Contents

I. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES & POLICIES ................................................................................................. ii
II. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 01
   Why Is Open Space Important? ............................................................................................................. 02
   How Are We Doing in Providing Open Space? ...................................................................................... 04
   Open Space Framework ......................................................................................................................... 04
   Guiding Principles for an Open Space Network ................................................................................... 05
   RELATED PLANS AND AGENCY PROGRAMS ..................................................................................... 06
III. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES .................................................................................................................. 09

Maps & Figures

MAP 1 Existing Open Space ......................................................................................................................... 03
Figure 1 Walkability .................................................................................................................................... 17
Figure 2 High Needs Areas ............................................................................................................................ 19
MAP 2 Existing and Proposed Open Space .................................................................................................... 21
MAP 3 Open Space Opportunity Areas ......................................................................................................... 25
MAP 5 San Francisco Bay Trail ..................................................................................................................... 33
MAP 4 Regional Trails .................................................................................................................................... 35
MAP 6 Bicycle Routes .................................................................................................................................... 37
I. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

OBJECTIVE 1
ENSURE A HIGH PERFORMING OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

POLICY 1.1
Encourage dynamic activation and programming of open space.

POLICY 1.2
Prioritize the activation of McLaren Park, Ocean Beach and other underutilized signature open spaces.

POLICY 1.3
Support the continued improvement of Golden Gate Park.

POLICY 1.4
Prioritize renovation in highly-utilized open spaces.

POLICY 1.5
Preserve existing open space by restricting its conversion to other uses and limiting encroachment from other uses.

POLICY 1.6
Preserve sunlight in public open spaces

POLICY 1.7
Reduce or eliminate automobile traffic in and around public open spaces.

POLICY 1.8
Maintain and repair open spaces to the highest level of quality.

POLICY 1.9
Increase awareness of City’s open space system.

OBJECTIVE 2
INCREASE OPEN SPACE TO MEET THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE CITY AND BAY REGION

POLICY 2.1
Prioritize acquisition of open space in high needs areas.

POLICY 2.2
Support the development of signature public open spaces along the shoreline.

POLICY 2.3
Encourage the development of regional-serving open spaces in opportunity areas: Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island, Candlestick and Hunters Point Shipyard.

POLICY 2.4
Support the development of civic-serving open spaces.

POLICY 2.5
Work with the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service to preserve the open space and natural historic, scenic and recreational features of the Presidio.

POLICY 2.6
Consider open space as a potential use on City-owned properties.

POLICY 2.7
Pursue the use of schoolyards as publicly-accessible open space during non-school hours.

POLICY 2.8
Continue to improve access to and level of activity provided at San Francisco reservoirs.

POLICY 2.9
Assure that privately developed residential open spaces are usable, beautiful, and environmentally sustainable.

POLICY 2.10
Ensure that downtown open spaces are truly accessible, usable and activated.

POLICY 2.11
Support private recreational facilities that provide a community benefit.

POLICY 2.12
Provide and promote a balanced recreation system which offers a variety of high quality recreational opportunities for all San Franciscans.

OBJECTIVE 3
IMPROVE ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY TO OPEN SPACE

POLICY 3.1
Creatively develop existing publicly-owned rights of way and streets into open space.

POLICY 3.2
Develop and enhance the City’s recreational trail system, to tie into the regional hiking trail system.

POLICY 3.3
Encourage alternative modes of transportation – transit, bicycle and pedestrian access - to and from open spaces.

POLICY 3.4
Ensure that open space is physically accessible, especially for those with limited mobility.

POLICY 3.5
Ensure that open space is safe and secure for the City’s entire population.

POLICY 3.6
Maintain, restore, and expand the urban forest.
OBJECTIVE 4
PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY, NATURAL HABITATS, AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OPEN SPACES

POLICY 4.1
Require the inclusion of environmentally-sustainable design principles into all open space construction, renovation and management/maintenance.

POLICY 4.2
Preserve the unique and natural characteristics of existing open spaces through a coordinated management approach.

POLICY 4.3
Protect and restore native habitat in natural areas.

POLICY 4.4
Protect and restore wetlands and riparian areas.

POLICY 4.5
Develop public and agency awareness of local biodiversity and natural habitats and ecology.

OBJECTIVE 5
ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN THE STEWARDSHIP OF THEIR OPEN SPACES

POLICY 5.1
Involve communities in the design, programming and improvement of their local open spaces.

POLICY 5.2
Encourage the development of community-initiated or supported open spaces.

POLICY 5.3
Provide tools to support community open space efforts.

POLICY 5.4
Reduce governmental barriers to community open space efforts.

POLICY 5.5
Encourage and foster stewardship of open spaces through well-run, active volunteer programs.

POLICY 5.6
Support urban agriculture through the creation and maintenance of community, rooftops, schoolyard and kitchen gardens.

OBJECTIVE 6
SECURE LONG-TERM RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE

POLICY 6.1
Develop innovative long-term funding mechanisms.

POLICY 6.2
Pursue public-private partnerships to generate new operating revenues for open spaces.

POLICY 6.3
Expand partnerships with regional park districts, open space agencies, private sector and nonprofit institutions to acquire and manage existing open spaces.
II.

INTRODUCTION
With its dramatic physical setting: made up of hilltops and mountains, surrounded by the bay and ocean, with nature woven through the landscape, San Francisco has an intrinsic connection with its environment. The opportunity the City provides to move outside and connect with nature has drawn countless thousands here over time, and that growth continues today.

As our City grows, we need to ensure we do not lose sight of these very qualities. If San Francisco is to continue to offer its residents the opportunity to live in a vibrant, civic, livable place, yet still connect with the wonders of the natural world, we need to have a framework to that ensures a world-class open space system. The goal of the City’s Open Space Framework is to continue the City’s legacy of fine parks and recreational opportunities, and the policies of the Recreation and Open Space Element are intended to guide the City’s decisions so they expand that open space system for the benefit of its citizens.
Why Is Open Space Important?

Open space is a critical component of any community’s quality of life; for San Francisco it is a defining element of the City and the community itself. The urban nature of the City provides places for activity and engagement, for peace and enjoyment, and for freedom and relief from the built world. It serves the social and environmental health of the City, providing a sustainable environment. Among its benefits:

• **Open space provides tangible economic benefit.** Numerous studies have quantified the dollars that parks bring back to a city, by making the area more attractive for investment, by attracting and expanding local businesses, by increasing tourism and by enhancing property values. The Trust For Public Lands’ study, *The Economic Benefits of Parks & Open Space*, cited testimony that our own Golden Gate Park has been shown to increase the value of nearby property to the tune of $5-$10 million additional dollars annually.

• **Open space and recreation activities improve resident’s physical and mental health.** Physically, open spaces’ benefits are clear: they provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to exercise, give residents access to sunshine and fresh air, and even encourage people to walk or bike from place to place. But open spaces also have a significant impact on people’s mental health, particularly in urban areas like San Francisco, and can be proven to be actual preventative measures that impact positively on health care and health care costs. As our communities continue to grow, our need for the relaxation provided by trails and open space becomes more important to our mental well-being. Public open spaces, whether playgrounds, picnic fields or even just engaging streets, can help build community by giving neighbors a realm in which to get to know each other, and giving children a safe place to play.

• **Open space promotes environmental sustainability.** Greenerly provided in open space networks can reduce air pollution; wetlands can filter contaminants; and natural habitat provides sanctuary for wildlife species ranging from mammals, birds and insects to plants. The trails and streets of an open space network can also aid in reducing greenhouse gases, by providing alternative transportation routes and promoting bicycling and walking.

• **Open space can help to address environmental justice across a community.** Public recreation opportunities provide easily accessible and low cost opportunities for the full diversity of our community, no matter what income level. High rates of childhood obesity and illness often correspond with fewer acres of usable open space. Provision of open space in areas with high concentrations of density, poverty, or special needs can redress equity issues. Participation in recreation and education opportunities can connect inner-city residents to nature, and allow them to contribute to their communities. Local food production in these open spaces can further add to the neighborhood by providing opportunities for fresh local vegetables and produce and providing an opportunity for community members to connect with nature.

• **Our open space network defines San Francisco, for its residents and for the region.** San Francisco’s physical landscape has come to define its cultural context. Our city is defined by its unique bioregional and geographic context: by its visual and physical connection to water on three sides, by its topography that ranges from mountains to gentle hilltops, by its contrast of built and unbuilt spaces, and by the diversity of citizens and species that inhabit them. Our ecological, economic and cultural diversity contribute to an open space network that is a critical part of the City’s role as the region’s epicenter, and of our unique sense of community identity.
Existing Open Space
How Are We Doing in Providing Open Space?

William Pitt, British Prime Minister in the 1760’s, said “The parks are the lungs of London”. Fortunately, our City’s long ago leaders also recognized the essential value of parks and green spaces to a world-class city like San Francisco.

By any measure, San Francisco is performing well against its urban counterparts. San Francisco has well over 3400 acres of open space owned and managed by the Recreation and Park Department (RPD)\(^1\). It also contains over 250 acres of open space owned and managed by the State\(^2\), and another 1600 acres of federally-owned open space\(^3\). These publicly-owned open spaces make up almost 20% of the City’s total land area. And the quantity of usable open space increases even more when one includes all of the other spaces owned by other city agencies, college campuses, schoolyards open during non-school hours, urban plazas or other publicly accessible outdoor spaces throughout the City, by another 600 acres\(^4\). This puts San Francisco among the top five cities in the country in terms of parkland per resident. All of these open spaces are shown in Map 1.

And San Francisco values its open spaces. In 1974, San Francisco voters passed Proposition J, which directs a percentage of property taxes towards the City’s Open Space Fund, to acquire new parks and open space. We spend more than any other urban area per resident on our parks, according to a 2008 report by the Trust for Public Lands, at an average of almost $200 per resident. But more revenue is needed as land costs increase, as maintenance is deferred, and as we move to meet the challenges of providing space and recreation opportunities for a growing population.

Open Space Framework

Products of the Open Space Framework

The Recreation and Open Space Element is part of the larger Open Space Framework. The Open Space Framework aims to provide all the elements needed to strive towards San Francisco’s goal of a comprehensive open space network: a broad vision, a policy context, and a tangible task list for moving forward. To accomplish this, the Open Space Framework will include three components.

1. A Vision for Open Space—Providing a broad outline of what the City’s ideal open space network should look like, this Vision sets forth the City’s long term goals over the next 100 years.

2. A General Plan Update of the Recreation and Open Space Element.

3. An Action Plan - The final component is a short-term Action Plan – a set of five and ten year implementation programs that will set forth the who, the how and the when of specific actions to be taken towards achieving the network envisioned by the Open Space Framework. While the Action Plan cannot guide specific site acquisition or renovation – those decisions have to be made at the neighborhood level - it provides a roadmap for policy makers, city agencies and our open space partners in setting overall citywide priorities for open space. It also serves as a resource and planning guide for the parks and recreation department.

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\(^1\) RPD land – Planning Department GIS analysis, May 2009
\(^2\) Candlestick, Mount Sutro – Planning Department GIS analysis, May 2009
\(^3\) Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, Fort Mason, Lands End, Sutro Heights, and 1000 acres of open space at Presidio – Planning Department GIS analysis, May 2009
\(^4\) Campuses, pilot program schoolyards, PUC lands, SFRA parks, Port parks, linear open spaces such as boulevards and parkways, and privately owned, publicly accessible open spaces in the Downtown.
Guiding Principles for an Open Space Network

San Francisco provides a significant amount of open space already for its residents, particularly given its small land area, its hilly topography, and its density, all of which make open space development a particular challenge. But we can do better, particularly in the activation, accessibility, enhancement and design of our open spaces, and the policies of the General Plan are intended to improve those aspects of our open space system. To ensure a holistic system that encompasses not only the full range of spaces that fall within our definition of open space, but also the necessary experiences that are so integral to San Francisco’s unique identity, the Recreation and Open Space Element follows the eight guiding principles:

1. INTEGRATED AND MULTIFUNCTIONAL: A major theme developed from the outreach process was the concept of “making the most of what we have”: utilizing and improving the expansive network of open and natural spaces the City already provides. San Francisco’s Open Space Framework therefore looks integrating a variety of open space types within each of our existing spaces, and by layering multiple functions and uses to create high-performing open spaces. It incorporates streets, alleyways, creeks, parks, habitat, urban forests, trails, recreational facilities, drainage, shorelines, commercial and civic spaces, backyards, and even buildings, as components of this integrated, multi-functional system.

2. REGIONAL RESPONSIVENESS: The Open Space Framework promotes San Francisco’s role in the regional context as an epicenter for ecological, economic, and cultural diversity. It aims to build on our City’s intrinsic qualities, both natural and cultural, and to reflect the values we place on cultural diversity and biodiversity. Furthermore, it aims to create a network that inspires a deep connection to place.

3. EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY: The Open Space Framework focuses on improving environmental justice, through equitable spatial and programmatic distribution of open space. It aims to provide the maximum feasible access for all residents, workers and visitors, and works towards a democratic network that includes all neighborhoods in the benefits of a multi-functional open space system.

4. CONNECTIVITY: The Open Space Framework envisions no a single concept of open space, but rather a wholly connected network. The open space system should facilitate non-motorized movement, enhance habitat through connectivity, link diverse neighborhoods, and be easy to navigate and understand.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY: The Open Space Framework uses open space as a way to increase the City’s capacity to be a safe and healthful place to live. It promotes social interaction, wellness, and a healthy lifestyle by providing multiple opportunities for exercise, physical activity, cultural and social activities, and a connection to nature.

6. ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION & INTEGRITY: With environmental sustainability as a driving theme, the Open Space Framework seeks to expand the quantity and quality of natural systems in the City, by promoting aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity, by designing for hydrological health, and by implementing environmental, ecological and conservation-minded strategies.

7. SUSTAINING STEWARDSHIP: The Open Space Framework aims to engage San Francisco’s residents as active, engaged participants in its future. Policies work towards shared, continued stewardship that increases the tangible link between citizens and their open space network. It seeks to create partnerships between public agencies, private business, and individual citizens to foster pride, purpose and community.

8. FEASIBILITY & ADAPTABILITY: The long-term vision of the Open Space Framework includes near-term implementation actions as well as flexible long-term goals, to generate a set of mechanisms that are achievable and adaptable over time. Improvements to governance and maintenance are critical to achievement of its goals.
RELATED PLANS AND AGENCY PROGRAMS

The Recreation and Open Space Element, along with its related components that make up the City’s overall Open Space Framework, aims to provide all the elements needed to strive towards San Francisco’s goal of a comprehensive open space network: a broad vision, a policy context, and a tangible task list for moving forward. The City also maintains several policy documents, plans and programs that provide more specific, or tailored, direction with regards to open space in certain parts of the City. These include:

Street Park Program

Street Parks is a partnership between San Francisco Parks Trust and the San Francisco Department of Public Works (DPW) to support the development and maintenance of community-managed open spaces on DPW owned properties, such as streets, stairways, sidewalks, median strips, traffic circles, and vacant lots. Improvements can range from sidewalk landscaping to median plantings to creation of mini-parks in unpaved street right-of-ways and in traffic circles. The program provides technical support on how to accomplish such projects, organizing seminars to assist in building a budget, and can provide up to $500 in matching funds.

Better Streets/ Public Realm Planning

The City’s Better Streets Policy, adopted in February 2006, states that the City’s rights-of-way should be “attractive, safe and useable public open space corridors with generous landscaping, lighting and greenery”, providers of habitat for urban wildlife, and that they should invite multiple uses, including recreation. The Better Streets Plan implements this policy with a set of standards, guidelines, and implementation strategies to govern how the City designs, builds, and maintains its pedestrian environment. Next steps include construction of several demonstration street improvement projects, as well as coordinating City agency actions to ensure consistent implementation of future street improvements by the City’s various agencies. A number of specific streetscape planning efforts implementing the principles of the Better Streets Plan are underway for a number of streets in the Mission District, Cesar Chavez Street, San Jose Avenue and along several Neighborhood Commercial District streets such as Leland Avenue, Polk and Divisadero Streets.

Better Neighborhoods and Area Plans: A number of neighborhood-based planning efforts have been completed or are underway throughout the City. Each neighborhood plan is intended to increase the livability of several of San Francisco’s urban neighborhoods by tapping the benefits of growth as a way to build more balanced neighborhoods. Most include capital improvement plans that draw from and build upon the policies of this Element, to address a range of neighborhood needs including recreation, open space, and an improved public realm.

Waterfront Land Use Plan and Open Space Access

The Waterfront Plan was initially adopted by the Port Commission in 1997, defining acceptable uses, policies and land use information applicable to all properties under the Commission’s jurisdiction, including the definition of locations for new public-private partnership projects coordinated with major public open space, maritime, and historic preservation improvements along the waterfront. The Design and Access Element of this Plan sets forth policies and site-specific design criteria to direct the location and types of public access and open spaces, public view corridors and urban design along San Francisco’s waterfront.

Redevelopment Agency Open Space Planning

The Redevelopment Agency has created a significant amount of open space in its project areas, with more in the planning stages. New parks have been developed at Golden Gateway, in the Western Addition, Yerba Buena Center, Bayview Hunter’s Point, South Beach, and most recently in Mission Bay. Open space planning is underway as a part of comprehensive redevelopment plans in Visitacion Valley, Candlestick, Hunter’s Point Shipyard, India Basin, and in Transbay.
Golden Gate National Recreation Area Planning Efforts

The GGNRA encompasses a number of open space and parklands throughout Marin, San Mateo and San Francisco, including Alcatraz Island, Crissy Field, the Presidio and the majority of the City’s public beaches. A major effort planned for the coming year is the Ocean Beach Erosion Control and Vision Planning process. During the next year, the Ocean Beach Vision Council will develop a document that will propose a comprehensive vision for Ocean Beach, including environmentally sustainable alternatives to improve beach access, enhance underutilized resources, and reconnect Ocean Beach to the city and its international visitors. Additionally, a Plan Amendment is being development for parts of the Presidio.

Significant Natural Resource Area Management Plan

RPD has developed a Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan (SNRAMP) to address the restoration and management of the remaining aspects of San Francisco’s original ecosystem. The SNRAMP will be implemented by the Natural Areas Program, run by the Recreation and Park Department, and restore and enhance remnant natural areas of the City, while also developing and supporting community-based stewardship of these areas. The program also includes a number of volunteer opportunities to engage students, businesses, groups, and individuals in the stewardship of San Francisco’s natural lands.

San Francisco’s Sustainability Plan

In 1996, a collaboration of city agencies, including the Planning Department, the Bureau of Energy Conservation, the Recreation and Park Department, and the Solid Waste Management Program; as well as a number of businesses; environmental organizations; elected officials; and concerned individuals, developed a plan for how the City might reach a sustainable development future. While the plan intended to lay out objectives for a five year timeframe, its intent, particularly with regards to “Parks, Open Spaces and Streetscapes” and their vital ecological, social and economic function in the City, is still applicable. And the Plan’s strategies for how to retrain those functions – through increased provision, constant maintenance, additional funding, expanded community participation, and civic commitment – are reflected in the strategies presented in this Element.
III. OBJECTIVES & POLICIES
OBJECTIVE 1
ENSURE A HIGH PERFORMING OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

The focus of this Element is to make the very most of the open space assets that San Francisco’s robust system already provides. And the way to accomplish this is to make sure that all of the City’s open spaces are high performing. High-performing open spaces are those that are part of a unified and connected open space system, and provide a high level of service to their users, with dynamic programming, activate functioning, numerous amenities and good maintenance. High performing open spaces layer multiple functions and uses within a green space, providing diverse recreational opportunities inside integrated and multifunctional open spaces that are compatible with a range of recreational uses.

POLICY 1.1
Encourage dynamic activation and programming of open space.

- recreational opportunities that respond to demographics of users and emerging industry trends.
- innovative community-driven uses such as food production, education, and improved streetscaping, etc.
- designing multifunctional open spaces that include both active and passive uses
- programming for a healthy, active lifestyle
- adding amenities, such as concessions, that would serve and attract visitors
- expanding opportunities for temporary uses such as festivals, concerts and farmers markets
- allow active engagement with natural areas (public access/trail, wildlife observation, birding and education displays)
- increase cultural programming and activities based on neighborhood need
San Francisco has a variety of quality open spaces, spaces where many different types of users can do a myriad of activities—children can play, seniors can sit and enjoy a break on a bench, people can enjoy nature and families can gather for a picnic. San Francisco’s open spaces vary in their form and function, from the green streets, pocket parks, plazas, community gardens, to large regional-serving parks such as Golden Gate Park. However, some of the City’s open spaces are underutilized and need additional programming and activation. These underutilized spaces offer a tremendous opportunity, because the space is already owned and operated by the City and would in most cases require minimal renovation to take full advantage of the space. These spaces should be redesigned to better serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, while ensuring that the spaces are flexible over time to adapt to changing neighborhood needs. The City should ensure that when large open spaces are redesigned that they are designed to benefit a variety of user groups, including seniors, youth, dog owners, hikers, cyclists, etc. and that space is included for both active and passive recreation. Different types of open spaces also offer the opportunity to consider innovative and community-driven strategies for activation, including: allowing small community gardens in some of the wide medians, such as Quesada Gardens in the Bayview; natural areas could be designated with special signage to teach kids about local flora and fauna and the importance of retaining these spaces, and permitting for temporary festivals and farmers markets could be streamlined to ensure these uses are facilitated and incentivized.

**POLICY 1.2**

Prioritize the activation of McLaren Park, Ocean Beach and other underutilized signature open spaces.

Some of the City’s large signature spaces offer a special opportunity to provide a multifunctional open space that serves a diverse set of users. In particular:

**McLaren Park**

McLaren Park should become a citywide resource, because of its large size, varied landscape, and the specialized activities and programs that are located within the park. Due to its large size (318 acres) McLaren Park could offer uses which satisfy the recreation needs of adjacent neighborhoods as well as meeting the needs of the city. Neighborhood-serving uses, such as the playgrounds, are primarily along the park’s periphery. The City should ensure that the objectives and priorities of the Master Plan, which was originally written in 1983 and most recently updated in 1996 are up-to-date and implemented.

Development of the park should capitalize on the site’s natural conditions, including topography, existing native vegetation, and views. Natural areas of the park, including open grasslands and wooded areas, should be preserved. When adding new features simple forms, and natural appearance should be emphasized. New plantings should be added in the park to act as windbreaks, to define subareas of the park, and to provide visual accents. Plant species should be hardy, wind and fire resistant and provide for and enhance wildlife habitats. Existing wildlife habitats should be preserved and a management plan should be developed to insure their long-term viability.

In an effort to increase park use, the City should continue promoting events to attract visitors to the park. Jerry Garcia Day, an annual festival held in honor of a local musician, draws thousands of visitors to the park and enhances its presence. Permitting events can also be an important funding component for city agencies.

The City should consider a number of improvements to McLaren Park. Existing traffic conditions should be examined to reduce conflicts between vehicles and park users. The City should investigate the feasibility of removing portions of right of way in the park and converting those areas to recreational use. The existing trail system should be retained and missing linkages completed. The trail system should also strive to accommodate all user groups. Any new development should build on the existing infrastructure including roads and parking areas, the irrigation system and drainage structures, lighting and electrical installations. Infrastructure that is damaged should be replaced within the existing network, channel or path. New recreation areas should serve active, as well as passive, non organized recreation needs. The City should also consider the long-term recreational opportunities of the Glen Eagles Golf course, which occupies the most land of any one activity in the park.
Ocean Beach

Ocean Beach offers a vast unbroken expanse of natural open space and is one of the longest urban beaches in the country. The area historically served the growing San Francisco population with the Sutro Baths, the Cliff House and an amusement park. While only the Cliff House remains of these amenities, the opportunities to improve access and activate this stretch of beach are endless.

Ocean Beach has been acknowledged to have the potential to become one of the most spectacular metropolitan beaches in the world, yet suffers from erosion and a lack of amenities. Even with its lack of amenities, Ocean Beach is annually visited by as many as 2 millions people for activities such as walking, picnicking, jogging, dog walking, surfing and fishing.

Creating a Master Plan & Coordinated Implementation Plan

The Ocean Beach Vision Council is leading a planning process to develop both short- and long-term goals for the area. The long-term planning process will examine ways to activate and enhance the beach to develop a true urban beach that serves the local and regional populations. Bounded by Golden Gate Park and residential areas to the East, Fort Funston to the South and the cliffs to the North, the Master Plan and accompanying Action (Implementation) Plan will be a comprehensive and dynamic document with sustainability as the core thread and will highlight the area’s potential as a working outdoor lab showcasing green technology and the most cutting edge practices in sustainability. The Plan will include near-term improvement programs to visitor’s basic services through close coordination between Federal, State, and local agencies. The Plan will also account for the anticipated growth in visitors as Ocean Beach becomes more “user friendly.” Implementing the Plan will call for strategies that fully realize the beach and promenade as a grand civic space for both passive and active recreation. The Plan will facilitate necessary vehicular access while emphasizing better pedestrian accommodation and ensuring connections to the neighborhood, the Presidio, Golden Gate Park, the Zoo, Fort Funston, Lake Merced, as well as to the rest of the city.

POLICY 1.3
Support the continued improvement of Golden Gate Park.

Golden Gate Park is San Francisco’s largest and one of its most important parks; with over 1000 acres of open space and estimated users topping 13 million annually. This park offers immeasurable opportunities to meet the needs of neighborhood residents, citywide and regional residents, workers and visitors, as well as visitors from national and international destinations. People are drawn to the park primarily for its natural features, but recently many renovated and new facilities in the park have increased its popularity, including the Conservatory of Flowers, the DeYoung museum, and the new California Academy of Sciences, to name a few.

Assessing the Master Plan

The City completed a Master Plan, a comprehensive plan that laid out landscaping, circulation, recreation facilities, buildings and monuments, utilities and infrastructure, maintenance, and funding for this signature open space, in 1998. Many of the proposals in the Plan have been completed, some are out of date, some remain unfinished and some new ones should be added. Golden Gate Park is one of the City’s most important resources and a detailed assessment of the Master Plan should be completed to determine if and how this Master Plan should be amended, including an assessment of the long-term viability of the Golden Gate Park Golf Course. The City should assess the ability to maintain the following objectives:

1. Acknowledge Golden Gate Park’s contribution to the diversity of cultural and recreational activities available to residents of San Francisco and the Bay region; recognize the park’s importance as an American cultural resource.
2. Provide for the protection and renewal of the park landscape.
3. Preserve the open space of Golden Gate Park.
4. Create and maintain a park-wide system of recreation roadways, pathways and trails. Minimize vehicular traffic.
5. Foster appropriate use of park recreation resources.
Improved Permeability

Specific opportunities have been identified to improve the permeability and access to the park. Currently, access points into the park are limited, especially on the north and south sides, the longest edges of the park. Access points should be increased to improve physical access, visual permeability, safety and to enhance the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, the lack of basic pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks along the southern edge of the park, provide opportunities for improved access.

POLICY 1.4
Prioritize renovation in highly-utilized open spaces.

While the City does not have exact numbers on user data, the anecdotal evidence is clear: Many of the City's parks and recreation buildings see more users than the space can manage. These spaces are spread throughout the City, with many overlapping the high needs areas discussed in Policy 2.1. The City should perform user studies and collect user data to assess which of the areas' existing spaces are the most highly used, so that those open spaces can be targeted for renovation and improvement to serve their higher user-ship.

POLICY 1.5
Preserve existing open space by restricting its conversion to other uses and limiting encroachment from other uses.

Development sometimes threatens public open spaces. While few public open spaces have been lost in their entirety to other uses, almost all public open space at one time or another has been viewed as a source of vacant land for new construction. The shortage of vacant sites and the intensity of development in San Francisco produce pressures on the City’s public open space. These same factors generate considerable demand for open space and leave few opportunities to expand the open space system. Consequently, it is essential that the City preserve the public open space which remains, and that no net loss of open space occurs.

In general, outdoor space in parks and playgrounds should not be diminished except in very unique cases. Yet, despite general agreement on the need to preserve public open space, developments may indeed be proposed on public land designated as open space in this plan. It is anticipated that the most persuasive arguments in favor of development will be based on the “public value” of the proposed development. The public value will differ among proposals, and a determination, of this value as compared with the value of open space will be difficult. In order to assist in
this determination, four types of potential development proposals have been identified. When proposals for new development occur, the following policies should be applied:

1. Proposals for Nonrecreational Uses

Proposals for nonrecreational uses, such as parking garages, streets and buildings, and for private or semi-public facilities, should, without exception, be prohibited in public parks and playgrounds.

2. Proposals for New Recreation and Cultural Buildings

A properly balanced system combines both indoor and outdoor spaces and programs. Recreation facilities, in addition to outdoor space, are important, and many San Francisco neighborhoods need more recreation centers, swimming pools and other indoor facilities. Additionally, culture is an aspect of community recreation, and facilities such as libraries can support and enhance the existing park system. Even small businesses associated with recreation, such as bicycle rental shops, cafes or kiosks, can enhance and activate underutilized open spaces. All of these uses require space, and because of the recreational nature of such facilities, combined with the urban scarcity of sites and the high cost of land, make parks and playgrounds frequent siting candidates.

Yet this situation is often in conflict with the need to retain outdoor open space, and loss of undeveloped land in a highly developed city like San Francisco results in a loss of open space that can rarely be replaced. Therefore, new facilities may only be permitted if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Facility directly serves the existing open space by enhancing and activating the space.
- If the use is a for-profit entity, it should demonstrate a revenue stream that will return to the park system for capital and/or maintenance expenses.
- Facility is limited in size. The size will vary by open space, but the size shall be limited to the smallest footprint feasible.
- A study is completed that assesses the effects of the proposed facility on the site in question, and finds such impacts are limited (because of a preponderance of nearby outdoor open space, or other mitigating factor), or that the benefits outweigh those impacts.
- A study is completed that analyzes alternative sites, and illustrates that the proposed location is the optimal site for the new facility.

Such criteria should be specifically stated in the General Plan referral for all such proposals.

3. Proposals for Expanded Recreation and Cultural Buildings

Existing recreational facilities are often in need of renovation and expansion to support the growing needs of the neighborhood. Yet additions can be limited, with creative thinking about siting and use of upper stories. Wherever possible, additions should be limited to the existing footprint, without creating a negative impact on the surrounding area by reason of excessive height and bulk. If additions are deemed necessary, expanded facilities should only be permitted if they are publicly accessible recreational and cultural uses, or facilities which directly support them; and if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Facility provides information demonstrating that the facility proposed is necessary to provide the public service of the agency holding the site in question;
- Facility demonstrates how the surrounding open space will be improved by the expansion. For example, the new facility will provide additional landscaping or an overall net improvement to the open space through the reduction in permeable surface.
- A study is completed that assesses the effects of the proposed facility on the site in question, and finds such impacts are limited (because of a preponderance of nearby outdoor open space, or other mitigating factor), or that the benefits outweigh those impacts.
- A study is completed that analyzes alternative sites, and illustrates that the proposed location is the optimal site for the new facility.
- Such criteria should be specifically stated in the General Plan referral for all such proposals.
Because this policy proposes a policy of no net loss of open space, any new or expanded facility that is permitted under one of the above criteria shall also mitigate its impact through one of the following measures:

1. Facility provides additional open space to mitigate any loss it has caused, in the form of activated programming, enhanced streetscaping such as living streets or green connectors (described in Policy 3.1) or in terms of returning space currently used by a structure to open space use.

2. Facility pays a fee equal to the value of the land, to enable the Recreation and Park Department to acquire additional open space.

4. New and Expanded Facilities in Non-RPD spaces:

Many of the City’s open space sites are under the jurisdiction of public agencies other than the Recreation and Park Department - a significant portion of the public open space in San Francisco is owned by other city agencies, including the Port of San Francisco (the Port), the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the Department of Public Works. These spaces include shoreline access, reservoirs, grounds of public institutions, streets, alleys, and undeveloped street rights-of-way. These non-RPD sites are often intended for public uses other than recreation, so the site’s role as open space is secondary to the prime use. Yet their role as open space is important, as they supplement playgrounds and parks and are a major visual asset.

New facilities related to that primary use, or expansions of supporting facilities of various types, may be requested. These proposed facilities may be necessary to perform the public function of the particular agency holding the land designated as open space. Approval of such facilities should be based upon conformity of the project with the General Plan, provided they meet one of the following criteria:

- Facility provides information demonstrating that the facility proposed is necessary to provide the public service of the agency holding the site in question;

- Facility provides sufficient proof that alternative sites have been studied and that the proposed facility can be located only on the site in question;

- A study is completed that assesses the effects of the proposed facility on the site in question, and finds such impacts are limited (because of a preponderance of nearby outdoor open space, or other mitigating factor), or that the benefits outweigh those impacts.

Upon approval, the city may request the agency to meet certain design criteria and performance standards which insure conformity with the General Plan.

In keeping with the overall policy goal of limiting encroachments, the City should also pursue eliminating nonrecreational uses in its public open spaces. In the past parks and playgrounds have been used as sites for public facilities such as fire and police stations, sewer plants and schools. Undoubtedly, the public need for them was great at the time of their construction and many are still essential. But as nonrecreational facilities such as these require maintenance, the City is faced with the decision to renovate them or to relocate them altogether.

Where it is possible to provide services elsewhere, the City should do so, and demolish the facility so as to return the site to open space use. If the facility can be successfully converted to recreational use, then reuse could be an alternative to demolition. The City should not, however, permit the reuse of such facilities for other nonrecreational purposes. The same policy should apply to the reuse of obsolete recreational facilities.

Our parks and open spaces also provide a temporary evacuation space during times of a natural disaster. Temporary structures needed to accommodate the needs of the community during a natural disaster are exempt from any of the above-mentioned requirements.

**POLICY 1.6**

*Preserve sunlight in public open spaces*

Solar access to public open space should be protected. In San Francisco, presence of the sun's warming rays is essential to enjoying open space. This is because climatic factors, including ambient temperature, humidity, and wind, usually combine to create a comfortable climate only when direct sunlight is present. Therefore, the shadows created by new development nearby can critically diminish the utility of the open space.
This is particularly a problem in downtown districts and in neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the downtown core, where there is a limited amount of open space, where there is pressure for new development, and where zoning controls allow tall buildings. But the problem potentially exists wherever tall buildings near open space are permitted.

Properties under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department or designated for acquisition are protected by a voter-approved Planning Code amendment. It restricts the issuance of building permits authorizing construction of any structure exceeding forty feet in height that would shade these properties from between one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset, unless it is determined that the impact on the use of the space would be insignificant.

A number of other open spaces designated in this Element or elsewhere in the general Plan are under the jurisdiction of other public agencies, or are privately owned and therefore not protected by current Planning Code amendments. Planning Code protections that limit the shading should be extended to other public open spaces, such as the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency parks and some BART plazas, such as the New Montgomery station. The City should conduct a thorough study to assess the extent of these spaces and the feasibility of protecting them during the hours of their most intensive use.

**POLICY 1.7**

Reduce or eliminate automobile traffic in and around public open spaces.

Roads in and around San Francisco’s public open spaces are used both by through traffic and by people enjoying the parks. As demand for each intensifies, the conflict between the two uses grows. This conflict should be resolved in favor of open space users because heavy or fast traffic endangers pedestrians, cuts access to open space, damages plant life and reduces the pleasure of being in the open space. The following methods of reducing traffic in and around public open space are consistent with the urban design and transportation elements of the General Plan and should be applied where possible:

- Consider eliminating some current roadway cut-throughs and ensure new roads are necessary for park access, not only as through-ways.
- Increase traffic calming on roads. Reduce the capacity of roads in public open spaces to encourage slower travel and provides safer routes for pedestrian and bicycle travel.
- Establish strict speed limits. Monitor speeds throughout the parks and ensure that strict speed limits are enforced.

**POLICY 1.8**

Maintain and repair open spaces to the highest level of quality.

Maintaining the City’s existing open space system is a continuing challenge. Maintenance continues to be a problem due to rising costs and limitations on staffing and equipment. In addition, many of the parks are old and both park landscapes and recreation structures are in need of repair or renovation. Heavily used parks and recreation facilities require additional maintenance. However, the number of recreation facilities has increased and their use intensified, often without a corresponding increase in the budget necessary to maintain facilities and offer the desired recreation programs. Maintaining open spaces to the highest level of quality ensure that spaces are activated and well-utilized.

In 2003 San Francisco voters adopted Proposition C, which required the Recreation and Park Department to adopt maintenance standards for all the parks under their jurisdiction in the City. All parks are being evaluated on a quarterly basis and since adoption the park maintenance standards and since an increase in custodial and gardening staff, maintenance has improved dramatically. In 2007-2008, over 80% of parks received a score of 80% or more, and only 3 parks received a score of 70% or less. 60% of parks scored higher than in previous years.

It has been a few years since the adoption of these standards and the program has been a success in improving the maintenance of the Recreation and Park Department’s open spaces; however, some commonly cited concerns do not fall under these current standards. Therefore, the City should consider updating and expanding these standards. The commonly cited concerns not captured with these standards, include, for example, the availability of restrooms, the water used for irrigation is being sprayed on the sidewalk, the grass is dying, etc. The standards should
be amended or these concerns should be evaluated in a systematic way to determine how best to address them. Additionally, these standards only apply to Recreation and Park Department owned properties and all of the City’s open spaces should be evaluated consistently to ensure maintenance is addressed throughout the City.

**POLICY 1.9**

**Increase awareness of City’s open space system.**

San Francisco’s open spaces offer residents, visitors and workers space many opportunities for recreating and relaxing. The enormous variety of spaces offers a range of options for the user, from a small plaza where downtown workers sit to enjoy their lunch, to large parks where hikers can walk through a redwood grove, to the numerous classes and programs offered by the Recreation and Park Department for families. Currently the Recreation and Park Department is working to increase community awareness of their spaces and programs, but the City should support these efforts by providing increased funding for marketing. Additionally, coordinated efforts to increase awareness of all City-owned open spaces would increase the use and activation of these underutilized spaces, which are underutilized simply because people are unaware of all that is being offered. Correspondingly, other spaces and programs are far exceeding their capacity, but the ability to respond to these needs is limited because data on usership is not currently collected. The City should first capture data on how the parks and open spaces are being used. This data would allow the City agencies to better assess which spaces are most in demand and at what times, allowing the City to be more responsive to community need.

The City should also take advantage of the latest technology to increase awareness of the open spaces and opportunities to volunteer. For example, a searchable website that allows users to determine which open space has which amenities, hours of operation, available programs, and which days are volunteer days would allow more community involvement. The City could also work on a marketing campaign utilizing the MUNI and BART systems to increase awareness of how to access open space by transit.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

**INCREASE OPEN SPACE TO MEET THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE CITY AND BAY REGION**

In an urban area, the most critical factor in the provision of open space is its distribution. All types of open space activity - from sportsfields to playgrounds - should be accessible to and within walking distance of every resident of the City. Walking distance, however, ranges depending on the type of activity and the resident. One-half mile is commonly accepted as a distance that can be comfortably walked in 10 minutes, and as a distance most people are willing to walk to access community uses1. For most open space activities, including active ones such as hiking, biking and sports activities; or for passive ones, like picnicking, this walking distance is acceptable. However, for activities that involve small children, such as a playground, or require moving through denser areas, a ¼ mile, or five minute, walk is more appropriate. Using these walking distances, and taking into account topography and other barriers, the City’s open space is generally well distributed, as illustrated in Figure 1: Walkability.

However, some parts of the City are still deficient in certain types of open space. The entire eastern side of the City has a lack of large open spaces within walking distance of many of its residents, a fact that becomes exacerbated as growth in the north and southeast increases. Many parts of the City also lack playground space. And while sportsfields are well-distributed, the demand for their use is often greater than neighborhood spaces can provide.

And even within some areas where acceptable walking distances are provided, such as high-density/low income neighborhoods, the area’s population and their needs may exceed the capacity of the public open space to accommodate it. As these communities continue to grow, more people are accessing the limited open space resources that exist, requiring improvements to serve more people in less space. This objective, and the policies that follow, are aimed at addressing these deficiencies through new or improved open space provision.

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1 Regional Plan Association (1997) 
Building Transit-Friendly Communities: A Design and Development Strategy
Figure 1
Walkability

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Active Use / Sports Fields
0.5 MILE BUFFER

Passive Use / Tranquil Spaces
0.5 MILE BUFFER

Playgrounds
0.25 MILE BUFFER
POLICY 2.1
Prioritize acquisition of open space in high needs areas.

Throughout the country, safe, green open space is a rarity in dense communities, where our low-income and minority populations tend to be concentrated, and where there are large numbers of children and elderly people. In the more densely populated, older areas of San Francisco, people often have less mobility and financial resources to seek recreation outside of their neighborhood. And people in lower density parts of the City with private yards tend to use these yards, while residents in denser neighborhoods do not have that option. Finally, studies have found that the need for park as an “oasis” is most critical in dense inner areas.

The workshops carried out in preparation for the 2009 update of this Element confirmed that families with children, seniors, low-income communities and communities of color tended not to be well-served by the City’s parks, open space, and natural areas, both in terms of walking distance and in terms of the range of open space activities available. Therefore, priority for the acquisition of new space to address inequities in terms of available activities, should be given to these high needs areas. These “high need areas” are defined as places where there is a conglomeration of high density, high percentages of children, seniors, and households with low income, and are illustrated in Figure 2: High Needs Areas. Their resulting correspondences yield a series of priority areas, shown in summary on the map illustration Needs Analysis.

To address these high needs areas, the City should first look for opportunities for new open spaces in these areas, particularly where there are gaps in distribution, or where growth is projected to increase.

New acquisitions should be designed with their neighborhood populations in mind. There are both demographic and cultural differences in people’s use of parks: preschoolers, school age children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens have distinct open space needs that should be accommodated, and various social and economic groups may utilize the space provided differently. Design of new spaces should be based on the specific needs and values of its user communities, by using a participation-based community design process.

POLICY 2.2
Support the development of signature public open spaces along the shoreline.

The Pacific Ocean, San Francisco Bay and their respective shorelines are the most important natural resources in San Francisco. Their open space potential is considerable, they offer unlimited opportunities for water oriented recreation, and most of the property adjacent to the thirty-two mile shoreline is in public ownership. Public access to the City’s edge along these amenities is integral to our City’s identity, and creating more, continuous, opportunities for open space along the shoreline and Bay is the City’s long term goal. Much of the waterfront is already accessible to the public, through parks ranging from Fort Funston and Ocean Beach to the Presidio, to the urban waterfront of the Embarcadero and numerous open spaces along the Piers, to Candlestick Point State Recreation Area.

These open space opportunities should be enhanced and expanded, by focusing on the development of several signature open spaces that draw people from their immediate neighborhoods and beyond. Key focus opportunities for developing new or enhanced signature open spaces on the waterfront are listed below, by geographic area, and a number are identified in Map 2: Existing and Proposed Open Space. Additionally, connecting these open spaces to the surrounding neighborhoods and throughout the City is an important concept and is discussed further in Policy 3.2.
Needs Analysis
TOTAL SCORE
- 5 - Lesser Need
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15 - Greater Need

Figure 2
High Needs Areas

Population Density
POPULATION / ACRES
- < 70
- 71 - 86
- > 89

Seniors
SENIORS / ACRES
- < 9.6
- 9.7 - 12.0
- > 12.1

Household Income
- < $36,500
- $36,501 - $58,400
- > $58,401

Children (0-4)
CHILDREN / ACRES
- < 3.6
- 3.7 - 4.0
- > 4.1

Youth (5-13)
YOUTH / ACRES
- < 4.6
- 4.7 - 6.4
- > 6.5
North and Eastern Shoreline

Significant progress has been made in opening and improving the city’s northern shorelines. With the recent opening of Crissy Field in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the retention of much of the open space in the Presidio as publicly-accessible open space, this area has transformed itself into a regional destination. (See Policy 2.5 for a further discussion of the Presidio). Long-term, opportunities to consider maximizing the recreational opportunities of Lincoln Park Golf Course should be considered.

However, a major opportunity exists to create an expanded, multi-park open space at the juncture of Market Street and the Embarcadero. The existing open spaces of Embarcadero Plaza, Justin Herman Plaza, and Sue Biermann (formerly Ferry) Park provide a wealth of untapped opportunity, which can be connected to function as a coherent link from downtown to the Ferry Building and the waterfront, holding several linked yet distinct activity and recreation spaces. Additionally, the Port is planning open the Northeast Wharf at Pier 27, which would be a three acre plaza at the base of Telegraph Hill and Fisherman’s Wharf Plaza, a series of linked open spaces in the heart of Fisherman’s Wharf.

Western Shoreline

The western shoreline has the advantage that it is already a long-stretch of natural and publicly-accessible open space. Ocean Beach, an open space that offers tremendous potential as a natural, unbroken space, should be improved to acknowledge the significance of this national treasure, and create a true gateway to the Pacific Ocean. The Ocean Beach Vision Council is currently working on recommendations to improve beach access, enhance underutilized resources, and reconnect Ocean Beach to the City.

The western shoreline also provides an opportunity in the form of improved access to Lake Merced. The PUC is currently exploring ways to improve access to the watershed. Additionally the City should improve access to the waterfront by strengthening connections through the Olympic Club, Harding Park, and the San Francisco Zoo from surrounding neighborhoods.

Southeastern Waterfront

The recent development of Mission Bay, the passage of the Eastern Neighborhoods plans (Mission, East SoMa, and Showplace Square/Potrero Hill, and Central Waterfront Area Plans), and the proposed Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard developments will bring growth which requires increased access and open spaces throughout the Southeast. Most of these plans are accompanied by specific open space strategies for parkland along the waterfront, where active water oriented uses such as shoreline fishing, swimming, and boating should be promoted.

In addition, the Port is planning a number of open spaces and improvements to the central and southern waterfronts that will help address this need, and which will be connected by the Blue Greenway, a recreational greenway which will extend from Mission Creek to the City’s southern border completing San Francisco’s portion of the Bay Trail. These projects should be given high priority, as they address growing areas of the City which are deficient in open space, and correspond with prioritized high-needs areas. Some of these projects are longer-term, and will require public funding to assist the Port:

- **Pier 43 Promenade** - Along the Bay north of the Pier 43.5 Arch, this project includes building a new public promenade in the heart of Fisherman’s Wharf, and will close a gap in the San Francisco Bay Trail.

- **Northeast Wharf Plaza** - This two acre open space will be located between the Embarcadero promenade and the planned Pier 27 International Cruise Terminal project.

- **Brannan Street Wharf** - This 1.5-acre park and plaza space will be constructed between Piers 30/32 and 38 over the water, and will include an open lawn area, historical and environmental interpretation, public art and a small craft landing float providing an access point for human powered boats.

- **Islais Creek Improvements** - This project may consist of shoreline improvements including rebuilding dilapidated wharves, removing ghost piles, and providing for open space system linkages to expand public access and recreational water use of Islais Creek.
Existing and Proposed Open Space

- Living Alleys
- Living Streets
- Green Connectors
- Off Street Multi-Use Paths
- Proposed Open Space
- Existing Open Space
- Acquire and develop sites for open space

San Francisco General Plan
Recreation & Open Space Element
• **Crane Cove Park** - This seven-acre shoreline park within the Port’s Pier 70 development area represents an opportunity for an aquatic center amongst other recreational opportunities, including an opportunity for historic interpretation of the sites and City’s deep rooted maritime history. In addition to Crane Cove Park, Pier 70 has multiple opportunities for a variety of open spaces, all of which must be consistent with the Industrial maritime character and setting of the site.

• **Irish Hill** - With the imminent closure of the Potrero Power Plant site and the Pier 70 future development, the remnant of Irish Hill has the potential to be a open space as well as an unusual reminder of the area’s history as the home for workers in the nearby mills from the 1880s until World War I.

• **Warm Water Cove** - This isolated park has the opportunity to be improved and expanded by up to three acres to provide access to the City’s Eastern shoreline and to provide recreational opportunities to the developing population.

• **Long-term Industrial Lands** - The recently closed Hunters Point Power Plant offers the opportunity to bring much-needed recreational space in the center of the Southeast, further addressing the health and environmental impacts that its operations brought to this area. Additionally, the Pier 90 to 94 Backlands, which is primarily undeveloped, can be a major opportunity site should the current industrial uses (concrete and gravel suppliers) relocate. Both sites present environmental clean-up challenges, but also offer environmental opportunities as they correct past site uses, to continue current site efforts to create wetlands and encourage native growth to surface.

The City, including the Recreation and Park Department, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the Port of San Francisco, must continue ongoing planning efforts to improve connections amongst the various waterfront open spaces to create a system of parks and linkages to one another, consistent with the Bay Trail and Blue Greenway planning efforts.

In addition to these signature spaces, there may be other places where the City should consider new waterfront open space opportunities or improvements, for a non-recreational reason. A recent study by the Pacific Institute projects that global warming will cause the ocean to rise nearly five feet along California’s coastline in the next 100 years, impacting many areas of the San Francisco Bay, including many of our piers and Port areas, much of Mission Bay and adjacent portions of SoMa. Inclusion of open space as a buffer, particularly development of tidal wetlands, can play a key role in adapting to sea level rise. Wetlands can protect shorelines from storm surges, while they continue to assist in reducing carbon levels, so the inclusion of wetland restoration and habitat enhancements should be considered as a part of any waterfront open space. While many of these areas are already built, and therefore not appropriate for open space development at this time (rather, strategies to protect the new development from flooding must be taken), ecosystem-based management principles should be considered wherever possible to ensure that shoreline retreat and flood protection are considered as measures to assist in adapting to projected sea level rise.

**POLICY 2.3**

**Encourage the development of regional-serving open spaces in opportunity areas: Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island, Candlestick and Hunters Point Shipyard.**

Several large, underutilized sites within the City offer not only the opportunity for new mixed use development to meet the City’s housing needs, but the chance to create new, large scale regional-serving open spaces.

• **Treasure Island**, the former naval base just off the City northeastern shoreline, is planned to reserve over 60% of its land area for open uses, ranging from parks and ballfields, to organic farms, to wetlands and a tidal marsh. Its 220 acres of proposed open space is to be planted with a diverse and healthy range of plants which will help offset the city’s greenhouse production. As a part of the planning for the redevelopment of Treasure Island, a Habitat Management Plan is being prepared to assure the protection and restoration of wildlife habitat and biodiversity on Yerba Buena Island. It is critical that the final designs of open space on the islands, taken together, provide not only a range of playgrounds & recreational areas to meet the new residents’ activity needs, but also offer strong, permanent protections for their wetlands &

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2 The Impacts of Sea-Level Rise on the California Coast, Pacific Institute/California Climate Change Center, March 2009.
natural habitat. The plans’ agriculture and biodiversity components should be developed to serve as educational and cultural amenities for the City and the region.

- **Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point** are currently undergoing a transformation into a vibrant, urban neighborhood and livable green community, as a part of environmental remediation of the long-damaged site. The proposal currently includes upwards of 167 acres of regional open space, including the addition of roughly 81 acres at Hunters Point Shipyard. While the plans call for some reconfiguration of the existing Candlestick Point State Recreation Area (CPSRA), the reconfiguration will help assure the full realization of currently under utilized portions of the State park and will introduce new park land along the current Shipyards shoreline. Currently only about one half of the existing CPSRA is improved, with the other half consisting of rubble and pavement used intermittently for stadium parking.

Taken together, the new open space will enable a continual Bay Trail along this southeastern portion of the City where it currently does not exist and provide a wide range of shoreline oriented recreational opportunities that could include boat launches, fishing piers, restored wetlands, picnic lawns, and concessionaire food services. The new open space system will be designed to work with the proposed new urban neighborhoods immediately adjacent and will assure improved connectivity to the Bayview community, San Francisco, and rest of the region.

**POLICY 2.4**

**Support the development of civic-serving open spaces.**

San Francisco is a civic city- our identity is as much with our social goals as it is with our physical landscape. Celebrations, rallies, gatherings and protests take place almost weekly; political speeches, music, performances in the open air and of course Critical Mass are monthly occurrences. The fact that these happen regularly in San Francisco emphasizes the role of our City as a regional centerpiece where like minds can gather.

San Francisco needs civic spaces which can serve as gathering points for these very types of activities –spaces for weekly events like farmer’s markets, for annual events such as the Pride Celebration, and for once-in-a-lifetime events such as presidential inaugurations. And as we grow, these spaces need to be able to accommodate more people, and more functions – from simple gatherings of bodies to technical showpieces or wired events. The main opportunities for focus, where we can unify the landmarks and activity centers are around two of our City’s major nexuses:

- **Civic Center:** Our existing Civic Center, surrounded by City Hall and other civic nexuses such as the Main Library and the Asian Art Museum, has hosted many of these activities, but its design limits its capacity and its function, meaning that activities spill into less optimal public spaces such as nearby streets. Similarly, the nearby UN Plaza provides additional activity space, used for weekly markets, but the two are underused when activities aren’t scheduled, and are separated by a virtual parking lot along Fulton Street between Hyde and Larkin Streets. A series of connected open spaces, along a “Civic Center axis” from Market Street to City Hall could be created with the development of pedestrian mall along Fulton Street between the new Main Library and Asian Art Museum, and with corresponding activity improvements to increase the usability of the Civic Center and UN Plazas. Some components that should be included in the revamping of these public spaces include an event lawn or amphitheater for performances, a gathering plaza, and pavilions for special events. This effort will work closely with and be supported by the Civic Center Sustainable Resource District program, a close coordination between Federal, State, local agencies and city departments that is envisioned to turn the historic Civic Center area into a more vibrant and sustainable place.

- **Embarcadero Open Spaces:** At the other end of Market Street, the numerous, yet underutilized, open spaces along the Embarcadero – Embarcadero Plaza, Justin Herman Plaza, and Sue Bierman Park- offer a glaring opportunity for synthesis into the City’s front door civic open space. Inspiration can be found in Millennium and Grant Parks in Chicago. Just as they serve as Chicago’s front door, San Francisco needs a civic space for large outdoor events – a place where arrivals can be greeted by the vibrancy of the City, and where its citizens can gather for moments of great joy or great mourning. A series of linked outdoor “rooms” would enable the reconnection of Market Street to the Ferry
Building, enhance visual connections to the bay, activate public space edges with uses that draw people to inhabit and use the space, and create a series of distinct activity spaces including space for civic and news events, space for large gatherings, and performance space.

**POLICY 2.5**

Work with the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service to preserve the open space and natural historic, scenic and recreational features of the Presidio.

The Presidio is among the most important and historic open spaces in the City. In 1989, the U.S. Army closed the Presidio, and as a result the Presidio became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). The Presidio Trust Act of 1996 divided the park into two management areas. Area A, the coastal lands, which remains under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and Area B, which includes the majority of the Presidio, is managed by the Presidio Trust.

Of the Presidio’s 1,491 acres, almost 1000 is currently open space. In this context, “open space” is defined as any area that is largely unoccupied by buildings, roads, sidewalks, parking areas, other paved areas, and landscaping around buildings. This includes: forest, some landscaped areas, dunes, wetlands and riparian areas, native plant communities, trails, and the Presidio Golf Course. It also includes small, informal open areas open to the public.

The amount of open space at the Presidio has increased by approximately 65 acres since 1994. This includes the restoration of Lobos Dunes which provided 13 acres of native plant habitat; the restoration of Crissy Field (Area A) which increased wildlife activity and public use along the Presidio’s bay shore, and the demolition of 58 units of Wherry Housing (Baker Beach Apartments).

The Presidio Trust Management Plan identifies an additional 99 acres of open space in Area B. This increase in open space will include the restoration and enhancement of native plant and forest habitats, larger contiguous bands of natural systems, and more space for recreation. The planned demolition of the Wherry Housing complex (Baker Beach Apartments) and some non-historic housing along West Washington Boulevard would also add to the Presidio’s open space acreage in the future.

**POLICY 2.6**

Consider open space as a potential use on City-owned properties.

All major metropolitan areas face challenges in providing sufficient open space, due to lack of available land. And while vacant or underutilized sites may be found, they are in high demand for use by private commercial or residential development, creating competitive land prices which are often too expensive for public funding. In order to meet the City’s need for new open space acquisition in these high need areas, the City should look to the resources it already has – sites already in public ownership.

The City should perform evaluation of all publicly owned sites in high needs neighborhoods (see summary of Needs Analysis in Figure 2), to determine their feasibility for park site acquisition. Some of these sites may be underutilized, and therefore available for purchase or swap - these should be reviewed for their potential to be transferred to RPD. Others may be currently utilized for public purposes, but
Open Space Opportunity Areas

- **Existing Open Space**
- **Opportunity Area**
  - (School yards and PUC sites with open space potential)
could offer opportunities for joint use. Public parking lots that are underutilized on weekends could serve as active recreational spaces during off-business hours, and could even be amenitized with reinforced turf systems that create greened parking areas. Public buildings could be evaluated for their potential to provide active roof space, which could be creatively developed as green spaces accessible to public during certain hours. Even sites that are pending future development could contribute, temporarily, to meting open space needs. Some agencies, such as the Port, SFUSD, Caltrans, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, may have control of parcels which are currently vacant, but are slated for future development. Those sites could provide opportunities for temporary open spaces such as community gardens and dog runs, rather than simply allowing them to sit vacant behind a chain-linked fence.

In addition to the streets and rights-of-way, schoolyards, and San Francisco Port owned properties, City departments and State agencies, such as the Municipal Transportation Agency and Caltrans own and operate spaces that could be better utilized to serve as open spaces throughout the city. The spaces under the freeway could serve as skate parks and bicycle paths, city-owned parking lots could be developed as open space. Additionally, there are many city-owned buildings throughout the City. The roofs of these buildings could be green and open to the public, serving as supplemental open space.

San Francisco’s Surplus Property Ordinance, passed in May 2004, requires the city’s surplus property to be considered for housing for the homeless. If a parcel isn’t directly appropriate for such uses, it directs that the parcel be sold on the private market, with proceeds used for housing and services elsewhere in the City. Some such parcels, while not of a size or shape feasible for housing, may provide open space opportunity— for recreation or food production, for a link between open spaces, or as ecological habitat. Before such spaces are sold for private development, an assessment should be made as of the site’s potential value for open space.

Open space acquisition should not be limited by the City’s inability to maintain additional parkland. However, the City should recognize that acquisition will require an on-going commitment of additional resources for maintenance. In appropriate cases, the City should acquire the property, and develop low cost maintenance techniques and programs for open space that is not used for intensive recreation, or should hold the land vacant, until development and maintenance funds are available.

**POLICY 2.7**

**Pursue the use of schoolyards as publicly-accessible open space during non-school hours.**

During school hours, schoolyards provide students with a space to learn, socialize, exercise and recreate. They also often provide the greatest expanse of open space available in their immediate neighborhood. But if the neighborhood cannot tap into that resource when the school day is over, the schoolyard becomes, for half its life, a lost opportunity. Opening these spaces for use during these times could provide much needed additional space in areas that are currently deficient in open space. This could prove mutually beneficial in that it could provide additional revenue for the school district and large new open spaces for residents without the high costs of acquiring new spaces.

In 2008 the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and the City launched a pilot program which opened ten school yards to neighborhoods during weekend hours. This program has been broadly successful, increasing community access to recreational space without any corresponding significant damage to school property. This program should be expanded to other neighborhoods, which will require additional funding to address the staffing, and operational needs that come along with any joint use project. A particular need for San Francisco’s youth is sports fields, including soccer, softball and baseball; so school yards that offer these facilities should be prioritized when seeking potential sites for the program.

The lessons from this pilot project could also be applied to other public or quasi-public sites. For example, next steps could look at small branch libraries or child care centers as opportunities for public access. The City should also approach private schools throughout the City and attempt to gain their support for such a program on their properties. Other cities have successfully established mutually beneficial joint use or development agreements that opened the privately-owned open space to the public. Private schools could use this vehicle as a way to be “good neighbors, and similar to private recreational facilities offering neighbor-
hood discounts, contribute to neighborhood needs. Where liability is an issue, the City should look to equitably share liability with private entities or multiple agencies.

**POLICY 2.8**
Continue to improve access to and level of activity provided at San Francisco reservoirs.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission owns and manages a significant amount of open space lands in San Francisco, as well as sites in Alameda, Contra Costa and San Mateo Counties. These lands are managed as watershed lands and serve as the city’s major water source; in some cases these sites also serve as open spaces with scenic easements, and are amenitized with recreational features like playgrounds, walking paths, seating areas and even golf courses. The PUC has recently expanded uses on its lands to include sustainable agriculture and composting.

Because of the PUC’s mission to protect public health and safety by ensuring water quality and the filtration capability of the existing system, these sites need to be carefully managed, and in some cases large-scale public recreational use is not possible with such constraints. However, increased public access to portions of its watershed lands which have high recreational value is still possible, particularly on certain opportunity sites, where the water quality will not be threatened.

Several of the PUC’s treatment, tank or station sites may offer the potential to yield limited rights-of-way connecting proposed trails or greenways discussed elsewhere in this Element. Such connections, however, must be limited to pedestrian crossings, and made in the context of safety concerns to the substructure beneath, ensuring it is not at risk of potential degradation.

Future leases and lease renewals on watershed lands should be consistent with protection of existing natural values. Watershed lands should be managed to limit potential fire and erosion hazards. Access should be consistent with the legal rights of existing tenants, and with the intent of existing scenic and recreational easements.

**POLICY 2.9**
Assure that privately developed residential open spaces are usable, beautiful, and environmentally sustainable.

In order to improve living conditions in each residential building and the quality of environment in San Francisco as a whole, the City should continue require that all new residential development provide outdoor open space. This space should provide usable, quality recreation opportunities directly outside residents’ front door, and supplement the public open space that is provided nearby.

In most multi-family zoning districts, a minimum of 60-125 square feet per unit is required. In areas however, such as Downtown, Chinatown, and high-density residential zoning districts, open space requirements can dip as low as 36 square feet per unit. This level of requirement is too low, especially for areas that often correspond with the high-needs areas mapped in Figure 2: High Needs Areas. These private open space requirements should be increased.

In multi-unit developments, providing required open space as common space has many benefits. It provides a collective place for residents to gather: residents get to know their neighbors well, and the space can foster a sense of community. It also provides enough area to foster explorative play for children, something small balconies and private spaces usually can not. Finally, it can be more space-efficient than providing numerous smaller spaces, especially if placed on rooftops or adjacent to common entry points where space for access is already required. Common open spaces can expand these benefits to the broader neighborhood as well, if they are publicly accessible during safe times of the day, such as daylight hours. Therefore, open space requirements should include incentives to promote the provision of common open space, and particularly, publicly accessible common open space.

The design of private open space is critical to its value. And how the open space is designed should relate to the type of development; while lower density districts may typically see open space provided as ground level or rear yard podiums, higher density residential development can expand to include not only rear yards or common courtyards at grade level, but also balcony, terrace and rooftop open space. Wherever the space is provided, usable space and landscape areas should be provided. Elements such as playground equipment, lawns, and gardens, based on the expected resident population of the project, should be included as well. To codify appropriate design for these spaces, the Residential Open Space Guidelines that were part of the previous version of this Element should be revis-
ited, updated and expanded to require minimum amounts of usable space and a minimum percentage of landscaping, as well as to include recommendations for programming towards high quality open spaces. These revised Residential Open Space Guidelines should then be codified into the Planning Code and/or the Residential Design Guidelines, as appropriate.

In the urban core, open space is already slim, and continuing development will make meeting these higher requirements more challenging, even as they are more necessary. Rooftop open space can provide a good way to meet this challenge. Aside from the environmental benefits of roof greening, which include reducing stormwater impact, improvement in air quality, and reduction in energy use for heating and cooling, rooftop greening can help to meet a number of the City’s open space goals, from recreational enjoyment to aesthetic improvement of urban landscape to space for food production to increased biodiversity. To enable quality roof space that provides these benefits, buildings need to be constructed with the type of roof known as an “extensive roof system, structurally able to support minimum depths for planting, or at least to hold occupancy and potted plantings; and design consideration needs to be given to safety, how the space overlooks neighboring properties and where access can be provided. Therefore, open space requirements should permit rooftop space to meet open space requirements, provided such rooftop spaces are designed consistent with the Residential Open Space Guidelines and their minimum required usable space and landscaping.

**POLICY 2.10**  
*Ensure that downtown open spaces are truly accessible, usable and activated.*

Public open spaces, especially in the dense downtown, provide a valuable respite, a place for people to take a break, enjoy their lunch, or sit and watch the passers-by. In the downtown, much of the open space is the result of requirements adopted in the 1980s that mandated new large commercial developments to provide publicly-accessible open space. The quality of these spaces varies greatly, with some of them providing true oases, with trees and planters and ample seating; while others are dark, tucked-away spaces that are accessible in name only. While this type of space can never replace true public open space, these spaces should be accessible and useable by all. The City should enforce all violations with the existing spaces, ensuring that they meet the conditions they were required to meet when the development was approved. The City should also reevaluate the current requirements including signage, seating, the need for public restrooms, improved landscaping and ecological functionality, and increased accessibility, to determine how to improve these open spaces. Additionally, the City should consider ways of allowing increased activation of the space and emphasize providing quality bicycle connections to these spaces.

**POLICY 2.11**  
*Support private recreational facilities that provide a community benefit.*

Outdoor space is not the only medium for physical activity. San Franciscans use indoor recreation spaces for activities like swimming, tennis, basketball, ping-pong, yoga, general fitness and group classes. And private recreational sources, such as clubs and gyms, offer residents spaces to participate in such activities. In permitting new development, San Francisco should continue to encourage the development of private recreational facilities to supplement those provided by the city.

Some private recreational facilities act in a quasi-public manner. These may provide free or low-cost community access, supplementing the work that the City is able to do in providing needy communities with active education programs, sports and recreational activities. Examples include the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community-based organizations. These types of facilities should be supported, and the loss of recreational space they provide should be addressed by any replacement project.
For-profit recreational facilities can offer similar education, sport and recreational benefits, provided the participant can pay. Examples include country and tennis clubs, yoga studios, and private gyms, like Gold’s or 24 Hour Fitness. These facilities should receive qualified support, based on the level at which they can demonstrate they are meeting a user population’s need. Such facilities should be encouraged to partner with communities or community organizations to help address community members that are not able to afford full rates, by offering neighborhood discounts or “community class” rates. The City should also look for opportunities to partner with such private organizations, to provide benefits to the public at a lower cost.

**POLICY 2.12**

*Provide and promote a balanced recreation system which offers a variety of high quality recreational opportunities for all San Franciscans.*

The City’s goal is to ensure that all San Franciscans are within a reasonable walk from an open space, and furthermore, that within that walk, each resident has access to a full range of recreational opportunities, from passive to active recreation. To ensure the highest quality of recreational opportunities for its residents, the City must be able to respond to changing demographics, neighborhood demand, and emerging industry trends – in addition to providing consistent hours of operation and equitably distributed facilities and services. This can be achieved by restructuring how the City provides recreational services.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

**IMPROVE ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY TO OPEN SPACE**

San Francisco is a built out city, where new land for acquisition is expensive and difficult to acquire. San Francisco’s street network provides an opportunity to supplement the city’s open space system and link the network of open spaces. The street network can incorporate all types of open spaces and serve as a system of pocket parks, trails, walkable streets and bike routes. These systems can connect residents to larger open spaces and serve as open spaces in their own right, places where residents can walk out their door to enjoy their open space, rather than having to walk to the nearest park or plaza. This system should be clear and legible and include signage to guide pedestrians to and through the larger open space system.

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**Expanding the Public Realm: PARK(ing) Day**

PARK(ing) Day began in 2005 when REBAR, a San Francisco art collective, converted a single metered parking space into a temporary public park in an area of San Francisco that is underserved by public open space.

The project began from a realization about how much of our urban public realm is devoted to cars, rather than people. REBAR devised the parking-space-as-park concept as a creative exploration of the range of possible activities for the on-street pieces of public space which can be leased through a couple of quarters.

Today, PARK(ing) Day is an annual, one-day event that has spread far beyond San Francisco. On National PARK(ing) Day, the car-lined streets of numerous cities turn into actual public rights-of-way, with: temporary public parks. The project temporarily liberates hundreds of parking spaces into open green areas for city residents to enjoy every year, and permanently changes our conception about how the public realm should be used.
POLICY 3.1
Creatively develop existing publicly-owned rights of way and streets into open space.

San Francisco’s right-of-ways offer a variety of opportunities for open space. In addition to the standard streetscaping improvements such as bulb-outs, crosswalk improvements, tree planting, pedestrian lighting, streets can serve an open space function. Calming traffic and expanding sidewalks or utilizing existing wide sidewalks creates additional pocket parks, sitting areas, and opportunities for sustainable plantings, community gardens and other landscape elements.

Green Connectors

These are streets that are designed to significantly calm and/or divert traffic, prioritize pedestrian and bicycle travel, and connect to larger open spaces. A number of recent area plans have developed specific green connector streets. These concepts are also proposed in the City’s long-term vision to extend throughout the City, and illustrated on Map 2: Existing and Proposed Open Space.

Living Alleys

The City’s alley way system, the small-scale streets that typically primarily serve to carry the vehicles that access the adjacent properties, can provide much needed open space, especially in dense neighborhoods. Some of the alleys, such as Belden Place in the financial district, are currently closed to traffic entirely and provide an intimate atmosphere where patrons of the adjacent restaurants can sit outside and enjoy a meal. Other alleys, for example Maiden Lane, are closed during certain times of the day. These spaces serve the adjacent businesses during the day, but allow deliveries during the evening hours. Other alleys are open to traffic, but designed to ensure speeds are slower and that drivers proceed cautiously. These alleys are designed with seating, landscaping, and pedestrian-scale lighting to create useable open spaces. All three types should be considered and encouraged. Using the City’s Better Streets Plan, the design for the different types of alleys can be implemented. The City should study different neighborhood needs and determine a priority plan for creating alleys that are most in need of these improvements.
Living Streets

Many of the streets, especially in the downtown area where dense residential developments are being built on wide streets provide an opportunity to develop living streets, or streets where sidewalks are expanded on streets with significant excess right-of-way to accommodate formal open spaces or pocket parks. Many of these areas are deficient in open space, and the streets should include places for neighbors to gather, relax and recreate.

Enhancing Existing Parkways

Parkways, are streets with broad, well-landscaped medians and sidewalks that provide recreational paths, while moving bikes and vehicles. These streets function not only as transportation corridors, but also as linear parks, creating a green network. This green space can often be effectively used for pedestrian and open space functions, by providing multi-use trails, seating, and open spaces. They can also be better used to perform ecological functions including stormwater runoff retention and infiltration. Two of the existing parkways, Park Presidio Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard offer a major opportunity to enhance the north-south connections from Golden Gate Park. These streets already provide ample trails and open space, but are in need of overall care, improved crossings, and enhancement. By utilizing the existing open spaces offered by these parkways, the City is once again focusing on how to make the most of what we have. The City should develop a specific design program to address the enhancement of these two parkways.

Temporary and Permanent Street Closures

The City recently began a program called Sunday Streets, which was modeled on a 25-year program in Bogota Colombia. The proposal began in 2008 with the idea to close one street to cars on Sunday mornings so people can get out and get active in a car-free space. The success of the program led to the creation of six Sunday mornings being proposed for street closures along different routes for 2009. Additionally, City agencies’ collaborative effort to transform excess pavement into public spaces is on-going and several pilot projects are being initiated around the city. This concept of temporary or even permanent street closures in the City presents a great opportunity to take advantage of existing street rights-of-way to create space for people to walk or ride their bike.
POLICY 3.2
Develop and enhance the City’s recreational trail system, to tie into the regional hiking trail system.

San Francisco currently has an extensive network of trails that provide local opportunities for walking and biking and link to regional trails and open spaces throughout the Bay Area. These trails surround the Bay, parallel the ocean, extend through parks and neighborhoods and connect existing open spaces. Many of these trails have gaps and lack adequate signage and the City should prioritize filling these gaps and increasing awareness of the trails through updated signage. New trails are also envisioned that would connect the Presidio to Candlestick Point Recreation area, providing additional hiking and biking opportunities and important wildlife corridors. The City should also work with Daly City and San Mateo County to encourage better links to San Bruno mountain and trails to the south.

Continuous Waterfront Trail

The trails along the waterfront represent many different jurisdictions including regional, city, and federal agencies. However, the user does not necessarily distinguish between these jurisdictions, but rather wants a continuous trail system along the waterfront. The City should improve trail signage to ensure users are provided clear routes and destinations and work to fill any gaps in the proposed trails and in the connections between the trails.

Bay Trail

The Bay Trail is a regional trail developed by the Association of Bay Area Governments that is proposed to surround the entire San Francisco Bay. In San Francisco, this trail would extend from the Golden Gate Bridge, along the waterfront to the Central Waterfront neighborhood, where the trail is being built inland along Illinois Street. The Bay Trail will eventually continue around the Bay through Hunters Point Shipyard and down to San Mateo. (See Map 4: San Francisco Bay Trail) The gaps are shown in Map 5 and the City should prioritize closing these gaps to ensure a complete Bay Trail. Closing the Bay Trail gaps would also help in the development of the Blue Greenway, a continuous corridor that links the existing and proposed open spaces through the Bay Trail and the San Francisco Water Trail.

Coastal Trail

The California Coastal Trail is a network of trails for walkers, bikers, equestrians, wheelchair riders, and others along the entire 1,200 miles of the California coast. Through San Francisco the 10.5 mile trail connects many scenic and tourist attractions along the coastline, including the Golden Gate Bridge, the Presidio, Ocean Beach and Fort Funston. While the current trail is relatively complete, there are a number of improvements that are necessary to ensure that the trail is accessible and visible for its entire route.

- Work with GGNRA to ensure space for the trail (on land and on the sand) between Sloat Boulevard (at the intersection with the Great Highway) and Fort Funston. (The current route near the Great Highway is closed due to a steep eroded edge at Ocean Beach.)
- Work with GGNRA to sign the trail from the beach to Fort Funston.
- Work with Daly City to address the sewage pipe that blocks seaside trail access from Mussel Rock to the Cliff House.
- Sign, provide furniture and sidewalk treatment in the Seacliff neighborhood.
- Provide clear signage where the Coastal Trail and Bay Trail connect to ensure a continuous waterfront trail.

The Ridge Trail

The Bay Area Ridge Trail is a 310 mile multi-use trail that links the hills and ridges of the nine counties of the Bay Area. The portion of the trail in San Francisco was completed almost 20 years ago and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council is in the process of reevaluating the needs of the trail. The City should work with the Council and the community to determine if a revised route, especially one that takes users through parks; determining connections to other trails, especially the proposed new cross-town trail; and updating and increasing signage along the route.

See Map 5: Regional Trails
GGNRA-Marine Drive: Trail is planned and relatively inexpensive, awaiting final planning decisions and funding by GGNRA.

GGNRA-Long Avenue: A planning/feasibility study was recently completed, an uphill bike lane or sidepath are planned.

GGNRA-Laguna Marina (aka “The Fort Mason Squeeze”): Design work to reroute the path has been completed for addressing the narrow passage between the train tunnel wall and the lightpost at the bottom of the Fort Mason path at Laguna/Marina.

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department-East Harbor Parking Lot: #1 Priority. Design work on improvements to the East Harbor parking lot were completed by RPD but have yet to be implemented due to the bike plan injunction.

Caltrans-Bay Bridge: Massive long-term Caltrans project. Bay Area Toll Authority recently programmed funds for a Project Study Report, the next step in the planning process.

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department-East Harbor Parking Lot: #1 Priority. Design work on improvements to the East Harbor parking lot were completed by RPD but have yet to be implemented due to the bike plan injunction.

Cargo Way: A feasibility study and preliminary design for incorporating a multi-use path, landscaping and drainage improvements was adopted. Construction funding needed.

Hudson Street Gap: Small section of this paper street is a private boatyard causing discontinuous access between India Basin Shoreline Park and existing Bay Trail to the south. Area may be addressed through redevelopment.

Yosemite Slough: Construction on northern side of slough to begin soon.

Hunters Point Shipyard: Long term redevelopment of shipyard will include completion of the Bay Trail.

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Hunters Point Shipyard: Long term redevelopment of shipyard will include completion of the Bay Trail.
New Cross-Town Corridor

A new proposed corridor would connect wildlife and allow hikers an urban wildlife experience through some of the City's most diverse natural areas. The corridor would begin in the Presidio, travel through Golden Gate Park, stop at Twin Peaks and Mt. Sutro, wind through Glen Park Canyon, then McLaren Park, and finally reach the San Francisco Bay in Candlestick Point Recreation Area. The exact route of this proposed new corridor, including, an extension to connect with Lake Merced and opportunities to daylight historic creeks as an enhanced green corridor, has yet to be determined. The City should work with pertinent Federal, State, local agencies and the community to develop this new corridor.

POLICY 3.3
Encourage alternative modes of transportation – transit, bicycle and pedestrian access - to and from open spaces.

San Francisco’s transit first policy emphasizes the importance of providing alternative transportation access to parks and open spaces. Alternative transportation is especially important because many of the City’s large parks are located far from the dense population centers and high needs neighborhoods. The City’s extensive network of transit allows users access to all the City’s parks. However, crossing the City especially on a weekend can often entail multiple transfers and long waits because of less frequent service. The City should consider increased and/or express local bus service to major open space amenities particularly from high needs neighborhoods. The City should also explore the idea of a “Green Transit Program,” a bus that delivers riders from the City’s high needs neighborhoods to the large parks. This service should be affordable and allow families an easy way to access the City’s large open spaces. The City should also consider ways to alert riders of a neighboring open space. For example, transit shelters that serve a park could be painted green or the name of an adjacent park could be marked on the shelter.

Bicycle routes that serve to get riders to and around our open spaces also provide a key component of the city’s alternative transportation network. Many of the improvements in the City’s Bicycle Plan address the need to connect people to the open spaces. The City should prioritize the bicycle improvements that provide both a connection to the City’s open spaces and serve as the most heavily utilized routes. For example, the improvements suggested along the panhandle would serve the need of improved access to the panhandle as well as facilitate this route as a commuter route for bicyclists.

The City should work to improve the pedestrian accessibility of a park by improving how the open space meets the street, encouraging easy pedestrian access, and improving pedestrian crossings on busy streets adjacent to open spaces. Some priority pedestrian improvements include Highway 35 at the Great Highway, a new pedestrian crossing from the Soma Eugene Friend Recreation Center to the Victoria Manolo Draves Park where pedestrians currently dart across a busy road, and crossings between the newly constructed Potrero del Sol and Rolph Playground on Potrero Avenue to allow safe crossing between two active parks.

POLICY 3.4
Ensure that open space is physically accessible, especially for those with limited mobility.

The City should ensure that public open spaces are accessible to all San Franciscans, including persons with special recreation needs. These may include seniors, the very young, and people with disabilities. In order to achieve this policy, park and recreation facilities should be planned and programmed for people with special recreation needs in mind. The following criteria should be followed when developing or renovating any new space:

- All parks and open spaces should be designed to comply with applicable requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the California Building Codes.
- All playgrounds should include universally accessible design, so that children with disabilities can play independently with their peers.
- The City should utilize the US Access Board’s recreation facilities and outdoor area accessibility guidelines as a best practice for design and construction.

The City should also ensure that routes to and from the open spaces are accessible. For example, the route from the public transit stop to the park should be fully accessible.
Regional Trails

- San Francisco Bay Trail
- San Francisco Bay Trail (Proposed)
- California Coastal Trail
- Bay Area Ridge Trail
- Crosstown Trail
POLICY 3.5
Ensure that open space is safe and secure for the City’s entire population.

Safety and security in the City’s open spaces are essential, allowing San Franciscans to enjoy their community open spaces. Improving the design of an open space through design treatments can reduce the fear of crime and the actual level of crime. Design treatments can include:

- providing clear sightlines
- designing the street/open space interface to encourage permeability and access
- ensuring adequate and appropriate lighting.
- activating and increasing park usership to increase “eyes on the park”.

POLICY 3.6
Maintain, restore, and expand the urban forest.

Trees and understory plantings in city parks, public open spaces, city streets and private property collectively form the urban forest. This urban forest contributes substantially to our quality of life and to the ecological functioning of our city. Trees and landscaping soften the urban environment, provide habitat, and mitigate stormwater runoff.

The Recreation and Park Department plants and maintains trees and landscaping in city parks and other Recreation and Park Department open spaces. The Department of Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) has permit jurisdiction over all trees and landscaping in the public right of way and provides maintenance along designated streets. Finally, property owners maintain trees within their property line as well as street trees and landscaping along their street frontage on streets not maintained by BUF.

The update to the City’s Urban Forest Master Plan was recently put on hold. This Master Plan covers all street trees and understory outside of Recreation and Park Department land and should be reinitiated. The first step in this master plan is to conduct a comprehensive tree inventory. The tree inventory should include geographic location, tree species, size, age, and disease classes, and other information as may be necessary or desirable. Upon completion, property owners should be encouraged to plant trees and landscaping fronting their property consistent with the City’s Urban Forest Master Plan and BUF’s tree and landscaping planting guidelines. Codes relating to planting and maintaining street trees and landscaping in public spaces, along public right-of-ways and within private property should be rigorously enforced to in order to maximize the extent health, and longevity of the City’s urban forest.

Many of the city’s trees and understory plantings in our parks have reached maturity and are in a state of degradation. An aggressive tree replanting strategy in parks and open spaces that addresses not only hazardous trees, but also develops a comprehensive replanting strategy, including a system wide prioritization for replanting, should be pursued.

OBJECTIVE 4
PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY, NATURAL HABITATS, AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OPEN SPACES

San Francisco is a heavily urbanized city, which nonetheless has a rich variety of plant and animal communities. Among these are coastal scrub, grassland, oak woodlands, marsh, and stream-sides. Some of the habitats hold species found nowhere outside of California. The City also has landscape areas designed to resemble plant communities not native to San Francisco, such as conifer plantings in Golden Gate Park. By providing food and shelter for migratory and resident birds, they too play a major role in supporting San Francisco’s biodiversity.

San Francisco can be a leader in creating new and more sustainable open spaces by ensuring that all their open spaces, including new and renovated park spaces, are developed in a way that enhances and works with the natural environment.
Bicycle Routes

- Routes to Major Open Spaces
- Other Bike Routes
POLICY 4.1
Require the inclusion of environmentally-sustainable design principles into all open space construction, renovation and management/maintenance.

When parks and open spaces are renovated and when new spaces are acquired the City should work to ensure that these spaces are environmentally sustainable and that new buildings and park features add to the natural environment and biodiversity rather than detract from it. Different criteria should be applied to different open spaces, depending on the sensitivity of the habitat, the uses in the open space, and the amount of space the new or renovated open space provided. However, certain key requirements, which the City is currently working on, will be applied to all new and renovated open spaces:

- **Water conservation and stormwater mitigation.** The PUC is developing a treatment facility for recycled water on the city's west side. One of the primary uses of this recycled water would be to water parks and open spaces, because currently clean, potable drinking water is used to water the city's open spaces. The Recreation and Parks Department is the biggest user of water in the city, with an annual total usage of 691 million gallons of water. Expanding the use of recycled water and considering other innovative treatments to capture stormwater runoff and reuse it for watering are being pursued by the PUC and the Recreation and Park Department. Impervious surfaces are being limited or retrofitted to pervious surfaces and innovative methods for capturing and reusing stormwater, such as cisterns, are being developed. Support for these efforts should continue because they offer an easy solution to potential water shortages caused by drought, earthquakes, or decline in the snow pack.

- **Soil conservation.** In order to conserve soil, a cut fill balance will be maintained to minimize the need to transport soil to or from the project site.

- **Energy production.** The City's open spaces could serve as a source of energy for the City. For example, new or renovated buildings could utilize solar panels.

- **Native and drought-tolerant plants.** The City is working to replace invasive and water-intensive species with species that fit better with San Francisco's natural environment. In designated natural areas, this means planting more native species. In street right of ways, the emphasis is on drought-tolerant plants, many of which are also native species.

- **Lighting.** Park lighting should be environmentally efficient and provide safety and security to park users, while also protecting wildlife in natural areas from light pollution. (See Policy 3.5 for a further discussion of park lighting.)

POLICY 4.2
Preserve the unique and natural characteristics of existing open spaces through a coordinated management approach.

San Francisco's natural areas are the undeveloped remnants of the historical landscape, which contain rich and diverse plant and animal communities. Following the adoption of the 1986 Recreation and Open Space Element, the Recreation and Park Department developed a Natural Areas Program to manage the 530 acres of parks and portions of parks that constitute a natural area. The mission of the program is to restore and enhance remnant natural areas and to develop and support community-based stewardship of these areas. The Natural Areas Program developed a “Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan” and this Plan is currently under environmental review. The Plan ensures that the appropriate and effective techniques are used for the management and restoration of natural areas owned by the Recreation and Park Department.

In addition to the Recreation and Park Department owned land, there are a number of natural areas under the jurisdiction of other city agencies, state and federal agencies and private ownership. The long-term ownership and management of these lands is uncertain because these properties are not under the same restrictions as the Recreation and Park Department-owned properties and therefore could be sold and/or developed. First, the City should ensure that a comprehensive inventory of all natural areas owned by city agencies, other than the Recreation and Park Department, and land held by private landholders is developed. The following criteria should be used to determine what constitutes a significant natural resource area worthy of protection:
The site is undeveloped and relatively undisturbed, and is a remnant of the original natural landscape and either supports a significant and diverse or unusual indigenous plant or wildlife habitat or contains rare geological formations or riparian zones.

The site contains rare, threatened, or endangered species, as identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or California Department of Fish and Game, or contains habitat that has recently supported and is likely again to support rare, threatened, or endangered species.

The site is adjacent to another protected natural resource area and, if protected from development, the two areas together would support a larger or more diverse natural habitat.

Given constraints on the City’s financial resources, and the demands for open space already expressed, it is clear that public acquisition for all natural areas that are in private ownership is not an option. Furthermore, there may be other uses of the site that may take precedence. However, if such an area is at risk of loss, such site should be examined, to see if it is a candidate for open space acquisition. A determination regarding whether or not, pursuant to other policies of the General Plan, there is a higher priority use to which the site should be devoted should be made - for example, a site proposed and needed in its entirety for permanently affordable housing, as defined by the Housing Element, should not be acquired for open space. The relative importance of the site as a natural area should also be assessed. And if the area is not to be publicly acquired, the City Planning Commission may require any development that is approved on the site to preserve the most important portions of the area, if it is feasible and consistent with the Planning Code to do so.

Once the significant natural resources are identified, the City should develop a management plan for these natural areas. Many of the properties are currently managed by the City, State or Federal agencies whose mission is not consistent with the preservation of natural areas. In these cases, consideration should be given to joint management through a conservation district, a governmental entity that controls the management of the land or the transfer of the maintenance of or the entire parcel of the natural area to the Recreation and Park Department for management that is consistent with the Significant Natural Areas Management Plan.

POLICY 4.3
Protect and restore native habitat in natural areas.

The goal of designating and protecting natural areas is to preserve and restore areas of the City that have a special role in promoting biodiversity. The existing ecological communities, including but not limited to wetlands, grasslands, coastal prairies, riparian, oak woodlands, coastal scrub, dunes, and rock outcroppings. Additionally, the natural areas serve as habitat for special species, including many rare and endangered species, such as red-tailed hawk, gray fox, great horned owl, and endangered mission blue butterfly. Habitat restoration activities should include all species listed by the California Native Plant Society. Restoration should also span the full cycle from seed collection and propagating seedlings, to planting young plants in restoration sites, to weeding invasive plants, to monitoring the results of restoration efforts, to planning for park improvements.

POLICY 4.4
Protect and restore wetlands and riparian areas.

Wetlands and riparian areas provide habitat, biological benefits, ecologically-efficient methods for treating stormwater runoff and often serve recreational users. Many of San Francisco’s wetlands are developed and little of the original wetlands have survived in San Francisco. However, a number of restoration projects have recently been completed or are underway, including Crissy field, Heron’s Head, Pier 94, Mountain Home Lake and the fresh and seasonal wetland at Lake Merced. The City should work to continue to support the monitoring and restoration of these wetlands.

The long-term vision for the City should also include daylighting creeks where feasible. A number of creeks run through the City’s system but are completely or partially buried, for example Islais Creek and Mission Creek.
POLICY 4.5
Develop public and agency awareness of local biodiversity and natural habitats and ecology.

In order to ensure the preservation and restoration of our native habitat and rare and endangered species, the City should increase awareness of the benefits of these natural areas as well as how the public should and should not interact with these spaces.

Programs could be offered to San Francisco students on environmental education. By providing this information to local students, the protection of our natural areas begins at a young age. The City should also develop a program that increases awareness of the challenges that stray pets produce in the natural areas and on the reasons not to feed wildlife. A detailed plan for determining biological corridors should be developed and residents should be informed of this corridor and the trees and plants that will best serve to protect and restore the habitat that uses this corridor.

The City should also provide specialized training for design, maintenance and volunteer staff with jurisdiction or ownership over natural areas. This focused training would increase awareness of the special plants and habitats provided in the natural areas and determine the best methods for protection and restoration.

OBJECTIVE 5
ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN THE STEWARDSHIP OF THEIR OPEN SPACES

San Francisco’s citizens are one of the City’s most valuable resources. With regards to open space, residents can be a major asset in addressing open space needs such as oversight, maintenance and stewardship. They can be instrumental in ensuring that recreation and open space activities are community-based, and particularly in a time of budget constraints, they can offer a community-based solution to public sector gaps.

POLICY 5.1
Involve communities in the design, programming and improvement of their local open spaces.

The most successful public spaces are those that respond to the needs of their users. Statistics, maps and figures can only go so far in determining a community’s need – they can tell us proximity to open space, they can tell us type of open spaces that are missing (hiking trails, sportsfields, playgrounds, etc), but they cannot tell us the components of open space design which will most reflect their user community.
A diversity of recreation programs is typically needed to serve the recreation needs and interests of San Franciscans, but some aspects to consider when designing for a community include the predominant household type of the nearby population, their age (or diversity of ages), and their cultural affinities. For example, families with small children will require tot lots as well as turfed areas for free play, while elderly individuals tend to use passive spaces and require plentiful seating opportunities. Also, various ethnic communities may have different cultural uses and preferences when using parks. There are also many survey studies that can help park managers identify overlooked preferences, barriers, and useful patterns when designing for specific communities, but even more relevant, particularly when designing for the diversity of San Francisco, is actual user participation in open space design. This will expand opportunities to interpret community heritage, facilitate participation in broader arts and cultural activities, and ensure that facilities and programs are appropriate for park users.

Open space designs and improvement plans should always include community participation. A community design charrette, or series of workshops, should be conducted at the initial stages of design, to learn about the community’s localized open space needs. The design that follows from this public process should build upon the community’s input to create the open space as an integral component of the neighborhood’s character. And that community character can be continued as the park evolves - by including plans that promote volunteer projects derived from the interest and abilities of the community under the direction of park staff.

POLICY 5.2
Encourage the development of community-initiated or supported open spaces.

Publicly-owned and managed open spaces, such as those managed by the Recreation and Park Department, are only one component of the City’s open space network. Informal, community-organized open spaces, such as community gardens, green opportunities on street corners or along undeveloped street ROW’s, and opportunities on private or underutilized (vacant) property, provide wonderful spaces for recreation and contact with nature.

Community organizing around engaged urban revitalization, such as the creation of parks and open space, can have tangible social benefits too. It fosters a sense of responsibility, and encourages residents to take initiative in affecting their own environment. They provide opportunities for recreation and exercise for those who work in the gardens, and provide visual interest to the general public. And the creation of a community space yields the physical form to support the coming together of a community, facilitating social interactions and further increasing participation in future community efforts.

The City should look for opportunities to expand the development of street parks, community gardens, improved streets and shared school playfields. An evaluation of public property potential, vacant and underutilized properties, and even private property where agreements with owners could be facilitated, would aid in identifying opportunities. While private property is often a challenge, as owners may want to preserve development potential in the future, it may be possible to structure conditions that allow for temporary use as open space. A formal authorization agreement, agreed to by property owner, City and community, could regulate limited-term public use, allowing vacant private properties to serve as a positive community asset without detriment to existing or future building rights.

POLICY 5.3
Provide tools to support community open space efforts.

One of the most important things that can be done to assist communities in developing or improving their own neighborhood spaces is broaden their awareness – of the need for open space, and of the opportunities they have to facilitate it. Education programs, which can be held in schools, within nonprofit programs, or even as seminars at neighborhood organizations, allow residents to tap into strategies for designating, financing and developing urban open space.
Many of the City’s nonprofits already provide technical assistance and support, broadening knowledge about what communities can do; organizing seminars, which aid community groups in understanding how to get a project started; providing planting lists and advice on their websites; and holding volunteer days to help get initiated. Communities may also have physical needs for maintenance support and tools. Tool lending libraries that assist park volunteers in cleanups, landscape improvements, and community tree plantings, all help support the development of open space and should be supported.

Finally, financial support is a huge need for community open space efforts. Within the City, the Community Challenge Grant Program (CCG) provides matching grants from $10,000 to $100,000 to local residents, businesses, non-profits and other community groups to make physical improvements within their neighborhoods. Other cities have expanded their capacity to fund such projects - Portland provides grants for capital improvement projects that implement community livability through tax increment financing, and the Chicago Park District provides outdoor space for community garden adoption. City departments should cooperate with, and financially support when possible, the work of neighborhood and non-profit organizations to foster community-initiated open spaces.

Community Open Spaces: Portland’s Intersection Repair Program

In 1996, neighbors in the Sellwood neighborhood of Portland created a neighborhood gathering place with a signature mural at the intersections of 9th and SE Sherrett Streets – without city approval. While the Office of Transportation threatened to sandblast the mural off the street, the Mayor and City Council recognized the community-building power of the project, and not only allowed the mural to stay but created a city ordinance which specifically permitted Intersection Repair projects.

The next Intersection Repair project to be constructed was Sunnyside Plaza, which worked with the nonprofit organization City Repair, formed out of the experience at Share-It Square. Neighbors worked together to paint a huge sunflower in the intersection, with leafy vines extending to the sidewalks, located planters at the street corners to slow traffic, and added seating areas, with an iron gazebo overhead.

Today, the work of City Repair has facilitated numerous other place-making projects, many of them fashioned using sustainable building techniques and recycled materials. Portland’s City Ordinance #172207 has fostered a simple way to get such projects through, by allowing outright street painting and construction in the right of way. It also requires community participation – 80% of residences within two-blocks, as well as all four property owners on the corners of the intersection, must sign off on the project.
POLICY 5.4
Reduce governmental barriers to community open space efforts.

The high cost of permitting requirements, combined with the time to complete them, can be a significant disincentive to community efforts. Recognizing this, San Francisco’s street regulating agencies have reduced permitting requirements for street landscaping, making the process simpler and reducing fee requirements. However, significant hurdles still exist to creating major changes to properties or to the public right-of-way. Because of the potential for conflicts with parking, traffic, transit, and adjacent uses, it is difficult to streamline major improvement processes. Yet, Portland has established a model ordinance, the “Intersection Repair” ordinance, which was intended to facilitate neighborhood improvements to streets, including major interventions like developing public gathering places in a street intersection. The City should examine the lessons from places like Portland to examine what aspects can be facilitated.

In cooperation with the Department of Public Works, the Planning Department and the Municipal Transportation Authority, the Controller’s Office is coordinating a study to improve the delivery of public street improvements. The study’s recommendations will look at methods for streamlining, simplifying and making street design and management more efficient, cost-effective, and transparent.

Another barrier is liability. In San Francisco, improvements that make private property publicly accessible, or even private improvements to public property, typically require that the improver indemnify the City of all liability, which can bring the additional burden of insurance. The City needs to make a concerted effort to limit such liability concerns, and balance good public policy with legal caution. In particular, the City should pursue legislation to address the issue of public liability in situations of joint use or joint development of public properties, so that the liability may be equitably shared by multiple agencies (such as the SFUSD and the Recreation and Park Department).

POLICY 5.5
Encourage and foster stewardship of open spaces through well-run, active volunteer programs.

Individual participation in public open spaces brings obvious improvements to our parks- greener plantings, better maintenance, and an overall feeling of ownership which deters negative behavior. But it also has benefits for the individuals – by encouraging appreciation of the space, stimulating more outdoor activity, and promoting long-term engagement in civic activity.

The Recreation and Park Department has a wide-ranging volunteer program which enables a number of opportunities to participate in gardening and ecological restoration projects, recreational programming, park planning and fundraising. The program also fosters group sponsorship, through weekly, ongoing work parties where such groups can provide ongoing stewardship of a park or area. But more resources are necessary if the program is to truly impact the maintenance gap that the City currently faces. And adjustments to the program- shifting workday opportunities to accommodate volunteer interest on weekends, creating technical specialties where volunteers can be proved to perform more complex tasks, and Increasing marketing for the program to expand its visibility – should be considered.

The Department of Public Works runs a number of parallel programs, such as Adopt A Street and the Community Clean Team to facilitate neighborhood efforts on San Francisco’s streets, parks and schools. Many of the City’s “Friends Of…” groups enable residents to become involved in the improvement or renovation of their neighborhood open space. The City should work to expand these public-private partnerships for stewardship of parks. Some ways that the City could help include coordinating all volunteer opportunities – whether City or nonprofit sponsored - into a single online, easy-to-access calendar; promoting business involvement in “Friends of…” or Adopt-a-Park programs; and looking for ways to share ongoing maintenance of parks with individual stewardship organizations.
POLICY 5.6
Support urban agriculture through the creation and maintenance of community, rooftops, schoolyard and kitchen gardens.

In 2008-2009, the City convened an Urban-Rural Roundtable, which developed recommendations to institutionalize the City’s Food System Policy to help increase urban agriculture as well as support the regional agricultural economy and increase locally grown, healthy food for residents. The mayor is expected to approve these recommendations and release San Francisco’s first food policy in the next several months. This policy supporting urban agriculture should be supported in all open space efforts.

Food Production: Empowering Residents Through Urban Agriculture

A growing number of community programs are helping to bring the message of community agriculture to unlikely places.

The Garden Project links former offenders with agricultural job skills. Garden Project Apprentices work in an intensive program to learn horticulture skills and grow organic vegetables that feed seniors and families in San Francisco. Apprentices grow a variety of vegetables – such as kale, Swiss chard, and broccoli – which are distributed by community centers. Garden Project Apprentices also work to support neighborhood greening projects by cultivating plants for schools, establishing and maintaining gardens at police stations and housing developments, and supporting community clean-up efforts.

Alemany Farm is a model of community agriculture that has had various incarnations since the 1990’s – first as St. Mary’s Youth Farm, then operated by the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners. Today Alemany Farm not only supplies jobs in agriculture and empowers its residents to grow their own food, but it engages the broader community with weekly workdays. It also runs a number of education programs, bringing children and adults of the nearby housing to understand the importance of local food production.

MyFarm is a decentralized farm model that grows vegetables in backyard gardens throughout the city and shares the harvest among homeowners. The organization installs and maintains vegetable gardens wherever residents are willing to sponsor them. Each week the produce is maintained and harvested, and members even share in what is produced.

One major component of this support will be identifying particular areas in the City’s Planning Code and other code documents where there might be disincentives or even obstacles to local food production and community agriculture. Urban gardens should not only be permitted in public open spaces, but promoted. And activities that allow distribution of locally grown food, such as farmers markets or even sales of community garden wares, should be considered a valuable part of activating public open spaces.

The benefit of fostering urban agriculture includes not only access to healthy fresh food; it brings about a closer connection between residents and their landscape. The City can incentivize creation of community agriculture on private
sites, such as private yards and building rooftops. Modifications to the Planning Code that offer either open space waivers, or credits for urban agricultural space or green roofs used for urban agriculture, can make their inclusion attractive to new development. City practices should also support the work of such organizations, and explore ways to increase their access in new housing developments, existing publicly managed housing developments, and even in private homes.

**OBJECTIVE 6**

**SECURE LONG-TERM RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE**

Securing resources for the maintenance and renovation of existing open spaces and providing funding for the acquisition of new open spaces has been a challenge for the City. As discussed throughout this Plan, open space provides economic, physical and mental values and high-quality, high-performing, open spaces are one of the keys to a good quality of life. The City must recognize the costs associated with open space maintenance and acquisition and fund these spaces accordingly. Funding does not mean simply providing money, but also includes providing necessary resources for open space renovation, acquisition and maintenance.

**POLICY 6.1**

**Develop innovative long-term funding mechanisms.**

One of the key goals of this Plan is to ensure that the policies and programs have adequate resources. The City is exploring a number of financing mechanisms that have been successfully utilized in other cities. Some options include,

- **Citywide Impact Fee to Fund Open Space.** Development impact fees are fees the City charges developers in connection with approval of a development project for the purpose of defraying all or a portion of public facilities related to the development project. In regards to recreation and open space, these fees can be used to acquire and develop new open spaces and capital improvements to existing open spaces. Development impact fees that provide revenue for recreation and open space are in place in a number of neighborhoods in the City, but not citywide. The City has developed an initial nexus study to demonstrate the impact of new development on open space, and is looking at the possibility of adopting these fees on a citywide basis.

- **Park Improvement Districts.** One of the biggest challenges in maintaining our open space system is finding a consistent source of funding for maintenance. Yet parks, especially well-maintained parks provide increased revenues to surrounding property owners, so they have a vested interest in ensuring the park is maintained. An innovative approach, similar to the Community Benefits District (CBD) used in many of San Francisco’s neighborhood commercial districts, is a Park Improvement District. A Park Improvement District is a public-private partnership in which businesses and/or residents in a defined area elect to pay an additional tax in order to fund improvements and maintenance for the park. The parks are still maintained by the City, but this additional funding provides supplemental funds to cover needed improvements and maintenance, and are controlled by a board of directors elected by the neighborhood.

- **Voluntary Contributions.** Many cities provide the option to voluntarily contribute a small amount of money specifically earmarked for open space. Such a contribution option would be added to residents’ utility bills, to fund improvements to open space.

- **Tax Revenue Options.** In some cities, decision-makers have pursued the option of an additional tax contribution earmarked for open space, usually via an additional property tax – or parcel tax – on residential and/or commercial owners. The tax requires a two-thirds majority vote by the electorate and provide a consistent source of funding. The money can be used for acquisition, maintenance, or capital improvements.
Innovative Funding Streams: Partners In Parks

The Portland Parks Foundation (PPF) was established in 2001 to oversee an expansion fund for equitable development of open space, on the recommendation of that City’s Open Space Plan, their “Parks 2020 Vision.”

PPF has pursued a number of innovative sponsorship opportunities. Their work with Nike led to the resurfacing of the City’s outdoor basketball courts - from recycled athletic shoes – and to a commitment for court maintenance through 2017. Nike also funded efforts to redesign the existing skatepark facilities at the Pier Park Skatepark, and continued to support Portland Parks & Recreation by partially funding the City’s Summer Playgrounds Program, and by distributing access cards for low-income children linking them to a full menu of after-school activities and weekend programs during the school year.

PPF also launched the “10 for 10” campaign, which was aimed at enlisting local companies to fund park maintenance at specific parks for at least $10,000 a year for 10 years. The program began with a major contribution from Columbia Sportswear, who agreed to sponsor maintenance and improvements at Sellwood Park in southeast Portland.
POLICY 6.2
Pursue public-private partnerships to generate new operating revenues for open spaces.

The City is increasingly developing public-private partnerships to increase funding opportunities. Some current examples include the funding of bus shelters throughout the City. These shelters are installed, maintained, repaired by private sources in addition to these private companies pay the City in exchange for advertising on the shelters. In other cities, for example, Portland, a small logo was placed on the basketball hoop and in exchange the company maintained the equipment. This is an idea that some neighborhoods may choose to participate in for their neighborhood park. Some neighborhoods may also wish to activate their open spaces by opening up the spaces to more community festivals. While some parks may benefit from uses such as a bicycle rental shop, a café or coffee kiosk, which can serve to activate an open space and can provide additional funding for maintenance and renovations.

The City should seek out new opportunities, including corporate sponsorship where appropriate, and where such sponsorship is in keeping with the mission of the open space itself. The City should also make a concerted effort to partner with regional and state grantmaking entities—the City should support the Recreation and Park Department, and other entities, in expanding their grant functions. Finally, the City should foster local fundraising opportunities through partnerships with local park groups.

POLICY 6.3
Expand partnerships with regional park districts, open space agencies, private sector and nonprofit institutions to acquire and manage existing open spaces.

Public agencies and private organizations and individuals are working to maintain open space in the Bay Region. These bodies include the Federal Government, the State of California, a multitude of local governments, several sub-regional open space agencies, as well as public nonprofit organizations and private landholders. Preserving a regional open space system is beyond the scope of the seventy-odd local governments in the nine county Bay Area. Valuable open spaces cross city and county lines, and individual municipalities have neither the regulatory powers nor the funds to retain them. Preservation of such spaces will depend upon regional action.

Ideally, regional open space should be handled by a regional agency with the authority to 1) enact an official regional plan and have temporary permit powers over all open spaces of regional value until the plan is adopted, 2) acquire open space through the eminent domain process, and 3) raise money to purchase, manage and develop the regional open space system through methods such as grant application and taxation.

Until a regional open space agency is formed, the City should facilitate efforts of existing agencies and organizations working toward regional open space goals. The City should encourage and work with these groups to secure additional land for open space retention and management, and to maintain existing open space areas in their current undeveloped open space status. The city should also support use of selected areas of open space lands within its jurisdiction for appropriate recreational uses.