

Waterfront Specific Plan Verbal Feedback Notes

On September 23, 2023, the City of Berkeley hosted an open house at Shorebird Nature Center, overlapping the Shoreline Clean Up. The goal was to engage the community, share the Draft WSP, and solicit feedback via green sticky dots to indicate elements the public supported, and sticky notes to capture their comments. 34 boards were displayed and broken into sections, including: Welcome, Introduction/Existing, Opportunity, Parks/Recreation, Land Use & Development, Design Guidelines, Supporting Infrastructure, Renderings, Exit. Staff facilitated the event, with staff at each section to introduce key topics, answer questions, engage 1:1 with stakeholders, and invite feedback via stickies and dots. The notes that follow summarize verbal feedback and staff notes from the Open House, by section. A separate document, the WSP Open House Board Feedback PDF captures the feedback recorded on the boards via dots and sticky notes.

1. Welcome table

- a. People were excited to give feedback, and even if they were not intending to engage, most wanted to participate after speaking with our welcome team.
 - i. Typically, had not heard about the WSP
 - ii. Were happy that “the city actually wants to hear what we want”
 - iii. Some people didn’t think they would comment, but opted to take the dots to mark what they liked.
- b. Anti-ferry group was intercepting people from the cleanup as they were approaching the WSP Open House.
 - i. When intercepted by the ferry group, many people turned around and left, and did not continue on to the WSP Open House they were originally heading to.
 - ii. A majority of the anti-ferry people were respectful, with a few exceptions
 1. One individual said “I’m going to shut this thing down” and mentioned a law suit. When he entered the Open House he was rude, and pushed a child who was sharing WSP feedback out of the way to yell at staff.
- c. 104 sign ins.
 - i. Some refused to sign in. Some entered without signing in. Some said they would sign in on the way out and may not have. 5-10% didn’t sign in.

2. Intro Boards: Existing Map, Jurisdictional Boundaries

- a. Provided new exposure to the scope of the Waterfront.
 - i. Explained looking at “existing” map and jurisdiction.
 - ii. Some people were completely new and thought this was the plan, not realizing everything that already existed.
- b. Anti-ferry individuals said this was all curated, and shared opposition.
 - i. One woman said none of her input is in any of these plans.
- c. Watersports users/kayak groups came through.
 - i. Discussed conditions in different areas.
 - ii. Several didn’t like the H.S. Lordships watersports access opportunity due to experience needed. After discussing tidal and wind patterns, and progression of abilities, they understood the potential value.

- iii. Understood process for any change due to the number of jurisdictions involved.
- d. Regular users had a lot of opinions on Caesar Chavez Park (CCP).

3. *Opportunity Boards: Goals, Opportunity Maps*

- a. Gave space, asked questions, engaged, guided toward stickies.
- b. Noticed young people, teens, kids were coming through and shared what they wanted to see at the Waterfront. This group was big-thinking and liked the visuals.

4. *Opportunity Boards: Renderings*

- a. Many people liked the renderings:
 - i. People spent time looking at them/exploring their contents.
 - ii. People commented that the visuals were helpful to understand what the plan could allow.
 - iii. Some expressed interest in improving the existing Shorebird Beach and hosting more shoreline clean up days.
 - iv. Many placed green dots and some stickies indicating support for the pier/ferry. While some people shared negative comments about the ferry or complaints on stickies and verbally, quiet visitors would come add a green dot of support and move on without engaging.
 - v. Later in the open house, people commented that the stickies made it hard to see the graphics.
- b. Some people did not like the renderings:
 - i. Many negative comments about the ferry, verbally and in stickies.
 - ii. Many negative comments about the renderings depicting the Berkeley Marine Center and Cal Sailing areas.
 - 1. Some who disliked the renderings refused to engage.
 - 2. Many people who disliked the WSP renderings disliked them because they mistook them for planned projects. After they engaged they were generally less troubled.
 - a. See the section below on rumors and misunderstandings for more detail.

5. *Supporting infrastructure*

- a. This section was dominated by ferry feedback, primarily negative commenters.
 - i. Positive ferry/pier feedback:
 - 1. People were interested and many were excited for the Berkeley Pier to return.
 - 2. This was evident from conversations, green dots and stickies.
 - ii. Concerns about the Pier-Ferry Project included:
 - 1. Concerns about using local money to provide regional transportation
 - 2. Wanted to put underground parking
 - 3. Concerns about carbon emissions because they think WETA would run diesel.

4. Some thought another tube for BART or another bus on the bridge would be better.
 5. Anti-Ferry individuals spoke about anti ferry in all sections of the WSP open house, not just the ferry / infrastructure section.
- b. There was almost zero discussion or questions on streetscape, transportation, mobility options. Most in the infrastructure section wanted to discuss the ferry.
 - c. People felt the parking problems were being kicked down the road.
 - d. People felt that the Pier-Ferry Project would usurp recreational use at the Waterfront.
 - e. Many people had comments about routine maintenance at Cesar Chavez Park. Staff engaged and discussed this with them.

6. *Planning - Land Use*

- a. This section was education and discussion-heavy.
- b. Many people were genuinely curious to learn about land use regulations proposed in the WSP.
- c. Some had initially negative reactions to land use section.
- d. Some of these individuals refused to engage citing commercialization of the waterfront.
 - i. Those who did engage felt relieved after a closer look at existing vs. potential land use breakdown and were glad to learn commercial uses would not usurp open space and parks. They also felt relieved about the process for commercial use review and thought behind areas for commercial uses, even if they disagreed with some of the proposed uses or any new uses in general.
- e. What people liked:
 - i. General:
 1. Liked the transition from Unclassified to thoughtful land use classifications, designations, and review.
 2. Liked the context sensitivity included in the Land Use Classification Map and Development Standard Area Maps.
 3. Liked the list of land uses included, and the intentional exclusion of inappropriate land uses which are not permitted.
 4. Liked the ease of permitting for benign/appropriate uses, and the intensity of permitting for more complex/sensitive land uses.
 5. Liked the appeal process and the review process.
 6. Liked that City Council approves all leases and licenses, and liked the additional layer of review. Liked that a clear process would exist, and would replace the cumbersome, unclear process now. Participants were surprised by the length of time for leases and licenses to be reviewed and approved even for benign uses.
 7. Liked that the plan considers appropriate areas for commercial, recreational, and park land.
 8. People felt comfortable with the land use designation proposals when they were explained.
 - ii. Existing Uses:

1. Liked that existing uses are considered in the draft plan and are allowed to remain.
 2. Glad that the boat yard could stay or get smaller.
 3. Liked that a new marine center would be permitted with a Use Permit (with a Public Hearing) in the draft plan.
 4. Liked that new club buildings require a Use Permit (with a Public Hearing).
 5. Liked that the red commercial areas are in existing developed areas/parking areas along the inner harbor, and not interfering with parks.
- iii. Recreation and Parks:
1. Liked the emphasis on recreation that wraps around the perimeter of the Waterfront.
 2. Liked the parks remaining parks.
 3. People were happy that open space was going to be prioritized.
 4. Wanted the Berkeley Yacht Club to be more open to watersports users and the public.
 5. Some liked that a future aquatic center or club house could be proposed under the draft WSP.
- iv. Commercial:
1. Liked that the WSP would set parameters for uses that can be proposed; i.e. a casino or residential wouldn't be permitted.
 2. Liked the mix of uses listed.
 3. Liked the level of review associated with benign vs more sensitive uses.
 4. People seemed receptive to development in the southern half of the Waterfront.
 5. Many liked the idea of beer gardens and outdoor food options. Some were opposed to beer gardens.
 6. Many said they would love more casual dining opportunities.
 7. Many did not support a hotel at all. Only heard "okay" feelings about hotels from a handful of individuals. Only heard active support from one or two people. People did like the idea of a hotel expansion at the Doubletree instead of a new hotel.

7. *Planning: Design Guidelines & Development Standards*

- a. Many didn't have experience with these. Staff explained breakdown of scale from land use to development standards to sections. Those who engaged felt increased confidence with the development standards outlined when they understood that structures would also be evaluated through the lenses of design guidelines.
- b. Those that engaged understood the draft Development Standards, and had specific things they disagreed with, i.e. "I like glazing, but please use bird safe glass only" or "as long as nothing is taller than 3 stories".
- c. Some thought nothing new should be built at the Waterfront.
- d. Comments were broad ranging about development standards - some were excited, others were not. As an example:
 - i. Some would rather have taller narrow buildings with smaller footprints.

- ii. Some would rather see only 3 story buildings.
 - iii. Some would rather see no new buildings at all.
- e. Aspects of development standards that people liked:
 - i. Liked thoughtful development standards.
 - ii. Liked the context sensitivity included Development Standard Area maps and tables.
 - iii. Liked the breakdown of areas. It felt logical.
 - iv. Liked that the setbacks were deeper along the western shore.
 - v. Liked that existing structures could remain.
 - vi. Liked that existing structures could need to go through design review if the WSP is adopted and if their nonconformity were increased.
 - vii. Liked that the setbacks were deeper in the new plan than some existing buildings at the Waterfront.
 - viii. Liked the ground floor transparency minimum.
 - ix. Liked the pedestrian entrance frequency minimum.
 - x. Liked the usable open space requirement.
 - xi. Understood that usable open space could be for a patio area or a rooftop deck. Lots of enthusiasm and support for a rooftop decks because they open up access to views in a special, differently enjoyable way.
 - xii. Liked the red commercial areas in spaces that already have development and parking areas.
 - xiii. Liked the finished floor elevation minimum.
 - xiv. Liked the building sub area coverage percentage because it made them feel confident that the whole waterfront wouldn't be developed/covered.
 - xv. Liked the active use requirements because they facilitated use of the structures.
- f. Development Standards people didn't like/concerns:
 - i. Many didn't support any development.
 - ii. Many people were concerned about heights of buildings
 - a. Concerns and questions about height (see format comments)
- g. Design Guideline boards
 - i. People generally liked the Design Guideline boards.
 - ii. People liked that these guidelines would help ensure appropriate development and context-sensitive structures.
 - iii. When design guidelines were referenced in the Development Standards section, most people were relieved that their concerns were ameliorated by the design guidelines drafted on the subsequent boards.
 - iv. The boards seemed to be self-explanatory and non-controversial. This section was least-staffed of all of them.
 - v. Many put green dots on the design guideline boards.
 - vi. People didn't have much to say about sustainability and resiliency but liked the boards.
 - vii. Many people engaged with the viewsheds board. Many were glad and relieved to see these guidelines spelled out. Some people didn't want to see anything taller than what's already here. People were concerned about impact that development could have on views from the Berkeley Hills.

8. *Check out*

- a. Many people were pretty positive as they exited the open house, regarding the experience, the information they learned, or the plan in general.
- b. Some people left unhappy or angry. These were primarily people with concerns about the Pier-Ferry Project.

9. *Rumors and misunderstandings that were cleared up:*

- a. Some people thought that the new roundabout at University and Marina is big so the City can bring in shipping containers to house hasty commercial development.
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood the width of the roundabout was specifically designed to ensure that the Marine Center can get large boats on trailers around the turn.
- b. Many people who came were upset and thought that the proposed ferry project would include diesel boats.
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood the Ferry boats would be electric, and there is budget allocated for this.
- c. Many people were concerned that the Marina was required to be “financially self-sufficient.”
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood this is not a requirement.
- d. Some asked where the residential high rises in CCP were shown in the WSP.
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood that residential uses cannot be added to CCP or the Waterfront.
- e. Many people thought that the entire Waterfront was a park and expressed confusion.
 - i. False. These individuals were educated on existing uses and existing and proposed land use designations.
- f. Many thought that the WSP would result in the majority of the Waterfront being overtaken by commercial development.
 - i. False. After engaging, the land use slides dispelled this.
- g. Many people misunderstood the four WSP renderings, and thought they indicated city-funded plans to construct the illustrations upon adoption of the WSP.
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood that the renderings are illustrative to indicate what could be proposed in a manner consistent with the draft plan, but they are not actual projects. Actual proposals would move through the approval process outlined in the WSP. The renderings show potential future development proposals that could be submitted over the next 20-50 years.
- h. Many mistook the Aquatic Center rendering as a plan to terminate Cal Sailing, Cal Adventures, raise their fees, wipe out low cost access to water recreation, and as a plan for the city to construct the aquatic center depicted without involvement from the existing south cove sailing clubs.
 - i. False. After engaging, participants understood that the city has no plans nor funds to construct such an aquatic center at this time, however it is a potentially feasible use over the next 20-50 years. The idea for an aquatic center was to house not displace the existing clubs, with a better facility that includes restrooms, community

- space, and potential café. After engaging, people also understood that the Aquatic Center Rendering would not terminate the uses in South Cove.
- i. Many mistook the Spinnaker West rendering as a plan to terminate the Marine Center and/or prohibit a marine center like it in the future.
 - i. After engaging, participants understood that the Spinnaker West area could accommodate the existing marine center, or a smaller marine center and some additional commercial uses under the draft WSP. They understood that a new marine center could be added through the applicable process. They were glad to learn that marine centers were not prohibited.
 - j. Many initial negative reactions were shared with staff. The majority of these stemmed from:
 - i. A dislike for the proposed pier-ferry project.
 - ii. A desire to preserve Cesar Chavez Park.
 - iii. A dislike for commercial development overtaking the natural environment at the Waterfront.
 - iv. A concern that there would not be parking for existing watersports users.
 - v. A concern that the four WSP renderings shown depicted actual construction plans.
 - k. Most who had these initially negative reactions did not have the background knowledge on what a specific plan is, misunderstood the Draft WSP, or believed false information. The above misunderstandings were dispelled for many.
 - l. Those who did engage with staff on these misunderstandings left feeling less negative about the WSP when they started.
 - m. Some who refused to engage left with disdain for the draft WSP, or some perceived elements therein.

10. Other comments:

- a. People were concerned about where the funds would come from for the Waterfront, long term.
 - i. People felt that the waterfront needed external support and should not be “self-sufficient.”
 - ii. Several got into taxation conversations and said funding should come from the very rich or the federal government.
 - iii. Someone said they wouldn’t vote for a tax measure if plans included a hotel.
 - iv. People wanted to know more about staff backgrounds/who funds us.
 - v. Some disliked federal government, some disliked capitalism.
- b. Some accused City Council of going ahead with whatever they want no matter what the process.
- c. Accused staff of being paid by developers to push an agenda. Demanded to know who paid staff to be here.
 - i. Explained not paid for Saturday hours, and that salary positions are funded primarily by boaters and waterfront tenants via the Marina fund.
- d. Demanded educational background of staff and expressed a hatred for planners.
- e. Asked why staff were here.
 - i. Softened up, began to listen and engage/give feedback after staff explained that their good intentions, care for the Waterfront, value for the way people interact

with space/place, quality of life enhancements, protection of what is truly special at the Waterfront, equitable access, etc.

11. Format of Open House

- a. This format involved primarily 1:1 and small group dialogue between staff and the public.
- b. People felt like it was lot of information to take in, but left more educated on the draft WSP and on planning in general.
- c. People valued the 1:1 conversation, and moving at their own speed. They valued spending time in the areas they wanted to, and benefited from seeing all the boards as they walked through.
- d. People had mixed feelings on the stickies being on the board. Some commented that couldn't see board with stickies. Others liked seeing the stickies. Participants were Facebook style "liking" yellow sticky comments using their green dots. Comments began back and forth conversations.
- e. Room for improvement:
 - i. Repositioning the welcome and wrap up tables for next time to funnel traffic better through the exit table (some thought exit was the entrance).
 - ii. People did not use the childcare option provided, potentially because it felt too crowded.
 - iii. "Adding a you are here" map for people to visualize it for each board would help.
 - iv. Adding the QR code with a link to the plan throughout the event would have helped. The QR code at the end was giving people issues because it linked to the WSP website not the plan itself. It would have been better if the QR code linked to the plan itself.

12. Summary:

- a. An estimated 110 individuals attended the WSP Open House to share feedback. The Open House was held inside and outside at the Shorebird Nature Center with approximately 30 poster board displays of graphics, charts and renderings from the draft WSP. Fifteen City staff from PRW and Planning were in attendance to engage and discuss the WSP with community members. Participants were given post-its and dot stickers to provide their feedback directly on the boards. Pictures of the boards are posted on the City's website.
- b. Feedback was wide-ranging. In general, participants expressed support for the WSP guiding principles. Many liked the renderings, and it was helpful for staff to explain that they were theoretical, not actual plans. Design guidelines were generally supported. Some expressed concerns about "commercialization" and "gentrification" of the Waterfront, while others supported new improvements, amenities, and development. Cafes, beer gardens, and casual dining were popular. Responses to development standards were mixed, with some indicating that they were appropriate, while others concerned about tall buildings or any new development. People liked the setbacks and roof decks and many felt the massing was appropriate. There was general support for the land use classifications and permitting path. Maintaining a natural feel at the Waterfront and connecting with the water was important. There was interest in usable open space, improvements to Shorebird Hill and Beach,

improved continuous walking paths and trails, and amenities like benches and signage. Accessibility for all and sustainability were broadly supported. Many wanted Cesar Chavez Park maintained as it is.

- c. The Pier-Ferry project was the biggest topic of discussion, with many opposing it, and some supporting it. Some silently supported the Pier-Ferry via notes and stickers on the Open House boards, especially when vocal opposition was present. Concerns cited included a fear that ferry parking and ferry users would squeeze out recreational uses at the Waterfront. A group opposed to the Pier-Ferry Project set up a table with anti-ferry propaganda, and spoke with many individuals before they entered the WSP Open House.