



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Executive Summary Initiation of Planning Code and General Plan Amendments

HEARING DATE: MARCH 26, 2015

Date: March 31, 2015
Case No.: 2014.0925MT
Project: Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan [Adoption Hearing]
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Recommendation: Adopt Amendments to the Planning Code and General Plan.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan is a necessary document for implementing the streetscape and circulation policies in the Rincon Hill Plan of the General Plan, adopted in 2005. As such, it is the basis for General Plan consistency determinations for all streetscape and right-of-way improvements (including traffic configurations) in the Rincon Hill area, whether implemented by the public or private sectors.

The Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan is used as the basis for, and to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of, all streetscape improvements required by Sections 138.1, 309.1 and 827 of the Planning Code, mandated by the Planning Commission, or voluntarily installed. All the curblines and traffic designs described here were fully analyzed in the certified Rincon Hill Plan EIR and related area Plan approvals. The purposes of the Streetscape Plan document are to

- (1) provide a clear, easy-to-follow and detailed comprehensive plan for streetscape and circulation changes for the Rincon Hill area.
- (2) provide detailed guidelines and standards for the design of streetscapes, including curblines, landscaping, street trees, sidewalk bulbouts, lighting, paving, and street furniture.

REQUIRED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS AT THIS HEARING

1. Adopt the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan
2. Amend the Rincon Hill Area Plan to amend and remove policies to reflect completion and adoption of the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan
3. Amend the San Francisco Planning Code to amend and remove language to reflect the adoption of the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Rincon Hill is an area transitioning from commercial and industrial area into a high-density mixed-use residential neighborhood. In 2005, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors adopted the Rincon Hill Area Plan, which seeks to facilitate this transition. The plan significantly increased zoning capacity on Rincon Hill, and when built-out will create housing to support roughly 10,000 new residents. Immediately to the north of Rincon Hill, is the Transbay Redevelopment Area Zone 1, which

was designed in tandem with the Rincon Hill area as one complete neighborhood centered on Folsom Street, and will add over 3,000 new housing units to those south of Folsom.

The Rincon Hill Area Plan recognized that Rincon Hill's industrial fabric lacked infrastructure such as pedestrian amenities and open space to support a thriving residential population. The Plan seeks to rectify this by recommending the construction of a series of open spaces, community facilities and streetscape improvements in the neighborhood. This new infrastructure would be largely funded by development impact fees adopted as part of the Rincon Hill Plan. The Planning Department in coordination with the Capital Planning Committee continues to identify additional resources to fully implement the plan.

The City is also in the process of working with community stakeholders to establish a Community Benefits District to ensure that future streetscape improvements are well maintained. (Note that those required to be constructed pursuant to Planning Code 138.1 are required to be maintained in perpetuity by the developer.) The proposed Community Benefits District will cover both the Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhoods.

While the Area Plan established basic direction for the design of streets within the plan area it did not articulate the level of detail necessary for implementation or to ensure consistent, high-quality streetscapes throughout the plan area.

To rectify this, the Planning Department worked closely with the SFMTA to refine the street and circulation concepts expressed in the Area Plan and vet design details like bulbout locations, turning radii, lane widths etc. These basic changes were approved by the MTA Board in 2006. In 2007, the Planning Department in partnership with SFDPW, the SFPUC, the SFFD and the SFMTA memorialized these designs in the illustrative document you are being asked to take action on today – The Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan (RHSP). The Streetscape plan further expands the design concepts articulated in the area plan with a level of specificity (paving materials, street trees, furniture, sidewalk dimensions) adequate to ensure that the streets surrounding Rincon Hill would be designed as high-quality, pedestrian-friendly spaces made using a consistent material palette and furnishings. Policy 7.4 of the Rincon Hill Area Plan calls on the City to:

Policy 7.4

Pursue the adoption of the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan by all necessary agencies and the Board of Supervisors consistent with this plan.

– Rincon Hill Area Plan (2005), an area plan of the San Francisco General Plan

The Department's intent was to follow with adoptions by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors soon afterwards. Unfortunately, in late 2007, the global recession hit and San Francisco's real estate market crashed. Several pending projects in Rincon Hill went dormant. The Streetscape Plan was never taken though final adoption by the Commission or the Board and has persisted in "draft" status since that time.

The legislation presented in this document would rectify this situation by finishing the adoption process. The proposed ordinance would also make some simple modifications to Section 138.1 of the Planning Code and to the Rincon Hill Area Plan to reflect the final adoption of the RHSP.

This legislation is timely. As the real estate market has roared back to life, there are now various active development projects in the plan area, and all are required to construct streetscape improvements. Adopting the RHSP would clarify the City's expectations for the

area to the Development Community and thus simplify the streetscape permitting process for streetscape projects in the Rincon Hill Plan Area.

PLAN OVERVIEW

Broadly, the RHSP provides two types of information to articulate a vision for the area's rights-of-ways: (1) providing typical plans, sections, lane striping configurations and dimensions for each street within the plan area, and (2) defining an approved palette of materials, furnishings, plantings and street trees.

CHANGES SINCE THE 2006/2007 PLAN WAS DRAFTED

Rerouting of the 12-Folsom Muni Line off of Folsom and Harrison Streets: When the RHSP was initially drafted, Muni's 12-Folsom bus was routed eastbound on Folsom and westbound on Harrison Street. Within the Rincon Hill Plan Area, the parking lane on the north side of Harrison Street doubled as a transit only lane during afternoon commute hours. This shared parking/transit lane precluded corner bulbs on the north side of Harrison Street. After the RHSP was initially drafted, the SFMTA rerouted the 12 Folsom so that it turned northward on Second Street, bypassing the Rincon Hill Plan Area. The rerouting of the bus from the plan area provided an opportunity to add nine corner bulbs on the north side of Harrison Street to improve pedestrian conditions and safety. These bulb-outs were subsequently evaluated by the Environmental Planning division of the Planning Department in a note to file on January 2, 2014 and deemed consistent with the adopted EIR.

Benches: The bench proposed in the initial draft of the RHSP did not meet ADA compliance. The Planning Department has since updated the standard benches proposed for Rincon Hill to seating options that are in compliance with the ADA.

Folsom Street Design Process: Folsom Street between Second Street and Spear Street is envisioned to house neighborhood-serving retail for the Rincon Hill and Transbay Plan Areas. The Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment (OCII) has been managing the redesign of Folsom Street and this stretch of Folsom Street will soon begin construction. A few proposed block dimensions in the Rincon Hill plan area were slightly modified through this process. These modifications are still within the spirit and intent of the vision established within the Rincon Hill Plan Area Plan.

Shared Public Ways (Curbless Streets): In 2010, after the Rincon Hill Area Plan was adopted and the Rincon Hill streetscape plan was first drafted, the City adopted the Better Streets Plan (BSP), which provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for the design of San Francisco's pedestrian realm. Amongst these were guidelines for curbless streets or "Shared Public Ways". The RHSP has been updated to reflect this policy development. Several alleys in the plan area: Guy Place, Lansing Street, Grote Place and Zeno Place have been changed from curbed alleys to Shared Public Ways in the streetscape plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

The streetscape changes proposed in the Rincon Hill Area Plan were environmentally cleared in the Rincon Hill Plan EIR in 2005. On January 7th, 2015, the Environmental Planning Division of the Planning Department published a Note to File to the original Rincon Hill Plan EIR finding that despite the passing of several years since the initial EIR was adopted, the findings were still valid and the streetscape improvements proposed in the Rincon Hill Area Plan and articulated in the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan would have not have any significant adverse impacts.

"As described in the foregoing memorandum, the program EIR for the Rincon Hill Plan EIR adequately addressed all impacts of the Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan. The current Streetscape Plan

represents a refinement to the streetscape concepts described in the Rincon Hill Plan and would not have any additional significant adverse effects not examined in the program EIR, nor has any new or additional information come to light that would alter the conclusions of the program EIR. Moreover, no substantial changes have been made to the streetscape project or Plan since certification of the FEIR, nor have there been any substantial changes in circumstances necessitating revisions to the FEIR, nor has any new information of substantial importance come to light that raises one or more of the above issues.”

Note to File to Rincon Hill Streetscape Plan EIR, San Francisco Planning Department, January 7th 2015

PUBLIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

The original Rincon Hill Planning Process had an extensive multi-year outreach and engagement strategy. Since that time Planning Department staff has conducted occasional outreach and attended neighborhood meetings to update residents on the status of the RHSP.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Amendments to the Planning Code and General Plan

Attachments:

Adoption Resolution

Board Ordinances and Resolutions

Rincon Hill Streetscape Master Plan 2014 Update_2015-04-01 (submitted as electronic document)