

# SF MUNA Community Development and Landscaping Project Summary

## 17th Street, San Bruno Ave. and Vermont Street, San Francisco

Region 2: 17<sup>th</sup> Street between  
San Bruno Ave. and Vermont St.  
(N)

Region 1:  
San Bruno  
Ave.  
between  
17<sup>th</sup> and  
Mariposa  
Streets  
(W)



Region 3:  
Vermont  
Street  
between  
17<sup>th</sup> and  
Mariposa  
Streets  
(E)

(S)

This document summarizes issues that plague the 17th, San Bruno and Vermont Street corridor in San Francisco, and summarizes ideas that the active SFMUNA community group in this area gained from local residents to improve the area. These issues and ideas are intended to encourage development of a landscape plan for this area that will resolve a majority of the concerns.



MUNA - The Mariposa-Utah Street Neighborhood Assoc.

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February 2012

Dear Professor Walter J. Hood and UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design Students,

On behalf of SFMUNA (<http://sfmuna.org/>), an active residential community group in San Francisco's South of Market/Potrero District, we are submitting this document to you to summarize the issues that plague our community and that our community has agreed it would like to see remedied with a re-landscaping project.

Our hope is that you will join us in developing a creative vision for this area that will revitalize it for the local residents and for the pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle commuters who regularly utilize this area to gain access to UCSF Mission Bay, Potrero Hill and the thriving Mission District in San Francisco.

In support of our plan to re-landscape, re-green and revitalize 17th Street, San Bruno Ave. and Vermont Street surrounding the 101 corridor in San Francisco, we have gained support from SF Supervisor, Malia Cohen and her staff, DPW (Department of Public Works), Caltrans and SF Parks. We also gained agreement from SF DPW and Caltrans that they will work together to re-landscape this area if we are able to submit a bona fide re-landscaping plan that they approve and that local residents will help them support and maintain.

To this end, the SF MUNA community group in San Francisco has been active in gaining input from local residents to determine what changes they would like to see made with the implementation of a re-landscaping plan for this area. This document is intended to summarize and share our findings with you in the hope that it will spark your creative ideas for revitalizing, re-greening and re-landscaping this highly urban area.

For ease of review, we have split the map of this area into 3 regions:

Region 1: 400-block of San Bruno Ave. between 17th Street and Mariposa Street

Region 2: 17th Street between San Bruno Ave and Vermont Street

Region 3: Vermont Street between 17th Street and Mariposa



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We have itemized both issues and suggestions the community has identified for each of these areas. We also appreciate that your creative ideas for improving these areas may be applicable to the larger landscaped area along the southern 101 corridor.

On behalf of our community, thank you in advance for your creative ideas. We look forward to sharing them with you in the form of a project review or other meeting, and we also welcome any questions you may have. Our SF MUNA Committee Members are available for consultation, questions and in-person visits. Our Chairperson, Jean Bogiages, is pleased to serve as your main point of contact.

Sincerely,

SF MUNA Committee

**SF MUNA Chairperson**

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## Region 1 Summary: 400-block of San Bruno Ave. between 17th Street and Mariposa Street



### Summary of Issues in Region 1, San Bruno Ave. between 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Mariposa:

- The area behind the cyclone fence along San Bruno is used for homeless encampments and as a pathway through Caltrans property along San Bruno Ave and the area south, behind and between houses on Utah Street.
- Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol clear out homeless and their belongings every couple of months, but in a few days they return.
- The fencing along this area is nearly pointless as homeless regularly go over and under it.
- Caltrans requires a fence along the freeway to keep pedestrians off of it.
- Transients have been observed creating fires, smoking and discarding active cigarette butts into dry grass and vegetation along San Bruno and behind the houses on Utah Street. This creates a fire hazard for residents.
- Current vegetation obstructs view beneath the plants along San Bruno, encouraging homeless encampments and frequent overnight use.
- San Bruno residents do not want their views blocked by any new vegetation that is added.
- San Bruno residents would like noise and dirt from the freeway reduced.
- Only Caltrans-approved vegetation may be planted in this area.
- Current vegetation is not cared for, ugly and unkempt.
- There is frequent prostitution in cars parked along San Bruno in the days and evenings.
- There is frequent garbage-dumping along the East side of San Bruno (car parts, mattresses, furniture, etc.)
- Condoms, needles, feces, bottles of urine and other unsafe garbage are often on the East side of San Bruno
- San Bruno Ave. is wide at the bottom of the hill near 17<sup>th</sup>, but skinny at the top where it only allows one car to pass near Mariposa Ave. This is also a blind intersection.
- The guard rail and arrow sign at the San Bruno/Mariposa intersection are frequently tagged with graffiti.



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- There is frequent speeding around the San Bruno/Mariposa blind intersection during commute hours
- There have been two bad accidents involving speeding and/or drunk driving at the San Bruno/Mariposa intersection and families with children live at this intersection
- There are frequent car break-ins in this area, during the day and night.

**Community suggestions for improving Region 1, San Bruno Ave. between 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Mariposa:**

- Beautify, enhance and maintain the natural environment; direct views and screen objectionable views
- Re-landscape this area, make it more beautiful and maintain it to encourage less use by transients
- Change the fencing to something that is not easily cut through, jumped over or dug under.
- Cover fences with vines or plants that are dense enough to separate the freeway from the homes.
- Add vegetation that will reduce noise and dirt from the freeway, transform its sound (as with Esprit Park), allow authorities to view what is going on underneath them and not block residents' views. (Consider low-growing pines that won't block views of city or underneath them, but that will help reduce noise and dirt.)
- Replace the pine trees that were cut down due to "disease" at the top of the hill where Mariposa meets San Bruno. These used to transform the sound of the freeway and were home to local hawks.
- Add lighting that will illuminate the area and not disrupt residents or impede views. Consider ground lights.
- Add/extend sidewalk along the East side of San Bruno to make it more friendly to pedestrians. Currently the sidewalk on the East side of San Bruno only extends halfway up the street from 17<sup>th</sup>. This makes no sense.
- Eliminate parking on the East side of San Bruno at the top of the hill where road narrows
- Convert parallel to perpendicular parking on San Bruno Ave. near 17<sup>th</sup> Street where the road is wide
- Add mirrors at the corner of San Bruno Ave and Mariposa Street so cars coming up the hill can see who is coming around the other side, and vice versa
- Add speed bumps at the San Bruno/Mariposa intersection
- Add speed limit signs and "Slow, Children at play" signs at this intersection
- Add lines in the middle of the road to encourage cars to stay on their respective sides of the street
- Add "no dumping" signs that specify the fine for such activity along San Bruno.



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## Region 2 Summary: 17th Street between San Bruno Ave. and Vermont Street

East



North

South

West

### Summary of Issues in Region 2 along 17<sup>th</sup> Street between San Bruno Ave. and Vermont Street:

- Homeless live on the small sidewalk on the North side of 17<sup>th</sup> street and up under the freeway eaves on the South side.
- Caltrans and SFPD participate in relocating the homeless, but they are back the next day.
- The sidewalks on 17<sup>th</sup> street under the freeway are always full of broken glass, garbage, condoms, syringes, feces and other safety hazards, making it difficult for pedestrians to pass.
- There is frequent garbage dumping on both sides of 17<sup>th</sup> Street under the freeway.
- The sidewalk on the South side of 17<sup>th</sup> Street is too small for strollers and wheelchairs to pass.
- There are no sidewalk ramps on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, making it difficult or impossible for stroller/wheelchair access.
- There are no stop signs at the intersection on 17<sup>th</sup> street making it difficult for elderly patrons of the corner Baptist church to cross the road safely.
- The Russian Baptist church in this area has experienced graffiti on its doors.
- The cyclone fence on the East side of the freeway at Vermont Street is decorated with plastic handcuffs of different colors.



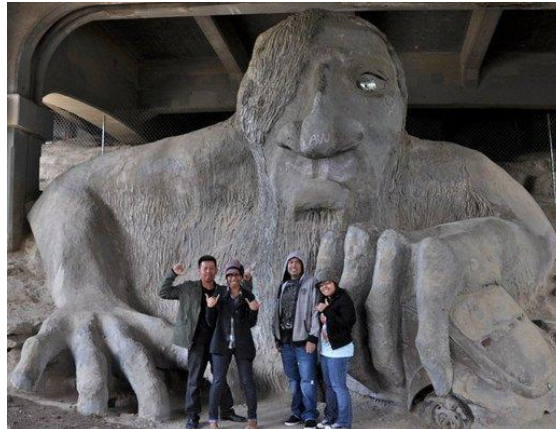
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- The area alongside the cyclone fence is used for prostitution in parked cars.
- Parked cars under the freeway often substitute for homes at night.
- There are frequent car break-ins in this area.
- The 17<sup>th</sup> Street section East, West and under the 101 is not safe, clean or well lighted. Pedestrians do not feel safe walking through here at night.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Street with its bike path and pedestrian sidewalks is an important pedestrian corridor between the Mission and Potrero Hill.

**Community suggestions for improving Region 2 along 17<sup>th</sup> Street between San Bruno Ave. and Vermont Street:**

- The community is working with homeless outreach in SF for a solution to this area, but would like to find a longer-term and more permanent solution for this area.
- Add impediments or fencing under the freeway eaves so homeless and prostitutes cannot make it their home.
- Add lighting, including ground lighting, to discourage activity in parked cars and so people feel safe walking through this area.
- Enlarge the sidewalk on the South side of 17<sup>th</sup> Street by moving the chain-linked fence back.
- Add a retaining wall to keep dirt from the steep hill under the freeway from running onto the sidewalk.
- Add ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps with yellow sidewalk pavers to increase access to this area.
- Consider a sidewalk made of pavers to allow more rainwater to get into the ground.
- Add stop signs on 17<sup>th</sup> Street at San Bruno so elderly can pass safely from one side to the other.
- Add landscaping under the freeway. Consider creating tiers of vegetation here that love shade.
- Consider adding art or a sculpture under the freeway to transform the area as was done by the Seattle Arts Council with the creation of the Fremont Troll by Steve Badanes [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fremont\\_Troll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fremont_Troll)



- Consider converting hill at the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and San Bruno into an amphitheater or park so people have a place for a quick break or lunch (1/2 of the community is opposed to this idea because they feel it will encourage unwanted use or loitering by after-school kids, homeless or transients)
- The pine trees are doing OK in this area. Consider using more pine trees to beautify the area.



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## Region 3 Summary: Vermont Street between 17th and Mariposa Streets



### Summary of Issues in Region 3 along Vermont Street between 17<sup>th</sup> and Mariposa Streets:

- Issues are similar to those in Region 1.
- On and off there are people “living” on the “green-belt area” between Vermont Street and 101. Even though the green belt area is fenced off, people seem to be able to crawl from underneath the fence or squeeze in through the closed gates
- Along the west sidewalk of Vermont Street (between Mariposa & 17<sup>th</sup>), there is a strong stench of urine. People hiding behind parked cars along the road have been seen relieving themselves
- The sound wall along the 101 behind the houses on Vermont Street south of Mariposa is frequently tagged with graffiti that is visible to residents who live along Utah and Mariposa on the opposite side of the freeway.
- Residents along Vermont Street would like to discourage homeless and transient traffic behind their homes and on the other side of the sound wall facing the 101 where fires have been lit and frequent graffiti is a problem.
- The Slovenian Hall is frequently tagged with graffiti paint, but they remove it immediately.
- There seems to be a graffiti “conversation” going on across the 101 from one side to the other (from the Vermont Street side to the San Bruno/Mariposa/Utah Street side)



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Pictures illustrating issues along the Vermont side of green belt



**Community suggestions for improving Region 3 along Vermont Street between 17<sup>th</sup> and Mariposa Streets:**

- Primary objectives are 1) to deter people from “living” in the open area 2) to make the area look aesthetically pleasing. Current fencing do not achieve these goals
- One radical approach is to make the area completely open- remove existing fence, clear lower branches of the trees, clear shrubs and just have lush green grass growing on the hill. Over time, it can be developed as a community garden
- Another approach is to try to limit access to the open area. Current fencing can be bolstered by adding shrubs (see picture below) outside and along the existing fence. The existing fence may have to be moved back to create enough space for shrubs
- Lighting along the sidewalk on the west side of Vermont Street needs to be improved to discourage people from urinating on the sidewalk as well as for safety at night

Examples of shrubs along the fence (as seen on Therien & Co boundary walls)



**Neighboring Community Projects as reference for this project:**

- [www.progresspark.org](http://www.progresspark.org)
- Esprit Park, 737 Minnesota Street, San Francisco
- <http://pennsylvaniagarden.blogspot.com/>

**Peiro Patti Fellowship Reference**

<http://www.spur.org/blog/2011-09-14/vision-new-greenspace-southeastern-sf>



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