

February 10, 2022
Item 4

TITLE: REVIEW AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT WAYSIDE AND DELUCCHI PARKS CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

SUMMARY

The City began work on Wayside and Delucchi Parks in 2006 following the completion of the Firehouse Arts Center and acquisition of the regional trail corridor (the downtown abandoned railroad property). In 2014, the City Council adopted the Wayside and Delucchi Parks Master Plan and then in 2016, Council approved the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents for the project. Staff and their consultant presented the project to the regulatory agencies in 2016. In response to feedback received from the agencies, the City substantially revised the conceptual design to reduce impacts to meet the regulatory agency requirements.

In 2018/19, four concept alternatives were presented to City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and input. Additionally, in 2019, the City purchased 4363 and 4377 First Street and in 2020, the City removed the giant Blue Gum Eucalyptus from Wayside Park.

The conceptual plans were revised to include the Commission and Council input and to incorporate the acquired properties and removal of the Eucalyptus tree. The revised concept plan, creek design, and hydrology report was then presented to the regulatory agencies at two separate meetings in 2021. Staff received positive feedback from the regulatory agencies.

The Wayside and Delucchi Parks conceptual design plan is now being presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission for their review, input, and recommendation to Council. The design is supported by the agencies and meets the primary objectives and goals of the 2014 Master Plan. Upon Commission and Council review and approval, staff will update the Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and make a recommendation to approve the draft Wayside and Delucchi Parks conceptual design.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

There is no direct financial impact resulting from a Parks and Recreation Commission recommendation. Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project no. 06716 has been established for the project. City Council will determine the final design and construction budget for the project.

BACKGROUND

In 2002, the Downtown Parks and Trails System Master Plan and Downtown Specific Plan recommended that Wayside and Delucchi Parks be considered in conjunction with the Main Street Green (now Rotary Park), Fire Station No. 1 (now the Firehouse Arts Center), the Main Street Bridge, the Regional Trail Corridor, and portions of the Arroyo Del Valle and be designed to serve as one contiguous park area. The plans intended that the combined facility of Wayside and Delucchi parks serve the immediate neighborhood as well as the City as a whole.

Following the completion of the Firehouse Arts Center and the City's acquisition of the Regional Trail Corridor, the Wayside and Delucchi Parks Master Plan process commenced, and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project no. 06716 was assigned to the project. In December 2008, the City Council approved a consultant agreement with the firm of Richard Larson & Associates, to develop the master plan. The firm's principal, Mr. Richard Larson, was the project Landscape Architect for the Firehouse Arts Center and was also the principal consultant for the Downtown Parks and Trails System Master Plan.

On April 9, 2009, the Parks and Recreation Commission held a public hearing to review two schematic designs prepared by Mr. Larson. The major difference between the two schemes was the disposition of the creek that runs through the site and whether it should be piped and "undergrounded" or remain open and enhanced and embraced as a park feature. The Commission overwhelmingly supported undergrounding the creek.

Later that same year, in August 2009, the Civic Arts Commission also reviewed the same two schematic plans that were considered by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Civic Arts Commission also supported undergrounding the creek, citing the improved and enlarged audience area that it would afford the Concert in the Park series, as well as the enhanced pedestrian connection to the Firehouse Arts Center. Shortly after the Civic Arts Commission reviewed the schematics, and due to general economic uncertainties, the project was placed on hold.

In March 2011, the Parks and Recreation Commission prioritized their projects for the upcoming City Council priority setting workshop in 2011. Completing the re-design of Wayside and Delucchi Parks was one of the Commission's top 3 priorities.

On May 30, 2013, updated Wayside and Delucchi Parks schematic plans were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission with changes based on the feedback received in 2009. The meeting was held as a public workshop to garner open discussion with the community regarding the schematic plan options. Notifications were sent out to approximately 630 residents. The Commission again voted to recommend undergrounding Kottinger Creek. The Commission's support focused on the additional lawn space that would be provided for concerts and events and the accessibility and safety issues they felt would be addressed with the undergrounding of the creek.

On July 16, 2013, the schematic park designs were presented to City Council. Staff provided Council with a status report on the project, including the input that was received during the Parks and Recreation Master Plan process that identified the renovation of Wayside and Delucchi Parks as one of the most important and significant improvements that the City should pursue. Staff also identified the regulatory challenges that were possible in undergrounding the creek. The Council directed staff to pursue the option that proposed undergrounding the creek.

On June 3, 2014, the City contracted with AECOM to provide the necessary environmental and permit application consulting services. Undergrounding the creek required the City to secure permits from government agencies with jurisdiction over natural resources and review the project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). To satisfy permitting and CEQA requirements, the City, with consultant assistance, prepared a Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration to accompany the permitting package for the project, which was adopted by the City Council on February 16, 2016. This Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was submitted to the various local permitting agencies for review prior to officially submitting the application to underground the creek.

Upon receiving the IS/MND, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) all expressed concern regarding the proposed undergrounding of 533 linear feet of creek in Wayside Park. The agencies were concerned with the potential loss of riparian habitat and impacts to surrounding watersheds. Due to these concerns, each of the agencies indicated they would likely not issue permits based on the submitted design and plans for Wayside and Delucchi Parks.

In November 2017, in response to permitting agency feedback, the City substantially revised the conceptual design to reduce impacts to Kottinger Creek and enhance segments of the channelized stream while still meeting the City's objectives of augmenting the appearance and use of the parks, upgrading an important downtown recreational amenity, and improving park safety. Compared to the previously submitted design, the new design reduced impacts to Kottinger Creek by approximately 500 linear feet and would have eliminated more than 2,900 cubic yards of fill in the creek. The originally proposed 533 linear-foot culvert in Kottinger Creek would be replaced with a clear- spanning deck covering 85 linear feet to unite the bandstand with the rest of the park.

Upon review by the RWQCB staff, this redesign was also determined to be unacceptable toward meeting the objectives and standards of the agency, and therefore, the proposed design would not be supported.

Taking into consideration the feedback and perspectives of the various permitting agencies regarding the section of Kottinger Creek in Wayside Park, staff initiated the process of modifying the originally adopted design of Wayside Park to achieve the intended goals outlined in the Master Plan, while conforming to the standards and guidelines that would be necessary to secure permits from the various local permitting agencies.

Staff prepared four potential design alternatives that attempted to meet these goals. The design alternatives contained varying placements of the Chan Henderson bandstand to maximize seating for event participants, as well as to achieve other aesthetic and design improvements meant to increase efficiency and access to park features. Of the four concept alternatives, Council directed staff to further study three of the options and to present the design to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review, with a goal of developing a final draft design that would meet the needs of the permitting agencies:

- Option A: Embrace the Creek – move the bandstand to the northwest corner of Wayside Park near the Firehouse Arts Center, with the creek in approx. the same location as it is currently
- Option B: Creek Access – move the bandstand to the northwest corner of Wayside Park near the Firehouse Arts Center, with the creek relocated further to the south
- Option C: Larger Lawn – move the bandstand to the south end of Wayside Park, with the creek in approx. the same location as it is currently.

On December 18, 2018, Council approved a contract with Moore, Iacafano, and Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) to study the design alternatives and develop the concepts further. The principal in charge of landscape architecture for MIG, Richard Larson, is the same landscape architect that developed the Master Plan for the parks.

On January 10, 2019, staff presented the concept alternatives to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission commented as follows:

- asked about sloping the lawn towards the bandstand, which the consultant said was likely not feasible due to the creek
- wanted to create a signature entrance at Neal and First Street with specialty paving and a monument
- had concerns about safety in the street
- wanted to make sure the bandstand had vehicular access for performances
- requested boulders on the slope to the creek to provide creek access
- asked about the possibility of moving the bandstand to the north side of Wayside Park
- asked about the design of the creek
- recommended Option B and to maximize the lawn/concert viewing space.

Following the meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission, staff amended the schematic designs to align with feedback from the commission and prepared for a subsequent meeting to solicit additional feedback from the necessary government agencies on the refined designs.

In May of 2019, City staff received notice from MIG that, in preliminary conversations with staff at the RWQCB, the project would not be supported by the regional permitting agency. The RWQCB stipulated that the reduced flow in the area of Kottinger Creek within Wayside Park was a result of a previous diversion by the City, routing water from Kottinger Creek to the Arroyo Del Valle.

This stipulation was based on Water Board staff's interpretation of mapping data provided by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) that identified a flow diversion from Kottinger Creek to the Arroyo Del Valle, which had been published in the National Hydrology Dataset and made available through the USGS and the California Department of Water Resources. City staff reviewed the data and demonstrated to the USGS that the information presented in their dataset did not accurately reflect the conditions of water flowing through Kottinger Creek. USGS then amended their mapping data. Once the error had been corrected, City staff met with the staff at the RWQCB to address their concerns. While RWQCB staff acknowledged that the City provided the necessary documentation to disprove their theory about the diverted waterway, the RWQCB determined that a hydrology study of the area of Kottinger Creek within Wayside Park would be necessary to adequately assess any proposed changes to the channel.

In addition to the need for the hydrology study, the City purchased properties at 4363 and 4377 First Street with the expectation to incorporate the properties into the Wayside and Delucchi Parks design. On January 21, 2020, City Council approved a contract amendment with MIG to include the hydrology study and the newly purchased First Street properties into the design.

MIG prepared a preliminary hydrology study and worked with staff to update the concept plans over the course of 2020. In early September 2020, the City had to remove the giant Blue Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) tree in Wayside Park due to disease and safety concerns. The removal of the tree provided an opportunity to meander the creek further to the east, thus meeting a request of the RWQCB for a more natural looking creek and providing an opportunity to further maximize lawn and concert viewing areas. Later in September, MIG presented draft concept plans to staff that accounted for the removed tree and the purchased properties. On November 4, 2020, staff, with the assistance of their consultant, presented the concept design alternatives to the RWQCB. The RWQCB provided positive feedback but required further design details before committing to their support for the project design.

Staff and MIG refined the design and presented the updated concept plan to the RWQCB again on May 28, 2021. The updated concept plan was favorably received from the RWQCB but again the RWQCB indicated that more information would be required, including the basis of design for the creek and a more detailed hydrology analysis.

In October 2021, the City entered into a contract with Balance Hydrologics to prepare preliminary creek design, hydraulic modeling, and a design basis memo for Kottinger Creek to be used in a detailed discussion with the regulatory agencies at the Army Corps of Engineers Interagency meeting.

On December 7, 2021, staff and MIG presented the hydraulic modeling, preliminary creek design, and basis of design to the regulatory agencies. The agencies indicated that the design met their expectations and that the design would likely be approved if submitted as shown.

DISCUSSION

When the Parks and Recreation Commission last reviewed the plans in 2019, the Commission directed staff to proceed with the concept option that maximized lawn and concert viewing area. The current concept plan reflects the feedback from the regulatory agencies along with the feedback received from the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council. The key features of the current concept plan are:

- Kottinger Creek will be more of a central focus and design feature of the park
- the portion of the creek through Wayside Park will be restored to a more natural form
- the creek will be re-aligned further to the south to provide a larger lawn area
- the First street properties acquired by the City will provide a continuation of Wayside Park, with a parking lot for approx. 25 vehicles that connects to First Street and the existing parking lot for the Firehouse Arts Center
- there will be a stronger connection between the Firehouse Arts Center and the main audience area
- Railroad Avenue could be closed for larger events and serve as additional space for the events.

As with previous concepts, the current concept plan includes many of the features of the master plan as approved in 2014, such as putting a focus on the Neal Street entry and allowing for the closure of the street for large events. Now, in addition to being a park renovation project, there is a significant creek restoration component.

The addition of the First Street properties, along with the removal of the Blue Gum Eucalyptus, provided an improved opportunity for the park design to incorporate a more natural creek alignment, a design that was acceptable to the regulatory agencies, and a larger lawn space for concerts and events.

Staff is requesting that the Parks and Recreation Commission review and make a recommendation to approve the draft Wayside and Delucchi Parks Master Plan concept. City Council will receive the Commission's recommendation, determine final approval of the concept plan, and direct staff to refine the concept and update the 2014 Master Plan. The plan is scheduled to be presented to the City Council in March or April 2022. Project costs are yet to be determined and will be identified if Council directs staff to proceed with the next phase of design.

Submitted by:



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Attachment:

1. Wayside and Delucchi Parks 2022 Design Elements