



Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco City Hall, Room 250  
San Francisco, California

August 31, 2017

**Re: Opposition to the Central SoMa Plan**

Dear Supervisor,

The YIMBY Party is opposed to the Central SoMa Plan being presented to the Planning Commission. The plan would further the jobs-housing imbalance that has wreaked havoc on low-income communities throughout the city and region. It adds 45,000 jobs but only 7,500 units of housing, which will lead to San Franciscans being out-bid by highly paid workers unable to live in the few units provided by the plan. The plan should be scrapped and rethought, or tied to massive up-zoning of residential housing elsewhere in the city.

As it stands, the Central SoMa Plan is one of a series of city policies that have attracted jobs to San Francisco without allowing for requisite housing. From the Mid-Market tax break to mega-projects like 5M and Mission Rock, the city has consistently expanded office space and attracted high-paying jobs without taking sufficient steps to incentivize or require residential construction. The Planning Department's own February 22, 2017 memo states that in 2015 as in 1980, San Francisco had the highest jobs-housing ratio in the Bay Area.

The Central SoMa Plan could be improved in a variety of ways:

- **Make some large Central SoMa lots residential:** The plan pays particular attention to eight large "key development sites" where it prioritizes office space at the expense of housing. The developer of one of these sites at 330 Townsend St. is even trying to build housing, but is being held back because of the plan's office

1390 Market St. Suite 200 • San Francisco, CA 94102 • [hello@yimbyaction.org](mailto:hello@yimbyaction.org) • 415-489-0197

YIMBY Action empowers community stakeholders to advocate for affordable and market-rate housing with the goal of bringing down the cost of housing in San Francisco and the Bay Area.



space requirements. The plan should relax rules for office space and allow or incentivize developers to build majority housing on some of these sites.

- **Increase height limits:** The majority of the parcels in the plan are kept below 85 feet—some are kept at 45 feet—a low height limit for a “downtown” area meant to surround a future subway line. Height limits should be raised, possibly with a density bonus to incentivize housing construction.
- **Add housing elsewhere in SoMa:** The Planning Department has argued that the Central SoMa Plan does not need a jobs-housing balance because other neighborhoods in San Francisco will provide the housing. While our position is that the plan be sent back, at the bare minimum passage of an imbalanced Central SoMa Plan should be tied to a requirement that nearby neighborhoods—like the Western SoMa and Showplace Square—are rezoned for substantially more housing than office to create a housing-jobs ratio closer to 1:1 across the area.

While revising the plan may slow down a few pending projects (mostly office), proceeding as-is will only exacerbate displacement without guaranteeing sufficient housing. The Central SoMa Plan repeats the mistakes of the past by limiting potential residential supply through low height limits and requirements for office space. San Francisco cannot go the path of other cities in the Bay Area that have built up their jobs base at the expense of affordability for their residents.

Supervisors, if this plan comes before you we ask that you send it back to the Planning Department with a requirement that substantially more housing be added than jobs. At the very least, the Board of Supervisors should demand that new area plans for the Western SoMa and Showplace Square be created to add more housing and offset the imbalance created by the Central SoMa Plan. It is our position that it would be easier and more expedient to make changes to the Central SoMa Plan rather than create new area plans, but the Board must ensure a better housing-jobs ratio one way or the other.

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The imbalance between jobs and housing must stop. It has led to the displacement of too many residents as is and will continue to do so without better planning. We urge you to show leadership and stop the Central SoMa Plan in its current form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Clark".

Laura Clark  
Executive Director  
YIMBY Action