

Performing Arts Center **Site and Landscape Design Narrative**

The general philosophy for the site planning and landscape architecture at the Performing Arts Center (PAC) expansion includes protecting and utilizing as much of the existing natural and mature landscape as possible. The landscape architecture plan minimize site grading, maximizes privacy and protects the natural drainage systems throughout the PAC property and adjacent properties. In addition, the landscape and hardscape design respects the natural and cultural heritage of our area.

Although the building and parking lots will cover near 70% of its acreage, the site plan takes careful consideration to protect storm water and runoff. A state-of-the-art underground retention basin collects rainwater from the building rooftops and Chestnut Street parking lots then slowly releases the runoff into neighboring Mill Creek. In addition, a gravel-pave system is provided for the new 76 vehicle Laurel Street parking lot. This system allows rainwater to permeate the parking lot surface and slowly pass into groundwater. The existing rain garden, located in the original parking lot on Laurel Street, will be maintained and enlarged for greater storm water capacity.

This extensive drainage collection system has been designed and installed as per State and local regulations. The PAC storm water system will be collecting silt, vehicle pollutants and organic debris along the way. This project protects water quality on-site and in the Upper Cullasaja Watershed as a whole. In addition, the gravel-pave pervious paving system has other great environmental benefits including a lesser heat island effect when compared to black tar pavement and is a more conducive growing environment for the important plants used for this project.

The existing and future plantings will enhance the natural landscape in the neighborhood. We preserved much of the existing native shrubs and plants by designing around them or when needing to be moved, storing for future planting. We have been able to preserve approximately 1/3 of the mature trees on the property such as the largest Bald Cypress; six large Red Maples along the east and west property boundaries; two Yellowwood trees, the Striped Maple and the signature 100 foot Norway Spruce on Chestnut Street. Future development in the former Mann property will preserve the large oak and hickory trees at the corner of Chestnut Street and Fourth Street.

The preservation of the mature Red Maple trees for vegetative buffers near Laurel Street is an important example of tree conservation in our planned green parking lot. In addition to the maples, established and new plantings will be added for edge buffers. Rhododendron, Mountain Laurel, Clethra, Azalea and other natives will appreciate the shade and soil profile around these trees. New large size native trees such as Princeton American Elm, Bald Cypress and Streetwise Red Oaks will be located within the new parking lot to provide shade and cooling effects.

We are also proud to say that the new parking lot trees have been carefully sourced from one of the best shade tree nurseries in the country, Select Trees of Athens. Select Trees grows top quality plants with extraordinary root systems designed to thrive in difficult urban planting sites. In addition, Select Trees was co-founded and managed by Highlands' own Tim Patterson. We are proud to plant these native trees knowing that the grower has "roots" in Highlands.

The signature Norway Spruce on the former Beck property has been pruned and protected with construction fencing and will be monitored for good health. These measures will continue for its preservation throughout the construction process. The existing vegetative buffer, located behind the former Wilson property, includes numerous large native Azaleas. The buffer has have been protected during the construction of the new parking

lot. Conservation of these plants is essential because they produce seedlings with a wide range of genetic diversity. We hope to propagate these plants to continue the heritage of this important collection.

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