



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: 12/17/2015

TO: Heather Jones (EP) Doug Vu (CP)

CC: Paul Chasan (CW), James Shahamiri (SFMTA), Charles Rivasplata (SFMTA), Lynn Fong (DPW-BSM), Suzanne Levine (DPW), Brent Cohen (DPW), Corey Teague (Planning Dept.), Josh Switzky (CW), Lana Russell (EP)

FROM: SDAT

RE: SDAT Review
Case No. 2014.0011, Address: 1298 Howard
Neighborhood: Central SOMA
Zoning: RCD, WMUG
Area Plan: EN: South of Market, Western SOMA
Block/Lot: 3728/019, 3728/086

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The 1298 Howard Street project came to SDAT on October 26th, 2015. Below are SDAT comments regarding this project.

Context

The proposed project entails new construction of 121 residential units, with 10,000 sq. ft. of office/retail and 91 parking places.

Better Streets Plan

The Better Streets Plan (BSP) adopted by the city in December 2010, provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for the design of San Francisco's pedestrian realm. The Plan seeks to balance the needs of all street users, with a particular focus on the pedestrian environment and how streets can be used as public space. The BSP polices can be found at: www.sfbetterstreets.org.

- Under the Better Streets Plan (BSP), Howard and 9th Streets are classified as Mixed-Use Streets, with a recommended sidewalk width of 15 feet.
- Natoma Street is classified as an alley, with a recommended sidewalk width of 9'

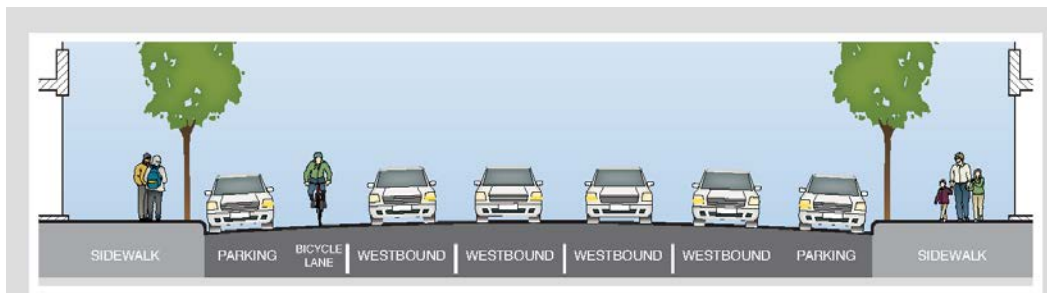
Vision Zero

In 2014, the SFMTA Board joined the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, SF Planning, SFDPH and multiple other city agencies in adopting the City's Vision Zero Policy which seeks to eliminate all traffic deaths in the City by 2024. The City subsequently established a network of Vision Zero Corridors which have higher rates of traffic-related injuries and fatalities compared to most San Francisco Streets. The City has determined that streets on the Vision Zero network should be prioritized for safety improvements especially those that improve the safety of vulnerable users like pedestrians. (See: <http://visionzerosf.org/about/support-for-vision-zero>, links to all agency resolutions are at the bottom of the page.)

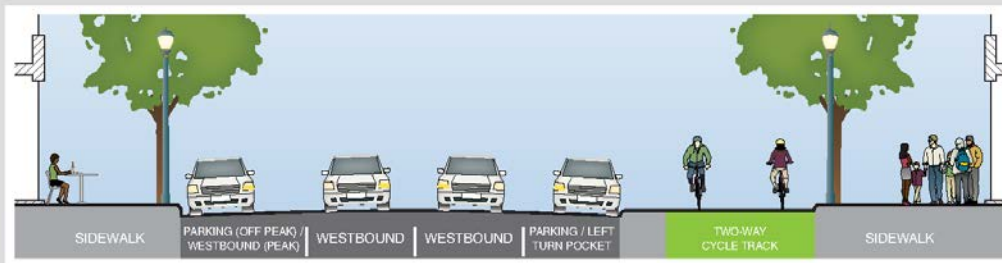
Howard and 9th Streets are designated as Vision Zero Corridors and fall on the Vision Zero High Injury Network for pedestrians.

Central SOMA Plan (DRAFT) Planning Effort Currently Underway

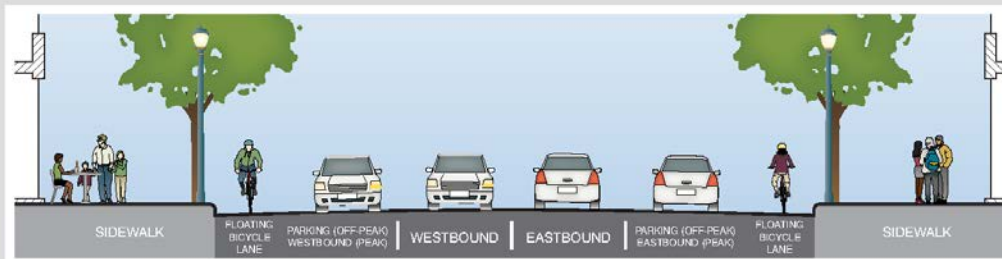
The Planning Department's Central SoMa Plan identified two alternatives for the future design of Howard Street. The one-way alternative would include two west bound travel lanes and a two-way cycle track on the west side of the street. The two-way alternative would include a travel lanes and bike lanes in each direction. These alternatives are currently being analyzed in the Central SoMa EIR which is anticipated to be completed in 2016.



Howard Street: typical existing section.



Howard Street: typical section of proposed one-way scenario showing wider, well-furnished sidewalks and two-way cycle track.



Howard Street (west of 6th St.): typical section of proposed two-way scenario showing wider, well-furnished sidewalks, and floating bicycle lanes.

SDAT COMMENTS

Main Driveway Location

- SDAT recognizes that locating driveways and curb cuts can be an exercise in trade-offs, weighing benefits against negative impacts.

In this case, there are significant concerns with each of three possible driveway locations, which make choosing one location especially challenging. In instances where there is no clear preferred location the City looks to existing policies to help guide the decision. In this case there are several policies that may apply within the General Plan including policies about encouraging safe bicycle facilities pedestrian-friendly alleys and active retail storefronts. In cases where policies are in conflict with one another achieving each individual policy goal may not be feasible. In these instances, the City staff attempt to balance competing policy goals to ensure the best possible compromise. That said, preventing injuries and prioritizing safety for streetscape users is of paramount importance.

Standard best practice in San Francisco is to locate the driveway on the side alley, in this case Natoma. This limits conflicts on main streets and sidewalks, which carry higher volumes of transit, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, and maximizes ground-floor active use on major streets for a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The Western SOMA Plan, however, states a strong preference for driveways to be located on major streets to preserve alleys as tranquil pedestrian-friendly spaces. SDAT respects the community's supported preference, and recognizes and strongly supports keeping alleys places that prioritize pedestrians. Still, adding some new traffic to a narrow alley that already functions as a loading street, for the benefit of minimizing conflicts on primary bicycle transportation routes, deserves serious consideration. The City has developed numerous tools pedestrian-friendly, traffic calmed alleys that accommodate vehicular traffic but prioritize pedestrians.

Locating the driveway on Natoma would maximize active ground-floor uses on the larger streets like Howard Street and 8th Street. Furthermore, there are already numerous driveways on this block of Natoma. People driving cars will continue to use it for access, as would this development if the driveway is located on Natoma.

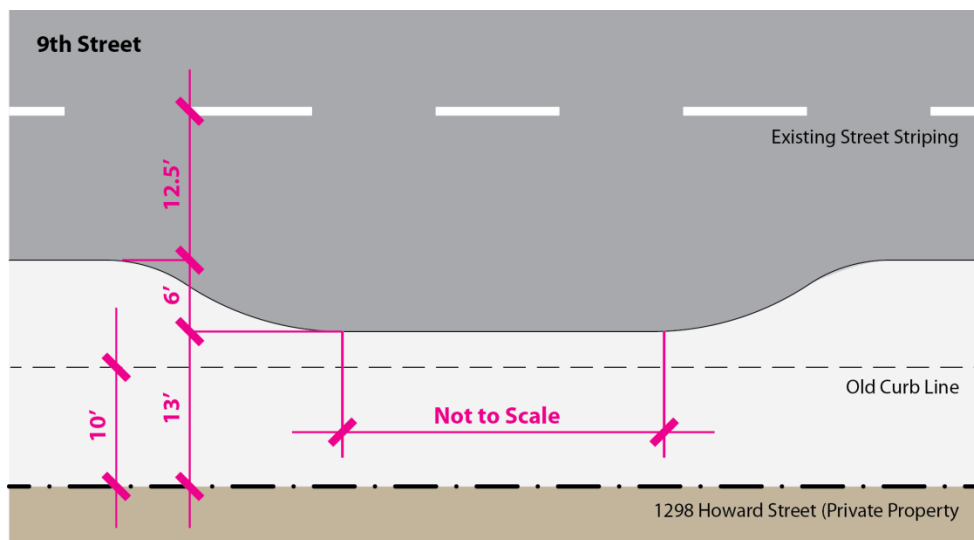
Locating the driveway on Natoma would also raise potential conflicts and tradeoffs that may impact the safety of people riding bikes. In particular, the buffered bike lane on 8th Street may be negatively impacted, although traffic calming improvements could be made at 8th Street to minimize these impacts. However, more significant conflicts with bicycles exist on Howard Street, which is the primary westbound bike route across all of SOMA and is slated for significant upgrades to the bicycle facility located there. SDAT recommends reducing parking to help alleviate potential conflicts.

The final option, on 9th Street, meanwhile, has significant issues related to traffic queuing and back-up.

In order to make an informed decision, SDAT requests more information on what size trucks are being planned for and accommodated, to be sure that Natoma is feasible given the loading demands this development would place upon it. Please provide this information, and contact Paul Chasan with any questions at paul.chasan@sfgov.org.

Bulb-out on 9th Street

- Proposed sidewalk dimensions do not meet City standards established in the Better Streets Plan as the sidewalk width between the proposed bulb-outs is inadequate. Please revise 9th Street curbs as follows.
- SDAT recommends the following curb configuration for 9th Street: At the corner, the outside lane should be 12.5' with a 19' bulb-out. After the bulb-out terminates, the sidewalk should be 13' wide, with a 7' parking lane and 11.6' outside lane.



- Curb returns should conform to the Department of Public Works Standard Plan For Curb Bulbs (see references below). Please note that the any sidewalk changes would require sidewalk legislation through the Department of Public Works' Bureau of Streets and Mapping.

Raised Crosswalk at Natoma

- SDAT recommends a raised crosswalk on 9th Street at Natoma Street. The entrance to Natoma should be narrowed, to a maximum of 14', and special paving is recommended.

Landscaping and Site Furnishings

- Landscaping, street trees, site furniture, and special paving should be included throughout the project's public realm per the Better Streets Plan (BSP).

Transformer Location

- Please indicate proposed transformer location on the site plans.

References

Please refer to the following design guidelines when revising the project's design.

BSP Bulb-Out Standards: http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/pedestrian-safety-and-traffic-calming/traffic-calming-overview/curb-extensions/#design_guidelines

Public Works' Standard Plan for Curb Bulbs:
<http://38.106.4.205/ftp/uploadedfiles/sfdpw/boe/87,175.pdf>

BSP Street Furnishings Guidelines: <http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/streetscape-elements/street-furniture-overview/>

BSP Guidelines for Special Paving in the Furniture Zone:
http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/streetscape-elements/sidewalk_paving/

BSP Sidewalk Landscaping Guidelines: <http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/greening-and-stormwater-management/greening-overview/sidewalk-landscaping/>