

City of Brisbane

Agenda Report

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Community Development Director via City Manager

SUBJECT: Sierra Point Design Guidelines Update

DATE: Meeting of December 12, 2011

City Council Goals:

To promote economic development that stabilizes and diversifies the tax base. (Goal #4)
To develop plans and pursue opportunities to enhance open space. (Goal #7)
To preserve and enhance livability and diversity of neighborhoods. (Goal #14)
To preserve the unique current character of Brisbane. (Goal # 16)

Purpose:

To provide the City Council with background information on the Sierra Point Design Guidelines Update which will be subject to formal City Council review in 2012. The updated Design Guidelines dated December 2011 have been provided to the City Council and are also available for public review at the Brisbane Library, Brisbane City Hall and on the City of Brisbane web site (<http://www.ci.brisbane.ca.us>) This study session is not a public hearing but rather is intended to provide background information and afford the City Council the opportunity to ask questions and obtain information that will be useful in any future upcoming public hearings scheduled on this matter.

Recommendation:

That the City Council receive and file this report.

Sierra Point Design Guidelines Update:

Existing Conditions

The Sierra Point Design Guidelines were originally adopted in the early 1980's to facilitate the development of Sierra Point as a suburban office park. The vision for Sierra Point has remained unchanged for the past 25 years, although the Design Guidelines have been amended from time to time to address particular building sites or design standards. While it has been over 25 years and numerous economic cycles since the overall project was approved, it remains only half built

out. To this day it remains a place that has not lived up to its development potential. On the other hand its track record in providing community benefits is somewhat more positive, although still somewhat mixed. The Marina, Bay Trail and related facilities are important community amenities that have been completed and are enjoyed by residents, workers, and visitors alike. The hotels are an important revenue source to the City. On the other hand, the lack of development has limited the tax revenues generated, the highly anticipated destination restaurant planned near the marina has not come to fruition and the overall project retains an unfinished feeling and character.

Why Update the Design Guidelines?

In 2005 a number of factors led to the City and community to re-evaluate Sierra Point and its future. City-sponsored placemaking workshops conducted in 2005 by Project for Public Spaces (PPS) identified community concerns regarding the auto-oriented suburban office park model of development and the limited range of public uses and community amenities provided at Sierra Point. The slow pace of development was contrasted with more robust development occurring in other nearby areas, particularly in adjacent South San Francisco. A recurring theme from the workshops was that with its bayside location and attractive setting, Sierra Point offers a great deal of unrealized potential as a community asset and location for business. The conclusions from the PPS Placemaking report pertaining to Sierra Point are attached to this report. The 2005 PPS workshops coincided with renewed private development interest in Sierra Point. The combination of these factors stimulated considerable dialogue and interest in what might be done to improve Sierra Point as both a community amenity and business destination.

Design Guidelines Update Process

In 2006, the City retained the services of urban design firm Freedman Tung and Sasaki (formerly FTB) to evaluate Sierra Point in light of the concerns stated above, and to update the Design Guidelines as needed. Major objectives of the consultant's work program were to enhance the value of Sierra Point to the community by improving public spaces, providing more opportunities for community use, and developing a stronger sense of place for the project. Other objectives included evaluating the relationship of private development to the public spaces and determining if this relationship could be strengthened to the benefit of both the public and Sierra Point's employees and businesses.

This led to an extensive review process involving workshops with Sierra Point property owners, a joint City Council/Planning Commission workshop, multiple Planning Commission workshops and hearings, as well as several meetings with ad hoc committee formed by the City Council's Economic Development Subcommittee. This ad hoc committee was composed of Councilmember's Conway and Lentz, as well as several community members who have been active participants in the review process to date. A timeline is attached outlining the steps in the process undertaken to date. The draft guidelines are also attached for information.

Design Guidelines Update- Proposed Revisions

As noted above, the objectives of the update process were to improve public spaces and increase opportunities for public use of Sierra Point and create a stronger sense of identity for the project to the benefit of both the public and businesses.

Substantive changes proposed to guidelines to achieve these objectives include:

- Refinement of the project objectives to incorporate enhanced public use and public space and stronger project identity and sense of place.
- Modification of the Master Plan to incorporate an approximately 1 acre public park/green at the easterly terminus of Sierra Point Parkway at Marina Boulevard, and extension of public green space from this new feature easterly to the bayfront linear park. This feature is intended as the public focal point for Sierra Point, serving as a community gathering space activated by public, visitor and employee usage, and supported by surrounding land uses.
- The illustration of a two property exchanges that would likely be considered to implement the proposed Master Plan (see attached Exhibit). The first involves an exchange of land owned by the City with land owned by UPC and currently planned as a hotel site. The second involves exchanging a leasehold held by a developer (OPUS) on City-owned property at the easterly terminus of Sierra Point Parkway in exchange for a leasehold on a different city-owned site westerly of the newly proposed public park (see attached exhibit).
- Establishment of parameters for the above-referenced land or leasehold exchanges which might be formally considered in the future to implement the updated Design Guidelines.
- Establishment of a vehicular and pedestrian system surrounding the new park which supports the design and function of this new amenity;
- Reconfiguration of buildings surrounding the park to address and support this new feature;
- Design guidelines for the streetscape and buildings surrounding the new park, including specific standards and guidelines to protect the existing linear park along the east and north boundaries;
- Recognition of Sierra Point Parkway as the key gateway into Sierra Point, and design guidelines for streetscape and landscape improvements to upgrade the appearance of this roadway in recognition of its gateway function;
- Establishment of a wayfinding program, a consistent program of signage and interpretation to help the public more easily utilize Sierra Point.

Issues of Concern

As the proposal has moved forward a number of concerns have been raised, and draft design guidelines have been modified to address an number of these issues. A brief summary of the major issues raised to date follows:

- ***The existing Design Guidelines are adequate and there is no need for to change anything.***

Staff response: The update process stems from community-based observations that Sierra Point has not lived up to its potential as either a community amenity or business destination, and addressing this fundamental issue is the purpose of the ongoing update process as authorized by the City Council in 2006. Ultimately this as a policy decision for the City Council to make.

- ***The proposed land swap represents a giveaway of City property to private developers.***