



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

December 11, 2017

Board of Supervisors Land Use & Transportation Committee
San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA

RE: Prioritization of Public Benefits in Central SoMa

Dear Supervisors Farrell, Peskin, Tang and Kim,

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the prioritization of public benefits in the Central SoMa Plan. We believe the choices made around Central SoMa's growth will influence the future of San Francisco as a whole. The proposed area upzonings create great opportunity for value capture to benefit the neighborhood, the city and even the region. We have already provided input to SF Planning staff and the Planning Commission but wanted to revisit given the updated proposal being presented to you today.

While the projected \$2 billion that could be generated by the Central SoMa Plan and allocated toward public benefits over 25 years is significant, the need is also enormous. San Francisco's transportation needs alone require \$10 billion in investment by 2030. Given the need to prioritize finite public resources, we believe that the most important public investments in Central SoMa are those that will significantly improve the public realm; that benefit all the neighborhood's residents, workers, and visitors; and that are key to neighborhood livability.

We urge the Department to put forth a financially-feasible public benefits program that prioritizes housing affordable to a range of household incomes, transit, complete streets, open space and sustainability.

Affordable Housing: \$940 Million (33% overall affordability)

Housing affordability is the crisis of our time, and SPUR has long supported increasing both new housing production overall and the availability of affordable housing. We agree with the Planning Department's proposal, which dedicates a large portion of the potential funding in Central SoMa to making new and rehabilitated housing units affordable. We want to acknowledge that the proposed 33 percent affordability goal commits approximately \$940 million of the potential \$2 billion in public benefits to housing, and that the baseline proposal in fact increases affordability across new and rehabilitated units from 23 – 26 percent up to 33 percent, through a combination of 100% affordable projects, dedication of Jobs-Housing Linkage fees and on-site inclusionary units. We believe that this is the right investment and that 33 percent is the right goal for new and rehabilitated units in Central SoMa.

Beyond affordable housing investments, there is \$481 million in existing baseline fees and requirements that we support, including \$60 million not included in the categories discussed below. We propose that the remaining potential for new value-capture funding be allocated to:

Complete Streets: \$130 Million

Redesigning all the major streets of the Central SoMa Area is key to the success of the neighborhood for all who live, work and travel through it. The streets of Central SoMa are currently designed to allow car traffic to move through the neighborhood quickly and not for the safety and enjoyment of walkers and bikers in the neighborhood. This is also an important effort because of the highly visible and tangible nature of the investment. We are glad to see that the proposal now supports the full \$130 million redesign and build-out of Central SoMa's major streets.

Open Space: \$170 Million

Open space is also a significant need for the neighborhood. A requirement for privately-owned public open spaces (POPOS) and existing fees will fund a new playground, a new recreation center and 4 acres of POPOS, but as SPUR staff have mentioned in prior letters to you, a new South Park-scaled one-acre public park is a \$30 million investment which we believe will improve the overall neighborhood and provide open space opportunities for new and existing residents and workers. We applaud the additional capital and operating dollars now proposed to be invested into the park, recreation and open space needs for the neighborhood.

Sustainability: \$70 Million

Sustainability is a high priority for SPUR. This is a complex area in which to allocate public benefits. State and city baseline performance requirements of private development are constantly changing (energy and water efficiency, materials selection, etc.), and it is difficult to put a price tag on many areas of potential investment.

We have suggested in the past that the Central SoMa Plan's sustainability efforts focus on building out the public realm—primarily open space and complete streets—to the highest level of sustainability and to make them visibly greener. We are pleased to see the planned investment in enhanced stormwater management in the complete streets build-out and public spaces, the freeway corridor air quality and greening improvements, water recycling in public spaces and best practices around the use of roof area.

Transportation: \$810 Million

SPUR believes strongly in the need for a significant investment in transit in Central SoMa, particularly given the high cost of meaningful transit investment. The city's 2030 plan identifies over \$10 billion in transportation needs; many of those needed capital and operating investments go through or touch the Central SoMa area and would have a real impact on those who live and work in this neighborhood. These investments could include transit expansion (such as the Downtown Extension), fleet expansion and Muni Forward. Rather than make specific transit project recommendations, we believe that transit priorities should be set by the SFMTA and the SFCTA. Given Central SoMa's proposed density and its proximity to similarly dense neighborhoods, getting transportation right in this plan is critical.

We acknowledge that there are many important areas of need for Central SoMa, far more than the potential \$2 billion can support. We urge the Department to prioritize those investments that are truly in the public realm; that benefit all the neighborhood's residents, workers, and visitors; and that are key to neighborhood livability.

We do have some concerns about the implementability of the plan, due to fees potentially being a barrier to development, and depending on whether Prop. M stands in the way of the office development (and

associated benefits) coming to fruition. We applaud the Planning Department for its work to identify and quantify those needs while trying to keep economic feasibility in mind.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this key plan.

Sincerely,

Kristy Wang
Community Planning Policy Director