

# Noe Valley's 24th Street ...An Urban Village



Plan prepared for



Noe Valley Association

Plan prepared by

URBAN ECOLOGY



# Noe Valley's 24th Street...An Urban Village

## The Final Plan

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## Introduction

Noe Valley, a quiet neighborhood nestled in San Francisco's hills, is one of the city's most desired and lively residential locations. Over the years it has gained the reputation of being a "village within a city" where small-town amenities like grocers, bakers and shoe repair stores are within walking distance of its Victorian era homes. Noe Valley was one of the few parts of the city that survived the Great Earthquake of 1906 and the devastating fire that followed. The wooden Victorian and Edwardian houses that line the neighborhood streets show the charm of old San Francisco.

The main commercial street that services this historic community is 24<sup>th</sup> Street between Church and Douglass Streets. This stretch of 24<sup>th</sup> Street bustles with activity for most of the day: its sunny sidewalk cafes, quaint stores and gourmet restaurants, not only provide the local residential community with a range of conveniences for its daily needs, but also attract people from throughout the city with a variety shopping and dining choices.

Great streets are places where people can walk comfortably and safely, shaded by trees and surrounded by neighbors. 24<sup>th</sup> Street is an active, attractive place that can be made even better. The Noe Valley Association, a Community Benefits District (CBD) of San Francisco initiated the streetscape plan for "Noe Valley's 24<sup>th</sup> Street- An Urban Village" to enhance this great community resource. The Association is made up of concerned property owners, residents and merchants along 24th Street between Church Street and Diamond Street, and along Castro Street between Elizabeth and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets, where most of the commercial activity is located. The goals of the CBD are to increase commerce, make Noe Valley a better place to shop, beautify the neighborhood, develop public spaces and allow the business and property owners to have input into the revitalization and maintenance of the district.



Noe Valley's quiet residential streets



Noe Valley's 24th Street

*"There'll be laughing, singing,  
music and swinging...  
Dancing in the streets"*

**Martha and the Vandellas**

The CBD was established in August 2005 and has since gained 501(c) 3 status from the IRS, which enables the organization to apply for federal, state and local grants in addition to seeking philanthropic funds to complete its projects. This CBD consists of 168 parcels that are able to assess additional taxes, amounting to approximately \$230,000. It uses a large part of its funds for sidewalk and public right-of-way maintenance, including regular street cleaning, graffiti removal and tree maintenance. Approximately 9% of the annual budget is allocated for public space development and streetscape improvements, including beautification, marketing, district promotions and special events such as farmers' markets and street festivals.



At the request of the Noe Valley Association, Urban Ecology, a San Francisco non-profit organization that specializes in community design and planning, undertook a rigorous community-based process which led to a vision and final plan for 24th Street. A series of three well-attended community meetings were conducted over a six-month period. Each meeting presented a design based on input from community and its first hand experience of the street.



This plan is meant to guide the long-term streetscape improvements along 24th Street, from technical engineering changes like extending the sidewalks to simple changes like installing new trash cans. The plan portrays a comprehensive vision that incorporates recommendations from the local community as well as from various city departments. The changes proposed would be implemented over the next 15 to 20 years, in order to take advantage of the city's capital improvement programs and other governmental funding.

This document is meant to be a reference handbook that summarizes the process and the final proposed design. The plan goes hand in hand with the "Complete Street" Toolkit, which is a directory of the various physical elements that can be incorporated into the streetscape. The Toolkit includes details of the permitting processes involved, contact information for the various concerned departments, costs and successful examples from other cities of the elements proposed in the plan.



## Vision and Goals of the Plan

The Noe Valley Association envisions 24th Street as a destination for local residents and visitors alike. The plan proposes strategies that would enhance the pedestrian experience of the street while addressing the need for amenities that encourage community interaction and taking into account environmental concerns. With the formation of the CBD, which will remain an active organization for the next 14 years, long-term streetscape improvement projects have the possibility of becoming a reality.

What follows is a list of the major goals of the plan, along with a brief summary of the actions recommended to accomplish these goals.

### Goal

To bring out the “family friendly” nature of the street.

### Recommended Actions

- Employ traffic-calming strategies to create a safe pedestrian-oriented street.
- Introduce amenities that contribute to community building and enhance social interaction like benches and landscaped areas that promote conversation.
- Introduce public art in multiple forms to create a livelier street.
- Examine the feasibility of Safe Routes to School projects to improve pedestrian safety.

### Goal

To create a distinct identity for the commercial corridor.

### Recommended Actions

- Enhance the urban village experience and the already-existing family-friendly atmosphere.
- Create a theme or logo that would be incorporated into customized street furniture like benches, bike racks and trash cans.
- Introduce other street furnishings like banners and unique pedestrian-scale lighting to identify the neighborhood.

*There is never a better way of  
taking in life than  
walking in the street.*

**Henry James**



24th Street is a family friendly experience



- Encourage street fairs on sections of the street that can be temporarily closed down such as the Harvest Festival and the Saturday farmers markets, to encourage pedestrian activity.

## Goal

To make “complete streets” that caters to the needs of a diverse group of people with a high level of amenities, accessibility and environmentally sound features. “Complete Streets” is a concept that incorporates all necessary facilities so the public can fully enjoy the street. It includes sidewalks of adequate width, necessary furnishings, safety features and provisions for “universal access” enabling all citizens to comfortably use the street.

## Recommended Actions

- Introduce street amenities in the Complete Street Toolkit as proposed in the final design.
- Ensure the proper installation of curb ramps with tactile detectable warnings at all intersections.
- Introduce audible countdowns at traffic lights.
- Install permeable sidewalks when property owners repave their sidewalks.
- Use environmental sustainability to guide decisions when buying street furnishings like wooden benches, energy efficient street lighting, etc.
- Design and install landscaping using drought-tolerant, non-invasive or native plant and tree species that are easier to maintain and that are less resource intensive.



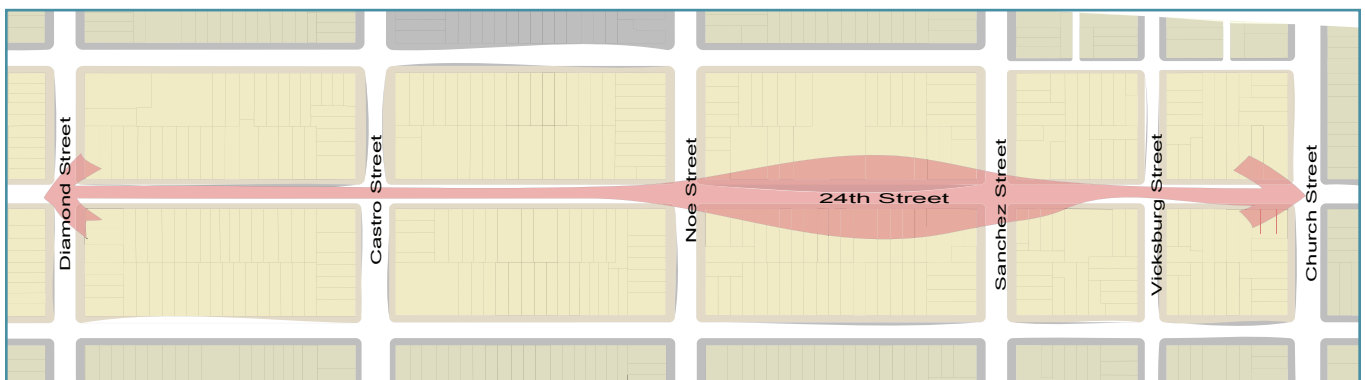
Street furnishings create a well-used, distinct street

## Summary of Community Outreach Meetings

### Concept Presentation

The first meeting with the Noe Valley Community was held on 16 November 2006 at the St. Phillips Parish Community Hall. The meeting was attended by members of the community who were eager to participate in the planning process. Urban Ecology presented three conceptual schemes of how 24th Street could be improved. The first scheme was titled “The Village Center,” the second “The Village Hubs” and the third “The Village Streets”.

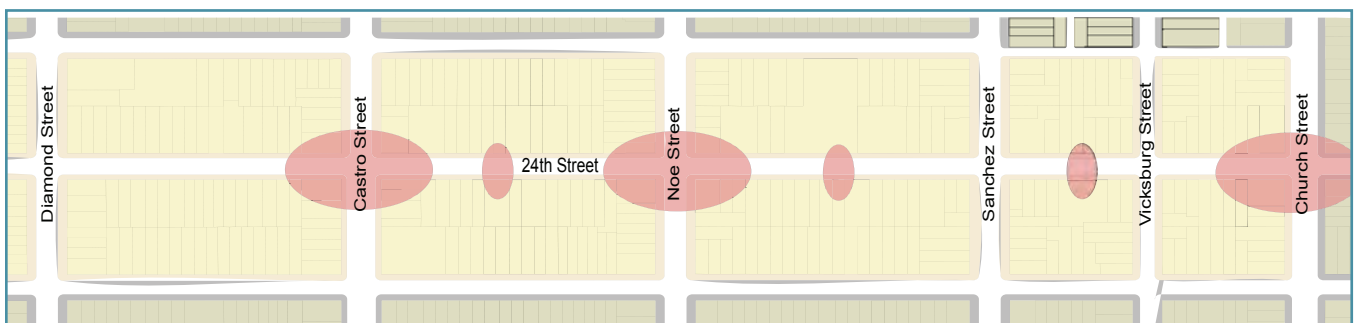
The Village Center proposal included a mid-block crosswalk in front of the Bell Market, between Noe and Sanchez Streets, and sidewalk extensions along either side of the crosswalk. The extended sidewalk along with the currently existing landscaped areas at the Bell Market parking lot would be consolidated as a community space meant to promote interaction among people. This scheme also proposed traffic-calming measures like bus bulb-outs at Noe and Sanchez Streets so that streets could be closed to traffic and opened to pedestrian activities like street fairs and markets. This newly created village center would have a concentration of amenities like landscaping, public art and seating spaces.



**The Village Center**

The second scheme, the “Village Hubs,” proposed focused improvements in more numerous but smaller hubs along 24th Street. These were categorized as “Transit Hubs” along the transit lines through and across 24th Street at Church, Noe and Castro Streets.

Additionally, “Community’ Hubs” at already-existing community gathering spaces were proposed, such as the public parking lot between Noe and Castro Streets, enhancing the parking lot belonging



**The Village Hubs**



to the church between Vicksburg and Sanchez Streets, and the Bell Market parking lot between Sanchez and Noe Streets. The “Transit Hubs” addressed traffic calming at these critical intersections while the “Community Hubs” included amenities encouraging social gathering, such as seating and landscaping.

The third concept, the “Village Streets,” focused on the entire length of 24th Street. It distributed street furnishing all along the street rather than focusing on particular zones or hubs.



### The Village Streets

This first meeting consisted of a presentation by the design team and a detailed public discussion about the various proposals. This was followed by two interactive exercises that sought and elicited further community input. The first exercise, during which the participants chose and ranked the three proposed concepts, resulted in the majority of those present voting for the “Village Hubs” proposal. The second exercise was a mock “shopping” exercise where the participants went shopping for street furnishings. The design team introduced a catalog of all the possible street furnishings that could contribute to the improvement of the streetscape. The community was given “dots” that represented a fixed allocation of “taxpayer” money that they then “spent,” thus enabling a quantifiable prioritization of preferred elements that reflected the desire of the Noe Valley community.

Urban Ecology developed a preliminary plan based on input from both the community in the first meeting and from city staff in various concerned bureaus of the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Transportation Authority, etc.

COMPLETE STREET COMPONENT	\$\$
Bus bulbs-outs	370
High-visibility crosswalks	327
Planters	300
Permeable sidewalks	282
Pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting	164
Landscaped sidewalk buffers	127
Street clocks	78
Art wraps	70
Benches	61
Trash cans	58
Countdown signals	40
Sidewalk medallions	33
Tree grates	33
Way-finding boards	25
Banners	22
Bus shelters	20
Bike racks	19
News boxes	18
Bulletin boards	9
Artistic bollards/ Public art	4
Neighborhood identification signs	0

Tally of the mock shopping exercise that prioritized street furnishings, showing the components that the community would spend their money on.

A second community workshop was held on 12 December 2006, to gather the community's feedback on the preliminary plan. This time around, the interactive exercises were designed around small groups to solicit more detailed input from the community- the daily users of the street and thus the "experts." Urban Ecology created scaled models of a typical hub, in this case the intersection of Castro and 24th Streets. The workshop participants placed street furnishing such as benches, news boxes, clocks, street lamps, bus shelters, etc., onto the model as each group deemed fit. This exercise helped Urban Ecology gain intimate knowledge of the challenges faced by the proposed preliminary plan and their possible solutions.

A third workshop was held on 6 March 2007 to discuss the final plan that resulted from the second set of revisions. In this well-attended meeting we also discussed methods of funding the project and expectations within the community about the long-term implementation plan that will be tied to the city's various capital improvement efforts.

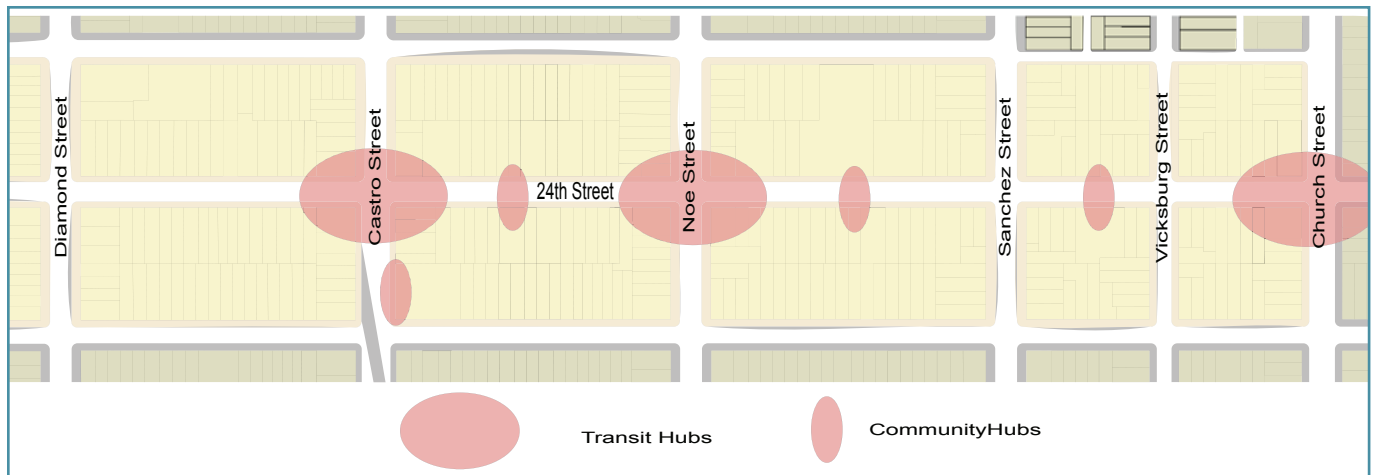


**Top:** Meeting 1 -the shopping exercise.  
**Middle:** Meeting 3 -sidewalk scaled models.  
**Bottom:** Meeting 3 - presentation and discussion.  
**Left:** Meeting 2 - hub scaled model interactive exercise.



## The Final Plan

Following the community's selection of the "Village Hubs" as a concept that would guide the design, a plan was developed involving both structural and engineering improvements to the sidewalks, like bus bulb-outs, and installation of street furnishings, like landscaping and lighting. New hubs have been designed at the key intersections of Castro Street, Noe Street and Church Street, and existing possibilities of "community hubs" have been strengthened and enhanced in this proposal. Community hubs have been proposed at sites like parking lots, both public and private. This section will present the plan, as both an overall strategy and as a detailed description of the individual elements.



## The Transit Hubs

Transit hubs have been proposed at certain key intersections to respond to transit needs in the street as well as to enhance the pedestrian environment. These hubs introduce amenities that improve the street for better transit and better community life of 24th Street, making it a friendlier, calmer, more accessible and more beautiful street. The main feature of the transit hub is the bus bulb-out. Bus bulb-outs are sidewalk extensions, in this case up to a maximum of 6 feet from the current curb into the traffic lane with the following goals in mind: to calm traffic in this busy intersection, which has a record number of collision-related accidents to increase the sidewalk area in order to provide space for landscaping and street furnishings, and to increase the efficiency of the transit busses so they do not have to veer in and out of the bus zone. An added advantage of introducing this element is that bus zones that otherwise occupy about 80 feet would now be bus bulb-outs of about 40 feet, freeing up some space for parking.

## The Castro Street Hub

The main features of the Castro-24th Street hub are the four bus bulb-outs. Such extensions are proposed on the south-east corner and north-west corner of 24th Street, Similar bus bulb-outs have also been proposed on the south-east and south-west corners of Castro Street. Due to the two perpendicular bus bulb-outs at the south-west corner of this intersection, the drainage catch basin will have to be moved. This expensive operation could be avoided at the other locations of the bus bulb-outs by designing with suitable bulb-out radii. The bulb-outs suggested in this conceptual plan will have to go through detailed design and engineering for a final approved version.

**Below:** Castro Street and 24th Street before proposed improvements

**Far Below:** Castro Street and 24th Street after proposed sidewalk extension and streetscape improvements



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### The Church Street Hub

The main feature of the Church-24th Street hub is the additional bus bulb-out at the south-west corner, complementing the one that already exists at the north-west corner of the street.

### The Noe Street Hub

The main feature of the Noe-24th Street hub are its two bus bulb-outs proposed on the north-east corner and south-west corner of 24th Street, once again to calm traffic and to increase the sidewalk area. The drainage catch basin does not need to be moved in this case.

### Common Features of Transit Hubs

1. The center line of the traffic lanes would require re-striping in order to allow traffic to pass a stopped bus at the bus bulb-outs.
2. The plan also recommends installing well-designed bus shelters in the extended space that the bulb-outs provide.
3. At either edge of the bus bulb-out, pockets of landscaping using drought tolerant, non-invasive and where possible, native plant species would be planted.
4. The plan also recommends that the current news boxes be replaced with consolidated pedestal news racks as per the city's news rack program. These consolidated news racks are proposed to occupy the last six feet of the bus bulb-out, at the edge of the landscaped pocket facing the sidewalk.
5. Each bus bulb-out should be installed with two pedestrian sidewalk lights to create a safe pedestrian atmosphere at night.
6. Each corner should be made handicap accessible by installing two curb ramps that lead into the crosswalk with tactile detectable warning strips.
7. Crosswalks should be made more visible by striping it in the yellow ladder pattern, and/or re-texturing and coloring the asphalt (refer to the Complete Street Toolkit).
8. Permeable pavers and landscaping may be installed where indicated on the plan to increase the environmental sensitivity of the street and to create a unified paving aesthetic along 24th Street.
9. Unique and aesthetically unified trash cans should be installed at each bus bulb-out (and along the rest of 24th Street).

*A great city is, to be sure,  
the school for studying life.*

**Dr. Samuel Johnson**

(Refer to the plans in the following page.)



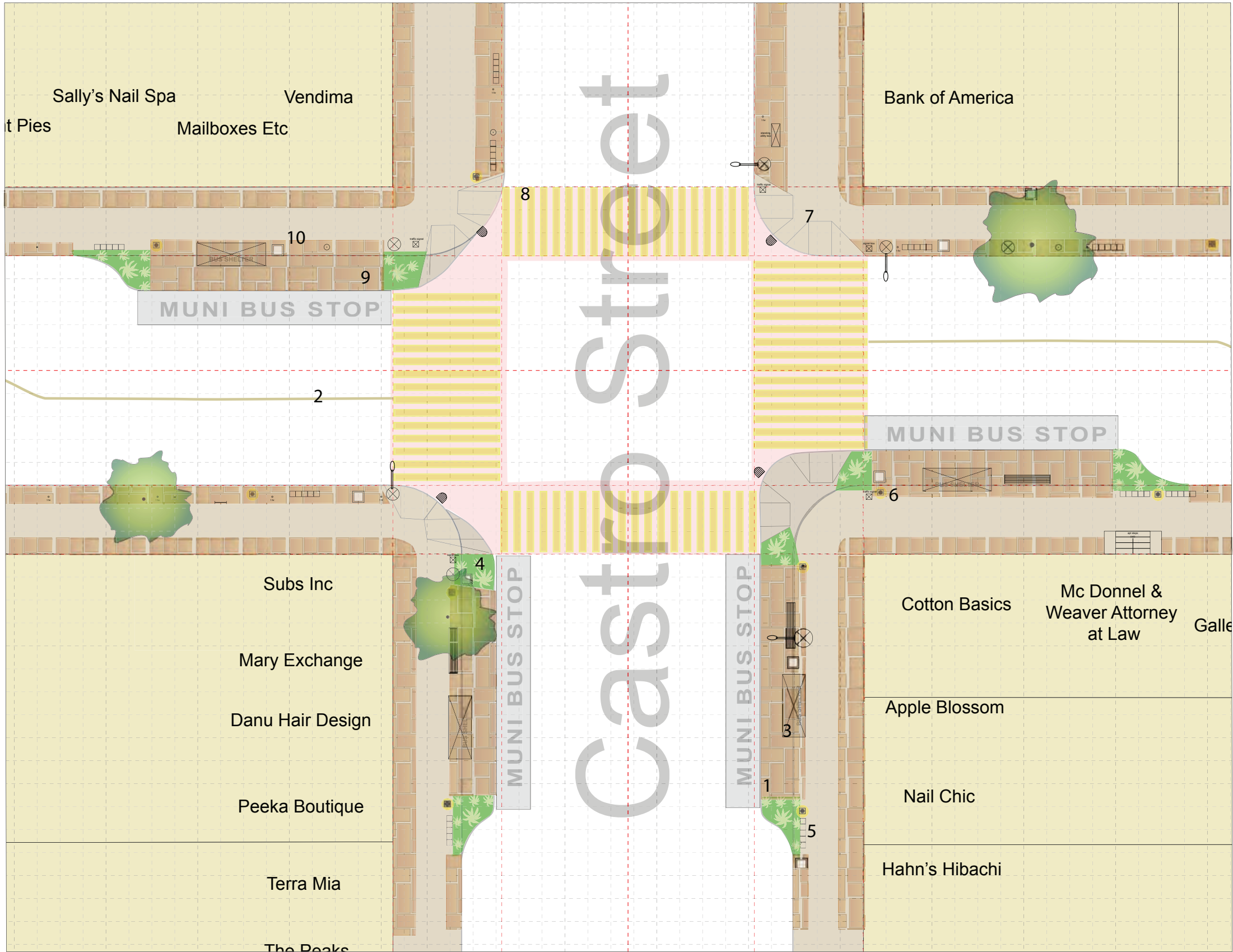


**Right:** Noe Street and 24th Street before proposed improvements

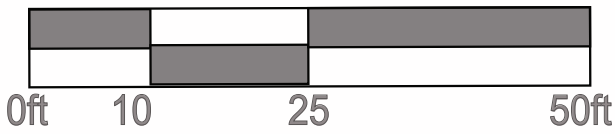
**Above:** Noe Street and 24th Street after proposed bus bulb out and streetscape improvements

**Below:** Ideas for sidewalk treatment using colored and textured paving and landscaping



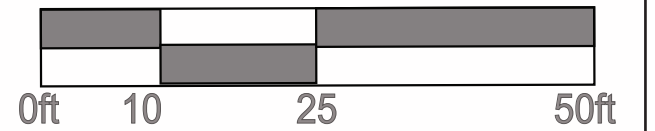


Key to Symbols				
Tree	Planter	Bench	Table	Newsboxes
Bicycle Rack	Utility Pole	Fire Hydrant	Trashbin	Parking Meter
Drain	Parking Sign	Streetlamp	Pay Phone	P.O. Box
Handicap Parking	Signpost	Awning	Store Sales Racks	Sidewalk Lighting
				Driveway



Note: Conceptual Drawing: Not for construction

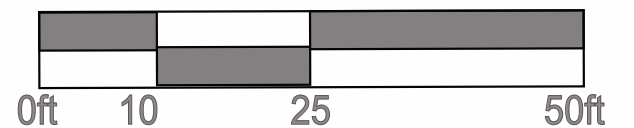
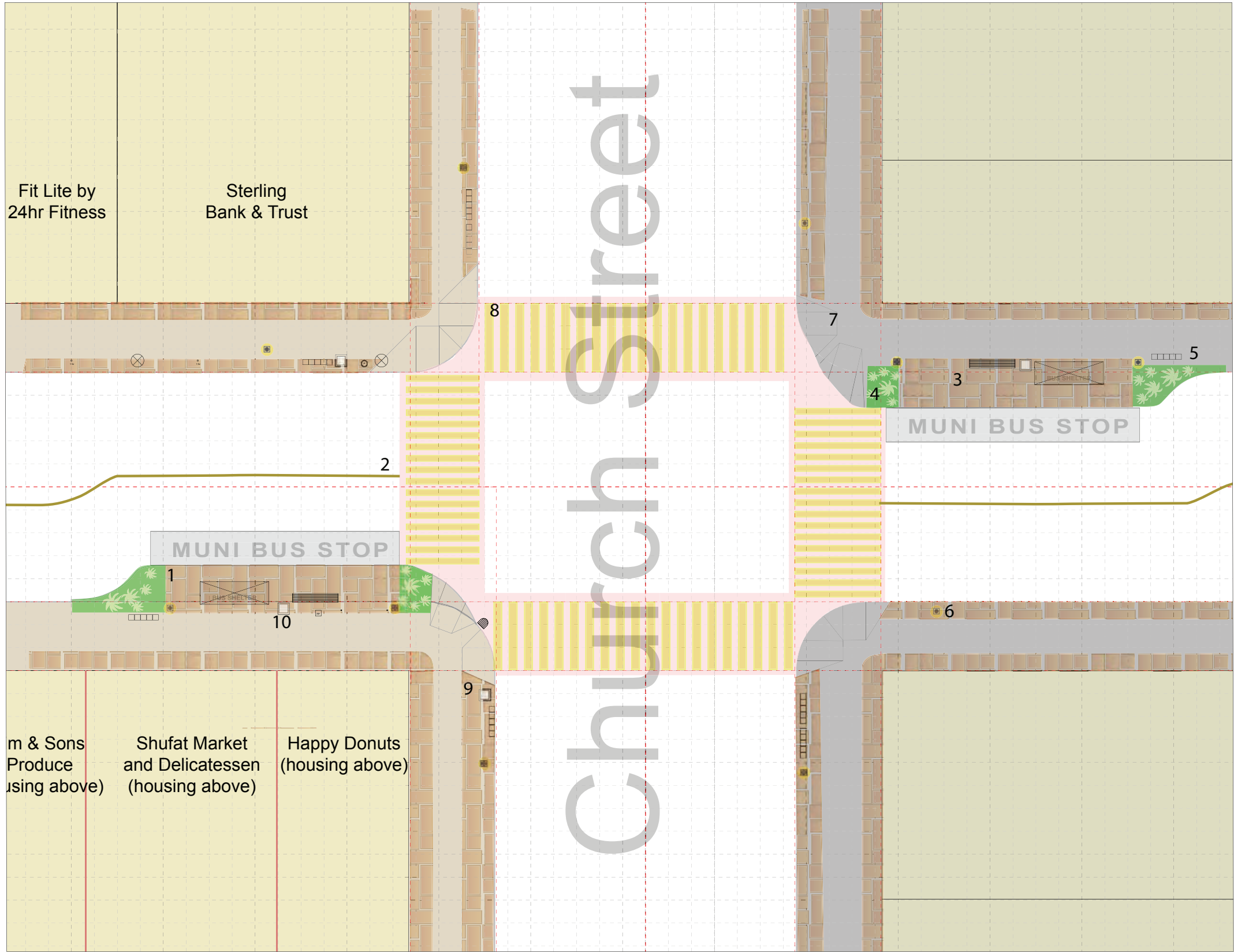




Note: Conceptual Drawing: Not for construction

### Key to Symbols

<p>Tree</p>	<p>Planter</p>	<p>Bench</p>	<p>Table</p>	<p>Newsboxes</p>
<p>Bicycle Rack</p>	<p>Utility Pole</p>	<p>Fire Hydrant</p>	<p>Trashbin</p>	<p>Parking Meter</p>
<p>Drain</p>	<p>Parking Sign</p>	<p>Streetlamp</p>	<p>Pay Phone</p>	<p>P.O. Box</p>
<p>Handicap Parking</p>	<p>Signpost</p>	<p>Awning</p>	<p>Store Sales Racks</p>	<p>Sidewalk Lighting</p>
				<p>Driveway</p>



Note: Conceptual Drawing: Not for construction

Key to Symbols			
Tree	Planter	Bench	Table
Newsboxes			
Bicycle Rack	Utility Pole	Fire Hydrant	Trashbin
Parking Meter			
Drain	Parking Sign	Streetlamp	Pay Phone
P.O. Box			
Handicap Parking	Signpost	Awning	Store Sales Racks
Sidewalk Lighting	Driveway		

## Community Hubs

Community hubs are spaces of social gathering, where people come to meet their neighbors and perhaps enjoy a conversation in the sun, or sit with a coffee and watch the street life around them. The locations for this kind of activity are the various parking lots in the project area as described below. The plan recommends softening the edges of the parking lots by introducing landscaping and seating areas. These spaces should also incorporate other street furnishing like street lamps, news racks and trash cans. They can serve as points for community-based public art. Here are a few places this could work well.

### Bell Market Community Hub (between Sanchez and Noe Streets)

The final plan proposes a “community hub” that consolidates the frontage area of the Bell Market parking lot to include landscaped areas and public seating spaces, along with public art and consolidated news racks to remove the visual clutter. (See photo simulation below.)

**Below:** The Bell Market parking lot as it exists today

**Far below:** The Bell Market community hub with possible improvements





### Public Parking Lot - Community Hub (between Noe Street and Castro Street)

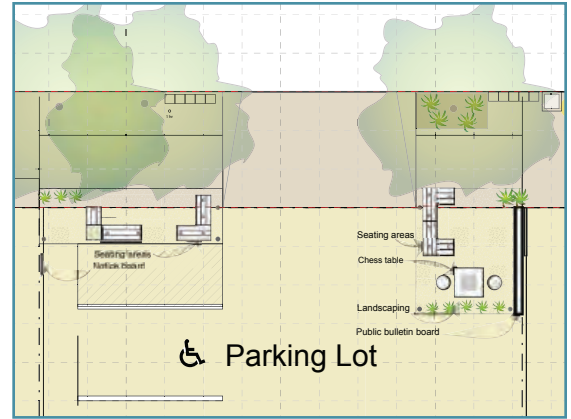
Using a similar strategy, Urban Ecology proposed a design to soften the hard edges of the walled public parking lot between Noe and Castro Streets. In place of the wall, the design incorporates game tables, a public notice board, and landscaped seating spaces where benches face each other to promote conversation. Additionally, the plan proposes installing pedestrian-scale street lighting, trash cans and news racks where space permits.

### Church Parking Lot - Community Hub (between Vicksburg Street and Church Street)

The recently renovated landscaped seating area at the Church parking lot has set a very good precedent and serves the community very well. It is especially well used during the Saturday farmers markets and on sunny days. This well-landscaped “conversational” community space is an example of a community resource that augments the already existing neighborhood feel of 24th Street. The plan proposes to enhance this characteristic by adding features like pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, consolidated news racks, etc. This along with the other streetscape improvements will unify the hub on 24th Street.

### Walgreens Parking Lot - Community Hub (Castro Street)

Similar enhancements are proposed around the Walgreens parking lot, which is currently bound by a wall. The wall could be replaced with landscaped seating areas and other supporting street furnishings such as lighting and public art.



The proposed plan for the Public Parking Lot between Noe and Castro Streets with landscaped seating areas



The existing community hub between Church and Vicksburg Streets



The existing Walgreens parking lot that is a possible site for future improvements

## Typical Sidewalks

The plan in the previous page shows a typical sidewalk that comprises of 3 zones:

### The Storefront Furnishing Zone

This zone is the closest three feet of the 12 foot sidewalk to the building property line or storefront edge. This zone can serve as a street furnishing zone, which is occupied by store display items like shelves with books, flowers and other wares. It could also be occupied by café or restaurant tables and merchants' benches. The plan encourages such furnishings, which bring life out onto the street, creating a friendly, cheerful environment.

### The Clear Travel Way Zone

The next six feet adjacent to the storefront zone is the clear zone reserved for foot traffic. This zone should not be encroached by furnishings that might obstruct pedestrian movement. More important, this space should be kept clear and smooth to ensure access for wheelchairs, strollers and walkers. Street advertising signs should not be placed in this zone.

### The Street-front Furnishing Zone

The three feet of sidewalk in between the travel way clear zone and the curb can be called the "street front furnishing zone." This zone acts as a buffer between the pedestrian and vehicular traffic to create a feeling of pedestrian safety. This zone is occupied by trees, low landscaping up to the height of 3 feet, parking meters, pedestrian-scale street lights, trash cans where needed, pedestal news racks where space permits and colored or textured paving. These amenities are functional but also enhance the physical and psychological buffer between autos and pedestrians. The plan also recommends tree grates over tree basins to increase the walkable space of the sidewalk. This is the zone that should have maximum permeability to allow rainwater to seep into the water table and not into the overburdened storm drains. Once City standards are set, permeable concrete can pave the sidewalk as it is replaced.



Storefront furnishing zone occupied by benches, and spill-over wares that liven the street

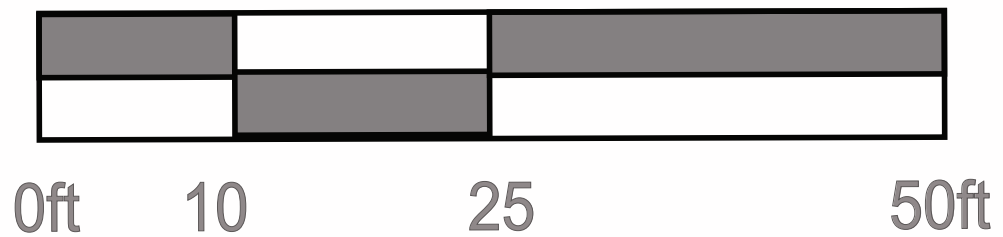
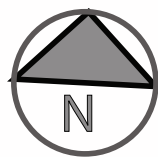
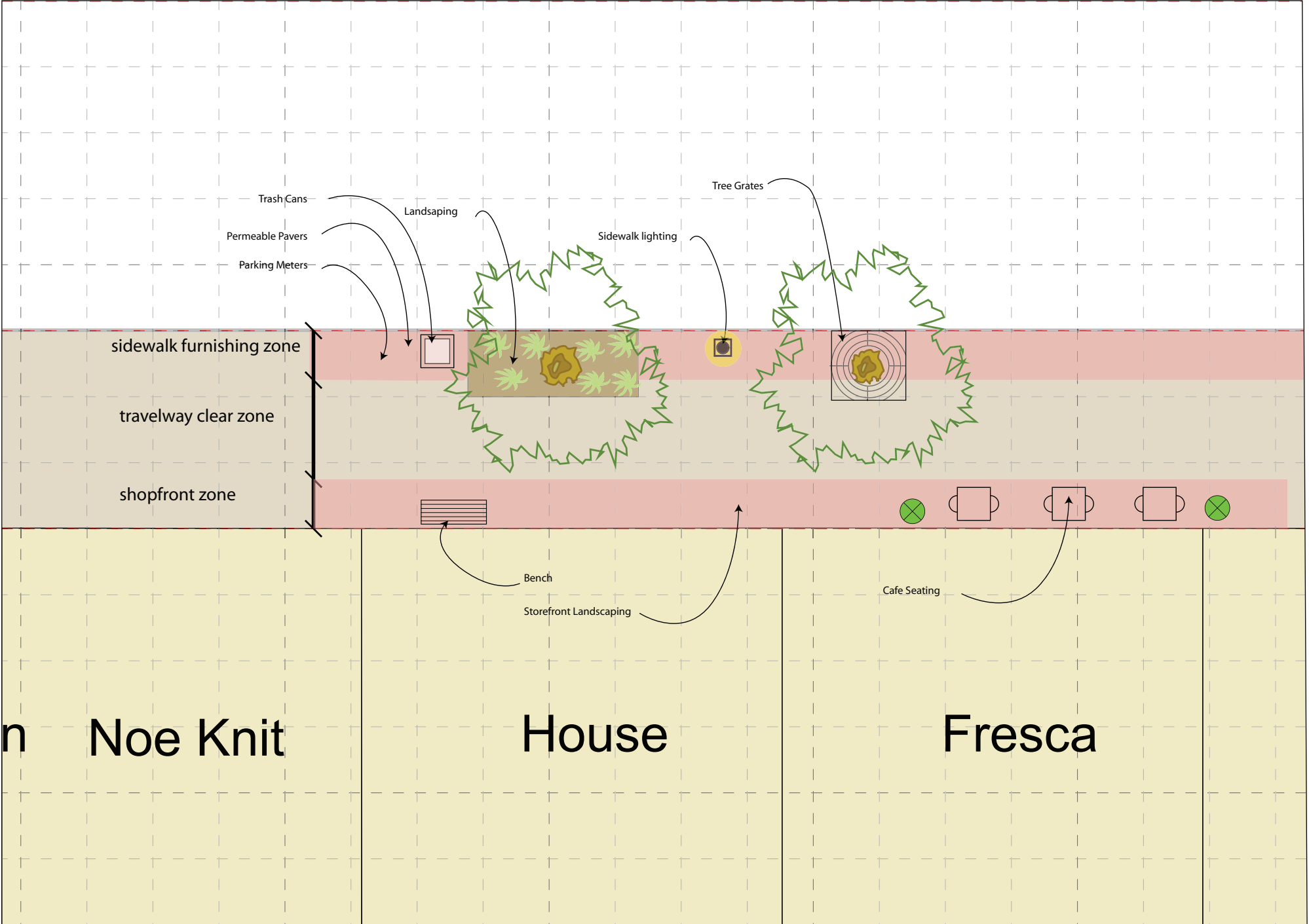


Clear 'travel way' for unobstructed pedestrian movement



Street front furnishing like news boxes, trees, parking meters etc. can be upgraded.





Note: Conceptual Drawing: Not for construction

Key to Symbols	<p>Handicap Parking</p> <p>Signpost</p> <p>Awning</p> <p>Store Sales Racks</p> <p>Sidewalk Lighting</p> <p>Driveway</p>
	<p>Drain</p> <p>Parking Sign</p> <p>Streetlamp</p> <p>Pay Phone</p> <p>P.O. Box</p>
	<p>Bicycle Rack</p> <p>Utility Pole</p> <p>Fire Hydrant</p> <p>Trashbin</p> <p>Parking Meter</p>
	<p>Tree</p> <p>Planter</p> <p>Bench</p> <p>Table</p> <p>Newsboxes</p>

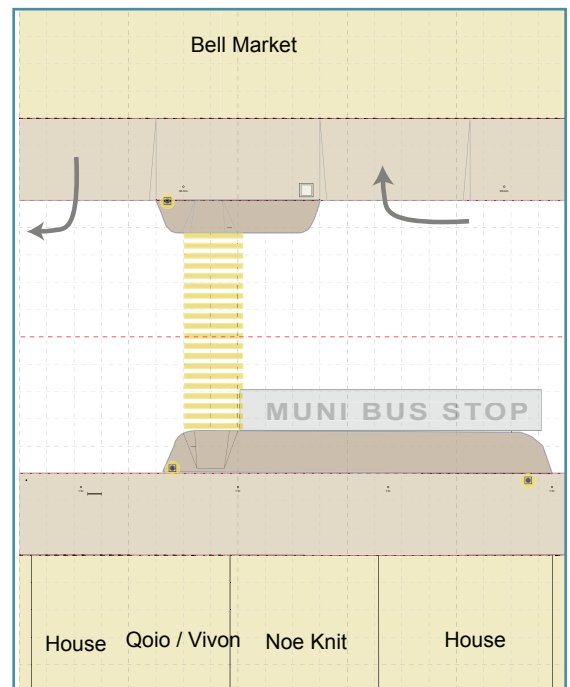
## Other Recommendations /Alternates

- **The Diamond Street Hub**

The plan proposes a bus bulb-out similar to the other transit hubs on the north-east corner of 24th Street. The other existing bus zones at this intersection are interrupted with driveways and thus cannot be converted into bulb outs. Despite the lesser volume of traffic at this intersection, landscaping and sidewalk lighting could be introduced.

- **The Bell Market Crosswalk and Sidewalk Extensions.**

The 'Village Center' proposal recommended that the eastbound bus stops on 24th Street at Noe and Sanchez be consolidated into one mid-block bus stop opposite Bell Market. This would encourage the Noe Valley community to use public transit for their daily grocery shopping. This proposal also recommended installing a mid-block crosswalk that would legitimize pedestrians currently "jay walking" in front of Bell Market. The crosswalk was to have linked the south side with a bus-bulb out and the north side with a sidewalk extension. This was meant to slow traffic down and make it easier for pedestrians to cross this busy part of 24th Street. Additionally this would have also prevented westbound vehicles from taking the frequent but illegal left turns out of Bell Market. Both extended sidewalks were designed to accommodate landscaping and seating spaces. This proposal could not be developed because current city guidelines seem to preclude mid-block crosswalks on the grounds that vehicular traffic expects crosswalks only at street intersection. Therefore, city officials will not support this proposal based on their current pedestrian safety concerns. However, other cities (i.e. Berkeley) have such mid-block crossings without traffic hazards. Moreover, it may be possible that these guidelines are re-examined in the future, at which time this idea could be re-assessed.



The Bell Market -'Village Center' as proposed in the first concept, to incorporate sidewalk extensions, a mid-block bus stop and a mid-block crosswalk

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- **Diagonal Parking**

Some merchants in the community voiced the need to increase parking in and around 24th Street. One proposal, diagonal parking along Castro Street between 24th and 25th Streets, was briefly examined. This idea would require detailed studies and feasibility analysis by the various city departments before it can be considered. Although beyond the scope of this plan, it is recommended that this possibility be examined further. The advantage to this proposal is that the road width of Castro Street could be reduced, thereby calming speeding traffic. However, diagonal parking also raises bike safety issues and potential conflicts with MUNI trolley stops.

- **Under-grounding of Wires**

Community members also strongly desire to underground the utility wires that currently contribute to visual clutter on the street. The City of San Francisco has worked on removing the unsightly utility poles and installing the wires beneath the surface of the street especially in other locations. The plan recommends that the utility wires be under-grounded at the earliest feasible time, although it is an expensive process costing approximately \$500,000 per block.

Douglass Street

Diamond Street

Castro Street

24th Street

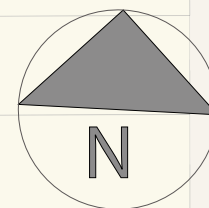
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










Note:  
Conceptual Drawing  
Not for construction

0 20ft 50ft 100ft

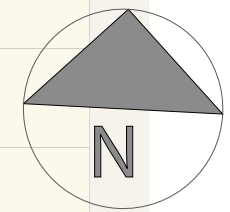
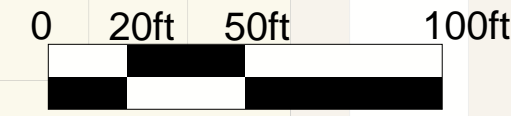
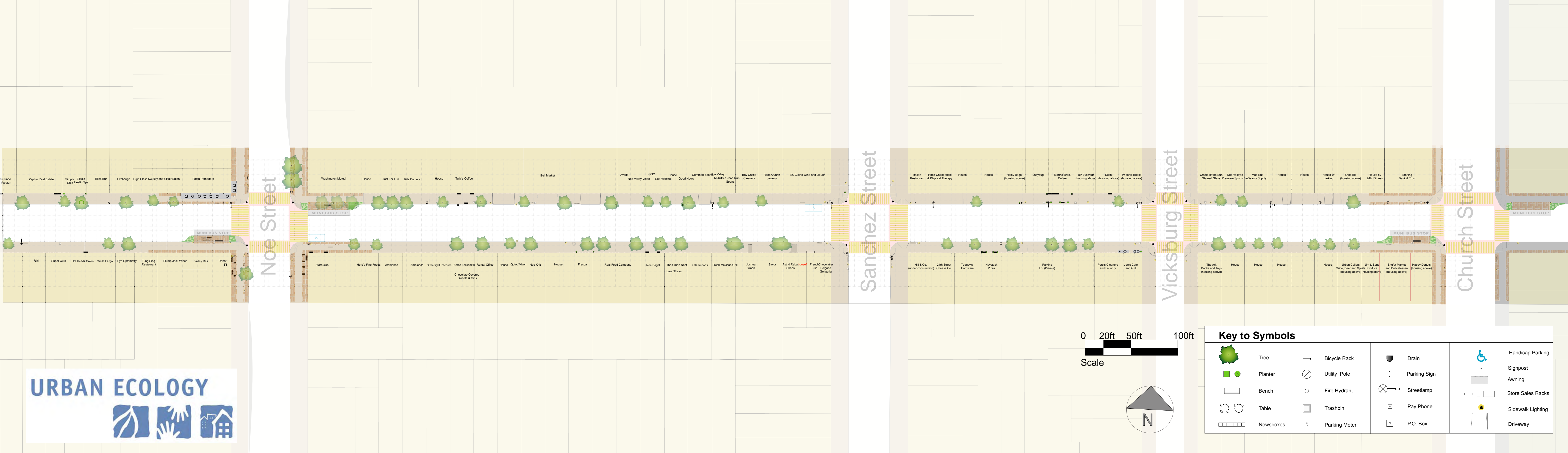
Scale



### Key to Symbols

	Tree		Bicycle Rack		Drain		Handicap Parking
	Planter		Utility Pole		Parking Sign		Signpost
	Bench		Fire Hydrant		Streetlamp		Awning
	Table		Trashbin		Pay Phone		Store Sales Racks
	Newsboxes		Parking Meter		P.O. Box		Sidewalk Lighting
							Driveway





### Key to Symbols

	Tree		Bicycle Rack		Drain		Handicap Parking
	Planter		Utility Pole		Parking Sign		Signpost
	Bench		Fire Hydrant		Streetlamp		Awning
	Table		Trashbin		Pay Phone		Store Sales Racks
	Newsboxes		Parking Meter		P.O. Box		Sidewalk Lighting
							Driveway



## **Plan Elements**

(For more information please refer to the Complete Street Toolkit)

## **Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Improvements**

### **Bus Bulb-outs**

Currently the eastbound stop at the Church street intersection with 24th street has a bus bulb out. The plan recommends similar bus bulb outs at all the bus stops that are currently bus zones, which includes the westbound stop at Church Street, both east and westbound stops at Noe Street and Castro St. At the Castro intersection, the plan also recommends bus bulbs at the south-east and south-west corners at the north and southbound bus stops. Bus Bulb outs will not only provide improvements in transit efficiency, but also calm traffic for dangerous right turns by motor vehicles. Bus bulb-outs also extend sidewalks by adding public space for community use and additional amenities.

### **High-visibility Crosswalks**

Currently, the Castro Street and Douglass Street intersections with 24th Street have high visibility yellow ladder crosswalks. The Noe Street intersection qualifies for a high visibility crosswalk because it is on a school route. The plan recommends that the Noe Valley Association rally for all intersections having high visibility crosswalks on the ground that the street has high pedestrian volumes. This will also achieve a uniform aesthetic appearance along 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Alternatively, all crosswalks could be made high visibility by using other aesthetically appealing materials and textures (see Complete Street Toolkit).

### **Sidewalk Lighting**

The plan recommends the installation of pedestrian scale sidewalk lighting to address pedestrian safety issues after dark. Attractive lighting focused on the sidewalk will also improve the aesthetic appeal of the street. Environmental considerations require cost-effective energy-efficient lamps be installed. Currently, 24th street is only equipped with roadway lights in the form of cobra lamps, and does not have any



Existing high-visibility crosswalks at the intersection of 24th Street and Castro Street

pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting. The provision of sidewalk lighting should be prioritized to the hubs at the designated locations. (See plan)

### **Signalized Intersections with Audible Pedestrian Signals and Timed Countdowns.**

Currently, the Castro intersection is the only one to have traffic lights with pedestrian count down signals. This is a recent improvement in pedestrian safety. If and when the other intersections are signalized, the plan recommends installing pedestrian countdown signals with auditory signals for the disabled community.

### **Curb Ramps**

Currently, only the Castro and Church Street intersections have curb ramps equipped with tactile detectable warnings. These ramps or cuts in the sidewalk that leads into a crosswalk, with the textured pads increase safety and convenience for all citizens. As part of the streetscape plan, it is recommended that every corner at street intersections have two such ramps (totaling to 8 at each intersection), each equipped with tactile detectable warnings. This effort should be incorporated when new bus bulbs are added as recommended in the plan.

## **Street Furnishings**

### **Hanging Baskets**

Hanging baskets with seasonal flowers are recommended to be attached where possible on the new sidewalk light poles. Hanging baskets could also be installed by individual property owners and merchants at their storefronts, signage poles and awnings.

### **Sidewalk Landscaping**

The plan recommends increased sidewalk landscaping to create a family friendly atmosphere and a distinct “village” identity. Sidewalk landscaping can be located in the 3’ furnishing zone on either side of the tree basin, or in a basin location similar to that of the tree well. The plan also recommends sidewalk landscaping below 3 feet in height at the intersections to allow maximum visibility of and by pedestrians entering the road way. Sidewalk landscaping can also be placed along



Newly installed curb ramps at the Castro  
- 24th Street intersection

storefronts in planter boxes with trellises on building walls forming vertical gardens that would attract butterflies. The plan recommends that sidewalk landscaping be introduced into the ground rather than in planters where possible. Removing a small amount of concrete will increase the permeable surface area of the sidewalks. During this planning process, the Noe Valley Association sponsored and installed 66 new street trees. The Association will maintain these great additions to Noe Valley's streetscape.

### Street Clocks

The community valued street clocks high on their priority list. Street clocks can aesthetically enhance the village appeal. They should be installed in locations where they would not obstruct the path of travel. It is recommended that street clocks be situated at the community hubs such as the Bell Market hub.

### Benches

The merchants of Noe Valley's 24th street have set a gracious precedent by providing numerous benches for the community at their shop fronts. These well-used public seating areas should be augmented where possible to continue a family friendly atmosphere.

### Trash cans

24th Street is currently equipped with two trash cans at every intersection. The plan also recommends replacing them with aesthetically pleasing trash cans that would contribute to the distinct identity of 24th Street. Trash cans should be placed at the transit and community hubs and wherever else needed or as space permits. If the existing cans can not be replaced in the near future, they could be painted by local school children as a community art project.

### Tree Grates and Guards

The plan recommends that every tree basin be covered by a tree grate as recommended by the Complete Streets Toolkit. The tree grate should ensure a level surface especially in the 6' Clear Travel Way that would improve accessibility for everyone. This element would be beneficial to the pedestrian experience of



Benches that contribute to the life on the street

24th Street, because its sidewalks are only 12' wide and tend to get crowded at peak times.

### Bus Shelters

24th Street has 3 bus shelters located on the westbound bus stop at the intersection of Church Street, and the eastbound bus stops at the intersection of Castro and Diamond. The plan recommends that with the increased sidewalk space created by the bus bulb outs, bus shelters should be erected at every bulb out. At other bus stops, shelters should be installed if space permits. The plan also recommends exploring better bus shelter designs that are not only more aesthetically appealing, but also better serve transit user wide more effective and comfortable seating, wind barriers and MUNI information.

### News Racks

The merchants and the community in Noe Valley expressed concern about news-boxes as they exist presently. Each newspaper having its own box is not aesthetically coordinated and creates visual clutter. In addition, the clusters of boxes also occupy substantial space on the valuable 12' of sidewalk. The plan recommends installing the consolidated pedestal news rack as part of the city's news rack program. News racks should be installed at the edges of every bulb out, at the edge of the landscaped pockets (so the box front opens onto the sidewalk with the advertisement space faces the street). Landscaping in these pocket parks should be a maximum of 2 ½ feet in height.

### Other Amenities

- **Bike Racks**

The plan recommends replacing the existing bike racks with more 'family friendly' designs that would also contribute to the identity of the street. (Refer to Complete Street Toolkit for more information)

- **Banners:** Colorful banners are usually installed on utility poles and pedestrian scaled street lamps to announce special events like festivals. Once again, such a display of visual material at different scales and heights creates a fun-filled atmosphere in the street.



Consolidated newsracks on Market Street as part of the city's newsrack program



A banner replicating the former Noe Valley Theatre's marquee has been suggested as a possible theme.

- **Public Art:** The plan recommends community based public art by the Noe Valley community. When a community invests in their street by contributing art, the space immediately reflects its family friendly nature. Children from the neighboring Lick and Alvarado schools should be involved in such public art projects. Some ideas include murals made of ceramic tiles or painted, a logo competition for the Noe Valley theme, or art on other street furnishing like mosaic or paint on the existing trash cans, painted benches, fire hydrants and landscape art around parking meters etc.

- **Themed Furnishings:** One way to create a distinct identity for 24th Street is to create a theme which could then be used on customized street furnishing like trash cans, planter boxes, bike racks, benches, tree guards and tree grates. A unified theme will give the district a distinct identity. However, some members of the community have expressed their apprehensions of 'branding' Noe Valley, which might steal from its village reputation.

- **Artistic Bollards:** Bollards are vertical structures that are used for traffic control, either to separate or divert different modes of travel. Usually merely functional, bollards can also be artistic adding to the aesthetic appeal of a streetscape.

- **Art Wraps:** Art Wraps are posters that are about 6 feet tall and wrap around existing utility or light poles to create a cheery street environment.



Themed street furnishing in Oakland's Laurel district: bike rack (above) and trash can (below)

## Environment

- **Permeable sidewalks:** Our streets' surfaces are impervious roads made of asphalt and sidewalks made of concrete. As a result, during the rains water runs off the surface of the streets into the storm water drains. In San Francisco, these drains lead clean water into the sewer system which chemically treats polluted water in order to cleanse it. Overburdening the capacity of the sewers with clean water that does not require chemical treatments causes environmental hazards at many levels. In addition, storm drains themselves reach their capacity during heavy storms, causing low lying areas to flood.

Permeable sidewalks include different strategies to catch rain water where it falls and to allow it to seep into the ground. This not only reduces flooding and relieves the sewer systems, but also recharges the ground water table. One way to do this is to install permeable paving material like porous concrete and pavers especially in travel paths. Lightly used non-travel areas can be dug up to create landscaped beds that also perform the same function.

The plan proposes that the 6 feet clear zone be installed with permeable concrete so as to provide maximum ease for wheelchair access. The 3' feet storefront zone and the 3' sidewalk furnishing zone could employ either of the above mentioned methods to increase permeability.

- **Recycling:** The plan advocates that the streetscape include trash cans that sorts different types of waste, especially recyclable bottles and cans.
- **Appropriate Plant and Tree Species:** The plan also advocates that any landscaped area be planted with non-invasive, drought resistant and where possible native species that are easily adapted to San Francisco's climate requiring less water, fertilizers, etc.
- **Energy efficient Street Lighting:** The plan also recommends choosing energy efficient street lighting and possibly solar street lighting.



Sidewalk landscaping increases the permeability of the street.

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## Action Plan

Of the many proposals in this plan, while some ideas might take a while, others can be implemented in the near future. The following elements of the plan could be pursued in the next few years:

- Flower baskets at storefronts and other permissible locations
- Curb ramps fitted with tactile detectable warnings at all eight corners of each intersection within the area under the CBD.
- Improved entrances to parking lots at Walgreen's and Bell Market to include landscaping and seating areas.
- High-visibility crosswalk at Noe and 24th Street, and colored and textured crosswalks at all intersections.
- Sidewalk landscaping areas and pervious paving along the street-front furnishing zone as sidewalk is repaved
- Public art projects to beautify the street like painting trash cans, installing murals on chosen blank walls, etc.

The conclusion of this design process is the beginning of another – the implementation process. The Noe Valley Association has successfully engaged the citizens, merchants and property owners in crafting a vision and a plan for the future of 24th Street. Now, the exciting work of making this plan a reality begins.

Over the next decades, many changes will occur on 24th Street. The Noe Valley Association with other stakeholders and citizens should remain engaged and aware of all public and private developments to ensure that they are consistent with this plan. A beautiful street that is greener, more accessible and family friendly will be shaped by constant attention and continued initiatives by the community. Urban Ecology was happy to support this effort, salutes the neighbors' hard work and hopes to continue to be involved in Noe Valley.

***It simply never occurs to us to make streets into oases rather than deserts.***  
**Bernard Rudofsky**