



AGENDA CORRESPONDENCE

MEETING DATE: MAY 4, 2021

**AGENDA CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE
PLANNING COMMISSION FOLLOWING POSTING OF
THE AGENDA IS ATTACHED FOR PUBLIC REVIEW
PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

From: Sean Green [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2021 9:17 AM
To: PlanningCommission <PlanningCommission@morrobayca.gov>; Scot Graham <sgraham@morrobayca.gov>
Cc: CityClerk <Cityclerk@morrobayca.gov>
Subject: 5/4/21 Planning Future Agenda Item: Public Benefits "Menu"

Planning Commission and staff,

Big projects such as this Sonic development (5/4/21 Planning Item B-2) are almost certain to ask for variances in some shape or form down the road; perhaps today's extension affords PC the perfect opportunity to update (or create) your ongoing list of desired public benefits in advance of Sonic's (and other applicants') future planning applications. Without a menu from which applicants can pull--and this goes for all projects--developers seeking minor or major variances from established code are left to brainstorm on their own, which oftentimes leads to proposed public benefits that feel more private than public. Like the nearby pending hotel on Hwy 41 did and the upcoming Vistra battery plant will, large-scale proposals inevitably request city concessions above and beyond those allowed by code. Attempts alone are all fine and good, but Planning Commission and staff would be well served to respond to such requests by rattling off a preselection of desirable public benefits we'd ask for in return (and the providing of which would make any public concessions you grant far more palatable to the public).

Examples (as conditions of variance approval)

Improvements to adjacent right of ways
Improvements to pedestrian/bike routes
Added street lighting or crosswalk improvements
Sidewalk completion or street repavement
Improvements to wayfinding or informational signage
Specific tree plantings or landscaping on applicant's or other parcel

Thinking ahead to the battery plant's aggressive height proposal (and Vistra's decreasing leverage as time passes), it would seem to make sense for PC to require significant public benefits as conditions for approval. Given the parcel's significant blight and environmental hazards, as well as its close proximity to Embarcadero, Morro Creek, the Triangle Lot, and several pedestrian/bike routes, a preliminary brainstorm of public benefits would hopefully include:

- Mitigation of existing blight throughout the Vistra property
- Mitigation of environmentally hazardous materials throughout the Vistra property
- Removal or repurposing high visibility, defunct structures and equipment
- Specific plantings of Monterey Cypress and/or other mature, screening trees around battery plant perimeter
- Creation of parklet/pathway from Vistra crosswalk to Morro Creek Bridge (east side of Embarcadero, west of Vistra parcel and battery plant)
- Creation of public pathway and landscaping from Vistra crosswalk to Maritime Museum (east side of Embarcadero, west of Vistra parcel)
- Coleman Park bathroom replacement
- Creation of public pathway from Harbor storage yard to Lila Keiser Park (north side of Vistra parcel and battery plant)

- Creation of public pathway along newly acquired sewer easement between Main Street and Triangle Lot (south side of Vistra parcel)
- Installation of safety lighting and emergency phone along north-south pedestrian/bike path (east of Vistra parcel and battery plant)
- Replacement of Surf Street Stairs w/ ADA access

Many of those above may seem to pertain specifically to Vistra, but they don't have to. We'd love to receive those benefits from ANY applicant, and now is as good a time as any for Planning Commission and staff to get a master list going that takes into consideration both the city's general needs and the likely locations of rumored upcoming projects. By getting out in front of potentially contentious variance requests, Planning Commission and staff can help applicants put together proposals that include significant, pre-discussed public benefits from the get-go. The public may still object to a project, but such battles would be far less frequent and far less contentious than had those private developers designed projects in a vacuum without desired public benefits specifically in mind. An agendaized PC discussion may help prioritize public welfare and give applicants the tools they need to do the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Green
Morro Bay, CA