

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: June 26, 2024

From: Community Development

Subject: Capitola Wharf Master Plan Public Input Summary

Recommended Action: Direct staff to proceed with the final development of Wharf Master Plan and return to Council in the fall for adoption.

Background: In 2024, the Wharf Resiliency and Public Access Project (Project) was completed. The Project focused on critical elements, including widening the Wharf, addressing failing pilings, replacing the deck, and adding new restroom facilities.

Storms in December 2023 caused additional damage to both the Wharf and its structures, necessitating the removal of the buildings. In February 2024, the Council approved the demolition of the buildings and instructed staff to initiate the Capitola Wharf long-term planning process (Wharf Master Plan).

On September 12, 2024, the City Council approved a contract with Fuse Architecture for outreach, planning, and design services for the Wharf Master Plan.

On March 13, 2025, Fuse Architecture introduced six draft concepts for the Wharf Master Plan to the Council. Following the presentation, Council directed staff to add the existing Wharf use as a seventh concept and initiate public outreach.

Discussion: Following the March City Council meeting, the consultant team polished up the seven Wharf options. The seven options were created to provide starting points for public discussion and feedback, with the understanding that the final Master Plan may be a hybrid of the options and new ideas.

Public input on the Wharf Master Plan options was accepted through May. A survey of the Wharf options was posted for an entire month and was taken by 1,067 participants. Participants were asked to review the seven options and then provide feedback on their favorite option. After providing feedback on their favorite options, they were given the opportunity to comment on the other six options and then asked to weigh in on common themes/options related to the Wharf. The results of the survey are included as Attachment 1. Below is the list of options and the percentage of participants for which that option was chosen as their favorite.

Option 1: Open Space / 3.61%

Option 2: Open Space with Mobile Vendors / 13.04%

Option 3: Existing Fishing Concession / 4.81%

Option 4: New Fishing Concession / 2.91%

Option 5: Fishing Concession and Mobile Vendor / 12.47%

Option 6: Fishing Concession and Flexible Market Space / 20.66%

Option 7: Permanent Structures (Restaurant and Fishing Concession) / 42.23%

A community meeting took place on May 20 and was attended by approximately 50 participants. During the community meeting, the consultant provided an overview of the options and responses to frequently asked questions (ie: questions about cost and the integrity of Wharf). Participants were asked to share their thoughts and feedback regarding the Wharf in groups with open dialogue. They were then asked to provide feedback on their favorite option. A summary of the public input from the community meeting is included as Attachment 4.

Throughout May, staff introduced the seven concepts to Capitola stakeholder groups, including: the Art and Cultural Commission, Commission on the Environment, Historical Museum Board, Planning Commission, Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project (CWEP), Capitola Village and Wharf Business Improvement Area (CVWBIA), Coastal Commission staff, and New Brighton Middle School Student Council. A summary of the feedback from the stakeholder groups is included as Attachment 3.

The consultant provided the following key takeaways from public input:

1. Survey was taken by over 1,000 people which included a great representation of all age groups except under 18 (2.9%). The majority of participants either lived in Capitola (499) or Santa Cruz County (419).
2. There is significant support for permanent structures (*options 6 / 21% + option 7 / 42% = 627 votes / 63% overall*): The main design intention was to create permanent year round structures for either a marketplace (Option 6) or restaurant (Option 7); both with fishing concession. The difference between the costs associated with Options 6 & Option 7, is due to structure type and a restaurant with full kitchen being included in Option 7.
3. There is support for Mobile Vending (*Options 2 / 13% + Option 05 / 13% = 260 votes / 26% overall*): Mobile vendors could be incorporated into the overall master plan. If mobile vending options are pursued, the consultant recommends light weight mobile vendors (not food trucks) due to weight limitations and concerns related to competition with existing businesses in Village.
4. The least popular option was Option 4 (*29 votes / 3% overall*): This option simply replaces the existing fishing concession with a new enclosed fishing station.
5. There is support in all options to keep the hoist and add a lifeguard station for personal rescue watercraft vehicles and shade structures.
6. There was a mix of opinions related to the stage, planters, and enclosed boat area. The stage location was frequently commented on related to the location (interferes with fishing, decreases open space, and being either on the roof or deck).
7. Biggest concerns were cost and more frequent, destructive storms. Related to costs, the survey informed the public that Options 1 – 5 may be paid for through grant money or general fund money. Options 6 and 7 will likely require a public/private partnership. For example, new commercial structures on the Santa Cruz Wharf require a private investor to pay for commercial structure and lease the space from the City. Moffat and Nicholl, the wharf engineer team, will assist with final conceptual design to ensure storm mitigation to greatest extent possible.

Recommendation from Consultant Team: Given the strong support for Option Seven and significant interest in Option Six, Fuse Architecture recommends a hybrid approach incorporating elements from both proposed options. The hybrid would be based on the public input received, understanding of the local community, architectural expertise, and the structural integrity of the wharf to create the most economically feasible conceptual design. The hybrid option will be developed to provide future flexibility for potential public/private partnerships, aligning the determined design program with stated public intentions and investors' business interests. The Wharf Master Plan would be utilized for a future Request For Proposals (RFPs) to generate private investor interest.

Next Steps: Final Development of Wharf Master Plan. The final Wharf Master Plan will include a site plan, a description of uses and programmed area, conceptual massing and renderings, updated cost estimates, and an overview of applicable permits and CEQA. The Wharf Master Plan will be presented to the City Council in the fall for adoption. The information in the Master Plan is intended to be incorporated into a future Request for Proposals, pending Council approval.

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact at this time. Estimated construction costs for permanent structures with a commercial kitchen range from \$5.2 – \$6.2 million. Given these costs, a public/private partnership would very likely be required, in which a private investor pays for the commercial structures and leases the space from the City.

Attachments:

1. Wharf Master Plan Options
2. Survey Findings
3. Stakeholder Group Findings
4. Community Meeting Findings (to be published as additional materials)

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