

**Meeting Notes
Central SoMa House
November 18, 2014**

The November 18th Central SoMa Open House focused on the community benefits being considered by the Plan, including 1) affordable housing, 2) open space, 3) PDR, arts, and non-profits, and 4) streets and transportation. Attendees rotated through discussion circles on each of these topics. The notes below reflect what the Planning Department heard at the open house, organized by topic.

Affordable Housing

Location and Type of Affordable Housing

- Impact fees should stay in the district
- Impact fees should leave the district if they enable more affordable housing to be developed overall
- The City should enable affordable housing to be built outside of San Francisco if it increases the total amount of affordable units
- The neighborhood needs both on-site and stand-alone affordable projects
- 33% goal is citywide, but may not make sense for the Plan Area

Strategies to Increase Affordable Housing

- The City should expedite the process for affordable housing projects
- The City should acquire and rehabilitate existing units
- The City should support maximize land efficiency for new developments
- Make offices pay more towards affordable housing
- 33% Below-Market Rate (BMR) housing requirement would increase other housing prices
- Impact fees cannot be too high, or no BMR housing gets built
- The City should increase density to get more BMR
- The City should utilize the state's density bonus program
- The City should build affordable housing on public sites
- There should be higher impact fees for luxury apartments
- The City should support more housing at medium income levels, rather than only at lower income levels

Process

- City needs to show exactly how we're going to get to 33% affordability goal
- Allow acquisition of hotels outside the Plan Area (e.g., west side of 6th Street) as a way to meet BMR requirement
- When schools and other institutions build housing it should count towards the affordability requirements

- The City should study if there's a way to reduce the burden of Homeowner Association (HOA) fees for on-site for-sale BMR units
- Small projects should have a lower BMR requirement than large projects (10% v. 30%)

Open Space

Creating New Open Space

- Privately-owned Public Open Spaces (POPOS) should be required
- The western side of the neighborhood needs more open space. Look into taking down old houses to create open space
- Unclear whether parklets are working here, and whether we should encourage more
- The City should buy more open space
- The Freeway and its off-ramp intersections is a big impediment to moving through the neighborhood. These could be significant, well-lit and designed amenities and add recreational programs

Use of Open Space

- Yerba Buena Park is a major success with great programming, like concerts, and a pleasant environment that serves the whole city concerts
- The 303 2nd Street Farmers' Market is very successful and it would be great to have more farmers' markets
- The neighborhood needs more dog parks and runs
- The neighborhood would benefit from more community gardens
- The neighborhood needs more tot lots and playgrounds to support and attract young families
- POPOS should be required to have neighborhood serving programming, rather than being incentivized to do so
- Parks should accommodate a diversity of uses for skateboarders, families, chess players, etc.
- Bocce ball would be a nice additional in new open space
- Basketball facilities would be a great addition
- Create space for exercise (examples from parks in Asia)
- A night market would be a possible addition to the neighborhood to help both with activity and safety
- New picnic space would be a great addition as part of added green space
- More food trucks would be beneficial in the neighborhood
- The Planning Department should engage the community in a process to determine programming

Design of Open Space

- The expanded open space network should especially serve low income families, youth, and teens
- After school programs would benefit from new programming in open spaces
- The High Line (NYC) is a great example of neighborhood serving and connected open space
- It is important that the open space has easy accessibility for the public
- It is important that POPOS be at the ground floor and not remote from public access
- Open spaces need to be designed with quality in mind, specifically with sunlight and wind comfort. Enclosed POPOS might be appropriate in certain cases to create this, but there is a general desire not to have too many be indoors
- Any additions to the open space network need to be designed to be safe and enhance neighborhood safety by adding positive activity
- Childcare facilities might benefit from direct access to open space, or the inverse, that open space might encourage the location of additional daycare facilities
- It is important that open spaces have good access to sunlight. Building controls should minimize new impacts
- When developing new open space, designs should be easy to maintain to prevent long term issues
- There is a big opportunity to energize the under freeway area
- Open spaces need to be design to support public safety—activating them in a healthy way along with lighting will helps this goal.
- New open spaces should be green spaces, not just plazas
- Activate parks with restaurants and retail
- The homeless center near the potential PUC park may impact park use
- The Flower Mart is a good POPOS/park location
- The neighborhood needs more trees, ones that have low maintenance, are drought tolerant, and tall but not branching out or blocking the sun too much.
- It is important to activate open spaces with shared spaces, as well as active and passive uses. Incentives might help this.
- Would it be possible to add parking under new open spaces?

Connecting Open Space

- The neighborhood could be better connected to the waterfront
- One of the reasons that South Park works so well is because of the connections at both ends
- The neighborhood has distinctive alleys; let's make a network of them and also create living alleys
- The neighborhood needs a network of small open spaces with clear and accessible connections.
- The homeless population along 5th and 6th Streets makes traversing the neighborhood more uncomfortable and challenging
- 4th Street is an important connection between Market Street and King Street

PDR (Production, Distribution, and Repair), Arts, and Non-Profits

Amount of PDR, Arts, and Non-Profits

- The neighborhoods needs a good mix (PDR and office complementary)
- The Plan should keep some PDR and add community amenities
- The City should not protect non-profits and PDR uses in SoMa if those uses cannot afford to be there
- Non-profits are good because they add civic value

Strategies to Protect and Increase PDR, Arts, and Non-Profits

- The zoning should maintain some protective zoning
- The Plan should incentivize protection of existing (e.g., Flower Mart)
- The Plan should incentivize and/or require new space
- Use incentives to provide PDR and non-profit space (e.g., added density and parking)
- Allow office development to cross-subsidize PDR space than to restrict any development of non-PDR use
- The Plan should explore new types of building controls, such as requiring ground floor PDR, 2nd floor non-profit, etc.
- Flowers are damaged by car exhaust, and thus the Flower Mart vendors prefer above ground parking
- The City needs a multi-pronged, site-specific approach to providing PDR
- The City needs a phasing plan to ensure no displacement of vulnerable small businesses
- The City needs stronger enforcement including legal oversight (e.g., developer agreements)
- Project descriptions need to be legally binding, subject to perjury
- All tenant improvement permits in PDR areas should be routed to the Planning Department

Streets and Transportation

Streets

- The City needs better enforcement of pedestrian safety at crosswalks
- Stillman Street would be a great as a pedestrian way
- Townsend is a problematic street and should be included in the Plan
- The sidewalks on 4th Street need to be wider
- The neighborhood needs to be safer for pedestrians

Transportation

- Traffic is a problem in the neighborhood
- Bay Bridge queuing causes a substantial traffic problem
- If you want to keep PDR in the neighborhood, trucks need to be accommodated
- The possible 280 demolition will affect access to the Flower Mart
- The neighborhood needs a “hierarchy of streets” – some to move cars faster than others
- The City should consider creating more two-way streets (particularly Folsom St.)
- The Plan will need to address the inherent conflict between motor vehicles (cars and trucks) and bikes and pedestrians
- Congestion discourages growth
- Include parking under parks
- The City should not reduce surface transit because of the Central Subway
- The neighborhood needs more buses
- MUNI drivers need to be more respectful of bikers
- The City needs transit-only “red lanes” on Harrison
- The neighborhood needs better cycling access
- Take out parking to widen sidewalk and create bike lanes
- The City needs to build more bike facilities