

17th STREET PLAZA TEMPORARY CLOSURE FAQ

WHERE, WHEN, & WHY

Where is the temporary street closure occurring?

The portion of 17th Street from the southern edge of the F-Line boarding island to Castro Street will be closed to automobile traffic and redesigned into a temporary plaza.

How long will the temporary plaza be in place?

Installation is scheduled to begin on Sunday May 10, 2009. A formal dedication by Mayor Gavin Newsom is scheduled at 10am on Wednesday May 13, 2009. A community celebration is planned by the Castro CBD on Saturday May 16, 2009. After an initial two month trial period (ending July 11, 2009), the plaza will be reviewed for consideration of a 4-month extension. The purpose of the two-month trial period is to allow both the City and community to closely evaluate the plaza and adjust its design or management to address any concerns that may arise.

What is the history of this idea?

The concept of creating a community gathering space and public plaza at 17th Street has been discussed in the Castro community for over a decade. After extensive community input, the idea was formalized in the City's *Upper Market Vision and Recommendations* document which was unanimously endorsed by the City's Planning Commission in October 2008. Additionally, the Castro/Upper Market Community Business District (CBD) funded and led a planning process, primarily for merchants, throughout 2008 that focused primarily on pedestrian safety. The result of the CBD's planning process was a recommendation for the closure of 17th Street at this intersection in order to enhance the pedestrian experience.

What has public involvement been to date?

In an effort to move from plan policy to implementation, the City has undertaken several efforts to inform the community about the creation of the 17th Street Plaza. The Supervisor's Office, the Department of Public Works, and the Planning Department have attended many community organizations meetings, including merchant meetings, neighbor gatherings, and site visits. The temporary plaza has also been discussed in the Bay Area Reporter as well as on many local blogs. The design of the temporary plaza reflects the ideas and concerns of the community. In addition, the temporary nature of the plaza allows for quick and inexpensive alterations – so additional community concerns and ideas can easily be addressed during the course of the trial run.

What are the precedents for doing a “temporary plaza”?

The program is inspired by the recent success of similar projects in New York City - where plazas and seating areas have been created in excess roadway simply by painting or treating the asphalt, placing protective barriers along the periphery, and installing moveable tables and chairs. Examples of temporary plazas can be found at: www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/sidewalks/pedestrian_projects.shtml

EMERGENCY ACCESS & TRAFFIC

Will there still be Police, Fire and emergency vehicle access?

Yes. The plaza is being designed to allow all emergency vehicles immediate access to the buildings or persons at risk. In addition to the existing Muni right-of-ways, the Fire Department has designated a clear path along the southern edge of the plaza where permanent fixtures are prohibited to ensure emergency access to buildings along 17th Street.

How will this change traffic patterns in the neighborhood?

A small scale traffic study was completed to understand the effects of the street closure on both Market Street and surrounding side streets, including Hartford Street. The City's Traffic Engineer has concluded that there will be very little impact on existing traffic patterns. Side streets such as Hartford Street are projected to see a decrease in automobile traffic over the course of the closure. Nevertheless, all changes to existing traffic patterns will be closely monitored as a part of this trial period.

What measures are being taken to inform drivers of the changes?

Signage will be placed on 17th Street at Noe Street to inform drivers that 17th is not a through-street. Signage will also be placed on Market Street informing east-bound drivers of the closure of 17th Street. In addition, highly visible and protective bollards and other objects will be placed around the plaza to clearly define its edge to motorists.

Will the Muni F-line still run through the plaza?

Yes. The F-line Streetcar will continue to operate as scheduled through the plaza. The plaza will demarcate the buffer needed to alert plaza users of the train path of travel. Access will also be provided for maintenance of Muni's overhead wires.

Will this affect garbage pick up?

No. Garbage pick up should not be affected. Typical contracts require trucks to pull within 100 feet of the pick up site. Since the plaza is only 140 feet long, all properties will be able to maintain their existing pick up contracts from either 17th Street, east of the plaza, or along Castro Street. The street's garbage pick-up providers are confident the plaza will not affect their operations, but are prepared to work with businesses, property owners and the City to tweak the solution during the trial period, if needed.

How will this impact deliveries and loading?

Business deliveries and loading are currently not permitted directly in front of the buildings along the portion of 17th Street to be closed because it is a Tow-Away Zone. The temporary plaza therefore should have no new impact in terms of deliveries and loading. However, frequently delivery trucks informally stop and unload directly in front of the businesses along the street. Once the plaza is created, it is expected that this currently informal loading and unloading will be occur at the eastern boundary of the plaza on 17th Street.

Will there still be access to the Chevron Station?

The owners of the Chevron station have publically supported the plaza and agreed to close their western driveway on 17th Street to allow for the plaza.

How will bicyclists travel through the plaza?

Both the City's bike planners and representatives of the Bicycle Coalition have reviewed and approve of the proposal. Both groups stated that few bicyclists currently pass through this stretch of 17th Street. Nevertheless, clear paths of travel have been delineated for bike movements to and from Market Street.

USE, DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

What will the plaza look like?

The City's design consultant, Public Architecture, is developing an innovative design for the plaza that includes barriers from traffic along the edge, special colored treatment for the existing asphalt, seating (both permanent and temporary), planters, and waste bins. The goal is to use recycled materials owned by the City. The City is also investigating opportunities to do temporary public art installations in the plaza.

What activities will take place in the plaza?

The goal of the plaza is to turn what is currently a dangerous and confusing intersection into a welcoming gathering space for the community. Seating will be provided to allow for people to rest, chat, people-watch, or enjoy a snack or meal outdoors. In addition, the Castro CBD is working with local musicians, community groups, and local vendors who are interested in utilizing the space at various times throughout the trial period. The City and its design consultant will be monitoring how the plaza is used, and if need be, will alter the design to encourage and foster the uses that the community finds most popular and desirable.

How will the plaza be lit at night?

The current lighting conditions have been determined to be adequate for safe plaza use, especially on the less-traveled eastern side near the gas station. Additional lighting elements will be considered upon further evaluation.

How will the City deal with the potential for undesirable uses in the plaza?

Every step is being taken to ensure the plaza is a safe, vibrant and welcoming space for the community. Via both design and management, the City is committed to preventing undesirable behaviors/uses. With input from both the Police Department and Mayor's Office of Homelessness, the plaza is being designed to discourage panhandling or over-night use. Most seating will be removed at night. In addition, local businesses are working with the Castro CBD to hire an off-duty San Francisco Police Officer who will patrol the plaza as part of their beat through the Castro area during late night hours.

How will the plaza be managed and maintained?

On going plaza management will fall primarily to the Mayor's Office of Greening and the Department of Public Works (DPW). The Mayor's Office of Greening will be in constant contact with the Castro CBD and other organizations about continually activating the space. DPW will oversee the plaza from a maintenance perspective. Materials will be provided by and moved, when necessary, by DPW. Day-to-day maintenance will be done by DPW in conjunction with the Castro CBD cleaning contractor, MJM Management.

NEXT STEPS

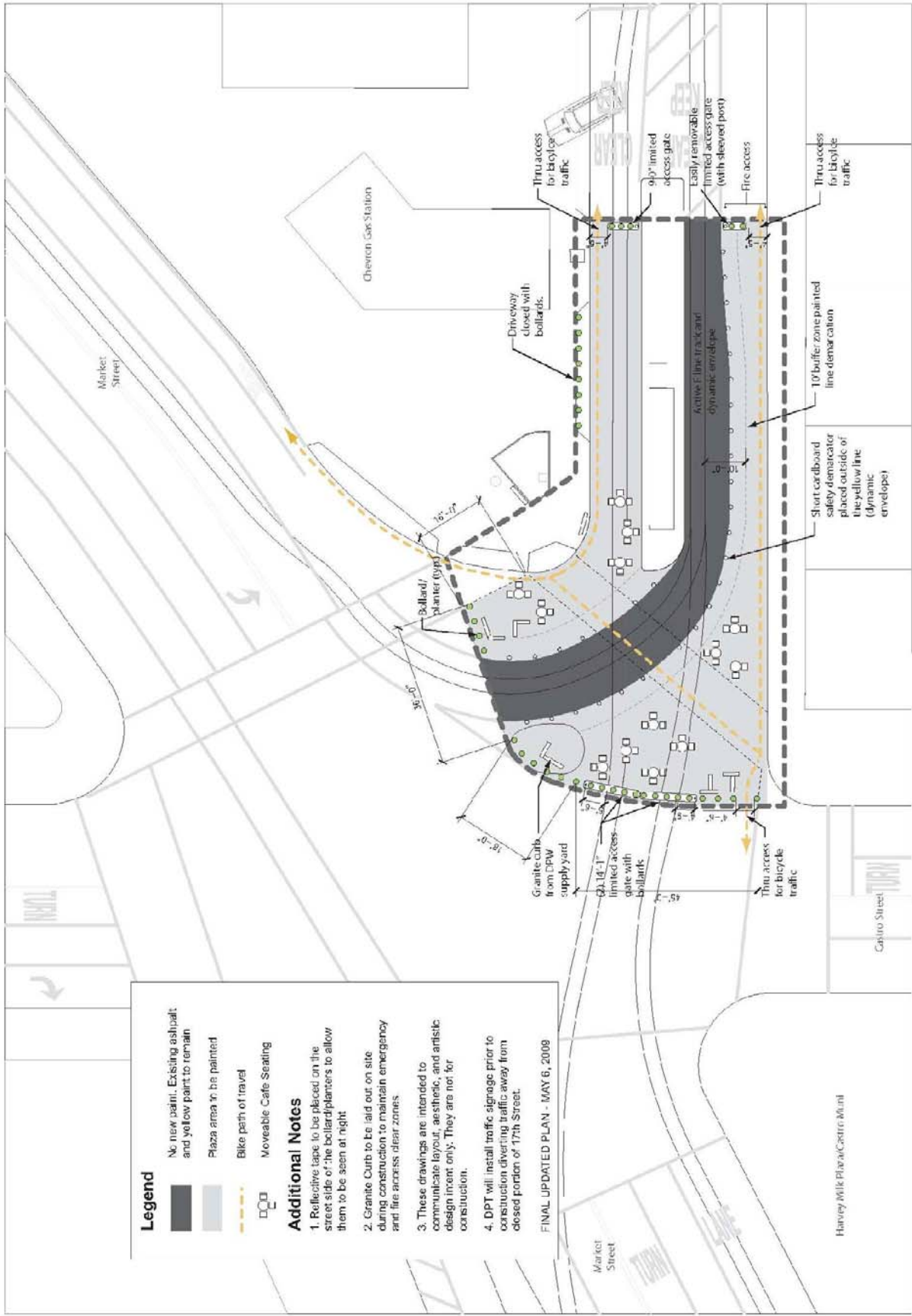
How will the success of the plaza be evaluated?

During the temporary closure, the success of the plaza will be evaluated to understand what adjustments need to be made in the short term, and ultimately, whether the temporary closure should be a long term community benefit. Two weeks prior to the initial two month evaluation point the representatives from adjacent neighbors, the Supervisor's Office, the City Agencies, will meet to discuss the first six weeks of the plaza's existence. The notes from this meeting will be presented at the public hearing that would approve or disapprove the four-month extension of the plaza.

Pending a four-month extension, Public Architecture will lead a more in-depth evaluation which will involve observation and public surveys on levels of community satisfaction, pedestrian activity, traffic flows, sanitation, and crime statistics. A report analyzing this data as well as an overall assessment of use, access, and key problems and opportunities will be prepared for review and action.

Who do I contact if I have feedback about the plaza?

Public feedback on the plaza during its trial run is welcomed and encouraged. All owners and residents will be notified when the City has a public hearing in July to determine whether to extend the trial run for an additional four months. In the interim, please contact Abigail Kiefer at the San Francisco Planning Department at (415) 575 9065 or the Supervisor's Office at 554-6968.



Legend

- No new paint. Existing asphalt and yellow paint to remain
- Plaza area to be painted
- Bike path of travel
- Moveable Cafe Seating

Additional Notes

1. Reflective tape to be placed on the street side of the bollard/planters to allow them to be seen at night
2. Granite Curb to be laid out on site during construction to maintain emergency and fire access clear zones.
3. These drawings are intended to communicate layout, aesthetic, and artistic design intent only. They are not for construction.
4. DPT will install traffic signage prior to construction diverting traffic away from closed portion of 17th Street.

FINAL UPDATED PLAN - MAY 6, 2009