

Central SoMa Draft Policy Document

Key Development Sites Guidelines

March 2015

Introduction

The Central SoMa Plan area includes a number of large, underutilized sites (parcels or groups of adjacent parcels) that offer tremendous potential for transformative new development. These few sites also cumulatively represent the lion's share of new development capacity proposed by the Plan. The guidelines in this document have been crafted to help shape development of these key sites, particularly where their size presents special possibilities for realizing public realm or other public benefit objectives, where there is a need for coordination between or within sites, and/or where adjacent investments in transit or open space improvements require special consideration of the relationship between private development and the public realm. The guidelines in this document reflect a targeted list of design considerations that are intended to supplement the Plan's area-wide controls, including the [Draft Plan](#) and the Planning Department's published policy papers regarding [bulk](#), [privately-owned public open space](#), [other open spaces](#), [affordable housing](#), and ground floors. These guidelines will be updated upon publication of subsequent related policy papers on such topics as transportation and height. The location of these sites, along with their existing and proposed zoning and heights, are contained in maps at the end of this document.

A number of goals and design considerations are common to several of the key development sites described in this chapter, as described below. Those aspects of this policy paper that help form part of the larger open space and pedestrian network are shown on a map that can be found at the end of this document.

Ensure a safe, convenient, and interesting pedestrian experience

The Plan aims to increase the walkability of Central SoMa through such means as widened sidewalks, adding mid-block crossings, and breaking up the large development sites with new mid-block alleys. The key development site guidelines below describe how the location of new midblock alleys should be coordinated within and between sites so that they contribute to the larger circulation network of streets and alleys. New alleys or extensions of existing alleys should match the 35-foot width of the existing alleys in the neighborhood.

The Plan also aims to ensure that new development enhances the pedestrian experience and provides neighborhood amenities. This is done by requiring active and welcoming ground floors, including supporting retail, engaging uses that enrich neighborhood life (such as PDR, arts and community facilities), banning office on the ground floor, minimizing the effect of off-street parking and loading, and designing buildings to be transparent and architecturally interesting. Because the interaction between the building and the street is particularly critical on large sites, the key development site guidelines below include additional strategies to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Provide adequate pedestrian space along 4th street

With the opening of the Central Subway, pedestrian volumes on 4th Street sidewalks are expected to reach levels similar to many downtown streets. However, because the Central Subway runs above ground south of the freeway, it will not be possible to widen the existing narrow sidewalks into the roadway. The key development site guidelines below detail how buildings fronting 4th Street will need to provide additional sidewalk space within the property line in order to provide adequate space for pedestrian circulation.

Create a dense network of diverse, high-quality, and connected open spaces

The intensive development proposed in the Plan requires intensive investment in open space. The Plan envisions providing a network of diverse small and medium-sized open spaces that permeates the neighborhood. Many of these open spaces will be created by requirements on new large commercial developments. The key development site guidelines below ensure that these open spaces are well connected to each other and to the larger street system, are supported and activated by adjacent development, and can accommodate the various recreational needs identified by the community. To supplement this network of privately owned spaces the Plan proposes a larger new public park located on the block bounded by Brannan, Bryant, 4th and 5th Streets. More detailed information can be found in the description of Site 1.

Protect access to sun, light, and air in the public realm

The Plan's bulk controls support substantial density in Central SoMa while simultaneously protecting access to sun, light, and air from sidewalks and open spaces of the Plan Area. The key development site guidelines below offer site-specific strategies that modify these bulk controls in specific locations where additional protection is needed or other changes are warranted based on site-specific conditions.

Create sites for affordable housing

The City has a target that 33% of all new units enabled by the Central SoMa Plan Area be affordable to low- and moderate-income residents. In the Plan Area, one of the largest challenges to achieving this goal is securing sites to build buildings that are 100% affordable, which will be necessary to reach the 33% goal. The key development site guidelines below identify opportunities to achieve this goal, based on the ability of some extra-large sites to dedicate at least 15,000 square feet of land towards affordable housing while still meeting other Plan objectives, such as providing a substantial amount of commercial space as well as community benefits such as open space, space for PDR and community facilities, and funding for transportation. Any dedication of land and/or construction of affordable units will be credited against a development project's fee burden.

Site 1 **“PUC Park Block”**
Block **3777**
Lots **042, 044, 045, 050, 051, 052**

Context

This block includes at least two important potential development sites. Lot 045 is nearly 100,000 square foot site that is being considered for an office development being studied in the Central SoMa Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a height of up to 160 feet. The draft Plan also envisions a new neighborhood park incorporating some or all of Lot 052, a 60,000 square foot “L” shaped lot currently owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and used primarily as a storage facility. There are also several smaller parcels that may factor in to the ultimate layout of this block, including two lots on Bryant Street (050 and 051) just west of the PUC parcel and two lots on Brannan Street (042 and 044) just east of the potential office development. Depending on which sites are involved, the new park could front on Brannan, on Bryant, or solely be in the middle of the block.

From a circulation standpoint, the block features three alleys which are currently dead-end cul-de-sacs – Welsh Street heading east from 5th Street, Welsh Street heading west from 4th Street, and Freelon Street heading west from 4th Street.

Guidelines

Mid-block alleys. Development at this site shall be required to provide mid-block alleys to improve the convenience of walking, as well as to support vehicular circulation and loading. These alleys should connect and extend the existing dead end alleys and increase the pedestrian permeability through the interior of this block, as follows:

1. Connect the two ends of Welsh Street. This alley would provide east-west access through the block and remove two dead-end conditions. This alley should follow the current alignment of Welsh Street alignment, unless 050 and 051 are not included in the coordinated development of this block.
2. Connect Welsh Street to Freelon Street to Brannan Street. This alley should provide direct access to the proposed park from Brannan Street and connect Welsh and Freelon Streets. The intersection of this mid-block alley with Brannan Street should be located as far to the east as possible, in order to align with a proposed mid-block pedestrian crossing on Brannan Street, and with a required mid-block alley on block 3786 (Tennis Club site).
3. Connect Bryant Street to Welsh Street to Freelon Street. This alley should provide direct access to the proposed park from Bryant Street and connect Welsh Street to Freelon Street.
4. Connect Freelon Street to 5th Street. This alley would provide east-west access through the block and remove a dead-end condition.

Ground floor activation. To ensure a safe, convenient, and interesting pedestrian experience, buildings fronting the proposed park (directly or across a street or mid-

block alley) shall be lined with active commercial and/or community uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. Uses that spill out into the mid-block alleys or sidewalks and help activate and enliven them are highly encouraged. Where possible, residential uses should be located adjacent to the park to provide additional eyes-on-the-street.

Parking and loading access. Any parking provided shall be accessed off existing or new alleys, though not facing the park.

Building massing to maximize light at the park. As discussed above, Lot 045 has major development opportunity sites that are being studied by the EIR for heights up to 160 feet. The new development on this site should be designed to facilitate sun and light access to the proposed park, which would be to its north and east (depending on its final configuration). This will require additional setbacks on the northeastern boundary of Lot 045 beyond what would otherwise be required by bulk controls, including the creation of a mid-block alley along this portion of the site running from Welsh Street to Brannan Street and additional setbacks at upper floors. In exchange, the south side of Welsh Street may be treated with the reduced upper story setback requirements as applied to the north side of alleys, as discussed in the [bulk guidelines](#). The building massing should also emphasize the corner of 5th and Brannan, and maintain the street wall along those important thoroughfares. In total, the site reconfiguration shall not result in additional development capacity for the site. Similar strategies should apply to other sites being developed adjacent to the proposed park.

Affordable housing. The City is strongly interested in securing one or two sites for affordable housing from the sites that are large enough to also include a substantial commercial development. Should the PUC Park Block yield an affordable housing site, the preferred location would be facing the proposed park, which would directly benefit the residents and help provide “eyes” on the park around the clock throughout the week.

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). Publicly accessible open space required from or offered by any development on this block should be located adjacent to the proposed park to expand its size or amenities or enhance access to it.

Site 2 **“Wells Fargo”**
Block **3776**
Lot **025**

Context

This 36,000 square foot development site fronts on the northeast corner 4th Street and Brannan Street. The site will be required to be predominantly a commercial use, with a height being studied in the EIR of up to 200 feet. The site is located adjacent to the 4th and Brannan rail stop, which is expected to generate high pedestrian volumes. The site is accessible from 4th Street, Brannan Street, and Freelon Street.

Guidelines

4th Street frontage. A five-foot building setback is required along the entire 4th Street frontage from sidewalk level up to a height of 25 feet, at which point the building can cantilever back to the property line. No columns or other obstructions will be permitted within the first five feet of depth from the property line. At the corner of 4th Street and Brannan Streets additional setbacks should be incorporated to accommodate the high volume of people anticipated at this corner (especially waiting to cross the street to access the Central Subway platform).

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). In addition to the setback along 4th Street, publicly accessible open space required or offered on the site should be located along either 4th Street or Brannan Street, but not necessarily immediately at the intersection of 4th and Brannan Streets beyond the additional queuing area described above.

Mid-block Alleys. Per Planning Code Section 270.2, the Planning Commission may require a new mid-block alley connecting 225-foot long lot frontages on Brannan and Freelon. However, given the existing permeability of the block (via such alleys as Freelon, Welsh, Zoe, and Ritch), such an alley is not necessary. Instead, the POPOS on the site should be provided through the means described above.

Building massing to maximize the proposed plaza. The new development on this site should be designed to maximize the size and facilitate sun and light access to its required public space along 4th or Brannan Streets, rather than along Freelon Street (whose north side is currently lined with parking uses). To facilitate this, the Plan will endorse a modification to Section 270.1 of the Planning Code to enable the building to be 225 feet along Freelon Street without requiring a horizontal mass reduction. Additionally, the south side of Freelon Street should be treated with the reduced upper story setback requirements applied to the north side of alleys, per the proposed bulk controls. The additional development capacity generated by this shift of building envelope should be applied to additional upper story setbacks along the 4th and Brannan Street frontages adjacent to the plaza and/or increased size of the plaza, such that the reduction of the upper story setback along Freelon shall not result in additional development capacity for the site.

Ground floor activation. To ensure a safe, convenient, and interesting pedestrian experience and reinforce the neighborhood commercial character of 4th Street, the portion of the building fronting 4th Street and the proposed plaza shall be lined with active commercial and/or community uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. Commercial spaces are encouraged to be small in scale (less than 50' per storefront) to maximize the variety and diversity of storefronts along 4th Street. Uses that spill out into the plaza and help activate and enliven it are highly encouraged. Lobbies for upper story uses (e.g., offices) are encouraged to be sited on Brannan Street.

Parking and loading access. Any parking and loading shall be accessed off of Freelon Street.

Site 3 **“Tennis Club”**
Block **3786**
Lots **036, 037**

Context

This 114,000 square foot development site runs 475 feet (more than half a block) northeastward from 5th Street toward 4th Street, and 240 feet from Brannan Street to Bluxome Street. The site will be required to be predominantly a commercial use, with building height limits being studied in the EIR of up to 200 feet nearer to 5th Street, and 130 feet towards 4th Street. The site is adjacent to the proposed linear park on the north side of the Bluxome Street right of way, which would be approximately 30 feet wide and run the length of the block.

Guidelines

Mid-block alley and privately-owned public open space (POPOS). A mid-block alley will be required through the site, due to the length of the development site, providing access from Brannan to Bluxome. To facilitate the planned signaled pedestrian crosswalk on Brannan Street, this connection should be aligned with the Brannan to Freelon to Welsh mid-block connection on Block 3777. The development should consider designing this alley as a more expansive POPOS, and/or placing the POPOS adjacent to this alley while incorporating landscaping and other pedestrian amenities. Any other publicly accessible open space required or offered on the site is encouraged to be along Bluxome Street, integrated with and expanding the planned linear park.

Building massing to maximize light at the parks. The development on this site should be designed to maximize sunlight on the proposed parks in this area during the lunchtime hours– including the Bluxome Linear Park and the proposed public park on block 3777 to the north.

Ground-floor activation. To ensure a safe, convenient, and interesting pedestrian experience, the portion of the building fronting the proposed Bluxome park shall be lined with active commercial and/or community uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. Uses that spill out into the park and help activate and enliven it are highly encouraged. Any parking provided shall be accessed off of Bluxome Street, but in a fashion that minimizes impact to the linear park and minimizes conflicts with pedestrian circulation using the mid-block connection from Brannan.

Affordable housing. The City is strongly interested in securing one to two sites for affordable housing from the sites that are large enough to also include a substantial commercial development. Should the Tennis Club site yield an affordable housing site, it should be on the eastern side of the lot, and potentially fronting Bluxome Street, where its adjacency to the proposed linear park would directly benefit the residents and help provide eyes on the park.

Site 4 **“330 Townsend”**
Block **3786**
Lot **014**

Context

This 31,000 square foot development site is a rectangular through-lot from Bluxome Street to Townsend Street on the eastern portion of the block between 4th and 5th Streets. The site will be required to be predominantly a commercial use, with a height being studied in the EIR of up to 300 feet. The site is immediately proximal to the Caltrain Station across Townsend Street and the proposed Bluxome Street linear park, which would be approximately 30 feet wide and run the length of the north side of Bluxome.

Guidelines

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). The 127-foot width of the parcel does not require a new mid-block alley. However, since a pedestrian connection between Townsend Street and the proposed open space on Bluxome Street is highly desired, the required or offered public open space at this site should be in the form of a pedestrian passage. To further this goal, some relaxation of dimensional requirements for required POPOS may be allowed at this site.

Building massing to maximize light at the parks. To maximize light to the proposed Bluxome Linear Park, and to emphasize the importance of the Caltrain Station, any proposed tower on the site shall be located toward the Townsend Street frontage (though the 15-foot streetwall setback above 85 feet shall still be required).

Parking, loading, and ground-floor activation. Any parking provided shall be accessed off of Bluxome Street. If a mid-block connection is proposed, uses that activate it are highly encouraged.

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). Publicly accessible open space required or offered on the site should be located along Bluxome Street and/or in the form of a mid-block alley between Bluxome Street and Townsend Street.

Site 5 **“Creamery and Buttercup”**
Block **3787**
Lots **026, 028, 050, 161, 162, 163, 164**

Context

This 72,000 square foot development site is comprised of multiple parcels on the corner 4th Street and Townsend Street. The site could be developed with exclusively commercial or a mix of commercial and residential uses. The site is large enough to potentially contain up to two towers (depending on the various factors as described in the policy paper on [bulk](#)), the tallest of which is being studied in the EIR of up to 400 feet. The site is located kitty-corner to the Caltrain Station, which generates high pedestrian volumes. The site is also less than two blocks from both the King/Berry and Brannan St Central Subway stops, and frequent movement of transit vehicles along 4th Street is expected. The “Creamery” portion of the site (lots 026 and 161) may be developed as a residential-only development, as it is smaller than 30,000 square feet.

Guidelines

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). Required or offered public open space shall be concentrated at the corner of 4th and Townsend Streets, to create a new plaza at this very busy corner.

Ground-floor activation. The portion of buildings fronting 4th Street and the plaza at 4th and Townsend shall be lined with active commercial and/or community uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. Uses that spill out into the plaza and help activate and enliven it are highly encouraged.

Parking and loading. To minimize impacts to transit vehicles traversing the intersection of 4th and Townsend Streets, all vehicle access to the site must be from an alley connecting to Townsend Street at the eastern edge of the site. New curb-cuts are not permitted along 4th Street, in keeping with Planning Code Section 155(r)(2)(N).

4th Street frontage. A five-foot building setback is required along the entire 4th Street frontage, from sidewalk level up to a height of 25 feet, at which point the building can cantilever back to the property line. No columns or other obstructions will be permitted within the first five feet of the property line.

Transit Access. The site shall consider incorporation, in the plaza or in a ground floor space adjacent to the plaza, pedestrian access to a future rebuilt Caltrain subway station at 4th/Townsend being designed as part of the Downtown Extension. Ideally, this station in the Townsend Street ROW, which extends as far east as the west side of 4th Street, would extend east under the intersection to accommodate station access from the east side of 4th Street. Due to the heavy pedestrian volumes expected, combined with the very frequent Central Subway transit movements along 4th Street and all of the vehicular traffic passing this point, it would be desirable to provide station access that does not

require crossing 4th Street for those coming from the east. The Transbay Joint Powers Authority is studying this possibility.

Site 6 **“4th and Harrison”**
Block **3762**
Lots **106, 108, 109, 112, 116, 117**

Context

This 102,000 square foot development site consists of multiple parcels running over 600 feet along the south side of Harrison Street from 4th Street much of the way to 3rd Street. The site will be required to be predominantly commercial use, with a height being studied in the EIR of up to 240 feet at 4th Street with lower heights further east. The site is located adjacent to the elevated 101 Freeway and is across the street from the 4th Street on-ramp. The site is accessible from 4th, Harrison and Perry Streets.

Guidelines

Mid-block alley. A mid-block alley connecting Harrison and Perry Streets will be required, due to the length of the development site. To facilitate the planned signalized pedestrian crosswalk on Harrison Street at Lapu Lapu Street, this alley should be aligned with this crosswalk.

Publicly accessible open space. Given the proximity of the elevated freeway, any required or offered open space should be oriented towards Harrison Street or a courtyard that is well-connected to the surrounding streets.

Ground-floor activation. The portion of the building fronting 4th Street and the open space provided shall be lined with active commercial and/or community-serving uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. The project should support pedestrian safety and comfort along Perry Street through such strategies as lighting and active uses. The project is encouraged to work with the City and Caltrans to support pedestrian safety, comfort and interest along 4th under the freeway through lighting, public art, and active uses on Caltrans property.

Parking and loading. Any parking provided shall be accessed off of Perry Street and/or the new mid-block alley.

Building massing to maximize light on the open space. Perry Street, which runs along the south side of the site, is largely covered by the 101 freeway, and contains no active uses on its south side. As such, requiring the new development to provide light to this alley is less important than providing light to the new open space provided by the project. As such, development along the Perry Street frontage shall be subject to the [bulk guidelines](#) applicable to the north-side alley controls for buildings in an 85-foot district (requiring 70% apparent mass reduction) rather than a 130-foot district (requiring 85% apparent mass reduction). In turn, the development should provide additional upper-story setbacks to provide additional light to the required open space on Harrison Street. This reconfiguration of permitted bulk on the site shall not result in additional development capacity.

Affordable housing. The City is strongly interested in securing one to two sites for affordable housing from the sites that are large enough to also include a substantial commercial development. Should the 4th and Harrison site yield an affordable housing site, it should be on the eastern side of the lot, to focus commercial development along the 4th Street transit spine and to site housing further away from the freeway ramp at 4th and Harrison.

Site 7 **“Flower Mart Block”**
Block **3778**
Lots **001B, 002B, 004, 005, 047, 048**

Context

This block consists of two development sites totaling 275,000 square feet encompassing a substantial portion of the block between 5th, 6th, Bryant, and Brannan Streets, except for the row of smaller parcels that line Bryant and 6th Streets. The 200,000 square foot “Kilroy” site (Lots 001B, 002B, 004, and 005) contains the Flower Mart, a culturally and economically important PDR use that will be required to be replaced on-site. The site will be required to be predominantly commercial use, currently being studied in the EIR with building heights of up to 270 feet. The 75,000 square foot “SKS/Zappetini” site (Lots 047 and 048) at the corner of 5th/Brannan contains a one-story flower-related use and a private storage lot for utility vehicles. This site will also be required to be predominantly commercial use, currently being studied in the EIR with a height of up to 160 feet.

The aggregate site is accessible from 6th Street, Brannan Street, 5th Street, and Morris Street, as well as from a private right-of-way easement along the north edge of the Mart (shared with properties facing Bryant).

Guidelines

Mid-block alleys. A number of new mid-block alleys shall be required to increase pedestrian permeability through the block. The exact location of these alleys shall be determined as part of the ongoing design and development considerations for this block. Desirable new mid-block alleys include:

- A Morris Street extension to Brannan Street.
- A connector from Morris Street to 6th Street.
- A connector from Morris Street to 5th Street.
- A connector from Morris Street to the easement on the north side of Lot 001B.
- A connector from Brannan Street to easement on the north side of Lot 001B.

These new connections shall be designed to create a permeable and interconnected system that allows people to walk through the interior of the block. The building massing on both the “Kilroy” and “SKS/Zappetini” sites shall be designed so as to not preclude likely alignments of such connections.

Privately-owned public open space (POPOS). Any required or offered open space should be located towards the eastern half of the block, where there will be more pedestrians and activity. The open space provided by these developments shall be consolidated so as to maximize their effective size, and have coordinated amenities. This will likely mean that the POPOS is developed on the western side of the “SKS/Zappetini” site and the eastern side of the “Kilroy” site, such that they could be built separately but that the final product be a cohesive open space. The open space

should be designed in a fashion to maximize light, air, activity, and a sense of being part of the public realm.

Ground-floor activation. It is yet to be determined if the rebuilt Flower Mart will be on the ground floor or below grade. If it is at the ground floor, it will be important to ensure that the facility is designed to support activation at this level during the afternoon and evening hours when the Flower Mart typically has no to low activity. The portion of the building fronting the required open space should be lined with active commercial and/or community uses that serve the local population into the evenings and weekends. Uses that spill out into the required open space, mid-block alleys, or sidewalks and help activate and enliven them are highly encouraged. Parking and truck loading shall occur off of one of the existing or new alleys.

Key Development Site Guidelines

This map conveys those aspects of the Key Development Site Guidelines policy paper that help form part of the larger open space and pedestrian network



Required mid-block connections, showing desired connectivity. Note that the actual alignment of each connection can vary from what is shown.



General location of major open space. New open space will need to be lined with commercial and/or community-serving uses. Note that the actual footprint of each open space can vary from what is shown.



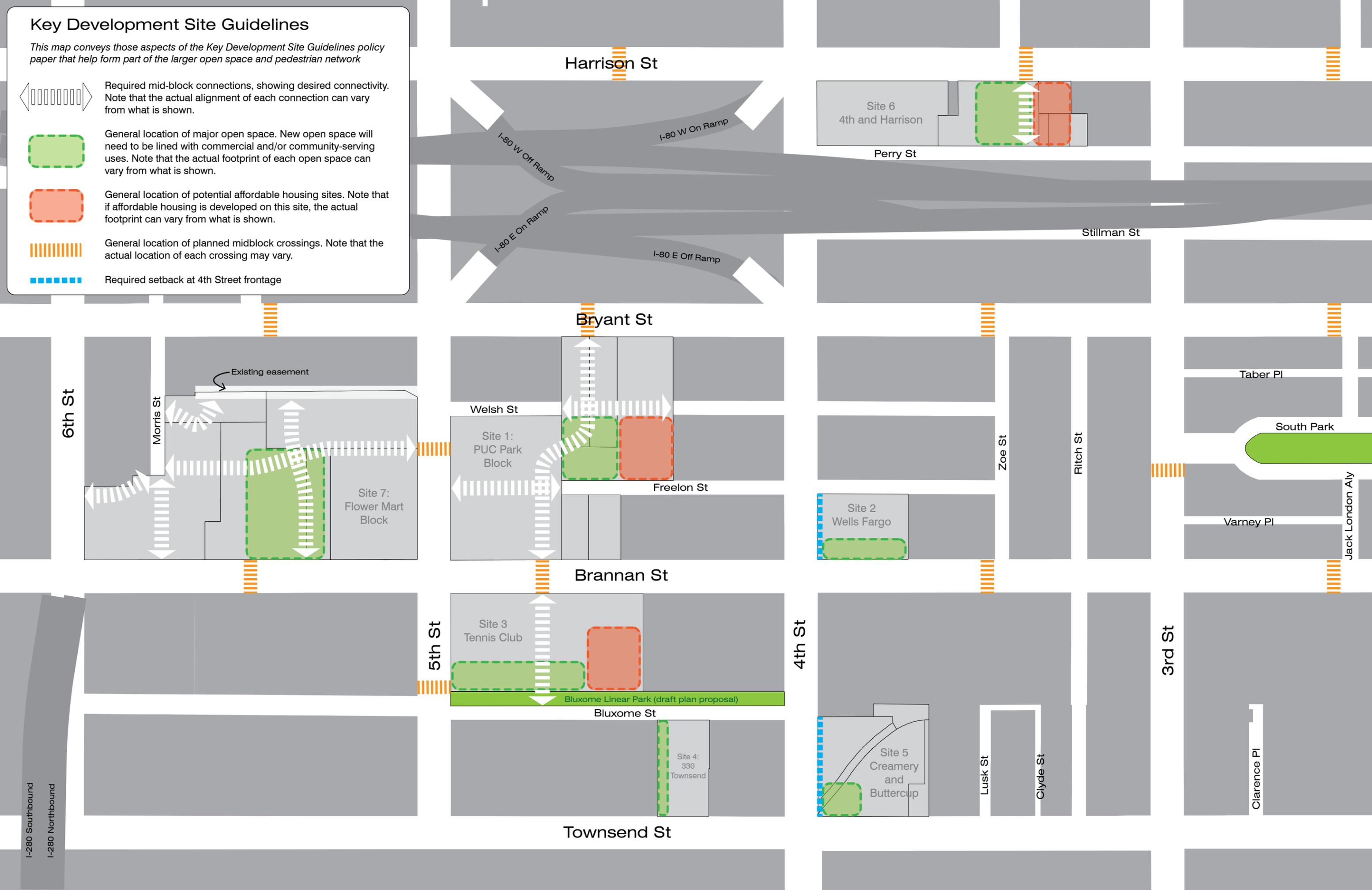
General location of potential affordable housing sites. Note that if affordable housing is developed on this site, the actual footprint can vary from what is shown.



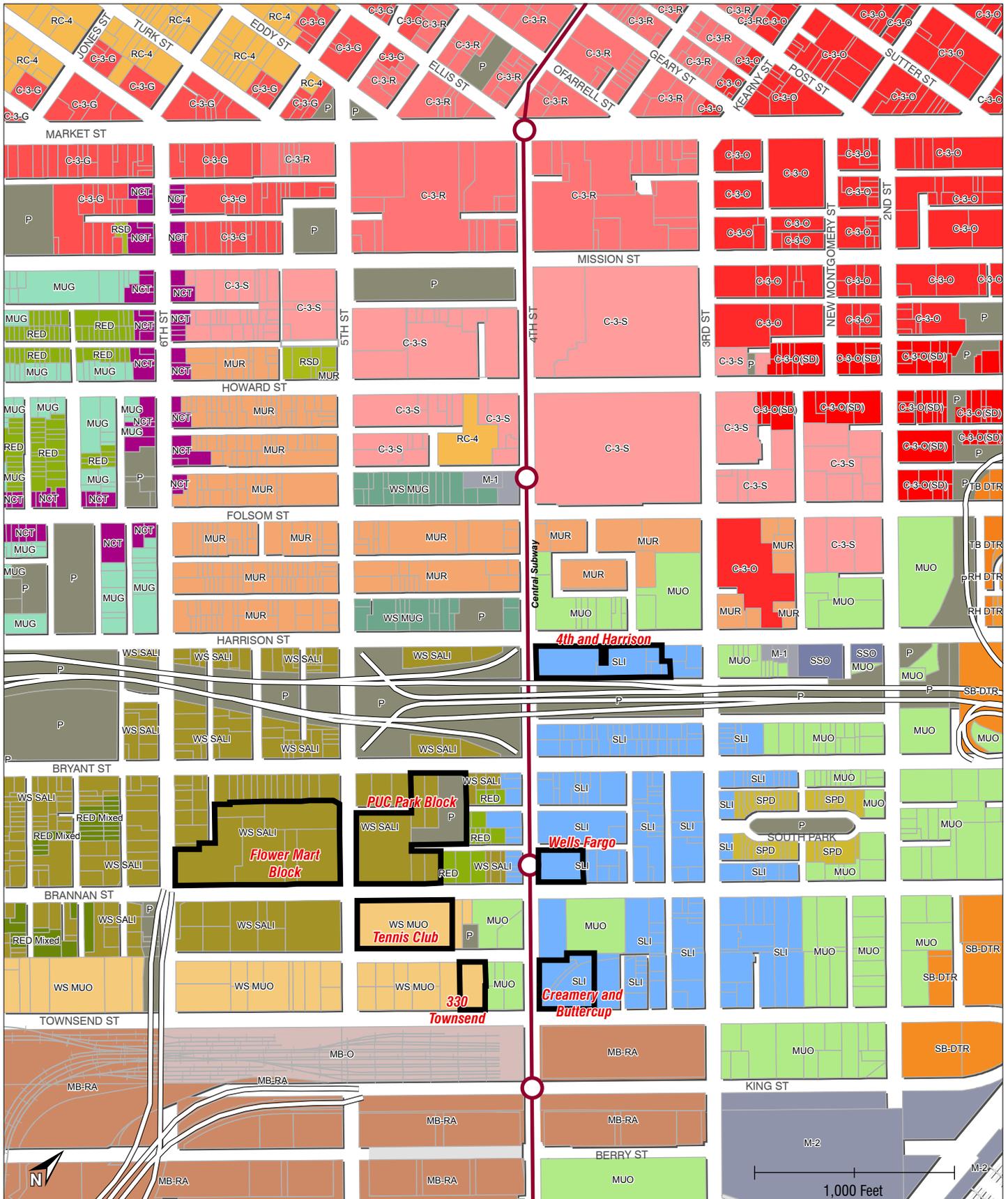
General location of planned midblock crossings. Note that the actual location of each crossing may vary.



Required setback at 4th Street frontage

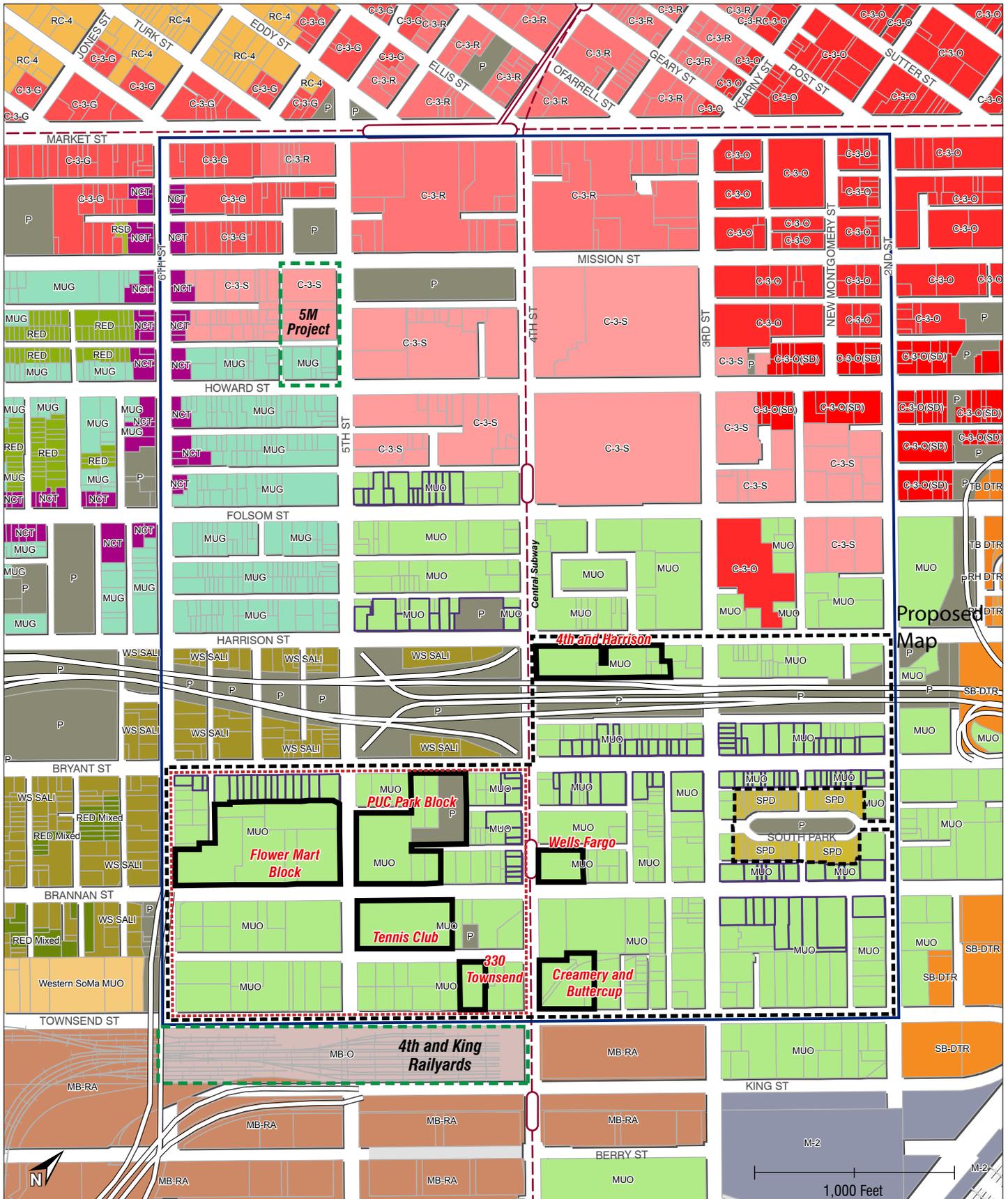


I-280 Southbound
I-280 Northbound



Central Corridor Existing Zoning Districts

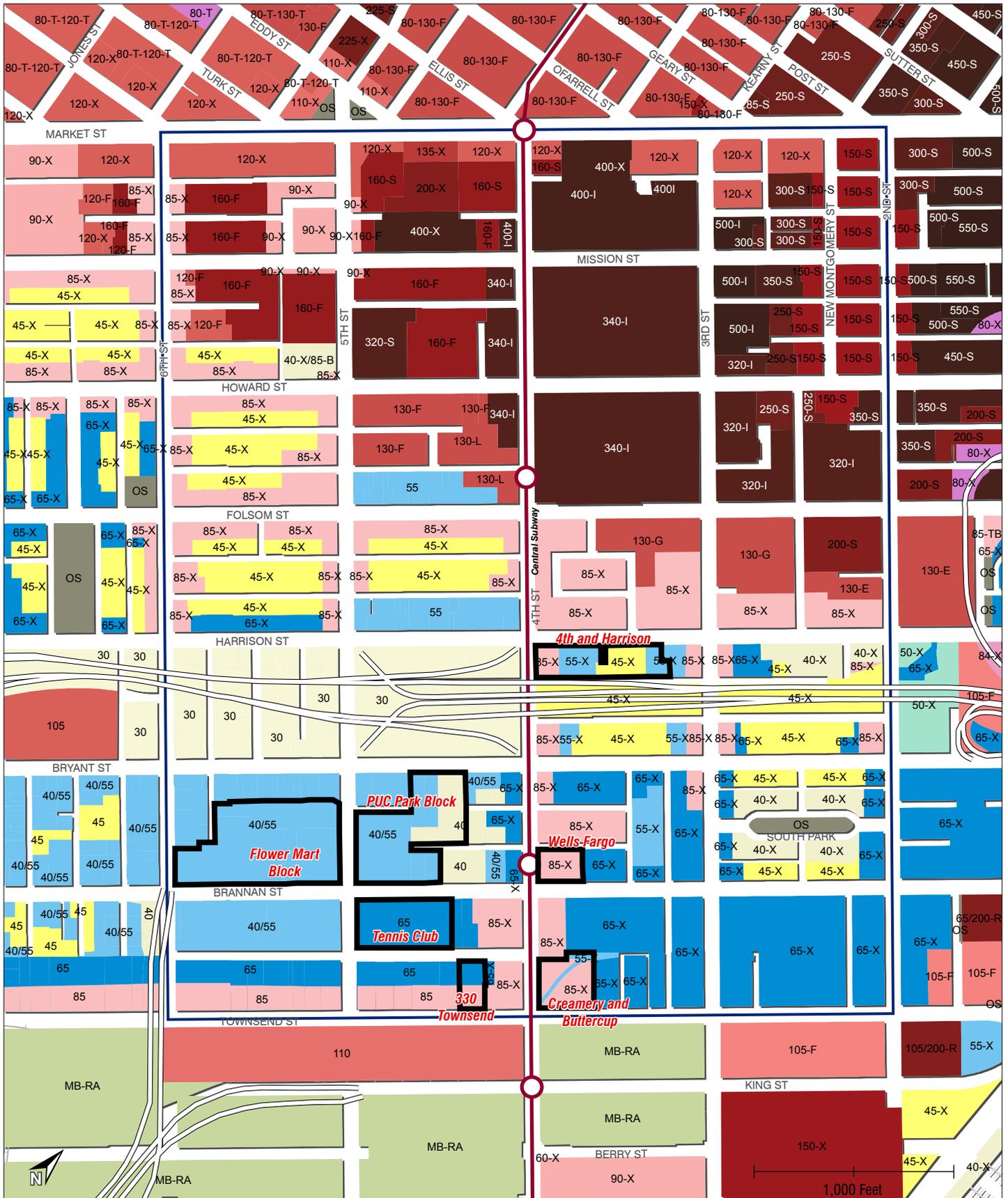




Central Corridor Zoning and Special Use Districts
Draft Preferred Alternative

- Central Corridor Plan Area
- SoMa Entertainment SUD
- South SoMa SUD
- Restricted Lot Consolidation
- Sites Under Separate Study

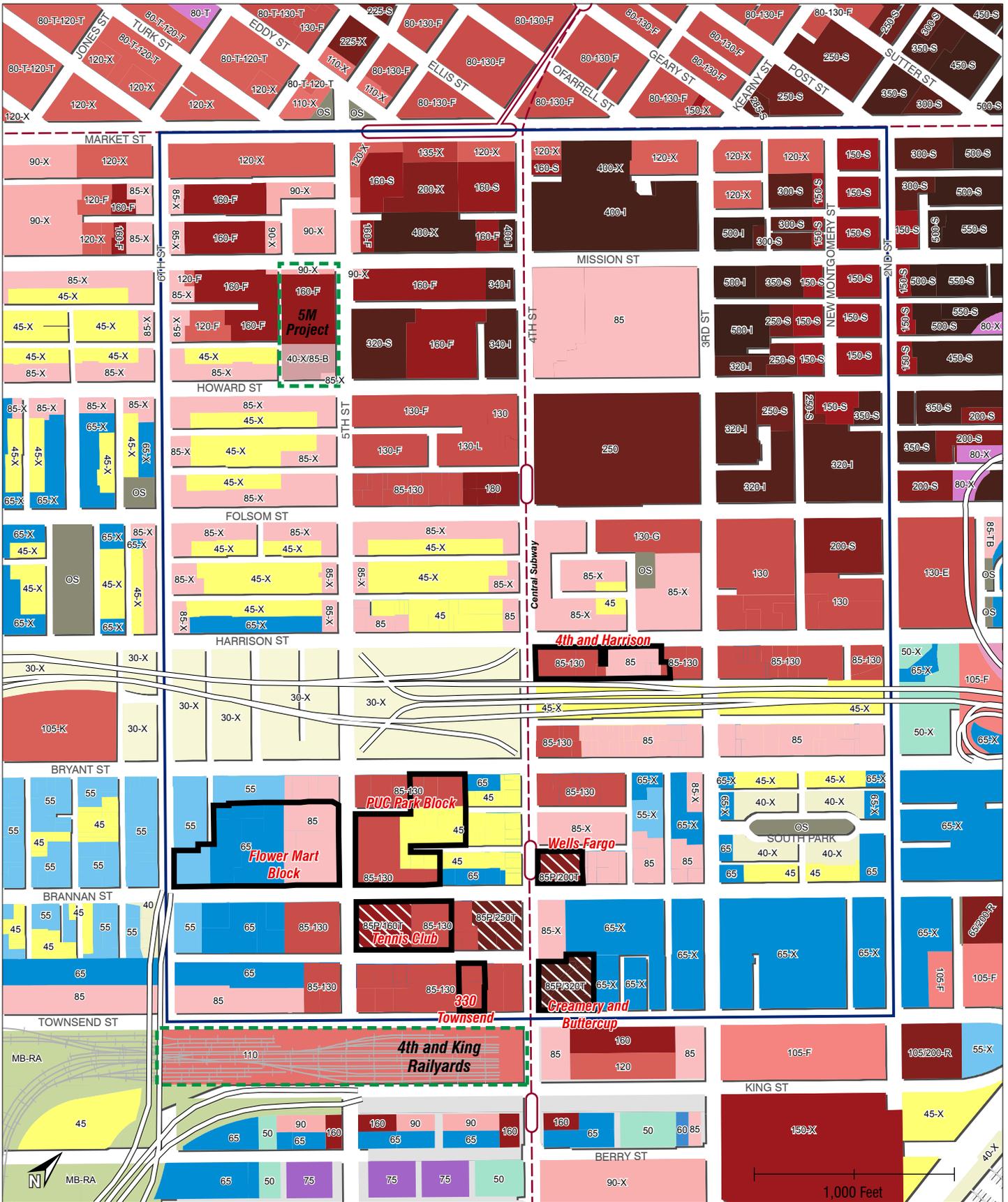




Central Corridor Existing Height Limits

Central Corridor Plan Area

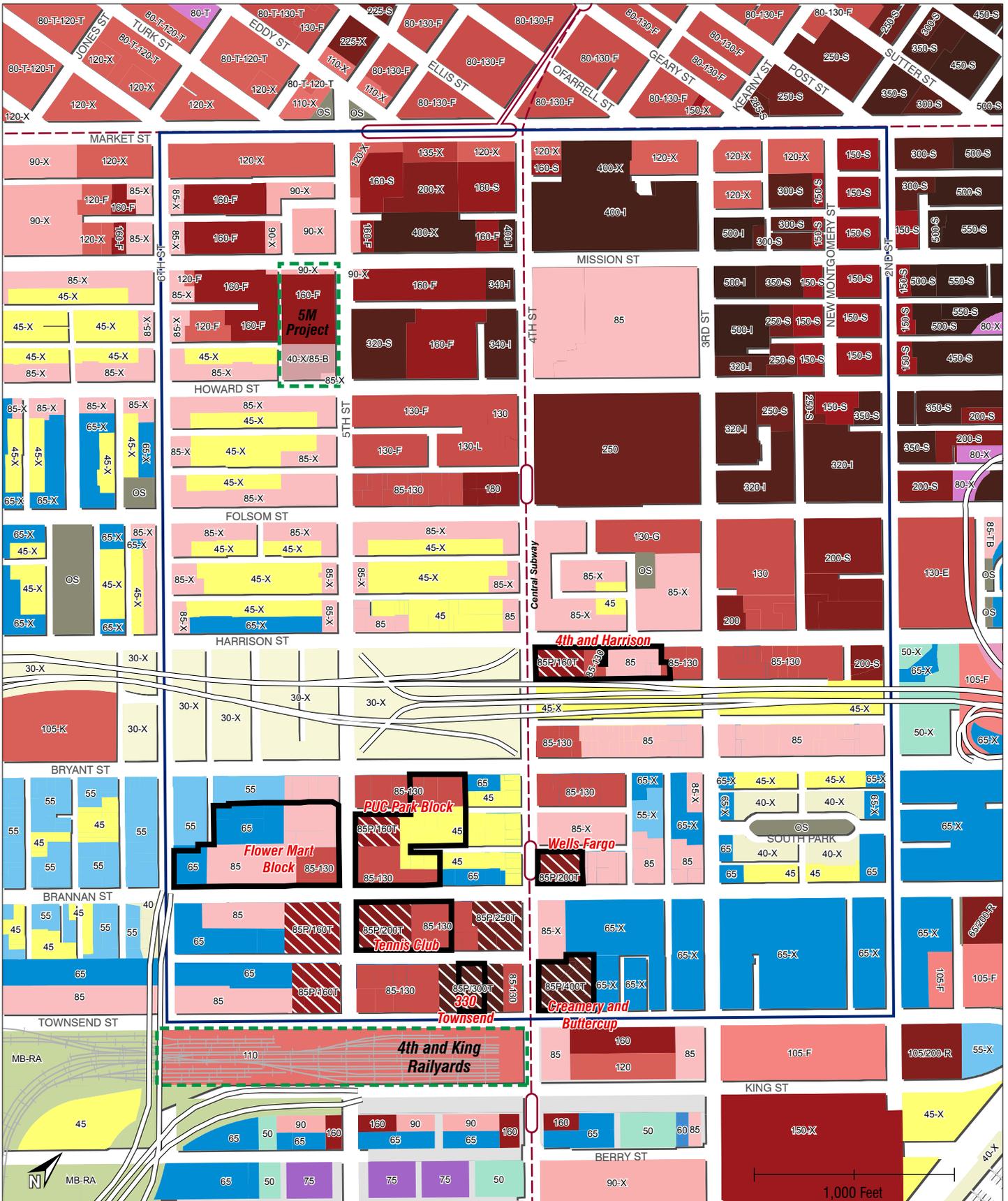




Proposed Central Corridor Height Districts
Proposed Mid-Rise Heights

- Central Corridor Plan Area
- Sites Under Separate Study





Proposed Central Corridor Height Districts
Proposed High Rise Heights

- Central Corridor Plan Area
- Sites Under Separate Study

