
Date: April 8, 2020
To: Balboa Reservoir Citizens Advisory Committee
From: Michael Ahrens, Member
Subject: Balboa Reservoir Project Design Standards and Guidelines Comments

The following are comments on the draft Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG) for the Balboa Reservoir Project (Project) on behalf of the Westwood Park Association (Association).

DSG Chapter 3.2: Residential Uses.

Dwelling Unit Mix

DSG Section 3.2 provides some limited standards addressing dwelling unit density and unit mix. Standard S3.2.2 on page 35 states that the dwelling unit mix shall include a minimum of 25% two-bedroom units and 10% three-bedroom units, which is one of the optional unit mix requirements in the Planning Code. Because one of the stated purposes of the Project is to promote housing for families with children, we believe more of the units should be required to be larger three-bedroom units.

The “Data and Needs Analysis” in the Housing Element points out that the City lacks units with three or more bedrooms and that of the 363,660 total units in the City’s housing inventory over 53% were constructed prior to 1940. San Francisco’s housing units generally tend to be small, with approximately 72% of all units being two bedrooms or less. San Francisco is a city of renters who occupy 62% of housing units. Housing units added in the last 27 years represent approximately 12% of all units. The majority of the recently approved mixed used projects after the unit mix requirement was adopted in 2008, have been mainly two-bedroom units. In addition, renter households are more likely to be overcrowded than home-owning households due to high housing costs. Larger households of all races have difficulty securing housing with three or more bedrooms at any price, which is attributed to the City’s very limited stock of larger units. Additionally, if working from home becomes the norm due to the societal changes we live with currently, the need for larger three and more bedroom units will be in even greater demand.

Based on this, we suggest that Standard S3.2.2 be amended to provide that minimum of 30 to 35% of the units have three bedrooms or more, especially when the project is built on public land.

Affordable Housing

The DSG does not address the amount or location of the proposed affordable housing. We understand that fifty percent (50%) of the 1,100 housing units planned will be affordable units and that these units will be located in four 100% affordable multi-family buildings.

We believe that the DSG should address the location and mix of affordable units. The Association understands the reasoning behind the necessity for all City subsidized units for households with very low income (below 55% of AMI) to be in a single building for various reasons. However, the DSG should otherwise be consistent with the Planning Department's current implementation of Planning Code Section 415.6(f) that requires a private housing development to integrate affordable units with market rate units throughout every floor of a residential project.

Therefore, we suggest the DSG be revised to include the following two additional sections:

Residential Uses S3.2.3:

All affordable units except for those subsidized by the City shall be integrated with the market rate units, equally, in all residential buildings, Similar to other private development as stated in Planning Code section 415.6(f).

DSG 6.1 and 6.16 Open Space and San Ramon Way:

DSG Figure 6.1-1 on Pages refers to the “San Ramon Paseo” as part of the Project’s open space network, which is described in more detail in DSG 6.16 on pages 166-67 as follows:

San Ramon Paseo is a pedestrian and slow bike path only, connecting the Balboa Reservoir neighborhood open space network to San Ramon Way at the west. Pedestrian and bike amenities will be provided along the paseo, creating a lush garden-like passage for residents and community members.

The Association has no objection to using this area as open space, but does have concerns about the connection to the Westwood Park neighborhood via San Ramon Way. First, this would require use of property owned by the Association and for which neither the City nor the developer has the rights to currently use for the Project. The Association reserves all of its rights to prevent its property for any connection to San Ramon Way from the Project site, and continue to object to opening San Ramon Way.

The Association does not believe that connection to San Ramon Way is necessary to encourage the use of public transit as most residents will use BART or Muni Metro J, K & L lines and walk from the terminal to Ocean, Lee, or the Brighton Avenue paseo to their home, rather than Muni line #23 that stops near Monterey Boulevard and Miramar Avenue. Therefore, the most likely use of the pedestrian connection would be for those looking for parking in Westwood Park and then walking to the site. This should be discouraged, not encouraged.

Moreover, we are also concerned about encouraging the use of bicyclists into Westwood Park, as riders in this City ignore traffic laws and any restriction imposed on them. The same holds true for skateboard riders, scooters, etc. Who will enforce the "slow bicycle" standard in the DSG when those riders are coming to and from the Project site through Westwood Park?

Therefore, we have the following suggested amendments to the DSG, which would also promote a connection with the local neighborhood commercial district on Ocean Avenue.

S6.16.2 Pedestrian ~~and Slow Bike Shared~~ Path

A ~~minimum~~ maximum 10 ~~8~~ foot wide ~~shared~~ path shall be provided for pedestrian use only at San Ramon Paseo.

S.6.1.6.6 Pedestrian Safety

The design of the San Ramon Paseo shall consider the safety of pedestrians, especially children, when walking between Monterey Boulevard and beyond to Ocean Avenue.

DSG Section 7.2 Height and Height Exceptions

The height limits for the Project range from 2-3 stories on the western property line to 6 and 7 stories adjacent to the City College buildings, with a maximum allowed height of 78 feet. However, Standard S7.2.6 provides for exceptions for features such as solar energy collectors, utility sheds, projections to accommodate additional ceiling height of common amenity spaces located on the top floor, and non-occupied architectural features, including wind screens. Some of these exceptions effectively raise the height limit by 8 to 10 feet.

We suggest amendments to Standard S.7.2.6 to include the limitation from Planning Code Section 260, as follows

- The portion of Section 206(b)(1) that provides "[t]he sum of the horizontal areas of the exempted features shall not exceed 20% of the horizontal area of the roof above which they are located" .

- Section 206(b)(1)(B) for the height and area of the elevator shaft to the roof deck.
- Include the exemptions in Section 206(b)(2)(A) through 206(b)(2)(e) of the Planning Code.
- Amend Standard S7.2.6 allowance for common amenity space located at the top floor to have a floor to ceiling maximum height of 10 feet for apartment buildings only. This section shall not apply to the townhouse buildings in TH1 and TH2.

DSG Section 7.20 and 7.21 Private and Public Parking Garages.

Figure 7.20.1 of the DSG shows the off-street parking locations for both the public and private parking. Standard S.7.21.6 addresses the public parking that may be co-located within private parking garages. The current Project description states that the Project will provide up to 750 public parking spaces, but S.7.21.6 states that “the total number of spaces available for public parking and hours of public use will be limited as set forth in the Development Agreement.” The Development Agreement “draft key terms” document provided for the April 9 Planning Commission hearing does not address parking other than stating approximately 220 spaces will be provided for to accommodate City College and the general public. Based on this proposed standard and the other information provided, we have the following questions and comments:

- How many total public and private off-street parking spaces are expected to be co-located within the same garage?
- Where and how many spaces will be designated for public parking and for City College students and staff?
- Will the CCSF parking be specifically designated or shared with other public parking and the residential off-street parking spaces?
- Many City College classes are in the evening that do not end until almost 10 pm. The DSG should provide more operational details to accommodate this rather than just refer to the Development Agreement for limits on hours of public use.

DSG Section 7.22 On-Site Bicycle Parking

The DSG provides that Class II bicycle parking spaces for visitors shall be located near all main pedestrian entries in accordance with the definitions and standards set forth in Planning Code Section 155.1 (See Figure 5.3-3, p. 63 and Standard S7.22.2 on p. 220.)

S7.22.3 does not provide specific detailed guidelines but merely refers to number of spaces required by the Planning Code. Will the North, East, South and West Streets be part of the City's' public streets that are maintained by the City or private streets to be maintained by the Owners of the buildings? Will SFMTA determine the locations of the Class II parking spaces, if not who will be?

S7.22.3 should provide the number of bicycle parking spaces, their locations, as well as a higher number of Class II bicycle parking spaces than the Planning Code requires since using bicycles as a preferred mode of transportation as stated in Objective 3, Policy 2.4.2 of the Area Plan.

DSG Section 7.36 Dwelling Unit Exposure and Rear Yards for Townhouse Units.

Standard S7.36.1 on p. 235 states that all townhouse units shall face onto a street or open space that meets one of the following definitions:

- A public street, private street, private drive or pedestrian way at least 20 feet in width, or
- An open area, an inner court or a space between buildings which is unobstructed (except for obstructions permitted in the Planning Code Section 136) and is no less than 20 feet in every horizontal direction.

How do all the townhouses meet this requirement if the minimum set back of the townhouses facing the western boundary abutting Plymouth Avenue is only 12 feet?

DSG Section 7.9 and 7.37 Open Space

We suggest a new bullet point for Standard S7.9.1 on page 187 requiring any roof deck on apartment buildings A through G to be setback 10' from the facades fronting on East, South, West and North Streets, or a SFPUC public open space.

For the townhouses, Standard S7.37.1 should include a bullet point that references the Department and Planning Commission requirements and guidelines related to setbacks for roof decks.

Questions and concerns re the Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG)

Amy O'Hair, Sunnyside SNA representative, BRCAC

Apr 8 2020

Page vi: This page notes: *"In the event provisions in this DSG directly conflict with those in the Planning Code, this DSG will control so long as the DSG remains consistent with the SUD."* Why would the design and infrastructure of the BP project ever conflict with San Francisco Planning Code? I would like an explanation as to why this proviso was included, and what conflicts might arise.

Page 11: There is an incomplete acknowledgement of the many actual uses of the Balboa Reservoir in its current state, as ad hoc open space, The scrappy growth and two large trees are home to a great many small animals and birds. Hawks hunt here daily. In addition, of course, to its use as City College parking, the open space is home to a weekend motorcycle school, frequent driving practice and instructions by family members, and bicycle-riding lessons for kids--in addition to being unmatched dog-walking territory used by dog lovers from all surrounding neighborhoods.

These uses, requiring large swaths of open land, will be lost, although that trade-off in order to build housing is one the City and many citizens want to see. I am not suggesting the project not go ahead as planned, but I would request the DSG document present an honest picture of the present uses of the reservoir lot which are **not** being replaced by the planned project.

Page 13: I note that most of drawings that are shown on pages 13-15 as examples do not display the types of mass reduction and roof line variations that are specified for the project on pages 7-9.

Page 14: As a historian of the neighborhood, I'd like to see the first six sets of dates on this timeline corrected. References are available on [my history page for the Reservoir](#).

- **1894: Sutro sells land for reservoir to Spring Valley Water Company.**
- **1909-1929: Development of streetcar line, Westwood Park and Sunnyside neighborhoods.**
- **1945-1956: WWII use by Navy and temporary campus use by City College.** [*campus, not housing*]
- **1958: Reservoir constructed, but not finished or filled.**
- **1964-1973: I-280 Freeway constructed and Balboa Park BART Station built.**
- **1991: Half of original reservoir given to City College.** [*official east/west realignment did not take place till 2012*]

Page 17: Are these fog-proof materials? Anyone living in the areas surrounding the BP site knows what a persistent foe surface molds are on the outside of our houses. The lessons from the disastrous green-roofed buildings recently pulled down on the NW corner of the City College Ocean Campus show what the fog and damp in this area can do to materials that are not chosen with those conditions in mind.

So I would like to make sure that the building cladding materials are vetted for their abilities to withstand years of our notoriously fog-sodden weather.