San Francisco Planning

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GENERAL PLAN REFERRAL

May 30, 2023

Case No.: 2023-003285GPR
Block/Lot No.: Block 6220/ Lot 002
Project Sponsor: City and County of San Francisco – Recreation and Parks Department (SF RPD)
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Recommended By: _____
Josh Switzky for Rich Hillis, Director of Planning

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

Project Description

The Recreation and Park Department (RPD) proposes permanently converting a segment of John Shelley Drive into a promenade for walking, biking, and rolling (including use by wheelchairs and other non-motorized uses), thereby restricting private vehicle access.

John Shelley Drive is a roadway in John McLaren Park and fully within RPD's jurisdiction. During the pandemic, John Shelley Drive was temporarily closed to private vehicles to create space for social distancing. Pedestrian and bike counts performed during this time show that the roadway receives nearly the same number of visitors as a promenade (320 daily average) as it does as a roadway for vehicles (360 daily average).

The Project, Shelley Promenade, would enhance the park experience for visitors by offering a long, flat, car-free, and paved space with vista points and connections to Philosopher's Way on a roadway that did not previously have sidewalks. The Project would extend from the north entrance of the Upper Reservoir parking lot to approximately 350 feet northwest of the west intersection of John F. Shelley Drive with Mansell Street, approximately 2,100 feet (0.40 miles) in total. It would be a facility for a variety of active transportation

modes, including—but not limited to--bicyclists, walkers, runners, scooter riders, skateboarders, and motorized wheelchairs, while maintaining access for emergency vehicles and other permitted vehicles. Parking access from the north parking lot, parking on street at the south end, and pathway and trail connections to the promenade, allow people who use a car and/or have a disability to access the space.

Environmental Review

The project was determined to be categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 on 5/31/2023 (Planning Case No. 2023-003285ENV).

General Plan Compliance and Basis for Recommendation

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

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS FOR SAFE, CONVENIENT AND INEXPENSIVE TRAVEL WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO AND BETWEEN THE CITY AND OTHER PARTS OF THE REGION WHILE MAINTAINING THE HIGH QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENT OF THE BAY AREA.

POLICY 1.2
Ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians throughout the city.

POLICY 1.6
Ensure choices among modes of travel and accommodate each mode when and where it is most appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 2

USE THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AS A MEANS FOR GUIDING DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT.

POLICY 2.2
Reduce pollution, noise, and energy consumption.

OBJECTIVE 19

ESTABLISH A STREET HIERARCHY SYSTEM IN WHICH THE FUNCTION AND DESIGN OF EACH STREET ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE CHARACTER AND USE OF ADJACENT LAND.

POLICY 19.5
Mitigate and reduce the impacts of automobile traffic in and around parks and along shoreline recreation areas.

OBJECTIVE 28

CONSIDER THE SIDEWALK AREA AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM.

POLICY 28.2
Partially or wholly close certain streets not required as traffic carriers for pedestrian use or open space.

OBJECTIVE 29

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

POLICY 29.9
Identify and expand recreational bicycling opportunities.

By restricting vehicle access and creating a dedicated space for people to walk, bike, and roll, the Project would prioritize and improve safety for clean, quiet, and energy-efficient non-auto modes. It would also provide a long, flat, and paved place away from cars for learning to bike, which is a key component to recreational bicycling and making bicycling accessible to all ages and abilities. Today, this section of roadway does not include sidewalks and car traffic segments the park's open space, compromising safety, park vistas, and the enjoyment of slow movement. The roadway is not serving as a required traffic carrier and during its temporary use as a promenade it was heavily visited. These factors make it a good candidate for closure and conversion to a promenade.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

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

POLICY 1.4
Prioritize the better utilization of McLaren Park, Ocean Beach, the Southeastern Waterfront and other underutilized significant open spaces.

OBJECTIVE 3

IMPROVE ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY TO OPEN SPACE

POLICY 3.1
Creatively develop existing publicly-owned right-of-ways and streets into open space.

POLICY 3.4
Encourage non-auto modes of transportation – transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access—to and from open spaces while reducing automobile traffic and parking in public open spaces.

The Project would take advantage of an existing low-volume, publicly-owned street to create space for people to walk, bicycle, and roll as well as connect the open space in the park on either side of the street. The Project would lead to better utilization of McLaren Park by offering the unique amenity of a long, flat, and paved space, away from cars. The roadway's temporary use as a promenade during the pandemic showed the potential to draw additional visitors to the park. The Project would reduce automobile traffic and parking in the park and facilitate the movement of non-auto modes within the open space.

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 have no impact on neighborhood-serving retail uses because the location is in a park.

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

   The Project would have no impact on existing housing and neighborhood character because the location is within a park.

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

   The Project would not impact or impede affordable housing supply because the location is within a park.

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

   The project area does not include a Muni transit route and would not overburden streets or neighborhood parking as the street had very low parking occupancy based on previous parking surveys and had very low vehicular traffic volumes of fewer than 500 vehicles per day.

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 Project would not affect industrial and service sectors as the Project would not include commercial office development and the location is within a park.

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

in an earthquake;

The Project would not hinder possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake. The roadway is fully within a park and does not act as an emergency vehicle route.

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

   No landmarks or historic buildings would be affected by the Project because the location is within a park.

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

   The Project would maintain existing sunlight and creates new opportunities for people walking and biking to access vistas.

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