



MEMORANDUM

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff of Historic Charleston Foundation, I respectfully submit the attached comments in reaction to the presentation that was shared at the last public meeting you hosted on October 27th and from additional information that has been shared on the Union Pier website. While the information shared to date does not yet represent a formal “Master Plan” proposal, we want to share feedback with you in advance of the draft PUD application being submitted to the city in the hope that it can meaningfully inform your draft PUD.

As you will see in the attached comments, we have reviewed and analyzed your material as best we can given the highly schematic nature of the information. We will continue to provide additional commentary once more information is released. Our objective in sharing our feedback and asking for deeper clarity is to partner with you in ensuring that this project—in scope, design, and implementation—is reflective of the exceptional design principles of our world-renowned historic city. To that end, we urge the planning and development team to consider adjusting the timeline for approval of this plan to afford adequate time for productive dialogue, feedback, and robust engagement with the community.

The redevelopment of Union Pier Terminal presents a critically important opportunity for Charleston on the last 70 acres of undeveloped waterfront on the peninsula. It is the largest proposed development project in the history of downtown. Historic Charleston Foundation supports the redevelopment of Union Pier as a vibrant new neighborhood that can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. As a state-owned public asset, Union Pier's plan should be approached differently than other private infill development. This plan needs to be bold, visionary and provide amenities to the residents that far exceed what a “typical” development would deliver. The scope of this project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the peninsula's waterfront.

Some key concepts of Union Pier should include:

- Proper allocation of land uses, height and density, and public open space
- Public access to the waterfront through parks and docks
- Significant civic uses that appeal to residents
- Restoration of the Bennett Rice Mill façade integrated into a comprehensive plan
- State of the art resiliency and flood mitigation
- High-quality architecture
- The public realm, urban fabric, and architectural scale and form of Union Pier should relate to the historic fabric of Charleston and reflect the granular, diverse character that makes Charleston unique and exceptional

We look forward to working closely with the Port and LOWE team to ensure that this unprecedented redevelopment project provides the community and city with visionary urban planning that is representative of the quality urban fabric of Charleston's historic district.



HISTORIC CHARLESTON
FOUNDATION

Union Pier Concept Plan as Presented by SCSPA and LOWE on October 27, 2022
HCF Comments, Feedback, and Questions
December 20, 2022
Categorized by the “Union Pier Master Principles”

For simplicity, HCF's comments and questions below are listed in outline form according to the way they were presented by the SPA and Lowe in the public meeting held on October 27th. Not all suggestions are weighted equally, nor are they prioritized. These are initial thoughts and reactions compiled in the spirit of wanting this project to be a resounding success for you, and for the entire city and state. Some of the suggestions listed below would have a far greater impact than other smaller, but nonetheless positive ones. We will continue to provide additional commentary once more information is released.

Connections – Union Pier will improve mobility on the peninsula. People traveling on foot, bike, transit and in cars will experience improved streets, intersections and views to the water.

- Please provide a survey that shows where the critical line is to help us better understand what portion of the site is legally buildable vs. decking. The 1957 site map (slide 30) has decking up to Concord Street? Is that now fill?
- We would like to see the large city blocks further broken up with alleys (perhaps some pedestrian-only) incorporated into the site plan.
- How is multimodal mobility being integrated into the future of Union Pier? Where are CARTA transit stops being considered? We do not see any bike lanes in the renderings for the proposed streets or pedestrian-only rights-of-way. Washington and Concord Streets, in particular, should be multimodal. What about the potential for water taxis?
- Inclusion of a bike path along the waterfront promenade should be considered.
- Redevelopment at this scale will no doubt create impacts to traffic with the addition of new residents, visitors, offices, parks, job opportunities, etc. How will traffic impacts be studied? Hopefully, you could incorporate a more progressive and innovative approach to mobility and traffic beyond just “level of service” analysis.
- Consider providing less parking for cars and being progressive with a pivot away from an auto-centric place.

- Include the abandoned rail right-of-way into Washington Street to create a continuous multi-use path to the Ravenel Bridge.
- Add more street deflections to add visual interest and calm traffic speed and be more consistent with the historic street grid of the lower peninsula.

Programs/Uses – Union Pier will create a new mixed-use neighborhood on the waterfront. The new district will blend seamlessly with the surrounding city, complementing the skyline of Charleston.

- Generally speaking, we would like to see a more granular, bottom-up approach to the urban design for Union Pier – establish height on a per lot basis to ensure it becomes the “textured and punctuated skyline” promised, break up city blocks for greater variation in block/lot size, and limit maximum building footprints.
- “The new district will blend seamlessly with the surrounding city...” -- how do you define surrounding city?
- This project merits including architectural design guidelines in the PUD application.
- The site should be centered around a monumental civic building along the waterfront—example of the Ferry Building in San Francisco with a seafood market like Pike Place in Seattle.
- We would like to see a skyline or bird’s eye rendering, similar to what is shown on slide 47 of the presentation, which provides a better sense of the scale and “textured and punctuated” skyline that is being proposed for the site.
- Slide 73 shows the “Nighttime Promenade” skyline. We would like to see an actual skyline rendering for the proposal during the day from the water.
- What is the scale for the building massings? The map shows 24 city-block scaled buildings which concerns us. The PUD site plan should include regulating guidelines that would break up these blocks and create smaller lot sizes so that the new buildings will indeed reflect the human-scaled grain of the historic district. There must be a mix of building footprints.
- The final map image in the presentation depicts large, city block-sized buildings, which violates the above tenet. If the proposed buildings are not massive blocks as shown, then get granular and show a range of massing. There are a couple of depictions on the map that show architectural moments that are “of Charleston,” including the gabled building west of the Pinckney Parklet and the small building located at Society and Concord behind the Rice Mill Square. These building depictions are complementary to the fabric of Charleston, and we would like to see more.
- To preclude the monolithic development, create maximum building footprint size – tall buildings (greater than 4 stories) should not have a footprint that exceeds the size of the Fort Sumter House or People’s Building.
- The height across the entire site should not exceed 6 stories (height of the Cooper Hotel) and should scale down to 3 or 3.5 stories along the water at key

view corridors, and at historically sensitive zones. As we've previously stated, the taller buildings need to be scattered across the site at key intersections and where it makes sense urbanistically.

- Certain zones should be considered for single-family/townhome residential development, particularly closer to East Bay Street and along the waterfront.
- What is the metric for minimum parking requirements that you will use for the site?
- What is the "harbor beacon"? This is an excellent opportunity to include a commitment towards public art sprinkled throughout the site.
- The cruise dock is too long; it should be shorter than the Carnival Sunshine's length of 896 feet. Eliminate the southern gangplank to the terminal and make sure to include shore power.
- Union Pier provides a unique opportunity to provide affordable housing at scale utilizing public land. The city is in a housing crisis, and the PUD should include a significant amount of workforce and affordable housing dispersed equitably throughout the development. The county's surplus property on Morrison Drive, the sale and rehabilitation of the former Archer School, and Charleston County School Board's recent announcement about using surplus property for teacher housing are examples to study.
- To avoid Union Pier being a place just for visitors and tourists, the PUD should cap the number of hotel rooms at 300.
- No short-term rentals should be allowed.

Open Spaces – Union Pier will create new public parks that offer waterfront access, playgrounds, dog parks and civic spaces.

- HCF much prefers the "Wharf Park" concept over the "Island Park," as it pays tribute to the history of Charleston's working waterfront and is compatible with the traditional form of the eastern edge of the peninsula. The Wharf Parks could have different nodes and shapes with varied levels of programming. We would refer the team to examine the small wharf with sycamore trees at the southern end of Waterfront Park for reference.
- Can large shade trees actually grow on the park over piers as shown in the renderings?
- The treatment of the Bennett Rice Mill façade requires additional study. As the site's only placemaker and historic remnant, the façade needs more breathing room; the space surrounding it could be more pronounced with an open, enhanced pedestrian connection to the Cooper River. Make the Society Street corridor into an open plaza or mall (e.g., Wragg Mall) extending all the way to the water's edge with clear views to the park and water.
- Could also consider incorporating the Bennett Rice Mill façade into a new exceptionally designed, contemporary civic building.

- While the feasibility of the marina is still being studied, how is the programming for the marina envisioned? Have you considered a lock harbor style marina?
- What is the total open space acreage for the site after the removal of some of the decking? It looks like it's only approximately 7 acres which doesn't seem adequate.

Stormwater – Union Pier will provide solutions to reduce flooding through a comprehensive stormwater management system.

- We would like to learn more details about the stormwater solutions being proposed for the site.
- What are the benefits to the surrounding areas?
- Beyond the check valves that have been discussed and the compensatory storage that the city's Stormwater Manual will require, what other resilient solutions are being incorporated?
- The Dutch Dialogues Charleston Final Report includes recommendations for resilient landscape, street, and building designs. What specific recommendations from the Dutch Dialogues report will be incorporated into the future of Union Pier?

Coastal Resiliency – Union Pier will provide solutions to storm surge flooding that integrate with existing plans for the Charleston peninsula.

- How has the team collaborated with the city's Office on Resilience and the USACE?
- We would like to better understand how storm surge protection is integrated into the site. Where is the USACE proposed barrier protection located? Are you assuming the location found on the current USACE maps?
- The Island Park design removes a significant amount of decking and “baffles” for wave attenuation. Would it still offer effective wave attenuation? How do you offset this loss of decking with potential storm surge impact?
- Slide 51 shows elevated development as a resilient solution by not locating new development in areas over water or on decking. Isn't that already disallowed by federal regulations and the new structures are already required to be located on higher ground?
- How would bringing the buildable portion of the site up to 15-foot elevation affect adjacent streets and properties?

General Questions and Comments:

- Is there a more detailed site plan that integrates the October 27th presentation with the materials available on the website?

- When will we see the first draft of the actual PUD document?
- What is the plan for addressing public feedback to the proposal?
- The architectural values delineated on slide 45 of the presentation should become the vision for the entire redevelopment.
- When can we see proposed massing diagrams and architecture? When is the commitment to quality architecture that has been made previously going to be incorporated?
- We would also like to see some resilient/sustainable design standards incorporated into the infrastructure and architecture (e.g., permeable sidewalk/road surfaces, green roofs)
- Union Pier Terminal is located adjacent to two National Register Historic Districts – the Old and Historic District and the French Quarter. It will be important for the new architecture at Union Pier to be under the purview of the regular Board of Architectural Review in order to capitalize on their architectural and historical knowledge of these important districts and how best to integrate contemporary designs into the unique fabric of Charleston.