



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Review and Comment Conservation District Designation HEARING DATE: JUNE 7, 2018

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Case No. 2017-010156DES
Project: Mint-Mission Conservation District
Re: Initiation of Article 11 Conservation District
Block/Lot: Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3704, Lot Nos. 003, 010, 012, 013, 015, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021, 022, 024, 028, 029, 034, 035, 059, 079, 113, 144; and Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3725, Lot Nos. 087, 088
Zoning: C-3-G (downtown General)
90-X Height and Bulk District
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The case before the Planning Commission is to review and provide comment to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on the Designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District pursuant to Section 1107 of the Planning Code. The proposed district contains nineteen (19) Significant or Contributory Buildings which possess substantial overall architectural, aesthetic or historic qualities justifying additional controls to protect and promote those qualities as required in Planning Code Section 1103.

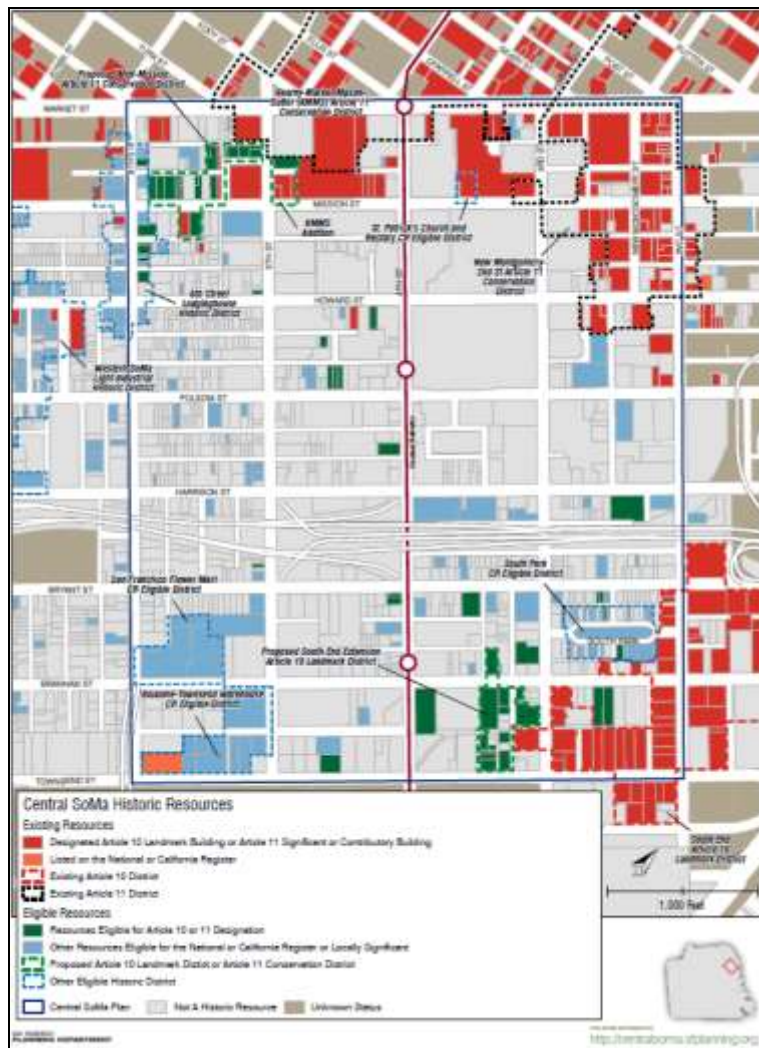
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Central SoMa Historic Resources Survey (2013-2014) determined numerous properties as eligible for Article 11 designation. These include the nineteen (19) significant or contributing properties located within the proposed Mint-Mission Conservation District. The Planning Department (Department) conducted the survey in response to the Central SoMa Plan in order to provide information on the location and distribution of resources within the Central SoMa Plan Area for the purposes of long-range policy planning and for use in permit processing, environmental review, and making recommendations for official nominations to historic resource. In conjunction with the survey, the Department developed the Central SoMa Historic Context [Statement](#) (2015) in order to provide a framework for consistent, informed evaluations of the area's age-eligible properties that had not been previously surveyed or for which survey information was incomplete.

- The Central SoMa Plan Area is comprised of approximately 28 blocks bounded by Market Street to the north, Townsend Street to the south, Second Street to the east, and Sixth Street to the west.
- The Central SoMa Historic Survey examined a total of 134 parcels within the Central SoMa Plan area that had not been previously surveyed, or for which prior survey information was

incomplete. Of these, 72 parcels were not documented, typically because the properties were vacant or not age eligible. A total of 31 properties were determined eligible for the California Register.

- Based on the findings of the historic context statement and survey, the Central SoMa Plan recommends policies that would recognize and protect historic resources. Such policies include protecting Significant and Contributory cultural heritage properties through designation to Article 11 of the Planning Code.
- The Historic Preservation Commission adopted the survey and historic context statement for the Central SoMa Plan on March 16, 2016.
- The Historic Preservation Commission initiated designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District on May 2, 2018.



Central SoMa Plan Historic Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, Article 11 designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTIONS

The item before the Planning Commission is review and comment on the proposed Mint-Mission Conservation District. Pursuant to Article 11, the Planning Commission is requested to provide review and comment on the proposed district to address:

- 1) The consistency of the proposed conservation district with the policies embodied in the General Plan and the priority policies of Section 101.1;
- 2) Identify any amendments to the General Plan necessary to facilitate adoption of the proposed boundary change; and
- 3) Evaluate whether the proposed boundary change would conflict with the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area.

Comments of the Planning Commission shall be conveyed to the Historic Preservation Commission and Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution.

OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

The proposed conservation district requires review and action by the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors. The following outlines a schedule for such actions:

- On May 2, 2018 the Historic Preservation Commission initiated and recommended the designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District
- On June 7, 2018 the Planning Commission will provide review and comment on the designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District
- Final actions on the designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District will be undertaken by the Board of Supervisors

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

The Historic Preservation Commission initiated and recommended designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District on May 2, 2018.

The Historic Preservation Commission adopted the Central SoMa survey and historic context statement for the Central SoMa Plan on March 16, 2016.

Central SoMa Historic Context Statement

The Central SoMa Historic Context Statement was developed as part of the Central SoMa Plan effort to provide a historical foundation and framework for consistent evaluations of the area's age-eligible properties. The context statement's study area extended beyond the boundaries of the

Central SoMa Plan Area and documented the history of SoMa, including significant themes, design elements, architectural styles, and character-defining features. The study developed significance and integrity thresholds and included analysis of conservation, landmark and historic districts and their relationship to previously undocumented buildings.

Central SoMa Survey

The Central SoMa Historic Resource Survey (2013-2014) involved gathering baseline property information for all buildings located within the Central SoMa Plan Area that had not been addressed by prior historic resources surveys, and those that had not been previously assigned California Historic Resource Status Codes (CHRSC). The Central SoMa Historic Survey examined a total of 134 parcels within the Central SoMa Plan Area. Of these, 72 parcels were not documented, typically because the properties were vacant or not age eligible. A total of 31 properties were determined eligible for the California Register.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

ARTICLE 11 – Conservation District Designation

Planning Code Section 1107 authorizes the designation or boundary change of a Conservation District through amendment of Section 1103.1 of Article 11 if they contain "...substantial concentrations of buildings that together create subareas of special architectural and aesthetic importance" (Section 1103). The designation of an area of the C-3 District as a Conservation District or the change of District boundaries may be initiated by motion of the Board of Supervisors, by resolution of the Planning Commission or the Historic Preservation Commission, by application of the owners of greater than 25 percent of the structures in the area proposed for designation, or by any historic preservation organization or group, or upon the verified application of at least 150 registered voters of the City. Once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Planning Commission for review and comment on the designation or boundary change of a Conservation District.

If the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation or boundary change, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which holds a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation or boundary change (Section 1107(d)). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation or boundary change, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal.

OWNER NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The following includes a timeline of the notifications, announcements, and outreach activities that have occurred for the Central SoMa Plan.

- **March 2014 - The Central SoMa Historic Resources Survey web page** was launched on the Department's website. The web page includes links to the draft Central SoMa Historic Context Statement, as well as a map illustrating the draft findings of the Central SoMa Historic Resources Survey. The website remains active and can be accessed at: <http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=3964>.

- **March 25, 2015 - Public outreach meetings** were held at the SPUR Urban Center to present the draft Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and the draft findings of the Central SoMa Historic Resources Survey. In preparation for this meeting, postcards were mailed to the owners of surveyed properties informing them that the draft survey findings were available for review on the project website and inviting them to attend the outreach meeting at the Spur Urban Center.
- **December 9, 2015** - A second public meeting at the SPUR Urban Center was held to solicit feedback on public benefits, including historic preservation. A postcard was mailed to public on February 29, 2016 in anticipation of the adoption hearing on March 16, 2016.
- **July 2015 - Presentation to SF Heritage** regarding the draft historic context statement and survey findings.
- **October 3, 2014 and January 15, 2014 - Meetings with the Central SoMa Survey Advisory Group** were held to solicit comments and suggestions based on the draft *Central SoMa Historic Context Statement* and the draft findings of the Central SoMa Historic Resources Survey.
- **March 1, 2018, March 29, 2018, April 12, 2018 and May 18, 2018 - Notification of Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission** hearings were mailed to property owners.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Since the hearing notices were mailed the Department has received inquiries from property owners with general questions regarding Article 11 Conservation District designation, Transferable Development Rights (TDR), and the requirements and review process for building alterations and Permits to Alter. The Department received one letter from the owner of 956-960 Mission Street with general questions about designation and suggesting the exclusion of properties on the west side of Mission Street. The owner also expressed concerns over any financial impacts of designation. The Department received one letter from the owners of 444 Jessie Street requesting the property be excluded from the conservation district over concerns about the impact of designation on future building alterations.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT DESIGNATION

The Mint-Mission Conservation District is representative of the post-1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire reconstruction period and the evolution of land use patterns at the northern edge of the South of Market neighborhood dating to the mid-nineteenth century. The district embodies the historic function of the blocks immediately south of Market Street as a transition zone between the large-scale commercial uses along Market Street and the predominately industrial uses to the south. This land use pattern was replicated during the reconstruction of South of Market following the 1906 earthquake and fire.

The district retains a mix of small to mid-scale residential, commercial and industrial buildings reflective of SoMa's role as the center of industrial production in San Francisco and the major supplier of mining equipment, heavy machinery and other goods to the western states during the mid-nineteenth century. Constructed between 1906 and 1930, the district's buildings include several warehouses and industrial lofts, three residential hotels with commercial ground floors, and a former bank. Residential hotels provided housing for the largely single men employed by the nearby factories and manufacturing operations and in seasonal or temporary positions along the waterfront. The district is particularly notable as it is a survivor of the extensive redevelopment of SoMa in the late twentieth century during

which much of the building stock from the period when the neighborhood served as the city's industrial and manufacturing center was razed.

The district encompasses a cohesive concentration of reinforced concrete and brick masonry buildings featuring Classical Revival style design influences. The use of Classical design elements, more so than any other style, typified early 20th century commercial architecture in San Francisco. Common examples of Classical Revival design include the use of corniced rooflines, frequently with brackets or modillions; dentil moldings; applied cast shield or swag ornaments; and arched openings. These design details are frequently strongest on residential and mixed-use buildings, and less pronounced on industrial buildings.

Other than portions of the New Montgomery-Mission-Second Street Conservation District, there are no other blocks north of Howard Street or east of 6th Street which so strongly retain this historic mix of residential hotels, small-scale commercial buildings, warehouses and manufacturing facilities. The Mint-Mission district is also rare in that most buildings are constructed on through-lots and have visible rear elevations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District. Documentation to support the proposed conservation district is included in the attached Appendix K and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- The designation of the district meets the eligibility requirements for listing on both the California Register of Historical Places and as a San Francisco Article 11 Conservation District.
- The proposed district contains nineteen (19) Significant or Contributory Buildings which possesses substantial overall architectural, aesthetic or historic qualities justifying additional controls to protect and promote those qualities as required in Planning Code Section 1103.
- The district is a rare remaining enclave of small to mid-scale residential hotels, commercial and industrial buildings dating to the post-1906 earthquake and fire reconstruction period which reflect SoMa's role as the center of industrial production in San Francisco.
- The district encompasses a cohesive concentration of reinforced concrete and brick masonry buildings featuring Classical Revival style design influences.

The designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District is consistent with the objectives and policies embodied in the General Plan, Priority Policies of Section 101.1, the Central SoMa Plan, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area as outlined below.

GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establish and require review of permits for consistency with said policies. The proposed designation is 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 Mint-Mission Conservation District will not impact neighborhood-serving retail uses or ownership/employment opportunities in such businesses.

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

The Mint-Mission Conservation District will encourage conservation and protection of neighborhood character as proposed alterations to exterior features of designated buildings shall be subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission, or as delegated to Planning Department staff by the HPC in accordance with Sections 1110 through 1113 of the Planning Code. The Boundary Change will encourage retention of the district's contributory buildings by providing access to an important financial incentive, namely the Mills Act program.

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

The Mint-Mission Conservation District designation will not negatively impact the City's supply of affordable housing.

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

The Mint-Mission Conservation District designation will not impede transit service or overburden 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 Mint Mission Street Conservation District designation would not impact the diversity of economic activity.

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

The Mint-Mission Conservation District designation would not modify any physical parameters of the Planning Code or other Codes. Seismic upgrades are not limited or subject to additional review as a result of this proposed designation.

7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;

Designation of buildings under Article 11 of the Planning Code will encourage the preservation of character-defining features of buildings within the district for the benefit of future generations. Designation will require that the Planning Department or the Historic Preservation Commission review any proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features of buildings within the district. Both entities will utilize the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

Designation promotes preservation by qualifying owners of contributing buildings within the district to apply for the Mills Act property tax reduction program. The Mills Act program allows owners of landmarks and buildings that contribute to landmark districts to receive a property tax reduction to offset

costs to rehabilitate, restore, or maintain their historic property, such as roof replacement, seismic strengthening, or general maintenance and repair.

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

The Mint-Mission Conservation District designation would not impact or facilitate any development which could have any impact on our parks and open space or their access to sunlight and vistas.

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT Objectives and Policies

The Urban Design Element of the General Plan contains the following relevant objective and policies:

OBJECTIVE 2: CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES WHICH PROVIDE A SENSE OF NATURE, CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST, AND FREEDOM FROM OVERCROWDING.

POLICY 2.4. Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

POLICY 2.5: Use care in remodeling of older buildings, in order to enhance rather than weaken the original character of such buildings.

POLICY 2.6: Respect the character of older developments nearby in the design of new 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 Mint-Mission Conservation District designation would preserve areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value by recognizing their cultural and historical value and providing mechanisms for review of proposed alterations by the Planning Department and/or the Historic Preservation Commission, as well as incentives for property owners to maintain and preserve their buildings.

DOWNTOWN PLAN POLICIES

The properties proposed for designation advance the basic principles of the Downtown Plan and reinforce the unique sense of place of the Plan Area. The Downtown Plan of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 12: Conserve resources that provide continuity with San Francisco's past.

POLICY 12.1: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural, or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

POLICY 12.2: Use care in remodeling significant older buildings to enhance rather than weaken their original character.

The creation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District advances the basic principles of the Downtown Plan and reinforces the unique sense of place provided by the conservation district. The designation would preserve areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value by recognizing their cultural and historical value and providing mechanisms for review of proposed alterations and new construction by the Planning Department and/or the Historic Preservation Commission, as well as incentives for property owners to maintain and preserve their buildings.

CENTRAL SOMA PLAN POLICIES

The properties proposed for designation advance the basic principles and objectives of the Central SoMa Plan. The Central SoMa Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 7.2: Support the preservation, recognition, and wellbeing of the neighborhood's cultural heritage resources.

OBJECTIVE 7.3.2: Support the preservation of buildings and features that reflect the industrial and arts legacy of the neighborhood.

OBJECTIVE 7.4: Prevent demolition of or insensitive alterations to cultural heritage resources in the built environment.

OBJECTIVE 7.4.2: Protect "Significant" and "Contributory" cultural heritage properties through designation to Article 11 of the Planning Code.

OBJECTIVE 8.6.2: Promote innovative and contextually-appropriate design.

The designation of the Mint-Mission Conservation District, with its historic mix of residential hotels, small-scale commercial, and warehouse buildings, recognizes and supports the preservation of the industrial history of SoMa. The designation protects "Significant" and "Contributory" cultural heritage properties and prevents demolition or insensitive alterations by requiring that the Planning Department and/or the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed modifications that may have an impact on character-defining features. The Planning Department and Historic Preservation Commission will also review proposed new construction in the district to ensure it is compatible with the character of the district.

General Plan Amendments

Identification of any amendments to the General Plan necessary to facilitate adoption of the proposed designation:

No amendments to the General Plan are necessary to facilitate adoption of the proposed designation.

Sustainable Communities Strategy

Evaluation of whether the district would conflict with the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area:

The Mint-Mission Conservation District designation promotes the Sustainable Communities Strategies and related transportation, affordable housing, job creation, environmental protection, and climate change goals. The proposed designation does not appear to be in conflict with the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area, which is a regional blueprint for transportation, housing and land use that is

focused on reducing driving and associated greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed designation is consistent with policies regarding transit-oriented growth and sustainability outlined in the General Plan and Central SoMa Plan.

Balancing the new construction envisioned in the Central SoMa Plan with preservation and retention of existing historic buildings addresses sustainability goals as preservation is an inherently sustainable practice. As noted on the National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services web page, and in its publication, "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Building," the repair and retrofitting of existing and historic buildings is considered to be the ultimate recycling project. Historic building construction methods and materials often maximized natural sources of heating, lighting and ventilation to respond to local climatic conditions. These original features can function effectively together with any new measures undertaken to further improve energy efficiency and make existing buildings even more sustainable.

ATTACHMENTS

Map of Mint-Mission Conservation District
Designation Ordinance
Appendix K to Article 11 Mint-Mission Conservation District
Planning Commission Draft Resolution
Historic Preservation Commission Resolution R957
Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms
Letter from Kwok Pong Lee, 956-960 Mission Street
Letter from Chritton Brothers Property, 444 Jessie Street