



❖ Sketchbook Study ❖

Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens™
Enhancing San Francisco Streets

Jocelyn Cohen

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My first thanks goes to Carolyn Blair, Executive Director of San Francisco Tree Council (a non-profit organization) for her perseverance and tenacity to preserve and protect trees. She has been a champion of my Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens.

As part of my career in arboriculture, urban forestry and landscape design I study with the internationally renowned master pruning artist and teacher, Dennis Makishima. After becoming a Certified Arborist, I wanted to expand my knowledge and skills with arboriculture so I could help people and trees harmoniously coexist in urban areas. As part of my studies, Dennis has helped me fine-tune my ideas, vision, long-term goals and necessary steps to launch the Sidewalk Pocket Park Garden Movement. His support of my visions and career is a great gift.

Two marvelous classes helped me form the background for understanding the history and philosophy of the ordered landscape and gardens in particular: a world survey, “Magic of the Landscapes: Gardens, Parks and Urban Open Spaces,” taught by Jim Chappell, President of SPUR, San Francisco Planning + Urban Research Association and Steve Albert’s class “The Literary Garden,” both at University of California Berkeley Extension (UCB). These classes provided a vast framework in which to piece together the distinction between the beauty of plants in wilderness versus the ordering of nature in gardens, and the significance to the heart gardens hold for people throughout all cultures and time. John Thomas, another instructor at UCB and Landscape Architect, Recreation and Park Department, San Francisco provided a venue for me to create the initial “Sketchbook Study” booklet in his landscape design class.

Community activist Arthur Chang offered insights into city policy and the history of urban streets, sidewalks, and engineering infrastructure. Thanks also to Chris Grampp, Landscape Design Department Head, Merritt College, for his critique of SPPG design examples and for several years of invaluable exploration of garden design.

Jocelyn Cohen

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Webs-tree Dictionary Definition

Sidewalk Pocket Park Garden (SPPG) *n.* A small garden, within a sidewalk cutout, like a pocket, along residential and commercial streets. Large trees overhead complemented by smaller shrubs and ground covers beneath bestow a park like impression. The garden width allows for pedestrians and meets the American Disability Act standards, whereas the length is determined by creativity and imagination.



Problems with Single Tree Planting

For a major metropolitan area, San Francisco rates among the cities with one of the worst green canopies per capita and lags behind other cities in its urban forest. The average life of street trees is seven to fifteen years, a tiny fraction of their normal, expected life. Trees rarely reach mature stature with large, vibrant canopies. The urban forest in San Francisco is inadequate for the density of population, industrialization and pollution that exists in the city. High levels of carbon sequestration and inferior air quality result in injurious social and environmental conditions. Surviving trees are routinely root pruned and improperly pruned adding insult to injury. The lack of large, beautiful street trees creates an aesthetic problem. We seldom can enjoy the gracefulness of the trunk flare or the nobility inherent in these unique plants.



THESE TREES NEED MORE ROOM FOR THEIR ROOT ZONE. ALTHOUGH THE SIDEWALK IS NARROW, THE WIDE STREET COULD HAVE CURB OUTS TO CREATE MORE SPACE FOR A POTENTIAL SIDEWALK POCKET PARK BY OPENING THE SIDEWALK BETWEEN TREES FOR A CONTINUOUS PLANTING.



ONE EXAMPLE OF THOUSANDS OF THE SINGLE STREET TREES. OFTEN THEY LACK A COHESIVE QUALITY AND PERPETUATE A FEELING OF ISOLATION AND DISINTEGRATION.

Background: Analysis of the Cause of the Problem

A single tree in a small basin surrounded by concrete struggles to exist in poor environmental conditions, suffering from insufficient water and soil compaction. City agencies, elected leaders and the community appear to lack interest in caring for the individual tree. People often don't know how to care for trees and either deliberately or without malice harm them. Trees are often viewed as nuisance rather than as beneficial, living entities necessary for a healthy environment and community. The following reasons exacerbate the problem:

Finances: Lack of funding and funding cutbacks.

Enforcement: The tree ordinance in the City Code, Article 16, only covers trees on City streets under the jurisdiction of Department of Public Works (DPW). It is rarely enforced.

Urban Forest Management: Each City Department has jurisdiction over many trees that are not covered by Article 16. These other agencies and entities, no fewer than 16, are not required to comply with the City Code. Thus, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Water, Department of Public Schools, the National Park Service, corporations with public plazas, and private individual owners may cut trees and set their own mandates and standards.

Education: When the Department of Public Works relinquished responsibility for 70% of the street trees due to funding shortages, property owners often did not understand the value and importance of their new inheritance. They may not know how to maintain a tree properly, and/or they may see the tree as an unwelcome financial burden. Indeed, they may have inherited a tree that was poorly maintained and now needs restoration.

Our Unique Urban Ecosystem: In pre-settlement times, San Francisco did not host trees; the ecosystem was a fragile landscape of dunes, wetlands and beach plants which did not support trees as part of its habitat. The necessity for an urban forest grew as the human population created new stresses from air pollutants, ground water drainage problems, and sweeping development of natural areas.

Challenging the Single Tree Paradigm

Over 150 years ago, planners and architects created zoning regulations and streets and right-of-ways for utilitarian purposes. Sidewalks and curbs gave pedestrians a separation from horses and carriages. Later, the unused underground provided space for utilities. Trees were not so important because towns were surrounded by rural land and wilderness. Sidewalks were not invented to contain an urban forest. The town square along with open spaces provided plentiful opportunities for trees. Today we live with these often outmoded legacies and evolved usages. In an intensely compact urban environment, we cannot afford to leave unsightly and unproductive parcels of land untended. Almost 50% of San Francisco is comprised of streets, creating a habitat of asphalt and concrete much of which nurtures the automobile more than people or nature. Our streets and sidewalks are filled with leftover spaces begging to be revitalized and redesigned. Yet we proceed, often following antiquated means of managing traffic and infrastructure.

- *Why are these engineer drawn lines of streets and sidewalks from 150 years ago so inviolate?*
- *How can we hope to attain a vibrant urban forest by putting trees in tiny cutouts, when research and experience shows large trees cannot thrive in this environment?*
- *Is it possible that the simple act of sharing a garden with trees crossing property lines could enhance social good and neighborliness?*
- *What harm could arise from encouraging willing actors to collaborate on a shared and common space?*
- *Can we in fact overlay a new paradigm for tree planting on the standard engineering lines of public rights of way?*
- *As of 2006, San Francisco's Mayor Gavin Newsom strongly supports a "green" city. Will his vision also translate into dollars to support a sustainable urban forest on every citizen's street regardless of class or race.*

Solutions: Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens

Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens transform the notion of a single tree planting in a cut out square of cement into enhanced mini gardens on our streets. As an urban redevelopment standard, they enhance the quality of life, air and natural areas in the city, producing long-term beneficial effects both for the urban forest and for people and communities. Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens fulfill multiple functions:

- Act as individual havens unto themselves providing peaceful, beautiful spaces on our city streets
- Work as links between larger natural areas including open space, neighborhood parks and green stairways to create tree lined greenbelts and corridors throughout the city
- Increase permeable space providing better conditions in which trees may grow
- Foster neighborhood cohesiveness and pride through community involvement



Gardens as Metaphors for Street Planting

Our sidewalks contain more open space than all city parks combined.... Mayor Gavin Newsom, "A Green and Clean San Francisco," September 14, 2004

Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens use the garden as the metaphor for street tree planting and design, creating beautiful landscapes for pleasure and delight. Individuals and communities will care for the small garden site on the street, which includes a tree(s) whereas people often do not feel the same connection with a single tree in a cut out hole in the concrete.

Gardens reflect and transcend time and resonate with everyone. Historically, almost all cultures revere gardens as symbols of life. In Hebrew the word for garden, *gan*, means protected place. For several millennia, people have cultivated the garden as a place protected from the harsh environment, a place to gather, a sanctuary from the rush and tumble of every day life. A garden gives people a sense of place, and, in its creation, we add order, along with our unique sensibilities and aesthetics of the landscape.

Gardens have profound personal and social dimensions; they place us in touch with our senses, the seasons, and the forces of life. SPPGs promote neighborliness and create small spaces where several households or adjoining properties act in consort. SPPG designs provide a framework for preserving mature trees and enhance the livability and prospect for younger trees to gain grace and stature. As the site matures, caretakers will take pride in the visual transformation of their street and their contribution. Sidewalk Pocket Parks highlight the unique presence, place and role trees hold on earth and provide a touch of the garden for everyone to enjoy and foster.

Aesthetic Pruning & Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens

Aesthetic Pruning embraces the creative interpretation of small trees & shrubs in the urban context. The living art form combines the artistic skill of the pruner, the essence of a tree, the science of horticulture & needs of clients & surroundings. Dennis Makishima, pruning master, teacher and mentor

Urban forests are becoming microcosms of our once vast wilderness. Just as Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens use the garden as a metaphor and inspiration for planting and design, our urban forests reflect upon their wild, forest cousins. The form, habit and function of trees in urban areas has a short history in the arena of city planning. Aesthetic pruning addresses the critical role humans play in shaping and cultivating the remarkable grace and elegance of individual trees and groves in urban settings.

By integrating aesthetic pruning into the care of trees on our streets and in SPPG's, we enhance the majesty trees naturally possess in their native habitat. For instance, to achieve scale and proportion we juxtapose large overstory trees against the backdrop of small understory trees and shrubs. The result? We create a sense of grandeur we feel in a natural, old forest setting. In areas that lack many good trees, even a few can introduce to the senses the interplay of color, form, sound and smell.

Aesthetic pruning combines the science and techniques of arboriculture with the art and philosophy of ornamental pruning. A single tree or branch contains all of nature. In our tight, urban communities to see nature's beauty all around us – as we walk to the bus or train for work or head out into the neighborhood for a breath of fresh air – becomes increasingly important.

Aesthetic pruning embraces another value critical to the long term success of our urban forest, that is duty and obligation to care and provide for our trees. Whether we inherit them from others or plant them ourselves we are obliged to nourish, maintain and enhance the conditions so a tree can reach its mature



BOTTLEBRUSH TREE, BEFORE

life, and may be passed onto future generations.

Aesthetic pruning shines in small places. Trees can be pruned to frame a view, guide the eye to a business sign, direct pedestrian traffic toward an entry and even solve conflicts between trees and power lines. Within a SPPG setting the components of aesthetic pruning come into play providing effective, cohesive settings. A planting of smaller scale trees with a resting spot creates a forest effect. In some neighborhoods, borrowed scenery enhances the view. In others a single tree in a windy SPPG can be pruned to enhance the effect of the weather, reminding us of a wind battered tree on top of a mountain and for just a moment this view takes us away from the concrete jungle. Signature trees within a SPPG, enhanced with the aid of aesthetic pruning, help define a block or community.

Planting trees in longer, larger cutouts creates visual cohesiveness. The Sidewalk Pocket Park Garden setting provides better horticulture conditions and more opportunities for integrated plant designs which show off the essence of the tree, breradth of canopy and broad trunk flare. Our urban forests, cared for with the best arboriculture practices combined with the art and philosophy of aesthetic pruning will result in a sustainable forest canopy which mimics both the untamed and artistically elegant side of nature and all her nobility.



BOTTLEBRUSH TREE, AFTER

Enhancing Trunk Flare and Root Crown

When we think of trees, we often reflect on the majestic canopy of a valley oak, the reddish bark of our California madrone, the exuberant flowers of the flowering cherry or the crisp golden and burgundy leaves of liquid ambers. Trees help us anticipate the coming season; new buds signal spring, falling leaves suggest winter rains and chilly weather.

Often in the city we miss seeing another great wonder of trees – their trunk flare and root crown or pad. Because sidewalks were not created for trees, the tiny cutouts are minimal, and tree scientists are rarely consulted about the basin size the tree requires for its health and vitality.

Consequently, city officials constantly battle with the tree's inherent structure. This includes cutting, hacking and pruning the roots, both which undermines the tree's the fact that it is general knowl- arboriculture that a tree can and a half times or greater at breast height, new planting small to accommodate the tree.

SPPGs provide more room for roots and pad. Plant design space to enhance the trunk furthermore, a wide trunk flare structural stability and health



underground and above very foundation. Despite edge in the field of often be wider by two at ground level than continues in basins too

the trunk and extending specifications encourage rather than hide it. Fur- often signifies good in trees.



LARGE TREES EXHIBIT A GRACEFUL FLARE AT GROUND LEVEL, BUT IN TINY TREE BASINS THIS ATTRIBUTE IS OFTEN CUT AWAY.



DIFFERENT SPECIES TRANSITION FROM TRUNK TO ROOTS DIFFERENTLY, AN ADDED BEAUTY THAT CAN BE REVEALED WITH SPPG.

Who Benefits from Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens

We all gain from this paradigm shift, as individuals, as a community, throughout public and private agencies and departments, and as an integral part of the world environment. As a national trendsetter, San Francisco can illustrate how trees, gardens and development mix harmoniously.

Infrastructure Savings: California spends over 70 million dollars a year replacing sidewalks, a portion of which results from insufficient space for tree roots, root pad and trunk flare. SPPGs allow more space for trees, resulting in less damage to the built infrastructure. This added space allows the tree underground to access more water, eliminating some of the problems of roots at the surface. A larger basin saves money on concrete as well as the costs of recycling concrete. The production of concrete results in approximately 13% of the toxins in the environment.

Enhanced Use of Space: With 50% of San Francisco covered with streets, we must utilize this space to help vitalize our urban forest. The health of a city's urban forest is the most important indicator as to the ecological health of the community. SPPGs provide better conditions for trees, allowing for longer lives, more vibrant canopies of leaves and flowers, and optimal sizes and statures.

Habitat: The larger tree basin allows space for understory planting, which complements the tree canopy, providing better habitat for our resident birds, animals and pollinators.

Storm Water Abatement: SPPGs provide larger permeable surfaces and enhanced conditions for larger trees, thus promoting healthier root systems that can intercept and absorb more rainwater, decreasing the run-off into the storm sewers.

Community Involvement: Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens build social bonds as neighbors sit on a common bench for a chat, garden together once a month, or linger for a moment en route to work.

Property Value Increases: SPPGs add value to the street and property. Larger trees produce greater annual benefits and curb appeal.

Benefits from Large Trees

Benefits provided by large trees are innumerable – tangible and intangible. How do we measure the benefit trees bring as we look out a window into a concrete jungle and see green lush canopy softening the landscape, or walk to the store beneath a row of trees on rainy days, or pause in the shade canopy on hot afternoons. Tangibly we can expect the following:

- A single large tree can release up to 400 gallons of water into the atmosphere each day.
- Tree foliage filters dust and can help remove toxic pollutants from the atmosphere. The foliage captures and removes a wide range of smog-producing compounds such as ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, airborne ammonia and some sulphur dioxide.
- Mature trees help cool and freshen the air. Not only do they moderate the air temperature, but through photosynthesis, their leaves take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen for us to breathe.
- Large trees remove 60 – 70 times more pollution than small trees.
- Mature trees reflect San Francisco’s natural heritage. The Mediterranean climate supports a wide range of trees and other plant species. The trees provide visual and physical links to the dramatic landscape that surrounds our city.
- Mature trees improve the aesthetic environment, absorb noise, calm drivers in traffic, reduce stress, and create a peaceful place to relax or socialize.
- Mature trees provide a sense of “Home” to a neighborhood. They are often a focal point on a street and give continuity to what is otherwise an ever-changing environment.
- New research calculates a single, mature tree provides over \$162,000 worth of ecosystem services in its lifetime. The benefits appear free from the tree, but this value represents the cost if we had to replicate it.
- Our forested cities with scenic, green corridors become increasingly significant as urban areas increase in size and population, and rural and wild lands diminish. Jumping into the car for an afternoon in the country has become costly to the pocket book as well as to the environment. We need to bring nature into our everyday setting, so the sense of beauty we seek far away can be attained close to home.

Existing Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens: Examples

Scattered throughout San Francisco we can find landscape planting in the style of Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens. Some of the factors which may contribute to making a site successful and having this stature include the following: more than one property owner invests time and resources in the project; the design and planting reflect upon the culture or sensibility of its caretakers; the trees and other plants are appropriate to the conditions of the site; and typically a SPPG integrates an established tree(s) which provides a sense of longevity to the community.



ABOVE: TWO LARGE TREES WITH SHRUBS AND HERBACEOUS PLANTS ENHANCE THE STREET IN THIS SIDEWALK POCKET PARK GARDEN.
RIGHT: ANOTHER SPPG EXAMPLE FENCED OFF WHILE NEW PLANTS BECOME ESTABLISHED.





ON THIS BLOCK IN THE MISSION SEVERAL RESIDENTS CREATED A COLORFUL, WELCOMING GARDEN INCLUDING THEIR STREET TREE.



PEOPLE CREATE GARDENS IN LARGE OR SMALL SPACES SOFTENING THE OTHERWISE HARD LANDSCAPE OF THE SIDEWALK AND STREET. SOMETIMES THEY INTEGRATE A STREET TREE WITH THE LANDSCAPE, SOMETIMES NOT. IN NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THE ONLY SPACE FOR A FRONT GARDEN IS ON THE SIDEWALK, COMBINING A TREE(S) WITH OTHER PLANTING MAKES A SETTING WHICH IS NOT ONLY MORE CONDUCTIVE TO THE GROWTH AND HEALTH OF THE TREE, BUT ALSO PROVIDES A MORE NATURAL AND BEAUTIFUL SETTING.

TYPICAL FRONT GARDEN IN THE AVENUES.



THE DUBOCE CIRCLE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS GARDENS ON CORNERS AND UP AND DOWN THE STREETS MAKING PARK LIKE SETTINGS.

ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NOT OPENED UP THE TREE BASINS, THERE IS A SIDEWALK POCKET PARK FEEL.



VIEWS OF OTHER DUBOCE GARDENS. THIS CORNER HAS A JAPANESE GARDEN TOUCH TO IT.

TREES, PLANTERS, SHRUBS, FLOWERING HERBACEOUS PLANTS AND SEATING COMPRISE EACH SETTING AS SHOWN IN PHOTOS ABOVE AND BELOW.





THE RESIDENTS ADJACENT TO THIS SIDEWALK HAVE CREATED A LANDSCAPE WHICH NOT ONLY INTEGRATES WITH THEIR OWN GARDEN, BUT ALSO GIVES THE LARGE STREET TREE SOME ROOM TO BREATHE. THE SPPG CONTINUES DOWN THE BLOCK ACCOMMODATING THE ROOT NEEDS AS SEEN IN PHOTO TO RIGHT.



THIS SIDEWALK HAS BEEN OPENED UP SO THE LONG ROOTS CAN FREELY EXTEND. RATHER THAN BATTLING WITH THE ROOTS HEAVING THE SIDEWALK, THE PROPERTY OWNERS SIMPLY REMOVED THE CONCRETE. THE HERBACEOUS PLANTS ALONG WITH THE ROOTS GIVE THIS SPPG A SCULPTURAL QUALITY.

More Examples

Existing SPPG examples occur mostly in upscale neighborhoods adding value and comfort to a select group of people with high incomes and expensive properties. These pleasing gardens should exist on our publicly maintained right of ways in all neighborhoods, regardless of economics and class.



LUSH SIDEWALK PLANTING WITH A NEWLY ESTABLISHED TREE SHOWS THE POTENTIAL OF THE SPPG CONCEPT.



UNUSUAL STREET TREE, BUT WHAT FUN IN THIS SETTING.



ANOTHER EXAMPLE WITH DAPPLED LIGHT CAST ON THE SIDEWALK.

Creating Green Belts & Corridors

With the help of Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens, tree canopies can be connected throughout the City to create a green belt or corridor with particular attention paid to routes or pathways that 1) lack green canopy 2) could become or once were migratory routes for birds, bats or insects and 3) in other ways fulfill an important environmental or ecological function. The City becomes a patchwork quilt of green landscape, while Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens fill in critical missing patterns. It becomes an exciting prospect for communities to see their Pocket Park Gardens linking to others that in turn connect to larger parks or green spaces.

The following sequence takes us from Bernal Hill, an open space south and west of the Mission, to Precita Park. With the help of Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens, we can create a solid green corridor connecting two parks, several staircase walkways and numerous streets.

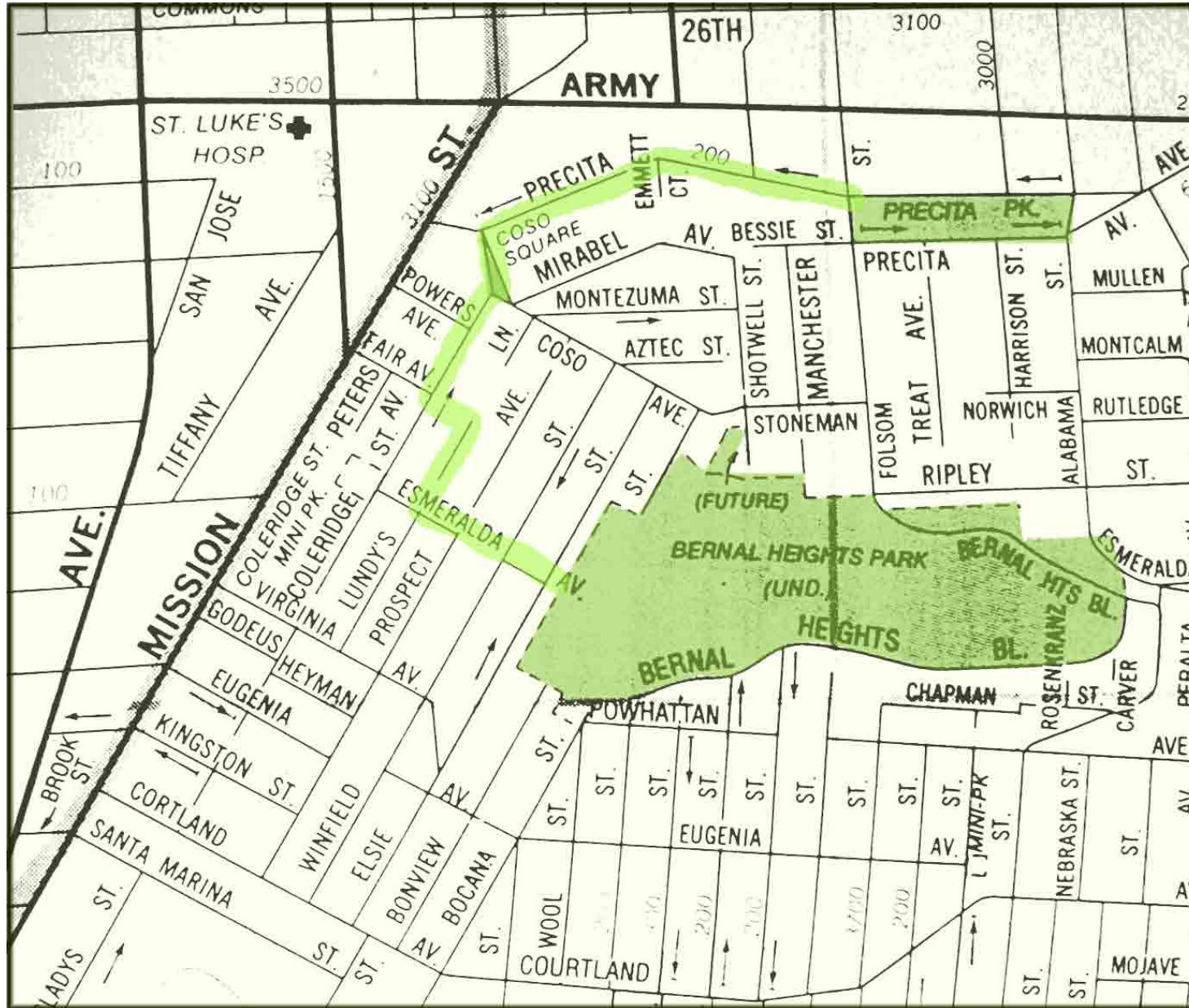


BERNAL HILL, A FAVORITE OPEN SPACE FOR ALL THE HILL RESIDENTS FOR WALKS, JOGS AND ESPECIALLY DOGS.



LOOKING NW FROM BERNAL HILL, ONE CAN SEE PRECITA PARK — OUTLINED RECTANGULAR BLOCK

Map from Bernal Hill to Precita Park



THE BERNAL HISS TO PRECITA PARK CORRIDOR WINDS DOWN STREETS AND STAIRCASES OFFERING A BEAUTIFUL WALK, BENCHES FOR VIEWS, REST AND CONVERSATION AS WELL AS A PEACEFUL WALK TOWARD THE MISSION AND 24TH STREET BART.



THIS PHOTO AND THE TOP TWO SHOW THE LUSH, FORESTED PATH FROM BERNAL HILL TO WINFIELD ON THE ESMERALDA STEPS.

BOTTOM OF STEPS LOOKING DOWN WINFIELD.



THE FOOT OF ESERALDA STEPS BETWEEN ELSIE AND WINFIELD LOOKING DOWN BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET SHOWING AMPLE WIDTH FOR SPPG'S



THE SIDEWALK UPHEAVAL COULD BE ABATED WITH A GARDEN LIKE SETTING FOR THE TREES WHILE CREATING A MORE PLEASANT SETTING.



PHOTO ABOVE SHOWS THE SMALL OPENINGS FOR TREES. ONE HAS ALREADY DIED, PERHAPS FROM LACK OF WATER, ANOTHER HAS OUTGROWN ITS' BASIN AND THE THIRD DOWN THE HILL (ALSO SHOWN ON PRECEDING PAGE) HEAVES THE SIDEWALK. ALL THIS COULD BE REMEDIED WITH A SPPG. BOTH SIDES OF THE SIDEWALK HAVE AMPLE WIDTH TO OPEN UP FOR SPPG. AT THE BASE OF THIS SECTION OF STREET WE SEE THE TOP OF A STAIRCASE GREENWAY (SEE RIGHT) WHICH COMES OUT AT PROSPECT STREET.



SLIDE OR WALK FROM WINFIELD TO PROSPECT ON THIS PLAYGROUND STAIRCASE.



WIDE SIDEWALKS LEND THEMSELVES TO SPPG TO CONNECT PROSPECT WITH LUNDY LANE. WE TURN RIGHT HERE ONTO LUNDY.

THE GREEN CORRIDOR THEN CONNECTS US TO THE END OF LUNDY LANE WITH STEPS DOWN THE FAIR STREET STEPS TO COOLRIDGE (BELOW).



SPPG ADDS CHARACTER TO THE END OF LUNDY LANE. BELOW: UP AND DOWN SHOTS OF THE FAIR ST. STAIRCASE TO COOLRIDGE. RIGHT.

THIS STAIRCASE TAKES US FROM THE END OF LUNDY LANE BACK UP TO PROSPECT VIA THE FAIR STREET STAIRCASE.



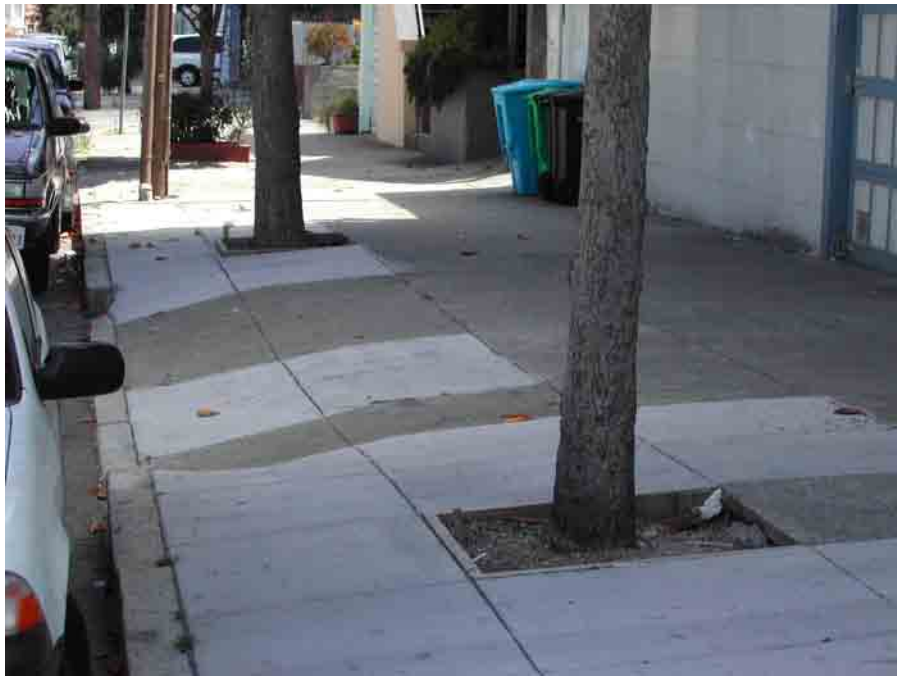


THE WALK ALONG COOLRIDGE CONNECTS TO A SMALL CORNER MINI PARK (BELOW) AT PRECITA, WHICH COULD BE A GROVE OF TREES.



THIS CORNER OF COOLRIDGE ILLUSTRATES A CONTAINER GARDEN WHICH COULD EASILY TRANSLATE TO A SPPG WITH A PERMEABLE LANDSCAPE.





RED FLOWERING GUM AND MAYTEN TREES ALONG COOLRIDGE (RIGHT) MAKE A BEAUTIFUL CANOPY, BUT THE BASINS ARE TOO SMALL.

THE SIDEWALKS EN ROUTE TO THE PRECITAPARK CAN EASILY ACCOMMODATE SIDEWALK POCKET PARK GARDENS.



SEVERAL LONG BLOCKS TAKE US TO PRECITA PARK, THE END DESTINATION FOR THIS BERNAL HILL TO PRECITA PARK GREENBELT.

ALTHOUGH SPARSELY PLANTED WITH TREES, PRECITA PARK OFFERS A CANOPY COMPRISED OF OLDER, AND NEW TREES.

Design Narratives – Three Studies and Stories

This suite of design plans includes examples of the following: small Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens facing one to three properties; corridor planting where the SPPG encompasses the entire block; and a corner bulb out in a commercial district. These and additional design plans will provide templates for property owners and neighborhood groups. They reflect a variety of alternatives, taking into account cultural and personal aesthetics. The gardens may range from designs with an emphasis on Japanese, Cottage Garden, California native or semi-tropical exotic motifs. The SPPG plans also account for environmental conditions such as sandy soil, steep slopes or wind as well as social and infrastructure conditions such as large vehicular trucks, and underground or overhead utilities.

Often the SPPG potential already exists. A landscape design can overlay a section of sidewalk that includes an existing tree and provide specifications for additions and subtractions to create a cohesive SPPG. These vignette settings provide opportunities to use trees and other plants to enhance a quality of the adjoining properties. Larger trees create broad canopy above, medium size trees may fit well in some residential neighborhoods, smaller trees may integrate and work as transitions from sidewalk to house. Trees in a SPPG can be utilized to mimic an existing form in the landscape or frame and highlight a business sign.

Design Narratives – Study I

This stretch of Precita planted with weeping bottlebrush trees, *Callistemon viminalis*, offers an example of a small SPPG facing one to several properties. Continuing the design theme with the existing trees and architecture, the SPPG has an Australian cottage garden sensibility with playful, colorful, bright plants that integrate with the bottle brush trees, the Victorian style homes and the Mission setting. A small bench gives the neighbors a place for conversation. Below are pictures as it appears now. The design plan follows.



AS A RELATIVELY QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET, PRECITA OFFERS A PLEASANT WALKING PATH TO THE MISSION DISTRICT AND 24TH STREET BART. THIS STRETCH IS ALSO PART OF THE BERNAL HILL CORRIDOR.



ADDING SPPG ALONG THE STREET WOULD INCREASE THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE FOR THE NEIGHBORS AND PROVIDE PLEASANT SETTING TO STOP AND CHAT WITH FRIENDS EN ROUTE TO BART OR SHOPPING.

Design Narratives – Study II

Esmeralda Stairway connects this one block corridor to Bernal Hill Park. The stairway streets that adjoin both ends of this stretch of Esmeralda have a woody feel. Because this is a wide street with wide sidewalks, there is adequate room for large trees that in time create an arch canopy with understory planting. This block of the corridor connects and integrates the existing woods on either end. A small sitting area will provide a resting and conversation space mid block. Below are pictures as it appears now. The design plan follows.



THIS STRETCH OF ESMERALDA BECOMES A GATEWAY TO BERNAL HILL AFTER THE WHOLE STREET IS LINED WITH SPPG. GARDENS AND NATURE BECOME A LARGER PART OF OUR DAILY LIVES.



AS SPPG BEGIN TO FILL IN OUR URBAN LANDSCAPE PEOPLE WILL BEGIN USING THESE BEAUTIFUL STREETS AS WALKING PATHS AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE CHANGES IN THE SPPG FROM SEASON TO SEASON.

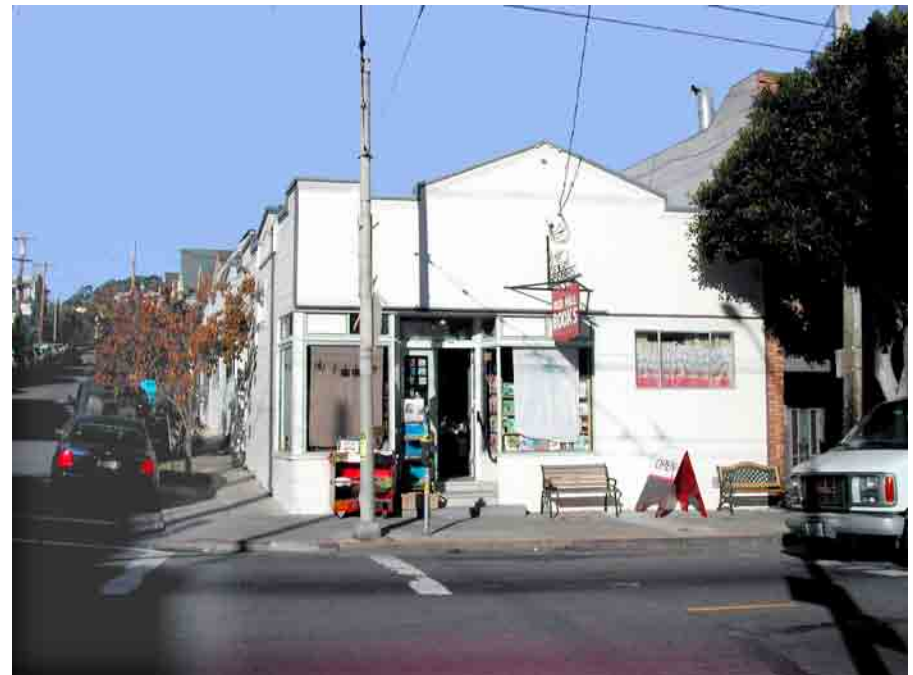
Design Narratives – Study III

This corner bulb in Bernal Heights illustrates an example of a SPPG in a commercial district. Bernal Heights feels like a small town, but the main street, Cortland Avenue, lacks vegetation, large trees and areas for outdoor seating at cafes. Trees need not be contained on the sidewalk and can gain greater planting space by extending into the street!

The bulb-out corner SPPG has a bold, sculptural, artistic feel from the new plants and sitting areas. The landscape also screens the street and provides protection to the sitting areas. Below are pictures as it appears now. The design plan follows.



CORNER AS IS: MANY OF OUR SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS OFFER A KIND OF TOWN CENTER AND COULD PROVIDE SPPG GATHERING AREAS FOR SHOPPERS TO REST AND CONVERSE IN A GARDEN SETTING.



CORNER AS IS: BULB-OUTS NOT ONLY GIVE TREES A MUCH HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO GROW, BUT THE SPPG PROVIDES A BUFFER BETWEEN PEDESTRIANS AND AUTOMOBILES AND BUSES ON THE STREET.

Design & Implementation Tasks

- Plant the seed for a Sidewalk Pocket Park Garden Movement
- Make visual presentation to various stakeholders, organizations and professional conferences
- Network and build a core group of supporters and alliances
- Work with City Department's to create policy in support of public gardens in public rights-of-way
- Fine tune the five year time line with specific target dates and goals
- Involve communities directly affected with each SPPG creation
- Commit ten possible sites with willing participants
 - Each SPPG can be unique, drawing from the culture and aesthetics of its caretakers
 - Can be one street address or a whole block
- Create site analysis of proposed SPPGs establishing a base map, site conditions and existing plant inventory
- Write specifications, including budget and implementation
- Use appropriate resources to implement
- Designate on map of San Francisco 30 – 40 initial prime locations for Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens
- Distribute a brochure that outlines guidelines for participating in the SPPG Program
- Produce guidelines giving instructions for ongoing care of the tree(s) and plants

Frequently Asked Questions

Jurisdiction: *Who owns the sidewalk and do I have to follow any standards?*

Sidewalk frontage often involves numerous jurisdictions. Some are City maintained, and others are private. Permits, codes, authorizations and costs that are required will be outlined in the SPPG Guidelines brochure.

Money: *How much will it cost to convert my sidewalk to a SPPG?*

Initial model sites may be subsidized through San Francisco Community Challenge Grant Programs, contributions from nurseries, landscape suppliers, and property owner support. Many SPPGs begin with an existing tree(s) so the main cost will be in the initial removal of the concrete sidewalk, a one-time cost in service and permits. Prior to 2006 the City required a Minor Encroachment Permit for concrete removal at a cost of \$726.14. A new Landscape Permit, pending legislative action will cost about \$200. Additional tree planting may be coordinated with Friends of the Urban Forest, an organization that helps subsidize the tree cost and planting, currently around \$150.00 per tree. Estimates of costs based on the size of SPPG and template models including plants, soil amendments, mulch and other landscape materials will be in the SPPG Guidelines brochure.

Maintenance: *Who takes care of the SPPG?*

Guidelines for the care of SPPGs will be available. Shared SPPGs will bring neighbors together for several hours a month for general landscape maintenance. Larger SPPGs may involve more entities that share the care. Depending on the location, trees may be maintained by Department of Public Works, Urban Forest Division. There will be savings on maintenance over time especially on sidewalk replacement.

The Big Idea: *How will I know how to design, plant and care for my SPPG?*

Template designs will be available which can be followed or easily modified. These will streamline the process for the property owner, the City and any contractors involved with installation and modifications. The design specifications also assure that appropriate plants are used for the site and that they are planted so as not to interfere with the growth and health of existing or new trees. The new Landscape Permit Application details City standards

Conclusion

Imagine this, in France in 1930 the Commission des Sites recorded 6,000 “remarkable trees” that were larger, older, more majestic than the rest, or had witnessed important events. These trees were listed for protection along with significant buildings.

With a paradigm shift from single tree planting to Sidewalk Pocket Park Gardens, our city streets could provide better habitat and environmental conditions for our own, large, growing monuments to nature.



