



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DATE: March 27, 2019

TO: Members of the Architectural Review Committee of the Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Julie Flynn, Project Manager, Civic Center Commons Initiative
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REVIEWED BY: Tim Frye, Historic Preservation Officer, tim.frye@sfgov.org,
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RE: **Temporary art installation outside of the SF Public Library sponsored through a partnership between the Civic Center Commons Initiative, the SF Public Library Main Branch, and the Exploratorium's Studio for Public Spaces.**

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BACKGROUND

The Planning Department (Department) is requesting review and comment before the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) regarding the proposal to construct a temporary art installation through a collaborative effort to make Civic Center's public spaces more welcoming in the near-term through improved stewardship, programming, and new attractions. The ARC has previously reviewed projects associated with the Civic Center Commons Initiative and its partners, including the following and illustrated in the map in Attachment 1:

- Collaboration with the San Francisco Recreation & Park Department and the Civic Center Community Benefit District on the launch and stewardship of the Helen Diller Civic Center Playgrounds and Bi-Rite Café Kiosk in Civic Center Plaza. This project was presented to the ARC on August 2, 2017, and then the HPC on August 16, 2017 where a Certificate of Appropriateness was approved.
- Design and programming of the Art/Lit Living Innovation Zone on Fulton Mall. Created in partnership with the Asian Art Museum and SF Public Library Main Branch, this temporary outdoor art gallery brings rotating art and programming to the north side of Fulton Street. This project was presented to the ARC on May 18, 2016, and then the HPC on July 20, 2016, where a Certificate of Appropriateness was approved.
- Design and launch of the Sound Commons Living Innovation Zone project in UN Plaza. Created in partnership with the Exploratorium, this temporary project invites visitors to stop, interact, and play with sound. The project was presented to the ARC on February 3, 2016, and then the HPC on April 6, 2016, where a Certificate of Appropriateness was approved. After two successful

years, this installation is being removed in phases through July 2019 to make way for new programming and amenities.

The subject site is the Larkin Street side of the San Francisco Public Library Main Branch Building at 100 Larkin Street, within the Civic Center Landmark District.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Civic Center was listed as a San Francisco Landmark District under Article 10 of the Planning Code in 1994, and portions of this district were previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and as a National Historic Landmark District in 1987. The Planning Department completed a survey of historic landscape features in the district in 2012-2015 as part of the Civic Center Cultural Landscape Inventory. The Public Library building falls on Block #0354 of the study area, and the Inventory states that there are few elements on this specific block that date to the period of significance. (Please see Attachment 2 with excerpt pages for additional information.)

The Public Library is one of many important civic buildings located along the axis of public spaces that connect City Hall to Market Street: Civic Center Plaza, Fulton Mall, and United Nations Plaza.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Building on past successful projects, staff from the Civic Center Commons Initiative have been working with the Exploratorium on a new temporary art installation, which is further described below. Like the successful precedents highlighted above, this new project will be durable, well-maintained, responsive to the architectural environment, and engaging for the public.

The project described in this memorandum has been created through a partnership between the Civic Center Commons Initiative, the SF Public Library Main Branch, and the Exploratorium's Studio for Public Spaces. The project builds on the Exploratorium's experience with interactive exhibits in public spaces in San Francisco and beyond. Local examples of past work include the Pause whispering dishes previously installed on Market Street, and the Sound Commons exhibit in UN Plaza, mentioned above.

Funded by a major grant from the National Science Foundation, this new project will feature temporary exhibits on the topic of social psychology – exploring how people interact with and think about their fellow human beings. The installation consists of approximately 17 columns, each 12' 3" high, rising from a 3x3' weighted base. The sizing of the base responds to the 3x3' grid theme that is a prominent feature of the Library Building. The columns serve as stations for interactive exhibits about social psychology, inviting people to connect, confront their biases, challenge conformity, practice generosity, and share stories.

The installation is being designed in close collaboration with the Library's facilities and programming staff. It will be built, installed, and maintained by the Exploratorium, and it is intended to remain for approximately one year on the Larkin Street side of the Main Library Building. The project team will also present to the SF Arts Commission and will continue working with stakeholder and permitting agencies to finalize the designs.

The project team aims to begin installation in early July of 2019, and to host a public opening in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Exploratorium Museum in early August. Once the project is installed, the Exploratorium will also conduct a research process to evaluate what makes the exhibit successful. This evaluation effort will result in a well-documented case study that can inform future projects in Civic Center or other areas of the City.

PUBLIC INPUT

The Installation reflects a deep collaboration with the Main Library and is based upon a robust research and community engagement process. Highlights of elements that have informed the exhibit design include the following:

- Exploratorium has conducted interviews with staff and residents at the Community Housing Partnership (CHP) to understand the needs of low-income populations that rely on Civic Center’s public spaces. CHP stakeholders also attended a prototyping event to view test exhibits at the Exploratorium in June 2018.
- The Exploratorium has worked with the SF Public Library and the City to “prototype” installation elements and conduct a rigorous formative evaluation process to determine the design of each exhibit. Prototyping occurred at the free Civic Center Commons Block Party event on October 7, 2018 (attended by over one thousand residents and stakeholders), at the LavaMae Pop-up Care Village in May 2018, and at the Tenderloin Museum in June 2018. The team also prototyped exhibits within the atrium of the SF Public Library Building for approximately one week each in the months of August, September, October, and December of 2018.
- The City has led targeted outreach to key area stakeholders including the Civic Center Community Benefit District, San Francisco Recreation & Park Department, Asian Art Museum, and Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.
- The project was presented at the most recent Civic Center Commons Partner Meeting on January 15, 2019, attended by over 65 core city and community partners. And, sample renderings were included in display boards highlighting near-term activation during the most recent Public Open House for the Civic Center Public Realm Plan on February 27, 2019.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Based on Appendix J of Article 10 of the Planning Code and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, the Department believes the proposed project is compatible with the character-defining features of the subject site and the Civic Center Landmark District. The Department finds the temporary installation will use durable materials, will be installed in a reversible manner, and will benefit from the development of a detailed maintenance plan created with project partners. Due to its temporary nature, the Department, specifically, requests the ARC to provide review and comment on the durability, and reversibility of proposed project.

Durability

The design team from the Exploratorium is experienced in creating large-scale temporary exhibits in outdoor environments and has created a design concept that is appropriately durable:

- While exact materials are still being finalized, the 3x3’ columns are being designed to withstand harsh outdoor conditions and human tampering. Design plans currently call for a steel base

weighted at over 650 lbs. The Exploratorium is working with a structural engineer to evaluate all columns for potential tipping risk as a condition of permitting.

- All columns and exhibits will be designed to withstand rain, wind, and power washing.

Reversibility

The exhibit is also designed to be temporary, and will be well-maintained throughout its one-year duration:

- At the end of the exhibit, the columns can be easily removed from the site.
- The Exploratorium is working with the SF Public Library Facilities Team to finalize a plan to restore holes left by small anchors proposed at the column base.
- Following successful precedents, the Planning Department is leading the project team in developing a detailed maintenance plan that will outline roles for the Exploratorium, Library Custodial team and the Civic Center Commons Stewards – a dedicated team of field staff who are present in Civic Center public spaces 7 days/week, 11 hours/day providing cleaning and ambassador services. The collaborative maintenance plan will build on past lessons learned to insure the exhibit remains in good condition for the full one-year period.

REQUESTED ACTION

The Department seeks comments on the following aspects of the proposed art installation regarding its compatibility with the Civic Center Landmark District:

- The appropriateness of the proposed art installation site within the landmark district, identified on Block #0354 within the Civic Center Cultural Landscape Inventory.
- The appropriateness of the design of the art installation in terms of form, scale, massing, materials, and color palette.
- Any additional information that should be provided in advance of the Certificate of Appropriateness hearing.

ATTACHEMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Map of recent new attractions in the Civic Center area
- Attachment 2 – Block #0345 excerpt from the Civic Center Cultural Landscape Inventory
- Attachment 3 - Plans and renderings

RECOMMENDATION:	Review and Comment
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Helen Diller Civic
Center Playgrounds

Bi-Rite Kiosk

Joseph Kosuth
Neon Mural

Bill Graham
Civic Auditorium

Existing Art/Lit Living Innovation
Zone (temporary installation -
through Summer 2020)

Asian Art Museum

SF Public Library
Main Branch

Grove St.

Site for proposed temporary
Exploratorium Art Project
(July 2019 - July 2020)

Existing Sound Commons
(temporary installation -
full removal by July 2019)

50 UN Plaza

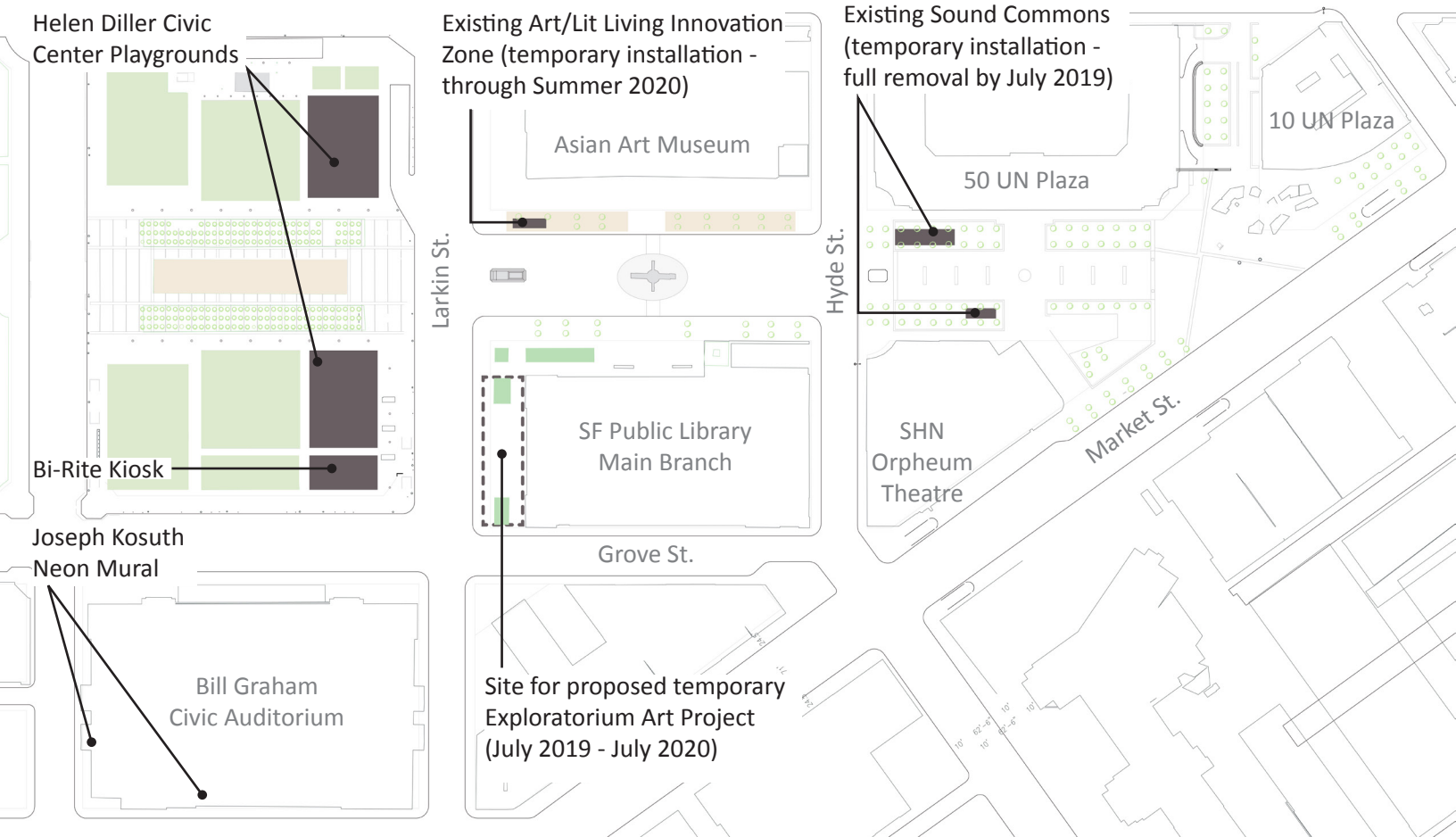
10 UN Plaza

SHN
Orpheum
Theatre

Market St.

Larkin St.

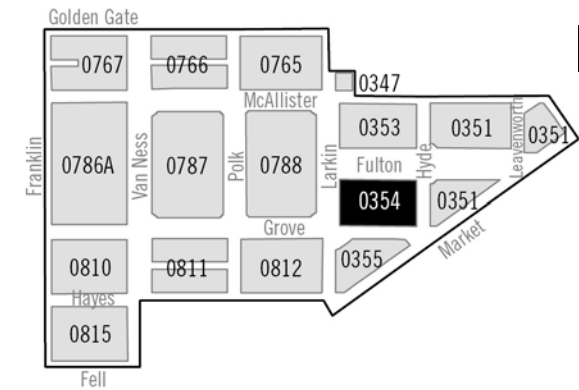
Hyde St.



San Francisco Civic Center Historic District
Planning Department, San Francisco, California

Cultural Landscape Report

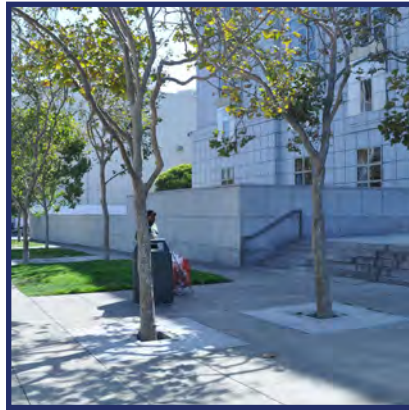
BLOCK #0354



Block #0354, bounded by Fulton, Hyde, Grove and Larkin Streets, is home to the San Francisco Public Library, completed in 1995 and opened in April 1996.

North of the Fulton Street façade is the location of an historic sculpture that has been part of the Civic Center since 1894, the Pioneer Monument (James Lick Memorial). Today, the sculpture functions as a median in the Fulton Street/Fulton Mall right-of-way that slows through-traffic between Larkin and Hyde Streets. The sculpture was relocated from the corner of Hyde and Grove Streets to this location in 1993 when construction for the new library commenced.

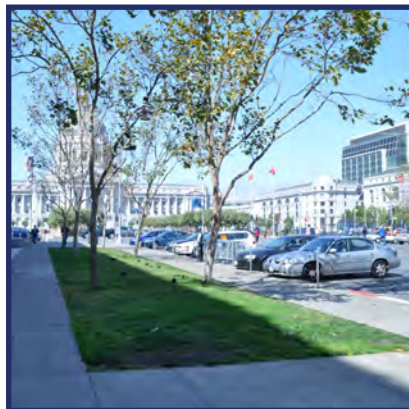
There are few landscape elements from Block #0354 that date to the period of significance. These features include London Plane trees planted in turf beds at the building's north side, the Pioneer Monument, fire utilities and granite curb remnants.



Platanus x acerifolia/London Plane trees in square tree wells filled with square tiles along Fulton Mall



Square tree well filled with square tiles along Grove St



Platanus x acerifolia/London Plane trees in turf planting area along Fulton Mall



Ornate metal light poles at SF Public Library's Larkin St entrance



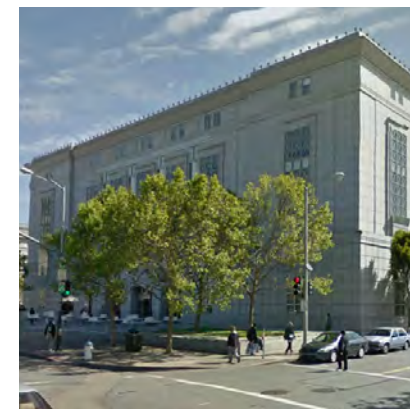
Single cobra street light along Fulton Mall



Pioneer Monument at Fulton Mall



MUNI bus shelter with domed glass roof along Larkin St



San Francisco Public Library*



Raised planting area with Platanus x acerifolia/London Plane trees at Larkin St



Elevated planting area and seat wall with skateboard deterrent clips at Larkin St



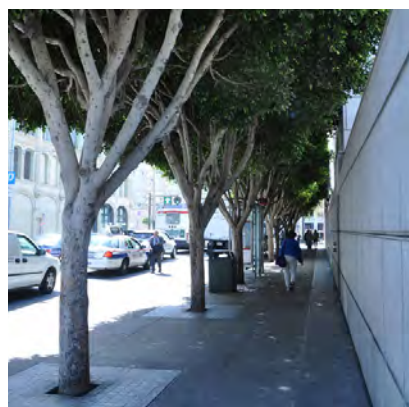
Single cobra street light along Larkin St



Sculpture in planting area - Double L Excentric Gyrotory



High pressure auxiliary water supply hydrant along Larkin St



Ficus microcarpa/Ficus trees along Grove St



On street bike parking at library's Grove St entrance

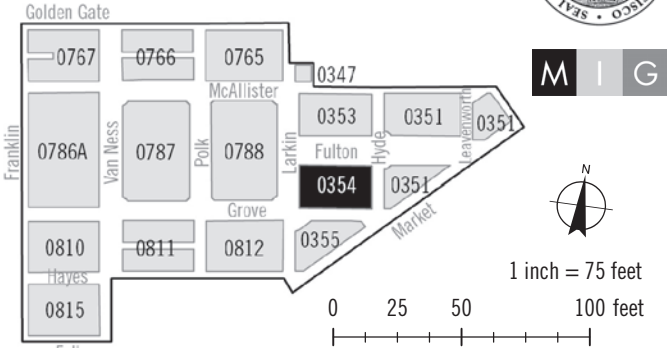


US Postal Service mail boxes along Larkin St

San Francisco Civic Center Historic District
Planning Department, San Francisco, California

Cultural Landscape Report

BLOCK #0354



- SOURCES:**
- 1. MIG field work, September 10-14, 2012
 - 2. Hand drawn inventory field maps, September 2012
 - 3. Bing aerial imagery online for ArcGIS, 2012
 - 4. San Francisco Utility Commission light pole data, 2012
 - 5. San Francisco publicly available GIS city lot, block and curb data, 2012

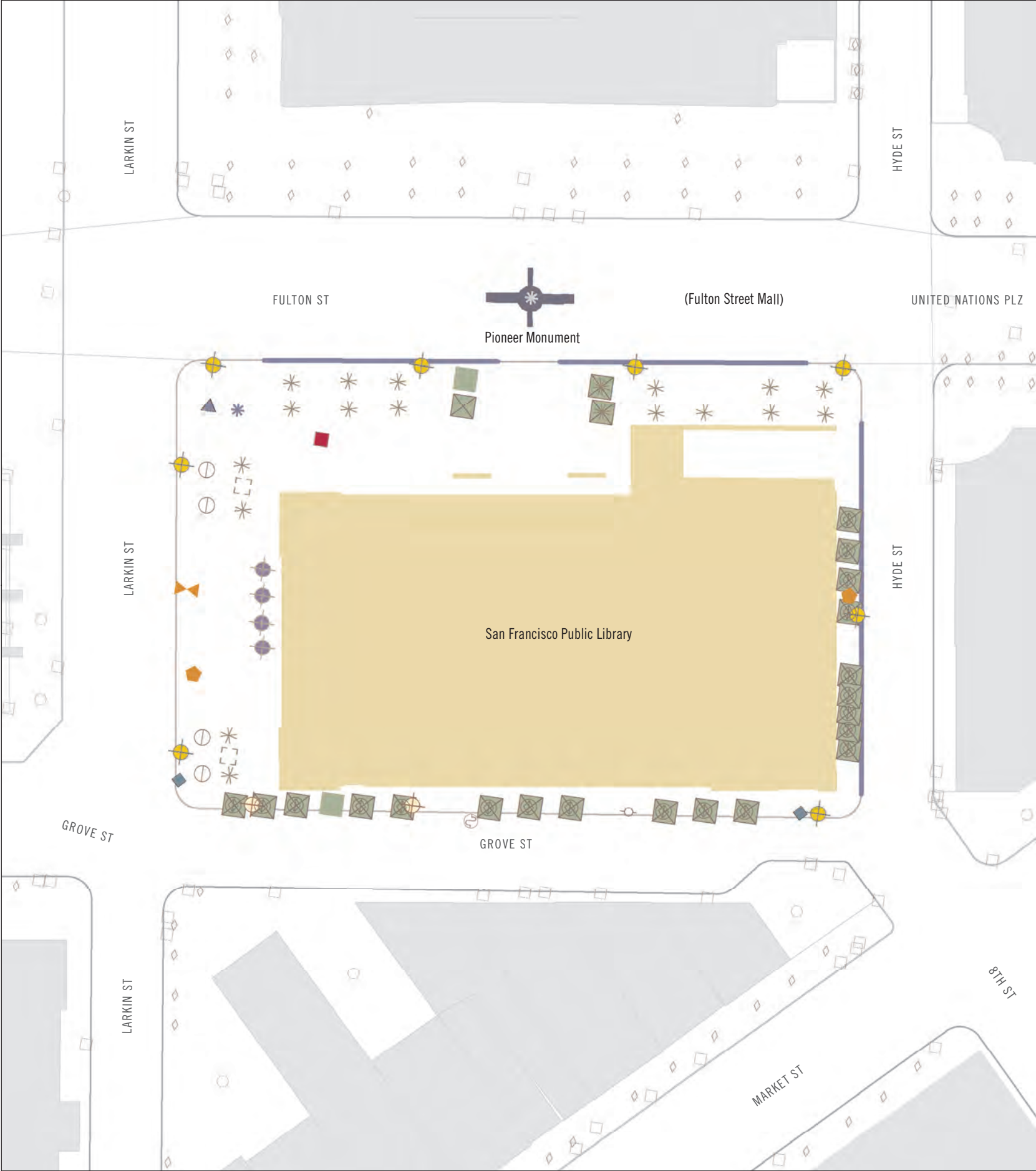
DRAWN BY:
MIG: Rachel Edmonds, Steve Leathers and Heather Buczek using Arc GIS 10.

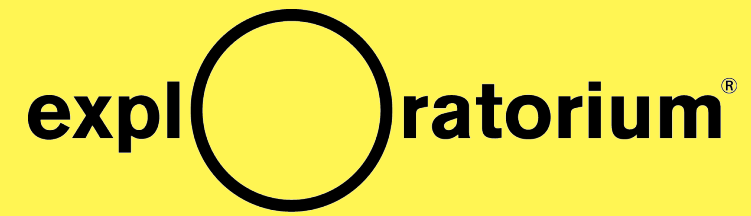
DRAWN DATE:
March 2013, updated September 2013

LEGEND FOR SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

- ◇ vegetation
- small scale feature
- circulation
- circulation - curb
- building or structure

- LEGEND:**
- bike rack
 - fire hydrant - painted white with blue top
 - bench
 - book drop
 - bus stop
 - mailbox
 - sculpture - Double L Excentric Gyratory
 - sculpture - Pioneer Monument
 - sign - street name
 - light pole - ornate metal
 - street light - aggregate concrete post
 - street light - single cobra
 - street tree - Ficus macrocarpa
 - street tree - Platanus x acerifolia
 - tree - Platanus x acerifolia
 - planting area
 - tree well
 - tree well - square with square tile covering
 - curb - granite
 - curb - cement
 - Pioneer Monument
 - non-contributing building or structure





**studio for
public spaces**

MIDDLE GROUND TEMPORARY ART PROJECT



National Science Foundation :
Award #1713638
Experiments in Urban Social Science

CIVIC CENTER COMMONS

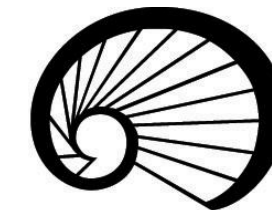
March 25, 2019

Middle Ground

Bringing social science research to public urban environments

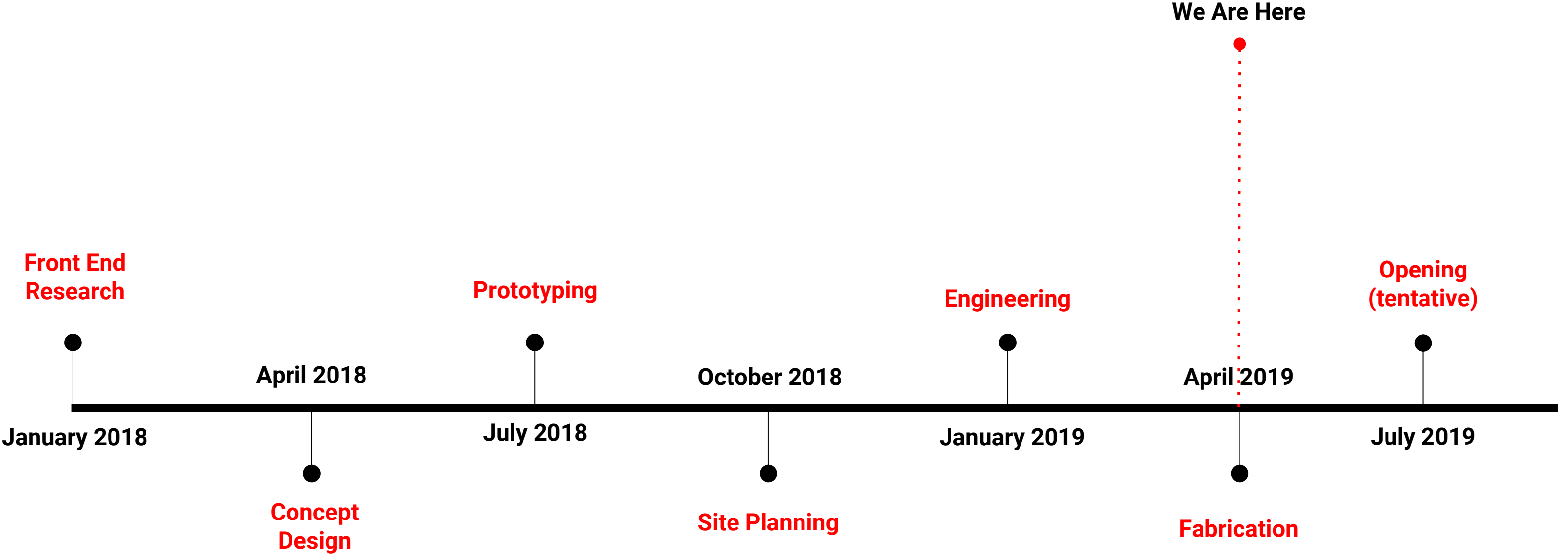


Partners



San Francisco Public Library

Timeline

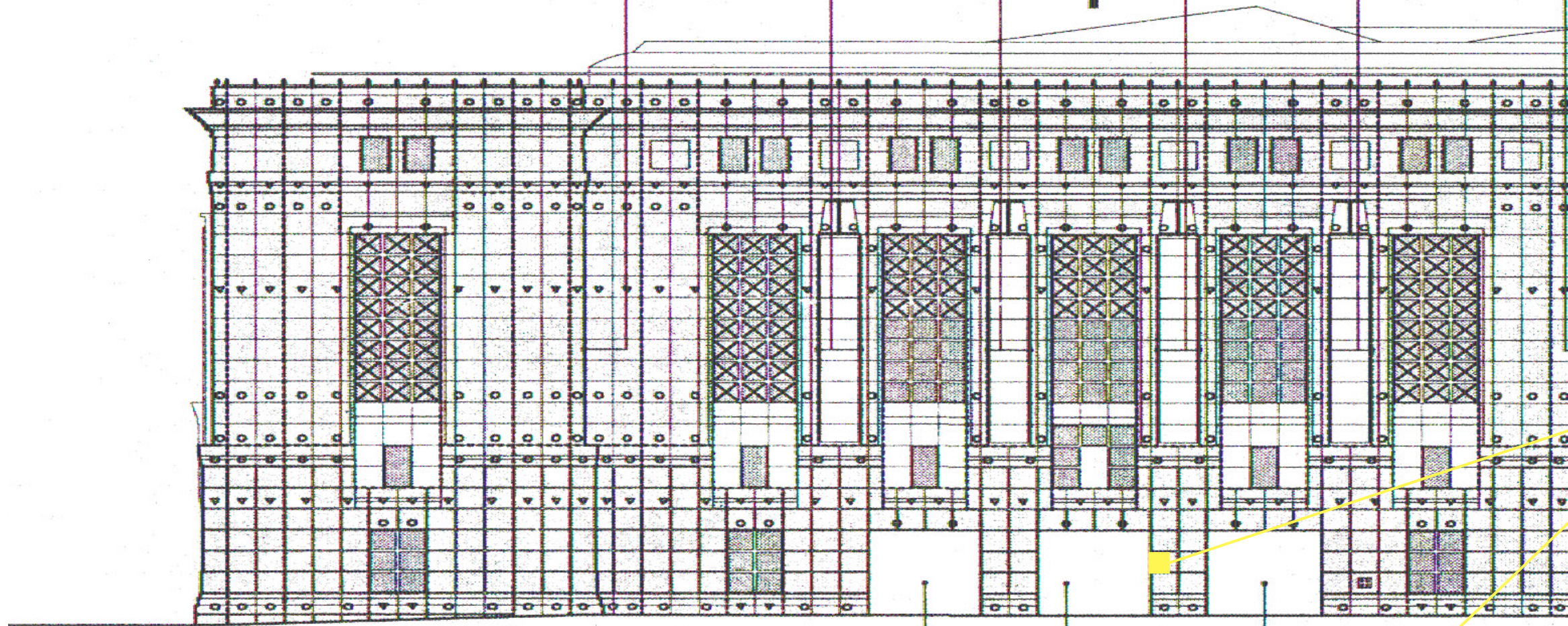




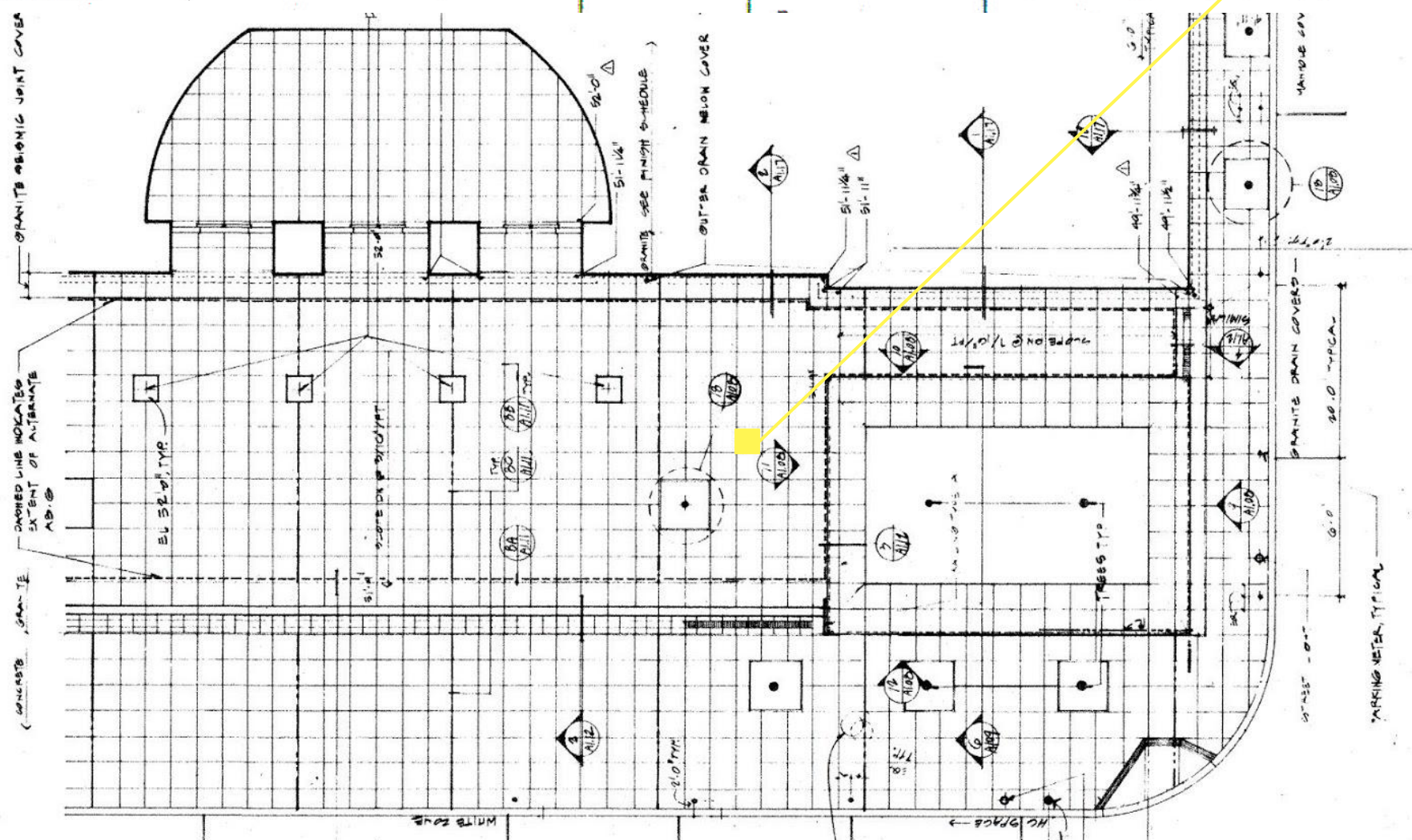


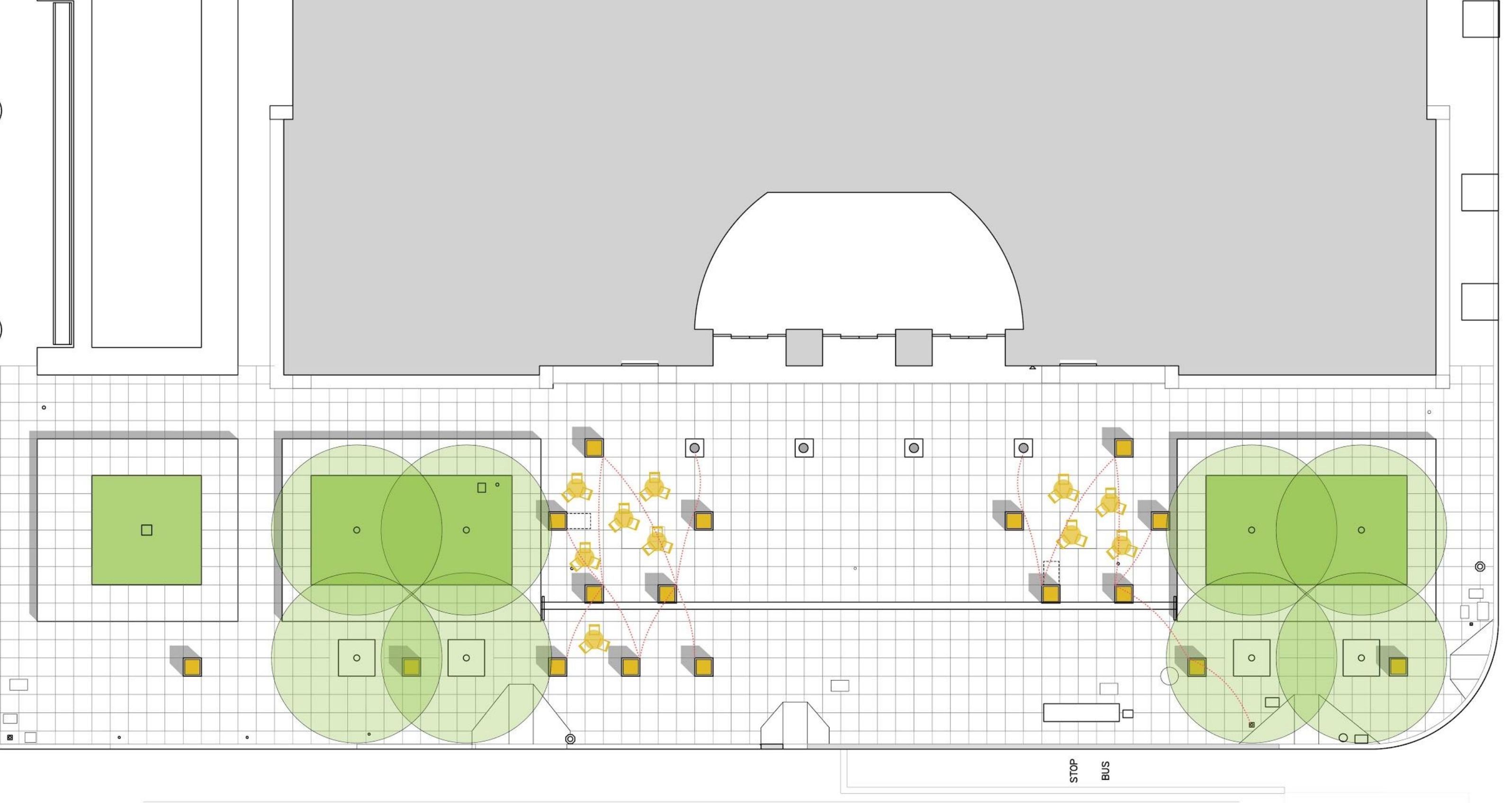
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



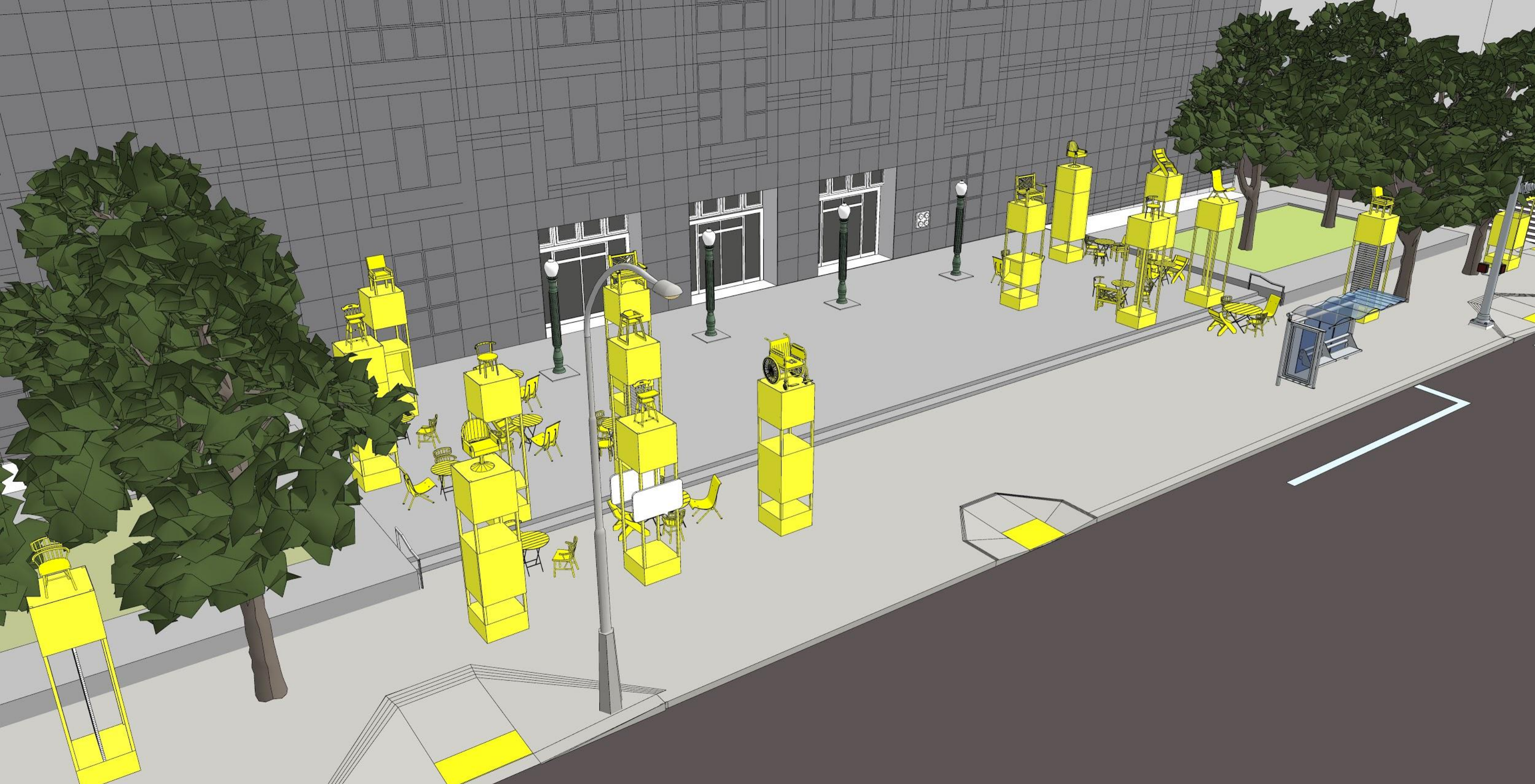


3'x3' GRID





Site Plan showing proposed temporary installation NTS



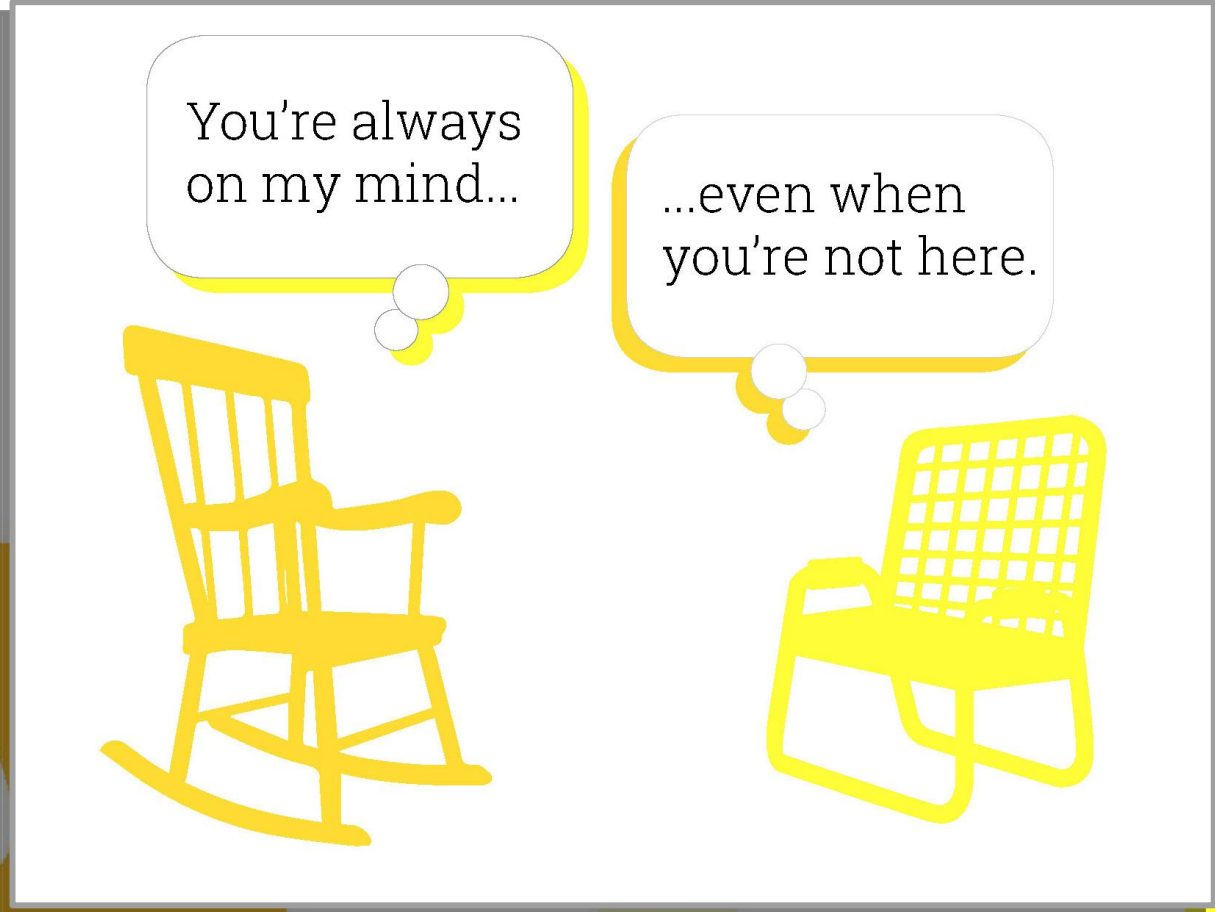
Aerial view of design concept



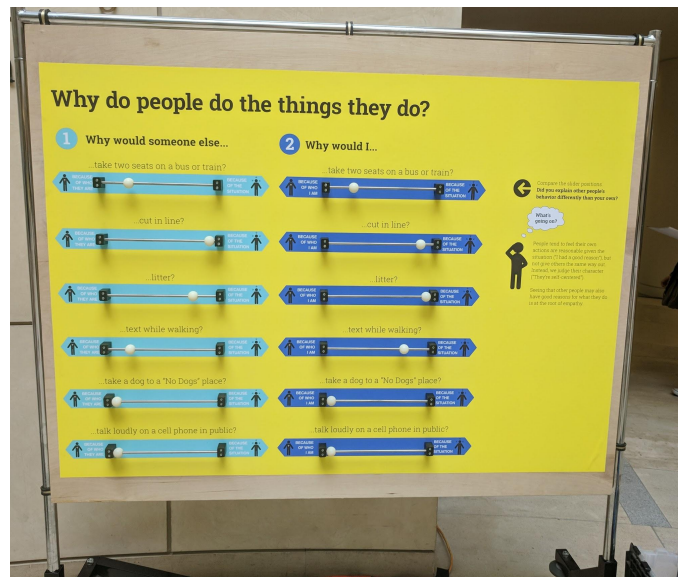
View of Design Concept from across Larkin



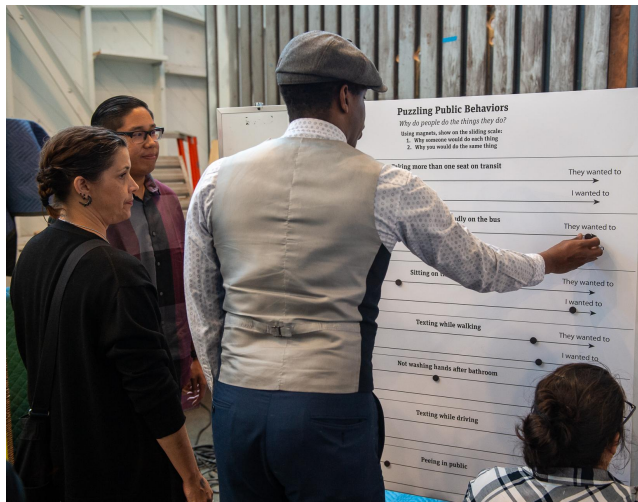
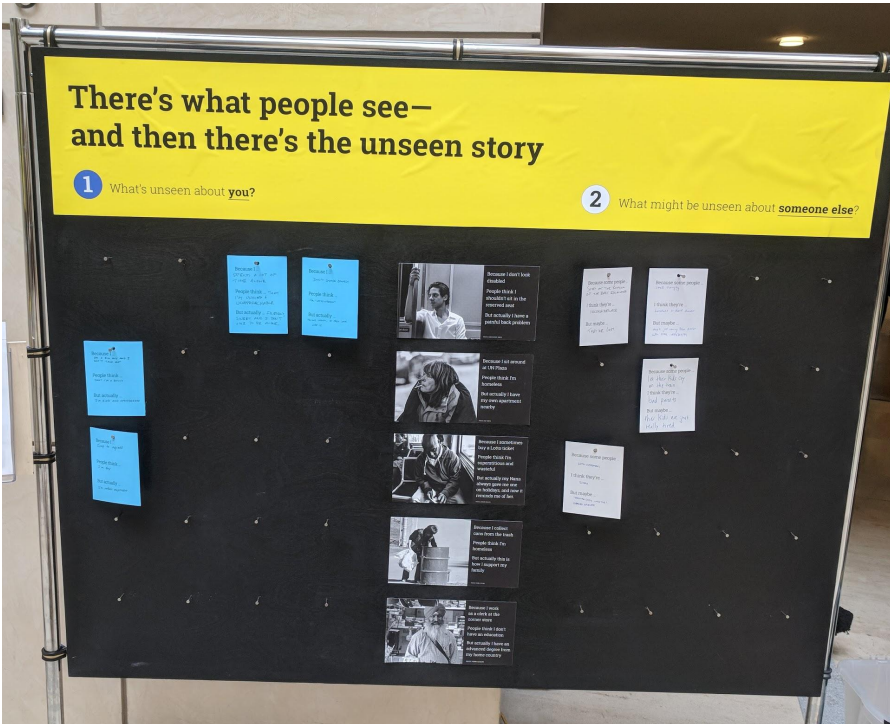
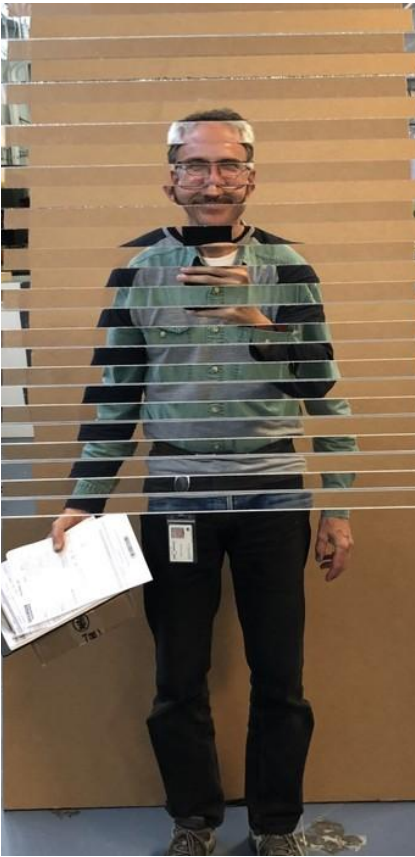
Variety of chairs (all painted yellow) on tops of columns and at grade
(image: Bade Stageberg Cox "Urban Ballet")

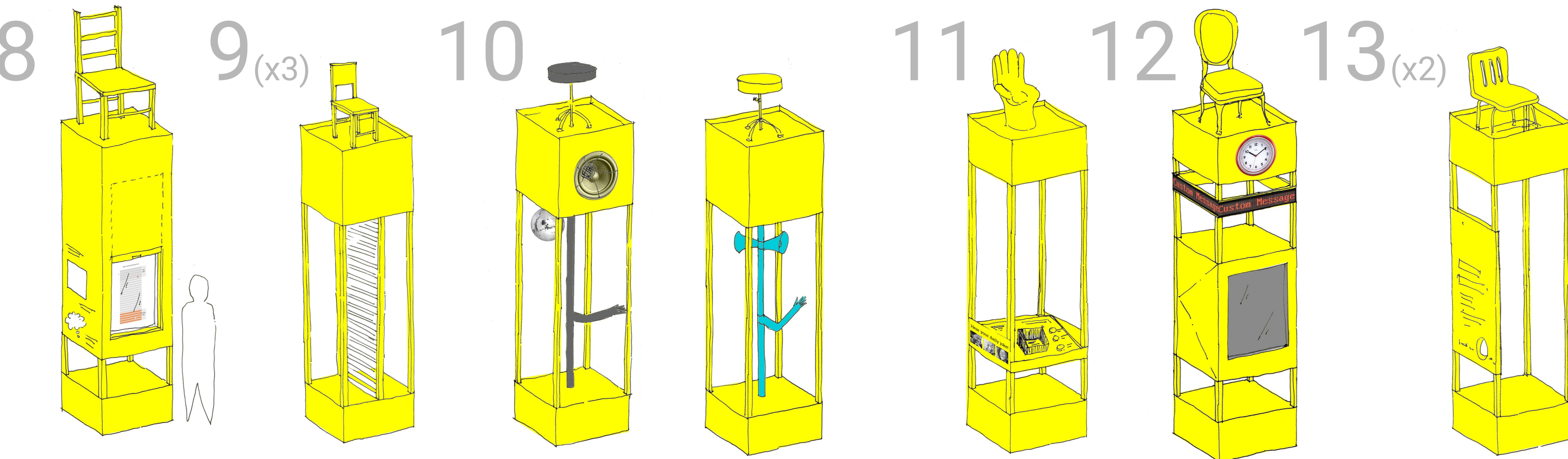
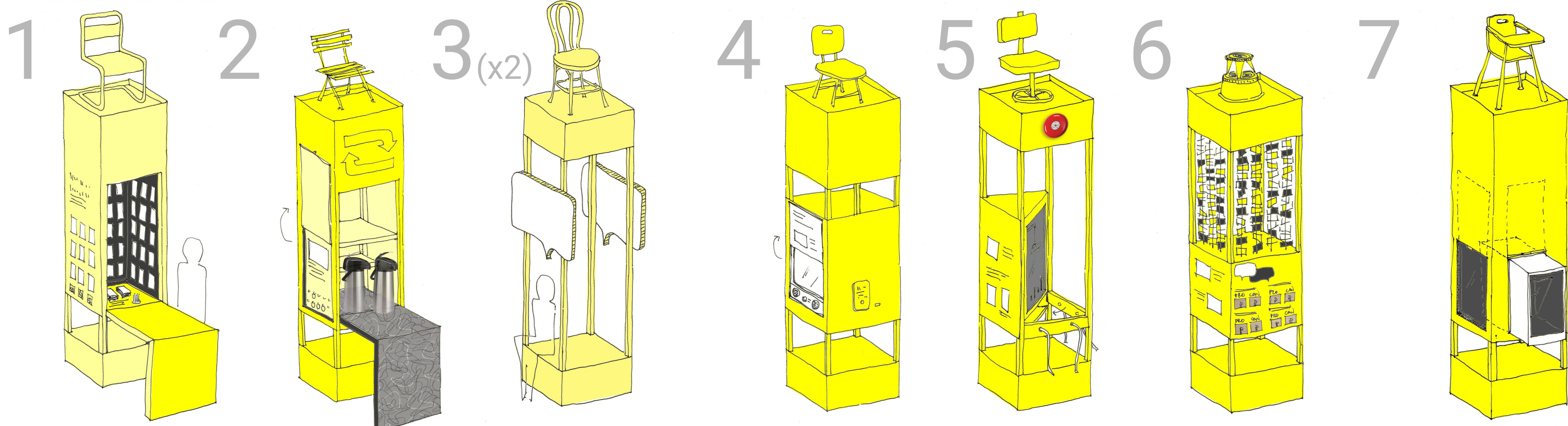


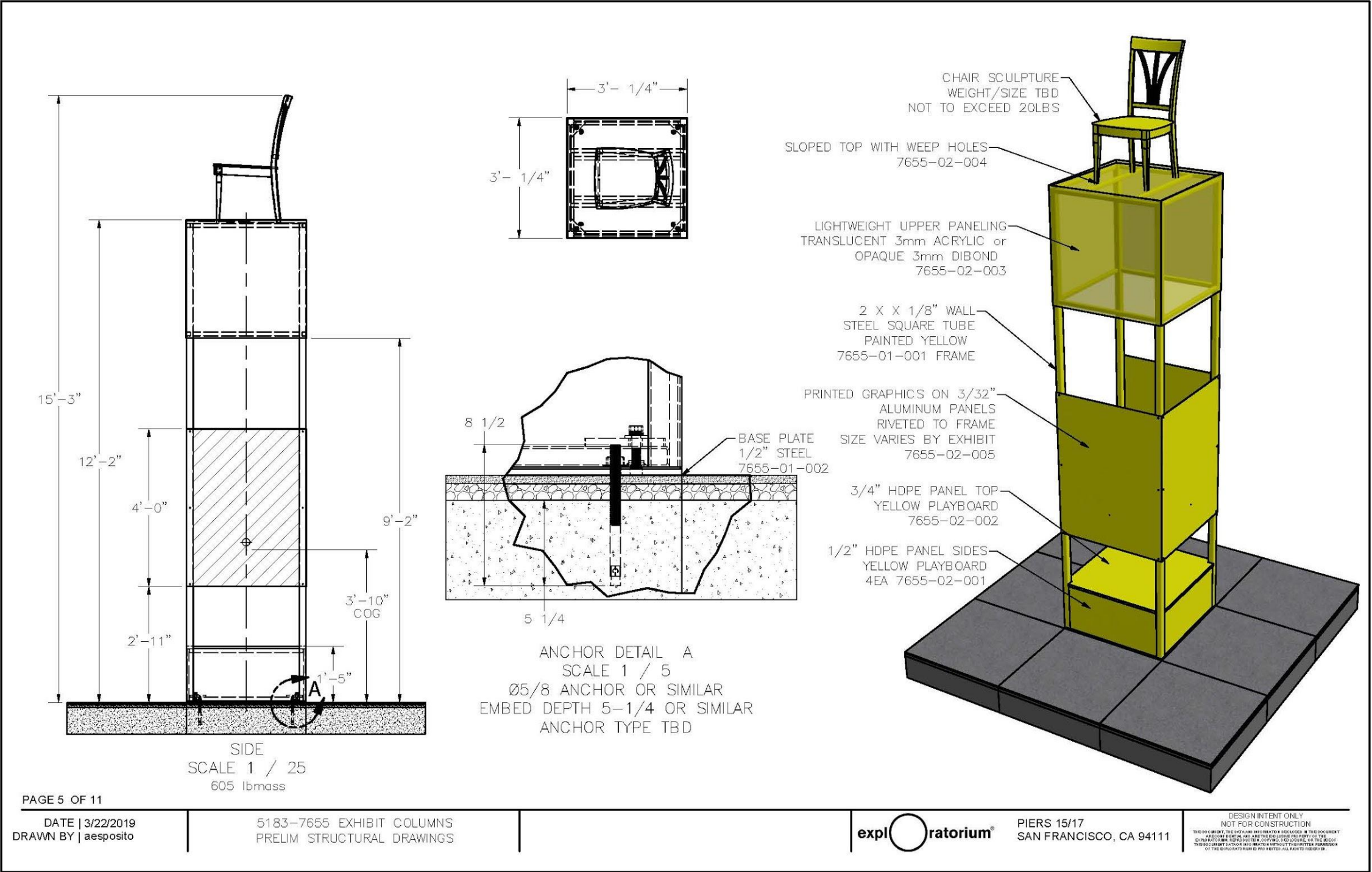
Chairs stand in for humans in exhibit graphics



Social Psychology Exhibit Prototypes







Restoration Plan

The Architectural Resources Group and Thameside Masonry are advising the following restoration plan for the granite surface.

1. Set up temporary barriers around restoration site.
2. Mask sensitive areas.
3. Fill all holes with a color matched mortar patch.
4. Wait for mortar patch to cure.
5. Remove barriers.



Architectural
Resources Group

Architects,
Planners &
Conservators

THAMESIDE MASONRY

