

28th Street/Little Portugal Station

Design Development Framework (DDF)

Placemaking Memo

August 2025

Prepared For

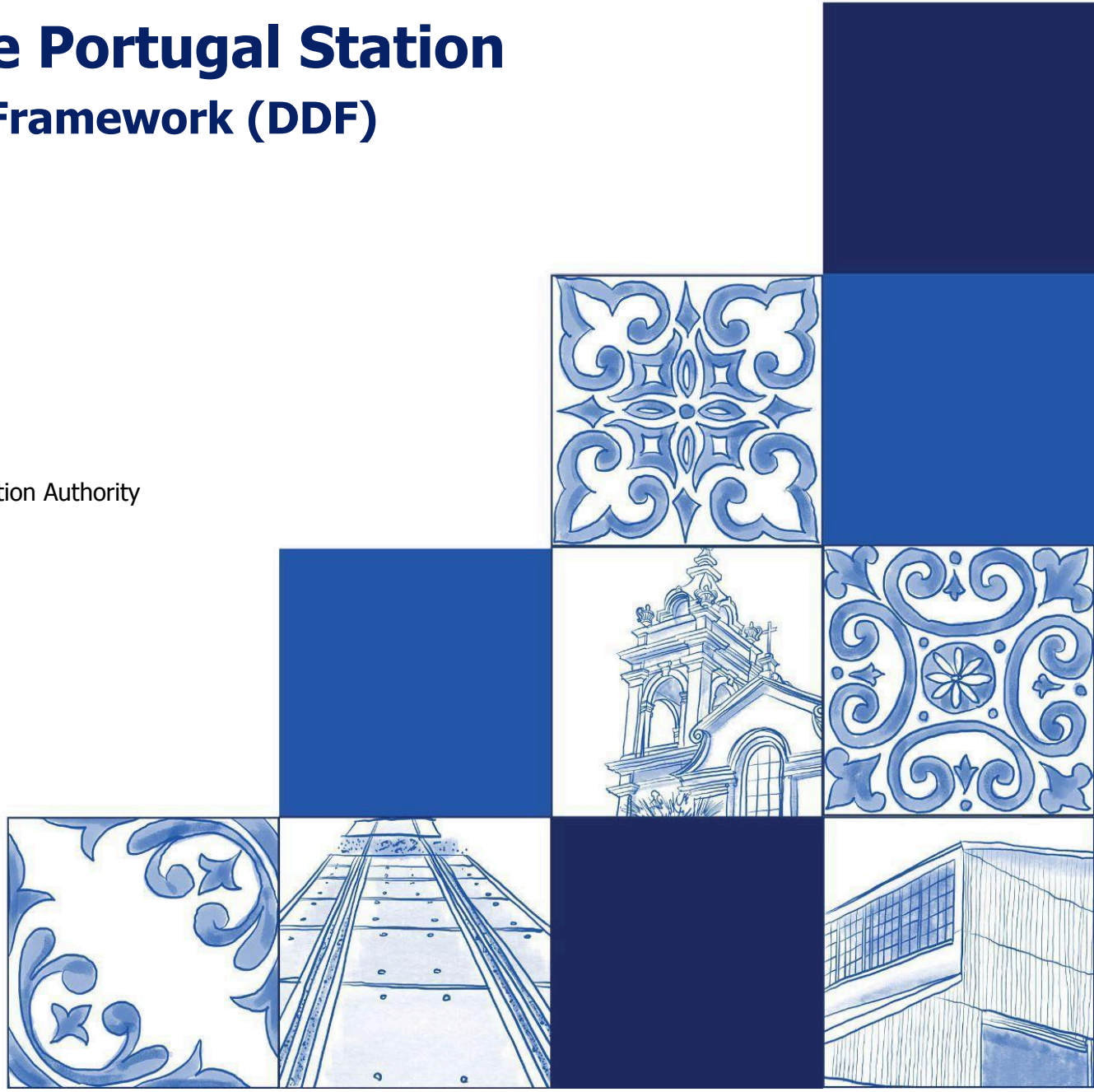
Christina Philip, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Prepared By

SITELAB urban studio
660 Mission Street #200
San Francisco, CA 94105

Acknowledgments

Art Builds Community
Economic & Planning Systems
Introba



Contents

1 Introduction.....	4
1.1 Memo Purpose.....	4
1.2 Memo Organization.....	4
1.3 Terms and Definitions.....	4
2 Executive Summary.....	6
3 Framework.....	7
3.1 Placemaking, Placekeeping, Placeknowing.....	7
3.2 Open Space Principles.....	8
4 Engagement and Storytelling.....	9
4.1 Community Engagement.....	9
4.2 Art and Culture.....	10
4.2.1 Art and Creative Expression.....	10
4.2.2 Process and Partnerships.....	12
4.2.3 Interim Use.....	14
5 Open Space.....	17
5.1 Vision.....	17
5.2 Program.....	19
5.3 Character.....	20
5.3.1 Reflecting Stories.....	20
5.3.2 Landscape.....	23
5.3.3 Inclusivity and Accessibility.....	24
5.4 Station Plaza.....	25
5.5 Neighborhood Park.....	28
5.6 Gateway Park.....	31
5.7 Paseos.....	32

5.8 Five Wounds Trail.....	34
6 Active Uses.....	35
6.1 Attractors and Anchors.....	36
6.2 Community Facilities and Neighborhood Amenities.....	37
6.3 Retail and Services.....	37

1 Introduction

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) Design Development Framework (DDF) provides a concept vision and guiding principles for real estate development at the 28th Street/Little Portugal Transit Center (the "Station") in San José, California. The DDF will be used by VTA and stakeholders to guide and evaluate developers' future proposals and designs for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) on approximately 12 acres of VTA-owned property by the Station (www.vta.org/28LPdevelopment). The Station is being constructed as part of the BART Silicon Valley Phase II (BSVII) Extension Project (www.vtabart.org).

1.1 Memo Purpose

This memo outlines the open space and ground floor activation strategy for the project area and highlights opportunities to integrate resonant cultural aspects into the future built environment, as a key driver of a successful future development will incorporate local assets and community stories. The memo also identifies opportunities to incorporate art and interim uses throughout the built environment. Refer to Appendix D: Project Context Memo for background research that contributed to the findings and urban design decisions articulated in this document.

The diagrams and figures provided in this DDF document are conceptual and subject to change. They reference BART Silicon Valley Phase II Extension Project (BSVII) plan sets updated through April 2025. This content is for preliminary planning purposes only; it is not a formal planning application

nor a regulatory document. Unless otherwise noted, all figures in this document were created by SITELAB urban studio for VTA.

1.2 Memo Organization

The memo opens with reflections on placemaking approaches as well as foundational principles. Three sections focus on engagement and storytelling (community engagement, art, and culture), open space (vision, program, character), and active uses (attractors and anchors, community facilities and neighborhood amenities, retail, and services).

1.3 Terms and Definitions

- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Individual real estate projects that are compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented and centered around high-quality transit, enabling a carless lifestyle with everyday access to residences, businesses, civic institutions, and amenities.
- **28th Street/Little Portugal TOD** (also referred to as "TOD" or "new development" in this document): The area of VTA-controlled parcels available for mixed-use, transit-oriented development surrounding the forthcoming 28th Street/Little Portugal BART Station—approximately 12 acres. Development(s) may be built by a single developer or multiple developers. The area is within the City of San José's Five Wounds Urban Village Plan boundaries.
- **Five Wounds Urban Village Plan (FWUVP):** City of San José-led planning initiative for the approximately

half-mile area surrounding the 28th Street/Little Portugal BART Station. The plan underwent an update in 2022-25, simultaneous to the creation of this DDF. The Urban Village Plan includes four Districts in the area—Roosevelt Park, Five Wounds, Little Portugal, and 24th & William. It identifies vision, principles, land use, urban design, streetscape, circulation, open space, parking, and implementation policies and actions.

- **Row Block:** VTA-controlled developable area located west of N. 28th Street, north of E. Santa Clara Street, south of E. Julian Street, consisting of the former Union Pacific rail right-of-way along the west side of N. 28th Street. Former railroad tracks run through the parcels and require removal, remediation and/or repurposing. The property shares a rear yard property line with adjacent parcels on the east side of N. 27th Street. The Five Wounds Trail will be located between the future Row Block and N. 28th Street.
- **Station Block:** VTA-controlled developable area located east of N. 28th Street, north of Five Wounds Lane, south of St. James Street, and west of N. 30th Street. This area includes the BART station owned by VTA and operated by BART.

2 Executive Summary

During a stakeholder meeting in September 2023, a community member remarked, “The hard work is already done.” He expanded on this to explain that the neighborhood already consists of thriving small businesses, organizations, and a strong sense of identity and community voice. The discussion that followed further reinforced that the work ahead is to ensure that the 28th Street/Little Portugal TOD fits within this context—uplifting and amplifying, rather than replacing, what thrives today.

Along these lines, we apply the concepts of *placekeeping* and *placeknowing* to center lived experiences, engagement, and partnerships with community stewards—endeavoring to go beyond “placemaking” at 28th Street/Little Portugal Station TOD (concepts explored in more detail in Section 3.1). Genuine placekeeping and placeknowing strategies require long standing commitments by VTA and its future development partners to engage and partner with local organizations, building upon the seeds planted during community engagement in 2023—see Appendix E: Engagement Summary for recorded feedback. This also includes enabling processes and frameworks for public art in the station area, collaborating with local artists to reflect stories of the neighborhood, and facilitating interim uses that deliver early public benefits.

Within the concept vision, open space and active uses are complementary in enabling a thriving public realm that facilitates varied experiences. The open space network includes a new public plaza in addition to smaller-scale parks

and walkable paseos, which collectively provide a platform for everyday activities to special events. These open spaces include principles of universal design for accessibility and contain the opportunity for a mix of programs (ranging from passive to active recreation, appealing to families and seniors), facilitated by a balance of hardscape (non-living) and softscape (living) elements that enable circulation and also comfort throughout the day and year. Ground floor commercial or community-serving active uses—including large-format attractors to small-format community facilities to retail kiosks—support these open spaces and offer amenities beyond typical office, institutional, and residential uses.

3 Framework

3.1 Placemaking, Placekeeping, Placeknowing

New development has an immense responsibility in shaping our experiences within the built environment. It has the ability to alienate or welcome; to be new and different or to be familiar and supportive. *Placemaking* as a concept often refers to the implementation of active uses within the ground floor of a building or public realm design elements that establish a clear “identity” or a “sense of place” that is inclusive “to all.” Critics challenge that this approach supports gentrification—because it often occurs in places that already have histories, stories, and existing communities that have cared for them and may undermine a sense of belonging held by the local stewards of these places.

Placekeeping and *placeknowing* have been lifted up as alternatives by scholars such as Roberto Bedoya, the Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland. In “Belonging is a Sticky Word: Roberto Bedoya in Conversation with Tom DeCaigny”¹ as well as “To Know a Place: A Conversation with Roberto Bedoya,”² Bedoya highlights the ways in which placekeeping and placeknowing center social networks, being in relationship with others, and community agency.

¹ “Belonging is a Sticky Word: Roberto Bedoya in Conversation with Tom DeCaigny,” Roberto Bedoya + Tom DeCaigny, February 2021, <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2021/02/belonging-is-a-sticky-word-roberto-bedoya-in-conversation-with-tom-decaigny/>

² “To Know a Place: A Conversation with Roberto Bedoya,” Anjulie Rao, <https://www.justplace.us/bedoya>

Therefore, the DDF identifies opportunities to center the stories of Little Portugal and community members’ lived experiences. This approach supports uplifting resonant concepts with those who are most familiar with the site and its surroundings—specifically, continued youth engagement at local schools and with surrounding residents, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profits to expand the initial list we engaged with (noted in Section 4). Other important partnerships to establish:

- Partnerships with organizations who are active in the surrounding area as stewards of this place, and providing space within the site to accommodate events and activities that are meaningful to them.
- Partnerships with local artists, engaging them early to enable co-authorship rather than reacting to a brief.
- Partnerships with local small businesses, including following through with recommendations from the “Five Wounds Urban Village Housing and Small Business Displacement Risk Assessment and Implementation Recommendations”³ for mitigating commercial displacement risk. Recommended strategies are to create commercial space for small businesses, support relocation of displaced businesses, provide financial and technical assistance, engage

³ “Five Wounds Urban Village Housing and Small Business Displacement Risk Assessment and Implementation Recommendations,” HR&A, Draft July 2023, https://sccvta.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/redp/es/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B9E698629-3BB2-4BD3-9235-D969A6E9046A%7D&file=HR%26A%20Five%20Wounds%20DRAFT%20report_07252023.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true

businesses to cultivate trust and tailor solutions, and create a citywide small business support fund.

In addition to these process recommendations, consider reflecting resonant stories through design, space, and programs to support a sense of belonging. This includes identifying opportunities to celebrate both the area's Portuguese cultural heritage and community as well as the multiculturalism and diversity of immigrants that consider Little Portugal, Five Wounds, and East San José home. This may be done through design characteristics within the public realm, signage, art, and other methods—such as retaining elements that may be meaningful to the site or neighborhood's past. Identifying early activation opportunities that support intergenerational space, such as youth programming to support the young population and the number of schools in the neighborhood, is also critically important.

It is important to note that the placemaking, placekeeping, and placeknowing concepts discussed in this memo do not provide a playbook for how to achieve a strategy that supports belonging within communities; rather emphasizing the importance of thoughtful and sustained engagement, partnerships, and programming as a necessary process toward community ownership.

3.2 Open Space Principles

Building on existing hearts of the Little Portugal neighborhood—including both formal and informal community gathering spaces—is critically important. The principles in

Figure 1 were generated by the design team, informed by themes from previous engagement and an understanding that the station should be integrated with its surrounding neighborhood fabric. The principles helped guide conceptualization of the open space network and reinforce project goals.



Figure 1. Open space principles

4 Engagement and Storytelling

4.1 Community Engagement

This section includes a brief overview of DDF Season 1 (“Vision”) and Season 2 (“Shape”) engagement that informed the approach to placemaking, placekeeping, and placeknowing within the DDF and may provide context for future engagement efforts for TOD at 28th Street/Little Portugal. A broad group of stakeholders was engaged, including future immediate neighbors of the station, local public institutions, nonprofit groups, faith-based groups, artists, youth, and community-based organizations. This engagement also built on past planning efforts, including work by [CommUniverCity](#), [City of San José agencies](#), the [BSVII Community Working Group \(CWG\)](#), and [VTA's Playbook](#). Highlights from engagement are noted in their respective sections to follow, and a more descriptive summary of engagement themes can be found in Appendix E: Engagement Summary.

Season 1 (spring 2023) focused on listening to stories, lived experiences, and qualities of place, in order to understand what community members were most excited and concerned about regarding future development. Four questions were consistently asked:

- What do you find special or unique about the neighborhood that you want the project team to know?
- Close your eyes and imagine this area 20 years from now. What has changed? What are you happy to see has stayed the same?

- What kinds of spaces/services are hard to access that would be helpful to have close by?
- What else do you think is very important for VTA to know?

Season 2 (fall 2023) focused on engaging community members around the concept vision and more specific opportunities it unlocked for the public realm. The goal was to refine the concept vision based on preferences and build trust in showing how ideas have been thoughtfully incorporated to date. Three questions were consistently asked:

- Community members have shared many stories about the culture, history, and character of the neighborhood. These can be highlighted within development around the station. Which stories do you connect with, and why? Vote for up to 3.
- In addition to seating and gathering space, what open space activities would you prioritize for this neighborhood, and why?
- In addition to housing, what future uses are you most excited about, and why?

Key takeaways across Seasons 1 and 2:

- What makes the neighborhood special and unique is the Portuguese culture and community, a sense of community that is tight-knit and multigenerational, the diverse and working class neighborhood with legacies of immigration and organizing, and love for local places and landmarks. Top three prioritized stories of Little Portugal to highlight within development include the

multicultural and immigrant community, local businesses, and local art and artists.

- Parks and open spaces are highly desired. They should be safe and friendly for many age groups (youth, families, seniors) and support different activities, from passive to active recreation. Top three prioritized open space activities include a farmer's market area, athletic facility, and play area.
- A variety of retail, services, and community uses are desired, with highest interest in food and retail services. Top three prioritized uses include a food hall, grocery store, and retail/shopping center.
- Community members also articulated broader desires and concerns. These sentiments included wanting to see the area cleaner and safe for children, families, and seniors; preserving culture and sense of identity; enabling people to stay in place and enjoy new opportunities and amenities; concerns around existing homelessness, commercial vacancies, construction effects, and gentrification.

4.2 Art and Culture

East San José is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of the City. It is where many immigrants begin their journeys and has welcomed people from Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Portugal (the Azores), and many other countries. The East Side is also home to many multi-family affordable housing complexes as well as numerous churches and social services which support these communities. Refer to Appendix D: Project Context Memo for additional background.

4.2.1 Art and Creative Expression

San José is also home to hundreds of artists, some working in the public and others working in small collectives within their communities. The arts and cultural landscape of San José reflect its diversity, and for people in East San José, it is important that they see themselves in the art that is presented there. Arts and cultural experiences bring people together and include various performances, visual, literary, music, murals, and food. Many events take place at the Mexican Heritage Plaza (1700 Alum Rock Avenue), Veggielution community farm (647 South King Road), parks, churches, and community centers. While East San José's cultural expressions are continuously evolving, they remain firmly rooted in the histories of its diverse population.



Figure 2. [“Our Journey is Sacred”](#) mural at Cristo Rey High School by San José artist Carlos Rodriguez

Various art forms can tell the story of a place within a development project. These may include functional art such as seating areas with stories and images embedded in their design, sculptural work that can be walked through and around, narrative murals, and platforms for performing art where stories can be told in music, dance, theater, and spoken word. These types of artworks and artwork platforms can be integrated into the 28th Street/Little Portugal TOD, enriching the environment for residents, commuters, and businesses. During 2023 engagement, community members uplifted art and local artists as their fourth top request when asked about open space activities, and third top request when asked about

the stories of Little Portugal they wanted to prioritize. They largely expressed interest in art that is relevant to the history of the neighborhood and specific to San José/East San José. Examples raised included banners, Portuguese tiles created by community members, murals, and the inclusion of both permanent and temporary art. Additional ideas expressed by students at Cristo Rey High School and San José High School during in-classroom engagement included bilingual signage, flags, painted floor, and places to walk around and view art. Refer to Appendix E: Engagement Summary for more information.

Along with our analysis of the site, the following ideas are prioritized according to the sequence of project development. Art content should prioritize and reflect the history and diversity of the community.

- Temporary artworks on construction fencing that help define the community’s character during construction.
- Artwork integrated into streetscape and “gateway” moments that are thresholds into the plan area and towards the Station Entrance—including the Gateway Park at E. Santa Clara, at E. Julian Street, along N. 28th Street and the Five Wounds Trail, and within the Station Plaza. Applications may include functional art such as furnishings, lighting, and signage.
- A series of feature elements or a continuous motif integrated along the Five Wounds Trail—including industrial artifacts, historical signage, or a multicultural representation of the neighborhood. Industrial artifacts may include railroad crossing arms and infrastructure

from the old railroad right-of-way, preserved and stored by VTA at Cerone yard.

- Early ground floor activation in mixed-use and retail spaces including activities such as public art, installations, popup restaurants and creative retail. An example of this is the City of San Francisco program called “Vacant to Vibrant,” which matches local businesses and artists with storefronts and supports negotiated leases in an effort to activate street frontage.⁴
- Temporary open space art locations that provide opportunities for community engagement and storytelling.
- Artwork integrated into the building design to ensure artists are at the table at the early stage of development.
- As the site develops, create opportunities for informal and formal performance spaces, freestanding and interactive art in plazas and other open spaces.
- Affordable space for artists to live and work.

Public art in the station area should be durable if it is intended for long term (‘permanent’) placement in the public realm and employ materials that are easily cleaned and maintained, such as concrete, steel, or other metals, or stone. Glass can be employed in limited areas where it is unlikely to be vandalized. Technology-based artworks should be confined to venues where tenants can monitor and maintain them. Artworks with limited lives, such as banners, window installations, and even

murals, should be considered temporary, and their duration should be described in the artist’s contracts. Each of these artwork types require clear guidelines and contracts that state whether the artwork is permanent or temporary, and who is responsible for its ongoing care.

4.2.2 Process and Partnerships

A successful art and culture program requires vision and commitment. The following best-practice recommendations are ideally initiated by VTA as the landowner and steward of public interest—prior to development agreements—to ensure expectations are clear for development partners.

- Public art framework plan
- Public art toolkit and guidelines
- Public art advisory committee

A comprehensive art framework plan in the station area establishes a toolkit for developers, their art consultants, and artists. This toolkit should include community histories, artwork guidelines, and procedures that state the process for a developer to create a public art advisory committee. It can be used as background in requests for artists’ qualifications and proposals (RFQs and RFPs) and can provide artists with the framework they need to develop artwork that is appropriate to its site and illuminates community stories. It is important that artists/teams chosen to create artwork in the station area have experience in community-based practice. Research and community engagement play vital roles in creating art that speaks for and to a community. Successful public art that tells a story is representative, inclusive, thoughtful, and responsive.

⁴ Vacant to Vibrant by SF New Deal, <https://www.vibrantsf.org/>

Artists can create inclusive artwork when provided with background information, guidance from a public art project manager, and opportunities to meet with community members in person. Artists must learn firsthand about a community's diverse stories and historical context to imbue meaning and identity in their work. A public art toolkit for developers and artists will provide a starting point, and engaging in community activities to learn about commonalities and differences will result in a richer artistic tapestry.

A well-considered public art process includes thorough research and a transparent artists' outreach and selection process. It is important that the artist selection process is clear and that everyone involved knows the steps involved. The developer should assemble an advisory group of knowledgeable, engaged, and experienced individuals to support artist selection and project development. The advisory group may include community leaders, a public art consultant, arts and design professionals, VTA team members, and development partners. VTA-appointed public art administrators are encouraged to maintain an agency-led vision for public art throughout the TOD that flows from decades of engagement in the area. While the developer has the final decision about the public art, the input, discussion, and counsel of an advisory group will be critical in creating a positive outcome. The BART Arts Master Plan⁵ includes arts advisory recommendations in its Appendix F.

⁵ "BART Arts Master Plan," BART, 2019.
https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/docs/BARTArtMasterPlan_Final_lo_res.pdf

It is important that the station area is representative of the communities. VTA should consider establishing a formal public arts program, including hiring its own public art program staff to manage and build a strong, inclusive, diverse, and welcoming arts program⁶. Knowledgeable staff can both manage public art and build partnerships with San José's arts cultural groups. In addition, partnerships with the East San José Carnegie Library, cultural organizations, small businesses, non-profit arts and social services agencies can promote safety, inclusion, family-oriented events, and ridership. If funding for program-wide staff positions is not available, consultants often work on a project basis. As an example, Art Builds Community worked with the City of San Jose's Office of Cultural Affairs Public Art staff to incorporate public art at the Berryessa BART station. See Section 4.2.3 for who may participate in programming and maintenance.

The presence of public art and cultural activities will encourage people to use BART and visit the station area. The station area can provide opportunities for professional arts organizations like Teatro Vision, San José Jazz, San José Multicultural Arts Guild, Mosaic, San José Taiko, and the Portuguese Band of San José to present their work. The station area can accommodate literary art programs in collaboration with the library and opportunities for the Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Latino communities to mount outdoor temporary arts engagements, including performances and culinary events.

⁶ Examples of successful public art programs include LA Metro in Los Angeles, CA (<https://art.metro.net/>) and Art on the BeltLine in Atlanta, GA (<https://art.beltline.org/>)

4.2.3 Interim Use

An interim Public Information Office (PIO) is proposed within an existing building near the TOD. This first opportunity for community members to engage with the site should deliver a public benefit and acknowledge the decades-long community planning effort bringing it to fruition. This public benefit/interim use could have an immediate impact on the neighborhood, create an identifiable marker to start associating with the station area, and become a local point of pride. Ideas range from arts and creative social programming to food, retail, and entertainment popups.

- **Mobile activity stations** that appeal to youth and families, including local favorites like the Maker[Space]Ship from San José Public Library, the Boombox Truck from San José Jazz, or the Bookmobile from Santa Clara County Library District.
- **Food truck gathering area** with rotating trucks and outdoor dining space, building on existing food truck presence in the neighborhood. Examples include Off the Grid and Spark Social (San Francisco).
- **Creative festivals** that bring people together through arts programming, such as the Market Street Prototyping Festival (San Francisco).
- **Service pop-ups** with a variety of vendors gathered to meet basic community needs, like the Lava Mae Pop-Up Care Village (San Francisco).
- **Immersive art installations or rotating community art** on canvases such as construction barriers, existing walls, or the street itself. Examples

include Wynwood Walls (Miami), Landing at Leidesdorf (San Francisco), Golden Gate Park Golden Mile (San Francisco), or Golden Gate Park Enchanted Forest (San Francisco).

- **Performing arts platform**, such as a small makeshift stage or a larger amphitheater, to support activities ranging from concerts to cultural dances. Examples can be found at the Downtown Berkeley Station BART Plaza.
- **Family-friendly active recreation areas**, including playgrounds, fitness zones, or skatepark elements that appeal to youth and families and complement existing uses in neighborhood open spaces. Examples include Boom Pop and Bridge Pop Parks (East Palo Alto).
- **Coffee shop run by local high school students**, providing a local jobs training partnership opportunity that can also become a point of pride (suggestion from Cristo Rey High School staff).
- **Micro or container retail** which can serve multiple activating functions of restaurants, shops, community hub, and event space within a compact area. Examples include BoxPark, Pop Brixton, and Camden Market (UK).
- **Basic structure to support a local arts organization**, such as Local Color at Downtown West that may need a home or satellite office nearby.

Interim uses could be implemented through partnerships with organizations who are already active in the community, City of San José Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood

Services, and/or parks management groups who facilitate programming for other local open spaces. Creekside Socials at Downtown West by Google and Jamestown offer an example. Socials include live music, art activities, and local food trucks, with future events planning to also include classes, workshops, and talks to contribute to an active district.



Figure 3. Santa Clara County Library District Bookmobile



Figure 4. "WE ARE ON NATIVE LAND" ground mural, Golden Gate Park Golden Mile, San Francisco



Figure 5. Play infrastructure at Boom Pop Park, East Palo Alto

Interim uses located within the proximity of active construction areas and construction vehicle routes to construction areas should be managed carefully to ensure safety. Candidates for early phase placemaking prior to BART construction completion are most applicable along E. Santa Clara Street, E. Julian Street, or E. St. James Street on the west side of N. 28th Street, where they can support the needs of the adjacent neighborhood without interfacing with critical site access. Interim uses should also offer the ability to evolve based on community feedback and changing needs.

5 Open Space

5.1 Vision

The concept vision for open space builds directly on the town square concept that was central to CommUniverCity plans: establishing close to the station a central place “to gather and strengthen the bonds of the community.”⁷ The open space network (approximately three acres in total) includes this new public plaza anchored around the station, as well as smaller-scale parks and walkable paseos, with the goal of facilitating different experiences and scales of gathering (Figure 6). This should be done in ways that complement the neighborhood’s existing open spaces and address gaps, not just for new residents of TOD, but for all. Preliminary thinking around the program and character of each of these spaces is described in the following sections.

⁷ CommUniverCity San José and City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative, *Five Wounds/Brookwood Terrace BART Station Area Community Concept Plan*, September 2010.

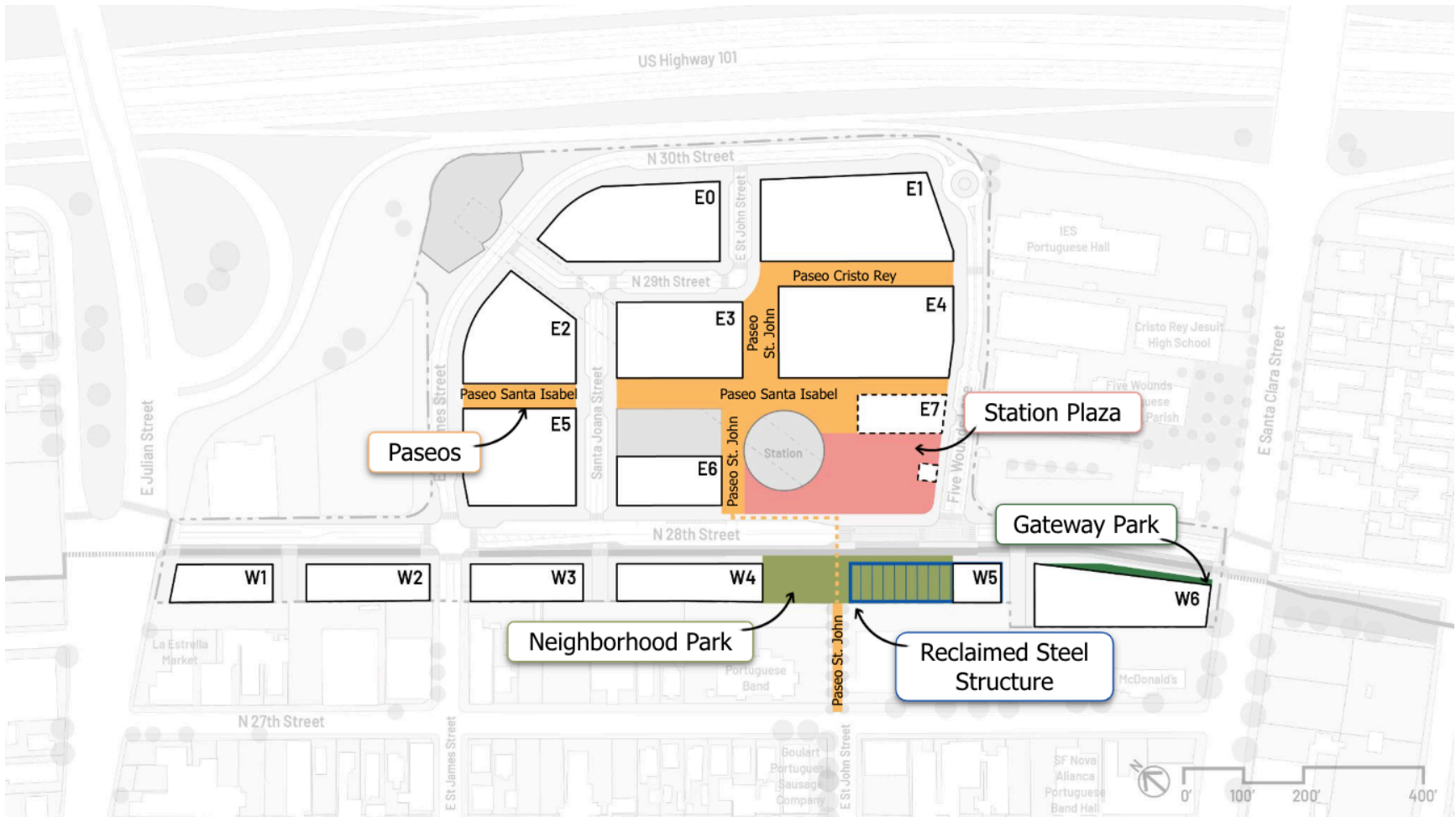


Figure 6. Conceptual open space network

5.2 Program

The program of the open space network should reflect the needs and interests of existing community members. The area is racially/ethnically diverse, multilingual, and multigenerational. The station's census tract (5014.01) is predominantly Hispanic (64%) and Asian (14%); Spanish is the most spoken language (spoken by 72% of children and 53% of adults at home); and approximately 30% of the community is under 20 years of age.⁸ In addition, there are many community serving uses and groups close to the station that may use the open spaces, including Cristo Rey High School, Five Wounds Parish, local businesses, artists and arts organizations, and community organizations. Refer to Appendix D: Project Context Memo for additional information about demographics.

Community ideas regarding open space program from 2023 DDF engagement include:

- Overall, parks and open spaces are highly desired, they should be safe and friendly for many age groups (youth, families, seniors), and they should support different activities from passive to active recreation.
- Top three open space activities: farmer's market area, athletic facility, and play area.
- Other open spaces activities in order of decreasing priority: art, garden, water feature, stage, lawn, exercise station, and dog park. Additional open

responses included activities for youth and families (walks in the park, movie nights), multi-use space that functions for special occasions and everyday events, and a sense of safety, accessibility, affordability, inclusion, and shade.

- Engagement with both staff and students from Cristo Rey High School, as well as students from San José High School, highlighted a desire for safe places for students to spend time. Students lifted up specific ideas, including food and retail establishments adjacent to open space (ranging from small local businesses to affordable quick service and chain stores), recreational activities (soccer/broader sports facilities, playground/play equipment), landscape elements (lawn, flowers of Portuguese significance, water features), basic amenities (seating, parking, public bathrooms, shade, trees, lighting, trash cans, water), and the presence of culture and art (bilingual signage, finding ways to represent the multicultural community, hosting a diversity of events).

These community ideas can help to right-size open spaces and inform thinking around stewardship, operational partnerships, and adjacent ground floor uses to enable a successful public realm.

Guiding principles around program that apply across the open space network:

- **Include both permanent and temporary elements.** This includes physical design features (such

⁸ "Census Tract 5014.01, Santa Clara, CA", Census Reporter, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US06085501401-census-tract-501401-santa-clara-ca/>.

as a playground) as well as events and activities (such as a farmer's market).

- **Accommodate flexibility for different needs.** Consider the spectrum of small to large gatherings, solo to social spaces, and everyday activities to special events.
- **Build in multigenerational opportunities.** Incorporate elements that address the unique interests of youth, families, and seniors.
- **Diversify beyond retail.** While retail is an important activating element, prioritize free amenities and activities as well for the greatest access.
- **As a baseline, include gathering and seating space.** Include a variety of shaded public seating elements and comfortable outdoor waiting areas for transit.

VTa's [Community Design and Transportation Manual](#) reinforces many of these ideas, with an emphasis on flexible or multi-function spaces that allow for varied programming, human-scale elements for comfort, and accessibility for all.⁹

⁹ VTA, *Community Design and Transportation Manual (CDT)*, Transportation and Public Life.

5.3 Character

5.3.1 Reflecting Stories

When community members were asked during 2023 engagement about which stories of the culture, history, and character of the neighborhood they connected with most, their top three priorities were:

- Multicultural and immigrant community
- Local businesses
- Local art and artists



Figure 7. Dia de Portugal Festival at Kelley Park



Figure 8. Example multicultural local businesses and organizations

A balance will be needed between highlighting Portuguese heritage and the cultural multiplicity of the area—including ongoing efforts to establish La Avenida Cultural District, led by the School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza as well as other surrounding community organizations. As noted in Section 4.2, public art and artist collaboration will be an important mechanism for grappling with this nuance. Some suggestions that have come up as ways to highlight Portuguese heritage specifically are to incorporate Portuguese names for open spaces or new internal streets, as well as references to blue and white azulejo tiles (particularly in the Station Plaza). Students from San José High School highlighted additional Portuguese motifs of hydrangeas and carnations, the Rooster of Barcelos from folklore, and a series of arches representing the city gates to São Miguel Azores.



Figure 9. Portuguese Azulejo tiles

The TOD is situated within an area of rich history involving many different immigrants and industries (agriculture, canneries, dairy farms, industrial manufacturing). Finding ways to carry forward remnants of these legacies into open spaces, such as exploring opportunities to incorporate the signage or structural frame of an industrial building from the site, can reinforce a sense of history on the site. Precedents for this type of creative reuse include Brooklyn Basin (Oakland), Vineyard Farmers Market (Fresno), and Cherry Street Pier (Philadelphia), each providing a compelling adaptation of a structure with the potential for day and night activation.

A precedent for reflecting stories in the built environment, Landing at Leidesdorff is a pilot project in San Francisco that illustrates San Francisco's history while reimagining a historic downtown alley into an active pedestrian destination. In addition to removable street seating, events, and programming, it includes three storytelling art elements:

- A ground mural speaks to the area's maritime history as a former wharf, with a stanza from "The Cool, Grey City of Love" by poet George Sterling
- Vinyl panels illustrate the historic shoreline and wharves at a larger scale
- A mural depicts the life of Captain William Leidesdorff, known as the "African founding father of California"¹⁰



Figure 10. Landing at Leidesdorff vinyl panels (image credit: Mu-Ping Cheng)



Figure 11. Landing at Leidesdorff mural (image credit: Mu-Ping Cheng)

¹⁰ City of SF, "Mayor Breed Celebrates Launch of New 'Landing at Leidesdorff' Downtown Destination," September 2023, <https://sf.gov/news/mayor-breed-celebrates-launch-new-landing-leidesdorff-downtown-destination>

5.3.2 Landscape

Given the combination of a warm and sunny climate, limited street trees around the site today, and many paved surfaces with few outdoor places for respite, there is a clear need for increased canopy cover and plantings to facilitate shade and cooling. Shade is also important for people waiting for trains between transfers, and increasingly important during extreme weather event days. Trees and plantings serve more than aesthetic purposes; selecting a variety of native and low-maintenance species can support the local ecosystem, contribute to biodiversity, provide habitat for pollinators, and also enhance our sense of connection with nature. Additional considerations:

- Incorporate layered plantings, including groundcover, perennial plantings, and trees with generous canopy. Plantings may also include flowers of Portuguese significance highlighted through engagement, such as hydrangeas and carnations.
- Use structural soils for trees where limited space for tree wells are provided within hardscape areas with high degrees of pedestrian traffic, such as the Station Plaza.
- Integrate permeable surfaces and green stormwater infrastructure to manage stormwater and reduce peak flows.
- Select materials that reduce urban heat island effect and balance light reflectivity and sun exposure. This could include sustainable paving materials (such as recycled or sustainably-sourced materials).

Refer to VTA's [Sustainable Landscaping Policy](#) which includes guidance on ways to conserve water resources, reduce or prevent pollution, and improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

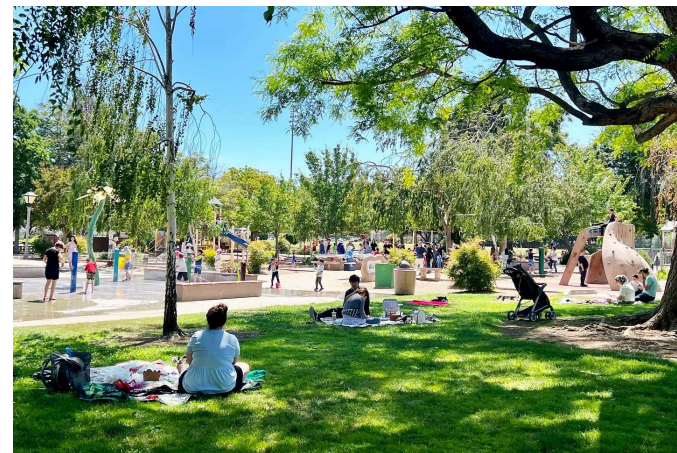


Figure 12. Examples of shade trees and layered plantings

5.3.3 Inclusivity and Accessibility

Prioritizing inclusivity, accessibility, and cues of publicness will help ensure new public open spaces feel welcoming and legible. Wayfinding, signage, seating, and lighting can all play a role in this:

- Enable clear sightlines through open space desire lines and to nearby landmarks such as the Five Wounds Parish and Station Entrance.
- Maintain a sense of openness and invitation to the street edge (e.g. landscape buffers that double as seating elements rather than fences where boundaries are needed).
- Implement gentle slopes that meet ADA ramp requirements instead of stairs to minimize thresholds for the elderly and people with mobility disabilities.
- Incorporate rest areas with ledges or seating near the Station Entrance, near play or event areas, along sloping paths, and near bus and paratransit facilities.
- Provide welcoming open space signage and information in multiple languages to cater to the diversity of backgrounds of visitors, residents, and commuters in the neighborhood.
- Incorporate ample pedestrian-scale lighting that invites usage of spaces outside of peak commute times and into the evening.

Refer to VTA's [Community Design and Transportation Manual](#) for more information on designing the pedestrian realm for all abilities, including accommodating the needs of people with visual, auditory, mobility, and other impairments.¹¹

¹¹ VTA, *Community Design and Transportation Manual (CDT), Pedestrian Environment*.

5.4 Station Plaza

"Move and Host"

The Station Plaza¹² is the largest proposed open space (up to about an acre in size), located on the Station Block. The Station Plaza is located directly adjacent to the Station Entrance and should be framed by ground floor active uses, anchoring/attractor uses, and a potential small pavilion, kiosks, or pop-up structures that support plaza activation while enabling sightlines between the Station Entrance and Five Wounds National Parish, E. Santa Clara Street, and the Neighborhood Park. At the highest level, the plaza is meant to both *move* people efficiently to and from the station and *host* people for gatherings.

The plaza is sized to accommodate a wide range of gatherings—from large special events to everyday individual or small group activities that bring people outside to linger and spend time. These large special events could include cultural festivals, such as the Dia de Portugal Festival, which is currently held at Kelley Park in San José and gathers hundreds annually to celebrate Portuguese culture. Also uplifted through 2023 engagement was the suggestion that the Station Plaza serve as a “bookend” to the Mexican Heritage Plaza on Alum Rock Avenue, which is comparable in scale and less than a mile away. This presents an opportunity to host a series of related events that bring people through the neighborhood.

¹² This section describes aspirations for the station plaza beyond the FTA-funded station plaza that will be delivered by BSVII. Future funding and provision will be determined at a later date.

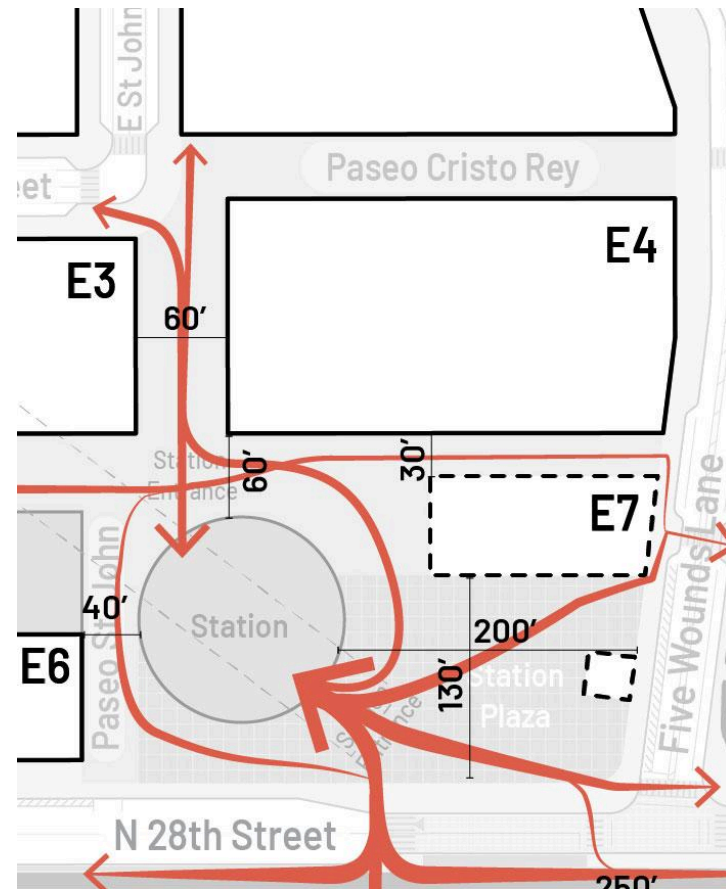


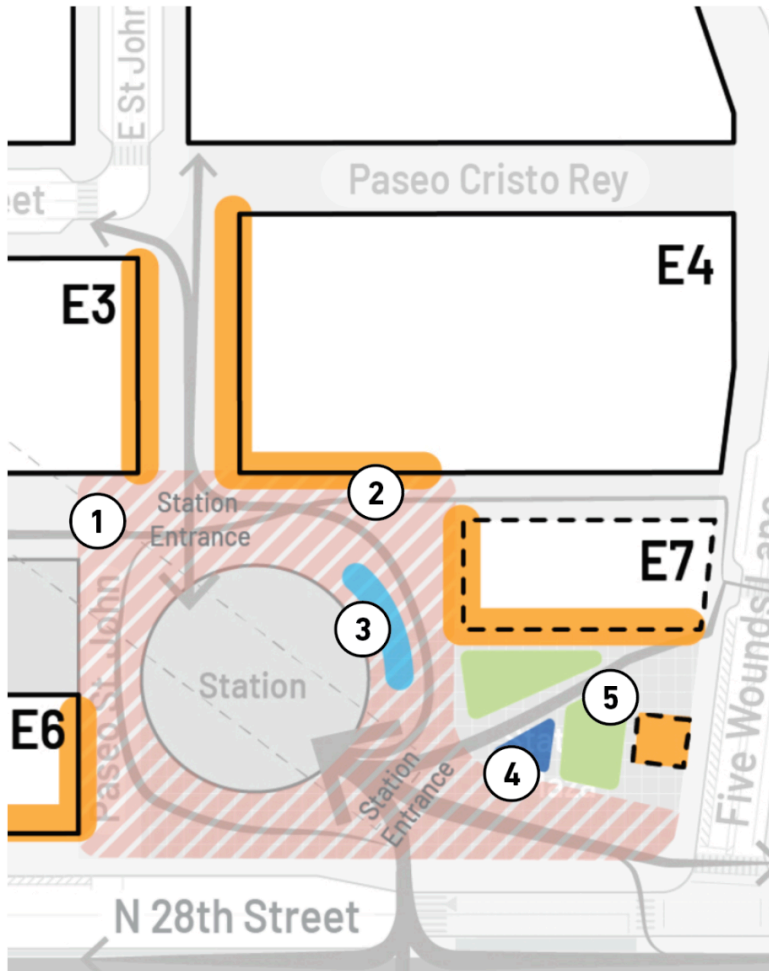
Figure 13. Conceptual Station Plaza dimensions and main pedestrian flows

Smaller, everyday events may include farmer’s markets, local vendor bazaars, or drop-ins from the East San José Carnegie Branch Library Maker[Space]Ship. Additional elements such as space for outdoor dining, an interactive water feature, landscape and shading elements, and a variety of seating can

ensure this is a comfortable and desirable place even in the absence of events.

As noted in Section 3.1, establishing partnerships with organizations who are active in the surrounding area will be critical to bringing these activation ideas to life. Specifically, gatherings and events may be implemented through potential partnerships with IES Hall, Five Wounds Parish, and/or CBOs that have established interest in cultural and community programming. A developer-initiated parks management group who facilitates programming for other local open spaces may also be considered. It will be important to connect with the City of San José Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services for necessary permits and approvals.

Given the high volume of pedestrian traffic expected within the Station Plaza, it is important to select materials that can withstand both intensive daily pedestrian use as well as loading access for events, BART service requirements, and emergency vehicles. Hardscape materials may include a combination of concrete, concrete pavers and bricks, or granite pavers. As noted in Section 5.3.1, the plaza may also incorporate Portuguese azulejo tiles—whether literally or through a contemporary public art interpretation—to add a unique touch and reinforce cultural stories of the place.



2 Active ground floors



Figure 14. Conceptual Station Plaza program

5.5 Neighborhood Park

"A family-oriented place to belong, linger, and play"

The Neighborhood Park is the second largest proposed open space (up to about half an acre), located on the Row Block. It facilitates clear and intuitive connections to the station along Paseo St. John, provides public access to N. 27th Street, and allows for respite while traveling along the Five Wounds Trail. Given its proximity to neighborhood residences, the park incorporates a mix of passive and active areas that support family gatherings and recreation. This could include elements such as a play area, multipurpose lawn, exercise stations, and small outdoor multipurpose athletic court that complements rather than competes with larger athletic spaces at nearby Roosevelt Park. Ishihara Park in Los Angeles occupies a similarly linear orientation that opens to the street and offers a variety of experiences through different "rooms," including a playground, lawn, learning garden, and picnic areas.

In addition, the Neighborhood Park is the ideal location for a repurposed structural frame from the existing industrial buildings within the project as a sculptural element nodding to the site's history, if components are able to be reclaimed during station construction. Creative reuse of this structure can help visualize the site's industrial history, frame a unique gathering place, contribute to a sense of continuity and identity, and mediate between the Station Entrance and adjacent development.

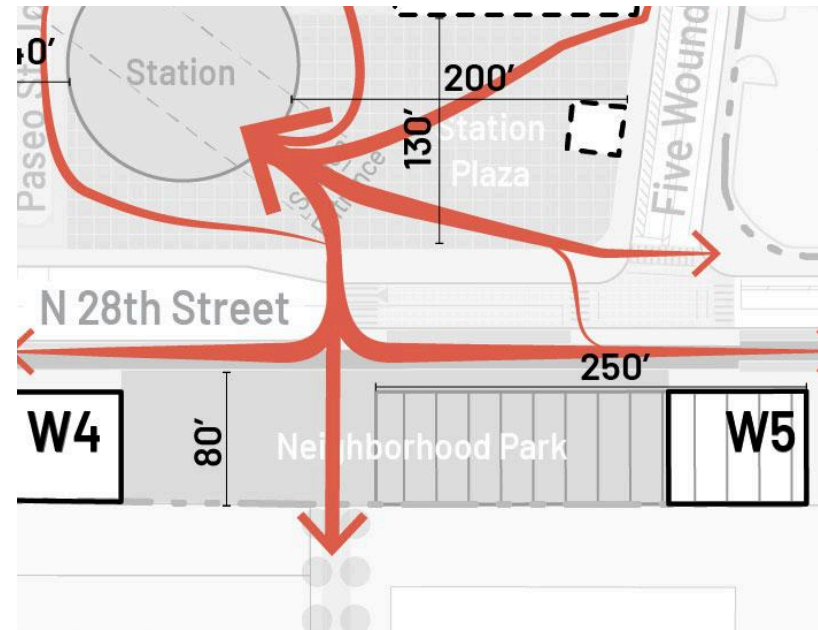


Figure 15. Conceptual Neighborhood Park dimensions and main pedestrian flows

While illustrated as an open structure, there may be micro-retail integrated below. See Section 6.3 for further discussion and examples of micro-retail and container reuse opportunities. The structure itself also provides an important element of shade during the daytime and should incorporate lighting elements that highlight the structure and support activities in the evening.

Because of the array of activities present in the Neighborhood Park, its materiality is more diverse than the Station Plaza, including semi-permeable materials, softscape materials, and play elements. Semi-permeable materials may include

decomposed granite or permeable pavers. Softscape materials may include ground cover vegetation, perennial plantings, and landscaped berms. Play surfaces may include rubberized play surface, reinforced lawn or turf, grass, engineered mulch, wood, or sand.

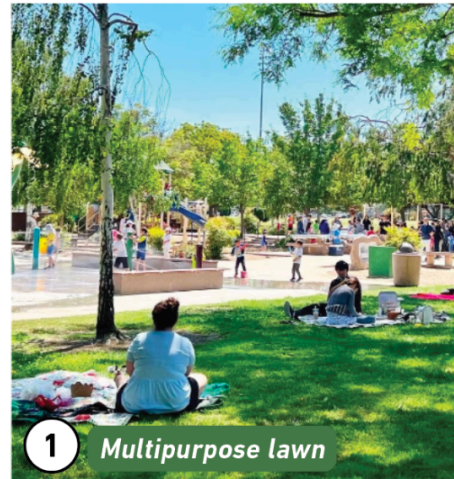
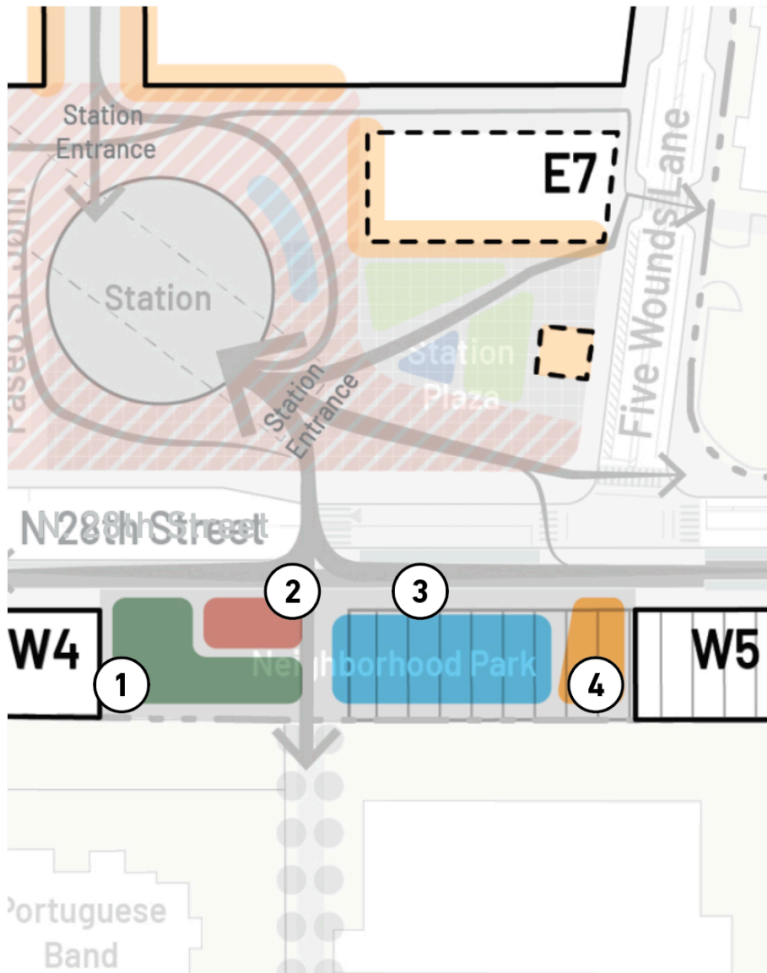


Figure 16. Conceptual Neighborhood Park program

5.6 Gateway Park

"Signal station arrival"

The Gateway Park (up to about 3,000 square feet in size) physically demarcates a gateway to the station, expands the adjacent Five Wounds Trail, and enables sightlines to the Station Entrance. Located on the Row Block near E. Santa Clara Street, it creates a place to pause on the busy commercial corridor, incorporates spill out space for adjacent ground floor active uses, and supports a welcoming environment for transit passengers at the VTA Rapid bus stop.

In order to signal a sense of arrival to the station area, the park may include literal or metaphorical gateway art. See Section 4.2 for further discussion of these opportunities.

Similarly to the function of the Gateway Park, Figure 17 from VTA's Community Design and Transportation Manual illustrates design elements of an active corner with inviting places to pause.

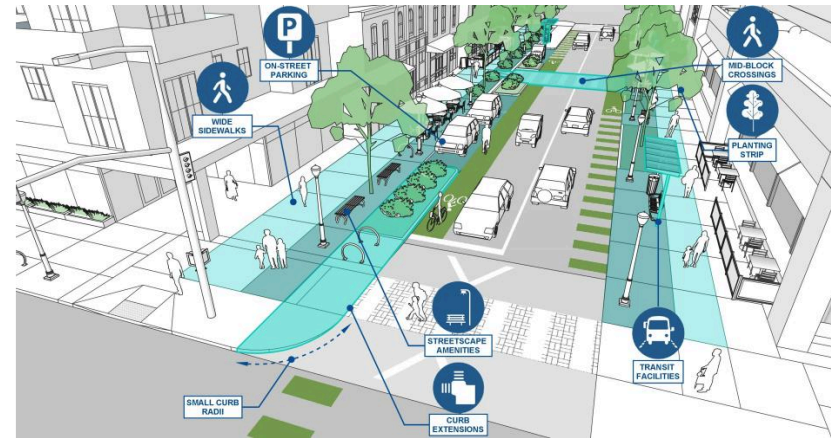


Figure 17. Design elements that support a welcoming and thriving pedestrian environment (Source: VTA's Community Design and Transportation Manual)

5.7 Paseos

"Increase walkability and connectivity"

Paseos complete the open space network and provide publicly-dedicated pedestrian passages between larger blocks, each approximately 30 to 60 feet in width:

- **Paseo Santa Isabel** provides a north/south connection between E. St. James Street and Five Wounds Lane along the northeast side of the Station Entrance—providing off-street station access from future development on the adjacent block north of E. St. James Street.
- **Paseo Cristo Rey** provides a north/south connection between N. 29th Street and Five Wounds Lane—home to Cristo Rey High School, Five Wounds Parish, and IES Hall.
- **Paseo St. John** provides an east/west connection extending from N. 27th Street along the alignment of E. St. John Street, across N. 28th Street, and along the north side of the Station Entrance to N. 29th Street.

See Figure 18 of the paseo network.

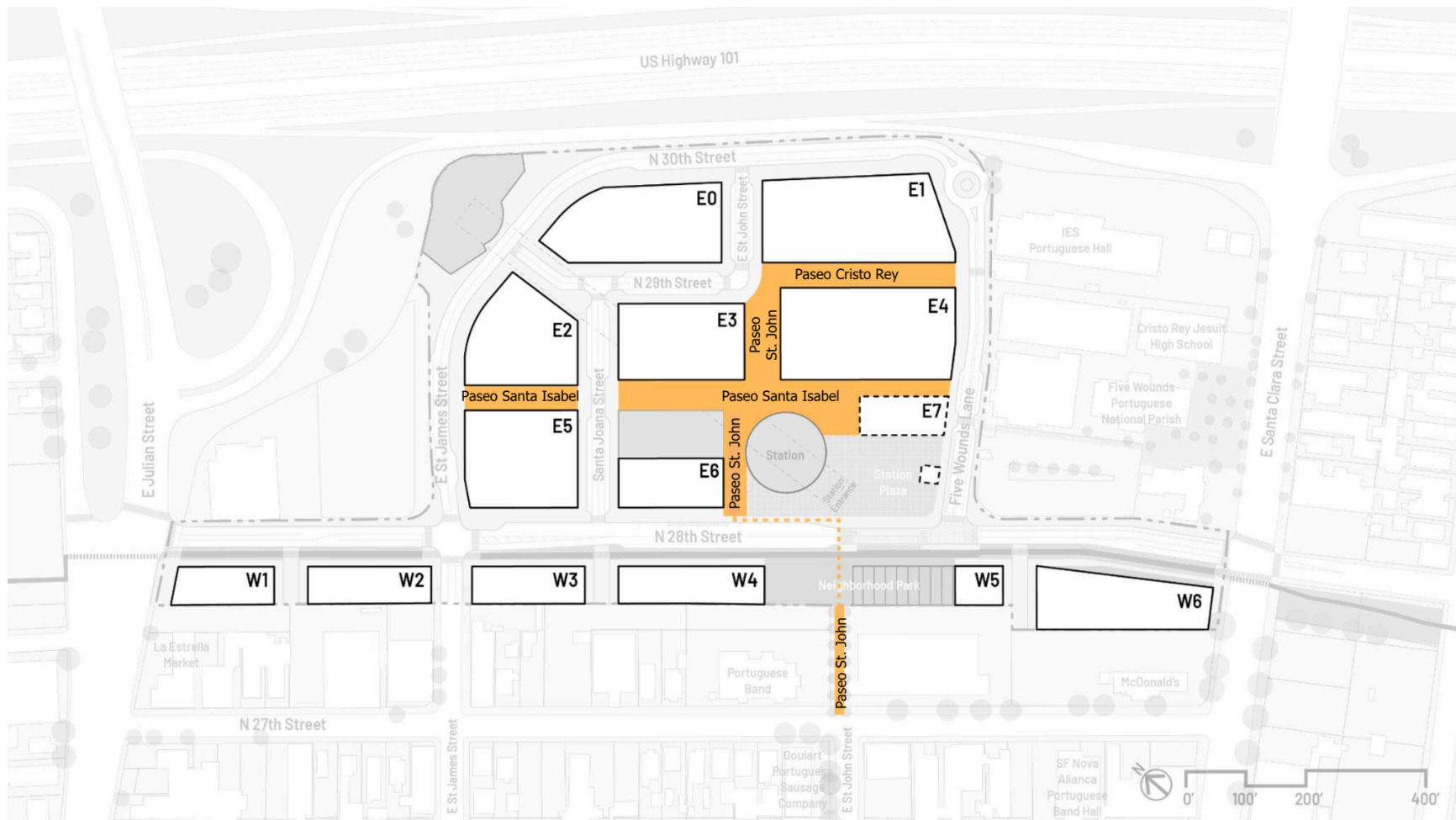


Figure 18. Conceptual paseo network

These car-free mid-block passages increase walkability and connectivity between open spaces and also function as spill out zones during large gatherings in the Station Plaza. Paseos have a minimum 20 feet wide clear space for emergency vehicles, with up to 40 additional feet for landscaped areas, furnishings, seating, programmatic elements, or outdoor seating near active uses. Establishing an active ground floor relationship between paseos and adjacent buildings is critical in order for them to feel safe and comfortable for everyday users.

Located in downtown San José, Paseo de San Antonio spans multiple blocks, connecting between the San José State University campus and Plaza de Cesar Chavez. It is framed by a variety of ground floor uses, including restaurants, shops, theater, and standalone kiosks. Also included are art, furnishings (lighting, public seating, trash, bike racks, hanging flower baskets), as well as pedestrian scale awnings and signage. Bollards, paving materials, and community crosswalks between the paseo blocks help to signal this is a different type of space that prioritizes pedestrians. However, Paseo de San Antonio faces challenges when multiple shops and restaurants close early, highlighting the importance of incorporating features that bring activation and a sense of safety at multiple times of day. In addition, designing elements to buffer strong winds and other environmental factors within the paseo will be critical for creating a pleasurable pedestrian experience.

5.8 Five Wounds Trail

The Five Wounds Trail serves an important function in regional connectivity and local access to the TOD. The DDF focuses on the segment of trail along the west side of N. 28th Street that connects E. Julian Street to the north and E. Santa Clara Street to the south. The trail is a project of City, County, and Open Space Authority; VTA's role is to provide the alignment and work with these entities on how best to integrate the trail into the TOD. Refer to Appendix D: Project Context Memo for history and past efforts on the trail, and Appendix B: TOD Framework Memo for discussion of the trail's circulation function (alignment, crossing strategies, dimensions).

The trail runs along both the Gateway Park and the Neighborhood Park, presenting opportunities to contribute to the gateway arrival experience to the TOD and identity for the district. Additional considerations are to incorporate art, artifacts, and design characteristics that honor the industrial and cultural heritage of the corridor (see Section 4.2), and to activate the trail edge with spaces for expansion, planted areas, wayfinding, and active uses (see Section 6).

6 Active Uses

Active uses encompass a wide range of land use types that create a more complete neighborhood, expanding beyond typical office, institutional, and residential uses to include commercial or community-serving uses. These active uses are often referred to as “third spaces”: places where people spend time outside of work and home life, or the commute in between. This can include diverse business types (including small and local businesses), sizes, and layouts to allow for adaptability as needs change over time. Some of the benefits of active uses:

- Increasing foot traffic to the station at different times of day
- Helping to steward, activate, and frame open spaces
- Contributing to overall character of the area with inviting and permeable frontages and active street presence
- Providing new indoor places for community gathering
- Addressing gaps in services and amenities within the neighborhood

In recent engagements, community members have weighed in on their desired types of active uses. Feedback from the Five Wounds Urban Village Plan survey indicated a preference for grocery stores/markets/bodegas and restaurants/cafes/bars. Feedback from 2023 DDF engagement indicated high interest in food and retail services, with top three priorities identified as a food hall, grocery store, and retail/shopping center. Other desired uses in order of decreasing priority included dining,

medical facility, gallery/performance space, cultural center, creative maker space, and small business incubator. Additional open responses included high degrees of interest in uses that are affordable, accessible, versatile, and flexible. Many also named family services as a priority; examples included affordable/all-day childcare, homework centers, and education services.

For greatest impact, active uses should be in highly visible locations. This includes key corners of buildings and towards streets, intersections, or where public open space or paseo intersects sidewalk. Within the framework, active edges are concentrated around the Station Plaza and along N. 28th Street between E. Santa Clara Street and E. St. James Street.

6.1 Attractors and Anchors

Attractors or anchors are active uses that are larger-format and address a clear gap in existing needs of the surrounding neighborhood, define the identity of a place, or establish a destination—creating something new that isn’t otherwise found nearby. Preliminary ideas from Appendix A: Market Study suggest:

- **Medical office building** (50,000+ square feet), which can serve dual purposes of bringing patient access closer to transit and also bringing a significant number of employees to the area. The 28th Street/Little Portugal census tract has a Healthy Place Index score in the 38th percentile, with Healthcare Access as the lowest performing policy action area. The nearest hospitals, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and Regional Medical Center, are approximately 1 and 1.5 miles from the station area respectively, but are among few in the surrounding area.
- **Grocery store** (5,000-20,000 square feet), which can serve as a larger format option in addition to the smaller and specialty markets that currently serve the neighborhood. Community members have indicated interest in expanding food access in the neighborhood and increasing healthy food options to address gaps without shifting business away from smaller grocers.
- **Live/work and artist housing** (600-800 square feet/unit; 50-100 units), which can diversify the housing mix within the development, reduce commute times, and increase creative presence and creative activation around the station. Local art and the artist

community continue to be highlighted through engagement as a point of neighborhood pride and identity. A few case studies highlighted through the market study that emphasize social connections and artist communities include The Tannery (Santa Cruz) and The Working Artists Ventura (Ventura):

- The Tannery: 100 live/work units at 600-1200 square feet/unit
 - The WAV: 54 live/work units, 15 units of supportive housing, 13 market rate units. 400-1500 square feet/unit
- **Incubator/accelerator space** (5,000-15,000+ square feet), which can create opportunities for new businesses and support existing small businesses. Small and local businesses continue to be highlighted throughout engagement as a point of neighborhood pride and identity.

See Appendix A: Market Study for further information on each of these uses. In addition, an interest in senior housing was raised multiple times during engagement and needs further study.

6.2 Community Facilities and Neighborhood Amenities

In addition to larger-format attractors and anchors, smaller-format uses that serve community needs may include:

- Child care center
- Educational center (i.e. jobs training resource or afterschool program)
- Creative maker space
- Gallery/performance space
- Event venue
- Cultural center

6.3 Retail and Services

Finally, more traditional retail and services may include:

- Coffee shop
- Bakery
- Butcher
- Restaurant
- Bar
- Food hall
- Shopping center
- Movie theater
- Gym
- Bank

Currently along E. Santa Clara Street—the main commercial corridor adjacent to the station—most businesses that are not industrial/auto services fall within two sectors: Local Services (beauty and nail salons, home repair, dry cleaning and other

related industries) and Retail Trade and Food Services (clothing and apparel, grocery, home furnishing stores).¹³

As noted in Section 5.4, a small pop-up/temporary kiosk is imagined within the Station Plaza. This presents an opportunity to frame and activate the plaza, with a combination of daily retail use and community gathering space that is stewarded by a community organization. As noted in Section 5.5, micro-retail is imagined within the Neighborhood Park. Similarly to the kiosk/pavilion structure in the Station Plaza, this can help to frame and activate the park in combination with outdoor seating and other programmatic elements. Figure 19 is an example of micro and container retail that creates a unique destination.



Figure 19. Example micro and container retail - Pop Brixton, England

¹³ HR&A Advisors, Inc., "Five Wounds Small Business Displacement Risks and Vulnerabilities DRAFT," June 2023