A ferry coming to Richmond is an exciting prospect for those who live and work in the city. In addition to the significant investment likely to be drawn to the waterfront, the ferry has important symbolic meaning: Richmond residents are central to the Bay Area economy.

The ferry is not just a new form of transportation; it will fundamentally change the land use pattern along the southern waterfront. The plan submitted to the City Council by the Water Transit Authority calls for almost 700 new units of housing on the Ford Peninsula and new Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) regulations may call for 1,700 new units within a half-mile radius of the proposed terminal at Marina Bay.

The ferry and its surrounding development can be a great opportunity for a more socially equitable future by creating a vibrant and more integrated waterfront. The ferry can help generate local jobs, affordable housing, and help improve transportation infrastructure for all residents.

However, the ferry can also lead to an exclusive waterfront for the wealthy, where the vast majority of Richmond residents can’t afford to live or shop. A recent report to the MTC by the consulting firm working on the Richmond ferry plan, states that much of the new housing will be affordable to only middle- and upper-income people. Consultants examining the idea of locating the ferry in Richmond stated the following, “This raises important equity considerations that need to be addressed as part of the planning process for individual station areas.”

REDI prefers a vision of the Richmond waterfront that is integrated, where people of different income levels live, work and interact. Unfortunately, the most recent ferry plan that was submitted to the City Council disregards the consultant’s advice to address equity directly within individual station areas. Instead, the current plan does little to assure an equitable and public southern waterfront that generates benefits for all of us.

Here are four keys to making the ferry work for everyone:

1) Strengthen Richmond’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. An equitable waterfront with adequate affordable housing will require strong citywide measures, as the draft plan does not include any specific solutions. One way for the city to ensure affordability on the waterfront is to revamp its inclusionary housing provision to:
   • require low- and very-low- income units;
   • discourage the use of in-lieu fees except under certain circumstances;
   • revise the in-lieu fee to reflect the cost of constructing an affordable unit;
   • devote all in-lieu fees to affordable housing;
   • prohibit the use of public funds to meet the inclusionary requirement.
   • Most importantly for the waterfront, the city should also impose a slightly higher standard for significantly upzoned areas, maximizing the public benefits from a major land use change.

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1 The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the regional transportation planning agency for the Bay Area. It plays a prominent role in allocating funding for transportation projects in the region. More information is available at www.mtc.ca.gov.
2 WATER TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT, Draft Discussion Paper, Submitted by DC&E Consulting the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, April 18, 2007
2) Be aggressive about affordable housing, and embrace the varying degrees of density needed for accomplishing it. Building new housing around transit makes sense and is now required by MTC regulation. It is also an opportunity to make the waterfront accessible to lower-income residents. The City should take advantage of the market and use the new market rate units to help fund a significant number of affordable units. Increased density along the waterfront helps make the case for ferry funding and makes affordability possible. This may require building upwards in order to maintain open space and preserve jobs. With good design and careful land use and transportation planning, the 311-acre ferry zone can accommodate a range of income levels while preserving the views and quality-of-life for existing Marina Bay residents.

- The City, the WTA and the MTC should allocate the resources to immediately and efficiently model different density options for the waterfront.
- The model should consider the housing market, development economics, possibilities for affordable housing, geology, viewsheds and design-elements which are critical to making an informed decision about how much housing to build on the waterfront.

3) Commit to improving transit throughout the city, including useful connections to the waterfront. A 2003 Community Based Transportation Plan funded by MTC provided a list of priority transit needs and amenities for low-income families in Richmond who mainly reside in the Iron Triangle, Parchester Village, Coronado and Santa Fe neighborhoods. With so many competing needs for improved bus services, the city should explore additional funding opportunities to pay for AC Transit feeder service to the ferry, especially since many Bay Area ferry riders tend to use park and ride lots and are unwilling to use other forms of transit.

- Parking fees could prove to be an important source of revenue to pay for transit improvements and amenities, especially since parking capacity is typically scarce around the most successful transit-oriented developments.
- Transit impact fees for future waterfront businesses and residential development can help the City raise funds for better transit connectivity and amenities and also help support reduced fares for low-income families.
- Transportation Demand Management Strategies (TDM) such as employer provided eco-passes, promoting carpools, rideshare and other bike, pedestrian and transit incentives could reduce congestion and vehicle miles traveled, and when combined, promote a more sustainable and healthy waterfront.

4) Take the next step on waterfront jobs. The current plan is to be commended for its attention to preserving jobs and industrial land, and the use of buffer zones is wise. Yet, 2,000-3,000 new residents on the Ford Peninsula will only increase pressures on industrial land, and new and preserved jobs do not assure new work for current Richmond residents.

- The City should develop an industrial land use and employment plan, including expansion of jobs in the green economy, rather than continuing to make land use decisions on a purely case-by-case basis.
- The City should adopt measures to mandate and expand local hiring and better develop the ability of Richmond residents to take advantage of good-paying jobs in local and clean industries.

A truly equitable and public waterfront will not happen by accident. The ferry is a wonderful opportunity for the City of Richmond to stimulate investment along the waterfront that could generate good jobs, affordable housing, and spectacular open and public spaces. Developing a plan that makes equity a priority by building in key land use, economic development, housing, transportation and environmental requirements not only helps make our case for funding for the ferry, but ensures the sustainable integrated waterfront that Richmond deserves.

For more information on REDI, our campaign and our ideas for the Richmond General Plan Update, visit www.urbanhabitat.org/richmond, or contact Richmond Campaign Coordinator Sheryl Lane at (510) 839-9608.

REDI is a diverse coalition of organizations committed to growth that benefits rather than burdens existing Richmond residents and that involves low-income residents in the decisions that impact their lives and neighborhoods.

3 MTC Regulation 3434.
4 Water Transit Oriented Development, Draft Discussion Paper submitted by DC&E Consulting for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, April 18, 2007 p.3-32
5 Water Transit Oriented Development, Draft Discussion Paper submitted by DC&E Consulting for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, April 18, 2007 p. 3-64