Town Hall Meeting Summary  
October 26, 2010 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.  
City Hall Council Chambers  

At the request of the Waterfront Subcommittee, staff held a Town Hall meeting to review the draft land use concept and strategies for the Waterfront Master Plan and receive input and comments. The following comments were received:

1. The speaker recommended maintaining a strong fishing environment and public access to nearby parking. He stated that the marina is for boats so the plan should address the needs of boats. Open space should be flexible and should allow for both parking and festivals. The Passenger Depot should have a use that signifies history, such as a veteran’s museum.

2. The speaker noted that activity areas should be focused in the Custom House Plaza, not in waterfront parking lots. Parking is offered for free to locals, which creates easy access for locals to Wharf #1 businesses. The speaker noted that at one time in the past, the public had access along the outer wall. She also noted that the restrooms at the Maritime Museum and the Harbormaster’s Office should remain accessible to the public.

3. The speaker noted that the fishing pier referenced by the previous speaker had been torn down. The speaker encourages the replacement of lost public access, and to also provide a ramp that creates access to Wharf #1. He also noted the importance of linking Custom House Plaza to the waterfront. He questioned the need for a new outer wall merely to provide additional slip capacity. He noted the unsightliness of the East Catellus site and that because the City spent a large amount of money to purchase the site, its use as a storage yard is disrespectful. The site should be designed to invite residents to the Window on the Bay. He also noted that the waterfront planning process lacks consensus. He suggested that the light rail project should be placed on a ballot for voter approval. He explained that the terminal station located at the Maritime Museum would create interference with the existing parking and would be too far away from the MST transfer opportunities located at Tyler and Del Monte.

4. The speaker spoke in favor of locating a veteran’s museum in the Passenger Depot.

5. An outrigger club member and festival organizer noted that Monterey already hosts many festivals and advised against converting the waterfront parking areas into festival space. He also noted the availability of parking in the garages. He supported the preservation of existing waterfront uses, such as Monterey Bay Kayaks and the Del Monte Beach House and that the presence of the kayak use brings people to the waterfront during regattas and other events. He noted that kid’s playgrounds are located nearby at Dennis the Menace park and are not necessary at the Window on the Bay. He noted that the public fishing off Wharf #2 poses a hazard for kayak users.

6. Another outrigger club member noted the congestion that occurs on Del Monte Avenue’s west-bound right lane and questioned the destination of those travelers. He noted the need to meet the needs of both the recreational cyclists and the “sports” cyclists that move more quickly. He advised keeping the bicycles separate from the pedestrians. He cautioned against locating a tall ship in potentially shallow areas that are susceptible to low tides. Finally, he noted that construction of a new outer wall is an expensive proposition.
7. The speaker noted that Wharf #1 is always like a festival; that it is packed with people. He cautioned against eliminating parking from the waterfront. He noted that the City should invest in its infrastructure first before taking on new high-cost capital projects and that the City Council should be presented with the costs for improvements to help them decide. The waterfront plan should identify simple, cheap, near-term improvements. He supports the light rail terminating outside of Monterey. Finally, he cautions that the waterfront plan is raising the anxiety of the Wharf #1 business owners.

8. The speaker supports the need to improve the “Lower Harbor” area but that the City should be smart about how to acquire funding. The speaker also supported the light rail project and the concept of investing in mass transit instead of roadway capacity.

9. A Yacht Club member expressed her understanding that the proposed draft land use concept will have many phases for implementation: short term, medium term, and long term. She suggested that the dry boat storage remain accessible and that the appearance should be improved. Waterfront signage should effectively direct traffic to destinations, including the Tyler Street garages. The speaker opposes any new commercial development on Wharf #2.

10. The speaker advocated for his project to bring the Western Flyer to Monterey on a permanent basis and to use the Passenger Depot as a museum showcasing the sardine industry.

11. A Wharf #1 business owner commented that a second outer wall should be placed further north to double the additional slip capacity created by the first new outer wall. He expressed support for the new commercial business on Wharf #2. He noted that the waterfront parking is not convenient for Wharf #1 patrons – that they tend to walk towards Wharf #2 instead of Wharf #1 seeking a destination. He also noted that though the waterfront parking lots are empty from October through March, they are necessary for commerce. He also expressed his dislike of parking garages in general. He acknowledged the success of Wharf #1 as a commercial area in that there are no vacancies. He also supports the amphitheater concept but not in place of waterfront parking.

12. A landscape architect spoke in support of the overall outreach process for the plan. Her feeling from the evening’s commenters was that most of the speakers are trying to protect the status quo. She stated that the process has taken in everyone’s input and that the City now has the opportunity to update and beautify the waterfront and maximize environmental benefits. She also stated that the new outer wall will not bring enough bang for the buck. She supports the pedestrian promenade and parks along the waterfront and feels that the location of the existing surface parking lots is a shame. She hopes that the Citywide study will support the relocation of at least a portion of the parking elsewhere. She supports expanding Window on the Bay to Figueroa and to move the boat storage elsewhere. She warned against the “Disneysification” of the waterfront, such as the permanent location of a tall ship. She supports the idea of a veteran’s museum.