



TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

SUBMITTED BY: JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director

SUBJECT: Consideration of Restroom Location for the Stow Grove Park Phase One Renovation

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the recommendation for the new restroom location to be included in Phase One of the Stow Grove Park Renovation, to be placed with other structures, within the 100' buffer of the dripline of the eucalyptus trees.

BACKGROUND:

On August 20, 2024, the project team officially kicked off Phase One of the Stow Grove Park Project. The team conducted a site walk to evaluate options for the affected areas in alignment with the Master Plan. While the primary focus is on Phase One, extensive discussions arose about the precise location of the new restroom, generating additional considerations for the placement of other future development features.

DISCUSSION:

As the Council is aware, the Stow Grove Park Master Plan included a recommendation to maintain a caretaker residence and consider public use in the same vicinity. Moreover, the Master Plan included the addition of a restroom facility to be located near the new Universal Playground. As the project team walked the site, evaluated the current conditions of the existing facilities, and explored the location options for the restroom, it was clear that some adjustments needed to be reconsidered.

The design team evaluated a variety of layouts for the caretaker cottage, public access space, maintenance yard, and the new restroom. Unless other fiscal resources are identified, the new restroom is the only structural item that will be constructed in Phase One. Knowing the location of the new restroom and understanding the intended location for the other structures will allow the design team to plan for appropriate utility alignment for the development of the construction documents. To consider the new restroom in some of these locations, the layout for the other components must be determined during this phase for space, utilities, and cost estimates.

The various layouts considered provided a variety of pros and cons to the site and the park users. The project team recommends a layout option that was never considered during the development of the Master Plan, but offers significant benefits to the park users, with thoughtful consideration to the proximal Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA). This layout recommendation evolved as the project team considered flipping the uses, and even re-organizing the existing uses. Switching the maintenance yard with the caretaker cottage location not only opens up possibilities to include the new restroom with the public access facility but places the caretaker cottage away from the public use, providing an element of privacy. In addition, this relocation allows for the elimination of the extra maintenance driveway and while still providing the opportunity for maintenance vehicles to have easy access for trash service, delivery of supplies and equipment storage.

Although the project team evaluated each of the existing structures and considered renovation options, the consensus was a strong recommendation to eliminate the structures and replace them with a prefabricated and/or modular unit(s). The caretaker cottage has a great foundation and character, but its current condition would likely require the contractor to take the unit down to the studs, move walls to meet the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements along with any unknown conditions that would require additional work and expense. The garage was considered for use as the public space, but further investigation uncovered that the garage unit was never permitted. Although the structure has great bones, the improvements to bring it up to code for use by the general public would require a significant amount of work to include a new roof structure, bracing of the walls, enhancing the foundation, securing the walls to the foundation, electrical upgrades, altering the grade of the driveway for ADA requirements, new windows and doors in addition to aesthetic upgrades to have it function as a public meeting space. The lack of physical space between the rooflines of the two structures may also eliminate the opportunity to have two separate uses, but this is still under evaluation. Lastly, it is important to note that when completing the California Environmental Quality Act process for the Master Plan, Rincon's historical team evaluated the site for potential state or federal historical criteria. Neither exists for this location nor for any components within the park site. Additionally, Stow Grove Park is not currently on the city's list of local areas of historic interest.

As the project team evaluated the line of eucalyptus trees along North La Patera Lane, it was noted that the garage structure is extremely close to the root structure of the trees, with less than a few feet of clearance between the two. In addition to the elimination of the new driveway, this also prevents the loss of an established tree. Lastly, the existing maintenance shed does not have enough structure salvage value to retain, and the entire unit would need to be destroyed and rebuilt, which provides the opportunity to consider a possible relocation.

One of the challenges in making improvements and renovating Stow Grove Park is that it has two areas designated as ESHA. However, these areas and protective buffers already contain existing amenities, including three group picnic areas, horseshoe pits, multi-use turf field, volleyball courts, restrooms, parking lot and walking/biking trails.

Repair and maintenance of existing facilities in ESHA and ESHA buffers is allowed under Chapter 17.30 of the Goleta Municipal Code (GMC). The City's General Plan and effectuating zoning regulations also allow for certain work within ESHA, with specific restrictions, such as general maintenance, trails, and education (i.e., bird watching stations, ADA pathways, interpretative trails, etc.). New development, however, would be subject to several policies and regulations.

If approved by Council, Park design in ESHA and/or ESHA buffer could still be General Plan and zoning-compliant if significant impacts are avoided or mitigated to the maximum extent feasible. Conservation Element sub policy CE 1.6(d) states that Public Works projects identified in the CIP *may* be allowed, only where there are no feasible, less environmentally damaging alternatives. Chapter 17.53.020(X)(1) of the GMC only exempts City Projects, including Capital Improvement Program projects (CIPs), from Zoning Permits and discretionary approvals if located outside of ESHA. As such, a permit (via a Development Plan) and discretionary review would be necessitated if new development is proposed in ESHA, and it can be demonstrated that there are no feasible, less environmentally damaging alternatives. Staff will return to Council on specific development plans associated with this project.

Given the unique nature of this community park, the history of its development, its humanmade creation (as opposed to undeveloped native habitat/open space) and considerable existing recreation amenities, as well as being identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program Plan, potential new development in the ESHA and/or ESHA buffers, may be allowed under Conservation Element sub policy CE 1.6(d) and Chapter 17.53.020(X)(1) of the GMC. This would allow for consideration of additional amenities that may be desired by the Goleta community and park users. Alternatives and related analysis would need to be conducted to ensure that there would be no feasible, less environmentally damaging alternative.

Any work completed outside of the existing footprint of an existing feature, which may be necessary for some of the proposed modifications, would be considered new development. An example is while the picnic areas can be maintained, any addition of a shade structure or potential expansion would be considered new development. Another example would be related to the discussion to consider the caretaker cottage as a potential mixed-use to accommodate a community meeting space. This potential mixed-use opportunity is included in the final draft plan, but the reconfiguration of this space to meet a public need and potentially future caretaker use, would also be considered new development.

The project team has identified the following elements as having a potential impact to ESHA and/or its designated buffers:

- Improved Horseshoe Area (exceeds current footprint, not in Phase One)
- Refurbish Existing Picnic Areas (additional shelter structure, not in Phase One)
- New Restroom (within the 100' buffer, included in Phase One)
- Refurbish Maintenance Facility (within ESHA and utilities only would be planned during Phase One)

- Caretaker Cottage Improvements (within ESHA and utilities only would be planned during Phase One)
- Inclusive Playground (within the 100' buffer, included in Phase One)

The Project team, including Rincon Consultants Inc., through its environmental analysis, has evaluated the current proposed changes for consideration and the potential impacts to ESHA, and it is anticipated that indirect impacts are primarily associated with construction activity during nesting periods. These can be mitigated with restrictions on construction timing and have been included in the CEQA documents as a required mitigation measure. There would be no anticipated direct or indirect long-term impacts to the designated ESHA boundaries and/or buffers.

Relocating any of these structures would fall within the ESHA buffer zone, which is 100' from the dripline of the eucalyptus trees. Staff did take this item to the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) in September of 2024. The Commission had a lengthy discussion, and, in the end, there were five Commissioners in support, one Commissioner not in support, and one Commissioner vacancy. The project team recommends the demolition of the existing structures with the relocation of the needed buildings utilizing prefabricated or modular units. This option not only provides opportunities for cost savings but allows the project to move structures away from the root structures of the eucalyptus trees and significantly reduces the impacts of construction within the ESHA buffer. Construction would be limited to demolition, excavation, and utility relocation. The structures would be constructed off-site and placed in the new location. The remaining construction after structure placement takes place almost entirely inside the building, which reduces the construction impacts for the ESHA buffer. Location details are included in the presentation included as Attachment 1.

Direction for the new restroom location is necessary in order to keep the project moving forward for the development of the construction documents. If Council is in support of the new location, staff will return with a development plan for the restroom, the areas of the playground within the buffer and the other structures for final approval.

GOLETA STRATEGIC PLAN:

City-Wide Strategy: 2. SUPPORT COMMUNITY VITALITY AND ENHANCED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Strategic Goal: 2.2. Strategic Goal: Support programs that enhance quality of life in the Goleta community such as recreation, public safety, human services, and cultural arts

FISCAL IMPACTS:

The recommendation in this report does not have fiscal impacts. Should Council choose not to make a determination, the postponement of this decision could likely impact the project schedule, which may impact the deadlines related to the \$750,000 grant funding from the State of California for the Universal Playground.

There is a known factor at this time that utilizing modular and/or prefabricated units for all of the replaced structures will be faster and is expected to be less expensive, but without further development, the cost savings is an unknown variable. The additional restroom was always specified to be a prefabricated facility, similar to the one at Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council may choose to not allow the demolition of current structures, replacing them with modular units and including the new restroom within the ESHA Buffer, which will result in the restroom being placed in the location specified in the park as currently reflected in the Master Plan, in the middle of the park between the new playground and a grove of trees.

LEGAL REVIEW BY: Megan Garibaldi, City Attorney

APPROVED BY: Robert Nisbet, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Considerations for New Restroom Location at Stow Grove Park PowerPoint Presentation

ATTACHMENT 1

Considerations for New Restroom Location at Stow Grove Park
PowerPoint Presentation

Considerations for New Restroom Location at Stow Grove Park

City Council

October 15, 2024

Presented by:

JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director



Background

- On June 18, 2024, a contract was awarded to KTUA for the development of construction documents for Phase One of Stow Grove Park Master Plan
- KTUA is also under contract to create the design development plans for the other two Phases of the Stow Grove Park Master Plan
- On August 20, 2024, the project kicked off with the design team, city staff and specialty subconsultants (i.e., civil and structural engineers) to review the site conditions, including the existing restrooms.

Background

Master Plan



FIGURE 3-1: Conceptual Master Plan

DESIGN KEY

- ① Upgrade Existing Park Entrances
- ② Channel Islands / Cultural Plaza
- ③ Butterfly / Pollinator Garden
- ④ General Use Field/s
- ⑤ All Abilities Playground
- ⑥ Walking / Running Path

- ⑦ Refurbish Maintenance Facility
- ⑧ New Restroom
- ⑨ Add a Trash Enclosure
- ⑩ Caretaker Cottage Shared with Community Use
- ⑪ Refurbished Parking lot
- ⑫ Entrance Promenade / Junction
- ⑬ Refurbish Existing Redwood Groves

- ⑭ Refurbish Existing Picnic Areas
- ⑮ Refurbish Current Restroom
- ⑯ Exploratory / Nature play Elements
- ⑰ Sand Volleyball
- ⑱ Native Tree Grove
- ⑲ Family Activities between Picnic Areas
- ⑳ Improved Horseshoes

- ㉑ Fitness Trail / Loop
- ㉒ Multi-use Play Field

Current versus Proposed Structures

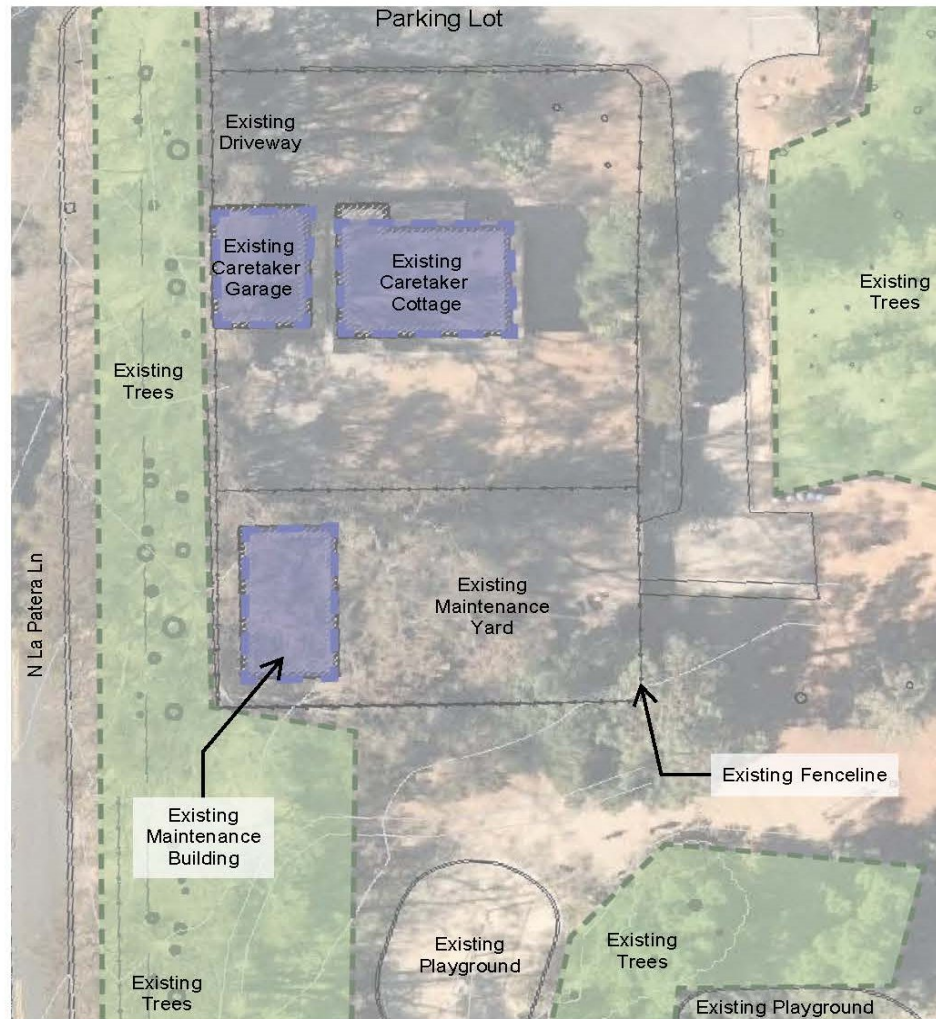
➤ Current Structures that were reviewed:

- Caretaker Cottage
- Caretaker Garage
- Maintenance Shed

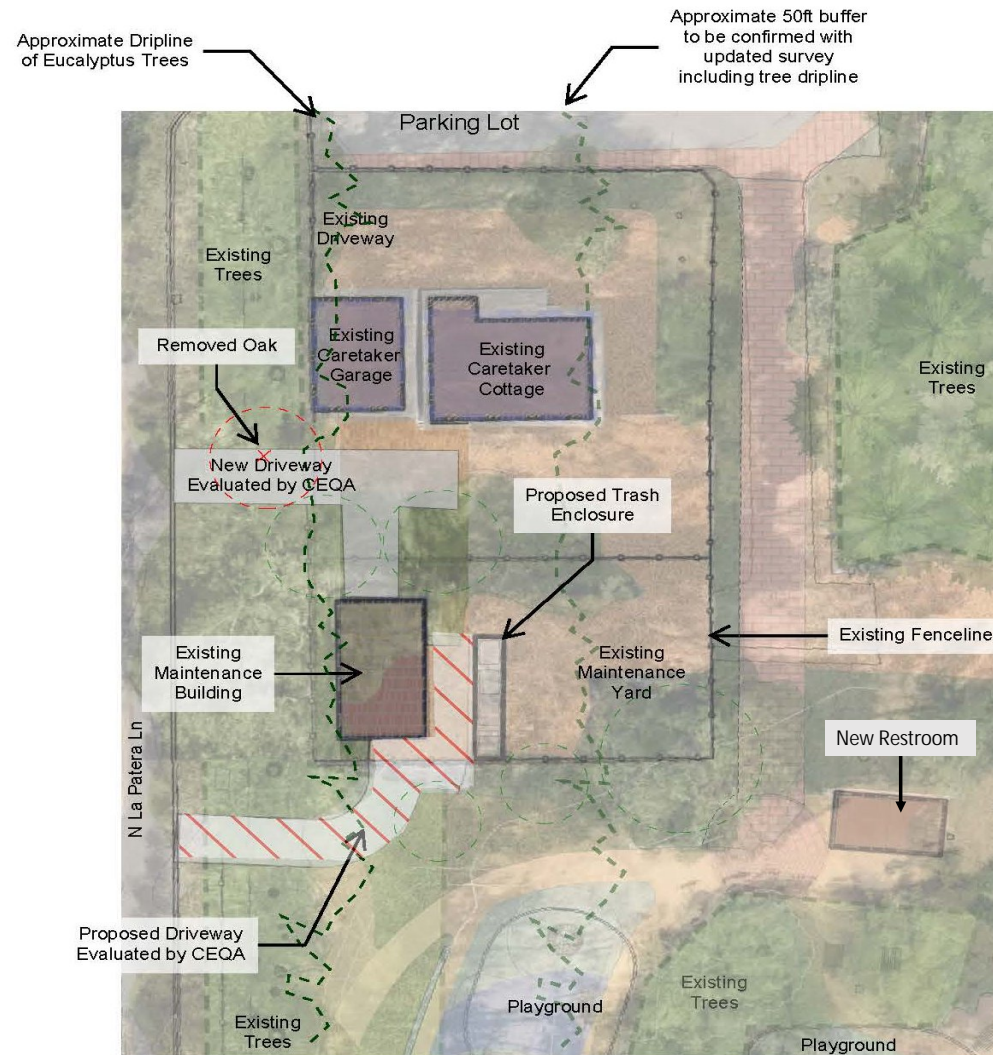
➤ Proposed Structures reviewed:

- New Family Restroom
- New Driveways

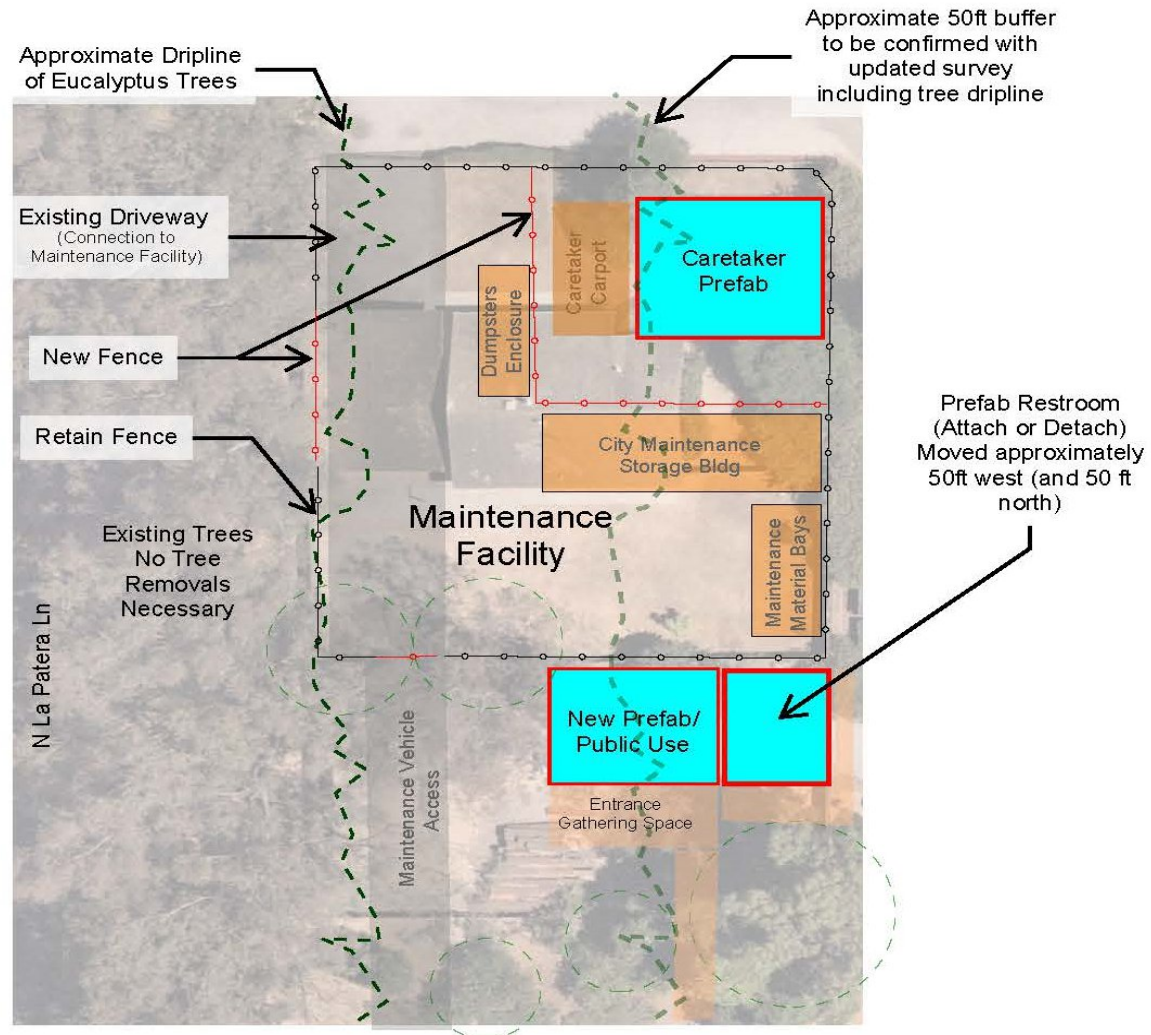
Existing Conditions



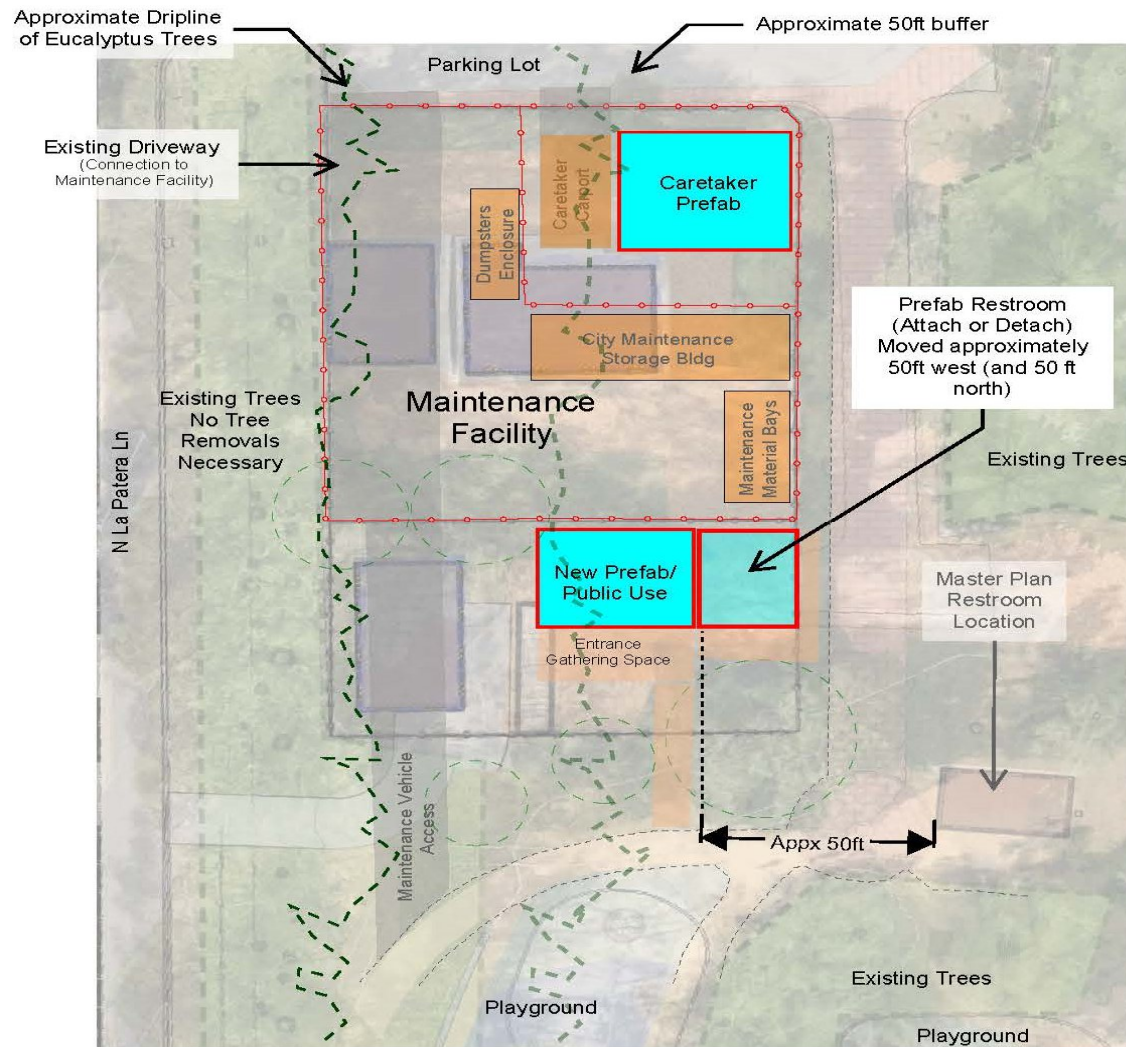
Approved Master Plan



Proposed Changes



Proposed Changes overlayed with the Master Plan



Next Steps

- If Council supports the new location for the restroom and to reconfigure the remaining structures, then:
 - Staff returns to Council with a development plan for the restroom and the areas of the playground within the 100' ESHA buffer
 - Staff continues to work with design team to identify appropriate size/configuration of remaining structures to return to Council with a development plan

Questions