



COMMITTEE FOR  
GREEN FOOTHILLS



January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Burlingame City Council  
City of Burlingame  
501 Primrose Road  
Burlingame, CA 94010

**Re: SFO Technology Center at 1300 Bayshore Highway Project**

Dear Mayor Brownrigg and Burlingame City Councilmembers,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, Sequoia Audubon Society, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, the Committee for Green Foothill's and the Citizens' Committee to Complete the Refuge are all writing to express our deep and urgent concern with the proposed SFO Technology Center at 1300 Bayshore Highway (Project). We strongly believe the proposed Project design will result in unacceptable bird mortality that can be avoided if Burlingame directs the developer towards an alternative, ecologically- and location-sensitive design.

Renderings of the project show an 8-story reflective and transparent curtain of glass facing the Bay with very little distinction between sky and building. Additionally, the Project proposes to surround and cross Easton Creek, transparent glass fences, railings, panels, screens, and a glass pedestrian walkway overhead. **This design is extremely hazardous to migratory birds.** Birds collide with glassy buildings and structures during the day as they attempt to access resources reflected by or seen through the glass. At night, brightly lit glass buildings lure migrating birds to their death. We strongly believe that the proposed design will introduce an unmitigable hazard to the bay front.

The San Francisco Bay has been designated as a site of “hemispheric importance” to bird populations throughout the Western Hemisphere. 136 species of birds have been documented along the Bay Trail in Burlingame; including the threatened Western Snowy Plover. In addition to resident birds, flocks of wintering shorebirds feed and rest along the shore in Burlingame for much of the year, from each autumn, until migrating back to their breeding grounds each spring. Yet the documents for the Project show no biological surveys or mitigations for impacts to birds and wildlife. In fact, the Project documents show no awareness of the seriousness of the issue for birds, even though it is located adjacent to our most important habitat.

It is now widely recognized that bird collisions with man-made structures, especially glass buildings and glassy elements, are significant contributors to bird-mortality and, most importantly, to the decline of bird populations in North America. When bird-friendly design is implemented as a guiding principal, the hazards can be greatly reduced.

Many neighboring cities recognize bird-collision with glass as an important issue and make an effort to minimize hazardous construction. The issue is addressed in General and Specific Plans (San Jose, Palo Alto, Mountain View), in Ordinances and mandatory Guidelines (San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Sunnyvale, Richmond) and in Mitigation Measures for areas near the Bay (Menlo Park). All of these cities look to provide standards and ordinances for bird-friendly design for any buildings located along and near the Bay. Some cities also require or recommend bird-friendly design and the regeneration of ecosystems along creek corridors. For example, Mountain View has established a 200-foot “habitat overlay zone” for creeks and sensitive habitats in the North Bayshore. Companies such as Google, Facebook, Intuit, Microsoft, and LinkedIn are also incorporating bird-friendly design into their buildings situated on or near the Bay, signifying the easily attainable union between ecology and urban design and preserving the integrity of our natural ecosystems while allowing our region to develop.

Generally, bird-friendly design measures may include: a substantial reduction in the amount of glassy material used in the building’s design; avoidance of glass and glazing that reflect the bay, the sky and surrounding vegetation; incorporation of visual cues into reflective facades to alert birds of the structure; avoidance of see-through situations such as transparent skyways and free standing walls; and avoidance or reduction of light emissions at night. Along the Bay front, it is especially crucial to implement avoidance and minimization measures to prevent bird carnage. We recommend planning with respectful setbacks from sensitive habitats and the implementation of adequate avoidance measures and minimization measures to prevent unnecessary and substantial bird deaths.

Together, our organizations represent many thousands of members in San Mateo, San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties and together we wish to bring these concerns to your attention. It would be tragic for this Project to become an inadvertent death trap for birds.

We urge the City of Burlingame to join other Bay Area cities and companies in demonstrating environmental stewardship and leadership by requiring an alternative, bird-friendly design for the 1300 Bayshore Highway Project and all other projects along the Bay. We hope the City of

Burlingame elects to build in harmony with nature and integrate development along the bay with the natural environment in ways that do not degrade this environment.

We also hope that Burlingame will include a Bird-Friendly Design Policy in the Envision Burlingame General Plan, and provide guidelines for implementation of such policy in Burlingame. Below, we provide resources on bird-friendly design for your review.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gita Dev  
Sustainable Land Use Committee  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta

Gail Raabe  
Board of Directors  
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

Leslie Flint  
Conservation Committee  
Sequoia Audubon Society

Noreen Weeden  
Director of Volunteer Programs  
Golden Gate Audubon Society

Helen Wolter  
Legislative Advocate, San Mateo County  
Committee for Green Foothills

Mackenzie Mossing  
Environmental Advocacy Associate  
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Cc:

- Burlingame Planning Commission
- Kevin Gardiner, Planning Manager

Standards, Guidelines and Design Resources

- The City of San Francisco Standards for Bird Safe Buildings
  - <http://sf-planning.org/standards-bird-safe-buildings>
- The City of San Jose Creeks and Bird Safe Design Ordinance requires Bird Safe Design in all areas along the Bay (north of Hwy 237). There are also recommendations for new construction along creeks.
  - <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/60393>
- Richmond Bird-safe standards
  - <https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/41218> (See 6-105)
- Sunnyvale Bird Safe Building Design Guidelines (required)
  - <https://sunnyvale.ca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=23799>
- In Mountain View, the North Bayshore Precise Plan requires Bird Safe Design for all new buildings North of Hwy 101 and installs a 200-ft Habitat Overlay Zone setback near wetlands and creeks.

- <http://www.mountainview.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=24429>
- American Bird Conservancy Bird-Friendly Design Guide
  - [https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bird-friendly-Building-Guide LINKS.pdf](https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bird-friendly-Building-Guide_LINKS.pdf)

#### Additional resources

- The Glass industry is well aware of the issue of bird collision, and a US Senate bill is looking to require bird friendly design for government buildings
  - <https://www.usglassmag.com/2018/01/bird-friendly-bill-introduced-in-senate/>
- Lighted building kills migratory birds
  - <http://www.audubon.org/news/nearly-400-migratory-birds-were-killed-one-texas-building-single-night>