

TO: Burlington City Council
FROM: City Hall Park Design & Project Management Team
RE: Evolution of Tree Plan for & Alternative Interim Concept for Public Gathering Space
DATE: June 20, 2018

The purpose of this memo is to detail the changes that have been made to the plans for City Hall Park regarding trees since 2016 as a result of public input, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations. Additionally, following the City Hall Park Tree Plan Ad Hoc Committee on June 12, Council President Wright requested additional information about an alternative, interim concept posed by the landscape architect for the public gathering space at the base of City Hall steps that would allow for the retention of additional crab apple trees. This memo also provides information about that concept.

Evolution of City Hall Park Tree Plan

At the outset of this design process in 2016, there were 58 trees. Two trees, which were assessed as being in decline by Warren Spinner in late 2016, were lost to wind damage in November 2017. Another 5 were removed early this year due to their hazardous conditions. **Today, there are 51 trees that exist within the park.**

A revised plan for City Hall Park was shared in November 2016, and received extensive public feedback. The design and project management team worked over the course of the 9 months that followed to make revisions to many aspects of the plan based on this feedback. The updates based on this feedback were presented in August 2017. **Among the revisions were retaining additional existing trees, including the large Silver Maple in the center of the southern lawn (tree 973), and the Norway Maples (937-938, 977-978), and the Hackberry (tree 936) lining the buildings on the eastern edge of the park.**

When the plan was submitted to the DRB in February 2018, the landscape plan indicated that 22 trees were proposed to be retained, and 12 new trees were proposed to be added for a **total of 34 trees.**

Based on public testimony during the DRB process, two additional existing trees (907, 944) were added back into the plan, and two additional new trees were added to the plan (2 and 13; 12 was relocated from its original proposed location where 907 stands). **Public feedback resulted in 4 additional trees in the plans during the DRB process for a total of 38 trees.**

Throughout the course of the Ad Hoc Committee's discussions, the design team presented 4 options for retaining existing trees or adding new trees within the constraints of the park's design goals. At the final meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee voted to recommend a hybrid of several of these options, that resulted in 2 additional existing trees being retained (965, 975), 2 additional new trees being added (15, 16), and one of the new trees from the DRB approved plan being moved to shade a walkway/seating area. **This would result in 4 trees in addition to the DRB approved plan, for a total of 42 trees.**

Further, the Committee voted to recommend retaining the Crab Apple (945) near the public gathering space at the base of City Hall steps, and adding a new tree (17) in the northeast quadrant of the park near where tree 932 will be removed. **Combined with the recommendations from the design team, this would result in 6 trees in addition to the DRB approved plan, for a total of 44 trees.**

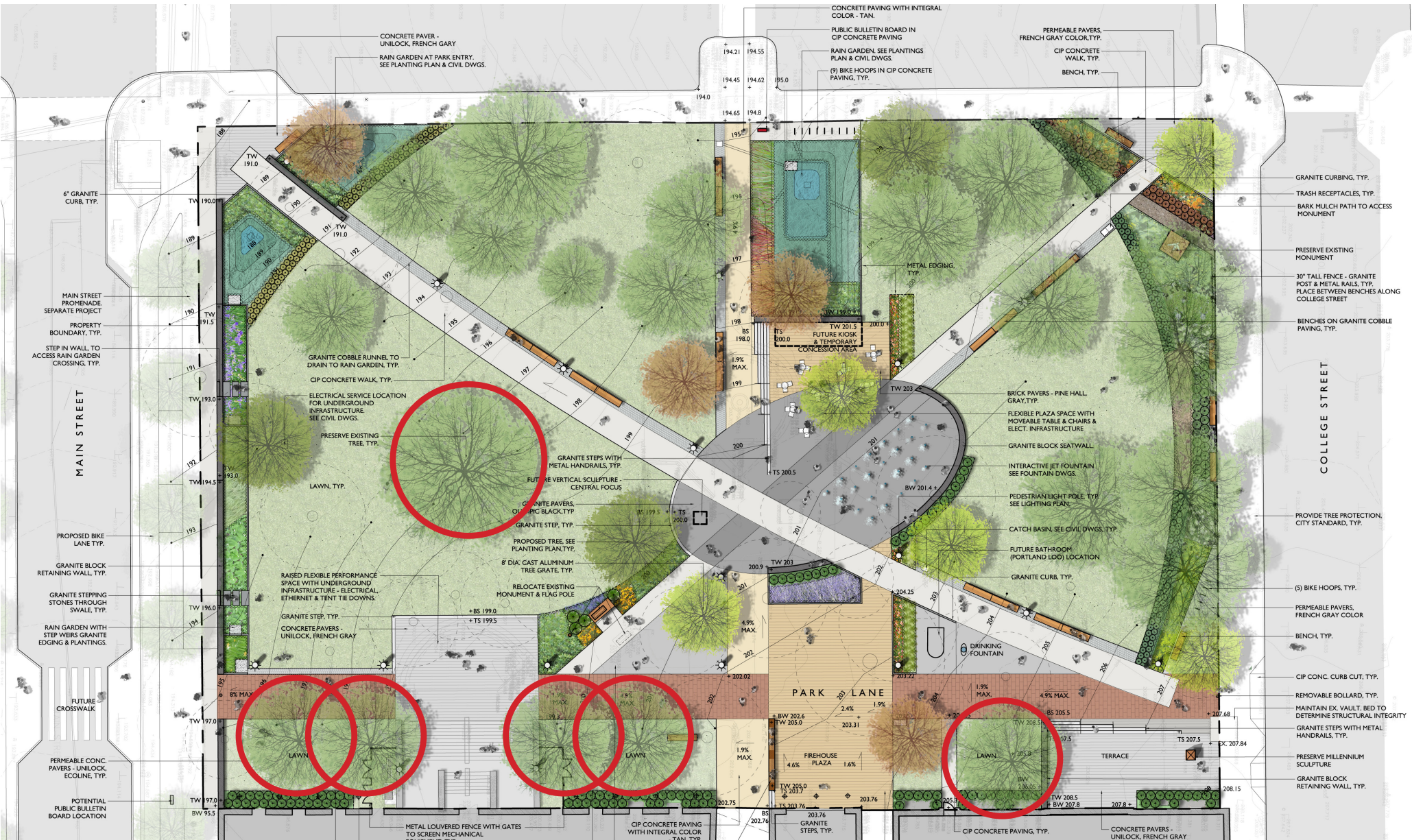
Finally, the committee voted to recommend retaining the Sugar Maple (964) in poor condition and the Silver Linden (911) in fair/poor condition on a temporary basis, and a good faith effort by the design team to explore whether the American Elm (968) could also be retained. **This resulted in 2 additional trees being retained for a total of 46 trees in the short term.**

Plans detailing this evolution can be found on the following pages.

Evolution of City Hall Park Tree Plan: November 2016 Concept Plan

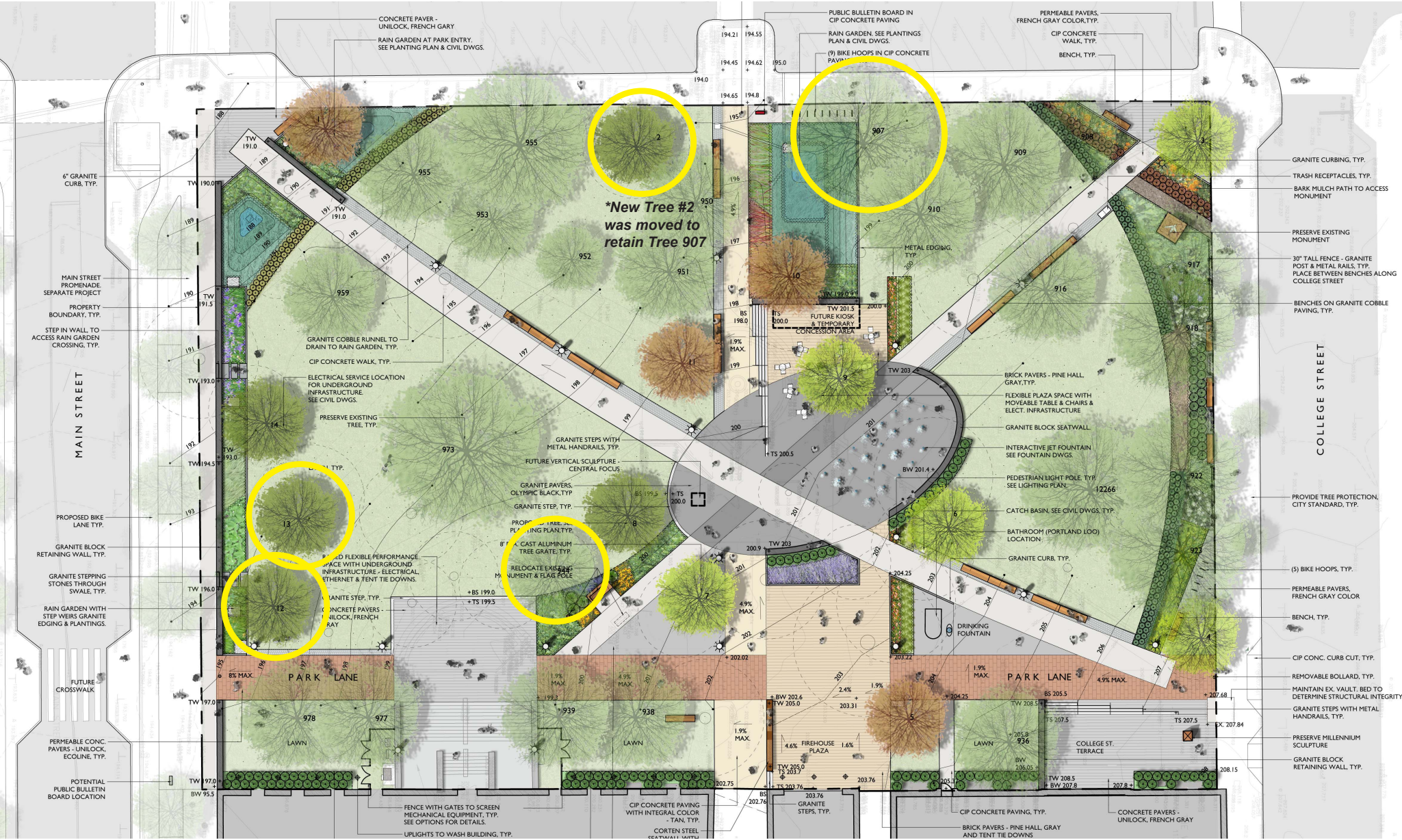


Evolution of City Hall Park Tree Plan: August 2017 Modifications



Existing trees that were added back into CHP Plan following 2016 Public Input

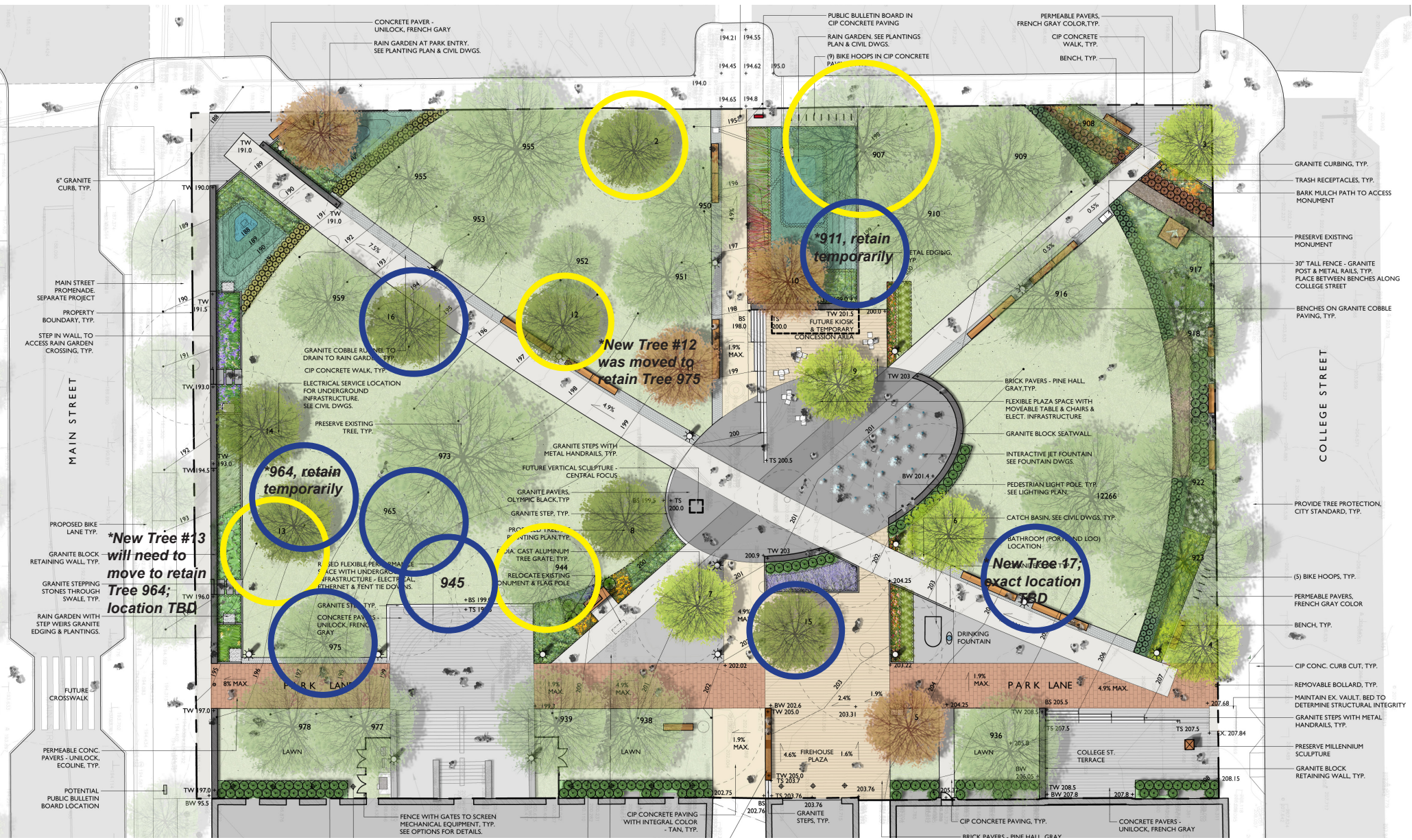
Evolution of City Hall Park Tree Plan: DRB Process



***New Tree #2 was moved to retain Tree 907**

4 additional trees (3 added & 1 retained) as a result of public input during DRB process

Evolution of City Hall Park Tree Plan: Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations



4 additional trees (3 added & 1 retained) as a result of public input during DRB process

8 Additional Trees (added, retained, modified) as recommended by Ad Hoc Committee

Design Purpose: Improve Existing Public Gathering Space

The gathering space adjacent to City Hall steps is a reconstruction of the existing amphitheater, based on the design goal to incorporate appropriate infrastructure in the park to accommodate modern civic uses. The steps, amphitheater, and lawn around it are frequently utilized today for a variety of formal and informal civic purposes. In the Imagine City Hall Park Process, the second most frequent response regarding the future of the park was to accommodate events, which is what this space was designed for. Additionally, the summary of the public feedback on the plan from December 2016 noted, “many liked the goal to have flexible spaces to be used for events and smaller performances. Several commented that larger and/or private ticketed events should not occur in this park.”

This space was planned as a ‘pad’ of sorts, to provide flexibility for a wide variety of events and uses in the park. It was re-envisioned from a sunken, 700 sq.ft. amphitheater to be flat, level with the lawn to the west, and just 292 sq.ft. larger. This reconfiguration would provide more flexibility for its use; allow it to be visible from and relate to both the steps of City Hall and the lawn to the west; and have integrated infrastructure that would make the space more usable and cost effective for programming small performances and other events. This space was anticipated to replace or reduce the need to use expensive, temporary infrastructure on the southwest corner lawn and to increase the frequency at which small performances could take place in the park. In order to do so, it was important for the space to be visible by people sitting in the lawn to the west, which would be significantly limited by the location, proximity, and size of the species of trees 942, 945, and 976.

Alternative Interim Semi-Circular Gathering Space Concept

The resolution establishing the Ad Hoc Committee sought recommendations regarding changes to the park’s approved landscape plan in order to retain additional existing healthy trees and/or add new trees that would balance shade on hardscapes. In the approved resolution, language regarding changes to the hardscape and specific elements of the design were struck. As such, changing the shape/program of this gathering space was not contemplated by the design team.

The idea of modifying this space from a rectangle to a semi-circle was raised by the landscape architect in response to the committee’s recommendation to maintain tree #945, and the discussion about maintaining trees 942 and 976 as well until they naturally die. This interim scenario would maintain this important feature of the park plan despite the changes to its design, functionality, flexibility, and loss of potential programming that would result, and allow for its future modification to the rectangular configuration in the DRB-approved plan. The committee ultimately did not support the motion to retain trees 942 and 976; however, more information was requested about this concept.

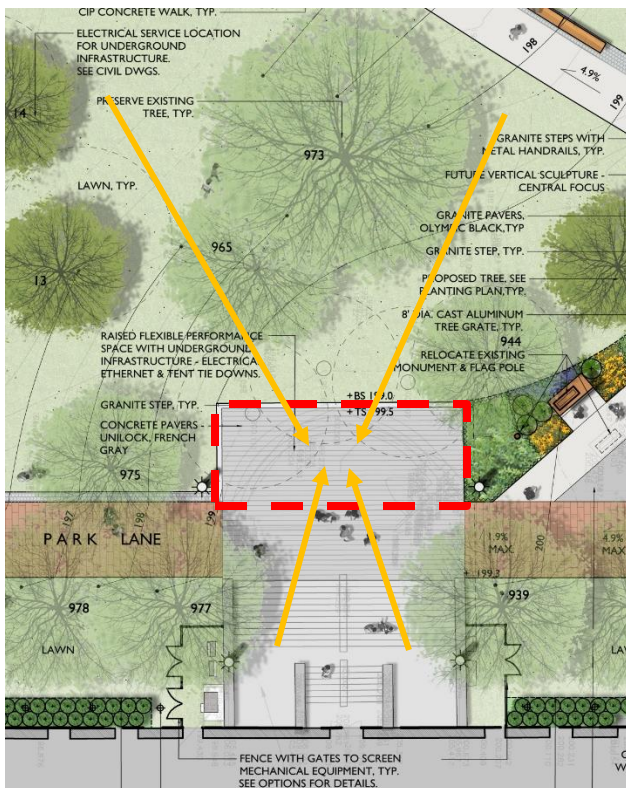
The interim design alternative is likely feasible from an engineering perspective. However, it is not the preferred approach by the design and project management team for the following reasons:

- The design of this space in the DRB approved plan was of a size, grade and with infrastructure to allow this space to be used for wide variety of purposes that can be oriented to either the City Hall Steps or the lawn to the west for seating. This is the only hardscape in the park that abuts a sizeable lawn to provide seating, is not bisected by a major walkway, and is virtually flat—together allowing great flexibility for its use. Even retaining tree 945 on its own affects the design of the space and limits its visibility from the west.
- One of the fundamental design goals was to correct and improve compaction of tree roots, and avoid repeated damage in the future. Therefore, the rectangular design was intended to reduce the need for costly installations, which require driving on and locating heavy infrastructure on the lawn/tree roots in the park, while also increasing the frequency of programming in the park. In the interim configuration, it is likely that events similar to Jazz Fest shows would continue to need to utilize the lawn for staging.
- When the space is used for performances oriented toward the lawn, it is possible to retain pedestrian circulation along Park Lane. However, if City Hall steps are the only seating option, it is more likely that circulation in this part of the park would be impacted during performances.
- If trees 942 and 976 were also retained, there is a risk that the space would never be retrofitted to the rectangular configuration due to the long potential life span of crab apple trees. The semi-circular

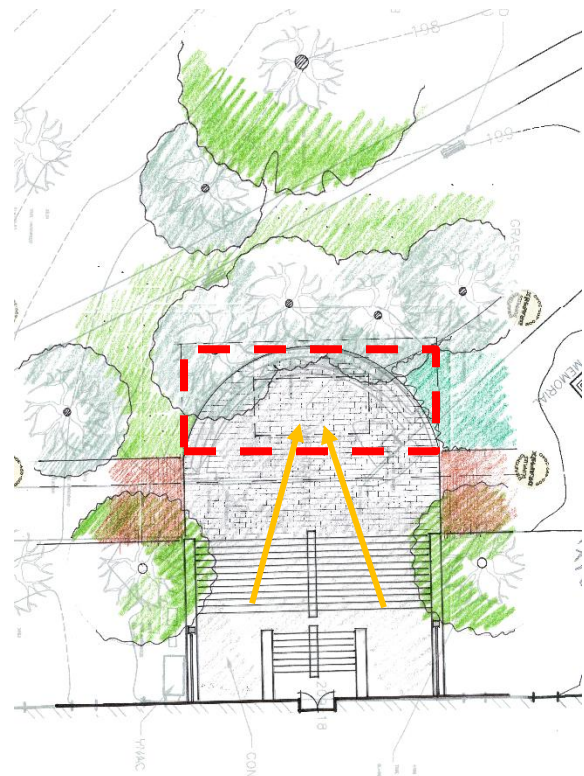
configuration reduces the utility of a design feature that was meant to accommodate greater programming options, which was responsive to extensive public input.

- Grass does not currently grow under the cluster of 6 crab apples in this location due the total shade on the lawn. Retaining trees 944, 965, and 975 only allows for grass to be reestablished.
- The City Arborist indicated that if trees 942, 945, 976 were removed, the remaining three Crab Apple trees (944, 965, 975) would benefit from having more space in which to grow and develop due to reduced competition, would be enhanced aesthetically, and would likely result in a significantly longer life.

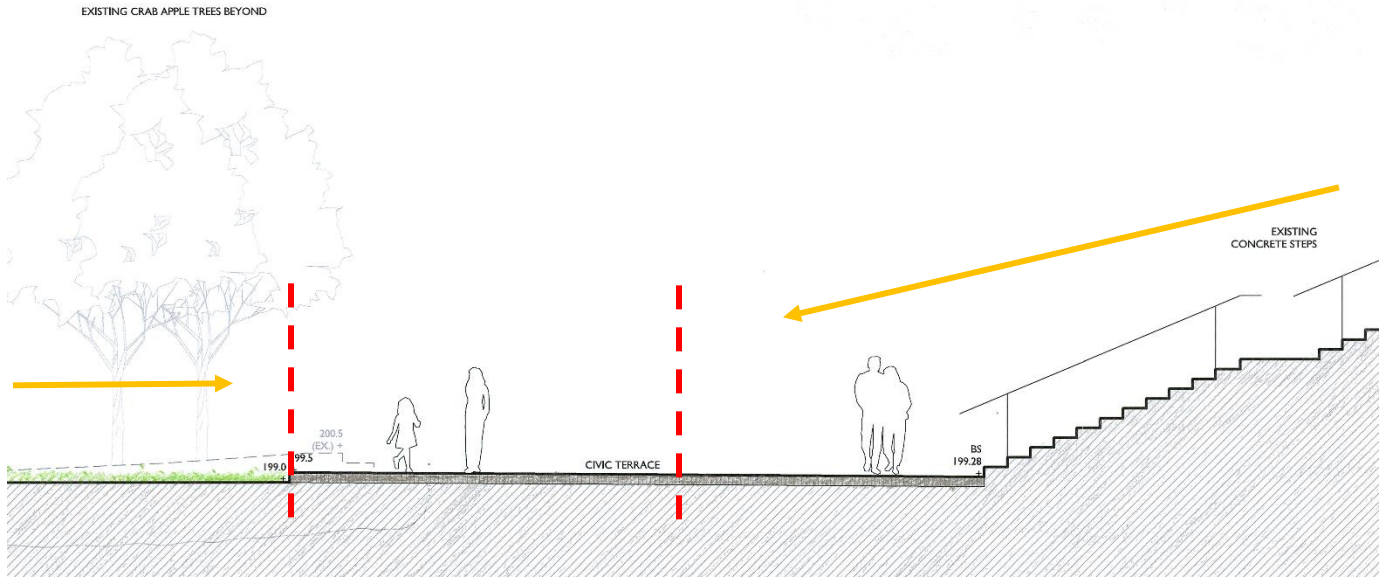
The following images provide a comparison of this space from the DRB approved plan, which includes some of the changes to the tree plan prior to the last Ad Hoc Committee meeting, to the alternative semi-circle concept. These images help illustrate how the grade and location of trees in the current plan allow it to be more integrated with the lawn to the west, versus how the space would be below the grade of and isolated from the lawn to the west if the trees are retained.



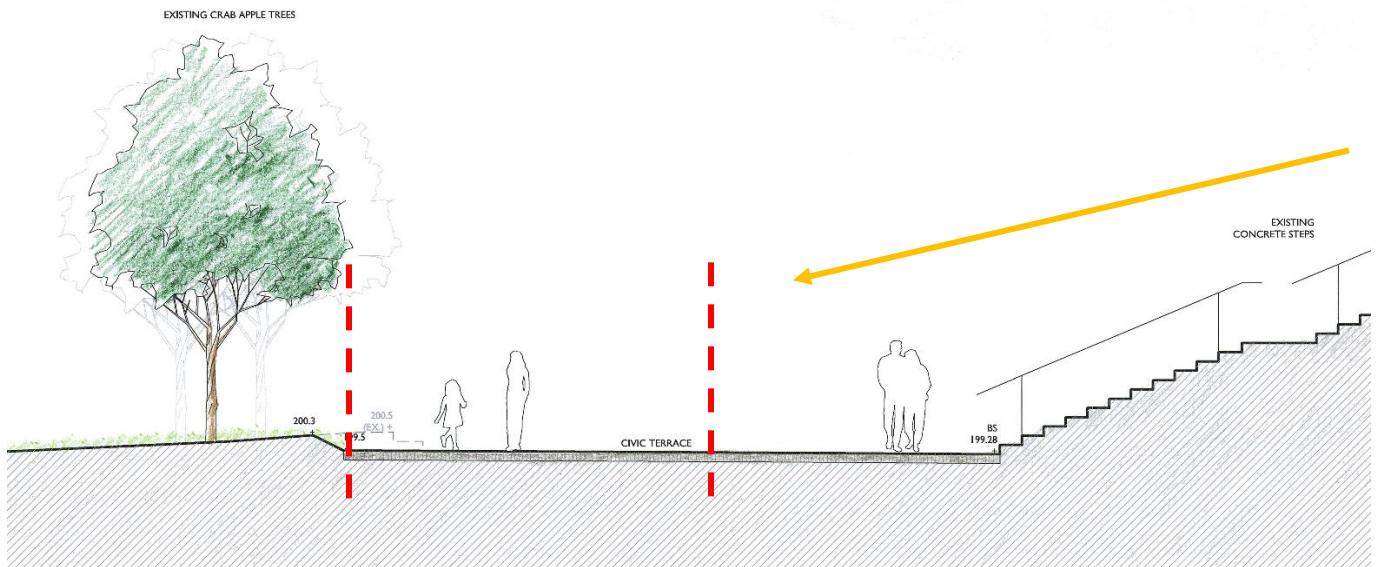
Plan provided for June 12 Ad Hoc Meeting: rectangular space, 3 of 6 Crab Apples retained; views from east and west



Sketch showing semi-circular space; all 6 crab apples retained; views from east only



Section of the gathering space at the base of City Hall Steps, as proposed in the DRB Plans, where the space can be visible from both the steps and the lawn to the west as seating options.



Section of the gathering space if tree 942, 945, and/or 976 were to be retained; the space is now located below the grade of the lawn to the west, and enclosed by trees which limit its visibility from the lawn.