

WESTWOOD PARK



October 28, 2015

To: Members of the Balboa Reservoir Community Advisory Committee

Re: Westwood Park Community Comments to: September 4th Memo provided by Emily Lesk, Office of Economic and Workforce Development and Jeremy Shaw, Planning Department, specifically, the Proposed Parameters related to Urban Design and Neighborhood Characteristics

Dear Balboa Reservoir CAC Members,

We respectfully submit the following comments for your review. Please note, we have provided the September 4th Memo text in black for ease of contextual reference:

WP Community Comment:

We appreciate the proposed parameters provided by the City, and support the voter approved Prop K. mandate. We further appreciate the Public Land for Housing Program's focus on our neighborhood site, as well as three other study sites including the Upper Yard located at Geneva and San Jose, the 4th and Folsom site, and 1950 Mission. At this early juncture, the community wishes to remind the city, reconfirm and restate the results and input from the greater San Francisco community on the City sponsored online survey. The top five choices, as listed in the Public Workshop #2 from May 5th, 2015 are:

1. Large open spaces for multiple uses (24%)
2. Affordable housing for all incomes (13%)
3. Neighborhood character and integrity (12%)
4. Large open spaces for programmed uses (6%)
5. Paths, walkways or routes to go on walks (6%)

Given that these were the top five concerns of the citywide SF Planning survey, neighborhood character deserves its own meeting, with an appropriate lead time to alert neighbors who are not on email. We all want our neighborhood and the new one to be successful in the midst of major change, and a quickly scheduled, poorly attended meeting will not help facilitate this process.

Further, the Westwood Park Association residents would like to restate and confirm the top 5 choices of their neighborhood specific survey, which asked the same

questions as the city sponsored survey. The top 5 choices of the WPA of the 113 residents who responded were:

1. Retaining neighborhood character and integrity (30.09%)
2. Large open spaces for multiple uses (25.66)
3. Large open space for programmed use (14.16%)
4. Affordable housing for all incomes (13.27)
5. Housing for local workforce / Paths walkways, or routes to go on walks (11.80% and 11.50%)

As described at the prior CAC meeting, these parameters will inform the selection of a developer partner for the Balboa Reservoir site. This selection will occur through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process in which prospective developers will propose concept-level ideas for development at the site. The proposals will be evaluated on how they adhere to these parameters, and a developer partner will be selected accordingly.

The September 14, 2015 meeting will focus on housing and urban design/neighborhood character parameters, and at subsequent CAC meetings we will seek feedback on additional categories of parameters including parks and open space, transportation, relationship with City College, sustainability, and other desired community amenities.

WP Community Comment:

The WP community respectfully requests that the CAC and City provide more than one CAC meeting in order to address housing, given that this discussion point of the RFP forms a significant portion of the Westwood Park community concerns, and will significantly impact the other components of the CAC guidelines for the RFP (i.e., urban design & neighborhood character, parks and open space, transportation, relationship with CCSF, sustainability, and other desired community amenities.

Please note that the writing of these parameters will not be the only opportunity for the community and the City to impact the development. Once a developer is selected through the RFP process, its winning proposal will be refined with additional feedback from the City, community members, and the CAC.

In our experience, the RFP process is most successful when the development parameters balance (1) setting clear expectations about what is most important to the City and the community and (2) providing enough flexibility to encourage creative proposals and allow for continued, iterative work once the developer has been selected. The proposed parameters below seek to strike that balance by providing high-level guidance on critical issue

WP Community Comment:

We respectfully request more detail around the RFP process. In particular:

1. Before the RFP is put in final form, we ask that a draft be made available to both interested proposers as well as the community, for comment. All of us have an interest in understanding the level of detail requested in the submitted proposals. For example, we would be strongly opposed to an RFP that does not ask the developer to include *specifics* as to how it intends to address the housing goals (number of units) as well as the community interests (maintaining neighborhood integrity, community space, etc.).
2. Does the City have any existing studies around the economic viability of the development? For example, does the City have or intend to do any studies that analyze the *total* number of units that would be required to support a development that also includes both affordable housing and neighborhood amenities?

Memo to Members of the Balboa Reservoir CAC

2 of 6

Background Information

At the September 14 meeting, staff will also present background information that will help inform the discussion of the proposed parameters. For additional background information, we highly recommend consulting these resources:

- The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development's "Inclusionary Affordable Housing Program Monitoring and Procedures Manual" can be found online at <http://sfmoh.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=6983>. The CAC may be especially interested in the monitoring and enforcement procedures that ensure that the housing serves only those in financial need, particularly the information found on pages 26 – 27 (limits to condominium resale prices) and pages 33 – 34 (restrictions for rental units).

- Information on the income levels that qualify for affordable housing is attached to this memorandum as Exhibit A and can also be found on the Balboa Reservoir Study's website,

www.sf-planning.org/balboareservoir.

- Proposition K (2014), which was passed by 65% of San Francisco voters in 2014, established affordable housing development goals that have informed our proposed housing parameters. In particular, Proposition K set a goal for 33% of newly developed housing to be affordable to low-income and moderate-income households. The full text of this ballot measure can be found beginning on page 168 of the 2014 election guide, at

http://sfpl4.sfpl.org/pdf/main/gic/elections/November4_2014.pdf.

- Applicable guidelines governing building design can be found within the Planning Department's ground floor residential design guidelines, at www.sfplanning.org/ftp/files/publications_reports/guidelines_for_groundfloor_residential_design.pdf; in Section 6 of the Balboa Park Station Area Plan (Built Form), at www.sfplanning.org/index.aspx?page=1748; and within the General Plan's Urban Design Element, at www.sf-planning.org/ftp/general_plan/15_Urban_Design.htm.

Memo to Members of the Balboa Reservoir CAC

4 of 6

Proposed Principles & Parameters: Urban Design & Neighborhood Character

The following draft principles and parameters provide a framework for more detailed parameters and guidelines to be included in the RFP. They are based on existing urban design guidelines in the Planning Department as well as on the specific context of the Balboa Public Site. Planning Department staff is working to further explore and illustrate these principles and draft parameters, which may lead to a refined set of parameters used to facilitate discussion, feedback and input on urban design and neighborhood character.

WP Community Comment: A copy of the Westwood Park Residential Character Guidelines has been e-mailed to the BRCAC general e-mail address in advance of this meeting for review by the CAC members.

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

Draft parameters:

a. Create a general block scale that respects nearby neighborhoods, provides permeability, and uses a pedestrian network to connect the surrounding fabric of streets and open spaces.

WP Community Comment: Please provide examples of permeability. One of the positive characteristics of the WP 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. WP residents purchased and retain high homeownership as a result of this desirable neighborhood characteristic. A new development would benefit from the same concept; reasonable but limited traffic access into and out of the neighborhood so that it is pedestrian oriented, family friendly, bike friendly, safe, and develops its own unique neighborhood character) This would also help with traffic calming within the two neighborhoods.

b. Break the scale of blocks by providing mid-block alleys, pedestrian paths, courtyards, or plazas to better connect networks of public or common spaces

c. Orient the site, blocks, and street and pedestrian connections to maximize pedestrian safety, accessibility and mobility.

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

Draft parameters:

a. Design the site and buildings to integrate with, respect and reflect local character, scale, design, and uses.

WP Community Comment: While the roots of the Sunnyside neighborhood go back to the early 1900s, Westwood Park homes were primarily built in the 1920s. The architecture of those neighborhoods reflects a shift from Victorian and Edwardian homes, which predominated before and immediately after the turn of the century. In the case of Westwood Park, it was developed as a “residence park” of bungalow-style homes primarily to offer middle class residents the opportunity to escape the noise, pollution and crowded conditions of downtown San Francisco. Any development on the Balboa Reservoir site should be respectful of the original intent of the development of the area West of Twin Peaks; complementing and highlighting the characteristics of the historic architectural style of the surrounding neighborhoods. Buildings that have recently predominated in new developments within the Mission District (boxy, glass fronts, loft style), are starkly out of character with the surrounding structures, just as six-story glass and steel buildings would be out of character in Cow Hollow, Steiner Street, Nob Hill or in the Inner Richmond district. Any project that follows the current architectural design trend in downtown and some of the adjacent neighborhoods would invoke a significantly negative response from existing residents in Westwood Park.

“Ocean Avenue Historic Preservation Resource Guide” references additional material relevant to the BR site and is available here:

http://www.oceanavenueassociation.org/the_cbd/reports

b. Design variation in building height, scale, massing and materials. Maintain visual interest and limit the extent of uniform, unvaried surfaces.

c. Locate taller buildings where adjacent buildings are tallest, with heights tapering down on approach to single-family neighborhoods. Buildings on the west side of site should **generally** be of lower height than the east, and respect the scale, privacy and light of adjacent homes to the west.

d. Building heights should fall within a range of 25’ to ~~65’~~ **40’** feet, allowing for heights of up to ~~85’~~ **65’** in the eastern portion of the site where, due to economic efficiencies, the additional height allows for additional community benefits.

WP Community Comment:

The current zoning of Westwood Park is 28’. The current zoning of the Balboa reservoir site is 40’ on the west and a small slice on the east which is 65’, as agreed to and implemented within the 2009 Balboa Park Station Area Plan, including the accompanying FEIR (Final EIR). Please describe for the community how an 85’ height maximum was derived, given the **significant community input that resulted in the 40’ height restriction within the 2009 plan**. The community concern is that desired open space will be negotiated for increased height and density. Please address this concern.

Please inform the public how the new Density Bonus (Affordable Housing Bonus Plan) would impact the BR development site. Please indicate and provide examples of current density guidelines compared to potential density guidelines under the new Bonus Plan.

e. Site and design buildings to enhance public spaces, while **minimizing** maintaining **their impact on** existing residential privacy and access to light.

f. Shape the height and bulk of buildings to respect views and vantage points; avoid top-heavy or bulky appearance.

g. Design roofs to enhance and not detract views from above.

Memo to Members of the Balboa Reservoir CAC

5 of 6

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

Draft Parameters:

a. Maximize exposure to sun and protection from wind, in particular afternoon winds from the West.

b. Design the site, buildings and public realm to accentuate local topography, integrate with local landscape and incorporate natural habitat.

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

Draft Parameters:

a. Design amenities and the public realm to align with neighborhood activities, desires or needs, including current uses of the site for families, dog walking and exercise.

WP Community Comments: Please note, current use does include parking.

b. Express the cultural and historical elements of the community in the site or public realm design. (see Comment re: historical)

c. Design the site and public realm to respect and reflect **Westwood Park** community heritage, the City College campus, and the role of Ocean and Phelan as a "gateway" to the neighborhood.

Meeting Agenda

The following meeting agenda, which has been developed in consultation with the CAC Chairperson, will incorporate discussion of these RFP parameters in addition to the other items discussed at the August 26, 2015 CAC meeting. Once a location for the September 14, 2015 meeting has been confirmed, staff will format a formal agenda document that will be posted on the CAC website and transmitted to the

CAC members.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call.

2. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting. (Action Item)

3. Scheduling October CAC Meeting. (Action Item)

Discussion and possible action regarding the cancellation of the regular meeting scheduled on October 12 (Columbus Day) and the scheduling of a special meeting in October to replace it.

4. General Public Comment.

5. Communication with the Community. (Discussion Item)

Discussion of strategies that CAC members might employ for outreach to and communication with their respective constituents. *Note: Each CAC member will be asked to briefly share the strategy or strategies that you anticipate employing.*

Memo to Members of the Balboa Reservoir CAC

6 of 6

6. Overview of RFP Format. (Discussion Item)

Presentation by City staff on anticipated RFP content, followed by discussion by the CAC.

7. Housing: Background and Parameters. (Discussion Item)

WP Community Comment:

At the January 21st, 2015 Community meeting, the City indicated 4 pilot sites were being studied in conjunction with the Public Land for Housing Program. Can the City provide an overview of the status of the other three pilot sites? For example, are these sites moving forward, how many units will be developed, how many affordable, cost of land, etc.?

Presentation by City staff on real estate and affordable housing development economics and initial draft housing and housing affordability parameters for the Balboa site, followed by discussion by the CAC.

8. Urban Design & Neighborhood Character: Background and Parameters. (Discussion Item)

Presentation by City staff on urban design and neighborhood character parameters and supporting background information, followed by discussion by the CAC.

9. City College Master Plan Process Update. (Followed by Q&A)

Report on master plan status and, followed by an opportunity for members of the public to ask related questions.

10. Adjournment.

Memo to Members of the Balboa Reservoir CAC

Exhibit A

The following documents are examples of urban design and neighborhood character that have been highly successful within the Westwood Park neighborhood for reference.

1. Enclosed for your review is a copy of the Westwood Park Association Residential Guidelines (“Guidelines”).

These Guidelines were unanimously adopted by the San Francisco Planning Commission on 6 May 1993 and in 1995 the Board of Supervisors passed legislation to incorporate these Guidelines into the San Francisco Planning Code (Section 244.1).

This legislation designated Westwood Park the first – and still only – Residential Character District in the City of San Francisco.

The thrust of the Guidelines and the law was to recognize the unique character and, specifically, that vertical additions would seriously undermine what made Westwood Park special.

In that regard, it must be noted that the Planning Commission took the unprecedented step of reducing the mapped height for all residential properties in Westwood Park from 40’ to 28’.

The same sensitivity to the impact of height on the unique neighborhood character of San Francisco’s only Residential Character District must also be shown in designing a project which is immediately adjacent to the western portion of the development.

2. The residents of Westwood Park enjoy and take great pride in their neighborhood’s **Residential Character District designation**, as recognized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on February 26, 1996 (copy attached).

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Directors

Kate Favetti, President; Anita Theoharis, Vice President; Caryl Ito, Co-Treasurer; Kathy Beitiks, Secretary; Tim Emert, Ravi Krishnaswamy and Linda Judge, Members-at-Large

By:


Kate Favetti, President


Linda Judge, Balboa Reservoir Chair

Cc: Norman Yee, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 7
John Rahaim, San Francisco Planning Director
The Honorable Mayor Edwin Lee, City of San Francisco