



Responses to Public Comment and Questions Regarding Draft Urban Design Parameters
Balboa Reservoir Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
November 5, 2015

The following matrix contains City staff responses to questions regarding the draft Urban Design and Neighborhood Character parameters. Public comment was raised during 11/5/2015 CAC meeting and in written form before or after the meeting. The original draft parameters and latest revisions can be found at sf-planning.org/brcac.

Principle #1: Connect and relate to the surrounding fabric of streets, blocks and open spaces.

	Question/Comment	City Response
1	Create inviting paths of travel to our modes of transit through more pedestrian-level lighting and way-finding directly on pathways.	Concurs with City’s intent in urban design and transportation parameters. Revising Parameter 1A to include “inviting.”
2	Maintain small-level streets/blocks in Westwood park and other areas.	The proposed street types and Better Streets Plan ensure human-scale street and block design. Parameter 1B provides guideline for smaller blocks. Street designs on the Balboa Reservoir site will not change small-level street designs or blocks in other areas.
3	Create more connections to other neighborhoods.	This is core tenet to the principles and parameters. Parameter 1A emphasizes the need to respect and connect to other neighborhoods. Transportation parameter 1D also requires RFP respondents to “maximize safe pedestrian connections” into the site.
4	Create walkways or bikeways on San Ramon Way, but do not open up to vehicular traffic.	See comments above. Transportation 1C requires respondents to limit vehicle traffic into adjacent neighborhoods.
5	Please provide examples of permeability. One of the positive characteristics of the Westwood Park neighborhood is that there are very few ‘through streets’ from WP into other neighborhoods. This provides a sense of a close-knit neighborhood within an urban setting. [Parameter 1.a.]	By the same token, one of the positive characteristics of Westwood Park, Sunnyside and Ingleside neighborhoods is that the streets do connect, providing redundancy and options for local connections, including those walking, biking or driving home. These neighborhoods, as with most in San Francisco, provide the “permeability” the parameters allude to. The nature of the site provides opportunities for close-knit, walkable neighborhood streets, similar to WP and Sunnyside, without similar opportunities for through streets like Phelan, Miramar or Ocean.
6	Mid-block alleys lead to crime, violence, and drug abuse.	The history of poorly lit and empty streets harboring illicit activity is one reason the Better Streets Plan and

		new street designs in San Francisco emphasize ground floor activation, transparency, quality design, lighting and walkability. All streets must comply with requirements and standards which help increase “eyes on the street,” pedestrian connections, and positive activity between buildings. Several examples of recent alleys illustrate that crime is not a foregone conclusion on our streets, including developments Stevenson Alley in SOMA, Hickory Street in Hayes Valley, and re-designs of Jack Kerouac alley, Linden Alley and others.
7	Consider street plans other than grids and alleyways.	Noted. The RFP will not include requirements for street layout (e.g. grids).
8	Pay attention/maintain to view-corridors; align streets to view corridors.	Noted. See Urban Design parameters 2d and 2e, as well as Public Realm parameter 1h.

Principle #2: Harmonize the relationships between existing buildings, streets and open spaces.

	Question/Comment	City Response
9	Conduct a wind study, shadow impact study regarding height and footprint.	If it is determined that wind or shadow studies are required, they will be conducted during environmental review, and site designs will anticipate the need to minimize these impacts.
10	Maintain 25-65 feet height allowance, and only allow 85 feet if there is a profound package of community benefits and does not cast too much shadow, create wind tunnels, or is not maintaining neighborhood character. [Parameter 2.d.]	See previous comment. The community benefits package will be modified to “a substantial package of community benefits.”
11	Consider the site in terms of a 360 degree view as opposed to creating a well-designed façade with poorly designed side and rear façades.	Parameter 2b has been amended to include “on all building facades”
12	Desire for houses/buildings to face towards open spaces/social areas, creating a transition from public to private space.	Noted and confirmed in Public Realm Parameters 2(b) and 2(c)
13	Desire for a wide variety of	Noted and confirmed in Urban Design Parameters 1(a)

	heights, bulks, and scales, with open space to break it up.	and 1(b)
14	Desire for a wide variety of architecture and materials, no loft-style housing.	Noted and confirmed in Urban Design Parameter 2(b)
15	Tall buildings cast shadows, but work well if placed properly on corners.	Noted and urban design parameters, precedents and policy concur.
16	Design open space to buffer site architecture with surrounding neighborhoods	Noted. Confirmed in Public Realm parameters 1(e) and 1(f)
17	“Buildings on the west side of site should generally be of lower height than the east...” [Parameter 2.c.]	Parameter has been revised to include suggested change.
18	<p>“Building heights should fall within a range of 25’ to 65’ <u>40’</u> feet, allowing for heights of up to 85’ <u>65’</u> in the eastern portion of the site where, due to economic efficiencies...” [Parameter 2.d]</p>	<p>The RFP parameters establish community priorities without limiting design solutions to address them – many of which we may not be able to foresee before an architect or developer is at the table. Community design and heights will continue to be addressed in future public workshops when there are architects and a developer at the table.</p> <p>In particular, urban design parameters are intended to create a cohesive and well-designed neighborhood that provides open space; provides affordable housing; allows flexibility for market-rate units which enable community benefits like moderate income units, open spaces, and sustainability; and respects the urban context on all sides of the property.</p> <p>In addition, the 85 foot maximum would only be considered with a substantial <i>additional</i> community benefit – such as more open space, more community facilities, or other priorities the community has identified. As one of the public commenters noted, tall buildings can work well to mark a corner, provide a focal point and provide variation in the site. The only possibility for an 85’ architectural element, tower or other identifying feature is if, after review with community members and the CAC, the additional community benefits proposed by a developer, above and beyond the other requirements, justify the height increase.</p>

<p>19</p>	<p>Transition from bungalow-style homes in Westwood Park to taller buildings on eastern section of site.</p>	<p>Noted. Principles 1, 2 and 3 establish the importance of site context, including surrounding character. The parameters specifically require building heights to taper, so that the west side nearest to Westwood Park is lowest and respects neighbors. In addition, massing, architectural design, landscape and open space can all support this transition. The parameters, however, do not seek to commit the architectural style or design ideas of the proposing developers and designers. However, These public comments will be made available to the proposing developers. And the public will have further opportunities to provide design input when architects are at the table.</p>
<p>20</p>	<p>Create humanity and texture in design; no industrial design.</p>	<p>Parameter 2b ensures that designs are varied and interesting. The City’s Residential Design Guidelines also guide the developer in ensuring the designs fit into the context of the neighborhood.</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>Consider new design concepts regarding open space, energy creation, structural technology, and height.</p>	<p>New, innovative design concepts are welcome. Innovations which best address the development parameters will perform the best in the RFP process. Community members can further explore innovative design concepts when the developer is selected and community design meetings are held. See also Public Realm and Sustainability parameters.</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>Please describe for the community how an 85 foot maximum was derived given the significant community input that resulted in the 40 foot height restriction within the 2009 plan. The community concern is that desired open space will be negotiated for increased height and density. [Parameter 2.d.]</p>	<p>The Balboa Park Station Area plan focused most rezoning on Ocean Avenue, including the rezoning of use and height for Ocean Ave frontage from NC to NCT. The process did not address rezoning the reservoir, which remained as a “P” public zone and at 40’ height, as in prior years. Now, the City is hosting the community process to consider the reservoir, in a similar way to the NCT during the BP Area Plan process.</p> <p>Consistent with the Balboa Park Area Plan notes, open space and affordable housing remain the highest priorities for the site. “Open space” minimum requirements in the Public Realm parameters are non-negotiable, regardless of proposed building heights. In addition, the 85 foot maximum would only be considered with a substantial <i>additional</i> community benefit – such as more open space, more community facilities, or other priorities the community has identified. As one of the public commenters noted, tall buildings can work well to mark a corner, provide a focal point and provide variation in the site. The only possibility for an 85’ architectural element, tower or other identifying feature</p>

		is if, after review with community members and the CAC, the additional community benefits proposed by a developer, above and beyond the other requirements, justify the height increase.
23	Current zoning for PUC lot is 40 ft, 65 ft for CCSF (MUB) lot. Principle 2d's proposal of 85 ft. would require zoning increase of 45 ft in PUC lot. The proposed 85 ft. is 20 ft. more than what CCSF lot (MUB) allows. This needs thorough open discussion and vetting with community. [Parameter 2.d.]	The parameters for the RFP are just the beginning of the conversation. The CAC and the community will be involved extensively in the site design when a developer and architect are chosen.
24	“Site and design buildings to enhance public spaces, while minimizing maintaining their impact on existing residential privacy and access to light.” [Parameter 2(e)]	Privacy and access to light of existing and future residents is important for the success of the development. When the developer partner is on-board, design issues and requirements will be thoroughly discussed with the community. The developer will have to demonstrate how the design meets these requirements and community priorities.
25	Although the presentation featured some slides showing buildings of different heights at other locations, it did not address the actual current zoning and proposed variances that Staff is, or might be advocating. [Parameter 2.d.]	As with other developments of this type or size, to ultimately be approved by numerous commissions and the Board of Supervisors, current zoning would have to be revisited anyway. Updating the zoning to create new opportunities for open space, affordable housing, and other development is commonplace and necessary. This process will help inform the best zoning and legislative changes to accommodate these opportunities.

Principle #3: Design with and complement the site’s natural context.

	Question/Comment	City Response
26	Consider having trees to address wind tunnel problem. [Parameter 3.a.]	Added the following language to Parameter 3a: Utilize trees to reduce impacts of wind.
27	Address permeability and run-off management.	Existing stormwater controls require site to reduce run-off from site. See Sustainability parameters for additional requirements and potential innovations.

Principle #4: Express neighborhood character, celebrate cultural history and build on neighborhood activities.

	Question/Comment	City Response
29	Any project that follows the current architectural design trend, boxy glass fronts and loft styles, in downtown and some of the adjacent neighborhoods would evoke a significantly negative response from existing residents in Westwood Park.	Noted. While these principles do not prescribe design trends, community input into design is desired at future community design workshops.
30	Create ways to connect students in these spaces.	Noted. See Urban Design Parameter 4(c), Public Realm Principle 2, Parameter 6(a), and City College Principles 1-4.
31	Create a seamless approach from and connection to CCSF/Unity Plaza.	Noted. See parameters in previous response as well as Public Realm Principle 1 and Parameter 1(d)
32	Include parking as a current use. [Parameter 4.a.]	This principle is intended to capture the character and cultural elements community members seek to build on. In this regard, “parking” has not been identified as an element of local character or cultural history. However, as a use, parking and the competing needs of CCSF are addressed in the transportation and CCSF principles. In addition, more precise identification of challenges and solutions to current parking and traffic needs will be addressed comprehensively in a neighborhood Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study.
33	No commercial space to compete with Ocean Avenue.	There are currently no requirements for commercial space. In addition, City College parameter 1(c) encourages uses which support City College affiliates and Public Benefit Parameter 2(b) calls for complementing existing retail.
34	What type of commercial establishments can be expected?	There are currently no requirements for commercial space. If any commercial space is proposed, City College parameter 1(c) encourages uses which support City College affiliates and Public Benefit Parameter 2(b) calls for complementing existing retail.
35	Buildings need to be presented in context with the neighborhood.	Noted. Future community design workshops will do so.
36	Ensure site design is compatible with Westwood Park, as a	Noted. See Parameters 1(a), 2(a) and 4 (c)

	residential character district, and its design guidelines, along with surrounding neighborhoods.	
37	Avalon development is on Ocean Avenue and is not a part of the neighborhood but rather the commercial corridor.	The parameters have been written to respect and consider site context on all sides of the site. Designing the entire site without consideration for any one side would be to the detriment of stated goals, connecting neighborhoods, reflecting City College character, and serving the diverse needs of all users. The parameters seek to balance all such competing needs, uses and context.
38	How do you densify neighborhoods without ruining the neighborhood character?	There are many elements of character that need to be considered, including the use, social context, and needs of diverse users on the site and its environs. In the case of Balboa Reservoir, development is possible while respecting local character by pedestrian connections [Parameter 1(a)]; by respecting neighborhood scale [Parameters 2(a) and 2(c)]; by fitting in with local landscape [Parameter 3(b)]; and by celebrating what the community cherishes [(Parameters 4a, b and c)]. Community members should continue to provide character elements most important to them in future community design workshops.
39	“Design the site and public realm to respect and reflect <u>Westwood Park</u> community heritage, the City College campus, and the role of Ocean and Phelan as a “gateway” to the neighborhood.” [Parameter 4.c.]	The parameters are written to include all neighboring communities.
40	Because of the broad importance of CCSF to the community, CCSF and other schools' interests should be made primary in any planning for housing and other goals.	Noted. See City College parameters.

Additional Comments

	Question/Comment	City Response
41	Consider using solar power options in designing green buildings.	Noted. See Sustainability parameters.
42	Safe Garden Paths, leverage the community's expertise especially connecting with and integrating CCSF's horticultural department.	Noted. See Public Realm and City College parameters. If the horticultural department or other groups are interested in partnering, they are encouraged to join a potential developer team or make their interest known to the City. Developer proposals with the best community components will perform better in that regard in the selection process.
43	Coordinate with Ocean Avenue Corridor design.	Parameter 4(c) notes the desire to reflect Ocean Avenue in the site design.
44	How granular can these principles be?	The draft principles are currently as detailed as they will get. Further comments at this level of detail are welcome. More granular, design comments will have a much stronger impact at future design workshops with architects at the table.
45	How does the Urban Design/Neighborhood Character presentation and its elements get translated into a site-plan?	Urban Design principles, as well as all of the other sections of the RFP, guide the developer responses or proposals in the RFP process. Those proposals which best fulfill the principles and aspirations for the site will perform the best. The selected proposal then can serve as a <i>start</i> or basis for future design conversation with the community. Only after further community design meetings and CAC meetings will a site plan emerge.
46	Desire for a pre-site plan for CAC and community based on draft parameters to establish more visual context than presentation's photos and narrative.	When the developer partner is on-board, design issues and requirements will be thoroughly discussed with the community. The developer will have to demonstrate how the design meets these requirements and community priorities.
47	Surrounding neighborhoods look inward.	Noted.
48	Create connections to Plymouth for emergency vehicles.	Noted. This is consistent with principles and parameters seeking to maximize pedestrian connections.
49	No trees on sidewalks less than 65 inches.	Street designs will adhere to the recommendations in the Better Streets Plan, which includes 10-foot sidewalks.

50	See development near Forest Hill station as example of appropriate design and height for the neighborhood	Noted.
51	Westwood Park was designed with curved streets to mitigate wind impact.	Noted.
52	Will the City donate the land to the developer to reduce developer costs to allow for lower building heights and more open space?	The owner of the land is SFPUC, which has fiduciary obligations to all of its San Francisco ratepayers. Ultimately, the beneficiaries of any proceeds from the sale are San Francisco ratepayers. In particular, the SFPUC is required to fulfill its bond obligations, which are what provide financing for San Francisco utilities, such as neighborhood stormsewer replacement. These legal and financial obligations to SF residents and business owners do not leave the option of donating land to a developer. The best way to ensure community benefits, such as more open space, is to establish minimum benefits and requirements in this process, while allowing for creative solutions to meet them.
53	Need to address long-term maintenance and of green space and its funding source.	Noted. Any future development agreement will include maintenance plans and budgets.
54	The site as it is provides a buffer from the intensity of other areas.	Noted. See public realm principles regarding open space, buffer and linear parks.
55	Consider SF General Plan in development preservation of scale, character design, and use.	Noted. The General Plan, the Balboa Park Station Area Plan, Proposition K (2014), transportation and other policies all guide and inform the parameters in this RFP.
56	Indicate and provide examples of current density guidelines compared to proportional density guidelines under the new affordable housing bonus plan. Site and design bonus plan to enhance public spaces while maintaining existing residential privacy and access to light.	The affordable housing bonus plan, still in review, is best summarized on SF Planning's website. (Go to http://www.sf-planning.org and search "AHBP".) It does not apply to the site. The intent of community design and development agreement processes (after a developer partner is selected) is to identify designs and levels of affordability that are supported by community members, the developer and the City, obviating the need for future bonuses. Ultimately, designs will go through several community design workshops and opportunity for further input. The process is designed to improve on the original proposal's fulfillment of development principles and parameters, such as Parameter 2(e), which minimizes impacts on privacy and light.

57	Density creates traffic which damages neighborhood character.	Noted. Parking and traffic will be further addressed in the transportation parameters..
58	Sufficient parking as a parameter is needed so as not to contribute to illegal parking (blocked driveways) in Sunnyside.	Noted. Parking and traffic will be further addressed in the transportation parameters. Current mechanisms also exist for enforcing illegal parking in existing neighborhoods. Ultimately, the Balboa Reservoir site will not change policies in surrounding neighborhoods. But these policies will be part of the discussion in the 2016 Transportation Demand Management project for the Balboa Area.