

Morro Bay Waterfront Master Plan

Final Public Engagement Plan

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Public Engagement Plan

Public engagement is the heart of the Waterfront Master Plan Update (WMP). The success of the WMP depends on public and stakeholder engagement to inform staff and consultants about important issues affecting the waterfront and to deliberate and reach consensus on a shared vision to address these issues. To that end, the WMP has been scoped to maximize public and stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process.

This public engagement plan serves as a guide that outlines the approach taken for public engagement related to the Waterfront Master Plan Update (WMP). The engagement plan is important because it:

- Confirms the goal and objectives for the public outreach efforts;
- Establishes an action plan for engaging the community and stakeholders; and
- Aids City staff in setting expectations regarding the amount of public engagement given the project budget, staff capacity, and other resources.

The plan may be adjusted by the City over the course of the WMP to ensure that the outreach goals and objectives are met, with consideration given for the scope, schedule, and budget. City staff are committed to earning and maintaining the trust, support, and confidence of the public and stakeholders by genuinely listening and facilitating balanced dialogue to reach a shared vision for the waterfront.

Throughout the public engagement process, staff will emphasize the following principles of collaboration:

- We are one team with a shared goal of a balanced WMP.
- We all have the best interests of the waterfront in mind.
- Consensus building among diverse stakeholders is necessary to make important decisions.
- Promote balanced dialogue by taking space and making space.
- All participants must be treated with respect.

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Project Outreach Team

Table 1, Project Outreach Team, identifies the key project team members who will help to execute the outreach and engagement process for the Waterfront Master Plan Update.

Table 1: Project Outreach Team

Name	Company/ Department	Role/Title	Phone Number	E-mail Address
City Contacts				
Airlin Singewald	Community Development	Community Development Director	805-772-6291	asingewald@morrobayca.gov
Susana Toner	Community Development	Assistant Planner	805-772-6270	stoner@morrobayca.gov
Consultant Team Members				
Amy Sinsheimer	PlaceWorks	Senior Associate	805-295-1530	asinsheimer@placeworks.com
Alan Loomis	PlaceWorks	Principal-in-charge	213-623-1443	aloomis@placeworks.com
Wendy Nowak	PlaceWorks	Senior Outreach Advisor	714-966-9220	wnowak@placeworks.com

Preliminary list of stakeholders

PlaceWorks will work with City staff to finalize the list of appropriate stakeholders to participate in the WMP update process. An initial list of recommended and additional possible stakeholders and stakeholder organizations/groups is included in Table 2 below. **We propose up to four small focus group meetings of 6 persons or fewer with invited participants to discuss existing constraints and potential opportunities in addition to up to six one-on-one interviews for a total of 30 potential stakeholder representatives participating.** PlaceWorks will facilitate the stakeholder meetings and will provide support through the preparation of emailed invitation language, meeting agendas, and discussion questions for City review. It is anticipated that the focus groups will be conducted in person with the remaining stakeholder meetings held virtually. At least two PlaceWorks staff members will attend the in-person focus groups. At least one PlaceWorks staff member will attend the virtual interviews. City staff will also be present during all stakeholder interviews. We assume that the City will be responsible for inviting stakeholders to the meetings. A summary of focus group and stakeholder input will be included in the WMP Background Report.

Table 2: Potential Stakeholders

Category	Stakeholders
Environmental Groups	<p>Recommended Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morro Bay Audubon Society • National Estuary Program • Open Space Alliance • REACT Alliance • Sea Otter Savvy • Surfrider Foundation
	<p>Possible Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EcoSLO • Land Conservancy
Business Community	<p>Recommended Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boating Businesses (tour boats, sport boats, kayaks, etc.) • Chamber of Commerce • Downtown Business Owners • Embarcadero Employees • Embarcadero Leaseholders/Developers • Embarcadero Business Owners – hotels, restaurants, gift shops, art galleries, kayak and boat rentals, etc. • Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman’s Organization • Morro Bay Yacht Club • Morro Dunes RV Park • Visit Morro Bay • Vistra (as a landowner)
	<p>Possible Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Contractors • Morro Bay Community Quota Fund • Offshore wind companies • PG&E
Community Groups	<p>Recommended Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of Morro Bay Harbor • Maritime Museum • Morro Bay High School students • Morro Bay Historical Society • Morro Bay in Bloom • Morro Bay Seniors
	<p>Possible Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLO County Commission on Aging • Bike SLO County

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Category	Stakeholders
Government Agencies	Recommended Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cayucos Sanitary District • Coast Guard • Morro Bay High School • State Lands Commission • State Parks
	Possible Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Parks and Recreation • Resource Conservation District • Waste Management Authority

Note: Staff and Placeworks will also engage with California Coastal Commission (CCC) staff, Chumash and Salinan tribal representatives, landowners, other City departments, and the general public throughout the process. These groups are not listed in the table because their participation is mandatory and they will have a formal and ongoing role in the planning process.

OUTREACH APPROACH

Outreach Goal

City staff have indicated interest in an outreach process that maximizes input from a diverse set of community members including underserved groups and is designed to appropriately manage the expectations of the public. The following section describes the objectives and methods for achieving the desired process.

Project Objectives

- Updating background information to reflect existing conditions, include a realistic estimate of the 20-year demand for visitor-serving commercial uses (hotel, motel, RV, tourism commercial, and tourism attractions such as museums).
- Expanding the plan’s boundaries northward to include the site of the former wastewater treatment plant site and surrounding public parcels.
- Expanding the plan’s boundaries to include the City-owned parcels known as Market Plaza.
- Incorporating existing information (from other studies) regarding the feasibility of waterfront infrastructure for offshore wind development.
- Incorporating a sea level rise analysis, vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan.
- Establishing a vision and conceptual plans with renderings for land use, development and circulation at and around the decommissioned Vistra powerplant property (using existing background information from previous studies).
- Establishing a vehicle circulation network to support the planned growth, including improved roadway connections from the Embarcadero and Coleman Road to Quintana/Main and to

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Atascadero Road/Highway 41; improving pedestrian facilities along the Embarcadero, including widened sidewalks and one-way traffic; and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

- Addressing land use and circulation issues at Morro Rock, including public access to beach areas, parking, ingress/egress, safety, infrastructure, and maintenance.
- Development of a financially feasible implementation plan.
- Implementing all relevant policies and programs of Plan Morro Bay.

Outreach Objectives

- Build a constituency of engaged stakeholders who have the confidence that they have had a role, their voices have been heard, and a sense of ownership of the updated Waterfront Master Plan. They also serve as ambassadors and advocates for the Plan, throughout the planning process and during critical approval stages.
- Listen to the public and stakeholders with genuine interest and curiosity to build our understanding of the waterfront, while educating and building awareness on technical elements of the planning process, including economics and sea level rise projections.
- Engage a full spectrum of local residents by employing a variety of outreach tools, including targeted outreach strategies to engage historically underrepresented groups.
- Provide broad reaching and transparent community engagement that incorporates multiple channels for participation, engages and interacts the way the community does (builds upon established forums where people are already familiar with the process making it more comfortable or easier to engage) and fosters an ongoing dialogue.
- Embrace technology and online platforms to listen, understand, educate, and engage.

Inclusive Outreach

An inclusive engagement process is defined to include outreach to, and participation by the full range of Morro Bay residents and stakeholders. This means that participation at public meetings, responses to public should reflect the composition of the City in terms of ethnicity, age, income levels, interests, and other socio-economic determinants associated with underrepresented populations. Intentional efforts should be taken at all levels to ensure that opportunities to engage are available and accessible to all.

Communities/Groups that are Candidates for Enhanced Outreach Efforts in Morro Bay

- Youth/high school students
- Employees, some who may not be residents
- Tourists

OUTREACH TOOLBOX

A successful outreach process relies on involving community members and stakeholders in varying degrees in all phases of the Waterfront Master Plan process. In addition to the stakeholder outreach described above, the following tools and mechanisms are recommended.

Waterfront Master Plan Advisory Committee (WMPAC) Meetings

The Waterfront Master Plan Advisory Committee (WMPAC) is a committee established by the City of Morro Bay to serve as the steering committee for the update project. The purpose of the WMPAC is to bring expertise on issues citywide, as there is representative membership from various City committees, as well as representation for the environmental community and Embarcadero leaseholders. The WMPAC will serve as a “sounding board” for City staff and the consultant team, providing input on related to different issues and implementation efforts in the WMP update.

As representatives of various community groups, the WMPAC will be expected to guide the WMP update and convey the perspectives of their constituencies. The committee consists of the following people:

- Steven Peck (elected Chair, Citizens Finance Advisory Committee)
- Mark Tognazzini (elected Vice-Chair, Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman’s Organization)
- Mary Witkowski (Planning Commission)
- Cherise Hansson (Embarcadero Master Leaseholders)
- Gene Doughty (Harbor Advisory Board)
- Paul Donnelly (Public Works Advisory Board)
- Melodie Grubbs (Morro Bay Estuary Program)
- James Constanzo (Recreation and Parks Commission)

Throughout the process, this committee will be expected to review technical data to best create an informed community vision for future development and guide policy decisions meaningfully. This vision should respect and balance the multiple interests and perspectives of the waterfront community groups and create greater community trust and ownership of the Waterfront Master Plan update.

Up to sixteen (16) monthly in-person meetings are planned. These meetings will be open to the public with the attendance of at least one PlaceWorks team staff member. The topics listed in Table 3 are subject to change, pending changes to the overall project schedule and completion of the draft Waterfront Master Plan, but provide general direction for subject matter to be covered at each meeting. The WMP Update is an iterative process, and it’s expected that topics will arise necessitating special focus WMPAC meetings.

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Table 3: Tentative WMPAC Topics

Meeting #	Anticipated Topic
Meeting 1 – July 2025	Scope of Work, Public Engagement Plan, Logistics for Waterfront Tour
Meeting 2 – August 2025	Waterfront Tour
Meeting 3 – September 2025	Summary of Initial Stakeholder Input
Meeting 4 – October 2025	Market Analysis, Circulation Background Conditions Report, Prep for Public Workshop #1
Meeting 5 – November 2025	Report on Stakeholder Outreach and Public Workshop #1
Meeting 6 – December 2025	Prep for Public Workshop #2
Meeting 7 – January 2026	Draft Sea Level Rise Report, Draft Background Report, Prep for online survey
Meeting 8 – February 2026	Vision, Report on Public Workshop #2, Prep for Public Workshop #3
Meeting 9 – March 2026	Final Sea Level Rise Report, Input on Alternatives ahead of Administrative Draft WMP
Meeting 10 – April 2026	Report on online survey, Report on Public Workshop #3, prep for Workshop #4
Meeting 11 – May 2026	Administrative Draft WMP
Meeting 12 – June 2026	Report on Workshop #4
Meeting 13 – July 2026	Public Draft WMP, Prep for Workshop #5
Meeting 14 – August 2026	Report on Workshop #5, Draft Addendum to Plan Morro Bay EIR
Meeting 15 – September 2026	Public Hearing Draft WMP
Meeting 16 – October 2026	Final Addendum to Plan Morro Bay EIR, WMPAC wrap up

Note: The specific meetings topics and order in which the topics are presented are subject to change.

Public workshops

In addition to WMPAC meetings, at which the general public will be invited to participate, a maximum of five (5) workshops will be conducted to directly engage a broad cross section of community interests.

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Recent Outdoor Long Beach Shoreline project public event

The workshops are planned to gather input during specific milestones in the WMP process. These workshops would be conducted to enable face-to-face interactions and discussions among members of the community (see Associated Milestone column in Table 4 below).

Table 4: Public Workshops

Activity	Purpose/Approach	Associated Milestone
Workshop #1 – October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the purpose of the WMP update and methods for community input • Presentation of findings from the Market Analysis and Circulation Background Conditions Report 	Project Overview and Baseline Analyses
Workshop #2 – January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of Background Report existing conditions materials (what we know and why it matters) • Input for Vision Statement describing the characteristics of The Morro Bay Waterfront including its role in the community and region, physical form and character, mix of uses, circulation and mobility, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and other selected topics. • "Envision the future" activities: Visual preference survey, mapping of community assets and opportunity areas for change • Input received will be used to develop draft Vision Statement. 	Background Report and Visioning
Workshop #3 – March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share what we heard during visioning and how it functions as the framework for developing alternatives • Breakout sessions with "hands-on" interactive exercises as input for the development of land use plan alternatives 	Evaluation of Alternatives

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Activity	Purpose/Approach	Associated Milestone
Workshop #4 – July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor event with multiple stations and ways to interact on the Embarcadero will solicit input on the Public Draft WMP. Possible activities: scavenger hunt of the Waterfront, passport stamped at each station, food, art, music 	Draft Plan
Workshop #5 – September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents final draft plan and Addendum including a recap of the update process, the vision, alternatives, key plan implementation components including land use and circulation plan and design guidelines, and future steps for implementation and engagement 	Public Hearing Draft Plan

Survey

The outreach team will create and administer one online survey to gauge broad public opinion regarding the WMP update process. We can use approaches that are more visually appealing and engaging for the user and can include visual preference surveys or priority rankings, for example Social Pinpoint. These surveys can be conducted via the City website, in which case they would provide a venue for additional broad public involvement and can be provided in hard copy for those that do not have access to a laptop or the internet. PlaceWorks will work with City staff to formulate survey questions and will then administer the survey(s) and report results.

Project Branding and Collateral

To create project recognition that will elevate awareness of the WMP update effort and associated project-related technical studies, PlaceWorks will develop a project logo and color palette (style guide) to create a cohesive theme for the project. This will create a recognizable identity that takes design cues from the unique characteristics of Morro Bay and builds on key themes the City wants to promote. We will design materials in such a way that they can be shared with the general public, businesses and organizations, schools, government buildings, community-based organizations, etc. The branding materials will include:

- Project logo/branding (three maximum, digital files)
- Style guide (fonts, color palette)
- Final logo artwork: Digital file