Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve
Technical Advisory Committee
January 14, 2016
Agenda Overview

- Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve Management Planning Process
  - Process Timeline
  - TAC Organizing Framework

- Review and Discussion of Management Plan Goals and Objectives: Defining Success
  - Reserve and Ecosystem Health
  - Visual Design and Aesthetics
  - Public Safety
  - Public Access
  - Other

- Public Comment

- Summary and Next Steps
Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve Management Planning Process

- Process Timeline

**UCSF MT. SUTRO OPEN SPACE RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS**

- Organizing Framework
Reserve Management

UCSF has hired two forest management consultants to work together to develop a forest management plan that will be reviewed by the TAC and the community.

• Key assumptions of the plan include:
  – Improves safety of the Reserve and protects lives and structures
  – Addresses hazard reduction and promotes a sustainable ecosystem
  – Includes a replanting strategy to promote biodiversity
  – Utilizes a phased-in approach

• Key criteria in selecting the consultants included:
  – Experience in eucalyptus groves and urban forestry
  – Proven thoughtful, measured approach to forest management

• The TAC is charged with providing guidance on elements of the management plan and will review the draft plan at its final meeting
Brief History of Mount Sutro

- Adolph Sutro, who served as San Francisco Mayor from 1894 to 1896, owned Mount Sutro and built his homestead there.

- In celebration of San Francisco’s first Arbor Day in 1886, Sutro began planting the hill—which had been covered with native grasses, wild flowers and shrubs—with imported blue gum eucalyptus, Monterey pine, Monterey cypress and other species.

- Sutro donated 13 acres of land to the UC Regents in 1895 that was developed into the UCSF Parnassus campus. In 1953, UCSF purchased a 90-acre parcel of land to the south, which included Mount Sutro.

- In 1976, the UC Board of Regents designated Mount Sutro permanent open space.

- The Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve comprises 61 acres and is maintained by UCSF’s Facilities Services Department.
UCSF’s Commitment

In the 2014 Long Range Development Plan, UCSF reaffirmed its commitment to maintain Mount Sutro as a public resource.

- UCSF designated 58 acres as permanent open space in the 1976 LRDP and subsequently increased the size of the Reserve to 61 acres.
- The area designated as Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve shall be kept free of any permanent structures or facilities except footpaths and appropriate landscape construction intended to enhance its use as a natural area.
Map of Mount Sutro
UCSF Policies in the Reserve

- Top priority is safety of people and structures
- No herbicides used in the Reserve
- Avoid unnecessary tree work in the Reserve during bird-nesting season (March to August)
- Commitment to transparency and community planning principles
- Maintain and encourage public access to trail network. UCSF has partnered with the non-profit Sutro Stewards who build and maintain trail system using volunteers
- Preserve the natural beauty of the Reserve and maintain ecosystem as a public resource
Management Plan Objective: Reserve and Ecosystem Health

Documented decline in tree health—evident by increased number of dead, dying and stressed trees—due to drought.

• Current Conditions:
  – Decline in overall tree health due to drought
  – Significant defoliation and dieback of canopies and increased mortality of trees
  – Competition for resources causing decline and stunted tree growth
  – Pest infestation

• Assumptions:
  – More species diversification to improve overall health of the Reserve
  – Some areas would benefit from improved tree spacing to promote growth
  – Habitat restoration efforts would promote wildlife diversity
Pests
Surge Lot: 2006 to 2015
Management Plan Objective: Visual Design and Aesthetics

Maintain “forest” experience

- Current Conditions:
  - Increase in gaps in the Reserve (from tree deaths)
  - Dense blackberry and poison oak affecting the understory
  - Stumps/downed trees

- Assumptions:
  - Better tree spacing in some areas for aesthetic value and tree health
  - Restore areas that are sparse from tree death
  - Encourage mix of trees and understory that provide natural experience for visitors
Management Plan Objective: Public Safety

Hazardous trees and fire hazard reduction

• Current Conditions:
  – Sharp increase in number of hazardous trees identified and removed
  – Fire defensible space work performed around buildings and roads approximately every two years

• Assumptions:
  – Proactive management of hazardous trees to continue
  – Annual monitoring of defensible space needs
  – Healthier ecosystem lowers risks
Urgent Safety Work

1. Defensible Space Work (December and January)

- UCSF is repeating defensible space work done in 2013, providing up to 100 feet of fuel clearance around structures. These areas constitute approximately 15.6 of the total 61 acres.

- Within the first 30 feet of structures, flammable vegetation (non-woody perennial plants) was cleared by goats. Workers will trim tree branches up to 10 feet off the ground.

- Remaining 70 feet of defensible space will include removal of all ladder fuels (mostly ivy).

- San Francisco Fire Department determined that defensible space is needed due to extra-hazardous fire conditions.
Urgent Safety Work

2. Johnstone Eucalyptus Stand (December to January)

- UCSF arborists and Fire Marshal became concerned about the condition of the trees on Johnstone Drive from Medical Center Way to Nike Road.

- UCSF hired two consulting arborists to evaluate, recommend course of action.

- The work is approximately 70% completed; project will include replanting
Urgent Safety Work
Trees along Johnstone Drive
Johnstone Trees
Tree Damage
Management Plan Objective: Public Access

Increasing usage as a recreational area

• Current Conditions:
  – Increase in number of visitors to the Reserve
  – In the past two years, articles in Via (AAA magazine), SF Chronicle and 7x7 have highlighted Mount Sutro as a “hidden gem” to be explored.
  – Awarded “Best Hiking Trail” in San Francisco Magazine last year
  – Increase in number of mountain bikers and trail runners
  – More trail conflicts

• Assumptions:
  – Strategies to mitigate trail conflicts
  – Plan for increasing usage
  – Improved forest health will help ensure safe public access
Project Timeline

- Winter-Spring 2016: Convene TAC meetings
- Spring-Summer 2016: Define revised project
- Summer-Fall 2016: Community meetings
- Fall-Winter 2016: Recirculate Draft EIR
- Fall-Winter 2016: Public hearing on recirculated Draft EIR
- Winter-Spring 2017: Prepare responses to comments
- Spring 2017: Publish Final EIR
- Fall 2017: Begin phased implementation (bird-nesting season from March-August)

Dates are approximate and subject to change
Summary and Next Steps