

EASTERN NEIGHBORHOODS

Community Workshop Series



EAST SoMa PLAN

COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHOP 1



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

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FEBRUARY 8, 2006

Background

Eastern Neighborhoods Community Planning Process in the South of Market

The Eastern Neighborhoods Community Planning Process began in January 2002. The primary goal of the effort was, initially, to develop new zoning controls for industrially-zoned lands in the Mission, SoMa, Showplace/Potrero, and Bayview/Hunters Point in order to respond to land use conflicts in these neighborhoods. In the South of Market there were a total of five community workshops in which participants articulated their goals for the neighborhood, determined how these goals would apply to zoning and land use decisions, and finally refined the zoning alternatives. These zoning alternatives as well as height alternatives were collected in the report titled “Community Planning in the Eastern Neighborhoods: Rezoning Options Workbook” (hereafter, “Rezoning Workbook”), and were then presented to the City Planning Commission (CPC) on March 3, 2003.

In the fall of 2003 the CPC initiated environmental review based on these zoning alternatives. Subsequently, the CPC adopted policies (Resolution 16727, Eastern Neighborhood Policies), and is now considering interim controls to stabilize the area while the environmental review is completed and permanent controls are adopted.

The Eastern Neighborhoods planning process has since been expanded to address issues of open space, urban design, and transportation. These are discussed below. The Department looks forward to refining these ideas based on the community’s input and refining other plan elements such as housing and the need for community facilities at subsequent workshops.

Boundary Changes in SoMa since the Rezoning Workbook

Since the release of the Rezoning Workbook, the area covered by the Eastern Neighborhoods planning process has changed in the South of Market. The areas that generally extend from between Division and 7th from Mission to Bryant, as well as between 7th and 4th from Bryant to Townsend are no longer part of the Eastern Neighborhoods Community Planning process. In September 2003 the Planning Department participated in a Town Hall meeting to respond to community input and to get feedback on the workbook. Residents of the western South of Market area were concerned with the process and in October 2003 the Planning Commission removed the western South of Market area from the Eastern Neighborhoods planning process and from the environmental review. The boundary was further revised and a few additional parcels were removed from the area now called the East SoMa in May 2004. The area removed, now called West SoMa, is subject to a separate planning process. The East SoMa now primarily consists of the South of Market Redevelopment area and the parcels east of 4th Street and south of Folsom Street.

Where We Are in the Process and What This Paper Represents

Since the release of the Rezoning Workbook setting out the general community goals, a range of options for new zoning controls, and initial height concepts, the Planning Department has been working with the community and doing analysis of its own to further articulate and refine these concepts. The Department also has done additional work to address what it believes is the full range of planning issues to be addressed in the Eastern Neighborhoods community planning process.

This paper presents the Department's latest proposals about how to move forward with and to complete the planning for the Eastern Neighborhoods. It includes:

- Community planning goals. These goals were established by the community in workshops in 2002 and were presented in the Rezoning Workbook.
- A proposal for land use in East SoMa as well as a zoning framework for achieving this land use over time. The land use proposal is unchanged from that presented as Option B in the Rezoning Workbook.
- A refined proposal for height controls. The heights in the Rezoning Workbook were refined based on community input and a closer analysis of the existing building stock and street system, i.e. lower heights on alleys and higher heights on major streets.
- A framework for parks and open space. These concepts were developed after release of the Rezoning Workbook.
- A framework for transportation. These concepts were developed after release of the Rezoning Workbook.

Subsequent workshop discussions will address the issues of public benefits with a focus on housing and community facilities. Additional analysis is underway to help articulate these issues and possible solutions.

The EIR now underway analyzes the full range of options that have been discussed in the public forum. It is the Department's intention that the proposals outlined in this paper—as well as the range of potential refinements that have been discussed previously and will be discussed during these workshops—will lie within the range of options analyzed in the EIR. This is intended to allow final articulation of the zoning proposal to be approved by the CPC and adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

East SoMa Community Planning Goals

The following goals were developed over the course of several community workshops in the spring of 2002. They are identical to those presented in the Rezoning Workbook. They are the basis of the concepts presented in this document:

- Encourage an appropriate mix of uses.
- Retain and promote businesses and organizations that contribute to the diversity of south of market.
- Encourage more neighborhood-serving businesses.
- Attract jobs for local residents.
- Encourage a mix of incomes in renter-owner-occupied housing.
- Increase affordable housing opportunities.
- Improve the character of streets and encourage pedestrian safety.
- Improve community facilities and enhance open spaces.
- Offer a variety of transportation options.

SoMa Area Plan Concepts

Land Use in East SoMa

The question of what land uses are appropriate in the East SoMa was discussed throughout the community workshops in 2002. The East SoMa has one of the most diverse mix of uses in the city. During the workshops, participants decided that this mix of uses should continue in the East SoMa but that the emphasis should be shifted to more housing and small commercial uses. This was the land use proposal forwarded in Option B of the Rezoning Workbook. The Department has now developed a framework for the permanent zoning controls, which is described below. This zoning framework was presented to the CPC on October 27, 2005.

Zoning Proposal

The following zoning districts are proposed.

Mixed Use Residential (in the Rezoning Workbook this district was titled the Residential/Commercial district). This new zoning district is intended to encourage housing, some areas at higher densities, and to provide space for a mix of retail and commercial uses. This is a very flexible zoning district that allows for all types of uses, but encourages housing production.











Neighborhood Commercial Transit District. This district runs along Second, Third, Sixth, Mission, and Folsom Streets. This new zoning district encourages active ground-floor uses by requiring minimum ceiling heights for retail uses, prohibiting new curb cuts on some blocks, and limiting blank walls. Originally, the Central Subway light rail was proposed to run under Third Street in East SoMa, but has since been moved to Fourth Street. In light of this change, the proposed NC-T district may make more sense on Fourth Street rather than Third, and the community may wish to make this change..

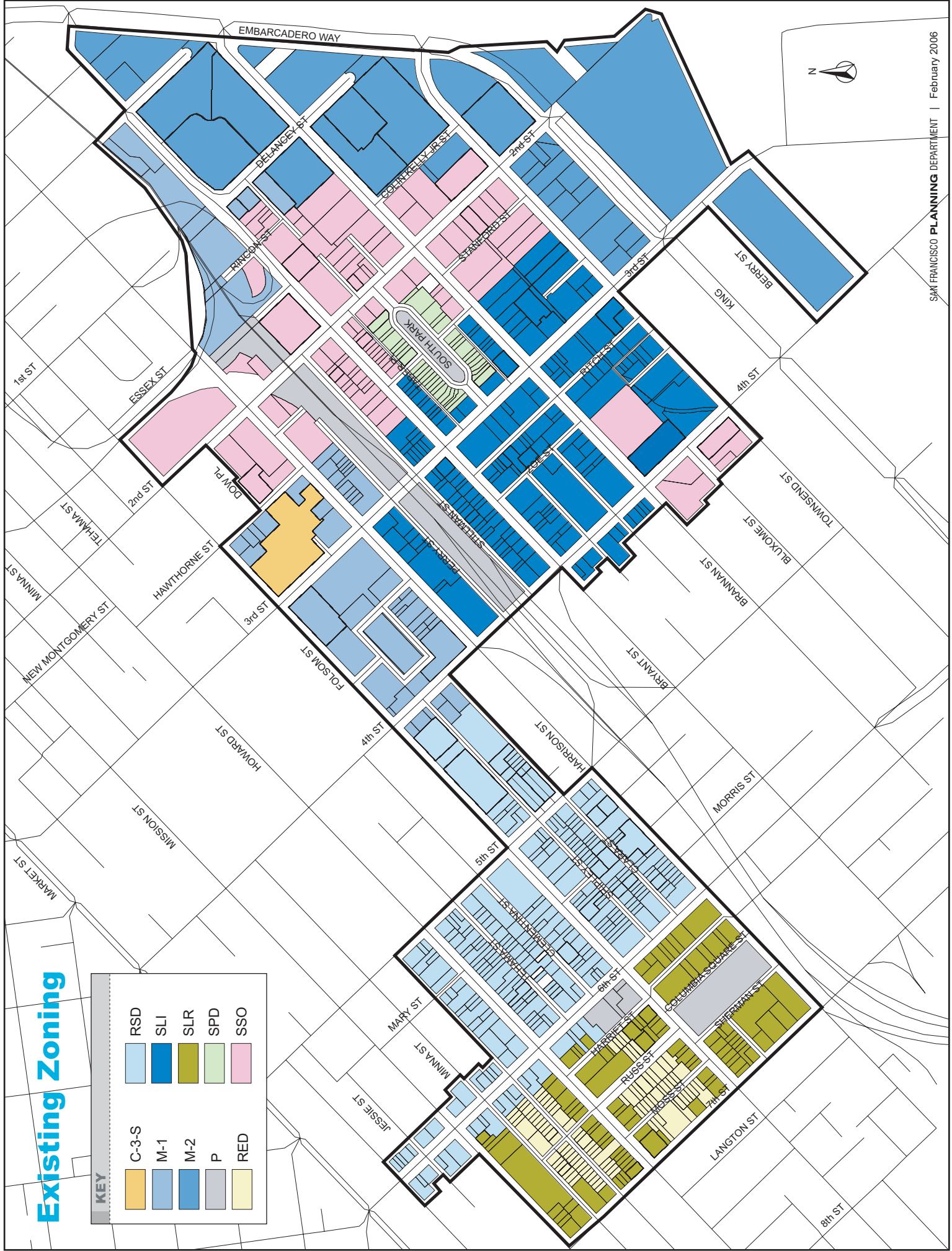
Residential Enclave Districts (RED). The Residential Enclave districts, which are already defined in the Planning Code, are maintained in the zoning proposal. The RED was designed to protect small-scale housing on narrow alleys in the South of Market. These alleys are often surrounded by larger, non-residential uses.

Employment and Business Development (in the Rezoning Workbook this district was titled the Core PDR district). This district encourages the promotion of businesses and maintains space for production, distribution and repair businesses. Prior to the boundary change, they were part of a larger district that extended into the West SoMa. Considering how few parcels would remain with this designation in the East SoMa, the community may wish to change these designations to a more mixed-use district, e.g. Urban Mixed Use.








Urban Mixed Use (in the Rezoning Workbook this district was titled the Residential/PDR district). The Urban Mixed Use district would require a certain amount of PDR as part of new development, but would otherwise encourage housing and mixed use. The intent is to create districts that are urban, balanced, and genuinely diverse, and to do so in part by ensuring the presence of some PDR activity. Parts of these districts are characterized by existing areas of mixed use; they also serve as buffers between predominately residential areas and predominantly employment and business development districts. The few Urban Mixed Use parcels exist between Fifth and Sixth and Folsom and Tehama Streets.

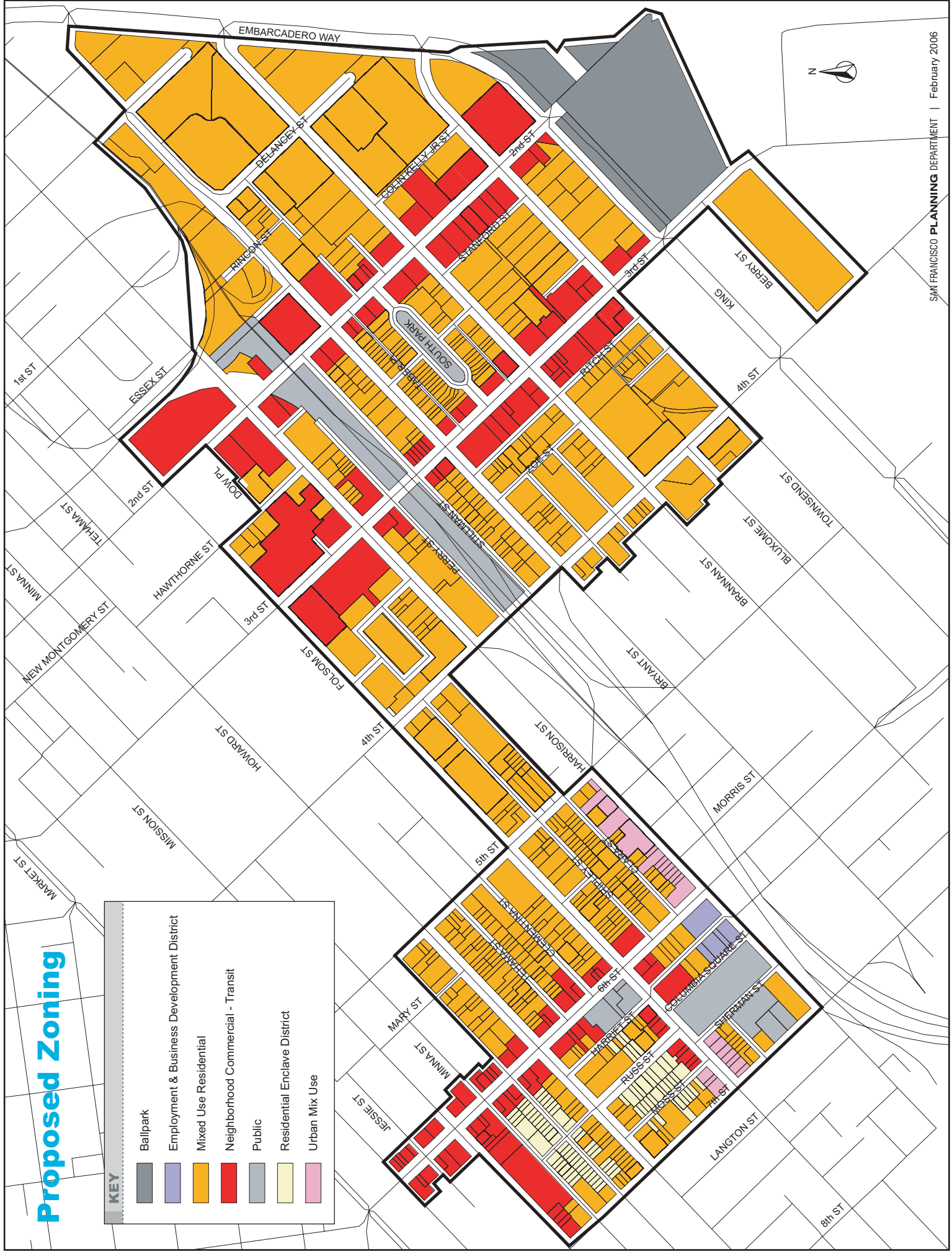
Existing Zoning

KEY	
	C-3-S
	M-1
	M-2
	P
	RED
	RSD
	SLI
	SLR
	SPD
	SSO



Proposed Zoning

KEY	
	Ballpark
	Employment & Business Development District
	Mixed Use Residential
	Neighborhood Commercial - Transit
	Public
	Residential Enclave District
	Urban Mix Use












Urban Form

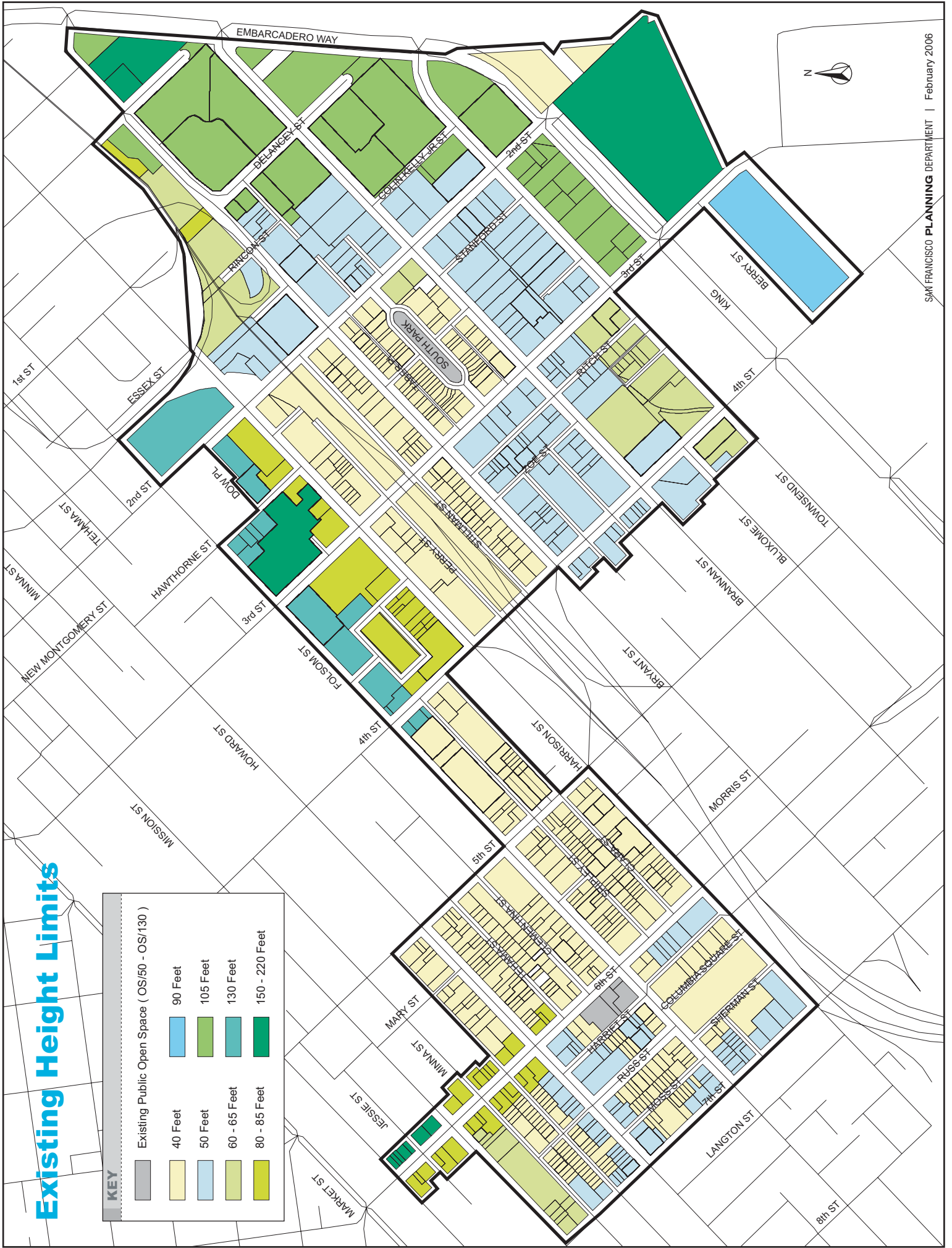
Proposed Height Limits

Since the release of the Rezoning Workbook, Department staff has discussed the initial height limit proposals in the Rezoning Workbook with community members and has refined the proposed height limits to reflect new projects and to balance the community desires. Height districts have been correlated to current building construction types. The main concepts of the height proposal are as follows:








- **Increase height limits on major streets.** Height limits are proposed to be increased on major streets, especially in the area from 4th to 2nd and from Bryant to Townsend, in order to accommodate more housing, to acknowledge the height of existing buildings, and to allow for higher heights on the ground floor for more gracious retail spaces.
- **Maintain lower height limits around South Park.** Height limits in the area around South Park are tailored to protect the park from shadows and to maintain the lower scale of the neighborhood.
- **Maintain or lower height limits on residential alleys.** Currently some parcels in the East SoMa allow buildings to go up to 85 feet with a conditional use permit. This provision has allowed tall buildings to be built on the small-scale alleys of East SoMa.
- **Alley controls.** The alleys of SoMa are small-scale spaces that break up the large blocks of the SoMa and provide human-scale space, sunlight and sky into the middle of these blocks. The proposed alley controls would require buildings to setback 10 to 15 feet above a height slightly higher than the width of the alley, after which they can go to their full allowed height. (See Appendix A for the proposed alley controls.)

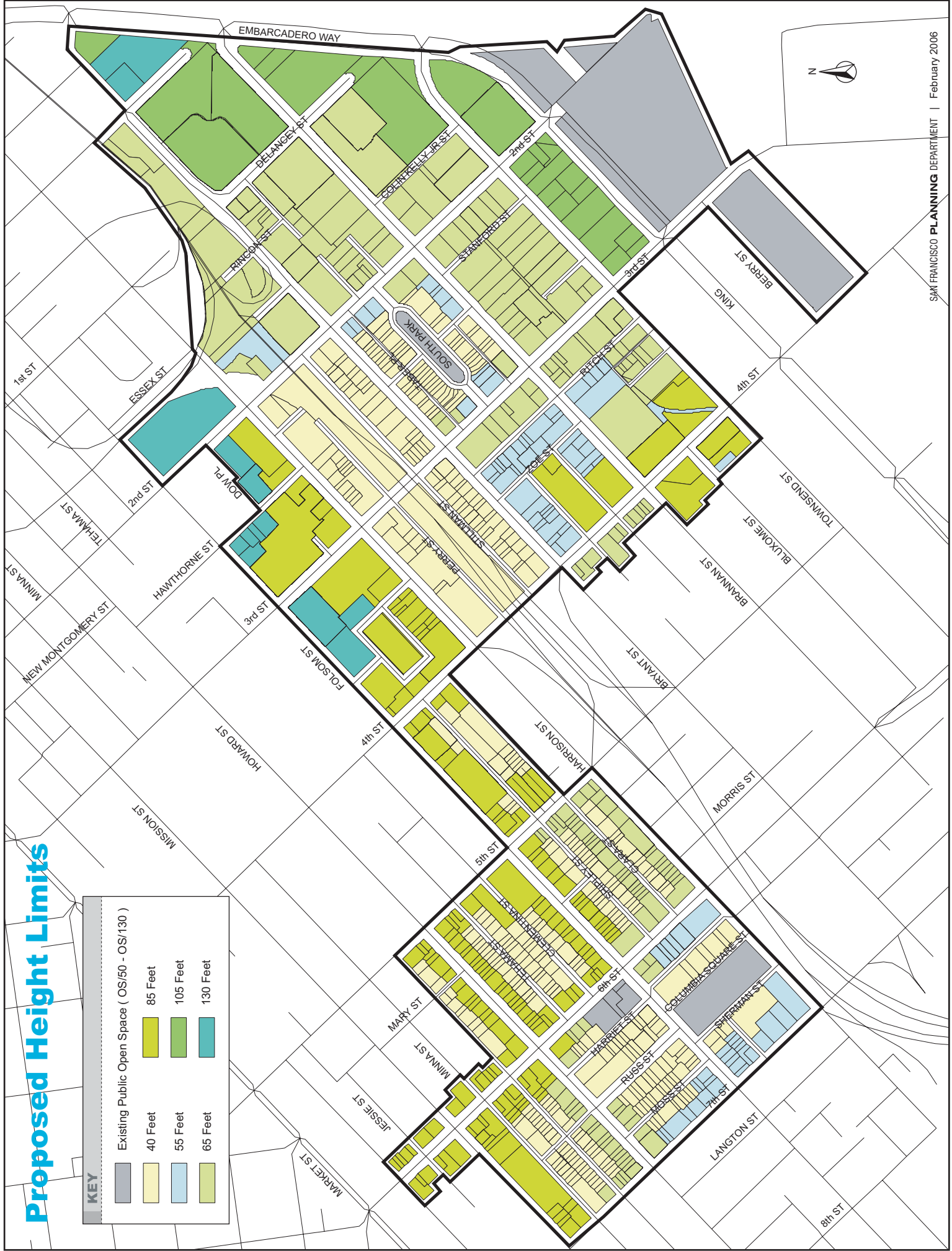
Existing Height Limits

KEY	
	Existing Public Open Space (OS/50 - OS/130)
	40 Feet
	50 Feet
	60 - 65 Feet
	80 - 85 Feet
	90 Feet
	105 Feet
	130 Feet
	150 - 220 Feet



Proposed Height Limits

KEY	
	Existing Public Open Space (OS/50 - OS/130)
	40 Feet
	55 Feet
	65 Feet
	85 Feet
	105 Feet
	130 Feet



Parks and Open Space

SoMa has an open space deficiency. With an influx of new residents, this deficiency will only be exacerbated. In a built-out, dense neighborhood such as SoMa, finding sites for new parks is difficult, and any proposed open space system must incorporate non-traditional open spaces such as pocket parks on widened sidewalks or shared alleyways, in addition to new neighborhood parks.

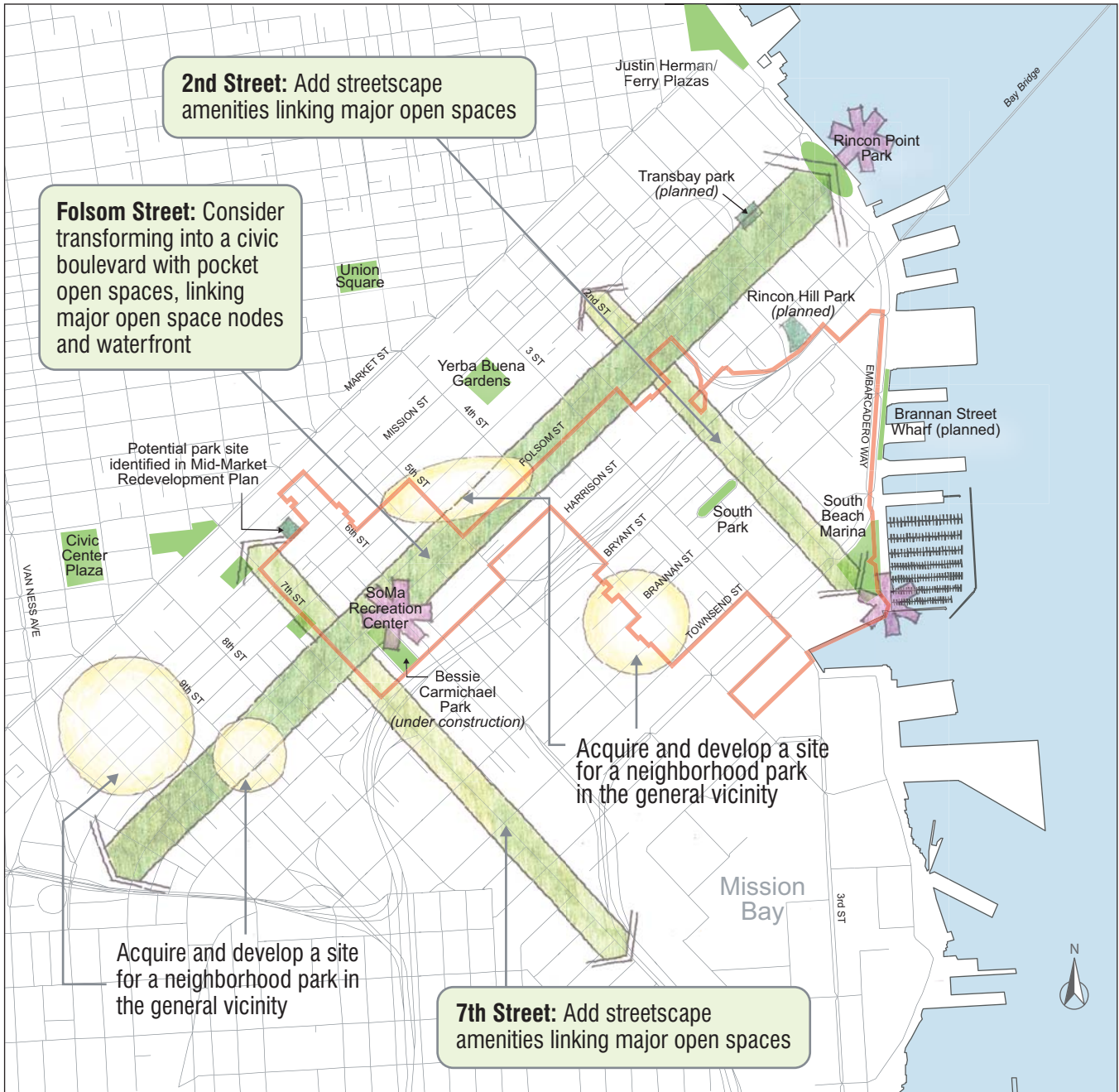
East SoMa presents unique opportunities to build a comprehensive open space system to serve neighborhood residents. The mixed-use character and alleyway network provide opportunities to create active open spaces on traffic-calmed alleyways in the interior of blocks. East SoMa also benefits from and could capitalize on its adjacency to the waterfront and network of waterfront open spaces—highlighting the need for better pedestrian connections to these nearby open spaces. The new park that will be built on the former Bessie Carmichael Elementary School site will provide a large new open space central to the SoMa community and should be an integral part of a new open space system.

To capitalize on the major existing open space opportunities and existing positive features, and to address open space deficiencies where they exist, the major elements of a SoMa open space system should include:

- Acquire and develop new spaces for neighborhood parks in underserved areas.
- Improve existing spaces to better serve neighborhood residents.
- Connect open spaces with a network of living streets. A major component of the SoMa open space system is to redesign key streets that connect to major open spaces, including Folsom, Second and Seventh Streets by adding streetscape amenities, widened sidewalks, pocket parks, and the addition of greenery.
- Require public open spaces as part of major new private development.

Open Space

Existing Facilities and Proposed Concepts



 East SoMa Planning Area

Transportation

Several challenges must be overcome to make the SoMa into a more livable, pedestrian-friendly place. The challenges include:

Large blocks. Blocks south of Market Street are substantially larger than those north of Market Street. This challenges pedestrians with long walking distances, long stretches between intersections, and few shortcuts or quiet route alternatives to major traffic thoroughfares.

Wide streets. Long crossing distances and wide areas dedicated to traffic make for a poor pedestrian experience.

One-way streets. The predominantly one-way street system facilitates high traffic speeds and is unfriendly to pedestrians, bicyclists, and residential neighborhoods.

Regional traffic. Essentially all SoMa streets have as their main purpose the distribution of regional traffic at the expense of local circulation, safety, and quality of life.

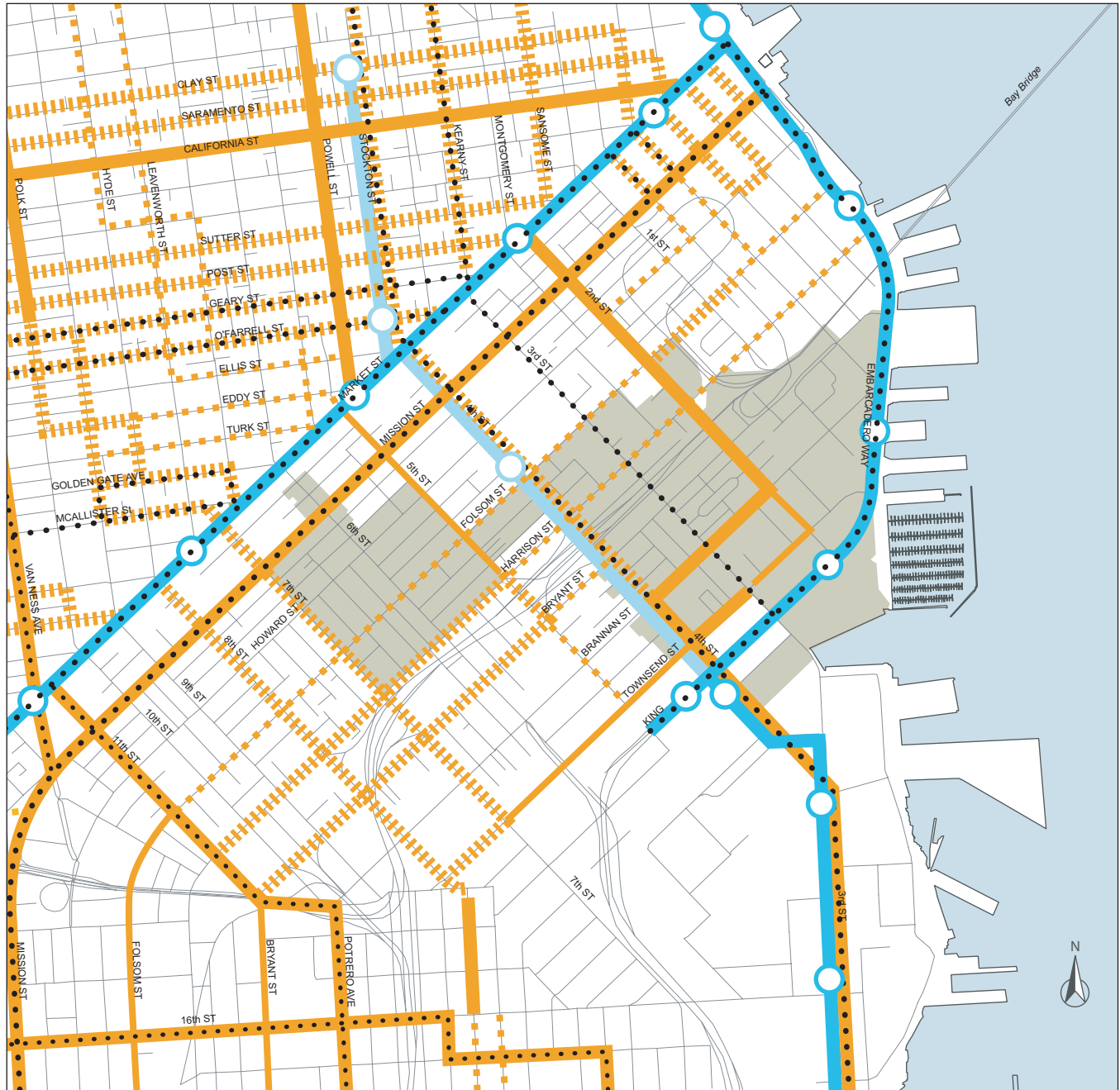
Poor Pedestrian Conditions. Narrow sidewalks next to wide, heavy traffic streets make the environment uninviting for walking. With significant increases in high-density housing proposed, these poor conditions will only worsen.





The following transportation improvements are being considered and reviewed as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods environmental review process.

- Consider transforming Folsom Street, from the Bay waterfront to the Mission District into a civic boulevard through the heart of South of Market with priority bus transit treatments and significant pedestrian improvements.
- Consider transforming Howard Street into a neighborhood-oriented street with calm traffic and bicycle improvements and pedestrian improvements.
- Consider north-south transit improvements in the 7th/8th Street corridor to better serve the Showplace Square area and mid-SoMa with transit and link them to Market Street, Civic Center, Van Ness and Geary transit corridors.
- Explore improvements to the pedestrian environment on 9th and 10th Streets through South of Market.
- Consider improvements to Second Street as an important pedestrian corridor and commercial street, as well as for bicycles and transit, connecting the ballpark area to downtown.
- Explore improvements to Third and Fourth Streets through South of Market as important pedestrian corridors connecting Mission Bay to downtown.

Downtown Transit Network

Existing

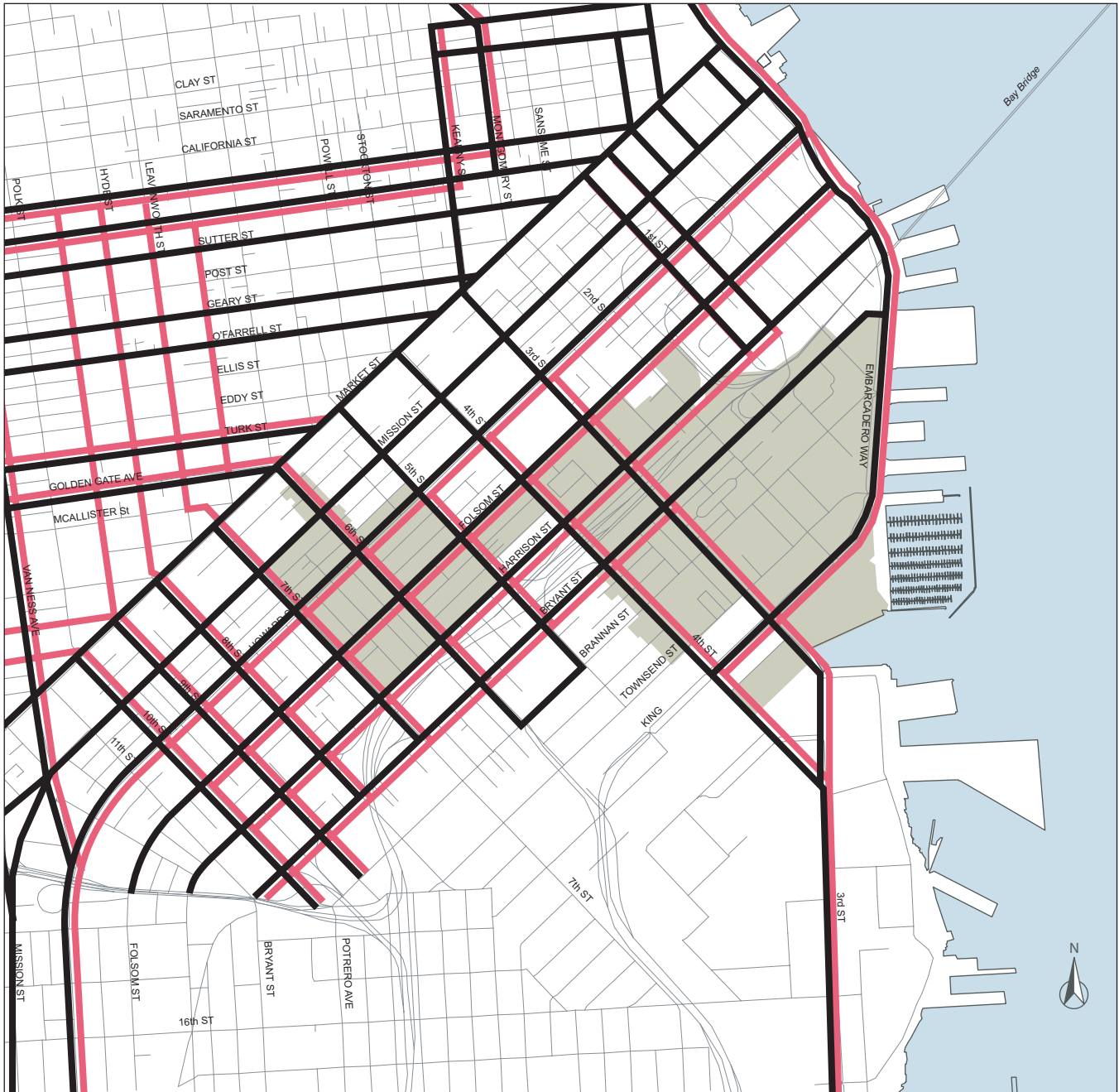


-  **Rail and Stations**
(Includes funded Central Subway, in advanced planning.)
-  **Multiple Bus Lines (2+) or Bus(es) with <10 Min. Headway**
(Dashed line indicates one-way operation)
-  **Bus** (Dashed line indicates one-way operation)
-  **Owl (Late Night) Service**

 **East SoMa Planning Area**

Downtown Vehicular Streets

Existing



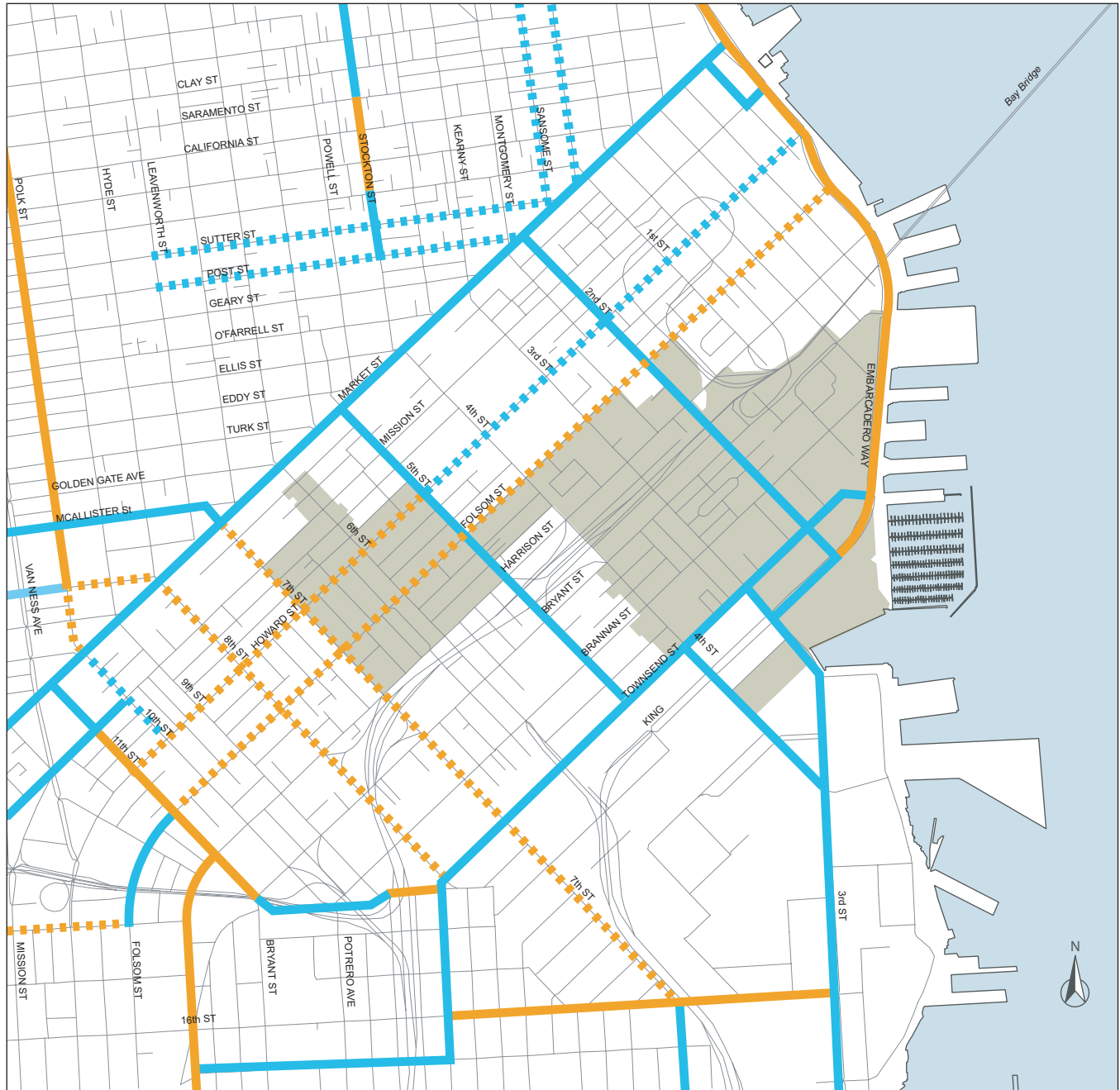
Major Arterial
(General Plan: Transportation Element)

Vehicular Streets
(General Plan: Downtown Plan)

East SoMa Planning Area

Downtown Bicycle Network

Existing Bike Facilities



 **Bicycle Lanes**
(Dashed line indicates one-way only)

 **Designated Bicycle Route**
(Dashed line indicates one-way only)

 **East SoMa Planning Area**

Proposed Transportation Policies

1 HOWARD STREET
 Consider transforming Howard Street into a neighborhood-oriented street with calm traffic and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

2 7TH/8TH STREETS
 Consider north-south transit improvements in the 7th/8th Street corridor to better serve the Showplace Square area and mid-SOMA with transit. Enhanced treatments for bicycles and pedestrians should be investigated.

3 9TH/10TH STREETS
 Opportunities to widen sidewalks and improve pedestrian conditions should be considered.

4 LIVING STREETS
 Explore transformation of portions of rights-of-way with excess capacity with wide landscaped pedestrian zones and usable open space.

5 FOLSOM STREET
 Consider transforming Folsom Street into a civic boulevard through the heart of SOMA, with priority transit treatments and significant pedestrian improvements.

6 2ND STREET
 Consideration should be given to creation of a streetscape plan that addresses new landscaping, possible bicycle lanes, bulbouts and transit-supportive treatments.

7 3RD/4TH STREETS
 Along with transit improvements, such as the Central Subway, consideration should be given to streetscape plans that improve pedestrian conditions and safety.

8 16TH STREET
 Explore improvements to 16th Street as a priority transit corridor, connecting the Mission District, Showplace Square/Lower Potrero and Mission Bay, with accompanying pedestrian and landscaping improvements.



Public Benefits Program

East SoMa lacks many of the public services that a residential neighborhood needs, including pedestrian-friendly streets and sidewalks; neighborhood parks, playgrounds and other open spaces; and community facilities and services for residents. New housing will only increase the need for public infrastructure and services. One of the primary planning issues that has emerged has been that of public benefits.

The concept of public benefits is that new development should be looked to to provide some of the public infrastructure and public amenities needed to serve the needs of residents and workers, and to mitigate impacts that new development would bring to the area. A comprehensive public benefits program, made up of specific zoning controls, fees and other funding mechanisms can provide at least some of the neighborhood improvements and amenities that are needed in East SoMa. A public benefits program should address the provision of the following:

- new parks
- community facilities
- affordable housing
- child care

There may be other needs as well, and we will discuss these with the community.

To help articulate how the City can address these specific needs, the Department has hired a consultant to prepare a background analysis that will inform the public benefits program for the Eastern Neighborhoods. The consultant will help articulate the range of public benefits, and needs look at what other cities have done to meet the needs of their communities, review the range of funding strategies and other methods for providing public benefits, analyze the feasibility of assessing requirements on new development to participate in this public benefits program, and determine the feasibility of addressing any funding shortfall by other means.

The Department will return to subsequent workshops with the results of this analysis for discussion and input.

SAN FRANCISCO'S ALLEYS

With the planned increase in population in the neighborhoods that the Citywide Action Plan (CAP) identifies for significant new residential development, there is the need to balance increased density with the characteristics that build livable neighborhoods: walkability, a human scale and a vibrant public realm. As these areas are planned to provide opportunities for new housing and other development, there is an obligation and a need to conserve and enhance a neighborhood's existing livable qualities, and augment them where they are currently lacking.



In the history of San Francisco, alleys have played a very important role in the development of many neighborhoods, including SoMa, the Mission and the Market/Octavia neighborhood. However, over the years, many alleys have been cut off, developed over or variously made unusable. This discussion piece describes the importance of alleys towards creating livable neighborhoods, and some preliminary strategies for enhancing alleys as meaningful urban places.

WHY ARE ALLEYS IMPORTANT?

Alleys have often been thought of as purely functional, a place for loading, deliveries and garage access. At worst, they have become dark, derelict or unsafe. In recent years, however, people have begun to appreciate the benefits that alleys provide, and to see them as place-enhancing spaces in their own right.

Most importantly, alleys break up the scale of large blocks and parcels. In SoMa, for example, blocks were laid out on a very large scale (550 feet by 825 feet). Soon after these blocks were laid out, property owners began to break the scale of the blocks by building alleys, in order to create a more useable development pattern and to enable access to the center of blocks.

Alleys also provide an alternative circulation network, distributing traffic on more streets and providing a choice of routes. Because they are a slow-traffic alternative to busy streets, alleys can be especially important to bicyclists and pedestrians. In dense urban neighborhoods, alleys create a human-scale space, allowing the penetration of sunlight, sky and greenery into the centers of blocks. Less tangibly, alleys can provide a sense of discovery, wonder and beauty to an often routine urban environment.

WHAT COMPONENTS MAKE UP A SUCCESSFUL ALLEY?

Whether or not an alley becomes a successful urban place is greatly determined by a handful of urban design factors: scale, sun and sky availability, a mix of access and use, greenery and connections.

San Francisco's historic pattern of development, and the city's development controls, demonstrate that streetwall height should be related to street width. This is important both to create an appropriate scale that defines the street without overwhelming it, and to ensure that sun and sky is available to people on the street. This relationship carries over to alleys: if buildings are too high, an alley can become a dark chasm, and a pleasant sense of refuge can turn into a perception of a dangerous place. Because alleys are narrower than streets, appropriate heights along alleys are lower than on streets.



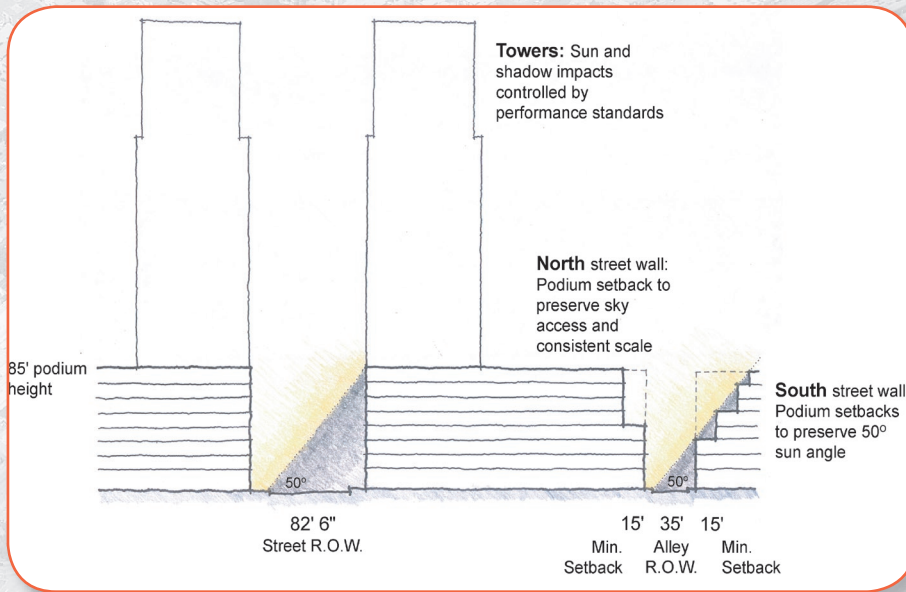
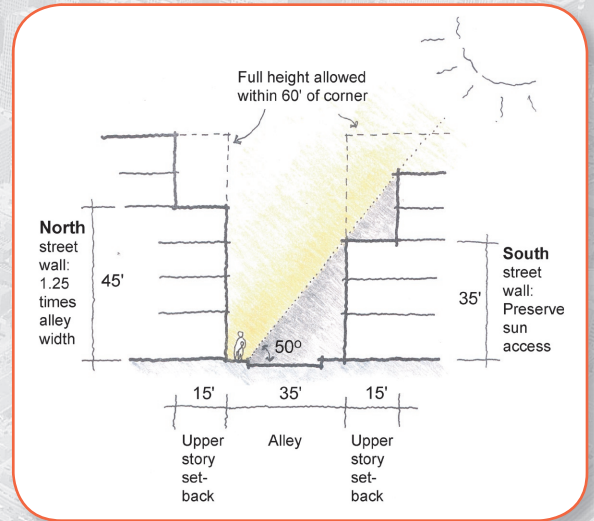
Less quantifiably, successful alley places have a quality of disorder that makes them interesting and attractive places to walk. Whereas streets often benefit from an unbroken streetwall that defines an 'urban room,' alley streetwalls can be more broken up: there can be a mix of residential units, secondary units over garages, small business entries, opportunities for glimpses into yards, walls, greenery, variation in building heights and massing and a fine-grained development pattern.



HOW CAN WE CREATE QUALITY ALLEY PLACES?

A variety of controls will achieve a quality system of alleys. The following ideas describe a draft proposal for how this could be achieved, using the neighborhoods of the SoMa as an example. Building heights, street widths and sun angles will be different in other neighborhoods; however, the general ideas about sculpting building mass can be applied elsewhere.

- 1) For alleys in height districts of 85 feet or less, regardless of orientation, streetwall height at the property line should be no greater than about 1.25 times the alley width. Above that height, there should be a stepback of about 15 feet. (For a 35-foot alley, this gives a maximum streetwall height at the property line of 45 feet, rounded up from 43.75 feet.)
- 2) Additionally, in east/west alleys in height districts of 85 feet or less, development on the south side of an alley should be further sculpted to retain sunlight on the north sidewalk of the alley, assuming a 5-foot walkway. Above that height, there should be a stepback of no less than 15 feet, and additional stepbacks as necessary to preserve a 50° angle from the curb of the north sidewalk to the building corner. (For a 35-foot alley, this gives a maximum streetwall height at the south property line of 35 feet, rounded down from 36 feet.)
- 3) At corners where an alley intersects with a street, the streetwall height at both property lines should extend without stepbacks 60 feet back from the street.
- 4) Where allowed, towers above 85 feet in height should not be subject to the stepback requirements listed above. Instead, towers should be required to meet sun and shadow performance standards to ensure that important streets, alleys and open spaces are not overly in shadow. Additionally, maximum floorplates and minimum tower separations will combine to allow adequate light and air through to streets and other public spaces.
- 5) Podiums on parcels that also contain towers should be subject to the same sculpting requirements as buildings in height districts of 85 feet or less.



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SCULPTING CONTROLS FOR SOMA ALLEYS

These figures show sun and sky access controls for alley frontages. Height districts of 85 feet or less are shown at top, and districts with towers are shown immediately above.