Appendix C: PortWalk Design Criteria

The PortWalk Design Criteria give guidance for improvements within the Port’s public access and open space system to ensure a certain standard of design consistency while preserving opportunities for creativity. The Design Criteria address the design and guide the selection for the following types of architectural components commonly found in the Port’s waterfront open spaces:

- Benches
- Trash & Recycling Containers
- Railings and Bullrail Edges
- Paving
- Planting
- Pier Apron Lighting
- Interpretive Signage

This appendix contains examples of the above components and includes the Design Criteria that should be considered when selecting furnishings and finishes. Neither the Design Criteria or the examples are intended to be prescriptive. Instead, the Criteria provide guidance for selecting improvements within open space areas that meet the use, character, durability and maintenance needs of the waterfront.

New waterfront development projects may incorporate architectural improvements shown in the Design Criteria or may select other fixtures and improvements if they are determined by the Port to meet the described Design Criteria for the particular component. This appendix may be updated from time to time as necessary without formal amendments to the Waterfront Land Use Plan or the Waterfront Design & Access Element.
Design Criteria

Benches

Benches let us know we are invited into a public area and provide us with a comfortable resting place. When selecting benches consider the criteria stated below. Benches should also include end and mid-rails at some locations for accessibility. Consider the following criteria for the selection of benches:

• Simple and Minimalist Form;
• Timeless Design;
• Comfortable;
• Durable and Maintainable Materials;
• Appropriate Scale for the Waterfront;

The following are examples of benches that could be appropriate along the waterfront.

**Cast Iron Benches With Wood Slats.**
Timeless design, comfortable, durable and easy to maintain.

**Concrete Bench With Wood Slats.**
Comfortable, durable, and maintainable.

**Metal Framed Bench With Recycled Plastic Slats.**
Simple, minimalist, comfortable, durable, and easy to maintain.

**Metal benches.** Simple forms, low maintenance, and have some transparency.
Design Criteria

Trash & Recycling Containers

Trash and recycling containers serve an important function in every open space. Their design should be noticeable without attracting unnecessary attention. Consider the following criteria for the selection of trash and recycling containers:

- “Background” Character;
- Simple or Minimalist Form;
- Functional;
  - Easy to Service;
  - Limit Blowing Debris;
  - Not Inviting to Birds;
- Durable and maintainable materials;
- Appropriate scale for the waterfront;

Recycling containers should be provided in some locations to accommodate the level of activity for the open space. Recycling containers can be a minor addition to a trash container in low intensity areas or may need to be separate containers for sorting of materials in higher use areas.

Concrete City Standard Trash Containers. Along the Embarcadero Promenade these containers are painted grey to be compatible with other Embarcadero streetscape improvements.

Trash receptacles maintained by the Port should be a standard stock item that is durable and easy to service.

Metal Trash Receptacles.
Simple form, durable, and have a cover to limit wind blown debris and birds.

Recycling Containers. In larger or high use areas provide individual recycling containers that are designed similarly to the trash receptacles.
Design Criteria

Railings

Railings and bullrails are both used along edges of pier aprons and marginal wharves. See page 33 for typical edge treatment layouts. Railings for pier and seawall locations are discussed separately.

Bullrails are often a preferred edge treatment because of their minimal view blockage, ability to moor boats at them, and maintaining the waterfront character. Railings may be located in public access areas along non-maritime edges, or if determined necessary by the adjacent uses.

Consider the following criteria when selecting or designing railings:
• Top rail should be inviting to lean on;
• Railings should not be easily climbable (no climbable horizontal bars or cables);
• Create a rhythm established by a regular spacing of posts;
• Consider including a mid-rail slightly below the handrail for added interest;
• Consider using posts that break the line of the handrail to minimize the appearance of alignment imperfections;
• Maximize transparency;
• Durable and maintainable materials;
• Appropriate scale for the waterfront.

Sample sections of railings constructed on the project site may be required for design review on larger projects. The following is a sample of railing types that meet these criteria:

Metal Post/Panel Railing With Wood Top Rail. Top rail is inviting to lean on, it is not easy to climb, a rhythm is established by the posts and panels, and it appears transparent and durable.

Metal Railing With Kinked-Wire Panels. The railing has a rhythm of posts and panels, it is transparent, durable and appropriately scaled for the waterfront. Top rail could be more inviting to lean on.

Metal Railing With Pickets. Top rail is inviting to lean on, there is a rhythm of posts and pickets, it is transparent, durable, and appropriately scaled for the waterfront.

Pier 7 Railing. Top rail is inviting to lean on, it is not easily climbable, a rhythm is established through regularly spaced posts, ornamentation and midrail create interest, transparency is high, and the materials are durable and maintainable.
Design Criteria

**Railings**

**Seawall Railings**
A railing located along a seawall marks the edge of the city – where land meets water. Because of the location on the edge of land, rather than on a pier over the water, a seawall railing should be a heavier design and use materials appropriate to its location on solid ground. Heavy bullrails, as described on the previous page may also be appropriate.

The following is a sample of railing types appropriate for a seawall location. Also consider the criteria listed for “Railings” when selecting or designing seawall railings.

**Embarcadero Pre-cast Concrete Railing.** Heavier design reflects its location on the seawall. The top rail is inviting to lean on, there is a rhythm of regularly spaced posts and pickets, and it is durable and easy to maintain.

Seawall edge, Riverfront Park, Chicago

Seawall edge, Atlantic Avenue, Boston
Design Criteria

**Railings** *(Not appropriate)*

Many rails are not appropriate for the waterfront due to lack of durability, being easy to climb, or not inviting to lean on. The following is a sample of railing types that should **NOT** be used along the waterfront.

**Metal Railing with Horizontal Pickets.** The top rail is not inviting to lean on, it is easy to climb, and there is no difference between the top rail, posts and the pickets.

**Horizontal Cable Railing.** The cables are easy to climb and are prone to stretching and breaking in high-public use areas.

**Chain Link Fence with Wood Top Rail.** Top rail does not appear strong enough or comfortable to lean on, it is not scaled appropriately for the waterfront and it is not of durable materials. Chain link may be used in certain locations on the waterfront if the described Design Criteria for railings is met.

**Metal Picket Railing.** It is not inviting to lean on, there is no difference between, post, or picket, and the galvanized metal without paint did not prove durable when exposed to salt spray.
Paving

Continuing the paving of the heavily used Embarcadero Promenade unto other adjoining open spaces helps inform users that these areas are there for public use and they are invited to be there. The Embarcadero Promenade is a simple dark concrete with a five-foot scoring grid. Although not mandatory, this paving should always be considered as an option or as the dominant paving material in waterfront open spaces that are contiguous to the Embarcadero walkways. Accent paving of other colors or materials may also be used in combination with the dark concrete where appropriate, or the dark concrete may be selected as the unifying material in larger open spaces.

Planting

Planting may be used to accent entries, create a more intimate scale, add color or shield the wind or sun. Historically plants were not commonly found on San Francisco’s industrial piers. While proper use of plants may enhance an open space, plantings should be used carefully so as not to detract from historic character or from a pier or wharf’s unique construction of being a structure over the water, rather than on solid land.

Consider the following criteria when including planting on pier or wharf open space areas:

• Planting should be minimal on pier aprons, wharves, or near historic structures;
• Planting should be used primarily for up-close accent of entrances, cafe areas or other similar uses;
• Plants should be placed in pots or planters above the pier deck;
• Planting located along the pier apron should not be obvious from afar;
• Greater amounts of planting may be considered away from pier edges and inland from the seawall; and
• Planting should not obstruct pedestrian movement along pier aprons.
Design Criteria

Pier Apron Lighting

San Francisco’s historic “finger piers” have a unique linear shape being about 150 feet wide and 600-900 feet long. The historic pier sheds are simple industrial warehouse structures with regular spaced roll-up doors for servicing ships. Lighting the pier aprons for use as open space should emphasize the length of the piers with a rhythm of doors, windows, perimeter lighting, and other edge improvements.

Consider the following criteria when lighting pier aprons:

- Lighting along the apron adjacent to historic pier sheds should be attached to the shed or be on a pole very close to the shed;
- Accent the linear form of the piers using the rhythm of supports or openings on the sheds with regularly spaced fixtures;
- Lights should be shielded so that distant views of the pier, although noticeable, do not compete with City and Bay views;
- Additional lighting for entrances or other uses along pier edges should be shielded so as not to create bright spots or detract from the larger City and Bay views;
- Select fixtures and locations for lights that are not attractive as bird perches;

Pier 1 south apron
Design Criteria

Interpretive Signage

Working maritime activities and rich history of the waterfront are interesting stories just waiting to be told. Interpretive signage exists along the Embarcadero Roadway, through Fisherman’s Wharf and at Heron’s Head Park. New open spaces, public access areas and sections of the Bayside History Walk should include interpretive signage to enhance the enjoyment of the waterfront. Consider the following criteria when developing content for interpretive programs:

• Include interpretive information in all major open spaces and other areas that have significant cultural, historic or educational interest and where possible along the Bayside History Walk;
• Coordinate content of interpretive information with that of nearby programs and signage; and
• Message content should appeal to a broad range of ages, interests, and ability to understand interpretive information.

Sign supports should have the following architectural characteristics:
• Simple or Minimalist Form;
• Durable and Maintainable Materials;
• Appropriate Scale for the Waterfront;

Pier 98 interpretive signage

Fisherman’s Wharf PortWalk Historic Walking Tour