



GENERAL PLAN REFERRAL

September 22, 2022

Case No.: 2022-008134GPR
Address: 721 John Muir Drive
Block/Lot No.: 7283/004
Project Sponsor: North San Mateo County Sanitation District
Applicant: Thomas Piccolotti – (650) 991-8200
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North San Mateo County Sanitation District
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Daly City, CA 94015
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Recommended By: 
AnMarie Rodgers, Director of Citywide Policy for
Rich Hillis, Director of Planning

Finding: The project, on balance, is **in conformity** with the General Plan.

Project Description

The City of Daly City (Daly City) is proposing to implement the Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvements Project (Project) in San Mateo and San Francisco counties. Daly City has been working closely with SFPUC to develop and implement the project, which provides mutual benefits to both cities. Much of the land the project will be constructed on is within APN 7283-004, which is owned by the City and County of San Francisco. Daly City is currently coordinating with SFPUC's legal and Real Estate Services Divisions to transfer by deed or ROW the lands within APN 7283-004 to Daly City for the project. However limited portions of the project within this parcel fall within the existing John Muir Drive ROW.

The Project is intended to upgrade the Vista Grande storm drain system, which is a regional stormwater system that drains the northwestern portion of Daly City and an unincorporated portion of San Mateo County – areas originally within the watershed of Lake Merced. In the 1890s, the stormwater system

components, including the Vista Grande Canal and Tunnel, were built to divert stormwater away from the Lake to an outlet at the Pacific Ocean. However, the existing Canal and Tunnel do not have adequate hydraulic capacity to convey peak storm flows, and this periodically causes backup of Tunnel flows into the Canal and flooding during peak storm events in adjacent low-lying residential areas and along John Muir Drive. The upgrades associated with the Project are designed to accommodate severe storm event runoff and prevent this substantial flooding on and around John Muir Drive.

Daly City is proposing the Project to address this storm-related flooding while providing the additional benefit of augmenting the water level of Lake Merced. The region lacks alternative green infrastructure options that would otherwise address the volume of stormwater that the Project seeks to accommodate – the drainage basin watershed comprises existing land uses that are essentially built-out, and any future MS4 stormwater green infrastructure requirements would mirror small scaled in-fill projects aimed at addressing non-point source pollution.

Thus, the purpose of the Project is to provide flood protection for the 25-year/4-hour storm in the lower Vista Grande subbasin while managing water elevations and improving water quality by reusing stormwater beneficially in Lake Merced. The Project has two primary mutually supporting objectives: to address storm-related flooding that periodically occurs as a result of inadequate storm drainage capacity in Daly City's Vista Grande Canal and Tunnel, and to augment water surface levels in San Francisco's Lake Merced for management of both lake volume and water quality. Both Daly City and San Francisco are independently obligated to address these respective issues. The Project represents an approach that would jointly address both agencies' obligations while minimizing disturbance and maximizing the beneficial reuse of stormwater. Two other important objectives of the Project are to improve recreational access and reduce litter transfer and deposition along the beach below Fort Funston by improving the existing ocean outlet structure, and to minimize construction-related costs, habitat disturbance, and disruption to recreational users by maximizing use of existing rights-of-way, easements, and infrastructure.

The Project would consist of the following:

- Partial replacement of the existing Vista Grande Canal to incorporate a gross solid screening device, a constructed treatment wetland, and diversion and discharge structures to route some stormwater (and authorized non-storm water) flows from the Vista Grande Canal to Lake Merced and to allow lake water to be used for summer treatment wetland maintenance, consistent with the Lake Management Plan (LMP);
- Modification of an existing effluent gravity pipeline so that it may be used year-round to convey treated effluent from the nearby North San Mateo County Sanitation District Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to the existing ocean outlet and diffuser by gravity, and abandoning the force main pipeline;
- Modification of the existing Lake Merced overflow structure to include a siphon that allows water from the Lake to flow into the Canal and Tunnel;
- Replacement of (1) the existing Vista Grande Tunnel to expand its hydraulic capacity and extend its

operating lifetime and (2) the Lake Merced Portal to the Tunnel; and

- Replacement of the existing ocean outlet structure and a portion of the existing 33-inch submarine outfall pipeline that crosses the beach at Fort Funston.

Environmental Review

The project was fully evaluated in the Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvement Project Environmental Impact Report, certified by the City of Daly City on 12/11/2017, State Clearinghouse Number 2013032001.

General Plan Compliance and Basis for Recommendation

As described below, the proposed ballot box installation is consistent with the Eight Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 and is, on balance, in conformity with the General Plan.

Note: General Plan Objectives are shown in **BOLD UPPER CASE** font; Policies are in **Bold** font; staff comments are in *italic* font.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

ENSURE A WELL-MAINTAINED, HIGHLY UTILIZED, AND INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Policy 1.1

Encourage the dynamic and flexible use of existing open spaces and promote a variety of recreation and open space uses, where appropriate.

The proposed project will ensure that the water quality and level of Lake Merced is improved, as well as a better outlet onto the beach at Fort Funston, which will result in an improved and well-maintained recreation and open space system.

Policy 1.4

Maintain and repair recreational facilities and open spaces to modern maintenance standards.

The proposed project will improve recreational access and reduce litter transfer and deposition along the beach below Fort Funston by improving the existing ocean outlet structure, and to minimize construction-related costs, habitat disturbance, and disruption to recreational users by maximizing use of existing rights-of-way, easements, and infrastructure.

Policy 1.10

Ensure that open space is safe and secure for the City's entire population.

The proposed project will alleviate flooding during peak storm events in adjacent low-lying residential areas and along John Muir Drive, ensuring safer access for area users.

OBJECTIVE 4

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY, HABITAT VALUE, AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OPEN SPACES AND ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN THE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT OF OUR OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Policy 4.1

Preserve, protect and restore local biodiversity.

Policy 4.2

Establish a coordinated management approach for designation and protection of natural areas and watershed lands.

Policy 4.3

Integrate the protection and restoration of local biodiversity into open space construction, renovation, management and maintenance.

Policy 4.4

Include environmentally sustainable practices in construction, renovation, management and maintenance of open space and recreation facilities.

The proposed project will better manage water elevations and improve water quality by reusing stormwater beneficially in Lake Merced, which will benefit local biodiversity. Similarly important objectives of the Project are to improve recreational access and reduce litter transfer and deposition along the beach below Fort Funston by improving the existing ocean outlet structure, and to minimize habitat disturbance.

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

EMPHASIS OF THE CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN WHICH GIVES TO THE CITY AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS AN IMAGE, A SENSE OF PURPOSE, AND A MEANS OF ORIENTATION

Policy 1.4

Protect and promote large-scale landscaping and open space that define districts and topography.

The proposed project will protect Lake Merced and the Fort Funston beach open spaces by better regulating lake water level and improving water quality, while also minimizing litter deposit onto the beach.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

ACHIEVE A PROPER BALANCE AMONG THE CONSERVATION, UTILIZATION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF SAN FRANCISCO'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Policy 1.1

Conserve and protect the natural resources of San Francisco.

Policy 1.2

Improve the quality of natural resources.

Policy 1.3

Restore and replenish the supply of natural resources.

The proposed project will conserve and protect the water level of Lake Merced, increasing water volume and the quality of the water.

OBJECTIVE 5

ASSURE A PERMANENT AND ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF FRESH WATER TO MEET THE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Policy 5.4

Promote nonpolluting recreation uses of fresh water lakes and reservoirs.

The proposed project will ensure that adequate water levels and minimized flooding of Lake Merced will continue to provide opportunities for boating and fishing and other recreational opportunities.

COMMUNITY SAFETY ELEMENT**OBJECTIVE 1**

REDUCE STRUCTURAL AND NONSTRUCTURAL HAZARDS TO LIFE SAFETY AND MINIMIZE PROPERTY DAMAGE RESULTING FROM FUTURE DISASTERS

Policy 1.10

Examine the risk of flooding due to climate change-related effects, such as storm surges, changes in precipitation patterns, and sea level rise as well as adaptation actions that will reduce population, built environment, and ecosystem vulnerability due to these threats.

The purpose of the Project is to provide flood protection for the 25-year/4-hour storm in the lower Vista Grande subbasin while managing water elevations and improving water quality by reusing stormwater beneficially in Lake Merced.

WESTERN SHORELINE AREA PLAN**OBJECTIVE 5: LAKE MERCED**

PRESERVE THE RECREATIONAL AND NATURAL HABITAT OF LAKE MERCED

Policy 5.1

Preserve in a safe, attractive and usable condition the recreational facilities, passive activities, playgrounds and vistas of Lake Merced area for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors to the city.

The Project will maintain the water level of Lake Merced and will improve water quality, ensuring continued and safe recreation and preservation of natural habitat.

OBJECTIVE 9: FORT FUNSTON**CONSERVE THE NATURAL CLIFF ENVIRONMENT ALONG FORT FUNSTON****Policy 9.1**

Maximize the natural qualities of Fort Funston. Conserve the ecology of entire Fort and develop recreational uses which will have only minimal effect on the natural environment.

The Project will reconstruct the Fort Funston beach outfall to ensure that minimal litter accumulates and that the natural qualities of Fort Funston are not compromised.

Planning Code Section 101 Findings

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:

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 would not have an adverse effect on existing neighborhood-serving retail uses and will not have a negative effect on opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of neighborhood-serving retail.

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

The storm drainage project is predominantly below ground, and will not impact housing or neighborhood character, and will not impact the cultural and economic diversity of the neighborhood.

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

The Project would not have an adverse effect on 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 would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets

or neighborhood parking in San Francisco County.

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 resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;

The storm drainage project does not include office development and does not affect industrial or service sectors.

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

The project has been developed in partnership with SFPUC to supplement water levels in Lake Merced. SFPUC uses Lake Merced as an emergency water supply source, thus the project helps the City's earthquake preparedness.

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

The Project would not have an adverse effect on the City's Landmarks and historic buildings.

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

The Project would not have an adverse effect on the City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas.

Finding:	The project, on balance, is in conformity with the General Plan.
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