



Friends of Willard Park

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December 1997



Tot Lot Opening Commemoration

On a beautiful Sunday in June, a few hundred of us gathered in Willard Park to celebrate the new tot lot. There were good eats, short speeches, well-deserved praise and trophies. Then, Mayor Shirley Dean cut the ceremonial ribbon.

Backed by the ever-supportive Andronico's market, Stuart and Virginia Sidells served up choice hot dogs, two kinds of potato salad, home-made baked beans and strawberry shortcake. And they made it look easy.

Music was graciously provided by The Water Dogs: Kurt Regis, Matt Parker, Steve McKenna and Joe Saah.

Kimo's Spirit of Polynesia Dancers put on an amazing Hawaiian dance performance to close the event. Though they regularly practice at the park, this was the real deal, complete with costume changes in the clubhouse.

FOWP and Michael O'Leary Honored for Tot Lot

The Willard Park renovation received recognition from Berkeley Design Advocates (BDA) at their December 5th reception. A Design Award was presented to our landscape architect, Michael O'Leary, for design and to Friends of Willard Park for community involvement. The work cited includes the tot lot, disabled-access pathways, clubhouse play-circle, play field renovation, plantings and trees.

BDA Design Awards were also given to Halcyon Commons, Marin Circle Fountain and Peralta Community Garden. These awards affirm community participation in the design and implementation of park projects. BDA hopes these well-deserved awards will encourage quality projects in the years to come.

Tot Lot Grads Deserve a Great Clubhouse

Now that the tot lot is a success, Friends of Willard Park has made a commitment to improve the clubhouse for children over six. Neighbors, park staff and local child care providers have all agreed that this should be our next focus. This won't be cheap, but with your help, we can start to make a difference for kids right away.

Your donation will benefit the children who attend the after-school and summer programs. Your donation will also help us convince the City of Berkeley to contribute substantially to our clubhouse projects. We watch our budget by spending cash primarily for materials and design services.

32 loyal Willard park supporters have already pledged \$3,200 by January 31, 1998. Donations from the rest of us should exceed that amount. Donations to FOWP are fully tax-deductible.

Want to save even more on your taxes? FOWP can accept shares of appreciated stock as a donation. You may deduct the full market value without incurring capital gains taxes or transaction costs.

Friends of Willard Park Projects: 1998 and Beyond

Our plans touch the four corners of the park, focusing especially on the clubhouse. Six of these projects will be paid for by a mini-grant of \$3,437 we were recently awarded by the City of Berkeley. These are indicated by white-on-black numbers 1-6. Mini-grant projects are to be completed by June 1998, so they are our priority.

Many smaller projects will be paid for by donations to Friends of Willard Park. Larger projects will require money and materials from the City and labor from the neighbors and UC students. Mike O'Leary has even begun courting help from the US Navy in Alameda!

Around the Clubhouse

These projects complement the tot lot and complete our commitment to provide play areas for children of all ages. And they will dramatically improve the experience for kids who attend the city-sponsored after-school and summer programs at the clubhouse.

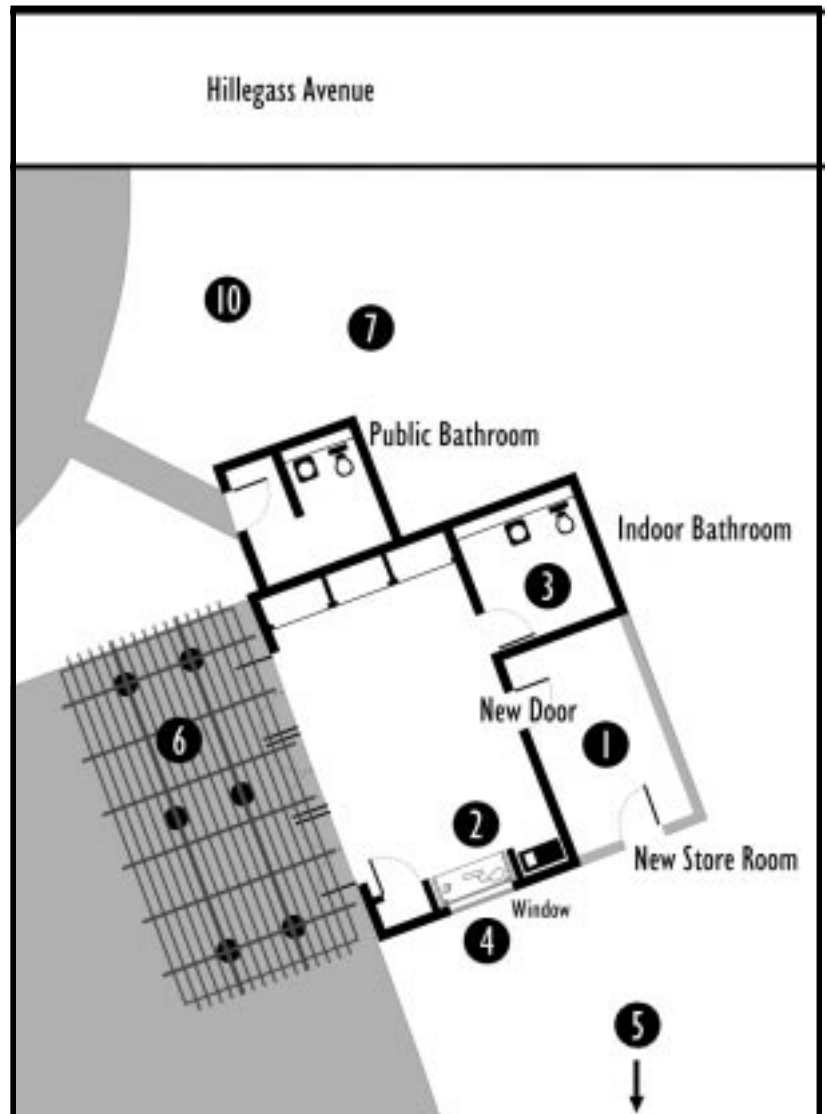
1. Build a store room for movable play equipment behind the clubhouse. This plan has already been approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission and the City. However there has not yet been money or energy to proceed. With the tot lot completed, now is the time. The store room will be 16 by 9 feet, and 9 feet high. It will have one entrance from the clubhouse and another from the outside. It will easily hold all the items that now clutter the clubhouse: tables and chairs, mats, large plastic blocks, games and art supplies. We'll then have room for gear like a basketball hoop, volleyball set and tetherball pole, all of which can be moved onto the concrete circle or the grass play field in front.

2. Reorganize the clubhouse. The existing oversized staff desk should be replaced with a space-efficient desk that can securely store a computer. We'd also like to provide a small area for food preparation.

3. Renovate the indoor bathroom, which is used by children and staff, so that it becomes a simple, attractive room. Add a heavy-duty changing table to accommodate disabled children. Install sturdy wooden shelves for bathroom and cleaning supplies.

4. Add a window on the west side of the clubhouse to look out onto the concrete play circle. This will connect the clubhouse to the play area and improve safety.

5. Create a small vegetable garden for children on the grassy slope west of the concrete play-circle. The garden would be terraced into the hillside.



6. Move six round concrete planters to the front of the clubhouse. Currently, these planters lie abandoned on the west side of the tennis courts. The children and staff want to adopt them to plant flowers and herbs. Several planters will be strategically placed so that they separate the clubhouse from the entrance to the public bathroom.

Hillegass Avenue Entry

These projects will elegantly define the Hillegass edge of Willard Park and create a handsome entrance. They will require more community input, a well thought out design, and of course — more fundraising.

7. Plant the east side of the clubhouse This 350 square foot area, temporarily mulched with wood chips, used to be paved and had the circular metal bathrooms. We'll remove the existing run-down wooden planter box and move the Japanese maple and the pay phone. At the sidewalk we'll lay cobblestone curbing to retain the planting bed. To prepare for planing, we'll also have to extend the irrigation system.

8. Build a gateway with an overhead trellis at the Hillegass entry. Constructed of timber and cobblestones and covered with climbing vines, this would provide a fitting entry.

9. Plant 6-8 street trees along Hillegass to soften and extend the edge of the park. The species of trees and their exact placement will need to be discussed.

10. Plant a Live Oak to match the existing oak tree across the path.

11. Install five new lights along Hillegass that match 11 we installed during the tot lot project. This edge of the park is too dark and these would extend the warm necklace of lights.

12. Add a curved bench around the oak. This would provide seating with a view of the play areas, without obstructing the open green.

13. Replace the brown trash cans on Hillegass with six green trash and recycling containers similar to those at the tot lot.

14. Renovate the cobblestone drinking fountain and add an accessible basin on the side for those traveling in wheelchairs.

15. Build a drinking bowl for dogs like the one by the tennis courts. Move the Mutt Mitt dispenser at the clubhouse to the drinking bowl location.

Tot Lot Area

Due to the heavy use (which is a great problem to have!) there are several smaller projects we've identified around the tot lot.

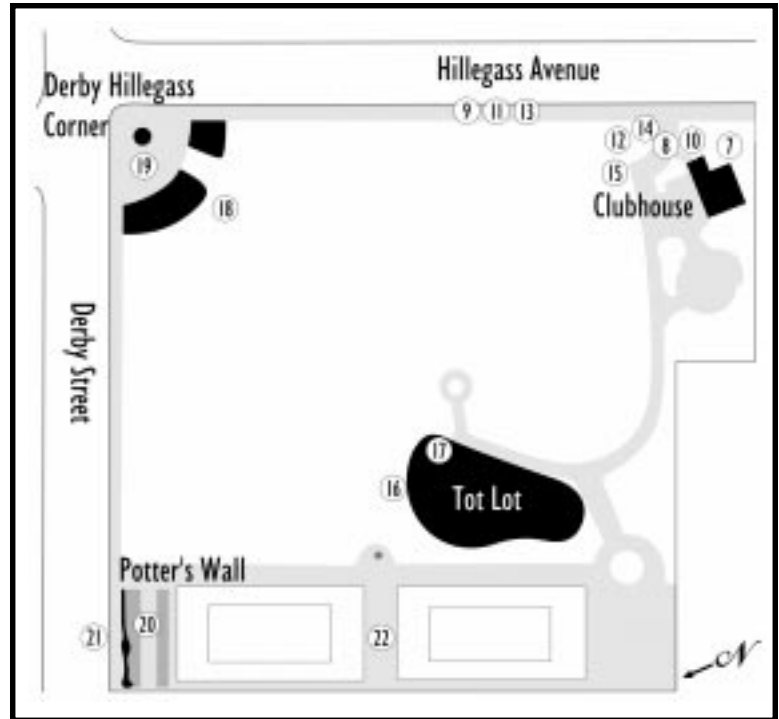
16. Replace damaged plants and plant more around the tot lot and along the Regent Street entrance. Most of the existing plants are thriving but the areas that need to be improved add up to 1,000 square feet.

17. Construct a wooden bench on the tot lot deck near the Dawn Redwood tree. Add a lockable compartment under the bench to store hoses, brooms and cleaning equipment.

Derby Hillegass Corner

18. 2,000 sq. feet of plantings. This fall, we planted the beds on either side of the entry with a mixture of ground covers, low-growing flowering perennials, bulbs and sword ferns. This is a durable mix that works harmoniously with the four majestic redwood trees. Now we need to add a few more plants and keep weeding so the plants take hold.

19. Plant the cobblestone well. This was built to remind passers-by that Derby Creek flows beneath us. Look closely and you'll see a brass plaque reading, "Liberate Derby Creek." These plants must be hand watered and adopted by a neighbor.



Potter's Wall

20. Install a drip-irrigation system to water the roses and ornamental cherry trees. We'll tie this system to a nearby water-source.

21. Repair and maintain the Potter's Wall. A few of the original builders are willing to clean it and make repairs if we supply the materials.

22. Tool storage between the tennis courts. We've already installed two heavy-duty metal tool boxes to house our equipment. These Knaack boxes are water proof, burglar proof and visually compatible with the existing electrical boxes. We will paint all the boxes green to match the tennis practice wall.

A History of Success: Neighbors and the City Working Together

Friends of Willard Park has made many important changes to the park over the past almost 8 years. Members held public meetings, lobbied for City funds and permission for projects, and put in thousands of hours at work parties. UC student volunteers have also played a huge role in our efforts.

Neighbors' donations have made a huge difference. Our dollars have leveraged funds from the city and local merchants. Our dollars help finish projects, purchase tools and buy pizza for work-party volunteers. Here's what we've done so far.

- **State-of-the-art tot lot.** Our 5,000 square-foot tot lot became an instant community gathering place. With an innovative and attractive design, we raised \$238,000 from Measure AA, SB-174 and PERS grants. Generous contractors, neighbors and students doubled the dollars, producing work that would have otherwise cost over a half million dollars.
- **Improved play fields and paths.** While building the tot lot, we laid hundreds of feet of wide pathways lined with cobbles. We filled much of the swale that used to cut the park in half.
- **New trees and lighting.** 18 new trees thrive within the park. We also installed 11 gorgeous lights on cobbled pedestals.
- **Derby-Hillegass cobblestone entry.** We created a stunning entry between the redwoods. The cobbled walls extend 30 feet into the park from a semi-circular wall at the corner. The project put an end to seemingly-permanent drug and alcohol abuse in this visible location.
- **Roof for the clubhouse pergola.** We installed a clear plastic roof to extend the dry play-space for kids on rainy days.
- **Rose walk at the Potter's Wall.** Replaced existing asphalt with a soft path lined with ever-blooming roses and cherry trees. This project helped discourage camping behind the wall.



Community Meetings with the City

Friends of Willard Park is hosting a community meeting with Roland Anolin, Senior Facilities manager for the City of Berkeley, at the Willard Park Clubhouse on Wednesday, January 21st at 7:00 PM. We will discuss the needs of the park, what the City can provide, and how we can all work together. Please attend and bring suggestions.

Sometime in February we will meet with the City again to talk about children's play equipment and other improvements to the clubhouse. Our guests will be Lisa Caronna, acting Director of Parks and Waterfront, and Madalyn Laws, Director of Recreation.

The date and time will be posted in the park and we will notify members of the community who have been interested in past projects. For more information, all John Caner, 849-8405 or e-mail him at jcaner@loansoft.com.



Friends of Willard Park wishes you a pleasurable winter holiday and an interesting new year,

John Caner Susan Fischer Bill Lipsky John Losito
Greg Murphy Jim Rosenau Patty Spangler

P.S. Please contribute what you can and join our work parties. You will see results in the park in 1998.

