



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

Date: April 7, 2016
To: Recreation and Park Commission
Through: Dana Ketcham, Director of Property Management, Permits and Reservations
From: Sarah He, Property Manager
Subject: United Nations (UN) Plaza –Living Innovation Zones (LIZ) installation

Agenda Wording:

UN Plaza - LIZ Installation: Discussion and possible action to approve a two year, revocable permit authorizing the Exploratorium to construct and install a series of temporary interactive installations in United Nations Plaza as part of the Civic Center Public Realm Plan.

Background

United Nations Plaza was designed by master landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The Plaza established Fulton Street/Fulton Mall as a pedestrian-only space between Market and Hyde Streets. UN Plaza's distinct palette of landscape features links to and complements Market Street on one side, while its other side is linked to the Civic Center. Fulton Mall provides a significant view shed of City Hall.

United Nations Plaza is not a park but in a vacated public right of way. The management of United Nations Plaza is a hybrid. Under Park Code Article 8B, the Recreation and Parks Department is responsible for the permitting of activities in the plaza and the Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance and daily operations.

The Civic Center Public Realm Plan (the "Plan") is an interagency effort managed by San Francisco Planning in partnership with multiple City agencies, including San Francisco Public Works, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, San Francisco Recreation and Park, San Francisco Real Estate Division, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, San Francisco Public Health and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development. The primary goal is to create a unified vision for long-term improvements to Civic Center's plazas, streets, and other public spaces. The Plan is part of San Francisco Planning's ongoing efforts to improve the area as both a neighborhood gathering space and common area for everyone who lives in, works in and visits San Francisco to enjoy. The Living Innovation Zone program ("LIZ") is one element of the Plan that seeks to invigorate city streets by creating venues for innovation, connection and play in public outdoor places central to people's everyday lives.



Proposed Installation

The UN Plaza LIZ will be temporary installation designed and built by the Exploratorium in UN Plaza. The LIZ will be composed of several elements installed throughout the four raised planters lining the United Nations Plaza Fulton Street axis and pedestrian thoroughfare. These elements include wooden pathways – accessed from the plaza – that lead pedestrians from the plaza, over the granite curbs and into the raised planter beds where they will wind in between the trees. These pathways will be punctuated by installations featuring ‘acoustic phenomena. Exhibit A contains details on the proposed installation.

The acoustic phenomena will create a series of circumstances that encourage self-agency through curiosity, exploration and social engagement. These experiences will afford hands-on sound exhibits where visitors can create, mold and share their own sonic landscape, a design informed by the Exploratorium Studio for Public Spaces’ approach to informal and hands-on learning. Like the first LIZ on Market Street, the architecture - including intimate, social and performative spaces - will encourage social interactions while simultaneously facilitating more intimate explorations into the often unnoticed world of sound.

The UN Plaza LIZ will be designed as a self-supporting structure and will not require footings and mounting hardware that will damage the existing Plaza.

The Recreation and Park Department will enter into an agreement that will authorize the installation and will provide a detailed agreement between the Exploratorium and the Department of Public Works which will provide for security and maintenance to ensure ongoing care, prevent vandalism and maintenance of the installation while on display.

The experience with the LIZ installation will help to develop longer-term and more capital intensive public realm improvements that stem from the Civic Center Public Realm Plan.

This is the first of two LIZs that will be installed within the district this year. The second of which will be installed on Fulton Street adjacent to the Asian Art Museum in July of 2016. The City is also contemplating strategies to link the two spaces and reinforce the axial relationship between UN Plaza and City Hall such as replacing dead grass in planting areas with decomposed granite and installing catenary lighting in the tree canopy. While these projects are separate from the LIZ, the LIZ team is coordinating closely with our colleagues at the Department of Public Works and Recreation and Parks Department to ensure an integrated design and minimize disruption to the plaza during construction.

On March 28, 2016 the San Francisco Arts Commission approved the installation of the LIZ in UN Plaza and on April 4th, 2016 the San Francisco Arts Commission is expected to approve the installation.

The LIZ installation will require prior approval of the Historic Preservation Committee and the approval is in progress.

A two Million Dollar Comprehensive Liability policy is a required condition of the Permit for the installation.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the two year permit

Supported By: San Francisco Arts Commission
SF Department of Real Estate
SF Planning Department
SF Department of Public Works
SF Department of Public Health
Mayor's Office Economic and Workforce Development
Asian Arts Museum
SF Public Library
Civic Center Community Benefits District
Tenderloin Community Benefits District
Human Services Network
UN Plaza Farmer's Market

Opposed By: No known opposition.

Attachments: Exhibit A- Rendering of the Liz Installations