



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Preliminary Project Assessment

Date: August 23, 2011
Case No.: **2011.0667U**
Project Address: 850 La Playa Street
Block/Lot: 1691/019
Zoning: NC-S District and the Coastal Zone
40-X Height and Bulk District
Project Sponsor: Safeway, Inc.
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DISCLAIMERS:

Please be advised that this determination does not constitute an application for development with the Planning Department. It also does not represent a complete review of the proposed project, a project approval of any kind, or in any way supersede any required Planning Department approvals listed below. The Planning Department may provide additional comments regarding the proposed project once the required applications listed below are 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. Additionally, it is likely that the project will require approvals from other City agencies such as the Department of Building Inspection, Department of Public Works, Department of Public Health, and others. The information included herein is based on plans and information provided for this assessment and the Planning Code, General Plan, Planning Department policies, and local/state/federal regulations as of the date of this document, all of which are subject to change.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project consists of a phased replacement of an existing grocery store (d.b.a. "Safeway"). The 3.3 acre site is bounded by La Playa Street to the west, Cabrillo Street to the north, 48th Avenue to the east, and Fulton Street to the south. It is zoned NC-S (Neighborhood Commercial Shopping Center) District. The first phase will consist of constructing a new Safeway store containing approximately 65,000 square feet on its existing 215-space surface parking lot. The second phase will include the demolition of the existing Safeway store and replacing it with underground and grade level parking for approximately 202 vehicles. The last phase of the proposal involves the construction of a small retail building (approximately 3,500 square feet), and a residential building (approximately 13,000 square feet) to be built by a separate developer.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project initially requires the following documentation as part of the environmental review process, which must be completed before any project approval may be granted:

1. An **Environmental Evaluation Application**: In order to facilitate environmental review and comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the applicant shall submit an Environmental Evaluation Application (EEA). The information in the EEA shall be supplemented with the following background studies:
 - a. *Transportation Study*. Based on a review of the plans submitted as part of Preliminary Project Assessment, the Planning Department has determined that a Transportation Study is required. As part of any future analysis, the Department will focus on site circulation, ingress and egress, and loading. Upon submittal of an EEA, the Planning Department will provide additional guidance related to the process for selecting a transportation consultant and assist in the development of the scope of work for the analysis.
 - b. *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)*. The applicant shall submit an Environmental Site Assessment. The ESA should investigate existing environmental conditions at the project site, which may include: potential underground storage tanks associated with a former gas station that was located at 48th Avenue and Fulton Street; the potential for asbestos-containing building materials (ACBM) and lead-based paint in the existing supermarket building; possible soils contamination associated with the site's surface parking lot; and documented releases of hazardous substances within 0.5 miles of the proposed project site, if any. The Phase I ESA should include professional recommendations as to whether further investigation (e.g., soils sampling) is warranted.
 - c. *Geotechnical Study*. The applicant shall submit a geotechnical study that investigates the soils underlying the site and identifies any geotechnical concerns related to the proposed column and spread footing-type foundation system. The geotechnical study should determine whether the site is subject to liquefaction and landslides, and should highlight any recommendations for mitigating potential impacts, as applicable, associated with any of the geotechnical concerns identified in the study. Additionally, if the geotechnical report completed for the original Safeway store is available, please also provide a copy as part of the submittal.
 - d. *Stormwater Management Ordinance*. The City and County of San Francisco Stormwater Management Ordinance (SMO) became effective on May 22, 2010. This ordinance requires that any project resulting in a ground disturbance of 5,000 square feet or greater prepare a Stormwater Control Plan (SCP), consistent with the November 2009 Stormwater Design Guidelines (SDG). Responsibility for review and approval of the SCP is with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Wastewater Enterprise, Urban Watershed Management Program (UWMP). The initial CEQA evaluation of a project will broadly discuss how the SMO will be implemented. The project's environmental evaluation would

- generally evaluate how and where the implementation of required stormwater management and Low Impact Design (LID) approaches would reduce potential negative effects of stormwater runoff. This may include environmental factors such as the natural hydrologic system, city sewer collection system, and receiving body water quality.
- e. *Archeological Study.* The project is subject to preliminary archeological review by Department staff. This review will commence after submittal of an EEA and geotechnical study/studies. At that juncture, the Planning Department will determine whether additional reporting and research will be required to determine whether the project has the potential to adversely affect known or potential archeological resources.
 - f. *Historic Architectural Resources.* According to the Planning Department's records, the existing Safeway building on the subject property was constructed in 1971, making it 40 years old at the time of this review. The State of California Office of Historic Preservation recommends documenting and taking into consideration in the planning process, any cultural resource that is 45 years old. Because the existing building is 40 years old, it does not have the potential to be considered an historical resource for the purpose of environmental review, and the Planning Department does not require any further analysis of this topic.
 - g. *Air Quality Screening.* The proposed project includes the siting of sensitive receptors (i.e. residential uses) near sources of pollutants. As part of the environmental review process, either the Planning Department or the environmental consultant shall conduct preliminary air quality screening to determine whether potential stationary sources of air toxic contaminants exist within 1,000 feet of the project site. Moreover, the analysis will also need to consider construction and operational air quality effects. Upon completion of this initial screening, the Department would determine whether additional air quality analysis is required, which may need to be prepared by a consultant as part of the overall project's environmental evaluation.
 - h. *Noise Measurements.* The proposed project site is located on a block bounded by 48th Avenue, Cabrillo Street, La Playa and Fulton Streets. The Planning Department's noise maps indicate that existing ambient noise levels range between 55 and 60 decibels. The project involves the siting new noise-sensitive uses (e.g., residential uses) along the Cabrillo Avenue and La Playa perimeters of the site. Given the mixed use nature of the project proposal, the Planning Department will require preparation of an initial noise technical memorandum that describes the project operations and the potential for noise, particularly related to loading and deliveries, to affect existing and nearby residences. This analysis shall include at least one 24-hour noise measurement (with maximum noise level readings taken at least every 15 minutes. The analysis must be prepared by persons qualified in acoustical analysis and/or engineering and shall demonstrate with reasonable certainty that Title 24 insulation standards, where applicable, can be met, and that there are no particular circumstances about the proposed project site that that appear to warrant heightened concern about noise levels in the vicinity.

- Should such concerns be present, the Planning Department may require the completion of a detailed noise assessment by person(s) qualified in acoustical analysis and/or engineering prior to the first project approval action, in order to demonstrate that acceptable interior noise levels, consistent with those in the Title 24 standards can be attained. The findings of the acoustical study are intended to be included in the environmental review document.
- i. *Aesthetics.* The project proposes demolition of the existing Safeway supermarket, construction of a new supermarket aligned with the southern edge of the property, reconfigured/multi-level parking in the site's center, and residential uses bordering the Cabrillo Avenue and La Playa edges. Existing views of the Pacific Ocean are available from limited points on site and from Cabrillo Street. Given the degree of visual change anticipated, the Planning Department will require photo simulations of the proposed project in the context of its surroundings from nearby public viewpoints. At minimum, the Department requires "before" and "after" photos of the site from the 48th and Cabrillo Avenues as well as from a viewpoint on La Playa. An analysis of how the project could alter westerly views of the Pacific Ocean should also be considered.
 - j. *Shadow.* Planning Code Section 295 restricts new shadow upon public spaces under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department by any structure exceeding 40 feet, unless the Planning Commission finds the impact to be less than significant. Based on a review of the preliminary plans, it appears that the tallest portion of the project building would be 35 feet. Therefore a shadow study is not required.

Based on a preliminary review of the information contained within the PPA application, the Planning Department requires preparation of an Initial Study. The Initial Study contains all topics on the City's standardized CEQA checklist. At this juncture it is not possible to determine whether the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment. As such, it may be appropriate to prepare a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration (if mitigation measures are identified that would reduce potential adverse effects to less-than-significant levels). If the project could have a significant effect on the environment, then the Department would require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

In any case, the Planning Department recommends that the applicant select an environmental consultant to prepare the requisite CEQA documentation. The selection of environmental consultants is subject to the Planning Department's *Consultant Selection Guidelines* and this process will be managed by an environmental planner that will be assigned to this case upon receipt of the EEA and documentation listed above.

Environmental Evaluation applications are available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street Suite 400, at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street, and online at www.sfplanning.org.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT APPROVALS:

The project requires the following Planning Department approvals. These approvals may be reviewed in conjunction with the required environmental review, but may not be granted until after the required environmental review is completed.

1. The proposed project requires a **Pre-application Meeting** with surrounding neighbors and registered neighborhood groups before a development application may be filed with the Planning Department. The Pre-application packet, which includes instructions and template forms, is available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street Suite 400, and at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street. The Pre-application packet is also available online at www.sfplanning.org under the “Applications” tab. All registered neighborhood group mailing lists are available online at www.sfplanning.org under the “Publications” tab.
2. A **Conditional Use Application/Planned Unit Development** pursuant to Planning Code Sections 303 and 304 is required for the demolition of the existing Safeway store and the construction of a new Safeway store as well as other aspects of the project on the site. Since the project site is greater than one-half of an acre, a Planned Unit Development may be submitted for the proposed project. Conditional Use authorizations are required for, including but not limited to, formula retail use, non-residential use size, and hours of operation. Conditional Use applications are available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street Suite 400, at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street, and online at www.sfplanning.org.
3. A **Coastal Zone Permit** is required for any demolition and new construction for properties located within the Coastal Zone for consistency with the requirements and objectives of the San Francisco Local Coastal Program, which is the San Francisco Western Shoreline Plan, a part of the San Francisco’s General Plan. The City’s General Plan is available online at www.sfplanning.org. Coastal Zone Permit applications are available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street Suite 400, and at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street.
4. A **Demolition Permit Application** is required for the demolition of the existing building. Demolition permit applications are available at the Department of Building Inspection at 1660 Mission Street.
5. A **New Construction Permit Application** is required for the construction of the new buildings. This portion of the project will require Planning Code Section 312 Neighborhood Notification, which can be done in conjunction with the Conditional Use Application. New Construction permit applications are available at the Department of Building Inspection at 1660 Mission Street.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTIFICATIONS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Project Sponsors are encouraged to conduct public outreach with the surrounding community and neighborhood groups early in the development process. As noted above, the proposed project is subject to the Planning Department’s Pre-application process before the project applications may be filed. Differing levels of neighborhood notification are mandatory for some or all of the reviews and approvals listed above.

PRELIMINARY PROJECT COMMENTS:

The following comments address specific Planning Code and other general issues that may significantly affect the proposed project:

1. The **First Source Hiring Program** – The proposed project is subject to the requirements of the First Source Hiring Program (Chapter 83 of the Administrative Code) for commercial establishments in excess of 25,000 square feet. Please contact the First Source Hiring Manager at (415) 581-2335 or www.business.services@sfgov.org. A copy of the “Chapter 83: First Source Hiring Program” form is also available online at www.sfgov.org/planning.
2. The **Better Streets Plan/Streetscape and Pedestrian Improvements** – Planning Code Section 138.1 requires certain improvements be made with development projects, such that the public right-of-way may be safe, accessible, convenient and attractive to the public. The Planning Code is available online at www.sfplanning.org.
3. The **Green Landscaping Ordinance** – The Green Landscaping Ordinance amends the Planning Code and the Public Works Code related to development projects in order to achieve environmental and aesthetic goals. A copy of the “Guide to the San Francisco Green Landscaping Ordinance” is available online at www.sfgov.org/planning.
4. With regard to the residential component of the project, all relevant code provisions related to residential units must be met, including but not limited to exposure, open space and off-street parking. If submitting as a Planned Unit Development, you may seek modifications to these requirements through that application; otherwise, variances from the relevant Planning Code sections must be justified and obtained.
5. **Draft Bird-Safe Guidelines** – Due to the proposed project’s location near Golden Gate Park, glass façades may need to be designed to comply with bird-safe standards if future pending legislation is approved. The bird-safe guidelines would apply to only new glazing or the replacement of more than 50% of the existing glazing facing Golden Gate Park. Glass façade treatments that would comply with the bird-safe guidelines could include latticework, grilles, and other devices, both functional and decorative, outside the glass or integrated into the glass spacing requirements. Additionally, bird-safe glazing treatment should consist of no more than 10% untreated glazing. Building owners are encouraged to concentrate permitted transparent glazing on the ground floor and lobby entrances to enhance visual interest for pedestrians.
6. **Seismic Hazard Zone** – The subject parcel is identified by the State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology as Seismic Hazard Zones in the City and County of San Francisco. Therefore, any new construction is subject to a mandatory Interdepartmental Project Review prior to any application that requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission. For more detailed information, please contact the Project Review Meeting Coordinator at (415) 575-6926.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN COMMENTS:

The following comments address preliminary design issues that may significantly affect the proposed project:

- *Massing/ Site Design*

- *Site design.* The loading and parking facilities, although relatively invisible from the street, serve as the organizational structure for the site. The site design could benefit from a better organization of the parking; the current design unnecessarily limits the potential for housing and results in a more complicated development strategy for the project sponsor by forcing a third-party residential developer to “tack on” housing to the exterior of the parking structure. The Planning Department’s Urban Design Advisory Team (UDAT) would prefer to see more housing on the site.
- The housing should be designed to respond to the context of the surrounding residential blocks, many of which contain buildings on 25’ lots. As a general principle, there should be an active edge to the entire perimeter of this site to support an engaging pedestrian experience. Blank walls, however designed, are strongly discouraged in any development, but especially in those located amidst otherwise fine-grained housing. (Please see further comments under *Street Frontage*.)
- The location of the new Safeway on Fulton is an improvement from the existing location, and it allows construction to occur while the existing store remains open. However, the development should consider using more of the site for housing and taking advantage of housing that faces Golden Gate Park, and the Ocean.
- An alternative site design option would treat the block as two development sites, with the store and associated parking built on one site, and the housing on the second. This would allow for far more housing units to be built and facilitate designs that are in greater harmony with surrounding context. This approach would address a number of the Planning Department’s concerns, including the number of units being built, the amount, location and design of access points for parking, and the inadequate quantity and quality of rear-yard open space.
- UDAT encourages taking advantage of the additional opportunities in the view corridors to the Ocean that cut through the block to the West.
- *Elevation along 48th Avenue.* The proposed project presents a 12’ high landscaped screen wall punctuated by two parking entrances and a 36’ wide side of 3 story housing at the La Playa edge. While a green wall is an effective means of screening a large parking lot, UDAT would like to see a greater relation in scale and use to the existing houses across the street -- an articulation that would be more in keeping with the existing finer-grained neighborhood pattern, consistent with fundamental design principles for building mass and articulation.

- *Street Frontage*

- The frontage along Fulton should provide a consistent and active face to Golden Gate Park. The General Plan notes “Strong and organized development adjacent to parks creates an effective contrast and makes the street space between the two a pleasing space

to be in. Weak and disorganized development adjacent to parks neither complements nor effectively contrasts with the park edge.”

- *Housing.* Active ground-floor features are encouraged with features found in the surrounding context such as front setbacks that allow for stair stoop entrances and landscaping in the front. The development of a large site allows a greater degree of flexibility in arranging aggregated parking access rather than curb cuts to individual garages facing the street.
- ***Vehicular Circulation and Parking***
 - *Parking and Loading Entrances.* The proposed parking entrances are unnecessarily wide. If they are to remain two-way, the width should be reduced to 24'. Four separate entrances for parking and loading -- two for the lower and two for the upper -- seem excessive for the quantity of parking provided, and further degrade the public realm.
 - *Parking.* UDAT is concerned by the amount of site area that is devoted to parking in the current proposal. This location of parking limits the possibility for the site to accommodate housing in a sensitive manner. The project design would be greatly improved by either reducing the parking ratio and/or the parking footprint. We encourage the sponsor to look at options to reduce the parking footprint. Specifically, one option is to access parking on the roof of the store from 48th Avenue. This strategy would result in approximately 140 parking spaces maintained through construction phasing. Another option is to locate the parking below the store. Also consider the abundance of street parking provided along the perimeter of the site to reduce the total on-site parking needed. All increase the ability to provide more housing units of higher quality on a greater portion of the site.
 - Two smaller existing Safeway stores in the Sunset -- one at Taraval and 16th Avenue, and another at Noriega and 30th Avenue utilize roof parking, each with approximately 65 parking spaces.
- ***Public Realm Improvements***
 - *Street Improvements.* Per Planning Code Section 138.1, the Planning Department may require standard streetscape elements and sidewalk widening for the appropriate street type per the Better Streets Plan, including landscaping, site furnishings, and/or corner curb extensions (bulb-outs) at intersections (see Better Streets Plan Section 4 for Standard Improvements and Section 5.3 for bulb-out guidelines). The project sponsor is required to submit a Streetscape Plan illustrating these features, and the Department will work with the project sponsor and other relevant departments to determine an appropriate streetscape design. Standard street improvement would be part of basic project approvals and not be eligible for in-kind contributions.
- ***Open Space***
 - *Rear yards.* It is not clear how and where the future housing development would provide sufficient rear yards or equivalent open space with the location of parking adjacent to the rear building walls. As a potential PUD, the proposed project may be modified from specific rear yard or lot coverage requirements; however, the resulting open space should

still be a high-quality open space that conforms to the spirit of what would be required in an RH district (see Section 134 of the Planning Code).

PRELIMINARY PROJECT ASSESSMENT EXPIRATION:

This Preliminary Project Assessment is valid for a period of **18 months**. An Environmental Evaluation, Conditional Use Authorization, or Building Permit Application, as listed above, must be submitted no later than **February 19, 2013**. Otherwise, this determination is considered expired and a new Preliminary Project Assessment is required. Such applications and plans must be generally consistent with those found in this Preliminary Project Assessment.

cc: Fred D. Ponce, Applicant
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