

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 7, 2024

From: Community Development Department

Address: 1400 Wharf Road – Capitola Wharf

Project Description: Amendment for permit #20-0141 to the approved Design Permit and Conditional Use Permit for the rehabilitation, repair, and expansion of the historic Capitola Wharf. The amendment includes designs for a replacement entry gate, exterior finish to the new restrooms, lighting, a donor wall, and an updated monument sign. The Capitola Wharf is located at 1400 Wharf Road within the PF (Public Facilities) zoning district, at APN: 034-072-01, -02. This project received a Coastal Development Permit issued by the California Coastal Commission.

Recommended Action: Review Wharf Enhancement amendments for permit #20-0141 permit, provide direction on location on donor panels, exterior finish for restroom, and monument sign, and approve final design with recommendations.

Property Owner: City of Capitola

Representative: Jessica Kahn, City of Capitola

Background: Uses for the wharf varied during its early existence, but since the 1920s it has been utilized for sport-fishing and recreation. In 1999, the Capitola City Council adopted the Historic Structures List, which identified the Capitola Wharf as a historic structure.

The most recent structural alterations to the Capitola Wharf were in 1981 when significant portions of the wharf were replaced. More recently, during the 2019-2020 storm season, the wharf required emergency repairs due to wave damage.

On June 4, 2020, the Planning Commission approved substantial renovations to the Capitola Wharf that included a 7,400-square-foot widening, new bathroom facilities, modification to the location and width of the entrance gate, a replacement security gate, and repair/replacement work throughout. A condition of approval was added requiring the application be brought back to the Planning Commission for a final review of four design elements.

On January 5, 2023, the wharf sustained substantial wave damage, which destroyed approximately 43 linear foot section (925 square feet) of the structure, severing access from the shore. The wharf has been closed to the public for safety since the beginning of January 2023 due to storm damage.

On May 4, 2023, the Planning Commission approved the follow-up design review of wharf renovations which included replacement wharf piles, bathroom facilities, entry gate modifications, and security gate. The updated plans included a three-stall restroom manufactured by Exeloo located by the entrance of the wharf. Two design options were presented, one with vertical wood siding and one with horizontal wood board. Both options had stainless steel doors, extended front eaves, and raised vents. The PC approved the Exeloo in concept but directed staff to have Public Works and City Council consider alternatives to the restroom and specifically consider alternative full exteriors for the Exeloo restroom structure for increased compatibility.

On May 11, 2023, the City Council received an update on the wharf including an updated entry gate design, donor wall, lighting, and benches. Public Works presented the updates to the City Council including the conditions added by the Planning Commission related to the design of the prefab

bathrooms. The City Council supported moving forward with bidding the project as designed, which included the Exeloo prefab bathroom. Staff proceeded with the Exeloo bathroom with simplified panels in periwinkle blue to compliment the colors of the existing buildings on the wharf and neighboring pastels at the Venetian.

On December 14, 2023, the City Council received an update from staff and representatives from the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project (CWEP). CWEP fundraised \$400,000 for additional wharf enhancements to add to the overall wharf experience and aesthetic. The City Council directed staff to have the Planning Commission review the wharf enhancements including a future updated entry gate design. Following the meeting, Fuse Architecture was authorized to complete the final design package of the wharf enhancements including the entry gate, monument sign, donor wall, lighting, benches, and placement of public art.

On December 23, 2023, storm waves caused further damage to the wharf and the two commercial buildings serving the Wharf House Restaurant and Boat and Bait. The foundations were severely damaged and the structural integrity of the two buildings was severely impacted. On February 27, 2024, the City Council approved the removal of the commercial structures at the end of the wharf. In approving the demolition of the existing buildings, the City Council also committed to initiating public outreach regarding future activity and structures on the wharf.

Discussion: The current review is for the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project (CWEP) items as well as the possible exterior modifications to the public restroom. The CWEP enhancements include public art, a new entrance gateway, replacement benches, lighting, recognition panels, and an updated monument sign. The City currently has a separate request for proposals published for a kiosk and educational signage on the wharf which are not part of the current review.

Artwork

Two local artists were selected by the CWEP team to add to the visitor experience on the wharf. Local artist Sean Monohan will create bronze fish inlaid to the wharf decking. The bronze fish will create a meandering pathway down the wharf to points of interest with educational signs and viewing telescopes. Local artist, Kathleen Crocetti, is known for her tile mosaic work throughout the Santa Cruz region. Her artwork will be incorporated into the new entrance gateway and recognition panels with a maritime theme reflective of the wharf setting.

Entrance Gateway

The original design permit included relocating and widening the existing entrance gate, but the overall design was unchanged. The update includes moving the entrance back seven feet to align with the widened area of the wharf and modifying the design. The new location allows a rolling gate and access to the side stairs from the beach at all times. Another improvement in terms of function is the new archway has been designed to rotate open when necessary. Both features will improve response times during emergencies.

The updated design maintains the look and materials of the existing archway with the lettering of *Capitola Wharf* in similar font, materials, and ornamentation. The two pillars flanking the entryway will incorporate tiled mosaic panels on the front, interior side, and back created by the local artist Kathleen Crocetti. Each mosaic panel will measure 18 inches wide by six feet tall. Lighting is proposed under the pillar caps that will be down-directed to illuminate each panel. Artist Crocetti is currently in the process of public outreach design meetings for the panels. Within the first two meetings, a preference for a maritime theme reflective of the local natural setting was decided upon. The mosaic panels will be recessed and framed by fluted stone in an ivory color. Above the panels on the front façade, perforated metal will be cut to introduce two dragons facing inward flanking the entrance with a filigree metal fireball located centrally in the archway, taking cues from the historic dragon moldings within the Venetians. The dragons and fireball are said to symbolize community, prosperity, and peace. A simple eight-foot-tall vertical gate with the City logo is proposed to close off the wharf during times of

emergency. The metal gate will slide to the side and typically be located between the new restrooms and the guard rail. The city logo will be visible above the guard rail.

Recognition Panels

The wharf enhancements also include four donor panels and two City dedication panels. The four donor panels will list the names of residents, businesses, and visitors who contributed toward the \$400,000 in funding for the Capitola Wharf Enhancement Project. The two City dedication panels will list local leadership and funding sources related to the 1981 and 2024 Wharf Resiliency Projects. Mosaic artwork by Kathleen Crocetti will be incorporated into the 6 panels.

Fuse submitted two options for the location of the panels. The first option is for the four donor panels to be located to the right of the entrance gate and the two City dedication panels to the left. A second design was created in an effort to retain the previous look and feel of the entry with the focus being on the entrance archway and creating a new space for the donor panels overlooking Hoopers Beach on the widened portion of the wharf. Within the second option, the 1981 dedication panel would be located to the left of the entrance, and the 2024 dedication panel to the right.

Staff is seeking direction from the Planning Commission on the 2 options for the placement of the recognition panels.

Benches

The proposed benches match the existing wood and concrete benches throughout the village. New benches will be placed along the edge of the wharf looking out toward the water as they did prior to the wharf being damaged.

Prefabricated Restrooms

The previous approval included a new restroom located at the head of the wharf between Capitola Boat and Bait and the Wharf House restaurant with a new one-stall, Portland Loo design restroom. The location will be plumbed but the Portland Loo will not be installed at this time due to the removal of the adjacent commercial structures.

The three-stall Exeloo restroom was approved by the Planning Commission during the May 4, 2023, meeting with a condition that the City Council or staff consider alternative exterior options for increased compatibility with the wharf. The updated design included a factory-coated metal finish in periwinkle blue to complement the existing buildings on the wharf and adjacent colorful Venetians. Within the current review, the project architect included an additional alternative of pressed bamboo which is highly durable and will fade over time and blend in with the wood on the wharf. A second alternative is to paint the periwinkle blue an alternative color. The architect include several colors to pick from if the Planning Commission would prefer paint over pressed bamboo.

Staff is seeking direction from the Planning Commission on the final color and finish of the three-stall restroom by the wharf entry.

Monument Sign

The project includes consideration of a new sign and a raised platform at the corner of Wharf Road and Cliff Drive. City-installed signs do not require a sign permit pursuant to §17.80.030(F). The new monument sign is located on the seaward side of Wharf Road closest to Stockton Bridge. The base of the sign is composed of repurposed wharf planks and has a curved bronze panel with stainless steel lettering. The font will match the font of the archway on the wharf. Accents of filigree are also proposed within the monument sign to tie back to the aesthetic of the wharf archway. The project also includes a raised circular platform composed of repurposed wharf planks which will lift the Wharf to Wharf finish line marker, making it more visible.

Alternative monument signs are referenced in the design pack, including:

1. Repurposed wharf plank wood base with stainless steel letter (remove the bronze-treated metal background)
2. Repurposed wharf plank wood base and attach a bronze panel with laser-cut lettering that is internally illuminated.
3. Cement board form monument sign with inset lettering similar to the Capitola Library.

Staff is seeking direction from the Planning Commission on the monument sign.

Lighting

The project includes new 14-foot light poles manufactured by Lumca. The poles will be a smooth finish steel grey. The poles and hoods have a polyester powder coating specific to protect the poles in humid environments with salt spray conditions. The hoods are down-directed in alignment with night sky standards. The LED lights are available with different levels of distribution related to the Illuminating Engineering Society's standards. Public works staff will work with the manufacturer to ensure the light distribution respects the marine setting.

Coastal Permit

The California Coastal Commission (CCC) is responsible for authorizing the Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the entirety of the proposed project because the entire wharf is located within the Commission's retained coastal permitting jurisdiction. A CDP was approved by the Coastal Commission on July 8, 2021, and issued to the City on July 19, 2021. Additions to the original scope of work due to storm damage were authorized under the 2021 approval as a minor modification. The City is in the process of obtaining a Coastal Development Permit for the demolition of the commercial structures.

CEQA: As part of the existing approval, the City adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was also adopted prepared pursuant to Section 21081.6. The MMRP has been incorporated into the existing conditions of approval by reference to ensure that impacts are reduced to a less than significant level. Additionally, the project has been reviewed and found to be consistent with Section 15300.2(f) for modifications to historical resources.

Conditions of Approval:

1. The project, with the added Capitola Wharf Improvement Program items, affirms the original approval and findings of the Design Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the rehabilitation and repair of the historic Capitola Wharf. The project is conditioned under the existing Conditions of Approval for permit #20-0141 by the Planning Commission on June 4, 2020, except as modified through conditions imposed by the Planning Commission during the May 4, 2023, and March 7, 2024, hearings.

Attachments:

1. **1400 Wharf Road – Capitola Wharf Enhancements**

Report Prepared By: Sean Sesanto, Associate Planner

Reviewed By: Austin Westly, Deputy City Clerk

Approved By: Katie Herlihy, Community Development Director