



**DATE:** February 22, 2022

**CATEGORY:** Consent

**DEPT.:** Public Works

**TITLE:** **PG&E Gas Regulator Station at San Veron Park—Heritage Tree Removal and Mitigation**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Authorize the City Manager or designee to execute the necessary documents to grant Pacific Gas and Electric Company a utility easement at San Veron Park with compensation to the City based on the appraised value of the easement.
2. Approve the removal and mitigation for two Heritage trees at San Veron Park at a 2:1 tree replacement ratio with 24" box trees.

### **BACKGROUND**

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) maintains a franchise agreement for rights to use the City's right-of-way to install and maintain pipes and appurtenances for transmitting and distributing gas services. As part of PG&E's ongoing gas safety programs, PG&E will replace the existing gas regulator station (GRS) in the median on the west side of the intersection on West Middlefield Road at North Shoreline Boulevard (see Figure 1). The GRS reduces pressure in the large gas transmission pipeline to feed into smaller pipelines that directly serve homes and businesses. The GRS has reached the end of its useful life and does not meet current safety standards.

As shown in Figure 1, replacing the GRS in its current location will require removing three Heritage trees. In accordance with Section 32.27 of the City's Heritage Tree Ordinance, PG&E is not required to apply for permits for removal of Heritage trees within the public right-of-way for such projects.



*Figure 1: Location of Existing GRS and Tree Removals*

During the [October 26, 2021 Council meeting](#), staff presented the GRS impacts as they related to the Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements project and the need for a policy decision regarding the ultimate location of the GRS. Council directed staff to defer the additional left-turn lanes on West Middlefield Road to avoid impacting the Heritage trees in the West Middlefield Road median, including the same three Heritage trees that would have to be removed to replace the GRS.

## **ANALYSIS**

The current location of the GRS is not ideal because it is constrained in a median area and surrounded on three sides by major streets. PG&E and City staff have investigated possible alternative sites that meet PG&E's requirements for the GRS while also providing a less constrained location and minimizing tree removals. Staff recommends an alternate location on the northerly edge of San Veron Park. Replacement of the GRS,

at either the existing location or the recommended location, requires removal of Heritage trees and creates visual impacts. Each location is analyzed below.

**Existing Location in West Middlefield Road Median**

The existing location is in the west end of the median and is constrained by the narrowing median width and existing trees. The close proximity to traffic lanes poses safety risks from traffic collisions for both the GRS equipment and PG&E workers. Vertical barriers would be required within the median to mitigate safety concerns and also to protect aboveground equipment. While most of the equipment is underground, visible elements include utility vaults to access the underground equipment, vent stacks, a cabinet, a pole with a small solar panel, and, in this location, the addition of protective barriers. Because the new GRS requires a larger footprint than the existing facility, three large Heritage trees would need to be removed from the median to install the GRS (see Figure 1, Table 1, and Attachment 1).

**Table 1: Trees in the Median  
at West Middlefield Road and North Shoreline Boulevard**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Tree Diameter at 54" Above Grade</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Heritage Tree</b>	<b>Tree Type</b>
1	34"	85'	Yes	Redwood
2	28"	80'	Yes	Redwood
3	25"	75'	Yes	Redwood

**Recommended Location in San Veron Park**

The recommended location in San Veron Park is not constrained on three sides by major roadways like the existing location and, therefore, provides safer access for maintenance workers (see Figure 2).

While this location is in the park, it is away from prominent, visual, and active playground and turf areas. A 4' retaining wall would be installed behind the GRS to maintain a flat grade behind the sidewalk for the utility vaults and to preserve the remaining trees by avoiding additional grading. PG&E would maintain the GRS and retaining wall.



Figure 2: Location of the Proposed GRS in San Veron Park

Installation of the GRS at this location would require the removal of two Heritage trees and three non-Heritage trees (see Table 2 and Figure 3). All tree replacements would be within San Veron Park. Figure 4 depicts a preliminary layout for tree replacements. Staff will work with PG&E to identify the final tree planting locations in San Veron Park that will also consider feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) as explained later in this report. Staff recommends replacement of the two Heritage trees at a 2:1 ratio with 24" box trees and replacement of the three non-Heritage trees at a 1:1 ratio with 24" box trees. Attachment 2 shows photos of the trees to be removed and a rendering of the GRS.

Table 2: Proposed Tree Removals at San Veron Park

No.	Tree Diameter at 54" Above Grade	Height	Heritage Tree	Tree Type
1	30"	35'	Yes	Pine
2	22"	15'	No	Purple Leaf Plum
3	12"	20'	Yes	Redwood
4	6"	12'	No	Ginkgo
5	6"	12'	No	Ginkgo





Figure 3: Proposed Tree Removals at San Veron Park

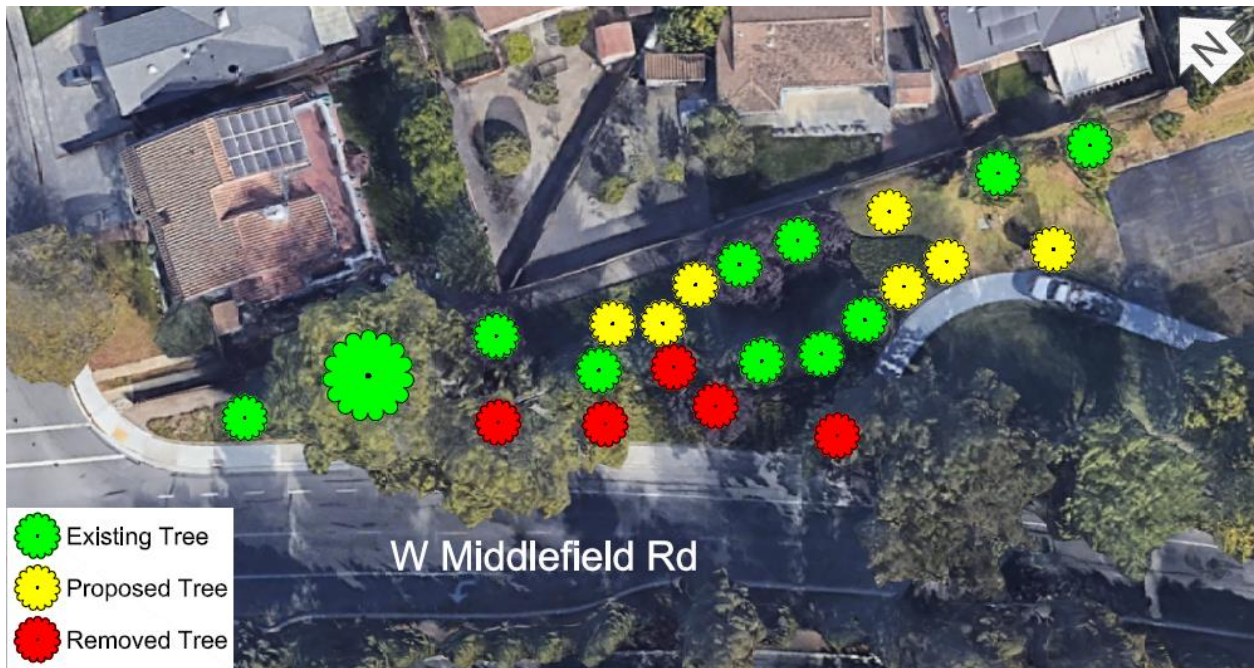


Figure 4: Preliminary Tree Replacement Layout at San Veron Park

Being less constrained, the recommended site at San Veron Park offers greater opportunities for replacement tree planting and mitigating the visual impact of the tree removals.

### **Recommended Easement**

The recommended location is outside of the right-of-way on City-owned property. To use this location to install the GRS, PG&E requires an easement for approximately 1,200 square feet from the City. An initial appraisal established the value of the easement at approximately \$130,000. The final appraised value will be determined once the City receives the final easement configuration information from PG&E. The recommended actions authorize staff to execute the necessary documents to grant PG&E the easement in exchange for the appraised value of the easement.

### **Parks and Recreation Commission**

On January 19, 2021, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) considered staff's recommendation to mitigate the removal of the two Heritage trees at San Veron Park at a 2:1 ratio with 24" box trees. The PRC provided feedback to staff to consider an alternate location in the park strip area on the west side of West Middlefield Road, across from San Veron Park (see Figure 5).

City and PG&E staff reviewed the proposed alternate location and found the location is not suitable. The GRS requires a large footprint and would not fit within the 10' of available right-of-way behind the existing curb. Although there is a 10' sidewalk easement behind the existing right-of-way at this location, this sidewalk easement is exclusive to sidewalk use and the GRS cannot be placed in the easement without PG&E obtaining an easement from the adjacent property owner. In addition, the alternative is far from PG&E's gas main and transmission lines and would require a significant amount of additional trenching and line installation, which would impact and increase construction and yearly maintenance costs.





*Figure 5: PRC Proposed Alternative Location*

The PRC approved a motion, on a 4-to-1 vote, to forward a recommendation to the City Council to approve the mitigation for the two Heritage trees at San Veron Park at a 2:1 tree replacement ratio with 24" box trees and included the following requests:

1. Consider alternate tree replacement locations at San Veron Park closer to the street.
2. Choose native species for tree replacement.
3. Apply features to enhance the aesthetics of the retaining wall.

If Council approves the recommended location, Public Works and Community Services staff will work with PG&E to identify appropriate tree planting locations (potentially

different than Figure 4), select native tree species, and find creative ways to improve the wall aesthetics, including exploring the use of colored concrete, a concrete stamp pattern, and/or plantings that can grow onto the wall.

The GRS upgrade is a critical PG&E safety improvement. Staff notes that while PG&E has been working with staff to determine the best location of the GRS, without Council approval of the recommended San Veron Park location, PG&E could proceed with upgrading the GRS at its current location in the median, including removal of the three Heritage trees, without City approval.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

PG&E would compensate the City in the amount of the final appraised value of the utility easement, estimated at approximately \$130,000. The design, construction, and maintenance of the GRS, including mitigation replacement for tree removals, will be funded by PG&E.

### **CONCLUSION**

Replacement of the GRS on West Middlefield Road at North Shoreline Boulevard is one of a series of gas pipeline safety improvements undertaken by PG&E in recent years. Though PG&E could undertake the project at the existing location within the right-of-way without Council approval, City and PG&E staff have worked together to seek an alternative location that provides a safer operating environment for PG&E while minimizing visual impacts and tree removals and offering more opportunity for mitigation tree planting. Consequently, staff recommends that the Council approve granting an easement to PG&E and the removal and mitigation for two Heritage trees to install the new GRS at the northerly edge of San Veron Park.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Do not authorize granting an easement to install the GRS and removal of the two Heritage trees at San Veron Park. PG&E will proceed to build the gas regulator station at the existing location, including the removal of three Heritage trees in the West Middlefield Road median.
2. Do not approve the mitigation for two Heritage trees at San Veron Park at a 2:1 tree replacement ratio with 24" box trees.
3. Provide other direction.



## **PUBLIC NOTICING**

In addition to agenda posting, staff posted notices on the Heritage trees proposed to be removed and noticed properties within 750' of the project site.

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Attachments: 1. Photos of Existing Location Tree Removals  
2. Photos of San Veron Park Tree Removals and GRS Rendering