

Benicia Urban Waterfront Enhancement & Master Plan
Community Advisory Committee #2
July 25th, 2013
Draft Meeting Summary

Present

Community Advisory Committee (CAC):

Bonnie Silveria - Benicia Main Street
Kimberly Funk - Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission
Larry Lamoreux - Community Sustainability Commission
Sue Wickham - California Native Plant Society
Nancy Lund - Solano Transportation Authority's Bicycle Advisory Committee
Jean-Claude Merciere- Benicia Yacht Club
Susan Cohen Grossman –Planning Commission
Jon Van Landschoot – Historic Preservation Review Commission

City Staff:

Rick Knight, Parks Superintendent
Michael Dotson, Parks & Community Services Director
Diane Smikahl, Library Director
Mario Guiliani, Economic Development Manager
Vic Randall, Management Analyst
Debra Bray, Administrative Clerk

The Planning Center/DC&E:

David Early, Principal
Tyler Van Pelt, Landscape Designer

Excused:

Elaine Eisner, Arts and Culture Commission
Ellen Kolowich, Economic Development Board
Pete Turner, Solano Transportation Authority's Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Amy Million, Principal Planner

Introductions

David Early reviewed the agenda and began introductions.

Review Project Goals

Vic Randall reviewed the project goals as defined in the Coastal Conservancy grant agreement.

David Early explained that the goal for this meeting would be to verify that all of the alternatives have the proper scope in them and that they include all of the issues that we want considered as we analyze the alternatives. We will then have four review meetings beginning in September at which we will evaluate and select among the alternatives.

Review Existing Conditions Analysis

David Early provided a brief overview of the Existing Conditions Analysis.

There was discussion regarding the Depot CAD site plan, which is publicly available and can be printed upon request.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked about the Depot parking lot being within or outside the current site boundaries. Vic Randall stated that the Depot site plan does extend beyond the Depot parcel line into the project area.

There was discussion regarding the tidal marshland at the eastern end of the site near the harbor. David Early responded that we are very aware of BCDC concerns and will involve them in the plan process.

Review CAC Meeting # 1 Summary

David Early provided a brief overview of the April 18 meeting.

HR Autz commented on the need for new permanent restrooms in the alternatives as well as the need to consider where temporary restrooms would be located during public events at the site.

Carolyn Plath commented on the limited presentation of the entrance plaza in the three site alternatives, as discussed at the community workshop. Mr. Early stated that the discussion regarding an entry plaza at 1st and B Streets was meant to be reflected in the site alternatives.

The summary of the April 18th Community Advisory Committee meeting was accepted as is.

Review of Community Workshop Summary

David Early reviewed the June 5th Community Workshop Summary, which the CAC accepted as presented.

Presentation of Draft Site Alternatives

David Early presented the three draft site alternatives. Mr. Early directed to the CAC to focus their consideration on ensuring that the alternatives include the range of possibilities they would like to see presented and considered.

Mr. Early gave a brief introduction to the alternatives:

Alternative A: Central Green

Alternative B: Linear Green

Alternative C: Linear Green with Extensive Boardwalks

This alternative is identical to Alternative B, but includes boardwalks which Mr. Early stated would be very difficult to permit.

Mr. Early directed the CAC to focus on ensuring that the alternative concepts cover the range of alternatives that they would like to see evaluated in the next phase of the plan process, rather than trying to evaluate the current drafts of the alternatives today.

Discussion

Committee Members:

Jean-Claude Merciere commented about the benefit of keeping people on 1st Street to improve commerce. He also asked whether we have been in contact with agencies regarding the boat launch area. Mr. Early explained that we have talked to some agencies and that there are pros and cons to both boat launch locations such as swift currents and larger boats. Mr. Merciere stated his opinion that currents out in the main channel are not that swift and could be accessed.

Mr. Merciere asked about the possibility of adding green space to Alternatives B and C in lieu of new wetland area. Mr. Early explained that it would be necessary to find a location off-site in which to construct new wetlands in order for that particular alternative to be implemented.

Larry Lamoreux asked for information regarding the bioswale and rain gardens. He also specified that we needed to better show where there would be vehicular access to the green for special events.

Bonnie Silveria stated that vehicular access is a must and needs to be clearly specified in the site plan. Ms. Silveria also expressed her view that the monumental stairs in Alternative A are in a very windy location and that the wind will need to be considered.

Ms. Silveria stated that the parking area behind the Depot in Alternative B won't work because that is a staging area for events. The building is used as wind protection.

Kimberly Funk asked for clarification about the 'Art Walk' concept.

Susan Cohen-Grossman asked how we would showcase the history of the area. Ms. Grossman also requested clearer labeling of the Bay Trail on the site plans.

Ms. Silveria noted that the Bay Trail alignment decided upon in the 1990's ran along the edge of the green space and wetland area. Mr. Early suggested we might use the third alternative to show the Bay Trail along the edge of the marsh.

Nancy Lund suggested siting the Art Walk in a different location.

Mr. Lamoreux asked about possibly siting the non-motorized boat launch in a location outside of the project area. Mr. Early indicated it would be appropriate to say that there should not be a boat launch within the project area, but that we would not be able to define another site outside of the project area in this process.

Mr. Merciere asked about boat launch affordability and whether or not we could put in two boat launches. He also asked about whether we could clear rocks and create a pathway that will lead down into the water in the B Street launch.

Mr. Merciere asked about benches facing the bridge but not in the path of prevailing winds. He suggested adding benches on the slope down from 1st Street.

Public

Some of the public comments involved:

Josh Russell expressed his support for expanding the green to the west, and discussed the potential for Benicia to become a kite boarding mecca.

Carolyn Plath expressed an interest in enhancing the 1st Street Promenade. She would like to see expanded seating along 1st Street and B Street, extending into the entry plaza. Low level rise, bench, or other seating would be very beneficial.

Staggered seating in the entrance plaza leading out to the expanded green.

Promenade effect could be completed down 1st Street, but possibly without the use of palm trees.

Monumental steps may not be enough seating for large events.

There was a question about funding and where money would come from to implement the plan. A number of prospective funding sources for implementation have been identified and will be pursued when the plan is completed.

The public art element could be incorporated throughout the entire site design such as within the plaza entrance, walkways, signage and boardwalk.

Is there another place to put the wetlands needed to mitigate for wetland conversion shown in Alternatives B and C? Mitigation for wetland conversion is typically required at a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio.

HR Autz likes the idea of a train walk, as presented in Alternative C, as the main focal point of the site.

Josh Russell suggested expanding the beach. He also questioned whether we could incorporate a small skate park for teens that could also function as something else during events such as seating or a stage?

Will the plans accommodate wheelchair accessibility and ADA compliance?

Karen Burns suggested it would be helpful to see a perspective drawing of the prospective plaza entry as a way to better communicate how we would envision the space. Ms. Burns does not want views of waterway and hills impeded.

Final Comments from Community Advisory Committee Members

Ms. Grossman recommended improving the flow of the pathway. Ms. Grossman would also like seating to be designed and sited with wind in mind.

Ms. Lund read from the 2004 Waterfront Park Initiative, noting that the Initiative prohibits recreational uses such as a skate park.

Ms. Silveria noted that the east side of 1st Street does not currently have palm trees and widened sidewalks only because there was not sufficient funding available to implement the streetscape on both sides of the street at that time.

Ms. Silveria stated that the restroom at the Depot is not intended for broad public use. Mike Dotson concurred that this should not be included in the plans as a new park restroom.

Ms. Silveria stated that the parking areas in Alternatives B and C should match the 2009 Depot site plans.

Mr. Lamoreux stated that accessibility should be prioritized.

Jon Van Landschoot recommended including artistic wind breaks on the west edge of the site, referencing the California Shakespeare Theater in Orinda as a model.

Ms. Funk asked whether the 2009 Depot Site Plan also included buildings in addition to the plaza/parking area. The site plan primarily consists of the plaza/parking area, though the plans do also call for an accessible ramp and small interior restroom.

Mr. Merciere commented that a non-motorized boat launch at the end of 1st Street and focusing amenities on the west edge of the park would increase commerce on 1st street.

Ms. Silveria discussed the positive energy that the recent increase in kiteboarders and paddleboarders has brought to lower 1st Street. She also added that it would be good to improve access to the water to increase safety.

Ms. Grossman noted that the site alternatives do not show how we will accommodate rising sea level

Next Steps

David Early explained the next steps in the plan process.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35p.m.