

AGENDA ITEM
CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE - NOVEMBER 19, 2013
BUSINESS ITEMS

DATE : November 8, 2013

TO : City Manager

FROM : Parks and Community Services Director

SUBJECT : **URBAN WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENT AND MASTER PLAN DRAFT
PREFERRED SITE ALTERNATIVE**

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution approving the Draft Preferred Alternative and directing staff to proceed with development of the Draft Master Plan and concurrent Environmental Review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Following public input at two Community Advisory Committee meetings and one Community Workshop that engaged over 100 members of the public and the Community Advisory Committee, the project consultant team drafted three site alternatives for review at a series of four Review Meetings designed to progressively refine the draft site alternatives and identify a preferred site concept. The first three Review Meetings consisted of the second Community Workshop, held on September 18, the third Community Advisory Committee meeting, held on September 26, and a Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission meeting held on October 9. The input received at these meetings has shaped the draft Preferred Alternative that Council is being asked to review. The cumulative feedback of the four Review Meetings and City Council direction will guide development of the Draft Master Plan, which is scheduled to be completed over a four month period.

BUDGET INFORMATION:

The project is being completed at a cost of \$160,000. The Coastal Conservancy is providing \$140,000 while the City of Benicia is providing \$20,000 cash, and staff time.

GENERAL PLAN:

Relevant General Plan Goals and Policy:

- Goal 2.12: Strengthen the Downtown as the City's central commercial zone
 - Policy 2.12.4: Create a social, recreational, and economic anchor at the waterfront end of First Street by establishing a waterfront park

which provides a site for community festivals, preserves open space, and allows commercial and civic uses at the Depot site.

- Goal 3.13: Improve urban design qualities of the waterfront and public access to the shoreline

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Relevant Strategic Issues and Strategies and Actions:

- Strategic Issue 3: Strengthening Economic and Fiscal Conditions
 - Strategy 1: Implement Economic Development Strategy
 - Action 1(e): Complete master plan for Downtown Waterfront Park
- Strategic Issue 5: Maintain and Enhance a High Quality of Life
 - Strategy 2: Implement the Downtown Master Plan
 - Action 2(a): Pursue outside funds for Downtown improvements

PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN:

Relevant Master Plan Goal and Objective:

- Goal 2: Provide a range of trail opportunities with a variety of settings in a comprehensive, City-wide trail network.
 - Objective 2.2: Seek continuous public access along the waterfront

BACKGROUND:

In June of 1977, the City received approval from BCDC to proceed with a number of projects in the Waterfront Area between the Fifth Street and First Street peninsulas, including construction of a marina, riprap, fishing pier, public boardwalks, tidal marsh, commercial and residential uses, public walkways and bikeways, parking areas, and overlooks. The permit has been amended thirty-four times since it was issued in 1977. Many of the projects were subsequently completed, including marsh restoration in the UWEMP project area.

The 1991 Benicia Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan sought to establish coordinated involvement between the City, the State, and the private sector in order to actively pursue more comprehensive use of Benicia's underutilized Waterfront. The Plan actively sought to preserve open space and important historical characteristics of the site, increase access to the Waterfront, and create opportunities for new activities and commerce. A specific implementation program was included to ensure that the goals of improved access and Waterfront utilization were achieved without compromising any of the site's vital existing views and environmental resources. The public space component was to include a major open space system "with continuous Waterfront pedestrian access linking large areas of passive and active recreation." The Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan included an array of projects

to be completed in phases. As a result of this Plan, the First Street Promenade project was designed and constructed.

The City Council adopted the Waterfront Park Initiative (Measure C) in November 2004. The purpose of the Initiative was to establish a waterfront park on the city-owned land south of B Street, between First Street and the Harbormaster's Office, and extending to the water's edge, but excluding the Southern Pacific Depot site, including property immediately north and south of the building totaling about one acre (see map in Measure C attachment). The Initiative changed the land use designation of this area from Waterfront Commercial/Downtown Commercial to Open Space and amended the General Plan to include Waterfront Park, with the following definition:

A waterfront park serves the entire community and accommodates activities appropriate to the characteristics of the site such as low impact recreational activities, community events and festivals, and enjoyment of the surrounding natural environment. The waterfront park south of B Street may not include any permanent sports fields, courts, or equipment. Nor may it include any permanent buildings, except for a public restroom and similar amenities. Walkways, benches, drinking fountains, and trash receptacles are permitted. The waterfront park south of B Street will preserve the marshlands within its boundaries, thereby protecting the wildlife that rely on this ecologically sensitive habitat.

Measure C had the impact of placing limits on development of the site that in effect negated some previous planning for the area (e.g., 1991 Waterfront Restoration Plan and 1997 Mayor's Task Force Report). A group of citizens formed the Waterfront Park Committee in 2008 in an effort to develop a conceptual plan for the waterfront that expanded on the vision for the area contained in the 1997 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan within the context created by the 2004 adoption of the Waterfront Park Initiative. The group became a subcommittee of the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission in March 2009.

City staff submitted a grant application to the Coastal Conservancy in October 2009 for funding to build on the subcommittee vision by producing a site master plan with significant public input. The Coastal Conservancy approved a grant award of up to \$140,000 to fund the development of a site master plan in September 2011.

At Council direction, staff issued a Request for Proposals in May 2012 for development of the Benicia Urban Waterfront Enhancement and Master Plan, which would include estimates of implementation costs, a schedule for construction phasing, an adaptive management plan for sea-level rise and

completion of environmental review. The Plan will provide enough detail to guide the development of construction documents, which will be the subject of a subsequent contract.

On October 16, 2012, Council approved a contract with The Planning Center/DC&E, the lead on an interdisciplinary consultant team that was deemed to have the best mix of technical abilities and skills required to lead the project. The Planning Center/DC&E provides services in landscape architecture, urban design, environmental review, comprehensive planning, regional planning, and Geographic Information Systems. The team also includes TranSystems Corporation (civil and marine engineering), Balance Hydrologics (hydrology, wetland restoration, and sea level rise adaptation), and Environmental Collaborative (biological assessments, regulatory permitting requirements, and resource management planning).

Council directed staff to establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) with one representative each from Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Commission, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Review Commission, Arts and Culture Commission, Economic Development Board and Community Sustainability Commission, appointed by the respective boards and commissions. Council also directed that the CAC include one member of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), Main Street and the Benicia Yacht Club, and each Benicia member of the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC).

In addition to conducting two general community workshops, the alternatives development and analysis process has included three CAC meetings at which the CAC has been asked to assist the consultant team and staff in conducting the alternatives analysis and developing the Alternative Concept Plans. The CAC will also be asked to review the draft Master Plan.

PLANNING PROCESS TO DATE:

The Planning Center/DC&E team began working with City staff on the Urban Waterfront Enhancement and Master Plan (UWEMP) project in November, 2012. The major steps taken thus far include:

Baseline Reconnaissance/Existing Conditions Analysis

In coordination with staff, the consultant team completed an Existing Conditions Analysis in May that documents site history and previous site plans, site use and design analysis, biological and hydrologic assessments, and preliminary wetland and sea level rise assessments.

Alternatives Development and Analysis

The public process has included consideration of alternatives for:

- The mix and physical distribution of active and passive recreation areas.
- The type and level of urban improvements, such as plazas, parking, and landscape and streetscape improvements.
- Strategies for accommodating stormwater and drainage requirements.
- Delineation and protection of natural resources, including tidal marshland.
- Site circulation and connectivity to the adjacent commercial district and residential neighborhood.
- Responses to sea level rise and other climate adaptation strategies.

City staff and The Planning Center/DC&E met with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) on April 18 to review the project goals, site history and existing conditions analysis, and to seek guidance from the CAC as to what alternatives they wanted to be considered in the alternatives development and analysis phase of the project.

The existing conditions analysis and the input received at the first CAC meeting was then presented at the first Community Workshop, held on June 5. Approximately 85 attendees were divided into small groups to work with a facilitator to develop alternatives and a design concept for the project area. A representative from each group then reported back to the larger group, and an end of meeting summary clarified common themes among the eight group designs. The workshop output was then summarized in a memo that reflected the alternatives developed by each of the groups, emphasizing the common themes that emerged in the workshop.

The Planning Center/DC&E then developed three alternative site plans that reflected the wishes expressed at the first Community Workshop, within the context of the project goals, CAC direction, and the existing regulatory framework.

The site alternatives were then shared with the Community Advisory Committee for review and comment at its second meeting, on July 25. The site alternatives were then refined based on CAC direction, leading to the alternatives being considered at the four Review Meetings.

Review Meetings

The second Community Workshop was held on September 18. At this workshop, participants worked in small groups to review and comment on the alternative concept plans and develop their own preferred alternatives for the study area. At the close of the workshop, a facilitated discussion resulted in a 'consensus report' on preferred options.

The third CAC meeting was held on September 26, to garner CAC input and further develop the preferred concept for presentation to the Parks, Recreation

and Cemetery Commission and City Council.

The third Review Meeting was held at the October 9 Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission (PRCC) meeting. The PRCC unanimously voted to accept the Draft Preferred Alternative as presented, with two changes that are included in the attached Draft Preferred Alternative.

ELEMENTS OF THE DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE:

The three prior Review Meetings (Community Workshop #2, CAC #3, and PRCC) have led to a Draft Preferred Alternative that is a composite of the three draft site alternatives. Elements that have generated broad support include:

- Entry plaza at the corner of 1st Street and B Street with seat walls
- Expanded, raised green area next to the entry plaza
- Bioswale in the northeast along B Street
- Secondary plaza at the eastern edge with seating
- Perimeter walkway around the green and bioswale
- Boardwalks in alignment with the historic railroad, with viewing platforms
- TrainWalk Boardwalk through the tidal marsh
- Bay Trail alignment within the park parallel to B Street
- Stormwater rain gardens between B Street parking and the Bay Trail
- Widened sidewalk and palm trees on the east side of 1st Street, to mirror the promenade on the west side of 1st Street.
- Diagonal or perpendicular parking within the park on south side of B Street
- Improved parking lot along east end of B Street
- Art integrated throughout the site
- Depot plaza as included in the 2009 Depot site plan

The attached Draft Preferred Alternative provides a graphic representation of the elements above.

Key project documents developed thus far have been made available online on the Parks & Community Services pages of the City's website, and can be found by following the 'Urban Waterfront and Enhancement Master Plan' link on the PCS homepage, www.ci.benicia.ca.us/Parks.

RESIDUAL ISSUES:

The majority of elements included in the Draft Preferred Alternative received broad support in the Review Meetings held thus far. However, there are four issues that require further research and consideration:

- 1. Sea-level rise:** There are three broad strategies that have been identified. The first, consolidation of the green and expansion of the tidal marshland, received broad support and is represented in the attached Draft Preferred Alternative.

The two other sea-level rise responses could be integrated into the site without significant alteration of the attached Draft Preferred Alternative.

One option is to raise the elevation of the green, an approach that is being used by the Port of San Francisco on a similar project at the Brannan Street Wharf. The current 100 year flood level is approximately 9 feet above sea level, while the mean sea level rise projected for 2050 by a 2012 National Academy of Sciences study was 11 inches. As such, it may be prudent to raise the elevation of the green to at least 10 feet above current sea level, and possibly as high as the elevation at 1st Street.

The final option that is being considered is the installation of a sheet piling wall at the interface of the green with the tidal marshland.

- 2. B Street:** At its October 16, 2012 meeting, Council gave staff direction that planning should be focused within the park boundaries. However, development and evaluation of the draft alternatives has made it clear that stormwater management and sea-level rise improvements included in the Plan will need to consider B Street. Staff recommend that, as possible, improvements to B Street be designed concurrently with improvements in the UWEMP project area.
- 3. Non-motorized boat launch:** The public workshops, CAC meetings, and subsequent Review Meetings drew a range of perspectives on whether and where a non-motorized boat launch should be included in the site plan. Ultimately, the inclusion and location of a possible non-motorized boat launch drew inconclusive support. It is shown at the existing beach access in the attached Draft Preferred Alternative. Staff is conducting further outreach and research on this issue. The balance of the Draft Preferred Alternative site plan will still be viable should it ultimately be decided that a location outside the project area would be more appropriate for the non-motorized boat launch.
- 4. 1st Street:** Consideration of Bay Trail connectivity and traffic circulation indicate a need to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the project area across 1st Street. Specifically, there is a need for a new crosswalk on the south side of the intersection of 1st Street and B Street. It may be prudent to concurrently plan for and improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation on all sides of this intersection.

NEXT STEPS:

Wetland Delineation

A Wetland Delineation was prepared and submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in October by Environmental Collaborative, a sub-consultant on the project planning team. An on-site verification has been tentatively scheduled for late December.

Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis

Based on the direction received during the four Review Meetings, including this City Council meeting, the consultant team will work with staff to prepare a Draft Master Plan, scheduled for completion in early 2014. The Planning Center/DC&E will prepare an environmental analysis concurrently with the preparation of the Draft Master Plan.

Master Plan Adoption

Initial Review meetings with the Community Advisory Committee and Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Commission are tentatively scheduled for spring 2014. The Master Plan adoption hearing at City Council is tentatively scheduled for June 2014.

Project Implementation

City staff have been in contact with staff from partner agencies, including the Coastal Conservancy and the Association of Bay Area Governments (SF Bay Trail Project and SF Bay Water Trail Project). Additional partner and funding agencies will be engaged over the next several months as we develop the Draft Master Plan. Discussions with regulatory agencies thus far have included initial conversations with Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) staff; we anticipate beginning discussions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shortly.

Attachments:

- ❑ Resolution
- ❑ Draft Preferred Alternative Site Plan Graphic
- ❑ Draft Preferred Alternative Section Graphic
- ❑ Project Schedule

RESOLUTION NO. 13-

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BENICIA DIRECTING STAFF TO PROCEED WITH DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENT AND MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Benicia approved a grant agreement with the Coastal Conservancy for the development of a Benicia Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan on December 20, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Coastal Conservancy grant agreement will provide the City \$140,000 to develop a waterfront restoration plan, and the City's required financial match for this agreement is \$20,000; and

WHEREAS, development of such a plan is consistent with the City's General Plan and with the Strategic Plan strategies of Strengthening Economic and Fiscal Conditions and Maintaining and Enhancing a High Quality of Life; and

WHEREAS, the effort will develop a master plan, an adaptive management plan for sea-level rise, estimates of implementation costs, and a schedule for construction; and

WHEREAS, principal objectives of the plan include improving waterfront access and connectivity, increasing active recreational use of the waterfront, and contributing to the economic vitality of Downtown Benicia; and

WHEREAS, an interdisciplinary consultant team led by The Planning Center/DC&E was awarded a contract for planning consulting services in October, 2012; and

WHEREAS, a Community Advisory Committee was formed to add value to the planning process guided by staff and the consultant. In order to have an efficient and cost effective process this City advisory body was formed of stakeholders and City Council advisory bodies including one member each from Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Commission, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Review Commission, Arts and Culture Commission, Economic Development Board and Community Sustainability Commission appointed by the respective boards and commissions and each Benicia member of the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC), one member of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), Main Street and the Benicia Yacht Club; and

WHEREAS, an Existing Conditions Analysis, completed in May 2013, provided a thorough review of City planning for this site since the City acquired the property in 1975, and site hydrology and biological resources; and

WHEREAS, two Community Advisory Committee meetings and one Community Workshop guided the development of three draft site alternatives; and

WHEREAS, three Review Meetings, consisting of one Community Workshop, one Community Advisory Committee meeting, and one Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission meeting, guided the refinement of the draft site alternatives and development of the Draft Preferred Alternative.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of the City of Benicia hereby approves the Draft Preferred Alternative.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff is directed to proceed with the development of the Draft Master Plan and concurrent Environmental Review for the Benicia Urban Waterfront Enhancement and Master Plan.

On motion of Council Member _____, seconded by Council Member _____, the above Resolution was introduced and passed by the City Council of the City of Benicia at a regular meeting of said Council held on the 19th day of November, 2013, and adopted by the following vote.

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Elizabeth Patterson, Mayor

Attest:

Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk

Dated: _____

Bicycle + Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Entry Plaza

Palm Trees to Mirror West Side of 1st Street'

Complete Bay Trail Connection

Monumental Stairs

Widened Sidewalk

Existing Depot

Proposed Depot Improvements

Non-Motorized Boat Launch

Remove Piers

Expanded Marsh

Maintain Beach Access

Edge of Existing Marsh

Enhanced Wetland

Green

Seat Wall

Diagonal Parking Along South Side

Rain Gardens

B Street

Multi-use Trail

E 2nd Street

Existing Bay Trail

Plaza

Bioswale

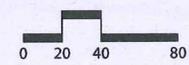
Viewing Platform

Boardwalk Along Historic Railroad Alignment

	Expanded Green		Bay Trail
	New Bioswale		Special Event Vehicular Access
	Existing Marsh		
	Expanded Marsh		

Draft Preferred Alternative: Central Green with Extensive Boardwalks and Integrated Art

11/05/13





Urban Waterfront Enhancement and Master Plan

Schedule for The City of Benicia

