

June 9, 2022

Re: Northam Park Tennis Renovations

The Parks & Recreation Department is currently completing the detailed design process for Phase 02 of improvements to Northam Park. This phase includes replacement of the park service building, the renovation of tennis courts 1-3, and replacement of the central concrete plaza located between courts 3 and 4. Throughout each phase of the Northam Park design process, City Staff have worked closely with consulting engineers and designers to minimize the impacts to existing trees in Northam Park, however in some instances this cannot be avoided. In consultation with the City Forester, the work of Phase 02 will require the removal of the four large Sycamore trees in planters within the existing concrete plaza. Several factors have been considered resulting in the recommendation to remove these trees:

- **Potential for Damage during Construction:** The existing concrete plaza is in poor condition with extensive cracking and heaving in both the pavement and planter walls. The concrete is not in an acceptable condition and will need a full removal, with construction to occur close to the trees. There is a strong potential for damage to roots and soil compaction given the extensive amount of work that will be required to be performed within the critical root zones of the trees.
- **Sanitary Sewer Connection:** As part of the building replacement, the existing 6" sanitary lateral servicing the building will be replaced. This new line will be installed through the central plaza area, connecting to a 10" main north of the courts. At the point of connection, the sanitary line will be approximately 10 feet below grade. This will require significant trenching near the trees, work that cannot be completed without causing damage to the roots.
- **Re-Grading:** The existing building and tennis courts sit lower than the surrounding grades, leading to frequent flooding. When these features are replaced, the new building and courts will be approximately six inches higher than existing grades to eliminate the runoff that currently comes onto the courts and into the building. This additional fill and compaction would adversely affect the mature trees.
- **Drainage:** The existing deck drains within the concrete plaza are undersized and unable to handle rainfall from larger storms. The new plaza will feature properly-sized trench drains along the edge and near the center that will handle runoff while also providing an accessible transition to the playing surface. Installation of these drains will require trenching to put in storm piping in the concrete plaza area.

Based on the above factors, the City's staff of certified arborists, including our Parks & Forestry Superintendent and Forestry Supervisor have recommended the removal of the trees as part of the construction project. They have assessed the trees and determined that the southernmost tree is in poor condition and should be removed regardless of the anticipated construction impacts. They have indicated



that the remaining trees appear healthy but given their age and proximity to the project, they would likely sustain damage during the construction process. Even if construction could be performed without damage, the changed conditions around the trees would negatively impact future health.

It is our understanding a tennis member has had a conversation with an independent arborist who supports staff's conclusion that three of the trees are currently healthy. This arborist may have also indicated that the construction would not have a negative impact. We feel that this informal assessment is likely based on a limited understanding of the extent of the construction activity planned for the site or is not taking into consideration the risk for potential damage to the trees and the safety of our patrons. We are confident in the expertise and recommendations of the City's staff of certified arborists.

As part of the design process, Staff explored alternative designs that might allow for the preservation of the trees within the tennis complex. Any alternative that preserves the trees would need to provide a pervious buffer throughout the critical root zone. Additionally, the grade within the critical root zone cannot be modified from existing elevations. This would require the removal of at least one tennis court to provide the additional space that is needed. Under this scenario, we still would not be able to ensure the trees will not be jeopardized due to the potential for root damage from the underground utilities work. Based on community input received throughout the planning and design process – which demonstrated a desire to keep all 12 courts – Staff concluded this was not a preferred alternative.

Up to this point in the Northam Park Improvements, we have been fortunate to be able to design with minimal impact to mature trees in the park. While this has required some creative thinking and additional costs, it has resulted in being able to maintain the overall character of the park. Unfortunately when it comes to the tennis court renovations, this is simply not an option. The impact of removing the trees within the tennis complex will be lessened by preserving the many mature trees immediately adjacent to the exterior of the complex. Additionally, Staff will look for opportunities to plant new trees within the park so that the natural beauty of the park can be enjoyed for many years to come. This will include the Dick Klitch memorial tree grove which will feature three large species shade trees to be planted just south of courts 1-3.