

Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and Central Waterfront

Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and the Central Waterfront are grouped into one district for the purpose of this report. However, each area is a distinct neighborhood characterized by very different uses and development pressures. Each neighborhood has a distinct scale, population and types of business. Additionally, the neighborhoods are going through separate planning processes at this time. Central Waterfront is currently in the Better Neighborhoods 2002 planning process. It is being considered with Showplace Square and Potrero Hill in this report in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the entire Community Plan Area.

The South of Market and Mission Bay bound these neighborhoods on the North and Northeast, San Francisco Bay bounds them on the East, Islais Creek and the Bayshore bound them on the South and the Mission District bounds them on the West. Highway 101 and Highway 280 also divide this area. Highway 101 isolates Potrero Hill from the Mission District to west and Highway 280 separates Potrero Hill from the Central Waterfront.

Showplace Square: Furniture and Design Center

Showplace Square centers on the northern edge of this planning area starting at Bryant and extending to 17th and 18th Streets. This neighborhood is an important furniture and interior design center that serves a national market. It was originally developed as a warehouse and industrial district serving nearby port facilities, once one of the City's important industries. A system of rail spur lines was developed along public rights-of-way to transfer

materials from warehouses and manufacturing facilities to and from the piers. However, after World War II and as port facilities changed worldwide, the Port of San Francisco became less competitive and maritime activity declined substantially.

Since the renovation of the warehouses to provide furniture showroom space, Showplace Square has provided space for a well-defined cluster of furniture makers, designers and contractors. The current land use in the area remains predominantly PDR. (Figure 6.3.5)

Until the 1970s, Jackson Square, a historic district just north of the downtown, was the primary location for the City's furniture showrooms. Many of these businesses were housed in historic structures with small footprints and limited net floor area. As the Jackson Square commercial vacancy rates dropped and rents

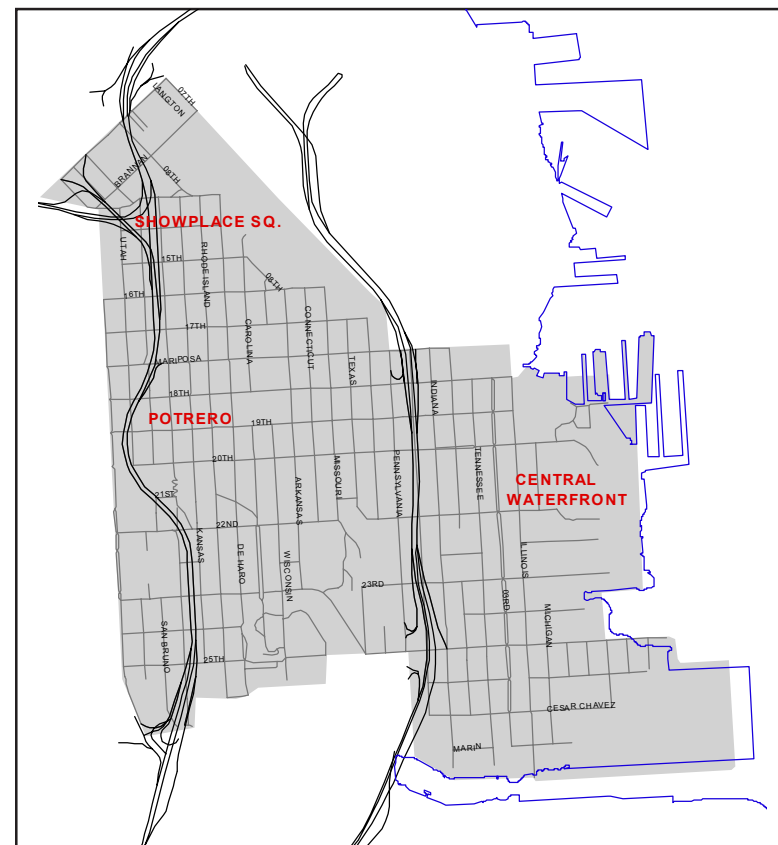


Figure 6.3.1 Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and Central Waterfront Boundaries



increased, the area began to attract high-end firms such as antique dealers and interior decorators. Many furniture showrooms and other design businesses were subsequently priced out of the market.



Henry Adams, a real estate developer and promoter, looked for another area in the City which shared Jackson Square's architectural character and could accommodate a new center for furniture showrooms and related businesses. The Showplace Square was a good choice because of the large attractive brick structures with open floor plans. This type of building is ideal for PDR uses, such as furniture showrooms that typically need large interior spaces. Large floor plates also accommodate frequent change and subdivision of interior areas to create various showroom sizes. Showplace Square has become one of the nation's most successful centers for home and office furnishings, interior designers and furniture makers.

Office and home furniture showrooms, re-upholstery shops, retail stores and small shops occupy the Showplace Square area. There are a total of 120 furniture businesses in Showplace Square. The largest building located at 2 Henry Adams Street houses 28 furniture businesses and showrooms. The furniture sector provides middle-income jobs in Showplace Square, employing over 825 people. McGuire Furniture, the largest employer in the furniture industry in San Francisco, alone employs approximately 165 people.



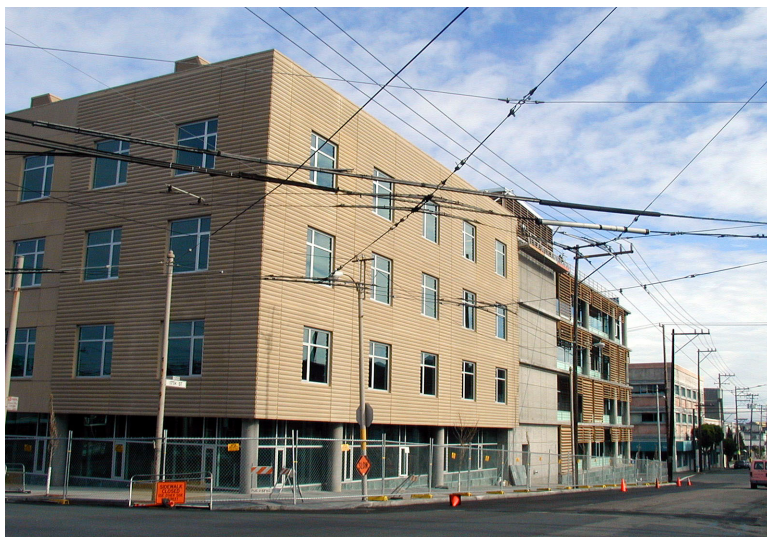
Figure 6.3.3 Furniture Showrooms in Showplace Square

Recent Live/Work and Office Development

Recently live/work, as well as other residential and office projects, have been approved and are being constructed in and near Showplace Square. An apartment building with 148 units has been approved for development and several live/work projects have already been constructed in the vicinity. Additionally, office space has been approved and recently constructed throughout the area, including 50,000 square feet of office space near the border of SOMA.

Office and residential development may change the industrial character of the area and threaten the integrity of the furniture design cluster. As parcels are broken up and smaller buildings are constructed, PDR uses can no longer easily return to use the space. Moreover, residential and office projects require intensive infrastructure improvements.

Recently, Potrero Hill has also felt some of the development pressure that is extending from SoMa and Showplace Square. Two large office projects in the northern area of Potrero (350 and 450 Rhode Island) are under construction and live/work lofts have already been built throughout the area. Potrero Hill is even less transit-accessible than SoMa, where the concern about lack of transit coupled with the increasing office development is acute.



The Showplace Square sub area which is property north of 16th Street is primarily classified as an M-2 (Heavy Industrial) District and M-1 (light industrial). These districts have a 50-foot Height and Bulk Limit. (Figure 6.3.6) Several parcels in the northern part of Showplace Square are classified as SLI (Service Light Industry) District uses. Industrially classified land generally has the most permissive zoning, permitting a broad range of land uses. These zoning regulations have permitted lower intensity projects to be built in the area, including office and live/work. Some of these projects have been incompatible with adjacent PDR and other industrial uses. Several attempts have been made to provide more appropriate industrial zoning, including Interim Controls proposed by the Planning Department and by Supervisor Maxwell.



Potrero Hill: A Stable Residential Neighborhood

Potrero Hill is primarily a residential neighborhood with small retail and commercial businesses located throughout the neighborhood. The area is isolated from the Central Waterfront to the east by Highway 280 and from the Mission District to the west by Highway 101. As its name suggests, Potrero is situated on one of the City's many hills. It has spectacular views of Downtown, Twin Peaks, Bayview Hill, Mt. San Bruno, the Bay and the East Bay Hills.

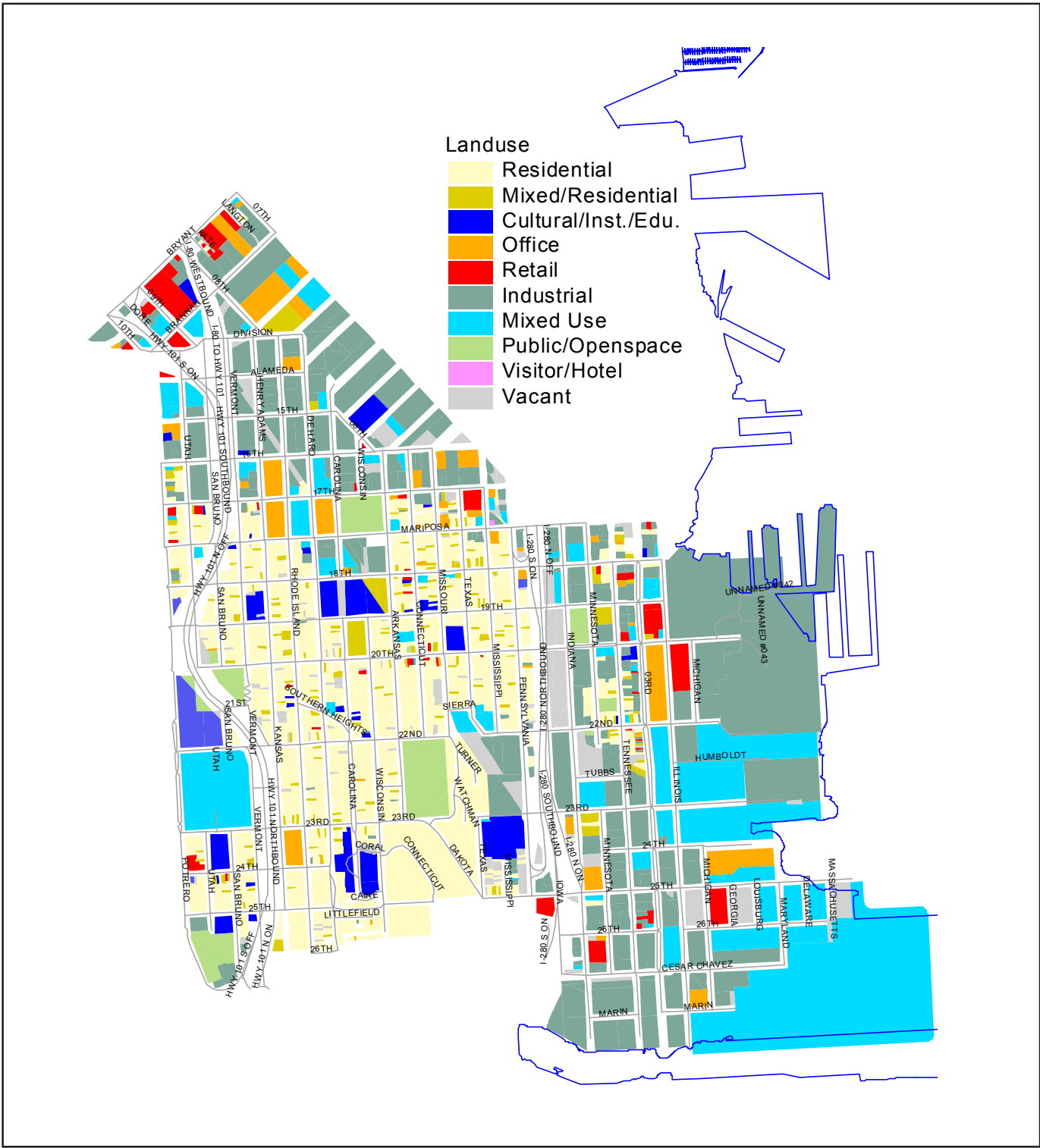


Figure 6.3.5 Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and Central Waterfront Land Use Map

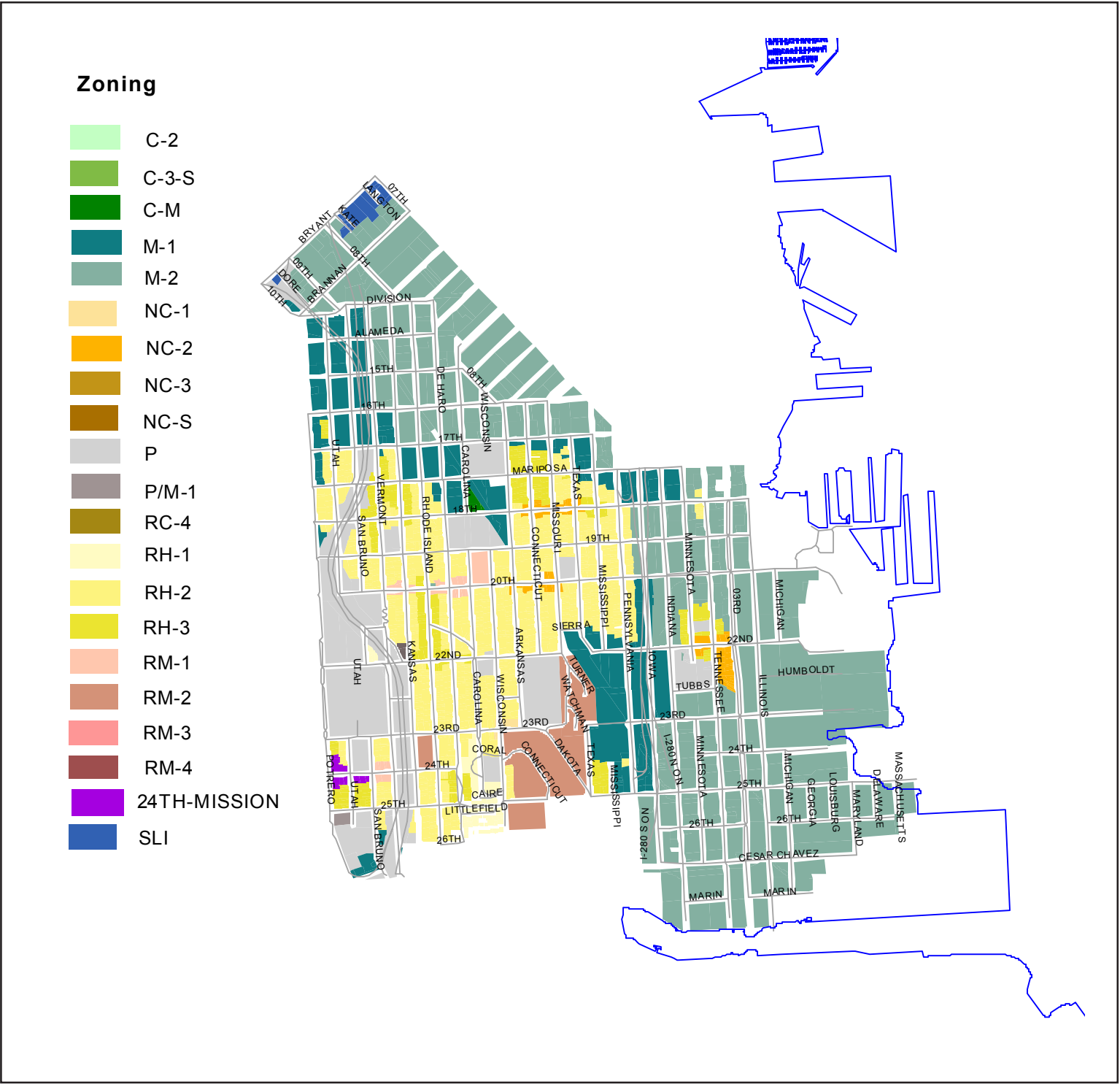


Figure 6.3.6 Showplace Square, Potrero Hill and Central Waterfront Zoning Regulations Map

Potrero Hill has a mix of single-family residences and small multiple-family units. There are also some apartments managed by the Housing Authority. A number of community facilities are available to area residents, including: a branch City library; Jackson Playground; McKinley Square; the Potrero Neighborhood Center and Potrero Hill Recreation Center. In addition, the City recently acquired Esprit Park, located on Minnesota between Highway 280 and Third Street. (Figure 6.3.2)

Although Potrero Hill is primarily a residential neighborhood, a few large employers like San Francisco General (the County hospital) are located in close proximity. Although separated from Potrero Hill by Highway 280, the hospital, one of San Francisco's largest employers, provides the area with approximately 2,500 jobs.

There are a variety of zoning classifications in the Potrero Hill area. (Figure 6.3.7) Most of Potrero Hill is classified as residential, including RH-2 (Residential-Two Houses) and RH-3 (Residential-Three Houses) Districts. Also included are RM-1 and RM-2 (Residential Mixed) Districts, which provides for a mix of uses within the same development. Potrero also has some areas classified as NC-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) Districts. These small areas are located primarily on 18th and 20th Streets.

South of 16th Street, several blocks of the Potrero District are zoned as M-1 (Light Industrial District) and M-2 (Heavy Industrial District). These districts permit Industrial land uses as a



Figure 6.3.4 Aerial Photo of Potrero Hill

principle permitted use, as well as other lower-intensity land uses, which are permitted or require a conditional use permit. The M-2 Districts are limited to the southeast portion of the Potrero District, extending along Cesar Chavez Street and Highway 280.

Central Waterfront: Better Neighborhoods 2002

The Central Waterfront is the subject of a separate and comprehensive study that the Planning Department has under way in its "Better Neighborhoods 2002" project. Therefore, the Central Waterfront is included here primarily to provide a comprehensive view of the Eastern neighborhoods.



The Central Waterfront is on the eastern side of Highway 280 and extends from Mariposa Street South to the Islais Creek Channel. The area is almost entirely devoted to light and heavy industry. The Port owns most of the land east of Third Street, from Pier 68 to Pier 80. This includes a significant amount of 'back land' acreage required for the Port's containerized shipping facility at Pier 80 and other Port facilities. While some of the area appears underutilized, most of it is required by the Port for transshipment and maritime functions. Pier 80 is currently the Port's only active container terminal. The Port is currently negotiating with a developer to design and construct a mixed-use (industrial and nonprofit arts) project on its 16-acre Pier 70 opportunity site.

The Central Waterfront is developed primarily with industrial buildings and Port-related maritime uses. However, a small residential neighborhood, called "Dogpatch," is located west of Third Street, east of Highway 280 and centered on Twenty Second and Tennessee Streets. Although maritime and port-related uses have declined in importance to the City as a whole, they occupy a major part of the Central Waterfront. The Central Waterfront has retained a predominantly industrial character and contains a significant percentage of the City's industrial buildings, as well as open lots for equipment and material storage. Rising commercial rents and increased residential development (which

creates the potential for conflict between residential and industrial uses) has caused PDR businesses to move from SOMA to the Central Waterfront.

The Central Waterfront is primarily classified as M-2 (Heavy Industrial). (Figure 6.3.7) Traditionally, this area has supported heavy industry, Port and related maritime uses such as ship repair and docking and loading/unloading of ocean-going vessels. Industrial uses are permitted outright and other uses may require approval by the Planning Commission.

The Central Waterfront is home to a number of major users, including the San Francisco Dry Dock, the largest dry dock on the West Coast. The area also has a power plant that its operator, MIRANT, proposes to upgrade and expand. ESPRIT, the clothing manufacturer, currently has its headquarters and some production and design facilities in the Central Waterfront. In addition, the San Francisco Opera's major stage set construction facility is located in the Central Waterfront.





Most of the remainder of land in the Central Waterfront has been developed with light industry, office and some heavy industrial uses. These include MUNI repair and storage facilities and other industrial uses. MUNI has two existing and one proposed maintenance facility in the area. In recent years, live/work projects have also been built in the area and in the adjacent Potrero flats. These projects sometimes conflict with the surrounding PDR uses.

In addition to these major industrial facilities, several other types of businesses clusters are located in the Central Waterfront. The businesses that employ the greatest numbers of employees and seem to benefit from their proximity include construction, transportation, warehousing/distribution, printing and publishing.

Planning for Showplace Square and Potrero Hill

The Showplace square and Potrero Hill area is a diverse area that supports many different businesses, residents and types of development. Several local community organizations, residents, landowners, and businesses have been very active in drafting rezoning proposals.

The development pressures in Showplace Square are acute and the character of the area may change. The area is witnessing residential and office development that might conflict with existing PDR businesses. The community development process will examine these recent changes in land use as well as the character of Showplace Square and Potrero Hill. It will identify needed infrastructure, services and amenities to strengthen the existing character of these neighborhoods. It will also address land requirements of the existing PDR businesses and opportunities for future commercial and industrial development.

