



24th Street BART Plazas

Community Design Plan

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit)

MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission)

MEDA (Mission Economic Development Association)

**San Francisco Planning
Department
Urban Ecology**

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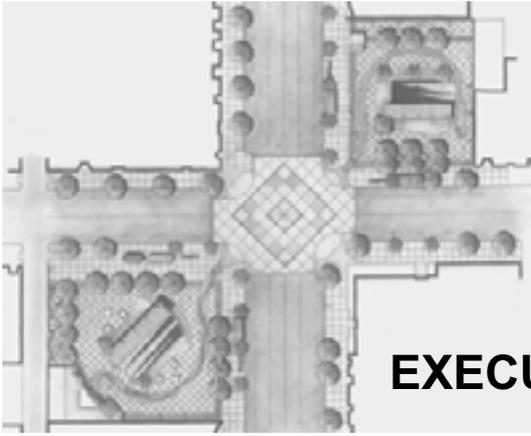
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On a sun-splashed Saturday afternoon, the 24th Street BART plazas in San Francisco's Mission District are bustling with activity: preachers, political activists, and public transit users are all present and vying for space. Each plaza occupies approximately a quarter acre in this highly urbanized district and is surrounded by a mixture of uses—small businesses, churches, schools, social service providers and residences. Not only are the 24th Street BART Plazas a busy transit hub, they also function as critical open space in the Mission.

As heavily used as they are, the plazas face a laundry list of problems: the design is uninspiring, and the facilities are in need of major upgrades. The bus shelters overflow during commute hours. People often sit on the pavement for lack of benches. Preaching, vending and political activities happen on weekends and in the evenings, but the plazas lack the infrastructure—a stage, vendor stalls or tables—to foster these activities. Community members report that after the sun sets, the plazas become a place to avoid or pass through quickly because the lack of visibility and the plazas' desolation contribute to their fear of crime. While the original thirty-year-old BART facilities are deteriorating, BART's ridership has skyrocketed. Since 1998, ridership has increased 23.1 percent. In addition to BART, five bus lines converge at the plazas. The need for enhancing the pedestrian and transit environment is immediate, given the heavy use.

Since Fall 2000, community members have been engaged in a participatory planning process to redesign the 24th Street BART plazas. With a planning grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), two governmental agencies—Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and San Francisco Planning Department (SFPD)—and two non-profit advocacy groups—Urban Ecology and Mission Economic Development Association (MEDA)—formed a partnership to carry out the participatory planning process. The goal of the process has been to define community-based solutions to the plazas' problems and create a vision for the future.

Over the past year, a few hundred people have engaged in this question through three community workshops, two focus groups, one hundred surveys, and a dozen presentations at stakeholder meetings. Discussions

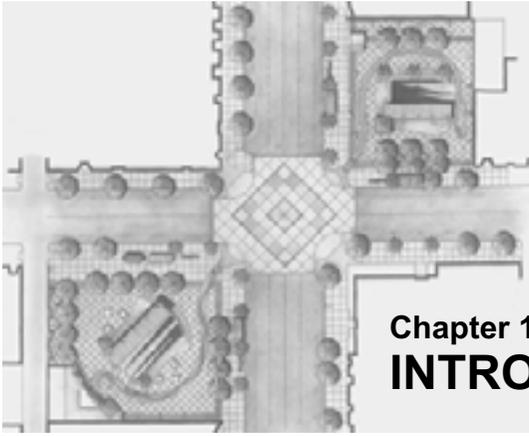
at these meetings formed the basis of the recommendations in the Community Design Plan. Community members spoke about how the plazas currently function and the changes they would like to see: Should a stage be built to accommodate the preachers, political activists and local performers? Should there be a canopy to protect exits and entrances? Should new uses such as vendors be introduced to the plazas? In discussions, especially around issues of safety and public use, competing interests often disagreed. However, community members eventually agreed on broader goals and a specific design. This plan documents the existing conditions of the site and the participatory planning process. It also sets forth the consensus that was reached: a set of community goals and a conceptual design for the 24th Street BART plazas, which can guide their transformation.



We have witnessed the Mission District make national headlines as the epicenter of debates over the balance of economic development, housing and gentrification. Community members, developers, non-profits and government agencies are all jockeying for power—power that determines development patterns in the Mission. Across the country, municipalities are recognizing that such issues demand an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, and that the dialogue is most fruitful if two components are integrated: A sound analysis of the plaza’s physical layout, assets, and challenges, and a process that allows all stakeholders to fully participate in their redesign. This is the essence of community-based land use planning: It serves as both a means of democratic decision-making and a tool for improving the built and natural environments.

In low-income neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area, where little attention is paid to participatory planning, Urban Ecology provides community-based planning and design services with the goal of improving the physical and natural environment. While planning is not an immediate solution to the challenges brought by the rapid economic change that the Mission District experienced in 1999 and 2000, it can set goals and standards for economic development, affordable housing, safe streets, and healthy public space over the long term. While the political and economic conditions of the Mission District are still changing, this plan recommends improvements to the existing physical infrastructure that will benefit local residents and businesses.

As frequently occurs with well-used public spaces, physical improvements can have an effect on civic life as well. With the new plaza design, community members are seeking to deter public nuisances and create an inspiring public open space. Community members want safe, inclusive and vibrant plazas that fulfill their open space and transit needs. They want a gateway to their neighborhood that identifies the Mission as a commercial center, residential neighborhood and arts and non-profit hub. Finally, the design fosters a sense of community through its strong arts component, and provides opportunities for local artists, vendors, and small businesses.



Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

The planning process at the 24th Street plazas emerged from several other land use-oriented initiatives in the Mission District. In 1997, Mission Housing Development Corporation initiated a community planning process to redesign the 16th Street BART Plazas. This project was one of the first recipients of MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities grants program, which funds planning and capital improvements that link land use and transportation. With the assistance of Urban Ecology, Mission District community members developed a design to increase the diversity of uses and users, and to improve visibility and connections to the surrounding neighborhood. In 1998, the Mission Economic Development Association partnered with Urban Ecology to conduct the Mission Corridor Study, which examined the corridor's retail and housing opportunities. Participants expressed a desire for a coordinated design and construction process between the 16th and 24th Street BART Plazas. In 2000, BART applied for funding from MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities program to develop a community design plan for the 24th Street BART Plazas. The plan would be used to develop community consensus around the future of the plazas, and as the basis for requesting capital funding. To do this, BART formed a partnership with MEDA, Urban Ecology, and the San Francisco Planning Department.

Bay Area Rapid Transit's Station Area Planning Division was established in 1999 to provide planning services for BART stations and property in coordination with comprehensive planning for the surrounding communities. In 2001, this Division was restructured within BART into four geographic teams, each charged with comprehensive planning. Before restructuring, however, Station Area Planning was institutionalized as Board Policy and remains a primary function of each planning team. Station Area Planning involves developing and strengthening partnerships with communities around the BART stations, and with the transportation providers that serve these communities. These partnerships aim to improve the quality of life and vitality in the communities and in the region; to reflect local priorities for future development; and to enhance the role of transit as a resource for residents, businesses and commuters. In partnership with the communities BART serves, Station Area Planning's vision is to create and enhance compact, walkable communities

around BART stations. BART initiated and managed the 24th Street BART Plazas Community Design Plan.

Urban Ecology is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to creating ecologically sustainable and socially just cities in the Bay Area. Urban Ecology's community design program helps grassroots neighborhood organizations plan for physical change by providing in-depth outreach, planning and design services. Where residents and community-based organizations bring awareness of a neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses, Urban Ecology brings skills that help residents think concretely about land use and design in order to craft high-quality, environmentally and culturally sensitive neighborhood plans. Urban Ecology was responsible for providing planning and design services.

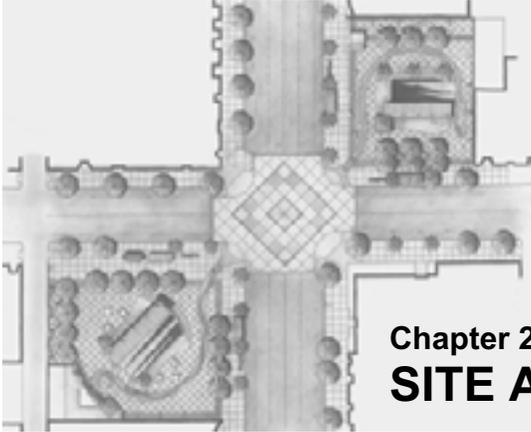
Mission Economic Development Association is a community-based economic development corporation that provides technical assistance to small businesses, loan packaging and advocacy for minority and women-owned businesses in the Mission. MEDA also conducts neighborhood revitalization projects such as the Mission Corridor Project and the Dolores Park Strategic Plan. For over twenty years, MEDA has worked to improve economic and social conditions in the neighborhood by stimulating investment, enhancing the business environment, and creating jobs for area residents. MEDA was in charge of all community outreach efforts.

The Planning Department of the City and County of San Francisco is responsible for adopting and maintaining a comprehensive, long-term general plan for future improvement and development of the City of San Francisco. For the 24th Street BART Plazas project, the department provided assistance through the review of relevant zoning requirements and *San Francisco General Plan* provisions, and coordinated with other city departments including Department of Public Works, Department of Parking and Transit, MUNI and the Transportation Authority to provide input on the feasibility of plan designs.

Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Transportation for Livable Communities Program was launched in 1998 to provide planning grants, technical assistance and capital grants to help cities and nonprofit agencies develop transportation-related projects. The program seeks to improve a community's connection with the regional transportation system by focusing on streetscape improvements, transit-, pedestrian-, and bicycle-oriented developments, and strategies that bring a new vibrancy to downtown areas, commercial cores and neighborhoods. Projects in the early or conceptual stage of their development are eligible for TLC planning grants, which are awarded to help grantees refine and elaborate promising project ideas. Projects with completed plans are eligible for capital grants, which directly support construction and help turn plans into reality. MTC provided funding for the 24th Street BART Plazas Community Design Plan.



Aerial view of Mission Street, between 23rd and 25th Streets



Chapter 2 **SITE ANALYSIS**

The Mission District Past and Present

The Mission District is the oldest neighborhood in San Francisco. Its roots lie in the establishment of the Mission Dolores by the Spanish in 1776. Spanish colonial policy shaped the layout of the city: the Presidio served as the military hold, Yerba Buena as the commercial center and the Mission Dolores as the religious center.

Prior to Spanish occupation, the Ohlone lived in the area and sustained themselves through fishing and hunting. After the establishment of the mission, the Ohlone were subjects of the Spanish empire and forced to work for the mission's ranch. Thirty years after the Spanish arrived, the wildlife was decimated and the freshwater streams were contaminated with animal and human feces. The Ohlone population began to decline as many of them died of disease, famine and exhaustion. By 1806, a measles epidemic killed one-fourth of the Ohlone population and many fled to the East Bay, where their numbers dwindled even further.

In 1821, Mexico gained independence from Spain, forcing the Spanish to relinquish control of the San Francisco outpost. The newly formed Mexican government gave large land grants to soldiers and their families who fought in the war. Termed "Californios," these families—such as the Noes, Bernals, Arguellos, and Castros—established prosperous cattle ranches, which fueled the Yerba Buena trading center. San Francisco became the largest city on the west coast and the bustling port of Yerba Buena remained distant from the area today known as the Mission District, considered the countryside in the 1820s.

In 1848, after the United States won the war with Mexico, the Californios began to lose control over their land. Although the federal government assured Californios of their land rights, newly arrived settlers demanded that the Californios show proof of ownership, which many families could not produce. Once the gold rush began, San Francisco's landscape changed dramatically, and its population rocketed from 1,000 to 34,000 residents. The Mission became home to many of the new settlers, although it retained more of a quiet village atmosphere and acted as a

destination for the Yerba Buena city dwellers who sought refuge from the city and fog.

In 1851, Plank Road was connected the Yerba Buena trading center to the Mission. Later renamed Mission Street, Plank Road has a rich transportation history and has always served as a backbone of the city's transit system. The very first local transit route, the Yellow Line, was a horse-drawn carriage service from Mission to Yerba Buena. With easy access to Yerba Buena, the Mission District attracted waterfront workers, garment workers, factory workers, coffee packers, iron workers, tradesmen, fishermen and waitresses from San Francisco's growing population. Real estate developers built over 3,000 Victorian homes, many of them ordered from the Sears Roebuck catalogues. While the residents of the Mission were mostly working- and middle- class, their nationalities were diverse. In 1860, San Francisco had the highest number of foreign-born residents of any city in the United States, and the Mission District was a receiving ground for immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Chile and Colombia. The neighborhood was also home to some of the city's wealthiest families as evidenced by the grander Victorians on South Van Ness and Liberty Hill. At the turn of the century, the Mission District was a mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood with the streets packed with houses and street cars that ran down Mission, Valencia, and 16th Streets. The neighborhood even had its own Victorian amusement park, Woodward's Garden, at Mission and 14th Streets.

The 1906 earthquake heavily impacted the physical and social conditions of the neighborhood. In San Francisco, three-fifths of the housing stock was destroyed by the fire, but stopped short of ravaging the Mission. The Mission, particularly Dolores Park, became an overnight tent camp. Many of the single-family Victorians were converted into smaller units and the vacant lots were filled with housing. The wealthier families left and the mixed-income neighborhood became dominated by the working class.

In the years following the earthquake, the Mission District's residential density supported commercial corridors along 24th Street, Potrero, Valencia, and Mission Streets. By the 1920s, several theaters opened along Mission Street, and it was dubbed the "Mission Miracle Mile" as it grew into a regional shopping destination. World War II had an enormous impact on the neighborhood. The GI bill enabled returning soldiers to move to the suburbs, and many Irish and Italian families left the Mission for the Sunset and Richmond neighborhoods. In their place, immigrants from Latin America (many from Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua) settled and worked in the factories and industry located south of Market, along the waterfront and in the northeast section of the Mission.



Mission & 22nd Street, 1936



Streetcars on Mission Street, 1937



"Dollar Days," 1950



The Aloha Hotel, Mission & 24th,
at the present site of the plazas



BART Construction, 1969

(Source: the San Francisco History
Center, San Francisco Public Library)

By the 1960s, the Mission District faced many of the same issues as inner city neighborhoods throughout the United States. The main commercial corridors were in decline and the housing stock grew dilapidated. BART's construction was accompanied by were plans for redevelopment. The question divided Mission residents: redevelopment was not universally supported, and was generally favored more by middle class than working class residents.

After witnessing redevelopment efforts in the Western Addition, many residents feared displacement and began to fight redevelopment efforts. Twelve thousand residents mobilized to form the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO). In 1970, MCO leaders negotiated an alternative to redevelopment with Mayor Alioto and the Board of Supervisors. The Mission adopted a model cities program which established the Mission Model Neighborhood Corporation to oversee development and planning. Several non-profits emerged from this organization: the Mission Housing Development Corporation, Mission Economic Development Association, Mission Hiring Hall and Arriba Juntos. Since their inception, these organizations have worked to combat redlining practices by banks; develop affordable housing and improve the conditions of the existing housing stock; assist small businesses with loan packaging and business plan; and assist low-income residents with job preparation and skills development. Over the last three decades they have become institutions leading and supporting community development in the Mission.

While redevelopment efforts were abandoned, BART's construction still heavily impacted the area. Many businesses reported that their customer base dwindled when segments of the street were shut off to build a tunnel from 1968-1972. Coinciding with BART's construction, several businesses left the area—including Borden's Dairy, Hamm's Brewery, Foremost Dairy—speeding to the loss of working-class jobs.

While parts of the Mission, such as Liberty Hill and areas west of Mission did gentrify during the 1970s and 1980s, the district also became a hotbed of radicalism. Artists made the Mission their home, along with organizations such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Women's Building. Local Latino artists created the Galeria de la Raza and murals began to show up on nearly every street in the Mission. These incremental changes added to the neighborhood's vibrancy and character.

While the Mission District has gone through several waves of change, the late 1990s have been exceptional. The neighborhood has a host of assets—its central location, sunny weather, restaurants and clubs, excellent transit—that make it appealing to young affluent urban dwellers. The fast pace of growth fueled by the booming Silicon Valley, San Francisco's own technology-based economy, and the regional and citywide housing shortage, have driven up land values and rents.

From 1997 to 1998, 350 owner-move-in evictions were reported in the Mission District—the highest number in the city. This moment was marked by a new wave of tensions between moderate and middle class residents—many who had raised their families in the neighborhood and are part of a strong network of families, neighbors and merchants—and newer residents who enjoy the economic freedom to choose where they want to live.

The development of the past few years has primarily benefited affluent residents, as is evident in the high-end retail and housing prices. Many of the retail establishments, particularly the restaurants, are out of the working-class population’s financial range, and the one-room live-work lofts, which comprise the majority of the new housing that has been built, are too small for families. These developments have contributed little to the Mission District’s well-being as a neighborhood of working-class and immigrant families.

Witnessing the impacts of such rapid growth without adequate planning, several Mission-based non-profits and concerned residents organized in 1999 to develop strategies to encourage development without displacement. These groups, including Mission Housing Development Corporation, MEDA, People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER), St. Peter’s Housing Committee and Mission Agenda formed the Mission Anti-displacement Coalition (MAC). Their efforts include advocating for a neighborhood planning process, keeping abreast of development projects, and developing land use controls—such as moratoriums on live-work lofts, and only allowing retail instead of office space on the ground floor of mixed-use buildings.



Neighborhood “Caminata,” protest walk organized by the Mission Anti-displacement Coalition

The economic downturn of late 2000 and early 2001 has rapidly changed the fortunes of those who rented the live-work lofts and occupied the dot-com office spaces. Thus, aided by the efforts of numerous organizing and service groups, the Mission may be in a position to proactively plan its neighborhood. The Mission District can now begin to address its numerous challenges—overcrowded housing, relatively high crime rates, and dilapidated public spaces such as the BART plazas.

The Surrounding Neighborhood: Land Use and Character

The BART plazas form the intersection at 24th and Mission Streets. Both streets differ in character, but serve as important neighborhood corridors. Mission Street is a healthy commercial corridor that boasts a number of historically significant buildings, cultural institutions, and neighborhood commercial services. The buildings are typically three to four stories, with housing above retail, ranging from flats to apartments to single-room occupancy hotels. Many businesses, such as Dianda's, La Traviata, Sigel's, J.J. O'Connor Flower Shop and the Mission Market, have been

located on Mission Street for decades. On weekends it turns into a busy shopping center, but on weeknights it shuts down early. There are a few empty storefronts in each block, and perceptions of crime and lack of maintenance give Mission Street a dicey reputation, particularly at night.

Mission Street's shops cater to a multicultural clientele, including, since the 1980's and 1990's, a proliferation of Asian (mainly Chinese) produce, goods and restaurants. Twenty-fourth Street's commercial base, on the other hand, is distinctly Latino, drawing a regional market from the South Bay who shop mostly on weekends for specialty items in music, clothing and food. A variety of fresh produce stores, sidewalk markets, and *panaderias* and *fruterias* line the street along with taquerias and restaurants. Galeria de la

Raza, Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center, Brava Theater, Mission Educational Center are a handful of the community assets located on the street. The famous Mission murals adorn many of the buildings on 24th Street and on adjacent residential streets, particularly Balmy Alley. The narrow width of the street and street trees add to 24th Street's character.

While the BART plazas anchor these important corridors, the plazas fail to reflect the importance of this intersection, particularly in their design. The intersection is a major hub of activity: several transit lines converge here, the Mission District, Bernal Heights and Noe Valley all border the plazas, and it is the only public space within several blocks. Several significant civic uses are located within a few blocks of the plazas: the Mission Cultural Center, the Mission branch library, Horace Mann Middle School and several churches.



The Plazas as Transit Node: Services and Traffic Conflicts

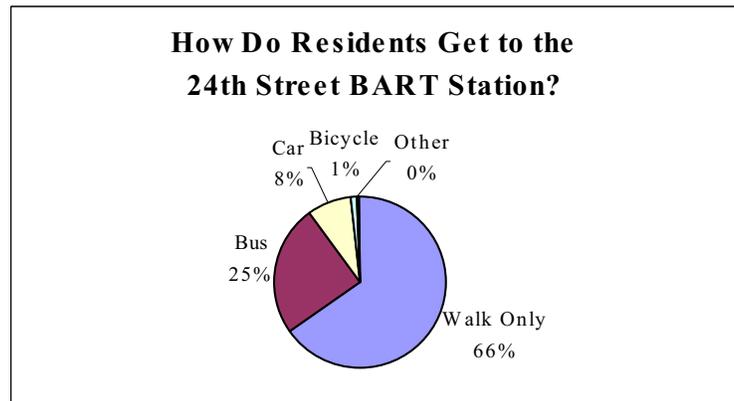
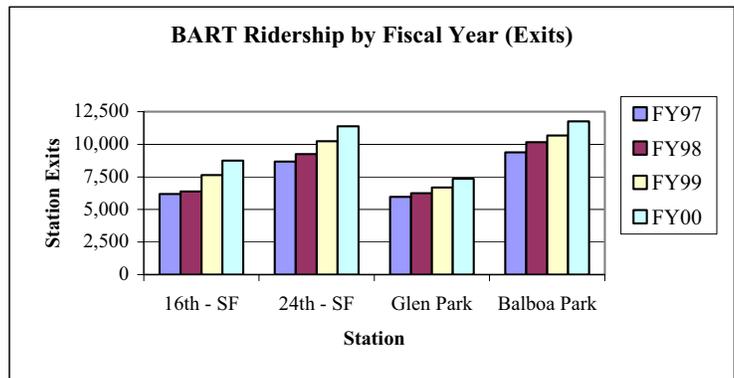
The plazas serve as a major transit node for commuters from six neighborhoods: the Mission, Bernal Heights, Noe Valley, the Castro, Potrero Hill and Diamond Heights. The plazas act as an entry point for workers from all over the Bay Area who are employed at several large institutions and industrial areas nearby or linked by Muni, particularly San Francisco General Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, the Produce District and the Central Waterfront. In addition to BART, five MUNI lines converge at the plazas. The 14, 14L, and 49 serve Mission Street, the 48 runs along 24th Street, and the 67 serves Bernal Heights. A shuttle also takes passengers to and from San Francisco General Hospital.

BART Use

Since 1998, the increase in ridership for the BART system has been staggering. For 24th Street station, ridership has increased by 23.1% (2,138 users). This trend is due more to socioeconomic factors than to physical infrastructure. New parking and little new housing has been built around the stations. The *San Jose Mercury News* reports that household size in the Bay Area has grown: “Bucking a national trend, the size of the typical Bay Area household increased over the last decade...the trend was particularly pronounced in working class communities” (“Bay Households Grow: Working-class Squeeze,” *San Jose Mercury News*). Instead, the regional housing shortage has drastically impacted the Mission: as housing prices have skyrocketed, extended families now live together and many singles are pairing up with roommates. This trend accounts at least in part for the increase in ridership. The BART extension to SFO and connection to Silicon Valley via direct Caltrain transfer (now under construction) emphasizes new commute opportunities and travel patterns using the plazas as a node.



Weekday origins of riders entering 24th Street BART Station



(Source: BART)

The rise in use also calls for investment beyond basic maintenance of the BART facilities and infrastructure. In a survey sampling 24th Street station users, 65 percent of users get to and from BART by walking and 25 percent by bus. Thus, improving the BART plazas will not only reshape them as the center of the neighborhood, but will enhance the environment for pedestrians and transit riders arriving at and departing from the BART stations.

Traffic Conflicts

Because the 24th

and Mission intersection serves as a major bus transportation node in the neighborhood, and is one of the busiest intersections in the district, it experiences a constantly high level of traffic conflicts. Although BART police report that the accident rate is not significantly higher than other intersections, traffic conflicts impact the safety of the intersection.



24th Street experiences some of the most serious traffic conflicts: the street is too narrow to accommodate bus stops, through lanes and street parking, and so bus and truck loading often back up passing traffic. The most striking conflicts are between buses and cars. Pick-ups and drop-offs often happen in the bus stop areas, preventing buses from pulling all the way to the curb.

Conflicts between loading trucks and buses are also apparent and frequent. With many retail stores around the plazas and inadequate official truck loading zones, service loading often takes place in the bus stop areas. Buses—especially trolley buses on Mission—have trouble pulling in to the curb while trucks are loading. These conflicts between buses, cars and trucks cause traffic to back up and force bus riders to step into vehicular traffic while boarding.

On the plazas, the lack of adequate bicycle facilities causes conflicts between parked bicycles and pedestrians. Bicycles are frequently locked to the fences, which interferes with pedestrian movement.

Because of the traffic congestion, the smooth flow of pedestrians from one plaza to another is often disrupted, which makes the plazas feeling isolated from each other. Despite their diagonal alignment, there is at best a weak physical and functional connection between the two.

The Plazas as Open Space: Site Inventory

The plazas also function as critical open space in the neighborhood, which is one of the most urbanized in San Francisco. The district boasts Dolores Park, one of the most popular city parks. Located four blocks from the BART plazas is Garfield Park, equipped with soccer fields, a playground and a swimming pool. Rather than a recreational space, the plazas serve a different function: they can be a meeting place, a place to sit while waiting for the bus, or a place to relax after a day of shopping. All of these activities take place now in the plazas despite the fact that their layout is cold and institutional. The plazas' design in no way reflects or supports the vibrancy of the Mission District.

Since their original construction in the late sixties, the BART plazas have undergone minor rehabilitations. At one point, fences were added, trees cut, and planters filled as a response to crime. This only added to the already unwelcoming feeling.

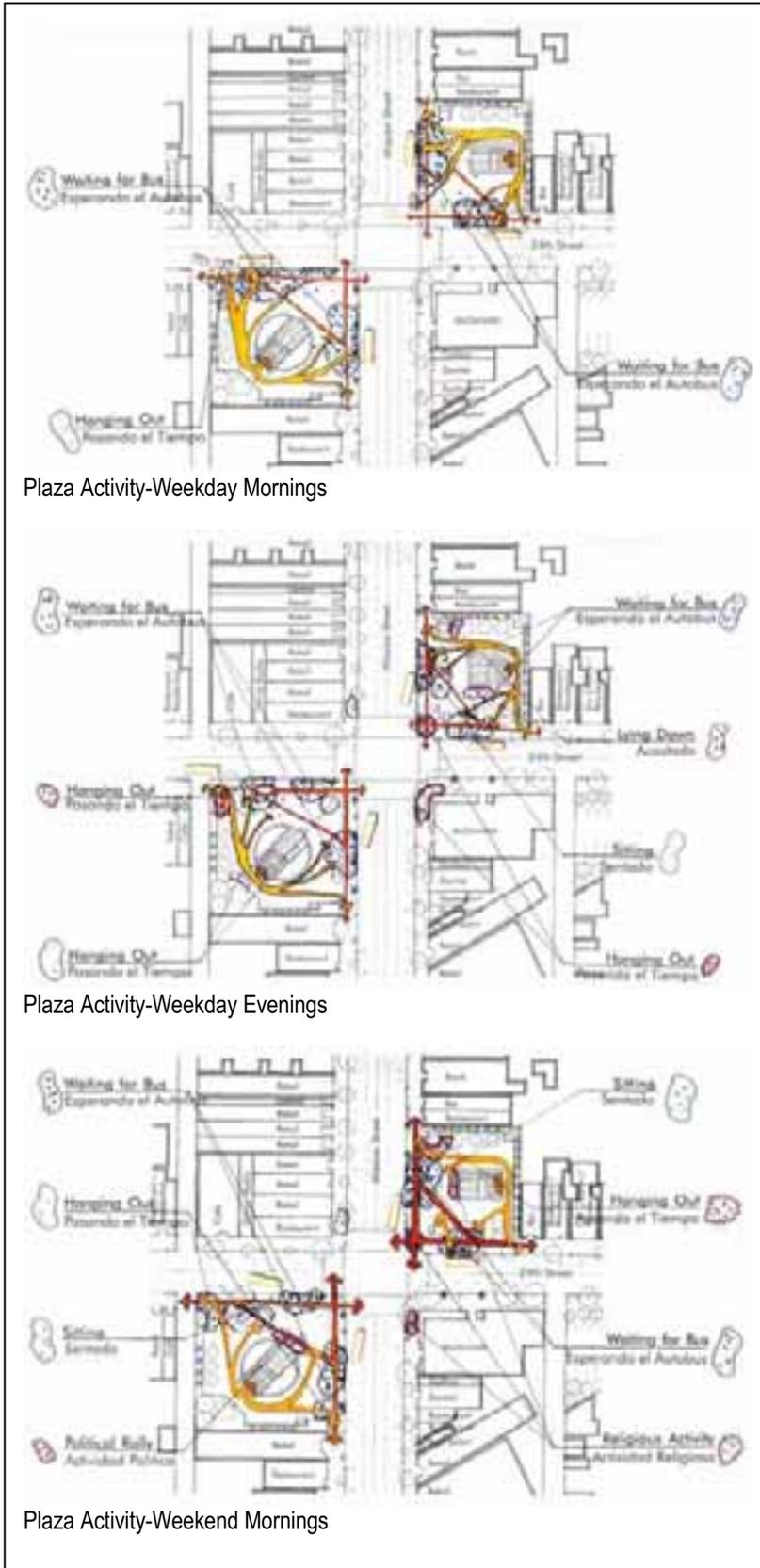
Presently, two sides of each plaza are exposed to 24th and Mission streets, while the other two sides of each are bordered by fences and buildings. Although some of the buildings display murals and commercial signs, most face the plazas with blank walls, and their activities do not spill onto the plazas. On the south plaza there is an alley situated on the west side, which is blocked off by a tall fence and small trees, and acts as a barrier between adjacent storefronts and the plaza.



The wells of the escalator and staircases are the principal elements that define the spatial structure of the plazas. The entries are surrounded by a low concrete wall and fences above, reaching a height of six feet. These tall walls and fences are one of the major elements that impede the ability to see across the plazas and contribute to the plaza users feeling unsafe, even in the daytime.

The other major amenities in the plazas include bus shelters, a public toilet, and a few square concrete benches. In addition to these elements, the plazas have mature palm and sycamore trees; however, they are not well pruned or maintained. Both plazas are paved with brick to the street curb. There is also a decorative blue-and-red sidewalk paving pattern for one block in both directions along Mission Street.

The Plazas as a Hub of Activities



Despite the plaza's mundane and institutional aesthetic, they are still a location for a range of activities. On any given day, they are packed with activities: from political campaigning and preaching to selling tamales and drinking forties. In the fall of 2000, Urban Ecology observed people's activity at and around the plazas during three different periods of time: weekday mornings from 7 to 9, weekday evenings from 5:30 to 7, and weekend middays from 11 to 1 (our work was observation only; no statistical data was collected). Since the plazas are used as both a transit hub and community open space, these three periods of time captured the breadth of activity. Urban Ecology focused on the pattern of activity and types of people as well as conflicts between different activities.

Weekday Mornings

Plaza activity is dominated by commuting and transit use. Many people transfer from BART to the buses or vice versa, and most of the pedestrian flow is into the BART station, rather than around the neighborhood.

Weekday Evenings

This time of day has the greatest overlap between commuter and social use of the plazas. The main social activities are: teenagers hanging out, day laborers waiting for rides or socializing on the northern plaza, homeless people hanging out, and small groups socializing on the southern plazas. In terms of transit use, large crowds of people are often waiting for the bus on both plazas, with a good number of them transferring from BART. Sometimes vendors—usually selling flowers—are on the plazas at this time as well.

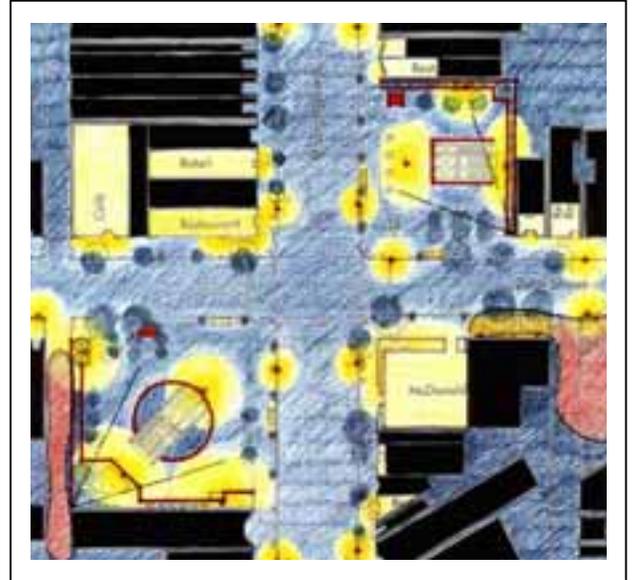
Weekend Midday

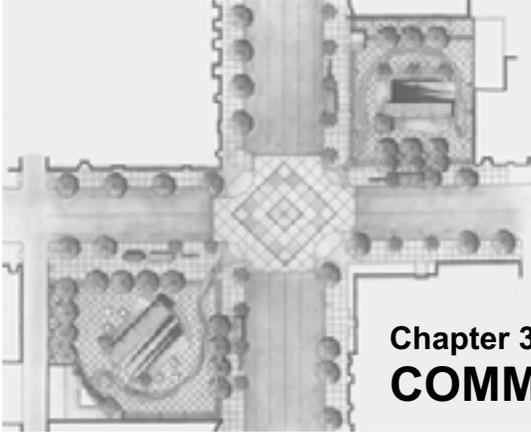
On weekends, the social aspect of the plazas dominates their use. Activities range from preaching to political activities to socializing. Groups generally segregate along ethnic and age lines. The benches are heavily used at this time. The transportation role of the plaza is reduced on the weekends, but a fair number of people still use BART and transfer from BART to the buses.

Nighttime Safety and Visibility

Once the sun goes down, the plazas take on a different mood and the activities there are sharply reduced. Many of the people involved in this process mentioned safety after dark as a major concern. The current visual barriers and lighting problems contribute to feeling unsafe. Lights are often obscured by trees, and poorly placed in relation to where people are using the plazas, resulting in areas that are relatively dark. Only a few of the surrounding stores are open late.

Indeed the community's perception of crime is affirmed by the amount of reported crime. The plazas fall into the D-454 policing district, the boundaries of which are 23rd to 25th Streets and Valencia Street to South Van Ness Avenue. In 2000, 231 incidences of crime were reported alone in D-454. This number is higher than the surrounding police districts (D-444, 453, 455 and 461), which averaged 148 in 2000.





Chapter 3 **COMMUNITY DESIGN PROCESS**

Workshop Process

The structure of the participatory planning process included three community workshops and an open house, which were held between November 2000 and May 2001. These workshops provided a forum for community input: participants discussed community goals, made design decisions about the plazas, and created an overall vision for the plazas. Attendance at these workshops ranged from twenty to sixty participants. The majority of the participants were residents, with a handful of local business owners. Government agency staff and a number of people who work at non-profits in the Mission also attended the workshops. Outreach was conducted by MEDA, and the workshops were planned and led by Urban Ecology.



First Community Workshop: Community Goals

On November 18, 2000 forty-three participants attended the first community workshop held at the Mission Cultural Center. The participants included 61% residents, 9% merchants and 30% other (includes people who work in the Mission as well as city and BART staff). At this workshop, community members drafted a list of design goals.

Second Community Workshop: Design Game

On January 27, 2001, sixty-two participants attended the second community workshop held at the Mission Cultural Center. The participants included 60% residents, 2% merchants and 34% other. At this

workshop, community members redesigned the plazas with the aid of a design game and created five plaza designs that formed the basis of the three design concepts later produced by Urban Ecology.

Internal Design Charrette

On February 23, 2001, Urban Ecology organized a small design charrette attended by twenty-five planners and urban designers, including Urban Ecology volunteers and staff from the Department of Public Works, the San Francisco Transportation Authority, the Department of Parking and Traffic, and the San Francisco Planning Department. The goal of the charrette was to develop the rough designs created at the second community workshop and assess their feasibility.

Third Community Workshop: Design Alternatives

On April 5, 2001, thirty-four participants attended the third community workshop held at the Mission Presbyterian Church. The participants included 69% residents, 6% merchants and 31% other. The workshop was held in English and Spanish with MEDA and Urban Ecology staff providing translation. Urban Ecology presented three design concepts and community members discussed which elements they preferred.



Open House: Final Conceptual Design

On May 31, 2001, twenty participants attended the open house at the Mission Education Center. Participants reviewed at the final conceptual design and asked clarifying questions.



Community Outreach

The planning and design project for the 24th Street BART plaza was conceived and carried out as a participatory design process. The plazas lie in the heart of the Mission community, and the organizations and government agencies leading the process both sought to improve their aesthetic qualities, and create a plaza design that would be highly functional for the thousands of people who use them daily. Thus, the general outreach, public workshops, and focus groups were structured to maximize public participation, and the final design incorporates many of the community's ideas.



The Mission Economic Development Association led the outreach portion of the project. Over the past few years, MEDA has broadened its economic development strategies and programs for the small businesses on Mission Street and around the 16th and 24th Street BART stations. After completing a study of the economic and housing development potential along Mission Street in 1999, MEDA established a Mission Corridor Project Office to implement several new programs there. MEDA conducts ongoing outreach to the businesses along the corridor, and also leads first-time homebuyers and small business development programs.

The outreach work about the 24th Street BART plaza planning and design process used the database of individuals, businesses, and organizations developed through the above programs. MEDA also sought to draw in individuals who come in regular contact with the plaza. Because the plazas have several functions—transit hub, community open space, and commercial heart—the range of people who use them is diverse. In addition, the intersection of 24th Street and Mission is a crossroads for three distinct neighborhoods: the Mission District (where the outreach efforts were concentrated), Bernal Heights, and Noe Valley.

For these reasons, we approached numerous groups about the plaza design process and encouraged their participation:

- Muni and BART riders who live and/or work near the plaza, using them as a transfer or a destination point
- Mission District residents within a ¼ mile radius of the 24th / Mission intersection
- Owners and staff of small businesses along Mission from 16th to 24th Streets
- Staff and members of local institutions, including schools, cultural organizations, and nonprofit organizations
- Leaders and members of neighborhood organizations in Noe Valley and Bernal Heights

Strategies.

MEDA conducted outreach using the following strategies one month prior to each workshop.

On the ground marketing. In order to reach the Mission District’s diverse population, we designed English and Spanish flyers about the three community workshops. Staff also walked along Mission Street, handed the flyers to business owners, and discussed the plaza design process with them. We also approached local community organizations from the Mission, Noe Valley, and Bernal Heights. Flyers were posted in the Mission Branch and Bernal Heights public libraries. Spanish translation was provided at all of the workshops.

Mass mailings. Postcards were mailed out as a tool to inform local merchants, residents, and community organizations about the plaza project. We used the database of participants from the 16th Street BART plaza design process, which took place in 1997-98, as a base for the mailing list. Attesting to the high level of local interest in the plazas, the mailing list for the 24th Street project began with 200 names in November 2000, and grew to 800 by the final presentation in May 2001.

Media. Bilingual media advisories were issued prior to each of the public workshops, and were sent out to the following neighborhood newspapers: *New Mission News*, *El Tecolote*, *Bernal Journal*, and *The Independent*. The community workshops were also announced in *Radio Unica*, a Latino radio station serving the Bay Area.

Internet and other outreach. To capture a broader audience, notices about the workshops were posted on Craigslist.org. Email announcements were sent to the Latino Advisory Committee and the Mission District Community email lists, each of which has approximately 80 subscribers.

Focus groups. As the process evolved, it became apparent that certain groups were not attending the public workshops. We organized several focus groups and smaller meetings to engage more stakeholders as the broader process continued:

- Bethal Tenants Association
- Café Venus
- Chinese Merchants Association
- Good Samaritan Tenants Association
- Greater Mission Rotary Club
- Mission Merchants Association
- Mission Street Vendors
- Precita Eyes
- San Francisco Youth Commission





Results

- A total of 43, 62 and 34 community members participated at each of the three workshops respectively.
- The database of interested individuals, which includes those who participated actively and others who simply wanted notification about the stages of the process, totaled 800 individuals by May 2001.
- Nine additional focus groups and smaller meetings were held.
- Coverage was obtained in the *New Mission News*, *El Tecolote*, and *Radio Unica*.



Analysis

A strong community presence was evident at each of the workshops, and many of the participants were frequent users of the plaza, and thus familiar with its challenges. At the same time, overall participation in the workshops was low. This is typical for workshops whose subject is a long-term planning and capital improvement project, and in the case of 24th Street, may have been influenced by some of the following factors.

Local politics. The rapid rise in real estate values that occurred in the Mission District with the economic boom from 1998 to the end of 2000 made national headlines. In neighborhoods throughout the Bay Area, the dot-com bubble suddenly brought businesses flush with venture capital seeking office space and employees with high incomes seeking apartments. Compounding the problem, San Francisco's historically low levels of housing development meant that very little new supply was available to accommodate the sudden influx of newcomers. Several of San Francisco's neighborhoods, including the Mission, are centrally located, enjoy good transit access, and have land available for development. These attributes and the influx of wealth naturally attracted the attention of property owners and developers. In the Mission, some landlords participated in a rising spiral of speculation in home sale prices and apartment rents, which resulted in the displacement of longtime residents, local businesses, and nonprofits that could no longer compete. The speed of the change was well documented—and sparked a number of local protests calling for a moratorium on development.

While issues of race and class have been part of San Francisco politics for decades, the local impact of the regional economic boom particularly heightened them in the Mission. In the planning and improvement of public spaces, these issues play out in debates about urban design, public art and representation, and the broad messages that the space intends to convey. Within the 24th Street plaza design process, the intent was to generate an aesthetic and functional design for the plaza, and thus we worked with participants more as *users* of the plazas than as representatives of particular groups with a political agenda. Thus, the low number of workshop participants may be partly due to the focus on land use and design, rather than broader political issues that spark activism.

Language. Many Mission residents speak Spanish and Chinese as their first language, and may have assumed that the workshops would take place solely in English. Spanish translation was provided at all of the workshops, and an all-Spanish break-out group was hosted at the second workshop. The language barriers may have kept some people away, but a level of comfort was established during the workshops themselves. This was aided by the fact that a number of MEDA, UE, and BART staff are bilingual, and mixed freely with the workshop participants.

Youth groups. Representatives of youth organizations communicated to the project team that targeted focus groups are a more effective means of obtaining youth input and participation than expecting their participation in general meetings.

Small business owners. Business owners, no matter how informed or involved, cannot sustain ongoing participation in the variety of community meetings that occur in an active community like the Mission. Instead, input from small businesses was obtained through one-on-one interviews and setting aside time on the agendas of existing community groups.

Media. The media’s response to press releases about community meetings was not strong. To attract media about the construction phases of the project, BART may consider issuing press releases; the BART logo gains more media recognition than those of non-profit partners.

Workshop format. The project team debated whether the public workshop format is one that succeeds in drawing in individuals who have never experienced a community planning workshop or are otherwise marginalized from the broader political culture of the Mission District. This is why Urban Ecology was chosen to be in charge of the planning and design portion of the project; the organization has experience conducting community planning workshops about diverse land-use topics—plazas, parks, streets, housing, transportation, among others—and has worked in communities with individuals in multiple languages and diverse backgrounds. Likewise, MEDA was chosen for the outreach because it is a well-known Mission institution.

In evaluation forms, no complaints were written about an inability to participate in the dialogue at the workshops. However, we recognize that people who feel unknowledgeable about planning and land use issues may have decided not to attend the workshops at all. Some Mission advocacy groups, such as PODER, conduct house meetings to approach non-English-speaking people and educate them about their political agenda. MEDA spread the word about the project through its meetings with individual groups, but these meetings focused on broader issues and did





not address the specific land use and design questions that were raised at the workshops. Thus, focus groups or house meetings with a more specific land use agenda may be considered for future planning projects.

Conclusions

Ironically, this process began in September 2000, at the height of the economic boom and the political controversy it engendered, and finished in May 2001, when the dot-com bubble had burst, and office vacancy rates were on the rise and housing prices had begun to drop. Throughout the boom and bust cycle, the 24th Street plaza continued to function as a transit hub, community open space, and commercial heart. Like any city in California, San Francisco will continue to experience economic cycles, and the point of urban planning and design is to engage people in an ongoing dialogue about housing, public space, transportation, plazas, parks, and the other physical structures that knit our communities together.



In conclusion, it was challenging to generate a high level of community participation in the design of the plazas. As described in the following sections, however, the project team was able to incorporate an aesthetic in the design that reflects the spirit of the Mission and a functionality that will allow the plazas to more fully serve their roles.

Community Goals

At the first community workshop, Urban Ecology presented the current conditions of the plazas with a set of analysis maps addressing land use, transportation, nighttime visibility and plaza activities. Participants convened into smaller groups and discussed their experiences with the plazas: how they use the plaza; their likes and dislikes about them; which activities they want deterred and what activities they want to introduce; and lastly, their vision for the plazas.

Community members discussed how the plazas functioned in their neighborhood and the values they held for their public spaces.

- As important *transit hubs* in the district, the plazas are a part of people's daily commute from the Mission, Noe Valley, and Bernal Heights.
- As the major *public space* in the vicinity, the plazas provide much-needed openness and greenery, and should be kept beautiful, well-maintained, and safe.
- As inclusive centers of *community activity*, the plazas should support informal gathering, music, and vending, and foster community ownership through cultural events, rallies, and the presence of local artists and craftsmen.
- As a *civic presence* and location for rallies, performances, and artists' work, the plazas symbolize the neighborhood's political and artistic culture.
- The plaza redesigns can also serve as catalysts for other *neighborhood improvements*, to make the area safer, more vibrant, and more livable.



In the breakout sessions, participants discussed the challenges the plazas present in terms of safety, pedestrian safety, maintenance and design. They also listed a number of ideas they would like to see in the redesign of the plazas. They included ways of making the plazas safer, more lively, more of a civic place, and better connected to their neighborhood. In the following pages we will present summaries of the community's input in each of these areas. Four community goals were distilled from this initial discussion, as well as subsequent workshops and focus groups. These goals, which have guided the design process, can be found on page 28.



Bart Access & Circulation



Street Edges

Goal 1: The plazas should be safe and comfortable for all.

There was an overriding consensus that the plazas should feel safe: they should have a sense of openness and clear sight lines, be comfortable to walk through, be well-lit, and be free of unwelcoming fortress-like elements. As the major transportation hub for three neighborhoods, there were often-repeated concerns about balancing access to transportation with social needs. Major questions included how to get in and out of the BART platform, how the plazas relate to the surrounding streets, to adjoining properties (the adjacent buildings and the alley), and how they relate to each other across the intersection. The high costs of moving the escalators, adding new elevators, and/or building canopies or other large structures represented some of the major constraints on design.

- **Visibility and Nighttime Use:** Remove visual barriers, including perimeter fences, high fences around the stair opening, perimeter, and vent areas; deal with isolated corners behind the dumpster, elevator, and news vendor stall; consider moving bathroom to interior of plaza (note cost constraints); remove fences and raised planters to create more space; consider more transparent design for fences and guardrails; provide lighting at all dark corners; create elements that light up at night such as a kiosk or canopy; and encourage longer BART hours and safe nighttime activities.
- **Circulation and BART Access:** Provide clear paths to the BART entries; resolve conflicts between gathering places and circulation; consider translucent canopies over stairs and escalators (slippery stairs are unsafe, protect the escalators from breaking down; any roof should keep clear sight lines to buses); consider second elevator at the South plaza; consider commuter services such as a booth for BART tickets and transfers; accommodate bicycles on downstairs platform as at 16th Street station.
- **Street Edges and Transit Access:** Accommodate drop-off for buses, cars, and taxis; accommodate those waiting for Muni busses and the UCSF shuttle; consider bus bulb sidewalk extension; expand the bus shelters and create custom shelters to tie in with the plaza's new design; show digital bus/BART information; address conflicts between people waiting and circulation along sidewalks by widening sidewalk areas and removing obstacles; consider removing fences and raised planters at alley edge; consider corner sidewalk extensions and/or a "scramble" pedestrian signal (allows right hand turns for cars without pedestrians in the way); visually connect the two plazas with raised intersection paving or pavement design (note the existing brick intersection paving).

Goal 2: The plazas should be a beautiful oasis in the neighborhood.

Workshop participants viewed the plazas as the major public space in the vicinity, and as an open space for light and air. The plazas should become a beautiful place for the neighborhood: they should provide healthy open space, with well-designed and durable elements, and with robust trees. Currently the South plaza tends to feel safer, sunnier, and more used; the tight exit to the wall on the North plaza is more intimidating, though it has a lively corner. Many participants suggested that the plazas could have the feel of Latin American plaza or *zócalo*.

- **Open Space and Sunlight:** Central entry disrupts open space and circulation, and narrow space at top of escalators opens onto a dead end; consider changing the orientation of the escalators to create better circulation, visibility and open space (this is a major cost constraint); consider reducing size of stair openings to create more open space (less expensive to reduce width than to span area above the stairs); maintain sunlight on the plazas.
- **Materials and Craftsmanship:** Materials are currently a monotonous “sea of brick;” change “jail bar” fence design, planters with sharp rocks, and cold concrete “benches”; make the plazas more inviting by using durable and beautiful materials for paving and street furniture that will be respected; seating can include metal or mosaic benches, stepped seating, and movable seating and tables; note paving, grillwork, seating, structures, and mural walls as potential for using local artists; incorporate users (gang kids, youth, etc.) in design and building.
- **Landscaping:** Remove badly-pruned trees; consider relationship of trees to gathering spaces, circulation, and sunlight; trees should be a substantial presence with a tall canopy for shade, but shouldn’t interfere with lighting; plant sturdy mature trees and insure that they will be well-pruned; consider palms for lighting and low maintenance; consider flower planters, trellises, topiaries, or a raised lawn area along the border (note considerations regarding hiding drugs in plants).
- **Structures and Shelters:** Consider canopy over stairs and escalator (traditional style, or lightweight ten structure); consider custom bus shelters (as on 19th Avenue); elevator awnings; vendor stall designs.



Open Space



Seating



Community Events



Vendors

Goal 3: The plazas should welcome everyone in the community.

Participants agreed that the plazas are a place that should be comfortable for all people: they should foster social interaction, be a safe hangout location, a family plaza, a place for informal music, checkers and chess, a family plaza. They should also foster a sense of community ownership, a place where neighbors come together for civic events that symbolize and strengthen the neighborhood and which celebrate local culture. In general, community members agreed that the plazas should balance the needs of both community members and commuters while providing plenty of seating, gathering places, space for performers and neighborhood vendors.

- **Gathering Places for Different Users:** Consider conflicts that might occur between different users: café-types socializing, skateboarders, gang kids, day laborers, and older men drinking, in order to ensure an inclusive space where everyone feels comfortable; create spaces for different groups, including passive (quiet sitting areas) and active (more public) places; consider amenities for different kinds of users, including permanent benches, café seating, chess tables, vendor stalls, performing areas, planter edges, etc; keep seating away from bathrooms, don't use concrete.
- **Performance Space:** Design the plazas to foster community “ownership,” including civic events and cultural expression; consider different types of activities, including political speakers, preachers, musicians, break-dancing, skate-boarding, and community celebrations (Aztec Dancers, *Virgen de Guadalupe* procession, *Carnaval*); create spaces for performers, perhaps sitting steps, a raised stage or flat performing area (consider accessibility; would a formal stage take away from other activities?).
- **Vending:** Consider present use by informal vendors such as the flower and tamale sellers at the top of the stairs, the ice cream carts, the Andean music and clothes vendors, and the newspaper kiosk on the North plaza; consider utility hookups (water, electricity, sewage) for movable carts; consider on-site storage for vendor carts; consider permanent vendor stalls that open up (as in the Hismen Hi Nu housing development in Fruitvale); consider space for a weekend marketplace; important issues include encouraging informal vending versus creating a formal vendor program or weekend market to support local cottage industries and micro-enterprises.
- **Adjacent Spaces:** Consider how the plazas relate to the alley and built edges; links to adjacent buildings provide “eyes on the street;” design for the possibility of future openings to adjacent buildings, including doors and windows; encourage commercial activity along plaza edge; consider extending plaza paving into Osage Alley.

Goal 4: The plazas should celebrate the Mission’s history and culture.

As a symbol of the Mission District neighborhood, the plazas should have a unique local identity. They should reflect the neighborhood’s architecture, history, local culture, as well as the work of local artists and craftspeople. Participants discussed at length how people would remember the plazas, and how the community might see itself reflected in the design of the new plazas.

- **Design elements:** Provide elements on the plaza as focal points for the neighborhood; design elements could reflect the colorful signs and mural patterns along 24th Street, or they could reflect the Art Deco style of the old Mission Street theater marquees.
- **Local craftsmanship:** Metalwork, paving, and other functional elements could be designed and made by local craftspeople, and could represent the history and culture of the Mission District; this could include Precita Eye’s 95-foot long mosaic serpent paving; larger structures such as bus shelters, a canopy, or vendor kiosks could reflect nearby architecture or be designed by local artists.
- **Public Art:** Surfaces could include displays for a community board or rotating art, with places for announcements, information about BART and bus schedules, a map of neighborhood, or a decorative clock; consider permanent vs. changeable art, and how to incorporate local crafts as an integral part of every aspect of the design; program activities that reinforce local culture and pride;.



Adjacent Uses



Neighborhood Context

Neighborhood context. Finally, the plazas were seen as part of a larger community, that has remained vibrant despite experiencing both disinvestment and gentrification. Suggestions about neighboring uses were recorded separately. In general, people felt that the plazas needed to be well-connected to the neighborhood, and to the restaurants and entertainment that serve the community. However, community members worried that improvements to the plazas might encourage further gentrification and displacement of existing businesses and residents.

- **Safety and maintenance:** Reduce criminal activities along the street and on the 24th Street parking lot; encourage neighborhood watch “barrio walks” along 24th Street; improve landscape maintenance and trash pickup.
- **Neighboring uses:** Create planning incentives for positive development of adjacent parcels in order to increase street safety and vitality; encourage more density and affordable housing, for example at the one-story McDonald’s site and at the parking lots on 24th Street; protect existing dance and retail spaces and nighttime entertainment that serves local residents, and discourage office uses that “shut down” at night.

Summary of Community Goals / Metas de la Comunidad



Goal 1: The plazas should be safe and comfortable for all.

Las plazas deben ser seguras y agradables para todos

- Visibility and lighting / *Visibilidad e iluminación*
- Simple safe circulation / *Circulación sencilla y segura*
- Safer pedestrian crossings / *Cruces más seguros*
- Increased shelter at bus stops and entries / *Protección en las paradas de buses y entradas*



Goal 2: The plazas should be a beautiful oasis in the neighborhood.

Las plazas deben ser un oasis hermoso en el vecindario

- Sense of openness and sunlight / *Espacios abiertos y soleados*
- Sturdy robust trees / *Arboles robustos*
- Well-designed durable elements / *Elementos durables*
- Opportunities for local craftspeople / *Artesanos locales*



Goal 3: The plazas should welcome everyone in the community.

Las plazas serán un lugar para todos en la comunidad

- Gathering places for diverse users / *Para diversos grupos*
- Space for performances / *Espacio para celebraciones*
- Neighborhood vendors / *Vendedores ambulantes*
- Encourage adjacent stores to open onto the plazas / *Apoyar a tiendas que quieran abrir hacia las plazas*



Goal 4: The plazas should celebrate the Mission's history and culture.

Las plazas celebrarán la historia y cultura de la Misión

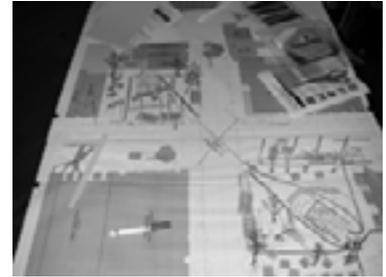
- Bright colors and cultural motifs of 24th Street / *Los colores vibrantes y elementos culturales de la Calle 24*
- Paving, seating, and metalwork by Mission artists / *Pavimentos, y trabajo de metal por artistas de la Misión*
- Improvements should help local neighborhood businesses / *Las mejoras de las plazas deben ayudar a negocios locales*

Design Recommendations

Neighborhood Vision

For the second community workshop, Urban Ecology created a participatory design game. Before the design portion of the workshop, Urban Ecology presented a slide show of different kinds of public spaces. Participants were asked to develop a vision of the plazas in their neighborhood, to think about the feeling evoked by their own particular vision, and about the kind of activities that might go on there. The idea was to have community members think about how the design, in terms of the layout of the plazas and the individual elements, serves to create this vision. Some ideas mentioned:

- A traditional Latin American *zócalo*
- A shady place for café seating
- A Paris-style subway entrance with well-crafted curvilinear metalwork
- A loud vibrant space full of vendors, street performers, etc.
- A backdrop for revolving arts, video projection, etc.
- A palm-lined formal civic space
- A space shaped by brightly colored walls suggesting Mexican architecture



Design Game

During the design workshop participants were asked to study the site's existing conditions and—particularly at the 24th Street plazas—the several public purposes that it serves. They then recommended specific physical and natural elements to improve it. Urban Ecology's design games are facilitated by staff and volunteer planners, landscape architects, and architects, who are able to explain the site's physical constraints and work with community members to bring the group's creativity to the site. In the breakout sessions participants began by discussing ideas for a general vision for the plaza.

- “What kind of a feeling do you want to create?”
- “What activities might go on there?”
- “What images come to mind?”

Participants worked in break-out groups with a set of cut-out paper icons representing seating, bus shelters, landscaping, stage, canopies, checkers and chess tables, vendor stalls and mosaics, as well as three-dimensional trees icons. Using the icons, markers, and construction paper, participants analyzed the layout of the plaza on a base map that highlighted constraints of the project—the escalators, vent, public toilet and elevator location. Additional comments were also recorded and sketches made on the base maps. Each of the five breakout groups developed a rough schematic design on the base map, showing major layout decisions in markers and placement of design elements with the icons and 3D pieces. At the end of the session participants were asked to revisit their original visions. “Looking back on your design, what are your priorities – the things you

really want to see get built?” Each design demonstrated a consensus by the group of a vision and a feel of what they would like to see in the plazas. While each design was unique and addressed the plazas’ challenges differently, they shaped certain commonalities.

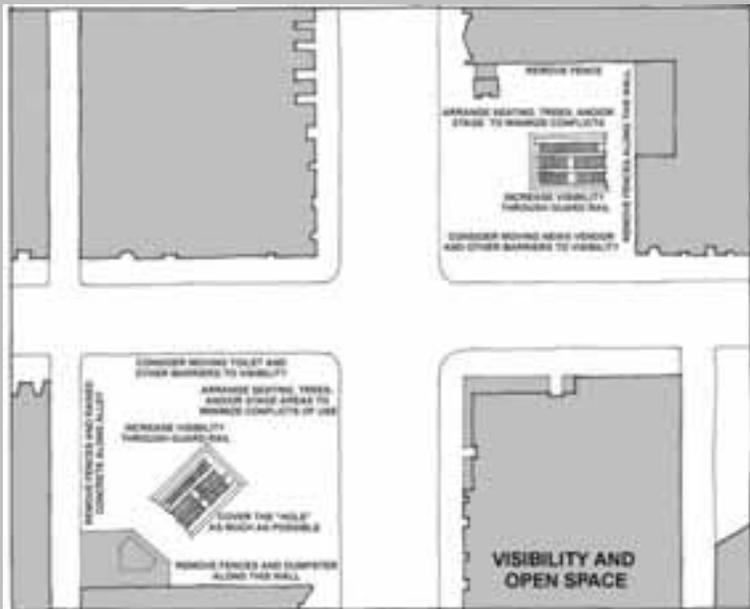
Technical Design Charrette

These preliminary design visions were used as the basis for developing alternative designs in a smaller design working group hosted by Urban Ecology for the different agencies involved in the planning process. The 24th Street plazas’ unique status as a transit hub, public space, and commercial hub means that multiple agencies must participate in any improvements. For this reason, Urban Ecology hosted a technical design charrette with San Francisco’s Planning Department, Transportation Authority, Departments of Public Works and of Parking and Traffic, Muni, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and BART Police, as well as BART Station Area Planning and their consultants, architects Carter & Burgess, urban designer Tom Richmond Associates, and cost estimator Martin Lee. Staff from the San Francisco Arts Commission and from Precita Eyes Mural Center also participated.

Over the course of one morning participants studied the range of design possibilities for the intersection, including a pedestrian scramble, bus bulbs and special paving. We explored a range of styles for the canopy covering the station entrances: a full canopy and an awning. Lastly, we examined opening the adjacent buildings onto the plaza as well as providing vendor facilities. Urban Ecology blended these discussions with the work done by community members to create the three design alternatives produced for the third community workshop.

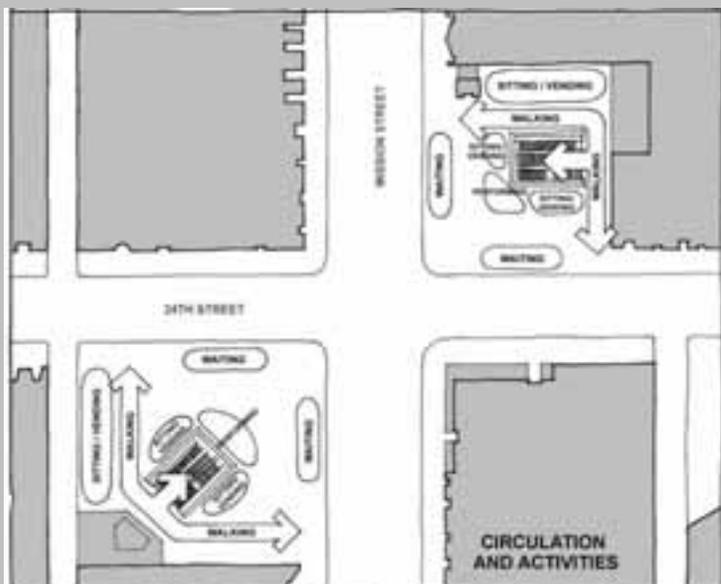
VISIBILITY AND OPEN SPACE

All participants suggested removing the fences and other barriers to visibility, and reducing the size of the stairwell holes in order to increase the open space potential of the plazas.



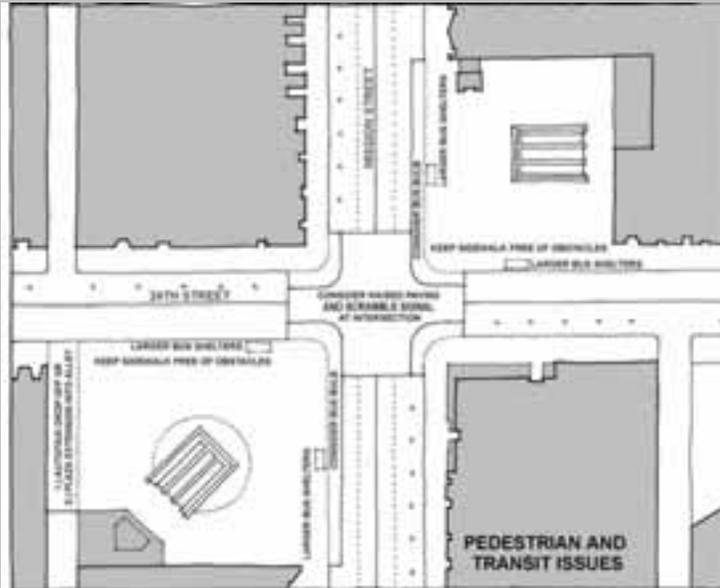
CIRCULATION AND ACTIVITIES

These are the major activity zones as identified by participants in the workshop, and suggest the issues that need to be resolved between circulation and the location of amenities such as trees, benches, movable seating, vendors, and performers. All participants suggested increasing plaza activities and amenities including benches, movable seating, vendors, and gathering spaces. Activities, such as a preaching and performing, should not conflict with circulation.



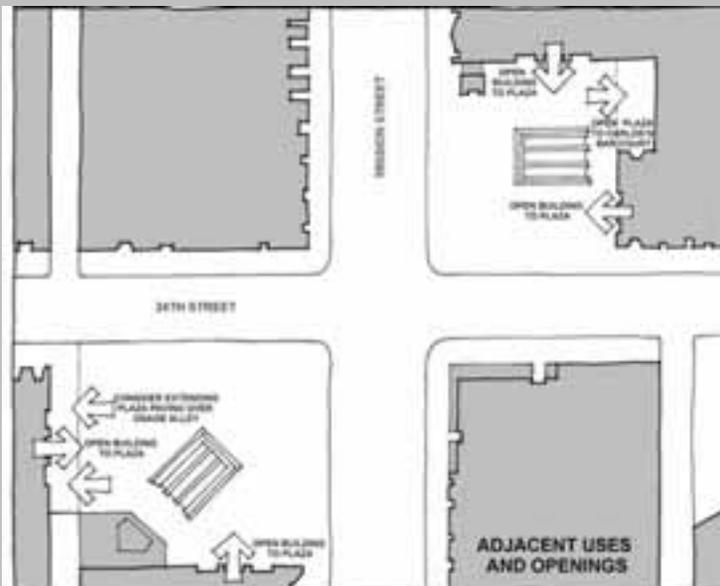
PEDESTRIAN AND TRANSIT ISSUES

Workshop participants nearly universally requested larger, more comfortable bus shelters. Some groups considered enlarging the sidewalk area in the bus zones or at the corners, creating “bulbouts.” Other groups considered extending the paving across the intersection and proposed a “scramble signal” allowing pedestrians to cross diagonally. Osage Alley was alternately suggested as a taxi/auto drop-off area, or as an extension of the plaza, perhaps allowing access only to emergency vehicles.



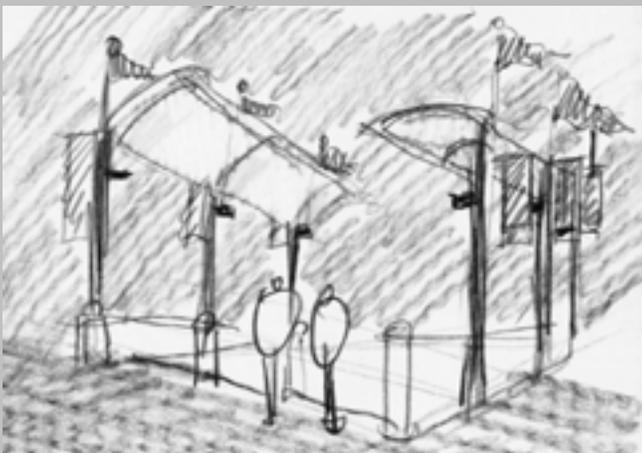
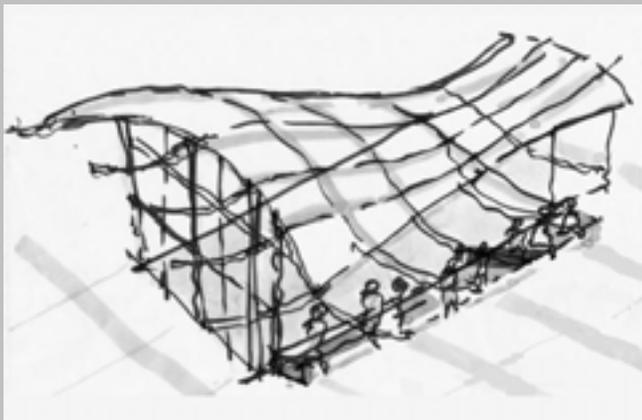
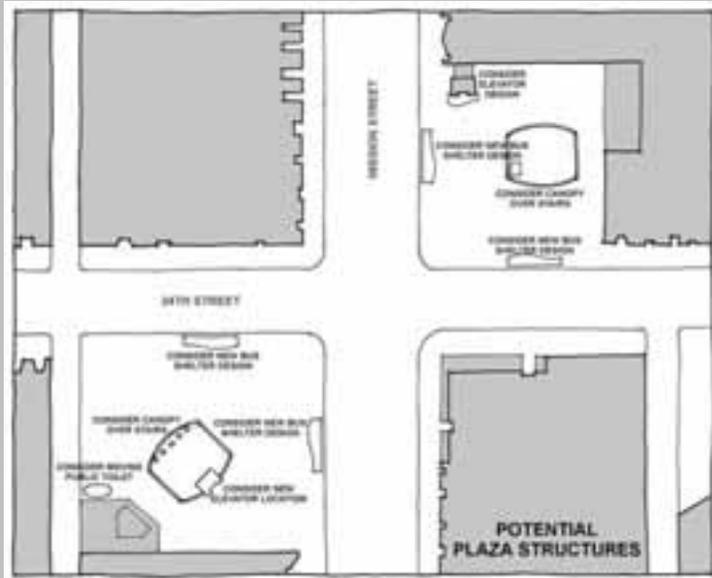
ADJACENT USES AND OPENINGS

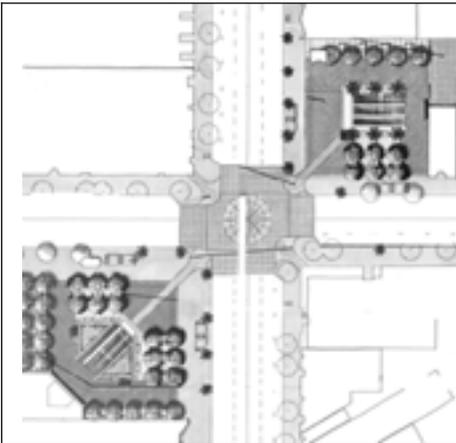
The plazas might open onto adjacent buildings and streets, extending the plaza use into Osage Alley, opening onto Carlos's Bar courtyard, or opening to cafes and retail in the adjacent buildings.



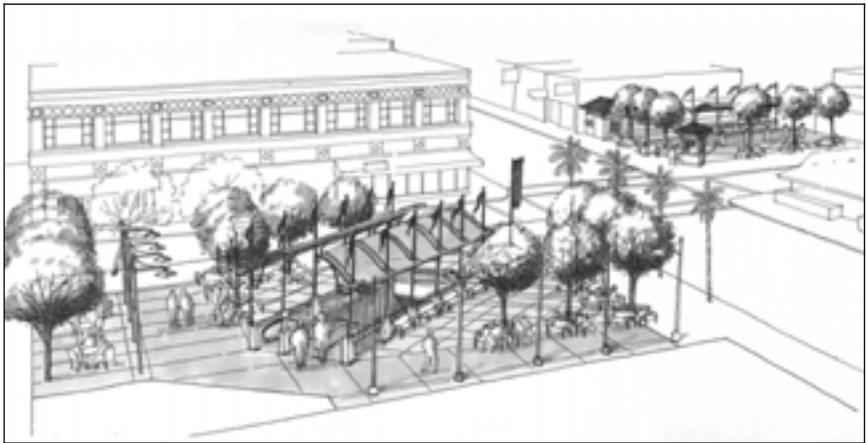
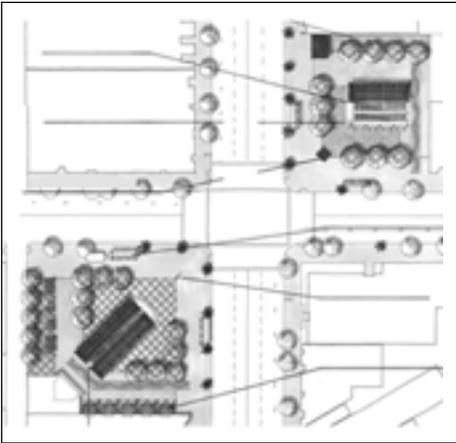
POTENTIAL PLAZA STRUCTURES

This map presents some of the grander suggestions made in the workshop. This includes large structures such as canopies above the escalator exit, larger bus shelters, and a stage. Other suggestions included moving the bathroom away from the sidewalk and adding a second elevator in the Southwest Plaza.

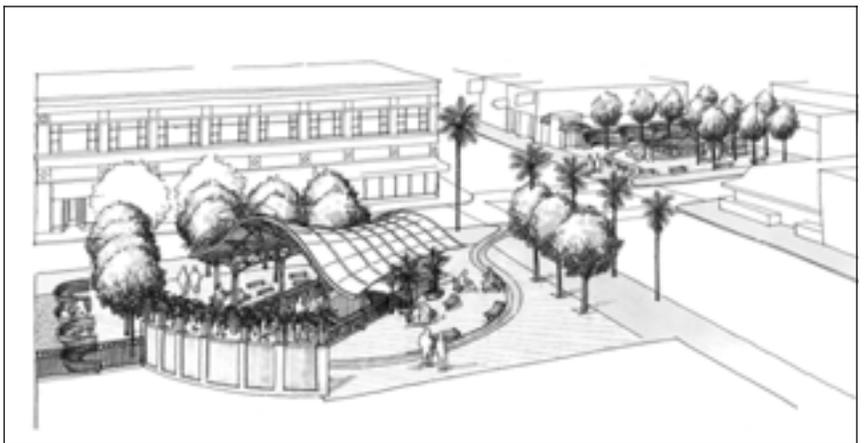
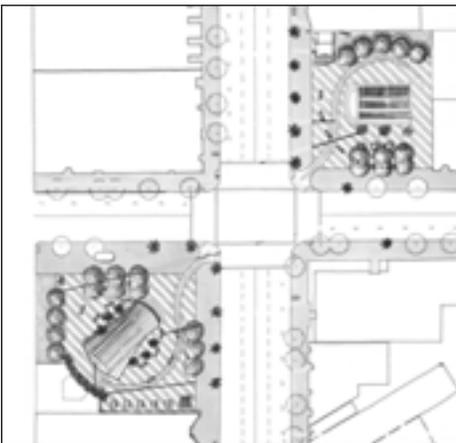




Alternative A: "The Urban Park"



Alternative B: "The Canopies"



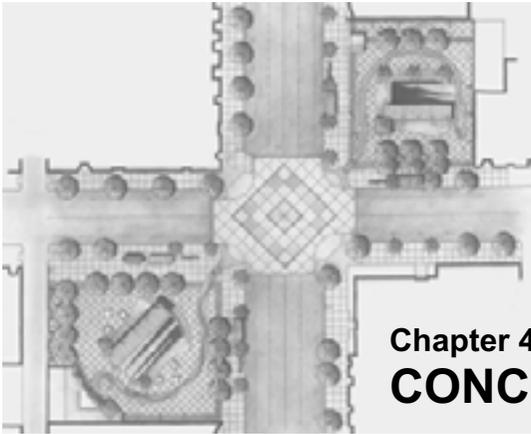
Alternative C: "The Curves"

Design Alternatives

At the third workshop, Urban Ecology presented three alternative designs. Following the list of goals and possible design responses that emerged from community input in the first two workshops, Urban Ecology developed three design alternatives that reflect different approaches to addressing the community goals. All of the alternatives seek to improve visibility by removing the fencing and circular walls, and introduce new activities and amenities such as vending and more seating that does not impede circulation.

- Alternative A: “The Urban Park” emphasizes the plazas’ potential as open space, resolving issues between circulation and amenities such as trees, benches, movable seating, vendors, and performers. It includes increased seating and trees. It also suggests extending the raised paving into the intersection, designing bus bulbs and corner bulbouts, and including a pedestrian scramble signal.
- Alternative B: “The Canopies” emphasizes some of the large structures that have been suggested by community members, including an awning-like canopy above the escalator exit, larger bus shelters, a stage area, and permanent vendor stalls. and openings onto the plaza. It also explores how the plazas might open onto adjacent buildings, extending the plaza use into Osage Alley, opening onto Carlos’s Bar courtyard, and suggesting openings from adjacent buildings.
- Alternative C: “The Curves” is characterized by curving decorative paving, curved mosaic seats, and a full canopy.

Community members selected desired elements from all three alternatives. A general consensus emerged around the curved design elements, fewer trees, space for informal vendors and performances, and the mosaic seating. A canopy, if one was to be built, should not be too heavy or overbearing.



Chapter 4 **CONCEPTUAL DESIGN**

Design Overview

The final conceptual design was presented at the open house in May 2001. The rehabilitation of the plazas begins by removing the major visual and physical barriers: the double line of fences, tall railings, and concrete planters. The surface area of the south plaza is enlarged by shrinking the large round “hole” around the BART stair entries. Finally, the nondescript elements—the concrete cubes, trash boxes, and monotonous paving—are



View of the north Plaza from Mission Street (bus shelter in foreground is not shown for clarity)

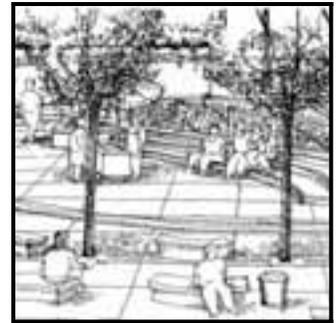


View of south plaza from Mission Street (bus shelter in foreground not shown for clarity)

removed and replaced with more functional, beautiful, and colorful amenities.

The plaza is characterized by colorful artist-designed elements, including a mosaic tile serpent winding through the paving, curved mosaic benches and sitting steps, and metal railings in Mexican *papel picado* patterns around the entries. Cantilevered translucent canopies provide shelter over the escalators, and new, larger bus shelters protect the many people who wait along the sidewalks. News kiosks and utility hookups encourage vendor activities on the plaza. Finally, corner sidewalk extensions and a “scramble” crosswalk signal protect pedestrians.

A pair of translucent canopies over each escalator will define the atmosphere of the plazas. A classic news kiosk will provide a human presence and a visual anchor. The work of Mission artists will be visible throughout: in the metalwork of the railings, tree grates, and ornamental brackets of the canopies; in the mosaics in the paving, benches, and sitting steps; and in the murals that adorn the elevator building and kiosks. Additionally, while it is hoped that in the future the adjoining buildings will open onto the plazas, presently these may provide canvases for murals.





Mosaic paving designs by Precita Eyes
Pavimento en mosaico por Precita Eyes

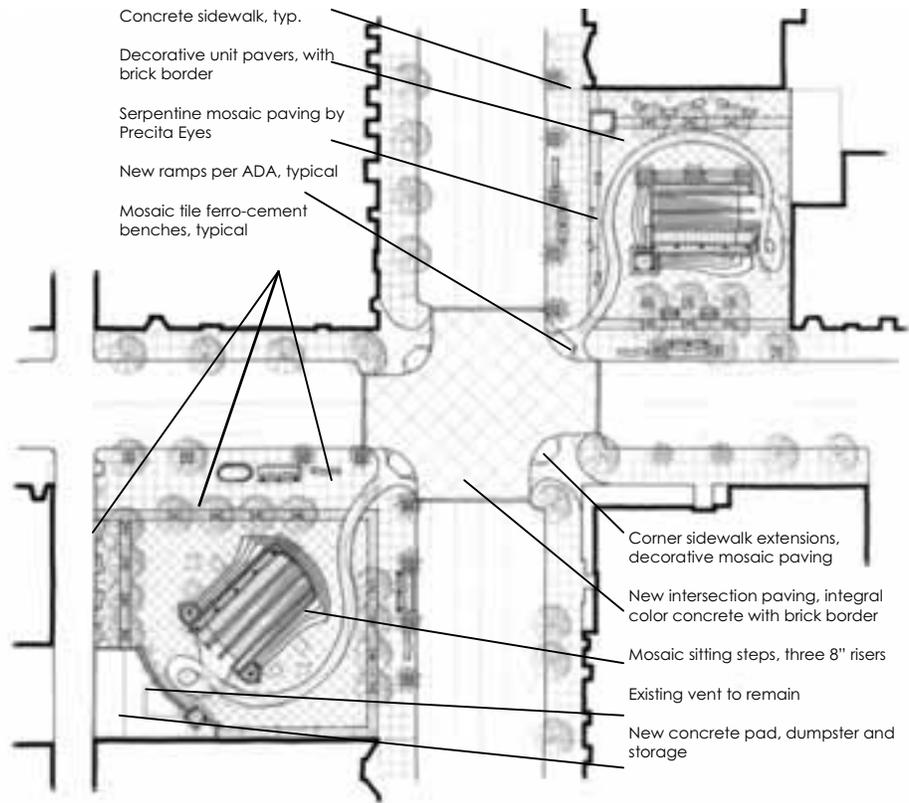


Examples of mosaic benches by artists
Ejemplos de asientos en mosaico



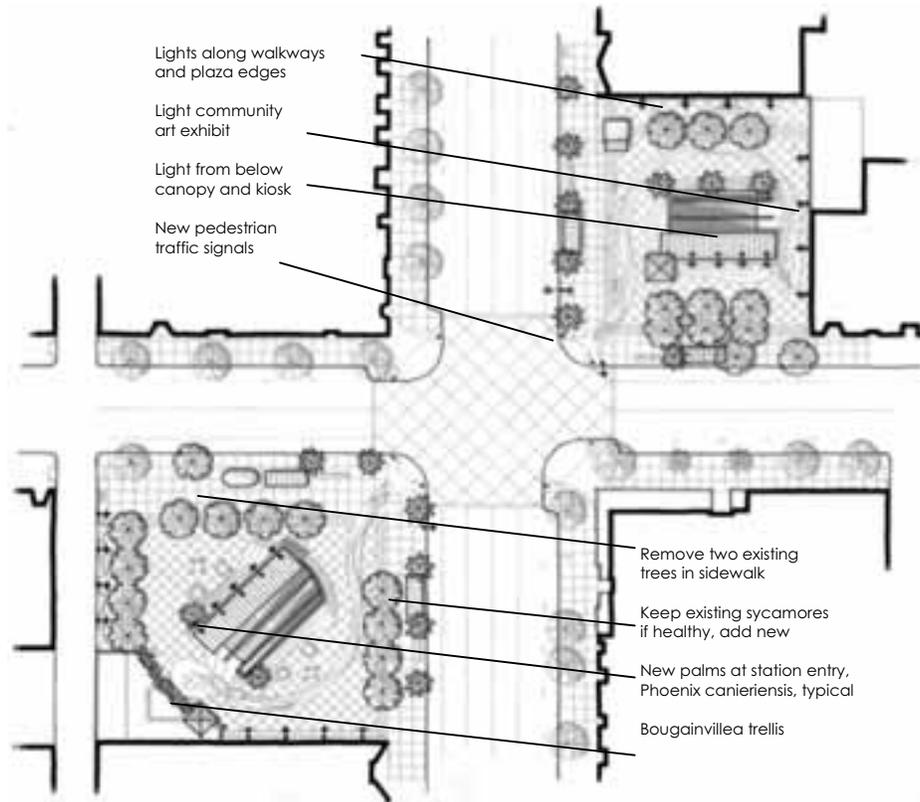
Sitting Steps / Stage (Montgomery BART)
Escalones para sentarse o para espectáculos

Paving and Seating



The plaza paving is pulled back from the property line, and marked off by traditional brick pavers, to create a larger zone for the sidewalk. Urban Ecology worked closely with artists from Precita Eyes Mural Center to incorporate mural and mosaic elements into the design. Two mosaic serpents with Mayan motifs, which are already under construction, became a centerpiece of the paving design, tying the two plazas together. The seating will be curved ferro-cement concrete forms, covered in mosaic patterns to match the serpent paving. The edges around the entries into the BART platforms are surrounded by low sitting steps, also in mosaic patterns. The edges will be protected from skateboards with metal nosings. Outside BART's property line, the design recommends creating corner sidewalk extensions as shown to decrease the distance for pedestrians crossing at both Mission and 24th Streets. A pedestrian scramble signal creates a phase for pedestrians only, so that pedestrians can cross diagonally without interference from car traffic. While this signal would not match the timed lights on Mission Street, and any such changes would require further studies by Department of Parking and Traffic, the signal adds significant pedestrian benefits. The design also recommends new paving across the intersection to tie the plazas together and to emphasize the diagonal crossing. All ramps (at the intersection and at the alley) would have to meet ADA standards.

Trees and Lighting



Trellis to be designed by local artisans
Enrejado por artesanos locales



London Plane Trees (Sycamores)
Sicòmoros



Street lamps (metalwork by artists)
Lámparas (con arte de metal)

A major component of the design is the addition of new lighting throughout the plazas. In particular, lights will be located along the edges of the plaza where the major circulation routes lead to and from the BART entries. Lights will accent the community art exhibit, the news kiosk cupola and the translucent canopies, creating a strong nighttime presence.

The sycamore tress will be maintained in the general configuration that exists, replacing unhealthy trees as needed. Trees will be removed from the sidewalk circulation area near the pay toilet in the south plaza, and trees will be added to complete a border around the plazas. Phoenix palms will accent the BART stair entries on both plazas. Finally, a bougainvillea growing along a trellis above the community exhibit on the south plaza will provide a colorful focal point for passengers coming out of BART.



Typical vendor stall (Glen Park)
Sitio de vendedores



Artist-designed guard rail (Los Angeles)
Pasamanos diseñado por artista

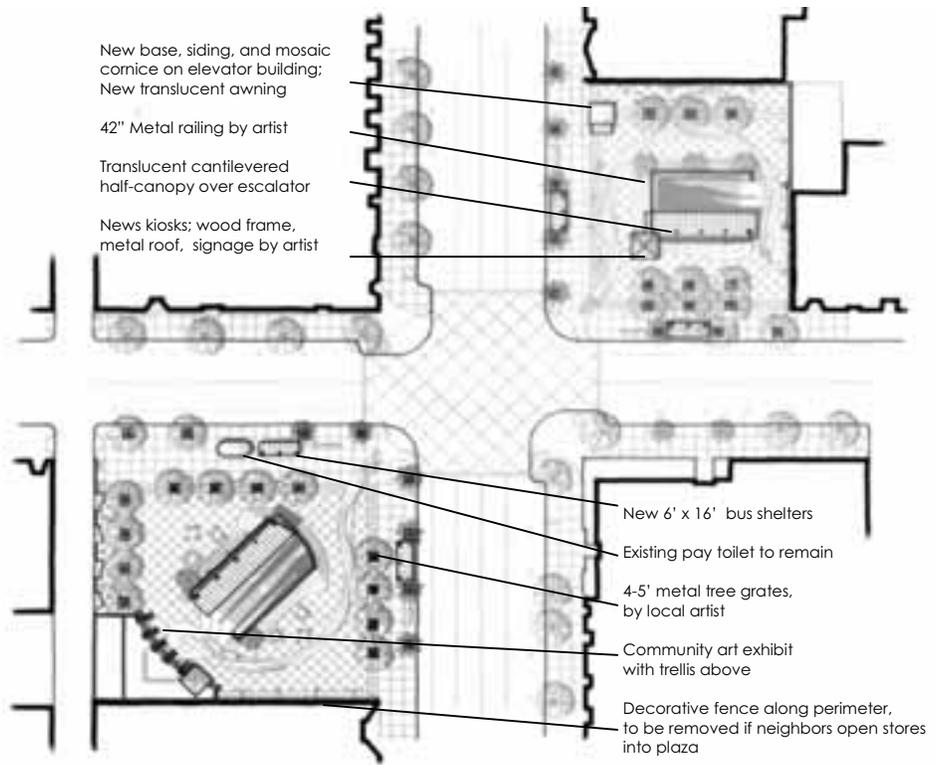


Elevator awning and mural
Ascensor con marquesina y murales



Custom bus shelter (Portland, Oregon)
Cubierta para la espera de autobuses

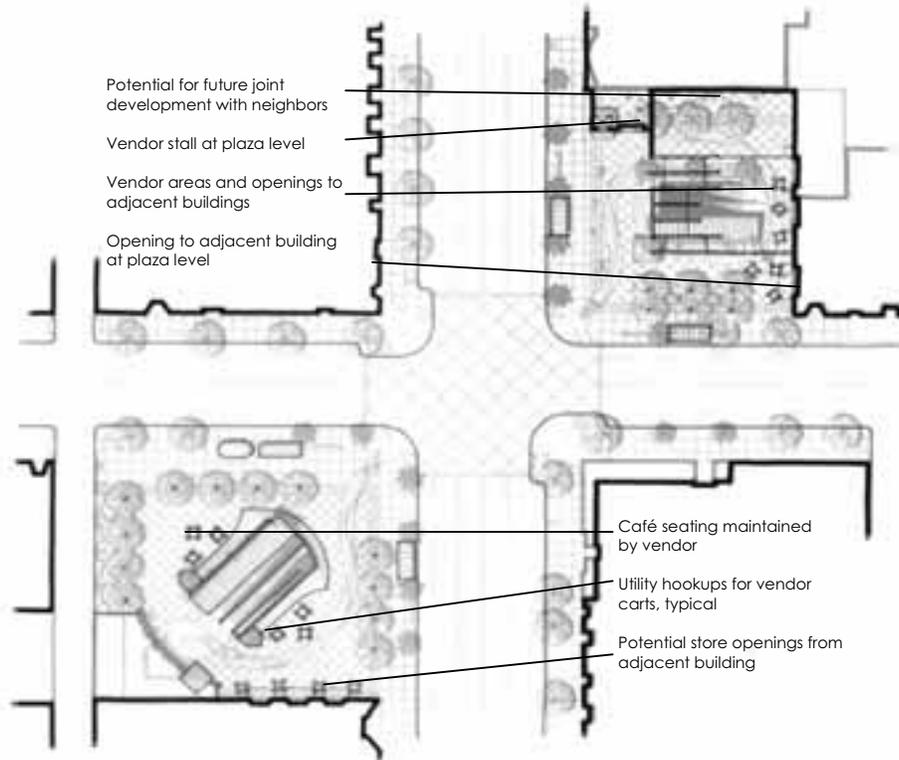
Structures and Metalwork



Several new structures will define the areas of the plazas. News kiosks in strategic locations will replace the existing shoddy kiosk on the north plaza. Lightweight translucent canopies, cantilevered from metal posts, will provide protection over the escalators and a well-lit beacon at night. A new awning at the elevator building will match the canopies. Larger bus shelter can be off-the-shelf shelters provided by Muni’s supplier, or custom-designed like the ones shown. All of these improvements provide opportunities for local craftspeople to work on the main structures, decorative bracing, and ornamental elements.

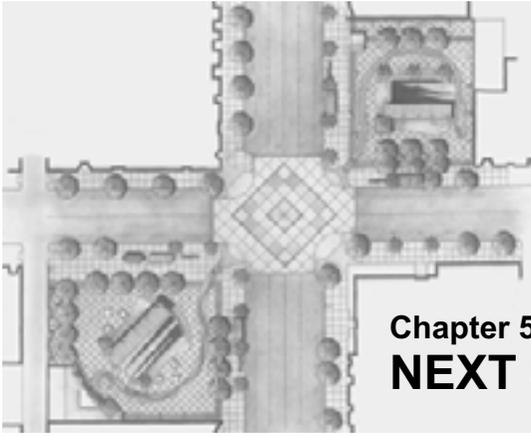
The existing fences will be removed and guardrails replaced by decorative metalwork as shown. Metal tree grates, the community exhibit and the bougainvillea trellis offer other opportunities for local metal workers.

Opportunities for Future Development



For the initial phase, the plazas offer opportunities for local vendors to set up shop on the plazas. Utility hookups (electric, water, sewage) will be located on either side of the stair entries, as well as next to the elevator. Electricity will be provided near the stage areas for performances. Food sales carts will be allowed to set up café seating on the plazas, to be taken care of by the vendors themselves.

The owners of the contiguous properties have expressed interest in redeveloping their buildings and opening the walls that now face the plazas. This Mission is already a thriving commercial district, and so new retail activity on the plazas should be encouraged. Additionally, some of the neighboring owners have expressed interest in creating a joint development agreement with BART. While the design is meant to stand alone with or without new development in adjoining properties, its flexibility and openness create opportunities for enlivening the plazas. It should be remembered that the plazas are zoned as public space, and that the community values their function as an open space in the neighborhood.



Chapter 5 **NEXT STEPS**

Strategies for Ongoing Community Involvement

In order for this project to come to fruition, it is important that community members take an active role, especially serving as advisors and decision makers as the plazas enter the next phase of construction. In the case of the redesign for the 16th Street BART Plazas, Mission Housing Development Corporation staffed a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The role of the CAC was to keep abreast of the development of the project and make decisions as the design was further developed. The CAC addressed timelines, materials, programming in their monthly meetings for a year prior to groundbreaking. In order for the CAC to play an active role, a committed staffperson at a strong partner organization and resources are needed.

Adjoining Development Projects

As a part of the planning process, property owners adjacent to the plazas expressed interest in joint development. As the conceptual design stands, joint development can be a real boon to the project. Community members expressed interest in seeing more housing around the BART station and seeing adjacent uses spill into the plazas, such as cafes and storefronts. Examples of joint development and retail use already exist throughout the BART system. At Montgomery BART in San Francisco, there are cafes and a flower shop located on the plaza. At Fruitvale BART in Oakland, the Unity Council, a local community development corporation, is working closely with BART to create a transit village comprised of housing, retail and services. With BART's new station area planning division, joint development is becoming more feasible. Care must be taken that joint development does not "privatize" an important public space, but rather encourages a diversity of activities.

Arts Projects: Soliciting and Supporting Public Art

One of the major components of this project involves art. The design calls for the metalwork, mosaics, and a community board to be designed by local artists. While Precita Eyes has been involved throughout the planning process, local craftspeople need to be sought out to identify potential subcontracts for other parts of the project, including railings, seating, canopies, and news kiosks. For the 16th Street BART project, the Mission Housing Development Corporation hired an arts consultant to carry out the coordination among artists. In the same vein at 24th Street, the arts consultant could develop scopes of work, budgets, and hold meetings with agency staff to ensure that local art remains central to the plazas.

Access Improvements

The ridership growth since 1998 has prompted BART to take action on how to improve their overall station facilities. There are several BART stations that are undergoing studies about how to improve overall access, particularly on the concourse level for ticketing and vertical access, which includes elevators, escalators and staircases. As part of an access or internal circulation study, BART should explore bicycle access and facilities. Community members and bicycle advocates expressed a desire for facilities similar to those at the 16th Street BART station: secure racks located on the concourse level in view of the station agent booth. In addition, the gutters that run parallel to the staircases could be redesigned as bicycle “stair channels,” which would allow bicyclists to safely move from plaza to concourse to platform without disturbing circulation.

Overall Project Coordination

BART Planning staff has increased from seven to fourteen since the Strategic Plan was adopted in 1999. This increased capacity allows for a strong agency partner to shepherd the process. The first step is to develop cost estimates for the project, and begin identifying sources of revenue for construction.

In municipalities across California, finding funding for capital improvements is a challenge. Large-scale public projects tend to be funded either piecemeal and through multiple funding sources. For the 16th Street BART project, MTC granted capital funds for the southwest plaza three years after the planning process was completed—funding for the northeast plaza has not yet been secured. As a recipient of a Transportation for Livable Communities Grant from MTC, this project may apply for capital funds, provided the construction costs are agreed upon in a partnership between BART, the City of San Francisco and MTC, and supported by matching funds from the appropriate agencies. However, because the design calls for improvements beyond BART’s property, other sources must be found. The pedestrian scramble, sidewalk,

bus shelters, bulbouts are projects which the City of San Francisco can support through matching funds.

Because of the difficulty in securing funds for construction, many public-works projects are built in phases. For example, it may be more appropriate to construct the canopies as the last phase of this project. Addressing the openings and bus shelters are more appropriate to build first, given that they are a primary concern among community members. A timeline of four to six years for full construction should be expected at the 24th Street BART plazas.

Preliminary Specifications

ITEM	quantity	cost
Demolition		
Remove existing plaza paving Remove wall and fence at stair opening Remove raised concrete planters and fences Remove existing sidewalk paving		
Sitework: Plaza		
Stair/escalator retaining wall and fill Mosaic-decorated concrete sitting steps Asphalt/concrete paving (typical) Decorative brick border Mosaic paving pattern by Precita Eyes Concrete pad for dumpster Drainage		
Sitework: Sidewalk and Intersection		
Sidewalk concrete paving Accessible ramps at corners and alley Corner sidewalk extensions Mosaic pattern for corner bulb Intersection paving Traffic Signals & Ped “scramble” signal		
Planting and Irrigation		
Remove existing unhealthy trees New trees, sycamores New palms, Phoenix canieriensis Bougainvillea Irrigation system		
Structures: Plaza		
Escalator canopy Decorative elevator cladding Elevator awning News vendor kiosks, metal or wood frame Community art board Trellis Storage shed for movable carts & café seating		
Structures: Sidewalk		
Bus Shelters, 6’ x 16’, typ. New traffic signals, with ped “scramble”		
Site Furniture		
Mosaic tile ferro-cement benches 42” ornamental guardrails, typ. Ornamental perimeter fencing if needed Metal tree grates, 5’ square Trash/recycling receptacles BART Signage by artist		
Mechanical & Electrical		
Plaza lighting (typical) Spot lighting on canopy and kiosk Emergency phones Utility hookups for vendors		

Appendix A: Agencies and Organizations

Bay Area Rapid Transit District

MSQ4
212 9th Street
Oakland, CA 94607
415-287-4702
www.bart.gov

San Francisco Arts Commission

25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 240
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-252-2551
<http://sfac.sfsu.edu>

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607
510-464-7700
www.mtc.ca.gov

San Francisco County Transportation Authority

100 Van Ness Avenue, 25th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-522-4800
www.ci.sf.ca.us/sfcta

Mission Economic Development Association

3505 20th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-282-3334
www.medasf.org

SF Department of Parking and Traffic

25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 345
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-554-2300
www.ci.sf.ca.us/dpt

San Francisco Planning Department

1660 Mission Street
San Francisco
415-558-6255
www.ci.sf.ca.us/planning

SF Department of Public Works

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 348
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-554-6926
www.ci.sf.ca.us/sfdpw

Urban Ecology

414 13th Street, Suite 500
Oakland, CA 9461
510-251-6330
www.urbanecology.org

SF Municipal Railway (MUNI)

425 Mason Street, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-923-2561
www.sfmuni.com

Appendix B: Works Cited

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