

Market & Octavia
Workshop 1/28/03

Transcription Note: We have transcribed these comments as accurately as possible. The audio quality was not as clear as we had hoped and some comments were difficult to decipher. Speakers have been identified by numbers only. John Billovits made staff comments.

Introduction JB

1st Speaker:

There is so much to comment on this plan. It is a very comprehensive. I have followed this since it began and you guys have done an excellent job. You addressed all the issues that I have heard people bring out and the plan really reflects that. It really builds on some of the strengths of this neighborhood and tries to kneed it back together again. I think it's really terrific. I agree with all the basic principals: the efforts to balance the transportation, and to restrict some of the parking in the neighborhood is really good. The effort to increase the density with infill is really good and provides affordable housing. So, I am very pleased and I wanted to say thank you very much... your efforts are really great. You have worked very hard, very diligently on this thoughtful plan. I appreciate it very much.

2*Speaker:

I think there are a lot of really exciting things about this plan. I appreciate the fact that we are even talking about my neighborhood as an area to improve on. My concern is specifically related to Brady Street, which is proposed to have a park and the general consensus to open up the alleys streets for more walking. Which in my head is a wonderful idea but, from what we have seen just in our neighborhood is now that we've closed off Stephenson it had become a haven for drug dealers are on bicycles. By closing off Stephenson Street we have seen a dramatic drop in crime.

One thing I would like to see a little more discussion of in the plan is what precautions or preparations are going to be done to these alleys to prepare them before they are opened. For example if they were open now, they are very poorly lit. I'm afraid if there isn't any preparation in the plan to clean them up or provide better lighting, you'll open them up and find whole area invaded by drug dealers from of 16th and Market Streets and many other areas. I'm not just picking one street.

I think the plan is great but, would like to see what policies are tackling the fact that we're living with criminals who are looking for lonely alleys to hide in.

JB Response: We expect the public improvements to be phased in conjunction with new housing and new development going into these areas. So we have a coordinated way to address some of these social crime problems that you're suffering from. The problems are more of a result of a lack of people and the low visibility on to those parking lots combined with the dead commercial spaces at night than the problems are a result of easy access. In all probability increased access and flow through would serve as a cleansing factor once things are done. I do, however, understand your concern.

3*Speaker:

In general I think its pretty good. I just have one thing, I'm a member the Mid-Market PAC and your plan has a little slice of our PAC area included. One of our goals and objectives is to grow more retail. This one block between 9th and 10th Street is in our PAC area. Although your just requiring retail on Market Street, we would like it on 9th and 10th street on that stretch of the street (in the PAC area). This is the only street that doesn't have retail already or that is at least partly commercial. It would be nice to have retail there because you guys, the Planning Department, are doing the zoning for us. We would like to have that done.

JB Response: We did pick selected places in the overall planning area where we enforce mandatory commercial/retail but it should be understood that the plan does allow commercial/ retail in the PAC area you addressed. In fact we encourage groundfloor retail where it isn't mandatory, (including on 9th and 10th Street). Mandatory ground-floor retail/ commercial is something new that we haven't yet had in the planning code. Perhaps we can put some stronger retail encouragement in the plan for that block.

3*Speaker Continue...: I am... .

4*Speaker:

I have been living here for 1 1/2years. I choose to move here because I wanted to have the European quality of life that San Francisco offers: living without having to have a car, and having a lifestyle that is convenient. I choose to live in the middle of San Francisco because everything is easy to get to. When I heard that you had this planning going on for this neighborhood I was interested and I wanted to start coming to these meetings. From what I have seen, I don't see anything I disagree with. I think overall you guys are doing a great job. To me it looks like you guys know what your doing and you care about what your doing. I think this meeting speaks for that because your listening to what we're saying. What I like to emphasize with is one thing that has a priority is the mass transit making mass transit a priority. We have talked about improving mass transit; personally I would like to see mass transit as a higher priority than car transit. Of course car transit is important. You have to have delivery trucks going into stores and ambulances going through. Sometimes, obviously, some people need cars one way or another. I think if there is going to be an emphasis on mass transit but, the ideas I heard about (for example of having more of a rail line right in the middle of major roads) that go beyond this neighborhood are things that I am happy to see discussed.

JB Response: I think you will find about reading more of this plan that it support's a long standing transit¹ first policy in San Francisco which, basically affirms alternatives to automobile including transit. The plan does this in a number of ways. Physically three separation of streets faced to provide transit dedicated lanes and preferential treatment as well as proposed new ways to analyze the systems of transportation so that is person based as opposed to vehicle based movement. Which preferences transit primarily...thank you.

5*Speaker:

I am new to this neighborhood moved here for the same reason the previous speaker moved here: I am also very excited by a lot of what's in the plan. My biggest point of concern is how will it all get implemented. You can have rezoning but ultimately you need to have people coming in and actually acknowledging the things your wanting to improve . I am not as clear on what the strategy is to have things actually happen on the ground as oppose to changing what's on the books.

JB Response: That is a bigger question and we have to respond over time. There is an implementation strategy in the back of the plan. It's a framework at this point in time. Some of the plan directives were able to implement at the Planning Department but many we are not able to because we don't fund these things. Our role is to come up with the big ideas- with the general plan policy framework and recommendations and sort of guide the decision making of the public and private enterprises over the next 20 year plus period of time. It becomes a framework of decision making. It then feeds into the budget decision making cycle for other city agencies that do these things physically and then feeds into ground potential etc... It's an incremental process including a number of different means of empowering the community is a big part of this plan.

This began as a community planning effort so its very important to us that you folks and everyone else in this community feels ownership of this plan and have a stake in it. It's strongest effect is to provide a clear guide map and clear standards that you in the community can use to take to the decision makers and insist that these ideas happen because the plan has formalized the ideas in an explicate way. In this regards, it's a tool to foster that communication.

6*Speaker:

I want to congratulate all the people who worked on this plan. I am very proud of it. I also wanted to second the last concern about the implementation. I represent a few different organizations today and I wanted to commit on public record to seeing this plan through: seeing it implemented, getting on the pieces funded, and making sure the other departments besides the planning department work with you. To make sure that DPT, DPW, and everyone else who takes over the plan after you actually implement it. I represent the Housing Action Coalition, SPUR and SF Bicycle Coalition and Transportation for a Livable City. All those groups are all strongly behind this plan and are committed to seeing it through to implementation.

7*Speaker :

I have been with this process from fairly early on and part of what I think is special about it is the Eight Elements. It really formulated some of the things that make for great neighborhood that I never thought about in that particular way. These eight elements about being able to get around, having neighborhood serving businesses, places to gather, etc. Now we can take these ideas as a template and use it other places too. A couple of things I like especially about this plan beside the Eight Elements; I mean if we implement it by tomorrow as it is, I think it would be great! There are always things we cannot **tinker** with. A couple of things I would like to call out in addition are having streets friendly to pedestrians are: windows and businesses on the ground floor not garages,

reducing the parking requirement in the zoning code so that you build housing without parking or without the one to one requirement, and allowing increased density within the current building envelopes so, that we can get more value out of what we already have without changing the character of the neighborhood. That's a great plan.

8*Speaker

Yes, I think it's a great plan and I want to thank John and the rest of the planning staff for the very hard work they have done. I particularly like complementing them on the process that we have gone through to get this plan. Thank them for coming to many community meetings- besides these meetings with Better Neighborhoods. They have come to so many neighborhood association meetings and recapped and recapped again and again for those people who were not able to attend the Better Neighborhood meetings. They have done an excellent job of getting the work out there and doing the outreach. It's been a day and night job for them for the last two years. I just want to thank you for your hard work and everything you have put into it.

JB This is getting embarrassing but keep the good comments going.

8*Speaker Continue....

Let me just add Part of the issue of the freeway parcels and getting the neighborhoods together that is another part that is density in this plan. But, looking at rebuilding all of those parcels with appropriate building to the scale of the neighborhood I really thank you for that much.

JB We would know like to focus on comments re: Land use, Height controls, Design Guidelines, and the Housing policies in plan. So, if people have comments that would be the good time for them. Parking that will be the next.

9*Speaker

Thank you to the Planning Commission and the Staff. I am a member of the Board of Directors for Rainbow Adult Community Housing. I would also like to introduce my partner Judy Max she is also a member of the Board of Directors for Rainbow Adult Community Housing otherwise known as RAC. Before I go anywhere I would like to take a moment on behalf of our organization to really thank the Planning Commission and it's staff for a long and thoughtful work that has gone through putting this plan together. And thank you for all the hard work that you have put in and also on behalf of our organization say that we support your mission and we think that our vision is in line with what your trying to do for the neighborhood. As you probably know, Rainbow Adult Community Housing's vision is to create a multi-cultural Senior Retirement Facility that is welcoming to Gay, Lesbians, Transgender and Bisexual community. We are working on our facility built on Parcels O &P, which is bond by O'Farrell and Octavia. What we would like to do tonight is address four points of concern that have come up from our end in terms of what we have planned. I would also like to mention real quickly that our founding members have been active members of the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association and have in fact been participating actively and have informed the Association of all the plans. The Association has voted to support the **RACH**

Facility to be on the side. The first point we would like to bring up is the small **lot pattern** that has been outlined in the plan and basically what we are sponsoring as an organization is coordinated development of parcels of O and P. As to oppose to requiring the 25ft wide lot that would limit the square footage of each one to about five thousand square feet. We are just afraid of by doing so it will eliminate the likes of the project such as RACH that we had envisioned. That would be there to support senior services particularly not just for our own residence but as well as the residence in the surrounding areas.

The second point that we wanted to bring up pertains to the use of Hickory Alley. Particularly the portion that Hickory Alley that is right under the freeway. We understand that the City, through the plan, would like to retain right away use for Hickory Alley and basically use it as a vehicle pathway. As you may know part of what we have created as part of RACH vision is to really create a green oasis for Hickory Alley as far as our plan. Which will provide access to not only to the residence and clients of Rainbow Community Housing but as well as to our neighbors in the area. We think this will provide a wonderful break in terms of the esthetics and beauty as well as people having a common area were they can congregate in and take advantage of the services that are available by RACH. I'll let Judy rap up.

10*Speaker

The other two points are related to our vision and to the plan. One is issue is the non-residential use of retail that is part of RACHS vision. The intent of this retail is to create services for residence of this community that promote wellness and healthy lifestyles that will also be available too neighborhood residence and the community at large. We envision a wellness center that has a swimming pool, physical therapy area a gym that will be open and available to members of the community in the surrounding area and in the City and also to have adult day health services. We would hope that there would be an expansion of the limits that are initially proposed to help accommodate that vision and that retail which will be serving the neighborhood and that community. Similarly with that retail use we have an envisioned a café some laundry services, services that would be necessary and to residents of the community and to Seniors who can walk a couple doors down and use some of the retail service but also available to neighborhood residents and community at large. So, for both of these reasons we are hoping that there is some what of an expansion of the limits of square footage for retail use and non-residential use because we think this will be serving the community as well. Lastly on the height issue in the plan 50ft is the height limit for buildings. We have in our preliminarily designs meet the 50ft limit, with the exception of Octavia Street, and in addition to meeting that space we also see that would help. One of the concerns of the neighborhood that O &P be consistent with the neighborhood. And if we can break up what this larger parcel with a larger building with different height limits some a little higher some a little lower that would help serve the community and this project as well. In summary, we are really supporting a effort to combine parcels because we think that for our vision for this creative land use a large scale design will help the community, the neighborhood, and will bring us to the 21st Century in a creative way.

JB Response: We will take a look at those issues and take it into consideration. If you're not familiar with the parcels O & P, those are the large parcels where the freeway touches down with ramps. These sites basically constitute whole City blocks and so there is a real challenge in terms of integrating those properties back into the fabric and character of the neighborhood. These sites are on the Western portion of the freeway parcels, which is clearly residential and small in scale. The plan represents a desire to try to integrate new development here into that fabric however, the plan is also encouraging a lot of the values that Rainbow Housing Project forwards in terms of the flexibility to accommodate services integrated into a mixed use living environment. Therefore, we are inclined to try to provide as much flexibility and to find as much middle ground as we can.

With that being said the plan takes a much larger perspective than looking at particular projects. We are looking at long-term urban design policies that apply throughout the plan area. However, we are providing flexibility. There are plenty of opportunities to apply for that flexibility throughout varies means to balance the merits of projects which means some trade-offs are available. Hopefully in this process we can find common ground to give that project a hearing at some point in time.

11* Speaker

One thing I like about the plan is how it ties land use and transportation. You sort of read the plan as a graph or a diagram of the transportation intensity. The proposal seeks to like increase in density along Market Street, which is very transit rich. The proposals for the Van Ness/ Market Street intersection was very high-density high-rise housing, which is supported by a lot of transit. It makes a lot of sense. Tied to this idea is a discussion about the relationship of parking and how it affects the affordability of housing and how it effects the way transportation works in the neighborhood. I think it's really good. I like the connection between transportation and the land use. One of the things I think about, as an architect, a lot of illustrations in the plan in terms of architecture are a little bit historical. There might be some illustrations that provide an example of some good modern architecture and good modern buildings-, which will still meet a lot of the principals of the plan. That's the only thing I would like to see changed.

I like how the plan gives back neighborhood and advocates for the infill lots the freeway lots to be built in keeping with the context of the neighborhood. Basically, the land use proposed by the plan is really good.

12*Speaker

I generally like the neighborhood plan where you walk down the neighborhood-shopping street and there are a lot of people on the street and activities along corridors with great neighborhoods. Hopefully that's what will develop here and create a great neighborhood that is transit-oriented. I like the idea of increasing the density along the transit corridors but I wonder if there are some complications that you might want to do over. You do have some areas that are proposed to have 30-40 story buildings. I can see the possible problems with the shadow and winds along those areas. Now if you work it out, without those negative things happening- ok. I see you have these podiums maybe that will get

around the problem but I can see that you might have to tone down some of those heights along the areas.

The other really big problem your going to have is appropriate parking, you might get shot at by a lot of people who insist that you have to have 2 for one parking or some ridiculous things like that. And as you try to implement some of these changes your going to encounter problems. You might want to start thinking of strategies for having to keep down so much of the opposition and the big shots. Otherwise, good work and keep it up.

JB Response: In terms of the high rise buildings there is only one place in the plan were they would be possible and they are actually allowed basically in the existing heights and that's around the VanNess and Market Area specifically and yes, we certainly initiate there ways of treating that wind and dealing with in fact there are working systems that would not allow that to happen if there were unacceptable levels of wind on the ground. In terms of the parking strategy, thanks for the heads up and the advice. It is I think our strategy to try and demonstrate a very sober reasoned case that's very straightforward, that achieves some pretty exciting goals but is also grounded and some basic geometry in function that we can demonstrate dispassionately and hopefully that will win the case.

13*Speaker:

I am a City Planning Consultant and an Alumni for the Planning Department and I am really grateful to see you all in this work it reminds me of the good all days at the Planning Department. This is a very comprehensive plan and getting into some good detail in a relatively small area keep up the good work. A couple of little fine toning aspects is that I am a supporter of the HAC the Housing Action Committee and a member of SPUR advocating higher density were its appropriate in transit rich areas. I would advocate being a little bolder in certain areas with Transit. For example where the existing heights are 50ft, we can try to get a five story building such as here this is listed as 55 feet which is a good idea. This will give you a nice tall generous retail and ground floor commercial and four floors. This will not be floors with eight-foot ceilings that make for very dark units. It would give you a chance to have a pattern 9' 1/2 feet tall. I would suggest in the areas for example the East West Streets or West of Van Ness and West of Franklin which you have here the largest streets and not the alleys which as you have 50 feet you might consider going to 55. Because this is a very good building with cross section of ground floor for commercial and four generous floors of housing above it.

Again flexibility on the parking is a good idea without requiring a one to one. The increase of the density this is a plan for the future we have to see this as a twenty-year plan. This is not going to be implemented next year but it's a great plan.

14*Speaker:

I have been participating in these meetings since there start and I am also a member of Castro Area Planning and Action. Our neighborhood is about a quarter of the planning area. I live near 15th and Church I want to say it's a really bold and great plan. I think one of things that is an issue for the entire Bay Area is the production of housing. Even though you go down Mission Bay and see a thousand units being built right now. It looks

like a lot of housing being built but we need much more and we can't get enough housing.

...and I think one of the great ways to do that...people are afraid of new housing but, I think these Better Neighborhood Plans show you can build a lot of new housing in existing neighborhoods and still preserve the character of the neighborhood. I just want to see along the transit corridor Market Street a little bit of pumping up the high limits-not excessive 50ft - 60ft in some locations is good.

I do support the flexibility on parking. I do think we're maxed-out on parking. I think that everyone can see just walking here, like other speakers, we came here without a car.

Architectural Guidelines, I think, are a little too restrictive. I think people in this neighborhood are sophisticated enough to accept some modern architecture that doesn't necessarily shock people or but, that is honest in its expression, yet is authentic to our time and is still appropriate in scale and detail to our neighborhood. I would like to second to Robinson.

JB Response: Thank you and I think the illustrations in our guidelines perhaps appear somewhat historical. We were trying to cope with some fundamental principals of building form and engagement in their surroundings that we'll be carrying through so, we will be working on some representations of that
Perhaps some different trees.

15*Speaker

I have several different comments on different aspects of this parcels oO and P. I was thinking you were trying to make several single family homes there and I was hoping that those could at least be two family if not four family houses. For small commercial spaces like a 100 to 500 sq. ft, a 12ft ceiling is out of scale and so requiring a 12ft ceiling for those commercial spaces, I think, would be obsessive.

What else can planning to help ensure those spaces will be neighborhood serving local businesses as opposed to chain stores and other things like upper part of Hayes street we have an excessive number of shoe stores. New Construction could be very high risk and neighborhood-serving businesses often don't have very much of a profit margin. How can that be encouraged?

On a different subject- parking. Desegregating the cost of parking from housing right is good but could cause some conflicts with the rent ordinance. If people have a parking space it gets bundled into their unit amenities. You will have to address how this would change the relationship with the rent ordinance. Another comment: you gave an example of redeveloping Safeway into mixed-use with housing. I thought that was a great idea and you gave a great example of how it could done in stages.

A question: how can you encourage taller more mixed-use development while preserving some of the great buildings. There is that one great block of buildings that's between Noe and Castro on the south side. I think more taller, mixed-use buildings would be good and how do you do that with sensitivity?

Another comment: you encourage that there be steps up for the first level of housing so that peoples windows are not right on the street were people can not look in. It feels nice and I like that and yet I wonder what's on that lower level if it's not a garage what is that lower level used for? Or is it just basement?

What happens if there is a major earthquake and a lot of buildings are destroyed? What kind of code of heights and density restrictions will come into effect.

JB Response: I don't think I'll be able to respond to that but, maybe I'll take on regarding the sensitivity on Market Street and how it's a general issue in the area. If your looking to creative new building forms then you are putting lower density, smaller buildings that are existing at risk because they become economically attractive places to go. We look at that incrementally as it happens over time and try to look for new development. It depends on how much pressure there is for growth. It is difficult to say right now.

On the last point which is the last one I will respond to: generally if there are earthquakes and the existing buildings go down in the natural disaster people are entitled to re-build as they were in their prior form, but up to current safety standards. That dynamic would still remain in place otherwise the basic controls we're recommending would be in effect. We will take into consideration everything else you said.

16 Speakers:

I would like to also compliment you on the plan. I think that the proposed zoning and building densities are very sensitively tuned to the potential of the neighborhood. I just wanted to mention that I feel that the densities and zoning will be successful if the other components of the plan are also paired with them. In other words, what I most admire about the plan is that you looked at the complicated relationships between building densities, transportation, housing policy and the other pieces of the puzzle. As we look towards the implementation we need to keep in mind that all those parts need to be paired and implemented together. These densities will work because you have a strong parking concept and proposal and because there is a transportation balance according to the plan. Thanks.

JB: Thanks.

17*Speaker:

I have several random thoughts that I hope are connected. There are for me anyway. This is only the second time I have heard this plan discussed and the first time in any type of detail. So I'm really late to this process but not to this neighborhood. I have lived on Brady Street from 25years and I have seen it go through a lot of changes but not through any kind of planning but through arson, gentrification, degentrification, regentrification and decay. Forgive me for being an optimistic or skeptic or skeptical.

I think after they build that high rise at Van Ness and Market and they find out that there is terrible wind problems a couple of block away from there, are they going to tear the building down? Or are they going to say "oops"? So, I hope that a lot of thought goes into the impact on me personally because I plan to live on Brady Street for another 25yrs. What impact is it going to have on the working class person like me and another thing since I'm new to this party I haven't really read the plan thoroughly but, I don't see the expression live-work loft being used and I'm wondering if it's been banned from the Planning Commission's vocabulary? Is it banned from San Franciscans vocabulary? Does it exist in other forms and your calling it something else not live-work loft?

JB: There are ways architectural ways in reducing the wind flow. Perhaps further performance standards can be put in place. The City does have standards now.

Public Question: When you plan something and it's a twenty year plan how much are you thinking of the impact it's going to have twenty years from now not one year from now or two years from now? Your getting complimented about the plan but maybe those exact same people fifteen years from now are going to be cursing you out

JB: I have an exit strategy. That's a very good point and we are using our best experience and judgment and the best expertise we can hire. We can garner the best reasoned judgment of people's experience in terms of trying to put this together to make it the best we can. The flip side is what happens if we don't do this? That scenario is pretty horrific so, we hope that it will work and we hope that it's all for the better.

The live-work question: there are no live-work uses in the districts that we are proposing. I believe the live-work use is an anomaly that doesn't fit into the structure of the code itself. In terms of the residential use it's not residential but it's industrial and commercial. That use is not part of the scheme or consideration. We are looking at mixed-use and commercial on the ground floor and in some places on the second floor's with residential above. We're not looking at integrated live-work here.

18*Speaker :

I wanted to address the point the woman made about 1st floor raised above street level so you have a basement that is not fully underground. In Manhattan a lot of those spaces are used as commercial space. It's not something for a business which you needs to attract a lot of walk by traffic. But, for example when I was a kid, one of my friends Dad was a carpenter. He and a couple of other peoples had a carpentry shop and it was basically underground. These spaces could be commercial space of some sort maybe, take some of the industry called PDR. Small ground floor spaces would distribute it around the neighborhood. At least for the stuff that doesn't smell to bad.

I'm wondering what you thought about the possibility of ground floor commercial or the side streets retail. Maybe that won't work but I like something ground floor or having some kind of commercial.

The last question I have was about Fox Plaza. When was that built? Was it before or after they started requiring wind studies as part of an environmental impact? A lot of people worry about increasing winds with larger buildings. Fox Plaza is a big offender and the State Insurance building is a big offender. If those guys had a wind study done and they said "everything was ok", we have a problem- unless you change the way you do wind studies. But if at the time there was no wind study done maybe the wind study will discover anything that will cause massive ground floor winds.

JB: My understanding is that wind studies were not done and certainly not done in the same fashion as the City's current standards. Our current standards were put into place in response to the problems that resulted from those buildings. One exception is the Federal Building, which the City didn't have any jurisdiction or control over. This building has created a big backlash with the City. The building form you are referring to with

partially underground uses is not very common in San Francisco. It doesn't happen in a number of places. In residential neighborhoods these spaces are usually residential units- sort of basement units. In shopping neighborhoods they are used to deal with steep slopes. In regards to what we're proposing in that space, I think we are really talking about two to three feet which essentially is a foundation opportunity in some buildings. They are often basement storage spaces or functional spaces. In general, someone had a question about retail in the alleyways, our plan is very flexible regarding where retail may go especially small-scale retail. Rather than requiring it extensively through the area, we are providing a lot of opportunity and will let the market and people's desires combine with opportunities to manifest themselves on the ground. That's part of our mechanism for trying to deal with the affordability question that came up earlier for the neighborhood serving retail- by having retail as a possibility in a lot of quirky little spaces that increases the opportunity and possibilities.

19*Speaker

I want to thank the team for having the courage to recommend that the freeway to be cut back to Bryant Street. I know they took on a lot of flack for that. Many of us worked on getting a portion of that down and that's exactly where we thought would be the best termination point. Bryant Street was just not politically possible at the time. So, having the freeway come over that part of Mission Street or that part of Hayes Valley was a terrible mistake. It just a poor land use to cut a swath of blight through all the communities underneath and on along the path of the freeway. All this just to move cars that are mostly driven by one person per car. It just doesn't make sense.

I feel really mad that the freeway is going to be re-built over the Mission and over an area of the City that is really beginning to revitalize. It is going to be a real struggle to keep that area in housing over the years (with affordable housing). To keep this area safe and keep a good livable neighborhood there will be difficult. We will have to wait another 30 years until another earthquake hits. Earthquakes have not always been bad for this city. Then another group of people will come along- maybe who live over there. They will say they don't want that freeway in their neighborhood anymore. We will just have to wait. I just wanted to say thank you for bringing this plan out and maybe it will make it easier for people in the future to get rid of the freeway in their neighborhood as well.

JB Response: Thank you and actually regarding the earthquake question, we have done many presentations in some national conferences there are lots of people who are very interested in this transition from freeway to a surface boulevard. Other places around the country are just beginning to look at this issue. They are actually envious of us and the fact that that we have an earthquake that damages these freeway structures to the point that you have to make a decision about where you want to reinvest your money. Other places they don't have the opportunity do that.

Thank you very much for comments on the land use controls, building guidelines, and housing. The next block of comments we would like to listen to are those addressing balancing transportation.

This plan is an implementation about the City's Transit First Policy which fosters public transit, cycling, and pedestrian friendliness as a way to get around. The plan seeks to improve public streets and open space systems to make them better civic spaces and

function as the glue in the open spaces for the community. People who have comment on those aspects of the plan please come forward.

20*Speaker

I guess I'm an over subscriber. Concerning the plan having wider sidewalks and having an emphasis on Transit First is great.

I have a couple of comments on transit, one on page traffic calming, and a question about the Van Ness/ South Van Ness Corridor. In general regards to getting more mass transit: let's use more buses and less fixed rail. Let's try to use the cheaper method of mass transit. On Hayes Street, how about considering a one-way middle lane that's used for buses only. This would be one way during rush hour traffic starting on Market Street going up to the park.

On Page Street your talking about traffic calming with a traffic circle in all the intersections. I think that I'm not sure that's the best way of all the possible traffic calming solutions for making it better for bicyclists. Right now the Upper Haight is talking about how to get traffic moving on Haight Street, which would mean cars being pushed over to Page Street. Then, being slowed down on Page Street. Try to figure out where your pulling down the web and where things connect. I just want to know more about that.

Finally, at one of the meetings we really had some wild and create ideas on how the South Van Ness Area could be totally reconfigured. It seems that idea has been dropped. Now, after a cursory look at the new plan, it looks like the status quo with trees. I'm wondering if we can get some of those creative ideas back.

JB Response: Regarding the South Van Ness scheme: more than a year ago we did have a design concept that looked at closing, actually vacating and closing, down two blocks of South Van Ness in the South of Market Area. We looked at creating a plaza space that was transit-only. There was a host of reasons why we abandoned that plan. Instead, the plan utilizes the boulevard strategy that has been proposed on Van Ness north of Market Street and continue the boulevard down onto South Van Ness. This is were they are talking about putting dedicated, transit-only lanes in the northern portion of Van Ness and bringing it down to South Van Ness. We felt like an urban boulevard environment would be a healthier and a better environment for the development area.

Speaker *21

I work as the Director of Operations with the SF Symphony I have been part of this Civic Center neighborhood for about almost 20yrs. I have seen the transition from when the freeway was up to when it came down. I have seen the Hayes Valley come back up and it's terrific.

I have volunteered to deliver some comments on behalf of the Symphony and the Opera and the Ballet. I wanted to start by applauding the Planning Department for bringing back these neighborhoods. Although we have a comment about parking. Pardon me if I refer to my script here. The Civic Center is also the Performing Arts Center for San Francisco and for the entire Bay Area in addition to the Symphony, Opera the Ballet we utilize two large facilities that would be Davis Symphony Hall that seats 2700 seats and the Opera

House that seats 3300 seats. There is also Hearbst Theater where San Francisco performances and other groups offer a variety of events that occur there as well. Plus, with the Asian Art Museum opening on March, there will be evening events as well. Soon, we also have the San Francisco Conservatory which we welcomed to our neighborhood. This will also have a number of performing spaces as well. There are a lot of performing arts venues which call this area their artistic home there are also a number of events at our Civic Auditorium: events of a rock and pop nature and some corporate convention gathering as well. We are concerned about the report's approach to traffic and parking which focuses a lot on work day peak periods. There are many evening and matinees where both Symphony Hall and the Opera House are simultaneously in use with sometimes over six thousand patrons. There are also hundreds of artists and musicians and employees who are on the site. We have conducted a parking survey of our crunch times and we will have a preliminary report in the near future. The preliminary results indicate that on street parking and off street parking are fully utilized. We support the policy of transit usage and encourage our patrons and employees to use transit. We feel that any proposal to remove existing off street or on street parking without replacement will have a severe and negative impact on the patrons of these facilities and on our organizations. We have thousands of patrons who attend our concerts from the North Bay, South Bay and the East Bay. These events frequently end late at night while many of our patrons do use public transit many don't, many others can't do so. We are also required to provide contract mandated union employee parking. This is for artists and musicians who work very late and or unusual hours with strange shifts either early in the morning or very late at night. A lot of them travel from and to work with very bulky instruments some of very fragile, some with very valuable instruments as well. These union artist musicians travel from points in the Bay Area. We had some discussions with Supervisor Chris Daly and some of these concerns were related to him at that meeting. He is interested and willing to work with us and to hear what those issues are and deal with them. Going forward with this plan without consideration for additional parking and replacement parking, I think, will seriously impact the arts organizations who call this area home and who are a big part of our city's reputation of being a national center for culture. We bring thousands of patrons to the area who also frequent the restaurants and the stores in the area. We want to make sure we encourage that to continue. Our group requests that we enter into a dialogue with the Planning Department in order to create a win-win situation. While this neighborhood can be revitalized while maintaining the vitality of the world class performing arts groups in the Civic Center. Thank you for listening and thank you for your consideration.

JB Response: Thank you. I believe we also did a parking survey on exactly on those issues on our own probably a year ago or a year and a half ago. The plan's approach of trying to optimize the utilization of existing resources is the first strategy looking for alternatives were we can. The plan says exactly the same thing. It says lets work together to see how we can do this in a healthy way and satisfy everybody's demands. So, we welcome that as well. Thank you.

22*Speaker:

I'm another City Planning Alumni also a former Chair at the Embarcadero Freeway Removal Committee which was also helped by Mother Nature. I do want to sound like a broken record and express my appreciation to John and the Staff and the consultants who worked on this because when you have an opportunity like Octavia Boulevard rebuilding it's wonderful: when you can seize that opportunity and do something positive and productive with it. Having said that, I am the consultant who is working the Ballet, Symphony and the Opera on these issues pertaining to parking, transit and transportation. I want to second the notion to get it to a dialogue about how the Civic Center Area and the performing arts organizations are dealt with in regards to transportation and parking. As was noted just between the symphony and the Opera there are six thousand seats and there's literally hundreds of employees. There are series of union contracts with the various artists and people who work there that do require parking within certain distances of the institutions. Obviously when your off work at midnight with instruments and things of that nature, parking is felt to be necessary. I've done so many of these surveys, a lot of parking survey focus on the afternoon and pick hours when people are going home, shoppers are out there, and that sort of thing that's going on. We have recently completed a parking survey of the greater vicinity of the symphony and opera house at eight o'clock at night when there are multiple performances going on. There are seventy evenings when both the Opera and the Symphony are going simultaneously. There are another seventeen matinees were their going simultaneously so you have eighty seven dates when these events are going on. Now, in addition to that there are another fifty odd dates when you have a full performance in one venue and a full dress rehearsal in the other venue so you end up with a one hundred and forty plus dates were you have either double performances or performances in full dress rehearsal. So, this is not an occasional thing that happens.

Now parking; we have not totally finished were we are with this but, I can tell you the obvious. At eight o'clock at night when you have double performances going on-street parking is over 100% utilized and off street parking is also at almost 100% utilized. You end up with a 99% utilization between the two. As it is also mentioned there are a lot of restaurants and businesses in this area that are not purely neighborhood serving. They are part of the of the performing arts/ culture thing going on. It is a matter of working out something that is practical, sensible, works with patrons, and works with the unions that are involved with all of this. I think that it takes more than just looking at traffic in the afternoon and it takes more than just talking about maybe we can manage parking a little bit better. the fact is that were taking about thousands of people and were taking about the support of our truly world class organizations. It is really important that we are able to maintain the kind of situation were people feel that they are able to come to San Francisco and they are able to attend these performing arts events. Once we have completed the report we need to get into a good dialog about creating a win-win situation because I can't imagine anyone who doesn't like all of this stuff in the plan. We can get these things accomplished in a way that is not damaging to the performing arts at the same time. Than that would be a good accomplishment for everyone and, I think that kind of win-win approach is really important.

23*Speaker:

Question how many parking spaces does Civic Center have? Garage spaces?

22*Speaker Cont...Response:

The Civic Center Garage has eight hundred twenty three spaces. The Performing Arts Garage has six hundred twenty six. Now if you ask the Director of The Parking Authority, the Performing Arts Garage, on an average when you have both performances full, they have an additional 50 cars in there as valet. The Civic Center Garage is generally over 100% full and that is the part of the problem. Especially with the Asian Museum coming on line and the Conservatory of Music beginning construction this summer. We are having an increase in what's going on.

JB Response:

Thank you and I think clearly the plan support those functions in the Civic Center area and is looking towards the same resolution. We look forward to sharing our information and trying to figure out what is really happening.

23*Speaker:

I work with the Recreation Department and am planner at this department. Our department wants to thank the Planning Department for taking a special look at open space and actually creating an element for that. And, in many instances we don't have the opportunity to have this special element like in other Planning Department documents.

I just wanted to briefly comment particularly on implementation. Our department would encourage the creation of these additional open spaces, particularly there are two parks identified our specific department may work with DPW, Planning Department and the Building Department. One of our department's concerns is it can be easier to get support and money for the acquisition and for capital improvements in the construction of a park. One of the ongoing problems our department faces, particularly years like this when we have budget cuts and long term maintenance. I hope to work with the Planning Department in looking at specific strategies for maintenance of those particular facilities are being identified and also for security because that seems to be one of the paramount issues that our department faces. Particularly in these areas in some of these inner blocks where visibility may not be apparent. The other idea I would like to share and work with the Planning Department is also looking at some sort of funding criteria for ongoing maintenance on some sort of assessment. Looking for creative ideas to make sure that these urban open spaces are actually an asset to the community. The other comment I would like to add particularly on the side South of Market Street is the need for active recreation area.

Within the General Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Element has designated this particular area as a high need area, particularly for active recreation such as a play area, play ground equipment, or things that create active, open space. I would like to see the plan encourage that as well-looking at places were we can place those type of uses.

JB: Thank you and for coming up from Recreation and Park Department tonight. The plan is a policy document. A lot of initiatives are some what problematic and it's a judgment call in terms of how far to take something- in say implementation and funding strategies for an individual open space. How can we alter that in the plan or that this is

the appropriate place or how those things happen down the road but, I do look forward to working with you on that...thank you.

24*Speaker:

The one thing I like about the plan is that it actually does address and supports our transit first policy. Often times you find the City Departments do have the transit first but, then they implement policies that are contradictory. So, this is the first time I have seen support for this policy and I applaud it. Also, I think the plan is creative in terms of pedestrian and bicycle safety. I like a lot of what your proposing for that. The sidewalk improvements are great.

I suggest you look at is Fell and Oak Streets. They are really traffic sewers that flow tremendous amounts of traffic through residential neighborhoods. I think that we should look at ways to return those streets to two-way streets. I think we should make those streets more residential in character.

Also, the living streets proposals for the alleys are excellent. I just spent five months in Europe and I saw a lot of living streets. They are pretty simple and they work very well. I think they would work great on the alleys in the neighborhoods. We have to try ways to get some built so people can actually see how wonderful they are.

The connection between the Octavia and Valencia is good in the north-bound direction, but in the south-bound direction it really needs some work. I would like to see more study on south-bound Octavia- from the Octavia Market intersection through Valencia Street. Some of the South of Market Streets are really horrendous for bicycling. The plan addresses the Howard South, Van Ness ,Duboce intersection, where a bicyclist was killed a couple of years ago. I think a study of that intersection needs to be done. To figure out how a bicyclist can go through that intersection without getting run over a car that is getting on the freeway. Mission and Duboce is hideous street for bicyclists, particularly on Mission at Otis. Bicyclists going westbound are forced to merge with cars coming off the freeway. There is a lot of space that is not being used in that right-of-way, it could be used as a bike lane. Eastbound from Duboce on to Division past of Mission is also a nightmare because you have all the traffic trying to turn right onto the on-ramp. On South Van Ness, a bicyclist has to merge through all the traffic in order to continue straight. I do hope you can take a look at these things more carefully.

JB Response: Thank you

25*Speaker:

I wanted to applaud both the proposal and the plan to drop parking minimums in the project area. I hope it's the start for a citywide drop parking minimums. There is no reason for building parking in new developments if people don't need cars. In such a transit-rich, walkable area as Hayes Valley it makes sense not to own a car. We also wanted thank you mentioning City Car Share in the document. In less than two years we have two thousand people sharing cars. In response to the Performing Arts folks, if we can get most of the residence to not own a car or share a car, we can have more of the on-street parking for some of our visitors who are not so lucky to live in a rich transit area. I wanted to piggy-back on what Robin said about bicycling. I spoke at a Market Street study that is going on right now or just starting. I got back from Amsterdam where 40%

of the trips are by bicycle. I realized one of the main reasons is not just because its bike lanes, but also there is separation- your not with the cars. There is a barrier between the bikes and the cars. Maybe this would be a bold proposal but, we can have a separated bike path. Eventually we can get downtown.

JB Response: Thank you, if we can be brief.

26*Speaker:

I wanted to comment on one idea two connecting ideas. I like the idea about getting rid of the parking requirement I think in general that's a fantastic idea. I also respect the comments made by the performing arts people that there needs to be some parking for them. I think people coming from different places just don't know how to use BART I think we get a lot of tourist there is truth that a lot of people come to see the performing arts they should have the parking available. The second point is regarding wheel transit I would like to see rail transit for several reasons one it's just more comfortable it takes you there faster than buses. If we want to get people out of their cars and something mass transit a rail is more of an attractive way to do that. Based on cost it is a concern that needs to be addressed. But, I think that I understand that once you have a rail system in place it's cheaper to operate than a bus system. I support more safe bike lanes things like that I also support having different tracks as it was suggested I think it's a fantastic idea. The situation I'm in is both my wife and I have bicycles that are just taking up space we never use them because we live in this neighborhood that is centrally located were in a place were we have to go through a lot of traffic to get to a park so, to have separate bike lanes and separate trails I would strongly support that.

JB: Thank you

27*Speaker:

I live on Brady Street. This is for the Performing Arts representative, I understand what is proposed and I respect your concern. On Brady Street I live with four parking lots that are frequently used by patrons going to Civic Center Area. I don't think replacing those lots somewhere else is the answer. The open parking lots lead to a tremendous amount of crime that effects me and my neighbors everyday: day and night. The suggestions I would proposed instead of replacing those parking lots or other parking that is lost in the proposed plan, would be to encourage the use of taxi's; to have the city reimburse the employees of the Civic Center Area for using public transit, taxis, car pooling, or buses.

There are several companies that bus their employees to public transit. The City Car Share is a wonderful idea. I understand that it is an uphill battle to get people to understand that they don't need to drive in their personal vehicle to get to the Symphony and the Opera. I lived in New York City for four years and was a stagehand and I know how it is to lug all my equipment. But, in Manhattan they have been doing it for years and I know its possible. I hope my suggestions prevent open lots and all the crime that's affiliated with that.

JB: Thank you and we hope to find solutions for all of that.

28*Speaker:

I again think it's a great plan and I support the reduction of on-street parking, or the elimination of on-street parking actually. I want to address the transit issue along on Market Street where I live near. Especially where we can build a lot more housing which would be created with no parking. This would be great but it will increase the number of commuters. We have to address the need to expand capacity on the subway, particularly at Church and Market and where we might want to explore a new entrance to the subway.

Also, on the surface it is a difficult environment for pedestrians I know that John and AnMarie came to one of the planning workshops that we sponsored last year in the Castro.

Regarding the Performance Arts organizations and their needs, I think they have real particular needs I hope they understand this neighborhood is looking outside the envelope and I do hope they do too. We can have great art and we can get a lot of people to use mass transit. We need to increase the use of transit in the neighborhood.

29*Speaker:

I like to reiterate what people have said. I think the success of this plan really does depend on the City making a genuine long-term commitment to transit. It does need to be a citywide commitment. I do think that the point the Performance Arts people have made illustrates how important it is you take the parking needs into consideration but, I think they need to make a priority getting transit a real option for patrons and employees who work there. It sounds as if they want to preserve parking but, I didn't hear what I wanted to hear from them: about seriously looking at ways to get people to come via transit.

JB: The plan does make the point that transit improvements are key crucial. Recognizing that this area is the hub for virtually the majority of the surface and underground transit.

30*Speaker :

I live three blocks from here. I just mailed a comment form in today. I am afraid to be a contraire of what other people have said. I live close to the opera but, I would still drive, I don't want to be out that late at night with my instrument. Three weeks ago my colleague was mugged in front of the opera and I think a lot of my colleagues drive because of what happened. Public transit is not possible and the Opera House does not compensate the employees. Everything that has been said by the representatives I would have to agree with. It's not just the Performing Arts but it's the city government around Civic Center. Housing units will compete for parking much more when the parking lots will be replaced.

I live on Herman Street between Buchanan and Laguna and that is also a traffic sewer. It's the only street going east-west that crosses on Market Street for a lot of periods everyday that block is stuck. It's gotten so bad people are going onto the sidewalk. Trees

our in front of our buildings have been knocked down. Is the traffic calming suppose to extend on Herman Street going to be continued here? If it is great, ...if it isn't please consider it.

JB: Thank you very much for your comments. The first point I like to make is the illustration between Hermann and Steiner was specifically given as an example not a proposal. The proposal is for the larger area of Hermann Street. We are looking at transit preferential treatment and parking reductions. There is an impression that means no parking or no cars. That's not the case. We are trying to balance the situation of our assessment and projections into the future. It's showing that if we continue this sort of development on a car-based structure that it will not work over time. Our long term strategy is to try to take a different approach that provides for a variety of means to get around. So, that we are less dependent on cars and in return will actually be making car use more functional.

It has implications for the first issue to be raised, which was caring a valuable instrument on the street, in the middle of the night, and walking around Civic Center. Our hope is that as time goes on and this plan is incrementally developed that there will be more people on the street and the streets will feel like a safer place to for you to walk and maybe won't be quite so scary. That's one way to think about how we get there in the interim. So, very thoughtful comments. Thank you.

31*Speaker:

I would like to see more California native plants and trees use we don't need Italian Cypress. As dearly as we like the palm trees on Embarcadero and Dolores lets use other trees in other places. While I support increase density in San Francisco, we do need to preserve open space in California to preserve our resources. The burden of where housing goes has got to be shared more broadly so, while this plan talks about the Octavia Boulevard in the back of the plan it talks about the CAP. As long we go by where the transit rich corridors are, we are going to build more housing and the east side of the City is going to be more and more dense and at some point we have to address the west side of the city. Thank you.

JB: Thank you. The burden of housing is under consideration. We are looking at housing as an opportunity in this sort of setting. Once we can create a building form and support it with public space then additional housing is a benefit that feeds in cycle. There is a San Francisco tradition of a density as a positive character of living.

32* Speaker:

Question: did you look at possibly having a zero minimum as far as parking to unit ratio? As it goes we have no maximum? We could probably have a lower maximum here making it more restrictive

JB: We actually do recommend parking maximum in conjunction with the minimum so they vary by district. Basically, with the intensity and the density. With the most intense areas we have a maximum- with a quarter of the space per unit and they can be bumped

up with an extra quarter with conditional use. So, with a conditional use they would vary from one half a space to one space but pretty much less than 1:1 to create some auto ownership housing. With the Page Street traffic circles is it possible to work in conjunction with someone like SLUG: the San Francisco Urban Gardeners to create those circles as a public space. Currently, in San Francisco it is a very difficult to obtain a small garden plot, sometimes the waiting list is three years long. Maintenance is an issue. Written comments are always welcome e-mail comments etc.

33*Speaker:

Having lived near the Caltrans right of way lot for many years and dealing with all the problems with crime that have been there and the difficulties in finding out who is responsible for which parking lot and then getting in touch with them. I'm concerned about the remaining rights-of-way and parking lots that will be adjacent to this freeway South of Market. I know it has not been determined yet weather they will be playgrounds or gardens or what. I think a policy is called for here. That causes the people who are leasing this land to take responsibility for this area. It would be worth it to look into the possibility to have a license to operate one of these lots. Then if the people who operate it don't secure the lot and allow crime to take over then the person who has the license would get a stiff fine for each infraction every time police found homeless or prostitutes taking their Johns there. I think that is the only way we are going to get the people who own this lots to take responsibility for these areas. This a breeding place for crime I would like to have people licensed for the lots so police can fine them for infractions.

JB: Closing comments.