



January 26, 2009

Dear interested community member –

Thanks to all who took the time to review and comment on the Better Streets Plan Draft for Public Review. The City published the Draft Better Streets Plan in June 2008. At that time, we held several public meetings across the city, garnering significant public feedback on the Draft Plan. We have also received and compiled significant written comment from a variety of organizations and individuals.

**This memo summarizes the written public comments received to date on the Draft Plan.** A summary of public feedback from outreach events, as well as a full list of public comments, is also available at [www.sfbetterstreets.org](http://www.sfbetterstreets.org). These comments will be reviewed and considered as we develop revisions to the Draft Plan and work towards a Better Streets Plan Draft for Adoption.

### Summary of Comments

Comments are broken down into several categories. Comments connected with a semi-colon ( ; ) are related; comments connected with a slash ( / ) show topics on which different commenters made opposing comments.

#### 1) Crosswalks and pedestrian signals

- Parking should be restricted at corners to make pedestrians visible/parked cars at corners help slow turning vehicles
- Facilitate convenience of pedestrian crossing: pedestrians should not have to push a button to cross the street; strengthen language to ensure that pedestrian cycles automatically come up; remove images and references to needing push buttons; give transit priority signals rather than forcing pedestrians to push a button to cross the street; give pedestrians green in direction of traffic green at pedestrian scrambles
- Add discussion of traffic control devices such as priority transit signals, added time for slower pedestrians, and timed signal progression for slower vehicle speeds that enhance pedestrian safety
- Provide mid-block crossings at pedestrian desire lines
- Badly maintained crosswalks are worse than no marked crosswalk

#### 2) Curb radii



- Use 5' radii on all streets except industrial streets and designated freight routes. Look into using smaller emergency vehicles and street sweeping machines to be able to use smaller radii
  - At-grade paving treatment to slow turning vehicles does not help pedestrians, and may create a dangerous situation
- 3) Driveways and utilities
- Add stop signs and yield-to-pedestrian signs for vehicles exiting parking lots
  - Above-ground utilities (overhead wires and surface-mounted boxes) have negative visual impacts and take up valuable pedestrian space; add description and stronger restrictions for these features
  - Consider trash pick-up service, effect on plantable areas
- 4) Education and enforcement
- Provide greater education for public responsibilities for maintaining streetscapes
  - Emphasize greater enforcement of use of public sidewalks and streets; enforce negative behaviors and provide alternative services (e.g. shelter, restrooms) for people using street in inappropriate way
  - Accompany plan with way to enforce compliance by homeowners, developers, and city agencies
- 5) Goals and policies
- Positive comments on emphasis on pedestrian safety, universal design, streetscape features, traffic calming and greening
  - Safety should be first priority; health and safety should be emphasized; accessibility should not preclude other goals; add enjoyment of nature
  - Emphasize minimizing auto traffic; healthy landscaped buffers instead of parking lane buffer; livable communities; encourage use of streets as open space but should not substitute for parkland
  - Minimizing clutter is good but 'order' should not be goal of streetscape design
  - Property owner streetscape improvements should take into account liability and maintenance issues, such that improvements don't result in excessive fees to adjacent property owners
- 6) Implementation
- Expand focus on implementation: add priority criteria, decision matrix for design options, success criteria and performance measures for



improvements; provide timeline, project list, and funding requirements; integrate into existing planning efforts

- Test innovative solutions through pilot projects
- Facilitate community improvements, and don't let standards rule out potential unique community improvements; provide resources to communities, such as list of grants
- Focus on delivering street improvements; conduct citywide audit of city responsibilities for designing and regulating street improvements; create one City department in charge of delivering great streets with accountability from other departments
- Improve existing infrastructure before beginning new projects
- Update planning code to require active frontages; focus on row-house building design
- Conduct neighborhood plans on a rolling basis with comprehensive streetscape and transportation recommendations; create working groups to implement plans; conduct audit of success
- Update Public Works Code

#### 7) Lighting

- Promote downward-facing lighting; emphasize negative impacts of light trespass and glare on bird and insect migration; consider shorter lighting to light ground-level and avoid light loss to night sky
- Use no more than the minimum light standard; adopt LEED and IDSA light standards; convert to energy-efficient LED lights; consider PV-powered lighting that adjusts to ambient light in the night sky
- Focus on lighting for sidewalks, not roadways
- Discuss existing City lighting standards, and maintenance responsibilities; move street lighting responsibility into DPW

#### 8) Paving

- Memorable paving is key to achieving great streets; focus on durable, maintainable materials – with commitment to maintain if non-standard
- Paving should reinforce pedestrian priority and safety; continue sidewalk paving through driveways, don't use difficult walking materials
- Encourage or require environmentally-friendly paving materials; specify particular types of recycled or re-used materials

#### 9) Roadway, parking, and loading

- Encourage property owners to remove garages and curb-cuts; perhaps incentivize by allowing dedicated on-street parking space



- Focus streetscape improvements on transit or bicycle corridors over auto-oriented corridors
- Include more references to bicycle facilities; consider grade-separated bike lanes on busy streets
- Focus on widening sidewalks, removing traffic lanes (minimizing roadway width), and converting one-way streets to two-way streets; set upper limits for traffic speeds and volumes; include discussion of vehicle lanes
- Emphasize pedestrian infrastructure; strategies that make it possible to leave car at home
- Provide model for auto-oriented streets that enhances pedestrian safety without reducing auto capacity
- Often better to have narrower streets to begin with than wider streets with bulb-outs, medians, and other pedestrian improvement strategies
- Define clear loading areas to minimize double parking

#### 10) Sidewalk width and zones

- When adding planting areas, take space from roadway, not sidewalk; put obstructing streetscape elements into parking lanes – only use if enough width for pedestrians exists; frontage zones should not be for planter pots – cause tripping hazard
- Diagrams show too much width given to planting, not enough to through width/ diagrams should show a lot more greening on sidewalks
- 4' is too small for a minimum sidewalk width; should be 6' or 8'
- Sidewalk width should be 'optimized' (as opposed to 'maximized') per land use and travel characteristics; sidewalks over 12' wide in lower density areas may become deserted and attract undesirable use
- With building setbacks, no need for frontage or 'shy' zone
- Minimize edge zone except where needed for getting in and out of cars; furnishings and edge zones can share space/have consistent edge zone to minimize possibility of pedestrians getting doored by parked cars
- Through zone can include ADA-compliant tree grates; 8' width between tree well and disabled parking zone is excessively wide

#### 11) Site furnishings

- Public seating necessary to achieve great streets; encourage cafes and restaurants to utilize outdoor seating
- Add criteria for site furnishings for safety, usability, and ability to maintain and replace – with commitment to maintain if non-standard



materials; allow for innovative, new lighting and furnishings as they become available

- Mention billboards and advertising – they create visual blight and should be restricted in public right-of-ways
- Trash cans should be easy to use, and always contain recycling containers
- Expand focus on wayfinding and signage; encourage pedestrian-scaled wayfinding signs in visitor areas

## 12) Stormwater management

- Positive feedback on permeable surfaces; permeable paving is good, particularly where plantings are not possible such as driveways; focus on potential for permeable paving in the roadway
- Street sweeping is often at odds with stormwater management features
- Consider financial feasibility, and technical and regulatory issues of providing stormwater LID improvements; may conflict with toxics in the soil

## 13) Street types

- Positive feedback on shared streets; expand criteria; make shared streets its own street type (between alley and paseo); designate residential areas as 'home zones'
- Emphasize pedestrian-only streets; consider 'restricted streets' as a street type with limitations on auto use
- Consider requirements for obtuse/acute/unusual angled streets, and exceptions to standard grid pattern
- On industrial street types, focus on mitigating environmental and safety issues, while accommodating auto and truck needs
- Rationalize and explain why certain elements are appropriate on certain street types, but not others
- Incorporate street types into general plan, and identify specific streets

## 14) Streetscape layout

- Balance consistency for streetscapes with ability to respond to unique conditions or scales; tie intent of project to design criteria
- Trees need not always be the organizing element of the streetscape; could be uneven rhythms of streetscape elements
- Sidewalks and transit facilities should be designed with a consistent aesthetic to one another

## 15) Trees and landscaping



- Utilize landscaping with habitat value; consult wildlife biologists; streets as habitat corridors could become danger to species getting run over
- Add greenery on sidewalks wherever possible
- Require smaller tree size for cost savings and tree basin size (24 sf too large) – many sidewalks too narrow to have large tree basins / tree basins should be minimum 5' x 5', prefer 5' x 8'
- Soil amendments may be detrimental to tree health, as tree roots won't grow out of basin, weakening tree stability
- Encourage ground-level plantings over bushy plantings; make sure ground plantings can be maintained; make suggestions for covering open soil in tree basins
- Greenery can be accommodated in much smaller planters, as little as 6" adjacent to buildings can accommodate climbing vines
- Greenery along building frontages should be shown; is good opportunity where curb-cuts preclude it along street edge
- Add connected, linear planters along street edge, building edge, in bus stops, and medians; can buffer seating areas and pathways from roadway
- Discourage above-ground planters as they are tripping hazard – plant in ground.
- Emphasize drought-tolerant plantings
- Provide incentives and resources for homeowners to select and plant trees