

Draft for Public Review

The Market and Octavia Neighborhood Plan



San Francisco Planning Department
As Part of the Better Neighborhoods Program
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Building with a Sense of Place

OBJECTIVE 3.1

NEW BUILDINGS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE BEAUTY OF THE AREA'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND THE QUALITY OF STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACE.

Buildings define the public realm in addition to providing space for a myriad of private activities. They provide the setting for people to meet and interact informally and shape the neighborhood's range of social experiences and offerings. Building height, setback, and spacing define the streets, sidewalks, plazas, and open space that comprise the community's public realm. Buildings shape the view and regulate the amount of sunlight that reaches the street. The uses of buildings and their relationship to one another affect the variety, activity, and liveliness of a place. Buildings with a mix of uses, human scale, and interesting design contribute to attractive and inviting neighborhoods, and are vital to the creation of lively and friendly streets and public spaces. In the best cases, the defining qualities of buildings along the street create a kind of "urban room" where the public life of the neighborhood thrives.

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NEW BUILDINGS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE BEAUTY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND THE QUALITY OF STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACE.

It is important to ensure that fundamentals of good urban design are followed while allowing for freedom of architectural expression. A variety of architectural styles (e.g. Victorian, Edwardian, Modern) can perform equally well; a building can relate well to the street and to other buildings regardless of style. As such, these guidelines regulate the elements of building and site design that affect the scale, character, and pedestrian friendliness of the street and the neighborhood, but do not address architectural style. The intent is to encourage buildings with a human scale that contribute to the establishment of inviting and visually interesting places, in keeping with the area's traditional pattern of development.



The new Gaia Building in downtown Berkeley, CA has demonstrated to many that new development, when it follows basic rules of good urban design, can contribute positively to the place.

Policy 3.1.1

Ensure that new development adheres to principles of good urban design.

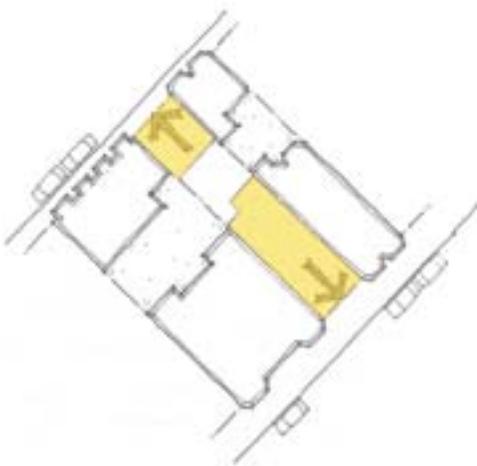
New development is likely to happen at different scales – modest structures will fill in small gaps in the urban fabric, some owners will upgrade their facades, and large underutilized parcels—such as the former Central Freeway parcels—will see dramatic revitalization. While this plan encourages mixed-use development in many parts of the plan area, the following guidelines respond to the variety of places found in the Market and Octavia neighborhood – portions of the downtown with large buildings, various neighborhood commercial districts, as well as purely residential areas – all with a wide-ranging physical character, scale, and intensity. The intent of these guidelines is to apply principles of good design that are general in nature and ensure good new development.

The following urban design guidelines apply to all new development in the Market and Octavia area. They are intended to supplement existing design guidelines found in the *General Plan* and the Planning Department’s Residential Design Guidelines. They are broken down into three areas of concern: (1) massing and articulation, (2) the treatment of the ground floor, which is further distinguished by the type of right-of-way a building faces, and (3) open space.

Massing and Articulation

The volume of space buildings may occupy is determined by controls limiting height and bulk. Beyond those controls, the way in which we experience a building is determined largely by its massing and articulation. Most buildings in San Francisco are no more than five stories tall, stand on narrow lots, and have bay windows or other kinds of projections. This gives them a distinct rhythm and verticality, and breaks down the scale to the scale of human activity taking place inside them.

- *The bulk of new buildings shall be built to all property lines facing public rights-of-way.* In the Market and Octavia neighborhood, buildings commonly front directly onto the public realm of streets and alleys and are set back only to accommodate elements that provide a graceful transition from public to private space. In the case of through-lots, massing is concentrated along public rights-of-way and open space is generally located at the center of the lot.



- In DTR and NCT districts, setbacks to accommodate wider sidewalks, recessed entries, or to mark entrances are permitted but limited to the ground floor.
- In RTO Districts, setbacks of the entire building mass to accommodate stoops and other forms of transitional space are permitted where there is a prevailing pattern of setbacks along the street.

- *Taller buildings shall include a clearly defined base, middle, and top.* The middle of buildings is clearly distinguished from the base and articulated with windows, projections, porches, and balconies. The roof, cornice, or parapet area is well integrated with the building's overall composition, is visually distinctive, and includes elements that create skyline interest. Roof forms should be drawn from the best examples in the area. Above five stories, top floor(s) are incorporated into an appropriately scaled expression of the building's top.

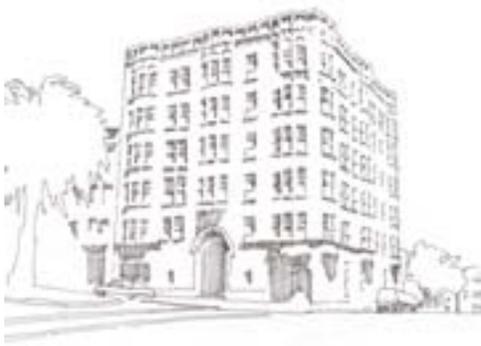
Upper-floor setbacks or other architectural techniques that reduce the overall massing should be considered where a building would exceed a height equal to the width of the facing street, or stray dramatically from the prevailing height of adjacent buildings.



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Cornices are not required. However, when designed well, cornices serve a number of important functions in relating a building to the public realm. They terminate the façade against the sky and create a definition that establishes the public street as an “urban room.” They are an integral part of the façade composition, adding balance and helping to tie the upper portions of a building to its base. Other ways of achieving these gestures to the public realm—other than strict inclusion of a cornice—are possible, but any alternative architectural expression of a façade must achieve these benefits to the public realm. The minimum recommended horizontal projection is two feet, with three feet preferable for buildings up to five stories.



- *Building façades shall include three-dimensional detailing such as bay windows, cornices, belt courses, window moldings, and reveals to create shadows and add interest. A minimum window reveal of two inches is required above the ground floor and sliding windows or applied mullions on windows facing the street are not permitted.* Windows and cornices are especially important elements contributing to the creation of a comfortable “urban room” and pedestrian environment. Upper floors include smaller, vertically proportioned windows punched into walls, projections such as bay windows, or small balconies. The typical window is oriented vertically and reflects traditional arrangements found throughout San Francisco. Other elements that contribute include awnings, canopies, projections, trellises, or detailed parapets.



- *Building façades that face the public realm (e.g. streets, alleys, and other publicly-accessible spaces) should be articulated with a strong rhythm of regular vertical elements.* There is a well-established pattern of individual buildings on 25’ to 50-foot frontages in the residential and neighborhood commercial areas of the Market and Octavia neighborhood. While buildings occupy larger frontages along the Market and Mission street corridor, they are typically broken up with a regular rhythm of projections, changes in massing, wall planes, and rooflines.

The façades of new buildings should extend this pattern. New buildings should occupy narrow frontages and express a vertical orientation in their use of projections, windows, and other detailing. This is ideally achieved through individual buildings on narrow frontages. At the least, vertical elements should break down the scale of larger buildings and create a rhythm that varies its overall massing.



These guidelines do not imply a requirement for bay windows. However, bay windows serve a number of important functions in the articulation of buildings. They extend a building’s private domain into the public realm, making for richer and more engaging interactions of buildings and streets and maximizing the opportunity for “eyes on the street.” Other ways of achieving such building articulation and a flow between the interior of buildings and the public realm—outside of a strict requirement for bay windows—are permitted, but any alternative architectural solution must achieve these benefits to the public realm.



- *Buildings on sloping sites shall step up to accentuate the city’s natural topography and maintain a strong relationship to the street.* One of the qualities most revered in San Francisco is streets and buildings that rise and fall in concert with topography. Buildings sidestep up sloped streets accenting the natural topography and giving a vertical rhythm to the street. Where buildings fail to step up slopes, they adversely “flatten” the city’s natural topography.

Larger development on sloped sites must step up with the topography of the hill at regular intervals. Where there is a slope at the curb on major streets that exceeds five percent, the building façade and internal floors, especially ground floors, shall step up with the curb as follows:

<i>Average slope of curb</i>	<i>Maximum width of ground floor plane between step-ups</i>
Between 5 percent and 15 percent, inclusive	50 feet
Between 15 percent and 25 percent, inclusive	37.5 feet
More than 25 percent	25 feet

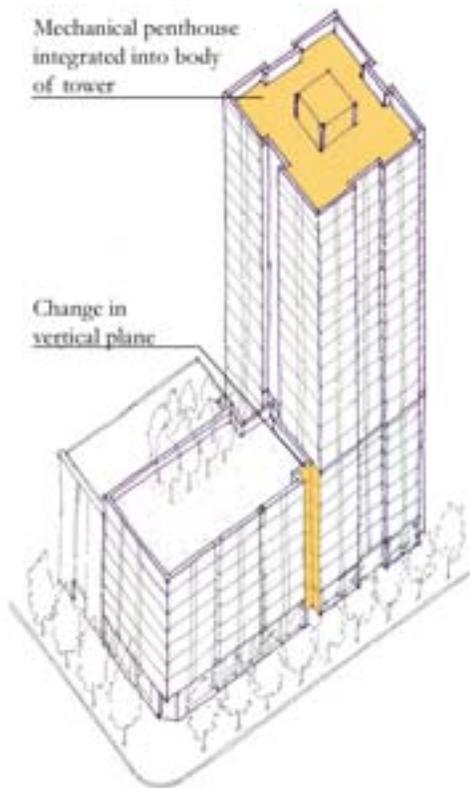
The ground floor should step-up in proportion to the slope between façade segments.



- *Special building elements and architectural expressions such as towers and special entries should be used strategically at street intersections and near important public spaces.* Throughout the Market and Octavia neighborhood, buildings with these elements contribute to a building’s distinction as a landmark, help to define a gateway, draw attention to an important activity, or help define public gathering places. Special corner treatments are encouraged for buildings that front onto major intersections throughout the plan area, and should be integrated into the design of the building.
- *High-quality building materials should be used on all visible façades and should include stone, masonry, ceramic tile, wood (as opposed to composite, fiber-cement based synthetic wood materials), precast concrete, and high-grade traditional “hard coat” stucco (as opposed to “synthetic stucco” that uses foam).* Rich detailing adds tremendously to the contribution of individual buildings to the public realm. Detailing is encouraged to provide interest and create variation in wall planes; materials and level of detail should be drawn from the best examples in the area. Base and cornice materials should be balanced in material and color.

Towers

Towers will be permitted above a base height of 85 - 120 feet in selected locations in the DTR District. Special urban design considerations are required for towers because of their potential impacts on the city skyline and on the quality and comfort of the street.



- *Horizontal articulation is required at the street wall height.* Like all buildings, towers need to create an appropriate enclosure along the street. Some form of horizontal articulation is essential to mark the street wall height and frame the portion of the building's façade that marks the pedestrian zone. This element should have a scale that is legible from the ground.
- *A change in vertical plane is required to differentiate the tower from the rest of the building.* A change in vertical plane differentiates the mass of the tower from that of adjacent buildings, focusing this massing on its base and setting it apart as a distinct building.
- *A minimum amount of pedestrian comfort from wind must be provided.* There are significant winds in the Van Ness Avenue and the Market / Mission street corridor. Towers such as the Fox Plaza Tower channel winds down to street level, resulting in unpleasant and often dangerous conditions for pedestrians. Redirected wind flows from new towers should not exceed 7 M.P.H. on Market Street and 11 M.P.H. on all other streets.¹ Horizontal articulation, screens and other wind mitigations should be integrated into the overall massing and articulation of the building.
- *Stair, elevator, and mechanical penthouses may not exceed the allowable height and should be integrated into the body of the tower.* Stair, elevator and mechanical penthouses add significant height to a building and can detract from the overall tower form. Where penthouses for circulation and mechanical apparatus exceed the top occupiable floor, the building façade should be extended to screen these uses as part of the overall façade treatment.

¹Not including alleys. A wind speed of 7 M.P.H. is appropriate for public sitting and gathering areas. 11 M.P.H. is appropriate for areas with significant pedestrian use. Based on code standards for the Rincon Hill Special Use District, San Francisco Planning Code Section 249.1.



Buildings in San Francisco are primarily light in tone.



The ground-floor along streets like this one provide variety and visual interest that makes them pleasant places to walk and spend time.

- *Towers should be light in color.* For the most part, buildings in San Francisco are light in tone. The overall effect is that of a white city spread over the hills. To maintain continuity with this existing pattern, dark or disharmonious colors or building materials should be avoided. Highly reflective materials, particularly mirrored or reflective glass, should be used sparingly.²

The Ground Floor

The design and use of a building's ground floor has a direct influence on the pedestrian experience. Ground floor uses in the area are devoted to retail, service, and public uses and to residential units and lobbies in apartment buildings. These uses provide an active and visually interesting edge to the public life of the street, which is especially important on neighborhood commercial streets. Parking, which has become a common street-facing use in more recent buildings, dilutes the visual interest and vitality of the street. This plan maintains a strong presumption against parking as a street-facing use, encouraging retail, residential, and other active uses facing the street.

Building on the Market and Octavia neighborhood's traditional pattern, ground floors should be visually distinguishable from upper floors, with generous ceiling heights. The base or ground-floor of all buildings should contain active ground-floor uses and avoid blank, unarticulated wall planes. The ground floor should be composed of a clearly legible framework of structural bays, flexible enough to offer the potential for varied and interesting street-front shops, restaurants, or lobbies for residences. Storefronts should include large windows, clearly defined entries, and attractive pedestrian-level detailing and ornamentation.

- *Surface parking is not permitted between the street-facing property line and the fronts of buildings.* The use of setbacks for parking detracts greatly from the character and comfort of the sidewalk. Parking should not be permitted at the front of buildings, except on parcels with 25 feet or less of frontage, where it is in a garage that is integrated into the structure of the building.

² From the Downtown Area Plan, San Francisco General Plan, adopted 1984.



Large garage doors make it next to impossible to present an active or otherwise interesting ground floor to the street.



Retail and residential entries like these are setback to provide transitional space from the street.

- *No more than 30 percent of the width of the ground floor may be devoted to garage entries or blank walls, except in no case shall garage entries be limited to less than 10 feet wide (except where curb cuts are expressly prohibited by this plan). No façade may feature garage entries that together total greater than 20 feet in width.* The building area immediately facing the street should be supportive of residential or commercial uses, have a human scale, and contribute active uses to the street. Large garage entries are extremely detrimental to the pedestrian character and safety of a street, and vehicle traffic crossing the sidewalk should be limited to the absolute minimum necessary to facilitate access to parcels. At least 70 percent of the width of the ground floor facing streets must be devoted to windows, entrances to dwelling units, store windows and entrances, landscaping or planters, and other architectural features that provide visual relief and interest.
- Parking should be located at the rear of the site and setback from street frontages wherever possible.
- Eight-foot-wide garage entries are preferable for parcels less than 50 feet wide.
- Building entries and shop fronts should add to the character of the street by being clearly identifiable and inviting. Blank walls (absent windows, entries, or ornamentation) should be avoided. Display windows with unobstructed views into interior spaces and building entrances should line major streets. Service functions such as trash, utility, or fire rooms, should not be placed at the street front if possible.
- *Primary building entries may be set back from the street-facing property line, though no more than 5 feet from the street-facing façade; and if set back should be no wider than 15 feet at the property line per individual entry.* It is common throughout the Market and Octavia neighborhood for ground floor entries to be recessed from the street, whether for commercial or residential uses. A recessed entryway provides transition space between the public sidewalk and the private interior of the building.
- *New buildings must meet the signage requirements outlined in Article 6 of the Planning Code.* The character, size, and quality of signage projecting from buildings plays an important role in the visual appeal and attractiveness of a street. New buildings should adhere to the existing limitations on signage in Neighborhood Commercial Districts, as well as for Market Street and Van Ness Avenue. General advertising signage is prohibited in the plan area.



Elevating ground-floor residential spaces slightly above street level provides both a sense of refuge from and connectedness to the street.

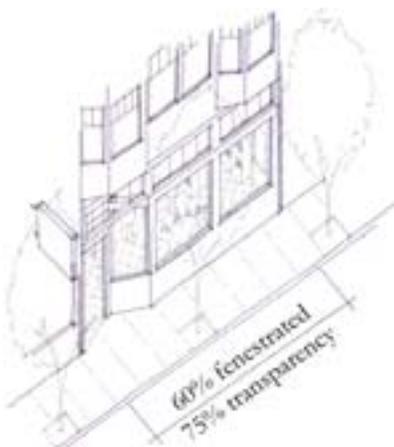
- *Changes in projections and recesses, along with materials and color, should be used to emphasize pedestrian entries and architectural features, and to de-emphasize garage doors and parking.* These elements focus attention on the active spaces of a building and reinforce a human scale within the façade and the street.
- *First-floor residential units are encouraged to be at least 3 feet above sidewalk level such that the window sills of these units are above pedestrian eye level in order to maintain the units' privacy.* The most successful ground floor residential units are set slightly above the street grade, such that ground-floor living spaces look down on the street. Transitions between private space and the public space of the street, using stoops and other means, are encouraged.
- *Lower level (1 to 3 story) residential units should be directly and independently accessible from the sidewalk, rather than from common lobbies.* Individual entries to residential units help to provide rhythm to a building façade, contribute activity, interest, and “eyes” to the street, and enhance the sense of connectedness between residential units and the public life of the street. Direct residential entries from the street are most appropriate in purely residential buildings and in mixed-use buildings where they do not conflict with ground floor retail uses.

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Neighborhood Commercial Streets

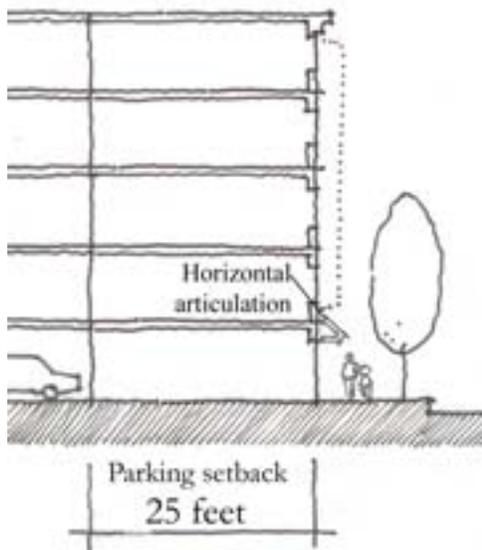
Like most parts of San Francisco, neighborhood commercial streets in the Market and Octavia neighborhood provide a center for the life of the area. They are distinctive and lively places, with an array of activities and interests that attract people. These streets are typically lined with individual retail storefronts that provide visual interest and have a scale that feels especially comforting to people. While not all new development on these streets need be mixed-use in character, it should contain active ground-floor uses and provide a façade that adds visual interest and a human scale to the street.



- *Retail frontages must be no less than 60 percent fenestrated and 75 percent transparent.* Retail spaces in the Market and Octavia neighborhood are typically open and provide ample transparency to the street, which businesses use to display goods and provide views to the goings-on inside. Dark or mirrored glass is not permitted. Solar consideration should be treated architecturally, through the use of recesses, eyebrows, or awnings.



Tall ground-floor retail frontages like this one provide generous light and air to interior spaces.



- *Ground floor retail uses should be directly accessible from the street at the grade of the sidewalk onto which it fronts.* Storefronts that require a patron to sink below or step up feel removed from the life of the street and are notoriously difficult to make successful. Storefronts on the ground floor should be accessed directly from the sidewalk. Steps up or down should be avoided. On sloping sites, taller retail spaces at the low end of the site are preferable to sinking a portion of the retail floor below sidewalk grade.
- *Ground-floor retail spaces should have at a minimum a 12-foot clear ceiling height.* The most successful retail spaces in the Market and Octavia neighborhood and the city have uncramped ground-floor spaces with high ceilings. They often have clerestory windows. At a minimum, ceiling heights should be at least 12 feet; taller ceiling heights, ideally 15 feet, are desirable.
- *If provided, off-street parking must be accessed via side streets or alleys. No curb cuts are permitted on Market, Church, and Hayes Streets nor Van Ness Avenue where retail is explicitly encouraged.* Commercial streets thrive where continuous storefronts are maintained and there is an active pedestrian environment uninterrupted by cross-traffic accessing off-street parking or dead spaces created by garage doors. Access to off-street parking will not be permitted on those frontages designated for retail encouragement, as described in Policy 1.7.
- *If provided, off-street parking at or above grade must be setback at least 25 feet from the street-facing property line, including parking above the ground floor.* Parking is not permitted as a use along commercial streets, in favor of active uses that contribute to the life of the street.
- *Horizontal articulation is required between the ground floor and second story. A minimum 6-inch projection is suggested.* The human scale of the sidewalk is of paramount importance on neighborhood commercial streets. Architectural detailing, such as a belt course or cornice, at the ground floor ceiling height helps to frame the pedestrian space of the sidewalk.



New buildings should celebrate Market Street as San Francisco's most important civic space and transportation spine.

Market Street

Market Street is San Francisco's premiere civic street—it is the focal point for the city's commercial, ceremonial, and cultural life. Market Street is also the backbone of the city and regional transit system and is the busiest pedestrian and cycling street. Given its special role, buildings along Market Street—and the uses they support—should contribute to its vitality and life as a civic space. New buildings should have a human scale and character appropriate for a street of its scale and prominence.

Beyond the requirements for neighborhood commercial streets, described above:

- *Ground floor retail spaces must have at minimum 15-foot clear ceiling height.* Retail spaces along Market Street are grand, open, and inviting. Reflecting the scale of existing retail spaces on Market Street, 15-foot ceiling heights will allow ample light and air to penetrate the ground floor, and in combination with adequate fenestration, add transparency to the façade.

Alleys

Alleys are typically quieter, support primarily service and small residential uses, and have a more intimate scale than streets. They provide an important way of moving about for pedestrians and cyclists and offer relief from busy streets. Alleys vary widely in their use and character—some are lined with commercial loading docks and others with residential stoops and front doors. The plan area has an exceptional network of alleys. New buildings on alleys should respond to the unique conditions of alleys, reinforcing their intimate scale and character.

- *Parking and garage doors may occupy no more than 40 percent of a parcel's total alley frontage, up to a total of 20 feet maximum, at ground level except in no case shall garage entries be limited to less than 10 feet wide.* Parking and garage doors, while necessary uses on alleys, do not dominate. Residential units, entries, loading docks, and other more active uses are preferable. Where parking and garage doors are permitted as an alley-facing use, they should be limited in their overall frontage, recessed, and otherwise screened from view.



New development should respect and enhance the intimate scale of alleys.

- Encourage residential uses on the ground floor. Residential uses on the ground floor are common on alleys in the plan area. By bringing active living space to street level, they give alleys a feeling of being inhabited that garage doors and such uses do not.

Open Space



Private open spaces, both at the interior of blocks and in the form of roofdecks and balconies, are an important part of the larger open space network.

Residential buildings in San Francisco provide interior open space for the use of their residents in a variety of forms. Different from parks, plazas, and other public spaces, private interior spaces provide secure open space easily accessed, in the best cases, from one's living space. They are a valuable play space for children, a setting for backyard gatherings, and are an extension of interior living areas. Creative design and siting of interior open spaces is encouraged in new buildings. Safe and comfortable interior open spaces compliment the area's larger network of civic streets and open spaces.

- *Three- and four-bedroom units should be within three stories of common open space, accessible via stairs.* Common open space should be directly accessible to family-sized units wherever possible. For these spaces to be useful as children's play spaces, a strong relationship between the unit and the open space that allows for supervision is important. Generally speaking, open spaces that are more than three stories from a living space and require the use of an elevator for access are far less likely to be actively used by families.
- *Street furniture and other public improvements should be provided in the vicinity of the project.* In addition to private interior open space, the street provides an invaluable public open space that residents and businesses use daily. Private open spaces should be strongly connected to the street and tree-plantings, street furniture, and other enhancements should be provided to strengthen the street's value as an open space.
- *Encourage rooftop gardens as a form of common open space.* Rooftop gardens are often overlooked as a means of providing common open space. These spaces typically have excellent sunlight access, are secluded, and offer good views.