

Lake Merced Task Force Recreation Committee Report

January 16, 2001

Introduction:

The Recreation Committee of the Lake Merced Task Force met through the late spring and summer to study the potential for recreational opportunities at Lake Merced. Our goal was to study the current and potential uses at the Lake and to recommend appropriate future recreation developments and uses for Lake Merced. The committee met on more than 10 occasions from May through October. In addition the committee toured the Impound Lake Triangle area and individual committee members conducted on-site user surveys to determine current recreation uses at Lake Merced.

The Recreation Committee focused its initial efforts on the development of an area plan encompassing Impound Lake, referred to as the Impound Lake Triangle project area. The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department has received a grant for improvements to the fishing pier area and suggested that the Lake Merced Task Force and its Recreation Committee serve as the project committee for the current proposal being developed by the Department. In this capacity the Recreation Committee toured the Impound Lake Triangle area, conferred with the project landscape architect from Department of Public Works and identified specific improvement opportunities for the site. The committee's recommended recreation uses for the Impound Lake Triangle area are included in this report and on the attached area maps. The Recreation Committee will continue to serve as the Project Steering Committee for the Impound Lake Triangle area project.

The Recreation Committee then focused its energies on the development of a comprehensive recreational vision for Lake Merced that captured the many and varied recreational, educational and environmental interests of current and potential users of Lake Merced while preserving and protecting the natural habitat and environment of the lake area. The Recreation Committee considered ways to maximize the collaborative opportunities and resources available with the Lake's current neighbors such as the San Francisco Zoo, San Francisco State University and Recreation Center for the handicapped, (RCH, Inc.). Recommendations were developed as a result of on-site tours, discussions with representatives from city departments, user surveys, review of previously prepared reports and a thorough discussion of the many uses and user issues impacting Lake Merced and its surrounding areas. Individual committee members served as liaison to the Nature and Water committees providing input on the work of these committees. Individual members also surveyed current uses of the perimeter walking and bicycle trail surrounding Lake Merced.

After developing and agreeing upon a recreation mission, goals and recommendations the Lake Merced Task Force Recreation Committee established cost estimates and prioritized each recommendation. Overall cost estimates were developed by committee members from the Recreation and Park and Public Works Departments and include estimated

design, construction and construction management cost estimates. The cost factors are as follows:

Low Cost:	\$1 -- \$250,000
Medium Cost:	\$251,000 -- \$750,000
High Cost:	\$751,000 and above

The Committee also established criteria for the prioritization of each recommendation and rated the items against the criteria. The composite results of this committee effort are included in the attached committee documents. The criteria for rating each recommendation are:

1. Beneficial to users and potential users at Lake Merced
2. Creates a safe environment
3. Creates visible/tangible improvement at the lake
4. Creates opportunities for diverse uses at Lake Merced
5. Finding is feasible
6. Compatible with nature committee recommendations
7. Compatible with water committee recommendations
8. Overall impact to Lake Merced as a center for educational, environmental and recreational opportunities for San Francisco

As a result of these efforts the following are the Mission, Goals and Recommendations developed by the Lake Merced Task Force Recreation Committee. The cost estimate, (Low, Medium or High) and the composite priority rating, (1-low to 10-high) are included after each recommendation where appropriate. Several recommendations are considered program suggestions (Program) and no cost estimate has been determined.

Recreation Mission for Lake Merced:

To establish Lake Merced as a center for educational, environmental and recreational opportunities for all San Franciscans and regional visitors to use and enjoy.

Goal 1:

Create and improve educational, environmental and recreational opportunities for local and regional visitors.

Recommendations:

- Establish a healthy fishery and improve fishing opportunities

- Improve fishing piers (Medium) (8.2)
- Improve fishing access while protecting sensitive areas from erosion (Low) (6.9)
- Stock the lake with fish regularly (Program) (6.4)
- Develop informational and regulatory signage for fishing areas (Low) (6.6)
- Provide boating rental opportunities and fishing supplies (Program) (7.6)
- Increase fishing programs for all ages (Program) (7.6)

- Develop visitor amenities which are compatible with educational and recreational uses and enhance the natural environment of the lake
 - Develop pedestrian activity nodes at strategic locations around the lake (Medium-High) (8.7)
 - Create trail systems including raised boardwalks and outlook decks in sensitive areas (Medium) (8.7)
 - Provide comfort stations and water fountains near Pedestrian activity nodes (Medium) (8.3)
 - Install bicycle racks (Low) (8.3)
 - Develop green space areas (Low) (6.2)

- Create aquatic related opportunities which are compatible with the natural environment of the lake
 - Develop aquatic related educational, recreational and competitive opportunities for all ages including sailing, rowing, windsurfing (Program) (8.4)
 - Establish boating and equipment rental facilities (Program) (7.9)
 - Provide safety instruction (Program) (8.5)
 - Improve storage facilities and showers for aquatic uses (Low) (8.0)

- Create visitor activity areas/pedestrian activity nodes at several locations with active and passive recreational experiences, interpretative opportunities, picnicking and comfort stations.
 - Develop potential sites at Sunset Circle, Brotherhood Way, John Muir Way and/or Harding Way (Medium - High) (8.1)
 - Incorporate active recreational activities including horse shoes, fitness trail, volleyball (Low) (6.6)
 - Establish a fully accessible ropes course (Low) (6.4)
 - Create green areas/open space for passive play and enjoyment (Low) (6.8)
 - Encourage youth golf program in conjunction with Harding Park (Program) (7.7)

- Provide a safe, attractive and compatible trail system for walkers, joggers and cyclists.
 - Develop a 12'wide striped trail system around the perimeter of the lake (Medium - High) (9.0)
 - Increase alignment of outside curb to maximize trail width (Medium - High) (8.5)

- Establish continuous bicycle trail access from Great Highway and Ft Funston trail systems, and Daly City BART station (Low – Medium) (8.9)
- Develop “blue zones” at appropriate areas around the lake to ensure that pedestrian activity nodes are accessible (Low) (9.1)
- Establish an educational/environmental/recreational facility which brings together the resources of the university, city, community agencies and organizations, and the community-at-large to maximize educational and recreational opportunities at Lake Merced and create an identity and focal point for Lake Merced
 - Build a comprehensive community center that includes opportunities for instructional/environmental/educational programs, recreational activities, aquatics programs, maintenance services, visitor services, administrative services and coordination of community resources. (High) (9.4)
 - Establish the center as a partnership of city, university and community in collaboration with Lake Merced neighboring resources (Program) (9.3)
 - Ensure that the center serves all ages and communities (Program) (9.3)
- Study the feasibility of creating a world-class rowing course at Lake Merced which requires the removal of the sewer line and sewer box (aka pedestrian bridge) at Impound Lake Triangle (Study - Low, Project – High) (5.0)

Goal 2:

Preserve, protect and enhance Lake Merced’s scenic and natural character

Recommendations:

- Establish trail systems that preserve and protect the natural environment while maximizing educational and recreational experiences
 - Establish raised boardwalks where necessary to protect the environment (Medium) (8.7)
 - Create overlook decks and outlook areas for the enjoyment of visitors while protecting sensitive areas (Medium) (8.9)
- Support efforts to reestablish and maintain natural areas and native vegetation around Lake Merced
 - Encourage volunteer programs (Program) (9.4)
 - Develop grant funded projects (Program) (9.4)
 - Support Natural Areas Program (Program) (9.3)
- Recognize and value the unique vistas and natural areas at Lake Merced and the wildlife populations it supports (Program)

- Support and create links to neighboring habitats, ecosystems and resources which highlight the region including Fort Funston, Zoo and Beach (Program)

Goal 3

Provide adequate and safe vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation of all people to the educational and recreational features of Lake Merced

Recommendations:

- Provide adequate and attractive parking areas at locations including Brotherhood Way, John Muir Way, Boat House, Sunset Circle (Medium – High)
- Establish safe and identified automobile, bicycle and pedestrian access routes
 - Establish 12' wide perimeter trail (Medium) (8.8)
 - Create safe parking lot designs and ingress/egress patterns (Medium – High) (8.6)
 - Install appropriate signage to ensure safety (Low) (8.9)
- Establish safe access routes from surrounding areas to Lake Merced
 - Include safe access at Herbst Road, Higuera, Brotherhood Way, Ft Funston/GGNRA, Harding Road, State Drive, Winston, Sunset Circle, and Font Blvd. (Low – Medium) (9.2)
 - Establish 35 mph speed limit around lake (Low) (8.8)
 - Establish pedestrian activated signal lights at northern and southern access points at Herbst Road and Skyline Blvd. (Medium) (9.4)
 - Create one-way design for portions of John Muir Way (Medium – High) (7.6)
- Encourage use of public transportation
 - Preserve bus routes on John Muir Way (Program) (8.9)
 - Create safe bus stops at access points on Lake (Program) (9.0)
- Link Lake Merced to regional trails
 - Link Ridge Trail and Coastal Trail systems (Low) (9.1)

Goal 4

Ensure quality maintenance of the entire Lake Merced area and its future improvements.

Recommendations:

- Provide adequate number of well-trained staff to maintain Lake Merced and its amenities
 - Establish maintenance center at lake (Medium – High) (9.2)
 - Provide training to personnel (Program) (8.8)
 - Provide adequate maintenance equipment and supplies (Low) (8.4)

- Encourage park stewardship through volunteer efforts
 - Support community groups and volunteers (Program) (9.1)
 - Establish stewardship programs with schools and university (Program) (9.3)
 - Encourage partnerships with environmental groups and agencies (Program) (9.0)

- Intensity maintenance activities in areas of high use to ensure safety and environmental sensitivity
 - Promote regular garbage clean-up (Program) (9.5)
 - Ensure high level of maintenance activity in high use activity areas (Low) (9.6)

Goal 5

Provide educational and interpretative opportunities to the public that focus on the appropriate use of and sensitivity to the Lake Merced environment.

Recommendations:

- Provide appropriate signage to inform the public of park regulations (Low)

- Establish interpretative programs which describe and explain the natural areas and habitats of Lake Merced (Program)

- Increase awareness of environmental issues related to Lake Merced (Low)

Respectfully Submitted:

Members of the Lake Merced Task Force Recreation Committee

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Adam Brown, Co-Chair, Neighborhood Parks Council

Erica Chenier, Bay Area Girl Scout Association

Gary Ehram, Dolphin Rowing Club

Kristen Furgeson, RCH, Inc.

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Debbie Hernandez, San Francisco State University

John Hentz, South End Rowing Club

Robert Karis, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

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