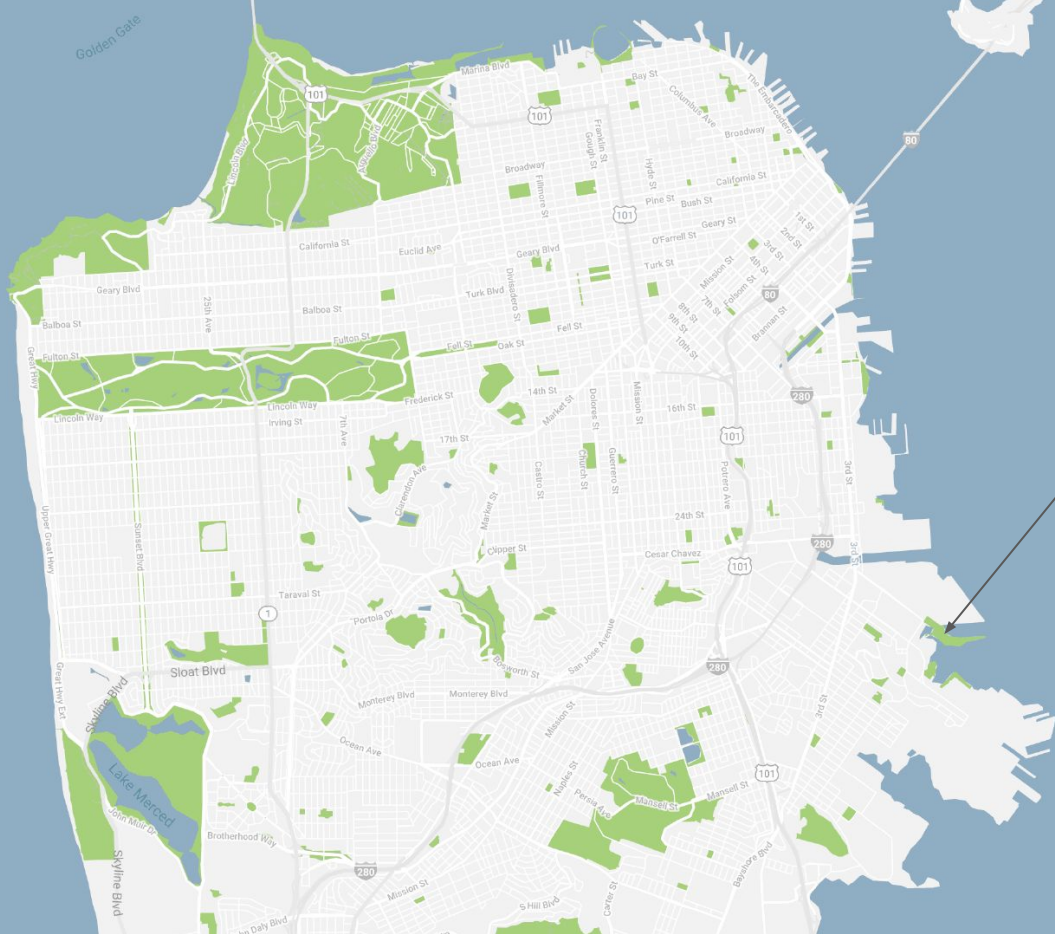


# Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park

Final Design, August 12, 2021





Heron's Head Park



- +The NEA will create a safe and welcoming space for child-led unstructured play and discovery in nature as well as team building challenges to complement existing EcoCenter programs.
- +Part of the India Basin project that is transforming industrial spaces and underperforming existing parks into a unified network of inspirational open spaces.
- +The proposed approx 12,000 sq.ft site is between the EcoCenter and the parking area.



## Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Site Overview



- +EcoCenter staff and Greenager Program youth will oversee programming and maintenance
- +The majority of the site area is currently enclosed by a fence, unprogrammed, and inaccessible to the public. As part of the project, the fencing will be removed.
- +The project will bring in new native plants to restore some of the damaged areas from the July 2020 fire.

# What's Important Today



## Wildlife and Habitat

Heron's Head Park is one of the few wetlands on San Francisco's shoreline, and is an example of restoration success attracting more than 100 bird species a year.



## Youth and Community

The Port of SF and the SF Recreation and Parks Department have teamed up to offer hands-on education programs for youth and public participation opportunities for visitors of all ages.



## The Greenager Program

Heron's Head Park is also home to the Greenagers, youth stewards and leaders that play an important role in the community by improving the city's green spaces and raising awareness on local issues.



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park |

# Final Design 2021



← Parking Lot

Play Zone

Winding permeable and accessible pathway to overlook and gathering area

Playful shortcuts along the pathway allow for multiple ways to circulate

Repurposed logs serve as seating for an outdoor classroom and places to perch for wildlife observation

Native plants: plants selected for play for play value, smells, colors and texture

Create-with-Nature

Lighting

EcoCenter

Heron's Head Nature Exploration Area was designed and inspired by [gathering input from local youth and community members](#). This natural play concept allows for active play, passive recreation, gathering with friends and family, and creates pockets of exploration to stimulate the senses and inspire imagination.

Design by:  
**bienstock**  
 natural playgrounds



# Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Plan



Native plants concentrated around the lookout selected for play value, smells, colors and texture including:

- +San Francisco gumplant
- +Sticky monkeyflower
- +Douglas iris
- +Hummingbird sage
- +Yarrow
- +Coffeeberry
- +California mugwort
- +Soft rush
- +Yerba buena
- +California aster
- +Coast buckwheat

Large multi-stem native shrubs including:

- +Pacifica Wax myrtle
- +Ceanothus - Ray Hartman
- +Coyote Brush







Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Bird's Eye View 2

# 1 | PLAY

Boulders and locally sourced trees invite kids to jump, climb, and balance.



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Play



## 2 | EXPLORE

A combination of fixed natural elements and loose parts provide ever-changing challenges shaped and designed by kids.



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Play

### 3 | CREATE

Wacky posts of different sizes line the create-with-nature zone and provide opportunities to string hammocks or slack lines, or create nature forts.



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Create-with-Nature



## 4 | GATHER

The path winds to the highest point of the site where logs form a circular gathering space to serve as an outdoor classroom and community gathering area. Surrounded by native vegetation, this is a great spot for quiet contemplation, for birdwatching, and for taking in views.



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Gather & Learn



Shortcuts created with boulders and logs offer alternate routes or short cuts to and from the overlook.



## Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Shortcuts & Discovery



Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Shortcuts & Discovery



# MATERIALS

Locally sourced and repurposed for nature play



Boulder donated by CEMEX from Mt. Diablo quarry

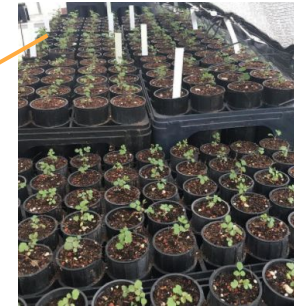


Photo by L.E.J.

Hyper-local Native plants grown by [Literacy for Environmental Justice](#) (LEJ). Their nursery employs local teens and engages the community in the process of growing plants, restoring local habitats, and preserving the unique biodiversity of San Francisco.



Tree repurposed from Lake Merced tree removal project by [Arborist Now](#)



Downed park trees provided by the SF Recreation and Parks Department Forestry team with support from the Heavy Equipment Operations team.



Welcome tunnel sourced locally and prepared for play by [Arbor Upcycle](#) / Arborist Now.

The shape and size of the tunnel would be very uncomfortable for an adult to lie in but great for kids to pass through and explore.

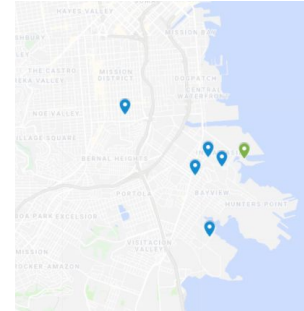
# Design Process

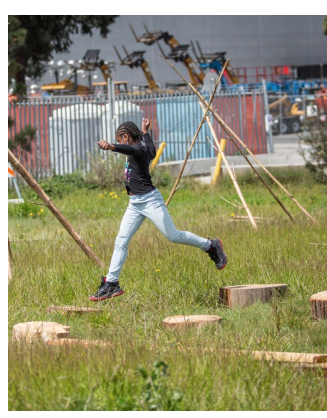


To help design our new Nature Exploration Area, we reached out to some play experts for ideas and inspiration:

- 4/12 | Design Jam @ Joe Lee Rec Center
- 4/13 | Design Jam @ Garfield Center | [video](#)
- 4/14 | Design Jam @ Hunter's View | [video](#)
- 4/24 | Design Jam @ Heron's Head Park
- 5/12 | Design Jam @ Bayview YMCA

[Learn more and see photos here>>](#)





# Nature Exploration Area @ Heron's Head Park | Community Design Jam

## Timeline:

- April: Community Design
- Late May: Review Concept Design
- August: Design Finalized
- September: Construction (3-4 weeks)
- TBD: Community event to celebrate the new Nature Exploration Area

**More info:** [www.sfchildrennature.org/heronshead](http://www.sfchildrennature.org/heronshead)

**Questions:** [maria.durana@sfgov.org](mailto:maria.durana@sfgov.org)



This kid-inspired Nature Exploration Area was made possible through the funding and volunteer power of the Kaiser Foundation, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, the Port of San Francisco, KABOOM!, and this community.



With support from:

