



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor  
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

**Date:** July 1, 2015

**To:** Recreation and Park Commission  
Capital Committee

**Through:** Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager  
Dawn Kamalanathan, Director of Planning and Capital Management

**From:** Alexander Wolk, Planner  
Stacy Bradley, Deputy Director of Planning

**Subject:** Approval for Buchanan Street Mall Park Activation Project

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### **Agenda Wording**

Discussion and possible action to 1) approve the concept design for the Buchanan Street Mall Park Activation Project, 2) recommend that the Board of Supervisors accept a grant valued up to \$187,600, from the Trust for Public Land, for the design and construction of a community-supported park activation project, and 3) approve the Grant Agreement between the Recreation and Park Department and the Trust for Public Land. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

### **Background**

The Buchanan Street Mall (“Mall”), located in the Western Addition neighborhood, runs north-south between Grove and Eddy Streets. It includes five consecutive blocks of green space, three playgrounds, a half basketball court and asphalt paths.

The Recreation and Park Department (RPD) has partnered with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to support a small, stand-alone, community-supported, park activation project (“Project”). TPL connected with Green Streets, Citizen Film and the Exploratorium (Studio for Public Spaces) to establish a community-based design process that mobilizes park neighbors around activating sections of the Mall in a positive way. The goal of the Project is to launch a sustained community effort through a series of design interventions and to begin to enhance and activate the Mall in a way that reflects the values of the community.



## **Concept Plan Description**

A park activation is typically a capital park project that is small-scale, high impact, completed in short time frame, and involves community design and construction. Over the last several months, Green Streets, Citizen Film, the Exploratorium, TPL and RPD have worked closely to develop a concept design with a mobile and modular construction that would be installed at various locations along the Mall (See Attachment 1, Project Site Plan, Renderings and Concepts). The elements would be designed to be easily placed and moved throughout the mall with specific machinery, thus nothing would be permanently installed.

The elements would also be modular to create different sized components throughout the Mall. For instance, the largest installation would be placed in a central location with smaller installations, i.e. “breadcrumbs” or “entry markers,” scattered throughout the Mall to unify the space with appropriately-sized components.

Using the modular construction as a base, the Project would consist of one or more of the following concepts:

1. Planters adorned in positive, artful community images and filled with communally planted and maintained vegetation.
2. A series of interpretive signs that tell the stories of the neighborhood, such as history of the Western Addition and strong individuals who have affected positive change in this community.
3. A place-making space that presents an opportunity for experiential learning and community gatherings.

While the concept and potential locations have been identified, each element will go through an iterative process of prototyping, where the Exploratorium and Green Streets will fabricate certain elements, solicit community feedback, and continue to adjust and modify designs over a period of several weeks, leading up to final construction.

All installations would be non-permanent and mobile, and could be reconfigured or enhanced depending on future funding and phasing. However, the current project must be implemented by September 30, 2015 due to the grantor’s requirements.

## **Outreach and Community Involvement**

Since April of 2015, Green Streets, Citizen Film, the Exploratorium, TPL and RPD have worked to establish a collaborative and participatory planning process, culminating in a Design Task Force comprised of neighbors. The team has also partnered with Community Grows, a local nonprofit that has renovated and/or created four other parks and gardens in the Western Addition since 1994.

Prior to establishing the Design Task Force, Green Streets hosted a series of community meetings featuring food, a short film screening and surveys designed to gather initial input from

the community on their vision for the Mall. Initial survey results have informed the design process during this activation phase.

Currently, the Design Task Force participates in weekly community meetings, which focus on the values and design elements to enhance and activate the Mall. Community meetings are held every Thursday throughout June and July at the African American Arts and Culture Center. Outreach, recruitment and engagement will continue throughout this activation phase using door-knocking, posting flyers in key locations, and public events and meetings (see Attachment 3, Flyer from Community Meeting). The BEETS (Band of Environmentally Educated and Employable Teens), a program of Community Grows, have also joined in Green Streets' outreach efforts.

The opinions and ideas of the Design Task Force are an important part of creative placemaking intended to transform an unsafe corridor into a vital stretch of history, storytelling and opportunity. The residents will provide meaningful input into the design and construction process to foster a sense of long-term stewardship.

### **Other Recent Funding and Awards**

In July 2014, Citizen Film received an 18-month creative placemaking grant in the amount of \$250,000 from ArtPlace America. ArtPlace's prestigious national grant program funds projects in which the arts play a central role in a community's planning and development strategies. The inspiration for the Buchanan Street Mall park activation sprung from this award.

### **Grant Agreement**

The Department and the Trust for Public Lands have successfully accomplished a number of projects throughout the RPD system. The agreement for this project aligns closely with previous agreements and establishes a framework for the collaboration between RPD and TPL.

Specifically, the agreement specifies that TPL will provide the concept plan, subject to approval by the Recreation and Park Commission, and construction for this activation project. Further, the collaboration with TPL will create neighborhood stewardship of the project that encourages active participation in voluntary upkeep of the project elements, regular communication with RPD and general stewardship of the Mall. (See Attachment 3, Grant Agreement)

After the initial year, the Department will accept the installation.

### **Project Budget and Funding:**

Outreach:	\$23,000
Design/Build/Install*:	\$115,000
Professional services, permits, contingency:	\$42,000
<u>Other:</u>	<u>\$7,600</u>
Total	\$187,600

\* This represents TPL's in-kind services for the planning phase of the project, concept design, and fabrication

**Project Schedule:**

Planning Phase: April 2015 – June 2015  
Design and Permits: July 2015 – August 2015  
Construction and Closeout: September 2015  
Opening: September 30, 2015

**Environmental Review:**

The Planning Department's Environmental Planning Division (EP) issued a CEQA Categorical Exemption Determination, Case Number 2015 – 006227ENV. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission would be the Approval Action as defined by Administrative Code Chapter 31. (See Attachment 4, CEQA Categorical Exemption Determination).

**Support:**

Supervisor London Breed  
Green Streets (see Attachment 5, Letter of Support)  
Citizen Film  
Trust for Public Land  
Exploratorium  
Community Grows

**Opposition:**

None known

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Commission 1) approve the concept design for the Buchanan Street Mall Park Activation Project, 2) recommend that the Board of Supervisors accept a grant valued up to \$187,600, from the Trust for Public Land, for the design and construction of a community-supported park activation project, and 3) approve the Grant Agreement between the Recreation and Park Department and the Trust for Public Land.

**Attachments:**

- 1) Project Concept Plan and Design Task Force Overview
- 2) Flyer from Community Meeting
- 3) Grant Agreement
- 4) CEQA Categorical Exemption Determination, Case Number 2015 – 006227ENV
- 5) Letter of Support from Green Streets