



# Middle Polk Neighborhood Association Development Principles

April 2016

The Middle Polk Neighborhood Association supports new development that is consistent with the character, history and social-economic diversity of the neighborhood. We advocate for new developments that balance the past with the future and are appropriately scaled for the neighborhood.

MPNA believes that new developments, when not displacing rent-controlled residential units or well-established local businesses, can be a positive contributor to our neighborhood. We also believe that a development strategy with some guiding principles is necessary to assure that projects improve the neighborhood, not simply add new residents and commercial square footage.

MPNA encourages project sponsors to engage with the organization early in the project design process. We will work closely with developers, the Planning Department, Planning Commission, and elected officials to ensure that our principles are included in final plans for developments. These are guidelines, not demands. Our leadership and membership will evaluate all aspects of the project before determining whether to support or oppose.

The Principles we hold important are:

1. *Social Justice: Diversity and Affordability*
2. *Peace of Mind: Quality of Life: Security and Safety*
3. *The Public Realm: Our Streets, especially the commercial corridor of Polk St.*
4. *Getting Around: Pedestrians, Bikes and Automobiles*
5. *Architecture and Design: Scale, Proportion, and Context*
6. *A Vibrant Economy: Supporting Neighborhood Commerce*
7. *Going Beyond the Minimum: Embracing the Spirit of Community*

## **Social Justice: Diversity and Affordability**

MPNA believes that inclusionary affordable housing should be included on-site. It is a neighborhood priority that we remain socially and economically diverse.

MPNA has developed the following housing targets that support diversity and affordability:

- All Buildings shall have a affordable inclusionary housing on site and in a percentage as required by City law
- MPNA will not consider an in-lieu fee payment except under the most unique circumstances.
- MPNA will consider supporting off-site developer built inclusionary housing on a case-by-case basis, with the understanding that all housing must be built within the Middle Polk Neighbors boundaries, or within a reasonable distance as determined by our board on a case-by-case basis.

## **The Public Realm: Our Streets**

MPNA believes that new developments should interface with the sidewalk, street, and other public realm elements to create a livable street environment which enriches the everyday life of residents and visitors. MPNA will closely review how a project integrates with the public realm. Outdoor seating, street trees, other plantings, public art, bulb outs, and other design elements are desired and encouraged. The pedestrian experience is paramount. Projects should make every effort to activate their frontages to create an active streetscape.

## **Peace of Mind: Security and Safety**

MPNA encourages building and street design to promote a healthy and vibrant public life with exterior designs that encourage healthy and positive behavior and avoid design features that encourage illegal, and unhealthy conduct. We understand that encouraging a public street life can also attract the kind of behavior that inhibits an environment's positive potential. It's important to design facades and pedestrian zones in such a way that negative and unacceptable public behavior can be managed by neighbors, the City and the Police. Good design directly embraces the reality of such activity and actively seeks creative strategies to minimize it.

## **Getting Around: Pedestrians, Bikes and Automobiles**

### Pedestrians

*MPNA prioritizes a positive and vibrant pedestrian experience above all other issues affecting our streets and sidewalks.* Sidewalk designs, including placement of trees, planters and other objects should be considered carefully as to not limit accessibility for pedestrians and those with disabilities. Designs should be both visually pleasing and accessible.

### Bicycles and non-motorized transportation

MPNA strongly supports at least a 1:1 or more ratio for bike parking, preferably 2:1 so that all residents, including children and spouses can take advantage of bicycle and non motorized transportation.

### Automobiles and Traffic

Polk Street, Van Ness Avenue and arterial streets are increasingly impacted by severe traffic. MPNA believes that, due to the transit rich nature of the neighborhood, exclusive parking for all new projects should be minimized.

In general, MPNA will not oppose parking authorized by right (or requirement). MPNA will encourage reduced parking where allowed by law via variance or CU approval. MPNA will apply additional scrutiny to projects which request parking in addition to the minimum and supports decoupling parking from condominium units.

Car sharing services are strongly supported and we will generally request the required number of spaces, or more, be applied to a project that triggers car share requirements. When feasible, MPNA reserves the right to request car share parking in buildings where it is not required by code. Car sharing services benefit both residents of the building and residents and businesses within the community. In instances where surface parking lots that include significant car sharing parking spaces are proposed for redevelopment, MPNA will generally not factor any potential loss of car share spaces in the discussion as we want to encourage owners of surface lots to rent to Car Share without concern that this decision would impact their future development plans.

Traffic is a concern for the organization. Projects with large commercial spaces (such as on Van Ness Avenue) or other factors that may contribute to additional vehicular volume, will receive additional scrutiny and study.

## **Architecture and Design: Scale, Proportion, and Context**

MPNA will consult with architects when appropriate to ensure appropriate professional standards and practices are being applied to all new projects in Middle Polk. In all circumstances, MPNA will consider the highest and best use of the project area when analyzing any particular project. Neighborhood scale ground-floor retail is strongly encouraged for all projects.

MPNA is not inclined to support “spot zoning” or other projects that propose to exceed height and bulk requirements. MPNA recognizes that many zoning variances are routine, including open space and backyard requirements. In general MPNA is inclined to support “routine” variances that are common for all projects unless there are extenuating circumstances that may disproportionately affect a resident or group of residents. Variances will be reviewed and considered as part of the entire project.

MPNA is generally inclined to support projects up to their permitted height and bulk, although there are exceptional circumstances where the organization may not support the full permitted height of a building. This includes when a development significantly out of scale with other buildings, including those properties that are a transition from Van Ness RC to Polk NCD height districts. These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will take into account all of the residents’ and the developers’ concerns. MPNA encourages the effective use of light wells and setbacks to allow new buildings to co-exist with neighboring buildings, many of which are rent controlled and have long-term tenants.

In general, MPNA is not inclined to require publicly accessible open space in small to medium size developments. When required by code or in the case of large developments, MPNA may request that open space be publicly available.

### **A Vibrant Economy: Supporting Neighborhood Commerce**

MPNA encourages the development of functional commercial spaces that prioritize locally owned, non-formula retail business. Formula retail and large-scale businesses are encouraged to locate on Van Ness Boulevard as opposed to Polk Street.

In projects that will displace a local business, MPNA encourages developers to take steps in assisting that business to remain in the neighborhood. Some strategies to help achieve this include allowing month-to-month tenancy terminating shortly before commencement of project, voluntary relocation assistance, or professional/in kind assistance. For projects in commercial spaces over 15,000 square feet, MPNA may require that a project sponsor-funded independent economic analysis be performed before considering supporting the project and request that subsequent findings be considered by the Planning Commission.

For businesses with long-term leases, MPNA requests that developers honor the lease terms or negotiate an agreement with the business owner that allows him or her to assert to the organization that they are comfortable with the approval of the project. We encourage developers to work with business to offer new spaces in a new building to existing businesses.

## **Going Beyond the Minimum: Embracing the Spirit of Community**

MPNA is excited to collaborate with developers and project sponsors on special neighborhood projects. Feel free to reach out to us with opportunities to collaborate. MPNA also expects project sponsors to consult with other neighborhood organizations and merchant groups as part of the community input process.