

# SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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**TO:** All Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: Pier 43 Promenade Project; First Review**  
(For Board consideration on February 8, 2010)

## Project Summary

**Applicant:** The Port of San Francisco (Port)

**Project Representatives:** Dan Hodapp, the Port of San Francisco; Steven Reel, the Port of San Francisco.

**Project Purpose.** The goal of the proposed project is to improve the public realm by removing most of Pier 43-1/2, repairing and/or reconstructing the shoreline and existing seawall, constructing a pedestrian promenade, installing sidewalk improvements, and creating other public spaces in the Fisherman's Wharf area, between Powell and Taylor Streets, in the City and County San Francisco. Several small commercial uses (nine vendor carts and some outdoor dining), is proposed in order to better serve the waterfront.

**Project Status.** A Negative Declaration of Environmental Impacts was prepared by the City of San Francisco Planning Department and was completed and accepted by the City Planning Commission in 2009. BCDC staff has not yet received a final application package for the project. The Commission will likely hold a public hearing and vote on the project, which will likely be processed as a material amendment to an existing major permit, sometime this summer.

**Background.** In November 2002, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the San Francisco Port Commission (Port) formed a joint Fisherman's Wharf Planning Committee (Committee) to develop recommendations for the Fisherman's Wharf area of the waterfront. The Committee sponsored 16 public meetings to solicit public input, discuss issues and develop planning recommendations related to open space, public access, traffic circulation and parking. The Committee's recommendations included options for improvements to the area known as the Triangle Parking Lot, which is bordered by Jefferson Street to the south, Taylor Street to the west, Pier 43-1/2 to the north and Powell Street to the east. The proposed project, to reconfigure Pier 43-1/2 and construction of a pedestrian promenade from Powell to Taylor Streets, were a part of those recommendations.

Funding for the project comes from the City of San Francisco's Neighborhood Parks Bond, which was passed by voters on February 5, 2008. Engineer's estimates indicate sufficient funding to construct the portion of the proposed project from Powell Street to the Franciscan Restaurant at this time. The Port has not identified funding to reconstruct the portion of the Pier north of the Franciscan Restaurant, the pedestrian pier leading to the historic bell display, nor the curb and



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pedestrian improvements west of the Franciscan Restaurant to Taylor Street. The Port is seeking design approval for the entire project with hopes of identifying funding to complete the entire project in the near future.

**Project Site.** For the past several decades, Pier 43-1/2 has been used for parking to serve the Franciscan Restaurant and other Fisherman's Wharf destinations. The pier has been repaired several times since 1990 and, in 2008, was closed permanently due to deteriorating structural conditions. The seawall where the pier begins is located approximately five feet north of the northern curb of the adjacent Embarcadero Roadway. The Embarcadero is the primary access route to the fishing industry operations on Pier 45.

**Existing Public Access.** Public access currently exists throughout most of the project area. As stated above, Pier 43-1/2 has been closed. Pier 43, however, is open to the public. There is a currently a sidewalk running along the northern side of the Embarcadero Roadway where the new promenade would be located, and a promenade between Pier 43-1/2 and Pier 45, both of which are open to the public. In addition, there is an existing 2,900-square-foot public access platform at the tip of Pier 43-1/2. While this area is currently structurally sound and open to the public, there is no way for the public to access the area given that the remainder of Pier 43-1/2 is closed. The public access platform contains a display of a historic pier sounding bell and a reconstruction of its cone shaped sounding board.

**Proposed Project.** The proposed project involves removing 55,000 square feet of Pier 43-1/2, repairing and/or reconstructing approximately 400 feet of seawall between Powell and Mason Streets, constructing 14,600 square feet of pile-supported promenade in the same vicinity, repairing and reconfiguring 6,300 square feet of Pier 43-1/2 to the north of the Franciscan Restaurant for a public access pier and plaza, and constructing a 2,400-square-foot pile-supported walkway connecting the newly-configured Pier 43-1/2 to an existing public access platform.

The newly constructed promenade between Powell and Mason Streets would extend 20 feet Bayward of the seawall, would be constructed over new and existing rock rip-rap, and would obscure views of the rip-rap at most tidal stages. The new promenade width would be approximately 35 feet because the promenade would also extend 15 feet inland of the seawall. At this location, a new 300-foot-long curb bulb-out would be installed to discourage vehicles from stopping and dropping-off at this prime viewing area, with the intent to maintain a view corridor to the Bay from Jefferson Street (1 block inland). A four-foot-wide planter with a protective curb would be located adjacent to the Roadway to provide an edge to the promenade and to further discourage vehicle stopping and drop-offs in the area.

To the west of the new promenade and on the north side of the Franciscan Restaurant, Pier 43-1/2 would be repaired and reconfigured to extend Bayward in an alignment similar to the adjacent piers. This new pier would be reserved for public access except for an approximately 15-foot-wide service area for the restaurant. The public access area would contain a raised wood deck with seating for viewing and a 15-foot-wide walkway along the pier perimeter. Currently, Red & White Fleet berths on the western edge of the pier. A portion of the pier is within their lease and would not be included within the project area.

The proposed project also includes a new 12-foot-wide by 200-foot-long pedestrian walkway (2,400 square feet) from the tip of the reconfigured Pier 43-1/2 to the public access platform located at the tip of the current Pier 43-1/2 structure. The pedestrian pier connection would have a paved surface, a railing with light-weight materials, and be entered through a portal with a roll down gate that would be closed at night.

Pedestrian and vehicular areas would be defined along the Embarcadero Roadway beginning at the western end of the Franciscan Restaurant. A curb or line of bollards would be added where none currently exists. The curb would define the edge of the roadway to the intersection of Taylor Street and then turn north to the entrance of Pier 45 Shed A. Between the curb and Shed A would be a 60-foot-wide pedestrian space with seating. In addition to the work along the promenade, the project would also involve realigning the Embarcadero Roadway where it meets Taylor Street. This realignment would compliment another intersection project that is being planned separately. The improvements in the vicinity of Taylor Street include constructing a curb to define a plaza in front of Pier 45 Shed A, and installing site furnishings throughout the project area.

The finishes and site furnishings are intended to express the historic and industrial working character of the fishing industry at Fisherman's Wharf. All new pavement (except the pedestrian pier connecting to the bell tower) would be asphalt surfacing and would adjoin adjacent asphalt surfaces. The railing along the promenade and pier would have a ten-inch-high concrete bullrail to provide protection from wave run-up and to reference the bullrails used at other nearby railings. The railing would be constructed with metal posts and chainlink fabric to compliment nearby railings.

The Fisherman's Wharf area is identified in the Committee's recommendations as having a significant shortage of seating, which the project would help alleviate by providing about 75 benches in prime viewing areas. Benches would be located to allow viewing of the Bay, the City, and strolling pedestrians. Litter receptacles, pedestrian way-finding signage and interpretive signage would also be included at various locations within the project area.

**Proposed Commercial Uses.** All of the aforementioned areas, the new promenade and the new pedestrian walkway would be available for public access with the exception of an 800-square-foot area, along the east edge of the newly configured Pier 43-1/2 and adjacent to the promenade, that would be used by the Franciscan Restaurant for outdoor dining. In addition, nine vendor carts are proposed at three locations: in the pedestrian area in front of Pier 45 Shed A; on Pier 43-1/2 at the east end of the Franciscan Restaurant; and in the widened area west of Powell Street between the promenade and Pier 43.

**Issues.** At this first review of the proposed project, the Port of San Francisco will be presenting an overview of the preliminary project design and public access features. The Board's comments are sought on these public access amenities and whether the public access design is consistent with the Commission's Public Access Design Guidelines:

1. **Is the design of the project consistent with the Commission's laws and policies regarding fill in the Bay?** Section 66605 of the McAteer-Petris Act states that fill in the Bay should only be authorized: (a) "...when public benefits from fill clearly exceed public detriment..." and should be "...limited to water-oriented uses..."; (b) when there is "...no alternative upland location..." for the project; (c) if the fill is "...the minimum necessary to achieve the purpose of the fill"; and (d) when "...the nature, location, and extent of any fill should be such that it will minimize harmful effects to the bay..." The Bay Plan also has policies which state, in part, that "small amounts of Bay fill may be allowed for waterfront parks and recreational areas that provide substantial public benefits and that cannot be developed without some filling" and that "...a small amount of fill may be allowed if the fill is necessary and is the minimum absolutely required to develop the project in accordance with the Commission's public access requirements." The *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan (SAP)* policies regarding Pier 43-1/2 state that "no new fill should be permitted except to maintain present uses, including tour boats, ferries and public access to the Bay."

The project involves removing approximately 55,000 square feet of pile-supported fill (most of the existing Pier 43-1/2) and placing approximately 17,000 square feet of new pile-supported fill in the Bay to construct the new promenade, the reconfigured Pier 43-1/2, and the new pedestrian walkway. The project also involves placing solid fill in the Bay to repair the existing sea wall and provide rip rap protection. The exact quantity is unknown at this time.

The Board should advise the Commission and the applicant on whether the proposed Bay fill is the minimum amount necessary to achieve the public access purpose of the fill, and/or whether there is an alternative upland location that could achieve the public access purpose of the fill.

2. **Adequate, usable, and attractive public access spaces.** The *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan (SAP)* contains a policy objective to “develop a major public plaza extending to the Bay within the area bounded by Jefferson, Powell and Taylor Streets.” The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access spaces should be “designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline”, to create a “sense of place”, and should “maximize comfort, [and] take advantage of existing site characteristics.” The *Guidelines* further state that “[v]iew opportunities, shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site’s inherent public access opportunities.” Lastly, the *Guidelines* state that, “[s]horeline access areas are most enjoyed when they are designed to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities” and provide, “public access spaces that are safe and secure.”

The project proposes a new 35-foot wide promenade along the waterfront between Powell and Mason Streets, a reconfiguration of Pier 43-1/2, which would include a new public access plaza and viewing platform, and a new pedestrian walkway to access the 2,900-square-foot public access platform at the tip of the current Pier 43-1/2.

The Board should evaluate whether the general shapes, sizes and dimensions of the proposed public access open spaces are appropriate to accommodate the expected level of use and serve the project purpose. The Board should also consider whether the new spaces would provide attractive and inviting experiences for the public (for example, is the pedestrian walkway wide enough, would the public regularly venture out to the public access platform, etc.) or whether a different public access configuration would provide a greater public benefit. Also, the Board should comment on whether the proposed plaza area on the reconfigured Pier 43-1/2 is inviting, provides a sense of place, and “feels public.”

3. **Connections to the Proposed Public Access Areas.** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that, “access areas are utilized most if they provide direct connections to public rights-of-way such as streets and sidewalks...” and “should be planned in collaboration with local governments” to provide for future connections. The *Guidelines* further state that this may be accomplished by “providing connections perpendicular to the shoreline at regular intervals...to maximize the opportunities for accessing and viewing the Bay.”

The Board should evaluate whether the proposed design and public access features provide, maintain and enhance the visual quality of the Bay, waterfront and adjacent developments. The Board’s opinion is also sought on whether the proposed design provides continuity and clear connections to public rights-of-way and other public access areas along the waterfront.