



Memo:

To: Waterways Advisory Committee

Cc: City Staff, File DR21-067

Date: March 14, 2022

Prepared by: Supervising Planner and Staff Liaison - Amy Lyle

Purpose: a synopsis of comments from individual Waterways Advisory Committee members related to file #DR21-067; project site - 170 Railroad St - adjacent to the Prince Memorial Greenway; project title - Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country Fence and Lighting; this was discussed at two meetings.

From the 1/27/2022 meeting:

Art Deicke- This is an important project for our committee, the maintenance agreement/access easement is confusing and needs to be ironed out before project approval. This property is a beautiful area of our city that should be maintained. We understand the security issues that are present and that they are primary. We can't allow the interaction to occur between the homeless and this business. The hotel needs some means of security. This seems like a reasonable solution. There needs to be eyes on the Creek. This fence will provide this, and two access points. 8 ft fence seems tall, but the security issue is a very large problem. I am in support of the project.

Carole Quandt- I have done a lot of cleanups along the creek and I've been told the original hotel owners were going to have a snack bar and opportunities for public engagement along the creek. The Hyatt also said the grape vines were going to be maintained, but they are not. Is there an agreement between the City and Hyatt for maintenance? Was it ever executed? Something has been lost over the years since the original concept of the hotel and the intended interaction with the greenway. The fence height is okay and there are other fences that have pickets on top, look at Shady Oaks. There may be precedent for this fence. Also, once this fence is built chances are it's never coming down. We have an opportunity to do this right and the height may set a precedent. I wish we could be on-site to review this project. The plans were not clear enough to make an informed recommendation.

Charles Carter- I am generally in support of the proposal. The security issues have been explained. I am in support of having vegetation being planted, even if it obstructs the view. The design of the fence is open and meets design guideline requirements. The plans need clarification

on slope, landscape/planting plan, and what will happen with the oak tree. I am generally in support. Staff needs to revisit maintenance agreement with final fence location.

Mark Neely- I agree on the need for the project. The applicant needs to get the landscape plan and tree issue resolved. The fence height is an issue, and we need more information.

Steve Rabinowitsh – My involvement started in 1990, helping move the Prince Memorial Greenway from channelized creek to public/private partnership. The intent was to create a larger riparian area and a safe place for the public. The fence locations were intentional. I understand the need for security and I'm sympathetic. The maintenance has suffered over the years. However, the answer is not to bring the fence line down to the pathway which will constrict the public realm. This will restrict the user and the perception of safety. I would support at 6 ft fence; 8 ft does not meet the intent of the plan and guidelines. 6 ft would be appropriate but at the fence line that exists now and a buffer near Hwy 101. Spikes on top of the fence set a precedent that we don't want. It will make it seem like the people on the creek are threatening; you need to consider the normal public users as well. Landscape and lighting plans need more specificity. There is public art on this property that was developed through the redevelopment agency. Tara Thompson requested that if someone wants to look at the art that the public be admitted. There needs to be more public and private partnership in this area, not less. We need more cohesive planning. There are ways to accomplish what the applicant wants and not with an 8 ft fence.

From the 2/24/2022 meeting:

Art Deicke- There is public access to the globe art installation due to fencing issue. Who has responsibility over this installation? Signage (City) isn't readable, it's not being maintained (photo shown). The eastern side of the Hyatt has an 8 ft gate (unlocked during his visit). I understand the need to maintain security. This understates the failure of the City to maintain security. What is the evidence between scaling a 6 ft chain-link fence and an 8 ft pole fence? Those aren't easy to scale. Does the two ft addition make a difference to security in proportion to the view? Why not do a post and rail 3 ft fence that provides a small visual deterrent at the location of the original proposed new fence, and then, with the new proposed location, erect a 6 ft fence as a physical barrier?

I also have concerns about spherical artwork. There needs to be a solution found for that. We need to figure out the maintenance, trash, signage, and flooding issues. It all needs to be explored and where the private verses public space fits in. Art is being lost due to the public/private piece and its being lost by the City. This needs to go to the other committee (Art in Public Places). There are alternatives to the 8 ft fence. They need to meet the creek guidelines at the base.

Carole Quandt - This is a complicated project with many issues that are larger than our normal scope. It's not going to the Design Review Board or Art in Public Places, and this is daunting responsibility. This needs to be elevated. I share the concerns on the fence height and the landscaping choice of pyrocantha. This could be a reemerging community asset, and this is a very important piece and important decision.

Mark Neely- I appreciate the fence has been pulled back. I have concerns about the 8 ft height; it feels too high. It will no longer be a public space if you have to go through the lobby to get there. Should we relocate or move the art? It needs to be more visible to the public. I understand the hotel's concerns but they need to beef up the security instead of impeding on people's enjoyment of the creek. I'm happy that the tree can stay. I do have concerns with pyrocantha, there needs to be some other protective plant that can be used.

Charles Carter- Does this need to go to Art in Public Places Committee? As WAC we are weighing in on design review and we are not a design review committee. I share concerns with the 8 ft height. There needs to be consideration of major vegetation and landscape installation will help the 8 ft fence, it will eventually look okay.

Kevin Sea- I applaud the move of the fence. The pyrocantha needs to become something else, reducing non-native spread. As WAC we are having a bigger conversation about beautifying the greenway and we want to continue that discussion and keep it maintained. If that means capital improvements, then I support WAC working on that. I respect the Hyatt needs to address business and hospitality needs, which is such a big part of our community. I'm okay with the height of the fence and it's reasonable since it's been 6 ft in the past. This is nicely planned out. We need a thriving public presence; the gate needs to provide access to the trail for Hyatt guests.

Steve Rabinowitsh - Thank you for bringing this item in front of WAC. Moving the fence location is positive, square top is positive. I appreciate the alignment. I understand the challenges of the hotel. A lot of the problem comes from isolation. We need to enhance public presence and access and make the location desirable for the public which will minimize the security issues with the unhoused. A 6 ft fence is appropriate with the square tops. An 8 ft fence will not solve the problem more than the 6 ft. Changing to a green color makes more sense, thank you Carole. It feels of isolation inside and outside the fence. I am worried about the landscaping creating more of a buffer. We need clear vision between the hotel and the creek. "Eyes on the creek" is extremely important, again, feeding into the issue of isolation. The landscaping needs to express these concerns. Taking this to the Art in Public Places Committee makes sense, they need a referral. How do we integrate the fence environment into the hotel property? Both are suffering from the current situation. This is a degraded environment; the plaza, which is meant to be a place for people to gather or hold events, is blighted. The landscaping hasn't done well; it could be so much more beautiful. We are turning people away. It's a problem for the City and for the hotel. We need to establish a method of working together to come up with a plan for the maintenance and enhancement of the area. I recommend that that process be created, with the City and the hotel. That's what really needs to happen, it's not about a fence.