



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor  
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

**Date:** November 1, 2017

**To:** Recreation and Park Commission  
Capital Committee

**Through:** Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager  
Dawn Kamalanathan, Director of Capital and Planning Divisions

**From:** Jacob Gilchrist, Project Manager

**Subject:** John McLaren Park Vision Plan

---

**Agenda Wording:**

Discussion and possible action to approve \$8.9 million in proposed expenditures from the 2012 San Francisco Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond for McLaren Park and authorize staff to proceed with design development and environmental review for projects included in the McLaren Park Vision Plan.

**Strategic Plan:**

Strategy 1: Inspire Place

Objective: Strengthen the quality of existing parks and facilities

Strategy 2: Inspire Play

Objective: Strengthen and promote the safety, health, and well-being of San Francisco's youth and seniors

**Background:**

As the second largest park in San Francisco, 313-acre John McLaren Park currently includes miles of trails and pathways, 6 tennis courts, 6 playgrounds, 5 picnic areas, 3 restrooms, basketball courts, amphitheater, natural areas, clubhouse, off-leash dog play area, golf course, reservoir, lake, marsh, ball diamonds, and other recreation amenities. While the park is well-loved by some of its neighbors, including some very active community supporters of the park, the park is underperforming as a citywide asset. A combination of deferred maintenance challenges, previous decades' incomplete design ideas, and an inconsistent boundary with its adjacent neighborhoods combine to create a park without a cohesive identity or sense of place.

The goals for the McLaren Park Vision Plan are to envision a set of park improvements to establish a basis for future funding and improvements. Over the past two years has worked with



McLaren Park advocates and neighbors to develop an approach for improving the park. This report outlines the McLaren Park Vision Plan.

### **Budget and Schedule:**

The 2012 San Francisco Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond Program allocates, in total, \$12 million for the purposes of improving McLaren Park. Funds are allocated based on the requirements of the G.O. Bond Ordinance, adopted by voters, and the Bond Report, adopted as policy by the Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The Bond Ordinance and the Bond Report both state a commitment to allocate \$10m to John McLaren Park and its contiguous properties. On page 24 of the Bond Report, SFRPD provides the following description of how the funds may be allocated:

*“These funds can be used for capital improvements at these parks, and may include, but are not limited to, the following types of projects:*

- Restoration of natural features, including lakes, meadows, and landscapes*
- Recreational Assets, such as playgrounds, playfields, courts, and picnic areas*
- Connectivity and Access, such as roads, pedestrian safety, paths, and trails*

*\$6.5 million of funds allocated to Golden Gate Park, and \$1.5 million of funds allocated to John McLaren*

*Park, shall be allocated to projects that create or restore:*

- Natural features, such as lakes, meadows, and landscapes*
- Habitat for the park's many species of plants and animal”*

The Commission, the BOS, and voters by approval of the ballot measure have all endorsed this approach. The Bond Report accompanied the ballot proposal, and resulting Bond Ordinance, to every policy making body responsible for the oversight of G.O. Bonds in the city. Adopted by the RPD Commission and the Board of Supervisors, staff treat the Bond Report as the most complete description of commitments made to the public on how the G.O. Bond will be delivered, particularly with respect to public process.

The Bond Ordinance and the Bond Report also state a commitment to allocate \$4 million of funding for trail improvements within Golden Gate Park and McLaren Park. The purpose of these funds is to, “to repair and reconstruct park nature trails, pathways, and connectivity in Golden Gate Park and John McLaren Park.” (page 23 of the Bond Report). Furthermore, a process commitment is established that, “RPD staff, in consultation with PROSAC, trail building experts, and park stakeholders, will make recommendations on proposed trail projects to the Recreation and Park Commission for approval prior to the expenditure of these funds. After identification and development of specific projects, environmental review required under CEQA will be completed.” As a Department, our approach has been to divide the funds equally between Golden Gate Park and McLaren Park equally.

In October 2015, Capital Director Dawn Kamalanathan presented to the Commission a proposal to expend \$3.1 million of this funding on a series of immediate improvements (“quick start projects”) as well as a professional consultant to develop a broader capital improvement plan for the park. In her report, Director Kamalanathan noted that the McLaren community is in:

*“Agreement that a broader capital improvement planning process needs to occur. While a number of prior planning exercises have focused on McLaren Park, these processes are either now outdated (McLaren Master Plan) or have been largely executed (McLaren Needs Assessment). RPD will initiate a focused capital improvement process in Spring 2016 that will evaluate and develop goals for McLaren Park:*

- **Entrances.** *The Park lacks welcoming and clearly identified entrances for pedestrians, bikes, and cars. The Mansell project will help address some of these issues, but each neighborhood needs a friendly and safe access point to the park.*
- **Connectivity.** *Stakeholders are most interested in exploring this theme. If a park user figures out how to enter the park, they then face the more complex challenge of deciding how to move around the park in a safe, convenient, and enjoyable fashion.*
- **Points of Interest.** *Certain features and areas of the Park, such as the Group Picnic Area, are in need of improvement and clear program goals or themes to guide their design.*

Since this time, staff has worked with CMG Landscape Architecture and their team of sub-consultants to develop a park improvement strategy plan referred to as the McLaren Vision Plan. The plan is a framework that proposes expending existing funding on a set of community-supported improvements while also memorializing support for a set of long-term improvements throughout the park.

With \$3.1 million allocated for quick start projects and project administration, to expend the remaining \$8.9 million in funding, staff worked through the community process to develop a proposed list of improvements. The list of near-term, fully funded improvements balances the park’s needs by improving trails and roadway crossings, focusing on two points of interest – the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater and Group Picnic Area, while also improving active two of the gateways areas with new multi-use courts and making further investment in locations such as the Leland Avenue Community Garden. While the overall schedule for improvements is currently in development, the schedules for these improvements anticipate planning to begin mid-2018. Planning for several improvements, such as the Group Picnic Playground, Community Garden are already well underway.

Sources

2012 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond	\$12,000,000
---	--------------

Uses

Previously Approved Allocation (approved by Commission October 2015)	
Visioning Process / Administration	\$600,000
Quick Start Funding - Approved	
Group Picnic Area	\$900,000

Leland Ave. Community Garden	\$500,000
Mansell Ave. Roadway Improvements	\$300,000
McLaren Bike Park	\$300,000
Jerry Garcia Amphitheater	\$250,000
Pathways Improvements	\$200,000
Signage	\$50,000
<hr/>	
Total Uses from Initial Allocation	\$3,100,000
Proposed Use of Remaining Bond Funding	
Trails and Natural Features Priority Areas	\$3,500,000
Points of Interest	
Group Picnic Restroom	\$1,700,000
Jerry Garcia Amphitheater - Improvement Area 1 and Facelift	\$1,450,000
Community Garden	\$250,000
Gateways	
Tai Chi/Multi-Use Courts - Mansell and Louis Sutter	\$1,000,000
Connectivity	
Additional Pathway Improvements incl. curb ramp crossings on Shelley Drive	\$500,000
Visitacion Valley Pedestrian Crossings	\$300,000
Program Reserve Funding	\$200,000
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,000,000</b>

#### Tier 2 Costs

The cost information below reflects the community-supported long-term improvements to the park. These improvements are not currently funded but were memorialized as part of the McLaren Vision Plan Community Process. Most of this project work includes the major renovations as outlined in the Gateway Plans, additional work to Points of Interest such as further improvements to the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater and Phase 2 of the McLaren Bike Park. These improvements, while important to the success of McLaren Park, are too costly to be included in the current funding available from the 2012 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond. These costs are based on construction cost estimates produced by a professional cost estimator and based on the plans included in the Vision Plan

#### Tier 2 - Future Work - Anticipated Costs (adjusted to 2019 prices)

##### Points of Interest

Jerry Garcia Amphitheater - Area 2 and 3	\$3,500,000
Upper Reservoir	\$4,000,000
Bike Park Phase 2	TBD

##### Gateways

Crocker Amazon - 4 acres (w/o fields)	\$3,100,000
---------------------------------------	-------------

Herz Playground	TBD
Louis Sutter Playground - 4 acres	\$5,500,000
Mansell East - 6 acres	\$22,000,000
Oxford St - 2 acres	\$6,500,000

#### Connectivity

Visitacion Ave Improvements	TBD
Shelley Drive Long-term Improvements	TBD

#### Misc

Park-wide trash enclosures	TBD
----------------------------	-----

### **Community Process:**

To kick off engagement with the McLaren Park community, RPD staff organized a fun day in the park highlighted by a Treasure Hunt and supported by RPD's Mobile Rec Team. The goal of the Treasure Hunt was to encourage park users to explore corners of the park they may not have visited on their own. Over 250 people attended the Treasure Hunt. We learned that generally residents love the park and want to keep it wild and natural feeling while also improving safety and opportunities for play.

Staff then held two large community meetings to engage the community on first exploring and then confirming the overall priority topics that the public wanted to discuss as part of the McLaren Vision Plan process. Following Community Meeting #2, staff dispersed its outreach efforts to get more specific feedback on different realms within the park. These Focus Areas included courts, trails, the Group Picnic Area, Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, and roadways. Over the course of Summer and Fall 2017, staff held community workshops on these topics, synthesized these improvements into an overall Vision Plan framework, and presented this draft to the public on October 17, 2017. Focus Area meetings had attendees of between 15-50 participants while the larger community meetings hosted between 60-120 participants, primarily residents from the neighborhoods surrounding McLaren Park. The schedule of community meetings included:

- July 23, 2016 : Treasure Hunt
- October 1, 2016 : Community Workshop
- February 4, 2017 : Community Workshop
- February 15, 2017 : SPUR Trail Walk
- February 25, 2017 : Trails Workshop (Trail Walk)
- April 1, 2017 : Courts Workshop
- April 8, 2017: Trails Workshop
- March 2, 2017 : Sunnydale Residents Meeting
- May 6, 2017 : Group Picnic Workshop
- May 23, 2017 : Roadways Workshop
- June 3, 2017 : Group Picnic Workshop
- June 8, 2017 : Sunnydale Residents Meeting

- June 8, 2017: Trails Workshop
- June 24, 2017 : Jerry Garcia Amphitheater Workshop
- July 12, 2017 : SPUR Lunchbag Presentation
- September 9, 2017 – Visitacion Valley Planning Alliance Meeting
- October 17, 2017 : Community Workshop

Additional outreach specifically for the Trails Focus Area included:

- Met with SF Urban Riders in April 2017 to discuss requests and responded to requests in writing prior to the final Trails + Paths workshop in June
- Met with Philosopher’s Way artists and SF Arts Commission various times, including on site, to review proposed adjustments
- Met with Visitacion Valley Middle School Assistant Principal in May 2017 to review proposed improvements along Visitacion Ave
- Met with cross country coaches and organizers in June 2017 to review how potential cross country routes can fit with proposed improvements
- Connected regularly with Healthy Parks, Healthy People walk leaders from Rec and Park to solicit input from their walk participants and publicize our community meetings
- Compiled fact sheet with additional trails and path improvements info and distributed via email and project page of Rec and Park website
- Led a site walk with a dozen neighbors in early October 2017 to review proposed improvements and process

Aside from the Vision Plan meetings, staff has worked with the McLaren Park neighbors for more than 5 years. We initially engaged the McLaren Park Collaborative - this group came out of Help McLaren Park, Save McLaren Park, the Friends of Crocker Amazon, Friends of Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, and folks advocating for McLaren Park. We have attended their monthly meetings, events such as the Summer Concerts, and presented information on the project regularly, at the monthly meetings.

Over the last two years staff also attended the Portola Neighborhood Association, Excelsior Collaborative, Vis Valley Service Providers, Vis Valley Planning Alliance, Mercy Housing Sunnydale Residents, and events related to those groups. A few of those events included: Vis Valley Festival, Excelsior Celebration and Sunday Streets, Vis Valley Family Celebration, Summer Concerts, Portola Garden Tour, and Big Truck Day among others, to promote the project and solicit feedback.

### **Vision Plan:**

The McLaren Park Vision Plan organizes the park into three categories:

#### 1. Gateways

For the purpose of the Vision Plan, five areas of McLaren Park have been considered as gateways into the park. These areas –Mansell and Shelley East, Louis Sutter Playground, Oxford and Bacon St, Herz Playground, and Crocker Amazon Playground – are all places on the perimeter of the park that serve several important purposes. In contrast to the largely wild interior of McLaren Park, these sites around the perimeter of McLaren Park offer amenities

often found in neighborhood and community parks such as active recreation sport courts, fields, and playgrounds, and are used by their respective communities as neighborhood parks. Notably, they also serve as major entrances into the park. The Vision Plan memorializes potential upgrades to each of these areas.

## 2. Connectivity

Safe navigation of the roads, trails, and pathways of McLaren Park are of paramount importance. The McLaren Vision Plan seeks to build on the improvements made to Mansell Street and the Philosophers Way to create a connectivity network that will allow McLaren Park visitors of all abilities to experience the park's unique landscapes, vistas, and flora.

## 3. Points of Interest

Points of interest are defined as areas within the park that provide space and amenities for specific activities. These areas include the Leland Avenue Community Garden, Group Picnic Area, Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, and McLaren Bike Park.

## **Gateways**

### Mansell East Gateway

As the largest gateway, proposed improvements to the area of McLaren Park adjacent to Mansell Street and Shelley Drive East include adding two plaza spaces for the purposes of supporting tai chi, re-aligning pathways to improve ADA compliance and remove duplicative paved paths, creating a central lawn and small picnic areas, and developing a stormwater retention area just north of Mansell to match the work done as part of the Mansell Street improvements. With the exception of one multi-use/tai chi court to be funded with current bond funds, these improvements are not currently funded but are included in the Tier 2 cost estimate.

### Oxford Street Gateway

Improvements at the area near Oxford and Bacon Streets include re-aligning the basketball area to accommodate a full court, pavement improvements, and integrating this work into the PUC plan to daylight Yosemite Creek. Aside from the PUC project work, these improvements are not currently funded but are included in the Tier 2 cost estimate.

### Crocker-Amazon Gateway

The relatively minor changes to an otherwise popular Crocker-Amazon Park include adding a pathway along the Geneva Avenue planting edge and creating new and welcoming entry plazas into the park. The existing multi-use courts are slated for re-surfacing in fall 2017. The remainder of these improvements are not currently funded but are included in the Tier 2 cost estimate.

### Louis Sutter Gateway

Proposed changes to Louis Sutter Playground include adding a multi-use court to facilitate tai chi, roller hockey, roller soccer, and bike polo, re-purposing an under-utilized and duplicative playground area with adult fitness equipment, and integrating these changes with the proposed SFPUC bio-retention basin and Yosemite Creek daylighting project. With the exception of one multi-use/tai chi court to be funded with current bond funds, these improvements are not currently funded but are included in the Tier 2 cost estimate.

## Herz Gateway

With the upcoming planning for Sunnydale Housing and the potential partnership with Mercy Housing to create a neighborhood services hub adjacent to Herz Playground, staff refrained from going to deeply into planning for Herz Playground.

## Courts

There are several opportunities for active recreation court and field sports around the perimeter of the park. The biggest finding from the community planning process was that, despite being a very popular park activity, there is no adequate place to practice Tai Chi. On Saturday mornings, there are routinely 50-100 Tai Chi practitioners at the Mansell tennis courts. Crocker Amazon, Louis Sutter, and Herz Playground are other popular areas for Tai Chi. While there is already a paved multi-use court at Crocker Amazon that was recently repaved, the Vision Plan calls for the inclusion of multi-use areas at the Mansell Gateway and at Louis Sutter Playground, with both courts funded from the 2012 Bond as short-term improvements. Other highlights include re-designing the basketball court at the Oxford Gateway to accommodate full court basketball and converting one tennis court at Louis Sutter so that pickleball can be played on the court. As previously mentioned, multi-use/tai chi courts are to be funded with current bond funds for the Mansell East Gateway and Louis Sutter Playground.

## Connectivity

### Trails and Paths

The Trails and Paths Focus Area of the McLaren Park Vision Plan process has been identified as a key component because of the importance of circulation and connectivity to a cohesive overall plan.

The goals of the Trails and Focus Area were to:

- Ensure safe recreation and access
- Maintain and build on natural character
- Protect natural resources
- Clarify circulation routes

The proposed improvements build on existing McLaren Park trails such as Philosopher's Way. In addition to the existing paths along the edges of the park, the framework of trails proposed includes multi-use loops in both the north and south half of the park and a thoughtful system of trails interior to the park.

Through the McLaren Vision Plan process, staff developed a set of best management practices for trail development and maintenance. These include:

- Trail width standards: trails built at 3' minimum for pedestrian only, 5' minimum for multi-use trails with bike access
- Trail realignment, decommissioning and habitat restoration for sustainability
- Drainage and erosion fixes
- Hazardous tree mitigation
- Habitat restoration planting



- Wayfinding and interpretive signage

Staff have identified 4 priority project areas because of a combination of their potential impact and the need to have a licensed contractor complete the more technical aspects in these areas. The 4 priority project areas and associated proposed scopes include the following:

1) Upper Reservoir

- Replace asphalt path and wood steps with a sustainable natural surface trail with less steps
- New crosswalk at Shelley to connect to path and trails on west side
- Mitigate drainage problems
- Habitat restoration planting
- Repair paving on ramp south of reservoir and accommodate bicycles
- Wayfinding signage

2) Shelley Loop Interior

- Clarify trail alignments and wayfinding between points of interest, such as the amphitheater and group picnic and playground area
- Repair trail surface erosion damage
- Improve drainage to minimize future erosion
- Convert trail impacting the creek to a spur trail with overlook and consolidate trails to increase connectivity
- Habitat restoration planting
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage

3) Connection between Louis Sutter and Mansell Courts

- Reconfigure asphalt path with steps to more sustainable multi-use trail that meets ADA Outdoor Accessibility guidelines
- Consolidate and reroute trails to reduce erosion and maintain or improve the integrity of the grasslands
- Wayfinding signage

4) Visitacion Ave Corridor

- New multi-use trail from park entry at Visitacion and Hahn to Visitacion Valley Middle School, along eastern side of road, with stabilized trail surface (sandy area)
- New sidewalk from park entry to middle school, along eastern side of the road
- New crosswalk from the middle school to the fire road trail entry
- Habitat restoration planting
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage

Based on current estimates, these 4 priority areas are funded by the proposed 2012 Bond expenditure plan outlined above. Staff are seeking approval from the Commission on the following as part of the Vision Plan

- The expenditure of \$2 million for trail and path improvements

- The expenditure of \$1.5 million for the restoration of natural features as indicated in the 2012 Bond Report, and as part of the future McLaren Park Trails Improvement Project
- Prioritization of the use of 2012 Bond funding for improvements in 4 designated priority project areas (see attached map which shows the 4 priority project areas)
- Organizing principles and hierarchy of trails, including multi-use loops in both north and south halves of the park as well as the balance of pedestrian only and bike-legal multi-use trails

Following additional community planning, staff will return for Commission approval of the McLaren Park Trails Improvement Plan, which will include more specificity of trail alignments, delineation of trail sections to be rerouted and /or decommissioned, including the possibility of limited fencing, trail surfacing, sign locations, proposed hazard tree abatement and planting work, and other trail features including drainage and erosion remediation.

### Roadways

With community calls to improve John Shelley Drive in McLaren Park, the SFMTA and Rec & Park developed a package of traffic calming measures that will slow vehicular speeds and make for improved crossings where trails meet the road. This \$120,000 project is funded by the SFMTA and includes 12 speed humps along John Shelley Drive's entire length, as well as 3 speed tables where trails meet. These speed tables can be converted to raised crosswalks in the future through adding curb ramps and crosswalk stripes. Additionally, the intersection of Cambridge and Shelley will be altered through the addition of safe-hit posts and painted roadway to make the intersection narrower, causing cars to pass through more slowly.

The traffic calming measures were presented at two McLaren Collaborative meetings and at two community meetings – one of which was dedicated solely to roadway improvements. The Community was supportive of these measures. MTA and RPD are working together to install these improvements along Shelley in early 2018, and to have an agreed upon MOU to address maintaining the various elements.

The collaboration between SFMTA and Rec & Park has also considered medium-and long-term ways of improving McLaren Park's roadways for bikes, pedestrians and cars, while also making for clarified road crossings. Improvements could include raised crosswalks, shorter crosswalks with bulb outs, bikeways, narrowing vehicular roadways to add multi-use paths, and to look at the parking patterns of the park to inform improvements. These future improvements are not currently funded.

In addition, the funding plan proposes the use of \$500,000 for pedestrian pathway and roadway crossing improvements and \$300,000 specifically for roadway crossing improvements in areas of the park that serve the Visitacion Valley neighborhood.

### Points of Interest

#### John F. Shelley Group Picnic Area

The Group Picnic Area plan reflects the community's preference to have a natural feel to the playground that capitalizes on the park's hilly topography. The playground will be located on the sloping hillside between to the two existing picnic areas. A large slide will descend from the top

of the playground to the base. At the top of the playground, there will also be a net climbing structure that will allow children to enjoy uninterrupted views of San Francisco. Natural elements such as boulders and timbers will be incorporated as play elements. The timbers will be stacked on the north side of the playground and allow children to scramble up to the slide and net structure. Boulders will wrap the base of the playground, and a wooden bridge will cross a dry creek bed featuring native plantings.

The picnic areas themselves will also be renovated with Quick Start Funding. Additionally, there is a strong desire from the community to build a restroom in this area of the park. The restroom is one of the elements proposed to be funded by the 2012 Bond.

### Jerry Garcia Amphitheater

There was widespread support for the following four options for the Amp, each of which can be delivered independently, or bundled together:

- Facelift. A series of inexpensive cosmetic upgrades that improve user and host experience, from cleaning up the green room, to wiring the front of the stage for power, to more storage, to lighting and sound upgrades.
- Amenities area. "Flattening" the area adjacent to the ADA parking spaces and next to the restroom to allow for placement of food trucks, outreach tents, and other amenities.
- Seating Improvements. Make the existing bench seating more comfortable and add numbering; gently sculpt the hill area above the bench seating to allow for a more comfortable, and easier to access/walk, picnic seating area.
- Temporary Fencing. Establishing lightweight infrastructure to support temporary fencing where crowd control and/or revenue control is desired; create two distinct entrances by the restroom and the bridge.

The Vision Plan proposes funding the facelift and amenities area (Area 1) with current 2012 Bond funding while the seating improvements and temporary fencings (Areas 2 and 3) are included as part of Tier 2, though elements of this work could be included in an initial phase of work if the \$1.45 mil budget allows.

### Bike Park Phase II

A project imagined by a group of local mountain bikers, the McLaren Bike Park is an area for riders of all experience levels to develop and hone their skills. The first phase of the McLaren Bike Park opened October 2017. This initial phase focused on development of a small, youth-sized, pump track. Phase II is imagined to expand the park with additional jumps and trails. These future improvements are not currently funded.

### Leland Avenue Community Garden

In existence over 25 years, this community garden at the western terminus of Leland Avenue serves a group of neighborhood community gardeners and is adjacent to a main entrance into McLaren Park from Visitacion Valley. Through a combination of funding sources including the Community Opportunity Fund (2012 Bond), add-back funds from Supervisor Cohen, an initial phase of garden improvements is slated to begin construction in early 2018. At the final community meeting, there was broad support for funding several additional elements of the garden, including a gazebo and gathering area. This funding will allow the garden to fulfill its potential as a vibrant community resource.

**Staff Recommendation:**

RECOMMENDED, That this Commission approve \$8.9 million in proposed expenditures from the 2012 San Francisco Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond for McLaren Park and authorize staff to proceed with design development and environmental review for projects included in the McLaren Park Vision Plan.

**Supported by:**

Tree Frog Treks

Steffan Franz

Shawn Smith, Leland Avenue Community Garden Coordinator

San Francisco Parks Alliance

SPUR

Community members as documented from Community Workshop #3 in the attached comment cards

**Opposed by:**

Tom Borden

Tom Scott

M Walker

Mary William

**Attachments:**

Vision Plan Presentation Boards

Community Workshop #3 Comment Cards