



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Memo to the Planning Commission Informational Update

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 4, 2011

*Date:* July 27, 2011  
*Case No.:* **2007.0558 TRANSIT CENTER DISTRICT PLAN**  
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*Recommendation:* **No Action Required. Informational Only.**

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This item is an informational item for the Planning Commission on the draft Transit Center District Plan, to remind the Planning Commission of the proposals of the draft Plan in anticipation of the publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Report in September.

The Planning Department published the draft Transit Center District Plan in November 2009, and the plan release that month was the most recent time that the Commission discussed the Plan. Copies were distributed at that time to the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, various city agencies and the Citizen's Advisory Committees for both the Redevelopment Agency and the TJPA. The Plan has also been available to the public for free download from the Planning Department's website or for purchase of hard copy or CD, as well as for review at the Public Library.

### SUMMARY OF KEY PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSALS

The Transit Center District Plan is a comprehensive plan for the southern portion of San Francisco's downtown Financial District, encompassing approximately 145 acres roughly bounded by Market Street, Steuart Street, Folsom Street, and a line to the east of Third Street. The area includes private properties as well as properties owned or to be acquired by the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) in and around the Transbay Redevelopment Project Area (for which a redevelopment plan was adopted in 2005) and the new Transbay Transit Center (now under construction). The Plan area includes all of Zone 2 of the Transbay Redevelopment Area; the Plan area also includes most of Zone 1 but would not make any use district or height and bulk changes within Zone 1.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zone 1 of the Transbay Redevelopment Area generally comprises the parcels formerly occupied by portions of the Embarcadero Freeway and Terminal Separator Structure. Zone 1 is under the direct land use jurisdiction of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The remainder of the Transbay Redevelopment Area is subject to the *San Francisco Planning Code*; in this Zone 2 the Redevelopment Agency has delegated its land use authority to the Planning Department.

The overarching premise of the Transit Center District Plan is to continue the concentration of additional growth where it is most responsible and productive to do so—in proximity to San Francisco’s greatest concentration of public transit service. The increase in development, in turn, will provide additional revenue for the Transit Center project and for the necessary improvements and infrastructure in the District.

The draft Plan’s fundamental core goals are as follows:

- (1) Build on the *General Plan’s* Urban Design Element and Downtown Plan, establishing controls, guidelines, and standards to advance existing policies of livability, as well as those that protect the unique qualities of place;
- (2) Capitalize on major transit investment with appropriate land use in the downtown core, with an eye toward long-term growth considerations;
- (3) Create a framework for a network of public streets and open spaces that support the transit system, and provide a wide variety of public amenities and a world-class pedestrian experience;
- (4) Generate financial support for the Transbay Transit Center project, district infrastructure, and other public improvements; and
- (5) Ensure that the Transit Center District is an example of comprehensive environmental sustainability in all regards.

Following are topic-by-topic highlights of the primary proposals of the draft Plan:

### Land Use

To meet regional and local sustainability goals, to maintain downtown San Francisco as the region’s premier location for transit-oriented job growth in this very transit-intensive area, and to continue to foster a 24-hour character in the area, the Plan proposes the following actions to increase the overall capacity of the district for additional growth:

- Rezone the entire Plan Area to C-3-O(SD) and eliminate the maximum 18:1 FAR limit in this zone.
- Revise some height and bulk limits. (See Urban Form section).
- Require a minimum ratio of commercial to non-commercial space for new construction on large development sites (i.e. larger than 15,000 square feet).

The following table summarizes the total amount of development that would result from the draft Plan’s proposals:

**NET ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Land Use	Net Additional Development	Increment of Net Additional Development Allowed by Rezoning	Increment Allowed by Rezoning as a Percent of Net Additional Development
Office	6,355,000	2,196,000	35%
Retail	86,000	3,750	4%
Hotel Rooms <sup>2</sup>	985	810	82%
Institutional	(175,000)	-	-
Residential Units <sup>3</sup>	1,298	800	62%

Note: Does not include Plan area development that is under construction, permitted, or already approved.

**Urban Form**

The draft Plan’s urban design framework seeks to build upon the core principles of city form established in the Downtown Plan and the Urban Design Element of the *General Plan*. The draft Plan presents key objectives and policies for directing new development in a manner that enhances the overall cityscape and builds upon established and planned transit assets downtown. Urban form in the draft Plan is considered at two key levels: the cityscape level and at the pedestrian level. These considerations reinforce and implement policies from its predecessor plans that have sought to achieve a compact, human-scaled, walkable and dynamic urban center and a dramatic concentrated skyline set against the natural backdrop of the city’s hills.

- Strategically increase certain height limits. Establish the Transit Tower site at 1<sup>st</sup>/Mission as the “crown” of the downtown skyline at a maximum enclosed height of 1,000’ emphasizing the location as the center of the City’s transit accessibility, with other immediately proximate buildings stepping down from that height to provide graceful transitions and a balanced skyline.
- Ensure that tall buildings establish a distinctly articulated streetwall base element to maintain a comfortable human-scale.
- Limit the street frontage of lobbies to help achieve an active pedestrian realm.

**Public Realm**

The draft Plan proposes to significantly transform the existing area, currently characterized by rather bleak and often narrow sidewalks, few pedestrian amenities, and long blocks dominated by vehicular traffic. In keeping with the area’s evolving role into the heart of an expanded and intensified downtown, the draft Plan proposes substantial changes in the design and allocation of right-of-way space to create a world-class pedestrian realm that supports the circulation and social needs of the District. The public realm recommendations also seek to enhance access to the proposed 5.4-acre rooftop park on the Transit Center and to provide additional public open space in a district with only smaller privately-owned open spaces. Such recommendations include:

- Widen sidewalks throughout the Plan area to provide a comfortable and attractive walking environment. Strive to achieve circulation space of at least 15 feet and a landscaping/amenity zone along the curb of at 6 feet, for a typical sidewalk width of 21 feet.
- Continue Living Streets treatments to create linear parks along Beale, Main and Spear Streets that connect to the new neighborhood at Folsom Street/Rincon Hill.
- Add signalized mid-block crosswalks on long blocks, particularly between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- Close Shaw Alley to vehicles.
- Close Natoma Street to vehicles between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets.
- Prohibit access to off-street parking and loading on Mission, Second, and portions of Folsom and Natoma Streets.
- Create a new public plaza at the northeast corner of 2<sup>nd</sup>/Howard where a grouping of buildings must be demolished to construct the Downtown Rail Extension.
- Permit and encourage buildings adjacent to the Transit Center to satisfy open space requirements through direct connections to the rooftop Transit Center Park.
- Permit payment of an in-lieu fee as an alternative to fulfilling Section 138 Open Space Requirements

### **Moving About**

The draft Plan expresses a commitment to basing growth on the Transit First Policy and the realization that growth in jobs, residences and activity downtown is dependent on the City's commitments to enhancing local and regional transit service and getting most people to and within downtown without autos. In order to ensure that surface transit is efficient and reliable, bicycling is attractive and safe, streets can be transformed into great public spaces, and that growth does not exacerbate vehicular congestion, the draft Plan proposes the following:

- Extend dedicated, protected transit lanes for the entirety of Mission Street, and on other key streets around the new Transit Center. On-street parking would be largely removed to accommodate improved transit lanes and widened sidewalks, with on-street loading bays provided.
- Consider converting portions of Spear, Howard, and Folsom Streets from one-way to two-way traffic.
- Expand bicycle lanes throughout the Plan area, including on Main, Beale, and Fremont Streets.
- Reduce allowed accessory parking for non-residential uses from 7% of gross floor area to 3.5% of gross floor area until such time as a maximum parking cap for the downtown is established.
- Support City and County efforts to continue evaluation and trial implementation of congestion pricing

### **Historic Preservation**

The Plan area currently contains the New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District. A historic resources survey and context statement was completed and adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board in 2008, and supplemental survey was completed in late 2009. In order to ensure that intensification of development in the area does not result in the inordinate loss or inappropriate alternation of historic resources, the draft Plan proposes the following:

- Expansion of the existing New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District to the west to incorporate more buildings along Mission and Natoma Streets.
- Revise the Article 11 ratings of numerous buildings in the Plan area
- Consider pursuing Article 10 landmark designation for four buildings in the Plan area
- Maintain the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program, but reduce the amount of TDR required for large projects to reflect the current projected supply of TDR, and consider instituting a Preservation fee in-lieu of purchasing TDR.

### **District Sustainability**

The proposed Plan would adopt a number of district-wide policies aimed at supporting and, where possible, exceeding the City's existing environmental, sustainability and climate change objectives. Such policies would promote a higher level of coordination and planning at the district level, specifically related to energy and water usage, than is typically conducted on a project-by-project basis. The incorporation of sustainability-related objectives and policies into the proposed Plan is intended to achieve lower impact and higher performance development within the Plan area than would otherwise be achievable. Highlights of these district efficiency policy proposals include:

- Pursue a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system or series of systems for the Transit Center District and the Transbay Redevelopment Area (Zone 1). Require new buildings to be designed to connect to such a system in the future.
- Create a reliable supply of non-potable water that can be used throughout the Plan area to reduce potable water demand. Create infrastructure in the Transit Center District and immediately adjacent areas for non-potable water use, including treatment and distribution.

### **Funding Public Improvements**

The draft Plan identifies \$567 million (over \$4 billion including the full Transit Center program) worth of public infrastructure and program implementation necessary to implement the vision of the Plan and to support proposed growth. To address the impacts of new development and to leverage additional growth to help support major public infrastructure investments in the area, particularly the Transit Center program, the Plan proposes the following:

- Complete necessary nexus analyses and adopt additional impact fees for open space, streets and transportation.
- Require participation in a Mello Roos Special Tax District for new development entitled under the Plan's rezoning. Total estimated Net Present Value of such program is over \$260 million.

### **IMPACT FEE NEXUS ANALYSES**

Since publication of the draft Plan, the Planning Department has been engaged with an economic consultant and the City Attorney's office to complete the necessary nexus analyses to support the creation of new impact fees in the Plan area to fund open space, streets and transportation improvements and programs necessary to support additional development. The Department anticipates publication of these studies and solidification of the fee proposal in autumn of this year.

**ADOPTION PROCESS**

Along with certification of the Final EIR for the Plan, the Planning Commission will consider amendments to the *General Plan, Planning Code* and Zoning Map as necessary to adopt and implement the Plan. These actions are expected in February 2012, following completion of the Comments & Responses to the DEIR.

**REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTION**

None. Informational only.

<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b> <b>None. Informational Only.</b>
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**Attachments:**

None