



Framework for public life

This section of the document proposes a series of principles and strategies from amplifying and improving public life in the Civic Center District.

Civic Center Framework for Public Life

Key Findings

Public Space

- 1 Civic Center is a powerful symbol of San Francisco
- 2 There's no center in Civic Center
- 3 The civic axis is broken
- 4 Fragmented stewardship
- 5 Look but don't touch: the space is unfriendly to the human scale and governance
- 6 The limited ability of the Beaux Arts plan to support public life has been eroded over time

Public Life

- 1 Lots of people are moving through Civic Center
- 2 Peaks in activity do not generate 'spillover' impacts
- 3 Few people choosing to spend time in Civic Center
- 4 Each space in Civic Center has a unique public life heartbeat
- 5 Activities like sleeping and encampments can be overwhelming in number, and even when they are not, have a ripple effect
- 6 Different users of Civic Center experience the same spaces differently

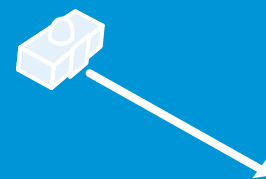
Vision for Public Life + Public Space

1. Civic Center exemplifies San Francisco's ideals of **tolerance, generosity, and diversity**
2. Civic Center is **generous at the human scale**, where everyday public life of the city unfolds
3. Civic Center is a **destination for celebration and culture** that inspires pride in the unique identity of San Francisco
4. Civic Center's public realm **encourages democratic participation** by providing space for large civic gatherings as well as smaller acts of civic life
5. The Civic Center District has a **strong identity**, expressed and anchored by a connected public realm

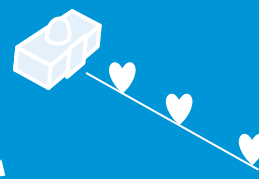
Big Moves



Connect to
Neighborhoods



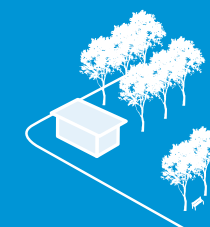
Enhance
Ceremonial Axis



Focal Points



Active Entrances



Edges +
Enclosure



Coordinated
Stewardship



Genuine Invitations
to Stay

A Vision for Public Life + Public Space

Civic Center is for everybody. It exemplifies San Francisco's ideals of **tolerance,** **generosity, and diversity**

- **Civic Center welcomes diverse people** - People move to San Francisco from around the world to experience diversity and tolerance, and Civic Center celebrates these values at their best.
- **Civic Center fosters coexistence between diverse people and cultures face-to-face** - Programming that appeals to different cultures and income groups is held at the same time, in the same space.
- **Genuine invitations are present for all users of the space, regardless of background or income.** The design makes “just being here” a dignified experience. A genuine invitation can be as simple as a dignified bench or a coffee shop, or as complex as a march or wedding.
- **The public life of Civic Center is resilient** - The space limits the invitations for illegal activity like drug use and drug dealing, and limits the negative impacts of activities like personal encampments without banishing them.



Civic Center is **generous at the human scale** and supports everyday public life

- **Basic amenities** - Seating, shade, human-scale lighting, bathrooms, drinking fountains, and wayfinding are sufficient for this large public space.
- **The urban quality of the space provides safety, comfort, and enjoyment and supports everyday moments of rest** - Civic Center invites people to have lunch in the fresh air, meet with fellow students, relax in the evening, and spend time with family and friends on the weekend. Great public spaces are also a good place to spend an hour - a place to be between A + B.
- **Play and recreation are supported in Civic Center** - Playgrounds and facilities for recreation complement the neighborhood public realm network.



Civic Center is a **destination for celebration and culture** that inspires pride in the unique identity of San Francisco

- **Cultural events in institutions spill out into the public spaces adjacent to them** - performances, book sales, and other events take place in the public realm of Civic Center, and audiences before and after formal shows and events linger and spend time in the public realm - especially after dark.
- **Civic Center's public realm hosts its own cultural events.** Spaces host formal and informal performances.
- **Permanent and ephemeral public art reflects the unique identity of San Francisco**



Civic Center's public realm **encourages democratic participation** by providing space for large civic gatherings as well as smaller acts of civic life

- **Major moments to debate and reaffirm our civic values continue to have a home in San Francisco's Civic Center.**
- **Daily civic acts central to our democracy take place in Civic Center's public spaces** – as appropriate, certain civic activities such as graduations, volunteering, and elements of the voting process should be invited to occur in the public realm around Civic Center.



The Civic Center district has a **strong identity**, expressed and anchored by a connected public realm.

- **Physically connected** - It is easy to walk and cycle through the district and connect to adjacent neighborhoods with clear gateways.
- **Programmatically and culturally unified** - Coordinated programming, public art, operating hours, wayfinding, and branding.
- **Stewardship and enforcement** - Law enforcement, ambassadors, cleaning, and other stewardship operates as one or in close coordination with one another.



7 Big Moves

The big moves are a set of proposals for both tactical and strategic spatial interventions, as well as recommendations for programming and stewardship

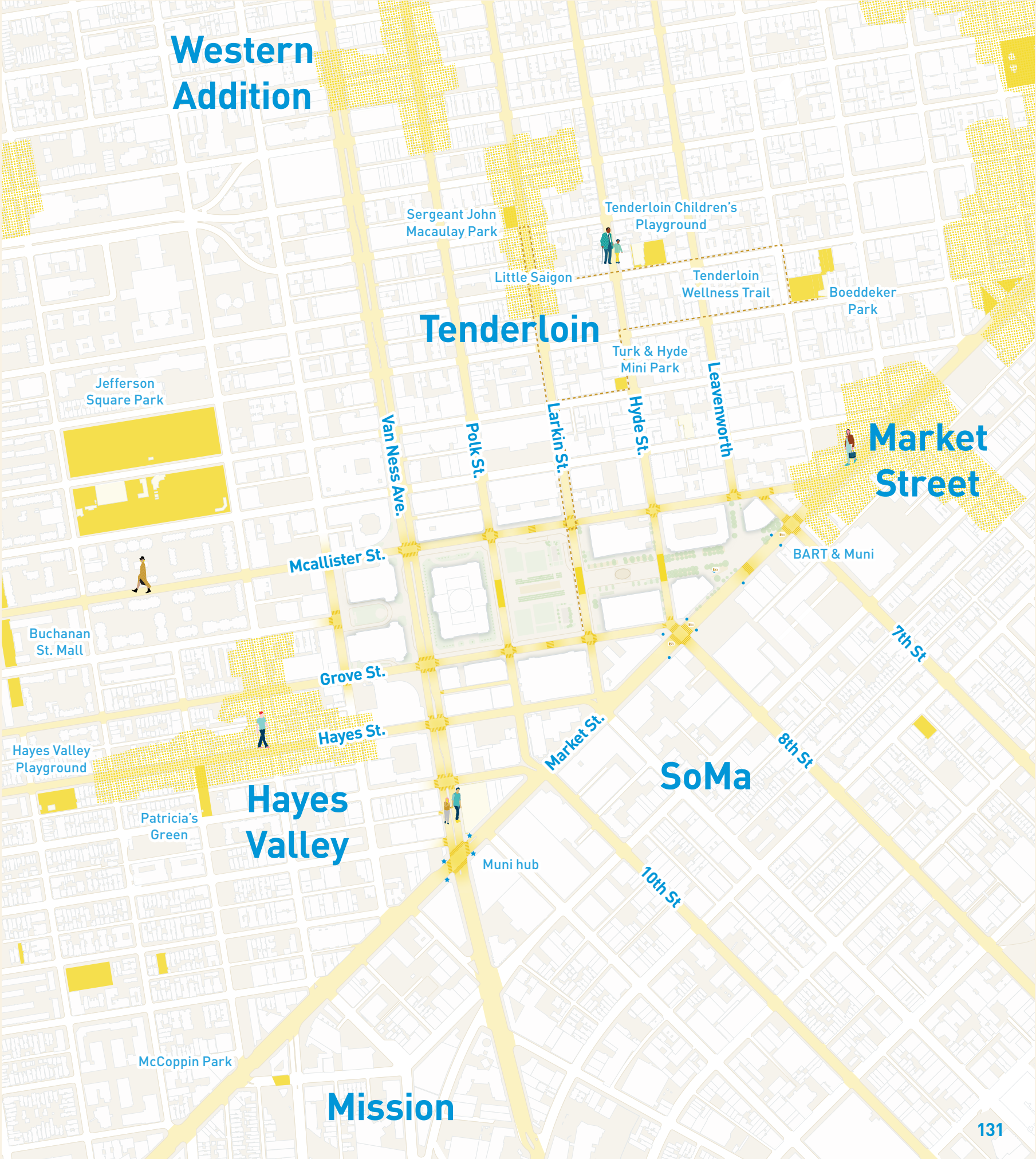
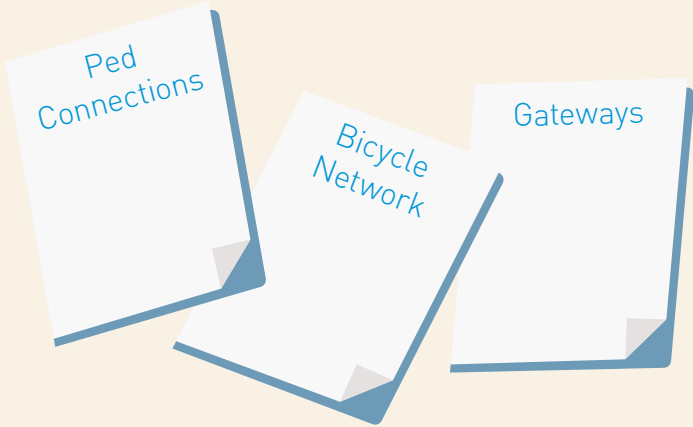
1

Connect Civic Center to the neighborhoods that surround it

The pedestrian network moving to and through Civic Center should exemplify the best of the city and highlight the city’s commitment to people-first mobility.

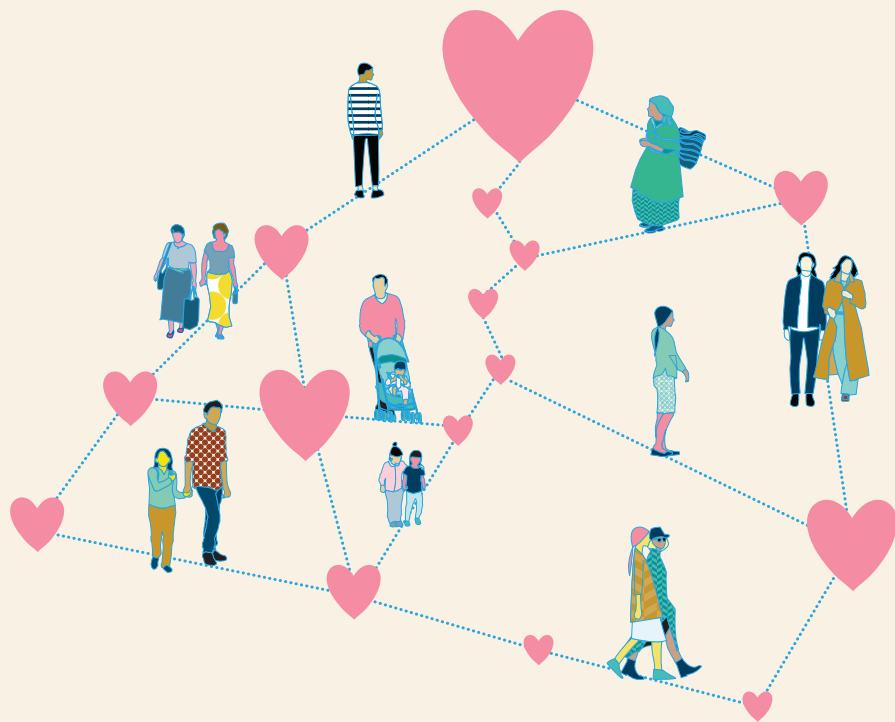
These walkable streets should be safe, consistent, convenient, and delightful with world-class sidewalks, intersections and gateways.

Design Tools:



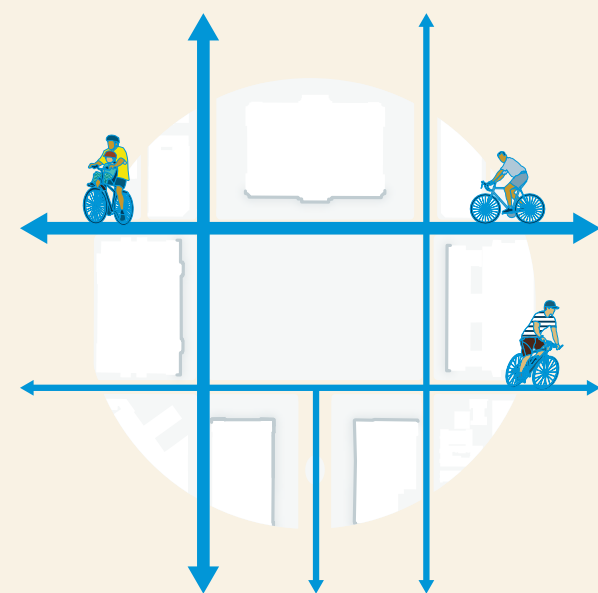
Consistent and high quality pedestrian connections

Civic Center’s feeder streets should be of high quality and notify people they are in the district through consistent furnishings and district branding.



The bicycle network moving to and through Civic Center should exemplify the best of the city

Grove and Polk Streets have been identified as priorities for the city’s cycling plan. Highlight the city’s commitment to advancing people-powered, non-motorized transportation by making these showcase facilities that are consistent, connected, and convenient.



A special focus on gateway intersections approaching Civic Center’s key public spaces

A gateway can be a welcome mat or a barrier to people entering into the Civic Center district.

Emphasize these key hinges with high quality crossings, short crossing distances, short crossing times, and improved crosswalks that ease movement to and through the district.

Create inviting gateways by incentivizing active street edges along key streets like Larkin Street.

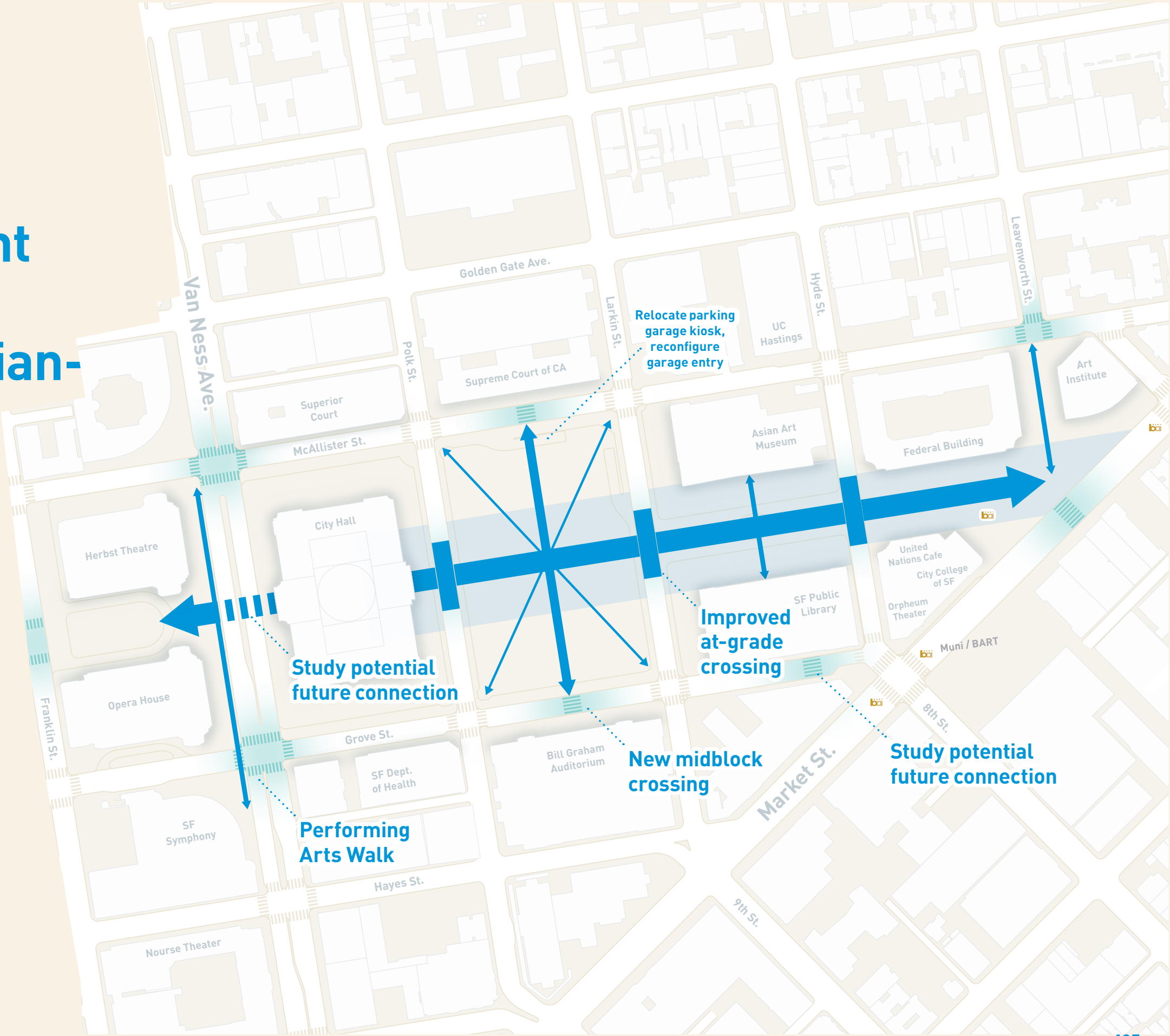


2

Enhance prominent civic + ceremonial axes with pedestrian-priority street crossings

The grand Beaux-Arts axis is the defining feature of Civic Center - let the public realm mirror the architectural significance of this big move by creating a new enhanced civic and ceremonial axes from the steps of City Hall to Market Street.

Design Tools:



Create a civic mall

The Civic Center ceremonial axis is modeled after other major ceremonial axis and was once a bold connection from the City Hall Steps to Market street.

Create a bold axis and corridor for major civic events that aligns the visual axis with strong pedestrian connection and mass gathering space.



National Mall during Obama's inauguration

Connect key public spaces along the main civic axis with at-grade crossings

Connecting grand civic buildings to grand public spaces can have a dramatic positive impact on both. Street crossings along this axis should prioritize pedestrians with wide at-grade crossings and pedestrian-priority signal timing along the axis emanating east from City Hall.



New mid-block crossings

Respond to existing pedestrian desire lines and create new mid-block crossings.



3

Enhance visual axes with new focal points

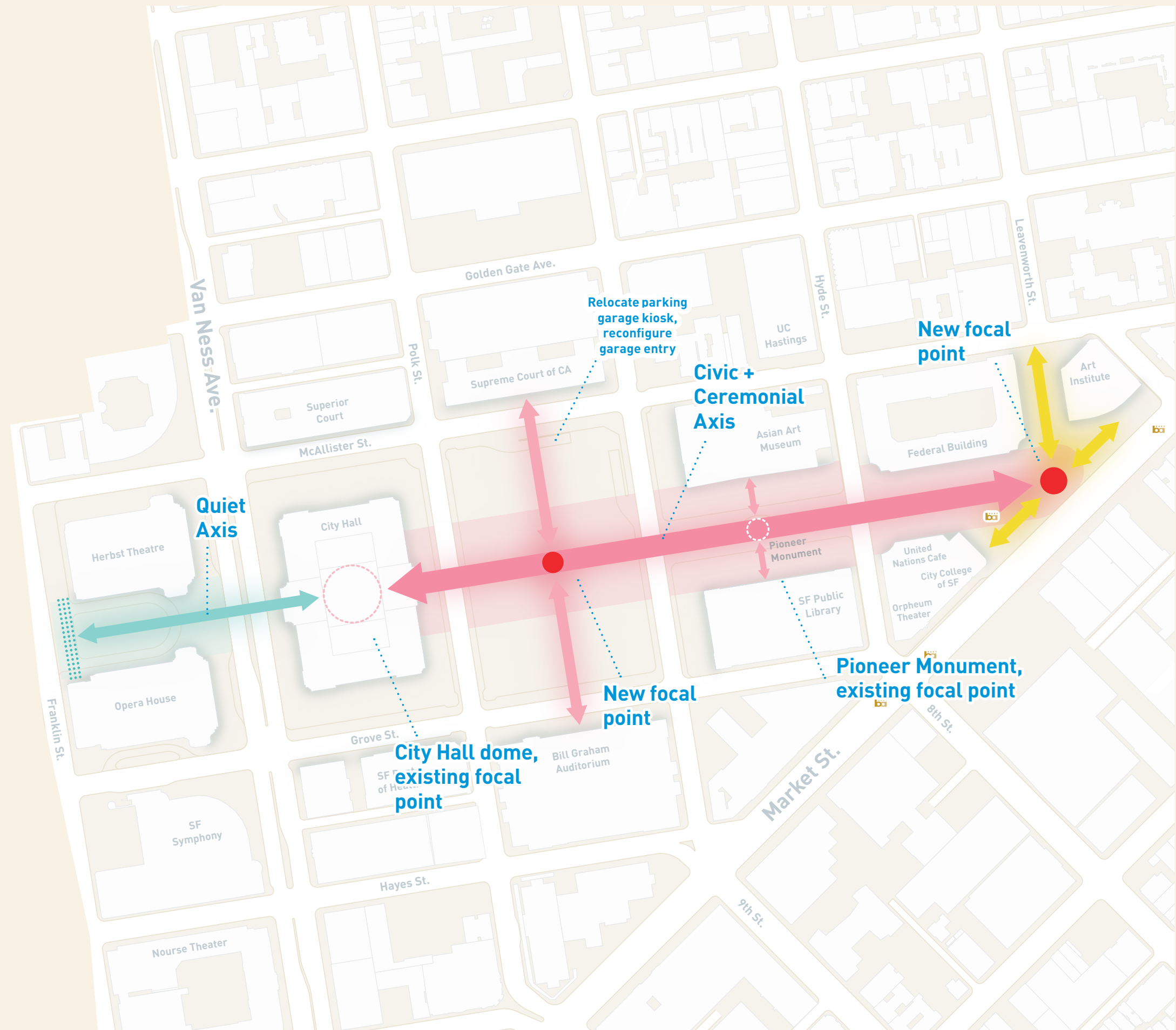
Focal points act as magnets in a space, and draw people to them. They enhance existing views, add interest and provide an important sense of orientation for users of the space. Focal points can be low to preserve views.

Enhance central Beaux-Arts City Hall / Market Street axis by placing a focal point at the east terminus in UN Plaza. Focal point should be a center of activity that relates to the commercial character of this space.

Establish a new focal point in Civic Center Plaza between the iconic architecture of Supreme Court and Bill Graham Auditorium. Introduce a new focal point monument, public art piece, pavilion, or other feature at the center of this new, reinforced axis.

Create a sense of enclosure and entry into the 'quiet axis' of Memorial Court through a soft threshold, like a grove of trees.

Enhance existing North/South connections on Fulton Street



New focal points

Spaces around the world that share Civic Center’s Beaux-Arts style have found a way to delight all five senses at the human scale - from mobile book libraries, climbable statues, to splashparks.



Trafalger Square



Place de la Republique, Paris



Poul Gernes, Denmark



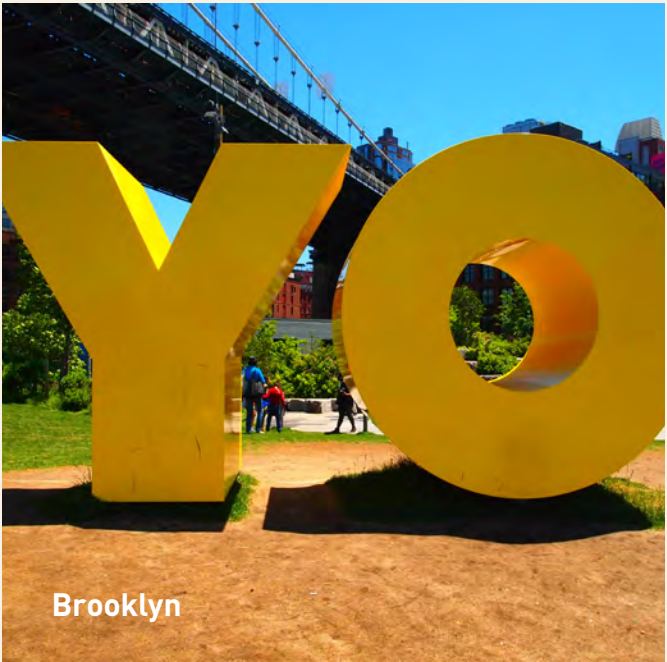
Temple at Patricia's Green © Hoodline



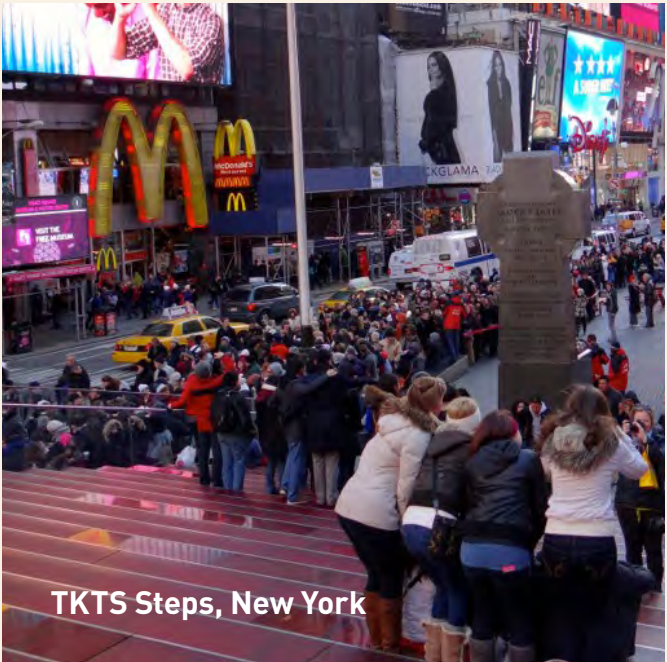
Crown Fountain, Chicago



Movement Cafe, London



Brooklyn



TKTs Steps, New York



Historic focal points
Civic Center Plaza 1942

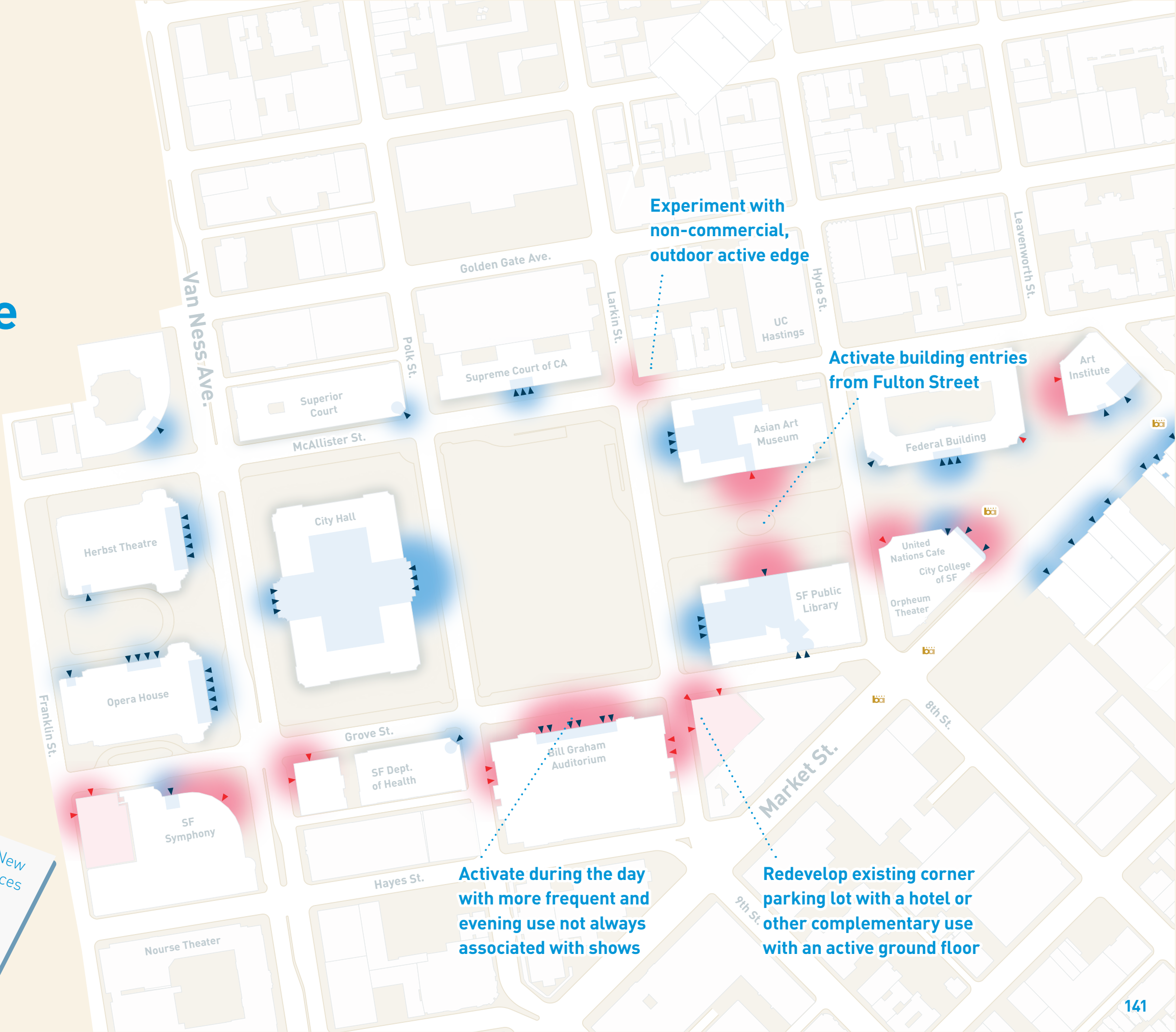
4

Celebrate and re-orient active entrances

The quality of space in Civic Center is highly influenced by the quality of the building edges that surround it. Add new entrances where possible and activate edges and entrances to promote and support healthy public life.

- ▼ New entrance
- ▼ Existing entrance
- New active edge
- Existing active edge
- Publicly-accessible interior space

Design Tools:



Amplify existing entrances

Seating, seatwalls, planting, shade, transparency and human-scale elements at the entrance of a building make it a more active edge.

Re-orient entries of the Asian Art Museum and Library towards Fulton Plaza.



SF Public Library during a book sale



Pérez Art Museum, Miami

Add new entrances

UN Plaza and Van Ness can be activated by adding new entrances to existing Beaux-Arts facades.

In Europe for example, it is common to find a beer hall or restaurant in the cellar of the town hall, even in areas with traditional architecture.



Munich City Hall
Includes a restaurant and beer garden in the basement



Consider a liner building on the blank corner facade of SHN Orpheum Theatre

UN Plaza at Hyde St.

5

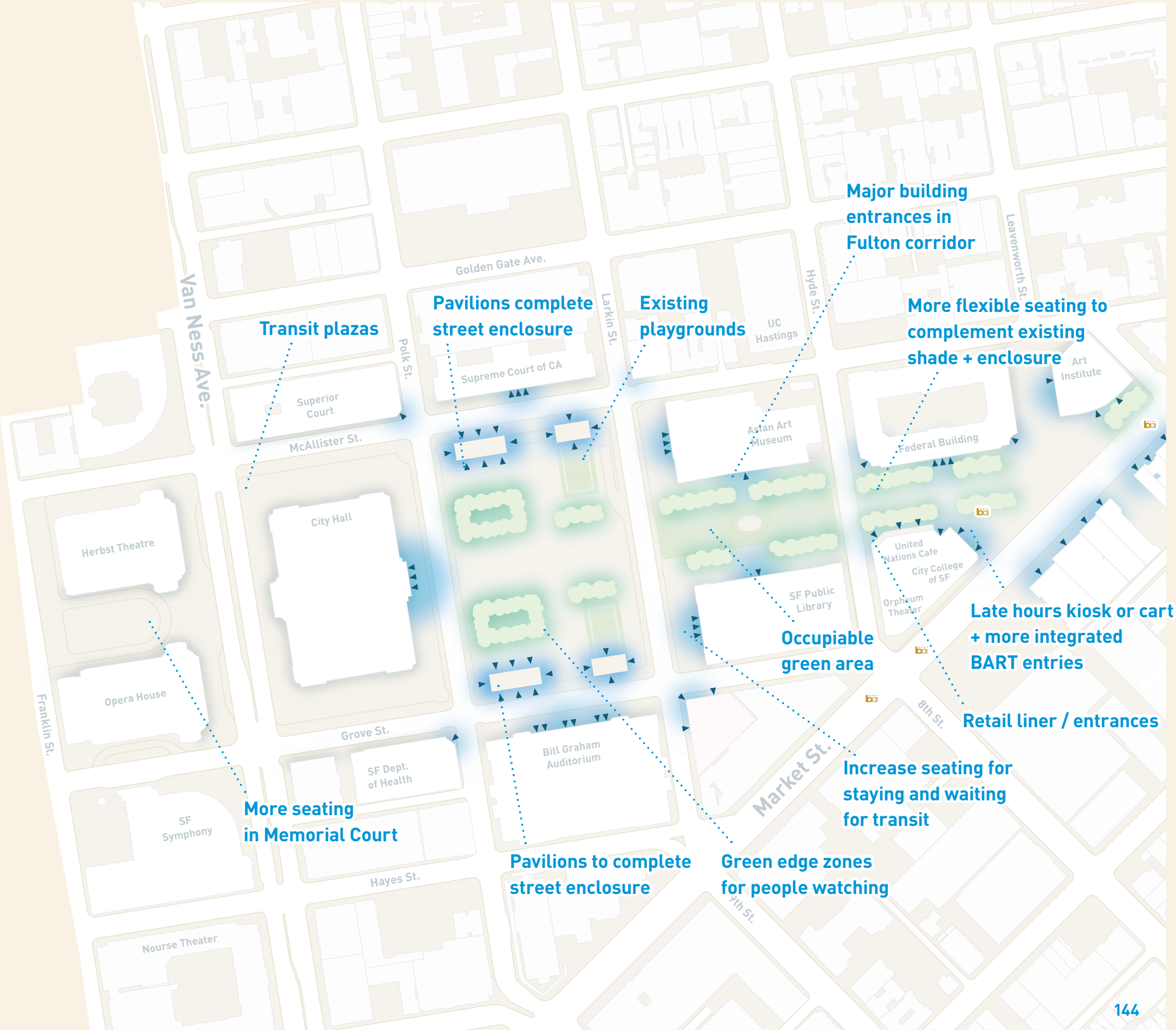
Edges and enclosure

Spatial organization creates a framework for life to unfold, and should be designed to support the desired public life profile of Civic Center.

Spaces with active edges promote robust public life. By introducing human-scale rooms and complete street corridors, more people will feel invited to stay.

1. Introduce new built edges along McAllister Street and Grove Street
2. Introduce a new landscape edge to define human-scale rooms on the edge of City Hall
3. Design for socially resilient space

- ▼ Active perimeter entrance and edge zone
- 🌿 Landscape edge zone



A new, built edge to complete the street wall

Pavilion-type structures could provide spatial definition to Civic Center Plaza and create new nodes of activity and opportunities for programming and activation during the day and at night.

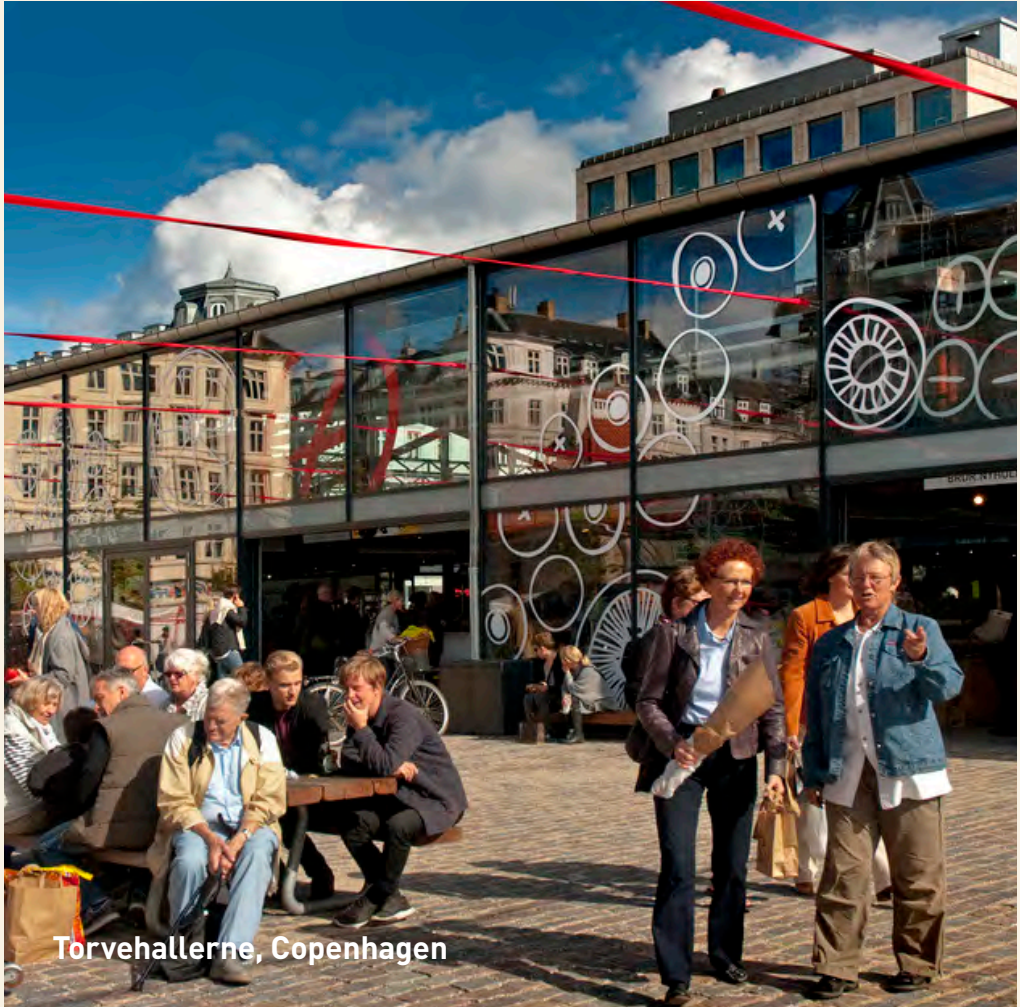
Consider introducing new built, edges along McAllister Street and Grove Street to complete the street wall with an active edge.



Civic Center Plaza Birite Kiosk, forthcoming



Mission Flores, SF



Torvehallerne, Copenhagen



Bryant Park Kiosks create enclosure, NYC © Colin Mitter

A new landscape edge to define human-scale rooms on the edge of Civic Center Plaza

Landscape rooms create human-scale spaces for people to spend time. These edges also minimize the negative effects of San Francisco’s windy and foggy microclimate



Lurie Garden, Chicago



Bryant Park, NYC



Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston



Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia

A socially resilient space through design

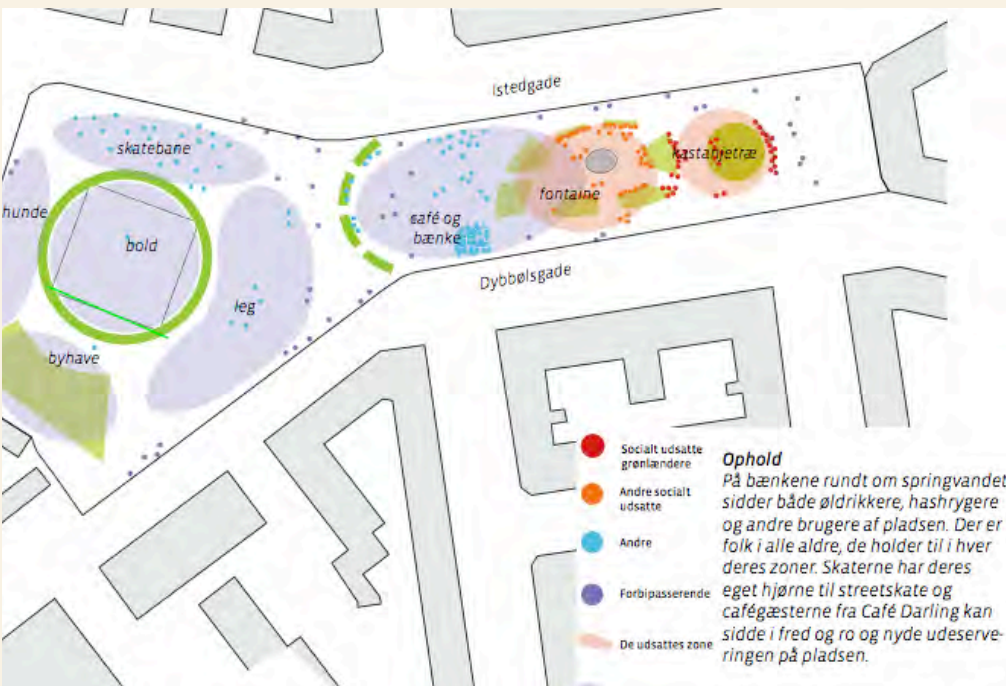
As we discovered in our Public Life study, activities like drug use and encampments have ripple effects in a space - deterring people from spending time there.

When designed with care at the human-scale, spaces that act like outdoor ‘rooms’ can create conditions for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged people to coexist side-by-side.

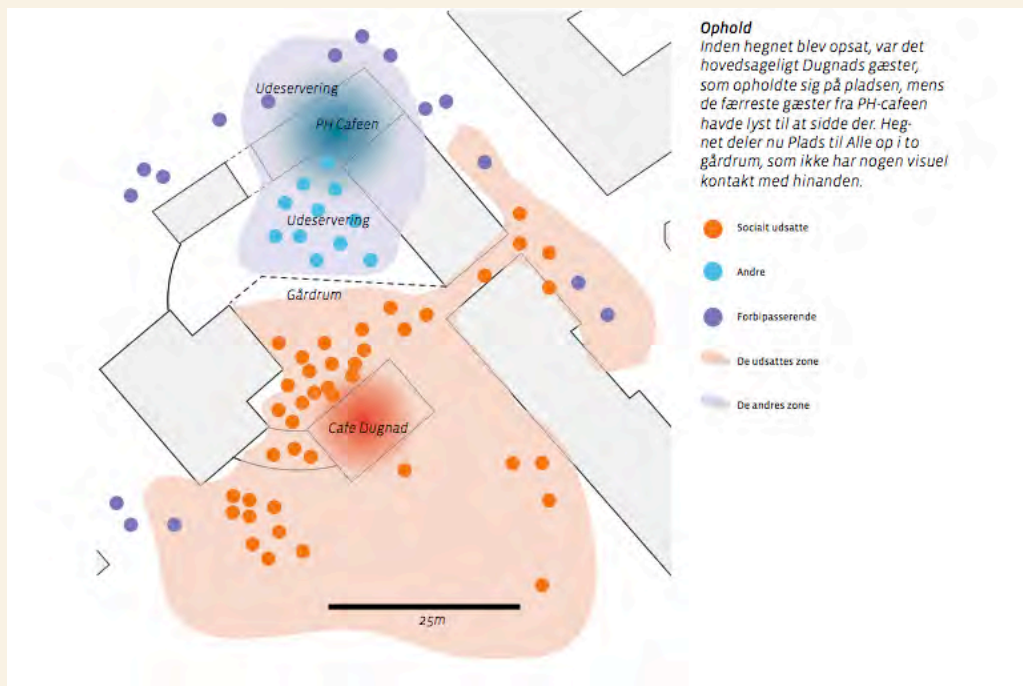
The social effect of landscape ‘rooms’ are highlighted in the example at right by a public life study from spaces in Copenhagen, DK.



“The City as a Living Room? City renewal with space for vulnerable people.”



In this space, people drinking and using drugs (red) spend time within a circular barrier or to the east of it, while others (blue) spend time outside of the barrier, and in the western edge of the space, effectively sharing the space.



Two cafes with different clientèles, one low-income and the other moderate income, exist side by side.

A socially resilient space through program

Many successful civic and neighborhood spaces contain a wide spectrum of public life.

One user group should never dominate use of a large public space like Civic Center - whether they are dog walkers, wedding guests, or people experiencing homelessness. Through unique, active invitations to be in the space, people who are engaged in less socially acceptable behaviors can continue to be there, alongside people there for other reasons.



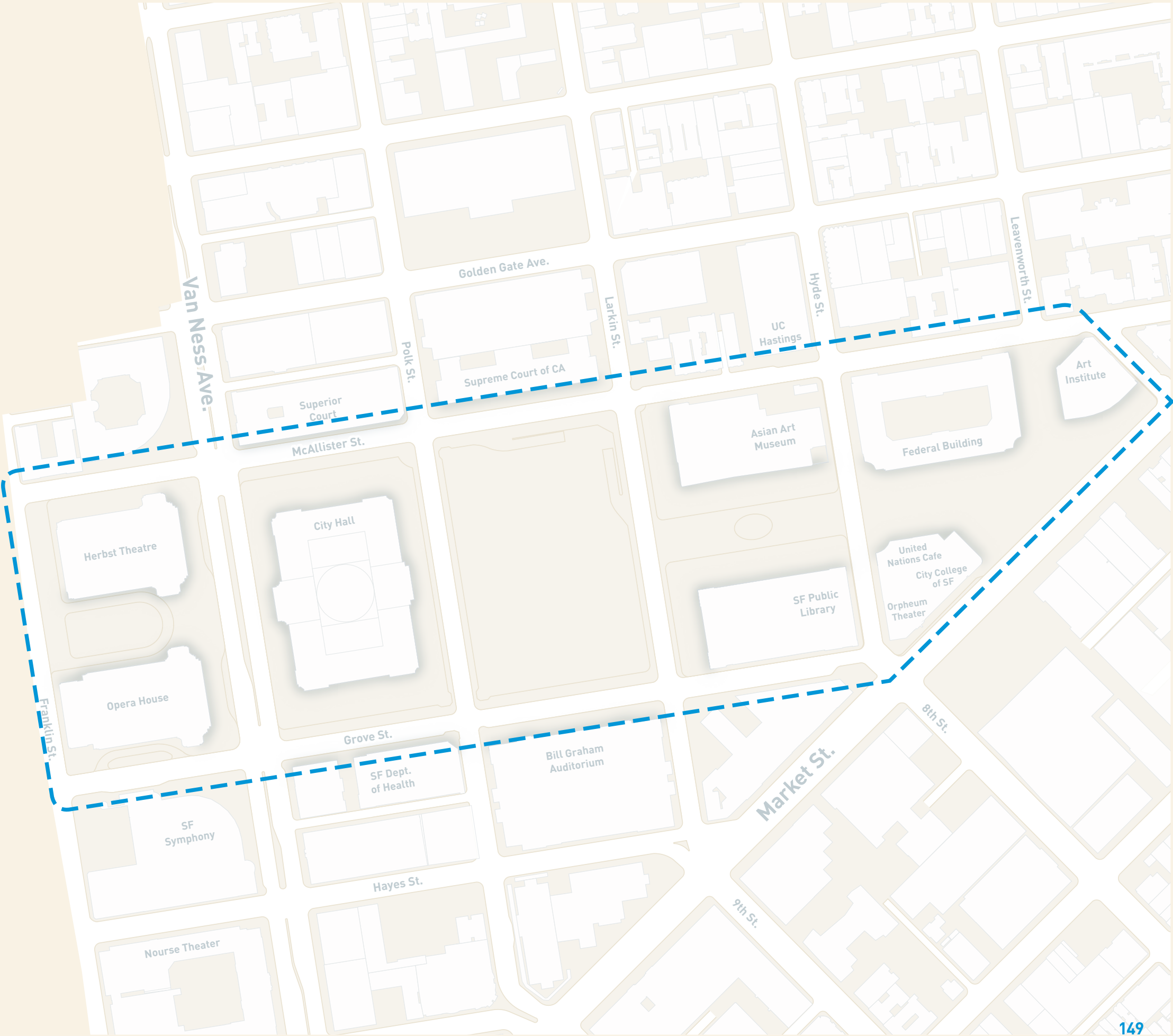
6

Coordinated Stewardship and Enforcement

Civic Center should have a coordinated strategy for district stewardship. This could take the form of an interdepartmental working group, a “friends of” group, and/or a single maintenance or management entity.

Stewardship, district identity, ambassador programs, programming, and other positive elements of stewardship should be coordinated with enforcement, police, cleaning, and other necessary activities.

Design Tools:



District-wide coordinated stewardship and safety

Stewardship and safety organizations should coordinate within the Civic Center district to to work towards common goals, including creating a safe environment for all that limits the impact of illegal activities.



Care

City agencies and non profit organizations devoted to care and services for at-risk people in Civic Center should be empowered to boost efforts in the district. Programs that are coordinated with stewardship and maintenance agencies over common goals will have larger, synergistic impacts.

The goal should not be to banish vulnerable people from Civic Center, but to provide services and dignified care.



Civic Center, San Francisco



Lava Mae, San Francisco © Adrian Pintor

Programs for social mixing

Civic Center should offer a wide variety of activities that appeal to a diversity of people so everyone feels welcome.

Public events should be planned such that different types of people interact in Civic Center. For example, a paid event should occur alongside a free one. A pop-up care village should occur alongside free games and music. Civic Center should use its unique large scale to meet neighborhood public space needs that are unmet by the area public space network. The spaces should meet the needs of more vulnerable neighborhood residents such as seniors, teens, and kids.



Encourage small acts of democracy

Look for ways to encourage smaller acts of democracy such as voting, immigration ceremonies, graduations, or specific-issue demonstrations.



San Francisco voter



Immigration ceremony



Simon Bolivar statue

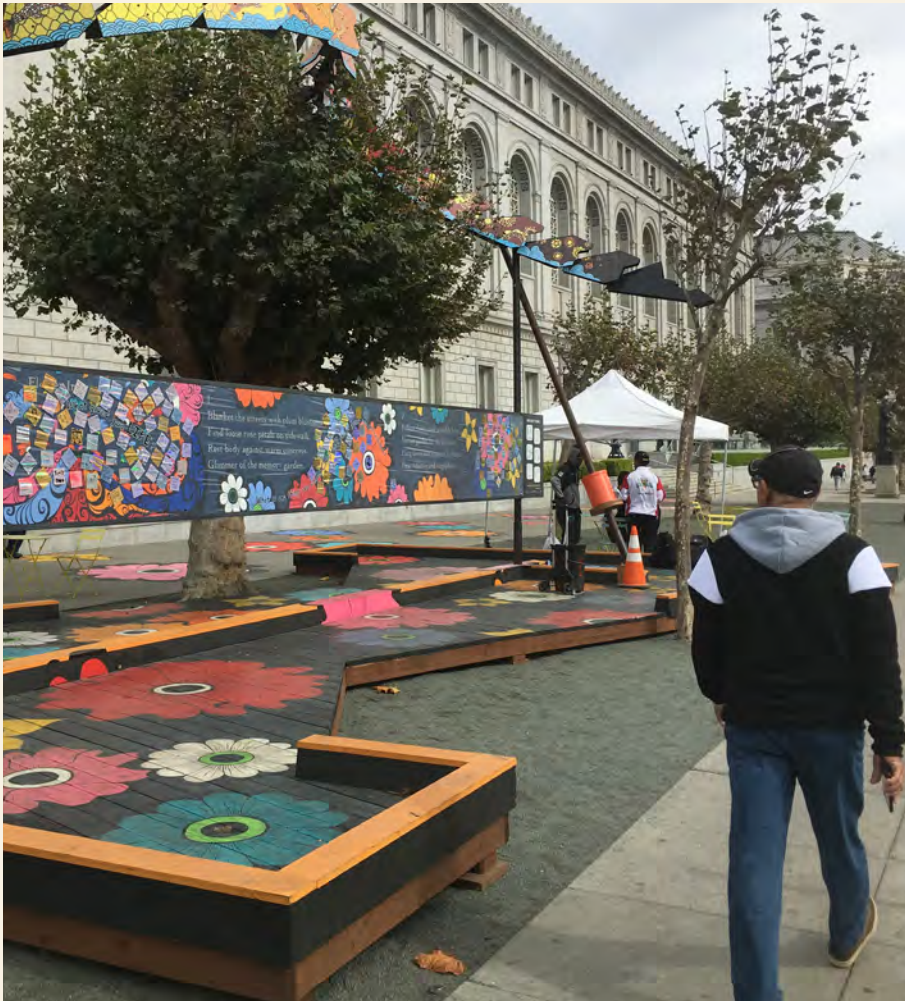
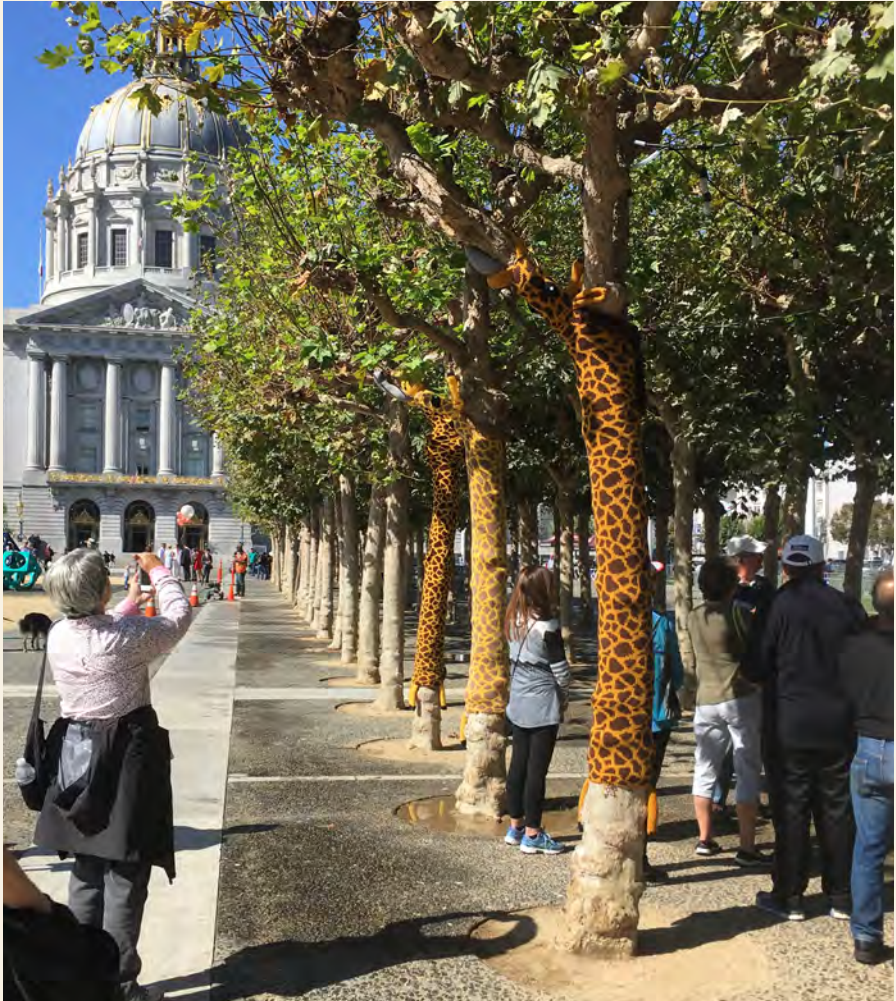


San Francisco highschool graduation

Reduce barriers to small-scale user-generated programming

Small-scale events, artwork and commercial activity can provide a more consistent and neighborhood-scaled activation of the public spaces of Civic Center. The current permitting process favors large events, as reflected in the use patterns of the Commons.

To encourage daily and neighborhood-scale use, permitting for small-scale programming should be streamlined, providing fewer barriers to entry than large events.

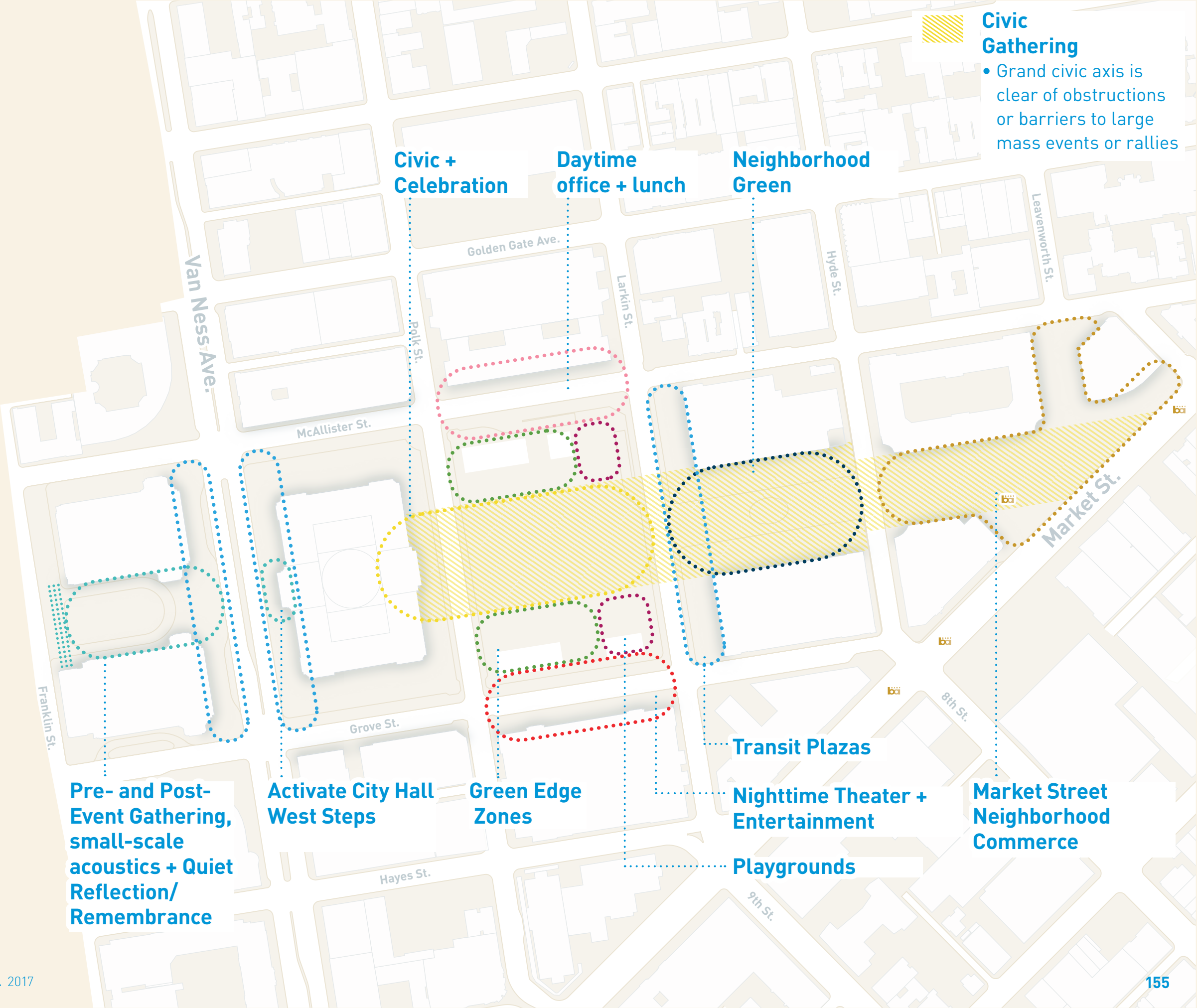


7

Genuine invitations to stay

Civic Center’s public spaces should provide genuine invitations to stay. Unique program areas can create moments that are just as special, symbolic, and iconic as the district’s architecture. Spaces can be brought to life by giving them distinct and visible programmatic identity.

Program areas and description at right. Design precedents for each major space in the pages to follow.



Invitations for Public Life in

UN Plaza

More flexible seating with shade and enclosure during markets

Commerce in UN plaza every day of the week, not only Farmer’s Market

Integrate BART into the public realm while improving a sense of safety by positioning a late-hours vendor like a flower kiosk or a newspaper stand near the BART entrance.



UN Plaza
Encourage 24/7 commerce

Civic Center needs a diverse ecology of commerce its major public spaces.

Consider encouraging a flower stand or news kiosk to open directly adjacent to the BART portal in UN Plaza to create passive eyes on the street and make BART riders and people departing from Civic Center entertainment feel more safe.

Consider coinciding a night market on evenings when the theaters are active.

In addition to brick-and-mortar activation, UN Plaza should have regular ephemeral events such as the Farmer's Market as well as smaller ephemeral programs like street vending. These active uses, when commercial, should not overshadow the civic nature of the space.



A flower market open provides eyes on the street



A night market greets people leaving theaters at night



Kiosk space for rotating vendors in Pernstejn Square, Czech Republic

UN Plaza

Celebrate transit stops

25% of users of this space use public transportation to get here. Dignify their journey by making transit connections part of the public realm experience.

Emphasize BART plazas as part of the public realm; Celebrate transit stops in front of Asian Art Museum + Library, and along McAllister and Van Ness.



Montreal



Paris



Alicante Tram Stop, Spain

Invitations for Public Life in

Fulton Street

Neighborhood Green

Leverage active edges to support a pedestrianized center of Fulton Street.

Remove vehicular traffic and parking.

Asian Art Museum and Library locate a major entrance or exit onto Fulton Street.

Create neighbourhood green space.

Transit Plazas

Increase seating and incorporate adjacent cultural identity into bus stops to serve transit riders and activate public spaces



Fulton Street A green plaza

Fulton Street can be a new neighborhood green space, framed by the Library and Asian Art Museum, with events and activities at the edges which spill out into the space.



Invitations for Public Life in

Civic Center Plaza

Civic + Celebration

New focal points along the way encourage walking and staying activities.

Gardens, restaurants, or cafes for wedding and graduation ceremonies.

Cater to small to medium-sized groups ~20 people who come here to celebrate.

Enhance parking entry and combine with other attractions such as daytime lunch location.

Connected public realm allows for moments of protest to occur in all spaces at once.

Spaces should delight the 5 senses.

Daytime office + lunch

Leverage sunny time of the day in the NE corner and host lunch and cafe activities.

Theater + Entertainment

Pre- and post-event invitations to spend time.

Major new retail and commercial spaces to encourage activity.

Nightlife spine - inviting to people walking home from shows

Activate Brooks Hall with cultural or commercial anchor.

Green Edge Zones.

Smaller edge spaces for people-watching.

Playgrounds



Civic Center Plaza Celebrate Views

Design of the Civic Center Plaza should reinforce the Beaux Arts symmetry and celebrate its grand architecture. Views should be emphasized along secondary axes (e.g. between Bill Graham Civic Auditorium and the Courthouse, and between the Library and the Asian Art Museum), as well as the primary grand axis from City Hall to Market Street.

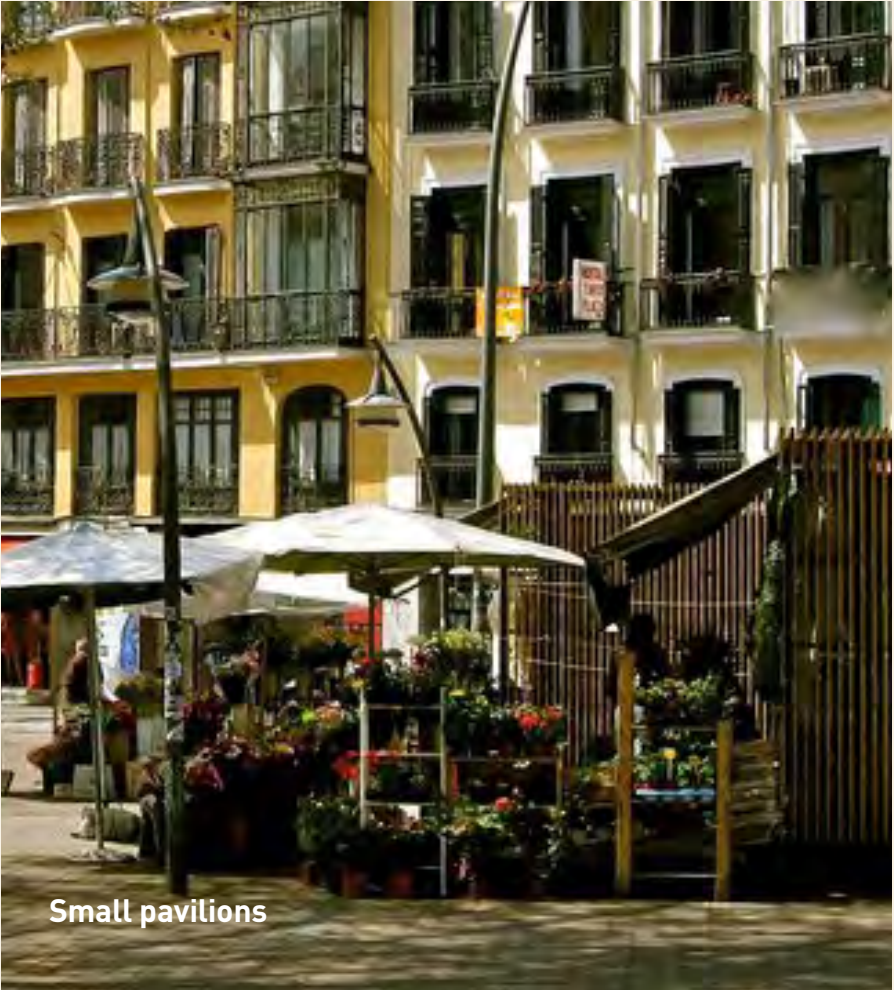


Civic Center Plaza
Pavilions + Kiosks

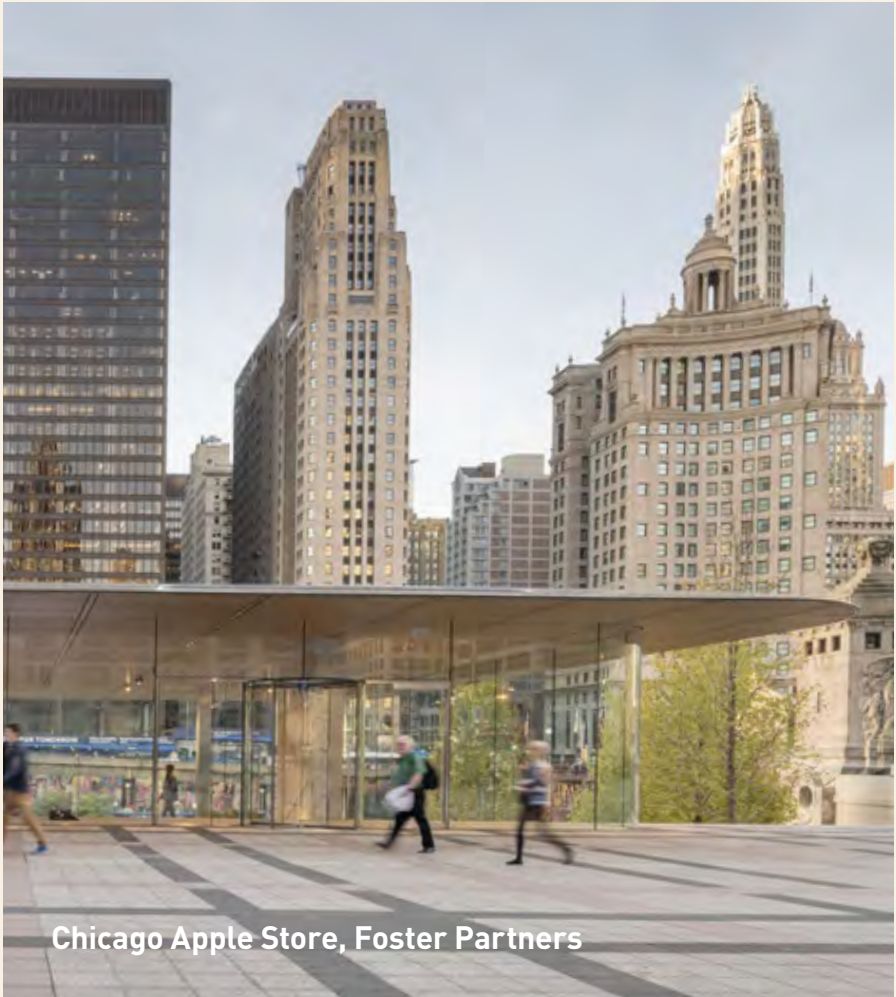
Consider a series of small or large pavilions or kiosks to bring life and activity to Civic Center Plaza.



Nørreport Station, Copenhagen



Small pavilions



Chicago Apple Store, Foster Partners



Lincoln Center, Diller Scofidio + Renfro

Civic Center Plaza
**Install basic public
space amenities**

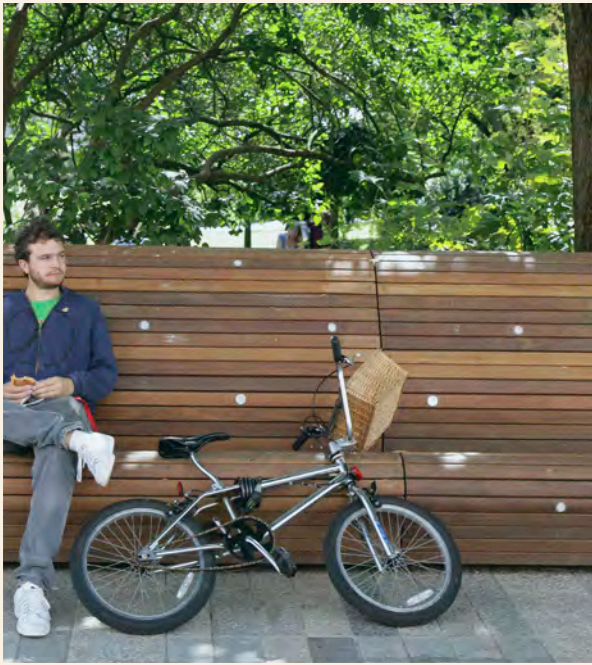
Install basic public space amenities such as trash cans, water fountains, bathrooms and human-scale lighting to create a safe and pleasant walk at all times of the day. Wayfinding that highlights common routes and the civic center axis and encourages people to explore the district.

Basic public amenities should be visible and accessible from key entry points to Civic Center.



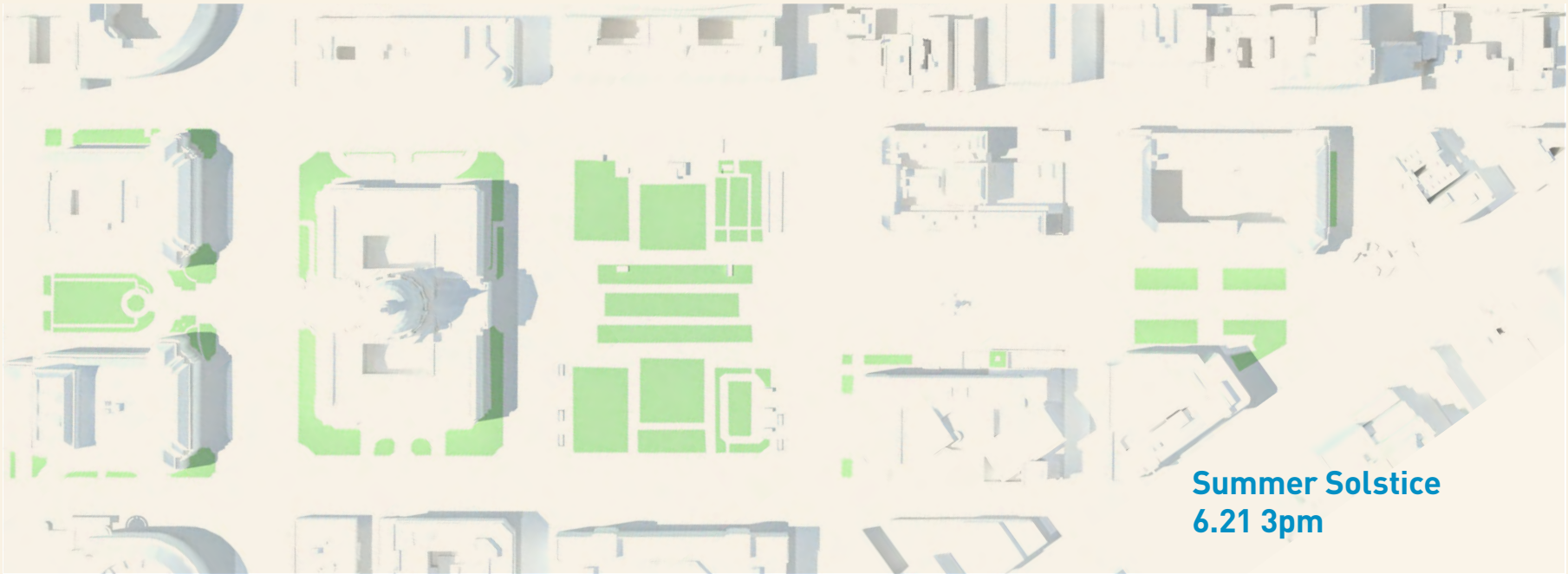
Civic Center Plaza
Dramatically increase opportunities to sit, lean and stay

Civic Center should have many more invitations to sit, lean, and stay. Healthy public spaces invite approximately 50% of all people spending time in a space to sit. In the past, too modest increases in the amount and variety of opportunities to sit and stay in Civic Center have communicated to the public that seating is a rare commodity, and private “encampments” in the few seats available have compounded on this perception. With proper stewardship to guard against the “privatization” of public seating, Civic Center can provide opportunities for everyone to stay.

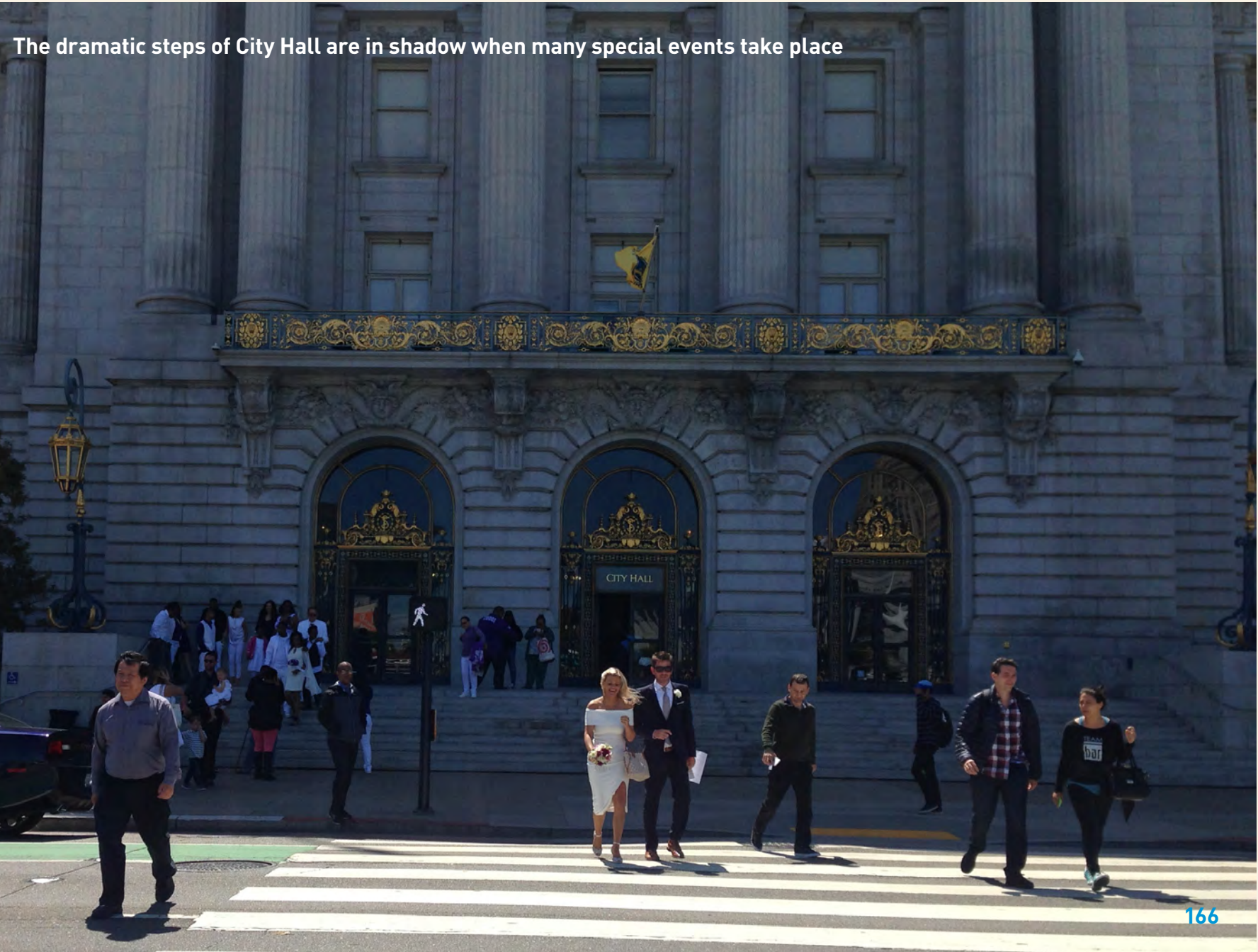


Civic Center Plaza
**Take advantage of
microclimate**

In San Francisco’s notoriously foggy, windy, and chilly climate, Civic Center has corners that are in sun for most of the day year-round, especially the northeast corner of Civic Center Plaza. However, anyone walking out of City Hall in the afternoon will be in shadow. Creating comfortable places to sit down relax that take advantage of the positive microclimate in Civic Center Plaza will enhance enjoyment of this space.



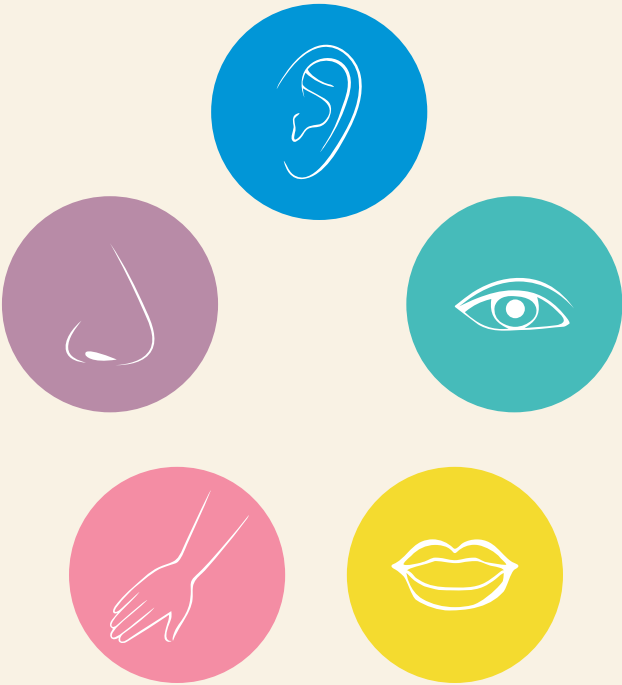
The dramatic steps of City Hall are in shadow when many special events take place



Civic Center Plaza
Delight the senses

The visual delight in Civic Center’s Beaux Arts architecture should be matched by delight to the senses of touch, sound, smell, and taste. Water features, aromatic gardens, and other sensorially-rich features offer intrigue and connect people to the landscape.

Opportunities to connect to San Francisco’s history through the senses, like a Dahlia garden, should be explored.



Civic Center Commons



Cumberland Park, Nashville



Civic Center Farmer's Market



Golden Gate Park Dahlia Garden, © SFGate

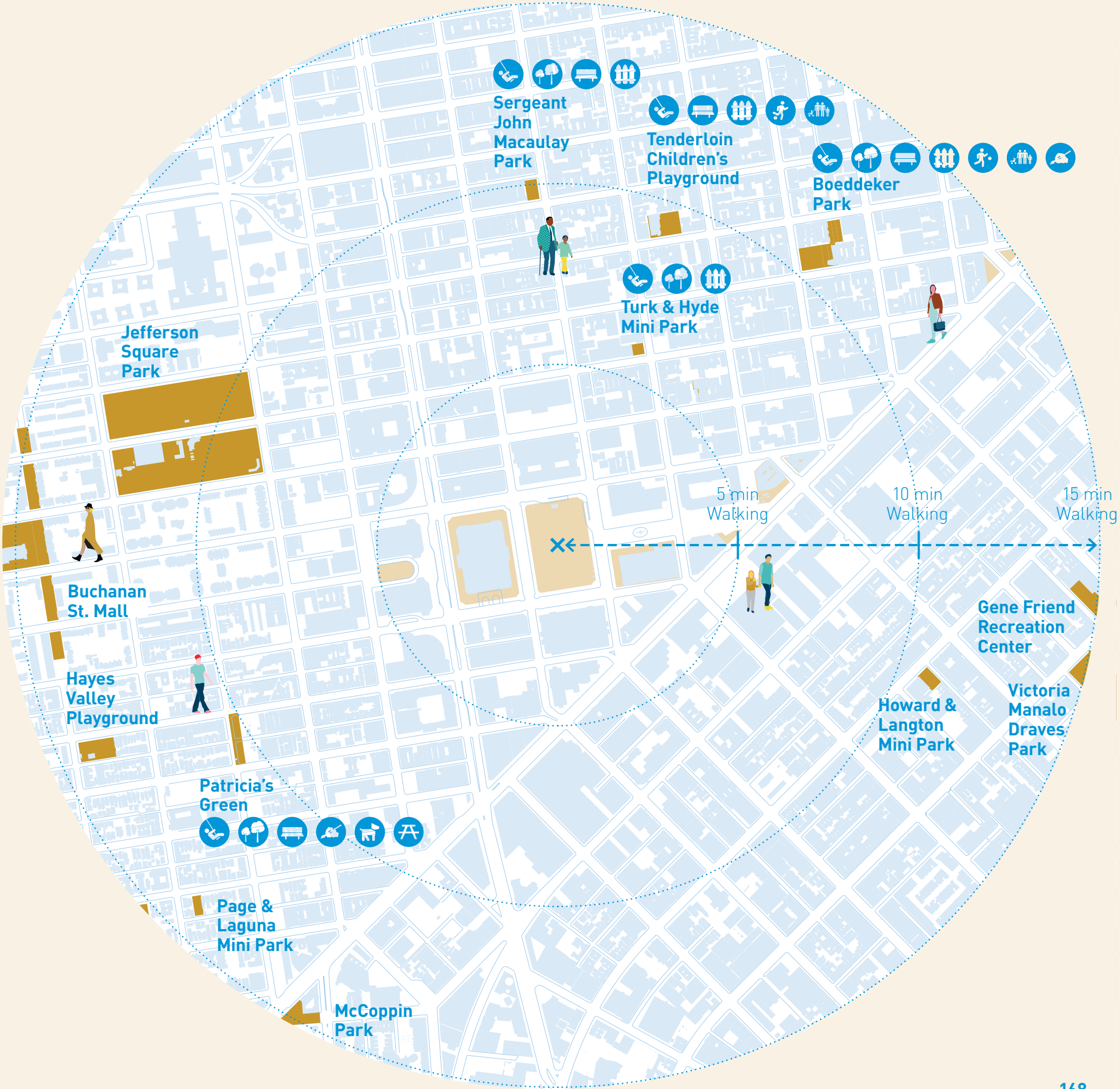
Civic Center Plaza

Recreational uses in Civic Center District supports gaps in the neighborhood public realm network

Civic Center sits at the center of several neighborhoods, each of which have their own network of public spaces. Civic Center Plaza should support but not duplicate the existing public realm network. Recreational uses should not overshadow the civic nature of the space.

How can Civic Center pick up the slack where neighborhood open space networks are lacking to better serve people in these neighborhoods? We recommend a comprehensive assessment of existing recreational amenities.

Open Spaces within 15 minutes walk of Civic Center Plaza



Invitations for Public Life in

City Hall West

**Pre- and Post-Event Gathering and Quiet Reflection
+ Remembrance in Memorial Court**

Develop stronger identity of Memorial Court by testing seating

Experiment with small-scale performances

City Hall West Steps

Activate west-side City Hall steps in combination with study with a mid-block crossing on Van Ness. Take advantage of afternoon sun.

Transit Plazas

Increase seating and incorporate adjacent cultural identity into bus stops to serve transit riders and activate public spaces



City Hall West
**Programming in the
“Front Porch” of
cultural institutions**

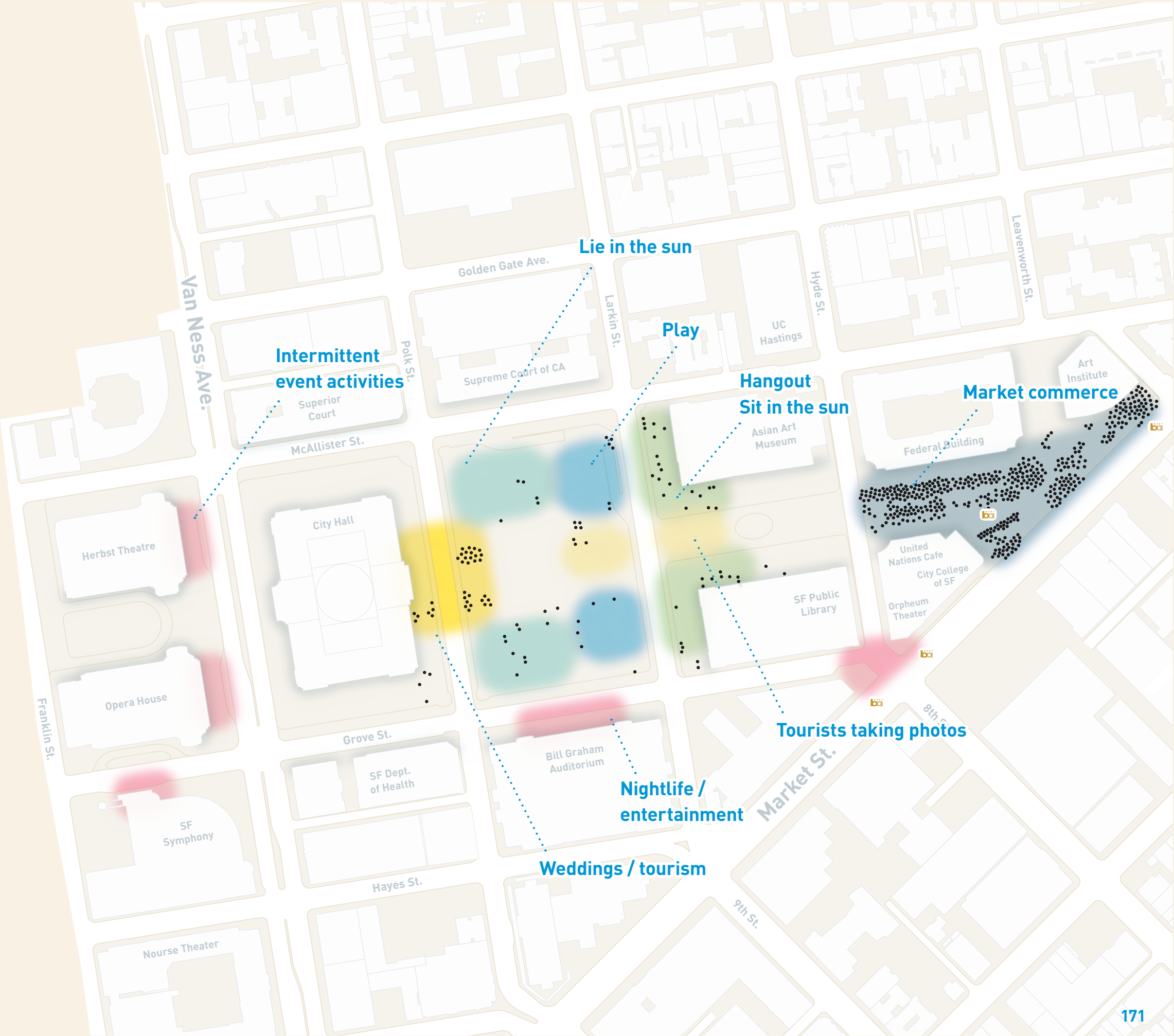
Use the public spaces adjacent to cultural institutions to bring cultural programming into the public realm.



Existing zones of public life

Even on a market day, when UN Plaza is bustling with activity, the rest of the Civic Center Commons are pocked with 'dead zones' where there is little to no staying activity throughout the day.

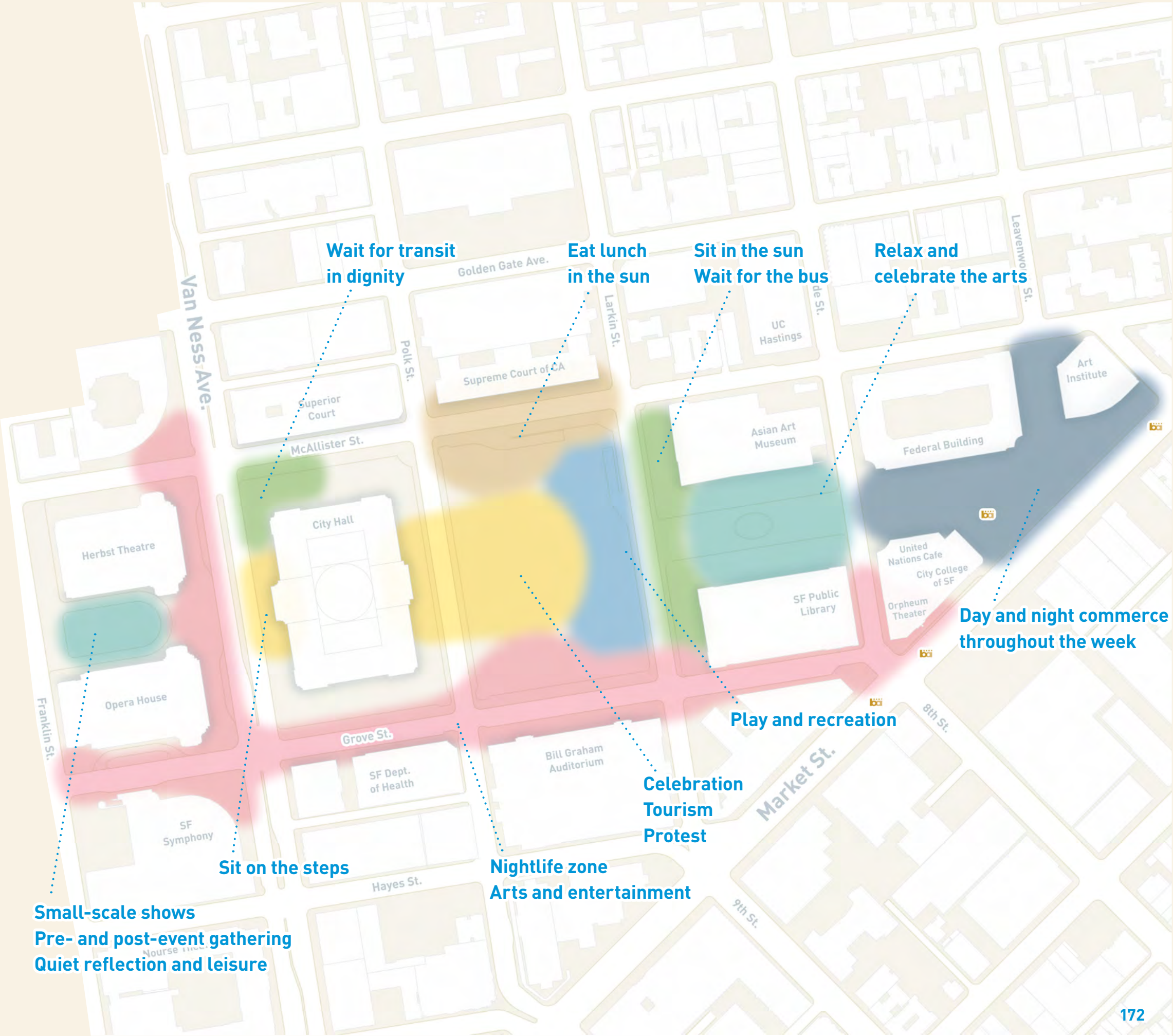
Bringing life to these dead zones is a key priority for the public realm plan.



Desired zones of public life

Design of Civic Center’s public realm should prioritize the type of life that we want to create in its public spaces; spacial and programmatic organization supports the desired public life profile and invites a density of activities.

Existing conditions including spatial characteristics, microclimatic differences and zones of active use, should be harnessed to invite a broad range of staying activities.



Follow the project
and get involved at
www.civiccentersf.org