1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document was developed by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (the “Agency”) and San Francisco Planning Department to guide public realm improvements in the emerging Transbay neighborhood, a redevelopment project area comprised of approximately forty acres generally south of the existing Transbay Terminal in the city’s southern Financial District. It will also help to guide public realm improvements in the Rincon Hill area south of Transbay. This plan builds on the streetscape and open space concepts in the Transbay Redevelopment Project Area Design for Development, the 2003 concept plan for the project area, and is intended to complement the urban design and zoning elements in the Development Controls and Design Guidelines for the Transbay Redevelopment Project, the specific development requirements that were adopted in 2005. It will be utilized by the Agency, the San Francisco Planning Department and other City departments, developers and architects as new projects are realized in Transbay and in the Rincon Hill area to the south.
1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This concept plan addresses the public realm within a redevelopment project area of approximately 40 acres connected through a network of ten major streets and six public alleys. Included are a neighborhood park and innovative uses below bus and freeway ramps that connect to the Bay Bridge. The project boundaries generally span from east to west between Second and Spear Streets, and from north to south between Mission and Folsom Streets.

The Transbay neighborhood forms not only one of the largest emerging residential areas in the city, but is an important connection to the developing Rincon Hill neighborhood, linking it to the Transbay Terminal and the Financial District. Streetscape improvements will also improve pedestrian linkages between the Embarcadero waterfront and Yerba Buena Center in the east-west direction. With the Transbay Terminal bus and rail service and vehicular on- and off-ramps to the Bay Bridge, the Transbay neighborhood will always be one of the most accessible neighborhoods, while also being one of the most traversed in the city—these design recommendations strive to rectify these two competing factors.

Architecturally, the project area is a mix of modern and historic structures reflecting evolving land uses that range from light industrial to commercial, followed by the introduction of new residential projects. The future neighborhood projected in the Design for Development will include more mixed-use projects, greater density, and approximately 3,400 new residential units, making the public realm improvements critical to the creation of a livable community. Once realized, the streetscape and open space improvements proposed in this plan will fulfill a critical function of knitting together a mix of architectural project types and dominant infrastructure elements that occurs across the twenty block area, while making the streets and alleyways more inviting for walking and biking.
1.3 THE DESIGN PROCESS

The ideas described in this concept plan emerged from a collaborative process led by the Redevelopment Agency and Planning Department with critical input from other City Departments and officials. The voice of the community was heard through a dedicated group of individuals serving on the Transbay Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), consisting of residents and other stakeholders, developers and architects either living in, or possessing a strong interest in the community. The CAC provided thoughtful insights, raised smart questions and gave critical input to the future vision of the neighborhood’s public realm.

A design team led by Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership, in association with Marta Fry Landscape Associates, CHS Consulting Group and ARUP, aimed to develop the most advanced streetscape concepts that meld sophisticated design with sustainable strategies reinforcing the city’s commitment to sustainability. The intent is the creation of a unique identity for the Transbay neighborhood visible in the design of its public sidewalks, parks and alleyways.

As this concept plan developed during 2006, planning advanced on replacing the existing 1939 Transbay Terminal with a new, multi-modal transit center. Although the proposed Transbay Transit Center is still in program development, the design teams for both the Terminal and this concept plan met to share preliminary ideas so the projects would begin to be thoughtfully integrated.

The adjacent Rincon Hill neighborhood has seen recent development evolve without a streetscape and open space concept plan, resulting in a less cohesive treatment of the area’s public realm. The Planning Department expects to reference these design recommendations and apply them to the Rincon Hill area immediately south of the Transbay project area. For example, new developments along key streets like Folsom, Main and Beale will likely be required to follow these streetscape designs for consistency.
1.4 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Specific recommendations for the streets and open spaces of the Transbay neighborhood follow a set of core objectives:

- Support a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use residential district through streetscape and alley designs
- Require sustainable strategies to support a more livable community and to contribute to the Mayor’s “A Green and Clean San Francisco” Initiative
- Enforce the specific roles for each street to balance the functional needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit patrons and motorists
- Create a safe and accessible public realm for all ages and abilities
- Modify Folsom to fulfill its future role as a neighborhood “main street,” allowing for its conversion to balanced 2-way traffic and to better link the Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhoods
- Modify the Folsom off-ramp to function better as a gateway into a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood
- Develop Transbay Park as a unique neighborhood park that can serve a diverse group of users (residents, office workers and children) allowing for a range of activities
- Develop viable uses under the west ramp to the Transbay Terminal and the Fremont and Folsom off-ramps that provide additional recreational or cultural uses and contribute to the neighborhood’s livability
- Reinforce Transbay neighborhood’s identity through the integration of public art and a clear wayfinding system

Public spaces will support a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district (Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood)

Art and cultural uses, in addition to recreational spaces, can transform the grim spaces under the bus ramps (Ateliers under Daumisil Viaduct, 2th Arrondissement, Paris)

Sustainable strategies will be integrated into sidewalks and open spaces (Green Street Project, SW 12th Avenue, Seattle)

Each street will balance the needs of the pedestrian, bicyclist, motorist and transit user (Downtown Los Angeles)

The Transbay Park neighborhood park will serve the diverse needs of its residents while maximizing green space and providing opportunities for art (Canary Wharf Park, London)

Public art can take the form of artist-designed transit amenities, reinforcing the unique character of the neighborhood (Bus Stop by Massimo Iosa Ghini, Hannover, Germany)
1.5 IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The streetscape and open space elements detailed in this concept plan are intended to complement the urban design and zoning elements in the Development Controls and Design Guidelines for the Transbay Redevelopment Project, the other primary supporting document to the Transbay Redevelopment Plan. The Development Controls and Design Guidelines lay out standards and recommendations for the private development within the Transbay Redevelopment Project Area, with a focus on Zone One, the portion of the Project Area comprised mainly of parcels that were formerly occupied by portions of the Embarcadero Freeway until it was demolished after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

Funding for the construction of the streetscape and open space elements in this concept plan will be provided by both public and private sources. The Redevelopment Agency estimates that approximately $80 million (in constant 2005 dollars) in net tax increment will be available for public facilities, infrastructure, utilities and circulation improvements. In Zone One of the Project Area, the Redevelopment Agency will control the parcels that will be developed and can therefore require private developments to contribute a portion of the cost of the new streetscape and open space improvements. In the remainder of the Project Area, Zone Two, the Planning Code was amended as part of the Redevelopment Plan adoption to allow the Redevelopment Agency or the Planning Commission to impose additional streetscape requirements on new developments.

Within Zone One, the Redevelopment Agency and the Planning Department have an opportunity to almost completely redevelop both the public and private realms. Along both sides of Folsom, Main and Beale Streets as well as along the new alleys, Essex Street and within the public park and other open spaces in Zone One, it is anticipated that the streetscape and open space elements in this concept plan will be fully implemented with a combination of public and private funding. In Rincon Hill, it is anticipated that all of the elements of this plan will be extended along Main and Beale Streets and on the south side of Folsom Street as new developments, such as 201 Folsom Street, proceed.

Within Zone Two and some portions of Zone One, the existence of recently completed private developments means that there will not be as much of an opportunity for changes in the public realm. Along First, Fremont, Howard and Spear Streets, elements from this concept plan should be applied wherever possible to ensure that new sidewalks are improved for pedestrians while also maintaining continuity with existing sidewalks where there may not be an opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment. Second and Mission Streets, although they are within the Project Area, have some recently completed private developments and are part of larger urban corridors that require separate planning processes.

Funding for the maintenance of the public art, streetscape and open space improvements will also be provided by both public and private sources. The Redevelopment Agency anticipates that developers of parcels in Zone One will be required to fund the long-term maintenance of the streetscape and open space improvements, possibly through the creation of a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District. The Redevelopment Agency estimates that the bonding capacity of such a district, based on estimated 2005 land values in Zone One of the Project Area, would be approximately $70 million.
1.6 PLAN SUMMARY

Key recommendations described in this concept plan are summarized here. A synopsis of the streetscape recommendations, new open space treatment, mobility elements and infrastructure needs provide a snapshot of the intended vision for Transbay neighborhood’s public realm.

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

The design of each street acknowledges and reinforces its particular role in the street system. Improvements that enhance the safety and level of comfort for pedestrians are the primary goal. Specific landscaping, materials, furnishings and sustainable strategies support the design character for each street.

Folsom will become the “neighborhood main street” and help connect residents to the adjacent Rincon Hill area. Conceived as a distinctly urban street with generous sidewalks, a double row of street trees and ample amenities, it will be transformed as dramatically as the Transbay neighborhood. Vertical markers will provide a unique identity and scale, while framing the stunning view to San Francisco Bay and Yerba Buena Island.

Howard & Mission will continue to serve as “crosstown boulevards” with new elements to complement the recent improvements realized with newer developments. A simple 2-color concrete paving pattern, consistent street trees and tree grates implemented along the entire length will vastly improve the pedestrian experience on both streets. The proposed Transbay Transit Center will recast Mission Street in the vicinity of the terminal and bring distinct but compatible streetscape improvements.

First & Fremont will function as important north-south “Bay Bridge connectors” leading residents to and from the terminal and Financial District into the South of Market district. Inherently higher traffic volumes informed the addition of a landscaped parkway, wider sidewalks and pedestrian lighting. Key to the success of Fremont is the redesign of the Folsom off-ramp which will improve the overall pedestrian experience and arrival sequence.

Second will continue to function as a “historic connector” which spans the full north-south length of the South of Market district. It should be considered for a more significant length than the three blocks that fall within this project’s boundary, as part of a larger analysis of this important connector street.

Beale, Main & Spear will have a unique character as “linear park streets” that embrace the new Transbay Park and extend a vital greenbelt north and south across the neighborhood. Beale and Main will be defined by a contiguous parkway, double tree rows, seating and public art. These streets will be transformed into popular walking streets for residents.

Clementina & Tehama are “pedestrian alleys” that provide important east-west connections across the neighborhood. These small urban spaces must be shared with automobiles and trucks so they are designed to feel like quiet walkable streets. They feature raised crosswalks that signal entrance into a pedestrian-oriented zone.
OPEN SPACE DESIGN

Transbay Park is envisioned to become a cherished gathering place for residents and office workers. The one-acre site, located between Main and Beale just north of Folsom, will accommodate multiple activities and layered uses. Informal play and recreation is crafted into sculptural forms that shape a plaza and a large open green. A water wall and basin create a dynamic and playful quality. The adjacent Clementina and Tehama alleys form the north and south boundaries, and are designed to blend seamlessly with the park.

The concept for the underutilized space under the bus and freeway ramps has been developed further in this plan. Recreational uses that can be accommodated within the supporting columns include hard courts and shuffleboard. Adjacent areas that aren’t shaded by the ramps themselves can provide additional green pockets and a mews on Shaw alley. Double rows of trees and a dog run will transform the character of Essex, making the least inviting street in the neighborhood into a regular gathering place for resident dog owners. Capturing these unclaimed spaces will increase usable open space in an area where little exists today.

MOBILITY PLAN

The mobility plan builds upon the recommendations made in the Design for Development. It includes additional recommendations and more detailed guidelines that support the streetscape concepts. A primary objective of the plan is to recast the nature of pedestrian environment in the Transbay neighborhood, from the dominant automobile-oriented character existing today.

The key recommendations described in the plan include: changing Folsom’s circulation to two-way east of Fremont with widened sidewalks on the north and south sides; modifying the existing Folsom Street off-ramps to allow a sidewalk on the west side of Fremont Street between Howard and Folsom; adding corner bulb outs to increase pedestrian space and reduce crossing distances; adding a speed table at the alley entrances; and adding mid-block crosswalks with pedestrian actuated signals on Clementina at the Beale and Main intersections. Each of these improvements will enhance the livability of the Transbay neighborhood, balancing pedestrians with bicycle, bus, vehicular and casual carpool needs.

While future transit service improvements on Folsom are anticipated, their details are not fully known. This plan includes design concepts for how bus stops can be integrated onto Folsom at enlarged bulb outs on the far side of each intersection.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The existing infrastructure was evaluated very broadly to understand its ability to support the streetscape and open space improvements described here. The plan discusses the opportunities to employ sustainable strategies while improving systems serving the neighborhood. Future studies, investigation and design will still be needed as each of the physical improvements from this conceptual phase moves towards realization.