

1 [Preparation of Findings to Reverse the Final Environmental Impact Report Certification -
Central SoMa Plan]

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3 **Motion directing the Clerk of the Board to prepare findings related to reversing the**
4 **Planning Commission’s certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report**
5 **prepared for the proposed Central SoMa Plan.**

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7 WHEREAS, The proposed Central South of Market Area Plan (“Central SoMa Plan” or
8 “Project”) is a comprehensive plan for the area surrounding much of the southern portion of
9 the Central Subway transit line, a 1.7-mile extension of the Third Street light rail line that will
10 link the Caltrain Depot at Fourth and King Streets to Chinatown and provide service within the
11 South of Market (“SoMa”) area; and

12 WHEREAS, The Plan Area is bounded by Second Street on the east, Sixth Street on
13 the west, Townsend Street on the south, and an irregular border to the north that generally
14 jogs along Folsom, Howard, and Stevenson streets and represents the border of the
15 Downtown Plan Area, and includes roughly 230 acres that comprise 17 city blocks, as well as
16 the streets and thoroughfares that connect SoMa to adjacent neighborhoods; and

17 WHEREAS, The Project includes street network changes throughout the Plan Area,
18 including specific designs within, and in some cases beyond, the Plan Area for the following
19 streets: Howard, Folsom, Harrison, Bryant, Brannan, Third, and Fourth streets, as well as
20 open space improvements outside of the Plan Area; and

21 WHEREAS, As envisioned by the Planning Department, the Central SoMa Plan
22 endeavors to address the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability
23 through a planning strategy that accommodates anticipated population and job growth,
24 provides public benefits, and respects and enhances neighborhood character; and

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1 WHEREAS, The Project seeks to encourage and accommodate housing and
2 employment growth by: (1) removing land use restrictions to support a greater mix of uses
3 while also emphasizing office uses in portions of the Plan Area; (2) amending height and bulk
4 districts to allow for taller buildings; (3) modifying the system of streets and circulation within
5 and adjacent to the Plan Area to meet the needs and goals of a dense, transit-oriented,
6 mixed-use district; and (4) creating new, and improving existing, open spaces; and

7 WHEREAS, Central SoMa Plan policies include a call for public realm improvements,
8 including planning for new open spaces; changes to the street and circulation system; policies
9 to preserve neighborhood character and historic structures; and strategies that aim to improve
10 public amenities and make the neighborhood more sustainable; and

11 WHEREAS, The Project also includes financial programs to support its public
12 improvements through the implementation of one or more new fees, in addition to taxes or
13 assessments on subsequent development projects; and

14 WHEREAS, The Planning Department determined that an Environmental Impact
15 Report (hereinafter "EIR") was required for the proposed Project and provided public notice of
16 that determination by publication in a newspaper of general circulation on April 24, 2013; and

17 WHEREAS, The Draft EIR was published on December 14, 2016, and circulated to
18 governmental agencies and to interested organizations and individuals for a 60-day public
19 review period that began December 14, 2016, and concluded on February 13, 2017; and

20 WHEREAS, The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Draft EIR on
21 January 26, 2017, and planning commissioners, organizational representatives, and
22 individuals made oral comments at that hearing; and

23 WHEREAS, The Draft EIR analyzed the proposed Central SoMa Plan, which consists
24 of the proposed goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures contained in the
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1 August 2016 draft of the Central SoMa Plan, as well as later modifications to various aspects
2 of the Plan based upon feedback from the community and decision makers; and

3 WHEREAS, In addition to the Central SoMa Plan, the Draft EIR analyzed several
4 components that were not specifically included as part of the Central SoMa Plan, including
5 greater heights for certain parcels on Blocks 3733, 3762, 3776, 3777, 3785, and 3786; height
6 reductions on the site of Moscone Convention Center (north and south of Howard Street);
7 open space improvements outside the Plan Area, on Ambrose Bierce Street, Annie Street,
8 Jessie Street East, and Shipley Street; and the street network changes noted above; and

9 WHEREAS, The Draft EIR contains a “program” level analysis, pursuant to
10 Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, 14 Cal. Code of Regs., Section 15000 *et seq.*
11 (“CEQA Guidelines”), for adoption and implementation of the Plan, as well as a “project” level
12 analysis pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15161 for street network changes and open
13 space improvements; and

14 WHEREAS, The Department prepared a Responses to Comments (“RTC”) document
15 that includes responses to comments on environmental issues received at the Draft EIR
16 public hearing that was held on January 26, 2017, and in writing during the 60-day public
17 review period for the Draft EIR, as well as text changes or revisions that were proposed in
18 response to comments received or based on additional information that became available
19 during the public review period and that represent a refinement or clarification to the text of
20 the EIR; and

21 WHEREAS, The RTC document was published on March 28, 2018, distributed to the
22 Planning Commission and all parties who commented on the Draft EIR, and made available to
23 others upon request at the Department offices; and

24 WHEREAS, Following publication of the RTC document, the legislative sponsors
25 proposed modifications to various aspects of the Plan based upon feedback from the

1 community and decision makers and, on April 5, 2018, the Department issued errata to the
2 EIR that analyzed the Plan changes that occurred after February 15, 2018, revised Mitigation
3 Measure M-CP-1a, and made a minor correction to the Draft EIR; and

4 WHEREAS, After the issuance of the first errata, the Department determined that it
5 was necessary to update the Central SoMa Plan Final EIR certification date, provide an
6 analysis of additional changes to the Central SoMa Plan's proposed height and zoning maps
7 for Assessor Parcel Block No. 3763, Lot Nos. 112 and 113 that was included in substitute
8 legislation introduced on April 10, 2018, clarify the application of EIR mitigation measures to
9 subsequent development projects, amend mitigation measures, include a list of approvals for
10 the Housing Sustainability District Ordinance, and evaluate a list of recommended and other
11 potential changes to the Central SoMa Plan included in the May 3, 2018, Planning
12 Commission packet; and

13 WHEREAS, In a second errata to the EIR, issued on May 9, 2018, the Department
14 determined that these proposed modifications would not result in new significant
15 environmental impacts or substantially increase the severity of a significant impact identified in
16 the Draft EIR, as modified by the RTC document, no new mitigation measures would be
17 necessary, and these modifications to the Project description and additional revisions to the
18 EIR do not change any of the conclusions in the Draft EIR, as modified by the RTC document,
19 and do not constitute significant new information that requires recirculation of the Draft EIR
20 under CEQA, Section 21092.1, and CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5; and

21 WHEREAS, On May 10, 2018, the Planning Commission, by Motion No. 20182,
22 certified a Final Environmental Impact Report ("Final EIR") for the proposed Project under
23 CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and San Francisco Administrative Code, Chapter 31, finding
24 that the Final EIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City and County of
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1 San Francisco, that it is adequate, accurate and objective, and contains no significant
2 revisions to the Draft EIR; and

3 WHEREAS, By letter to the Clerk of the Board, received by the Clerk's Office on
4 June 8, 2018, from Richard Drury on behalf of Central SoMa Neighbors and SFBlu, and by
5 letters to the Clerk of the Board, received by the Clerk's Office on June 11, 2018, from Phillip
6 Babich on behalf of One Vassar LLC, Angelica Cabande on behalf of the South of Market
7 Community Action Network ("SOMCAN"), and John Elberling on behalf of the Yerba Buena
8 Neighborhood Consortium ("YBNC") (collectively, "Appellants"), Appellants appealed the Final
9 EIR certification; and

10 WHEREAS, The Planning Department's Environmental Review Officer, by
11 memorandum to the Clerk of the Board dated June 14, 2018, determined that the appeals had
12 been timely filed; and

13 WHEREAS, On September 25, 2018, this Board held a duly noticed public hearing to
14 consider the appeals of the Final EIR certification filed by Appellants and, following the public
15 hearing, conditionally reversed the Final EIR certification, subject to the adoption of written
16 findings in support of such determination; and

17 WHEREAS, In reviewing the appeals of the Final EIR certification, this Board reviewed
18 and considered the determination, the appeal letters, the responses to the appeal documents
19 that the Planning Department prepared, the other written records before the Board of
20 Supervisors and all of the public testimony made in support of and opposed to the appeals;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, Following the conclusion of the public hearing, the Board of Supervisors
23 conditionally reversed the Final EIR certification, subject to the adoption of written findings of
24 the Board in support of such determination, based on the written record before the Board of
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1 Supervisors as well as all of the testimony at the public hearing in support of and opposed to
2 the appeals; and

3 WHEREAS, The written record and oral testimony in support of and opposed to the
4 appeals and deliberation of the oral and written testimony at the public hearing before the
5 Board of Supervisors by all parties and the public in support of and opposed to the appeals of
6 the Final EIR certification is in the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors File No. 180651 and is
7 incorporated in this motion as though set forth in its entirety; now, therefore, be it

8 MOVED, That this Board of Supervisors directs the Clerk of the Board to prepare the
9 findings specifying the basis for its decision on the appeals of the Planning Commission's
10 certification of the Final EIR for the Project.

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