

# public realm design guidelines

## IN THIS CHAPTER...

- A. Overarching Guidelines
- B. Character Area Guidelines
- C. Open Space Guidelines

Comprised of a city's streets, sidewalks, and public open spaces, the "public realm" plays a crucial role in the vitality, perception, functionality, and livability of our shared spaces. The intent of the public realm design guidelines is to **enhance the pedestrian environment along the Transit Corridors Area's key roadways, as well as within its public open spaces.**

The guidelines in this section are crafted to facilitate a balance between the needs of transit, automobiles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, including those with disabilities. Furthermore, these design guidelines provide opportunities for "green" design features in the public realm, supporting the sustainability goals for Downtown San Bruno.

The design guidelines for the public realm address three subcategories:

- A. Overarching Guidelines** that direct streetscape design throughout the Transit Corridors Area;
- B. Character Area Guidelines** that provide specific design guidance for the five Character Areas in the plan area; and
- C. Open Space Guidelines** that outline design parameters for creating active, vital open spaces in the Transit Corridors Area.

## **A. OVERARCHING GUIDELINES**

The Overarching Guidelines are designed to give form to the public realm throughout the plan area. The public realm is generally defined as the City’s roadways, medians, sidewalks, planter strips, and public open spaces, such as parks and plazas. Important components of this realm include streetscape elements such as landscaping, street furniture, and lighting, as well as features that add visual interest and draw to the pedestrian environment, such as public art and signage. The guidelines in this section are organized as follows:

A1 Roadways

A2 Crosswalks and Bulbouts

A3 Sidewalks and Landscaping

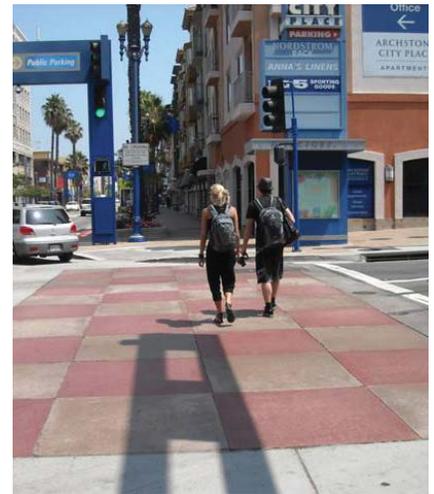
A4 Street Furniture, Lighting, and Public Art

A5 Wayfinding and Signage

A6 Stormwater Management and Sustainability

A1 ROADWAYS

- A1-1 Reduce pedestrian crossing distance at crossing locations by utilizing features such as bulbouts in parking lanes between parking spaces and at corners. Provide well-designed traffic calming devices along corridors, including traffic circles, bollards, bulbouts and chicanes to create pleasant livable environment.
- A1-2 Reassess best urban design for El Camino Real, San Bruno Avenue, Huntington Avenue and San Mateo Avenue to reach proper balance between driving, parking, walking and biking interests.
- A1-3 Provide adequate buffer between pedestrian zones and vehicle driving zones consisting of landscaping and/or curbside parking to ensure safe and appealing pedestrian environment within the Pedestrian Emphasis Zone.



*Crosswalks should be clearly delineated with special paving.*

A2 CROSSWALKS AND BULBOUTS

- A2-1 Provide clearly marked minimum 10-foot wide crosswalks at all controlled intersections and at intersections of key streets, as described in the Transportation Chapter.
- A2-2 Ensure that all crosswalks have ramps and warning strips that comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- A2-3 Explore using special paving materials, colors, and/or patterns for crosswalks to heighten visibility and lend identity to the area while creating an attractive pedestrian environment.
- A2-4 Explore the use of in-pavement flashers and crosswalk signage that flashes to alert drivers of a crossing, especially at key intersections along El Camino Real and San Bruno Avenue and San Mateo Avenue.
- A2-5 Provide bulbouts along El Camino Real, San Bruno Avenue, and Huntington Avenue at intersections and pedestrian crossing locations.



*Pedestrian refuges mid way across the street provide safe waiting areas for pedestrians.*



*Bulbouts with special paving and landscaping should be considered to provide a shorter crossing distance for pedestrians.*



*The pedestrian zone should be distinguishable with the use of paving materials that help it stand out and provide visual interest.*

- A2-6 Consider development of new mid-block pedestrian crossing locations on El Camino Real, San Bruno Avenue and Huntington Avenue when justified by pedestrian traffic study, in conjunction with site development or in response to existing pedestrian demand.
- A2-7 Encourage the design of corner bulbouts at intersections to function as pocket plazas with pedestrian amenities such as landscaping, seating, trash receptacles, and bicycle racks.

### A3 SIDEWALKS AND LANDSCAPING

- A3-1 Ensure that all streets have continuous sidewalks conforming to the ADA standard of a minimum width of five feet. Where possible, encourage a minimum six-foot wide pedestrian zone to provide comfortable pedestrian circulation.
- A3-2 Locate street trees and planter strips between sidewalks and roadway to provide a safety buffer for pedestrians from traffic. Allow tree wells and planters to be used instead of planter strips in cases where parking or bicycle lanes are located next to sidewalks.
- A3-3 Ensure that planters and tree wells are at least four feet wide to allow for healthy street trees. Incorporate well-designed tree grates in tree wells
- A3-4 Landscape planter strips with shade-providing trees and shrubs. For sidewalks, select tree species that do not create excess shade and obstruct pedestrian circulation
- A3-5 Select tree species for street medians consistent with scale and design theme for roadway segment. Ensure that tree canopies are high and airy to create a pleasant streetscape without impeding roadway visibility.
- A3-6 Use low-maintenance native or drought tolerant plant species in streetscape landscaping to minimize water consumption and maintenance.
- A3-7 Discourage use of turf, grass or landscaping that requires high water usage.

- A3-8 Promote outdoor dining and display of selected goods (i.e. fruit and vegetable stands, flowers, clothing standards, etc.) on sidewalks, where sidewalk width is sufficiently wide, to activate the streetscape. Maintain a pedestrian zone of five feet in addition to sidewalk seating, displays or activity areas.
- A3-9 Ensure at least a 12-foot tree canopy clearance from the finished sidewalk elevation to provide clear emergency and service access, allow light penetration from pedestrian-scale street lights, and create visual connections between buildings, signage, the sidewalk and the roadway.
- A3-10 Place new street trees in appropriate locations to avoid blocking views and access to building entrances or signage.
- A3-11 Ensure that trees do not obstruct ADA access, or infringe on pedestrian and/or bicycle circulation.



*Outdoor dining opportunities are highly encouraged along most corridors in the plan area.*

#### A4 STREET FURNITURE, LIGHTING, AND PUBLIC ART

- A4-1 Provide both pedestrian-oriented and automobile-oriented street lighting within the whole Transit Corridors Plan area, with first priority to the Pedestrian Emphasis Zones designed to meet established lighting standards to provide safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.
- A4-2 Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities—including seating, trash receptacles and public art—at key nodes along El Camino Real, San Bruno Avenue, San Mateo Avenue, and Huntington Avenue.
- A4-3 Provide bicycle racks and/or lockers at key locations throughout the Planning Area—especially along San Mateo Avenue and at the Caltrain Station Area. Ensure that bicycle racks are placed in highly visible locations and in sufficient quantities.
- A4-4 Explore opportunities for artistic design of bicycle racks, trash receptacles, seating, lighting posts, and utility boxes.
- A4-5 Install public art pieces throughout El Camino Real, San



*Street furniture and pedestrian lighting should fit the desired character of the Transit Corridors Area.*



Bruno Avenue, San Mateo Avenue, Huntington Avenue, the Station Area, and other plazas. Create a cohesive series of art pieces either by theme, artist, style, or materials.

A4-6 Utilize medians, bulbouts, pocket plazas, and wide sidewalk spaces as potential areas to display public art pieces.

A4-7 Provide shelters at bus stops where possible.

A4-8 Ensure that bus shelters do not obstruct pedestrian circulation. Require a minimum of six-foot sidewalk clearance for the pedestrian passage way.



A4-9 Work with SamTrans to design visually iconic, energy efficient, and user friendly bus shelters. Consider the use of solar panels to power lighting and monitors, require ADA accessibility, and ensure maximum transparency to enhance safety.

## A5 WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

A5-1 Develop consistent thematically branded wayfinding and signage to maximize visual recognition.

A5-2 Employ signage for vehicular, pedestrian and bicyclist wayfinding to the Caltrain Station Area, San Mateo Avenue, major bus stops, and key community amenities such as City Hall, the City Library, and the proposed Performing Arts Center.

A5-3 Design and install gateway amenities at the Caltrain Station platform on San Bruno Avenue to announce a sense of arrival into the City. Ensure that gateway amenities are elegantly designed and contribute to the new character of Downtown San Bruno

A5-4 Install new gateway sign on San Bruno Avenue at east entry into City.

A5-5 Place signs at a height visible for both pedestrians and drivers. Signs should be placed at around 12 to 15 feet above ground. Scale signage to be visible both from the roadway and the sidewalk. Ensure that letters and



numbers are no less than four inches tall for directional signage.

- A5-6 Explore opportunities for educational and interpretive signage along El Camino Real and San Mateo Avenue to highlight important historic or design features of the area.
- A5-7 Provide visually-attractive, easy-to-read and well-located signage to direct vehicles to Downtown parking areas.



*Directional signage throughout the plan area should be designed to match the desired contemporary character.*



*The visual simulation above shows the concept for gateway signage along San Bruno Avenue from the east at the future Caltrain Station and grade separation.*



*Drought tolerant and/or native landscaping is encouraged along the sidewalks and planting strips throughout the plan area to collect stormwater run-off.*



## A6 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- A6-1 Encourage the transformation of sidewalk planters and planter strips into stormwater run-off collectors and planters. Explore the transition from piped to natural percolation.
- A6-2 Install naturally drained, landscaped stormwater planters where possible, including on sidewalks, medians, bulbouts, parks and plazas, and traffic circles.
- A6-3 Encourage the use of permeable pavers around tree wells instead of impervious materials to increase infiltration of stormwater runoff.
- A6-4 Minimize the use of impervious surfaces within the public realm.
- A6-5 Explore the use of permeable paving materials or porous asphalt along parking lanes and surface parking areas.
- A6-6 Consider permeable paving with natural drainage instead of planter strips or between planter strips where feasible to increase infiltration.
- A6-7 Consider Use stormwater planters (small, contained vegetated area that collects and treats stormwater) and permeable paving as opportunities for educational and interpretive signage. Use new open spaces as opportunities for stormwater detention and infiltration to reduce run-off to the bay.
- A6-8 Employ paving materials with high solar reflectance and high thermal emittance (high albedo) to reduce heat-island effects.
- A6-9 Use native or drought-tolerant, low maintenance plant species for landscaping of streetscapes, parks and plazas to minimize water consumption and maintenance.
- A6-10 Explore the creation of a regional or municipal stormwater treatment facility to assist in maximizing the development potential of physically constrained sites. Consider implementing an in-lieu fee to develop and maintain the treatment facility.

## **B. CHARACTER AREA GUIDELINES**

The Character Area guidelines are specific to each of the five Character Areas in the Transit Corridors Area and intended to give form to the public realm within each one of those areas. The guidelines in this section are organized as follows:

B1 Station Area

B2 El Camino Real

B3 San Bruno Avenue

B4 San Mateo Avenue

B5 Huntington Avenue



*The Station Area should provide a plaza space with iconic architecture and signage and opportunities for people to congregate.*



*The Station Area should include well landscaped areas that provide shade.*

## B1 STATION AREA

- B1-1 Work with Caltrain to design the Station plaza to serve both commuters and the community.
- B1-2 Install iconic gateway streetscape elements at the Station Area. Consider archways, banners, special paving to create a unique identity to the Station Area.
- B1-3 Landscape the Station Area plaza with airy street trees that do not cast excess shadows.
- B1-4 Provide plentiful seating options in the plaza for commuters. Ensure that seating is sheltered from the rain.
- B1-5 Orient ticket booths, platform escalators or stairs, and retail kiosks to maximize visibility of the plaza. Cluster stairs and elevators to station close to platform to maximize area used for plaza space.
- B1-6 Provide secure bicycle parking and bicycle lockers at the Station Area and as part of surrounding development to encourage bicycle use.



*Secured bicycle parking is encouraged throughout the Station Area.*

## B2 EL CAMINO REAL

- B2-1 Ensure that right-of-ways are designed in consistency with the Grand Boulevards Initiative guidelines and efforts are coordinated with Caltrans. These guidelines will adapt to be consistent with evolving Grand Boulevard design guidelines.
- B2-2 Install pedestrian scale lighting along El Camino Real.
- B2-3 Enhance and install the El Camino Real historic bells to emphasize the history of the boulevard.
- B2-4 Install directional signage and banners on lamp posts in the median and sidewalks along El Camino Real.
- B2-5 Explore installing roadway lighting in the street median to provide ample lighting on the roadway. Consider using sustainable options such as LED lights and solar panel powered lights.
- B2-6 Install public art and design treatments in underpasses to create a pleasant pedestrian experience.



*Historic elements within the public realm along the El Camino Real corridor should be respected and highlighted.*



*Street trees, lighting and street furniture should be placed along the sidewalk's edge to buffer pedestrians from street traffic and enhance the pedestrian realm.*

### B3 SAN BRUNO AVENUE

- B3-1 Perform traffic study considering future build out volumes to reassess best urban design for San Bruno Avenue to reach proper balance between driving, parking, walking and biking interests. Based on study recommendation, develop new design standards.
- B3-2 Install stormwater planters with street trees along the sidewalk. Ensure that sidewalks are no less than five feet wide. Planter strips should be no less than three feet wide.
- B3-3 Install pedestrian scale signage and lighting on San Bruno Avenue to reduce the perceived scale of the arterial street.

#### West of Caltrain Station:

- B3-4 Ensure parallel parking lanes, where appropriate, to be seven feet in width. Install bulbouts between parking spaces to create opportunities for street trees. Ensure that sidewalks on San Bruno Avenue are at least eight feet wide and supplemented with building setbacks in the private realm.
- B3-5 Determine the best route for an east-west bike route that can accommodate Provide five-foot Class II bicycle lanes in both directions, potentially along San Bruno Avenue east west of the Caltrain Station to increase access to the transit station and connections to the bicycle network.

#### East of Caltrain Station

As part of an overall phasing strategy, in the near term explore design improvements that enhance the aesthetics of the street without removing driving lanes. In the mid to long-term along San Bruno Avenue the City might explore possibilities to change current road configuration

to dedicate more right-of-way to pedestrians and bikers; therefore, reducing number of vehicular travel lanes. Possible ideas to improve the streetscape while maintaining the current road configuration include:

- B3-6 Explore attractive and creative pavement materials (tinted and/or stamped concrete or asphalt, stone, brick etc.) in the crosswalks, sidewalks and/or roadway.
- B3-7 Explore raised pavement at intersections and/or special paving to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- B3-8 In mid- to long-term phases of the implementation of the Plan (after the Caltrain station is built and a viable transit-oriented development area is established), the City should explore narrowing San Bruno Avenue East to two driving lanes and two parking lanes with bulbouts between parking spaces to create opportunities for street trees.
- B3-9 For sidewalks without a parking lane as a buffer, install decorative bollards and stormwater planters to buffer vehicular traffic.

#### Station Underpass

- B3-10 Ensure that the Caltrain underpass is well designed, with abundant lighting, sidewalk railings or bollards, public art, or retail uses to activate the space. Maximize views into and from the underpass to provide an eyes-on-the-street environment and increase safety.



*The Caltrain underpass should integrate creative lighting techniques to establish a well lit pedestrian environment.*





*Raised crosswalks, special paving at intersections, and well placed bollards should be integrated throughout the Transit Corridors Area to add visual interest and reinforce the pedestrian realm.*



B4 SAN MATEO AVENUE

- B4-1 Perform traffic study considering future build out volumes to reassess best urban design for San Bruno Avenue to reach proper balance between driving, parking, walking and biking interests. Based on study recommendation, develop new design standards.
- B4-2 Explore reducing vehicular speed in Downtown, and using raised intersections to slow traffic.
- B4-3 Provide, where feasible, angle parking rather than parallel parking adjacent to curb.
- B4-4 Retain bulbouts at street crossings. Install landscaping, public art, and seating amenities at bulbouts where possible.
- B4-5 Plant street trees in tree wells with grates rather than in pots.
- B4-6 Install raised crosswalks at all key intersections to improve pedestrian safety and reduce vehicle speeds (see Figure 7.17: Recommended Pedestrian Facilities Improvements).
- B4-7 Install attractive and creative pavement materials (tinted and/or stamped concrete or asphalt, stone, brick etc.) in the crosswalks, sidewalks and/or roadway.
- B4-8 Consider reconfiguration of the intersection of San Mateo Avenue and El Camino Real to facilitate creation of an outdoor public plaza and highly visible gateway to Downtown (see figure 7.14: Conceptual Realignment for a conceptual design for the intersection of San Mateo Avenue and El Camino Real). Align the intersection to be centered on the San Mateo Avenue – El Camino Real junction, rather than the Taylor Avenue – El Camino Real junction. Design a 90-degree intersection into San Mateo Avenue from El Camino Real to ease truck and service access.

## B5 HUNTINGTON AVENUE

- B5-1 Perform traffic study considering future build out volumes to reassess best urban design for Huntington Avenue to reach proper balance between driving, parking, walking and biking interests. Based on study recommendation, develop new design standards.
- B5-2 Install five-foot wide bicycle lanes on Huntington Avenue.
- B5-3 Widen sidewalks an additional 5 feet and landscape sidewalks with trees, plantings and public art. This additional landscaping and art will providing a visual buffer to the future elevated Caltrain tracks.
- B5-4 Ensure that parallel parking lanes (on the west side of the street) are eight feet in width and intermittently spaced with landscaped bulbouts.
- B5-5 Install directional signage and banners on existing light poles.
- B5-6 Install pedestrian scale lighting on sidewalks.
- B5-7 Explore opportunities to enliven the berm alongside the elevated Caltrain tracks with murals, lighting, public seating, retail, and/or vegetation.



*Appropriately striped and signed bike lanes should be installed throughout the plan area in locations described in the Transportation Chapter.*

### **C. OPEN SPACE GUIDELINES**

The Open Space guidelines are intended to ensure that community spaces throughout the plan area are designed to be welcoming to pedestrians and fit seamlessly into their surrounding environments. The guidelines in this section are organized as follows:

C1 Pocket Parks

C2 Plazas

C3 Greenways, Alleys and Pedestrian Connections

## C1 POCKET PARKS

- C1-1 Ensure that pocket parks are of a sufficient size and active programming to cater to San Bruno residents and visitors.
- C1-2 Include a variety of programs and facilities to serve a wide range of users, including play equipment areas, gathering space, multi-use play areas, and community gardens.
- C1-3 Ensure pathways are at least five feet wide for ADA access.
- C1-4 Provide adequate lighting and signage within pocket parks.
- C1-5 Ensure that park entrances are highly visible to enhance safety and wayfinding. Maximize vistas into the park and encourage “eyes on the park”. Avoid locating tall foliage, walls, or large signage near the entrance of the park, which may act as visual barriers.
- C1-6 Encourage the design and use of natural drainage bio-swales in pocket parks to filter surface water run-off.
- C1-7 Encourage the use of pervious paving surfaces to increase natural stormwater run-off drainage.
- C1-8 Encourage adjacent uses to front directly onto pocket parks.
- C1-9 Incorporate an iconic feature that distinctly identifies each pocket park/plaza. If the pocket park on San Mateo Ave opposite Jenevein Ave intersection becomes a permanent park, install additional improvements, such as playground equipment.
- C1-10 Require the use of native or drought-tolerant plant species that require low water usage and maintenance. Discourage the use of high-maintenance species that require high water usage, such as lawn.
- C1-11 Consider the installation of a skateboard park on Huntington under Highway 380 to activate the space. Ensure that the skateboard park is designed with ample



*Open spaces and parks are a key component to a balanced urban environment.*



*Plazas are encouraged throughout the plan area that are well designed and connected to the sidewalks.*

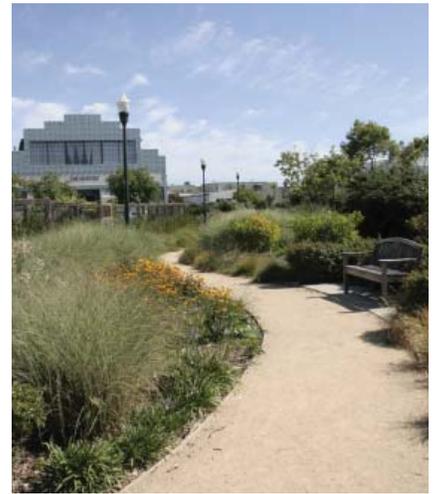
lighting and bollards or fencing to provide safety to users.

## C2 PLAZAS

- C2-1 Encourage the use of water permeable paving surfaces to increase natural stormwater run-off drainage.
- C2-2 Provide signage to direct users through plazas.
- C2-3 Use special paving patterns and treatment at transit plazas and promenades to increase visibility and identity.
- C2-4 Ensure a safe pedestrian and bicycle route through the plazas to the transit stop. Include curb-cuts when necessary for ADA and bicycle access through plazas.
- C2-5 Provide landscaping and street trees in plazas to create a pleasant environment. Ensure that trees provide foliage without casting excess shade.
- C2-6 Provide amenities in plazas for social gathering, including seating, tables, interactive public art, play areas, and bicycle racks.
- C2-7 Allow outdoor seating or outdoor exhibits in plazas to activate the space.
- C2-8 Program temporary events in plazas such as farmers markets, parades, and live performances.
- C2-9 Install plentiful lighting in plazas to ensure safety.
- C2-10 Install banners and signage in public plazas to create a sense of community identity for San Bruno.
- C2-11 Create historic plaques in plazas at significant locations to commemorate the history of San Bruno and its major contributors.
- C2-12 Promote a donor recognition program to honor fundraising contributors both as a fundraising strategy and as public art/paving design..

C3 GREENWAYS, ALLEYS AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

- C3-1 Create connections to Centennial Way Trail in South San Francisco from the Caltrain Station and San Mateo Avenue.
- C3-2 Improve the design of Memory Lane. Consider the use of a combination of special paving treatment and patterns, historic lamp posts, landscaping, signage, or street furnishings where appropriate to emphasize the pedestrian and bicycle connection..
- C3-3 Pave alleys with special patterns and materials to highlight pedestrian use. Ensure that alleys are well-lit with ambient lighting.
- C3-4 Plan for pedestrian and bicycle paths through new development.



*Pedestrian paths are encouraged connecting key destinations within the plan area.*



*Alleys should be designed to encourage use not only for circulation but also for potential gathering spaces.*



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