



Project Address/Name: 2500 Mariposa Street, The Potrero Yard Modernization Project
Case Number: 2019-021884ENV
Date: May 22, 2020
To: Rafe Rabalais, SFMTA
From: Mat Snyder, Planning Department

This letter provides feedback from the Planning Department regarding the Potrero Yard Modernization Project at 2500 Mariposa Street ("Project"), based on the information provided in the Environmental Review Project Application, the Planning Code, General Plan, Planning Department policies, and local, state, and federal regulations as of the date of this document, all of which are subject to change.

This letter follows a similar format as a Preliminary Project Assessment (PPA) provided to most medium and large-scale development projects prior to the initiation the Department's review of such projects. Similar to a PPA, this letter provides initial feedback and describes the next steps in the application review and entitlement process. Unlike typical PPAs, the Project is a City project that has already had ongoing input from the Planning Department along with other City agencies and the community at large. Also, unlike typical PPAs, this letter is not in reaction to a PPA application, but rather to the submittal of an Environmental Review application. The Planning Department is using this application milestone as an opportunity to do the following: (1) memorialize our joint understanding of the Project Description and the Project's land use and design parameters; (2) describe the review and entitlement process going forward; and (3) provide initial feedback on Project Description.

The Planning Department may provide additional comments once all supplemental applications, background materials and revisions have been submitted. While some approvals are granted by the Planning Department, some are at the discretion of other bodies, such as the Planning Commission or Historic Preservation Commission. Please see below for a list of project approvals. In addition, the Planning Department will provide detailed design review feedback upon submittal of an application when a developer is selected. Additionally, the project will likely require approvals from other City agencies.

You may contact Mat Snyder at mathew.snyder@sfgov.org to answer any questions you may have about this letter.

CC: Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning Division
Michael Christenson, Current Planning Division
Mat Snyder, Citywide Division
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Luiz Barata, Design Review Division



SITE DETAILS

<i>Block/Lot(s):</i>	3971/001
<i>Parcel Area:</i>	192,000-square-foot (or 4.4-acre)
<i>Zoning District(s):</i>	Public - P
<i>Height/Bulk District(s):</i>	65-X
<i>Plan Area:</i>	Mission District (Eastern Neighborhoods)

BACKGROUND

The subject Project is part of the SFMTA's 20-year Building Progress Program to expand and modernize its facilities to meet growing transportation demands and changing technologies. At the same time, the City and County of San Francisco ("City") is looking to explore the ability of these public sites to provide needed space for other public needs, such as additional housing, particularly affordable housing.

Over the last six years, the SFMTA has engaged other City Departments, including the Planning Department, the community and consultants to explore possible development scenarios. Through this ongoing engagement, the SFMTA has developed a Project Description, provided in the Environmental Review application and summarized below. Because of the complexity of the Project, the SFMTA has not developed a detailed set of plans but rather a set of project objectives and design parameters that will be used for the basis of this review. These project objectives and design parameters will not only be the basis of the environmental analysis described here but will also be the basis of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) by which the SFMTA intends to engage a private developer partner in implementing the Project.

As a next step, the SFMTA will be holding two community engagement session remotely to discuss the forthcoming Request for Qualifications (RFQ), which is the first step in developing a short list of potential development partners, who in turn, will be invited to respond to the RFP.

These remote community meetings will be held on June 6, 2020 at 11:00 am (in English) and 1:00 pm (in Spanish). For specific information about these meetings go to:

<https://www.sfmta.com/calendar/potrero-yard-reimagined-spring-2020-virtual-update-and-conversation>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project Site is currently used as the Potrero Yard Muni Bus Maintenance Facility and it fully occupies the equivalent area of two typical blocks (200 ft x 400 ft) south of Franklin Square Park (4.4 acres).

The Potrero Yard Modernization Project is proposed to address critical space needs to accommodate bus maintenance, operation, and administrative uses within a modern, energy-efficient, and seismically safe transit facility. The proposed program would incorporate modern bus technologies, facilitate the transition to a future all-electric battery-powered bus fleet, improve work conditions, increase the efficiency and timeliness of bus maintenance and repairs, and promote resiliency and flexibility in the face of climate change and natural disasters. The proposed project would also include a mix of uses, including housing and other community needs, as part of

a joint development program, with residential uses within and atop the transit facility podium and a ground floor commercial/active use along Bryant Street.

Under the proposed project, the existing bus storage yard (including the bus wash area and running repair station) and the maintenance and operations building (including the second floor parking deck) would be demolished and replaced with a new, approximately 9- to 13-story, approximately 75- to 150-foot-tall, approximately 1,300,000-gross-square-foot structure. The new structure would be an approximately 75-foot-tall podium with three transit levels, commercial and residential uses along the perimeter of the podium on six floors, and three to seven floors of residential development atop the transit facility podium. The Project’s proposed change in land use is as follows:

Land Use	Demolished	New
Paved Bus Storage Yard	112,450 sq. ft.	--
Total Building Floor Area	109,000 gsf	1,300,000 gsf
Bus Maintenance Facility Subtotal	221,450 gsf	723,000 gsf
Residential Development Subtotal	--	544,000 gsf
Residential Units	--	575
Commercial Development Subtotal	--	33,000 gsf

The Environmental Application includes conceptual plans that provide a land use plan in three dimensions along with the proposed building massing. The plans show the entire site built out property-line to property-line for a height of approximately 75-feet. This podium massing would house the new bus maintenance facility along with offices and other MTA-related uses; further, the podium’s frontages would feature residential, retail, and other active uses in some locations. Above the podium would be new housing constructed to a general height of 110-feet with two masses rising to a maximum height of 150-feet. The residential upper portions of the project would be setback from the podium walls with the heights generally stepping from the Mariposa frontage down toward the 17th Street frontage as a means to minimize shadow on Franklin Square Park.

The subject site is within the northeast quadrant of the Mission District and is surrounded by recreational (Franklin Square), residential and light industrial uses with buildings varying from 1 to 4 stories. The maintenance and operations building is considered a moderately intact example of a municipal car barn. The planning department assigned the building a status code by of “3CS,” meaning that it is already listed in the California Register and considered a historical resource. The common materials found in the neighborhood include stucco, plaster concrete, wood siding, and masonry. Fenestrations show a pattern of large glass surfaces with true divided-light windows (following the traditional industrial window typology), bay windows, and/or punched awning windows.

KEY PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

As noted above, the Environmental Application does include detailed architectural plans, but rather sets forth Project Objectives and conceptual design parameters. The Project Objectives are set forth as either “Basic” for those objectives that meet the fundamental intent of MTA’s Building Progress Program, or as “Additional” for those objectives that enable San Francisco to meet other City goals.:

BASIC OBJECTIVES

Transit Facility

- Rebuild, expand, and modernize the SFMTA’s Potrero Bus Yard by 2026 to efficiently maintain and store a growing Muni bus fleet according to the SFMTA Fleet Plan and Facilities Framework schedule.
- Construct the first SFMTA transit facility with infrastructure for battery electric buses to facilitate Muni’s transition to an all-electric fleet, in accordance with San Francisco and California policy.
- Construct a new public asset that is resilient to earthquakes and projected climate change effects and that provides a safe, secure environment for the SFMTA’s employees and assets.
- Improve working conditions or the SFMTA’s workforce of transit operators, mechanics, and front-line administrative staff through a new facility at Potrero Yard.
- Improve and streamline transit operator hiring by consolidating the SFMTA’s operator training function in a new, state-of-the-art facility.
- Support efficient Muni operations by consolidating the Street Operations division in a modern, convenient facility.

Community Input

- Implement inclusive and transparent stakeholder engagement in designing this project and completing the CEQA process.

Responsible Public investment

- Create a development that is financially feasible.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

Streetscape and Urban Design

- Enhance safety and reduce conflicts between transit, commercial vehicles, bicyclists, drivers, and pedestrians.
- Improve the architectural and urban design character of the project site by replacing the existing fences and blank walls with more active, transparent street walls, to the extent feasible

Mixed Use Development and Housing

- Maximize the reuse of this 4.4-acre site in a central, mixed-use neighborhood by creating a mixed-use development and providing dense, mixed-income housing, including below-market rate units.
- Increase the city’s supply of housing by contributing to the Mayor’s Public Lands for Housing goals, the San Francisco General Plan Housing Element goals, and the Association of Bay Area Governments’ Regional Housing Needs Allocation for San Francisco by optimizing the number of dwelling units, including affordable housing, particularly near transit.
- Support transit-oriented development and promote the use of public transportation through an innovative and comprehensive transportation demand management program.
- Ensure that joint development is financially feasible.

Sustainability

- Demonstrate the City’s leadership in sustainable development by constructing an environmentally low-impact facility intended to increase the site’s resource efficiency.

The Planning Department is supportive of these objectives particularly as it relates to using the site to construct badly needed affordable housing at a location that is well served by transit and supportive complementary uses.

The Planning Department is also supportive of the general building envelope that has been developed to meet these objectives. The 75-foot podium portion of the building would not only provide for the much needed expanded SFMTA facility but enable an urban streetwall on the site's four bordering streets, where, in many cases, there is currently only a fenced in yard. Planning looks forward to working with the SFMTA and their eventual developer partner to assure these 75-foot building walls are well articulated, sufficiently bordered by active uses and broken up to respond to their immediate context.

Planning is also generally supportive of the approach to the residential massing above the podium. Planning has reviewed several previous development scenarios that looked at the trade-offs between maximizing development and providing a configuration of building mass that is best suited for the site and its Mission District context. Here, Planning believes that the current conceptual design has struck a good balance in providing significant development space for housing, while requiring that the portions of the building above 75-feet are shaped to minimize their impact: portions above the podium are stepped back from property-line walls, with the overall mass of the Project stepping down from the Mariposa Street side to the 17th Street side to minimize shadows on Franklin Square. Planning looks forward to working with the SFMTA and their eventual developer partner to assure the massing sufficiently minimizes the visual impact from those on the street through upper story setbacks and through mass dimension and separation requirements, as well as ensure that the building provides architecture articulation and façade modulation that is human-scaled and compatible with the neighborhood context.

Planning is very interested in assuring that this bus facility is designed to contribute to its urban context by featuring active uses along the perimeter of the bus facility. Planning agrees with the emphasis of placing most of the active uses along Bryant Street while allowing the Mariposa frontage to serve the main frontage for the bus operations. However, Planning is interested in finding ways to assure that as much of the perimeter features active frontages as possible -- particularly along 17th Street --which means balancing interior efficiency with providing uses at the building's parameter that have a stronger relationship to the surrounding public realm and other uses.

Planning acknowledges that the current proposal includes demolishing the historic *San Francisco Municipal Railway Potrero Car Barn* to ensure that the new bus facility is functional and that the mixed-use development can be feasibly constructed. Planning also acknowledges that -- both through environmental review and public outreach -- the trade-offs between preserving the resource (either fully or partially) and removing it will need to be further explored and analyzed.

REQUIRED REVIEW AND APPROVALS

Planning Code Text Amendment. The subject properties are currently zoned P (Public) and is within a 65-X Height and Bulk District. Uses in P Districts are generally restricted to uses that are operated by public entities. Non-publicly owned institutional uses, PDR, retail and residential uses are not permitted in P Districts. In order to establish the uses and/or permit the construction of buildings that would otherwise not be permitted under the existing zoning, a Planning Code Text amendment is required to create a Special Use District (SUD) that would include specific controls governing development within the boundaries of the SUD. Similarly, the current Height

and Bulk limit of 65-feet would not allow the project. Because of the specific nature of the height and bulk proposal for the site, a new Height and Bulk designation related to the SUD will need to be created. Upon recommendation by the Planning Commission, this legislative amendment must also be approved by the Board of Supervisors. The application can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.sf-planning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=8420>

Zoning Map Amendment. The reclassification of real property from one district to another which includes the establishment of a new Special Use District and/or changing of the height and bulk limits will require an accompanying Zoning Map Amendment. Upon recommendation by the Planning Commission, this legislative amendment must also be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

General Plan Amendments. Given the scale and the prominence of the proposal, staff will do a thorough review of the General Plan elements and Mission Area Plan to see what General Plan figures, maps, and text may need to be amended. Because of the scale and the need for a General Plan amendment, amending the General Plan will likely be a necessary action. General Plan amendments may be initiated by the Planning Commission or by application from the property owner. General Plan amendments can be applied for using the same Legislation Change Amendment application referred to above.

Zoning / Entitlement Process. The Project will require approval by the Planning Commission. Depending on the rezoning, which will include creating an SUD, but could also include changing the underlying zoning, the form of that approval could be a Conditional Use authorization under Planning Code Section 303, Large Project authorization under Planning Code section 329, or something uniquely tailored to the Project created within the SUD. Planning will work with the SFMTA and their development partners to construct the best entitlement path forward that will assure some certainty regarding the rights to implement the land use program, but will enable the Commission to set forth Conditions of Approval, typical of projects of this scale.

Design Guidelines. SFMTA has worked with Planning and their consultant to develop an initial set of Design Guidelines that describe design objectives without being overly proscriptive. Depending on the specificity of the ultimate Project design, Planning may request the more fully fleshed out Design Guidelines be developed for the site to provide ongoing guidance for the site's development. The SUD could potentially refer readers to the Design Guidelines for more specific urban design requirements for the site.

Shadow Analysis. An initial shadow fan analysis shows that the proposal would cause new shadows to be cast on Franklin Square Park. Therefore a Shadow Analysis application is required for the Project. Ultimately, any shadow cast on these parks would require the Planning Commission to find these new shadows neither significant nor adverse with consultation from the Recreation and Parks Commission.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project would require environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Since submittal of the Project Application, the Planning Department has worked with the SFMTA and the environmental consultant to gather project specific information, required for the environmental analysis for the project.

The Environmental Planning Division anticipates publishing a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and to host a public scoping meeting for the environmental analysis in fall 2020. The purpose of this

phase is for interested parties to comment on the scope of the EIR, such as the environmental topics the division should cover in depth in the EIR.

Following this phase, the Environmental Planning anticipates publishing a draft EIR, where interested parties will have the opportunity to comment on the division's analysis of the project's environmental impacts. This includes a public hearing on the draft EIR at the Planning Commission. This phase will also likely include obtaining comments on the draft EIR from the Historic Preservation Commission at a noticed public meeting.

Lastly, the Environmental Planning anticipates preparing a response to comments document. The document will respond to comments received on the draft EIR that raise significant environmental issues. The division would make this document publicly available at least 10 days prior to a Planning Commission hearing that considers certification of the EIR as adequate, accurate, and objective. This certification hearing may coincide with the project approval Planning Commission hearing.

The Environmental Planning will work with the SFMTA, the environmental consultant, and other Planning department divisions on the schedule for each phase.

DESIGN REVIEW

COMPLIANCE WITH DESIGN GUIDELINES

Due to its type (mixed-use), scale, and conditions, it is expected that the Urban Design Guidelines will provide the basis to evaluate the development and guide future design guidelines. Below are some preliminary design comments that are expected to be addressed at the time of further submittals:

Site Design

S1. Recognize and Respond to Urban Patterns – Integrate architecture and building modulation in the site design to reduce the scale of blocks wherever possible by providing plazas, building entrances, and courtyards that relate to the overall city pattern of buildings and blocks.

S3. Recognize and Enhance Unique Conditions - The project needs to acknowledge and respond to unique conditions by providing building articulation and/or differentiated architectural treatment to unique city conditions that occur at the site: the end of York Street, frontage along 17th Street, and the four corners of the site (particularly the two corners along Bryant Street).

S4. Create, Protect and Support View Corridors – Planning supports stepping back upper floors in order to define better streetwalls and reduce the perceived scale of the buildings at street level. Consider using bay windows throughout the development to increase framing of view corridors.

S5. Create a Defined and Pedestrian-Scaled Streetwall – please see comment S4 above. In addition, design all public building frontages to allow active and direct engagement with the street to support pedestrian-oriented activity. Provide building openings to allow public view of the interior operations of the maintenance facility.

S6. Organize Uses to Complement the Public Environment – Locate retail uses near neighborhood commercial areas and ground floor residential units near adjacent housing. Support adjacent institutional, civic, and recreational uses with more public programming, including retail, particularly along the 17th St. frontage. Locate uses appropriately to the scale and intensity of each street frontage. Special design consideration should be given

to those frontages along less busy streets (i.e. Hampshire Street) where long distances of inactive uses are being proposed.

S7. Integrate Common Open Space and Landscape with Architecture – Further detailed information needs to be provided in subsequent submittals. Use open space (courtyards and roof decks) to moderate the scale of buildings and use buildings to positively shape open space. Create open space that allows for active uses but is also protected for the residential users. Locate and orient open space and building mass to maximize solar exposure and protect open space from prevailing winds. Provide seating and other active elements to help enliven open spaces. Use trees, planting, and paving to develop defined human-scale spaces. Maximize opportunities for sustainable plantings and permeable surfaces in sidewalks, roofs, and courtyards.

S8. Respect and Exhibit Natural Systems and Features - Further detailed information needs to be provided in subsequent submittals. Employ environmental technologies and green infrastructure best practices to respond to the site, its surroundings, and local and regional ecological systems. Express the project's sustainable operation, significance, or efforts through explanation or physical / visual evidence.

Architecture

Further detailed information needs to be provided in subsequent submittals. Below are some guidelines that will need to be addressed:

A1. Express a Clear Organizing Architectural Idea - Architectural concepts should be clear, compelling, compatible with the site's context, and consistent to its own rules and logic.

A2. Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally – See comments S4 and S5. All buildings should provide modulation and articulation in order to break overall massing volume, create a defined street wall, provide a pedestrian scale experience, relate to the surrounding buildings, and create a hierarchy of the architectural elements. To achieve this, Planning recommends using means of subtraction and addition of volumes to the facades, bay windows and projections, material changes, reflection of building function/ programming and expression of structural elements.

A3. Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials – The surrounding neighborhood does not have a consistent material context. This project should aim to reinforce materials already being used in the area by drawing from the variety of surrounding building materials for the Project. Because of the industrial context and nature of the maintenance facility, it is expected that the materials be compatible with the industrial use. Residential uses will require warmer and more natural materials to emphasize the residential character.

A4. Design Buildings from Multiple Vantage Points – Design all visible façades with similar effort and consideration as primary façades. Due to the scale of the project, it is expected that the roof design and the many courtyards, in multiple levels, will be designed and fully integrated to the project. Minimize, combine, and integrate rooftop utilities and stairs/ elevators penthouses into the overall building architecture. Sculpt taller buildings to enhance the city skyline.

A5. Shape the Roofs of Buildings – See comment A4. Provide building termination to emphasize the desirable streetwalls. Create intentional façade terminations and avoid glass railings at the top of building façades. Roof guardrails should be setback a minimum 5' from the building edges.

A6. Render Building Facades with Texture and Depth – Also see comment A2. Avoid large expanses of undifferentiated blank surfaces. Simple changing color or materials in the same plane are rarely sufficient. Create different façade articulation between lower floors and upper floors. Compose window patterns that correspond to programmatic needs, vary heights and widths of façade features, and articulate forms with materials. Establish a rhythm of horizontal and vertical elements, such as bay windows, cornices, belt courses, window moldings, balconies, etc.

A7. Coordinate Building Elements – Consider public art, signage, and lighting as elements that will inform the architecture of the building. Design signage and lighting to reinforce pedestrian comfort and safety.

A8. Design Active Building Fronts – See comments S5 and S6. Along Mariposa Street, we recommend reducing conflicts between major vehicular and pedestrian movement. Planning has previously identified modules of the structural grid along the Mariposa Street that could be better utilized, as well as has indicated that some access points for residential and transit related functions could be relocated to Hampshire Street; further work needs to be coordinated with other San Francisco agencies such as the SFMTA, Public Works, and Fire. Planning recommends that future project applications be further discussed at SDAT (Street Design Advisory Team) meetings, which convenes multiple city agencies. Consider the placement of active Muni-related uses such as administrative functions, non-profits and lobby/ exhibit space along Mariposa Street. Along Hampshire St. and Bryant St., the Department recommends that the podium incorporate openings or transparency so that the public can see the activities of the bus yard. Ideally these façades will incorporate elements of design inspired by the bus operations using textures, materials, and articulation, while addressing issues such as weather protection, noise and emissions. Along 17th Street, Planning recommends that the entire building frontage be lined up with residential uses with potential active uses at the ground floor of the corners. This could possibly be achieved by eliminating rows of bus parking and pushing the bus operations and ramps further south. Residential lobbies and vertical circulation should be clearly visible and identifiable, and distributed along the façades to help activation. Evaluate the potential to provide ground floor residential dwelling units with direct access and appropriate transition space between the street and sidewalk as per the Guidelines for Ground Floor Residential Design. Avoid or minimize expansive blank and blind walls at the ground floor. Distinguish commercial entrances from residential entrances through integrated signage, changes in materials and colors, and elevated residential entries.

A9. Employ Sustainable Principles and Practices in Building Design – Overall building design to be guided by sustainability principles, including but not limited to: recycled or renewable sources / locally sourced building materials, water and energy efficiency, and overall building low carbon footprint.

Public Realm

Better Streets. The Project will be subject to the Better Streets Requirement of Planning Code Section 138.1 to assure the four surrounding streets are brought up to date to the current San Francisco streetscape standards as set forth the Better Streets Plan. The SFMTA is currently working on a streetscape plan that will take into consideration the need to facilitate multi-modal travel, the heavy usage of the SFMTA fleet, and the urban design need to unify this portion of the Mission District. The Planning Department and the Street Design Advisory Committee (SDAT) look forward to engaging with the SFMTA in advising on how best to meet each of these objectives.

P2. Locate and Design Open Spaces to Maximize Physical Comfort and Visual Access – orient and design common open spaces to maximize physical comfort, considering solar orientation, exposure, shading, shadowing, noise, and wind. Provide seating in a variety of space configurations. Provide different scales of open space / activities.

P3. Express Neighborhood Character in Open Space Designs – explore different ways to integrate artwork to express neighborhood character and the importance of Muni operations to the city.

P4. Support Public Transportation and Bicycling – Provide easy access to bike racks and internal building bike parking.

P5. Design Sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian Experience – See comment A8.

P7. Integrate Sustainable Practices into the Landscape – See comment A9. Use native or drought resistant plantings. Integrate stormwater treatment to landscape plan.