INTRODUCTION

The first Civic Center Public Realm Plan community workshop took place on November 7, 2017 from 6-8pm at UC Hastings College of the Law. The evening was structured in three parts:

1. A presentation providing an overview of the Public Realm Plan process and the results of the project team’s analysis of exiting conditions;

2. A small group activity that allowed participants to share their hopes and potential actions to improve Civic Center’s public spaces; and.

3. An open house where participants were invited to review a series of project boards and provide feedback on potential design directions for Civic Center’s public spaces.

OUTREACH

The workshop was heavily publicized via in-person outreach to area stakeholders, direct residential mailing, multi-lingual postings, email blasts and website announcements. Engagement was offered in Arabic, Chinese, English, Tagalog, Spanish and Vietnamese. Outside of the workshop format, other engagement included in-person outreach to over 50 organizations, 300 multilingual intercept surveys and four focus groups: three in-language, and one with area youth.

ATTENDANCE

Approximately 76 people attended the workshop. Participants ranged from neighborhood residents to representatives of the area’s cultural institutions. The majority of participants came from the Civic Center area including, Hayes Valley, Civic Center, Tenderloin, SoMa, Cathedral Hill and Lower Haight. Of this majority, 90% arrived on foot. Other participants came from elsewhere in the city including, Mission Dolores, Mission, Haight Ashbury, Cole Valley, Pac Heights, Russian Hill, Mid Market, Sunset, and Bayview.

At check-in, workshop attendees used dots to mark on a map where they came from within San Francisco and how they traveled to the workshop (via foot, bike, car, etc.)
The evening began with welcoming remarks from John Rahaim, Director of the San Francisco Planning Department. Director Rahaim emphasized the importance of coming together to think critically about the future of Civic Center’s public spaces and emphasized their importance as both a neighborhood-serving spaces and regional gathering places. Director Rahaim also acknowledged the complex social challenges being experienced in these spaces and noted that the potential physical/design improvements to the public realm are only one component of larger City efforts to make Civic Center a healthy and inclusive place that welcomes everyone.

Nick Perry, Plan Manager from SF Planning introduced the plan and gave an overview of the project team, the historical context of the effort, plan components, an overview of community outreach to date, and overall project timeline.

John Bela and Anna Muessig from Gehl Studio presented results from the Public Space and Public Life (PSPL) study conducted in the Civic Center area in early summer 2017. This effort involved more than 100 volunteers and 52 hours of observation across four days to see how people use and move through the various spaces in Civic Center.

In conjunction with an existing conditions analysis, the results of the study will inform concepts for both near and long-term improvements to Civic Center’s public realm. John and Anna shared highlights from their study, emphasizing that the highlights being shared only captured the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in terms of the breadth of analysis that can be done with the tremendous amount of data and encouraged participants to view the forthcoming PSPL report.

Willett Moss and Lauren Hackney from CMG Landscape Architecture concluded the presentation by introducing draft Public Space Design Principles that will guide the future vision for the Civic Center area’s design focus areas. The design focus areas include the three main public spaces in the Civic Center area (UN Plaza, Fulton Street between Larkin and Hyde, and Civic Center Plaza – Joseph L. Alioto Performing Arts Piazza), the subterranean Brooks Hall, and the streets that surround Civic Center Plaza.

**PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS**

**GEHL’S PUBLIC SPACE KEY FINDINGS:**
1. Civic Center is a powerful symbol of San Francisco;
2. There’s no center in Civic Center;
3. The civic axis is broken;
4. Fragmented stewardship and governance;
5. Look but don’t touch: the space is unfriendly to the human scale; and,
6. The limited ability of the Beaux-Arts plan to support public life has been eroded over time.

**GEHL’S PUBLIC LIFE KEY FINDINGS:**
1. Lots of people are moving through Civic Center;
2. Peaks in activity do not generate ‘spillover’ impacts;
3. Few people choose to spend time in Civic Center;
4. Each space in Civic Center has a unique public life heartbeat;
5. Activities like sleeping and encampments can feel overwhelming; and,
6. Different users of Civic Center experience the same spaces differently.

**CMG’S DESIGN GOALS:**
- **Connection & Cohesion**
  Reinforce key connections, unify the public realm as a place for pedestrians, and create a vivid district identity.
- **Quality & Comfort**
  Create a high-quality sustainable neighborhood open space that connects people to their environment.
- **Invitations & Vitality**
  Provide necessary infrastructure to welcome diverse activities, visitors, and uses.
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
Following the presentations, workshop attendees gathered around tables to join a small group discussion activity. Nine groups were asked to write down their hopes for the area on one piece of paper and on another piece of paper their ideas for actions that would help achieve those hopes. ‘Hopes’ and ‘Actions’ were grouped thematically and discussed amongst the group. Members of the project team were present at each table and will use the results of the discussions to inform the design process. The results of the discussion are summarized via the word clouds below.

HOPES

“Inviting,” “safe,” “inclusive,” “welcoming,” “clean,” and “community” were among the words most frequently mentioned by workshop attendees when sharing their hopes for Civic Center’s public spaces.

ACTIONS

“Food,” “bathrooms,” “enforcement,” “market,” “events,” “safe,” “services,” and “activate Brooks Hall” were among the words most frequently mentioned by workshop attendees when asked what actions might help achieve their hopes for Civic Center’s public spaces.
OPEN HOUSE

After the small group discussions, participants were invited to review project information and offer feedback either generally or as prompted by each of the 17 project boards on display. These boards elaborated on the content introduced earlier during the project team’s presentations. Project team representatives were present at each board to answer questions and encourage participants to place green dot stickers over items they felt were priorities in the design of the space. Participants were also encouraged to write general comments on sticky-notes or on the boards themselves. Boards were grouped into three categories:

1. Civic Center Today (Existing Conditions Analysis)
2. Civic Center Tomorrow (Ideas for Future Improvements)
3. Related Projects (Civic Center Commons Initiative, Helen Diller Playgrounds & Kiosk)

Most boards were grouped under the “Civic Center Tomorrow” category. Each of these boards covered a different topic related to design and use of Civic Center’s public spaces. At these boards, workshop participants used green dot stickers to indicate their response to questions on the board and mark photos that represented design elements/uses they liked the most. Based on the number of green dots placed on each board, the level of general interest/engagement with various design topics can be surmised. The boards, in order of engagement, are listed below:

1. Public Space Programming & Events: 116 responses
2. Public Space Uses: 98 responses
3. Planting vs. Paving in Public Spaces: 82 responses
4. Public Space Planting Types: 82 responses
5. Public Space Amenities: 80 responses
6. Brooks Hall Uses: 70 responses
7. Public Space Attractions: 61 responses
8. Lighting: 59 responses
9. Paving Materials: 45 responses

As indicated above, boards more focused on aesthetic topics like lighting and paving materials generally garnered less interest. People seemed most interested in weighing in on improvements to the events, uses, plantings, and amenities in Civic Center’s public spaces.

Highlights from the responses at each of these boards are summarized on the following pages.
Workshop participants were polled on potential design and programming improvements to Civic Center’s public spaces. These responses will help inform the conceptual public space design alternatives that the project team will develop and share with the public at the next community workshop. It’s important to note that the findings and data below only represent the opinions of those who were able to attend workshop. Additional outreach events and an online survey are planned to allow those who did not attend the workshop a chance to weigh in on these same design questions.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OPEN HOUSE BOARD RESPONSES

SHOULD THE PUBLIC SPACES HAVE MORE PAVING OR PLANTING?

Workshop participants were asked to consider what the balance should be between planted and paved areas in each of the three major public spaces in Civic Center.

- 26 people responded to the question for Civic Center Plaza, with the majority indicating they’d prefer more planting.
- 24 people responded for Fulton Street, with the majority preferring a mix of planting and paving.
- 19 people responded for UN Plaza, with a slight majority preferring more planting.

WHAT KINDS OF PLANTING WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Workshop participants were asked to offer their input on tree types, tree composition, and planting type.

- 28 people indicated their favorite tree type, with a majority (18 votes) preferring deciduous over palm or evergreen trees.
- 19 people selected a preferred tree composition, with the majority (10 votes) preferring an ordered composition.
- 35 people shared their favorite planting type. Open lawn was the least popular option. Community garden, formal garden edge, and diverse native plants received the most positive responses.
Workshop participants were asked to share their top three options for lighting elements they thought would create a beautiful urban environment. Of the four categories of lighting presented, facade lighting and light-based public art received the most responses. People responded most positively to precedent images of ground floor and building facade uplighting (10 votes) and a photo of a public art light installation that uses restored historic street lamps (7 votes).

Of the paving categories polled, color was the most conclusive with varied tone and texture as the most popular response. Facade uplighting was the most popular lighting type. Public Facilities like drinking fountains and toilets were the most popular amenities selected to increase people’s comfort in Civic Center.

Workshop participants were asked to select their top three amenities/features for making Civic Center more comfortable. Responses varied widely, but the top three options were public toilets (15 votes), moveable cafe tables and chairs (12 votes) and drinking fountains (12 votes).
“Contemporary cafe pavilion” was the most popular feature that people thought would prompt them to come and linger in Civic Center.

“What Kinds of New Uses Would Invite You to Civic Center?”

Workshop participants were asked to select the top three features they thought would invite them to come and linger in Civic Center. People seemed generally supportive of small-scale commercial uses in Civic Center; two of the most popular categories were “Cafe Pavilion” (17 votes) and “Retail kiosks” (10 votes). “Fountain” was the second most popular category (16 votes).

The least popular feature was “Dog Park,” which was selected by just one person.

“Ongoing uses + Events” like art installations were the most popular event category.

“What Events Would Invite You to Civic Center?”

Workshop participants were asked to select the top three events they thought would invite them to come and linger in Civic Center. By far, the most popular category of events were the “On-going uses and events” that already take place in Civic Center’s public spaces (38 votes).

The next most popular category was “Cultural Events Screening” (19 votes) followed by Festivals (15 votes). Specific events to receive the most votes were “Symphony and ballet simulcast” (11 votes) and “Outdoor library and reading space” (11 votes).
Workshop participants were asked to select the top three attractions they thought would support both large-scale and intimate neighborhood gatherings. Responses varied widely. The top three individual features were an “Iconic public sculpture” (12 votes), “Platform for seating + performance” (10 votes) and “Interactive sculptural features” (7 votes).

When looking broadly at participants’ responses, it’s clear that public art in all its forms is highly desired in Civic Center; when combined, the various forms of public art that people had to choose from received 34 votes.

Various types of public art were popular choices for attractions in Civic Center, with “Iconic Public Sculpture” like Chicago’s ‘Bean’ receiving the most positive response.

An underground rec. Center was the most popular use for Brooks Hall.

70 participants selected their favorite use for Brooks Hall, located beneath Civic Center Plaza. Votes were roughly split between the “Public Cultural” (19 votes), “Public Civic” (24 votes), and “Public Recreation” (22 votes) categories. By far, the least popular category was “Non Public” (i.e., uses not open to the public on a regular basis) with just 5 votes. “Underground recreation center” was the most popular use (18 votes).