

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Suisun Waterfront Development; First Pre-application Review
(For Design Review Board consideration on September 11, 2017)

Project Summary

Project Proponents & Property Owners. Main Street West Partners and Suisun City.

Project Representatives. Jason Garben (Suisun City, Development Services Director); John Kearnes (Suisun City, Senior Planner); Tim McSorely (Suisun City, City Engineer); Paul Junker (Micahel Baker International, Project Planner); Michael Rice (Main Street West Partners, Principal Designer).

Project Site. The 5.77-acre site is located at the intersection of Driftwood Drive and Civic Center Boulevard, in the City of Suisun City, Solano County. The western portion of the site is bound by the sailing basin in the Suisun Channel and the southern portion of the site is border by a wetland.

Existing Conditions. Suisun City, located at the northern boundary of the Suisun Marsh, was established during the Gold Rush in the 1850s. In 1994, Suisun City received approval to create a sailing basin at the northern end of the Suisun Channel, resulting in the current shoreline configuration (Exhibit 1). Adjacent parcels around the basin have been developed over time, with the project site being one of the two remaining vacant parcels. An existing 32-space parking lot is located immediately north of the project site, approximately 16 existing bicycle parking spaces are located west of the project site, and a jet fuel pump cleanout station is located at the northwest corner of the proposed project site. BCDC-required public access exists at and near the site, including a 20-foot-wide lighted promenade with trees that extends around the perimeter of the sailing basin and terminates at the southwestern corner of the proposed project site. An ornamental lighthouse was installed at this promenade terminus in 2009. An approximately 0.36-acre wetland exists at the southern boundary of the project site. There is a 10-foot-wide trail, referred to as the "lighthouse trail", which extends from the lighthouse to the City Hall, south of the proposed project boundary. The Mike Day Memorial Park is partially within BCDC's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction, adjacent to Civic Center Boulevard within the proposed project site. There are two designated San Francisco Bay Water Trail sites along the southwest and northwest shoreline of Suisun Channel.

Proposed Project. The proposed project is located partially within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction and would result in the construction of 41 single family residences and the improvement of 2.96-acres of public areas, including 0.53 acres of new public areas. It is unclear at this time who would be responsible for maintaining the public areas. The project would involve the following activities:

1. The construction of 41 two-to-three story single family residences, 18 of which would be partially within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction. The homes would have two-to-four bedrooms and would be separated from the public areas by a 3-foot-tall wrought iron fence (Exhibit 2);
2. The construction of a 12-foot-wide, 460-foot-long public pathway, an eight-foot-wide vegetated buffer with an 18-inch seatwall between the the public pathway and the existing promenade, and a 10-foot-wide vegetated buffer between the public pathway and the homes. The path would ramp down to connect to the existing hotel plaza north of the site and would have two sets of steps connecting directly down to the promenade. As shown in Exhibit 5, a pproximately six game tables, four waste receptacles, and six bicycle racks would be installed along the new public pathway. The existing promenade would not be improved as part of the project. (Exhibit 5);
3. The creation of a 32-to-35-foot-wide view corridor from Almond Avenue to the waterfront with a six-foot-wide public path, two benches, and an entry sculpture (Exhibit 5);
4. The creation of a 0.18-acre open space area at the corner of the development, east of the lighthouse, connecting the pathway along the promenade to the existing 10-foot-wide lighthouse trail. The existing lighthouse trail would not be improved as part of this project (Exhibit 8);
5. The relocation of the Mike Day Memorial park to an area outside of the Commission's jurisdiction. The park would be 0.55-acres and would include play structures, five picnic tables, six benches, a 0.36-acre sod lawn area, and twelve public parking spaces. The parking spaces would have a 12-hour parking limit. A 4-foot to 5-foot-wide sidewalk would extend around all four sides of the park. The sidewalks on A Street and Almond Street would connect to the paths to the waterfront promenade (Exhibit 4);
6. The creation of a six-foot-wide connector path from the relocated Mike Day Memorial park, across A Street to the lighthouse path (Exhibit 6); and
7. The relocation and expand an existing 32-space parking lot to a 38-space parking lot available for public use (Exhibit 3).

Following review by the Board, the project will be reviewed by Suisun City's Planning Commission, including public stakeholder outreach. The project is scheduled to begin construction in 2018. No environmental document has been prepared at this time.

Resilience and Adaptation to Rising Sea Level. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”), the 100-year-flood elevation (BFE) for the site is 10 feet NAVD88. The existing promenade is situated at an elevation of 9.1 feet NAVD88. The new public path along the homes will be at an elevation of 11.5 feet NAVD88 and the homes will be at a minimum of 12 feet NAVD88. For site planning purposes, the project proponents have used the following sea level rise estimates: 12.3 inches by 2050 and 41.9 inches by the end of the century. The homes and the new public path have an anticipated life of 50 years and would be flooded during a 100-year storm event by 2050 and would be flooded by a 1-year storm by 2100, similar to the majority of Suisun City.

The existing promenade and lighthouse trail are located below the current BFE and would be regularly inundated by mean high water at the end of the century. Instead of raising the elevations of these components, the project proponents have proposed that Main Street West Partners conduct a sea level rise study of the entire public access area along the Suisun City shoreline that is required by BCDC Permit 1991.020.08.

Prior DRB Reviews. On June 5, 2000 and July 10, 2000 the Board reviewed the design of a different project at this site, which included a 100-room hotel, an 8,000-square-foot conference center, a 115-space parking lot, and 0.5-acres of public access area located between the hotel and the promenade. In these reviews of that other project, the Board expressed concerns about the interfacing of the conference center and the hotel with the public promenade and the Mike Day Memorial park, which was to remain in its current location. This project was approved by the Commission on September 7, 2000, however, it was never constructed.

Commission Findings, Policies & Guidelines

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies

The **Bay Plan Map** No. 3, Policy No. 3 states that projects in Suisun City should: “Preserve boat launch ramp, transient tie-up and small boat launch.” The proposed project would not change the existing boat ramps and launches. No new in-water access is proposed as the adjacent shoreline includes the existing promenade and wetlands.

The Bay Plan **Public Access** policies state, in part, that “...maximum feasible access to and along the waterfront and on any permitted fills should be provided in and through every new development in the Bay or on the shoreline...” and that “[a]ccess to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available.” Further, these policies state, in part: that “... improvements should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline, should permit barrier free access for persons with disabilities to the maximum feasible extent, should include an ongoing maintenance program, and should be identified with appropriate signs.” Additionally, “[p]ublic access should be sited, designed and managed to prevent significant adverse effects on wildlife and that access should be designed consistent with the physical and natural environment. Furthermore, the policies provide that “[p]ublic access should be sited, designed, managed, and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding,” and that “[a]ny public access provided as a condition of development should either be required to remain viable in the event of future sea level rise or flooding, or equivalent access consistent with the project should be provided nearby.” The policies also state, in part, that “[r]oads near the

edge of the water should be designed as scenic parkways for slow-moving, principally recreational traffic. The road-way and right-of-way design should maintain and enhance visual access for the traveler, discourage through traffic, and provide for safe, separated, and improved physical access to and along the shore.”

The proposed project would provide 0.55-acres of new public access areas with a 460-foot-long pathway and a 0.18-acre open space area. The new pathway would be resilient to flooding (BFE) by sea level rise through the year 2050 and would flood during a 100-year storm event (BFE) in 2100.

The Bay Plan **Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views** policies state, in part, that “all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay” and that “[m]aximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas...” Furthermore, “[s]tructures and facilities that do not take advantage or complement the Bay should be located and designed so as not to impact visually on the and shoreline” and that “[s]horeline developments should be built in clusters, leaving areas open around them to permit more frequent views of the Bay. Developments... should be designed to preserve and enhance views along the waterway, so as to provide maximum visual contact with the Bay.” Additionally, “structures near or over the Bay should be designed as landmarks that suggest the location of the waterfront when it is not visible, especially in flat areas. But such landmarks should be low enough to assure the continued visual dominance of hills around the Bay.”

The proposed project would limit the views towards the Bay from the nearest public road, Civic Center Boulevard. The project proposes to include a view corridor from Almond Street to the Bay and from A Street toward the wetland.

The project proposes to place an entry sculpture at the end of the public path through the view corridor. The proposed open space area adjacent to the lighthouse can also provide for views of the Bay.

The Bay Plan **Recreation** policies state, in part, that “[d]iverse and accessible water-oriented recreational facilities...should be provided...” and that access to these features “should be clearly posted with signs and easily available from parking reserved for the public or from public streets or trails.”

The proposed project would provide additional public access space close to the waterfront. The existing shoreline park and playground would be relocated away from the shore. The relocated park proposal includes new picnic tables and more benches than the current park. No in-water access is proposed as part of this project.

The Bay Plan **Climate Change** policies state, in part, that if existing or future flooding presents a risk to public safety, projects “...should be designed to be resilient to a mid-century sea level rise projection. If it is likely the project will remain in place longer than mid-century, an adaptive management plan should be developed to address the long-term impacts that will arise based on a risk assessment using the best available science-based projection for sea level rise at the end of the century.”

The project proponents propose to analyze and provide an adaptive management plan to address the vulnerability of the existing public areas along the shoreline to rising sea levels.

The Commission's **Public Access Design Guidelines** state, in part, that "[s]horeline areas should provide clear connections to public right-of-way, be related to the adjacent uses and be designed, built and maintained in a way that indicates their public character. Public access should be designed in a manner that 'feels public'" and that public access should be designed "so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user's appreciation diminished by large nearby building masses...." Furthermore, "public access improvements should be designed for a wide range of users," should "provide basic public amenities, such as trails, benches, play opportunities, trash containers, drinking fountains, lighting and restrooms that are designed for different ages, interests and physical abilities," and should be designed for the weather of the site. Additionally, projects should provide "public parking for convenient access to the Bay." The guidelines also state that viewing the Bay is the "most widely enjoyed 'use' and projects should be designed to "enhance and dramatize views of the Bay." Further, the guidelines state that projects should "provide connections to and continuity along the shoreline," which can be accomplished by "[c]onnecting shoreline public access with the local park and open space system, public buildings, shopping districts and other public spaces" and by "[p]roviding connections perpendicular to the shoreline at regular intervals...."

The proposed project would provide a new public pathway, tables, and waste receptacles along the shoreline. A public restroom exists on the west side of the sailing basin approximately 400 feet away from the proposed development.

Board Questions

The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following issues regarding the design of the proposed public access:

1. Would the Suisun Waterfront Development encourage diverse activities and create a "sense of place," which is unique and enjoyable?
2. Are the proposed public amenities at the project site appropriate to provide diverse and interesting experiences and would they be distributed and designed to meet the needs of the public? Would the public benefit from any additional amenities?
3. Would the elevated walkway located adjacent to the houses provide useable access that feels open for public use? Are additional design elements needed to enhance the public feel of this area?
4. As proposed, would the open space area near the light house appear open for public use considering the adjacent private residential property? If not, how should the design be modified?

The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following issues regarding the design of the proposed physical and visual connections:

5. Are the connections between the new public areas (pathways and open space areas) and the existing public paths designed cohesively and appropriately?

6. Are the proposed streets, paths, walkways, and landscape features designed to maximize physical access to and along the shoreline?
7. Does the project design from the public thoroughfare of Civic Center Boulevard ensure the public's ability to view Suisun Channel? Are there recommendations for enhancing these public views, including adjustment to the proposed physical connections?

The Board's advice and recommendations are sought on the following issues regarding sea level rise:

8. Given the existing promenade lies below the current Base Flood Elevation, does the proposed elevated public access maximize access to, and along the shoreline?