

**TO:** PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS

**DATE:** 4/26/16

**SUBJECT:** UPDATE ON THE CONCEPTUAL PLANS FOR THE RE-BUILDING OF THE PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSUEM AND ZOO.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Friends of the JMZ and CAW Architects are seeking a “Vote for Support” for the Alternate Design.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Park and Recreation Commission reviewed designs for the Junior Museum & Zoo (JMZ) at two prior meetings, in February 2015 and July 2015. Staff and the design team has heard the comments from those meetings and made significant revisions to program and design. We believe that the design that we are presenting today successfully addresses your comments while still meeting the JMZ’s project goals.

### **JMZ Mission Statement and Integration with Rinconada Park**

The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo (JMZ) mission statement, “to engage a child’s curiosity for science and nature through hands-on inquiry-based activities and inspiring encounters with live animals,” directly aligns with the mission of the Palo Alto Community Services department “to engage individuals and families in creating a strong and healthy community through parks, recreation, social services, arts and sciences.” The JMZ is a treasured, local museum, zoo, and education center uniquely situated in Rinconada Park to serve Palo Alto families and children. The museum and zoo are a valued amenity and integral aspect of the visitor experience at Rinconada Park. With 150,000 annual visits, JMZ provides a strong start for children; JMZ is integral to Rinconada Park and the park is integral to the JMZ

The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo (JMZ) works closely with researches and professionals to provide a rich environment that stimulates children’s natural curiosity and creativity. The science of brain development is providing concrete evidence that there is real power in play. Research tells us that play motivates and enhances children’s cognitive and social-emotional growth. We also know that play-based learning environments are more effective than classroom, memorization-based, learning environments at teaching our children.

The JMZ provides a strong start for learning in young children learning in eight ways. Each way works to leverage the unique assets that the JMZ offers to nurture the passion and skills for learning, promote seamless linkages between formal and informal learning, and engage children from low-income families so that they, too, can participate in the new learning landscape.

1. The JMZ increases the availability of high quality early learning experiences to all children.
2. The JMZ engages and supports families as their child's first teachers.
3. The JMZ supports the development of executive function and deeper learning skills in children through literacy and STEM-based experiences.
4. THE JMZ positions children for meeting expectations of the common-core state standards.
5. The JMZ adds capacity to early learning networks and improve student achievement. This year more than 19,000 children on the peninsula will benefit from JMZ science classes.
6. The JMZ creates seamless linkages across early learning and early grades.
7. The JMZ provides learning during the summer when many children are vulnerable to losing ground.
8. The JMZ builds community through a vast array of partnerships.

Rinconada Park has been and will continue to be the best place to grow the JMZ because the location leverages the park, community center, scout facilities, children's library, and art center to integrate indoor and outdoor experiences, live animals, and collections to provide a strong start for young children.

### **JMZ Programs and Project Goals**

The current JMZ building (built in 1941) and zoo (built in the 1969) are not adequately sized or designed to accommodate the JMZ's vibrant programs, current requirements to support living and non-living collections, expanding educational programs, and current accessibility or seismic code requirements. The goal of the proposed re-build project is to provide the JMZ with adequate storage and support space to meet standards for zoo accreditation, museum accreditation, and provide adequate storage and prep space for the on-site and off-site educational programs. In addition, the goal is to improve circulation to allow universal access for children with disabilities to all exhibits and areas of the facility, which requires considerably more space than allowed for in the existing facility. The re-build JMZ will better serve its current, local visitors and schools while still maintaining an intimate experience for children to explore science and nature.

### **DISCUSSION**

**Rinconada Park Long Range Plan and Existing Conditions** The existing JMZ building is located in a complicated and constrained corner of the city owned parcel including Rinconada Park, the parking lot, the girl scout building and Lucie Stern community center. There are a number of existing site constraints as well as goals from the Rinconada Park Long Range Plan that our design team is striving to work within for the JMZ re-build project. The site constraints include an existing utility corridor that runs under the existing zoo, adjusting to appropriate property line setbacks (the existing building does not meet setback requirements), the Rinconada Park boundary line (currently the existing zoo sits in the park and museum outside of the park), and preserving a number of heritage and special specimen trees surrounding the existing facility. The Rinconada Park Long Range Plan outlines a number of goals for the shared area of the site

surrounding the JMZ including maximizing parking stalls and clarifying circulation in the parking lot, creating a strong park arrival experience from Middlefield and Lucie Stern, and integrating the park visitors experience with the Zoo through art installations, educational features, and possibly views into the zoo.

### **Previous PRC Presentations and Comments**

At the February 2015 PRC meeting, we presented a design and footprint for the new JMZ, which responded to the site constraints, zoning regulations, and included the program space requirements outlined by the JMZ staff and Friends of the JMZ. This design proposed to expand the zoo footprint as well as add a zoo support building in the park - totaling 11,000 SF expansions into parkland. While the commissioners were in support of the JMZ mission and the goals of this project, there were concerns about the reduction of park open space with the proposed zoo footprint.

At the July 2015 PRC meeting, we presented three design alternates studying options for reducing the footprint in the park: zoo program and square footage reduction, moving the zoo support building to the park arrival area, increasing the building footprint along Middlefield. The comments received were that design alternate showing a 10% zoo program and square footage reduction still posed too large of an expansion into the park and the other two design alternates compromised parking and existing trees, which will be major issues with the community. The charge from the commissioners was to preserve parkland by minimizing zoo expansion and relocating the zoo support building out of parkland, preserve heritage and mature specimen trees, maintain the parking count per the long-range plan design.

### **Program Reductions and Efficiencies**

Since the July 2015 PRC meeting, the design team along with the Friends and the JMZ Staff have worked to simultaneously reduce the construction budget, long term operational costs, and find efficiencies in the program space requirements. Through this process, we have reduced building program square footage by making the lobby an exterior space, creating efficient visitor and staff circulation, finding efficiencies in open office layouts, and relocating the zoo support building to be part of the main museum building. In the zoo, we have optimized the size and quantity of animal exhibits while creating an exciting vertical, multi-layer experience without large ramps (large space and cost requirements).

These program efficiencies, reductions and creative thinking have opened up new possibilities for fitting the new JMZ building on this tight and complicated site. While we have lost some space and features in these reductions, the design team, Friends and JMZ Staff believe this revised design still meets the project goals to meet accreditation requirements and create an exciting new facility for the treasured Palo Alto JMZ.

### **Proposed Design**

The proposed design addresses the previous PRC comments:

- Minimize the zoo expansion in parkland

- Move the zoo support building out of the parkland
- Preserve the heritage and specimen trees as well as the two large mature shade trees in the parkland
- Maintain increase parking stall count and clear vehicular circulation

The proposed design removes the zoo support building from the park. Only the exterior, open-air zoo is located in the park - consistent with the existing zoo condition. The proposed design locates an exterior lobby for the JMZ under the large mature pecan tree taking advantage of this grand site feature while also locating exterior program area over the existing utility corridor. The zoo support building is located on the first floor of the main museum and education building (completely outside of parkland). The reduced program square footage and creative space layout creates a more efficient and dense building footprint (reduces long-term operational costs) and simplified building mass (reduces construction costs). The small classroom building with glassy butterfly exhibit on the second floor creates opportunities for shared park resources and free park visitor experiences.

The proposed design creates an inviting park arrival area between the Girl Scout Building and the new classroom/butterfly building allowing the park experience to expand beyond its boundary: new trees, benches, signage, public art, and potentially a science/nature themed exhibit. The proposed design creates opportunities to activate and enrich both the zoo and park visitors experience along the edge between the zoo and the park. The zoo wall enclosure can be a sculptural, artistic, educational feature allowing the zoo experience to spill out into the park.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed recommendations are consistent with Policy C-26 of the Community Services element of the Comprehensive Plan that encourages maintaining park facilities as safe and healthy community assets; and Policy C-22 that encourages new community facilities to ensure adaptability to the changing needs of the community.

This project is subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. In January 2015, staff launched a joint environmental study for the Rinconada Park Long Range Master Plan and the Junior Museum and Zoo Project with the help of consultants David J Powers and Associates. The CEQA review includes preparation of technical studies to analyze existing conditions and identify potential impacts, preparation of an Initial Study and the filing of a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Preparation of Technical Studies for the environmental review started in January of 2015 and to date we have completed reports for Air Quality, Arborist Assessment, and Noise Assessment. Two studies are nearly complete including an updating the Historic Evaluation Report and a Transportation Impact Report. Once these reports are completed, staff will prepare the Initial Study and the Mitigated Negative Declaration required for this project. By the end of June 2016 the CEQA analysis is expected to be complete.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Proposed site plans and elevations for the alternative concept design for the Junior Museum & Zoo.

**PREPARED BY**

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**PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO**  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING



DRAWING PACKAGE FOR APRIL 20, 2016

CODY ANDERSON WASNEY

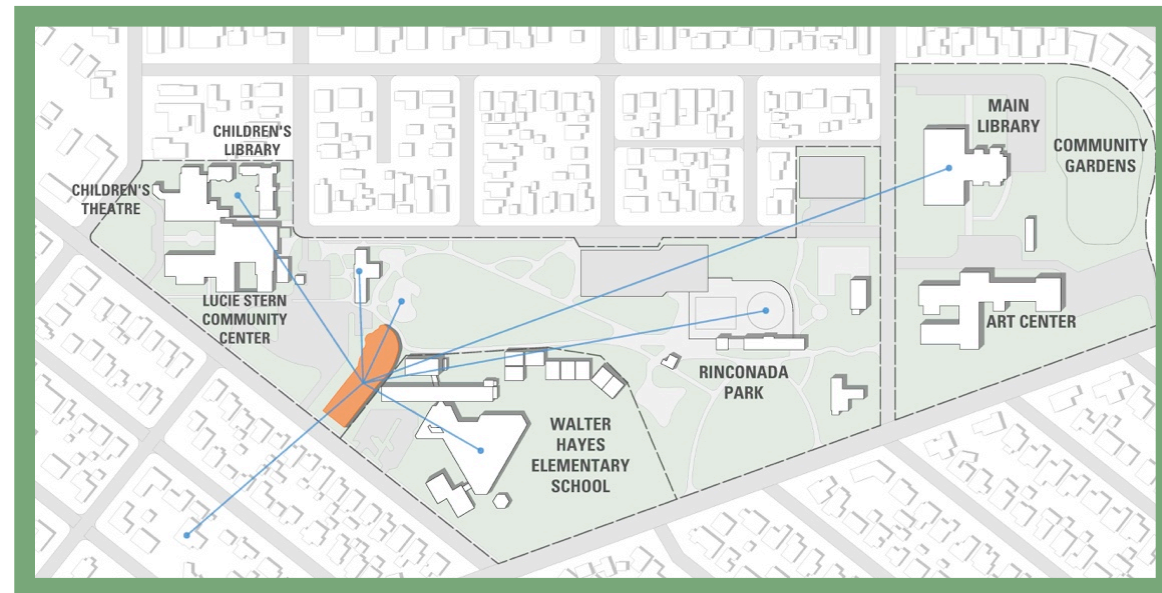
ARCHITECTS

MISSION STATEMENT: To engage a child's curiosity for science and nature by encouraging exploration to build a foundation for understanding and a lifelong respect for nature.



STIMULATES CHILDREN'S  
NATURAL CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY

NURTURE THE PASSION & SKILLS FOR LEARNING



LEVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN PARK

*"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play  
than in a year of conversation." - PLATO*



PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO  
**RICONADA PARK LONG RANGE PLAN**

APRIL 20, 2016

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## EXISTING CONDITIONS: SITE PLAN

### PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO EXISTING CONDITIONS

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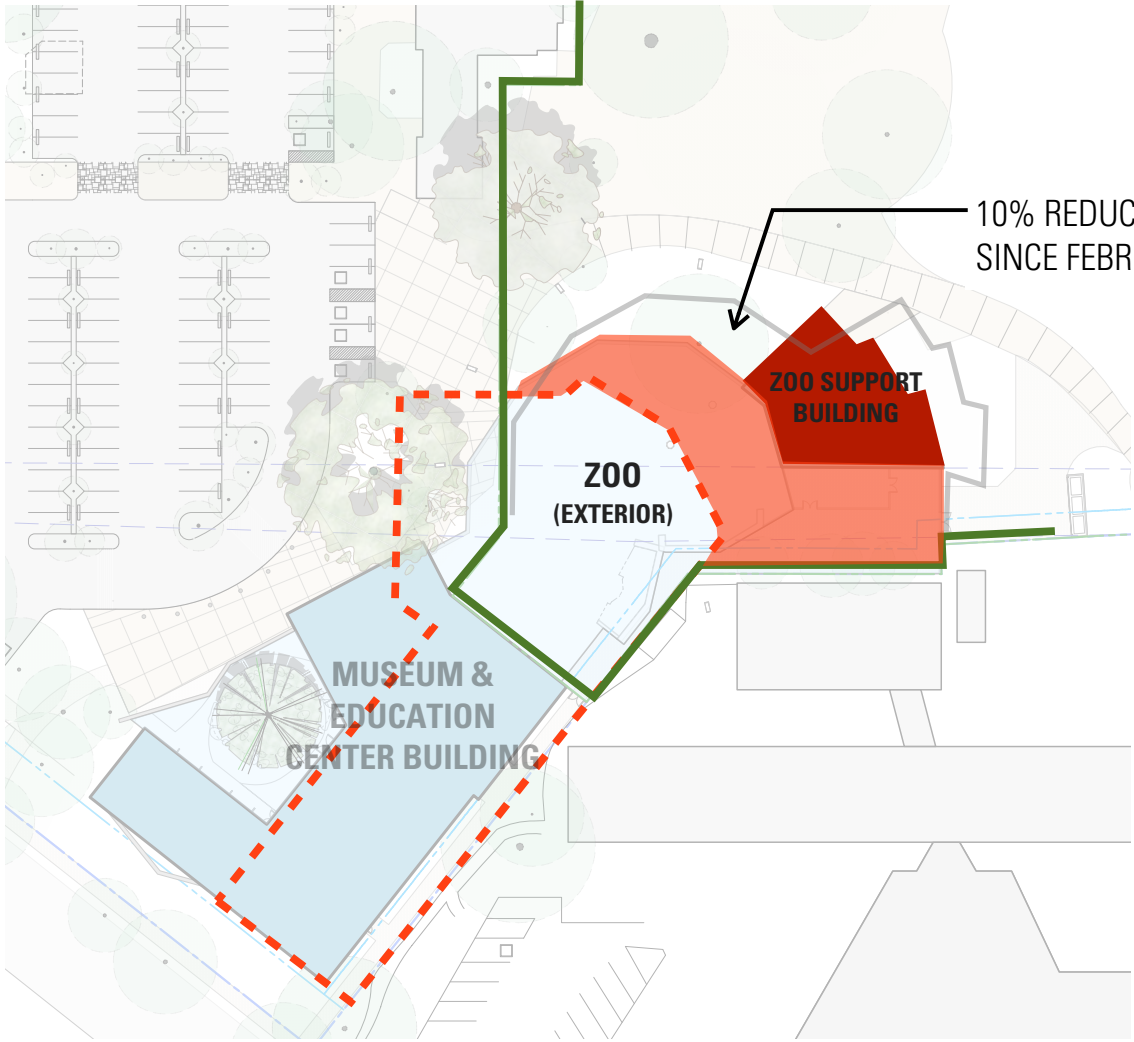
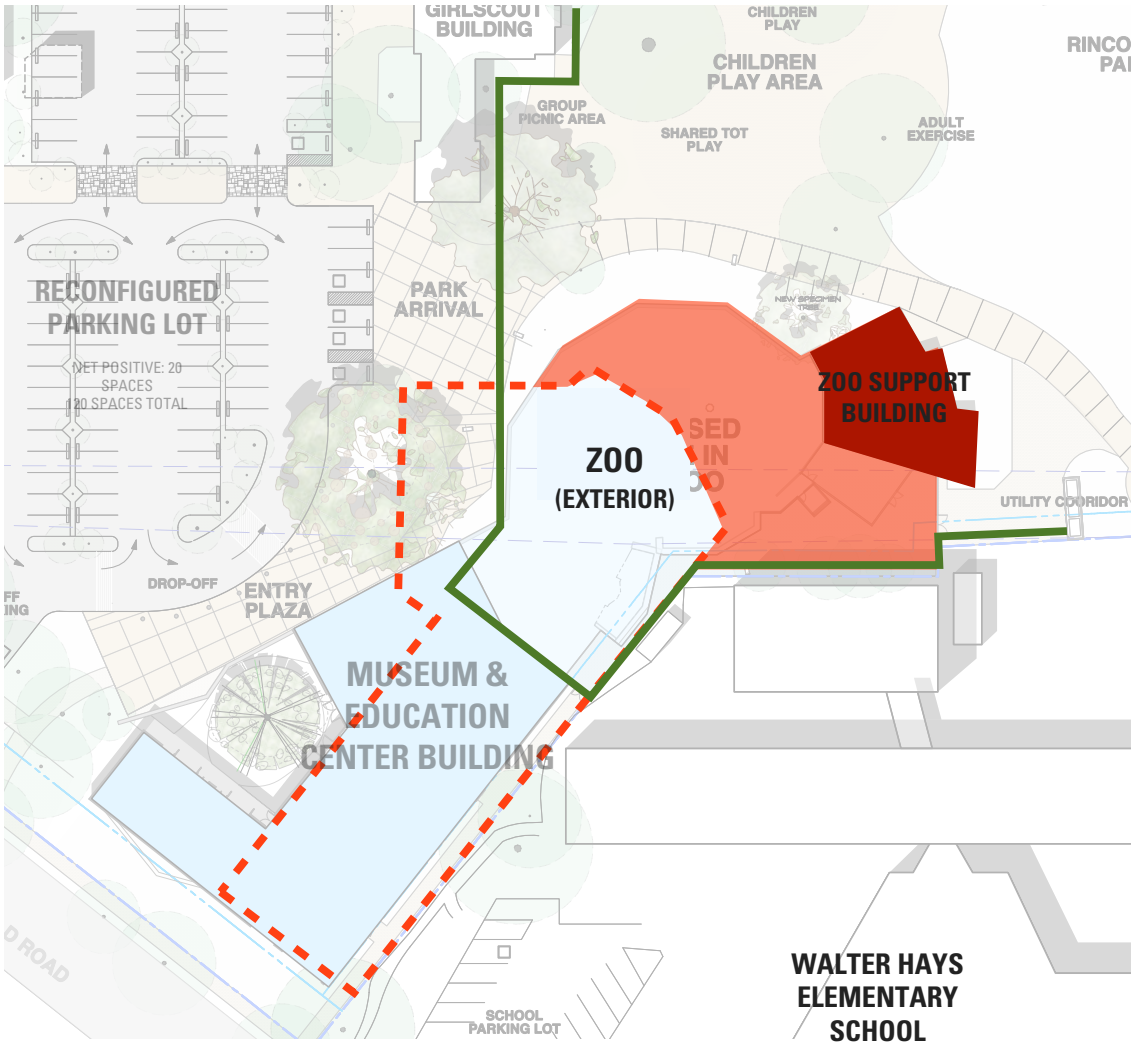
**EXISTING CONDITIONS: ENTRY TO PARK**



**EXISTING CONDITIONS: FACE TO PARK**

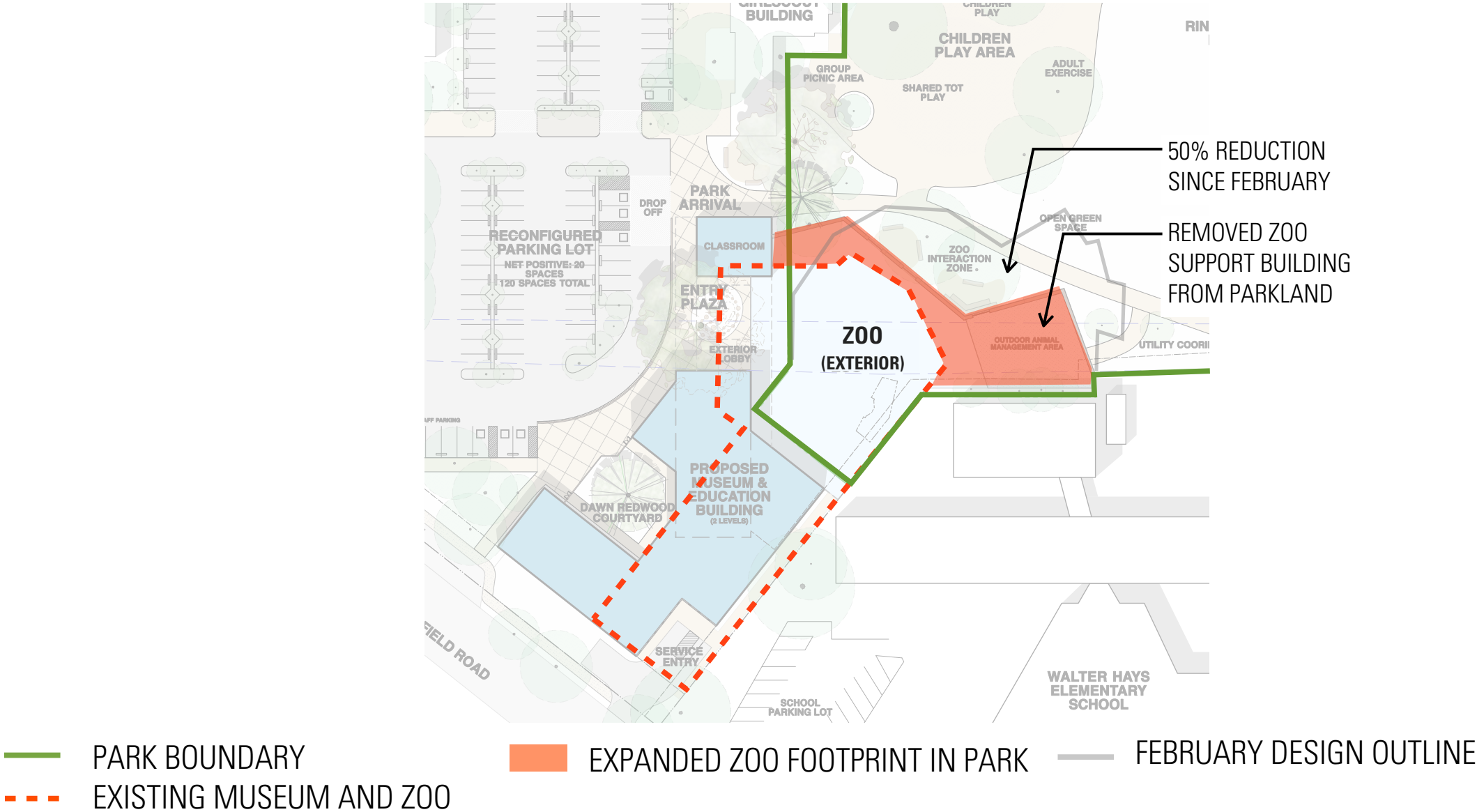
FEBRUARY 2015 DESIGN

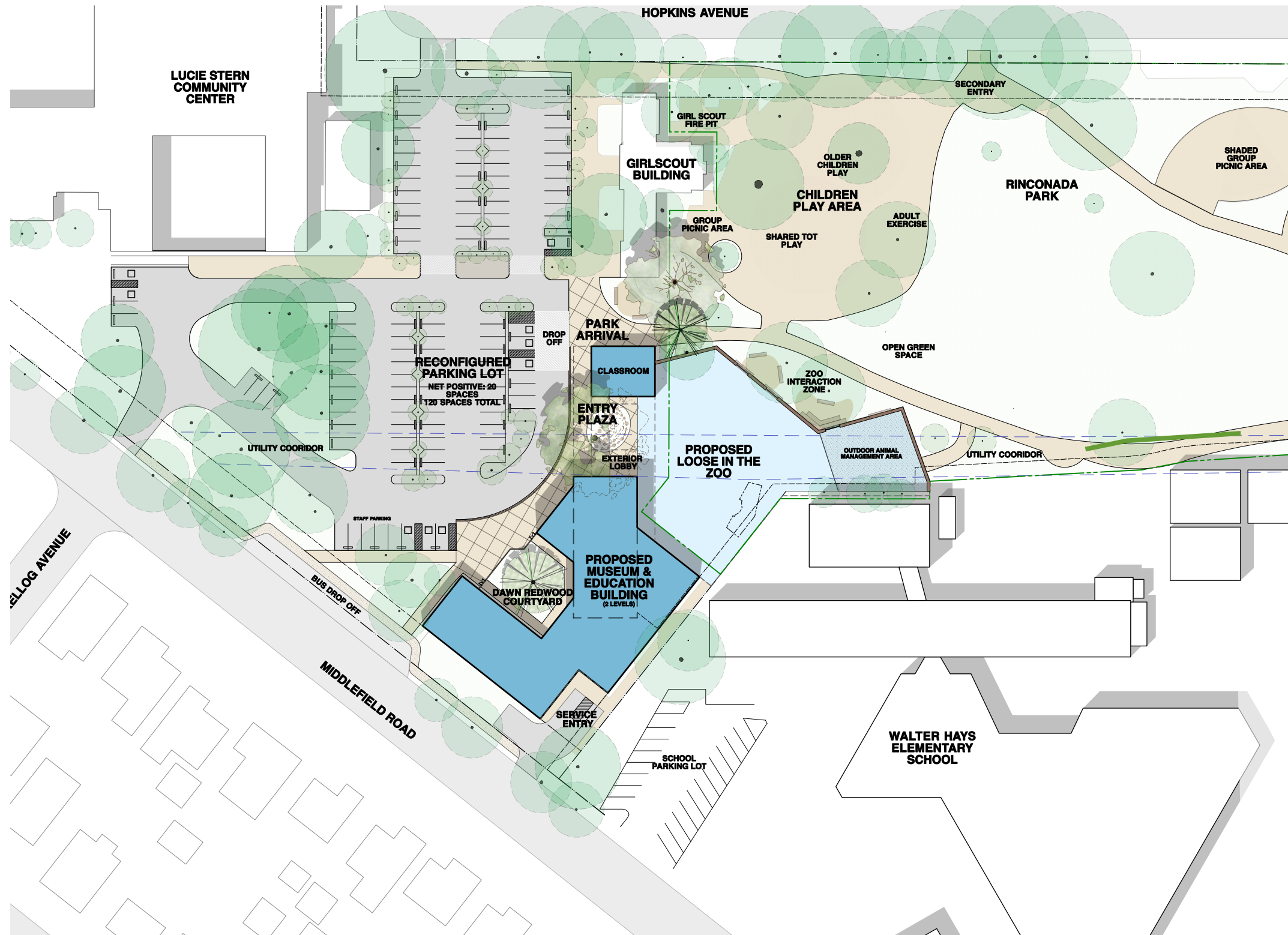
JULY 2015 DESIGN



- PARK BOUNDARY
- - - EXISTING MUSEUM AND ZOO
- EXPANDED ZOO FOOTPRINT IN PARK
- ZOO SUPPORT BUILDING IN PARK
- FEBRUARY DESIGN OUTLINE

APRIL 2016 PROPOSED DESIGN





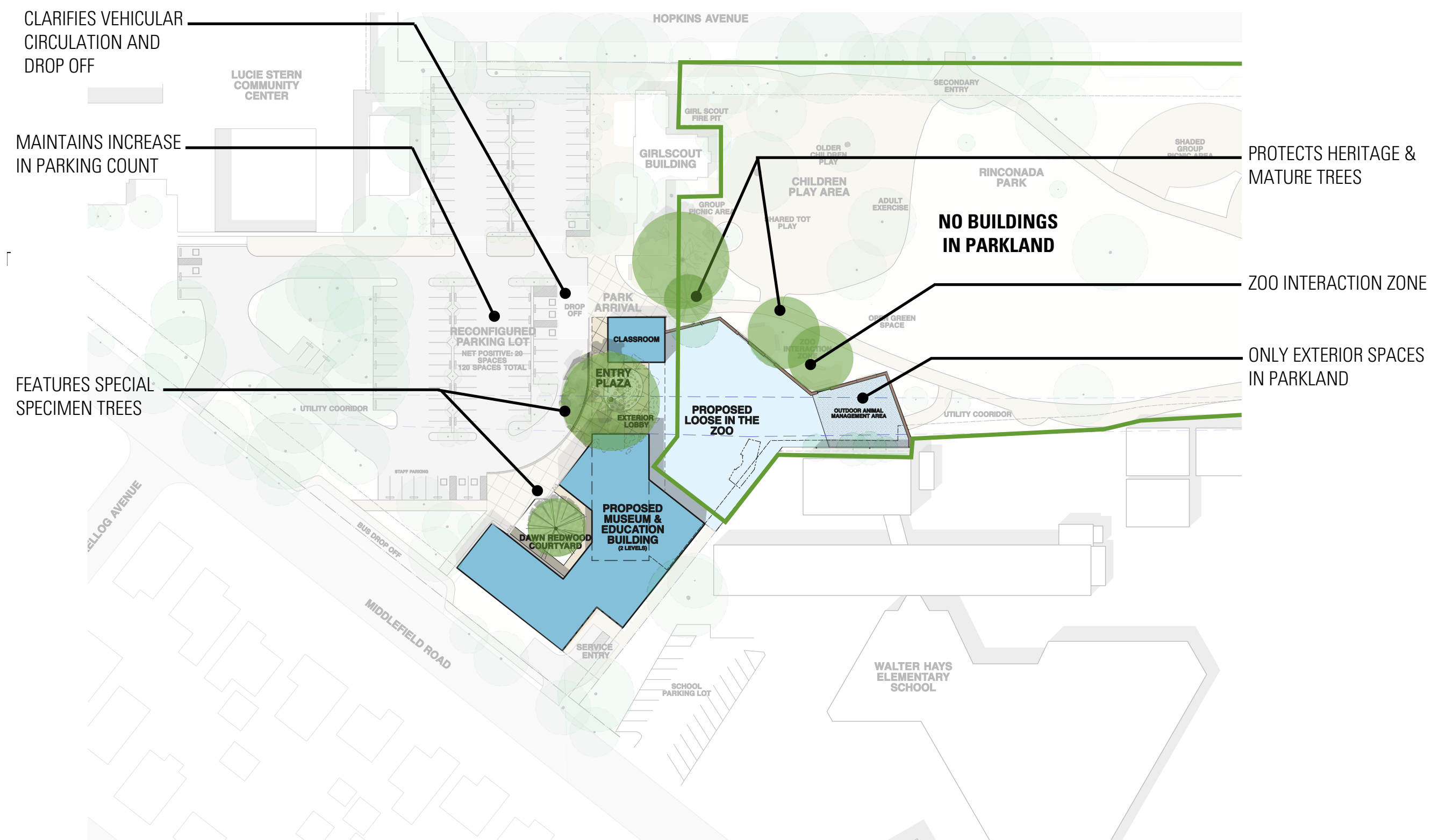
PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO  
**PROPOSED DESIGN - SITE PLAN**

APRIL 20, 2016

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**PROPOSED DESIGN - SITE PLAN**

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PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO  
**PROPOSED DESIGN - FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

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PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO  
**PROPOSED DESIGN - SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

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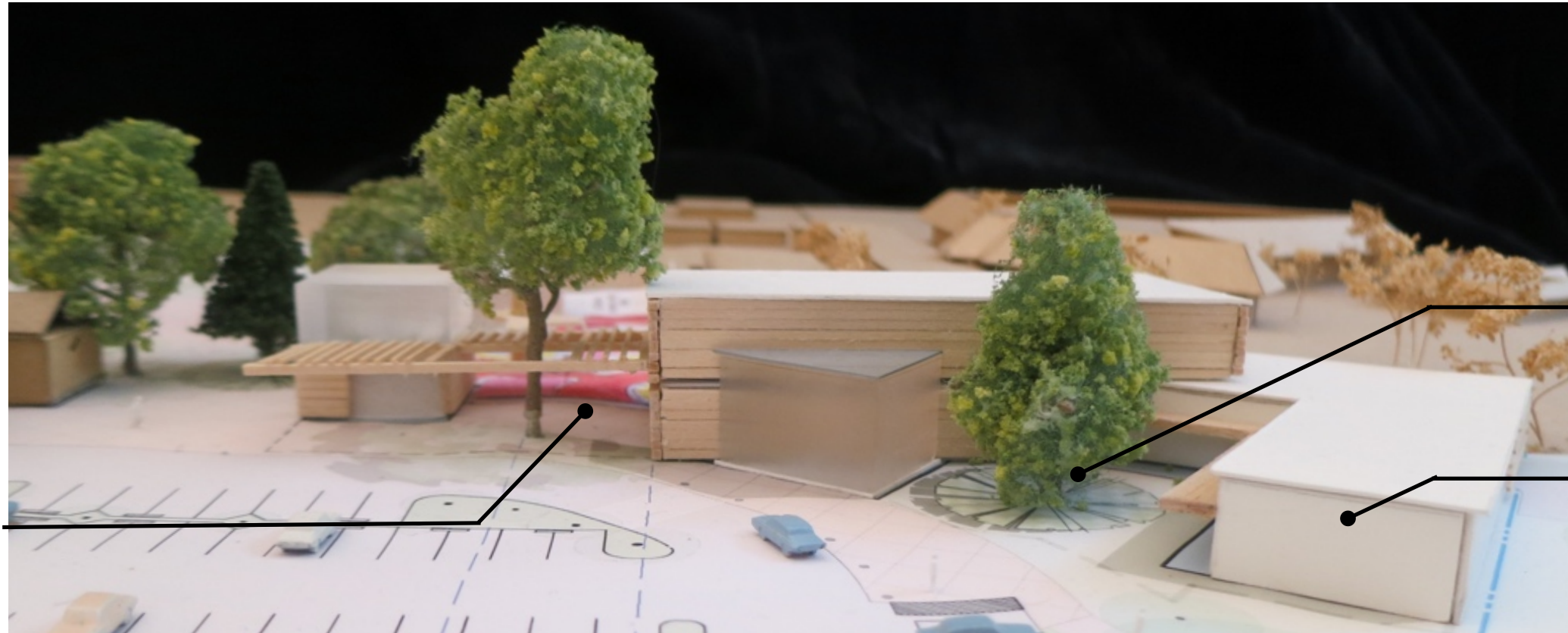
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EXTERIOR LOBBY  
UNDER PECAN  
TREE



DAWN REDWOOD  
TREE FEATURED IN  
COURTYARD

ONE STORY MASS  
ALONG MIDDLE-  
FIELD ROAD

BUTTERFLY EXHIBIT  
ON DISPLAY FOR  
PARK VISITORS



FEATURE EXHIBIT  
ON DISPLAY FOR  
PARK VISITORS

GATEWAY INTO  
RINCONADA PARK

PALO ALTO JUNIOR MUSEUM & ZOO

DESIGN OPTION - MODEL VIEWS IN PROGRESS

APRIL 20, 2016

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