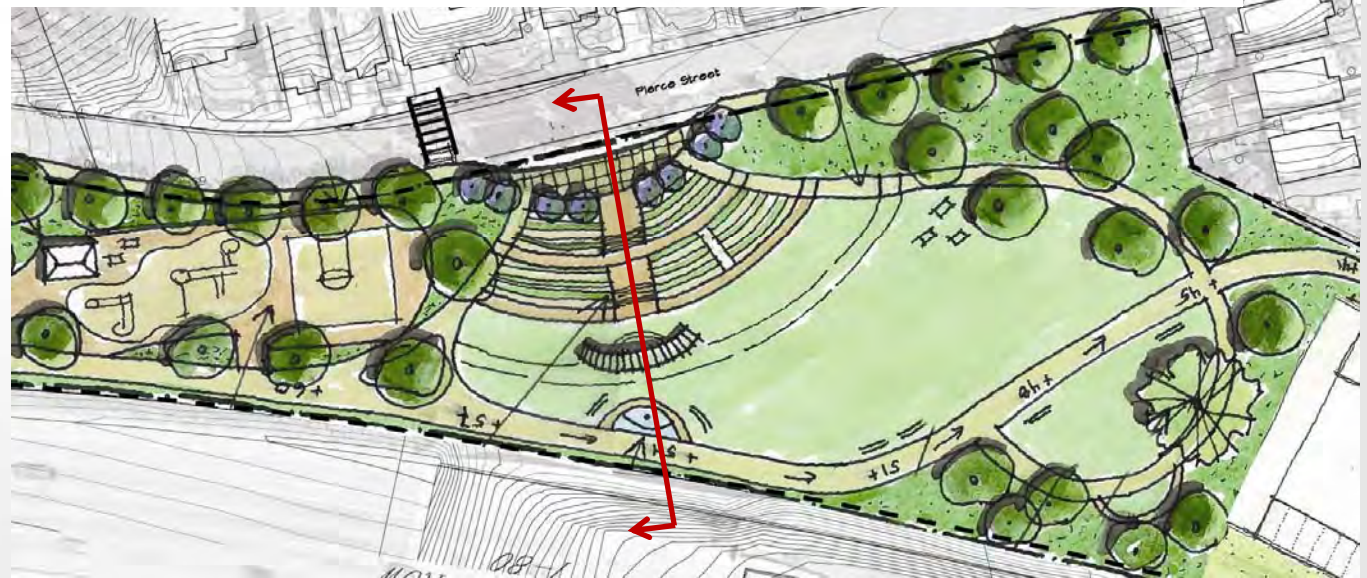
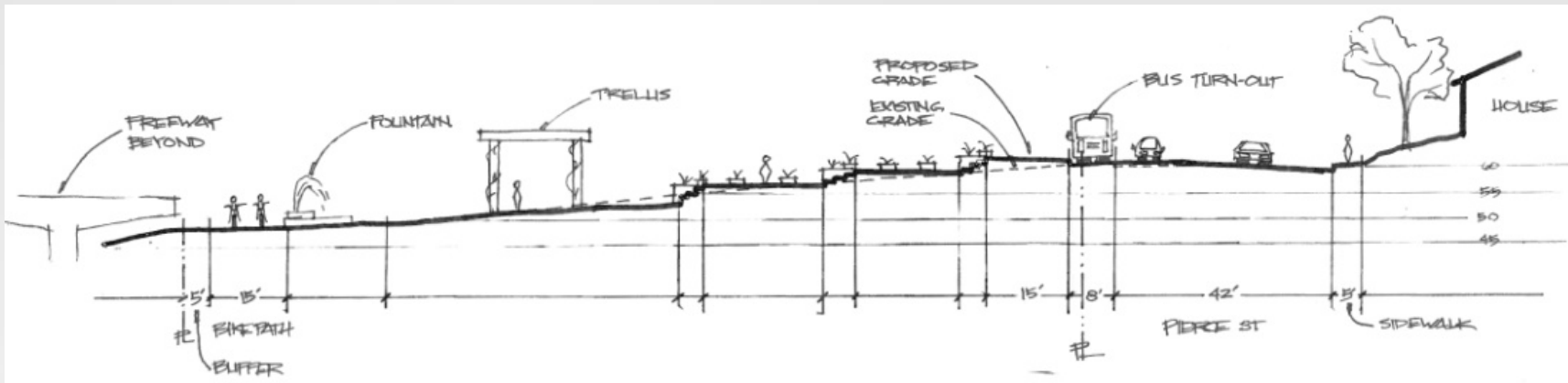
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



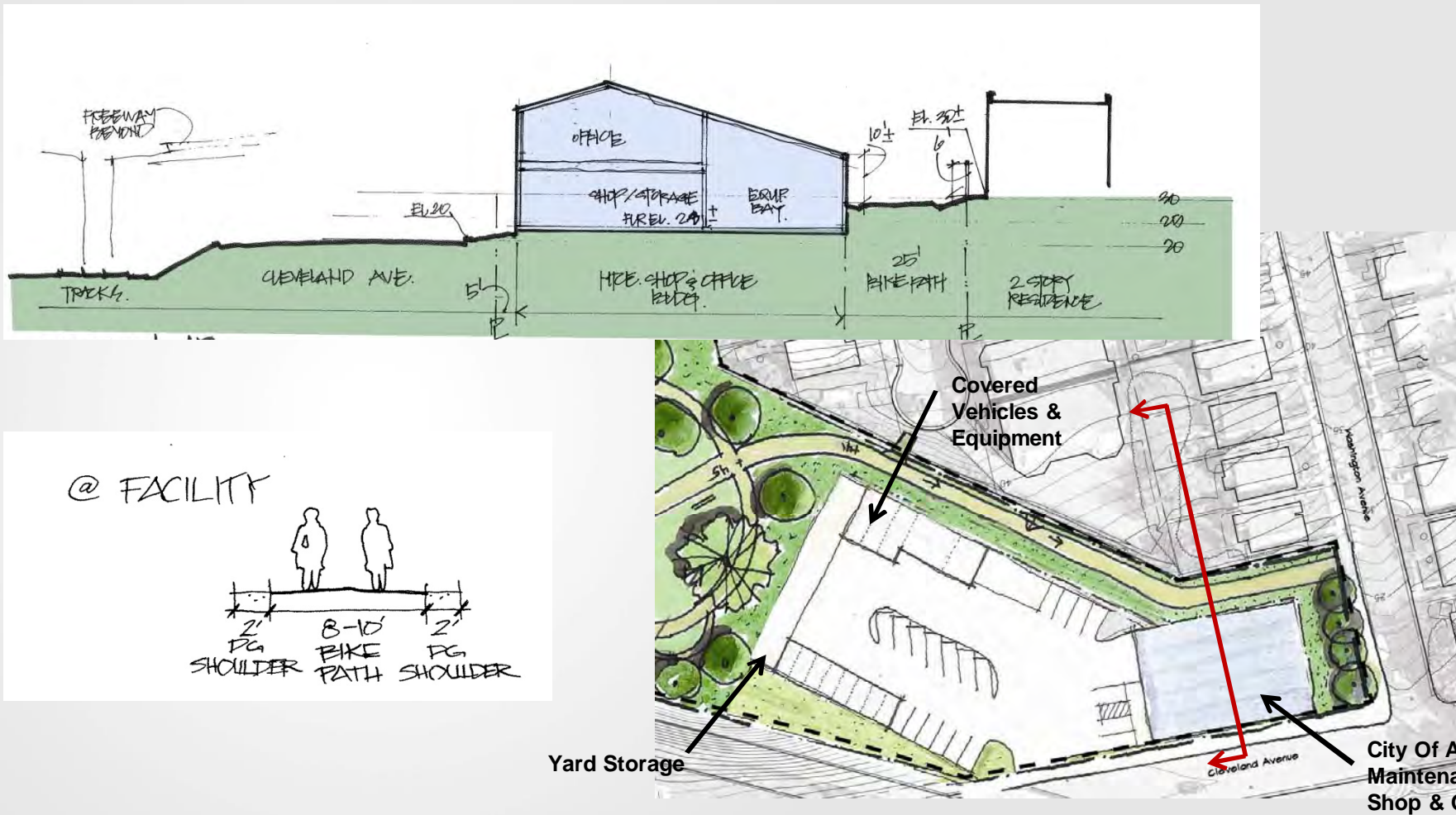
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative A : Group 1



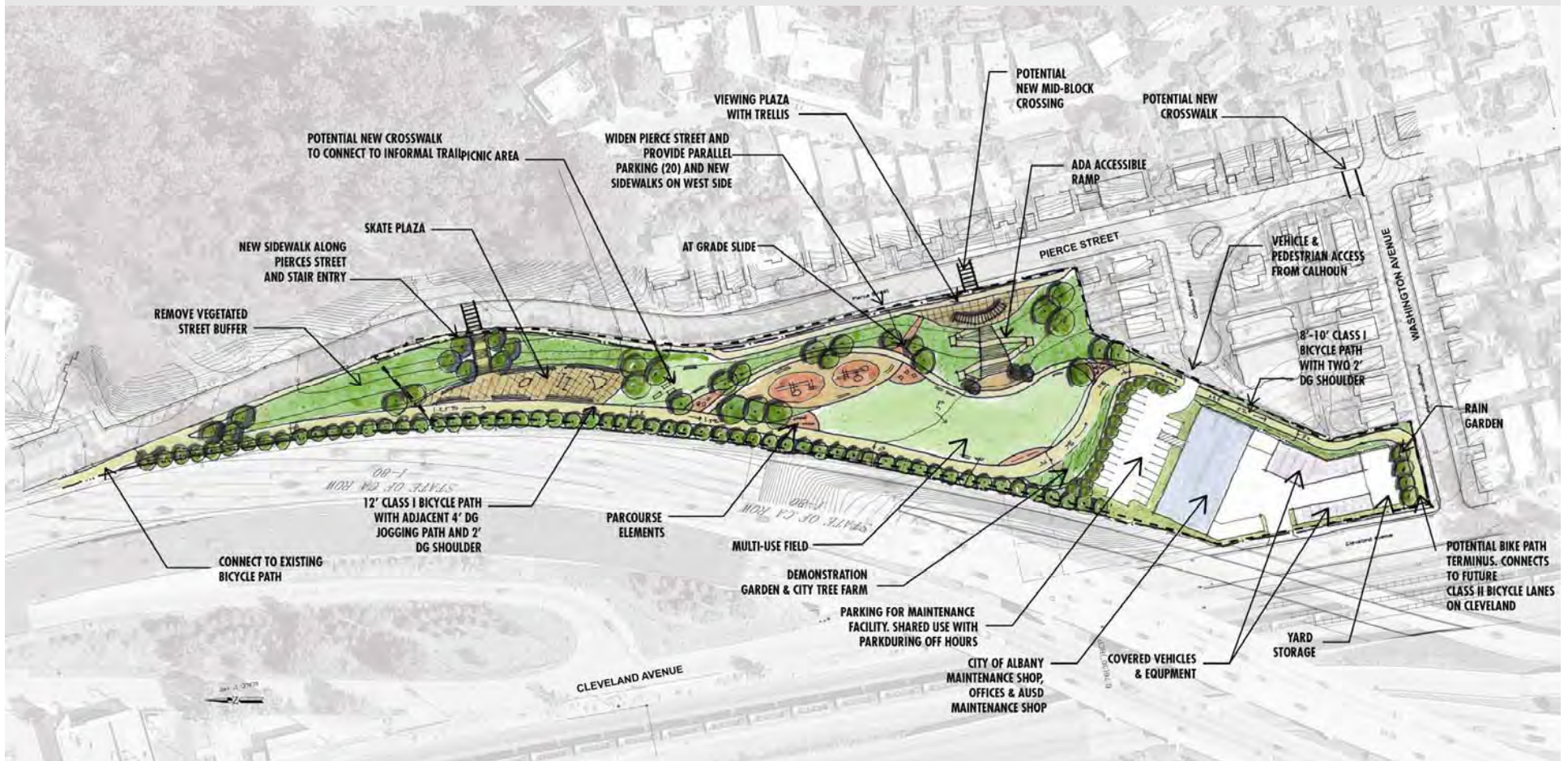
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



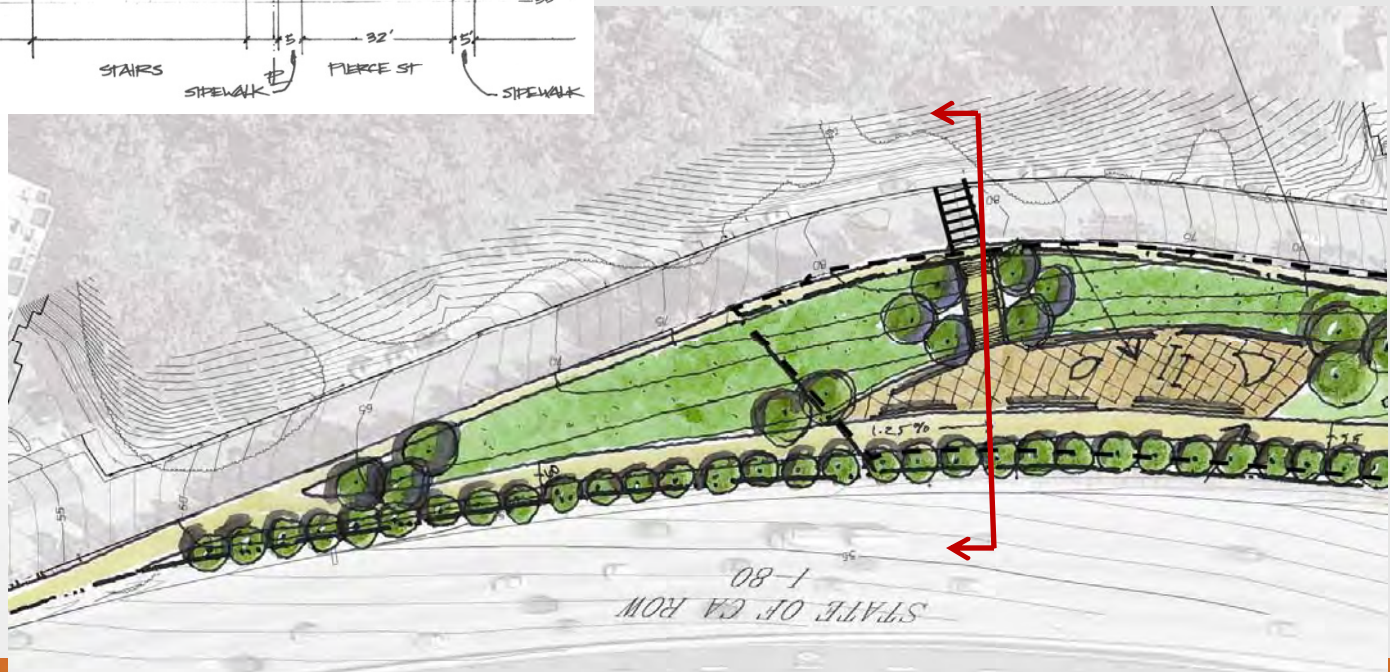
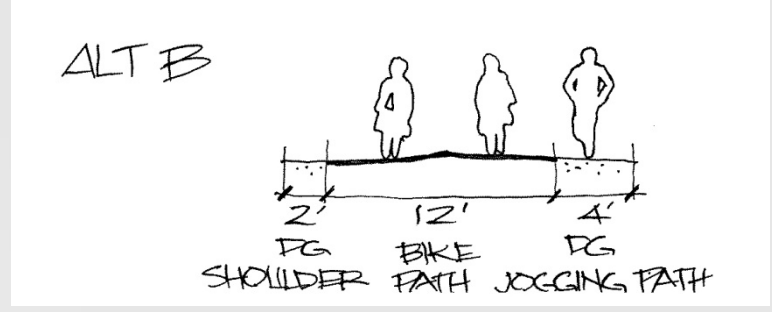
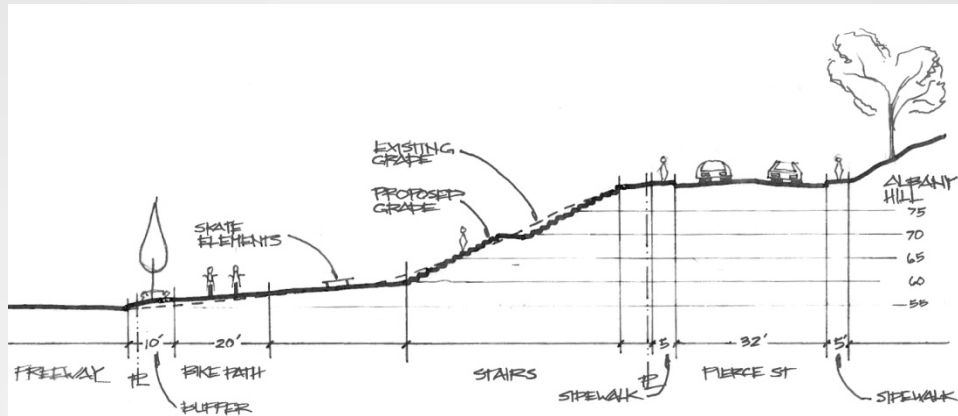
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



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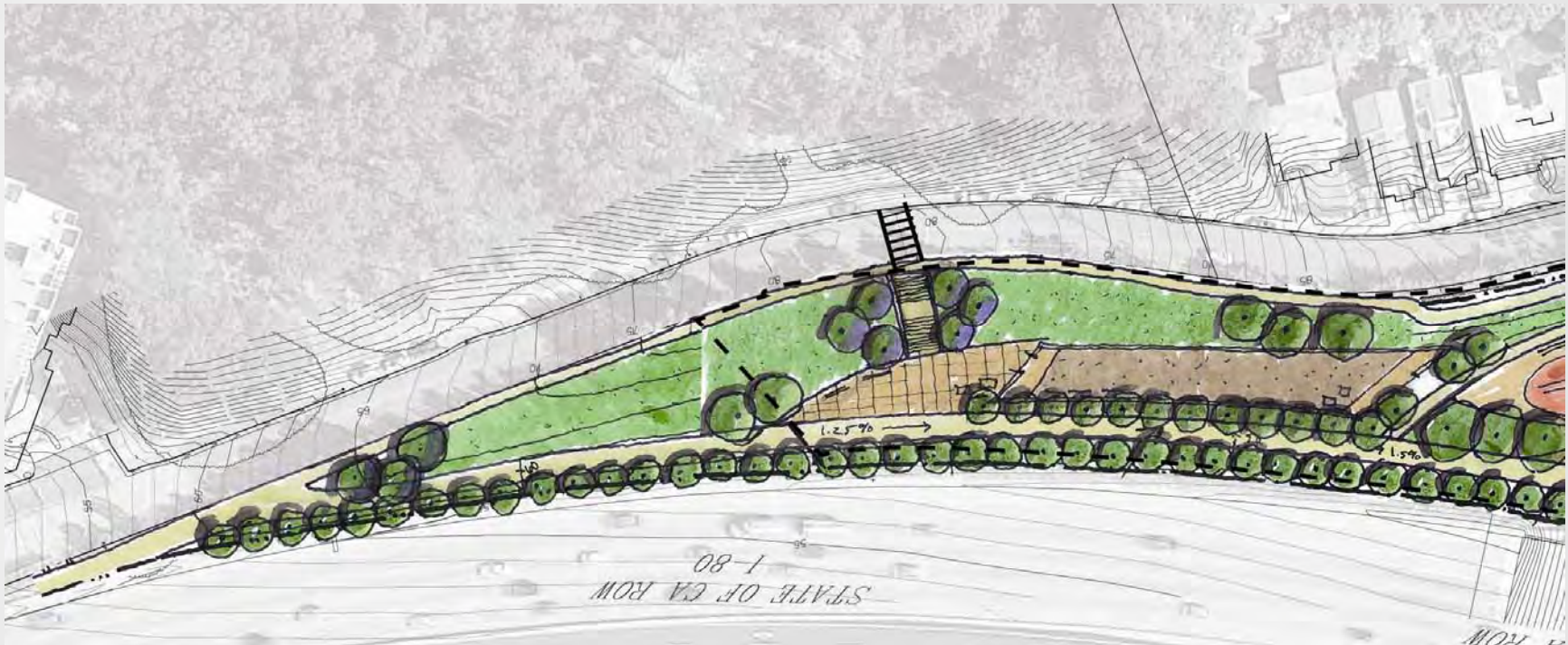


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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2

- Dog Park Alternative



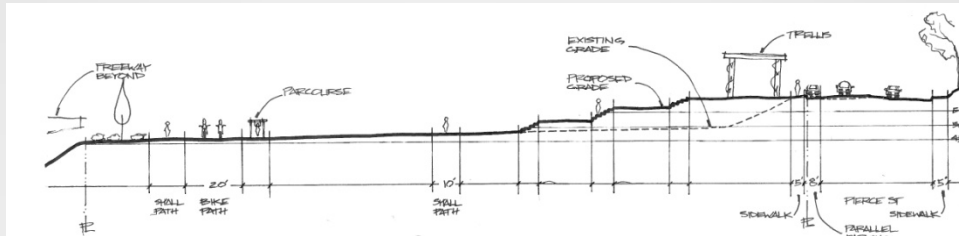
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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



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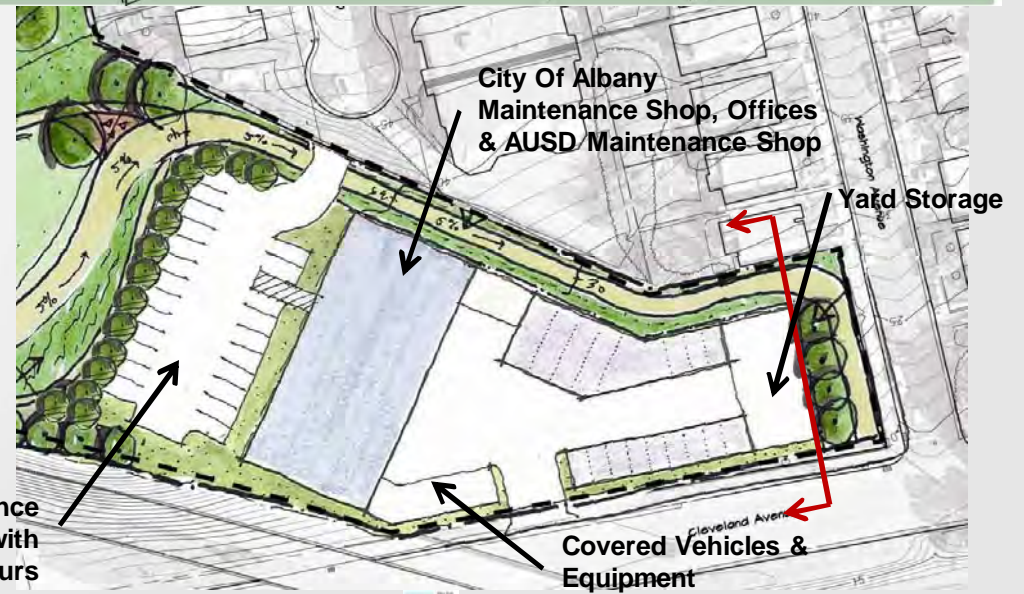
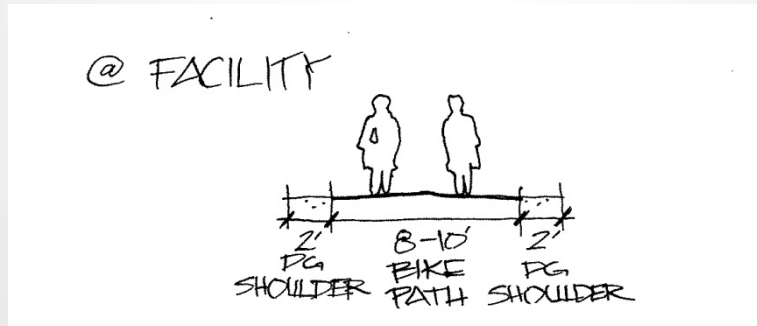
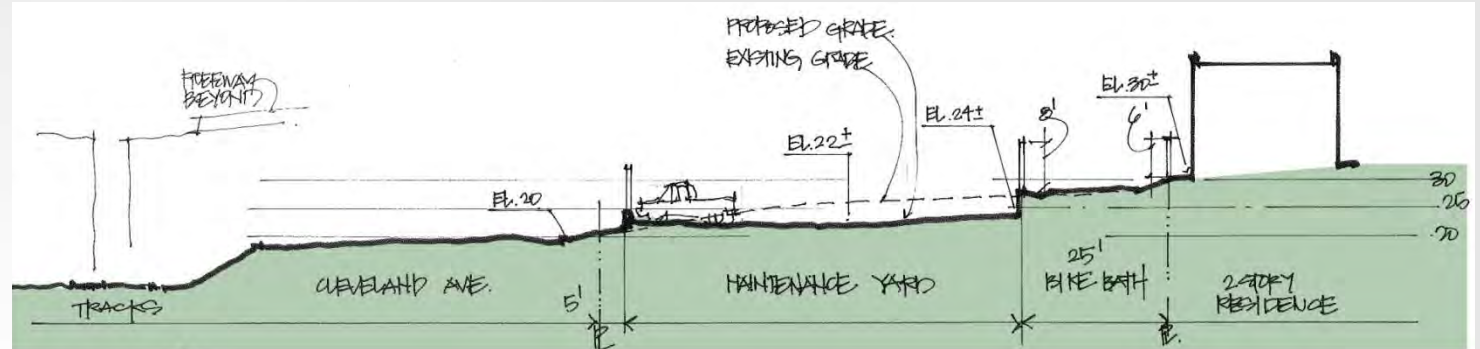


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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2

Section 2A



Parking for Maintenance Facility, Shared Use with Park During off hours

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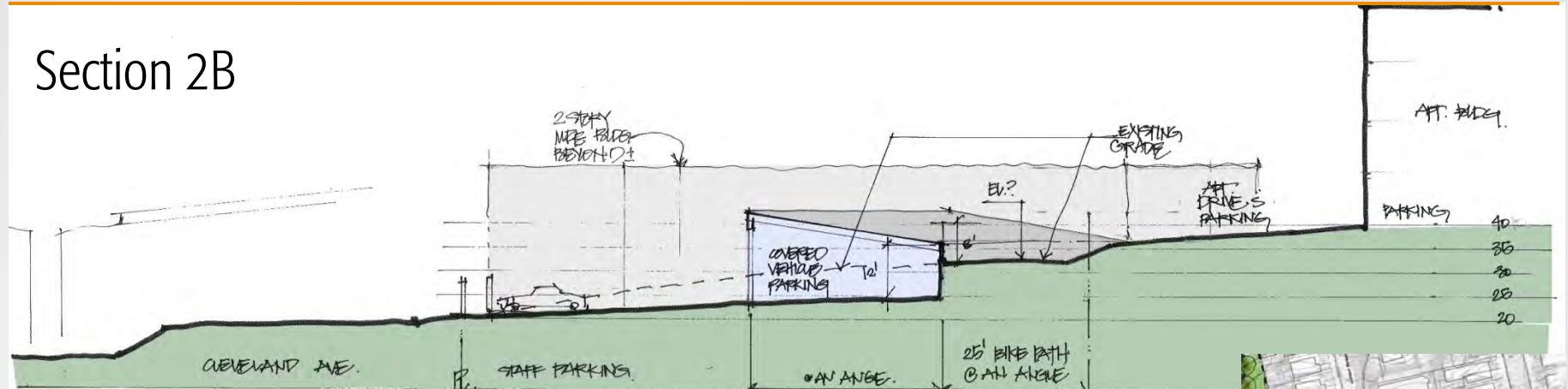


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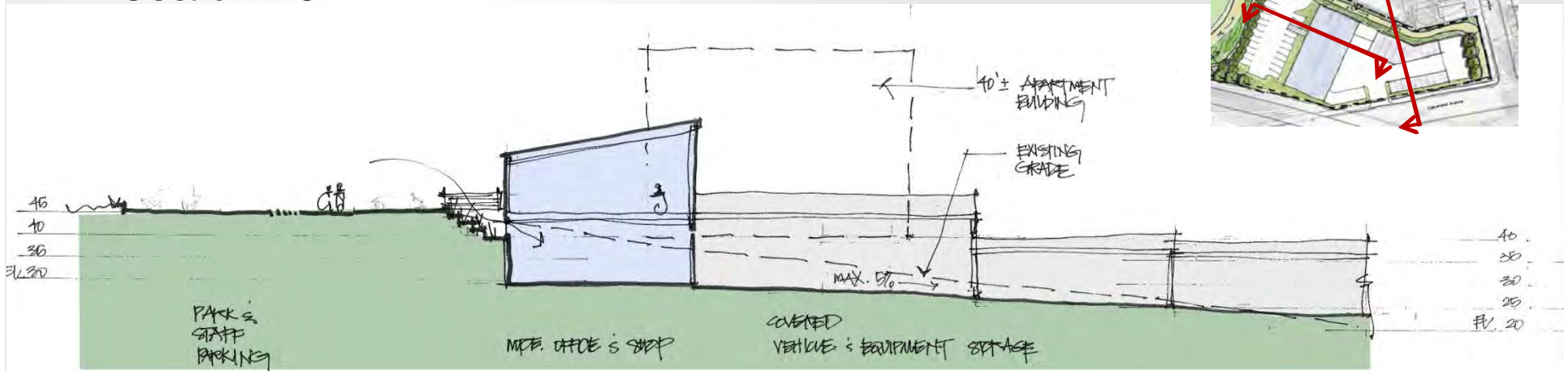


Maintenance Facility Alternatives – Alternative 2

Section 2B



Section 2C



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Maintenance Facility Alternatives – Alternative 2



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



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Park Design Alternatives – Alternative B : Group 2



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DISCUSSION

- Alternatives Input

Break Out group discussion-

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Next Steps

- Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting –September 13th, 2012
- Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting – September 12th
- Traffic & Safety Commission Meeting – September 27th, 2012
- City Council Meeting – October 15th, 2012

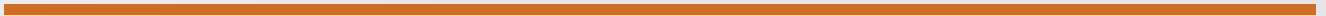
- Pre-Design Report- October-November, 2012

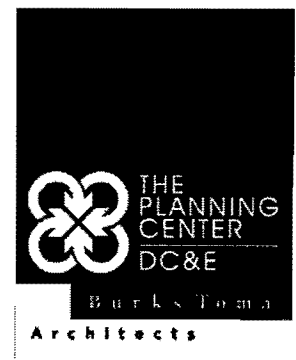
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September 5, 2012

Re: Working Group #2 Meeting Summary

This memorandum summarizes the August 30th, Pierce Street Parcel Working Group Meeting #2. The meeting was held at the Senior Center in Albany from 6:30-8:30pm and was led by Burks Toma Architects and The Planning Center | DC&E. The meeting was attended by 12 working group members.

John Hykes of Project Manager from the Planning Center | DC&E began the meeting by providing a re-introduction to the project, a recap of where the project is to date, and an overview of the next steps. Then he presented a summary of the first Working Group Meeting and of the two alternatives that were developed based upon the alternatives each of the two groups created during the small group exercise.

Following is a summary of the comments given by the committee regarding the project and/or the individual alternatives.

Alternative A

- 12 feet is a lot of space to dedicate to a bicycle lane considering the narrowness of the park at certain locations.
- The proposed crosswalks should be raised to also function to calm traffic.
- There is a potential conflict between the location of the meditation area and noises from the maintenance facility and yard.
- Is it possible to consider a roof over the maintenance parking that could be utilized for park space?
- Could the meditation garden include a labyrinth?

Alternative B

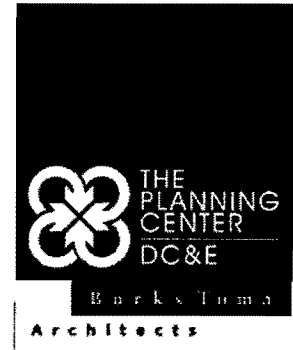
- Skate Park is a bad idea, and there is a really nice skate park less than a mile away from the parcel.
- Maybe the bus stop should be left at the same location to preserve space at the park entrance.
- There is a new jogging path at Cougar field, so a jogging path at this location may not be necessary.
- Is there really a need for a dog park at this location?
- A dedicated dog park may be a good idea. People with dogs will go there, it is better for all users of the park for them to have a dedicate space, so that they do not interfere with other activities in other locations.
- It is potentially dangerous to have the bicycle path go across the driveway entrance at Calhoun Street.



- If the shared parking lot is available on the weekends it will be used for negative non-park uses.
- Parking at the park is necessary to reduce demand in neighborhood.
- Sidewalks are needed along all of Pierce Street.
- Parallel parking along Pierce Street is not as safe for families loading and unloading children from cars.
- Parking along Pierce Street is a good idea because it makes it easier for police and neighbors to keep an eye on it.
- Parallel parking along Pierce Street might cause visibility problems for other drivers.
- Off-street parking should be located close to the playground for easier access for families.

General Comments

- Is AC Transit still continuing to operate on Pierce Street in the future?
- The bicycle path will be used as a commute bicycle path, so it will be important to avoid any potential conflicts with pedestrians and cars in the design.
- Solar panels should be included on the roof of the building and covered parking.
- People on Washington Avenue and Calhoun Street are going to be affected by this project, have they been contacted?
- What are the restroom hours going to be? There is a large homeless population at the Albany bulb and if the restroom is open all the time it will become a problem.
- Will there be hours for the park. Safety issues should be a concern.
- The design should include traffic calming along Pierce Street.
- Pierce Street is already too narrow
- Is there the potential for a staircase from Cleveland Street to the park?



Program	Consensus	Disagreement	Additional Thoughts
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The park should have a minimal amount of new parking dedicated to park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Bicycle Path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some felt a lot of space in the design is dedicated to bicyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about conflict between commuters and park users. Concern about conflict between bicycles and vehicles if driveway at Calhoun
Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A necessity for the park Should be located near bathroom and parking 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for slide and idea to integrate topography into the playground design (similar to Dolores Park)
Community Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pierce Street Parcel is not the correct location for a community garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Terraced Entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be planted with a number of different things including demonstration garden or Asian-themed plants
Mediation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General support. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not too much concern about location other than should be located near complementary adjacent uses.
Skate Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pierce Street Parcel is not the best location for a skate park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a great skate park less than a mile away
Parcourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good idea and location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Demonstration Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good idea, could be in various flexible locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Restrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needed. Should be located near playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of concern expressed about hours of bathroom and preventing use by nearby homeless population
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some felt there was too much space dedicated to open grass area. Grass is a water consumptive use. Others felt that the appropriate location for grassy open spaces is in a park and that use of water is better in a park than a home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Dog Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good idea to include a small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinions changed on this when



	<p>fenced location for dogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern portion of the site is appropriate • Location adjacent to the Maintenance facility was also suggested 	<p>supporters for the dog park shared their opinion that having a dedicated area for dogs will prevent owners from allowing their dogs to use other areas “illegally”</p>
<p>Building Location</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreement as to which location was better. • Some preferred the corner location as depicted in Alt A because it held the street edge. Others felt this location would create a blank edge because of building requirements. • Others preferred internal site location because it would allow for eyes in the park. 	

Parking Location	Potential Benefits	Potential Drawbacks
Northern Area of Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good use of difficult space • Easy access from Pierce • Allows close proximity to other park programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential negative traffic impacts on Pierce street because of topography • Requires driveway easement on Caltrans property • Requires dedication of large portion of park area to parking
On-Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to widen Pierce Street and minimize some of the existing parking/driving limitations on Pierce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires dedication of park parcel to parking • Parking is not adjacent to many park program (i.e. playground)
Calhoun (shared with maintenance facility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to share parking between maintenance facility and park use • Provides good ADA access to plateau of site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Traffic along Calhoun • Minimal number of dedicated parking spaces for park during maintenance facility hours • Potential conflict point between cars and bicycles when driveway crossing bicycle path