



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Commission Resolution No. 19599

HEARING DATE: MARCH 24, 2016

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Project Name: Midblock Alley and Rooftop Screening and Enclosure Controls
Case Number: 2015-017728PCA
Initiated by: San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Ste. 400
San Francisco, CA 94103
Staff Contact: Tina Chang, Planner
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Reviewed by: AnMarie Rodgers, Senior Policy Advisor
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Recommendation: **Recommend Adoption of Planning Code Amendments.**

RECOMMENDING THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ADOPT FINDINGS RELATING TO THE PLANNING CODE AMENDMENTS TO PLANNING CODE SECTIONS 260, 270, 309, 329, 735, 743 AND 744 TO ALLOW FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE SCREENING OF ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT AND MAKE MID-BLOCK ALLEY CONTROLS MORE CONSISTENTLY APPLIED THROUGHOUT THE ZONING DISTRICTS IN WHICH MID-BLOCK ALLEYS ARE REQUIRED AND (3) MAKE AND ADOPT FINDINGS, INCLUDING FINDINGS UNDER PLANNING CODE SECTION 302 AND FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE EIGHT PRIORITY POLICIES OF PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1.

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, Planning Code Section 260(b)(1)(F) allows additional building volume to screen certain rooftop features (e.g., mechanical equipment, elevator and stair penthouses, etc.), as described in Section 260(b)(1)(A) and (B) in C-3, Eastern Neighborhoods, and South of Market Mixed Use Zoning Districts. However, the allowable volume, as measured in cubic feet, may not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the horizontal area of all upper tower roof areas multiplied by 20, which may preclude adequate screening of rooftop features; and

WHEREAS, a building's terminus is a critical element of its design, as evidenced by Planning Code provisions permitting exceptions to height limits for architectural elements to add interest to the city skyline. Under current Code requirements, to take advantage of the maximum permitted height of 20 feet for the rooftop screen, a permit applicant must provide a setback at the building's terminus, which may not accomplish stated urban design goals of improving the appearance of the sky-line when viewed from a distance; and

WHEREAS, because rooftop screen controls are measured in terms of volume, Projects currently may provide a screen without a setback, but screens that are not set back must be reduced by 25 percent of the

maximum permitted height, or 15 feet, which may prevent mechanical features from being adequately screened, especially considering that many mechanical features reach a height of 16 feet; and

WHEREAS, to help ensure a building's terminus is consistent with the rest of the building's design, and to allow for more adequate screening of rooftop features, this ordinance allows the volume of rooftop screens and/or enclosures to be modifiable, subject to design review, in C-3 and Eastern Neighborhood Mixed Use Districts, allowing the screen to reach a maximum volume equal to 100 percent of the horizontal area of all upper tower roof areas multiplied by twenty; and

WHEREAS, the introduction of mid-block alleys in certain Planning Districts was adopted in 2008 as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods Community Planning effort. This design feature divides large industrial blocks into more walkable segments and transforms historically industrial neighborhoods into urban, people-friendly places; and

WHEREAS, Policy 3.2.7 of the East SoMa Area Plan states that pedestrian networks should be strengthened by extending alleys to adjacent streets or alleys wherever possible, or by providing new publicly accessible mid-block rights of way. Policy 3.2.7 was codified in Planning Code Section 270.2; and

WHEREAS, long street frontages can occur on alleys as well as streets, implicating the special bulk requirements of Planning Code Sections 270.1 and 270.2; and

WHEREAS, when enacted, Section 270.2 only applied to the Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use Districts and DTR Districts, and required that mid-block alleys in Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use Districts be at least 60 percent open to the sky; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the City enacted Ordinance No. 85-10 extending the mid-block alley requirement to South of Market Mixed-Use, C-M and South of Market C-3 Districts. However, the "60 percent open to the sky" requirement was not similarly extended; and

WHEREAS, to more consistently apply mid-block alley requirements throughout the City, this ordinance requires that mid-block alleys, where required, will be at least 60 percent open to the sky; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Ordinance corrects errors found in the affected Sections of the Planning Code, namely in Sections 260, 309 and 329; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this Ordinance are in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.); 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, and Jonas Ionin is the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has reviewed the proposed Ordinances amending the Planning Code, which Ordinances are attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as amended by the Planning Commission to include language to remove rooftop equipment that is unused or permanently out of operation for existing buildings;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Planning Code Section 302(b), the Commission adopted a Resolution 19581 to Initiate Amendments to the Planning Code on March 3, 2016;

The Commission has reviewed the proposed Planning Code Text Amendments Ordinance; and

MOVED, that the Commission hereby recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed Planning Code Amendment Ordinance, and adopt the attached Resolution to that effect.

FINDINGS

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments and the record as a whole, including all information pertaining to the Project in the Planning Department's case files, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. **General Plan Compliance.** The Project is, on balance, consistent with the Objectives and Policies of the General Plan as set forth below.

URBAN DESIGN

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE 3.

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

Policy 3.3

Promote efforts to achieve high quality of design for buildings to be constructed at prominent locations.

This project meets this policy. The proposed Planning Code Amendments moderate new developments in the City, helping to ensure that large blocks are broken up such that more pedestrian friendly environments are created. Additionally, creating additional flexibility to rooftop screen and enclosures will help projects achieve a high quality of design at prominent locations. Projects requiring Downtown or Large Project Authorization tend to be larger in scale and therefore more prominent, thus warranting greater flexibility in screening of mechanical rooftop features that, if improperly screened, would not achieve urban design goals of improving the City's sky-line and creating visual interest to the termination of a building.

OBJECTIVE 4.

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

Policy 4.13

Improve pedestrian areas by providing human scale and interest.

This project meets this policy. The proposed Planning Code Amendments add clarity, expand the applicability of and increase consistency in application of mid-block alley controls. The result is smaller, more pedestrian-scaled blocks which are more pedestrian-friendly and contribute to greater comfort and safety.

**TRANSPORTATION
Objectives and Policies**

OBJECTIVE 23.

IMPROVE THE CITY'S CIRCULATION SYSTEM TO PROVIDE FOR EFFICIENTTM PLEASANT, AND SAFE MOVEMENT.

Policy 23.8

Support pedestrian needs by incorporating them into regular short-range and long-range planning activities for all city and regional agencies and include pedestrian facility funding in all appropriate funding requests.

This project supports this policy. The proposed Planning Code Amendment helps extend mid-block alleys to the Folsom Street Neighborhood Commercial Transit, South of Market Street Neighborhood Commercial Transit, and Regional Commercial Districts.

2. **Planning Code Section 101.1(b)** The Project is, on balance, consistent with the Objectives and Policies of the General Plan as set forth below.
 - A. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses be enhanced.

Existing neighborhood-serving retail uses would not be affected by the Project.
 - B. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.

The Project would not affect existing housing and neighborhood character nor the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.
 - C. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced,

The Project would not affect the City's supply of affordable housing.
 - D. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking.

The Project would not impeded MUNI transit service or overburden our Streets or neighborhood parking.

- E. 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 Project will not affect the City's industrial and service sectors.

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

The Project will not affect the City's Earthquake preparedness.

- G. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

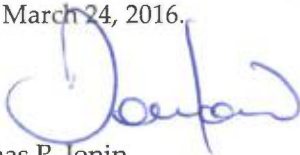
The Project would not affect the City's historic buildings.

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

The Project would not affect parks and open space nor their access to sunlight or vistas.

3. Based on the foregoing, the public necessity, convenience and general welfare require the proposed Planning Code amendments.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the San Francisco Planning Commission on March 24, 2016.



Jonas P. Tonin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Fong, Richards, Antonini, Hillis, Johson Moore, Wu

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: March 24, 2016