

City Hall & the School: 127 years

In 1890 the Town of Ashland was coming into its own. The community had just purchased the land at Laurel and N Main (1889) for the purpose of building a school, and the City was finalizing plans to build a new City Hall (1891) at 20 E Main St.. Now, 127 years later, each of these institutions, the School District and the City, are reconsidering the fate of these two historic properties.

The School District has determined that: because each school requires its own dedicated administration; fewer schools, with larger student bodies, saves the District money that is better spent elsewhere. Thus, the limited size of the Briscoe property is no longer cost effective and must be sold. Meanwhile, City Hall has also been profoundly affected by Ashland's phenomenal growth and cultural transformation.

For years City Hall was surrounded by businesses that Ashland residents would naturally visit on a regular basis. Grocery and hardware, the local pharmacy, doctors and lawyers; all were located on or near the Plaza. Locals could pay the utility bill, buy milk and eggs, and visit the dime store; without being compelled to move the car. This is no longer the case. Today the Plaza is dominated by restaurants, clubs, Shakespeare and upscale shops; catering to the thousands of visitors that have become the hallmark of downtown Ashland. Parking has become a frustrating challenge that often ends with a long walk. Ann Seltzer pointed out that during the last remodel, when Utilities was temporarily located at the Grove, a majority of residents expressed their pleasure and relief with the ease of access afforded by an adjacent parking lot.

Reconstruction of City Hall in its current location, which is projected to take 3 to 5 years to complete, would be a hardship on Plaza Merchants that cannot be overstated. If adopted, the plan would be to excavate a full basement, and build 3 seismically reinforced stories above ground. Under one option, only the historic facade would be saved (at an additional cost of about \$1,000,000), otherwise the building would be totally demolished and then rebuilt.

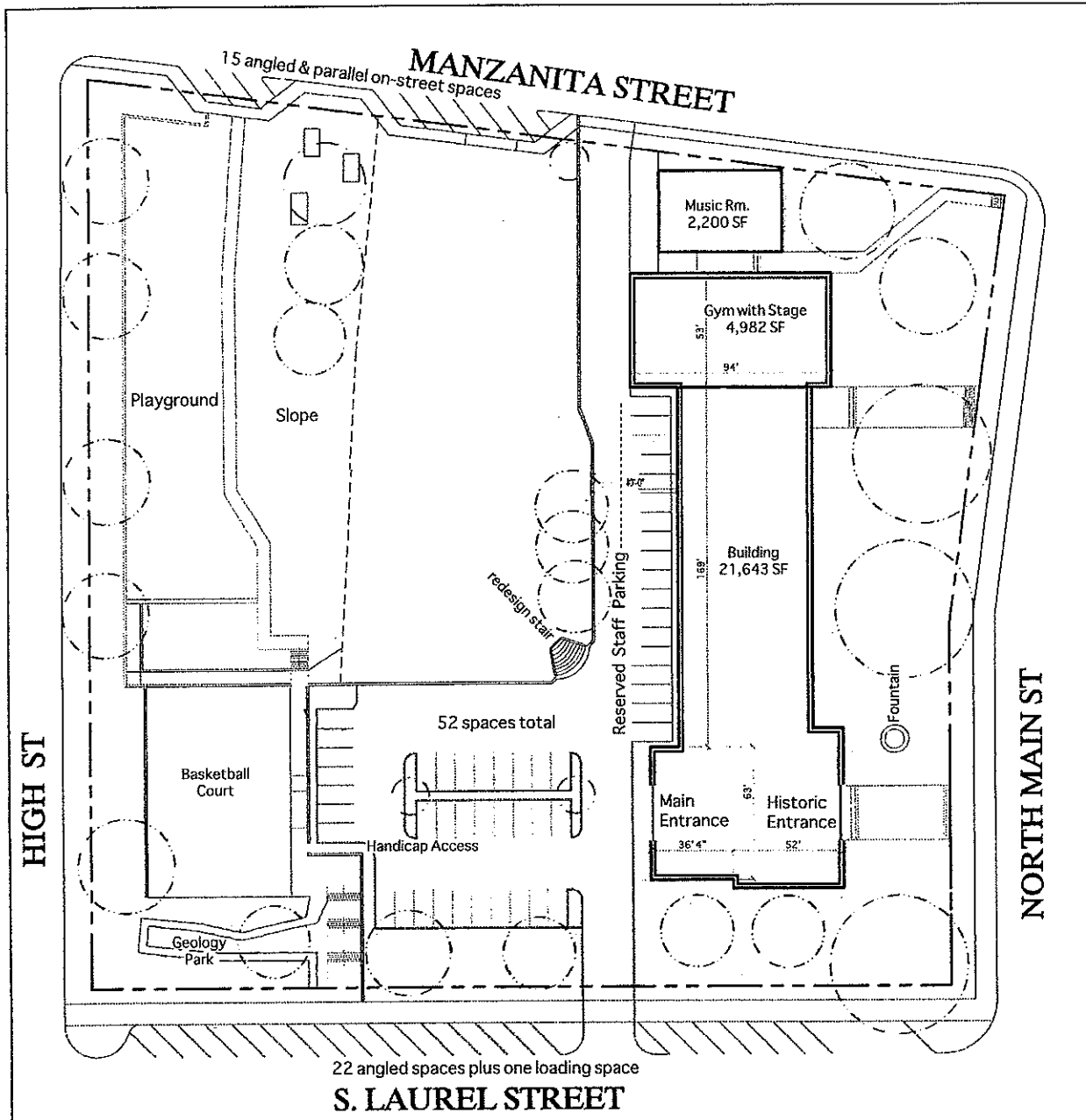
I am not suggesting that the current City Hall be abandoned because of its seismic instability. On the contrary, I believe it should be remodeled as a seismically reinforced two story building; ready to serve Ashland in daily life, and in the event of emergency. A Parks Information Hub, City Museum, and Town Hall have all been suggested. The Chamber of Commerce may be interested in space. This realignment of use, could be designed to serve *both* visitors and residents.

The Ashland City Hall Feasibility Study concluded that 24,352 SF would serve the City well into the future. As fate would have it, the Main St. wing and former Music Room of the Briscoe School offers 23,843 SF, all on one level, just two blocks from the Plaza. The gymnasium (4,982 SF), with its ceiling over 20 feet above the floor, would allow the construction of a 4,200 SF mezzanine; bringing the total square footage to over 28,000 SF


at the Briscoe Property. This would more than satisfy the City's need. In satisfying spatial needs in the Main St. wing, the Laurel St. wing could be razed. Razing the ArtWing would make way for the construction of a parking lot of 52 onsite spaces. When added to the 22 angle spaces on Laurel St., there would be 74 parking spaces for public and staff at the new City Hall. Briscoe Playground and Geology Park would become City Hall Park. In that, this Park is a natural gathering place for the community, City Hall would become a part of community gatherings. The ArtWing successfully hosted *MidSummers Dream Art & Music Festivals* and *First Nations Day*, a profound cultural event.

There is freedom in open space: it belongs to no *one* and is shared by us all. 127 years ago the Community of Ashland accepted the responsibility of simultaneously building a School and a new City Hall. That investment has served us well. Let us serve the next generation.

James Royce Young chair: Lithia Arts Guild of Oregon ArtWing Resident
Leonard Eisenberg creator: Briscoe Geology Park ArtWing Resident



PARTNERSHIP OPTION WING OF BUILDING REMOVED
 52 SPACES ONSITE ~ 38 ON STREET
 PARK OPEN SPACE KEPT 99% INTACT


 NEAR SCALE
 AUGUST 21, 2017

Briscoe ~ City Hall

Lithia Arts Guild of Oregon