



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

General Plan Referral

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Date: July 16, 2018
Case No. Case No. 2018-009489GPR
Eagle Plaza Major Encroachment Permit

Block/Lot No.: Public ROW fronting Block/Lot No: 3521/056
Project Sponsor: Place Lab (a DBA of Build Public), on behalf of Build Inc.
315 Linden Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Applicant: Brooke Ray Rivera
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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

Eagle Plaza is a new proposed shared public way in San Francisco's Western SoMa neighborhood that will transform an underutilized street into a safe and clean pedestrian-oriented space for relaxing, gathering and celebrating. This project requires a General Plan Referral because it requires a Major Encroachment Permit. Eagle Plaza will transform a portion of 12th Street between Harrison and Bernice Streets in Western SoMa, within the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan Area, into a new public pedestrian-oriented plaza with both greening, public gathering spaces and LGBTQ/Leather pride commemorative elements. The Plaza is designed to accommodate community events and festivals.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The effects of the project were fully reviewed under the Western SoMa Community Plan, Rezoning of Adjacent Parcels, and 350 Eighth Street Project Final Environmental Impact Report, certified by the San Francisco Planning Commission on December 6, 2012, (Motion No. 18756, Planning Case Nos. 2008.0877E and 2007.1035E). On September 9, 2015, the project was determined to be consistent with the Western SoMa Community Plan EIR and exempt from environmental review per CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 (Planning Case No. 2013.1390E).

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE AND BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Project the approval of a major encroachment permit to authorize the construction of Eagle Plaza in the City's Western SoMa Neighborhood. 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:

Western Soma Area Plan

OBJECTIVE 4.4 Ensure a minimum level of safety on neighborhood-serving streets.

Policy 4.2.2 Introduce traffic calming measures that promote pedestrian and bicycle transportation and safety.

OBJECTIVE 4.5 Design neighborhood-serving streets according to local needs and desires.

OBJECTIVE 7.2 Work in coordination with other public agencies to ensure that local park, open space, and recreation needs in western soma are met by new development.

POLICY 7.2.5 Require development projects to contribute to parks and open space directly by creating publicly accessible open space on the site of a project, or by contributing funding for parks and open space such that Western SoMa achieve a standard of 10 acres of open space per 1,000 residents in the Western SoMa SUD.

The Eagle Plaza proposal will meet the above objectives and policies in that the project sponsor has worked closely with the local community in proposing and designing the plaza in making sure that local needs are reflected in its design and programming.

OBJECTIVE 6.6 Provide public information and education about historic and social heritage resources.

Policy 6.6.5 Explore new strategies, including the use of public art, for integrating social history into traditional historic preservation.

The proposed plaza will be anchored by Eagle Tavern, which is considered an important business establishment for the LGBT community. The Project Sponsor has indicated that they will continue to work with the local community in finding ways to celebrate and curate the LGBT's history within the South of Market neighborhood.

OBJECTIVE 7.3 Improve the neighborhood's public realm conditions.

Policy 7.3.2 Redesign underutilized portions of streets and public open spaces, including widened sidewalks and medians, curb bulb-outs, "living streets", or green connector streets.

Policy 7.3.4 Require new development to improve adjacent street frontages, employing established street design standards.

The proposed Eagle Plaza will clearly improve the immediate area with an increased space dedicated to pedestrian and open space, so that the public right-of-way is not only a space to move through but to dwell within. The proposal is to provide flexible space that can be programmed in different ways for different needs and for different events. The Project Sponsor is required to improve the immediate sidewalk space to Better Streets standards pursuant to the Planning Code. The cost of such improvements has been deducted from the value of the in-kind so that value of the required improvements are incorporated in the value of the fee waiver.

Urban Design Element

OBJECTIVE 4 Improve of the neighborhood environment to increase personal safety, comfort and opportunity.

Policy 4.11 Make use of street space and other unused public areas for recreation, particularly in dense neighborhoods, such as those close to downtown, where land for traditional open spaces is more difficult to assemble.

Recreation and Open Space Element

OBJECTIVE 3 Improve access and connectivity to open space

Policy 3.1 Creatively develop existing publicly-owned right-of-ways and streets into open space.

The proposed Eagle Plaza would repurpose underutilized public right-of-way to open space thereby implementing the above Urban Design and Recreation and Open Space objectives and policies.

OBJECTIVE 6 Secure long-term resources and management for open space acquisition, and renovation, operations, and maintenance of recreational facilities and open space.

Policy 6.1 Pursue and develop innovative long-term funding mechanisms for maintenance, operation, renovation and acquisition of open space and recreation.

The Project Sponsor has indicated its plan to establish a Mello Roos District to fund and operate the plaza. Approvals for the plaza will be required by Public Works and/or other agencies having jurisdiction

over the plaza. Through these approvals, ongoing maintenance plans and funding plans for said maintenance will be required. Furthermore, the Project Sponsor acknowledges that the City could require that it participate in the City's Plaza Program whereby the programming of the plaza is turned over to a third party to assure that it is sufficiently maintained and is managed as a public resource.

In addition to the General Plan the Eagle Plaza Proposal has been endorsed through several additional city-led and community-led processes:

- Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Forces 2008 Strategic Analysis Memo on Open Space. Page 13 4
- San Francisco General Plan, Recreation and Open Space Element. April 2014, Policy 3.1. 5
- Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force, San Francisco Planning Department. 2011. Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing: South of Market LGBTQ Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources. Pages 7, 9, and 28. 6

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 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 adverse effect on neighborhood serving retail uses or opportunities for employment in or ownership of such businesses.

The owners of anchor neighborhood businesses SF Eagle Tavern and DNA lounge are founding members of the Friends of Eagle Plaza ("FoEP"). Community supporting organizations such as Folsom Street Events, Eastern Neighborhoods Citizens Advisory Committee, South of Market Business Association, and the Somabend Neighborhood Association are also stewards of the project through FoEP. A dedicated coffee kiosk with accompanying storage and potentially a public restroom, stewarded by the kiosk vendor, will provide "eyes on the plaza" in the northern portion of

the site that features denser greenery and a more private, contemplative environment for reading, lunching, casual meetings with friends, etc. Additionally, the plan calls for a designated food truck parking area at the plaza's north end, with a design intent of creating a rotating schedule of lunchtime food truck vendors to add activity to the space. At the southern Harrison Street end, the SF Eagle in conjunction with 1532 Harrison's future café business will keep watch over the plaza at varying times of day and night (café during morning and early afternoon, the Eagle in the late afternoon and evening). The café will feature outdoor dining, and the Eagle may consider a future expansion to include food service, enabling patrons to dine on the plaza. As well as jobs, these businesses will generate more energetic, active uses of this half of the plaza.

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 adverse effect on the City's housing stock or on neighborhood character. The existing housing and neighborhood character will be not be negatively affected.

Eagle Plaza is designed to be a physical commemoration, celebration, and preservation of the rich LGBTQ and leather cultural history of the surrounding Folsom Gulch neighborhood. While Eagle Plaza is and always will be a public place welcoming to all ages and demographics, several elements will highlight this important LGBTQ and leather heritage. A central flagpole flying the leather pride flag will build the plaza's identity, similar to the rainbow pride flag's role in the Castro. As a playful nod to the area's history and the Folsom Street Fair, a series of movable poles mounted into the plaza surface will allow a range of creative uses: as mounts for shade canopies or movie screens, as TRX fitness equipment poles, or as supports for Folsom Street Fair activities. In addition, the neighborhood stage area located outside the SF Eagle would be a place for community events featuring local artists, musicians, speakers, and more.

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced.
The Project would have no adverse effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.

No units of housing will be changed or removed as a consequence of Eagle Plaza, and, the housing development under construction at 1532 Harrison Street is a key fiscal sponsor of Eagle Plaza, providing \$1.5M to the completion of Eagle Plaza and providing 136 new rental units (22 below market rate) will be available for rent.

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

The Project would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI's transit service, overburdening the streets or altering current neighborhood parking.

Eagle Plaza is designed as a safe and clean pedestrian-oriented throughway, providing an alternative to driving and alleviating associated parking and traffic concerns. In order to curb but not entirely prohibit through-traffic, the "shared street" design allows slow-moving cars but in a plaza environment designed primarily for pedestrians. The plaza is designed for maximum flexibility in use, with areas that can function as small, independent enclaves for a range of active and passive uses but that, when closed to through-traffic can be converted into a large, unified space for special event programming. In its typical configuration with the plaza open to slow-moving cars, heavy movable planters and bench structures create a clear barrier between pedestrian zones and the vehicular right of way. For community events, the plaza becomes pedestrian-only by moving the planters and benches with a pallet jack into the right of way, blocking vehicular access and opening the space into a contiguous and cohesive-feeling gathering and celebration area.

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 Project would 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 Project would not adversely affect achieving the greatest possible preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake. It would improve the City's ability to respond to injuries caused by earthquakes and other emergencies.

Eagle Plaza can become a neighborhood gathering space in the event of an emergency, and could also house emergency relief services or portable housing if needed. The plaza has been designed to accommodate emergency vehicle access.

7. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

This site and building are not landmarks or of historic significance. The structure was constructed in the last 20-30 years.

The idea for a public plaza at this site emerged as a way to commemorate Folsom Gulch's rich LGBTQ cultural history and leather heritage for the broader benefit of its residents, small businesses, and local and international visitors. The plaza would reflect this history and itself become a community gathering space.

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

The Project would have no adverse effect on parks and open space or their access to sunlight and vista. While the site will remain as a public right-of-way, it has been designed to function as a public open space and includes similar features to those found in city parks.

The project design will result in significant greening of the space and replace an asphalt street with trees, planted areas, and permeable surfaces, Eagle Plaza will be critical to enhancing the livability of the neighborhood for both incoming residents and the existing residential, business, and entertainment communities of Folsom Gulch. Eagle Plaza will: improve stormwater retention and infiltration, reduce the heat island effect, reduce water usage through use of native drought-tolerant plants, provide local habitat, promote walking and biking, and more.

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