

Redwood City Downtown Entries

Redwood City, CA



Rather than merely install large signs, FTB was engaged by Redwood City to use urban design to help people find their way into downtown and strengthen its historic identity.

BEFORE

- Downtown's street grid was diagonally rotated away from its main access arterials El Camino Real and Veterans Boulevard, making it hard for many people to find their way in.
- A 1960's reconfigured railroad track crossing of Broadway also confused visitors coming in from El Camino Real by diverting them from Broadway onto low-activity Marshall Street.
- At the track crossing, Broadway's view corridor into downtown was completely hidden by a tall cluster of dense redwood trees planted in the former right-of-way, adding more disorientation.



A 1991 USGS aerial photo of Broadway's entry to downtown (horizontal street) from El Camino Real with its Caltrain track crossing diversion (yellow arrow) to Marshall Street, and the redwood tree cluster that blocked the view down Broadway to the downtown core.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Through community workshops, propose urban design treatments to strengthen wayfinding and district identity together.
- Extend the compelling imagery and context of downtown's rich history in the design.

OUTCOMES

Broadway Gateway Arch and El Camino Real Clock Tower designed and constructed

- Workshops endorsed FTB's concepts for urban-scale landmark gateway sign features at key entries and intersections.
- Two features were designed by FTB and constructed, a domed gateway clocktower at Broadway and El Camino Real, and a gateway arch using the City's historic sign and slogan at the Broadway rail crossing. Both featured neon-lit signs and historic architecture elements.
- Discussions with stakeholders successfully achieved consensus to remove the cluster of redwood trees so the gateway arch would succeed.
- The Clock Tower received a 1997 national award for a freestanding sign from *Signs of the Times*.
- The Clock Tower and Gateway Arch have become symbolic icons for downtown, used by city and business promotion programs.

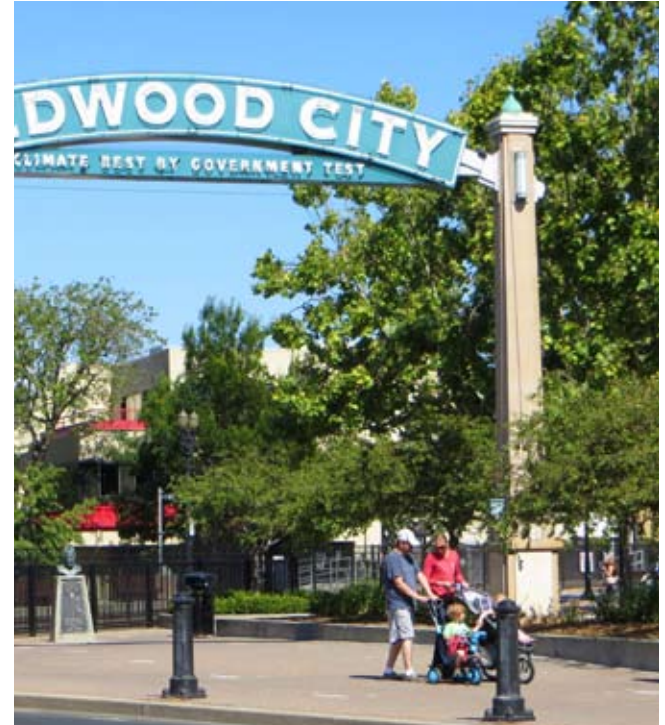
CLIENT: City of Redwood City

IN COLLABORATION WITH: Korve Engineering, Sierra Engineering Group, Arrow Sign Company

FTB: When this project was completed the firm name was Freedman Tung & Bottomley (FTB).



Downtown's reconfigured western entry from El Camino Real was fitted with a new landmark gateway arch to unmistakably point the way to downtown's core. It replaced a cluster of redwood trees that had confounded visitors by blocking the view beyond to the core in combination with the railroad crossing's diagonal diversion (left) of traffic away from Broadway.



Left: The Broadway clock tower was designed and detailed for both El Camino Real's strip corridor scale as well as Broadway's pedestrian scale. Its compact footprint is sited on the sidewalk, entirely within the public right-of-way.
Right: Two smaller original gateway signs with utilitarian posts and slogan panels once spanned a two-lane El Camino Real many decades ago. This landmark gateway arch enlarged the sign's scale, added neon, and redesigned its supports with classical and deco features to preside over the new Arguello plaza and link the downtown core to its El Camino Real entrance.



To mark downtown's entrance at El Camino Real, FTB overcame the absence of a memorable building at the "point" of Broadway's angled intersection by positioning a three-sided clock tower with a cylindrical neon-lit "BROADWAY" sign there, topped by an homage to downtown's Courthouse dome. The tower's uplit shaft displays banners for downtown events.