

7

Transportation and Circulation

7



Photo by Patrick Boury <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pbo31/103923073/>

7.1 Existing Conditions

This section summarizes the existing transportation conditions in the Plan Area and references the numerous previous and ongoing studies that have addressed transportation conditions in Japantown to date. In addition, the section includes an in-depth assessment of parking and pedestrian safety conditions in Japantown.

This section is organized as follows:

- Review of previous studies and community priorities
- Existing pedestrian and bicycle conditions
- Existing transit service
- Existing traffic conditions
- Existing parking conditions

In identifying the “big picture” challenges for transportation in the Japantown neighborhood, this section serves as the basis for the transportation and circulation strategies recommended in this Plan.

Review of Previous Studies and Community Priorities

The first phase of the transportation existing conditions study included a review of the numerous previous and ongoing studies that are relevant for transportation conditions in the Japantown neighborhood. Based on this review, four primary sources were selected for reference in this report 1) the focus group and workshop summaries from the current Better Neighborhoods study; 2) the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the J Pop Center (1746 Post St.); 3) the Japantown Neighborhood Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Community Plan; and 4) the ongoing Geary Corridor BRT Study.

The BNP’s focus groups and community workshops have identified the following community priorities for Japantown:

- Improving Geary Boulevard for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Increasing pedestrian safety throughout the neighborhood;
- Providing more countdown signals at crosswalks and longer times to cross the streets;
- Making safer bus stops/ improving bus service; and
- Providing better parking locations and increasing parking supply.

The subsequent sections of this section present data from the primary reference sources, as well as original data collection and analysis.

Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Conditions

This section summarizes field observations and previous studies regarding existing pedestrian and bicycle conditions in Japantown.

Existing Pedestrian Conditions

The Japantown Neighborhood Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Community Plan, sponsored by the City and County of San Francisco Department of Public Health and the California Office of Traffic Safety Business, Transportation Housing Agency, and prepared by the Japantown Task Force, Inc. in 2006, summarized community concerns and recommended measures for improving pedestrian and traffic safety.

Key findings from this study included:

- “Insufficient time and long crosswalks to cross busy intersections;
- Traffic laws not being obeyed by cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians;
- Trucks double-parking and blocking traffic to unload goods on a daily basis;
- The need for more police officers and traffic enforcement on a regular basis; and
- Visitors and tourists of the Japantown community unaware of different traffic laws.”

Field Review Findings

Based on several walking and driving observations of the study area during midday, peak, and weekend hours, most of these findings were easily observed. Double-parked trucks, jaywalking, and long crosswalks across Geary and Webster were noted, as shown in the following photographs. Other key field observations included the significant number of seniors and children walking in the neighborhood.

Pedestrian Collisions

The Japantown Pedestrian Community Plan also included a summary table of pedestrian-auto collisions in Japantown from 1998 to 2005 as well as a map of collisions from 2000 to 2004. The table illustrates that the prevalent contributing factors for pedestrian collisions are driver and pedestrian violations. Based on the findings from the *Community Plan* and our field visits, as well as the strong community priority of improving pedestrian safety, we have conducted a further analysis of pedestrian collisions in the Japantown neighborhood. We have also narrowed the data to focus only on the Plan area boundaries.

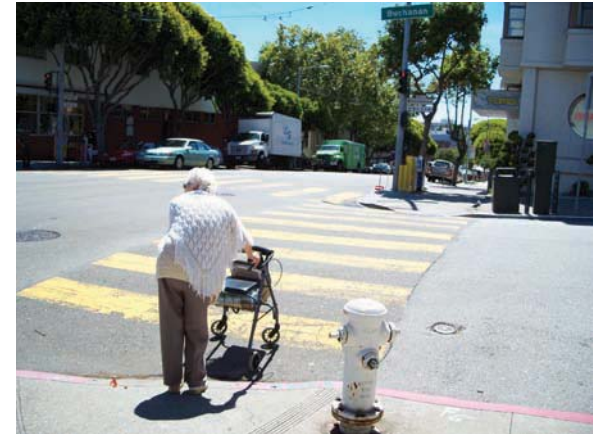
This analysis included the development of pedestrian collision rates (calculated as the number of collisions divided by average daily intersection traffic volumes or vehicle exposure) for the intersections with pedestrian collisions from 2000-2004.¹ Adjusting for exposure is standard practice in the analysis of collision data to ensure collision “hot spots” are identified where the number of collisions is particularly high given the level of vehicle-pedestrian conflicts that would be expected.

1 Recent pedestrian-vehicle collisions have occurred on Fillmore (with Muni) and at Geary and Webster. In both incidents, the pedestrian was a senior.



Geary Boulevard Pedestrian Safety Concerns

(From top left clockwise: no crosswalks across Geary at Webster Street, jaywalking, fast speeds and wide crossings, and inconvenient overpass)



Post Street Pedestrian Safety Concerns (From left: bicycles on sidewalks, jaywalking, wide crossings, and senior pedestrians)



Webster Street Pedestrian Safety Concerns (From left: fast moving traffic, senior pedestrians, and wide crossings)



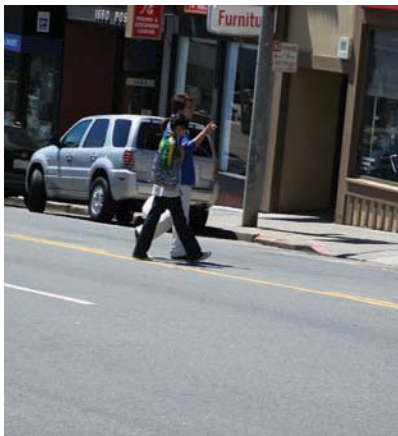
Fillmore Street Pedestrian Safety Concerns (From left: heavy traffic and bus volumes, sight distance concerns at bus stops and crosswalks)

The locations with the most pedestrian injuries from 2000-2004 (illustrated in Figure 7.1) were:

- Geary and Laguna
- Sutter and Fillmore
- Geary and Steiner

The locations with the most pedestrian injuries adjusted for vehicle exposure (traffic volumes) from 2000-2004 (illustrated in Figure 7.2) were:

- Sutter and Fillmore
- Sutter and Webster
- O'Farrell and Fillmore
- Post and Webster
- Post and Fillmore
- Post and Laguna
- Geary and Laguna



Pedestrians Jaywalking at Post and Buchanan



Pedestrian Jaywalking at Post and Buchanan;
Truck Double-Parked in the Background

Figure 7.1
Pedestrian Collisions with Injuries
in Japantown, 2000-2004

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2000-2004 Pedestrian Collisions

Injuries

- = 1-2
- = 3-4
- = 5-7
- = 8-10

= Pedestrian overpass

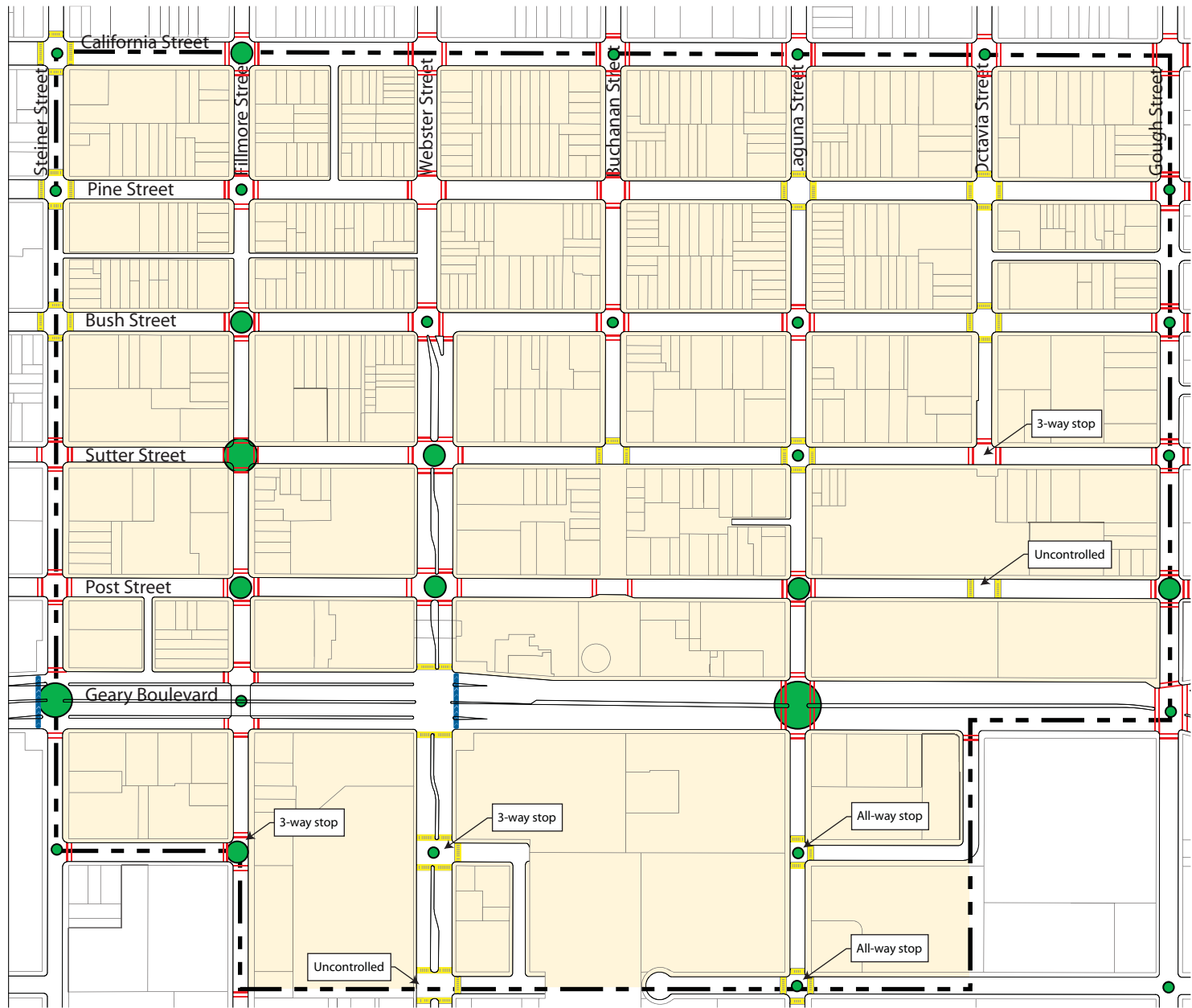
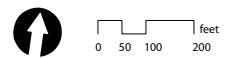
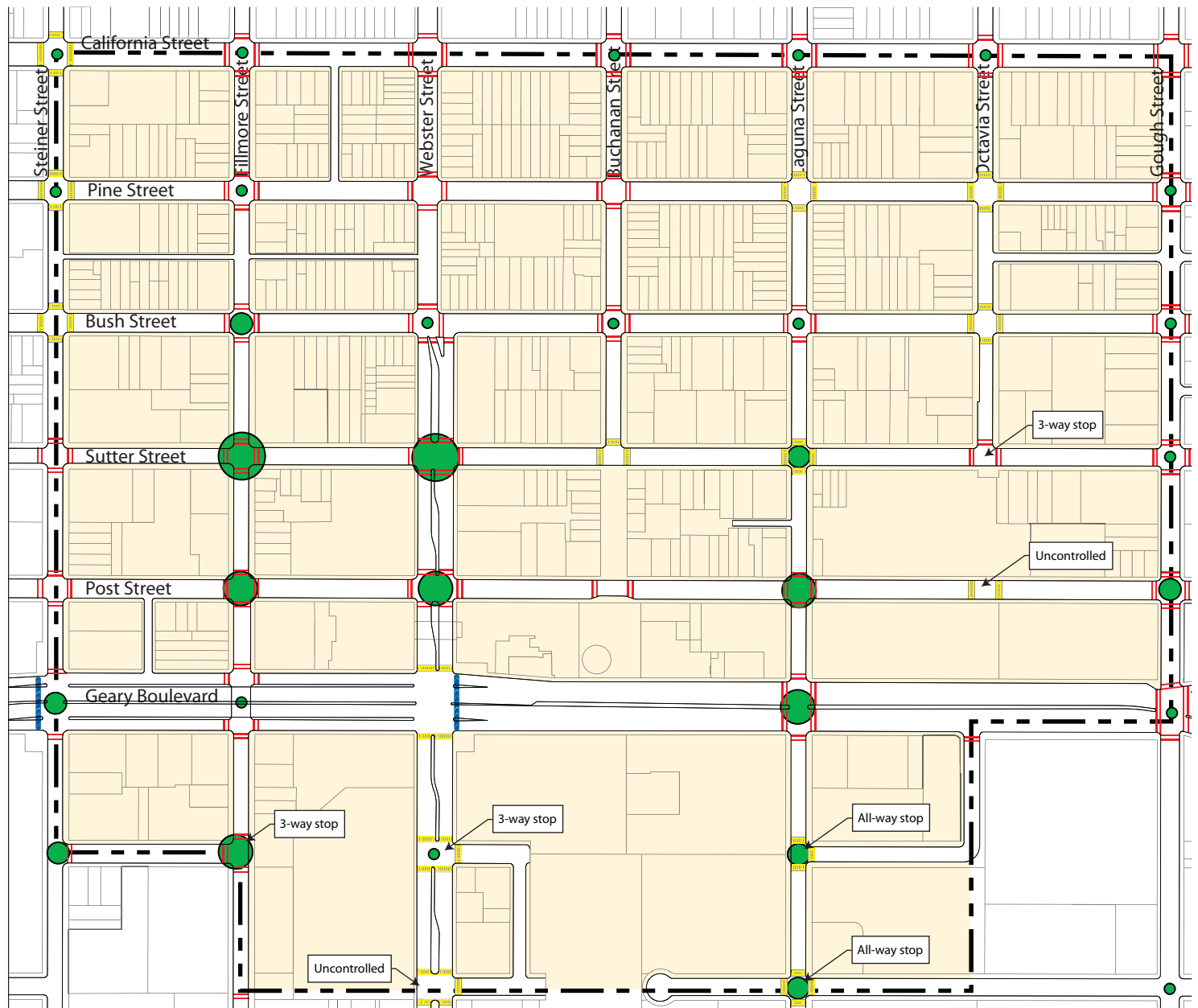


Figure 7.2
Pedestrian Injuries, Adjusted for
Vehicle Exposure

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- 2000-2004 Pedestrian Collisions
Injuries / ADT
- = 0.00002306-0.00007693
 - = 0.00007694-0.0001514
 - = 0.0001515-0.0002386
 - = 0.0002387-0.0005360
 - = Pedestrian overpass



Existing Bicycle Conditions

Designated bicycle routes in the study area include Steiner Street (Route 45—a shared, wide roadway), Webster Street (Route 345—a bike lane on edge of roadway south of Sutter Street), Sutter Street and Post Street (Route 16—a shared, narrow roadway), as shown on Figure 7.3 in coordination with the San Francisco Bicycle Plan. These routes connect Japantown with the Citywide bicycle network in all directions. Bicycle parking is available in the Japan Center parking garage.

Based on previous transportation studies in Japantown (1746 Post Street Draft EIR, 7/26/06 and 1333 Gough/ 1481 Post Street Preliminary Draft EIR, 9/14/07), few bicyclists currently use the facilities in the area. The studies note that during both weekday midday and evening periods, bicycle conditions are considered acceptable, with “no substantial safety or right-of-way issues” observed.

Field observations for this Plan and community feedback suggest that there may be a need for enforcement with regard to bicyclists riding on sidewalks and entering/exiting the parking garages. However, with the improvements to street configurations and parking facilities recommended in this chapter, these conflicts can be avoided.

Existing Transit Service

Japantown is well served by San Francisco Municipal Railway (“Muni”) bus lines. These lines connect the neighborhood with destinations throughout San Francisco, and they also connect with regional transit service providers.

Figure 7.4 depicts the transit lines in the Japantown neighborhood.

Existing Traffic Conditions

Japantown is connected to San Francisco and the Bay Area via a regional freeway network. Local streets also provide access within Japantown and to neighboring areas of the City. This section defines the vehicle access network and summarizes existing conditions on roadways in the Plan Area.

Roadway Network

The roadway network in Japantown provides multi-modal access to, from, and within the neighborhood. Post, Fillmore, and Sutter streets serve as transit corridors and retail corridors with significant pedestrian crossings. Geary Boulevard serves as a major transit and vehicle corridor with some retail primarily on the north side. Webster Street has two lanes of travel in each

direction through Japantown. This excess capacity is a remnant of historical plans to convert Webster Street to an expressway. Buchanan Street runs intermittently north-south between Beach Street and Market Street; in Japantown it serves as a pedestrian mall between Sutter and Post Streets. The Peace Plaza is located between Post Street and Geary Boulevard on what was Buchanan Street right-of-way. Laguna Street serves as a transit corridor between Sutter and Post Streets and an important pedestrian corridor and connection for many residential areas and community uses.

Intersection Operations

Operating characteristics of several signalized intersections were evaluated as part of the 1746 Post Street and 1333 Gough/ 1481 Post Street Environment Impact Reports. Under existing conditions, all evaluated intersections within Japantown were found to operate with acceptable conditions. Conditions were evaluated based on level of service (LOS). LOS is a qualitative description of an intersection’s performance based on average delay per vehicle. LOS ranges from LOS A, or free flow conditions, to LOS F, or very congested conditions. LOS A through D are considered acceptable conditions, with excellent to satisfactory service levels. All study area intersections operated at an LOS D or better.

Figure 7.3
Existing Designated Bicycle
Routes in Japantown

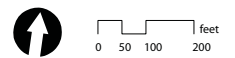
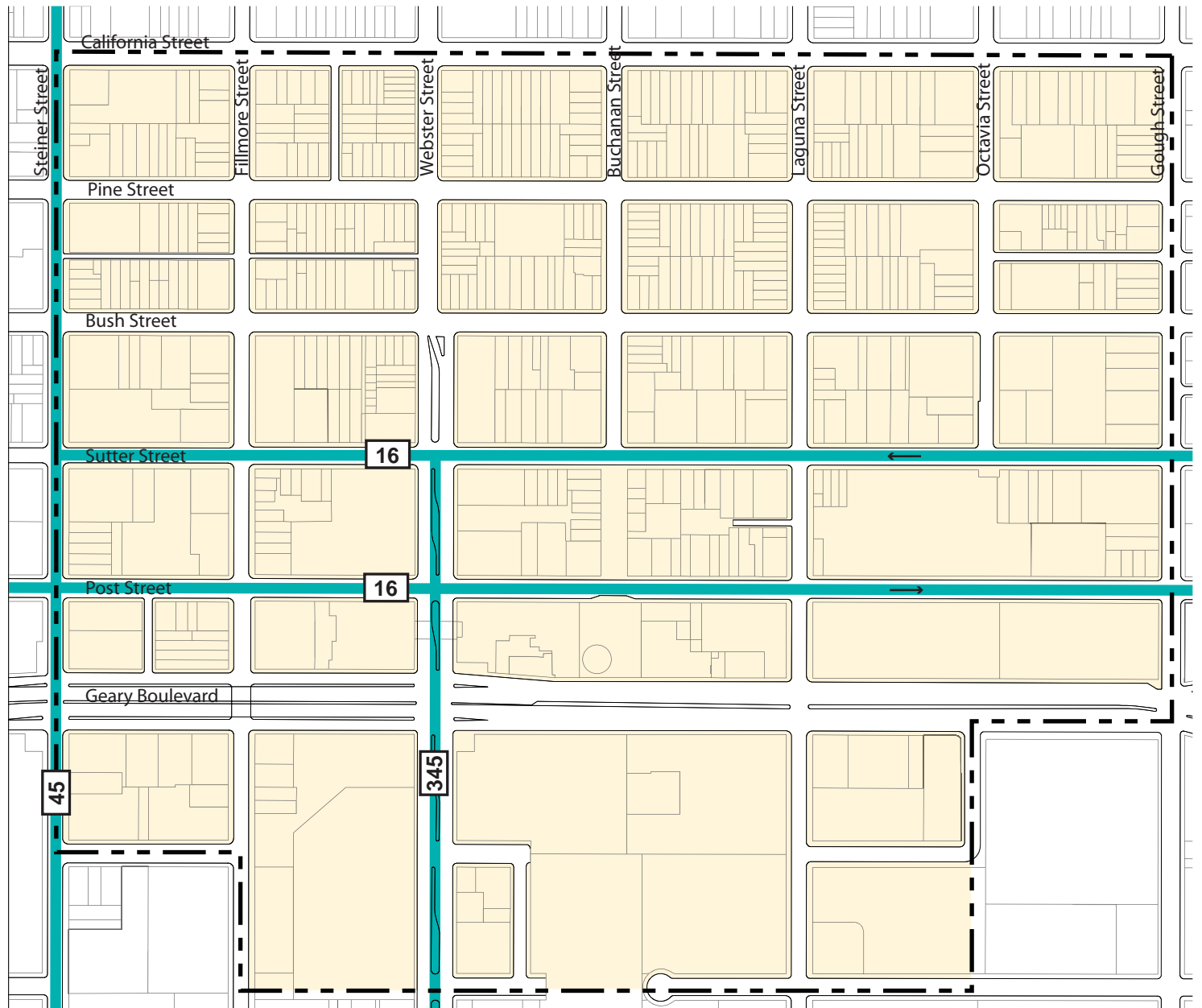
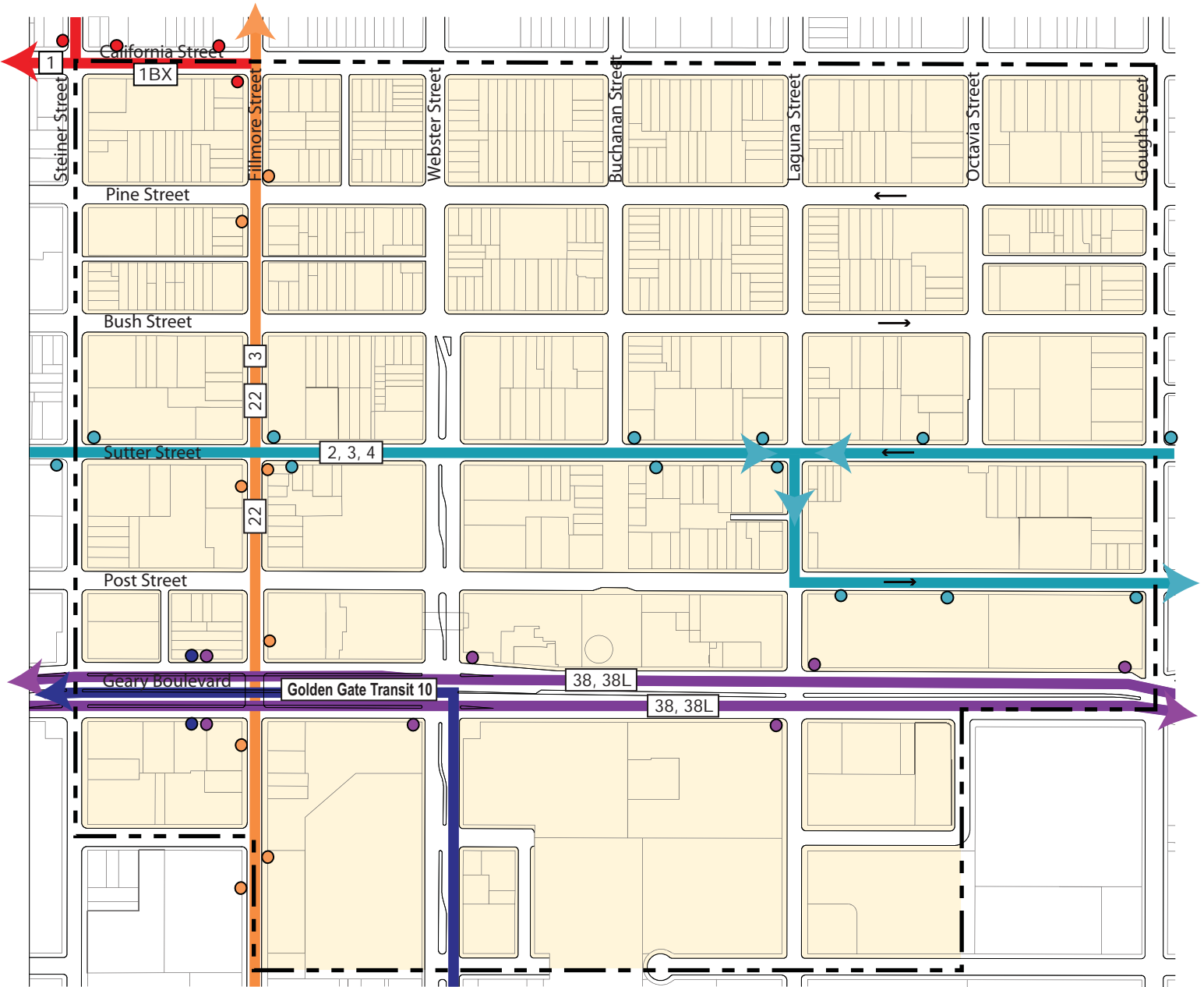


Figure 7.4
Existing Transit Routes Serving
Japantown and Bus Stop Locations

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↔ Transit Routes

● Bus Stops



Existing Parking Conditions

Parking is available in Japantown on street (generally with meters or residential permits restricting use) and off-street in both public and private garages and surface lots. This section details the parking options and existing parking occupancies (or use of the available parking).

On-Street Parking

Fehr & Peers conducted a windshield survey of on-street parking supply and occupancy within the Japantown neighborhood. On-street parking supplies total 1,964 spaces within the Plan area, including those spaces dedicated to loading zones and disabled parking (see Figure 7.5). Of those spaces, 1,679 (86%) were occupied during the afternoon period while 1,846 (94%) were occupied during the evening period (see Table 1 below). When counting only metered and unmetered parking spaces, however, occupancy ratios increased to 93% in the afternoon and 102% in the evening (due to double parking and blocked driveways).

Because illegally parked vehicles were included in the parking occupancy survey, several streets within the study area exhibited parking occupancy rates exceeding 100% (as noted in Table 1). Occupancy rates were the highest on Post Street directly adjacent to Japan Center, where occupancy exceeded 100% on each block from Steiner Street to Octavia Street during both survey periods. Observations indicate that illegally parked vehicles on this street consist primarily of commercial loading vehicles, with a smaller percentage of double-parked passenger vehicles. Illegally parked vehicles within the remainder of the study area consist predominantly of work trucks and other commercial loading vehicles parked in front of driveways.

Off-Street Parking

The primary off-street parking facility in the Japantown neighborhood is the Japan Center Garage. The garage, which is owned by the City of San Francisco and operated by the Japan Center Garage Corporation, has 924 parking spaces. The majority of these spaces

(747) are located in the main garage, which is bounded by Geary to the south, Post to the north, Webster to the west, and Laguna to the east. An additional 177 parking spaces are located in the Annex Garage, which is bounded by Geary, Post, Webster, and Fillmore. The Annex Garage primarily serves the Sundance Kabuki Cinema whereas the main garage serves the hotel, restaurants, and shops in Japan Center. The garage also provides parking for carshare vehicles.

Parking rates start at \$1.75/hour, with a total charge of \$15.00 for eight or more hours (up to 24). Several merchants, including the Sundance Kabuki Cinema, offer partial parking validation.

Garage occupancy data was obtained from the Japan Center Garage management for the month of June 2007² (see Figures 6 and 7). The data includes parking permit usage by California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) permit holders and monthly parking, as well as hourly parking. Public hourly parking is available in both garages. The data suggests there is available capacity to accommodate additional vehicles in the Main Garage. However, during peak hours (Friday nights and Saturdays), the Annex Garage fills close to capacity. Anecdotal evidence at the time of the survey suggested there is a greater parking shortage in Japantown garages than shown with this data. It should also be noted this survey was completed in 2007, before the economic downturn.

Table 1 Parking Occupancy

Time Period	Total Spaces Occupied	% All Spaces Occupied	% Metered/Unmetered Spaces Occupied
1 PM – 3 PM	1679	86%	93%
7 PM – 9 PM	1846	94%	102%

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2007

² Prior to drainage construction efforts.

Figure 7.5
Parking Occupancies,
Mid-day and Evening

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- >100% Parking Occupancy
- = 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- ⋯ = 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

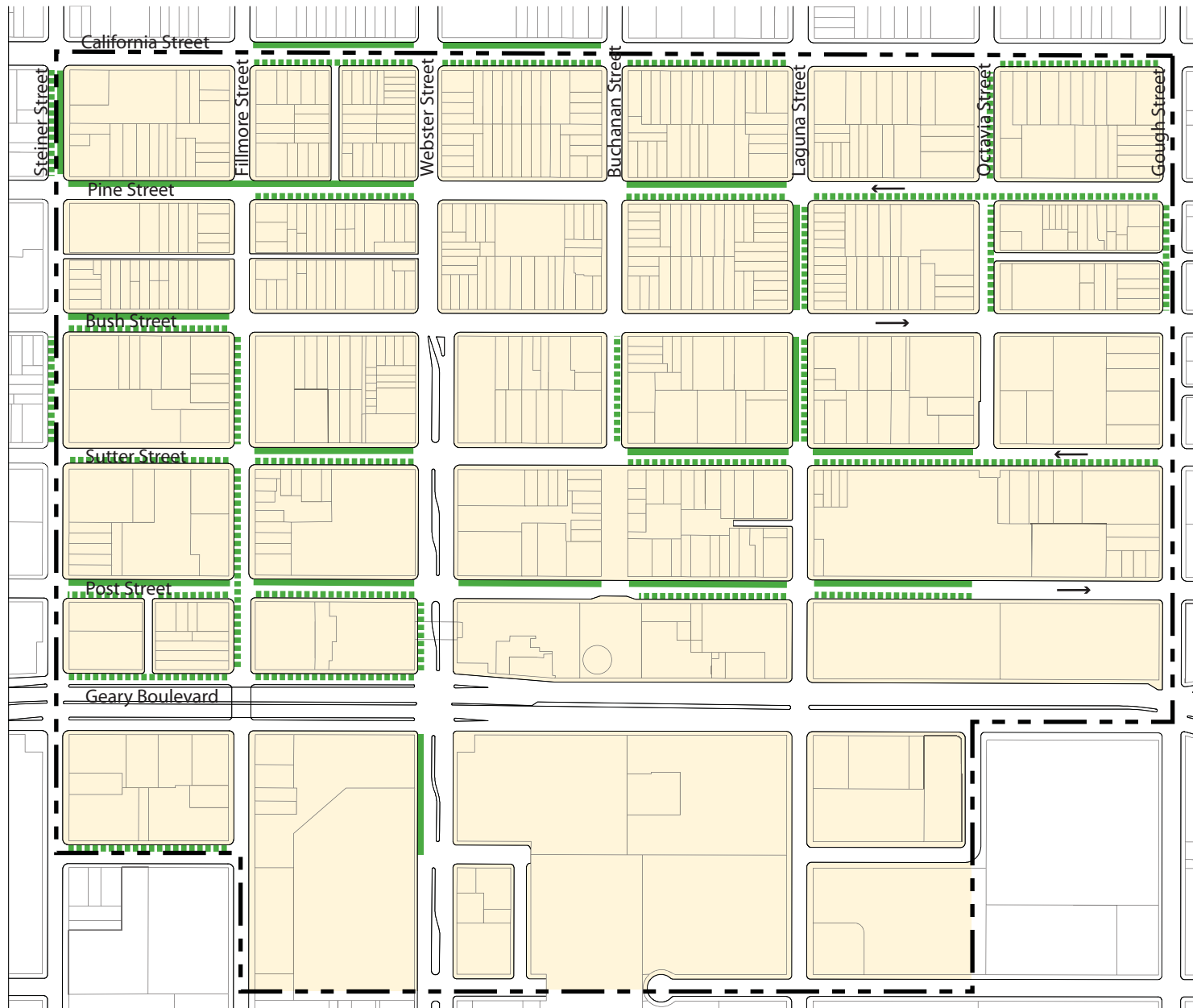


Figure 7.6
Annex Garage Occupancy, Peak Weekend/Weekday and Typical Weekday (June 2007)

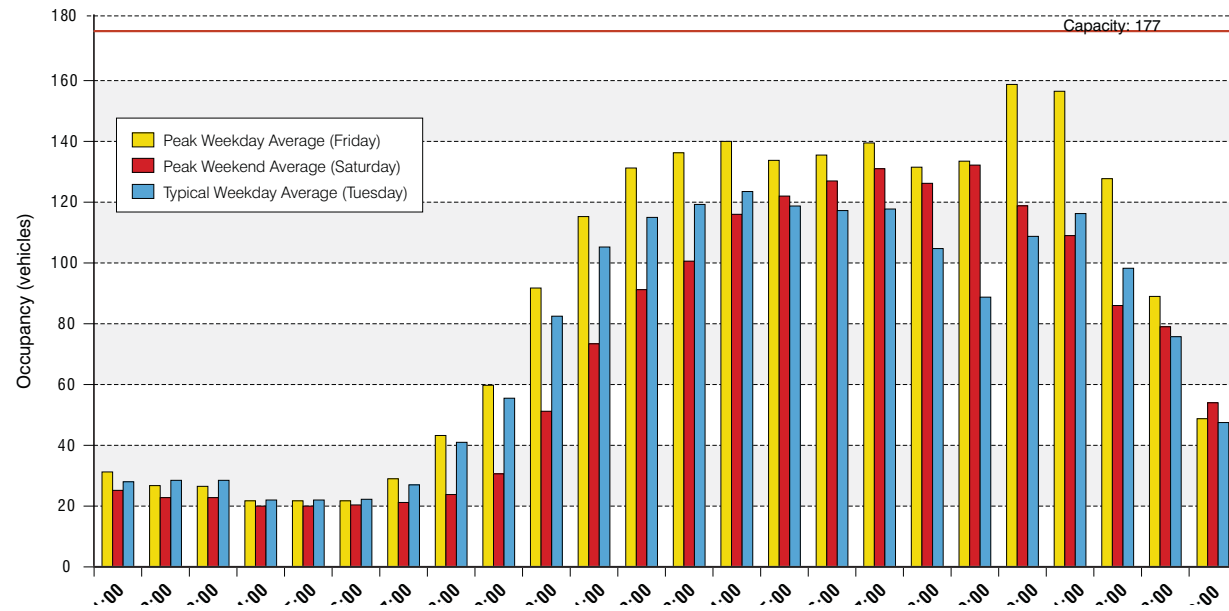
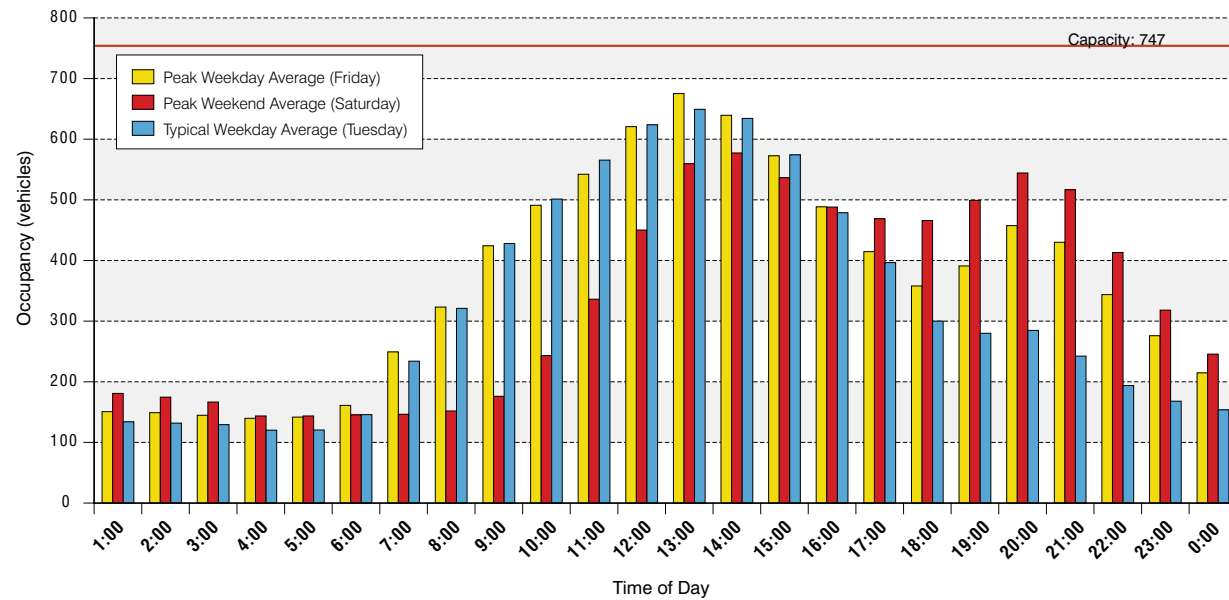


Figure 7.7
Main Garage Occupancy, Peak Weekend/Weekday and Typical Weekday (June 2007)



7.2 Recommendations and Strategies

Japantown is strategically located within San Francisco, with convenient access by many modes of transportation, including bicycle, transit, and private vehicle. The relatively flat topography of the neighborhood also makes the area conducive for walking. There are opportunities exist to improve safety, efficiency, and the general “experience” of traveling to, from, and within Japantown, in line with community priorities.

Improve Circulation for All Modes

This section presents a series of recommendations to improve circulation in Japantown. Strategies include safety improvements to better accommodate pedestrians and encourage walking as a key transportation mode in the neighborhood, recommendations for transit access and improved accommodation for persons with disabilities, and improvements for bicyclists.

Prioritize Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility at Key Intersections

Existing pedestrian conditions, including pedestrian-vehicle collisions and observations of pedestrian and driver behavior at study intersections and corridors, are presented above in Section 7.1. Pedestrian safety is one of the key priorities for this Plan and was the focus of several community meetings and focus groups.

Existing conditions data was combined with community input to develop a prioritized list of pedestrian safety focus areas. Major improvement locations included within the Geary BRT study corridor were not included

in this list, as they are being addressed in a separate study. The improvement locations are grouped in tiers, with the first tier recommended for the short-term, the second tier recommended in the medium-term, and the third tier recommended for the longer-term. Figure 7.8 provides a graphical illustration of the tiers.

- 1st Tier:
 - Post/Webster
 - Post/Fillmore
 - Post/Laguna
 - O’Farrell/Fillmore
 - Sutter/Fillmore
 - Sutter/Webster
- 2nd Tier:
 - Post/Octavia (midblock)
 - Buchanan/Geary (Midblock)
 - Buchanan/Post
 - Buchanan/Sutter
- 3rd Tier:
 - Sutter/Laguna
 - Fillmore/Bush
 - Fillmore/Pine

Several intersections along Geary, including Geary/Fillmore and Geary/Laguna were also identified as high priority areas. These locations will be addressed through the planned Bus Rapid Transit and corridor

improvement project on Geary Boulevard.¹ Corridor-wide pedestrian safety improvements are also recommended along Webster Street, Post Street, and Sutter Street. Specific intersection improvements are provided below, followed by a discussion of the corridor-wide improvements.

A collection of pedestrian safety treatments based on national best practices and local feasibility, are recommended for consideration to improve pedestrian safety throughout Japantown, but especially at the priority locations described above and noted in Table 2. The specific treatments recommended for each priority location are defined in the Draft Better Streets Plan and described in detail in Appendix G: Transportation and Circulation Analysis.

Remove Two Travel Lanes on Webster Street




As discussed in Section 7.1, Webster Street currently has two lanes of travel in each direction through Japantown. A key recommendation for this Plan is a lane reduction or road diet of Webster Street through Japantown to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, reduce vehicle speeds, provide opportunities for additional open space or parking, and enhance a “sense of place” in Japantown. Based on traffic circulation, shadows, and pedestrian connectivity analysis, this Plan recommends that two travel lanes be replaced with a linear park along the eastern edge of Webster Street. More details on the proposed linear park are included in Chapter 6.

¹ Although significant improvements on Geary may need to wait for the BRT project, short-term improvements, such as retiming the signal at Geary and Laguna to provide more crossing time for seniors, may be feasible.

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-  Corridor Improvements
-  Geary Blvd Bus Rapid Transit Improvement

Intersection Improvements:

-  First Tier
-  Second Tier
-  Long Term

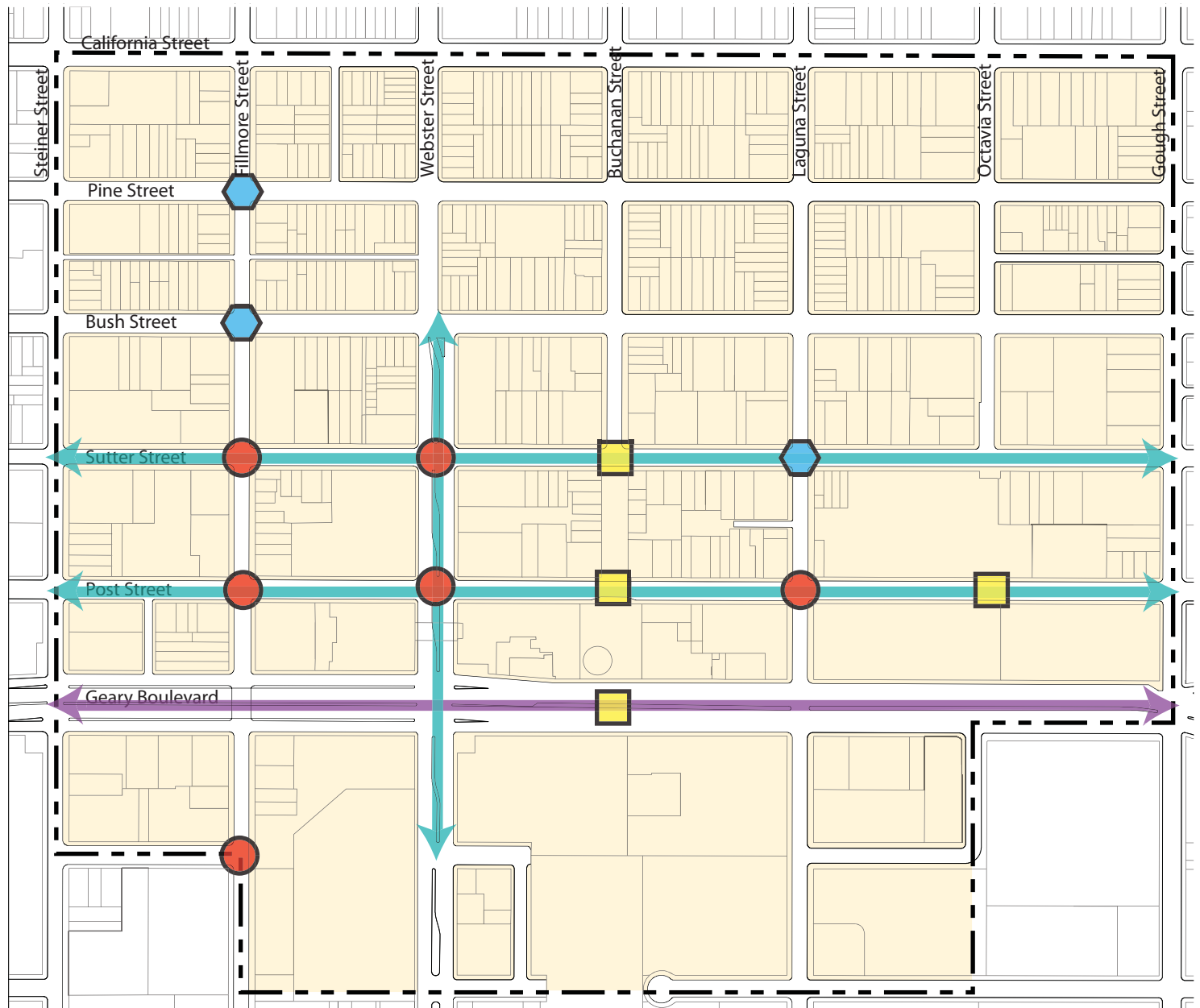


Figure 7.8
Pedestrian Improvement
Locations and Prioritization

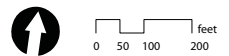


Table 2
Pedestrian Safety Recommendations

Treatment	1st Tier						2nd Tier				3rd Tier		
	Post/ Webster	Post/ Fillmore	Post/ Laguna	O' Farrell/ Fillmore	Sutter/ Fillmore	Sutter/ Webster	Post/Octavia (midblock)	Buchanan/ Geary (midblock)	Buchanan/ Post	Buchanan/ Sutter	Sutter/ Laguna	Fillmore/ Bush	Fillmore/ Pine
01. Advanced Stop Bars	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
02. Advanced Yield Limit Lines and Signs							❖						
03. Pedestrian-actuated in-pavement lighting or overhead flashing beacon							❖						
04. Pedestrian Scramble										❖			
05. Road Diet	Webster St.; potentially Post St.	Potentially Post St.	Potentially Post St.			Webster St.			Potentially Post St.				
06. Two-stage, signalized crossing								❖					
07. Bulbouts*	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
08. ADA-compliant curb ramps (two per corner)*	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
09. Raised intersection									❖	❖			
10. Textured crosswalk pavers	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
11. Pedestrian countdown signals	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖		❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
12. Reduce pedestrian walking interval to 3 ft./second	❖	❖	❖		❖	❖		❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
13. Bus bulbs			Southeast corner bus stop		Northeast, southeast, and southwest corner bus stops		Southwest corner bus stop				Northwest corner bus stop		Northwest and southwest corner bus stops
14. High visibility bus stops			❖		❖		❖				❖		❖
15. Time signals for cross-street traffic speed control	Post St.	Post St.	Post St.		Sutter St.	Post St.			Post St.	Sutter St.	Sutter St.		
16. Pedestrian-scale lighting	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖
17. Wayfinding signs to discourage jaywalking								❖					

* Where feasible. Curb radii should be designed as small as possible and accommodate typical vehicle use. Bulbouts are recommended on all corners where feasible, to be combined with bus bulbs as noted.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2009



Re-Envision Post and Sutter Streets

Post and Sutter Streets each currently provide three travel lanes. Post Street has two lanes eastbound and one lane westbound, while Sutter Street is the reverse (two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound). Based on existing traffic volumes, there is more than enough vehicle capacity to accommodate existing traffic more efficiently. By re-envisioning use of this right-of-way, a more “complete street” can be created to provide for other modes, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles, and commercial vehicles, without major impacts to auto circulation.

As mentioned in Section 7.1, truck double parking is a significant concern in Japantown, especially along Post Street. Double parking reduces vehicle throughput and pedestrian and vehicle sight lines. Additional commercial loading zones (yellow curbs and meters) and longer loading hours should be designated to reduce double parking and truck traffic. Coordination is necessary with existing merchants and the Japan Center renovation to ensure that the locations/hours of loading areas are viable.

Several options for reconfiguration of Post and Sutter Streets were presented to the community, as shown in the Post Street and Sutter Street cross-section alternatives in Figures 7.9 and 7.10. The community felt strongly that bicycle lanes were not desirable on Post or Sutter Streets. Converting one of the westbound lanes on Sutter Street to a bus-only lane that could be shared by bikes and buses may be acceptable. Community members generally do not support changing the Post Street configuration through Japantown; however, there is opportunity for improvement given the existing conflicts with vehicular and bike travel resulting from double-parking and truck loading. Alternative A, with a center, two-way left turn lane, may offer additional

flexibility for truck loading and unloading along Post Street. Where angled parking is feasible in the new cross-section, back-in angled parking is recommended based on the City’s design guidelines for bicycle facilities.

Pedestrian scrambles are recommended on Post and Sutter Streets at Buchanan Street to enhance further the pedestrian realm within Japantown. The same treatment is recommended at both intersections for consistency.

Increase Education and Enforcement Programs

Pedestrian safety experts advocate a three-pronged approach to improving pedestrian safety: education, enforcement, and engineering (the “3 E’s of safety”). In addition to the above engineering recommendations for the priority intersections, a comprehensive education and enforcement program is recommended. This program is also appropriate as a short-term response to pedestrian safety concerns in Japantown. Many of these recommendations have been tried in some form through previous efforts. A renewed focus on education and enforcement, especially targeted at seniors, is recommended.

More education focused on jaywalking and speeding can help address two key issues for pedestrian safety in Japantown. Bilingual pedestrian safety brochures could be made available and educational sessions could be hosted at some of Japantown’s community centers, such as the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC), Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC), and Nihomachi Little Friends. Information about safer places for seniors and children to cross and anticipated improvements could



Source: bikeportland.org

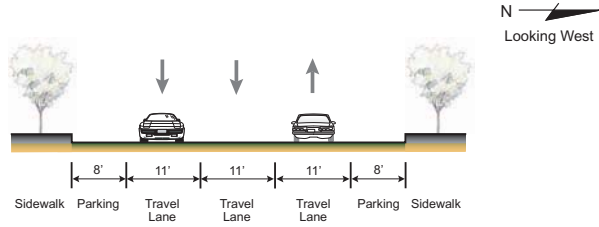
be provided. Additionally, posters, signs, and banners may be posted around Japantown, specifically during special events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival, to remind both pedestrians and drivers of safe walking and driving habits.

Enforcement strategies should target both pedestrians and drivers with goals to reduce speeding and jaywalking and encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians.

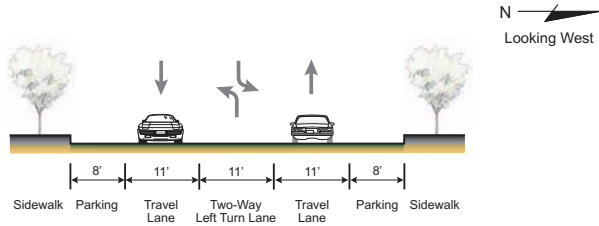
Pedestrian “sting” operations, with plain-clothed police officers in crosswalks and uniformed officers issuing citations for drivers who fail to yield the right of way to the pedestrian, have resulted in improved yielding behaviors in communities nationwide, and may be a candidate strategy for Japantown. The efficacy of this program is enhanced when the effort is sustained, publicized in the media, and tickets are supplemented with educational brochures.

Figure 7.9
Post Street
Cross-Section
Alternatives

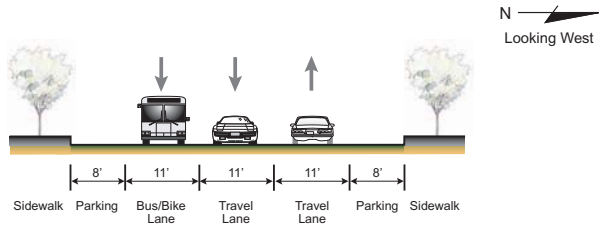
Existing Post Street



Post Street - Alternative A (Steiner to Gough)



Post Street - Alternative B (Laguna to Gough)



Post Street - Alternative B On-Street Parking Option (Steiner to Laguna)

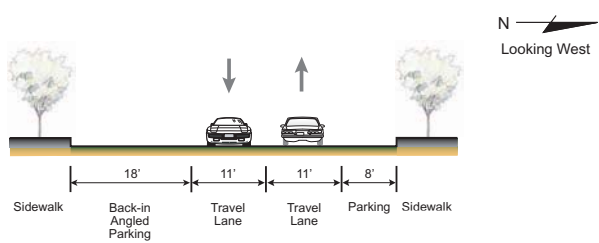
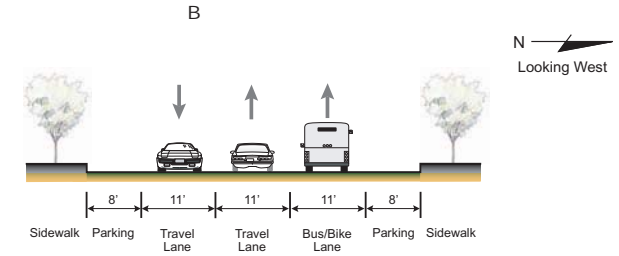
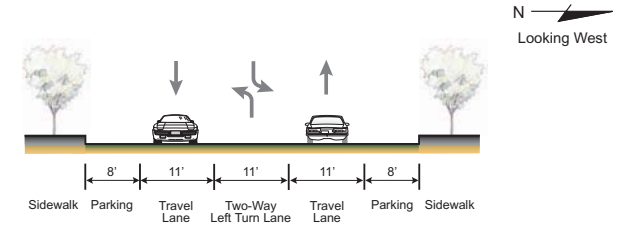
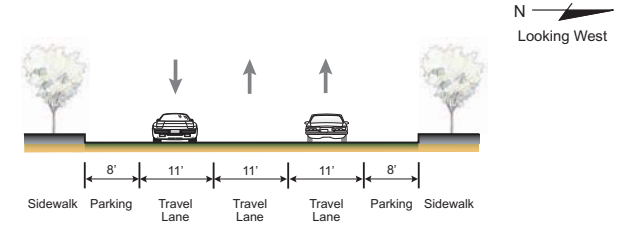


Figure 7.10
Sutter Street
Cross-Section
Alternatives



Additional short-term enforcement and speed reduction strategies include:

- Consider enhancing signage placement at problem intersections. For instance, the intersection of Laguna and Geary has a “no-turn” sign but its location, on the overhead arm of a traffic signal, reduces its visibility to drivers.
- Locate speed meters that alert drivers of their speed compared to the posted speed limit and flashing lights at the top and bottom of the Geary Boulevard tunnel to signal drivers to reduce their speed.

Improve Transit Access and Efficiency

In addition to enhancing the pedestrian realm in Japantown to facilitate safer and more comfortable circulation within the neighborhood, transit access to Japantown should be enhanced to improve access to the neighborhood from other locations throughout the region.

Currently, although transit service to Japantown is relatively rich, it is provided exclusively by conventional bus transit. The City and County of San Francisco has recently undertaken an effort to improve the overall performance of its bus network, which will include some changes to conventional bus service in Japantown.

Coordinate with the Transit Effectiveness Project

The Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is a partnership between the SFMTA and San Francisco Controller’s Office to increase the effectiveness of the City’s Muni transit system. Preliminary service and route changes have been proposed through the TEP. Changes that may affect transit service to Japantown include:

- Proposed shortening of the 2-Clement to run between 14th Avenue and Downtown, but no longer serve the Outer Richmond west of 14th Avenue.
- Proposed consolidation of the 2-Clement, 3-Jackson, and 4-Sutter into one line. The 3-Jackson and 4-Sutter would be eliminated, but extra service would be added on the 2-Clement. There would be additional “short line” buses that run only between Presidio Boulevard and downtown, where there is more demand. In the morning peak hour, there would be a bus every six minutes west of Presidio Boulevard (a 40% increase from the 10-minute frequency of the 2-Clement today), and a bus every three minutes east of Presidio (a 25% increase from the four minute combined frequency of the 2-Clement, 3-Jackson, and 4-Sutter today).

The TEP enhancements will also include additional real time information displays at bus shelters throughout San Francisco. All Muni buses are currently equipped with “NextMuni,” which provides current bus location and expected stop arrival times in real time via the Internet and information displays at select stops.

Bus bulb locations recommended to enhance pedestrian safety should be coordinated with any changes to routing and stops associated with the TEP.

Consider Re-routing the 1BX-California Express

The 1BX-California Express runs through Japantown on Pine Street (WB) and Bush Street (EB) between Gough Street and Fillmore, and turns on Fillmore Street to access California Street. Because the line offers express service, the bus stops only once in Japantown, at Fillmore Street and California Street.

Based on community input, rerouting the express 1BX-California Express “B” line from Fillmore Street to Gough Street (SB) and Franklin Street (NB) is recommended for consideration to reduce bus traffic and traffic congestion on Fillmore Street. This change would not affect the existing bus stop locations in the Plan area.

Coordinate with Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Project

In addition to improvements to the existing conventional bus service, the city is currently conducting an environmental assessment of implementing bus rapid transit service along Geary Boulevard. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) and the SFMTA initiated studies to assess the feasibility of bus rapid transit (BRT) service on Geary Boulevard and Van Ness Avenue in 2004. The SFCTA anticipates that BRT service will be implemented on both corridors by 2013-14.

The Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Study Report, published in May 2007, identified and assessed conceptual alternatives for bus improvements along Geary Boulevard. Implementation of the BRT may result in significant reconfiguration of Geary Boulevard in the vicinity of Japantown. The Project Team has begun evaluating the alternatives devised during the Feasibility Study and has identified revised alternatives for the Fillmore location, presented in Figure 7.11. Additional details regarding the proposed BRT service, including study documents, outreach events, and frequently asked questions, are available at www.gearybrt.org for the Geary project, and at www.vannessbrt.org for a similar effort on Van Ness Avenue.

The Japantown Task Force has provided comments to the SFCTA throughout the planning process. Going forward, coordination of Japantown development and infrastructure projects with the Geary BRT should be considered a priority. The coordination strategy should include:

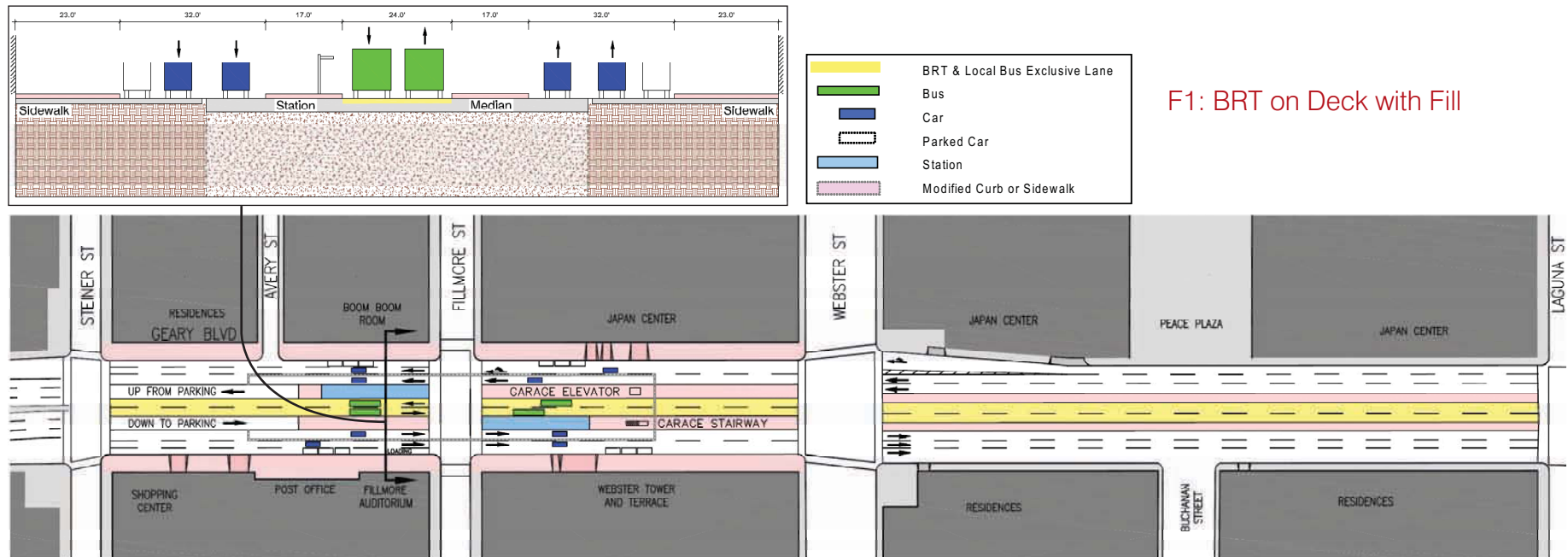
- Ensuring that the final selected design alternative for Geary Boulevard through Japantown is closely coordinated with plans for any future redesign of the Japan Center Malls and maintains access to the Japan Center Garage.
- Addressing pedestrian safety concerns at the following key intersections along Geary Boulevard:

Laguna, Webster, and Fillmore Streets, and evaluating potential crossing options at Buchanan.

- Coordinating the BRT construction schedule with any major construction and renovation efforts in Japantown, specifically Japan Center to determine the most advantageous construction plan for all interested and effected parties.

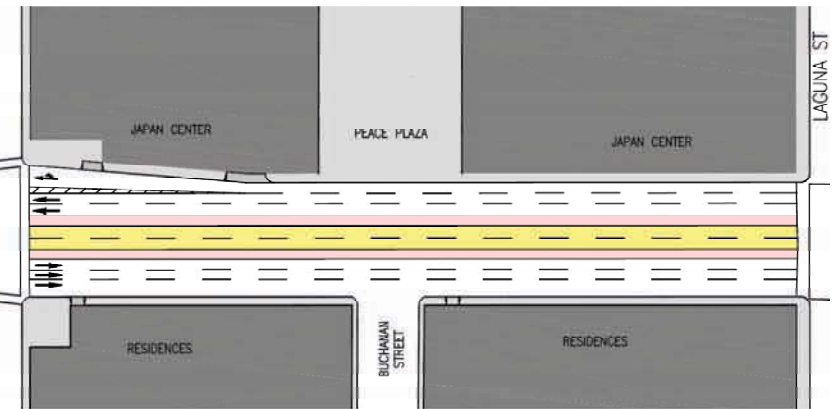
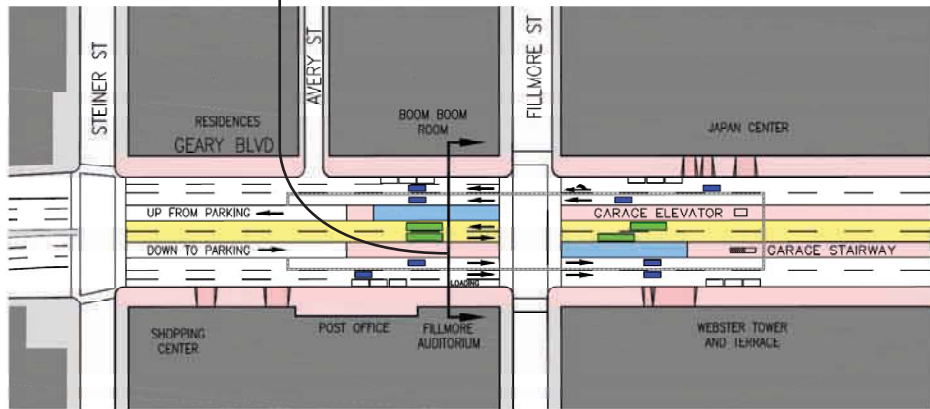
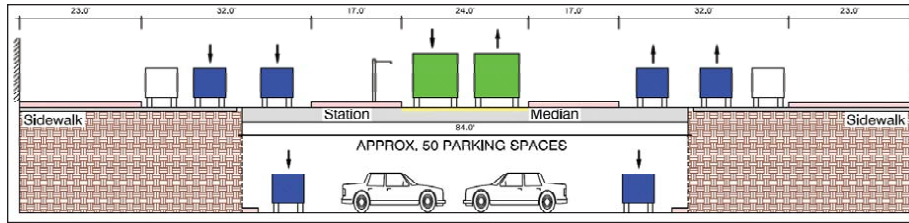
Near Japantown, Geary Boulevard currently operates as an expressway, grade separated from Fillmore Street, creating difficult crossing conditions where it returns to street level at Webster and Steiner Streets. Based on community input collected through a focus group, public meeting, and the Japantown Task Force, the fill

Figure 7.11
Five Conceptual Bus Rapid Transit Alternatives for Geary Boulevard (Fillmore Area)

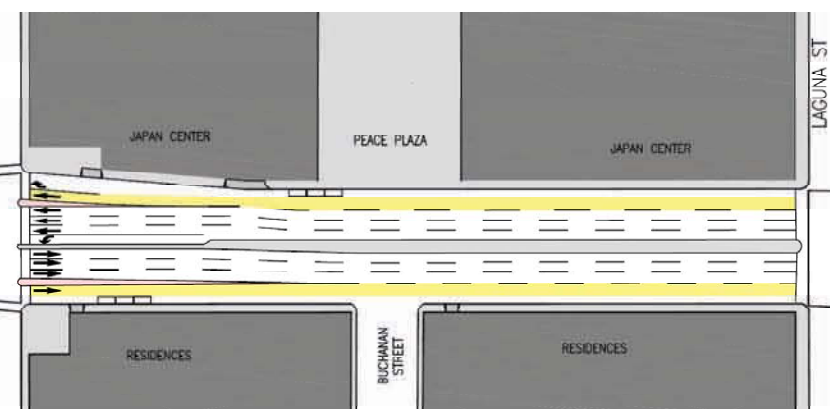
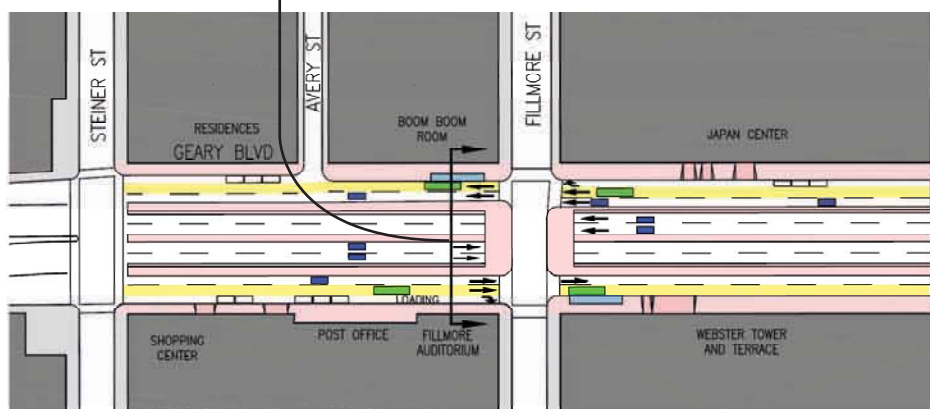
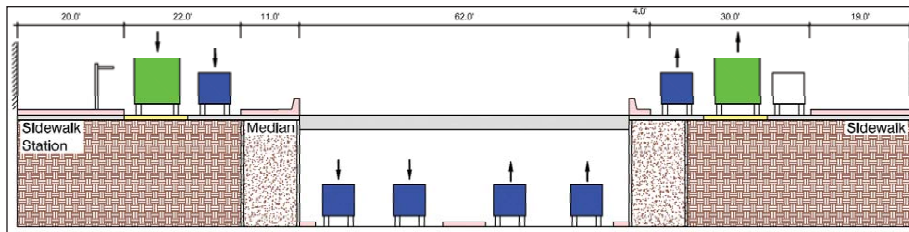


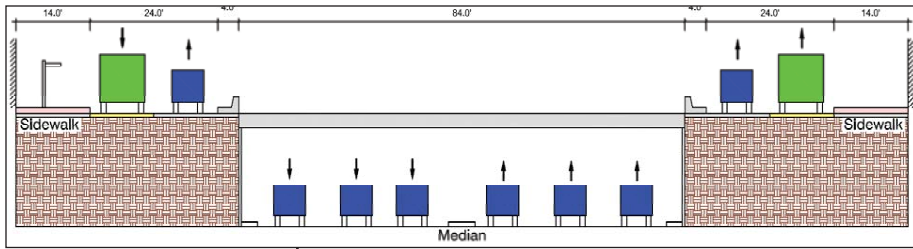
F1: BRT on Deck with Fill

F2: BRT on Deck with Parking

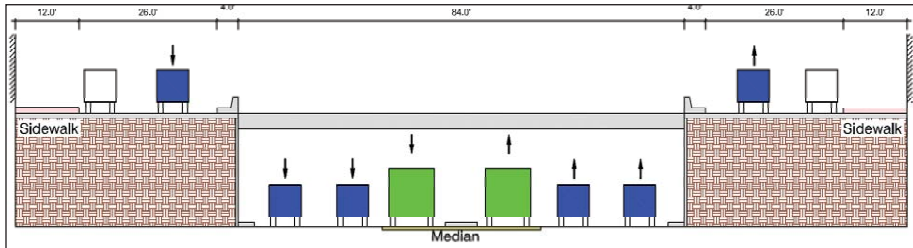
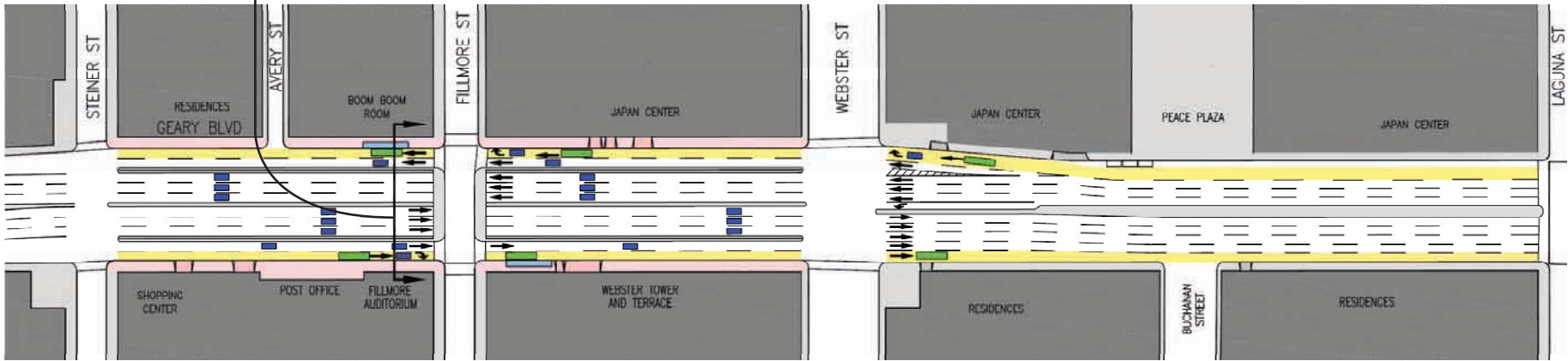


F3: BRT in Widened Service Road

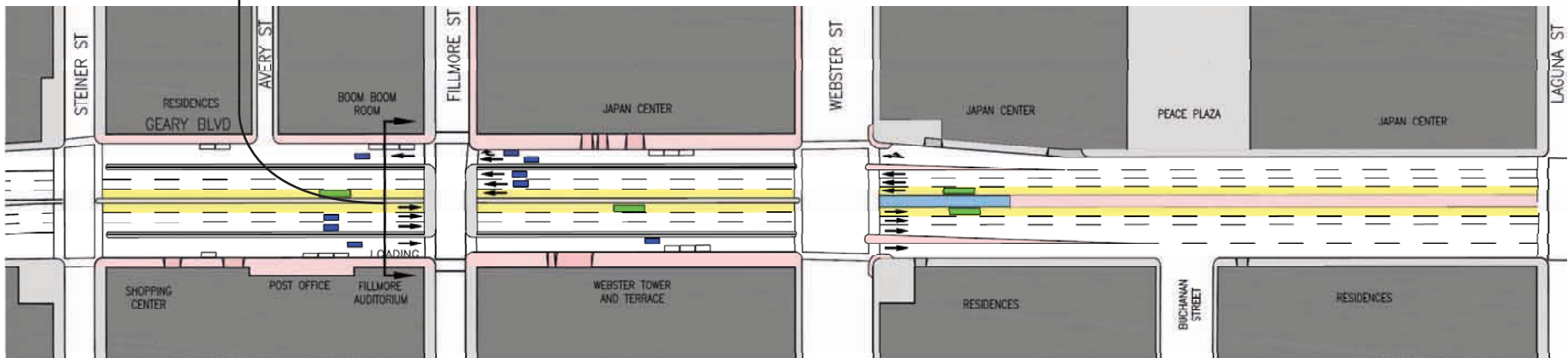




F4: BRT in Service Road



F5: BRT Underground, Station at Webster



options—those that would raise Geary Boulevard to be at the same level as its cross streets—received the most support.² These “fill options” are considered friendlier to pedestrians (especially seniors) because bus stops and stations would all be at street level and both transit riders and pedestrians would not be required to go up and down stairs. These options may even offer an opportunity to expand the existing garage in the area under the existing overpass. Though all options will improve the connection between Japantown and the adjacent neighborhoods, the options that retain the existing tunnel on Geary Boulevard underneath Fillmore and Webster Streets are considered less desirable because they may continue act as a vehicle-oriented barrier between Japantown and the Fillmore neighborhoods without significant reconfiguration of the use of the underpass. Community members also expressed strong concerns with an additional alternative that could move the BRT stop to Webster Street, citing the long walk for seniors and disabled persons seeking to transfer to the 22-Fillmore, and, if SFMTA were to instead move service to 22 service to Webster (at substantial cost), citing concerns of interactions between the linear park and trolley wires from new bus service.

During the environmental review process the Project Team will continue to refine the alternatives further to ensure the project delivers the greatest transit enhancements while addressing the desires and concerns of the community. It is important to note that the preference for the fill options was based on information available at a certain point in time. As the design and analysis progresses, new information may change certain aspects of the alternatives for the Fillmore Street underpass (e.g. cost, complexity, etc.) and, through them, public opinion or preference toward a particular alternative

Improve Parking Management

In addition to improving access to and within Japantown, the availability of parking within the neighborhood was raised as a top priority for the community.

Currently, demand for on-street parking in Japantown exceeds the supply. Off-street parking, including surface lots and garages, is generally available in the existing Japan Center garages. Several strategies could be employed in Japantown to offer both supply and demand management options to increase on-street parking turnover, reduce circling for parking, and promote off-street parking for longer-term and employee parking. All of these parking strategies must support the City’s transit-first policy.

Coordinate with SFpark Programs in Japantown

SFpark is a new “Smart Parking” management system for San Francisco, which includes several demonstration projects in the City. The program has the following goals:

- Make parking easier to find and easier to pay for.
- Reduce frustrating circling for parking, which means less congestion.
- Improve Muni’s reliability by reducing parking-related congestion.
- Reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.
- Increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other drivers by helping drivers be less preoccupied by the search for parking.

- Increase San Francisco’s economic vitality and competitiveness.
- Improve the quality of life in our City’s vibrant neighborhoods (<http://www.sfmta.com/cms/pproj/sfpark.htm>).

Portions of the Fillmore and Japantown neighborhoods have been selected as one of the demonstration locations beginning in September 2008. As part of this program, parking supplies in the Annex Garage and on-street parking in Japantown will be micromanaged. Parking availability information will be available by cell phone or on the Internet and parking prices will vary by time of day, day of week, and length of stay.

The following parking management strategies should be incorporated into the demonstration project if feasible, or coordinated with future SFpark efforts and policies.

Price On-street Parking Meter Rates to Meet Demand

Parking management best practices suggest that meter rates should be set at market rate such that each block face has 15 percent of its parking available during peak periods. Market rate pricing reduces the congestion, pollution, and overall frustration associated with circling for parking. Increased meter rates support economic vitality of shopping districts as well, providing ample and convenient parking for customers while encouraging employees and other longer-term parkers to park in remote or off-street locations (or perhaps use alternative travel modes).

² At each of these public involvement events, staff from the SFCTA was present to provide updates on the BRT concept and answer questions. Presentation materials included photo simulations and a 3-D, desktop model.

Determine Feasibility of a Parking Benefit District to Capture Increased Meter Revenue

Increased meter rates usually translate to increased parking revenue, which could be returned to the community through a parking benefit district. A parking benefit district is a district within which all or a portion of the increase in parking revenue generated through meters or parking permits in an area is returned to the community to pay for extra maintenance, security, beautification projects, marketing, etc. Currently, San Francisco has not adopted this strategy. This would require a policy change at the City level—currently, all parking meter revenue is required to go to Muni service.

The Japantown community generally supports the parking benefit district strategy to benefit the neighborhood's businesses and community organizations. If the City agrees to move forward with parking benefit districts through SFpark, the Japantown working group supports Japantown's becoming a pilot project with the following requirements:

- Priority for on-street parking should be given to residents on neighborhood residential streets.
- The benchmark parking occupancy by which parking rates are set shall be established with community input.
- A parking benefit district shall be coordinated with the proposed Community Business District (CBD) or an ad hoc committee consisting of the two funding sources to determine how the two sources of funding (property taxes and on-street parking meter revenue) shall be allocated.

Provide Additional Parking Regulation

Some blocks of Japantown have no parking regulations (other than street cleaning), such as the west side of Webster, between Post and Sutter Streets; parking regulations that prevents all-day employee parking should be considered in these locations.

Provide Additional Bicycle Parking

Bicycle parking should be provided on-street and in the City-owned parking garages throughout the study area where possible. The recommended curb bulbouts and bus bulbouts may provide opportunities for additional, on-street bicycle parking.

Improve Parking Supply Management

- Provide real time signage on key Japantown access routes to identify off-street parking locations and available spaces (see additional details on proposed wayfinding strategies in Chapter 6).
- Provide attended parking in parking garages to increase parking supply (full time, during peak hours, or as needed during special events). Experience with attended parking in local garages suggests this strategy may increase capacity up to 50-percent. Where possible, explore parking lifts for surface lots and garages.
- Allow shared parking in parking garages, including offering evening residential permits to reduce on-street parking demand.
- Reduce or relocate California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) employee parking to an alternate facility upon demonstrated demand.

Encourage and Maximize Mixed-use Development to Incorporate Structured Parking with New Commercial and Housing Development

New development may create additional opportunities for shared parking facilities. For example, a mixed-use development with structured parking could be provided on existing surface parking lots between Post and Sutter Streets or the Safeway surface parking lot (Fillmore Street at Geary Boulevard) as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.



Real Time Parking Availability Sign
Source: www.directionalsystems.com

Consider the Opportunity to Increase the City's Revenue by Providing New Structured Parking Under Geary Boulevard

As mentioned above, the Japantown community supports the Geary BRT fill alternative with potential structured parking provided under Geary Boulevard, in order to provide parking options for visitors to Japantown from the larger Bay Area Region. If structurally feasible, this parking could be provided as an extension to the Japan Center Parking Garage, which is owned by the City.

However, preliminary engineering analysis estimates that a) this proposed scheme is not structurally feasible if it was accessed from the Annex garage; b) existing utility lines and a pump station prohibit access from the Annex garage; and c) only 50 spaces could be gained costing \$50 Million each which do not justify the additional cost.

Set New Requirements for New Residential Development

To reduce the parking demand and supply associated with new development, the following requirements could be set for new residential developments in Japantown:

- Require transit passes with homeowners' association (HOA) dues or rents.
- Unbundle parking and/or reduce parking provisions: Unbundling parking requires residential units to be rented or sold separately from residential parking. Reduced parking provisions limit the number of parking spaces available for a residential development. Both strategies are appropriate for transit-oriented developments where significant non-auto options are available, such as potential new residential units in Japan Center, adjacent to the planned Geary BRT.

- Set maximum rather than minimum parking ratios: use a ratio of 1:1 in Zones 1 and 2, and 0.75:1 in Zone 3 (as described in Chapter 4: Land Use). Setting a maximum provision ratio of 1 space per unit (or 0.75 space per unit), but not requiring any spaces, allows developers to provide parking based on market demand, which is typically lower in transit-oriented areas such as Japantown. This policy is consistent with several other areas of San Francisco.

Provide CarShare and Secure Bicycle Parking in Off-Street Parking Areas

Enhancing the availability and convenience of alternative transportation modes is a key support strategy to make unbundled and market rate parking effective. CarSharing options can address mid-day travel needs, which may otherwise encourage employees to drive to/from Japantown.

Enhance Personal Safety and Wayfinding

Personal safety is another key concern in Japantown. Bringing more eyes to the street and more on-street activity to Japantown will encourage walking, bicycling, and transit ridership. Pedestrian-oriented development along Geary Boulevard and Webster Street and significant new residential development will enhance personal safety. Additionally, a staffed kiosk, or Koban, in Peace Plaza or Buchanan Mall is recommended only if it can be fully funded (based on previous experience with this strategy).

Finally, enhanced wayfinding for all modes will improve the ease of travel and advertise the available travel options for residents, employees, and visitors. Wayfinding strategies are presented in Chapter 6.

RECOMMENDATIONS
IN THIS CHAPTER:

Japan Center

- Ensure that Japanese-oriented Retail is the Centerpiece of Any New Development on the Japan Center Site
- Allow for Residential Development of Sufficient Height and Density in New Development on the Japan Center Site to Ensure that it is Financially Feasible
- Ensure that the City Participates in the Funding of a Reconstructed Parking Garage, which Includes Sufficient Spaces for Retail Shoppers and Other Visitors to Japantown
- Include Sufficient Parking to Serve New Residential Development, Balanced with a "Transit Oriented" Approach
- Include Existing Businesses in the Retail Mix of a New Retail Center
- Ensure that Any New Development Opens Up to the Neighborhood
- Integrate and Enhance Peace Plaza as a Central Community Gathering Space in the Redesign
- Integrate Japanese-influenced Design Aesthetic in the Center's Redesign
- Work with the Developer to Encourage Provision of Affordable Housing in the Neighborhood
- Work with All Parties to Create a Fair and Balanced Public Benefits Package