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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



DECKED OUT

Einwiller Kuehl deconstructs
Oakland's waterfront

DALLAS PARKS

Downtown looks different
these days

SHAPED TOUCHES

A meditation on design and the
fragmentation of public space

MORE MYCORRHIZA

Following a passion for mycelium
outside the classroom



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LAM

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HMWhite tops Rockefeller Center with greenery; a master plan by GGN pulls three schools together; Waxahachie, Texas, jumps on the stormwater park train; pipelines muddle future restoration along the Louisiana coast; a remembrance of Darwina L. Neal, 1942–2021; and more.

EDITED BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

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Small Town, Heavy Load

Urbanites flee to rural areas for the fresh air and open space, but a study of three Iowa towns finds those advantages aren't enjoyed equally. Small-scale interventions are one way landscape designers can help.

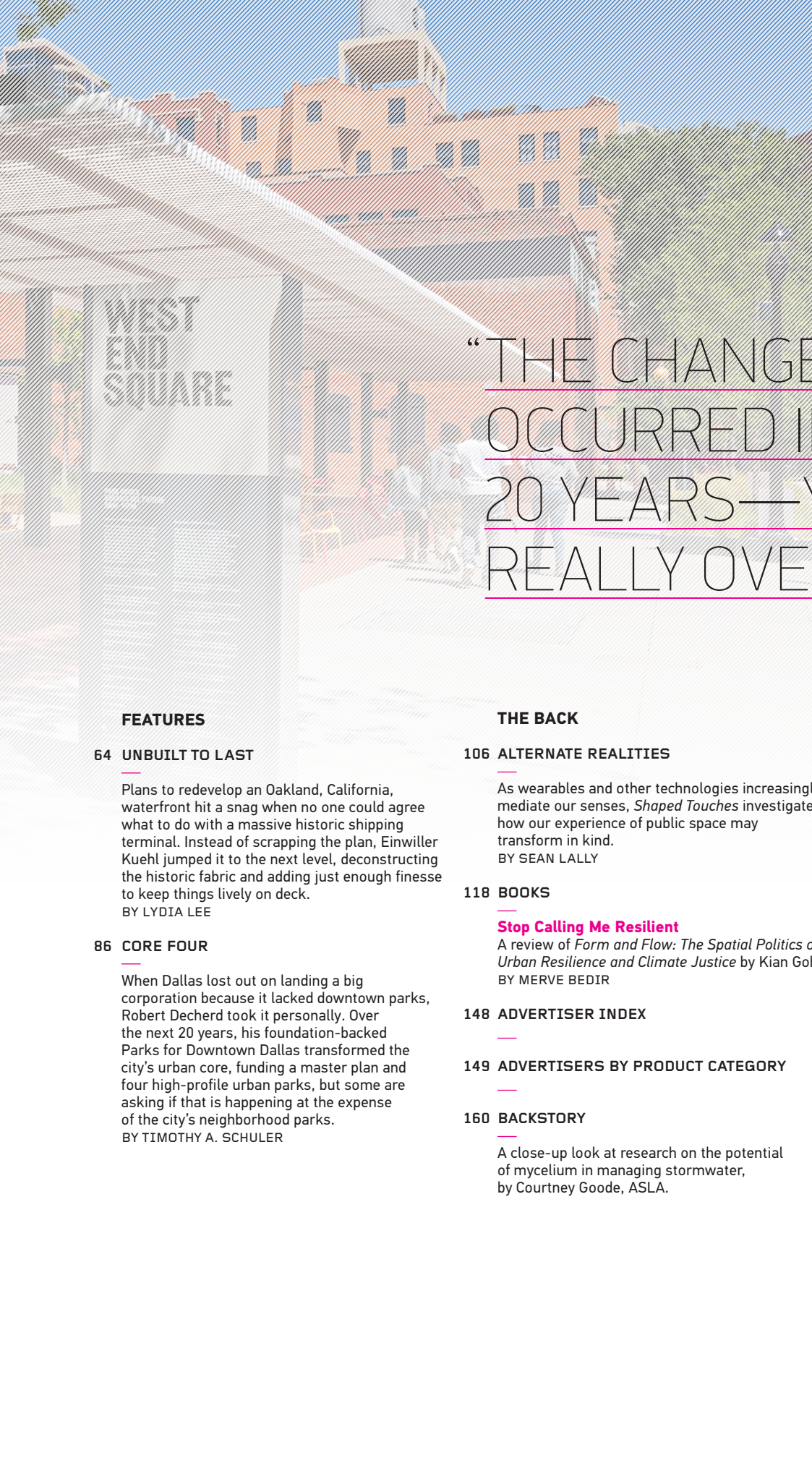
BY ANJULIE RAO

56 **GOODS**

Home Style

Settle in with outdoor furnishings for designed digs.

BY EMILY DAVIDSON



“THE CHANGE THAT’S
OCCURRED IN THE PAST
20 YEARS—YOU CAN’T
REALLY OVERSTATE IT.”

—RYAN O’CONNOR, P. 86

FEATURES

64 UNBUILT TO LAST

Plans to redevelop an Oakland, California, waterfront hit a snag when no one could agree what to do with a massive historic shipping terminal. Instead of scrapping the plan, Einwiller Kuehl jumped it to the next level, deconstructing the historic fabric and adding just enough finesse to keep things lively on deck.

BY LYDIA LEE

86 CORE FOUR

When Dallas lost out on landing a big corporation because it lacked downtown parks, Robert Decherd took it personally. Over the next 20 years, his foundation-backed Parks for Downtown Dallas transformed the city’s urban core, funding a master plan and four high-profile urban parks, but some are asking if that is happening at the expense of the city’s neighborhood parks.

BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

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As wearables and other technologies increasingly mediate our senses, *Shaped Touches* investigates how our experience of public space may transform in kind.

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FEATURES



ERIC EINWILLER

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Einwiller Kuehl combined new elements and historic fabric at a waterfront park, page 64.



**AN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,
WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT
PLAN HIT A FEW BUMPS
BEFORE EINWILLER KUEHL
TOOK IT APART.**

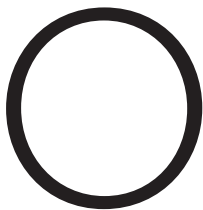
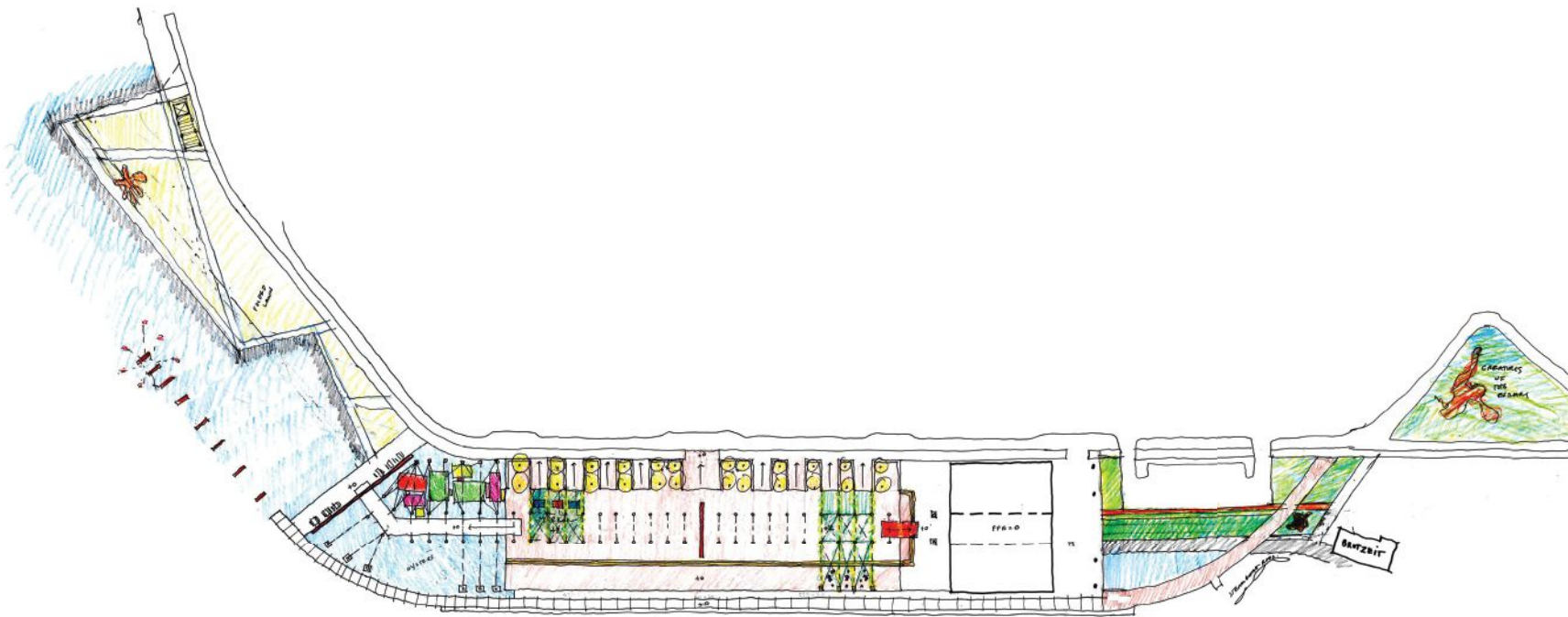
BY LYDIA LEE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC EINWILLER

UNBUILT



TO LAST



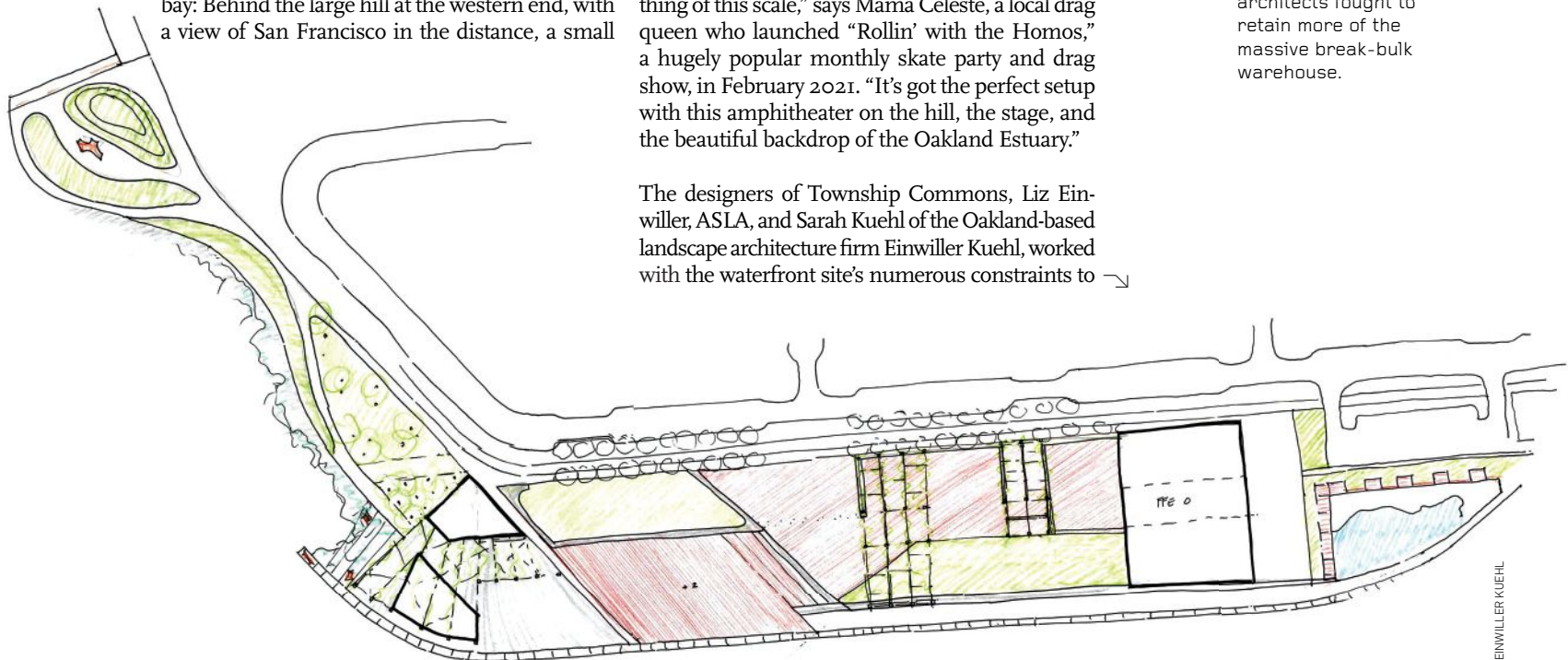
ON A BRIGHT Saturday afternoon in mid-October, a party was going on at Township Commons, one of the newest parks in the San Francisco Bay Area. Actually, four events were going on simultaneously across the Oakland, California, park's four and a half acres, overlooking the glittering waters of the bay: Behind the large hill at the western end, with a view of San Francisco in the distance, a small

family gathered around a folding table; at the other end by the café/market, people dressed in sober attire were attending a private catered event; on the main deck, five couples were taking a salsa class; and next to the hill, a handful of roller skaters in bright outfits were practicing some groovy moves. The sheer acreage meant that there was room for everyone. "I knew this space was perfect for something of this scale," says Mama Celeste, a local drag queen who launched "Rollin' with the Homos," a hugely popular monthly skate party and drag show, in February 2021. "It's got the perfect setup with this amphitheater on the hill, the stage, and the beautiful backdrop of the Oakland Estuary."

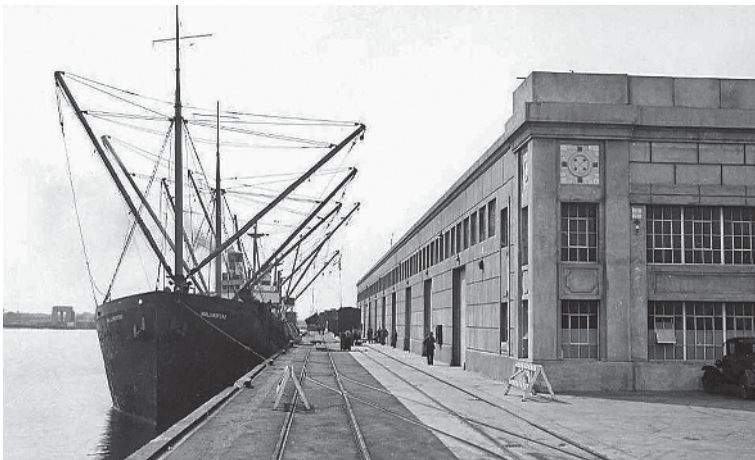
The designers of Township Commons, Liz Einwiller, ASLA, and Sarah Kuehl of the Oakland-based landscape architecture firm Einwiller Kuehl, worked with the waterfront site's numerous constraints to

ABOVE AND BELOW Early sketches by Einwiller Kuehl, one emphasizing planting and one structured around the loading dock.

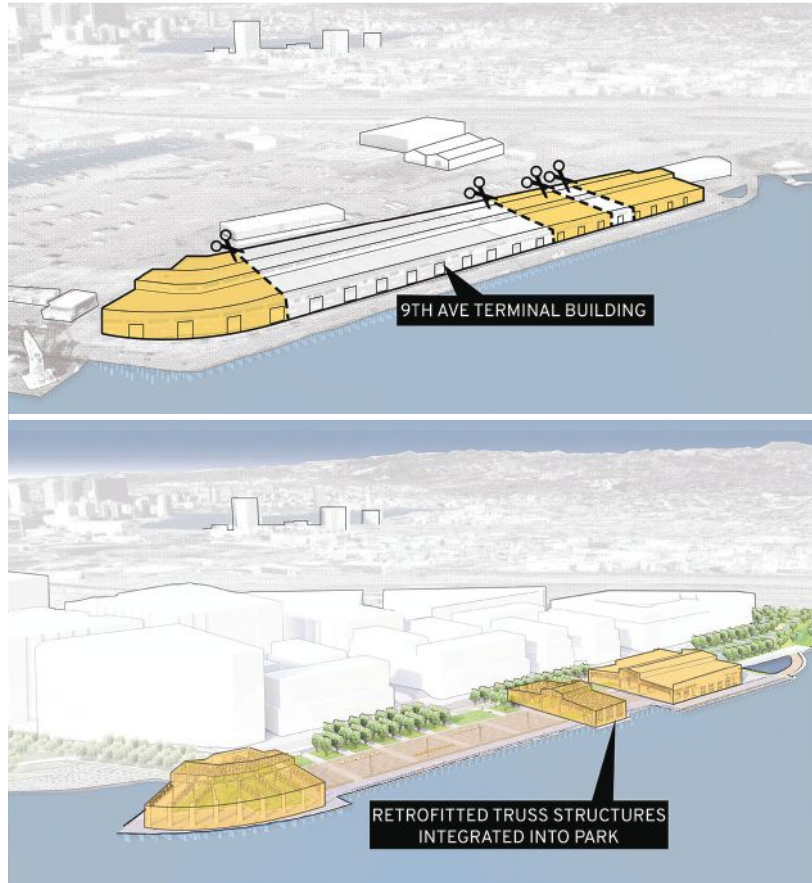
OPPOSITE The landscape architects fought to retain more of the massive break-bulk warehouse.



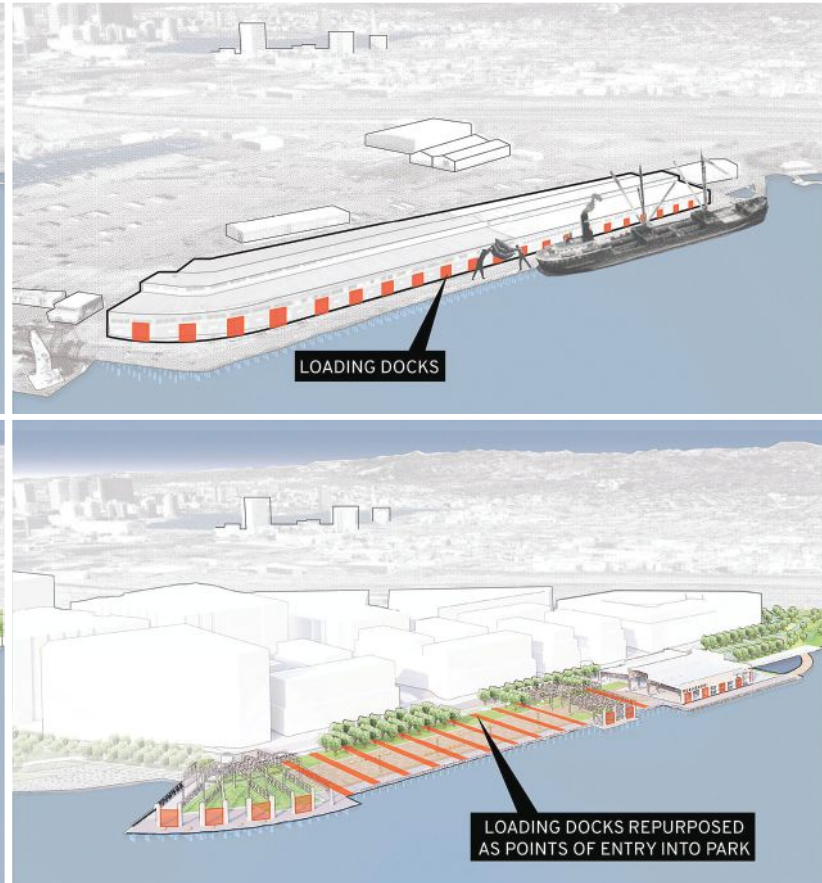
EINWILLER KUEHL



ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDING



REINVENTION OF HISTORIC LOADING DOCKS



↳ create an inviting canvas for all this activity. “Every single thing that we got to do had to count,” Kuehl says. “If you were going to place a light post, that was a move—it wasn’t like, ‘I’m making my design; let’s add some light posts.’ There’s a restraint because of the rules, and [the park] is very spare, but we kind of got into it as a design language.”

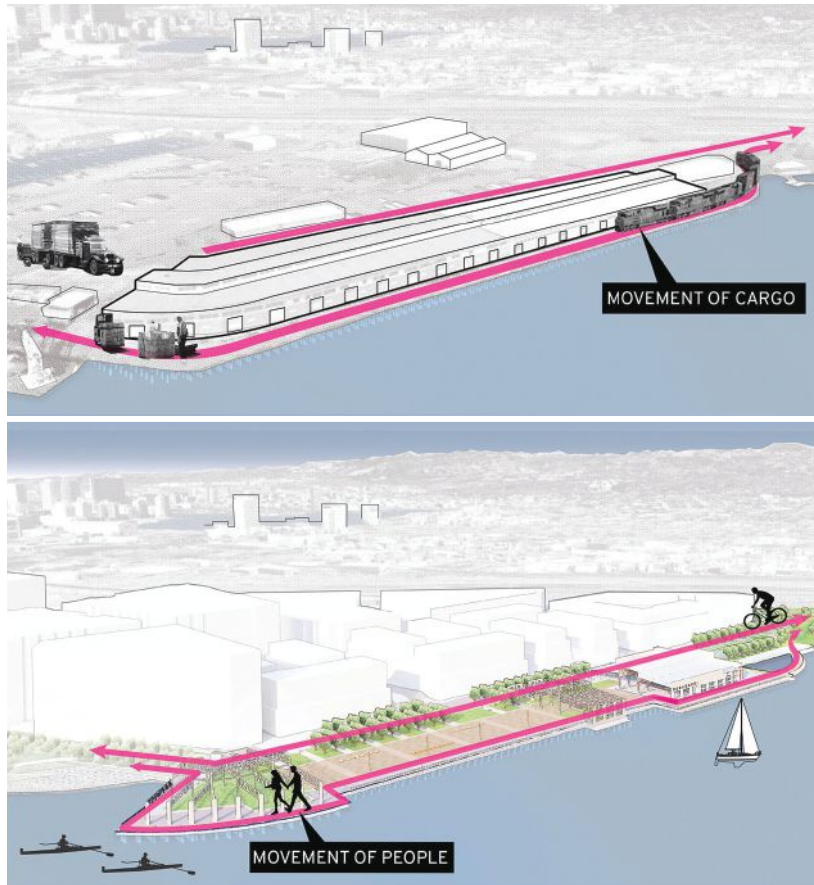
Township Commons is part of the latest redevelopment of Oakland’s historic waterfront, formerly off-limits to the public. Like the neighboring city of San Francisco, located directly across the bay, Oakland went through rapid development during the gold rush; it was the western terminus for the first transcontinental railroad. Today, the Port of Oakland, located a few miles west of the park, is one of the largest container ports in the United States. And the one-time shipping channel known as Brooklyn Basin, named by settlers who arrived on the ship *Brooklyn* in 1846, is bordered by a new 62-acre mixed-use development with 3,700 hous-

ing units and 100,000 square feet of retail. The park’s East Coast-sounding name is a reference to Brooklyn Township, the historical term for this part of town, east of downtown Oakland.

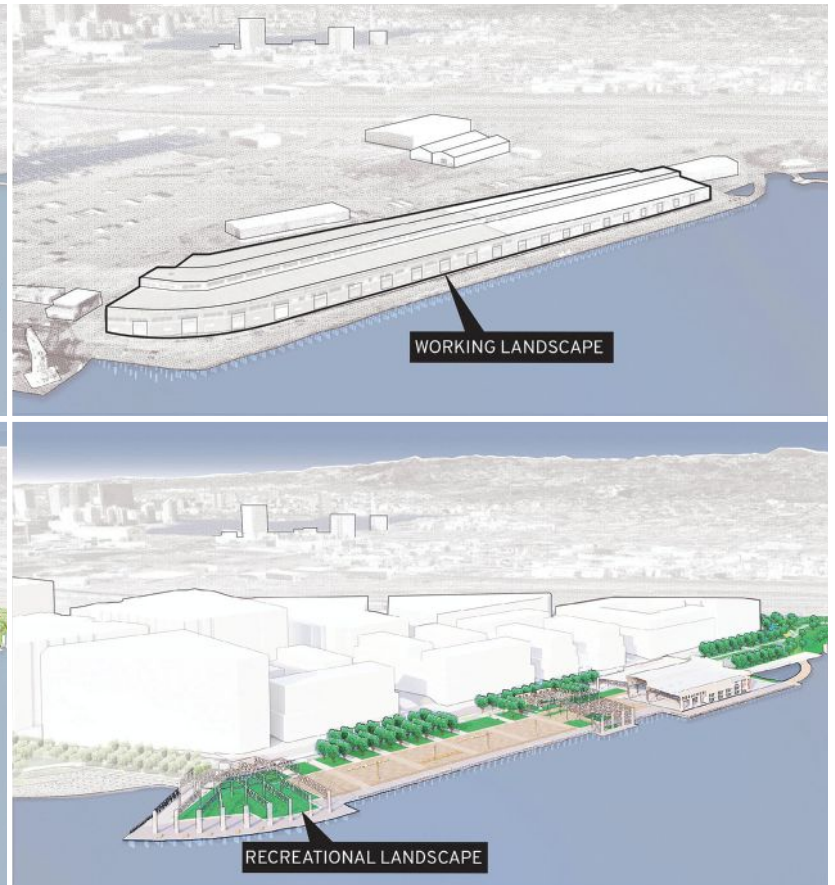
For more than a decade, the Brooklyn Basin development and its nearly 33 acres of public parks existed only on paper. The locally based Signature Development Group began working on the project in 2001, but an entitlements process, slowed by lawsuits and the Great Recession, delayed the groundbreaking until 2014.

Einwiller Kuehl had the particular challenge—and opportunity—of figuring out how to incorporate a historic structure within the park, which was part of the development’s first phase of construction and opened in November 2020. The site was almost entirely occupied by a 180,000-square-foot municipal shipping terminal. Built in 1930, the 9th Avenue Terminal was a rare emblem of Oakland’s

EVOLUTION OF MOVEMENT ON-SITE



TRANSFORMATION FROM INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT TO PUBLIC PARK



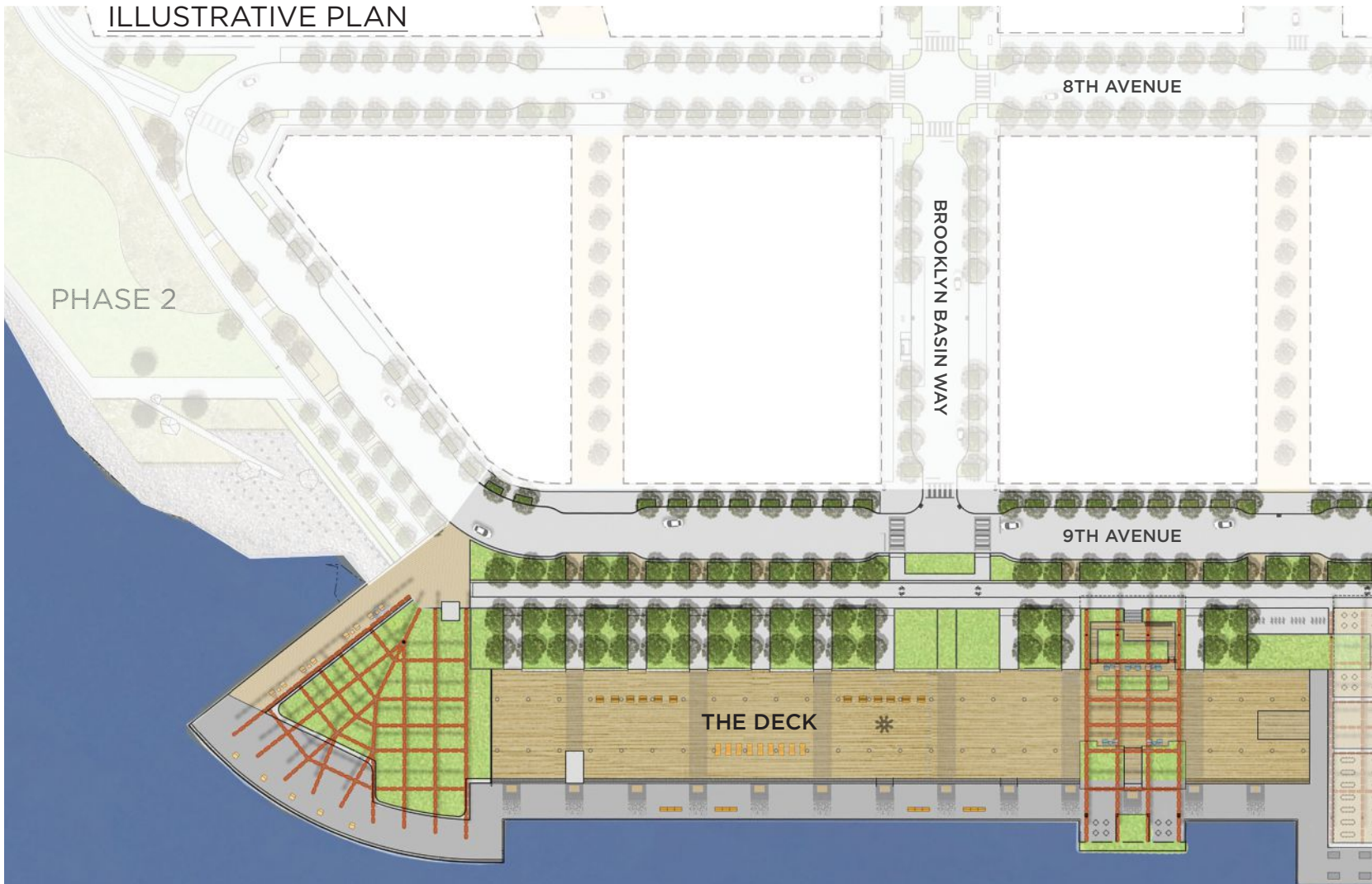
long history as a port town that preservationists had sought to preserve in its entirety. Before modern container shipping took off in the 1970s, smaller cargo ships unloaded goods out of their hulls into storage sheds to protect them from the weather. Reflecting the City Beautiful movement with its Beaux-Arts detailing, this break-bulk terminal was custom-designed to facilitate the easy movement of goods between ship, rail, and truck. Built on a pier supported by about 3,000 pilings, its many loading docks were readily accessible by boat. A railway line ran between the building and the edge of the pier, with a parallel road on the other side.

Einwiler Kuehl was the second firm to take on the challenge. Two decades ago, the developer had worked with ROMA Design Group (now ROMA Collaborative) to create a preliminary development plan for Brooklyn Basin. Aligned with the city's vision for a large public events venue, the original plan for Township Commons called for

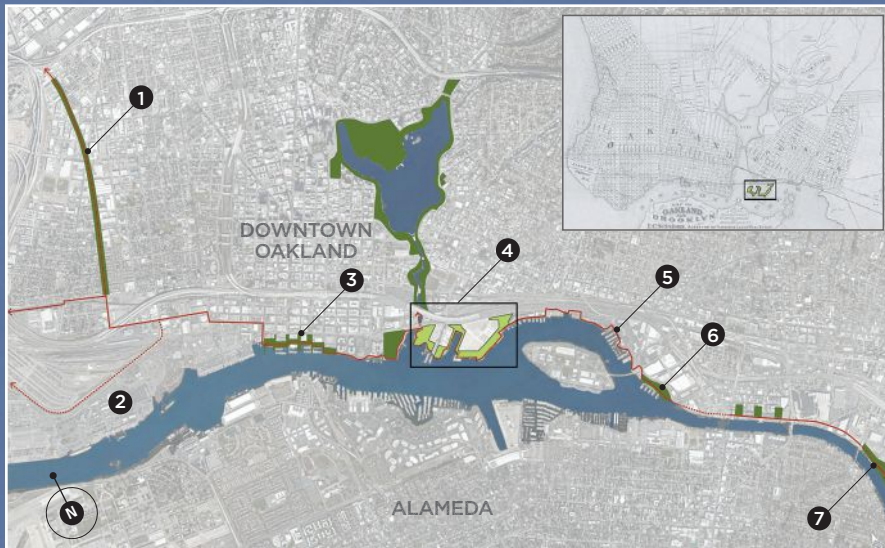
restoring a 20,000-square-foot section of the terminal and leaving the rest as open space. In 2006, the city approved the plan, and in 2013, the development kicked into high gear after a major Chinese investor signed on. The developer and ROMA came back to the city in 2015 with an updated plan for Township Commons, featuring a large wooden deck overlooking the waterfront.

The response was not good. According to Mike Ghielmetti, the president of Signature Development Group, the city's design review committee agreed with members of the public that "it was boring, that it was just a big deck." After failing to get approval after two meetings with the design review committee, the developer decided to switch design firms rather than risk further delay. Ghielmetti thought of Kuehl; he knew her firm was based in Oakland and had been impressed by its previous designs for a nonprofit that he was also involved with.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN



OAKLAND ESTUARY CONTEXT



- 1 MANDELA PARKWAY
- 2 PORT OF OAKLAND
- 3 JACK LONDON SQUARE
- 4 BROOKLYN BASIN PARK
- 5 BAY TRAIL
- 6 UNION POINT PARK
- 7 MLK REGIONAL SHORELINE



CLINTON LANE

9TH AVE
TERMINAL

EMBARCADERO

I-880
NIMITZ FREEWAY

OAKLAND
ESTUARY





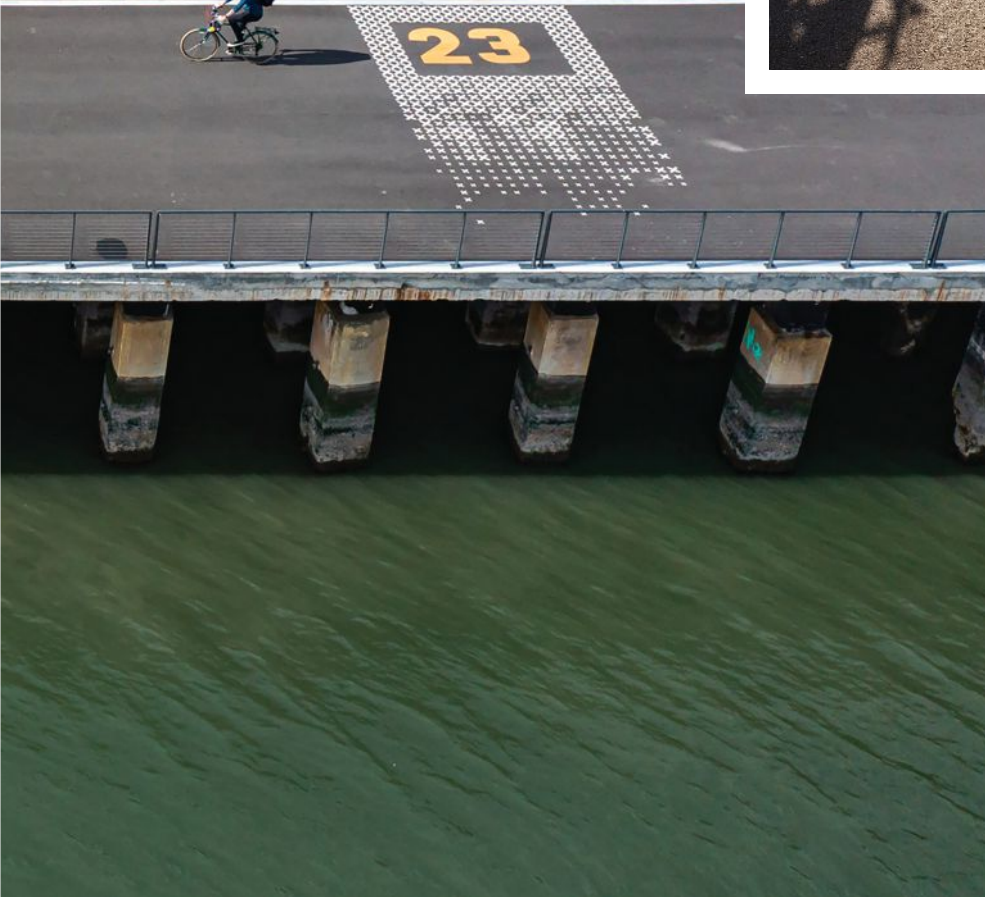


LEFT

The large wooden deck is a popular place for sunbathing and dancing.

INSET

Bright yellow loungers pack a strong visual punch.



“Timing is everything, and there was a little bit of very good luck,” Kuehl says. “Based on our portfolio, they wouldn’t have known that we knew how to do this. This is an incredibly technically complicated project that’s all built on structure. The seismic and structural parts of this are a big deal.” Before teaming up, Einwiller and Kuehl had worked for more than a decade at PWP Landscape Architecture on large projects that included Newport Beach Civic Center’s public park and a University of Texas at Austin campus redesign. Einwiller had also been part of the team that designed San Francisco’s Salesforce Park, a landscape notably elevated over a transit station. At the time they were hired in October 2015, Einwiller Kuehl was a four-person firm. The firm currently consists of a dozen people and is working on construction documents for the second park at Brooklyn Basin.

When they walked through the enormous empty terminal, the two were struck by the building’s elegant structure. “We were just enamored with the steel construction and how fine and

RIGHT

The plantings on the dock, which include a mix of native and drought-tolerant species, needed to meet a weight budget.

beautiful [the steelwork] was—they don't do steel like this anymore," Einwiller says. They talked to the developer, who had won a lengthy legal battle with preservationists to proceed with demolition, about saving more pieces. The two hoped to reference the past without devolving into nostalgia. They also knew that building new elements on structure would have been very costly and that reuse was a more sustainable approach.

Within three weeks, Einwiller Kuehl had a general concept to show the city's design review committee, and a month later presented it to the planning commission. From the developer's point of view, the essential program was the same. "It wasn't a wholesale change; it was an evolution," Ghielmetti says. "ROMA did a great job and came up with a great plan. [Einwiller Kuehl] took it and sculpted it in a way that really befitted Oakland."

But critically, the redesign managed to embody the spirit of the entire terminal, if not its intact form. The new plan still included the restored eastern end, but also included the western end and a hefty slice of the middle, preserving in total about a third of the terminal's skeleton. Useful for defining smaller environments within the large open space, the latter two pieces would be carefully designed ruins. While there are plenty of precedents for parks that incorporate pre-existing ruins, Einwiller Kuehl may be the first to create ruins to make a park. The design called for removing the roof, cutting some new openings into the concrete walls, and reinforcing them with additional steel. The terminal's loading docks would also live on, transmogrifying into entrance ramps to the park on the street side. ↘



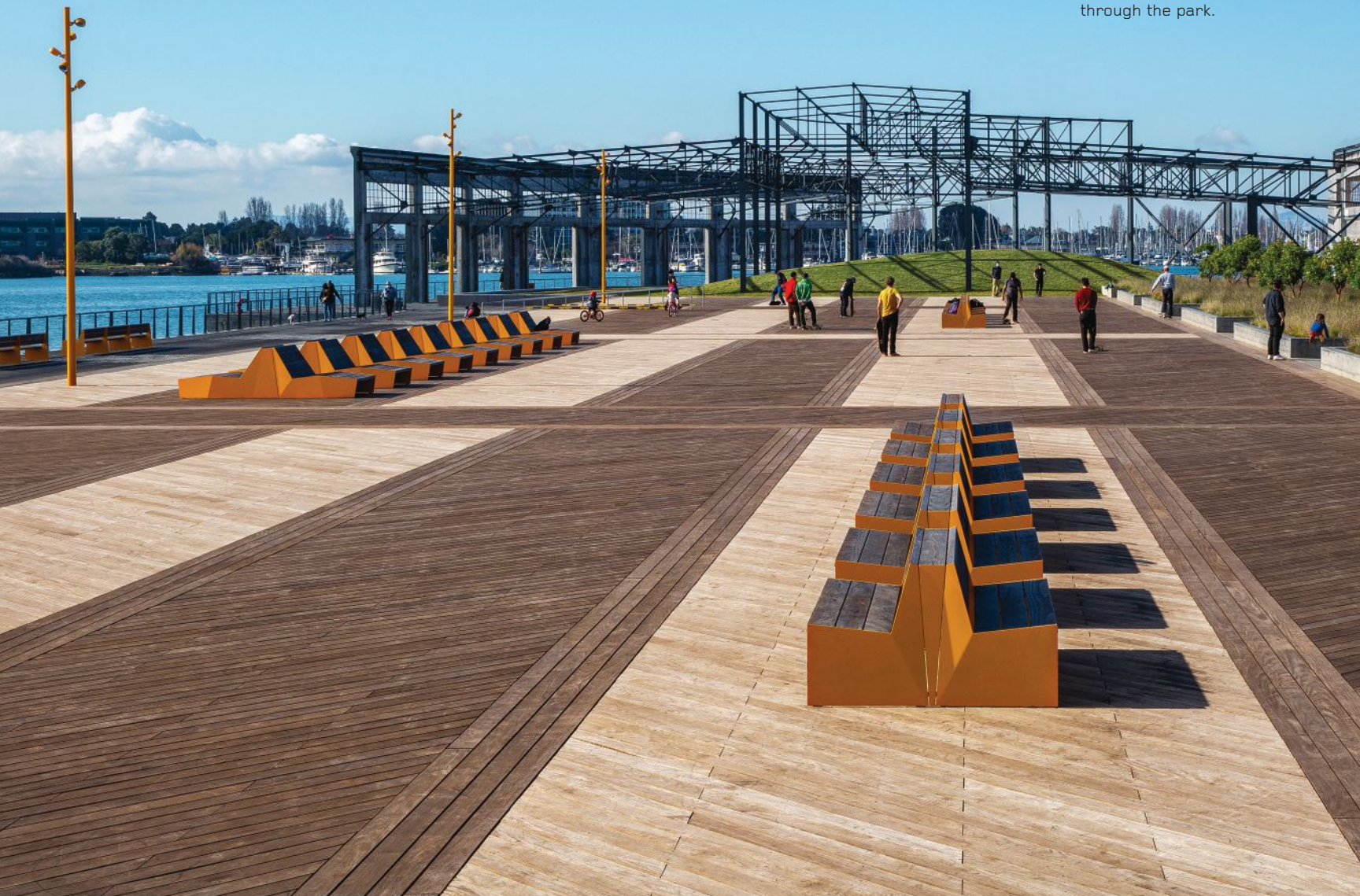


“EVERY SINGLE THING THAT WE GOT TO DO HAD TO COUNT. IF YOU WERE GOING TO PLACE A LIGHT POST, THAT WAS A MOVE.”

—SARAH KUEHL

BELOW

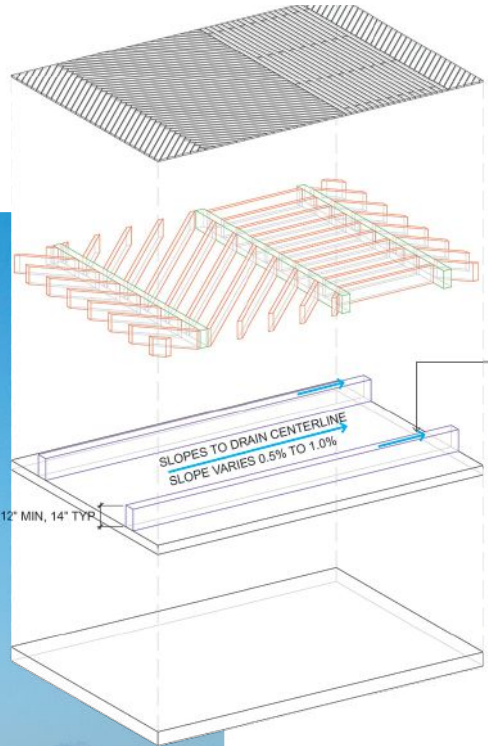
The hill acts as a magnet to pull people through the park.



WOOD DECK SUBSTRUCTURES—CONCEPT AXON



EINWILLER KUEHL, DRAWINGS



DECK BOARDS
- NOMINAL 1X4, ACTUAL 7/8" X 3 1/2"

INTERMEDIATE BEAMS (WOOD): PLEASE ADVISE ON SIZE AND SPANS

JOISTS: PLEASE ADVISE ON SIZE AND SPANS. SPACING = 16" ON CENTER.

JOISTS ARE HUNG BETWEEN BEAMS SO THAT TOPS AND BOTTOMS OF BEAMS AND JOISTS ARE FLUSH.

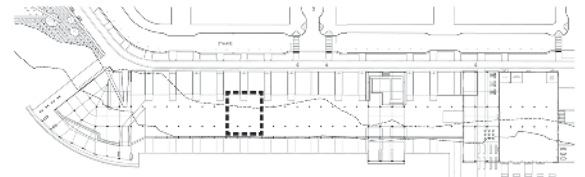
EK PROPOSES TO SLOPE THE TOPS OF THE UPTURNED CONCRETE BEAMS AT 1.0% CONSISTENTLY (TOWARD DRAIN CENTERLINE), INDEPENDENT FROM SLAB SURFACE

UPTURNED CONCRETE BEAMS CONNECTED TO STRUCTURAL SLAB
- DRAWN AT 8" WIDTH, PLEASE CONFIRM

VARIES, 12" MIN, 14" TYP

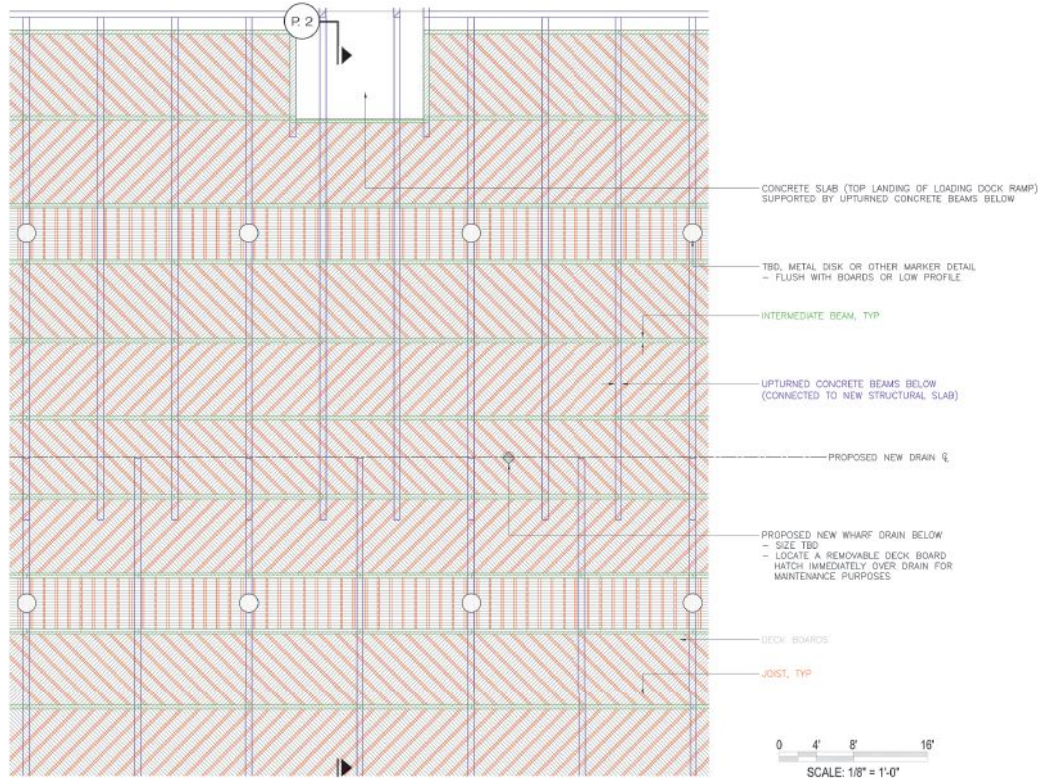
SLOPES TO DRAIN CENTERLINE
SLOPE VARIES 0.5% TO 1.0%

EXISTING WHARF SLAB



KEY PLAN

WOOD DECK SUBSTRUCTURES—PLAN



CONCRETE SLAB (TOP LANDING OF LOADING DOCK RAMP)
SUPPORTED BY UPTURNED CONCRETE BEAMS BELOW

TBD, METAL DISK OR OTHER MARKER DETAIL
- FLUSH WITH BOARDS OR LOW PROFILE

INTERMEDIATE BEAM, TYP

UPTURNED CONCRETE BEAMS BELOW
(CONNECTED TO NEW STRUCTURAL SLAB)

PROPOSED NEW DRAIN

PROPOSED NEW WHARF DRAIN BELOW
- SIZE TBD
- LOCATE A REMOVABLE DECK BOARD HATCH IMMEDIATELY OVER DRAIN FOR MAINTENANCE PURPOSES

DECK BOARDS

JOIST, TYP

0 4' 8' 16'
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

BELOW

The hardscaping is softened by drought-tolerant plantings including *Sesleria* grasses.

OPPOSITE

The original loading docks take on a new form as ramps.



TOWNSHIP COMMONS PLANT LIST

TREES

- Arbutus x 'Marina'* (Marina strawberry tree)
- Pinus canariensis* (Canary Island pine)
- Quercus virginiana* (Live oak)
- Washingtonia filifera x robusta* (Filibusta fan palm)

SHRUBS

- Ceanothus 'Julia Phelps'* (Julia Phelps ceanothus)
- Frangula californica* (California buckthorn)
- Olea europaea 'Montra'* (Little Ollie dwarf olive)

PERENNIALS

- Agave 'Blue Flame'* (Blue Flame agave)
- Correa 'Dusky Bells'* (Red Australian fuschia)
- Distictis buccinatoria* (Blood-red trumpet vine)
- Epilobium canum 'Calistoga'* (Calistoga hummingbird trumpet)

GROUND COVERS/GRASSES

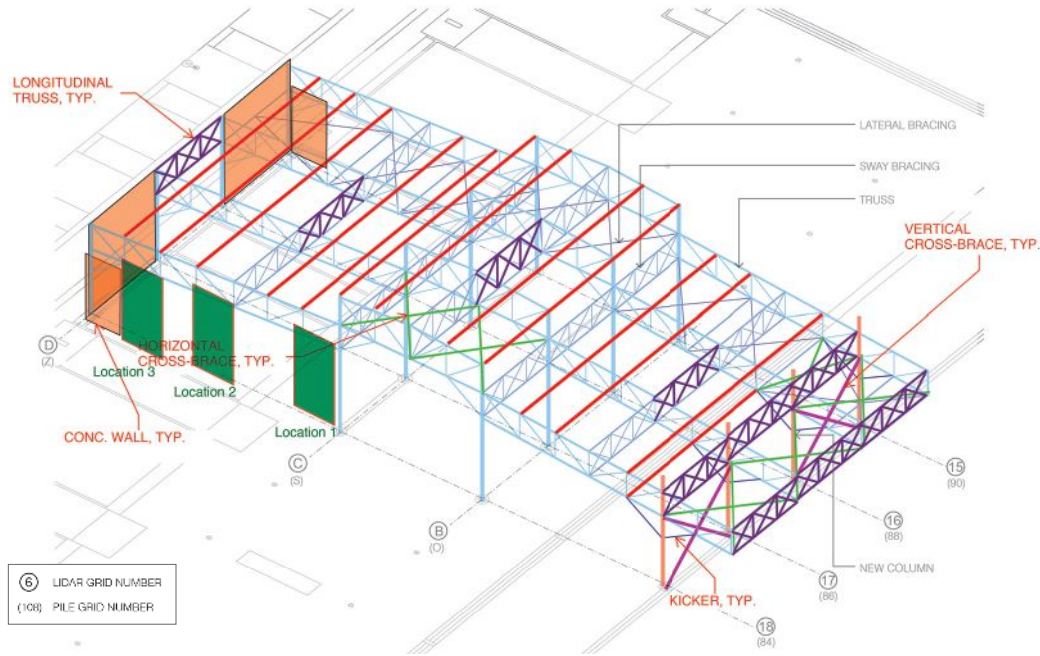
- Baccharis pilularis 'Pigeon Point'* (Pigeon Point dwarf coyote brush)
- Bouteloua gracilis 'Blonde Ambition'* (Blonde Ambition blue grama grass)
- Ceanothus griseus var. horizontalis 'Yankee Point'* (Yankee Point ceanothus)
- Lomandra longifolia 'LM300'* (Breeze dwarf mat rush)
- Salvia clevelandii* (Fragrant sage)
- Sesleria 'Campo Azul'* (Campo Azul blue moor grass)
- Sesleria 'Greenlee'* (Greenlee moor grass)
- Sesleria nitida* (Gray moor grass)

→ The Oakland planning commission gave the Einwiller Kuehl plan a unanimous nod. During the meeting, the planning commissioner Chris Pattillo, FASLA, who is also a principal emeritus of the landscape architecture firm PGAdesign in Oakland, said, “I know very well that what [Einwiller Kuehl] has produced here is nothing short of astounding, given the time frame that [the firm] had to do it, and I am grateful—and I think the whole city will be grateful—when they see it.” Added Pattillo: “A lot of us talked about wanting it to be gritty, to be urban, to be edgy. You totally got that.”

The designers also came up with creative solutions to deal with the constraints of the site. Their options were limited not only by weight but by regulatory restrictions. In many places around the world, the public trust doctrine preserves public rights to boating and fishing along waterways. But in California, the courts have extended the common-law doctrine further, interpreting it to



DECK TRUSS STRUCTURE TO REMAIN



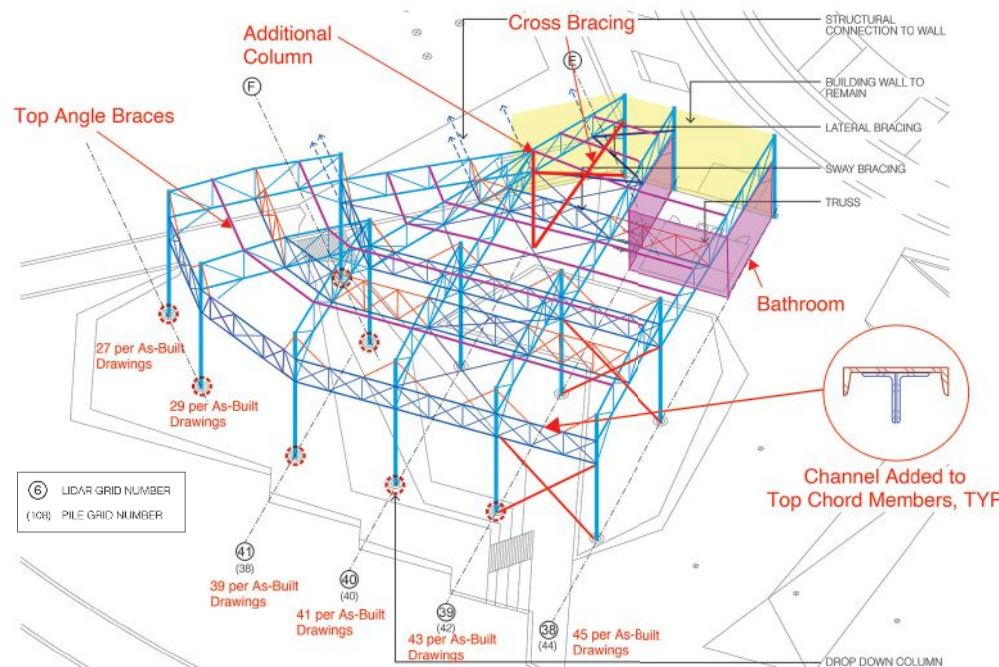
OPPOSITE
Part of the old warehouse has been repurposed into a super-deep porch.

mean that any development on public tidelands must have a statewide benefit. Thus, Township Commons couldn't have a playground, tot lot, basketball court, skatepark, or other "local-use" facilities. (A California State Lands Commission spokesperson confirmed that such features were not considered to provide a regional or statewide benefit, and therefore not "traditional trust-consistent uses.")

Instead, the design team tried to encourage play through landscape elements, putting in wide concrete ramps up to the big wooden deck and installing an eight-and-a-half-foot-high artificial hill under the western end of the warehouse. During a site visit in early September, a child could be seen riding a miniature mountain bike down the hill, made of polystyrene foam covered in grass. "The hill is hanging on for dear life right now because it is overused—it's being loved to death," notes Kuehl. The hillside also provides informal amphitheater seating for events like "Rollin' with the Homos." It overlooks a 110-by-45-foot paved space that serves as an informal stage. Originally, the design team had proposed steps that terraced down to the water's edge, but when that proved too expensive to implement in this particular spot, they came up with the hill as an alternative perch to take in the views, which include the distant skyscrapers of San Francisco.

At the eastern end, the restored terminal is now a popular gathering space with plentiful outdoor seating. Einwiler Kuehl convinced the developers to extend the roof overhang from two building

COVE TRUSS STRUCTURE TO REMAIN



bays to three—encompassing 72 feet—to create an even deeper "porch" that faces the rest of the park, "captur[ing] that connection between architecture and landscape," Einwiler says. The terminal is currently home to a gourmet market and café, public restrooms, and a kayak rental, with space for a future restaurant and additional retail. The retail activity also provides eyes on the street for public safety.

**“WE WERE JUST ENAMORED WITH
THE STEEL CONSTRUCTION.”**

—LIZ EINWILLER, ASLA



RIGHT

A slice of the warehouse was used to define garden rooms.

The designers wanted to encourage wheeled activities at the park by including a wide, joint-free asphalt track around its perimeter. “It was a happy marriage of a technical constraint—limited weight and dimension for paving sections—the budget, and a connection to the industrial history that led us toward asphalt,” Kuehl says. The waterfront section of the trail was also required by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, which mandates public access in new shoreline developments. Along the trail, the designers marked the loading docks with their original numbers, which people have been using to designate meeting points. “They are pedestrian loading docks now,” Kuehl says. “We’ve seen invitations that say, ‘We’re having a birthday party at Brooklyn Basin at #47,’ which is adorable.”

Although the pier was designed to support a heavy load, it needed a several-million-dollar seismic retrofit, including a new eight-inch-thick concrete lid done by the engineering firm Simpson Gumpertz & Heger. Any added elements had to fit within both the financial budget and the weight budget. “We had massive weight restrictions because we were sitting on piles,” Einwiller says. “It was very hard to get even the light poles in or the plants.” Substantial plantings were out of the question. But because the designers came into the project early on, they were able to negotiate with the structural engineers to get planters close to where the pier transitions to land. The plantings are a mix of native and drought-tolerant plants, with plenty of *Sesleria* grasses (a “tough-as-hell” urban plant, says Kuehl), *Agave* ‘Blue Flame’ for color and sculptural qualities, and *Arbutus* ‘Marina’ trees that will eventually grow into small groves along the park edge.









LEFT

The waterfront loading docks live on in bold graphics.

The “boring” deck in the original proposal also became a key part of the Einwiller Kuehl design. They wanted to provide some variation in texture within such a large space without adding weight, and the raised deck also gave people a view of more water (the park faces a landmass just a few hundred yards across the historical shipping channel). They also took special care to reduce its scale, laying the Forest Stewardship Council–certified machiche planks in a modified herringbone pattern—rather than as endless parallel planks—and furnishing it with bright yellow loungers. They knew that people were worried that the unprogrammed deck would be a vast, desolate space—“like those scenes in movies by Antonioni where you just hear the wind,” laughs Kuehl. Clearly, those fears were unwarranted. On that October afternoon, in addition to all the other goings-on, someone had opted for a more leisurely day, draping a beach towel over one of the loungers. The cruise deck was there for anyone who wanted to escape, without the need to purchase a ticket. ●

LYDIA LEE IS A REGULAR *LAM* CONTRIBUTOR WHO WRITES ABOUT LANDSCAPE DESIGN FROM THE BAY AREA.

Project Credits

PRIME/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT EINWILLER KUEHL INC., OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA (SARAH KUEHL, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL; LIZ EINWILLER, ASLA, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL; WHITNEY STEWART, ASLA, SENIOR ASSOCIATE; GISELA STEBER, AFFILIATE ASLA, ASSOCIATE; CHELSEA DEWITT, ASLA, ASSOCIATE; LAUREN MCCLURE, DESIGNER). **CLIENT** SIGNATURE DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND ZOHP, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. **STRUCTURAL AND SHORELINE PROTECTION** SIMPSON GUMPERTZ & HEGER, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. **CIVIL ENGINEERING** BKF ENGINEERS, REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA. **ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHICS** VOLUME INC., SAN FRANCISCO. **IRRIGATION** ARTHUR LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION CONSULTING, LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA. **ARCHITECTURE CONSULTANT** MWA ARCHITECTS, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT** WRA INC., EMERYVILLE, CALIFORNIA. **CONTRACTOR** HAWK DEVELOPMENT, LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA.