



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: June 20, 2018
TO: Civic Design Review Committee of the Arts Commission
FROM: Nicholas Perry, Senior Planner (415) 575-9066
RE: **Civic Center Public Realm Plan**

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SUMMARY

The Civic Center Public Realm Plan is creating a comprehensive, long-term vision for improvements to the Civic Center's plazas, streets, and other public spaces. The Plan is an interagency effort managed by the San Francisco Planning Department in partnership with multiple City agencies including, San Francisco Recreation & Park Department, San Francisco Real Estate Division, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, San Francisco Public Works, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, San Francisco Arts Commission, and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development. Coordination and partnerships with Civic Center's numerous stakeholder groups is a key component of the Plan. The Plan is being closely coordinated with the Civic Center Commons Initiative, an on-going effort to improve Civic Center as a neighborhood gathering space and public commons for all San Franciscans (see www.civiccentercommons.org for more information). The Plan is currently midway through its design and community engagement phase. This memo provides an overview of the Plan and design work completed to-date in anticipation of an informational presentation at Civic Design Review Committee meeting on June 25, 2018.

BACKGROUND

The greater Civic Center area's rapidly growing residential and worker population, when combined with the existing population in the Tenderloin, SoMa, and other nearby neighborhoods, is placing increasing demands on Civic Center's public realm. Multiple City agencies have worked on improving individual public spaces within Civic Center, but the City lacks a current comprehensive plan that ensures a cohesive and coordinated approach to public realm design, operations and management. In response to these conditions, San Francisco Planning began working with its partner agencies to scope the Civic Center Public Realm Plan. The Plan is building off the momentum of recent improvements like the new Helen Diller Civic Center Playgrounds, and creating a unified vision for the area's plazas, streets, and other public spaces that accounts for the aspirations and needs of the City in today's social, economic and cultural context. Over the past two years, San Francisco Planning has completed the RFP processes to hire a consultant team, completed analysis of existing conditions, and, in November 2017, initiated the conceptual design and community engagement phase of the project.

PROJECT TEAM

The Civic Center Public Realm Plan is a multi-agency project managed by San Francisco Planning with a large consultant team led by CMG Landscape Architecture.

Key contacts working on the project's design scope are listed below.

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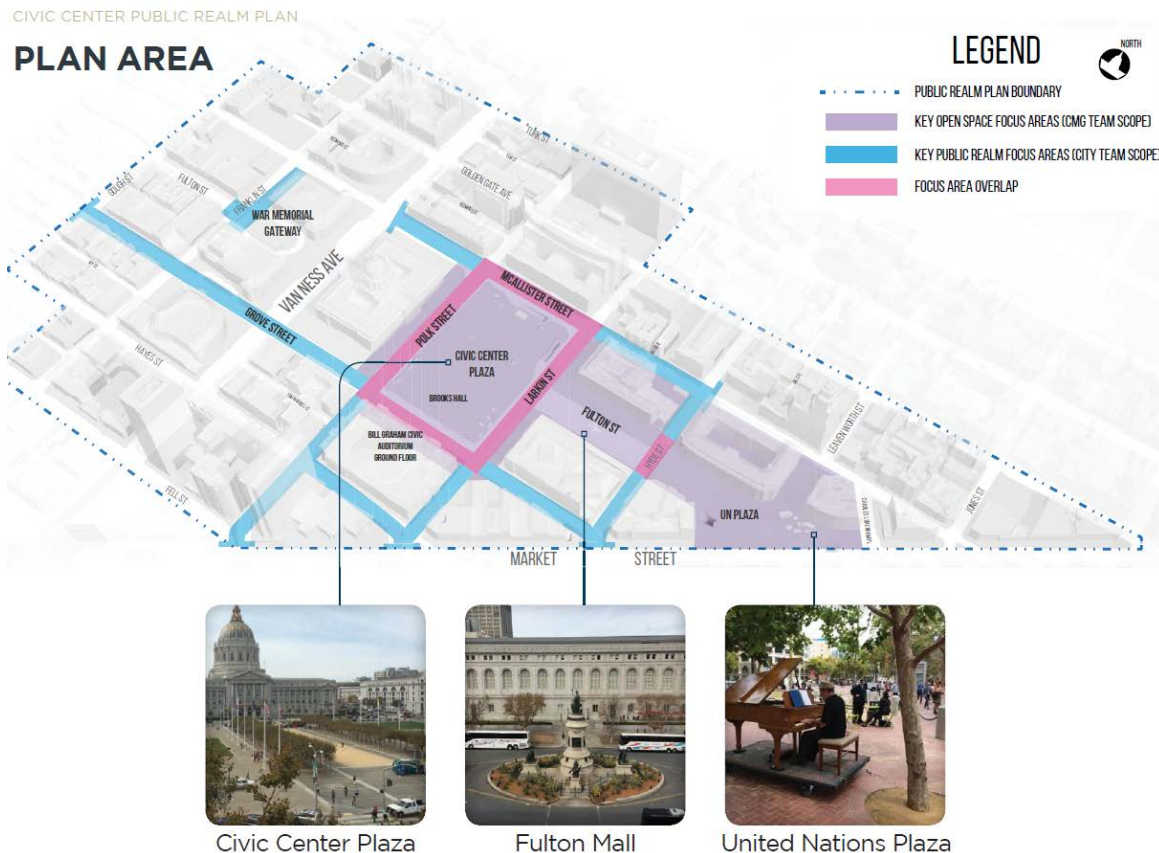
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PLAN AREA

The plan area is generally bounded by Gough Street, Golden Gate Avenue, Market Street and Fell Street and encompasses the San Francisco Civic Center Landmark District. See map below for reference. Shaded areas on the map are special focus areas for design work. A consultant team led by CMG Landscape Architecture is working with the City and community stakeholders to develop a design plan for Civic Center Plaza, United Nations Plaza, and the connecting block of Fulton Street (aka Fulton Mall). These three spaces are collectively referred to as “Civic Center Commons.” This team is also studying use and activation options for Brooks Hall beneath Civic Center Plaza and for the ground floor of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. An operations and management plan for the Commons is a key component of the plan’s scope. In addition to public space design, an interagency team convened by Planning is preparing conceptual designs for improvements to the following streets:

- Grove Street (From Gough to Market);
- Polk Street/Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place (From McAllister to Market);
- Fulton and Franklin Street Intersection (War Memorial Gateway);
- McAllister Street (From Van Ness to Hyde);
- Larkin Street (From McAllister to Market); and,
- Hyde Street (McAllister to Market)



HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Civic Center was listed as a San Francisco Landmark District under Article 10 of the Planning Code in 1994, and portions of this district were previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and as a National Historic Landmark District in 1987. Planning completed a survey of historic landscape features in the district in 2012-2015 as part of the Civic Center Cultural Landscape Inventory, which was adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 16, 2015.

PLAN TIMELINE

Winter 2016-Summer 2017	RFP & Contracting for Public Space Design Consultant Team
Summer 2017-Fall 2017	Existing Conditions Analysis, including Public Life Study
Winter 2017-Spring 2018	Public Space & Street Design Options Development
Spring 2018-Fall 2018	Public Space & Street Design Preferred Option Development
Fall 2018-Fall 2020	Environmental Review
Fall 2020	Plan Adoption Hearings

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key component of the plan is outreach, coordination, and partnership with the Civic Center's many stakeholders. The project team is working closely with InterEthnica, a local firm that specializes in community engagement, to ensure that the diverse communities living in and near Civic Center are fully integrated into the plan's development. Over 50 community organizations have been engaged to-date. Outreach has included two large community workshops (November 2017, April 2018), in-language focus groups in Chinese, Filipino, Spanish, and Vietnamese, intercept surveys, online surveys, and in-the-field community engagement using a moveable outreach station developed through the Planning Department's Groundplay program.

DESIGN OPTIONS

Plan views and renderings of the design options developed to-date for Civic Center's public spaces and streets are available online at www.civiccentersf.org/design-options. A general description of the design options is provided below.

Public Space Design. Three framework plans have been developed by the CMG Landscape Architecture team for Civic Center Commons. The frameworks respond to the results of the existing conditions analysis and input received via the extensive community outreach process to-date. The framework plans are meant to illustrate a range of long-term potential improvements and approaches to designing Civic Center Commons to support civic gatherings and daily use.

All three framework plans share some key design moves, including the following:

- Incorporating the existing Helen Diller Civic Center Playgrounds;

- Unifying the public realm through an expanded Civic Center Plaza footprint, safer street crossings, and inviting gateways;
- Treating the Leavenworth Street portion of UN Plaza as a key neighborhood gateway;
- Accommodating multiple locations for civic gatherings, connected by a generous civic promenade from City Hall to Market Street;
- Relocating the Pioneer Monument and Simon Bolivar Monument from this civic promenade to appropriate alternative locations within the Public Realm Plan area, and removal of pollarded trees within Civic Center Plaza;
- Mitigating wind and enhancing sunny locations in the public spaces, to maximize environmental comfort;
- Providing ample seating and basic amenities such as restrooms and drinking fountains;
- Adding new program and uses that support public life day and night, weekend and weekday;
- New kiosk/park pavilion buildings providing access to Brooks Hall and Civic Center Garage and space for Civic Center Plaza-level amenities (e.g., café, info. centers, etc.)
- Actively engaging adjacent institutions, including new program and pavilions on the Main Library's Fulton Street terrace; and,
- A new station entry building at the BART/Muni entrance at UN Plaza.

The differences between the framework plans are briefly described below:

- **Public Platform.** The Public Platform framework plan is designed to emphasize space for performance and public gathering. It features large, flexible areas of lawn and/or paved plaza with groupings of trees and planting along the edges of the main public spaces. Special paving marks key areas of public gathering (e.g., the center of Civic Center Plaza) but otherwise a unified paving pattern is used to visually tie together the three public spaces. Sloped lawns in Civic Center Plaza create a new foreground at City Hall and provide access to Brooks Hall from the Plaza. A large new interactive fountain is envisioned on United Nations Plaza. A new station entry building at the main Civic Center Station entrance would also serve as a terraced amphitheater and overlook (similar to the TKTS booth at Times Square in New York City). Leavenworth Street at UN Plaza includes neighborhood-focused active recreation amenities.
- **Civic Sanctuary.** The Civic Sanctuary framework plan is designed to emphasize the area's history and role as a place of civic life and work. Orderly rows of trees define the main public spaces. The historic ceremonial path connecting City Hall to Market Street through the center of the spaces is emphasized with special paving that incorporates a historical timeline into the paving pattern. Civic Center Plaza includes a large flexible lawn and plaza, with a viewing courtyard that provides outdoor space and light to Brooks Hall below. The center of Fulton Street is devoted to two large, flexible panels of lawn. The existing Lawrence Halprin design for United Nations Plaza is retained, with

some adjustments to improve use and activation. Leavenworth Street at UN Plaza includes micro-retail and interactive art.

- **Culture Connector.** The Culture Connector framework plan is designed to emphasize local diversity and culture. At Civic Center Plaza, a large oval shaped gathering space is framed by smaller open spaces that contain flexible lawns, picnic areas, and playgrounds bordered by trees and planting. At the center of the oval-shaped central gathering space is an interactive “mirror fountain” that can easily be drained to create more space for large gatherings. Large canopy structures cover access points to Brooks Hall and the Civic Center Garage and add protected outdoor space at kiosks. A series of small kiosks that can serve as incubator space for local businesses line the south side of Fulton Mall and United Nations Plaza. Space for sculpture gardens and interactive art installations line the north side of Fulton Mall and United Nations Plaza. A unified paving pattern is used to visually tie together the three public spaces and surrounding streets. The existing fountain at United Nations Plaza is repurposed as a boulder play garden. Leavenworth Street at UN Plaza includes neighborhood-focused passive recreation amenities such as a dog park.

Brooks Hall & Bill Graham Civic Auditorium Activation. Each framework plan for Civic Center Plaza is paired with complementary reuse scenarios for Brooks Hall and the ground floor of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. These conceptual scenarios have been developed based on community input, architectural/structural considerations, and market analysis.

Each scenario shares the following features:

- Space for a district water system;
- Space for storage and Main Library operations;
- Space for a community center that could include public recreational amenities; and,
- Mix of civic, cultural, and revenue-generating uses that support public spaces above.

The differences between the scenarios are briefly described below:

- **Public Platform.** Active retail, food & beverage tenants, and fitness center in Brooks Hall. New food and beverage tenant space built underneath the center of the Grove Street marquee of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.
- **Civic Sanctuary.** Government office space, food & beverage and anchor retail in Brooks Hall. Moveable kiosks incorporated into the Grove Street frontage of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.
- **Culture Connector.** Market hall and event venue in Brooks Hall. Two food and beverage tenant spaces built underneath the Grove Street marquee of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.

Street Design. The Civic Center Public Realm Plan area encompasses more than 30 blocks and several miles of streets. Working with the community and the consultant-led public space redesign team, an interagency City team has led the concept design of the streets within the plan area. To ensure the concept design for all the streets bordering Civic Center’s key public spaces is closely coordinated and integrated into the redesign of the public spaces, the City-led street design team and consultant-led public space design team have been closely collaborating on the areas where the teams’ design focus areas overlap.

Key elements of the team’s street design work are briefly summarized below, by street:

McAllister and Larkin streets. McAllister and Larkin Streets both border some of Civic Center’s key public spaces, including Civic Center Plaza. Currently, both roadways are widened significantly around the Plaza and also, for McAllister, at City Hall. While changes are not proposed on a corridor-wide level for either of these streets, changes are proposed for the blocks around the Plaza and vicinity, as detailed below:

McAllister Street:

- Strengthened role as major transit corridor (5-Fulton and 5R Rapid), with transit-priority upgrades;
- 29’ of potential reclaimed public space created from wide, 108’ existing roadway;
- Gracious pedestrian promenade along Civic Center Plaza’s north edge; and
- Narrowed intersection crossings and enhanced crossing treatments for safety.

Larkin Street:

- Strengthened role as major neighborhood gateway street;
- 28’ of potential reclaimed public space created from wide, 105’ existing roadway;
- Gracious pedestrian promenades along Civic Center Plaza’s east edge and fronting the Main Library and Asian Art Museum; and
- Narrowed intersection crossings and enhanced crossing treatments for safety.

Grove Street & Polk streets. Two conceptual design options for both Grove and Polk streets in Civic Center, a “Complete Street Option” and a “Plaza Promenade Option” have been created by the interagency team. These options address the needs of bicycles, pedestrians, vehicles, parking, and loading in different ways, as described below:

- **Grove Street: “Complete Street Option.”** Generally, the Complete Street option keeps one vehicle lane in each direction and reduces the amount of on-street parking. This allows for sidewalk widening and/or plaza expansion, protected bike lanes, and loading zones. The streetscape in front of Bill

Graham Civic Auditorium would be designed to function as public space during special events.

- **Grove Street: “Plaza Promenade Option.”** Generally, the Plaza Promenade option replaces on-street parking with loading zones, a two-way bike path, and major sidewalk widening. Along the edge of Civic Center Plaza, vehicle access is limited to a loading-only lane in front of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. The rest of the roadway in front of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium becomes public space. This would expand Civic Center Plaza and improve the pedestrian connection between the Plaza and Auditorium.
- **Polk Street: “Complete Street Option.”** Generally, the Complete Street option keeps the existing number of vehicle lanes on Polk Street but reduces the amount of on-street parking to allow for sidewalk widening and/or plaza expansion, protected bike lanes, and loading zones. The streetscape in front of City Hall would be designed to function as public space during special events.
- **Polk Street: “Plaza Promenade Option.”** Generally, the Plaza Promenade option replaces parking on one side of the street with a two-way bike path and widened sidewalks. On the block adjacent to City Hall, one southbound vehicle lane is kept. The rest of the roadway in front of City Hall becomes public space, improving the pedestrian connection between the Plaza and City Hall.

War Memorial Gateway. Today, the edge of the War Memorial Courtyard next to the intersection of Franklin and Fulton streets is a surface parking lot that does not have a clear path for people to walk into the courtyard. A Flexible-Use Plaza design is proposed that would better connect the War Memorial Courtyard to the sidewalk, open up views to City Hall from Fulton Street and provide space for events and gatherings. This option would require the loss of several parking spaces.

NEXT STEPS

Between now and mid-July the project team will gather community input on the design options through surveys, hearings, community group meetings, and other engagement efforts. Beginning in mid-July, the team will start to develop and vet a preferred design scheme for the public spaces and streets. Preferred design concepts will be shared at a community open house, tentatively scheduled for Fall 2018. A draft plan document is expected to be completed by the end of 2018, at which time environmental review will commence. For more information on the plan and to stay up-to-date on the latest project updates, please visit: www.civiccentersf.org