

## Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** April 10, 2023 – 5:00PM

**Location:** **Metro Center**, 375 Beal Street, Yerba Buena Room 1<sup>st</sup> floor  
San Francisco 94111

**To:** **Waterfront Design Advisory Committee:**  
Laura Crescimano      Dan Hodapp  
Marsha Maytum      Kathrin Moore  
Richard Sucre

**From:** Ryan Wassum and Mark Paez - Port Planning

**Re:** **Joint WDAC and Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) Design Review Board (DRB) meeting to review the proposed Ferry Building interior and exterior public space enhancements**

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### Project Review

This staff report is for the proposed Ferry Building Enhancements, both to the interior ground floor and the exterior public spaces. The project is located within Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) jurisdiction, and this will be a joint meeting with the BCDC Design Review Board (DRB). The role of the WDAC is to review and provide recommendations for the proposal for consistency with the goals and policies outlined in Chapter 2 of the [Port's Waterfront Plan](#), specifically, under sub-chapters Public Access and Open Space, Urban Design and Historic Preservation, and Diversity of Activities and People.

The Ferry Building Enhancements (“Project”) are proposed by Hudson Pacific Properties (“Hudson”), the current lease holder, to increase public accessibility and visitation, maximize utilization of interior and exterior spaces, and celebrate its iconic architecture. The proposed enhancements generally consist of activating the exterior arcades, improving indoor/outdoor dining facilities and spaces that connect with the public promenades along the Embarcadero and the Bay, and improving the plaza directly to the east of the Ferry Building. Each of these design components are further described under the Proposed Project Overview section below.

### Project Site/ Existing Conditions

The project site is located on the east side of the Embarcadero Roadway at the base of Market Street. The Ferry Building is bound by: Pier 1 to the north; the Downtown Ferry Terminal berths and the Bay to the east; the Agriculture Building to the south; and the Embarcadero Roadway to the west.

## **Planning Context/ Background**

The Ferry Building opened in 1898 as the Union Depot and Ferry House and functioned as a main transportation hub connecting the City of San Francisco with communities throughout the Bay Area. Initially the ground floor was used primarily for ticketing services, baggage and freight handling, and storage, while the second floor served as the primary circulation path for ferry arrivals and departures.

The Ferry Building was designated a City and County of San Francisco Landmark in 1977 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) in 1978. The Ferry Building underwent a complete rehabilitation in 2003 that was respectful of its status as a landmark and its position on the National Register. In 2006, the Ferry Building became a contributor to the Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District and was again listed in the National Register.

## **Proposed Project Overview**

The following description of the Project is based on the Ferry Building Enhancements exhibit (attached as **Exhibit B** to this staff report) developed by Hudson's project architect, Page & Turnbull, and landscape architects, Einwiller Kuehl, dated April 10, 2023. The Project includes interior and exterior alterations to the Ferry Building at various locations along the ground floor and the building site. The areas of interventions are the Ferry Plaza (to the east of the Building), Entry Portico and Arcades, and the Bayfront Kitchens, which are each described in more detail below.

### ***Ferry Plaza Improvements***

Ferry Plaza is a broad area of flexible use pavement and is the primary location of a highly successful Foodwise Saturday farmer's market. As currently configured, the transition between the building interior and the plaza side exterior can be confusing for visitors. The experience of navigating toward the water, retracing steps to entryways, and/or identifying places to meet on the leeward back plaza are not clear.

The Project design builds upon some of the existing successful elements of Ferry Plaza and would add new elements to activate and encourage public use outside of the Saturdays Farmer's Market. The Project would increase programming and events while also adding enhancements that link inside and outside circulation and guide people as they arrive at the Ferry Terminal or from the Embarcadero.

New elements include a retail kiosk, seating, lighting, and accent pavement, which all add to the outdoor tables and chairs that were added during the pandemic. The proposed kiosk structure located at the eastern edge of Ferry Plaza would comprise of approximately 500 square feet. The grid of the existing pavement in Ferry Plaza would be minimally repaired and the grid lines would receive surface treatment for graphic visibility. The proposed design is intended to accommodate the farmers market, leaving room for trucks, vendor stalls, and patron circulation.

Along the south side of the Ferry Building new signage, seating elements, lights and banners, and graphic pavement designs are proposed to delineate neighboring open spaces and guide the movement of people.

Ferry Plaza and its surroundings may be impacted by future infrastructure that may be implemented to address future sea level rise, and by improvements to accommodate a potential new tenant at the Ferry Plaza East Building (FPEB).

### ***Entry Portico and Arcades Improvements***

Within the entry portico, non-historic glass partitions and glazed doors would provide access to the ground-floor marketplace. Glazed walls with glazed doors now located at the north and south edges of the central entry area would be moved forward to the front edge of the building (See Exhibit B, Page 36). There are no proposed changes to the historic stairs or the non-historic glazed entry doors located partway up the stairs.

Proposed changes to the Ferry Building along the open-air portions of the north and south arcades include alterations to the arcades and enhancements to the outdoor space directly in front of the primary façade along the Embarcadero. Hudson seeks approvals from the Port under the terms of their ground lease for alterations to both the north and south arcades of the primary façade and their respective public outdoor spaces. The schedule for the south arcade and plaza is to be implemented at a later date and coordinated with future leases and/or lease renewals for those areas.

Each open-air arcade along the west façade of the building contains approximately 4,130 square feet that is currently used in a variety of configurations including storage, commercial units, and unprogrammed space. The Project would initially enclose the north arcade to create two or more commercial units. The existing roll-down metal grille system mounted behind each opening of the arcade would be removed, and glass partitions, consisting of operable glass wall systems with fixed transoms, each fabricated with metal framing within the arched openings above would be installed behind the openings to the arcades at their west wall. The larger rectangular opening would have a similar operable glass wall system that will be full height to the bottom of a fixed grille/louver supplying air intake to the interior space. This operable glass wall system would be hidden behind each column when fully opened and retracted. The large rectilinear openings (Ferry Building entry) at the north arcade and the south arcade would be left open to the exterior and contain mechanical vents with decorative grilles at the top portion of their openings to provide required fresh air and exhaust for the spaces within the arcades. These necessary vents with decorative grilles would replace the rolling overhead doors and decorative grilles that were installed as part of the 2003 renovation. A permanently fixed in place glazed wall with glazed doors would be installed at the north end of the arcade with a glazed operable partition to allow the arcades to be closed and secured. This pattern would be replicated and reflected in the south arcade at a future phase.

Within the arcades, one or more demising gates would physically separate the various commercial units. The forward portion of the demising wall (closest to the Embarcadero) would be both transparent and operable. This would allow each commercial area to be secured when necessary, while also ensuring that each arcade remains single volume with views and movement along the length of the space.

Alterations to the front plaza (also referred to as the “Café Zones”) include the introduction of furnishings and the construction of two lightweight metal-framed canopy structures, that are freestanding, separated by a six-foot wide circulation corridor along the face of the building, and structurally independent of the Ferry Building. These structures would define and provide weather protection for these outdoor seating areas. The canopy structures would contain lighting, signage, and moveable overhead panels to provide shade and weather protection, and moveable furniture. Signage is not part of the current submittal.

### ***Bay Front Kitchens Improvements***

Along the rear (east) façade of the Ferry Building, the Project would install “Bay Front Kitchens” that combine existing commercial units along the Central Breezeway and open seating areas on either side of the Central Breezeway at the rear façade (See Exhibit B, Pg. 41). The Project

retains the current BCDC easement or 'Central Breezeway' as a wide corridor that bisects the building to provide access to the ferry berths along the east (Bay side) of the Building. The areas to the north and south of the breezeway will be altered by removing the fixed storefront assemblies that were installed in 2003 to include food and beverage sales and seating. Operable metal panel or open grill systems are proposed along the north and south sides of the breezeway, allowing the seating areas to be opened or closed to the interior corridor, as needed. The east wall of the central breezeway, which opens to the rear façade along the Bay and includes a single pair of doors, would be replaced with a new glass storefront with two sets of paired doors.

The existing non-historic glazing systems along the rear façade, including the two bays to the north and one bay to the south of the breezeway would be removed and built out eastward, thereby enclosing this area within the building. This new glazing system would feature an operable wall system that can open the seating area to the exterior. The reproduction and original cast-iron columns located at the east façade would be retained in place. The current locations of these columns are not original to the Building, as they were relocated to this location during the 2003 rehabilitation.

### **Consistency Review with Waterfront Plan Policies**

The WDAC reviews Port Projects to ensure consistency with goals and policies outlined in Chapter 2 of the Port's [Waterfront Plan](#). Specifically, Chapter 2 identifies applicable policies under sub-sections such as *Public Access and Open Space Along the Waterfront*, *Urban Design and Historic Preservation*, and *Diversity of Activities and People*. For ease of review, the applicable policies for each sub-section are outlined in **Appendix A** and have been further analyzed for consistency by Port staff under each corresponding policy.

As presented, the Project appears consistent with most policies of the Waterfront Plan, with certain policies requiring greater review and discussion by the WDAC. Such policies are described in **Appendix A**.

### **Environmental Analysis**

The Planning Department is considering Hudson's request for an environmental evaluation application for a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determination. If the proposal is found consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and incorporates standard construction practices, it is anticipated that it will be determined Categorically Exempt from further CEQA review.

### **Adaptation to Rising Sea Levels**

The entire Project site and its surroundings are anticipated to be impacted by future sea level rise. The Port's Waterfront Resilience Team is currently developing strategies to address strengthening the seawall and adapting to rising sea levels. Resilience approaches to the Ferry Building will seek to maintain the public's access to the historic building and adjacent ferry terminals. All Project enhancements could be impacted by future infrastructure that may be necessary to address seismic safety and rising sea levels, and the exterior enhancements could be adjusted in the future to accommodate infrastructure changes.

### **Next Steps**

At the April 10, 2023 joint WDAC-DRB meeting, the WDAC may recommend approval of all or part of the Project, or provide design direction to Hudson for further modifications. Upon making final recommendations, Port and City Planning staff will forward those to the Port Commission and Planning Commission as necessary, including how the proposal is consistent with the Waterfront Plan goals and policies outlined and analyzed in **Appendix A**. Further, the Port and Hudson will continue with the outreach plan for the Project with presentations at the Port Commission, San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Port's Northern Waterfront Advisory Committee (NAC).

### **Attachments**

1. **Appendix A:** Project Consistency Analysis with Waterfront Plan Policies
2. **Exhibit B:** Ferry Building Enhancements Presentation
3. **Exhibit C:** Page & Turnbull's Findings of Consistency

## Appendix A

### Project Consistency with Waterfront Plan Policies

The following Waterfront Plan Policies (*italicized*) are applicable to the proposed Project, which must be determined consistent and/or compliant. Port staff have provided an assessment of each for consistency under corresponding “Analysis” sections.

#### **Chapter 2B: Diversity of Activities and People**

##### *Embarcadero Historic District*

Policy 26. *Encourage temporary public-oriented uses in the Embarcadero Historic District to promote a dynamic waterfront. Allow pilot projects and small business opportunities.*

**Analysis:** The Project incorporates temporary and public-oriented uses with the intent to activate the rear plaza and adjacent public access areas and bring more people and vibrancy to the waterfront.

#### **Chapter 2C – Public Access and Open Space Along the Waterfront**

##### **Open Space Continuity**

Policy 1. *Maintain a continuous waterfront walkway that connects parks, public access, and activity areas from Fisherman’s Wharf to India Basin, provides improvements to the San Francisco Bay Trail, and follows these guidelines:*

- b. Keep the walkway separate from auto traffic, where feasible.*
- c. Provide separated walking and cycling paths, where possible.*
- e. Design to integrate the walkway with adjacent open spaces and activities that enhance wayfinding, social interactions, and enjoyment of the public realm.*

**Analysis:** The Project maintains continuous walkways connecting public access areas, open spaces, and continuity along the Embarcadero Promenade, which are separated from the Embarcadero protected bike-lanes and vehicle traffic. Wayfinding is proposed in one location on the overhead portal to Ferry Plaza that aligns with the east side of the Ferry Building over the driveway.

Policy 3. *Extend pedestrian walkway and public realm improvements as part of pier renovation projects and through the Blue Greenway.*

- a. Provide public access around the perimeter of piers wherever safe, feasible, and compatible with maritime berthing and pier operations, consistent with Maritime Policy 26 in Chapter 2A.*

**Analysis:** The Project provides pedestrian public realm improvements along the southern side of the Ferry Building from the Embarcadero promenade to One Ferry Plaza. The improvements would continue to allow easy access to terminal berths and allow maintenance vehicles to access maritime and transportation facilities.

##### **Sequence of Open Spaces**

Policy 4. *Complete and enhance a sequence of major open spaces located at regular intervals at significant points along the waterfront.*

*d. Create a Ferry Plaza on the Bay side of the Ferry Building, designed to complement ferry terminal and passenger activities, farmers markets, and public gatherings and events, enjoy expansive views of the Bay Bridge, and resilience design features to adapt to rising tides.*

**Analysis:** The Project would provide enhancements to Ferry Plaza that will complement terminal/passenger movement and provide opportunities for social interaction, public gatherings, the weekly Saturday farmers market, and special events. The proposed improvements do not include resilience design features, but their temporary nature could be modified in the future to accommodate such changes. The placement of the retail structure on Ferry Plaza is held away from the south edge of the Pier to allow expansive views of the Bay and Ferry Terminal activities.

### **Variety of Open Spaces**

*Policy 5. Complete a variety of public access and open spaces that offer many recreational opportunities and enhance other uses along the waterfront. Take advantage of the attributes of each location to create different kinds of experiences (e.g., places that reflect the unique authentic characteristics of nearby neighborhoods through art or by telling the waterfront story; quiet, contemplative places for passive enjoyment; spaces that support civic gatherings and urban events that draw large crowds; environmental restoration areas; and places that appeal to children and seniors).*

**Analysis:** The Project responds to the constantly changing uses on Ferry Plaza and the south and west sides of the Ferry Building by providing layout and furnishings for small social interactions, the farmers market, café uses, and large events, potentially being one of the most flexible use spaces along the Port's waterfront.

*Policy 7. Seek ways to draw attention to underused public open space and water recreation areas.*

**Analysis:** The Project proposes design elements to draw people to Ferry Plaza on the east side of the Ferry Building, which at times is currently an underutilized public space.

### **Design Character**

*Policy 12. Emphasize San Francisco Bay and the waterfront's spectacular natural setting as the backdrop for the design of most open space improvements and built features.*

*a. Ensure that public spaces are simple and minimalist in form and character to allow the natural beauty of the waterfront to be the strongest visual image.*

*b. Design public access and open spaces to further the historic, maritime, and natural character of the waterfront. Consider including design, interpretive information, art, or other features that communicate the uniqueness of the site.*

**Analysis:** The Project's public space improvements to Ferry Plaza are minimal to adapt to a variety of uses, and along the west side of the Ferry Building are intended to maintain views to the Building. Interpretative information and/or art are not included in the proposal.

**WDAC Consideration:** The WDAC should evaluate the proposed improvements to determine if the furnishings and other elements convey a simple and minimalist form and character.

*Policy 13. Locate public access areas at ground or platform level, open to the sky (allowing limited covering if it enhances public access and does not support private uses above), and along the waterfront edge consistent with Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) policies.*

**Analysis:** The Project maintains public access areas at ground level, and open to the sky except for the front canopy that is intended for weather protection.

*Policy 14. Address microclimate conditions in the design and placement of new public access, open spaces, and amenities (e.g., by providing places that are sheltered from uncomfortable winds and extreme sun exposure).*

**Analysis:** The Project proposes a front canopy for weather protection and greater use of the south side of the Ferry Building which is more protected from prevailing winds than other areas of the site. In addition, the glass partitions and canopy along the North Arcade would provide heating and/or shade to make users more comfortable.

*Policy 16. Promote safety by locating and designing public access and open spaces so that they have high visibility and are well lit. Avoid creating concealed areas.*

**Analysis:** The Project maintains open and unobstructed views in Ferry Plaza and other open space areas with minimal structures added. The proposal also adds lighting on the Plaza and along the southern promenade.

## **Chapter 2D: Urban Design and Historic Preservation**

### **City Pattern**

*Policy 2. Recognize and strengthen the Port's role in contributing to the city's transportation system, open space network, and neighborhood identity.*

- a. Improve waterfront circulation by accommodating, where feasible, the various ways in which people can safely move along the length of the waterfront.*
- b. Continue to develop and improve the Port's public open spaces as a series of Bay edge destinations and as part of the local and regional open space network.*

**Analysis:** The proposal maintains an open Embarcadero Promenade for pedestrian use.

**WDAC Consideration:** The WDAC should evaluate the proposal as to how the improvements strengthen the Ferry Building and Ferry Terminal identity of the site.

### **Historic Preservation**

*Policy 4. Preserve and enhance the Port's historic resources and districts. a. Review, rehabilitate, and enhance the Port's significant historic resources to achieve consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.*

- e. Provide interpretive information that communicates the waterfront's architectural, maritime, and cultural history.*

*g. Maintain and support the expansion of maritime berthing and activities, a form of the historic maritime use for which the waterfront was developed, to maintain the character and authenticity of the waterfront.*

*i. Consider how best to share the Port's maritime, industrial and recreational history with residents and visitors, including through special events (e.g., blessing of the fishing fleet, Fleet Week, Sunday Streets, tours of historic sites, etc.), oral histories, interpretive signage, and cultural exhibits.*

**Analysis:** Hudson retained Page & Turnbull, Historic Preservation Architects, to guide the design of the proposed alterations to the Ferry Building to achieve consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation ("Standards"). Page & Turnbull's findings of consistency are included in Exhibit C for reference. The findings conclude that the proposed scope of work is consistent with the standards because:

- The proposal will not result in a change of use of the historic property.
- The proposal will result in the addition of new features and equipment and will not remove historic fabric.
- The proposed scope of work is highly reversible and if removed in the future would allow the historic resource to substantially return to its earlier condition.
- The design of proposed new features will be simple, of a contemporary yet compatible aesthetic and fabricated of high-quality materials appropriate for the landmark building.
- The installation of glazed storefront assemblies and HVAC intake and exhaust louvers is within existing openings and with minimal attachment to lessen the impact on the historic fabric of the resource.
- The infill of the north arcade with a set of glazed folding doors will provide a certain degree of transparency and visual access into the arcade when closed due to cold weather or after business hours.
- The proposed installation of a free-standing dining trellis in front of the building is designed to be light weight in appearance and to maintain significant visual access to the north arcade and the west façade of the building.
- Interior alterations will replace non-historic retail storefronts with new finishes that will be compatible with the design aesthetic established for the Market Hall in the 2003 rehabilitation.
- The proposed enclosure of outdoor dining on portions of the non-historic and largely reconstructed east elevation of the building will not alter historic materials or spatial relationships.
- The proposal will refresh and supplement the interpretive exhibit in the central Ferry Terminal corridor that passes through the building.

While Port staff generally agree with the above findings of consistency, staff would like to better understand the impact of the proposed scope of work on the historic character of the resource and its visibility. As the design continues to evolve, staff will review and approve an operations plan that will specify when folding glass doors within the arcade are required to remain open, and when panels would cover the dining trellis to enclose and protect the outdoor dining from wind and rain. When design details are further developed, including a signage program for the arcade and dining trellis, staff and Hudson will continue to outreach to community groups including San Francisco Heritage and Telegraph Hill Dwellers Neighborhood Association.

### **Public Realm**

*Policy 5. Provide unifying elements to the length of Port property that strengthen the identity of the Port and enhance the public realm.*

*c. Enhance the pedestrian environment through physical interpretation of history and public art.*

*d. Design public spaces to be climate-sensitive, allowing for shelter, wind breaks, and sun access or shading depending on seasonal protection needs.*

*e. Develop standards for waterfront lighting that is pedestrian-scaled, provides safety, is sensitive to wildlife, is environmentally efficient, and enhances the quality of public space.*

*f. Implement public realm improvements in conjunction with Port development projects and transportation investments.*

**Analysis:** The Project does not modify the Embarcadero Promenade, which is the continuous open space along the Port's northern waterfront. The Project does not include interpretive information or new public art at this time. The project provides improvements that shelter wind and sun and makes use of wind protected areas.

### **Resilience Planning**

*Policy 6. Integrate protection of the Port's historic and cultural assets and resources with resilience planning. Preserve the architectural character of buildings and structures important to the unique visual image of the San Francisco waterfront, to the maximum feasible extent while at the same time prudently addressing the need to perform deferred maintenance and resilience improvements.*

**Analysis:** The Project is proposing light enhancements to spaces within and around the Ferry Building and Ferry Plaza. The Port is currently in the process of resilience planning and evaluating key scenarios for sea level rise and seawall protection that would best protect the area and the historic resources.

### **Views**

*Policy 7. Provide waterfront views, shoreline public access, or direct access to and from the Bay for visitors' enjoyment of the natural environment.*

**Analysis:** The Project proposes improvements on Ferry Plaza to maintain and enhance views of the Bay and Ferry Terminal activities and provides public access along the perimeter of the Pier. However, proposed pedestrian furnishings within the extension of the walkway along the south edge of Ferry Plaza may slightly impede views to the Bay and Treasure Island from the Embarcadero Promenade.

*Policy 8. Recognize, preserve, and enhance public views of the Bay, maritime uses, and historic structures.*

*c. From Port properties, establish new views of the Bay, maritime uses, and historic resources.*

**Analysis:** The Project proposes improvements on Ferry Plaza to maintain and enhance views of the Bay and Ferry Terminal activities.