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Ghirardelli Square: The Best Piece of Urban Space in the Country

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GHIRARDELLI SQUARE:
THE BEST PIECE OF URBAN SPACE IN THE COUNTRY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Art & Art History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Samantha Iverson Johnson

May 2021

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

GHIRARDELLI SQUARE:
THE BEST PIECE OF URBAN SPACE IN THE COUNTRY

by

Samantha Iverson Johnson

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ART & ART HISTORY

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2021

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ABSTRACT
GHIRARDELLI SQUARE:
THE BEST PIECE OF URBAN SPACE IN THE COUNTRY

Samantha Iverson Johnson

Ghirardelli Square, which opened in 1964, is well known among many architecture historians and urban planners owing to its origins as the one of the first successful rescue and adaptive reuse of a factory site and its place among the shifting urban renewal policies within San Francisco. Previous analysis has focused primarily on the work of Lawrence Halprin and his impact within Northern California; however very little has been discussed in regards to Roth and his team's original plan for the space along with the outrage taking place concerning urban renewal policies in San Francisco during this time. By examining Halprin's design for Ghirardelli Square both to emerging theories of urban design and William Roth's model of preservation-oriented private development, I argue that Ghirardelli Square represents a significant, but under-examined model of the 1960s' turn towards a new synthesis of architectural modernism and palimpsestic urban design. The work of these two men, and the team of planners and architects that formed the Ghirardelli Project Committee, created an innovative plan of rescue and adaptation that resulted in Ghirardelli Square's place as a significant phase in the history of urban aesthetics and design. With consideration for the ever-changing urban landscape, and the ongoing gentrification experienced today in many major metropolitan areas throughout the United States, this study stresses the importance of cultivating an understanding of historic urban planning and policy that originated in the early 20th century and the subsequent reaction against this same policy beginning in the 1950s.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	6
Chapter 1: Resisting the “Wall Street of the West”.....	10
Urban Renewal Comes to San Francisco.....	12
Freeway Revolt.....	14
Chapter 2: Setting the Stage.....	18
Russian Hill and the Fight to Save the Waterfront.....	19
“Magnificent Act of Civic Rescue.....	23
Chapter 3: Beehive of Excitement.....	30
The Man, the Myth, the Legend.....	34
Imageable City and Choreographed Movement.....	37
A Square of Pure Imagination.....	41
Conclusion: The Dream Fulfilled.....	52
Bibliography.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco, California.....	1
Figure 2.	The Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco, 1945.....	13
Figure 3.	Western Addition Area 1 demolition, 1953.....	15
Figure 4.	Photo of Fontana Towers, 2012.....	20
Figure 5.	Lawrence Halprin's proposal to William Roth, 1962.....	33
Figure 6.	Kevin Lynch, Five Elements of the City, 1960.....	39
Figure 7.	Architectural rendering of final Ghirardelli Square plan, 1965.....	42
Figure 8.	Photo of Street Elevation, Ghirardelli Square, 1965.....	45
Figure 9.	Architectural rendering of Ghirardelli Square, 1963.....	46
Figure 10.	Ghirardelli Square, North Point façade, 1919.....	48
Figure 11.	Ghirardelli Square Plaza, 1965.....	49
Figure 12.	Ghirardelli Square Plaza, 1965.....	49

INTRODUCTION

Envisioned as an urban space teeming with activity by both financial backer William Roth and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, Ghirardelli Square has become a premier tourist destination, averaging 3.4 million visitors each year.¹ Anchored by the ever-popular Original Ghirardelli Ice Cream & Chocolate Shop and Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory, the Square is constantly evolving (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco, California. The Cultural Landscape Foundation, Washington DC. Permission to reprint.

William Roth's original vision for Ghirardelli Square, and Lawrence Halprin's subsequent realization of this plan to create "the best piece of urban space in the country," became the turning point in contemporary urban design and planning.² The

¹ Pierleoni, "Ghirardelli Square circles back with a high-end style", *Sacramento Bee*, August 12, 2016; <http://www.sacbee.com/entertainment/article95057822.html>. (Accessed 10 February 2019).

² Allison Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco: Art, Land, and Urban Renewal in the City by the Bay*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 383

adaptive reuse of a former factory complex as a vibrant pedestrian experience located within a small urban space of a major metropolitan city is still considered both forward thinking and innovative.³ Eschewing all design options that included popular modernist elements of the time, the Ghirardelli Square team of designers set about to create a space that would not only rescue a historic building, but also entice visitors, and their wallets, away from the suburban shopping mall. The end result had a direct impact on both the North Beach neighborhood and Fisherman's Wharf, along with altering prevailing urban design concepts.

I have broken this thesis into three chapters based on a Venn diagram composed of three connected spheres: planning debates, location, and design. The first chapter, "Wall Street of the West," investigates the reaction against modernist urban planning's impact on mid-twentieth-century cities along with a desire to rescue and revitalize existing structures and neighborhoods. Looking first at San Francisco's 1945 city plan, the chapter will then work through secondary sources to introduce urban renewal and redevelopment policies that were adopted by San Francisco in the 1950s. The chapter will end a discussion surrounding the backlash gaining momentum against the city's urban redevelopment plan along with the neighborhoods irrevocably changed by this renewal program. Specific projects will be discussed as they relate to the aggressive changes San Francisco was implementing along with examples of successful, and some not so successful, protests to stop the wrecking ball.

³ *ibid*, 383.

Chapter 2, “Setting the Stage” deals with the effect this reaction against the city’s urban renewal projects had on Roth’s rescue of Ghirardelli Square. What factors contributed to Roth and his team’s goal to create a community-driven, public mixed-use space with a central plaza? Additionally, how and why did this location avoid the wrecking ball while countless other, often historic places, were being demolished in the name of progress?⁴ Within this project I plan to explore the reasoning behind William Roth’s purchase of the land and historic buildings, his initial goal for the location, along with a look at the team he assembled, the process of creating Ghirardelli Square, and even some of the backlash they received from original supporters of the renovation.

In the third chapter “Beehive of Excitement” I provide evidence to show how Lawrence Halprin’s design for Ghirardelli Square is directly connected to alternative mid-20th century urban design theories that were vastly different from the contemporary Modernist concepts *en vogue* during this time. I will explore in detail Halprin’s plan for the space, including an analysis of the designer’s use of aesthetics of space and movement tied to typology and small urban space. Furthermore, I will expand on this discussion, and delve deeper into the issues of urban design and redevelopment at play during the mid-twentieth-century, by presenting and discussing examples from urban planning concepts, including Gordon Cullen’s *Townscape* theory and Kevin Lynch’s

⁴According to Alison Isenberg, William Roth was haunted by his failure in 1959 to stop the demolition of the 1853 Montgomery Block. This location was associated with late nineteenth century writers, artists, and actors. Once cleared, this location was used as a parking lot for 10 years before the Transamerica building was built on the spot, 30.

Imageable City, to show how Roth, Halprin and the Advisory Team looked to these examples when formulating their plan for Ghirardelli Square.

Ghirardelli Square has always been one of my preferred destinations to spend time, as well as one of my favorite pieces of architectural and urban design. As I began my research into the development of Ghirardelli Square, I kept coming back to one question: How did a place as beautiful and historic as Ghirardelli Square come into existence during a time when the city of San Francisco was enticed, as many other major urban cities were, by redevelopment and high rises?⁵

When I began to look at information for this project, both archival and current, it became quite apparent that much of the existing research either briefly touched on Ghirardelli Square and its importance within San Francisco's urban renewal projects of the early 1960s or completely dismissed Roth and his team's impact on Ghirardelli Square, and San Francisco proper. In fact, a majority of the analysis that has been completed on Ghirardelli Square has focused primarily on the work of Lawrence Halprin and his impact within Northern California. However very little has been discussed about Roth and his team's original plan for the space along with the outrage taking place concerning urban renewal policies in San Francisco during this time. Roth's goal to keep as many of the existing brick factory buildings as possible, coupled with the objective to utilize renovation of these buildings instead of demolition, directly influenced Lawrence Halprin's design layout for the space.

⁵ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 381.

By examining Halprin's design for Ghirardelli Square in relation both to emerging theories of urban design and to William Roth's model of preservation-oriented private development, I argue that Ghirardelli Square represents a significant but under-examined model of the 1960s' turn towards a new synthesis of architectural modernism and palimpsestic urban design. I would venture to say that the introduction of Roth, the advisory board, and grassroots activists allows us a fuller picture of the issues behind a project that involve architects, neighbors, city planners, and engineers. All of these elements came together and created an innovative plan of rescue and adaptation that resulted in Ghirardelli Square's place as a significant phase in the history of urban aesthetics and design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of my argument builds on Allison Isenberg's *Designing San Francisco: Art, Land, and Urban Renewal in the City by the Bay* (2017). Isenberg's scholarship is useful in understanding the climate of San Francisco during this time of redevelopment, including the rejection of further plans for urban renewal along with a push back against ideas of modernist architecture and a desire to reclaim the city's personality and charm. In particular, Isenberg expands beyond just an examination of city planning and urban design to consider: "The interactions of property managers, merchant builders, publicists, graphic designers, cartoonists, alternative press activists, public interest lawyers, urban design critics, and grassroots preservationists..."⁶ Through Isenberg we are introduced to the major players on both sides of this debate including: William Roth, Karl Kortum, and city planner Justin Herman, to name a few.

As her analysis continues, Isenberg goes into detail discussing the dynamics surrounding the purchase and rescue of the Ghirardelli Factory complex, including the plan for the site and subsequent work of Lawrence Halprin. What she does not do, which this thesis does, is connect Halprin's concepts to the wider theories of urban design in this period, which also flowed through Halprin's notation diagrams. By concentrating the remainder of her argument on the theory that much of the landscape design credit of Ghirardelli Square should be given to Stuart and Caree Rose, managers of the complex brought on board to obtain vendors and run the day to day operations, Isenberg disregards the fact that Halprin worked directly with Roth and the planning team to design the

⁶ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 8.

location.⁷ This is an important piece of evidence as it highlights both Roth and Halprin's motivation for the site and impact that contemporary urban design theories played on the construction of the Square.

Recent scholarship on Lawrence Halprin and his planning concepts in regards to the Ghirardelli Project by Alison Bick Hirsch's *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America* (2014) became an invaluable scholarship source. Hirsch's work not only tracks Halprin's shift from designing largescale regional shopping malls to crafting more personal, intimate shopping spaces, but also delves into discussing Halprin's desire to restore the social life of the city. Hirsch's research looks more intently at Halprin's theories and planning legacies, including an understanding of Halprin's collaboration and ideology during the early 1960s and how this helped to shape Ghirardelli Square.

While some of the analysis absent from Isenberg's scholarship is discussed with this work, including an understanding of the shift in Halprin's theories and their application into his work on Ghirardelli Square, it does not possess the contextual consideration of San Francisco's particular planning and preservation politics. Hirsch's scholarship, coupled with Isenberg's exploration of urban planning within San Francisco are important elements within the narrative of Ghirardelli Square. This thesis project will bring these two types of analysis together in order to reassess Ghirardelli Square as a significant phase in the history of urban aesthetics and design.

⁷ Interview of William Roth by Randolph Delehanty, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Within my analysis of San Francisco's urban renewal, I found that Jasper Rubin's *A Negotiated Landscape: The Transformation of San Francisco's Waterfront Since 1950* (2011) helps to understand the history of the waterfront including the changes taking place both naturally and artificially throughout the Waterfront. This scholarship discusses the height-limit zoning law as it relates to planning director James R. McCarthy's desire to halt the skyscraper construction beginning along the waterfront. Missing from much of this analysis is the importance of the protests taking place in reaction to the threats of urban renewal the Waterfront faced, along with the impact citizens in neighborhoods surrounding the area had on saving much of the Waterfront. Both of these histories are vital in understanding the importance of what was taking place along the Waterfront and the surrounding neighborhoods of Ghirardelli Square.

For a broader understanding of the ideas surrounding the reaction against urban redevelopment in regards to downtown revitalization, Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn's *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities* (1989) contains several case studies that shed light on the positive side of downtown urban renewal, specifically of shopping centers meant to draw people away from suburban malls. While this is helpful in understanding the changing concepts of urban design taking hold throughout the country, I do not agree with the condescending comments the authors directed towards the development of Ghirardelli Square, and the people involved in the project.

Within the discussion in Chapter 4 of urban shopping centers, the authors only provide one paragraph on the subject of Ghirardelli Square, relegating it to a project by

“small, local entrepreneurs... that were not a part of the big league.”⁸ This statement alone has been discredited by other researchers as well as within this project. Not only is it dismissive, but similar to Isenberg’s analysis, it fails to take into consideration the concepts utilized within Ghirardelli Square linked to contemporary theories of urban design, such as Gordon Cullen’s Townscape theory (1961) and Kevin Lynch’s *Image of the City* (1960). Both of these theories emerged in parallel with the development of Ghirardelli Square and speak to ideas challenging contemporary modernist design at the time. They will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

⁸ Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn’s *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 75

CHAPTER 1: RESISTING THE “WALL STREET OF THE WEST”⁹

To begin the story of how Ghirardelli Square came into existence we must first step back 17 years to investigate the changing, and some would say modernization of, urban environments. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, a time of prosperity and population growth throughout the United States emerged. To keep up with the demand for new housing within major metropolitan areas, urban planners, working with city managers, began to look at new concepts with respect to urban renewal and redevelopment projects. It was at this time that the term “urban renewal” came in to vogue among city managers and developers. Under this new urban policy cities could apply for funds to redevelop certain areas they deemed blighted.¹⁰ Meant to be a means of removing urban blight and improve the living conditions for many of the residents within the city, mid-century urban renewal planning’s end result was a great deal of

⁹ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 10. According to Isenberg, the Wall Street of the West movement first took off in San Francisco in the 1920s; at that time, it was evidently a real estate concept for the development of Montgomery Street as much as it was a claim about the city’s banking sector. See Dudley Westler, “Stable Realty Values Create World Market,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 4, 1928, M27. From David Rockefeller’s New York City perspective in 1969, San Francisco had a “reactionary and hostile business climate” and was clearly ambivalent about its ambition to remain the West Coast’s financial and business center. See Warren Lindquist to Emmett Solomon, April 28, 1969, folder Real Estate-Embarcadero Center 1966-72, Box 412, RG3, Rockefeller Family, RAC. Used with special authorization.

¹⁰ According to Eric Mumford in *Designing the Modern City: Urbanism since 1850*, “In the United States from 1949 to the early 1970s, millions of dollars of federal funds were disbursed to many cities to clear and rebuild central urban areas. The New Deal focus on slum clearance public housing was expanded to include more business and institutionally oriented efforts, such as those in Chicago by the South Side Planning Board.” In regards to urban planning, “Blight” was used to describe impoverished neighborhoods that planners believed needed to be completely rebuilt. The implications were that “blight” stood in the way of progress, that it could spread, and that it needed to be removed before it killed the City. It was a deeply political term firmly rooted in structural racism, which relied on fears of white flight and urban disinvestment to justify the wholesale removal of communities of color. See San Francisco Planning Commissions 100 Year Centennial program for more information. https://default.sfplanning.org/publications_reports/SF_Planning_Centennial_Brochure.pdf, (Accessed 29 December 2019).

social injustice, particularly as it related to minorities, immigrants and poorer members of the community.¹¹

In city after city – from New York to Philadelphia to San Francisco – the areas that were deemed blighted and subject to wholesale clearance of structures and residents were predominantly low-rent, low-income and immigrant neighborhoods located adjacent either to upper-middle class homes or to the “central business districts.”¹² Many city planners looked at redeveloping many of these areas in the hopes of creating large open spaces and multiple story housing complexes made up of concrete and glass slabs.¹³ Sadly, this drive to “modernize” the city was also driving many urbanites to the suburbs, turning the urban landscape into a place “to work in and to endure – a place you have to go to but want to leave as soon as you can.”¹⁴ The fact that many of these planned design concepts, from skyscraper cities to open space housing communities, altered both the physical characteristics and personality of the mid-century city was simply not a concern

¹¹ For more information see: Amy Lavine, “Urban Renewal and the Story of Berman v. Parker”, *The Urban Lawyer*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 423-275; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton University Press, 2014); “The Story of Urban Renewal,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, May 21, 2000, <http://old.post-gazette.com/businessnews/20000521eastliberty1.asp>, (Accessed 13 November 2019).

¹² Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880*, Fourth Edition, (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 280.

¹³ Examples of such plans include the ill-fated Pruitt-Igoe of St. Louis, MO and the potential plan for Jefferson Square Neighborhood in San Francisco, CA (see images for both later in this chapter). North Beach, where Ghirardelli Square is located, was also included within this redevelopment (see Figure 2 Master Plan of San Francisco)

¹⁴ *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life*. Edited by J. Tyrwhitt, J.L. Sert, E.N. Rogers. (New York, 1952), 4. In regards to San Francisco specifically, it was increasingly becoming the Bay Area’s “office town”, with a labor force that was mostly white-collar and commuted.

for most of the city planners and architects involved in the process of redevelopment and “urban renewal.”¹⁵

Urban Renewal Comes to San Francisco

Not to be left behind as other cities began to modernize and innovate, San Francisco created its First General Plan for Redevelopment in December 1945 in direct response to the creation of the California Community Redevelopment Act in the same year.¹⁶ San Francisco’s General Plan was firmly rooted in contemporary modernist planning: “the plan was intended to serve as a living document and as the first step in the continuous process of planning. It spoke of the city as a ‘gigantic machine... (that) should run smoothly like a ball bearing,’ so long as the ‘parts (that) are old and no longer fit’ are replaced, rebuilt and improved.”¹⁷

By 1947, the San Francisco Planning Commission had targeted the Western Addition District, South of Market, Chinatown, The Mission, and Bayview/Hunters Point as “general areas in which conditions indicative of blight are found.”¹⁸ As shown in the

¹⁵ The term “urban renewal¹⁵” was first popularized when the Housing Act of 1954 was passed, the third amendment to the 1934 Act. The National Housing Act of 1934’s purpose was to stop the rise of bank foreclosures on homes during the Great Depression. It offered mortgage insurance and made housing options more affordable. See: Louis Hyman, “The Architecture of New Deal Capitalism,” *Reviews in American History*, March 2009, Johns Hopkins University Press, 37(1): 93-100; John Buescher, “Home Sales During the Depression,” Teachinghistory.org; Public Law 73-479, 73rd Congress, H.R. 9620, National Housing Act of 1934, fraser.stlouisfed.org/archival/1341/item/457156. The amendment provided funding for “improvement of housing, the elimination and prevention of slums, and the conservation and development of urban communities (Public Law 83-560 <https://uslaw.link/citation/us-law/public/83/560>. (Accessed 13 November 2019).

¹⁶ For more information see the San Francisco Planning Commission’s Centennial Brochure, sfplanning.org/resource/planning-commission-centennial, (Accessed 5 March 2020).

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

below image (Figure 2), these districts were designated as blighted neighborhoods, disregarding any historic importance to the neighborhood or the structures within.

Figure 2. The Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco, December 20, 1945, San Francisco Planning Commission, San Francisco, CA. Permission to reprint.

By the end of that same year the Planning Commission released their “New City: San Francisco Redeveloped” report targeting the 36-block area “bounded by Van Ness Avenue, McAllister, Webster, and Geary Streets,” for low income housing and artificial open space parks.¹⁹ The plan, proposed as The Jefferson Square Neighborhood, was to include several substantial apartment houses and social welfare institutions that took on

¹⁹ San Francisco Planning Commission “New City: San Francisco Redeveloped: The Jefferson Square Neighborhood” (1947), <https://www.flickr.com/photos/walkingsf/4099003940>. (Accessed 5 March 2020).

the appearance of modernist cement slabs placed on their side, devoid of any personality or individuality, similar in many ways to the Pruitt-Igoe project of 1950 in St. Louis, MO.²⁰

FREEWAY REVOLT

As local city planners continued to target areas that they deemed blighted, strife was beginning to take hold within the city and among its residents, strife and resentment against the selling off of neighborhoods for urban renewal and removal projects steadily grew. Successful redevelopment projects, including the Golden Gateway downtown and Embarcadero Center, existed in stark contrast to renovation projects to neighborhoods such as the Western Addition and Yerba Buena, which entailed total destruction of the existing architecture.²¹

²⁰ According to Oscar Newman in Peter Hall's *Cities of Tomorrow*, the Pruitt-Igoe experimental high-rise complex tragedy "is best appreciated when we realize that the most recognized of architects are often those who turn out the most dramatic failures." As Hall continues stating the issue with such structures was due to the fact that while there were two camps to modern architecture, the "social methodologist" and "style metaphysicians", the "United States had only imported the second, Corbusian training." This analysis surrounding the reason for the failure of such high-rise "affordable" housing can be directly compared to the success of "conventional low-rise developments, with similar mixes of tenants," experiencing "no such problems." For more information see Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention and Urban Design*. (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

²¹ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream: An Illustrated History of San Francisco*, (San Francisco: Scrimshaw Press, 1976), 274.

Figure 3, Western Addition Area 1 demolition, December 1953. Available from: San Francisco Public Library. Permission to reprint.

According to T.H. Watkins and Roger R. Olmstead's *Mirror of the Dream*, the wholesale destruction in the Western Addition (Figure 3) began to look like a mistake as new apartments of low quality but high rent began to replace historic buildings that could have been renovated and modernized.²² As more and more elements, both historical and nostalgic, were being destroyed, San Franciscans were beginning to see the value in saving what was distinctively San Franciscan. For example, several grassroots historic preservation movements devoted to saving existing neighborhoods in San Francisco,

²² *ibid*, 278.

including the Waterfront and surrounding Aquatic Park, were organized by private citizens frustrated with the loss of historic buildings and neighborhoods.²³

In addition to plans to create multi-family housing and open park spaces, San Francisco was bitten by the same bug that plagued Los Angeles and New York City: the determination to design and build a vast freeway system. For evidence of this we need look no further than a 1948 San Francisco Planning Department map that was adopted in 1951, which shows 10 freeways crisscrossing the city, including freeways that would extend all the way into the Richmond and Sunset neighborhoods.

As early as 1958, protests erupted to stop many urban renewal projects, including the planned extension of the Embarcadero Freeway towards Golden Gate Bridge.²⁴ This city-long freeway would have run through parts of Golden Gate Park, displacing hundreds of minority residents.²⁵ Termed the “Freeway Revolt”, the protest was organized by neighborhood groups who had presented the Board of Supervisors with a signed petition, listing 30,000 names asking to cancel seven of the planned freeways, including the Embarcadero.²⁶ Though construction had already begun on this freeway, including 1 ½

²³ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 274.

²⁴ As construction began on the Embarcadero Freeway, which was planned to cut public opposition had formed with over 30,000 people signing petitions at meeting held in Sunset, Telegraph, Russian Hills, and other threatened areas. By 1959 neighborhood preservationists and environmental activists had successfully convinced the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to halt its approval of seven of nine freeways scheduled for construction. For more information see: Chris Carlsson, “The Freeway Revolt”, www.foundsf.org. (Accessed 11 November 2019), William Issel, “Land Values, Human Values, and the Preservation of the City’s Treasured Appearance: Environmentalism, Politics, and the San Francisco Freeway Revolt”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Nov., 1999), Watkins, T. H., and Roger R. Olmsted. *Mirror of the Dream: An Illustrated History of San Francisco*. San Francisco: Scrimshaw Press, 1976 and Katherin M. Johnson, “Captain Blake versus the Highwaymen: Or, How San Francisco Won the Freeway Revolt” *Journal of Planning History*. Volume: 8 Issue : 1, 2008.

²⁵ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 274.

²⁶ Chris Carlsson, “The Freeway Revolt”, www.foundsf.org. (Accessed 11 November 2019).

miles of freeway that was completed along the Embarcadero, the Board of Supervisors voted to reject both plans, which successfully halted any further construction.²⁷

This narrative is an important element in understanding how Ghirardelli Square came to exist. At a time when freeways and automobiles were taking hold of California, San Francisco “harbored the seeds of an incipient revolt”, rejecting the expansion of both freeways and saving several neighborhoods from demolition.²⁸ But it was not just the unsightly view of a freeway cutting through the fabric of the city, nor the very real displacement of hundreds of people from their homes and neighborhoods that led to the large number of protests throughout San Francisco. In direct reaction against the “Manhattanization” of the city, many San Franciscans were convinced that, according to Watkins and Olmstead, “San Francisco’s ready capitulation to those interests promoting high-density development and all that came with it” were in fact destroying the life, light and charm of the city.²⁹

²⁷ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 274.

²⁸ Carlsson, “The Freeway Revolt”.

²⁹ According to Watkins and Olmstead, these “cityside conservationist” revolts varied in degrees of organization to outright disorganization in direct reaction to what was perceived as “untrammelled and almost completely undirected change”, 274.

CHAPTER 2 - SETTING THE STAGE

In the first half of the 1960s, growing concerns for equality and freedom of speech led to many college students organizing massive protests both within the urban fabric and on college campuses.³⁰ In 1961, Alfred Heller founded California Tomorrow to introduce “a greater awareness of the problems we must face to maintain a beautiful and productive California.”³¹ Directly related to the latter point, urban renewal and redevelopment throughout major cities was not immune to the growing backlash experienced across different societal spheres.

Perhaps in response to this backlash, or in direct concert with it, Jane Jacobs’ seminal work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), was unprecedented in its evisceration of the modernist drive to revitalize the urban city without consideration for the loss of neighbors, people, or personality. While the majority of her work focused on what took place within New York City, specifically in regards to urban planner Robert Moses and his Hausmannization of the city and surrounding areas, it is Jacobs’ direct examples of neighborhoods and the people who lived within them that spoke to the diversity, and contrasting destruction, taking place within the urban fabric. In fact, Jacobs’ book argued that “urban renewal” or, “slum clearance” as many began to call it, did not respect the needs of the city dweller.³²

³⁰ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 266-277. Examples of such protests include the 1960 University of California and San Francisco State College student protest held at City Hall in reaction against the House Un-American Activities Committee’s closed sessions. Others included the 1961 creation of the “Save the Bay” Movement, founded by Catherine Kerr, Sylvia McLaughlin, and Esther Gulick, and the “Free Speech Movement” of 1964.

³¹ *ibid*, 272.

³² Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 50th Anniversary Edition, (New York: Random House, 2011), 6-7.

Much has been written about Jane Jacobs and her fight to save New York proper, along with her crusade to change contemporary urban renewal planning principles so I will not spend too much time here discussing her work. But I do feel it is important to note that Jacobs, while not opposed to new buildings being introduced into an urban environment, advocated that each neighborhood “must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a proportion of old ones.”³³

While it can be argued that Ghirardelli Square does not necessarily fall under the umbrella of urban renewal, due to its private purchase and development funding, it is important to note that because of its location in an area designated as blighted by the City Plan of San Francisco (Figure 2), there was still a risk the location would be swallowed up by the high-rise craze sweeping through the City. If not for the 1960 “Height-Limit Revolt” organized by residents of Russian and Telegraph Hill, this location was at risk.

Russian Hill and the Fight to Save the Waterfront

It was actually one specific project that led the way for the planning manager of the San Francisco to push for a law limiting the height of buildings to 40-feet.³⁴ Located one city block North of Ghirardelli Square on North Point St., the historic Fontana Spaghetti Factory was demolished to make way for the construction of twin modernist apartment buildings, the 17-story Fontana Apartments (Figure 4), which would irrevocably alter the views and property values of thousands of San Francisco residents.³⁵ As Karl Kortum

³³ *ibid*, 244.

³⁴ Chris Carlsson, “Height Limit Revolt Saves Waterfront Vistas”, www.foundsf.org, and *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1960. (Accessed 11 November 2019).

³⁵ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 274.

warned, “like a pair of enormous tombstones, side by side, these structures will signalize a dead chance that the city once had.”³⁶

Figure 4, Photo of Fontana Towers, 2012 by Chris Carlsson. Permission to reprint.

Though the organized resistance of Russian Hill residents was too late to stop the construction of the much-maligned curving towers, their efforts started a chain reaction of laws to stop the “Manhattanization” of San Francisco and the Waterfront.³⁷ It was in 1960 that then planning director James R. McCarthy declared that “San Francisco zoning laws will have to be changed to prevent construction of a ‘Chinese Wall’ of skyscrapers

³⁶ Isenberg, “’Culture-a-Go-Go’: The Ghirardelli Square Sculpture Controversy”, 11.

³⁷ Carlsson, “Height Limit Revolt Saves Waterfront Vistas” and *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1960.

along its waterfront... We want to avoid what has happened in lower Manhattan in New York, where views of the bay are blocked by high rising buildings.”³⁸

As mentioned, this call for updated zoning laws led to a temporary 40-foot height limit on 100 blocks of the northern waterfront. There was resistance from the start from both political and commercial interests, but fortunately the Planning Commissioners was not swayed.³⁹ Efforts to end the restriction at the Board of Supervisors led to the then pro-development Mayor George Christopher publicly supporting this change.⁴⁰ Thanks in no small part to a diverse organized movement consisting of twenty-two improvement groups and neighborhood associations, including the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, activists were able to obtain 8,000 signatures on a petition to support the 40-foot height limit.⁴¹ By 1964, the restriction was made permanent and even once critical Weinberger had only positive things to say about the law.⁴²

Even before Russian Hill residents were fighting to halt the construction of the Fontana Apartments, a young chicken farmer, in love with the sea, was working to return

³⁸James Rubin, *A Negotiated Landscape: The Transformation of San Francisco's Waterfront Since 1950*, (Chicago: The Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2011), 114; See also “Changes Urged in Zoning Laws: *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1960.

³⁹ According to Carlsson, Casper Weinberger, “who had been a 3-term Republican state assembly member in the 1950”, the San Francisco Real Estate Board, the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Associated General Contractors, and the San Francisco Building Trades Council, all opposed and avidly fought the new height limit ruling.

⁴⁰ Carlsson, “Height Limit Revolt Saves Waterfront Vistas”, The Planning Department continued to advocate for height restrictions in favor of public arguments stating that “enjoyment of nature and views belong to everyone and should not be sacrificed to private real estate interests.”

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² According to Carlsson, Weinberger argued that the law “will preserve for future generations one of the priceless assets of San Francisco, the whole relationship of the city to the Bay... and particularly, the views enjoyed by the public from publicly owned lands.”

San Francisco's Aquatic Park to its former glory.⁴³ A key player involved in the drive for conservation along the San Francisco Bay, Karl Kortum envisioned a grand maritime museum within the bathhouse, as well as "historic vessels moored in the cove."⁴⁴ Deemed largely a great success, both the museum and ships are still located a stone's throw away from what was to become Ghirardelli Square. Important to note, as an early proponent of rescuing much of the waterfront and turning it into an "historic maritime destination," Kortum had connected with a wide range of supporters from newspapers, the head of the sailors' union, and city commissioners and supervisors to make his dream a reality.⁴⁵ With this support, Kortum began to work towards incorporating other areas within the North Waterfront that were in danger of falling victim to urban renewal.⁴⁶

Of course, there were many setbacks along the way, including the rumored sale of historic Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory to a private developer. In early 1962, The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that the Ghirardelli Family was in talks to sell the Factory complex to a developer looking to "sell the property as an apartment house."⁴⁷ Located at the western most point of Fisherman's Wharf, just below the wealthy residents of Russian Hill and adjacent to the Go-Go Bars and Beat Clubs of old North Beach, the Ghirardelli Factory was located smack dab in the middle of areas within San Francisco that were witnessing the brunt of protests against urban renewal and revitalization. In addition, North Beach had been designated as a blighted area in the San Francisco City Plan. The

⁴³ James P. Delgado, "A Dream of 7 Decades: San Francisco's Aquatic Park", *California History*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Fall, 1985), 282.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 28.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 27-29. And Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 286.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 30.

risk was great that the city would allow the construction of such a massive concrete and glass modern structure, similar to what had taken place at the Fontana Spaghetti Factory one block over.⁴⁸

This megastructure plan titled “Ghirardelli Center” encouraged Kortum, who had worked tirelessly to revitalize the waterfront and surrounding areas, to look for a private investor to save the Ghirardelli Block.⁴⁹ Encouraged by Kortum and others, William Matson Roth, along with his mother Lurline Matson Roth, stepped in to purchase the Ghirardelli Factory and surrounding city block.⁵⁰ Kortum pinned his hopes on Roth’s rescue of the complex and conversion of it into an extension of the Aquatic Park and the Maritime Museum. Roth had other plans.⁵¹

“Magnificent Act of Civic Rescue”⁵²

William Roth, a life-long San Franciscan, had a special connection to the City by the Bay. Born and raised in the city, his work as the director and officer of Matson Navigation in San Francisco, along with his role as a regent for the University of California provided him with ample opportunity to witness the impact the changes taking

⁴⁸ See Figure 1 in Chapter 1 for detailed layout of areas deemed blighted by the city.

⁴⁹ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 30. “Kortum and others approached William Roth about saving the building.” And Letter from Karl Kortum to William Roth dated April 25, 1962, Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder. Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁵⁰ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 30; Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 381 and Letter to Randy Delehanty from Warren Lemmon detailing cost of purchase and subsequent alterations, October 23, 1981. Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder. Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA. Roth paid \$2,500,000 to purchase the property. It would cost an additional \$8,700,000 to complete the project. It was subsequently sold in 1982 for \$20 million.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 30.

place in San Francisco were having on both the citizens and landscape of the city.⁵³

Though Roth's purchase of the location may be viewed solely as a developer looking to exploit a viable urban space for commercial gain, his choice of location was directly impacted by the grassroots activism of Karl Kortum and the Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Roth was not opposed to skyscrapers, urban redevelopment, or even large apartment towers, but he did harbor a strong desire to halt a "wall of Fontana high-rises to replace brick factories."⁵⁴ As someone who supported diverse projects like Tin Angel and modernist artistic endeavors such as the San Francisco Museum of Art, Roth had an ability to bridge old and new.⁵⁵ In his work as developer of Ghirardelli Square, and in collaboration with Halprin, Kortum, and the advisory board, Roth's vision to create an open-air pedestrian space, without the demolition of the existing factory buildings, in essence reworked the old (Ghirardelli Factory) into something new and innovative (Ghirardelli Square).⁵⁶

Roth's role as leader of the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR) during this time provided him with ample opportunity to see what the changing landscape of San Francisco was doing to the city he loved.⁵⁷ It was, in fact, his direct involvement in the city's redevelopment program during this time, coupled with his own

⁵³ Martin, Douglas Martin, "William M. Roth, Shipping Heir Who Became Lifelong Public Servant, Dies at 97". *The New York Times*, June 16, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/business/william-m-roth-shipping-heir-who-became-lifelong-public-servant-dies-at-97.html>. (Accessed 13 February 2019).

⁵⁴ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 32.

⁵⁵ Isenberg, "'Culture-a-Go-Go'", 403.

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 12. The San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR) is a business-backed citizen's advocacy and redevelopment organization comprised of business leaders and neighborhood citizens focused on urban planning and governance.

guilt for his lack of action when the city's historic 1800 Montgomery Block was demolished, that placed his purchase of the Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory as a direct reaction against the "colossal failure of many urban renewal projects", spurred on by the destruction that was taking place throughout San Francisco during the previous two decades.⁵⁸

Aside from concerns surrounding the loss of historic locations and communities, Roth had a more pragmatic goal in regards to the purchase of the Ghirardelli property: to build a multi-use shopping, dining, and open-air entertainment location bursting with all the amenities a local San Franciscan could desire.⁵⁹ To understand where the plan, to be discussed later in this chapter, originated within Roth and his team's process, we must first look at what other concerns city planners and metropolitan cities were facing.

Like major urban areas throughout the country, San Francisco was experiencing a sudden exodus of the middle class. The city was becoming a place one came solely for work, with a majority of the white-collar workers commuting in from surrounding suburban areas.⁶⁰ The International Congresses for Modern Architecture (CIAM) was directly concerned with the shift in the City Core. CIAM advocated for a return to community centers filled with public squares, promenades, cafes, etc. where people could

⁵⁸ According to Allison Isenberg, "'Culture-a-Go-Go'", 8, this site was known locally as the Monkey Block and "by the late nineteenth century the building was associated with writers, artists, actors - San Francisco's first bohemians". Currently the location for the Transamerica Building, it first sat for ten years after demolition of the buildings as a parking lot. See also Watkins' and Olmstead *Mirror of the Dream* for detailed list of artists and writers associated with the history of this location; Richard L. Austin, David G. Woodcock, W. Cecil Steward, and R. Alan Forrester, *Adaptive Reuse: Issues and Case Studies in Building Preservation*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1988) 19.

⁵⁹ William Roth, Ghirardelli Memorandum, January 27, 1963, Container 1, William M. Roth Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁶⁰ *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life*. Edited by J. Tyrwhitt, J.L. Sert, E.N. Rogers. (New York, 1952), 4.

meet and enjoy their surroundings.⁶¹ At a time when many other metropolitan cities were experiencing the same problem, it became imperative for planners to find a way to bring people back to the downtown they no longer recognized. Roth hoped to do just that.

As I began investigating a treasure trove of archival resources at University of California, Berkeley, I discovered a paper trail that perfectly laid out, chronologically, each step taken from purchase to eventual opening of Ghirardelli Square to the public in two phases, with the first phase opening in 1964. Through this research it also became clear that, from the beginning, Roth had a specific plan in mind concerning the layout and function of his Ghirardelli Project. This function, or purpose, of Roth's newly acquired land included, among other things, a decree to first and foremost keep as many original buildings as feasible.⁶² He also stated he wanted the location "to be oriented chiefly to residents of the Bay Area – not tourists" and that "strict quality control" would be maintained in the selection of shops, outdoor entertainment, and possibility of residential spaces.⁶³ The foundation of this last point can be found in Roth's belief "that profit could be generated by ambience and association."⁶⁴

But first, he needed to find an architect and a designer for this new urban space. After purchasing the property, Roth began to assemble an advisory team that would help decide each aspect of the design, landscape, and occupancy layout of Ghirardelli Square. The first person Roth added to the team was Warren Lemmon, from Matson Realities, as

⁶¹ *ibid*, 6.

⁶² William Roth, Ghirardelli Memorandum, January 27, 1963, Container 1, William M. Roth Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁶³ Roth, 1963.

⁶⁴ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 288

the on-site project manager.⁶⁵ Lemmon's role was to "solicit advice and broker decisions amid contradictory recommendations", which eventually led to Roth appointing him president of Ghirardelli Square Inc.⁶⁶ Tasked with securing architects for both the buildings and layout of the Square, Lemmon chose a well-known San Francisco firm with extensive experience working on some of the most recognizable buildings throughout the world.⁶⁷ Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons (WBE) was, and still is, a well-known and highly respected architectural firm, known as an important "finishing school" for many Bay Area up and coming architects.⁶⁸

Proctor Mellquist, the *Sunset* Editor who had encouraged Roth to purchase the Ghirardelli complex, was another one of the first to join the Advisory Board. Mellquist, considered to be the leading expert on trends in Western living, continued to have an important role within the development of Ghirardelli Square including encouraging Roth early on in the process to "exploit the factory's open spaces."⁶⁹

Mellquist saw much potential in the location and encouraged Roth to incorporate space for live music, outdoor dining, views of water, and the sight and sound of a fountain splashing.⁷⁰ He also recommended keeping as many of the original buildings as possible, echoing Roth's own ideas, along with adding a wealth of trees and foliage and

⁶⁵ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 65.

⁶⁶ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 65

⁶⁷ These buildings include the Bank of America, World Headquarters Building on 555 California Street in San Francisco, Stanford Medical Plaza and Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Science and United States Government, Department of State, Consulate Office Building in Hong Kong, to name a few. WBE also worked on both the Bay Area Rapid Transit project and Golden Gateway Redevelopment Project in San Francisco. For more information see pcad.lib.washington.edu/firm/128. (Accessed 12 March 2020).

⁶⁸ pcad.lib.washington.edu/firm/128. (Accessed 12 March 2020).

⁶⁹ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 88.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 89.

ample seating from benches to umbrella-covered outdoor tables.⁷¹ To add another twist to this tale, it was Mellquist who contacted Lawrence Halprin, a well-respected Landscape Architect, and encouraged him to “look over the Ghirardelli Center and note ideas down for you (Roth).”⁷² It was this encouragement and subsequent submission of a plan that mirrored Roth and Mellquist’s own ideas that helped Halprin to stand out from the over 20 other designers vying for an opportunity to create Ghirardelli Square.⁷³

From the start, Karl Kortum was eager to be a part of the planning process for the Ghirardelli Project. He joined the advisory board early on and provided feedback concerning the architects and design ideas to be implemented along with recommendations concerning what should or should not be placed within this historic location.⁷⁴ These, of course, were not the only opinions Kortum had, and shared, concerning the Ghirardelli Project and the people Roth brought on to design and execute his plan. According to Allison Isenberg in *Designing San Francisco*, Karl Kortum and David Pesonen, an associate of Kortum’s who hoped to be hired to work on the Project, counseled William Roth on his choice to use modernist architects and landscape architects in the project. Kortum believed that:

“these fellows are so seldom creative that it is pitiful... their almost uniform failure – because so damned few are really talented – moves me to contempt and

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Letter from Lawrence Halprin to William Roth dated June 27, 1962, Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁷³ Synopses of Proposals for Ghirardelli Block, Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁷⁴ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 30. Kortum had suggested early on that the distinctive buildings would be perfectly suited as an extension campus for the University of California, where Roth served as Board of Regents. And Advisory Board Minutes, Board Meeting, Wednesday November 6, 1963, Container 1, Advisory Board Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

to a kind of rage when they start to spoil something as fine as the Ghirardelli property.”⁷⁵

As far as Kortum and Pesonen were concerned, the Ghirardelli Project needed preservationists, environmentalists, and historians; not modernist architects and designers.⁷⁶ In their mind, modernist architects did not have the ability to preserve historic structures and, preferring to tear down old structures to create new ones that better emphasized their “singular artistic originality.”⁷⁷

Looking through the notes and letters from Karl Kortum to Roth and Lemmon, Kortum did not want much of the face of the Ghirardelli Project altered.⁷⁸ He had wanted Ghirardelli Square to become an extension of the Aquatic Park and Maritime Museum, hoping to see his goal of creating an historic attraction to rival and complement Fisherman’s Wharf.⁷⁹ The contention that Kortum and his team brought to the project I find most fascinating due to the fact that what Roth, Mellquist, and even Lawrence Halprin created in their preliminary designs for the project actually called for the rescue and renovation of the vast majority of the buildings, including the historic factory, clock tower, and electric sign. Kortum continued to serve on the Advisory Board through the opening and launch of the second phase of construction and one wonders if he ever found satisfaction in the finished project or had always harbored hope that his presence would eventually sway others to consider his viewpoint.

⁷⁵ Isenberg, 50. And Kortum to Roth, August 22, 1963, Binder 1, Box 1, GSAR.

⁷⁶ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 52.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, 50.

⁷⁸ Advisory Board Minutes, November 6, 1963

⁷⁹ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 286.1

CHAPTER 3: BEEHIVE OF EXCITEMENT

Ground broke on the future site of Ghirardelli Center in November 1963.⁸⁰ At this same time, a working model of Ghirardelli Square was presented to the Advisory Board, detailing the development plan for the easterly half of the block, which was scheduled for completion in October 1964.⁸¹ Chapter 2 introduced us to the many players involved in the decisions made concerning the design, construction, amenities, and tenancies. Before the first advisory board meeting in June 1963, many aspects of the planning and recruitment were already taking place, spearheaded by Roth and Lemmon.

The reason I bring this up is that most historians and biographers associate Ghirardelli Square and its success to one man: Lawrence Halprin. While I am by no means dismissing Halprin nor his immense work on the project, which will be the subject of this chapter, I believe that it is important to note that, similar to the description of Haussmanization by Stephane Kirkland, who argues that Haussmann worked closely with Napoleon to raze and reconstruct Paris in the 19th century, Halprin did not work alone.⁸² Many of the ideas Halprin expanded on originated with William Roth and Proctor Mellquist months before Halprin was brought on board. In fact, Roth was involved in the

⁸⁰ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 32-33.

⁸¹ Minutes of the Ghirardelli Square Advisory Board meeting held on Wednesday, November 6, 1963, Advisory Board Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁸² In regards to the working relationship between Napoleon and Haussmann, much of the legacy surrounding the rebuilding of Paris is termed Haussmannisation, completely ignoring the plans and impact Napoleon exerted even before Haussmann joined the project. This example parallels the Ghirardelli Square project not only due to the fact that William Roth had begun developing ideas and concepts before Lawrence Halprin joined but also that when Ghirardelli Square is remembered, historically, it is more often than not tied solely to Halprin as the lone genius behind the project. For more about the relationship between Napoleon III and Baron Hausmann in regards to the rebuilding of Paris read Stephane Kirkland, *Paris Reborn: Napoleon III, Baron Haussmann, and the Quest to Build a Modern City*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013).

project every step of the way, approving or requesting changes to Halprin's plans throughout construction. Much of the overall layout of the Square, including the choice to add new buildings that would match the existing factory buildings, were approved by Roth.⁸³

That Halprin's original design submission perfectly mirrored what Roth envisioned for Ghirardelli Square is important to note as these were novel ideas not seen as widely during this time period.⁸⁴ I argue that Roth and Halprin's collaboration on this project stems from their awareness of the changing needs within the urban landscape and the growing desire for a public mixed-use location intimate enough for strolling, shopping, eating, and people-watching.⁸⁵ By looking back to early architectural and urban theorists, such as Camillo Sitte, and contemporaries like Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen, Halprin worked to deliver on that ideal.

From the start, Halprin concurred with Roth and Melquist that the goal of redevelopment should include saving as many of the original buildings as could feasibly be done.⁸⁶ Within his preliminary plan (Figure 5) Halprin included options for underground parking, multi-tiered access to the Square, and highlighted the need to incorporate as much lighting, seating, and greenery, things Proctor Melquist and William

⁸³ Letters and preliminary architectural plan/Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder. Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁸⁴ A total of 26 design and architectural firms submitted proposals to William Roth for the Ghirardelli Project. Of those, some did call for an addition of a high-rise structure "if and when zoning permits" (See Rockrise and Watson) which was still very much in vogue within the urban planning community. Warren Lemmon and Others, Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁸⁵ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 32.

⁸⁶ Lawrence Halprin, *Lawrence Halprin Notebooks, 1959-1971*, (Cambridge [Mass.]; London: M.I.T. Press, 1972), 75. And Letter from Lawrence Halprin to William Roth dated June 27, 1962, Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder. Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Roth were eager to include in the space.⁸⁷ Lawrence Halprin himself states, within his book *Cities*, that “in addition to” multiple uses, “Ghirardelli Square was designed to be fun to be in.”⁸⁸ He wanted visitors, old and young, to have the opportunity, within a major urban city, to choose from different places to eat; listen to music; have a variety of options for shopping; or just sit and people watch if they wanted to.⁸⁹ This vision not only changed the face of Ghirardelli Factory and the North Beach community but significantly impacted urban design and planning for decades to come.

⁸⁷ Halprin, *Lawrence Halprin Notebooks*, 75-77.

⁸⁸ Lawrence Halprin, *Cities*, 1963, 493.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

Notes on the Ghirardelli Center For Bill Roth June '62

It's quite clear that much of the old brick stuff should
But some should come out!!!!

Section (no scale)

The box factory should be removed as should the one story wings between the old factories.

A great plaza at the upper level should be developed —
around it a "BEEHIVE OF EXCITEMENT" with several

Figure 5. Lawrence Halprin's proposal to William Roth, submitted April 1962. Lawrence Halprin Collection, Architectural Archives, The University of Pennsylvania. Permission to reprint.

The Man, the Myth, the Legend

But where did Halprin come up with his innovative and intricate design ideas, woven in choreography, landscaping, brick and lighting? We have already seen that the foundation for many of Halprin's plans in regards to Ghirardelli Square was laid out and shared by Roth and Proctor Mellquist from the beginning, months before Halprin joined the team. In fact, throughout the project, every aspect of Halprin's design had to be approved by Roth. Letters between the two show how specific Roth was in the details he wanted throughout the Square, down to how many plants were to be located in the open-air spaces.⁹⁰

As mentioned earlier, much of the preliminary plan for Ghirardelli Square had been mapped out by William Roth shortly after purchasing the property. This fact, coupled with Halprin's own evolution of thought and planning in regards to moving away from modernist design aesthetics, found its perfect expression in Ghirardelli Square. While much has been written about Lawrence Halprin and his genesis from Landscape Architect to designer of suburban malls to adaptive reuse projects such as Ghirardelli Square and Levi's Plaza, my goal is to briefly introduce the architect here along with a sampling of his projects.⁹¹ My hope is to showcase the evolution and trajectory of his career as further

⁹⁰ Letter from William Roth to Walter Lemmon, Container 1, Warren Lemmon and Others Folder. Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

⁹¹ For more information about Lawrence Halprin see Kenneth I. Helphand, *Lawrence Halprin*, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2017); Alison Bick Hirsch, *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: the Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

proof of his connection to changing urban design and planning theories along with ties to new concepts and ideas presented later in this chapter.

Lawrence Halprin began his architectural career after his service in World War II, first working for San Francisco architect Thomas Dolliver Church. Originally, Halprin had arrived at the building to meet an old Harvard college friend, Bill Wurster of Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons, the architects on the future Ghirardelli Square project. Halprin was referred to Church by his friend and worked on several projects for him before venturing on his own.⁹² Eventually Halprin started his own Landscape Architecture office, with commissions mostly involving work for private gardens and backyards.⁹³ As Halprin's projects evolved to include public works such as the West Coast Memorial to the Missing of World War II for the Presidio, the Seattle World's Fair, and Sproul Plaza for UC Berkeley, he began to look at the connection between nature, urban locales, and human interaction.⁹⁴ As Frank Lloyd Wright stated about Halprin, while designing the exhibition on the latter's career for the San Francisco MOMA, "he saw there was a need for a new way to express the (urban) landscape at the end of the 20th century'."⁹⁵ This constant evolution within Halprin's work and theories led to two of his most recognizable works: Sea Ranch in California and Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco.

⁹² John King, "Lawrence Halprin – landscape architect – dies", San Francisco Chronicle, October 26, 2009. (Accessed 15 April 2020).

⁹³ *Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places*, Exhibition Catalogue, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 7.

⁹⁴ Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1994, 153-154.

⁹⁵ King, "Lawrence Halprin – landscape architect – dies".

To understand Halprin's methodology in regards to Ghirardelli Square it is important to look at his Sea Ranch project which was completed at the same time. Planning for Sea Ranch began in 1963, the same year Halprin began to work on Ghirardelli Square. While Ghirardelli Square was meant to be an urban oasis in a city besieged by the sounds of redevelopment and automobiles, Sea Ranch was created as a location for experimental projects, both architecturally and on a human scale.⁹⁶ Within this project, Halprin began to experiment with the concept of diverse usage within open spaces. His hikes on the John Muir Trail aided in developing many of his own theories about the concept and evolution of form.⁹⁷ As a landscape architect, Halprin was already familiar with the beauty, artistry, and form of nature. Through his projects and classes at Sea Ranch, Halprin began to intersperse the existing beauty of nature with artificial forms, architecture and human interaction to choreographed movement, both within nature and by society.⁹⁸ As Halprin himself states in an interview with The Chronicle, "Landscape architecture deals with things that are so important. It's partly nature, it's partly culture, it's partly social – it's all of these."⁹⁹

Looking at how Halprin's design aesthetic was constantly evolving throughout his career, it is not hard to imagine the impact contemporary design theories at odds with the prevailing modernist urban redevelopment ideals had on him. As Helene Fried posits within the introduction of the SFMOMA catalogue that accompanied the exhibition,

⁹⁶ Charles Moore, "Still Pools and Crashing Waves", *Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places*, Exhibition Catalogue, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 16-19.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 19.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, 16-39.

⁹⁹ King, "Lawrence Halprin – landscape architect – dies".

Halprin “relishes the quest for better places where people can live and work and play.”¹⁰⁰ I believe that Halprin's use of aesthetics of space and movement tied to typography and small urban space can be directly linked not only to contemporaries Gordon Cullen and his *Townscape* theory along with Kevin Lynch's *Imageable City* but also to the late nineteenth-century theorist Camillo Sitte.

Imageable City and Choreographed Movement

Released 75 years before Ghirardelli Square was in development, Camillo Sitte's seminal book *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen, City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, effectively predicted the urban shift in planning and design, impacted by changing needs and habits of city dwellers, that would eventually lead to the loss of intimate plazas and public squares.¹⁰¹ Sitte's advocacy for the “‘enclosure of squares’ and their festive public role” within the fabric of urban life can be traced back to his “dissatisfaction with 19th-century expansion plans” taking place throughout Europe.¹⁰² He effectively predicted the work of Daniel Burnham and others who were advocating for the City Beautiful Movement at the turn of the previous century.¹⁰³ Strongly opposed to the ideas embraced by this Movement, Sitte warned against “the meager unimaginative character of modern city plans.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence Halprin: *Changing Places*, 10.

¹⁰¹ George R. Collins, Christiane Crasemann, and Camillo Sitte, *Camillo Sitte: The Birth of Modern City Planning*. Rizzoli Essays on Architecture, (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 243-244.

¹⁰² Wolfgang Sonne, *Urbanity and Density in 20th-Century Urban Design*, (Berlin: Dom Publishers, 2017) 120.

¹⁰³ For a list of other planners and designers working within the City Beautiful Movement at the turn of the 20th-century see John W. Reps, “Burnham before Chicago: The Birth of Modern American Urban Planning”, *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol 10, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago Centennial Lectures (1983), pp. 190-217.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *Camillo Sitte*, 221.

Within his first chapter, “The Relationship Between Buildings, Monuments, and Their Plazas”, Sitte described how many locations throughout Italy, for example, continued to experience active public life within open plazas. He espoused on the importance of having public areas where “there is nothing here to distract our attention; nothing that reminds us of the daily hustle and bustle” and bemoaned the loss of such ancient and common place environments in the face of modern concepts and shifts within society.¹⁰⁵

I have no doubt that Sitte’s advocacy for more intimate and enclosed public squares and plazas can be directly linked to the layout and design of the Square. The concern Sitte expressed over the loss of public pedestrian environments was beginning to be felt deeply by many San Franciscans during the large-scale urban renewal projects taking place within the City. It is not difficult to imagine the impact Sitte’s writing had on Roth and his team as they began to map out the plan for Ghirardelli Square.¹⁰⁶ A plan that would bring Sitte’s work to fruition: an enclosed, pedestrian-only, urban square.

Further expanding on this idea for an urban square, this pedestrian experience can also be directly tied to Kevin Lynch’s *The Imageable City* due to the fact that in order to fully experience and visualize your surroundings within an urban environment, there are certain aspects that must be present and noticeable within the environment. Lynch’s Five Elements of the City (Figure 6), utilized as a map or scavenger hunt of sorts, perfectly

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *Camillo Sitte*, 152.

¹⁰⁶ The first English edition of Sitte’s seminal work was published in 1945..

laid out the elements of a city necessary to aid in crafting a mental image of itself within a person's memory long after they have visited.

Figure 6. Kevin Lynch, *Five Elements of the City*, 1960. MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Permission to reprint.

As illustrated, above these elements, the incorporation of routes and roads, whether pedestrian or vehicle driven, plazas, landmarks, and a variety of neighborhoods all aid in the creation of a variety of viewpoints and perspective, providing a visual character that very well may be different from person to person. It is hard not to chuckle at the fact that this theory came about at the tail end of widespread urban redevelopment crisis and loss of identity. At a time when cities began to grapple with the loss of character in favor of skyscrapers and massive housing tracts, it is a little ironic that both this body of work and

Gordon Cullen's *Townscape* theory, advocating for a return to plazas, old and new buildings, and intimate pedestrian walkways, were released around the same time.¹⁰⁷

As if mirroring Lynch's planning concepts, Cullen himself suggested that in order to understand a city or neighborhood plan, one must be able to visually experience it, walking "from one end... to another, at a uniform pace, (which) will provide a sequence of revelations."¹⁰⁸ These revelations, if executed correctly, would have a powerful impact on the viewer, as if "unfolding a mystery, the sense that as (the visitor) presses on more is revealed."¹⁰⁹ Linking directly to Kevin Lynch's theory concerning the elements every city plan must incorporate to create an imageable city, Cullen delves even deeper into what these revelations should be and the impact they should have on the viewer.¹¹⁰ From walkways and paths, to plazas, roads, and landmarks, both Cullen and Lynch advocate for elements necessary to create "a sense of discovery and drama" to not only attract visitors but entice them to stay.¹¹¹ Taking it one step further, Cullen postulates that creation of an area inside a grouping of buildings, what we would call a plaza, leads to an opportunity to "bring people together" which in turn will "create a collective surplus of enjoyment."¹¹² This, I would argue, was Halprin's end goal for the space he was working to bring to life.

¹⁰⁷ First published in 1961, Gordon Cullen's *Townscape* goes into greater detail, looking at casebook studies of specific towns within England to highlight the attributes each of these town showcases and the importance of proposed developments adhering to similar concepts.

¹⁰⁸ Gordon Cullen, *Townscape*, (New York: Reinhold Pub., 1961), 17.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Throughout Cullen's *Townscape* writings he not only breaks down the specific elements of form and function, tying this directly to elements necessary to create a success Town, but also utilizes a wide variety of examples, illustrations, and case studies to elicit evidence substantiating his theory.

¹¹¹ Cullen, *Townscape*, 19.

¹¹² *ibid*, 9.

Within Lawrence Halprin's own design plans, he strove to control and direct the movement of visitors and pedestrians within Ghirardelli Square through use of planted trees, careful planning and choreographed layout of paths, nodes, and edges.¹¹³ Ghirardelli Square was meant to be a pedestrian-only location, with a central plaza, outdoor seating and dining for meeting and people watching, along with a range of activities to entice the city dweller. Halprin's goal for Ghirardelli Square was to encourage people to stroll, to visit, and to explore all that it had to offer.

A Square of Pure Imagination

Now that we have introduced William Roth's motivation and goal for the project along with Lawrence Halprin's preliminary concept and urban design theories along with theorists at odds with prevailing modernist concepts currently in vogue during this time, it is time to look at the project itself. At this point it is important to reiterate that over 20 design and architectural firms submitted proposals to Warren Lemmon during the summer of 1962, Halprin's included. As mentioned earlier, Halprin's initial plan stood out from the rest for a variety of reasons. From the start, Halprin's plan for Ghirardelli Square (Figure 7) was locked in his desire to create "choreographed (pedestrian) movement" within the square connected to his ambition to create an urban space that was innovative as well as connected.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Final plans delivered to William Roth, September 20, 1963. Warren Lemmon and Others Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

¹¹⁴ *Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places*, San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1980, Exhibition Catalogue, 126.

Figure 7. Architectural rendering of final Ghirardelli Square plan, 1965. William W. Wurster/Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons Collection, 1922-1974. Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley. Permission to reprint.

Halprin's carefully choreographed plan involved all aspects of design, including the direction people should walk, the layout of the central plaza, the ramps and steps taken to reach the shops and restaurants, purposefully laid out in tiered levels.¹¹⁵ The landscape architect desired that visitors to Ghirardelli Square "have multiple options for entering, exiting, and moving about."¹¹⁶ All of these elements had become second nature in Halprin's planning process as he began to dive into the importance of viewing the city,

¹¹⁵ Lawrence Halprin: *Changing Places*, 126.

¹¹⁶ Alison Moore, "Urban Renaissance with Mermaids", 3.

and by extension Ghirardelli Square, “like a biological community, an ecosystem based on natural foundations.”¹¹⁷ That is why I believe he agreed with Roth and Mellquist that as much of the original brick and buildings should be retained. Halprin viewed this space as one teeming with opportunities for interconnectedness and relationships both between the buildings themselves and the visitors who would populate this “Beehive of Excitement.”¹¹⁸

Before our tour of the Square begins keep in mind that a vast majority of the original buildings were kept and refurbished.¹¹⁹ Buildings including the Clock Tower, Woolen Mill, Power House, and the Mustard and Chocolate buildings were all kept original with renovations mostly completed on the inside in order to house retail and dining establishments. While the shops and restaurant themes have changed over the years, it is important to note that when William Roth began planning for this space, he compiled a long list of possible shops and eateries catering to the diversity and individuality of San Francisco.¹²⁰

Utilizing the plan from 1965 (Figure 7), and taking into consideration that construction on the western side was not yet complete we will begin our tour of the location while also pointing out the different aspects that can be linked to Kevin Lynch’s

¹¹⁷ Halprin, *Notebooks*, 105.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 75-77.

¹¹⁹ According to submitted plans and correspondence between the architects, Warren Lemmon, and William Roth, the following buildings were kept with only refurbishment and repairs needed to bring them up to code: Mustard Building, Chocolate and Cocoa Buildings, The Clock Tower, Power House, and The Woolen Mill. Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹²⁰ Notes from William Roth to Advisory team regarding ideas for shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. William Roth Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

theory.¹²¹ As we begin the tour, notice that there are only four viable entrances into the Square from the street: a southern entrance on the left side; a southwest entrance; and two northern entrances with one on the corner of Larkin and Beach Streets and the other directly off Beach. It is easy to postulate that these entrances were carefully laid out by Halprin in order to control the movement of incoming visitors along with creating a sense of excitement and expectation as one entered the square, akin to Cullen's desire for a city to create drama and mystery within its own public space. For the purpose of this "tour" we will enter the Square utilizing the southern entrance on the corner of Beach and Larkin (Figure 8).

¹²¹ The two-part construction was due to the fact that the Ghirardelli Chocolate Company continued production of their famous chocolate on site for 3 years after selling the property until they completed the move to their new location in San Leandro. Warren Lemmon and Others Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives. The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Figure 8. Photo of Street Elevation, Ghirardelli Square, June 1965. Photo taken by Roger Sturtevant. William W. Wurster/Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons Collection, 1922-1974. Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley. Permission to reprint.

As we enter the Square twisting and turning through several flights of large stairs, we are immediately met by one of the new buildings, created during the renovation. The Wurster Building, which serves as the main restaurant for the location, looms over visitors as they begin to climb the stairs. Surrounded by windows on three sides, crafted in brick, and facing out into the bay, this building was meant to match harmoniously with the older, original buildings. What makes it stand out is its dramatic stance and winding route, meant to serve as a bright and enticing location facing out onto the Bay. As we move past the brightly lit restaurant we have two options to proceed. We can either continue past the newly created Carousel building on our left and walk about another set of stairs or we can continue to our right and begin our shopping excursion.

Continuing along our tour, we will first head towards the shops on the western side of the Square. Taking this path to the right, we begin our meandering walk through a maze of greenery and brick. At this point as your guide on this tour I would like to point out that while the final creation of Ghirardelli Square stayed true to the original brick and building design, as both Halprin and Roth had wanted, there were other building plans put forth by Wurster, Bernardi, & Emmons that were varied in style and compatibility. One such plan that stands out, both figuratively and literally, is surprisingly modern and brutalist (Figure 9). This proposed building would have replaced the historic Woolen Mill and Power House.

Figure 9. Architectural rendering of one of Wurster, Bernardi, & Emmons plans for Ghirardelli Square. Bancroft Library Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Fair use permission to reprint.

Taking the second left just in front of the first of many shops, we immediately step in to a wide-open space abounding with benches, tables, and other visitors either strolling about or people-watching. As we venture through this area we are treated to an abundance of flowers, plants, and historic architecture. Construction has just begun on this western part of Ghirardelli Square but it is still filled with visitors, shops and much activity. Within this small square we are also treated to a few of the Square's historic buildings, specifically the Cocoa and Chocolate buildings along with the 19th-century era Woolen Mill. Backtracking towards where we first entered this small node we instead turn to our right, choosing the path that will eventually lead us into the larger and more

active plaza. At this point we are treated to the sight of one of the two landmarks located here: the original, early 20th-century Clock Tower.

Commissioned by the Ghirardelli Chocolate Company and designed by architect William Mooser, this Chateau Blois style tower stands proudly on the corner of Larkin and North Point¹²². Not to be outdone, there is another far more famous landmark adjacent to the Clock Tower building that faces out onto the Bay. Added to the complex at the same time as the Clock Tower building, the electric Ghirardelli sign originally faced into the city (Figure 10). During the Ghirardelli Square construction project, there was much debate within the advisory meetings on whether the sign should be kept. Eventually this decision came to a vote and the sign was saved! The sign was re-situated to face out towards the Bay, from its original position of facing up into the City, and stands as a beacon for all to see atop the Mustard and Cocoa buildings¹²³.

¹²²https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM7YDZ_Ghirardelli_Square_Clock_Tower_San_Francisco_CA. (Accessed 7 April 2020).

¹²³ According to California Historical Society's Strategic Initiatives Liaison Alison Moore, Halprin was concerned about the impact the site would have on the residents of nearby Russian Hill. To quell any concerns about the light emanating from the 100-foot-tall Ghirardelli sign, the team chose to turn the sign around. This both eased the concern of residents and "created a brilliant beacon advertising the square to boats passing by,"⁴.

Figure 10. North Point facade, 1919 (Calisphere), SF Planning Commission. Permission to reprint.

Figures 11 & 12. Plaza with Fountain, Ghirardelli Square, June 1965. Photo taken by Roger Sturtevant. William W. Wurster/Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons Collection, 1922-1974. Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley. Permission to reprint.

As we maneuver past the electric sign and Clock Tower our end goal comes in to view. Filled with outside dining tables, entertainment, lighting and a plethora of flora, we have finally arrived inside the main plaza (Figures 11 and 12). As we end our trek through this “Beehive of Excitement” we sit and take in all the activity around us. As we ponder the adventure that unfolded in front of us as we wandered through this maze designed by Lawrence Halprin we settle our view upon his beautiful and minimalistic fountain.¹²⁴ Within our view of this scenic square we also note the absence of one very noisy and smoggy part of our daily lives: the automobile. While there is ample parking

¹²⁴ Ruth Asawa’s *Andrea* (1968) would not have been covertly installed until 3 years after our tour. Interesting to note that this sculpture, which famously enraged Lawrence Halprin, had been commissioned by William Roth. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/entertainment/garchik/article/Ghirardelli-mermaids-frolic-for-50-years-11743780.php> (Accessed 7 April 2020).

underneath Ghirardelli Square and around the exterior, cars are not seen and barely heard within this oasis in the city.¹²⁵

We know based on transcripts from interviews with Lawrence Halprin, and even within his own writing, that he purposely designed Ghirardelli Square to be accessible *by foot*. As he mentions in his discussion with author Douglas Davis in SFMOMA's retrospective on Halprin's career, the landscape architect "spoke of nothing but the theater of movement going on around us."¹²⁶ Halprin enjoyed filling his landscapes with objects and people, creating constructs that encouraged choreographed movement within urban environments.¹²⁷ As Davis accurately surmises, Halprin, working directly with Roth and the Advisory Team, "proved that downtown can survive as DOWNTOWN, not as an imitation of a wide-open urban space."¹²⁸ Halprin himself would later state that the Square provides "in a sense a prototype of what a city could be like."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ A 300-car subterranean parking garage was added into the project early on to accommodate the projected number of visitors to the new shopping destination. According to author Louis Redstone in *New Dimensions in Shopping Centers and Stores* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973) "an interesting series of terraces in the central plaza is created by the stepped floors of the subterranean garage." These terraces play into Halprin's goal to craft choreographed movement within the Square while also successfully hiding any appearance of an alteration to the landscape.

¹²⁶ Douglas Davis, "The Golden Voyage", *Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places*, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1980), Exhibition Catalogue, 65-66.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ Davis, "The Golden Voyage", 65.

¹²⁹ Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco*, 15.

CONCLUSION: THE DREAM FULFILLED

Ghirardelli Square's first phase of construction and renovation opened in 1964 with much anticipation and widespread acclaim, with the completion and launch of the second phase of construction consisting of the western part of the block taking place in 1968.¹³⁰ Once completed, Ghirardelli Square was home to over 20 retail spaces, including multiple shops and restaurants.¹³¹ By 1969 the Square had become a destination where one came to "see and be seen," where lavish parties held by the cultural elite of San Francisco took place.¹³²

Deemed the "crown jewel of the Aquatic Park," Ghirardelli Square brought to the city of San Francisco in general, and the Waterfront in particular, a much-needed boost of revenue and revitalization, leading the way for additional adaptive reuse projects within the city, including Levi's Plaza and the Cannery Building next door.¹³³ Heralded as an "important... influence on large-scale adaptive use," Ghirardelli Square stemmed from a "reaction against the sterility and impersonality of previous urban development (projects)."¹³⁴ Due in large part to its popularity and connection with the history and

¹³⁰ Alison Isenberg, "Culture-a-Go-Go", 279. And *Vista Magazine*, Exxon Travel Club, (Summer 1979), 15; The second phase was designed by John Mathias and included the Chocolate factory and Cocoa building. It was completed shortly after Ghirardelli Chocolate Company officially relocated to San Leandro. Warren Lemmon and Others Folder, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹³¹ The specific layout of each space was as follows: Woolen Mill, Cocoa and Chocolate Buildings – four floors plus a basement with five total shops each; Plaza housed three shops and a bathroom; and the Wurster building housed two restaurants and a shop, Warren Lemmon and Others, Ghirardelli Square Archives, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

¹³² Isenberg, "Culture-A-Go-Go", 493; 379.

¹³³ Watkins, *Mirror of the Dream*, 286; Deirdre Stanforth, *Restored America*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 197

¹³⁴ Stanforth, *Restored America*, 196; William Severini Kowinski, "The Malling of the City," *San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle*, This World, Sunday, January 10, 1982, 16. See National Register of Historic Place – Nomination Form, February 19, 1982.

heritage of San Francisco, Ghirardelli Square was designated as a landmark in 1970 (Landmark #30) and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.¹³⁵ While there have been new and necessary elements added to the site, such as updated lighting, railings and moveable signage, the overall character of the 1960s redevelopment remains intact.¹³⁶ Ghirardelli Square's success and the reaction against widespread urban redevelopment can be argued as catalysts for the 1966 passing of San Francisco's first set of historic preservation laws following the enacting of the National Historic Preservation Act.¹³⁷

To understand the importance of what William Roth, Lawrence Halprin, and the Advisory Board accomplished we need to look no further than the successive projects that took place in San Francisco shortly after opening day. For this we will look at three very different projects, two of them located just down the street from Ghirardelli Square: The Cannery, formerly the Del Monte Fruit Company factory, and Haslett Warehouse. Both of these locations, adjacent to the Square just off of Beach Street, attempted to capitalize on the success of Ghirardelli Square by filling their locations with eclectic shops, specialty restaurants, and, currently, an abundance of tourist-centered activities.

Purchased in 1963 by developer Leonard Martin, the Del Monte Fruit Company shifted its focus, so to speak, from canning fruits to shopping mall.¹³⁸ The Cannery, as it is now called, was created with the goal of retaining "the rich and exciting feeling of an

¹³⁵ <https://tclf.org/sites/default/files/microsites/halprinlegacy/ghirardelli-square.html>. (Accessed 30 March 2020).

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ San Francisco Planning Commission Centennial Brochure, 2017, 13.

¹³⁸ <https://noehill.com/sf/landmarks/nat1975000172.asp>. (Accessed 13 April 2020).

(open-air) marketplace.”¹³⁹ Similar to the layout of Ghirardelli Square, the goal was to create a shopping center that enhanced “turns, zigzags and corners in the center to offer a hint of a maze.”¹⁴⁰ Incorporation of the multi-level canning buildings as host to numerous shops and restaurants required additions of open arcades, open escalators and stairs, and even an outdoor elevator. The goal from the start was to emphasize the “upness” of the center along with encouragement for visitors to explore the space.¹⁴¹ Whether this was successful or not can be debated as the current space upstairs is utilized by the San Francisco Academy of Art.

Completed just two years after Ghirardelli Square by architects Joseph Esherick & Associates, who were also responsible for the creation of The Cannery, the Victorian-era Haslett Warehouse saw its upper two floors of this four-story building converted into office space.¹⁴² The bottom two levels, complete with fashion shops, restaurants, and a San Francisco history museum, were created to appeal more to the tourists that were beginning to flock to Fisherman’s Wharf. Today the building is owned by the National Park Service and houses The Argonaut Hotel along with the San Francisco Maritime Park Museum.¹⁴³

Not to be outdone by San Francisco, many other urban cities were looking to revitalize their downtown while also utilizing historic and underused buildings and properties. According to Russell C. Kennedy, former director of urban planning at

¹³⁹ Redstone, *New Dimensions in Shopping Centers and Stores*, 81.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Redstone, *New Dimensions in Shopping Centers and Stores*, 81.

¹⁴² Redstone, *New Dimensions in Shopping Centers and Stores*, 296.

¹⁴³ <https://noehill.com/sf/landmarks/nat1975000172.asp>. (Accessed 4-13-20).

Chicago's Design Institute "Ghirardelli Square worked architecturally as well as financially, socially as well as aesthetically. Naturally, shrewd developers imitated it all over the country."¹⁴⁴ Cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston, to name a few, looking to capitalize on the success of Ghirardelli Square, encouraged the development of their own form of adaptive reuse projects, ranging from affordable to upscale housing projects along with mixed-use facilities akin to the Square itself.¹⁴⁵

While each one of these projects are in their own way successful, they do not match the originality and impact that Ghirardelli Square has had on the landscape of urban development itself. Recognized almost immediately upon opening as a "vital, attractive complex... characterized by airy spaces and interiors that do not violate the buildings' original design" William Roth's project, along with the city of San Francisco, has been heralded by many as the birthplace of the adaptive reuse trend.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Pioneer Woolen Mills and D. Ghirardelli Company/Ghirardelli Square, 1982. (Accessed 2-15-2019).

¹⁴⁵ These renovation examples include formerly industrial areas such as the Meatpacking District in New York, SoMa in San Francisco and Villa Park Orchards Association Packing House in Orange, California. For more information on these projects see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/03/travel/escapes/36-hours-in-soma-san-francisco.html>; <https://www.bisnow.com/orange-county/news/student-housing/chapmans-new-student-housing-will-celebrate-the-oranges-packing-history-83314>. (Accessed 4-13-20); Some of these successful endeavors include Quincy Market, Faneuil Hall in Boston, Massachusetts; Station Square in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Pratt Street Power Plant in Baltimore; Brooklyn Bridge Park's seven abandoned coffee warehouses. For more information about these projects see: National Registry of Historic Places Digital Archive at <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP>; <https://www.stationsquare.com/history/> and <https://web.archive.org/web/20131211012140/http://mikebloomingberg.com/index.cfm?objectid=E99DF405-C29C-7CA2-F6F4E9B623E06B15>. (Accessed 4-13-20).

¹⁴⁶ Barbaralee Diamonstein, *Buildings Reborn: New Uses, Old Places*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 19; For more on this recognition see National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Pioneer Woolen Mills and D. Ghirardelli Company/Ghirardelli Square, 1982; "Ghirardelli Square San Francisco." *The Washington Star*, April 5, 1981; National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States. *America's Forgotten Architecture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.; Blakey, Scott. "San Francisco – Merchandising as Theater." *San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle*, November 19, 1978.

William Roth and the design team have received numerous awards, including the Award of Merit for the “achievement of excellence in architectural design”, conferred upon Ghirardelli Square in 1966 by the American Institute of Architects.¹⁴⁷ The success and longevity of the Ghirardelli Project has outlasted multiple ownership changes along with the introduction of new stores and restaurants.¹⁴⁸ Even through the many changes along with ups and downs, Ghirardelli Square’s legacy and impact on future adaptive reuse projects is impossible to ignore.

As mentioned earlier, much of the preliminary plan for Ghirardelli Square had been mapped out by Roth shortly after purchasing the property. His goal to keep as many of the original buildings in place was an obvious turn away from modernist design aesthetics popular at the time. Halprin came on to the project aware of these parameters and, in fact, due to his evolving urban planning ideas, was looking to explore similar concepts within his work. It is also clear that Ghirardelli Square came about due to a chain of events that took place within the same time period. The introduction of Roth, the advisory board, and grassroots activists grants a fuller picture of the issues behind a project that involved architects, neighbors, city planners, and engineers. This coupled with Roth’s original design ideas created an innovative plan of rescue and adaptation that

¹⁴⁷ The team also received the Collaborative Achievement in Architecture Award along with the Award of Merit. The Collaborative Achievement award had only been presented once before in the Institute’s history. Other awards received included the Honor Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects; Municipal Landscaping Award from the American Association of Nurserymen, Inc.; and the American Society of Travel Writers Connie Award, to name a few. National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Pioneer Woolen Mills and D. Ghirardelli Company/Ghirardelli Square, 1982. (Accessed 2-15-2019)).

¹⁴⁸ For more information on changing ownership and stores see: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/SF-s-historic-Ghirardelli-Square-nearly-full-13546118.php> and <https://chainstoreage.com/real-estate/jamestown-acquires-san-franciscos-ghirardelli-square>.

resulted in Ghirardelli Square's place as a significant phase in the history of urban aesthetics and design.

“The greatest value of the adaptive use movement is characterized by the hundreds of abandoned schools, factories, hotels, warehouses and military posts that have been adapted for use as affordable housing, office buildings, as well as commercial, civic, educational and recreational centers.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Roger W. Caves, PhD, *Encyclopedia of the City*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

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