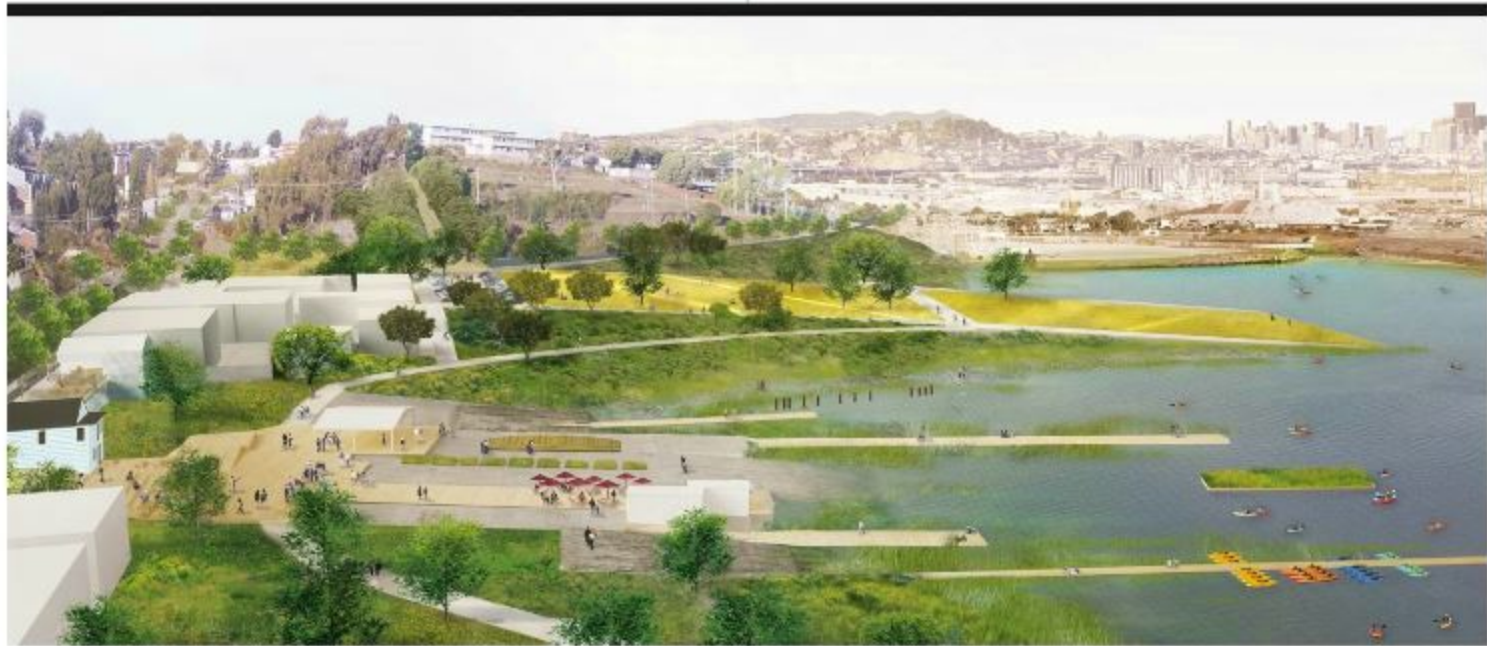


## SAN FRANCISCO'S OVERLOOKED EDGE

**AFTER A DECADE OF PLANNING, A 13-MILE GREENWAY  
WILL SOON CONNECT SOME OF THE CITY'S  
LEFT-ALONE COMMUNITIES TO THE WATERFRONT.**

BY LISA OWENS VIANI



**ABOVE**

Gustafson Guthrie Nichol's redesign of a park at India Basin is part of the city's Blue Greenway.

**BELOW**

Shannon Nichol, FASLA, and architectural historian Jonathan Rusch evaluated the site's resources.

Like all peninsulas, San Francisco is surrounded by water on three sides. Its western edge historically has attracted surfers, bird-watchers, and dog walkers, while the north side has lured tourists and residents with parks, promenades, and waterfront restaurants. That's left the southeast side to carry the brunt of heavy in-

dustrial. For years, shipyards, power plants, and sewage treatment facilities have made this shoreline unappealing and hard to reach. Now, since many of those facilities have closed—owing to community opposition, environmental concerns, or obsolescence—the city is seizing the opportunity to build a 13-mile trail that will connect a string of shoreline parks and complete an important piece of the 500-mile San Francisco Bay Trail.

Planning began in 2005, when the former mayor Gavin Newsom appointed a task force to develop a vision for a “blue greenway”—blue for the kayak and canoe “trail” in the water that follows the shoreline, and green for the terrestrial path. This built on grassroots efforts to make the shoreline more accessible, espe-

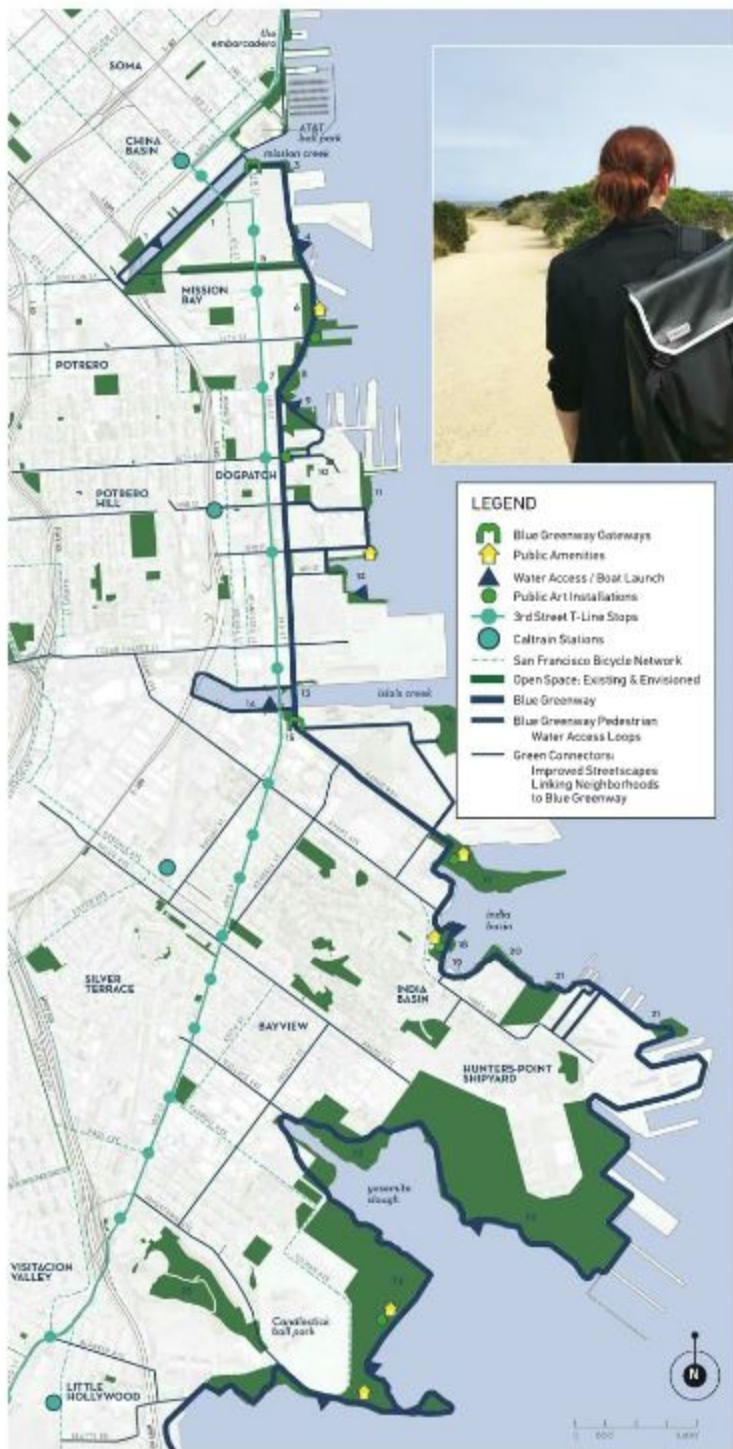
cially for the residents of adjacent, disadvantaged communities that had suffered from pollution and blight for years. But with multiple landowners, jurisdictions, and funders, not to mention the remediation of several heavily contaminated sites, progress on the Blue Greenway has not been especially fast—until recently.

“All of this open space is being driven by a wave of new investment and a big bump in housing, both market-rate and affordable,” says Benjamin Grant of the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), which is among the nonprofits pushing the plan forward. The communities next to the greenway expect to see 30,000 new residents in the next 20 to 30 years. Much of the funding for the new





# BLUE GREENWAY—NETWORK VISION OVERVIEW



**LEFT**  
Heron's Head Park's thriving wetland and wildlife habitat.

park is coming from development fees as well as \$38 million in bond funds. Call it a positive side effect of the city's population boom.

At Pier 70, the Port of San Francisco—which is the biggest landowner along the route—is redeveloping a 28-acre site that will maintain an active shipyard, cap toxic soils, offer mixed-use residential, and add eight acres of waterfront parks. One of those parks, Crane Cove, will include a beach where people will have the rare opportunity to dip their toes into the San Francisco Bay, says David Beaupre, a senior waterfront planner with the port. Both the Golden State Warriors and San Francisco Giants plan to build shoreline parks on their properties nearby.

Farther south, another piece of the Blue Greenway will soon come online at India Basin. There a former shipyard with a somewhat inaccessible and underused park was recently the subject of a redesign contest sponsored by the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department, the Trust for Public Land, and the San Francisco Parks Alliance. Gustafson Guthrie Nichol (GGN) won the con-

test with a "big soft edge" concept. This includes restored wetlands and possibly an offshore, horizontal levee designed to make the shoreline more resilient to sea-level rise. GGN's concept links the community with the shore via stairways, safer street crossings, and pathways inspired by the old metal rails used to launch boats 100 years ago.

"It's a very unusual place along the edge of the bay in that you have this very shallow, gradual gradient happening, with some original tidal flats," says Shannon Nichol, FASLA, a founding principal at GGN. A "raked back" slope will be planted with marine, brackish, and upland vegetation to attract wildlife.

This park will join existing parks along the Blue Greenway, such as Heron's Head, Pier 94, and Islais Creek, which are cared for by various nonprofits with help from the port. At the southern end, the California State Parks Foundation has been working for five years to clean up contamination and restore wetlands along Yosemite Slough. Jackie Omotalade, the Blue Greenway director with the San Francisco Parks Alliance, is thrilled to see local communities finally have access to San Francisco Bay. She says the Blue Greenway will be the "southeast crown of the city's parks and open space." ●