



## **Waterfront Plan Working Group**

Meeting: June 1, 2016

### Urban Design and Open Space Meeting Notes

Members Present: Kirk Bennett, Chris Christensen, Jeffrey Congdon, Jane Connors, Jon Golinger, Carolyn Horgan, Aaron Hyland, Ellen Johnck, Ken Kelton, Janice Li, Stewart Morton, Rudy Nothenberg, Jacquelyn Omotalade, Alice Rogers, Peter Summerville, John Tobias, Corinne Woods, Dee Dee Workman

Absent: Grant Ballard, Reid Boggiano, Mike Buhler, Kevin Carroll, Linda Fadeke Richardson, Stephanie Greenberg, Earl James, Ron Miguel, Karen Pierce, Tom Radulovich, Frank Rescino, Jasper Rubin, Cristina Rubke, Dilip Trivedi, Anne Turner

1. Welcome & Acceptance of May 11, 2016 Working Group Meeting Notes (6:00-6:10)
  - Co-Chair Rudy Nothenberg welcomed attendees and noted that the final Part 1 Orientation meeting is on July 6th re Transportation. Suggested that members may want to weigh-in later this evening on whether they feel that a further meeting might be necessary to conclude Part 1.
  - Working Group accepted May 11, 2016 Meeting Notes
  - Link to Working Group documents: <http://sfport.com/waterfront-plan-archives>
  - Link to SFGovTV meeting video:  
[http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=183](http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=183)
2. Meeting Topic: Urban Design and Open Space (6:15-7:15)  
Link to presentation: <http://sfport.com/sites/default/files/2016-6-1%20Presentation%20Urban%20Design.pdf>

Introduction: Diane Oshima, Assistant Deputy Director, Waterfront Planning, Port of San Francisco

- Provided background re the Port's history and urban form as established by the finger piers and bulkheads that are embraced as part of the City's cultural values as well as architectural resources, and rehabilitated in several Port public-private development projects.
- Recognized and thanked Ellen Miramontes who is leaving her position at BCDC, managing its Design Review Board and reviewing waterfront design.

- Introduced guest speaker, Karen Alschuler, Principal of Perkins+Will, and invited her to share insights about key characteristics of great waterfronts. Karen has led the design of several waterfront projects in San Francisco and around the world and has been a member of BCDC's Design Review Board for 20 years.

Karen Alschuler, Consulting Principal for Perkins+Will, and Chair of BCDC's Design Review Board

- Alschuler expressed gratitude for being invited to speak briefly about characteristics of a great waterfront, to lay some poetry over the ideas that have been discussed to date, and possibly inspire new ideas. Good urban design is not separate from topics such as real estate, historic resources, or demographics – rather it pulls all of these elements together.
- The City has waterfront on three sides, mostly open and available to the public. The west and north sides are primarily open space. The Port's waterfront on the east side is the maritime and mixed-use urban waterfront. Each waterfront area has its own character.
- Presentation focused on five features of a great city waterfront: the edge and curve; the aspect; telling the story; an invitation; and frame and connect. Images from around the world were provided alongside images of San Francisco, to illustrate important design features of the City's waterfront that could be further highlighted in dramatic or subtle ways.
- Looking forward, Karen encouraged the Port and Working Group to embrace change and be courageous in the development of resilience strategies. With good guidance, the City's waterfront can continue to be one of the best in the world.

Urban Design and Open Space Policies: Dan Hodapp, Waterfront Planner, Port of San Francisco

- The existing Waterfront Plan urban design and open space policies focus primarily on the area of the waterfront from Fisherman's Wharf to Pier 70.
- Urban Design Policies that focus on the built form of the waterfront are organized around three features: Historic Resources (Recognize and Preserve; Inform and Interpret; Waterfront Character); City Form (Neighborhood Character at Seawall Lots; Waterfront Character at Bulkheads and Piers); and Views (Sites, Streets and Intervals). Photos of existing projects illustrated examples of each policy as applied to urban design at the Port.
- The Waterfront Plan's open space policies were developed in collaboration with BCDC and a technical advisory committee for the Waterfront Plan.
- Open Space Policies are focused around five objectives: Continuity, Sequence, Variety, Connection and Character. Photographs of completed parks and public access improvements illustrated all of these policies, in the various forms that occur along the Port's waterfront, which include:
  - Promenades (Jefferson Street, Pier 43)
  - Plazas (Harry Bridges, Cruise Terminal, planned Ferry Plaza)
  - Parks (Rincon Park, Bayview Gateway Park)
  - Piers and Wharfs (Pier 14, Brannan Street Wharf, Pier 1 apron)
  - Natural Areas (Heron's Head Park, Pier 94 Wetlands).

- The Port collaborates with the BCDC and the City to review proposed open space designs along the waterfront.

#### Southern Waterfront Urban Design and Open Space: David Beaupre, Waterfront Planner, Port of SF

- Waterfront Plan Update provides an opportunity to reference the new Blue Greenway access and open space policies and add new policies appropriate for the distinct industrial character and variety of shoreline edge types.
- Overview of projects underway south of China Basin: Seawall 337 (Mission Rock); Bayfront Park; Pier 70 projects (Orton, Forest City and Crane Cove Park)
- Overview of recent open space projects including: Warm Water Cove Park (maintained by the Green Trust, a volunteer organization based in Dogpatch); Islais Creek Park (Kayaks Unlimited helps to maintain park, stores its boats and introduces neighborhood youth to kayaking); Bayview Gateway and Bayview Rise (artistic light show); Herons Head Park (rehabilitated wetlands, a dog run, and Eco Center that provides free environmental programs and volunteers that help maintain the park); Cargo Way bi-directional bike path.
- Water Recreation access has increased significantly since 1997, with a State established “Bay Area Water Trail”, 5 new water launch sites and 6 others planned or under consideration on Port property.
- The Port would like the Working Group to consider:
  - How and where should recreation uses and types be expanded?
  - How can signage be used to enhance the public realm experience?
  - How do we maintain urban design values, adapt to rising seas and make improvements to the seawall?

#### Responses to Questions:

- How might existing materials, and craftsmanship contribute to design along the waterfront (e.g. ship cleats, the Red and White [fleet] excursion boat signs)? It’s valid to respect, use and reuse significant material elements, including historical artifacts along the waterfront. The key is in selecting those elements and creating a balance with new features.
- Regarding building heights, how much importance to you give to Allan Jacobs’ preference for a pattern of declining building heights towards Bay? Considering the City as a whole (where the west and north waterfront areas are primarily open space), the urban waterfront on Port property is a good place to invite density and intensity in certain locations, particularly as the City looks to house people and reduce vehicle trips. It is important to ensure that the water’s edge is public and shared. City is responsible to find the right balance for areas where people are clustered, and areas of less density. Do you think that the 13-story Fontana Towers near Aquatic Park could have been designed in a better way? This illustrates the importance of design and the quality of the architecture, because there are more beautiful taller, narrower structures today.
- What are the policies with regards to signage and clutter? When new open spaces are created, are there policies to put up signage to show people where they are? Re clutter,

Fisherman's Wharf has some A-frame signs on the sidewalk: are there commercial sign regulations? We include BCDC trail signage on Port property. Regarding commercial signs, A-frame signs are not legal under existing guidelines because they block pedestrian access. Signs must be compatible with local neighborhoods – Fisherman's Wharf has different sign compatibility than other parts of the waterfront. The Port is analyzing new wayfinding signs to help guide people to various public access areas. It has just completed some for the Blue Greenway and would like to carry the idea north.

- At Delancey Street – why are the ground floor retail spaces empty or under-used? What purpose were they intended to serve? The ground floor is used for the Delancey Street restaurant. There may not be market demand for much retail in the area. The Port is not involved with property management of those buildings.
- The Port seems to be using the terms “open space” and “public space” interchangeably. Open space infers a green, passive, park-like setting. A public space infers a built, articulated area with activity. Does the Port view them interchangeably, or is the Port seeking to encourage a certain mix of these? The Port has a variety of spaces and they do have different connotations. One of the most used open spaces is the walkway behind the Ferry Building. Should the Waterfront Plan Update policy encourage more articulated spaces or more open green space? This is a good topic for the group to discuss; does it want more of one or the other. The Port can better define these terms.
- Is there a sense of how much open space the Port can have before maxing out on budget? We have partnered with the City on park bonds and with developers. Open space funding is limited, and we need to be more creative about seeking more funding sources for future improvements. Pier 7 was completed with 11 different grants.
- Can the Working Group see more detail regarding the criteria for safe and appropriate Bay water access sites? Location criteria include coastal condition safety and feasibility, maritime operations and harbor traffic, cost and connectivity as apart of system and landside amenities. The Port can provide more detail and will continue to work with Bay Access, BASK, ABAG, Coastal Conservancy and BCDC to integrate new polices into the WLUP to address the growing demand for water recreation.
- Can small vessel (i.e. water-taxi) landings be incorporated with planned kayak landing sites in southern waterfront? This should be open to discussion. There may be opportunities to design landings that serve multiple functions, such as at Pier 1.5.
- In the southern waterfront, is there any preservation value in the utilitarian, industrial buildings? Can the Port influence the redevelopment planning of the former Potrero Power Plant site? Considering the changes to the waterfront in the last 20 years, are there special challenges that we should be aware of in order to best inform the Waterfront Plan Update? Most of the utilitarian buildings in southern waterfront are being used for industrial/cargo uses. The Potrero Power Plant development site is privately owned, but given that the Potrero site abuts the Forest City development site at Pier 70, the Port, City and developers are coordinating development and site plans so that they are integrated and work well together. The Port seeks opportunities to address challenges in the southern waterfront,

for example with the planning and redesign of Terry Francois Boulevard: The Port has worked with SFMTA and the Office of Community Infrastructure to add a protected cycletrack to provide bicycle access along the waterside of the street, which will continue to also provide industrial truck and maritime access to the piers, and provide an important segment of the Blue Greenway. In developing the Blue Greenway Planning Design Guidelines, the team included a Recreation and Parks planner, who helped the Port assess how Blue Greenway open spaces could complement other existing Rec Park facilities in southeast San Francisco. The interagency coordination continues to ensure that we have a cohesive system of waterfront and city public parks, facilities and public access.

- Co-chair Rudy Nothenberg asked if Working Group members feel that is there sufficient information to move on to Phase 2 or should additional time be scheduled to wrap up Phase 1? Notes that Port staff will remain a resource whether or not an additional meeting is held and all Part 1 meetings have been taped on SFGov media. Staff agreed to send an email to the Working Group members asking whether an additional meeting is needed in Part 1, and if so, what one or two issues should be covered.

#### Comments from Working Group and Audience:

- Non-architects might find floating markets, fishing boats, and gritty elements of the waterfront even more interesting than highly designed waterfront spaces around the world. It's important to evolve over time to maintain some of these workaday elements in San Francisco, too.
- Regarding children using the waterfront: You don't see kids unless they are visitors. Kids like places that are fun. What can we learn from other cities? Response: Toronto decided to concentrate on public areas of the waterfront, and brought in designers from around the world to design their open spaces, many of which are attractive to kids. A contrasting thought: Having raised a child in San Francisco where he enjoyed the freedom to run up and down waterfront next to the boats and birds, it may not be necessary to build something specifically designed to make the waterfront fun for kids.
- Request that Port staff to involve City Park & Rec in Part 2 of the Waterfront Plan Update process as they are a partner with the park bond program and can also address the interest in more active recreation.
- Please keep safety in mind with any new projects along the waterfront. With more people on The Embarcadero, there are is a greater risk of collisions between pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists. The South Beach Rincon Hill Neighborhood Association keeps in contact with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, and the Port should, too.
- Request that Port staff provide an updated public access map showing pedestrian access on both waterside and landside of piers. The map could include new projects and the proposed/planned access as well.
- The Port has been successful at providing passive open space, but not in providing actively used open spaces that encourage physical sports (e.g. Marina Green); outdoor civic event sites (e.g. Justin Herman Plaza and temporary entertainment such as America's Cup); and open space that attracts people to gather. This seems to work best when there's an adjacent active commercial

use (like the Americas Cup and the related food stands) that prompted high-use of a basic, temporary astro-turf area for gathering during Americas Cup.

- People want activity and want to get into the water. An avid sea kayaker, I want to emphasize that strong interest in active water recreation and thank the Port for improving water access. Another member of Bay Access and president of Kayak Club noted that 300 high school students got involved with kayaks through grant funding. It is important to have five things: accessible parking and restrooms, loading area, boat storage, an onsite boat club, and signage. Thanks David and Dan for their support of these four existing water trail sites.
- Maureen Gaffney with ABAG, and with the Bay Trail for 12 years working as a planner for San Francisco, Marin, Napa and Solano Counties, is delighted with the trail spaces along the waterfront. Speaking on behalf of waterfront trail, thanks David Beaupre for calling out Bay Trail grants to Port. Commend the Port for its dedication to making projects happen.
- Co-Chair Janice Lee expressed gratitude for the presence of Advisory Team members and requested to have the members present stand up for acknowledgement.