



Caring for Our Coast


♦ ♦ ♦
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September 26, 2022

TO: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Gary Jones, Director 

SUBJECT: **ALIGNING MARINA DEL REY WITH LOS ANGELES COUNTY PRIORITIES FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION – 60-DAY REPORT (ITEM 14, AGENDA OF JULY 12, 2022)**

On July 12, 2022, your Board instructed the Department of Beaches and Harbors (DBH) in collaboration with the Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Arts and Culture, the Los Angeles County Development Authority, the Poverty Alleviation Initiative, and the Antiracism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (to incorporate an equity lens) (collectively, the Workgroup), in consultation with other relevant Los Angeles County (County) departments, stakeholders, labor, and community members/organizations, to report back in writing within 60 days with recommendations for the completion of an assessment that identifies urgent community needs that can be strategically addressed in Marina del Rey (MdR), in light of the Board's adopted County Guiding Equity Principles, community input, and the 2014 MdR Vision Statement. A second report, due within 180 days of the Board's July 12 action (Motion), will provide recommendations for the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the best use of the County-owned land and water assets that comprise MdR. Collectively, this effort is being referred to as "MdR for All" to reflect the County's vision of a more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable County resource that embodies the ideal of "LA's Marina."

Background

Marina del Rey is unique among LA County's unincorporated areas, with the County owning all of its 401 acres of land and 403 acres of water. Since the 1960s when its initial construction was completed, MdR has grown into a thriving waterside community with 4,602 boat slips in 22 anchorages and marinas, 5,445 rental apartments, 600 condominiums, seven hotels, recreational boating facilities and services, an array of



shops and restaurants, and civic amenities. MdR is an asset that generates a significant amount of revenue for the County and receives visitors from throughout the County and the region as well as from all over the world. In the past, MdR has been developed on a parcel-by-parcel basis, with the County leasing its land and water to individual private developers, mainly on a for-profit, market-rate basis, with the County sharing in the revenues generated by local businesses.

Over the years, the County's needs have changed because of its growing and diverse population. Additionally, it has become increasingly apparent that spatial inequities in the County that resulted from intentional policy decisions (including land use and planning decisions) throughout the 20th Century have led to major disparities in life outcomes for residents, simply based on where they live. As part of the County's Antiracism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative and ARDI's strategic planning effort, your Board directed County departments to work collaboratively and "urgently and boldly" to implement policies and programs that will advance the work of ARDI to reduce racial disparities in life outcomes for County residents. (See discussion of County Guiding Equity Principles in section (A)(1) below.)

One way to accomplish this clear directive was outlined by the Motion, which called for development of a holistic strategic plan for the use of County-owned assets such as MdR, which more closely aligns with the County's equity and inclusion goals and better serves the needs of all County residents. Given that the County owns and controls various parcels of land in MdR and that several long-term ground leases are due to expire within the next five to ten years, we have a historic opportunity to re-examine the use of County property in MdR and make it more open and accessible to the broadest and most diverse spectrum of visitors and residents since its creation.

On August 4, 2022, the County stakeholders who are members of the Workgroup met to discuss the project and their respective departmental roles, and to brainstorm about current perceptions of MdR, potential improvements to the community, and potential approaches to provide the deliverables outlined in the Motion.

A. MdR For All Core Resources:

As directed by your Board in the Motion, the MdR for All work, including an urgent needs assessment (Needs Assessment) and future planning, land use, and redevelopment efforts, will be guided by three primary sources: (1) the County's adopted Guiding Equity Principles, (2) the 2014 MdR Vision Statement, and (3) stakeholder/community input.

1. County's Guiding Equity Principles:

Application of an equity lens to both needs assessment and land use planning for MdR is an integral part of the MdR For All work. On September 15th, 2021, your Board approved

the following Countywide Equity Principles, which serve as the guiding principles for the County's ARDI initiative and Racial Equity Strategic Planning efforts:

- Reduce racial disparities in life outcomes as well as disparities in public investment to shape those outcomes.
- Develop and implement strategies that identify, prioritize and effectively support the most disadvantaged geographies and populations.
- Authentically engage residents, organizations, and other community stakeholders to inform and determine interventions (e.g., policy and program) and investments.
- Seek to improve long-term outcomes both intergenerationally and multi-generationally.
- Use data to effectively assess and communicate equity needs and support timely assessment of progress.
- Disaggregate data and analysis within racial/ethnic and other demographic subgroup categories.
- Work collaboratively and intentionally across departments as well as across leadership levels and decision-makers.
- Act urgently and boldly to achieve tangible results.
- Align policies, processes, and practices to effectively address equity challenges throughout the County of Los Angeles' workforce (personnel, contractors and vendors).
- Intervene early and emphasize long-term prevention.

As noted above, the County, as steward of MdR, must think and plan strategically for use of that resource to ensure that its development serves rather than hinders the County's stated equity and inclusion goals. For that reason, ARDI staff were identified as key members of the Workgroup by your Board. DBH met with the ARDI's Executive Director, Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, to discuss your Board's directives and confirmed that ARDI staff will provide support to DBH throughout the process. That support may include sharing and identification of data, exemplars or models of equitable placed-based projects, equity tools, effective practices, and equity language to help guide the needs assessment and planning process for future development in MdR. ARDI will also assist the Workgroup by helping to develop a framework for the equitable redevelopment of MdR as contemplated by the Motion, to include assessment of baseline conditions, goals, metrics, measurable

outcomes, community engagement and more. It is anticipated that third party consultants retained by the County will provide additional support, research, and recommendations for the application of the County's Guiding Equity Principles to future planning and redevelopment efforts in MdR.

2. 2014 MdR Vision Statement:

In 2014, the County completed a visioning process for MdR, led by the Department of Regional Planning (DRP). This process was intended to establish a framework to guide future decision-making on development, policies, and development standards in MdR and culminated in the 2014 MdR Vision Statement. Despite the lack of explicit use of an equity lens, the Vision Statement is still a valuable resource the County may draw on to the extent it is useful in connection with the work on MdR for All, as it addresses many of the access and inclusivity-related directives set forth in the Motion and is based on significant community input and expert analysis, much of which is still useful and relevant in 2022. Significantly, like the Motion, the Vision Statement suggests a plan for the highest and best use of County-owned MdR with a focus on visitor and public-serving amenities and practical accessibility concerns such as public transportation and mobility options. It should be noted that, although the Vision Statement remains a valuable resource, it is one tool among many, and should not be considered a mandatory land use planning document or in any way to limit the scope or substance of the MdR for All work.

“Marina del Rey is a vibrant, sustainable, pedestrian-/visitor-/resident-/ and boater-friendly destination that supports water-oriented activities, provides low-cost access to the water, contains a variety of shopping and dining experiences, and is a premier location where people want to play, relax, and live.”

(Vision Statement, page 2)

The Vision Statement's recommendations relevant to MdR for All include:

- Grouping similar land uses into activity districts (Residential, Marina Beach, Visitor's Row, Boater's Way) to create a sense of place and take advantage of enhanced mobility options. These features allow visitors to access the amenities and services they want without having to drive from place to place, making the Marina easier to access.
- Establishing Mobility Hubs where modes of travel come together at key locations and provide the opportunity for convenient transfers between modes (i.e., WaterBus stops, landside transit stops, bicycle facilities, bicycle parking, bicycle sharing kiosks, pedestrian access, visitor and directional information, and car sharing opportunities). These hubs would be located in portions of existing parking lots and could allow the consolidation of parking from throughout the Marina, making some parking lots available for alternative uses.

- Expanding transit by co-locating transit stops (both ground and water, where feasible) at Mobility Hubs and by improving service frequency, particularly for the Beach Shuttle. This would provide an opportunity to expand connections to regional transit and encourage greater auto-free access to the Marina.
- Improving the pedestrian experience by introducing additional signalized pedestrian crossings, as well as wider sidewalks, and design treatments on shared mole roads to improve the pedestrian experience in the Marina. Existing crossings in MdR could be enhanced to improve pedestrian safety and comfort. A multi-use waterfront promenade that can serve the entire Marina is also recommended. These improvements would increase the accessibility of MdR and its waterside amenities for all County residents and visitors.
- Developing a new civic center just north of Bali Way on the west side of Admiralty Way and combined with a mobility hub. The civic center would co-locate harbor administration facilities with a visitor's information center and the Lloyd Taber-Marina del Rey Library on one site. This same alternative would develop a creative-office complex across Admiralty Way on the east side that is envisioned to be occupied by smaller professional firms and start-ups. A consolidated civic center would improve community access to County resources and provide opportunities for expanded park and open spaces in MdR.
- Creating active public gathering spaces adjacent to the Promenade which also serve as view corridors, including by repurposing parking lots for public gathering spaces.
- Continuing the use of the "bowl" concept to guide building heights throughout the Marina, developing taller buildings outside of the loop roads and shorter buildings along the waterfront. This recommendation helps to protect and enhance the Marina's scenic resources.
- Developing urban design guidelines to address elements of the built environment (e.g., building design, promenade design, lighting, gateways, and the provision of public furniture), and improving directional signage within the Marina and developing gateway signage at its main access points. Enhancing these elements will expand the areas accessible for public enjoyment and improve the Marina's visual identification as a destination/community.
- Promoting the Marina's diversity of wildlife, enhancing the area's wildlife-viewing opportunities, and highlighting the Marina's wetland history by incorporating interpretive elements into public areas.

The Workgroup expects that it will draw on the 2014 Vision Statement as a source to guide future redevelopment and land use planning and will expect all consultants to become familiar with that document as it (together with the Guiding Equity Principles and stakeholder input) will inform their efforts to holistically plan for MdR's future.

3. Community/Stakeholder Engagement:

In order to identify the most urgent needs in MdR and ultimately produce a comprehensive plan for the best use of the land and water assets comprising MdR, a robust outreach effort is needed. It is important that this process not only be transparent, but also far-reaching, to include stakeholders who are currently active in the MdR community as well as voices that are not often heard surrounding MdR matters or those who may lack adequate access to MdR's resources.

DBH plans to collaborate with ARDI, other departments participating in the Workgroup, and project consultant(s), to develop a plan for stakeholder engagement with the MdR for All project, co-designing engagement tools, toolkits, and processes to ensure equity is prioritized. The Workgroup, led by its consultant(s), will conduct extensive engagement with existing and potential stakeholders and community residents, in accordance with the engagement plan, which may include focus groups, listening sessions, community and stakeholder meetings, and online surveying, as recommended by the consultant.

In preparation for this report and as a preliminary source for the Needs Assessment required by the Motion, DBH conducted meetings with the following stakeholder groups during the months of July, August, and September:

- MdR Lessees Association
- LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce
- MdR Tourism Board
- Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) (labor advocacy group)
- Unite Here Local 11 (hospitality workers union)

In addition, DBH staff presented information about the Motion and MdR for All to the Small Craft Harbor Commission, which essentially acts as a neighborhood council for the MdR community, at its August 2022 meeting. DBH and other members of the Workgroup also publicized and linked to a fillable feedback form on DBH's website to begin collecting feedback from the community regarding the most urgent needs in MdR. DBH anticipates presenting to the MdR Design Control Board on the Motion at its September 2022 meeting as well.

The initial meetings were mainly to provide an introduction to and overview of the Motion and MdR for All, and to encourage MdR stakeholders to engage with the process, help publicize the process to their members, customers, constituents, and provide initial feedback. It was further emphasized that the process is intended to be transparent and

participatory and that the initial meetings were only the beginning and not the sole opportunity groups and individuals would have to give input or otherwise engage with the project. As the MdR for All work moves forward, DBH anticipates retaining one or more outside consultants to assist the Workgroup in identifying additional relevant stakeholders and preparing and implementing a comprehensive community engagement plan for MdR for All.

B. Costs and Potential Funding Sources

The Workgroup has yet to identify funding sources for this project other than DBH's own budgetary funds. DBH requested an additional fund balance of \$1 million in its FY22-23 budget to fund the planning efforts. DBH staff met with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and researched the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program (approved under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) Notice of Funding from U.S. DOT but found the MdR for All work ineligible, at least in the form in which it currently exists. DBH will continue to explore with DPW the possibility of incorporating projects that may qualify for BIL funding and that may be recommended in the future as part of MdR for All.

In general, grant funding for the types of community needs and land use planning efforts directed by the Motion, e.g. opportunities from the California Strategic Growth Council, are made available for disadvantaged and low-income communities only. For this reason, DBH recommends that identification of grants and other funding sources be included in the consultant's scope of work with a focus on implementation actions e.g., to increase access to MdR from disadvantaged communities. For example, DBH or partners could apply to the Regional Park and Open Space District's Recreation Access Competitive Grant Program for expansion of existing MdR programs to benefit residents of disadvantaged communities, and/or to Metro for funding of additional high-quality transit connections from disadvantaged communities to visitor-serving areas of MdR. Additionally, opportunities may exist to leverage existing stakeholders with interests in MdR to contribute funds or other resources (e.g., existing data) towards producing an urgent needs assessment; those should be explored as well.

DBH conducted an informal survey of other recent County needs assessments and planning/visioning documents to help determine an estimated cost for this initial phase of the MdR For All work. Because the scopes of the various projects are all different, this estimate is not scientific but rather an educated estimate. Those other County projects included: (a) 2016 Countywide Parks Needs Assessment (\$3.5 million), (b) 2018 Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Foundation La Brea Tar Pits and Museum Hancock Park Re-visioning and Master Plan (\$1 million), (c) 2022 Parks Needs Assessment Plus (\$2.8 million), and (d) Department of Public Works Equity in Infrastructure study (\$3.4 million).

Based on discussions with the DPW and other County departments as well as the specific project scope, which is narrower geographically and focused solely on urgent needs that

can be addressed in the near term, DBH estimates the Needs Assessment, together with the 180-day report due to your Board as the second deliverable under the Motion, to cost approximately \$322,289. This is based on the estimated time to complete the tasks involved in those deliverables, at the rates charged recently by County consultants for similar work. Costs of the recommended outside consultant (and/or other consultants, as deemed appropriate by DBH) in connection with coordination of the Needs Assessment and 180-day report are estimated at a maximum of \$325,000, based on the foregoing cost information and the proposal received by DBH from the recommended consultant in response to its scope of work.

C. Identified Urgent Needs

As a result of discussions among the Workgroup as well as initial stakeholder meetings, DBH has identified the following potential urgent community needs in MdR:

TIER I:

- Affordable housing
- Public open/recreational space, particularly on the water
- Community aquatic center emphasizing youth-serving water access and safety programming such as DBH's WATER program

TIER II:

- Consolidated parking (e.g., a parking structure) vs. multiple surface parking lots
- Improved wayfinding/placemaking signage

It should be emphasized that the foregoing list is preliminary and will be provided to the consultant(s) retained for validation and/or modification as appropriate.

D. Retention of Coordinating Consultant

DBH recommends retaining Somos Group LLC (Consultant/Somos) as soon as possible to coordinate and help provide the Needs Assessment and 180-day report, as well as, potentially, other Motion deliverables as requested by the Workgroup. DBH staff reviewed Somos' qualifications and a proposal submitted in response to a scope of work (SOW) for the Needs Assessment and determined that Somos is well-qualified to provide services to the County to help expedite and coordinate the various aspects of the MdR for All project. Somos is a BIPOC-owned business whose principal, Alfred Fraijo Jr., is uniquely qualified to assist with all aspects of this work. He is a seasoned land use attorney and a native Angeleno with deep roots in the community and a longstanding commitment to community service, including serving on the Boards of the California Community Foundation, LUSK Center for Real Estate (USC) and the Latino Policy and Politics Institute (UCLA), among other community service positions. He is also the founder of Action for the City, a nonprofit that advocates for equitable land use and sustainable development policies. It is anticipated that, among other tasks, Somos may recommend and coordinate the hiring of subcontractors to complete the Needs

Assessment, assist the County in validating or modifying the list of Identified Urgent Needs set forth in Section C, help identify stakeholder groups and prepare/implement the community engagement plan, and assist in identifying funding sources, all as directed and approved by the County. Pursuant to the SOW response from Somos, the estimated cost of its services in connection with the Needs Assessment and 180-day report is a maximum of \$325,000.

E. Recommendations:

Based upon the preliminary work discussed above, DBH has developed a set of recommendations for the completion of an assessment of urgent community needs in MdR (Needs Assessment) and requests that your Board direct DBH and the Workgroup to do the following:

1. **Retention of a Coordinating Consultant:** Authorize DBH to retain the services of Somos Group (and/or other appropriate consultants as needed) at a cost not to exceed \$325,000 as soon as possible to act as a coordinating consultant to help the Workgroup to expedite the preparation and delivery of the Needs Assessment, 180-day report, and other associated work as requested by the Workgroup.
2. **Equity Lens and Tools:** Continue to work with ARDI staff and pertinent consultant(s) to develop a framework for analyzing the needs and future development of MdR that is based on and consistent with the County's Guiding Equity Principles, as discussed in Section (A)(1).
3. **Funding Sources:** Continue to explore and pursue funding sources and opportunities to cover the deliverables requested by the Motion, including but not limited to those discussed in Section B.
4. **Community Engagement:** Work with ARDI staff and pertinent consultant(s) to develop and execute a comprehensive plan for community and stakeholder engagement with MdR for All that specifically seeks out the input of those who are currently under-represented in MdR, as outlined in Section (A)(3).
5. **Incorporation of Vision Statement:** Continue to coordinate with the Department of Regional Planning to ensure that the 2014 MdR Vision Statement helps to inform the MdR For All work, and begin strategic planning efforts for a potential comprehensive amendment to the MdR Local Coastal Program as may be necessitated by the Motion.

Honorable Board of Supervisors
September 26, 2022
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c: Marina Board Deputies
Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Arts and Culture
Department of Economic Opportunity
Department of Public Works
Department of Regional Planning