



**DATE:** September 28, 2018

**TO:** Joe Kirchofer and Kearstin Dischinger  
Reservoir Community Partners, LLC

**FROM:** Jeremy Shaw, Maia Small, Luiz Barata, and Seung Yen Hong  
San Francisco Planning Department

**RE:** Balboa Reservoir – Design Review Update

This memorandum summarizes design review comments and feedback from Planning Department staff on the most recent Balboa Reservoir sketch draft (discussed on September 20, 2018). Since many comments from the August 21<sup>st</sup> design review memorandum still apply, they are copied below for ease of reference. Presuming that Reservoir Community Partners is further developing the Sept 20<sup>th</sup> sketch, this memorandum supersedes the August 21<sup>st</sup> memorandum. While the entire memorandum should be taken into account, the core of the Department's original feedback is in **bold text** for clearer guidance. New comments based on the most recent sketch are **highlighted** below.

## DESIGN COMMENTS

### Site Design and Massing

Overall, the proposed building massing is well-integrated into both the proposed grading and existing neighborhood form; this takes advantage of vertical ground changes to minimize visual impacts of the new structures from the existing public realm.

On the south side, where the building sites are closer to transit and retail, the proposed built form appropriately provides an extension of the multi-family residential developments along Ocean Avenue. In the next stage of design refinements:

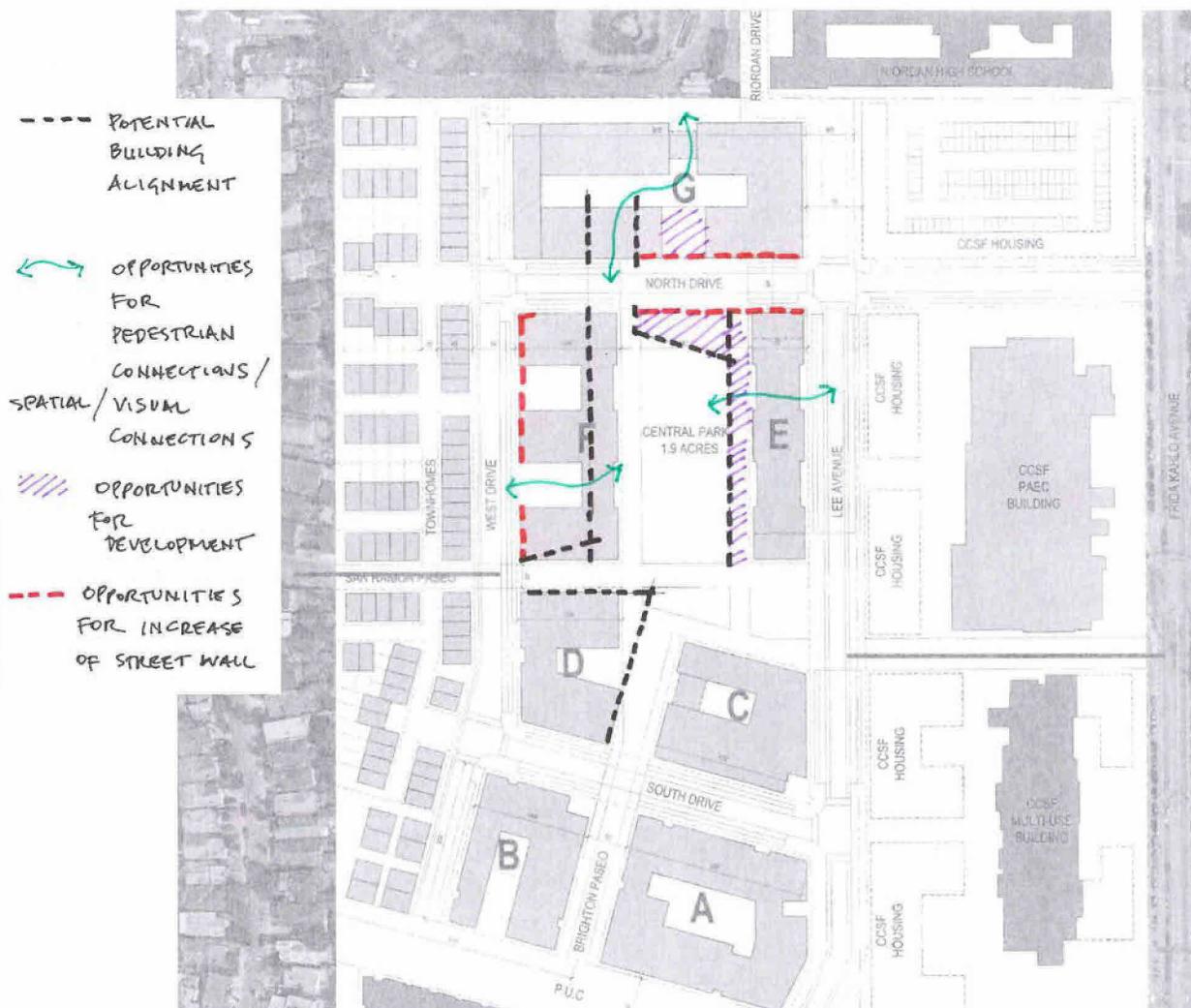
- The building massing and articulation should **respond to the unique situation at the rear of the Ocean Avenue buildings**, as well as to the recreational or other active uses that can co-exist within SFPUC's retained property. Careful architectural consideration of the southern frontages of Buildings A and B will be paramount to support pedestrian life in the retained property area.

On the west side, the scale of the townhouses and rear yards appropriately provide a transition to the single-family residential neighborhood of Westwood Park.

- **Note that the design and layout of the townhouse rows will be reviewed at a future date as the development proposal evolves.** This review will seek rear yard configurations that are compatible with the adjacent neighborhood; street wall and driveway configurations that support safe public sidewalk use; frontages that foster a cohesiveness with the multi-family

housing across West Street; and a natural transition into the stepping form of building heights across the roadway. **The townhouses and the multi-family buildings should feel like an integrated neighborhood;** the site design and massing of each should be designed to unite them across the street. Additionally, the **townhouse configurations should include public rights-of-way (either pedestrian or vehicular) that feel welcoming to all** by continuing the public sidewalks with similar materials and design aspects, presenting a clear street wall, and defining open space (either for private or public use) so that it is active and cared for.

Please refer to the diagram below in support of the following comments.



The reconfiguration of the open space and the design responses to ongoing feedback from City College and the neighborhood are both supported. But parcels E, F, and G could benefit from being less rigid and from more balanced proportions. Specifically, the Planning Department recommends:

- Revising Parcels E and F so their widths are balanced and centering the central park between West Drive and Lee Avenue;
- Finding opportunities to express the different angles/ alignments originally caused by Ocean Avenue/ PUC alignments deeper into the site (i.e. parcels E and F);
- Shifting the green/open space connection on parcel G to the west;
- Exploring a larger footprint for parcel E to create a stronger street frontage along North Drive.
- Adding pedestrian connections and/or visual connections on parcels, E, F, and G; and ensuring the space north of parcel G does not feel isolated or unsafe
- Further defining Brighton Paseo with the footprint of parcel D;
- Creating a strong street frontage at North Drive and West Drive.

## Open Space

The Planning Department supports the overall public realm network, as it connects to the surrounding areas and displays a clear hierarchy of pedestrian connections, linear parks, central park, and other open spaces. The Department especially supports the re-orientation of the park to the ends of creating more active, programmable open spaces; creating more open space adjacencies and opportunities for active ground floors; maintaining the connection to City College; improving the orientation to the north and Sunnyside neighborhood; and strategically using topography to support the public realm principles and parameters. As the park design is still in draft form, the Planning Department looks forward to the next iteration and continues to recommend:

- **Maximizing opportunities to activate the Central Park** with adjacent active ground floor uses;
- **Maximizing continuous, level open spaces or sections of the Central Park** to allow for more recreational program or programmable space near Building F and City College.
- **Creating a clear identity and program or potential use for all open spaces.**

## Streetscape and Street Frontage

### *Street Hierarchy and Sidewalk Widths*

Consistent with the Department's urban design goals, the streetscape plan and proposed street frontages articulate a clear street hierarchy and intentionally-defined, public-facing street walls. As mentioned in the previous diagram, the Department suggests re-designing footprints along North Drive and West Drive to improve the street frontage.

The Planning Department understands that street design is an ongoing discussion with SFMTA, the Fire Department, and Public Works. We continue to recommend roadway widths that serve the needs of each department while maximizing sidewalk widths for pedestrians. Until the next street design revisions, the recommendations from August 21<sup>st</sup> remain:

- North and South Streets should be categorized and designed as “Neighborhood Residential Lanes” to discourage speeding.
- Since Lee Avenue serves non-residential uses (including potential future housing and Performing Arts uses on City College property and the Reservoir’s central park), **it should maximize sidewalk widths for pedestrians**; in particular, the width for the pedestrian through zone should be wider than 6’. Provide a new street type, such as a Mixed-Use street per the Better Streets Plan, with 15’ sidewalks.
- Lee Avenue will also be the primary bicycle connection south to the Class III bike route on Holloway Avenue. The design of Lee Avenue should therefore minimize the potential conflict between cyclists and loading or TNC vehicles. **SFMTA and Planning staff recommend protected bicycle lanes on Lee Avenue.**
- **The Department does not recommend providing a 2’ courtesy curb zone.** While landing zones should be provided for passengers to get out of parked cars, tree wells should extend all the way to the curb. Removing this zone from the design should not reduce the total sidewalk width.
- The nine-foot sidewalk fronting the townhouses along West Street does not meet City standards. **West Street sidewalks should be twelve feet at a minimum.** Such a narrow sidewalk will make a very unpleasant pedestrian experience.
- The mid-block crossing of West Street (from the paseo between the townhouses) needs to have a treatment such as a rectangular rapid flashing beacon to promote pedestrian safety.
- Staff request street sections of the shared public ways for review in the next update.

### *Paseos and Shared Public Ways*

Overall, Planning Department supports a variety of streets and public ways that promote pedestrian access, provide usable public space, and break up the scale of buildings. The Planning Department recommends the following design treatments as the paseo and shared public way designs evolve:

- Design the paseos and shared public ways to maximize stormwater treatment and minimize conflicts between pedestrians, bikers, and e-scooter users.
- **Design an inviting pedestrian connection along the northern site boundary so that pedestrians feel secure** and comfortable. The mid-block connection from North Drive to the pedestrian paseo is critical to provide an inviting and secure environment.
- Consider chicanes and other traffic calming measures within shared public ways (securing fire access as needed).
- Paseo pedestrian paths should be a minimum of 12 feet if they are intended to be shared between bicyclists and pedestrians. **20-foot paseo pathways are ideal.**

### *Phase 1*

No indication of Phasing was provided with the Current Plan. **Provide more information about how pedestrians and bikers will navigate the site during Phase 1.** Consider providing a pedestrian path from Ocean Avenue to the project site through Brighton Way and a direct path from Unity Plaza to the Central Park during Phase 1.

### **Architecture**

The proposal does not provide enough architectural information at this stage for the Department to provide comments. As the design evolves, consult the San Francisco Urban Design Guidelines as a baseline for design expectations (<https://sf-planning.org/urban-design-guidelines>).

While the neighborhood should have an overall intentional cohesiveness in its planning, its individual buildings should express more original character to allow a variety of creative presentations for a more organic visual environment. Vary buildings heights and massing dimensions, avoid using the same materials with only different colors or shades, and find different architectural approaches that provide substantial differences in element hierarchy. To fulfill this goal, the Department recommends the use of multiple architects in the overall development project.

Recognize that the project faces unique uses and buildings on each of its sides: the CCSF campus, the mixed-use/ multifamily Ocean Avenue, the Westwood Park neighborhood, and Riordan High School. Each of these entities should affect and inform the architecture of the proposed buildings. Similarly, relate the design of the ground level with the adjacent types of open spaces.

Finally, the architecture and open space elements should highlight the history of the site whenever productive and feasible. Balboa Reservoir has been and should continue to be unique in the San Francisco landscape; its future neighborhood should reflect this complex history and varied edges in its shape, material expression, and architecture.