



Left: The project area's Bryant Street corridor has one- to three-story buildings without many ground-floor storefront windows. Right: Large-format retail constructed in 1991 at Eight, Ninth, and Bryant.

In the upper part of Showplace Square, or lower Potrero Hill, centering on 16th and 17th Streets, light PDR uses such as auto service, graphic design, and warehouses are prevalent and occupy primary one to one- and-a-half story buildings. New multi-story residential buildings are intermixed among the older structures. Some of the new buildings incorporate industrial materials such as corrugated metal, taking their design cues from the industrial history of the area. The area also has some retail and wholesale commercial uses and a few eating and drinking establishments.



Newer residential construction in lower Potrero Hill.



The area between 16th and Mariposa streets is characterized by one- and two-story industrial buildings mixed with new residential construction and a few retail and entertainment establishments. Images taken from 17th Street.

The Seventh Street Corridor, between Seventh and Eighth Streets, represents another distinguishable subarea of the neighborhood. A number of establishments have open storage and other open facilities; these include aggregate processing, a waste collection vehicle yard, and bus storage and maintenance. There is also a large vacant parcel, the former location of a now-demolished paint factory where a residential project is proposed, where Seventh Street meets 16th Street. Consequently, lot coverage, building height, and overall development intensity in this corridor is low. However, new housing recently built at Eighth and Townsend streets contributes to an increasing development intensity in the northern part of this corridor.



Low-intensity and low-height uses in the Seventh Street corridor

The residential part of Potrero Hill, which begins, variously, south of 17th, Mariposa, or 18th Streets, has a fairly uniform development pattern. It is built with Victorian-era single-family dwellings with zero side setback and two to three stories in height. There are relatively wide residential streets, with 90-degree parking on many. Eighteenth and 20th Streets function as neighborhood commercial corridors, with many retail and restaurant establishments. They are pedestrian oriented, with ground-floor windows and a regular rhythm of small storefronts. The narrow lots that front the residential and commercial streets of Potrero Hill contribute to a fine pattern and an intimate scale.

Visual Resources

The San Francisco Design Center on Henry Adams Street provides a visual anchor to Showplace Square, with both older brick buildings and a 125,000 square foot contemporary glass and steel pavilion is highlighted with sand blasted wood and glass. The Anchor Brewing Company, located at Mariposa and DeHaro Streets at the base of Potrero Hill, serves as a visual landmark because of its size and its connection to the city's



Two- and three-story dwellings characterize most of Potrero Hill.

manufacturing history. The massive three-story red brick Baker & Hamilton building on Seventh and Townsend Streets anchors the northern extent of this subarea.

San Francisco General Hospital, on the border between the Mission and Potrero Hill, occupies a large site and its four paired multi-story brick ward buildings on Potrero Avenue only partially obscure the much larger concrete hospital structure behind. Atop Potrero Hill are smaller-scale visual landmarks, such as the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House on DeHaro Street, as well as much larger elements, such as the distinctive form and arrangement of the Housing Authority's Potrero Terrace and Potrero Annex properties, at the southeast corner of the hill, overlooking the Central Waterfront to the east and the Bayview District to the south.

There are no parks in Showplace Square, but Potrero Hill has several large parks—Jackson Playground at the northern foot of the hill, McKinley Square and Potrero Hill Recreation Center atop the hill, and Potrero del Sol Park at the southwestern edge of the area.



Left: The four-story red-brick buildings of the San Francisco Design Center provide a visual anchor to Showplace Square. Right: The Anchor Brewing Company at DeHaro and Mariposa is a notable building in lower Potrero Hill

Central Waterfront

The visual character of the Central Waterfront is affected by the predominance of industrial uses and buildings, the proximity to the San Francisco Bay and presence of Port-related uses, the number of historic buildings in the neighborhood, and contrasts between old and new construction.

Although the Central Waterfront once clearly echoed the natural shoreline, extensive filling and leveling of hills has resulted in an area that today is nearly flat. Only the remaining small mound of Irish Hill, on Illinois Street is left of the original topography.

Streets and Street Patterns

The I-280 freeway defines the western edge of the neighborhood. Some east-west streets terminate at the freeway, while others pass over or under it, connecting the Central Waterfront to

Potrero Hill. In particular, 18th and 20th streets are elevated over the freeway, and the elevated structures themselves function as visual elements within the neighborhood. They provide good views from above, but create shading and overhead enclosure at the ground level below.



Twentieth Street is elevated over the I-280 freeway and is a visual element within the Central Waterfront.

Block dimensions roughly mirror those in Potrero Hill, with 200- by 800-foot blocks between 20th and 23rd Streets, and 200- by 400-foot blocks to the south and north. The street grid dissipates at the neighborhood's eastern edge, where Piers 70 and 80, and other large uses such as the Potrero Power Plant, occupy extensive land areas along the project area's eastern edge. East of Illinois Street, several east-west streets extend to the Bay, but there are few connecting north-south streets.

Buildings and Streetscapes

The building and development types in the Central Waterfront correspond to its land uses. Although PDR uses and associated building types predominate, the Central Waterfront also includes residential and commercial buildings. Several subareas with different development characters are identifiable.

Illinois Street to San Francisco Bay. East of Illinois Street, the Central Waterfront is almost exclusively in maritime and other PDR uses. It includes a mix of industrial buildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, modern one-story structures, and open lots. In general, the northern portion of this subarea is more built-up and has older industrial buildings than the southern portion.

Pier 70 has a distinctive visual character provided by the late 19th- and early 20-century industrial buildings that cluster around 20th Street. Many of these buildings do not meet current seismic standards and are vacant, many in a dilapidated condition and state of disrepair. Additional information on historic buildings is found in Section IV.K, Historic Architectural Resources.



Pier 70 contains a number of former industrial and administrative buildings that have been identified as potential historic resources. Left: Powerhouse #1. Right: United Iron Works Machine Shop.

South of Pier 70, there are only a couple of older brick industrial buildings; most of the development consists of modern one-story industrial buildings. There are also a number of uses with low lot coverage, and extensive areas devoted to outdoor storage or equipment. These include the large towing yard at the end of 22nd Street on Pier 70, the Potrero Power Plant between 22nd and 23rd Streets, mini-storage, fleet storage associated with distribution uses, and the container terminal at Pier 80. The large number of open lots contributes to the low-height and low-intensity character of development through much of this subarea.

Between Illinois Street and Third Street, PDR uses also predominate, and single-story structures are common. However, between 20th and 23rd Streets stands a pair of three- and four-story older industrial buildings. In the northern end of this corridor, there are also a few new multi-story residential structures.

Third Street Corridor. Third Street is a mixed-use corridor with a wide variety of building types. Uses include light PDR, such as warehousing and auto repair, a few offices, small-scale eating and drinking establishments, live/work, and housing. Buildings include contemporary one-story structures, three- and four-story brick and stucco former industrial buildings and warehouses (that also front on Illinois Street), a few art deco commercial/industrial buildings, and, near the intersection with 22nd Street, mixed-use Victorian-era buildings. Some new loft-style residential buildings have been constructed at the northern end of the corridor and near 22nd Street. There is also a set of small, historic civic buildings: the former Potrero Police Station and the Potrero Emergency Hospital.



One-story construction typifies the area east of Illinois Street and south of Pier 70. There are also a number of uses that have open lots for outdoor storage and facilities, such as the Potrero Power Plant (right).

The facilities associated with the recently completed Third Street Light Rail Line constitute a visual element within the corridor. These facilities include poles, roadway paving, signage, street lighting, and street trees.



Above: The Illinois Street corridor has a number of one-story industrial buildings, interspersed with a few multi-story buildings on the west side of the street. Maritime-related facilities such as cranes are visible on the east side. Left: A four-story former industrial building at Illinois and 20th Streets.

West of Third Street/Dogpatch. The area north of 20th Street and west of Third Street also exhibits a variety of uses and building styles. There are a few brick warehouses constructed

around the turn of the 20th century, as well as a number of industrial buildings dating from the 1920s and 1930s. There is a small cluster of Victorian-era houses on Tennessee Street, extending a half block on either side of 18th Street. There are also several loft-style residential buildings, some of them new construction, and others in converted industrial buildings. Esprit Park occupies the entire block between 19th, 20th, Minnesota and Indiana Streets.



Highly varied building styles in the Third Street corridor.

Buildings in this subarea are mostly one and two stories, though a few have three stories. Compared to the heavier PDR and maritime areas east of Illinois Street, parcels are small.



The mixed-use area north of Dogpatch. Left: A turn of the century brick warehouse building. Right: New residential loft construction adjacent to a one-story PDR building.

Generally bounded by Third Street, Indiana Street, 20th Street, and a diagonal alignment between 22nd and 23rd Streets, Dogpatch is a primarily residential enclave dating to the late 1800s. The houses are concentrated on Minnesota and Tennessee Streets. Twenty-second Street serves as the neighborhood's commercial spine, and has two- to three-story mixed-use buildings with ground-floor commercial space.



Dogpatch is a residential and neighborhood commercial enclave centered on 22nd and Third streets.

The lot pattern in Dogpatch is one of deep lots with narrow frontages. Along with the articulation and detailing of its buildings, the 25-by 100-foot pattern contributes to an intimate scale and pedestrian-oriented environment.



One-story warehouse buildings and new loft construction side-by-side on Minnesota Street near 24th Street.

South and east of Dogpatch, the Central Waterfront consists largely of one- and two-story industrial buildings, a few lots used for open storage of fleets, and some three- and four-story new loft-style residential buildings. While much taller than surrounding development, the new lofts borrow from the industrial aesthetic, employing tall stories and large windows, and incorporating metal elements into their facades.



Left: New loft construction at Indiana and 23rd streets. Right: Looking down Minnesota Street from 26th street.

Visual Resources

The most dominant visual element in the Central Waterfront is the Potrero Power Plant, near the water's edge, east of Illinois Street between 22nd and 23rd Streets. Other notable visual landmarks include the two-block long former American Can Company building at 20th and Third Streets and the old Bethlehem Steel complex nearby, and other large industrial and former industrial buildings throughout the area. The old wood-frame I. M. Scott School on Tennessee Street is another visual landmark in the neighborhood.

The only park of substantial size in the Central Waterfront is Esprit Park.

Views

This section describes views from streets and other public areas in each of the Eastern Neighborhood's subareas.

Because of the discontinuous street grid, the views from public areas in East SoMa are primarily to other parts of the city. Many of the north-south streets provide views of the tall buildings of Downtown San Francisco. Some east-west streets on the eastern edge of the district provide views toward San Francisco Bay. The Embarcadero on the neighborhood's eastern edge also provides open views of the Bay and across to the cities and hills of the East Bay.

From many of the Mission's north-south streets, there are views to Bernal Heights—lush green in winter and spring, and dusty brown in summer and fall—to the south and to downtown to the north. On east-west streets, there are views to Potrero Hill and Twin Peaks, as well as the skeletal structure of Sutro Tower.



Left: The most notable views in many parts of East SoMa are to downtown skyscrapers, such as this view from Mission and Sixth streets. Right: View of Bernal Heights from Mission and 24th streets.

The Showplace Square/Potrero Hill neighborhood has dramatic views of downtown San Francisco from 16th Street and above. From higher points on Potrero Hill, there are views in several directions: it is possible to see Twin Peaks, Bayview Hill, San Bruno Mountain, the Bay and the East Bay Hills. Views are particularly dramatic around 20th Street and from the top of the hill near the Potrero Hill Recreation Center. McKinley Square also offers dramatic views of the Mission District and Twin Peaks to the west.



There are dramatic views to downtown San Francisco from Potrero Hill, even from lower streets.

The Central Waterfront affords some publicly accessible views to the San Francisco Bay, downtown San Francisco, and Potrero Hill. Views of the Bay are best from east-west oriented streets and publicly accessible open spaces (i.e., Warm Water Cove) close to the Bay. Views of the Bay, East Bay Hills, and shipping facilities are also good from east-west streets at higher elevations on the west side of the neighborhood. There are fairly consistent views of downtown from areas north of 20th Street. Throughout the Central Waterfront, views of the east side of Potrero Hill are available to the west.

Light and Glare

Sources of light and glare in the project area are generally limited to the interior and exterior lights of buildings, parking lot lighting, and street lighting. Where there are more open lots and outdoor facilities, such as in the Seventh Street corridor in Showplace Square/Potrero Hill, and in

the Central Waterfront neighborhood, freestanding parking lot and security light standards are more common. In addition, cars and trucks traveling to, from and within the project area represent a source of glare. These sources of light are typical of those specifically in industrial zones and within developed urban areas in general.

Regulatory Setting

General Plan Urban Design Element

The Urban Design Element of the *General Plan* is concerned with the physical character and environment of the city with respect to development and preservation. *General Plan* policies are discussed in Section IV.B, Plans and Policies, of this EIR.

Planning Code – Height and Bulk Districts

San Francisco utilizes a zoning system with two separate sets of districts: one that regulates land uses, and another that regulates height and bulk. There are 13 different height and bulk districts within the project area. Proposed height limits in each of the Eastern Neighborhoods are discussed in Chapter III, Project Description; existing height limits are described in Section IV.B, Plans and Policies.

Other Controls

Section IV.B, Plans and Policies, describes parts of the Planning Code that are applicable to urban design, including Section 311 and the Residential Design Guidelines and Section 312 and the Neighborhood Commercial Design Guidelines, as well as the Industrial Area Design Guidelines and the Planning Commission prohibition on reflective glass. (The latter two policies were adopted by Planning Commission resolutions.)

Impact Analysis

Significance Criteria

For the purposes of this EIR, the project would be deemed to have a significant effect on visual quality if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and other features of the built or natural environment which contribute to a scenic public setting;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or

- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area or which would substantially impact other people or properties.

It is not anticipated that the proposed project would substantially damage scenic resources that contribute to a scenic public setting. As a proposed rezoning and planning process the project would not directly result in any physical changes. Rather, any changes in urban form and visual quality would be the secondary result of individual development projects that would occur subsequent to the adoption of changes in zoning and community plans.

The analysis, therefore, focuses on how the baseline aesthetic quality in the project area could change as a result of elements proposed in the project, namely the changes to maximum building height and to land use regulations. The analysis also considers the urban design objectives and policies in the draft area plans. The analysis considers the degree of visual contrast and compatibility in scale and character between existing development and the future development that is likely under the rezoning project. Little in the way of specific changes to urban form or visual quality would be directly attributable to the proposed rezoning and draft area plans themselves. Instead, the focus of this analysis is on areas where proposed zoning changes could affect the built environment when development on individual sites within the project area occurs.

Anticipated Area-wide Changes in Urban Form

The proposed rezoning would increase maximum permitted building heights along selected streets and subareas of the Eastern Neighborhoods, to correspond with the intended character and intensity of the proposed use districts. Many of the proposed height limit increases would be minor, between five and 10 feet, which would have correspondingly minor effects on urban form and neighborhood character. In other locations, height limit increases of 15 to 25 feet are proposed, particularly south and east of South Park, along some of the major streets in the western extension of East SoMa, in the northernmost portion of the NEMIZ, along the Seventh Street corridor in Showplace Square, and in the Central Waterfront east of Third Street and south of 22nd Street. In a few locations, height limit increases of 30 to 45 feet are proposed (along portions of Howard, Folsom, Harrison, and Fourth Streets in East SoMa; areas near the center of Showplace Square; and on either side of Third Street south of 23rd Street in the Central Waterfront.) On a number of parcels near the 16th and Mission BART station, increases of 55 feet are proposed (where the height limit is currently divided between 50 feet and 105 feet among parcels on a single block). (See Figures 22 through 28 in Section IV.I, Shadow, beginning on p. 383, for proposed height limit changes.)

Under any of the project's rezoning options, typical building heights along many corridors in the project area are likely to incrementally increase, as development occurs subsequent to adoption of the proposed rezoning and community plans. On individual sites within the project area, buildings would likely be constructed to maximize investment of increased height allowances. Typical

building heights, therefore, are anticipated to increase over time, through out this EIR's planning horizon (2025).

While existing PDR buildings are often single-story, new construction is likely to be taller. Because many existing buildings in the project area do not reach the current maximum permitted height, as reuse and redevelopment occurs over time on individual sites within the project area, building heights are likely to increase, both to maximize development investments and because residential and commercial uses can utilize multi-story buildings. Increased heights can also affect the overall scale of development in an area or corridor, which could be adverse if human-scaled elements are not maintained at the pedestrian level. However, the majority of proposed height limit increases are in the range of five to 15 feet, and would not noticeably impact the scale of development, in the context of the generally existing 40 to 85-foot height districts. On some blocks, height limits would be lowered to reflect the prevailing heights of existing buildings, while in other areas, there would be no change at all.

As building heights incrementally increase along affected street corridors, the ratio of streetwall height to street width would also increase. New development can fill in gaps in the existing streetscape, and increased heights along a corridor can have a positive impact on urban form by better defining the street edge and enclosing the pedestrian realm. In addition, the proposed area plans emphasize other possible improvements to the pedestrian setting, such as street plantings and enhanced sidewalks.⁶⁵

In addition to increased heights, parts of the project area would be allowed to develop at higher residential densities than currently permitted, to a greater or lesser degree depending on which rezoning option is ultimately chosen. As discussed in the Project Description, these changes would occur in areas that currently contain non-residential uses and are re-designated from an industrial or heavy commercial zone (M-1, M-2, or CM) to MUR (Mixed-Use Residential), Residential-Transit-Oriented (RTO), or Urban Mixed Use (UMU), although the UMU district would also require retention of PDR space. Such residential and mixed-use designations are part of all three rezoning options, but the greatest areawide changes would be most prevalent under Option C.

The proposed Employment and Business Development (EBD) zones would be expected to result in a greater retention of uses and associated urban form and character than under a future No-Project scenario. EBD zones would encourage light industrial uses and prohibit residential use, thereby reducing the likelihood of substantial conversion or demolition of industrial buildings compared to a future No-Project scenario, in which existing SLI, M-1, and M-2 use districts permit housing conditionally.⁶⁶ The application of the EBD designation would cover the greatest

⁶⁵ See, for example, Objective 3.2 in the Open Space Element of the draft East SoMa Area Plan that seeks to "Create an open space network of green connector streets, living streets and public parks."

⁶⁶ The Service Light Industrial (SLI) zone permits residential use, but only for affordable housing in accordance with the provisions of Planning Code Section 803.5(f).

area under Option A, leading to the least expected change to the light industrial character of these areas.

While changes to urban form and visual character are expected in the project area, the changes would not be adverse in and of themselves. Some of the changes that would indirectly result from the rezoning could have a neutral effect on urban form or visual quality, or have beneficial effects (or, at least, beneficial elements). For example, the proposed rezoning would be expected to result in more cohesive urban form and more consistent building styles within sub-areas of the Eastern Neighborhoods. By delineating new residential and employment (EBD) districts, the rezoning project would concentrate and segregate these uses in designated areas to a greater degree than the existing M-1 and M-2 districts, which currently allow all major land use categories, including residential use with Conditional Use authorization. The proposed use districts would, therefore, be expected to provide for greater neighborhood definition in terms of its built pattern. In the absence of such definition, under a no-project scenario, ad hoc residential development could continue in non-residential areas. While strong contrasts in land use and building style are part of the baseline visual setting and character of the project area, and indeed not uncommon in a densely developed city such as San Francisco, visually cohesive and coherent residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors would contribute positively to urban form and visual quality.

New residentially-oriented districts would also result in a greater number of higher-density residential neighborhoods than currently is the case. Under all three options, where a new zone that allows residential uses—such as the Mixed-Use Residential (MUR), or Residential Transit Oriented (RTO)—would be applied to areas that contain existing PDR uses, some sites are likely to undergo a change in use of existing buildings or be redeveloped with residential and mixed-use buildings. The potential effects would be greatest under Option C and least under Option A.

Under all three rezoning options—as well as the future no-project scenario—the number of residential units, and by inference, residential buildings, in the project area is projected to increase. Residential buildings have elements that can contribute positively to visual character. They tend to include façade variation at street level, and would also include pedestrian-scaled building entries, some with stoops such as in the Mission. Where ground-floor commercial space is included in residential buildings, it would tend to include storefront windows and thus provide more ground-floor transparency than is typical with PDR uses, which often have solid walls and roll-up doors that accommodate vehicle rather than pedestrian access.

Neighborhood-Specific Impacts

This section describes the proposed zoning changes in each neighborhood, and where the changes and impacts to urban form and visual quality identified in the preceding section are likely to occur within each neighborhood. The draft area plan policies pertinent to visual quality are listed here, in their entirety, for each neighborhood.

East SoMa

Draft East SoMa Plan

The Draft East SoMa Plan includes the following objectives and policies related to urban form and visual quality.

- Objective 5.1: An urban form that creates East SoMa's distinctive place in the city's larger form and strengthens its physical fabric and character.
- Policy 5.1.1: Infill development should harmonize the visual relationship and transition between new and older buildings by respecting the heights, massing and materials of the older, surrounding buildings, while reflecting high quality, innovative design.
- Policy 5.1.2: Heights should reflect the importance of key streets in the City's overall urban pattern, while protecting the lower scale development that surrounds South Park and the residential enclaves in the western section of the plan area (see heights map).
- Policy 5.1.3: Development should step down in heights as it approaches the Bay to reinforce the City's natural topography.
- Policy 5.1.4: Enforce alleyway sunlight access guidelines to maintain adequate light and air to sidewalks and ground floor units along alleys.
- Policy 5.1.5: Respect public view corridors. Of particular interest are the east-west views to the bay or hills, and several views towards the downtown.
- Policy 5.1.6: Respect the views towards the downtown from the freeway deck west of 4th Street, where the height of the building fabric remains low.
- Policy 5.1.7: For blocks with an established mid-block open space, rear-yard setbacks should respect prevailing conditions.
- Policy 5.1.8: Discourage the consolidation of lots to preserve a diverse and fine grain development pattern.
- Policy 5.1.9: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.
- Objective 5.2: Promote an urban form and architectural character that supports walking and sustains a diverse, active and safe public realm.
- Policy 5.2.1: Require high quality design of street-facing building exteriors.
- Policy 5.2.2: Ground floor retail and PDR uses should be as tall and roomy as possible, with a minimum clear ceiling height of 12 feet, and should include visually permeable facades in order to permit a view inwards from the street to the activities within. The façade should be at least 75-percent transparent and windows should not be tinted.
- Policy 5.2.3: In use, design and entry, orient buildings towards corners where appropriate. Promote architectural features such as towers, bays and cupolas on corner buildings to help define and convey these buildings' visual and programmatic significance to the public realm. Major entrances should be located at corners, if at all possible.
- Policy 5.2.4: Minimize the visual impact of parking.

- Policy 5.2.5: Residential buildings should be strengthened and opportunities for additional green landscaping should be maximized by adhering to the following design requirements:
- A. Blank and blind walls at the ground floor are highly discouraged and should be minimized. Frontage should not be used for utilities, storage, and refuse collection wherever possible; where they must be on the street, they should be integrated into the overall articulation and fenestration of the façade.
 - B. Parking should be accessed from secondary streets on lots with two or more street frontages;
 - C. Ground-floor units should be primarily accessed directly from the public way (not through common corridors or lobbies). Upper story units should connect to a lobby entry that opens directly onto the public way.
 - D. Ground-floor units should be setback at least 5 feet and no more than 10 feet from the street-fronting property line, and should be at least 18 inches, and ideally 3 feet, above sidewalk level.
 - E. The setback area should be generously landscaped.
 - F. Physically intimidating security measures such as window grills or spiked gates should be avoided; security concerns should be addressed by creating well-lit, well-used streets and active residential frontages that encourage “eyes on the street.”
- Objective 5.3: Improve neighborhood walkability by creating a circulation network through interior blocks and by defining a street scale and character comparable to those in existing mixed-use areas elsewhere in the city.
- Policy 5.3.1: Apply locally appropriate guidelines and street typologies from the Streetscape Master Plan (SMP) throughout the plan area.
- Policy 5.3.2: The intersection of major streets should be designed as prominent public spaces. The design, scale, massing, and orientation of buildings should reflect the significance of these intersections while providing the necessary improvements to create vibrant and sustainable public spaces.
- Policy 5.3.3: Developments that occupy a significant portion of a block, that abut historical alley rights of way, or that include logical alley extensions of existing alleys, shall provide easements that would allow for future alley networks to be built.
- Policy 5.3.4: Available portions of freeway right-of-way should be transformed into landscapes that foster both qualities of place and visual and pedestrian interest. Areas underneath freeway overpasses should be designed to soften the otherwise uninviting character of these areas and to promote neighborhood walkability.
- Policy 5.3.5: Significant above grade infrastructure, such as freeways, should be retrofitted with architectural lighting.
- Objective 5.4: Promote the environmental sustainability, ecological functioning and the overall quality of the natural environment in the plan area.
- Policy 5.4.1: Require new development to meet minimum standards for on-site landscaping that considers rainwater retention and filtration through the use of permeable surfaces, green roofs, and other architectural elements. Provide strong incentives for existing development to meet these standards.

- Policy 5.4.2: Although discouraged, surface parking lots should be designed to minimize negative effects on microclimate and stormwater infiltration. The City's Stormwater Management Plan, upon completion, shall guide how best to adhere to these guidelines.
- Policy 5.4.3: The City shall explore providing strong incentives in order to encourage the retrofit of existing parking areas and other paved areas to meet the guidelines in Policy 5.4.2.
- Policy 5.4.4: Enhance the connection between building form and ecological sustainability by promoting use of renewable energy, energy-efficient building envelopes, passive heating and cooling, and sustainable materials in addition to ecological landscaping elements as discussed in Policy 5.4.1. Compliance with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards and/or other evolving environmental efficiency standards is strongly encouraged.

Impacts

As illustrated on Figure 5 in the Project Description, gradual increases in building heights can be expected along primary streets (e.g., up to 85 feet along parts of Folsom, Harrison, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, and part of Sixth Street) in East SoMa as new development occurs. Under all rezoning options, existing buildings occupied by PDR uses are likely to be replaced with residential and mixed-use buildings, where proposed zoning would permit such changes, affecting typical building heights and building styles. As heights along primary street corridors increase, a stronger visual edge would be created, which could add to an impression of a relatively larger scale compared to baseline conditions. Areawide changes to permitted heights would be relatively modest compared to what is currently allowed in and immediately adjacent to East SoMa.

Height increases would increase the ratio of street wall height relative to street width and decrease the angle of openness to the sky in all instances where heights could increase, but most prominently along primary streets, such as Folsom and Harrison Streets. Because many of East SoMa's primary streets are wide, the potential height increases would create more optimal proportions. Currently, along some street segments (e.g., Folsom west of Fifth Street) there are gaps in the streetscape or existing development that is not sufficiently tall enough to create a kind of edge proportionate to the wide streets and sense of enclosure that would contribute to a positive urban streetscape and pedestrian realm. Increased building heights along certain corridors could be seen by some as beneficial.

The sense of enclosure related to variations in building heights would become greater on lots behind the primary streets where height limits up to 85 feet are proposed. Future building heights could be up to 40 feet taller than existing buildings on lots clustered around South Park (Taber Street) or fronting smaller streets (e.g., Tehama, Clementina, Shipley, Clara Streets, etc.). In recognition of the narrower streets, lots and the smaller buildings that contribute to an intimate scale, heights within the residential enclaves would be established at 40 to 45 feet, similar to current conditions. Draft area plan policies seek to balance height increases on primary streets with protecting mid-block open spaces and ensuring adequate solar access to sidewalks and

ground-floor units by requiring building setbacks, such that the sun access plane would be preserved.

The rezoning options could result in the introduction of new or different land uses in East SoMa, which could not only affect typical building heights, but also building styles. Under Option A, existing heights and the area's prevailing architectural character would likely be maintained on the far southern and western edges of the neighborhood, where the EBD and Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) districts are proposed. In the UMU-designated areas, new mixes of uses at greater intensities may occur. This district would require PDR replacement space, and new buildings in these areas would likely exhibit a mixed character typified by taller ground floor floor-to-ceiling heights that could accommodate PDR business or workspaces with housing above; styles could draw on industrial and residential architecture (e.g., fenestration, roofline, bays, etc) in the area.⁶⁷ Therefore, compared to a future No-Project scenario, Option A would result in greater expected retention of the area's character compared to baseline (and future No-Project) conditions.

Throughout the remainder of East SoMa under Option A, and throughout the entire neighborhood under Options B and C, a greater amount of new residential development – primarily residential use, some in converted non-residential buildings and most in new multi-story structures is projected to occur. As a whole, East SoMa is likely to become more intensely built up over time, and develop a more urban, mixed-use character, similar to changes that have occurred in adjacent areas such as Yerba Buena, Transbay, and Rincon Hill, though at a lower-scale than these areas are at present (or in some cases are projected to become). This assumption also applies to the 2025 No-Project scenario, under which no rezoning of East SoMa would occur.

Existing views from public areas would also incrementally change with any of the *Workbook's* rezoning options. Changes in permitted building heights would increase street wall heights in the neighborhood, which would further define view corridors. Longer-range eastward views to the Bay would continue to be available, as would views to the north. Taller buildings along Folsom Street could bring the urban backdrop of downtown closer to the project area and obstruct some oblique views across SoMa. The draft area plan also seeks to “respect public views corridors” by advocating the reduction of visual clutter and where possible, placing service utilities underground. Short-range views of the area's streetscapes could also change with implementation of any of the rezoning options and area plan. From the pedestrian perspective, the scale of SoMa's large blocks could, over time, be broken up by future alleys or mid-block open spaces that could be required as part of new development. Other potential changes in short range views would occur with implementation of a variety of streetscape improvements in conjunction with the plan's draft policies that seek to design intersections of major streets as “prominent public spaces” directed by guidelines developed as part of the Streetscape Master Plan effort.

⁶⁷ Policy 5.2.2 in the draft East SoMa area plan states that, “Ground floor retail and PDR uses should be as tall and roomy as possible, with a minimum clear ceiling height of 12 feet, and should include visually permeable facades in order to permit a view inwards from the street to the activities within. The façade should be at least 75-percent transparent and windows should not be tinted.”

While new uses, and new taller buildings could alter the baseline character, increase the scale of the built environment and also alter existing views in East SoMa, the primary objectives and policies in the draft East SoMa Area Plan would encourage an urban form that creates “East SoMa’s distinctive place in the City’s larger form and strengthens its physical fabric and character.” This would be achieved through the array of draft urban design policies which pertain to moderating building heights, respecting SoMa’s view corridors, emphasizing high quality design elements particularly along street-facing building exteriors, reducing the visual impact of parking, as well as harmonizing new development with historic resources.

Under any of the proposed rezoning options as well as the No-Project scenario, the East SoMa’s aesthetic setting would change. With the development and implementation of design policies for the new zoning districts, it is not anticipated that Options A, B, or C would substantially degrade or adversely affect East SoMa’s baseline visual character or its surroundings. Under a future No-Project scenario, absent an area plan with neighborhood-specific policies, future development would be regulated by the urban design objectives and policies in the General Plan. Although there would be changes in visual quality, it is concluded that neither any of the rezoning options nor the No-Project Alternative would result in a significant effect on urban form, visual quality, and views in East SoMa.

Mission

Draft Mission Area Plan

The Draft Mission Area Plan includes the following objectives and policies related to urban form and visual quality.

- Objective 6.1: An urban form that reinforces the Mission’s distinctive place in the city’s larger form and strengthens its physical fabric and character.
- Policy 6.1.1 Infill development should harmonize the visual relationship and transition between new and older buildings by respecting the heights, massing and materials of the older, surrounding buildings, while reflecting high quality, innovative design.
- Policy 6.1.2 The design of new mixed-use infill development in the Northeast Mission Industrial Zone (NEMIZ) should strengthen the area’s industrial character through appropriate materials, height, massing, and setback, while still animating the ground-floor plane.
- Policy 6.1.3 Heights should reflect the civic importance of key streets, such as Mission and Valencia streets, in the City’s overall urban pattern, while maintaining the lower scale residential development along secondary streets.
- Policy 6.1.4 Enforce alleyway sunlight access guidelines to maintain adequate light and air to sidewalks and ground floor units along alleys.
- Policy 6.1.5 Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

- Policy 6.1.6 Respect public view corridors; of particular interest are the westward views to the hills, the northward views towards the downtown, and the southward views to Bernal Heights.
- Policy 6.1.7 Architectural design should be used to highlight publicly important views generated by shifts in the street grid or the termination of a street at a T-intersection.
- Policy 6.1.8 Discourage the consolidation of lots to preserve a diverse and fine grain development pattern.
- Policy 6.1.9 For blocks with an established mid-block open space, rear-yard setbacks should respect prevailing conditions.
- Objective 6.2 Promote an urban form and architectural character that supports walking and sustains a diverse, active and safe public realm.
- Policy 6.2.1 Require high quality design of street-facing building exteriors.
- Policy 6.2.2 Ground floor retail and PDR uses should be as tall and roomy as possible, with a minimum clear ceiling height of 12 feet, and should include visually permeable facades in order to permit a view inwards from the street to the activities within. The façade should be at least 75-percent transparent and the windows should not be tinted.
- Policy 6.2.3 In use, design and entry, orient buildings towards corners where appropriate. Promote architectural features such as towers, bays and cupolas on corner buildings to help define and convey these buildings' visual and programmatic significance to the public realm. Major entrances should be located at corners, if at all possible.
- Policy 6.2.4 Along east/west streets, buildings must preserve a 50-degree sun access plane along the south side of the right of way, measured from the curb-line. Along north/south streets, buildings must preserve a 52-degree sun access plane, measured from the curb-line.
- Policy 6.2.5 Minimize the visual impact of parking infrastructure.
- Policy 6.2.6 The prevailing setback and step-up along the Mission's residential streets should be respected in all new construction.
- Objective 6.3 Develop a comprehensive public realm plan for the mission that reflects the differing needs of streets based upon their predominant land use, role in the transportation network, and building scale.
- Policy 6.3.1 Apply locally appropriate guidelines and street typologies from the Streetscape Master Plan (SMP) throughout the plan area.
- Policy 6.3.2 The intersection of major streets should be designed as prominent public spaces. The design, scale, massing, and orientation of buildings should reflect the significance of these intersections while providing the necessary improvements to create vibrant and sustainable public spaces.
- Policy 6.3.3 Developments that occupy a significant portion of a block, that abut historical alley or rail rights of way, or that include logical alley extensions of existing alleys, should provide easements that would allow for future alley networks to be built.
- Policy 6.3.4 Public art, or an in-lieu fee for public art, should be required of all major infrastructure improvements.

- Objective 6.4 Promote the environmental sustainability, ecological functioning, and overall quality of the natural environment in the plan area.
- Policy 6.4.1 Require new development to meet minimum standards for on-site landscaping that incorporates rainwater retention and filtration through the use of permeable surfaces, green roofs, and other architectural and programmatic elements. Provide strong incentives for existing development to meet these standards.
- Policy 6.4.2 Although strongly discouraged, surface parking lots should be designed to minimize negative impacts on microclimate and stormwater infiltration. The City's Stormwater Management plan, upon completion, shall guide how best to adhere to these guidelines.
- Policy 6.4.3 The City shall explore providing strong incentives to encourage the retrofit of existing parking and other paved areas to meet the guidelines in Policy 6.4.2.
- Policy 6.4.4 Enhance the connection between building form and ecological sustainability by promoting use of renewable energy, energy-efficient building envelopes, passive heating and cooling, and sustainable materials in addition to landscaping elements such as green roofs, green walls, and other means. Compliance with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards and/or other evolving environmental efficiency standards is strongly encouraged.

Impacts

Minimal visual change is expected in the existing, predominately residential and neighborhood commercial areas of the Mission as a result of the proposed rezoning options, which would retain existing use regulations and heights in many areas. Regarding visual character, the greatest potential changes could occur in the NEMIZ under Option C.

Compared to a future No-Project scenario, heights along Mission Street would tend, over time, to become more consistent along the corridor, and the areas around the neighborhood's two BART stations—at 16th and 24th Streets—would become more built up as focal points. The proposed 15-foot increases (from 50 to 65 feet) along Mission Street between 19th and 21st Streets would be consistent with the existing height district along most of this corridor, but greater than prevailing building heights, which are primarily three or fewer stories.

Because the proposed Neighborhood Commercial Transit use districts would be similar to existing neighborhood commercial districts in terms of both uses permitted, and existing lot coverage in the corridor is high, the range of rezoning options would in some cases result in incremental changes associated with the replacement of existing residential-over-commercial structures with newer buildings with a greater number of residential units and possibly expanded or enhanced ground floor commercial spaces, because the NCT districts would have no residential density limit (with density governed only by height and bulk requirements). Future buildings along Mission Street may become taller buildings than those surrounding them, up to a maximum of 65 feet throughout most of the corridor and up to 105 feet on parcels surrounding the BART stations. Five-foot height limit increases along Valencia Street, five- and 15-foot increases on 24th Street, with similar increases along parts of many other east-west streets in the

Mission, would encourage taller ground-floor commercial spaces if and when individual properties are redeveloped over time.

Although possible changes to the character along the Mission's commercial spines would be likely under any of the rezoning options, such changes would not be adverse. In some cases, vacant or underutilized buildings would be demolished and new projects constructed, which would result in aesthetic changes. In other instances, surface parking lots or vacant parcels could be developed with new uses. The existing character of the Mission's commercial corridors (e.g., Mission, Valencia, 16th and 24th Streets) is eclectic, comprised of a number mixed-use buildings built in a variety of architectural styles, with no single style predominating. Future development would occur within that context and would be guided by draft area plan objectives and policies to "harmonize the visual relationship and transition between new and older buildings, by respecting heights, massing and materials of older buildings..." while also "preserving notable landmarks and areas of historic or aesthetic value..." Aesthetic changes may also occur in the pedestrian realm through policies developed for the Mission as part of the Streetscape Master Plan effort, which seeks to develop a comprehensive plan that reflects the differing needs of streets based upon their predominate land use, role in the transportation network and building scale.

No substantial aesthetic changes associated with rezoning options are expected within the established, residential areas of the Mission (generally south of 20th Street, the area south of 17th Street between Capp and Harrison Streets, and portions of Guerrero Street). The visual pattern of the Mission's residential neighborhoods, defined by moderately-scaled row houses and flats along smaller blocks, some transected by alleyways, is not expected to be altered by any of the rezoning options. Visual elements unique to the neighborhood, such as the murals along Balmy Alley, would not be adversely affected by the project. In some cases, the Planning Code may require landscaping within the right-of-ways in front new developments, which could enhance the area's character. Moreover, where individual residential projects are proposed under any of the rezoning options in the future, the Mission area plan's urban design policies and applicable planning code requirements related to lot coverage, provision of usable open space, etc. would regulate future buildings.

In terms of views, future new buildings within the Mission, particularly along the commercial corridors may be visible from public spaces (such as Dolores Park, Bernal Hill and Potrero Hill), but would not result in an adverse visual change, as they would tend to blend into the densely built urban fabric of the area. Long-range views to Bernal Heights to the south and downtown to the north would continue to be available from many of the Mission's north-south streets. Views on east-west streets would continue to be available to Potrero Hill and Twin Peaks. Enhanced landscaping along certain corridors, particularly Folsom, 17th, 20th, 25th Streets, could add additional greenery in these urban streetscapes.

Short-range views could change, particularly along the commercial corridors, where zoning would allow transit-oriented neighborhood commercial uses to be developed up to 65 feet, and up to 105 feet near BART. In some instances, existing parking lots could be developed and new buildings (e.g., along Valencia Street between 18th and 20th Streets) could create a continuous street wall where gaps currently exist; although future development could alter views of the existing streetscape and also obstruct views from private residences. These reduced private views would be an unavoidable consequence of the rezoning options and an undesirable change for those individuals whose views would be blocked. Impairment of private views caused by the project would not exceed levels commonly expected in urban areas and are not considered a significant environmental effect.

Under all of the rezoning options, alterations to existing buildings and proposed new buildings would be guided by a set of design objectives, policies, and principles in the draft Mission Area Plan. All of the options would set the stage for future development to alter the character of the NEMIZ, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the rezoning option or variant selected. Option A would incrementally alter the existing industrial aesthetic and Option C would result in the greatest changes over time as the character of the NEMIZ's built environment would become more reflective of a full service residential neighborhood. Option B would preserve the heart of the NEMIZ PDR use, allow mix uses on the core's periphery in the UMU zones, creating visual transitions between areas of greater industrial concentration and residential neighborhoods. In particular, Options A and B could enhance the industrial character of the area through its delineation of uses, which could intensify if the Mission were to receive new PRD uses or PDR uses displaced from other neighborhoods. Conversely, to the extent that existing buildings in districts limited to PDR uses could not be leased, vacant properties, with the potential for physical deterioration, could result.

Under Option C, sites in the northeast Mission would continue to be converted from PDR to residential and mixed uses, as individual properties are redeveloped, which would affect typical building heights and styles. Most of the existing development in the northeast Mission is not built to the existing 50-foot height limit. Option C would designate the northeast Mission as UMU and MUR districts, such that future development would be likely to maximize permitted height allowances, expressed through a built form taller than the NEMIZ's generally one and two-story extant structures. However, potential height limits associated with the rezoning options would be minor throughout most of the NEMIZ, and are assumed not to create redevelopment pressure in and of themselves. Changes to urban form in the northeast Mission would depend more on changes to land use regulations. Additional residential construction would be likely in the eastern part of the district, which would be designated MUR.

Under the future No-Project scenario, there would be expected to be a continuation of the recent pattern of new residential construction within industrial areas such as the NEMIZ, but with less focus than under the proposed rezoning project, which would delineate specific areas—larger or

smaller, depending on the rezoning option—for residential development. Moreover, the No-Project Alternative would not include the proposed rezoning project’s design objectives, policies, and principles. On the other hand, the No-Project Alternative would not include any of the proposed project’s increases in height limits, which could act to counter development pressure at some locations that, under the project, would gain greater development potential.

In the UMU-designated areas of the eastern part of the NEMIZ, PDR floor area would be required to be retained on sites that have been in PDR use, though zoning could facilitate redevelopment of parcels to accommodate increased floor area. While few examples of mixed residential-industrial construction exist, ground-floor PDR space is likely to be utilitarian and include features such as roll-up doors and docks, rather than pedestrian-oriented doors and windows. In both MUR and UMU districts, typical building heights and overall development intensity is likely to increase.

New buildings would likely be designed in a contemporary style, and would provide a contrast with both early 20th century and mid-century modern construction in the district. If historic buildings—currently located throughout the district—are retained through existing and draft policies proposed in the draft Mission area plan, a degree of contrast in architectural style which is part of the NEMIZ’s baseline visual character would also be maintained. Under the No-Project Alternative, without the draft area plan policies urging historic preservation, and without the more finely delineated residential, mixed-use, and employment-based use districts, there might be incrementally more potential for certain historic buildings to be lost to site-by-site redevelopment at higher densities.

Implementation of the draft area plan’s design policies would ensure compatibility with the scale of existing development as well as with pedestrian-orientation, and articulation and appropriate massing of buildings. Future development in the NEMIZ would be guided policies in the draft Mission area plan, that among other things, encourage “the design of new mixed-use infill buildings... should strengthen the area’s industrial character through appropriate materials, height, massing, and setback, while animating the ground-floor plane. While visual quality is subjective, the rezoning options would not result in a significant effect on urban form and visual quality in the Mission District.

The *People’s Plan* (applicable to the NEMIZ and immediately surrounding area) would not result in substantially different visual impacts than any of the three proposed rezoning options. Because it would retain more PDR uses than, for example, Option B, and retain PDR uses over a somewhat larger geographical area, the People’s Plan could be expected to result in incrementally less visual change from baseline conditions.

The MCEJJ proposal (applicable only to the NEMIZ), because it calls for greater flexibility in permitted land uses in the NEMIZ, could be anticipated to result in incrementally greater changes

in visual impact from baseline conditions, compared to any of the three rezoning options, as this plan would be anticipated to result in some greater degree of new development, given its relatively less stringent proposed use controls.

Showplace Square/Potrero

Draft Showplace Square/Potrero Plan

The Draft Showplace Square/Potrero Hill Plan includes the following objectives and policies related to urban form and visual quality.

- Objective 5.1: Provide an urban form that reinforces Showplace Square's distinctive place in the City's larger form and strengthens its physical fabric and character.
- Policy 5.1.1: Infill development should harmonize the visual relationship and transition between new and older buildings by respecting the heights, massing and materials of the older, surrounding buildings, while reflecting high quality, innovative design.
- Policy 5.1.2: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.
- Policy 5.1.3: Heights should reflect the importance of primary streets and transit priority streets (TPS) in the City's overall urban pattern, while transitioning to the lower scale residential development at the base of Potrero Hill. Heights should respect natural topography.
- Policy 5.1.4: Respect public view corridors. Of particular interest are the east-west views to the bay or hills, and several north-south views towards downtown and Potrero Hill.
- Policy 5.1.5: Adopt firm bulk controls to protect view corridors.
- Policy 5.1.6: Attractively screen rooftop HVAC systems and other building utilities from view.
- Policy 5.1.7: For blocks with an established mid-block open space, rear yard setbacks should respect prevailing conditions.
- Policy 5.1.8: Discourage the consolidation of lots to preserve a diverse and fine grain development pattern.
- Objective 5.2: Promote an urban form and architectural character that supports walking and sustains a diverse, active, and safe public realm.
- Policy 5.2.1: Require high quality design of street-facing building exteriors.
- Policy 5.2.2: Ground floor retail and PDR uses should be as tall and roomy as possible, with a minimum clear ceiling height of 12 feet, and should include visually permeable facades in order to permit a view inwards from the street. The façade should be at least 75-percent transparent at the ground level.
- Policy 5.2.3: In use, design and entry, orient buildings towards corners where appropriate. Promote architectural features such as towers, bays and cupolas on corner buildings to help define and convey these buildings' visual and programmatic

significance to the public realm. Major entrances should be located at corners, if at all possible.

- Policy 5.2.4: Along east/west streets, buildings must preserve a 50-degree sun access plane to the north side of the right of way. Along north/south streets, buildings must preserve a 50-degree sun access plane to the east side of the right of way. Along all alleyways and mid-block passageways, enforce sunlight access guidelines to maintain adequate light and air to sidewalks and ground floor uses.
- Policy 5.2.5: Minimize the visual impact of parking infrastructure.
- Objective 5.3: Improve neighborhood walkability by creating a circulation network through interior blocks and by defining a street scale and character comparable to those in existing mixed-use areas elsewhere in the City.
- Policy 5.3.1: Apply locally appropriate guidelines and street typologies from the Streetscape Master Plan (SMP) throughout the plan area.
- Policy 5.3.2: The intersection of major streets should be designed as prominent public spaces. The design, scale, massing, and orientation of buildings should reflect the significance of these intersections while providing the necessary improvements to create vibrant and sustainable public spaces.
- Policy 5.3.3: Pedestrian friendly living streets should be designed as primary pedestrian connectors between 16th and 17th streets at Wisconsin, Arkansas, and Connecticut Streets, and on King, Berry, Hooper, Irwin, and Hubbell Streets.
- Policy 5.3.4: Developments that occupy a significant portion of a block should provide publicly accessible alleys or passageways.
- Policy 5.3.5: Available portions of freeway and rail rights-of-way should be transformed into landscape designs that foster both qualities of place and visual and pedestrian interest. Areas underneath freeway overpasses should be designed to soften the otherwise uninviting character of these areas and to promote neighborhood walkability.
- Policy 5.3.6: An at-grade pedestrian connection between Showplace Square and Mission Bay should be enhanced by tunneling the Caltrain right-of-way.
- Policy 5.3.7: Public art, or an in-lieu fee for public art, is required of all major infrastructure improvements.
- Objective 5.4: Promote the environmental sustainability, ecological functioning and overall quality of the natural environment in the plan area.
- Policy 5.4.1: Require new development to meet minimum standards for on-site landscaping that incorporates rainwater retention and filtration through the use of permeable surfaces, green roofs, and other architectural and programmatic elements. Provide strong incentives for existing development to meet these standards.
- Policy 5.4.2: Surface parking lots should be designed to minimize negative impacts on microclimate and stormwater infiltration. The City's Stormwater Management Plan, upon completion, shall guide how best to adhere to these guidelines.
- Policy 5.4.3: The City shall explore providing strong incentives to encourage the retrofit of existing parking and other paved areas to meet the guidelines in Policy 1.4.2.
- Policy 5.4.4: Enhance the connection between building form and ecological sustainability by promoting use of renewable energy, energy-efficient building envelopes, passive heating and cooling, and sustainable materials in addition to landscaping

elements such as green roofs, green walls, and other means. Compliance with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards and/or other evolving environmental efficiency standards is strongly encouraged.

Impacts

Little to no visual change is likely on Potrero Hill south of approximately Mariposa Street, where the zoning controls, while they would in some instances be under differently named use districts, would continue to limit the majority of the neighborhood to low-density residential use. Physical changes in these areas would largely be expected to be tenant improvements to single- or multi-family homes. Such changes are expected to be in the form of vertical or horizontal additions, window replacement, deck additions, and possible new low- to moderate density residential construction. Visual changes would be incremental and are expected to occur under all rezoning options, which would be guided by principals of the draft Showplace Square area plan and/or by existing provisions in the Planning Code and General Plan (assuming future No-Project conditions).

Minimal visual change would be expected within the heart of Showplace Square itself, as all zoning options would permit, or even require, PDR uses to remain. Option A would delineate EBD (PDR-use-only) zoning in the existing industrially zoned area bounded by Potrero Avenue and Division, De Haro, and 16th and 17th Streets. Under Option C, some larger industrial buildings in Showplace Square may be retained and/or converted to residential use, which would have limited, if any, visual effects.

The greatest visual changes would likely occur along the Seventh Street corridor and lower Potrero Hill around 16th and 17th Streets, where all three proposed rezoning options would introduce residential or residential mixed use districts. The Seventh Street corridor currently contains a number of open yards used for fleet storage and maintenance, and other uses that have low lot coverage. In some locations, such as the Greyhound bus yard and a self-storage facility, tall fences obstruct visibility into sites, so there is little visual interaction with the public realm. The proposed use district changes—from M-2 to MUR and UMU under Options A and B (and, under Option B only, some areas of EBD with a Design/Arts overlay), and to MUR and RTO under Option C—would facilitate the development of multi-family residential and mixed-use buildings, which would tend to provide much more visual interaction with the street and sidewalk than do the existing uses in the corridor. Additional residential development in the northeast part of Potrero Hill is also likely to increase the amount of visual interaction between buildings and the public realm.

The development intensity in the Seventh Street corridor would increase substantially under all three options, as sites with low-intensity uses could be redeveloped, over time, with residential and mixed residential-commercial buildings, and height limits would increase variously to 50 and 65 feet, compared to 40- to 50-foot height limits currently in place along this corridor. For the most part, this subarea does not directly abut other areas that could be adversely affected by the

increased scale and development intensity. On the corridor's northeast side, it is adjacent to the freeway and train tracks. The proposed height limits would allow moderately scaled development (up to six stories) that would be similar to and compatible with nearby neighborhoods in the other directions; in some locations, future buildings may be visible from the freeway, which could further add to the variety and complexity of urban viewshed visible while traveling through the neighborhood. Implementation of proposed design policies to new projects would help ensure that a positive scale is maintained within the subarea, particularly at the ground-floor level.

The area surrounding 16th and 17th Streets would likely experience the continued development of multi-family residential buildings, as has been occurring for the last several years, leading to gradual replacement of existing one-, two-, and three-story industrial commercial and industrial structures with new residential buildings that would generally be taller. Building heights and the overall scale would likely increase somewhat from the baseline condition. Implementation of design policies would help ensure compatibility with existing development as well as pedestrian-orientation, and articulation and appropriate massing of buildings. As such, while visual quality is subjective, none of the options studied would have an adverse effect on urban form and visual quality in Showplace Square/Potrero Hill.

As in the Mission, the future No-Project scenario could result in a continuation of site-by-site residential construction within the industrial area around Showplace Square, particularly in the Seventh Street Corridor, but without benefit of the proposed rezoning project's design objectives, policies, and principles. Without the draft area plan's policies urging historic preservation, some of the historic brick industrial buildings that visually characterize Showplace Square might be at greater risk of loss to demolition or alteration for residential use. On the other hand, the No-Project Alternative would not increase the height limits, potentially limiting development pressures to some degree. Like the proposed project, effects of the No-Project Alternative would be less than significant.

Central Waterfront

Draft Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan

The Urban Design Element of the Draft Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan includes objectives, policies, guidelines, and standards related to urban form and visual quality. The Historic Preservation Element also contains objectives and policies that could influence the urban form and visual quality of the neighborhood.

The Urban Design Element of the Neighborhood Plan includes the following objectives:

- Connect the Central Waterfront to the Bay and surrounding neighborhoods through visual linkages and sight lines.
- Emphasize transit nodes and transit corridors.
- Maintain the fine grain of the Dogpatch area and build with respect to its character.

- Ensure a rich and active pedestrian realm, especially along neighborhood commercial streets.
- Respect and build from the successful established patterns and traditions of building massing, articulation, and architectural character of the area and the city.
- Foster a more pedestrian-supportive public realm in industrial areas along east-west streets.
- Encourage an active and public waterfront.

To these ends, the draft area plan includes a set of qualitative design guidelines, as well as more quantifiable standards, that would apply to new projects in the Central Waterfront. One guideline calls for extending the city street network and creating human-scaled blocks. For the Dogpatch neighborhood, the draft area plan proposes a maximum lot size (7,500 square feet) and a prohibition on parcel consolidation.

There are a number of guidelines that address the massing and articulation of buildings in Dogpatch (which includes part of the Third Street corridor). New development on larger lots, those with 75 feet or more of frontage, is to be composed of individual buildings, rather than singular large masses. Building facades are to be articulated with “a strong rhythm of visual elements.” They are to include three-dimensional detailing and have high-quality building materials on all visible facades.

A number of guidelines also address the pedestrian realm and the ground floor of buildings. Generally, buildings are to be built to the front property line. However, near light rail platforms on Third Street, new development is to be set back in order to accommodate wider public sidewalks. The standards would also prohibit parking between sidewalks and the fronts of buildings, and limit the building frontage that can be devoted to garage entries or blank walls. One guideline encourages the use of projections and recesses to emphasize pedestrian entries and de-emphasize garage doors and parking.

For commercial streets, the ground-floor guidelines deal with direct pedestrian accessibility from the sidewalk, minimum fenestration and transparency of retail frontages, and horizontal articulation between the ground floor and second story. Also proposed is a prohibition on new curb cuts on 22nd Street in Dogpatch and all of Third Street within the draft area plan area, and limitations on parking location.

In terms of ground-floor standards for industrial areas, the guidelines call for locating offices space and orienting building entrances to face east-west pedestrian streets. On pedestrian streets, loading docks are discouraged if alternative street frontage is available and their width is minimized so as to support the pedestrian environment.

The Historic Preservation Element of the draft area plan also contains a number of objectives and policies related to preserving historic buildings in the district. For example, Policy 1.1 is to “encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and resources.” This policy

addresses adaptive re-use of historic buildings. Policy 1.4 is to “preserve historic elements of the maritime and industrial area east of Illinois Street.” Policies 1.5 and 1.6, respectively, are to obtain historic designations for resources at Pier 70 and in the Dogpatch neighborhood. Policy 1.8 is to “promote preservation incentives that encourage reusing older buildings in the Central Waterfront Area.”

The historic preservation element also includes several policies related to the compatibility of new construction with existing buildings. Policy 2.1 states that, in general, new buildings should be designed to respect the character of nearby older development in terms of similarity or successful transitions in scale, building form and proportion, detail, and materials. Policy 2.3 is to apply the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for infill construction in historic and conservation districts.

The Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan also proposes improvements to the Third Street Corridor pedestrian-scale lighting, street furniture, corner bulb outs, special paving, enhanced tree plantings, and corner setbacks to new development.

Impacts

Compared to a future No-Project scenario and to baseline conditions, the rezoning project would result in greater concentration of new residential development in Dogpatch, minimal changes on Pier 70, and retention of existing form and character in other parts of the Central Waterfront.

In the Central Waterfront a single rezoning option is proposed, and the majority of the Central Waterfront would continue to have an industrial zoning designation. The proposed project would result in more cohesive urban form, including greater maintenance of baseline character of the Central Waterfront’s industrial areas, and a concentration of residential uses. The new EBD district would replace the current M-2 district. Outside of Port jurisdiction, generally west of Illinois Street, the EBD District would more effectively protect PDR uses from conversion to higher-intensity uses than does the existing M-2 district because it would prohibit residential uses. Compared to a future No-Project scenario, the rezoning project would result in greater maintenance of baseline urban form and visual character of the industrial areas, with relatively minimal change from baseline conditions. The recent trend of constructing isolated four-story loft residential buildings that are surrounded by existing one- to two-story PDR uses is expected to cease in the EBD. New residential uses would instead be concentrated in a corridor that extends north and south from the existing Dogpatch neighborhood. This extended residential zone would transitionally have a mixed-use pattern, but eventually develop a consistent residential character.

While rezoning to the Pier 70 Mixed Use District could facilitate changes in use on the pier, the historic preservation policies of the Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan would encourage the retention and adaptive re-use of historic structures. The allowances for new uses on the pier, including some higher-value uses such as research and entertainment, could bring investment that

would contribute to stabilization and renovation of the structures, upgrading the degree of basic building maintenance. The basic urban form and character along 20th Street—including building-height-to-street-width proportions and degree of building articulation—would be maintained, while the streetscape character would likely change somewhat with renovation and repair of buildings, and any right-of-way improvements that are undertaken. Such changes would generally be considered an improvement to the visual character of this subarea. Without this investment or other intervention, the historic buildings along 20th Street could continue to degrade.

As new development occurs in the neighborhood, it would be required to comply with the design guidelines and standards of the Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan. Along prominent streets such as Third Street, the guidelines and standards promote pedestrian-oriented development by requiring buildings to be adjacent to the sidewalk, storefront windows on retail frontages, building articulation in a regular rhythm, and parking to be located on side streets. These provisions would improve the pedestrian orientation of street segments that are not currently pedestrian oriented, and enhance the pedestrian orientation of those that are. The guidelines also address building massing and façade articulation and detailing, which would help to ensure that new buildings are compatible with existing development and provide visual interest.

The historic preservation objectives and policies of the Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan would help to retain older buildings, particularly on Pier 70 and in the Dogpatch neighborhood. Retention of historic buildings would maintain elements that contribute positively to the aesthetic character of these subareas, as the buildings tend to have strong detailing and articulation, high-quality exterior materials, and appealing proportions. Their retention would also contribute to architectural diversity and contrast as new development occurs. The policies related to compatibility of new construction would help ensure that it complements rather than detracts from the baseline character.

The Central Waterfront Neighborhood Plan also proposes improvements to the Third Street Corridor pedestrian-scale lighting, street furniture, corner bulb outs, special paving, enhanced tree plantings, and corner setbacks to new development. If constructed, these elements could have a positive effect on the pedestrian environment and overall visual quality of the Third Street corridor, and would complement the recently completed light rail facilities.

Under the proposed rezoning, the existing Dogpatch residential neighborhood would effectively be extended north and south from Mariposa to 25th Street in a corridor variously centering on Third and Tennessee Streets, through rezoning from M-2 to MUR. Thus, residential uses would, over time, be expected to replace existing PDR uses on the newly designated mixed-use blocks. Within the Dogpatch Historic District itself, however, the Planning Code would require that new development and alterations “be compatible with the character of the historic district.” Building heights are likely to increase and styles are likely to change as individual parcels containing existing PDR uses are developed with residential and mixed residential-commercial buildings. At

the same time, the design guidelines and standards of the Central Waterfront Plan would ensure that the fine-grained development character of Dogpatch is maintained, through a maximum lot size, and through criteria related to articulation and massing. Heights could increase in the Third Street corridor, particularly between 23rd and 25th Streets.

Typical building heights can also be expected to increase along Third Street, particularly north of 23rd Street, and the corridor would become more intensely built up over time. The height limit along Third Street would increase from 50 to 65 feet from the northern project area boundary (Mariposa) to 23rd Street, and from 65 to 85 feet between 23rd and 25th streets. As new development or additions to existing development occurs in the northern part of the corridor, it is likely to be taller than existing development, which ranges from one to four stories. The increased height limits could facilitate higher-intensity development surrounding the light rail stop at the intersection of Third and 23rd streets, and would support the function of this intersection as a node and focal point. As existing gaps in the streetscape are filled in, Third Street would likely develop a stronger visual edge and more of a central city character. Implementation of design policies would help ensure compatibility with existing development as well as pedestrian-orientation, and articulation and appropriate massing of buildings, and result in a less-than-significant effect on urban form and visual quality.

The future No-Project scenario in the Central Waterfront would likely result in some of the same effects as would the proposed rezoning project, because this neighborhood has been the location of numerous residential and live-work projects in recent years, and the recent opening of the T-Third Street light rail line is likely to bring additional attention to the Central Waterfront as a potential new residential neighborhood. As in the other subareas, the No-Project Alternative would likely result in less coordination in planning of residential development, with a potential for more *ad hoc* new construction hopscotching from one site to another at various locations around the neighborhood, as opposed to the draft area plan's proposal for channeling development into relatively smaller, more cohesive new neighborhoods.

Views

Under all rezoning options, the view angle to the sky could decrease in some street corridors. Most views from streets and publicly accessible parks within the project area are not panoramic; rather, they are urban views down developed corridors already flanked by buildings. While proposed height increases and use district changes could facilitate taller development in some locations, and thus decrease the view angle to the sky, taller buildings would not generally obstruct other currently visible elements. The rezoning project would not substantially degrade the views. New development up to the proposed height limits may even help define the street edge and better frame these urban views.

In a few locations adjacent to the San Francisco Bay—such as along the Embarcadero in East SoMa, and from Warm Water Cove in the Central Waterfront—there are relatively wide-angle

views of the Bay. However, the project would not affect any development bayward of these vantage points and hence would not affect the openness of the bay views. On Potrero Hill, where there are sweeping views of the city and more distant landscape features, the existing use and height districts would not change; views would not be adversely affected by the rezoning project.

Light and Glare

While individual development projects that occur under the proposed rezoning project could generate additional night lighting in the future, the project would not result in obtrusive light or glare that would adversely affect views or substantially affect other properties.

The project is a rezoning program rather than a specific physical project, and itself would not generate any new sources of light or glare.

Development projects that occur on properties within the project area could generate additional night lighting, but not in amounts unusual for a developed urban area. In fact, where new residential development replaces open parking lots or yards—the case for a few sites in the project area—it would tend to include softer lighting and generate less glare than the present security lighting where such security lighting currently exists, because residential exterior lighting tends to be focused on specific doorways, rather than lighting a wide area such as a surface parking lot. New development projects would, as now, be required to comply with standards in the San Francisco Planning Code related to glare. For example, Section 202(c) states that no use would be permitted in any R, C, or M-1 district that creates conditions that are hazardous, noxious, or offensive through emission of odor, fumes, smoke, cinders, dust, gas, vibration, glare, or excessive noise. Planning Commission Resolution 9212 generally prohibits the use of mirrored or reflective glass in new buildings.

Conclusion

With implementation of the design policies proposed as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods area plans, none of the proposed re-zoning options would substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the area, have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, substantially damage scenic resources that contribute to a scenic public setting, or create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area or which would substantially impact other people or properties. All of the proposed rezoning options, as well as the No-Project Alternative, would result in visual changes over time. As noted, visual quality is subjective. With all options, the degree of change perceived by observers will vary. For example, some observers could be more keenly aware of any increase in building height or overall density, and these observers could find the changes to be substantially disruptive. On the other hand, it is likely that some observers would not consider the changes in the existing visual setting to be substantial, while still others would see a benefit in certain alterations of the built environment. No direct change in visual quality would occur under the proposed rezoning project, and all of the

indirect visual effects of development that could occur through implementation of the proposed project are likely to occur over a fairly lengthy period time. Given that aesthetic impacts are inherently subjective, and given that the changes would occur within a highly developed urban environment and would be guided by the urban design principles contained within the associated area plans, it cannot be concluded that either the proposed project or the No-Project Alternative would result in a significant adverse effect on visual quality and urban design.
