



2015-006227 ENV

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

From: Stacy Bradley, RPD Planner

To: Jeanie Poling
San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS
CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

~~CLASS 4~~ 4 - minor alterations
to land

CC: Dawn Kamalanathan
Philip Vitale, Project Manager, The Trust for Public Land

Jeanie Poling

Re: CEQA Exemption Request for Buchanan Mall Park Activation Project

5/18/15

Date: May 13, 2015

Dear Ms. Poling:

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (SFRPD) requests review of the proposed Buchanan Street Mall Park Activation project (Project) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purposes of this letter are to: 1) Provide the Environmental Planning Division (EP) with the information on the proposed Project; and 2) Request EP review and concurrence that the proposed Project is categorically exempt under CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 provides exemptions for "Minor Alterations to Land. Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Examples include, but are not limited to: (f) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored." This project would install elements from one of three conceptual options that would require minimal trenching to secure the elements to the ground. This Project requires the Recreation and Park Commission to approve the concept plan and to accept the gift in place from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) who will be administering the Project.

The following description of the proposed activities demonstrates that the proposed Project would not result in any adverse environmental effects, and provides support for our recommendation that the activities are categorically exempt under CEQA.

Background:

The City, through RPD, operates and maintains the Buchanan Street Mall ("Mall"), which is located between Grove and Eddy Streets. The Mall includes five consecutive blocks of green space, three playgrounds, a half basketball court and asphalt paths. The Mall is surrounded by affordable housing and community centers. RPD will partner with TPL to design and build a small, stand-alone, community-supported, park activation project. TPL will connect with community partners as it identifies project elements and maintenance goals. The goal of the park activation project

("Project") is to enhance and activate the Buchanan Street Mall, and must be implemented by September 30, 2015 due to the Grantor's requirements.

Description of Proposed Project:

The Project proposes to add a small capital improvement to help activate the Buchanan Mall. Based on initial conversations with the project partners and the first phase of outreach, the Project would consist of one of the following concepts:

1. Large planters adorned in positive, artful community images and filled with communally planted and maintained vegetation. The largest planter would be placed in front of one of the community organizations along the Mall, such as the African American Arts and Culture Center, with one smaller planter box located on each of the other four blocks.
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. There would be several signs that line the main bike/pedestrian paths to encourage residents and visitors to learn about the history of the community by moving through the space.
3. A place-making installation that presents an opportunity for experiential learning and community gatherings. The main installation would be in front of one of the community organizations along the Mall, such as the African American Arts and Culture Center, with a few small installations or signs located on the other four blocks.

The proposed project is also consistent with policies in the Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) of the San Francisco General Plan. The ROSE highlights the goals and objectives of the SFRPD, including renovations, building partnerships with nonprofits, encouraging pedestrian transportation, and facilitating community-supported projects. Specifically, the proposed Project is consistent with the following ROSE policies:

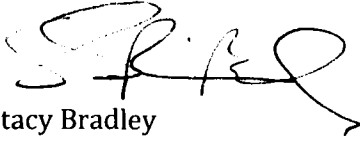
- POLICY 1.2 Prioritize renovation in highly-utilized open spaces and recreational facilities and in high needs areas.
- POLICY 2.7 Expand partnerships among open space agencies, transit agencies, private sector and nonprofit institutions to acquire, develop and/or manage existing open spaces.
- POLICY 3.4 Encourage non-auto modes of transportation – transit, bicycle and pedestrian access—to and from open spaces while reducing automobile traffic and parking in public open spaces.
- POLICY 5.3 Facilitate the development of community-initiated or supported open spaces.

CEQA Compliance/Recommendation:

Based on the above description, SFRPD recommends EP determine the proposed Project to be categorically exempt under CEQA guidelines 15304 "Minor Alterations to Land". Section 15304, Class 4 provides an exemption from environmental review for "minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes." The installation of these elements involves a minor alteration to existing park facilities with minor trenching and backfilling where the surface will be restored and does not include removal of mature, healthy trees. Therefore, the proposed Project meets the criteria for exemption under Class 4.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 415-575-5609 or stacy.bradley@sfgov.org. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Bradley', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Stacy Bradley

Attachments:

1. Map of Buchanan Mall
2. Photos of Existing conditions at the Buchanan Mall
3. 3 Proposed concepts – currently being reviewed by the Buchanan Mall community



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION APPLICATION COVER MEMO - PUBLIC PROJECTS ONLY

In accordance with Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, an appeal of an exemption determination can only be filed within 30 days of the project receiving the first approval action.

Please attach this memo along with all necessary materials to the Environmental Evaluation Application.

Project Address and/or Title:	Buchanan Street Mall Activation Project
Project Approval Action:	Gift Acceptance by Rec and Park Commission 7-16-15
Will the approval action be taken at a noticed public hearing? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES* <input type="checkbox"/> NO * If YES is checked, please see below.	

IF APPROVAL ACTION IS TAKEN AT A NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING CALENDAR LANGUAGE:

End of Calendar: CEQA Appeal Rights under Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code If the Commission approves an action identified by an exemption or negative declaration as the Approval Action (as defined in S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31, as amended, Board of Supervisors Ordinance Number 161-13), then the CEQA decision prepared in support of that Approval Action is thereafter subject to appeal within the time frame specified in S.F. Administrative Code Section 31.16. Typically, an appeal must be filed within 30 calendar days of the Approval Action. For information on filing an appeal under Chapter 31, contact the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244, San Francisco, CA 94102, or call (415) 554-5184. If the Department's Environmental Review Officer has deemed a project to be exempt from further environmental review, an exemption determination has been prepared and can be obtained on-line at <http://sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=3447>. Under CEQA, in a later court challenge, a litigant may be limited to raising only those issues previously raised at a hearing on the project or in written correspondence delivered to the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Planning Department or other City board, commission or department at, or prior to, such hearing, or as part of the appeal hearing process on the CEQA decision.

Individual calendar items: This proposed action is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS ARE INCLUDED:

- 2 sets of plans (11x17)
- Project description
- Photos of proposed work areas/project site
- Necessary background reports (specified in EEA)
- MTA only: Synchro data for lane reductions and traffic calming projects