



November 6, 2023

Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department; Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission  
City of Berkeley  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Re: Cal Sailing Club Comments on Draft Waterfront Specific Plan

Dear Commissioners, City Officials and WSP Project Team,

Cal Sailing Club (CSC) is a 50-year-old nonprofit institution at the Berkeley Marina that provides affordable, equitable water recreation access to thousands of Berkeley and Bay Area residents. We request that this letter with our comments on the draft Waterfront Specific Plan (WSP) (version dated October 30, 2023) be included as a communication in the agenda packet for the January 23, 2024 City Council Special Session. CSC plays a central role in bringing people to the waterfront and providing access to water sports. We would like the WSP to fundamentally reflect CSC's stewardship of its own site, both at the South Basin and in the Marina itself, and lay out plans for supporting these activities. With CSC represented in the planning process, it can continue to be a powerful public advocate for a better Marina and waterfront area.

#### CSC BY THE NUMBERS

- **2500+:** total number of free rides per year that have been provided to the public for decades now, giving visitors aged 5 and up superb views of the Golden Gate and the Berkeley waterfront during our monthly Open Houses from April to November.
- **1,100:** annual active memberships
- **19,026:** number of members since 2009
- **\$1.33:** Average daily cost for full membership (yes, that is one dollar and thirty three cents, or \$120 on a quarterly basis). Fee is waived if a member contributes additional volunteer hours
- Because of this accessibility, we have a diverse membership, in terms of ethnicity/race/culture/gender and socioeconomic status. In the last 12 months, new members have self-identified **45.6% as White, 29% as Asian, 9.5% as Hispanic, 3% as Black, 1.8% as Middle Eastern, 0.3% as Hawaiian, 0.2% as Amerindian.**
- **2,942:** lessons given last year in sailing and windsurfing
- **\$45,000** grant from California Department of Parks and Recreation this year to teach Boating Safety
- **7,126:** estimated area in square miles from which CSC draws members
- **\$125,000+:** As of 2022, annual revenues generated from slip fees at Berkeley Marina by current or former CSC members
- Numerous youth program events serving Berkeley Youth Authority and other disadvantaged youth, plus area Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (for sailing merit badge)

## **CLUB BACKGROUND AND ACTIVITIES**

CSC was originally part of UC Berkeley sailing club, dating from the 1940s. In 1979, the club became an independent 501(c)(3) co-op, open to the general public. With its Berkeley-nourished volunteer spirit, the club has grown over the years and now draws thousands of people to this unique public space. Everything done at CSC is volunteer-based with the exception of our paid day leaders, whose role is to watch the water to keep members (and nonmembers) safe. We provide extraordinarily low-cost access to introducing and fostering skills in sailing and windsurfing that would otherwise be out-of-reach to many.

The South Sailing Basin sits directly across from the Golden Gate Bridge, which funnels winds into Berkeley, especially in summer. CSC's fundamental focus is to provide rigorous skill and safety lessons on land and water under challenging conditions; to administer and enforce a skill and abilities-based ratings system (novice, junior, senior) by testing members; enforcing club rules; providing safety oversight through paid employees (called a dayleader), and as warranted, to set restrictions on activities depending on the weather conditions. And as a sailing school, CSC has an excellent safety record. It is well known that our training is far more rigorous than that of the American Sailing Association and other national groups. Skilled CSC members have reported that sailboat rental companies on the West Coast are eager to charter boats to them, often without testing, when they learn of their standing at the Cal Sailing Club, which also contributes to the solid standing of the Berkeley Marina.

CSC, together with Cal Adventures, draws people to the Berkeley Marina for the "best deal on the Bay," and "the best place to learn sailing and windsurfing at low cost." Our club enhances the waterfront and the reputation of the Marina.

### **CSC'S COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT WATERFRONT SPECIFIC PLAN (WSP)**

#### **Issue 1: Ambiguity in WSP draft on CSC's status as an existing establishment and categorization in WR-1 as a redevelopment area for the South Cove**

Cal Sailing Club is a community-based organization as defined by BCDC and a recreation center, and would like to see its land use recognized as such. Throughout the current plan, it is unclear whether the WSP is classifying our space of operations as an area for private recreational development and commercial operations (WR-1), such as for commercial boat rentals and cafes, rather than recognizing its existing status and ability to remain as a quasi-public use area.

Further, while we support additional, affordable restaurants, cafes and bar spaces throughout the waterfront, sharing space on our lot with an external commercial enterprise such as a café has potential for conflicts and confusion. P. 139 of the current draft is at least one place where the draft still notes a new café as a potential use of our space, which would significantly impinge our operations and functionality.

Finally, we envision renovations and improvements in the future and would like clarification if we would need any zoning certificate or AUP to enhance our space for existing purposes.

**Recommendation:** Identify clearly in the WSP current water-based activities and services provided by CSC to inform the audience (e.g. potential developers) of this already existing vibrant activity. In addition, include CSC in the developing plans of any form of an “Aquatic Center” with the goal that CSC remain a volunteer-operated, non-profit sailing organization accessible to all income backgrounds. Finally, CSC would like tangible assurance within the WSP that any development at or near the club be done in a way that allows uninterrupted operation of CSC, continued CSC management of the organization, and preservation of the singular nature of the club.

## **Issue 2: Sedimentation and water accessibility for the South Sailing Basin (SSB)**

We would like to initiate a discussion concerning mud accumulation in the SSB, along with alternatives to address this growing problem. This trend has serious implications for the WSP and, of course, the entire Marina. Siltation is eating into our operating hours and thus reducing our value to the community, and it is reducing the value of all water-based recreation for all users of the SSB. This sedimentation is noted in the WSP - Dredging Needs Technical Memo Draft<sup>1</sup> but this memo has been left out of the plan document itself. Information in the technical memo could be expanded to provide notes on feasibility in the WSP. At the very least, the plan needs to state that the City Council included \$350,000 in the FY23-4 City budget for an evaluation study of an SSB dredging alternative.

**Recommendation:** Include mention of the Dredging Technical Memo in the WSP and suggest possible plans to address the siltation of the South Sailing Basin, including further studies, cost estimates and consideration of alternatives.

## **Issue 3: Dock replacements**

CSC also has an active keelboat instruction program and conducts lessons from J-dock. The WSP in section 2.3.2 notes plans to replace docks to allow larger slips. The current configuration and location on J-dock allows us open-water access, proximity to CSC facilities and the six adjacent slips, and is important to teach specific safety skills of this program, like docking without an engine.

**Recommendation:** Include in the WSP the recognition of existing recreational programs that operate inside the marina. Further, we ask that CSC be included early in the planning process

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<sup>1</sup> Found at:  
<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-04-21%20Draft%20Dredging%20Needs%20Technical%20Memo%20-%20Moffatt%20Nichol.pdf>

to reconstruct these docks so we continue to run our program at our current level of quality standards.

#### **Issue 4: Marina financial planning**

An element of the plan emphasizes revenue-generation; however, it does so in a way that ignores underlying inequities in the way the Marina Fund has been managed, and therefore potentially misleading development plans. Analysis of the Marina Fund and city meetings have indicated that the Marina Fund does not need to be financially “self-sufficient” nor be responsible for additional parklands, in Berkeley’s largest public park. CSC supports equity in financing the park areas and public space of the Berkeley waterfront to the same standard as other parks in the City.

**Recommendation:** CSC recommends that the WSP clarify this language to be consistent with conventional accounting practices for enterprise funds and appropriate to parks spaces, for example, by considering alternative financial analysis and removing park and public area expenses from the Marina Fund. This would ensure that the plan does not reinforce a mistaken idea that the entire marina (including both commercial and park areas) must be financially self-sufficient.

### **CONCLUSION**

CSC very much appreciates the opportunity to provide our feedback on the draft WSP. We wish to make clear that we support the vision of a vibrant waterfront area that will provide access to nature, native plants, and animals (including wild turkeys!); accessible, safe water sports and recreation; a well-maintained boat harbor; and limited appropriate and supportive commercial activities. The WSP achieves this vision in many ways. Cal Sailing Club is proud to act as a Marina magnet, drawing people from diverse backgrounds; to offer non-motorized water recreation access for people from every income level; to contribute to the Marina’s financial stability; and to interact with the natural environment in a low-impact, complementary manner. We look forward to seeing our recommendations incorporated into the next draft of the WSP.

Sincerely,

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