



History of Warm Water Cove

— *Jeanne Alexander*

Deteriorated but deserving, Warm Water Cove is awaiting its makeover. The indispensable first step is passage of the 2008 Park Bond, in February. Nestled on the Central Waterfront between China Basin and Candlestick Point, Warm Water Cove sits at the end of 24th Street, east of Illinois Street and close to the new Third Street light rail. It's one of the parks embedded in the Blue Greenway, San Francisco's vision for the southern part of the regional Bay Trail and the Bay Water Trail.

Owned by the Port of San Francisco and the Mirant Corporation (owners of the adjacent power plant), the two-acre park was



WARM WATER COVE IS AWAITING ITS MAKEOVER. PHOTO BY MERLE GOLDSTONE

established in 1976, according to **David Beaupre**, senior waterfront planner. From its beginning, the park and Cove, with its spectacular views of the Bay, have coexisted with and been damaged by homeless encampments, drug users and graffiti artists. The Homeless Church bus that held Sunday services for the squatters has now gone, but needles and trash remain. The wooden picnic tables, benches and the fishing pier have been burned several times, and graffiti 'artists' continue to tag, undisciplined after their work is painted over. The long-standing cache of sunken tires in the Cove's water is still on view at low tide.

In 2002, the SF Planning Department's Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan noted that the park "... should be improved in order to attract the activity necessary to making Warm Water Cove a pleasing and safe destination." Most park users, from the adjacent Dogpatch and Potrero Hill neighborhoods, agreed. In 2004 the Port installed an accessible and unburnable concrete picnic table, paved pathways, and new signage. But today blogs and media stories about the Cove reflect contentious and ongoing problems.

Periodic cleanups have had little lasting effect. Early this summer the Port, DPW and the community dredged up a mass of old tires, cleaned the grounds of brush and refuse, and repaved the paths. In August, a heavy duty cleanup team included the Port's **Tom Carter**, deputy director of maintenance; **Mohammed Nuru**, deputy director for operations, SF Department of Public Works; **Merle Goldstone**, public information officer for DPW community programs; **Corinne Woods**, Blue Greenway coordinator of Neighborhood Parks Council; and Project Connect. They marshaled 100 volunteers who picked up trash, trimmed trees and painted over the graffiti-covered walls. This effort may have a longer life because, says Carter, the Port's maintenance department, the SF Police

Department and DPW are now monitoring the park on a daily basis. **Susan Lavin**, homeless coordinator in the Bayview Police Department, reports that over the last two years, the homeless count has gone from 30 or 40 to 1. Two families with young children have been moved into new three-bedroom apartments. One child, four years old, said she had never slept in a bed before.

In October, NPC's monthly coalition meeting featured a presentation by **Mike Ernst**, a graduate student in city planning and recipient of the first SPUR Piero Patri Fellowship in Urban Design. Mike set out his visionary land-use plan to expand and revitalize the Cove, integrating the adjoining neighborhoods—innovative concepts for the days of planning that are just ahead.

"We're preparing now for the long term future of Warm Water Cove," **Corinne Woods**, NPC's Blue GreenWay Coordinator explains. "In creating a master plan we will be meeting with managers of the Port, PUC, DPW, artists, dog owners, skate boarders, and other members of the community.

The plan might include art, music and recreational elements." **Robin Talmadge** of Potrero Hill is working with Supervisor **Sophie Maxwell** on a pilot off-leash dog park.

"The Port has invested significant funds and labor over the years to encourage responsible park users. But without park stewards, the unlawful camping, dumping and graffiti will continue," says **David Beaupre** of the Port. "The goal," Woods agrees, "is to create stewardship. The 120 NPC 'Friends' groups work to maintain and improve their parks. It's the only way to protect their environment." Clearly this orphan park needs to see a "Friends of Warm Water Cove" in its future.

Established: 1976

Location: end of 24th Street, east of Illinois Street

Transportation: Third Street Light Rail, 23rd and 3rd Street stop

Contact: Corinne Woods, 415.902.7635

To read more of *Jeanne Alexander's San Francisco park histories*, please visit <http://www.sfnpc.org/parkhistories/index.html>



Parks in the News

NPC Endorses February 2008 Parks Bond

In October, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a \$185 million park bond for the February 2008 ballot. The bond, which will require a 2/3 majority of voters to pass, includes \$5 million in a matching grant fund, \$4 million for urban forestry, and \$5 million for refurbishing trails. In addition, \$33.5 million will go to waterfront park renovation/ development, \$8.5 million for playfields, and \$11 million for restroom upgrades if the bond is approved. Strong required reporting by a citizen's oversight committee will ensure accountability. NPC has prepared a ballot statement in support of the bond.

Mosaic Project Underway at Crocker Amazon Playground

The drab, cement benches at Crocker Amazon Playground are turning into beautiful pieces of art. FACE (Friends and Advocates of Crocker Amazon & the Excelsior), a neighborhood booster club, is undertaking a mosaic bench project through an award from the City's Community Challenge Grant program. NPC is stewarding this undertaking as the fiscal agent, and the art direction has come from Precita Eyes, the City's premier muralist collective.

On weekends since early October, a core of dedicated volunteers carefully apply small pieces of ceramic tile to the benches, with children as young as three participating! The four benches will be completed on Saturday workdays through the winter and spring, weather permitting. If you would like to volunteer, please come by the playground (at Geneva Avenue and Moscow Street) on Saturdays between 11 AM and 4 PM. For more information or to be placed on the email list for workday updates, call 415-585-8005, or email info@facesf.com

City Controller's Annual Report On Parks, Streets and Sidewalk Maintenance Released

For the third year, the City is reporting on performance for parks and streets as measured against established standards. City parks performed somewhat better in this year's annual report, which was released in October. However, some districts in the City still have many parks with poor ratings, and many parks fluctuate in quality due to erratic maintenance. To download the full report, go to www.sfnpc.org/controller07annualreport

Balboa Playground Rebuild Is Moving Right Along!

The Friends of Balboa Park Playground are working together to replace their outdated playground and provide

NPC Receives Two Generous Challenge Grants — We Need Your Help!

We are seeking donors to match two generous challenge grants that NPC recently received: \$25,000 from Walter & Elise Haas for the Open Space Task Force, and \$50,000 from Miriam & Peter Haas for the Playground Safety Program. If you or your business would like to contribute to either of these initiatives, please contact Karin Edwards (Open Space Task Force Coordinator) or Meredith Thomas (Stewardship Program Manager) at 415.621.3260.

a gathering space for their children and neighbors. Working with NPC and RPD, they received a grant from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) via the non-profit KaBOOM! to make this new playground a reality.

The group will work closely with AAOS and their KaBOOM! project manager to craft a design for the playground this fall. The playground will be universally accessible for all children and is certain to become a destination for families across the city. On Tuesday, March 4, 2008, hundreds of volunteers from AAOS and the community will actually build the playground! To keep up on the progress of this gung-ho group, visit www.fobpp.com

Visionary Plan Prepared for Neglected Waterfront Park

Urban planning graduate student Mike Ernst has prepared an exciting plan for Warm Water Cove, as part of his Piero Patri fellowship, awarded by SPUR. A largely unknown and under-utilized park along the eastern shoreline, Warm Water Cove is owned by the Port. On October 10th, Mike shared his innovative ideas to expand and revitalize Warm Water Cove Park with the NPC coalition. He proposed to expand the park by converting surrounding lots and creating an active, multi-use space that serves as a piece of the Blue Greenway park network. The new park would feature sculpture and murals, picnic areas, green spaces, a skate park, and would incorporate habitat restoration and stormwater runoff. To view his presentation, visit www.sfnpc.org/speakerseries#october

Civic Dialogue on Open Space Needed

— Isabel Wade, Executive Director

San Francisco's parks and open spaces stand at a crossroads between, as one park advocate recently observed, "disparate and desperate." Disparate because our open spaces are not connected with any kind of green network. Desperate because many of our neighborhoods are lacking parks, and because the city lacks funding to maintain and renovate existing parks.

Each of these situations can be remedied, but it will take a combined effort of political leadership and community involvement. New resources are needed to improve maintenance from below-average to excellent, to change parks and facilities

An initial infusion of funds may come from a \$185 million parks bond that will be on the ballot in February 2008. This bond, greatly improved from its initial version thanks to the feedback of key stakeholder groups including NPC, will provide financing for eleven major projects around the City. Renovation of long-neglected waterfront parks will contribute to a successful Blue GreenWay trail in the southeast. The bond will fund renovation of park trails in natural areas, and will begin the refurbishment of the park system's long-neglected urban forest by providing tree care and planting. Finally, there will be an opportunity for neighborhood

groups to select their own park improvements when they provide matching resources, including 'sweat equity.' NPC has endorsed this bond, which is now known as Proposition A.

For many City residents, though, concern for upkeep of existing parks is paramount before the City invests in additional open space. There are many challenges to securing the funds needed for a full contingent of City staff, and the likelihood of achieving this level of staffing in the near future is slim. The Mayor is to be commended for supporting a steady increase in the number of gardeners and custodians. However, we will need to devise a creative, San Francisco solution to the maintenance dilemma, with more challenging and productive

opportunities for volunteers, if we expect residents to support additional park acquisition.

Future issues of this newsletter will present 'best practices' from other cities to digest in our gristmill of ideas. We urge readers to participate in this important discussion on open space when NPC initiates the planning component of our Open Space 2100 project. We also invite you to blog about your opinions and to participate in forums on our website (www.sfnpc.org). Our Task Force coordinator is Karin Edwards, a recent graduate of the Goldman Policy Institute at Berkeley. Please feel free to email Karin your thoughts at kedwards@sfnpc.org, or write her c/o NPC: 451 Hayes Street, 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94102.



THE PORT IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON A MASTER PLAN FOR PIER 70 THAT WILL CREATE NEW WATERFRONT PUBLIC ACCESS AND OPEN SPACE. PHOTO OF PIER 70 BY JOYCE PEDERSEN

from old-and-run-down to newly-restored, and to transform our parks and playgrounds into a central component of our vision of a great and livable city, instead of treating them as an afterthought (at best.)

Fortunately, there are signs of hope. In November Mayor Newsom launched a civic Task Force on Open Space to address these challenges. A joint effort of the Mayor's office, relevant City agencies, and community partners spearheaded by NPC and SPUR, the Task Force will come up with strategies to finance the acquisition of new parks and open space, and will also devise the best options to maintain parks, as well as meet the estimated \$1.7 billion of capital funds needed to repair existing facilities.

Revitalizing Communities, Park by Park

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