

# REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council  
From the City Manager

May 12, 2014

## **SUBJECT**

Inner Harbor Specific Plan Land Use and Circulation Update

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Hold a Joint Study Session with the Planning Commission for an Update from the Inner Harbor Specific Plan Task Force.

## **BACKGROUND**

On March 11, 2013, the City Council initiated the Inner Harbor Specific Plan process. At that meeting, the Council (1) approved the Inner Harbor Community Engagement Framework (2) approved the recommended Inner Harbor Task Force membership, and (3) directed Staff to initiate the Community Engagement Process. The Task Force is comprised of 15 members representing property owners, government, environmental, business, recreation, residential tenants, and water-related users. Since March 2013, staff and its consulting team of MIG (Specific Plan and meeting facilitation) and ESA (environmental review and planning baseline studies), held 11 Task Force meetings and one Community-wide meeting.

On April 16, 2014, the Task Force discussed and voted on a series of recommendations, which are the subject of the Joint Planning Commission/City Council Study Session.

## **ANALYSIS**

During the course of this year-long study, the Task Force members provided insight and ideas about how they conceived a city could relate to its waterfront resources. The Task Force also heard considerable input from the public, both in terms of the Docketown community and the broader Redwood City community on this same issue. They also received technical information from the project team on issues such as sea level rise, noise, air quality, circulation, biological resources, and jurisdictional review. Property owners and tenants throughout the plan area also presented their perspectives on the potential outcome for the plan area.

Based on this input, the concepts of the General Plan and the successful development of the Downtown Precise Plan the Task Force developed 17 Guiding Principles that should be the foundation of the plan. Those are:

1. Accommodate a mix of habitat, recreational, educational, residential, and commercial uses in the Inner Harbor.
2. Create a day/night environment that is safe and enjoyable for residents, employees, and visitors.
3. Develop strong visual and circulation linkages from Downtown and other areas into the Inner Harbor.
4. Prioritize use of the waterfront for public-oriented and water-dependent uses and activities.
5. Provide recreation and open space amenities in the Inner Harbor in support of the citywide adopted parkland standard.
6. Preserve existing and accommodate new floating communities.
7. Insist upon quality architecture, streetscapes, public place improvements, and other “placemaking” features that define the Inner Harbor.
8. Respond creatively and appropriately to projected sea level rise; include use of sustainable and adaptable approaches—such as floating walkways and floating structures—for land use and infrastructure improvements.
9. Promote recreational uses that accommodate human- and wind-powered watercraft.
10. Emphasize and enhance boater access to Redwood Creek and the Bay for recreation and educational purposes.
11. Provide for new and improved pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto connections between the Inner Harbor and Downtown Redwood City, and between the Inner Harbor and adjacent developed areas along the Bay.
12. Complete the Bay Trail connection through the Inner Harbor.
13. Incorporate marine and freshwater wetlands areas within or near the Inner Harbor plan area as habitat and for education.
14. Accommodate educational use amenities such as museum exhibits and hands-on learning labs that feature historic Redwood City and local flora/fauna/habitat.
15. Require private development to include community benefits—either on-site or within the Inner Harbor—such as open space accessible to the public, recreation areas, trails, docks, water access, affordable housing, community services, habitat, or as determined by the City Council.
16. Incorporate historic features and references to City history into the overall composition of the Inner Harbor area, and into new buildings and public spaces.
17. Plan for land use and circulation compatibility with adjacent institutional, industrial, and port-dependent uses.

These Principles are the foundation of a series of land use and circulation concepts that sought to balance the multiplicity of interests, from environmental preservation to water-based communities to land development. Neither of the drafted concepts satisfied a majority of the Task Force such that there was a consensus for either.

However, the draft plans provided a framework for discussion and a glimpse of the trade-offs that any plan will face. Consensus was reached regarding four significant issues to the degree that the City can direct the environmental consultants to begin the

preparation of the Project Description, the first key step in the CEQA process, and the Plan consultants to begin structuring the Specific Plan.

The Task Force agreed that at least one-third of the total project area (this includes both land and water areas) be reserved as Open Space. Open Space at this point in the Plan development includes a range of definitions including Active Space, Passive Space, and Wetlands. In the final Plan, Open Space will be clearly identified as active open space, passive open space, water open space, or wetlands.

Second, the Task Force agreed that a Floating Community was a desirable development within the Project Area. The Task Force identified two locations for a floating community: 1) utilizing approximately 2/3rds of the Ferrari site; and 2) in pockets along Redwood Creek. The Task Force recommends that the City consider pursuit of legislative remedies to enable residential uses on the lands granted to the City from the State. The Task Force further recognized that there are no guarantees that regulatory permits can be obtained to allow for a floating community even on private property.

Third, the ability to develop private property was recognized and supported by the Task Force. No specific development types (e.g., residential, office, retail) were addressed by the Task Force. The detailed requirements for development standards will be written as part of the Specific Plan, as they were for the Stanford in Redwood City and Downtown Precise Plans. As part of the environmental review a range of development intensities will be studied and then formulated in the Specific Plan. Heights and densities remain to be established, as well as materials and view corridors.

Finally, the ability and desire to move people and vehicles through and around the Project Area were developed. It is important that there be a connection to the Bay Trail, that there be bicycle access along Blomquist, that the Maple Street connection to Downtown be enhanced to support better Complete Street planning, that Blomquist extend over Redwood Creek and that it also be designed to address the conflicts inherent between automobiles and construction trucks.

Throughout all of the scenarios and potential uses, it is critical to the Task Force that the Plan address the long-term issue of sea level rise. The preferred approach to this constraint is to seek a system of adaptive retreat rather than construction of a sea wall and continuous levees. The details and implications of this approach will be evaluated in the EIR and the economic analysis over the next several months.

Subsequent to the Study Session, staff will request the City Council confirm that the land use types and circulation concepts are acceptable for consideration in an EIR for the Inner Harbor Specific Plan.

Based on Council direction, a Project Description will be prepared and a draft will be circulated to the individual Task Force members for their early, pre-EIR comments, as well as to staff for final approval. Once the Project Description is complete, the public

will be advised that the process is underway. We anticipate the Project Description will be complete in Summer 2014 and then the environmental analysis will begin. The Planning Commission will review the project in Summer 2015. City Council review and action is anticipated in September 2015.

**ALTERNATIVES**

There are no alternatives necessary as part of the Study Session discussion.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this report.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This study session is Not a Project under CEQA.



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BILL EKERN  
ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER



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ROBERT B. BELL  
CITY MANAGER

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Guiding principles
2. RCIH Conceptual Land Use Plan
3. Revised Meeting Summary
4. Task Force members

**Redwood City Inner Harbor Draft Guiding Principles  
Revised Based on Task Force Members' Input  
February 25, 2014**

***VISION: Overarching Themes***

- Connect Redwood City to the water's edge.
- Create a unique and vibrant neighborhood destination on the bay.
- Value and enhance the natural environment.
- Serve as a regional model for waterfront communities and adaptation to sea level rise.
- Celebrate and preserve Redwood City's heritage.

***Guiding Principles***

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5. Provide recreation and open space amenities in the Inner Harbor in support of the citywide adopted parkland standard.
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