

CHAPTER III

Plans and Policies

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), this chapter describes any inconsistencies between the proposed Central SoMa Plan (the Plan) including proposed open space improvements and street network changes extending beyond the Plan Area boundaries, and applicable plans and policies. This analysis evaluates the objectives and policies of the *San Francisco General Plan*, including its East South of Market (SoMa), and Western SoMa area plans that overlap with portions of the Central SoMa Plan Area, and other applicable local and regional plans to determine if there would be any inconsistencies with implementing the Plan or proposed open space and street network changes.⁴³ This chapter also discusses the Plan's compliance with the *San Francisco Planning Code*, which implements the *General Plan*. Where inconsistencies are identified that could result in physical effects on the environment, the reader is directed to analysis of those effects in Chapter IV, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures. In particular, regional plans pertaining to air quality (e.g., *2010 Clean Air Plan*) are discussed in Section IV.G, Air Quality.

The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors would review the Plan for consistency with the objectives, policies and principles of the *General Plan* and consider possible amendments proposed to achieve Plan conformity with the *General Plan*. The specific policy inconsistencies identified in this EIR would also be referenced in the staff reports prepared in conjunction with the Plan's approval documentation.

III.A San Francisco General Plan

The *General Plan*, adopted by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, is both a strategic and long-term document, broad in scope and specific in nature. The *General Plan* is the embodiment of the City's collective vision for the future of San Francisco, and comprises a series of elements, each of which deal with a particular topic, that applies citywide. The *General Plan* contains 10 elements (Housing, Commerce and Industry, Recreation and Open Space, Community Facilities, Urban Design, Environmental Protection, Transportation, Air Quality, Community Safety, and Arts)⁴⁴ that provide goals, policies, and objectives for the physical development of the city. In addition, a Land Use Index cross-references the policies related to land use located throughout the *General Plan*. The *General Plan* also includes area plans that outline goals and objectives for specific geographic planning areas.

The Central SoMa Plan Area covers 230 acres of land within the central portion of the City's South of Market district. The Plan Area would be formed primarily from portions of two adopted plan areas: roughly 40 percent of the Plan Area is within the Western SoMa Area Plan (including all or portions of Assessor

⁴³ Portions of the Plan Area are also within the former Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment Plan. The redevelopment plan sunset in 2010 and, while the Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment, as successor to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, retains ownership over certain improvements in the Plan Area, the redevelopment plan is no longer in effect.

⁴⁴ The Planning Department is currently preparing a Preservation Element, the adoption of which is anticipated in early 2017.

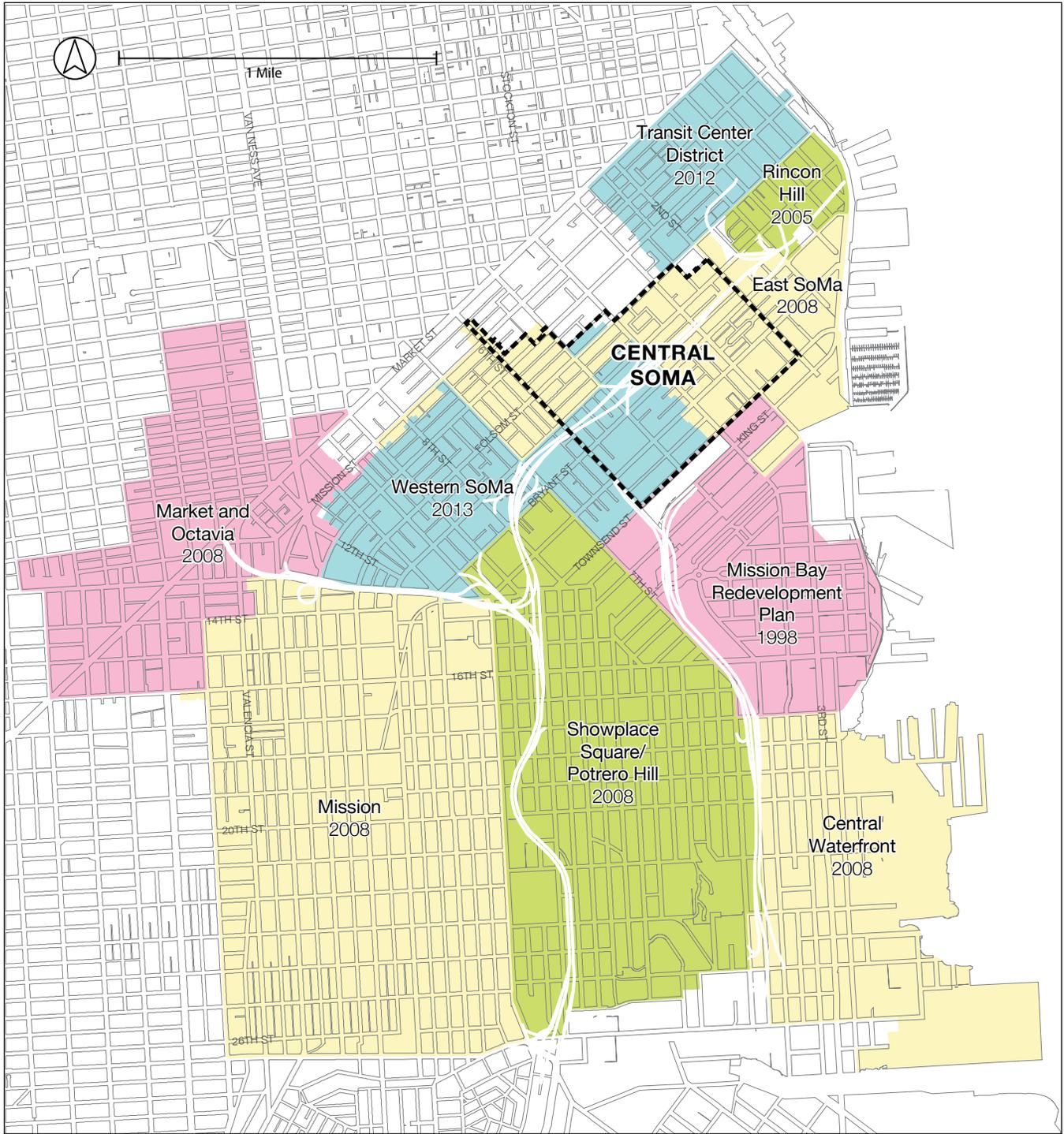
Blocks 3760, 3761, 3778, 3777, 3785, and 3786); about 60 percent of the Plan Area would be derived from land that is currently part of the East SoMa Area Plan (including all or portions of Assessor Blocks 3704, 3725, 3732, 3750, 3751, 3762, 3763, 3775, 3776, 3778, and 3787).

Figure III-1, Area Plans in and near the Central SoMa Plan Area, depicts the areas under the jurisdiction of each of these area plans. In an area plan, “the more general policies in the *General Plan* elements are made more precise as they relate to specific parts of the city.”⁴⁵ The *General Plan*’s area plans contain specific policies and objectives that address land use and planning issues in the local context. In order to establish the Central SoMa Plan Area’s geography as described in Chapter II, Project Description, the Plan would require amending the *General Plan* to create the Central SoMa Plan Area as a distinct area plan, in conjunction with conforming amendments to other area plans or elements of the *General Plan* as necessary to achieve internal consistency. Specifically, the Central SoMa Plan would supersede those portions where the Plan Area overlaps with the Western and East SoMa area plans.

As directed by the state CEQA Guidelines (Sec. 15125(d)), potential conflicts with the East SoMa Plan and Western SoMa Plan policies are discussed below. A conflict between a proposed project and a *General Plan* policy does not, in itself, indicate a significant effect on the environment within the context of CEQA. Any physical environmental impacts that could result from a conflict with *General Plan* policy(ies) are analyzed in this EIR. In general, potential conflicts with the *General Plan* are considered by the decision-makers (in the case of a *General Plan* amendment, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors) independently of the environmental review process. Thus, in addition to considering inconsistencies that affect environmental issues, the decision-makers consider other potential inconsistencies with the *General Plan*, independently of the environmental review process, as part of the decision to approve or disapprove a proposed project. Any potential conflict not identified in this environmental document would be considered in that context and would not alter the physical environmental effects of the Plan and proposed street network changes and open space improvements that are analyzed in this EIR.

Additional *General Plan* policies with which the Plan could conflict, beyond those of the area plans noted above, are discussed following the discussion of the area plans. This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of *General Plan* consistency; in particular, this section is not intended to, and does not, identify policies that the Central SoMa Plan would support. Staff report(s) for Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors action(s) on the Plan will contain a complete analysis of *General Plan* consistency.

⁴⁵ Introduction to the *General Plan*.



----- Central SoMa Area Plan Boundary

III.A.1 East SoMa Plan

The East SoMa Plan was adopted in 2008 as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods Area Plans and Rezoning Project, a multi-year effort to address conflicts between residential and office uses and light industrial (PDR) uses in the southeastern portion of the city. In addition to East SoMa, the Eastern Neighborhoods planning process resulted in adoption of area plans for the Central Waterfront, Mission, and Showplace Square/Potrero Hill neighborhoods, with attendant zoning and height map amendments to implement area plan objectives. The East SoMa Area Plan, which overlaps with the southeastern portion and part of the northwestern portion of the Central SoMa Plan Area, calls for a diverse mix of uses and of income levels, including new affordable and market rate housing, offices and retail, more neighborhood-serving businesses, more jobs for local residents, safer streets, more community facilities, more open spaces, and an increased variety of transportation options. A major focus of the Eastern Neighborhoods planning effort was to identify and designate industrial protection districts, within which office and residential uses (that typically command and can afford higher land rent) would not be allowed. Several areas, primarily in the Central Waterfront, Showplace Square, and northeast Mission neighborhoods, were rezoned for this purpose (as were areas within the Bayview District, under a separate planning process) with use districts that limit or prohibit outright residential and office uses. As adopted, the East SoMa Plan did not include the rezoning of the majority of the Service/Light Industrial (SLI) use district, where office and market-rate residential uses are not allowed. The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors deferred that land use change to a more focused planning process, which has culminated in this Central SoMa planning effort.

Notably, along with the deferral of major zoning changes, the East SoMa Plan was alone among the four Eastern Neighborhoods area plans in not explicitly protecting PDR uses. While each of the other three area plans adopted as part of the Eastern Neighborhoods planning process included an objective to, “Retain the [neighborhood’s] role as an important location for production, distribution, and repair (PDR) activities,” the East SoMa Plan did not: as explained in the text accompanying the East SoMa Plan’s Objective 1.1 (“Encourage production of housing and other mixed-use development in East SoMa while maintaining its existing special mixed-use character):

The intent of this Plan is to keep East SoMa a place of mixed uses, where new affordable and market rate housing, offices and retail can mix with viable production, distribution or repair (PDR) businesses, and small institutions. PDR businesses will not be strongly protected through proposed new zoning in this area, because of its proximity to the city center. Nevertheless, it is expected that a good number of PDR establishments will remain viable into the future, adding to the unique mix in East SoMa.

Therefore, while the East SoMa Plan does not anticipate wholesale displacement of PDR uses, neither does it designate—through zoning—portions of the Plan Area as especially protective of PDR uses as was done in the other Eastern Neighborhoods. In fact, the East SoMa Plan recognizes that certain PDR uses may continue to exist in the Plan Area in part because their operations would change. Plan Policy 1.1.10 states, “While continuing to protect traditional PDR functions that need large, inexpensive spaces to operate, also recognize that the nature of PDR businesses is evolving gradually so that their production and distribution activities are becoming more integrated physically with their research, design and administrative functions.” Moreover, the East SoMa Plan recognized that the Central Subway, now under construction beneath Fourth Street in the Plan Area, would give “new importance to the Fourth Street corridor as a potential location for higher density uses” and development around the new rail stations “should be planned very specifically to integrate with the

stations.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, while implementation of the East SoMa Plan did not rezone the SLI use district that currently governs most of the Central SoMa Plan Area south of Harrison Street between South Park and Fourth Street, the East SoMa Plan anticipated that (what is now) the Central SoMa planning effort would “allow the Planning Department to develop a strategic set of land use controls better suited to Fourth Street’s future role as a major north-south transit corridor.”⁴⁷

The Central SoMa Plan would retain many of the goals of the East SoMa Area Plan, while also proposing changes to land use and development controls to those areas where the Central SoMa Plan overlaps with the East SoMa Area Plan (generally, between Second and Fourth Streets south of Folsom Street, between Natoma and Harrison and Fifth and Sixth Streets, and in a connecting area between Fourth, Fifth, Folsom and Clara Streets). The Central SoMa Plan may conflict with the following objectives in the East SoMa Plan that emphasize housing production, and adoption of the Central SoMa Plan would therefore result in a change, at least to some degree, in the City and County of San Francisco’s planning policy for the East SoMa Plan Area:

Objective 1.1: Encourage production of housing and other mixed-use development in East SoMa while maintaining its existing special mixed-use character; and

Objective 1.2: Maximize housing development potential in keeping with neighborhood character.

The Plan would designate MUO zoning in place of existing SLI and WS-SALI use districts in portions of the Plan Area, where mixed-use office would be allowed on parcels where that use is currently prohibited.⁴⁸ It would also eliminate most of the existing WS-SALI use district within the Western SoMa Plan Area parcels incorporated into the Plan Area where current WS-SALI regulations prohibit all housing.⁴⁹ Although the Plan would ease existing restrictions on housing development through implementation of proposed MUO zoning controls, the MUO zoning designation appears nonetheless to emphasize development of employment-generating uses such as office to a greater degree than that of housing. This preference for employment-generating uses over housing would not substantially conflict with the housing objectives in the East SoMa Plan because the Plan’s MUO zoning use district would permit housing in areas where it is currently limited.

The rezoning of SLI to MUO proposed under the Plan is not necessarily inconsistent with the policies in the East SoMa Plan related to land zoned for PDR uses. Those policies (discussed above) anticipated a degree of adaptability related to the manner in which PDR uses and the types of PDR activities may evolve relative to future spatial demands. Rezoning SLI and WS-SALI to MUO within the Plan Area would not directly eliminate any existing PDR use, nor would it preclude future PDR use in the Plan Area. Instead, PDR use could integrate with other uses that could be located within buildings that may have once solely accommodated PDR activities. Evolving trends in functional research, design, prototyping, product testing and manufacturing suggest those activities and functional spaces would increasingly intermix with traditional offices and administrative uses within a single building. Thus, on balance, the East SoMa Plan appears to have anticipated the planning process and its attendant rezoning proposal resulting in the Central SoMa Plan,

⁴⁶ East SoMa Plan, text accompanying Objective 1.1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The Western SoMa SALI use district is referred to in this EIR as “SALI use district” and “WS-SALI use district” interchangeably.

⁴⁹ As directed by Policy 3.3.1 in the proposed Central SoMa Plan and illustrated on Figures II-3 and II-4 in Chapter II, Project Description, the existing SALI-zoned parcels on the two blocks between Harrison, Bryant, Fourth and Sixth Streets are not proposed to be rezoned to MUO, and would retain WS-SALI zoning designations under the Plan.

which is the subject of this review. The Central SoMa Plan would not be demonstrably inconsistent with the East SoMa Plan. As part of the approval process for the Central SoMa Plan, the applicable parcels in the existing East SoMa Plan area would be incorporated into the Central SoMa Plan.

III.A.2 Western SoMa Plan

Originally part of the Eastern Neighborhoods planning process, Western SoMa was defined as a separate area in 2004, and the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force was established to develop a plan for this area. A Final EIR was certified in December 2012, and the Western SoMa Area Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in March 2013. The Western SoMa Plan overlaps with the southwestern portion of the Central SoMa Plan Area, generally between Fourth, Sixth, Harrison, and Townsend Streets. While the Central SoMa Plan is consistent with certain policies and proposals of the Western SoMa Plan, including prioritizing capital improvements such as a new park, enhancing the pedestrian and bicycle environment, and making transformative streetscape improvements along Folsom Street, the two plans differ fundamentally in their approach to land use controls in the area of overlap. The Central SoMa Plan proposes changes to land use controls to support more employment growth, particularly office-type employment, west of Fourth Street where the two Plan Areas overlap, by zoning this area as Mixed-Use Office (MUO). In contrast, the Western SoMa Plan's policies and zoning in this area emphasize retention of PDR uses and spaces for nighttime entertainment uses.

As proposed, the Central SoMa Plan appears to conflict with the following objectives and policies in the Western SoMa Plan, meaning that adoption of the Central SoMa Plan would result in a change in City planning policy for the overlapping Western SoMa Plan Area:

- Policy 1.2.1:** Re-name, re-district and re-purpose the existing Service Light Industrial (SLI) zoning district as a new Service, Arts and Light Industrial (SALI) zone;
- Policy 1.2.4:** Prohibit housing outside of designated Residential Enclave Districts (RED) south of Harrison Street;
- Policy 2.2.3:** Limit retail uses south of Harrison Street to no more than 25,000 square feet;
- Policy 2.2.15:** Provide relocation opportunities for existing nighttime entertainment uses into areas where the impacts on neighborhood residential areas can be minimized;
- Policy 2.3.1:** Provide business assistance for new and existing light industrial businesses in the Western SoMa SUD;
- Policy 8.1.2:** Create, expand and protect space for the arts;
- Objective 8.3:** Protect and encourage appropriate neighborhood entertainment uses; and
- Policy 8.3.4:** Provide opportunities for relocation of existing entertainment uses from residential areas to non-residential areas of the Western SoMa SUD.

The Central SoMa Plan would rezone portions of the PDR-protective WS-SALI use district (the WS-SALI also encourages arts and entertainment uses), along with the similar SLI district in East SoMa, as discussed above. Therefore, the Plan could be potentially inconsistent with Western SoMa objectives and policies designed to protect PDR uses. However, the Plan would also ensure that the removal of protective zoning would not

result in a net loss of PDR as a result of the Plan, and would provide incentives to fund, build, and/or protect PDR, as outlined in Objective 3.3 and accompanying policies, below.

Objective 3.3: Ensure the removal of protective zoning does not result in a loss of PDR in the Plan Area.

Policies set forth under Objective 3.3 include the following:

Policy 3.3.1: Maintain existing zoning that restricts non-PDR development in certain locations. The Plan would implement this policy by maintaining the existing SALI zoning between Fourth and Sixth Streets and Harrison and Bryant Streets (see Figure II-3, Proposed Zoning, in Chapter II, Project Description);

Policy 3.3.2: Limit conversion of PDR space in formerly industrial districts. The Plan would implement this policy, where parcels are rezoned under the Plan from SLI to MUO, by requiring retention of 50 percent of existing building space permitted as PDR as of January 1, 2016, and, where parcels are rezoned under the Plan from SALI to MUO or WS-MUO, requiring complete retention of existing building space permitted as PDR as of January 1, 2016; and

Policy 3.3.3: Require PDR space as part of large commercial development. The Plan would implement this policy through three developer options for new office projects greater than 50,000 square feet:

- 1) Build PDR on-site, as follows:
 - On former SALI parcels, require 0.5 FAR or 100 percent replacement of PDR, whichever is greater;
 - On former SLI parcels, require 0.5 FAR or 50 percent replacement of PDR, whichever is greater; and
 - Elsewhere, require 0.5 FAR.
 - Exempt from land area, for purposes of calculating the FAR, any land dedicated to affordable housing or publicly accessible open space fully open to the sky;
- 2) Build net new PDR off-site at 1.5 times the on-site requirement. This PDR can be built anywhere in SoMa (bounded by Market Street, The Embarcadero, South Van Ness Avenue, Thirteenth Street, Division Street, and China Basin); or
- 3) Preserve existing PDR space at 2.0 times the on-site requirement. This PDR can be preserved anywhere in SoMa not zoned SALI after Plan adoption (Market, The Embarcadero, South Van Ness, Thirteenth Street, Division Street, China Basin).

The Plan would also implement Policy 3.3.3 by evaluating the potential for development to meet its PDR requirement through payment of an in-lieu fee to the City to be used for the construction of new PDR and preservation/retention of existing PDR space. A project sponsor may choose between any of the PDR protection options in the Plan. Implementation of the above policies would be anticipated to reduce displacement of PDR uses and concomitant PDR employment that could otherwise occur as a result of implementing the Plan.

Additionally, with respect to land use compatibility, the Plan would allow housing in the MUO district south of Harrison Street, which could potentially result in land use conflicts related to noise for residential uses (noise-sensitive receptors) in proximity to nighttime entertainment and PDR uses. While the proposed Central SoMa Special Use District (SUD) Entertainment Subarea would allow nighttime entertainment uses as-of-right

in the four block area between Bryant, Townsend, Fourth and Sixth Streets, the underlying MUO use district would also allow housing. The compatibility of land uses with respect to noise is further discussed in Section IV.E, Noise and Vibration. This section also finds that new uses could be adequately protected from increased traffic noise from Plan-related development, through compliance with the *Building Code*. Existing sensitive land uses, however, would be adversely affected by increased traffic noise levels generated by increased traffic on Howard Street under two-way Howard and Folsom Streets network changes.

Accordingly, with the exception of potential land use incompatibility related to noise issues associated with the location of residential uses in proximity to nighttime entertainment and PDR uses, the Plan would not be demonstrably inconsistent with the Western SoMa Plan.

III.A.3 Other Area Plans

The Plan Area abuts the Downtown Plan boundaries to its north, generally along Folsom Street. The Downtown Plan contains objectives and policies that address the following issues: provision of space for commerce, housing, and open space; preservation of the past; urban form; and movement to, from, and within the downtown area. The aim of the Downtown Plan is to encourage business activity and promote economic growth downtown, as the city's and region's premier city center, while improving the quality of place and providing necessary supporting amenities. The Downtown Plan was intended to maintain a compact downtown core and direct growth to areas with developable space and easy transit accessibility so that downtown would "Encompass a compact mix of activities, historical values, and distinctive architecture and urban forms that engender a special excitement reflective of a world city."⁵⁰ The Downtown Plan also recognizes the "Importance of conserving resources that provide continuity with San Francisco's past"⁵¹, by including an implementing objective to catalogue Landmark and Significant Buildings inventoried in Articles 10 and 11 of the *Planning Code*. The Central SoMa Plan would expand the Transfer of Development rights program that protects historic resources to the Plan Area. No inconsistencies with the Downtown Plan have been identified.

The Plan Area is adjacent to the area covered by the Rincon Hill Plan, adopted in 2005. The Rincon Hill Plan calls for, among other things, envisions Folsom Street as a grand civic boulevard linking the high density neighborhoods to the north with the Rincon Hill Plan Area, through the enhancement of Folsom Street "into a walkable neighborhood center to serve the Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhoods" (Rincon Hill Plan Objective 1.3), with ground-floor neighborhood-serving retail stores. Although the Plan Area does not overlap with the Rincon Hill Plan Area, the proposed street network changes would extend beyond the Plan Area and into the Rincon Hill Plan Area. The proposed street network changes, that is the expansion to the bicycle lane network, improvements to pedestrian walkability features, and expanded transit lanes, would be in keeping with the goals and policies of the Rincon Hill Plan, and thus, no inconsistencies are identified.

⁵⁰ Introduction to the Downtown Area Plan.

⁵¹ Downtown Plan, Preserving the Past, Objective 12.

III.A.4 Other General Plan Policies

Air Quality Element

The goal of the Air Quality Element is to “Give high priority to air quality improvement in San Francisco to protect its population from adverse health and other impacts of air pollutants.” The Element seeks to achieve this goal through achieving adherence to air quality standards; improvements related to mobile sources; land use planning; public awareness; reduction of dust; and energy conservation. Among the key policies in the Air Quality Element is the following:

- Policy 3.5:** Continue existing growth management policies in the city and give consideration to the overall air quality impacts of new development including its impact on the local and regional transportation system in the permit review process. Ensure that growth will not outpace improvements to transit or the circulation system.

The Air Quality Element further contains a policy to exercise air quality modeling in building design for sensitive land uses to protect residents; this is implemented in *Health Code* Article 38 and further addressed in Section IV.F, Air Quality (Air Objective 3, Policy 3.7). As described in Section IV.D, Transportation and Circulation, growth pursuant to the Plan would result in Muni ridership that would exceed Muni’s capacity utilization standard on one corridor crossing the southeast screenline, as well as on two corridors crossing Plan-specific cordon lines. As described in Chapter II, Project Description, the Plan would also result in transit delay on a number of Muni lines, due to increased congestion. On the other hand, the Plan would include a number of street network changes, such as dedicated transit lanes and new boarding islands, which would improve transit operations compared to conditions without the Plan. The Plan also would encourage growth along transit lines and would promote other modes of travel. Moreover, it is arguably the case that increased development adjacent and near to a rich variety of transit options and in proximity to other uses, as would occur in the Plan Area with implementation of the Plan, would result in lesser vehicle emissions per job and per housing unit than would be the case for a comparable amount of new development in a part of the Bay Area that is less well-served by transit and has less variety of land uses. This is borne out by the fact that the Plan would result in a decrease in automobile travel, as a percentage of all trips and would also result in a decrease in vehicle miles traveled per resident and per job compared to the regional average vehicle miles traveled. As described in Chapter II, Project Description, the Plan would also improve travel conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists through street network changes that would add mid-block crosswalks at a number of locations, prohibit new curb cuts on many block faces, and create new bicycle lanes.

Compatibility of the Plan with objectives and policies in the Air Quality Element will be considered by decision-makers as part of their decision whether to approve or disapprove the Plan. However, based on the above, the Plan appears to be substantially consistent with the overarching goals and principles of the Air Quality Element, in that it would achieve growth with lesser air quality impacts than a comparable degree of growth in an area less well-served by transit.

Housing Element

The 2014 Housing Element is a component of the *General Plan* and establishes the City’s overall housing policies. California State Housing Element law (*California Government Code* Sections 65580 et seq.) requires local

jurisdictions to adequately plan for and address the housing needs of all segments of its population in order to attain the region's share of projected statewide housing goals. This law requires local governments to plan for their existing and projected housing needs by facilitating the improvement and development of housing and removing constraints on development opportunities. San Francisco's 2014 Housing Element was required to plan for an existing and projected housing need of 28,869 new dwelling units.

The objectives, principles, and implementation strategies of the Plan are founded, in part, upon the policy direction of the Housing Element, particularly with respect to provision of affordable housing, and do not present a potential conflict with those policies. The rezoning of the Plan Area would remove restrictions on residential development in some parts of the Plan Area and allow for increased residential development potential through changes in allowable building heights. Further, where the Plan would remove restrictions to residential development, the Plan also includes policies that propose to increase the percentage of affordable housing requirements imposed on new residential development, thereby expanding the amount of affordable housing in the area, or providing additional fees for affordable housing to the city. Although the Plan's emphasis is on accommodating employment uses, the more flexible zoning proposed throughout the Plan Area would allow residential development in many locations where it is now prohibited, with commensurately higher levels of affordable housing production or funding than is now achievable.

Therefore, no inconsistencies have been identified and Plan implementation would not conflict with the objectives and policies of the Housing Element.

Urban Design Element

The Urban Design Element is concerned with the physical character and environment of the city with respect to development and preservation. The Urban Design Element addresses issues related to City Pattern, Conservation, Major New Development and Neighborhood Environment. Objective 3 of the Urban Design Element, "Moderation of major new development to complement the city pattern, the resources to be conserved, and the neighborhood environment," includes the following policies, among others:

- Policy 3.5:** Relate the height of buildings to important attributes of the city pattern and to the height and character of existing development; and
- Policy 3.6:** Relate the bulk of buildings to the prevailing scale of development to avoid an overwhelming or dominating appearance in new construction.

The Plan proposes to intensify development along and proximate to the new Central Subway line, currently under construction, including substantial increases in building heights at select locations—up to a maximum of 400 feet. In addition, several parcels north of the I-80 freeway and east of Fourth Street would be zoned to a maximum of 300 feet. While development in this area would not necessarily relate to the important attributes of the city pattern, it would function to reduce the visual prominence of the elevated freeway. As described in more detail in Section IV.B, Aesthetics, the Plan would not adversely affect public views. Therefore, no inconsistencies have been identified and the Plan would not conflict with the objectives and policies of the Urban Design Element.

Recreation and Open Space Element

The *General Plan's* Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) contains objectives and policies for maintaining, creating, and enhancing recreational and open space resources in the city. Beginning in 2007, the Planning Department, in conjunction with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, began updating the ROSE and a final updated element was adopted in April 2014. The primary focus of this update was to encourage high performance in the city's existing open space system; set priorities for areas to be acquired for new park and recreational facilities; improve the connectivity of the open space network, including public streets and right-of-ways; enhance biodiversity; and identify methods to acquire, improve and maintain recreational facilities, such as through the development of impact fees or through public/private partnerships.

The ROSE identifies portions of the Plan Area as in need of new public open space and the Plan recognizes existing recreational and open space deficiencies within the Plan Area. Implementation of the Plan would result in an increase in the numbers of residents in the Plan Area. The Plan calls for creating new open space and recreational facilities, including a network of pedestrian-friendly streets, alleys, and walkways that would serve as flexible public spaces to address the existing deficiencies, address or offset future demands for open space and recreational facilities, and address the lack of street connectors that lead to nearby large open spaces. Further, the plan seeks to ensure that new private development would augment the open space network. The Plan also would not result in overuse of existing recreational facilities to the extent that they would require expansion or replacement (see analysis in the Initial Study, Appendix B, of this EIR).

The Plan would increase building height limits in some portions of the Plan Area and facilitate development of buildings under Plan regulations at heights greater than currently allowable that may increase shadows on parks and open spaces in the Plan Area. Thus, implementing the Plan's height district amendments may conflict with the following policy in the Open Space Element:

Policy 1.9: Preserve sunlight in public open spaces.

As described in Section IV.H, Shadow, development in the Plan Area could result in the addition of small amounts of new shadow at limited times to several parks under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department (South Park, Victoria Manalo Draves Park, and the Gene Friend Recreation Center), as well as to other public open spaces and to certain publicly-accessible, privately owned open spaces. Section IV.H, Shadow, finds that new shadow from Plan-related development would not substantially adversely affect the public's enjoyment of these open spaces, and that the impact would be less than significant without mitigation. Height limits are also intended to protect sunlight on Yerba Buena Gardens, Alice Street Community Garden, the Bessie Carmichael School Yard, and, insofar as is feasible, a potential park site identified in the Plan on the block bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Bryant, and Brannan Streets (Assessor's Block 3777). Moreover, with respect to City parks, new construction in excess of 40 feet in height would be subject to *Planning Code* Section 295, which protects parks under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission from substantial new shadowing.

Compatibility of the Plan with objectives and policies in the ROSE would be considered by decision-makers as part of their decision whether to approve, modify or disapprove the Plan. In light of the above, the Plan would not be substantially inconsistent with the overarching goals and principles of the ROSE.

Environmental Protection Element

The Environmental Protection Element addresses the environmental protection issues related to natural resource conservation and transportation noise and includes a comprehensive energy management plan. The element contains Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Community Noise that indicate maximum acceptable noise levels for various newly developed land uses. As described in Section IV.E, Noise and Vibration, nearly all major streets in the Plan Area have traffic noise levels above 70 dBA, L_{dn} , meaning that the area is quite noisy by residential standards. The Central SoMa Plan, including the Two-Way Option for Howard and Folsom Streets, would conflict with the following objectives and policies in the Environmental Protection Element:

- Objective 9:** Reduce transportation-related noise;
- Policy 9.6:** Discourage changes in streets which will result in greater traffic noise in noise-sensitive areas;
- Objective 11:** Promote land uses that are compatible with various transportation noise levels; and
- Policy 11.1:** Discourage new uses in areas in which the noise level exceeds the noise compatibility guidelines for that use.

Existing sensitive land uses would be adversely affected by increased traffic noise levels generated by Plan traffic on Howard Street under two-way Howard and Folsom street network changes as further discussed in Section IV.E, Noise and Vibration. As also discussed in that section, new uses could be adequately protected from Plan-generated traffic noise through *Building Code* compliance.

The Plan also proposes to create a new Central SoMa SUD Entertainment Subarea in an area south of Bryant Street between Fourth and Sixth Streets. However, residential uses still would be allowed within this area. As discussed in Section IV.E, Noise and Vibration, there are currently only a small number of Places of Entertainment within the area proposed for the SUD. To the extent that new residential uses and new Places of Entertainment could locate in the proposed SUD, new entertainment venues would have to be soundproofed and new residential development would have to be designed to minimize noise conflicts with new and existing entertainment uses, as required by the City's recently adopted revisions to the *Building Code*, *Administrative Code*, *Planning Code*, and *Police Code*. Additionally, mitigation measures identified in Section IV.E would require that new noise-generating uses, including entertainment uses, be designed to minimize noise impacts on any nearby existing residential uses. Combined implementation of the City code provisions and mitigation measures would reduce the potential for noise conflicts between residential and entertainment uses and ensure consistency with the Environmental Protection Element.

Compatibility of the Plan with objectives and policies in the Environmental Protection Element will be considered by decision-makers as part of their decision whether to approve or disapprove the Plan. However, based on the above, the Plan would not be considered demonstrably inconsistent with the Environmental Protection Element's objectives and policies relating to noise; however, as noted above, the Central SoMa Plan plus the Two-Way Option for Street Network Changes on Howard and Folsom Streets could be inconsistent with the Environmental Protection Element policies related to reducing traffic noise.

III.B Other Plans

Environmental plans and policies are those, like the *Bay Area 2010 Clean Air Plan*, that directly address environmental issues and/or contain targets or standards that must be met in order to preserve or improve characteristics of the City's physical environment. The Plan's proposed street network changes and open space improvements do not appear to substantially conflict with any such adopted environmental plan or policy. (Consistency with clean air plans is discussed further in Section IV.G, Air Quality.)

III.B.1 Plan Bay Area

Plan Bay Area is driven by the need to meet the growth forecasts identified for the region in a Sustainable Communities Strategy, prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. *Plan Bay Area* estimates that approximately 92,000 additional housing units and 191,000 additional jobs would be added in San Francisco by 2040, which would equate to roughly 15 percent of the total growth anticipated in the region. *Plan Bay Area* sets out a plan to meet most of the region's growth in Priority Development Areas, (or PDAs), as identified by local governments. Much of the eastern third of San Francisco is within various PDAs; the Plan Area is contained within the Eastern Neighborhoods PDA, which also includes Rincon Hill, Western SoMa, the Mission District, Showplace Square and Potrero Hill, and the Central Waterfront.

The amendments to the *Planning Code* proposed by the Plan would "increase the areas where space for jobs and housing can be built" (Plan Objective 1.1), by "retain[ing] existing zoning that supports capacity for new jobs and housing" (Policy 1.1.1) and "replac[ing] existing zoning that restricts capacity for development with zoning that supports capacity for new jobs and housing" (Policy 1.1.2). The amendments would also "increase how much space for jobs and housing can be built" (Objective 1.2), by "increase[ing] height limits on parcels, as appropriate" (Policy 1.2.1) and "allow[ing] physical controls for height, bulk, setbacks, and open space to determine density" (Policy 1.2.2). To meet these objectives and policies, the Plan proposes to maintain existing MUO (Mixed Use, Office), MUG (Mixed Use, General), SOMA NCT (South of Market Neighborhood Commercial-Transit), and South Park use districts and replacing SLI (Service/Light Industrial), WS-SALI (Western SoMa Service, Arts, Light Industrial), and RED (Residential Enclave) use districts with MUO and WS-MUO zoning. The Plan would also increase height limits in certain parts of the Plan Area. Proposed use districts are shown in Chapter II, Project Description, on Figure II-3, while proposed height and bulk districts are shown on Figure II-7.

The proposed changes in allowable building heights, along with the replacement of floor area ratio maximums with density limits based on height, bulk, setback, and open space controls, would increase development capacity on a number of parcels in the Plan Area. *Plan Bay Area* envisions accommodating regional growth near transit. The Central SoMa Plan's objective of concentrating growth near transit would be consistent with the goals of *Plan Bay Area*.

III.B.2 The Climate Action Plan

In February 2002, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Resolution (Number 158-02) committing the City to a greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions goal of 20

percent below 1990 levels by the year 2012. The resolution also directs the San Francisco Department of the Environment, the SFPUC, and other appropriate City agencies to complete and coordinate an analysis and planning of a local action plan targeting GHG emission reduction activities. In September 2004, the Department of the Environment and the SFPUC published the Climate Action Plan for San Francisco: Local Actions to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The Climate Action Plan examines the causes of global climate change and human activities that contribute to global warming and provides projections of climate change impacts on California and San Francisco from scientific reports; presents estimates of San Francisco's baseline GHG emissions inventory and reduction targets; describes recommended emissions reduction actions in the key target sectors – transportation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and solid waste management – to meet stated goals by 2012; and presents next steps required over the near term to implement the plan. Although the Board of Supervisors has not formally committed the City to perform the actions addressed in the Plan, and many of the actions require further development and commitment of resources, the Plan serves as a blueprint for GHG emission reductions, and several actions are now in progress.

The Climate Action Plan cites an array of potential environmental impacts to San Francisco from climate change, including rising sea levels that could threaten coastal wetlands, infrastructure, and property; increased storm activity that could increase beach erosion and cliff undercutting; warmer temperatures that could result in more frequent El Niño storms causing more rain than snow in the Sierras, reducing snow pack that is an important source of the region's water supply; decreased summer runoff and warming ocean temperatures that could affect salinity, water circulation, and nutrients in the Bay, potentially altering Bay ecosystems; other possible effects to food supply and the viability of the state's agricultural system; possible public health effects related to degraded air quality and changes in disease vectors; and other social and economic impacts.

According to the Climate Action Plan, achieving these goals will require the cooperation of a number of different City agencies, which is being facilitated through an interdepartmental working group titled Adapt SF.⁵²

In 2013, the Department of the Environment published the Climate Action Strategy Update, which presents updated statistics of potential environmental impacts to San Francisco from climate change and an updated baseline GHG emissions inventory. The Climate Action Strategy Update indicates that moving to renewable electricity is the single biggest step the City can take to reduce GHG emissions and puts forth new climate action strategies to continue to reduce levels and performance indicators to measure progress. The GHG reduction strategies include driving investments toward energy efficiency in buildings, shifting modes of transportation away from the automobile, efforts to achieve zero waste to landfills, protection and expansion of the urban forest, and a focus on GHG emissions reductions in municipal operations—specifically in government buildings and feet vehicles (including Muni buses).

An analysis of potential Plan effects on global warming and GHGs is presented in the Initial Study (Appendix B, Section E.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions). The analysis concluded that, given subsequent development projects in the Plan Area would be required to comply with the City's existing regulations to reduce GHG emissions and other ongoing City and State regulations that will continue to reduce projects'

⁵² City of San Francisco Department of the Environment, *San Francisco Climate Action Strategy, 2013 Update*. October 13, 2013. Available at: http://sfenvironment.org/sites/default/files/engagement_files/sfe_cc_ClimateActionStrategyUpdate2013.pdf, accessed October 25, 2016.

contribution to climate change, the Plan would have a less-than-significant impact with respect to GHG emissions.

On September 8, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 32 (SB32), which requires the State to further reduce GHG emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by year 2030. However, the City's 2008 GHG Reduction ordinance had already established a citywide reduction goal of 40 percent below 1990 levels by year 2025⁵³. The City's 2013 Update to the Climate Action Strategy⁵⁴ demonstrates that its GHG reduction strategies are predicted to reduce San Francisco's carbon footprint by 44 percent below the 1990 level by 2025, which would exceed the reduction requirements of its ordinance, which has a target date that precedes the new State law by five years. Consequently, even with the adoption of SB32, continued compliance with the City's existing regulations to reduce GHG emissions, other ongoing city, and state regulations that will continue to reduce projects' contribution to climate change and the Plan would have a less-than-significant impact with respect to GHG emissions.

Furthermore, the Plan contains an Environmental Sustainability chapter with objectives to minimize greenhouse gas emissions, minimize water waste, support biodiversity, access to nature, and a healthy ecosystem, improve air quality and help achieve zero solid waste. These policies would further reduce a project's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

Further, the Central SoMa Plan is one of the means by which San Francisco and the region as a whole could potentially meet State mandates under SB 375 to reduce per-capita greenhouse gas emissions because the Plan Area is within a designated PDA, a location where substantial growth could occur in such a way as to achieve these goals.⁵⁵

Based on the above, the Plan would not conflict with the Climate Action Plan and the 2013 Climate Action Strategy Update and regional and statewide actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

III.B.3 San Francisco Bicycle Plan

In August 2009, the Board of Supervisors approved the San Francisco Bicycle Plan. The Bicycle Plan includes a citywide bicycle transportation plan (comprised of a "Policy Framework" and a "Network Improvement" document) and implementation of specific bicycle improvements identified within the Plan. The Bicycle Plan includes objectives and identifies policy changes that would enhance the City's bike-ability. It also describes the existing bicycle route network (a series of interconnected streets in which bicycling is encouraged), and identifies gaps within the citywide bicycle route network that require improvement. The Final Environmental Impact Report for the Bicycle Plan assessed a total of 56 short-term and long-term bicycle improvement projects, including bicycle lanes on Fifth Street within the Plan Area. Along the eastern edge of the Central SoMa Plan Area, the Bicycle Plan EIR evaluated a bicycle lane project on Second Street; this project is currently

⁵³ *San Francisco Environment Code*, Chapter 9, Sections 900 through 908, "2008 GHG Reduction Ordinance", Ordinance No. 81-08, Approved April 29, 2008.

⁵⁴ City of San Francisco, *Climate Action Strategy 2013 Update*, October, 2013, p. vii, Available online at http://sfenvironment.org/sites/default/files/engagement_files/sfe_cc_ClimateActionStrategyUpdate2013.pdf, accessed October 27, 2016.

⁵⁵ *Plan Bay Area* was necessitated by the adoption of Senate Bill 375, which required regions to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (or Alternative Planning Strategy) to reduce GHGs by linking growth to transit, resulted in higher jobs and housing growth projections.

undergoing further evaluation. As described in Chapter II, Project Description, the Plan's proposed street network changes would include bicycle improvements, including bike lanes and cycle tracks, both within the Plan Area and on surrounding streets, that would be in addition to the Bicycle Plan and thereby encourage increased bicycle use. Therefore, implementation of the Central SoMa Plan and street network changes would not conflict with the Bicycle Plan.

III.B.4 Better Streets Plan

The Better Streets Plan was adopted in 2010 to support the City's efforts to enhance the streetscape and the pedestrian environment. It classifies the city's public streets and rights-of-way and creates a unified set of standards, guidelines, and implementation strategies that govern how the City designs, builds, and maintains its public streets and rights-of-way. It comprises the Streetscape Master Plan and the Pedestrian Transportation Master Plan. Major project concepts applicable to the Plan include (1) pedestrian safety and accessibility features, such as enhanced pedestrian crossings, corner or midblock curb extensions, pedestrian countdown and priority signals, and other traffic calming features; (2) universal pedestrian-oriented streetscape design with incorporation of street trees, sidewalk plantings, streetscape furnishing, street lighting, efficient utility location for unobstructed sidewalks, shared single surface for small streets/alleys, and sidewalk/median pocket parks; and (3) integrated pedestrian/transit functions using bus bulb-outs and boarding islands (bus stops located in medians within the street). All such streetscape improvements would require coordination with other relevant City departments, such as the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), Public Works, and the Fire Department, to ensure no disruption of service provision. The street network improvements included in the Plan were specifically developed for consistency with Better Streets Plan requirements, and these improvements and the Plan would not be inconsistent with the Better Streets Plan.

III.B.5 Transit First Policy

The City's Transit First policy, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1973, was developed in response to the damaging impacts over previous decades of freeways on the city's urban character. The policy is aimed at restoring balance to a transportation system long dominated by the automobile and improving overall mobility for residents and visitors whose reliance chiefly on the automobile would result in severe transportation deficiencies. It encourages multi-modalism, the use of transit and other alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle as modes of transportation, and gives priority to the maintenance and expansion of the local transit system and the improvement of regional transit coordination.

The following ten principles constitute the City's Transit First policy:

- To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods;
- Public transit, including taxis and vanpools, is an economically and environmentally sound alternative to transportation by individual automobiles. Within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile;

- Decisions regarding the use of limited public street and sidewalk space shall encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and shall strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety;
- Transit policy improvements, such as designated transit lanes and streets and improved signalization, shall be made to expedite the movement of public transit vehicles (including taxis and vanpools) and to improve public safety;
- Pedestrian areas shall be enhanced wherever possible to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and to encourage travel by foot;
- Bicycling shall be promoted by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking;
- Parking policies for areas well served by public transit shall be designed to encourage travel by public transit and alternative transportation;
- New transportation investment should be allocated to meet the demand for public transit generated by new public and private commercial and residential developments;
- The ability of the City and County of San Francisco to reduce traffic congestion depends on the adequacy of regional public transportation. The City and County shall promote the use of regional mass transit and the continued development of an integrated, reliable, regional public transportation system; and
- The City and County shall encourage innovative solutions to meet public transportation needs wherever possible and where the provision of such service will not adversely affect the service provided by the Municipal Railway. (Added November 1999.)

One of the goals of the Plan is to “Support growth with improved streets, additional open space, and other elements of ‘complete communities.’” The Plan would encourage growth in residential and employment uses, particularly office use, in a transit-accessible area, thereby encouraging the use of transit and alternative transportation modes. These factors would be expected to help minimize single-person auto travel in the future, which would be consistent with the intent of the Transit First Policy.

Section IV.D, Transportation and Circulation, analyzes potential transportation impacts of the Plan, including possible impacts on alternative transportation modes. Given that the Plan would: (1) increase sidewalk and crosswalk widths; (2) increase bike facilities; (3) increase dedicated transit lines; and (4) reduce the number of mixed-flow lanes (thereby increasing transit, pedestrian and bike facilities), in connection with the Plan’s emphasis on compact development proximate to a high level of transit service, along with pedestrian and bicycle improvements, would not be inconsistent with the Transit First Policy.

III.B.6 Muni Forward (formerly the Transit Effectiveness Project, or TEP)

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency’s (SFMTA) Muni Forward is a system-wide program of projects to reduce transit travel time and improve transit customer experiences, service reliability, and transit service effectiveness and efficiency. The SFMTA has developed the Service Policy Framework, which sets forth transit service delivery objectives and actions to meet these objectives and supports the SFMTA Strategic Plan goals. Implementation of Muni Forward is guided by the Service Policy Framework and determines how

investments should be made to the transit system. Muni Forward includes the following categories of proposals: Service Improvements, Service-related Capital Improvements, and transit Travel Time Reduction Proposals (TTRPs). The SFMTA Board of Directors approved MUNI Forward in March 2014 (Planning Department Case No. 2011.0558E), including the majority of recommendations that emerged from the planning process and an overall 12 percent increase in Muni service. As of early 2016, Muni Forward has resulted in increased frequency of service on several transit lines serving the Plan Area, including the N and K/T Muni Metro light rail lines on Market Street and bus lines 8, 8AX, 8BX, 10, 14R, 14X, and 38R. As described in Chapter II, Project Description, the Central SoMa Plan proposes a number of street network changes, including dedicated transit lanes on Folsom, Harrison, and Third Streets and on portions of Bryant and Fourth Streets. Given this, and the fact that the Plan's first objective is, "Support transit-oriented growth, particularly workplace growth, in the Central SoMa area," the Plan would not be inconsistent with Muni Forward.

III.C Planning Code (Zoning)

The *Planning Code*, which incorporates by reference the City Zoning Maps, governs land uses, densities and the configuration of buildings within San Francisco. Permits to construct new buildings or to alter or demolish existing ones may not be issued unless a project conforms to the *Planning Code* or an exception is granted pursuant to provisions of the *Planning Code*.

The Plan would make alterations to the *Planning Code*, as described in Chapter II, Project Description. Principally, the Plan would rezone much of the Plan Area south of Folsom Street to the MUO use district (see Figure II-3, Proposed Plan Area Use Districts, in Chapter II, Project Description).⁵⁶ The Plan also proposes to increase allowable height limits on selected parcels (see Figure II-7, Proposed Plan Area Height and Bulk Districts, in Chapter II, Project Description). Physical effects of development that could occur pursuant to these changes are analyzed throughout Chapter IV and in the Initial Study (Appendix B).

III.C.1 Planning Code Section 295

Section 295 of the *Planning Code*, the Sunlight Ordinance, was adopted through voter approval of Proposition K in 1984 with the intent of limiting new shadow on open spaces under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission. Section 295 applies to structures greater than 40 feet in height and governs the period from one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset, year-round. Section 295(b) states that the Planning Commission, following a public hearing, "shall disapprove" any project governed by this section that would have an "adverse effect" due to shading of a park subject to Section 295, "unless it is determined that the impact would be insignificant." The Planning Commission's decision under Section 295 cannot be made "until the general manager of the Recreation and Park Department in consultation with the Recreation and Park Commission has had an opportunity to review and comment to the City Planning Commission upon the proposed project." In practice, Section 295 may further limit heights and/or shapes of certain buildings

⁵⁶ The Plan would modify existing zoning districts by amending their designation, primarily WS-SALI and SLI to MUO. The change in allowable uses is a component of the Plan studied in this EIR.

around protected parks; the Section 295 requirement is in addition to the height limits in the Height and Bulk districts.

Privately-owned open spaces, including any open spaces that are required under the *Planning Code* as part of an individual development proposal, are not subject to Section 295.

Shadow effects that are attributable to the Plan are analyzed qualitatively in Section IV.H, Shadow, of this EIR. This analysis does not present a quantification of anticipated new shadow on parks subject to Section 295. Such quantification is typically required for analysis of individual buildings under Section 295 and/or as part of project-specific review, where a project could potentially shade a Recreation and Park Department facility.

III.C.2 Planning Code Section 321

Section 321 implements the City's annual limit on office construction, which is set at 950,000 square feet per calendar year, with a subset of 75,000 square feet reserved for buildings smaller than 50,000 square feet. The limit applies to all office space citywide, not just downtown. Buildings smaller than 25,000 square feet are exempt; however, redevelopment plan projects are included, as are projects within San Francisco that are under the jurisdiction the State of California and federal agencies, including the Presidio Trust and National Park Service. Square footage not allocated during any given year is added to the overall allocation for succeeding years.

As of July 22, 2016, the Planning Department inventory of office space showed less than half a million (about 444,000) square feet of space available for large projects (those 50,000 square feet and larger), with an additional 1.08 million square feet available for smaller projects (25,000 to 49,999 square feet).⁵⁷ Another 875,000 square feet is added to the large project pool and another 75,000 square feet is added to the small project pool each October (the start of the Section 321 year). The 2012–2013 Section 321 year was the most active in the history of the office allocation program, with 3.6 million square feet of large projects approved (no small projects were approved); the Salesforce (formerly Transbay) Tower at 101 First Street at Mission Street represented 38 percent of this total, at 1.37 million square feet. This building is currently under construction. After a lull in 2013–2014, another 2.2 million square feet of office projects was approved in the 2014-2015 Section 321 year, including “Park Tower” (250 Howard Street) in Zone 1 of the Transbay Redevelopment Area (767,000 square feet; groundbreaking occurred in October 2015) and 633,500 square feet of office space in the 5M Project at Fifth and Mission Streets.

As of July 2016, the Planning Department reported four large projects with applications pending for allocation of office space totaling 1.16 million square feet. One project, the proposed conversion of the San Francisco Design Center building at 2 Henry Adams Street from showrooms to office space (246,000 square feet; Case No. 2013.1593), was effectively denied in July 2014 when the Board of Supervisors Land Use Committee tabled a resolution designating the building a City Landmark, an action that was required to allow the office conversion. This action essentially reduced the 1.16 million square feet of pending space as of November 2015 to 910,000 square feet.

⁵⁷ San Francisco Planning Department, “Office Development Annual Limitation (Annual Limit) Program Update,” July 22, 2016. Allocations in square feet of gross floor area, as defined in *Planning Code* Section 102.9. Available at http://zasfplan.sfplanning.org/ANLM/Office_Allocation_Stats.pdf, accessed October 24, 2016.

Of the other three projects, two are in the Plan Area and are undergoing environmental review: a proposed 700,000 square-foot building in the Central SoMa Plan Area at 598 Brannan Street (Case No. 2012.0640E) and a four-story, 89,800 square-foot addition to an existing seven-story building at 633 Folsom Street (Case No. 2014.1063). The fourth proposal would convert 119,600 square feet of PDR space in the San Francisco Armory at 1800 Mission Street to office use.

The large building inventory reached a maximum of just over 5.1 million square feet available at the start of the 2012–13 allocation period in October 2012. As of July 2016, the Planning Department has environmental or other applications on file for some 6.9 million square feet of office space, considerably more than the 444,000 square feet available. The largest projects on file include redevelopment of the San Francisco Flower Mart site at Sixth and Brannan Streets, within the Plan Area (approximately 2.0 million square feet), redevelopment of the bayside portion of Pier 70 (approximately 1.8 million square feet), a mixed-use project at Seawall Lot 337 (the San Francisco Giants’ “Mission Rock” project on Port of San Francisco Land; approximately 1.3 million square feet), and an approximately 907,000 square-foot office project at 725–735 Harrison and Fourth Street, also within the Plan Area. There are applications on file for 3.8 million square feet of office space in seven separate projects within the Central SoMa Plan Area, including two small (less than 50,000 square-foot) projects.

As noted, an additional 950,000 square feet (875,000 square feet for large projects and 75,000 square feet for small projects) of space is added to the available inventory each October. If during a particular year large office projects come before the Planning Commission for approval of more office space than is available, the Commission must compare the proposed projects and approve those that “promote the public welfare, convenience and necessity,” based on criteria that include:

- Maintaining a balance between economic growth, on the one hand, and housing, transportation and public services, on the other;
- Projects’ contribution to, and effects on, the objectives and policies of the *General Plan*;
- Design quality;
- Suitability of each project for its location and any location-specific effects;
- The anticipated uses of each project, “in light of employment opportunities to be provided, needs of existing businesses, and the available supply of space suitable for such anticipated uses;”
- The extent to which a project “will be owned or occupied by a single entity;” and
- The use, if any, of transferrable development rights to assist in preservation of existing historic structures (*Planning Code* Section 321(b)).

The more than 10 million square feet of office space assumed to be developed in the Plan Area over the next 20 years represents about 11 years of the annual limit’s large building allocation. However, as noted above, there are other very large office projects outside the Plan Area that would be anticipated to draw down the office space allocation.

In contrast to the large office allocation, the inventory available for smaller buildings is nearly 15 times the annual allocation of 75,000 square feet. The small building inventory has increased in all but five years since the annual limit took effect in 1985. Office projects within the Plan Area would be subject to Section 321.

Accountable Planning Initiative

In November 1986, the voters of San Francisco approved Proposition M, the Accountable Planning Initiative, which added Section 101.1 to the *Planning Code* to establish eight Priority Policies. These policies are: (1) preservation and enhancement of neighborhood-serving retail uses; (2) protection of neighborhood character; (3) preservation and enhancement of affordable housing (discussed in Appendix B, Initial Study; Section D.2, Population and Housing, Question 3b, with regard to housing supply and displacement issues); (4) discouragement of commuter automobiles (discussed in Section IV.D, Transportation and Circulation); (5) protection of industrial and service land uses from commercial office development and enhancement of resident employment and business ownership; (6) maximization of earthquake preparedness (discussed in Appendix B, Initial Study; Section E.13, Geology and Soils, Questions 14a through 14d); (7) landmark and historic building preservation (discussed in Section IV.C, Cultural and Paleontological Resources); and (8) protection of open space (discussed in Section IV.H, Shadow; also see Appendix B, Initial Study; Section E.8, Wind and Shadow, Questions 8a and 8b; and Question 9, Recreation, Questions 9a and 9c). The Priority Policies, which provide general policies and objectives to guide certain land use decisions, contain some policies that relate to physical environmental issues. Prior to issuing a permit for any project that requires an Initial Study under CEQA, and prior to issuing a permit for any demolition, conversion, or change of use, and prior to taking any action that requires a finding of consistency with the *General Plan*, the City is required to find that the proposed project or legislation is consistent with the Priority Policies. In evaluating *General Plan* consistency of the Plan, the Planning Commission and/or Planning Department would make the necessary findings of consistency with the Priority Policies.

The staff report for the Planning Commission will analyze the Plan's consistency with *General Plan* policies and zoning, and will discuss in detail any modifications required in connection with Plan adoption.

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