

URBAN DESIGN / AESTHETICS WORKGROUP **NAPA RIVER FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN – NAPA CITY REACH**

May 9, 1997.

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS **To** **THE NAPA RIVER COMMUNITY COALITION** **(A Supplement to Our Conceptual Site Plans, Sections, and Related Drawings)**

I. Background

The Urban Design / Aesthetics Workgroup (UDAW) consists of a team of local design professionals which has worked together cooperatively on the Napa River Project for the last sixteen months. The UDAW team's main goal was to provide professional input in relation to urban design and aesthetics, and integration of these key elements into the "living river" flood control strategy.

There are five key components that will make this portion of the River Project a success:

- Creation of a plan that provides 100 year flood protection from Napa River flooding within the urbanized areas of Napa.
- Creation of a plan that incorporates elements of a watershed management strategy beyond the Project boundaries that makes geomorphic, environmental, management, and economic sense.
- Creation of a plan that embraces and incorporates the elements of a living, restored river.
- Creation of a plan that makes economic and financial sense to the Napa County community as well as to the State and Federal governments.
- Creation of a plan that incorporates sound urban design principles and design excellence, that both expresses the community's unique physical, cultural, and historic aspects and which incorporates the River Project into the fabric of the community.

It is our sense that the first four issues are being extremely well addressed by the Corps, by City, County, and resource agency staff, by private consultants, and by the Coalition process. The fifth issue, that of urban design, is the subject of this report.

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II. Urban Design and Aesthetics

We believe that integration is the key word that needs to be addressed in relation to the River Project. The Project needs to be integrated with adjacent properties and the general fabric of the community. Good urban design is the key that makes this integration possible.

Much has been written over the years about what good design is. This community, as with any other community, has a difficulty putting "good design" into words. Like some other things, they know it when they see it; its absence can also be felt. Simply put: It provides an appealing appearance to, and evokes a positive response in, the vast majority of the people.

Our specific task, as a group of local design professionals, is to translate the possibilities and opportunities we see into a series of drawings, sketches, and written standards that the community can understand, respond to, and then decide upon. These will serve as the basis for the final design done by others, which is then translated into reality by craftspeople. The tangible results of this design are what people will experience every day when they are near the River. It is critically important that the community ends up feeling good about the project after all the debate is over, and when our children and grandchildren walk the trails, view the River, or sit on a bench. As design professionals, we help plan projects that will fit well into the fabric of people's lives.

III. Overall Project Unifying Themes

It is important that the project is unified from one end to the other. This doesn't mean that everything looks the same or that a trail by Kennedy Park looks the same as one by the proposed Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts. It does mean that there are subtle themes that tie the areas together, that let one know that it's the Napa River, that although there are many ways to enjoy its beauty and opportunities, it is a cohesive, interrelated whole.

We suggest that the following are some of the elements that unify the project:

- Provision for open views of the River from the banks, from public roads, from adjacent neighborhoods and commercial properties, and from all bridges.
- Coordination of the trail system, from Kennedy Park north through town. The trail system is one of the key elements that ties the project together and integrates it into the community fabric.
- Design that invites and permits people to be near the River and that provides easy access to the River.
- Coordination and blending with the planned natural, emergent vegetation.
- Wall and berm design that minimizes the amount of exposed concrete and rock riprap and that flows in an appealing manner.

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- Use of a unified color pallet of natural colors including indigenous stone and stone-colored finishes with brighter colors where the designer deems appropriate, and use of neutral-tone wrought iron or steel rails.
- Undergrounding of overhead utility lines. Minimal use of fencing.
- Provision for decorative hard-surface paving for trails, walks, and plazas within the urban reach.
- Downtown bridge designs that complement its historic nature. It is of vital importance that River and other views from the bridges (and views of the bridges) be preserved or created for pedestrians and motorists alike. A new Maxwell Bridge on Imola Avenue should be considered for a modern, innovative design.
- Provision for intimate public access to or near the River within the urban reach and for intensive public gatherings in that reach.
- Substantial provision for docks serving small and large boats, floats for tie-ups, and hand launching within the urban reach, encouraging access by water and creating an active waterway. It is important to remember that the River is navigable up to the Third Street Bridge and should be maintained accordingly.

IV. Urban Reach

A. Hatt Building to Third Street

After the Project is built, this part of the River will be highly visible and has the potential to be a significant re-use area. We believe that innovative and highest quality design is imperative for this area's future success as a focal point for the community's eyes. The heart of the urban riverfront, a place of high-intensity public use, it becomes the City's statement of what it, and its waterfront, are.

We suggest that the following are critical elements in this area:

- Set flood walls back on the west side in a stepped fashion such that there is the ability to create pedestrian access to, or near, the water, to create a beautiful appearance, to preclude unbroken expanses of shear, vertical walls, and to create maximum flexibility for future re-use.

- Provisions for pedestrian-oriented uses; people want to see other people and need visible access routes that make sense:
 - Restaurants and cafes
 - Public open space
 - Retail / Commercial (with no offices on ground floor or plaza level)
 - The viewing and performing of public events — the River Festival, dance, etc.

All of these are examples of ideas that serve locals and visitors alike.

- Ban the creation of any new parking lots at the river's edge. This area is far too valuable for this kind of use. The use of hidden, underground parking is acceptable, but development of parking away from the riverfronting area is strongly encouraged.
- Use landscaping to mitigate wall heights and to create areas of greenery and color.
- In addition to removable floats, provision of at least one boat dock or float that can be left in place permanently without concern that it will be washed away in a flood. The area just below the Hatt Building on the west bank or the center pier of the new Third Street bridge may be appropriate locations for such a dock.
- Continual maintenance such that the tidal wetland area does not become a repository for trash; this will require provisions for maintenance access to the tidal wetland.

B. Dry Bypass

Because the Corps is in the process of determining its recommended design for the Dry Bypass, it has been difficult to create design recommendations for this area. Nevertheless, there are a number of important issues that need to be considered.

We suggest that the following are important considerations for the bypass area:

- The Resource Agencies (Fish and Game, Water Quality Control Board, etc.) have indicated that this area will be outside of their respective jurisdictions as far as the "Living River" approach is concerned. As such, the community may incorporate the elements it wishes to be included as long as they fit within the parameters of the Corps' design and of sensitive urban design.
- We believe that this area has potential as a connection from Downtown to the proposed Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts. A smooth and attractive circulation system within this area is critical for the downtown. It should be designed to be an inviting and visually pleasing space rather than a place to park automobiles. However, a small parking area will need to be provided near the outlet to serve people launching small boats, canoes, and kayaks.
- Provisions should be made for urban, open space uses including limited recreation and trail continuity.

- Where allowed by hydraulics, a mowed turf bottom within the bypass is desired; this turf needs to be irrigated such that the area is green all year.
- The potentially stark geometry should be avoided through design, materials, and landscaping. As an example, the levee trail flanking the bypass should be an inviting, tree-shaded promenade.
- Provision of lighting and security; final design should provide limited police patrol access.

This area is very important to the success of the project from both a hydraulic standpoint and from an aesthetic standpoint. It is critical that this area has great attention paid to it as the Corps is able to provide additional design information. We have some innovative ideas for its use.

C. Hatt Building to Imola

Although this stretch of the River is less visible to visitors, it is highly important to the residents and employees in the area. Riverside Drive is the only street in Napa that parallels the River and that affords sweeping vistas of the River.

It appears that the Corps has been successful in properly lowering the water surface elevations for the 100-year flood flow. This reduction in water levels has the direct result of lower flood wall or berm heights than originally thought in this stretch. It appears that the maximum height on the west side will be 4.5 feet in the vicinity of Oak Street. The majority of walls or berms on the west, however, will be in the 3 to 4 foot range. Some will only be 2 to 2.5 feet high. These can be incorporated into the landscape of the area and still afford good views of the River, particularly from the trail. A few limited access points for fishing and observation should be provided in addition to maintaining the existing boat access in two locations. The walls and/or berms in this reach will be set back twenty feet from the top of the bank. The trail is proposed to be on the landward side of the wall and/or berm. In most instances, this will work quite smoothly with the existing improvements. In a couple of instances, it appears that there will be a need to eliminate on-street parking and/or adopt other measures due to the resulting narrowing of the street.

On the east side of the River, the area near the Mobile Home Park has a wall in the 6 foot range. Careful attention to this wall's placement, treatment, and use of adjacent berms will be important to how this wall is ultimately viewed. Again, the vast majority of walls or berms will be in the 2 to 4+ foot height range. The trails on this side of the River through this reach are also on the landward side of the wall/berm except in the vicinity of the Mobile Home Park.

Walls on both sides of the river should be colored and textured. The Corps has proposed that they be made of concrete, but we urge that the most attractive design and materials

be used. There are many simple architectural treatments that can be incorporated into the walls for very little additional expense. Walls in excess of roughly 30" in height should have earth fill placed against them on one or both sides in order to reduce their perceived height. In those areas where there is insufficient area for this earth fill, great attention needs to be given to wall design in an effort to preclude vandalism.

V. Continuing Role of Design Review

We believe strongly that the proposed River Project has great potential for the entire Napa City and Napa County community. These concepts still need to be finalized as the Corps prepares their General Design Memorandum (GDM) and prepares to start their final construction drawings. The community has demanded financial accountability for other significant projects such as the recent school bond issues in Napa and Calistoga. We suggest that the Coalition and the community need to hold the Corps, the City, and the Flood Control District accountable for consistency in the final design details for the River Project, as well.

We recommend that an on-going, semi-autonomous Design Review Committee be created by the Coalition with the members representing the major coalition participants. It is very important that design professionals play a significant, professionally compensated role in that committee due to the many design-related issues that need to be addressed.

We suggest that the following items need to be monitored:

- Review of the GDM during and after preparation.
- Bridge design including basic style, railings, etc. As noted above, the new downtown bridges need to complement the historic nature of Napa, and need to be designed in a way that allows easy viewing of the River, as well as pleasant viewing of the bridges.
- Wall locations, heights, depths, materials, landscaping, adjacent banks, and other details.
- Walkways, in the urban areas as well as in the more open areas.
- Pedestrian linkages to downtown, to neighborhoods, to the River, across bridges, etc.
- Uses related to the Dry Bypass.
- Integration with adjacent properties and their land uses.
- Continuous monitoring during the preparation of detailed plans during the long-term staged construction of the project.

VI. Postscript

It is important to understand that we are not designing the basic River Project. We are making recommendations and suggestions regarding urban design and aesthetic features that we believe should be included now, or that provision should be made to accommodate for future opportunities.

Concurrent attention to the details and to the bigger picture will make this project a success for the Napa community. To make design review effective, it is imperative that there is assurance that a specific program and process will be followed. It is important that these include drawings and written documents.

It is important to also speak of the monetary aspects of design and aesthetics. Good design does not need to be expensive or complicated. The suggestions that we have made are all relatively simple and straightforward and should add very little to the project costs. But our suggestions are not cosmetic add-ons or frills; they are fundamental to a successful and vibrant project.

The drawings we have prepared are going to be used as part of a public awareness campaign for approval of the River project. The community is going to look carefully at those drawings and presentations when considering whether or not to vote in favor of local funding for the project. If the aesthetic details are removed during final design, it is our sense that the community will feel betrayed. We cannot afford, as a Coalition, to be less than forthright about what we want to see built.

We urge the Coalition to push for design review and aesthetic provisions within the required Project Agreement between the Corps of Engineers and the Flood Control District / City of Napa. We also urge that these principles be incorporated into, and be enhanced by, the more comprehensive Development Standards and Design Guidelines now being separately developed by the City of Napa, guaranteeing consistency. The ball cannot be dropped just before the goal line is reached.

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URBAN DESIGN GROUP

NAPA RIVER FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN - NAPA CITY REACH

December 19, 1997

Mike Rippey, Chair
Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
1195 Third Street
Napa, CA 94559

Re: Interim Report, Napa River Flood Management Project

Dear Mr. Rippey:

I. Summary

We, individually and/or collectively, have worked on design aspects of the River Project for more than three years. Most recently, some have worked under contract with Napa County and others under contract with the City of Napa and the Napa City Redevelopment Agency. Our recent objective was to assess whether the evolution of the River project continues to reflect the community's visual and functional values that were expressed in the Community Coalition for a Napa River Flood Management Plan.

Although there are a number of issues needing resolution and although there are some variations from the original concept design, we have found that the design-in-process is substantially in conformance with the approved Plan created by the Community Coalition. We acknowledge that many of our concerns must be addressed in the final design stages. Other concerns relate to city planning issues. At a later date, we will make recommendations to the City regarding urban design guidelines for the riverfront area.

Lastly, we feel strongly that there remains a need for continuing, professional design review as the Flood Management Project evolves.

II. Background

Subsequent to the adoption of the Community Coalition Plan, Barbara Kent Stafford was retained by the City of Napa to assist the City in its review and coordination of the Corps of Engineers' plan for the Napa River. Phil vanderToolen was retained by the Napa Community Redevelopment Agency to assist in the conceptual design of elements of the Napa River's urban reach. Following these efforts, four additional design professionals were asked by Napa County to work with Stafford and vanderToolen and to review work they produced in conjunction with the Corps documents. The four included Bill Bylund, Architect; Liesel Eisele, Landscape Architect; Juliana Inman, Architect; and Charles Shinnamon, P.E., Civil Engineer and Community Developer.

In addition to the work we had already done, we reviewed drawings and sketches prepared by vanderToolen and Stafford, reviewed photographs of a myriad of potential design elements, and analyzed additional Corps information that was presented by Stafford. We also had an

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opportunity to suggest changes to the draft Aesthetic and Design Characteristics section for the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. Lastly, we prepared a list of items needing further review and resolution after the General Design Memorandum (GDM) is adopted.

III. Items for Further Review

There are a number of items that will need further review and resolution after the GDM is adopted. Design details are important to the overall project, which is at a normal point at this stage of the design process. More details will come, as the design is refined. Because the project is not yet at a final design stage, on-going design review is essential.

We have prepared the following list of items that will need to be addressed in the GDM and in the final design. It is important to understand that it may not be comprehensive and is subject to further review:

- Bypass design
- Landscape planting throughout the project
- McKinstry Street alignment
- Wall design
- Final bridge designs
- Veterans Park final design
- Paving within the Urban Reach
- Holding pond at the northeast corner of Imola and Coombs Street
- Fishing access and design
- Backfill at walls -- design and planting
- Walkway and paving designs
- Pedestrian linkages and trail system
- Wine Train tracks / bridges / elevation
- Walls and levees from Oxbow to Trancas
- Boat access and design
- Project amenities; i.e., light standards, benches, signs, railings, etc.

Of the above issues, the visual and functional aspects of the dry bypass generate the most concern. The bypass area has the potential for being a significant link between Downtown and the American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts. It should be designed to foster a dynamic link between these two areas rather than pose a barrier between them. Because of the significance of this key feature, we believe that the design aesthetics need to be studied in greater detail with significant input from the City, the Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts, and the Community Coalition. This area must be a handsome feature of the project given its prominence in the heart of the community.

The Urban Design Group also had strong feelings in relation to boat and fishing docks/piers/wharves. We suggested that the following language be added to the GDM:

"Provision will be made for a potential wharf, boat dock, and continuous river trail in the vicinity of Main and Division Streets. Trails and/or walls will be reasonably modified during final project design in order to accommodate wharves/docks/piers being built concurrently by others. A separate project such as this will be subject to normal City, Corps, and regulatory agency review."

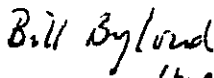
"Provision of a wharf or boat dock/pier in the above area does not preclude future consideration of wharves/docks/piers in other locations. These also will be subject to normal City, Corps, and regulatory agency review."


It is important to understand that, although additional design and refinement is needed for all of the above items, we are of the firm opinion that these are solvable issues in keeping with the intent and the spirit of the approved Community Coalition Plan.

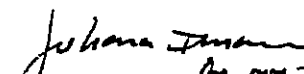
We emphasize that incorporation of well-designed wall treatments, railings, plantings, etc, are not aesthetic add-ons but should be considered to be part of the basic project. Good design does not need to be expensive or complicated. The suggestions that we have made here and in the past are all relatively simple and straightforward and should add very little to the project costs. But our suggestions are not cosmetic add-ons or frills; they are fundamental to a successful and vibrant project.

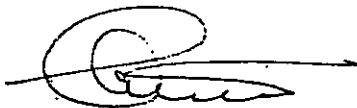
We support the Plan as adopted by the Community Coalition, as it has evolved, and as it continues to evolve with the understanding that the issues we have raised will be addressed in the GDM and in the design documents. We are eager to continue our involvement in the design and the review of the Plan's urban elements as the project moves forward.

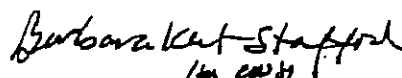
Sincerely yours,


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Architect


Liesel Eisele (by ours)
Landscape Architect


Juliana Inman, AIA (by ours)
Architect


Charles Shinnamon, P.E.
Civil Engineer


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