



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

General Plan Referral

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Date: October 19, 2012

Case No. **Case No. 2012.1239R**
Major Encroachment Pedestrian Tunnel Winston Drive

Block/Lot No.: Blocks 7299/005, 7296/004, 7298/004, 7298/006

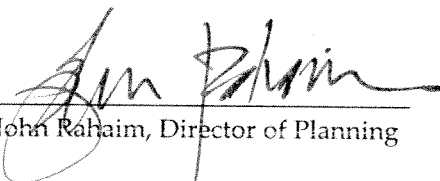
Project Sponsor: Wendy Bloom
San Francisco State University
Capital Planning, Design and Construction
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Recommendation: Finding the project, on balance, **in conformity** with the General Plan, as described further in this Case Report.

*Recommended
By:*


John Rahaim, Director of Planning

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

San Francisco State University (Herein referred to as SFSU) is requesting a Major Encroachment Permit for the construction of a pedestrian tunnel below Winston Drive to provide a safe and accessible connection from the main campus to the site of a new Recreation Wellness Center. The site slopes steeply downward toward the campus on the south side of Winston Drive, with the result that the elevation at the bottom of the slope is approximately 24 feet below street level and approximately 20 feet below the proposed project site on the north-side of Winston Drive. Thus, the underpass will provide a gradual (5% slope or less) ADA-compliant walkway between the campus land on the south and north sides of Winston Drive. The tunnel will be approximately 15 feet high and 20 feet wide. Its length will be kept to a minimum (likely around 80 feet) to serve as a gateway between the center and main campus.

In addition, as currently exists, a staircase will provide access to the street level from the campus on the south side of Winston Drive. SFSU will replace the existing crosswalk concurrent with the construction of the tunnel and install a new sidewalk along the entire length of the project site on the north side of Winston Drive. Currently, there is no sidewalk along most of the project site fronting Winston Drive. With these improvements, ample pedestrian access will be provided at both the street level and lower level.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project has received a Categorical Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Class 1-Existing Facilities. Minor alteration to existing facilities or topographical features involving no expansion of use.

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE AND BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Pedestrian Tunnel on Winston Drive has been reviewed for consistency with General Plan policies and with the Eight Priority Policies of the Planning Code Section 101.1. **In general, we find the project to be in conformance with the City's General Plan**, consistent with the Eight Priority Policies and the Objectives and Policies of the General Plan as described in the body of this letter. The project sponsor has indicated through correspondence with the Department that additional improvements to Winston Drive and to the tunnel not detailed in their submittal will be included as a part of the tunnel's construction and/or the construction of the planned Recreation and Wellness Center. These additional improvements are summarized below.

- Pedestrian lighting leading to and through the tunnel
- Landscaping in and around the tunnel area.
- Art /design elements to make the tunnel welcoming and inviting.
- Improvements to the existing crosswalk on Winston Drive.
- Improvements to the north side of Winston Drive that brings the existing sub-standard sidewalk into conformance with the San Francisco Better Streets Plan's design recommendations (Including a minimum sidewalk width of 10 feet).

These improvements would bring the overall project and its relationship to Winston Drive into closer conformance with the General Plan, and the Department urges the project sponsor to ensure such improvements are included in the project as constructed.

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

POLICY 1.9

Increase the clarity of routes for travelers.

Currently, due to topography of the site, pedestrians wishing to travel across Winston Drive from the central SFSU campus must climb up stairs to get to street level. The proposed pedestrian tunnel would provide a clear, ADA-accessible path of travel beneath the road to facilitate a more direct connection

between the central campus and the new recreation amenities proposed for north of Winston Drive. A stairway will remain in place for those wishing to travel up to street-level, so no loss of connectivity is anticipated.

POLICY 4.3

Provide adequate lighting in public areas.

Although the lighting plan for the tunnel and surrounding areas has not been finalized, the project sponsor has stated there will be ample pedestrian lighting in the tunnel and on the pathways leading to it. SFSU is also investigating using an "artful display of video images" to enliven the experience of walking through the tunnel and increase pedestrian safety.

POLICY 4.8

Provide convenient access to a variety of recreation opportunities.

As proposed, the tunnel would provide the SFSU campus community with more direct and convenient means of access to a major new recreation facility.

POLICY 4.12

Install, promote and maintain landscaping in public and private areas.

Although landscaping plans have yet to be finalized, the project sponsor has stated the tunnel portals and pathways leading to them will include landscaping.

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

POLICY 1.2

Ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians throughout the city.

The proposed tunnel is being designed with pedestrian comfort in-mind, presenting an alternative to climbing up a staircase to cross Winston Drive. The project sponsor has indicated that tunnel will be designed with ample lighting and other design amenities.

POLICY 2.4

Organize the transportation system to reinforce community identity, improve linkages among interrelated activities and provide focus for community activities.

As proposed, the tunnel may help reinforce community identity at SFSU by serving as a gateway between the central campus and its new recreational facilities north of Winston Drive.

OBJECTIVE 23

IMPROVE THE CITY'S PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION SYSTEM TO PROVIDE FOR EFFICIENT, PLEASANT, AND SAFE MOVEMENT

The proposed tunnel would be an enhancement to the pedestrian circulation system in the SFSU campus area. It should also be noted as part of the larger Recreation Wellness Center Project, SFSU is working with SFMTA to craft a traffic calming plan for Winston Drive. In front of the new Recreation Wellness Center site, the project sponsor has stated that a new sidewalk will replace the non-existent or substandard sidewalk on the north side of Winston Drive consistent with the design parameters established in the *San Francisco Better Streets Plan*.

POLICY 23.3

Maintain a strong presumption against reducing sidewalk widths, eliminating crosswalks and forcing indirect crossings to accommodate automobile traffic.

POLICY 23.6

Ensure convenient and safe pedestrian crossings by minimizing the distance pedestrians must walk to cross a street.

The project sponsor has indicated that in conjunction with construction of the tunnel, surface-level improvements would be made to the existing surface-level crosswalk on Winston Drive. The project sponsor has stated that safety enhancements such sidewalk bulb-outs into the parking lane or traffic islands are proposed to improve the pedestrian crossing experience. In addition, a new surface-level crosswalk across Winston Drive is proposed to the east of the tunnel location, centered on the new Recreation and Wellness Center site.

POLICY 23.9

Implement the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the city's curb ramp program to improve pedestrian access for all people.

The proposed tunnel would provide an ADA-compliant access route between the central SFSU campus and the new recreation facilities north of Winston Drive.

OBJECTIVE 27

ENSURE THAT BICYCLES CAN BE USED SAFELY AND CONVENIENTLY AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION, AS WELL AS FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES.

As proposed, the new tunnel would provide bicyclists a more-direct path of travel between the SFSU central campus and the recreation facilities north of Winston Drive that avoids bicycling uphill or carrying bicycles up the existing staircase to cross the street.

PROPOSITION M FINDINGS – PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1

Planning Code Section 101.1 establishes Eight Priority Policies and requires review of discretionary approvals and permits for consistency with said policies. The Project is found to be consistent with the Eight Priority Policies as set forth in Planning Code Section 101.1 for the following reasons:

Eight Priority Policies Findings

The subject project is found to be consistent with the Eight Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 in that:

1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced.

The project will not displace or restrict access to any existing neighborhood-serving retail business or restrict further opportunities.

2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhood.

The Project considered would have no adverse effect on existing housing and neighborhood character.

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced.

The project will not adversely impact the City's supply of affordable housing.

4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking.

The project will not adversely impact traffic patterns, neighborhood parking, or Muni services.

5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for residential employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced.

The proposed project will not displace any industrial business.

6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

The project will not impede emergency vehicle access.

7. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

No landmarks or other historic buildings will be adversely impacted by the proposed project.

8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development.

The project will not affect any parks or open spaces.

**RECOMMENDATION: Finding the Project, on balance, in-conformity
with the General Plan**