

CENTRAL CORRIDOR – DRAFT URBAN FORM PRINCIPLES – 11/3/11

This document contains the Draft Urban Form Principles for the Central Corridor Project. It attempts to articulate the objectives that will guide the creation of the Central Corridor Plan. The principles themselves were developed based on extensive conversation with community members throughout the first half of 2011, as well as our Central Corridor Background Report, the East SoMa Area Plan, and the Draft Western SoMa Area Plan.

Interface of Land Use Pattern with Urban Form

- Support job growth by firms who do not want to be in the Financial District (i.e. in high-rises), including that of the tech sector, by allowing and encouraging large-floorplate, mid-rise commercial buildings.
- Allow more height flexibility on large development lots, particularly in order to achieve a diverse mix of uses. Ensure that large sites capable of accommodating large floorplate (15,000 or 20,000 sf+) commercial buildings are used for that purpose and not strictly used for housing.
- Accommodate housing on smaller sites not practical for commercial buildings and on large sites as part of mixed-use projects that incorporate significant commercial space.

Cityscape/Skyline

- Reinforce the importance of 4th Street as a transit corridor and center of activity through higher heights and greater density. Use height to identify station locations at Moscone and Brannan Station, as well as at the 4th/King Station.
- Reinforce the existing pattern of the skyline by focusing the highest buildings at the northern and southern ends of the Plan area, toward Market Street and adjacent to the 4th/King Station and northern Mission Bay, where there is greatest proximity to regional transit.
- Sculpt heights to be mindful of distant views through and across the district from vantage points to the west and south, with views of the Bay, East Bay hills, and other key features.
- Do not use the height of the freeway as a benchmark or limit for setting height limits adjacent to the freeway.
- Limit the height of large floorplate buildings (>12,000 gsf) to 120 feet and consider allowing taller, more slender structures to rise higher only on large sites that ensure wide spacing of towers.

Local Livability and Character

- Relate the streetwall height to the width of streets in order to create a comfortable urban room. Generally seek a ratio of approximately 1:1. Given that the major streets are 82 feet wide, streetwall heights should be 65 to 85 feet.
- Protect the more intimate scale of alley environments by continuing to require height sculpting and by lowering height limits on the interior of certain blocks, particularly where smaller-scale housing is the predominant existing use along the alley.

- Require building setbacks above the streetwall height from the sidewalk and from interior property lines for large floorplate buildings to preserve a comfortable street environment as well as light and air in the district.
- Recognize the grain of lot patterns and existing development, particularly small scale residential fabric.
- Adjust building height limits in discrete areas with a high concentration of existing historic buildings and unique character, such as in the South End Historic District, in order to maintain the character of the district and reduce pressure to re-develop these buildings. Also consider expanding the Transferrable Development Rights program to the plan area as another mechanism to preserve historic resources.
- Sculpt building height limits to avoid adding significant new shading on public open spaces and school yards to the extent feasible, balanced with other core objectives. Avoid mid-day shadows particularly.
- Encourage or require certain key sites, such as at station area corners or other important locations, to provide public open space to provide relief for pedestrians and focal gathering areas.