

Mountain View, California

Castro Street 100 Block Feasibility Study

August 25, 2021

Gehl





Who we are.

Gehl is an urban design consultancy focused on making cities for people. The starting point for our work is public life. Understanding public life helps communities create great public spaces and supports high quality of life.

Why we are here.

Gehl and Kimley Horn were selected by the City of Mountain View department of Public Works to conduct a pedestrianization feasibility study for the 100 block of Castro street in the downtown heart of the city.

Gehl

Kimley»Horn
Expect More. Experience Better.

Project Team



Blaine Merker
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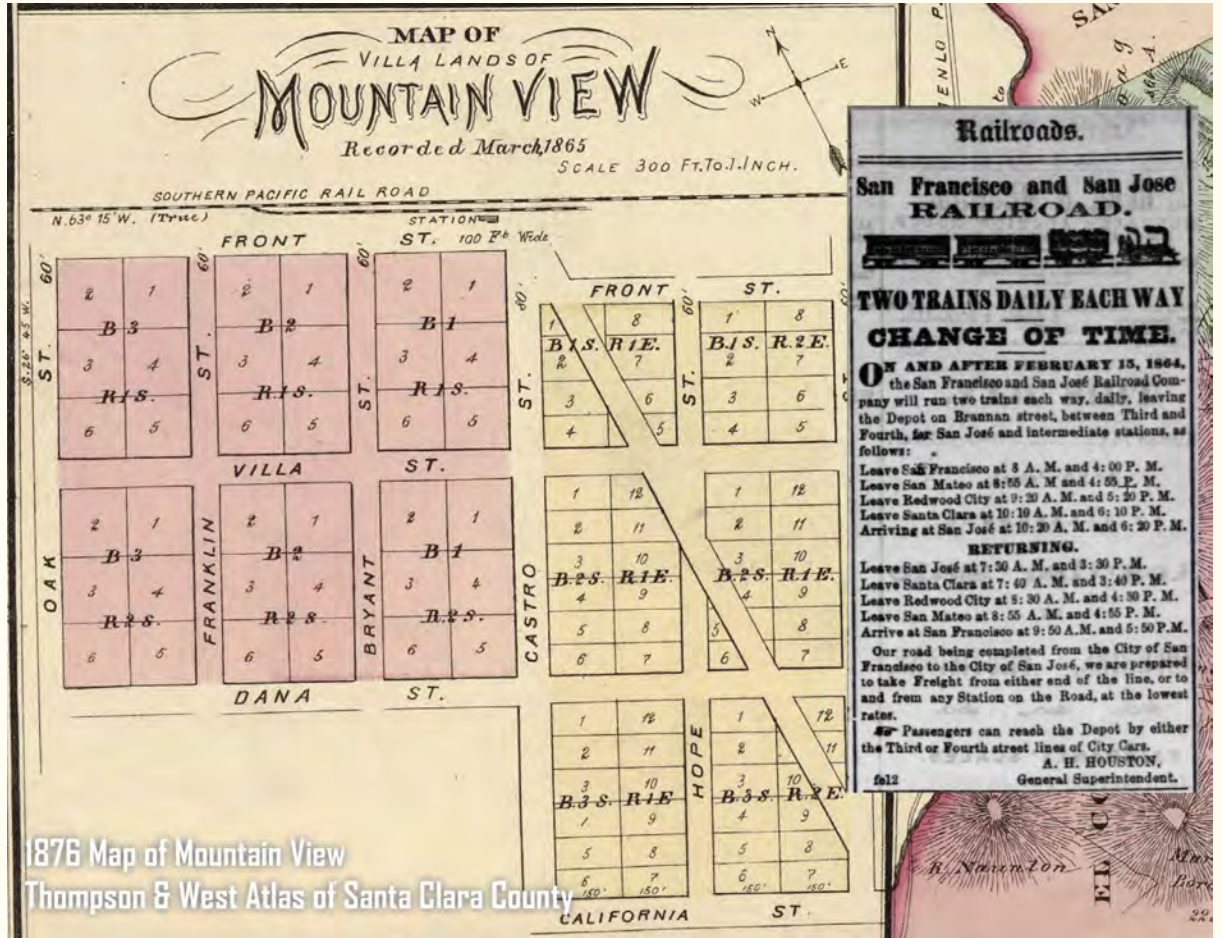
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Downtown Mountain View

Site History

Site History



Site History



Site History

Mid-Century: Castro + Stierlin & Moffett
MV's main north-south road.

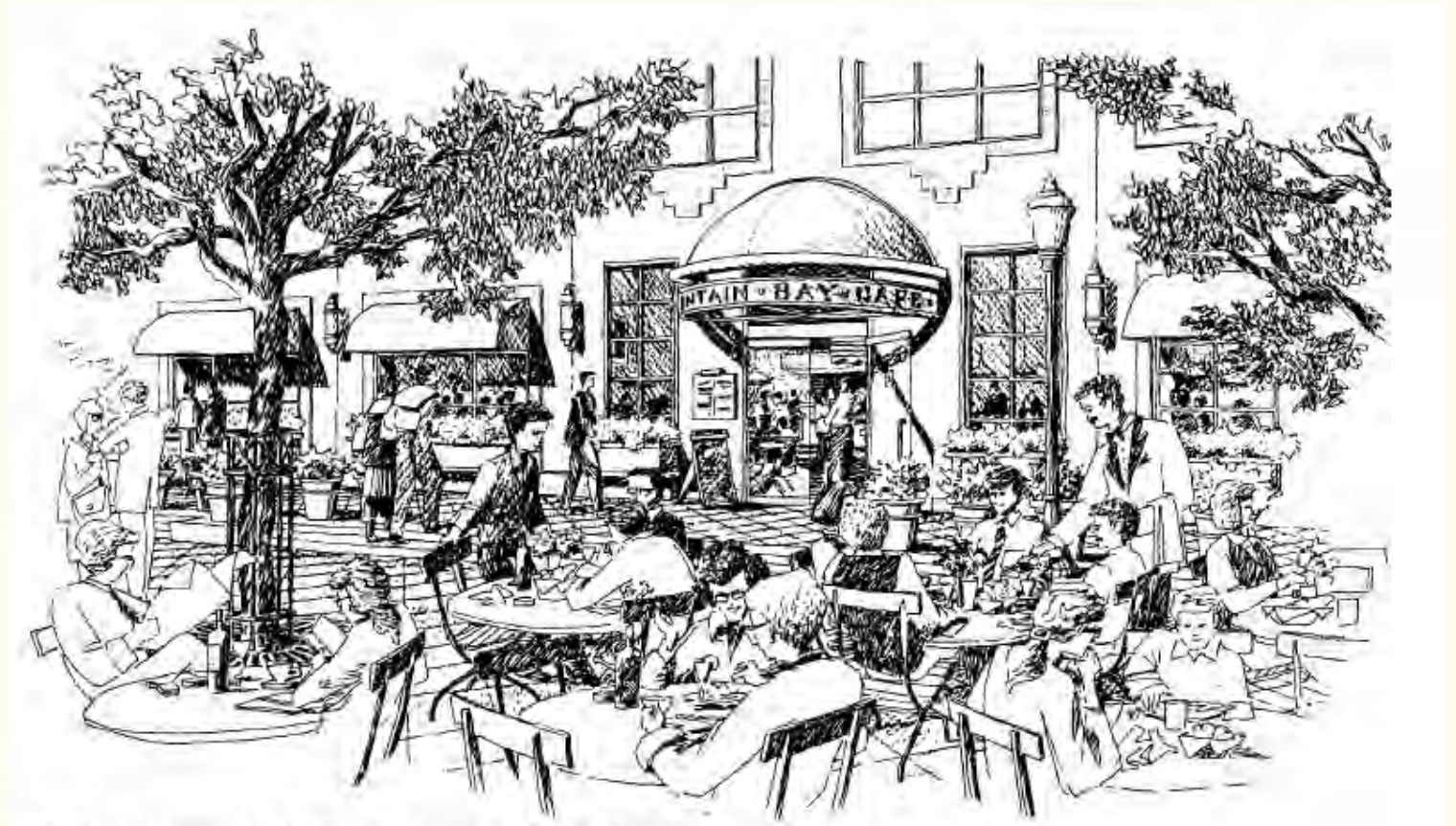


Site History

Mid-Century: Castro + Stierlin & Moffett
MV's main north-south road.



Site History



1988 artist concept of sidewalk dining on Castro Street.

Source: Mountain View Downtown Precise Plan

Site History



Downtown Mountain View

Site Context

What makes up Downtown

Between Evelyn and El Camino Real, there are...

318

Businesses ¹

600+

People cross Villa Street along
Castro every hour ²

11

Off-street Parking Structures ³

464,000

Square feet of Retail and
Restaurant Space¹

6

Unique city events each year

1,600

Off-street Parking Spaces ³

1,200,000

Square feet of Office Space ¹

2

Recurring events every week in
the Summer

^{*} Sources:

1. ULI Downtown Technical Assistance Panel, 2019
2. Estimate, based on Kimley Horn Grade Separation and access Project Movement Volumes, April 2019
3. National Data & Surveying Services Parking Study, Fall 2019

Site Context

Castro Street is “The Heartbeat of the City”

Castro Street is Mountain View’s oldest commercial corridor and is the heart of Downtown Mountain View, a mixed-use, walkable city-center for residents and visitors alike.

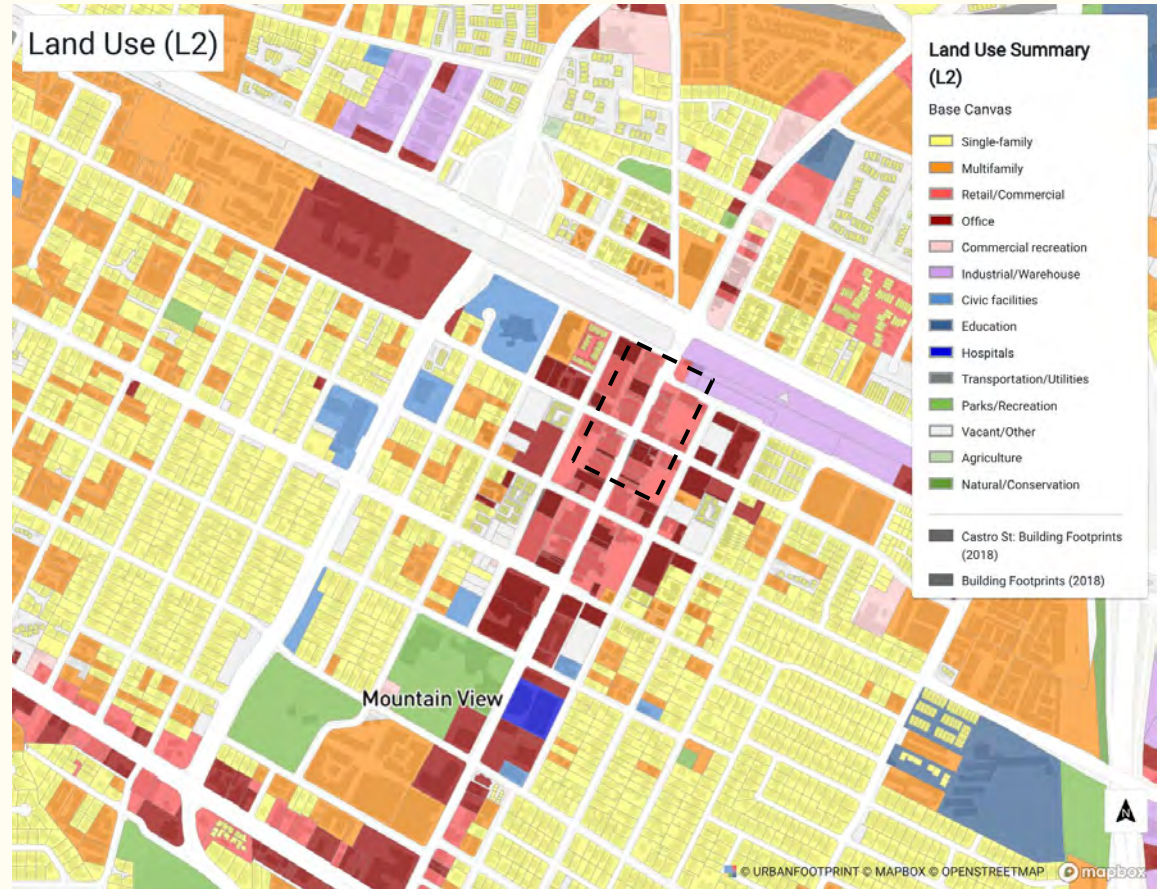


Site Context

A well-developed cluster of walkable commercial and retail space

Downtown Mountain view is a destination for unique restaurants and shopping experiences.

The northern portion of Castro Street features more restaurants and retail stores, while the southern portion hosts more office space, recreational areas, and municipal buildings.



Source: Urban Footprint

“....This is a neighborhood of intimately scaled buildings that displays a patina earned only through decades of organic growth.”

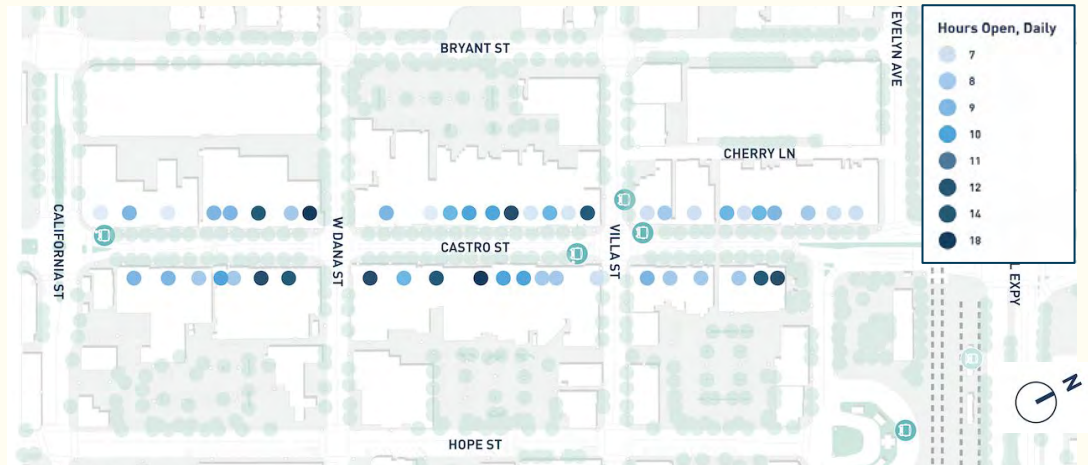
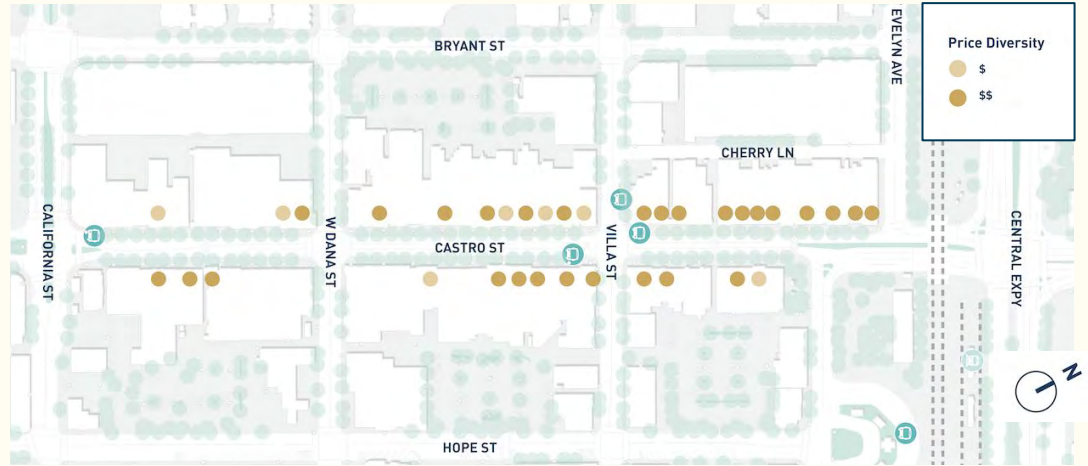
-ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP), 2019

Site Context

Strong, authentic businesses with local and regional appeal

Castro Street is home to many different types of local businesses across a variety of price points that attract a diverse mix of customers. These ground-floor businesses, mostly restaurants and retail establishments, bring people to Downtown Mountain View throughout the day and into the night.

Local residents, daytime employees, and weekend visitors are attracted to Castro's one-of-a-kind businesses and the intimate scale and feel of its urban fabric.

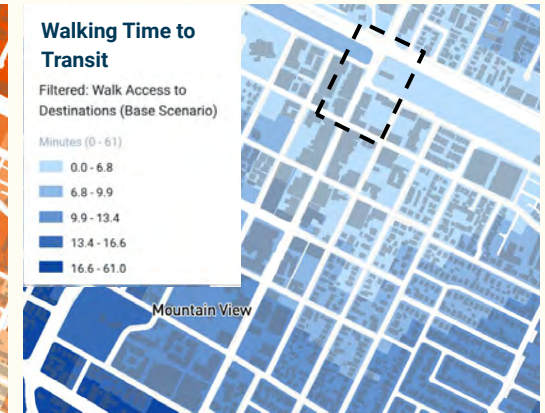
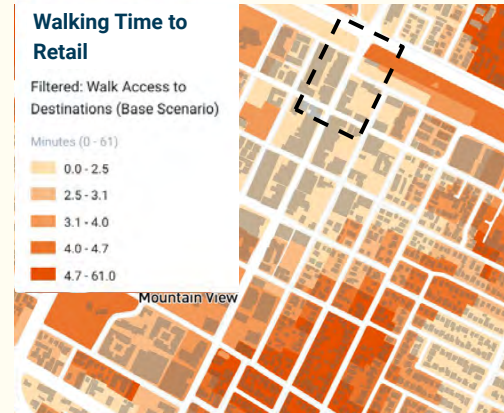


Site Context

Excellent access to many mobility choices

With its small blocks and fine-grain urban fabric, Castro Street is very walkable and provides a variety of retail destinations. **The Mountain View Transit Center is located adjacent to Castro's 100 block and provides a key connection to local and regional transit.**

The Transit Center hosts Caltrain Rail, VTA Bus and Light Rail, MVGo Shuttle, Mountain View Shuttle, and a number of private mobility services that serve large employers to the north of downtown.



Source: Urban Footprint

Site Context

A variety of off-street parking options

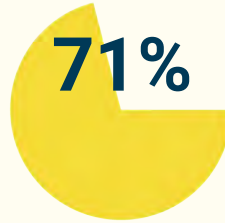
There are **11 Parking Garages** in Downtown Mountain View, hosting almost **1,600 parking spaces**. Although some stakeholders believe that there is a perceived lack of parking in Downtown Mountain View, a study performed in Fall 2019 found that **adequate parking exists during peak hours**.

In addition, **the new Mountain View Transit Center Master Plan includes 300+ more parking spaces** to the northeast of Castro Street.

The Urban Land Institute's 2019 Technical Assistance Panel identified **better parking management, visibility, and efficiency** as a main area of focus for the city.

Weekday Peak

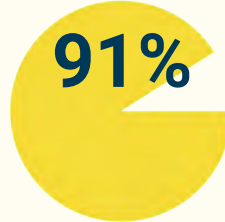
Wednesday at 6:00 pm



Of parking spaces in public lots and garages are used, with a **surplus of 460 spaces**

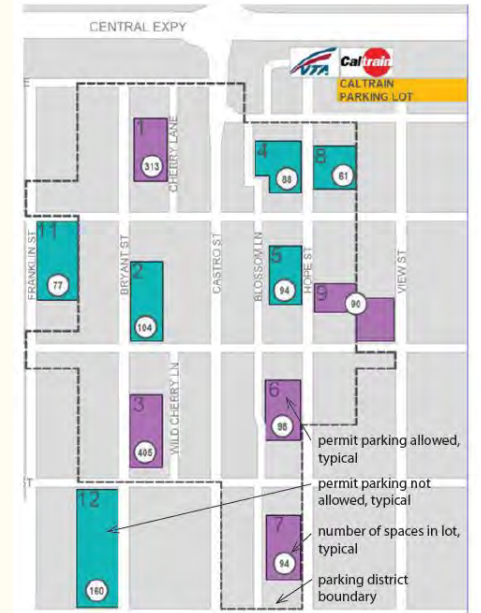
Weekend Peak

Friday at 9:00 pm



Of parking spaces in public lots and garages are used, with a **surplus of 147 spaces**

Downtown Parking



Downtown Mountain View parking district. Courtesy City of Mountain View.

Site Context

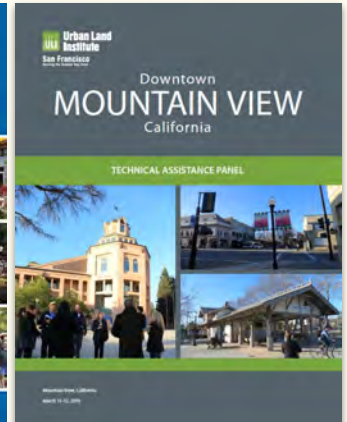
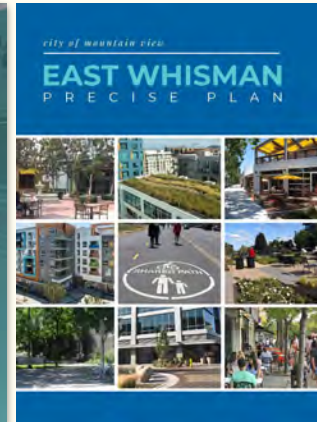
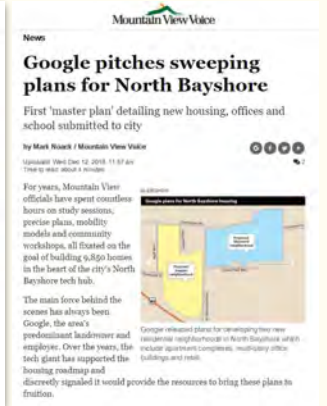
Change is coming to Mountain View

A number of upcoming projects will change how people live, work, and arrive in Mountain View, including:

- **CalTrain Modernization Program**, including Electrification
- **Castro Street Grade Separation Project**
- **Mountain View Transit Center Master Plan**
- **Google expansion projects**, including North Bayshore office and residential expansion
- **East Whisman Precise Plan**

In support of these changes the city has also commissioned studies, such as ULI's **Downtown Mountain View Technical Assistance Panel** in 2019.

These projects are crafting a safer and more transit-friendly future for Mountain View.



Site Context

The new Transit Center will be the “Nexus of Mobility” for Mountain View

“The Transit Center is envisioned as a hub of activity for Mountain View, **servicing as the nexus of mobility for the City and an active public place integrated into thriving Downtown Mountain View.**”

It will both **expand the reach of Downtown Mountain View** and **support the growth of its existing and new businesses** by improving local and regional access and connectivity.”

- Mountain View Transit Center Master Plan,
Kimley-Horn



Site Context

More people will come Downtown and move around by foot, bike and transit than ever before.

Movement patterns in Downtown are already changing: Castro Street has been closed to vehicle traffic since the Summer StrEATS pilot began in Summer 2020, and the intersection with Central Expressway will be permanently closed in the near future.

These changes prioritize transit service over private vehicle movement, and will draw more pedestrians and bicyclists to downtown Mountain View.



A blue-tinted photograph of a pedestrian-friendly street, likely Castro Street in Mountain View. The street is lined with tall, leafy trees on both sides. In the foreground and middle ground, there are several outdoor seating areas with wooden picnic tables and benches. Some people are sitting at the tables, and others are walking. There are also some planters and a sign that says "CHECK OUT OUR FAMILY". The overall atmosphere is relaxed and community-oriented.

**Mountain View has a bold vision,
and a more pedestrian friendly
Castro Street will help us get there**

Castro Street 100 Block

Physical Characteristics & Dimensions

Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

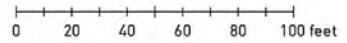
100 Block Street Plan



100 Block of Castro St - Mountain View CA

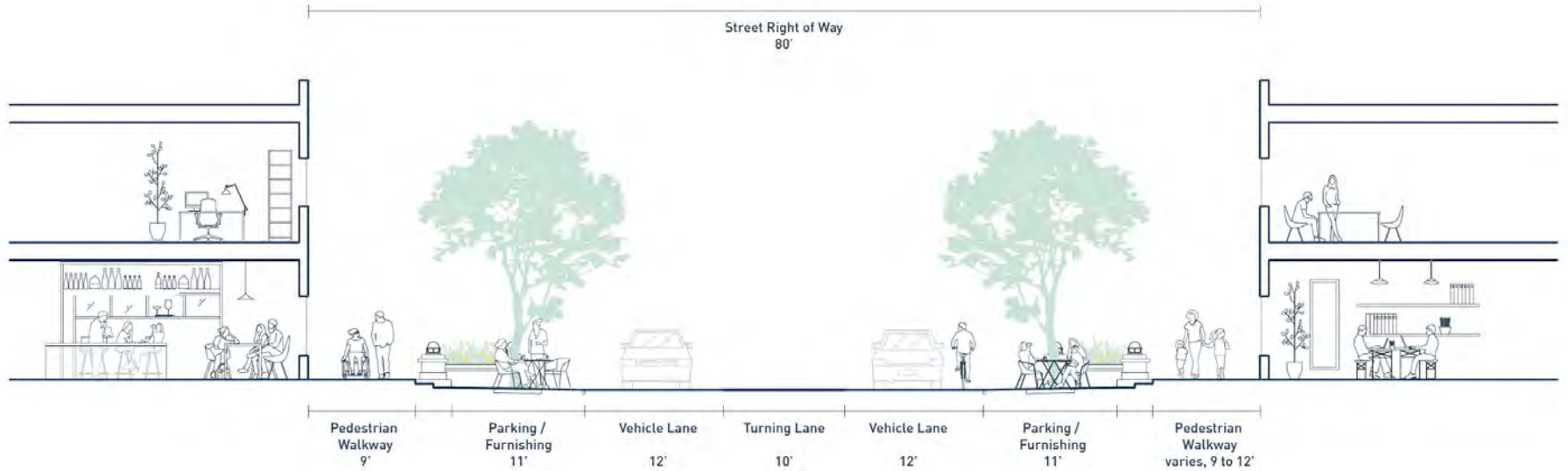


1:500 Scale



Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

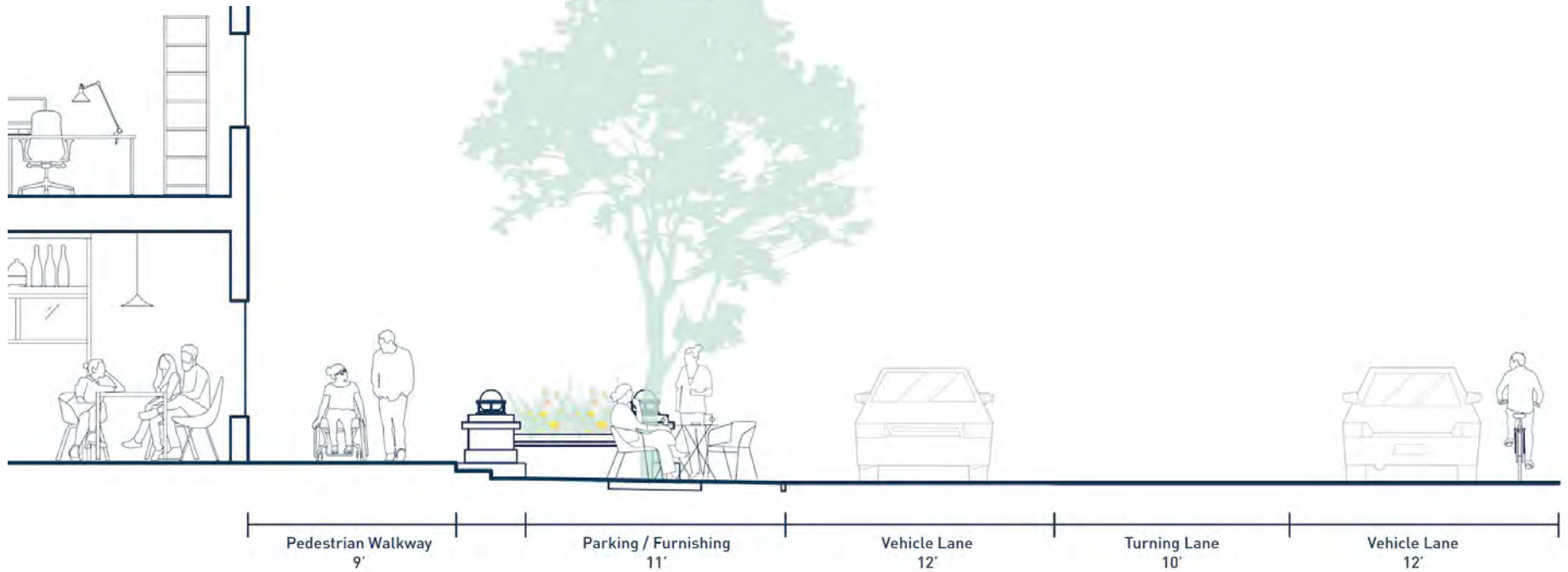
100 Block Street Section



Street Right of Way
80'

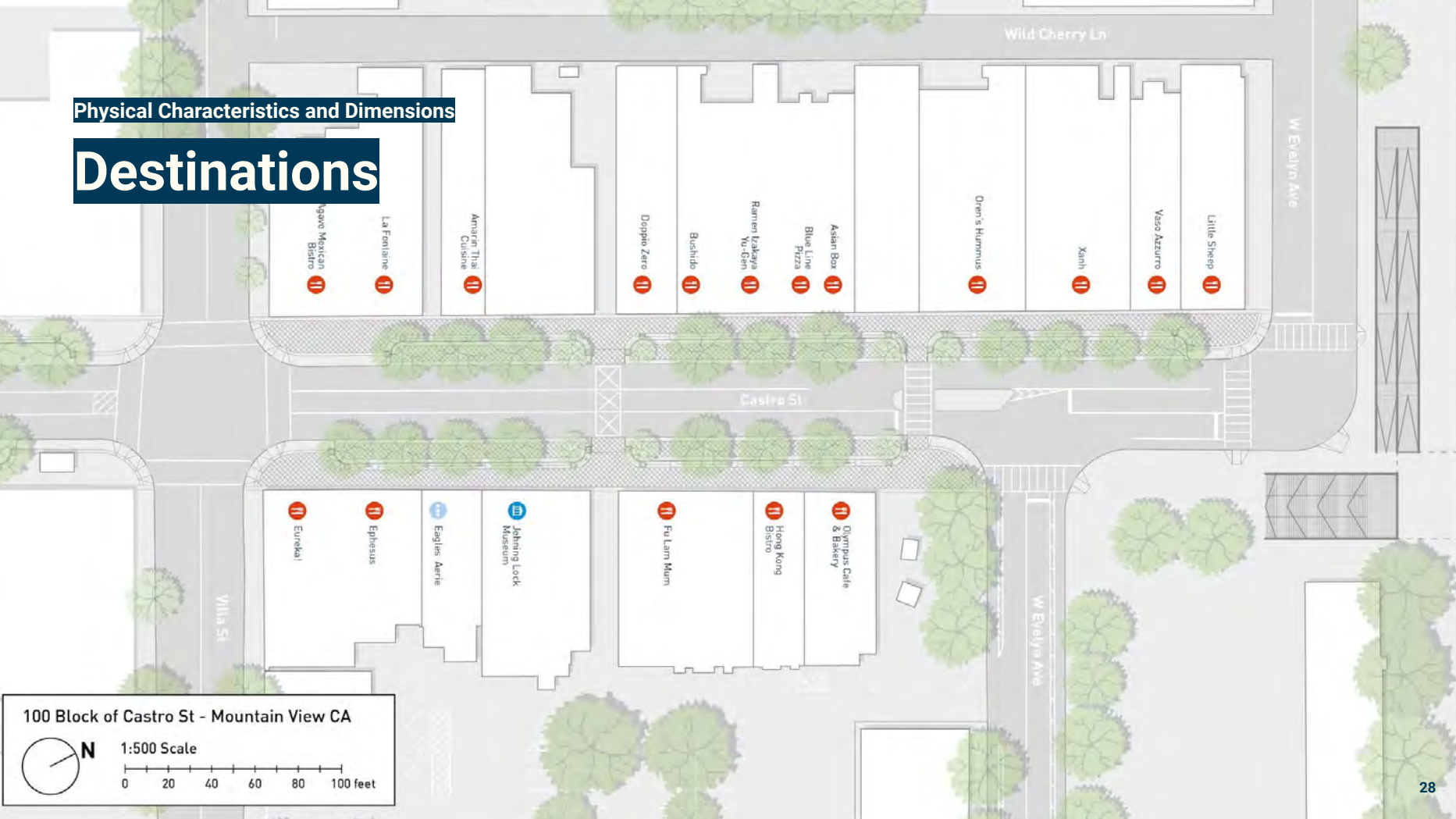
Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

100 Block Detail Section

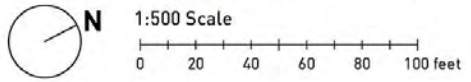


Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

Destinations



100 Block of Castro St - Mountain View CA



Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

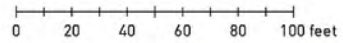
Street Trees



100 Block of Castro St - Mountain View CA



1:500 Scale

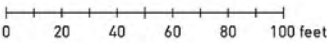


Physical Characteristics and Dimensions

“Flex Zones”



100 Block of Castro St - Mountain View CA

N 1:500 Scale



0 20 40 60 80 100 feet

Flex Zone Use Legend

-  Patio Seating (11)
-  Street Parking Space, Free for 1 hour (8)

Source: Google Street View, dated February 2020

Castro Street 100 Block

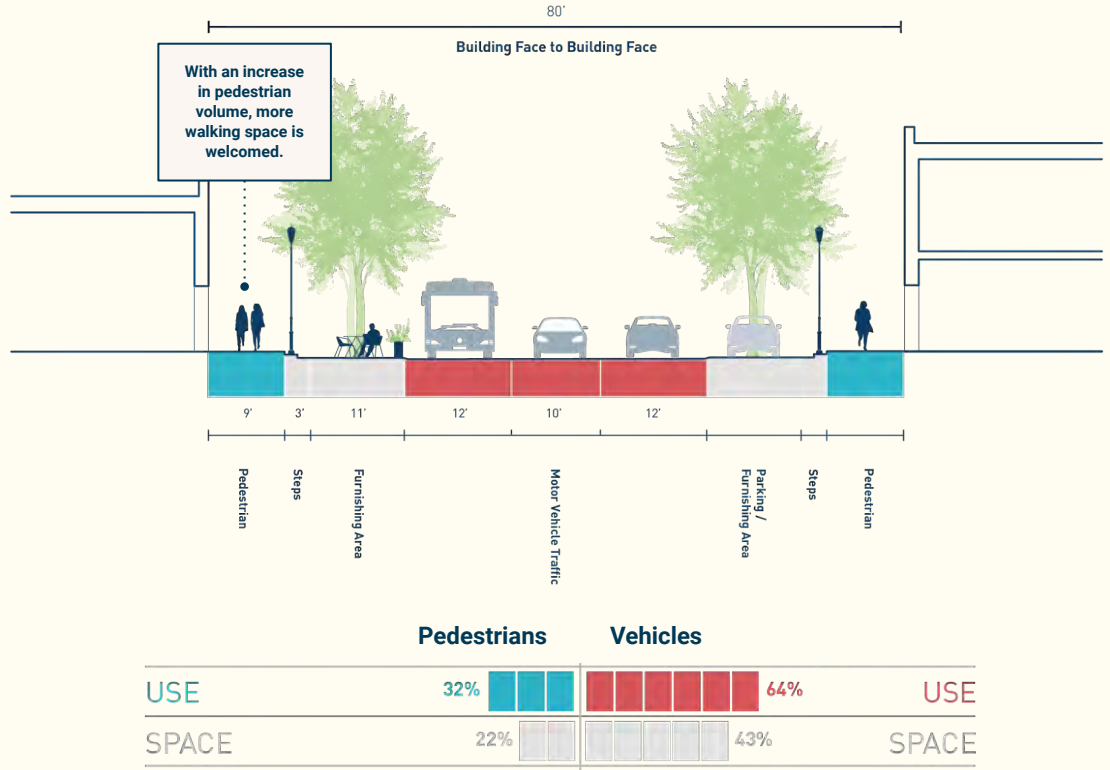
Public Space & Public Life Insights

Public Space & Life Insights

1. There is a mismatch between mode use and space allocation

In 2019, Pedestrians made up 32% of the movement on Castro Street but were only allocated 22% of the street. Vehicles accounted for 64% of movement, and took up 43% of the space.

Castro Street's ROW allocation matches its **current** high-throughput of vehicles, but we expect this to change dramatically with the closure of Castro Street at Central Expressway and an increase in pedestrian traffic.

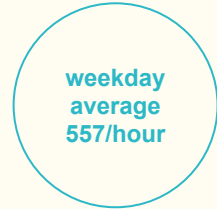
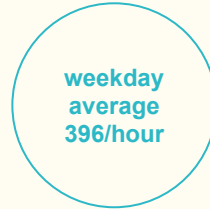
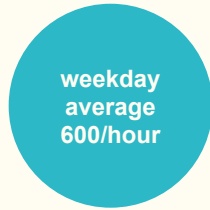


Source: Kimley Horn Grade Separation and access Project Movement Volumes, April 2019

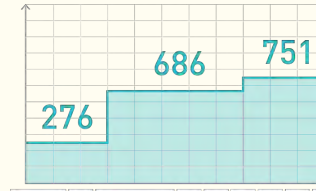
Public Space & Life Insights

2. Castro Street will need more room for pedestrians

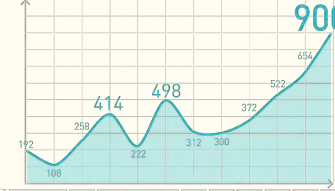
Castro Street's current pedestrian counts are already comparable to other, much more pedestrian-oriented streets in North America, and we expect pedestrian volumes to double or triple with the coming changes to Downtown Mountain View.



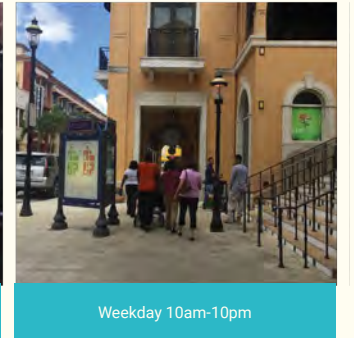
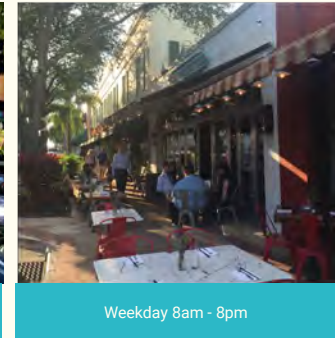
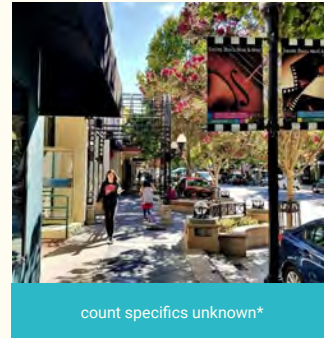
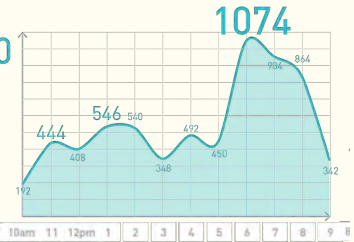
Castro Street
Mountain View



Clematis Street East
West Palm Beach



Rosemary Street - City Place
West Palm Beach



* Source: Kimley Horn Grade Separation and access Project Movement Volumes, April 2019

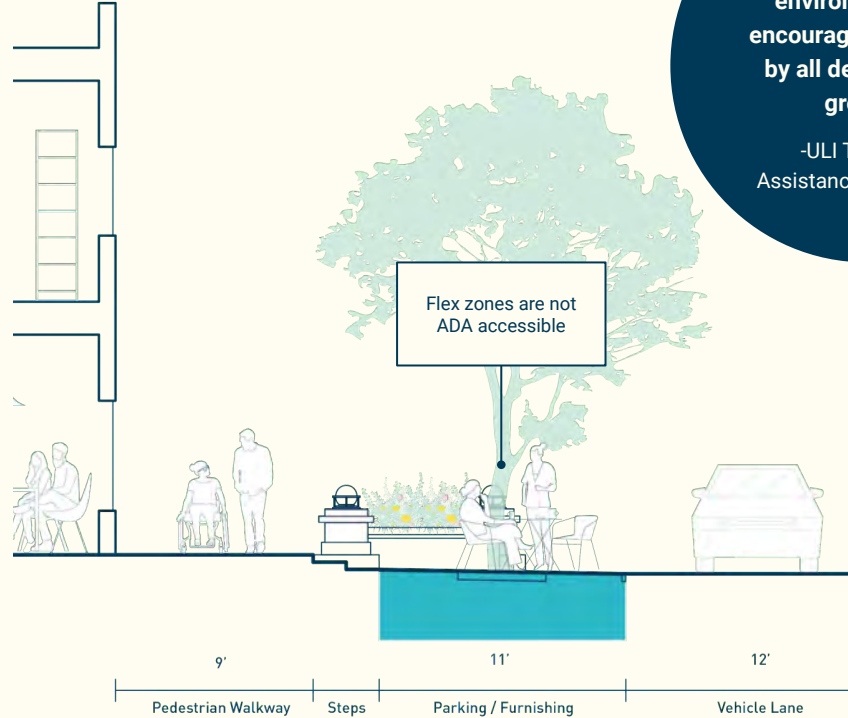
Public Space & Life Insights

3. The 'flex zone' was pioneering, but could better prioritize people over parking

Though Castro Street was designed with 'flex-zone' edges to accommodate parallel parking, **two thirds** of these spaces have been converted by local businesses to host outdoor patio seating.

The curb features two steps between the flex-zones and the sidewalk, but **these steps do not provide ADA access and do not meet the standards of contemporary accessibility design.**

It is time for the street design to follow the lead of these businesses and craft an experience where **public life is prioritized over vehicle storage.**



"Ensure an appealing, accessible and safe environment that encourages active use by all demographic groups"

-ULI Technical Assistance Panel, 2019

Public Space & Life Insights

4. With the current street design, you need to pay to sit on Castro Street

Paid Seating, provided by businesses for their patrons on the sidewalk or within the streetside 'flex-zone', accounts for 110 Tables and 223 Seats on the 100 block.

Public seating, free for all to enjoy, is limited to 10 planter benches located at mid-block crossings and street intersections. These benches together can accommodate about 50 people total.

Observations from Castro Summer Streets show that there is a latent demand for more public seating. This simple gesture could extend an invitation to other street users that are currently excluded and create a more diverse public life.

Before Castro Summer StrEATS...



82%

of seating on the 100-block was 'paid' and only open to patrons of the businesses providing the street furniture

Source: Google Street View, dated February 2020

Public Space & Life Insights

5. Wayfinding is lacking for pedestrians and motorists

The wayfinding signage for pedestrians and motorists in Downtown Mountain view is lacking. **By improving this communication, we can help visitors and residents explore Downtown Mountain View more confidently and comfortably.**

Pedestrians should be able to find local amenities without a smartphone, such as public restrooms, transit stops, parks, and parking lots.

We also know from ULI's Technical Assistance Panel that there is still a perceived lack of parking despite a surplus of spaces even during peak hours. By better communicating parking lot locations and availability, vehicles will move more safely and efficiently.



Public Space & Life Insights

6. The mature tree canopy offers a fantastic micro-climate

Castro Street's lush tree canopy is a precious resource - this is another resource that only comes with age and authenticity and must be nurtured in future design iterations that keep people comfortable and close to nature.

Trees help shade the street, create a sense of enclosure and safety, and provide a cool micro-climate on hot summer days.



Public Space & Life Insights

7. Castro's street design should be as great as the buildings that frame it

The 100 block has well proportioned, human scale architecture with lots of windows and a rhythm that encourages people to walk, linger, and visit ground-floor businesses.

These architectural characteristics are very valuable, and a **well-designed streetscape would compliment these human-scale features and create a big payoff for the city and local businesses.**

"The Downtown area already authentically possesses what developers spend years, and untold sums, trying to recreate, often unsuccessfully..."

-ULI Technical Assistance Panel, 2019



Public Space & Life Insights

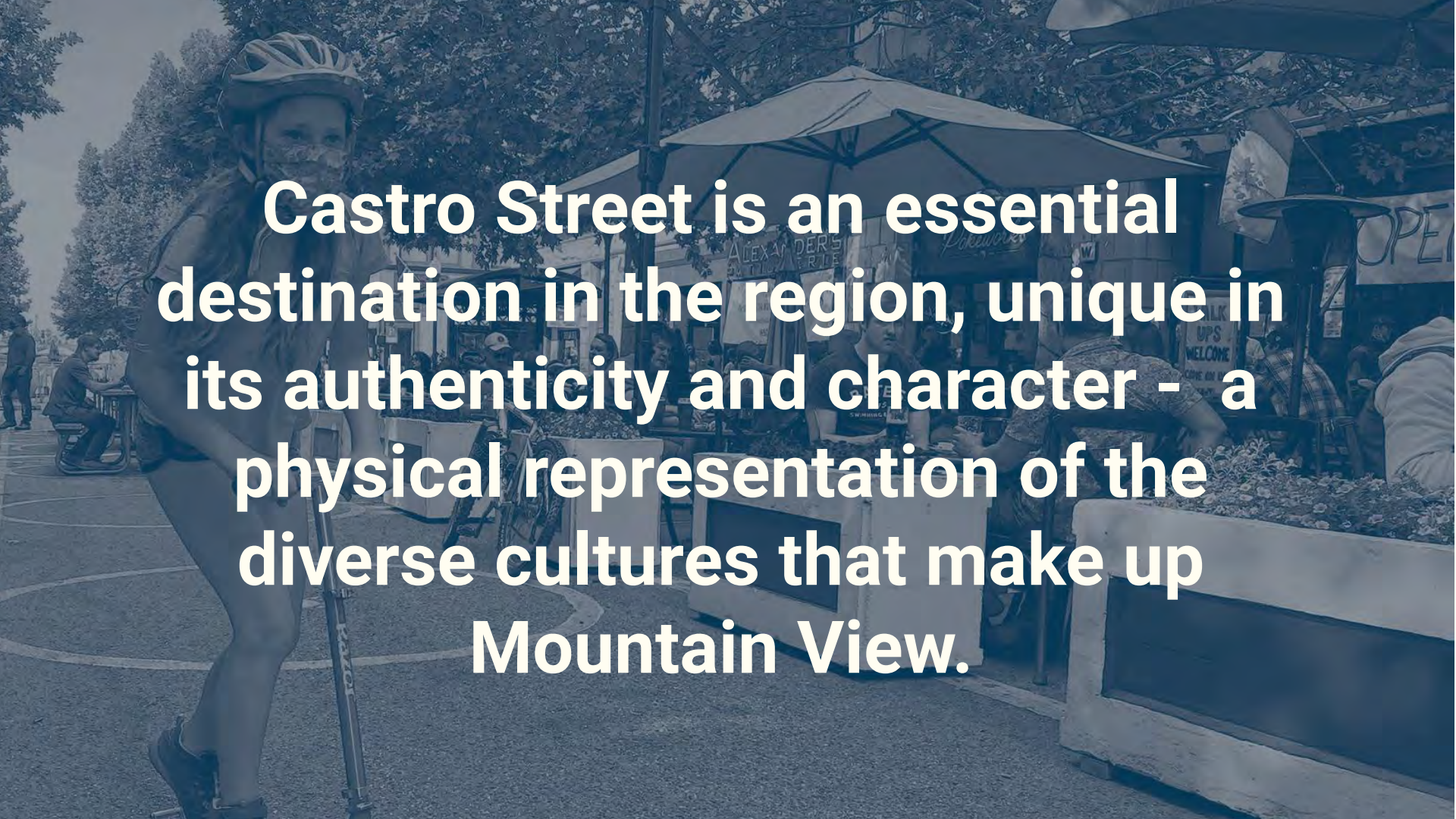
8. People in Mountain View loved Castro Street before, but they love it even more without cars.

191 responses were captured by an intercept survey during the Summer StrEATS pilot. Of those responses, **94.6% of the people wanted to see “more of this” in Mountain View**, with dozens of write-in responses asking to keep the street car-free.

The street pilot invited people to come more frequently and stay longer - 64% visited multiple times and 54% planned to stay for more than one hour.



* Comments from Castro Summer StrEATS intercept survey



Castro Street is an essential destination in the region, unique in its authenticity and character - a physical representation of the diverse cultures that make up Mountain View.

Castro Street 100 Block
Vision for Downtown

“Downtown Mountain View is **the historic center and civic focus of the community, and the “heartbeat” of the City.**”

“**The downtown is also the natural place to go** to meet one’s friends, relax outdoors over a cup of coffee, pick up some groceries, find entertainment or just go for a stroll.”

“Downtown Mountain View is not just a physical space but **a community of people.**”

“The downtown [...] will support the broader community by being an exciting, attractive and vital core, **a place that defines what is best about Mountain View.**”

- Extracts from The Vision for Downtown Mountain View, Downtown Precise Plan (1988, updated June 2019)

Castro Street 100 Block

Design Principles & Strategies For a Great Street

1. Prioritize people walking

Make it easy, intuitive, and accessible

2. Focus on the kind of life you want to invite

Design and program for the activities you want the street to support

3. *Public Space is a verb*

A street must be actively cultivated and nurtured to support great public life



Prioritize people walking

Make it easy, intuitive, and accessible

1. **Create an extensive pedestrian surface with minimal interruptions or grade changes**
2. **Design spaces to invite intuitive movement**
3. **Provide wayfinding to communicate key information and distances to neighborhood destinations**
4. **Introduce pedestrian scale lighting for safety and comfort**
5. **Only invest in public realm where you have or will have active ground floors**

2 Focus on the kind of life you want to invite

Design and program for the activities you want
the street to support

1. **Fill the gaps in the day, week or season**
2. **Design and program to support everyday use as well a major events**
3. **Invite new users and new uses**
4. **Layer programs, offer something for everyone**
5. **Make everyone comfortable, provide seating for all ages and abilities**

3 **Public Space is a verb**

A street must be actively cultivated and nurtured to support great public life

1. **Focus on programming and activation to complement any design improvements**
2. **Consider empowering a downtown organization to focus on programming, activation and business recruitment**
3. **Commit to a higher level of maintenance than an ordinary street**
4. **Get people involved in the process at every step!**

Castro Street 100 Block
Concept Alternatives

Concept Alternatives

A: "Expand Public Space"



Street design prioritizes space for...



Quality of Connection to Transit Center
Medium

Public Space Gain
Medium

B: "Castro Street Plaza"



Street design prioritizes space for...



Quality of Connection to Transit Center
Medium

Public Space Gain
Large

C: "Evelyn Realignment"



Street design prioritizes space for...



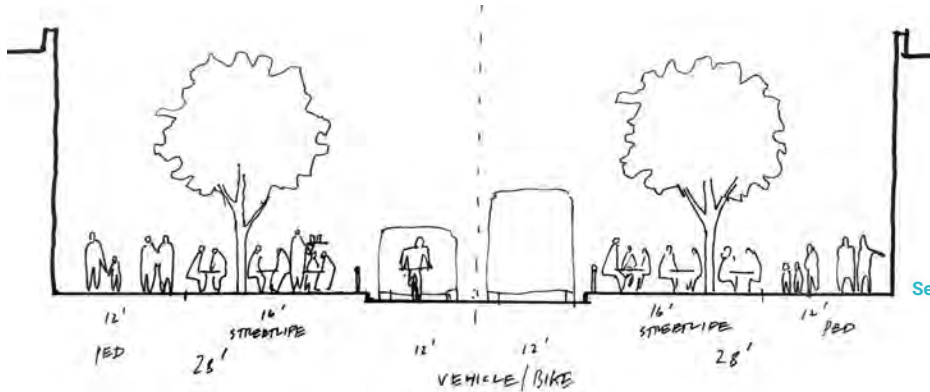
Quality of Connection to Transit Center
Large

Public Space Gain
X-Large

Concept Alternatives - Alternative A

Expand Public Space

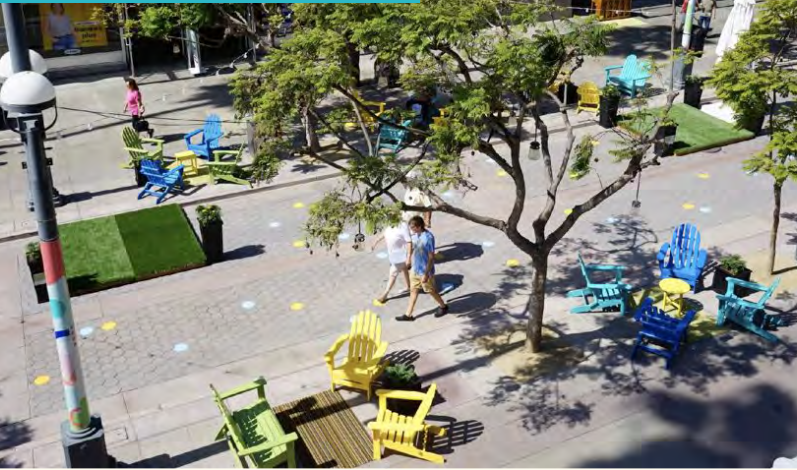
- Allow for additional public space
- Remove 7 parking spaces on Castro Street
- Allow for expanded flex zone and patio seating



Section Condition A-A'



Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica



Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica



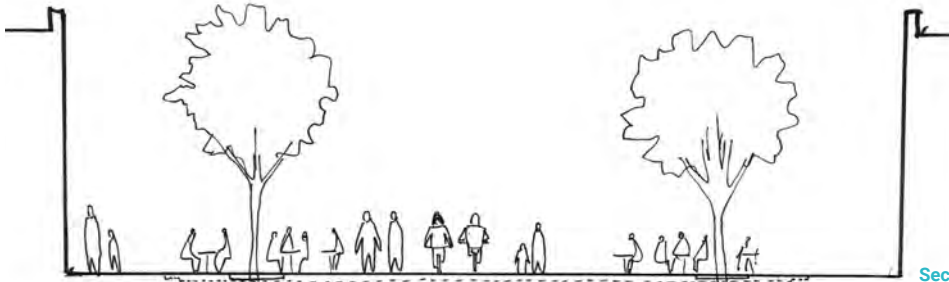
Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica



Concept Alternatives - Alternative B

Castro Street Plaza

- Create pedestrian only plaza on Castro Street between W Evelyn Avenue and Villa Street
- No private vehicle access; access for service and emergency vehicles can be provided using retractable bollards
- Remove 7 parking spaces
- W Evelyn Avenue provides for through traffic and access to parking and deliveries



Geh

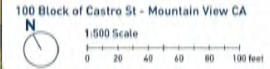
90'

Section Condition B-B'



Legend

- Pedestrian Surface
- Extended Pedestrian Surface
- Shared Pedestrian/Vehicle Surface
- Vehicle Only Surface
- Bollard + Warning Strip



Director Park, Portland



Rosemary Square, Florida



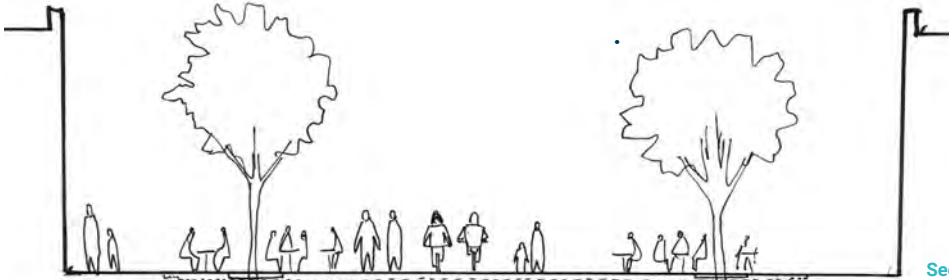
Plaza Kulturvet, Copenhagen



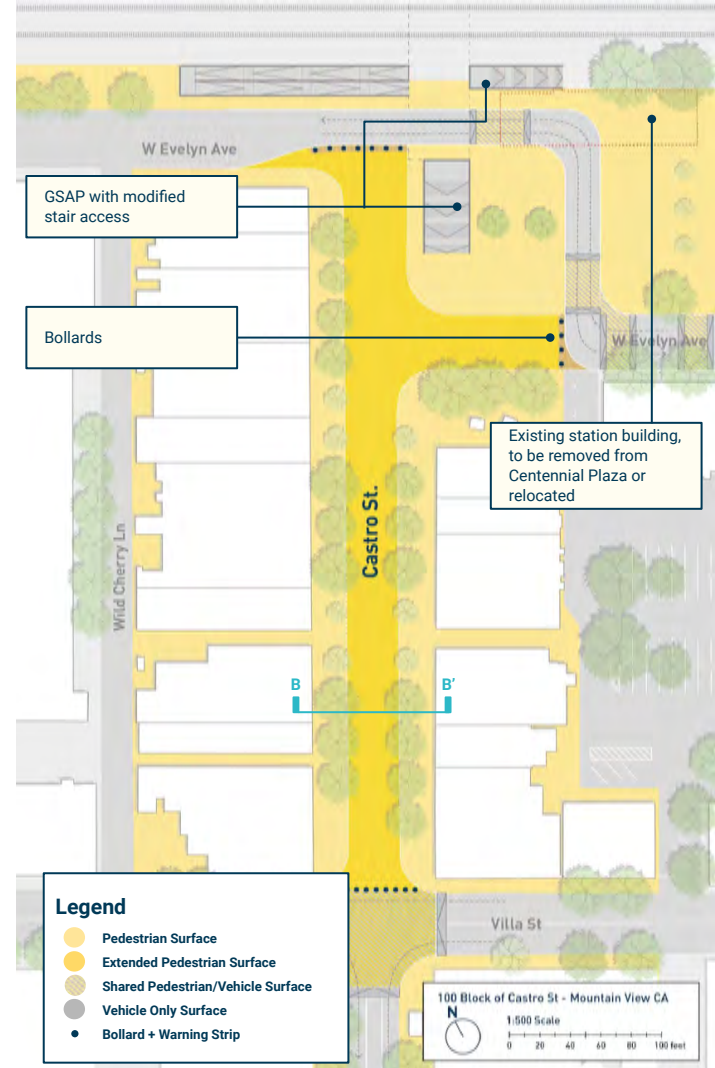
Concept Alternatives - Alternative C

Evelyn Realignment

- Adjust W Evelyn Avenue right-of-way so curve occurs east of Castro Street, opening plaza space west of Evelyn
- Potentially remove or relocate existing station building
- Redesign stair access to undercrossing
- Create pedestrian-only plaza on Castro Street extending into the new plaza; create an integrated design for both
- No private vehicle access; access for service and emergency vehicles can be provided using retractable bollards
- Remove 7 parking spaces



Section Condition B-B'



Director Park, Portland



Director Park, Portland



Director Park, Portland



Castro Street 100 Block

Material Palette

Material Palette

Paving



Material Palette

Planting



Material Palette

Seating



Material Palette

Lighting



Material Palette

Wayfinding



Thank you!

Gehl

gehlpeople.com

[@gehllive](https://twitter.com/gehllive) [#citiesforpeople](https://www.instagram.com/citiesforpeople)