

About Flex Lanes and Flex Space

1. Flex lanes: A Near-Term Approach to Sidewalk Widening



Flex lanes on Columbus Avenue for the Columbus Day Festival.

This concept is recommended in the City's Better Streets Plan. Café or restaurant owners may apply to the City for a permit to **place tables and chairs in curbside parking spaces** in front of their businesses, and the seating areas are kept separate from adjacent spaces and travel lanes using **planters or other semi-permanent fixtures**. Spaces may be used for parking part of the time, and café seating at other times. Several tables might fit into the space typically occupied by a single car, **benefiting business owners as well as pedestrians**, who gain additional space on sidewalks where seating is removed or relocated.

In September, 2009, several businesses along Columbus Ave experimented with flex lanes. Photos by Rod Freebairn-Smith.



Flex lanes in Mountain View, California.



2. Flex Space: Gaining Sidewalk and Managing Parking

Permanently widening the Columbus Avenue sidewalks enough to accommodate tables and chairs would require removing parallel parking, and accommodating deliveries through a flex space arrangement. A flex space is a sidewalk that allows trucks to park to load and unload. Flex space implementation should be paired with parking management improvements.

Columbus Avenue Neighborhood Transportation Study

www.sfcta.org/columbus



News!

- Read the **Final Report on the Study** website: www.sfcta.org/columbus
- Or call **415.522.4809** for a copy

Make it Happen! Contact us to help support the implementation of Study recommendations.

Study Purpose

Identify street design and policy changes for Columbus Avenue that:

- Enhance the street's livability and vitality
- Benefit residents, visitors, and merchants alike
- Enjoy strong community support

Study Partners

- RENEW SF
- San Francisco County Transportation Authority

Below: Study-recommended signature plaza design for Columbus at Stockton / Green. Rendering by Robert Mittelstadt.



Columbus at Stockton / Green



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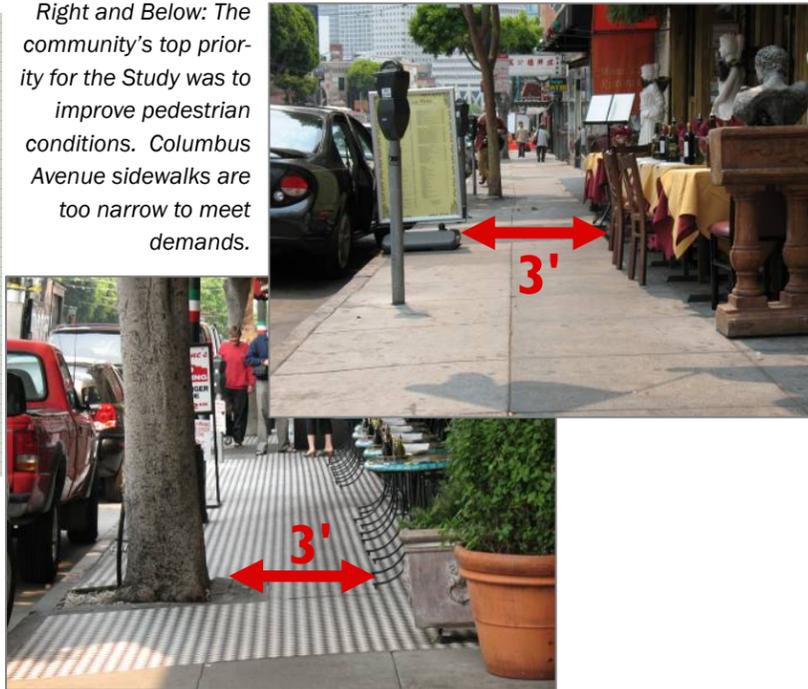
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Stakeholders identified the following issues as top transportation priorities for Columbus Avenue:

- Pedestrian conditions
- Streetscape vitality
- Transit service efficiency
- Coordination with the planning for Central Subway
- Parking management

Right and Below: The community's top priority for the Study was to improve pedestrian conditions. Columbus Avenue sidewalks are too narrow to meet demands.



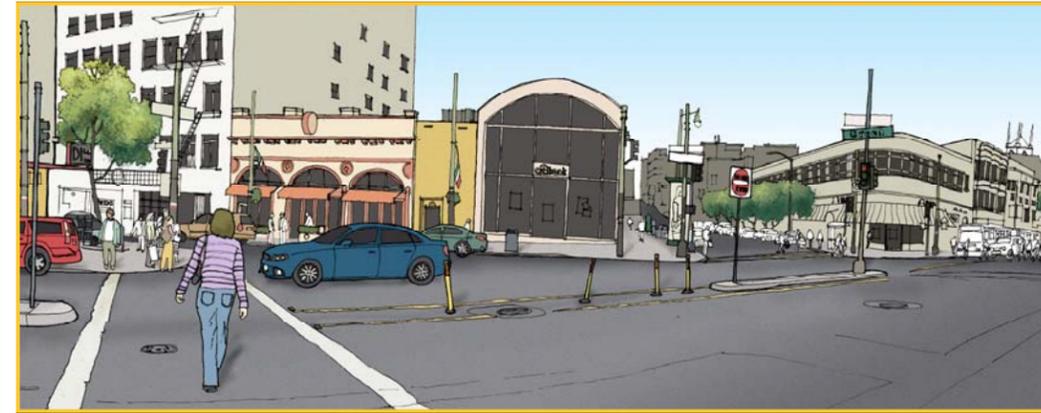
**Recommendation #1
Double the Sidewalk Width**

Of the three street designs analyzed in the Study, Alternative 3 provides the greatest benefits for pedestrians:

- Doubles the sidewalk to 20' - 22'
- Accommodates loading / unloading in the outer sidewalk zone ("flex space")
- Removes parallel parking for passenger vehicles
- Retains two traffic lanes in the near term

**Recommendation #2
Future "road diet"**

- Would reduce the number of travel lanes from two to one in each direction
- Would increase safe space for bicycling
- Requires measures to ensure no increase in transit delay (such as bus stop consolidation, transit signal priority, proof of payment / all door loading).



Left: Another view of the existing intersection of Columbus at Stockton / Green, and the Study's proposed design.

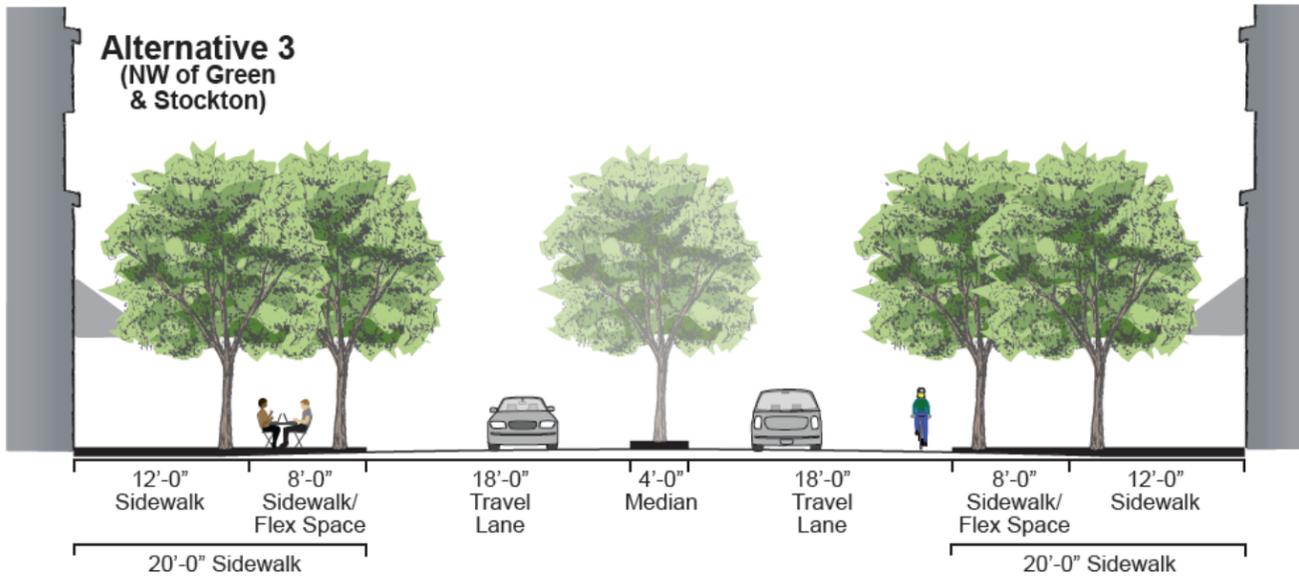


**Recommendation #3
Signature Design for Columbus at Stockton / Green**

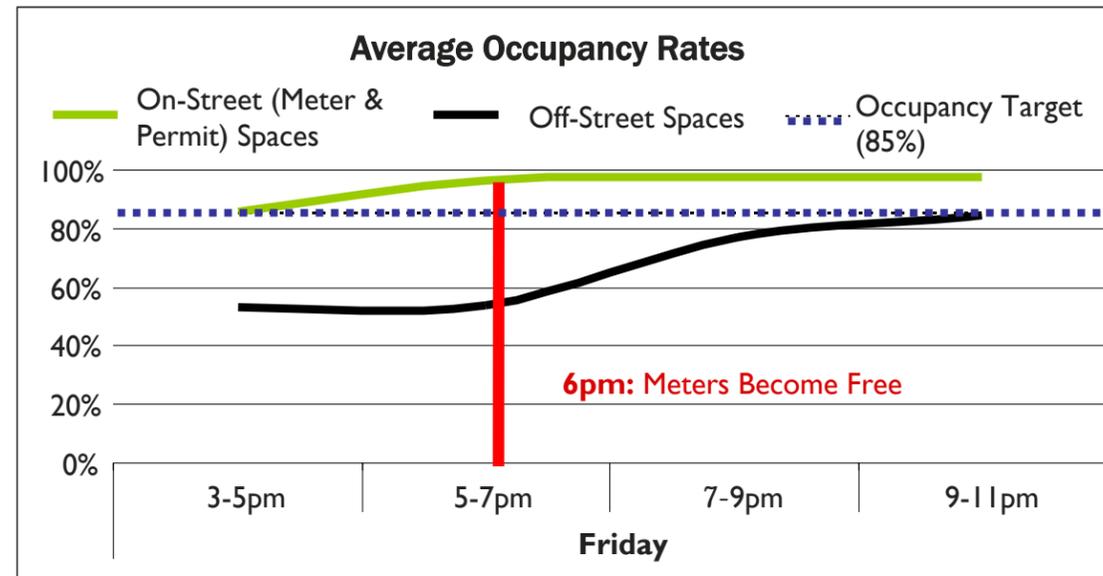
- Reduce crossing distances through widened sidewalks at corners
- Creates usable space on the sidewalks and the median
- Anchors the "crown" of Columbus with a central plaza

**Recommendation #4
Parking Pricing and Management**

- Increase visibility of off-street parking through real-time signage
- Achieve 85% occupancy rates for on-street parking through pricing reforms
- Reduce double parking through a universal valet program
- Seek to form a Parking Benefits District



The Study recommends Alternative 3 (of 3 analyzed) because it provides expanded usable space on the sidewalks. Shown here with a "road diet," Alternative 3 can be implemented with the same traffic striping as today.



There is a strong relationship between the price of and demand for parking around Columbus Avenue. Occupancy rates for on-street parking jump to 100% after 6 pm when meters are no longer in effect.

The cost per minute of parking off-street is up to 6x higher than parking on street. If long term parkers occupying short term (on-street) spaces were shifted to garages, occupancy rates could be reduced to the City's goal of 85% during most time periods.