



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

What is the Transit Center District Plan

The Transit Center District Plan, now underway in the Planning Department, will build upon the 1985 Downtown Plan policy of extending the city's urban core to the Transbay transit area. This new project will analyze land use, urban form, trends, and growth in the area since 1985. A public planning process will be established to participate in the review of such factors as circulation, historic resources, wind, shadow, urban form, growth trends, and emerging recommendations for modifying current rules governing development.

The study will produce new planning policies and controls for land use, urban form, building design, and public realm improvements for private properties as well as for properties owned or to be owned by the Transbay Joint Powers Authority in and around the adopted Transbay Redevelopment Project Area and Transbay Transit Center. It will also propose a mechanism for directing some financial benefits from any increases in development opportunity to the Transit Center program and other public infrastructure and amenities in the area. This effort will result in a comprehensive plan and implementing mechanisms, including General Plan, Planning Code and Zoning Map amendments as necessary. The Department intends to propose a draft plan and implementing ordinances for approval in early 2009.

Within the Transit Center District area (the "Plan Area") preliminarily defined by Market, Main, Tehama, and New Montgomery Streets, the Transit Center District Plan will achieve the following:

- Evaluate the Plan Area's potential for development;
- Establish new height and bulk limits and other zoning regulations governing urban form;
- Create appropriate land use controls to capitalize on major transit investment in the downtown core;
- Set forth guidelines and standards to achieve a high-quality public realm and enhanced public amenities;
- Establish mechanisms, including funding strategies, by which development will help support transit and other public infrastructure improvements.

More information about the Transit Center District Plan is available online at http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/planning/City_Design_Group/CDG_transit_center.htm.

Individual Projects in the Area

The Planning Department will prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the Transit Center District Plan. This document will contain the cumulative environmental impact analysis of development under the proposed Plan through the year 2030. Project sponsors in the Plan Area and its vicinity will be able to use this analysis to help satisfy the CEQA review requirements for their individual projects. The availability of the Plan-level EIR will:

- Facilitate and potentially streamline the timeline and scope of CEQA review and land use entitlements for individual projects;

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- Provide an accurate “big picture” of future development, which will avoid overstatement of environmental impacts from any individual project; and
- Serve as the basis for the cumulative impact analysis necessary for individual project environmental review under CEQA.

In the absence of CEQA review that accounts for cumulative impacts of the Transit Center District Plan, it is unlikely that any proposed development project could proceed independently of the Transit Center District Plan EIR. However, once the necessary information in the Plan EIR is finalized, the Department anticipates the following:

For project proposals that are consistent with the current zoning (June 2007), project sponsors likely will be able to rely on the Transit Center District Plan cumulative environmental analysis and background studies which could be incorporated into their own project-specific environmental review. Project entitlements for projects consistent with current zoning could proceed in advance of adoption of the Transit Center District Plan rezoning once their project-specific environmental clearance is obtained.

Some proposed projects in the area may be of insufficient size to contribute substantially to the amount of future cumulative development in the area. Those projects may be able to proceed with their individual environmental review separate from the larger Transit Center District Plan EIR process. The Department will review each proposed project on a case-by-case basis and will determine whether or not the project’s environmental review could proceed in this manner.

Proposed projects in the Plan Area that are not consistent with the current zoning are unlikely to be considered for development approval unless and until the Board of Supervisors approves the Transit Center District Plan rezoning. Projects that are consistent with the Transit Center District Plan rezoning will be able to take advantage of the Transit Center District Plan environmental analysis to proceed expeditiously with individual project-specific environmental review.

Funding Participation

Because all proposed projects in the Plan Area will be able to take advantage of the Planning Department’s area-wide environmental analysis, the Department expects that some portion of the environmental review fees and costs for individual projects will be used to reimburse the Department's costs for the Transit Center District EIR.

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