



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

Date: July 8, 2015
To: Recreation and Park Commission
Through: Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager
From: Dawn Kamalanathan, Director of Planning and Capital Management
Subject: St Mary's Square Extension Design

Agenda Wording

Presentation and discussion only regarding the status of construction developments at 500 Pine Street and 350 Bush Street and the agreements providing for the transfer to the City of a parcel on the roof of the planned building at 500 Pine Street to expand the area of St. Mary's Square.

Background

In March 2015, the Recreation and Park Commission directed staff to finalize escrow documents with the developers of 500 Pine, and to address outstanding community concerns on the design of the St Mary's Square Expansion Area ("the Expansion Area"). The Expansion Area includes 6,127 sf of area located on the rooftop of the 500 Pine Street building.

Since that March 2015 meeting, all documents relating to the transfer of the St. Mary's Square Expansion Area to the Recreation and Park Department – including the Property Transfer Agreement, as well as the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions– have been finalized and await execution by the General Manager Phil Ginsburg and Director of Property John Updike.

On May 14th, in a meeting with community representatives, Recreation and Park Department staff, and the developers of 500 Pine, attendees agreed to host a brief and focused community outreach process to revisit the design of the St. Mary's Square Expansion. The process, as agreed upon, included two public meetings: 1) a smaller meeting of community stakeholders and institutions to identify core goals for the park, and 2) a larger meeting for the general public to review and comment on final changes recommended by the architects of the St Mary's Expansion Area.

The first community stakeholder meeting was held on June 5, 2015. Attendees included staff from the Recreation and Park Department, Chinatown Community Development Center, Chinese Historical Society, Chinese Cultural Center, and Self-Help for the Elderly. Heller Manus architects Ignatius Tsang and Wing Lee presented proposed design modifications in response to community feedback received prior to the meeting:



- Security gate and fence between existing St. Mary’s Square and the proposed Extension Area was eliminated in order to provide for greater integration.
- Planter areas were reduced to achieve 4,485 SF (as compared to prior 3,465 SF) as the maximum usable area with a corresponding maximum occupancy of 299 people per the Building Code requirements (as compared to prior 231 person maximum occupancy). As a result, the revised park design provides more area for the use of public than the area shown in the original design.
- Planter design was consolidated to provide for one large open space for potential programs and activities such as Tai-Chi and Zumba classes.

Community members then shared concerns about the design and provided specific suggestions for desired changes. Participants agreed that the design should be further refined to address the following issues:

- Re-configuration of the metal fence design so that lurking is not promoted.
- Better and seamless transitioning between existing St. Mary’s Square and proposed Expansion Area.
- Investigation of lighting strategy to ensure proper illustration that addresses both safety and security issues
- Recognition that the potential public art element should be highly visible from the rest of the existing St. Mary’s Square. The location would be revised as the southeastern corner of the proposed garden.
- Commitment by the design team and owner to host bimonthly meetings to solicit feedback from the community on the development of the public art component.
- Incorporation of a historical plaque acknowledging the Kong Chow Temple into the proposed Expansion Area, although the location(s) is yet to be confirmed.

Stakeholders also agreed that St. Mary’s Square, as an underutilized open space in Chinatown, offers a unique opportunity to absorb park users and uses from other more heavily impacted park sites, such as Portsmouth Square.

The Recreation and Park Department convened a second public meeting at the Betty Ann Ong Recreation Center on June 24, 2015. As a result of the feedback received at the meeting, Heller Manus further refined the design of the Expansion Area as follows:

- Spacing of the proposed bamboo will be refined so that the proposed landscape design will not completely segregate the office from the park.
- The proposed Expansion Area layout will not include equipment/system for one unique group of user as so that the proposed open space will be highly flexible for local-community partners to develop different events/activities such as Tai-chi, and etc.
- Parapet details will be developed for code compliant requirements. It could potentially integrate the lighting design for the park.

Community members also repeatedly requested that the Recreation and Park Department explore funding two major improvements to St. Mary’s Square, currently under the Recreation and Park Department’s jurisdiction:

- 1) Removal of the planters located at the entrance to the Expansion Area. Currently, there are two low, shallow, broad planters that flank the entrance to the Expansion Area. The planters offer little



to no aesthetic value, and often function as an attractive nuisance for loitering and vandalism. Removal of the planters would significantly improve the visual integration of the Expansion Area with the rest of the park.

- 2) Installation of a fence around the edge of St. Mary's Square. Park users and staff share concerns about safety and cleanliness at St. Mary's Square. Installation of a perimeter fence could deter inappropriate park activities.

Staff agree with these recommendations, and support their implementation should funding become available.

Recommendation

This item is for discussion only and requires no action by the Commission.

Attachments

Proposed concept design for the St. Mary's Expansion Area

