



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

General Plan Referral

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Date: November 22, 2016
Case No. **Case No. 2016-014961GPR**
Relinquishment of Sidewalk Fronting Van Ness Avenue from Caltrans to the City of San Francisco

Reception: **415.558.6378**

Fax: **415.558.6409**

Block/Lot No.: Van Ness Avenue sidewalks between Plum Street and Lombard Street

Planning Information: **415.558.6377**

Project Sponsor: John Updike
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94102

Applicant: Same as Above

Staff Contact: Maggie Wenger - (415)-575-9126
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Recommendation: Finding the project, on balance, is **in conformity** with the General Plan

Recommended By: 
John Rahaim, Director of Planning

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project is Caltrans's proposed relinquishment of the sidewalks of Van Ness Ave between Plum Street and Lombard Street to the City. The proposed Project would not affect the structure or function of the sidewalk or Van Ness Avenue. The submittal is for a General Plan Referral to recommend whether the Project is in conformity with the General Plan, pursuant to Section 4.105 of the Charter, and Section 2A.52 and 2A.53 of the Administrative Code.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

On November 22, 2016, the Major Environmental Analysis of the Department determined that the Project (City acquisition of sidewalks along Van Ness Avenue) is Categorical Exempt from Environmental Review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c) and 15378 because there is no direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE AND BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Project is the City's proposed acquisition of the sidewalk fronting Van Ness Avenue from Caltrans. This acquisition extends from Lombard Street in the north to Plum Street in the south and includes all sidewalks along both sides of Van Ness Avenue. The Project is consistent with the Eight Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 as described in the body of this letter and is, on balance, **in-conformity** with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

POLICY 1.2

Ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians throughout the city.

Safety is a concern in the development and accommodation of any part of the transportation system, but safety for pedestrians (which includes disabled persons in wheelchairs and other ambulatory devices) should be given priority where conflicts exist with other modes of transportation. Even when the bulk of a trip is by transit, automobile or bicycle, at one point or another nearly every person traveling in San Francisco is a pedestrian.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City is consistent with maintaining the current sidewalk width and condition along Van Ness Avenue. The structure and function of the sidewalk will not be affected by the relinquishment.

POLICY 23.1

Provide sufficient pedestrian movement space with a minimum of pedestrian congestion in accordance with a pedestrian street classification system.

Sidewalks should be sufficiently wide to comfortably carry existing and expected levels of pedestrians, and to provide for necessary pedestrian amenities and buffering from adjacent roadways. The need for these elements varies by the street context – sidewalk width should be based on the overall context and role of the street.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City is consistent with maintaining the current sidewalk width and condition along Van Ness Avenue. The structure and function of the sidewalk will not be affected by the relinquishment.

VAN NESS AREA PLAN

POLICY 1.1

Encourage development of high density housing above a podium of commercial uses in new construction or substantial expansion of existing buildings.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support the development of high density housing consistent with the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design.

POLICY 1.4

Maximize the number of housing units.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support the development of high density housing consistent with the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design.

POLICY 5.2

Encourage a regular street wall and harmonious building forms along the Avenue.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will facilitate development consistent with the Urban Design goals of the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design and streetscape improvements.

POLICY 5.5

Encourage full lot development resulting in a maximum number of dwelling units.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will facilitate development consistent with the Urban Design goals of the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design and streetscape improvements.

POLICY 6.1

Design exterior facades which complement and enhance significant works of architecture along the Avenue.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support development consistent with the Urban Design goals of the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design and streetscape improvements.

POLICY 6.4

Differentiate bases of buildings and incorporate detail at ground level through variety in materials, color, texture and architectural projections. Provide windows with clear glass throughout the building.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support development consistent with the Urban Design goals of the Van Ness Area Plan by streamlining the approval process for building design and streetscape improvements.

POLICY 8.1

Require sponsors of major renovation or new development projects to improve and maintain the sidewalk space abutting their properties according to the guidelines contained in this Plan.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support streetscape improvements consistent with the Van Ness Area Plan. The City will review sidewalk projects for consistency with Streetscape, Urban Forest, and other public realm plans instead of Caltrans reviewing projects for consistency with state transportation standards.

POLICY 8.2

**Where there are no trees, plant trees within the sidewalk space and the median strip.
Maintain existing healthy trees and replace unhealthy ones.**

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support streetscape improvements consistent with the Van Ness Area Plan. The City will review sidewalk projects for consistency with Streetscape, Urban Forest, and other public realm plans instead of Caltrans reviewing projects for consistency with state transportation standards.

POLICY 8.9

Provide attractive street furniture at convenient locations and intervals throughout the length of the street.

The proposed relinquishment of sidewalk from Caltrans to the City will support streetscape improvements consistent with the Van Ness Area Plan. The City will review sidewalk projects for consistency with Streetscape, Urban Forest, and other public realm plans instead of Caltrans reviewing projects for consistency with state transportation standards.

PROPOSITION M FINDINGS – PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1

Planning Code Section 101.1 establishes Eight Priority Policies and requires review of discretionary approvals and permits for consistency with said policies. The Project, relinquishment of sidewalks fronting Van Ness Avenue from Caltrans to the City, is found to be consistent with the Eight Priority Policies as set forth in Planning Code Section 101.1 for the following reasons:

Eight Priority Policies Findings

The subject project is found to be consistent with the Eight Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 in that:

The proposed project is found to be consistent with the eight priority policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 in that:

1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced.

The Project would have no effect on neighborhood serving retail uses or opportunities for employment in or ownership of such businesses.

2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhood.

The Project would have no effect on the City's housing stock or on neighborhood character. The existing housing and neighborhood character will be not be negatively affected

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced.

The Project would have no effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.

4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking.

The State will be relinquishing the sidewalk in its existing conditions. Commuter traffic, MUNI transit service, and neighborhood parking will not be altered or affected.

5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for residential employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced.

The sidewalk relinquishment will not affect the existing economic base in this area.

6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

The sidewalk relinquishment would not adversely affect achieving the greatest possible preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

7. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

Landmarks and historic buildings will not be negatively affected with the relinquishment of the sidewalk.

8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development.

Parks and open space will not be affected with the relinquishment of the sidewalk.

RECOMMENDATION:	Finding the Project, on balance, in-conformity with the General Plan
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Attachments:

Site Plan

Aerial photos of site