



DATE: May 8, 2018

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Public Works

TITLE: **Conceptual Plan for a Community Garden at South Shoreline Boulevard and Latham Street, Project 17-44**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve the conceptual plan for the Community Garden at South Shoreline Boulevard and Latham Street.
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute an amendment to the professional services agreement with Verde Design, Inc. for additional landscape architecture services related to the design of the Community Garden at South Shoreline Boulevard and Latham Street, Project 17-44, increasing the contract amount by \$27,000 to \$125,000.

BACKGROUND

The Parks and Open Space Plan, approved by City Council in 2014, included a Citywide priority to: “Acquire land for a garden space that is available to the public and consider various types of gardens (e.g., urban gardens, demonstration gardens, edible landscaping etc.)”

The City of Mountain View currently operates two community gardens: the Willowgate Community Garden, located at the end of Andsbury Avenue, and the Senior Garden, located on Hetch Hetchy right-of-way at the corner of Escuela Avenue and Crisanto Avenue. Both community gardens provide individual gardening plots (current total = 162) to Mountain View residents. There are currently 129 residents on the waiting list. The typical wait time for a plot has been three to five years and with the additional high-density housing developments currently being built in the City, the demand for plots is expected to increase. The City also has a demonstration garden, operated by a nonprofit, at Heritage Park.

In June 2015, the City Council approved the use of an approximately 35,000 square foot (0.8-acre) City-owned property on the southwest corner of South Shoreline Boulevard

and Latham Street as a new community garden and a new Capital Improvement Project was created to build the garden.

ANALYSIS

Verde Design (Verde) was chosen to design the new community garden, and part of their scope of work included facilitating several meetings to gather input from stakeholders before creating a final conceptual plan.

In October 2017, a focus group meeting with current and wait-listed Mountain View community gardeners was held to gather input on what they would like to see in the new community garden. In December 2017, a community meeting was held where neighbors, gardeners, and the general public were invited to provide input on two draft conceptual plans.

The main input received at these meetings included:

- Use proposed garden plot size (6'x18' – same as the Senior Garden).
- Prefer raised garden beds, but flushed garden beds are acceptable.
- Prefer one hose bib per plot, but one hose bib per every two plots is acceptable (Senior Garden has one bib per two plots).
- Provide a buffer zone between the garden plots and the perimeter fences (preferred by adjacent neighbors).
- Provide a fence surrounding the gardens to discourage nongardeners from entering the site (both existing community gardens are access-controlled).
- Provide a metal, ornamental perimeter fence to match the fence surrounding Eagle Park.
- Prefer decomposed granite walkways, but mulch walkways are acceptable (both existing community gardens have mulch walkways).
- Prefer that storage sheds with communal tools be incorporated into the garden design to help maintain a neater appearance.

- Provide a vehicular gate to allow for occasional deliveries of mulch and other materials.
- Provide site amenities such as bike racks, picnic tables, and an informational kiosk.
- Provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant parking along South Shoreline Boulevard instead of Latham Street.
- Consider implementation of a time limit on parking along the garden section of South Shoreline Boulevard to ensure there is parking available for the gardeners.

Based on the public input received, Verde developed a conceptual plan to present to the City's Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC).

As very few adjacent neighbors attended the community meeting in December or had commented on the project, staff invited the immediate neighbors to an informal meeting on March 20, 2018. The purpose of the meeting was to provide neighbors with an opportunity to preview of the conceptual plan and to make sure they were fully aware of the project. Meeting notices were hand-delivered to 13 properties surrounding the site and mailed to four absentee property owners. Out of the 13 properties, three residents attended the meeting. In addition, staff met with two other residents individually. The main comments received from the immediate neighbors were:

- Picnic tables currently located in the shade of the large redwood tree (southwest corner of the site) should be moved away from the back fence to avoid disturbing the neighbors.
- The shed in this same area should be moved forward because debris from the adjacent redwood tree may collect behind the shed and create a nuisance area where rodents can nest.
- There is a concern that the garden will increase rodent activity in adjacent yards. Neighbors suggested the City install a layer of metal mesh "gopher wire" under the garden beds to make it difficult for rodents to access the garden plots.
- There is an interest in preserving the non-Heritage trees on the site as well as a large cactus.

Staff presented the conceptual plan to the PRC on March 28, 2018 and discussed neighbor concerns at the meeting. The PRC voted to recommend approval of the

conceptual plan and budget amendment to fully fund the project. The PRC had no specific comments on the concerns raised by neighbors and deferred any decisions to staff on whether adjustments should be made to the conceptual plan.

The final conceptual plan (Attachment 1) includes some minor adjustments to the shed and picnic table locations to address the concerns of the neighbors, and staff plans to keep the cactus and any non-Heritage trees that do not impact garden plots. Staff has also added metal mesh “gopher wire” under each garden plot (in addition to a root barrier) to address rodent concerns.

The conceptual plan includes:

- 78 raised garden plots (6’ wide x 18’ long).
- Six ADA raised garden plots (5’ wide x 21.6’ long).
- One hose bib for every two plots.
- A 6’ wide buffer zone between the garden plots and the perimeter fences.
- Two pedestrian gates along South Shoreline Boulevard and one vehicular gate near Latham Street.
- Site amenities such as picnic tables, bike racks, and an informational kiosk.
- 6’ high metal, ornamental perimeter fence that matches the fence at Eagle Park.
- Fibar (shredded wood) walkways for ADA access areas and mulch on all other walkways.
- Two ADA parking stalls along South Shoreline Boulevard and a plan to implement a time limit for all other vehicles parked on South Shoreline Boulevard along the community garden frontage. Parking for community gardens is generally provided on the street frontage of the garden, rather than in a separate parking lot onsite. Onstreet ADA parking spaces at parks and other public facilities with onstreet parking is being implemented in phases.

Site Soil Investigation

An Environmental Site Assessment and Soil Quality Evaluation was prepared by Cornerstone Earth Group in anticipation of the site being used as a community garden. Previously, the site was likely used for agricultural purposes and more recently contained residential structures. Pesticides are commonly found on former agricultural and residential sites, and lead can occur naturally or from paint or other materials.

Twelve (12) surface soil samples were taken and tested for pesticides, lead, and arsenic. The results were compared with Federal (Environmental Protection Agency) and State (Department of Toxic Substance Control) agencies' standards to determine if there are any potential human health concerns associated with the results. Several pesticides were detected, but none exceeded their respective residential screening levels. The detected arsenic results appear typical of natural background concentrations.

The evaluation of the lead results revealed no significant risk to human health in a residential setting. However, considering that there are no published screening levels for a community garden use, Cornerstone Earth Group recommended using raised planter beds with clean imported soil, with planter depths based on the root depth of the plants to be cultivated. The recommended plan, therefore, includes 16" raised planter beds with a permeable root barrier beneath each bed.

FISCAL IMPACT

When the project was originally conceived during the planning phase, a much simpler design was envisioned (to be designed in-house) and a lower cost estimate was used for funding the project. As design developed and community input was incorporated, more elements were considered that were not included in the original estimate.

With the site located along South Shoreline Boulevard, more features will be provided to maintain the appearance of the garden, including a taller, ornamental fence to match the fencing at Eagle Park and storage sheds to store and organize communal tools. Other elements that have resulted in higher costs include: ADA parking, irrigation, and water delivery to every other plot, higher garden beds, root barriers/bed liners, and additional imported soil to ensure soil quality.

Other cost increases from the original budget include a higher landscape architect designer budget; additional conceptual design work performed by the landscape architect as outlined below; other consulting engineering costs, including soil sampling and design of the ADA parking; staff and administrative costs.

The current total estimated project cost for the community garden is \$1,070,000. The current project budget is \$520,000. Therefore, a budget amendment will be necessary to construct the project. Because the project is only in the conceptual design phase and the construction bidding climate is volatile, staff plans to return to Council to amend the project budget once the construction bids are opened and actual costs are known. There are sufficient funds in the Park Land Fund for the current project estimate.

Verde Design Contract Amendment

The City's contract with Verde for landscape architecture services totals \$98,000. During the conceptual design development, staff asked Verde to provide additional cost estimates, modified conceptual plans, phasing plans, and integrated ADA parking along South Shoreline Boulevard—all work outside of the original project scope. This additional work, along with the added work required to incorporate the design changes into the final plans, costs \$11,070. The City has authorized the use of additional services funds in the contract to pay for this work, leaving only \$1,095 remaining in the contract for any future extra work that might come up.

With the project still in the early stages of design, there is a possibility that additional out-of-scope work may be necessary to complete the design. In an effort to streamline the design process, staff recommends adding \$27,000 in additional services funds to Verde's professional services contract. These funds will only be used if services outside the basic scope of work are needed and will require prior written approval by the City. This amendment will increase the total contract amount to \$125,000.

SCHEDULE

The following is the projected schedule and next steps for the project:

- Council Approves Conceptual Plan May 2018
- 95% Construction Document Submittal July 2018
- Council Approves Plans and Specifications September 2018
- Begin Construction January 2019
- Complete Construction June 2019

CONCLUSION

Construction of a new community garden at South Shoreline Boulevard and Latham Street meets Council's goal to create more garden space available for City residents and

will make 83 new community garden plots available. The conceptual plan incorporates input from gardeners, neighbors, and the community in general, while also taking into account site constraints and operational needs.

The current estimated project cost exceeds the project budget due to changes in scope and additional consultant and administrative costs. Staff plans to return to Council, once actual construction costs are known, to amend the project budget and proceed with construction.

The majority of the additional services budget in the Verde professional services agreement has been spent to pay for out-of-scope work the City asked Verde to provide during the development of the conceptual plan. An amendment to their professional services agreement will increase the amount set aside for additional services by \$27,000. These funds will be used, if needed, for any out-of-scope work authorized by the City during the construction document design phase.

ALTERNATIVES

The following are possible alternatives for the project:

1. Do not proceed with the project.
2. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to the standard agenda posting, the residents and property owners within 1,000' of the community garden site, current community gardeners, those currently on the wait list for the Willowgate and Senior Gardens, and interested other parties received notices. The notice was also posted at the Willowgate Garden, the Senior Garden, and the project site. The notice was shared on social media sites such as the City's Twitter and Facebook accounts as well as on *Nextdoor.com* and the City's website. The notice was also published in the *Mountain View Voice*.

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937-05-08-18CR-E-1

Attachment: 1. Community Garden Conceptual Plan

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