



April 27, 2022

To: Mayor Gerring, Vice Mayor Anduri and Lafayette City Council Members

Re: Collaborative Parks Opportunities at Leigh Creekside and Gazebo Parks

Background

In November 2016, the Lafayette City Council considered an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for an amended Leigh Creekside Park Master Plan and General Plan amendment that would add an ADA path and an active play structure to the neighborhood park at the corner of Fourth Street and Moraga Boulevard. At that meeting, it was determined that the potential noise impacts of the project may violate the City's own Noise Ordinance. This triggered a need for a focused Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to analyze the potential noise impacts caused by the addition of a play structure.

In fall 2017, the City began work on the focused EIR. In fall 2018, the scope was expanded based on comments received during the Notice of Preparation comment period. EIRs must include a Project Alternative Section that evaluates a "reasonable range of alternatives" to the project or to its location. EIRs must also evaluate the comparative merits of alternatives and include sufficient information about each alternative to allow evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the project. Staff has worked with the EIR consultant to carefully review potential project alternatives, including a more passive play option, a no project option, and alternate sites. When developing these alternatives, staff sought feedback from the community. Separately from the CEQA review, but on a parallel track, Staff made many attempts to find common ground among contending community groups for a viable and mutually supported alternative.

On February 22, 2021, the Madison Park apartment project was approved by City Council on the site of the proposed Library Park as identified in the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP). Although the apartment project includes a small, publicly accessible plaza area, the much-needed active play area envisioned by the DSP was eliminated at this location.

Also, in February 2021, following collaborative discussions between stakeholders, the Parks, Trails & Recreation (PTR) Commission asked City Council to direct Staff to reach out to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center (LLLC) and the Friends of the LLLC Boards about adding active play features to the site of the existing amphitheater. The proposal also included suspending the Leigh Creekside Park EIR work. Following the Council meeting and subsequent outreach, both Boards objected to this proposal and no

further action was taken. Before continuing with the Leigh Creekside EIR, PTR Staff asked the environmental consultant to prepare an updated estimate for the work needed to finish the EIR. The estimate was \$45,000 to complete this process.

Meanwhile, conversations continued to seek common ground. In March 2022, the most active stakeholders -- PTR Commissioner Grace Dixon, MaryJo Cass and Deborah Callister – brought forward a collaborative concept based on a scaled-back project at Leigh Creekside Park plus a new active play area at the Gazebo Park location that was identified in the DSP.

Two-Park Collaborative Concept

The collaborative concept is attached to this letter. The concept proposes to move the active play features presented in the amended Leigh Creekside Master plan to the Gazebo Park location and to develop a natural-looking passive play design for Leigh Creekside Park. It includes examples of children’s play equipment and other features for each of the two parks. The concept provides an expanded opportunity to address the urgent need for children’s play areas serving the neighborhoods to the east of Moraga Road and the Downtown. This need is expected to become even more pressing in the future as a result of the 313 new housing units to be built in the area that are already City-approved or in the approval process.

Both the Parks Subcommittee and the full PTR Commission have reviewed and discussed the concept. At its April 27 Special Meeting, the PTR Commission approved sending this letter to the City Council asking for funding to move forward quickly to begin the evaluation process for the collaborative concept and to prepare a detailed plan of action for the Leigh Creekside Park and Gazebo Park play areas. In the meantime, the PTR Commission also recommends putting the existing EIR process on hold until a clear scope and direction for the new concept is approved by Council.

This evaluation and planning process will require staff effort and consultants to review both sites and answer many questions. The PTR Commission has identified the following preliminary issues that need to be addressed. They focus primarily on the Gazebo site since much work has already been done on the Leigh Creekside Park location.

- What is the scope of a feasible children’s play area at the Gazebo site? This includes verifying property lines, addressing the current use for parking, use of the existing garden area, determining the topology of the site including the adjacent creeks (the area is at the junction of the Lafayette and Las Trampas Creeks), understanding the proximity to Mount Diablo Boulevard, and the prospect of acquiring a neighboring parcel as envisioned in the DSP.
- Once a feasible area(s) is identified for the Gazebo Park, what preliminary design is proposed for the types and locations of play equipment and areas that continue to reference the history-based features included in the current Leigh Creekside Park EIR?
- What replacement play features are recommended for Leigh Creekside Park? The collaborative concept includes many good ideas. However, a specific proposal needs to be developed, along with cost estimates.

- What is the expected scope of environmental review for both park sites? For Leigh Creekside Park, this may involve an update of the on-going EIR to include the revised play features. The Gazebo Park will need a new environmental analysis and review process.

This preliminary work is likely to raise more questions from the PTR Commission and the Community that will need to be addressed.

In order to start evaluating the concept, staff needs Council permission and approval of initial funding to address the issues listed above, and to prepare a specific plan for City Council review and approval. Staff estimates a cost of about \$75,000 to complete this work. The funds will come from the monies already in the Fund 12 budget. The specific tasks include:

- Survey the Gazebo site and document the existing conditions;
- Prepare a report on the initial findings, draft a specific plan, and respond to questions;
- Develop conceptual equipment layouts and facilities at both sites; and
- Define the scope of work for the new Gazebo Park and for modifications to the Leigh Creekside Park draft EIR.

Recommendation

The PTR Commission and Staff request that the City Council:

- Approve initial evaluation of the Two-Park Collaborative Concept for Leigh Creekside Park and Gazebo Park as described above;
- Approve \$75,000 for this work from Fund 12; and
- Put the Leigh Creekside Park Amended Master Plan focused EIR on hold.

We thank Council for your continued support of the Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission. Please contact Parks, Trails & Recreation Director Jonathan Katayanagi if you have any questions or comments: jkatayanagi@lovelafayette.org, (925) 284-2232 (office), (925) 595-4847 (mobile).

Sincerely,

Joe Dougherty
Chair of Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission
On Behalf of the Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission

Jonathan Katayanagi
Parks, Trails & Recreation Director
City of Lafayette

Attachment: Two-Park Collaborative Concept

Passive Play at Leigh Creekside Park:
Age 0-4 and All Abilities

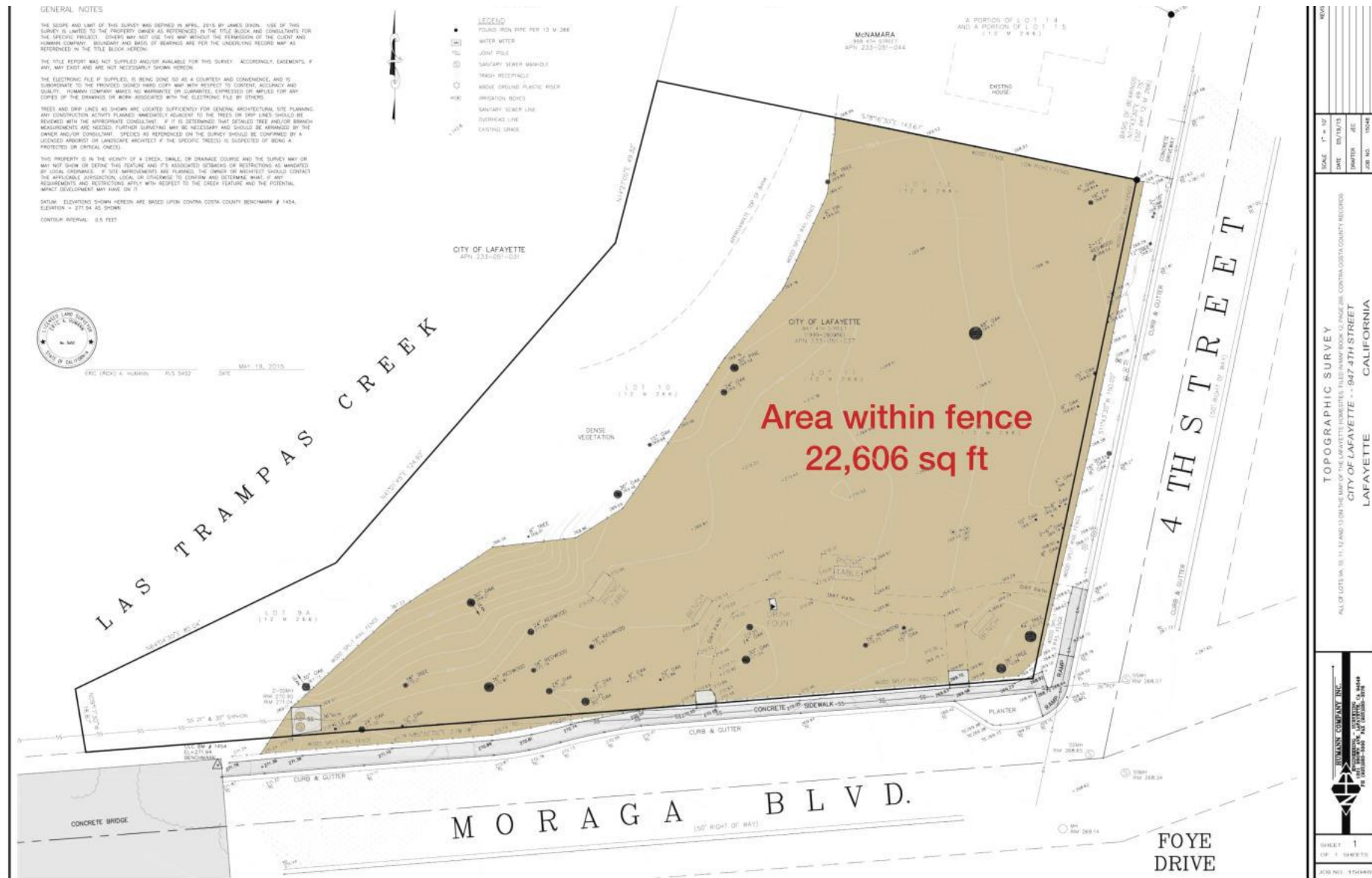
Active Play at Gazebo:
Age 3-8 and All Abilities

Concepts and Images to Review and Discuss, Based Upon a
Shared Objectives Approach

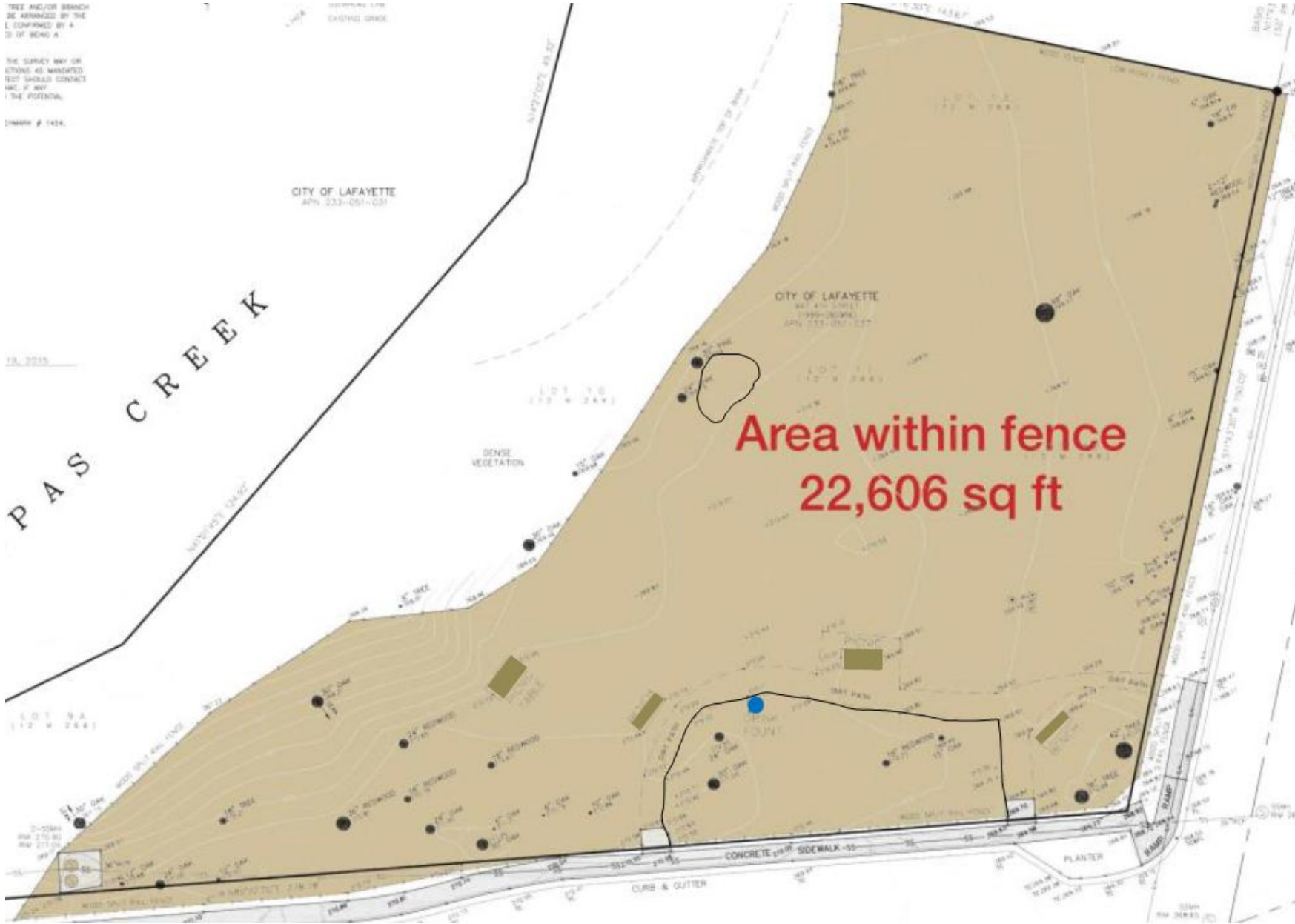
Objectives to Consider

- Leigh:
 - Keep park natural-looking
 - Avoid artificial fall zone materials and excessive soil compaction
 - Ensure design is playful enough to meet the neighborhood's needs
 - Acknowledge and appreciate extensive work of City staff, commissioners, and Council in park's design process
 - Retain inspirational natural, historical, and educational elements
 - Welcome dogs on leash
 - Locate passive play area within central picnic table and Moraga Blvd fence line
 - Consult arborist to protect existing trees and native plants within play area
 - Minimize height of play elements; ideally 18-24 inches high that are unobtrusive and blend with landscape
- Gazebo:
 - Transfer the 2016 Council-approved Amended Master Plan active elements (Saklan and Pioneer) to Gazebo
 - Continue efforts to acquire Sterling Cleaners and Fitness USA to gain creek views, extend and establish green belt park and creek walk
- Both:
 - Retain Scientific Art Studio for both Leigh and Gazebo
 - Ensure all abilities play elements in both locations
 - Educate and honor: native plants, Native People, native animals, Lafayette history

Leigh Creekside Park is .52 Acre



Passive Play Area



Leigh: Passive Play Options to Consider

Natural Materials

- Boulders: scrambling, acorn grinding, and perhaps one sculpted to roll ball down
- Slate: fresh water “finger painting” near water fountain
- River Rocks: balancing, tactile, scrambling
- Pebbles: patterns, tactile
- Sand: pouring, digging, tactile
- Logs: balancing and tunnel
- Net: climbing, swaying (ADA)
- Stumps: hopping
- Wood Plank/Log Bridge: elevation change
- Native Scrambling Tree or Bush: climbing

Natural-Looking, Minimal Digging

- Footings for bridge and net/hammock sway
- Partially submerge boulders or raise ground
- Miwok tule reed boat crafted of durable materials to mimic tule reeds
- Minimal concrete (a natural material) may be needed for boulders and river rocks
- City/parents may prefer natural-looking Scientific Art Studio fabricated logs
- Fabricated boulders/parts of creek bed floor may have imbedded “fossils” or “footprints”
- Sculpted boulder for gravity “sluice;” babies watch balls roll down
- Sand pit “fallen log” feature may be fabricated if necessary for climbing, strength, and durability

Passive Play in Dry Creek

- Boulders
- River Rocks
- Pebbles
- Sand
- Native Plants



Passive Sand Play



Passive Native Tree



Child (my 8-year-old daughter) in native Sunset Manzanita "Hut" at Community Center



Children (3-4 years) climbing tree at Brook Street Park

Umbellularia californica
"California Bay Laurel"



BN Bay Nature

California buckeyes know what to do in summer dry spell — hibernate -

Visit

Passive Net Play



Passive Fossil or Native Animal Footprint Stamps, Lafayette/Mt. Diablo Were Once Under Sea



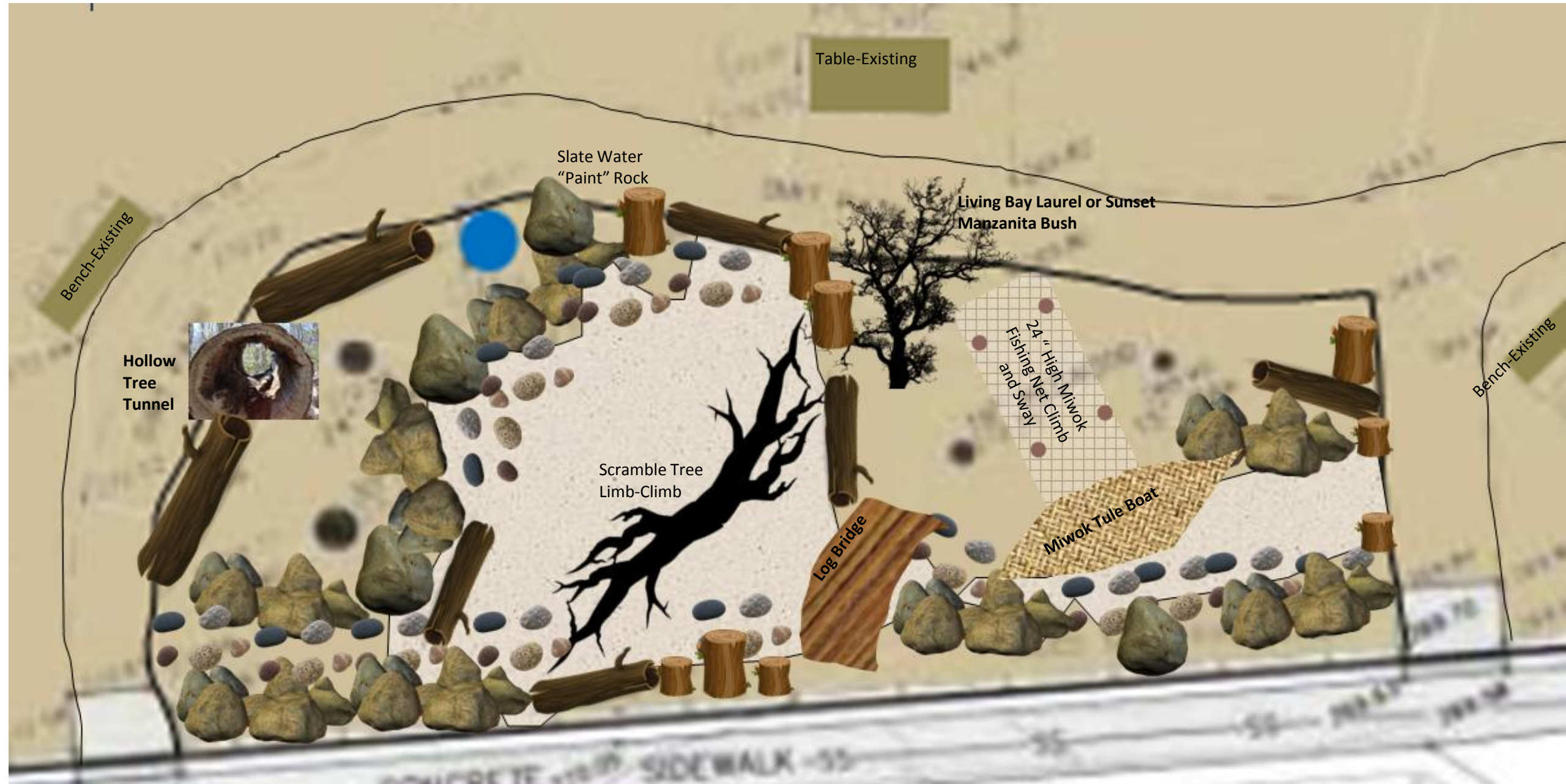
Part # 9F17 -

This concrete stamping tool creates a classic replication of the fossilized lake bottom creatures of the Green River Formation of the Eocene era. The depiction here is two fossilized fish from the extinct genus *Priscacara* along with ammonites and clams in a slate texture. The fossil fish are related to perch and are each approximately 7" long by 4" with the overall stamping tool being approximately 30" by 18".

Leigh 0 – 4 Passive Play Goals to Achieve

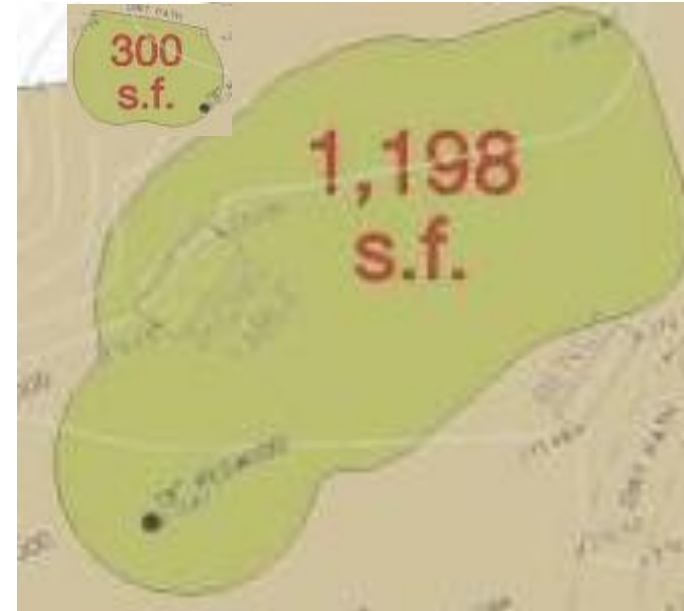
- Encourage vestibular development, build gross motor, agility, strength
 - Logs, tunnels, boulder, nets, climbing trees
- Ensure accessible play for children of all abilities in a shared space
- Provide a range of textures and colors for sensory and tactile learning
 - Rough granite, smooth river rock, pebbles, sand, bark, hardy native plants
- Inspire mindful exploration, curiosity, and natural discovery
 - Hidden embedded animal footprints, small sculptures, artifacts
- Spread elements apart, but within navigable and viewable area
 - Solitary, observational, and “parallel play” —imperative stages for age 0 – 4 years
 - Safely encourage crawling, toddling, and walking over to elements
- Integrate play with sensory immersion in nature

Leigh Passive Play Idea Sketch for 0 – 4 Year Olds

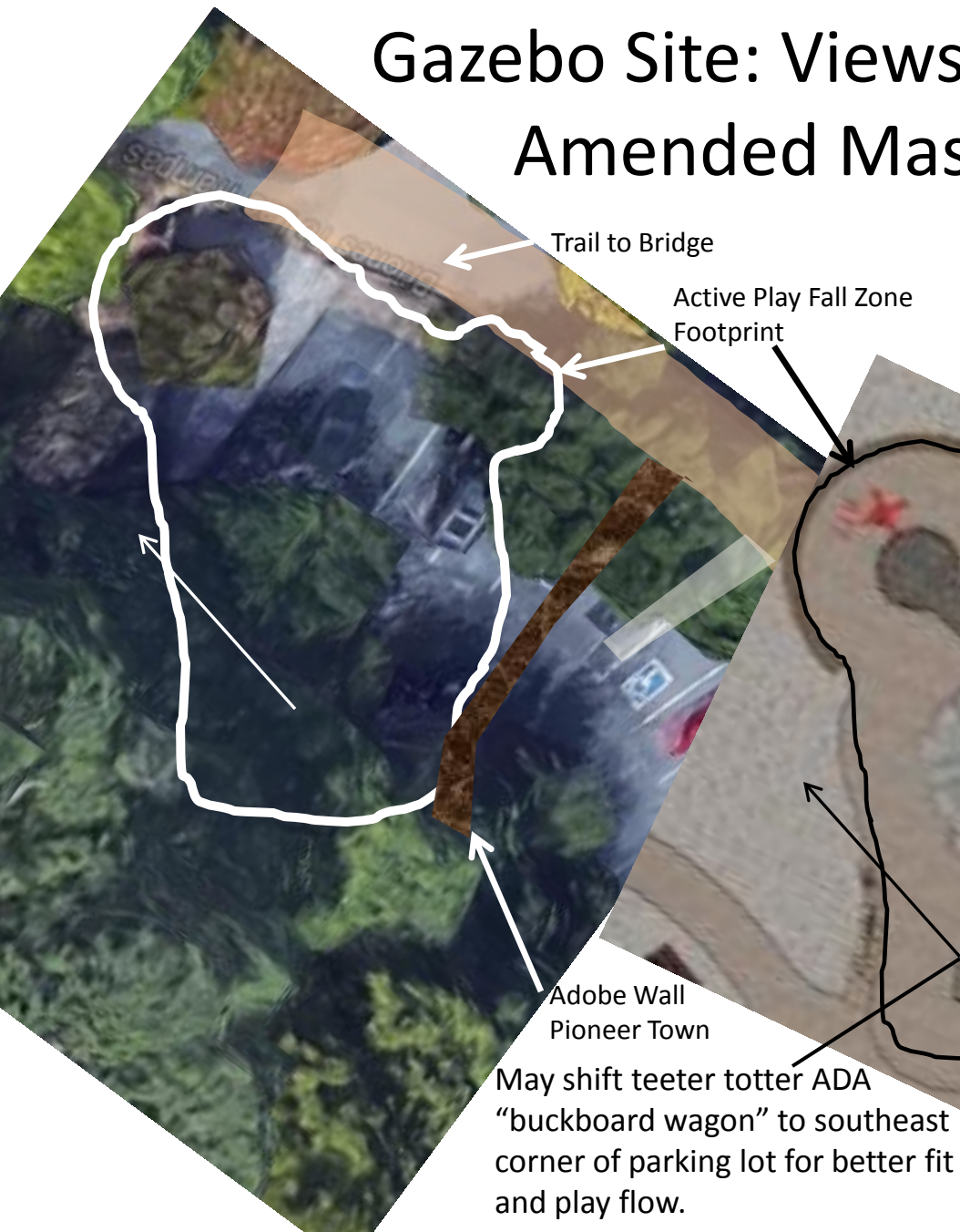


Transferring 2016 Council-Approved Amended Master Plan to Gazebo Site May Be Possible

- ▶ Standard parking space =180 square feet
 - ▶ 5 Spaces = 900 square feet (double is 1800 square feet*)
 - ▶ 6 Spaces =1080 square feet (double is 2160 square feet*)
 - ▶ 7 Spaces = 1260 square feet (double is 2520 square feet*)
 - ▶ *Car back-up area behind parking space more than doubles area
- ▶ “Pioneer Town” adobe wall against parked cars
 - ▶ Blacksmith, grist mill, Shreve “Pioneer Store,” Post Office
- ▶ Explore collaboration with Lafayette Garden Club
 - ▶ Possible Memorial Garden relocation
 - ▶ Space for Toddler Zone: 1 Spinner Cup, 1 Rocker Horse
- ▶ Work towards acquiring Sterling Cleaners for extended greenbelt and Creek Walk



Gazebo Site: Views of 5 Parking Spaces, Memorial Garden, Amended Master Plan Active Play Design Overlay



Active Play Features in 2016 Council-Approved Amended Master Plan that May Shift to Gazebo

- Age 3-8 Area
 - Embankment Slide
 - Scramble Rock
 - Hammock Sway (ADA Accessible)
 - Climbing Nets
 - Lookout Platform
 - Bridge
 - Steps with ADA Transfer



Active Play Features in 2016 Council-Approved Amended Master Plan that May Shift to Gazebo

- Age 3-8 Area
 - Lumber Wagon Teeter Totter (Back-Support-ADA)
 - “Pioneer Town”
Pioneer Store, Grist Mill, Blacksmith (ADA Height)
 - Hammock Sway (ADA Accessible)
 - Climbing Nets
 - Boulder Scramble
 - Lookout Platform
 - Steps with ADA Transfer
 - Rock Wall Climb



Active Play Features in 2016 Council-Approved Amended Master Plan that May Shift to Gazebo

- Age 3-8 Area

- Lumber Wagon Teeter Totter (Back-Support ADA)
- “Pioneer Town” Pioneer Store, Grist Mill, Blacksmith (ADA Height)
- Hammock Sway (ADA Accessible)
- Climbing Nets
- Boulder Scramble
- Lookout Platform
- Steps with ADA Transfer
- Rock Wall Climb



Active Play Features in 2016 Council-Approved Amended Master Plan that May Shift to Gazebo



Age 3-8 Area

- Hammock Sway (ADA Accessible)
- Climbing Nets
- Lookout Platform
- Bridge

Age 1-4 Area

- Spinner Cup (ADA Accessible)
- Rocker Horse

