

# **PROPOSAL**

## **Fallen Bridge Park**

**at**

**Utah & 18<sup>th</sup> Street**

**October 12, 2007**

## Revision History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>June 24, 2004</b>	<b>Park Committee</b>	<b>First Version</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Oct 1, 2007</b>	<b>Jean Bogiages</b>	<b>Updated Plan with drawings by Miller &amp; Co.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Oct 4, 2007</b>	<b>Jean Bogiages</b>	<b>Remove references to dog area</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Oct 12, 2007</b>	<b>Jean Bogiages</b>	<b>Add additional information about the tile project</b>

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## **IMPORTANCE OF URBAN PARKS**

What makes a healthy urban park? Why is it that some parks become vibrant centers of neighborhood activity, while others languish empty and unused--or, worse, attract illicit activities? Over the past six months, we've considered these questions from a number of different angles, read up on theories of urban park design, and brainstormed on ideas.

What elements of nature and community are missing from an environment of buildings, streets, freeways and the attendant noise and clutter? Can these elements be added to the urban environment through the urban park?

We present a proposal which, at its core, is designed to draw people. The design incorporates a variety of micro-environments and activities that will attract a wide range of people for a wide range of reasons.

- It will provide a place to sit and rest.
- It will provide recreation.
- It will provide contemplation.
- It will provide a place to let children run free.
- It will provide opportunity for socialization.

We are optimistic that a well-designed space can naturally encourage and inspire the best aspects of urban living, while simply, elegantly, deterring urban ills. This proposal promises such a park.



maintained by the San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks. To the right of the sand area, there was more reclaimed land which was maintained by the State of California.



*1972 Celebration on opening Fallen Bridge Park*

Since 1972, there has been no significant upkeep of the park. Rather than do a park upgrade, as things decayed, they were removed. The slide and bouncing horses were taken out of the sand area, making it a target for broken bottles and graffiti. The wooden benches were removed from the front of the sand area. The wooden retaining walls continue to decay. The park frequenters included hookers and party goers looking for an outdoor urinal. Neighborhood efforts to fix the park were restricted to painting over graffiti.

In March 2004 the neighborhood formed a committee of the MUNA neighborhood association to address the park problems. The committee met with RPD and discussed a embarking on short term plan and a long term plan.

The short term plan included cleaning out the hilly area of the park and laying down mulch to discourage weeds as well as planting flowers in the sand area after laying weed cloth and covering the weed cloth with mulch. Much of the short term plan has been accomplished with neighborhood participation. The long term plan is addressed in this proposal.

## **DESIGN DESCRIPTION**

We propose a redesign of the Mini Park, so that residents can enjoy their neighborhood park and feel safe in its surroundings. The questionnaires have confirmed people's concerns with the park's history of drug dealing, prostitution, trash and graffiti. To meet the neighborhood's requests of safety, aesthetics and pleasantness of experience, changes are essential. The questionnaires responses and the given architecture are determining the new design for our neighborhood park. It will be a multi use park, with no bushes to hide behind, vines to cover wall areas to discourage graffiti and trees to mask the freeway sound.

To paraphrase Jane Jacobs, who writes at length in her much read *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, neighborhood parks are to be used, not merely glanced at. A successful park, no matter how small, can prevail in its future usage if a succession of activities encourages flow at its center. Therefore, the design layout is a response to the variety of the park's users.

### **The Sundial (Art Installation)**

At one of the neighborhood meetings, when asked by the designer what one would like to see in the park, a neighbor replied: " I'd like a touch of magic, something really special". While magic may not have a loud voice in this proposal, it confirmed the design decision for the central area. The central area has been an historical problem, continuously subjected to graffiti and other forms of vandalism. The circle is a challenge by virtue of its shape, scale and location. It is at the center of the curling ramp and overpass used by passersby, commuters and mostly high school students. The overpass and its goings and comings is a place where one can be observed checking his watch. The student wondering if he will be late for school, the commuter wondering whether she will miss the bus. This seemed to be an ideal place for a sundial, connecting the sense of time to the parts of the physical universe, sun, earth, rotation, revolution that the walker experiences.

The sundial will be the center of the circle area. This construction, half art and half science will offer a glimpse into the mystery of the universe as well as being a place of beauty, surrounded by a circle of native plants and vines covering the concrete walls.

### **The Court Activity area (Park and Court)**

The left side of the park will feature two major components; one is a multi-use recreational area, the other a garden area filled with native plants and shade trees.

A multi-use recreational area, incorporating a surface suitable for bocce ball, petanque, badminton, mini-hockey and other games is an ideal attraction for a small neighborhood park, a neighborhood eager for social interaction and use of its space. Petanque is a social game that can be played by almost anyone, of any age and can be learned quickly. When not in use for games, the terrain could accommodate mothers and their small children. At least one bench is a required addendum to the petanque court. In this way, people could either watch a game, wait for their turn to play, read a book or sit when taking a baby out for fresh air.

## **The History and Art Tile project**

The concrete retaining wall enclosing the activity area will double as an area for sitting and an area for displaying artwork in the form of a tile project which will be embarked on by the neighborhood preschool children. Institution landmarks reflecting the history of Potrero Hill will be recognized by tiles which will be cemented along the top of the concrete wall and in the bench area. The tiles can be used to line the semicircular bench described below.

### **Semi-circle bench - view into the sunset and Twin Peaks (18<sup>th</sup> & Utah Corner)**

From this particular site, at the intersection of Utah and 18<sup>th</sup> street, the view is breathtaking. The eye carries us through an array of streets, and perhaps 17<sup>th</sup> street is the most striking, as one can see its tip all the way to the Castro district. But there is also, the cusp of Noe valley's roofs and as Rebecca Solnit, once said: "One had to be standing on this part of the city to name the two hills Twin Peaks". We would like to include this right side area into our redesigning plans. Most importantly, it will be necessary to build a discreet retaining wall to enclose the park and separate it from the freeway.

The design will include a large circular bench starting from the top of 18<sup>th</sup> street and curving around the end of the Street and down 18<sup>th</sup> Street again.

The two main changes to the given terrain will be grading and leveling, so as to make the Park more user friendly and in the addition of retaining walls in order to accomplish the first objective. This applies to both the left and right areas.

Pedestrian lighting needs to be implemented so that people can feel safe at night when walking by or in the park. Some vehicular light is already in place, one by the overpass, the other at one corner of the park, but this is not sufficient. Most of the park is bathed in darkness as soon as the sun goes down. Keeping vandalism and crime at a distance is one of the neighborhood's highest priorities, therefore adequate lighting is absolutely essential.

### **The Sidewalk**

The sidewalk area in front of the park currently is a wide cement area consisting of 3 foot square sidewalk tiles with the occasional tree. The objectives of including the sidewalk area in the park and providing ground access for rainwater will both be met by removing all but one line of 3 foot square concrete and increasing the planting area. Plants chosen for this area would be native drought resistant plants in order to reduce maintenance.

## QUESTIONNAIRES

In March 2004 the Fallen Bridge Park Sub-Committee of MUNA wrote, distributed, and collected surveys to determine the neighborhood concerns and desires for the mini-park (survey questions are listed below). Over 100 surveys were distributed to the houses and apartments on 18th Street between Potrero Avenue and Utah Street, Utah Street between 17th and 18<sup>th</sup> Streets, Mariposa between Potrero Avenue and San Bruno, and San Bruno between 17th and Mariposa Streets. 23 surveys were returned.

### Survey Questions:

Do you use the Mini Park?

For what purpose do you use the Mini Park?

List problems you see with the Mini Park in its current state:

What changes would you like to see?

What would you NOT like to see?

What would you like to see as the prime focus of the park?

Overall the surveys showed real community agreement that the park needs to be fixed. As it currently exists, the respondents experience the mini-park as a focus for drug dealing, prostitution, and graffiti. Many people mentioned that poor lighting and landscaping make the mini-park attractive to homeless people which has led to significant trash, litter, and sanitary concerns. The evening darkness of the sidewalk next to the street also attracts prostitutes and their clientele who park there and when done, litter the area with used condoms. All of these problems keep people from using the park. The vast majority of responses expressed a desire for the park to be beautiful and provide space where neighbors can gather. The need for better landscaping, better lighting, better seating, and better maintenance turned up again and again in the responses. They also demonstrated a real frustration with the chain link fence, the resulting build-up of litter, the lack of seating, and the deterioration of the park overall.

Specific requests for change included space for a dog run, community garden plots, and a children's play area. Many respondents noted that they primarily used the park as a place to walk their dogs and asked that the park remain dog friendly. They also think they would use the park much more if it were a nicer space. There were fewer requests for a community garden and children's play area than there were specific requests to not include such spaces. Responses included doubt that these areas would be used sufficiently and concerns that there is not enough space in the mini-park to effectively include such specialized areas.

## PHOTOS and DESIGN DRAWINGS

### Now and Plan



*Ariel View of Fallen Bridge Mini-Park*



*Park Section above 18<sup>th</sup> St. where curved bench and landscaping are planned.*



*View from Park Section above 18<sup>th</sup> Street*



*Looking into Northern Section of Park*

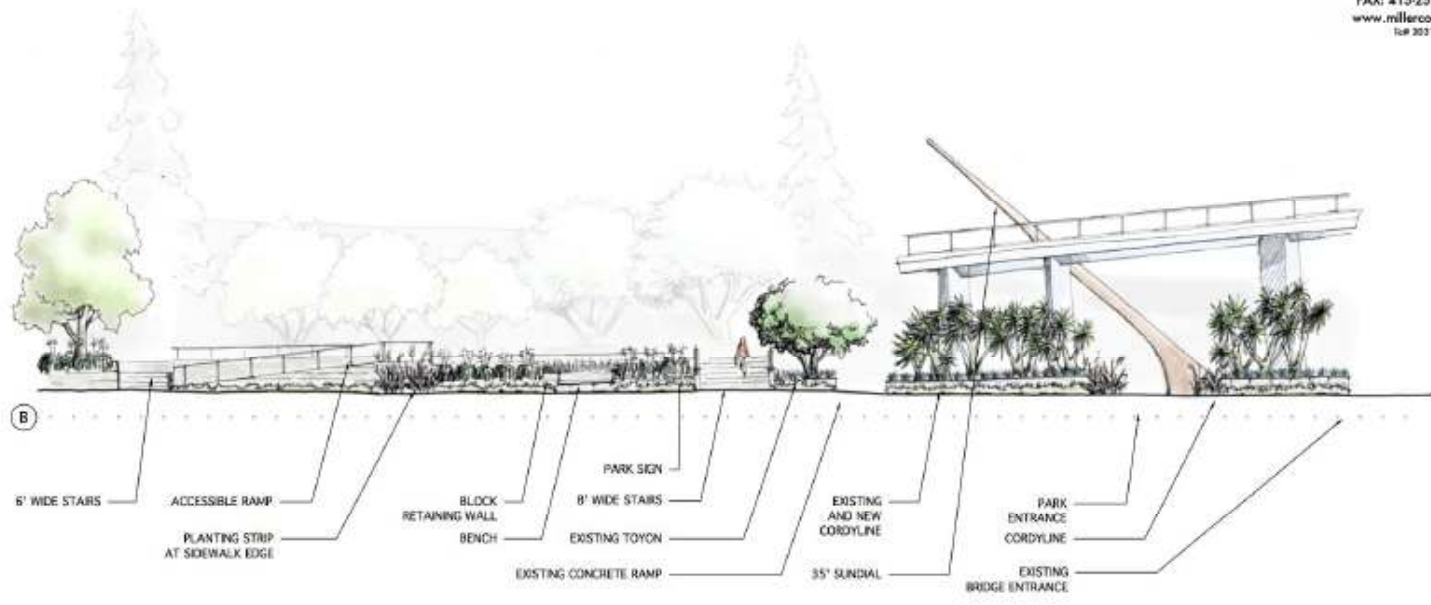


*Problem in Northern Section – Homeless Bags*





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SECTION B: VIEW FROM UTAH STREET INTO PARK

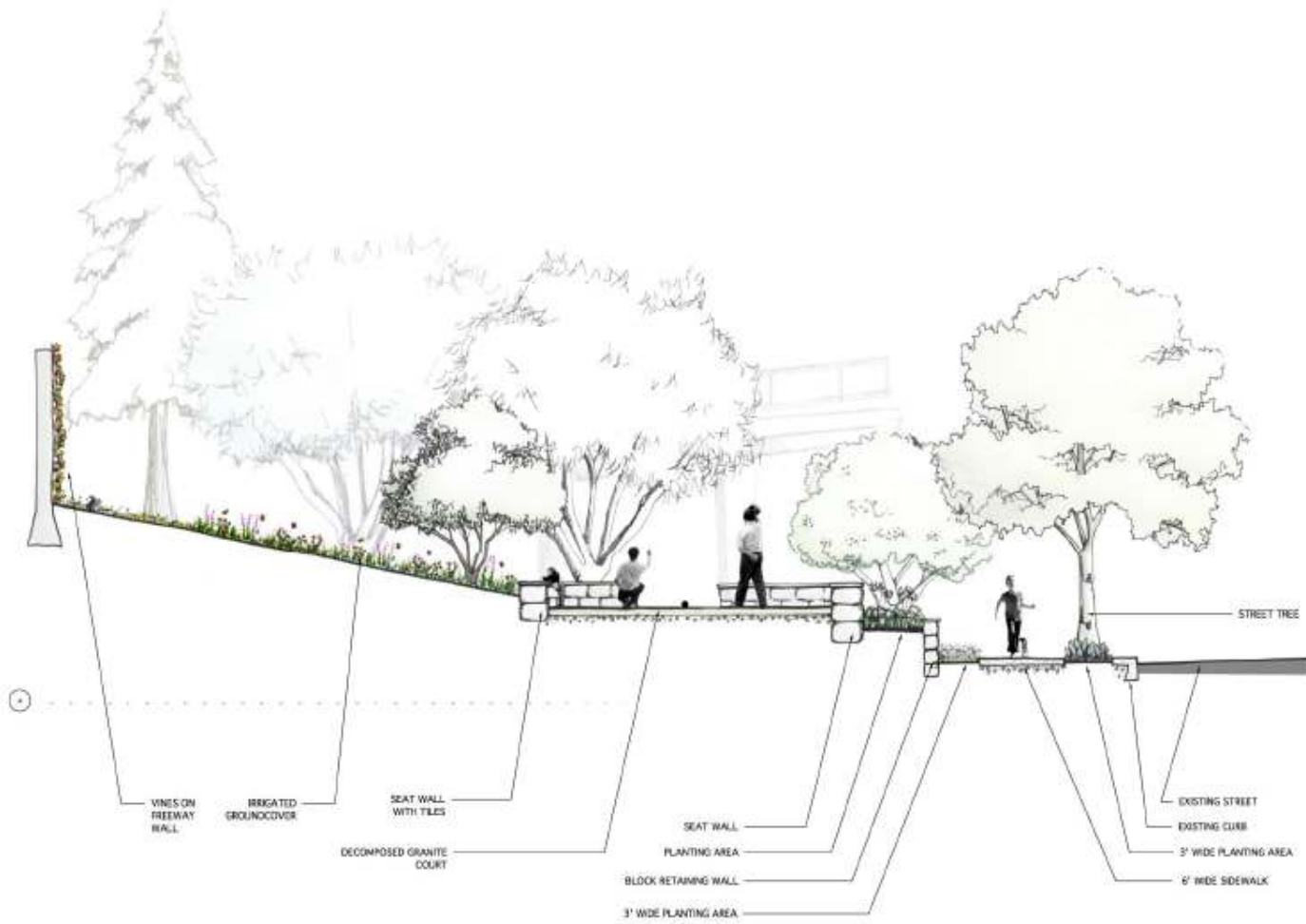
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'

FALLEN BRIDGE MINI-PARK MASTER PLAN  
September 29, 2007



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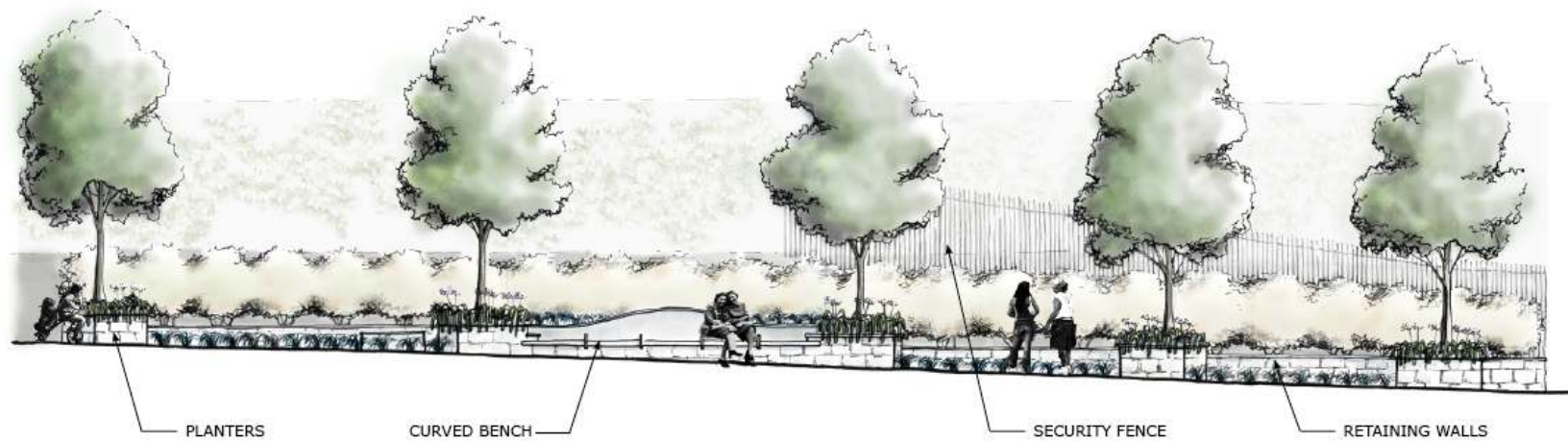
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SECTION A: VIEW THROUGH FREEWAY WALL TO UTAH STREET

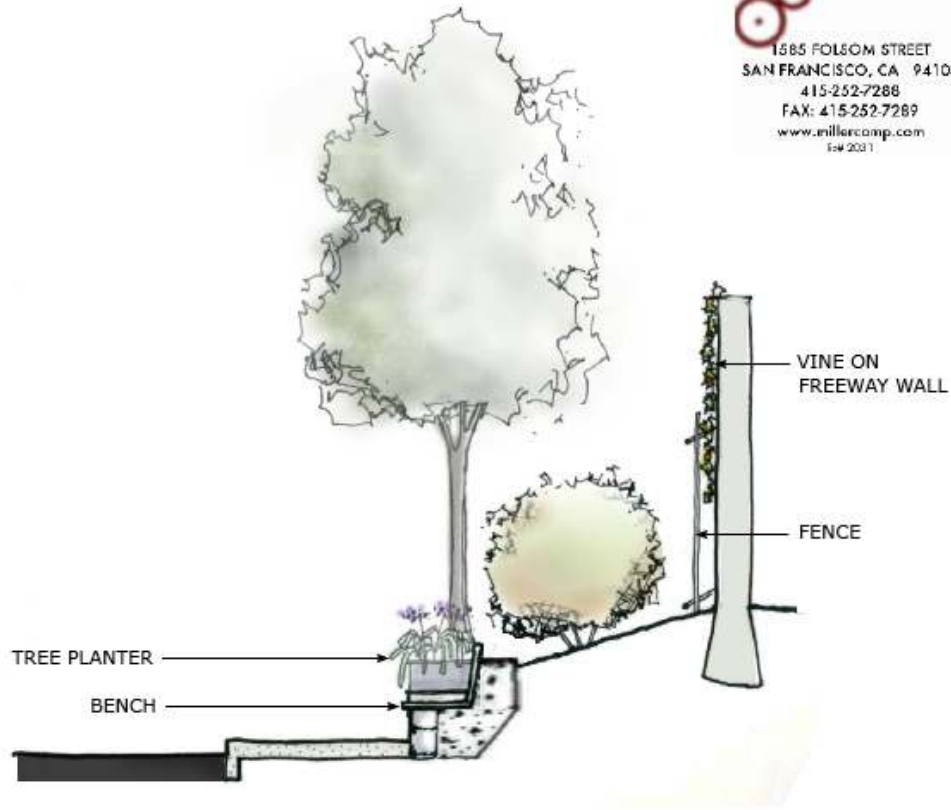
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'

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SECTION C: VIEW TO CORNER OF 18TH AND UTAH


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**SECTION D: THROUGH CURVED BENCH TO FREEWAY WALL**  
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'

**FALLEN BRIDGE MINI-PARK MASTER PLAN**  
 September 29, 2007

## **Acknowledgements**

### ***2004 Plan***

The San Francisco Neighborhood Parks Council and the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department have given a good deal of help and guidance to the neighborhood. We would like to thank Robert Watkins, RPD and Betty Traynor, NPC, in particular for their help and guidance.

With their help we have already improved the park as part of a short term plan and we have joined the ParkScan project to document problems in the park.

The neighborhood organization and RPD have worked together in a very productive way in the last half year. Results of this effort have almost eliminated graffiti to date. We are hopeful that in continuing and expanding this collaboration between MUNA and agencies connected to the park, we will be able to transform the park into an area the neighborhood can be proud of.

We would especially like to thank Isabelle Sorrell for her effort and dedication in creating and rendering a new park design which meets the needs of the neighborhood.

### ***2007 Plan***

The second version of the Park Upgrade Plan has benefited greatly from the park survey and design efforts of Jeff Miller, Jen Natali, Kyla Burson and the Miller Company. Additionally we thank them for meeting with us numerous times to help us formulate our ideas about the park. We are grateful for their generous contribution of time, thought and landscape design.