

LETTER FROM CONCERNED CITIZENS

The Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force has drafted a Western SoMa Community Stabilization Policy that sets forth housing affordability and land use mix metrics to serve as triggers for Planning Commission project approvals and Conditional Use requirements for potential new development in Western SoMa. We have a number of concerns regarding the proposal (outlined below) and request that these concerns be considered as part of the ongoing planning process.

1. We need density, not "Stabilization." Our group members living and working in Western SoMa believe that Western SoMa lacks the necessary density of people living in the area; nor does it have sufficient businesses to serve a neighborhood. Policies should ultimately encourage development within the neighborhood. Instead, this plan introduces additional restrictions that unnecessarily limit growth by creating an infeasible development environment.
2. The draft policy compares Western SoMa to designated "redevelopment areas," (such as Mission Bay, Bayview/shipyard, and Treasure Island); however, Western SoMa is not a designated redevelopment area. According to the 2008-2009 budget for the Redevelopment Agency (http://www.sfgov.org/site/sfra_index.asp?id=57082), over \$100 million was potentially available for affordable housing programs for redevelopment areas. This policy would request similar affordability restrictions without the access to these funds to make this feasible. If Western SoMa is not supported by such a designation, then using these neighborhoods as a basis for planning creates an unrealistic expectation around the feasibility of such restrictions.
3. Mandating a much higher percentage of affordability will limit housing growth. The plan calls for 30% of new development to be affordable. Since all neighborhoods surrounding Western SoMa (including areas defined by the Eastern Neighborhood plan) do not have this restriction, this will ultimately limit housing development, as developers will choose to build elsewhere. Why is Western SoMa required to meet higher inclusionary standards than what is required to develop in other areas of the city?
4. Western SoMa has a great track record of creating affordable housing - why is this used to justify increased restrictions? The draft policy indicates that 38% of Western SoMa housing post-1990 has been affordable. This is used as justification for the 30% affordability requirement in the future. If Western SoMa has historically provided above and beyond citywide inclusionary housing requirements, it would seem an even stronger argument could be made that other areas with less affordable housing be mandated to

correct the imbalance in the future.

While the previous plan from the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force had a restriction to prevent more than 100 market rate units in a calendar year (with some exceptions noted), this new "Stabilization Policy" is unfit for Western SoMa for primarily the same reason: it prevents the density required for a complete neighborhood. It is this complete neighborhood that people living and working in the area demand, and the foundation on which we demand a feasible planning solution.

We support additional affordable housing, but also recognize it comes at a cost. Trying to force unrealistic demands without providing funding for them will continue to stagnate growth in Western SoMa, and ultimately cost the city, this area, and its people (of every income level).

Concerned Citizens of Western SoMa (CCWS)
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