



DATE: April 2, 2019

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Public Works

TITLE: **Charleston Park Improvements,
Project 16-59 – Approve Concept Plan
and Related Actions**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve the concept plan for the Charleston Park Improvements, Project 16-59.
2. Approve the removal and mitigation of one Heritage evergreen ash tree at a 2:1 replacement ratio with 24" box tree.
3. Approve the removal and mitigation of one Heritage Canary Island date palm tree at an 8:1 replacement ratio with 24" box trees in the event this tree cannot be successfully transplanted to another location within the park.

BACKGROUND

Charleston Park is a five-acre public park bounded by Amphitheatre Parkway to the north; Charleston Road to the south; the Google Charleston East campus at 2000 North Shoreline Boulevard (currently under construction) to the east; and the Googleplex campus at 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway to the west (see Figure 1). The park was developed in 1997 in conjunction with the adjoining 20-acre Silicon Graphics Inc. (SGI) Campus (now Googleplex). A unique feature in the park is the water terrace that integrates the open spaces between the public park and the private courtyard extending into the Googleplex. In 1999, the park received the American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Medallion, an award given to projects across the nation that represent the best of what landscape architecture has achieved. Beside the open space and the distinct water feature, the park has a restroom and is landscaped mainly with cherry and Chinese pistache trees.

As part of considering the transportation improvements surrounding the Charleston East development, on October 4, 2016, the City Council supported the draft Charleston Corridor Feasibility Study (Study) with consolidated transit pull-outs along the corridor. One such pull-out is located along the park's frontage on Charleston Road.

The proposed improvements adjacent to Charleston Park implement the North Bayshore Precise Plan (NBPP) requirements for Charleston Road, promoting active transportation, including sidewalks, two-way cycle tracks, a transit stop, bicycle parking areas, and landscaping buffers between each one of these facilities. The first phase of the construction of the Charleston Corridor improvements between Shoreline Boulevard and Huff Avenue is currently under way and is being fully funded by Google.

Figure 1: Existing Charleston Park

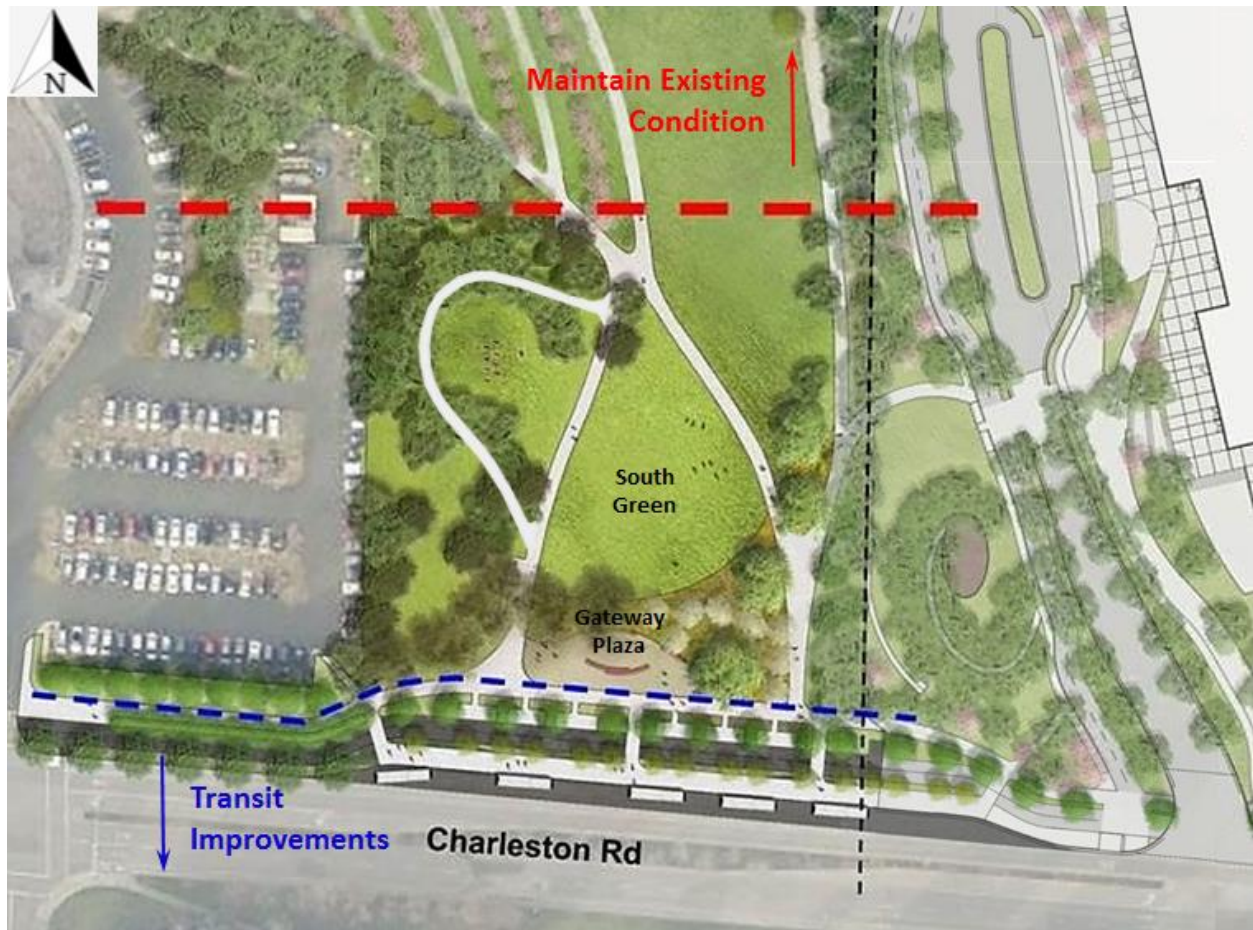


ANALYSIS

The transit pull-out along the park frontage encroaches approximately 60' into the park, requiring modifications to the park improvements along the Charleston Road frontage. The design and construction of these modifications are funded and implemented by

Google as part of installation of the transportation improvements. Google's landscape architect, Olin, worked closely with Community Services Department and Public Works Department staff to develop a conceptual design for Council consideration (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Recommended Concept Plan A



The concept includes a gateway plaza that provides a transition from the Charleston Road transportation improvements and preserves large, open grass areas with pathways connecting each edge of the park frontage to the existing pathway network in the park.

Gateway Plaza

The new Gateway Plaza will be a focal spot that connects the park to the Charleston Road transit area. It will be located directly behind the public sidewalk, where it will be

a gateway for both transit and park users. A new park sign and benches will be installed at the plaza. A rendering of the Gateway Plaza is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Gateway Plaza



South Green

Park improvements seek to maintain the existing “open space” character of the park by providing a large, contiguous green open space, which affords ample room for relaxation, recreation, and a place to gather. A rendering of the South Green is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: South Green



New Pathway

New pathways proposed in the park will be between 6' and 10' wide. The recommended Concept Plan A will have two paths in the north-south direction, serving as the arterial through the park. A third path will meander under the tree canopy through the grove on the west side of the park. The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) requested the use of a more natural material that will blend in with the wooded surroundings for the third path.

Other Considerations

- The landscape material selection will be consistent with the "Plant Palette for the North Bayshore Precise Plan." This document was prepared in 2015 as a plant palette recommendation for the NBPP adopted by the City Council.
- Other amenities will include lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks.

Park's Northern Half

- The northern half of Charleston Park encompassing the water terrace is not part of the scope of this project.

- The NBPP indicates the implementation of streetscape improvements on the north side of the park along Amphitheatre Parkway that include a landscape buffer and two-way cycle track. These improvements require a minimum of 26’ of the park’s Amphitheatre Parkway frontage. Attachment 2 shows the impact of the NBPP improvements. There are no near-term plans in place to develop the improvements along Amphitheatre Parkway per the NBPP but, at a future date, these improvements would be installed.

On March 13, 2019, the PRC reviewed the recommended concept and unanimously recommended approval by the City Council with some minor modifications. The modifications include using decomposed granite for the path that meanders through the grove on the west side of the park and addition of a hydration station.

Heritage Trees

In January 2018, a certified arborist with HortScience, Inc., evaluated all the trees on the site and prepared a Tree Inventory Report. There are two Heritage trees within the site that are proposed to be removed for the project. Table 1 shows the Heritage Tree Removal List, and Figure 5 shows the location of the two trees proposed for removal.

Table 1: Heritage Tree Removal List

No.	Tree ID	Tree Species	Trunk Diameter	Justification for Removal	Status
1	781	Canary Island Date Palm	21”	In conflict with construction	If unable to transplant, mitigate with 8:1 ratio
2	214	Evergreen Ash	16”	Poor health/ mostly dead	Proposed for removal; mitigate with 2:1 ratio

Figure 5: Heritage Trees Proposed for Removal



On March 13, 2019, the PRC reviewed the Heritage tree removal and mitigation plan for the proposed project. Based on public comment, the PRC requested that the Canary Island date palm be preserved and transplanted to a different location within the park. If transplanting and preservation of this tree is not feasible, the PRC requested a mitigation of 8:1 ratio with 24" box trees. The other Heritage tree (evergreen ash) was approved by the PRC for removal and mitigation at a 2:1 ratio with 24" box trees. If the Canary Island date palm tree can be transplanted successfully, the project will plant two new 24" box replacement trees. If the Canary Island date palm tree cannot be transplanted, the project will plant a total of 10 new 24" box replacement trees. New trees planted at the park will come from the NBPP Plant Palette and will mostly be

native species. Final tree selection will be made with input from Community Services Department staff.

Environmental Clearance

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project has been determined to be categorically exempt under Section 15304, as the project consists of minor alterations to land.

Next Steps

After Council's approval of the concept plan, Google will begin final design of the project. Construction is expected to begin in fall 2019.

FISCAL IMPACT

The design and construction of the Charleston Park Improvements is funded by Google. Staff time for plan checking and inspection will be funded from the Charleston Road Improvements, Feasibility Study, Project 16-59.

CONCLUSION

On March 13, 2019, the PRC recommended a conceptual plan for the improvements to Charleston Park. The improvements provide a Gateway Plaza with two north-south paths serving both park and transit users. A third meandering path provides a more naturalistic experience through a tree grove. The South Green preserves the park's existing character by maintaining a large contiguous open space.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide other recommendations for the concept plan.
2. Make other recommendations for the Heritage tree mitigation.
3. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to agenda posting, notices were sent to property and business owners within a 750' radius of the project site, as well as announcements posted on the City website and lawn signs on the Charleston Park site.

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