

# Alta Plaza Park (North)

Water Conservation  
Improvements

Community Meeting #2

*March 18, 2014*



# Agenda



- Welcome & Introductions
- **Other Park Deficiencies Status**
- Program and Project Background
- Summary of Public Comments
- Park Analysis & Revised Concept
- Discussion and Public Comments
- Next Steps



# Ground Rules



- Keep to the agenda
- Turn off cell phones
- Raise your hand to speak
- Direct comments to the facilitator
- Be respectful when others speak



*Working together will make this a productive meeting!*



# Purpose of Meeting



To review a landscape plan based on public comments for water conservation improvements at Alta Plaza Park.

(Please direct facility maintenance questions to Zack Taylor at [Zack.Taylor@sfgov.org](mailto:Zack.Taylor@sfgov.org). Thank you.)



# Other Park Deficiencies

- Sidewalk Seepage
- Park Pathways
- Excessive Weeds





# Sidewalk Seepage

## Condition:

Constant water seepage onto sidewalk. Water is from undetermined source(s).

## Status:

- Submitted a FY14-15 General Fund request for french drains behind retaining walls.
- Researched history of site as a former redrock quarry.
- Proceed with geotechnical and hydrological tests.





# Former Redrock Quarry

take a few minutes to examine the environs. When John McLaren set out to reclaim it, this terraced 11.9 acre square was a badly gouged redrock quarry. Although it galled him to do so, he modeled his terracing on the Grand Casino at

## The Elegant Alta Plaza

By Margot Patterson Doss

HERE'S A RIDDLE for you: Where can you find four U-shaped walks all going the same way and the same place, an Aztec temple without an altar, or Monaco without Grace? Give up?

Would you believe Alta Plaza?

Come stroll it one of these sunny spring afternoons and let the plaza itself reveal the answers to the riddle.

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ODAY, THE opening Sunday in Plant-a-Tree Week, is as good as any, for residents of the city street perimeter (who cherish their green spaces as other San Franciscans cherish the city views) have just completed a two-block terracing that is a model of good neighborliness and civic co-operation.

Begin this walk at the corner of Steiner and Clay streets. Before you climb the inviting steps, take a few minutes to examine the environs. When John McLaren set out to reclaim it, this terraced 11.9 acre square was a badly gouged redrock quarry. Although it galled him to do so, he modeled his terracing on the Grand Casino at Monte Carlo.

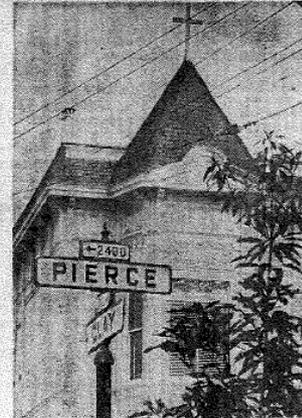
"Slopes and terraces as a general rule should not be introduced into park scenery except to overcome an insurmountable difficulty," he wrote testily in the park report of 1910, after three of the terraces were completed. "Here the excessive steepness of the slopes prevented any other method of improvement."

McLaren's Scotch conscience didn't keep him from sinning against his principles, but it kept him from enjoying it. Today planners would commend him for "making maximum use of the design potential of a major topographic feature."

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WALK NORTH about 50 paces to find the first of four staircases that zig and zag connecting the U-shaped terraces at about 20 foot elevations each. Escallonia hedge and a walkway orders each.

Pause at the first landing to look down on the row of Victorian townhouses between Steiner and Pierce, a favorite of architects and visitors and one of the best maintained in the city. Appropriately the trees that line the street are Victorian



THE SET KO KAI EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Nearby are some handsome Victorians



both blocks. Twins Jan and Marion Dietrich, who have been moving figures in the tree-planting program are not home owners, but tenants who live in the 2700 block of Clay. "Our landlord, Dan Lunda, has done such a nice job preserving these houses, we wanted to do something to show him we like it," Marion says. Other owners and tenants, the Pacific Gas & Electric Company, the telephone company and the park department, with an assist from the Department of Public Works, have all pitched in to get trees planted and wires put underground.

In its time, the grey house on the corner has been a private residence, a girls' school, a boarding house and a beauty parlor. The Victorian on the opposite corner of Pierce is now an Episcopal church, called Set Ko Kai.

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CLIMB ONE more level and notice how the cityscape broadens to include Buena Vista park, Twin Peaks and Suto Forest. Mount the final level and see Potrero Hill, Bernal Heights, St. Ignatius Church, Kaiser Hospital, Lone Mountain and the Fireman's Fund insurance company's construction. Walk west and you will be at the Grand Staircase, a setting splendid enough for Greek Drama. For contrast, walk all the way to the west end, come down the zigzagging stairs there to Scott street and return on Clay, where neighborliness and the shared pleasure of a green hillside and a row of green trees gives the city another dimension.

If you haven't answered the riddle, try walking it again.

box. At least one authority claims this row was prefabricated in Chicago and sent overland.

Ed and Cynthia McKay, who own 2643 Clay, point out that theirs is constructed of redwood, has balloon studs, and certainly wasn't logged nor milled in the Middle West. They believe the seven in the row were one of San Francisco's early tracts, constructed in the 1870s from plans sent out from the East and sold initially for \$3000 each.

Twenty times that price would be a buy today.

A previous owner of their home can remember when water came down like a cataract in the park and neighbors stabled horses behind some of the houses.

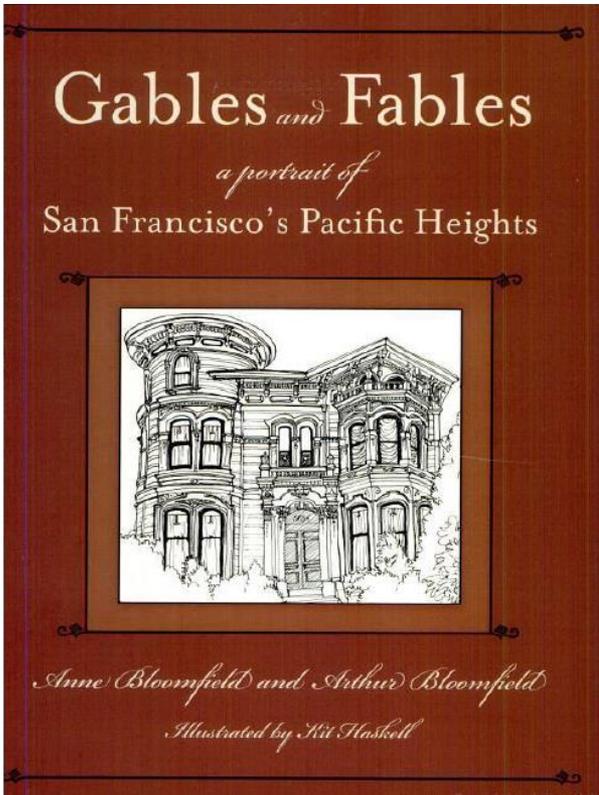
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CLIMB ONE MORE terrace and notice how the elevation gives an overview that includes

San Francisco Chronicle (dated March 5, 1967)



# Former Redrock Quarry



Published May 1, 2007

MAPS BY TOM LINDEN, 1992

Even the shape of the land is a human artifact because more than a century ago it was barren and had been used as a quarry for filling other sites. There were dangerous holes, the biggest and deepest some 150 by 250 feet in size or a third of a block in the park's center.

Whoever thought it up, the design with its handsome stairs, formally capped walls and Beaux Arts symmetry is excellent. The excavations were duly refilled and the four terraces create usable space out of the steepest natural slope, the Clay Street side at Pierce. Come to think of it, it was a bold idea in the first place to plan a park here, but then, this is ever-hilly San Francisco...

With 1890 came the thaw. Property owners in the area hired a designer named R. Ulrich to prepare a plan for Alta Plaza Park and he duly came up with walks, terraces, the still-treasured "cozy nooks for rest and meditation," and plantings in the defunct quarry area that had for good reason been giving the neighbors fits.

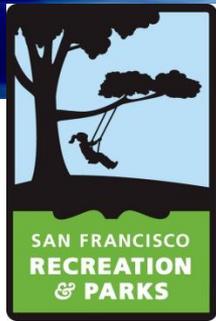
Meanwhile a newly energized City Hall appropriated \$10,000 to develop the park and in 1890-92 it was graded at last, holes filled, the still-present perimeter walls built, the Clay Street side terraced, the walks and staircases constructed, trees and grass planted.



# Former Redrock Quarry



Clay Street with Alta Plaza Park in background (Photo dated Dec 1919)



# Engineered Approach

- Conduct percolation tests to understand soil's water-holding capacity.
  - ✓ 3 test pits along Jackson Street approximately 5'-6' behind retaining wall.
    - Location 1 – Hit rock at 12" depth
    - Location 2 – Clean sand to 30" depth. Percolation rate = 3"/hour.
    - Location 3 – Encountered 12" of clayey silt on top of silty sand. Percolation rate = 1.5"/hour.
  - ✓ More test pits to be done at each perimeter edge.
- Video camera drain lines.
- Isolate and determine leaks in irrigation lines.
- Monitor muddy lawn condition at summit.
- Monitor irrigation schedule.

Data from these tests will be used to control leakage and run-off, and to engineer a drainage solution. Possible remedy is installation of a perforated pipe 10" below sidewalk and connect to City sewer.



# Park Pathways

## Condition:

Deteriorating, uneven pathways.

## Status:

- Submitted a FY14-15 General Fund request for pathway replacement at Scott St. entrance.
- Work order for temporary paving repairs completed.



# Excessive Weeds

## Condition:

Excessive weeds on the newly planted south side.

## Status:

Contract with Shelterbelt Builders in progress. Scope includes wick weeder application (drift-free applicator)





# Purpose of Meeting



To review a landscape plan based on public comments for water conservation improvements at Alta Plaza Park.

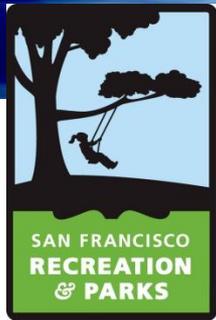
(Please direct facility maintenance questions to Zack Taylor at [Zack.Taylor@sfgov.org](mailto:Zack.Taylor@sfgov.org). Thank you.)



# Project Team



Marvin Yee, PM Capital	RPD
Zack Taylor, Ops Manager	RPD
Andrea Alfonso, Land. Arch.	DPW
Lizzy Hirsch, Land. Arch.	DPW
Amanda Dougherty, PM	PUC



# Program Background

- 2012 “Clean and Safe” Park Bond – Water Conservation Program
- SFPUC’s Grant Assistance for Large Landscape Retrofits Program
  - Maximize water savings through conservation and innovation
    - Replace irrigation system
    - Improve system design and efficiency
    - Plant lawn alternative



San Francisco  
Water Power Sewer

Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission



# Program Background

Alamo Square - \$1,318,485 Grant Award

- Replace irrigation system
- Replace irrigation controller
- Install booster pump
- 3.26 MGY savings (37% reduction)

Balboa Park - \$120,180 Grant Award

- Replaced booster pump
- Replaced irrigation controller
- Improved watering coverage

Jefferson Square Park - \$1,063,980 Grant Award

- Replaced entire irrigation system
- Installed state-of-the-art irrigation controller
- Installed “no mow” grass
- Installed drought-tolerant shrubs
- 2.14 MGY savings (30% reduction)



# Jefferson Square Park

- 5-acre park in Western Addition neighborhood
- \$1.06M grant from SFPUC to RPD
- 2 years of planning, design, and construction
- 30% reduction in high water-use turf grass, new irrigation system
- Estimated Water Savings of 2.14 MGY



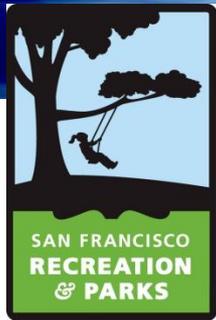


# Alta Plaza Park

## NEED FOR WATER CONSERVATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Antiquated irrigation system (30+ years old)
- Corroded quick coupler line (70+ years old)
- Difficult-to-maintain lawn on steep slopes
- Remove lawn at top of retaining walls
- Drought emergency declaration





# Alta Plaza Park

## WATER CONSERVATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Replace irrigation system
- Replace quick coupler line
- Replace unusable turf with plantings, where appropriate
- Install weather-based smart controller
- Improve soil drainage



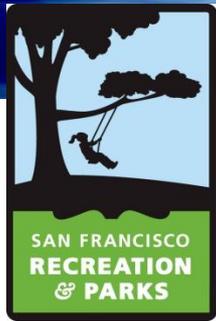
➤ Estimated 39% water-use reduction = 2.5 MGY



# Project Details

- Water Conservation Program
  - 2012 “Clean and Safe” Park Bond (\$583,407)
  - PUC Large Landscape Retrofit Grant (\$583,407)
- Unified landscape scheme for entire park





# Planning Process & Schedule

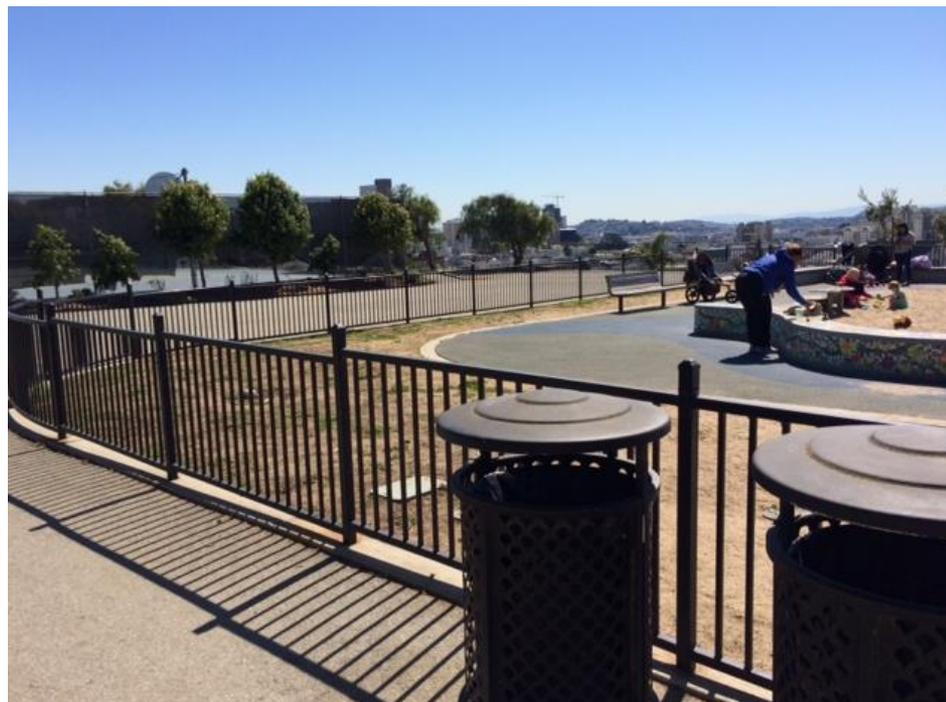


- Community Meetings (February – March 2014)
  - Meeting #1 – Introduction and Public Input
  - Walking Tour
  - Meeting #2 – Proposed Plan and Public Input
- Commission Approval (May)
- Construction Documents (June – August)
- Advertise, Bid and Award (September – December)
- Construction (January – April 2015)
- Completion – Grand Opening !!!



# Community Meeting Comments

- **Minimize impact** to current uses
- Keep **lawn open** and flexible/unstructured for passive uses
- Maintain **texture and feel** of existing lawn
- **Unified**, visually appealing **design** that includes south side
- **Durable** perimeter plants
- Incorporate **hebe** shrubs
- Need for **shade** in playground
- **Tree assessment** needed





# Walking-Tour Comments

Symmetrical landscaping at park entrances

1. Maintain lawn where possible
2. Add shade trees at playground
3. Keep as much grass as possible
4. Expand plantings around restroom and storage container
5. Need drainage solution for muddy, lawn areas
6. Plant along pathway
7. Plant along pathway
8. Match palm tree; plant behind bench
9. Plant corner
10. Plant pocket area at middle of ADA path; replace backflow cage



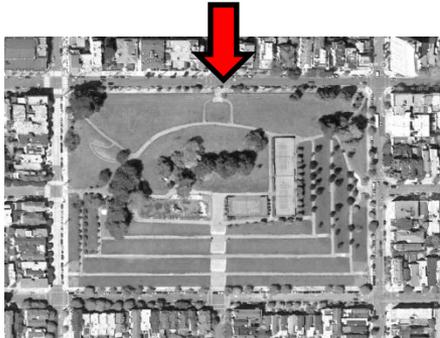




BUILDING DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION  
S.F. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

# Existing Conditions

Alta Plaza Park



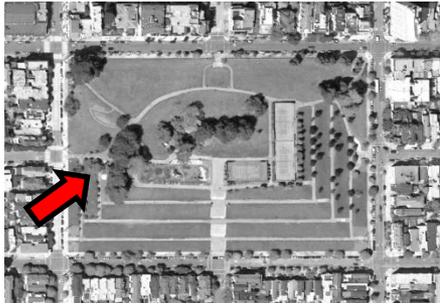
Entrance Planting Opportunity at Jackson Street



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Alta Plaza Park



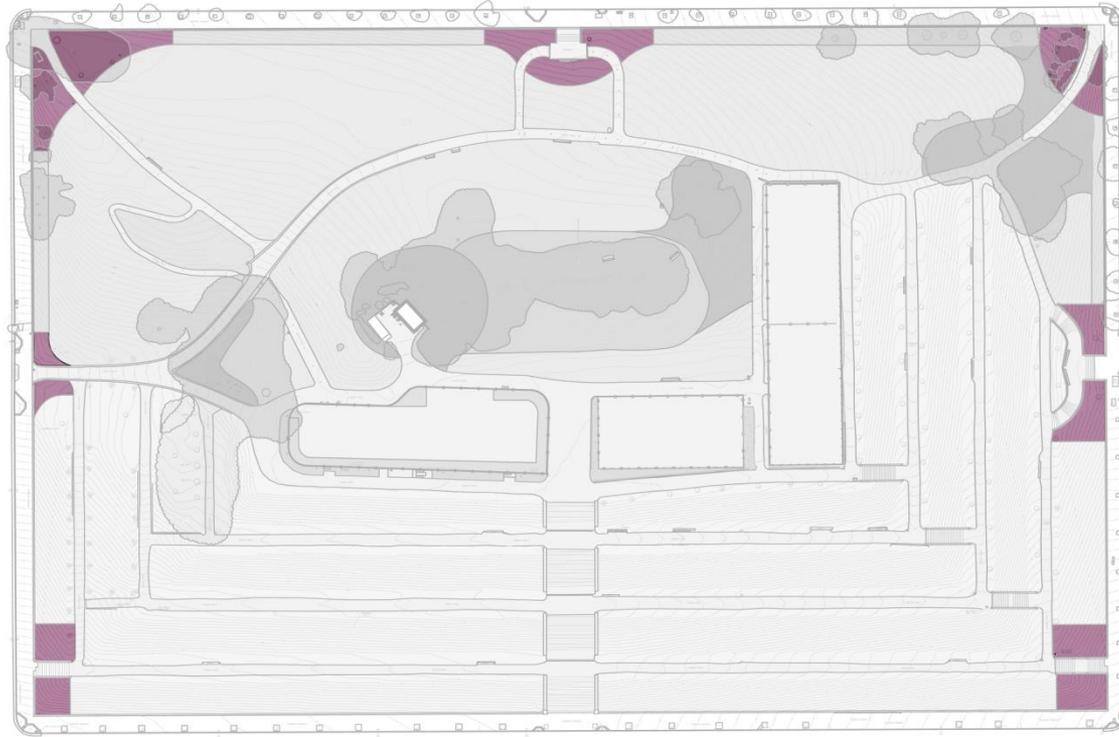
Sloped Park Entrance at Scott Street



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# Proposed Planting Modifications

Alta Plaza Park



## ACCENT PLANTING



COPROSMA x  
DWARF MIRROR PLANT

LIROPE MUSCARI  
BIG BLUE MONDO GRASS

EUPHORBIA CHARACIAS  
WOOD SPURGE

SHADE EXPOSURE



RUDBECKIA FULGIDA 'GOLDSTRUM'  
GOLDSTRUM DAISY

SALVIA NEMEROSA  
SAGE

COPROSMA x  
DWARF MIRROR PLANT

SUN EXPOSURE



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# Accent Entry Planting Variations

Alta Plaza Park



Colorful perennials bounded hedge border



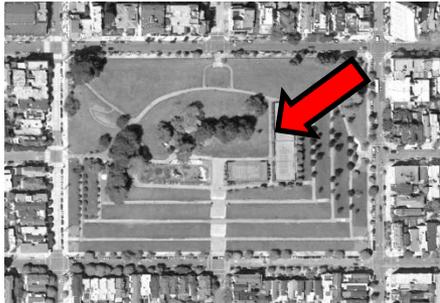
Phoenix canariensis - Canary Island Palm



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# Existing Conditions

Alta Plaza Park



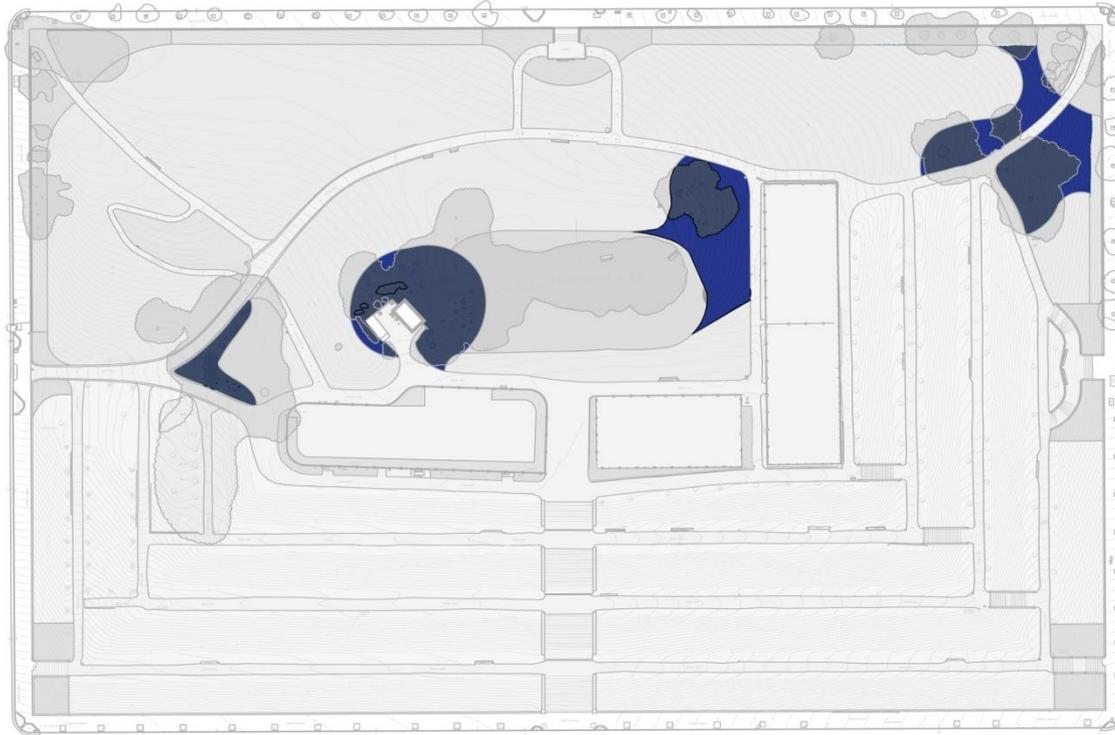
Shaded sloped area between central hill and courts



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# Proposed Planting Modifications

Alta Plaza Park



## UNDERSTORY PLANTING



ELEAGNUS PUNGENS 'CORAL SILVER'  
SILVERBERRY

PHILADELPHUS MICROPHYLLUS  
LITTLELEAF MOCK ORANGE

POLYSTICHUM MUNITUM  
WESTERN SWORD FERN

ARCTOSTAPHYLOS X  
'JOHN DOURLEY'

EUPHORBIA CHARACIAS  
WOOD SPURGE

LIROPE MUSCARI  
BIG BLUE MONDO GRASS

MAHONIA X 'SOFT CARESS'

POLYPODIUM CALIFORNICUM  
CALIFORNIA POLYPODY FERN

RHAMNUS CALIFORNICA 'SAN BRUNO'  
SAN BRUNO COFFEE BERRY

MAHONIA REPENS  
OREGON GRAPE



# Understory Planting Variations

Alta Plaza Park



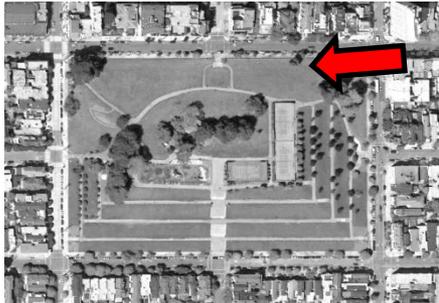
Understory shade tolerant planting mix



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# Existing Conditions

Alta Plaza Park



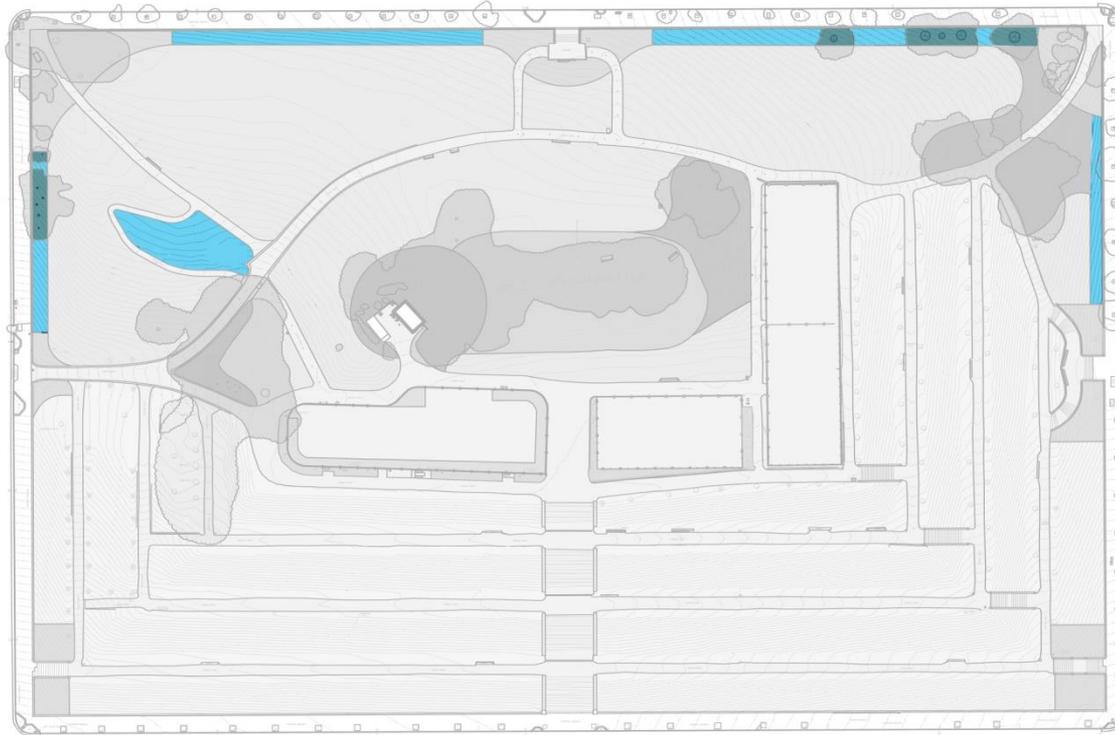
Park Edge Condition at Jackson and Steiner Streets



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# Proposed Planting Modifications

Alta Plaza Park



## EDGE PLANTING



*ERIGERON* SPP.  
CALIFORNIA DAISY



*FESTUCA MAREII* 'GREENLEE FORM'  
GREENLEE ATLAS FESCUE



*ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM*  
YARROW



*LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA*  
'BREEZE'



*PHORMIUM X BRONZE BABY*  
DWARF FLAX



*CALIMINTHIA NEPETA*  
LESSER CALAMINT

SUN EXPOSURE

SHADE EXPOSURE



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# Perennial Grass Planting Variations

Alta Plaza Park



Sun exposure Edge Planting mix

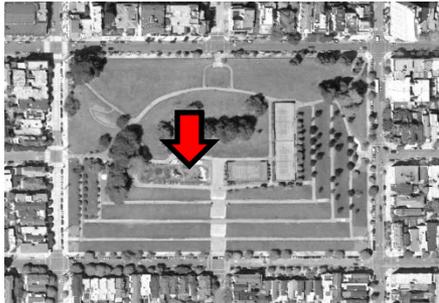




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# Existing Conditions

Alta Plaza Park



Playground Planting Areas in Poor Condition



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# Proposed Planting Modifications

Alta Plaza Park



Arbutus unedo 'Marina'- Strawberry Tree

## PLAYGROUND TREATMENT



HEBE X  
DWARF HEBE



DECOMPOSED  
GRANITE



Agonis flexuosa - Peppermint Willow



# Public Comments



# Contact Information

Please submit additional comments to:

Marvin Yee, Project Manager  
Recreation and Park Department  
30 Van Ness Ave, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
S.F., CA 94102

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E-Mail: [Marvin.Yee@sfgov.org](mailto:Marvin.Yee@sfgov.org)

Website: [www.sfrecpark.org](http://www.sfrecpark.org)



**Thank you!**