

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

FROM: Will Travis, Executive Director [415/352-3653 travis@bcdc.ca.gov]
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SUBJECT: Alcatraz Landing at Piers 31½ - 33, Alcatraz Cruises, City and County of San Francisco (First Review)
(For Board consideration on October 18, 2010)

Project Summary

Applicant. Hornblower Cruises and Events (Alcatraz Cruises).

Project Representatives. Joe Wyman, Hornblower Cruises and Events; Steve Buchholz, Heller Manus Architects.

Project Site. The proposed project is located at Piers 31½ and 33, within the San Francisco northeastern waterfront, near the intersection of Bay Street, Francisco Street and The Embarcadero, within the City and County of San Francisco (see page 1, "Vicinity Map"). Piers 27-29 lie to the south and Pier 35 (the existing San Francisco Cruise Terminal) lies to the north of the project site. The project site consists of the pier deck located between Piers 31 and 33 (known as Pier 31½) and a portion of the Pier 33 shed building.

Project Background. In 2006, Hornblower Cruises was selected by the National Park Service (NPS) as the transportation service provider to take passengers to Alcatraz Island from San Francisco. For the past four years, Hornblower Cruises, doing business as Alcatraz Cruises, has provided ferry service to Alcatraz Island from Pier 31½, pursuant to a ten-year contract with the NPS, and an existing BCDC permit (BCDC Permit No. M85-13). Currently, the project site contains a "will call" window, a ticket sales office, two temporary canopies for ticketed passenger queuing, mobile vending carts, portable benches and water stations, and portable interpretive displays depicting the historic eras of the Island's evolution. In addition, managerial offices are housed within the Pier 31 bulkhead building and an existing café (Alcatraz Landing Café) and restroom facilities are housed within the Pier 33 shed. (see pages 2 - 6). Approximately 16 parking spaces are currently provided on-site for NPS employees and contractors on the southeast side of the Pier 31½ deck.

Proposed Project. Alcatraz Cruises proposes to renovate the existing structures and outdoor spaces at Piers 31½ and 33 to provide enhanced visitor services and an interpretive center



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associated with passenger ferry services to Alcatraz and Angel Island (see pages 7 and 9, “Proposed Long Term Site Plan”).

According to the applicant, all of the proposed work will comply with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the preservation of structures in a National Register District, and Alcatraz Cruises will seek LEED certification. Approximately 1.39 million guests visit the Island annually and the total number of guests annually is limited by the NPS’s General Management Plan guidelines that limit seasonal service levels based, in part, on large nesting bird populations on the Island. Consistent with the General Management Plan, Alcatraz Cruises makes passenger runs from Pier 31½ every 30 minutes between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., seven days a week. In addition, there are two evening departures to Alcatraz Island (6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.). Guests to the Island may remain as long as they like and return on any available vessel. Although the total number of passengers per visit fluctuates throughout the day based on guest flow, the total number of guests per scheduled departure is limited to approximately 300 passengers. A typical visit to the Island is approximately two hours.

Alcatraz Cruises proposes to make the following improvements (see pages 21 to 23 for elevations and pages 10 to 13 for 3-D renderings):

1. **Pier 33 Bulkhead Building.** Renovate the existing café and retail space by:
 - a. Re-designing existing canopies along the Embarcadero façade to comply with Port of San Francisco’s guidelines for the National Register District. Canopies would be oriented more horizontally rather than the present triangular shape.
 - b. Restoring the original window openings in the south façade of the bulkhead building, consistent with the Secretary of Interior Guidelines.
 - c. Renovating the existing doorways in the east façade to create double doors.
 - d. Replacing several windows in the east façade with a retractable glass-framed doorway to provide enhanced access to the plaza and east area beyond.
 - e. Fabricating and installing an overhead awning along the east façade to cover the existing casual dining and waiting area (see page 8, “Proposed Long Term Canopy Plan”).

2. **Within the Pier 33 Shed.** Improve the southern portion of the pier shed to establish a Visitor’s Center, concession stand, restrooms, and a staff break room by:
 - a. Installing glazing and demising walls around the perimeter of the leasehold space (to the south of the main drive aisle) and infilling the two existing roll-up door openings along the south side of the pier shed wall. Glazing would be placed in the roll-up doors so that the door can be lowered in front of the new glass for security during off-hours. Glazing on the interior walls would be installed above demising walls to retain views of the wooden rafter framing inside the pier shed.
 - b. Inserting a series of concession stand windows as part of the glazing into one of the roll-up door openings so that queuing takes place on the pier deck, rather than inside the shed.
 - c. Making life-safety and fire improvements that include: extending overhead sprinkler systems into the demised space; providing sufficient exit widths and openings; and

providing sufficient fire rated demising walls and rated glass to meet Building Code requirements.

- d. Replacing or refurbishing the existing industrial sash windows in the pier shed façade.
 - e. Providing visitor and staff bathrooms within the pier shed. Each bathroom would be equipped with low flow toilets, ADA accessible units and sinks, and baby changing stations (see page 26, “Enlarged Bathroom Plan”).
 - f. Providing up to twelve Class I bicycle lockers inside the shed space (for both employees and visitors).
3. **On the Pier 31½ Deck.** Install visitor assembly improvements that include:
- a. Visitor amenities throughout the plaza and waiting areas to include benches (using recycled plastic lumber), garbage and recycling container centers, pedestrian-scaled solar powered lighting, and directional and informational signage (see page 9, “Proposed Long Term Site Plan”).
 - b. An approximately 4,200-square-foot (60’ x 70’) pedestrian-scaled pavilion to cover the passenger waiting area and ticketing queues. The roof of the pavilion would be fitted with a sufficient number of photovoltaic panels to power the electrical needs of the ticket booth and pavilion. Several panels will be thin set, to allow daylight through and into the pavilion (see pages 8, 12 and 24).
 - c. An approximately 300-foot-long by 42-foot-high, pedestrian metal picket railing along the Bayside of the Pier 31½ deck (see page 13).
 - d. Interpretative displays and related artifacts placed on the pier deck that include: a scaled model of Alcatraz Island and the surrounding Bay floor with interpretative panels; a display of Golden Gate National Recreation Area artifacts related to the history of the Island, such as a cannon replica and a restored transport vehicle; a series of nine interpretive panels depicting the historic eras of the Island entitled the “Keepers and the Kept”; and a series of planters with native plants associated with the existing garden on Alcatraz Island (see pages 14 – 20).
 - e. An “iconic” sign and/or a series of decorative arches and bollards to create a sense of entry to the pier deck from the Embarcadero promenade. Entry signs would include the NPS’s logo, Alcatraz Cruises’ logo, and a park entrance sign (see page 21, “Entrance Design” and page 10 for 3-D rendering).
 - f. Most of the site would be publicly accessible (except for the ticketed pavilion area). In addition, an approximately 10,750-square-foot area of the Pier 31½ pier deck would be specifically reserved for public access and would include:
 - (1) An approximately 4,500-square-foot area (15 feet wide by 300 feet long) along the Bayside of the Pier 31 ½ deck. This area would include benches, recycling stations, overhead lights and a pedestrian railing along the edge of the pier deck.
 - (2) An approximately 6,250-square-foot area (25 feet wide by 250 feet long) connecting the Embarcadero promenade to the Bayside of the Pier 31½ deck. This area would be free of structures and interpretive displays to allow the public to freely move across the pier deck to the Bayside public access area.

(See pages 9, 11 and 12).

- g. A parking and vehicular circulation area within the east side of the pier deck that includes: 10 staff and 6 disabled public parking spaces with appropriate signage and pavement markings; bicycle racks for up to 24 bikes; motorcycle parking spaces for up to 10 motorcycles; and an electric charging station for alternatively powered vehicles (see pages 9 and 11).
4. **Along the Embarcadero Roadway.** Modify an existing driveway cut and curb alignment in front of Pier 31½ by:
- a. Relocating the drive-cut approximately 25 to 30 feet south of the present location to create a designated driveway to access the parking area.
 - b. Continuing the curb alignment where an approved sidewalk bulb-out removal project will occur, in front of Pier 31½. The new curb alignment will create an approximately 8½-foot- wide by 60 – 80-foot-long area for vehicular drop-off outside of the adjacent bike lane and Embarcadero Roadway.

(see pages 7, 9, and 25).

San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan Policies. The *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan* (SAP) requires that public access be provided free of charge to the public, be generally accessible at any time, and emphasize passive recreation and focus its proximity to the Bay and on the views and unique experiences that nearness to the Bay affords. The SAP also requires that “on-pier public access areas...incorporate unique and special amenities that draw the public to them, including cultural expression, (e.g., public art, event programming or unique views).”

BCDC Public Access Design Guidelines. The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access should feel public, be designed so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user’s appreciation diminished by structures or incompatible uses, and that there should be visual cues that public access is available for the public’s use, such as benches, trash containers and lighting. The *Public Access Design Guidelines* further state that public access areas should be designed for a wide range of users, should maximize user comfort by designing for weather and day and night use and that each site’s historical, cultural and natural attributes provide opportunities for creating projects with a “sense of place” and a unique identity.

Public Access Issues. At this conceptual stage, the project applicant and staff are seeking the Board’s advice on the proposal. Specifically, the Board should focus on whether the proposed improvements, the amount and quality of public access, and the vehicle circulation and parking, is appropriate and/or whether the proposed uses would impact physical and visual access to the Bay, in light of the SAP policies described above. The staff requests that the Board consider the following design questions during its review of the project:

1. Do the proposed improvements on the pier deck (specifically, the new canvas canopy over the café, the ticketed pavilion area, benches, and interpretive displays) adequately preserve views to the Bay and maximize the public’s enjoyment of the waterfront? Are there adequate view corridors from the Embarcadero promenade out to the Bay that would lead the public to and along the public access areas?

2. Does the site layout provide usable and inviting public spaces that are oriented to the Bay and adequately separated from the private (ticketed) areas? Are the public access spaces and corridors on the pier deck designed to provide adequate circulation around the pier deck?
3. Would the proposed public access areas accommodate the type of uses that would likely occur within these spaces? Are there alternative design treatments or public access improvements that should be considered?
4. Would vehicular access and parking on the east side of the pier deck conflict with the pedestrian use of this public access area? Should vehicular access be limited in this area? What methods should be used to reduce any potential conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles?
5. Do the interpretive displays help enhance the public access area? Would the number of displays and their arrangement on the pier deck enhance the public access experience for the non-paying public?