



REPORT TO COUNCIL

City of Sacramento

915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2604
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Staff Report
August 11, 2009

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

Title: Alley Activation Update (M09-026)

Location/Council District: Alleys within the Central Business District and Midtown Area, Council Districts 1, 3, and 4.

Recommendation: Provide review and comment regarding the various efforts underway to activate Central City alleys. Direct staff to continue working with the Alley Activation Committee on the Pilot Alley proposals, and to help identify potential funding sources.

Contact: William R. Crouch, Urban Design Manager, (916) 808-8013; Stacia Cosgrove, Senior Planner, (916) 808-7110

Presenters: Stacia Cosgrove, Senior Planner

Department: Community Development

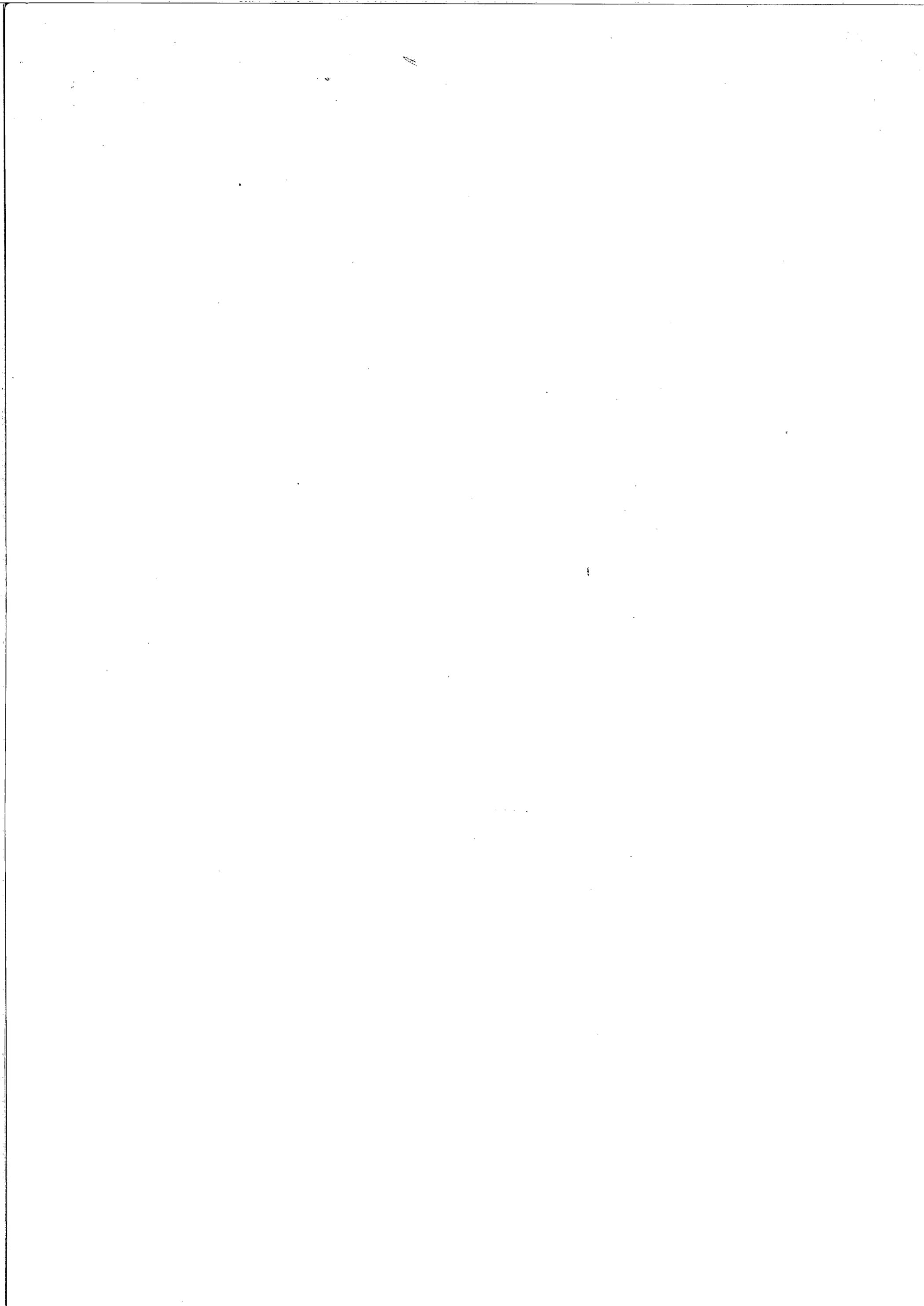
Division: Planning

Organization No: 21001010

Description/Analysis

Issue: Central City alleys serve their function as service areas for trash disposal, vehicle access to garages and the rear/side entrances of abutting property, and emergency service access. Sacramento has come to acknowledge in its policy documents the tremendous potential that alleys present as pedestrian thoroughfares, residential front-doors, small business locations, and restaurant and café destinations. However, with the rare exception, the City has yet to realize such development and there are numerous barriers to its actualization.

An Alley Activation Committee has formed in the Central City area, involving property owners, members of the development community, and City staff. The over-arching goal of the group is to transform selected alleyways in the Central City from back-of-house service entrances and potential criminal activity areas to spaces that contribute positively to the livability of the Central City area.



Alley Activation Strategies: Several different pilot projects are under discussion; they are briefly summarized below. More detailed information is included in this report as "Attachment 1- Background". It is acknowledged amongst all of the parties involved in the alley activation effort that not all alleys are the same and that a different approach is necessary when one takes into account the surrounding land uses on the block and any sensitive uses, the need for automobile access to existing garages, and the requirements of emergency personnel:

Pilot Alley 1: "Pedestrian First" Alleys- This strategy looks at ways to beautify alleys to encourage their use by pedestrians while at the same time maintaining limited vehicular access. Status: Council is being asked to direct staff to continue to work with the Alley Activation Committee to implement improvements to the "pilot alley" located between 17th/19th Streets and L St/Capital Avenue. The pilot alley would include some measure of alternative paving treatments (including porous pavements), wayfinding signage, meet ADA requirements, include landscaping, lighting, and street furniture.

Pilot Alley 2: Alley-Oriented Residential Uses- Locating new residential units adjacent to alleys is encouraged in the General Plan as a way to increase density within the Central City area without affecting the existing streetscape or threatening historic resources. Units are oriented toward the alley for their primary pedestrian and vehicular entrances and provide the public safety benefit of "eyes on the alley." Status: There are a number of projects constructed in the Central City area that are good examples of alley-oriented residential, including Capitol Park Homes (12th & Q St.), 9onF (15th & F St.) and Freemont Mews (14th & P St.). The first application for a Stitch Development (three condominium units at the rear of an existing 40' x 160' lot) was submitted to the Zoning Administrator on July 2, 2009 for review and approval. The entitlement process is expected to take eight (8) weeks.

Pilot Alley 3: Restaurant Uses- While there are countless sidewalk cafes located within the right-of-way on sidewalks Citywide, the City of Sacramento has little experience with locating restaurant and café seating within alleyways. Using other cities as a model, notably San Francisco in our region, restaurant seating in alleys can greatly enliven an area and provide a special amenity for residents and visitors. Status: The City currently has an application for a project called "Restaurant Row," located within the alley bounded by I/J Street and 16/17th Streets (adjacent to the Memorial Auditorium). Staff anticipates bringing this project forward for review to Council within the next few months. There is also a private development project called Meridian II, located at 15th & L Streets, adjacent to the Convention Center, proposing to limit vehicular access in favor of pedestrian oriented uses on the alley during the day.

Issues to be Addressed: There is a list of issues that have been identified that must be addressed to ensure successful implementation of any alley related development; a comprehensive list is included in this report as Attachment 2. City staff from numerous departments continue to meet with community members to ensure active coordination and to improve our review process.

Policy Considerations: The following Council adopted documents include policy direction related to alleys:

2030 General Plan- The City's newly adopted 2030 General Plan Update includes a number of policies that support alley development and beautification. Policy LU 4.3.3 allows a density bonus for alley oriented residential uses.

Central Core Urban Design Guidelines- The Central City Urban Design Guidelines, updated in March 2009, recommends promoting the use of the Central City's alleyways for sidewalk cafes as one strategy for activating the public realm with minimal impact on storefronts and sidewalk capacity. (2.2-22) It also acknowledges that in certain locations, alleys can function as shared-use environments that are primarily pedestrian in character, but where cars are tolerated. (3-19) In the Central Core, there is the opportunity for some alleys in the commercial district to be redesigned as retail-lined passages- areas of intense pedestrian use and activity- with only limited service and emergency vehicle use. (3-20)

Environmental Considerations:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): This summary of on-going discussions regarding alley activation strategies is not considered a "project" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15378(b)(5). Implementation of any specific alley activation projects would undergo separate environmental review at that time.

Sustainability Considerations: Alley activation consists of efforts to provide streetscape improvements and promotes complete neighborhoods that include a variety of residential choices and support commercial uses. Alley beautification and complete neighborhoods promote walkability and reduces dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels, consistent with the goals of the City's Sustainability Master Plan and 2030 General Plan.

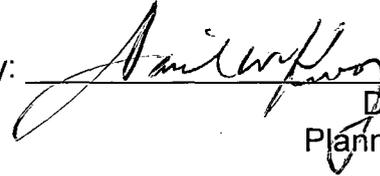
Commission/Committee Action: None at this time.

Rationale for Recommendation: On-going discussion between City staff and the community regarding Central City alley beautification and activation is consistent with the City's General Plan and Central Core Design Guideline goals.

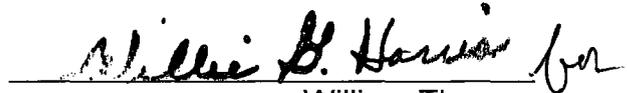
Financial Considerations: The cost of the different alley improvements is currently under discussion. Staff will work with the Alley Activation Committee to help identify potential funding sources for both construction and maintenance. There is staff time being expended on the project from various departments that is not compensated at this time.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): No goods or services are being purchased under this report.

Respectfully Submitted by:


David Kwong
Planning Director

Approved by:


William Thomas
Director of Community Development

Recommendation Approved:


Ray Kerridge
City Manager

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Attachment 1- Background

Background

The City of Sacramento acquired its interest in the Central City alleys in 1870 by deed from John A. Sutter, Jr. Fee ownership of the alleys belongs to the adjacent property owners, with adjacent lots running to the centerline of the alley. The City owns an easement over the alleys for use by the public. Downtown and Midtown alleys are typically 20' wide and 320' in length.

There are many potential benefits to alley development and beautification:

1. Enhance walkability and connectivity for pedestrians between homes and parks, neighborhood commercial, schools, and transit stops.
2. "Greening" alley through the use of porous pavement, landscape areas, and tree shading.
3. Reduce opportunity for criminal activity by adding lighting and changing perceptions.
4. Promote recreational opportunities, including the creation small public spaces and opportunity for public art.
5. Encouraging "complete neighborhoods" by providing small commercial spaces and office spaces that are neighborhood serving. Affordable by design residential housing.
6. Increase residential density without changing the street view or scale. Protect historic resources from redevelopment pressure.
7. Slow traffic speed in the alley by narrowing the travel lane.
8. Consolidation of solid waste in a single enclosure, capture more recyclables.
9. Create an entrepreneurial zone for small businesses that can locate on an alley.

The following is a list of alley activation activities that are currently underway:

Addressing/Naming Initiative

Addressing standards have been developed for the City's alleys to establish and maintain a comprehensive and consistent addressing system. A consistent addressing system will protect public health and safety by enabling a quicker response time for emergency services, expediting postal and general delivery services, providing more efficient delivery of City services, and providing efficient delivery of information to outside agencies.

Alley Activation Committee

A group of committed stakeholders meet once a month to discuss the alley activation effort and the moving forward of its various components. The committee is made up of property and business owners, development professionals; City staff is also in attendance from various departments, including Fire, Community Development, Transportation, Utilities, and more.

Commercial Development Within Central City Alleys

There are several locations within the Central City where businesses are operating and their primary entry is located on an alley. The most common examples are Old Soul Coffee located on the alley between L/Capitol and 17th/18th Streets and Merchants Alley at 7th Street between K/J Streets. Finding suitable off-site parking or waiving parking required by the Zoning Code is a significant hurdle to be overcome for businesses not located within the Cultural and Entertainment District (where parking is required only for office, hotel/motel, or residential uses) and that are unable to provide parking on-site.

Restaurant Row- Pilot Alley 3. Restaurant Row is a proposal to partially close the alley between 16th/17th Streets and I/J Street to automobile traffic for a portion of each day, adjacent to the Memorial Auditorium block. The purpose is to create an active, lively space with restaurant and cafe seating within the alley during lunch and dinner times. The hours it would be expected to be closed to vehicular traffic is from 10am to 2am. The remainder of the time the alley would be open to traffic as usual, to facilitate trash pick-up and deliveries. (Exhibits A-C)

Meridian II- The City currently has a development application for a project known as Meridian II, the companion development to the Meridian I building, constructed at the southeast corner of L and 14th Street. Meridian II, located at the vacant lot at 15th & K Street, would be located across the public alley from Meridian I. The proposal includes visually linking the two towers at the ground level through special paving treatments, outdoor seating, and limiting through vehicular traffic for a portion of the work day. (Exhibit D- Meridian II)

Fire Department Alley Survey

Because the Fire Department's ability to access structures from an alley can be critical during an emergency, two primary factors are considered as they affect fire operation effectiveness:

- 1) Apparatus access to buildings and fire protection systems;
- 2) Fire fighter access to building doors and bedroom windows.

Fire Department personnel will be surveying the alleys under consideration for improvements to look for particular conditions, for example, where a highrise building might be adjacent to the alley with access only from the front and the back. Or a structure on the alley with bedroom windows that are a distance of more than 150-feet from the street (150-feet is the maximum distance that a hose can be pulled from a fire engine to fight a fire). These conditions affect efforts to restrict access to an alley.

Midtown Property-Owner Business Improvement District (PBID)

The Midtown PBID is a special assessment district set up to raise funds within a specific set of boundaries. Established in 2008, the PBID services will include a maintenance program to increase frequencies of sidewalk, alley, litter, and graffiti clean-

up; and economic development and marketing program; a daytime and nighttime safety program to support police services and address issues of homelessness and public nuisances; and a program to advocate for and implement Midtown parking improvements. There is an opportunity for the City to work with the PBID to share alley maintenance funds. (see Exhibit E- PBID Boundaries)

Other Cities

During the course of alley activation discussions, staff has also been reviewing efforts in other cities across the country; especially in highly urbanized areas, alleys are seen as a great asset and “greening” efforts are prevalent, such as Chicago’s Green Alley’s project, or San Francisco’s Chinatown Alleyway Master Plan. There is also a Green Alley program in Los Angeles.

Outreach

The monthly Alley Activation Committee meetings are open to the public and have been well attended by various stakeholders in the community and City. They have been attended by a representative of the Midtown Neighborhood Association, ECOS, the Sacramento Disability Advisory Commission (DAC), Urban Design Alliances, and several members of various Midtown and Downtown neighborhoods. The DAC has extended their invitation to the Project Team (Alley Activation Committee) to come before the Commission and present the project. The DAC has also committed to staying involved to ensure that accessibility opportunities are maximized. Discussions have been conceptual to this point regarding hardscape improvements to alleys, however, more formalized outreach will occur. With regards to the Restaurant Row proposal, there have been a number of formal and informal meetings with neighboring property owners on the alley, business operators, neighborhood activists, and City staff to address concerns. The Stitch Development application has been routed to the neighborhood groups in the area for comment and will go through the standard public hearing process for entitlements. The Stitch concept has been presented several times to the following groups: Boulevard Park NA, Midtown Neighborhood Association, and Neighborhood Advisory Group (NAG), and at least once to many other groups, including neighborhood groups, business associations, and professional groups. As the various projects progress, outreach to stakeholders will remain a top priority.

Pilot Alley 1- Streetscape Improvements

Members of the Alley Activation Committee and staff from various City Departments met on July 13, 2009, to begin in earnest to discuss the “Pedestrian First” pilot alley, to be located between 17th/19th Street and Capitol/L Street in Midtown. Exhibit F-J The goal is to develop a true pilot project, whereby the following could be tested in a real setting:

- A new alley development standard that would use porous paving materials, allowing some amount of water to percolate through the pavement and reduce stormwater run-off;
- Restrict vehicle traffic to one-way and narrow the travel lane to as little as 12’ in width, where appropriate;

- Install landscape planters and trees;
- Explore the possibility of having a combined location for trash and recyclable collection on the alley, eliminating multiple dumpsters and waste containers.

Solid Waste Disposal

Solid waste bins and containers are commonly located on alleys throughout Midtown. They are sometimes not well maintained and can become quite odiferous, an impediment to encouraging pedestrians to walk in alleys to connect to their destinations. The Alley Activation Committee has asked City Staff to consider how we might improve this situation. One suggestion is to combine the location for trash and recyclables into a single unit on an alley. Staff expects to work further on this idea with the Pilot Alley 1 (discussed above).

Stitch Development- Pilot Alley 2

Stitch Development is a development model that would build 3-unit, alley-loaded, condominium buildings on the back portion of existing Central City lots. (Exhibit K-M) By partnering with property owners to build on existing lots, additional density within the downtown area could be achieved without affecting the existing streetscape or threatening historic resources.

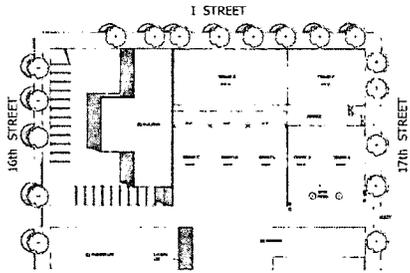
An application for planning entitlements was submitted on July 2, 2009, for the first Stitch Development, located at 1717 Capitol Avenue. The project proposes to locate three (3) new condominium units at the rear of a typical 40' x 160' lot. A parking garage is provided for each new unit and the primary entry for the units is from the alley, although there is also a pathway from Capitol Avenue. There is a landmark historic structure at the front of the lot facing Capitol Avenue that will not be altered.



ALLEY LOOKING EAST - BEFORE



BELDEN ALLEY - SAN FRANCISCO



SITE PLAN / GROUND FLOOR

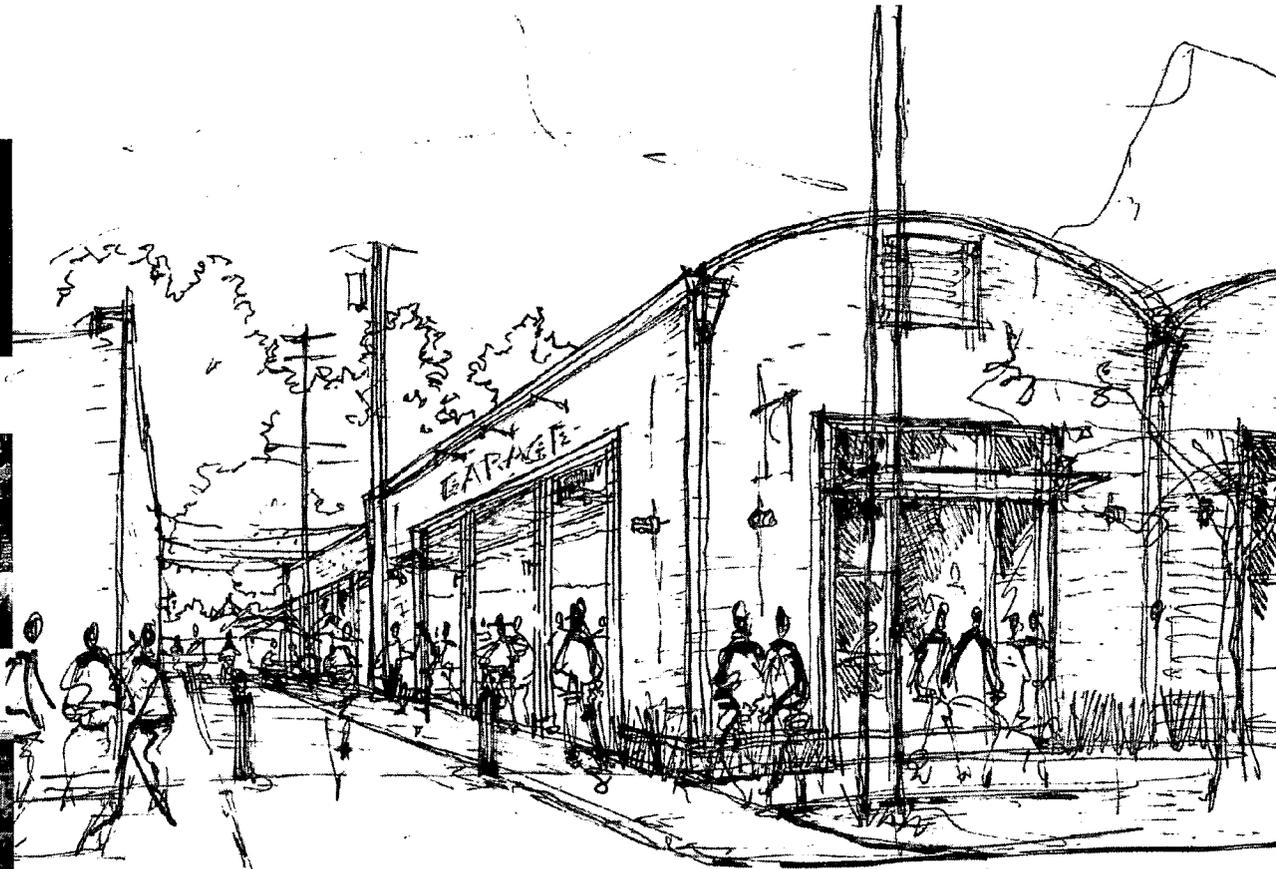


THE ALLEY RESTAURANT ROW

five RESTAURANTS - one ALLEY

THE ALLEY | 16th TO 17th STREETS - BETWEEN I & J

VRIZAKAS ARCHITECTS



THE ALLEY RESTAURANT ROW

CONNECTION TO THE MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

Exhibit B- Restaurant Row II

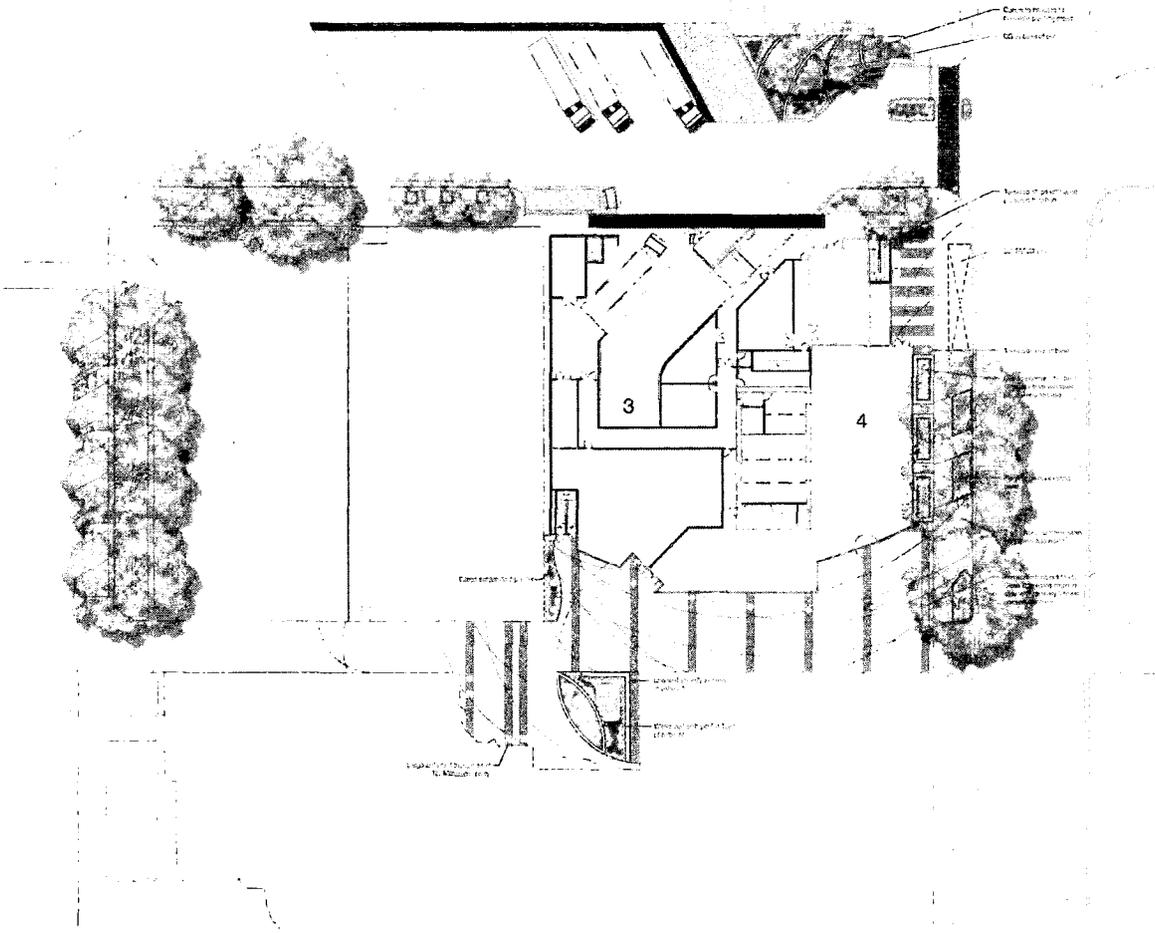
August 11, 2009

THE ALLEY | 16th TO 17th STREETS - BETWEEN I & J

VRILAKAS ARCHITECTS
1000 BROADWAY, SUITE 1000, NEW YORK, NY 10018

Alley Activation 9

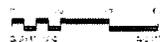
Exhibit D - Meridian II



Meridian Plaza II
Preliminary Landscape Plan
Lionakis Beaumont Design Group Inc.
Sacramento, California

A3

March 2007



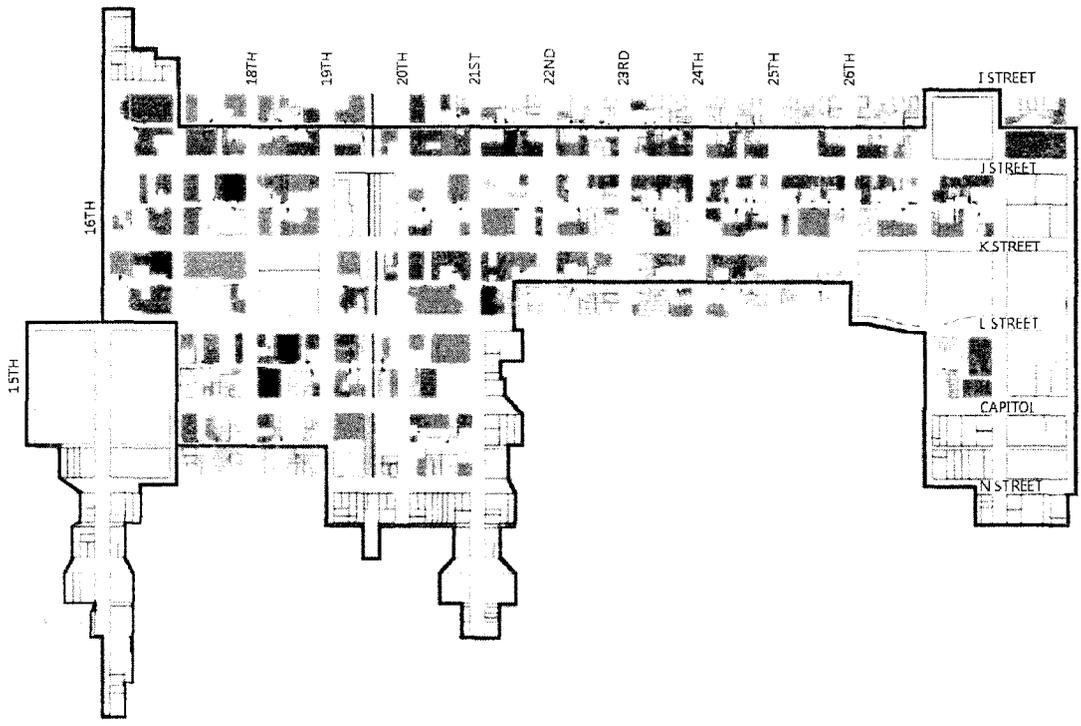
The HLA Group Landscape Architects & Planners, Inc.
1000 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95811
916 437 7229 / 916 437 8370 Fax / www.hla.com

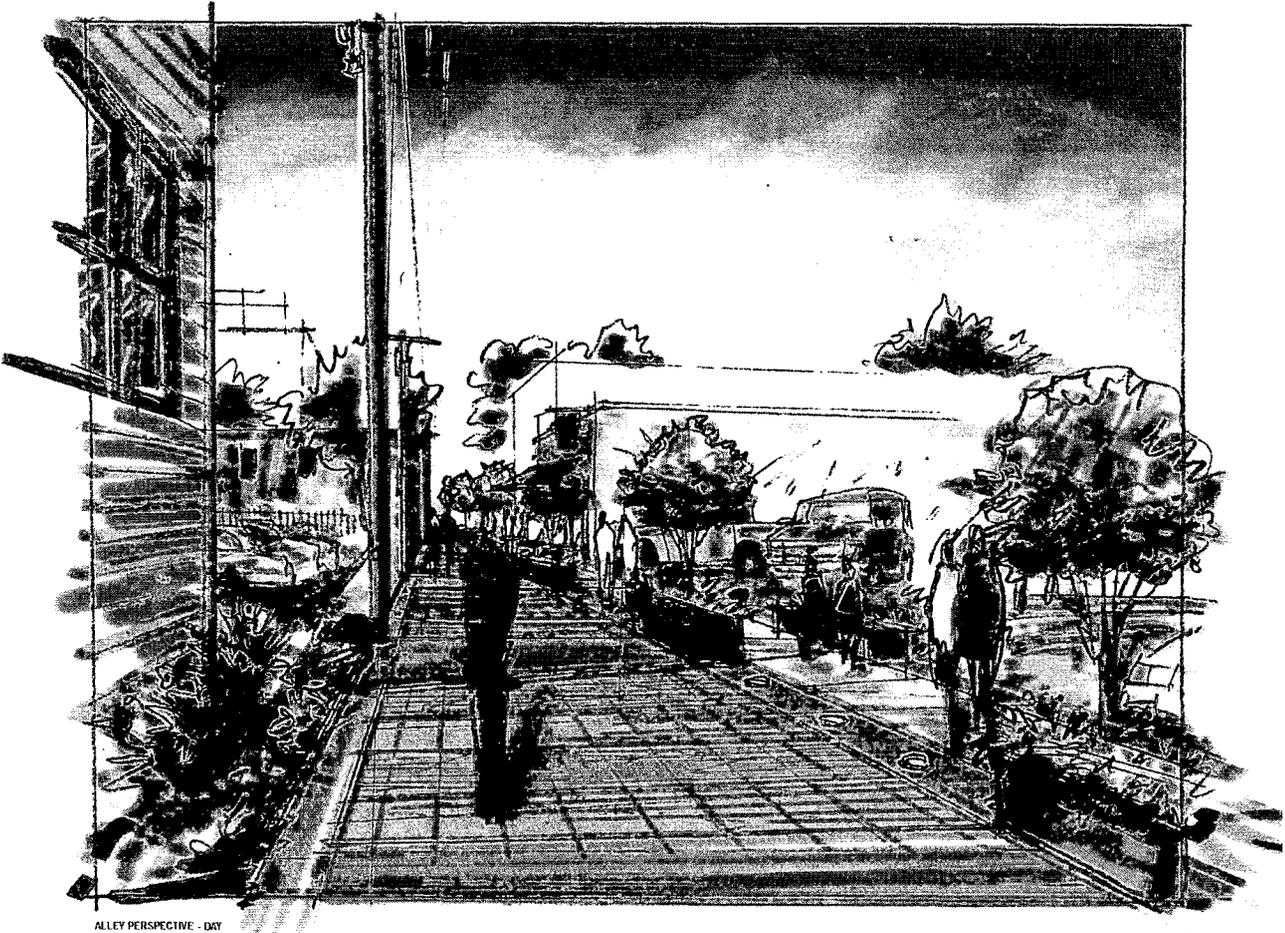
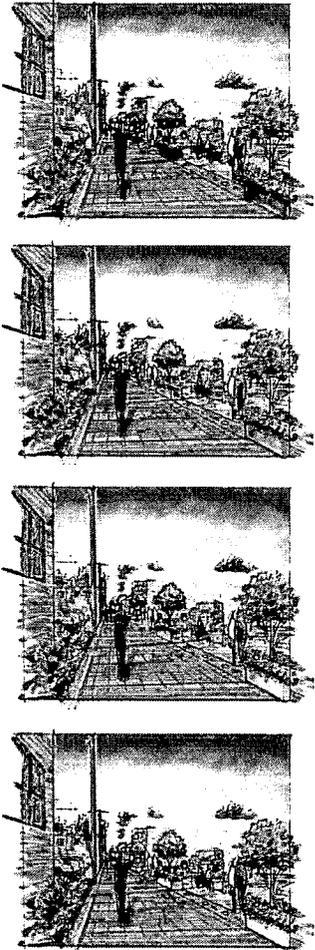
Exhibit E- PBID Boundaries

LEGEND

	RESIDENTIAL / SCHOOL / CHURCH
	OFFICE
	COMMERCIAL / RETAIL
	MIXED-USE
	PAVED AREA / PARKING
	LANDSCAPED AREA / GARDEN
	WALL
	SOLID FENCE
	RAIL FENCE
	CHAIN LINK FENCE
	GARAGE
	DRIVEWAY
	DOOR / GATE
	TELEPHONE POLE
	DUMPSTER
	TRASH CAN
	TREE

MIDTOWN PROPERTY-BASED BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



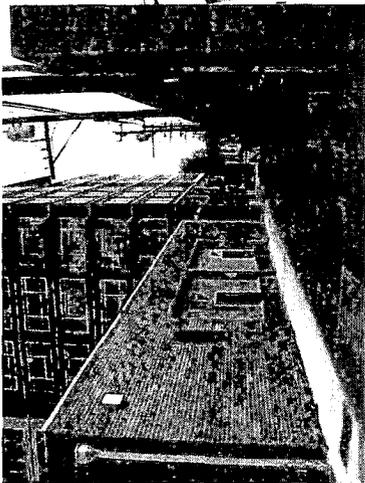


ALLEY PERSPECTIVE - DAY

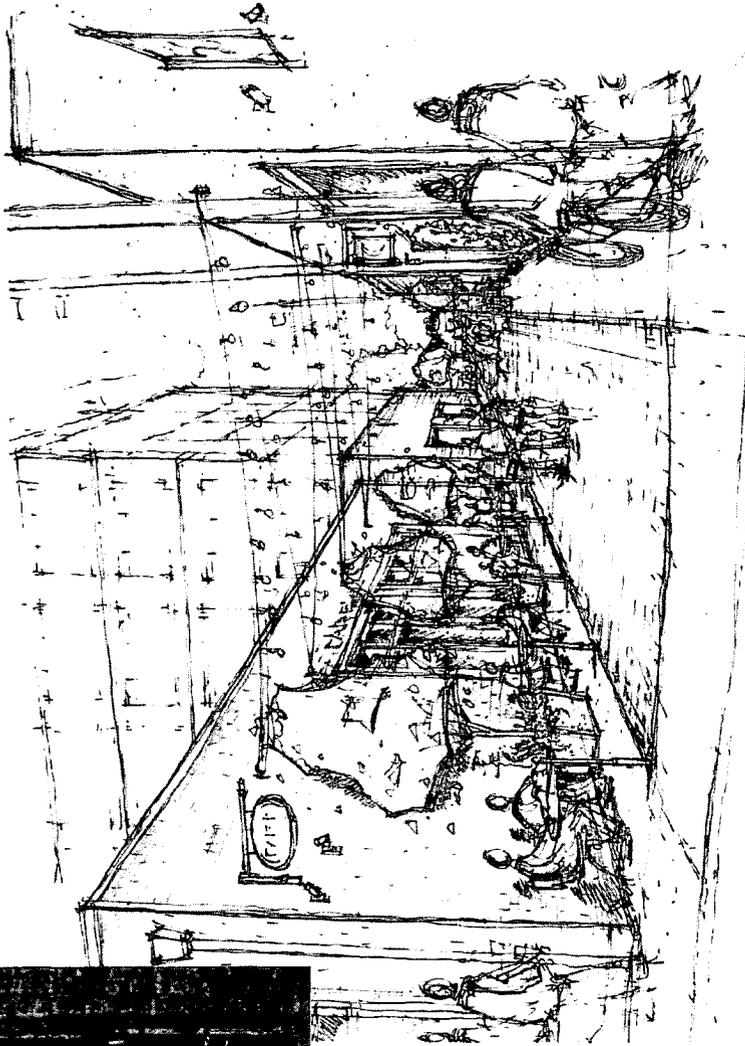
TEST CASE ALLEY 17TH-18TH STREET BETWEEN CAPITAL & L STREET

Exhibit F- Pilot Alley 1, Daytime, 17th-18th Street

Exhibit H- Pilot Alley 1, 18th-19th Street



ALLEY LOOKING EAST - BEFORE



THE ALLEY PERSPECTIVE

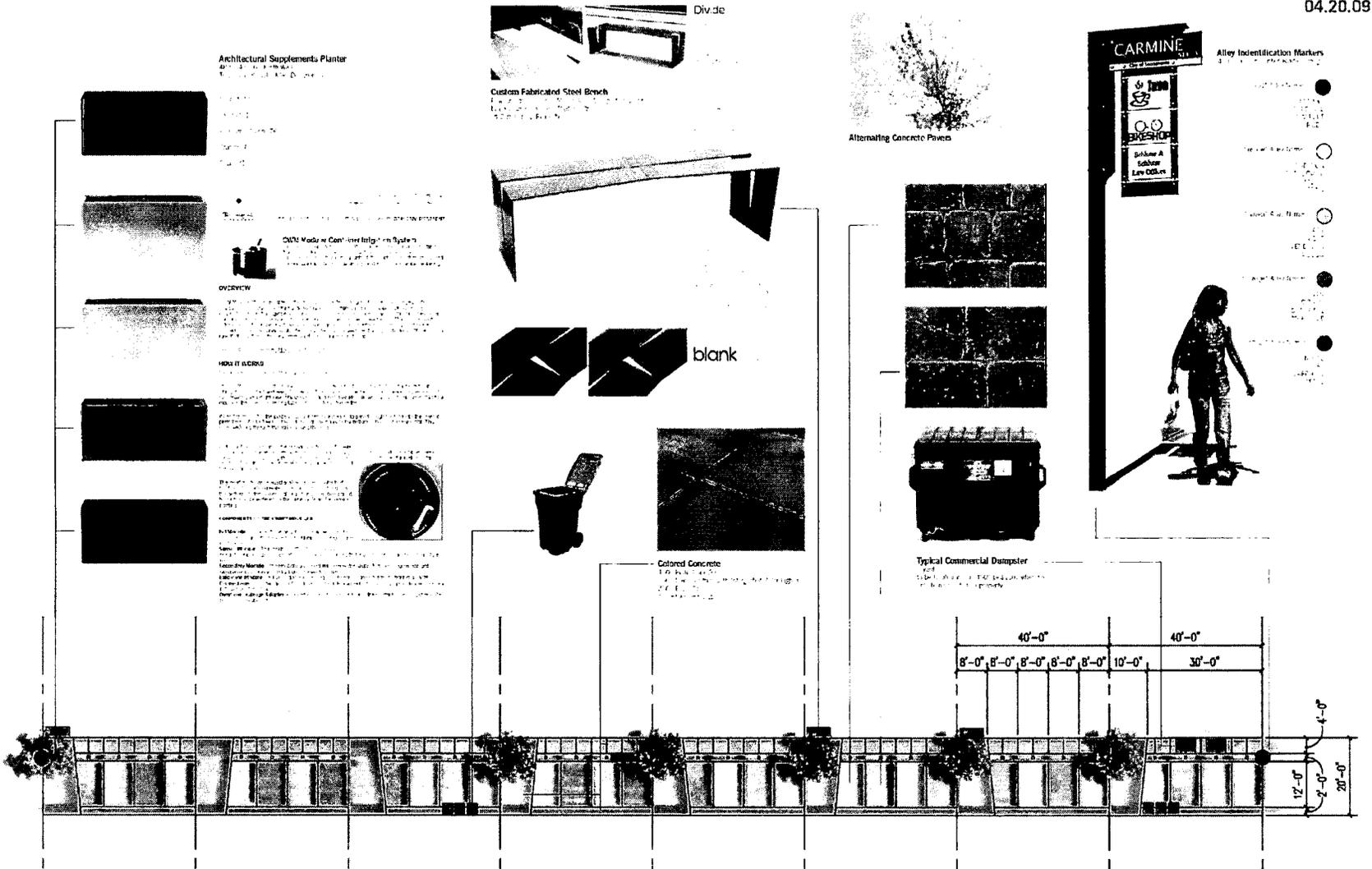
THE ALLEY | 18th TO 19th STREETS - BETWEEN L & CAPITOL

12 City of Sacramento

WILLIAMS BISHOP
URBAN DESIGN ARCHITECTS

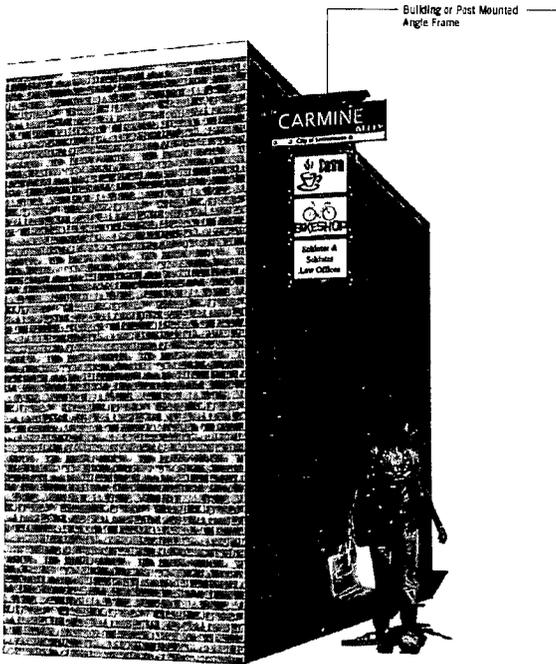
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Exhibit I - Pilot Alley 1, Materials

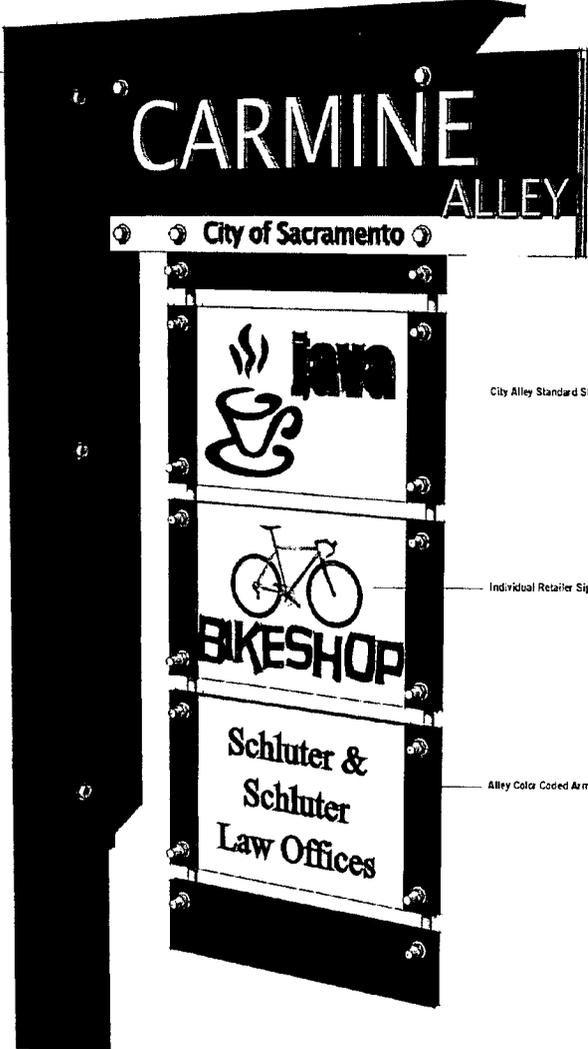


TEST CASE ALLEY 17TH-18TH STREET BETWEEN CAPITAL & L STREET

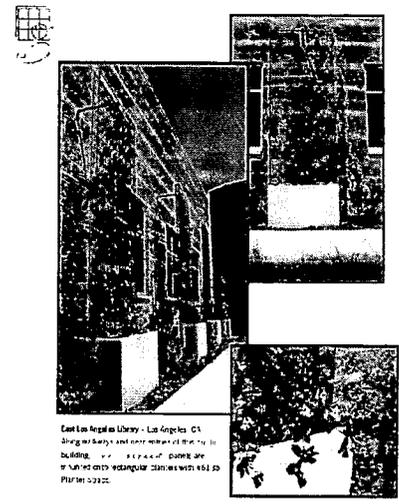
Alley Activation 19



Building Mounted Alley Signage Option



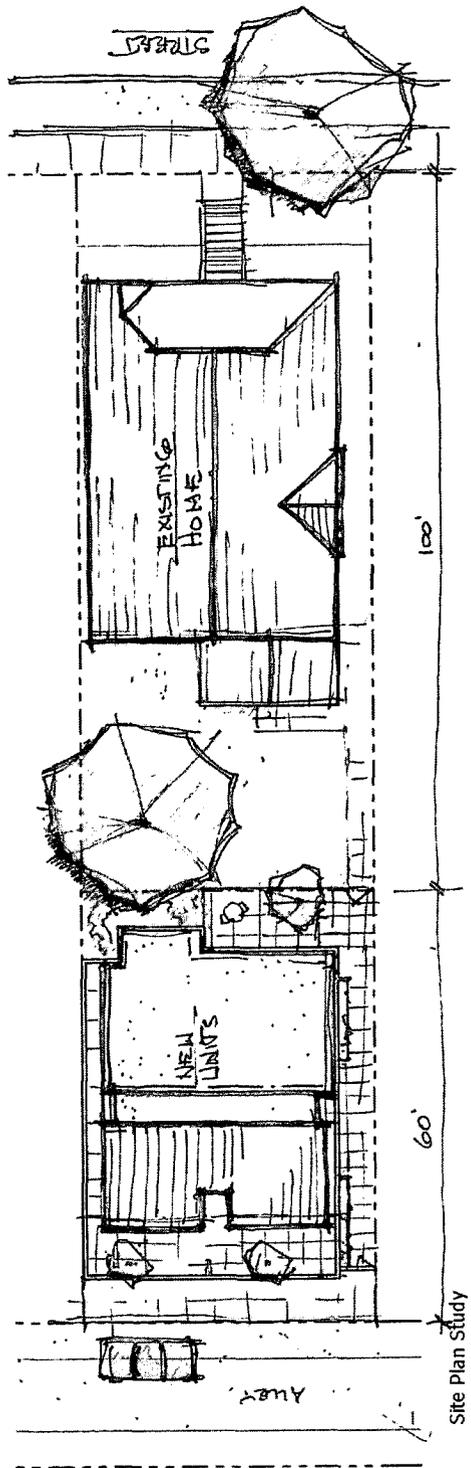
TEST CASE ALLEY 17TH-18TH STREET BETWEEN CAPITAL & L STREET



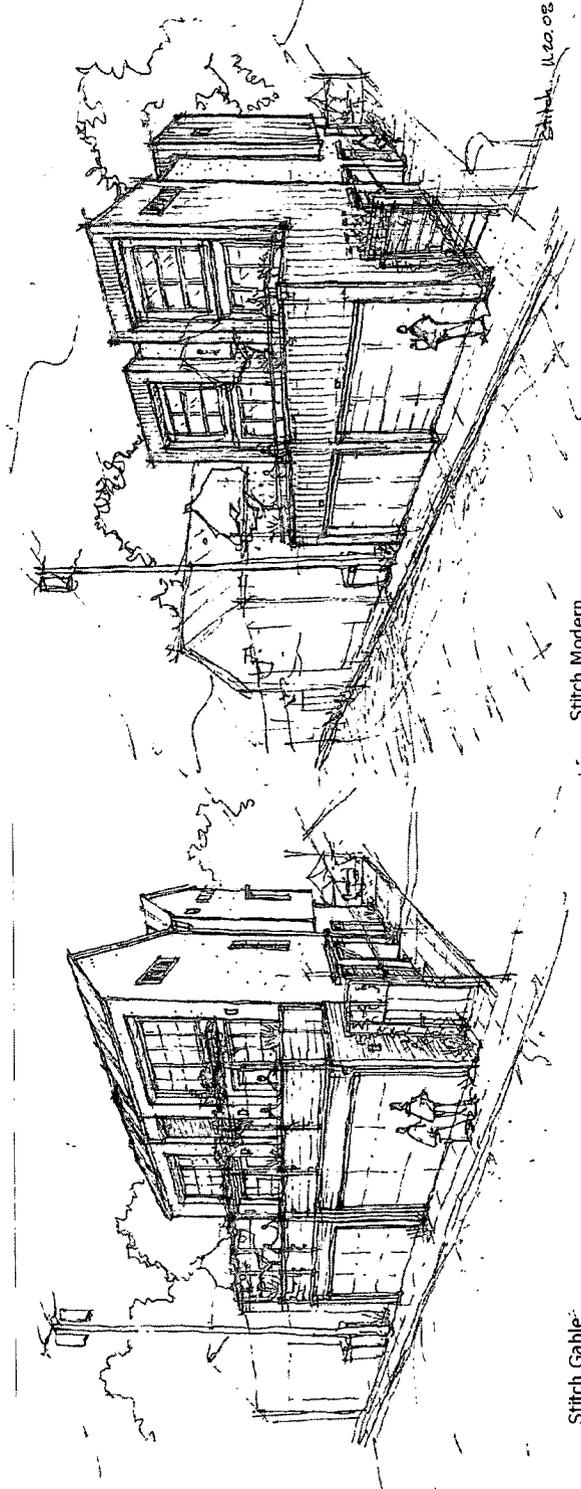
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 1212 S. SAC STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90055 T: 800-450-2474



Exhibit K- Stitch Development, Site Perspective



Site Plan Study



Stitch Gable

Stitch Modern

Exhibit L- Stitch Development, Floor Plan (typ.)

VRILAKAS architects
1221 10th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 T 916 441 4605 F 916 442 4485
Alley Housing Case Studies
DATE 8/11/2008

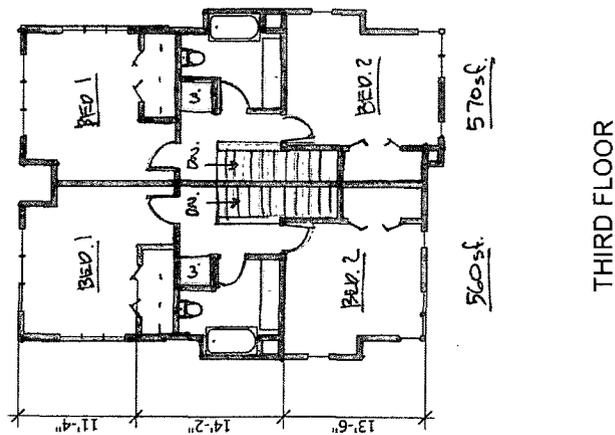
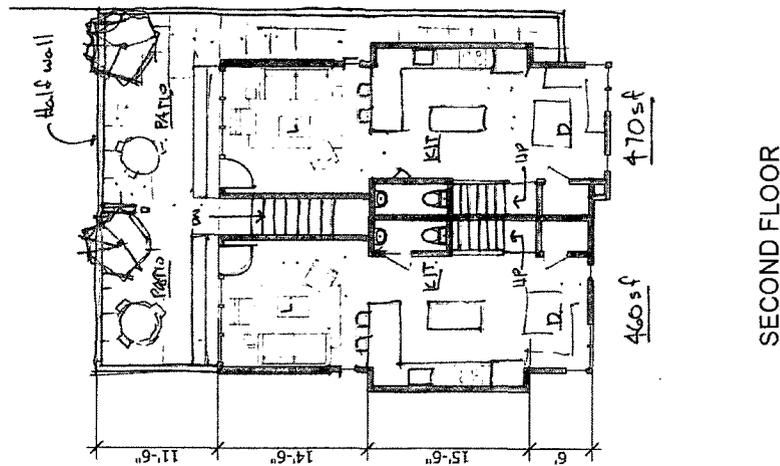
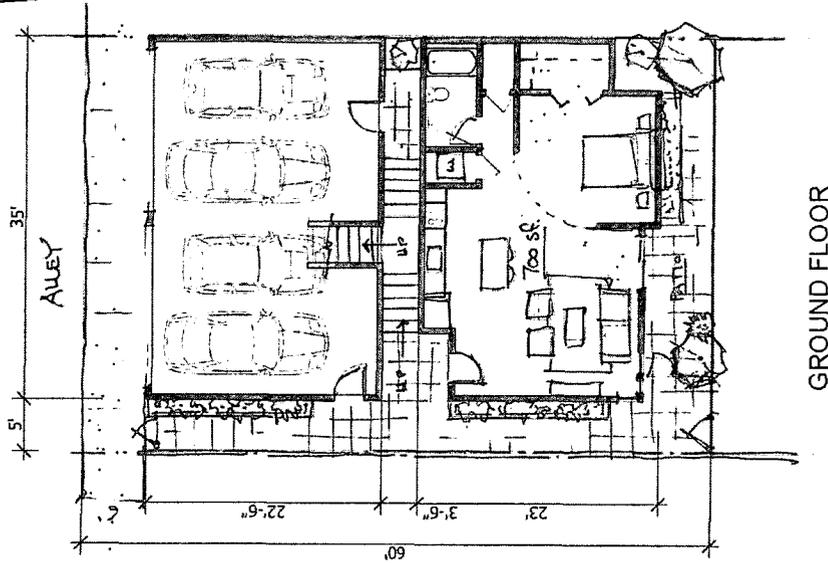
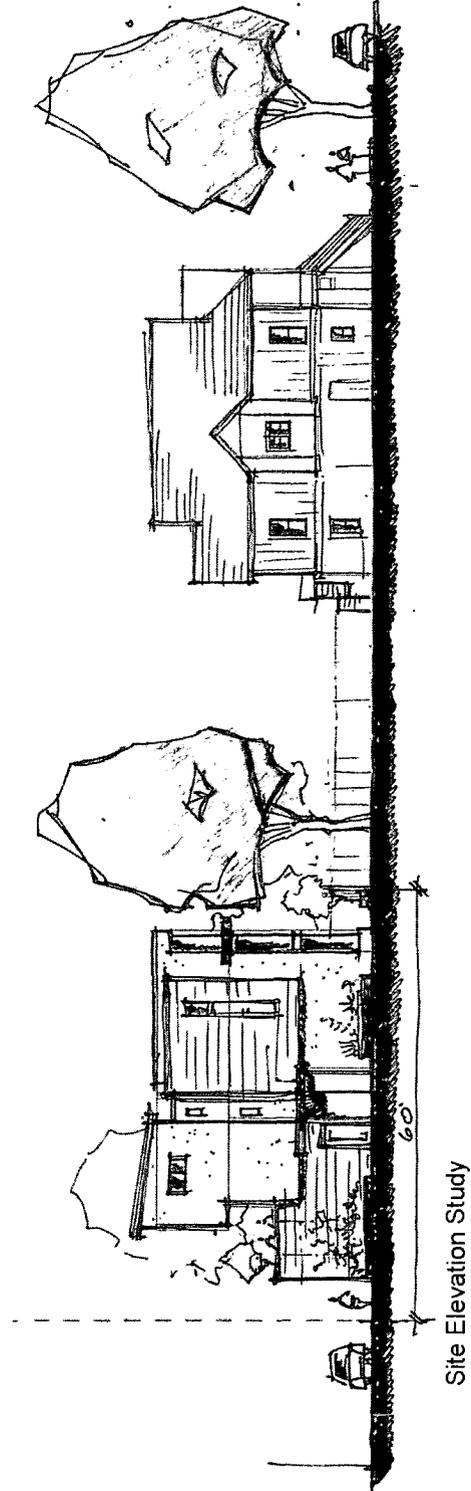
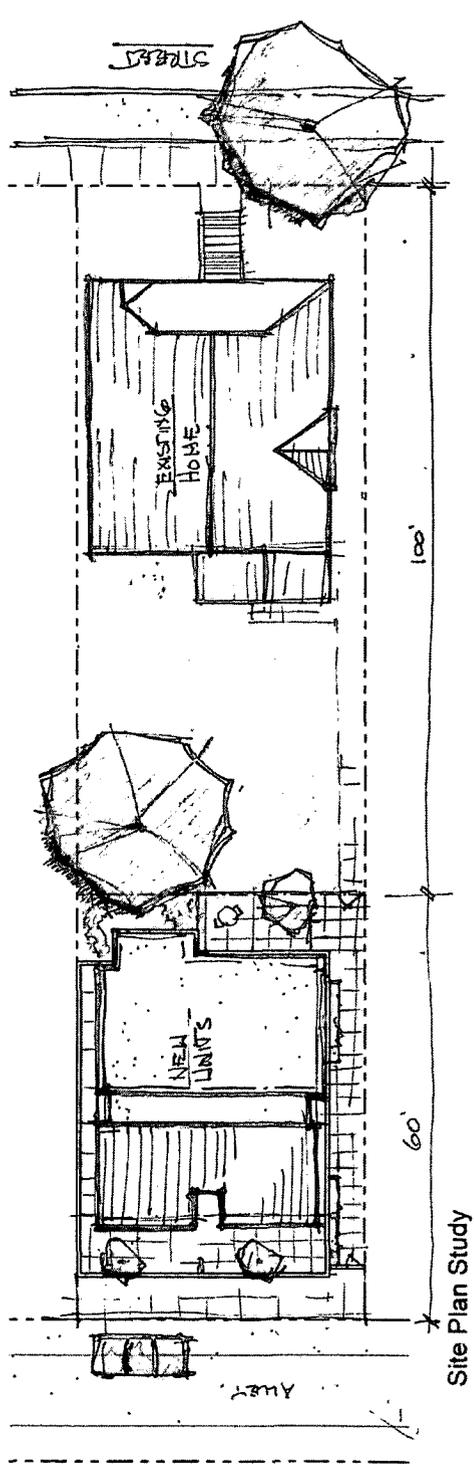
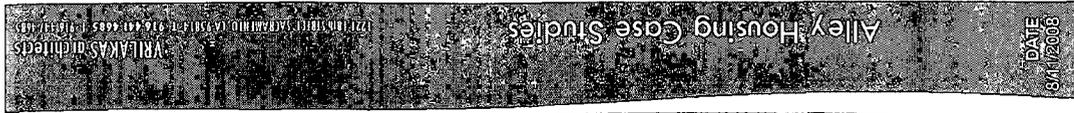


Exhibit M- Stitch Development, Scale Concept



Attachment 2- Identified Issues

Identified Issues

The following is a list of issues that are part of the on-going discussion regarding alley activation. They listed in no particular order:

Issues Raised During Alley Activation Discussions:

#	Issue	Comments	Resolution	Contact Person(s)
1	Hanging lights above the alley. How high do they need to be strung? Are there particular requirements from the Fire Department for clearance?	Fire Dept minimum is 13'-6", however DOT height requirement is higher at 15'. 35' of vertical clearance is needed for front-loader garbage trucks		King Tunson, Fire Department Jerry Way, DOT
2	How do we address public notification of alley closure?	Public Notice a part of the process if treated as "alley closure."	Determine which section of the Vehicle Code is appropriate or if closures should be done as "pedestrian malls."	City Attorney's Office, Community Development, Transportation
3	How will trash pick-up be accomplished?	Options- A. Combine trash enclosures into one location on the alley, B. Use daily pick-up and smaller containers that can be rolled out.	Solution depends on the characteristics of the alley and its function. More discussion required.	Chris Thoma, Solid Waste Dept.
4	If trash receptacles are combined into a single location on an alley, how will access rights be granted and maintained? What would require a new property owner to abide by an agreement?	If SFR or MFR (4 or fewer) are included along with commercial properties, the City must be the one to provide service, per City Code requirements.		Chris Thoma, Solid Waste Dept.
5	How will routine maintenance and tap installations be addressed when the City needs to disrupt restaurant operations?	Typically Underground Service Alert (USA) requires a 48 hour notice for underground markings	48 hour courtesy notification to the business may be incorporated.	Department of Transportation, Utilities Department
6	Identify all underground utilities in the alley.	Schematic drawings identifying approximate alignment, locations and sizes of water and sewer lines are readily available. Depends on the project; this may not be the adequate data to design a project.	Project specific survey and engineering is required. Other utilities owners should be contacts for their utility locations.	Other Utilities, Utilities Department

7	What type of devices can be used to block vehicular traffic?		No chains- they are not cane-detectable. Gate or bollards is better.	Rocky Burk, ADA Coordinator, Dept. of Transportation
8	Who will be responsible to ensure that the alley is safe for pedestrians during restaurant operations?	Maintain pedestrian clearance.		
9	Will some sort of compensation be required from the commercial businesses that use a portion of an alley? What would the money be used for?	Routine alley maintenance and cleaning? The City currently has no funding source for alley maintenance.		
10	Confirm slopes within the alley. Ok to grind down sections to meet <2% slope?			Department of Transportation
11	What if the property owner directly across the alley wants to also use the alley for outdoor seating?			
12	What are the proposed hours of operation if a temporary closure is proposed?	Depends on proposed alley use and surrounding land uses on alley.		
13	How will Fire trucks/engines turn around if entering the alley from the side street?	150' max. distance without a turn-around		
14	Is there a different paving standard that would be acceptable to the City? Can interlocking pavers be used?			Department of Transportation
15	What sort of outreach has been done to the other property owners on the block?			
16	Outreach to stakeholders? How will that be managed?			
17	There needs to be consideration given to how to approach parking issues. New uses would generate a code requirement for more parking that may not be able to be accommodated on-site.			Community Development and Department of Transportation
18	Timely access to manholes and drain inlets must be preserved for maintenance and emergency response (i.e. overflowing manholes, sewer back-ups) (Source: Utilities Dept.)			Utilities Department
19	Provide information related to the flow of surface water (rain) through the dining area to the drain inlet. (Source: Utilities Dept.)			Utilities Department

20	Acknowledge that there may be odor complaints during hot/dry weather because there is an existing 18" sewer main in 17th Street and a 90" sewer main in 18th Street. Target zone comprised of combined sewer system (CSS) of various sizes and odor control drop inlets. (Source: Utilities Dept.)	Odor can be mitigated, but with some difficulty.		Utilities Department
21	Maintenance and or replacement of the water/sewer line in general requires total shut down of the alley		Permitting condition can include Hold Harmless Agreement for loss of business	Utilities Department
22	Catastrophic failure (e.g. sudden sinkhole) is always possible. More congregation in the alley increases the probability of injuries to people and liability to City		Permitting condition can include Hold Harmless Agreement.	Utilities Department
23	The pilot location, (Capitol/L 18th to 19th) and most of the target zone is comprised of sewer and water pipes that have not been replaced and are about 100 years old. They are mostly shallow and failed to different degrees.	When the alley surface is beautified, it is a good practice to attempt to renew the underground infrastructure to avoid tearing up the surface.	Formulae for City's share and developer share must be determined. Funding mechanism, such as Assessment District or Community Fee District, should be established to help pay for the improvements.	Utilities Department
24	CSS is currently undersized by today's standard with flooding in the streets and alleys in some heavy storm events. The impact to the CSS collection system capacity as the result of the increased imperviousness (increased landuse density) needs to be addressed.	With more alley development increasing the land use density and other projects changing existing uses to restaurant uses, the cumulative impact to the CSS will be substantial. Upsizing the combined system and new water lines are inevitable.	Formulae for City's share and developer's share must be determined. Funding mechanism, such as Assessment District or Community Fee District, should be established to help pay for the improvements.	Utilities Department
25	More people congregating in the alley also means potentially more litter.		Maintenance district can be created for litter pick up. PBID responsibility?	
26	SMUD: The alley currently has overhead and underground electrical facilities. District consents to the encroachment of the sidewalk café.			SMUD
27	Consider specific regulations with regards to the hours for outdoor music, if applicable.			
28	How will Fire Department maintain required access to building and fire protection systems?	Required to have vehicle access to within 150' of all points of a building.		King Tunson, Fire Department

29	How will Fire Department continue to access bedroom openings within a limited access environment?	Required ladder access to all bedroom windows under 4 stories.		King Tunson, Fire Department
30	What are additional costs/time to developers for <u>new</u> fire protection systems and occupancy separations?	Replacement of landscape/alternate paving to access water mains in alley. Placement of FD connections neat hydrants on alleys.		King Tunson, Fire Department
31	What is the effect for buildings that have provided additional alley egress/access as an alternate means of life safety systems?			King Tunson, Fire Department
32	How will limited access affect Fire Department operations and fire strategy options during an emergency?			King Tunson, Fire Department
33	Fire protection systems such as Fire Department Connections (FDC's) and Post Indicator Valves (PID's) are required to be immediately accessed without obstructions of any kind for a minimum of 3-feet. How will this requirement be maintained?			King Tunson, Fire Department

