



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

**Date:** June 15, 2023

**To:** Recreation and Parks Commission

**Through:** Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager  
Stacy Radine Bradley, Director of Capital and Planning  
Yael Golan, Deputy Director of Planning

**From:** Brian Stokle, Planner

**Subject:** McLaren Park – Shelley Promenade

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### **Agenda Language**

*Discussion and possible action to recommend that the Board of Supervisors restrict private vehicles on a 2,100 foot (0.4 mile) long segment in the western portion of John Shelley Drive between the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot and Mansell Street, in order to create a promenade for walking, biking, and other non-vehicular transport and recreation to improve accessibility and enjoyment of John McLaren Park.*

### **Strategic Plan**

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

**Objective: 1.1.:** Develop more open space and improve access to existing facilities to address population growth in high-need and emerging neighborhoods

**Objective: 1.2.:** Strengthen the quality of existing Parks & Facilities

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

**Objective: 2.2.:** Strengthen and promote the safety, health, and well-being of San Francisco's youth and seniors

**Strategy 4: Inspire Stewardship:** Strengthen the City's climate resiliency by protecting and enhancing San Francisco's precious natural resources through conservation, education, and sustainable land and facility management practices.

**Objective 4.2** Increase biodiversity and interconnectivity on City parkland



## **Executive Summary**

- The Department proposes to restrict private vehicles on a 0.4-mile-long section of the John Shelley Drive roadway in John McLaren Park to enhance the park experience and improve safety and comfort for vulnerable street users. This section of the road has been closed to private vehicles since early in the COVID-19 pandemic to create a safe space for recreation.
- The proposed conversion of a section of the roadway into a promenade is supported by multiple city policies and program recommendations to improve accessibility, equity, and mobility within John McLaren Park.
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) policies and analysis support the proposed action. (see Attachment D)
- The closure will require approval from the Board of Supervisors.
- Recreation and Park Department staff (RPD) propose that the Recreation and Park Commission recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the conversion of a section of John Shelley Drive from a vehicular roadway to a permanent pedestrian and bicycle promenade. The Board of Supervisors action would be the Approval Action for the program for purposes of Chapter 31 under the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **Purpose**

Adopting a Resolution to urge the Board of Supervisors to restrict private vehicles on the above-mentioned segment of John Shelley Drive in John McLaren Park to implement slow streets, to enhance the park experience, and to improve safety and comfort for vulnerable street users, creating a primarily flat paved promenade for people to walk, roll and bike, and enjoy more engagement with nature away from motor vehicles, while remaining accessible to people with disabilities.

## **Background**

John F. Shelley Drive, which is wholly located within John McLaren Park, has been under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission (RPC) since the 1920s, when John McLaren Park was created. John F. Shelley Drive is a two-lane vehicular roadway with parallel parking located on both sides of the street. The road contains no sidewalk nor any built bicycle facilities. John F. Shelley Drive is a roughly inverted “U”-shaped roadway that intersects Mansell Street in two locations: the segment of Shelley that intersects Mansell Street further west is called “Shelley West;” and the segment that intersects Mansell Street further east is called “Shelley East”. In between these segments is the section known as “Shelley North”, which extends from Cambridge Street to the northern edge of the Upper Reservoir parking lot (see Map 1 and Map 2 below).

**Map 1: John McLaren Park and Street Network**



Existing conditions on John Shelley Drive include swing gates located at the intersection of Shelley West & Mansell Street, and additional gates on Shelley North, just west of Cambridge Street. Currently, these gates are being used to block vehicular access to the areas of the park accessed from Shelley North and Shelley West when the park is closed (from sunset to sunrise).

On April 28, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 emergency and the City’s Shelter-In-Place orders, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD), in partnership with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), established a 0.9-mile car-free roadway within McLaren Park along the western and northern portions of John Shelley Drive from Cambridge Street to Mansell Street at Shelley West. The closure was intended to provide more outdoor space for residents while allowing social distancing in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The car-free segment restricted private vehicles on a portion of John Shelley Drive, with exceptions made for RPD vehicles, and emergency response vehicles. The new “Shelley Promenade” created a daily, full-time, nearly one-mile car-free route in the northwest portion of the park. On September 4, 2021, the promenade portion was shortened by 0.5 miles (2,600 feet) to allow private vehicle access to the Upper Reservoir parking lot, and the newly

renovated Group Picnic site and new Redwood Grove Playground, creating a 0.4-mile promenade, in the same segment now proposed for permanent closure.

John F. Shelley Drive is currently open to vehicular traffic from the Upper Reservoir parking lot east to Cambridge (Shelley North) and from Cambridge Street east to Mansell Street (Shelley East). The section between the Upper Reservoir parking lot and Mansell Drive (Shelley West) remains closed to vehicular traffic. (See Map 1 above)

The street segment closed to private vehicles for social distancing, Shelley West, previously carried an estimated 350 daily vehicle visits on weekdays, based on pre-pandemic traffic counts performed by SFMTA in October 2015. Based on pedestrian and bike counts performed during its temporary promenade configuration, Shelley Promenade received nearly 300 daily visits from Monday to Friday, and approximately 380 daily visits on weekends. The segment of roadway proposed for conversion into a promenade is a relatively flat area, offering pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users and other users a wide, flat space to walk, bike or learn how to bike without conflict with private vehicles. The proposed promenade segment also is not home to any of the park's main attractions and points of interest, and its closure to vehicles would in fact allow for more active use and more visits in this northwestern portion of the park. SFMTA has noted in their analysis (see Attachment D), that "the restriction of vehicle access will have no significant impacts on local vehicle or transit circulation while serving to promote walking and biking in the park. As such, SFMTA staff do not object to the creation of the Shelley Promenade in John McLaren Park."

### **Proposed Physical Changes**

No changes to the paving are currently planned and an emergency access aisle will remain unobstructed for the full length of the Shelley Promenade. The project will include the addition of bollards and gates to prevent unauthorized vehicular access to the Shelley Promenade once funding is identified. The project will also include an accessible parking space with an accessible path of travel to the north end of the promenade and an accessible path connecting the 29-Sunset bus stop on Mansell Street to the Promenade; all as described below in Maps 3 and 4.

### **Public Outreach**

RPD conducted extensive outreach to direct the spending of the 2012 Neighborhood Parks Bond McLaren Park Program funding and adopted the McLaren Park Vision Plan in 2018. The Vision Plan called for examining ways to improve pedestrian and bike access to the park's roadways. The Shelley Promenade would fulfill the Vision Plan's goals of enhancing overall connectivity and increasing the length of designated multi-use pathways in the park to support pedestrian, bicycle, and other modes of travel.

During the temporary closure, RPD received significant feedback in support of the closure from neighbors and visitors. At a community meeting held virtually on February 23, 2023—attended by 40 members of the public— participants voiced unanimous support for permanently closing John F. Shelley Drive to private vehicles and converting it to the Shelley Promenade.

The Shelley Promenade proposal has been shared at a McLaren Collaborative meeting in 2022. A Change.org petition<sup>1</sup> has over 425 signatures supporting a car-free Shelley Drive in nearly the same location as proposed. To date, RPD has received more than 10 letters of support for the proposed promenade, and one letter against.

RPD and SFMTA staff evaluated these proposed closures and concluded that closing the above portions of Shelley Drive to private vehicle access would be consistent with the California Vehicle Code. For the reasons articulated in this staff report and public feedback, staff conclude:

- The restricted portions of the street are no longer needed for vehicular access and the closures and traffic restrictions leave a sufficient portion of the streets in the surrounding area for other public uses, including vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- The closure or traffic restriction is necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use that part of the street during the closure or traffic restriction.
- The City has met or will meet the remaining requirements under the Vehicle Code. Staff have done outreach and engagement for all abutting residents and property owners and the community surrounding John McLaren Park and posted notices of the proposed promenade hearing.
- The City maintains a publicly available [website](#) with information about John McLaren Park in general and, specifically, the proposed Shelley Promenade, that identifies the road being considered and provides instructions for participating in the public engagement process.

Prior to implementing Shelley Promenade, the City will provide advance notice of the closure or traffic restrictions to residents and owners of property abutting those streets and will clearly designate the street closure or traffic restrictions with appropriate signage consistent with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

### **Access to and at the Site: Trails, Paths, Parking, and Traffic**

Park visitors walking and biking will be able to access the promenade at the south end from the Mansell Promenade and connecting trails to Brazil Street, the High Point, Labyrinth Path, and Field of Dogs paths. Access from the north end will be provided from the trails to Upper Reservoir, La Grande Water Tower, Philosopher's Way, and paths to Excelsior and La Grande Avenue.

Park visitors arriving by vehicle may reach the proposed promenade in the following ways:

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<sup>1</sup> Change.org petition on car-free Shelley Drive: [https://www.change.org/p/san-francisco-recreation-parks-keep-a-portion-of-shelley-drive-closed-in-mclaren-park?recruiter=95396115&recruited\\_by\\_id=4d546090-dcba-11e3-b637-cf8b66ba48a6&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copypink&utm\\_campaign=petition\\_dashboard](https://www.change.org/p/san-francisco-recreation-parks-keep-a-portion-of-shelley-drive-closed-in-mclaren-park?recruiter=95396115&recruited_by_id=4d546090-dcba-11e3-b637-cf8b66ba48a6&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copypink&utm_campaign=petition_dashboard)

- The North: Entering the park via Cambridge Street and taking Shelley North to the Upper Reservoir Lot, or if going to the Field of Dogs, taking Shelley East then Mansell Street to the Shelley West entrance to the parking at the Field of Dogs.
- The South, East and West: Entering the park from Mansell Street in the east, Persia Street in the west, and Visitation or Sunnysdale avenues from the south. Access to the north end of the promenade would be via Shelley East then Shelley North to the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot, and via Mansell Street to the Shelley West entrance to the parking area at Field of Dogs.

Park visitors arriving by transit may reach the promenade via the SF Muni bus stop on Mansell Street at Shelley West, traveling west on the Mansell promenade (adjacent to Mansell Street) and then traveling north on a new connector pathway to the southern portion of the Shelley Promenade.

In creating the promenade, a designated pedestrian, bike and accessible facility will be added where none existed before. In addition, a series of barriers, bollards and gates will be added at each end of the promenade. Bollards will be spaced wide enough to allow for people to walk, bike or roll a wheelchair through at each end, while also incorporating a bollard that allows emergency vehicle access. One end will have a gate installed to allow RPD vehicles to service the promenade. A barrier will also be placed at the south exit to the Upper Reservoir Parking lot to prevent vehicles from entering the promenade, but with sufficient space on either side for accessibility, walking and biking.

The approximately 45 parking space Upper Reservoir Parking Lot will provide the primary location to access the promenade for people arriving in a vehicle. A new accessible blue zone parking space will be added on Shelley West near the parking lot. At the south end, near Mansell Street at the Field of Dogs, vehicular parking will be restored as parallel parking along the approximate 350-foot distance between the Mansell Street gate and the beginning of the promenade.

Approximately 200 parking spaces of parallel parking will be removed on Shelley West due to the creation of the proposed promenade. Analysis of parking occupancy in this segment for the McLaren Park Vision Plan found that fewer than 20% of the Shelley West spaces were used during weekday and weekend peak periods.

### **Alternatives Considered**

Alternatives considered in the outreach process included variations to where the promenade segments would end and begin at each end. For the north end, alternatives considered included starting the promenade at the north entrance of the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot, and at its south entrance. For the south end, near Mansell Street, an option was considered to maintain the promenade all the way to Mansell Street, however, based on public input, it was decided to keep a short section of the road near Mansell open to vehicles to provide better access to the Field of Dogs.

### **Other Promenade Alignment Alternatives Vetted by Staff**

*John Shelley Drive from Group Picnic to Field of Dogs near Mansell.* This alternative would provide vehicular access to the popular Group Picnic and Redwood Grove children’s play area but would not provide access to the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot, nor provide access to accessible parking at a flat portion of the proposed promenade. In addition, a turnaround on John Shelley Drive North would require most vehicles to make a three-point turn.

*John Shelley Drive from Cambridge Street to Mansell Street at John Shelley West.* This alternative would reduce vehicular access to key destinations including Group Picnic and Redwood Grove children’s play area and Upper Reservoir Parking Lot, while removing accessible vehicle access to these sites. In addition, this option would remove a significant portion of parking in the park, especially important for large events held at Jerry Garcia Amphitheater. On the south end at Mansell, this option would prevent vehicular parking access to the Field of Dogs dog play area, as no parking is available on nearby Mansell Street. Although this alignment was the initial “road closure” in place from April 2020 to September 2021, it cut off vehicular access to the key destinations listed above.

### **No Program**

If no change is made, the roadway would remain as a two-lane, two-way, roadway with parking on each side, and no pedestrian or bicycle facilities on this segment, as it was prior to 2020. But there is very little vehicular traffic on Shelley West, and significant public support for the Promenade.

### **Environmental Review**

The Commission action of recommendation to the Board of Supervisors is not an approval of the Program for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Environmental review, consistent with CEQA, has been conducted on the Shelley Promenade and will be reviewed by and relied upon by the Board of Supervisors if and when it considers the Project. Categorical Exemption 2023-003285ENV under CEQA was received on May 31, 2023, and is attached so that the public, and RPC, have the full information available at this time.

### **Funding Impact**

If the proposed promenade is adopted by the Board of Supervisors, the total cost of implementation for the street restrictions is anticipated not to exceed \$100,000, primarily for paint, signs, and barrier procurement and installation. The new ADA blue zone parking space, path of travel at the north end, and the new path between the Mansell Promenade and the south end of the Shelley Promenade will be constructed as soon as possible and total costs are anticipated not to exceed \$150,000. Determining exact funding sources for these elements is ongoing.

### **Summary**

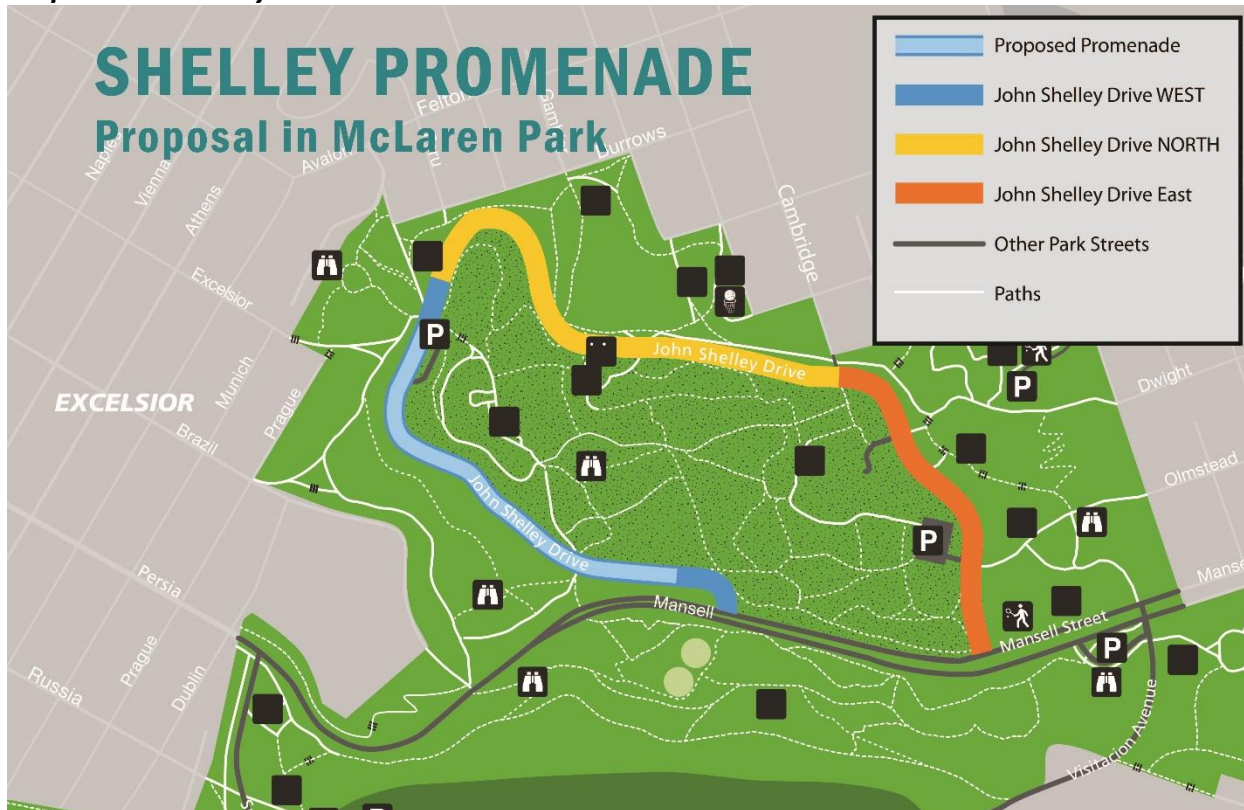
Create the Shelley Promenade as a car-free bicycle and pedestrian promenade by restricting private vehicle access along the western portion of John F. Shelley Drive. The Shelley

Promenade will extend from the north entrance of the Upper Reservoir parking lot to approximately 350 feet northwest of the west intersection of John F. Shelley Drive with Mansell Street, approximately 2,100 feet (0.40 miles) in length. Construction of permanent barriers will occur soon after formal approval action is taken. After further design, an accessible blue zone parking space with an accessible route connecting to the Shelley Promenade will be added on Shelley West near the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot, and a new pathway will be created to provide pedestrian access to the Shelley Promenade from the nearest SF Muni bus stop. The roadway would create a separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of pedestrians, bicyclists, emergency vehicles, and other permitted vehicles<sup>2</sup>. The roadway would become a facility used for a variety of active transportation modes, including—, but not limited to-- bicycles, walkers, runners, scooter riders, skateboarders, and wheelchairs.

### Staff Recommendation

*Staff recommends that the Commission recommend that the Board of Supervisors restrict private vehicles on a 2,100 foot (0.4 mile) long segment in the western portion of John Shelley Drive between the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot and Mansell Street, in order to create a promenade for walking, biking, and other non-vehicular transport and recreation to improve accessibility and enjoyment of John McLaren Park.*

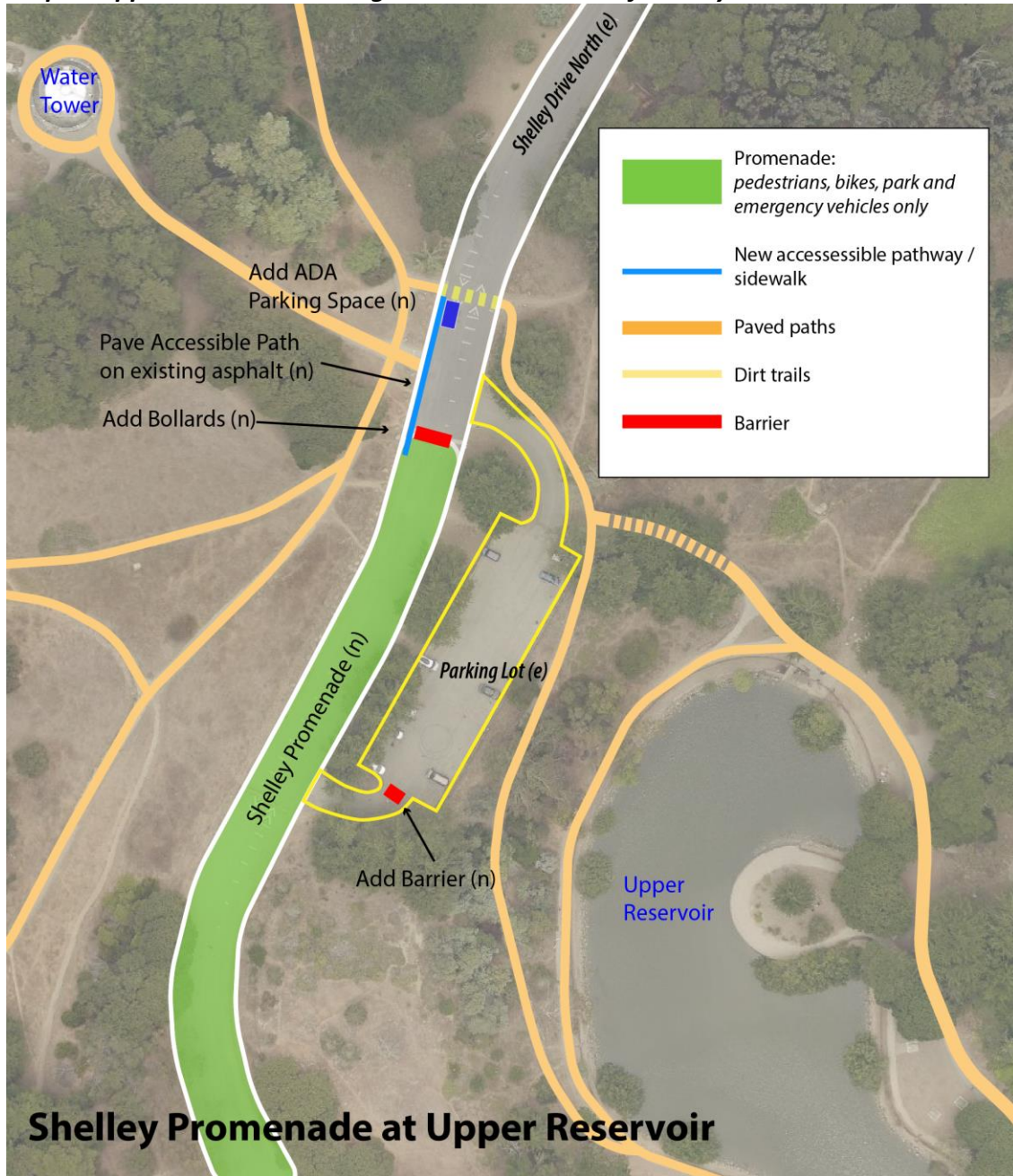
**Map 2: John Shelley Promenade Location and John McLaren Park**



*Examples of permitted vehicles include official City, State, or Federal vehicles being used to perform official City business (e.g., park maintenance, street cleaning, permitted event access, etc, and others as defined by the legislation.*

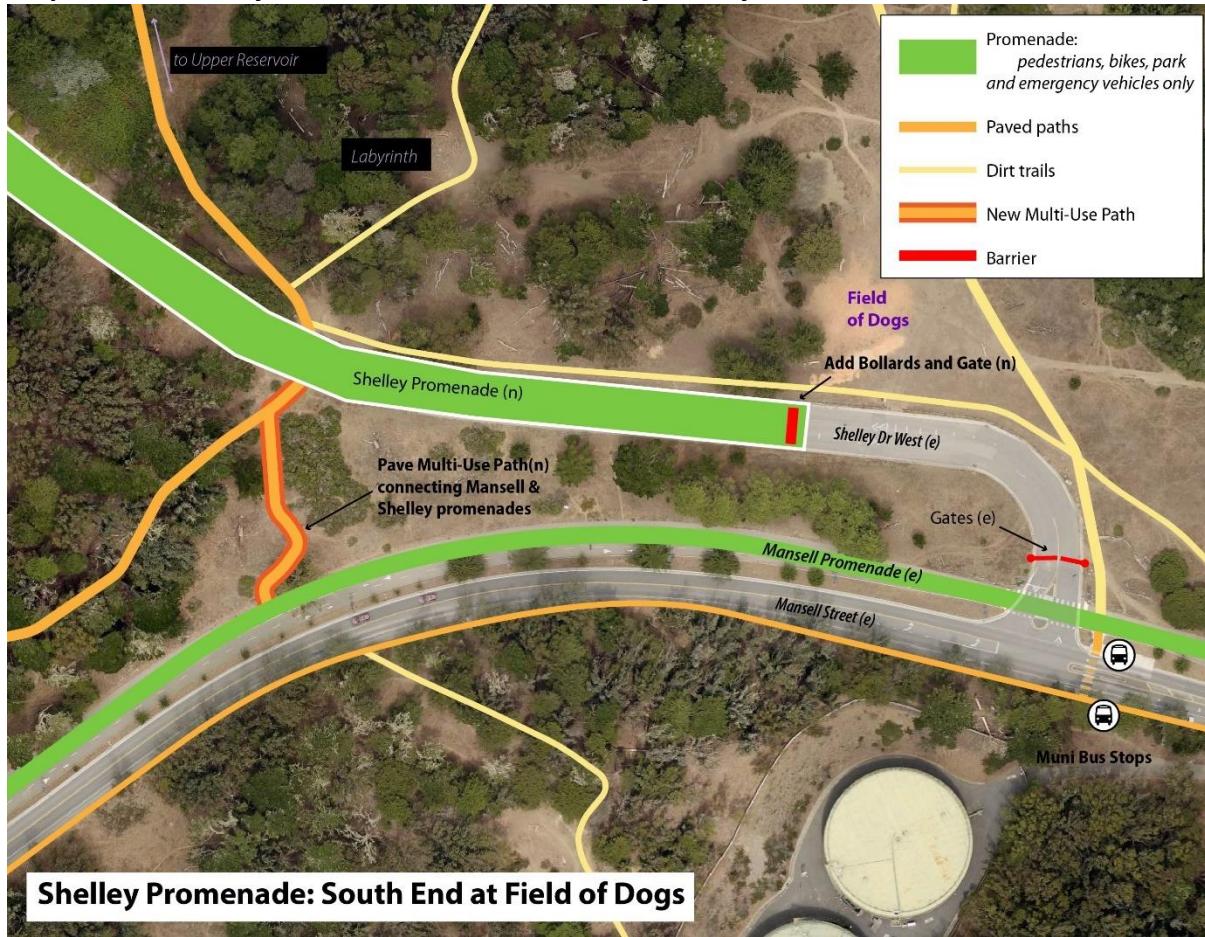


**Map 3: Upper Reservoir Parking Lot and North End of Shelley Promenade**



**Shelley Promenade at Upper Reservoir**

**Map 4: John Shelley Drive West and South End of Shelley Promenade**



**Supported By:**

- Walk San Francisco
- San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
- SF Urban Riders
- KidSafeSF
- More than 10 letters of support from private citizens

**Opposed By:**

One letter of opposition has been received by RPD staff to date

**Attachments**

- Attachment A - CEQA findings (Categorical Exemption)
- Attachment B – Draft Recreation and Park Commission Resolution
- Attachment C – Draft Board of Supervisors Ordinance (*available for Full Commission*)
- Attachment D – SFMTA Memorandum of Shelley Promenade
- Attachment E – Relevant Guiding City Documents

**Attachment A - CEQA findings (Categorical Exemption)**

CEQA Findings to arrive before June 1 and will be added to the item.

**Attachment B – Draft Recreation and Park Commission Resolution**

SAN FRANCISCO  
RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION

RESOLUTION No. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, On April 28, 2020, the Recreation and Park Department temporarily restricted private vehicles from using certain portions of John Shelley Drive in John McLaren Park, as part of the Slow Streets program that the City implemented across San Francisco in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the safety and protection of persons using those streets in John McLaren Park to safely recreate; and

WHEREAS, The temporary restrictions in John McLaren Park enabled thousands to safely use the Park, prompting the Recreation and Park Department to consider, alongside its ongoing efforts to improve accessibility, equity, and mobility in John McLaren Park; and

WHEREAS, The Recreation and Park Department’s mission statement is to provide enriching recreational activities, maintain beautiful parks, and preserve the environment for the well-being of everyone in our diverse community; and

WHEREAS, The Recreation and Park Department’s vision statement is, “Inspiring a more livable city for all, San Francisco’s parks connect us to play, nature, and each other”; and

WHEREAS, The Recreation and Park Department’s Strategic Plan states under Strategy 1: Inspire Place, Objective 1.1: Develop more open space and improve access to existing facilities to address population growth in high-need and emerging neighborhoods, J- expand connections between public open spaces through improved bicycle and pedestrian connections within and between parks; and

WHEREAS, The Recreation and Park Department’s Strategic Plan states under Strategy 1: Inspire Place, Objective 1.2: Strengthen the quality of existing parks and facilities, C- Continue to reimagine public rights-of-way as recreation-focused public open space in Golden Gate Park, Upper Great Highway and John McLaren Park

WHEREAS, the McLaren Park Vision Plan states, under Principle 1: Enhance community access into and through McLaren Park, and Principle 4: Create and build on the diverse play opportunities available in McLaren Park.

WHEREAS, The Shelley Promenade follows extensive public outreach, including through notifications to residents and owners of property abutting the streets that are proposed to be closed to private vehicles and through a publicly available internet website that has information about the closures and instructions for participating in the public engagement process, and the public received the opportunity to comment on the proposed vehicle restrictions at public meetings, and at this hearing; and

WHEREAS, The overall public opinion for the vehicle-restricted streets in John McLaren Park during the COVID-19 pandemic has been positive and supportive to continue these vehicle restrictions in the future; and

WHEREAS, The streets proposed to be restricted are no longer needed for private vehicle traffic, and the restriction would leave a sufficient portion of the streets in the surrounding area for other public uses, including vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic; and

WHEREAS, The proposed restriction on private vehicles would be necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use those streets during the restriction; and

WHEREAS, The Recreation and Park Commission's action at this hearing does not constitute an approval of the Shelley Promenade for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); rather, it is a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Department has reviewed the Shelley Promenade under CEQA to assist the Board of Supervisors' decision whether to approve the Shelley Promenade, and that determination was before the Recreation and Park Commission at this hearing, for informational purposes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Recreation and Park Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors restrict private vehicles on a 2,100 foot (0.4 mile) long segment in the western portion of John Shelley Drive between the Upper Reservoir Parking Lot and Mansell Street, in order to create a promenade for walking, biking, and other non-vehicular transport and recreation to improve accessibility and enjoyment of John McLaren Park; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Recreation and Park Commission supports the Recreation and Park Department making implementing slow streets, creating new bicycle facilities, and making additional policy improvements on Shelley Promenade in order to improve Park accessibility, equity, and mobility; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in the event the Board of Supervisors approves the Shelley Promenade, the Recreation and Park Department is directed to consult with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to ensure that any street closures or traffic restrictions are clearly designated with signage in compliance with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Recreation and Park Commission at its meeting of June 15, 2023.

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Secretary  
*San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission*

**Attachment C – Draft Board of Supervisors Ordinance**

*Draft will be ready for review by Full Commission on June 15*

**Attachment D – SFMTA Memorandum on Shelley Promenade**



## Attachment E –Relevant Guiding City Documents

The proposed Shelley Promenade would be consistent with the following City Plans and Policies, including implementing the Transportation Element of the City’s General Plan:

**Recreation and Park Department Strategic Plan:** *consistent with 4 objectives in 3 strategies:* Inspire Place with clean and fun parks that increase pedestrian and bike safety in McLaren Park; Inspire Play to promote active living and the safety, health and well-being of our youth and seniors.

Inspire Stewardship with increasing the City’s climate resiliency and interconnectivity on City parkland.

**San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency’s Strategic Plan:** *consistent with 2 goals:* Make streets safer for everyone and eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by increasing use of transit, walking, and bicycling.

**Transit First Policy:** *consistent with 6 objectives, especially 3, 5, & 6:* To encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety; enhance pedestrian areas to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and to encourage travel by foot; and promote bicycling by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking.

**San Francisco General Plan – Transportation & Open Space Elements:** *consistent with and implements the Transportation Element Policies 1.6 and 18.5 and the Recreation and Open Space Element Policy 3.4 in the General Plan:* Giving walking and biking priority in parks, on trails and in other recreational areas, and where the enjoyment of slow movement and the preservation of the natural environment would be severely compromised by automobile traffic; Mitigate and reduce the impacts of automobile traffic in and around parks and along shoreline recreation areas; and 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.

**McLaren Park Vision Plan:** consistent with Principle 1: Enhance community access into and through McLaren Park, and Principle 4: Create and build on the diverse play opportunities available in McLaren Park. A key concept of the Vision Plan calls for improved connectivity with safe navigation of roads, trails and paths, that builds on the improvements made to Mansell Street and Philosopher’s Way. The plan called for creating bicycle and pedestrian access ways along roadways, especially where no path or trail is in proximity of existing roadways, like the segment of John Shelley Drive included in this proposal.

**Vision Zero Strategy:** *consistent with the Safe Streets Action* to expand active transportation network for biking and walking, including low-car and car-free streets, Slow Streets, and protected bike lanes.

**Climate Action Plan:** consistent with the Transportation and Land Use Sector, with a goal of achieving 80% of trips in San Francisco to be taken by low-carbon modes such as walking, biking, transit, and shared electric vehicles by 2030.