



## **CAPA's Review and Recommendations for the Draft Upper Market Community Design Plan**

For many years, Castro Area Planning + Action (CAPA) has advocated for a comprehensive plan for the Castro, and welcomed the opportunity presented by the Upper Market Community Design Plan to create a comprehensive plan for one of the major streets in the Castro.

CAPA congratulates the Planning Department and MIG Design Consultants for a successful and popular series of planning workshops in the Fall of 2007, and we thank Supervisor Bevan Dufty for making funds available for the planning process. CAPA members have been particularly active in the process, and we reviewed the Draft Upper Market Plan and found much in the plan that CAPA can support, as well as some elements that need some modification.

Following are CAPA's comments on the various proposals.

Go to [WWW.CAPASF.ORG](http://WWW.CAPASF.ORG) for more information about CAPA's activities, and how to join.

### **ENGAGING SIDEWALKS**

Allowing more active use of the sidewalk for cafes, restaurants and other businesses, encouraging use of special paving, and adding natural features and art is one positive element of the plan. But the primary use of Market Street sidewalks should be for pedestrian movement. The plan should include a maximum amount of sidewalk space that can be used for purposes other than walking. A fee for commercial uses should also be implemented, structured to encourage appropriate commercial use. Fees could then support maintenance and ongoing improvements.

### **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Installation of plantings on sidewalks, in selective on-street parking spaces, and in the center median would add a wonderful bit of nature to the street, and would relieve the sewer system of some storm-water run-off. Heavy use of sidewalks and possible misuse of the planted areas should be considered, and new street trees should be consistent and continuous.

### **GREAT OPEN SPACES**

#### **"New Plaza" at 17<sup>th</sup> and Castro (Harvey Milk Plaza)**

The plan identifies a potential "new plaza" at the terminal of the F-line and Chevron gas station site. This should be identified as Harvey Milk Plaza in the plan, and a comprehensive plan for a complete Harvey Milk Plaza that encompasses the entire intersection (and including a possible closure of the part of 17<sup>th</sup> Street west of Castro) should guide incremental development of the plaza.

The plan proposes creating of a plaza first by closing 17<sup>th</sup> Street east of Castro, and then public acquisition and conversion of the Chevron site. The plan suggests that the Chevron site be developed largely as a multistory building of unspecified use, and a vestigial single pump gas station. CAPA believes that the plaza should be the predominant use on the site, with a smaller building to spatially define the plaza and provide space for various uses that activate the plaza. A small gas station should be considered a temporary use as use of petroleum-based fuels is replaced by new forms of fuel.

#### **New Plaza at Church and Market**

The proposal for a large new plaza at the south end of the Safeway parking lot at Market and Church, with a new retail building bordering it on the north has merit, but a piecemeal strategy of developing the Safeway site is not appropriate. A comprehensive plan for the site is needed. What is now a dead zone in the urban fabric could support high density housing, retail, structured parking and a plaza.

### **Public Art**

Another element of this plan is adding art to the center median of Market Street. Art in the Castro should celebrate the LGBT experience, and includes LGBT artists.

## **PEDESTRIAN / TRANSIT ORIENTED IMPROVEMENTS**

CAPA supports the plan's redesign of major intersections that include special paving at crosswalks, infill street tree planting, landscaped bulbouts at side streets, level connection from Muni platforms to sidewalks, and mid-crossing pedestrian refuges. Redesign concepts are shown for each intersection in the draft plan, showing how the elements could be implemented. Missing from these pages is a specific design for the intersection of Dolores and Market, which is a gateway to the Castro and the terminus of the Dolores Street. As a major point of traffic and congestion and a link in the bikeway network, a design for this intersection is needed in the plan.

## **BIKE-ORIENTED IMPROVEMENTS**

Recommendations for connecting Market Street bike lanes through major intersections, and installing more bike parking facilities, are good and should be coordinated with the citywide bike plan.

## **JUST ENOUGH PARKING**

The plan recommends parking management strategies to provide enough parking, and converting some street spaces to expanded sidewalk areas for outdoor dining space; or be used for car-sharing parking. CAPA supports this policy, and recommends creating additional parking on residential streets by replicating the Duboce Triangle model with head-in parking on two sides of streets.

## **EXCELLENT DESIGN**

CAPA agrees that the best and most innovative design is important for both public spaces and new buildings at high-profile sites at Harvey Milk Plaza/Castro and Market. Implementation of the 2000 competition-winning design for Harvey Milk Plaza will instill confidence in the process.

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

The plan has many standards for new development that are generally good. If development is done correctly, it could enliven the entire corridor from Harvey Milk Plaza to the GLBT Center. The unique character of the Castro and unmet needs for affordable and sustainable housing, new businesses and cultural and social institutions, need to be considered also.

### **Cultural Density Bonus**

CAPA supports a "cultural density bonus" to permit greater density and/or additional height of 1 to 2 stories in projects that provide space for cultural institutions and organizations. A public process of designing new developments and creating appropriate cultural programs should be required, and the strategy could be applied to other sites to create cultural nodes along Market Street.

### **Ground Floor Uses**

The plan proposes that "new developments should accommodate ...both large format retail as well as small businesses". There should be restrictions on the size and number of spaces designed for large stores to ensure that smaller, specialized businesses are accommodated. CAPA supports eliminating minimum off-street parking requirements and prohibiting garage access from Market Street.

### **Residential Diversity**

Providing new housing for a diverse range of households, including single people, families, seniors, and congregate living (such as co-housing) is a goal CAPA endorses. Specific policies including density bonuses for affordable and smaller units would ensure that such units are built.

### **Design Guidelines**

The design guidelines for new buildings are all valuable goals, but implementation of these policies should also encourage innovation and authenticity in design, and recognize the value of a diverse built environment in the manner that the Castro community supports a diverse society.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Role of CAPA and Other Neighborhood Organizations in Implementation**

The implementation plan charges neighborhood organizations and Individuals with the tasks of raising awareness and community support for the public realm improvements such as Harvey Milk Plaza and other streetscape improvements, as well as lobbying for public funding for such improvements, something that is clearly in CAPA's court as the Castro's community based volunteer planning organization. Neighborhood organizations like CAPA should also be engaged in monitoring how new development conforms to the plan's goals for affordable housing and community institutions. We encourage all members and those who support these planning goals to join CAPA in making the vision for the Castro a reality.