

**Dialogues in
Urban Planning
Towards Sustainable Regions**

**Edited by
Tony Gilmour and Edward J. Blakely
with Rafael E. Pizarro**



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FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR ALAN PETERS

When the word ‘sustainability’ first started entering the standard planning lexicon, it was widely seen as an essentially environmental or ecological concept. Sustainability had to do with the ability of macro-environments to reproduce themselves over the longer term. However, over the years there has been increasing recognition that environmental sustainability requires major changes in human behaviour, including human economic behaviour. In planning, there has been a slow realisation by the profession that much of what urban planners do, has a profound effect on regional sustainability. Among other things, planners regulate settlement patterns. They accommodate and guide growth, and help manage the externalities that derive from that growth. They help plan the housing and infrastructure, including the transportation infrastructure, needed to accommodate that growth. In addition, they regulate the building of housing and infrastructure. All these activities have a huge impact on the sustainability of regions.

The changes needed to promote sustainability are difficult since they so often seem at odds with the demands of economic growth and with the affluent lifestyles that growth allows. Moreover, even if it is possible to move to cleaner and greener models of economic growth, that move will produce winners and losers, and the losers may very well be those already poor. At the local and regional levels, it is clear that low-density settlement patterns, common throughout the western world, have encouraged a reliance on car travel. Planners need to encourage new developments to be denser and closer to workplaces and built using sustainable technologies, but they also need to find mechanisms to retrofit older suburbs so that these places function in more sustainable ways. These changes will prove very expensive.

All over the world, urban planning curricula are being updated and changed to take more notice of the need to promote the sustainability of places. Certainly this is true of the University of Sydney, as this book amply demonstrates with chapters reflecting research projects, academic writing and doctoral dissertations by the academic staff, adjunct faculty, and doctoral students at the Urban and Regional Planning program of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning.

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Chapter 10

PLANNING A SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN IN THE GLOBAL ERA: A CASE STUDY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Richard Hu

Sustainability has been a buzzword of urban planning for the past two decades. This is particularly true in the discourse of planning effort specifically focused on the downtown area. In the downtown discourse, the concept of sustainability is more comprehensive than it is generally understood as of ecological and environmental implications only. The essence of planning a sustainable downtown is how to combine the downtown's economic competitiveness with its social and environmental scenarios and make them mutually supportive. Downtown development practices in the post-war decades proved that narrowly-focused economic goals and downtown redevelopment could not be sustained without a balanced integration of considerations of social equity, physical environment and infrastructure provision. This sustainable planning approach for the downtown area has been becoming increasingly important in the context of accelerated globalisation and the rise of global cities in that a city centre's interaction moves from a regional scale to an international one.

The advances in information technology and transport technology accelerated the process of globalisation at an unprecedented speed in the last two decades of the 20th century. One direct impact of this globalisation process is the advent of a bunch of global cities whose influences are of global importance. The global importance is mostly understood in an economic sense, even though there are some global cities whose global influences are more through political or cultural means. These global cities are the command centres of globally dispersed activities and agglomeration centres of advanced producer service providers (Sassen, 2001). They are interconnected through the location choice of leading firms of services such as accounting, advertising, financing, insurance and management consultancy (Taylor,

2004). Global cities interact with each other and compete for location choices of the leading business, investment and people which produce or serve the advanced services. Downtown area, the powerhouse of a global city, now has to face dual competitions with global counterparts and regional centres.

Downtown is changing, no matter whether it is considered as a concept or as a place. Conceptually, downtown is often referred to as CBD (central business district). The sense of business, however, needs re-examining since a process of diversification of functions and activities is underway in the downtown area (Hu, 2006). The downtown is no more a place exclusively for business, particularly office activities as it was until the 1980s. The mode of production and the workforce of the knowledge based economy require an urban environment which can facilitate and attract a diversity of human activities of working, living and visiting.

A downtown's competitiveness is directly related to its sustainable capacity to create such features of diversification. Here, the competitiveness of downtown refers to its capacity to attract business, activities, and people, while the sustainability of the capacity is that the economic vitality is achieved without undesirable environmental and social consequences. So the sustainable capacity encompasses economic vitality as well as liveability and social diversity. In the past two to three decades, major global cities have been reshaping their downtown planning strategies to build their sustainable capacity to improve urban competitiveness.

In order to illustrate how sustainability is incorporated in the strategic planning to transform a downtown area, this chapter examines the City of San Francisco. San Francisco fundamentally transformed its planning strategy of the downtown area to improve its sustainability capacity in the 1980s and 1990s as a response to changed global and regional settings. The traditional downtown development model which was heavily focused on pro-growth office buildings was unable to sustain its long-term development and was thus criticised. Downtown planning stakeholders of the business, the government and the community gradually came to a consensus, notwithstanding deep conflicts in the early stage, that the re-tolling to a more sustainable approach for San Francisco's downtown was necessary in order to continue San Francisco's status as a global city and a regional hub. The overwhelming

scale of downtown redevelopment impacted negatively on urban infrastructure, environmental quality and liveability, and thus reduced its competitiveness. From the 1980s, San Francisco began to lose its corporate economy to the Bay Area regional centres. Meanwhile, San Francisco's economic base was shifting towards being more dependent on knowledge and experience sectors (ICF International, Economic and Planning Systems, 2007). In order to maintain and enhance its competitiveness and cope with the economic base transition, San Francisco released a series of plans to reposition its sustainable future.

Content analysis of plans is used for this research to reveal the contours of the planning process via the discourse used to articulate planning. I examine each of the major plans including the Downtown Plan 1985, the Proposition M 1986, and the South of Market Plan 1995. These three plans are the key planning documents that transformed the downtown development in the past two decades. The three thematic variables of economic planning, physical planning and social planning along with three imbedded characteristics of development, restriction and conservation are examined in the plan texts to explore common frameworks and patterns. In addition, a set of statistical tabulation based on the economy and demography are used to trace the contours of data that acted as backdrops for the planning process. Finally, I use informed assessments and judgements from these documents to reach conclusions about the intentions of the actors as the plans emerged.

The chapter is organised into an overview/introduction, followed by a historic narrative of the background of the plans, and a brief on the application of the method of content analysis. The chapter then analyses the three plans in detail to explore their thematic variables and characteristics. It finally concludes the common thematic patterns of the plans to showcase how the sustainable capacity of a downtown area was built to improve its competitiveness in the new context of global and regional competition.

Background

The post-war decades were another urban boom age for major American cities. For the City of San Francisco, the strategy was to build another Manhattan instead of the sprawling model of its southern rival city of Los Angeles. This Manhattan strategy was based on two basic

propositions. For one, it anticipated the rise of the post-industrial economy. In this economic transition, San Francisco maintained its long-established status as a national and regional centre of financing, administrative and service sectors. The planning framework was for San Francisco to be a cosmopolitan city similar to New York with a dynamic downtown with high rise office buildings as the anchor to maximise land value, attract headquarters business, investment and people (McGovern, 1998). For the other, San Francisco should be an American gateway to the rising Asian Pacific area. San Francisco's geographical vicinity and historical links with this area would help build relationships with the emerging growth centres of Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. A global city image with modern high-rise buildings would be an asset in facilitating trade, as well as attracting business and tourism.

The Manhattan model for San Francisco emerged in post-World War II as a consensus. This consensus was shared by the business, the government and the general public (DeLeon, 1992). They upheld the legitimacy of large-scale urban redevelopment and took a laissez-faire planning approach, believing in market forces as the determinants of urban affairs. Centred on this consensus, a pro-growth coalition was formed in San Francisco in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This coalition was initiated by the business, echoed by the government, propagated by the media and won the general support of the community (Hartman, 2002). This pro-growth coalition exercised pre-emptive power over the city's land use and development policy. Very swiftly, lands were cleared for redevelopment, and high-rise office buildings mushroomed. Within two decades of construction boom, a Manhattan grew on the West Coast – by the mid 1970s, San Francisco's present skyline had almost taken its shape. From the late 1950s, the growth heat continued until the mid-1980s for almost three decades with San Francisco's office space supply more than doubled.

The pro-growth planning culture dominated San Francisco without any challenge until the early 1970s. McGovern (1998) calls this planning culture a private hegemonism in that it was led and dominated by the private sector in the three post-War decades. However, since the early 1970s, some differences in opinions began to be voiced. Not surprisingly given San Francisco's liberal tradition, they were first voiced by some progressive activists (DeLeon, 1992). The activists expressed concerns

over the loss of San Francisco's traditional aesthetic and environmental character with the advent of overwhelming modern building boxes and argued for growth control. These sporadic early voices were submerged in the construction boom. In the late 1970s, the negative consequences of urban redevelopment became more obvious. Apart from aesthetic considerations, the concerns expressed expanded to include environmental pollution, pressure on transport infrastructure and housing supply, and impact on social equity. Some progressive activists established community-based organisations to push forward the cause to harness the growth juggernaut. They proposed public ballots to change the course and although they all failed, they spread the message.

The attitude of the pro-growth groups towards downtown growth began to substantially change from the early 1980s. Businesses and the government were ready to review their pro-growth stances because the old model was straining public resources and leading to deep social cleavages between the haves and have nots. The office vacancy rate in the financial district climbed steadily from 1% in 1980 to 17% in 1986. The investment incentive of office construction lessened. Other negative impacts of urban growth on environmental and sustainability issues aroused stronger community reactions. Growth control for sustainability was widely discussed and was gradually accepted by more people.

The time was right to adjust the laissez faire approach towards urban affairs and take some interventionist actions in the mid 1980s. In 1983, the Planning Department of San Francisco released the Downtown Plan as a strategy to guide future downtown planning as well as a response to the increasing community pressure for growth control. The Downtown Plan was officially ratified by the Board of Supervisors, the legislative branch of the City's government, in 1985. It is clearly stated in the Introduction that 'the Downtown Plan grows out of an awareness of the public concern in recent years over the degree of change occurring downtown – and of the often conflicting civic objectives between fostering a vital economy and retaining the urban patterns and structures which collectively form the physical essence of San Francisco' (San Francisco Planning Department, 1985). It was the first comprehensive downtown plan of its kind in the US and put San Francisco at the forefront of American city planning and urban design efforts. It was on

the front page of the *New York Times* twice and won the National Merit Award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

However, the growth control supporters were not satisfied with the development orientation set down in the Downtown Plan. They proposed another public initiative through popular voting in 1986. This time, they succeeded. The ballot initiative, which is generally known as the Proposition M as it was registered, was approved by the voters. It imposes the strictest limits on commercial office development ever witnessed in a major US city. The influence of Proposition M is fundamental: it represented not merely a change *in* the system but a change *of* the system (DeLeon, 1992).

One outcome of downtown growth in San Francisco is the incorporation of the South of Market Area (SoMA) as part of it. The SoMA had been traditionally one area of industry and warehouse, and a bastion of working-class residents, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians. From the 1980s, the SoMA was gradually becoming a trendy centre of arts, museums, design studios, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. It is becoming San Francisco's CSD (Central Social District) as a complement to the CBD (Terplan, 2007). In the 1990s, with the rise of hi-tech economy, the diverse lifestyle and cheap rent spaces made the SoMA the Mecca of hi-tech elites composed of computer programmers, visual artists, film makers, and media content producers. Dubbed as 'Multimedia Gulch', the SoMA was the driving force of San Francisco's economic growth.

The SoMA was the focus of urban development in the 1990s. The Downtown Plan clearly targeted the SoMA as a new office expansion zone and envisioned the Transbay Terminal area in the SoMA as the heart of the new downtown. In the old downtown core, no substantial office space was built during the second half of the 1980s in downtown San Francisco due to the Downtown Plan, particularly the restrictive Proposition M. The Proposition M was the result of the system of ballot initiatives in California in which the citizens could make proposals to intervene in government policy through public ballots. However, the growth pressure and market forces constituted a menace to the social diversity and the economic mix of traditional light industry and new hi-tech start-ups in the SoMA. The businesses in the SoMA are mostly location and rent sensitive and are not competitive with those higher

rent paying commercial activities which require office space. It was in this context that the South of Market Plan was produced in 1995 to guide the development and conservation of the SoMA. As expressed in the Introduction, the Plan ‘identified both existing community characteristics, problems and amenities as well as the types of development pressures and market forces that may affect the SoMA over the next 20 years’ (San Francisco Planning Department, 1995).

These three plans – the Downtown Plan 1985, the Proposition M and the South of Market Plan 1995 – are the three benchmark planning documents which shaped the downtown development in the past two decades and are still working now.

Analytical approach

To examine the central themes of the sustainability debate, the San Francisco plans have been looked at through three lenses:

Figure 67: Classifications of thematic variables

Thematic variables	Thematic points	Exemplary contents
Economic planning	Business activities, Commercial space use, Employment	Maintain high quality, especially retail shopping facilities in the retail core. (Downtown Plan)
Physical planning	Infrastructure of transport, Housing, Urban form, Open space, Place amenity	Landmarks and historic buildings should be preserved. (Proposition M)
Social planning	Social life, Social equity, Cultural and community facilities	Promote making existing rental housing permanently affordable for low- and moderate-income residents. (South of Market Plan)

In order to measure the thematic variables in each planning document, a number of thematic characteristics are identified and defined. These thematic characteristics are key concepts which appear repeatedly in the text. Tabulation of the frequencies and percentages of these characteristics will demonstrate the trends and patterns of the themes, which is regarded as an invariable and crucial step in a content analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). In the case of San Francisco's planning documents, three thematic characteristics appear with very high frequency in the text. They are defined as thematic concepts of development, restriction and conservation, as classified in Figure 68. The texts are scrutinised to highlight and measure the frequency of the appearance of these concepts and their synonyms. The numerical frequencies of these thematic characteristics are the measures to indicate the thematic patterns of planning. The content analysis is a qualitative research method using very quantitative tools.

Figure 68: Classification of thematic characteristics

Thematic characteristics	Synonymous concepts	Exemplary contents
Development	Develop, encourage, provide, promote, improve, address, introduce, arrange, create, etc.	Create new parks and recreational facilities for the enjoyment by area residents, workers, and visitors. (South of Market Plan)
Restriction	Restrict, exclude, discourage, reduce, minimise, limit, etc.	Discourage development which has substantial undesirable consequences which cannot be mitigated. (Downtown Plan)
Conservation	Conserve, preserve, remain, maintain, protect, continue, keep, etc.	Ensure that existing housing and neighbourhood character is conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighbourhoods (Proposition M)

Downtown Plan 1985

The Downtown Plan envisages downtown San Francisco as a centre of ideas, services and trade, and a place for stimulating experiences. Towards this goal, downtown San Francisco should ‘encompass a compact mix of activities, historical values, and distinctive architecture and urban forms that engender a special excitement reflective of a world city’ (San Francisco Planning Department, 1985).

Figure 69: Themes of the Downtown Plan, 1985

Thematic variables	Categories	Policy nos.	Frequencies of thematic characteristics			Key objectives
			Develop-ment	Restric-tion	Conser-vation	
Economic planning	Commercial space	11	8	6	3	Enhance commercial spaces
Physical planning	Housing	4	2	1	1	Expand and preserve housing
	Open space	12	12	0	0	Provide quality open space
	Historical preservation	3	1	0	3	Preserve historical architecture
	Urban form	14	11	0	3	Design attractive city
	Transport	34	31	5	3	Encourage public transit; discourage cars
	Seismic	4	5	0	1	Reduce hazards
Social planning	Social equity	1	1	0	0	Retail services for lower incomers

Before approving the plan, the Board of Supervisors insisted on a growth cap as a condition of approval. So the final Plan includes an annual limit of 950,000 square feet on construction of downtown office buildings of 50,000 square feet or larger. This is the most prominent thematic characteristic of restriction in the plan as a sustainability

approach. The main body of the Plan includes seven sections: Space for Commerce, Space for Housing, Open Space, Preserving the Past, Urban Form, Moving About, and Seismic Safety, which in total cover 23 objectives and 82 policies. Figure 69 is the tabulation of the thematic characteristics of these 23 objectives and 82 policies.

Economic sustainability planning

The section of Space for Commerce exclusively covers the theme of economic planning. This section includes six objectives regarding the commercial spaces of office, retail, hotel and support commercial space. The overall objective is to enhance the total city living and working environment through economic growth and change management. In terms of major economic activities, downtown San Francisco should be a prime location for financial, administrative, corporate and professional activities, as well as a centre of specialised retail trade, tourist and visitor centre. Future land use and density for these commercial activities should be maintained and enhanced in and around downtown.

Of the 11 policies to implement the economic planning objectives, there are eight frequencies of thematic characteristic of development, six of restriction and three of conservation. It is a clear strategy to continue downtown development to sustain the economic vitality. In the mean time, some restriction measures are taken to control the development to an appropriate extent in order to 'minimise undesirable consequences' (Policy 1.1). This shows recognition that although prior growth did generate economic vitality, it also brought about environmental and social costs. Future office development is restricted within the downtown core of north and south of Market and is allowed to expand to the Transbay Bus Terminal in the SoMA. The quality retail core and local retail services are conserved from office encroachment. A compact downtown should be developed and maintained with a diversity of commercial activities of office, retail, hotel and support facilities, all of which are central to new urbanist sustainable planning approaches.

Physical sustainability planning

The theme of physical planning covers all the other sections in the plan of housing, open space, historical preservation, urban form, transport and seismic.

For housing, the policies are balanced between providing more housing and protecting existing housing. Lack of housing provision was becoming problematic for downtown's vitality at night and on weekends. This problem was worsened by the downtown office development pressure which had demolished or converted housing into commercial uses. As a result, San Francisco was short of affordable housing and some low and medium incomers were forced out of town.

The plan emphasises the importance of open space for a vital, comfortable and economically vigorous downtown. It has 12 policies which are exclusively about developing sufficient and sophisticated open space for downtown workers, residents and visitors. Details of design requirements are specified to make open space usable, accessible, and aesthetic.

Historical preservation is also emphasised in the plan. San Francisco is proud of its legacy of traditional architecture. Unfortunately, this urban character was impacted by the modern downtown redevelopment with large scale, square shape and heavy colour. The plan requires architectural continuity with history and classifies 251 buildings of architectural value for protection.

Apart from open space, urban form is another key component of urban design element in the plan. The plan claims to build San Francisco into the most visually attractive city in the world. Very detailed specifications are provided regarding height and bulk, sunlight and wind, building appearance, and streetscape. Considerations are made from the pedestrian perspective for visual aesthetics and sensual comfort. Traditional street patterns and street-building relations are preserved.

The category of transport covers 34 policies, the most of all categories, which can be partially translated into the importance of transport in the Downtown Plan. This is justifiable since transport plays a crucial role in determining the competitiveness of downtown. The transport objectives fall into three aspects: encourage transit use; discourage auto use;

enhance pedestrian and cyclist circulation. Most policies are about developing downtown transport in different modes as manifested in as many as 31 frequencies of the thematic characteristic of development. The five frequencies of thematic characteristic of restriction aim at restricting auto use and downtown parking.

Seismic safety is a special issue to San Francisco due to its geographical location on the earthquake belt. This is of particular importance for high-rise downtown area.

Social sustainability planning

There is no policy which specifically addresses social issues. Only Policy 3.2, which stipulates to ‘encourage the retail businesses which serve the shopping needs of less affluent downtown workers and local residents’, can be regarded as an effort to address social equity.

Sustainability summary

The Downtown Plan is predominantly a planning document of physical sustainability planning. Even though the category of commercial spaces is classified into the theme of economic planning in the analysis, it is essentially about land use and development orientation. The social planning theme is almost non-existent.

The Downtown Plan focuses on development, urban design and conservation. Development refers to the growth of commercial spaces, provision of housing and public transport, and provision of public space. Urban design refers to the emphasis on the design aspect of open space and urban form to create a pleasing environment for workers, residents and visitors as well as a global city image. Conservation refers to the protection of the historic urban character of architecture and street pattern, and the protection of housing and historic building from office development encroachment.

Economic competitiveness and liveability are the two primary goals of the Downtown Plan. Economically, downtown San Francisco should be the centre of activities of finance, insurance, administration, corporate and professional services, as well as retail and hotel. This is maintained and enhanced through a balanced and controlled land use of office, retail, hotel and support commercial services. The liveability is achieved

through urban design of open space, urban form, and historical protection. The competitiveness of the city requires the kind of environment which is beautiful, compact, walkable and accessible.

Housing and transport are two basic supporting infrastructures for a sustainable downtown development. Enhancing housing supply and preserving existing housing from being encroached on by office development adds to the sustainable vitality of downtown. Efficient public transit facilities will sustain the downtown's competitiveness.

Proposition M, 1986

The Proposition M has four parts: growth limits, citizen participation, job training for local residents, and priority policies. With regard to growth limits, the Proposition M strengthens the restriction characteristics of the Downtown Plan by imposing a permanent annual 950,000 square feet cap on all new buildings of more than 25,000 square feet and reserving annual 75,000 square feet for small buildings. In social planning, the Proposition M empowers citizen participation by giving citizens the last word in deciding the fate of any large scale development projects. Other favourable measures for local residents include creating a coordinated training program for local residents to take newly opened jobs and responding to the primary needs and concerns of ethnic minorities, workers and low-incomers. The Proposition M further proposes eight priority policies to be included in the Master Plan of San Francisco. Figure 70 is the tabulation of the thematic characteristics of these eight policies.

Economic sustainability planning

Three policies touch upon the theme of economic planning. They are about economic diversity and neighbourhood-serving retail. Conservation is the strongest thematic characteristic – they mean to protect the existing diverse economic base and local serving retail from being encroached upon by office development.

Physical sustainability planning

The majority of the eight priority policies stipulate on the general physical planning issues of urban form, housing, open space, transport,

and seismic protection. In terms of thematic characteristic frequency, it is clear that almost all physical planning policies are on conservation, that is, to conserve the existing physical features from being impacted.

Figure 70: Themes of Proposition M, 1986

Themes	Categories	Policy nos.	Frequencies of thematic characteristics			Key objectives
			Development	Restriction	Conservation	
Economic planning	Economic diversity	2	0	0	2	Protect economic diversity
	Retail	1	1	0	1	Retail for neighbourhood use
Physical planning	Urban form	2	0	0	2	Preserve city character and historic architecture
	Open space	1	0	0	1	Protect from development
	Seismic	1	0	0	1	Protect from earthquake
	Transport	1	0	1	0	Public transit priority
Social planning	Cultural diversity	1	0	0	1	Preserve cultural diversity
	Local employment + ownership of business	2	2	0	0	Enhance local employment and ownership
	Affordable housing	1	1	0	1	Preserve and enhance affordable housing

Social sustainability planning

There is a strong component of social planning theme in the Proposition M policies. In total, four policies stress the social issues of cultural diversity, affordable housing, and preference towards local employment

and ownership of business. In terms of the thematic characteristics, there is a balance between development and conservation. The cultural diversity and existing affordable housing are protected. Local employment and business ownership as well as the supply of affordable housing are enhanced.

Sustainability summary

Of all the proposals and policies of the Proposition M, there is a strong prevalence of the theme of social sustainability planning over economic planning and physical planning. This is not surprising since the Proposition M came out as a community response to the Downtown Plan which is essentially a physical planning document as discussed above. The major social planning concerns of the Proposition M include citizen participation, social equity of employment and business ownership, affordable housing and development mitigation.

The issues of economic planning and physical planning replicate those in the Downtown Plan, but the focus is on the conservation rather than the development aspect. In this sense, the Proposition M is a planning document about conservation rather than development. In almost every piece of proposal or policy, the word ‘conserve’ or its synonyms occur. The Proposition M is the most restrictive planning document in the history of San Francisco for its permanent annual development cap.

South of Market Plan, 1995

The South of Market Plan includes goals, objectives and policies of development and conservation of the SoMA towards the 21st century. It is based on the recognition that the SOM as a healthy, vibrant and stable community of low-incomer residents and location- and rent-sensitive small businesses. It has a diverse employment base of industrial and service activities, an increasing number of which belong to the creative technology and artistic work. The plan is a true new urbanist sustainability approach that recognises the need to protect existing housing for local workers and residents.

Based on a thorough analysis of the physical, social, cultural and economic conditions and the forces within the SOM, the Plan outlines these four goals: (1) protect and facilitate the expansion of industrial,

artisan, home and business services, and neighbourhood-serving retail and community service activities; (2) protect existing economic, social and cultural diversity; (3) preserve existing housing and encourage the development of new, affordable housing; and (4) preserve existing amenities and improve neighbourhood liveability for South of Market residents, workers and visitors.

These four major goals are embodied in more details in the objectives and policies of the four sections of the plan: Business Activity, Residential Activity, Transportation, and Area Liveability. Figure 71 analyses the policies through the spectrums of the three themes of economic planning, physical planning and social planning.

Figure 71: Themes of the South of Market Plan, 1995

Themes	Categories	Policy nos.	Frequencies of thematic characteristics			Key objectives
			Develop-ment	Restric-tion	Conser-vation	
Economic planning	Business activities	6	5	2	2	Protect existing business activities
Physical planning	Housing	8	6	1	1	Preserve and develop housing
	Transport	8	8	1	0	Develop transit and restrict auto
	Liveability	13	12	0	8	Preserve and improve amenities
Social planning	Social equity	1	1	0	0	Preserve/develop affordable housing

Economic sustainability planning

The SoMA has been traditionally housing artisan, service and light industrial businesses which are small in employment number and space use. They are very rent- and location-sensitive and are vulnerable to higher rent-paying office activities. So their biggest challenge comes from the pressure of office conversion of the existing residential and industrial buildings which are normally low and small in size.

The first policy of the plan is to restrict office development within the SoMA which has already been integrated as part of the downtown so as to protect light industries and business service spaces from being encroached upon. Other conservation policies include protection of the live/work loft studio space of performing and visual artists and craftspersons. The existing mixture of business activities which should not be allowed in new land use is protected. The economic diversity as well as cultural diversity are preserved and enhanced through the planning of night entertainment activities and small businesses which are diverse and are mixed together.

Physical sustainability planning

Housing is crucial to the cultural, social and economic diversity of the SoMA. Like the space for traditional SOM industries and services, the biggest challenge of affordable housing also comes from the pressure of office conversion. On the one hand, existing housing should be conserved through discouraging their demolition for non-residential use. On the other hand, new housing provision should be expanded.

Transport development should help enhance the social and economic diversity of the SoMA. Transit should be the primary mode of travel, and auto traffic should not impact on the liveability of the SoMA. The liveability is a key element of physical planning of the SoMA through both conservation and development thematic characteristics. By conservation, the existing amenities should be preserved, such as urban form, architectural character, and landmark buildings. By development, essential community services and facilities should be improved.

Social sustainability planning

Social planning is implicit in most policies by preserving and enhancing social diversity. The need for affordable housing is emphasised for local low- and moderate-income workers and residents.

Sustainability summary

The South of Market Plan is a balanced sustainable approach among the three themes of economic planning, physical planning and social planning. Numerically, the policies exclusively expressing the theme of social planning is few, but the notion is embodied in most of the policies. The chief goal of the plan is to achieve social and economic diversity of the SoMA through physical planning measures.

To enhance and preserve the cultural and economic diversity and the physical character is the prevailing theme of the plan. The thematic characteristics of development and conservation converge to point to this purpose: conservation and development of vitality and diversity of the SoMA community. The thematic characteristic of restriction also points to this purpose: protection of the community character from office development pressures and market forces which would otherwise convert the area and thus cause undesirable social and environmental consequences.

Economically, the diverse economic base of small-scale light industrial, service and artisan business activities should be preserved and their expansion should be allowed through construction of new industrial and commercial spaces. Spaces for convenient retail and community service activities for residents, workers and visitors should also be provided.

The supporting infrastructures of housing and transport are crucial in sustaining the healthy, vibrant and stable community. The liveability of the SoMA is to be improved through providing more amenities and community serving facilities. The area liveability should not be negatively impacted by commercial development and auto traffic.

Social diversity and equity should be maintained through providing and preserving affordable housing, maintaining the mixture of employment, and the existing business space uses. The needs of low- and moderate-income residents and workers is especially protected.

Conclusions

The Downtown Plan, the Proposition M and the South of Market Plan collectively represent a fundamental sustainability orientation to planning of downtown San Francisco in the 1980s and 1990s. They have been shaping central San Francisco's urban landscape in the post-1980s period. Their ultimate aim is to strengthen San Francisco's sustainable urban competitiveness in order to continue its status as a global city and a regional hub of the Bay Area.

The three plans signify first of all a transformation of planning philosophy in San Francisco. Prior to the 1980s, San Franciscans believed in the market forces and adopted a *laissez faire* approach to planning. Behind this ideology was a strong pro-growth coalition, mainly composed of the business sectors and the government who prioritised urban redevelopment on the top agenda to drive a post-industrial economy. This stance was propagated by the media and acknowledged by the general community in the early stage. However, in this pro-growth hegemony, community participation and social equity were virtually absent. The very unsustainable nature of this planning philosophy had an increasingly negative impact on San Francisco's strategic status as a leading urban hub. The release of these plans is a strong message of redirection of the *laissez faire* tradition towards interventionism. Free market force was regulated and downtown development was mitigated. The community was empowered in deciding on the city's affairs. Figure 72 is a comparison of this planning philosophy transformation in San Francisco across the 1980s and 1990s which are collectively aimed at a sustainable downtown San Francisco.

The three plans led to a fundamental transformation of planning strategy, policies and practices in San Francisco to a more sustainable base. After three decades of office construction boom, the negative effects were becoming a barrier to long-term competitiveness. It was recognised that downtown development was not inherently positive. A competitive downtown relies on sustainable capacity building between economic development, environmental liveability and social equity. This imperative required a review of three decades of unfettered downtown development and repositioning of planning strategy and practices.

Figure 72: Planning transformations for a sustainable San Francisco

Philosophies	Beliefs
Laissez faire	<p>Hegemonic privatism: business-dominated elite</p> <p>Laissez faire approach: market-driven and minimum government intervention</p> <p>Manhattan model for aesthetic appreciation and embracement of post-industrial economy</p> <p>Faith in market forces as a fair distributor of costs and benefits of development</p> <p>Minimal concern about the negative consequence of vigorous development</p> <p>Virtual absence of regulator and redistributive policies</p> <p>Expert skills</p>
Interventionist	<p>Progressive activism: grassroots and community-based</p> <p>Scepticism of market forces: government interventions guarantee a more equitable outcome</p> <p>Popular empowerment and citizen participation in downtown planning</p> <p>Downtown development is not inherently positive</p> <p>Growth limits and linkage policies to offset social and environmental costs of downtown development</p> <p>Popular initiative as a powerful tool to shape land use decision making</p>

Thematically, the three plans try to reach a sustainable balance between economic planning, physical planning and social planning. This is an important differentiation from San Francisco's planning tradition which was exclusively focused on economics. Economically, the goal is to continue and strengthen San Francisco's status as a centre of financing, headquarters and service. Strong physical planning policies are adopted to enhance infrastructure of transport and housing supply, improve accessible and pleasing public space, and emphasise the aesthetic value of urban form to build a compact and walkable downtown San Francisco for workers, residents and visitors. Socially, favourable policies towards local residents, especially the low- and moderate-incomers, aim to protect them from being squeezed out of the city by market forces

and commercial development. Similar favourable policies are also proposed for affordable housing, employment and local businesses.

The three plans guide urban development in such a way as not to cause undesirable environmental and social consequences. Office construction is restricted in terms of both volume and location. More development policies are devoted to urban design and downtown walkability. Meanwhile, conservation of existing economic and social diversity, and historical buildings and architectural aesthetics is enforced. They are plans for sustainable development, as well as conservation and restriction as shown in the analysis of their thematic characteristics.

These transformations mark important changes of urban planning philosophies and practices in San Francisco. They are meant to improve the urban competitiveness of the downtown area through its sustainable capacity building. This sustainable capacity building, in the case of San Francisco, is planned through a balanced approach between economic planning, physical planning and social planning.

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