

A Meandering Path at Parcel 24



Chinatown - historic photograph

Site

Parcel 24's central public open space will be an important green outdoor space and circulation link for both development and neighborhood residents. Through an 85 foot wide opening, lined by ground floor community spaces, busy Albany Street above is connected to quiet, residential Hudson Street below. The landscape cascades down a total of 24 feet with the main open space about halfway between the two streets. This corner of Chinatown contains a strong sense of history, a diverse social fabric, and a dynamic, invested community. These important site context elements will inform the design of the open space at Parcel 24.

Program Development

In April, members of the Chinatown neighborhood met to continue the dialogue on Parcel 24's open space. While working to establish desired activities and features, they envisioned a space that could be:

- Green: the open space should look and feel planted. There was an overarching desire to have as much natural plant material as possible and for the space to offer opportunities for a quiet, tranquil, experience of nature in this very urban setting.
- Flexible: a variety of spaces should be included to allow for multiple types of uses.
- Backward and forward looking: the site's past, its historical diversity, and the future hopes and dreams of residents should be reflected in the public space.
- Cohesive: The three different levels should be "of a type"—not identical, but coordinated.
- Connected: Community integration is important to this space. The design should reach outwards to the neighborhood, the region, and perhaps, to the world (such as through a sister city program)



Sketches of potential garden and walkway at Hudson St. edge.

Community members are realistic about size and site constraints, agreeing that some, but not all, of the following activities, features, or elements should be incorporated:



Perspective drawing of potential Hudson Street sloped garden

Most popular:

- Benches
- Water (small, seasonal & passive)
- Green Space/Lawn
- Flower garden
- Historic and cultural interpretation
- Public art
- Children's play
- Lighting for night use
- All season use

Possible:

- Table/board games
- Martial arts/dance practice
- Walking/health walk
- Covered seating
- Seating walls/steps
- Family events
- Neighborhood events

Required:

- Handicapped access to all open space elements
- Emergency vehicle access at Hudson and Albany Street levels
- Utilities including lighting, electrical, water for features and irrigation, and emergency/safety equipment.

The Meandering Path

Distilling the essential qualities of this site and community's desired program into one conceptual idea, the notion of a Meandering Path emerges as a highly appropriate and desirable approach. It also offers a unique identity for the open space.

While traversing the site on a 5% sloped path from Hudson up to Albany Streets, the visitor is invited to experience an inclined garden that momentarily reframes the urban experience. Within the path, the walker may encounter history, art, culture, water, plants, children playing, and opportunities to read, and relax—perhaps learning something new, or being drawn to think about a distant place.



Possible pathway and stair material types

The meandering path would maintain a constant pitch of 5% providing comfortable access for the physically challenged and avoid the need for continuous handrails. Shortcut stairs would enable quicker vertical connections and circuits.



View along Hudson Street

Off of Albany Street, a threshold invites people to step from the busy interchange into a sloped, planted walkway that could be embedded with historical and cultural interpretive elements.

After descending the Albany Street walk, a "living room", potentially composed of passive lawn, patios, and sculptural play should feel like the neighborhood's sanctuary. Kids feel safe playing here, and parents are happy to allow exploration within the boundaries of the space.

At the Hudson Street side, a garden descends to the street providing a quiet, tranquil place where people may find reading nooks, overlooks and quiet spaces where friends can gather for conversation or pause to enjoy an impromptu conversation as they stroll along the meandering path.



Schematic Landscape Plan

HUDSON STREET