

[City], [State]



LINKS

Search:  GO

# The Unique and Colorful History of Richmond's Point Molate

*This month, we begin a series of articles about Richmond's Point Molate, a hidden-in-plain-view waterfront site with rich natural resources and an interesting past.*



Located on the western shore of the Point San Pablo Peninsula about a mile and a half north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, Point Molate offers a waterfront location, diverse habitat, open space and nationally designated historic buildings. Photo by Joel Williams

## BC Staff Report

*This month, we begin a series of articles about Richmond's Point Molate, a hidden-in-plain-view waterfront site with rich natural resources and an interesting past. This month focuses on the history of the site, while future installments will look at recent redevelopment proposals and the natural features of Point Molate.*

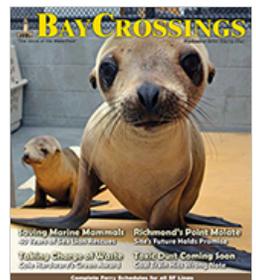
Point Molate is a tremendous asset to the City of Richmond. Located on the western shore of the Point San Pablo Peninsula about a mile and a half north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, its waterfront location, diverse habitat, open space and nationally designated historic buildings provide a number of opportunities to maximize the site's economic and conservation potential.

Point Molate offers 1.4 miles of unobstructed shoreline, more than 200 acres of upland open space and a 465-foot ridge line with panoramic views of the San Francisco and San Pablo bays, Mount Tamalpais and the East Brother Light Station. Adding to the site's unique character is the Winehaven Historic District, a designated National Historic Landmark.

The rich and varied history of the San Pablo Peninsula predates the arrival of the Spanish in the early 19th century. Prior to that time, Ohlone and Miwok tribes lived in and hunted at Point Molate. During the late 19th century, a Chinese shrimp camp was established on what is now Point Molate Beach Park. The Union Shrimp Company operated the camp until 1912, when the federal government restricted large-scale shrimping on the Bay.

The construction of the Belt Line Railway along Richmond's western waterfront and Point San Pablo in 1903 attracted a number of commercial and development activities to the peninsula, including the construction of the Standard Oil Long Wharf, an oil can factory, a brick factory and two rock quarries. The growth in commercial sardine fishing spurred construction of a number of fish processing plants between Point Molate and the San Pablo Yacht Harbor.

## CURRENT ISSUE



September 2015

## LATEST NEWS

- » [ON OUR COVER  
September 2015](#)
- » [Port of San Francisco  
Grabs National  
Spotlight](#)
- » [Terminal Supervisor  
Mark Andrade](#)
- » [Future Holds  
Promises and  
Challenges for Point  
Molate](#)
- » [Coal From Utah  
Threatens the Bay  
With Pollution](#)
- » [Like a Sturgeon](#)
- » [From Missiles to  
Medicine: The Marine  
Mammal Center  
Celebrates 40 Years  
of Rescue, Research  
and Education](#)
- » [Cole Hardware Wins  
Green Award for  
Take-Back Program](#)
- » [Once Again, It's Time  
to Talk Like a Pirate!](#)
- » [Safety Tips for Stand-  
Up Paddlers](#)
- »

In 1956, Del Monte built a whale processing plant north of Point Molate's Terminal 4. This last whaling station in the United States was active at Point San Pablo until the early 1970s, when American whaling was finally banned.

[A September to Remember at Jack London Square](#)

Captain Raymond Clark, who was instrumental in establishing the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry at Point Castro in 1915, developed the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor just north of Point Molate in 1930. The harbor continues to operate today and provides boat access to the East Brother Light Station, built in 1873 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

» [Photography and the Art of Chance](#)

» [WATERFRONT ACTIVITIES September 2015](#)

### **Winehaven**

Shortly following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the California Wine Association relocated its production facilities from San Francisco to a 41-acre site along the Point Molate shoreline.

» [Around the Bay in September 2015](#)

Winehaven served as the association's headquarters and production facilities for more than 10 years, until just after the passage of Prohibition. Its central location and access to shipping and rail lines made it an ideal site for producing and distributing wines to domestic and foreign markets. The facility would become one of the largest wineries in the United States, annually producing and distributing more than 12 million gallons of wine, brandy and champagne.

The first building constructed for the winery was the Winehaven Hotel, which housed construction crews and winery workers. The winery, a Rhineland-style brick castle, was built two years later and was large enough to accommodate areas for crushing, fermenting and bottling. To accommodate the influx of winery workers and their families, 29 cottages and the winemaker's residence were constructed just north of the winery.

By 1909, Winehaven was fully operational with a crew of 120 workers, a number that grew to as many as 400 during the harvest season. The area developed into a small village with a school, post office and ferry service to Oakland and San Francisco. In 1919, the passage of the Volstead Act began the Prohibition Era and brought an end to the winery's operations.

While the California Wine Association continued to produce sacramental wine, medicinal wine and Calwa Grape Juice after passage of the law, demand was insufficient to sustain the winery and it closed its doors a few years later. In 1978, Winehaven's historical contribution to architecture, commerce and industry was recognized with its designation as a historic landmark and placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Point Molate Naval Fuel Depot**

Point Molate experienced renewed activity in 1941 with the advent of World War II. The Department of Defense (then still called the Department of War) purchased Winehaven and the surrounding area for use as a Navy fuel depot and began adapting the area for light industrial and military use. The Winehaven Hotel was adapted for use as barracks and a mess hall; the cottages were renovated for Navy housing; and the winery buildings were converted to administrative offices and storage space.

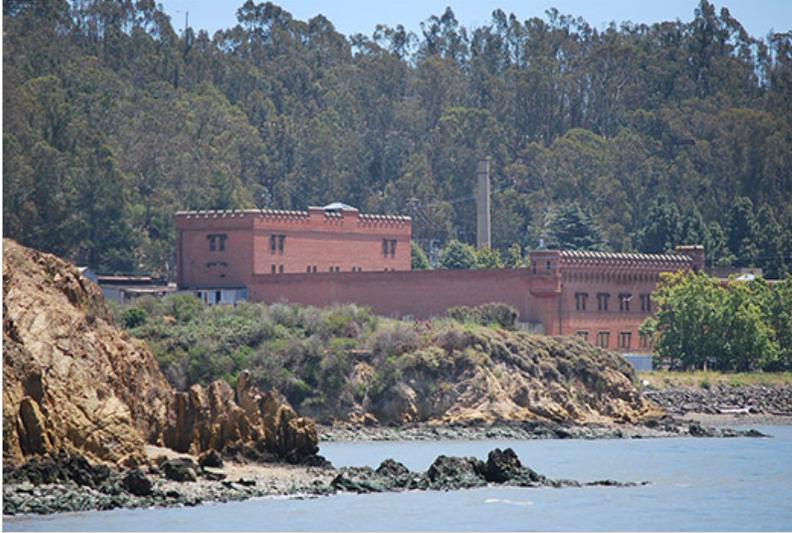
Eventually, some buildings—such as the school house and Winehaven Hotel—were razed to modify the area for light industrial use. As part of the site expansion and infrastructure upgrades, a new pier was built off the point and the site was equipped with drum storage areas and rail lines. Infrastructure upgrades included the installation of 17 miles of pipeline and 75 underground and aboveground storage tanks with the capacity to hold 1.1 million barrels of petroleum.

The Point Molate Naval Fuel Depot was decommissioned on September 30, 1995 under the U.S. Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990. As part of the base closure process, the Richmond City Council was designated as the Local Reuse Authority to act as the governmental agency responsible for the reuse planning and disposition of Point Molate. A 45-member Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee of local stakeholder groups was established to prepare the reuse plan that was submitted to, and approved by, the LRA in 1997.

In September 2003, the U.S. Navy sold 80 percent of the property to the City of Richmond for one dollar; the remaining 20 percent required additional environmental remediation before it could be transferred to the city. Transfer of the remaining property was executed in March 2010 under an agreement that required the Navy to place \$28.5 million in escrow for Richmond to complete remediation of the site. The funding amount was predicated on a future commercial use, the remediation standards for which are significantly less than the remediation standards for residential use.

Point Molate Beach Park was originally created by the U.S. Navy as a recreation site for both base personnel and residents of Richmond in the early 1970s. The park was established on a site of a natural beach that had been very popular in the region prior to the Navy's arrival. Turned over to the City of Richmond in 2003 as part of the initial parcel to be transferred, the park was immediately closed due to lack of funds within the City of Richmond. With \$115,000 from *Cosco Busan* oil spill settlement funds earmarked for Richmond, Citizens for a Sustainable Point Molate developed a beach rehabilitation plan that was submitted to the Richmond Parks Department and presented to Richmond City Council for approval in March 2013. The park reopened for public use in October 2013.

Next month we will look into recent actions surrounding proposed developments of Point Molate, including the demise of a planned hotel and casino complex.



The Winehaven winery, a Rhineland-style brick castle built in 1909, was designated as a historic landmark in 1978. Photo by Joel Williams



Point Molate Beach Park was originally created by the U.S. Navy in the early 1970s, and reopened to the public in October 2013 after being closed for a number of years. Photo by Joel Williams

Bay Crossings 2005-2015. All rights reserved. Ferry Building #1 Ferry Plaza

*All images in Bay Crossings Magazine may not be reproduced or used without expressed consent of Bay Crossings and the photographer. Please contact Bay Crossings for permission.*

[City], [State]



LINKS

Search:  GO

# Richmond Casino Fails to Materialize, Leaving Point Molate Still Largely Undeveloped

Last month, we told you about the unique history of Richmond's Point Molate.



## BC Staff Report

Last month, we told you about the unique history of Richmond's Point Molate. This month, in our continuing series of articles about this waterfront jewel, we cover some of the relatively recent actions concerning development plans for this location.

The City of Richmond owns a 413-acre site at Point Molate, just north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. The site is bounded by Chevron refining facilities and properties to the north, east and south. Properties to the north and south are used for storage and transportation of petroleum products, while the more intensive industrial uses occur to the east of the site. Caltrans owns a small sliver of property near the base of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, while the State of California owns a piece of the subtidal lands south of Terminal One.

Approximately 84 acres of upland property are under 15 percent slope and are suitable for development. The remaining dry land acreage has slopes of up to 50 percent and would be more appropriate for open space and recreational uses. The San Pablo Peninsula is zoned for community and recreational uses, with the exception of marine or light industrial uses for Terminal 4 and Chevron's Point Orient.

In 2003, the Richmond City Council issued a request for proposal for development of Point Molate and received seven responses. One proposal came from Chevron, which was concerned over security risks and the prospects of a major development adjacent to its refinery. The company bid \$80 million on the condition that the property would remain as open space.

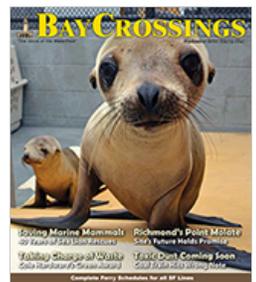
However, the city chose instead to negotiate with Upstream, whose bid had originally outlined a hotel-conference center and residential project. The project eventually evolved into a hotel and casino complex with Upstream offering to purchase the former Naval Fuel Depot and contribute close to \$20 million to the city annually.

In 2004, the city entered into a Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) to sell the property to Upstream for \$50 million and began negotiations with the firm to develop the resort hotel and casino complex. Under the conditions of the LDA, any future development of the property would include construction and maintenance of the Bay Trail along the shoreline as well as 33 acres of shoreline park and 150 acres of hillside open space with a public trail system. Over the course of the lengthy negotiations, the developer's nonrefundable payments and deposits to the city for the right to negotiate and for extensions of the LDA grew to \$15.5 million.

In 2009, the Citizens for East Shore Parks and East Bay Regional Park District filed a lawsuit against the city and the developer over environmental concerns about the development of Point Molate. The parties approved a settlement whereby Upstream would provide at least \$35 million for shoreline preservation. The settlement funding was for land acquisition, and was not limited to Point Molate. It included other areas in Richmond and potentially outside of Richmond.

The settlement was contingent, however, on the casino's construction. Voters rejected the casino proposal in the November 2010 elections by defeating Measure U. The Richmond City Council then voted against the project in April 2011 following the release of the

## CURRENT ISSUE



September 2015

## LATEST NEWS

- » [ON OUR COVER  
September 2015](#)
- » [Port of San Francisco  
Grabs National  
Spotlight](#)
- » [Terminal Supervisor  
Mark Andrade](#)
- » [Future Holds  
Promises and  
Challenges for Point  
Molate](#)
- » [Coal From Utah  
Threatens the Bay  
With Pollution](#)
- » [Like a Sturgeon](#)
- » [From Missiles to  
Medicine: The Marine  
Mammal Center  
Celebrates 40 Years  
of Rescue, Research  
and Education](#)
- » [Cole Hardware Wins  
Green Award for  
Take-Back Program](#)
- » [Once Again, It's Time  
to Talk Like a Pirate!](#)
- » [Safety Tips for Stand-  
Up Paddlers](#)

final environmental impact report.

Richmond Mayor Tom Butt, a councilmember at the time, told *Bay Crossings*: “In the end, it became clear that the promise of a world-class conference center, hotel and performing arts center would just be a casino and a 4,000-space parking garage. The cash flow to the city would be a fraction of what was initially promised. Huge historic buildings would be razed and traffic would be in permanent gridlock at the bridge. It was a classic bait and switch, and we were able to see it before it was too late.” »

Under the LDA, the rejection of the casino project triggered an exclusive 120-day period during which the developer could negotiate an alternative proposal. The developer instead filed a lawsuit against Richmond contending that the city violated the LDA and had not acted in good faith. »

Seven of the nine counts filed by the developer in its lawsuit have been dismissed by the court. The developer then requested permission to file another amended complaint and to stay the lawsuit. The judge denied both requests on October 2, 2014. The majority of the property remains vacant today, with the exception of Building 123, but efforts to remediate and restore the site continue.»

The Point Molate Community Advisory Committee was formed in 2011 to work with the Richmond City Council, citizen advisory boards and commissions to provide oversight on Point Molate matters. The committee’s work has included advising the city council on environmental remediation, land use planning and financial management.

*Next month we will conclude our series by looking at what the future might hold for Richmond’s Point Molate.*

[A September to Remember at Jack London Square](#)

[Photography and the Art of Chance](#)

[WATERFRONT ACTIVITIES September 2015](#)

[Around the Bay in September 2015](#)

Recently, a group of architectural students from the Fach Hochschule University of Applied Sciences in Lübeck, Germany visited the Bay Area. Part of their mission was to take architectural excursions to initiate experiences of other ways of thinking, living and building in different cultural contexts. They paid particular attention to the Ford Assembly Building, which was the largest assembly plant to be built on the west coast, because it is an outstanding example of 20th-century industrial architecture. Designed by Albert Kahn and known for its “daylight factory” design, which employs extensive window openings along its sawtooth roof, the almost 500,000 square foot building built in 1930 suffered structural damage in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The City of Richmond selected Orton Development to repair and rehabilitate the building and in 2008, SunPower and Mountain Hardware were some of the first companies to make the building their new home. The old craneway at the waterfront is now called the Craneway Pavillion, which is used for concerts, banquets, weddings and corporate events. The iconic building is also part of the Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park.



Professor Heiner Lipper of the Fach Hochschule Lübeck Technical School (left) with Craig Murray of the City of Richmond, during a tour of the Ford Assembly Building.



The Ford Assembly Building, built in 1930, is an outstanding example of 20th-century industrial architecture.



Students from the Fach Hochschule Lübeck Technical School group in front of the Rosie the Riveter Museum before touring the historic Craneway Pavilion next door.

Bay Crossings 2005-2015. All rights reserved. Ferry Building #1 Ferry Plaza

All images in Bay Crossings Magazine may not be reproduced or used without expressed consent of Bay Crossings and the photographer. Please contact Bay Crossings for permission.

[City], [State]



LINKS

Search:  GO

# Future Holds Promises and Challenges for Point Molate

Over the last two issues, we have explored the colorful history and recent activity at Richmond's Point Molate.



Point Molate Beach Park is located just north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge on Stenmark Drive and consists of slightly over 11 acres of parkland along a 1/3-mile stretch of shoreline. Photo by Joel Williams

### By BC Staff

Over the last two issues, we have explored the colorful history and recent activity at Richmond's Point Molate. In this last installment of the series, we will explore what the future could hold for this 413-acre waterfront site with 1.4 miles of unobstructed shoreline just north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Point Molate's historic buildings, waterfront location, unobstructed Bay views, expansive open space and recreational opportunities make it an ideal site for development. That being said, the costs and management challenges of converting the former military site to other uses are significant.

The San Pablo Peninsula, where Point Molate is located, is zoned for community and recreational uses, with the exception of marine or light industrial uses for Terminal 4 and Chevron's Point Orient. The majority of property remains vacant, except for Building 123, but efforts to remediate and restore the site continue.

The Point Molate Community Advisory Committee (PMCAC) was formed in 2011 to work with the Richmond City Council, citizen advisory boards and commissions to provide oversight on Point Molate matters. The committee's work has included advising the city council on environmental remediation, land use planning and financial management.

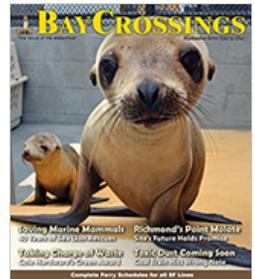
Among other things, intensive industrial use over the last half-century by the U.S. Navy resulted in extensive environmental contamination of the groundwater and soil at Point Molate. The City of Richmond oversees cleanup efforts at Point Molate with advisory assistance from the PMCAC.

### Shoreline

Point Molate Beach Park is located just north of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge on Stenmark Drive and consists of slightly over 11 acres of parkland along a 1/3-mile stretch of the site's shoreline. The park originally opened to the public in the mid-1970s as a popular recreational destination until its closing in 2003.

The park reopened in October 2013 after volunteers led by Citizens for a Sustainable Point Molate restored the beach and the City of Richmond invested \$115,000 for park improvements and upgrades. The city has maintained the park since 2013. However, the beach is experiencing significant shoreline erosion, with accelerated losses in the past two years of over one foot of bluff line. A combination of storm-driven and seasonal tides along with wakening from the Vallejo ferry has scalloped the shoreline from Point Molate Beach Park to Point Orient.

### CURRENT ISSUE



September 2015

### LATEST NEWS

- » [ON OUR COVER September 2015](#)
- » [Port of San Francisco Grabs National Spotlight](#)
- » [Terminal Supervisor Mark Andrade](#)
- » [Future Holds Promises and Challenges for Point Molate](#)
- » [Coal From Utah Threatens the Bay With Pollution](#)
- » [Like a Sturgeon](#)
- » [From Missiles to Medicine: The Marine Mammal Center Celebrates 40 Years of Rescue, Research and Education](#)
- » [Cole Hardware Wins Green Award for Take-Back Program](#)
- » [Once Again, It's Time to Talk Like a Pirate!](#)
- » [Safety Tips for Stand-Up Paddlers](#)

Another distinctive feature of the shoreline is the 1,450-foot pier that extends into San Francisco Bay at a depth of 18 feet. The pier was built in 1942 and has been periodically restored.

[A September to Remember at Jack London Square](#)

## Bay Trail

There have been discussions with the San Francisco Bay Trail Project about pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, and about linking the Bay Trail around Point Molate along the shoreline area. A 50-foot-wide railroad right-of-way crosses the property along the shoreline and continues north around the Point San Pablo Peninsula. The Southern Pacific rail line is no longer in use and is in disrepair.

» [Photography and the Art of Chance](#)

As part of the I-580 Access Improvement Project, the shoulder on the eastbound I-580 exit lane will be converted to a third travel lane. The project will upgrade the current bicycle access to Point Molate and the shoreline with a separate bicycle-pedestrian path on the north side of I-580 adjacent to westbound traffic. The project is expected to be completed in 2018. Additionally, in 2014, Chevron donated a 0.9-mile easement to East Bay Regional Park District to continue the Bay Trail from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge along the shoreline to Point Molate Beach Park.

» [WATERFRONT ACTIVITIES September 2015](#)

» [Around the Bay in September 2015](#)

## Infrastructure

Point Molate's crumbling infrastructure is insufficient at the present time to support any new development or build-out. A general overview of the current state of the system:

- All water is supplied by East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) through one 12-inch water main along Stenmark Drive from the Potrero and Richmond reservoirs. The water pumping and distribution system is inadequate to meet the capacity needs of a large build-out or development and would require substantial repair and upgrading.
- Power is a significant problem. The power plant servicing Point Molate is broken down, power lines are disabled and the transformers are dated. Any new development would require substantial new power infrastructure.
- Currently, there is no collection system for sewage. A sewage treatment plant for the Naval Fuel Depot was later replaced by a smaller, portable treatment plant that now treats groundwater. The current system is inadequate to serve large-scale development. Furthermore, it would be a massive undertaking to build a collection system to connect the property to the sewage treatment plant at Point Richmond.

A Navy assessment in 1999 estimated infrastructure replacement costs at \$18 million. In the intervening years as the property has remained vacant, homeless encampments appeared and vandals stripped the plumbing and copper wiring in the Winehaven winery, winemaker's residence, Building 6 and the cottages in that area. The property's crumbling infrastructure and associated costs could serve as significant deterrents to marketing and developing the property.

## Access

Another major barrier to developing Point Molate is poor vehicular access. Stenmark Drive, located between I-580 and Terminal 4, provides the only public access to Point Molate. This two-lane road lacks sidewalks and lighting and is only accessible to westbound I-580 traffic from the Western Drive/Point Molate exit. There is no direct access from eastbound I-580.

Drivers travelling eastbound on I-580 must take the exit past the toll gate, cross under the freeway, get back on I-580 and continue west to the Stenmark Drive/Point Molate exit. The City of Richmond owns and maintains a 40-foot-wide right-of-way adjacent to the road. Secondary roads throughout the site are narrow and steep, full of potholes and poorly maintained.

Attempts to broaden or modify Stenmark Drive would be difficult, if not impossible. Chevron property abuts Stenmark Drive and the underlying infrastructure of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge makes widening the road financially and structurally prohibitive. There is no public transit, designated bicycle lanes nor pedestrian paths linking Point Molate to surrounding areas.

## Funding

One of the greatest constraints on redeveloping Point Molate is the lack of capital or a dedicated funding source. The City of Richmond's financial capabilities are limited, and a military base reuse project—traditionally administered through a redevelopment agency and funded through tax increment financing—is no longer a viable option.

Securing funding for infrastructure and historic preservation, as well as ensuring financial sustainability, will ultimately determine the success of Point Molate. The site needs a management structure that will address these funding needs and help guide future implementation decisions. A number of management options for Point Molate have been proposed over the years, each with its own benefits and limitations. Those options include:

### 1. Private Developer Acquires All or Part of Point Molate

The City of Richmond has traditionally pursued development projects through a master developer or developer to lease or purchase the property and could follow a similar strategy for Point Molate. Under this model, the city seeks a developer to develop all or part of the site.

## 2. Chevron Purchases Point Molate

In 2004, Chevron submitted a proposal to purchase Point Molate for \$80 million and convert it to open space with some light industrial and commercial use. The proposal included \$1 million per year to the city for 25 years for site maintenance. Given that Chevron has coveted Point Molate as a security buffer, the company assumedly maintains interest in purchasing the property and may submit a similar proposal.

## 3. Point Molate Left Undeveloped as Open Space and Park Lands

Given the city's financial constraints, this model assumes Richmond would partner with East Bay Regional Park District or some other public or nonprofit entity in developing and preserving open space and parkland. The property could be transferred under a Public Benefit Conveyance. This model would require a partner with experience in developing and leasing historic assets and would most likely involve a collaboration with a land trust or conservancy as a primary fundraising partner to ensure financial sustainability.

## 4. Management Entity Oversees Point Molate Redevelopment

Under this model, a management entity (such as a trust, public/private partnership, agency or nonprofit corporation) would oversee the marketing and management of Point Molate. The entity would be structured similarly to a nonprofit organization, where proceeds from the property are reinvested back into the development and maintenance of the site. Primary responsibilities would include real estate development and leasing of existing assets, and to a lesser extent environmental remediation, planning, community engagement, advocacy and partnership development. This model assumes partnership with a conservancy or land trust that would provide fundraising support.

Whether Point Molate is successfully developed will ultimately also depend on the ability to build a solid, sustainable financial foundation, one that will support the restoration, rehabilitation, conservation and redevelopment of the site. Furthermore, any capital investment would need to be independent of City of Richmond funding. A management entity, independent of but accountable to the city, could oversee that effort while maintaining all or some of the site for public use.

Funding to support the redevelopment of Point Molate could be generated through land sales, a partnership with a fundraising organization or through other funding sources. Like at the Presidio, leasing revenue from commercial and residential space at Point Molate could be reinvested back into restoring the site and its structures. The establishment of a management entity for Point Molate places the City of Richmond in the best position to proceed with the redevelopment of the property and its transformation into a first-class regional waterfront recreational resource.



One major barrier to developing Point Molate is the poor conditions of the roads that have been poorly maintained over the years. Photo by Joel Williams

Bay Crossings 2005-2015. All rights reserved. Ferry Building #1 Ferry Plaza

*All images in Bay Crossings Magazine may not be reproduced or used without expressed consent of Bay Crossings and the photographer. Please contact Bay Crossings for permission.*