

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 6, 2018

SAN DIEGO MARITIME MUSEUM ENTRANCE BUILDING DESIGN AND PERMITTING

Project No. 18-033-01
Project Manager: Prentiss Williams

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,500,000 to the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego to prepare plans and specifications, environmental analyses and permit applications for the construction of an entrance building and redesigned exhibition space at the San Diego Maritime Museum in the City of San Diego.

LOCATION: City of San Diego, San Diego County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Urban Waterfront Restoration

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Current Conditions and Proposed Improvements](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Site Map](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31300 *et. seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) to the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego (“the grantee”) to prepare plans and specifications, environmental analyses and permit applications for the construction of a new entrance building and redesigned exhibition space at the San Diego Maritime Museum in the City of San Diego.”

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the development of urban waterfronts.
 3. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
 4. The Grantee is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff is recommending authorization to disburse up to \$1,500,000 to the Maritime Museum Association of San Diego (MMSD) to prepare plans and specifications, environmental analyses and permit applications for the construction of a new entrance building and redesigned exhibition space at the Maritime Museum of San Diego (the Museum) located at the Star of India Wharf on the San Diego Bayfront in the City of San Diego. MMSD is requesting the grant to fund the design of a potential physical restructuring of the Museum, including designing of an entry building on the water, and planning the repositioning of the Museum’s ships on the Bay connected by walkways (Exhibit 2)

One of the problems that the Museum faces is the fact that it is hard to “see”. Many people look at the Museum, see what appears to be a fascinating but disaggregated grouping of vessels, and move along after taking a couple of pictures. Currently the Museum has no single, unified point of entry. Therefore the Museum is not immediately perceived as a museum, and is not recognized as a cultural and historical destination. This problem is abetted by the fact that the Museum’s ships, in their current configuration, are bunched together in a relatively tight Bayfront space.

To address this problem, MMSD would like to redesign the Museum. MMSD has already prepared conceptual plans, with the primary component of the redesigned Museum being a themed entry building. The conceptual plans provide for this structure to be built on the water, but flush with the Embarcadero walkway. Where currently visitors see a collection of ships, the proposed building would serve as the entry point to a museum complex that is immediately recognizable as an institutional destination. The proposed project includes furthering the conceptual designs and preparing the environmental analyses of the designs. Based on the conceptual designs, the proposed project will design the entry building to incorporate a visitor welcome area, with guest reception/ticketing and check-in areas for school groups. The designs will allow for maritime objects and photographs to be displayed on the walls and suspended from the ceiling. There designs will include a theater/meeting space area where visitors will receive an

orientation to the Museum and which will provide context for all that they will see and experience. The building will be designed to contain additional exhibit space, restrooms, a café, and the administrative offices, which are currently lodged within the ferryboat *Berkeley*.

The proposed designs will also provide for an amphitheater adjacent to the entry building that will provide a venue for lectures, presentations, and concerts that will support both educational and entertainment activities within the Museum.

The proposed project includes design of a more dispersed series of walkways that will allow the Museum's vessels to be displayed in a manner that will both make them more visible and that will assist the Museum in telling a chronologically coherent story, as visitors will be able to take themselves on a self-guided tour from the Age of Exploration through the Age of Steam to the current period of maritime activity.

MMSD's decision to initiate redesign of the Museum is best understood in the context of major changes taking place along the whole of downtown San Diego's Bayfront. The first of these changes is the development of the Midway Museum, which has increased substantially the number of visitors to the Bayfront. More recently, the County of San Diego inaugurated the new Bayfront Park, which is both a prime recreational spot for families and a major new events venue directly across from the Museum. In the last six months Anthony's, a landmark restaurant adjacent to the Museum on its south side, has been demolished and the site will be developed over the next two years with a new restaurant and shopping destination complex. The largest project envisioned for the area, the demolition of the Seaport Village complex and the creation of a new shopping and living development, will transform and revitalize the south Bayfront area in the next decade, once completed.

The Star of India Wharf, where the Museum is housed, is designated as Commercial Recreation in the Port of San Diego Master Plan last updated in August 2017. The Commercial Recreation designation includes "water dependent educational and recreational program facilities."

Site Description: The Museum is located at the Star of India Wharf on the San Diego Bayfront (Exhibit 3). Apart from three ticket kiosks, signage, and a few maritime artifacts on the walkway directly adjacent to the Bay, the Museum's footprint as a whole exists on the Bay waters. The museum consists of a number of historic ships and replicas, including the *Star of India*, a massive iron-hulled ship from the 1860s; the *Berkeley*; the *Californian*; the *Surprise*; the *San Salvador* and others. Each ship features galleries and exhibits relating to maritime history, California history and local culture. The Museum's footprint on the Bay waters also includes the floating walkways and barges that provide access to the ships. The Museum's presence in this location is a function of a long-term (40-year) lease with the Port of San Diego, which expires in 2044.

Grantee Qualifications: MMSD has a demonstrated history of successful administration of State grants, including funding received from the Coastal Conservancy. The Museum has received Conservancy grants for a number of projects including the restoration of the tall ship *Californian*, the construction of the galleon *San Salvador*, and the 2014 Festival of Sail. The Museum has grown under MMSD’s management over the last several years, including the acquisition of numerous additional vessels, the development of new educational programming and exhibits, and the diversification of the Museum’s offerings, from the major Festival of Sail event to environmental programming to enduring partnerships such as that with the National Park Service.

Most notably, the MMSD has overseen the construction of the *San Salvador*, a fully sea-worthy, historically accurate replica of a 500 year-old Spanish galleon. This project, which took six years and cost \$15,000,000, demonstrates MMSD’s ability to conceptualize and execute complex projects.

Project History: The proposed project has been identified as a priority by MMSD’s Board of Directors for the past several years. Much of the groundwork for the project concept that informed the Board of Directors’ decision to move forward with the project came from three studies. These included a study conducted by San Diego State University Center For Hospitality & Tourism Research estimating the economic impact of the project; a study conducted by Lord Cultural Resources on behalf of the MMSD related to attendance and financial projections; and a study, “San Diego Heritage Tourism Sector Market Assessment and Organizational Plan”, prepared by the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and sponsored by the San Diego Unified Port District. The decision to move forward at this time with the proposed project was made when the Conservancy received a special appropriation from the General Fund in its FY 2018/19 budget for the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,500,000
Project Total	\$1,500,000

The anticipated source of funds is a FY2018/19 \$1,500,000 appropriation to the Conservancy from the State’s General Fund for “a grant for the Maritime Museum site at Star of India Wharf in the San Diego Harbor.”

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is consistent with Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding urban waterfront restoration, in the following respects:

In Section 31301, the Legislature found that “developing the state’s urban waterfronts into environmentally sound areas through, but not limited to, the creation of parks, open space, visitor

serving facilities . . . will promote tourism, public access, and private sector development in these areas.” The San Diego Maritime Museum is an integral part of the city’s northern waterfront. The addition of an entrance building to the museum has the potential to enhance the museum itself as a visitor destination as well as promoting tourism in and around the waterfront as a whole.

Under Section 31307, the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the restoration of urban waterfront areas. Under Section 31308, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of any urban waterfront project. As mentioned above, the Maritime Museum is a central feature of San Diego’s urban waterfront, which is in the process of being restored and revitalized. The proposed project will contribute to the restoration of this urban waterfront.

According to Section 31316, the Conservancy may undertake projects or activities which include “exhibits or events emphasizing maritime history,” and “the development of amenities and infrastructure consistent with [Chapter 7].” The proposed project will facilitate the development of infrastructure that will support maritime history education.

The proposed project is also consistent with Section 31305, in as much as it exhibits “innovation in sensitively integrating man-made features into the natural coastal environment.” Preliminary designs for the new entrance building envision a combination of glass and undulating roof segments of composite material that together will create the impression of the prow of a massive ship of glass cutting through waves. The intention is to create a striking addition to the aesthetic of the Bayfront; an architectural tribute to the maritime enterprise and the world’s waters. The museum uses the ships themselves to display maritime history. These ships are beautiful and historic and blend well into the land and water of the San Diego waterfront.

Further, the proposed project would also be consistent with Section 31119 of Chapter 3 of Division 21, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations for “educational projects and programs for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12... relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and maintenance of coastal resources.” The MMSD conducts educational programs for school children of all ages on the Museum’s vessels. The potential addition of the new entrance building would enhance these programs and enable the MMSD to expand them to reach greater numbers of pupils. The MMSD intends to provide new permanent educational content that addresses issues related to climate change and the health of oceans and waterways in the context of this improvement project.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective 2C** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design facilities that will increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities and enable people to enjoy natural, cultural, and historical resources.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective 3A** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will develop a waterfront revitalization plan that will increase accessibility, encourage economic revitalization, promote excellence in urban design, enhance cultural resources, and will be resilient to a changing climate

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective 4B** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will support the design and installation of interpretive or educational displays and exhibits related to coastal, watershed, and ocean-resource education, maritime history, and climate-change.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:**

Sustainable Preservation: California’s Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2013-2017

Goal IV: Foster a Preservation Ethic. The expanded interpretive displays that would be contained in the proposed entrance building along with improved display of the Museum’s vessels would “cultivate a sense of stewardship for historical and cultural resources, and the belief that these resources, and the stories they can tell, enrich our lives and our communities.”

Goal V: Protect Historical and Cultural Resources. Through the preservation and display of examples of California’s maritime past, the Museum helps to “Protect, preserve, restore, and maintain historical and cultural resources ... for the education, enjoyment, and enrichment of present and future generations.”

Coastal Act (1976)

Public Resources Code Section 30210 on public access and recreation calls for “maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.”

4. **Support of the public:** The proposed project is supported by a wide range of public officials and private organizations including several state legislators, Wayne Donaldson, Chairman of

the Presidential Advisory Board on Historic Preservation and Delegate to USICOMOS; Andrea Compton, Superintendent, Cabrillo National Monument, National Park Service; Michael Jones, Board Chair, International Maritime Alliance; Joe Terzi, Executive Director, San Diego Tourism Authority; and Port of San Diego, Commission Chair Rafael Castellanos. Letters received by the Coastal Conservancy in support of the project are contained in Exhibit 4.

5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of the City of San Diego.
6. **Need:** The funding necessary to move forward with building a new entrance building and reconfiguring the exhibition space will need to be raised from local and private sources as well as from State and foundation sources. The MMSD is in the process of developing a major capital campaign to raise the funds needed for project construction. The proposed grant by the Coastal Conservancy will enable the MMSD to complete plans and permit applications for the proposed improvements which will raise the profile and credibility of the project and greatly assist the MMSD's fundraising efforts for construction costs.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The San Diego Maritime Museum is a prominent feature of the San Diego waterfront, which is visited by millions of tourists from throughout the State and around the world. The museum itself hosts tens of thousands of visitors annually, including school groups from throughout San Diego County. If constructed, the new facilities, including additional interpretive materials in the themed entry building, the amphitheater facility, and the new layout of ships on the Bay with additional interpretive space, will enable the MMSD to enhance the educational content of the Museum available to the public, and will provide opportunities for new exhibits and new educational programming. With the development of the proposed improvements, the Museum expects to more fully realize its role as a destination of regional significance for purposes of education, recreation, and research.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** According to the San Diego Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy, published in January, 2012 by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability USA, the wharfs and marinas along San Diego Bay are “some of the most vulnerable facilities to sea level rise due to their proximity to the water.” Although located at sea level, the facilities of the Maritime Museum of San Diego are all floating and therefore not vulnerable to the flooding and inundation associated with sea level rise. All of the vessels and wharfs of the Maritime Museum are moored adjacent to the Embarcadero, which is currently approximately 2 meters above sea level at extreme high tide. Current estimates of amount of sea level rise in San Diego Bay at the location of the Maritime Museum are approximately 0.5 meters in 2050 to 1.5 meters in 2100 under daily conditions. According to these estimates the facilities of the Maritime Museum would not be vulnerable to flooding or inundation due to sea level rise. The facilities of the Maritime Museum may become more vulnerable to the impacts of coastal storms as sea levels rise; but San Diego Bay is well-protected from ocean swells, and the range of potential storm damage impacts from winds blowing across the full width of the harbor may be expected to remain relatively constant with sea level rise. Further, the restructuring of the placement of the Museum's vessels on the

Bay will allow the Museum to create docking angles for a number of vessels that will minimize the effects of storm surge.

Additional Criteria

9. **Innovation:** The innovation inherent in this proposed major reorganization, enhancement, and reinvention of the Maritime Museum of San Diego is found particularly in the proposed physical design of the new entry/interpretive center structure and the reconfiguration of the Museum's ships on the Bay. The conceptual plans, as shown in the images attached to this staff recommendation, are of a themed entry and exhibit building that itself mirrors the maritime history that it celebrates, evoking the image of a ship's prow moving through clear waters. An open amphitheater on the Bay will provide an atmospheric venue for lectures and concerts. The movement of the Museum's ships from their current tight clusters to a more dispersed and aesthetically pleasing configuration on a broader swath of the Bay will provide both for an engaging sight and allow the viewer to gain a greater appreciation for the sweep of history that these ships represent.
10. **Readiness:** Upon approval of the proposed grant, the MMSD would move forward to contract with a qualified architectural firm to serve as the project management entity for the design and permitting of the project. It is anticipated that the preparation of designs, environmental documents, and permit applications would be completed within two years of project initiation. Also see "Qualifications of Grantee" section above.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** As part of its Urban Waterfront Restoration program, the Conservancy has provided funding to the MMSD for another major and visionary project on the Bayfront: the construction of the replica Spanish galleon *San Salvador*. This project has increased the visibility of the Museum and drawn more visitors to learn about California maritime history. The proposed project would build on the success of the completion of the *San Salvador* and help establish the Museum as a permanent and prominent feature of San Diego's waterfront.

Through the Urban Waterfront Restoration program, the Conservancy has also provided funding for a variety of educational and interpretive facilities and programs statewide. Recent projects include funding to Call of the Sea in Los Angeles to complete construction of *Matthew Turner*, and funding to Sail San Francisco, the Maritime Institute of Los Angeles, and MMSD to conduct tall ship "festivals," or exhibitions wherein fleets of reconstructed and replica vessels sail to various ports throughout California, giving the general public the opportunity to board and explore these beautiful and historic vessels.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal Code of Regulations §15262, which exempts planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions which the agency, board, or commission has not approved, adopted, or funded. The current project is limited to the preparation of plans, environmental analyses and permit applications for the possible future construction, reorganization and

enhancement of the Museum. In authorizing this grant, the Conservancy is not approving, adopting, or funding any future activities at this site.

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval.