

San Francisco, California United States

“The City by the Bay”



Paolo Valassi

San Francisco's identity is deeply intertwined with its physical location. Stretching from the shores of San Francisco Bay over its hilly peninsula to the breakers of the Pacific Ocean, San Francisco is a place of sweeping vistas which dramatically juxtapose urban forms and open water. Given the city's history of repeated cycles of boom and bust in the pursuit of the big score, it is astonishing that the city is so lovely and has managed to stay that way. That it has done so is largely due to its long tradition of civic activism and civic pride.

During the city's early history, both Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham were called in by private citizens to create park plans for the city. While neither plan was implemented due to concerns over cost and the potential commercial disruption that reorganizing the city might entail, these endeavors established a tradition of community involvement in the city's urban design. Most recently, thanks to civic activism the city took the extraordinary step of not rebuilding the Embarcadero Freeway, despite the freeway's function as a major connector to downtown. What was predicted to be a traffic disaster has instead served to revitalize San Francisco's downtown and reconnect the city with the water's edge.

San Francisco's open space is vast, despite the city's density. From large urban parks to pocket parks, civic plazas to outdoor cafes, distinct neighborhood streets to waterfront piers, San Franciscans are blessed with vibrant and varied outdoor spaces which can serve as an example to all cities as they densify.



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"a hilly Paris by the Golden Gate" Daniel Burnham

City Statistics

City Population: 776,733

City Area: 30,080 acres

Density Level: 25.8 persons/acre

Park Acreage: 7,756 acres

Park acreage per 1000 residents: 9.99

Governing bodies: Recreation and Parks Dept, National Parks Service, Presidio Trust, Port of San Francisco

Expenditure per person: \$150.50 (Parks Dept. only)

<http://www.ci.sf.ca.us>

A Brief Timeline of Major Open Space Events

1776 - Mission Yerba Buena founded. 1847 - After annexing Yerba Buena the previous year, the U.S. renames the city San Francisco. 1848 - Gold is discovered, prompting a massive influx of new immigrants

1860 - Private citizens hire Frederick Law Olmsted to create a parks plan. The plan is never implemented.

1870 - Barren dunes are acquired at the city's edge for a park. After 2 1/2 feet of topsoil is hauled in to cover the dunes, the site becomes Golden Gate Park.

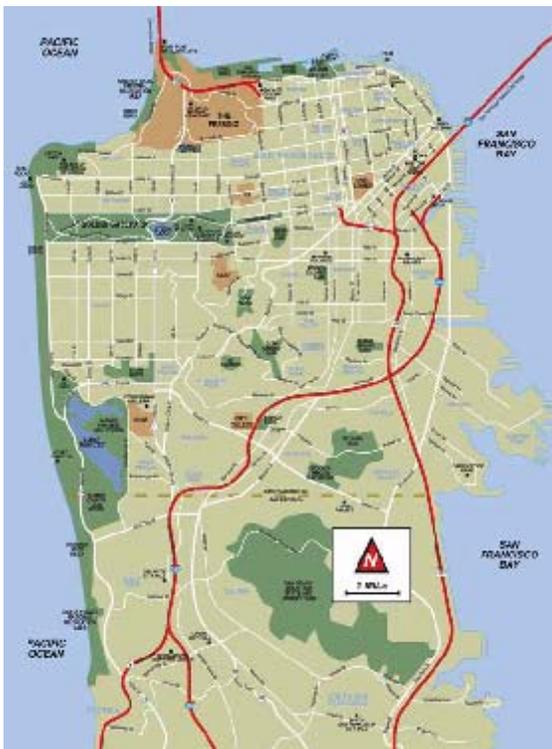
1905 - Private citizens hire Daniel Burnham to create a city plan. The 1906 earthquake provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to implement that plan. Instead, the city is rebuilt along its previous outlines.

1915 - The Marina district and much of the Presidio are developed to host the Panama Pacific International Exhibition. The Presidio later becomes a major military base.

1957 - San Franciscans revolt against plans to cut through the city with freeways. Unfortunately, resistance comes too late to prevent the Embarcadero Freeway from being built.

1989 - The Loma Prieta earthquake causes closure of the Embarcadero Freeway. This time, San Franciscans seize the opportunity presented by the earthquake to reimagine the city's urban form. The freeway is pulled down in 1991.

1940's-1996 - Parks infrastructure falls into disrepair. Morale becomes so low in the Recreation & Parks Dept. that staff stop wearing their uniforms on the job.



1996 - Newly elected Mayor Willie Brown makes renewed investment in the city's ailing parks system a city priority.

1996 - Congress establishes the Presidio Trust. The Trust is a new economic model for a park, mixing open space with historic preservation and commercial activity.

1997 - The San Francisco Waterfront Plan is adopted to provide for public/private mixed use and open space along the Embarcadero waterfront.

1997 - The Natural Areas program is established in the Recreation & Parks Dept. to focus on preserving and restoring ecological habitat within the city.

1980's-present - Decommissioning of military bases expands the city's open spaces

www.sfgate.com/maps/

Major Components

a. Connective corridors - Green connective corridors ring the City. It is possible to bike or walk from the Ferry Building at the foot of the Bay Bridge, all the way around the waterfront to the Pacific Ocean and Lake Merced. This connective ring is possible due to the integration of San Francisco’s city parks system with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, a federally managed open space system.

Within the City itself, streets function as the primary corridors, connecting parks with civic plazas and neighborhood centers.

b. Anchors - San Francisco’s park system is anchored by major open spaces which ring the city. Golden Gate Park reaches from the shores of the Pacific into the city, extending even further inward by way of the narrow Panhandle. South of Golden Gate Park along the Pacific shore, one encounters Lake Merced. Lincoln Park perches north of Golden Gate Park. The park system continues eastward around the city through the Presidio, Chrissy Field and Fort Mason.

c. Civic - Important social and civic spaces are scattered throughout the city. Sitting at the eastern end of Market St., the Ferry Building serves as the gateway to the city for ferry commuters and also hosts an indoor/outdoor farmers’ market. One can walk, bike or take the streetcar along the newly restored Embarcadero waterfront to Fisherman’s Wharf, Chrissy Field and the Palace of Fine Arts. Moving up Market St. from the Ferry Building, San Francisco MOMA and the Moscone Center have revitalized the once moribund South of Market area. Walking east from MOMA takes the visitor to Union Square, the heart of San Francisco’s major retail area. A few blocks north of Union Square, one finds the Civic Center, San Francisco’s seat of government.

d. Neighborhood Parks - San Francisco’s major parks and civic anchors are complemented by numerous neighborhood parks. Many of these smaller parks are landmarks in their own right. They include Telegraph Hill/Coit Tower, Buena Vista Park Alamo square (flanked by the famous seven sisters houses), Duboce park, and Mission Dolores park.

e. Other- Part of what makes San Francisco truly unique is its neighborhoods and streetscapes. The city’s stunning Victorian architecture provides visual continuity across districts, while each neighborhood’s particular demographic mix and views make it unique. One cannot mistake the mexican flavor of the Mission for the ex-hippie ambiance of Upper Haight St. or the Italian/Asian mix of North Beach. Although there has been much concern in recent years that San Francisco’s expensive real estate market is driving out the very residents that give each neighborhood its flavor, so far, the city’s districts have retained their distinctive personalities. There is always something to see when strolling San Francisco’s streets, and always something different around every corner.



Upper Haight
whit & maya’s road trip.
www.personal.psu.edu/users/j/w/jws253/2004-06-maya_road_trip/



Map of Golden Gate Park
<http://www.parks.sfgov.org/site/>



Funding and Planning

As much of San Francisco's open space is held by various state and federal government agencies, there are many overlapping but cooperative authorities managing a wide array of sites.

San Francisco's city-owned recreation and open spaces are managed by the city's Recreation and Parks Department. The annual operating budget of \$116.6 million is comprised of money from the following sources (figures are projected FY 2005-2006, as cited by the department summary report, July 31, 2005)

General Fund monies	\$24.9 M
• permit and facility rental fees/parking fees/recreation program fees/admission fees/concessions/	
Golf Fund	\$10.9 M
Yacht Fund	\$1.8 M
Open Space Fund	\$27.8 M
• property taxes/	
Bonds	\$3.5 M
Other	\$0.6 M

Capital Improvement

Capital Improvement Program

- Capital Program Implementation

Neighborhood Park Improvement Program (129 PROJECTS)
 Neighborhood Park Improvements, Natural Areas, Urban Forestry, Aquatic Facilities, Master Plans, Citywide Improvement Programs

Golden Gate Park Improvement Program (25 PROJECTS)
 Golden Gate Park

Other Programs (2 PROJECTS)
 San Francisco Zoo, Marina Yacht Harbor, Golf Facilities

* Golden Gate Park and Other Programs will not be discussed further in this presentation
 ** Golf Facilities program started in 2002 with the establishment of the Golf Fund

Presented on July 7-8, 2004 Slide No. 2

The mission of the San Francisco Recreation and Park District's Capital Improvement Division:
Creating unique, enduring parks for our diverse community which inspire positive interactions with the environment.

Statement for Capital Improvement Division:

In March of 2000 the citizens of San Francisco passed Proposition A, a \$110 Million General Obligation Bond, and Proposition C, a continuation of the Open Space Fund established in City Charter Section 16.107. PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE FUND. In addition to grants, gifts and other sources, both Propositions established sources of funds which would be used to implement the Recreation and Park Department's (RPD) Capital Improvement Plan.

Neighborhood Park Improvement Program

- Program Funding Overview

	10-yr Budget	Received To-date
GO Bond	\$110 M	\$110 M
Open Space Fund	\$120 M	\$53 M
Revenue Bond	\$30 M	--
Grants	\$100 M	\$30 M
Gifts	\$40 M	\$22.5 M
Other Sources	--	\$22.5 M
	\$400 M	\$264.5 M

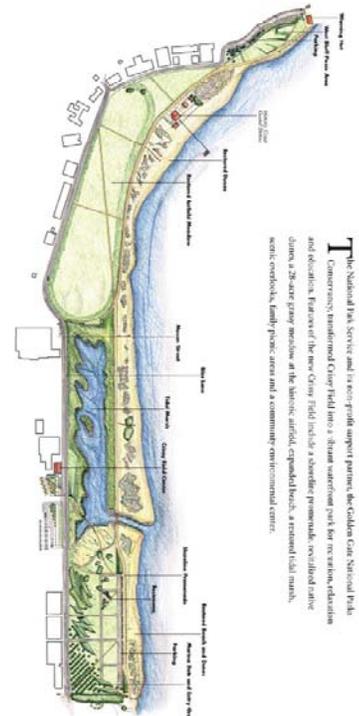
Presented on July 7-8, 2004 Slide No. 3

The Capital Plan, originally (in 1999) estimated to cost approximately \$400 million (please see 98-99 Park Assessment documents), outlines the proposed renovation of RPD's facilities in at least 440 projects over a ten-year period. The Capital Plan was estimated to start in Fiscal Year 2000-2001. In order to implement the Capital Plan, the department created a Capital Improvement Division (an expansion of the former Planning Division), which would be charged with planning, direction and overseeing construction projects included in the Capital Plan.

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Lessons Learned

- Identify historic and cultural locations to use as core anchors
- Take advantage of opportunities
 - Natural disaster recovery
 - Infrastructure replacement
 - Military or other large-land holding organization downsizing
- Rethink spatial planning assumptions
 - Freeways
- Urban ecology is possible & important
 - Habitat restoration and improvement
 - Chrissy Field
 - Significant Natural Areas Management Plan
- Layer functions on open space
- Neighborhood identity
 - Architecture, streetscapes, dog policy, etc.
- A good mass transit system is CRUCIAL
- Coordinated, citywide activism
- Cooperative management
 - Public Organizations: Federal, State, City level governments and agencies
 - Private Organizations and Non-Profit Groups
 - San Francisco Parks Trust
 - Citizens!



<http://www.chrissyfield.org>

San Francisco's Dogs: A Powerful Constituency

Canine Influence on Park Policy

Dogs and dog owners have developed powerful influence in the way San Francisco's parks are managed and used. The 10-year \$400 million capital improvement plan addresses dogs quite prominently, as does the developing language for the Significant Natural Areas Management Plan. The following statement by the Department of Recreation and Parks exemplifies the importance it places on the use of parks by dogs and their owners

The Department recognizes the strength and character of the communities that have developed while recreating with a dog. It is the intention of the Department to increase opportunities for these unique communities to develop. We recognize the positive influences these communities bring to neighborhood parks. While the policy, on the face of it, appears to be restrictive, its purpose is to create more places for legitimate off leash use in our parks. Just blanket enforcement of the current law would definitely undermine that use. Inadvertently, off leash use has created conflict with the rich breadth of uses our parks are host to. The Department is committed to facilitating solutions that allow these uses to coexist peacefully.

Since releasing the draft dog policy on June 12, 2001 the Department has reviewed and considered over 2,700 responses to that document. Nearly 300 staff hours were spent reading, evaluating and incorporating suggestions from the public. While many said they disagree with the policy we found several areas of common ground. Most citizens, whether dog owners or not, like the idea of having designated off leash zones. Most citizens would also like the clean up laws enforced and a majority would like the leash laws enforced. However, that said, it is clear that there was a tremendous amount of confusion surrounding the draft dog policy. The purpose of the policy is to provide guidelines and rules so that civilized compromises can be reached in each community for balancing many conflicting land uses.

Exercising Your Dog In San Francisco Parks

A Guide for Your Dog's Best Friend



"Enjoy your neighborhood park today!"



City and County of San Francisco
Department of Recreation and Parks



Michael Macor, SF Chronicle



Embarcadero: Reconnecting the City to its Waterfront

San Francisco's early automobile corridor planning called for the city to be covered in a grid of freeway structures, of which the Embarcadero freeway, a double decker elevated roadway, was a part. The massive transportation structure cut-off San Francisco from the waterfront that gave birth to The City by the Bay. Though it was considered oppressive and an unwise use of real-estate, fear of change and anticipated traffic gridlock led to a defeat by public vote of a 1986 ballot measure to replace the Embarcadero Freeway with a public waterfront promenade. It took the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake to render the waterfront freeway structurally unfit and a renewed, citizen-fueled campaign to recover the space, reconnecting the city to the sea and the pedestrian to the waterfront. Today the Embarcadero redevelopment is considered an example of successful waterfront redevelopment, not only for the creation of a great public space, but for the vision and courage that drove it.



SAN FRANCISCO
PARKS TRUST

Partnerships in San Francisco Open Space

A partial list of organizations involved in the use, maintenance, and well-being of San Francisco's open space:

PARK ORGANIZATIONS

Golden Gate Park Concourse Authority
San Francisco Parks Trust
California State Parks Foundation
Crissy Field Center
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
National Parks & Conservation Association
Neighborhood Parks Council
The Park People
Parks & People Foundation

COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

Boundless Playgrounds
Eco Gateway Urban Parks, Trails & Paths
National Audubon Society
The Playground Institute
Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Rides
San Francisco Botanical Garden Society
Sierra Club
Spark: School Park Program

Trust for Public Land
Walkable Communities

SAN FRANCISCO SITES

California Palace of the Legion of Honor
Camp Mather
Exploratorium
Palace of Fine Arts
The Presidio
Randall Museum
San Francisco Croquet Club
San Francisco Zoo
Sharon Art Studio
Stern Grove Concerts

SAN FRANCISCO LINKS

Bay Area Transit Info
Bay City Guide
Better Neighborhoods
Bicycle Coalition
Friends of the Urban Forest
Go City Kids
Golden Gate Audubon Society
NeighborNet
SF Arts Commission
San Francisco Beautiful
SF Clean City Coalition

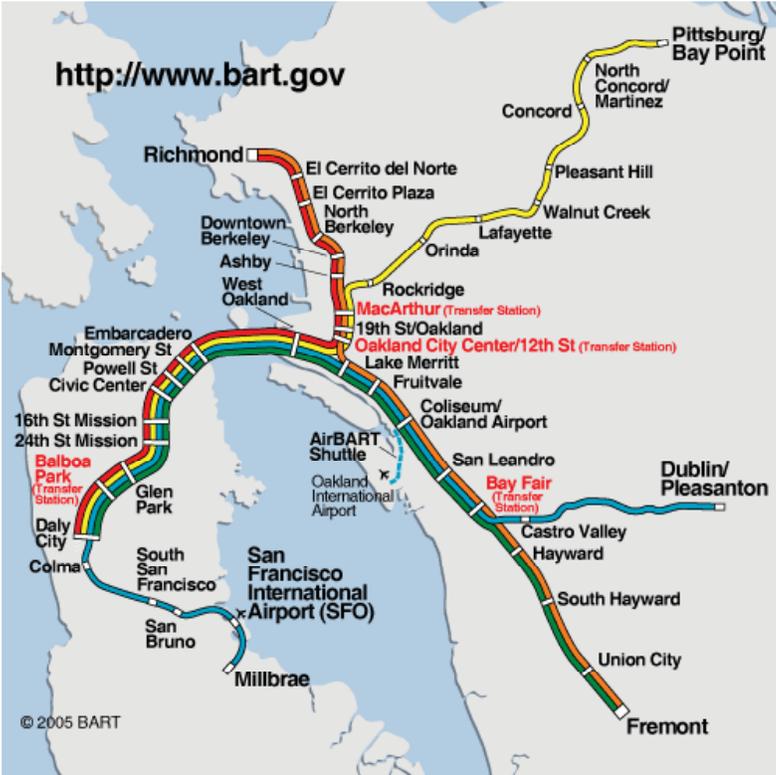
SF Environment Ocean Beach
San Francisco Public Library
San Francisco Convention & Visitor's Bureau
San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance*
SF Dog Owners Group
San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG)
SF Model Yacht Club
San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR)
San Francisco SAFE (Safety Awareness for Everyone)
SF Skaters
San Francisco SPCA
SF Swimmers
Youth Sailing at Lake Merced

OTHER PARK LINKS

East Bay Regional Parks
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
State Park System



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Resources

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Port of San Francisco. Waterfront Land Use Plan San Francisco: Port of San Francisco, 2000.

The Presidio of San Francisco. www.presidio.gov

Scott, Mel. The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective (2nd ed.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985

