



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE MARCH 22, 2018

Project Name: Urban Design Guidelines
Case Number: 2016-000162CWP
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RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ALL PROJECTS IN COMMERCIAL, MIXED-USE AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND PROJECTS WITH TWENTY-FIVE OR MORE RESIDENTIAL UNITS, 150' LONGER FRONTAGE, OR NON-RESIDENTIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS; ADOPTING FINDINGS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, AND FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1.

WHEREAS, in 2013 the Planning Commission requested that the Planning Department develop design guidelines that will provide consistently-applied design direction for projects during a period of increased development growth with competing public and private priorities;

WHEREAS, the Planning Department, in response, has developed Urban Design Guidelines derived through an intensive analysis of existing urban design policy found in the General Plan and other adopted area-specific, zoning-based, or use type, guidelines across the city that cover the topics of Site Design, Architecture and Public Realm;

WHEREAS, the Urban Design Guidelines support the built environment goals and values found in the General Plan that include that new projects be contextual and reflect existing neighborhood architecture and urban patterns; contribute high quality design to the city based on best professional standards and practices; enhance neighborhood uniqueness and cultural character; support an active pedestrian environment and human-scaled design; and reinforce sustainability practices.

WHEREAS, the Urban Design Guidelines will not modify or supersede any existing design guidelines or the General Plan;

WHEREAS, the Planning Department worked extensively with design and development professionals, city agencies, neighborhood groups, and members of the public over three years to refine the process, applicability, and content of the Urban Design Guidelines and considerably revised all three by broadening the outreach, changing the applicability, removing the waiver, balancing the content to

include more Neighborhood Commercial examples, and revising numerous aspects of the content as offered and requested;

WHEREAS, Special Area Design Guidelines for North Beach, Polk, and Pacific Neighborhood Commercial Districts have been in development since August 2017, and are currently in draft form;

WHEREAS, the proposed guidelines are not defined as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act Sections 15378 and 15060(c)(2) because they do not intensify development or change or affect zoning or transportation in the built environment;

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of Department staff and other interested parties beginning with Planning Commission informationals on January 21, 2016; October 20, 2016; May 11, 2017; and January 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS, all pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; and

MOVED, that the Planning Commission hereby approves the proposed Urban Design Guidelines (included as Exhibit A) for application in Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Neighborhood Commercial Districts except for the North Beach, Polk, and Pacific Neighborhood Commercial Districts and in Residential districts for projects with non-residential uses or residential projects with twenty-five units or more or with a frontage longer than 150'. The application of the Urban Design Guidelines in Residential Districts for residential projects with twenty-five units or more or with a frontage longer than 150' shall no longer apply after the adoption of a revision to the Residential Design Guidelines. Sites in National Register, California Register, Article 10 and Article 11 Historic Districts will be exempt from Urban Design Guidelines conformance.

Department staff will report annually to the Planning Commission on any proposed updates, functionality, compliance, or guideline interpretation issues. The effective date for application of the Urban Design Guidelines will be for site permits or project applications submitted on or after April 1, 2018 in applicable areas.

The proposed Special Area Guidelines, a separate project underway at the Planning Department, provides essential area-specific design guidance in key neighborhoods and thus should be supported by Department efforts as so-desired by established neighborhood groups that represent Neighborhood Commercial Districts.

FINDINGS

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. **General Plan Compliance.** The proposed Urban Design Guidelines are consistent with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

EMPHASIS OF THE CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN WHICH GIVES TO THE CITY AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS AN IMAGE, A SENSE OF PURPOSE, AND A MEANS OF ORIENTATION.

Policy 1.1

Recognize and protect major views in the city, with particular attention to those of open space and water.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline S4 requires projects to "Create, Protect, and Support View Corridors" from the public realm. The proposed Urban Design Guideline A4 requires projects to "Design Buildings from Multiple Vantage Points" understanding that San Francisco's unique topography affords view corridors that highlight architecture in the urban fabric.

Policy 1.2

Recognize, protect and reinforce the existing street pattern, especially as it is related to topography.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline S2 requires projects to "Harmonize Relationships between Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces." The proposed Urban Design Guideline S5 requires projects to "Create a Defined and Active Streetwall" specifically considering the width and character of the street. The proposed Urban Design Guideline S3 requires projects to "Recognize and Enhance Unique Conditions" including the specific site conditions of street crossings.

Policy 1.4

Protect and promote large-scale landscaping and open space that define districts and topography.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline S8 requires projects to "Respect and Exhibit Natural Systems and Features" including supporting existing topography and open space.

Policy 1.5

Emphasize the special nature of each district through distinctive landscaping and other features.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline P3 requires projects to "Express Neighborhood Character in Open Space Designs."

Policy 1.10

Indicate the purposes of streets by adopting and implementing the Better Streets Plan, which identifies a hierarchy of street types and appropriate streetscape elements for each street type.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline P4 requires projects to "Support Public Transportation and Bicycling" through the design of architecture and public realm amenities that encourage the use of both.

OBJECTIVE 2

CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES WHICH PROVIDE A SENSE OF NATURE, CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST, AND FREEDOM FROM OVERCROWDING.

Policy 2.6

Respect the character of older development nearby in the design of new buildings.

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines A2 and A3 require projects to "Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally" and "Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials" to direct projects to be compatible with neighboring building context.

Policy 2.7

Recognize and protect outstanding and unique areas that contribute in an extraordinary degree to San Francisco's visual form and character.

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines A2 and A3 require projects to "Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally" and "Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials" to be compatible with neighboring building context and support the visual form and character of the city.

OBJECTIVE 3

MODERATION OF MAJOR NEW DEVELOPMENT TO COMPLEMENT THE CITY PATTERN, THE RESOURCES TO BE CONSERVED, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT.

Policy 3.1

Promote harmony in the visual relationships and transitions between new and older buildings.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline S2 requires projects to "Harmonize Relationships between Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces" asks new projects to match massing patterns and sculpt to accommodate existing building massing, setbacks, and block patterns. The proposed Urban Design Guideline A2 requires projects to "Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally" to be compatible with neighboring building lot widths and massing.

Policy 3.2

Avoid extreme contrasts in color, shape and other characteristics which will cause new buildings to stand out in excess of their public importance.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline A3 requires projects to "Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials" to be compatible with neighboring building context and avoid standing out without a larger civic purpose.

Policy 3.4

Promote building forms that will respect and improve the integrity of open spaces and other public areas.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline S7 requires projects to "Integrate Common Open Space and Landscape with Architecture" to better organize building massing for the benefit of natural ground and open space.

OBJECTIVE 4

IMPROVEMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT TO INCREASE PERSONAL SAFETY, COMFORT, PRIDE AND OPPORTUNITY

Policy 4.12

Install, promote and maintain landscaping in public and private areas.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline P5 requires projects to "Design Sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian Experience" including adding landscaping to sidewalk areas for public enjoyment and stormwater management.

Policy 4.13

Improve pedestrian areas by providing human scale and interest.

The proposed Urban Design Guideline A8 requires projects to "Design Active Building Fronts" to enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage neighborhood activity. The proposed Urban Design Guidelines A6 and A7 requires projects to "Render Building Facades with Texture and Depth" and "Coordinate Building Elements" to provide visual interest for pedestrians therefore encouraging walking and neighborhood engagement.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 6

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN VIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO CITY RESIDENTS.

Policy 6.7

Promote high quality urban design on commercial streets.

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines S4, S5, S6, A8, and P5 requires projects to "Harmonize Relationships between Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces;" "Create a Defined and Active Streetwall," "Organize Uses to Complement the Public Environment;" "Design Active Building Fronts;" and "Design Sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian Experience" all to foster neighborhood compatibility and enhance commerce and storefront uses in Neighborhood Commercial Districts and harmonize their compatibility with Residential Districts.

2. **Planning Code Section 101 Findings.** The proposed amendments to the Planning Code are consistent with the eight Priority Policies set forth in Section 101.1(b) of the Planning Code in that:

1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future

opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would enhance neighborhood-serving retail by retaining and supporting the maintenance of its use and built environment character.

2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would enhance the retention and maintenance of neighborhood character by requiring that new projects be compatible with neighborhood characteristics at the site design, architecture and public realm scales.

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not have an adverse effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.

4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking.

5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not cause displacement of the industrial or service sectors due to office development, and future opportunities for resident employment or ownership in these sectors would not be impaired.

6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not have an adverse effect on City's preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not have an adverse effect on the City's Landmarks and historic buildings.

8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development;

The proposed Urban Design Guidelines would not have an adverse effect on the City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas.

3. The application of the Urban Design Guidelines will support neighborhood compatibility and encourage the use of best professional design practices and standards for projects in Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Neighborhood Commercial Districts and in Residential districts for projects with non-residential uses or residential projects with twenty-five units or more or with a frontage longer than 150', in particular on sites where few or no design guidelines apply.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission hereby APPROVES the proposed Urban Design Guidelines as described in this Resolution.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on MARCH 22, 2018.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: