

MEMORANDUM

February 18, 2009

TO: MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION
Hon. Rodney Fong, President
Hon. Stephanie Shakofsky, Vice President
Hon. Kimberly Brandon
Hon. Michael Hardeman
Hon. Ann Lazarus

FROM: Monique A. Moyer
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Informational Presentation on commencement of Embarcadero Design Standards Study – to review function and develop Standards to improve the quality of the pedestrian environment on The Embarcadero Promenade.

DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION: Information Only - No Action Required

Overview

The Embarcadero Design Standards is a project to evaluate and improve The Embarcadero Promenade/Herb Caen Way as a pedestrian circulation corridor and access way to Port facilities, and to further respond to the Port's mission of attracting people to the waterfront. The *Design and Access Element* of the *Waterfront Land Use Plan* provides context for the Embarcadero Design Standards (Standard), which are intended to provide more specific guidance to direct public improvements, and design criteria to guide Port tenant improvements within the Promenade. The Standard will be developed through a public process and proposals will be presented to the Port Commission, the Waterfront Design Advisory Committee, and in public workshops prior to seeking Port Commission endorsement.

Background

The Embarcadero Promenade/Herb Caen Way is the walkway on the waterside of The Embarcadero Roadway that currently extends from AT&T Ballpark at China Basin Channel to Pier 39 in the north. The completion of the Pier 43 Bay Trail Promenade project, one of the waterfront open space projects funded by Proposition A February 2008, will effectively extend the Promenade into Fisherman's Wharf, to Pier 45. At almost three miles long and providing more than 15 acres of public space, The Promenade is the spine that connects all northern waterfront parks and destinations and the place where many form their impressions of the waterfront.

This Report Covers Calendar Item No. 11A

The Embarcadero Promenade was designed as part of the transformation of The Embarcadero from an industrial service road serving the piers, to a grand urban boulevard. Planning began in the mid-80's, and improvements were constructed from 1993 through 2000. Previously, the waterfront was largely inaccessible to pedestrians, cut off by the elevated freeway and numerous rail tracks, and there was little reason for many to cross The Embarcadero. Today the Promenade is a heavily used public space and its use is expected to grow substantially as the Port continues to develop waterfront projects. As the only access to the Port's piers, The Promenade is not designated as a City sidewalk for exclusive pedestrian use; it must still accommodate maritime access and allow for bicycles. Thus, The Promenade is a multiuse pathway where during peak times conflicts may exist between many users as they compete for space. Currently, the useable circulation of The Promenade is reduced due to the varied placement of light poles, signs, litter receptacles, bike racks and public art. One of the key purposes of the Standard is to evaluate and recommend modifications to the location and installation of fixtures and street furniture to maximize public circulation and access along The Embarcadero Promenade.

Since the Promenade's completion, many Port tenants and Port partner developers have proposed to add various site furnishings such as benches, café enclosures, awnings to bulkhead buildings, street trees and planters. For the most part the Port has not authorized these installations due to a lack of having consistent standards. The *Design and Access Element* of the *Waterfront Land Use Plan* sets a framework for design of public improvements along The Embarcadero, recognizing the importance of achieving a cohesive appearance for this important public space. The intent of the Standard is to provide more specific definition on the types and conditions under which such tenant improvements of public space should be allowed. The Standard also will be developed with an understanding of the relationship between such installations and the need to be compatible with the Embarcadero Waterfront National Register Historic District.

Thus, the purpose of the Standard project will be to develop policies and design criteria to:

- Enhance value of Port facilities with a well designed Promenade that is functional and aesthetically complementary to the waterfront environment;
- Develop clear design direction for public-serving improvements along The Embarcadero for use by tenants, developers, staff, the Waterfront Design Advisory Committee and BCDC's Design Review Board, and the Port and BCDC Commissions;
- Define and simplify the design review of public space installations and ensure they are consistent with the character of the Embarcadero Historic District; and
- Continue Port efforts to provide responsible stewardship of The Embarcadero.

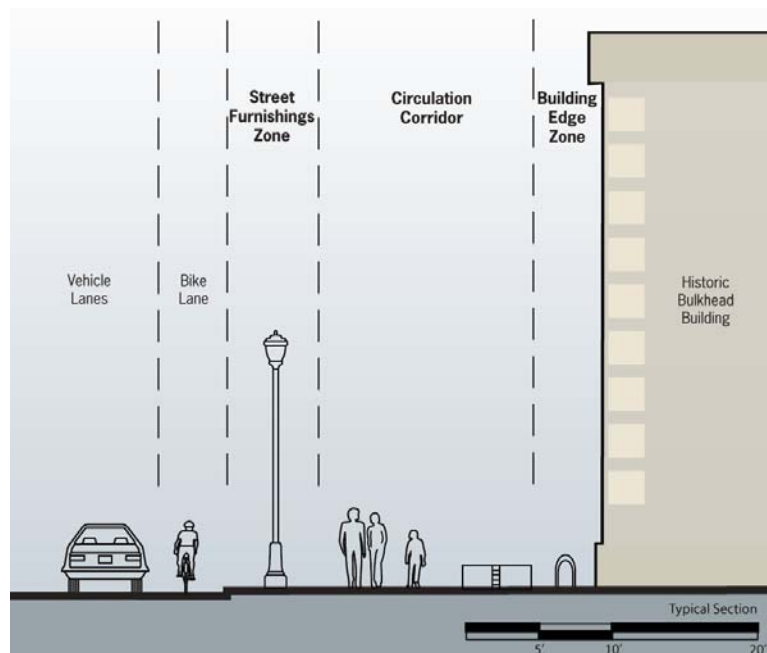
Study Analysis

The Standard study will rely on established policies, principles and design criteria adopted in the *Waterfront Design & Access Element*. In particular, the *Waterfront Design & Access Element* contains a policy to prepare design criteria consistent with the Public Access and Open Space policy "Character" in the *Waterfront Design & Access Element*, which states open spaces are to be designed as "*an architectural backdrop to the waterfront's spectacular natural and built features*". This policy shall direct the architectural character of design criteria for site furnishings. The *Waterfront Design & Access Element* also

contains four general design principles to direct design criteria that state open space improvements should be:

- Functionally Appropriate – first be functionally appropriate for their intended purpose.
- Character – complement and enhance the waterfront setting.
- Durability – materials should be selected and designed for permanence, waterfront conditions and a high level of public use.
- Maintainable – open space elements should be designed for achievable maintenance requirements.

The Embarcadero shares a layout and function common to the great boulevards of the world: it has a central circulation space, a building edge zone to offer identity to tenants and facilitate building entry, and there is a curb zone where there are street lights, signs and other street furnishings.



The Promenade will be analyzed in these three zones and the Standard is expected to lead to amendments to the *Waterfront Design & Access Element* and possibly other Port codes to include:

- Identification of changes to improve the circulation function of The Promenade and access to Port businesses on the piers, including consideration of removing certain elevated segments of the Art Ribbon;
- Criteria for adding sidewalk café furnishings adjacent to bulkhead buildings;
- Standards for adding site furnishings (e.g. benches, bike racks, litter receptacles, bollards, planters, sidewalk cafés, and awnings and canopies on bulkhead buildings) along The Promenade to further its visual identity and enhance the pedestrian experience of visiting the waterfront; and

- Standards for adding signage, public art, event banners, and other improvements that contribute to the quality of the waterfront.

Ferry Building Area

It is anticipated that the Standard study will include a tailored address of design standards specific to the Ferry Building frontage along The Embarcadero. Design criteria for the Ferry Building area will be different from The Promenade to reflect the special architectural and civic character of this waterfront location. Ferry Building design criteria will be prepared to address café furnishing improvements requested by Embarcadero facing tenants that include overhead weather protection, café railings, wind screens, planters, signage and lighting.

Community Outreach

Staff has conducted a detailed review of the existing conditions along The Promenade, as context for developing the Standard project, and have researched many other waterfronts internationally. Following the Port Commission presentation on February 24, 2009 there will be a presentation on March 9, 2009 at the joint meeting of the Waterfront Design Advisory Committee and BCDC's Design Review Board to review this information and proposed approach for the Standard. The Port also will hold public workshops beginning this spring to review the existing conditions of The Promenade, analyze The Promenade's evolved function, and contribute to the development of policies and design criteria. The Port will solicit public comments and inputs for Standard proposals, which will be further reviewed at public meetings of these design review boards and presented to the Port Commission later this year, prior to seeking endorsement and approval.

The Standard proposal also will be presented for comment and discussion to the Embarcadero Transportation Task Force. This Task Force was formed to examine how The Embarcadero could best serve the changing land uses and transportation demands, including pedestrian circulation along The Embarcadero Promenade. The Standard are intended to address the shared use *pedestrian* area on the bay side of The Embarcadero Roadway consistent with the goals of the Task Force. Port staff also will coordinate with the San Francisco Planning Department to craft the Standard so that it provides design guidelines consistent with the *Better Streets Program* currently underway at the Planning Department.

Funding

The Standard will be developed primarily by Port staff. Minor supporting studies such as evaluation to changes in the Art Ribbon and changes to street signage may be requested later this spring to be funded out of the Port's FY 2008-09 Planning & Development Operating Budget for Professional and Specialized Services.

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