

upper market community workshop series
and design plan

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Community Workshop #1: Visioning
September 11th, 2007



INTRODUCTION

The Upper Market Community Workshop Series and Design Plan are intended to guide future development of Upper Market Street, generally between Castro Street and Octavia Streets. In this project, a series of community workshops will focus on developing the community's vision for the Upper Market Street corridor, with an eye to how upcoming development can contribute to that vision. The project will consist of a number of community workshops which will engage the community as a means of generating a common vision for the public realm of the corridor and for several of its key sites. The workshops are intended to elicit from the community recommended elements that can contribute to the focus area's identity, which may include land use recommendations such as retail uses and housing types; community improvements such as community services and support; and design/development suggestions, including preservation of historic character, and improvements to the public realm, that will help to express this identity. These elements will be formalized into a series of recommendations that convey the community's vision for the corridor, and provide a guide for development within the focus area.

MEETING FORMAT AND CONTENT

On September 11, 2007, approximately 150 community members convened for the first of the project's three community workshops. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss the community vision for the Upper Market area and discuss preliminary design strategies to achieve the community vision. The workshop was held from 6:30 PM to 9 PM at the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy.

Supervisor Bevan Dufty welcomed community members. Sarah Dennis, lead planner of the San Francisco Planning Department, followed up with a project introduction. Daniel Iacofano of Moore Iacofano Goltsman (MIG), Inc. provided an overview of the agenda, project and planning process, and introduced the project team, which included economist Jessica Zenk of Seifel Consulting, transportation planner Jeff Tumlin of Nelson Nygaard, and architectural historians Caitlin Harvey and Karin Sidwell of Page and Turnbull.

Anchi Mei, of MIG, presented a preliminary analysis of the Upper Market area's assets, issues, and opportunities. Following the presentation, Daniel Iacofano facilitated a large group discussion, in which workshop participants provided on the overall vision for the area, key assets, primary issues and opportunities for improvements. Mukul Malhotra, Lou Hexter and Anchi Mei, of MIG, graphically recorded the comments from the participants.

The workshop culminated in interactive, small group discussions, facilitated by MIG and San Francisco Planning staff, in which community members identified ideas and strategies to realize the community vision for the area around the categories of: streetscape and intersection improvements; transit and bike circulation, safety and amenities; public spaces and Harvey Milk Plaza; LGBT identity and urban design; youth needs; new development character; land use activities; identity and sense of place (e.g. historic preservation and public art); and other categories not arose in small group (e.g. safety, green design).

The small groups then reported back to the larger group, sharing the main ideas and building further on the community vision.

A reduction of the large wall graphic, with recorded comments from the workshop, is attached to the end of this summary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community participants offered many creative and thoughtful ideas for improving the future of their community. These recommendations fall under four main values of inclusivity, livability, connectivity, and quality. Below is a summary of the strategies the community suggested for achieving their vision for the Upper Market area.

A. INCLUSIVITY: Celebrate the many identities of the Upper Market area.

- Promote LGBT identity, culture and legacy while being inclusive of all adjacent neighborhoods.
- Embrace and integrate with adjoining neighborhoods, such as Dolores Mission, Eureka Valley and Mission.
- Redesign Harvey Milk Plaza as a great public space.
- Create places for youth.
- Provide opportunities for art and history in the public realm.

B. LIVABILITY: Encourage and support neighborhood needs.

- Create more social gathering spaces, such as pocket parks and plazas.
- Encourage and support small businesses.
- Support additional commercial services in the Upper Market area.
- Support community and cultural land uses.
- Address the problem of homelessness in the area.
- Encourage construction mitigation measures to protect public health.

C. CONNECTIVITY: Improve circulation, safety and amenities for all modes of travel.

- Improve sidewalks with widening, natural landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- Incorporate traffic-calming and pedestrian-oriented street improvements.
- Improve public transit services to meet current and future needs.
- Increase bike circulation, safety and amenities along Upper Market Street.
- Improve auto circulation network and consider creative parking strategies.

D. QUALITY: Promote and maintain quality design in public and private developments.

- Encourage new developments that have engaging building design elements that engage with the public realm.
- Encourage fine grain building form.
- Support allowable building heights if done well and in the right location.
- Create housing developments that provide diverse and flexible configurations for different ages and family sizes.
- Respect historic aspects of the area.
- Support affordable housing.
- Encourage creativity, diversity and green design in new architecture.
- Improve the Safeway site.
- Good financing and maintenance plans are essential for successful implementation.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The following section is a summary of comments made by participants during the workshop and in writing on the comment cards provided. The comments are organized under the following headings:

- I. STREETScape AND INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
- II. TRANSIT AND BIKE CIRCULATION, SAFETY AND AMENITIES
- III. PUBLIC SPACES AND HARVEY MILK PLAZA
- IV. LGBT IDENTITY
- V. YOUTH NEEDS
- VI. NEW DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER
- VII. LAND USE ACTIVITIES
- VIII. IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE
 - A. HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 - B. PUBLIC ART
- IX. OTHER
 - A. HOMELESSNESS
 - B. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
 - C. IMPLEMENTATION

I. STREETScape

ASSETS

Along the study area, there are some stretches of streetscape that are more pedestrian-friendly than others. These pedestrian-friendly stretches have good plantings, gathering spaces and commercial uses fronting the sidewalk. Active storefronts with doors and windows create a cozy streetscape environment. Different cafes and restaurants use the sidewalk by pulling out tables and chairs creating a seamless connection between inside and outside. All these features add up to create a lively streetscape experience.

ISSUES

However, there are also issues in the Upper Market corridor. Specific areas along the corridor have lackluster, vacant or underutilized developments that create a challenging walking experience. Double-parked cars and speeding are two major auto-related issues. Plantings are inconsistent along the corridor and there are insufficient sidewalk amenities along the street.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Install more natural landscaping into the streetscape.
2. Add sidewalk amenities, such as additional plantings, seating, signage, and interesting pavement materials.
3. Widen sidewalks to accommodate more sidewalk amenities and activities such as sidewalk cafes and street musicians.

II. CIRCULATION

ASSETS

The Upper Market corridor can be easily accessed since Market Street is a main arterial in the city well served by public transit. Upper Market also serves bicyclists with dedicated biking lanes along both sides of Market Street and important biking streets that intersect across Market Street.

ISSUES

However, there were several circulation concerns raised by workshop participants. Participants said that public transit needed improvements to service and facilities and that bike lanes are dangerous due to the impact of vehicular traffic. Additionally, people said cars drive too fast on Market Street, certain intersections were unsafe for both drivers and pedestrians, and there was a need to address parking supply.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Incorporate traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented street improvements.

2. Improve public transit services to meet current needs.
3. Increase bike circulation, safety and amenities along Upper Market Street.
4. Improve auto circulation network.
5. Consider creative parking strategies.

III. PUBLIC SPACES + HARVEY MILK PLAZA

ASSETS

There are a number of active public and private places, such as Castro Street and the sidewalk seating offered by businesses around Noe and 16th Streets (i.e. Café Flore, Harvest Ranch Market.)

ISSUES

There is strong community desire for a range of sizes and types of public spaces to gather as well as enjoy public social life. The area's largest formal public space, Harvey Milk Plaza, does not maximize its potential.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Create pocket parks and plazas for people to gather, relax and enjoy the public social life.
2. Redesign Harvey Milk Plaza to create a grand public space for the Castro area.

IV. LGBT IDENTITY

ASSETS

Upper Market has a strong presence, identity and sense of community. The community is passionate, active and well educated. The community is open to all lifestyles and very accepting of social diversity. This is a safe place for the LGBT community.

ISSUES

The LGBT community sees a need for more LGBT-oriented history and identity reflected in the area as well as LGBT-oriented art and community institutions in the area. Furthermore, workshop participants expressed a desire for housing affordability and flexible housing configurations to accommodate different household sizes and arrangements.

V. YOUTH NEEDS

ASSETS

The Upper Market area is a place for youth to hang out and feel safe. LYRIC and Larkin Street are community organizations that offer youth a place to hang out and receive services and support.

ISSUES

There is a need for more youth-friendly places to hang out and engage in recreational activities.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Create places for youth.
2. Supply recreational spaces geared for the youth.

VI. LAND USE ACTIVITIES

ASSETS

The Upper Market area has a large mix of land uses that greatly contributes to the area's livability. There are a number of small businesses that add to the area's fine-grain character and are well-supported by the local residents. The Castro area is an international tourist destination. A range of entertainment options takes place along the corridor.

ISSUES

While there are many commercial activities in the area, workshop participants listed many more services that they would like to see. They expressed concern for the existing small businesses and a need to continue support for them. There are a number of vacant and underutilized buildings and parking lots that create "dead spaces" along the street. Participants said there are, however, several undesirable land use activities, such as check cashing and gas stations that they would like to see replaced with other activities. Additionally, there was desire for more non-commercial activities, i.e. art and recreation.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Support additional commercial services in the Upper Market area.
2. Encourage and support small businesses.
3. Support community and cultural land uses.

VII. NEW DEVELOPMENT FORM AND CHARACTER

ASSETS

The Upper Market area has diverse range of built form and character. Some fine-grain blocks are stacked with narrow buildings without numerous building entrances and windows. Oftentimes, these blocks also have historic commercial façade elements, such as recessed doors and moldings on window frames, which add an interesting layer of architectural richness. The area's history as a streetcar suburb has left a strong legacy of mixed-use buildings that gives rise to many engaging ground floor commercial designs. A diverse palette of building colors and materials also give Upper Market developments an eclectic overall character.

ISSUES

The Upper Market area has a few challenges in terms of existing building form and character. There are several blocks where buildings have inactive building facades due to the presence of glazed windows and fencing or a lack of doors, windows and architectural detail. The presence of parking lots (primarily the Safeway parking lot) on Market Street form "holes" in the development edge that give character to the street and area. Workshop participants expressed concern over the quality of new developments and desire a high level of new development design quality. There was also some concern over new development creating additional gentrification in the area.

OPPORTUNITIES

Building Height and Massing

1. Support allowable building heights if done well and in the right location.
2. Encourage fine grain building form.

Building Design and Character

3. Encourage new developments that have engaging building design elements that engage with the public realm.
4. Create housing developments that provide diverse and flexible configurations for different ages and family sizes.
5. Respect historic aspects of the area.
6. Support affordable housing measures.
7. Encourage creativity and diversity in styles.
8. Create design review measures and incentives for quality design.
9. Promote green design.

Other Community Recommendations

10. Improve the Safeway site.
11. Encourage construction mitigation measures to protect public health.

VIII. IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE

ASSETS

There is indeed a unique identity to the Upper Market area. Participants likened the area to a “village”. Several natural features such as the street trees and views to surrounding topography are also key markers in the area’s identity. The Upper Market area is home to several different neighborhoods (such as Dolores Mission, Eureka Valley, Mission, Duboce Triangle) that with different identities and contribute overall to a diverse Upper Market overall environment.

ISSUES

Participants expressed a need for more creative features to be designed into the public realm as well as historical and LGBT elements to be highlighted.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Provide opportunities for public art.
2. Incorporate history into the public realm.

IX. OTHER

Below are two additional topics that community members raised as important issues to address in the Upper Market area.

OPPORTUNITY

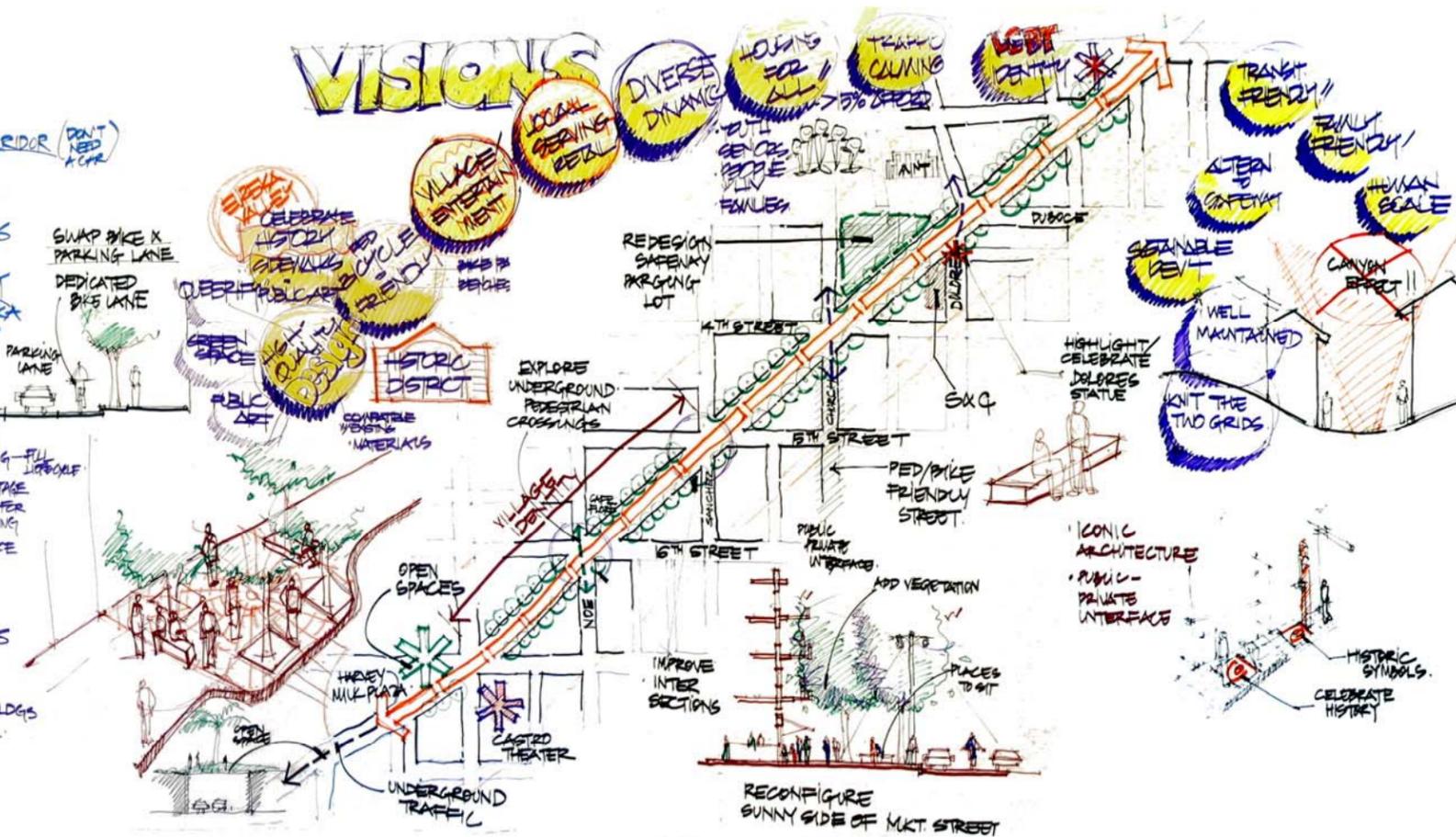
1. Address homelessness in that area.
2. Good financing and maintenance plans are essential for successful implementation.

ASSETS

- LIKE TOPOGRAPHY/VIEWS
"BOWL" EFFECT (BLDG HEIGHT)
 - VILLAGE/ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT/TOURIST
 - PAST GAINS IN AFF. HOUSING
 - THE WIGGLE/
CHURCH ST CONNECTION
 - POSSIBLE HISTORIC DISTRICT AT MISSION DELORES
 - HISTORY (INTO LANDSCAPE)
 - BUILD ON HARVEY MILK PL REDESIGN
- ## OPPORTUNITIES/IDEAS
- CROSSTOWN SUBWAY
 - KNIT NORTH/SOUTH SIDE OF STREET
 - 6-9 STORES
 - HISTORY/ART IN STREETScape
 - IMPROVE SERRANO SITE → OCTAVIA

- TRANSIT CORRIDOR (DON'T NEED A CAR)
- DIVERSITY IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES
- HISTORY OF EUREKA VALLEY
- VILLAGE IDENTITY
- DIVERSE HOUSING - FULL SPECTRUM
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SUNNYSIDE FOR ALL-PURPOSE DINING
- PERFORMANCE SPACE AT
- WEEKEND STREET CLOSURES
- LIGHTING & SAFETY
- NO BIG BOX BLDGS OR STRIP MALL

VISIONS



ISSUES

- RECONCILING DIFFERENT VISIONS
- DON'T OBLIVIOUS TO TOPOGRAHY, VIEWS
- VILLAGE DESTINATION
- HEIGHT EFFECT / CANYON EFFECT
- PARKING FOR RESIDENTS
- SERPENTINE SOIL / HEALTH EFFECTS FROM CONSTRUCTION
- CONCERN OVER QUALITY OF ARCHITECTURE
- FAST TRAFFIC, PEDESTRIAN UNSAFE
- LACK OF BENCHES / STREETScape AMENITIES
- FREE SUBSIDY for residences higher than 9 stories
- DIRTY
- EXPAND RADIUS OF DEVELOPMENT TO LOCAL RESIDENTS
- DIFFICULT FOR ELDERLY / HOUSING / "BABY BOOMER" TSUNAMI / PHYSICAL CONDITION
- HOMELESS
- MARKET/CASINO INTERSECTION IS NOT ATTRACTIVE
- "MINT MELD"