

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: James R. Herman Cruise Terminal and Northeast Wharf Plaza – Pier 27
City and County of San Francisco**
(For Board consideration on May 9, 2011)

Project Summary

Project Applicant: Port of San Francisco

Project Representative: Dan Hodapp, Port of San Francisco.

Project Site. The proposed project would be located at Pier 27, along the San Francisco waterfront, near the intersection of Greenwich and Lombard Streets with the Embarcadero, in the City and County of San Francisco. Pier 23 lies to the south and Pier 31 lies to the north of the project site. The site currently consists of the Pier 27 shed, a paved parking area between Piers 27 and 29 known as the “valley”, and a small “office annex building” located west of the shed along the Embarcadero promenade.

Proposed Project. The proposed project involves demolishing the Pier 27 shed and the small office annex building and developing an approximately 84,500-square-foot two-story Cruise Ship Terminal in its place, an approximately 130,680-square-foot (3-acre) Ground Transportation Area in the valley area between Piers 27 and 29 to provide vehicular circulation for cruise ship terminal, and an approximately 87,120-square-foot (2.5-acre) “Northeast Wharf Plaza” along the Embarcadero edge. In addition to the Pier 27 shed, a portion of the Pier 29 shed would also be demolished to in anticipation of the needs of the Thirty-fourth America’s Cup event authority. The Port has indicated that the development shown in the attached exhibits exceed the scope of work that can be afforded within the current project budget and that structures other than the cruise terminal building, such as cafes and retail buildings, as well as the full scope of improvements within the Northeast Wharf Plaza and the valley, will need to be funded by future projects or with an increased project budget.

San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan. The project as currently proposed is inconsistent with several policies of the *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan* (SAP). In particular, the SAP requires, in part:

- A “Northeast Wharf Open Water Basin” between Piers 19 and 27, including removal of at least 315 feet of the easternmost portion of the Pier 23 shed, to improve Bay views and provide opportunities for physical access between the Bay and piers;



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- Facilities within the Northeast Wharf Open Water Basin to be limited to temporary berthing of ceremonial and visiting ships that do not extend landward of the Pier 27 shed (as partially removed to create the Northeast Wharf Plaza);
- An approximately two-acre “Northeast Wharf Plaza”, opening up views from Lombard Street and the Embarcadero to the Bay, Yerba Buena and Treasure Islands, and the Bay Bridge, by removing approximately 56,000 square feet of the Pier 27 shed, and the Pier 27 Annex Building; and
- Design amenities at the Northeast Wharf Plaza that include: minor grade changes to create a transition from Herb Caen Way to the plaza; zones or activity areas to support both active and passive recreation uses; water-side uses, such as temporary, small craft tie-ups and hand-held boat launching; connections with the water’s edge that allow users to easily access the Bay; appropriate plaza features that would enliven public recreation and enjoyment of the Plaza; and some commercial uses that may encroach into the plaza and serve to activate it and adjoining public access areas.

The Port acknowledges that an amendment to the SAP is needed in order for the Commission to approve a cruise terminal at Pier 27 and to retain the Pier 23 shed, and has applied for such an amendment. The Commission will consider initiating the process for a possible SAP amendment on May 5, 2011, with a scheduled public hearing on the proposed amendment on October 6, 2011. The outcome of this planning process and the ultimate changes to the SAP policies will shape the final design and public access requirements of the proposed project. Although the Port seeks feedback from the Board on the conceptual design concept it is currently considering, the Port recognizes that the design of the project may change, depending on the outcome of the SAP amendment process. The Port recognizes that in such a situation, it may need to return to the Board with a revised design that is consistent with any final approved SAP amendment.

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies. The *San Francisco Bay Plan’s* policies on Public Access state that “a proposed fill project should increase public access to the Bay to the maximum extent feasible” and that the public access improvements provided as a condition of any approval “should be consistent with the project and the physical environment...” and “...should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline...” The policies require that the *Public Access Design Guidelines* be used as a guide to siting and designing public access consistent with a proposed project. The *Bay Plan* policies on Appearance, Design and Scenic Views further state that “all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay” and that “maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore.”

Board Advice. At this stage in the process, the staff is seeking the Board’s input and advice on the conceptual design of the Cruise Ship Terminal and the Northeast Wharf Plaza. In addition, the Board’s advice is sought on whether views from the Wharf plaza and Herb Caen Way will be diminished with the possible location of the Cruise Ship Terminal at this location and the retention of the Pier 23 shed, compared to what was contemplated or required in the current SAP. Below are some design questions the Board should consider in evaluating each of the project components.

1. **Cruise Ship Terminal.** The cruise terminal design concept is illustrated and explained on pages 18 - 35 of the attached exhibits, and includes plans for the proposed flow of passengers and vehicles within the Ground Transportation Area (“GTA”) on pages 24 and 25. The project

architects believe, the terminal has a strong connection to the site and it's greater surroundings both in terms of physical access and views. The eastern edge of the building provides access to a working apron as well as views of docked ships, and of San Francisco Bay when the terminal is used for special events. The south end of the terminal opens directly onto the Northeast Wharf Plaza allowing the terminal and plaza to activate each other. The embarkation lobby at the south end of the terminal also offers views of the city, including landmark structures such as the Transamerica Pyramid and Coit Tower.

Design Issues:

- Would the proposed siting, massing, and architectural treatments of the cruise terminal building adequately preserve and enhance views to the Bay, fit the historic and maritime character of the surrounding area, and maximize the public's enjoyment of the waterfront?
 - Would the proposed height of the building be compatible with adjacent public spaces? Are there adjacent or nearby areas outside of the Northeast Wharf Plaza that would provide attractive and usable public access to and along the shoreline?
 - Is the proposed Ground Transportation Area and the proposed operational flow of passengers designed to effectively minimize conflicts between vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians? Are there methods that should be used to reduce potential conflicts between bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles within the Cruise Terminal area or along the Embarcadero?
 - Are views of the Bay from the Northeast Wharf Plaza adequately maintained with the siting of a cruise ship terminal and its attendant ships at this location and the retention of the Pier 23 shed? If not, are the loss of Bay views adequately compensated by other "view sheds" rather than one "view cone"? (See pages 6 - 8 and 29 - 34 of the exhibits for view comparisons).
2. **Northeast Wharf Plaza.** The major components of the Plaza include the Waterfront Edge, Main Event Space, Multi-Use Recreation Space, Embarcadero Edge, and the Beltline Piazza, and are fully described on page 38 of the exhibits. Additional site plan studies that were evaluated for the Plaza include "Parallel Green" and "Crescent Walk", and are illustrated on page 39. The Northeast Wharf Plaza concept is illustrated and explained on pages 38 - 39 of the attached exhibits. Additional site component concepts are described on pages 42 - 48.

Design Issues:

- Does the proposed site layout provide usable and inviting public spaces that are oriented to the Bay and offer a variety of public open space uses? (See page 38 of the exhibits).
- Would the proposed public access areas accommodate the number of individuals and variety of uses that would likely occur in these locations? Are there other areas adjacent or nearby the Plaza that could provide attractive public access spaces?
- Would the proposed uses and improvements within the Plaza (cafes, retail buildings, outdoor seating, paving materials, and landscaping) help assure the vitality of the public spaces?

- Are there adequate connections between the Embarcadero promenade and the public access spaces and Plaza? Along the Embarcadero Edge, what is the best way to address the grade change? (See page 45 of the exhibits). Are the public access spaces and corridors designed to provide adequate circulation in and around the site?
- If budget constraints limit the quality and quantify of public access improvements at the site, what minimum public access features should be provided?
- Are there other design principles or goals that the applicant should apply when further developing the design of the Cruise Terminal and the Plaza?