



AGENDA NO: C-1

MEETING DATE: January 16, 2024

**AGENDA CORRESPONDENCE
RECEIVED BY THE PLANNING
COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC REVIEW
PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

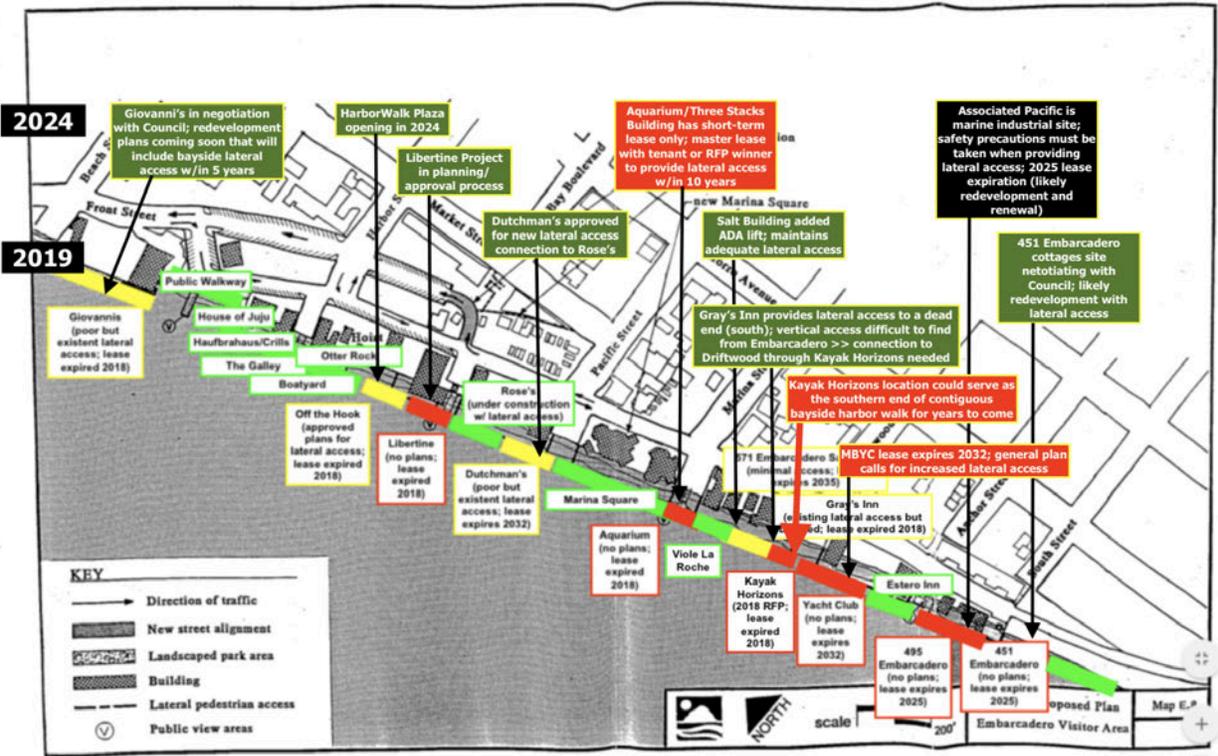
Planning Commission,

Before I comment on today's proposed project at 551 Embarcadero (Lease Site 62/62W), I wish to thank the applicants for their interest in expanding their footprint on the public waterfront. Any time we have the opportunity to join small, adjacent parcels, the City should strongly consider doing so in order to increase possibilities and decrease the partitioned nature of some of our smaller lease sites. I'd encourage the Planning Commission to recommend a formal merger of lease sites to prevent future complications that could emerge with partial sales or redevelopment, and to hold the combined 551/561 Embarcadero project to the development standards of a single parcel, which, in effect, it will become.

I also wish to reiterate to city staff and the Planning Commission the somewhat backward nature of our standard Consent of Landlord process whereby Council negotiates and grants exclusive leasing rights to a Tidelands Trust site prior to PC or any other advisory board setting eyes on any proposed plans for design and use. That said, any opportunities for the Planning Commission and/or Harbor Advisory Board to be involved earlier in the process will inevitably increase the likelihood of later approval; today's concept review is a small step in the right direction.

Now, as a longtime advocate of public access along the publicly owned and controlled waterfront, I want to take a moment to compliment planning staff, the Planning Commission, and waterfront master leaseholders who've recently gone through the planning process. We have made great strides as a city in recent years connecting bayside lateral access to the extent that 100% continuity between Tidelands Park and Morro Rock within 10 years is an actual, real possibility.

Below is a map of south Embarcadero from Beach Street to Tidelands Park showing the improvements to lateral access:



Note that every significant gap has been addressed or will be addressed soon with just a few exceptions (from north to south):

1. **Aquarium/Three Stacks building.** Master lease expired 2018. Short-term lease in place. Upon expiration, current tenant or RFP winner to provide lateral access.
2. **Kayak Horizons/Gray's Inn.** To be discussed today and throughout 2024.
3. **Morro Bay Yacht Club.** Lease expires 2032. "Poorly accessible existing bayside lateral access" per 2019 technical memo likely to be addressed during negotiations for renewal.
4. **Associated Pacific building.** Lease expires 2025. "Poorly accessible existing bayside lateral access" per 2019 technical memo unlikely to change due to safety constraints of marine-dependent industrial use.
5. **451 Embarcadero cottages.** Lease expires 2025. No bayside lateral access but likely to be added in new master lease development.

In other words, for the foreseeable future, the Kayak Horizons location can and should mark the southernmost end of a contiguous harbor walk that begins at Driftwood's westernmost public right of way. The more pronounced (and less obstructed) we can make this southwest corner entrance, the better.



Other lease site and/or right-of-way improvements that further attract pedestrian attention and use may additionally be considered at this (and other) public street ends west of Embarcadero. For example, Libertine's recently proposed project west of Centennial Parkway as well as [Anchor Park](#) to the north add much needed value, space, continuity, and breathing room to the structure-heavy public waterfront. Whether or not the well intended gazebo design at 551 Embarcadero is right for the location, I trust the Commission to thoughtfully discuss this important corner of the proposed plans and come up with a winning approach for both the City and the master leaseholder moving forward.

As for harborwalk continuity, the most important piece of 551 Embarcadero's proposed project, from a public perspective, is likely the bridging of the short but detrimental pedestrian gap between Gray's Inn and the Driftwood street end. Assuming the proposed connection is structural (and not a floating dock), beautified, unobstructed, well advertised, and highly visible, the leaseholders would be providing much needed public benefit along a fairly tricky bayside corridor. In fact, it's quite possible that increased lateral access and connectivity at the new Gray's Inn may prime the pump for northward extension through the Aquarium/Three Stacks building within the next 5-10 years, and southward extension through Morro Bay Yacht Club and beyond (per the recommendations of the [2019 Lateral Access Technical Memo](#)) when current leasehold expires in 2032, thus extending contiguous pedestrian pathways another 200+ feet along the bay side of MBYC, through the already accessible Estero Inn, all the way to the parklet north of Associated Pacific.



In February 2022, the Harbor Advisory Board reaffirmed the intended coastal access route laid out in the new general plan and other related city documents. In recent years, the Planning Commission has similarly supported pedestrian access along the bay side. Please continue these positive trends for the sake of residents, visitors, businesses, and Morro Bay's future by prioritizing bayside lateral access above most other considerations. The recent successes we've had along the waterfront prove it's possible to balance private development and public benefit. I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this project and wish the applicants the best of luck moving forward.

Respectfully,

Sean Green
Morro Bay, CA

Lateral access technical memo:

<https://www.morrobayca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14912/Lateral-Access-Technical-Memorandum-2019>