

Central SoMa Draft Policy Document

Bluxome Street Linear Park

January 2014

Introduction

The Open Space chapter (Chapter 5) of the draft Plan states that the Plan should “repurpose the excess right-of-way on Bluxome Street between 4th and 5th Streets as a new linear open space” (Implementation Strategy 1.4). The discussion below seeks to convey how such a park might be developed.

Summary

The Department is proposing a new linear park along Bluxome Street between 4th and 5th Streets.

Background

Parks don't need to be large to have a big impact. San Francisco has some excellent examples of very small public open spaces where children can play and adults can walk the dog, or chat with neighbors, or garden, or just stroll in a calm, green, relaxing environment. One example is Juri Commons in the Mission district, which combines all of the above in a space less than 30 feet wide by about 300 feet long.

The block of Bluxome Street between 4th and 5th Streets is more than 800 feet long and 70 feet wide from building to building - the “public right of way”. This is twice the width that is needed for circulation – Bluxome is not a through street, and the typical SoMa alley is only 35 feet wide. Two Juri Commons-sized parks could fit within the public right of way on this block and still leave room for a typical small Soma street that could handle traffic (cars, trucks, fire trucks, bicycles, pedestrians) serving the adjacent buildings. A recently built example of this sort of on-street linear park is on Spear Street between Folsom and Harrison Streets.

Initial Proposal

The basic concept is shown on page 74 of the Draft Plan for Public Review: existing two-way traffic flow, the existing south sidewalk and some existing on-street parking would be retained, while the sidewalk on the north side (sunny in the afternoon most of the year) between 4th and 5th Streets would be widened significantly to create a linear public space. There will need to remain a few driveways through this linear park, most notably at the Fire station located midblock, but the other details shown in the plan and cross-section are conceptual and intended for discussion. The Plan graphic shows the north sidewalk landscaped with more of an urban “plaza” feel at the ends near 4th and 5th Streets, and a softer, more natural environment towards the middle of the block. The double row of trees shown could possibly be an urban orchard. The surface throughout

could be permeable to help manage stormwater, and other green infrastructure could also find a place here. With such a long block to work with, the park could be considered as a series of outdoor “rooms” designed to accommodate different activities, and they don’t all need to look or function the same way.