

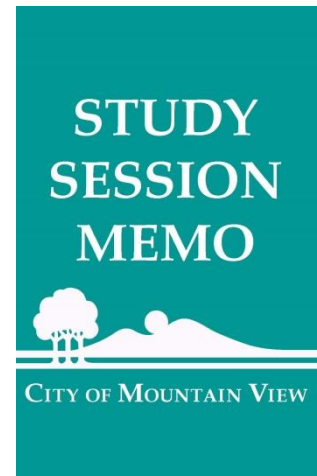
DATE: December 11, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Matthew VanOosten, Senior Planner
Wayne Chen, Acting Community Development
Director

VIA: Daniel H. Rich, City Manager

TITLE: **Google Landings**



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to present the first formal submittal of plans for an office building located at Landings Drive and a parking structure located on Huff Avenue (complete project commonly referred to as Google Landings) and receive preliminary Council input on the project prior to a next application submittal.

BACKGROUND

Project Site

The Google Landings proposal consists of an 803,004 square foot office building with one level of podium parking and a four-story, 536,500 square foot parking structure. The office site is located on Landings Drive, south of Charleston Road, west of Permanente Creek, and north of Highway 101. The structured parking garage is in a separate location between Alta Avenue and Huff Avenue midblock between Charleston Road and Plymouth Street (often referred to as Huff Garage). In total, the Google Landings project encompasses a 26.43-acre site.



Surrounding Land Uses

The surrounding land uses include Highway 101 to the south, Permanente Creek to the east, and office uses to the north and west. Also to the north of the project are several residential buildings. Google has been in communication with the Santa Clara Valley Water District in regard to the plan's impacts to Permanente Creek.

North Bayshore Precise Plan

The project site is located in the General Character Area of the North Bayshore Precise Plan (Precise Plan). The Precise Plan was first adopted by Council in December 2014 and envisions the General Character Area as an office employment-focused area with a lower-density, more campus-like environment than the Core and Gateway Character Areas but a greater density than existing uses. The Precise Plan also allows for buildings and blocks to be larger in this location than in other North Bayshore areas but should be connected by a network of internal campus quads, greenways, and

walkways. The General Character Area allows development intensity up to a 1.0 floor area ratio (FAR) and building heights up to six stories.

Bonus FAR Application Process

In 2015, Council action allotted Google the necessary square footage in North Bayshore to reach 1.0 FAR on the site so long as Bonus FAR criteria are met. The project site is allowed a base of 0.45 FAR. A Tier 1 bonus of 0.30 FAR is allowed if the applicant provides a LEED Platinum® building and transportation improvements. An additional Tier 2 bonus of 0.25 FAR would be allowed if the project achieves net-zero water and provides public benefits beyond the transportation improvements. The estimated value of the community benefits and transportation improvements at the time was \$52,000,000.

The benefits outlined in the formal submittal have changed slightly from those originally presented in the Bonus FAR process (see Attachment 3). Google states that it maintains committed to delivering on all the community benefits promised as part of the 2015 Bonus FAR process (see Attachment 4). Staff is in ongoing discussions with Google to ensure the proposed benefits meet the scope, intent, and value of the initial benefits proposed and is in conformance with the Precise Plan and Bonus FAR program.

DISCUSSION

The following section provides an overview of the proposed project, outlines the project's consistency with the North Bayshore Precise Plan, and provides staff recommendations and requested Council feedback on the overall project and specific topic areas.

Project Overview

Office

The Google Landings office site features a building that reaches up to six stories and is between 77' and 110' in height. The contemporary building is spread across the odd-shaped lot in a diagonal figure eight. The building is "lifted" in the middle by pillars to create a large patio open space on the ground floor, and the entire building is surrounded by landscaping. The landscaping to the north of the building is a large landscaped quad complete with an amphitheater space. To the east, the applicant intends to restore Permanente Creek with greater natural features and to create a publicly accessible native habitat area.



Google Landings Office Building

The office plans show extensive landscaping and native oak planting on a northern portion of property at 1875 Charleston Road, currently not owned by Google (see Page G008 of Attachment 1). The property owners of 1875 Charleston Road are aware of the project and this submission to the City. Google and the property owners are continuing to negotiate a deal to allow for the landscape improvements currently shown on 1875 Charleston Road. Discussions so far have been positive and must be resolved prior to the final Council approval of the project if this landscaped area currently in the plans is to remain.

The plan proposes a redesign of Landings Drive which is not currently consistent with the Precise Plan. The garage entrance location on Charleston Road also does not meet Precise Plan intent. Staff will continue to work with the applicant on these technical details to ensure road design and site access are consistent with the Precise Plan.

Parking Structure

The off-site parking structure on Huff Avenue is four stories and 58' in height and is situated adjacent to the green loop path in North Bayshore. The overall building footprint is 566'x274' and includes 1,792 parking spaces and ground-floor retail facing the green loop. Additional discussion on the project's overall parking strategy follows below in the parking section.



Huff Parking Structure

Staff believes further changes are needed to the Huff Garage design to create a strong design presence and make the building more compatible with the vision for North Bayshore. Specifically, the garage is long and needs enhanced design to break up the facade and provide visual interest. Staff will continue to work with the applicant through the design review process to ensure a fitting building.

Design

During the Bonus FAR approvals in 2015, Google presented drawings of the potential building architecture for the office site. While some design and site plan elements of the plans before Council today are different than the initial design, the building square

footage and FAR remain the same as what was awarded through the 2015 Bonus FAR allocation process.

Google states that they learned from Charleston East and that the current design responds better to the natural environment and the Precise Plan's sustainability goals than the initial design. The current design also does not require complex design and engineering solutions to construct the building, while it creates a greater diversity of high-end architecture in North Bayshore.



Proposed Office Building



Google Landings 2015 Bonus FAR Design

Question 1: Does Council support the design direction for Google Landings?

Parking

During the Bonus FAR approvals, Google proposed a district parking plan that involved Google Landings providing enough parking for multiple off-site Google buildings, including Charleston East. Charleston East was approved without any on-site parking on the condition that Google lease spaces at the Shoreline parking lot until permanent district parking is built.

Google now proposes an off-site, four-story parking structure located between Alta Avenue and Huff Avenue that is to serve only the Landings project and Charleston East. Google proposes to build 1,408 spaces below the Landings office site and 1,792 spaces in the separate four-story parking structure with 1,200 spaces to serve Charleston East and 592 spaces serving Landings. Rather than a centralized district parking plan, the proposal calls for parking two projects on two sites.

Staff has asked for a circulation plan and traffic study to better understand the potential impacts of two parking locations rather than a central one at the Landings office site.

Question 2: Does Council support further exploring the new parking arrangement?

Building Height

There are three different maximum heights allowed across the site based on the Precise Plan. The most common height limit on the site is 110' where the portion of the site faces Highway 101. There are also maximum heights of 95' (where the project is further from Highway 101) and 80' (where the project is fronting Permanente Creek). Given the project's unique roof structure, it most closely relates to a gable roof structure for the purpose of calculating height. Gabled roof height is measured as the mean height level between the eaves and the ridge for gabled roofs. The purpose of allowing an average between the tallest point and the eave for commercial structures is to support the use of varied roof forms in commercial structures.

The mean height of the roofs does meet the height limits of 110', 95', and 80' at the various points on the site. Given the size of the site and its grading, height measurements were taken based on three different points at the project boundary. Staff is supportive of this interpretation and is requesting Council feedback given the unique nature of the building and roof design.

The Precise Plan also includes a Habitat Overlay Zone (HOZ) of 150' from Permanente Creek where no building is allowed to take place. Additionally, there is a height guideline of 55' for buildings within a 100' encroachment of the Permanente Creek HOZ. In other words, between 150' and 250' from Permanente Creek, the guideline for maximum building height is 55'. A relatively small portion of the building that is 74' in height is located within the encroachment area. At its maximum, the office extends 45' into the encroachment area.



Office Protrusion into the 55' Height Limit (in yellow)

Google reasons in the plans that the overall building area proposed within this 100' encroachment area has significantly less square footage than what is allowable. Google believes that the extension over the maximum height guideline results in a superior project while also meeting the intent of the Precise Plan by providing a net ecological benefit. Google states that the project is establishing native habitats along the creek, removing the existing surface parking, and creating extensive habitat restoration.



Office Building Viewed from Permanente Creek

As for the parking structure, the Precise Plan recommends a maximum height of 55' as a guideline, and the proposal features a height of 58', not including elevator and stair towers. Google states that the additional height was needed in order to make the structure flexible to a number of uses, including residential, should parking not be needed in the future.

Question 3: Does Council support the heights for the office and does Council support an off-site parking structure of 58'?

Tree Removal

The office site currently has 929 trees located with the project boundary, including 342 Heritage trees. The majority of trees are London plane (25 percent), Coast redwoods (24 percent), and California pepper (10 percent). The remaining is a mixture of 40 other largely nonnative species such as Japanese maple, honey locust, crape myrtle, sweetgum, tarata, and Carolina cherry laurel. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the existing trees are in good health, and fifty-four percent (54%) are in fair condition. The remainder is in poor health or dead.

Redwood trees are not native to the North Bayshore Area, and their habitat requirements are not met by the local climate conditions, resulting in a need for

substantial irrigation. Wildlife use of redwood trees is also lower than locally native species such as oaks, willows, and cottonwoods. Google also believes London plane trees are undesirable due to its contamination of the native California sycamore.

Google proposes to remove 897 trees, including 361 Heritage trees and three non-Heritage street trees. The number of Heritage trees includes 19 trees located outside of the property that would be impacted by the development. Google states in the plans that the existing suite of tree species on the office site does not present opportunities for preservation and incorporation in the overall landscape plan and ecological strategy. A significant amount of earthmoving is needed for the project, which necessitates the removal of most of the trees on-site. Google proposes a mitigation plan that includes the planting of 735 trees with the project. The 735 new trees comply with the City's requirement of replacing Heritage trees at a 2:1 ratio. The planting plan includes 110 California buckeye, 65 Fremont cottonwood, 169 Coast live oak, 185 Valley oak, 120 red willow, and 86 street trees with species to be determined by the City. The Coast live oak and Valley oak would be planted in 60" boxes, the street trees would be planted in 36" boxes, and the rest of the trees would be planted in 24" boxes.

The existing tree canopy cover is approximately 43 percent, and the proposed planting plan estimates 49 percent coverage at 10 years and 65 percent coverage at maturity. The result would be canopy coverage approximately 50 percent greater than what exists today. Additionally, a significant amount of surface parking is being removed and replaced with more landscaping in the current proposal. Hardscape and building structures account for 71 percent of the current site, and the new proposal lowers that number to 43 percent.

Staff has asked that Google work with their arborist to pursue options for the preservation and/or relocation of trees in good condition.

Question 4: Does Council support the proposed tree removal and native tree replacement strategy as well as staff's recommendation for further preservation/relocation?

Build-to Area

The Precise Plan requires at least 40 percent of the building frontage be located between 15' and 50' in the front setback. This is so buildings activate and engage with the sidewalk and do not have an isolated appearance. The size and shape of the sites make it difficult to decide which portion of the project is the front, but staff has determined that the portion of the site along Charleston Road and the northwest portion of the site

along Landings Drive where it connects to Charleston Road are considered the front. This side was chosen because much of the rest of the site faces Highway 101 or Permanente Creek. The area that fronts Charleston Road does not need to meet front requirements because it is within the HOZ. However, the northwest portion of the site would need an exception since only 31 percent is within the build-to frontage requirements.



Build-to Area Graphic

Google states that this is necessary due to building the structured parking garage to the edge of the property and stepping the building back from that structure's edge. Google believes that it still achieves activation through quality design and inclusion of sidewalks, bikeways, and landscaping at the street edge.

Question 5: Does Council support an exception to the Precise Plan Build-to Area?

Street Framework

Office

The Precise Plan provides direction to break down large blocks with additional street, pedestrian, and bicycle connections to improve the circulation network within North Bayshore. A conceptual street layout in the Precise Plan shows a new Access Street bisecting the office site and a north-south greenway connection on the eastern side of the site. The project proposal shows a public greenway connection on the eastern side of the property. However, there is no Access Street through the property to break up the large block. In addition, due to security concerns, there is not a public greenway connection through the site in lieu of an Access Street. Access through the large block is limited to Google employees. Google has expressed heightened security concerns and wishes to maintain a security perimeter.



Precise Plan Conceptual Street Map

Garage

The Precise Plan conceptually shows a green connection through the Huff Garage site, but one is not shown on the plans. Staff would like to see further investigation into ways these sites could have large blocks be broken down better and consider enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections.

General

There are two more issues to note with the conceptual street plan that are not in Google's control. There is a section of greenway (circled in blue on the above map) that is not on property owned by Google but would complete a greenway connection from

the completed greenway adjacent to the proposed garage to the Permanente Creek Trail. That connection remains a key piece in North Bayshore connectivity. Additionally, the Precise Plan calls for the new Access Street to continue south across Permanente Creek, through private property, and connect Alta Avenue/Plymouth Street (see orange circle on map). This property is also not owned by Google. Staff will continue to work with the applicant to ensure that the new Access Street is built in such a way that allows for a future connection to Alta Avenue when it is available. The City may need to take the initiative at some future date for these connections.

Question 6: Does Council support the proposed street/greenway framework or should the designs be revised to include access through one or both sites?

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council provide feedback on the project and direction on the following questions posed in the Study Session memo:

- Question 1: Does Council support the design direction for Google Landings?
- Question 2: Does Council support the new parking arrangement?
- Question 3: Does Council support the heights for the office and does Council support an off-site parking structure of 58'?
- Question 4: Does Council support the proposed tree removal and native tree replacement strategy as well as staff's recommendation for further preservation/relocation?
- Question 5: Does Council support an exception to the Precise Plan Build-to Area?
- Question 6: Does Council support the proposed street/greenway framework or should the design be revised to include access through the sites?

NEXT STEPS

Following feedback from the City Council at this Study Session, the applicant will submit a revised application and the project will continue the development review and CEQA process. Working with staff, the applicant will make changes as needed. The project is currently anticipated to come before Council for a final decision by the end of 2019.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The Council's agenda is advertised on Channel 26, and the agenda and this Study Session memo appear on the City's website. All property owners and tenants within a 750' radius were notified of this meeting.

MVO-WC/2/CAM
835-12-11-18SS

- Attachments:
1. Google Landings Office Project Plans
 2. Google Landings Parking Structure Project Plans
 3. 2015 Bonus FAR Approval Summary
 4. Current Community Benefits Summary