

Landscape Design Services for the Plaza in Downtown Ashland

Meeting Notes from June 21, 2012 Public Outreach Meeting

Note: Responses by Covey Pardee during the meeting are shown in italics.

Morning Session:

- Does not want to see more concrete, and don't reduce the green space. Increase the plaza size and make more pedestrian friendly. Hardscape is hot.
- Does not want to see trees or hardscape removed. Any ideas about vehicle traffic?
- Resistant to hardscape generally, but with park nearby agrees with increased hardscape for this space. How will softscape be protected? Will it be elevated?
- *Response: Protect planters with seat walls and propose resilient plants. Plants will be elevated a little. Design will provide healthier areas for trees. Hardscape can be kept cooler with shade from trees.*
- Can you provide statistics for how much seating and hardscape will be provided and how it relates to existing plaza?
- *Response: Properly planted trees will provide shade to cool concrete. Concrete does not heat up without sunshine. During cooler parts of year, bare trees will let sun in to warm the concrete.*
- *Response: Yes, we will provide data regarding changes in seating and paving at the next meeting.*
- *Response: Sweetgum is unhealthy and nearing end of its lifespan.*
- Will information booth be removed?
- It is really hot outside of booth, and shading it would be nice.
- Would not like booth removed. Want more bike parking and more seating. Stage idea seems too extravagant for the space.
- What will seat materials be? Examples?
- *Response: We are considering concrete or perhaps boulders. Maybe shaped concrete. Wood benches have not withstood the use/abuse.*
- Concrete is not comfortable for long-term sitting.
- How long do people stay at plaza? Have you sat and watched how the plaza is used?
- *Response: Yes, we have spent time in plaza people-watching to understand what is going on currently.*
- In Portland they use 'cob' material for seating and other elements. Can we use that here?
- *Response: Cob may not be best for this climate and use.*
- What is wrong with the sweetgum tree?
- *Response: The large sweetgum has reached maturity, it is struggling in the confined space, and its roots are girdling. Summer rain and winter snow could easily break the sweetgum's branches*

or topple the tree. The Modesto Ash has a thin canopy due to disease. Modesto Ash does well in other areas. Proper selection is the key.

- How much room do tree roots need?
- *Response: Depends on specie. Recommend removing and replacing diseased and struggling trees with appropriate species for this space and condition. For sweetgum, they need to be in large areas, far from paving.*
- Does not make sense to do all this new work and not remove trees that will need to be removed in near future.
- Will lighting be addressed? Currently it is a big issue and we need more lights. What about hanging flower baskets?
- *Response: Lighting is not addressed in the current plan, nor is hanging flower baskets. However, details like this may be considered as the project proceeds.*
- No bikes are in this area because it is not bike friendly. Seating is bad and plants are looking bad, especially the lawn. At this time the plaza is not an inviting space.
- How do you enhance the space so level of activity increases?
- The designs seem like short-term solutions. You need to remove parking and make plaza larger.
- Plaza needs to be comfortable and welcoming.
- Current scale and size of plaza makes the space interesting. But the space needs to be maintained better. Even at this size, plaza can have a big impact.
- Did you look at other small scale plazas?
- We need a green, larger pedestrian plaza.
- Plaza needs to fit today's needs.
- Need space to accommodate cultural activities, and a place for loading and unloading equipment from vehicles.
- How about standing and leaning areas?

Evening Session:

- What about all the people that congregate under the tree at the north end?
- What about permeable paving?
- Does not make sense to remove information booth.
- Can Iron Mike be moved?
- What about safety of walkers on west side of plaza? How do plans take that into account?
- *Response: plant low shrubs, seat walls, allow visual access to all of plaza and direct flow of people. Recognize west side of plaza dangerous w/ car movement. Plans discourage this pattern.*
- Can the plaza have moveable chairs and tables?
- How do you deal with people who run across the street? Can design slow them down?
- We need various 'rooms' within the plaza for diverse users.
- *Response: Design will provide paving patterns, seat walls and elements to help create sub-spaces within plaza. Perhaps movable site furniture could work, but it is a site management issue and the city would need to consider the options.*

- It does not make sense to have a small plaza when the city is growing so much. Likes idea of movable furniture and a stage. Iron Mike is part of our history and should not be moved. What about using trees in large movable containers? Does not like bollards.
- Are the mail box and utility pay box staying? If they are removed, it reduces the number of cars pulling up to edge of plaza. Wants the seating to be artful and comfortable. Concerned with the heat in the area, shade is critical.
- How can you make concrete comfortable? Can we use tall vertical shrubs or containerized plants?
- *Response: Stay away from tall plants, with exception of trees, to allow visual connection to and across plaza. This is safer and feels more comfortable. Concrete seat walls can have benches added on top, or can be formed to be more comfortable.*
- Show example images of seating facing out, wants to sit across from others to allow interaction. What about tables?
- Geppetto's had movable furniture for years and it was never stolen, it was safe because it was very visible.
- How about using canopies for shade?

Landscape Design Services for the Plaza in Downtown Ashland

Meeting Notes from July 9, 2012 Public Outreach Meeting

Note: Responses by Covey Pardee during the meeting are shown in italics.

Morning Session:

- Lighting for public safety/property?
- *Response: Lighting will be considered during the next stage of design.*
- Would seat wall act as a stage?
- *Response: Sure, if you wanted it to be. The semi-circle is the implied stage, where people will go to perform. The wall acts as a backing to the space.*
- Sloped seating?
- *Response: The wall can be sat on and wide enough to lie on though probably not comfortable to sleep on. Shape is also whimsical, looking at children playing on it.*
- Can concrete wall have a back on seat?
- *Response: Yes, not shown in model perspectives, but we are looking at them on the materials palette.*
- “Where the palm meets the pine” – is there a place for palm trees?
- *Response: Not suitable for this area, and too little shade.*
- What about flowers, color, hanging baskets?
- *Response: Color in the shrubs and trees, but not annuals. Details like irrigation and light pole selection come later in process. Design is flexible, at this time need to get the spatial arrangement and form right. Details and budget implications will be considered during the next stage of design*
- Wood benches were vandalized. What other materials can we use on top of concrete walls?
- *Response: Steel. Also, people will take care of site better once more citizens frequent the plaza. Improving the plaza will decrease vandalism.*
- A lot of grey in the design. What about color? Mosaics, tile, blue and green concrete?
- *Response: We are looking at using city standard concrete color, we need to work with the city on these choices, and we need to be careful about choosing bright concrete colors.*
- Keep the space neutral, let people bring the color and highlights.
- Will the concrete pattern continue around the fountains?
- *Response: Yes, but not figured out at this time.*
- How has lighting been addressed?
- *Response: Lighting will be considered during the next stage of design.*
- Could a fountain be added at a future date using the irrigation water?
- *Response: Fountain would require potable water, irrigation is a separate system.*

- What about historical images, signage, art?
- *Response: We have mused about historical images as tiles on the walls, or perhaps a return to the old neon sign for the Lithia water. Interpretive information could be provided through the information booth.*
- Plan shows mailbox and pay box gone, eliminating people driving to that area which is good.
- What about drainage, will you use the landscape?
- *Response: We will explore all the options – permeable paving, landscape infiltration, and drainage systems. The existing trees sit high and that needs to be considered.*
- If trees will be removed, why not show more hardscape?
- *Response: City council wants another outside arborist to look at the trees and prepare a report. Tree Commission wants no fewer than five trees in the plaza. The Ash will need to go, and the Japanese maple will likely be moved to a better location in the park. Red maples send roots up - we explored using a platform but decided not to – used walls to protect instead. Sweetgums should not be used in urban areas.*
- Removal of the lawn will keep the ‘characters’ from sleeping there.
- I really like the radiating form and the overall design. (several people made same comment)
- Excellent plan!
- Glad the design encourages performance. Great!
- Maybe locate electric meters inside the information booth?
- *Response: Need access, maybe at back of booth.*
- Bulletin board – kiosk – maybe add frame to keep it neater?

Evening Session:

- Where will trash cans be located?
- *Response: Need to get overall design approved first.*
- Why have planters, it seems like a waste of space?
- *Response: We cannot pave right up to existing trees, they need space. If tree dies in future, planting the replacement in a tree grate may be appropriate.*
- What about skateboarders on the walls?
- *Response: There are ways to keep them away.*
- What about more comfortable seating since this is a performance space?
- *Response: We see this primarily as a setting for shorter performances.*
- Why not remove the parking to the north and make the plaza and performance area larger?
- *Response: Design allows for future expansion.*
- From a maintenance standpoint this design looks great.
- People can bring their own pillow or chair if they don’t want to sit on the concrete.
- The concrete edges look sharp, what if someone falls on them?
- *Response: Concrete edges can be chamfered or rounded to make more comfortable. Concrete seating in the sun can be inviting during the right season.*

- What about accessibility for older people?
- *Response: All areas of site need to meet accessibility standards, and there would be seat walls of various heights.*
- Excited about the increased seating. Could the wall behind the 'stage' be used for storage by performers?
- *Response: Good idea.*
- Plaza is not what we are to the rest of the world. Design looks too modern. Bring families in?
- *Response: We can use 'worn materials i.e. granite, colored pavers, varied finishes. Different materials add to space, and cost more. Backs can be added to the concrete seat walls.*
- Plaza is still a traffic island, a round-a-bout. Eliminate the parking and make it bigger. The wall by stage is a barrier to the street side buildings. What about when this parking is gone?
- *Response: The seat walls can be double-sided where needed. There is a lot of space between the plaza and the buildings, and we would not want to just pave the entire space. We need subspaces. Again, that area is outside of our scope.*
- I think the pavers are necessary for trees and drainage. I really think the design is great. Concrete seat walls are absolutely fine. Parrotia and potentilla are excellent plants.
- Walls feel like something on a college campus. I would prefer curved shapes.
- Plaza will grow in future. Now the time to set the norm with seating and structure.
- I like the radial sun form. I would like curvilinear seating.
- Maybe there could be different material for the long bench, such as iron or wood?
- What about relocating the information booth?
- *Response: More than 25,000 people visit the booth each year for information. It is utilized more than most people realize.*
- Walls are too angular. What about boulders, an oriental theme?
- *Response: This is a small space, difficult to have varying themes.*
- I want seats with backs. What about other uses for info booth?
- Plaza as a community reflection, a family area and tourist spot. A kid spot. (Inspire pamphlet)
- We need more locals downtown. This is a public space.
- The artist market should be allowed onto the plaza.
- The artist market and other commercial uses should be kept off the plaza.
- Want artists on the plaza. It would make the artisans market more visible.
- How about circular planters around trees?
- What about seats around the new trees?
- What about adding tables and umbrellas?
- Plaza should be for people to relax, not for commercial use.
- Need some long-term seating. Locals are here year-round and space should be seasonal.
- What about imprinting images into walls? Art or hopscotch?
- What about space for music?

- *Response: This is a small space, and these are good ideas. Decisions about details can be made at the next stage of design. Designing a public space requires balancing often conflicting demands.*
- Like how the tree grates provide more pedestrian space.
- Like the idea of movable furniture.
- Nice work.