



Audubon Park

**Audubon Park Master Plan
50% DRAFT**

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Introduction

Audubon Park is one of New Orleans' most cherished assets, providing quality recreational opportunities for millions of people annually. In developing the Audubon Park Master Plan, the Audubon Commission's highest priority was to continue its stewardship of the unique character of Audubon Park that has been the source of enjoyment for generations of New Orleanians. Therefore, the Site Plan contained in Section A reflects no major changes to land uses in Audubon Park. Within this existing framework of uses in Audubon Park, however, the Commission must continue to improve the beauty of the Park and the quality of the services it provides to the entire New Orleans community, consistent with its more than one hundred years of stewardship of Audubon Park. The six sections of this 50% Draft Master Plan document delineate those actions the Commission preliminarily deems appropriate for the future of Audubon Park.

The response to the Audubon Commission's request for public input on the Audubon Park Master Plan has been great and we appreciate all of the interest that it has generated. The public meeting on January 13th had over 150 attendees and the comment period after the meeting resulted in many written responses, over 100 email comments, numerous telephone comments, and meetings between staff and interested groups and individuals.

The 50% Draft Master Plan is being published and disseminated at this early stage in order to provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on all aspects of the Master Plan early in its development. To this end, the Draft Master Plan attempts to address all of the issues applicable to the Park's Master Plan which have been identified by Audubon staff, its consultants and the general public over the last several years, and particularly during the last four months of public comment and meetings. This Draft Master Plan then attempts to briefly explain the philosophy related to each issue and broadly outline how the final Master Plan may address each issue. It is the intention of the Audubon Commission that this methodology will facilitate a public comment process that is informed, specific and productive before a detailed 90% Master Plan is completed and disseminated for final public comment and action by the Commission.

A public meeting to receive comments on the Draft Plan will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 9th in the Audubon Tea Room. This schedule will allow the public sufficient time to review the Draft, ask questions and prepare specific comments for the Commission at the public meeting or via written or email communication.

After the July 9th public meeting, further public comment will be solicited by the Commission until the end of July. The Commission will then continue the Master Plan development to the 90% stage, publish the 90% Draft Plan and hold another public meeting and comment period before completing the plan and voting on it at a Commission meeting in late 2003 or early 2004.

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Section C: Environmental Program

Introduction

The Master Plan for Audubon Park anticipates continued improvement and development in the environmental program within Audubon Park in a manner which enhances but does not significantly change the character and feel of the park as it exists today. The formal landscaped areas in the park (such as St. Charles entrance and Usdin Garden) will remain important parts of the landscape of the park but no major formal landscape area additions are anticipated. Plantings to enhance the animal habitat and water quality in the front section of Audubon Park will be added. The grass and lawn areas of Audubon Park will not change in scope but will see a continuously improving level of care. Garbage and trash removal (and prevention) procedures, always a challenge in New Orleans, will be developed and tested. The golf course will achieve and maintain certification from Audubon International in the Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program. A labyrinth and a “meditation walk” are anticipated to be completed in the quiet area of the park riverward of the Stables. And the water quality of the lagoons in the front section of Audubon Park will continue to improve.

Landscape Areas

The most significant feature of the landscape of Audubon Park, its trees, are covered in a separate section of this Preliminary Master Plan. The formally developed landscape areas in Audubon Park are featured primarily in the front section of Audubon Park, between Magazine Street and St. Charles Avenue. The entrance at St. Charles, the Usdin Garden and the landscaping throughout the new Audubon Park Golf Course and Clubhouse have been developed over the years to add to the visual beauty and the visitor enjoyment of the entire front section of Audubon Park. These areas will continue to be maintained in at least their existing state of maintenance and beauty, but no other major formal landscape areas will be added in the front section or any other section of the park. A small amount of new landscaping will be placed in the area of the Hyams fountain and the habitat plantings (see next section) will increase the visual and species diversity of the plants in the front section of Audubon Park. Also see the Labyrinth section in this report.

Habitat Planting

In addition to being an important source of recreational activities for millions of human park visitors every year, Audubon Park is also the home to a diverse collection of wildlife, especially birds. The Master Plan anticipates several planting and renovation activities designed to simultaneously improve the habitat quality for the animals and the recreational enjoyment of park visitors. The landscape activities will be focused on plantings which provide cover and food for the animal life and actions designed to improve the stability and long term viability of Bird Island.

Included in this section are several schematic landscape concepts developed by Audubon International to illustrate a possible location and plant palette for habitat enhancement along the lagoon edge and in several areas within the front section of the park. In this preliminary Master Plan we are asking the public to review and comment upon these concepts in order to give the Audubon Commission a better framework for the development of them as the Master Plan evolves to its 90% completion status later this year. In developing a more specific program balance must be maintained between habitat enhancements for the animals, the visual continuity of the park landscape for users and neighbors, and the maintenance cost of these types of plantings (which must be minimal in order not to drain resources from the many other maintenance needs of the Park).

Bird Island in the front section of Audubon Park is certainly the most visible and probably the most important habitat area. It is an area that also provides a great deal of pleasure for many of the park users who are drawn by the quantity and diversity of birds. The Commission's operational philosophy in the past has been to avoid tinkering with such a small area which is so densely populated and successful. The Master Plan anticipates a careful review of Bird Island and its surrounding lagoon areas to determine if any action should be taken to try to maintain the success of this area long into the future. Some of the factors which need to be reviewed are the long term health and condition of the trees on the Island, the bank stability, the water depth and quality around the Island and the wildlife activities and trends on the Island and the adjacent land areas. Comments from the public are requested. The 90% Master Plan document will establish the parameters for an analysis of Bird Island, but the analysis itself will take at least 12 months to complete.

Grass and Lawns

The Master Plan anticipates no significant changes to the size or location of the grass areas of Audubon Park. The lagoon edges will remain in their same place, the tree canopy will not be greatly expanded, the athletic field areas will be improved but not significantly expanded, the formal landscape areas will not expand and the only additional paving is anticipated to be parking spots perpendicular to the road from Magazine to the Golf Clubhouse and on Riverview (see site map).

In the last several years efforts have been made to increase the lushness of the grass in Audubon Park and the regularity and consistency of the cutting of the grass. The Master Plan anticipates that these attempts to improve the "greenness" of the park will continue. Consideration will be given to over-seeding larger areas with rye grass in the winter. Experiments will be made with a more shade tolerate species of St. Augustine to green some of the heavily shaded areas of the park. And equipment and staffing will continuously be reviewed to attain the best possible level of daily maintenance, weather and financial and other unforeseen circumstances being considered.

Garbage and Litter

It doesn't take very many pieces of paper, plastic water bottles, newspapers, piles of dog manure or sucked crawfish heads to make the most beautiful park experience unpleasant and ugly. None of these problems are caused by nature. They are all caused by users of the park. The Master Plan for Audubon Park anticipates dealing with these issues with a two-fold strategy. First, Audubon will attempt to go against the history of New Orleans and take steps to reduce the amount of trash and garbage not properly placed in receptacles. Second, Audubon will be aggressive in removing litter, garbage and tree debris as quickly as possible.

From a prevention standpoint, additional garbage cans will be placed in the front section of the park and around shelter houses. "Doggie bag" stations will be placed to provide bags for the removal and disposal of dog waste. Shelter house usage regulations and controls will be developed, communicated and enforced as much as possible. For related comments see Education Program and Infrastructure Program sections of the Plan.

For cleanup, the Commission will continue to send staff throughout the park each morning to pick up litter. The new, smaller garbage truck will continue to be used to empty trash containers. Security personnel will request compliance from park users in the area of litter prevention and cleaning up after their own mess. And the Commission will continue to investigate additional equipment which may facilitate the cleanup of litter, leaves and tree debris.

Golf Course

The new Audubon Park Golf Course, with its gentle mounding, lagoons, landscaping, major trees, broad vistas and green grass has been a wonderful improvement to the front section of Audubon Park and an incredible success. The aesthetics and environmental management of the golf course will continue to improve. Rye grass will be planted each winter to maintain green vistas for park users 12 months of the year. The horticultural aspects of the course will continue to develop, although no significant increase in landscaped areas is anticipated. Hurst Walk will be maintained in its current location, a peaceful and naturalist path under the oak trees. The new lagoons on the golf course will be managed and maintain along with the main lagoon in Audubon Park. And the golf course operations and maintenance will be consistent with the standards of the Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program of Audubon International.

Labyrinth

One of the proposals which received significant public comment was the development of a labyrinth in Audubon Park. There is currently a temporary labyrinth defined with lirioppe in the area of Audubon Park riverward of the Stables. Included in the draft Master Plan is a schematic design of the proposed labyrinth, a two-dimensional paving pattern to be located in the area of Audubon Park essentially where the temporary labyrinth is currently located.

The Master Plan anticipates the development of the labyrinth in this area of Audubon Park. Included with the labyrinth would be the reserving of this area of Audubon Park for peaceful, quiet activities. The current publicly accessible shell road in this area would be largely removed and reserved only for service vehicles. The Meditation Walk sign in the front section of Audubon Park would be relocated to this area of the park. See preliminary schematic layout of this area of the park, as attached. As can be seen from this preliminary schematic layout, the portion of this section of the park closer to the Stables would include the labyrinth and the Meditation Walk and the area closer to the river would remain sunny green space in front of several majestic live oaks. Parking and vehicular access would only be from the parking perpendicular to East Drive.

Lagoon

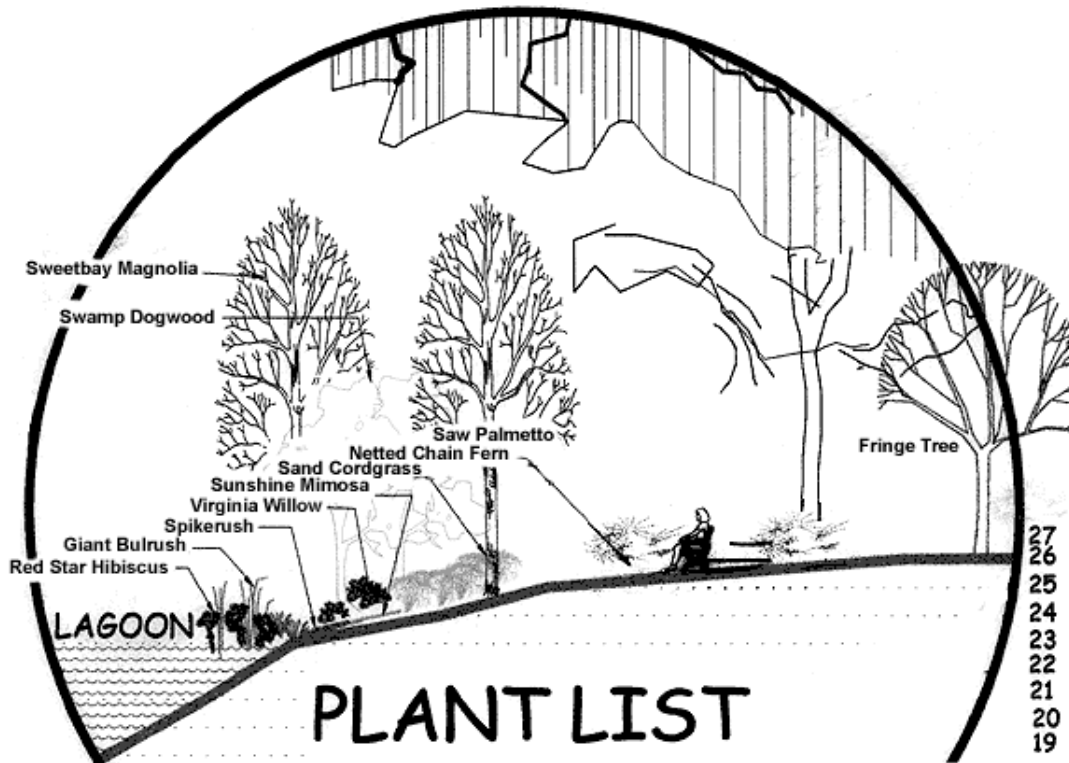
The lagoon in the front section of Audubon Park is, along with the live oak trees, the dominate element of the park designed and created during the first several decades of the 1900's. Although controversial at the time, its critics were proven wrong and the Audubon Park Master Plan anticipates its shape remaining unchanged and the quality of the water slowly improving.

Two years ago a new water well was dug to provide a controllable water supply to the lagoon. This was completed in conjunction with the golf course project. Some aeration was added at the St. Charles end of the lagoon. Additional aeration will be added to the main lagoon, as it has been added to the lagoons on the golf course, to improve the oxygen content of the water. The 90% Master Plan document will include an updated analysis of the main lagoon and a recommended short and long term strategy for upgrading the water quality while retaining the historic shape of the lagoon.

Shortly after the development of the lagoons in Audubon Park, the lagoon was a popular swimming hole. The area of the lagoon near the golf clubhouse and Newman bandstand was developed into a swimming area, including lifeguards, bathhouse and even lighting for nighttime swimming. For a much longer period of time the lagoon was used for canoeing, pedal boats and the swan boat. Although the Master Plan does not anticipate using the lagoons for these type of recreational purposes, the objective would be to bring the water quality of the lagoon to a level compatible with these types of uses.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION: Lagoon Edge Planting

The Master Plan will consider the planting (over several years) of the lagoon edge along the golf course/oak grove side with native plants that enhance the animal habitat, aesthetics and the water quality along the lagoon and require little maintenance. This sketch plan is illustrative of how the concept may be carried out.



Broadleaf Deciduous

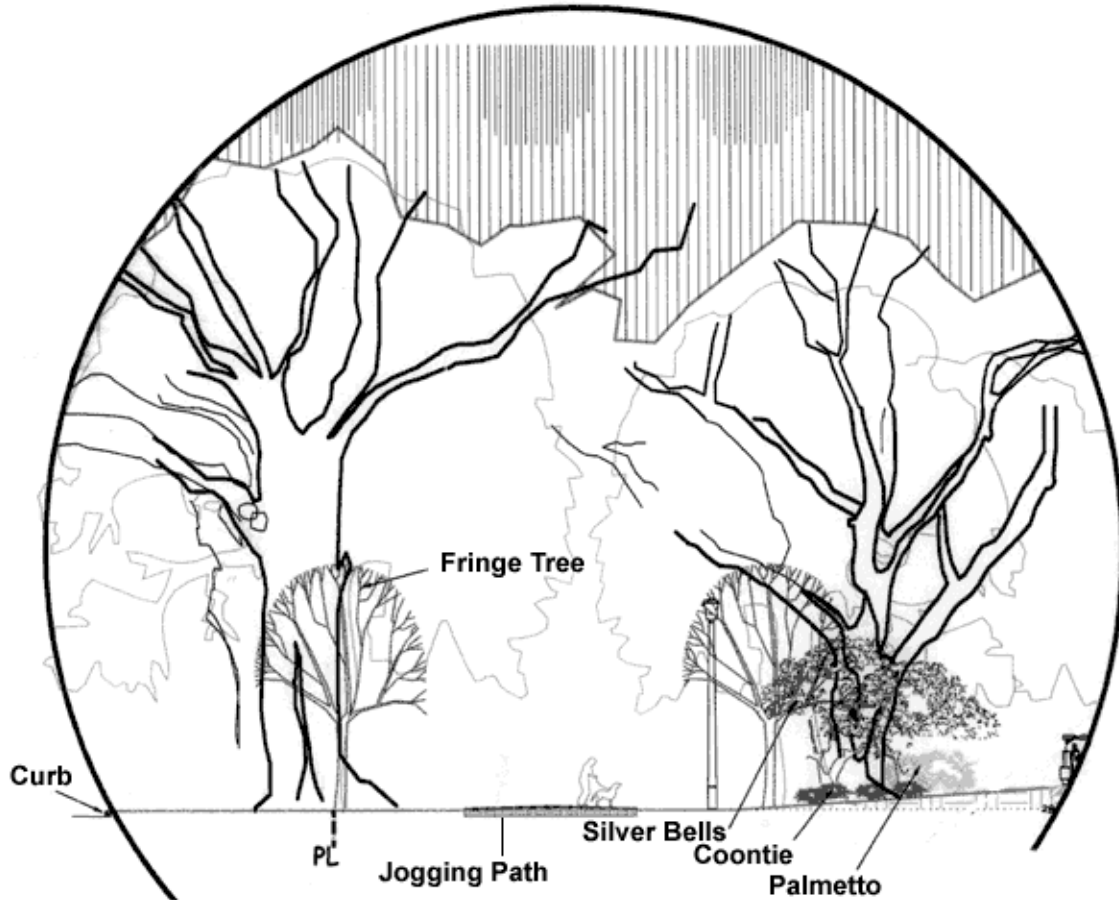
Quantity	Symbol	Scientific Name	Common Name	Code Name	Planting Size
7		<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	White fringe tree	Chwi	24"-Box
6		<i>Cornus foemina</i>	Swamp Dogwood	Cofa	10 gal
7		<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweetbay Magnolia	Mavi	15gal

Shrub and Ground Cover

Quantity	Symbol	Scientific Name	Common Name	Code Name	Planting Size
11		<i>Aster carolinensis</i>	Climbing Aster	Asca	1 gal
7		<i>Hibiscus coccinea</i>	Red Star Hibiscus	Hico	1 gal
20		<i>Itea virginica</i>	Virginia Willow	Itvi	3 gal
11		<i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>	Flame Azalea	Rhau	3 gal
5		<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Saw Palmetto	Serrep	7gal
24		<i>Spartina patens</i>	Marshhay Cordgrass	Spba	1 gal, divisions
25		<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	Walter's Viburnum	Viob	7 gal
525		<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	Carolina Yellow Jessamine	Gese	1 gal 48"
412		<i>Woodwardia areolata</i>	Netted Chain Fern	Wovi	1 gal 48"
12		<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	French mulberry	Coam	3 gal 60"- 72"
684		<i>Eleocharis vivipara</i>	Spike Rush	Elvi	Plugs 12"
26		<i>Sabal minor</i>	Louisiana Palm	Sami	7gal
23		<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal Flower	Loca	1 gal 36"
2866		<i>Opismenus hirtellus</i>	Basket Grass	Ophi	Existing & Rooted cuttings 24"
13		<i>Rhododendron canescens</i>	Pinxster Azalea	Rhoa	3 gal

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION: Jogging Path Planting

The Master Plan will consider the planting (over several years) of the jogging path edges along Magazine Street and Walnut Street with native plants that enhance the animal habitat and aesthetics of the area and require little maintenance. The sketch plan is illustrative of how the concept may be carried out.



JOGGING PATH PLANT LIST@ Magazine St.

Broadleaf Deciduous

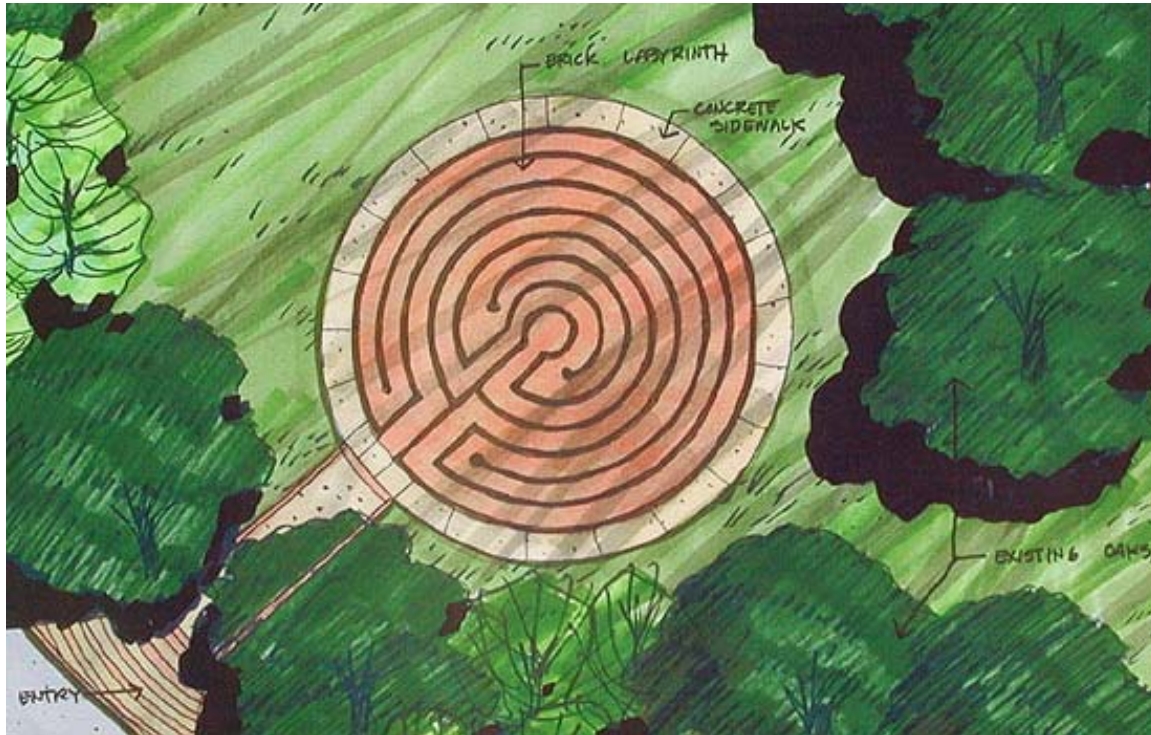
Quantity	Symbol	Scientific Name	Common Name	Code Name	Planting Size
6		<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	White fringe tree	Chvi	15-Gal
9		<i>Halesia diptera</i>	Two-winged silverbell	Hadi	15-Gal

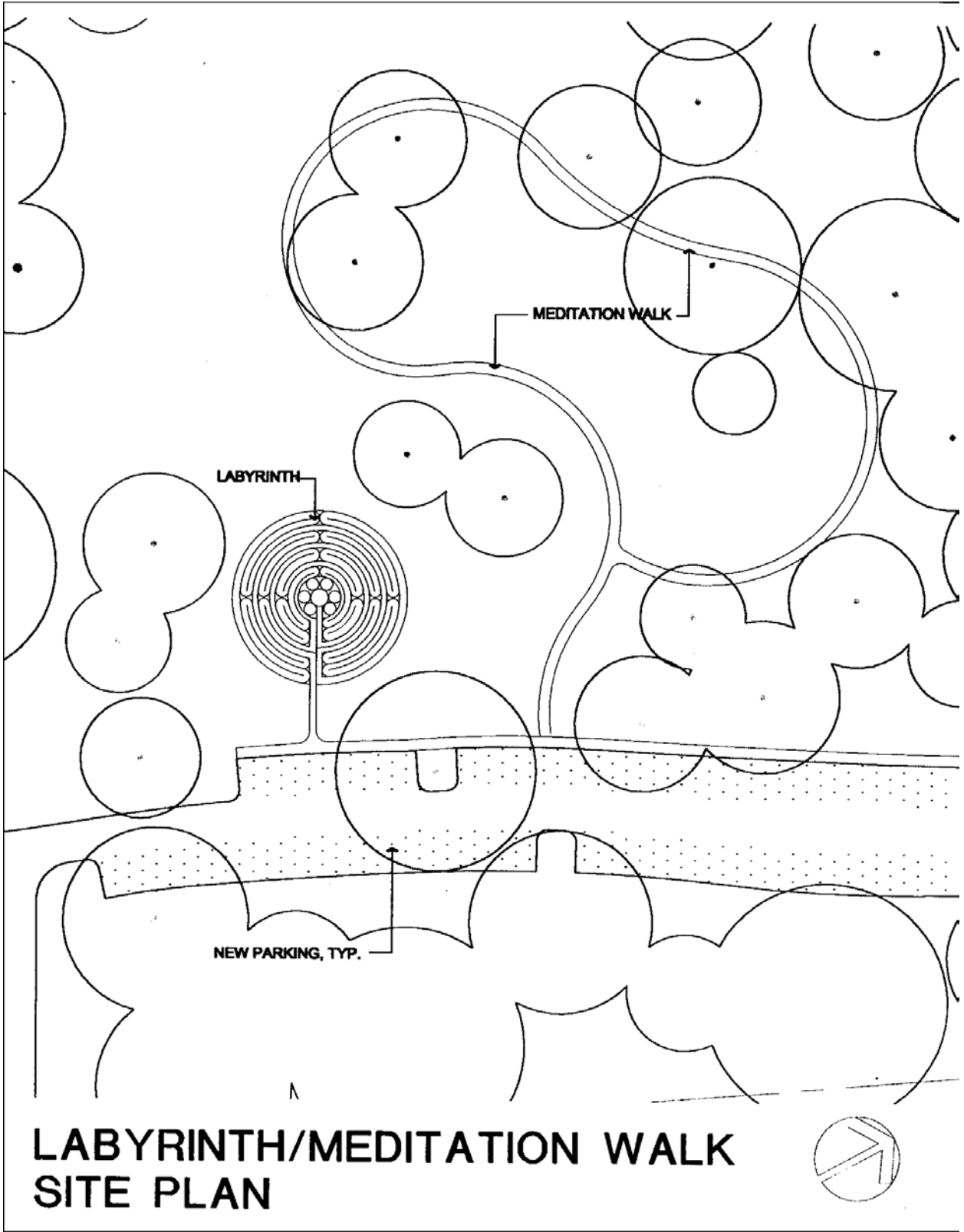
Shrub

Quantity	Symbol	Scientific Name	Common Name	Code Name	Planting Size
129		<i>Zamia pumila</i>	Coontie	Zapu	3 gal
17		<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Saw Palmetto	Serrep	7gal

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION: Labyrinth

One of the concepts the Audubon Commission is considering as it prepares the Master Plan is the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth as it has been discussed would be approximately 60 feet in diameter. It would consist of a brick/stone paving pattern and no vertical elements. A conceptual drawing is included below.





**LABYRINTH/MEDITATION WALK
SITE PLAN**