



### 3.0 Urban Design Vision & Framework

The urban design vision was set by the community in the Existing Conditions Workshop. The community worked together to identify key opportunities in the study area to enhance how future growth occurs. The vision statement below is from the workshop and guided creation of the urban design guidelines:

---

*Create an attractive and inviting mixed-use center that builds upon the current feeling of the corridor while creating a defined community identity that includes unique signage, gateways, public gathering spaces, street trees, and landscaping.*

---

Urban design addresses how neighborhoods and the built environment are formed. Urban design is about making connections between people, places, urban form, nature, and the built environment. Urban design creates a character for a district or area.

#### 3.1 Public Realm

These urban design guidelines are intended to respect and reconnect to the historic development patterns of the Morena Boulevard study area while allowing for new growth and development to occur.

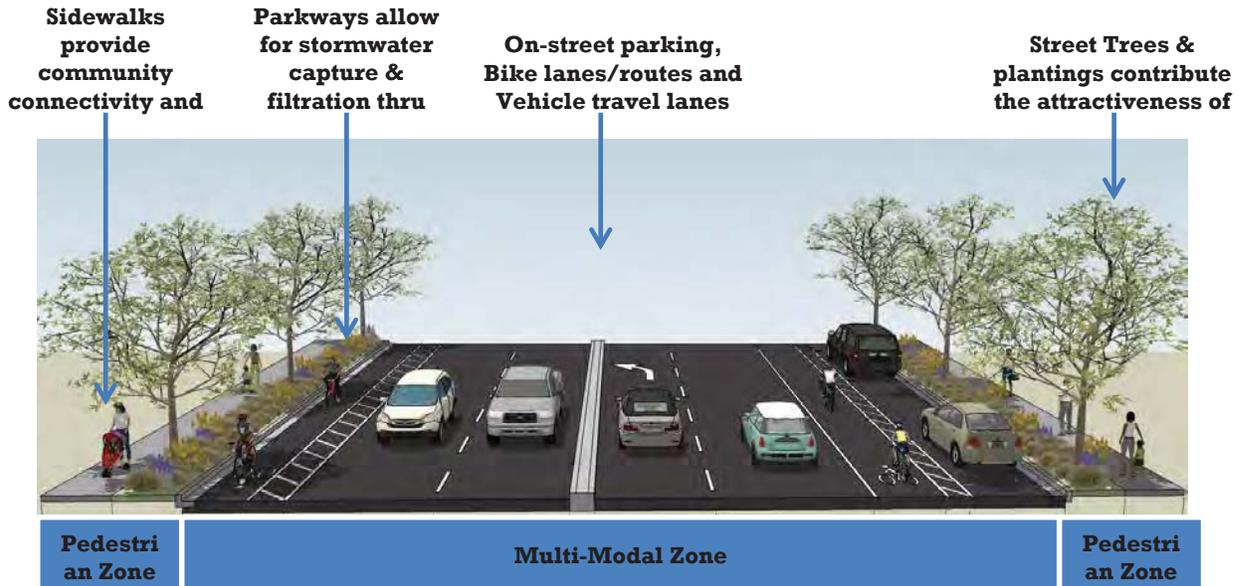
The public realm represents the largest urban open space resource in the study area. It represents more space than parks, trails, and recreational fields combined. The public realm, commonly referred to as a street or streetscape, refers to the space from property line to property line. Sidewalks, planting areas, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, vehicles lanes, on-street parking, and many other features contribute to the attractiveness of the public realm or street. Figure 3-1 highlights the elements typical within the public realm in the study area.

Streets are the connections to neighborhoods, as well as paths to work, school, and play. They are used by drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. These guidelines recognize the importance of street design to facilitate movement as well as encourage healthy physical and social interactions.

---

*The Public Realm interfaces with the Private Realm at the street, ground floor use, alley, parking, and curb conditions.*

---



**\*Street furniture, lighting, and public art also enliven a street and**

Figure 3-1: Public Realm Elements

### 3.2 Districts

There are four districts in the MBAP study area. Within a district, public realm criteria are held consistent to preserve/create a specific character. The text below explains the key characteristics of each district and Figure 3-2: District Types identifies where these districts occur in the study area.

#### Design District

- Land uses: Light Industrial, Retail
- Primarily located in the southern end of Morena Boulevard

#### Neighborhood Retail District

- Land uses: Light Industrial, Retail  
Clustered around key neighborhood destinations

#### Restaurant District

- Land uses: Light Industrial, Retail  
Two key areas in the southern end of Morena Boulevard

#### Residential Mixed Use District

- Land uses: Light Industrial, Retail
- Primarily located in the southern end of Morena Boulevard

# Morena Blvd Station Area Planning Study

## Final Report

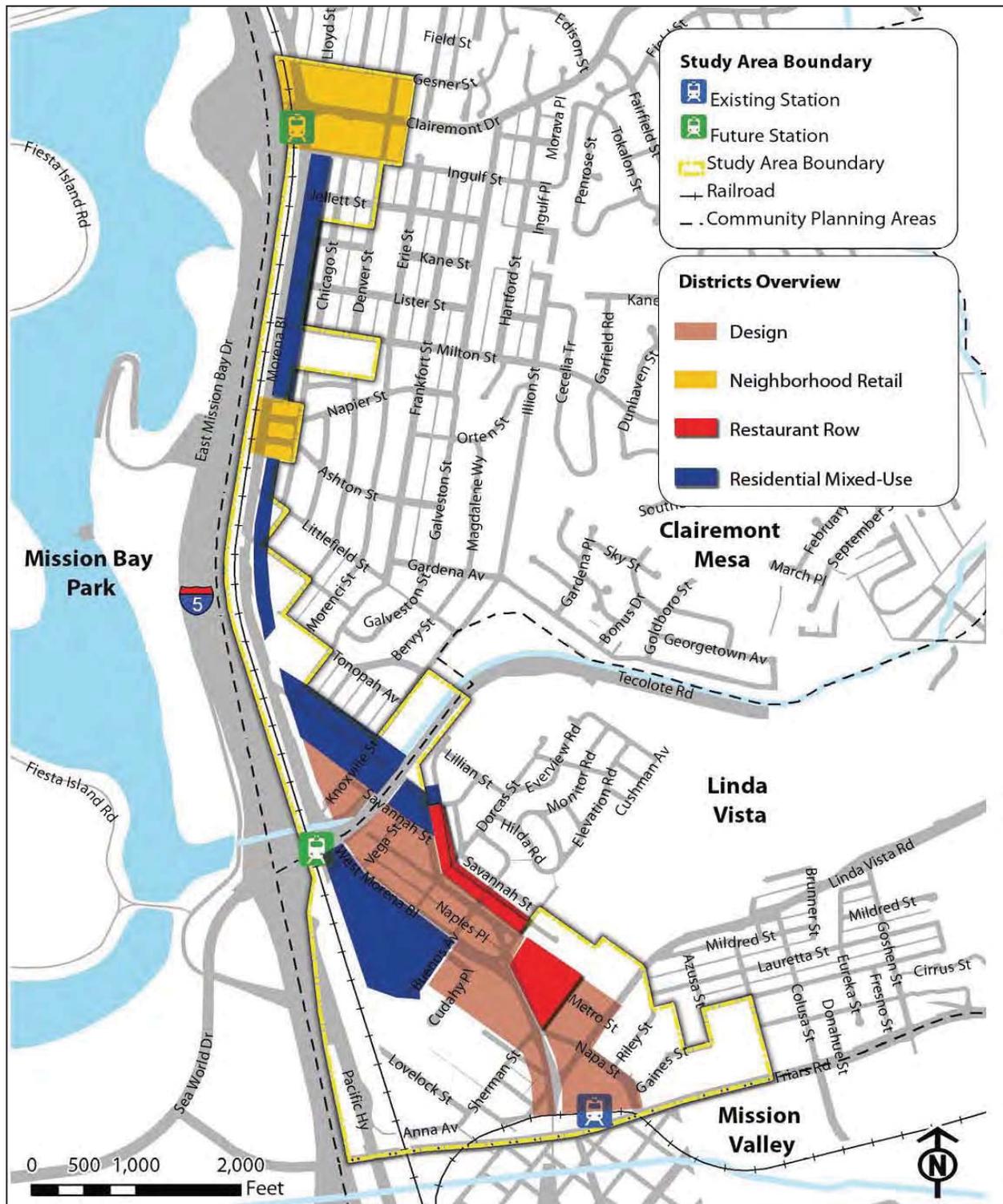


Figure 3-2: District Types



### 3.2.1 Recommendation Topic Areas

Successful streets are created by carefully crafting the interface between buildings and streets. This interface is also sometimes referred to as the “pedestrian zone.” Figure 3-3 explains how the building’s interface with the sidewalk, parkway, and street can relate to each other. The district discussion below includes recommendations for each of these pedestrian zone elements. In addition, there is guidance for the study area as a whole at the end of this chapter.

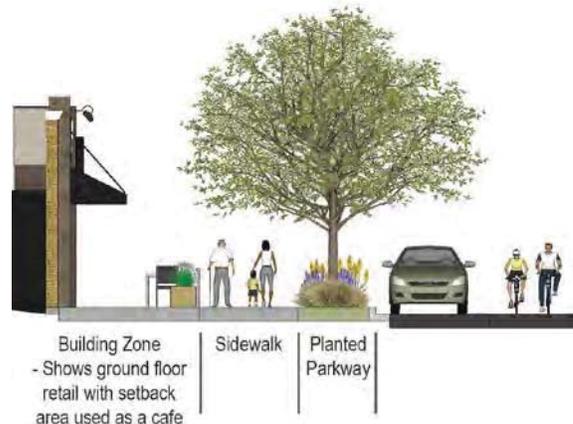


Figure 3-3: Pedestrian Zone

#### Building Context

**District Building Context:** Highlights the typical building heights, land uses, and any other focus of the area.

#### Building Guidelines

**Ground Floor Use:** Coordinates how the ground floor use activates the sidewalk.

**Entries & Parking:** Establishes standards for how entrances and parking should be addressed for a district.

**Windows & Visibility:** Makes recommendations for windows for building types identified in District Building Context.

**Building Articulation:** Identifies recommendations for how two adjacent buildings relate.

#### Street Guidelines

**Pedestrian Zone:** Consists of the sidewalk and planting area. Providing an attractive walking environment is an important catalyst to improving both the mobility and land use environments within the study area.

**Bike Routes:** Integrates bicycle design with the street design of each district. Bike access has health benefits and is an alternate mode of transportation that does not create pollution. Morena Boulevard is also important regionally as a north/south bicycle facility connector.

**Landscape:** Discusses street trees and shrubs appropriate for each district setting. Street trees improve the comfort of the street to pedestrians and also help improve air quality through absorption of pollution and carbon dioxide.

**Hardscape:** Identifies preferred hardscape treatments. These physical features positively impact the walking experience.

**Public Space:** Identifies open space/public gathering space opportunities.



### 3.2.2 Design District Overview

The Design District focuses on creating an attractive street environment for the numerous interior design and finish companies that are located in the southern end of Morena Boulevard. In general, they require showrooms, warehouse, and loading areas. This artistic industry has a long history in the study area and has been identified for retention/expansion by the community.

#### District Building Context

**Typical Height:** One to two story buildings - Due to the minimal height and need for maximized interior floor space, these uses face a number of design challenges. For future development that is taller than the typical height identified, projects shall adhere to these guidelines and the Overarching Study Area Guidance.

**Focus:** Operationally, businesses' key concern is getting inventory on and off vehicles. It is critical to the on-going success of this district to increase visibility from the street and allow easy vehicle access, while minimizing impacts to the street especially as it relates to the pedestrian and bike environments.

#### Building Guidelines

**Ground Floor Use:** The exteriors of the buildings in this district must be designed to activate the sidewalk and create visual interest.

- The ground floor shall be a minimum of 15 feet in height. The preferred design is 20 feet with clerestory windows.
- Building facades over 20 feet in length should include a repeating pattern of at least three of the following: color change, texture change, material change and expression of a structural bay.

**Entries & Parking:** The businesses in this district require a large parking lot and loading area; however, these areas cannot be located adjacent to the street. This condition potentially creates a two sided building – entrance on the parking lot side and parking on the street side.

- Parking lots shall be located to the rear of the site but the entrance to the business must be located on the side or corner of the building and the entrance must be clearly visible from the street through building design, not through signage.
- Two entrances may be provided – one entrance from the parking lot and one from the street - but the street entrance may not be closed to pedestrian access.

**Windows & Visibility:** Windows encourage pedestrian activity and create interest for a building. This is especially important in this district. Windows allow “eyes on the street” and help improve the perception of safety.

- Windows must be provided adjacent to the entrances. They shall be large commercial windows that are a minimum of 12 feet tall.
- It is highly preferred to locate windows along the street façade.

**Building Articulation:** The use of color, texture, materials, and horizontal plane change greatly enhances a blank façade. This district must incorporate a minimum of three building articulation strategies. Blank walls or facades are not acceptable.

- A mural can be used as a façade treatment if it is commissioned by an artist.
- Living green walls can be used as a façade treatment if water is delivered from a non-potable source and does not contribute to runoff (i.e. all water must be captured on site).



Above highlights a setback, articulated building that uses the setback space as plaza



Example of light industrial company



Example of interior design business



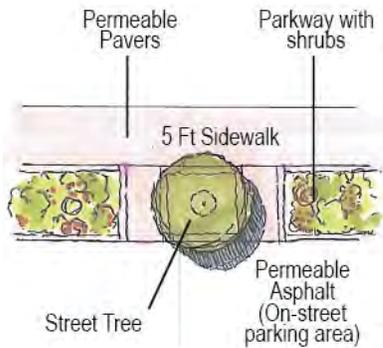
Typical “blank wall” design



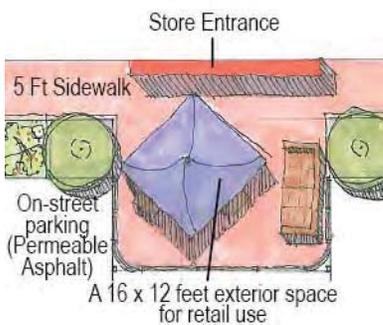
Typical loading area



Above highlights a bulbout transit plaza



Above shows a tree in a tree grate, crossing from the on-street parking, and how permeable surfaces can be used in the pedestrian zone



Above shows an exterior urban space that could be used for retail display

Street Guidelines

**Pedestrian Zone:** Sidewalks are the primary facilities for pedestrian access and a planted parkway is an attractive, environmentally beneficial, physical buffer between vehicles and pedestrians.

- A minimum clear unobstructed path of travel of 5 feet shall be maintained throughout the district. The path of travel must be free of utilities, street furnishings, or any other physical impediments. Where possible, a width of 10 feet should be provided.
- If an expanded walking environment is desired, tree grates may be used in the planting area or parkway. See the landscape section for planting information.

**Landscape:** Landscape opportunities include the parkway and bulbouts (curb extensions). In addition to criteria listed in Overarching Study Area Guidance, the street trees in this district shall allow visibility through the tree canopy and provide an accent color to the public realm.

- Two theme trees shall be selected and established as a palette to create a consistent character for the district. The theme trees shall be used in the parkway
- Two accent trees shall be selected. One accent tree must have characteristics amenable to a self-treating Low Impact Development (LID) condition without a sub-drain and one tree without LID treatments.

**Hardscape:** Grey concrete is a very plain surface for sidewalks. Color should be introduced to the hardscape that coordinates with branding of the Design District. Also, permeability in the sidewalk can decrease flooding in the southern end of Morena Boulevard, particularly at intersections.

- Preferred hardscapes: Permeable pavers shall be used in the sidewalk; Permeable asphalt or concrete shall be used in on-street parking areas and multi-use paths (see images at right).
- Standard concrete finishes: Acid wash with exposed aggregate and pattern through scoring.

**Bicycle Routes:** West Morena Boulevard has a Class 2 bike lane.

- A minimum of two bike racks shall be provided per block. The recommended goal is to achieve a ratio of one bike rack per storefront.

**Public Space:** One recommendation for public space in the Design District is to activate the street through midblock bulbouts that absorb a parking space. Image at right shows one possible urban plaza. If a permanent extension of the curb is not possible, consider a removable “parklet,” as has been installed in North Park and is planned in other locations in the City.

- When a large outdoor display area is needed or a transit plaza is needed, a midblock plaza bulbout shall be designed into the street environment
- For furniture businesses, parklets maybe used a urban space option and exterior display area



### 3.2.3 Neighborhood Mixed-use District Overview

The Neighborhood Retail Districts are areas of the study area that focus on day-to-day needs of the surrounding neighborhood. It is important that these businesses remain as the neighborhood and community grow.

#### District Building Context

**Typical Height:** Two to six stories – There are few sites available for development and growth is anticipated for San Diego. Conventional strip retail development is strongly discouraged. These guidelines must be used in conjunction with the Overarching Study Area Guidance.

**Focus:** This district focuses on a blend of retail, office, and residential. The mix of uses gives residents a greater range of neighborhood services while providing day-to-day amenities. For retailers, providing fast, easy in and out parking is important as well as high visibility and pedestrian and bike-friendly access. For residents, an important consideration is maintaining existing views out to Mission Bay – particularly along Clairemont Drive. Offices can be located on the first and second stories. One to three bedroom condo-style residential units are also encouraged, particularly at the Clairemont Drive node due to its adjacency to the trolley station.

#### Building Guidelines

**Ground Floor Use:** The ground floor use should activate pedestrian zone with cafes and sidewalk displays.

- If the ground floor use includes a large retailer, the design is encouraged to incorporate “liner retail.” These smaller “liner” businesses can activate the sidewalk in this district. If the major retailer elects to not have liner retail, any building facades facing a street must have storefront entry windows throughout the entire façade.
- The ground floor shall be a minimum of 15 feet in interior height. The preferred design is 20-25 feet with clerestory windows.

**Entries & Parking:** The businesses in this district require a moderate amount of parking. However, the focus is on a significant number of on-street parking spaces to allow quick in and out for neighborhood conveniences.

- Parking lots shall be located to the rear of the site but the primary entrance to the business must be located on the street. The entrance must be clearly visible and defined by the building design, not through signage.
- Loading may occur from the street.
- Private surface parking lots are not permitted between building entrances and the nearest sidewalk/pedestrian. Structured parking is encouraged.

**Windows & Visibility:** Windows encourage retail activity and create interest for pedestrians. Windows also enhance safety by allowing “eyes on the street.”

- Windows must be provided adjacent to all entrances. They shall be large commercial windows that are a minimum of 13 feet tall and extend to a minimum of 15” above the top of sidewalk.
- Windows can only be tinted to help shield sunlight. Screens and reflective glass are not acceptable finishes.
- Clerestory windows are highly desirable.

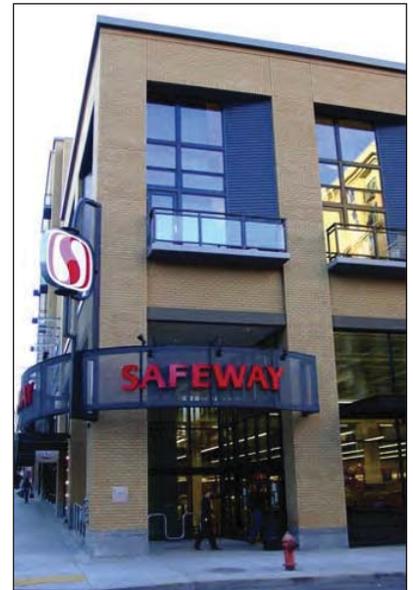


Image above shows a corner entrance to a major grocery store

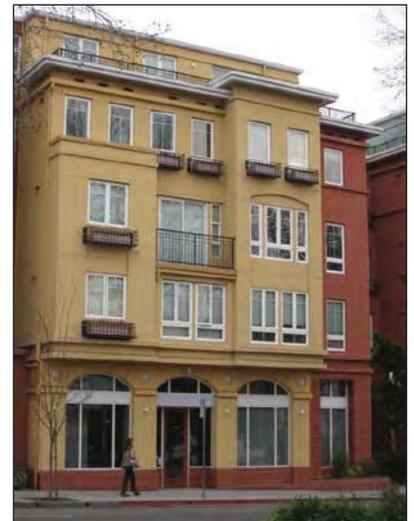


Image above shows office use on the ground floor with residential above



Unacceptable storefront entry



Unacceptable height difference between adjacent buildings

**Building Articulation:** Blank walls or facades are not acceptable. Building facades must include horizontal and vertical articulation.

- If the difference between the new development and existing building is more than 3 stories, the building must step back from the existing building through the use of balconies and designed step backs.
- Floors above the first story shall step back between 10 to 15 feet.
- Any new building shall include horizontal and vertical changes in color and material to break up the massing of the building.

### Street Guidelines

**Pedestrian Zone:** Sidewalks in this district serve a dual purpose of allowing outdoor retail activities and providing pedestrian access.

- A minimum 5 foot clear unobstructed path of travel shall be maintained throughout the district, but the sidewalk shall be extended to the edge of curb. The path of travel must be free of utilities, street furnishings, or any other physical impediments.
- Tree grates shall be used in the parkway to increase the sidewalk. See the landscape section for planting information.

**Landscape:** Landscape opportunities include trees in tree grates and bulbouts (curb extensions). In addition to criteria listed in Overarching Study Area Guidance, the street trees in this district shall allow visibility through the tree canopy and provide an accent color to the public realm.

- Two theme trees shall be selected and established as a palette to create a consistent character for the district. The theme trees shall be used in tree grates and be amenable to bioretention soil condition with sub-drain.
- One accent trees shall be selected. The accent tree must have characteristics amenable to a self-treating LID condition without a sub-drain.

**Hardscape:** The amount of hardscape in this district is higher than other districts due to the expanded sidewalk. In this district, the total sidewalk width would ideally be a minimum of 15 feet from property line to curb edge.

- Colors for pavers and accents on the sidewalk should be consistent with branding of the Design District.
- Runoff is not acceptable and self-treating or bioretention areas must capture and slow all runoff and water that hits the district.
- Preferred hardscapes: Permeable pavers shall be used in the sidewalk; Permeable asphalt or concrete shall be used in on-street parking areas and multi-use paths (See images at right)
- Standard concrete finishes: Acid wash with exposed aggregate and pattern through scoring

**Bicycle Routes:** Morena Boulevard has a Class 2 buffered bike lane.

- A minimum of two bike racks shall be provided per block. The recommended goal is to achieve a ratio of one bike rack per storefront.

**Public Space:** There are no recommendations for permanent public space.

- One recommended temporary public space is to incorporate parklets. Parklets are temporary urban spaces that can be used as plazas, café seating, or green space.



Above shows how a sidewalk can be expanded into the parkway



Above shows an exterior urban space that could be used for retail display



### 3.2.4 Restaurant Row District Overview

Restaurant Row District is an area of Morena Boulevard supportive of restaurant uses. The exterior space is especially important in this district because it needs to support outdoor cafes and a farmer's market type environment.

#### Building Context

**Typical Height:** One to two stories. Despite the limited number of stories, conventional strip retail development is strongly discouraged. For future development that is taller than the typical height identified, projects shall adhere to these guidelines and the Overarching Study Area Guidance.

**Focus:** The Restaurant Row District focuses on creating a hub of restaurants to draw residents and the general public to the Morena Boulevard area.

#### Building Guidelines

**Ground Floor Use:** The ground floor use is restaurants and shops that are related to food sales/service.

- Proposed projects shall include shade devices such as umbrellas or awnings. Businesses must be able to store them inside when the restaurant or storefront is closed.
- The ground floor shall be a minimum of 15 feet in height.
- Business shall only occupy the sidewalk temporarily and must be able to remove café furniture at closing.
- The building edge should be located on the property line or within a 5 foot setback from the property line. If a setback is taken, the business must use the setback as a part of an outdoor activity.
- The restaurants and businesses should form a continuous edge along the property line. Buildings shall be designed with a shared wall condition for lots that are narrower than 50 feet.

**Entries & Parking:** The businesses in this district require a moderate amount of parking. Appropriately timed on-street parking is critical to the turnaround of restaurant patrons.

- Parking lots shall be located to the rear of the site and all primary entrances must be located on the sidewalk adjacent to the street.
- Loading may occur from the street.
- Food trucks are encouraged to park along the street or in parking lots within the Restaurant Row District.

**Windows & Visibility:** Windows for restaurants and food related businesses allow residents and potential patrons to “check out” a restaurant before entering. Windows in this district are a thin screen between the inside and outside of a building.

- Windows must be provided adjacent to all entrances. They shall be large commercial windows that are a minimum of 12 feet tall and extend to a minimum of 15" above the top of sidewalk.
- Windows can be lightly tinted to protect the interior from sunlight, but cannot use reflective glass or shading. Sun should be screened by exterior building treatments.

**Building Articulation:** When a continuous building edge is desired, there are two strategies. One is to create one project or development that is a series of retail storefronts. A second is to build each building individually with shared walls as is common



Images above show ground floor retail uses through cafes and public plaza areas



Outdoor Cafe



Example of a continuous edge



in a “main street” environment. The MBAP study area has a number of small parcels that would currently be more conducive to individual parcel development.

- The small parcels do not require significant building articulation to break down mass. However, care should still be taken to design the building at the pedestrian scale.
- Buildings should also highlight a vertical hierarchy with the ground floor being the primary and the next story being secondary in hierarchy. This can be visually achieved through window size and vertical elements such as columns.



Above shows how the ground floor is the primary floor with second and subsequent floors being secondary

### Street Guidelines

**Pedestrian Zone:** Expanded sidewalks are critical in this district for continued success of the retail businesses and restaurants. Incorporating outdoor cafes, public seating, and a regular farmer’s market are key to the success of the Restaurant Row District.

- The expanded sidewalk is necessary but an unobstructed clear pedestrian path is important as well. A 5 foot clear unobstructed path shall be maintained even with any additional sidewalk activity in place.

**Landscape:** The landscape opportunities include trees in tree grates and bulbouts (curb extensions). In addition to criteria listed in Overarching Study Area Guidance, the street trees in this district shall allow visibility through the tree canopy and provide an accent color to the public realm.

- Two theme trees shall be selected and established as a palette to create a consistent character for the district. The theme trees shall be used in tree grates
- One accent trees shall be selected and can be used in a tree grate or in bulbouts. The accent tree must have characteristics amenable to a self-treating LID condition without a sub-drain.

**Hardscape:** Branding should be an integral part of building design and sidewalk design. The colors should be directly related the businesses’ selection of the branding. Branding symbol or logo should be incorporated into the sidewalk.

- Preferred hardscapes: Permeable pavers shall be used in the sidewalk as edge treatment around concrete sections.
- Permeable asphalt or concrete shall be used in on-street parking areas.
- Standard concrete finishes: Acid wash with exposed aggregate and Pattern through scoring

**Bicycle Routes:** West Morena Boulevard has a Class 2 bike lane.

- A bike rack shall be installed to every other parking meter. If parking meters are not introduced then a back rack servicing a minimum of two bikes shall be provided on each of end of each side of a block.

**Public Space:** There are no public space recommendations for this district.



Above shows an expanded sidewalk with outdoor café and bike racks