

# D.

## PUBLIC SPACE

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## D.1 OVERVIEW

As introduced in the Urban Design Framework in Chapter C, the Specific Plan proposes a comprehensive public space and pedestrian/bicycle network that enhances community life and establishes safe and attractive pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections throughout. Figure D1 illustrates the enhanced network of pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly linkages between downtown, the station area, the Civic Center, and along and across El Camino Real.

The key unifying concepts for public space in the project area include:

- Connected + Walkable Downtown and Station Area;
- Green + Shaded Downtown and Station Area;
- Bicycle Network + Access Downtown and Station Area; and
- El Camino Real + East-West Connectivity.

This section also includes standards, general guidelines and sustainable practices for streetscape and public space improvements in the downtown, station area and along El Camino Real. For each improvement (e.g. Santa Cruz Avenue), the section provides a short overarching description of the improvement, the intent of the improvement, its character and specific elements, and applicable standards and guidelines. These descriptions, standards and guidelines are to be used by those making public improvements in the area, including public agencies and private property owners.



*Comprehensive public space with generous pedestrian amenities (Vancouver, Canada)*

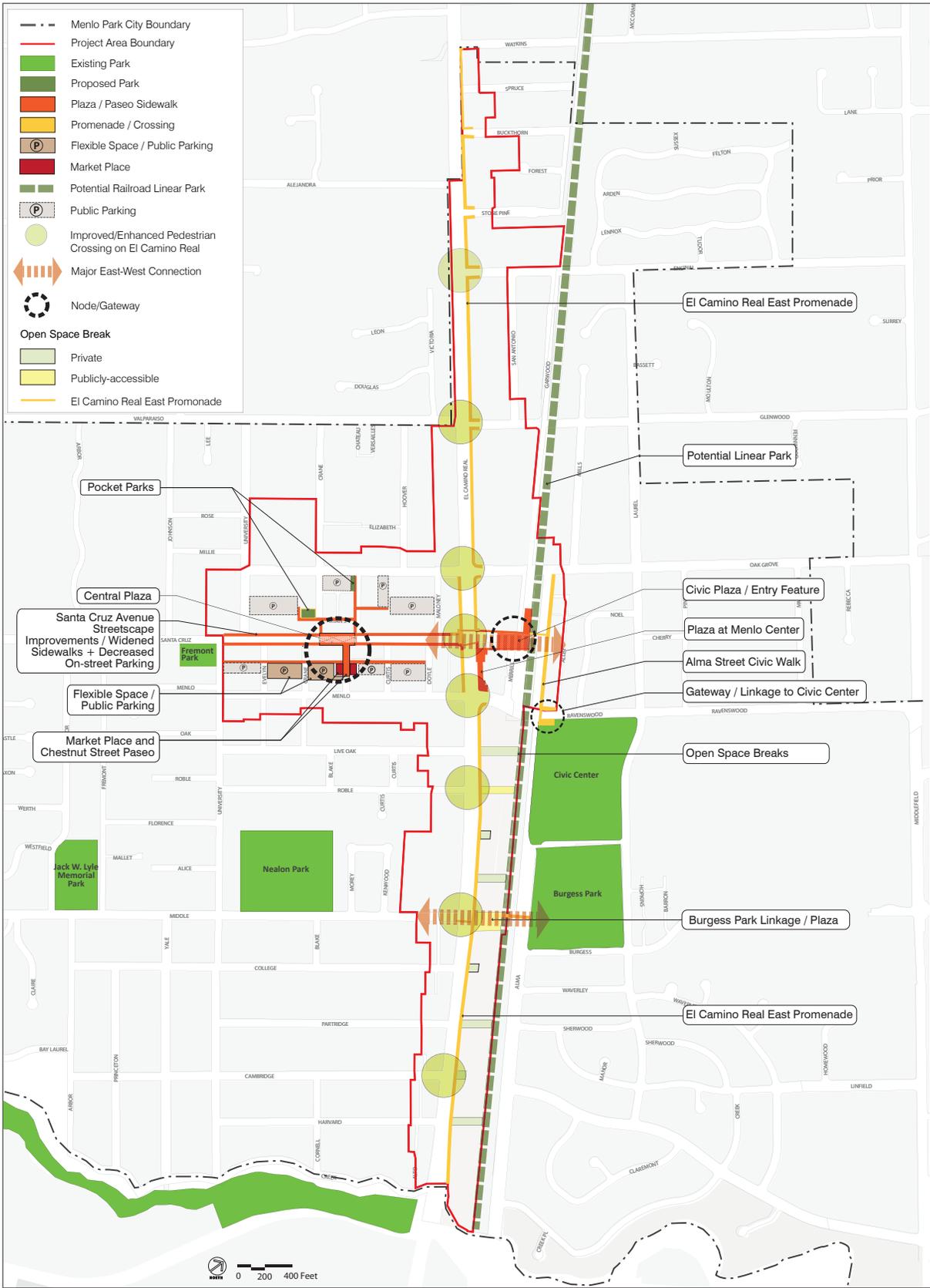


Figure D1. Public Space Framework

## Connected + Walkable Downtown and Station Area

The Specific Plan establishes a rich, unifying and coordinated network of enhanced sidewalks, a pedestrian paseo (a public path designed for walking), plazas and parks, connecting Fremont Park to the west to the station area and Civic Center to the east (See Figure D2).



Connected and walkable downtown (San Francisco, California)

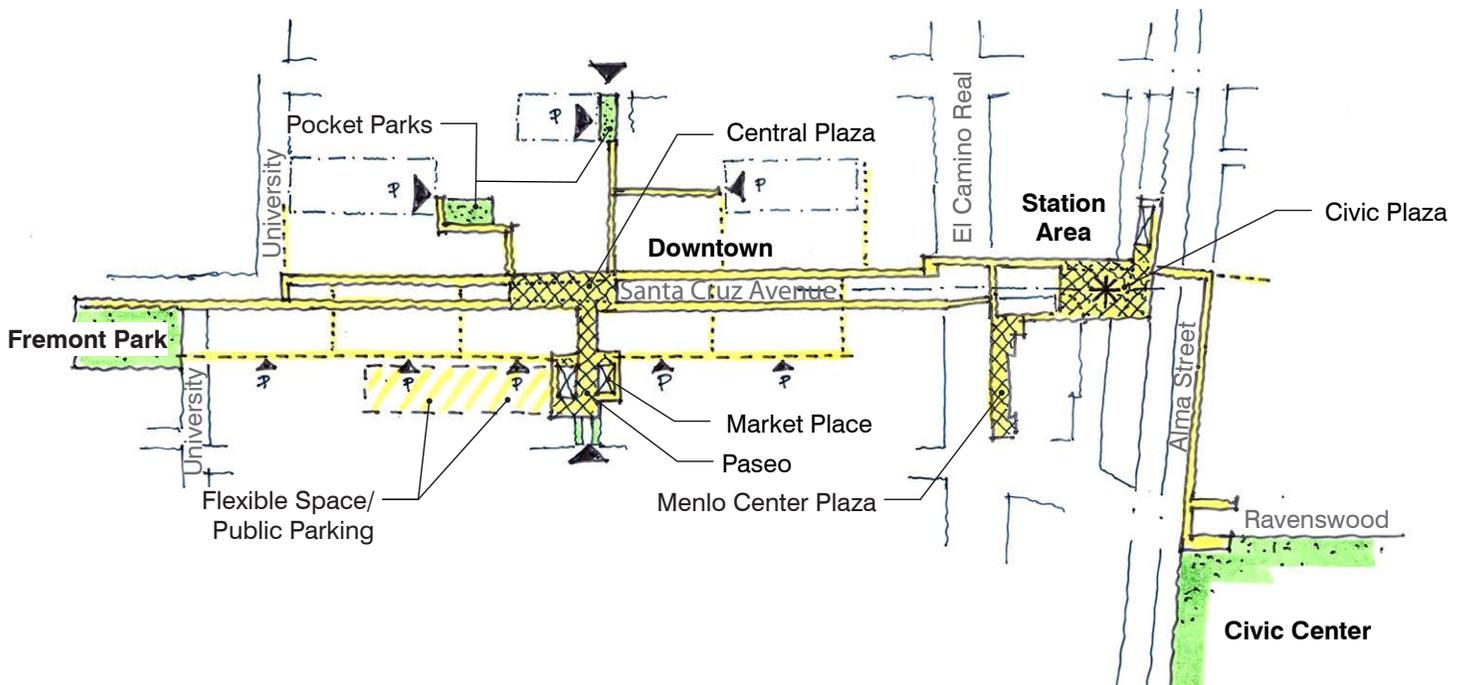


Figure D2. Connected + Walkable Downtown and Station Area Concept

## Green + Shaded Downtown and Station Area



Green and shaded downtown (Victoria, British Columbia)

In certain areas of downtown and the station area, such as in the median of Santa Cruz Avenue, the existing tree cover is strong and mature. However, in other areas, such as side streets and parking plazas, the tree cover is inconsistent. The Specific Plan recognizes the quality of the existing tree cover and proposes to build upon it with new trees, creating substantial shaded pathways to encourage walking and completing tree canopy or shade where possible (See Figure D3).

“  
 (Trees) are a traffic-calming  
 measure, they add to the  
 reduction of GHG emissions  
 and they contribute to a  
 pedestrian scale  
 ”

- Workshop #3 Participant

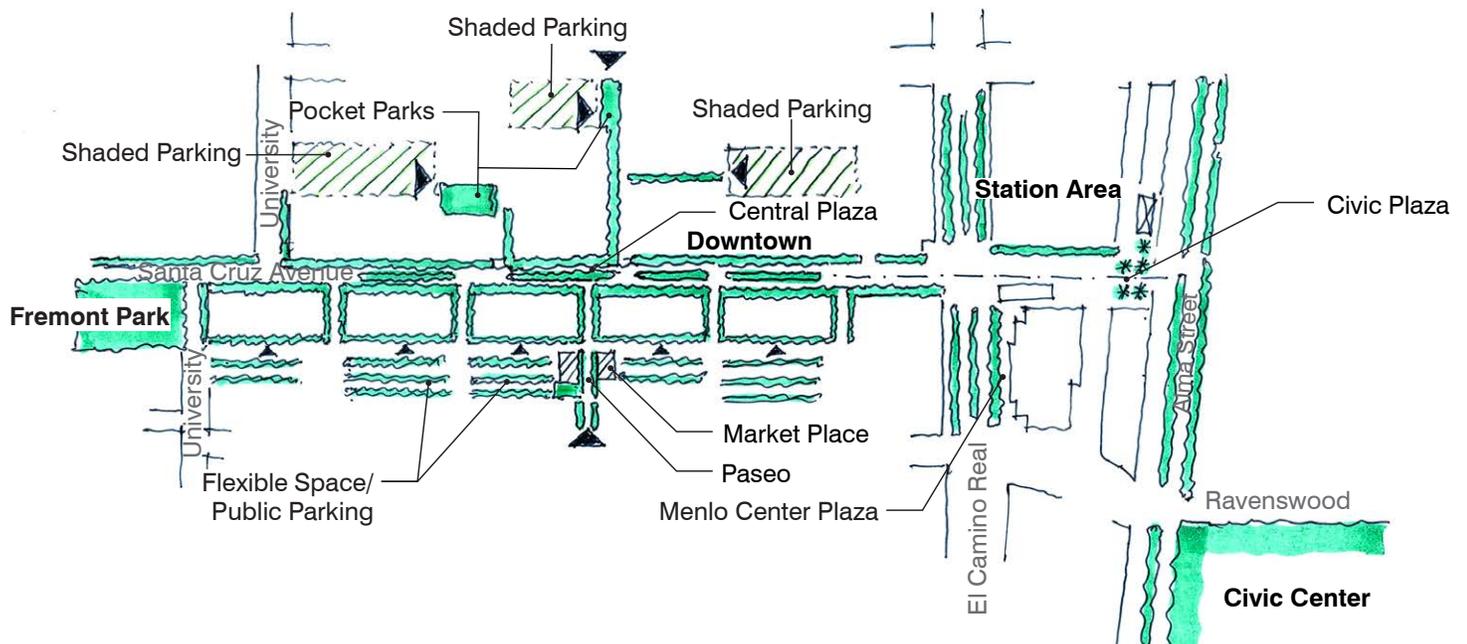


Figure D3. Green + Shaded Downtown and Station Area Concept

## Bicycle Network + Access Downtown and Station Area

The Specific Plan builds upon, connects and expands the bicycle network outlined in the *Menlo Park Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan, 2005*, creating a denser bicycle network in the downtown area with links to the station area and El Camino Real corridor. It proposes bicycle parking throughout downtown (See Figure D4 and Chapter F “Circulation” for more detail).



Bicycle network and access downtown

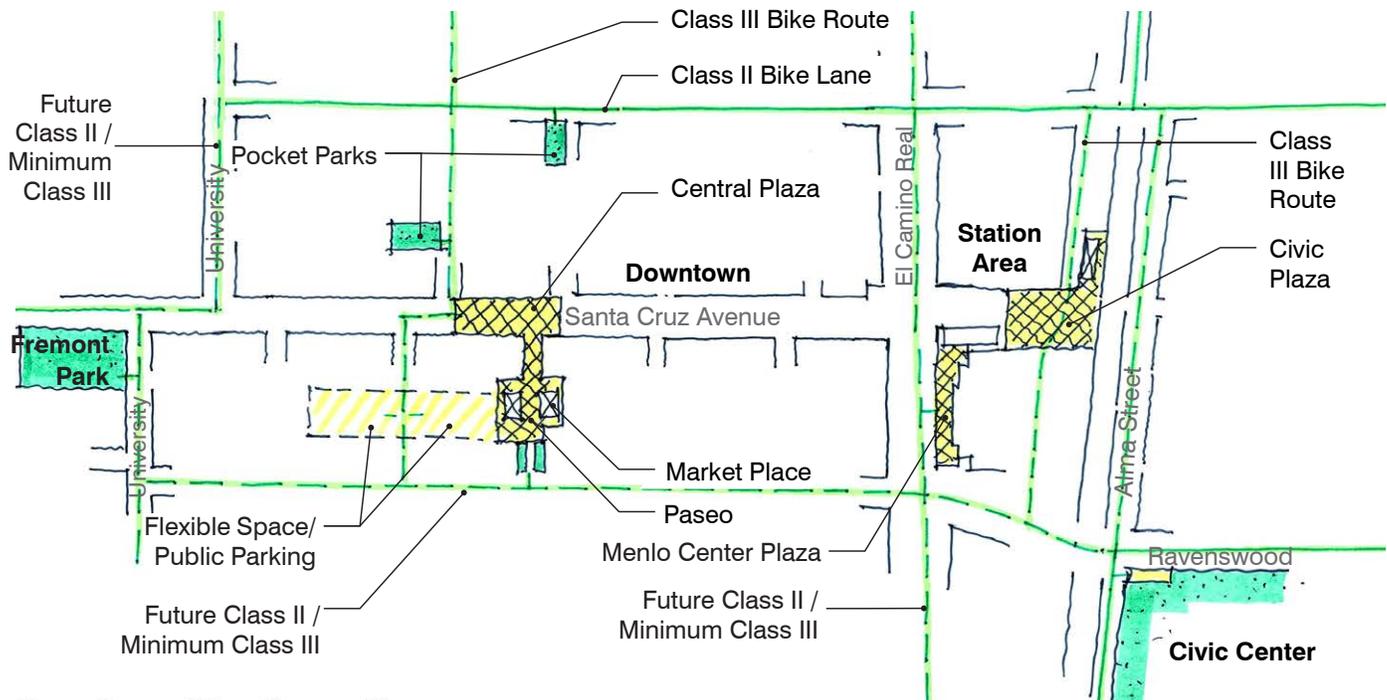


Figure D4. Bicycle Network + Access Downtown and Station Area Concept

## El Camino Real + East-West Connections

While opportunities exist to enhance pedestrian crossings of El Camino Real along the entire corridor, the greatest opportunities for both north-south and east-west connections exist on the east side of El Camino Real south of Ravenswood Avenue, an area principally owned by three entities, including Stanford University. The Specific Plan establishes guidelines for an expansive promenade along El Camino Real and several east-west breaks, with a pedestrian/bicycle connection across the rail tracks between Middle Avenue and Burgess Park (See Figure D5). The plan also locates another prominent pedestrian/bicycle connection across the railroad tracks at the eastern terminus of Santa Cruz Avenue, connecting downtown, the station area and Civic Center with one another.



Figure D5. El Camino Real South Concept

## D.2 DOWNTOWN

The Specific Plan establishes a comprehensive network of public spaces downtown that enhance the civic and social life of the community and support downtown businesses. Because there is no existing civic plaza or vacant public land, the Specific Plan relies on existing public rights-of-way and public parking plazas to create much-needed civic and social spaces. The plan establishes a recognizable center in downtown, a central nexus of public spaces and locus of activity -- a Central Plaza -- at the intersection of Santa Cruz Avenue and Chestnut Street. This central area, accompanied by an improved streetscape and widened sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue, elevates the character of downtown's "main street." In combination with enhanced pedestrian linkages, activity nodes and pocket parks, the improvements create a comprehensive, connected network of civic and social spaces.

Illustrated in Figures D6 and D7, the public space improvements in downtown consist of:

- Santa Cruz Avenue Sidewalks;
- Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza;
- Chestnut Paseo;
- Market Place;
- South Parking Plazas Pedestrian Link;
- Flex Space/Parking (Parking Plazas 5 and 6);
- Crane Street and Chestnut Street/Oak Grove Avenue Pocket Parks; and
- Other Street/Alley Improvements.

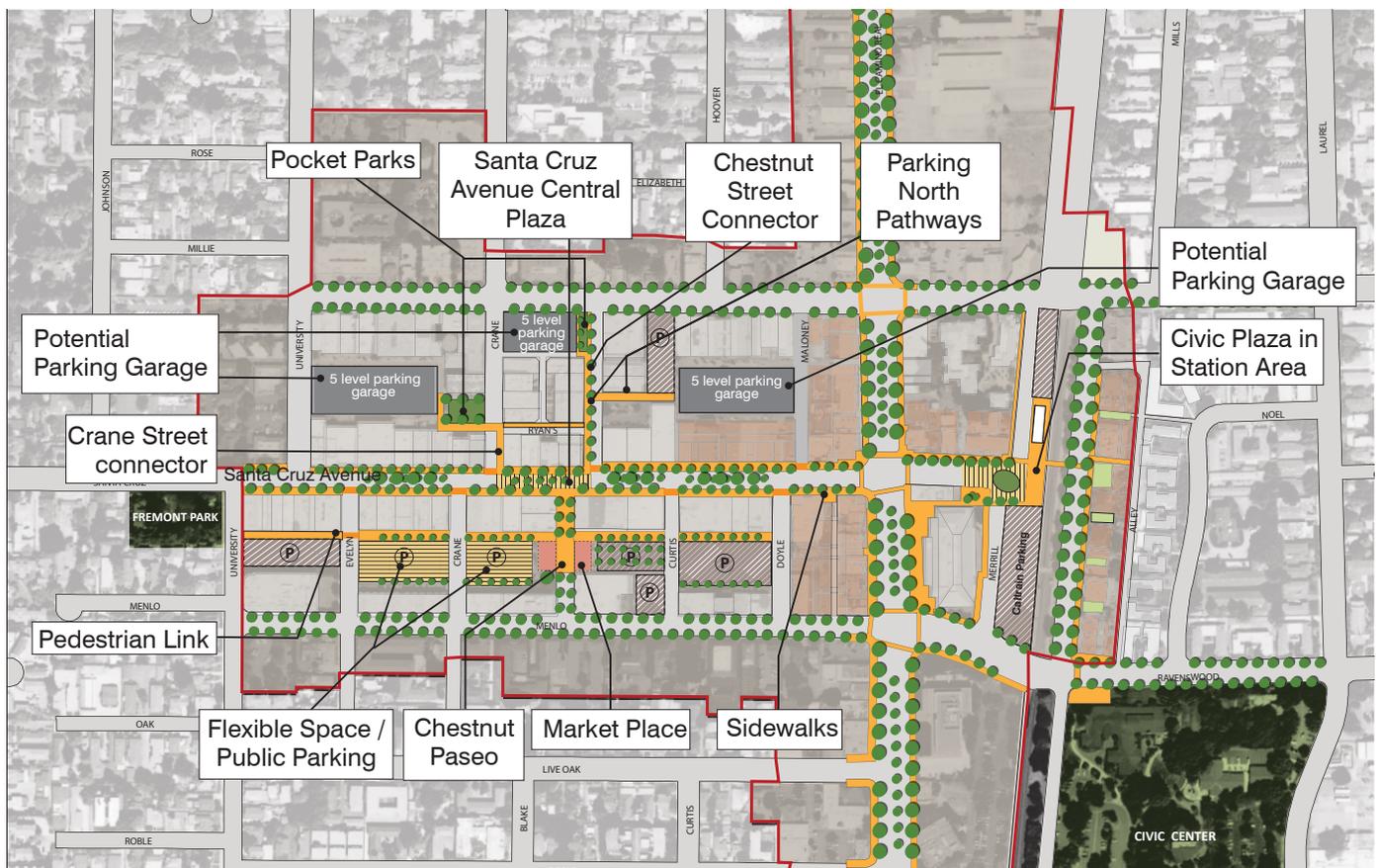


Figure D6. Downtown Public Space Plan with Major Public Space Improvements

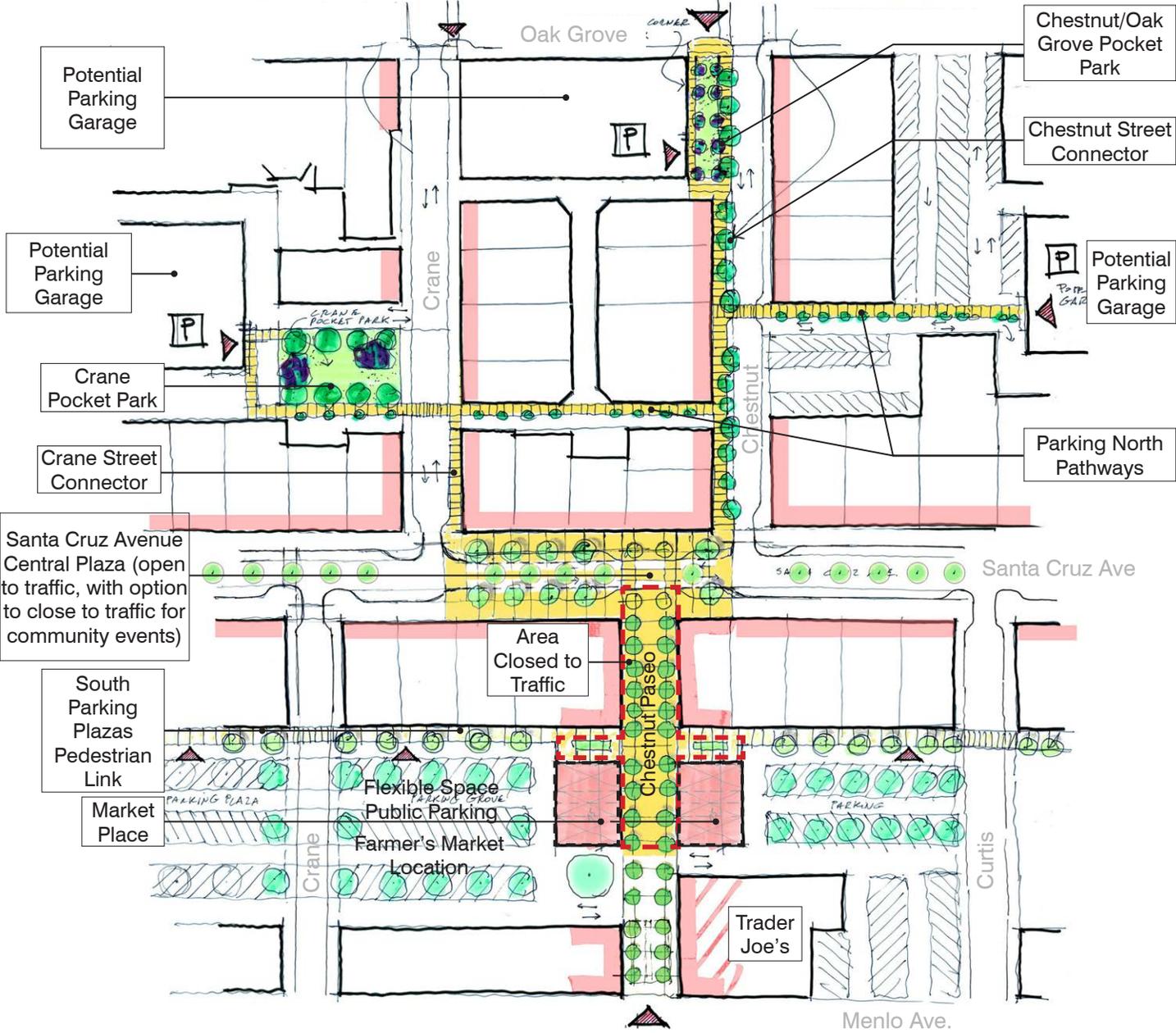


Figure D7. Concept Plan of Key Public Spaces Downtown

## Santa Cruz Avenue Sidewalks

The Specific Plan calls for improving the pedestrian realm on Santa Cruz Avenue, increasing street activity and enhancing the image of downtown by widening sidewalks, providing ample space for informal gathering, sitting and outdoor dining and introducing new streetscape improvements. The plan establishes sidewalk functional zones, ensuring a pedestrian clear zone and more pleasant and functional sidewalks. It redistributes the right-of-way between traffic lanes, on-street parking and sidewalks in order to focus on an enhanced pedestrian experience while still accommodating vehicular circulation and on-street parking.

### Intent

- Encourage walking and increase levels of street activity with wider, more functional sidewalks.
- Renew the image of downtown with updated streetscape elements.

### Character

- Tree canopy with clear visibility to storefronts.
- Median trees retained, which are iconic features of downtown.

### Improvements

- Retain existing median trees and integrate them into new streetscape design.
- Replace diagonal parking with parallel parking, and use reclaimed width to widen sidewalks.
- On the side with diagonal parking, replace the diagonal parking with parallel parking, narrow travel lane and widen sidewalk.
- On the side with parallel parking, retain parallel parking, narrow travel lane and widen sidewalk.
- Integrate street trees into on-street parking zones, particularly where sidewalks are narrowest.



Existing Santa Cruz Avenue sidewalk (Menlo Park, California)



Widened sidewalks providing ample space for sitting and outdoor dining (Santa Cruz, California)

“  
Encourage restaurants and shops to utilize sidewalks and storefronts for public space gathering, dining, resting

”

- Workshop #1 Participant

“  
I would absolutely trade parking spaces on Santa Cruz and El Camino for well-designed parking garages with safe, pleasant pedestrian paths!

”

- Workshop #1 Participant



12' wide sidewalk (Palo Alto, California)



Illustration of 19' wide sidewalk



Renewed/memorable image for downtown (San Jose, California)

- Upgrade streetscape elements, such as benches, seating, trash receptacles, newspaper racks, paving, and street lighting.
- Implement and evaluate Santa Cruz Avenue sidewalk improvements on a trial basis, before moving forward with a permanent installation. The trial period shall be the basis for the review and consideration of a permanent installation.

## Standards

**D.2.01** Streetscape improvements on Santa Cruz Avenue shall retain existing median trees to the extent possible.

## Guidelines

Streetscape improvements on Santa Cruz Avenue should include the following:

**D.2.02** Provide widest sidewalk possible while retaining on-street parallel parking.

**D.2.03** Introduce safe pedestrian crossings by using elements such as marked crossings, clear signage, supplementary lighting, and curb extensions.

**D.2.04** Introduce street trees in parking zone to maximize sidewalk width, particularly in those areas where a 12 foot minimum sidewalk dimension cannot be achieved.

**D.2.05** Coordinate with streetscape improvements in the station area.

**D.2.06** Consider the following as criteria for streetscape furnishing selection: timeless, functional, easy maintenance, durability and sustainability.

**D.2.07** Achieve safe lighting for vehicular circulation and comfortable lighting for pedestrians; consider additional decorative lighting for nightscape.

“  
I like the wider sidewalks on  
Santa Cruz  
”

- Workshop #3 Participant

Sidewalk improvements on Santa Cruz Avenue should include the following:

**D.2.08** Organize sidewalks according to best practice functional zones: frontage zone (if space allows), pedestrian thru zone, furnishings zone and curb/parking zone. Illustrated in Figure D8, each zone should accommodate a specific function.

**D.2.09** Incorporate a frontage zone, if space allows. A frontage zone lies between the adjacent building and pedestrian thru zone, assuming the sidewalk dimension allows for it, and it may accommodate outdoor seating and planting.

**D.2.10** Incorporate a pedestrian thru zone, which allows for unimpeded pedestrian circulation, free of all obstruction, including utility boxes and fences for outdoor dining. The pedestrian thru zone should have a minimum width of 12 feet.

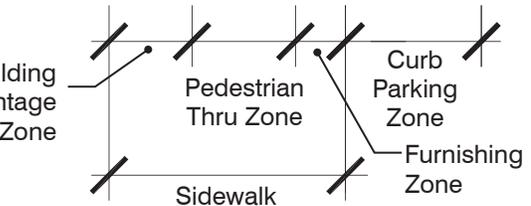
**D.2.11** Incorporate a furnishings zone, which provides a buffer between the pedestrian thru zone and street traffic. The furnishings zone accommodates public amenities such as street trees, street lamps, benches, bike racks, kiosks, news racks, mailboxes, transit shelters, public art, plantings, utility poles and utility boxes. In some cases, the furnishings zone is also used for outdoor seating and dining by shops, cafes and restaurants. The furnishings zone should have a minimum width dimension of 5 feet.

**D.2.12** Incorporate a curb/parking zone, which is the interface between the roadway and sidewalk and accommodates vehicular parking (See Figures D9 and D10).

**D.2.13** Optimize flexibility and space for outdoor seating.

**D.2.14** Avoid cluttering of sidewalk with excessive or encumbering streetscape elements.

**D.2.15** Preserve good visibility of retail storefronts.



**Figure D8.** Sidewalk section. The qualities of the sidewalk may vary, but all should exhibit certain characteristics, including a Furnishings Zone, Pedestrian Thru Zone, and Building Frontage Zone (where possible)



Sidewalk organized according to best practice functional zones: building edge, pedestrian thru zone, furniture zone and curb / parking zone (San Jose, California)



Good visibility of retail storefronts (San Jose, California)

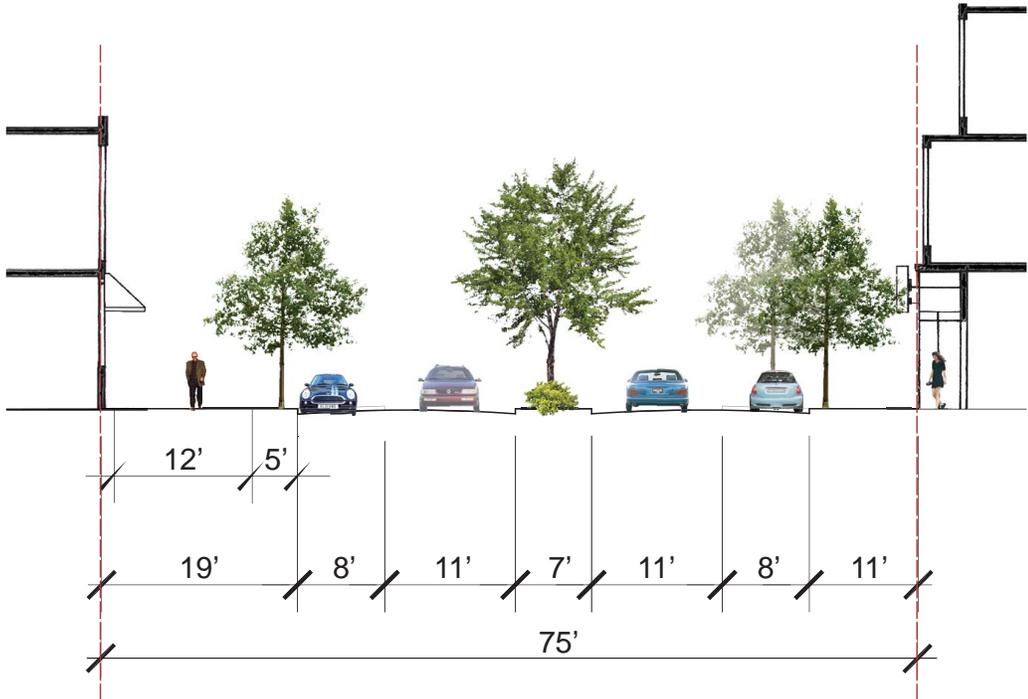


Figure D9. Section through Santa Cruz Avenue, showing two traffic lanes with parallel parking, median trees retained, diagonal parking removed, one moderately-sized sidewalk and one wide sidewalk

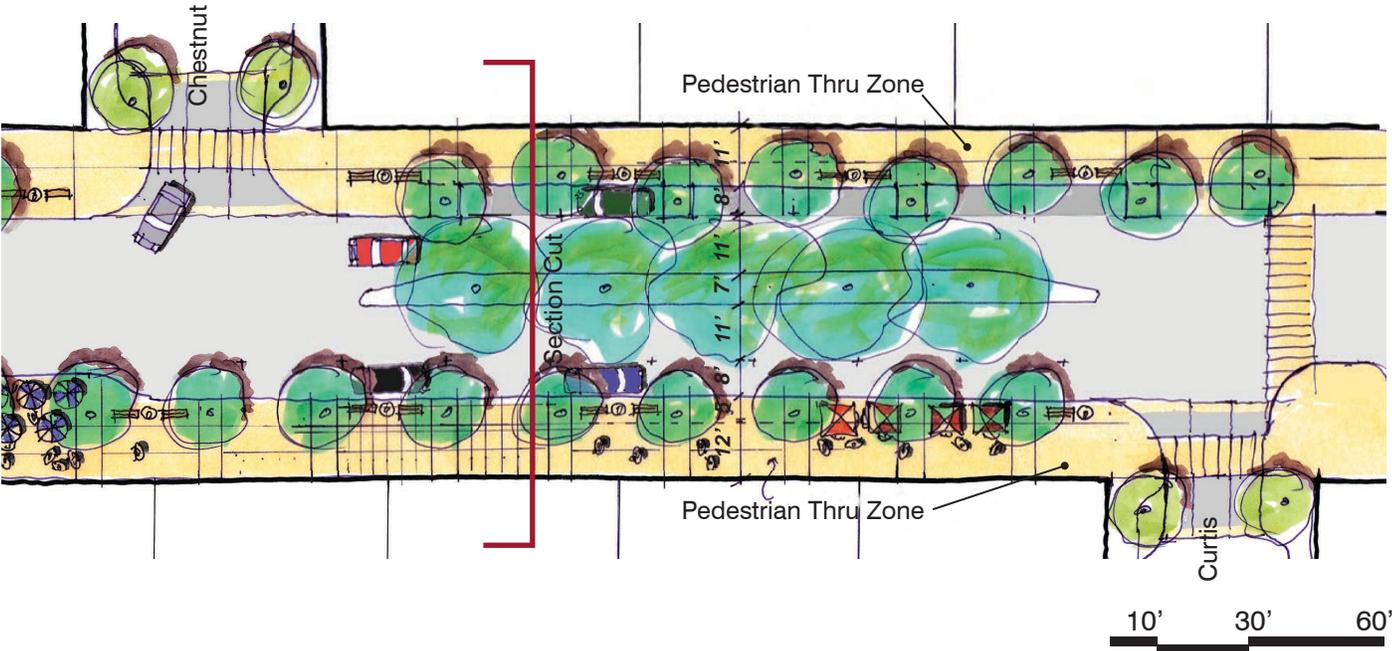


Figure D10. Concept Plan of Santa Cruz Avenue with Major Streetscape Improvements. This plan does not feature the Central Plaza described in the next section.

## Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza

The Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza provides a central public space on Santa Cruz Avenue between Chestnut Street and Crane Street. In this area, the street remains open to traffic but on-street parking is removed, providing for wider sidewalks. The street surface is raised to be flush with the sidewalks, and a unified pavement treatment from building to building across the street creates a seamless public space. On special occasions, this portion of Santa Cruz Avenue can be closed to traffic for events or festivals (see Figures D11 and D12).

### Intent

- Provide downtown with a new, central and distinctive public plaza located in the central portion of Santa Cruz Avenue.

### Character

- Plaza for public gathering and ample seating.
- Distinctive enhanced treatment.
- Flexible use with vehicular circulation or closed to traffic for special events or festivals.

### Improvements

- Create a differentiated and enhanced pedestrian-oriented treatment on Santa Cruz Avenue between Crane and Chestnut Streets.
- Eliminate on-street parking in this area to create expansive sidewalks.
- Implement and evaluate Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza improvements on a trial basis, before moving forward with a permanent installation. The trial period shall be the basis for the review and consideration of a permanent installation.



*Active public plaza, a place for public gathering with ample seating (Emeryville, California)*



*No on-street parking, expansive sidewalks and flush surface (San Jose, California)*

“  
 Create plazas that are used  
 for music festivals. More  
 open space and specialty  
 retail.  
 ”

- Workshop #1 Participant



*Illustration of Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza*

## Guidelines

The design of the Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza should include the following:

**D.2.16** Afford flexible use.

**D.2.17** Allow for the area to be open or closed to traffic.

**D.2.18** Provide a unifying overall treatment from building edge to building edge.

**D.2.19** Consider a flush surface by raising the roadway to sidewalk level, creating a seamless, walkable space while also serving as a traffic calming device.

**D.2.20** Incorporate and ensure continuity of the pedestrian thru zone as established for the length of Santa Cruz Avenue.

**D.2.21** Consider incorporating additional landscaping materials within widened sidewalk areas.

**D.2.22** Consider a civic art installation.

“  
*Add site-specific sculptural /  
architectural focus elements  
such as a thematic water  
feature*

”

- Workshop #3 Participant

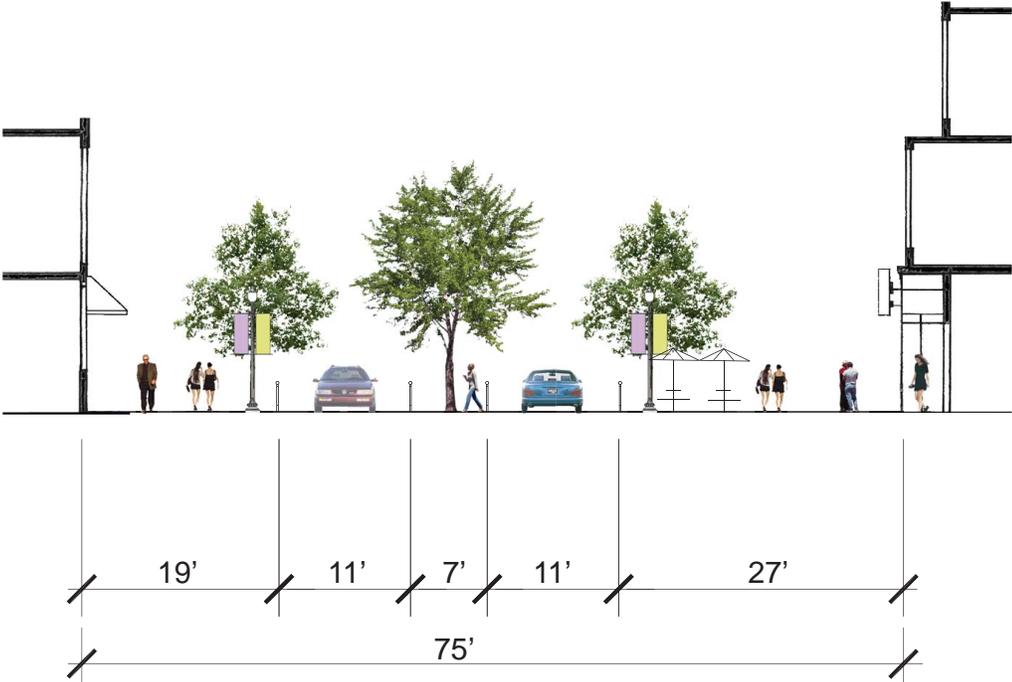


Figure D11. Section through Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza with Median Trees Preserved

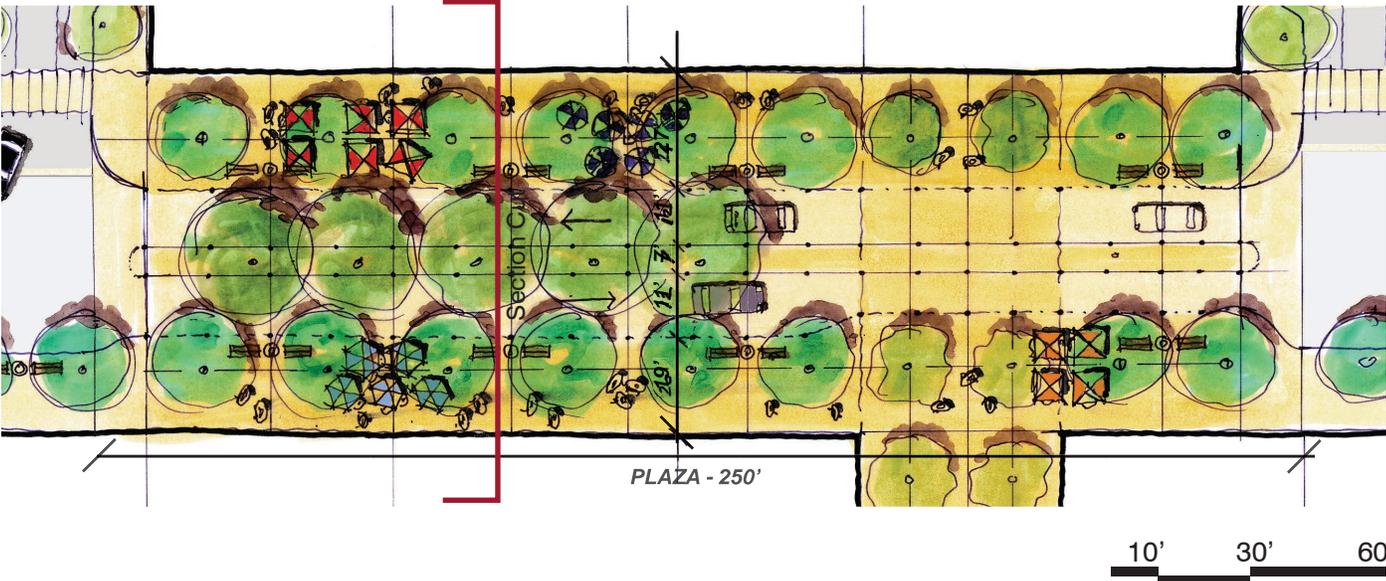


Figure D12. Concept Plan of the Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza

## Chestnut Paseo

The Specific Plan proposes to convert Chestnut Street south of Santa Cruz Avenue into a pedestrian paseo, extending the Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza experience south toward the market place and flex space/parking area (discussed below). Closed to regular traffic, the paseo provides space for temporary vendors, such as jewelry or crafts sellers, benches, additional landscaping and a flush surface for pedestrian comfort and great space functionality. The paseo works synergistically with the Farmer's Market, adjacent ground floor retail and the market place, and it offers a unique environment away from motor vehicles. The paseo remains accessible to emergency vehicles and allows access to the Parking Plazas 6 and 7, at the south end of Chestnut Street (See Figure D13).



*Pedestrian-only Paseo (Paris, France)*

### Intent

- Create a pedestrian-only public space connecting Santa Cruz Avenue with the market place and the flex space/parking area.

### Character

- Pedestrian-only street with flush surface and enhanced landscaping.

### Improvements

- Close Chestnut Street to regular vehicular traffic between Santa Cruz Avenue and the south driveway of the parking plazas.
- Enhance streetscape character.
- Implement and evaluate Chestnut Paseo improvements on a trial basis, before moving forward with a permanent installation. The trial period shall be the basis for the review and consideration of a permanent installation.

## Standards

**D.2.23** Allow for emergency vehicular access throughout.

## Guidelines

The design of the Chestnut Paseo should include the following:

**D.2.24** Allow for flexible use.

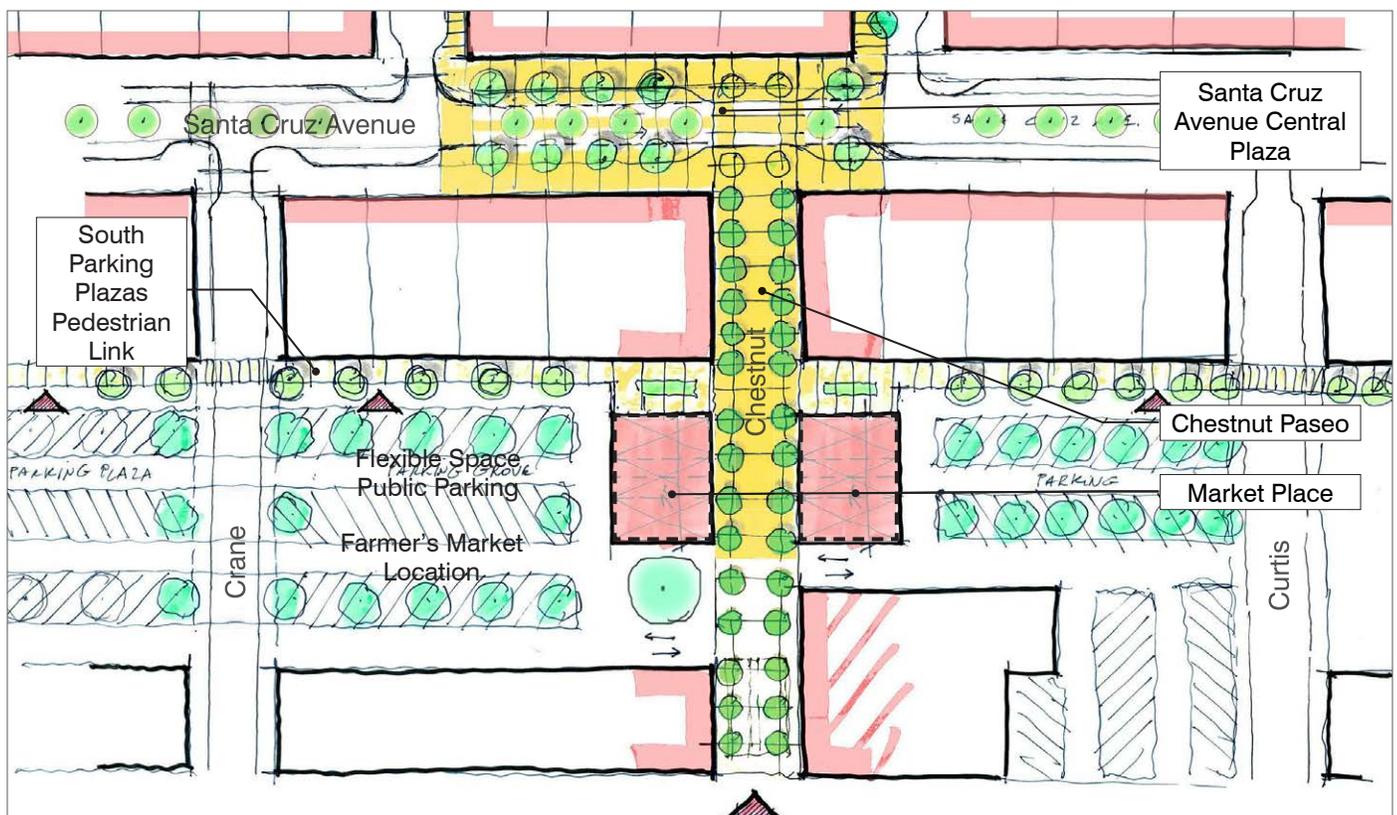
**D.2.25** Provide a unifying overall treatment, with enhanced paving, the width of the right-of-way.

**D.2.26** Provide a flush surface by raising the roadway to sidewalk level, creating a seamless, walkable space.

**D.2.27** Consider additional landscaping and a civic art installation.

**D.2.28** Consider providing additional shade with permanent light tensile structure (i.e. structured, open-air, tent-like structure).

**D.2.29** Coordinate treatment with Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza and market place.



**Figure D13.** Concept Plan of Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza and the Chestnut Paseo

## Market Place

Described in more detail in Chapter E “Land Use + Building Character”, the market place concept reinforces and activates this area as the center of downtown, in conjunction with the Central Plaza, Chestnut Paseo and flex space (described below), and increases foot traffic for downtown retailers. It complements and does not compete with the existing Sunday Farmer’s Market, and it can reinforce the Farmers Market’s identity in Menlo Park and the region. The market place can be designed with a range of uses, such as small-to-mid-sized retailers and restaurants, to be determined through a review process by the City. In particular, consideration should be given to existing Menlo Park merchants for the market place. Located at Parking Plazas 6 and 7, framing the Chestnut Paseo, the market place concept embodies a flexible idea of its physical design with multiple potential scenarios: a plaza expanding the Paseo; a pavilion structure creating a covered and shaded plaza for a portion of the Farmer’s Market or other events, such as a band shell for concerts; kiosks, or small enclosed building(s) providing permanent stalls for vendors. Such a structure or building could straddle and cover a portion of the Chestnut Paseo. Whether using structured, open-air, tent-like or other features, the market place should consider ways to provide for flexible spaces. Part of Parking Plaza 6 is currently under private ownership, so the City will need to either reach agreement with the current owner for alternate use of this space, or potentially acquire the parcel.

### Intent

- Reinforce and activate the area as the center of downtown, in conjunction with the Central Plaza, the Chestnut Paseo and the flex space/parking area.
- Complement the existing Sunday Farmer’s Market and nearby Trader Joe’s and Draeger’s markets.

### Character

- Small scale pavilions or buildings for permanent or temporary vendors or sheltered plaza related to the Farmer’s Market and flex space/parking area activities.



Local vendors in market space (Vancouver, Canada)



Outdoor market (San Francisco, California)



Street market (Portland, Oregon)

“  
Like to see more street fair-type vendors on weekends  
”

- Workshop #3 Participant



Public market building (Vancouver, Canada)



Heritage oak tree off Chestnut Street to be preserved (Menlo Park, California)

“  
*Interested in the outside  
 market idea, imagine that  
 as becoming retail space  
 of some kind, analogous to  
 having a Sunday market but  
 all week long*  
 ”

- Workshop #3 Participant

## Improvements

- Construct sheltered plaza and/or small scale pavilions or buildings.
- Implement and evaluate the Market Place improvements on a trial basis, before moving forward with a permanent installation. The trial period shall be the basis for the review and consideration of a permanent installation.

## Standards

The design of the market place shall include the following.

**D.2.30** Preserve and integrate into the concept the existing heritage oak tree.

**D.2.31** Retain automobile access to and from Parking Plazas 6 and 7, toward the south end of Chestnut Street.

**D.2.32** Provide clear space as needed for emergency vehicles.

## Guidelines

**D.2.33** Programming of the market place should contribute to the Farmer’s Market identity and presence in the region.

**D.2.34** The market place improvement could be a roofed structure, an enclosed building(s), an extension of the paseo or a combination of the above. It could be disconnected structures or other improvements along either side of the Chestnut Paseo, or it could potentially straddle the Paseo. The market place could have an approximate size of 4,000 square feet.

The design of the market place should include the following.

**D.2.35** Be oriented to activate the Chestnut Paseo, Farmer’s Market and flex space during events.

**D.2.36** Consider establishing a visual landmark from Santa Cruz Avenue and the parking plazas.

**D.2.37** Coordinate treatment with the Chestnut Paseo and adjacent flex space/parking area.

## South Parking Plazas Pedestrian Link

Along the south sides of the buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue on the northern edge of Parking Plazas 4 through 8, a promenade provides a safe and welcoming pedestrian pathway, connecting the parking plazas with rear store entries, the market place, the Chestnut Paseo and other streets leading to Santa Cruz Avenue (See Figure D14). Such an improvement encourages people to walk downtown rather than drive and park in multiple places.

In some cases, the pedestrian promenade replaces existing parking spaces. In cases with existing diagonal or perpendicular spaces, proposed improvements include the pedestrian promenade and parallel parking in place of diagonal or perpendicular spaces. (See Chapter F “Circulation” for the quantity of spaces affected).

### Intent

- Create a safe and comfortable east-west pedestrian pathway on the northern edge of Parking Plazas 4 through 8, connecting the parking plazas to rear business entrances, key public spaces and streets.

### Character

- Tree-lined, well-lit promenade.

### Improvements

- Establish a continuous shaded pathway on the south side of the buildings bordering south parking plazas.
- Adjust parking layout to accommodate the new pathway.



*Pedestrian promenade (Portland, Oregon)*



Rendering of South Parking Plazas Pedestrian Link

## Guidelines

The design of the pedestrian promenade should include the following:

- D.2.38** Be continuous between University Drive and Doyle Street, incorporating pedestrian crosswalks across intersected streets.
- D.2.39** Incorporate a 6-foot clear minimum pedestrian thru zone.
- D.2.40** Be tree-lined for shade and properly lit for pedestrian safety.
- D.2.41** Coordinate style and materials with the Chestnut Paseo.
- D.2.42** Consider special paving treatment, including public art inlays or other creative use of the surface as well as sustainable materials such as permeable paving.
- D.2.43** Consider special treatment of trash bins, utilities, etc. to create a more pleasing environment.

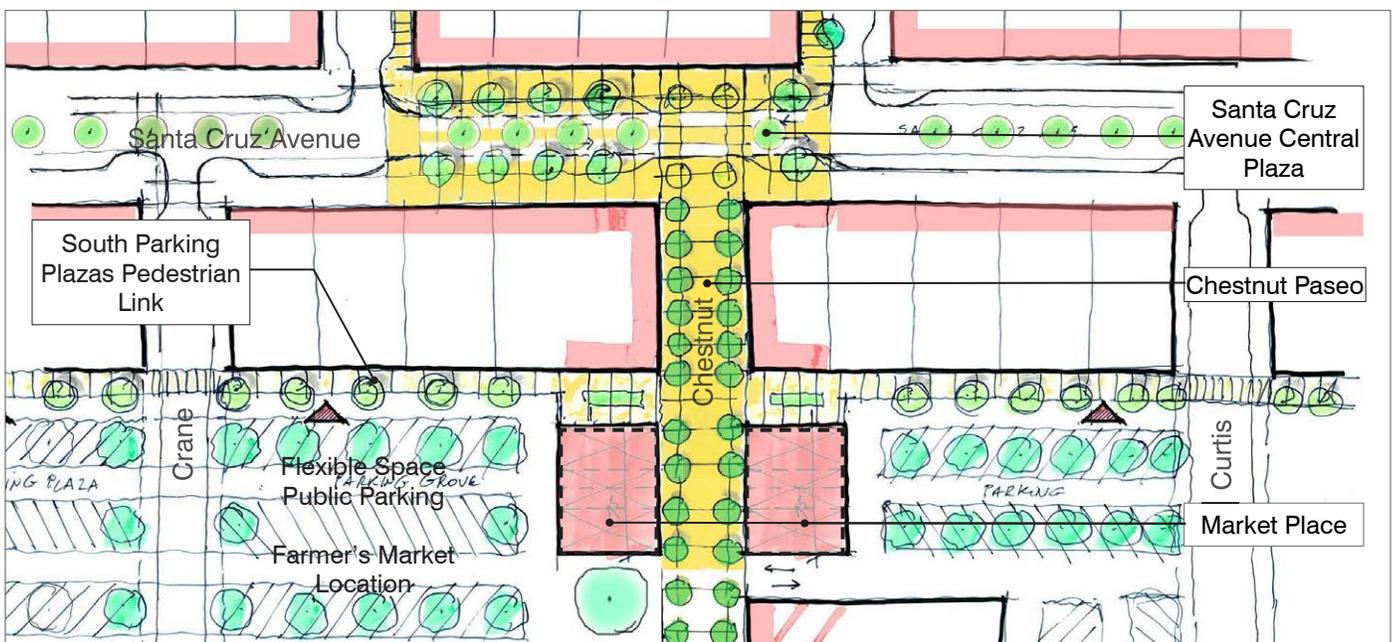


Figure D14. Concept Plan of South Parking Plazas Pedestrian Link

## Flex Space/Parking Area (Parking Plazas 5 and 6)

Due to their size and configuration, downtown parking plazas offer opportunities for public assembly and events. They are also major paved, impervious areas that could be improved with new sustainable practices. The Specific Plan proposes modifying and improving Parking Plazas 5 and 6, two surface parking lots south of Santa Cruz Avenue and adjacent to the Chestnut Paseo and market place, to allow for more flexibility in their usage. These flexible spaces would continue to provide parking during most times, but they would also be able to stage special community events, such as festivals, movie screening and the existing Farmer's Market.

### Intent

- Improve treatment of Parking Plazas 5 and 6, while ensuring they continue to serve as parking lots, to create a flexible programmable space to accommodate varied types of events in downtown.

### Character

- Flexible/multiuse landscaped parking plaza incorporating sustainable practices.

### Improvements

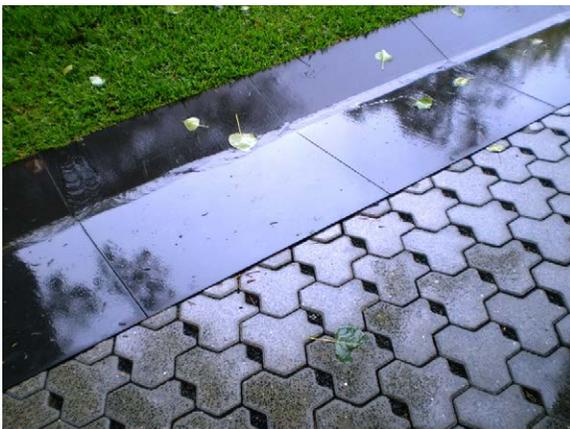
- Enhance treatment of Parking Plazas 5 and 6 to create a flexible, programmable space for community events, including the Farmer's Market.
- Use sustainable design strategies.



*Flexible parking plaza offering opportunities for public assembly and events*



*Unique evening/nightscape experience (Baltimore, Maryland)*



*Sustainable design of parking lot using permeable surfaces (Baltimore, Maryland)*



*Parking plaza designed according to sustainable practices such as augmenting the permeability of surfaces, mitigating heat island effect and producing renewable energy (Malmo, Sweden)*

## Guidelines

The design for improvements to Parking Plazas 5 and 6 should include the following:

**D.2.44** Optimize layout and functionality, including integration of the portion of Crane Street between the parking plazas and the pedestrian promenade on the northern edge of the parking plazas.

**D.2.45** Preserve existing trees to the extent possible.

**D.2.46** Provide the same number of parking spaces (or more) as exist today to the extent possible.

**D.2.47** Consider opportunities for sustainable practices such as augmenting the permeability of surfaces, mitigating the heat island effect and producing renewable energy.

**D.2.48** Consider creative lighting of the space, such as in-ground lights, to create identity and unique evening/nightscape experience.

## Crane Street and Chestnut Street/Oak Grove Avenue Pocket Parks

Two pocket parks serve as an alternate destination for pedestrians, both local residents and downtown shoppers. They extend the palette of downtown public spaces with two intimate small green open spaces for respite and gathering. Their locations function as small gateways to downtown from the north side parking areas and streets.

### Intent

- Provide smaller, more intimate open spaces north of Santa Cruz Avenue as part of downtown's public space network.

### Character

- Green and shaded, predominantly softscape, seating areas.

### Improvements

- Provide two small parks north of Santa Cruz Avenue: one on Crane Street and one at the corner of Chestnut Street and Oak Grove Avenue.
- Implement and evaluate Pocket Park improvements on a trial basis, before moving forward with a permanent installation. The trial period shall be the basis for the review and consideration of a permanent installation.

### Guidelines

The design of the pocket parks should include the following.

**D.2.49** Convey a 'soft' character with ample use of softscape materials (e.g., grass and planting).

**D.2.50** Provide shade and seating.

**D.2.51** Consider use of seasonal plant materials and public art installation.

**D.2.52** Emphasize safety and comfort for all users.



*Smaller, more intimate open spaces (Palo Alto, California)*



*Green and shaded (softscape) seating areas (Boston, Massachusetts)*



*Enhanced and welcoming connections for parking north pathways (Mountain View, California)*



*Clear and comfortable connections from street to pocket parks (San Luis Obispo, California)*



*Wide, tree-lined pathways/sidewalks connecting facilities (Portland, Oregon)*

## Other Street / Alley Improvements

On the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue, the Specific Plan calls for enhanced and welcoming connections between the proposed parking garages, pocket parks, Santa Cruz Avenue and the Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza. These improvements consist of the Chestnut Street connector, Crane Street connector and parking north pathways.

### Intent

- Provide clear and comfortable connections from the proposed parking garages and pocket parks on the north side of downtown to Santa Cruz Avenue and the Central Plaza.

### Character

- Tree-lined pathways/sidewalks.

### Improvements

- Widen and enhance the Chestnut Street west sidewalk and the Crane Street east sidewalk leading to the pocket parks.
- Enhance the pathways and crosswalks connecting the proposed parking garages to the Chestnut Street and Crane Street connectors.

### Guidelines

The design of the pedestrian connectors should include the following:

**D.2.53** Incorporate an 8-foot clear pedestrian zone.

**D.2.54** Be tree-lined for shade and properly lit for pedestrian safety.

**D.2.55** Provide safe crosswalks on Chestnut and Crane Streets for continuity of the network of connections.

**D.2.56** Include way-finding signage.

**D.2.57** Coordinate treatment with pocket parks and overall streetscape palette for Santa Cruz Avenue.

## D.3 STATION AREA

The Specific Plan focuses on improving the Caltrain Station area as a major arrival and departure point within Menlo Park. The plan establishes a central Civic Plaza at the intersection of the east end of Santa Cruz Avenue and the Caltrain Station as a unifying public space that organizes surrounding spaces and pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Other major public improvements in this area include Menlo Center Plaza, Alma Street Civic Walk and Ravenswood Gateway, all of which support the centrality of the Civic Plaza and create stronger connections to the plaza and downtown.

One significant unknown is the future configuration of the proposed high speed rail line (HSR) within the Caltrain right-of-way. The Specific Plan's public space concept for the station area is meant to be flexible, accommodating any rail configuration, either below-grade, at grade, or elevated.

Illustrated in Figure D15, the public space improvements in the station area consist of:

- Civic Plaza;
- Menlo Center Plaza;
- Alma Street Civic Walk;
- Ravenswood Gateway; and
- Railroad Tracks/High Speed Rail Open Space.



*Central Civic Plaza used to organize surrounding spaces and pedestrian and vehicular traffic (Los Angeles, California)*



Figure D15. Concept Plan of Station Area

## Civic Plaza + Santa Cruz Avenue

At the eastern end of Santa Cruz Avenue, the Civic Plaza celebrates the arrival to the City at the Caltrain station. It serves multiple purposes -- as a landmark space and gateway to downtown and Menlo Park, a pick-up and drop-off locale for motorists and transit users and a civic public space integrating the historic train station and enhanced pedestrian linkages and plazas to downtown, Menlo Center and Civic Center.

### Intent

- Create an improved arrival/departure transit plaza for the station and iconic civic plaza for downtown.

### Character

- Landmark civic space that celebrates the station and Santa Cruz Avenue arrival.

### Improvements

- Implement streetscape improvements that celebrate the station area and sense of arrival.
- Provide enhanced connections to the eastern neighborhoods and Civic Center across the railroad tracks, via a grade-separated connection, and to Menlo Center plaza.
- Install iconic trees, such as native oak trees, maples, sycamores, or redwoods, that are differentiated from the surrounding landscape, including El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Avenue, and create a unique sense of civic space.
- Improve Santa Cruz Avenue northern sidewalk for greater connection to El Camino Real and downtown.
- Improve Merrill Street sidewalk for greater connection to Oak Grove Avenue.
- Provide enhanced connections and integrate with Menlo Center.



*Landmark civic space (Portland, Oregon)*

## Standards

The design of the Civic Plaza shall include the following:

**D.3.01** Preserve and highlight the existing historic train station building.

**D.3.02** Accommodate bus turning and drop-off/pick-up of passengers.

## Guidelines

The design of the Civic Plaza should include the following:

**D.3.03** Provide a unifying treatment across the Plaza.

**D.3.04** Allow for integrated vehicular circulation through the space.

**D.3.05** Organize the plaza around, and integrate into its overall design, a central civic feature such as a fountain or sculpture; the major element should be located in a way that optimizes visibility from downtown, in particular from Santa Cruz Avenue.

**D.3.06** Consider use of iconic trees to create a unique sense of civic space, such as native oak trees, maples, sycamores, or redwoods, that are distinctive from general surrounding landscaping but already featured at the station.

**D.3.07** Incorporate lighting fixtures and decorative lighting to create a memorable space.

**D.3.08** Accommodate various connection options across the Caltrain right-of-way depending on the final configuration of the high-speed rail line.

**D.3.09** Provide 15 foot tree-lined sidewalk on the northern side of Santa Cruz Avenue, coordinated with improved sidewalks for the main part of the avenue downtown.

**D.3.10** Optimize the interface with Menlo Center and connection to its plaza.

**D.3.11** Improve the pedestrian linkage to Oak Grove Avenue.

## Menlo Center Plaza

The Specific Plan proposes improvements to Menlo Center Plaza that make the plaza more functional as a civic space, integrate the plaza more fully with El Camino Real and create stronger connections to the Civic Plaza and Civic Center. The Specific Plan recognizes that these proposals are for improvements on private property, and that the City can exercise only limited influence in this area.

### Intent

- Improve treatment of Menlo Center Plaza and its connections with the station Civic Plaza and the Civic Center, and emphasize the presence of Menlo Center Plaza on El Camino Real.

### Character

- Paved gathering space with seating and dining areas, shaded and tree-lined.

### Improvements

- Enhance connection to the Civic Plaza.
- Enhance connections to the Civic Center via south of Menlo Center Plaza and Ravenswood Street edge.
- Provide for visual access to the plaza from El Camino Real.

### Guidelines

Enhancements to the Menlo Center Plaza should include the following:

**D.3.12** Coordinate with enhancements to El Camino Real streetscape and Civic Plaza.

**D.3.13** Include benches or other seating furniture.

**D.3.14** Provide a direct connection with the station Civic Plaza.



*Existing Menlo Center (Menlo Park, California)*



*Existing Menlo Center (Menlo Park, California)*

## Alma Street Civic Walk

Part of the overall east-west pedestrian linkage network, the Alma Street Civic Walk provides an improved connection from the Station Area to the Civic Center. The Civic Walk enhances the pedestrian environment and walkability along the eastern side of Alma Street to the corner of the public library. By providing a stronger link to the active Civic Center, the Civic Walk helps increase the vitality of the station area and downtown.

### Intent

- Create a comfortable and inviting pedestrian connection from the station area to the Civic Center, thereby enhancing the connection between the Civic Center and downtown.

### Character

- Pedestrian-oriented, tree-lined, and safely-lit sidewalk.

### Improvements

- Optimize Alma Street right-of-way width, with parking layout and lane distribution, to create a wider enhanced sidewalk on the east side.
- Create a safe pedestrian crossing from the Civic Walk to the train station, and extend Civic Walk across Ravenswood Avenue with an improved and safe pedestrian crossing.
- Enhance sidewalk by making it tree-lined.
- Provide ample shade and tree line to create a comfortable pedestrian environment.

### Guidelines

The design of the Alma Street Civic Walk should include the following:

**D.3.15** Take into consideration the final configuration of the proposed high speed rail.

**D.3.16** Provide a 15 foot minimum tree-lined sidewalk on the east side of Alma Street between the station area and Ravenswood Avenue, with an 8 foot wide minimum pedestrian thru zone

**D.3.17** Be safely lit to reinforce the pedestrian experience.

**D.3.18** Coordinate with other improvements in the station area, creating a greater sense of connectivity and continuity.

**D.3.19** Provide a safe pedestrian crosswalk between Civic Walk and the train station/Civic Plaza, depending on the final configuration of the proposed high speed rail and consistent with the guidelines for the Civic Plaza.

**D.3.20** Incorporate a safe and upgraded pedestrian crossing at Ravenswood Avenue. Potential crossing improvements are discussed in more detail in section F.3.

**D.3.21** Include pedestrian way-finding signage.

**D.3.22** Preserve to the extent feasible heritage and other significant trees.

## Ravenswood Gateway

The Specific Plan recognizes the intersection of Ravenswood Avenue and Alma Street as an opportunity to create a sense of gateway into downtown and the Menlo Park Civic Center and Public Library area. Streetscape improvements at the Ravenswood Gateway establish a connection between the Civic Center and the Station Area. The improvements also focus on providing better definition of the southeast corner of the intersection as an identifiable entrance and “front door” to the Library and Civic Center (See Figure D16).

### Intent

- Create a sense of gateway to Civic Center and downtown at the Alma/Ravenswood intersection.

### Character

- Streetscape and landscape civic character that relates to the station’s Civic Plaza.

### Improvements

- Provide streetscape and landscape improvements at the northeast and southeast corners of Alma/Ravenswood intersection to create a sense of civic gateway.
- Provide a wider and safe pedestrian crossing coordinated with the Alma Street Civic Walk.
- Install a landmark sign (distinct from way-finding signage) or art element.



*Civic gateway with landmark signage and streetscape and landscape improvements (Redwood City, California)*

## Guidelines

The design of the Ravenswood Gateway should include the following:

**D.3.23** Coordinate streetscape and landscape design improvements with Alma Street Civic Walk and station Civic Plaza.

**D.3.24** Coordinate crossing treatment with Alma Street Civic Walk.

**D.3.25** Consider use of iconic trees to create a unique sense of civic space, such as native oak trees, maples, sycamores or redwoods, that are distinctive from the general surrounding landscaping but are already featured in the area.

**D.3.26** Integrate lighting to achieve gateway and civic character.

**D.3.27** Include a landmark sign or art element.

**D.3.28** Include pedestrian way-finding signage.



**Figure D16.** Concept Plan of Ravenswood Gateway

## Railroad Tracks/High Speed Rail Open Space

The Specific Plan recognizes that the existing railroad track configuration will change if and when high speed rail service between southern California and San Francisco is implemented. The Specific Plan’s proposed improvements apply regardless of the final track configuration. However, the improvements’ final design will depend on the final configuration of the high speed rail alignment, particularly for those elements closest to the tracks. It is assumed that high speed rail will generally fall within and follow the existing Caltrain right-of-way. Expansions of the right-of-way could be required, particularly in the Station Area, as well as between Glenwood Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue, where the current right-of-way is narrowest.

At this time, three rail track configurations for high speed rail are under consideration: locating the train tracks underground, elevating the railroad tracks, or keeping the tracks at grade and lowering the cross streets. All three configurations achieve a fundamental requirement that the tracks be grade-separated and completely separate from other trains and all other modes of transit (i.e. vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian). Under the current proposal, high speed rail will not stop at Menlo Park. However, Caltrain will continue to provide commuter rail service to Menlo Park. If high speed rail is placed in a tunnel, it is unclear at this time if Caltrain would also be placed in a tunnel, remain at-grade or have some other configuration.

### Guidelines

**D.3.29** If high speed rail is placed underground, the City should encourage a final configuration that includes Caltrain tracks. Such a configuration should be capped, with the roof of the tunnel able to accommodate public use, such as a linear park, at-grade.

**D.3.30** If high speed rail is placed underground as described above, a linear public park, accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists, should be considered for placement above ground as well as other appropriate commercial uses.

**D.3.31** If high speed rail is elevated, the City should encourage a final configuration that includes Caltrain tracks. With such a configuration, the City should encourage a structure that provides maximum “porosity” with maximum visual and/or physical access underneath (e.g. elevated Bart tracks in the East Bay). The tracks should be elevated enough to allow for at-grade passage underneath for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. An earthen embankment or stark walls should be avoided. Wherever possible, an elevated configuration should incorporate landscaping to soften the visual impact.

**D.3.32** If high speed rail is elevated as described above, the City should consider maximizing east-west pedestrian and bicycle connections underneath, in addition to those in the Specific Plan, where appropriate. The spaces should be safe and welcoming.

## D.4 EL CAMINO REAL

El Camino Real is a major arterial roadway extending through the downtown area and connecting Menlo Park to surrounding cities. The Specific Plan proposes enhancements that strengthen the image of the street and create a continuous and unified experience while recognizing the distinct areas that the corridor passes through. The improvements also create strong east-west linkages with surrounding areas and districts. The proposed enhancements are consistent with the *Grand Boulevard Initiative's Multi-Modal Strategy & Context-Sensitive Design Guidelines*.

The public space improvements for El Camino Real consist of North-South Walkability and East-West Connectivity.

## North-South Walkability

The Specific Plan proposes streetscape improvements on El Camino Real that help unify the street experience by using a common language of trees, paving materials and lighting elements. It provides a pedestrian promenade on the eastern side of the street.

The existing dimensions of the street and the need to serve as an arterial roadway create constraints on widening sidewalks in the area. Pedestrian improvements to the portions of El Camino Real north of Oak Grove Avenue and south of Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues are achieved, in part, within setback areas as adjacent development occurs. Under these circumstances, the greatest opportunity for an expansive pedestrian promenade is on the eastern side of El Camino Real between Ravenswood Avenue and the Palo Alto city limits, an area controlled primarily by three property owners, including Stanford University (see Chapter E “Land Use + Building Character” for more detail).

Figures D17, D18 and D19 illustrate proposed typical improvements for El Camino Real for portions north of downtown, in the downtown area and south of downtown, respectively.

It is important to note that street sections for El Camino Real north of downtown (Figure D17) and within downtown (Figure F18) have four travel lanes rather than six travel lanes as shown south of downtown (Figure D19). While the curb-to-curb width north of downtown and within downtown could accommodate a change to six travel lanes by removing on-street parking (approximately 40 spaces), the Specific Plan proposes a four-lane street section in these areas rather than six-lanes for a number of reasons. With six lanes, only slight improvements in traffic/intersection operations would be realized as the added lanes would be created by converting right-turn lanes, not by adding new lanes. In addition, parking removal decreases the pedestrian and retail environment. Building setbacks would need to be increased substantially to provide sufficient sidewalk width to buffer pedestrians from moving traffic. Further setbacks would be needed to accommodate bicycle lanes.

### Intent

- Encourage walking and pedestrian activity along El Camino Real with improved walkability and comfort.

### Character

- Tree-lined, pedestrian-oriented, paved, and safely lit sidewalks.

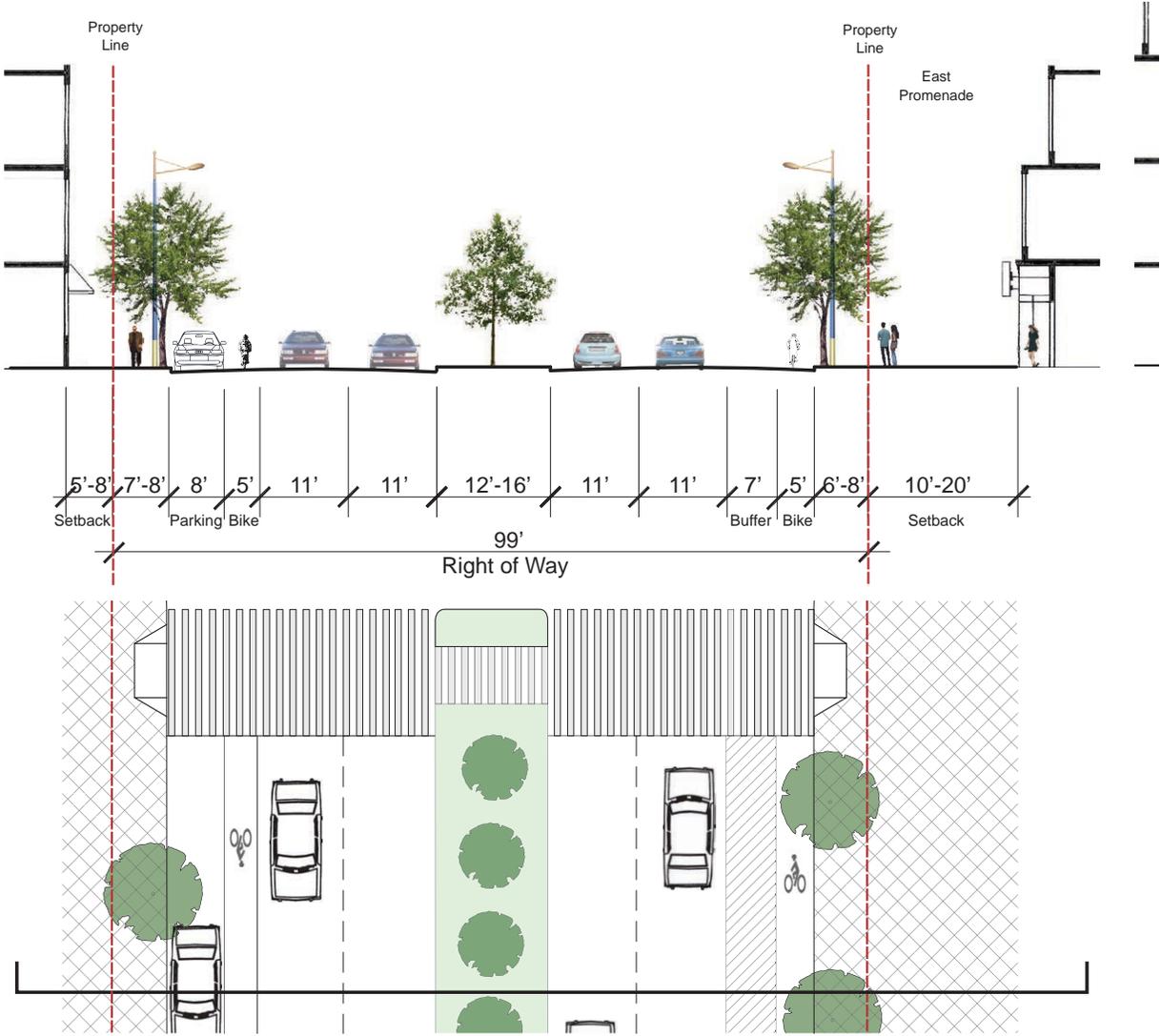
### Improvements

- Use building setbacks as needed to create wider sidewalks (private development-related improvements).
- Enhance sidewalks with consistent paving, street trees and street furnishings.

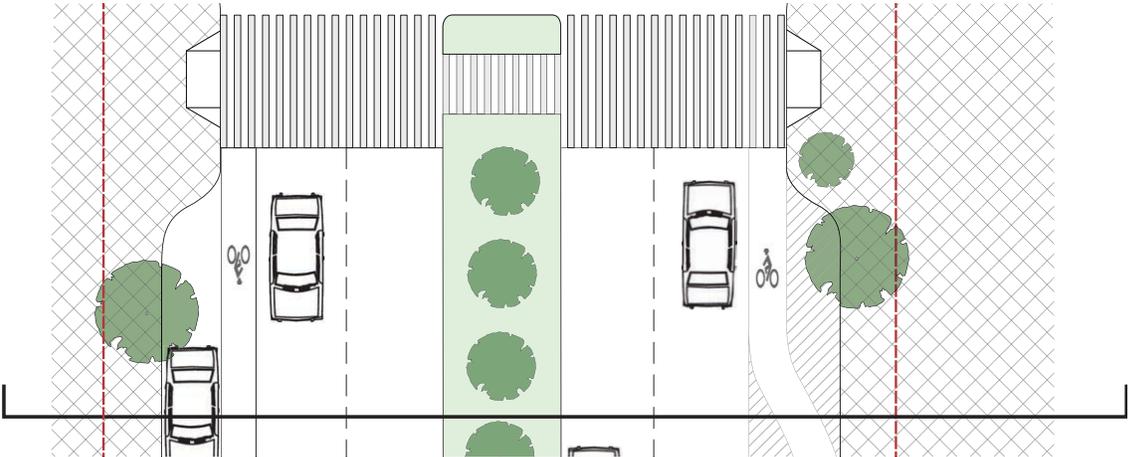
### Guidelines

The design of the sidewalks along El Camino Real, whether within the El Camino Real corridor or within adjacent setback areas, should include the following:

- D.4.01** Take into consideration recommended criteria of the Grand Boulevard Initiative’s *Multi-Modal Access Strategy & Context-Sensitive Design Guidelines*.
- D.4.02** Be 15 feet wide, at a minimum, on the east side of El Camino Real, inclusive of a 10-foot-wide clear pedestrian thru-zone, north of Oak Grove Avenue and south of Menlo Avenue.
- D.4.03** Be 12 feet wide, at a minimum, on the east of El Camino Real, inclusive of an 8-foot-wide clear pedestrian thru-zone, in the downtown area between Oak Grove Avenue and Menlo Avenue.
- D.4.04** Be 12 feet wide, at a minimum, on the west side of El Camino Real, inclusive of an 8-foot-wide clear pedestrian thru-zone.
- D.4.05** Incorporate a coordinated set of streetscape improvements, including street trees, paving and lighting.

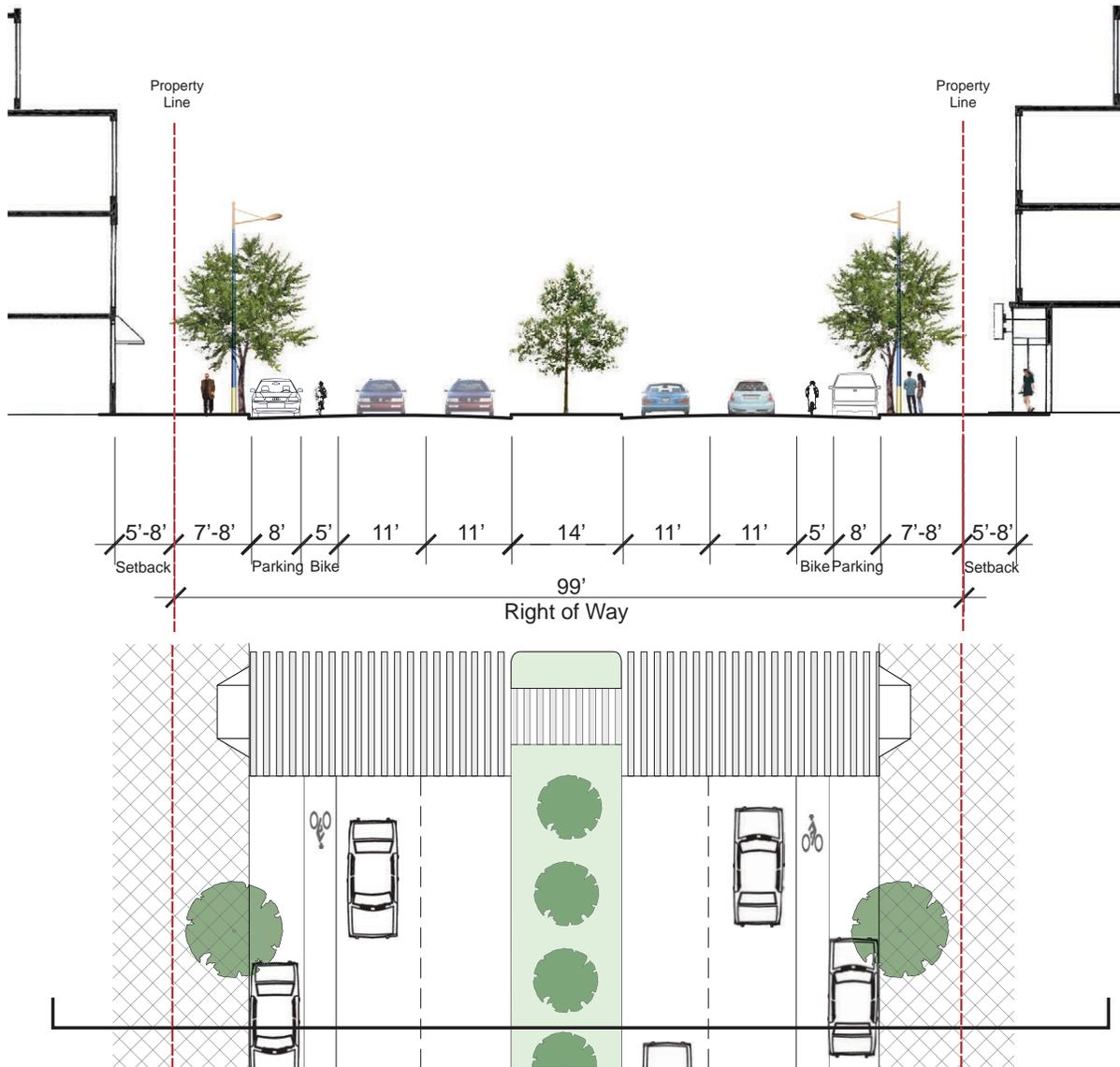


Section and plan without sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

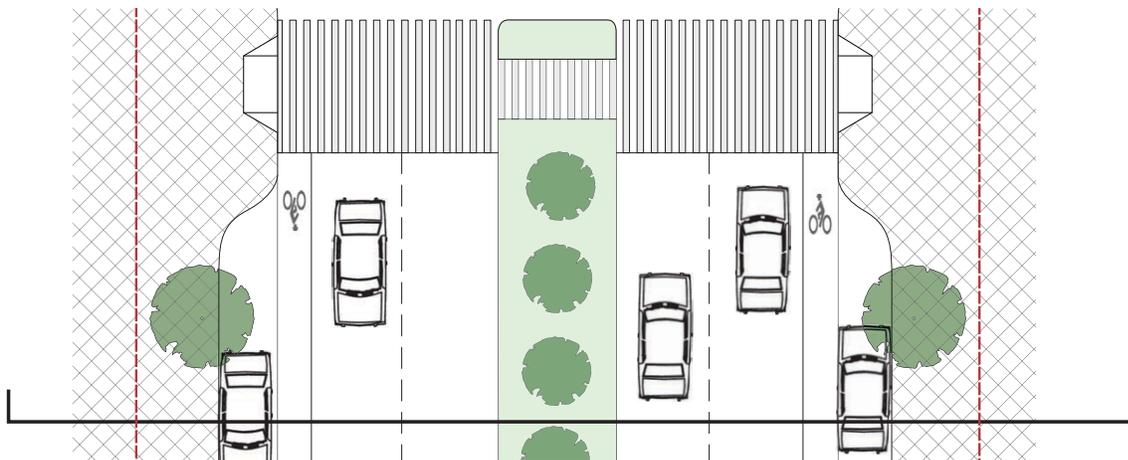


Alternative plan with sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

Figure D17. Typical Section/Plan at El Camino Real North between Valparaiso Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue

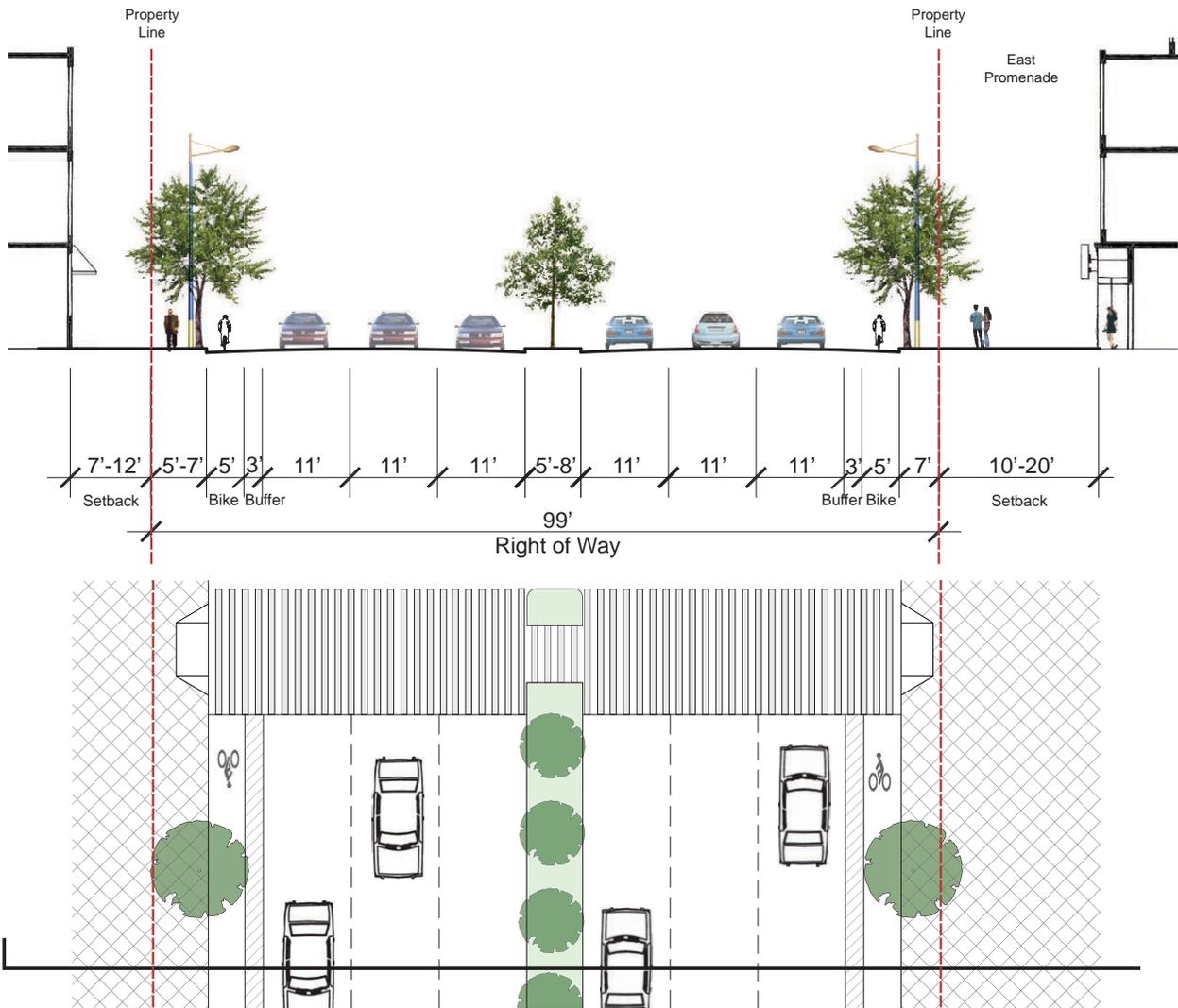


Section and plan without sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

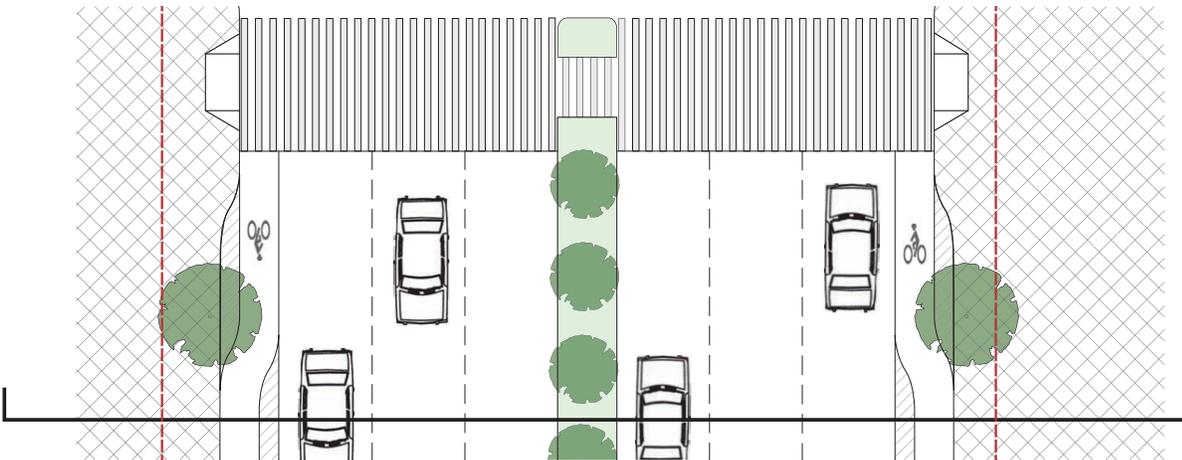


Alternative plan with sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

Figure D18. Typical Section/Plan at El Camino Real Downtown between Oak Grove Avenue and Menlo Avenue.



Section and plan without sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection



Alternative plan with sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

Figure D19. Typical Section/Plan at El Camino Real south of Roble Avenue

## **East-West Connectivity**

El Camino Real, in addition to the Caltrain railroad tracks, is both a real and perceived barrier between the east and west sides of town, including downtown and the station area. Long crossing distances make traversing the street on foot inconvenient. The Specific Plan recognizes key intersections along El Camino Real and improves crossing conditions at these locations. In addition, the plan proposes two potential pedestrian/bicycle grade-separated crossings of the railroad tracks: one at the terminus of Santa Cruz Avenue in the station area (discussed in Section D.3 “Station Area”) and one on Stanford University property at Middle Avenue. Done in conjunction with intersection improvements, the latter one would be undertaken by Stanford University when it redevelops and/or in conjunction with High Speed Rail improvements.

### **El Camino Real Crossings**

The Specific Plan proposes improvements to most intersections on El Camino Real. Section F.3 “Pedestrian Improvements” identifies the locations and nature of those improvements. In most cases, the improvements allow for sidewalk extensions (i.e. bulb-outs) for at least one corner depending on traffic flow requirements. Figure D20 illustrates what an improved intersection might look like on El Camino Real in the downtown area.

### **Intent**

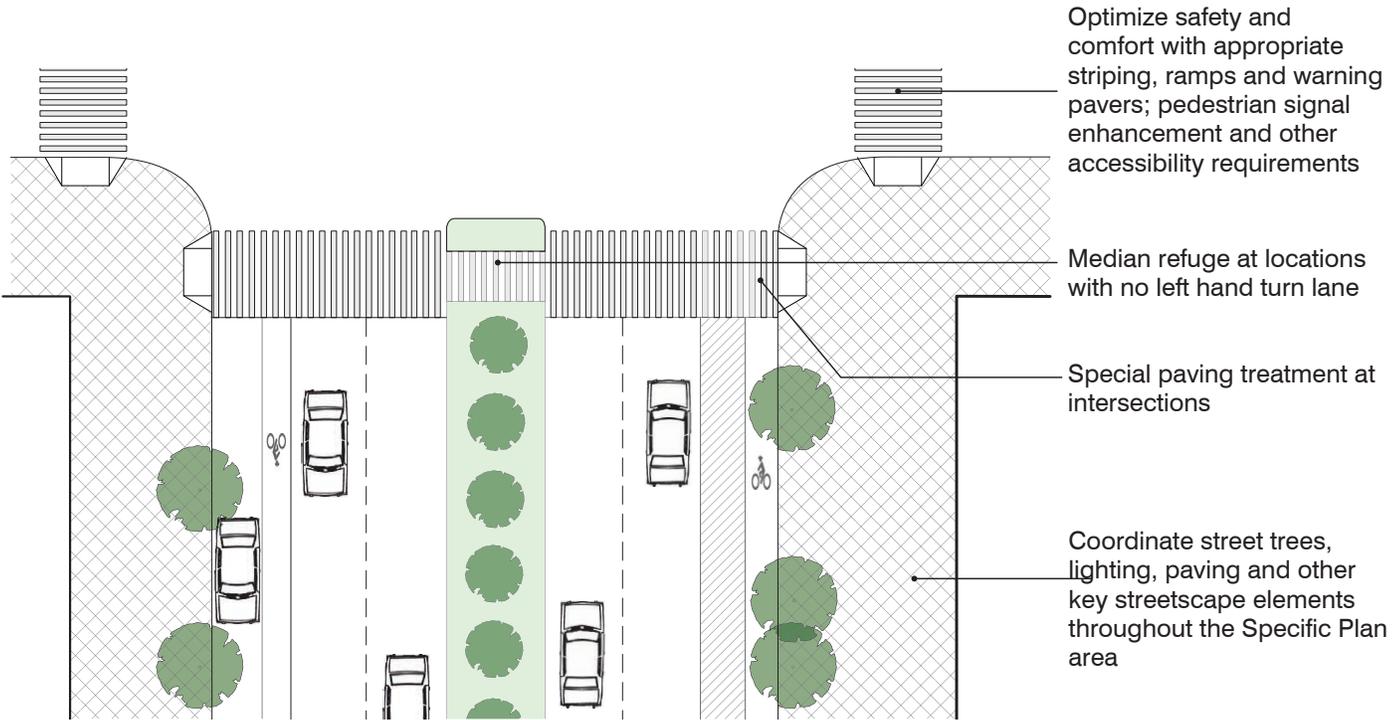
- Minimize the El Camino Real barrier effect and improve connectivity across El Camino Real by improving pedestrian crossing conditions.

### **Character**

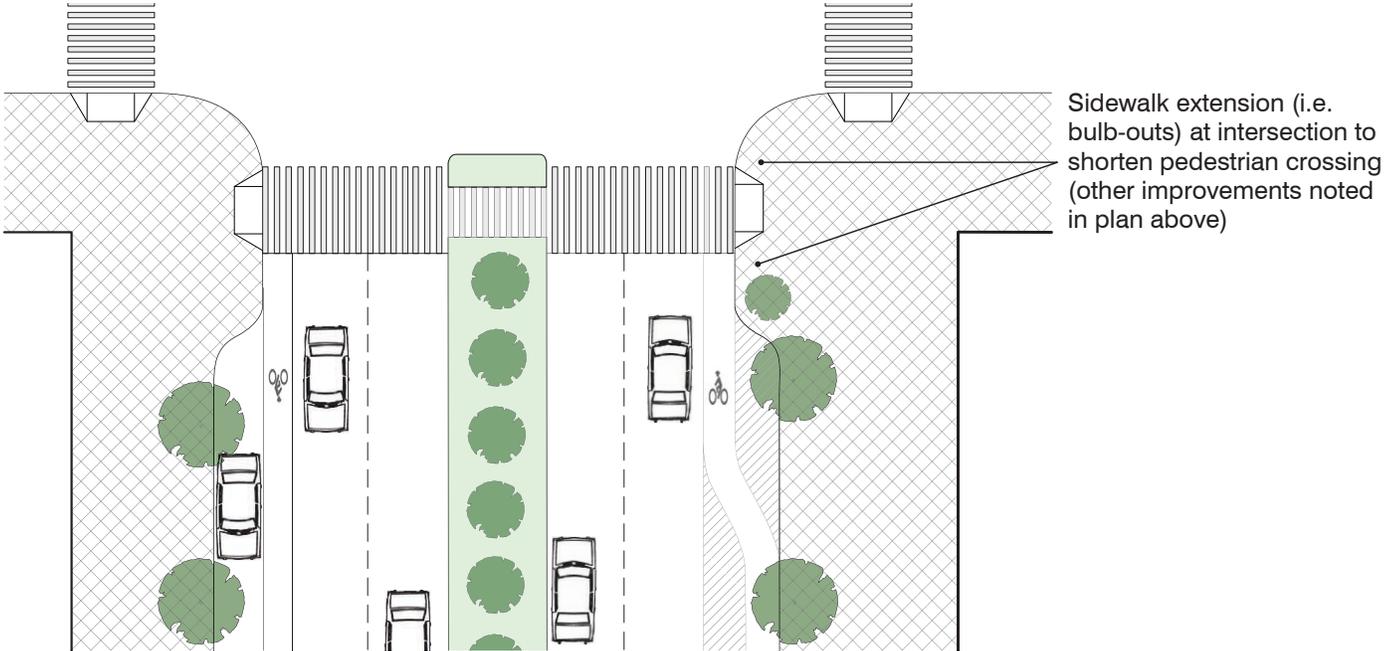
- Pedestrian-oriented design.

### **Improvements**

- Create special crossing treatments at key intersections as identified in Chapter F “Circulation”.



Plan without sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection



Alternative plan with sidewalk extension (i.e. bulb-outs) at intersection

Figure D20. Typical Intersection Improvement

## Guidelines

The design of intersection improvements on El Camino Real should include the following:

**D.4.06** Take into consideration recommended criteria of the Grand Boulevard Initiative's *Multi-Modal Access Strategy & Context-Sensitive Design Guidelines*.

**D.4.07** Optimize crossing time by reducing curb-to-curb distance to the extent feasible.

**D.4.08** Optimize safety and comfort with appropriate striping, ramps and warning pavers and other accessibility requirements.

**D.4.09** Integrate additional landscaping and "low impact development" (LID) materials, such as pervious materials to manage storm water, where possible.

**D.4.10** Incorporate special treatment for intersections in the downtown/station areas (i.e. Oak Grove Avenue, Santa Cruz Avenue and Menlo Avenue) to enhance connections between the two areas.

**D.4.11** Coordinate street trees, lighting, paving and other key streetscape elements with other streetscape elements of El Camino Real above.



*Coordinated street trees/landscaping, paving, furniture, signage and other streetscape elements (Emeryville, California)*



*Publicly-accessible pedestrian connection and open space element (Portland, Oregon)*

## **Burgess Park Linkage/Open Space Plaza**

Explained in more detail in Section E.3 “Development Standards + Guidelines,” the Specific Plan identifies two locations for publicly-accessible open space and grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle linkage across the railroad tracks. One is in the station area at the terminus of Santa Cruz Avenue (discussed above in Section D.3 “Station Area”) and the other is at the terminus of Middle Avenue. The latter connects the western neighborhoods with Burgess Park and neighborhoods to the east.

Described in Section E.3.4 “Massing and Modulation,” the plaza at Middle Avenue provides additional open space amenity to both the community and the private development. The open space plaza should integrate with both the pedestrian promenade along El Camino Real and linkages to the east side of the Caltrain tracks. Adjacent buildings should activate the plazas with ground floor uses, such as cafes and small stores, as discussed in Section E.2.3 “Special Land Use Topics.” The guidelines for this open space amenity are below.

Because this open space and linkage amenity is located partly on Stanford University property, it should be part of development review with the City when Stanford University chooses to redevelop the land. The rail crossing itself should consider High Speed Rail improvements, but may be undertaken at any time.

### **Intent**

- Provide publicly-accessible open space amenities on the east side of El Camino Real at the intersection of Middle Avenue.
- Provide a grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle linkage across the railroad connecting the Middle Avenue plaza with Alma Street/Burgess Park. The final configuration of such a linkage will depend on the final configuration of the high speed rail.

### **Character**

- Publicly-accessible open space/plaza providing seating and places for small informal gatherings.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connection associated with publicly-accessible open space.

## Improvements

- Create a welcoming, publicly-accessible open space plaza at the terminus of Middle Avenue, integrated with the pedestrian promenade along El Camino Real, that provides seating and shade and allows for small, informal gatherings.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle linkage across the railroad tracks between El Camino Real, the new open space and Alma Street at Middle Avenue. The precise configuration of such a linkage will depend on the final configuration of the high speed rail.

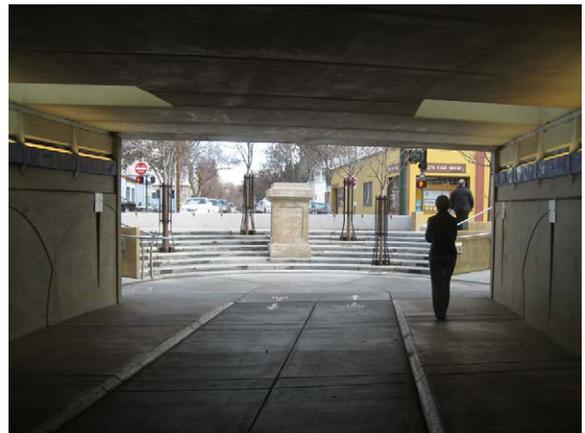
## Guidelines

The design of the open space plaza and pedestrian/bicycle linkage should include the following:

- D.4.12** Visually extend Middle Avenue.
- D.4.13** Allow for seating and informal gatherings.
- D.4.14** Provide green space and shaded areas.
- D.4.15** Integrate with vehicular access needs and associated development.
- D.4.16** Provide a pedestrian and bicycle linkage between El Camino Real, the new open space and Burgess Park at Middle Avenue; this linkage would involve a grade separated crossing if tracks remain at grade.
- D.4.17** Emphasize safety and comfort for all users.



*Pedestrian/bicycle tunnel linkage (Palo Alto, California)*



*Grade separated pedestrian/bicycle linkage (Palo Alto, California)*

## D.5 GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Specific Plan proposes overarching guidelines for public space improvements in the plan area. The intent of the guidelines, in part, is to establish a coordinated streetscape and open space system.

### General Guidelines

#### Walkable Streets

**D.5.01** All pedestrian pathways should be continuous, direct, shaded and lit for safety.

#### Streetscape Palette

**D.5.02** The streetscape palette should be consistent and coordinated across downtown and the station area for main streetscape elements. The streetscape palette should also be consistent for El Camino Real.

#### Street Trees and Planting Materials

**D.5.03** The street tree canopy should be extended for shade, and street tree rows completed for continuity.

**D.5.04** Iconic/differentiated trees should be used for civic spaces.

**D.5.05** Indigenous plant materials should be used for reduced water consumption.

**D.5.06** Deciduous/flowering plants could be used, where appropriate, for seasonal variation and additional interest.

#### Signage

**D.5.07** Signage should be coordinated, and it could be used to enhance downtown identity.

**D.5.08** A comprehensive pedestrian way-finding system should be implemented.

#### Public Art

**D.5.09** Public art could be used to create focal points and mark destinations.

**D.5.10** Public art could be incorporated into pathways (e.g. interpretive walk).

**D.5.11** Temporary public art could be installed throughout downtown.

**D.5.12** Public art could include lighting.

#### Durability and Maintenance

**D.5.13** Durability and easy maintenance should be considered when selecting streetscape furnishings.

#### Accessibility

**D.5.14** Applicable accessibility codes shall be integrated into streetscape and public space design.

### Surface Parking Guidelines

Surface parking should include the following:

**D.5.15** Be visually attractive, particularly when seen from streets and public spaces.

**D.5.16** Address security and safety concerns with adequate lighting and sight lines.

**D.5.17** Preserve existing mature trees to the extent possible.

**D.5.18** Incorporate canopy trees for shade.

**D.5.19** Introduce safe pedestrian pathways, connecting the parking lot to building entries and public sidewalks, using elements such as marked crossings, clear signage and supplementary lighting.

**D.5.20** To reduce water consumption and heat island effect, incorporate shade, use indigenous plant materials and use permeable materials, where appropriate

## D.6 SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

The Specific Plan proposes the following sustainable practices for public space improvements based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND). In addition to the practices below, the Specific Plan proposes sustainable practices for private and public development, inclusive of LEED-ND, as described in Section E.3.8 “Sustainable Practices”.

### Guidelines

#### Walkable Streets

**D.6.01** Healthy activity and walking should be encouraged through well designed and attractive public spaces.

**D.6.02** Shaded streets and public spaces that optimize use and activity should be provided.

#### Stormwater Management

**D.6.03** Pervious materials should be used on sidewalks and other paved surfaces wherever possible to minimize storm-water run-off from paved surfaces.

**D.6.04** Large soil-filled, planted catch basins are encouraged as a part of sidewalk design. They should be coordinated with street trees, lighting, and infrastructure on the street.

#### Heat Island Effect Reduction

**D.6.05** Dark colored paved areas should be minimized.

**D.6.06** Greening and the shading of paved areas are encouraged.

#### Reduced Water Consumption, Maintenance and Durability

**D.6.07** Indigenous and drought-resistant plant materials should be used.

#### Reduced Energy Consumption

**D.6.08** Energy consumption in landscape elements should be minimized through these techniques:

- Solar power fixtures.
- Downward path lighting.
- Motion sensor lights or lighting controlled by timers set to turn off at the earliest practicable hour.
- Gravity fed water features/systems.