ocean beach open space
landscape design summary
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Project Lead, Project Management

AECOM
Landscape Architecture, Public Outreach
# Ocean Beach Open Space Design

## Open Space Design Focus Areas

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About this document:
Ocean Beach Open Space Design Focus Areas

This document presents schematic design improvements for two portions of Ocean Beach, which present very different conditions and opportunities. The North Ocean Beach focus area comprises the parking lots and promenade between Lincoln Avenue and Balboa Streets. The South Ocean Beach focus area comprises the roadway, parking lots, and beach access points South of Sloat Boulevard.

The designs presented here develop concepts recommended in the Ocean Beach Master Plan (2012) which was developed through a robust interagency and public process. They are designed to be integrated into the Master Plan implementation efforts being pursued by multiple agencies.
south ocean beach
South Ocean Beach is an environment in flux, with a variety of interacting constraints and exposure to intense wave energy. South of Sloat Boulevard, coastal erosion threatens the Great Highway, beach parking lots, and – most significantly – critical wastewater infrastructure. This section presents design for an adaptive landscape that can improve public access as conditions change over time.
Open Space Relationships

Legend

- **Open Space Resource**
- **Ocean Beach / Pacific Ocean**
- **Study Area**
- **Lower Great Highway Path / California Coastal Trail**
- **Lake Merced Trail / Bay Area Ridge Trail**
South Ocean Beach Overview

South of Sloat Boulevard, Ocean Beach reflects the history of human intervention, coastal erosion, and ad hoc response. In contrast to the wide sandy beach at the north end, this area has a narrow beach, backed by a combination of natural sandstone bluffs, exposed construction fill, and engineered coastal protections. The Great Highway and adjacent parking lots were extended seaward during the construction of the wastewater infrastructure in the 1980s and 90s, which included the Oceanside Water Pollution Control Plant, the Westside Pump Station, and the Lake Merced Tunnel.

This, among other factors have resulted in a narrow beach and limited public access. In response to severe erosion, particularly during El Nino winters, the city placed boulder revetments to protect coastal infrastructure, further degrading beach conditions and resulting in regulatory compliance issues. The Ocean Beach Master Plan process brought affected agencies and the public together to propose a way forward, which will allow the removal of the revetments. The approach includes closure of the Great Highway south of Sloat, sensitively designed structural protections for threatened infrastructure, and a coastal trail connecting Fort Funston, Lake Merced, the San Francisco Zoo, Ocean Beach, and Golden Gate Park.
View 1
Fort Funston | 2014 by AECOM

View 2
Erosion - Reach 1 (2010 Emergency Bluff Toe Protection) | 2013 ESA/PWA

View 3
Erosion - Reach 2 | 2013 ESA/PWA

View 4
Erosion - Rubble Reach | 2013 ESA/PWA
Existing Conditions

Typical conditions along the Great Highway south of Sloat Boulevard reflect the installation of the roadway and parking lots atop construction fill and the Lake Merced sewer tunnel, and the subsequent coastal erosion and city response. With erosion undercutting the paved areas and threatening the tunnel, concrete barriers have been used to narrow portions of the roadway, and the beach is narrow, backed by exposed fill and boulder revetments.

Existing Conditions

1. Exposed bluff top at former federal parking lots
2. Guardrail between North and South lanes
3. Temporary k-rail barrier installed in response to ongoing erosion issues
4. Emergency quarry stone revetment placed at foot of bluff in response to erosion
5. Pacific Ocean
6. Lake Merced Tunnel, located roughly at same elevation as Ocean Beach.
Jurisdiction and Infrastructure

A basic challenge of managing changes at Ocean Beach is the complex, overlapping jurisdictions. The beach and parking lots, along with the Ft Funston bluff tops are Federal property, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Inland, the city property is generally owned by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (Rec-Park). The SF Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) owns and operates the wastewater infrastructure, including the Lake Merced Tunnel under the Great Highway. The roadway is managed and maintained by SF Public Works, and the SF Zoo sits on property leased from Rec-Park. In addition, Public Works and SFPUC have been issued permits by GGNRA to conduct coastal management (armoring, sand, and sandbag placement) on its property, and much of the area lies in the Coastal Zone, subject to permitting by the California Coastal Commission.

Legend
Infrastructure

- Transport box
- Sewer outfall
- Lake Merced Tunnel
- Pump station

Jurisdiction

- Federal land
- City land
- City/Federal boundary
- Managed by Public Works
- Leased by San Francisco Zoo
Existing Conditions Open Space Usage

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Existing Conditions Pedestrian and Vehicular Access

Legend

- Vehicular access
- Vehicular parking lot access
- Pedestrian access
Existing Conditions Site Analysis

Legend

- Critical erosion area
- Top of bluff 2014
- Existing k-rail
- Steep topography
- Existing beach access
- Bank swallow nesting
South Ocean Beach is subject to chronic coastal erosion, which becomes more acute during stormy El Nino winters, such as those of 1996-7, 2009-10, and 2015-16. Coastal Storms, compounded by the seasonally lower beach elevation, have undermined the bluffs and roadbed, resulting in exposed fill along the beach, and recession of the sandstone bluffs nearer to Fort Funston. In two locations, boulder revetments have been placed on the beach, limiting access and impeding coastal processes.
Building on the Ocean Beach Master Plan: Key Move 1

The designs presented here are intended to guide incremental implementation of the Ocean Beach Master Plan vision, and to be coordinated with other efforts, including the Master Plan’s coastal management strategy and roadway and intersection improvements.

These proposals are based on the Ocean Beach Master Plan’s “Key Moves” 1 and 2, which recommend the phased closure of the Great Highway south of Sloat Boulevard, re-routing of north-south traffic behind the Zoo via Sloat and Skyline Boulevards, and introducing integrated coastal management, environmental restoration, and open space access improvements. These actions are central to the Ocean Beach Master plan vision, and will result in a spectacular coastal open space amenity as developed in this document.
Key Move 1:
Reroute the Great Highway behind the zoo via Sloat and Skyline Boulevards.

1. Reconfigure and signalize Sloat–Great Highway and Sloat–Skyline intersections.
2. Maintain one-lane driveway from Skyline to treatment plant for trucks.
3. Reconfigure Sloat with two lanes each way, angle parking along zoo boundary, integrated stormwater management, bikeway and coastal access amenities.
4. Extend Muni L Taraval south across Sloat, with terminus at zoo entrance.
5. Introduce coastal trail to Fort Funston and Lake Merced, including a crosswalk at Skyline.
6. Integrate with California Coastal Trail, linking Lake Merced all the way to Marin County.
7. Replace beach/zoo parking along Armory Road and at Skyline trailhead.
8. Reopen Armory Road from Zoo Road to zoo parking lot to provide zoo access.
Emergency quarry stone revetment

Informal parking in median and bluff top

North parking lots
phased approach

South Ocean Beach is imagined as an “adaptive landscape”, which takes shape over several phases as coastal erosion – and efforts to manage it – proceeds. This approach is important in the context of uncertainties about the pace of erosion, sea level rise, and related, interdependent implementation projects.
Phase 1

Installation of sub-surface protection

Revetments & Rubble Removed

Dynamic Coastal Protection

Restoration of coastline
Phase 0

This phase represents thinking about what could be improved at South Ocean beach immediately, without changing the roadway footprint. It includes the reorganization of concrete barriers and parking areas, creation of a safe pedestrian route along the shore, and informational signage. Because of timelines and jurisdictional constraints, many of these actions appear unlikely to proceed, but are included here as a record of the design team’s thinking and a source of ideas should conditions shift.

Phase 0 Axon

1. Exposed bluff top at former federal parking lots
2. Steel barrier between North and South lanes
3. Temporary k-rail barrier re-arranged to form temporary parking area adjacent to exposed bluff top
4. Temporary parking area in closed roadway.
5. Emergency quarry stone revetment placed at foot of bluff in response to erosion
6. Pacific Ocean
7. Lake Merced Tunnel, located roughly at same elevation as Ocean Beach.
Phase 0 Plan Diagram

- Add temporary parking at coastal access point and remove unnecessary asphalt.
- Re-structure existing parking lot to improve beach entrance and remove unnecessary asphalt.
phase 1
Phase 1: Great Highway Narrowed and Multi-use Path

This phase is enabled by the narrowing of the Great Highway to two lanes (one each way) south of Sloat Boulevard as part of the city of San Francisco’s recovery from the 2010 erosion events. It includes:

- multi-use bicycle/pedestrian path in the vacated southbound lanes,
- reconfiguration of the Great Highway/Skyline Boulevard intersection for safe crossing
- replacement coastal access parking away from coastal hazards
- depaving and revegetation along bluffs
- signage and site fixtures at coastal access points.
- temporary public art and interpretive materials

Several related projects from different agencies need to be coordinated to achieve these improvements, but they will result in a significantly improved condition for the public, including safe connections to Fort Funston and Lake Merced.
Phase 1 Plan Diagram

- access to Fort Funston and Lake Merced
- new amenities to improve experience
- remove unnecessary asphalt and revegetate bluff
- reduce roadway and move landward
- new permanent coastal parking
- move existing coastal parking landward onto city property
- new multi-modal coastal trail
- reduce parking lot size, remove restroom and muni turnaround as erosion occurs
Phase 1 Overview

The designs presented here are intended to better connect Ocean Beach to Golden Gate Park and other open space amenities through several related interventions.

1. Multi-modal coastal trail
2. Temporary coastal parking in abandoned South-bound lanes
3. Long term coastal parking removed from coastal hazards
4. De-paving and revegetation along bluffs tops
5. Re-configuration of the Great Highway/Skyline Boulevard intersection for safe crossing
6. Existing coastal parking at end of Sloat Boulevard.
Moveable Site Furnishings for an Adaptive Landscape

“K-rail” or concrete barriers are found throughout the landscape at Ocean Beach south of Sloat Boulevard. This proposal uses the barriers - normally a mundane solution to temporary channel traffic - as a framework for site furnishings in this interim open space.

Because K-rail is rugged, modular, and moveable, it presents a useful foundation for furnishings, signage, and art in an adaptive landscape - one that is designed to change with the evolving coastline over time.
phase 1 concept renderings
View 1: Coastal Access from Parking Area

- Access to bluff top and beach
- Sand management and re-vegetation
- Seating provides shelter from wind and airborne sand
- Temporary art & signage
- Bike parking
- Vehicle parking

SPUR | AECOM
View 2: Multi-use Path at Coastal Parking

- Brushwood sand fencing
- Sand accumulates behind sand fencing
- Multi-use coastal trail
- Beach access framed by relocated k-rail
- Variety of seating options and clustered near coastal parking
- Narrowed Great Highway
- Planting area buffers parking lot from coastal trail
View 3: Overview of Coastal Parking Area

- Native plant revegetation
- Coastal access point
- Beach nourishment and sand ladder for improved access
- Brushwood sand fencing placed along exposed bluff
- New Coastal Parking
- Great Highway
Sloat and Skyline Phase 1 Sub-projects

**Existing Conditions**
The current condition at Sloat and Skyline has no safe pedestrian crossings, and the unusual condition of an un-regulated northbound lane that does not stop at all.

**Project 1.1 Road narrowing**
The initial narrowing of the Great Highway as described in Phase 1 will not immediately affect the intersection at Sloat and Skyline - the intersection will remain as is for a brief period of time.

**Project 1.2 Intersection Signalization**
After the completion of the Great Highway narrowing, the intersection at Sloat and Skyline will receive signalization or stop signs. This allows intersection improvements to occur in Project 1.3.

**Project 1.3 Multi-use trail**
A multi-use trail will use the vacated southbound lanes to connect from Sloat Boulevard to the Lake Merced trail.

**Project 1.4 Ft. Funston trail connection**
In addition to providing parking for Ocean Beach, new trail access will be provided to Fort Funston as well, as part of an independent project by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
View 4: Long Term Coastal Parking

- Fort Funston trails
- Parking lot exit to Skyline Blvd.
- Multi-use coastal trail and access to Fort Funston
- Permanent coastal parking location
- New crosswalk, signalized intersection, and access to Lake Merced
- Oceanside Treatment Plant (SFPUC)
View 5: Intersection of Sloat and Skyline Before
View 5: Intersection of Sloat and Skyline After

Great Highway and multi-use coastal trail to Ocean Beach

New crosswalk, signalized intersection, and access to Lake Merced

Northbound traffic on Skyline Blvd.
phase 2
Phase 2

This phase is to be coordinated with the full implementation of the Ocean Beach Master Plan vision, including the closure of the Great Highway south of Sloat Boulevard, the installation of low-profile structures to protect the Lake Merced Tunnel, and the removal of existing boulder revetments. This phase includes:

- A permanent coastal bicycle-pedestrian trail connecting to Fort Funston and Lake Merced
- Coastal Access and Ft Funston parking located away from coastal hazards
- Depaving and re-vegetation of blufftop areas
- Truck access to the Oceanside Treatment Plant and pump station designed for minimal impact on open space

Phase 2 Typical Condition
Phase 2 Coastal Trail Options

In Phase 2, the coastal trail which connects South Ocean Beach with Fort Funston and Lake Merced will replace the Great Highway between Sloat and Skyline Boulevards. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission will need to maintain occasional truck access to their facilities along the coast; the Oceanside Treatment Plant and the Westside Pump Station near the current intersection of Sloat and Skyline. These graphics show potential arrangements between the minimal vehicle traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Wherever possible, truck access will use existing parallel access roads and driveways rather than the Great Highway alignment to minimize disruption of the public open space.

As the project moves forward, these options will be studied in more detail to determine the safest arrangement for all visitors to Ocean Beach.
Coastal Trail Option 2

Coastal Trail Option 3
Phase 2 Overview

The designs presented here are show a long term vision of the future of South Ocean Beach. This plan provides better and safer beach access, and connects the key open space resources in the area, while protecting our vital pieces of infrastructure from Sea Level Rise.

1. Multi-modal coastal trail
2. Long term coastal parking removed from coastal hazards
3. Re-configuration of the Great Highway/Skyline Boulevard intersection for safe crossing
4. Access to SFPUC Westside Treatment Plant
5. Revegetated Dune / Back Beach
6. SFPUC Pump Station
Conceptual Rendering of Coastal Trail and Restored Landscape

- Multi-use Coastal Trail
- Access to Fort Funston
- Improved beach access
- Native coastal Planting
- Clean beach
north ocean beach
Ocean Beach north of Lincoln Boulevard is the most familiar, best-known, and busiest section of the beach. It is the capstone for Golden Gate Park, and San Francisco’s western waterfront. The historic O’Shaughnessy seawall, lined with a beachfront promenade situates this stretch of beach into a long San Francisco tradition, especially during the precious few hot days in this famously cool city.
North Reach Overview

North Ocean Beach offers a wide, sandy, urban sea strand, and is host to more visitors than any other section. Beginning just north of Lincoln it is backed by the O’Shaughnessy seawall and promenade, and a series of parking lots which serve the beach and host several major events. Golden Gate Park is across the Great Highway between Lincoln and Fulton. North of Balboa, steep cliffs emerge topped by the popular Cliff House with the Sutro Baths ruins and Land's End beyond. A multi-use path extends south from Lincoln, but is not fully connected to the promenade.
View 1  O’Shaughnessy Parking Lot | 2014 by AECOM

View 2  Historic Promenade at O’Shaughnessy Parking Lot | 2014 AECOM

View 3  North End of O’Shaughnessy Parking Lot at Beach Entrance | 2014 AECOM

View 4  Historic Planters and Promenade | 2014 AECOM
ocean beach
open space design
February 2017

Cliff House
Balboa Parking Lot
Seal Rocks
Widening beach
Existing Condition

Although several iconic recreational spaces converge at north Ocean Beach, they are not as well-connected as they should be, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. While the parking lots facilitate access for motorists and hosts events, they also serve to separate the beach from Golden Gate Park, presenting large undefined swaths of asphalt instead of the grand sense of welcome the space deserves, especially at the terminus of JFK Drive. This separation also compromises the sense of safety, as visitors must repeatedly cross auto access routes. At Lincoln, the promenade ends unceremoniously in the sand, creating a gap that prevents cyclists, wheelchair and stroller users, and those with limited mobility from continuing south on the multi-use path in the Great Highway median. Finally, this busy open space lacks basic amenities, including restrooms, food, and adequate seating and bicycle parking, inconveniencing users and burdening the services at the nearby Beach Chalet.
Jurisdiction and Infrastructure

At North Ocean Beach, the beach, O’Shaughnessy seawall, promenade, and adjacent planting areas are all part of the GGNRA, while the parking lots and Great Highway are city property, owned by the SF Recreation and Parks Department. The SFPUC owns and operates the Westside Transport under the Great Highway and the combined sewer outfall visible on the beach south of Lincoln Way. All of these fall within the Coastal Zone and are thus subject to California Coastal Commission approval or Federal consistency processes.

Legend

Infrastructure

- Transport box
- Sewer outfall

Jurisdiction

- Federal land
- City land
- City/Federal boundary
- Managed by Public Works
Existing Conditions Open Space Usage

Legend

- **67%** 228,663 SF | Parking area
- **20%** 769,598 SF | Promenade
- **13%** 44,782 SF | Planters
Existing Conditions Pedestrian and Vehicular Access

Legend

- Vehicular access
- Vehicular parking lot access
- Pedestrian access
Building on the Ocean Beach Master Plan: Key Move 5

The improvements presented here are intended to implement Ocean Beach Master Plan “Key Move 5: Better Connection Between Golden Gate Park and the Beach”. Some progress has already been made here through the installation of vegetated medians in the Great Highway north of Lincoln Way in 2013. This has created clarity in vehicular movements, shortened pedestrian crossings with median refuges, and introduced some visual respite from the excessive paving. These recommendations extend those improvements through the parking lots, expanding and clarifying pedestrian spaces and providing a welcoming sense of arrival.
Key Move 5:
Create a better connection between Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach.

5.1 Tighten and renovate parking lot; add permeable paving; preserve flexible use and event capacity.
5.2 Maintain row of “watching the water” parking spots.
5.3 Modify parking entrances and improve pedestrian crossings at JFK and Beach Chalet.
5.4 Use landscape features to mark the oceanfront termination of Lincoln and Fulton.
5.5 Add a two-way, physically separated bikeway on the east side of the Great Highway north of Fulton, integrated with existing multiuse trail.
5.6 Add abundant bike parking.
5.7 Develop a joint city-federal parking management plan; consider some fee parking on peak days.
5.8 Introduce landscape site elements and seating appropriate to rugged conditions; introduce and restore climate-appropriate/native landscape planting.
Existing Framework

Legend

- **Major Access to Ocean Beach**
- **Ocean Beach Promenade**
- **Historic Planters**
- **Access barrier - Great Highway**
- **Access barrier - Parking Lots**
- **Gateway**
Proposed Improvements: North Ocean Beach

The designs presented here are intended to better connect Ocean Beach to Golden Gate Park and other open space amenities through several related interventions.

1. Ocean Beach Plaza
2. Lincoln Connection
3. Efficient and safe parking lots
4. Modular timber seating and access features
5. Landscaped buffer between parking lots and Great Highway
6. Native dune revegetation
Improving Connections to North Ocean Beach

- Repaving and restriping of the parking lots, using permeable pavement for portions of the lot, but maintaining conventional paving that can accommodate heavy trucks for event purposes as needed. The paving treatments would be visually distinct to further break down the visual monotony of the paved areas.

- Clearly marked pedestrian routes through the parking lots, aligned with crosswalks, bus stops, and the arrival plaza.

- Properly specified and installed climate-appropriate and native plantings in the planting areas, integrated with modular timber furnishings, and designed to prevent trampling.

1. Ocean Beach wide condition
2. Historic O’Shaughnessy sea wall
3. Replace asphalt with varied materials to define and breakdown large parking area. Use permeable materials where feasible
4. Modular seating, signage, and other elements at key locations
5. Through efficient parking layout, add planting buffer between parking area and Great Highway
6. Better and more visible signage
7. Improve pedestrian crossings through parking areas
8. Add shelter and seating to transit stations
9. Use materials to highlight entry into Golden Gate Park
Material and Character Images

Native Planting at Lands End

Native dune restoration

“Sand-crete” permeable pavers in parking stall

Decorative permeable asphalt

Median Planting - Great Highway

Colored asphalt

Native coastal planting

Modular timber seating

GGNRA welcome sign at Ocean Beach

Raised pedestrian crossing in parking lot
Ocean Beach Plaza

An arrival plaza adjacent to the equestrian ramp, created by relocating the southbound parking lot entrance at JFK drive. The plaza would accommodate seating, signage, bike parking, and rugged, compact restrooms such as the “Portland loo.” It would also incorporate space for food trucks that would be available during busy days.
View 1: Proposed Ocean Beach Plaza

- Durable timber seating
- "Portland Loo" style restrooms
- Additional bike parking
- Unique beach welcome paving
- Exercise equipment
- Permeable unit pavers
- Colored asphalt
- Space for temporary concessions
View 2: Overview of Ocean Beach Plaza

- Wayfinding signage at beach entries
- "Portland Loo" style restrooms
- Location for welcome signage
- Bike parking or bike share station
- Historic promenade unchanged
- Shortened pedestrian crossing from Golden Gate Park
View 3: Seating and Flexible Use

- Unique beach welcome paving
- Flexible use space
- Informative signage
- Multiple seating types
Modular Furnishings in Planter Zone

Timber furnishings designed to be set in the existing planted areas providing a range of amenities for seating, lounging, bike parking and additional circulation between the parking lots and promenade. These would be deployed according to context, with more furnishings in areas of greater circulation, and more planting elsewhere.
Lincoln Connection

An extension of the paved promenade beyond its current southern terminus to the crosswalk south of Lincoln Way, connecting the promenade to the existing median multi-use path. A low concrete wall would help keep sand off the promenade and allow efficient mechanical sand removal.

Re-vegetation of the dunes at the Lincoln beach access point with native species would occur, and installation of sand fencing to limit windblown sand onto the promenade and roadway.
View 1: Proposed Lincoln Entrance

- Proposed Lincoln Entrance
- Additional wall added for sand management
- Sand fencing
- Dominant wind direction
- Lincoln entrance to Ocean Beach
- GGNRA welcome signage
- Ocean Beach promenade extended to meet intersection of Lincoln and Great Highway
View 1: Pedestrian Crossing at Lincoln and Great Highway

- GGNRA welcome signage
- Safe and accessible paving
- Informal path continues
- Placement of sand fencing prevents wind-blown sand from encroaching on roadway
- Restored native dunes
View 2: Overview of Lincoln Entrance

- Temporary boardwalk added for stability
- Wall to prevent sand movement onto roadway, height varies as appropriate
- Clear access to Ocean beach promenade
- Access to Lower Great Highway path