



# SAN FRANCISCO

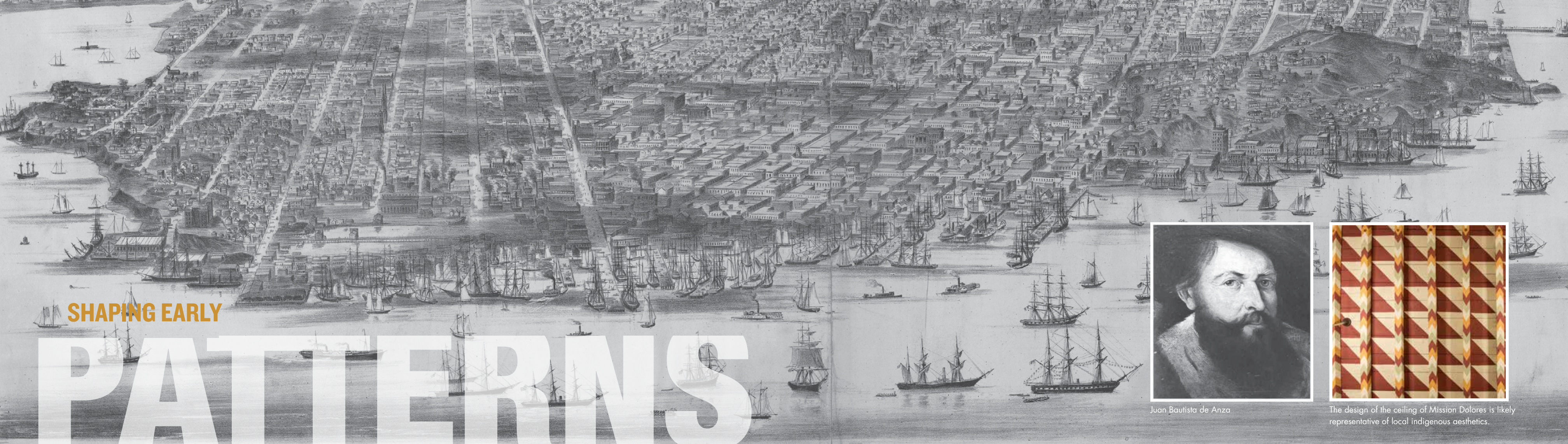
PLANNING COMMISSION



**100**  
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
**100**  
YEARS OF EXCELLENCE







Juan Bautista de Anza



The design of the ceiling of Mission Dolores is likely representative of local indigenous aesthetics.

## The Land, the Yelamu, and Colonial Spain set the City's earliest patterns

In 1776 the de Anza Expedition brought the first European colonial settlers to the peninsula that would become San Francisco. As with all Spanish colonial settlements, the land was to be governed by the 1573 "Laws of the Indies." These were the first written city planning laws that shaped the future City's development. Unlike Los Angeles, Santa Fe, and many other places in New Spain, San Francisco was not laid-out on the classical, roman-influenced, city plan that these laws dictated. That said, the City's two monuments of colonial Spain, the Presidio and the Mission, reflect the laws' clear goal that colonial settlements' physical organization would enforce a rigid three-part social structure, divided between the military, the church, and the people.

Spanish colonists did not lay their plans on a blank canvas, as the natural landscape dictated the placement of both the Presidio and the Mission. Both were situated near sources of drinking water, and both avoided the vast fields of sand dunes. Because it was meant to protect the Bay, the Presidio overlooked the Golden Gate. Because it was supposed to produce food, the Mission overlooked sunny grasslands.

Spanish colonists also built on the settlement patters of those they sought to colonize. As with all of the Americas, this land had been the home of indigenous peoples for millennia. When Juan Bautista de Anza arrived, this was the home of the Yelamu,

members of the larger Ohlone language group, and the Spanish placed their settlements near their three semi-sedentary village sites. The Presidio was placed nearly atop the bay-side village of Petlenuc, and the Mission was built near the villages of Chichui and Sitlintac, both of which bordered the body of water that came to be called Mission Creek. Through the lens of the violence of settler colonialism, these echoes of indigenous patterns on the land are still visible in today's City.



This 1844 Map of San Francisco Bay clearly shows the division of the area into three distinct parts representing the three branches of Spanish colonialism: Military, Church, and Civil Society.



## 1839 Vioget Map

The Spanish transfer of control of California to the new government of Mexico brought greater possibilities of private land ownership in the area that would become San Francisco. In 1834, all of Mission Dolores' land was removed from church control through secularization. Over the course of the following year, the government established the secular trading town of Yerba Buena, formalizing its use as a commercial port in the coastal tallow trade. By 1839, the tiny town had enough structures that Alcalde Francisco de Haro ordered the Swedish sea captain, Jean Jacques Vioget, to develop a plan to regularize existing land claims and prepare for the addition of future lots. Vioget's map proposed a modest street grid of 12 blocks and laid out the initial paths of the streets that would later be named Kearny, Grant, Jackson, Washington, Clay, and Sacramento.



Vioget's Survey of Yerba Buena, 1839

## 1847–1849 O'Farrell and Eddy Plans

In 1847, Mexican Yerba Buena became American San Francisco. The City needed a plan that could anticipate platting new lots - both inland from the water, and out into the mud flats of the bay. Under the authorization of Washington Allen Bartlett, the first American Alcalde of Yerba Buena, Jasper O'Farrell drew up a new survey that further regularized Vioget's grid and extended up and over the City's hills. To the south, he laid out a separate grid aligned with the curve of the shoreline and the general course of the road to the Mission. Where these two grids met, he projected the wide boulevard of Market Street.

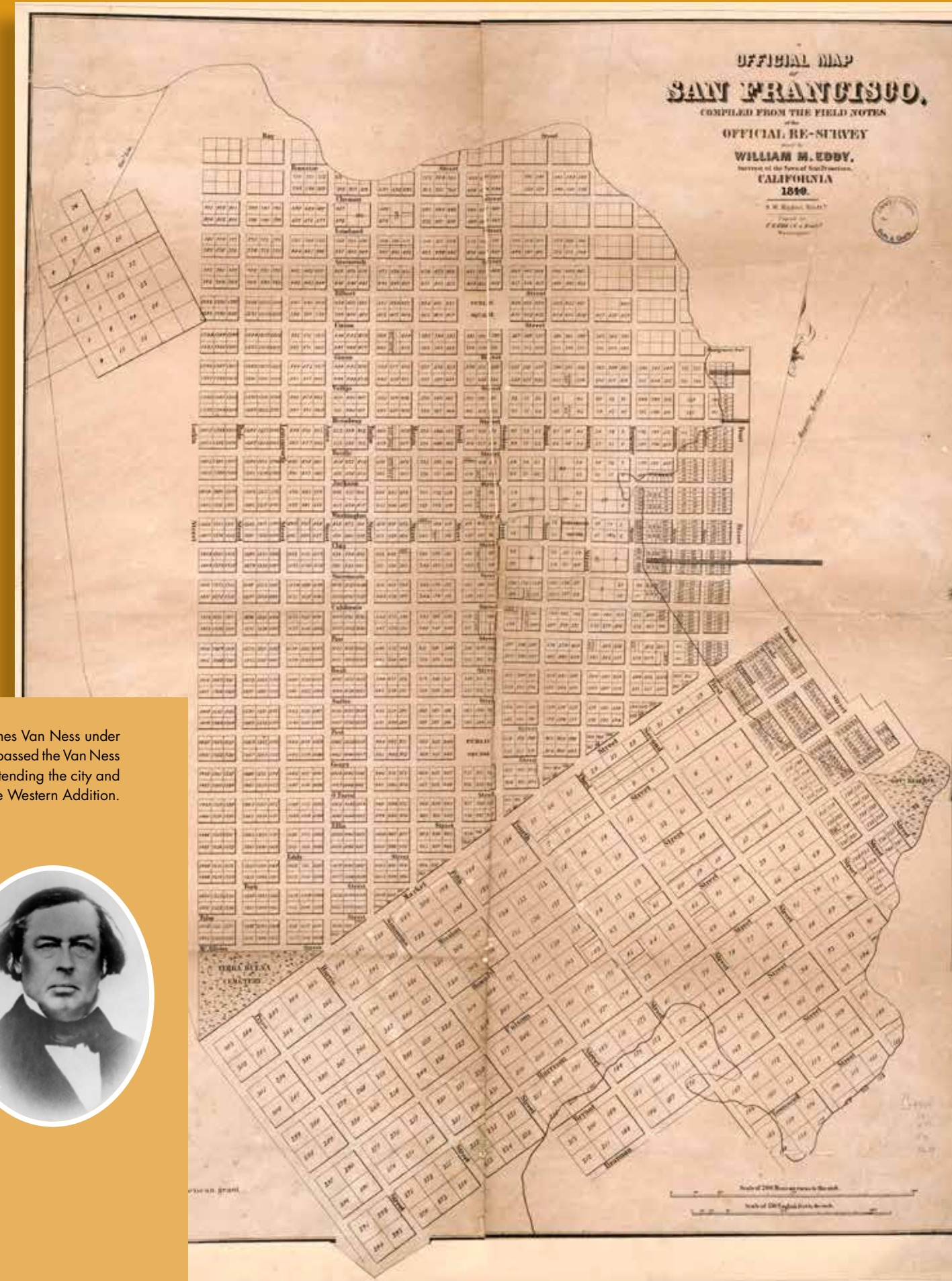


Jasper O'Farrell

William Eddy's 1849 survey of San Francisco.

O'Farrell translated the Vioget lots into a standard width of about 46 yards, while he platted the grid south of market with wider lots of about 92 yards. Other than these slight concessions, the plan paid little deference to the lay of the land. By focusing on the regular division of land into lots for public sale, the O'Farrell Plan reflected the rapid growth of San Francisco as it expanded into an instant-city.

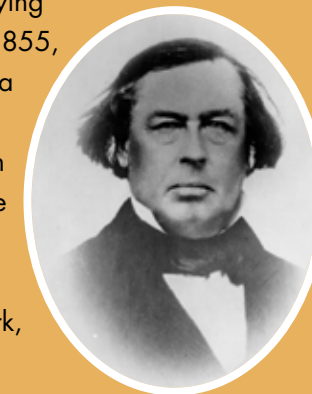
So phenomenal was the City's growth, especially following the discovery of gold, that all of the new lots surveyed in 1847 sold within only two years. In response, the City hired William Eddy to draw up a new survey in 1849, expanding the grid further west as today's Leavenworth and 8th Streets.



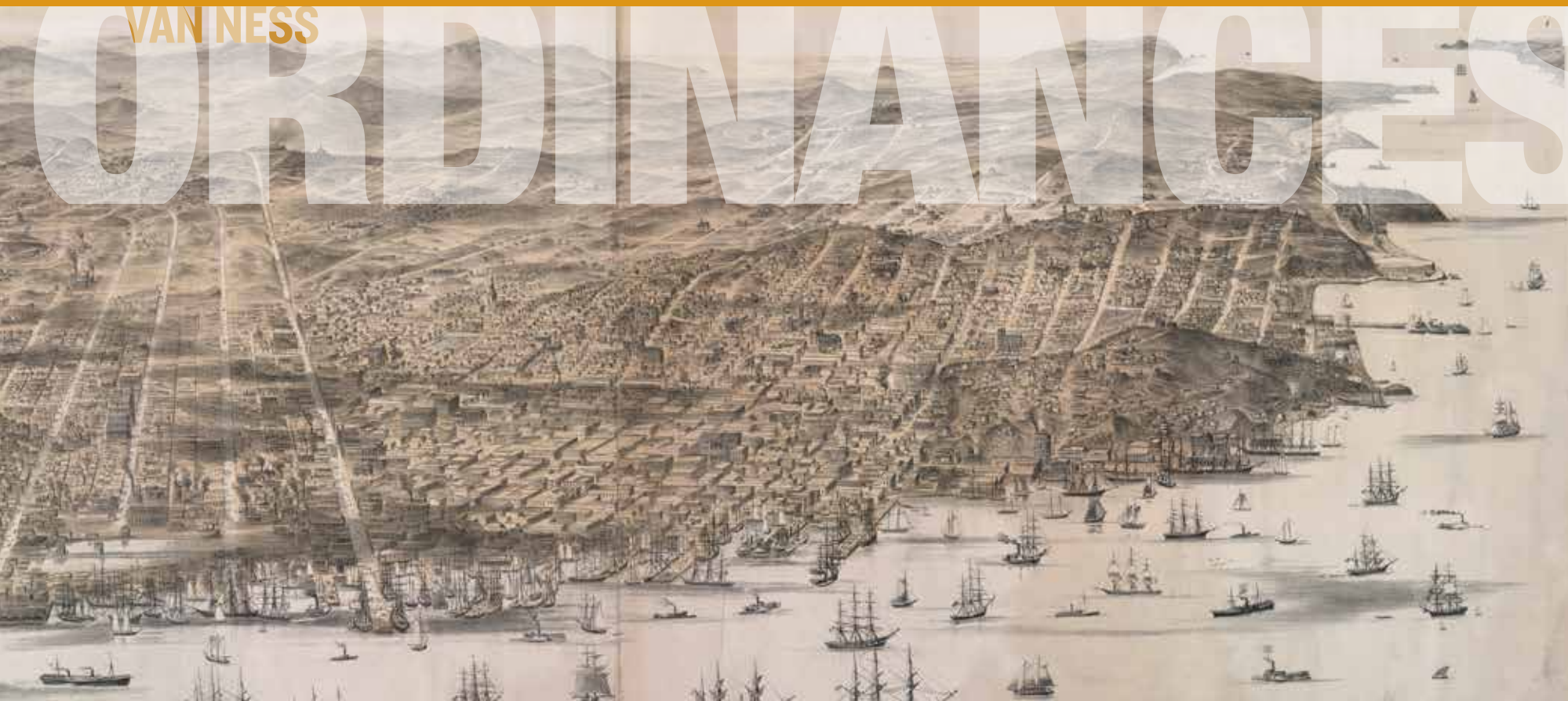
## 1855 Van Ness Ordinances

Mayor James Van Ness under whom the City passed the Van Ness Ordinances extending the city and its grid into the Western Addition.

However, squatters began occupying the lands further to the west. In 1855, Mayor James Van Ness put forth a set of ordinances that extended the City's grid into a vast Western Addition as far as Divisadero. The Ordinances also set aside certain blocks as open space, including today's Alamo Square, Duboce Park, and Jefferson Square.



A bird's-eye lithograph of San Francisco, c. 1864, showing the extension of the City and its grid into the new Western Addition following the passage of the Van Ness Ordinances.





SEC. 19. The proprietors, or owners of every slaughter house within the corporate limits, shall pay for a license to carry on the same, the sum of one hundred dollars per quarter; and a slaughter house shall not be located east of the line of Larkin street, or north of the line of Harrison street.

Slaughter houses.

SEC. 29. It shall be the duty of the Inspector of Licenses to make out a Street Directory, arranging the houses in numerical order, with the names and business of such occupants, as may come within the provisions of this ordinance, together with the number and amount of each license. It shall also be his duty to visit, at least once in each month, every place of business within the corporate limits, to see that each place is duly licensed, and that no other business than that for which such license is obtained is carried on, and cite delinquents before the Recorder.

License Inspector.



Pacific Chemical Works on 16th Street near Mission Creek c. 1868-1869, indicative of the type of industrial uses near the original Butchertown along Mission Creek.

## 1853-1868 Slaughterhouses and San Francisco's first Zoning Ordinance

One of the earliest land use dilemmas in San Francisco was the location of slaughterhouses. In 1853, an ordinance creating a system of business licenses forced them south of Harrison, where they could dump offal into the waters of Mission Bay. In 1864, the City passed another ordinance to add restrictions to hog farms, requiring their complete relocation to a new Butchertown further south on Islais Creek.

However, the law remained unenforced through the granting of several extensions, delays, and civic inaction that lasted throughout the decade. Finally, with the assistance of the state legislature, a mayoral veto of further postponements, and increased enforcement, Butchertown finally moved south to the shores of Islais Creek in present-day Bayview. Though broader questions of zoning the City as a whole were not yet addressed, the City had at least shown that, given enough political will, it could exert meaningful influence on the pattern of private development after the initial platting of land. The American Planning Association designated the slaughterhouse and hog yards ordinance as a national planning landmark in 1990. As "one of the earliest applications of city land-use zoning powers in the country," the award claimed, it "[laid] the foundations for zoning controls ... in the U.S."

THE BUTCHERS, AND THE MAYOR'S VETO.  
The following was received from His Honor, the Mayor:  
MAYOR'S OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, }  
March 7th, 1870. }  
To the Honorable the Board of Supervisors:  
GENTLEMEN: I herewith return to your Honorable Body, without my approval, Resolution No. 940, granting to the wholesale butchers, now located at the Potrero, an extension of sixty days from the first day of March.  
It has been stated that should this extension of

On March 7th, 1870, Mayor Selby vetoed the extension on enforcement of the slaughterhouse prohibition, ending years of non-enforcement.

## 1870 Cubic Air Ordinance and 1880 Laundry Ordinance

The 1870 Cubic Air ordinance required 500 cubic feet of air for every occupant of room used for lodging. On its face, such a law sounds like it would be aimed at helping the living conditions of the poor. However, the law was created and employed in order criminalize the city's Chinese population. Like the Laundry ordinance that followed it in 1880, the ordinance was created by populist, nativist politicians who consistently scapegoated the City's already disenfranchised Chinese laborers in the name of concerns for white working class laborers. Both ordinances used appeals to public safety in order to single out Chinatown as a supposedly uniquely unsafe and in need of legal retribution.



Chinatown, 1870.



DuPont Street, present-day Grant Ave, in Chinatown, in 1880.

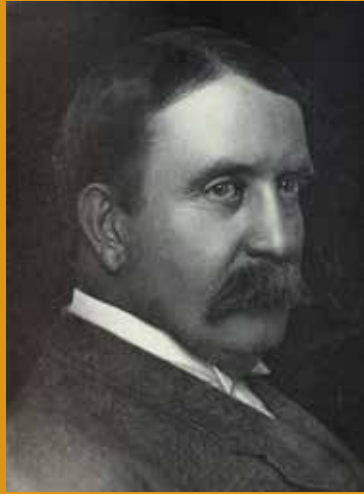


## 1905 Daniel Burnham Plan and Civic Center

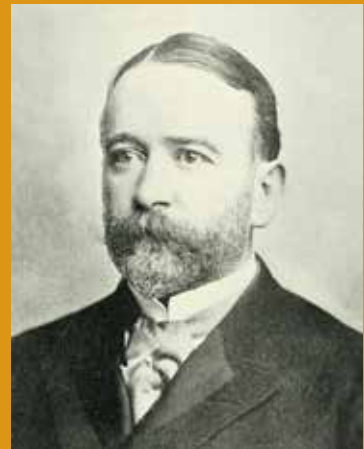
The City Beautiful was an architectural movement which sought to impose a new moral order on American society through the creation of orderly, unified, and aesthetically pleasing urban spaces.

In 1904, Mayor James Phelan organized a private group called the Association for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco. This group invited Daniel Burnham, the former Director of Works for the Chicago Exposition, one of the main proponents of the City Beautiful vision and the most famous urban planner in America, to create a unified plan for the city's development.

Burnham proposed a grandiose re-thinking of San Francisco, much like Georges-Eugène Haussmann's system for Napoleonic Paris. The Burnham plan envisioned a new pattern of grand boulevards cutting through the City's existing grid, expediting the flow of traffic, and terminating the most important civic spaces. Drawing on the styles of classical Greece and Rome, he envisioned the City's hilltops as key visual markers, breaking the City's topographically-blind street grid with a mixture of open spaces, terraced streets, and public monuments.



Daniel Burnham



Mayor James Phelan



View of Daniel Burnham's proposed street grid in his 1905 plan for San Francisco. Its grand diagonal boulevards highlight the greatest challenge to getting it implementing: its disregard for existing property lines.



Daniel Burnham's proposed treatment of Telegraph Hill in his unrealized 1905 plan for San Francisco. Its park-like boulevards, neoclassical architecture, and treatment of prominent locations all mark it as a sterling example of the City Beautiful movement.

Less than a year after the plan was presented to the public, much of San Francisco was leveled by the catastrophic earthquake and fire of 1906. Though Burnham and the Reconstruction Committee saw the City's destruction as the ideal opportunity to realize the plan, it was not to be. Political instability, the lack of strong government authority over private development, and the overwhelming civic desire to rebuild quickly all meant that the City was rebuilt on an essentially unchanged grid.

However, one key aspect of Burnham's plan did become reality. In 1909, Burnham took up the cause of a City Beautiful Civic Center at the site he had initially proposed at the intersection of Van Ness and Market. Though the public initially voted down a bond issue to cover the project, the idea was successfully revived in 1912, connecting the need for a grand civic center with the City's upcoming plans to host a World's Fair. Today, Civic Center represents the City's most ambitious foray into City Beautiful urban planning.



Mayor Rolph at the groundbreaking for the City's new City Hall, c. 1912.



Civic Center under construction, c. 1916. Workers spread concrete on Fulton Street while scaffolding is visible around the dome of City Hall in the background.



Mayor Rolph at the opening ceremonies for the city's new City Hall, December 28, 1915.



A 1914 projection of the then yet-to-be-built Civic Center. Civic Center represents the City's most ambitious foray into City Beautiful urban planning.



## 1912 Board of Supervisors Empowered to Create a Planning Commission

In 1912, San Francisco voters approved an amendment giving the Board of Supervisors the power to create a Planning Commission as an unpaid advisory body to the Board, which maintained all ultimate authority. The only direction given was that it would “devise plans for the improvement and beautification of San Francisco.” In the Board of Supervisors’ clarifying statement, this was simply shortened as “to suggest and devise plans for a City Beautiful.” The charter amendment passed, but with an incredibly slim margin of only 523 votes. Though the Board of Supervisors now had the power to create a Planning Commission, the low margin of victory at the polls translated into low political will, so the power lay unexercised.

Meeting of the Board of Supervisors in their chambers at the then-new City Hall, October 9, 1916. Though the Board of Supervisors had been granted the power to create a Planning Commission in 1912, tensions between the body, the Mayor, and the City Engineer meant that no Planning Commissioners were appointed until a compromise was reached in 1917.



That a new subdivision be added to Section I of Chapter II of Article II, designated as Subdivision 42, to read as follows:

Subdivision 42. To provide by ordinance for the establishment of a City Planning Commission, which shall devise plans for the improvement and beautification of San Francisco.

Members of said Planning Commission shall receive no compensation and shall not be subject to any prohibition forbidding officials from holding more than one office or position.

The Board of Supervisors shall prescribe the duties of said commission, the number and qualifications of the members thereof, and in general shall enact all legislation not expressly forbidden by this Charter or by general law necessary or incident to carrying into execution the propositions for which said City Planning Commission is instituted.

This 1912 charter amendment which was passed by a narrow margin of only 523 votes gave the Board of Supervisors the power to create a Planning Commission.



City Engineer Michael O'Shaughnessy and Mayor James Rolph, October 1, 1927.



City Engineer Michael O'Shaughnessy in the front seat of a truck, August 11, 1918. As City Engineer, O'Shaughnessy oversaw the creation of the Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct. He was a powerful force in shaping the City's physical form and was reluctant to lose influence to a newly-created Planning Commission.

## 1917 Appointing a Planning Commission

In 1913, San Francisco's business and real estate interests played a significant role in passing the California State City Planning Enabling Act on May 21, 1915, formally empowering cities to create city planning commissions. Under this legislation, such commissions were authorized to make recommendations on a wide range of subjects affecting their city's physical development. Included among these potential powers was the ability to divide “the city into zones or districts for the purposes of conserving and protecting the public health, comfort and convenience.”

Following the California State City Planning Enabling Act, the Board of Supervisors finally exercised their right to authorize a Planning Commission. However, facing opposition from the City's engineer, Michael O'Shaughnessy, and with a likely unwillingness to give up any political power, Mayor James Rolph left the commission seats empty.

In 1917, city planning advocates were able to come to a compromise with the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors, and a City Planning Commission was finally appointed on December 28, 1917, comprised of four mayoral citizen appointees: Judge Matt I. Sullivan, Mrs. Abbie Krebs Wilkins, R. B. Hale, and Paul Scharrenberg.

This new arrangement largely maintained many of the existing power centers by giving the Commission little autonomy, no budget or staff, and extremely curtailed authority. As created, the Commission was primarily tasked with promoting land-use division and property setback lines by drafting a zoning regulation and drawing up an accompanying zoning map.

Even given these limitations, San Francisco had finally established a planning body within city government.

Article in the San Francisco Chronicle, August 7, 1917, announcing a forthcoming compromise between the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to finally appoint the long-delayed Planning Commission.

The Well-Dressed

The Victrola is the

LAW MAY CHANGE IN CITY PLANNING

Commission With Wide Powers Is Proposed by Mayor

Mayor Rolph yesterday presented to the Board of Supervisors a proposed repeal of the present city planning ordinance, together with another ordinance to take its place. The Public Welfare Committee will hold a hearing on the measure, and if the ordinance passes, the city planning commission will be named.

The new ordinance, which is in many ways different from the old, provides that the commission shall be made up of the Mayor, City Engineer, City Attorney, City Architect and seven other members. The commission will offer suggestions on the improvement of the city, opening of streets, location of buildings and parks, disposal of garbage, abatement of public nuisances, regulation of the height of buildings, extension of the fire limits and creation of residential and industrial zones.

Stinson, the little d, in one of Art Smest at Tanforan tomorrow

son Will Loher Feats at

gaped, rushing altered in their a little girl baby racer and wet streets leveled their

n's way of she was an auto-The little Francisco for her gramme to aid

waste much change into a less lavish the young star rushed to the

MAYOR NAMES CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Board Is Officially Created After Discussion Extending Over Five Years

After five years of discussion, the City Planning Commission came into municipal existence yesterday as a part of the machinery when Mayor Rolph named its members, of whom the following are designated by ordinance:

James Rolph Jr., Mayor.  
M. O'Shaughnessy, City Engineer.  
George Lull, City Attorney.  
John R. Lull, City Architect.  
Supervisors Joseph Mulvihill, Richard J. Welch and John C. Ketchum, who are respectively chairmen of the Welfare, Streets and Commercial Development committees.

All of the above are ex-officio members of the new Commission during their tenure of the office. The membership of the Commission as completed includes the following citizens: Matt I. Sullivan, four years; Paul Scharrenberg, three years; R. B. Hale, two years; Mrs. Abbie E. Wilkins (formerly Mrs. Krebs), one year.

The last four appointees are named in accordance with a suggestion made to the Mayor by Beverly Hodghead and others.

While the creation of this commission has been under discussion for several years, the appointments following the recent enactment of an ordinance by the Board of Supervisors outlining the scope of the commission is gestions of making comprehensive civic improvements which may be carried out by the constituted authorities.

The selection of nine of the thirteen members from among the thirty officials is expected to assure a commission with the work of the other branches of the city government.

Russians

Article in the San Francisco Chronicle, December 29, 1917, announcing the appointment of the first Planning Commission five years after voters approved the existence of such a board.

CALIFORNIA OIL CONCERN

Aviatrix Will Fly Tomorrow  
Birdgirl Helps Grizzly Fund

FIRST DIVIDEND OF W. P. SENDS

More American Lads Make the Great Sacrifice

SUPREME COURT DISBARS KER

AMERICAN BANK BRANCH SEIZED





Composite image of the maps from the City's first zoning maps.

**OAKLAND LIONS ROAR WELCOME TO DELEGATES**

Lodgemen From All Over U. S. Begin Big National Convention

40 STATES REPRESENTED

Head of Order Predicts the Entire World Will Soon Be Represented

Four thousand Lions roared in the hall of the Hotel California last night at the opening of the 40th annual convention of the United Kluxers of America, Inc., which opened yesterday morning at the Hotel California.

The Kluxers, who are a secret society, are a combination of the Ku Klux Klan and the United Kluxers of America, Inc. They claim to be a patriotic organization and are active in the city and in the state.

**With the Lions in Oakland**

*Judge Harris vs. Bill Cameron*

The Kluxers, who are a secret society, are a combination of the Ku Klux Klan and the United Kluxers of America, Inc. They claim to be a patriotic organization and are active in the city and in the state.

**PLANS TO ZONE CITY APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

Proposed Ordinance Prepared for Presenting Monday

**Accused Doctor Puts Knife Into Cupid**

Describes 3 Types of Modern Women

Special by Licensed Wire to The Chronicle

NEW YORK, July 19.—Cupid went down like a bomb when the doctor put the knife into him today. In an interview with the Chronicle, the doctor, who is a well-known figure in the city, described the three types of modern women who are the cause of his trouble.

**SUIT TO FORCE CONTRACT LOST BY FORESTERS**

Jury Decides Lodge Must Fulfill Purchase Agreement on Newark Land

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 1921**

**PLANS TO ZONE CITY APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**

The city's first zoning ordinance was approved by the city planning commission yesterday. The ordinance was prepared by the city planning commission and was presented to the city board of supervisors for their consideration.

**1921 First Zoning Ordinance**

Following its creation in 1917, the Commission had a draft zoning ordinance by 1920. It laid out six divisions: 1st and 2nd Residential, Light and Heavy Industrial, one uniform Commercial, and a blanket Unrestricted District.

**Proposed Ordinance Prepared for Presenting Monday Before Supervisors**

The proposed ordinance was prepared by the city planning commission and was presented to the city board of supervisors for their consideration.

**DISTRICTS CREATED**

The six districts the ordinance will create, if approved, are as follows:

- ONE—Single dwelling district.
- TWO—Group dwellings, for flats and apartment houses.
- THREE—Commercial, including stores and office buildings.
- FOUR—Light Industrial.
- FIVE—Heavy Industrial.
- SIX—Unrestricted.

**D.C. HECER**

116-118 Kearny St. SAN FRANCISCO

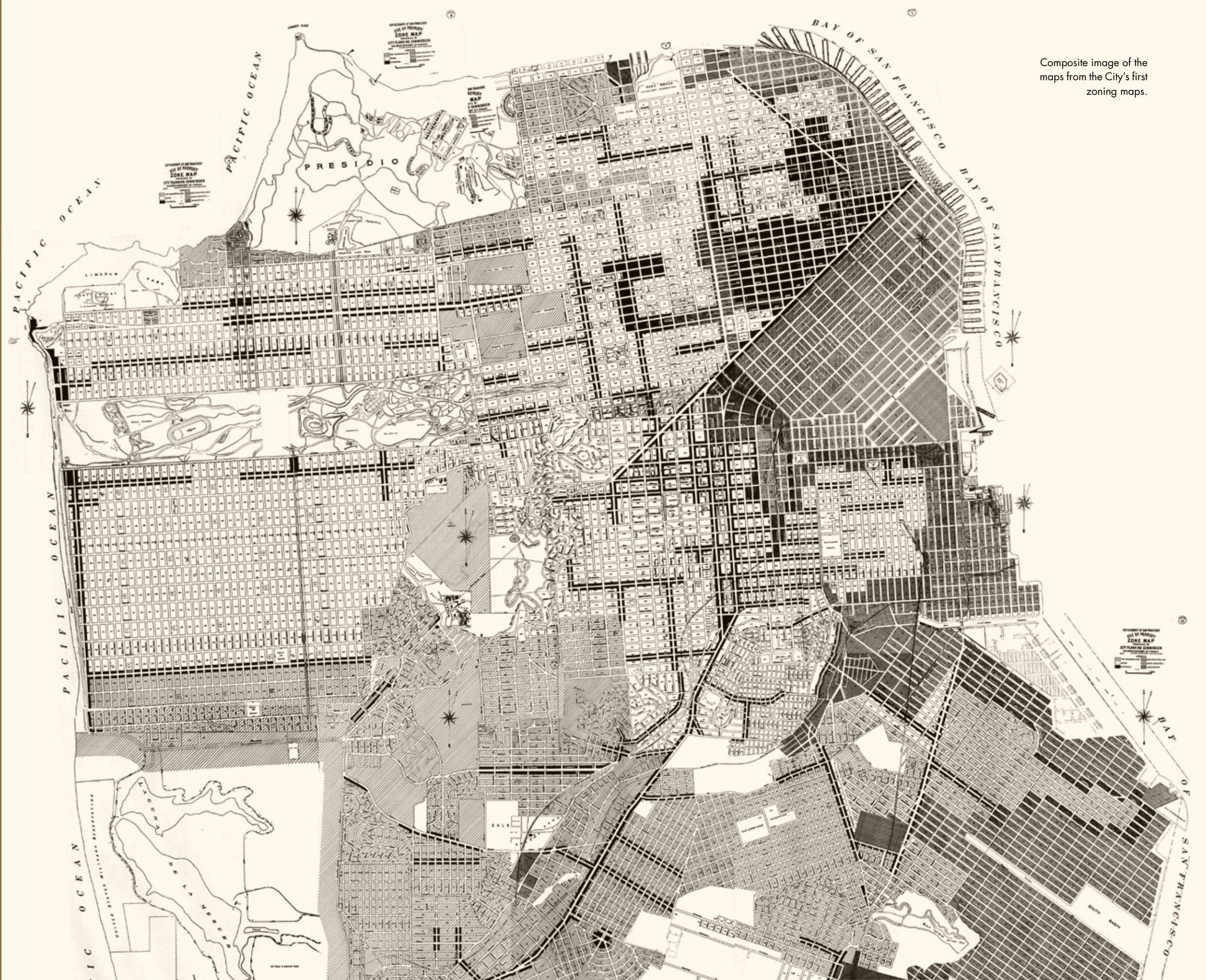
Devoted to Correct Dress

Fastidious Men from all parts of the United States and Canada after spending the winter in Southern California as they stop off at San Francisco order their year's supply from Article in the San Francisco Chronicle, July 20, 1921, announcing the upcoming new zoning regulation. This article makes it clearly visible that the City's first zoning map consisted of only six districts.

**Grocers Sue Local**

**\$267,000**

The good name of the livingston shop is your guarantee that every day is exactly as represented.



Composite image of the maps from the City's first zoning maps.



# Planning through the '20s

Shortly on the heels of the first zoning law, the Commission also got a uniform set-back ordinance passed as law in 1922, thus completing the main points of its initial mandate. However, it continued to struggle with the limitations placed at its formation. At its core, the Commission was entirely beholden to the authority of the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors, as evidenced by its two-year-long fight for 40-foot height limits in portions of the Marina, Pacific Heights, and Presidio Heights, finally passed in 1928. Another public and prolonged planning fight fumed from 1925 to 1928 over whether Judah or Lincoln should be the Sunset's main commercial street, raising further questions about financial influences over the Board of Supervisors' land-use decisions.

Once again, a similar coalition of real estate and business interests joined forces to call for planning reform, and passed a charter amendment in November of 1928 that finally granted the Planning Commission political power over land-use decisions. It widened the Commission's reach beyond zoning and setbacks and tasked it with creating a general plan. Also included were some of the first neighborhood notification requirements and provisions for hiring professional planning staff, including a City Planner Engineer.

For the first time since it was first proposed in 1912, the Planning Commission's power finally had teeth.

Text from the 1928 charter amendment that expanded the powers of the Planning Commission.

**Staff and Finances.**  
Section 2. The Commission may appoint a City Planning Engineer who shall hold office at the pleasure of the Commission and, subject to the civil service provisions of this Charter, may also appoint a secretary and such other employees as are necessary for its work and for whose employment funds are appropriated by the Supervisors. The City Planning Engineer shall be a person of expert and technical training, with at least five years' experience in engineering.  
Subject to appropriations for such purposes, the Commission may also contract with architects, city planners, engineers or consultants for such services as it may require.  
The Supervisors shall make appropriations in the budget for 1929-30, and each succeeding fiscal year, in such amounts as may be deemed necessary by the Supervisors to carry on the work of the Commission.



1929, looking north on Fillmore Street at Chestnut in the newly constructed Marina District. Visible on the left is a row of newly constructed residential buildings, all of uniform height and set-back. On the right is vacant undeveloped land.

1918 aerial photo of the Marina District and the Presidio showing the new residential land created by the destruction of the 1915 International Exposition.



A gas station at 19th and Lincoln, c. 1935.

## 1932-1938 Developing the power of Conditional Use Authorizations

In the early 1930s, the powers of the Planning Commission and of zoning in general were challenged by the question of the placement of gas stations in the city's new residential district, the Sunset. In order to be built, such structures required a rezoning from the neighborhood's blanket residential zoning to commercial. Yet in the eyes of local property owners, this threatened the neighborhood's suburban appeal and potentially opened the property to future possibly noxious uses.

As it stood, the Commission had no power to dictate specific building types or to approve a zoning change contingent on the building's use. In 1932 this question prompted the Board of Supervisors to grant the Commission the power to approve re-zonings with stipulations on the "character of the improvements which will be placed on said property."

Finally, in 1938, the Commission gained the power to approve certain non-conforming uses in residential districts through conditional use authorizations rather than zone changes.



A gas station at 23rd and Vicente, 1951.



A gas station at 45th and Judah, 1951.



# WASTEPAPER

**Telesis / San Francisco Housing  
and Planning Association (SPUR)**

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College Press, Inc.  
A 16

*now*

*is the time*

*to* **PLAN**

AS IT IS

*Your*  
**services**

streets  
transportation  
utilities  
stores  
libraries  
schools and churches

How much time is lost ?  
How do you get to work ?  
Do you get good services ?

accommodating the same number of people on the same amount of land -  
BY PLANNING this is the way

IT COULD BE

Safety

*Safety*

SUPERBLOCK of nine square blocks

No through streets  
Land thus saved can  
be used for play.

Parking off  
the street

School in  
the center,  
away from the  
traffic.

Very wide  
arterials bounding  
the Superblock.

Illustrations from the San Francisco Housing and Planning Association's 1941 pamphlet, *Now is the Time to Plan*. These display many key features of post-war modernist, liberal planning. These include proposals for large-scale super-block developments, preferences for suburban-style amenities over the older urban fabric, and a desire to approach planning with a removed, scientific rationalism.

[illegible]

GENERAL AREAS IN WHICH CONDITIONS  
INDICATIVE OF BLIGHT ARE FOUND

**NAMES OF DISTRICT**

1. WESTERN ADDITION
2. SOUTH OF MARKET
3. CHINATOWN
4. MISSION
5. TIDELANDS
6. [Area near waterfront]

**SAN FRANCISCO AND ENVIRONS**

## 1945 First General Plan: Intertwined with Passage of Community Redevelopment Act

[that] should run smoothly like a ball bearing," so long as the "parts [that] are old and no longer fit" are replaced, rebuilt, and improved.

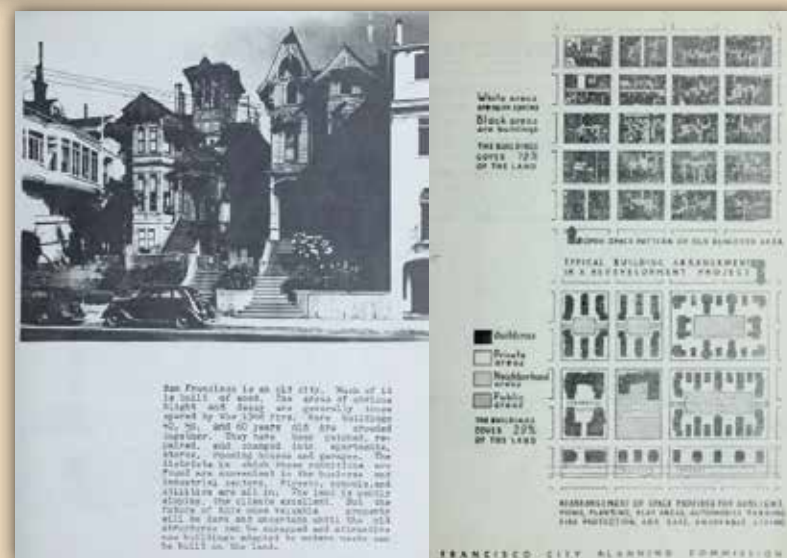
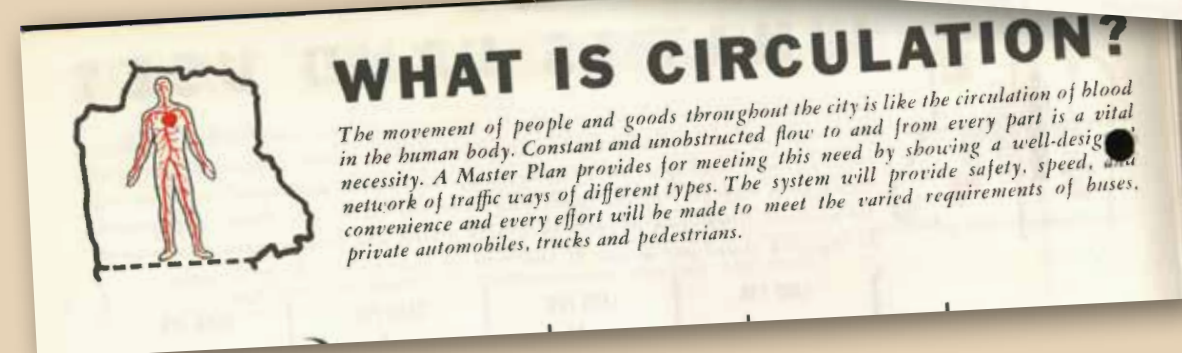
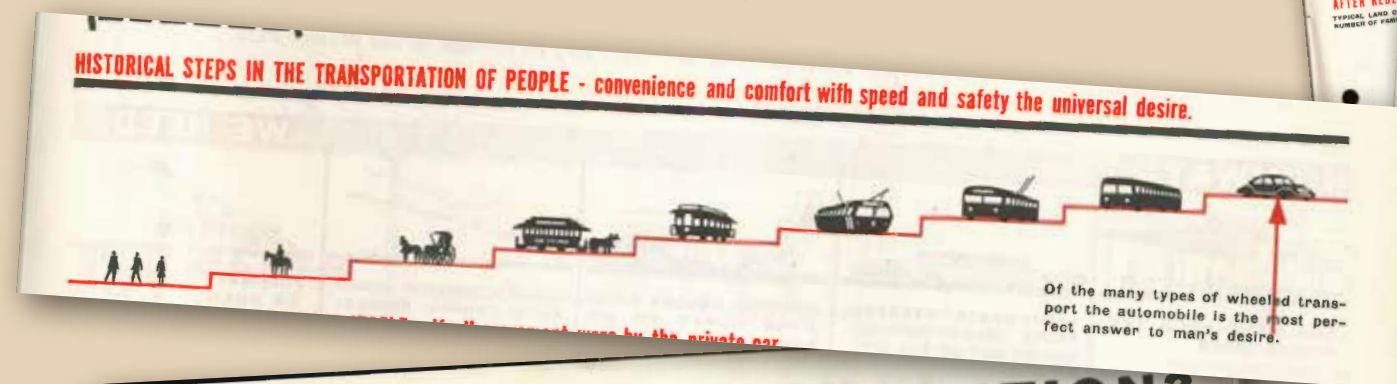
Though the Redevelopment Agency and the Planning Department were two independent bodies, they were linked from the start. The 1945 Community Redevelopment Act allowed cities to create redevelopment agencies that could establish "project areas" to decrease blight. In fulfillment, the 1945 General Plan identified the Western Addition, South of Market, Chinatown, the Mission, and Bayview/Hunter's Point as "general areas in which conditions indicative of blight are found."

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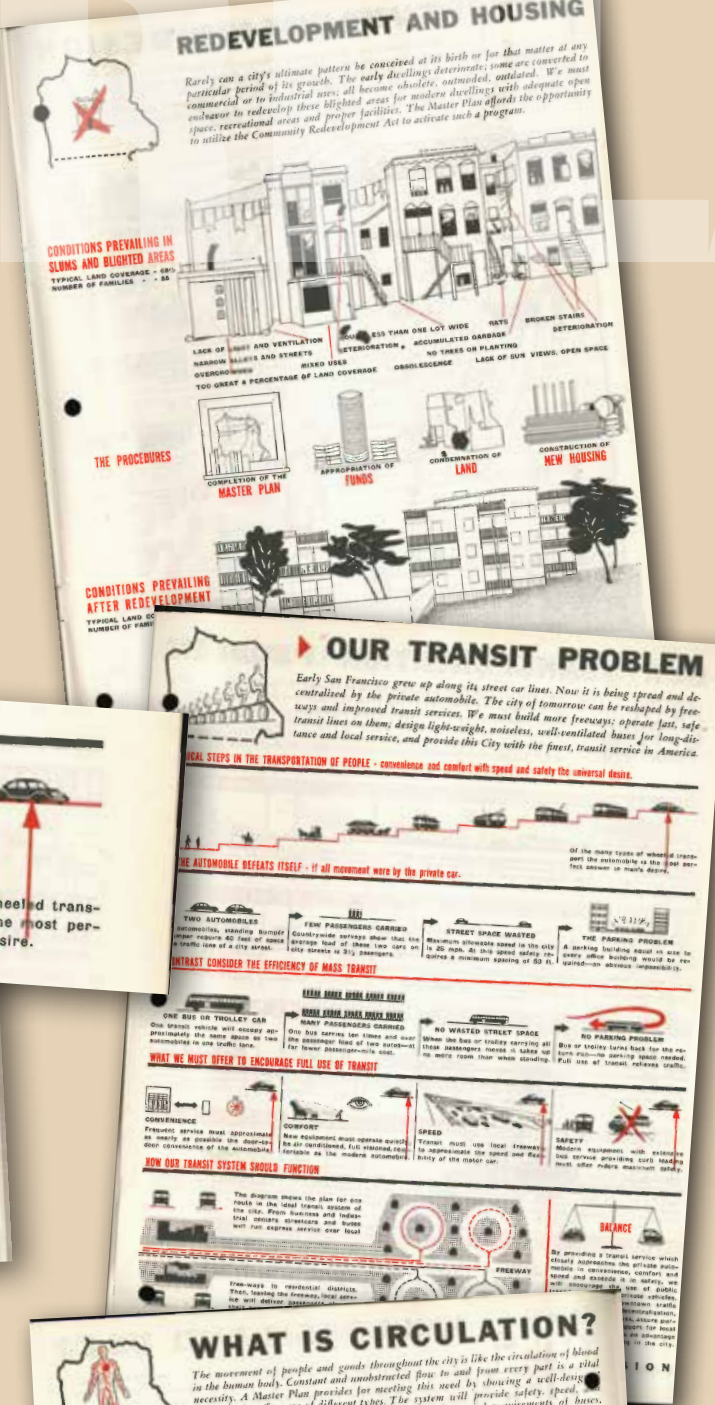


A designation of blight was a prerequisite for redevelopment. Unlike the Planning Department, which could only set limits on private development, the Redevelopment Agency was implementation-focused. It used federal funds and government powers, such as eminent domain, to act as a private real estate developer.

By the late 1960s, these two government bodies were in growing conflict with one another, with the Planning Department struggling to gain an upper hand on the Redevelopment Agency's politically powerful director, Justin Herman, while also avoiding the growing public backlash aimed at the Agency's destructive work program.



These two pages from the section of the 1945 Master Plan focused on redevelopment, illustrating how the metaphor of blight – a communicable plant disease – was constructed to justify the wholesale destruction of communities, especially the multi-ethnic Western Addition, in favor of large, super-block developments.



This page from the 1946 Master Plan Primer illustrates the supposed shortcomings of the City's existing mixed-use. Victorian neighborhoods are compared to the modern, semi-suburban apartment blocks that the Plan envisioned taking their place. The lack of people in this image speaks to removing concerns of non-white neighborhood residents in modernist planning processes.

This diagram from the 1946 Master Plan Primer clearly spells out the centrality of cars to modernist planning, depicting the personal automobile as the literal pinnacle of the history of transportation. Though the same page goes on to describe the place of transit in the modernist city, its role is envisioned as easing car travel.

This page from the 1946 Master Plan Primer compares the flow of cars through the City to the flow of blood through a body's veins. This speaks to the centrality of automobile travel to post-war functionalist, modernist planning.

## 1950s–1960s Struggles to Define the Direction of Planning

The unified face of city planning began to show fissures within city government in the late 1940s and early 1950s. During these years the Mayor, the Planning Commission, and the Planning Director all found themselves in open conflict at one time or another. The core question in many of these disputes was how, and indeed if, San Francisco would accommodate its growing post-war population. The war years had proved that there was a growing mismatch between the City's housing supply and demand. Under the Directorship of Paul Opperman, the Planning Department pressed the City to focus on suburban style development. This was aimed at keeping pace with the new housing tracts ringing the Bay, and it also fit larger Cold War defense strategies which saw dense cities as potential enemy targets and sources of social dissent. Opperman championed enlarged minimum lot sizes and off-street parking requirements, both of which resulted in less-dense, more middle-class neighborhoods. The power struggles became so intense that at one point a grand jury even suggested that the Mayor eliminate the Planning Department, citing "'dissension' and 'lack of co-operation' between Opperman, the Commission, and other City departments."

One of the biggest symbols of this lack of civic consensus was the effort to update the City's zoning code. In 1951 the Chronicle reported that "[b]ecause of the inflexibility of the present ordinance, a total of 1,376 changes have been made in it by the Planning Commission and the Supervisors since 1921." A new ordinance was anticipated as early as 1947, when voters passed yet another charter amendment aimed at strengthening the city's planning powers. Besides formalizing the creation of the Planning Department and the position of Planning Director, this amendment proposed a new Zoning Administrator position to take on the growing task of issuing variances. It made the creation of this new position contingent on major updates to the code.

The Planning Commission was reluctant to give up power to a new administrator and delayed the code's approval. Furthermore, proposed restrictions on large scale development, including height limits and stricter floor-to-area ratios, were staunchly opposed by the City's development interests. Though a draft ordinance was ready by 1949, its approval dragged on for an additional ten years.

The 1960s began with the passage of the long-delayed zoning code. The new ordinance gave the City far-more nuanced zoning tools than the 1921 ordinance contained. The Code largely reaffirmed planners' liberal modernist visions, setting no meaningful limits on Downtown development, dictating suburban-style lot coverage rules for some residential areas, and permitting high rise apartment towers in others. As the city that post-war planners had envisioned came into being, though, citizens increasingly pushed back. Much like the people who had organized behind the City Beautiful movement a half-century earlier, and like those who espoused modernist city building twenty-five years after that, this new generation of San Franciscans believed that they had to take immediate action. The difference, this time, was that they saw city planning as the enemy rather than the solution.



## 1954 Establishment of the Planning Commission's Power of Discretionary Review

In 1954, a developer sought to build a motel at 19th and Lawton across the street from Shriners hospital. The Hospital objected that while the Sunset's R2 zoning allowed hotels, motels were a type of use not anticipated in the 1920s zoning ordinance. The Commission sought the City Attorney's advice who affirmed that the City had "supreme control" over the issuance of building permits under the authority of its so-called "police power," and that the laws invest the Planning Commission with the power to exercise its sound discretion in determining compliance with the code.

Though the City Attorney said that this power was "a sensitive discretion and one which must be exercised with the utmost restraint," it greatly enlarged the Commission's authority. It also expanded the public's ability to participate in the planning process, creating the authority by which individuals may request a project undergo a discretionary review hearing. Sensing the significance of this change, a Commissioner opposed of the decision said, "If we are going to start reviewing every building application with a protest against it, all anyone will have to do is dredge up some feeble-minded citizen to oppose and we will sit for a full-dress hearing."

This decision continues to set San Francisco's planning processes apart from most other jurisdictions where most projects are approved "by right" of applicable planning and zoning laws without the need for discretionary decisions.

Front page of the Chronicle, February 9, 1954.

**San Francisco Chronicle**  
THE VOICE OF THE WEST  
SAN FRANCISCO, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1954  
FOUNDED 1865—VOL. CLXXIX, NO. 25  
CCCCAAAB—CP  
CA 1-1112 DAILY 10c, SUNDAY 20c

**SHRINE HOSPITAL FIGHTS PLAN FOR MOTEL**

**Chinatown Scolds City Over Festival**  
The man who directed Chinatown's successful New Year festival over the week end said yesterday there would never be another — unless the city gives more co-operation.  
Harry Lem, general chairman of the festival declared that while city officials were ready to cash in on the publicity afforded by the celebration, they were not willing to help pay for it.  
"The city didn't even give us a dime," he said. "Not only that, but it wouldn't even order the Police Department to block off the streets for us."  
Mayor Elmer E. Robinson answered that "everything the festival committee asked for, I granted. I allowed the municipal band to perform. I led the parade myself. As far as finances go, I recommended to the Board of Supervisors that funds be provided."  
Lem said he had requested that certain streets be blocked off the day before the festival began, so that the concession stands could be set up. Police refused, Lem said, and he set up his own barricades.  
"In a few years," Lem said, "we could make this into a nationally known event—if we got the city behind our efforts."  
Lem said it cost Chinatown \$40,000 to stage the festival. "The money was raised primarily through sale of votes (at \$1 a vote) in a contest for festival queen."  
He estimated that 250,000 attended the three-day affair.

**Zoning Appeal Under Way**  
The governors of the Shrine Hospital for Crippled Children have decided to take action to prevent the construction of a motel at 19th avenue and Lawton street, opposite the hospital.  
J. Clark Benson, attorney and secretary of the Board of Governors, told The Chronicle last night the Shrine's objection would be carried to the City Board of Permit Appeals, "and higher if necessary."  
Benson already has protested to the City Planning Department, and to the Board of Public Works. In both instances, he works.  
Benson said he was informed that nothing could be done to stop the building of the motel, and that the Board of Supervisors would not interfere.

**Model Pat Knudson Files Criminal Beating Charge**  
Pat Knudson, 31, one of the city's best known models, filed a criminal charge yesterday against a man who allegedly beat him on the street.

**Grayhound Plea Draws Protests**  
Pacific Grayhound Lines asked the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington yesterday for permission to set up a separate, subsidiary corporation to operate its Bay Area commuter lines.  
Separation of commuter service from other California routes and from interstate operations, the company announced, "will facilitate the proper regulating of interstate rates. Actual costs of operation would be more easily ascertainable."  
Commented John E. McKirahan, president of the Contra Costa County Commuters Association: "It looks like Greyhound is trying one more way to boost commuter rates."  
The association's board of directors is scheduled to meet today.

**\$375,192,697 for State Costs Legislature Begins Work on Record 'Operations' Budget**  
By JACKSON DOYLE, Chronicle Sacramento Correspondent  
SACRAMENTO, Feb. 8 — Governor Goodwin J. Knight sent a record-breaking "operations" budget to the Legislature today. It totaled \$375,192,697—all for general State expenses.  
State Finance Director John M. Peirce then told the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee that:  
1—A substantial deficit (estimated at \$50,000,000) by Legislative Auditor A. Alan Post) is in prospect for July 1.  
2—No new or increased taxes will be sought to reduce the gap between expenditures and income.  
3—The deficit will be met by borrowing.

**Kuchel Talks Here, Backs Ike's Program**  
SENATOR KUCHEL  
Recession talk denounced

**Supervisors**

**Reds Threaten Capital City In Indochina**

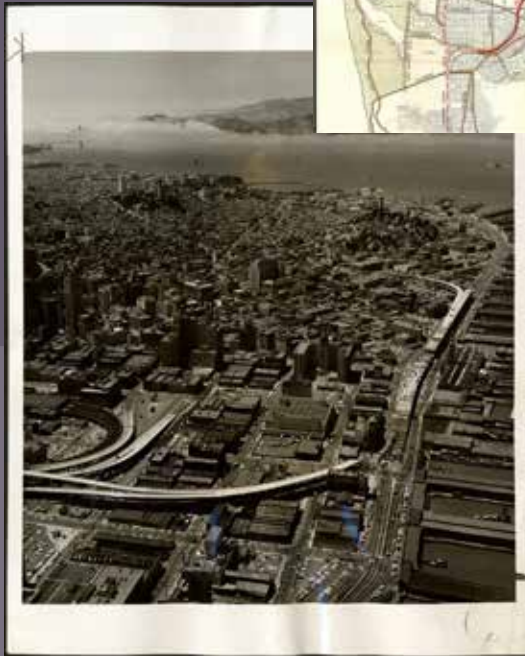


One of the proposed routes for the un-built Golden Gate Freeway which would have connected the Embarcadero Freeway to the Golden Gate Bridge, 1966.



A 1966 design proposal for the un-built Panhandle Freeway intended to ameliorate the concerns of anti-freeway activists by placing the freeway partially underground.

Map of some of the freeways proposed to have been built through San Francisco, 1948.



Aerial view of Embarcadero Freeway under construction with Golden Gate Bridge in the background, July 3, 1958.



Pickers protesting against the Southern Freeway marching at City Hall, April 1961.

## 1959–1969 Freeway Revolt

By the late 1950s, the city that modernist planners had been envisioning since the Second World War was finally coming into being, complete with freeways, high-rise apartment towers, and massive redevelopment areas. But these successes of the post-war planning consensus backfired as citizens increasingly resisted. Though this opposition took many forms, one of its most famous demonstrations was the so-called "Freeway Revolt."

Between 1959 and 1969, a new coalition of neighborhood, environmental, and preservation activists successfully pressured the Board of Supervisors to reject several important pieces of the state's proposed freeway network in the City. Had this not happened and had earlier plans been followed, San Francisco's cityscape may well have included a freeway through the Sunset, an additional freeway through the Mission, a freeway through the Panhandle and Golden Gate Park, bridges to Alameda and Angel Island, and a continuous stretch of freeway along the entire northwest waterfront from the Bay Bridge to the Golden Gate.



## 1962 Sign Ordinance

In 1962, the Commission passed an ordinance governing large signs, intended “to improve the appearance of the City and County and preserve its inherent attractive features.” The same aesthetic concerns in part motivated the supporters of the contemporary freeway revolt who, the following year, succeeded in getting the Board of Supervisors to require that future freeway plans protect “land values, human values, and the preservation of the City’s treasured appearance.” In this context, the sign ordinance marked an important shift away from the modernist/functionalist planning thinking of the 1940s and 1950s, and towards the concerns of neighborhood activists and the emerging environmentalist movement which would dominate planning in the 1960s and 1970s.



A pair of billboards beside 424 Presidio in 1951.



Billboards at St. Francis Circle, c. 1953.



Billboards along Turk at Lyon, c. 1953.

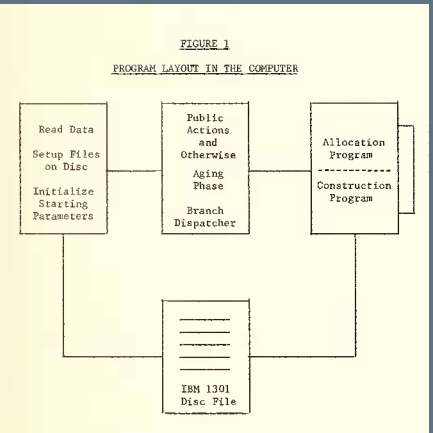
San Francisco Chronicle, March 22, 1962, announcing the new Sign Ordinance.



Cover of the Planning Department's 1962 Sign Ordinance

## 1966 Housing Simulation Model and the First Housing Inventory Report

In 1966, San Francisco received federal funding to prepare a computer simulation of the City’s housing demand, marking the City’s first serious effort to integrate computing into urban planning. The project was notoriously complex and required scheduling time on large institutional research computers in order to run the desired simulation. Even then, the program took several hours to set up and several more hours to run. Despite the sizeable government funds spent on the project, and the promises of consultants and officials alike, the model failed to produce meaningful or useful results. The project was not a complete wash, however; in 1967 the Planning Department used data compiled for the project in order to produce a Housing Inventory Report. This annual Housing Inventory Reports continues to be the longest-running, continuous publication of the department.



A flow chart describing the programming of the San Francisco Housing Simulation Model.



The console of an IBM 7094: the type of computer that the Housing Simulation Model was designed on.



The IBM 7090 computer at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 1960, one of the facilities where the Housing Simulation Model was likely run.



## 1966 Landmarks Preservation Advisory Committee/ Historic Preservation Commission

San Francisco passed its first set of historic preservation laws just a year after the passage of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. In 1967, the Board of Supervisors adopted Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code which enabled City designation of specific landmarks and districts. Implementation was entrusted to the newly created Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, made up of nine mayoral-appointees that reported to the Planning Commission.

The roots of this effort trace back to the work of the Junior League, whose earlier survey of historic structures, Here Today, directly informed Article 10. That title reflected the belief of many contemporary neighborhood and environmentalist activists that without fast, proactive action, much of the City's historic fabric would soon be lost. The plight of specific endangered buildings and districts often provided the energy behind much of early preservation movement, especially the loss of the Fox Theater, the Fontana Warehouse, and many Victorians in the Western Addition.

The late 1970s and early 1980s proved just as significant for historic preservation in San Francisco as the early 1960s had been, with many similar dynamics at play. Much as Here Today had done, San Francisco Architectural Heritage's survey of Downtown architecture, Splendid Survivors, directly informed the creation of Article 11 of the Planning Code. Article 11, passed as part of the 1985 Downtown Plan, established conservation districts throughout Downtown and introduced innovative new preservation methods, such as the transfer of development rights. Just as losses had spurred action in the 1960s, the losses of the Fitzhugh Building and the majority of the City of Paris building proved to be powerful motivators.

## SAVED

Octagon House, Gough and Union Streets. A landmark saved by private efforts. When it was threatened with demolition in the 1950's by the construction of a motel, the Colonial Dames of America secured title to the building and moved it across the street to a lot donated by Lucy and Edith Allyn. The building has been totally renovated to become an outstanding San Francisco landmark.

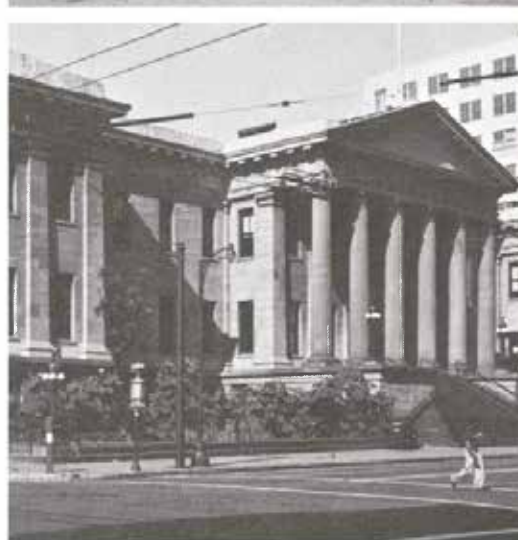
## ENDANGERED

The old U. S. Mint, 5th and Mission Streets. An endangered publicly owned building that deserves protection. This building, survivor of the 1906 holocaust, was the location of the minting of much of the West's outpouring of gold and silver in the 19th century. It was the last major federal building constructed in the Greek Revival style. The building is not only significant historically; its pillared front portico and surrounding landscaping are key architectural elements in the 5th Street corridor between the Powell Street rapid transit station and Mission Street, providing much needed relief to the intensive commercial uses in the 5th Street area.

## LOST

The Humphreys House, once at the northeast corner of Hyde and Chestnut Streets. Frame house designed in the Victorian Gothic mode. Constructed in 1852 from material shipped around the Horn. The building, at the crest of Russian Hill, with its huge eucalyptus tree at the street corner, was a favorite San Francisco landmark. It was demolished in 1947 for a lack of established procedures to channel belated community concern over its destruction.

More recently, voters passed Proposition J in 2008, replacing the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board with a new Historic Preservation Committee. This new body reports directly to the Board of Supervisors and is made up of seven members, six of whom are required to be preservation professionals.



## 1970 CEQA and Friends of Mammoth

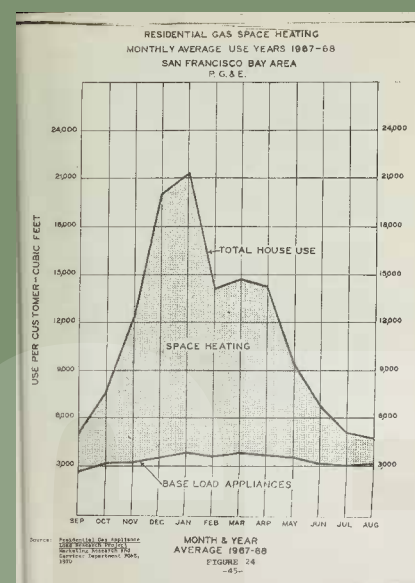
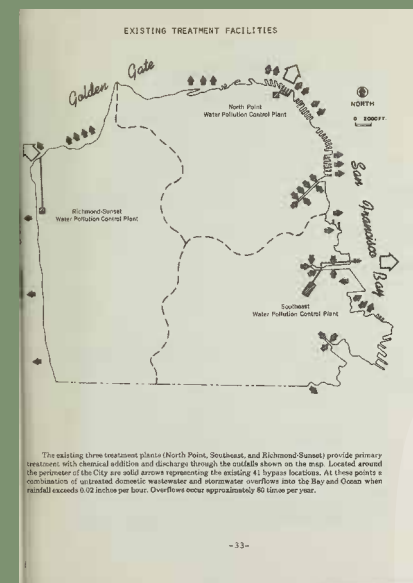
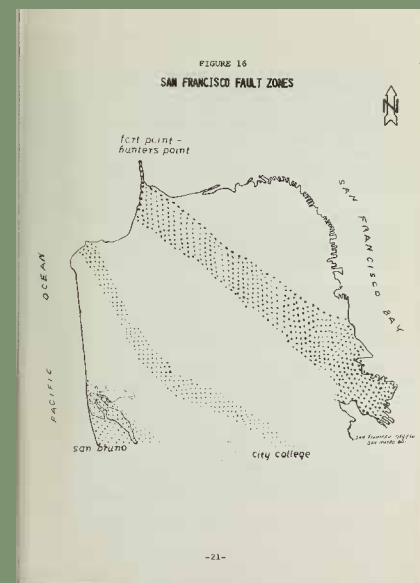
In 1970, the California Legislature passed the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It was among the first environmental protection state laws in the nation, passed just months after the enactment of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Among CEQA's most important elements was the requirement of local agencies to produce Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) for public review.

Initially, the law was interpreted as applying only to government projects; however the 1972 California Supreme Court ruling in Friends of Mammoth vs. Board of Supervisors of Mono County interpreted CEQA to cover all projects, public or private, approved by a government agency's discretionary decision. Initially the City scrambled to provide CEQA review for all of the projects implicated by this court decision. In 1973, the Board of Supervisors adopted Chapter 31 of the Administrative Code which established local procedures for implementing this state law.

This dramatically reshaped planning processes and politics across the state, especially in San Francisco, where a 1954 City Attorney's decision meant that nearly every action taken by the Planning Commission amounted to a discretionary decision. Though CEQA only required study and documentation of environmental impacts - not their elimination - the public input requirements for that process created an immensely powerful point of leverage for a broad set of public advocates. In 1988 the California Supreme Court resolved a local case brought by the Laurel Heights Community Improvement Association vs the UCSF that established that CEQA review must "afford the fullest possible protection" bound by what is "reasonable foreseeable". As a result, the Planning Department's Environmental Review workload broadened, members of the public gained a much larger seat at the table in planning decision making, and the City's already boisterous planning process became even more so.

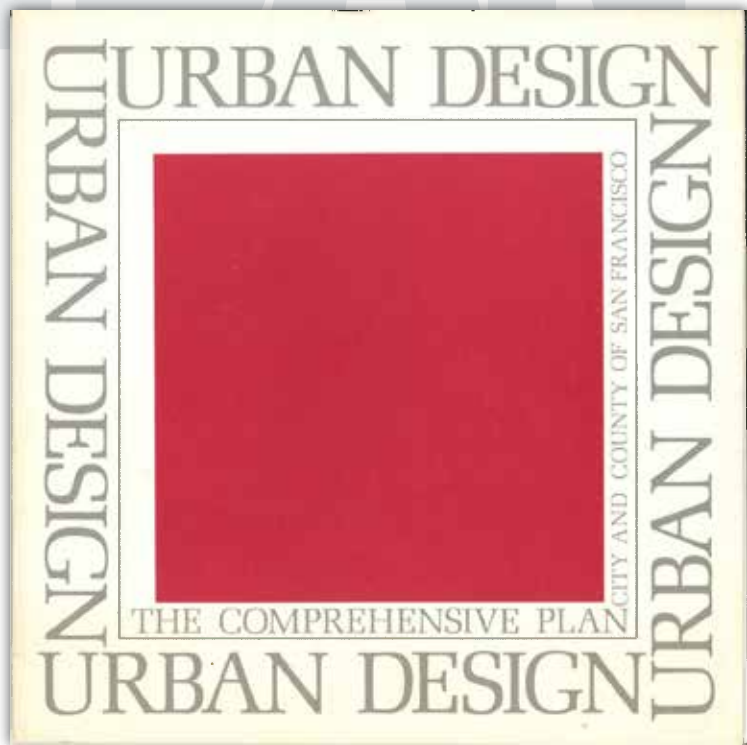


Diagram of "Community Noise Exposure Levels (CNEL) San Francisco International Airport, 1972 Operations" from the draft EIR for the SFO expansion project, published August 1973. This was one of the Department's first major EIRs.



Diagrams from a 1974 draft EIR for a proposed condo development on Potrero Hill. These include studies of fault lines, gas heating, traffic, and sewage, all indicative of how CEQA greatly expanded the purview of both planners' work and public input.





Cover of the 1971 Urban Design Plan

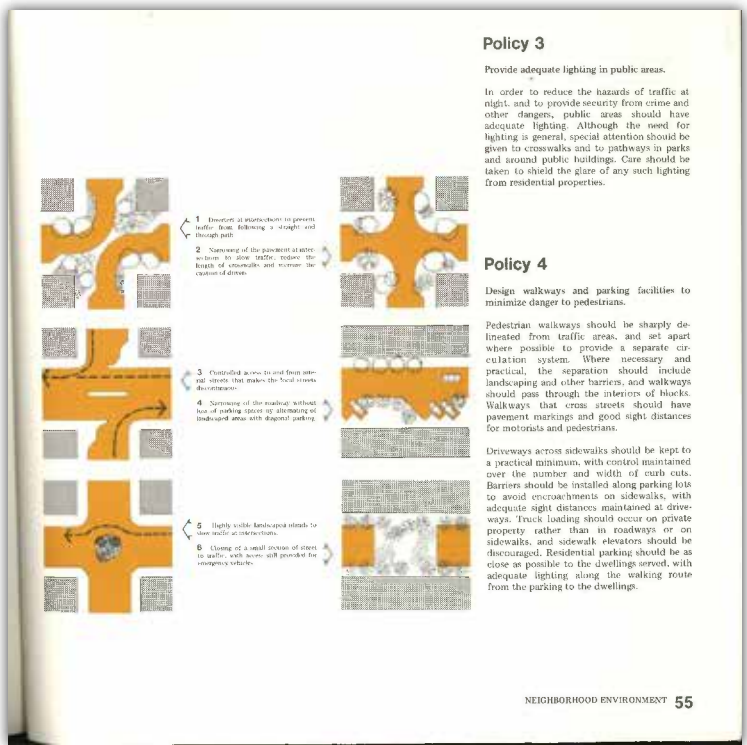
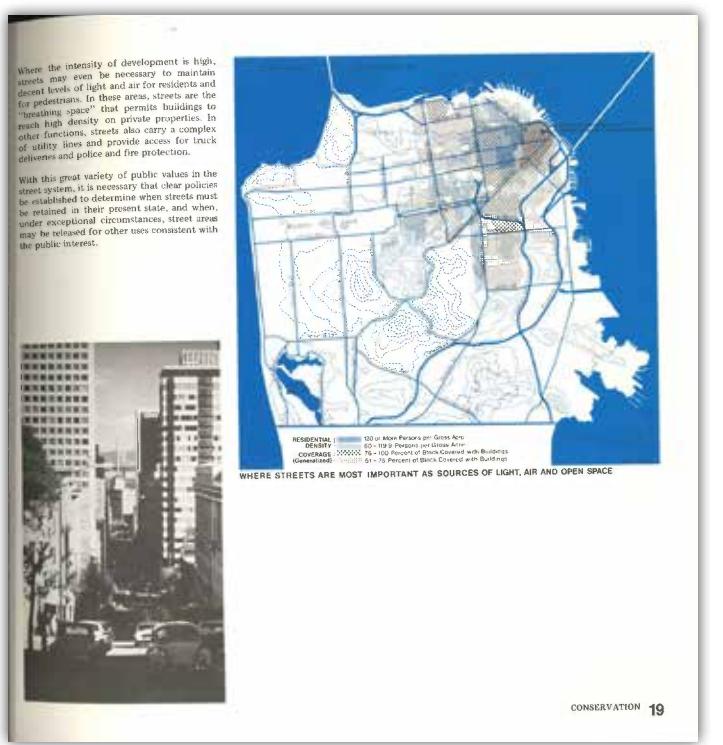


Diagram of the Urban Design Plan's suggestions for creatively treating curbs and streets in order to change their use.



Map of height limits from the Urban Design Plan.



Map of light, air, and open space from the Urban Design Plan.



Photos in the Urban Design Plan suggesting that new development be more deferential to historic buildings.



Diagram in the Urban Design Plan suggesting the renovation of historic structures back to their original design.

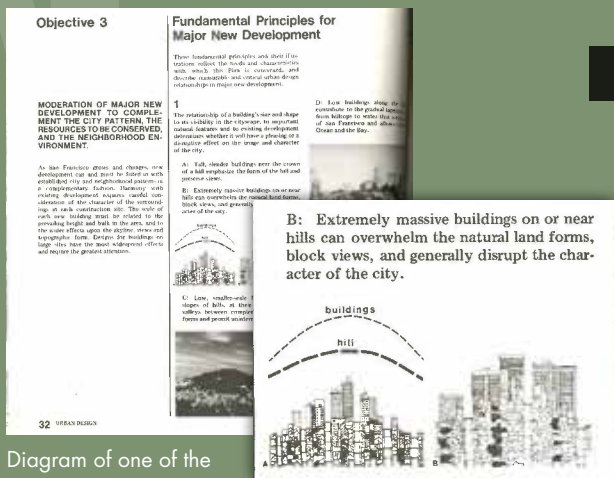


Diagram of one of the Urban Design Plan's policies to place taller buildings atop hills and shorter buildings at their bases in order to preserve the original contour.



Diagram of the Urban Design Plan's policy for preserving open space rather than converting them to underground parking as had been done in Portsmouth and Union Squares. The drawing imagines how such a garage would affect Washington Square.

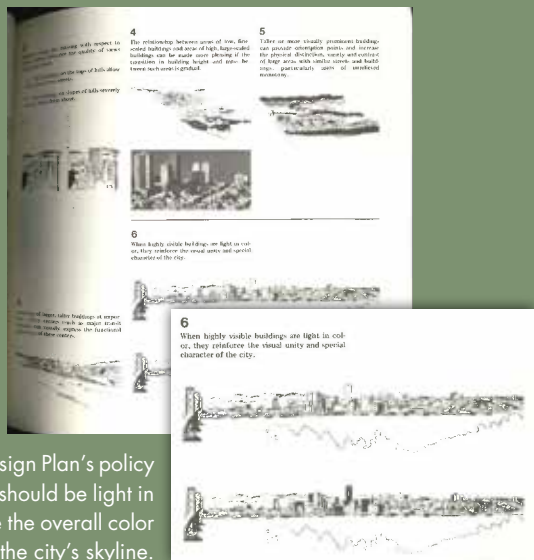


Diagram of the Urban Design Plan's policy that significant buildings should be light in color in order to preserve the overall color palette of the city's skyline.

## 1971 Urban Design Plan

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Planning Department rewrote the City's General Plan. In these new plans, the Department squarely moved away from the Downtown-focused, modernist, functionalist thinking that had dominated the planning establishment during the post-war decades. This followed the path that many in the public had already taken through the 1960s, halting the spread of freeways, fighting the wholesale destruction of redevelopment, and increasingly souring on the rising skyline of certain high-rise buildings such as the Fontana Towers and the Bank of America Building.

Among the most groundbreaking of the new plan elements was the Urban Design Plan, which directly reflected the concerns of the Department's new director, Allan Jacobs. Rather than drastically remake the city, the Urban Design Plan sought to protect its existing fabric and essential physical characteristics at the level of both the broad cityscape and the individual building; to cultivate human-scale amenities; and to provide landscaping along streets for livability. Created at a time when most American cities sought to fight deindustrialization by tearing out the old and emulating the suburbs, it proposed radical reinvestment in the urban fabric and a reimagining urban livability. This marked the first time that a major American city had passed such comprehensive urban design rules backed with specific zoning controls around issues such as preservation, height, and bulk.

## Residential Rezoning

During the mid-1970s, political activists drew alliances between neighborhood preservationists, affordable housing activists, and environmentalists. Galvanized by earlier victories stopping redevelopment and freeway expansion, they turned their energy towards residential zoning controls. Mayor George Moscone appointed Sue Bierman to the Planning Commission, as Director Rai Yukio Okamoto led the work for the Commission's 1978 Residential Rezoning. This rezoning effort resulted in tighter controls on residential density through the use of a 40' height limit, rear-yard and front-setback requirements. This rezoning also established the first residential design guidelines.



# Managing Change

Dianne Feinstein, Mayor 1978–1988  
Art Agnos, Mayor 1988–1992  
Frank Jordan, Mayor 1992–1996  
Willie L. Brown, Mayor 1996–2004

Rai Yukio Okamoto, Planning Director 1976–1980  
Dean Macris, Planning Director 1980–1992  
Lucian “Lu” Blazej, Planning Director 1992–1996  
Gerald Green, Planning Director 1996–2004

## The Downtown Plan and Neighborhood Rezonings

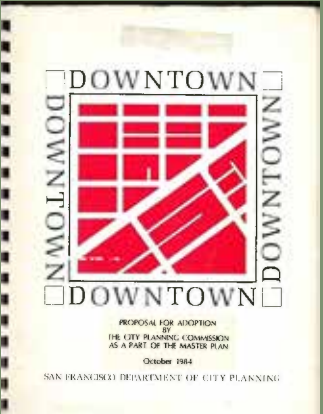
By the late 1970s and early-1980s, San Francisco was experiencing a boom in commercial office development and public discontent with the continuing construction of modernist high-rises that had been increasing since the 1960s. The 1970s had seen a distinct escalation in citizen participation in planning decision-making, aided by CEQA, district elections, and the election of George Moscone as Mayor in 1976. The result was a new slow-growth movement that increasingly demanded the City account for the cumulative impacts of high rise development, contain the spread of “downtown,” and improve the quality of the “refrigerator boxes” popping up on the skyline. As large skyscrapers continued to appear, in many cases replacing significant cherished historic buildings, public pressure to stop what they considered a threat to the essential character of their city. Similar to the freeway revolt decades earlier, a “skyscraper revolt” led to the City commanding the strictest planning restrictions of any city in the nation.

In response, the Planning Department, led by Planning Director Dean Macris, initiated a major planning process aimed at limiting and sculpting the growing business district while keeping high-rises out of Chinatown, North Beach, and the Tenderloin. The key to the Downtown Plan’s many innovations was a move away from an older mindset within the planning field that cities should work to attract development at any cost. Instead, it proposed that the planners could leverage the developer’s interest to build in San Francisco to get them to provide public benefits including impact fees for transit, open space, and childcare as well as on-site public amenities such as public art and privately-owned public open spaces, or POPOS. New buildings, the Plan insisted, had to complement the existing Downtown, not dominate it. The Downtown Plan was a watershed victory of the historic preservation movement in the City, with the Plan designating over 200 buildings for preservation, and creating the city’s Transferrable Development Right program. The Downtown Plan sought to allow growth within limits that preserved sunlight and conserved important buildings. With such powerful forces at play, adoption of the Plan was highly contested. The City Attorney, George Agnost, initially argued that preservation was unconstitutional. Mayor Diane Feinstein mediated the disagreement and became a firm supporter of the Plan. Prior to considering adoption, the Board of Supervisors insisted on establishing an annual office limit to prevent over-construction during the first three years.

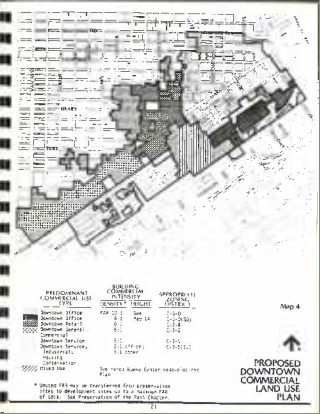
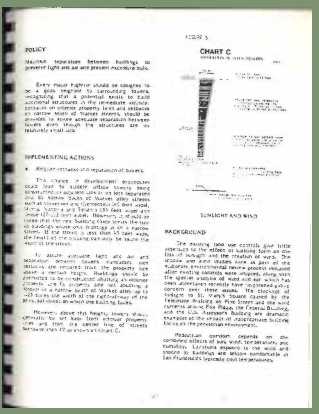
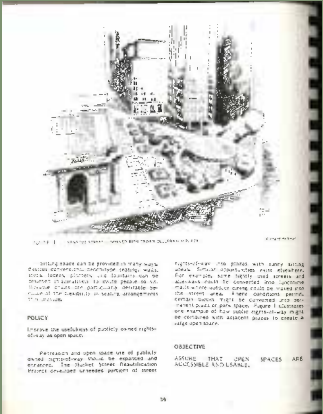
Predictably, the Downtown Plan did not end the high-rise debate, but it added to public confidence that rules were in place to modify rampant, indiscriminate construction; City Hall had gained the upper hand and developers were required to meet high standards. Or, as seen from the national perspective in a front page article of New York Times put it in 1985, “In brief, the plan - so radical in its restrictions on skyscraper development that it is impossible to imagine it even being proposed in any other major city - was viewed by many San Francisco politicians as being too weak.” Soon thereafter, the voters passed Proposition M in 1986, which made the temporary limits on office development permanent law.



1985 view of the downtown skyline from the present-day site of Yerba Buena Gardens inside the Yerba Buena Redevelopment area.



Cover to the 1984 Downtown Plan and illustrations from the plan depicting its concerns for the design of Downtown high-rises and public spaces.



Map of commercial land use zoning in the 1984 Downtown Plan.



Map of ground floor uses in the 1984 Downtown Plan.

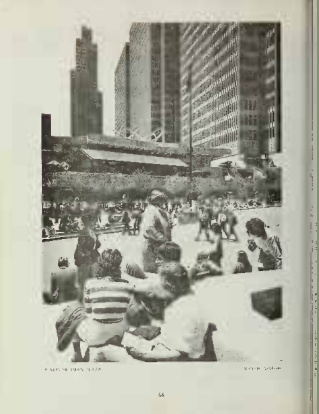


Image in the 1984 Downtown Plan of people in Justin Herman Plaza.



7th and Irving, 1983.



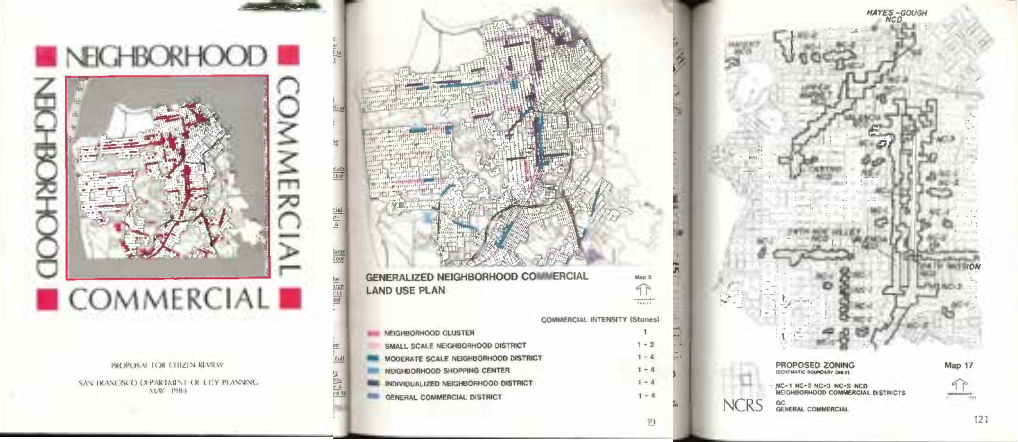
Clement St at 5th Ave, 1983.

## Preserving the Neighborhoods

As the Downtown Plan was being developed, so too were plans underway to manage growth in the adjacent neighborhoods. The Planning Commission also oversaw efforts that resulted in area plans for Chinatown, the Tenderloin, South of Market and Van Ness Avenue in the early and mid-1980s. While the Department also prepared never-realized plans for Mission Bay, that effort was ultimately completed by the Redevelopment Agency. In Chinatown, however, it was concern over the Redevelopment Agency declaring the neighborhood blighted combined with the restrictions placed by the Downtown Plan that led to Planning Department involvement. Quickly twin efforts led by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (the Six Companies) on one hand; and on the other, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center and Asian Neighborhood Design led to competing plans. In 1995, with Lucian “Lu” Blazej as Planning Director, the Commission adopted a plan that balanced the two alternatives to preserve the unique physical and cultural character while stabilizing the housing supply and affordability.

Similarly, many neighborhood residents felt that the character of their neighborhood shopping districts was changing. Many properties that had formerly housed a more diverse mix of ground floor neighborhood-serving retail and second floor residences were increasingly being converted into restaurants, bars, bank branches, fast food chains, boutiques, and professional offices. Starting in 1980, the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and the Planning Department faced these challenges by establishing and refining a set of new districts covering many of the City’s neighborhood commercial streets. These evolved into a set of highly-detailed controls catered to the specifics of each neighborhood. Similar to the Downtown Plan, the 1987 Neighborhood Commercial Districts were based on the then relatively new idea that the City should be more discriminating in its pursuit of economic growth. This effort foreshadowed later formula retail controls by

adding limits on expanding retail, particularly financial institutions and food services and drinking establishments from overwhelming neighborhood shopping districts around the city. The controls also pioneered the use of regulating buildings by floor level and creating a very fine-grained list of non-residential uses. This innovation protected housing over retail from displacement.



Cover and map from a 1984 proposal for creating permanent Neighborhood Commercial Special Use Districts.



# Changes to the General Plan Process

## 1996 New City Charter

On November 7, 1995, San Franciscans passed Proposition E, adopting a comprehensive update to the City’s charter. The previous charter had been written in 1932, largely in order to place checks on the powers of the mayor. Several groups had attempted to amend the charter over the subsequent 60 years to no avail, most notably with Proposition E in 1968 and Proposition A in 1980. Despite it failing at the polls, the 1980 proposal greatly informed the ultimately successful efforts undertaken in 1994 and 1995.

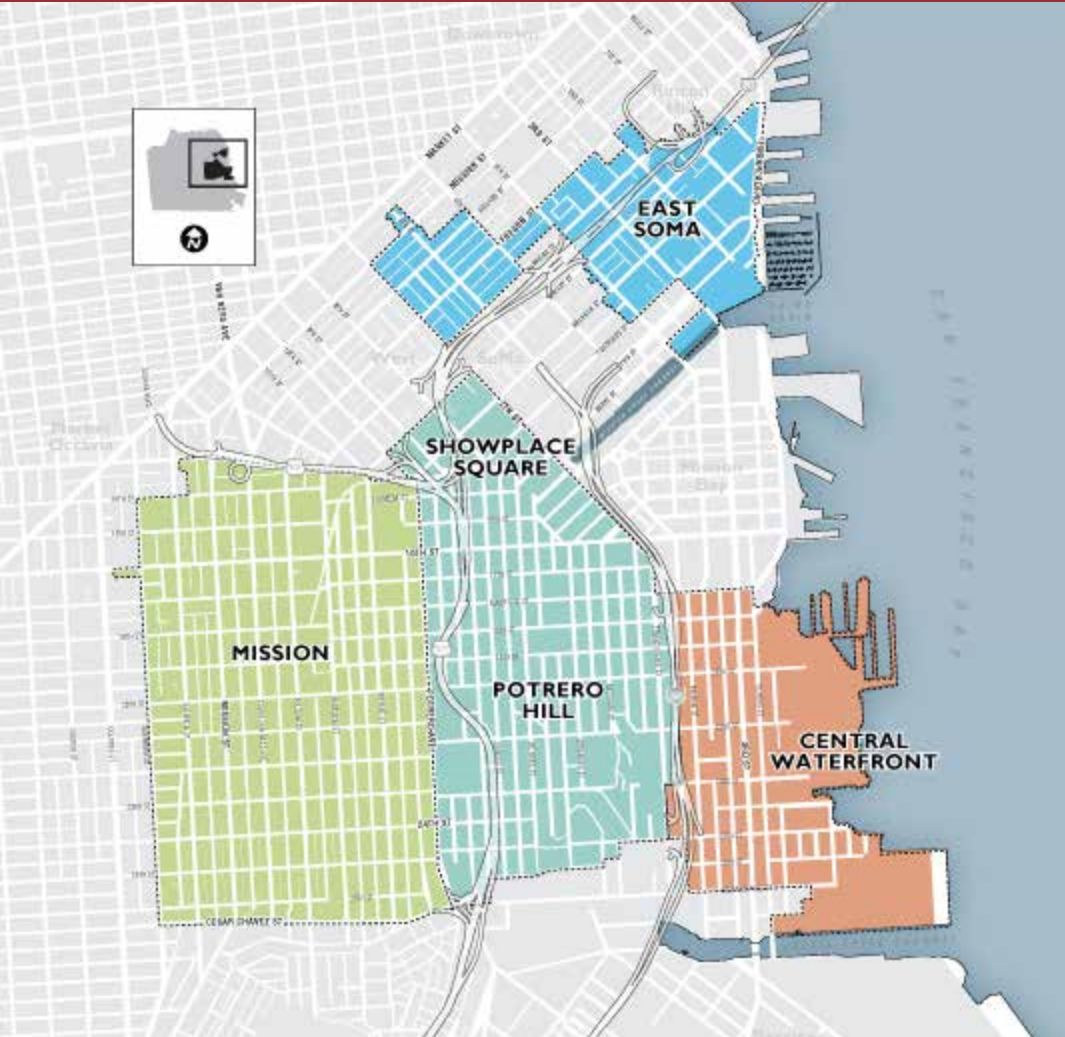
The 1996 Charter made several notable changes to the City’s planning processes. The 1932 Charter gave the Commission complete control of the “Master Plan.” The 1996 version changed the name to the “General Plan” and broadened by involvement of the Board of Supervisors, requiring changes to be approved by Ordinance for the first time. Concerning mayoral appointees, it gave the Board of Supervisors the power to reject an appointee to the Planning Commission with a supermajority vote, and it gave the Planning Commission much greater power over whom the mayor appoints as Planning Director. Additionally, it updated the language for how the Zoning Administrator grants variances. The changes within the 1996 Charter foreshadowed further changes to the Commission. In 2002, the voters passed Proposition D which, for the first time, split the Commission’s appointments between the Mayor and the President of the Board of Supervisors.

Eastern neighborhoods plan areas

# A New Millennium

Willie L. Brown, Mayor 1996–2004  
Gavin Newsom, Mayor 2004–2011

Gerald Green, Planning Director 1996–2004  
Lawrence “Larry” Badiner August 2003–2004 (Acting)  
Dean Macris, Planning Director 2004–2008  
John Rahaim, Planning Director 2008–Present



## 1999–2009 Dot Com Boom and Industrial Protection: Eastern Neighborhoods

The late 1990s dot-com boom created a resurgence of growth management issues that the City had been grappling with in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This time, the focus turned away from downtown and toward the more industrial parts of the City, largely in the City’s Southeast sector. Liberal zoning controls in industrial neighborhoods, exploitation of allowances for live-work buildings, and much unpermitted conversion of industrial buildings to office use created a general concern around scattershot and unplanned growth, preservation of industrial lands, and gentrification and displacement of adjacent lower income communities and communities of color. These trends were exacerbated by a general resurgence in urban living and the dramatic price spike in both housing and commercial real estate regionally due to rapid job and wage growth of the dot-com boom.

In March of 1998, the Commission adopted interim Industrial Protection Zones, sparking a dialogue asking how much of this land would be needed for industrial uses in the future – as opposed to what could be transitioned into full-service residential neighborhoods. As the study of the industrial lands heated up, it became clear the San Francisco should continue to ensure a future for “industry” in the City, but not the smokestack industry of past eras. Instead, policy debate focused on the role of these businesses in functionally supporting the City’s residents and primary economic activities, as well as enhancing job diversity. This sector was given the new title of PDR for production, distribution and repair.

The Eastern Neighborhoods program grew out of the successive layer of interim controls both by the Commission and the Board to protect these businesses. While the Eastern Neighborhoods process was originally envisioned as merely a zoning exercise to resolve this issue, affected communities demanded that the effort be expanded to also comprehensively plan for improving quality of life and addressing growth. Eventually, the effort would produce area plans and rezoning for the Mission, Potrero Hill / Showplace Square, East SoMa, and the Central Waterfront, and were adopted in December 2008.





## 1999–2008 Complete Transit-Oriented Neighborhoods Better Neighborhoods Plans

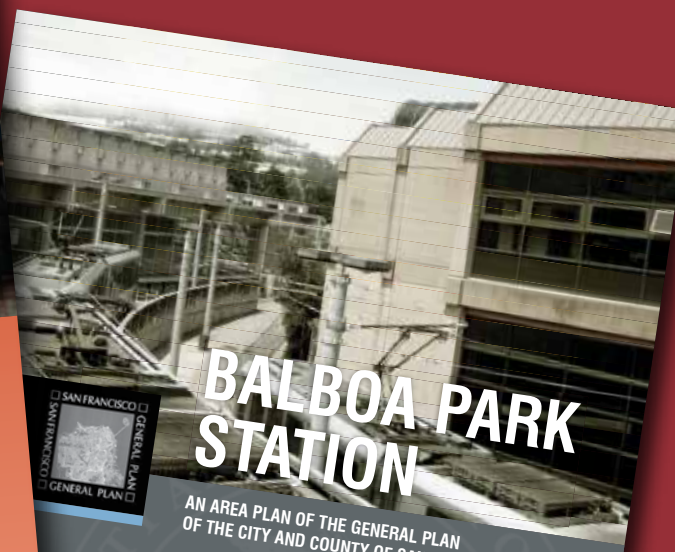
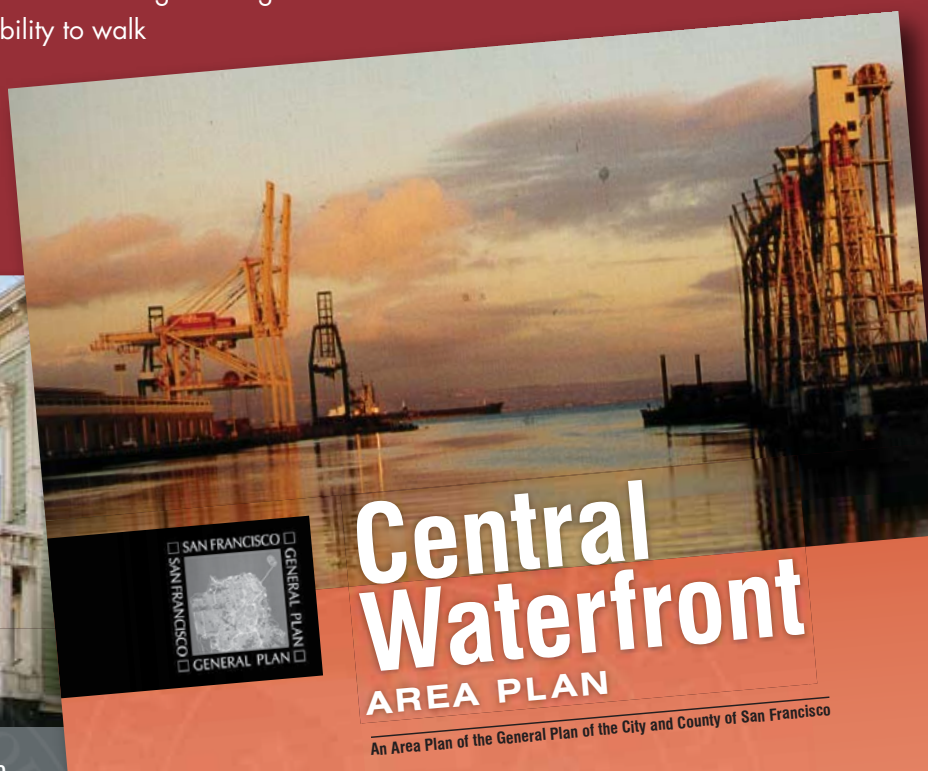
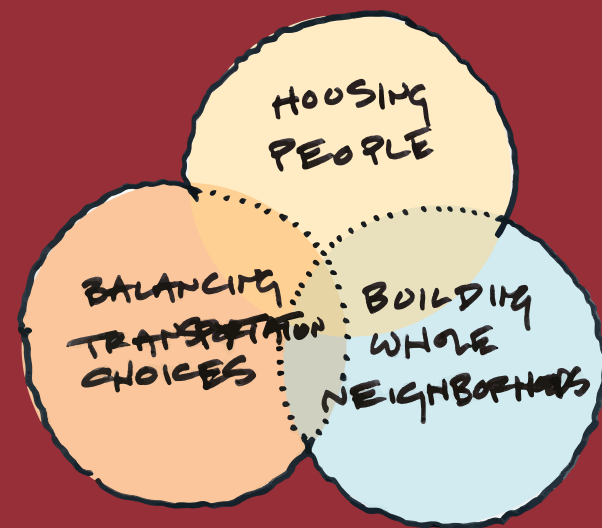
At the same time, building on the national trend to returning to urban living, the Department sought funds to do comprehensive neighborhood planning for neighborhoods that were well-served by transit and that afforded significant opportunities for new housing. The Better Neighborhoods Program, launched in 1999, attempted to respond to these increasing pressures through comprehensive, localized plans in three areas surrounding transit: Balboa Park, Market-Octavia, and the Central Waterfront. Market and Octavia further capitalized on the soon-to-be-removed Central Freeway, which had been damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, to re-knit the neighborhood together and create new housing opportunities.

Broadly-speaking, most planning efforts from the late 1960s through the early 1990s had focused on strengthening the City's Downtown core and preserving the neighborhoods by limiting opportunity for growth. Better Neighborhoods shifted the focus to finding more space for housing in new mid-rise, transit-oriented mixed-use neighborhoods, recognizing the need to accommodate housing demand in a thoughtful, sustainable way. Better Neighborhoods rested on a belief that great neighborhoods shared eight common elements: the ability to walk to shops, safe streets, the ability

to get around easily, a variety of housing choices, places for people to gather, a full range of services, a special neighborhood character, and a role to play within the larger city as a whole.

These plans focused as much on envisioning redesigned streets and new open spaces and improved zoning controls and urban design guidelines to reinforce pedestrian-oriented buildings as they did on planning for housing growth.

The first of these plans to see adoption would be the Market & Octavia Plan under the new leadership of Director John Rahaim in 2008, followed shortly thereafter by the Balboa Park Station Area Plan.



## 2003–2012

### New High-Density Neighborhoods Adjacent to Downtown (Downtown Neighborhoods: Rincon Hill and Transit Center District Plans)



Capitalizing on the demolition of the Embarcadero Freeway and significant new public investment at the Transbay Transit Center, a new Rincon Hill Plan and strategy for the adjacent Transbay district looked to re-envision the southern side of downtown, building on the ideas of the Downtown Plan, with high-density housing located in tall, slender towers, with active uses at the ground floor. Together with the Redevelopment Agency, Planning created the Rincon Hill and Transbay Redevelopment plans, both adopted in 2005, to create a dense, but green, downtown residential neighborhood centered on Folsom Street (site of the former elevated Embarcadero Freeway). The Plan accomplished a few significant firsts, including parking maximums instead of parking minimums, removal of residential density controls, and a minimum housing to commercial use ratio.



Transit Center District Plan and Rincon Hill Plan areas

Following on the heels of these Plans, the Planning Department led an effort to revisit the plans and zoning around the Transbay Transit Center itself, the area envisioned by the Downtown Plan as the densest center of the evolving downtown. The Transit Center District Plan, adopted in 2012, re-focused the downtown skyline on its geographic and transit epicenter, refined the Downtown Plan's goals for quality of place in this dense hub, and established new "value capture" benchmarks for generating substantial revenues for public infrastructure, including the Transbay Transit Center and a future Downtown Rail Extension.



# Looking Ahead

San Francisco continues to grapple with a number of crucial issues and challenges facing the City. Housing affordability remains the most pressing concern of our times, while on-going gentrification of neighborhoods and displacement of long-term residents and communities forces us to ask who the City is for.

## Providing Housing for All

With over 65,000 units of new housing approved over the last several years, many are in several large master-planned developments that will remake underused areas of the City, such as the Hunters Point Shipyard, Treasure Island, and Pier 70. Home SF, adopted in 2017, incentivizes the building of more affordable and family-friendly housing in neighborhood commercial and transit corridors through zoning modifications. The City has recently completed a year-long process to adopt new regulations requiring market-rate developments to include affordable units and has enabled the construction of thousands of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) to help provide more affordable housing.



## Resilient and Sustainable Waterfront

Over the coming decades, the impacts of sea level rise and the increasing frequency and intensity of storms mean that areas currently unaffected could begin to experience periodic coastal and/or urban flooding. In the face of natural hazards such as sea level rise and seismic vulnerability, the Sea Level Rise Action Plan is the first step toward developing a citywide Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan by 2018 to address immediate and long-term threats of sea level rise.

The Plan defines an overarching vision and set of objectives for future sea level rise and coastal flooding planning and mitigation in San Francisco, providing direction for City departments to understand and adapt to the impacts of sea level rise, and identifies what long-term sea level rise means for San Francisco's residents, visitors, economy and waterfront.

## Advancing Community Equity and Opportunity

Endorsed by the Planning Commission in 2017, the Mission Action Plan 2020 (MAP2020) aims to retain low to moderate income residents and community-serving businesses, artists, and nonprofits in order to strengthen and preserve the socioeconomic diversity of the Mission neighborhood. The Plan came out of a two-year community-initiated process which deeply engaged community partners in a conversation of what is most needed for the neighborhood. Moving forward, the Department will seek to understand where gentrification and displacement are most acute, and learn from the MAP2020 model to bring strategies to prevent displacement to other communities, and to implement these strategies.



## Safeguarding Cultural Heritage

San Francisco's cultural heritage is a valuable historical, social, and economic resource that requires thoughtful management to safeguard the City's unique identity and to ensure a high quality of life for its future inhabitants. Sustaining the traditions, businesses, arts, and practices that compose San Francisco's social and economic fabric preserves experiences that can be shared across generations. Safeguarding the City's heritage contributes to maintaining resilient and distinctive neighborhoods, an exceptional quality of life for residents and enriching experience for visitors. Conserving both the tangible and intangible elements of our cultural heritage encourages a deeper awareness of our shared and multi-faceted history while facilitating sustainable economic development.

In recent years, the City's Board of Supervisors has recognized several cultural heritage districts that are distinguished by unique social and historical associations and living traditions, including the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (2013), the first formally designated cultural heritage district, Calle 24 (Veinticuatro) Latino Cultural District in the Mission neighborhood (2014), and the formal designation the SoMa Pilipinas – Filipino Cultural Heritage District (2016).

In 2015, the Board of Supervisors approved Ordinance No. 29-15 to establish a Legacy Business Registry, recognizing that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets to the City and encouraging their continued viability and success. In the same year, Local Measure J established the Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund to include those that have operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years, are at risk of displacement, and meet all other requirements of the Registry.



## Keeping People Moving As the City Grows

The Transportation Sustainability Program was developed to improve and expand upon San Francisco's transportation system to help accommodate the City's growth. The Transportation Sustainability Program is comprised of the following three components: Enhance Transportation to Support Growth (Invest), Modernize Environmental Review (Align), and Encourage Sustainable Travel (Shift).



Adopted in 2015, the Transportation Sustainability Fee requires new development to invest more in our transportation system to help address the impacts of growth. In 2016, the San Francisco Planning Commission adopted a resolution making San Francisco the first city in California to move forward with state-proposed guidelines that modernize the way City officials measure the transportation impacts of new development, allowing San Francisco to immediately implement changes to how it analyzes environmental impacts of development and transportation projects rather than wait for state adoption.

Signed into law in 2017, the Transportation Demand Management Program (TDM) requires developments to provide on-site amenities that support sustainable modes of transportation and reduce single-occupancy driving trips associated with new development.



## Photo Attributes

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Pg. 3: Viogel’s Survey of Yerba Buena, 1839 Eldredge, Zoeth Skinner. The Beginnings of San Francisco. 1912: San Francisco (sfgenealogy.com)

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Pg 5: Mayor Rolph at the groundbreaking for the City’s new City Hall, c. 1912.  
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Pg 6: Article in the San Francisco Chronicle, August 7  
Pg 6: Article in the San Francisco Chronicle, December 29, 1917, announcing the appointment of the first Planning Commission five years after voters approved the existence of such a board.  
Pg 6: City Engineer Michael O’Shaughnessy and Mayor James Rolph, October 1, 1927.  
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Pg 6: City Engineer Michael O’Shaughnessy  
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Pg 11: Picketers protesting against the Southern Freeway marching at City Hall, April 1961.  
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Pg 11: Aerial view of Embarcadero Freeway under construction with Golden Gate Bridge in the background, July 3, 1958.  
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Pg 11: One of the proposed routes for the un-built Golden Gate Freeway which would have connected the Embarcadero Freeway to the Golden Gate Bridge, 1966.  
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Pg 11: Map of some of the freeways proposed to have been built through San Francisco, 1948.  
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Pg 11: A 1966 design proposal for the un-built Panhandle Freeway intended to ameliorate the concerns of anti-freeway activists by placing the freeway partially underground.  
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Pg 12: Billboards at St. Francis Circle, c. 1953.  
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Pg 12: A flow chart describing the programing of the San Francisco Housing Simulation Model.  
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Pg 12: The console of an IBM 7094: the type of computer that the Housing Simulation Model was designed on.  
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Pg 12: The IBM 7090 computer at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 1960, one of the facilities where the Housing Simulation Model was likely run.  
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Pg 15: Map of ground floor uses in the 1984 Downtown Plan.  
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Pg 15: Image in the 1984 Downtown Plan of people in Justin Herman Plaza.  
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Pg 15: 7th and Irving, 1983.  
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## Planning Directors

Leon Deming Tilton  
August 1942 – August 1946

Thomas “Jack” Kent, Jr.  
September 1946 – June 1948

James “Jim” Redman McCarthy  
July 1948 – March 1949

Paul Oppermann  
April 1949 – March 1958

James “Jim” Redman McCarthy  
March 1958 – September 1966

Edward L. Murphy  
October 1966 – February 1967

Allan B. Jacobs  
February 1967 – October 1974

Edward L. Murphy  
October 1974 – January 1975

Dean Macris  
January 1975 – January 1976

Rai Yukio Okamoto  
May 1976 – February 1980

Dean Macris  
February 1980 – March 1992

Lucian “Lu” Blazej  
March 1992 – June 1996

Amit Ghosh  
June 1996 – November 1996

Gerald Green  
November 1996 – August 2003

Lawrence “Larry” Badiner (Acting Director)  
August 2003 – June 2004

Gerald Green  
June 2004 – October 2004

Dean Macris  
November 2004 – January 2008

John Rahaim  
January 2008 – Present

## Zoning Administrators

Clyde O. Fisher, Jr.  
1960 – 1966

Robert “Bob” Passmore  
1966 – 1967

R. Spencer Steele  
1967 – 1978

Robert “Bob” Passmore  
1979 – 1999

Mary Gallagher  
1999 – 2000

Lawrence “Larry” Badiner  
2000 – 2010

Scott Sanchez  
2010 – Present

## Mayor

Edwin M. Lee

## Board of Supervisors

London Breed, President  
Sandra Fewer  
Mark Farrell  
Aaron Peskin  
Katy Tang  
Jane Kim  
Norman Yee  
Jeff Sheehy  
Hillary Ronen  
Malia Cohen  
Ahsha Safai

## San Francisco Planning Commission, 2017

Rich Hillis, Commission President  
Dennis Richards, Commission Vice-President  
Rodney Fong  
Christine D. Johnson  
Joel Koppel  
Myrna Melgar  
Kathrin Moore

## Historic Preservation Commission, 2017

Andrew Wolfram, Commission President  
Aaron Jon Hyland, Commission Vice President  
Ellen Johnck  
Richard E. Johns  
Diane Matsuda  
Jonathan Pearlman

## San Francisco Planning Department Senior Management Team, 2017

John Rahaim, Planning Director  
Thomas DiSanto, Director of Administration  
Lisa Gibson, Director of Environmental Planning/  
Environmental Review Officer  
Jonas Ionin, Director of Commission Affairs  
Jeff Joslin, Director of Current Planning  
AnMarie Rodgers, Senior Policy Advisor  
Scott Sanchez, Zoning Administrator  
Daniel Sider, Senior Advisor for Special Projects  
Adam Varat, Acting Director of Citywide Planning

## Centennial Project Staff

John Rahaim, Director  
Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary  
AnMarie Rodgers, Senior Policy Advisor  
Gina Simi, Communications Manager  
and Project Manager  
Devin McCutcheon, Historian and Co-Author  
Candace SooHoo, Deputy Communications Manager

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