Naval Station Treasure Island Reuse Plan

Draft Plan

Prepared for the Office of Military Base Conversion, Planning Department, City & County of San Francisco, and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

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from the Ferry Building and other parts of the bay to Treasure Island. Waterfront promenades and bike and pedestrian paths will connect a wide array of recreational and entertainment facilities with restaurants, shops and hotels. Major attractions, such as a theme park, will provide a unique entertainment and educational experience, reinforced by film production activities, youth training and social service programs. A mixed-income residential community will incorporate homeless services and offer a unique opportunity to live close to work and within a short ferry ride from downtown San Francisco.

The plan for reuse of Treasure Island is forward-seeking and envisions a dramatic transformation in the type, intensity and character of activities. With the assistance of federal and state partners as well as private development, Treasure Island can become a model of success for military reuse and urban redevelopment.

Background and Setting

Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island are centrally located within San Francisco Bay and lie entirely within the municipal boundaries of the City and County of San Francisco. Connected by a causeway, the two islands are extremely different from each other in origin and character. Yerba Buena Island is a natural rock outcropping of approximately 150 acres which is steeply sloped
and highly vegetated, with elevations rising to over 300 feet above the water. In contrast, Treasure Island is a 403-acre flat and low-lying rectangle of filled land. The Bay Bridge crosses Yerba Buena Island; a series of ramps provides access to the Islands from the bridge. Both islands are highly visible within the region, from both the Bay Bridge and along the Embarcadero in downtown San Francisco. Both have had histories of use and identities that predate the current military character.

Naval Station Treasure Island comprises Treasure and Yerba Buena Islands, excluding the 32.5-acre portion of Yerba Buena Island occupied by the United States Coast Guard. Since it became a military installation in 1941, Treasure Island has served as a place of assembly, transfer and embarkation of troops as well as an administrative, legal and training support center. Nonresidential buildings total approximately 2.5 million square feet. There are also approximately 1,000 existing family housing units on the two islands.
Treasure Island was placed on the military base closure list in 1993. Naval operations are scheduled to cease September 30, 1997. This impending closure offers the City and County of San Francisco a unique opportunity to plan for reuse and to shape the destiny of these important islands in the bay.

Planning for Reuse

Reuse planning for Treasure Island has been undertaken by the City and County of San Francisco through its Office of Military Base Conversion (OMBC), a joint effort of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, the Planning Department and the Port under the policy direction of a Citizens Reuse Committee appointed by the Mayor. This Draft Reuse Plan was developed through the efforts of the OMBC and the CRC, and informed by public input and technical direction from City departments in collaboration with a planning consultant team led by ROMA Design Group.
The planning process included the development of goals and objectives for the reuse of Treasure Island, the preparation of studies of existing conditions that create both opportunities and constraints for development, the exploration of land use and development alternatives, and the articulation of plans for reuse. The proposed Reuse Plan reflected in this document offers a vision for the future which capitalizes on the unique strengths of Treasure Island, and which is mindful of the serious constraints presented by the island as well.

Reuse Plan Overview

The following describes the major elements of the Reuse Plan:

Development Constraints

With its central bay location and panoramic views, Treasure Island offers unique opportunities for development. However, there are serious constraints that must be considered in redevelopment planning:

- **Seismic.** Consulting engineers have reported serious concerns about the seismic safety of Treasure Island. It is projected that a major earthquake could result in ground liquefaction and substantial differential settlement, seawall failure, and severe lateral spreading. Over the long term, the island can be made safer for major redevelopment through seawall reinforcement and ground improvements. The cost of such improvements is a serious challenge for the project. Seismic concerns may also affect immediate reuse of certain buildings, particularly those closest to the perimeter, which may be deemed unsafe without costly retrofits.

- **Transportation.** Vehicular access to Treasure Island is relatively poor, due to congested levels of Bay Bridge traffic and the substandard configuration of the on and off-ramps. With limitations on the number of vehicular trips that the
bridge and ramps can support, ferries will be the desirable primary mode of transport for large-scale redevelopment. Successful service will require a number of embarkation points around the bay.

- **Tidelands Trust.** Because Treasure Island was created through landfill on tide and submerged lands, it is likely that when it is no longer under federal ownership, it will fall within the restrictions of the Tidelands Trust created by the California constitution. (Yerba Buena Island, as a natural island, is not affected.) Under the Tidelands Trust, land uses are generally restricted to maritime-related uses, publicly oriented uses that attract people to the waterfront (including hotels), recreation and open space. Residential and general office/industrial uses are largely prohibited. Limited continued use of existing facilities as nonconforming interim uses may be permitted by agreement of the State Lands Commission, which oversees the Trust. Property held in Trust may not be conveyed by the public trustee (the State or City) to private ownership. Thus, land can only be leased, and not sold, for development. Revenue received by the trustee from lands subject to the Tidelands Trust must be used only for Trust purposes; reinvestment in developing and managing Treasure Island would satisfy this requirement.

**Proposed Land Use Plan**

The land use plan proposed for redevelopment of Treasure Island aims to maximize a range of public benefits within the major constraints of the site. The plan emphasizes publicly oriented recreational, entertainment, and hospitality uses that recall the spirit of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition. These uses take good advantage of the island’s central location and outstanding views, and can be linked to the city and the Bay Area by ferry service, expanding upon the “recreational” use of ferries at Alcatraz and Angel Island. They are also generally allowable under the Tidelands Trust.
Key aspects of the proposed land use plan for Treasure Island include:

- Broadly defined publicly oriented uses, including development of hotels; one or more theme park attractions, which may integrate the continuing film production activities; destination entertainment activities; and active and spectator recreational areas.

- A public promenade and open area around the entire island, with parks and plazas to help connect the island to the bay setting. The existing marina is expected to continue, and may be expanded. The recreational areas may be the venue for special fairs and events.

- Preservation (as feasible) of historic structures, most prominently Building 1 (the Administration Building), which acts as a grand gateway to the island.

- Construction of a new ferry terminal on the San Francisco side of the island, to supplement likely initial ferry usage of the existing Pier 1 on the east side.
- Designation of a portion of the island for possible new residential development, but with important conditions for realization: the Tidelands Trust restrictions will have to be removed, and transportation issues carefully managed to avoid unacceptable additions to bridge and ramp congestion. Alternately, this area of Treasure Island may be used for expansion of the publicly oriented uses or for natural open space and wetlands. In the near term, some of the existing housing will be designated for very low-income and homeless San Franciscans.

- Development on Treasure Island will take place around the planned 36-acre federal Job Corps center, which will provide resident employment training to 850 young adults.

Key aspects of the proposed land use plan for Yerba Buena Island include:

- Development of a hotel and/or new housing in the hilltop area facing San Francisco. Homeless service providers will initially use a portion of the existing housing on this part of the island, but could be relocated if necessary to accommodate new development.

- Preservation of the historic circle of houses anchored by the Nimitz Mansion and reuse for public events, possibly as a conference and retreat center.

- Additional development of housing, which may include artists’ live/work space, or visitor-oriented uses along Clipper Cove on the eastern portion of Yerba Buena Island.

This contemplated development program, focusing on entertainment features, theme parks, hotels and resorts, and sports and recreation facilities, will create thousands of new jobs and generate taxes and revenues to help defray the costs of capital improvements and public services.
Homeless Services Plan

Under the base closure process, localities must give consideration to homeless needs, and must balance these needs with other community interests in developing a base reuse plan. This homeless services plan must be accepted by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the Draft Reuse Plan review process.

For Treasure Island, homeless service providers have been represented by the Treasure Island Homeless Development Initiative (TIHDI), a consortium of 14 nonprofit organizations. The proposed homeless services plan aims to ensure meaningful opportunities for homeless and low-income San Franciscans, consistent with the overall redevelopment plan for Treasure Island. Key elements include:

- **Housing.** TIHDI organizations will have the opportunity to lease approximately 375 existing units on Treasure and Yerba Buena Islands to provide permanent and transitional housing for homeless clients. In the event of large-scale housing development on Treasure Island, developers will be required to include affordable units in their projects, and property will be set aside for the development of affordable housing by nonprofit groups.

- **Economic Development.** The economic development component is designed to create jobs and training venues for homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals. TIHDI will have the opportunity to lease buildings to operate at least three businesses on Treasure Island, such as a restaurant and convenience store, with additional opportunities as the Islands are developed. These businesses will create significant job opportunities, and any excess revenues will be used to support homeless services.

- **Employment Policy.** The goal of the proposed employment policy is to provide homeless and economically disadvantaged San Franciscans with job opportunities on Treasure Island while maintaining flexibility to meet the needs of individual
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Vision for the Future

The closure of Naval Station Treasure Island, slated to occur in September 1997, affords San Francisco the opportunity to reclaim lands long held in military use and reintegrate them within the life of the city. Originally built to become a municipal airport, later becoming the site of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, Treasure Island established close ties with the city and contributed to San Francisco’s emerging image and identity as a major urban center in the early years of the 20th Century. During the Exposition, the island provided a visual backdrop to the city with the bay as a stage. For many, it represented the prospect of linkage to far-off and distant lands and the power of the imagination to transport one there.

In the future, Naval Station Treasure Island can play an important role in supporting San Francisco’s economic base, enhancing its image and identity, expanding the range of recreational and entertainment opportunities, and adding to the overall livability of the city and region. Opportunities exist for a select number of uses that can take advantage of both the central location and visual excitement of the island setting, and which can successfully operate with controlled vehicular access. Ferries will bring visitors
Financial Feasibility

As discussed above, the development of Treasure Island will require major public infrastructure improvement, much of it related to the unique challenges of the island setting and geology. Planned uses and development activities are expected to generate revenues of over $225 million over time, and will help cover these costs. However, there is a significant “gap” of nearly $40 million between expected project-based revenues, which would be derived from long-term capitalized leases and building leases as well as tax increment and theme park admission tax debt proceeds, and costs.

Securing up-front monies to defray the costs not funded through project-based activities will be a major challenge for the redevelopment of Treasure Island. The City will need to work closely with the federal government to secure funding. Existing programs to be explored include Clean Water grants (for new sewage treatment plants) and Economic Development Administration grants for infrastructure. The Coast Guard will benefit from some of the infrastructure upgrading, and may agree to contribute to certain improvements. Special funding will likely ultimately be needed to cover the extraordinary costs of the project, including building demolition and shoreline stabilization.

Major Concepts

Underlying the Draft Reuse Plan, in addition to the Goals and Objectives articulated by the Citizens Reuse Committee and presented in the Planning Process chapter, are a number of fundamental concepts and approaches. Many of these are an outgrowth of the first phase of the planning effort and have helped shape both the land use plan and the implementation strategy. They include the following:

- **Emphasizing Publicly Oriented Uses.** Enhanced ferry and transit access to the Islands will enable intensified use by the public to provide a wide range of recreational, cultural and economic opportunities. These uses would relate to culture, economics and recreation. The emphasis in the Draft Reuse
Plan is on the development of a range of publicly oriented uses that will attract large numbers of people to both public spaces and paid attractions. These include entertainment attractions, cultural and historic settings, recreation and spectator sports events, and attendant uses, in particular, hotel and retail activities. The range of activities will appeal to regional residents as well as tourists, and will complement the array of attractions that draw millions to the Bay Area each year.

- **Taking Advantage of the Island Setting.** The fact that Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island are surrounded entirely by water is perhaps their most distinctive characteristic. This plan emphasizes taking advantage of the island setting, heightening the awareness of the water, and extending the amenity of the bay. It encourages building on the qualities that water can provide in creating a magical and exciting place through lighting and landscaping. Finally, it keeps the water's edge open and accessible for the public, to add to the enjoyment and appreciation of the bay.

Most people visiting Treasure Island are impressed with its extraordinary location and the stunning views that it offers, not only of the city, but of the entire region. It provides a sense of detachment while, at the same time, being at the heart of the urban area. Its low, flat form provides a unique perspective, almost akin to being out on a ship at sea. Regardless of the uses that ultimately are implemented, protecting the island from being irrevocably lost is a basic underlying premise of this planning effort.

- **Creating Attractive and Viable Ferry Service.** While the Bay Bridge and existing bus transit service are adequate to serve levels of reuse comparable in trip generation to existing use, ferries are the recommended transportation for high-level visitor use at Treasure Island. Historically a major transportation mode in the Bay Area and the primary mode for the 1939 International Exposition, new vessels and improved terminals are once again making ferries attractive for transbay travel. Relatively short travel times, proximity of reuse activity to proposed Clipper Cove and west side ferry docks,
avoidance of bridge congestion and substandard access ramps, and most importantly, the attractiveness of the water journey will make ferry travel viable for visitor trips to Treasure Island. Promotion of ferry service as the primary access mode will help emphasize the unique “island setting” of Treasure Island. The proposed ferry service is compatible with the goals and objectives of the MTC Regional Ferry Plan. The high level of ferry activity between Treasure Island and San Francisco, as well as between Treasure Island and East Bay locations, will increase the visibility of and stimulate the use of other existing or planned ferry services.

- **Establishing a Publicly Spirited Environment of Innovation and Enjoyment.** Although highly visible from the City and Bay Bridge, Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island as military properties have for decades appeared to be off limits to the general public. One of the most significant challenges in the transition to new civilian uses has to do with changing the image and identity of the place, and creating a more extroverted and public-spirited place that has the potential to attract large numbers of people to the site. Clearly, the emphasis on potential theme parks and sports complexes as well as new hotels and restaurants accessible primarily by public transit and ferry will play a significant role in the transformation of the area. In addition, the Draft Reuse Plan further places an emphasis on innovation in design and in utilizing the most effective technologies in environmental design to create a sustainable and attractive place for visitors to the island.

- **Building Value Over Time.** As part of the incremental approach to improvements and economic reuse, the early improvements that are made and uses which are supported should be those which add to the value of the island as a whole. As discussed more specifically in the Implementation Strategy, emphasis is placed on those new uses that can be attracted to the relatively stable core of Treasure Island early on; that change the image and identity of the island; and that make it more attractive for civilian reuse. Such uses would include on Treasure Island recreational, sports, golf courses
The Illustrative Plan is developed to show the implications of some of the plan policies and guidelines. It is intended to provide an example, but is by no means reflective of the only way development could occur. Rather, the plan is intended to provide flexibility to respond to changes in market and technology and it is possible that build-out of the island will look different upon completion than what has been depicted here.
and facilities; and on Yerba Buena Island, new residential, and potentially, hotel and conference center development. These would add to the visual appeal of the Islands and would help to attract new users.

- **Preserving Treasure Island as an Urban Amenity.** A basic premise underlying the Reuse Plan is that Treasure Island is a significant asset for the City and the region and should be redeveloped for future use. The choice facing policymakers which leads to this premise is whether to invest in and develop the island or allow it to remain vacant or underutilized after the Navy departs. Redeveloping the island entails substantial financial investment, particularly related to the need for seismic stabilization. However, “nondevelopment” could also require substantial public expenditure. As discussed in detail later in the Reuse Plan, a major earthquake in the coming years could cause the perimeter dike on Treasure Island to fail and at least portions of the island to slide into the bay. To prevent contaminating and degrading the bay, all buildings, roadways, infrastructure and hazardous materials on the island should be demolished and removed. The cost of such removal would likely range from $60 to $100 million or more. To further reduce the risk of affecting the bay, the island itself could be removed by dredging and hauling the landfill material to an on-shore site. This approach would be staggeringly expensive.

The investment in developing Treasure Island offers the return of a safe, attractive and exciting development, with thousands of new jobs and ongoing public benefit for San Francisco and the area. It will preserve a unique part of the history of our century, and will offer a unique vision and appreciation of the bay region for generations to come.

- **Investing in Seismic Safety for Treasure Island.** It is an additional premise of the Reuse Plan that Treasure Island should be brought up to a contemporary level of seismic safety over the course of development. Because it is composed of homogeneous fill surrounded by a rock wall subject to failure, Treasure Island represents a greater risk to life and property in
the event of a major earthquake on a nearby fault than possibly any other district in the city of San Francisco. The Navy has occupied Treasure Island for over 50 years. During this period, there have been no major earthquakes on nearby faults (the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, though intense, was of short duration with a distant epicenter, and caused damage consistent with current scientific models). With a major earthquake likely in the coming years, it is critical that prudent steps be taken to reinforce the perimeter and interior of the island. The level of knowledge and technology regarding seismic safety has increased dramatically since Treasure Island was constructed in the mid 1930s, and numerous seismic safety initiatives—including the Bay Bridge retrofit, the UMB upgrade ordinance, and statewide designation of seismic hazard zones—are now underway. As a new "neighborhood" of the city, San Francisco has the opportunity and obligation to incorporate Treasure Island in a manner consistent with current standards of seismic safety. The need for causeway and perimeter improvements has been acknowledged by the Navy, which was planning to undertake causeway upgrading prior to the base closure announcement.

The proposed seismic upgrade program contemplates phased perimeter and infrastructure improvements linked to creating improved land for development. The costs, though substantial, are linked to new uses and revenue generation. It provides for the long-term, prudent development of Treasure Island as a safe environment for residents, visitors and workers.

- **Undertaking Improvements that Serve Multiple Purposes.** The idea of trying to combine a number of different objectives in a single improvement is one that originates from need, but which can also produce excellence in design and function. At Treasure Island, the attempt is made to make improvements that stabilize the shoreline edge; create a protected utility corridor and circulation system; and produce a waterfront open space spine that is publicly accessible and attractive. By combining seismic, infrastructure and access improvements within a single corridor along the shoreline, the opportunity arises to reduce costs and increase benefits.
This is a common approach taken in waterfront locations, where major public works have historically been utilized to accomplish simultaneously numerous objectives related to recreation, circulation, service support, and ground stabilization.

- **Seeking Uses that Contribute to Film Production and the Tourist Economy.** Tourism is San Francisco’s biggest industry, and the city attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. Treasure Island has the capability of adding to the visitor attractions in the Bay Area, and San Francisco specifically, through developments planned at the Islands and through enhanced ferry service. In addition, film production is a growing industry, with an increasing number of films shot annually in San Francisco. At Treasure Island, Hangars 2, 3 and 180 are currently in use for film production, and it is anticipated that this use can expand in association with theme park activities and be supported by the nearby office and production facilities that exist on the base today.

Publicly oriented uses have the potential to:

- Generate more than 8,000 permanent and seasonal jobs.

- Create a new focus of activity and a destination that will extend the average length of stay of tourists in San Francisco.

- Create spin-off economic effects of benefit to existing hotels, restaurants, and attractions within the city.

- Support the burgeoning field of multimedia productions and film-related industries that has begun to grow within San Francisco.

- Support ferry service.

- Create a compatible environment with other uses, such as hotels, recreation and sports.
- **Fostering Federal and Local Partnerships.** Like many military base conversions, the reuse of Naval Station Treasure Island will not be feasible without the assistance and support of the federal government, working with local government and private developers to implement the Draft Reuse Plan. Currently, federal responsibilities are primarily focused upon toxics remediation; however, the need for federal investment in the property needs to be more closely tied to the unique circumstances and obstacles which will be faced in achieving economic reuse. More specifically, the special geological conditions of Treasure Island and the need for improvements make Treasure Island very different from other base reuse projects. The most extraordinary costs relate to demolition and shoreline and ground stabilization, but other important areas for partnering include financial support of homeless services and housing, and utilities improvements. A strong commitment of the federal and local governments will be needed to implement the plans for reuse.

**Plan Outline**

Following this Executive Summary and the description of the Planning Process, this report contains four major sections:

- **Site and Context.** This section describes the existing conditions which affect reuse. The information presented in this section draws primarily upon Existing Conditions Reports (Volumes 1 and 2) prepared by the consultant team and the City Planning Department in the first phase of the planning effort. It summarizes key findings related to physical characteristics, environmental and cultural characteristics, transportation and infrastructural systems, and the economy.

- **Recommended Policies.** This section builds on the draft goals and objectives as set forth by the CRC, and expands upon each of these to give more specific direction for future reuse. It establishes a series of guiding and specific policies governing each of the elements of the Reuse Plan, as follows:
- Land Use
- Urban Design
- Homeless Needs and Services
- Access and Circulation
- Utilities and Public Services
- Community Safety

- **Conveyance Requests.** This section sets forth the proposals for conveying land and property from the Department of Defense to federal, state and local entities.

- **Implementation Strategy.** The Implementation Strategy outlines approaches and options for the various components of reuse, including conveyances, phasing and interim reuse, financing options and fiscal considerations.
Box 2, Folder 16

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