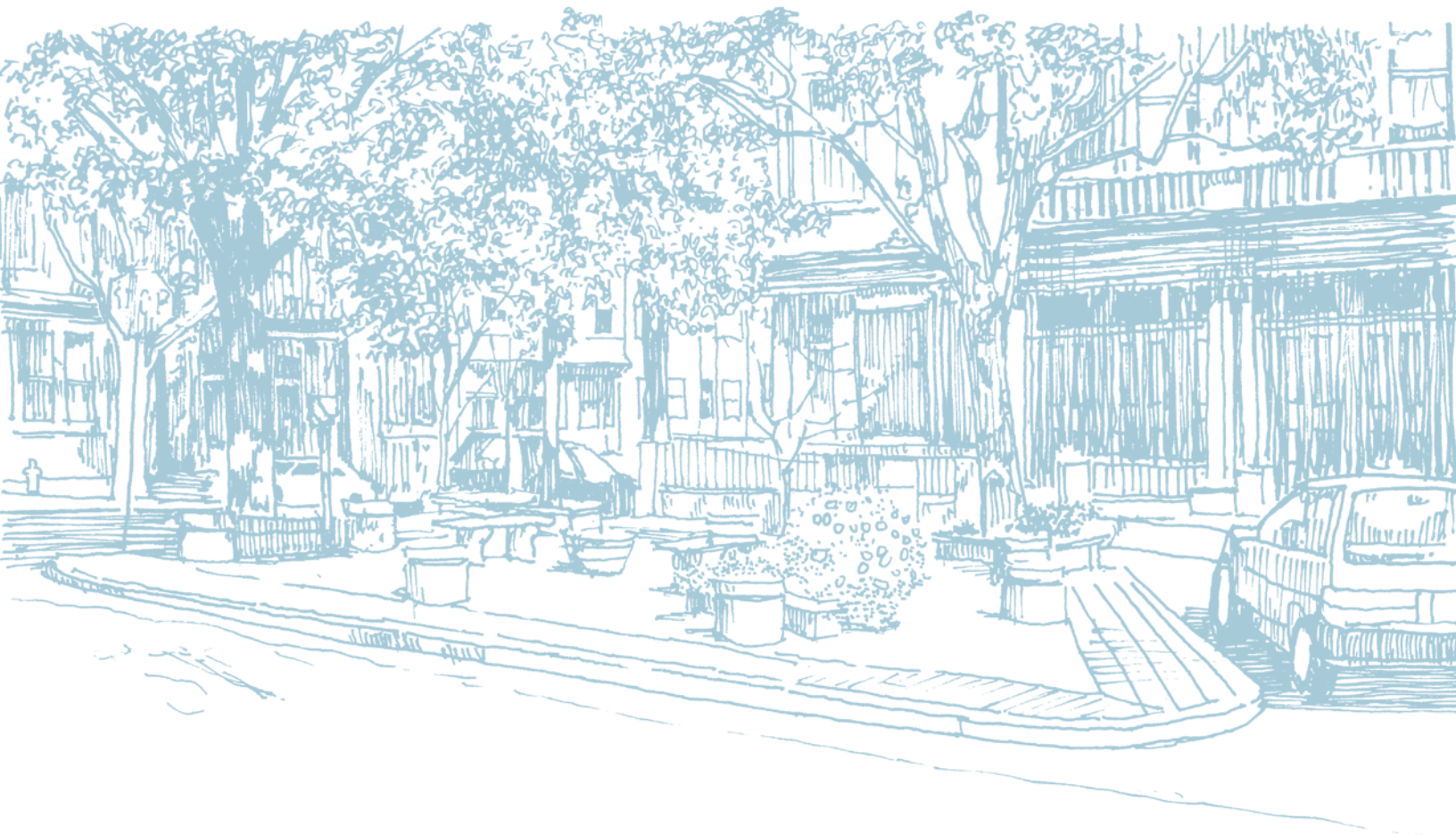




Guide to the San Francisco **Better Streets Plan**

& RELATED AMENDMENTS
TO SAN FRANCISCO'S MUNICIPAL CODES

ADOPTED DECEMBER 2010



Rendering by Allan B. Jacobs



ABOUT THE BETTER STREETS PLAN

The Better Streets Plan (“The Plan”) provides a unified set of policies and guidelines for the design of the pedestrian realm in San Francisco, defined as the areas of the street where people walk, shop, sit, play, or interact – outside of moving vehicles. The Plan seeks to balance the needs of all street users, with a particular focus on the pedestrian environment and how streets can be used as public space.

The Plan’s goals include:

- A renewed emphasis on how streets can serve as public space;
- Enhancement of pedestrian safety and accessibility;
- Realizing the ecological potential of streets; and
- Improved public health by encouraging physical activity through livable streets.

The Better Streets Plan was developed over three years through a significant public process, which included over 100 Better Streets community meetings, and monthly meetings with a 15-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

The Better Streets Plan and accompanying legislation were officially adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 7, 2010.

GOAL OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended as a summary for community members, merchants, developers, design professionals, City staff, and others to understand the key requirements and guidelines of the Plan and accompanying legislation.

The City is currently developing a user guide and interactive website that will provide comprehensive guidelines and requirements from the Better Streets Plan and legislation.

CONTENTS:

- Better Streets Plan FAQ
- Streetscape Requirements
- Streetscape Guidelines
- Street Designs
- Streetscape Elements
- Case Study: Leland Avenue

Better Streets Plan FAQ



Rendering by Allan B. Jacobs

A Better Street is designed and built to strike a balance between all users regardless of physical abilities or mode of travel.

A Better Street attends to the needs of people first, considering pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, street trees, stormwater management, utilities, and livability as well as vehicular circulation and parking.

HOW DOES THE BETTER STREETS PLAN AFFECT ME?

The Better Streets legislation requires that any changes to the public right-of-way, whether proposed by a community member, developer, merchant association, City agency, or others must conform with relevant guidelines and policies from the Better Streets Plan. This means that if you are designing or building a street improvement, it must be consistent with the Better Streets Plan for those particular elements included in the project.

Community-initiated projects are not required to build streetscape elements in their project beyond those proposed. For City-led projects, Section 2.4.13 of the Public Works Code (the “Complete Streets Policy”) states that City projects that excavate in the public right-of-way shall include appropriate transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and stormwater features to the maximum extent practicable.

The Better Streets legislation also establishes requirements for new development that meets certain thresholds to provide streetscape and pedestrian elements, including street trees, stormwater facilities, sidewalk widening, and other streetscape elements.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

If you are proposing or are required to make a change to the public right-of-way, you must obtain relevant City permits. Generally, this will require submitting plans or designs that are consistent with the relevant guidelines and requirements. For development projects, review of streetscape features will be concurrent with the overall development review and approvals.

NEXT STEPS / COMING SOON

This document provides a summary of the new guidelines and requirements. It is not meant to be comprehensive – users should consult the Better Streets Plan and relevant municipal codes.

To build on this document, the City is working on developing a comprehensive website and user guide, explaining in greater detail the requirements and guidelines of the Plan. These products are expected to be released in Early 2011.

Streetscape Requirements



Street trees



Site furnishings



Stormwater management facilities

SUMMARY

The Better Streets Plan legislation requires property owners and developers making certain changes to their property to provide streetscape elements consistent with the Better Streets Plan.

The Better Streets Plan legislation, adopted December 7, 2010, establishes new requirements for streetscape improvements, building on existing requirements. All streetscape requirements for new development are now located in Section 138.1 of the Planning Code.

STREET TREES

In all zoning districts, property owners making certain changes are required to install street trees every 20 feet on center, as previously required.

The legislation made minor changes to street tree requirements in commercial and mixed-use districts – requirements for minimum tree caliper, branching height, basin size, and tree basin edging treatment were expanded to apply to all RC, C, NC, and MU zoning districts, in addition to C-3 and DTR districts.

The legislation also expands the requirement for trees to be planted in a continuous soil-filled trench: this requirement now applies to projects on large lots and lots with significant street frontage (parcels that are 1/2 acre or more, contain 250 feet or more of lot frontage, or encompass a full block face of lot frontage) that will add a new building, add 20% or more to an existing building, or renovate 50% or more of an existing building.

As previously, street tree requirements may be waived or modified by the Zoning Administrator, and an in-lieu fee may be assessed or sidewalk landscaping provided.



Sidewalk landscaping

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

The legislation does not change existing requirements in the Public Works Code and Building Code regarding stormwater management. As before this legislation, projects that will disturb greater than 5,000 square feet of the ground surface, measured cumulatively over time, are required to manage the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff to meet or exceed either LEED sustainable sites 6.1 or 6.2 guidelines.

Projects may meet this requirement either on their site or by making improvements in the public right-of-way. Any development project that meets the thresholds above is required to submit a Stormwater Control Plan.

OTHER STREETScape ELEMENTS

The legislation creates new requirements for projects on large lots and lots with significant street frontage (parcels that are 1/2 acre or more, contain 250 feet or more of lot frontage, or encompass a full block face of lot frontage) that will add a new building, add 20% or more to an existing building, or renovate 50% or more of an existing building.

In any zoning district, for projects that meet these thresholds, the City may require standard streetscape elements per the appropriate Better Streets Plan street type.

Any development project that meets the thresholds above must submit a streetscape plan to the Planning Department for review. The streetscape plan will be reviewed as part of overall project approvals.

SIDEWALK WIDENING

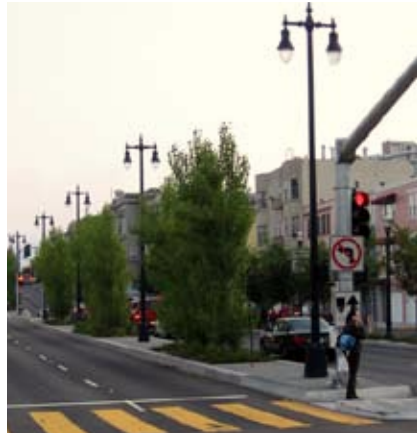
For the thresholds listed in the previous section, the City may also require sidewalk widening so that the resulting sidewalk meets or exceeds the *recommended* sidewalk width for the relevant street type from the Better Streets Plan.

Where development projects would create new streets, sidewalks must meet or exceed the recommended sidewalk width. This width may be decreased if a consistent front setback is provided.



Sidewalk widening

Streetscape Guidelines



SUMMARY

The Better Streets Plan establishes guidelines for the design of pedestrian and streetscape elements. Any changes to any of these features must conform with Better Streets Plan guidelines.

Overall Streetscape Design

The Better Streets Plan contains comprehensive guidelines for the design of the pedestrian realm. The legislation requires that any changes to the public right-of-way must conform with the policies and guidelines in the Plan (Section 98.1(e) of the Administrative Code). The following sections highlight key guidelines from the Better Streets Plan.

STREET TYPES (SEE CHAPTER 4.1 OF THE BETTER STREETS PLAN)

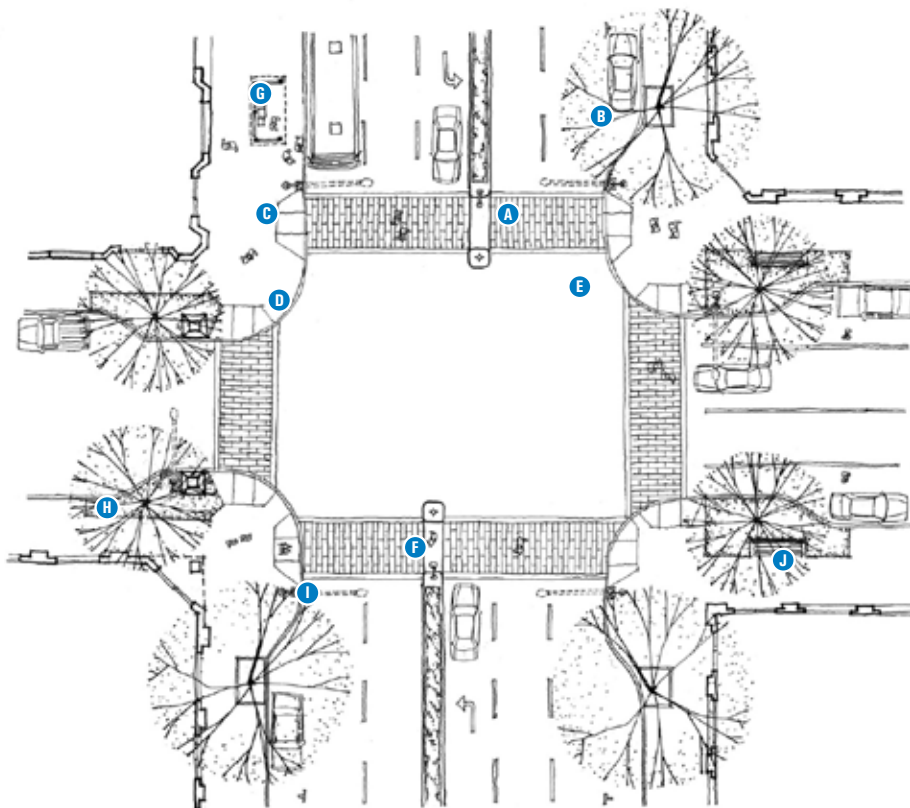
The Plan identifies a set of street types that set the design framework for appropriate design features and dimensions for that street. Street types are based on existing land use and transportation designations from the Planning Code and San Francisco General Plan. The Plan also identifies special street types based on unique conditions.

INTERSECTION DESIGN (4.2)

The Plan provides guidelines for intersection design that enhances pedestrian safety and quality, and identifies elements that contribute to a good intersection.

Identifying Street Type

STREET TYPE		ZONING DISTRICT (PER SF PLANNING CODE)	
COMMERCIAL	Downtown	C-3, C-2 (C-3 adjacent), CCB (w/in Downtown Streetscape Plan)	
	Throughway	NC, C-2, NCT, CCB (not w/in Downtown Streetscape Plan), CVR, CRNC, MB Retail, MB Hotel	Indicated in general plan as arterial street
	Neighborhood		
RESIDENTIAL	Downtown	DTR, RC-3, RC-4	
	Throughway	RH, RM, RTO, RED, MB Residential	Indicated in general plan as arterial street
	Neighborhood		
OTHER	Industrial	C-M, M1, M2, PDR-1, PDR-1-B, PDR-1-G (except Transit-Oriented Retail SUD), PDR-2	
	Mixed-use	MUG, MUO, MUR, PDR-1-D, PDR-1-G (Transit-Oriented Retail SUD only), SLR, SLI, SPD, SSO, RSD, UMU, MB districts: Public Facilities, Commercial Industrial, Commercial Industrial/Retail	
SPECIAL	Parkway	Contains significant continuous sidewalk or median greening (25'+ in width)	
	Park Edge	Contains continuous frontage on an open space	
	Multi-way Boulevard	Separates through traffic from local access	
	Ceremonial (Civic)	Unique, Grand civic space that serves as major gathering spot	
	Alley	Narrow right-of-way (< 30' wide)	
	Shared Public Way	Street designed as a single surface that shares space between pedestrians and vehicles	
	Paseo (pedestrian-only)	Right-of-way closed to motor vehicles	



Elements of a Good Intersection

- A. Visible crosswalks
- B. Parking restrictions at corners
- C. Curb ramps
- D. Tight curb radii
- E. Curb extensions
- F. Pedestrian refuge islands
- G. Accessible transit stops
- H. Street trees and landscaping
- I. Street and pedestrian lighting
- J. Seating and other site furnishings

Sidewalk widths

	STREET TYPE	MINIMUM WIDTH	RECOMMENDED WIDTH
COMMERCIAL	Downtown commercial	Per Downtown Streetscape Plan	
	Commercial throughway	12'	15'
	Neighborhood commercial	12'	15'
RESIDENTIAL	Downtown residential	12'	15'
	Residential throughway	12'	15'
	Neighborhood residential	10'	12'
OTHER	Industrial	8'	10'
	Mixed-use	12'	15'
SPECIAL	Parkway	12'	17'
	Park edge	12'	24'
	Multi-way boulevard	12'	15'
	Ceremonial	varies	varies
	Alley	6'	9'
	Shared public way	NA	NA
	Paseo	varies	varies



SIDEWALK WIDTH (4.2)

The Plan identifies a minimum and recommended sidewalk width for each street type. Sidewalks below the minimum width for the relevant street type should be widened as opportunities allow. Recommended sidewalk widths allow the provision of all features and elements necessary to create a gracious, usable pedestrian environment. The City should strive to meet recommended sidewalk widths wherever possible.

SIDEWALK ZONES (4.2)

In order to function for all users, sidewalks should allow sufficient clear width for through travel while providing amenities to serve passers-by. To that end, the Plan identifies a set of sidewalk “zones” to organize elements on the sidewalk. Each zone should meet guidelines for width, use, and appropriate elements.

The five sidewalk zones are:

Frontage zone: The area adjacent to the property line that transitions between the sidewalk and building uses

Throughway zone: The portion of the sidewalk for pedestrian travel along the street

Furnishing Zone: The portion of the sidewalk used for various streetscape amenities and functional elements, including plantings, street lights, furnishings, and surface utilities

Edge zone: The area of the sidewalk used by people getting in and out of parked vehicles

Extension zone: The area where pedestrian space may be extended into the roadway, via features such as curb extensions, landscaping, or paving treatments



Sidewalk zones

STREETSCAPE LAYOUT (4.2)

Streetscape elements should also be organized laterally along a block: individual elements should be mindful of other specific elements and of the overall pattern of plantings and furnishings.

Key principles include:

- Street trees should be the primary organizing element of the streetscape
- Street lighting should be located alternately with street trees
- Other furnishings should be placed between these organizing elements, clustered at predictable, high-use locations such as transit stops or corners
- Utilitarian streetscape elements should be consolidated to minimize visual clutter.

There are a number of ‘special sidewalk zones’ that vary will from the overall streetscape layout and have their own set of design requirements, including corners, transit stops, accessible parking and passenger loading (blue and white) zones, and driveways.

Design guidelines for sidewalk zones

ZONE	EXTENSION	EDGE	FURNISHINGS	THROUGHWAY	FRONTAGE
Width	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Width of parking lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0’ (where no parking lane, or no continuous planting) • 2’ (where parking lane and continuous planting) • 2’6” (where angled or perpendicular parking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3’ (where trees or landscaping are provided) • 4’ (+ 1’ for every 5 mph increment over 25 mph) • Wider (as needed for site furnishings/public space) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4’ minimum per ADA and on alleys; widening to 5’ every 200’. • 6’ on other street types • Wider (to accommodate expected pedestrian volumes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18” • 2’+ (commercial and mixed-use streets) • Less (where continuous setback is provided)
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All site furnishings, trees and landscaping, street lighting, and utilities • Flexible use of parking lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkable surface • Non-continuous vertical elements such as street lights, utility poles, parking meters, etc. with 18” clearance to curb • Street trees and basins, with non-continuous planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All site furnishings, trees and landscaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear of obstacles; accessible walking surface • Overhanging elements (>80”) • Tree grates (not preferred) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays, cafe seating • Furnishings aligned with frontage • Planters (surface or above-ground) • Overhanging elements

Street Designs



Crosswalk



Curb radius



Curb extension

CROSSWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS (5.1)

Well-designed crossings are essential to creating a safe and usable pedestrian environment. Crosswalks and intersections may be enhanced by a number of features to make pedestrians visible to vehicles and create convenient pedestrian connections.

This section provides guidelines for standard marked crosswalks, high-visibility crosswalks, mid-block crosswalks, pedestrian warning signs, advance stop and yield lines, flashing lights and beacons, parking restrictions at crosswalks, special intersection paving, raised crosswalks and intersections, pedestrian signals, pedestrian ‘scrambles’, pedestrian ‘head-start’ signals, pedestrian actuated signals, pedestrian countdown signals, accessible pedestrian signals, right-turn-on-red prohibitions, removal of multiple turn lanes, removal of closed crosswalks, and curb ramps.

CORNER CURB RADII (5.2)

Curb radii impart a huge impact on the quality of an intersection – curb radii should maximize pedestrian space and slow vehicle turns while accommodating necessary design vehicles.

This section provides guidelines for the design of curb radii (the shape defined by two sidewalks that come together at a corner), including appropriate design vehicles (the type of vehicle that should be able to make a given turn), and alternative strategies for minimizing overly large turn radii.

CURB EXTENSIONS (BULB-OUTS) (5.3)

Curb extensions, or bulb-outs, extend the sidewalk into the parking lane at intersections, making pedestrians more visible, shortening crossing distances, and slowing vehicle turn movements. They can also provide space for landscaping and other amenities. Bulb-outs should be designed to maximize pedestrian space per curb radius guidelines.

This section includes guidelines for standard bulb-outs, extended bulb-outs, and mid-block bulb-outs.



Pedestrian warning sign

MEDIANS AND ISLANDS (5.4)

Medians and islands are traffic control devices that may also be landscaped and/or useable space to give a street a unique identity. Medians may also serve as pedestrian refuges at crosswalks. Where provided, medians should include landscaping if width allows, and be designed to visually slow traffic.

This section includes guidelines on standard center or side medians, pedestrian refuge islands, and corner islands, also known as ‘pork chops.’

TRANSIT STOPS (5.5)

All transit trips begin or end on foot. Transit stops are a section of the sidewalk environment that merit special attention, due to their frequent use and specific needs. Transit stops should provide amenities for waiting riders, and must be accessible to all users and provide clear paths to and from the transit shelter and vehicle. Curb extensions at transit stops (“bus bulbs”), and boarding islands may be used to provide additional waiting space and enhance transit operations.

This section provides guidelines and standard transit stops, “Rapid Network” transit stops, bus bulb-outs, and transit boarding islands.

PARKING LANE TREATMENTS (5.6)

In many cases, the pedestrian realm may be extended into the parking lane, either temporarily or permanently. This area could be used to provide additional public space, landscaping, or to consolidate site furnishings out of the way of the path of travel. Where there is existing angled or perpendicular parking, there is an opportunity to provide significant corner plazas that extend the width of the parking lane.

This section provides guidelines on alternative uses of the parking lane, including corner plazas created by curb extensions, landscape planters, bicycle parking, and ‘parklets’ (converting a portion of the parking lane to public space by adding platforms with seating and landscaping).



Sidewalk pocket park

TRAFFIC CALMING AND ROUNDABOUTS (5.7)

Traffic calming features slow traffic and enhance pedestrian safety by visually narrowing the street or forcing cars to move around obstacles in the roadway. Where traffic calming features are provided, they should be enhanced with landscaping, seating, and stormwater treatment features. Roundabouts are traffic control devices with limited applicability in San Francisco.

Traffic calming features discussed in this plan include traffic calming circles and chicanes. The section also discusses best practices in pedestrian design for roundabouts.

PEDESTRIAN-PRIORITY DESIGNS (5.8)

In many instances, the pedestrian environment can be expanded such that significant portions of or the entire roadway can act as public open spaces. These streets should prioritize pedestrian space and significantly calm or restrict traffic.

Pedestrian-priority designs include sidewalk and median pocket parks, multi-way boulevards, shared public ways, pedestrian-only streets (paseos), and public stairs.



Parklet



Traffic calming circle



Octavia Boulevard

Streetscape Elements



Urban forest



Stormwater management

URBAN FOREST (6.1)

Street trees should be the primary organizing element of the streetscape, with a consistent rhythm along the street. Other types of landscaping should be provided where appropriate to provide additional aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits. Landscape elements should be situated to retain paths of travel to and from other streetscape elements, and to define the furnishings zone of the sidewalk.

This section includes guidelines for street trees, tree basin furnishings, sidewalk landscaping, planter boxes, and hanging baskets.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT TOOLS (6.2)

Stormwater management tools capture stormwater in the public right-of-way before it enters the City's combined or separate stormwater systems. Stormwater features may infiltrate, retain, detain, convey and/or treat stormwater, depending on the facility and the context. They should be designed to be integral, aesthetic streetscape features in addition to their stormwater management role.

The Plan contains guidelines for permeable paving systems, bioretention facilities, swales, channels and runnels, vegetated gutters, vegetated buffer strips, infiltration trenches, and infiltration boardwalks.



Street lighting



Special paving



Site furnishings

STREET LIGHTING (6.3)

Street lighting is a key organizing element that defines the daytime and nighttime street environment, and enhances pedestrian safety and security. Street lighting should be designed to light the entire right-of-way, including the sidewalk and the roadway.

This section includes guidelines for roadway and pedestrian lighting, including location and spacing, light distribution, light color, poles and fixtures, energy efficiency, light levels and uniformity, and maintenance considerations.

PAVING (6.4)

Paving materials may be standard concrete or asphalt or non-standard materials, such as brick or stone pavers, which may be used to enhance a streetscape, provide visual accents, or define edges.

This section discusses standard and special paving materials. Permeable paving is discussed in Section 6.2: Stormwater Management Tools.

SITE FURNISHINGS (6.5)

Site furnishings consist of all streetscape amenities in the sidewalk, providing aesthetic relief and functionality for passing pedestrians. Site furnishings

should generally be aligned in the furnishings zone of the sidewalk, and should be clustered at high-use locations. Utilitarian elements should be consolidated or minimized to reduce visual clutter in the streetscape.

This section contains guidelines on benches and seating, bicycle racks, bollards, flowerstands, kiosks, newsracks, parking meters, public art, sidewalk restrooms, traffic and parking signs, trash receptacles, and signage and gateways.

UTILITIES AND DRIVEWAYS (6.6)

Utilities and driveways are functional elements that provide necessary access and facilities. They are a necessary and ubiquitous element of streetscape environments; however, they often conflict with other streetscape elements, and vice versa. Utilities should be efficiently located to minimize impacts to other existing and potential streetscape elements.

This section contains guidelines for the placement and design of sub-surface utility vaults, vents, and lines, surface-mounted utility boxes, overhead utility wires, and driveways.

Case Study: Leland Avenue



Seat wall and stormwater planter



Pervious paving in the sidewalk and parking lane



Gateway plaza and public art



Crosswalk treatments

Leland Avenue is the commercial heart of the Visitacion Valley neighborhood. However, until recently it was run-down and disinvested. In 2006, the City and community collaborated to create a design for its improvement. The City applied for and won a \$4 million grant to build the proposed street improvements. The Leland Avenue improvements were completed in September 2010, revitalizing the street and providing a gateway to Visitacion Valley.

Though not part of the Better Streets Plan itself, The Leland Avenue streetscape improvements are consistent with the Better Streets Plan guidelines, and include many of the elements the Plan proposes. This project serves as a good model for how Better Streets Plan guidelines can be applied, in this case to a neighborhood commercial street.

Significant features of the project include:

- New street trees
- Roadway/pedestrian lighting with a single set of fixtures
- Corner bulb-outs informal seat walls
- Bioretention planters to infiltrate and detain stormwater
- Pervious paving in the furnishings zone and parking lane
- Colored and textured paving treatments to highlight pedestrian crosswalks
- A 'gateway' plaza with seating at Bayshore Boulevard
- Public art including metal work, tile mosaics, and a gateway sculpture

PHOTO SIMULATIONS

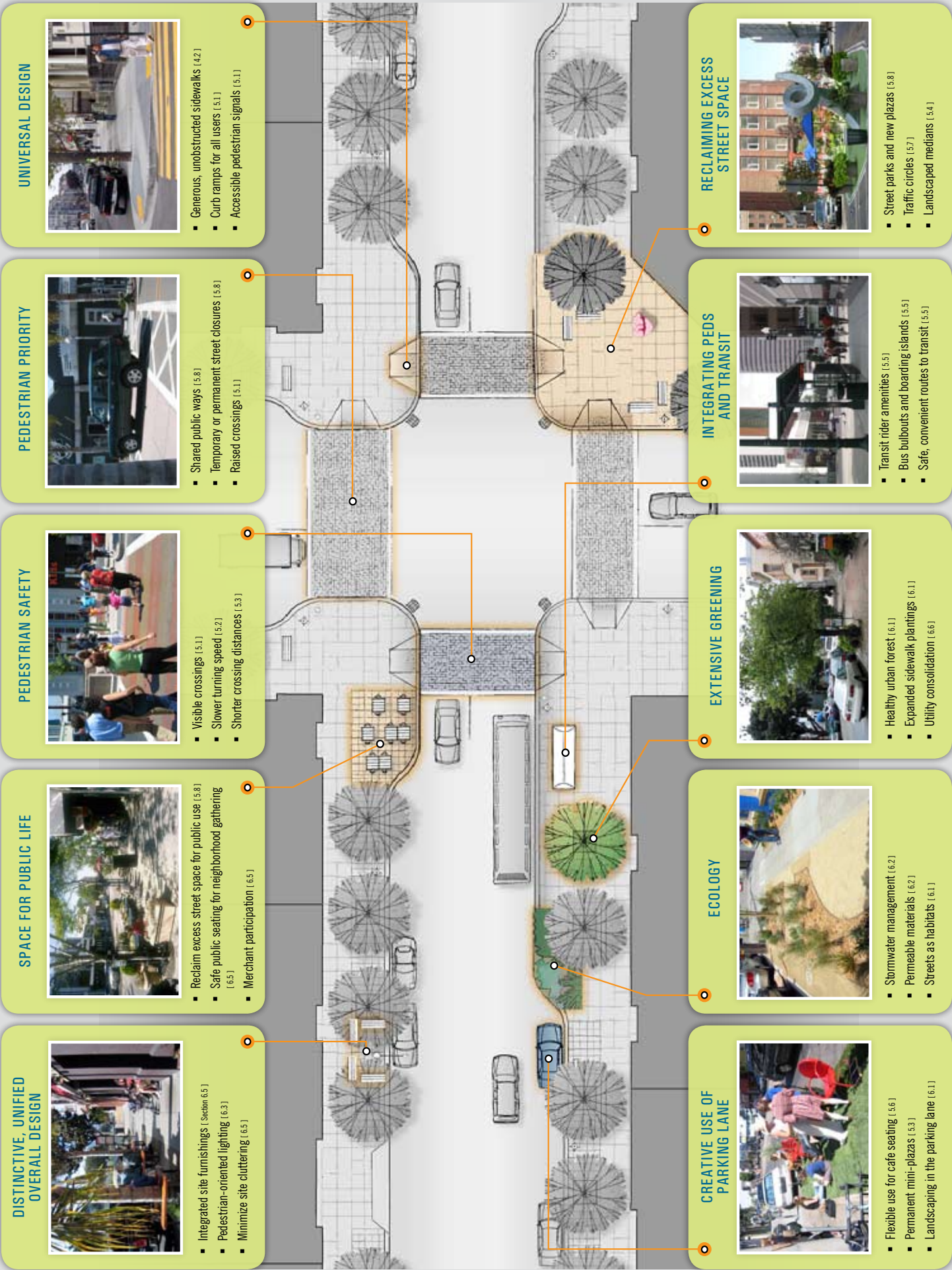


▲ This photo-simulation illustrates how the Better Streets Plan guidelines could be applied to a typical mixed-use San Francisco street to improve the pedestrian environment.



PHOTOSIMULATIONS ARE FOR VISUALIZATION PURPOSES ONLY, AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO SHOW SPECIFIC DETAILS AND DIMENSIONS

▲ This photo-simulation illustrates how the Better Streets Plan guidelines could be applied to improve the pedestrian environment on a typical residential San Francisco street.



DISTINCTIVE, UNIFIED OVERALL DESIGN



- Integrated site furnishings (Section 6.5)
- Pedestrian-oriented lighting (6.3)
- Minimize site cluttering (6.5)

SPACE FOR PUBLIC LIFE



- Reclaim excess street space for public use (5.8)
- Safe public seating for neighborhood gathering (6.5)
- Merchant participation (6.5)

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



- Visible crossings (5.1)
- Slower turning speed (5.2)
- Shorter crossing distances (5.3)

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY



- Shared public ways (5.8)
- Temporary or permanent street closures (5.8)
- Raised crossings (5.1)

UNIVERSAL DESIGN



- Generous, unobstructed sidewalks (4.2)
- Curb ramps for all users (5.1)
- Accessible pedestrian signals (5.1)

CREATIVE USE OF PARKING LANE



- Flexible use for cafe seating (5.6)
- Permanent mini-plazas (5.3)
- Landscaping in the parking lane (6.1)

ECOLOGY



- Stormwater management (6.2)
- Permeable materials (6.2)
- Streets as habitats (6.1)

EXTENSIVE GREENING



- Healthy urban forest (6.1)
- Expanded sidewalk plantings (6.1)
- Utility consolidation (6.6)

INTEGRATING PDS AND TRANSIT



- Transit rider amenities (5.5)
- Bus bulbouts and boarding islands (5.5)
- Safe, convenient routes to transit (5.5)

RECLAIMING EXCESS STREET SPACE



- Street parks and new plazas (5.8)
- Traffic circles (5.7)
- Landscaped medians (5.4)



Adopted December 7, 2010

Mayor Gavin Newsom

San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

David Chiu (president), Michela Alioto-Pier, John Avalos, David Campos, Carmen Chu, Chris Daly, Bevan Dufty, Sean Elsbernd, Eric Mar, Sophie Maxwell, Ross Mirkarimi

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www.sfbetterstreets.org



THE BETTER STREETS PLAN WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY THE SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY THROUGH A GRANT OF PROPOSITION K LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SALES TAX FUNDS.