



# San Francisco Tomorrow

*Working to Protect the Urban Environment*

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

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## TROLLING FOR A UNIQUE SAN FRANCISCO WATERFRONT NEIGHBORHOOD

In recent years, the districts around Lefty O'Doul Bridge have undergone mammoth transformations in the blink of geological time. Irrespective of whether it's good or bad architecture, "instantaneous" development illustrates the difficulty in sustaining "urban soul" in a place that has its own unique character. The new Mission Bay and the King Street corridor physically exist now --- but they add very little to the local "sense of place". So, the challenge remains: How to "instantly" create unique, fine-grained urban and architectural texture that ordinarily evolves over time.

In the next month, the Port of San Francisco has the opportunity for catalytic urban design at Seawall Lot 337 (SWL 337), a 16-acre waterfront site used until now by the Giants as a parking lot, along the south bank of China Basin Channel, in Mission Bay. Across from AT&T Ballpark and fronting Lefty O'Doul Bridge, SWL 337 could be the urban **Heart of Mission Bay**, planting the seeds for an energetic, uniquely San Francisco neighborhood. A lengthy public process led to the formulation of the worthy "SWL 337 Objectives and Criteria for Development", which contains guidance for land use, open space, transportation, neighborhood character, historic resources, city form, economics and sustainability.

The landmark Lefty O'Doul Bridge, crossing China Basin Channel south of AT&T Ballpark, is a unique San Francisco focus for a potentially rich San Francisco neighborhood. The 1934 bascule drawbridge was designed by engineer Joseph Strauss who later designed the Golden Gate Bridge. Quite a majestic sight, the massive concrete counterweight tilts the bridge skyward, allowing ships to meander into San Francisco Bay. The red brick ballpark, McCovey Cove Park, houseboats, channel bridges, piers, blue waters and stunning vistas all add glitter to this urban necklace of sights and events. Above the Bridge-Operator House's door, at the north end of Lefty O'Doul Bridge, is mounted an aged horseshoe. According to an old-time bridge operator, the shoe fell off a horse herding cattle from China Basin southward to Butcher Town. Cattle drives in historic San Francisco!

Many constituent interests crafted the "SWL 337 Vision Statement", and these complex, intertwined goals require tenacious stewardship on the part of Port staff, the Port Commission, Advisory Groups and citizenry. SWL 337 is strategically critical to a much wider region.

On February 15, 2008, the Port of San Francisco received four development concepts for Seawall Lot 337. Two public presentations by the development teams have taken place. The designs are remarkably varied in spatial concepts, scale and land uses, with interesting blends of parks, plazas, wetlands, residential, condos, retail, offices, hotels, theaters, entertainment, parking, green industries, galleries, art studios, etc. (Search SWL337 at [www.sfport.com](http://www.sfport.com) or go to [http://www.sfgov.org/site/port\\_page.asp?id=56101](http://www.sfgov.org/site/port_page.asp?id=56101))

An eight member SWL 337 Advisory Panel, with wide-ranging expertise, was appointed by Port Executive Director Monique Moyer to review the four proposals and to make recommendations to the Port Commission. A short-list of developers will be invited to prepare detailed development and financial proposals. So, opportunities for public input still lie ahead.

With over \$1.4 billion in known infrastructure repairs, replacement and seismic work for aging historic piers and seawalls, the Port has a daunting need for SWL 337's revenue potential. Still, the City as a whole

*(continued from page one)* merits an optimal balance of economics, urban design, architectural quality and neighborhood-building. A robust vetting process should gauge the quality of past work of the development teams and their architects/ planners---consistent with the SWL 337 Vision Statement and the site's overriding strategic importance for the entirety of Mission Bay.

San Francisco Tomorrow (SFT) believes that the design proposals for Sea Wall Lot 337 could play up the historic sense of place to reinforce the urban exuberance, Mediterranean intimacy and uniqueness of this part of San Francisco. SFT will continue to be active participants in this important waterfront project, and we encourage the citizenry to get involved. The Port needs to aspire to a much higher standard of excellence at SWL 337, and thus, to enrich San Francisco's streetscapes, urban milieu, public/ open spaces and environmental quality.

## **PRESIDIO TRUST CONSIDERS NEW MOVIE MULTIPLEX PUBLIC OPPOSES URBANIZING HISTORIC NATIONAL PARK**

The Presidio Trust's announcement that it is considering a plan to build a new movie multiplex in the Main Post area, the Presidio National Park's most historic district, has drawn strong criticism from the Presidio Historical Association, a nonprofit watchdog group.

The movie multiplex would sit on the Presidio's historic Main Post across the street from the massive Fisher art museum and a few hundred yards from the 100-room hotel, according to Trust documents. Proposed by the San Francisco Film Institute, the movie complex is double the size of the historic 1930s-era Post Theater now located on the site. Project renderings of the multiplex show a modern-style, 18,000 sq. ft. annex to the Main Post theater that once served U.S. Army families stationed at the former Army base.

"Standards that apply to National Historic Landmark Districts such as the Presidio make all three of these proposed modern buildings unacceptable," said Gary Widman, President of the Presidio Historical Association. Widman suggested the Trust was acting like an urban renewal agency in a blighted area rather than a public entity entrusted with preserving a publicly owned, irreplaceable historic site. Last summer, the Trust selected a contractor for a proposed 80,000 sq. ft. hotel. In January 2008, the Trust announced that it was moving forward with plans for a highly controversial 100,000 sq. ft. contemporary art museum proposed by Gap Store founder and former Trust president Donald Fisher to house his private art collection.

All three structures are proposed to be built on

the Presidio's most historic site, the Main Post, founded as a garrison by Spain in 1776 as the cornerstone of San Francisco. They would add a total of 198,000 sq. ft. of new construction to the Main Post. Home to the Spanish, Mexican and American military from 1776 to 1994, this new construction in the Main Post area would be the equivalent of over three football fields. More than 30,000 U.S. soldiers and their families are buried less than a mile away.

"The Presidio Trust's support for such incompatible, massive modernistic structures in the heart of a designated National Historic Landmark District it is charged with protecting, shows insensitivity to 230 years of American history and a willingness to sacrifice forever the Presidio's most historically significant site for a profit," Widman said.

Yet regarding a Presidio History Museum, the Trust has failed to act. The park has not had an onsite history museum since 1997. The Presidio Historical Association proposed a history center as a more suitable alternative to Fisher's museum. Since then, the Trust has floated a sketchy plan for a history "museum without walls", in addition to the Fisher Museum, hotel and theater.

The Trust has not held public hearings to discuss the theater multiplex. Two public meetings on the Fisher museum and history center alternative were held during last December's busy holiday season, generating hundreds of written public comments to the Trust. The vast majority of these comments in newspapers and internet blogs opposed the Fisher museum and its intended location.

## Installation of Native Plants in the tiny open lot next to the Arts Commission Gallery, Van Ness and McAllister, in the heart of the Civic Center, kicks off the Mission Greenbelt Project Campaign.



Last November, volunteers for **Nature in the City** installed a *Native Plant Demonstration Garden* to educate the public about sustainable landscape practices and conservation and to draw people into Amber Hasselbring's Mission Greenbelt Project Campaign HQ at the **Arts Commission Gallery** at Van Ness and McAllister. Next project will be a native plant garden at the *Mission Pool and Playground*, near the west end of the proposed Mission Greenbelt.

## CELEBRATE NATURE at McLaren Park Earth Day

April 20, Earth Day, naturalists and neighbors of San Francisco's McLaren Park invite you to celebrate nature where you live. This free celebration will transform McLaren Park into an outdoor ecological classroom for people of all ages. Meet at the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater Sunday, April 20 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. to participate in hands-on restoration of the remnant native plant areas which are found in the park and for bird and butterfly walks. There will be artwork and other activities for kids as well as live performances. **Attended bike parking** will be available. John McLaren Park is largely unknown, provides the curious what one might think impossible in an urban setting as crowded and dynamic as San Francisco: peaceful rolling hills and meadows and spectacular vistas overlooking the downtown and the developed pattern of city streets and neighborhoods.

### HISTORY OF THE PARK

Named after John McLaren, the superintendent of Golden Gate Park from 1887-1943, McLaren Park is one of the largest and most treasured parks in San Francisco. Its 317 acres, including natural areas rich in native plants and wildlife as well as lawns and planted gardens, narrowly escaped the tide of development.

Before the waves of immigrants came to the San Francisco Bay Area, the Native American Ohlone people made use of the native plants, fungi, insects, and animals for their material and spiritual well being, and in turn, nature was woven into the fabric of their culture. The site of McLaren Park was once part of two ranchos granted by Governor Alvarado in 1840 when California was a part of Mexico. Four homestead associations formed in the 1860s to promote housing developments throughout the southern portion of San Francisco. Because of the hilly topography and a lack of roads, few lots were sold on what is now McLaren Park; the rest of the land remained farmland, greenhouses and gardens.

The highest and most hilly areas remained undeveloped. In 1904 Daniel H. Burnham proposed that the hilly areas in the homesteads be made a city park. Harkening back to his proposal, in 1926 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors resolved to create a 550-acre park in what was part of the University Homestead, even though some of the parcels had been sold to individuals. The city immediately began to buy back some of the sold properties with moneys from the general fund. In need of additional funding, in 1928 the Board attempted to pass a bond issue to buy back properties and improve the park. The bond initiative failed but the board was not deterred. The city continued to buy properties with money from the general fund. The final purchases of private property to create the present 317-acre park were completed in 1958. By 1939, WPA workers completed installation of a system of footpaths, roadways, hiking and equestrian trails. The 10,000 trees planted then, thrive today, as well as the remnant meadows of native plantlife.

*EARTH DAY is Sunday, April 20 from 11 to 5 at McLaren Park*

*Hold the Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2008*

## *Annual SFT Dinner*

*(details next month)*

### ***Congestion pricing for Downtown San Francisco***

San Francisco Tomorrow supports congestion management pricing for automobiles entering downtown San Francisco. We see it as a means to reduce auto congestion, improve Muni runtimes, and provide funding for maintaining and improving transit service in San Francisco. To accomplish these goals and ensure a successful program, the boundaries of such a district must be carefully drawn to capture all traffic entering the central business district, and the revenue generated dedicated to public transit.

Congestion pricing, as implemented in London, Singapore and Stockholm, is a good idea. Attachment 1 shows the downtown business districts of these cities, plus that of San Francisco. Information we have received is that business is better in the London central business district, transit ridership is up, and automobile traffic greatly reduced since implementation of the congestion management fee. Attachment 2 shows the origins and destinations of trips to the San Francisco central business district. It should make it clear that the proper place to collect the congestion management fee is the perimeter of the central business district of San Francisco. Should the legislature permit the collection of congestion management fees, San Francisco Tomorrow urges that it be done subject to the following conditions: it be collected at the perimeter of the central business district, the proceeds be used entirely for public transit, and that it be administered by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, which oversees both Muni and the Department of Parking and Traffic.

### ***Haight Ashbury Neighborhood recycling center***

Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council (HANC) operates a neighborhood recycling center that has served its immediate community for the past 25 years. It enjoys widespread community support and is endorsed by the San Francisco Department of the Environment. San Francisco Tomorrow (SFT) has written to the Board of Supervisors to request that the HANC Recycling Center be able to continue operation in the Kezar Stadium area where recycling in Francisco began. Not only do the workers receive your household bottles, cans and newspapers but a secondary use, the propagation of local San Francisco Native Plants has taken hold there. If you are attempting to garden with natives, early Spring is a good time to come by and talk with esteemed plantsman Greg Gaar about good choices of natives that will thrive in the unique microclimate your garden in the city.