



SFMTA

# Shared Spaces

Balancing diverse transportation needs as the city recovers from the pandemic



Due to the density of San Francisco, many restaurants and businesses do not have significant amounts of outdoor space; thus, the COVID-19 physical distancing requirements made it challenging for these businesses to operate during the pandemic. [Shared Spaces](#) is a multi-agency program that was established to allow merchants and community groups to use sidewalks, full or partial streets, and other nearby public spaces like parks, parking lots and plazas, for restaurant pick-up and other neighborhood retail activities allowed under San Francisco's Public Health Orders.

So far, over 1,700 free Shared Spaces permits have been issued throughout San Francisco to help businesses move outdoors. The city maintains an [interactive map](#) showing the locations and status of all the proposed and approved locations.

## Emergency response to permanent program

Shared Spaces has been a lifeline to businesses during this challenging time and has proven successful for safely activating the public realm in a community-focused manner. This demonstrated success and the ongoing state of economic recovery will make Shared Spaces a permanent fixture of our public right of way for years to come.

Born out of the emergency Shared Spaces program, the SFMTA legislated a new curb typology called General Loading Zones in summer 2021 so sponsors have access to the curb for high-demand, under-five-minute parking or drop off activities. This new typology has proven to be immensely beneficial as we evolve to see an increased demand for high turnover drop off activity generated by businesses like restaurants.

### FOR CONSIDERATION:

As one of the Mayor's top economic recovery programs and a legislated mandate, Shared Spaces will continue to be a priority for agency staff. We secured \$2.5 million in Pandemic Relief funds to hire eight new Shared Spaces positions within the Streets Division, four in our Shops and four for planning and permitting. Since the Pandemic Relief funds only provide two years of staffing, we would need an additional \$2 million in the next budget to fund program staffing for another two years.

It will be imperative to use effective Curb Management policies that strategically balance diverse transportation needs as we recover from the pandemic; we've seen our transportation patterns rapidly evolve and our recovery will be a pivotal time to ensure San Francisco's trajectory continues to meet Vision Zero, Transit First and Climate Action goals.

For more information, contact:  
[sharedspaces@sfmta.com](mailto:sharedspaces@sfmta.com)

## Addressing competing needs for the city's commercial corridors

Due to the density of San Francisco, there's a high level of competing demands for our streets and sidewalks that existed well before the pandemic. By establishing a permanent multiagency program, the SFMTA can support the city's economic recovery while supporting all members of the community and ensuring the smooth operation of the city's rights-of-way.



### USE OF THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

While Shared Spaces activate our right of way, they create competing demands for the same spaces as transit stops, commercial and passenger loading zones, accessible parking, bike/bikeshare parking, and traffic flow.

- ✓ Prioritizing Shared Spaces within our established SFMTA Curb Management Strategy hierarchy will help ensure Shared Spaces are in line with our city's Vision Zero, Transit First, and Climate Action goals.



### STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS

While many stakeholders favor extending relaxed program parameters, other business stakeholders and community members do not always agree. Instead, they favor increasing the safety and quality of parklets and minimizing their presence on dense commercial corridors due to resulting impacts such as double parking, reduced accessibility, neighbor complaints, emergency access concerns, and noise concerns.

- ✓ As part of transferring over to the permanent program, specific regulations have been documented to help balance the curb, and the SFMTA is committed to working with stakeholders and city partners in making decisions on how to use the curb.



### FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

The SFMTA FY2022 program cost is \$6.15 million with approximately half in staff labor and half in non-labor (e.g., meter loss, materials). Using these resources to support Shared Spaces could impact delivery and implementation of other projects and programs.

- ✓ The FY2023 SFMTA program cost is expected to decrease to \$2.39 million due to program efficiencies and if permit fee revenues, as codified in the Shared Spaces ordinance, are collected.

