



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Planning Commission Motion No. 19222 General Plan Referral

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 14, 2014

*Date:* August 1, 2014  
*Case No.:* **2013.0154EKRU VX**  
*Project Name:* **MOSCONE CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT**  
*Project Address:* 747 HOWARD STREET  
*Zoning:* C-3-S (Downtown Support)  
 340-I Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 3734/091; 3723/115  
*Applicant:* John Noguchi  
 Director of Convention Facilities Department  
 City and County of San Francisco  
 747 Howard Street, 5th Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94103  
*Staff Contact:* Elizabeth Watty – (415) 558-6620  
[Elizabeth.Watty@sfgov.org](mailto:Elizabeth.Watty@sfgov.org)  
*Recommendation:* Approve with conditions

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RELATED TO THE DETERMINATION THAT: (1) GRANTING REVOCABLE PERMISSION TO OCCUPY A PORTION OF THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY ON HOWARD STREET IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT AND MAINTAIN TWO PEDESTRAIN BRIDGES; (2) CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF OFF-SITE IMPROVEMENTS ALONG HOWARD AND THIRD STREETS, CONTIGUOUS TO THE MOSCONE CONVENTION CENTER, INCLUDING RECONSTRUCTING AND WIDENING THE EXISTING SIDEWALK, INSTALLING NEW LANDSCAPING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE EXISTING ROADWAY WITH SPECIAL PAVING; (3) CHANGING THE OFFICIAL SIDEWALK WIDTH OF : (A) THE SOUTHERLY SIDE OF HOWARD STREET BETWEEN THIRD AND FOURTH STREETS; (B) THE NORTHERLY SIDE OF HOWARD STREET BETWEEN THIRD AND FOURTH STREETS; AND (C) THE WESTERLY SIDE OF THIRD STREET BETWEEN HOWARD AND FOLSOM STREETS; AND (4) MAKING CHANGES TO AND EXPANDING CITY OWNED PROPERTY TO ACCOMMODATE INCREASED CONVENTION FACILITIES AND TO IMPROVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MOSCONE CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT AT 747 HOWARD STREET WITHIN THE C-3-S**

**(DOWNTOWN SUPPORT) DISTRICT AND THE 340-I HEIGHT AND BULK DISTRICT, WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES OF THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE PRIORITY POLICIES OF PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1; AND MAKING AND ADOPTING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS.**

## **PREAMBLE**

On March 1, 2013, John Noguchi, the Director of the City and County of San Francisco's Convention Facilities Department (hereinafter "Project Sponsor") filed an application with the Planning Department (hereinafter "Department") for Environmental Review, to expand the Moscone Convention Center. The project would in total add approximately 211,065 gross square feet ("gsf") to Moscone North and South (an approximately 22.3% addition).

On July 10, 2014, the Project Sponsor filed an application with the Department for a Determination of Compliance with Planning Code Section 309, with exceptions to the requirements for Reduction of Ground-Level Wind Currents in C-3 Districts (Section 148) and for Access to Off-Street Loading (Section 155(r)(4)), within the C-3-S (Downtown Support) District and a 340-I Height and Bulk District.

On July 10, 2014, the Project Sponsor also filed an application with the Department for a General Plan Referral to allow alterations to a publically owned facility (Moscone Convention Center), public realm improvements including sidewalk widening and open space improvements throughout the site, and the construction of pedestrian bridges over Howard Street within the C-3-S (Downtown Support) District, and a 340-I Height and Bulk District.

On July 10, 2014, the Project Sponsor filed a variance application with the Zoning Administrator under Planning Code Sections 136 to allow two pedestrian bridges to extend over the full width of Howard Street; 145.1(c)(3) and 145.1(c)(6) to allow certain non-active uses to front Howard and Third Street and to provide less than the required amount of ground floor transparency along the Third Street frontage; and Section 155(s)(5) to allow two facade openings, each greater than 15 feet wide for access to off-street loading within the C-3-S (Downtown Support) District and a 340-I Height and Bulk District.

On August 14, 2014, the San Francisco Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") reviewed and considered the FEIR and found that the contents of said report and the procedures through which the FEIR was prepared, publicized, and reviewed complied with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 *et seq.*) ("CEQA"), Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15000 *et seq.* (the "CEQA Guidelines"), and Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code ("Chapter 31").

The Commission found the FEIR to be adequate, accurate and objective, reflecting the independent analysis and judgment of the Department and the Commission, and that the summary of comments and responses contained no significant revisions to the DEIR, and certified the FEIR for the Moscone Center Expansion Project in compliance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines and Chapter 31.

On August 14, 2014, the Commission (1) adopted Motion No. 19219 certifying the FEIR as accurate, adequate and complete, (2) adopted Motion No. 19220, adopting CEQA findings, the MMRP, and (3) adopted other Motions with respect to the Moscone Center Expansion Project.

On August 14, 2014, the Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting on the General Plan Referral Application No. 2013.0154EKRUVX.

The Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of the applicant, Department staff, and other interested parties.

**MOVED**, that the Commission hereby adopts the General Plan Referral, Application No. 2013.0154EKRUVX based on the following findings:

## **FINDINGS**

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. The above recitals are accurate and constitute findings of this Commission.
2. **Site Description and Present Use.** The Moscone Center North and South Halls are located on Howard Street between Third and Fourth Streets in the South of Market and Yerba Buena Gardens neighborhoods. The Convention Center also includes the Moscone West exhibition hall, which is located across Fourth Street, north of Howard Street; however, the Project does not include any changes to Moscone West. The Project Site spans portions of parcels on both sides of Howard Street, between Third and Fourth Streets (Block 3734, Lot 091; Block 3723, Lot 115). The Project Site is bordered by Third Street to the east; Folsom Street to the south; the Metreon (a commercial retail center housing shops, restaurants, and a movie theater), Children's Creativity Museum and Fourth Street to the west; and Yerba Buena Gardens and Mission Street to the north. The Project Site is generally flat along Howard Street. However, other than the Moscone South Lobby building and Esplanade Ballroom entries on Howard Street, the majority of developed buildings and public open spaces sit atop the roof of the below-grade Moscone South Exhibition Halls A, B & C. That roof is approximately 12 feet above Howard Street. A pedestrian bridge over Howard Street connects the two blocks.

In combination, the total footprint of the Project Site is approximately 827,500 square feet below grade, and approximately 131,400 square feet above grade. All of the function space at Moscone North and South is under ground, with the exception of the street-level North and South lobbies and the Esplanade Ballroom, located at grade along the Third Street frontage of Moscone South.

Currently, two bus loading plazas front the south side of Moscone North and the north side of Moscone South on Howard Street, creating a separation of approximately 250 feet between the two lobby door entries. The north bus loading plaza is approximately 180 feet in length, three

lanes wide, and is able to accommodate up to 7 buses. The south bus loading plaza is approximately 275 feet in length, three lanes wide, and also is able to accommodate up to 7 buses.

Truck access to the Project Site is provided via a one-way ramp located mid-way along Third Street between Howard and Folsom Streets. Eighteen loading spaces are located at the lower level. Trucks exit the Project Site via a one-way ramp located mid-way along Fourth Street between Howard and Folsom.

Moscone Center—including Moscone North, South, and West—is the largest convention, exhibition, and meeting facility in San Francisco, hosting about 90 to 100 events during a typical year. It is owned by the City and County of San Francisco. Some of the large events that have taken place at Moscone Center include Oracle OpenWorld, American Bar Association’s annual meeting, the Game Developers Conference, the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference, Google I/O, and JavaOne. Moscone Center also hosted the Democratic National Convention in 1984. Most events take place over 2 to 5 days and attract an average of 6,426 attendees per event-day. The two annual events that attract the greatest number of attendees are Oracle Open World and Salesforce, both of which take place annually in October to November. These each attract up to 45,000 attendees.

3. **Surrounding Properties and Neighborhood.** The C-3-S District includes Yerba Buena Gardens, hotels, museums and cultural facilities, housing, retail, and offices arranged around public gardens and plazas. The Central Subway’s new Moscone Station is under construction and located southwest of the Project Site.

The Project Site is bordered by Third Street to the east; Folsom Street to the south; the Metreon (a commercial retail center housing shops, restaurants, and a movie theater), Children’s Creativity Museum and Fourth Street to the west; and Yerba Buena Gardens and Mission Street to the north.

In addition to Moscone North, the project block north of Howard Street shares Lot 115 with other buildings and uses above grade, including the large Yerba Buena Garden (a public park that contains the Sister Cities Garden, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and various art installations), the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Galleries and Forum building, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. The Metreon—a 4-story, 115-foot-tall retail center housing shops, restaurants, and movie theater—is adjacent to the site to the northwest.

In addition to the Moscone Center, the project block south of Howard Street shares Lot 91 with a variety of other buildings and uses, including the Yerba Buena Bowling and Ice Skating Center, the Children’s Creativity Museum, the Child Development Center, the Children’s Garden, two cafes and the restored 1905 Carousel.

Nearby buildings range in height from a few stories to 40 stories. Across Mission Street to the north are the Contemporary Jewish Museum and St. Patrick’s Church, both of which are only a few stories tall. That block also includes the 39 story Marriott Marquis Hotel and the 40-story (398

feet) Four Seasons Hotel and Residences, which together provide a dense concentration of hotel and residential uses. Buildings between 5 and 20 stories front Market Street.

To the east of Moscone North, across Third Street, is the 42-story St. Regis Hotel and Residences, the five-story San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and 8-story SFMOMA parking garage, the 29-story (315 feet) W hotel, and the 26-story Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building. Farther south, on Third Street between Howard and Folsom Streets, is Convention Plaza, which comprises a 12-story office building and the 4-story Moscone garage.

South of the Project Site, across Folsom Street, are a nine-story senior housing building (which includes an adult day health center), a 12-story residential building, and an 8-story senior housing building in the interior of the block, all of which are relatively dense residential uses. Also south of the Project Site is a five-story commercial building. The block south of Howard Street contains low-rise buildings housing uses, including the Yerba Buena Bowling and Ice Skating Center, the Children's Creativity Museum, the Child Development Center, the Children's Garden, and the restored 1905 Carousel.

To the west of Moscone South are an eight-story senior housing building and two-story commercial building that has been approved to accommodate a 12-story hotel. Farther north, on Fourth Street between Howard and Mission Streets, is the 3-story Moscone West building, as well as the 5-story San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Agency 5th and Mission Parking Garage. Market Street, a major east-west roadway in downtown San Francisco, is located two blocks north of the Project Site. Union Square is located approximately three-quarters of a mile to the north, and the Civic Center is located about 1 mile to the west (north of Market Street).

4. **Project Description.** The proposed Moscone Center Expansion Project would increase the size of the convention center facility by about 22.33 percent, from approximately 945,200 gsf to 1,156,300 gsf, and through renovation and repurposing of the existing facility, the Project would result in an approximately 42 percent increase in functional space. The Project is focused primarily on Moscone North and South, and no changes are proposed at Moscone West. Improvements to the Moscone North and South building would occur both below grade and above grade.

The Moscone Center Expansion Project is being undertaken jointly between the Moscone Expansion District (MED), managed by the San Francisco Tourism Improvement District (SFTID) Management Corporation, and the City. Construction is expected to commence in December 2014 and last approximately 44 months.

The Moscone Center Expansion Project includes the following key components:

- **Maximize Contiguous Exhibition Space.** A primary goal of the Expansion Project is to maximize contiguous exhibition space below grade. Additional contiguous exhibition space would be created by excavating in one location under Howard Street and repurposing below-grade spaces between the existing North and South exhibition halls. Currently, the largest contiguous

exhibition space is located at Moscone South, at 260,000 sf. The proposed project would create a total of approximately 515,000 sf of contiguous exhibition space below ground.

- **Moscone South & Esplanade Ballroom Expansion.** The proposed above-grade Moscone South improvements would consist of two elements: the Moscone Esplanade Ballroom Expansion and the Moscone South Expansion; the South Expansion and Esplanade Expansion would function and appear as one building. Above grade, Moscone South and the Esplanade functional space would expand by a combined 277 percent, from approximately 71,100 square feet to approximately 267,700 square feet. The completed building would be approximately 96 feet in height above Howard Street, but would include setbacks to break-up the perceived massing at the street. An additional 70-foot setback would be provided along the southwest side of the building in order to reduce the relative height of the southern wall relative to the Children's Garden, from approximately 82 feet to approximately 57 feet. The setbacks would be used as programmable rooftop terraces for the Convention Center.
- **Moscone North Expansion.** The Project includes minimal above-grade expansion of the Moscone North building. The Moscone North expansion is primarily an expansion to the existing lobby, with a two-story vertical circulation lobby at the east, providing access to meeting rooms located in Moscone South, via the proposed bridge over Howard Street. The remainder of the roof of the Moscone North expansion would be a new public terrace, adding 8,000 square feet of new public open space and access to Yerba Buena Gardens through the Sister Cities Gardens.
- **Pedestrian Bridges.** Two pedestrian bridges would connect the proposed expansions between Moscone North and South above Howard Street, framing the main public arrival space at grade between the two buildings. The eastern bridge would be partially enclosed (naturally ventilated) to provide enhanced internal circulation for Moscone convention attendees, while the western bridge would remain an uncovered public walkway intended for use by pedestrians moving between the two Yerba Buena blocks located north and south of Howard Street. This public walkway would replace the existing circuitous pedestrian bridge located north of the existing Carousel for an improved circulation. The replacement western bridge would be an expansion of the public open spaces, and would touch down in the Children's Garden directly across from the existing amphitheater, leaving an area between the bridge and the western façade of Moscone South for planting. The ramp location on the south side of Howard Street has been reconfigured to create more open space at the Carousel level for public programming.
- **Public Realm Enhancements.** The Project includes significant public realm improvements throughout and adjacent to the Site. Howard Street would be improved to include reconfigured bus pick-up and drop-off facilities to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Similarly, Third Street would be improved through the relocation of the off-street loading access south, allowing for widened sidewalks and to minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. A new paseo would be created behind the Moscone South Building to help break-up the length of the Third Street block, to activate the south block of Moscone, and to increase the access points to various activities located within the interior of the lot. The Project would also create a new public open

space in the form of an elevated terrace above Moscone North, which connects directly to existing public open space that is occupied by restaurants at Yerba Buena Gardens.

- **Yerba Buena Children’s Garden Improvements.** The Project includes improvements to the Children’s Garden south of Howard Street, including a new plaza located between the children’s carousel and the proposed western pedestrian bridge, a tot lot with play equipment for children under age 5, relocation and expansion of the existing learning garden, replacement of the nature walk/allée of plum trees, an elevated social seating area providing improved view points throughout the garden, reconfiguration of the existing lawn, restrooms, garden storage, an enlarged café and a public plaza alongside the Esplanade Ballroom.
5. **Public Comment.** The Department has heard from 269 people or organizations in support of the Project, and from one person in opposition to the Project.
  6. **CEQA Findings.** On August 14, 2014, by Motion No. 19219, the Commission certified as adequate, accurate and complete the FEIR for the Moscone Center Expansion Project. On August 14, 2014, by Motion No. 19220, the Commission adopted findings, including an MMRP, pursuant to CEQA. In accordance with the actions contemplated herein, the Commission has reviewed the FEIR, and adopts and incorporates by reference as though fully set forth herein in the findings, including the MMRP pursuant to CEQA, adopted by the Commission on August 14, 2014, in Motion No. 19220.
  7. **General Plan Referral.** San Francisco Charter Section 4.105 and Sections 2A.52 and 2A.53 of the San Francisco Administrative Code require that, for projects that include certain actions, the Department or the Commission must review these actions and determine whether the project is in conformity with the Objectives and Policies of the General Plan, as well as the Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1. The following aspects of the Moscone Center Expansion Project trigger the requirement for a General Plan referral:
    - a. **Sidewalk and Street Encroachments.** The Moscone Center Expansion Project requires several encroachment permits, in order to occupy a portion of the public right-of-way on Howard Street in order to construct and maintain two pedestrian bridges across Howard Street.
    - b. **Sidewalk Width Changes.** The Moscone Center Expansion Project includes changes to sidewalk widths along Howard Street abutting Moscone North and South, and along Third Streets abutting Moscone South. Specifically, it includes changes to the official sidewalk width of: (i) the northerly side of Howard Street between Third and Fourth Streets; (ii) the southerly side of Howard Street between Third and Fourth Streets; and (iii) the westerly side of Third Street between Howard and Folsom Streets.
    - c. **Changes to City Owned Property.** The Moscone Center Expansion Project includes changes to City Owned Property, as described in the Project Description, above.

8. **General Plan Findings.** The General Plan Findings set forth in Motion No. 19221 apply to this Motion, and are incorporated as though fully set forth herein.
9. **Priority Policies/Planning Code Section 101.1(b).** The General Plan Priority Policy Findings of Planning Code Section 101.1 as set forth in Motion No. 19221 apply to this Motion, and are incorporated as though fully set forth herein.
10. **Planning Code Section 101.1(b)** establishes eight priority-planning policies and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the Moscone Center Expansion Project complies with said policies, as outlined in Motion No. 19221 relating to Case No. 2013.0154X, in that, as designed, the Project would contribute to the character and stability of the neighborhood and would constitute a beneficial development for the City, and said findings are incorporated as though fully set forth herein.
11. The Commission hereby finds that approval of this General Plan Referral would promote the health, safety and welfare of the City.

**DECISION**

That based upon the Record, the submissions by the Applicant, the staff of the Department and other interested parties, the oral testimony presented to this Commission at the public hearings, and all other written materials submitted by all parties, the Commission hereby **ADOPTS FINDINGS** that 1) street and sidewalk encroachments, 2) sidewalk width changes around Moscone North and South, and 3) changes to City owned property, are consistent with the Objectives and Policies of the General Plan, and the Priority Policies of Section 101.1 and adopts the CEQA findings, including the MMRP, set forth as "Exhibit 1" to the CEQA Findings Motion No. 19220, as though fully set forth herein.

I hereby certify that the Planning Commission ADOPTED the foregoing Motion on August 14, 2014.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: August 14, 2014