

TLC Main Street/Railroad Avenue Streetscape Concept

San Mateo, CA



The City wanted to extend Downtown's walkable look and feel across the Caltrain tracks through a belt of industrial and service businesses towards its residential neighborhoods beyond.

BEFORE

- Service and repair businesses (and several retail and restaurant uses) occupied a two block area just north of downtown's Caltrain track edge.
- The wide streets and narrow sidewalks were utilitarian, treeless, and poorly lit at night.
- Railroad Avenue's missing curbs and battered chain link fence looked unkempt from adjacent Downtown Cineplex and parking structure sidewalks and passing Caltrain windows.



Railroad Avenue before: a service alley with Caltrain edge and fence in disrepair, highly visible from downtown.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Use the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) grant to introduce streetscape upgrades that encourage walking, bicycling and transit use and connect downtown with neighborhoods.
- Extend downtown's public realm design character but modify it to acknowledge the working character of the district.
- Support neighborhood businesses, including maintaining existing truck loading access.
- Make the highly visible Railroad Avenue edge more appealing and add value to properties.

OUTCOMES

Streetscape concepts reviewed with the community and constructed.

- Brick-paved corner bulb-outs and trees in curbed wells between parked cars (due to narrow sidewalks) were added. New pedestrian-height streetlights with white lighting were located along 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Railroad Avenues. The City implemented the streetscape concepts.
- FTB designed metal picket fencing with a patterned top profile and added a row of decorative twin-headed streetlights along Railroad Avenue (the same model as used at the train station).
- The improvements struck a balance between pedestrian/landscape features and retention of loading zones and driveway access.

CLIENT: City of San Mateo

IN COLLABORATION WITH: SFE Landscape Architects (cost estimate)

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



Railroad Avenue after: FTB-designed decorative track edge fencing and a row of pier-mounted twin-head streetlights were installed along with improved paving and brick unit pavers at pedestrian pathways, visible from the adjacent downtown cineplex and nearby public parking structure. The storefront at right has since been renovated into a successful restaurant.



Left: The TLC Study Area straddled the Caltrain tracks and encompassed Main Street, Railroad Avenue, and First, Second and Third Avenues in Downtown San Mateo.

Right: Above - the streetscape concept cross-section through Railroad Avenue showing the improved fencing and lighting at the train edge and trees between parked cars on the opposite side. Below - a new brick paved corner bulb-out with a street tree and pedestrian-height streetlight at First Avenue and South Claremont Street.



Night time view of Second Avenue between Railroad Avenue and South Claremont Street, with new pedestrian height streetlights and new street trees in curbed wells positioned between parked cars.