



# *LOWER DIVISADERO* STREETScape DESIGN CONCEPT

October 2006

AsianNeighborhoodDesign

## A Vision for Lower Divisadero: In Five Years...

The Lower Divisadero streetscape design concepts were developed over the course of three community workshops, convened by the Mayor's Office of Workforce and Economic Development and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), with support by Asian Neighborhood Design (AND). Planning meetings were conducted in coordination with Supervisor Mirkarimi's office, the Department of City Planning, the Mayor's City Greening Initiative, the Department of Public Works, and the Metropolitan Transportation Agency.

Drawing from all the community comments, LISC developed a vision statement for what Lower Divisadero would be like in five years:

*Lower Divisadero Street serves as an attractive, tree-lined pedestrian-friendly district with locally-serving retail, unique cafés, restaurants, and shops. Day and nighttime establishments create an atmosphere of vitality and excitement and respectfully work with local residents to ensure a neighborhood that remains clean, safe, and friendly. Our neighborhood's identity accommodates the diversity of its artistic and historic character, independent businesses, and individuals and families with varying economic levels. Collectively we take pride in our community and shape the neighborhood's future.*



# Community Objectives

## Workshop #1

The first workshop was held on February 8, 2006. The workshop began with a visioning process – moving toward creating an identity/vision for the commercial district. Participants were asked to close their eyes and picture a neighborhood commercial district in SF or the Bay Area that they really like, and answer the following questions: Who shops there? Who lives there? What kinds of businesses are located there? What are the things that draw people to the neighborhood? What are your favorite establishments in the neighborhood? What are the buildings like? What about it makes the neighborhood unique? Based on these questions, the participants began to agree on some fundamental principles that should inform the vision for the commercial district. The streetscape *design* issues that were raised during this visioning exercise included:

- Link the two sides of the district (connection across Fell/Oak arterials)
- Beautification (trees, facades, street median)
- Design elements to promote unified identity
- Reduce auto-orientation
- Parking: re-open the DMV lot, and Improve parking enforcement

## Workshop #2

The second community workshop was held on March 8, 2006. Streetscape design themes were fleshed out further in this workshop. The physical streetscape is one element/aspect of the overall “vision” for Lower Divisadero. Participants also identified notable clusters/sub-areas of streetscape characteristics. The principal node that was identified was the block between Fell and Oak, which, due to high traffic volumes and open parking lots and gas stations, divides the corridor in two. A major challenge of enhancing Divisadero will be figuring out how to “stitch” the street back together again.

Participants were asked to identify “themes”/big ideas, building on the assets of Divisadero Street, that could inform the streetscape design strategies. Among the ideas that were identified were:

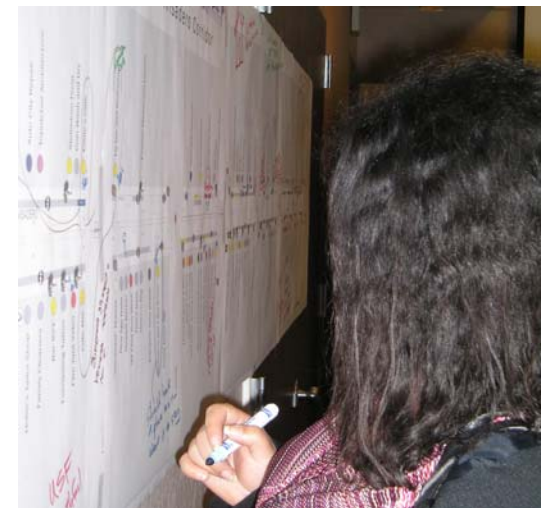
- Daytime/nighttime life of the street → *lighting; signage; displays; seating*
- Convergence of adjacent n’hoods → public spaces/gathering points; seating; identity banners/markers; public art
- Outdoor/indoor business activities → displays; tables/seating; facades; width of sidewalk; paving materials



- Landscaping for “shady lane” or for more open vistas → *tree types/frequency; sight lines*
- Transit orientation → bus stop amenities; bus bulbs; lighting
- Ped orientation → sidewalk width; paving materials; crosswalks; corners
- not “picturesque” standardized
- messy vitality
- warm feeling
- don’t cut parking vs giving back to pedestrians
- Fillmore high-rise scale destroyed neighborhood
- missing element is streetscape “greenery”
- lush canopy
- median is eyesore
- bus - can we lose overhead lines
- consistent greenery
- benches, sitting areas, where sidewalk is wide enough
- Divisadero, as seam, where neighborhoods come together
- if we build gathering points they will all come, concentrate on nodes
- make sure trees don’t take visibility from businesses, signs
- greenery can be like Dolores, Portola – don’t overwhelm
- traffic slowing – pedestrian crossings
- sidewalk width – people with strollers, etc
- Fell & Oak – needs to be solved
- seating can be places to sleep

AND presented samples urban design elements, including lighting, trees/greenery, corners, median, bus stops, art, etc. Streetscape design is built up by using a palette of streetscape “elements” (or as some refer to them as a “kit of parts”) which were discussed in depth at the second community workshop. These elements include:

- landscaping
- lighting
- seating
- trash receptacles
- corner “bulb outs”
- ped crosswalks
- bus stops and “bus bulbs”
- street medians
- facades (windows, signage, paint, etc)
- displays
- sidewalk paving materials
- permeable paving



- public art
- identity (banners, markers, etc)

Participants were asked to “Design” the streetscape using the appropriate palette of *elements*, such as lighting; trees/greenery; corners; bus stops; center median; art; etc., using the themes/big ideas as a guiding framework.

### Workshop #3

At the third workshop, convened on April 19, 2006, AND presented three streetscape design concepts that could be applied to the corridor, incorporating a variety of design elements and with varying degrees of simple to more complicated implementation. The purpose of the streetscape design work is to create a “complete street,” one that fulfills the many vital functions of the spine of a busy neighborhood commercial corridor such as Divisadero. These design strategies were informed by the overall Divisadero “vision” and built on themes/big ideas and assets fleshed out in earlier discussions.

AND also facilitated a discussion of Oak & Fell issues and possible streetscape design solutions, and the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development continued with a discussion of related land use considerations for the Oak/Fell area.

Using these scenarios as a starting point, participants were asked to describe the design elements that they would select as priority improvements. The consensus around design concepts will allow the City to prepare some rough order-of-magnitude cost estimates to begin the process of identifying funding sources and preparing more detailed design plans for the streetscape.



# Lower Divisadero Streetscape Issues and Options

The following are the various issues that were brought up by residents and merchants during the course of the public workshops and some options that might be incorporated into streetscape designs. They formed the basis for the discussions at the third workshop which resulted in consensus on the direction of a design concept for Lower Divisadero.

## Overall feeling

- Warm feeling;
- “Messy vitality;”
- lush greenery;
- Pedestrian safety – crosswalks and pedestrian lighting
- Gathering places – sidewalk widenings, seating
- “Where neighborhoods come together” – corner nodes as gathering places where neighborhoods converge
- “Stitching the street back together” – dealing with Oak and Fell pedestrian realm
- Identity – “branding” and unique identity for Divisadero
- opportunities to express the arts and eclecticism of Divisadero, not standardized, art reflecting local character and history

## Sidewalk widening

- Bus bulbs at 4 key intersections (Haight, Hayes, McCallister and Turk, possibly Fulton), 60’ long typical, bus shelters typical, with planters, benches and art within existing 10’ sidewalk zone
- Sidewalk widening options:
  - Corner bulbouts elsewhere, would take up a car space in specific locations where bulbout is to be used for seating and planters
  - Bulbs into Divis crossing only at Page, Grove
  - No change to curb location, but add textured (“streetprint”) crosswalks
  - Mid-block widenings (note tradeoff with parking, drainage issues)

## Median Improvements

- Do nothing, keep existing concrete on 4’ median
- New textured paving and sculpture locations along median
- Median flowers, low-maintenance xeriscape; no permanent irrigation installed (?)
- Palm trees (only feasible tree option for 4’ median); may be combined with median paving or low plantings;
- Public art along median

### **Lighting options**

- Do nothing to fixtures, add artwork (metal “banners”?) or standard banners to median poles
- Change center cobra light style only, changing the head, new decorations; No additional ped lights
- Keep median street lights but add ped lights attached to existing sidewalk catenary poles (add new ped light poles only where needed)
- All new light standards with street and ped lights, demolish median cobras, keeps sense of regularity and design to sidewalk experience

### **Sidewalk Greening**

- Do nothing – new trees only as installed and maintained by Merchants and FUF
- Light foliage (“business-friendly”) trees throughout, is there a preferred street tree?
- Light foliage to McCallister (commercial area), heavier trees above (residential area).
- Hanging flower baskets, drought tolerant, attached to existing catenary poles or to new ped lighting poles

### **Identity and public art**

- Divisadero “branding,” banners or metalwork signs identifying Divisadero on median poles
- Public art incorporated in median
- Custom street fixtures and furniture (trash cans, seating), as public art murals and sculpture, locate at sidewalk widenings
- Information boards or kiosks at selected corners
- Art should reflect local history, work with historical research
- “Archways” across Fell and Oak (suggested in two of the breakout groups)

### **Street Furniture**

- Garbage Cans, throughout
- Bike Parking throughout, make space in bulbouts for bikes
- Custom street fixtures and furniture (trash cans, seating), as public art murals and sculpture
- Public art incorporated in median
- Art should reflect local history, work with historical research
- Seating at bulbouts and especially bus nodes, but not near liquor stores; no seating for sleeping; incorporate decorative elements, metalwork
- Locate information boards, kiosk at McCallister and Diviz (?)
- Need bus shelters NOTE – are there any shelters now?

### **Driving Lanes**

- Don't allow any left turns
- Allow left turns only with left turn arrow, 3-way signal
- Remove one lane each direction and create wider median (8'-14') and sidewalks (15'). THIS OPTION DOES NOT APPEAR FEASIBLE AT THIS TIME.

### **Parking**

- Keep net number of parking spaces
- Any spaces removed need to be replaced with a parking structure at DMV lot or Purple Heart lot.

### **Special treatment at Fell and Oak**

- No change to land use or traffic: corner bulbouts at all eight corners where feasible, encourage greening at gas station edges, reduce curb cut size
- No change to land use or traffic: eliminate some parking spaces to widen sidewalk mid-block
- Eliminate morning towaway on Oak: would allow corner bulbs on north side of Oak
- Change in land use: if auto-oriented uses get developed, the sidewalk could be widened with no loss of parking spaces

# Divisadero Streetscape Scenarios

## Community Streetscape Goals

Boiling down all of this preliminary input from the first two community workshops, the following goals were used as AND developed three potential scenarios for a streetscape design.

1. Pedestrian safety – crosswalks and pedestrian lighting
2. “Warm feeling” and “lush greenery”
3. Gathering places and seating on the sidewalk
4. “Where neighborhoods come together,” gathering places at nodes
5. “Stitching the street back together,” improving the pedestrian realm at Oak and Fell
6. Expressing Divisadero’s unique identity and merchants
7. “Messy vitality,” not standardized, opportunities to express the arts and eclecticism of Divisadero, and the local character and history

And Divisadero is seen as a key corridor with a variety of important functions which should be embedded in its streetscape design. Uses for streets:

- Streets for getting around
- Streets for hanging out
- Streets for nature
- Streets give an identity to a neighborhood
- Streets express local culture
- Street are places for commerce

## THREE SCENARIOS

At the third community workshop AND presented three design scenarios, each incorporating elements discussed at the previous working meetings, but ranging along a continuum from roughly modest cost with simpler and more selective changes to largest cost with very comprehensive and dramatic changes.





## Divisadero Streetscape Scenario 1

### Scenario 1 – Beautifying Divisadero

- a. Crosswalks: Streetprint
- b. Lighting: no change to poles, but add regular banners to median poles
- c. Median landscaping: paving, public art sculptures
- d. Sidewalk landscaping: light foliage trees
- e. Sidewalk extensions: none
- f. Street furniture: more trash cans
- g. Art opportunities: median lights, median sculptures; trash cans
- h. Additional merchant opportunities: general sidewalk beautification



## Divisadero Streetscape Scenario 2

Scenario 2 – Greenery and small gathering places

- a. Crosswalks: Streetprint
- b. Lighting: Change median fixture/heads, add permanent signage/art to median poles, add ped lights on Muni catenary poles on sidewalks
- c. Median landscaping: drought-tolerant plantings
- d. Sidewalk landscaping: light foliage trees or palms
- e. Sidewalk extensions: mid-blocks only, doesn't change storm drain locations
- f. Street furniture: trash cans, seating and planters at sidewalk extensions
- g. Art opportunities: median lights and poles; seating, planters and trash cans; paving on mid-block extensions
- h. Additional merchant opportunities: merchant displays and sidewalk seating on bulbouts



### Divisadero Streetscape Scenario 3

Scenario 3 – Gathering places where different neighborhoods come together

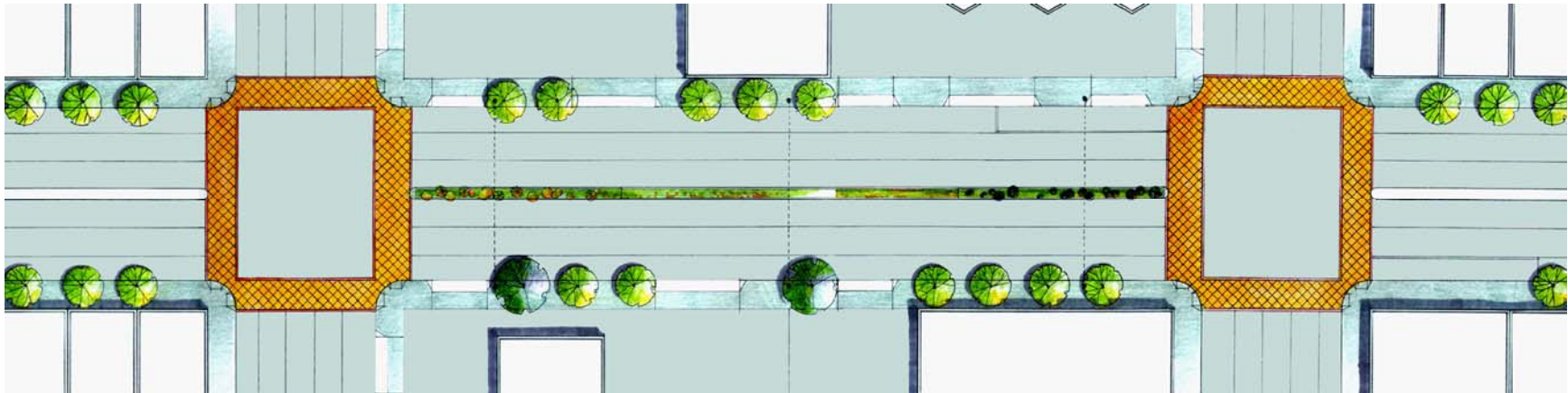
- a. Crosswalks: Streetprint
- b. Lighting: Remove median lighting and poles; install new street-and-ped lights on new sidewalk poles in regular pattern
- c. Median landscaping: palm trees, drought-resistant ground cover
- d. Sidewalk landscaping: light foliage trees, drought-tolerant planters
- e. Sidewalk extensions: generally at corners, approx. 60' extensions at bus stops
- f. Street furniture: trash cans, seating and planters at sidewalk extensions; bus shelters at bus bulbs
- g. Art opportunities: signage/metalwork on new lighting standards; seating, planters and trash cans; paving on corner and bus-bulb extensions
- h. Additional merchant opportunities: opportunities for merchant displays and sidewalk seating on bulbouts

# Oak and Fell Streetscape Concept

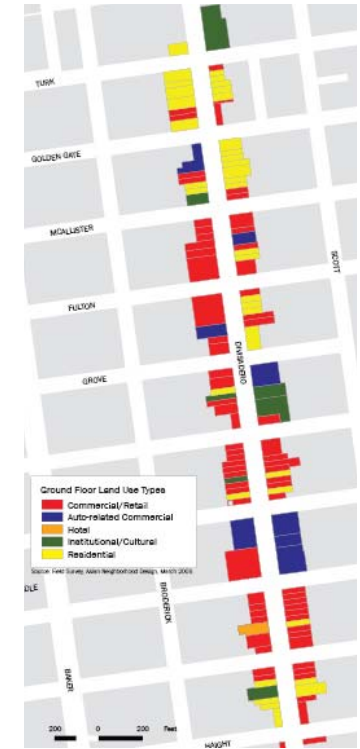
From the initial community workshop it was clear that a special design treatment was needed at the Fell and Oak intersections where traffic volumes on these cross-town arteries are intense. AND therefore prepared a specific design concept for this location along the Lower Divisadero corridor, with the idea of trying to facilitate “stitching” the two parts of the corridor back together.

## Special treatment at Fell and Oak:

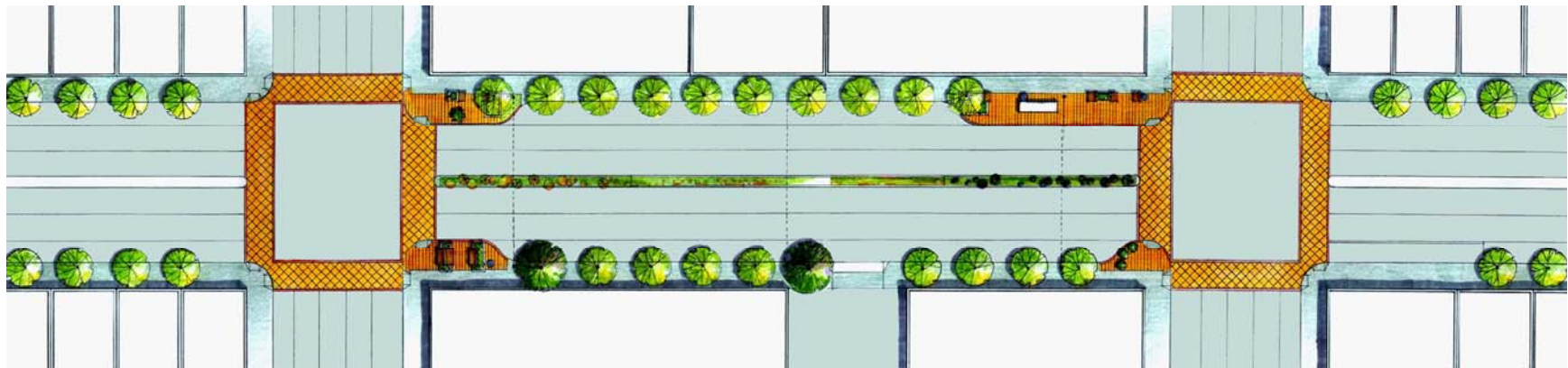
- Streetprint on all crosswalks
- Corner bulbouts in future where turning movements aren't restricted
- Street trees to create more continuous “rhythm” of greenery
- Low-profile landscaping along center median
- Reduce curb cut size and encourage greening at gas station edges  
(note that this area has lots of curb cuts, limiting both locations for street trees and on-street parking spaces)
- Potential to eliminate morning tow away on Oak to allow a bus bulb in the future



## Oak and Fell – Land Use Issues



With current land use patterns in this area – essentially auto-oriented with three gas stations and a car wash occupying much of the street frontages – there are limits on how much pedestrian improvement can be accomplished through streetscape design alone. At the final community workshop the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development facilitated a discussion about the potential for future land use changes with mixed use development that could establish more consistent building frontages along Divisadero Street. Such development of some of these sites would also allow additional streetscape improvements as well as allow for some sidewalk widening without loss of on-street parking. The concept design shown here includes a more complete pattern of trees and several corner bulb outs plus a long bus stop curb extension.



# Divisadero Streetscape Implementation

## Agency Collaboration

Between the community workshops, AND convened several technical advisory meetings with various agencies involved in streetscape issues, including DPW, DPT, Muni, Planning Dept, etc.

Muni's Overhead Lines Department provided some general heights of what could be attached to catenary poles. Muni was generally concerned about the location of street furniture within the 60' bus bulb zone, but, though these items would have to be reviewed on an individual basis, they generally required maintaining clearances around the front and rear doors of buses. DPT generally agreed that installing streetprint paving at crosswalks was very feasible, but others pointed out that streetwork by other agencies and utility companies often failed to match the existing paving, creating ugly patches. It was unclear whether it would be possible to eliminate morning tow away on Oak to get a corner bulb there. DPW generally identified mid-block sidewalk widenings as more cost-efficient, because they generally would not involve moving PUC-controlled catch-basins, which generally occur at corners. Divisadero was identified as a DPW-maintained street, who could possibly continue maintenance of new median plantings.

A key issue will be taking advantage of parallel funding opportunities and city investments. For example, there are plans already underway for Muni along Geary Boulevard which will impact the intersection with Divisadero. There is also the possibility of a Geary Boulevard rezoning process through the Planning Department. And there will be other opportunities to collaborate with agencies such as with DPW improvements, if these agencies coordinate their work.

## Community Implementation

In the community discussions, several issues were raised that were not properly design questions, but which are significant considerations in the implementation of the street design. Among the goals of the process was to identify any kind of community maintenance program for Divisadero Street, or to develop a community-based

stewardship program to ensure ongoing maintenance of improvements. This raised several questions:

- Are there other organized community groups to take “ownership” of different parts of the plan?
- Are there opportunities to match the City’s street investment with local volunteers and art (using funding for the SF Arts Commission, the Community Challenge Grant, SF Beautiful, or other funding).
- And several community members suggested collaborating with Friends of the Urban Forest or Ida B. Wells High School – which have been involved in other neighborhood improvement projects?

## Next Steps

While this first process was aimed at fleshing out an initial streetscape design concept, the community’s enthusiastic engagement provided good input on the direction for the design work. The general sentiment at the third and final workshop was that scenario two (shown again here) – the ‘middle of the road’ package of design elements – was both an aesthetically appropriate vision for Lower Divisadero and a practical option from a funding and implementation standpoint. This design concept will allow the City to prepare some rough order-of-magnitude cost estimates to begin the process of identifying funding sources and it will also frame a further more detailed streetscape design process to take the community’s initial concept to an implementation level of specification.



Lower Divisadero Streetscape Scenario 2