

LOCAL NEWS

Sausalito approves new ferry landing project plans



A Golden Gate Ferry docks in Sausalito on Feb. 26, 2020. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)



By **KRISSY WAITE** | kwaite@marinij.com

PUBLISHED: February 9, 2024 at 2:02 p.m. | UPDATED: February 9, 2024 at 2:06 p.m.

Sausalito has approved a new design for its ferry landing project after months of redesign and public uproar.

The City Council approved a design review permit for the project in a unanimous vote on Tuesday. The recommended plan details a new landing plaza, provisions for pedestrians and cyclists to queue in the same direction, and widened walkways.

The plan was created by SWA Design Group and a group of residents that appealed an earlier proposal.

“This project plan is better than it was the last time we all saw it,” Councilmember Janelle Kellman said. “This is just a vision, you all know we don’t have all of the money to execute on it, but it is a plan and then that plan will help staff understand where to move forward with this and where to spend our time and grant opportunities.”

The meeting was a continuation of a previous appeal hearing during which the ferry landing design was given to consultants to develop. Designers presented the new plan at the hearing Tuesday.

Specifically, the City Council unanimously approved a motion to withdraw the previous application in order to settle the appeal. In a second motion, the city approved the community group’s recommended plan.

Bill Hynes, a planner with SWA Design, presented the plans. He said the state of the landing involves “a series of unfortunate events” that obstructs views and creates safety hazards.

The proposed plan includes building a pedestrian landing plaza at the intersection of Tracy Way and Anchor Street; making Tracy Way pedestrian traffic only; removing the long crosswalk across Bridgeway; widening the sidewalk to 14 feet in front of the Sausalito Yacht Club and installing a new crosswalk and signage at the driveway entrance; and adding a bioretention basin for stormwater and a 10-foot sidewalk in the eastern part of parking lot 1.

Jacques Ullman, a member of the community group that opposed the earlier plan, said having the bicycle and pedestrian lines queuing in the same direction onto the east side of parking lot 1 is beneficial because it reduces congestion around Vina del Mar Park.

“Pedestrians can circulate freely, bay views are opened up and the downtown shoreline experience is enhanced for everyone,” Ullman said. “The Planning Commission plan maintains the current mess of bicycles in the plaza and clutter of bicycle racks on Tracy Lane.”

The original plan for the landing, presented to the council in March 2022, split the line of pedestrians and cyclists waiting for the ferry in opposite directions. When the plan was presented to the Planning Commission, it was edited to have pedestrians and cyclists line up in the same direction because there was concern about the cyclists in front of the Sausalito Yacht Club.

In September 2023, the commission approved the edited project in a 3-2 vote. Shortly after, more than 40 residents filed an appeal against the commission’s approval, stating the original design was a safer option.

In November, the City Council voted unanimously to modify the commission’s plan to reflect the appellants’ suggestions.

Hynes said the new plan is an opportunity to embrace sustainability. More than 30 trees planted in landscaping will sequester carbon and mitigate the “heat island effect” with the shade they provide. Pollution from stormwater can be filtered through the basin. Currently, water from the parking lot drains directly into the bay.

“Bioretention basins and stormwater features can be functional and beautiful,” Hynes said.

Vice Mayor Joan Cox said it would take about 20 years for the trees to reach maturity and have the same carbon reducing effect as any trees they cut down.

The design calls for the removal of 31 parking spots, which would cost the city about \$200,000 a year in revenue, according to Wayna Kwan, the parking programs manager. However, he said the lot is only full for about 90 days of the year.

Hynes suggested several ways to mitigate the parking loss, like removing a city storage container that blocks spaces, restriping lots, creating motorcycle spaces and making lot 5 free employee parking.

A more detailed plan will be presented following a cost analysis, according to Hynes. He also said the sustainability aspects of the project could be used to secure more funding.

City staff estimated the Planning Commission’s approved plan would have cost \$1,796,180, while the latest plan would cost about \$2.3 million, close to what the original plan submitted in March 2022 would have cost.

The ferry landing project is funded by a Federal Transit Administration grant administered by the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District. The city, which is also the applicant, is contributing \$100,000, according to a staff report. The total budget is \$2.5 million.

Councilmember Jill Hoffman expressed concern over the location of the bike queuing line. She agreed the current system is not optimal, but noted that it was created by the bike and pedestrian safety committee to resolve an issue with rental bikes. She said a management plan should be researched.

“It does take a certain amount of staff to physically manage directing people on the bikes,” Hoffman said. “That is a cost to the city.”

David Parisi, a traffic engineer with Parametrix, said the proposed design would greatly improve safety for cars, pedestrians and cyclists. He noted that the widening of sidewalks and the yacht club driveway would discourage potential loitering.

“So the crosswalk would now be treated more like an intersection instead of a raised crosswalk going through it,” Parisi said. “Most people know not to hang out in the middle of crosswalks and intersections.”

Residents filled the chambers, many to express their support of the new design. More than 200 letters were submitted to the council on the topic, according to Mayor Ian Sobieski.

Cheryl Popp, a resident of Sausalito for more than 30 years and waterfront business owner, said the community group’s plan should be approved without delay or modification.

“A safe, sustainable, vibrant and attractive downtown is obviously important to me,” Popp said.

Adrian Brinton of Sausalito said he supports the project and that the revenue loss from parking can be made up by improving the system.

“We can fix the meters so people actually pay all the time,” Brinton said. “We should stop using parking as sand that we throw in the gears to stop these projects from moving forward.”

Carolyn Revelle with Sausalito Beautiful said the new plan is the best for safety, aesthetics, tourism and the environment. She said the benefits far outweigh the parking loss.

“The Sausalito waterfront is one of our most distinctive assets, yet visitors arriving by ferry find not a welcoming plaza but a parking lot,” Revelle said.

The council directed staff to get professional cost estimates; identify phases of construction that can be built with the grant funding; begin construction-level drawings on those phases; and find additional funding. SWA Design was contracted to continue the design work.

“It is time to move forward and have faith in ourselves that we can adapt to the situations going forward,” Sobieski said.

Start your day with us: Our top stories curated & delivered to your inbox each morning.

Email Address

Sign Up

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Use](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and to receive emails from Marin Independent Journal.



2024 > February > 9

