

**Will Travis Comments to BCDC on June 4, 2020**  
*Item #11. Seaport Plan Update*

The most important word in BCDC's name is "and." BCDC is the Bay Conservation AND Development Commission. BCDC conserves natural resources, but not at the expense of economic prosperity. And BCDC favors economic development, but not at the price of environmental degradation.

BCDC is updating its Seaport Plan because the Oakland Athletics has proposed a new baseball stadium at Oakland's Howard Terminal, which the Seaport Plan currently reserves exclusively for port use.

To advance its two complimentary objectives, BCDC will ultimately have to decide whether the theoretical chance that the Howard Terminal might be useful for some maritime purpose thirty years from now is outweighed by the immediate economic, social and environmental benefits of the A's project.

Cargo forecasts and port throughput projections have been prepared to help answer this question. These projections are based on a heap of assumptions, one of which is that we have a pretty good idea of what the future will look like. But often our guesses are wrong.

Imagine if we had tried a hundred years ago to determine what the Bay Area's port needs would be in 1950. In 1920 most shipping cargo was the break-bulk variety, and San Francisco's finger piers provided most of the region's port capacity. In 1920 we didn't know the Great Depression was on the horizon. Or World War II, during which the military developed new ideas for handling cargo, ideas that would evolve into a concept called "containerization," which revolutionized the shipping industry.

Not knowing any of this, in 1920 preserving every finger pier that existed and building lots more of them on the San Francisco waterfront might have seemed like good ideas. We're no better at predicting the future today than we were a century ago. As a result, what now seem reasonable ideas may ultimately play out to be little more than outdated theories.