SAN FRANCISCO
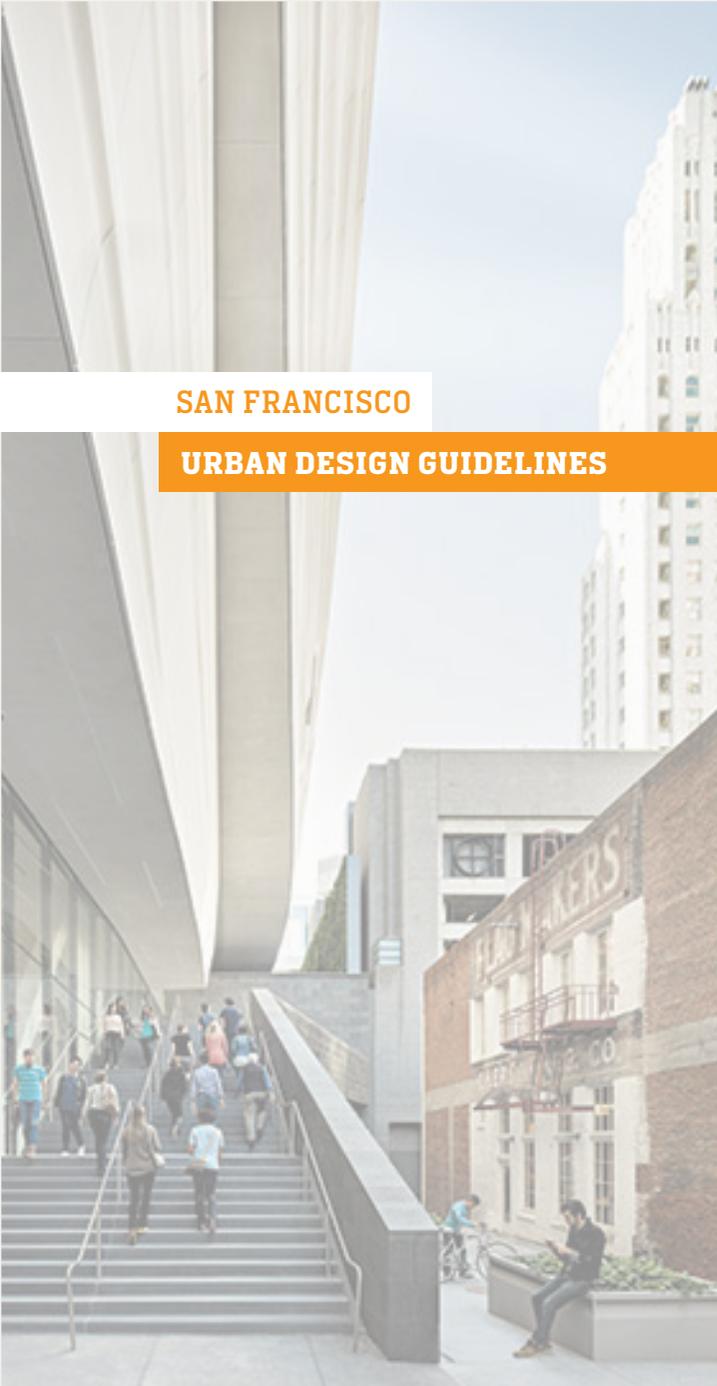
URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

San Francisco
Planning

CONTENTS

Urban Design Guidelines

Built Environment Values for the City of San Francisco

Being a Good Neighbor

Good urban design is characterized by the thoughtful orchestration of buildings, landscape, open space, and streets. Such compositions result from fundamental principles that apply universally, as well as a deep understanding and response to site-specific conditions. San Francisco's architecture spans various eras and architectural styles, but its urban fabric maintains a high degree of continuity and consistency within the variety of buildings. The Urban Design Guidelines establish that new buildings have the responsibility to sensitively respond to their context and existing patterns of development while being of their moment.

San Francisco's urban design policy supports contextual sensitivity for two primary reasons: the first is that site-responsive design enhances our connection to our environment by maintaining a sense of orientation and familiarity. The second is that buildings that unduly distinguish themselves in form, materials, or character compete for attention with the larger urban fabric or buildings of greater public significance.

This expression of context occurs at three scales:
- *Site design*, where massing, open space, and site organization patterns respond to these values;
- *Architecture*, where design organization reflects adjacent volumes, proportions, and facade rhythms; and lastly,
- *Details*, where context informs the appropriate use of particular materials, tones, detailing, and placement of elements.

While projects should address all three scales, a context-specific response is not a prescription and each project should be evaluated on balance. The guidelines are especially important to help large projects with significant frontages contribute to fine-grained neighborhoods and new projects avoid creating substantial contrasts in scale or expression with existing neighborhoods. Over time, appropriate design will result in thoughtful layers that both uphold San Francisco's unique neighborhoods and support their evolution.

Designing Sustainably

With the inclusion of sustainable design principles and practices, dense urban development is inherently environmentally-friendly. Concentrating people near shared infrastructure reduces environmental burdens and conserves natural areas for habitat, recreation, and undisturbed ecological function. Walkable and transit-friendly development reduces energy use, improves air quality, and enhances the health of individuals.

Preservation is a key piece of sustainable development. As the city grows, retaining significant and irreplaceable buildings or fabric may be as much a measure of achievement as building the new. Not only is it resource-conserving, it retains, refreshes, and infuses the future with the city's historical values, culture, and identity.

Supporting Human Needs

People interact with the built environment in and between their homes and workplaces, neighborhood streets, and public open spaces. Urban form that considers the quality and functionality of the building fabric, streets, and open spaces contributes to the livability of San Francisco. Buildings and building features that are scaled for human interaction such as steps, doors, windows, and seating contribute to physical and psychological well-being. Buildings that enhance the connection between the inner life of buildings and the outer public realm also help engage people to the larger sense of activity and spirit of place. All of these goals support an experience of urban life in which people are the measure.

Endeavor. San Francisco is a global hub for invention, creativity, and economic vibrancy supported by density, diversity, and places for people to interact. This healthy economy depends on promoting and balancing a diverse range of options for housing, work, and recreation as well as physical and cultural infrastructure.

A beautiful, diverse, and sustainable city encourages thriving neighborhood commercial districts, healthy housing development, and the growth of educational and cultural institutions. Enhancing the quality of the pedestrian experience and transportation supports employment and quality of life, and encourages people to shop locally, which in turn supports small businesses and local jobs.

Though better design need not cost more, a well-designed building with high-quality construction ensures longer term value and promotes a higher

quality of life for the occupants and public alike. Higher quality construction along with integrated sustainable design ensures that buildings will endure and perform better over the life of the project, reducing operating costs and environmental impacts.

Culture and Social Well-being. The vibrancy that defines San Francisco—its diversity, rich culture and social history, along with its dynamic political life—is supported by buildings and spaces that foster robust urban social life. Fundamentally, the built environment is a physical manifestation of a city's cultural values and experiences layered over time. New projects should provide thoughtful and accessible places and buildings that express their neighborhood culture and identity.

Quality of Life. There are many reasons people live in and love San Francisco—its unique and beautiful physical setting, mild climate, proximity to nature and open space. Along with promoting a safe and healthy environment, new development should support the individual experience, including senses of human-scale, beauty, and well-being. Human comfort is experienced spatially and visually through scale, enclosure, proportion, visual richness and compositional clarity. While we expect cities to feel dense, they can also remain familiar at the human-scale.

New development should contribute to an individual's connection to place. Some people find delight in cities because of the achievement and physical beauty found in the spaces and buildings, while others enjoy a sense of community. The Guidelines are intended to promote the quality of individual buildings, and to enhance the experience of the city as a whole.

Guideline Origin

The Urban Design Guidelines are based on existing policies, principles, and values established in the Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan. The Guidelines elaborate on those policies and other adopted policies and plans with more specific guidance to inform the shape of development in applicable areas. In doing so, the Guidelines reinforce the collective values of the City and County of San Francisco to ensure that buildings contribute to the overall environment in a manner that both sustains and delights. A detailed analysis of the correlation between specific guidelines and all existing city policy has been developed as a companion document and is available from the Planning Department.

Guidelines Organized by Values

Establish relationships and logics
S1   Recognize and Respond to Urban Patterns
A1   Express a Clear Organizing Architectural Idea
P1   Design Public Open Spaces to Connect with and Complement the Streetscape

Respond to context
S2   Harmonize Relationships between Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces
A2   Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally
P2   Locate and Design Open Spaces to Maximize Physical Comfort and Visual Access

Enhance unique neighborhoods
S3   Recognize and Enhance Unique Conditions
A3   Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials
P3   Express Neighborhood Character in Open Space Designs

Engage larger viewpoints and systems
S4   Create, Protect, and Support View Corridors
A4   Design Buildings from Multiple Vantage Points
A5   Shape the Roofs of Buildings
P4   Support Public Transportation and Bicycling

Design the building interface with the public realm
S5   Create a Defined and Active Streetwall
A6   Render Building Facades with Texture and Depth
A7   Coordinate Building Elements
P5   Design sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian Experience

Use program to support the urban experience
S6   Organize Uses to Complement the Public Environment
A8   Design Active Building Fronts
P6   Program Public Open Spaces to Encourage Social Activity, Play, and Rest

Support sustainability
S7   Integrate Common Open Space and Landscape with Architecture
S8   Respect and Exhibit Natural Systems and Features
A9   Employ Sustainable Principles and Practices in Building Design
P7   Integrate Sustainable Practices into the Landscape

Application of the Guidelines

Applicability

Good neighbors make great neighborhoods and great neighborhoods make a beloved city. Design review ensures that new development will appropriately contribute to fostering vibrant, healthy, livable urban places that express and advance San Francisco's unique cultures and qualities.

The Urban Design Guidelines establish a set of goals, values, and qualities by which projects are evaluated in design review. They outline clear expectations that projects must demonstrate to be successfully entitled.

Application of and compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines is mandatory in the permit review process. Note that other guidelines may also apply depending on the zoning, location, building type, and scale of the project. In such cases where multiple sets of guidelines apply, the respective guidelines are viewed as "layers," where the most specific guidelines– in the unlikely event of a conflict– would take precedent.

General Applicability. The Urban Design Guidelines apply to buildings in all districts outside RH-, RM-, and RTO-, M- and PDR-districts. They do not apply to sites in Article 10, 11, National Register, or California Register Historic Districts.

Special Areas. Where the Urban Design Guidelines apply, sites in certain designated areas must also comply with Special Area Guidelines. Special Area Guidelines are neighborhood-specific guidelines adopted by the Planning Commission that have been developed to work in-concert with the Urban Design Guidelines to help projects be more intentionally responsive to unique neighborhood characteristics. In the event of a conflict, Special Area Guidelines supersede the Urban Design Guidelines.

Residential Districts. In Residential Districts, the Urban Design Guidelines only apply to non-residential projects, or to projects that have either twenty-five units or more or a frontage longer than 150' feet. The Residential Design Guidelines also apply. In the event of a conflict, the Residential Design Guidelines supersede the Urban Design Guidelines.

Historic Resources. Individual resources, and sites in designated Historic Districts, must comply with any applicable historic guidelines.

Design Review

Design Review is an integral step in the permitting and entitlement process. The Urban Design Advisory Team (UDAT) is an internal Planning Department staff team that reviews new construction based on the Urban Design Guidelines and other relevant design guidelines, the Planning Code, and the policies in the General Plan.

Design Review typically occurs during a Preliminary Project Assessment (PPA) and at the site permit or entitlement stage. The intent of initial Design Review stage is to identify and respond to basic design issues early that may affect the approval process.

The second stage of Design Review occurs before entitlement action and encompasses a more detailed review of the project's design. In this second stage, UDAT review focuses on all the components that relate to the overall policies of the Department, and the relationship of context and urban design principles. The scope of UDAT review includes massing, scale, articulation, materials, composition of open space, relation of the new building to existing buildings and street pattern, and location of functions especially as they relate to the public realm and aesthetics.

UDAT is comprised of staff planners with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, and urban design. Design

Order of Guideline Precedence

| Any Other Applicable Design Guidelines | } Including the RDGs in Residential Districts |

| Special Area Guidelines | } Each participating Neighborhood Commercial District |

| Urban Design Guidelines |

GUIDELINE   RATIONALE   RANGE OF MEANS

EXAMPLE   NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL EXAMPLE

Review comments are communicated through the case planner and may involve subsequent review as the project evolves. Design findings are included in the planners' case reports. The Planning Commission, in turn, will accept or enhance those findings as projects note their final review motions. In addition to graphic renditions of a project, sponsors should provide a narrative that articulates how their project's design complies with the Urban Design Guidelines.

Demonstrated adherence to these guidelines will speed the entitlement process. These guidelines attempt to address the range of urban design considerations, and most, but not necessarily all, will apply to every building.

Guideline Structure

Where they apply, the Urban Design Guidelines promote a thoughtful approach to city building based on well-established patterns of building and habitation. They establish a baseline for appropriate design response, but are not intended to be a proxy for superior design.

Each guideline is described at the top of the page, followed by a sidebar that explains the rationale for the guideline, a range of means by which one might achieve that guideline, and illustrations that further describe its application. The range of means describes important parameters and methods by which a project can meet the guideline, but is not a prescriptive list. Projects may satisfy the guideline by applying one or all of the means or by suggesting something unique to the project that meets the intent. Each project will be evaluated on balance.

The illustrations are existing built examples in San Francisco that exemplify the means for the guideline indicated but are not necessarily exemplary of every guideline in the Urban Design Guidelines. Neighborhood commercial examples are highlighted to show the unique expression of those contexts. Note that photos with an *R* designation indicate that, while the example clarifies the means or intent of the indicated guideline, the Department recognizes that the specific site depicted is in a residential district in which the guidelines would not apply.

Glossary

Adjacent
Near, close, or contiguous.

Articulation
The act of giving expression. In architecture, it is the definition of the formal elements of architectural design. Through degrees of articulation, each part is united with the whole in such a way that the joined parts are put together. The articulation of a building reveals how the parts fit into the whole by emphasizing each part separately.

Appropriate
Fitting or suitable to a particular situation, location, or setting.

Cadence
The flow or rhythm of events, especially the pattern in which something is experienced. This is a common design metaphor for how a series of elements (building detail or urban scale) can express a legible and harmonious rhythm that defines itself as a set. (See: *variation*)

Character
Prevailing existing architectural elements, including building mass, scale, and era they were built.

Comfort
To ease the trouble of. This document uses the word comfort to describe the physical ease—temperature, wind pressure, glare, safety, air quality—of the human body in an outdoor place.

Compatible
Able to exist or occur together without conflict.

Complement
Something that goes well with something. This document uses this term to express how elements can be adjacent and agreeable in scale, proportion, composition, and type but not identical in style or manner.

Context
Setting. The interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs. Context in urban design parlance typically refers to the physical and cultural environment around a specific site or how a proposed building may be described within its surroundings.

When reviewing a project for contextual compatibility, the Department considers a site's context to include buildings and open spaces immediately adjacent to the subject site, the entire block face on which it sits, the facing block from the site, and the overall block pattern ranging in all directions by two or more blocks. The Department also considers the character of special or unique nearby structures, access to or frontage onto civic places and streets, and important nearby public environments such as neighborhood commercial districts.

Districts
*Relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character. (*From Kevin Lynch, Image of the City.)

Edges
*Perceived boundaries such as walls, buildings, and shorelines. (*From Kevin Lynch, Image of the City.)

Fenestration
The arrangement of windows and doors on the elevations of a building. Fenestration is often examined as a pattern.

Glazing
Glass windows, doors, and walls.

Harmonize
To be combined or go together in a pleasing way. Like complement, this document uses this term to describe how elements can visually fit together, or make meaningful relationships without being identical or duplicative.

Historicism
Reference or influence of patterns or approaches of the past. False or cursory historicism is often used to suggest an unwarranted or excessive regard of the importance of past styles.

Human-Scale
The set of physical qualities and quantities of information characterizing the human body, its motor, sensory, or mental capabilities, and human social institutions. This document uses human-scale to set or describe the size of and relationships between elements.

Inflection
A bend or angle. In urban design, a point of inflection is where a consistent block or street pattern changes often where two streets come together at an unusual angle.

Landmarks
*Readily identifiable objects which serve as external reference points. (*From Kevin Lynch, Image of the City.)

Mass
A quantity or aggregate of matter usually of considerable size. The act of creating an amount of matter. In architecture, mass is used to describe the three-dimensional volume or shape of a building or part of a building or the act of creating it.

Mid-block open space
Public or private site area, often including multiple lots, left as open space in the center of city blocks. This is typically created by an ensemble of many lots that follow a similar pattern, for example, consistent application and compliance with rear yard requirements.

Modulation
A volumetric regulating according to measure or proportion. A three-dimensional modelling and definition of form that repeats, and supports the overall design. Recesses, projections, or other changes in facade planes, along with windows, materials, patterns and colors, and other similarly scaled elements can be used to modulate.

Parti
The chief organizing thought or decision behind an architect's design presented in the form of a basic diagram and/or a simple statement. A parti often explains a building's form, circulation, program, or overall site strategy.

Program
An architectural program or brief is a statement of a client's requirements. A program typically includes a list of uses, adjacencies, and circulation issues of the project.

Proportion
The relationships of the various objects and spaces that make up a structure to one another and to the whole. These relationships are often governed by multiples of a standard unit of length known as a "module."

POPOS
Privately-owned public open space. Shared open spaces that are owned and managed by private entities but available for public use.

Reflect
To give back or exhibit as an image, likeness, or outline. This document uses "reflect" to describe how new elements may seem of the same family or extend a series of similar older elements. It is not intended to imply a mirror-like copy.

Relate
Indicate its connections with (something else). For the purposes of this document, one element relates to another if it expresses aspects of the other's geometry, form, circulation, detailing, materiality, or use.

Scale
A proportionate size, extent, or degree, usually judged in relation to some standard point of reference.

Sidewalk
An elevated paved path for pedestrians at the side of a road and often between the roadway and a building. For the purposes of this document, sidewalks do not include private property or vehicular travel lanes.

Solid / Void ratio
A comparison between the amount of openings or windows to the amount of wall on a facade. A facade may have different kinds or numbers of openings than another but its solid/void ratio could be the same.

Streetwall
Combined facades of buildings generally built to the property line facing a street or open space. A clear streetwall helps define "the urban room" or the public realm. A consistent streetwall that is visually interesting and active ground floor uses promotes pedestrian activity.

Variation
A change or difference in condition, amount, or level, typically with certain limits. In design, variation describes how adjacent elements can contain different attributes with enough similarity to be recognizable as related. A pattern of variation generally requires the repetition of three or more elements. (See: *cadence*)

Volume
A three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height. In architecture, a volume can describe a three-dimensional portion of a building or shaped element.

The American dream starts with the neighborhoods.

Harvey Milk

S SITE DESIGN

Site Design

The combination of San Francisco's built elements and topography give it a unique identity among cities and its individual neighborhoods reveal its many cultures. The guidelines in this section guide the form, massing, and placement of development as it arrives in a evolving city.

Site design determines the massing of buildings and their relationship to topography, open space and the overall city fabric. Each building plays a role in the block, set of blocks, and street environment and should support the larger existing patterns of open space, circulation, uses, access to sunlight, and pedestrian experience. Three key patterns repeat in this section's guidelines: enhancing mid-block open space, defining the streetwall, and shaping buildings based on adjacent street types.

Every increment of construction must be made in a way as to heal the city.
Christopher Alexander

San Francisco itself is art: every block is a short story, every hill a novel, every home a poem, every dweller within immortal.

William Saroyan
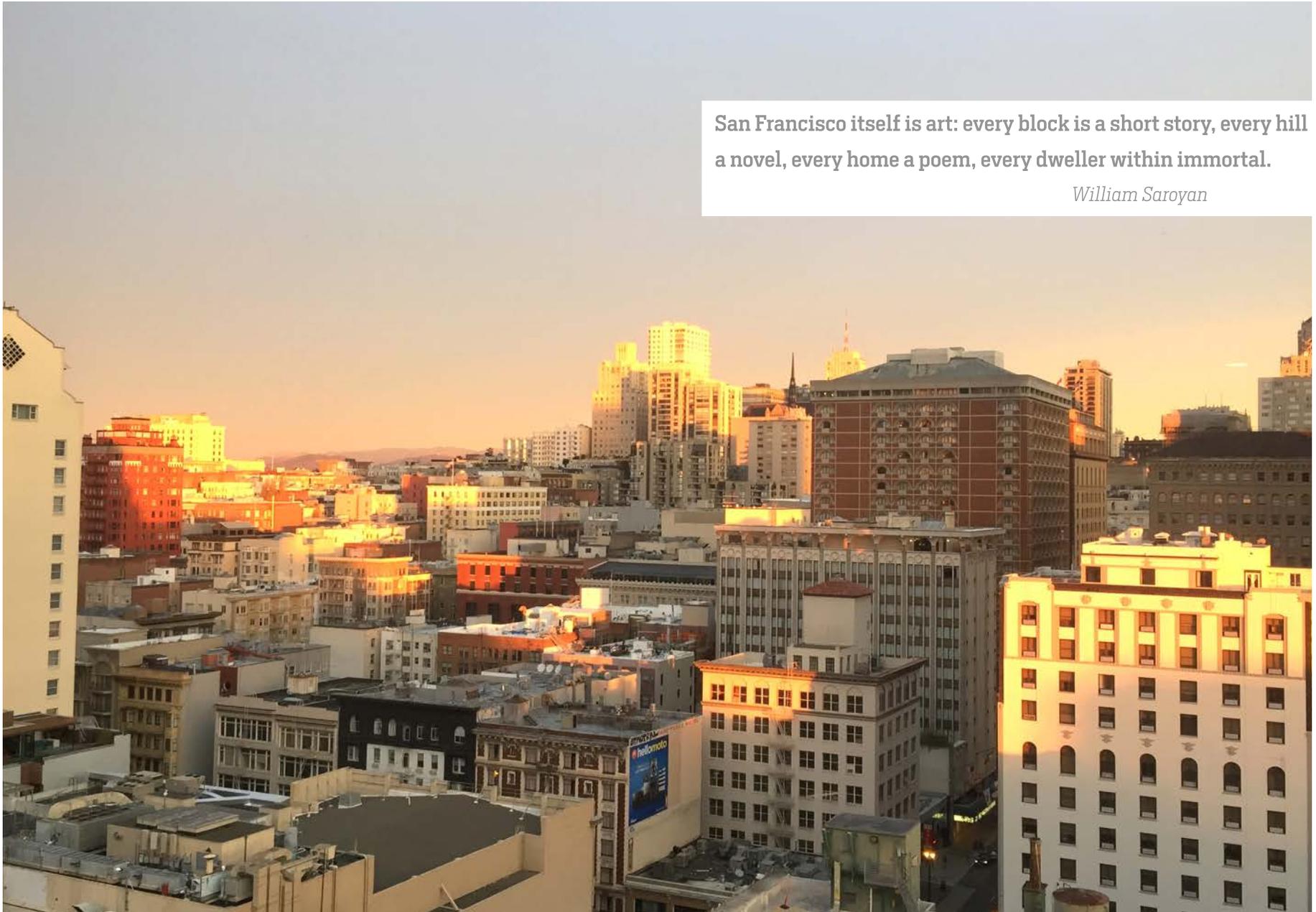
S1 RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO URBAN PATTERNS

Urban patterns are the streets, blocks, lots, buildings, and open spaces which, when taken together, give a cohesive structure to the city. Many of San Francisco's blocks are divided by a variety of smaller alleys, open spaces, and stair walks which promote walkability and modulate the scale of buildings. Sites that reinforce and continue existing urban patterns enrich and support these familiar qualities of the city.

» Design sites to improve or augment existing land use, open space, and building patterns.

» Design sites to help connect and define edges, landmarks, paths or districts.

» Extend and enhance the fabric of streets, alleys, sidewalks, paths, stairwalks, and open spaces to create walkable neighborhoods typical of San Francisco.

» Reduce the scale of blocks wherever possible by providing new streets, mid-block alleys, pedestrian paths, courtyards, and plazas that connect with other streets and public or common open spaces.

Stairways promote walkability where topography is challenging.
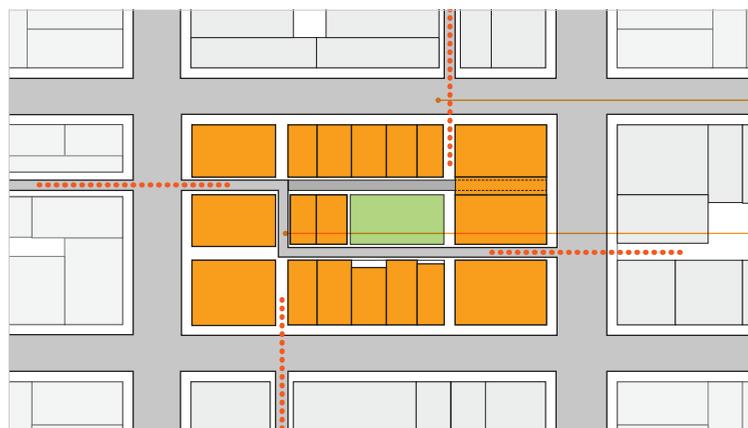
PATTERNS CAN
ESTABLISH VEHICULAR
OR PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

NEW PATHWAYS
MAY ALSO PROVIDE
UNEXPECTED
TURNS OR BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS

Site design can extend existing patterns or help historic ones re-emerge.

Alleys and mid-block passageways encourage activity and pedestrian movement.

FACADE AS
STREETWALL ELEMENT

NEW CORNER CIVIC PROMINENCE DUE
TO LANDMARK PROXIMITY
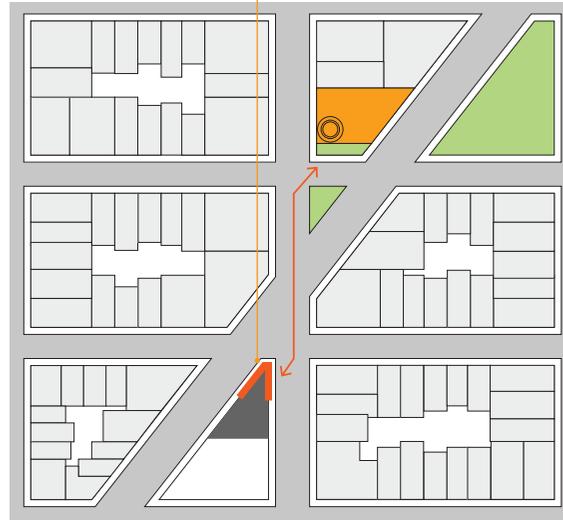
INTERIOR BLOCK FACADES
ARE PUBLIC-FACING

CITY EDGE

OPEN SPACE

OPEN SPACE

LANDMARK

MID-BLOCK OPEN SPACE

STREET

Streetwalls may not only define the line of the block, but the edge of a boulevard, district, or neighborhood.

Civic buildings can act as markers of public space, gateways, or centerpieces in a neighborhood.

Design projects to orient to key neighborhood elements as well as the street environment.

S2 HARMONIZE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS, STREETS, AND OPEN SPACES

A building that relates to city fabric, to its immediate context, and adjacent human activity helps unify neighborhood experience and character. The relationship between areas of low, fine–scaled buildings and areas of high, large–scaled buildings can be more harmonious if the transition in building height and mass between such areas is managed in an intentional and sensitive manner.
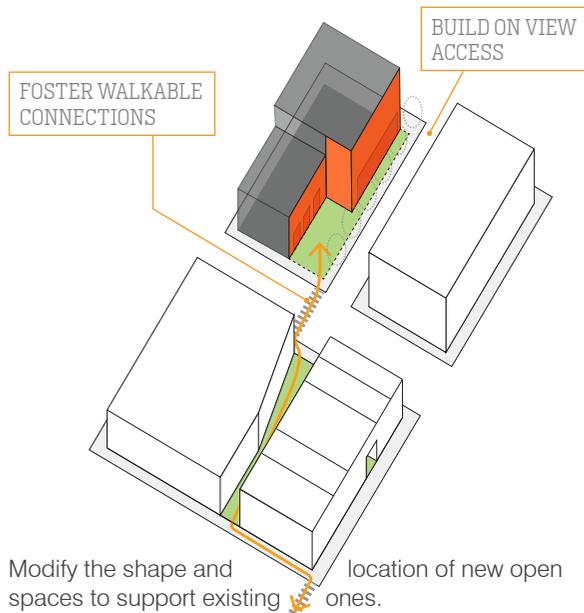
» Develop site and building design to establish, respect, or enhance the mid-block open space and minimize their impacts to privacy and access to light. Different configurations for rear yards may be acceptable due to site conditions.

» Relate building scale and massing to the size and scale of existing buildings. Consider setbacks and side terracing to reduce light and air impacts on adjacent buildings, provide more interesting side facades, or transition to smaller-scaled residential neighborhoods.

» Reflect the existing patterns of side spacing and side setbacks.

» Sculpt building massing vertically and/ or horizontally to a scale compatible to its context.

» Provide matching lightwells to augment livability and access to light and air.

» As groups of buildings create their own topography, shape new buildings to respond to, reconcile, or moderate differences between existing ones.

» Modify tall buildings to minimize wind impacts at the street level.

» Mass buildings to minimize shadow impacts on residential areas, lower buildings, parks, and open space.

» Use street widths to help establish the general massing, scale, and proportions of the building.

» Shape the height and bulk of towers with respect to views from important vantage points around the city.

» Place, orient, and shape open space to support adjacent existing open space conditions.

FOSTER WALKABLE CONNECTIONS

BUILD ON VIEW ACCESS

Modify the shape and location of new open spaces to support existing ones.

RESHAPE CORNER SITES TO BETTER CONTRIBUTE TO LIGHT AND AIR

DASHED LINE INDICATES TYPICAL REAR YARD

By modifying typical rear yards, corner sites can better support streetwalls and mid-block open space.
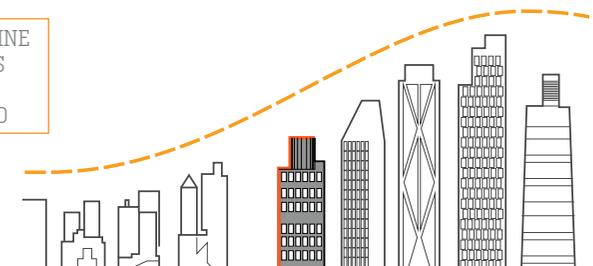
Building massing should respect larger patterns in the urban fabric.

PROVIDE SIDE SETBACKS TO MAINTAIN EXISTING PATTERN

LOCATE FRONTAGES TO REINFORCE THE STREETWALL

PROVIDE MATCHING LIGHTWELLS

SHAPE NEW BUILDINGS TO AVOID IMPACTING ADJACENT BUILDINGS' ACCESS TO LIGHT AND AIR

SHAPE NEW PROJECTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO MID-BLOCK OPEN SPACE EVEN WHEN THE PATTERN IS BROKEN

CONSIDER SIDE SCULPTING TO ENHANCE VISIBLE SIDEWALLS
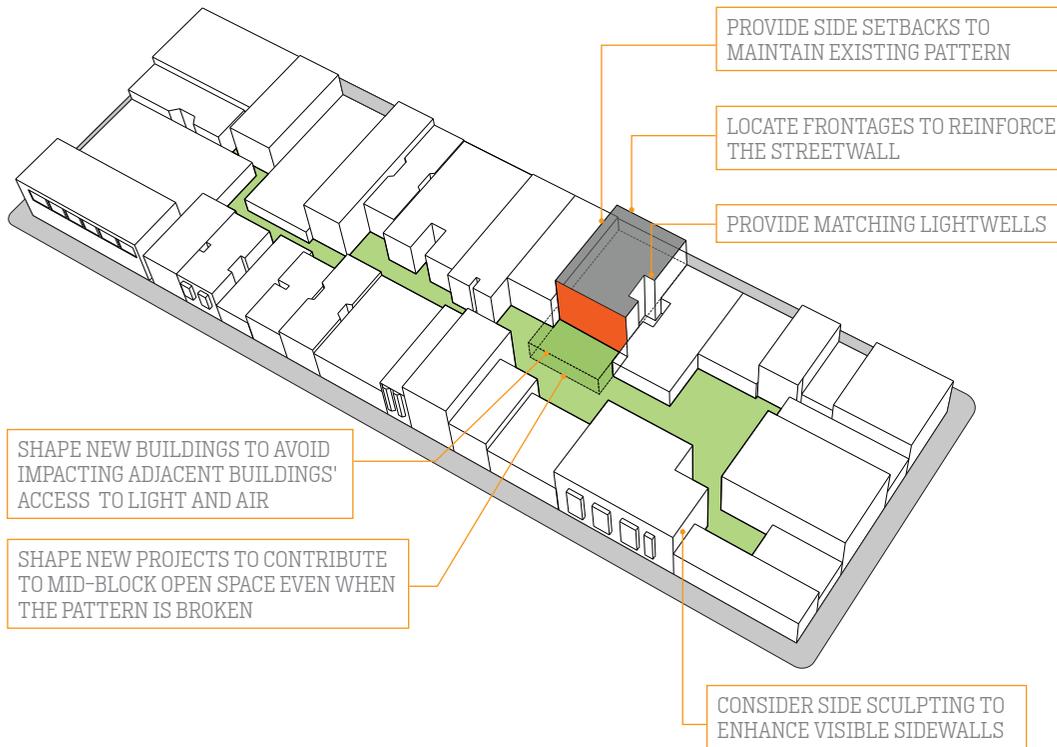
Place and shape front, side, and rear facades to support the overall urban design of the block.

CONSIDER ADJACENT HEIGHTS AND STREET WIDTHS IN MASSING BUILDINGS

WIDTH

HEIGHT

Massing should reflect similar dimensions to street widths and surrounding buildings.

New projects should reflect the scale of existing street frontages.
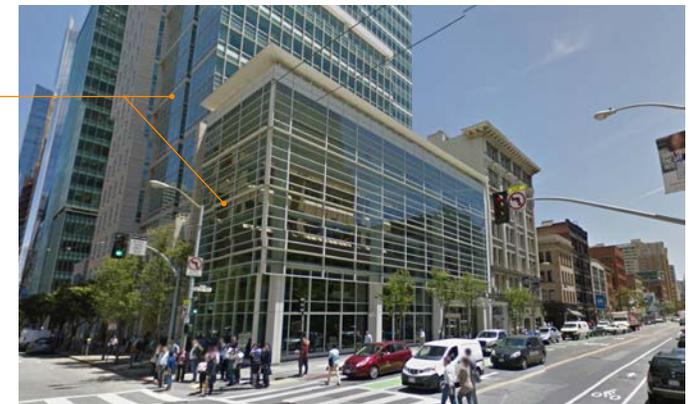
Individual buildings can sculpt massing to respond to both a taller streetwall and a lower one.

S3

RECOGNIZE AND ENHANCE UNIQUE CONDITIONS

The multiple grids of the City roll over its hills, creating transitions, interruptions, and irregularities in its geometry and lot patterns.

Projects can use terminated vistas, curves, and grid offsets to define local places, offering spatial variety and orientation.

Sites that respond to and celebrate these variations create unique places that support civic identity.

» Site and shape buildings to express unexpected adjacencies, ending points, crossings, and convergences that honor unique histories and places.

» Seize design opportunities to celebrate and reinforce irregularities, alignments, and juxtapositions of the urban fabric as points of identity.

» Design responses may create multiple important facades, frame a facade by a perpendicular street, or use angular site geometry to influence form.

» Consider celebrating corner buildings with traditional or reinterpreted treatments such towers, belvederes, cupolas, awnings, marquees, gables, art and prominent entries.

» Use an inflection to create open space and integrate the landscape with the building.

» Designate a public space with an inflection that is shaped either by unique responses to buildings or street locations.

PROVIDE AN ENTRY OR OPEN SPACE AT A SIDE STREET ALIGNMENT

Develop unique design responses to atypical street patterns.

NC

Corners can have special treatments.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

SCALE BUILDING MASS AND
GEOMETRY WITH BLOCK PATTERN
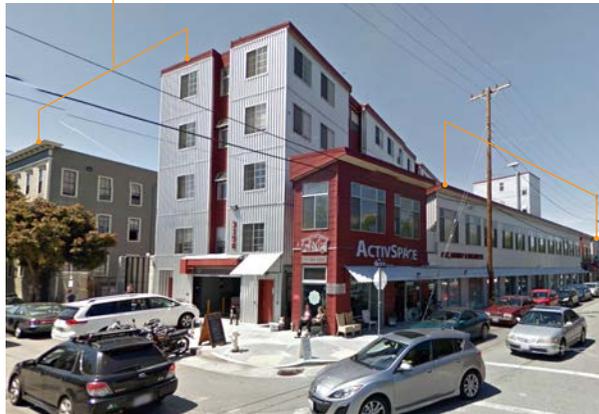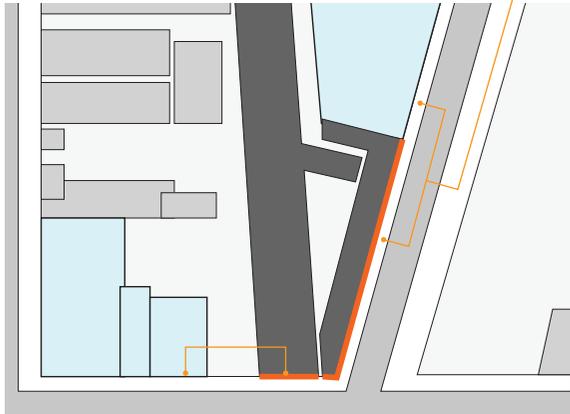
Building massing can articulate a unique change in neighborhood scale and orientation.

Inflections in architecture can note important street crossings, transit access, or civic places.

NOTCH REFLECTS
AN INVITATIONAL
CORNER

Built geometry can highlight important crossings without directly aligning with them.

Inflection points can shape special open spaces.

S4 CREATE, PROTECT, AND SUPPORT VIEW CORRIDORS

While views from private property are not protected in city regulations, the General Plan does protect specific view corridors from the public realm.

Seeing the city's hilltops, open areas, and surrounding water help people orient themselves in the city and beyond.

» Design sites, buildings massing, pathways, and the approach to sites to respect existing view corridors as defined by the General Plan and create new viewpoints from public streets and spaces where feasible.

» Consider providing views to above or alongside physical elements and not just to vistas below.

» Step back or shape street walls to organize or frame long-range views.

» Exhibit skyline or bay vistas from publicly-accessible roof areas. Such views may change over time.

» Consider using bay windows, familiar San Francisco architectural features, as they not only offer views down street corridors to residents, but frame similar views for pedestrians.

Design roof gardens and POPOS to offer vistas.

Public buildings can establish special visual connections. Such views may change over time.
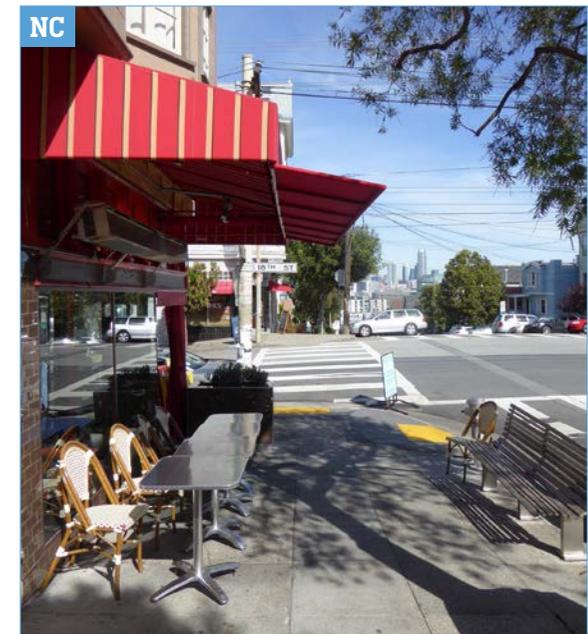
Building orientation and uses can take advantage of views from the public realm.

Organize buildings to shape long-range vistas where feasible.

Vistas may be above sites as well as below.

Sculpted streetwalls help define view corridors.

S5 CREATE A DEFINED AND ACTIVE STREETWALL

Streetwalls help define public space, city identity, and promote interesting pedestrian spaces. The scale and design of building fronts at the street can support an active, engaging, and pedestrian–oriented street life.

» Positively reinforce the shape of the street or public space with the building; design the building to define the street and frame views.

» Design all public building frontages to allow active and direct engagement with the street to support pedestrian-oriented activity. Consider the width of the sidewalk in establishing the articulation of the streetwall.

» Provide a side setback or inset doorway if the context presents a consistent pattern of them.

» Absolute consistency in streetwall presences is not always necessary. In some settings, designing a street front with a variety of forecourts, setbacks, loggias, and recesses that act as a lively counterpoint to a streetwall may be appropriate, but not to such an extent that the overall sense of urban room enclosure is eroded.

» Where a project offers a forecourt or front setback, design it as an inviting spatial transitional element between the building wall and the street environment.

» Avoid dark, cavernous spaces when designing recesses and setbacks to create a safe and inviting environment.

» Consider sun and sky access in the design of street walls as appropriate to the use and character of the neighborhood.

» Relate setbacks to the established pattern of planes. Create a well-defined rhythm with architectural components.

» Shape upper floors of buildings to reinforce strong or predominant streetwall heights.

HIGHRISES RECOGNIZE MIDRISE OR PODIUM HEIGHTS

EVEN PREDOMINANT STREETWALL HEIGHTS VARY

BOTTOM FLOORS ARE DESIGNED TO ACT AS A VISIBLE BASE

Mid-rise districts may present variable streetwall heights but should relate to each other in expression to help define the public realm and experience.

In downtown, streetwalls should both relate to the pedestrian realm and express district density.

VERTICAL PROJECTIONS AND INDENTATIONS HELP BREAK DOWN SCALE

Larger projects can continue a smaller existing pattern of streetwall scale.

NC

WINDOW SCALES EXPRESS THE RESIDENTIAL USE ABOVE THE GROUND FLOOR

CONSISTENT PATTERN OF SMALL-SCALED RECESSED STORE ENTRIES

Neighborhood commercial streetwalls should be present at the sidewalk.

NC

The ground level of the streetwall should be active and permeable.

S6 ORGANIZE USES TO COMPLEMENT THE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT

Sites should organize new uses to support neighboring ones to help catalyze or even initiate larger block activity.

As all streets––even alleys––include public space, design projects with inviting frontages on all accessible sides.

The public realm can be connected to active uses at grade or immediately above.

» Align mid-block passages, courtyards, and entries with existing pedestrian paths and program their frontages.

» Locate retail uses near neighborhood commercial areas and ground floor residential units near adjacent housing.

» Support adjacent institutional or civic uses with more public programming, including retail.

» Where visible loading docks or other more utilitarian built features are necessary, consider their adaptable use during off hours or for alternative purposes, for example as seating, for events, or as outdoor workspace.

» Where more than one frontage is possible, locate uses appropriate to the scale and intensity of each street or interface.

» Locate and design vehicular areas and appurtenances to enhance the pedestrian environment.

» Minimize the location, size, and number of curb cuts and locate parking access to minimize impacts on transit, bicycles, and pedestrian circulation.

» Screen at-grade parking from street view with ground floor uses such as residential, commercial, or office.

» Maximize active ground floor uses and street front quality.

» Integrate landscaping, screening, and physical barriers to lessen conflicts between pedestrians and motorists.
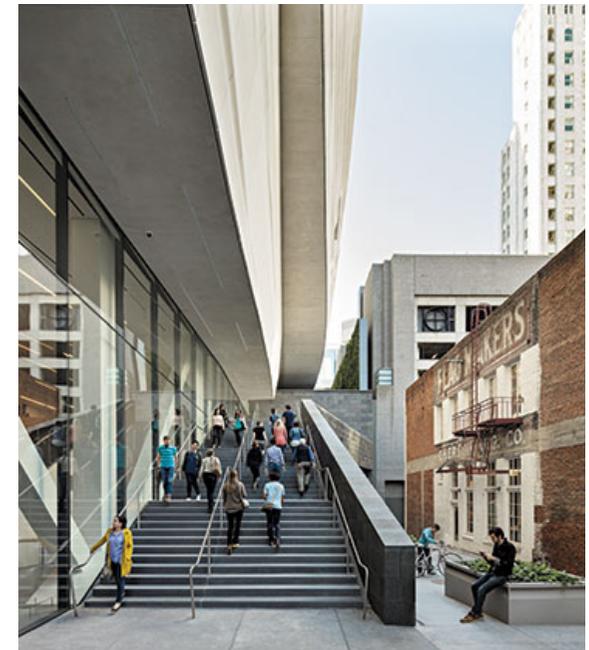
Civic entries can align with public pathways.

More utilitarian features, such as loading docks, can serve off-hour functions, such as lunchtime seating.
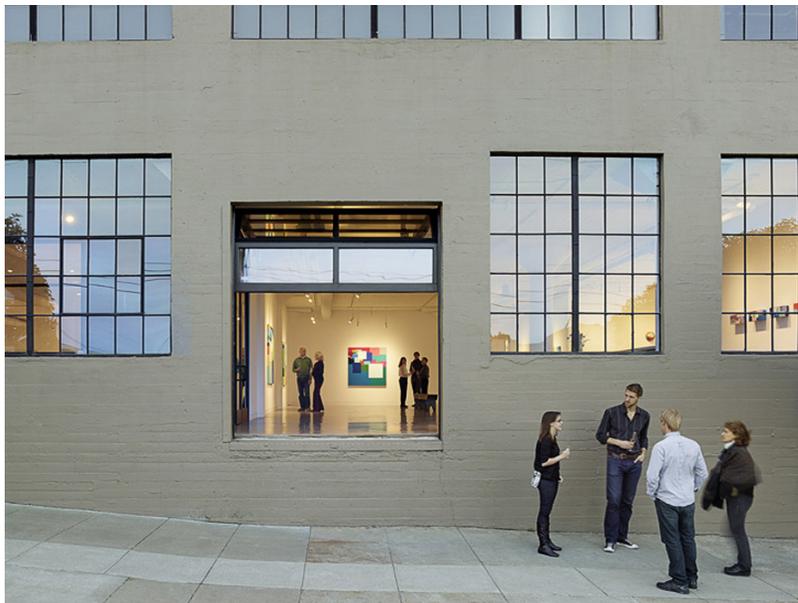
Organize internal uses and reconsider building openings in creative ways to connect to exterior spaces.

Locate ground floor uses in mixed-use projects to reflect and support existing uses on a block or street: retail with retail and residential with residential.

S7 INTEGRATE COMMON OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE WITH ARCHITECTURE

When integrated into the built environment, common open space—such as rear yards, front setbacks, courtyards, and roof decks—enhance the quality of urban life.

A continuous landscape conceived of mutually supportive interior and exterior spaces imparts a better human experience.

» Complement the surrounding pattern of both public and private open space.

» Use open space to moderate the scale of buildings and use buildings to positively shape open space.

» Provide a gradient of private space (nearest residences) to semi-public space (in central and shared areas) to pass-through spaces (accessible to people from outside).

» Provide a sequence of spaces that transition between public and private realms.

» Offer views from open space.

» Connect building entries and circulation with pathways and access points.

» Create space that is active and protective.

» Locate and orient open space to maximize solar exposure during a useful part of the day and protection from wind.

» Provide seating or active elements to help enliven a space.

» Use trees, planting, and paving to develop defined human-scaled spaces.

» Maximize opportunities for sustainable plantings and permeable surfaces in sidewalks, roofs, courtyards, and rear yards.

» Complement building architecture with compatible landscape architecture in concept, form, and materials.

Include plantings in thresholds between inside and out.

Sculpt and detail building mass to add richness and spatial variety to frame open space.

Landscape and buildings together can frame entries.

Buildings can form intimate exterior spaces that relate to interior uses.

Buildings can capture space and create active, civic environments.
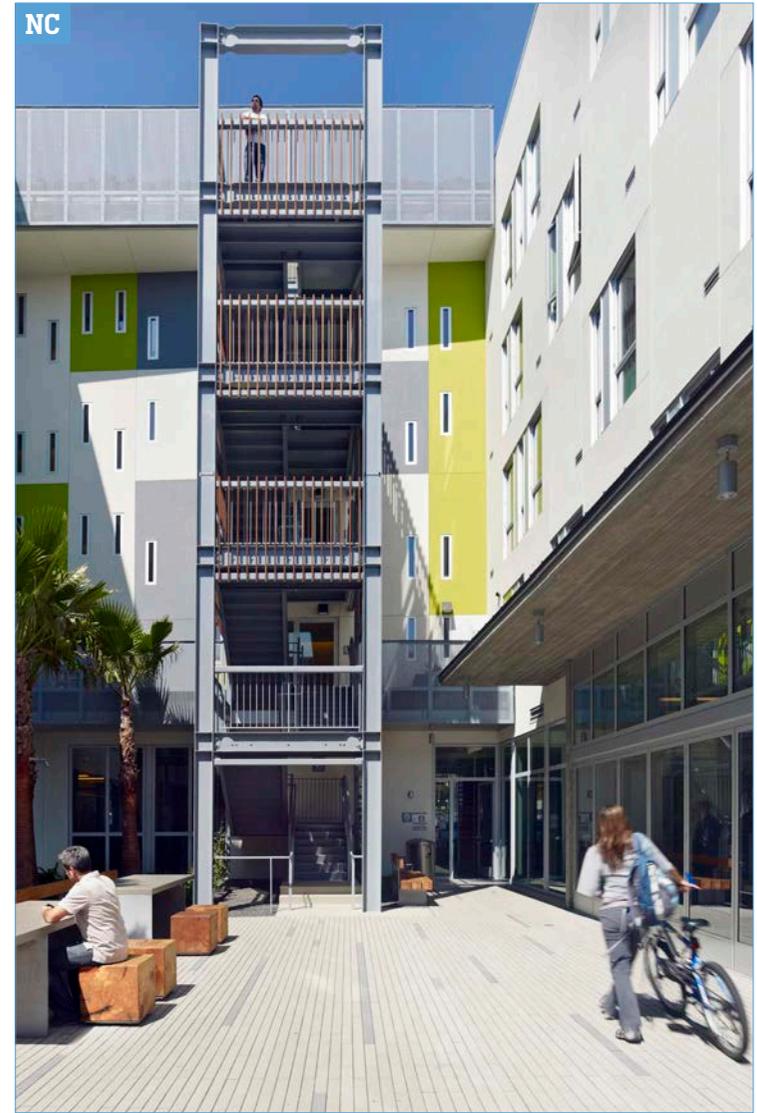
Connect building uses and circulation with exterior environments.

S8 RESPECT AND EXHIBIT NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES

Natural features provide contrast from the intensity of the built urban environment. Sites should support ways for residents to see and experience waterways, sand dunes, hills, cliffs and trees.

Retaining the natural environment promotes its health and our connection to it. Buildings that reflect the existing site topography and retain natural features help express city identities.

» Site, orient and sculpt buildings to reinforce and accentuate built and natural topography.

» Retain and highlight existing features, such as natural areas, rock outcroppings, waterways, and specimen trees.

» Use site design to frame visual connections to natural features such as waterways and hilltops.

» Employ environmental technologies and green infrastructure best practices to respond to the site, its surroundings, and local and regional ecological systems.

» Express a project's sustainable operation, significance or efforts through explanation or physical/visual evidence.

» Preserve and introduce flora that provide wildlife habitat.

Encouraging a variety of elements that follow topography supports the city's overall physical identity.

Buildings reinforce the natural topography by stepping up a hill.

Building mass can frame special natural elements.

A SINGLE BUILDING CAN BREAK ITS MASSING TO FIT WITH THE BLOCK TOPOGRAPHY RHYTHM
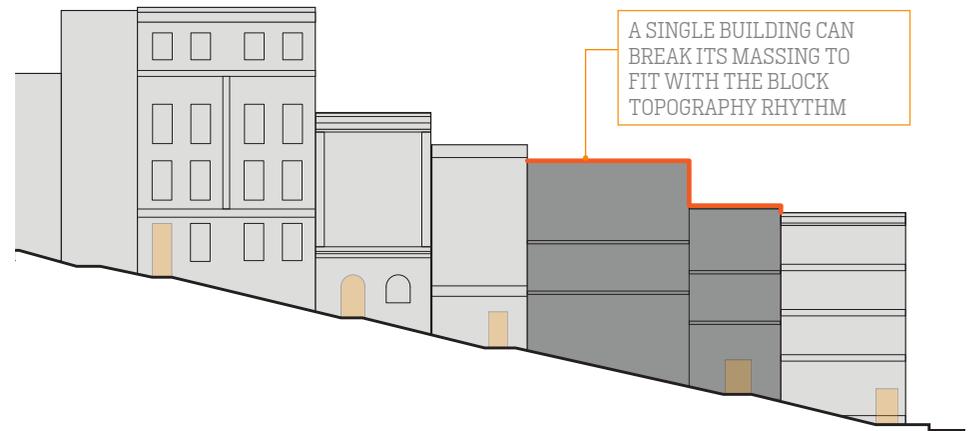
Reinforce existing topography and lot widths with building form.

Design can enhance the experience of natural elements including weather.

Orient interior uses to open into southern-exposed spaces.
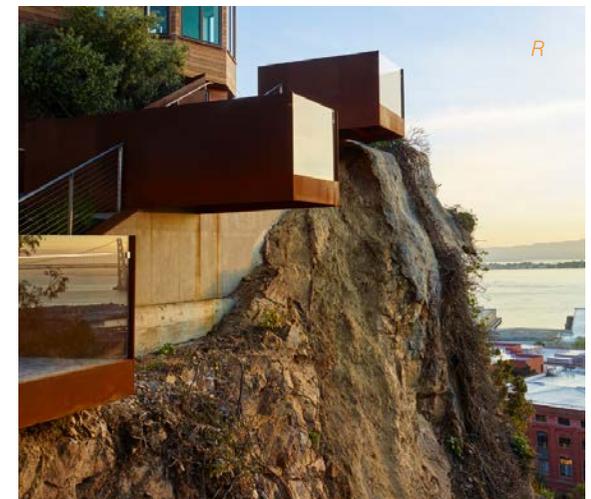
Shape landscape and building form to express natural features and textures.
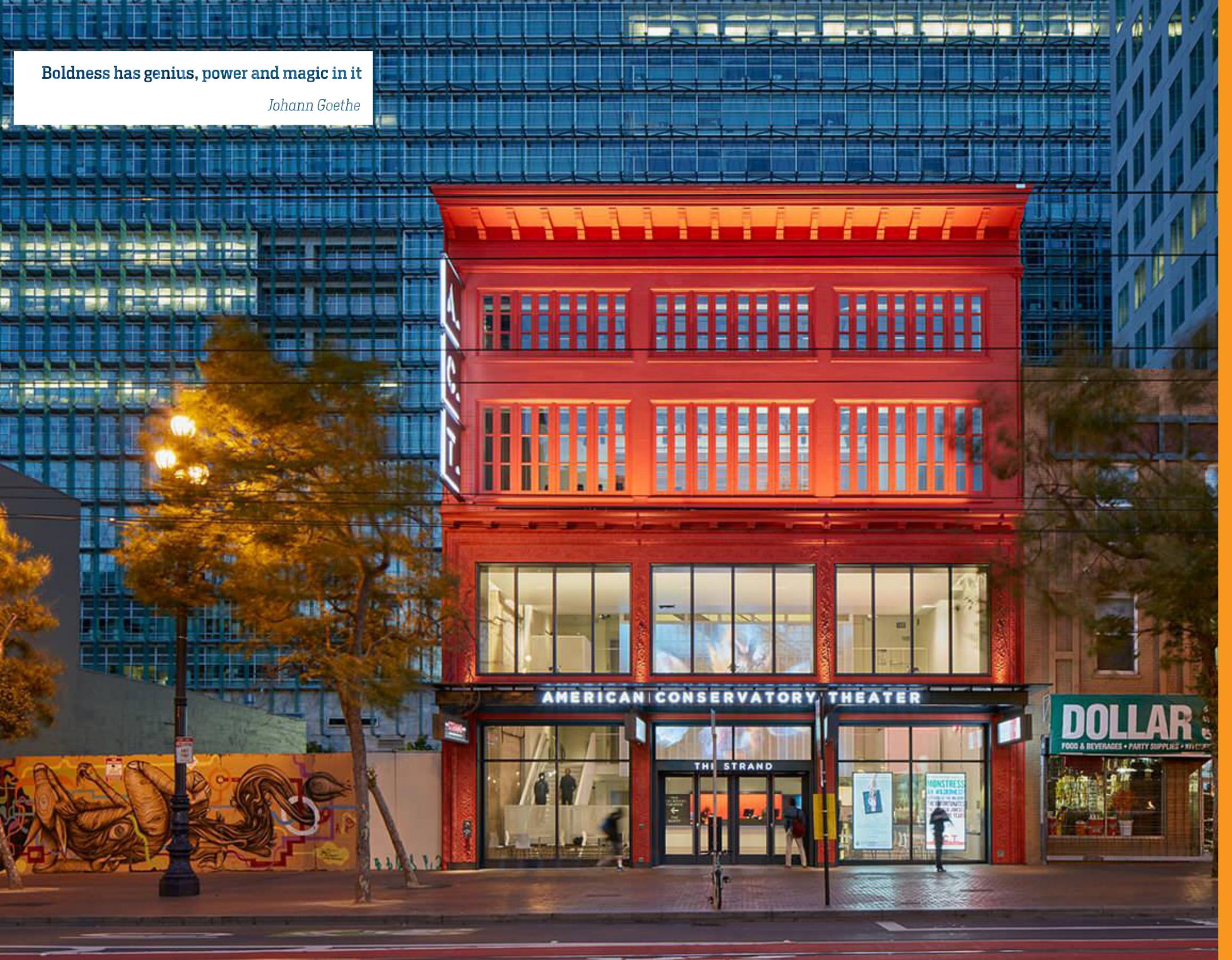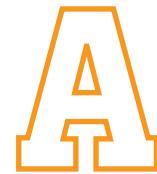
A ARCHITECTURE

Architecture

San Francisco has compelling architecture, not just because of individual buildings, but because they work together to form larger rhythms of urban fabric in a distinctive landscape. As cities change over time, the challenge is to allow this fabric to evolve so that contemporary expressions of architecture, culture, creativity, materials, and construction methods fold into historic ones without dramatic disruption. Great cities encourage this evolution and great buildings accept that they enter a place where they can both respectfully join their neighbors and express the values, technologies, and design sensibilities of their time.

Older buildings characterize city neighborhoods by contributing a richness of character, texture, and human scale—all established goals within the City's built environment values. New projects should reinforce or enhance the physical patterns of neighborhoods to support these goals and are encouraged to do so with their own voice. In areas with a defined visual character, new buildings may have a higher obligation to be compatible with the physical attributes and features of surrounding buildings.

These guidelines are not intended to restrict a project's specific architectural system or materials, but to support contemporary expressions in which local patterns can be respectfully evoked.

Rather than necessarily replicating historic treatments, shapes, and styles, new buildings are encouraged to respond to their context through their massing, siting, scale, proportions, facade design, material choice, and roof form. In addition to architectural elements, projects can also support neighboring context by extending or complementing use or programming, connecting to public space, supporting circulation patterns or spatial connections, or reflecting cultural influences within the neighborhood.

Through these types of responses, the City's environments can achieve a balance of variation with consistency and unexpected with familiarity.

In architecture it isn't enough to just have the right building that works well. It can also be beautiful. It can also be different. It can create surprise. And surprise is the main thing in a work of art.

Oscar Niemeyer
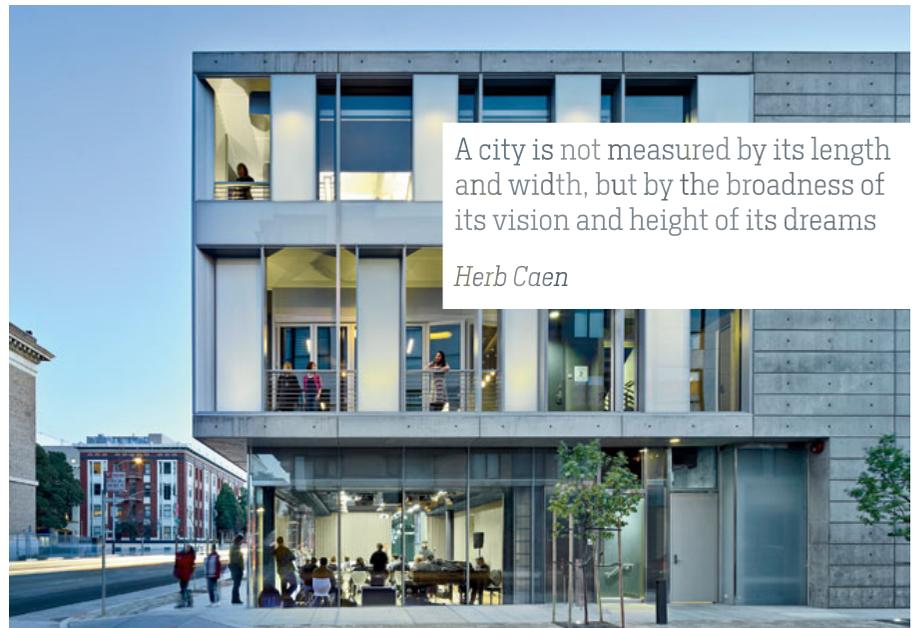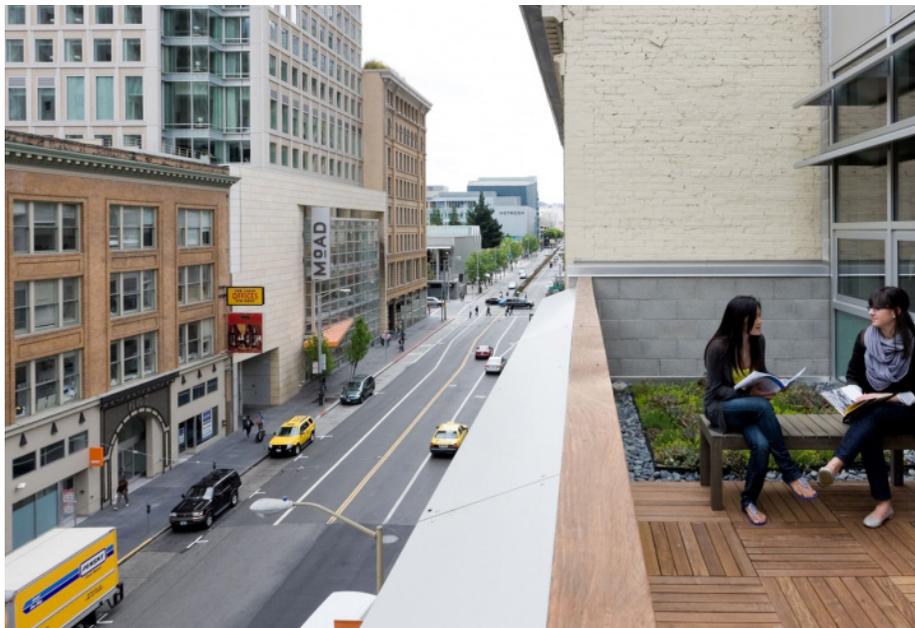
A city is not measured by its length and width, but by the broadness of its vision and height of its dreams

Herb Caen

A1   # EXPRESS A CLEAR ORGANIZING ARCHITECTURAL IDEA

Whether originating in cultural meaning, pragmatic strategy, artistic vision, or neighborhood context, good architecture comes from design intention. Architecture that starts with a clear organizing idea, or parti, is more likely to convey meaning and withstand the whims of style.

Buildings in an urban setting should respond to context and maintain their own compositional rigor and coherence.

» Make architectural concepts clear, compelling, and compatible with a site's context.

» Make architecture consistent to its own rules and logic.

» Develop details and select materials that are consistent with the overall architectural strategy and neighborhood compatibility.

» Express a spatial sequence or experience, material system, structural organization, hierarchy, or relationship to site or context through a parti.

» Provide a cohesive expression or composition of neighborhood compatible components.

Materials can support concepts at both volumetric and fine-grained levels.

Clear and coherent formal concepts can elevate utilitarian projects.

Reinterpretations of traditional elements can generate a clear organizing strategy.
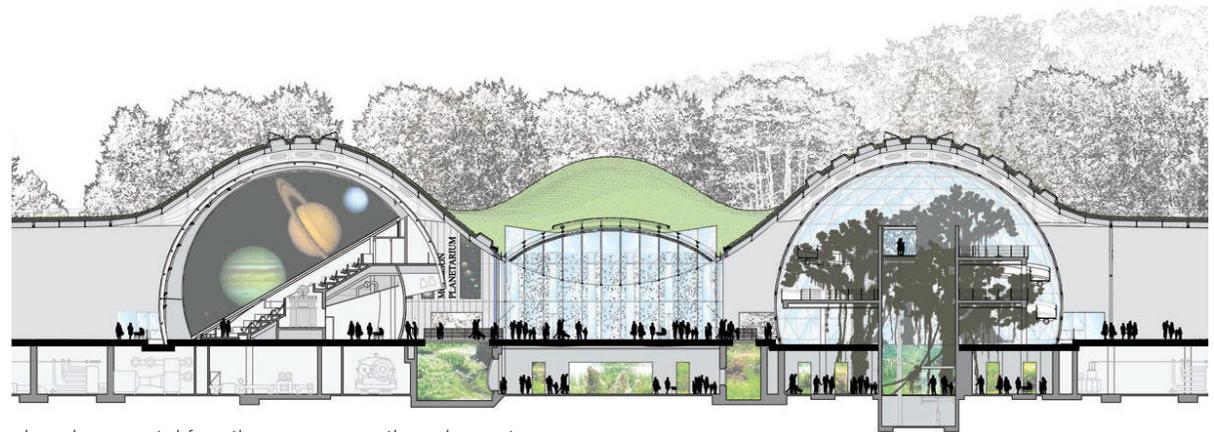
Organizing concepts (or partis) can link context, program, and environmental functions, among other elements.

Concepts can structure the relationship between new and historic structures and highlight their best features.

Neighborhood patterns can help establish a cohesive system of architectural components.

A2 MODULATE BUILDINGS VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY

San Francisco is predominantly a city of narrow lots with vertically–oriented facades composed of bays and recesses. In many cases, buildings are horizontally composed of strongly defined and differentiated bases, bodies, and tops.

Buildings that relate to the city fabric and the human activity within them help unify the existing neighborhood experience and character.

» Reflect neighborhood-prevailing lot widths and proportion and size of architectural elements in the scaling and ordering of the proposed building.

» Sculpt massing to harmonize with the rhythm of adjacent buildings and add a human-scale. Adjacent buildings may include an entire block face and the block face across the street in mixed-character locations.

» Provide bays and balconies where found in the prevailing pattern.

» Use the internal building program or circulation to externally express different volumetric or facade elements.

» Utilize a hierarchy of scales within the overall values established in these guidelines if there is no consistent neighborhood pattern

» Proportion the scale, the amount of transparency, and the character of entrances at the ground floor to the type of uses and street interaction.

Structure can help establish a vertical or horizontal building rhythm.

BUILDING ROOF TERMINATION

ONE STORY BUILDING TERMINATION

REPEATED BODY PROJECTIONS

PRIMARY VERTICALS

SECONDARY HORIZONTALS

BANDING

ACCESSORY ELEMENTS TO GROUND FLOOR

PRONOUNCED ENTRY
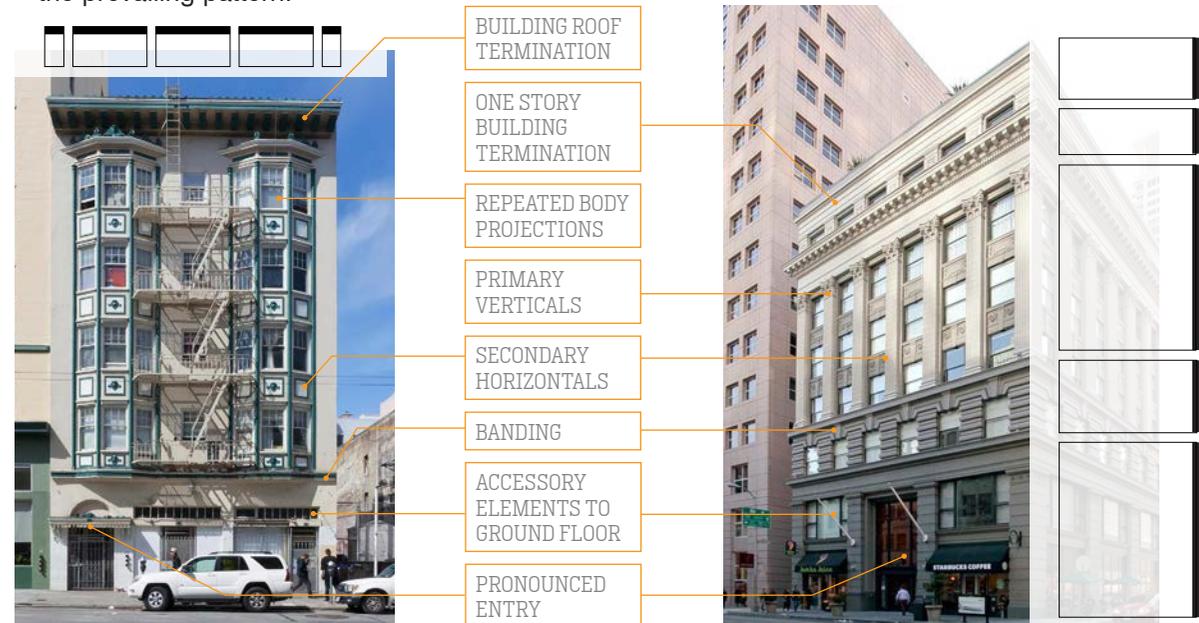
Traditional elements provide horizontal and vertical modulation. Consider meaningful adaptations for contemporary projects to address the same scale or rhythm of familiar inflections.

NC

Consistent building and element heights and widths can help unify a variable streetwall.
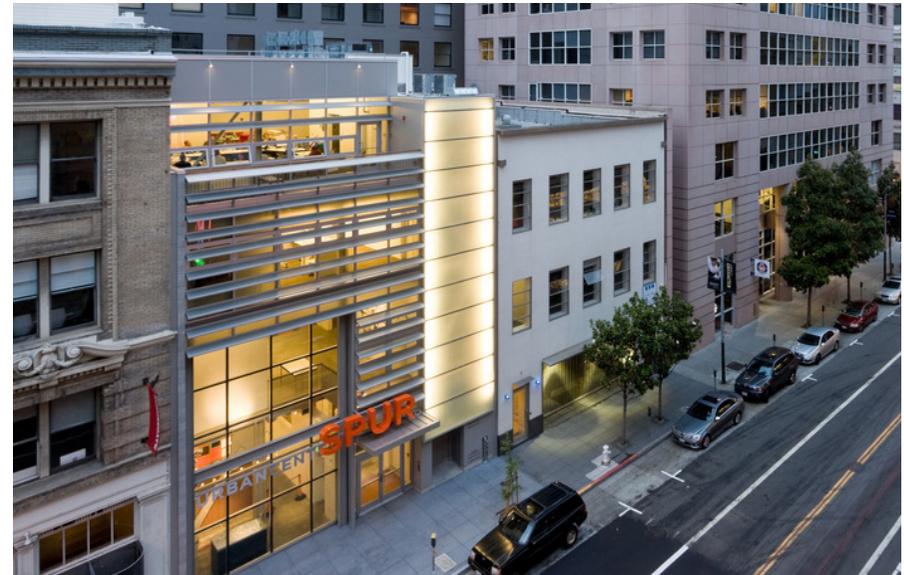
Infill projects should reflect horizontal and vertical proportions with the adjacent streetwall pattern.

Breaking down a large facade can enhance a sense of residential scale.
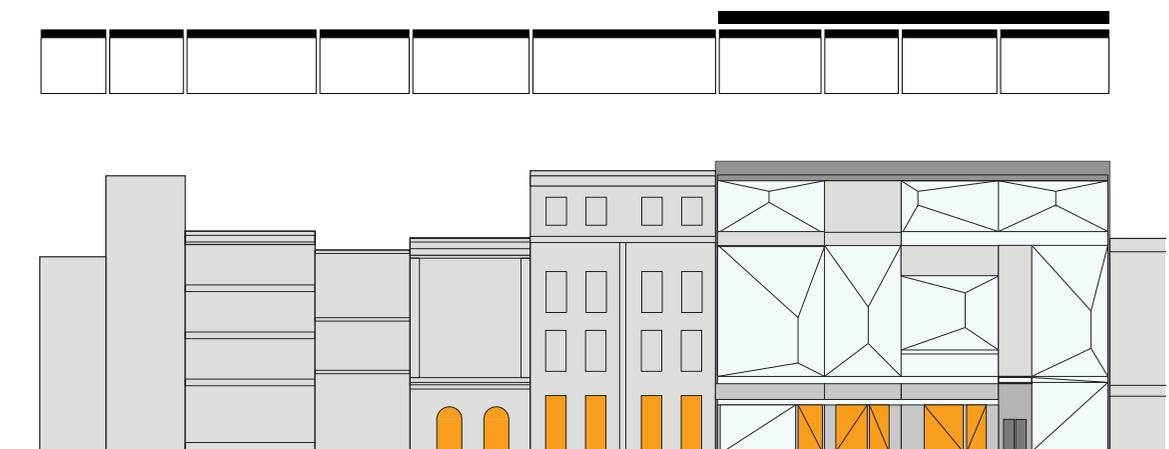
Larger sites can support existing neighborhood geometries, proportions, and rhythms through modulation.

A3 HARMONIZE BUILDING DESIGNS WITH NEIGHBORING SCALE AND MATERIALS

New buildings should recognize and respond to existing patterns of scale, form, materials, and proportion to create continuity within a neighborhood and enhance San Francisco's appealing and walkable nature.

Building materials should resonate with San Francisco's soft and diffuse light quality created by its light colored buildings and the atmospheric effects of the bay. Strong contrast draws attention and importance to a building and should be reserved for public facilities.

» Either use common neighborhood material types or contemporary material strategies that complement neighborhood material characteristics.

» Balance light and transparent materials with solid, durable materials.

» Avoid or limit the use of dark and highly reflective materials. Large amounts of glazing may appear dark and reflective, particularly on cloudy days. Towers should be predominantly light in color.

» Use high-quality and durable primary materials such as stone, steel, masonry, and concrete for on all visible facades. High-grade wood may be appropriate on larger buildings in residential areas.

» Exhibit human-scaled detailing, components, and features.

» Use joints, panel patterns, and cladding attachments to reinforce a finer scale of material and expression.

» Consider the pattern of glazing, openings and material divisions on a building as a visual and three-dimensional fabric that demonstrates appropriate scale and clear ideas about the use of cladding or structural components.

» Respect neighboring fenestration patterns in the design of building facades through type, proportions, scales, and frequency.

» Employ the number and scale of planes and depths of walls found in the surrounding context to inform the planar variations in new development.

NC

Neighborhood commercial areas typically express a strong residential character above the ground floor.
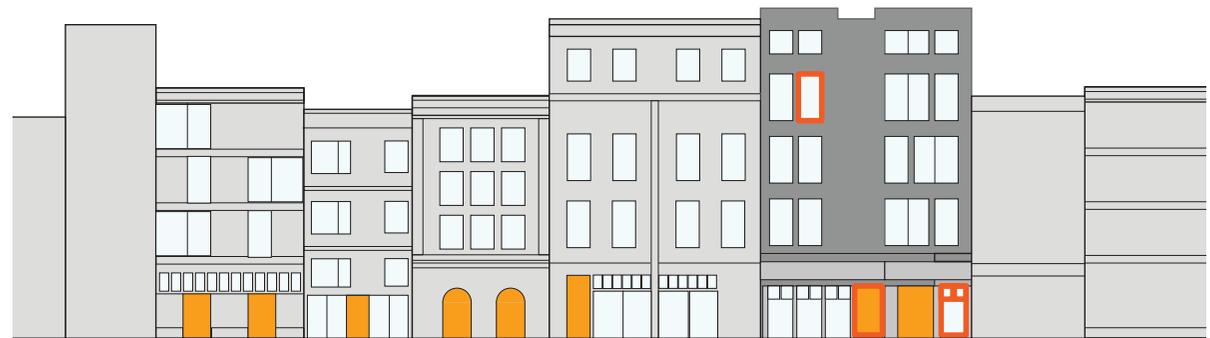
Window and doorway systems should be similar in proportion, scale, and amount to nearby structures.

Geometry relationships and use of similar materials can support compatibility in streetwalls.

NC

Scale and texture similarities can allow differences in color or style.
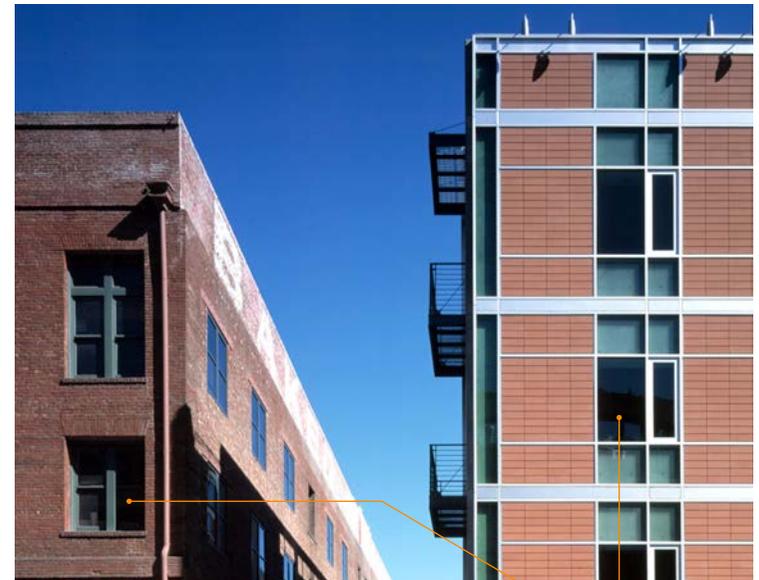
Projects should both reflect context and be internally consistent.

SIMILAR AMOUNT OF GLASS TO SOLID WALL (SOLID/VOID RATIO)

NC

Neighborhood commercial uses are often embeded within a residential context and should defer in character and scale.

Timeless, high-quality materials can both express different eras and harmonize a block streetwall.
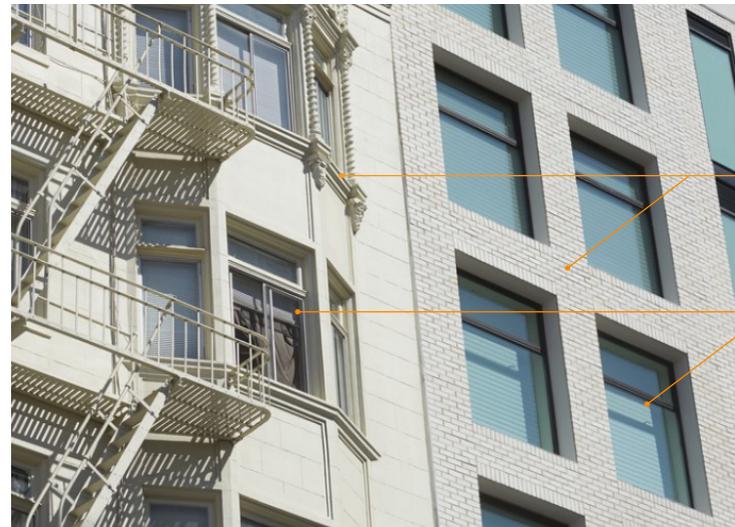
TEXTURE SCALE IS SIMILAR BUT USED IN DIFFERENT WAYS

WINDOWS ARE SIMILAR IN SIZE, PROPORTION, AND DEPTH

A4 DESIGN BUILDINGS FROM MULTIPLE VANTAGE POINTS

Although street fronts of urban buildings are typically primary facades, buildings should, when seen from different distances and vantage points, reveal considered yet unexpected things. In a city of undulating hills, all visible facades and roofs are design opportunities.

» Design all visible facades with similar effort and consideration as primary facades.

» Design all aspects of buildings, including the roofscape, to enhance views from above and at night.

» Minimize, combine, and integrate rooftop utilities into the overall building architecture.

» Decking and green/living roofs support a more visually compelling roof landscape and reduce solar gain, air pollution, and the amount of water entering the stormwater system.

» Sculpt and articulate sidewalls that are likely to be significantly exposed.

» Architecturally screen roof top mechanical equipment.

» Sculpt towers to enhance the city skyline.

Upviewing is a common perspective from the sidewalk.

Building projections can help frame the pedestrian experience.
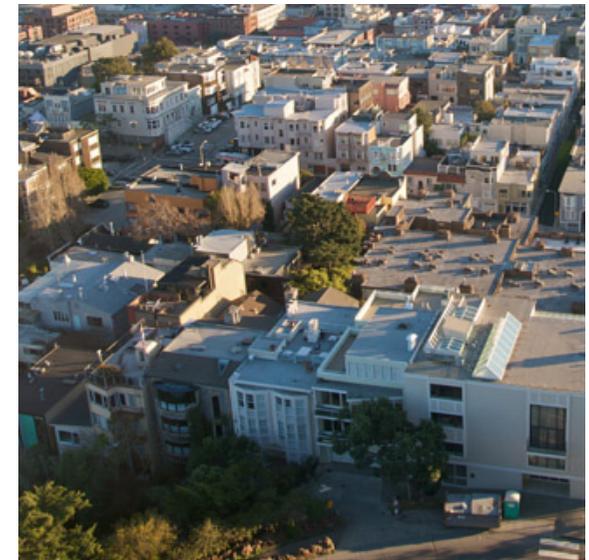
San Francisco hills offer overhead views of city buildings.

Tall buildings should contribute to the beauty of the skyline.

The bay window, a characteristic San Francisco feature, is often viewed from the side.
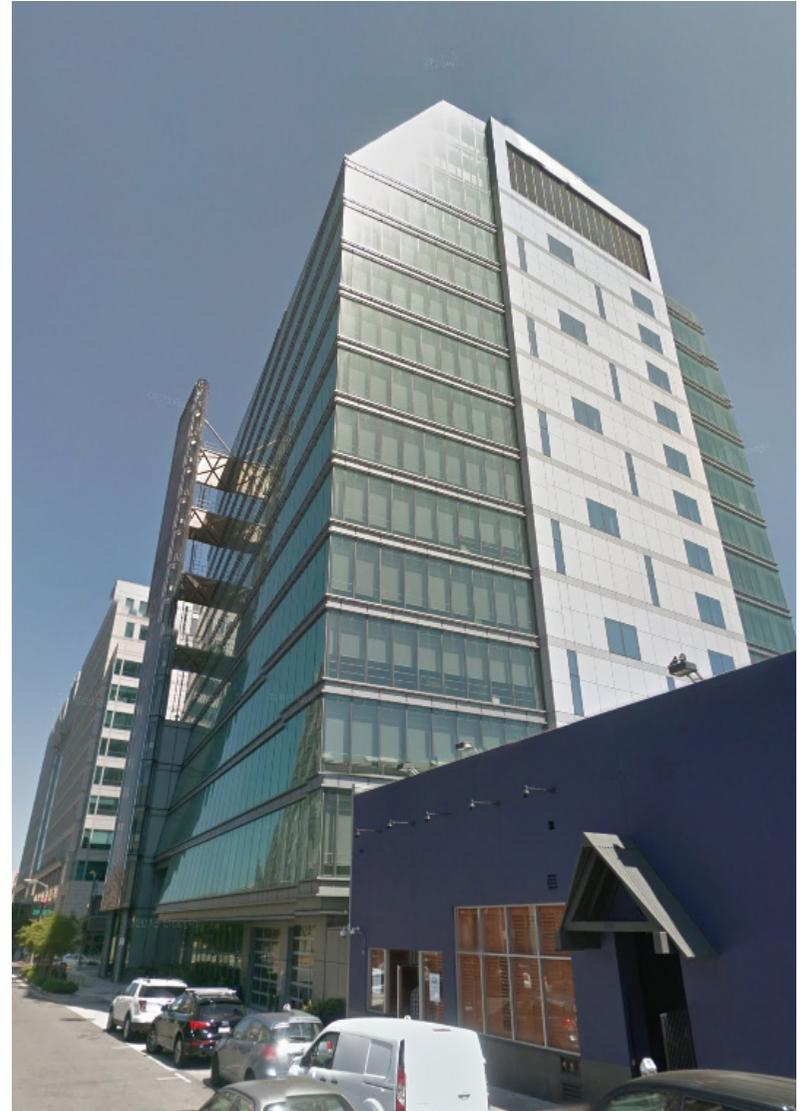
Design all sides of an exposed building envelope.

A5 SHAPE THE ROOFS OF BUILDINGS

Viewed from its many hills, San Francisco is a city of roofs. The shape that building roof terminations make with the sky can positively shape the street wall, reinforce the building's design intent, and contribute to the image of the city from a distance. Roofs may also provide amenities such as common or private open space.

Roofs should complete the composition of the building and streetwall and express their various functions.

» Sculpt roof forms to be cohesive and integral to the building's overall form and composition. Stories that project above the predominant heights along a blockface may want to be setback and rendered more simply to allow the primary front facade to complete the streetwall.

» Design roof forms to complement the rooflines of surrounding buildings.

» Shape rooflines in response to existing topography.

» Create an intentional facade termination and avoid glass railings at the top of building facades. Roof guardrails should be set back a minimum of 5' from primary wall planes and/or lot edges.

» A termination feature need not project from other facade features, but rather it should define the building's top. Non-projection examples include a recess, material fade, or taper. A building top may include the definiton of a full story.

Use a full top floor to articulate the top of a building facade.

Crenelation has historically been employed to mesh the building edge with the sky and the built with the natural.

Skyline-defining elements help establish neighborhood character.

Detail and depth on the top story can help terminate the building.

Roofing materials can help unify variable roofscapes.
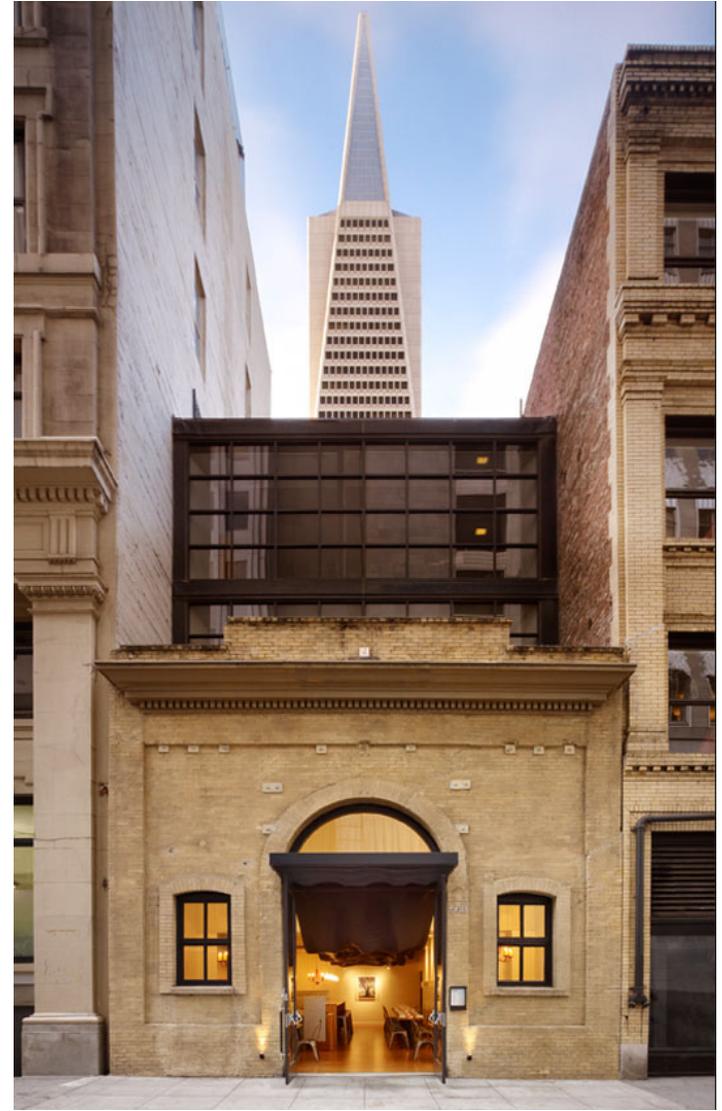
The shape and location of roofs with clear delineations can create layers of history and scale.

A6 RENDER BUILDING FACADES WITH TEXTURE AND DEPTH

Facades composed of long expanses of homogenous surfaces create dull streetscapes that lack scale, visual interest, and character. Facades designed as three-dimensional ensembles create street walls that engage the eye and enhance the experience of the pedestrian. Manipulation of light and shadow render various scales and components of buildings more vividly.

» Avoid large expanses of undifferentiated blank surfaces. Simple changes of color or material in the same plane are rarely sufficient.

» Consider differentiating facade articulation between lower floors and upper floors.

» Evolve the specific character of relief for a building or ensemble from the overall architectural idea.

» Texture buildings by adding deep relief including punched openings in scale with adjacent facade systems.

» Compose window patterns that correspond to programmatic needs.

» Vary the heights and widths of facade features, and articulate forms with materials.

» Respond to the ornamental scale of adjacent buildings. Historic features may be reinterpreted but should be identifiable as from their own era. Avoid cursory historicism and facade elements that mimic neighbors.

» Consider a rhythm of horizontal and vertical elements, such as bay windows, cornices, belt courses, window moldings, balconies, etc.

» Design curtain walls that modulate the facade and provide scale and three-dimensional texture.

» Consider externalizing structure to help modulate a long or tall facade.

NC

Ornament at the tops of buildings helps to add visual interest and expression.

Form and materials can work together at different scales of detail and variability.

NC

Add smaller, human-scaled features at the ground where they can be easily seen.

Fine-grained architectural detail help to enliven the streetwall.

Artful ornamentation brings delight and a human-scale to facades.

Depth and detail can be invitational.
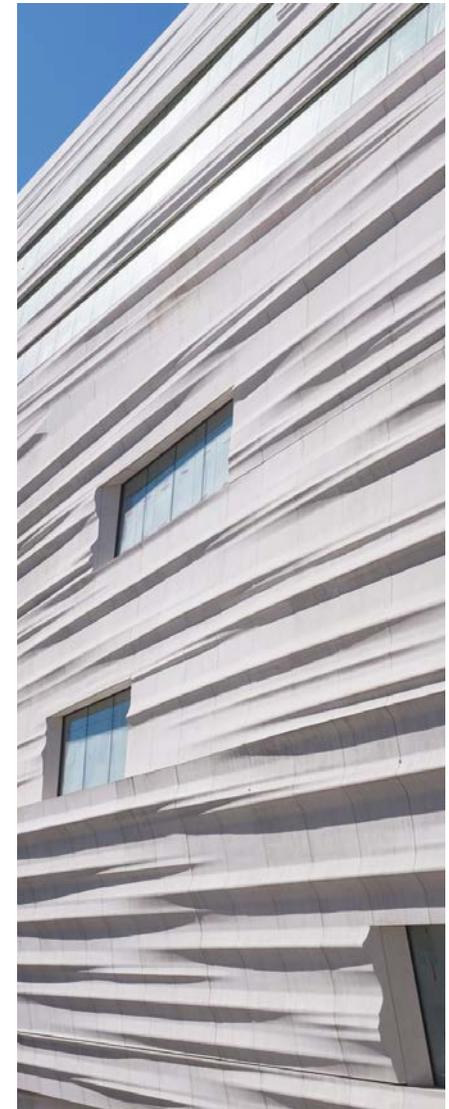
Dimensional variation can create texture in facades.

A7   **COORDINATE BUILDING ELEMENTS**

Signage, lighting, canopies and other finer-grained architectural elements provide additional means of animating and harmonizing a project with its environment.

Signage and lighting, when compositionally integrated, can convey information, impart a human-scale, and enhance the public realm.

Lighting should contribute to the public realm and highlight significant features while being careful not to disrupt neighbors or dominate the night sky.

Coordinated lighting, signage, sunshading, storefronts, and canopies enliven buildings.

» Use lighting to highlight significant building features but do not over-light buildings nor project light into the sky. Employ sustainable or "dark sky" measures to reduce illumination when not needed or visible.

» Lighting or excessive rear or side glazing should not be placed in a manner that will disturb neighbors, especially in residential districts.

» Design lighting to reinforce pedestrian comfort at the ground level.

» Control the intensity of building and signage lighting and allow for dimming and color variation.

» Orient and size signs to the pedestrian scale, and so as to not overwhelm the building facade.

» Design building signs to reflect the type and sensibility of their use. Consider marquees where programmatically appropriate.

» Design signs and canopies appropriately to illustrate the hierarchy of entrances and information along facades where there are many elements or uses.

» Railings for stairs and upper level terraces should be either setback from the edge of the building or designed as thoughtful extensions of the architecture that terminate the structure top.

» While separate from the building design, art can be placed to focus attention to aspects of the site or building orientation.

» Note that the underside of balconies and soffits should also be integrated into the overall building palette.
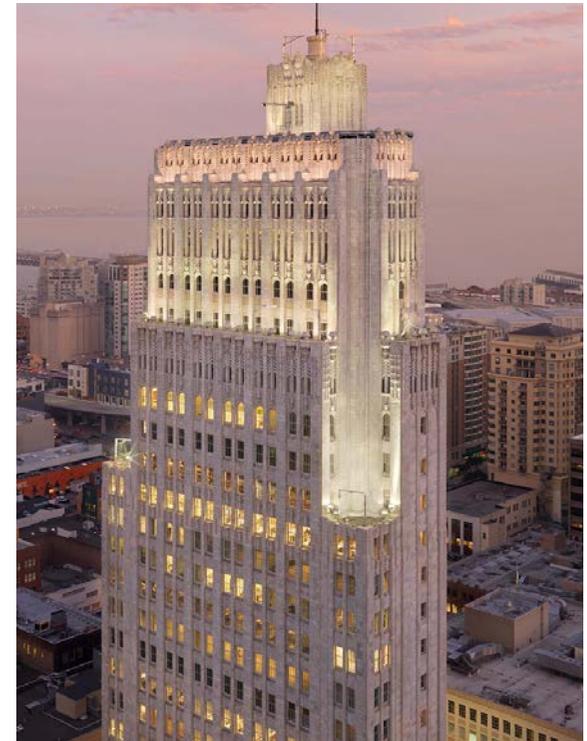
Lighting can accentuate form and building tops.

Coordinated scales of retail space, architectural details, and signage contribute to the identity of neighborhoods.

Materials, lighting, modulation, and guardrails can mutually reinforce an architectural idea.
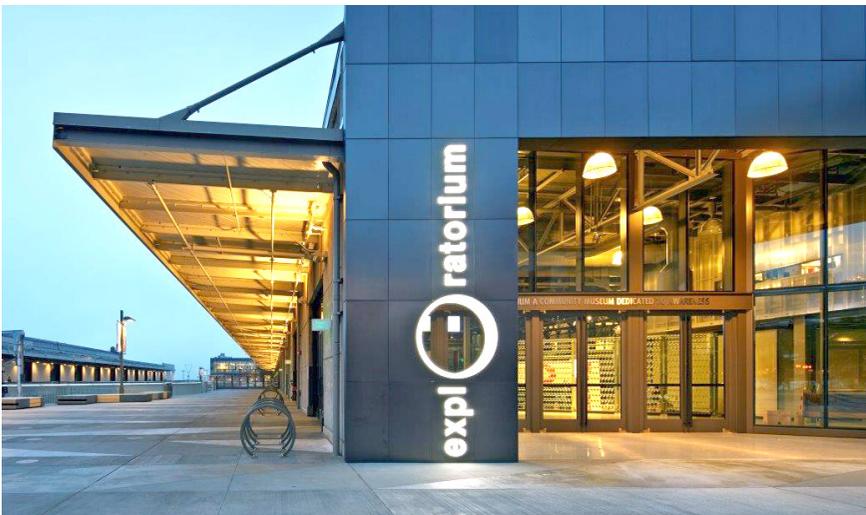
Signage can be inventively incorporated as a facade element.

Retractable canopies and moveable furnishings express more day-to-day active use and stewardship of the sidewalk.

A8 DESIGN ACTIVE BUILDING FRONTS

Buildings that provide an active and transparent interface between their interior uses and the street support well–being and safety through natural surveillance.Ground floors with residential stoops, setbacks, retail, lobby entrances, and upper levels with balconies create an engaging, human-scale street experience.


NC
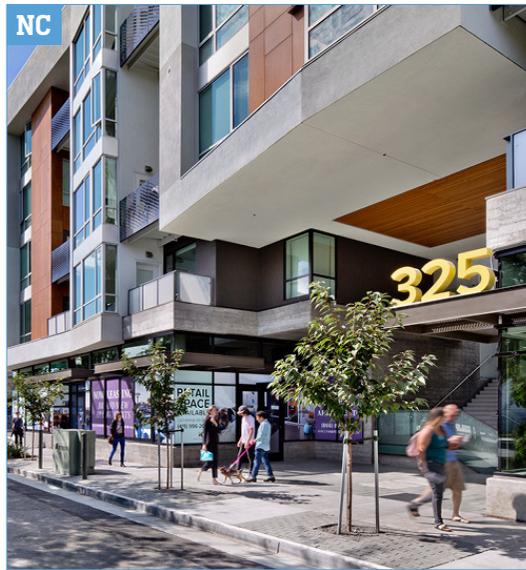
Retail, second-floor balconies, open space, and lobbies can work together to animate frontage

» Design the base of the building to foster positive activity. Orient and integrate courts, entries, lobbies, large windows and balconies to face streets, public parks, plazas and open spaces to provide more opportunity for safety and interaction.

» Consider how the rhythm of the streetwall and level of detail at the ground floor correspond to walking speed.

» Locate main building entries on the main street. Design entrance lobbies to create a gracious transition between the street and interior – wide, high, and set back enough to clearly signal 'entrance.' Incorporate overhead projections and landscaping. Building entrances should be celebrated and more significant than garage entrances.

» Locate mailboxes and other facilities used daily in residential building lobbies to increase their pedestrian activity.

» Provide ground floor residential dwellings with appropriate transition space between street and sidewalk per the Department's Guidelines for Ground Floor Residential Design. Minimize the height and opacity of front screens, fences, railings and gates. Make defensible and useful space outside individual apartments.

» Avoid or minimize expansive blank and blind walls at the ground floor.

» Include operable windows and seating to help animate a building.

» Match the scale and openness of the ground floor to the scale and role of the street it faces. Maintain the prevailing pattern of floor to ceiling height at the ground floor retail space.

» Provide upper story balconies where appropriate to allow interface between private and public space.

» Maximize transparency of ground floor commercial facades, but avoid continuous, floor to ceiling glazing. Use or re-interpret traditional storefront elements.

» Develop and express programmatic relationships between inside and outside. Use furniture, displays, signage, and landscaping to help animate the building edge and sidewalk.

» Minimize frontages devoted to utilities, storage, services and parking access, and integrate with the overall articulation and fenestration of the facade. Where possible, locate trash rooms below grade, place transformers in sub-sidewalk vaults or at the interior of the site, and combine loading with vehicular access to minimize curb cuts. Enclose all utility appurtenances.

» Distinguish commercial entrances from residential entrances through integrated signage, changes in materials and colors, or by elevating the residential entry.

» Avoid long frontages without active entries. Widths between entrances should fit a common neighborhood pattern.

NC

BUILDING BASE TERMINATION

FINE-GRAINED CLERESTORY GLAZING

ARTICULATION JUST ABOVE EYE LINE

HUMAN-SCALED GLAZING PROPORTIONS

RECESSED ENTRY WITH LIGHTING

FRAME DETAIL

TEXTURED BULKHEAD
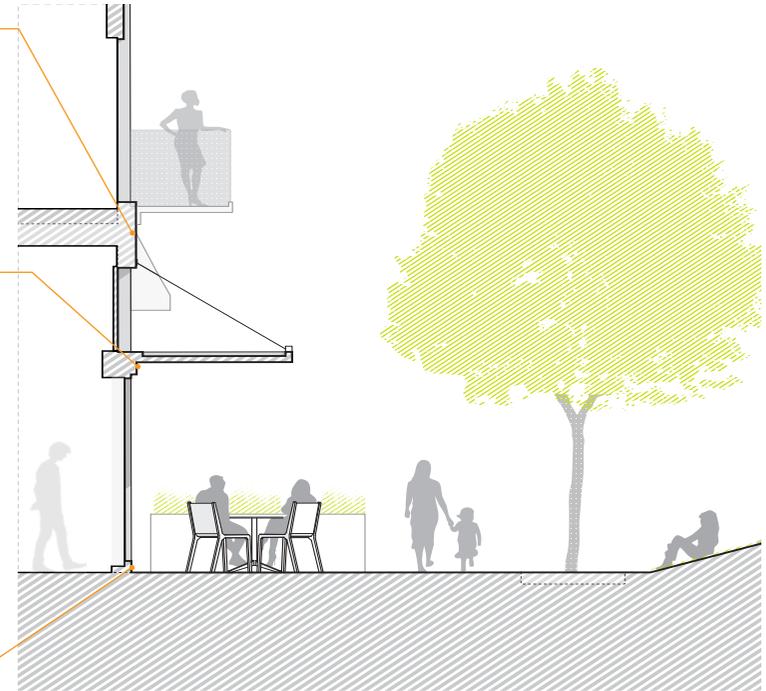
Storefront elements bring human-scaled features to the street.

Balconies can help upper stories connect to the public realm.

NC

Furnishings and openings can connect interior and exterior uses.
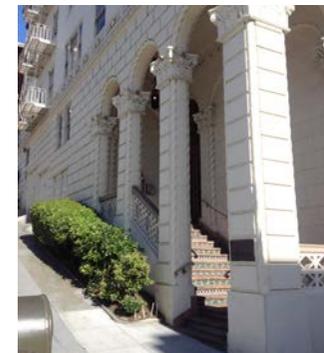
Building entrances can activate the public realm.

A9 EMPLOY SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN BUILDING DESIGN

Thoughtful building design practices can reduce the negative impact of construction on the environment.

By choosing building materials and systems that help conserve resources and reduce carbon emissions, new projects can better support the health of natural systems.

See the San Francisco Better Roofs Ordinance.

» Use building materials that are made of recycled or renewable resources and/or from local sources.

» Employ passive solar design in facade configurations, treatments, and materials.

» Design wall and roof fenestration to enhance natural lighting without negatively impacting interior comfort.

» Create daylit living and working environments to not only reduce energy use, but to connect people to the natural cycle of day and night.

» Provide natural ventilation to reduce energy use and allow access to air flow.

» Exceed energy performance requirements for the building envelope by employing supportive passive design strategies and high-performance building components.

» Create inviting circulation to reduce reliance on elevator and escalator use.

» Reuse existing structures to reduce the use of natural resources.

» Provide systems that reduce water use.

» Design roofs and/or walls to generate renewable energy.

» Design roofs and/or walls to provide habitat-supportive vegetation.
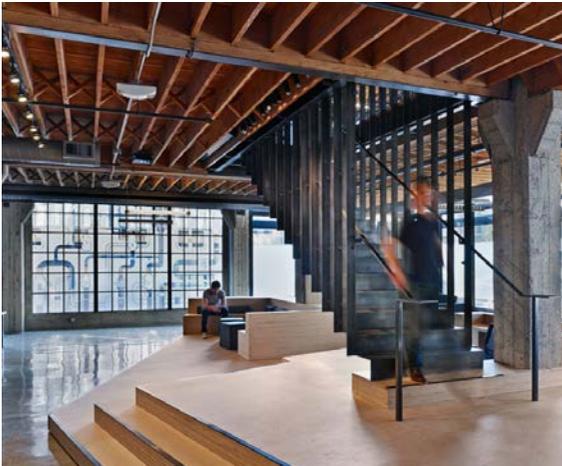
Select recycled or renewable materials or structures when possible.

Provide easy access to bicycle parking to encourage their use.

Built surfaces can foster habitat-supportive vegetation.

Inviting stairs encourages walking rather than taking the elevator.

Light shelves help protect interiors from heat gain while bringing daylight into interior space.

Use unprogrammed surfaces for energy generation or water collection.

Reuse existing buildings and clerestory daylighting to reduce resource and energy use.

Create daylight working areas to encourage connection to natural cycles and reduce energy use.

Money lives in New York. Power sits in Washington. Freedom sips cappuccino in a sidewalk café in San Francisco.

Joe Flower

P PUBLIC REALM

Public Realm

San Francisco's public realm is a network of open spaces that consists of parks, parklets, plazas, sidewalks, streets, alleys, and privately-owned public open spaces (POPOS). The city's landmark parks and plazas host community, political, and recreational events; its finer-grained urban spaces support more local activities; and its streetscapes nurture everyday life. Together they build and support the public experience, express the identity of individual neighborhoods, and foster the complexity of the city.

This section addresses the three primary contributions of private development to the public realm: streetscape, POPOS, and building frontages.

San Francisco is a transit-first city and its design of streetscapes should encourage walking, bicycling, and the use of public transportation. The Better Streets Plan supports pedestrian safety, sustainability, accessibility, use of public transit, and the development of beautiful places for people. The Better Streets Plan has a specific range of options, including details, types of street furniture, paving materials, and planting.

POPOS also supports pedestrians by providing access to natural light and air, activities that link people to each other, a respite from the day to day routine, and extensions of interior activities. A POPOS should be responsive to local community or neighborhood culture or recreational needs, reflective of local design character, and inviting to all. All urban open spaces should be compatible with or support habitat, natural systems, and cultural history.

Buildings adjacent to streets, alleys, sidewalks, paths, and open spaces should reinforce the fabric of vibrant and walkable neighborhoods. Street facing facades should contribute to vibrant and inviting sidewalks. Similarly, urban open spaces work best when engaged with and connected to active building frontages.

Identity is the extent to which a person can recognize a place or recall a place as being distinct from other places – as having a vivid, or unique, or at least a particular, character of its own.

Kevin Lynch

Cities have the ability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when they are created by everybody

Jane Jacobs

P1 DESIGN PUBLIC OPEN SPACES TO CONNECT WITH AND COMPLEMENT THE STREETSCAPE

Publicly–accessible open spaces are most welcoming to all when they act as extensions of sidewalks.

Open spaces provide relief and rhythm to the urban experience when thoughtfully incorporated with neighboring uses.

Design and quality of open space is more important than size.
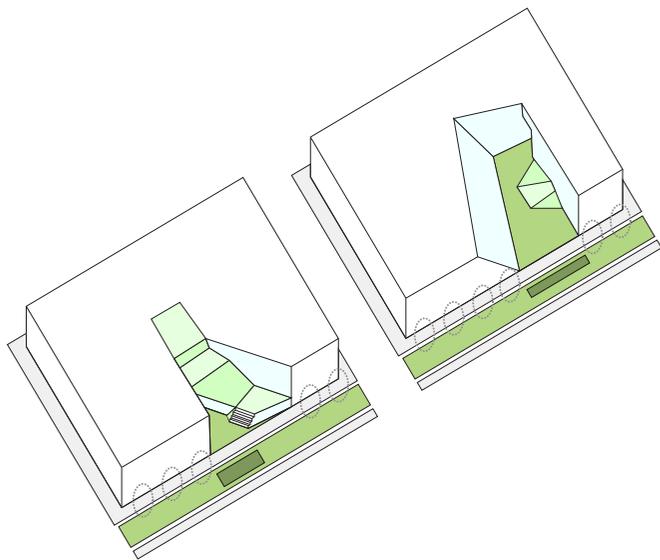
Courtyards connected at the level of the street support sidewalk activity.

» Locate open spaces so they are physically and visually accessible from the sidewalk.

» Provide open spaces at the ground level and adjacent to the sidewalk.

» Program public space to support adjacent interior uses.

» Access to rooftop public open spaces should be evident and as welcoming as possible.

» Avoid designs that appear to privatize public open space or elements.

» Align or coordinate doorways with public pathways wherever possible.

» Locate public open space to connect to existing or planned open space networks.

» Connect interior public spaces to the sidewalk as directly and overtly as possible without security or other design elements that promote exclusivity.

» Public open space should be open during typical hours of neighborhood activity, including weekends.

» While public open space may be closed at off-hours, design security barriers to be invisible and unobtrusive when the space is open and comfortable and visually contributory when closed.

» Integrate windows, courtyards, balconies, and wind breaks adjacent to plazas and gathering spaces to provide more opportunity for human interaction and connection between inside and outside uses.

» Define larger open spaces with smaller spaces to encourage different uses or activities.

Plazas surrounded by active building uses mutually support each other.

PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY ALONG PUBLIC FRONTAGES

SUPPORT EASY PATHWAYS THROUGH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE SO THEY BECOME A NATURAL PART OF CITY FABRIC

BUILDING ENTRIES SHOULD BE PLACED TO CONNECT TO PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

NC

Open spaces can extend from the public sidewalk.
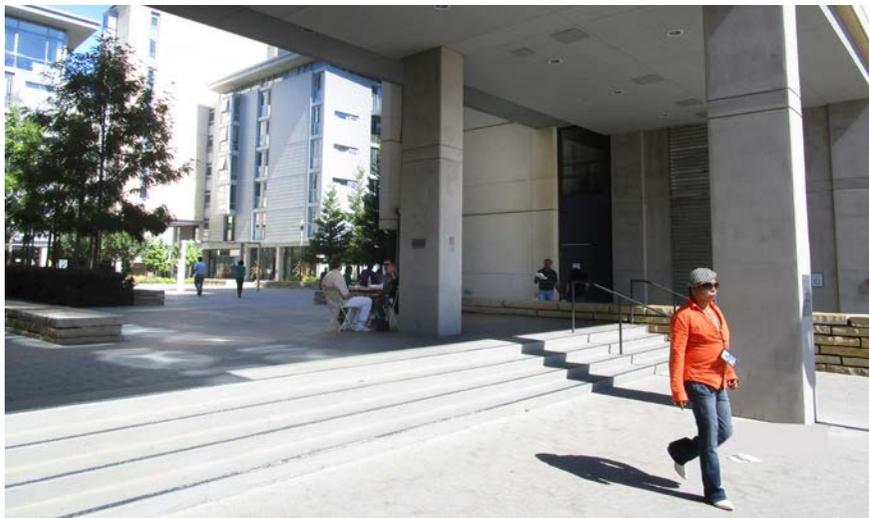
Courtyards can be effective public space if they are open and directly connected to the public realm.

STREET

BUILDING INTERIOR

PLAZA

PARK

BUILDING INTERIOR

STREET
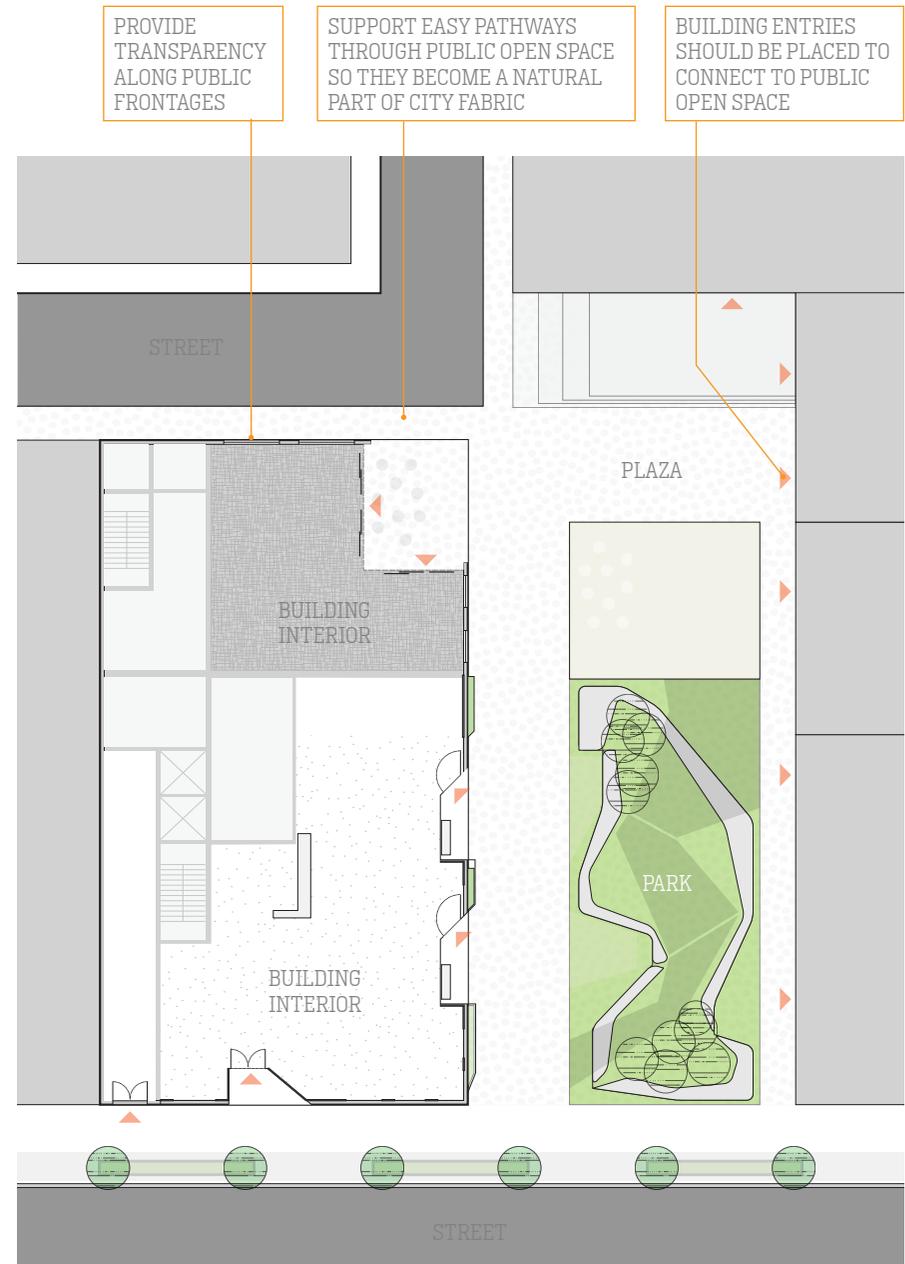
Access to many entries, buildings, and public rights-of-way helps encourage natural pedestrian flow and safety.

P2 LOCATE AND DESIGN OPEN SPACES TO MAXIMIZE PHYSICAL COMFORT AND VISUAL ACCESS

San Francisco's generally mild microclimates, tempered by westerly ocean wind and fog, provide opportunities in the design of its open space.

Protection from the elements, a variety of amenities, and many access points enable and encourage people to use and enjoy an outdoor space.

Sightlines can help people be aware of their surroundings and feel at ease in public open spaces.

» Orient and design publicly accessible open space to maximize physical comfort. Consider solar orientation, exposure, shading, shadowing, noise, and wind.

» Design seating for casual gathering in both sunny and shaded locations and in both quiet and active zones where possible.

» Consider how orientation and visual connection may support an individual's perception of personal safety.

» Consider the change in season and solar angles when designing open spaces for light, weather protection, or shade.

» Use landscape, structures, and buildings to define spaces while, at the same time, provide visual access to encourage their use and enhance safety.

» Provide different scales of space when possible.

» Consider San Francisco's unique microclimates when developing a space's intended program.

Locate foliage and seating to offer both shade and wind protection.

Provide appropriate lighting and sightlines for evening access.
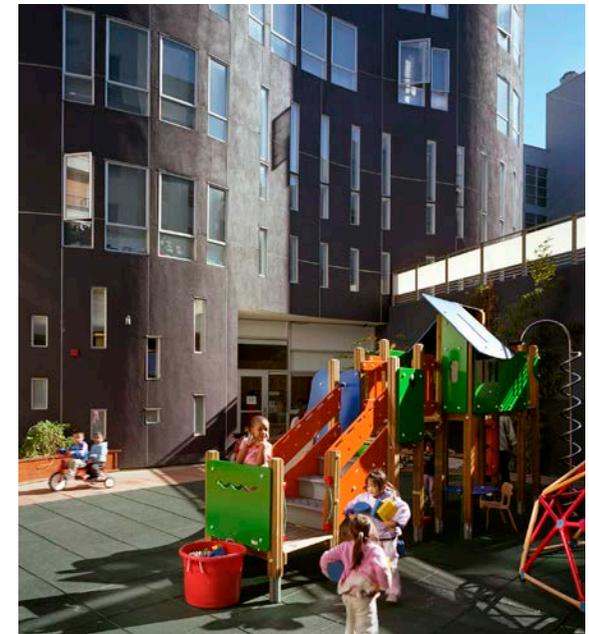
Connect sightlines from windows to open space activities.

Create a variety of sun, shade, and lit areas.

Offer a range of seating and activity options.

Use landscape and architectural components to form different scales of space.

P3 EXPRESS NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER IN OPEN SPACE DESIGNS

The public realm of every neighborhood should serve and express its unique character and culture.

Open spaces should be inclusive, interactive, and accessible.

» Consider neighborhood needs in programming and arranging spaces and amenities that support distinct and neighborhood activities and events.

» Find specific qualities of open space or landscape that express the culture or history of the community.

» Provide places that support positive and spontaneous activities or events.

» Engage local residents, businesses, and cultural leaders to design and program activities and events.

» Respect neighborhood patterns of materials and public space.

» Provide dedicated spaces for children's play and separate spaces for dogs.

» Incorporate art, murals, and local artifacts as key public features, located with attention to visibility and educational opportunities.

Simple changes can mark specific places.

Parklets are temporary programmed uses of a public parking space that can express a neighborhood use.

Local initiatives create unique places and foster stewardship.

Materials and textures can both support expression and play.

Architectural elements in open space can help express neighborhood identity.

P4

SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLING

Locating bike parking close to building, open spaces, entrances at grade—especially when combined with amenities including bike repair or sales or other commercial activities—facilitates bike use, reduces the need for automobile parking, and augments an active street life.

Protected seating and active street life encourages transit use. For more detailed requirements and examples, see the San Francisco Better Streets Plan.

» Provide bike racks at access points to open spaces and buildings.

» Organize uses and connections on the ground level to support the types of travel modes that are available. Locate and orient retail and other commercial entrances towards transit options wherever possible.

» Reduce or eliminate off-street parking in transit-rich locales.

» Provide broader sidewalks, weather-protected seating, and real-time scheduling for transit users at bus stop locations.

» Minimize automobile access conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists.

» Locate bike racks near building entrances and other areas of activity to maximize visibility and convenience.

» Consider amenities for electric and room for larger-sized bicycles.

Innovative design can safely enhance the relationship between pedestrians and transit.

Locate bicycle parking near pedestrian entrances and access points. Provide racks in an orientation so that cargo bikes can also fit without interrupting pedestrians.

Make space for bicycle sharing hubs at transit and activity rich areas of the city.

NC

Provide outdoor uses near transit stops.

NC

Provide bicycle parking and seating near transit stops.

P5

DESIGN SIDEWALKS TO ENHANCE THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

A well-designed pedestrian environment increases walking, the success of the neighborhood, and overall comfort and safety.

Sidewalk design helps to connect the public realm to ground floor activities.

For more detailed requirements and examples, see the San Francisco Better Streets Plan.

» Locate exterior uses and amenities to support and connect to interior activities.

» Design the furnishing zone as a buffer between the sidewalk and roadway.

» Sidewalk elements should be scaled according to their context, including the intensity of activity, building heights, and noise.

» Coordinate building elements such as furnishings, lighting, overhangs, storefronts, and signage to create an engaging sidewalk space.

» Locate bicycle racks and seating near building entrances and open spaces.

» Minimize conflicts between pedestrians and automobiles by locating building entrances away from curb cuts.

» Align trees and other sidewalk landscape features to provide a direct and continuous path of travel.

» Size tree wells and planters to support healthy trees and increased foliage. Consider permeable paving wherever possible to reduce water flow during heavy rain.

» Integrate pedestrian lighting into the composition of architecture and open space design.

NC

Parklets offer public space that can support sidewalk activity.

NC

Extended sidewalks add usable public space.
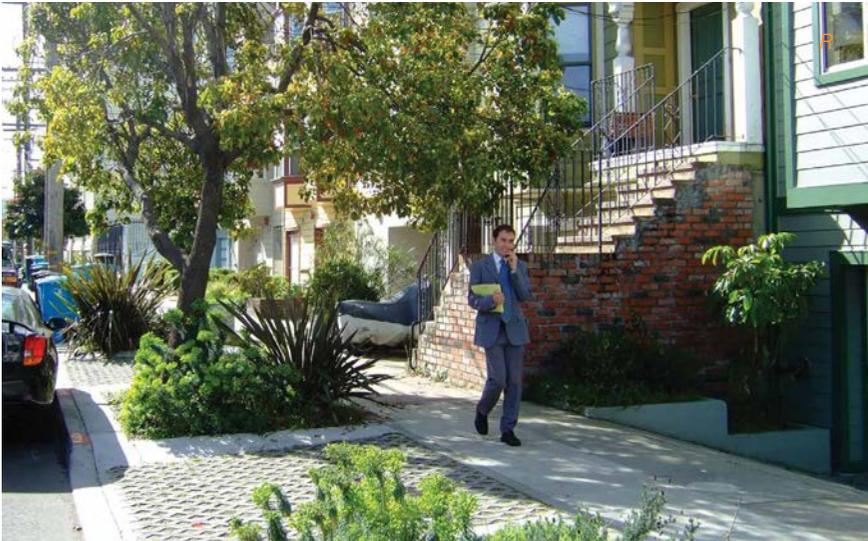
Building frontages and buffers work together to frame sidewalk space.

NC

Exterior seating supports interior uses.

Foliage can help create the edge of pedestrian areas.

NC

Add storefront-adjacent elements where feasible.

P6 DESIGN PUBLIC OPEN SPACES TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL ACTIVITY, PLAY, AND REST

Design places for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to maximize use.

Furnishing open space to accommodate social, recreational, or restful activities ensures activity and engagement.

» Design spaces for specific and flexible uses. Programming and design should be considered in the context of neighborhood uses.

» Consider maintenance and stewardship in development of uses and features.

» Include spaces for programmed events and performance where appropriate.

» Use planters, ledges, and low walls to provide places for people to view, socialize, and rest.

» Consider site factors such as circulation and adjacent uses when selecting and placing temporary or permanent art.

» Provide individual and group recreational amenities to encourage physical activity, including courts or game boards. Consult with neighbors for area-specific options.

» Include seating and tables in a variety of ways for people to sit alone, in pairs, and in small or large groups.

» Place art to engage people and enhance the open space and architecture. Consider art that interprets a natural or cultural story.

» Provide play areas for a variety of ages and groups. Design landscape with opportunities for immersive experiences of nature and varied, challenging, and stimulating play elements.

» Include convenience establishments such as food, flower, or news stands and kiosks with amenities such as charging stations, water fountains, etc.

» Integrate art, lighting, paving, seating, planting, building materials, entries, and windows to provide human-scaled elements.

Playground elements can be added in smaller spaces.

Play can be inventively included in design elements in public space.


People can use spaces differently by season.

Flexible and stepped seating helps activate public spaces.

Encourage the exploration of nature or natural elements in public environments

Recreational elements can help define space.
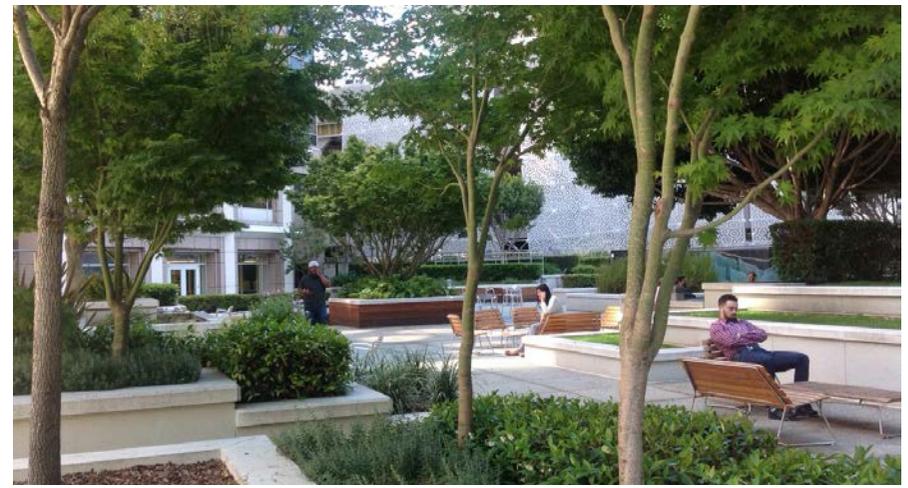
Coordinate seating, planting, and building entries to create areas for groups and individuals.

P7 INTEGRATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO THE LANDSCAPE

Sustainable and habitat–friendly landscaping and other green infrastructure features can promote local biodiversity, water, and energy conservation, as well as provide a unique, more natural experience for the public the urban environment.

Landscape elements along sidewalks offer shade, a rhythm or walking cadence, texture and finer–grained scale, a sense of street enclosure, and a soft buffer from traffic.

Plantings can enhance the change in season.

» Include materials and natural features that conserve and promote wildlife habitat and local biodiversity.

» Use trees to provide shade and buffer from wind or exposure.

» Extend or enhance existing tree planting patterns to define public space.

» Select trees species to be compatible with the local microclimate and support habitat.

» Plant trees in rows to define an edge, in groves to define a specific area, or as individuals to offer a special place to gather.

» Use native or drought resistant plantings.

» Use permeable paving and below-grade infrastructure to capture storm-water and improve the health of street trees. Trees and vegetation thrive in larger soil wells or trenches because they develop root systems more naturally and gain better access to replenishing water.

» Use front setbacks to accommodate landscaping where sidewalk space prevents landscaping or tree planting.

» Consider using recycled permeable and/ or concrete paving for curbs or benches to contain new planting. Reuse site or construction materials wherever possible.

Provide native or drought-resistant plantings.

Support agricultural uses in open space.

Provide trees and foliage in public space, especially otherwise unused.

Sidewalk features can contribute to the enjoyment of public space as well as provide water reclamation infrastructure.

Street trees help shade buildings and reduce solar heat gain.

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