

## **Central SoMa Draft Policy Document**

# **New Park between 4th, 5th, Bryant, and Brannan Streets**

**November 2013**

### Background

We all know that SoMa is lacking in open space – particularly the area south of the freeway and west of South Park. The Central SoMa Plan hopes to help rectify that by facilitating the creation of a large park on the block bordered by 4th, 5th, Brannan, and Bryant. The advantage of this block is that it contains a large, publicly owned parcel – the SF Public Utilities Commission’s (SFPUC) street light storage yard. Historically, the city has had more success developing new parks on publicly owned land than privately owned land, because of the challenge of real estate transactions. To facilitate this process, the Planning Department and Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) have begun negotiating with the SFPUC for the land (SFPUC’s bylaws require that it receive fair market price). Planning has also started coordinating with Tishman Speyer, which is proposing an office development on the northeast corner of 5th and Brannan whose design will have a substantial impact on the park’s functionality.

Alternatively, the TODCO Group (a SoMa-based non-profit housing organization) has proposed a different location for the proposed park, which would front 5th Street between Bryant and Brannan. The Planning Department has worked very closely with the TODCO group over the three years of the planning process, as has incorporated many of their ideas into the Plan. Both the Planning Department and TODCO’s park proposals are being studied in the Central SoMa Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

It is premature to consider any specific park design. That would occur in its own community process as soon as feasible.

### Proposal

As detailed on page 72 of the Draft Plan, the Planning Department’s proposed park would be situated in the middle of the block, akin to South Park. This location would enable the city to utilize much of the PUC’s parcel, and require minimal acquisition/swapping of additional land. It would also enable the city to complete the alley grid through this block, which currently has a series of dead ends. These alleys would provide access to the park. Additionally, development surrounding the park would provide “eyes”, to create more safety. Finally, given the proximity of the park to the freeway, Planning asked for and received an assessment of potential park locations from the Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH’s conclusion was that the mid-block area was a preferred location for a park, given reduced noise in that location.

The TODCO proposal is shown on page 73 of the Draft Plan. As described above, it would be situated to face 5th Street, and potentially be met by a matching park on the west side of the street. This proposal would require real estate transactions involving Tishman Speyer, the proposed developers of the site at 5th and Brannan.