



Photo credit: Stock / oholtrapha



Mayor Breed set a bold goal to bring at least 30,000 new residents and students Downtown by 2030. This vision sees Downtown as a diverse, mixed-use, 24/7 destination, and neighborhood. The 30 x 30 Action Plan builds on more than a year of progress delivering the Mayor's Roadmap to San Francisco's Future, through a series of new and ongoing initiatives.



Learn more about downtown and the Roadmap to San Francisco's Future:
www.sf.gov/roadmap



History of the Downtown Plan



Photo credit: iStock / SvetlanaSF

San Francisco is unique in that much of its Downtown (C-3 zoning district) was fully built out since the 20th century, with very few vacant parcels available for new development. Many adjacent neighborhoods transformed over the last century, whereas Downtown's core maintained its concentration of commercial activity since the City grew around it as the main business hub of the West Coast in the mid-1800s.

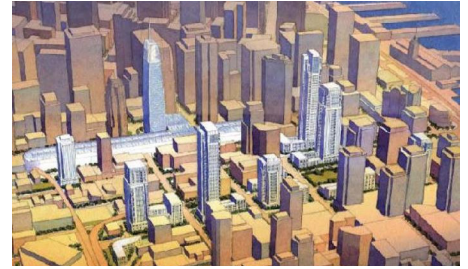
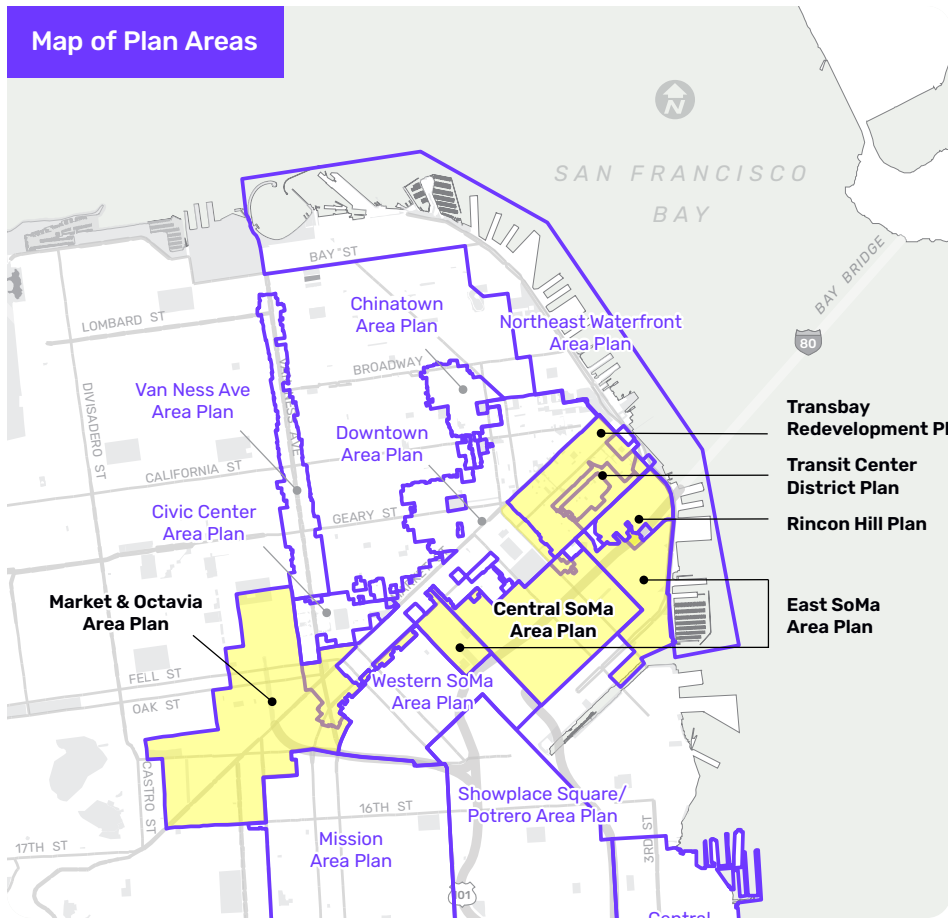
While Downtown has had very flexible zoning for decades that allows for housing, office, institutions, medical, arts, and culture uses, the concentration of job space is largely attributable to market forces and the area's geographic and transportation assets.

Adopted in 1985, the Downtown Plan (part of the City's General Plan) was developed in response to office growth taking place outside of the financial district and spilling into the adjacent neighborhoods. At the time, the Plan was widely praised as an ambitious effort to manage growth and address impacts to housing, transportation, and the loss of historic buildings. The Plan helped to re-center employment growth in the C-3 zoning district, which, despite its relatively small size in relation to the rest of the City, contains the majority of San Francisco's jobs.

Planning for downtown housing has long been a policy of the City. In fact, most of the housing built in San Francisco since 1985 has been within one mile of the C-3 zoning district. To increase the vibrancy of Downtown and meet growing housing needs in places where people could walk to work, the Downtown Plan called for a series of new plans for the adjacent neighborhoods. These plans include: the Rincon Hill Plan, Transbay Redevelopment Plan, East and Central SoMa Area Plans, Transit Center District Plan and the Market & Octavia Area Plan. Since 2005, with the adoption of these new neighborhood plans, 40,575 units have been built within one mile of the C-3 zoning district, compared with 10,655 units between 1990 and 2004.

In addition to expanding opportunities for housing, the Downtown Plan established a structure to fund citywide benefits. Impact fees from Downtown development projects fund new public art, childcare centers, transit improvements, open spaces, and new affordable housing, benefiting all San Franciscans.

Map of Plan Areas



Rincon Hill Plan and Transbay Redevelopment Plan, 2005

These plans created a high-density new mixed-use neighborhood in a commercial area formerly overshadowed by the Embarcadero Freeway with over 7,000 housing units, a new retail main street on Folsom Street, new parks, and a range of services and amenities.



Market & Octavia Area Plan, 2008, 2020

The Plan laid out a vision of revitalizing an urban neighborhood that would be transformed by the removal of the Central Freeway. The Plan substantially upzoned the area around Van Ness and Market for a high-density, transit-oriented residential neighborhood and limited office uses.



SoMa (Eastern Neighborhoods and Central SoMa), 2009 and 2019

Successive plans for this area sought to encourage more housing in this eclectic mixed-use area, including allowing housing in former industrial areas, while improving transit, adding pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and creating new open spaces and parks.



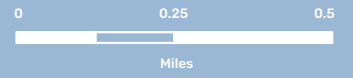
Transit Center District Plan, 2012

This Plan builds on the 1985 Downtown Plan that envisioned the area around the former Transbay Terminal as the heart of a 21st-century Downtown with increased density and revenue for public projects. In addition to landmark job space like Salesforce Tower, this plan enabled thousands of housing units around the Transit Center.

Downtown San Francisco has tremendous physical assets that make it an ideal place to live, study, work, and play. The area is well served by transit, including Muni and BART. The area is well served by high-quality public spaces including alleys and plazas. In addition, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department is planning eight new or renovated open spaces in the area. Downtown is in close proximity to the City's iconic waterfront and has numerous education, arts, culture and entertainment institutions.



Map of Downtown Higher Educational Institutions, Arts, Culture, and Entertainment

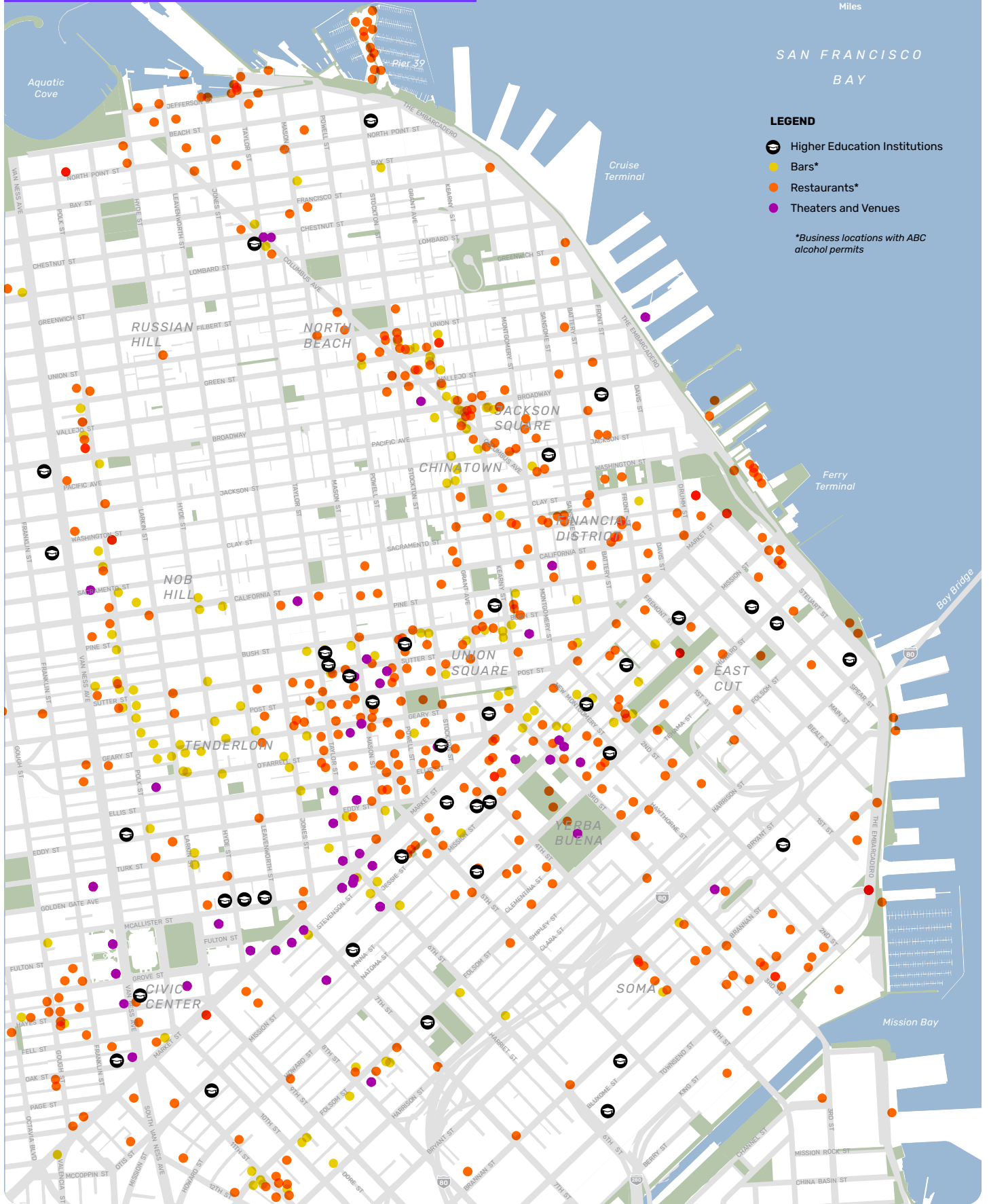


SAN FRANCISCO BAY

LEGEND

- Higher Education Institutions
- Bars*
- Restaurants*
- Theaters and Venues

*Business locations with ABC alcohol permits



DOWNTOWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Downtown recovery, housing production, legislative changes

In February 2023, Mayor Breed laid out her Roadmap to San Francisco's Future, a comprehensive plan to reinvigorate Downtown and reaffirm San Francisco as a thriving global destination and the Bay Area's economic center. In the first year after announcing the Roadmap, the City has already taken a number of actions to achieve that vision:



Paused scheduled tax increases for retail, restaurants, entertainment, hospitality, and other businesses, created a Downtown office tax credit, and initiated a business tax reform effort to encourage in-person work and make our tax base more resilient.



Established more flexible zoning Downtown to foster a wider variety of businesses and activities and passed small business streamlining legislation that eased over 100 zoning regulations for small businesses citywide.



Invested in public spaces like Landing at Leidesdorff, Mechanics Monument Plaza, Union Square, Hallidie Plaza, Powell Street, and a new skate park at UN Plaza to create new and inviting experiences Downtown.



Funded new events and activities that enliven Downtown while supporting local vendors and businesses like the Bhangra & Beats and UNDSCVRD Night Markets, Union Square's Winter Walk, and Let's Glow SF light art festival that attracted nearly 70,000 people last December and generated \$8 million in economic impact.



Increased police staffing and extended non-police community ambassador programs Downtown, launched a multi-agency operation to disrupt open-air drug dealing, and secured \$17 million in State funding to combat organized retail crime.



Launched the Vacant to Vibrant program that matches entrepreneurs, artists, and non-profit pop-ups with Downtown landlords to activate vacant ground floor spaces for free and the Storefront Opportunity Grant program that awarded \$2.1 million to over 70 small businesses in its first year.



Extended the **First Year Free** program that waives City fees for new small businesses and has waived nearly \$3.7 million in fees for over 7,700 businesses so far, and passed a new outdoor entertainment fee waiver to support arts, culture, and entertainment venues.



Established California's first **Entertainment Zone on Front Street** which allows existing bars and restaurants to sell alcohol directly to customers at outdoor events and street festivals, and launched the **Downtown ENRG grant program** to support arts culture and entertainment activities.

STRATEGY

The City is pursuing four strategies in order to usher in 30,000 new residents and students Downtown by 2030.



Convert at least 5 million square feet of underutilized office space to approximately 5,000 units of housing for some 10,000 new residents.



Image credit: Compass Development

APPROACH:

- A** Remove red tape and permitting hurdles.
- B** Reduce conversion cost through fee reductions and tax incentives.

INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE THIS STRATEGY:

- Adopted in July 2023, Mayor Breed's **Commercial-to-Residential Adaptive Reuse Program** streamlines permitting by waiving a dozen Planning Code requirements for Downtown conversion projects.
- Approved in March 2024, Mayor Breed's Proposition C ballot measure **waives the real estate transfer tax** on up to 5 million square feet of commercial-to-housing conversion projects downtown, eliminating a significant cost for these projects.
- Published in September 2024, the Department of Building Inspection's **Commercial-to-Residential Adaptive Reuse Information Sheet** clarifies Building and Fire Code requirements and alternative methods of compliance for adaptive reuse projects.
- Introduced in September 2024, a new ordinance proposed by Mayor Breed and District 6 Supervisor Matt Dorsey **waives inclusionary housing and development impact fee requirements for commercial-to-residential conversions** to remove the primary remaining City-imposed development cost for these projects.
- In 2025, following passage of Assembly Bill 2488 that was signed by the Governor in September 2024, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) will establish a **special Financing District for commercial-to-housing conversion projects** that would reinvest incremental property tax revenue to offset a significant share of development costs for these projects.

STRATEGY



Build at least 5,000 units of housing in new residential projects to welcome another 10,000 residents across Downtown.



Photo credit: San Francisco Business Times

APPROACH:

- A** Remove red tape and permitting hurdles.
- B** Reduce conversion cost through fee reductions and tax incentives.
- C** Spur housing on publicly owned sites.

INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE THIS STRATEGY:

- Launched in February 2023, Mayor Breed's **Housing for All** plan implements San Francisco's Housing Element target of 82,000 new homes by 2031. The ongoing plan continues to speed up permitting for new housing development citywide and Downtown.
- Passed in July 2023, the **inclusionary housing and impact fee reforms**, sponsored by Mayor Breed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors, significantly lower inclusionary housing requirements and reduces development impact fees by one-third for new and pipeline housing developments through 2026 citywide. Fee reform also permanently allows developers to defer 80% of their impact fees until Temporary Certificate of Occupancy, reducing risk and costs for housing builders.
- Passed in December 2023, Mayor Breed's **comprehensive housing streamlining legislation** simplifies the approval process for new housing projects citywide, eliminates special approvals for large projects, and removes procedural and design constraints on new residential developments Downtown.
- In April 2024, OEWD entered two Downtown office buildings—1 South Van Ness and 170 Otis—into the **C40 Cities Reinventing Cities Competition**, a global design and development competition to transform underutilized urban sites into innovative, zero-carbon, and resilient developments. Through the competition, the City is seeking proposals for high-density housing developments at these sites.
- Introduced in July 2024, a new ordinance proposed by Mayor Breed and District 6 Supervisor Matt Dorsey **increases capacity for residential development in the Central SoMa and Transbay Plan Areas** by eliminating zoning provisions that require a minimum amount of commercial space in mixed-use projects on large sites.
- In 2025–26, OEWD and the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) will pursue State legislation that would **expand the existing Welfare Tax Exemption** for low-income affordable housing developments to also support the development of new workforce housing available to middle-income residents in Downtown.

3



Bring 10,000 students, teachers, and staff by attracting universities and colleges to launch or grow their presence Downtown.



Image credit: UC Hastings Law

APPROACH:

- A Create a Downtown hub for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- B Grow SF-based higher educational institutions Downtown.
- C Solicit new higher educational institutions to locate Downtown.
- D Incentivize student housing Downtown.

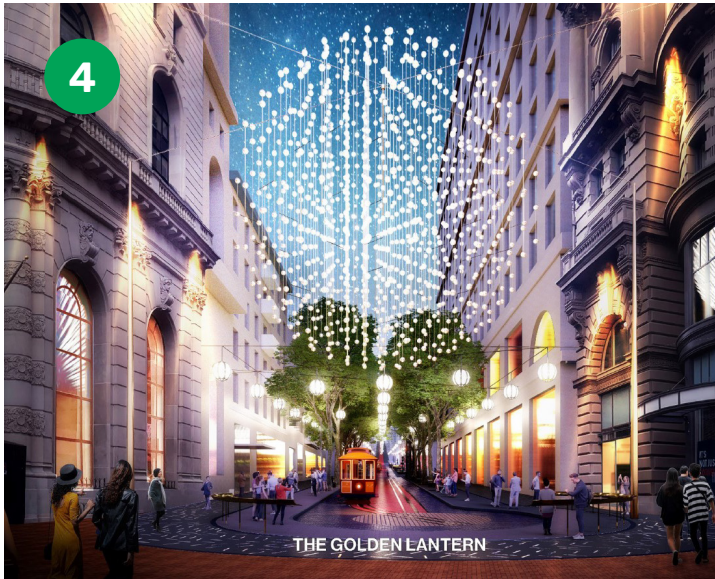
INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE THIS STRATEGY:

- Launched in June 2024, Mayor Breed’s Black 2 San Francisco (B2SF) **summer internship program connected 60 students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** across the country with paid opportunities at more than 30 City departments. The eight-week pilot of the career exploration initiative offered B2SF scholars the opportunity to live, learn, work, and explore in San Francisco, creating meaningful and lasting ties to the City. Daily morning classes and other programming held at the University of San Francisco’s Downtown Campus at Howard and Spear provided a successful model for shared space engagement and productive public-private-nonprofit partnership.

- In October 2024, the Planning Department will launch **priority permit processing for student housing developments** to streamline approvals. Student housing is a key component of attracting higher education campuses to San Francisco. Recent projects like the University of California Law San Francisco’s new Academe at 198, which houses students from numerous local universities, demonstrates the strong potential for student housing Downtown.
- As part of Mayor Breed’s B2SF initiative, the City will engage HBCUs to develop and operate a satellite campus Downtown with a full suite of academic and professional programming. The City will invite regional higher education partners to collaborate on this effort and to work toward shared economic and social justice goals.
- OEWD is devising economic development strategies for targeted recruitment of higher education institutions including incentives tailored to the unique needs of each potential partner institution. Incentives may include tax abatements and credits, development incentives, and support for research initiatives.
- OEWD continues to meet with local university partners, to position San Francisco as an ideal location for higher education. Specific upcoming efforts will work to drive 1) internal partnerships between local higher education partners to explore potential for shared physical spaces, personnel, and recruitment efforts; and 2) external partnerships between higher education and San Francisco’s job creators, towards internships and job placements.

STRATEGY

4



Improve Downtown’s public realm to serve its future as a mixed-use neighborhood, with outdoor spaces that serve all of its future users.



Photo credit: Field Operations/Union Square Alliance

APPROACH:

- A** Remake Embarcadero Plaza.
- B** Activate streets as public spaces.
- C** Increase open space amenities that serve residents.

INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE THIS STRATEGY:

- Completed in December 2023, the Recreation and Parks Department’s (RPD) **transformed United Nations Plaza features a skate park and recreation hub** with exercise equipment and dance classes, chess and ping pong tables, lighting, music, and new public art.
- Unveiled in June 2024, the proposed **Powell Street redesign plan transforms this iconic pedestrian-centered promenade** to better serve residents, retailers, and visitors and support Union Square’s economic recovery. An initial \$4 million in the City’s 2023–24 budget will assist OEWD, SFMTA, and the Union Square Alliance with the final design and implementation.
- Announced in June 2024, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure plans to **advance construction of the East Cut Sports & Dog Park** to add 2.4 acres of outdoor recreation space to serve the East Cut neighborhood; and to simultaneously preserve **The Crossing at East Cut** as a space for

every everyday recreation and community gathering uses that are managed by the East Cut Community Benefit District with support from OEWD.

- In fall 2024, the City, through RPD and in partnership with OEWD, is negotiating an agreement with BXP, the owners of the adjacent Embarcadero Center, to establish a **public-private partnership that will redevelop Embarcadero Plaza into a Downtown “living room”**. Once approved by the RPD Commission and Board of Supervisors, the project will overhaul the currently underutilized public plaza to include amenities for residents and visitors such as spaces for entertainment and marketplaces and other park features to be determined through a public outreach process.
- If passed by voters in the November 2024 election, Proposition B (Healthy, Safe, and Vibrant San Francisco Bond) would include up to \$41 million in funding to improve and modernize public spaces in Downtown.
- OEWD, in partnership with the Planning Department and SFMTA, is working to expand Downtown’s public realm network by **activating at least 10 additional streets and alleys** into resident and visitor-serving public spaces using strategies such as entertainment zones, pedestrian-only street hours, and street fairs and night market activations. This initiative builds on community-based efforts like the Downtown SF Partnership’s **Public Realm Action Plan** and **Landing at Leidesdorff**, a new public gathering place created through a City and private partnership.