

Embarcadero Public Realm Framework



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Port of San Francisco



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Introduction



Overview



The Embarcadero Public Realm Framework (PRF) implements policy from the Port of San Francisco Waterfront Plan to create an attractive and functional environment along The Embarcadero. The public realm is the setting for civic life comprised of the network of streets, parks, open spaces, and the buildings that frame these public spaces. The PRF is a vision and toolkit for describing how future improvements to these elements can achieve a well-designed public realm that balances mobility and access needs, while contributing to the efficient function and enjoyment of a city. It identifies how Port streets and public spaces can be improved, how new development can contribute to the quality of adjacent neighborhoods, and how to implement these improvements.

Along with the Waterfront Plan, additional City guidelines are referenced to ensure consistency with relevant initiatives and plans. In 2010, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted the Better Streets Plan, which outlines best practices for enhancing the public right-of-way in the city. The Better Streets Plan provides relevant guidelines for the PRF and recognizes the

Embarcadero as a “ceremonial street” – a civic space that serves as a major gathering spot for special events. This distinction sets it apart from other city streets, encouraging a high-quality design unique from other city streets.

The PRF examines The Embarcadero’s public pedestrian spaces – The Embarcadero Promenade located along the waterside of the roadway, and the sidewalk and other public spaces located along the west-side of the Embarcadero. The SFMTA leads the planning, design and implementation of improvements to the City’s transportation network including The Embarcadero Roadway. The Port relies on SFMTA to provide direction through this City role, for guidance on traffic circulation in the Roadway. When changes are proposed the Port with SFMTA works with tenants and community stakeholders to ensure the Port’s public trust responsibilities are furthered.

The PRF also describes how other improvements and enhancements – new public spaces along the west-side of The Embarcadero, pedestrian wayfinding, public art, and interpretive displays could enhance the Port’s public realm.

Study Area



The Embarcadero Promenade



The Embarcadero West-Side



The Embarcadero is a continuous waterfront arterial along the Port of San Francisco’s northern waterfront, extending from Second Street at the AT&T Ball Park to Pier 45 in Fisherman’s Wharf. It entails three distinct components:

- **The Embarcadero Promenade** – a multiuse pathway on the waterside of the Embarcadero. The Promenade traditionally augmented the piers with maritime and cargo set-up space, vehicle and rail access, and circulation for moving along the waterfront. Today it continues to provide access for maritime and other uses within the pier and bulkhead buildings, and is a popular linear public space where people come to be at the Bay, see maritime operations, visit commercial and cultural destinations, and traverse the edge of the City.
- **The Embarcadero West-Side** – The sidewalk on the west-side of the Embarcadero is at the bay-side edge of several neighborhoods.

The west-side sidewalk is a pedestrian Embarcadero route that provides connection points to and from neighborhoods, and has many intersections to cross the Embarcadero that connect with City and neighborhood destinations. Port parcels adjacent to the west-side sidewalk could be improved to enhance these functions.

- **The Embarcadero Roadway** – the roadway between the Promenade and west-side has 2 to 3 lanes of vehicle traffic in each direction, the Muni E and F rail line in the center, bicycle lanes, and parking and loading spaces on each side. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) leads the design and improvements of the roadway in conjunction with the Port.

The Public Realm Framework provides criteria and guidance for the Promenade and the West-Side public spaces. The Embarcadero Roadway improvements are discussed in other efforts led by SFMTA.

Goals and Objectives



Public Findings

The Public Realm Framework is informed by public discussions during the Waterfront Plan update in 2018, and during development of the Embarcadero Promenade Design Criteria. Through the Waterfront Plan public process key findings emerged for the Embarcadero expressing desire “for a unique and diverse waterfront that respects the historic districts and maritime use and character of the waterfront”. Those findings are summarized in four categories:



Diversity of Activities

Provide activities that draw the widest range of users to the waterfront; Complement neighborhood character and provide transitions between City-side and water-side areas; Improve the public and pedestrian experience.



Urban Waterfront Character & Experience

Preserve and enhance the Embarcadero Historic District pier facilities; On the City-side, guide infill development that enhances neighborhood character and provides a transition from the City to the Bay; Protect and expand the Port’s diverse maritime industries; Create interpretive signage and displays that highlight points of interest, maritime history, public views, and the Bay ecology; Improve wayfinding systems that draw the public out onto piers and increase use and enjoyment of the waterfront.



Open Space & Public Access

Activate waterfront parks with more recreational uses and activities that serve a wider range of users; Provide continuous public access along the water, where compatible with maritime operations; Provide more restroom, furnishings, and food concession amenities; Expand locations for water recreation, including recreational fishing; Create more resting spots along the west-side of The Embarcadero; Support habitat and environmental enhancements.



Complete Streets & Transportation

Along The Embarcadero, orient west-side improvements to enhance upland neighborhoods and districts, and east-side improvements to the needs of Port businesses, visitors and recreational users; Promote sustainable, multi-modal transportation and Transportation Demand Management policies; Improve neighborhood, pedestrian and transit pathways and connections across The Embarcadero; Improve pedestrian, bicycle and transit passenger safety; Improve curb management for Port tenant and visitor parking, passenger drop-off, delivery and service vehicles; Incorporate green infrastructure and sustainable construction and operations in public realm improvements.

These findings are embedded in the Waterfront Plan to ensure the Port is creating a waterfront that meets the needs of its tenants and the public. The PRF integrates these ideas to ensure consistency with the Plan.

Guiding Principles

The Public Realm Framework is guided by three primary principles that are carried throughout in describing the public spaces and possible enhancements. The Guiding Principles share a common directive of making the Port's public realm accessible, efficient, and enjoyable.



Define *public improvements and uses that can occur in each zone of the public realm.*

The Public Realm Framework describe the different zones common to sidewalks and public spaces (edge, thoroughway, and frontage zones), and the furnishings, utilities, public spaces, and private uses that may occur within each zone. The PRF provides recommendations for the placement of furnishings and amenities allowing for adequate movement and improvement to the quality of these spaces.



Connect *Port public spaces to the neighborhood, the waterfront and their context.*

The character and appearance of improvements can identify their ownership as public or private. The PRF will ensure compatibility of improvements with the character of the place, the neighborhood, and historic properties.



Enhance *Port public spaces through their arrangement, use and improvement.*

The public realm is improved through places to sit, places to engage with others, landscaping, innovative approaches to storm water management, public art, signage, and furnishings. The PRF suggest how and where Port public spaces can improve the waterfront and adjacent City neighborhoods.

Design Criteria



Embarcadero Promenade



The Promenade Zones: Curb Area (green), Circulation Corridor (red), and Building Edge (yellow).

The Embarcadero Promenade framework organizes The Promenade into three distinct and continuous “zones:” Edge Zone, Throughway Zone, and Frontage Zone.

The following criteria provides direction and dimensions for the character, function, and types of furnishings or other improvements that are acceptable within each zone. The criteria generally do not apply to improvements beyond the front of the bulkhead buildings.

The criteria will also be used to guide project evaluation for consistency with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Rehabilitation (Secretary’s Standards). For projects that apply for Federal and State Rehabilitation Tax Credits, these design criteria incorporate precedents and best practices that resulted from the Port’s portfolio of completed tax credit projects and serve to define improvements and alterations consistent with the Secretary’s Standards. Tax Credit projects are also subject to review and approval by the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and the National Park Service (NPS).

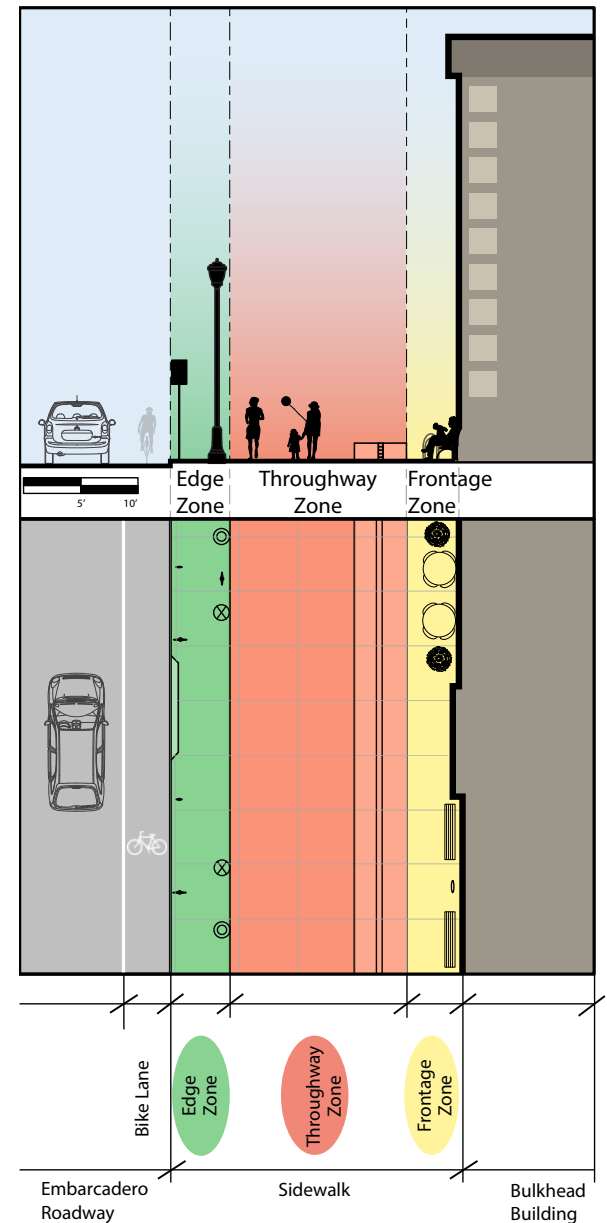
Promenade Zones

The Embarcadero Promenade has a layout and function that is defined in the following three zones:

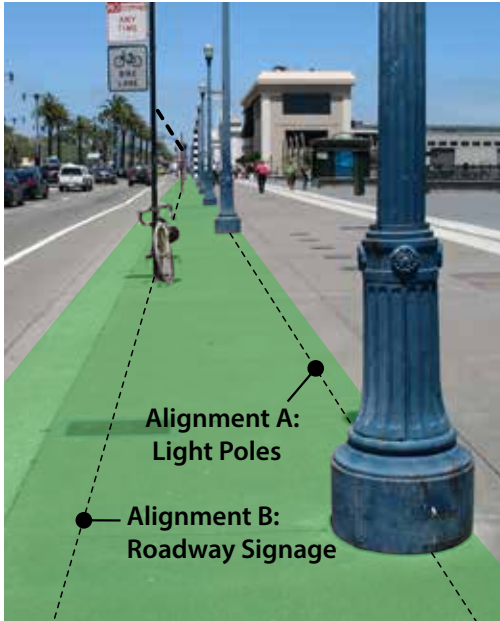
Edge Zone: *the transition zone between the roadway and The Promenade where street lights, roadway signs and pedestrian furnishing are located;*

Throughway Zone: *the central space of The Promenade where people traverse the length of the waterfront; and*

Frontage Zone: *the transition zone between the building and The Promenade, where people enter and exit the building and where tenants can establish street-level identity.*



Edge Zone



Organize fixtures & furnishings into two alignments.



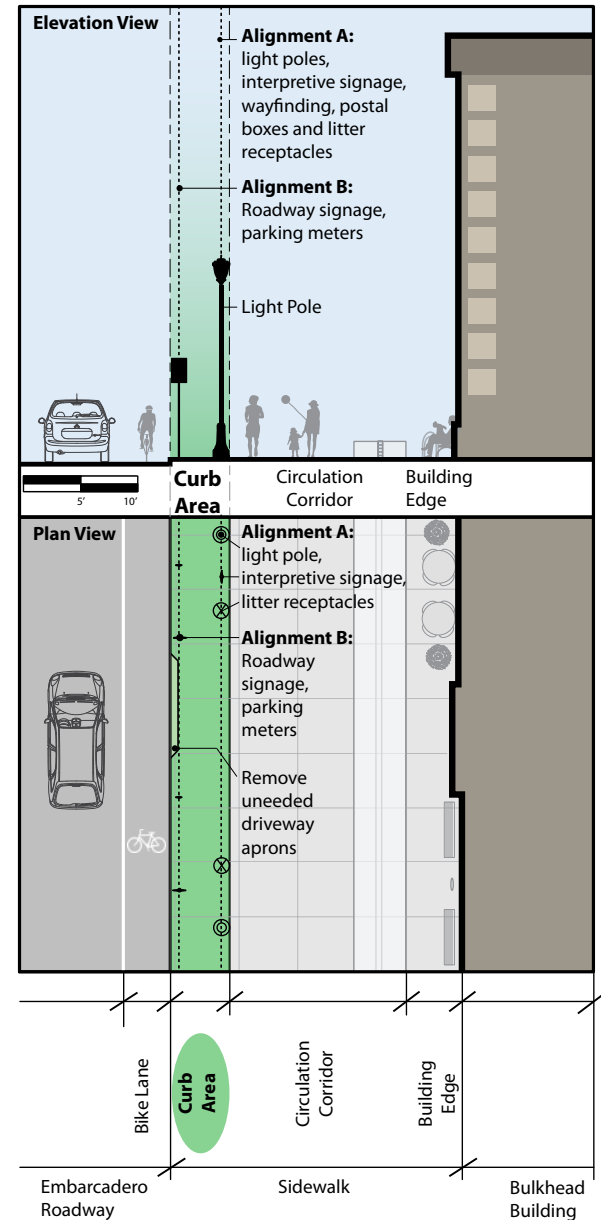
Identify and remove unneeded driveway cuts.

The Edge Zone is the linear space between the street edge and the alignment of the roadway light poles.

Along the Embarcadero the Edge Zone varies in width from 5 to 12 feet. The Edge Zone is where most of the furnishings and fixtures that have a civic identity are located. The Edge Zone also functions as a buffer between vehicles and pedestrians. Improvements to the Edge Zone will include removing unneeded driveway cuts and organizing fixtures and furnishings into two alignments:

Alignment A: Pedestrian oriented site furnishings such as wayfinding and interpretive signs, postal boxes, and litter receptacles will be located within the alignment of the light poles; and

Alignment B: Roadway related signage will be placed approximately 2 feet from the curb edge and mounted in a consistent manner (as per Port details).



Throughway Zone



A 16' circulation corridor will be maintained.



Popularity of The Promenade.



To obtain a clear Circulation Corridor, raised sections of the Art Ribbon will be made flush and interpretive columns will be relocated.

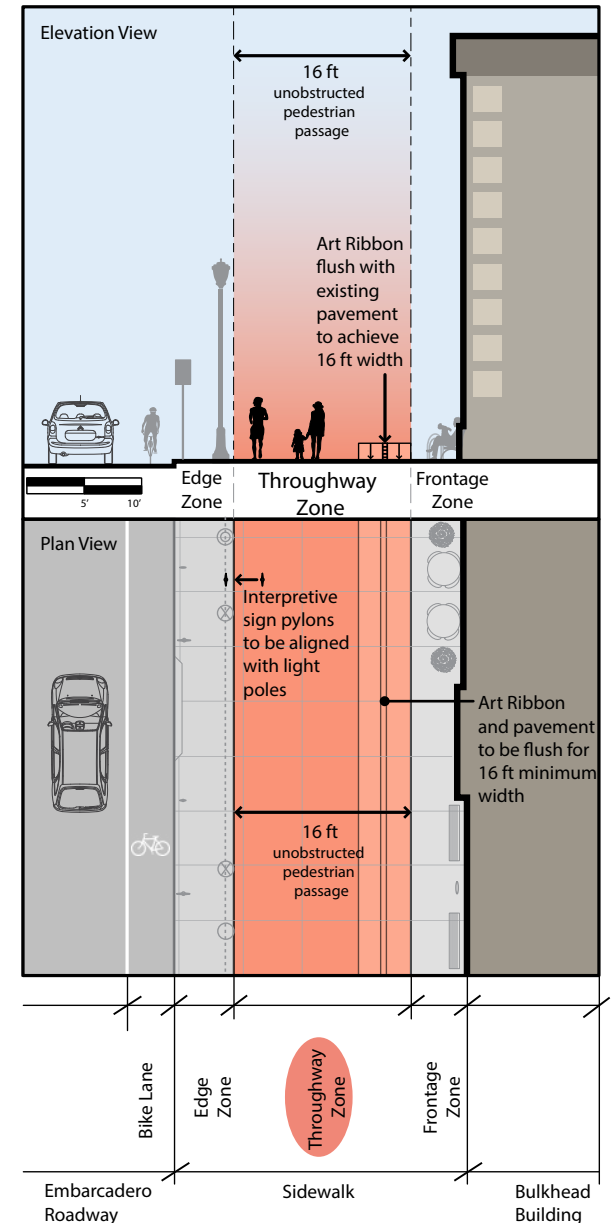
The Throughway Zone is the central zone of The Promenade.

This Throughway Zone varies in width from 9 to 20 feet and is the place where people walk, skate, run, cycle, or stroll. The Promenade is also crossed at frequent intervals by a variety of vehicle types that access and service Port tenants and Port operations.

The Throughway Zone is to be maintained or expanded to a minimum 16-foot clear width to provide for its multimodal use. Furnishings and other improvements may be placed to the sides in the Curb Zone or Frontage Zone. Changes to The Embarcadero Promenade to create this width will include modifications to two public art components of The Embarcadero Roadway project: the Art Ribbon and the black and white interpretive sign pylons.

Art Ribbon: To achieve a 16-foot width, raised sections primarily in areas north of the Ferry Building will be reconstructed flush with adjacent pavement, in a manner respecting the linear continuity of the Art Ribbon.

Interpretive Sign Pylons: The black and white interpretive sign pylons will be relocated to align with the Roadway light poles within the Curb Zone.



Frontage Zone



Furnishings standard to The Promenade: bench and bike racks.

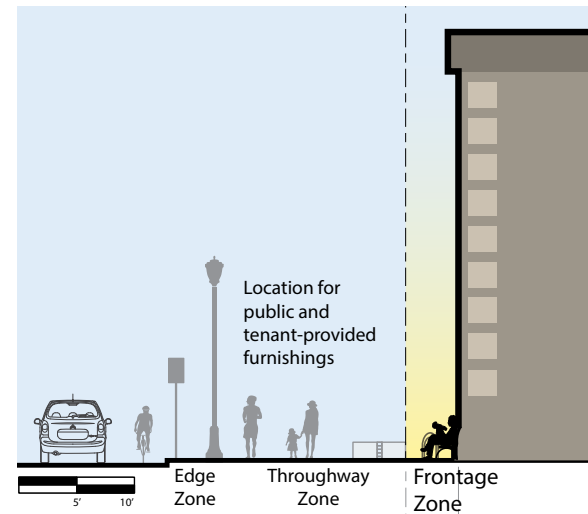


Signage and entry canopy.

The Frontage Zone area has dual purposes of providing an entry space at the front door of bulkhead buildings, and in some locations being a space for furnishings for general public use or tenant cafes (with a Port approved permit, lease or license, and approval by BCDC).

The Frontage Zone begins at the waterside edge of the “Art Ribbon” along most of The Promenade and extends to the face of the bulkhead and pier buildings. The Frontage Zone is always outside of the area defined as the Throughway Zone.

Furnishings that may be appropriate within the Frontage zone are reviewed in the context of the specific location where they are proposed, and to ensure that they are sensitive to their surroundings including the historic setting of the bulkhead buildings.



Promenade Furnishings



Furnishings appropriate for the Frontage Zone.

Improvements within the Frontage Zone may have a mix of furnishings with a public and/or tenant identity. Tenant furnishings are improvements that serve or enhance the uses within the adjacent buildings by visually informing the public of their presence and providing outdoor café/retail space and/or pedestrian amenities. Tenant and public furnishings must be compatible with the historic setting, the industrial character of the waterfront, and be consistent with the Secretary’s Standards.

Furnishings or other improvements within the Frontage Zone may include: cafe railings, planters, tables, chairs, other types of seating, umbrellas, signage, bike racks, litter receptacles, and bollards. The following describes design criteria for tenant furnishings in the Frontage Zone:

Benches and Bike Racks: locate benches and bicycle racks adjacent to the bulkhead buildings in a manner that complements the historic architectural features of the bulkhead buildings, and does not intrude upon the Throughway Zone or “Art Ribbon.”

Cafe Seating: cafe areas and furnishings shall respect the defined width of the Throughway Zone and not overhang the “Art Ribbon.”

Bollards, Café Railings and Planters: shall have a simple industrial sturdy forms character that minimizes their visual prominence and shall be finished in a color complimentary to the bulkhead buildings. Planters shall be constructed of durable materials that do not deteriorate or weather quickly. Plantings shall always be properly maintained. Reflective strips shall be included on bollards where needed for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Umbrellas: shall have fabric tops, have a minimal peak-to-edge vertical dimension to maintain a horizontal appearance and allow the greatest views of the bulkheads, and may have tenant signage on the valance. Umbrellas should be able to withstand wind and may contain heaters and lights if directed toward the sidewalk. Umbrellas may not occur where the adjacent windows have awnings.

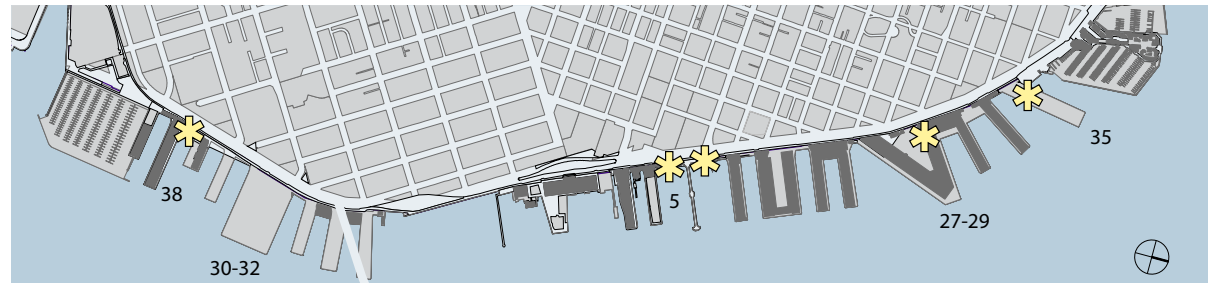
Other tenant furnishings not specified above shall have simple and bold forms, be fabricated of sturdy materials that do not deteriorate or weather quickly and are complimentary to the bulkhead buildings.

Spaces Adjacent to Bulkhead Buildings

San Francisco's climate both invites people to use outdoor spaces and often to seek protection from the City's cool and breezy conditions. In the Frontage zone, located between the bulkhead buildings and the Promenade Throughway zone, umbrellas, planters and low railings may be permitted for weather protection. In some waterfront locations retail and café uses may be permitted along the side of the bulkhead buildings. On the map below are five locations where the space between buildings may be great enough to allow seating, tables, umbrellas, corralled retail or food service uses, or a minor

single-level ancillary structure to provide an extension of the adjacent retail or dining use in the bulkhead building. Improvements would require maintaining circulation to public access areas while also maintaining ample views of the Bay. Locations shown are:

1. North side of Pier 5 bulkhead
2. South side of the freestanding restaurant building adjacent to Pier 7
3. South side of Pier 29 bulkhead
4. West side of Pier 35 bulkhead
5. North side of Pier 38 bulkhead



Locations where a covered dining structure may be permitted to the side of a bulkhead building



South edge of Pier 29 bulkhead building



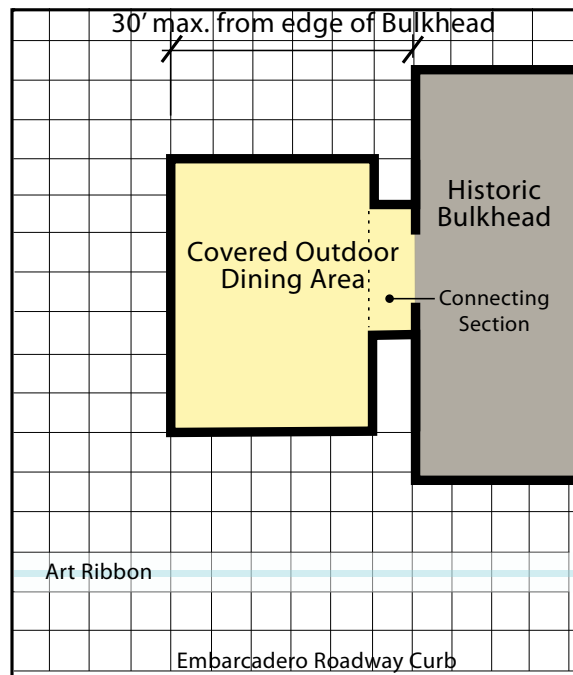
North edge of Pier 38 bulkhead building

Any proposal for outdoor seating, retail activity, or an ancillary structure would be subject to review and approval by BCDC.

Furnishings or a structure offering weather protection should have a temporal architectural character and be compatible with the adjacent historic structure and district and the adjacent public space uses. Café structures shall meet the following criteria:

- Be as transparent as possible to promote visual interaction between diners or shoppers and public space users;
- Maximum 14' height to peak of canopy roof;

- Extend no greater than 30' horizontally from the side of the bulkhead building;
- Be a lesser horizontal dimension than the depth of the adjacent bulkhead building;
- If joined to the bulkhead, the connecting section shall provide visual separation yet minimal dimensions between the structures, shall have a transparent character, and shall not conflict with historic features or non-door openings on the bulkhead building;
- The roof shall be fabric or light-weight in its appearance;
- Opaque vertical panels at the base of the structure shall not exceed 30" in height; and
- Vertical side panels above 30" shall be as transparent as possible, constructed of either fabric or windows that open.



Plan view of possible outdoor dining footprint



Pier 5 Covered Outdoor Dining Area

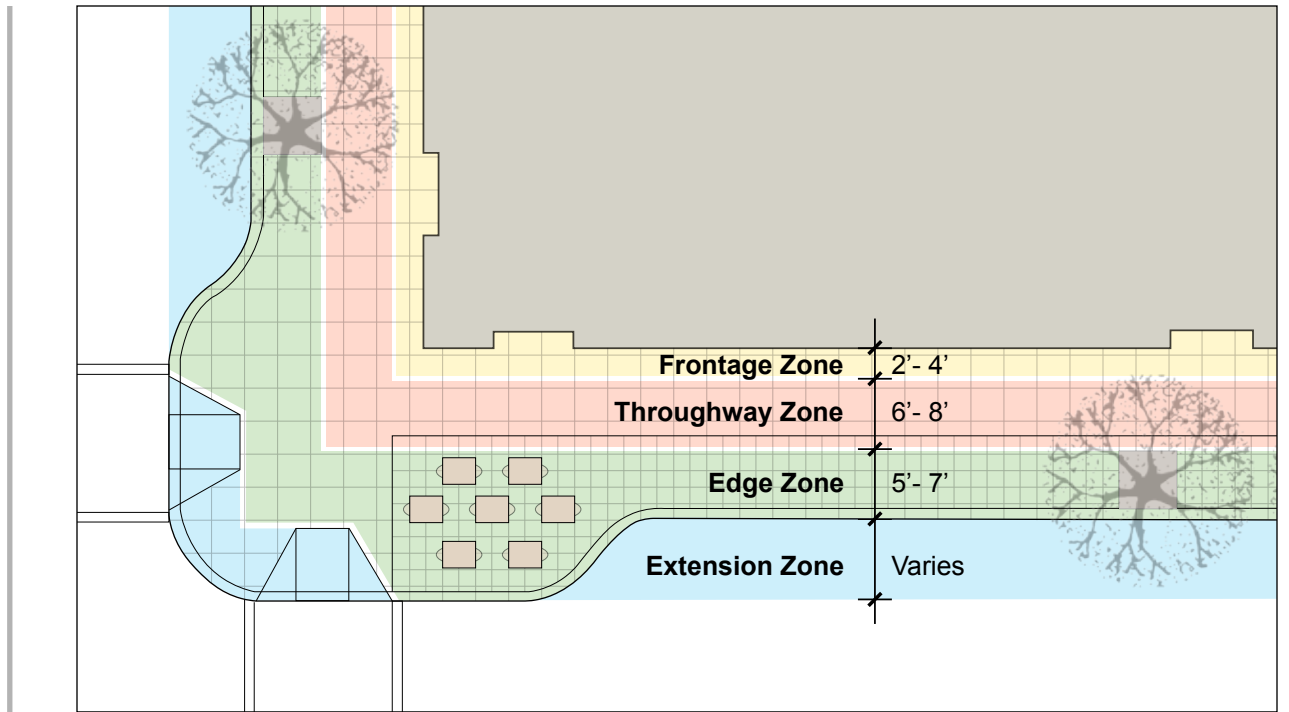
Embarcadero West-Side



West-side Embarcadero sidewalk at Delancey Street

The Embarcadero West-side public spaces have a layout and function organized into four distinct zones: Extension Zone, Edge Zone, Throughway Zone, and Frontage Zone. These Design Criteria provide direction and dimensions for the character, function, and types of furnishings or other improvements that are acceptable within each zone.

Consistent with *SF Better Streets* and *SF Urban Design Guidelines*, the Embarcadero West-Side Design Criteria demonstrate how street and sidewalk improvements work together to improve the neighborhood character, improve streets, provide environmental benefits within the larger city infrastructure network, and are appropriate for the Embarcadero.



West-side sidewalk desired minimum dimensions and possible curb bulb-out



Duboce and Sanchez, San Francisco

Extension Zone

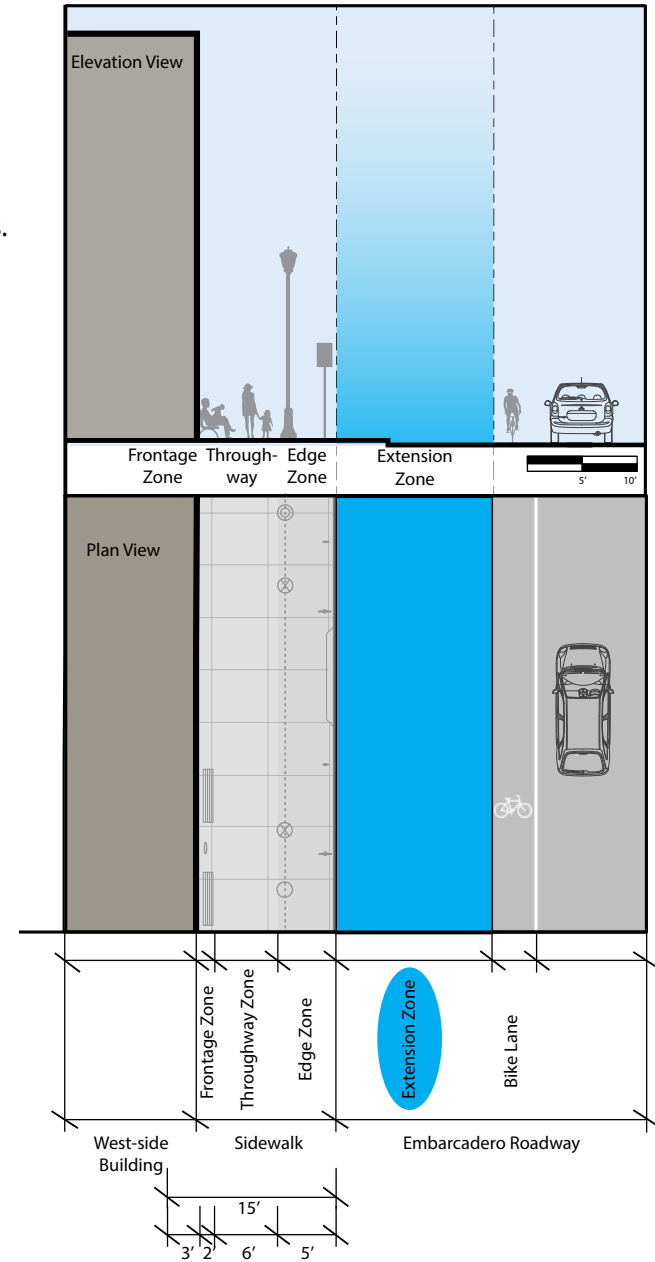


Curb Extensions narrow the roadway, making pedestrian crossings safer and shorter.



Converting curbside parking into public seating, community spaces and areas for stormwater management.

The Extension Zone is an expansion of the sidewalk into the parking lane for pedestrians use. The Extension Zone takes up most of the full width of the parking lane to provide for landscaping, seating, wayfinding, interpretive displays, or pedestrian islands to improve visibility and shorten street crossing distances. The Extension zone can also be used for stormwater facilities and other utilities.



Edge Zone



Bollards



Tree with walkable grates

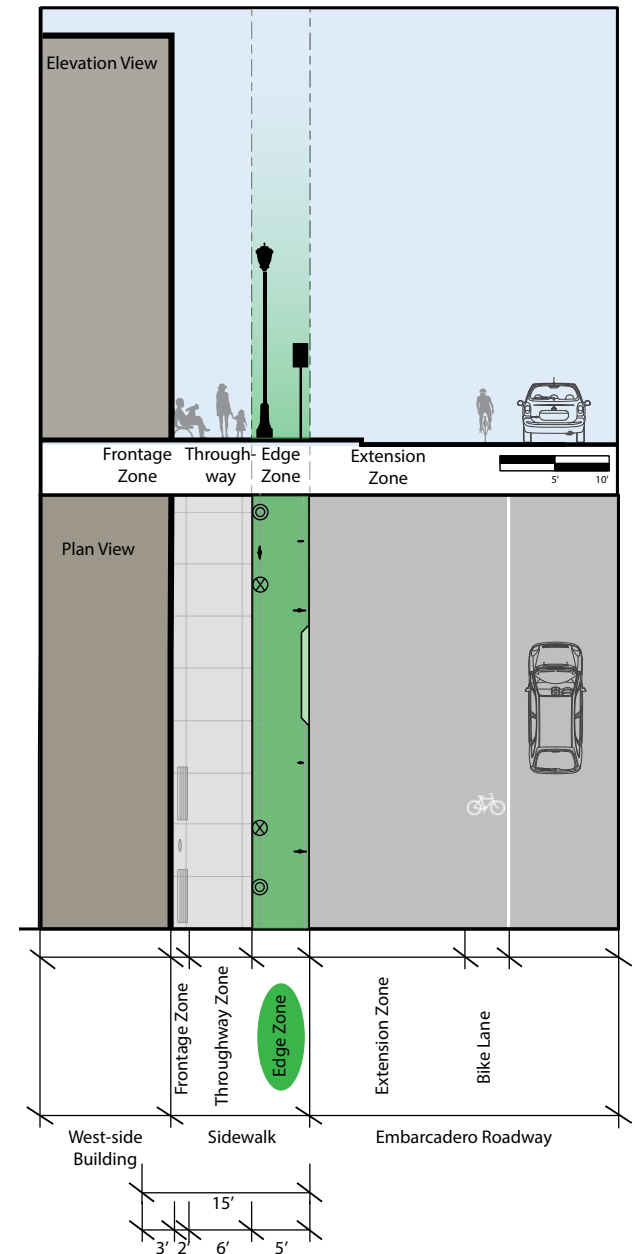


Street trees and lighting

The Edge Zone is the linear space between the street edge and the alignment of the roadway light poles. The width of the Edge Zone along the Embarcadero West-Side is generally about 4-6 feet.

The Edge Zone is a walkable area for pedestrians getting in and out of vehicles, and for vertical elements such as bollards, streetlights, parking meters, or traffic and parking signs. Improvements shall be non-continuous and allow for access to parked vehicles and shall maintain a minimum 18" clearance to curb.

A widened Edge Zone may include planting, seating, and stormwater facilities to aid in activating public space while providing visual improvements. In areas where continuous planting occurs, trees should be spaced out at 20' minimum and with the required pedestrian Throughway.



Throughway Zone



Special paving surface



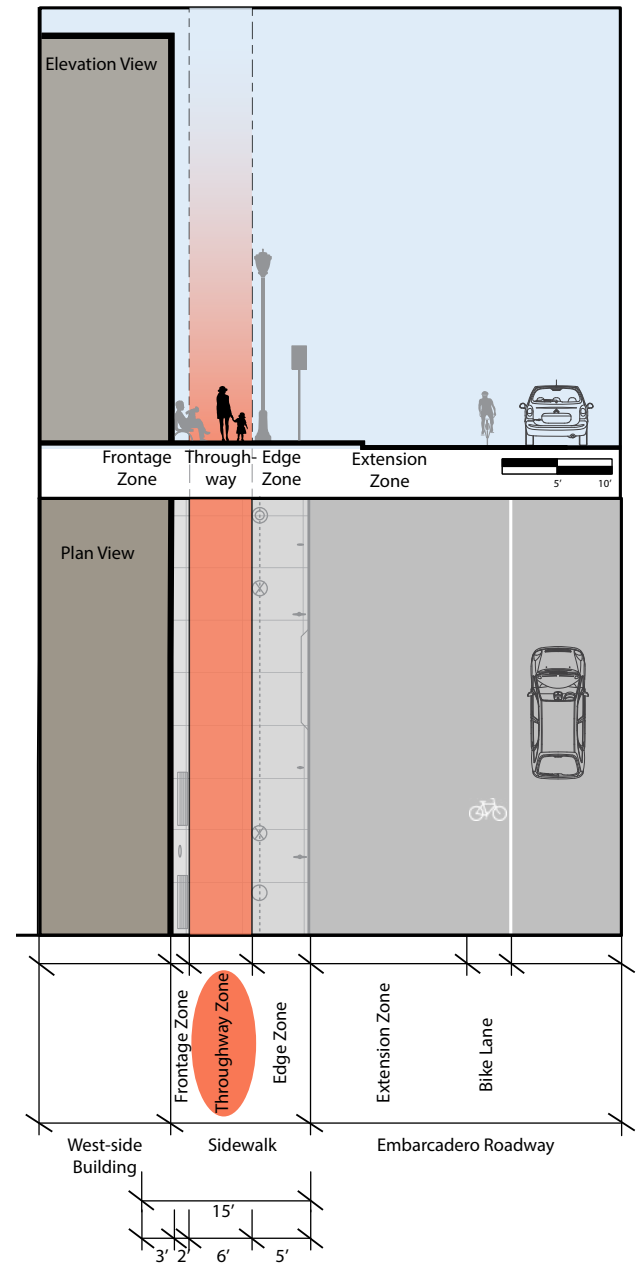
Embarcadero - Mission to Howard Streets



Embarcadero West Sidewalk at Levis Park

The Throughway Zone is the central zone intended for accessible pedestrian travel on the sidewalk.

To remain consistent with accessibility regulations, the width of the Throughway Zone must be no less than 4' and widen to 5' every 200'. In street types with high pedestrian volumes, additional width should be provided. For example, for Ceremonial Streets the Throughway zone is recommended to be 10' wide within a total sidewalk width of 22'. To maintain a clear, accessible walking surface, the Throughway zone must be clear of all obstacles. Appropriate streetscape improvements include special paving where done on a street-wide scale, and sub-surface utilities. In limited circumstances, ADA-compliant tree gates may be counted towards the minimum width. Overhanging elements (awnings, store signage, and bay windows) may encroach upon this zone as long as there a minimum clear distance of 80" to the sidewalk.



Frontage Zone



Cafe Tables and Overhanging Elements



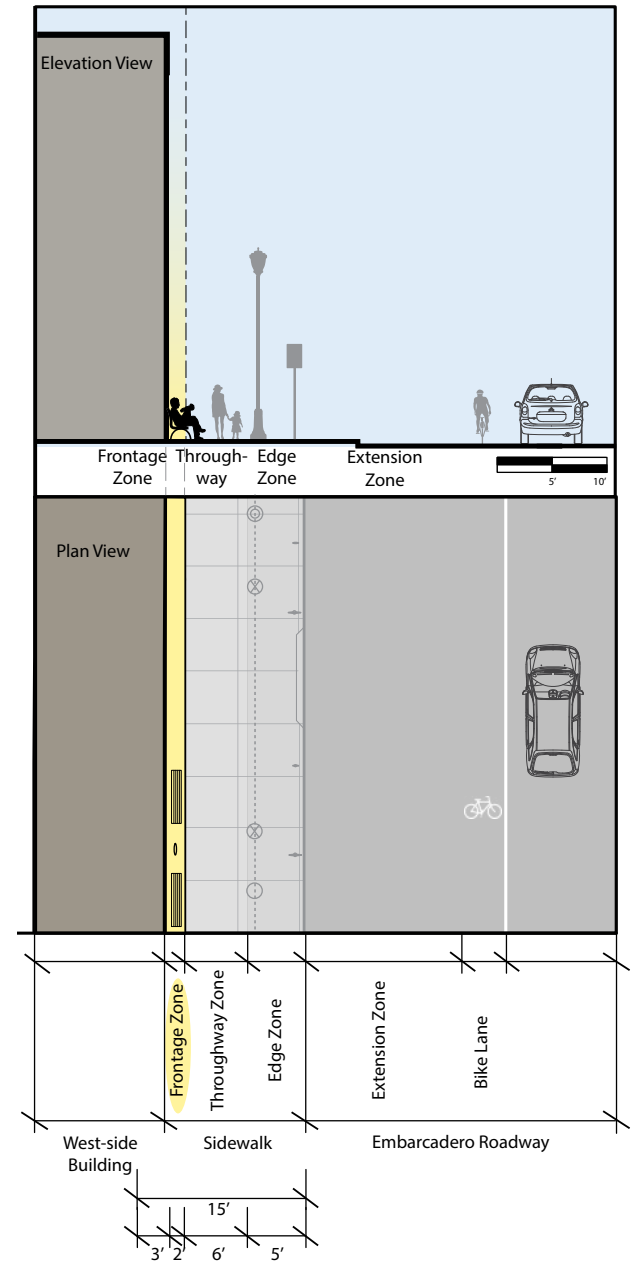
Merchandise display



Planters and cafe space

The Frontage Zone is the interface between the building and sidewalk, where people enter and exit the building and where retail tenants can establish street-level identity.

The Frontage zone should maintain a minimum 18" width on all street types to accommodate minimal uses at the building edge. For commercial street types, the frontage zone should maintain a minimum of 2' width, allowing for amenities such as small café tables and seating, merchandise displays, planters (surface or above-ground) and other furnishings. In a case-by-case basis, where there is minimal pedestrian traffic, the Frontage zone may be decreased or eliminated.



Embarcadero Public Realm Framework

