



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Planning Commission Resolution No. 20371 HEARING DATE JANUARY 17, 2019

*Project Name:* Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines  
*Case Number:* 2018-007888CWP  
*Staff Contact:* David Winslow, Principal Urban Designer and Architect,  
Current/Citywide Planning Divisions  
david.winslow@sfgov.org, 415-575-9160  
*Reviewed by:* Aaron D Starr, Manager of Legislative Affairs  
aaron.starr@sfgov.org, 415-558-6362

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

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

### **ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING CODE TO REFERENCE THE POLK/PACIFIC SPECIAL AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES; ADOPTING FINDINGS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, PLANNING CODE SECTION 302 FINDINGS, AND FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1.**

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider initiation of the proposed Ordinance on November 29, 2018; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments would amend the Planning Code Sections 723 and 726 to reference the Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines.

WHEREAS, the Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines were adopted at the same hearing that the proposed amendments will be considered; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Ordinance has been determined to be categorically exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act Sections 15060(c) and 15378 because they do not result in a physical change in the environment; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of Department staff and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, all pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has reviewed the proposed Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds from the facts presented that the public necessity, convenience, and general welfare require the proposed amendment; and

MOVED, that the Planning Commission hereby **approves** the proposed ordinance.

## **FINDINGS**

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. The Commission finds that the Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines will add more clarity and better organization to the Planning Department's design review effort.
2. The Commission finds that Community members from the Middle Polk Neighborhood Association (MPNA), Lower Polk Neighbors (LPN), and Pacific Avenue Neighborhood Association (PANA), requested the Planning Department develop design guidelines for the Polk Street and Pacific Avenue Neighborhood Commercial Districts with the goals of addressing neighborhood-specific conditions and community values with clear guidance on the design of alterations and new buildings.
3. **General Plan Compliance.** The proposed Ordinance and Special Area Design Guidelines are consistent with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

## **URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT**

### **OBJECTIVE 2**

CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES WHICH PROVIDE A SENSE OF NATURE, CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST, AND FREEDOM FROM OVERCROWDING.

#### **Policy 2.6**

Respect the character of older development nearby in the design of new buildings.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines A1.1, A3.1, and A3.2 directs projects to be compatible with neighboring building context by "Preserve Architecturally Important Buildings", "Harmonize with the Scale, Proportions, Texture, and Character of the District", and "Reflect the Architectural Quality, Composition, and Design Features of Existing Buildings."*

#### **Policy 2.7**

Recognize and protect outstanding and unique areas that contribute in an extraordinary degree to San Francisco's visual form and character.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines A1.1, A3.1, and A3.2 directs projects to be compatible with neighboring building context by "Preserve Architecturally Important Buildings", "Harmonize with the Scale, Proportions, Texture, and Character of the District", and "Reflect the Architectural Quality, Composition, and Design Features of Existing Buildings."*

### **OBJECTIVE 3**

MODERATION OF MAJOR NEW DEVELOPMENT TO COMPLEMENT THE CITY PATTERN, THE RESOURCES TO BE CONSERVED, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT.

**Policy 3.1**

Promote harmony in the visual relationships and transitions between new and older buildings.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines S2.2, S2.3, S2.4, S2.6, requires projects to “Respect Mid-Block Open Space...”, “Relate the Height of New Buildings to the Height and Scale of Existing Buildings”, and “Step the Height of Buildings with the Slope”, and “Maintain Small Lots with Narrow Building Fronts where this is the Traditional Pattern” asks new projects to match massing patterns and sculpt to accommodate existing building massing, setbacks, and mid-block patterns.*

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Guidelines A3.1, and A3.2 requires projects to “Harmonize with the Scale, Proportions, Texture, and Character of the District”, and “Reflect Architectural Quality Composition and Design Features...” to harmonize with neighboring buildings’ character.*

**Policy 3.4**

Promote building forms that will respect and improve the integrity of open spaces and other public areas.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Guidelines S2.5, P2.1 P2.2 requires projects to “Maximize Sun Access to Parks, Plazas, and Major Pedestrian Corridors- Especially in Alleys” and to “Improve the Polk Gulch Alleys per the Polk Alleyway Vision plan”, and to “Improve the Alleys of Pacific Avenue to Serve as Neighborhood Open Space” to use landscaping and to shape building massing for the benefit of streets, alleys, and open space.*

**OBJECTIVE 4**

IMPROVEMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT TO INCREASE PERSONAL SAFETY, COMFORT, PRIDE AND OPPORTUNITY

**Policy 4.12**

Install, promote and maintain landscaping in public and private areas.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines P5.1 and P5.2 require projects to “Provide Street Trees with New Development” and to “Use Landscaping to Buffer Parking and Unbuilt Lots” to add landscaping to sidewalk areas for public enjoyment and storm water management.*

**Policy 4.13**

Improve pedestrian areas by providing human scale and interest.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines A7.1, A8.1, and A8.2 requires projects to “... Relate the Size and Design of Signs to be Compatible with the Scale of the Building...”, and to “Maximize Commercial Storefront Transparency”, and to “Design Storefronts with Human Scale Features” to enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage neighborhood activity. In addition, the proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines P2.1, P2.1, P5.1, and P5.2 encourages projects to make improvements associated with the public realm to provide visual interest for pedestrians therefore encouraging walking and neighborhood engagement.*

## COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT

### OBJECTIVE 6

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN VIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO CITY RESIDENTS.

#### Policy 6.7

Promote high quality urban design on commercial streets.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guidelines were adapted from the existing Urban Design Guidelines found in the Commerce and Industry Element for Neighborhood Commercial Districts.*

*Specifically, S2.1, S2.2, S2.3, S2.4, S2.6, S5.1 and A3.1, A3.2, A7.1, A8.1, and A8.2 requires buildings to harmonize with the patterns of building massing, open space, features, proportions, scale, articulation, transparency and materials of the context to foster neighborhood compatibility and enhance commerce and storefront uses in Neighborhood Commercial Districts.*

#### Policy 6.8

Preserve historically and/or architecturally important buildings or groups of buildings in neighborhood commercial districts.

*The proposed Polk / Pacific Special Area Design Guideline A1.1 "Preserve Architecturally Important Buildings" encourages the retention of architecturally important buildings that may not otherwise receive protection as historic resources as means of preserving neighborhood character and as a sustainable building practice.*

4. **Planning Code Section 101 Findings.** The proposed amendments to the Planning Code are consistent with the eight Priority Policies set forth in Section 101.1(b) of the Planning Code 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 proposed Ordinance would not have a negative effect on neighborhood serving retail uses and will not have a negative effect on opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of neighborhood-serving retail.*

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

*The proposed Ordinance would not have a negative effect on housing or neighborhood character.*

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

*The proposed Ordinance would not have an adverse 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 proposed Ordinance would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking.*

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 resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;

*The proposed Ordinance would not cause displacement of the industrial or service sectors due to office development, and future opportunities for resident employment or ownership in these sectors would not be impaired.*

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

*The proposed Ordinance would not have an adverse effect on City's preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.*

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

*The proposed Ordinance would not have an adverse effect on the City's Landmarks and historic buildings.*

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

*The proposed Ordinance would not have an adverse effect on the City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas.*

5. **Planning Code Section 302 Findings.** The Planning Commission finds from the facts presented that the public necessity, convenience and general welfare require the proposed amendments to the Planning Code as set forth in Section 302.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission hereby APPROVES the proposed Ordinance as described in this Resolution.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on January 17, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES: Fong, Hillis, Johnson, Koppel, Melgar, Moore

NOES: None

ABSENT: Richards

ADOPTED: January 17, 2019