

# ***Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan***

*by the*

*Chinatown Community Development Center*

*with the San Francisco Department of Public Works*

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## *Executive Summary*

The *Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan* is sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and spearheaded by the Chinatown Community Development Center in collaboration with the San Francisco Department of Public Works and the North Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Broadway, between Columbus Avenue and the Embarcadero Roadway, is the focus of this report. Between April and September, 1999, a community planning process took place to envision how the Broadway streetscape could be improved. Specifically, the proposed improvements seek to functionally and visually link Broadway to the City's waterfront in a manner that is pedestrian and transit friendly, enjoys community support and recognizes and maintains Broadway's capacity as a major gateway to the northeast quadrant. The content of this report chronicles the community planning process and documents the proposed streetscape improvement plan.

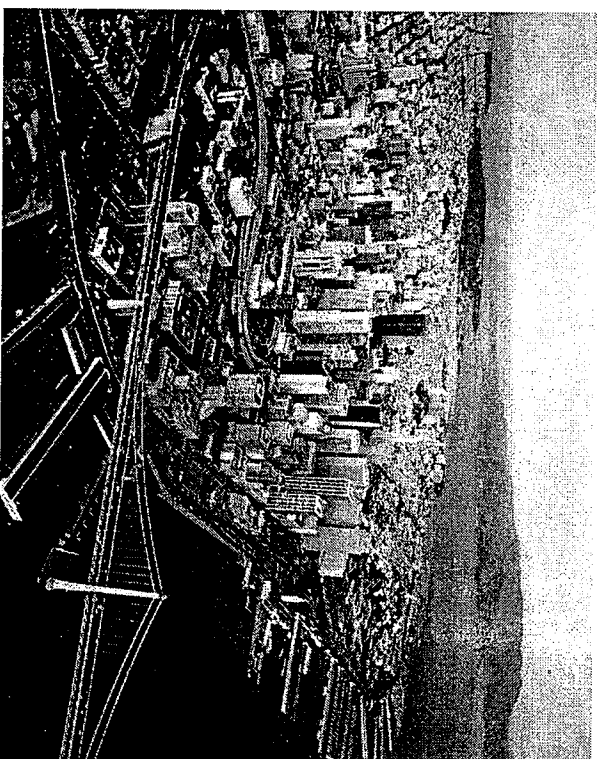
The immediate next step for the *Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan* is to seek implementation funds and to move into design development with further community input.

# I. Introduction

## A. Project Background

Broadway, located in the northeast quadrant of San Francisco, is a vital point of access between the City's northeastern neighborhoods, the Bay, and the surrounding area, since the late 1840's. Its long history as a major gateway to the City began early; the street's original terminus at the San Francisco Bay was the site of Clark's Wharf, a first facility of such capable of handling seagoing vessels. Although Broadway has evolved to take on different functions over the years, it, to this day, remains to be one of the most well utilized east-west corridors in the City.

In the early 1990's, a number of factors, including an economic recession, the demolition of the elevated Embarcadero Freeway (the former Route 480), and the loss of business vitality associated with these events, helped to create a general feeling in the community that Broadway, particularly its easternmost segment between Chinatown/North Beach and the Bay, was in a state of decline. In response to these concerns, the Chinatown Community Development Center (Chinatown CDC--formerly the Chinatown Resource Center), initiated the *Broadway Envisioning Study*, a community-based envisioning pro-



*San Francisco Waterfront After the Route 480 Demolition*

cess, to develop strategies to revitalize Broadway, to reconnect it with the waterfront and to reestablish its importance as a gateway to Chinatown and North Beach.

Since the completion of the community envisioning process in 1994, several new restaurants on Broadway, between Columbus Avenue and Montgomery Street, have opened while other establishments, including some residential housing in the area, were refurbished. The lower portion of Broadway, near the Embarcadero Roadway,

way were realistic and realizable, and within the boundaries of an acceptable streetscape plan requirements.

In addition to the Chinatown CDC's planning staff, the project team included many volunteers and interns. Emily Huang and Michael Garavaglia, residents in the community and also professional architects, volunteered design services and were instrumental in developing design concepts and renderings. Daniel Fratin, a student intern with the Chinatown CDC, also contributed to the project as a research and planning assistant. Additionally, the Chinatown CDC utilized youth interns from the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment and Training Program. The local high school youth participated in the community meetings and in the process, gained knowledge on the importance of community input in a neighborhood planning process. Total volunteer and intern hours on the project accounted for over 400 hours.

### C. Community Participation

In the development of the *Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan*, community participation was extensively sought and organized to include residents of the area, business and property owners, and community based organizations. The high level of community participation and the critical input given throughout the course of project helped to ensure the ease of consensus building

and the eventual adoption of the proposed streetscape improvement plan.

Beginning in April 1999, a total of four monthly community meetings and a number of focus groups were held to solicit community input (see Appendix: Community Meetings). At each of these meetings, both the number of participants and the level of input given exceeded the project team's expectations. The number of participants at two of the community meetings surpassed fifty, while the remaining had no fewer than thirty. More importantly, the attendance was consistent, with close to 20 participants consistently attending all four community meetings.

The diversity in the individuals attending the community meetings also aided in the success of the resultant streetscape improvement plan. Each participant brought in a unique perspective and represented a particular interest. Especially well represented at the community meetings were residents, property owners, and community/special interest groups. The vast and diverse groups present included members of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, the North Beach Neighbors, the Chinatown Transportation Research and Improvement Project, the Community Tenants Association, the Ping Yuen Residents Improvement As-

nity meetings and all written materials distributed were translated into Chinese. Additionally, the Chinatown CDC facilitated smaller meetings where Chinese language speakers and others interested but unable to attend the evening meetings were directly solicited.

#### **D. Project Methodology**

Community meetings were the primary means through which the *Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan* was developed. Each of the four meetings was designed to solicit community input in various areas of concern regarding the Project Area (see Appendix: Community Meetings), and the information received at each meeting built upon the next, finally leading to the eventual development of the preferred streetscape improvement plan.

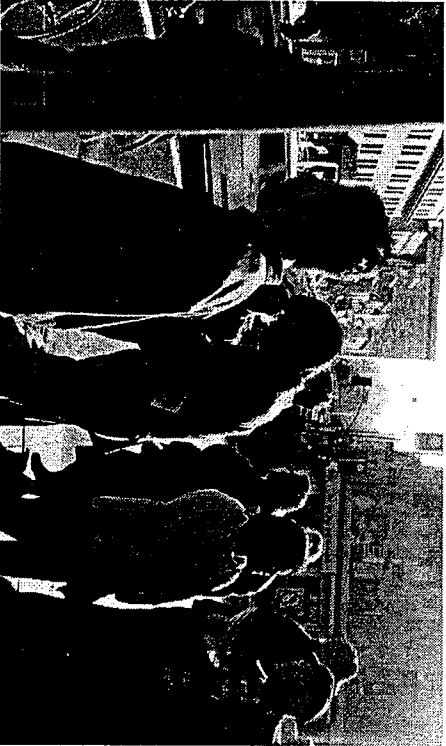
Prior to the first community meeting, in order to ensure that the community reached was representative of the area's stakeholders, Chinatown CDC sent project introductory letters to property owners within a two-block area north, south, and west of the Project Area. All Project Area merchants and community based organizations in the northeast quadrant were also sent the introductory letters. The introductory letter drew reference to the *Broadway Envisioning Study* and described the purpose and scope of work of the community planning process (see Appendix: Miscellaneous Project Litera-

ture). Over 1,200 letters were mailed.

The first community meeting, held on April 22, 1999, drew over forty individuals representing various community based organizations or themselves as residents, property and business owners. In addition to being an introductory meeting where the community participants were introduced to the project and the project team, the goal of the first meeting was to identify the Project Area's needs. Each of the participants provided a critical analysis of Broadway as existing, specifically in terms of the area's strengths, weaknesses and potential. The results of the needs assessment from this meeting (see page 10) were utilized in the second to formulate solutions to enhance, improve or mitigate Broadway's needs identified.

At the second community meeting, the most attended of all meetings, a design charrette was the focus. Participants, broken-up into smaller groups of 8 to 10 individuals, drew their own plans of an ideal Broadway Corridor. To aid the participants in the design, the project team provided a typology of street elements, such as people, cars, buses, bicycles, trees, lighting, and other street furnishings, along with scaled plans and cross sections. A three-dimensional scaled model of the street profile was also made available as a visual reference. The hour long design charrette resulted in six different conceptual

tional thoughts and ideas about the Project Area. The walking tour guidelines requested participants to stop at key destinations along Broadway to assess existing conditions and to visualize the area's potential (see Appendix: Miscellaneous Project Literature).



*Walking Tour Participants Convening at Broadway and Columbus*

Following the self-guided field walks, the third community meeting held featured speakers from the three city departments. Representatives from the San Francisco Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Housing, and the Port Authority shared with the community the impending development plans for the three freeway vacated parcels in the lower Broadway area. The session was

informative for all parties involved in that the development of these parcels, which include a hotel, a housing project and a police station, will greatly influence the use and character of Broadway and has potential to impact the proposed streetscape improvements and vice versa.



*Participants Reviewing Plans for a Port Hotel*

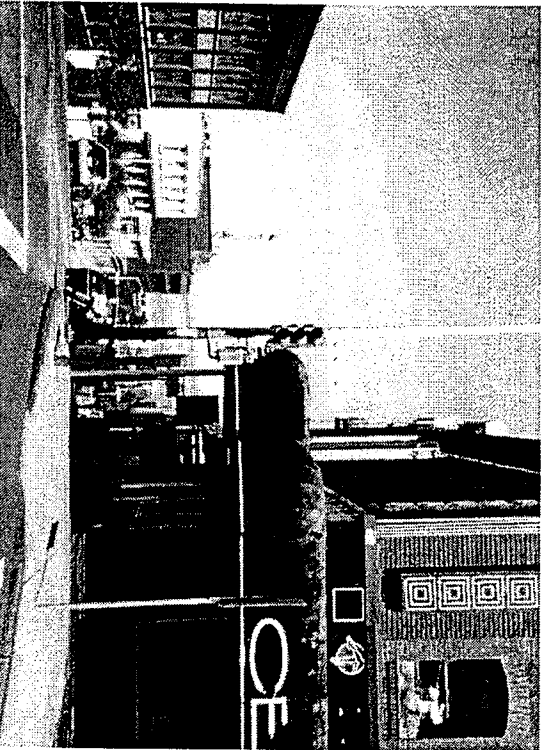


*Meeting 3 Participants*



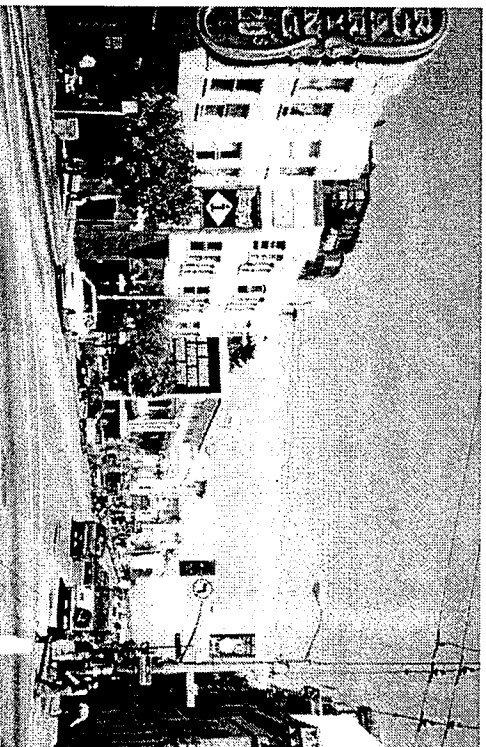
graph Hill. In the midst of this transition zone, is Broadway, a community with its own history and a vibrant presence.

The Broadway segment of the Project Area is generally thought of as having two distinct sections, the upper and lower, which are visibly separated by a significant change in topography. The upper Broadway, roughly between Columbus Avenue and Montgomery Street, is a busy mixed-use, residential and commercial district. From its earliest days onward, this area of Broadway has been known for its cutting edge entertainment establishments,



*A Change in Grade on Broadway at Montgomery*

which played host to beat poets and drag shows, inaugurated the topless dance, and was a center of the City's early punk scene. Currently, the upper Broadway lacks a clear image; upscale restaurants, neighborhood retail and residential hotels stand side-by-side with strip clubs and parking lots.

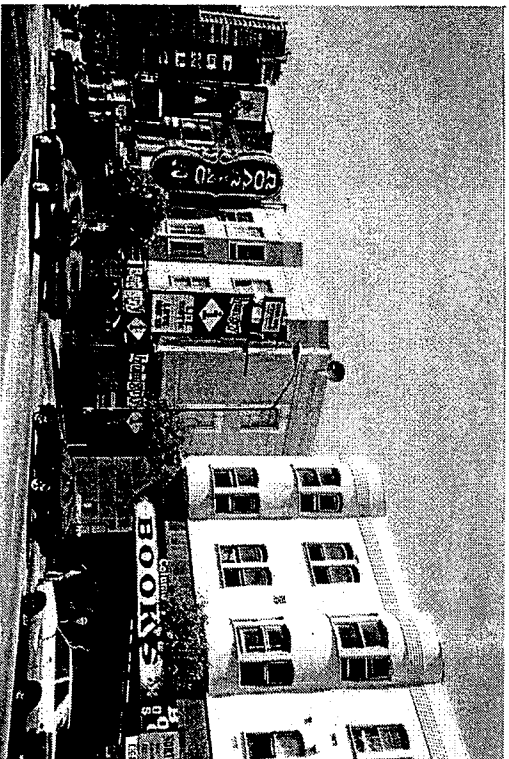


*Upper Broadway: Looking Towards the Embarcadero*

Unlike the upper Broadway, the lower area of Broadway, between Montgomery Street and the Embarcadero Roadway, is more muted. With the exception of the Golden Gateway Commons, a large residential complex, at the foot of Broadway, the lower area is dominated by com-

is contained under the Northeast Waterfront Historic District, then there is Jackson Square, North Beach, Chinatown and Telegraph Hill.

- Authenticity of upper Broadway is real and adds to the Broadway's attractiveness; the eclectic quality of Broadway should be preserved.
- Broadway is fine-grained and has potential to be pedestrian-friendly, as many businesses are now reclaiming sidewalk spaces.
- The sidewalk-café effect that we now have in the upper Broadway is a positive thing.
- The fact that there is already much pedestrian activity in the upper Broadway area is a positive aspect of Broadway.
- Presence of restaurants, entertainment, public art (Romolo Alley), and jazz; these are all positive qualities.
- Broadway is a tourist destination.
- Broadway's connection to mass transit (F-line) on the waterfront and in the northeast quadrant is its future strength as a major gateway to the northeast quadrant.
- Availability of intensive modes of travel in the area is one of Broadway's strengths.
- Ample parking opportunities in the lower Broadway is a plus.



*Businesses on Upper Broadway*

**Broadway's Weaknesses / Threats:**

- The wide width of Broadway as it is currently doesn't lend itself as a pedestrian friendly street; it is uncomfortable for pedestrians.
- The street is too wide; it doesn't need to be anymore since the freeway on- and off-ramps are gone.
- Existing sidewalk spaces are too small and cluttered with utilities, poles, newspaper racks, meters, etc.
- We need to reclaim storefronts; some are still very dilapidated.
- There is a sense of blight to certain parts of Broadway.

- Broadway area at night makes it especially unsafe.
- Poor roadway and pedestrian signage. There is no directional signage, directing pedestrians from the waterfront onto Broadway.

#### Opportunities for Broadway:

- Potential to have nice sidewalk spaces, friendlier pedestrian environment, with integrated design of lighting, trees and street furniture (we can bring elements out of the stores, restaurants).
- For Broadway to function like the great boulevards like Champs-Elysees, we need to expand our sidewalk spaces.
- Would love to see the improvements go beyond the streetscape/sidewalk space to improving storefronts and ground-floor facades.
- The existing Chinatown shuttle (the Park & Ride Shuttle) could go on Broadway and have stops along it.

#### Miscellaneous:

- Hotel use at the Embarcadero affects the area...it really doesn't serve as a gateway.
- The three freeway parcels will change the character / use of the lower Broadway.
- We need to look at land use; the police station will not attract or draw pedestrians to Broadway (we need

- ground-floor activity, i.e. retail).
- Possible new jobs could come out of new activities in the lower Broadway area, i.e. a housing project, a hotel and a police station.
- The Butterfly Museum is looking for a location on the waterfront.
- (Upper) Broadway marks the beginning of a residential area; it demarcates downtown from Jackson Square and the neighborhoods.
- Vehicles currently dominate Broadway; it is a commuter corridor up to Van Ness Ave.

### C. Project Goals and Objectives

Recognizing that Broadway is a street with much inherent strength and character which could greatly benefit from some improvements to highlight its role today as both a neighborhood street and a commuter corridor, the *Broadway Streetscape Improvement Plan's* goals and objectives are summarized as follows:

1. Gateway: Broadway is a major gateway to the northeast quadrant and the improvements made should acknowledge this important function and highlight Broadway's link to the San Francisco's waterfront.

One of the few remaining east-west connections to the waterfront, Broadway today serves as a traffic and pedes-

transit; MUNI's #83 and #12 lines run on Broadway. In addition to transit, Broadway presently allows for two lanes of traffic each way and a total of two on-street parking lanes. Given the mixed-use nature of the northeast quadrant, where business and neighborhood vitality depends largely on Broadway's capacity as a major traffic and transit corridor, it is recognized that the proposed streetscape improvement plan maintains and encourages this important function of Broadway. The community's goals further encourage that the existing transit lines, #83 and #12, be extended to the Embarcadero, and that it runs both easterly and westerly directions on Broadway with designated transit stops along Broadway.

4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Friendly: In addition to being a commuter corridor, Broadway is a neighborhood street in and adjacent to a number of residential communities in the northeast quadrant, and as such, the proposed improvements should greatly contribute to Broadway becoming a more inviting, friendly and safe environment for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

A well noted negative aspect of Broadway today: It is not pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Its large width, while practical for traffic and transit capacity, also contributes to Broadway's unfriendliness to pedestrians and bicyclists. For many residents in the area, Broadway's many

intersections are difficult to cross, sidewalk areas are too narrow and/or uninviting to walk, and the area, for the most part, is unsafe due to both "unsavory" elements, i.e. panhandling and adult entertainment, and the lack of street life and vitality. It is also noted that existing street lighting is not adequate. And, for bicyclists, although Broadway is currently part of a bicycle route, it isn't well identified as such. Therefore, it is a goal of the proposed streetscape improvement plan that the Broadway Project Area be addressed to improve pedestrian crossings, to highlight the existing bicycle route and to enhance sidewalk environments.

5. Balanced Needs of Residents / Businesses: The Broadway Project Area is "everybody's" neighborhood. It is a mixed-use district of commercial and residential activities and is in the midst of the second most tourist visited area, North Beach and Chinatown, in the City. The proposed improvements should balance the needs of all in the community.

One of Broadway's biggest strengths is its eclectic quality represented by the current land uses and its multi-cultural environment. Many neighborhoods are adjacent to or in the Broadway Project Area and the area's history, both of the upper and lower, is rich and diverse. Additionally, Broadway is a mixed-use community of both commercial

