MEMORANDUM

TO: Community Investment and Infrastructure Commissioners

FROM: Tiffany Bohee
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Conditionally approving, consistent with the Transbay Streetscape and Open Space Concept Plan and pursuant to the Transbay Implementation Agreement, the conceptual designs for Transbay Under-Ramp Park; Transbay Redevelopment Project Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Transbay Redevelopment Project Area (the “Project Area”) was adopted in 2005 with the goal of developing: 1) a new, multi-modal Transbay Transit Center and related public infrastructure; 2) a new, transit-oriented neighborhood on approximately 10 acres of publicly-owned property, most of which was formerly owned by the State of California (“the State-owned parcels”); and 3) approximately 1,200 affordable housing units, which is estimated to be 35 percent of the new residential units constructed in the Project Area.

The Transbay Redevelopment Project Area Implementation Agreement (the “Implementation Agreement”) is an enforceable obligation that requires, among other things, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (“OCII”), as the Successor Agency (the “Successor Agency”) to the former San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (the “Former Agency”), to execute all activities related to the implementation of the Transbay Redevelopment Plan, including but not limited to, activities related to major infrastructure improvements, including new public parks. (Section 2.1 (d) of the Implementation Agreement at p. 4) On April 15, 2013, the California Department of Finance (“DOF”) determined “finally and conclusively” that the Implementation Agreement, along with other Transbay-related documents, is an enforceable obligation that will not require additional DOF review in the future, although expenditures under the Implementation Agreement are subject to continuing DOF review.

In June 2011, the Former Agency entered into an agreement with CMG Landscape Architecture (“CMG”) to complete design documents for select elements of the 2006 Transbay Streetscape and Open Space Concept Plan (“Concept Plan”). CMG and ARUP as the engineering sub-consultant (“Design Team”) are responsible for creating conceptual designs for the open space along Essex Street between Folsom and Harrison Streets and the areas under the TJPAC bus ramp and Caltrans Folsom/Fremont off-ramp between Folsom and Howard Streets and along Clementina Street between Essex and First Streets (collectively “Under-Ramp Park” or “Park”). Through a series of public workshops and Transbay Citizens Advisory Committee (“CAC”) meetings, as well as extensive research and analysis, the Design Team prepared detailed conceptual designs for the Park (“Park Conceptual Designs”). Staff is seeking the Commission’s approval of the designs, so that the Design team can begin preparing schematic design documents for the Park in anticipation of the start of construction in 2015.

Staff recommends approval of the Park Conceptual Designs.
PROJECT AREA BACKGROUND

The Project Area was adopted in 2005 after an extensive planning process that resulted in a rezoning of the neighborhood around the future Transbay Transit Center to accommodate approximately 3,300 new housing units, 2.6 million square feet of commercial development, and nearly 9 acres of public open space all on publicly-owned property. The residential development will be concentrated on Folsom Street, adjacent to the emerging Rincon Hill neighborhood, the development of which has been closely coordinated with the Project Area planning process.

In 2006 the Former Agency and the San Francisco Planning Department (“Planning”), in collaboration with other City entities, commissioned the production of the Concept Plan. The Concept Plan, prepared by a team of consultants including Zimmer Ginsul Frasca Architects, LLP, Marta Fry Landscape Associates, CHS Consulting Group, and ARUP, addresses the public realm within the Project Area. The Concept Plan includes design elements related to the ten major streets and six public alleyways within the Project Area, as well as neighborhood parks and areas below bus and freeway ramps. While the designs for Transbay Park, the one-acre open space located between Main and Beale and Clementina and Tehama Streets, were relatively well developed in the Concept Plan, the area below the off-ramps was not designed in detail. As such the Design Team was retained to develop the Park Conceptual Designs which comprise programmatic, planting, lighting, travel, and retail plans for different areas throughout the length of the Park.

The Under-Ramp Park is public infrastructure that the Implementation Agreement requires OCII to develop and thus its funding should be eligible for tax increment generated from the privately-owned owned parcels within the Project Area. These expenditures will appear on future Recognized Obligation Payment Schedules (“ROPS”) that the Oversight Board and DOF will review and approve. The construction will be completed by the TJPA, using OCII funds, concurrently with the construction of the over-head bus ramp from the Bay Bridge to the new TTC. The land upon which the park will be built is currently owned by the TJPA and the California Department of Transportation (“Caltrans”), and thus a coordinated effort is required to create a unified open space with the ownership divisions undetectable. Caltrans and TJPA staff has reviewed the Park Conceptual Designs and all of their comments have been incorporated. Formal approval of the Park designs will be sought from TJPA and Caltrans after the schematic designs have been completed. Both agencies have agreed in concept to allow OCII to construct the Park underneath the ramps. OCII staff has started negotiating the terms of future use agreements that will need to be executed with the TJPA and Caltrans before construction of the Park can begin. The long-term ownership of the park improvements will be the subject of the Successor Agency’s Long-Range Property Management Plan and is still to be determined.

DISCUSSION

Goals

The Concept Plan included the idea to “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.” From this, OCII Staff, Planning Staff, TJPA Staff, and the Design Team (“Project Team”) developed a more specific set of goals for the Park: 1) Create a safe, clean, comfortable, and vibrant urban living room; 2) Create a unique space that serves the neighborhood, the city, and the region; 3) Create and maintain an ecologically and
economically sustainable urban park; 4) Create an iconic gateway into the city from the Fremont Exit and into the neighborhood from Folsom Street; and, 5) Draw visitors to the park over the course of the day, the week, and the seasons with unique programs and events.

Research & Analysis

The site analysis conducted by the Design Team included in-depth assessments of: nearby open space; transit, bike, and vehicle access to and through the Park; surrounding existing and proposed land uses; watersheds; ceilings and walls; street and neighborhood edges; topography; and, sun and shade exposure. In addition, the Design Team did scale comparisons and extensive precedent research. From this research and analysis and in order to address unique opportunities and constraints throughout the park, the Design Team divided the Park into distinct rooms that are geographically separated by streets or alleyways and will be coordinated with each other but programmed and designed with the individual characteristics of each factored into the proposed concepts.

Public Process

The Park Conceptual Designs were developed through an extensive public process with neighborhood residents and property owners. OCII staff and the design team held two public workshops and worked closely with several property owners, especially the developer of the residential project at 41 Tehama Street, which is immediately adjacent to the proposed Park. At the first public workshop, held in December 2011, CMG presented an overview of the Park site and some very general ideas for programming. They developed three different themes for the Park: urban wild, culture, and terrain. They introduced these three approaches and the concept of dividing the space into “rooms,” discrete zones of the park, separated by existing streets or topography, serving different functions and/or user groups. After CMG’s presentation of their ideas and the opportunities and constraints within the Park, the approximately 35-45 people in attendance were given a handout with the three approaches for each of the six rooms and asked to write down any comments for consideration. Additionally, the design team separated into groups and the attendees were asked to circulate, ask questions, and attach green and red stickers to the specific elements they either did or did not like. CMG took the comments and boards and synthesized them into an integrated approach to the park, focusing on the activities and uses that the residents and workers liked. After the first public workshop, OCII staff and the design team held several meetings with the developer of 41 Tehama to fully integrate the plaza of that proposed residential project with the Park Conceptual Designs. In the second public workshop, held in July 2012, active and passive program ideas included in the initial presentation and those suggested by the public were strategically placed throughout the Site. The program presented at the July 2012 workshop was very well-received and only minor changes were made between that meeting and the final October 2012 public workshop where the detailed Park Conceptual Designs in Attachment 1 were presented to the public. Based on the support received during the public workshops, which the CAC members also attended, the CAC voted to approve the Park Conceptual Design at its September 13, 2012 meeting.
Design Components

As stated above, the Park is divided into rooms each with its own character. Beginning south and moving north, they include: a dog zone and a sports court south of Folsom Street; a large lawn area in the uncovered space north of Folsom Street and an event space with adjacent retail or amenity space built into the grade change from Folsom to Clementina Streets; a children’s play area and rain garden treatment area, with a meandering path along Clementina Street under the Caltrans off-ramp; an outdoor beer garden in the center of the park; and a terrace with a prominent entrance into the park from Howard Street.

Design features used to unify the park consist of a coordinated lighting scheme, an art piece along the western edge of the park (discussed below), and a unifying color and design palate for the ground covering, furniture, and fixtures. There will be bike and pedestrian paths traversing the length of the park that will provide a ground floor automobile free, direct connection to the TTC. Other activating features of the park include a pedestrian path surrounding the children’s play area, a circuit training loop throughout the entirety of the park, space for food trucks to park, porch style swings suspended from the over-ramp, various sizes of event space capable of hosting movies or other performances, a climbing structure and numerous slides navigating the grade changes throughout the Park.

As seen in the attached Park Conceptual Designs, CMG prepared four bird’s eye view renderings for different points in the park and supplemented these views with close-ups and sections to demonstrate specific features within each room.

1. The first bird’s eye view is from the northernmost park edge and illustrates the bike and pedestrian paths traversing the length of the park, the publicly accessible bike repair facility, the dining terrace, and a possible art element along the western park “wall.” The super graphic proposed for the wall of 557 Howard Street will be coordinated with the owner as will the possibility of openings onto the elevated plaza at this location.

2. The second view looking east from Clementina Street shows the beer garden in the foreground, the porch swings and plaza in front of the residential development at 41 Tehama. Please note, this rendering shows a blank space for the 41 Tehama Plaza but the design team is working separately with the developer of that building to integrate the plaza into the park design. Further down Clementina Street to the north is the rain garden which will help meet the City’s stormwater treatment goals. To the south is the children’s play area with slides and other elevated structures that will reflect the geometry of the off-ramp and character of the adjacent existing residences. Also seen in this view is a chandelier like structure suspended from the turnaround in the bus ramp where it crosses Clementina Street.

3. The third bird’s eye view is looking south from the bus turnaround. At the level of Folsom Street will be a small plaza and grassy area to take advantage of one of the sunnier, uncovered areas of the park. This area will also serve as an extension of the neighborhood retail corridor planned for Folsom Street and allow for the neighboring building to open onto this space. Beneath the plaza and grassy knoll is a small building that could house a park maintenance office, equipment rental shop, gallery space, or any other use that compliments the activities on the adjacent plaza and throughout the park. The plaza,
adorned with a small climbing structure, will be equipped to host events in the daytime or evening.

4. The fourth bird’s eye view is from Folsom Street looking south onto Essex Street. There will be a sports court on the western edge and a dog park to the east behind the new Rene Cazenave development currently under construction. Additionally, the Lansing Street Stairs and slope will be re-imagined to provide a safe well-maintained direct connection to the park for the residents in the Guy/Lansing and Rincon Hill neighborhoods. A grove of trees along the length of Essex will provide a unique and elegant entrance into the park that can be appreciated by pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles entering San Francisco from the Bay Bridge.

**Public Art**

OCII staff has budgeted $500,000 for public art in the Park. The exact nature and location of the public art will be determined through a public process through a future contract with the San Francisco Arts Commission ("SFAC"), and will be presented to the Commission for consideration. Staff anticipates presenting the contract with SFAC for the Commission’s consideration in July 2013. Some obvious opportunities for art include the building walls along the western edge of the park, the lighting components, the ramp columns, and the underside of the ramps themselves. Staff anticipates working with SFAC, the CAC and the neighborhood to develop a comprehensive and integrated public art program for the Commission’s consideration.

**Park Maintenance**

OCII is working with residents and building owners in the Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhoods to create a Community Benefit District ("CBD"). It is anticipated that the CBD will be formed by 2015, and will include a maintenance plan for the parks within the Project Area including Under-Ramp Park. All developments on the publicly-owned parcels will be required to join the CBD to ensure proper care of the public and private infrastructure improvements. Once formed, the CBD Board of Directors will be responsible for hiring the proper park maintenance team to care for and activate the Park. According to the current schedule, the CBD will be established in by the beginning of Fiscal Year 2014-15.

**Development and Design Timeline**

Once the attached conceptual designs are considered by the CCII, the Project Team, working with the public will develop schematic designs for the Park. The Commission will review and approve the schematic designs in Fiscal Year 2013-14. Since the park is primarily beneath the bus ramps heading into the TTC, the construction and timing of the Park will be closely coordinated with the TJPAB. The ramps and therefore the Park are anticipated to begin construction in 2015. The total construction cost of the Park is estimated to be approximately $18 million which includes $500,000 for public art. Construction funding will be sought by OCII, through the issuance of bonds, in Fiscal Year 2014-15.
SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PARTICIPATION

The Former Agency entered into the contract with CMG in June 2011, relying on the Small Business Enterprise ("SBE") policy to ensure diversity in the design team. The current CMG team includes 58% SBE participation for the total work scope, which includes the Park Conceptual Designs, as well as the schematic designs for the Folsom Streetscape Improvements Project, the cost of which is shown in Attachment 2. OCII staff is currently working with CMG to expand the team for the next phase of work on the Park to include an additional architect to design the structures in the park. Once this additional architect is on board, the SBE participation rate for the total work scope will increase to 59.5%.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

Agency approval of the Under-Ramp Conceptual Designs will allow for the completion of feasibility and planning studies for portions of the Transbay Streetscape and Open Space Plan and related community outreach. These activities would have no resultant significant impacts on the physical environment, and are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15262.

(Originated by Courtney Pash, Assistant Project Manager, Transbay)

Tiffany Bothe
Executive Director

Attachment 1: Transbay Under-Ramp Park, Conceptual Designs
Attachment 2: Transbay Streetscape Fee Summary