

Comments of Will Travis
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at the
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In order for you to understand why the gateway park project is so exciting for those of us involved in its creation, its planning and its design, I have to ask you to join me in looking at the project site from the regional perspective—from the 40,000 foot view. When we step back to get this broad perspective, it's impossible to not also see the gateway in its historic context.

It's where the transcontinental railroad ended in the 19th century. It was the place where passengers had to board boats to continue their journey westward to San Francisco. Coming from the other direction, it was where new arrivals to our state and our nation finally touched the heartland of America. And as our region grew outward in the 20th century, the site was the linchpin of the commuter rail network that shaped the East Bay.

Today, the gateway site plays much the same role. It's where travelers coming from the east on America's main street—Interstate 80—must finally leave the landmass of our nation and rise up above an inland arm of the Pacific Ocean called San Francisco Bay. To pass over the Bay, they will travel on a spectacular new bridge that rises from this gateway, a bridge erected by the greatest highway builders in the world—the California Department of Transportation. Our state is as much known for its freeways as for its redwood trees. What better place to pay tribute to our road builders than here where great highways merge and a great bridge finds landfall. Travelers to this special gateway deserve to be offered a chance to pause and celebrate where they have been, where they are going, and what has happened here before.

Mayor Gavin Newsom has described the City of San Francisco as 47 square miles surrounded by reality. Travelers leaving San Francisco will touch down in reality in Oakland. But this is the best kind of reality where an Army base that was part of vast military system that won and protected our freedom in the 20th century will be transformed into welcoming gateway to Oakland where elegant new buildings will serve our needs in the 21st century.

The backdrop of this gateway is the Port of Oakland with its iconic cranes, massive ships and containers stacked higher than skyscrapers. The grand scale and ballet-like movement of ships, cranes and brightly colored boxes are all the billboards that are needed to advertise to the world the essential role the port plays in fulfilling our consumer needs and advancing California's economic prosperity. Here at this gateway we should encourage people to stop and witness the grandeur of these giant and massive machines of commerce.

This gateway will be the last westward outpost of another of our region's treasures—the East Bay Regional Park District. Born in the midst of the Great Depression, the Park District protects the greenbelt that shapes our East Bay communities and brings nature into reach for all our citizens. It's fitting that this gateway should also be a park, green and accessible to everyone, those who live nearby and those who are visiting from afar.

As much as this place can remind us of history, it can also be an inspiration for our future. It can become America's gateway to the Pacific and to the nations of the East where the future lies.

It's impossible to think about New York Harbor without visualizing of the Statue of Liberty, which has long welcomed travelers who cross the Atlantic Ocean and which symbolizes the spirit of our nation. Our gateway begs to become home for something equally inspirational,

something that will be forever be identified with San Francisco Bay, and something that will welcome to our great nation travelers who have crossed the Pacific Ocean.

The Statue of Liberty provides another more prosaic lesson from which we can learn. The grand lady, who is always identified with New York City, was erected on an island in New Jersey. It took some clever after-the-fact gerrymandering to move that island to the State of New York. The lesson we can learn from that experience is that ideally we should ignore, and at a minimum, blur, the political boundaries and property lines that transect this gateway site.

At the gateway, we can best decide what needs to be done and where it should be located by working collectively on a plan that fulfills all of our objectives in the best way possible. To accomplish this goal, all of the agencies, departments and staff who are working on the gateway park project have committed ourselves to serving the greater public for whom we all work by thinking of this gateway not as a place that is a collection of separate properties divided by lines on a map, but more like a holistic campus where green space, transportation facilities, civic buildings and handsome commercial structures are integrated within a overarching visual expression of what the word "gateway" means.

Most of all, the gateway site cries out to not be ignored, not be treated like the ordinary, not to be second best.

We've been given a great gift in the opportunity we have to make this place as spectacular as it deserves to be. We would be remiss in not accepting this gift and irresponsible if we do not achieve excellence in our planning of this very special gateway. To accomplish what is asked of us, we have committed ourselves to working together for as long as it takes and as hard as is needed to make this gateway a testimonial to inspiration, to cooperation and to a celebration of this gateway to San Francisco Bay, to Oakland and the East Bay, to California and our nation, to the past and to our future.