

***Destination***

*Streetscape*

***Downtown***

*Investments for a Walkable City*



**The Downtown Streetscape Plan**

Adopted July 13, 1995

An implementation plan and guidelines for  
Objective 22 of the Downtown Area Plan and  
Section 138.1 of the Planning Code.

Plan Summary

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The Planning Department  
City and County of San Francisco

Funding Provided by  
The San Francisco County  
Transportation Authority

# ***Destination Downtown***

## **The Downtown Streetscape Plan**

The Planning Department  
City and County of San Francisco

*The Downtown Streetscape Plan is the guiding document for the development of the Downtown Pedestrian Network called for in the Downtown Area Plan (Objective 22). As such, the Plan is the basis for Master Plan consistency determinations for all pedestrian streetscape improvements in the downtown, whether implemented by the public or private sectors.*

*The Downtown Streetscape Plan is also the implementation framework for downtown streetscape improvements as outlined by Section 138.1 of the Planning Code which regulates streetscape improvements in the downtown, C-3 districts. As per the provisions of Sections 309 and 137 of the Planning Code, the Downtown Streetscape Plan is used as the basis for, and to determine the adequacy of, all streetscape improvements required by Sections 138 and 138.1 of the Planning Code, mandated by the City Planning Commission, or voluntarily installed as a component of any project subject to Section 309 review.*

*The Department of Public Works is the permitting agency for all improvements in the public right-of-way. All streetscape improvements mandated by the Planning Commission as per the provisions of the Planning Code and the recommendations of the Downtown Streetscape Plan are subject to approval by the Director of Public Works. As set forth in DPW Order Number 168,244, DPW agrees to consider the recommendations referenced in the Downtown Streetscape Plan when reviewing encroachment and street-use permit applications in the downtown area.*

... The street  
"means accident  
and incident,  
drama, move-  
ment. It means  
above all dream.  
... In the street  
you learn what  
human beings re-  
ally are; other-  
wise or after-  
wards, you invent  
them"....

Close to half a million people walk in downtown San Francisco every day. They are walking to and from transit, work, shopping, or maybe to a lunchtime sojourn at an open space. And, while walking, they see the city at a slower pace and a smaller scale than people in cars and buses. Walking affords intimate observations of the city; as the influential urbanist Kevin Lynch once noted, pedestrian paths provide a strong sense of the overall image of the city. And, for better or worse, the physical character of the city's streets has a strong influence on the quality of San Francisco's image for residents and visitors alike.

Downtown San Francisco has a remarkable number of urban resources to offer visitors, shoppers, and workers. Foremost among these is the richness and diversity of the city—its energy and its beauty. It is this richness that has made San Francisco both a desirable place to live and work, and one of the world's most popular destinations. Yet, it is often difficult to appreciate a beautiful view or a wonderful street scene if the sidewalk is hazardous, dirty, in disrepair, and filled with a variety of neglected and poorly placed pieces of street furniture. Indeed, there are an average of 100 pedestrian-vehicle accidents in the downtown each year, and some sidewalks are so cluttered that pedestrians have to walk in the street. The overall quality of the urban environment is dependent on the richness of the views, the social scene, and the conditions of the street from which the entire urban experience is viewed.

According to surveys conducted by the Planning Department, almost 70% of the 300,000 people who work downtown arrive by transit, carpool, or by walking. Similarly, 60% of the 200,000 other people in the downtown area each day arrive by transit or by walking. Of these, over 30% of the shoppers downtown use walking as their primary mode of transportation. It is also estimated that 90% of the 12 million tourists that visit San Francisco each year walk through the Union Square area during their stay in the city, and it is probable that

the majority of the people who arrive downtown by auto will spend some time walking too. The compactness of downtown and the City's temperate climate combine to make walking an ideal mode of transportation. *As a result, the underlying assumption of this design plan is that walking is essential in the downtown core, and all streets are, or should be, pedestrian-oriented.*

A negative image of the city influenced by a poor streetscape environment can have significant and adverse impacts on the economic vitality of the city as a whole. Visitors might choose not to visit again or pass along negative perceptions of San Francisco to their hometown friends and colleagues, regional shoppers might choose to go to a mall instead of Union Square, and businesses, both large and small, might choose to locate in a clean, attractive, and well-maintained environment elsewhere. Ultimately, efforts to retain and improve upon the innate attractiveness and livability of San Francisco must include attention to all of the components of the urban experience, including the conditions of the streetscape.



*Stockton Street Scene*

# Overview

## The Downtown Streetscape Plan

The publication of this streetscape plan for the downtown pedestrian environment represents a first step in a long-term effort to improve sidewalk conditions in downtown San Francisco. The intent of the plan is to assist in the development of pedestrian projects in both the public and private sector by providing design ideas for large scale improvements as well as guidelines for individual sidewalk elements. The goals of this plan are threefold:

■ **To provide a coordinated, comprehensive design vision for the Downtown Pedestrian Network.** A design vision that:

- Reinforces the sidewalk as an essential element of the public realm.
- Provides for the comfort and safety needs of pedestrians.
- Contributes to the unique physical character of the City.
- Complements the open space network.
- Promotes walking as the primary transportation mode in the downtown core.
- Unifies the downtown streetscape.

■ **To provide standards and guidelines for the placement of streetscape elements by both the public and private sectors.** These standards and guidelines will ensure that the many sidewalk elements are appropriately sited and meet the overall goals of the Downtown Pedestrian Network.

■ **To provide a framework for anticipated capital projects funded by the Proposition B sales tax as administered by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, for privately financed projects implemented to meet downtown open space requirements, and for projects funded by public-private partnerships.**

This Downtown Streetscape Plan was developed by the Planning Department as a component of the Downtown Pedestrian Projects Program of the Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan, funded by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority.

Planning staff worked closely with the public, merchants' groups, city agencies, and design professionals in the development of this plan. The San Francisco Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was especially helpful as the co-sponsor of the Downtown Pedestrian Charrette and as an on-going forum for design assistance and feedback.

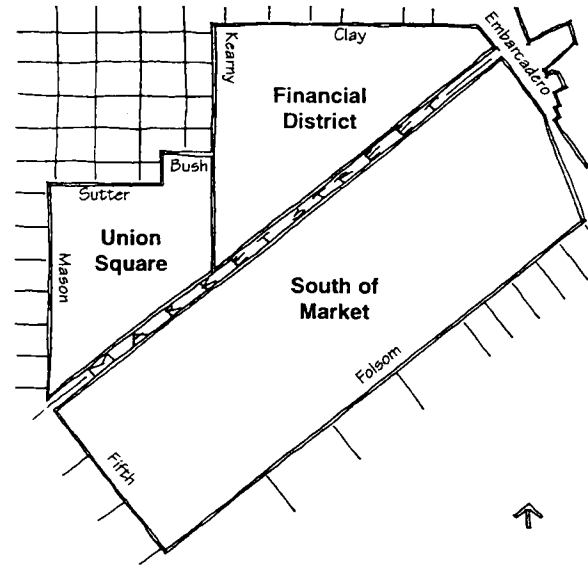


*Outdoor Cafes on Maiden Lane*

# Overview

## Plan Study Area

The study area for the Downtown Streetscape Plan encompasses the C-3 district outlined in the Downtown Plan, exclusive of Market Street, the Embarcadero, and the Civic Center area, all of which are addressed in other plans. The boundaries of the study area, as indicated on the map, are Mason and Fifth Streets to the west, the Embarcadero to the east, Clay Street to the north (except Chinatown), and Folsom Street to the South.



*Study Area Boundaries*

The district is further subdivided into three sub-areas that correspond to land use and zoning patterns: Union Square (Mason to Kearny, Market to Bush), the Financial District (Kearny to the Embarcadero, Market to Clay), and South of Market (Fifth to the Embarcadero, Market to Folsom).

## Existing Streetscape Conditions

While each street in the Downtown area raises specific issues and concerns, there are a number of universal problems that occur throughout the area. Identified problems include:

■ **Congestion:** Large pedestrian volumes are not necessarily a problem in a vibrant urban environment. A high level of foot traffic makes the downtown more bustling and interesting. Problems can occur, though, if the sidewalk is too narrow for the number of people and activities on it. Congested sidewalks can be hazardous, and create significant accessibility problems.



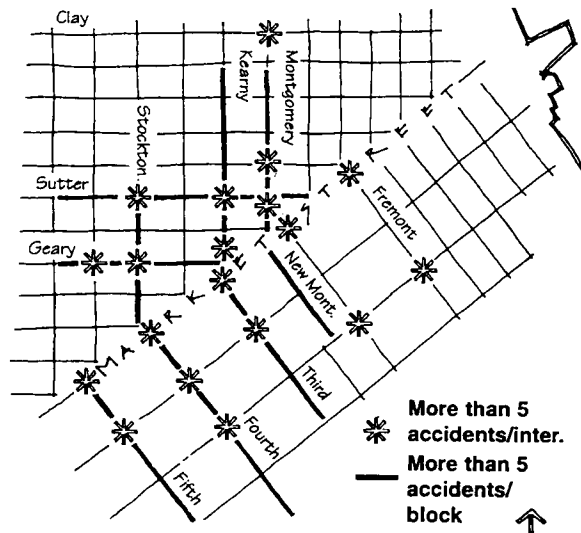
*Congestion on Kearny Street*

■ **Queuing Space:** When the sidewalks are too congested, significant problems can result at the corners due to insufficient queuing space. At congested corners pedestrians often wait off the curb, a particularly dangerous practice on streets with peak-period curb lane traffic.

■ **Unsafe Crosswalks/Vehicle Conflicts:** Conditions such as lengthy crosswalks, insufficient signalized pedestrian crossing times, extensive vehicle turns through the crosswalk, red-light running, and inadequate pedestrian crossing islands present problems for pedestrians and are evident throughout downtown.

# Overview

■ **Sidewalk Clutter/Obstacles:** There are many elements on the sidewalk ranging from street signs and parking meters to street trees and flowerstands. While many of the elements are desirable and/or necessary, their placement often makes them obstacles to pedestrians.



**Pedestrian/Vehicle Accident Problem Areas**

■ **Accessibility/Poor Sidewalk Surfaces:** The conditions listed above, combined with a host of inadequate corner curb ramps and a variety of sidewalk surfaces (many in disrepair), have created disabled access problems throughout the downtown.

■ **Lack of Pedestrian Amenities/Unattractive Streetscapes:** There are a number of elements that make the streetscape pleasant, including street trees, benches, and, in San Francisco, historic details. Well-designed pedestrian amenities are a key element in creating a walkable and memorable environment. Moreover, certain amenities such as benches greatly contribute to the comfort of pedestrians by giving them places to rest, socialize, and to experience the city visually. Downtown San Francisco is notable for the absence of many of these amenities.

■ **Cleanliness:** One of the most common complaints about the downtown streetscape is the fact that it is "dirty." Some of the more common items that questionnaire respondents mentioned include litter, graffiti, and odors, particularly those caused by the lack of public restrooms.

■ **Orientation/Poor Signage:** Although there are a number of prominent visual markers in the downtown area, the lack of adequate pedestrian signage often makes the area quite confusing for tourists, a problem that is exacerbated by the street grid shift at Market Street.

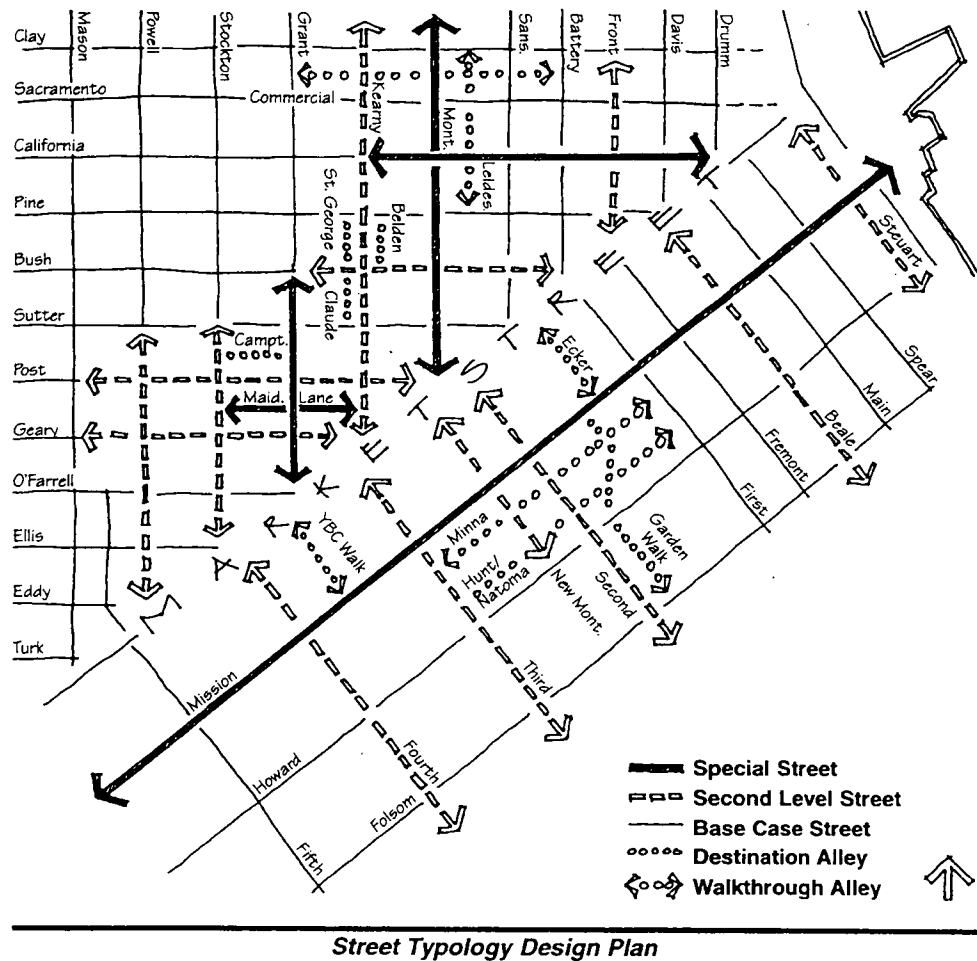
■ **Lack of Consistency:** This problem is most evident with sidewalk paving patterns. Some blocks have widely differing paving materials in front of each individual property, and many of these are in various states of disrepair. Similarly, the proliferation of different elements, including planters, street trees, and street lights on one block often creates visual cacophony which diminishes the effectiveness of the improvements.

■ **Neglect of Streetscape Elements:** Many of the individual elements that are already in place have not been maintained. As a result, there are many elements that have become eyesores and occasionally dangerous, which detract from the image of the area.

■ **Insufficient Open Space:** As recognized in the Downtown Plan, there are significant open space deficiencies downtown. Sidewalks are an integral element of the downtown open space network not only as connections, but as valuable open space elements themselves.

## Design Plan

The Downtown Streetscape Plan is based on a classification of streets based on usage, function, city pattern, and symbolic significance. This framework facilitates a design process within which streets can be differentiated from each other while also being coordinated with the overall design goals for the downtown. The typology draws from existing conditions and anticipated changes, but is deliberately fluid to accommodate future developments. The typology plan facilitates the design solutions outlined in the plan while also engendering a downtown environment that clearly indicates to pedestrians which streets are important connections and destinations. In particular, the typology establishes a design matrix for streetscape elements that concentrates street furniture on streets with sufficient sidewalk space.



# Design Plan

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... The fundamental assumption of the Plan is that all downtown streets are inherently pedestrian-oriented ..

The design framework is constructed as a progressive hierarchy with *Base Case Streets* representing the bottom rung and *Civic Streets* the top. The *Base Case* establishes the minimum for all pedestrian streetscapes downtown; The next level, *Second Level Streets*, are primary pedestrian connections and incorporate the Base Case with additional treatments. The third level, *Special Streets*, are focal point, destination streets and incorporate the lower two categories of improvements as well as more distinctive, specially-designed improvements. The top level, *Civic Streets*, is reserved for the most important symbolic streets in San Francisco, Market and The Embarcadero, both of which merit distinctive urban design attention.

Since both Market Street and The Embarcadero have been the focus of their own design plans and street improvement projects, improvements for these streets are outside of the scope of this study. This Plan will reinforce the importance of both streets by ensuring that their streetscape designs remain the most prominent and unique in the city. Market Street will also be enhanced through the development of links from both the south and north. Moreover, the wide pedestrian right-of-ways on Market and the Embarcadero facilitate the placement of street furniture such as sidewalk toilets that might not otherwise be accommodated on smaller sidewalks elsewhere downtown. Since Market Street is the central spine for much of the downtown, these street furniture placements are especially important complement to the street furniture placements outlined here.

At least one street in each sub-district is designated as a *Special Street*. These streets will be focal point, destination streets for the sub-districts thereby setting the tone and definition for the sub-district as a whole. The five *Special Streets*, California, Grant, Maiden Lane, Mission, and Montgomery, are noteworthy for their citywide symbolic recognition, streetscape environment, and pedestrian function, and each merits a unique design treatment. As a rule, they should be centers of pedestrian amenities and activities with design treatments that do not appear elsewhere.

The *Second Level Streets*, Beale, Bush, Fourth, Front, Geary, Kearny, New Montgomery, Post, Powell, Second, Steuart, Stockton, and Third, are important functional and, in some cases, symbolic pedestrian streets. These *Second Level* streets are designated as significant pedestrian paths between important destinations. Improvements are designed to facilitate through movement and to highlight destinations.

The *Base Case Streets* are all streets not designated as either *Special* or *Second Level*. The focus on the *Base Case* streets is to create safe and attractive pedestrian environments that reinforce district identity.

This typology is also applied to the alleyways. The *Base Case* establishes the minimum for a pedestrian connection, *Walkthrough*, alley: Annie, Commercial, Ecker, Jessie, Leidesdorff, Minna, Natoma, Shaw, Stevenson, and Trinity. The *Second Level* highlights more important, *Destination*, alleys: Belden, Claude, Commercial, Campton, Hunt/Natoma and St. George. The *Special Street* signifies the most imageable of the alleys, Maiden Lane.

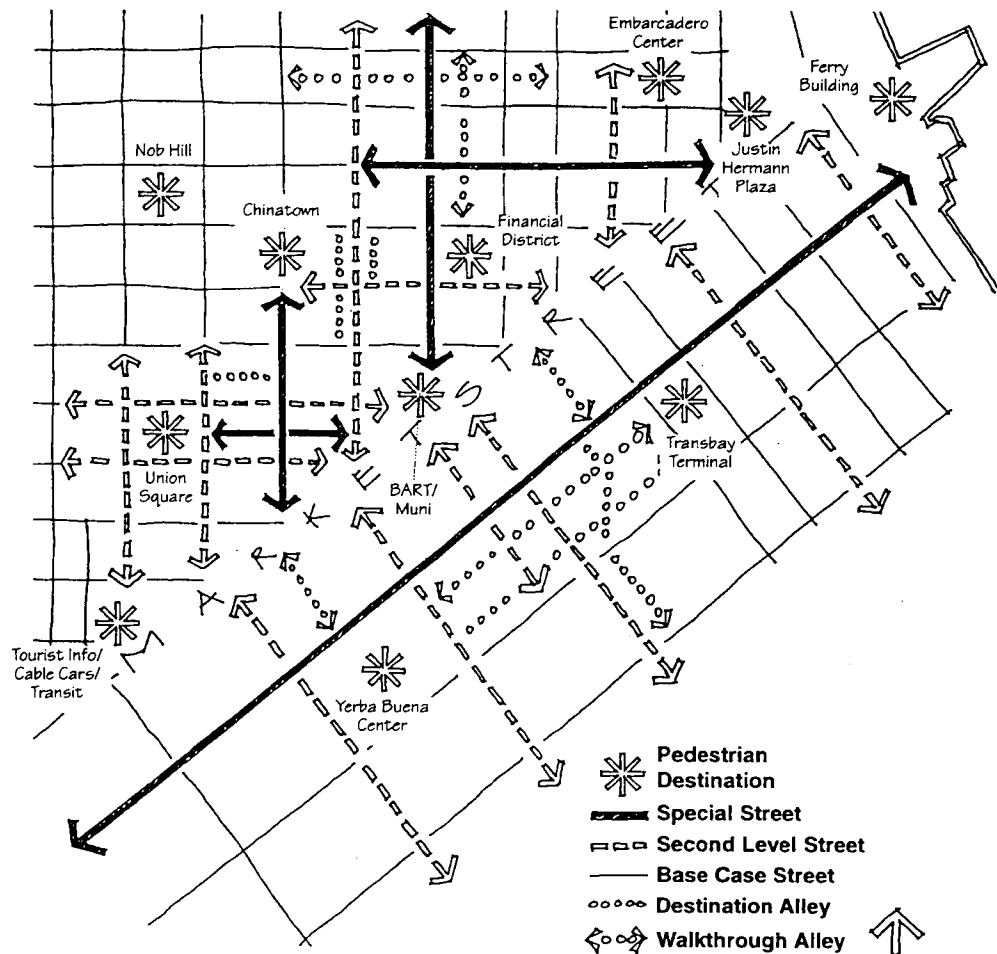


# Design Plan

The resulting Downtown Pedestrian Network is a system of interrelated pedestrian routes. It is both a network of connections between destinations as well as a series of destinations in and of itself. The enhanced connections between significant nodes (both within and adjacent to downtown) reinforce these places as pedestrian destinations. For example, street improvements will highlight the visual connection between Chinatown and Yerba Buena Center on Grant Avenue, between North Beach/Telegraph Hill and Market Street on Kearny Street, and between Union Square and the Financial districts on Post Street.

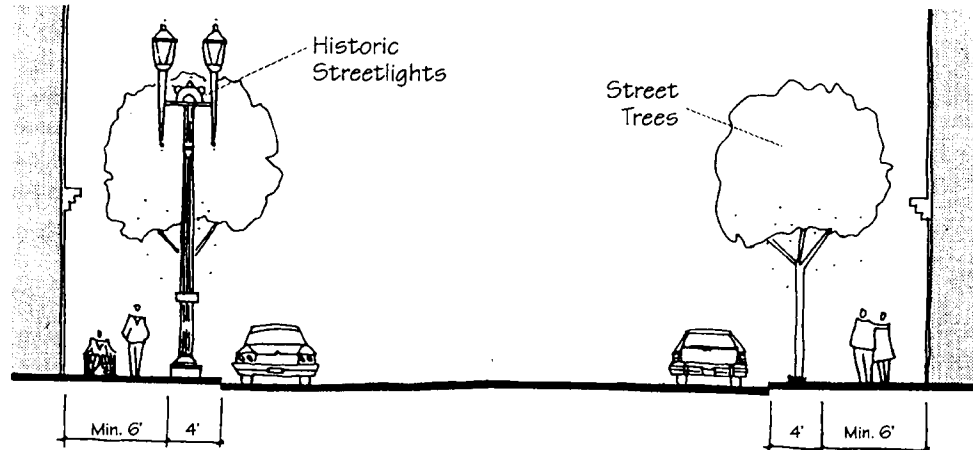
.... In San Francisco, there is more open space on the sidewalks than in all parks and open spaces combined ....

Similarly, the Downtown Pedestrian Network complements the Downtown Open Space Network outlined in the Downtown Plan. Streetscape improvements such as trees and sitting areas integrate the sidewalks into the open space system as both connections and integral elements which increase open space resources. Areas with open space deficiencies as identified in the Downtown Plan will benefit from these streetscape improvements, particularly along Mission Street near Second Street, on Minna Street, and on the *Destination* alleys such as Claude and Belden.



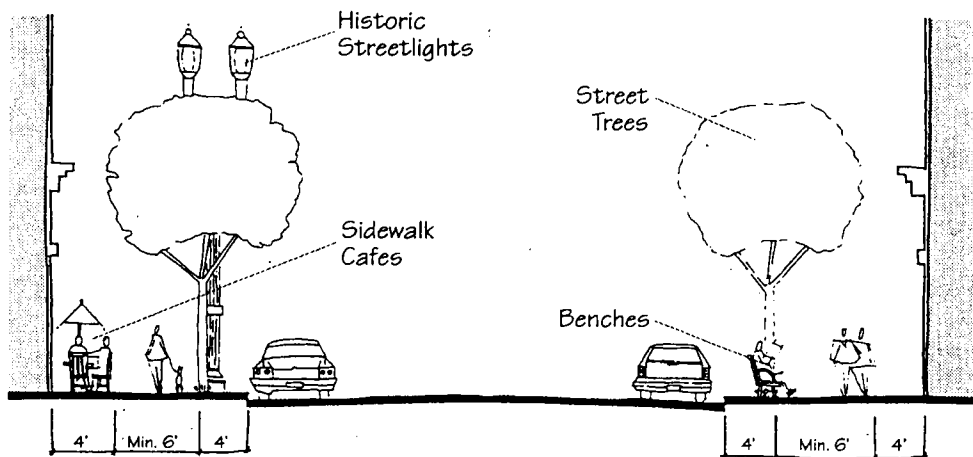
*Design Plan and Significant Pedestrian Destinations*

# Design Plan



- Street Trees
- Historic Street Lights
- Fixed Newsracks
- Trashcans
- Standard Sidewalk
- Corner Clear Zone

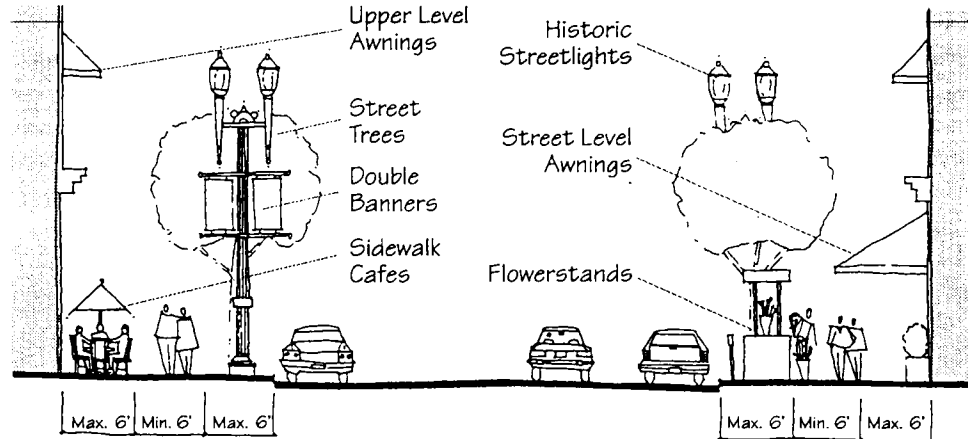
*Typical Base Case Street Diagram*



- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Street Trees w/uplighting | ■ Paving Variation |
| ■ Historic Street Lights    | ■ Benches          |
| ■ Fixed Newsracks           | ■ Bicycle Racks    |
| ■ Trashcans                 | ■ Sidewalk Cafes   |
| ■ Standard Sidewalk         | ■ Kiosks           |
| ■ Corner Clear Zone         | ■ Sidewalk Vendors |

*Typical Second Level Street Diagram*

# Design Plan



- |                             |                    |                      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| ■ Street Trees w/uplighting | ■ Benches          | ■ Unique Streetscape |
| ■ Historic Street Lights    | ■ Bicycle Racks    | ■ Sidewalk Toilets   |
| ■ Fixed Newsracks           | ■ Sidewalk Cafes   | ■ Special Paving     |
| ■ Trashcans                 | ■ Kiosks           | ■ Awnings            |
| ■ Standard Sidewalk         | ■ Sidewalk Vendors | ■ Banners            |
| ■ Corner Clear Zone         |                    | ■ Flowerstands       |

**Typical Special Level Street Diagram**

## Base Case

The standard Base Case Street has a 10' sidewalk as an absolute minimum, although 12'-14' is preferable. The streetscape is intended to be the minimum standard for all downtown sidewalks as befitting the importance of these streets as part of the downtown urban fabric.

## Second Level

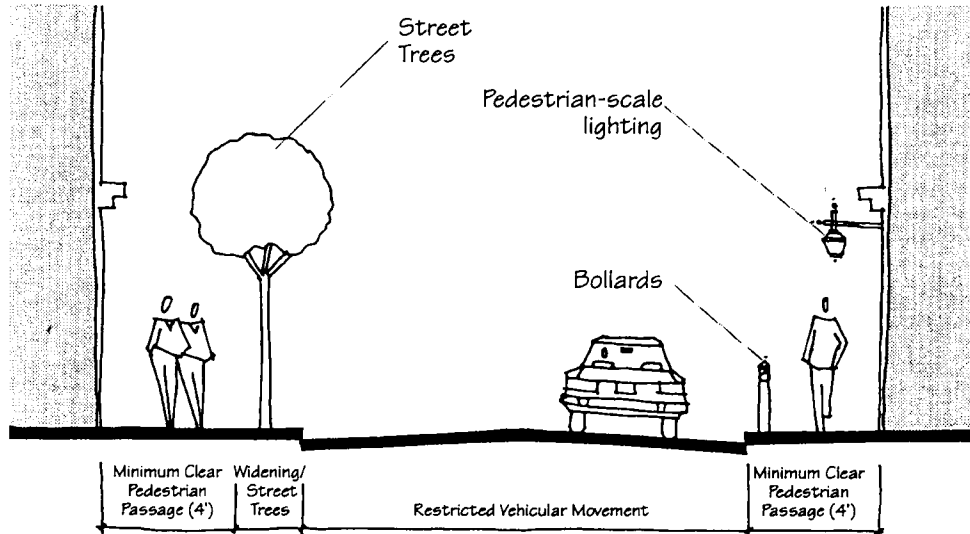
The standard Second Level Street design conveys the importance of these streets and encourages both through movement and stationary activities. In addition to the Base Case features, the generally wider sidewalks (14'-15') on Second Level Streets facilitate more pedestrian amenities including benches on Front, historical accents on Second, and corner bulbing on Kearny.

## Special Level

The Special Streets are considered destination streets and would have corresponding wide sidewalks and street furniture. California, Grant, Maiden Lane, Mission, and Montgomery all have memorable, symbolic images that are important within the downtown and for the city as a whole. Typical designs would include Base Case and Second Level improvements with additional elements such as unique paving treatments, flowerstands and other street furniture, and sidewalk widenings (to 18' to match existing sidewalks on Grant and California). However, since each street is distinctive, their designs should be distinctive too. Montgomery Street is a particular challenge since street furniture opportunities are limited due to the existing pedestrian congestion. Nonetheless, the importance of Montgomery as a pedestrian street should be recognized with some unique treatments such as decorative paving, public art, and, eventually, sidewalk widening.

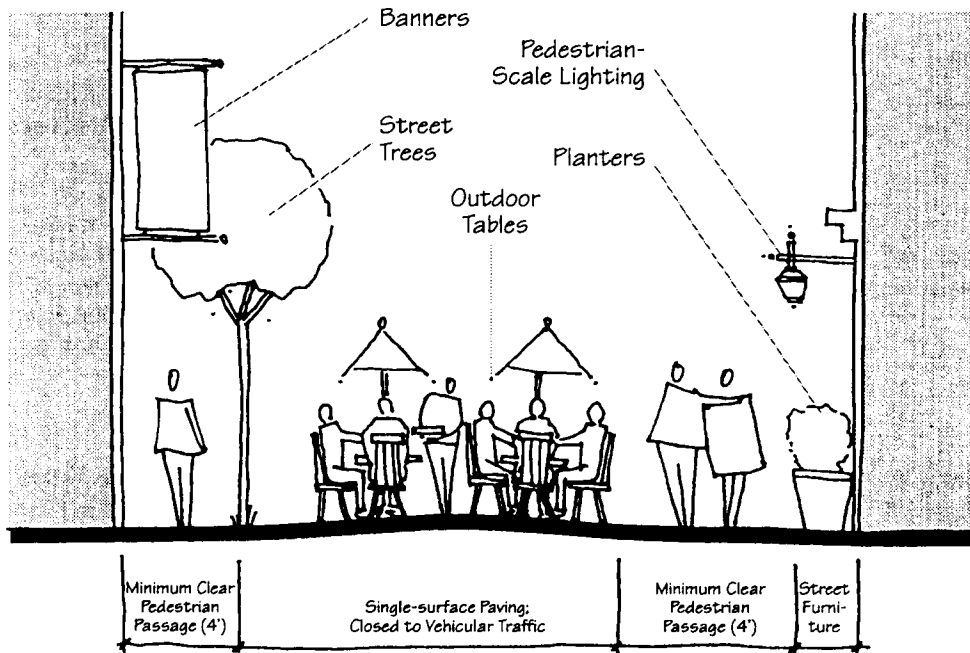
# Design Plan

## Walkthrough Alley



Standard improvements on Walkthrough alleys include network banners, bollards, pedestrian-scale lighting, and streetsign consolidation. Pending study of traffic, service, and parking needs, parking spaces might be removed to facilitate selected sidewalk widening and pedestrian amenities such as trees and benches.

## Destination Alley



To encourage their use as alternative open spaces, design treatments on the Destination alleys might include entry gates, decorative single-surface paving treatments, banners, pedestrian-scale lighting, plantings, and restricted vehicular access. Given the unique character of each Destination alley, each merits its own design to be developed in conjunction with local merchants and property owners.

## Specific Streetscape Plans

The following specific street designs are recommended in addition to the standard Base Case designs which represent the minimum level of improvements for all downtown streets:

**Beale:** Second Level Street improvements.

**Bush:** Second Level Street improvements; corner bulbing at Kearny; preservation of historic teardrop lighting.

**California:** Special Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening to 19' on all blocks; pedestrian signage and kiosks.

**Cyril Magnin:** Right turn on red ban at Ellis; restricted bus movements.

**Fifth:** Transit stop improvements; pedestrian safety signage.

**First:** Transit stop improvements.

**Fourth:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening from Market to Harrison; transit stop improvements; pedestrian signage; right turn on red ban; pedestrian safety signage; extended pedestrian crossing times.

**Fremont:** Transit stop improvements; pedestrian safety signage.

**Front:** Second Level Street improvements; corner bulbs at California and Sacramento; tree clusters at corners; lunchtime mall street closure.

**Geary:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening at Kearny, Stockton, and across from Union Square; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements; mid-block entrance into Union Square; transit stop improvements; hanging planters and decorative flowers facing Union Square.

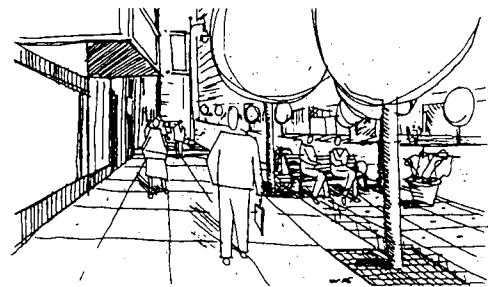
**Grant:** Special Level Street improvements; corner bulbs at Post, Geary, and Sutter; distinctive paving and banners; limited traffic access; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements; sidewalk public toilets; mid-block crossing at Maiden Lane.

**Kearny:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk element restrictions; north-south corner bulbs ("snippets") at Sutter and Bush; pedestrian signage; right turn on red ban; pedestrian safety signage.

**Mason:** Tourist-oriented signage.

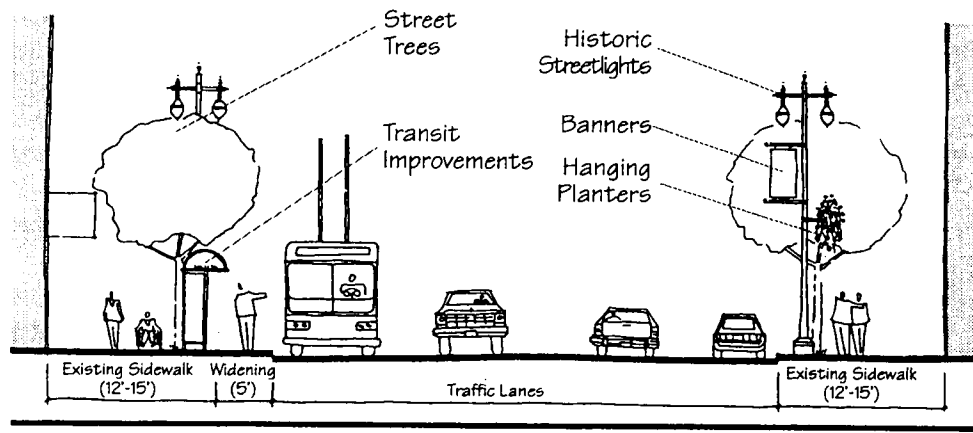


**Grant Avenue Improvements**



**Kearny Street "Snippet"**

# Street Designs



**Mission Street Concept Diagram**

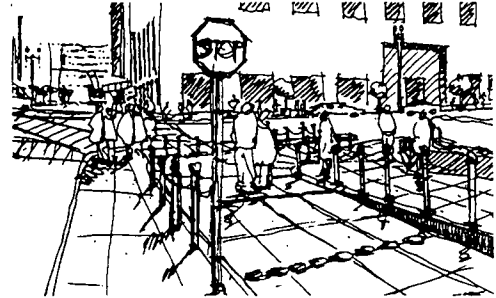
- Mission:** Special Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening; corner bus bulbs; distinctive paving; transit stop improvements; pedestrian-oriented lighting; pedestrian signage.
- Montgomery:** Special Level Street improvements including distinctive paving; sidewalk element restrictions; in-ground trees; north-south corner bulbs at Sutter, Bush, Pine, and California; pedestal-mount newsracks; 1'-2' sidewalk widening from Market to California; pedestrian signage; public art program.
- New Mont.:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk sitting areas and tree clusters; historical/informational signage.
- O'Farrell:** Bus bulbs and transit amenities; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements.
- Post:** Second Level Street improvements; distinctive "Post Street Promenade" improvements; bus bulbs at transit stops; sidewalk widening facing Union Square; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements; mid-block entrance into Union Square; hanging planters and decorative flowers facing Union Square.
- Powell:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk element restrictions; sidewalk widening from Ellis to Geary; in-ground tree clusters; international flags/banners; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements; pedestrian-scale lighting; cable car turnaround area improvements.
- Sansome:** Lunchtime street closure between Sutter and Bush.
- Second:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk sitting areas and tree clusters; historical/informational signage.
- Stuart:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening east sidewalk between Mission and Howard.
- Stockton:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening between Geary and O'Farrell; rebuild Sutter Street crossing island; pedestrian signage and sidewalk directional elements; pedestrian-scale lighting; designated street artist placements.
- Sutter:** Base Case Street improvements; bus bulbs and transit improvements.

# Street Designs

## Specific Alleyway Designs

**Third:** Second Level Street improvements; sidewalk widening between Mission and Howard; public art program including banners; pedestrian information and safety signage; right turn on red ban; signalized mid-block crossing between Mission and Howard; extended pedestrian crossing time.

**Union Square:** Rebuild crossing islands; add yield for pedestrians signage; pedestrian scramble crosswalk.



**Union Square Corner Improvements**

The following specific alleyway designs are recommended in addition to the standard Walkthrough Alley (Base Case) designs which represent the minimum level of improvements for all pedestrian alleys:

**Belden:** Destination Alley improvements; single-surface paving; traffic restrictions.

**Campton:** Destination Alley improvements; single-surface paving; traffic restrictions.

**Claude:** Destination Alley improvements; single-surface paving; traffic restrictions.

**Commercial:** Destination Alley improvements between Montgomery and Sansome.

**Ecker:** Traffic restrictions; single-surface paving.

**Leidesdorff:** Destination Alley improvements between Sacramento and Clay; traffic restrictions.

**Hunt/Natoma:** Destination Alley improvements between Third and New Montgomery.

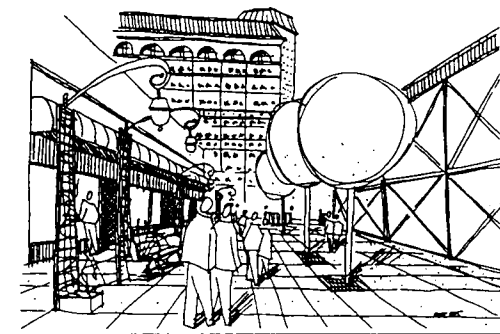
**Maiden Lane:** Destination Alley improvements; single-surface brick paving; information/historical kiosks; benches; signalized crosswalk at Grant Avenue.

**St. George:** Destination Alley improvements.

**Garden Walks:** Develop pedestrian-only mid-block garden walkways from Yerba Buena Center to Market Street, in the Terminal Separator right-of-way, and along Minna Street..

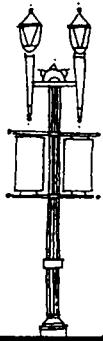


**Improvements on Maiden Lane**

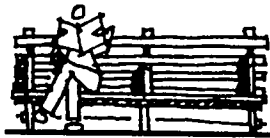


**YBC Garden Walk to Market Street**

# Typology Elements



1. Banners



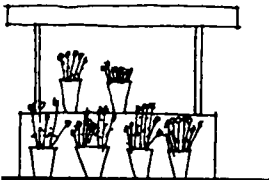
2. Benches



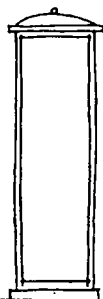
3. Bicycle Racks



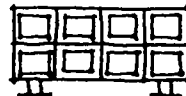
4. Bollards



5. Flowerstands



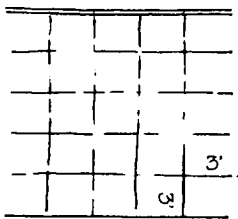
6. Kiosks



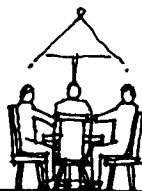
7. Newsracks



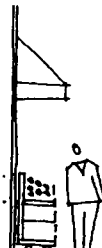
8. Planters



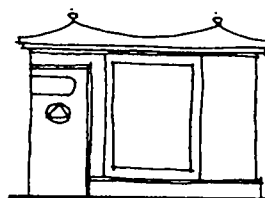
9. Sidewalk Paving



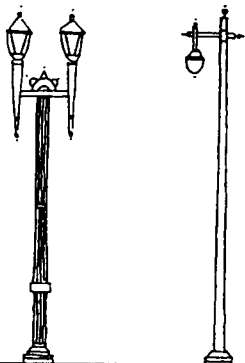
10. Sidewalk Cafes



11. Sidewalk Displays



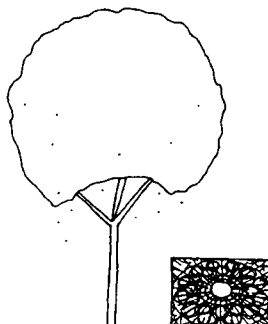
12. Sidewalk Toilets



13. Historic Streetlights



14. Trashcans



15. Trees/Grates



16. Vendors



