



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: September 8, 2009

REPORT NO: 103

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board  
Agenda of September 17, 2009

SUBJECT: West Lewis Mini Park – Approval of General Development Plan

SUMMARY: Should the Park and Recreation Board approve the proposed General Development Plan (GDP) for West Lewis Mini Park?

Director's Recommendation - Approve the proposed General Development Plan

Other Recommendations – The following groups have reviewed and considered the proposed GDP:

- University Heights Recreation Council
- Design Review Committee
- Uptown Planners – Facilities Subcommittee
- Uptown Planners
- Council District 2 Community “Stakeholders”
- Mission Hills “Heritage” Group

Fiscal Impact – The City’s Capital Improvements Program currently allocates \$450,000 to fund phase one improvements of the West Lewis Mini Park project. It is anticipated that phase one improvements would be primarily in the portion of the park adjacent to West Lewis and Falcon Streets, and include: disabled access improvements, decomposed granite surfacing, decorative hardscape, raised planters, interpretive signage, decorative boulders for seating, landscaping and temporary irrigation. Additional funds will need to be identified and allocated to the project to fully fund the General Development Plan improvements. Annual operation and maintenance cost for the new development is estimated at \$1,800. Funding for these costs will need to be budgeted in the Park and Recreation Department Operating Budget in Fiscal Year 2011, as approved by the Budget Appropriations Ordinance.

Water and Energy Conservation Status - The proposed GDP complies with all water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Environmental Status – The City of San Diego, as a lead agency under CEQA, has prepared and completed a Mitigated Negative Declaration, Project No. 150839, dated April 29, 2009, covering the park development activity.

## BACKGROUND

The overall project site is approximately 9,900 square feet and is comprised of two canyon overlook areas connected by a pedestrian bridge along a “paper block” of West Lewis Street between Falcon and Goldfinch Streets in the Mission Hills Community Area.

The area identified for phase one construction is located on the southwest corner of West Lewis and Falcon Streets. This property lay fallow for years until it was vacated and quitclaimed to the City for this park as a condition of the adjacent condominium conversion. The proposed improvements include: disabled access improvements, decomposed granite surfacing, decorative hardscape and paving, native landscaping, raised planters, interpretive signage, public art elements, decorative boulders for seating, drainage improvements and irrigation to establish landscaping. The extent of phase one implementation will depend on the bids submitted for the project.

The remainder of the project is located along the unimproved canyon edge of the West Lewis “paper block” from Goldfinch east to the West Lewis and Falcon Street improvements. The proposed future improvements will include a pedestrian bridge to connect the two overlook area improvements, decomposed granite paving, hardscape, raised planters, decorative boulders for seating, landscaping and irrigation to establish landscaping at the southeast corner of West Lewis and Goldfinch Streets.

The preliminary project package was initially submitted to the Development Services Department for evaluation and preparation of an environmental document. At that time, it was determined that the project would require a Process Three Site Development Permit and Mitigated Negative Declaration environmental document. As a part of the Site Development Permit Process, the environmental document and Site Development Permit were sent to the Uptown Planners for review and comment (as discussed under DISCUSSION). The Site Development Permit and mitigated negative declaration were approved by the Hearing Officer on April 29, 2009 (Project Number 150839).

## DISCUSSION

- On October 7, 2006, the first project workshop was held at the University Heights Recreation Council (UHRC). This recreation council was selected as it is the neighboring community and there is no recreation council serving the Mission Hills community. This meeting was noticed for a radius of 300 feet around the project site and was listed as a workshop item on the agenda.
- On March 1, 2007, the UHRC unanimously voted to approve the GDP (4 – 0) with the following recommendations:
  - Less trees
  - Orient seating towards canyon
  - Fewer planters
  - Relocate artwork toward street

Eight community members attended the meeting in support of the proposed plan. The recommendations of the UHRC were incorporated into the current proposed GDP.

- On April 11, 2007, the Design Review Committee (DRC) considered the proposed GDP and adopted a unanimous motion to approve the GDP (10 – 0) with the following recommendations:
  - Provide lighting, if possible
  - Remove the on street parking

In review of the recommendations by the DRC, staff determined lighting was in conflict with desires of the community as discussed in the UHRC meeting, and that the project does not have the authority to eliminate on-street parking.

- On March 19, 2009, the Uptown Planners – Public Facilities Subcommittee reviewed the project and made the following motion to recommend to the Uptown Planners:
  - Recommend support for the development of a mini-park at the location; and
    - a) That the design proposed for Phase 1 of the mini-park be significantly revised in order to minimize interference with the canyon and its natural slope by eliminating the proposed grading and instead utilizing the natural canyon edge to set the boundaries for any active use as a park;
    - b) That the concrete portions that transform the natural canyon setting into a plaza be eliminated so that the use of natural canyon lands for recreational purposes is brought into conformity with the stated objectives set out in

the Uptown Community Plan (“Open Space and Recreations Element.”). This means moving the walkable areas farther back from the canyon edge, significantly simplifying the overall design, retaining the interpretative elements, providing a bench, providing a cobble walkway, and providing cobble/rock and native vegetation in place of the poured concrete.

- Eliminate the second phase (those improvements outside the southwest corner of West Lewis and Falcon Streets) of the project, and delete all reference to it in all project-related documents.
  - Uptown Planners recommends that a firm budget not to exceed \$300,000 be established; and that the City of San Diego waive any additional fees.
- On April 7, 2009, Uptown Planners considered the project and approved the same motion as the Public Facilities Subcommittee.
  - On April 29, 2009, the Site Development Permit for the General Development Plan was approved as presented by the Development Services Department Hearing Officer.
  - On May 8, 2009, a group of stakeholders called together by Council District 2, discussed the project and made the following recommendations:
    - Retain the project budget at \$450,000
    - Support the current plan, but substitute certain elements to give a more naturalistic look, including:
      - a) Remove two of the trees in the plan that block the view to the canyon, and replace with lower profile native shrubs, or leave open.
      - b) Possibly reduce the four trees screening the condo development to three trees.
      - c) Substitute decomposed granite for the glass composite tiles in the “plaza” area.
      - d) The preference is for retention of the bird signs and kiosk over having more trees in planters.
  - On May 22, 2009, the Mission Hills Heritage, discussed the project and made the following recommendations:
    - The design should be “softened” and made more organic to fit better within the natural setting of the adjacent canyon.
    - No more than \$450,000 of Developer Impact Fees (DIF) funds should be spent on Phase I of this project, and no DIF funds should be allocated to Phase II of this project.

- Remove the four northernmost corten steel raised planters with small trees.
  - Remove approximately 70-80% of the boulders with only a few left for seating.
  - Increase native/drought tolerant plantings as necessary to soften the park.
  - Delete the concrete grid.
  - Reduce the size of the “accent paver” area and substitute a more organic appearing material.
  - Retain the interpretive sign/kiosk and walkway.
  - Retain the public art as budget permits.
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- On June 17, 2009, the project was presented to the Park and Recreation Board. In the subsequent motion, staff was directed to incorporate the recommendations of Mission Hills Heritage into the GDP.
  
  - On September 3, 2009, the revised GDP, satisfying the recommendations from the letter, was presented to the UHRC. The UHRC made a unanimous motion to support the GDP as presented (4 – 0).

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the proposed GDP for West Lewis Mini Park as presented.
2. Approve the proposed GDP for West Lewis Mini Park with modifications.
3. Reject approval of the proposed GDP for West Lewis Mini Park.

Respectfully submitted,

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Deputy Director, Architectural Engineering  
and Parks Division

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SB/sb

Attachments: General Development Plan

**DESIGN CONCEPT STATEMENT**

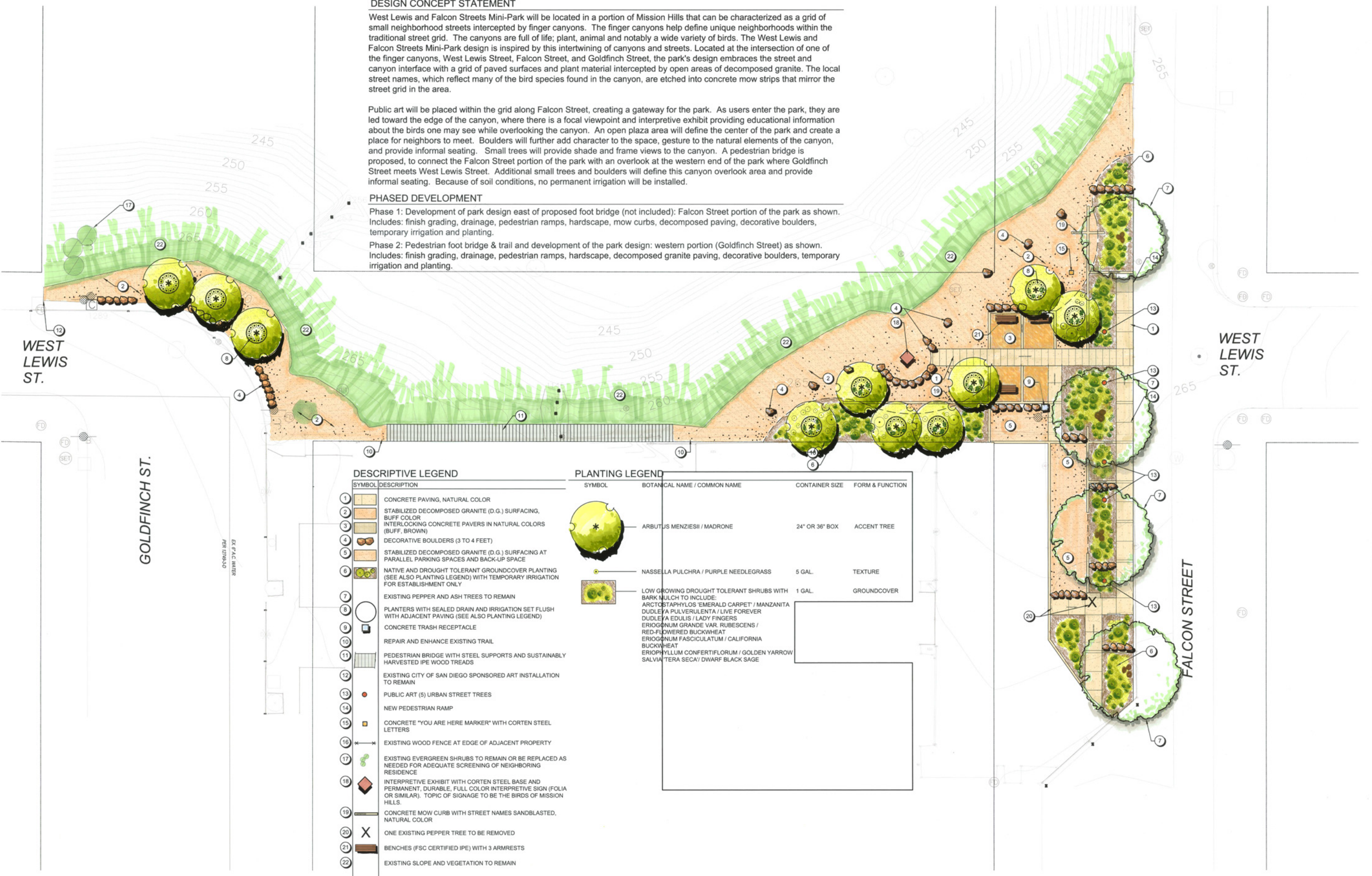
West Lewis and Falcon Streets Mini-Park will be located in a portion of Mission Hills that can be characterized as a grid of small neighborhood streets intercepted by finger canyons. The finger canyons help define unique neighborhoods within the traditional street grid. The canyons are full of life; plant, animal and notably a wide variety of birds. The West Lewis and Falcon Streets Mini-Park design is inspired by this intertwining of canyons and streets. Located at the intersection of one of the finger canyons, West Lewis Street, Falcon Street, and Goldfinch Street, the park's design embraces the street and canyon interface with a grid of paved surfaces and plant material intercepted by open areas of decomposed granite. The local street names, which reflect many of the bird species found in the canyon, are etched into concrete mow strips that mirror the street grid in the area.

Public art will be placed within the grid along Falcon Street, creating a gateway for the park. As users enter the park, they are led toward the edge of the canyon, where there is a focal viewpoint and interpretive exhibit providing educational information about the birds one may see while overlooking the canyon. An open plaza area will define the center of the park and create a place for neighbors to meet. Boulders will further add character to the space, gesture to the natural elements of the canyon, and provide informal seating. Small trees will provide shade and frame views to the canyon. A pedestrian bridge is proposed, to connect the Falcon Street portion of the park with an overlook at the western end of the park where Goldfinch Street meets West Lewis Street. Additional small trees and boulders will define this canyon overlook area and provide informal seating. Because of soil conditions, no permanent irrigation will be installed.

**PHASED DEVELOPMENT**

Phase 1: Development of park design east of proposed foot bridge (not included): Falcon Street portion of the park as shown. Includes: finish grading, drainage, pedestrian ramps, hardscape, mow curbs, decomposed paving, decorative boulders, temporary irrigation and planting.

Phase 2: Pedestrian foot bridge & trail and development of the park design: western portion (Goldfinch Street) as shown. Includes: finish grading, drainage, pedestrian ramps, hardscape, decomposed granite paving, decorative boulders, temporary irrigation and planting.



**DESCRIPTIVE LEGEND**

SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION
1	CONCRETE PAVING, NATURAL COLOR
2	STABILIZED DECOMPOSED GRANITE (D.G.) SURFACING, BUFF COLOR
3	INTERLOCKING CONCRETE PAVERS IN NATURAL COLORS (BUFF, BROWN)
4	DECORATIVE BOULDERS (3 TO 4 FEET)
5	STABILIZED DECOMPOSED GRANITE (D.G.) SURFACING AT PARALLEL PARKING SPACES AND BACK-UP SPACE
6	NATIVE AND DROUGHT TOLERANT GROUND COVER PLANTING (SEE ALSO PLANTING LEGEND) WITH TEMPORARY IRRIGATION FOR ESTABLISHMENT ONLY
7	EXISTING PEPPER AND ASH TREES TO REMAIN
8	PLANTERS WITH SEALED DRAIN AND IRRIGATION SET FLUSH WITH ADJACENT PAVING (SEE ALSO PLANTING LEGEND)
9	CONCRETE TRASH RECEPTACLE
10	REPAIR AND ENHANCE EXISTING TRAIL
11	PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE WITH STEEL SUPPORTS AND SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED IPE WOOD TREADS
12	EXISTING CITY OF SAN DIEGO SPONSORED ART INSTALLATION TO REMAIN
13	PUBLIC ART (5) URBAN STREET TREES
14	NEW PEDESTRIAN RAMP
15	CONCRETE "YOU ARE HERE MARKER" WITH CORTEN STEEL LETTERS
16	EXISTING WOOD FENCE AT EDGE OF ADJACENT PROPERTY
17	EXISTING EVERGREEN SHRUBS TO REMAIN OR BE REPLACED AS NEEDED FOR ADEQUATE SCREENING OF NEIGHBORING RESIDENCE
18	INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT WITH CORTEN STEEL BASE AND PERMANENT, DURABLE, FULL COLOR INTERPRETIVE SIGN (FOLIA OR SIMILAR). TOPIC OF SIGNAGE TO BE THE BIRDS OF MISSION HILLS.
19	CONCRETE MOW CURB WITH STREET NAMES SANDBLASTED, NATURAL COLOR
20	ONE EXISTING PEPPER TREE TO BE REMOVED
21	BENCHES (FSC CERTIFIED IPE) WITH 3 ARMRESTS
22	EXISTING SLOPE AND VEGETATION TO REMAIN

**PLANTING LEGEND**

SYMBOL	BOTANICAL NAME / COMMON NAME	CONTAINER SIZE	FORM & FUNCTION
	ARBUTUS MENZIESII / MADRONE	24" OR 36" BOX	ACCENT TREE
	NASSELLA PULCHRA / PURPLE NEEDLEGRASS	5 GAL.	TEXTURE
	LOW GROWING DROUGHT TOLERANT SHRUBS WITH BARK MULCH TO INCLUDE: ARCTOSTAPHYLOS 'EMERALD CARPET' / MANZANITA DUDLEYA PULVERULENTA / LIVE FOREVER DUDLEYA EDULIS / LADY FINGERS ERIOGONUM GRANDE VAR. RUBESCENS / RED-FLOWERED BUCKWHEAT ERIOGONUM FASCICULATUM / CALIFORNIA BUCKWHEAT ERIOPHYLLUM CONFERTIFLORUM / GOLDEN YARROW SALVIA 'TERA SECA' / DWARF BLACK SAGE	1 GAL.	GROUND COVER

**GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

WEST LEWIS AND FALCON STREETS MINI-PARK  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA