



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

To: Local Media
From: John Rahaim, Planning Director, 558-6411
Contact Persons:
John Rahaim, Planning Director, 558-6411
David Alumbaugh, Acting Director of Citywide Planning, 558-6601
Joshua Switzky, Project Manager and Lead Planner, 575-6815

Date: Thursday, November 19, 2009
Sent by: Email; on Web site at www.sfgov.org/planning

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DRAFT TRANSIT CENTER DISTRICT PLAN RELEASED FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

On Thursday, November 19, the San Francisco Planning Department will release the Transit Center District Plan Draft for Public Review at the regularly scheduled meeting of the San Francisco Planning Commission. The Plan updates a major element of the City's renowned Downtown Plan, adopted in 1985, that envisioned the area around the Transbay Terminal as the core of the 21st century downtown.

The overarching premise of the Transit Center District Plan is to continue the concentration of future growth where it is most responsible and productive to do so from a local and regional perspective—in proximity to San Francisco's greatest concentration of public transit service. The Plan balances increased density in the heart of downtown with the principles of good place-making that are essential to maintaining and enhancing the distinctive qualities of downtown San Francisco.

Some of the key recommendations of the draft Plan include:

- Increase capacity to help accommodate San Francisco's share of job growth for the next 25 years by eliminating density caps and increasing some height limits above the current 550-foot maximum in the area around the new Transbay Transit Center.
- Create gracious public spaces and accommodate higher pedestrian volumes by widening sidewalks and adding substantial amenities and infrastructure, such as seating, landscaping, kiosks, and bicycle parking.
- Create a new plaza at the northeast corner of Howard and 2nd Streets and support the creation of a park on the 5.5-acre roof of the Transit Center.
- Manage travel demand and reduce auto traffic to facilitate growth by limiting increases in parking, providing incentives, and pursuing congestion pricing if necessary.
- Expand the existing New Montgomery-2nd Street Conservation District to preserve numerous historic resources, as well as recommend protection of many additional individual buildings.

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

- Pursue the creation of district-based resource systems to reduce consumption of energy and water by new development.
- Consider the implementation of multiple new funding mechanisms to generate funds from new development for the Transit Center and other necessary infrastructure and improvements to support growth, including a Mello-Roos special tax district and new impact fees.

“This comprehensive plan is one of the lynchpins of the City’s future growth – one that is based in sustainability and channeling growth around major investments in public transit,” said Mayor Gavin Newsom. “The vitality and continued growth of downtown San Francisco is essential to the health and economy of the City and the sustainability of the region. This plan takes a very comprehensive approach to sustainability, looking at everything from land use to transportation patterns to energy systems in order to reduce the ecological footprint of growth.”

John Rahaim, the Planning Director, added, “The Downtown Plan has created a vital and unique downtown for the heart of the region. The Downtown has added over 20 million square feet of office space, hotels and thousands of housing units since the 1985 Downtown Plan. This growth was possible due to excellent transit, resulting in little appreciable increase in auto congestion on downtown streets. Downtown is more livable and enjoyable today than in 1985. This plan will continue this tradition of success, to create a dynamic district appropriate to the multi-billion dollar public infrastructure investment of the Transit Center Project. We look forward to hearing comments from the Planning Commission and the public in the coming months.”

This Draft Plan document is the culmination of two years’ work led by the Planning Department, with participation from the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, many other City and local agencies, and a team of consultants that included experts in urban design, economics, transportation, and historic preservation. The process included four well-attended major public workshops and numerous regular discussions and updates with the Redevelopment Agency’s Transbay Redevelopment Project Citizen’s Advisory Committee.

The item on Thursday’s Commission agenda is to announce the publication of the draft Plan for Public Review and to initiate the next phase of public review. The Commission will not take action at this hearing and is not expected to discuss the content of the Plan. Additional public discussions and hearings will follow throughout 2010. Adoption hearings are expected in late 2010. Interested members of the public wishing to review the Plan are encouraged to download it from the Department’s website (<http://transitcenter.sfplanning.org>). A CD with the plan can be obtained and printed copies can be purchased at the Department’s Planning Information Counter at 1660 Mission Street, 1st Floor. The Plan can also be viewed at the Planning Department offices or the San Francisco Public Library. Comments on the plan can be submitted via email to Joshua Switzky (joshua.switzky@sfgov.org) or to the Planning Department via mail.

TRANSIT CENTER DISTRICT PLAN FACT SHEET

- The Plan's primary recommendations include:
 1. Rezone the area around the new Transbay Transit Center to increase capacity to accommodate San Francisco's share of job growth for the next 25 years. Eliminate density caps in the plan area.
 2. Selectively increase allowed height limits around the Transit Center to permit a very limited number of buildings taller than the current 550-foot height limits to create a "crown" at the core of the downtown and reinforce the center of the downtown at its public transit hub. The Plan encourages a landmark building of up to 1,000 feet in height (the "Transit Tower") in front of the Transit Center at 1st and Mission Streets.

The Plan would allow over 9 million square feet of new space, of which two-thirds is anticipated to be office space along with substantial amounts of housing, hotel rooms, and retail. This represents an increase of about 50% in the zoned building capacity for the area.

3. Transform the streets in the district to create gracious public spaces and to accommodate higher pedestrian volumes by widening sidewalks and adding substantial amenities and infrastructure, such as seating, landscaping, kiosks, and bicycle parking. Add signalized mid-block crosswalks and create through-block pedestrian paths. The necessary sidewalk widening will likely be accomplished through reductions in on-street parking and, in some cases, traffic lanes.
4. Increase the amount of public open space in the area, including the creation of a new plaza at the northeast corner of Howard and 2nd Streets (where buildings must be demolished for the rail extension) and support for the creation of a park on the rooftop of the Transit Center.
5. Improve the efficiency and flow of transit in the area by expanding the amount of dedicated transit lanes, and designing all transit lanes to be self-enforcing. Further analyze circulation changes to improve transit and pedestrian movement, such as closure of Mission Street to autos in front of the Transit Center.
6. Comprehensively manage transportation demand and reduce auto traffic in order to facilitate growth in the area through the regulation of the quantity and pricing of parking, the provision of commute incentives, the coordination of loading activities, and potentially the implementation of congestion pricing.
7. Expand the existing New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District along Mission and Natoma Streets to preserve numerous historic resources, as well as recommend protection of many additional individual buildings, including four recommended as City Landmarks.
8. Pursue the creation of district-based sustainable resource systems to reduce consumption of energy and water by new development, including systems of Combined Heat & Power and Non-Potable Water.

9. Consider the implementation of multiple new funding mechanisms to generate funds from new development for necessary infrastructure and improvements to support growth, including a Mello-Roos special tax district and new impact fees. The Mello Roos district alone has the potential to generate over \$260 million over the estimated 25 years of buildout in the Plan area.
- The public review period for the draft Plan will continue well into 2010 through publication and completion of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the Plan. The draft EIR is anticipated for publication in mid-2010 with adoption hearings on the Plan at the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in the last quarter of 2010. Following adoption of the Plan, buildings seeking to utilize the new zoning, including the Transit Tower, could seek entitlements.
 - The Plan complements and is consistent with the adopted Transbay Redevelopment Plan, which will transform several blighted former Embarcadero Freeway parcels along Folsom Street into a new neighborhood with over 2,700 new housing units, 35 percent of which will be affordable, and new open space. This residential development, to be built under the auspices of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, is in addition to the 9 million square feet of (mostly commercial) development that would be allowed under the proposed Transit Center District Plan.
 - At the core of the Transit Center District Plan area is the Transit Center itself, a project being constructed and managed under the jurisdiction of the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA), comprised of representatives of the City and County of San Francisco, AC Transit, and the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain). The Transit Center District Plan was coordinated with the TJPA. The Transbay Transit Center Project is a roughly four-billion dollar public project, now underway, that includes a new multi-modal transit station on the site of the current Transbay Terminal and a rail extension from Fourth and King Streets to the Transit Center to serve Caltrain and California High Speed Rail.