



Design Review Subcommittee (DRSC)

Meeting Date: July 26, 2023

STAFF: Samantha Wylie, Beaches, Parks and Recreation Director
Jonathan Lightfoot, Economic Development Officer

SUBJECT: **Pier Underpass Improvement Project**
Consideration of a conceptual design of improvements to the pier underpass presented by PierPride. The purpose of this presentation is to allow DRSC the opportunity to provide comments on the project for potential inclusion in the final design.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2017 PierPride Foundation has been integral in the revitalization of the pier and its surrounding amenities. Each year since its establishment, PierPride has committed to supporting a project within the City's capital improvement program. In the first quarter of 2023, the PierPride Board approached the City expressing a desire to pursue a redesign of the pier/base of the pier underpass based on public surveys and community feedback.

In June 2023, the Beaches, Parks & Recreation (BPR) Commission reviewed the presentation and provided input on the project. The Commission recommended approval of the concept plans to the City Council.

Project Description

The proposed project includes a variety of modifications to the public realm around the pier to improve and highlight access to the pier, such as:

- Relocating the Avenida Victoria crosswalk to align with the pier, and raising/widening the crosswalk. This treatment is commonly referred to as a "table".
- Reducing landscape elements between the sidewalk and the pier underpass to open up visibility towards the pier from Avenida Victoria.
- Expanding the hardscape around the southwest sidewalk to create a viewing plaza. This also creates more space for the busy pier stop of the Trolleys.
- Incorporating pier planking to connect the pier to the underpass to provide a strong visual cue directing pedestrians. This would replace existing asphalt.
- Adding art installations within the underpass.
- Providing new e-bike parking.

Review Process

The area of work is public property, primarily within the right of way and Parque del Mar. While the project is supported by PierPride, the implementation would be a city project (Capital Improvement Project, CIP). The City is not required to obtain a discretionary zoning permit for its own projects. However, the project will be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act and will require a Coastal Development permit. While zoning regulations do not apply, the project should be consistent with the policies and goals of the Architectural Overlay, Pier Bowl Specific Plan, and the Coastal Land Use Plan.

Why is DRSC Review Required?

Per Section 17.12.025, "The City Planner and review authority may refer projects to the Design Review Subcommittee." Both Planning and the BPR recommend that the DRSC provide feedback on the public realm design components of these conceptual plans.

ANALYSIS:

Staff has worked with PierPride to narrow the scope of the project and identify some of the critical elements within this area. Based on this feedback and the visioning provided by the PierPride Board of Directors, PierPride worked with RSM Design, a local design firm, to create concepts for City review.

The proposed designs would improve sightlines to the pier by redesigning the landscaping, including the hedges and plant material. This area is proposed to be transformed into a pier plaza, allowing for seating walls and outlook areas that would encourage individuals to safely wait for the trolley or utilize the space passively in transition to the beach and pier. The existing palm groves would remain in place and additional bike racks would be installed on the east side of the railroad tracks.

The underpass would be renovated and would include improvements to the existing drainage to avoid flooding during storm events, as well as the initiation of a public art installation. The underpass would lead to a stamped concrete surfacing mimicking the pier planking that would provide a continued pathway onto the pier.

The initial project renderings are included on the following page:



General Plan Consistency

The project is consistent with related General Plan policies as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – General Plan Policies

Policy	Project Consistency
<p><u>BPR-3.06. Pier Bowl and North Beach.</u> We enhance the Pier Bowl and North Beach areas to function as recreational, cultural and economic hubs. We also maximize accessibility for residents, visitors and commuters, including train passengers, to create easy and natural transitions between the beach, beach trail and local businesses or cultural attractions</p>	<p>Consistent. The project focus is to enhance the pier access and transitions between the pier train station and businesses and the underpass, providing more clear connections to the pier.</p>
<p><u>UD-1.02 Design of Public Plazas and Spaces.</u> <i>“We require public plazas and spaces to be designed for safety, comfort, convenience, and universal accessibility. They should be well-defined by surrounding buildings, located near the public street for good visibility and convenience, and incorporate amenities such as seating, distinctive focal points, public art, shade trees, and/or eating and entertainment facilities.”</i></p>	<p>Consistent. The project proposes a painted mural in a public space, adding public art consistent with the policy.</p>
<p><u>UD-1.05. Streetscape Design.</u> We design new and, when necessary, retrofit existing streets to strengthen connectivity, beautify and enhance community character through public right-of-way improvements, including sidewalks, bicycle paths, street trees, parkways, curbs, signs, street lighting and street furniture.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project prioritizes enhancements to the streetscape design, improving connectivity and prioritizing public view of the pier. The project improves a trolley stop and also proposes additional bike parking.</p>
<p><u>NR-2.04. Public View Corridors of Ocean.</u> We preserve designated public view corridors to the ocean.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project would open up views of the pier from Avenida Victoria.</p>
<p><u>NR-2.05. Street Design.</u> We respect and enhance public view corridors in the design and layout of new streets.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project would open up views of the pier from Avenida Victoria.</p>

Additionally, the project is within the Pier Bowl Focus Area of the City's Coastal Land Use Plan (LUP), and is consistent with the following policies of that document:

Policy	Project Consistency
<p><u>PUB-1 Neighborhood Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity.</u> Encourage connectivity by developing and maintaining pedestrian and bicycle trails, where appropriate, along the City's coastline, including designated railroad crossings for pedestrians, and maintain connectivity between neighborhoods with safe, well-designed and maintained walking and biking trails and sidewalks</p>	<p>Consistent. The project improves connectivity and visual cues between the different destinations within the pier bowl.</p>
<p><u>PUB-11 Pier Bowl and North Beach.</u> Enhance the Pier Bowl and North Beach areas to function as recreational, cultural and economic hubs. Maximize accessibility for residents, visitors and commuters, including train passengers, to create easy and natural transitions between the beach, beach trail and local businesses or cultural attractions.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project improves connectivity and expands public space, improving the sense of arrival to the pier. Improvements to the flood control elements of the underpass would limit the number of closures during storm events.</p>
<p><u>PUB-17 Implementation of Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements.</u> The City shall implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements as part of Capital Improvement street projects.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project includes additional e-bike parking facilities.</p>
<p><u>PUB-51 Maintenance of Beach Access Points.</u> The maintenance and enhancement of improved and licensed public non-vehicular access across the railroad tracks and to the shoreline shall be of primary importance when evaluating any future public or private improvements in the Coastal Zone.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project enhances the pier underpass, attempting to direct more pedestrian traffic to this primary access point under the rail tracks. Improvements to the flood control elements of the underpass would limit the number of closures during storm events.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff is seeking DRSC feedback and recommendations on the proposed improvements. If no further DRSC review is necessary, this item will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration.

Figure 3-16 Municipal Pier

