

Neighborhood Walking Tour June 8, 2000

On Thursday, June 8, 2000, approximately 25 citizens joined Planning Department staff and Project Coordinator Jasper Rubin for a two-hour tour of the Central Waterfront and Dogpatch neighborhood. The following notes summarize the many of the points and questions that were raised both by Jasper and tour participants.

Corner of Illinois and Mariposa

This part of the neighborhood is dominated by 24-hour Port activities. It is an active industrial area. Illinois Street is an important truck thoroughfare, but it is also desired by bicyclists as an alternative to 3rd Street, where no accommodation is provided for bikes. Can these two modes comfortably co-exist here? Should we give up sidewalk space to give more room to trucks and bikes? On-street parking?

There are many sites in this area where there are opportunities for in-fill development. Should housing go here, or is the area too industrial?

Pier 70 is a major redevelopment opportunity. A citizens committee is currently working with the Port to develop goals and objectives for new development on the pier.

Corner of Illinois and 18th

Illinois is a very different street from 3rd. What scale of development is appropriate on each street?

Are there possibilities for opening up public access and views of the waterfront here? Should we remove buildings in line with the numbered streets to open up views along street corridors, or should waterfront access be provided mid-block?

Should we make 3rd Street the major pedestrian corridor or Illinois? Should buildings be smaller or larger on Illinois versus 3rd?

The Port of San Francisco owns all the property on the east side of Illinois, requiring that we coordinate planning with them. The fish processing plants here may move to Pier 45, creating a development opportunity here. Where is housing development appropriate, and where would it conflict with industry?

Muni will be building streetcar tracks around the block of 18th, Illinois, 19th and 3rd in order to create a turn-around for the 3rd Street line. How will that affect this area? Is there an opportunity to extend the historic streetcars to this neighborhood?

None of the existing businesses in the area will be forced out, but things will evolve over time. How can we preserve the interesting character of the area while still allowing for change?

Illinois and 19th

How can we preserve the interesting and historic gantry cranes as part of a major public open space on this Port land? We must make sure to coordinate planning for Port and non-Port lands.

Illinois and 20th

There are several historic buildings here, including the old Bethlehem Steel building. On other corners are a major live/work project where artists work, the American Industrial Center and a big parking lot. Truck access is required at all hours to the major dry dock facility on the waterfront here. There is also a cluster of retail on 20th, including an Irish pub, a Chinese restaurant and a smoke shop. They are primarily aimed at dockworkers. This is a critical intersection for the neighborhood and will likely be a locus of change over time.

Housing is forbidden on Pier 70 because it is part of the working waterfront. Parking is no longer accepted as a temporary land use for Port lands except on the seawall lots where hotels are also OK.

In the American Industrial Center, the process of change is highly visible. Heavy industry once gave way for garment manufacturing, which is now giving way for high-tech office.

Illinois and 22nd

The Pier 80 power plant will likely have its capacity tripled in the near future. How will this industrial use affect the neighborhood?

22nd and 3rd

The traffic on 3rd Street is very pedestrian unfriendly, with motorists intentionally trying to run down the tour group on our visit. There are no pedestrian amenities on 3rd, with narrow sidewalks bounded by blank walls.

Along with the new 3rd Street light rail line, Muni also plans to expand crosstown service to this area. The streetcar line should be operational by 2004. Major new housing and commercial construction may be possible on 3rd, especially with the arrival of the streetcar. The width of the street, however, makes it challenging to create an intimate, pedestrian-oriented street there. Twenty-fourth Street and Union Street are 60 feet wide, while 3rd varies from 82 to 110 feet.

Currently, there is likely not enough housing and places to work in the neighborhood to support more than the limited retail there now.

Major truck traffic also affects the livability of the street. Is it possible to build a new truck bridge at Islais Creek and divert trucks to Illinois?

Tennessee Street

Near the Hell's Angels Clubhouse there is a mix of well-designed and not so well-designed new residential development.

The old schoolhouse on Tennessee offers interesting potential for historic re-use. The Omega Boys Club meets here, but it is generally unused.

The old fire station building is also beautiful, but it is next to very unattractive new live/work buildings. Light industrial uses are pervasive along this residential street, but here there are few conflicts between housing and light industry. This type of industry is very different than that on Illinois.

The bridge up to Potrero Hill is not at all pedestrian friendly, with almost non-existent sidewalks.

Esprit Park is the only real park in the neighborhood, but it is not publicly owned. Nearby residents are very enthusiastic about the park and want to keep it. To them it feels safe at all times of day. Many users like the mix of passive recreation and dog walking that occurs there. The sidewalk treatment with street trees along the park is especially beautiful.

19th and Tennessee

This corner offers a good view of the cranes and dry dock facility. Several very unattractive live/work buildings are just down the street. Notice how the ground floors of these buildings are very dead, making walking past them unpleasant. The parking requirements force developers to put up blank walls along the sidewalk, with parking behind. Retail, windows or doorways would help make the buildings more friendly to the street. A different live/work project nearby converted a historic brick industrial building, retaining its beautiful and friendly facade.

19th and 3rd

The auto repair shop on this corner is already scheduled to be converted to live/work lofts. Corners are especially important development sites for neighborhoods because they "frame" streets, providing highly visible "entry statements" to the neighborhood beyond them.

Other live/work buildings along 3rd Street are very unfriendly to walk past, with many driveways, blank garage doors and garbage bins. So many driveways are provided that all the public on-street parking was lost.

3rd and Mariposa

Having returned to the starting point, several key issues are presented:

- How can we accommodate growth and actually improve the neighborhood rather detract from it?
- Creating a plan that everyone can agree upon and that addresses the real difficult issues of the neighborhood may be very time consuming.
- Industry is a necessary part of this neighborhood and it must be accommodated. Where can new uses be mixed with industry? Where can it not?