



# *San Francisco Tomorrow*

*Working to Protect the Urban Environment*

*Issue 364*

*Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow?*

*April 2014*

*You wouldn't want to miss*

## *San Francisco Tomorrow's Annual Awards Dinner*

*May 21, 2014 Delancey Street Restaurant*

Every year at our Annual Dinner, San Francisco Tomorrow bestows the Jack Morrison Award for lifetime environmental dedication and achievement. Receiving this, our highest award, will be **Rebecca Evans**, a long-time Sierra Club activist, the first full-time employee of the SF Group and a founding member of the League of Conservation Voters. Among first appointees to the Commission on the Environment in 1993, Becky has chaired and served on numerous waterfront advisory committees and is a signatory of this June's Waterfront Height Limit Right-to-Vote Initiative.

One of SFT's Unsung Heroes, Tim Redmond, will receive his award for progressive journalism as former editor of the Bay Guardian and now founder of the on-line publication, 48 Hills, which will continue to shed light on the corrupting influence of money and private power on San Francisco's public decisionmaking.

In a combined award, Sara Shortt and Tommi Avicolti Mecca will be recognized as Unsung Heroes for their efforts to confront the housing affordability crisis through the Housing Rights Committee to obtain relief for long-time tenants and others impacted by growing housing inequity in San Francisco.

San Francisco Tomorrow depends on this event to gain support for our continued efforts to protect the environment, elect responsible and responsive public officials and promote excellence in public transportation. Please respond by Monday, April 28 to have your patron and sponsor support listed in the program.

PATRON \$120. or \$150. SPONSOR \$80.

Dinner ticket \$50.(dinner only) Membership renewal \$15., \$25., \$35. OR \$50.

*PLEASE SEND YOUR RESERVATION to Jane Morrison, 44 Woodland, San Francisco 94117*

or call Jane at 564-1482

***Visit SFT's website at [sftomorrow.com](http://sftomorrow.com)***

# CITY'S OPEN SPACE NOT BUSY ENOUGH? City's Plazas Program wants to "activate" quiet plazas and open spaces

The Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development has drafted legislation to target San Francisco's public plazas for business-focused activities. According to the OEWD, City property generally over 2,000 square feet and outside the Recreation and Parks Department jurisdiction would be eligible for participation in the "Plazas Program". Each proposed plaza would have a "demonstrable need for a long-term activation" and/or maintenance solution. Selected public spaces would need to be "adopted" by the Board of Supervisors on a plaza-by-plaza basis as part of the Plazas Program.

The program's description available on the OEWD website uses words like "energize", "activate", "revitalize", "support economic vitality", and "strengthen and empower neighborhoods" to describe what basically amounts to renting public places to anyone who can fill out an RFP. The idea is that the City's coffers would benefit from increased economic activity; the program would help businesses that need affordable space and don't want to go through standard business permitting processes.

## So-called "stewards"

According to the OEWD, the City would select a vendor to 'steward' or run the plaza (and presumably include its own commercial activities). A selection process would determine the steward's suitability for a selected plaza. Each plaza would engage a single steward. Some time and space at each plaza will be reserved for non-commercial uses, presumably when no businesses want to use the space. If the public or an organization wished to host events at that plaza, the decision and administration of those events would be in the hands of the steward (the business that has rented the plaza).

It sounds as though the public uses of a public plaza would be outsourced to a vendor. There is no indication whether there are limits to the vendor's ability to sublease, charge fees or otherwise restrict activities in the plaza. The OEWD is partnering with the City's Real Estate Division and the Department of Public Works to launch the SF Plazas Program.

San Francisco's plazas are vital to the livability of the City because they create a sense of place and community for residents and visitors to enjoy the local neighborhoods. But does every unused public

space really need to be filled with vendors and commercial activities in order to be "activated"?

Part of the discussion here is whether "we" need the money from renting public spaces, or whether the spaces are better off left alone. The purpose of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development is to attract and retain businesses to San Francisco, revitalize commercial corridors and create a business climate where companies can grow and prosper. The OEWD's rationale is that plaza stewards would "take care of" the public space so the city won't have to. Is the extra money going into the General Fund or being earmarked for Recreation and Park or OEWD administration?

Information and answers about the fate of SF's public plazas for anyone who would like to form an educated opinion is simply not available from the documents and website. What about a list or map of the plazas? Rules governing the public/private use of the plazas? Any restrictions to types of enterprises to be installed in the plazas?

Why do the descriptions of the City's process for the plazas stop with "Select a Steward"? Who is going to oversee the steward and how? Who is accountable? Who pays for the infrastructure to support the plaza business? What is the emphasis or percentage share the plazas are intended to accommodate for community supported activities such as art and music events? How much space will be dedicated to retail vs. non-commercial functions?

The project manager for the Plaza Program, Robin Havens, stated that there is no list of proposed plazas because each plaza would need to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors on a plaza-by-plaza basis. It seems as if every plaza and open space owned by the City could be a candidate for the program but Ms. Havens mentioned only McCoppin Hub Plaza (McCoppin and Valencia Streets), Jane Warner (Market and Castro Streets) and Daggett Plaza (16th Street at 7th Street), as possibilities.

The Mayor's Office is soliciting public input. The Plazas Program will be heard before the Planning Commission on Thursday, May 1. Contact [robin.havens@sfgov.org](mailto:robin.havens@sfgov.org).

# Mayor's Transportation Task Force Misses the Mark

Early in 2013 Mayor Edwin Lee announced the formation of a 45-person Task Force, convened to develop a long range transportation plan for San Francisco. Through a General Obligation Bond Issue, extension of the 1/2 cent transportation sales tax and increase in San Francisco's Vehicle License Fee, the Task Force developed a plan for the Mayor that would raise a total of \$2.955 billion, to be spent on assorted projects over the next 20 years.

Unfortunately the group was comprised mostly of individuals brought in to help win support for next November's ballot measures rather than develop a good transportation plan for San Francisco. In fact, most members had little if any experience in the transportation field, particularly with respect to Muni and its huge backlog of unfulfilled capital needs. A quick review of the 27 projects proposed by the Task Force shows that the result of the effort was a "transportation plan" in name only.

In the Table 6 Strategic Funding Plan breakdown, deteriorating and cash-starved Muni would receive less than half the funds raised. The monies it would receive are at this time at least partly earmarked for questionable projects only vaguely described. See <http://sfcontroller.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=4912>. The long-awaited Caltrain extension (DTX), needed to help reduce the heavy traffic that daily floods San Francisco streets with cars, would receive only a token 0.67%, as compared to Street Maintenance's 22.9% and Bicycle/Street Enhancement's 22.3%.

In other words the Mayor's plan would relegate almost half the amount raised to non-transit projects, often in response to the demands of the benefiting groups. As San Francisco's non-automotive travel workhorse, Muni needs and deserves at least 75% of the funds raised by the Mayor's program to be carefully allocated to important, specifically-defined Muni improvement and operating projects. As a project with the capacity to help reduce traffic in San Francisco, DTX needs and deserves significant support from City Hall, including at least 10% of the funds to be raised by the Mayor's program.

## The peripheral canal is back –in a big way!!

In his first term as governor, Jerry Brown committed to a project that would complete his father's legacy - the Peripheral Canal. The 1960 bond measure championed by the senior Governor Brown built the State Water Project, which, when operated in conjunction with the already existing federal Central Valley Project, established the largest plumbing experiment in the World, initially moving about 3 million acre-feet of water annually. (An acre foot of water is 325,600 gallons; by contrast, the City of San Francisco uses about 11,000 acre-feet annually).

The problem with the plumbing system was the Delta, which limited the amount of water that could be exported – not so much because of environmental concerns, but because the pumps in the south Delta accessed San Joaquin River water, which has much lower flows and lower water quality than the Sacramento River. To resolve that issue, California State Legislature, at Governor Brown's urging, approved the Peripheral Canal, which was intended to divert Sacramento River water before it reached the Delta and send it to the project pumps in the South Delta. Californians - mostly in the north - reacted in anger to what was widely termed a "water grab" and overturned the project in a 1982 statewide referendum.

The 30 years since the defeat of the Peripheral Canal have seen federal action to balance environmental needs and exports (the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, 1994); a spike in pumping in the mid-2000s that reach 6 million acre feet; and a crash in Delta species, including the much maligned Delta smelt, a key link the Delta's food chain. Currently, Delta exports are limited by federal court rulings to protect critically endangered species. *(continued on page 4)*

**The controversy over artificial turf in Golden Gate Park continues:** A Ballot Initiative has been filed for the November 2014 election which would permit renovation of the sports playing fields in the western part of Golden Gate Park with natural grass only, The installation of artificial turf and nighttime stadium lighting would not be permitted in the area west of Crossover Drive. *Visit [sftomorrow.org](http://sftomorrow.org) for more*



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*(peripheral canal continued from page 3)* And now Governor Brown is back - and so is his effort to complete his father's legacy. Now, the tunnels have morphed into twin tunnels that would carry Sacramento River water under the Delta to the pumps. The punchline? These tunnels are being touted as a mechanism to save endangered species. The idea is that when endangered fish are present near the South Delta pumps, the water supply would switch to Sacramento River supply.

We are assured that the tunnels would be operated to protect species, that 100,000 acres of habitat creation in the Delta would offset the loss in water supply, and that exports would be about the same as they are now. We question how this project would be operated and how much water will be taken. We're told that environmental needs will guide those decisions, but given what's happening to species protections in this drought year, we're skeptical. In December, the tunnel plan and its associated environmental impact report were released – nearly 40,000 pages!! The comment period has been extended from April 15 to June 15.

## ***Help us craft our SFT Vision 2014***

*As a member of SFT, you are always invited to take part and to let us know your views. We're making an action plan for our urban environmental efforts in 2014. With the growth policies espoused in recent years, drawing even more people to our small, beautiful peninsula of the Bay, some of the policies that SFT has espoused in the past are still relevant (Build more affordable housing! Safeguard our existing affordable rental housing! Improve public transit!). What are your ideas? What still works? What are some new avenues?*

**Join an SFT Committee!** Choose Housing, Waterfront, Transportation, Political Action or Communication.

If interested, call Jennifer Clary, 585 9489 Denise D'Anne 431 4172 or Jane Morrison 564-1482.

