

FILE NO.

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Better Streets Policy.]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to add Chapter 98, the Better Streets Policy; making environmental findings; authorizing and urging official acts in furtherance of this Ordinance; and requesting General Plan amendments to incorporate the Better Streets Policy and its supporting principles.

Existing Law

This law is entirely new.

Amendments to Current Law

This Ordinance would add a new chapter to the Administrative Code that establishes a Better Streets Policy for San Francisco. As part of this Policy, the legislation would recognize that streets: (a) are corridors for all types of transportation, pedestrian and transit in particular; (b) organize the City's development pattern; (c) are integral to the City's water management infrastructure; (d) are public open spaces that should be attractive, safe, and useable with lots of greenery; (e) are components of the City's ecology, (f) provide access to properties, public spaces, views, light, and air; and (g) provide habitat for urban wildlife. The Ordinance would require that City agencies coordinate their activities to promote more coherent street design for both public and private projects. The following supporting principles would guide street design to: (1) address the scale and character of the street in the context of the surrounding environment; (2) support multiple uses and prioritize public space for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit over automobiles; (3) ameliorate the negative impacts of traffic while enhancing property values and increasing the safety and attractiveness of neighborhoods; (4) address the characteristics and challenges of watershed management by reducing runoff, increasing use of permeable surfaces, and including street trees and landscaping wherever possible; (5) reduce visual clutter from signage, signals, and other structures; (6) consider the impact of vehicular traffic on pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users and operators; (7) prioritize pedestrian safety, enjoyment, and comfort; (8) convert excess paved space into planted and open space areas; (9) utilize new technologies and other best practices to manage stormwater runoff and reduce pollution and water use; and (10) collaborate with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in local neighborhoods.

The legislation would urge the Mayor, within 3 months of the effective date of the legislation, to prepare a report that includes proposed legislation; recommended actions or activities and their associated costs that the Board or City departments may take in furtherance of the Better Streets Policy; a City-wide strategy for community input and involvement; and proposals for creation of public-private partnerships. The legislation also urges the Planning Commission to initiate amendments to the City's General Plan to embrace the Better Streets Policy.

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Background Information

This legislation is intended to provide a coherent policy vision to ensure best practices in street design and management. The Ordinance articulates this vision and provides a set of guiding principles for street design.

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Note: Additions are *single-underline italics Times New Roman*; deletions are ~~*strikethrough italics Times New Roman*~~. Board amendment additions are double underlined. Board amendment deletions are ~~strikethrough normal~~.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. Findings.

(a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this Ordinance are in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code sections 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. _____ and is incorporated herein by reference.

(b) The Board finds that the authority of the City in articulating its vision for its streets and public right-of-ways in its Municipal Codes and in General Plan is hereby affirmed. All departments shall coordinate their various decisions regarding the planning, design, and use of public right-of-ways so as to fully carry out the vision for streets contained in this Better Streets Policy, so that all actions balance the needs of all street users, and so that all actions of City government work in unison toward the creation of streets and publicly-accessible right-of-ways that contain the characteristics and objectives of good street design and sound

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environmental planning. In furtherance of this approach, City departments also shall coordinate, to the extent feasible, financing decisions for public right-of-way improvements.

Section 2. The San Francisco Administrative Code is hereby amended by adding Chapter 98 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 98 - THE BETTER STREETS POLICY.

Section 98.1. Better Streets Policy; Governing Principles; Coordination of Departmental Actions.

(a) The Better Streets Policy is an official policy of the City and County of San Francisco and shall read as follows: Design City streets in keeping with the Urban Design Element of the City's General Plan, the City's Transit-First Policy, ~~and best management~~ practices in environmental planning and pedestrian-oriented, multi-modal street design, and incorporation of sustainable water management techniques ~~infrastructure design~~ to ensure continued quality of life, economic well-being, and environmental health in San Francisco.

(b) In furtherance of the Better Streets Policy, the City recognizes that San Francisco's streets constitute a large portion of the City's public space. Implementation of the Better Streets Policy will ensure that such streets will continue to be:

(1) Corridors for all modes of transportation, with a particular emphasis on pedestrians and transit priorities;

(2) Organizers of the City's development pattern and how individuals perceive such a pattern;
and

(3) An integral component of San Francisco's water management infrastructure.

(c) The Better Streets Policy also is intended to ensure that the City's public right-of-ways become:

(1) Attractive, safe, and useable public open spaces ~~and~~ corridors with generous landscaping, lighting, and greenery;

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(42) Sustainable and healthy components of the City's ecology, taking advantage of available technologies to reduce the environmental impact of our street systems and to better comprehensively manage stormwater runoff based on established principles of watershed planning; and

(53) Providers of access to properties, public view corridors, light, and air; and

(4) Providers of habitat for urban wildlife.

(e) As part of an approval or decision concerning any public and private project that impacts or is adjacent to a publicly-accessible right-of-way, all City departments shall coordinate their various determinations regarding the planning, design, and use of public right-of-ways in accordance with the Better Streets Policy and the following supporting principles:

(1) Streets must be designed as a whole, cognizant of the facing buildings and uses within them, such that the resulting street environment is of appropriate scale and character.

(2) Streets that support and invite multiple uses, including safe, active, and ample space for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit, are more conducive to the public life of an urban neighborhood and efficient movement of people and goods than streets designed primarily to move automobiles. Decisions regarding the design and use of the City's limited public street space shall prioritize space for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit over space for automobiles.

(3) Street trees and landscaping in right-of-ways have been demonstrated to ameliorate the negative effects of traffic on pedestrian areas and adjacent uses, enrich open spaces, enhance property values, and increase the safety and attractiveness of neighborhoods. Decisions regarding the design and use of the City's streets shall result in replacing unnecessary paved areas with street trees and landscaping wherever possible, and shall facilitate the health and maintenance of such landscaping. Drought-tolerant plantings, passive rainwater retention systems, and other technologies shall be used to reduce the costs associated with mechanical irrigation where possible. Streets should be appropriately designed and maintained to ameliorate negative effects of traffic on pedestrian areas and

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adjacent uses, to provide usable on-street open spaces, to enhance property values, and to increase the safety and attractiveness of neighborhoods.

(4) Streets should be appropriately designed and maintained to address the unique characteristics and challenges of the watersheds in which they lie through design treatments that reduce downstream flooding with untreated stormwater and combined sewer overflows into the San Francisco Bay and Pacific Ocean. Decisions regarding City street design and use shall include techniques that reduce impacts on the combined sewage and stormwater system and increase permeable surface area through the planting of street trees and landscaping and minimization of unnecessary pavement. Designs also shall incorporate strategies that facilitate the health and maintenance of street trees and landscaping, such as use of drought-tolerant plantings, passive rainwater retention systems, piping for recycled water, and other water management technologies that minimize the need for potable irrigation water.

(45) The design of the City's streets shall minimize visual clutter. This concern shall extend to the number, design, and placement of signs, signals, utility structures, and elements oriented to vehicular traffic. Decisions regarding signs and signals for the control of vehicles must consider and balance the visual impact of the design of the street on all users and the image of the City.

(56) The control and signalization of vehicular traffic has significant impacts on the quality and safety of the street experience for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users and operators. Decisions regarding the systems and signals for the control of vehicles, including, but not limited to, changes to signal timing, speed limits, and allowable turning movements, must consider and balance the impact on the street experience and safety of all users.

(67) The design of the right-of-way and adjacent development, including the maintenance and removal of street trees and other landscaping, allowance of curb cuts, and placement of utilities, have significant impact on the street environment. Decisions regarding street design must consider and prioritize pedestrian safety, enjoyment, and comfort.

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(78) Paved space on many of the City's streets is more than is needed for the safe and efficient movement of transit, bicycles, and automobiles. The City will encourage innovative solutions to reuse such excess street space as planted or open space areas. The City also will consider establishing a program to encourage and make it possible for adjacent neighborhoods to replace paved areas with usable open space, permeable surfaces, plantings, stormwater retention areas, and other public amenities.

(89) New technologies and the rethinking of old techniques will provide opportunities for more sustainable design of our public right-of-ways to increase opportunities for public use and enjoyment, reduce pollution and water usage, better manage stormwater, and provide the opportunity for environmental education where possible. The City will encourage and facilitate the use of innovative solutions based on best management practices in environmental planning and pedestrian-oriented, multi-modal design for its publicly-accessible rights-of-ways.

(910) Major new developments, both public and private, often include the rebuilding of portions of public right-of-ways and should serve as models of the Better Streets Policy. Special efforts should be made to ensure that such new developments lead by example. Public projects should establish model street and open space designs and private projects should incorporate stronger street design and landscaping standards. The City should encourage local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to collaboratively develop such designs and standards in order to foster the community's active use and sense of ownership of these spaces over time.

~~Section 3. The Mayor and Directors and General Managers of all City departments are hereby authorized and directed to take any and all lawful actions which they or the City Attorney may deem necessary or advisable in order to effectuate the purpose and intent of this Ordinance.~~

~~Section 4. The Board urges the Mayor to report to the Board within 63 months of the effective date of this legislation on these actions undertaken pursuant to Section 3 above. Such report ~~may~~ shall include proposed legislation; recommended actions or activities that~~

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may involve the Board of Supervisors, or affected City departments, ~~or interested stakeholders~~ and their associated costs; a City-wide strategy for community input and involvement; and proposals for the creation of public-private partnerships.

Section 54. The Board of Supervisors and Mayor hereby request the Planning Commission, in accordance with Section 340 of the Planning Code, to initiate amendments to the City's General Plan to incorporate the Better Streets Policy and its supporting principles.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

By: _____
John D. Malamut
Deputy City Attorney