
STRUCTURAL ALTERATION PERMIT (#LMSAP 2019-0009)
**International House Proposed ADA Improvements within the Public-Right-of-Way
at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and Bancroft Way**

PROJECT STATEMENT

1.0 Project Background

Land Use Planning
Received
May 23, 2022

The International House has undertaken a design approach to address a multitude of public safety, ADA compliance, operational constraints, maintenance issues and code issues that currently exist within the Public-Right-of-Way in front of the International House.

The goals of the project are to

- Integrate ADA access more gracefully into the streetscape
- Continue to provide an ADA accessible shuttle stop
- Create ADA compliant sidewalks
- Construct the existing ADA parking space as a compliant ADA parking space
- Underground utilities
- Increase pedestrian lighting
- Create wider sidewalks to accommodate the high volume of pedestrians
- Reduce maintenance costs
- Increase pedestrian safety

This Structural Alteration Permit (SAP) application proposes to complete ADA access improvements for a portion of the west side of the 2200-block of Piedmont Avenue, a City Landmark property. The Public-Right-of-Way ADA Improvements are part of a larger project undertaken by the International House to renovate the International House's front entry. Most the front entry renovations are outside of the Public-Right-of-Way and are not located within the Landmarked Piedmont Avenue streetscape or under the jurisdiction of the City of Berkeley.

Working collaboratively with multiple departments within the City of Berkeley (Public Works, Fire, Planning and Transportation), the University of California, the Department of the State Architecture and the International House staff, the project team created multiple options for this constrained site. The submitted plan represents the preference of the City of Berkeley's Fire Department.

Upon completion of the project, the front entry of the International House and the Piedmont Avenue streetscape will provide a multitude of benefits to the public, support a vibrant, highly accessible arrival experience and feature a new streetscape that is contextual with the historic roadway and architecture of the International House.

Update on Application Submittal and Previous LPC Hearing

The Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the Structural Alteration Permit (SAP) application during the March 5, 2020 LPC hearing and provided feedback. Since then, the project is under review. The university has revised the design and project plans taking into consideration the comments from the

LPC. The University's Capital Strategies has taken the lead on the pending 2019 application submittal to the LPC and requests final action at the June 2 meeting. In addition, on May 17, 2022 based on LPC's feedback, UC organized a site visit with Commissioner Twu and Commissioner Finacom at the public-right-of-way project site. The purpose of the site visit was to review the revised plans and learn more about UC's proposed access improvements and the site conditions. The University staff addressed the questions from the commissioners and provided background information regarding the project.

Early History of Piedmont Avenue

The conception of Piedmont Avenue began during the master planning of the College of California (the future UC Berkeley) in the 1860's. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted was commissioned to generate a comprehensive study of the campus. The Olmsted Plan for the College of California (1865) illustrated the origins of the east-west axis of the Central Glade, embraced by the north and south forks of Strawberry Creek. An integral design element was Piedmont Way, Olmsted's first landscaped boulevard, running north-south that became a model for several of his residential projects around the country. Olmsted's master plan was conceptual and was not outlined in detail or supported by construction documents. The 'overarching intention' of the master plan was 'to create a framework in which others could later make decisions'. The most detailed plan of his vision was a parcel map from 1868 that includes lot lines and right of ways but no indications of medians, divided roadways, sidewalks, curbs or plantings.

The curvilinear design of Piedmont Avenue, between the transition to Gayley Road on the north and the intersection with Dwight Way on the south, is attributed to Fredrick Law Olmsted and, as such, received City of Berkeley Landmark designation status in 1990.

Existing Conditions

Over the course of the last 150 years, Piedmont Avenue has seen many physical and demographic changes. Piedmont Avenue now possesses a broad range of residential uses, functions as a major transportation route and must comply with regulatory requirements. Currently the Avenue supports a diverse and growing student body traveling along it with a wide array of devices from electric scooters to mopeds, strives to accommodate ride sharing services, provides access for a wide range of emergency, service and shuttle vehicles, transforms from a vehicle dominated roadway to a pedestrian friendly environment during special events and must seamlessly incorporate ADA accessibility.

2.0 Project Description

The project proposes to upgrade the Public-right-of-way of the area in order to improve the conditions for ADA access to the International House located immediately adjacent to the project site at 2299 Piedmont Avenue. The scope of work includes the following:

1. Remove the existing ADA ramp, railings and walls between the back of curb and back of sidewalk
2. Remove the existing non-compliant staircases within the Right of Way
3. Remove and reconstruct the existing sidewalk to increase its width from 6' to 8'

4. Remove the existing soil in the parkway adjacent to the existing ADA parking space, add a curb wall and new sidewalk to align with the top of curb to create an ADA Compliant landing for the existing parking space
5. Lower the elevation of the existing sidewalk to make it level with the top of curb
6. Reconstruct the existing shuttle stop to make it ADA compliant by removing the existing sidewalk, constructing a new sidewalk at a lower elevation aligned with the top of curb and provide a 4' wide landing for passengers
7. Install three pedestrian pole lights per the City of Berkeley's standards
8. Install brick paving at the northwest and southwestern edge of the public-right-way
9. Reconstruct the existing curb along its current alignment to increase storm water flow capacity along the Avenue

Attachment 1 provides the set of plans to illustrate the existing conditions and proposed project.

Project Rationale

The rationale for the project is public safety, compliance to ADA, aesthetic enhancement, integrating different modes of transportation and to recognize trends of more active uses of the public realm.

Specific rationales include:

- Pedestrian Safety: Pedestrians currently crossing Piedmont Avenue enter or exit the existing accessible ramp or stairs directly into the roadway. By code there must be protected landings at the bottom of both ramps and stairs.
- Accessible landings on the sidewalk for both the existing ADA parking space and the shuttle space. Currently there are no accessible landings.
- Installing brick paving, instead of landscape strips or a line of trees accommodates increased pedestrian traffic. Brick paving is consistent with other sidewalks along Piedmont Avenue. During special events such as football games, Piedmont Avenue is closed to vehicular traffic before Bancroft Way. The sidewalks, ramps and stairs in front of the I-House must accommodate large crowds and emergency access. Currently there is not enough room for pedestrians to walk along the sidewalk, pedestrians can trip or fall on the irregular pavements/curbs. Emergency providers have a very constrained space to provide direct access to Gayley Road and their command center is typically located within the International House's driveway.
- Currently the I-House streetscape is composed of a range of walls, railings, signs, over-head utilities and plantings. The proposed improvements will create a harmonious composition that reflects the unique architectural character and pedestrian scale of I-House and Piedmont Avenue.

Project Benefits

The proposed renovations will provide a multitude of safety and aesthetic benefits to the public and community.

1. Increase pedestrian safety by eliminating conflicting pedestrian access points into roadway
2. Provide an ADA compliant shuttle stop, parking space and curb ramps, guaranteeing universal access for all
3. Remove a confusing and unpleasant system of ramps and walls within the right-of-way
4. Underground overhead utilities for public safety, removing visually intrusive elements

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5. Provide pedestrian scaled lighting that will increase safety
 6. Accommodate a range of service, emergency and transportation uses while removing conflicts
 7. Increase the width of the sidewalks to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic and activities

FINDINGS

Compliance with the CITY OF BERKELEY MUNICIPAL CODES CHAPTER 3.24

The proposed renovations of the existing Piedmont Avenue streetscape in front of the I-House are warranted per section 3.24.280 of the Berkeley Municipal Code which states that *'None of the provisions of this chapter shall be construed to prevent any measures of construction, alteration or demolition necessary to correct or abate the unsafe or dangerous condition of any structure, other feature, or part thereof, which such condition has been declared unsafe or dangerous by the Planning and Community Development Department or the Fire Department, and where the proposed measures have been declared necessary, by such department or departments, to correct the said condition; provided, however, that only such work as is reasonably necessary to correct the unsafe or dangerous condition may be performed pursuant to this section.'*

As noted previously in this Applicant Statement, the existing stairs, accessible ramp, shuttle stop, and accessible parking space are non-compliant with ADA and are an unsafe and dangerous condition. The applicant seeks to rectify this condition by constructing ADA compliant facilities within the public right of way.

Attachment 1: Proposed Project Plans and Images, Piedmont Ave. ADA Improvements