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November 28th, 2011

Ms. Amy Cohen

Mr. Jordan Klein

Office of Economic and Workforce Development
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 448
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Ms. Cohen and Mr. Klein,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Central Market Economic Strategy (dated September 2011). SPUR is very supportive of the efforts your office has made to revitalize Central Market. We look forward to working with you to build upon the objectives and strategies you have identified in the Central Market Economic Strategy document. We are particularly hopeful that the Central Market Economic Strategy will include a roadmap for implementation and that you will develop a workplan to accompany the Central Market Economic Strategy once it has been adopted in order to flesh out the work to be completed under each objective.

We offer the following suggestions and recommendations for your consideration:

Objective 1: Enhance and activate the public realm

We are supportive of the strategies and action items outlined in this objective. We believe that coordination between the Central Market Economic Strategy and the Better Market Street Plan are critical to the success of both.

We appreciate your inclusion of strategy B: “make physical improvements to UN Plaza and Hallidie Plaza.” We recommend the planning and implementation of physical improvements to UN Plaza and Hallidie Plaza be included in the Better Market Street Plan.

We are very supportive of strategy F: “Develop a model for the establishment of a public restroom facility with full time staffing.” We strongly agree that this public restroom should be staffed full-time to ensure the safety and cleanliness of the facility.

Objective 2: Establish a Creative Arts Community

We support the establishment of a Creative Arts Community in Central Market. Achieving this goal will not be easy to do. Strategy C “Provide...technical assistance to non-profit organizations that desire to locate and/or remain in the district” and E “Create incentives for developers and property owners to develop and maintain facilities for arts organizations and uses” are critical to this effort.

We strongly support establishing streamlined permitting for temporary projects. Streamlined permitting should be available for any temporary project that activates the street, not just those associated with an arts use. The recently proposed 1% for Arts legislation could help support some of these projects.

Objective 3: Stabilize the Existing Community

We recommend that this objective be moved forward in the document to highlight its importance.

A.1. “Target the ‘worst offender’ SROs.”

We strongly support this action item. Currently there are some SRO owners that allow very negative behaviors to occur within their buildings. We believe that targeting one of the worst offenders within the first 6 months has the potential to have a positive ripple impact on the neighborhood as a whole.

B.2. “Assign a point person...to act as a liason for affordable housing strategies”

In addition to assigning a point person in the Mayor’s Office of Housing to assist as a liason for the Central Market District, we recommend also assigning a point person responsible for Master Leasing SROs as part of the Care Not Cash program.

C.2. “Explore new programs...to build workforce housing”

This is an important housing strategy to help diversify the housing stock. In addition to the development of smaller units that are affordable by design, we support the development of 80/20 rental housing projects in Central Market (80% market rate/20% affordable at 50% of AMI through the use of tax exempt bond debt). New rental housing can be affordable to moderate and middle income households. Additionally, we also support the development of moderate and middle-income ownership housing.

E “Enable community members to have more input on the location of new social service facilities...”

We would encourage OEWD to work with social service providers within the district to establish a series of “Good Neighbor” policies to help reduce the impact of clustered social services on street activity. Many Community Benefit Districts employ community guides and ambassadors to help support civility on the streets. The Central Market CBD could help encourage adherence to good neighbors policies.

Objective 4: Reduce Vacancies and Catalyze Development

A.1 “Establish a tax increment financing district”

We believe that the establishment of a tax financing district in Central Market is critical to carrying out the other objectives of the Central Market Economic Strategy.

A.2. “Enable broader use of the Mills Act” and B. “Market existing funding and incentive programs...in order to restore historic buildings, facades and theater marquees.”

We are very supportive of these strategies and action items. Central Market is an ideal location to pursue an aggressive adaptive reuse and historic rehabilitation program. We strongly encourage the broader use of the Mills Act in the Central Market. As we understand it, Los Angeles has been very successful in incentivizing adaptive reuse and using the Mills Act to rehabilitate historic properties.

E. Explore the possibility of non-monetary incentives to facilitate the rehabilitation of vacant buildings.

In 1999, Los Angeles adopted an adaptive reuse ordinance to encourage the reuse of historic properties in the downtown area. In 2003, that ordinance was amended to include four other areas of the city. We also understand that the City of Los Angeles appointed a adaptive reuse “czar” housed within the Mayor’s Office to help facilitate the use of the city’s adaptive reuse programs.

More information may be found about Los Angeles' program here:
<http://preservation.lacity.org/reuse-ordinance>

H. "Provide support to catalytic...development projects to ensure they are built"
One issue that is not addressed in Central Market Economic Strategy is that of increased height. SPUR believes there may be a few targeted areas where it may be appropriate to encourage increased height. The City may wish to consider height or FAR bonuses for the inclusion of arts related spaces or other public benefits. Adding additional housing units in the area will help increase foot traffic in the neighborhood and support the new retail that the Central Market Economic Strategy is seeking to encourage.

Another issue that should be addressed is the development of new student housing in Central Market. There are many educational institutions within or directly adjacent to the Central Market District. These include UC Hastings College of the Law and the Academy of Art. The city should work with these institutions to site new student housing within the District.

Additionally, OWED could help to create a loan program that helps fund start-up and tenant improvements for co-working environments.

Objective 5: Build Community Capacity

SPUR supports the strategies and action items outlined under this objective.

Objective 6: Improve Safety

SPUR believes that meeting this objective is perhaps the single most important way to realize the other objectives in the Central Market Strategy. In particular, we are extremely supportive of action item B.1. "increase the presence and visibility of police through more foot and bicycle patrols."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 415-644-4292.

Sincerely,



Sarah Karlinsky
Deputy Director