



London N. Breed, Mayor  
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

**Date:** September 19, 2019

**To:** Recreation and Park Commission

**Through:** Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager  
Toks Ajike, Director of Capital and Planning Division

**From:** Melinda Stockmann Sullivan, Project Manager

**Subject:** Gene Friend Recreation Center – Concept Design Approval

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### **Agenda Wording**

Discussion and possible action to approve a conceptual design for the Gene Friend Recreation Center. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 31.

### **Strategic Plan**

Strategy 1: Inspire Public Space: Keep today's parks safe, clean, and fun; promote our parks' historic and cultural heritage; and build the great parks of tomorrow.

Strategy 2: Inspire Play: Promote active living, well-being and community for San Francisco's diverse and growing population.

### **Background Information**

The Eugene L. Friend Recreation Center is located at 270 6th Street in the SOMA district of San Francisco. The one acre site currently includes a single story recreation center with a full indoor gymnasium, activity room, weight room and auditorium. The grounds feature basketball and volleyball courts, lawn and planting areas and a wood and metal play structure over sand. The facility currently provides services to youth, adults, and seniors.

Beginning in 2014, the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) partnered with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to develop a feasibility study and concept design for the improvement of the recreation center. The feasibility study and concept design process were funded by TPL through a gift from the Friend Family Foundation; WRNS Studio was the architecture firm selected through a TPL-led Request for Proposals (RFP) to lead the design process.



The feasibility study and concept design have been donated to RPD as an in-kind grant to the City. As such, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors has resolved to authorize RPD acceptance of the in-kind grant through their budget and finance approval process.

The feasibility study included a thorough analysis of potential improvements that could be made to the existing building and site and explored options to build a new recreation center and facility. To continue serving a range of community interests, it was determined that replacement of the existing recreation center would provide the greatest opportunity for expanded programming for the growing neighborhood. The recreation center currently fills key programming needs for underserved populations. The SOMA neighborhood is also currently undergoing significant population growth.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national non-profit organization that has successfully worked in partnership with the City and communities in the Bay Area for 40 years to ensure that everyone has access to quality parks and open space. Some of the recent park renovations resulting from this partnership include Hayes Valley Clubhouse and Playground, Balboa Park, Boeddeker Park and Clubhouse, and the Helen Diller Civic Center playground.

## **Community Process**

RPD Staff and TPL have been working with the community since late 2014 to envision the improvements to Gene Friend Recreation Center. The project plan initially envisioned a building improvement project to the existing recreation center. However, based on community feedback obtained doing public outreach, the project team also explored building replacement options. The resulting feasibility and concept design studies demonstrated that improvements to the existing building would be costly and would not fully accommodate community desires and the needs of the growing SOMA neighborhood. Construction of a new recreation center will allow RPD to provide more public amenities, improve site access and security, and will provide greater seismic strength and environmental benefits.

Community Engagement has included:

- 5 Public meetings
- Community events
- 20+ Focus Groups
- 100+ Survey Responses

The Department has engaged with the following Community Groups:

- United Playaz
- Mercy Housing
- Veterans Equity Center
- Bayanihan
- City Crossroads
- WestBay Pilipino Multi Service Center
- Bessie Carmichael School
- SOMA Youth Collaborative
- Friends of Gene Friend Rec Center
- San Francisco Parks Alliance
- Office of Supervisor Jane Kim
- Office of Supervisor Matt Haney

## Proposed Project Scope

The Concept Design, created by architecture firm WRNS Studio, was developed through a feasibility study completed in 2015 and through an extensive community outreach process, culminating in the completion of a concept design in October 2018. Program priorities expressed by the community and the Recreation & Park Department include indoor and outdoor basketball courts; multi-purpose rooms and flexible meeting spaces; space for dance, performances and events; exercise rooms, game rooms, and playground/open space. The Department and community both expressed interest in maintaining the existing square footage of outdoor space while also increasing building floor area.

Additional features of the concept design are that it seeks to create a welcoming entrance on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, increases site security, and provides efficient use of space in the building and landscape. The proposal maintains garden space on Harriet Street, and the building's form activates the streetscape as it stands as a lightbox at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Folsom Streets. The intent is to provide a space for the community that is visionary, welcoming, open, active, and safe. A terrace enables an increase in building floor area and maintains the site's existing outdoor square footage.

Sustainability will be a key focus for the new facility. The Project will at the minimum meet the City of San Francisco's requirement of LEED Gold certification and, if budget allows, will pursue LEED Platinum. Passive systems, and simple, low maintenance solutions will be used throughout. Sustainable features being explored include passive cooling, solar water heating, solar power, and rainwater catchment areas with graywater re-use.

An additional focus for this facility is safety and seismic performance. The project site is designated as an SFRPD Emergency Staging Site. The new building will include a structural system designed to meet a seismic safety factor of 25% over the minimum seismic code requirements of similar structures, which matches the recommendation for schools and day care facilities. In addition, the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems will be designed to connect to portable water, power and other essential services during emergency staging periods.

Among the potential scope elements explored during the concept design was the potential inclusion of aquatics facilities. The SOMA neighborhood is not currently served by a Recreation & Park Department pool. While the site could accommodate a pool, it would consume a significant space that could be used for other programming. It would also increase an already large project budget by a significant margin. An opportunity arose during concept design for the Department to partner with TMG Partners, to build a new aquatics center at their 88 Bluxome Street development, half a mile from the Gene Friend Recreation Center. This new pool project is currently envisioned as the Gene Friend Annex Aquatic Center, and is being managed separately from the Gene Friend Recreation Center. Capital Division staff will provide additional updates on this new aquatics center as the project progresses.

The design team worked extensively with key project stakeholders from the Community and the Department in summer and fall 2018 to make some small but thoughtful updates to the concept design to make it as functional and as valuable as possible.

## **Funding**

Confirmed Fund Sources to Date:

TPL In-Kind Grant: Concept Design Study	\$520,500
Eastern Neighborhood Development Impact Fees	\$2,800,300

## **Anticipated Project Schedule**

Planning Phase:	Spring 2015 – Fall 2019
Design Phase:	Fall 2019 – Winter 2020
Bid Phase:	Winter 2020 / 2021 – Summer 2021
Construction Phase:	Summer 2021 start

## **Environmental Review**

The project has been reviewed by the Planning Department and was issued a Categorical Exemption under Class 32 – In-fill Development (Case No. 2018-012920EEC).

## **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends approval of the conceptual design for the Gene Friend Recreation Center. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

## **Supported By**

Friends of Gene Friend  
United Playaz  
West Bay Pilipino Multi Service Center  
Bayanihan Equity Center  
The Trust for Public Land  
San Francisco Parks Alliance

## **Opposed By**

None Known

## **Attachments**

A – Concept Design  
B – Letters of Support  
C – Categorical Exemption