



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-21-37
Meeting 21-09
March 10, 2021

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Draft Design Schemes for the Administrative Office Interpretive Elements Project

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Choose a preferred alternative from the two draft design schemes and provide any additional direction for planning and design of public-facing interpretive elements for the future Administrative Office located at 5050 El Camino Real in Los Altos.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) has contracted with EDX Exhibits to provide planning and design services for public-facing interpretive elements at the District's future Administration Office located at 5050 El Camino Real. The goal of this project is to provide members of the public who visit the administrative office with opportunities to create meaningful personal connections to multiple interpretive themes inspired by the District's work and mission. The General Manager is seeking a Board of Directors (Board) selection of a preferred alternative from the two draft design schemes and any additional Board direction to inform next steps.

BACKGROUND

Since purchasing the current 330 Distel Circle, Los Altos office building in 1990, the District's success in growing the regional greenbelt, restoring natural lands, and expanding public access has created the need for additional office space. As a forward-thinking and fiscally prudent public agency, the District planned for its long-term office space needs by setting aside general reserve funds. After exploring alternatives, purchasing and repurposing an existing, larger office building and selling the current building to offset costs emerged as the most cost-efficient, environmentally sound long-term solution.

At the July 2017 public meeting, the Board of Directors (Board) adopted a resolution to enter into a purchase and sale agreement for the building located at 5050 El Camino Real in Los Altos ([R-17-90](#)). Escrow closed on February 1, 2019. Construction to repurpose the building to meet District needs in fulfilling its mission and serving the public started in February 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in March 2022. This new office space presents multiple opportunities to enhance public awareness of the District and foster a deeper connection to the local natural resources and iconic Bay Area landscapes through informative and inspirational interpretive elements.

Project Scope and Design Consultant

The following areas in and around the new Administrative Office building located at 5050 El Camino Real have been identified as spaces and locations where public-facing interpretive elements and design features are desired.

Entry Lobby/Foyer

Visitors will enter the building through a ground-level set of doors into a foyer with approximate dimensions of 38 feet by 16 feet, enclosed by windows with a high ceiling. There are two wall spaces available, each with approximate dimensions of 9 feet by 9 feet, and three-dimensional floor space.

Main Lobby/Atrium

The main lobby has approximate floor-space dimensions of 38 feet by 23 feet. The lobby and atrium contain a 24-foot by 9-foot wall space identified for interpretive elements. The lobby and atrium will include a reception desk area and a visitor seating area with ample space for interpretive elements or design features.

Outdoor Areas

The walkway between the sidewalk at El Camino Real and the building's front door provides outdoor space and there are other available outdoor areas along Distel Circle that could help draw people in from the sidewalk or parking areas. There is retaining wall space available adjacent to the southern access of the underground garage with dimensions of 50 feet by 6 feet and four areas on the building exterior facing El Camino Real, with dimensions of approximately 20 feet by 5 feet.

To proceed with Phase 1 of the interpretive elements project (interpretive planning and design), the District completed a competitive consultant selection process in the fall of 2020, entering into a contract with EDX Exhibits (EDX) ([R-20-133](#)). EDX was chosen based on their design quality and relevance, expertise and competency, commitment to accessibility and diversity, and overall cost.

DISCUSSION**Draft Design Schemes**

The focus of this item is to receive Board input on and selection of a preferred design approach as conceptualized in the two draft design schemes discussed below and provided in Attachment 1. These two draft design schemes reflect the Project Brief that was approved by the Board on January 27, 2021 ([R-21-18](#)). The schemes provide an overall design approach and general direction to help the Board select a tone, mood, and color palette for the project.

- **SCHEME 1: Bringing the Preserves to the People**

This scheme focuses on bringing a mini-preserve experience into the office space by exploring multiple habitats found in District preserves. This scheme uses natural and reused materials that reflect what one can find at the preserves, as well as smooth transitions and natural colors to draw people into the preserve experience. This scheme also attempts to stay truer to scale to provide as realistic an experience as possible to incite curiosity and interest for heading out to the land and gain a full sensory preserve experience.

- **SCHEME 2: Windows into Open Space**


This scheme focuses on inviting visitors to peer into the open space experience through “windows” from the office space into each of the interpretive themes, including using wooden frames around vibrant, backlit photographs. This scheme utilizes more modern finishes, bold colors, and textures that create architectural, dynamic spaces featuring playful, interactive, tactile and architectural elements with movement to bridge the urban setting of the site with the natural character of the preserves.

The general cost estimate for fabricating and installing each scheme is approximately \$120,000, depending on the final plan and design. Once a preferred scheme is selected, EDX will proceed to flesh out a detailed plan, design, and draft cost estimate that the Board is scheduled to review at their July 14, 2021 meeting. This more detailed plan will incorporate Board feedback received on March 10, 2021 as best as possible.

Project Timeline

Phase 1 of this project encompasses planning and design according to the following schedule and scope.

Phase I: Interpretive Planning and Design Timeline

SCHEDULE	SCOPE
Dec. – Jan. 2020-21	Transmit pertinent information and create a project brief that includes the proposed interpretive foundations on which to base the design, including an overarching theme reflecting the District's missions, Vision Plan, and Board direction. Include identification of tangible elements to be interpreted and associated intangible elements and universal concepts. Finalize Project Brief with Board feedback on January 27, 2021.
 Feb.-Mar. 2021	Create 2 design scheme alternatives that explore different organizing themes, visitor flow, and how the established themes can best be communicated through panels, interactive and tactile elements, and/or audio-visual elements. Include a cost estimate for fabrication of each scheme. Present to the full Board for selection of a preferred alternative on March 10, 2021.
Mar. - July 2021	Develop design for the preferred alternative, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals and objectives for each exhibit area or primary element. • Plans and elevations for all exhibit components. • Sketches and descriptions of proposed interactive and tactile elements. • Initial layouts and first draft text for all graphic panels, including font selection and color palettes and layout for interpretive panels. • Digital modeling of the exhibit scheme to help communicate exhibit design to District staff and Board. • Strategies for programmatic accessibility to bring exhibit content alive for visitors with low vision and blindness, hearing impairments and cognitive differences. • Cost estimate for fabrication and installation of the design. <p>Seek Board review and feedback on July 14, 2021.</p>
July-Aug. 2021	Create a final design document, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully dimensioned plans, elevations, and sections

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed drawings of interactive and tactile elements Fully developed Audio/Visual treatments and coordination with project design team to ensure all elements work seamlessly with the project design Final layouts with final text and photos/graphics for all graphic panels Fabrication and installation cost estimate <p>Present the final design document to the full Board on August 25, 2021.</p>
Sept.- Oct. 2021	Incorporate all final corrections to the final design and production document, and hand-off to fabricator for Phase II work.

The second phase of this project will be fabrication and installation of interpretive elements and will require a separate competitive request for proposals process. Phase II work is expected to begin in the fall of 2021 with fabrication and installation complete before the District moves into 5050 El Camino Real in March 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT

At each major milestone, the District presents a revised cost estimate to ensure that the overall administrative office project remains within the May 2019 Board-approved project budget of \$27.4 million ([R-19-64](#)). The latest 100% project cost estimate is approximately \$26.8 million, below the Board approved project budget.

Funding sources for the project include using *Committed for Infrastructure* reserve funds, any future additions to the reserve, rent income, parity bond proceeds, and interest earned from the parity bonds. Partial reimbursement will also come from the future sale of the current 330 Distel Circle office ([R-20-117](#)).

The administrative office interpretive elements project is divided into two phases:

- Phase 1: Planning and Design (the subject of this Agenda Item)
- Phase 2: Fabrication and Installation of the approved interpretive elements (future phase)

The Fiscal Year 2020-21 (FY21) adopted budget for the New Administrative Office (AO) Facility project #31202 is \$8,488,000, which includes funds for the interpretive project. There are sufficient funds in the project budget to cover expenditures through the end of the fiscal year for the Phase I scope of work. Funding for FY22 will be requested as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process and is currently estimated to be a maximum of \$166,000 to finalize planning and design, and complete fabrication and installation – these funds are rolled into the FY22 projected costs for planning/design/construction as shown below.

New Administration Office (AO) Facility #31202	Prior Year Actuals	FY21 Adopted	FY22 Projected	FY23 Projected	Estimated Future Years	TOTAL
Acquisition:	\$31,742,406	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$31,742,406
Planning/Design/Construction ² :	\$1,744,869	\$8,402,000	\$17,253,131	\$0	\$0	\$27,400,000¹
Move-in and Closeout ³ :	\$0	\$86,000	\$1,051,927	\$0	\$0	\$1,137,927
Total Budget:	\$33,487,275	\$8,488,000	\$18,305,058	\$0	\$0	\$60,280,333

Acquisition and associated purchase costs Spent-to-Date (as of 02/18/2021):	(\$31,742,406)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$31,742,406)
Spent-to-Date (as of 02/18/2021):	(\$1,744,869)	(\$125,494)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$1,870,363)
Encumbrances:	\$0	(\$8,362,506)	(\$14,430,949)	\$0	\$0	(\$22,793,455)
Budget Remaining (Proposed):	\$0	\$0	\$3,874,109	\$0	\$0	\$3,874,109

¹Amount includes Board approved project budget of \$27.4M

²FY22 amount reflects revised, updated estimate based on current accelerated schedule

³The FY22 projection of \$1.05 million has not been approved by the Board and will be reviewed by the Board as part of the FY22 Budget and Action Plan process

The recommended action is not funded by Measure AA.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

This project has previously come to the full Board of Directors at the following public meetings:

- **November 18, 2020:** The Board approved award of contract to EDX Exhibits to complete phase 1 planning and design. ([R-20-133](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **January 27, 2021:** The Board reviewed, discussed and approved the Project Brief, which documents the interpretive foundations that will inform and guide the project. ([R-21-18](#), meeting minutes have not been approved yet)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Approval of office interpretive elements is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Furthermore, the AO Project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15301, Existing Facilities. District staff filed Notices of Exemption with Santa Clara County on September 24, 2020.

NEXT STEPS

If approved, the consultant and multi-department staff project team will proceed with developing a detailed plan and design using the preferred design scheme, which will be brought to the Board for review on July 14, 2021.

Attachment1: Draft Design Schemes

Responsible Department Head:
Korrine Skinner, Public Affairs Manager

Staff contact:
Leigh Ann Gessner, Public Affairs Specialist II

Prepared by:

Leigh Ann Gessner, Public Affairs Specialist II

Renée Fitzsimons, Interpretation & Education Program Manager

Draft Design Schemes Presentation for Exhibits

1 Scope for AO Exhibit Design

2 Scheme 1—Bringing the preserves to the people

3 Scheme 2—Windows into open space

4 Site Element Options

Schemes 1 and 2 convey the same content—it's the organization and aesthetics of each that are different.



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Big Interpretive Idea for the exhibits:

**Open space belongs to everyone:
it preserves our natural world,
sustains healthy living, and offers
enriched experiences for people
to connect with nature.**

Interpretive themes:

Midpen agency—The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is an innovative public entity that preserves open space for its many benefits.

Importance of open space—Preservation of open space and agricultural lands provides multiple benefits, including restoration of vital ecosystems, conservation of the region's dramatic scenery and rich agricultural heritage, and provides opportunities for enriching and ecologically sensitive recreation.

Open space is for everyone—While preserving the natural world, open space also provides profound benefits and enrichment for all people.

Scope for Exhibit Design

Outdoor Areas

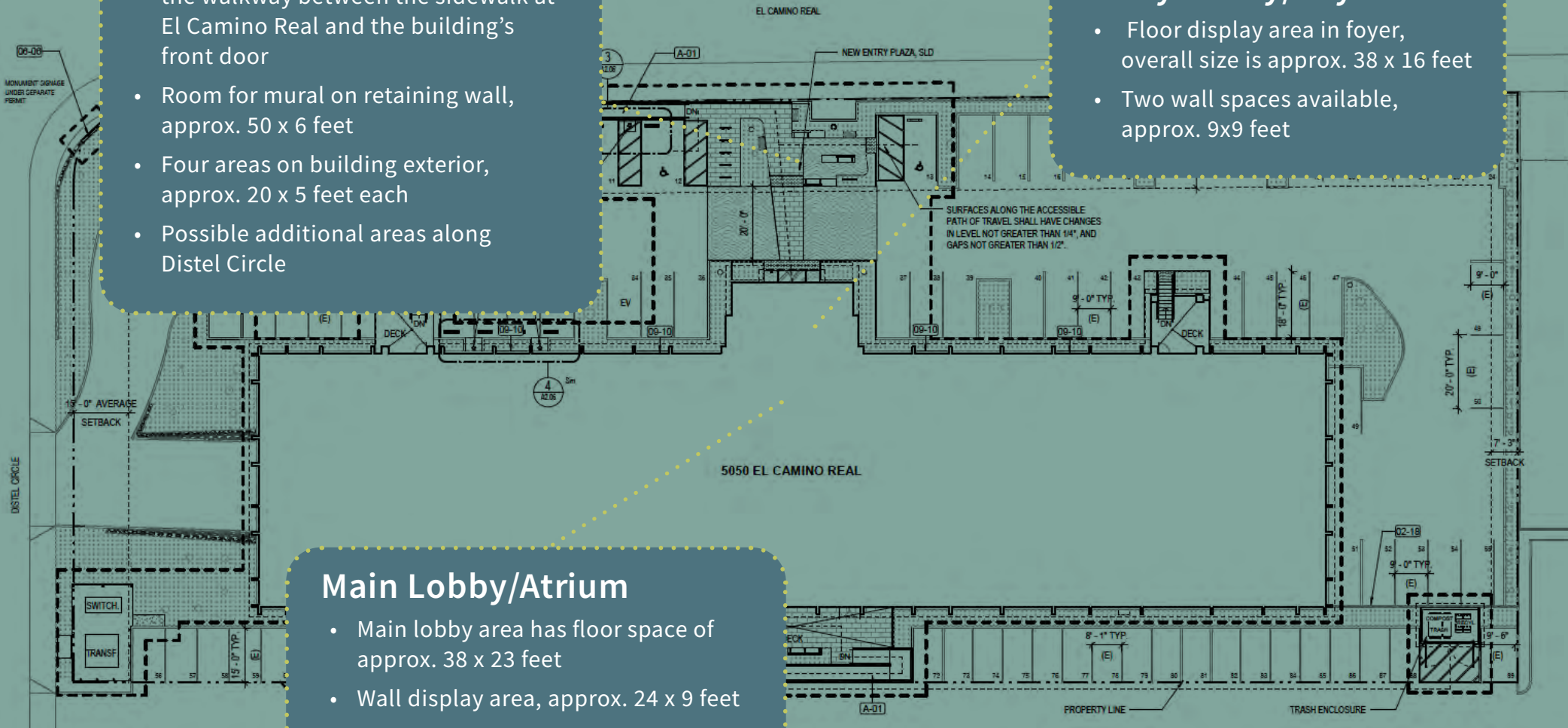
- Room for interpretive panels along the walkway between the sidewalk at El Camino Real and the building's front door
- Room for mural on retaining wall, approx. 50 x 6 feet
- Four areas on building exterior, approx. 20 x 5 feet each
- Possible additional areas along Distel Circle

Entry Lobby/Foyer

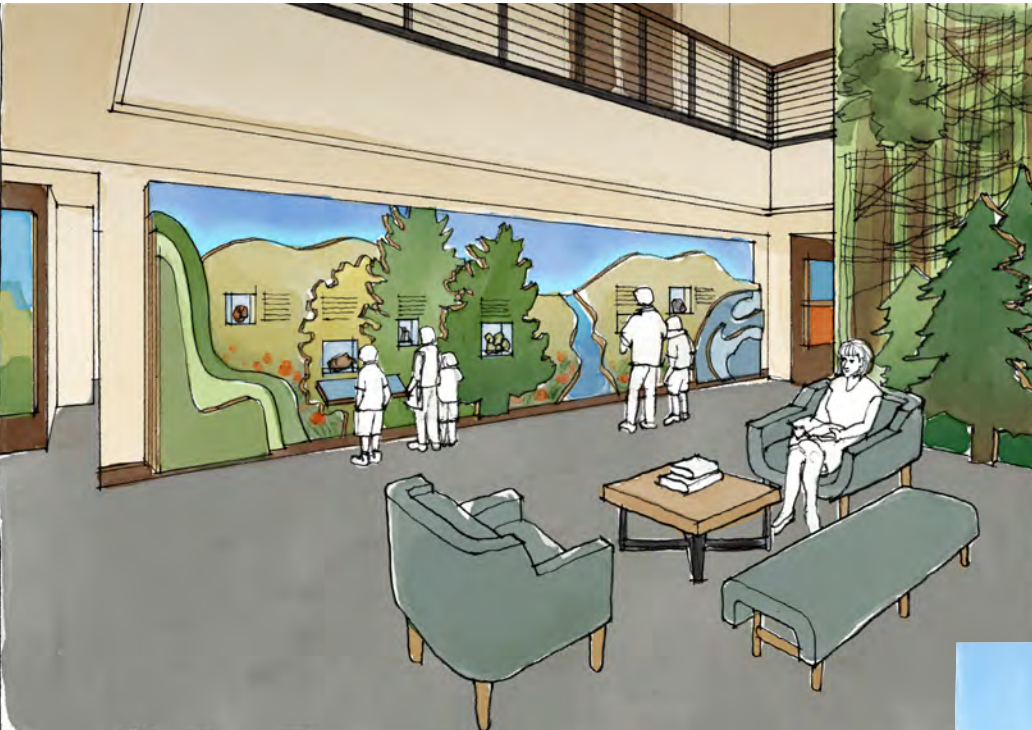
- Floor display area in foyer, overall size is approx. 38 x 16 feet
- Two wall spaces available, approx. 9x9 feet

Main Lobby/Atrium

- Main lobby area has floor space of approx. 38 x 23 feet
- Wall display area, approx. 24 x 9 feet
- Possible additional elements: 60" monitor, photo wrap for elevator, backlit photo in hall, large scale mural above stairs, framed art upstairs



Scheme 1 Overview



Scheme 1—Bringing the preserves to the people

- Brings a sense of the natural preserve experience to the plaza and inside.
- Uses wood and other natural materials with modern finishes, subtle colors and textures.
- Creates comfortable, evocative spaces.
- Incites curiosity and interest through large-scale, holistic, and integrated exhibits.
- Immerses visitor in sense of the preserve environments.






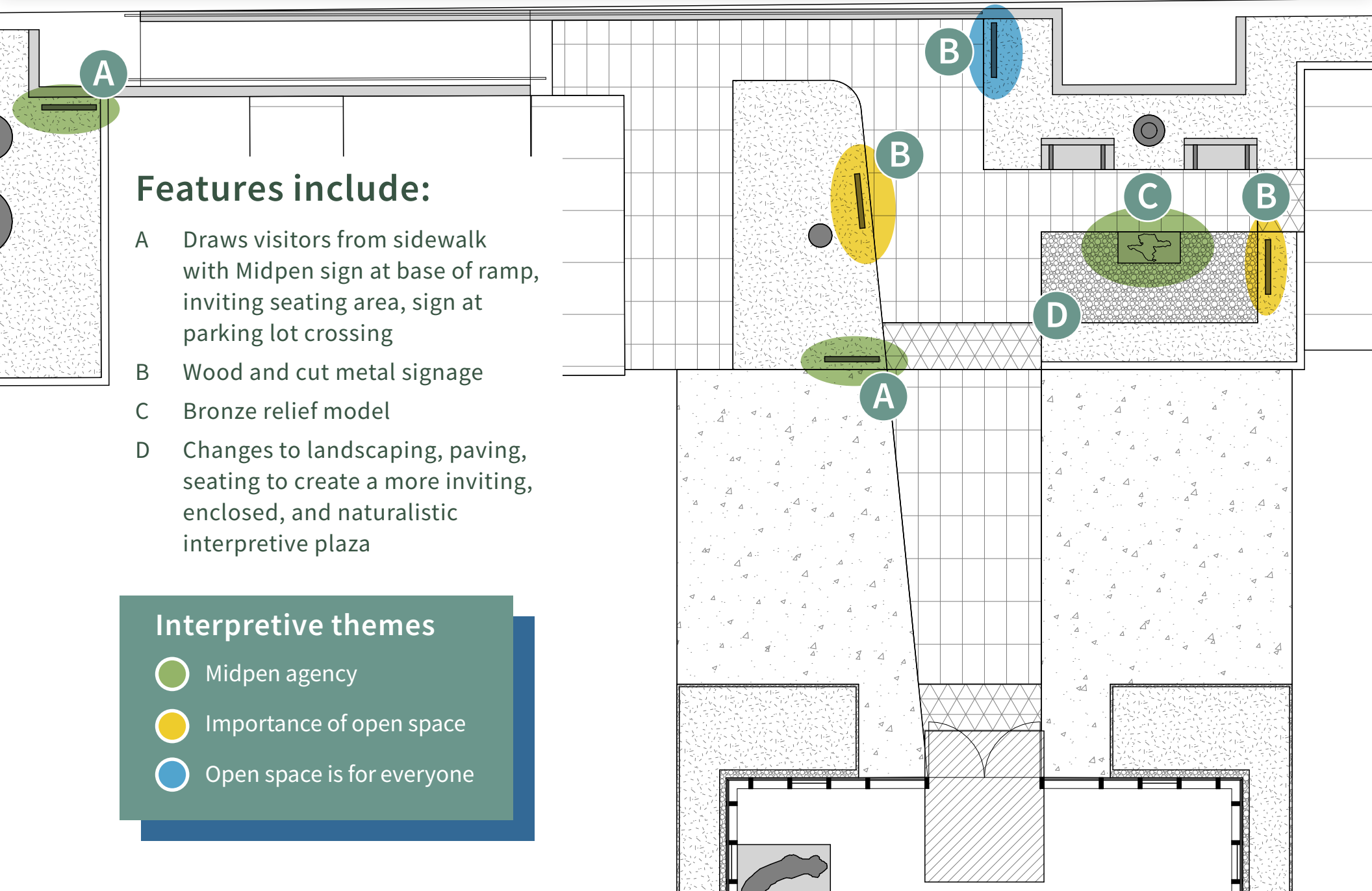
Scheme 1 Exterior Proposed Features

Features include:

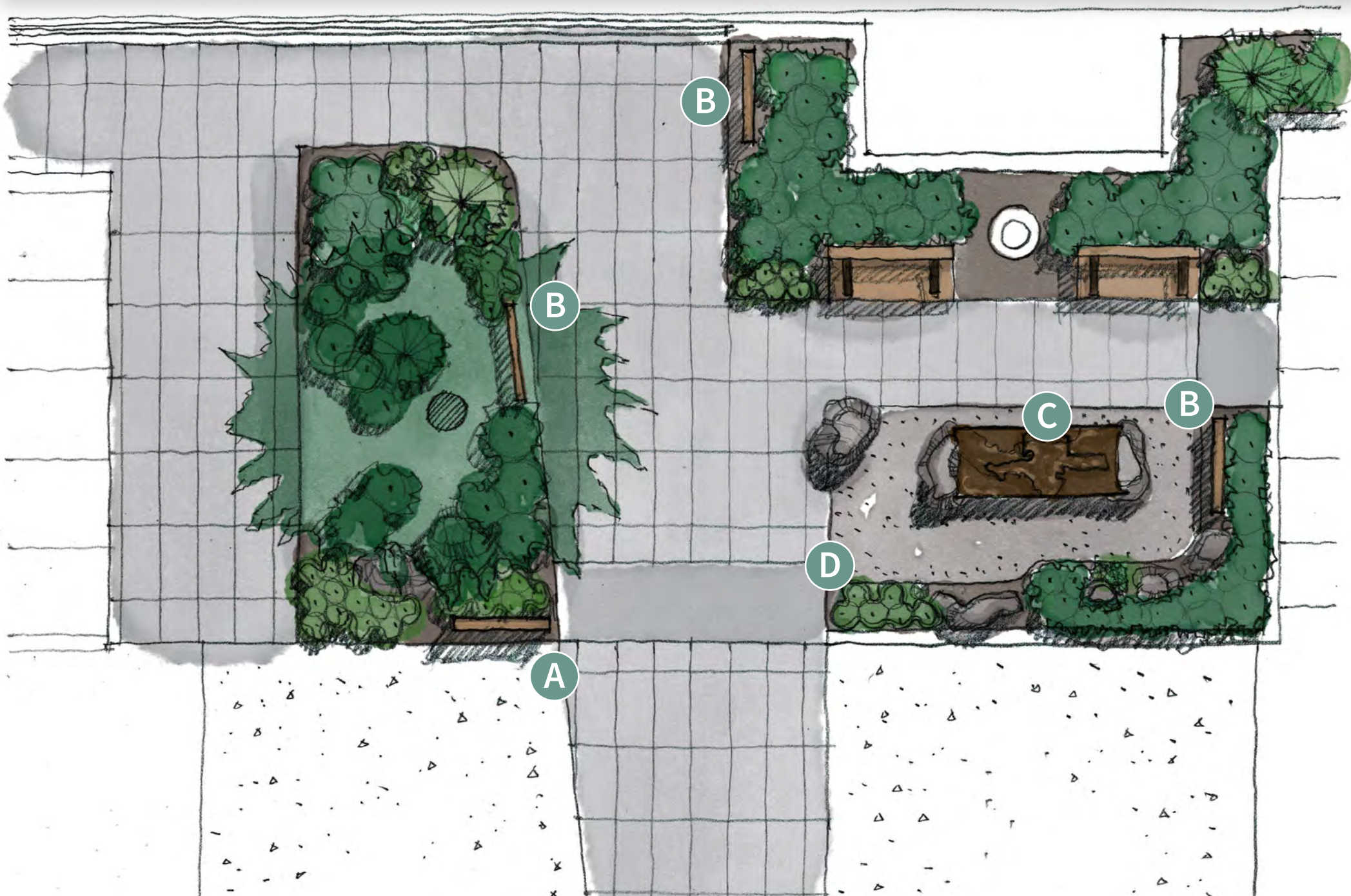
- A Draws visitors from sidewalk with Midpen sign at base of ramp, inviting seating area, sign at parking lot crossing
- B Wood and cut metal signage
- C Bronze relief model
- D Changes to landscaping, paving, seating to create a more inviting, enclosed, and naturalistic interpretive plaza

Interpretive themes

-  Midpen agency
-  Importance of open space
-  Open space is for everyone



Scheme 1 Exterior Plaza Proposed Features



Scheme 1 Exterior Plaza



Scheme 1 Exterior Reference Images



Reference images included to convey the general look, feel, materials, and style that features in this scheme may emulate. More context will be provided in the meeting presentation.

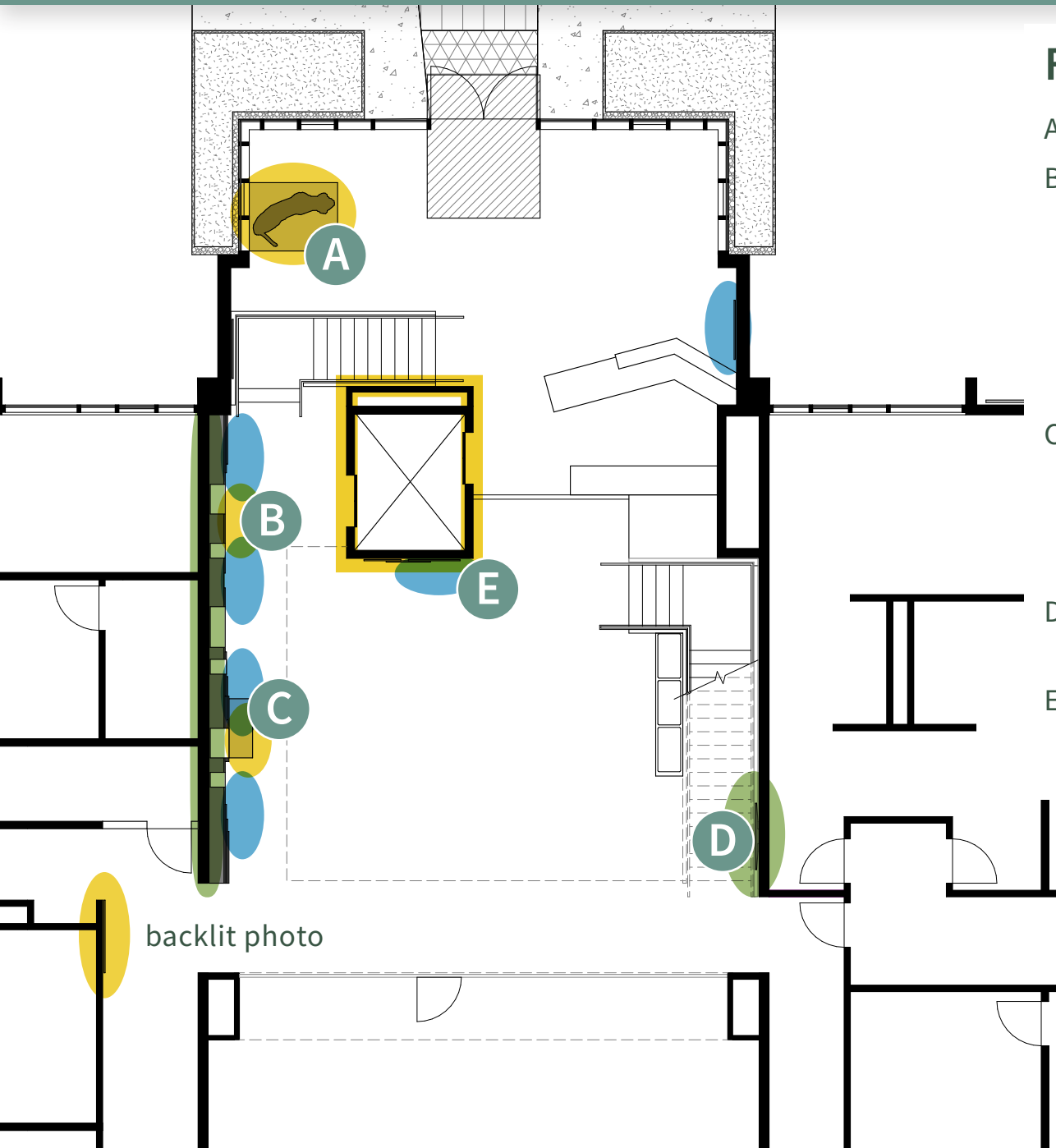
Scheme 1 Exterior Reference Images



Reference images included to convey the general look, feel, materials, and style that features in this scheme may emulate. More context will be provided in the meeting presentation.



Scheme 1 Interior Proposed Features



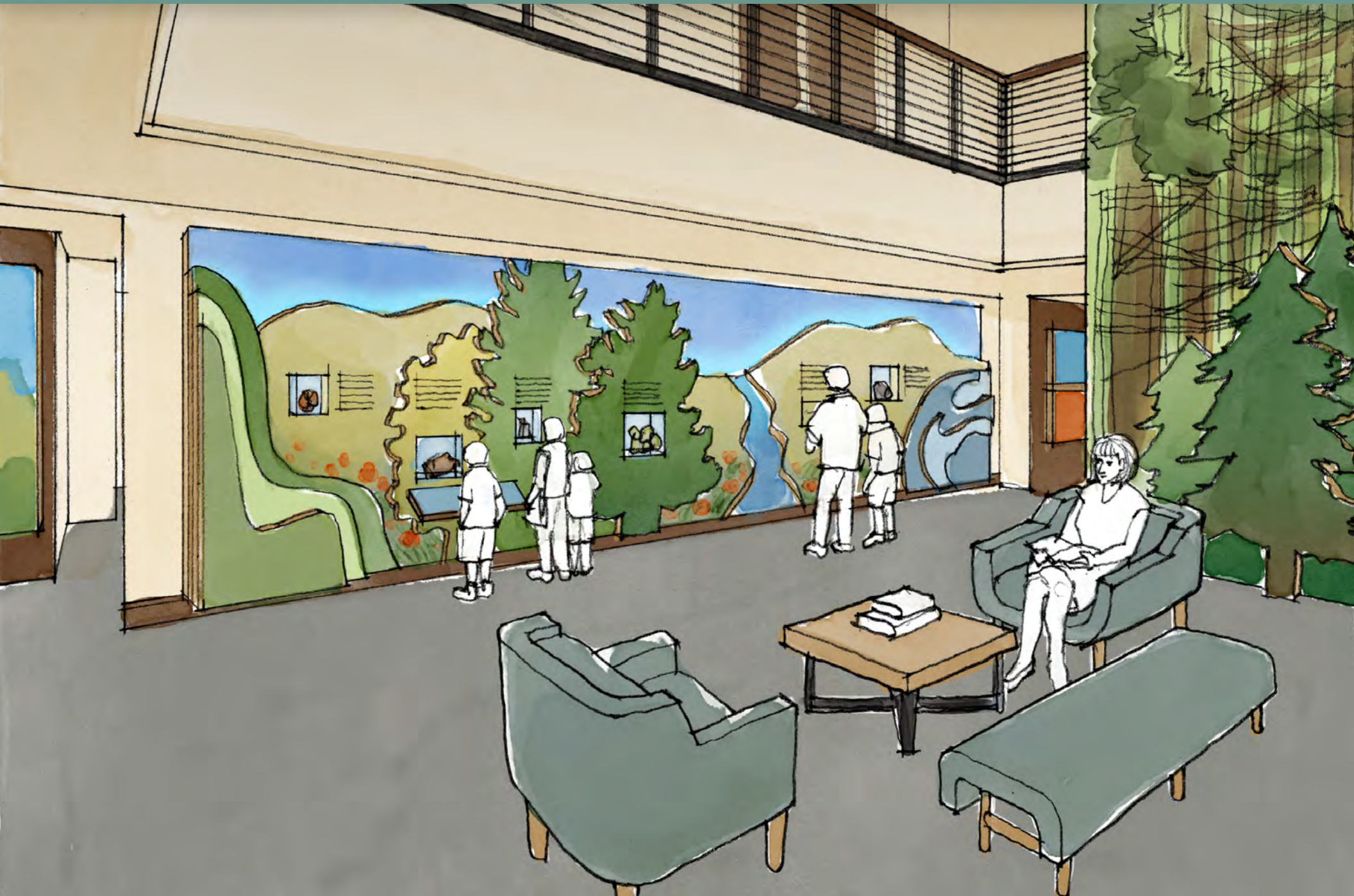
Features include:

- A Cougar in foyer with window graphics
- B Exhibit wall display made of layers of apple wood, printed with abstract habitat imagery
Visitors experience wall as one multi-layered landscape, featuring up to four habitats
- C Graphics, objects, images are inset into wood layers
Content distributed and woven together across exhibit wall
- D Monitor on opposite wall, beneath stairs
- E Cutouts of redwood saplings (in apple) applied to elevator photo wrap.

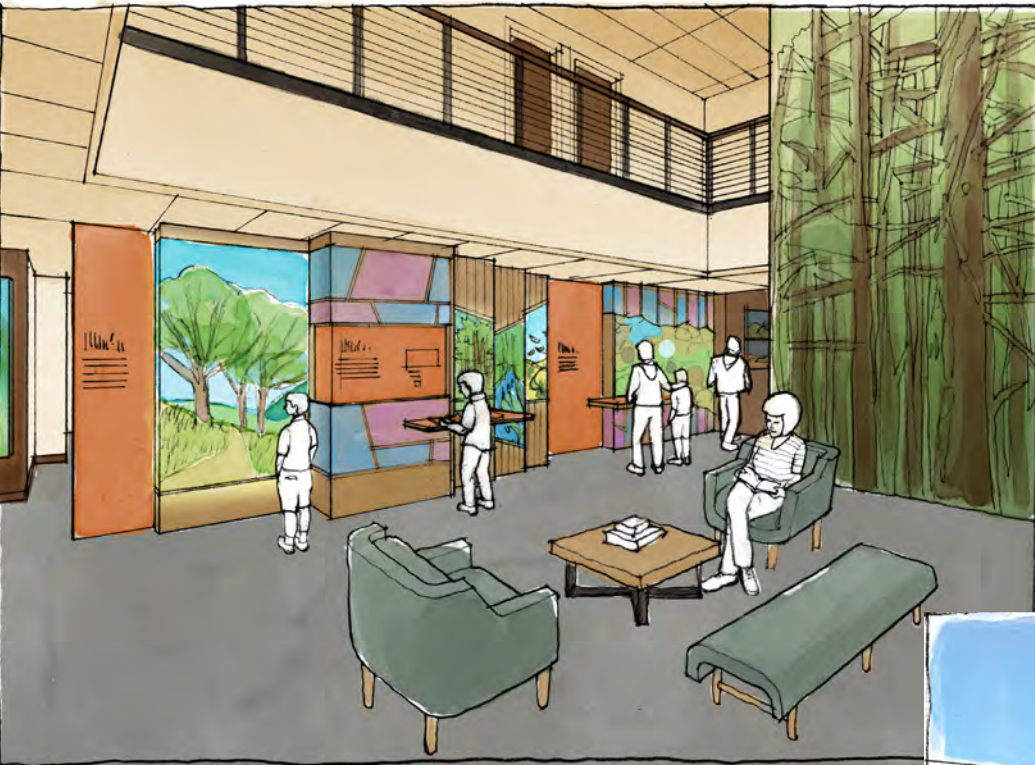
Interpretive themes

- Midpen agency
- Importance of open space
- Open space is for everyone

Scheme 1 Interior Exhibit Wall



Scheme 2 Overview



Scheme 2— Windows into open space

- Invites visitors to explore the preserves through dramatic imagery.
- Uses wood frames to invite visitors to look into the experience of open space.
- Uses wood and other natural materials with modern finishes, bold colors and textures.
- Creates architectural, dynamic distinct spaces.
- Presents interpretive themes separately—each theme has own “window.”






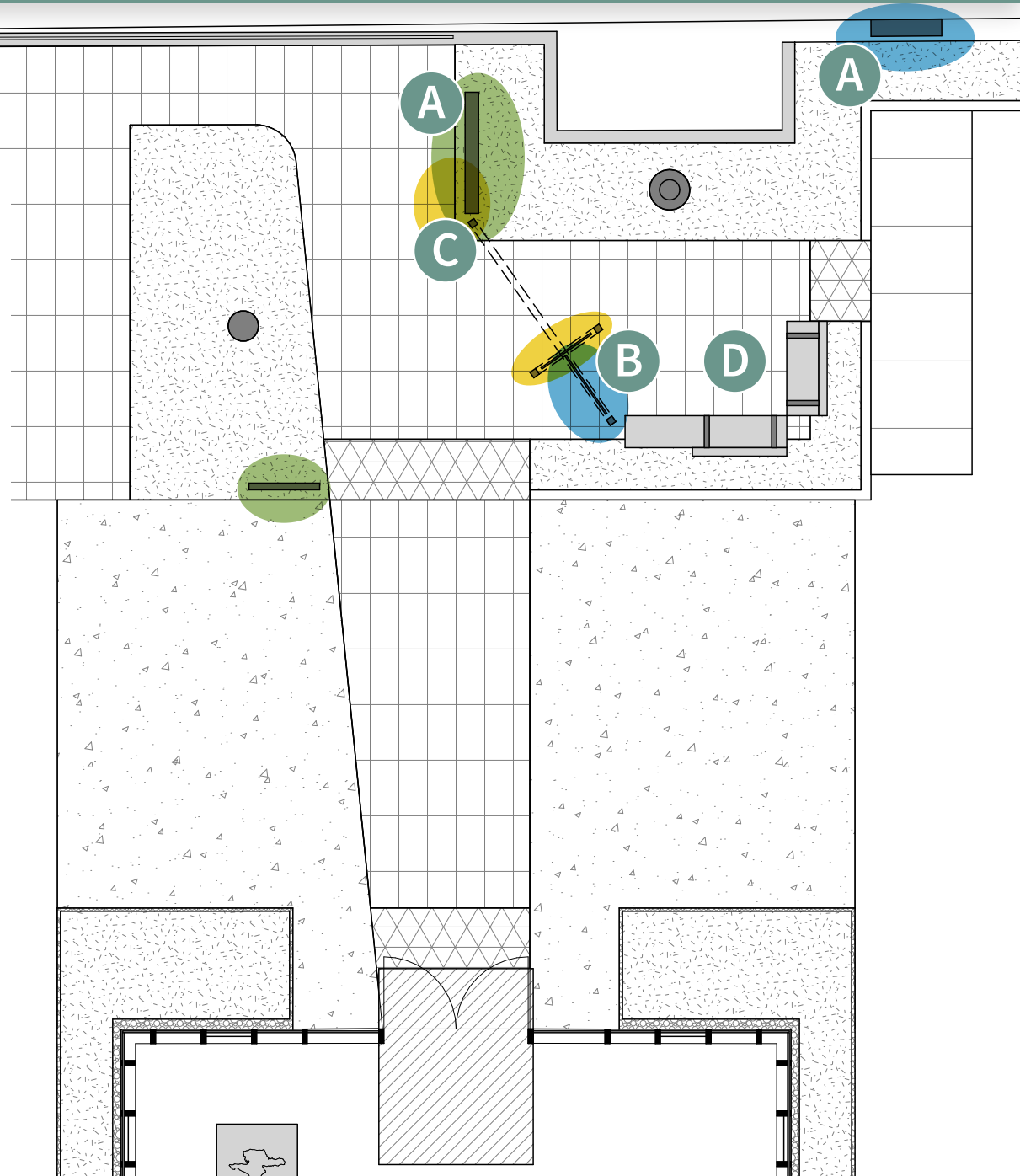
Scheme 2 Exterior Proposed Features

Features include:

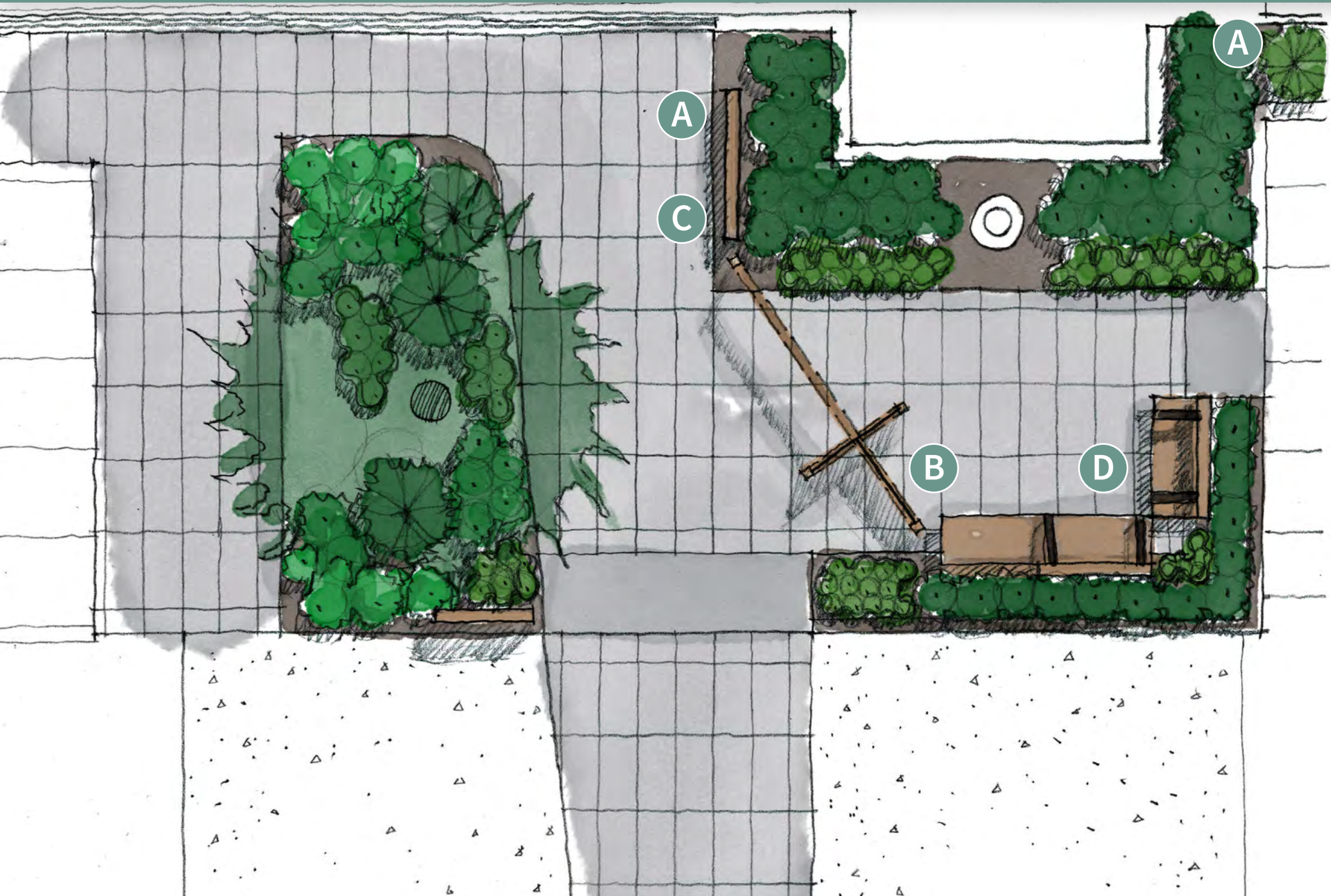
- A Engages visitors from sidewalk with moving elements and structure visible in plaza, graphic on retaining wall at sidewalk
- B Wood frames with smooth metal signage
- C Spinners featuring different preserves
- D Changes to landscaping, paving, seating to create a more inviting, enclosed interpretive plaza
Banners are colorful, fabric

Interpretive themes

-  Midpen agency
-  Importance of open space
-  Open space is for everyone



Scheme 2 Exterior Plaza Proposed Features



Scheme 2 Exterior Plaza

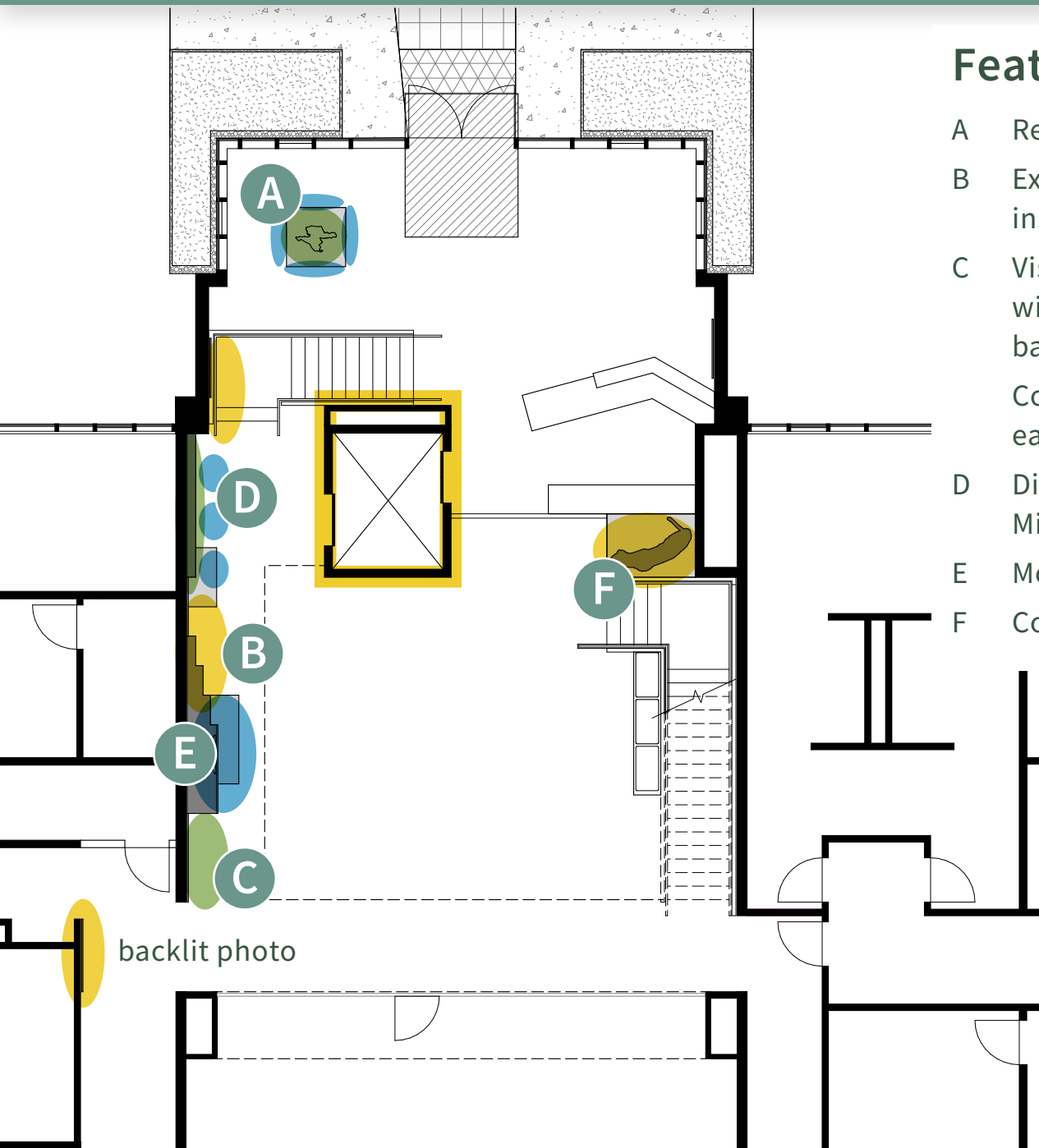


Scheme 2 Exterior Reference Images



Reference images included to convey the general look, feel, materials, and style that features in this scheme may emulate. More context will be provided in the meeting presentation.

Scheme 2 Interior Proposed Features



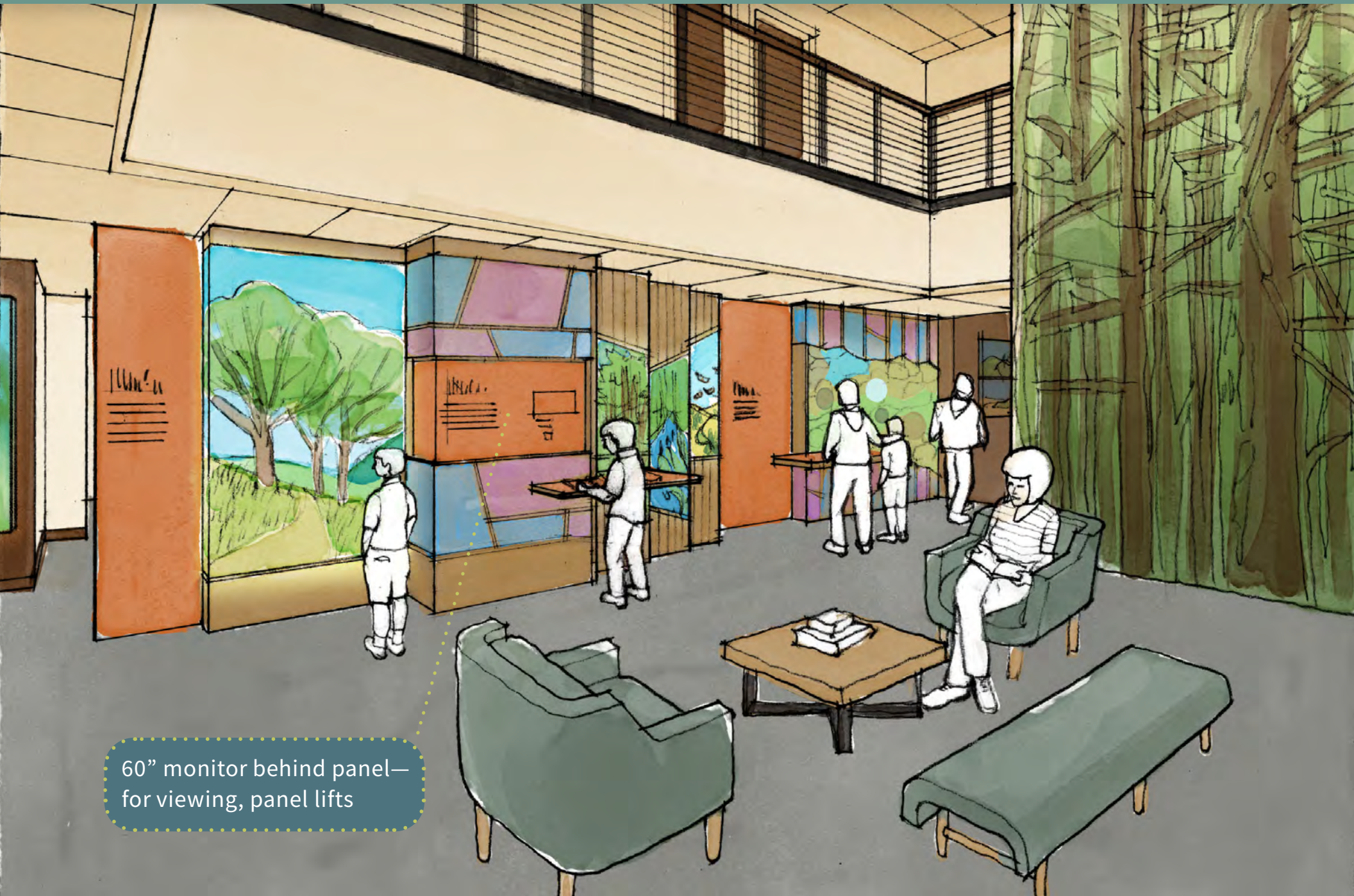
Features include:

- A Relief model in foyer
- B Exhibit wall display made of wood with inset graphics
- C Visitors experience wall as sequence of windows onto interpretive themes—backlit photos throughout
Content divided up into separate bays, each theme has large introductory graphic
- D Display includes large horizontal map of Midpen preserves
- E Monitor concealed behind liftable panel
- F Cougar on opposite wall, next to stairs.

Interpretive themes

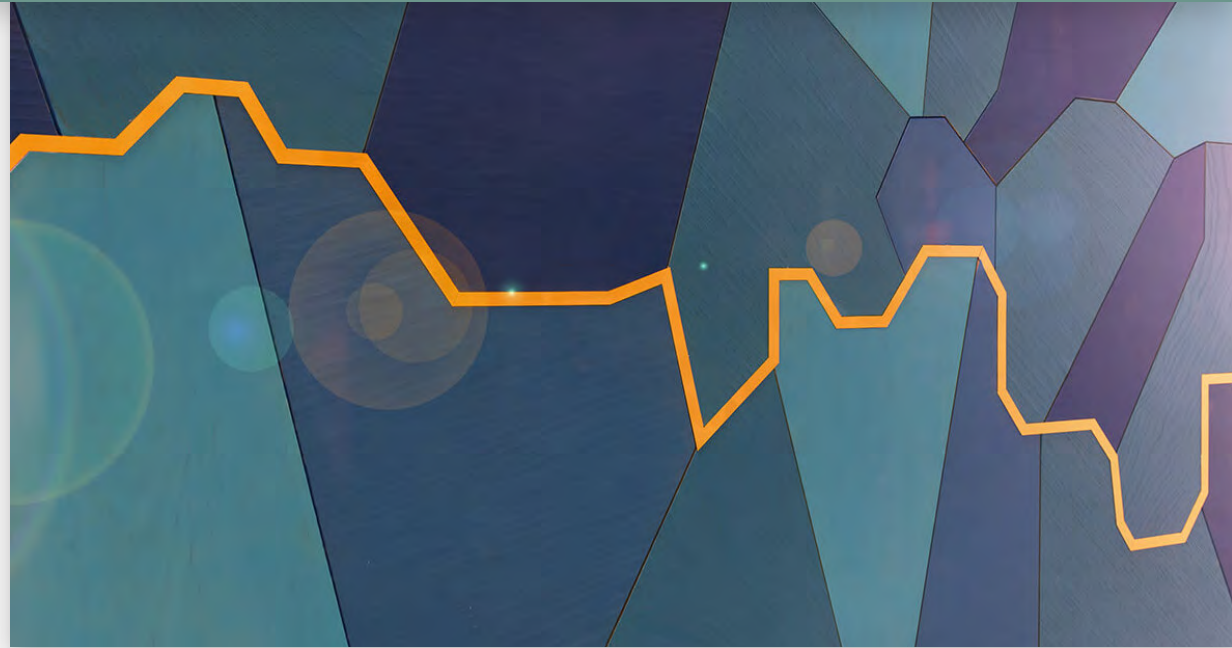
- Midpen agency
- Importance of open space
- Open space is for everyone

Scheme 2 Interior Exhibit Wall



60" monitor behind panel—
for viewing, panel lifts

Scheme 2 Interior Reference Images



Reference images included to convey the general look, feel, materials, and style that features in this scheme may emulate. More context will be provided in the meeting presentation.

Site Elements Option 1: Metal Cutouts



Reference images

These site element options show different possibilities for exterior elements—their general look, feel, aesthetic, and materials.

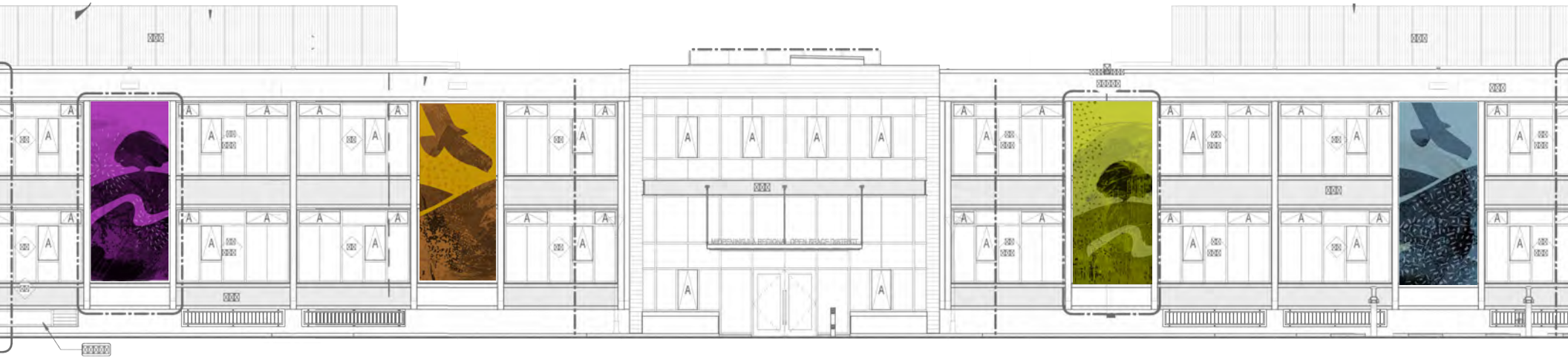
Option 1: Metal Cutouts

Design description: Abstracted nature-based patterns found in preserves

Proposed material: powder-coated painted metal cutouts

Approx. cost: \$5,000 each

Site Elements Option 2: Banners



Option 2: Banners (2a)

Design description: Midpen logo elements in duotone colors from Midpen palette

Proposed material: cloth banners (or tile or enamel)

Approx. cost: \$2,500 each for cloth (dye fades after 1-2 years) or plastic mesh banners (lasts approx. 5 years)

Approx. cost: \$5,000-\$8,000 each for tile or enamel—lasts approx. 25+ years

Site Elements Option 2: Banners



Option 2: Banners (2b)

Design description: Midpen logo elements in multiple colors from Midpen palette

Proposed material: cloth banners (or tile or enamel)

Approx. cost: \$2,500 each for cloth (dye fades after 1-2 years) or plastic mesh banners (lasts approx. 5 years)

Approx. cost: \$5,000-\$8,000 each for tile or enamel—lasts approx. 25+ years

Site Elements Option 2: Banners

Suggested Artist

Paintings by Hilary Williams, an artist living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area. She creates fine art screen prints on paper, mixed media paintings and illustrations in which she takes inspiration from her environments, the urban and natural landscapes and a fantastical imagination. Pieces shown here are examples of her style only.



Site Elements Option 3: No Banners



Option 3: No Banners

No banner option

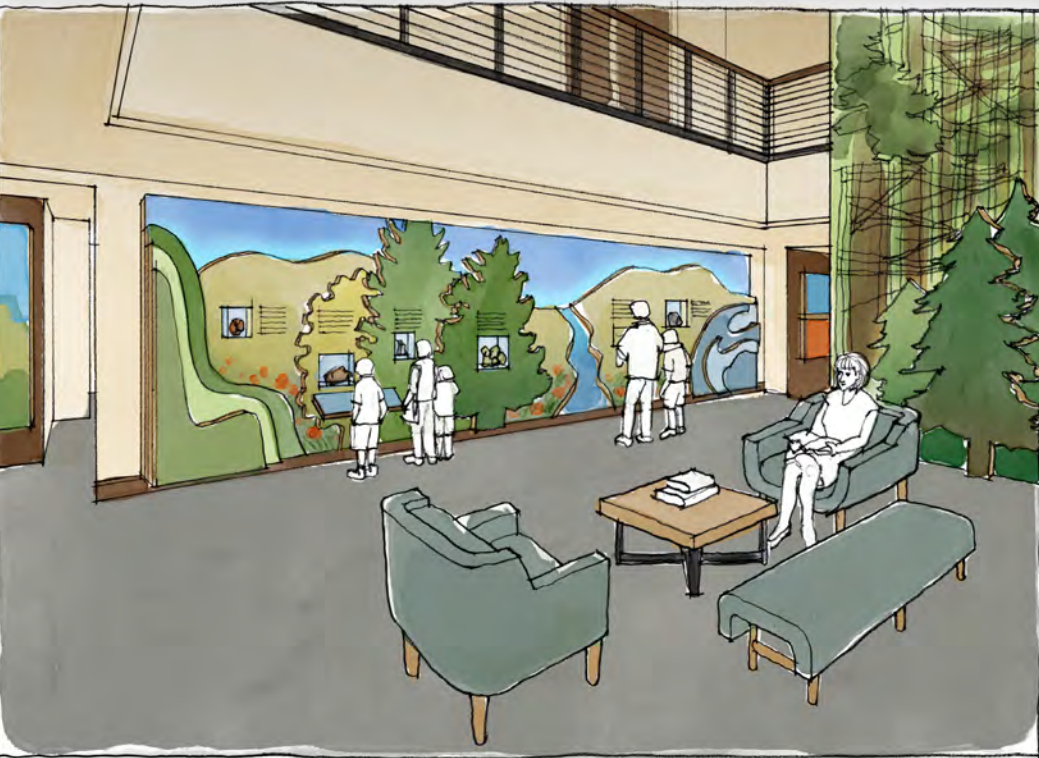
Approx. cost savings: \$10,000-\$16,000

Cost Estimate for Schemes 1 & 2

These cost estimates give a general sense for how the two draft design schemes compare cost-wise. Actual costs will depend on the elements in the final plan and design.

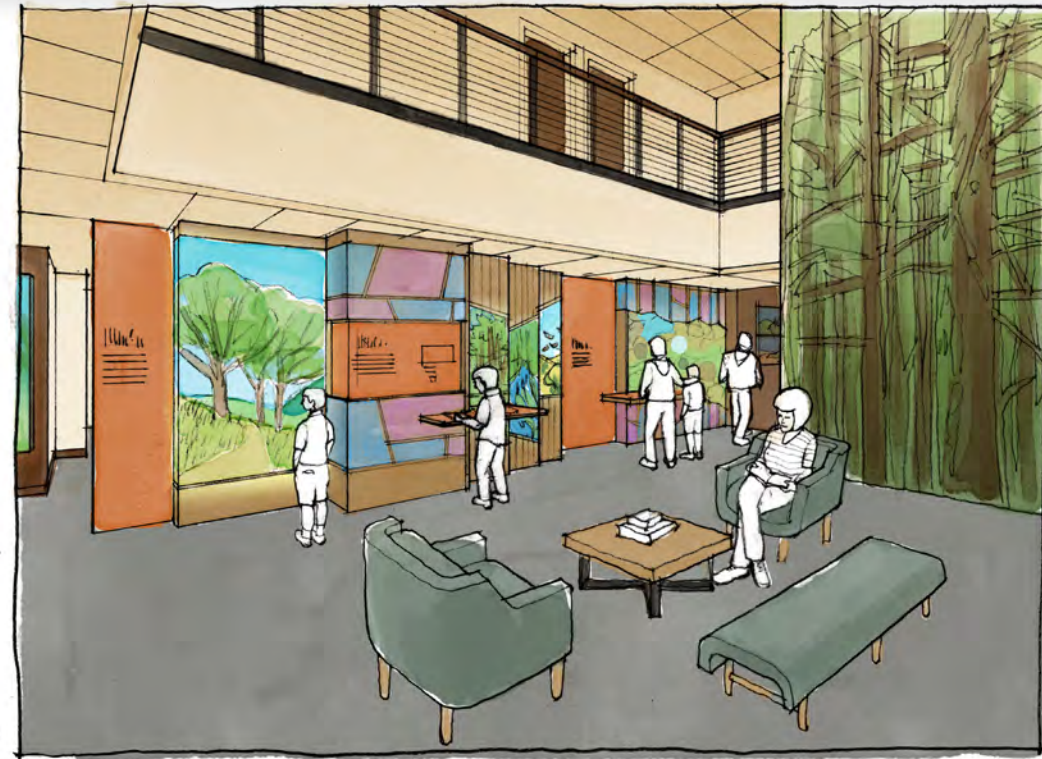
Scheme 1: BRINGING THE PRESERVES TO THE PEOPLE	Scheme 2: WINDOWS INTO OPEN SPACE
EXTERIOR	EXTERIOR
APPROXIMATE EXTERIOR COST \$62,000	APPROXIMATE EXTERIOR COST \$43,000
PROPOSED ELEMENTS include: 5 panels and structures, bronze relief model, mural, 2 banners.	PROPOSED ELEMENTS include: 4 panels and structure, spinner interactive, mural, 4 fabric banners.
More expensive due to bronze relief model, metal cutouts for banners.	Less expensive due to lack of bronze relief model, fabric banners.
INTERIOR	INTERIOR
APPROXIMATE INTERIOR COST \$80,000	APPROXIMATE COST \$99,000
PROPOSED ELEMENTS include: Cougar in foyer, graphics on wall between foyer and lobby, main lobby wall display, elevator photo-wrap.	PROPOSED ELEMENTS include: Relief model in foyer, graphics on wall between foyer and lobby, main lobby wall display, elevator photo-wrap.
Less expensive due to less complex construction of main wall display.	More expensive due to relief model, more complex construction of main wall display, backlit photos.
APPROXIMATE TOTAL COST \$142,000	APPROXIMATE TOTAL COST \$142,000

Schemes 1 & 2: At-A-Glance



Scheme 1—Bringing the preserves to the people

- Brings a sense of the natural preserve experience to the plaza and inside.
- Uses wood and other natural materials with modern finishes, subtle colors and textures.
- Creates comfortable, evocative spaces.
- Incites curiosity and interest through large-scale, holistic, and integrated exhibits.
- Immerses visitor in sense of the preserve environments.



Scheme 2— Windows into open space

- Invites visitors to explore the preserves through dramatic imagery.
- Uses wood frames to invite visitors to look into the experience of open space.
- Uses wood and other natural materials with modern finishes, bold colors and textures.
- Creates architectural, dynamic distinct spaces.
- Presents interpretive themes separately—each theme has own “window.”