

Northeast Embarcadero Study

Summary of Public Comments

May 19, 2010

The Planning Department led an open public discussion with the intention of creating the broadest possible shared vision for the Northeast Embarcadero Waterfront, and continued this discussion throughout the course of the study. The public dialogue had three main phases, or rounds. Each phase consisted of a public workshop(s) with stakeholders, merchants, property owners, community members, neighborhood groups, and elected officials. While comments from earlier phases have been made public and posted on the web for clarity, all are incorporated in this summary.

The public outreach effort was substantial; notification for each workshop included emails, mailings, and web updates. The mailing list included property owners and occupants in the area, local businesses and neighborhood organizations, and attendees of all former community meetings held regarding the Northeast Embarcadero Study. Over the course of the study's outreach effort, more than 10,000 postcards were printed and mailed. Additionally, over 600 emails were sent each time a workshop, or project up-date was announced. These emails were sent to local business organizations, Port tenants, Ferry Building merchants, attendees of previous community meetings, and other interested citizens.

The Planning Department hosted 5 community meetings throughout the course of the study. These meetings were always well attended, often hosting more than 100 people at each meeting. In addition to local residents, and residents from other parts of the city who are interested in the northeastern waterfront area, many attendees represented a diverse range of companies and organizations. The Planning Department also attended six meetings with the Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group.

The Planning Department received hundreds of comments from interested individuals and organizations. While public opinions were strong and diverse, many comments included concern regarding the specific issues of the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club, Open Space, Parking, Views, Height, Historical Character, and the Public Trust. Below, lists a summary of public comment according to each round of the study.

Round 1 - Community Discussion & Listening to the Public

August 7, 2009

Community participants offered many ideas. To better understand the issues, we have summarized the comments by topic.

I. Process and Timeline

What We Proposed. At Supervisor Chiu's request, the Port Commission in late February asked the Planning Department to undertake a 6- to 8-month public planning process, which would culminate in a set of recommendations by October 2009. Certain unavoidable delays prevented the Department from starting the project immediately.

What We Heard. A significant number of comments were received about the shortness of the timeline and the infeasibility of conducting a meaningful public discussion in that compressed amount of time.

Planning Department Response. The Planning Department is proposing to extend the study timeline by several months. Now the study will be completed by the end of 2009. Additionally, the Department is extending the first round of public discussions to ensure that all points of view are heard.

II. Making Sure the Study's Recommendations are Implemented

What We Heard. There was general confusion regarding the goals and scope of the study, and the review and approval process for future development in the area.

What The Northeast Embarcadero Study Is Intended To Do. The Northeast Embarcadero Study will document for the public, the Board of Supervisors, the Port Commission, the Planning Commission and other key public agencies the conclusions and recommendations the Planning Department reaches through its community dialogue regarding land use, the design of buildings, the design of sidewalks, and the design and programming of new and existing open spaces.

The study can be used by the public to monitor change and evaluate it. It can be used by the Port as a basis for actions to be taken on Port SWL 351, including any development agreements for the parcel¹. It also can be used by the Port to help evaluate and guide development on other Port Seawall Lots in the study area. It can inform the Planning Department's evaluation and recommendations regarding its review of proposed development on non-Port parcels in the study area, including the 8 Washington Street proposal. It can inform the Board of Supervisors when it considers issues in the study area that might come before it. It can inform future changes to the City's General Plan and the Planning Code, the Port's Land Use Plan and its Design and Access Element. Finally, the study can be used by other key agencies as they address issues not formally the subject of the study but relate to it, such as transit and parking.

¹ If the study is completed in time, the Port Commission has instructed Port staff to incorporate the recommendations of the study into any development agreement between the Port and the developer who is proposing to incorporate Seawall Lot 351 into any proposed development of at 8 Washington Street.

III. Use of Land

What's There Now. For the most part, the study area is zoned for commercial business (C-2) and high density residential-commercial (RC-4). It contains a diverse range of uses including mixed use residential, office, open space, and surface parking. Much of the surface parking is on Port land. The Port lands in the study area currently are subject to the Public Trust, which restricts some uses on these sites, primarily housing and general office use.

The Port land is subject to the Waterfront Land Use Plan and its accompanying Design and Access Element. The Waterfront Plan sets forth land use policies for all property under the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco. The Plan's overarching objective is "Reuniting San Francisco with its Waterfront." The majority of the Study area resides in the Northeast Waterfront area of the Plan, which has the following objectives: protect historic resources as the area evolves; continue cargo support activities for as long as feasible; new activities to draw San Franciscans to the water's edge; and highlight gateways to Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach and Chinatown. The Design and Access Element provides design criteria under the headings of siting and site design, orientation, architectural detail, and service.

What We Heard. There is a broad disparity of views about appropriate uses in the study area. A substantial number of people expressed concern about the potential loss of the active recreation uses on the privately owned land now housing the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club. Many note the need for active recreation facilities in the neighborhood. Others believe that some or all of the land now used for parking should be converted to public open space.

Those who do envision some level of development on the land now used for parking generally agree that adding to the diversity of uses with new residences, local-serving retail, community facilities, public open space and other neighborhood amenities would improve livability for the area's residents while strengthening the character of The Embarcadero, assuming that new development is well designed and enlivens the public realm.

- Any new uses should be local-serving and city-serving uses supportive of current residents and businesses, rather than destination uses for those coming from outside the area.
- Any new housing should accommodate a diverse range of income levels, and include affordable housing, senior housing, and family housing.
- Any new development should include open space that engages the public.
- Consider issues of sea level rise when planning for new uses.
- Be respectful of the public trust.
- Be cognizant and respectful of the initial plan for the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Project.

Planning Department Response. Given the widely divergent views that people hold about appropriate uses in the study area, it is unlikely that a single shared vision with specific uses can be crafted. The Planning Department will continue to work openly with the community to create the broadest possible vision for the area. In the event the Department's recommendations include some level of added development, the Department will work closely with the community to

establish development and design guidelines and standards that ensure that any new development is well-designed and enlivens the neighborhood and the public realm.

IV. Seawall Lot 351 and Adjacent Parcels

What's There Now. On February 24, 2009, the Port Commission awarded San Francisco Waterfront Partners II (SFWP) the opportunity to advance a development proposal to include Port Seawall Lot 351, pursuant to a Request for Proposals issued by the Port in 2008. The Port Commission found that the SFWP proposal responded to the development objectives in the RFP, and it directed staff to enter into negotiations with SFWP to refine the project. At the same meeting the Port Commission, at the behest of Supervisor Chiu, asked the Planning Department to conduct the Northeast Embarcadero community planning process, and directed staff and SFWP to support and participate in the study and to incorporate the recommendations of the study into any proposal and negotiations for Seawall Lot 351. The San Francisco Planning Department agreed to conduct the study, which is now underway and is the subject of this paper.

What We Heard. Like the issue of land use discussed above, there is a broad disparity of views about the proposed development on the site of the Golden Gateway Swim and Tennis Club, also known as the 8 Washington site, with or without the inclusion of Port SWL 351. A substantial number are opposed to development on the site and the redesign of its recreational facilities. Others have expressed concern about current height limits and whether they are appropriate to the location.

Planning Department Response. The Study will provide recommendations regarding development on Port SWL 351 and the adjacent parcels, including requirements to include in any development agreement for Port SWL 351 should the Port Commission decide to engage in one².

V. Quality of Design

What's There Now. The area has an eclectic mix of large and small buildings, but generally transitions from towers in the south to lower-scale office in the north. The grain of development becomes much finer as one moves westward towards Telegraph Hill, but building footprints remain large from the base of the hill to the edge of The Embarcadero.

What We Heard. Broad community support was expressed for a large number of urban design strategies aimed at achieving an active and attractive built environment that is complementary to the very best historic buildings. The strategies include:

- Site design and building heights should balance views to landmarks and the relationship to adjacent historic buildings with the need for additional public amenities.
- Any development that does occur on parcels along the Northeast Embarcadero should be built with high quality materials and reflect the very best of contemporary design.

² If the study is ready in time, the Port Commission has instructed Port staff to incorporate the recommendations of the study into any development agreement between the Port and the developer who is proposing to incorporate Seawall Lot 351 into any proposed development at 8 Washington Street.

- New development should relate to, but not mimic, the historic bulkhead buildings on the east side of The Embarcadero.
- Connections from adjacent neighborhoods to and along The Embarcadero should be strengthened through high quality development and a gracious public realm.
- New development should enliven the public realm with active ground-floor frontages, such as townhouses, retail shops, restaurants and cafes.
- Greater floor-to-ceiling heights for ground floor retail that results in a more appealing pedestrian experience along adjacent sidewalks ought to be explored.
- Other people-oriented design principles should be explored, including hiding parking from view, limiting the number of driveways, and adding pedestrian-scaled lighting.
- Efforts should be made to ensure select parcels provide the opportunity for meaningful development.
- The design of the public realm and range of public amenities should make the waterfront a more attractive place for a variety of ages, both resident and visitor.

Planning Department Response. The Planning Department will use these strategies, many of which have been refined through recent area plans, to develop a set of guidelines for new development that reflect the waterfront's prominence in the city's urban landscape and respect the local and historic character of buildings in this neighborhood. Design guidelines must also respect the prominent character of the Embarcadero Historic District, yet provide appropriate guidance for the best of contemporary architecture.

VI. Quality of the Public Realm

What's There Now. The area contains a large number of open spaces, passive in character, with several privately owned. The design of the west side of the Embarcadero does a poor job of linking existing open spaces, in part due to the gaps in the built environment used as parking lots. Further, street and intersection design generally could do a better job of addressing and accommodating the needs of pedestrians; better streetscape design, for example, would improve the linkages to open space and other community facilities.

What We Heard. Most comments supported the need to strengthen the public realm. There was disagreement, however, over whether perceived deficiencies in open space would be best remedied by significant new parks, or by the reprogramming and redesign of existing parks. Similarly, there was disagreement over whether any new open space should be heavily landscaped or more integrated into any new urban fabric in the form of plazas and the like. Despite these differences, the community voiced broad support for a number of strategies to strengthen the public realm:

- The network of open spaces along The Embarcadero corridor should serve a wider variety of users, including children, the elderly, and dog owners.
- The network of open spaces should remain active and safe throughout the day and night.

- New open spaces could be created in a variety of ways, with consideration given to turning ‘paper streets’ and parts of underutilized streets into public plazas and gardens, and being placed on top of parking structures.
- All new open spaces must remain accessible to the general public and have no barriers to access.
- The quality of the public realm should reflect the area’s prominence as the city’s gateway to the waterfront.
- Connections to the surrounding neighborhoods, such as along Clay or Washington streets, should be made stronger by adopting a more people-oriented streetscape design, including at intersections.
- The West Esplanade walk should match the east side’s prominence as a pedestrian route in terms of design quality and width.

Planning Department Response. These strategies are sound, and the Department will use them as the basis for the study’s open space recommendations. The amount and location of additional open space, how it would be designed and the uses it would accommodate will require additional community input and analysis of existing conditions.

VII. Moving About

What’s There Now. The Embarcadero is the transportation spine for the area, carrying cars, transit, bicycles and pedestrians along the length of the waterfront. Its width is dominated by car and transit infrastructure, and while pedestrians enjoy a generous walking path on the east side adjacent to the water and historic piers, the west side path is not as gracious. Cyclists have two narrow bike lanes, one in each direction, and are allowed to move slowly along the Embarcadero Promenade. The streets west of The Embarcadero are generally quiet and provide enjoyable routes for pedestrians.

What We Heard. There was broad agreement that more needed to be done for pedestrians, particularly along the west side of The Embarcadero. There was general agreement that over time, the transportation infrastructure needs to be re-oriented and become more people-oriented by shifting priorities away from automobiles and towards pedestrians and cyclists, although some cautioned that transit and other ways of moving about should be improved before any effort to shift right-of-way away from cars.

The community’s priorities discussed include:

- Future transportation investments should shift the transportation network to become more ‘people-oriented’ by widening sidewalks, improving wayfinding signage and dramatically improving the comfort and safety of bicycle facilities.
- Transit service should be increased to reduce crowding and improve reliability for residents and employees, while additional services, such as a downtown transit loop, should be explored.

Planning Department Response. The scope of this effort does not include transit service planning or operations. Nonetheless, community views and study conclusions on the need for improved service, particularly as a means to improve pedestrian, bicycle and automobile circulation, will be conveyed to the SFMTA and City leadership.

VIII. The Need for Parking

What's There Now. Depending on the time of day and day of the week, off-street parking supply in the area roughly defined by Sansome and Kearny to the west, the water to the east, The Embarcadero to the north, and Sacramento and Market Street to the south ranges from 5,500 to 7,000 parking spaces and has an average weekday occupancy rate of 78% and weekend occupancy rate of 32%.³ Many of the Port owned seawall lots are currently being used as surface parking lots.

What We Heard. Substantial numbers of people think that the land now used for parking should remain as parking for the foreseeable future. Almost all agree that the continued need for parking will need to be balanced against any proposed development for the current surface parking lots. There is a concern regarding the perceived 'lack', and recent reduction, of parking in the area, and a desire to survey parking needs in the area while better managing existing supply.

- Regardless of new development there should not be a net increase in parking in the area; rather existing parking supply should be used more efficiently.
- Create a plan for the parking provided by the study parcels before the use of the land is changed.
- Examine parking needs for local businesses and employees in the area (especially the Ferry Building), including loading and delivery needs.
- Manage parking to communicate parking availability near the Ferry Building.
- Work with garage owners to make better use of garages in the area.

Planning Department Response. As with transit, the scope of this study does not include a means for extensive parking analysis and programmatic conclusions. However, to the extent this work identifies parking needs or relationships in the area or on specific sites, these will be forwarded to the Port, the SFMTA and City leaders for consideration.

IX. How Things Get Built

What's There Now. The Northeast Embarcadero Study will provide design guidelines for new development in the area.

What We Heard. There is a community belief that private development should provide public benefits to the area. Additionally, there were many comments in support of public-private

³ *Exploratorium relocation transportation report*, Wilbur Smith Associates. January 23, 2009.

partnerships to help further community goals for the area, as well as an understanding and desire for interagency cooperation and support to help achieve the community's vision for the area.

- Create partnerships between the public and private interests in the area.
- Establish a framework for interagency communication and cooperation to ensure new development follows existing regulations for the area.
- Help the City and the Port find funds for community amenities.
- Evaluate the proposal of Revenue Bonds to finance the construction of parks and parking improvements in the area, including financing for maintenance.
- Encourage new development to be affordable to neighborhood serving businesses.

Planning Department Response. The Northeast Embarcadero Study will provide a set of recommendations to guide future actions in the area. These recommendations can inform the work of neighborhood organizations, developers, and residents interested in improving their neighborhood.

Round 2 - Public Comment on the Department's Initial Recommendations

November 12, 2009

On September 30, 2009, the Planning Department conducted a walking tour and community workshop to present recommendations for the Northeast Embarcadero study area. In its presentation, the Planning Department outlined fundamental planning and design principles and described how they could best be applied in the Northeast Embarcadero.

Attendants at the workshop gathered into small groups to discuss the Department's initial recommendations, to exchange ideas, and to concur or express alternative views. What follows summarizes public comment at the workshop, as well as comments received by the Department via email and mail. The summary is organized by the Department's Fundamental Principles.

I. Building along the Waterfront

Principle. San Francisco's historic pattern of a moderately scaled, dense city fronting the working waterfront across The Embarcadero remains fundamental to its character.

Preliminary Recommendation. Although the Northeast Waterfront has transitioned away from a working waterfront, the fundamental character of the city connected to the Bay through a continuous or nearly continuous urban edge at the western edge of The Embarcadero must be maintained and strengthened by encouraging new development on now-open parcels.

What We Heard About The Principle. There was general agreement with this Principle. Many agreed with encouraging reasonable density and moderately scaled buildings on The Embarcadero. Some thought the historic pattern was disrupted in places, especially from Broadway to North Point. Others thought increasing height and density above the City's historic pattern would be better. In keeping with the City's scale and historic pattern, comments were received about the need to ensure the appropriate size and scale of the seawall lot parcels. Most agreed that The Embarcadero is a fundamental component of the character of the area and that the street should be enhanced as a promenade and symbol of a living waterfront.

There was disagreement about what constitutes an urban edge. Some translated an 'edge' to mean a built edge and others thought an 'edge' could be defined by open space. As before, views differed as to whether parking lots should be replaced with active open space or development.

Other comments included:

- The west side of the Embarcadero needs a street edge; remove the parking lots, add retail and small scale outdoor space. Create an opportunity for events to occur in the area; Sue Bierman Park would be the best space for this.
- Don't accept a hard edge – don't need to build to create an edge. The role for a street wall is to have open space along the street.
- Buildings should form a complete street wall and an urban edge means encouraging development. A good street wall is defined as a mixture of uses activating the street with people. Creating an exciting, engaging and safe

pedestrian environment along the west side of The Embarcadero should be one of the City's highest priorities, and developing the parking lots is an essential step to achieving this.

II. Respecting San Francisco's Topography

Principle. Topography is a defining San Francisco feature, especially for neighborhoods such as Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill. To weaken the visual prominence of the city's hills and ridges would weaken one of San Francisco's basic images.

Preliminary Recommendation. Public views of Telegraph Hill generally, and Coit Tower in particular, from The Embarcadero must be acknowledged and respected. Views of Coit Tower from certain locations are a defining element of the Northeast Embarcadero and of the city and should be preserved. Urban design guidelines should protect these views to the extent possible. Similarly, public views from the hills and ridges above the Northeast Waterfront to The Embarcadero, the Ferry Building and San Francisco Bay must be considered and respected.

What We Heard About The Principle. Most comments supported the importance of keeping view corridors open to emphasize topography, but specified that public views are more important than private views, and even more specifically, that public views from hills are more important than those from The Embarcadero. Many agreed that episodic views are important, but not necessarily from the Ferry Building and that views need not be continuous or unbroken. Many agreed that if done well, there could be a successful series of views as you walk along The Embarcadero. Others expressed the importance of views of Coit tower from the Ferry Building, and the possibility of gaining new residential units in the area, while varying height to maintain views to historic landmarks.

Other comments included:

- View corridors should be created carefully, incorporating the right sized spaces, and a balanced, smooth transition from building to view.
- Need to have the highest quality views from The Embarcadero. The existing water basins do not provide enough water access; views aren't as great as they should be for this promenade boulevard.

III. Strengthening the City's Pattern

Principle. The continuity or near continuity of San Francisco's street grid, including its extension across hills and to the water's edge, is fundamental to the city's pattern and an inseparable city image to residents and visitors.

Preliminary Recommendation. The Embarcadero Waterfront should be strongly connected visually to adjoining neighborhoods along all streets that terminate at the Bay, and there should be pedestrian access to The Embarcadero along all streets. Therefore, the streets leading into The Embarcadero from the west – including Clay, Jackson, Pacific, Vallejo, and Union – should be opened to public pedestrian access and allow views to the waterfront. This access may be the result of an easement across privately-owned land, or an extension of the public way across publicly-owned land. Establishment or reestablishment of these accessways would be expected to happen over time as opportunity arises, and would not come about through the indiscriminate

removal of current development or uses. Where a physical connection exists but a visual connection is not possible, signage needs to clearly indicate that pedestrians can access the waterfront via the designated route. Likewise, where intersecting streets lead out from The Embarcadero to destinations inland, such as North Beach, Chinatown, Telegraph Hill and the like, these connections should be clear and clearly marked.

What We Heard About The Principle. Many agreed that The Embarcadero is a civic street that requires strong connections both to the waterfront and to adjacent neighborhoods. There was strong support to enhance the public realm, with a particular emphasis on pedestrian travel. Many commented that the idea of connections must go beyond vehicles to include bikes and pedestrians.

Most agreed with the need to enhance existing connections and re-establish previously severed connections in the area. Connecting the street grid to the waterfront was seen as an important first step. Differences did occur. For example, some liked the idea of opening up the Jackson Street corridor while others did not. Others liked strengthening the formal grid, while others questioned its formality, suggesting meandering pathways and a desire to explore other 'informal' street frameworks. There were many comments on parcel size; both to reinforce the existing street pattern, to enhance connections from other neighborhoods and to the waterfront, and to enhance the pedestrian quality of the area.

Other comments included:

- The prevailing city pattern and its continuity is an important Principle.
- The seawall lots are large lots (in length along the Embarcadero). When developing these lots, buildings need to replicate the small grain sensitivity of San Francisco buildings.
- There is concern about the ability to get through where streets dead end; people should be able to access The Embarcadero along the grid, and priority for this access should be given to pedestrians.

IV. Recognizing the City-Wide Role of the Northeast Waterfront

Principle. The Northeast Embarcadero Waterfront is a resource of city-wide, regional and state-wide significance, and the importance of this resource must be respected.

Preliminary Recommendation. The use of land and design of buildings along the Northeast Embarcadero should be based on the needs defined by the larger public context. The demands of financial expediency or preferences of the local community should not dominate the decision-making process; in addition to the civic centrality of the area, the area's proximity to major transit infrastructure, the downtown and other major destinations must be carefully weighed before any final solution is adopted. Therefore, surface parking and above-grade structured parking is inappropriate here and the existing surface parking should be phased out from this significant location. To the extent that parking is needed in this area, it must be below grade or accommodated in adjacent develop, and/or managed by strong on- and off-street parking management programs.

What We Heard About The Principle. While there is little dispute on the northeast waterfront's

national and local importance, a suggestion was made to expand this description to include its international significance. Others suggested that an accessible waterfront is a defining San Francisco feature. Yet others mentioned that waterfront decisions should be driven by local constituents, since it is the local constituents and immediate residents that contribute to the vibrancy and fiscal survival of the area. There was also some concern about rising sea levels, and that planning principles needed to be expanded to include a discussion about this issue.

Similar to the first workshop, a desire was expressed for a '24 hour' neighborhood featuring housing, retail and amenities for a diverse range, including seniors, children, tourists and dogs. Some questioned why private condominiums are of regional significance. Some mentioned the desire for more affordable housing in the area. Many agreed that the time had arrived for the waterfront to produce revenue for the City and that reuse of the surface parking lots is fundamental to that objective. Again, there were concerns about maintaining control over the type and quality of the area's retail choices.

Other comments included:

- Seek administrative or legislative changes to allow a wider variety of uses on the Seawall lots.
- Retain the seawall lots and paper streets as public trust lands, and maintain Port ownership of these lots.
- Ensure new development is amenable for visitors and residents.
- Concern that the 8 Washington proposal would result in a loss of light and green space for the Golden Gateway residents.

A number of comments were made regarding parking. Most agreed with the Department's recommendation that parking should be below grade. There were concerns about the gradual phasing out of parking from the area, and its effect on local businesses. Concern was also raised regarding the potential conflict between different modes of travel, and the need to create a multi-modal balance. Many offered specific suggestions regarding parking; others offered more general suggestions. A consistent theme was the question for whose benefit was parking being built? Was it to increase the market value of a development? Or was it needed to serve the larger community? Other comments included:

- All parking should be discouraged in the area. As part of any specific Plan this area should have a maximum parking requirement and parking lots operating simply as revenue generators should not be allowed.
- The Port's request for a parking facility appears to be an idea for generating revenue and not for serving a real community need.
- Parking is inevitable. Regardless, it should be below ground and as minimal as possible.
- With a high water table, constructing parking below-grade is expensive. Is this a realistic expectation?

V. Providing Public Open Space

Principle. Adequate public open space and public recreational facilities are fundamental needs in all San Francisco neighborhoods.

Preliminary Recommendation. This part of the city has access to some of the most stunning open spaces found along any waterfront, and the anticipated improvements will only further enhance the quality of the public realm. This study envisions a number of new small- to medium-sized publicly accessible open spaces to be part of any development built on the study parcels. Taken together with the substantial upgrade to the western sidewalk of The Embarcadero anticipated in this study, there would be a string of open spaces offering a unique and greener pedestrian walkway as an alternative to the eastern promenade.

The potential of Sue Bierman Park and the rest of the public open space at the foot of Market Street add to this richness. Given that the southern part of the study area is regarded as deficient in public active open space, a portion of Sue Bierman Park bounded by Drumm, Washington, Davis and Clay streets offers an excellent opportunity for new public active recreation facilities. Further, the Embarcadero Open Space planning effort, while focused on the design and reprogramming of the larger network of open spaces centered on Market Street and The Embarcadero, will provide a forum for a more detailed discussion of how these exceedingly important civic spaces can gain new significance.

With these thoughts as background, the Department concludes that this section of the waterfront is not in need of significant new open space. The Embarcadero Waterfront is not an appropriate location for space-intensive public recreation facilities, such as formal ball fields and the like. The deficiency in active open space can be addressed on some portion of Sue Bierman Park between Davis and Drumm streets.

Private recreation facilities such as the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club may complement public recreation facilities for certain segments of the population, but they do not fully replace the need for public recreation facilities. The Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club is used both by immediate residents such as those of the Golden Gateway Apartments as well as by the general public. It is an important resource for these residents. Should its loss be threatened by new development that would displace it, those portions of the facility that now serve the immediate residents should be provided as part of any new development, and any lag time between its removal and replacement should be kept to a minimum if at all. Whether such a replacement facility serves a broader public beyond the immediate neighborhood, however, is not relevant to the current discussion.

What We Heard About The Principle. There was general support for the Principle, including the graphics that accompanied it. Some comments placed concern on the fact that the Principle did not include private recreational facilities.

A number of comments were received regarding the proposed 'string of open spaces' recommended for the west side of the Embarcadero. Many expressed the need for a comprehensive open space plan for the area that could include making better use of existing space or introducing other uses, such as bike rental and changing facilities, rather than a series of smaller open spaces along the length of the study area. Some supported the idea of private development contributing public open space as part of proposals to build on key sites.

Some comments asked to vary the scale of the areas open spaces, and to site them to enhance unique view points, where appropriate. Many comments regarded the need for the open spaces

to be of a usable size and location and orientation, to be inter-woven with development, to be public, active, functional, and to enhance the area.

Other comments included:

- Provide functional open spaces: including; playgrounds, parks, recreational spaces.
- Reserve small seawall lots as either public open spaces, or for uses which enhance the adjacent public open spaces.
- Ensure open space in the area is cognizant of the water as open space.
- Save as much open space as possible; take all parking places and turn them into plazas, change existing open spaces to include play area. Break through the Levi Plaza street wall and open up the visual connection to street.

Many liked the proposal to incorporate an active recreation program at Sue Bierman Park and agreed that the park needed to be improved and programmed permitting, as in the past, recreational activities in the park. Some felt that Sue Bierman Park should be left as is, that is, natural and un-programmed. Many agreed to the need to provide recreational amenities for children in particular, such as playgrounds, and other active recreation uses. Others commented on the importance of the location of Justin Herman Plaza and Sue Bierman Park and their proximity to the Ferry Building and Market Street.

Other comments included:

- Want to see replacement, in-kind, of on-site recreation per the Recreation and Open Space Element.
- Need for large public spaces near the Ferry Building. Justin Herman Plaza and Sue Bierman Park offer a great opportunity to provide a gateway to the city. These spaces can be used by the city for celebrations and public gatherings.
- Need for large spaces and functional parks to accommodate new arrivals and city celebrations.

There was some disagreement over whether a facility with a fee-based membership system constitutes a private club, although the majority believed that it did. Suggestions were made to amend the Principle so that it did not delineate between public and private facilities. Additionally, comments were received regarding the relationship between the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Plan and the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club; many stated its direct correlation for the provision of open space in this area. Others commented on expanding the role of the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club as defined by the Planning Department to serve beyond the area's residents, since many people all over the City use its facilities. Lastly, many comments highlighted the community service and health benefits the club provides in the area.

Other comments included:

- Amend Principle to read 'and recreational facilities', rather than 'and public recreational facilities.'
- There are a large number of elderly and disabled people using the facility, and it is important to remember the community and health benefit aspect this facility provides to the community.

VI. Ensuring the High Quality Design of Streets along the Waterfront

Principle. Streets that have special civic importance because of their location and/or width play a unique role in the city, merit the highest design standards and should offer a gracious public realm for pedestrians.

Preliminary Recommendation. The west side of The Embarcadero should have a graciousness that equals but does not duplicate the Embarcadero Promenade. It should be softer and greener – with street trees and plantings – to contrast with the harder eastern edge, where such trees and plantings are less appropriate. There should be a wide sidewalk with generous space for landscaping and public amenities; there should be places for pedestrians to stop, relax and enjoy the unique environment; there should be attractive pedestrian lighting that provides a well-lit and safe environment for people to walk in the evenings and at night; and there should be narrow, safe and comfortable intersections that prioritize pedestrian needs over vehicular at most crossings.

What We Heard About The Principle. There was agreement that the Embarcadero is a civic street, and that the west side is different from the east side in both scale and feel. Comments were made regarding the need to create an environment that encourages people to walk on the west side of the Embarcadero, including increasing the ability to walk continuously without traffic interruptions, providing active and engaging ground floors, a spacious sidewalk width, episodic views, strong connections, small seawall lot parcels, public art, pedestrian amenities, and better east-west crossings.

Specific comments regarding street design were also received. Such comments included:

- Create a promenade along the west side of the Embarcadero that provides bulb-outs, greenery, raised crosswalks, reduces parking and curb cuts, adds dedicated bike lanes separate from the walkway, and emphasizes a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Allow no blank walls facing the pedestrian realm. No matter what happens on the ground floor, development should face the street, and provide a good combination of materials and design.
- Make intersection improvements, especially the Broadway and Washington intersection.
- Activate the existing plazas; create more open space, green space, parks, and bicycle paths.

VII. Building with a Civic Vision along The Embarcadero

Principle. Development along The Embarcadero Waterfront must match the street's civic importance in quality of design, choice of materials, building orientation and active ground floors.

Preliminary Recommendation. New development in the Northeast Embarcadero Waterfront must be held to the City's highest design expectations in view of The Embarcadero's prominence as a grand civic street.

Based on its analysis of the proper scale and enclosure of The Embarcadero and of proper relationships to surrounding areas and key public views of Telegraph Hill and Coit Tower from The Embarcadero, the Planning Department recommends that certain currently allowed heights

in the study area be reduced. The area south of Broadway to Washington Street is now zoned to allow heights of 84 feet. The Department recommends that development fronting The Embarcadero between Washington and Jackson Streets be limited to a height of 65 feet. For development fronting The Embarcadero between Jackson and Pacific Streets the Department recommends that heights be limited to 35 feet to facilitate a key view of Coit Tower and portions of Telegraph Hill from The Embarcadero Promenade. To protect a key view of Coit Tower from the north end of the Ferry Building, the Department recommends that a limited view corridor be considered to further sculpt development fronting The Embarcadero to retain that key view. North of Broadway, fronting parcels were recently zoned for 40' and no change is now recommended to those height limits.

For the Drumm Street frontage of the parcel bounded by The Embarcadero, Washington, Drumm and Jackson streets, the Planning Department recommends a street wall height of 45 feet to reflect the street's width and respect the character of the Golden Gateway development across the street. There should be a horizontal setback of at least 20 feet above the fourth story, above which the building should be permitted to rise to 84 feet.

What We Heard About The Principle. Many thought this was a good Principle and agreed that The Embarcadero waterfront must include high quality design. Comments were received regarding the importance of respecting the historic character of the area but not mimicking it; expressing a desire for a contemporary style in new development. Others commented on the need for 'green' buildings and high quality materials. Lastly, there was a comment requesting that the Study's urban design guidelines should be parcel specific, and not generally applied to the study area.

Many comments were received regarding the importance of building design, scale and massing over building height. It was emphasized that building design should promote and preserve views, be articulated, and provide variety through appropriate bulk and massing, with less stress on rigid height requirements. Comments questioned the Department's recommendation for reducing heights, some stating that height was needed to help define The Embarcadero. Some supported the existing 85' height limit along The Embarcadero, others preferred a lower building, including buildings one-story in height with active ground floor retail. Comments included:

- The style of a building contributes more to the City than height. Taller heights can be allowed with setbacks and floor area ratios to limit the massing of the building and to restrict a full build out of a building's potential envelope.
- There should be a preference for low-rise, one-story buildings with restaurants and other active uses such as bicycle rental facilities.
- A tower on the southwest corner is the best proposal for the 8 Washington Street project. But since 'political considerations' rule out any possibility of a tower, sculpting 35-65-84 works.

There were comments for and against the Planning Department's recommendation of 45 feet along Drumm Street between Washington and Jackson. Some agreed with the recommendation, and thought that an 85 foot building would make that street section 'cavernous'. Others preferred tall buildings, sighting that the setback was not necessary due to the width of the street itself. Other comments were received suggesting a reduction to 65' feet for the entire length of the block. Comments were also received regarding the residents of the Golden Gateway development, and their concerns for loss of light and green space with any new development.

VIII. Designing in the Context of Adjacent Neighborhoods

Principle. New Development should respect the scale and character of the surrounding areas. This includes the special nature of the historic districts in and around the Northeast Waterfront.

Preliminary Recommendation. New development within the Northeast Embarcadero Historic District must be consistent with the design guidelines established by the Secretary of the Interior Standards. New development outside any of the historic districts should recognize and respect the precedent set by the districts, but remain faithful to the aspirations of contemporary architecture.

As noted above, many of the public streets and rights-of-way in the study area serving the Golden Gateway project are lined with at-grade parking garages and elevated public open spaces. These design decisions, made several decades ago, severely undermine the quality and character of the pedestrian environment, offering austere ground-floor frontages, which is especially concerning along streets identified in the study as potential neighborhood connectors (Broadway, Clay, Washington). At least on those streets identified as neighborhood connectors, the City should consider a program to correct this condition over time, perhaps in partnership with adjacent property owners. Such an effort might include the use of a portion of the public right-of-way to create ground-floor activities that enliven the street and vastly improve them as pedestrian-friendly connectors to nearby neighborhoods.

What We Heard About The Principle. There was a comment that the Principle should include the existing neighborhood as well as surrounding areas, particularly, that the Principle should not disregard the existing neighborhood and club. There was concern whether this Principle defined the Embarcadero Center as a 'surrounding area'. Additionally, comments were received stating that development should be of relative consistency near the ferry terminal plaza and consistent but lower (in height) north of Broadway, and that form, articulation, and good design are needed to retain and enhance the area's character.

We received comments agreeing with the Department's recommendation, particularly that being informed by the existing context is good, but to encourage contemporary architecture that respects the area's historic context, not mimic it. Most support the proposal to activate ground floors, particularly on the streets identified as connectors to other neighborhoods.

Other comments included:

- Develop a Waterfront Open Space capital program, and place a Waterfront Open Space Bond before the voters.
- Establish special use districts (SUD's) and charge impact fees for private development in the Waterfront and Washington-Broadway SUDs to finance a program of neighborhood improvements.

Round 3 - Summary of Public Comment on the Department's Refined Urban Design Recommendations and Urban Design Guidelines

April 9, 2010

A Summary of Public Comment

Throughout the course of the Northeast Embarcadero Study, the Planning Department has led an open public discussion with the intention of creating the broadest possible shared vision for the Northeast Embarcadero Waterfront. Public dialogue has been focused around the study's three main phases, and public comment received during each phase has been summarized and posted on the study's website.

This document summarizes comments received during the study's third phase, including comments made at the study's workshop on February 24, 2010, as well as comments received via email, mail, and fax. In order to ensure all comments were received prior to the release of the final study, the Planning Department placed a deadline for submitting comments to the Department of March 24, 2010.

Comments are classified according to the study's final products, namely: the public realm improvements, urban design guidelines for new development as well as summarizes long-term recommendations for the area. While a wide range of comments was received by the Department during this phase of the study, and all comments have been reviewed and recorded, comments that were summarized in previous public comment summaries are not included in this document. It is important to note, however, that all comments submitted to the Department during each phase of the study have been considered for the final report.

I. Public Realm Improvements

Comments regarding the public realm focused on open space, sidewalk and street improvements, and the character of the area. Many comments agreed with the need for more active open space, but questioned how to implement active space in the area. Some comments asked for greater detail on the proposed urban plazas for the area, both to help better understand the proposed network of open spaces in the area, and also to better describe the type of materials (e.g., lighting, planting, and art) used for the plaza's.

There was strong and broad support for improving the pedestrian character of the area, although there was conflict between the desire for widened sidewalks on one hand and the perceived need to maintain space for vehicles on the other. Some comments expressed concern regarding the potential traffic impacts of the study's proposed street improvements.

Some comments noted that the study did not go far enough in integrating the area's historic districts as a defining character of the area. Comments requested that the study highlight the area's historic importance, such as by emphasizing the connection to the Jackson Square Historic District with the study's proposal to extend Jackson Street to The Embarcadero, and expanding the language that described the additional Planning Code requirements when proposing to develop in or near historic districts.

Comments included:

- Decrease the number of lanes on The Embarcadero, increase the frequency of the F-line, solve traffic, and make it a more attractive street for pedestrians.

- The Embarcadero needs more specifics on intersection design, traffic calming, and bicycle facility design.
- Undertake a traffic modeling effort prior to proposing changes to the circulation system.
- Prioritize improved pedestrian crossings that connect Washington Street to the Ferry Building and Pier 1 (Port of SF), Green Street to Piers 15/17 (Exploratorium), and Battery Street and Lombard Street to Pier 27 (Cruise Ship Terminal).
- Provide flexibility for sidewalks widths so that the development potential for smaller parcels is not compromised.
- The City should conduct a separate study for Broadway that includes streetscape improvements and traffic impacts.
- Consider converting Washington and Clay Streets to two-way streets east of Battery Street. If Washington remains a one-way street, the eastbound bike lane should be located on Clay Street, instead of Washington, to avoid one-way conflicts.
- Manage the potential traffic on Washington Street originating from the proposed 8 Washington project.

II. Urban Design Guidelines for New Development

Comments regarding design guidelines for new development focused on land use, views, and height. Comments referred to the existing mixed-use character of the area, including the media industry, and the existing dense housing stock. Some comments stated that the proposed land use for the area should complement the existing land uses in the area, including commercial and cultural institutions, as well as housing. Comments requested that the study include a demographic analysis and existing uses analysis because there was a fear that the urban design guidelines will determine the socioeconomic profile of future residents and undermine the economic profitability of existing businesses. Some discussed the limited number of uses permitted in the area due to the constraints of the Public Trust; indeed, opinion was divided over whether the Planning Department should recommend uses that are not currently allowed under the Public Trust.

Comments were received regarding views. Many thought that preserving views to Telegraph Hill was important; however, opinions on how to create these views were diverse. Some liked the 'episodic' views proposed in the draft study, others wanted open view corridors along the entire length of The Embarcadero. The opinion was expressed that preserving the views to and from Telegraph Hill should be the single most important criteria in evaluating the height and sculpting of any proposed development south of Broadway.

Comments on the Department's height proposal varied immensely, suggesting a poor chance for a broad community consensus. As with before, opinions ranged from maintaining the current parking lots in perpetuity to allowing a tower on the proposed 8 Washington site, and many points in between. Some argued the Department's height proposal for the 8 Washington site defined heights too rigidly. Others proposed eliminating height limits altogether and instead proposed evaluating height on a project-by-project basis, possibly using a bonus framework to allow for more bargaining over the potential public benefits that would be paid for by an individual development. There was broad disagreement over the most appropriate height for any non-tower building on the proposed 8 Washington Street site, although many suggested allowing for a transition to the Golden Gateway Commons to the north, which is between 55' and 60' in height. Many expressed support for the idea of a taller building (8-12 stories), and even a tower, along the Drumm Street portion of the site, so long as the building was reduced significantly in height along The Embarcadero.

Comments included:

- The area needs ground-floor uses that ‘spill over’ into the public realm.
- Some community members were unconvinced that the additional housing, new public open spaces and improved streetscapes constitute “public serving” uses.
- Amend the guideline to “enhance views from surrounding hills and public areas.”
- Consider providing rooftop guidelines, including for ‘living roofs’.
- There was disagreement over whether the sense of enclosure created by a building framing a street and/or open space contributed to the sense of place, and whether short buildings adjacent to large open spaces were appropriate.
- Consider roof top height exemptions when evaluating height.
- Consider a height bonus for SW lots 320-324, and 374 to provide more gracious ground floor space for uses that activate the pedestrian realm, as has been approved for mixed-use buildings in the Eastern Neighborhoods.

III. Long-Term Recommendations

Comments were received that discussed the need for the study to include parcel-specific development standards and a land use matrix, along with general urban design guidelines. Some comments requested a new and/or revised Plan for the area that would address the conflict between the proposed uses in the study and the public trust provisions and include a plan for land use, height and parking. Comments were also received regarding the implementation of many of the proposed public benefits for the area, and requested prioritizing some improvements over others.

Comments included:

- Incorporate tiers for decision making – e.g., is high density housing a priority over open space?
- Set a priority of the principles and order them with an agenda in mind
- Community facilities - how to pay for them? Could space in private development be used by the community?
- Can planning conduct a cost benefit analysis of height and public benefits?