

JMOS Courtyard Input from Parents 4-15-20

1. **Which spaces does JMOS want to commit to maintaining as a courtyard? District maintenance will not maintain these spaces. Proposed spaces to the south and east of entry are ~10,200 square feet while our current courtyard space is ~4,500 square feet.**

There were no formal parent responses to this question. The only parent that verbally said she would commit to maintaining a space was Laurie Green who would commit to maintaining some garden beds and is interested in an area for edible/food forest. Pam's take is that the parents will defer to whatever spaces the teachers would like to maintain but can't be counted on for ongoing maintenance. Suggestions from Pam are a) be sure that whichever spaces are chosen, teachers are committed to maintaining the spaces with their classes; b) landscape architect can drastically reduce maintenance by designing a durable, permanent, low-maintenance space with mulch, sand, concrete surfaces and low-maintenance plants.

2. **Which space might be optimal for a future playground to be funded and built by PTC? Landscape architect may be able to help plan for future connections with playground and/or we may determine one of the proposed courtyard spaces would work for this purpose.**

See answer 1. Parents will defer to teachers on this, but can't be counted on for continued, ongoing maintenance. Pam's suggestion would be to have either the area east or west of the main entry function as an active nature-play outdoor space (which could also function as a playground), with the other space being a more reflective, outdoor classroom for journaling and classroom activities. We would like a more durable and less "precious" space – no small stones that can be thrown, no wood logs that rot, no cobb structures that fall apart. We want something visually appealing, but nothing should be able to be picked up and destroyed.

3. **What is the overall vision for how kids and teachers will use this/these courtyard spaces?**

Again, parents defer to teachers. There is a definite desire for a durable, active, outdoor nature play area where kids can run and play without always getting in trouble. There should likely be a fence or barrier to keep younger kids from running into parking area.

It's possible that younger students (K-3) and older students (6-8) probably want to use these spaces differently. K-3 needs to run and move their body without getting in trouble and always being told to walk. 6-8 need gathering spaces to chat and private reflective spaces for activities like journaling. An outdoor classroom gathering space would also be ideal for art classes (up to 15 students) or even a whole younger class of 25 students to get outside for storytime.

4. **Are there specific plants that would help fulfill your overall vision? (edible foods (fall-spring), deer-resistant, drought-tolerant, Oregon natives?)**

Pam and Carrie both lean toward more low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, deer-resistant plants and trees. The school year is September – May when it is colder and wetter. Laurie Green would like some edibles. Pam notes that edibles for most fruits are harvested during the summer months when students are not on campus, and fruit trees generally take more maintenance (pruning, pests management, irrigation). If edible fruits are planted, please put an attractive deer fence in and focus on low-maintenance species that are useful during the school year (Sept-May). No plants that poke kids (ie, no Oregon grape). Carrie advocated for lots of trees.

5. **What kinds of features do we specifically want to include? (for example, do we foresee making Cobb structures and water feature? gathering spaces? fencing/barriers? art/mosaic? sand?)**

pathways to run? raised garden beds?)

Amy Stewart and Pam both say no cobb – it falls apart and is hard to maintain. Plus, it's too tempting for young kids to climb on it, which has damaged the current cobb structures. There were no parent comments about a water feature. We'd defer to teachers on that, but not sure how much value it adds if kids can't play in it and it gets mucky/icky or requires maintenance. It would be nice to re-purpose the current John Muir compass into the entry pathway. There are a lot of areas in the current courtyard that are visually interesting, but not useful to kids, such as the flagpole or the memorial. There should be more focus on kids being able to be active and engage with/explore/play in the space. Some of the benches in current courtyard are too rickety. It would be nice to continue to have some raised garden beds.

6. **What permanent features do we hope the team can build into plans (ie, take advantage of bond funds to help pay for fencing, irrigation, picnic tables, pathways...re-purpose sand from current volleyball court if we know we want sand)?**

Biggest ask from parents (Pam, Amy, Sky, Carrie, Laurie):

Please include as many permanent, durable features as possible including fences/barriers, gates, irrigation from the water main in multiple places, electrical sockets for things like woodworking, more large trees/plantings, an overhang structure for some rain and sun protection, pathways for running/moving through the space, and sitting areas for both solitary reflection and group gatherings. If there are places where concrete should be used – planters, walkways, retaining walls, benches – please include in plans and build. Make sure any irrigation lines that need to be under the concrete are in place. Make it durable and low-maintenance. Surface the area with mulch, sand, creeping ceonothus, decking or structures that allow kids to jump and climb. Re-purposed sand from the volleyball court could be used in a sandbox in the active play area. We trust the vision of the landscape architect and can always add more aesthetic and community features with time.

7. **Where would we like permanent irrigation connections from water main?**

Parents didn't indicate any preferences other than that we want to have enough so that we're not strapped later if we do plantings and drip irrigation. It would be amazing if landscape architect could incorporate some planting ideas and garden beds in the plans and then include irrigation where it makes the most sense.

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Parent emails that came in after this document was submitted are below. These emails were also forwarded to the landscape architects.

From: **s smith**
Date: Thu, Apr 16, 2020 at 1:25 AM
Subject: JMOS Exterior/Landscape Plan for April 17
To: <johnmuirschoolptc@gmail.com>

Greetings,

My daughter is a second grade student at JMOS, following is an initial list of ideas and suggestions for the landscape/exterior design.

Question 1 and 2

Area 1: JMOS maintained courtyard and natural garden area

Area 2/A: JMOS maintained courtyard and natural area

Area 3: an evergreen and oak forest of native trees, also throughout the property

Area B: designated space for a JMOS garden with raised beds, fruit trees, grapes, berries etc.

Area C: Nature based Playground Area (has direct access and line of sight to covered outdoor area)

Area D: A pond/water feature with native fish and plants for ecological learning. From this point a circulating stream that meanders throughout the property around the school and returning to the pond. Also willow, oak and evergreen trees around the pond.

Question 4; Specific plants:

Apple trees (fall harvest), Native Oak Trees (harvest-able acorns), blueberries and huckleberries (fall harvest varieties), grapes (fall harvest variety) incense cedar, doug fir/spruce, madrones, big leaf maple, native willow, bamboo, bay laurel, oregon grape, manzanita etc. spring medicinal/edibles such as mint and indian/miners lettuce etc. This is an initial list, needs more research.

Question five: specific features

Cob walls, benches, and structures. Natural materials and unfinished wood used, metal and concrete avoided whenever possible. Decomposed Granite or similar paths. If cement paths are required in spots, they could have nature "prints" (ie leaves, animal prints) in them and a color added. Non linear curved meandering pathways throughout.

Outdoor spaces to sit in nature, have classes or small social individual groups.

Any fencing or barriers made of natural materials or cob walls.

Space for students to contribute outdoor projects to the permanent aesthetics and structures through art, woodworking, bird and bat houses etc.

Designated garden with raised beds and fruit trees/berries etc.

A pond/water feature with native fish and plants for ecological learning. From this point a small circulating stream that meanders throughout the property around the school.

Nature based Playground Area

Water spigots through out property for future utilization

Pathway to wetland restoration area on east side of school grounds

Question 6 and 7

The ability to facilitate having "classroom" and learning be outdoors daily, is essential to the JMOS living up to it's intention, vision and name.

Also, as much effort can be made to create natural visual separation between JMOS and AMS as possible will further strengthen the unique character and cohesive student experience of JMOS.

Irrigation to pond water feature and meandering stream, all courtyards and outdoor areas including forests and raised bed garden areas. Spigots throughout the property for future and current use.

Cob benches under sun/rain shades, for all weather outdoor time

A circular outdoor semi covered gathering/teaching area for classes, with a fire ring and benches.

Raised garden beds and greenhouse.

designated places and infrastructure for outdoor art, mosaics and student led permanent projects.

Additionally

I am requesting a webinar or presentation mock up be made available to JMOS staff and parents so we can better understand the vision of the landscape architectural team and help facilitate collaboration.

Also, if Principal Rebecca Gyarmathy could CC teachers and parents the finalized April 17th document that voices all our input, that would be very helpful to the process and inclusion.

Thank You,

Shane Smith

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jenny Elizabeth Johnson**

Date: Fri, Apr 17, 2020 at 11:47 AM

Subject: Landscape plan for new JMOS building

To: Rebecca Gyarmathy <rebecca.gyarmathy@ashland.k12.or.us>, Pam Kuhn <pammyding@gmail.com>

Koebly and I looked at the plans for the new building and the outdoor areas. We are both very impressed! Everything looks amazing. It's going to be so spacious inside and out. I agree with just designating areas at this point and getting trees sited/designated so they can anchor the spaces we are talking about. Maples are beautiful in the fall, as are ornamental fruit trees (like cherries) in the spring. Since Courtyard 1 and 3 are the same sizes, whichever of them are the closest to JoEllen's classroom would be the best play area for the youngsters, however Courtyard 3 is near to the AMS building/library on the other side so I wouldn't think that would be great for a kinder recess area as they are noisy and shouldn't be hushed outdoors. The Courtyard 1 area already has two big trees that I hope can be saved, but that will make it a shadier area and not a great "food forest" placement. Courtyard 2 could serve as a food forest and place to grow fruits and veggies as it has a south-facing placement. I would like to see at least one apple tree as they are harvested in the fall and are easy to use as both snacks and also for baking/cooking since we will have a kitchen! We could also have thornless blackberries or marionberries, late varieties that fruit in September. I think keeping those in a separate area from the play courtyard is a good idea, otherwise you are going to get little ones pigging out on apples and berries during recess. Herbs planted for sensory experience (rubbing up against mint, lemon balm, rosemary, lavender...) would

create a lovely low maintenance perennial garden, maybe in a circular fashion. A pollinator garden that attracts butterflies and bees, a bug hotel, a fountain or water feature- all these things that attract wildlife are important.

Whichever courtyard area is chosen as the shorter recess area for JoEllen and Randi's classes will need to have some kind of fencing, especially courtyard 1 as it borders parking/drivethrough areas on two sides.

I'd like someone to be considering pick up time and where kids will be waiting for pick up. Current pick up is really chaotic, with kids up in the top grass area. Kids aren't allowed to wait in the courtyard.

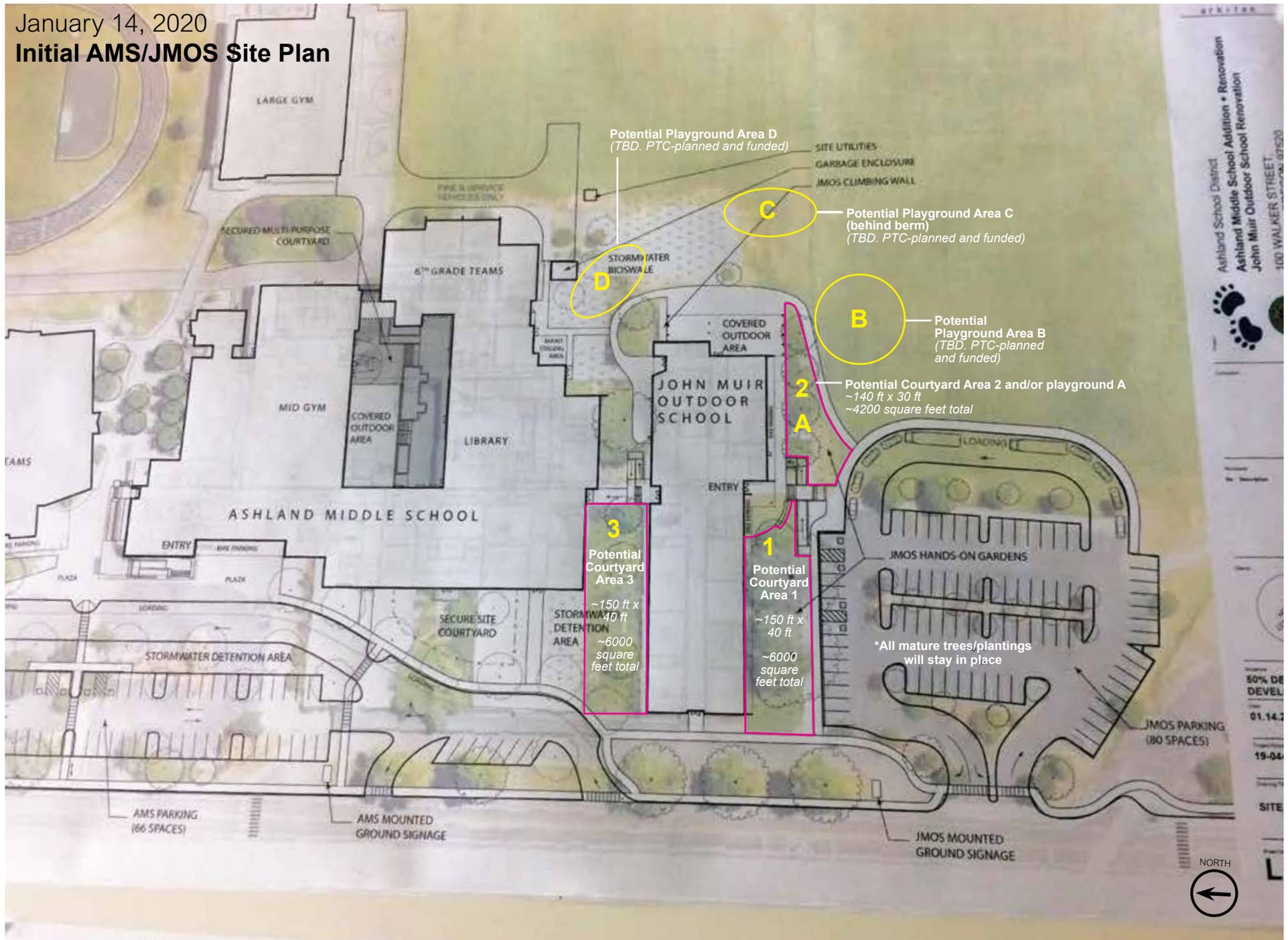
Where will the pick up area be and can we design it at this point to be more cohesive and less frustrating for adult monitors and parents to keep an eye or find their kids?

I like the playground areas B and C better, as they are closer to the upper field areas. I would prefer seeing some trees planted just beyond the covered area, to create a sheltered by nature feeling to the end of our building/area, around playground area C, and then use playground area B for the playground.

I know that the district didn't want us using wood or tires for a playground. Wood splinters and disintegrates (as you can see from the stumps Koeby put in for the sandbox in the courtyard some years ago!). Kids aren't allowed to climb trees on district grounds either. We were encouraged in our previous meetings to use boulders, metal turning bars, and to limit the wood/natural products used. I think a willow structure/dome/tunnel would be a great idea!

Those are our thoughts!
Jenny and Koeby Johnson

January 14, 2020
Initial AMS/JMOS Site Plan



Ashland School District
Ashland Middle School Addition + Renovation
John Muir Outdoor School Renovation
100 WALKER STREET
07520



50% DEVELOPMENT
01.14.20
19-04
SITE

