

LINDEN ALLEY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

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Linden Alley, the 300 block of Linden Street in the Hayes Valley neighborhood of San Francisco, is 100-feet of oasis that opened in 2010 after five years of a community-led effort to re-design the block. In 2005, two individuals who worked above the alley began talking about the possibility of re-designing the street in the style of a Netherland's woonerf. The street, considered an alley, was in the central neighborhood Hayes Valley between Gough Street and Octavia Boulevard, in walking distance to Civic Center, the Fillmore District, and the bustle of business along Market Street. The area was known for loitering, drug use, and public urination.

Despite its reputation, Blue Bottle Coffee opened its first San Francisco location there in 2006, which spurred Loring Sagan and David Winslow to envision an alternative for the block. Sagan owned property and Winslow was working there at the time. They both knew the street well and observed how the presence of a new cafe changed the activity and brought new users to the alley. They connected with adjacent property owners and community groups like the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association and Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) to share the idea.





Linden Alley prior to the renovation.
Characteristically, a typical alleyway connection in San Francisco with poor street life activity and dominated by back of building parking.

Linden Alley post renovation.
The redesign of the east side of the street along with temporary building interventions on the west side of the street have increased the pedestrian interactions and enlivened the area.



Winslow approached Mayor Gavin Newsom's Direct of City Greening Initiatives, Marshall Foster, who encouraged them to pursue a Community Challenge Grant for seed funding. In 2006, the project received \$97,800 from the City Administrator's Office as a Community Challenge Grant. Adjacent property owners and community groups were also contributing toward the implementation of the vision and Studio for Urban Projects awarded Linden Alley a grant. NPC took on fiscal sponsorship of the project collecting contributions.

In San Francisco: Linden Alley is one of ten shared streets in San Francisco,

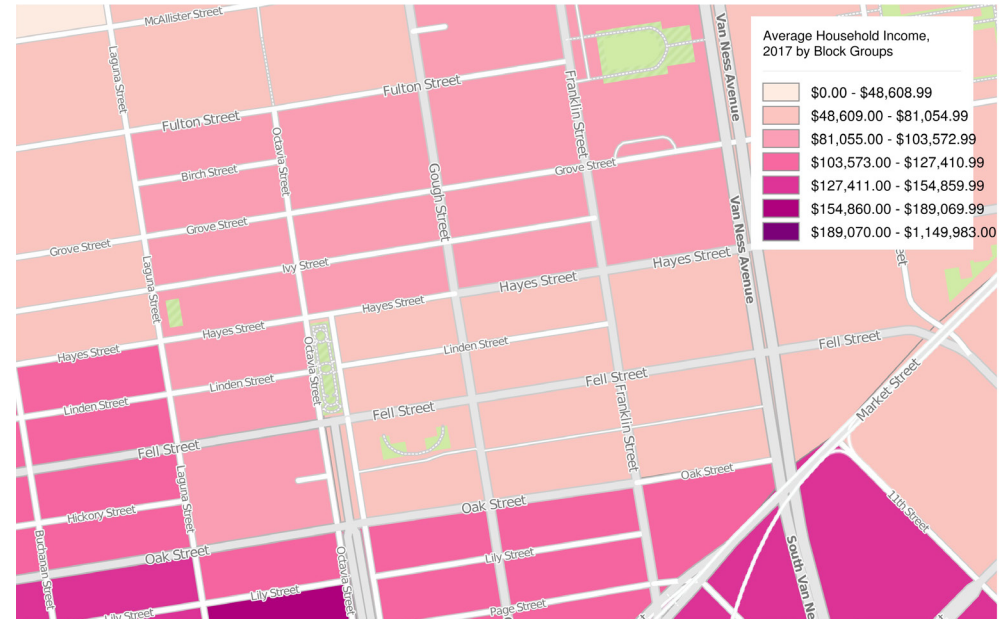
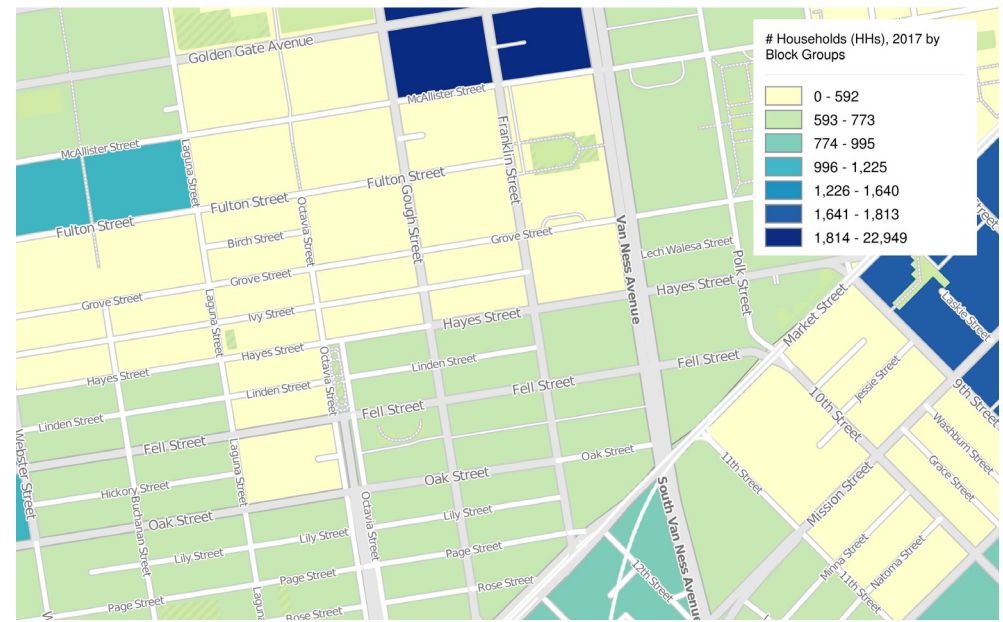
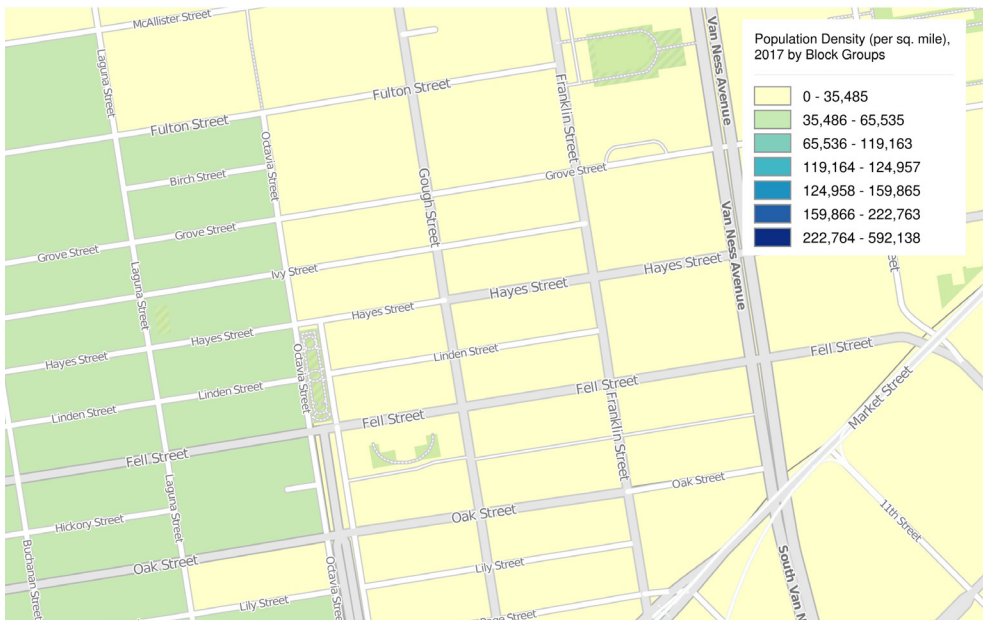
On the Block: Linden Alley is home to many types of businesses and

Amid fundraising, design and permitting took two years for revisions with different city departments - SF Planning, Department of Public Works, Public Utilities Commission, and SFMTA - as well as securing approval from the Board of Supervisors. They received a permit for the street in 2008 as well as the remaining funding.

After securing an encroachment permit, the street still required a maintenance and liability pledge since the street varied from standard designs. Sagan took the lead and established a limited liability corporation, LLC, to hold the \$2 million insurance policy at \$2,600 per year and collect funds annually from adjacent, participating businesses.

Before beginning construction, the Department of Public Works (DPW) offered to check the condition of the underground pipes where a 100-year-old sewer line was due for replacement. DPW was able to allocate federal stimulus funds to replace the sewer line, move catch basins and repave the street. Following DPW's work, the re-design took two-and-a-half months to construct.



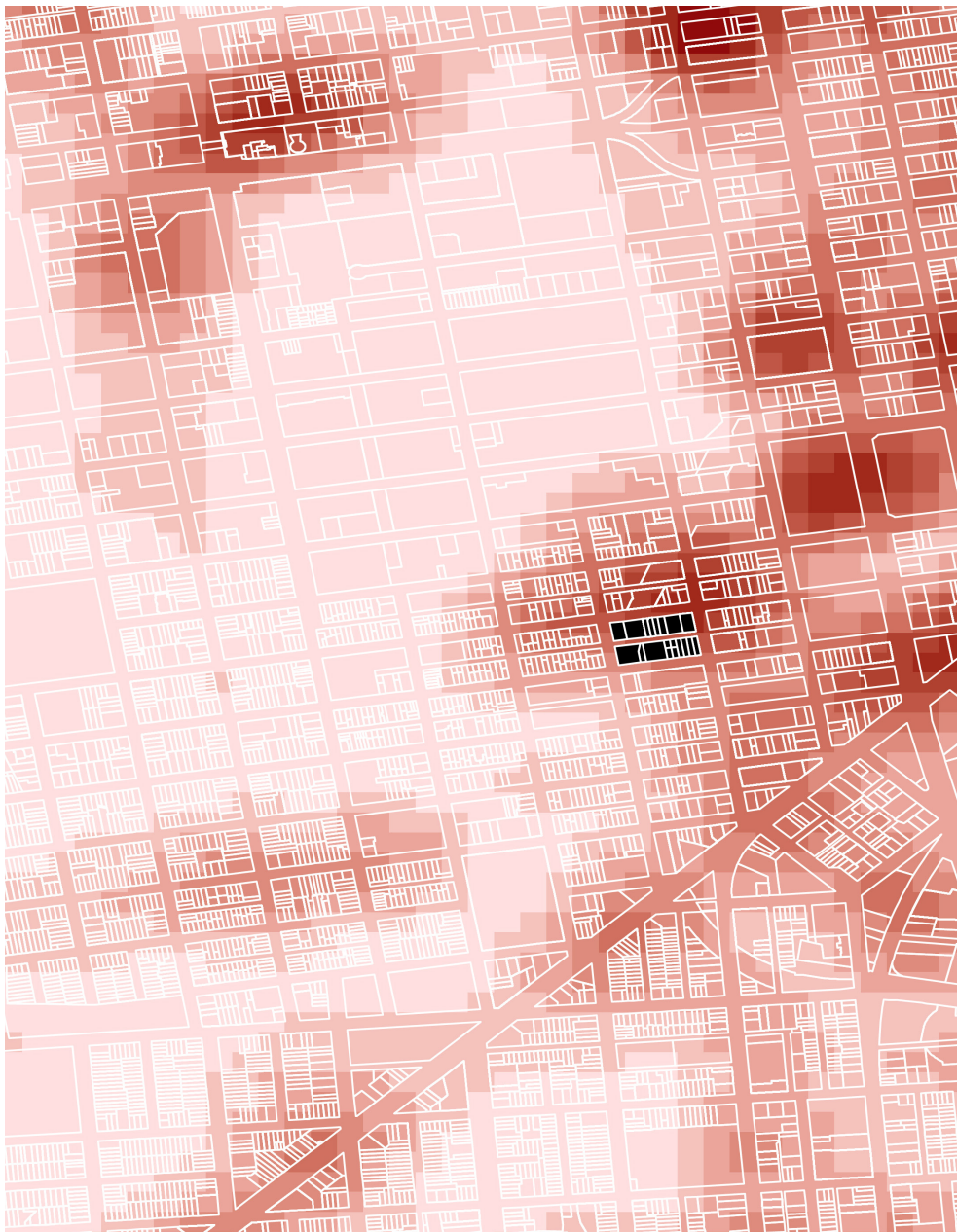


Population Density. Linden Alley is located in a relatively low density area in San Francisco at less than 35,000 people per square mile.

Vacant Lots. Housing units around this area are mostly occupied compared to the rest of the city.

Households. There are less than 600 households in Linden Alley's block group, suggesting that there area is not residential.

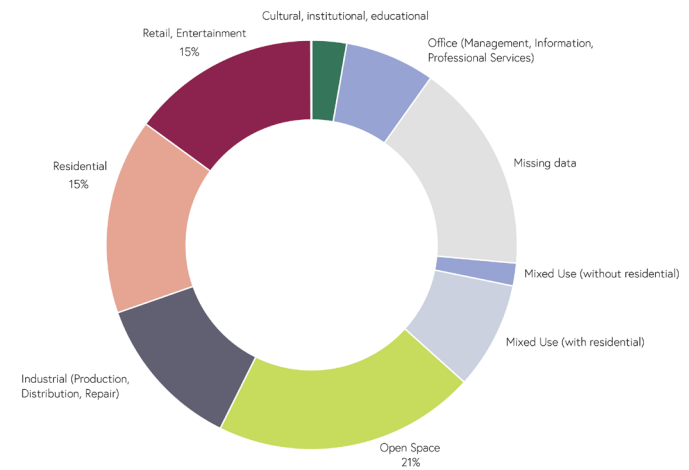
Average Household Income. Linden Alley is surrounded by higher-earning blocks around it.

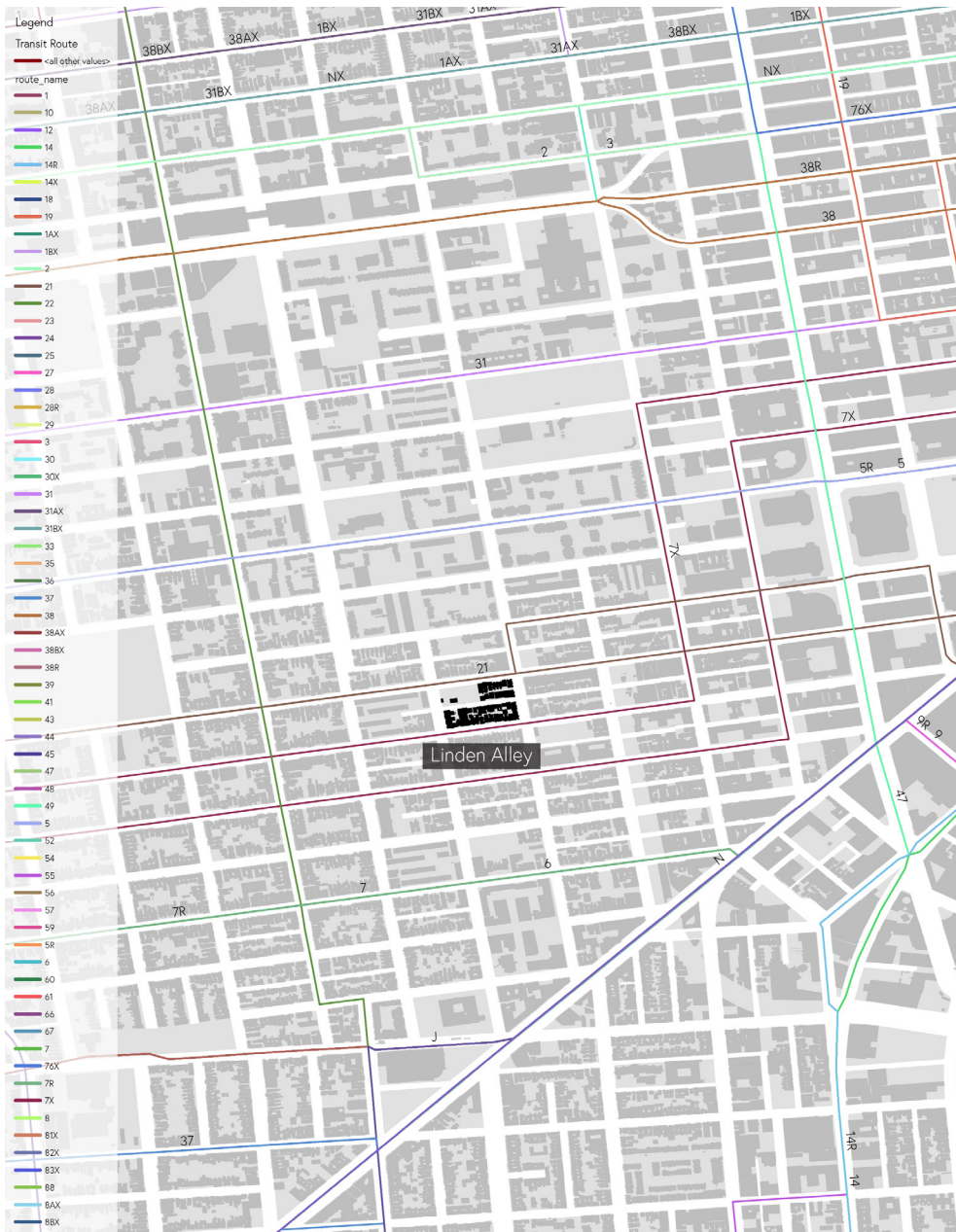


Business Density. Linden Alley is at the edge of business cluster near the City Hall.

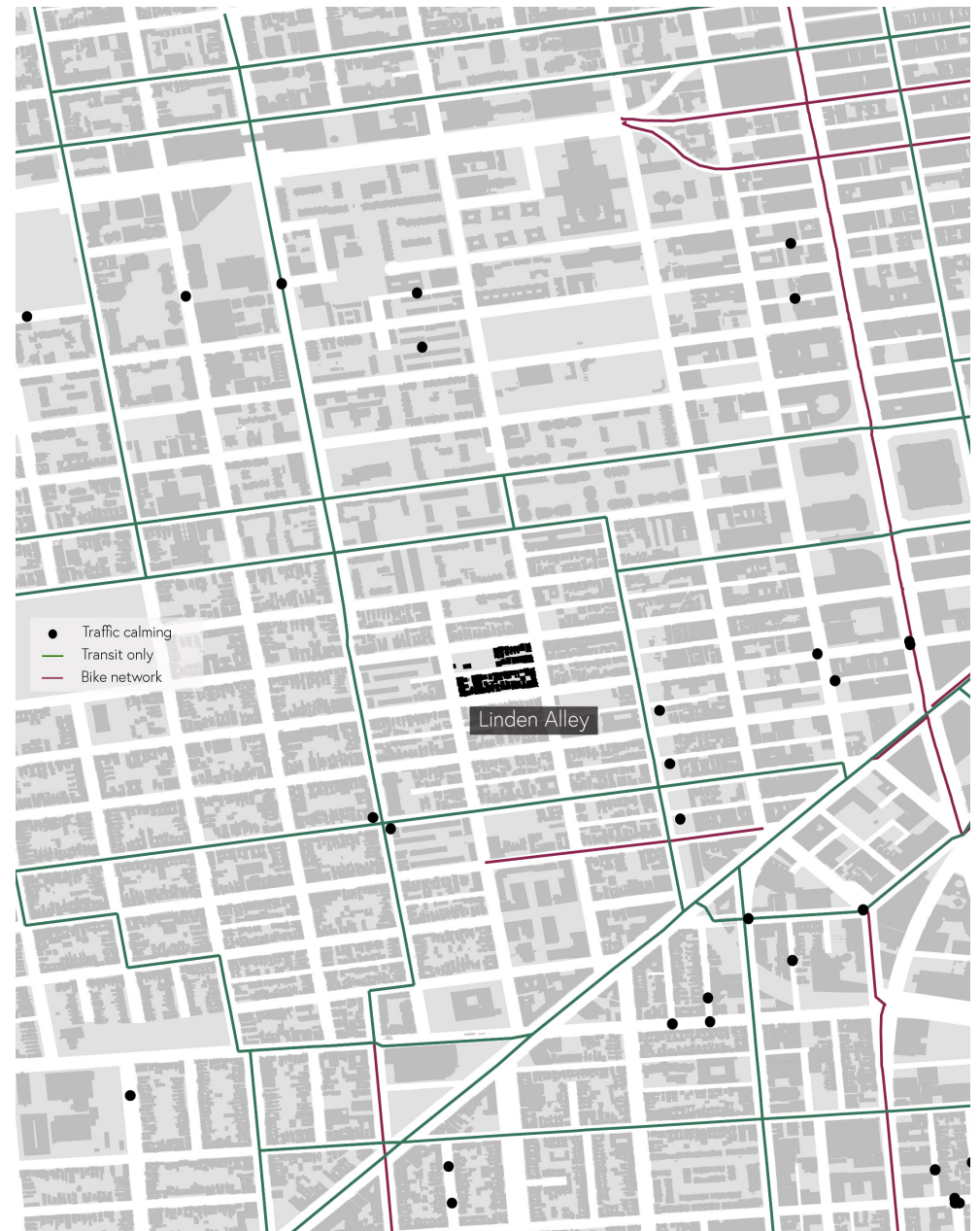


Land Use. The adjacent blocks from Linden Alley share street project are mainly used for residential, both in the form of mixed use and otherwise.

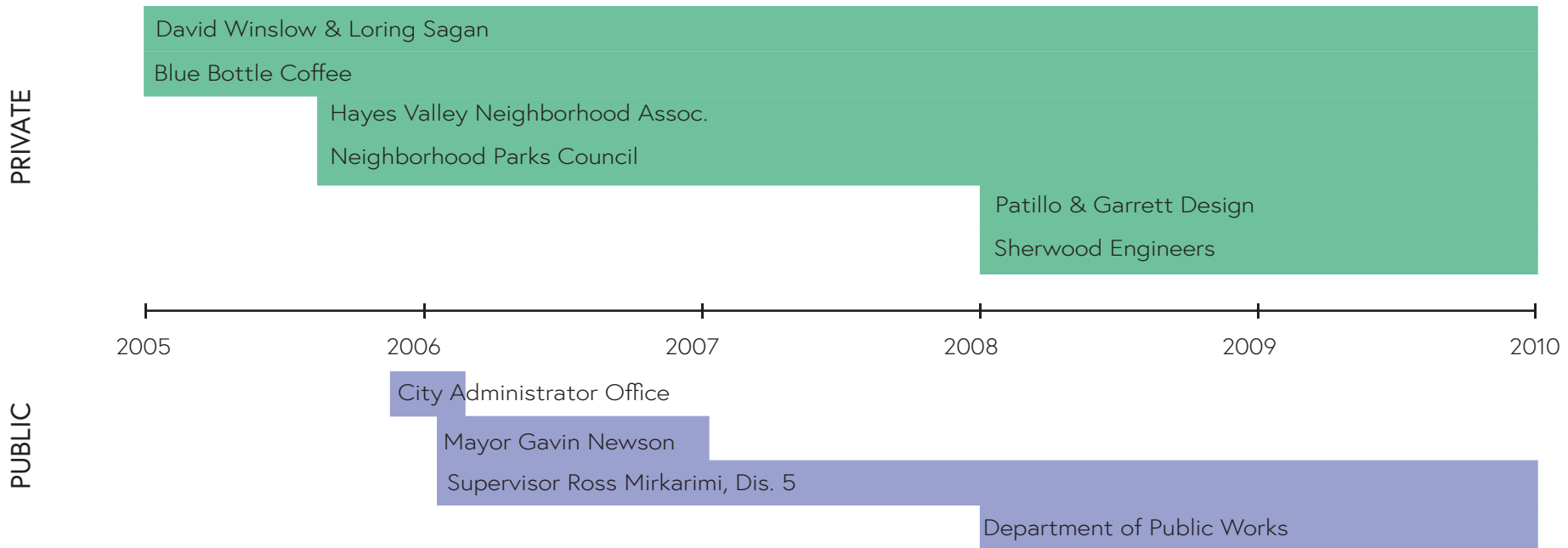
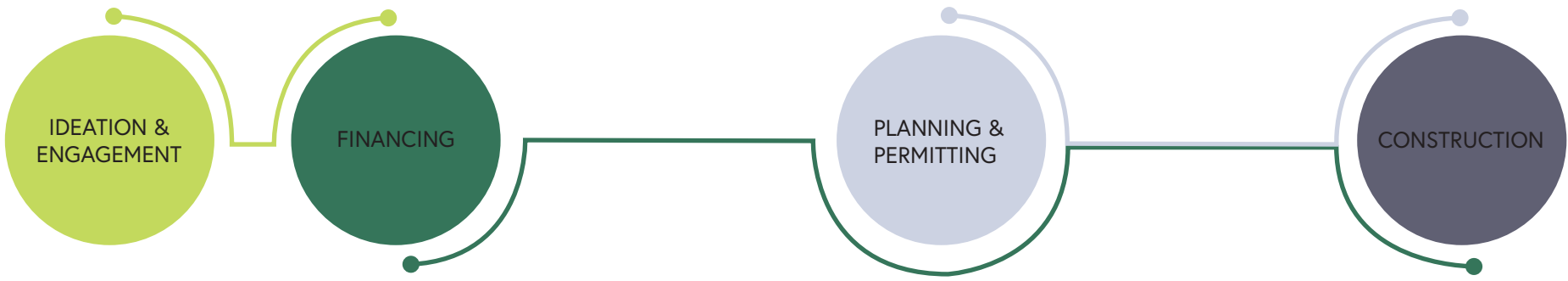




Transit Lane. Linden Alley is well connected with the rest of the city with various bus lines passing the adjacent blocks.



Traffic Improvement. The city has invested in various traffic improvement efforts in business areas and Vision Zero corridors nearby.



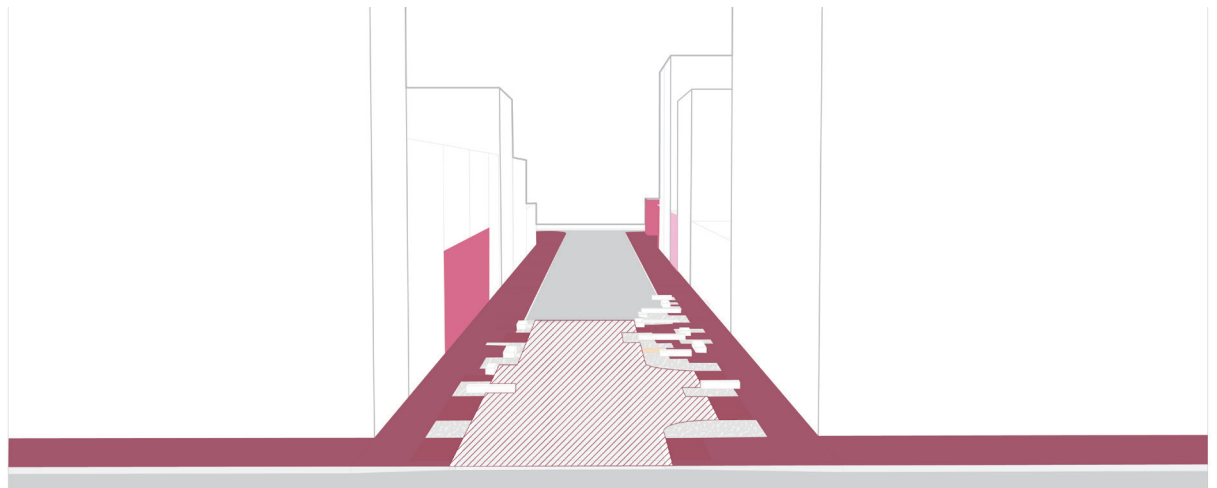
Timeline and Stakeholders: Many public and private partners shown above worked together through the ideation, engagement, financing, planning, permitting, and construction of Linden Street.

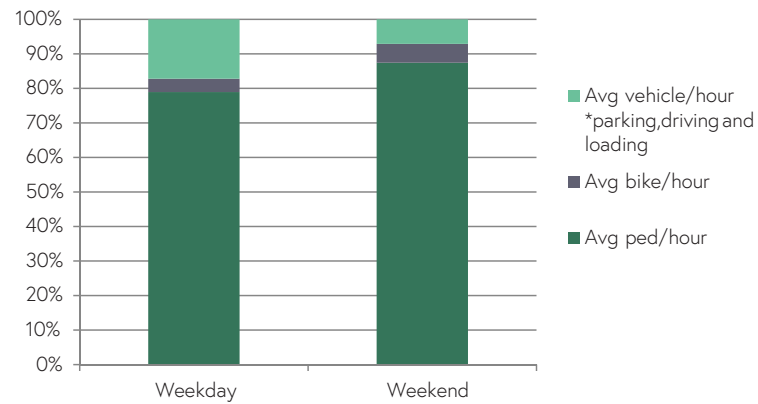
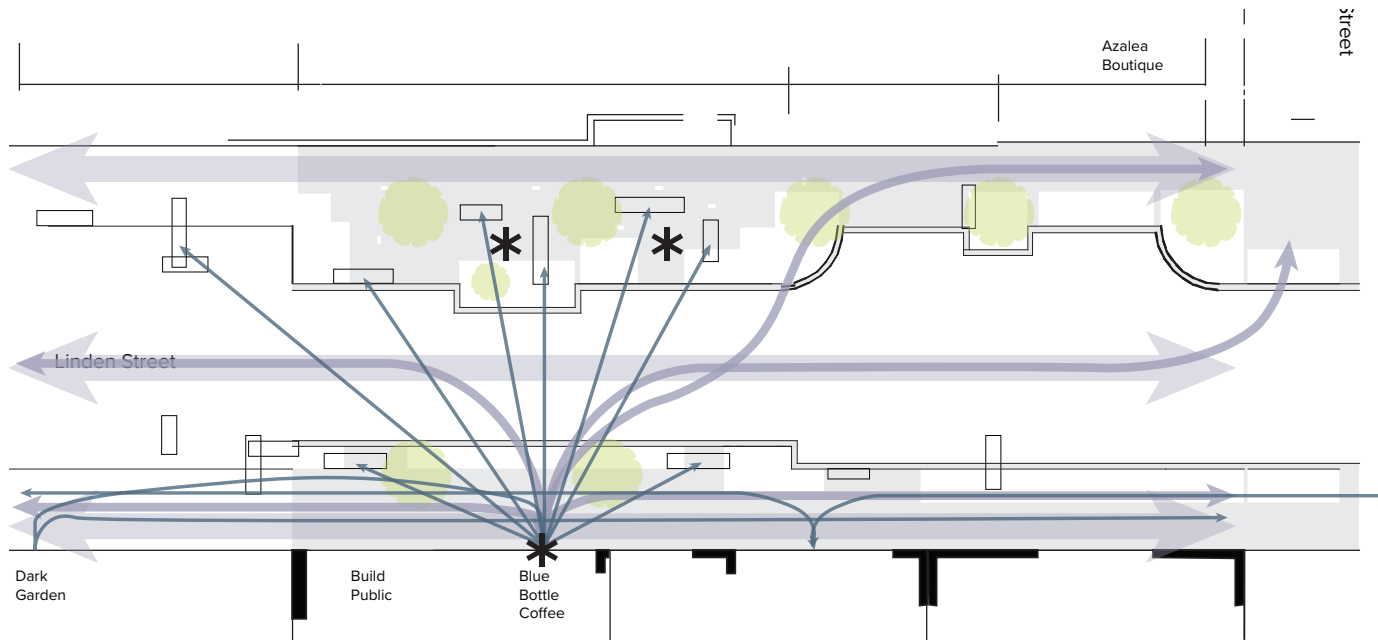
- Public
- Semi-Public
- Restricted Public
- Shared Space



Occupiable Space

The occupiable space created by the shared street renovation compliments the availability of the semi-public space located on the ground floor of businesses along the street. By far, the largest attractors of the street are the Blue Bottle storefront and the open space on the west end of the street. The dynamic of having the two points of attraction on either end of the street creates the draw of activity to the street.





Pedestrian Traffic. Most people pass Linden Alley on the way to/from Blue Bottle Cafe.

User Groups. There are less driving/parking/loading over the weekend; driving is replaced by walking. Majority of activities observed are walking and



"A lot of people who come here live or work in the neighborhood."

Barista, Blue Bottle Cafe



"Urban spiff up part is good. Homeless problem as everywhere. Blue Bottle has good coffee. Cap with park at the end allows for less traffic and more greenspace."

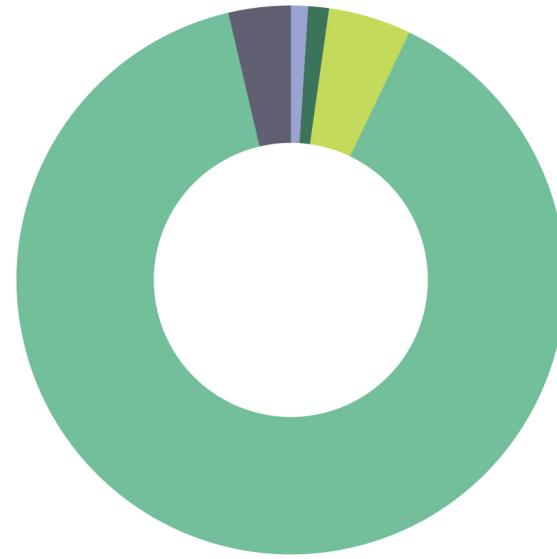
Employee, Nearby



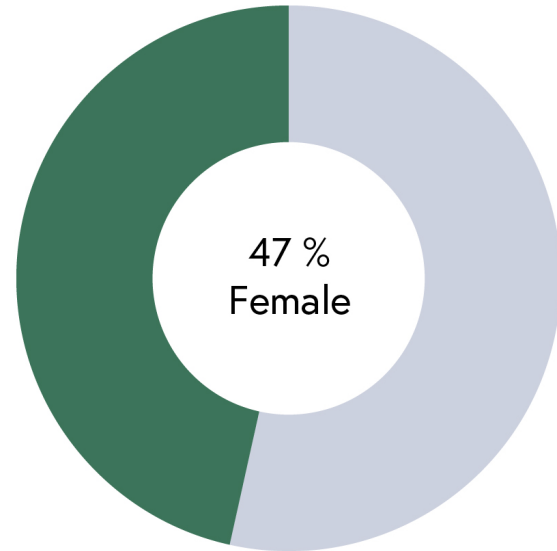
"Like the art and sitting outdoors. Artwork seems informal, approachable. Fascinating and accessible; centrally located, would not come for the street itself, but also what's around to explore."

Tourist

Users. Quotes from typical users of Linden Street: someone who works on the block, someone who works nearby, and a visiting family.



- 5% 0 - 4
- 1% 5 - 14
- 1% 15 - 19
- 75% 20 - 64
- 4% 65 +



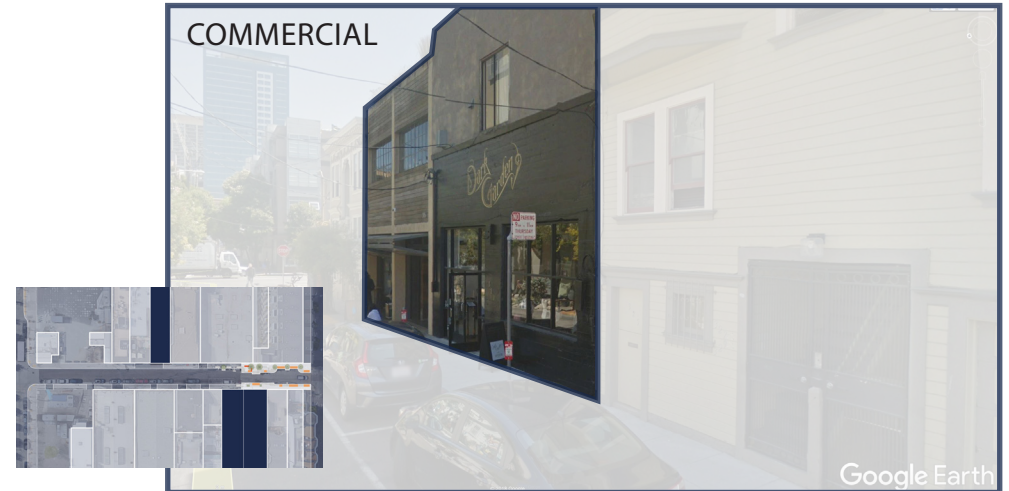
- Male
- Female

Ages. Age distribution of visitors, employees, and residents.

Gender. Sex distribution of visitors, employees, and residents.

Building Typologies

The buildings flanking Linden Alley are typical of the general character of San Francisco. There are primarily residential buildings of two types, 2-3 story residential buildings, and 4+ apartment buildings. There are also several storefronts along the alley with plans for more to appear. Some industrial buildings also add to the diversity of character of the street. These buildings no longer hold the industrial production they once did, but retain their character as such. And finally, there is a grouping of temporary container buildings on the west end of the street.



Design Elements



Granite Block Seating



Bollards



Planted Storm Water Drainage



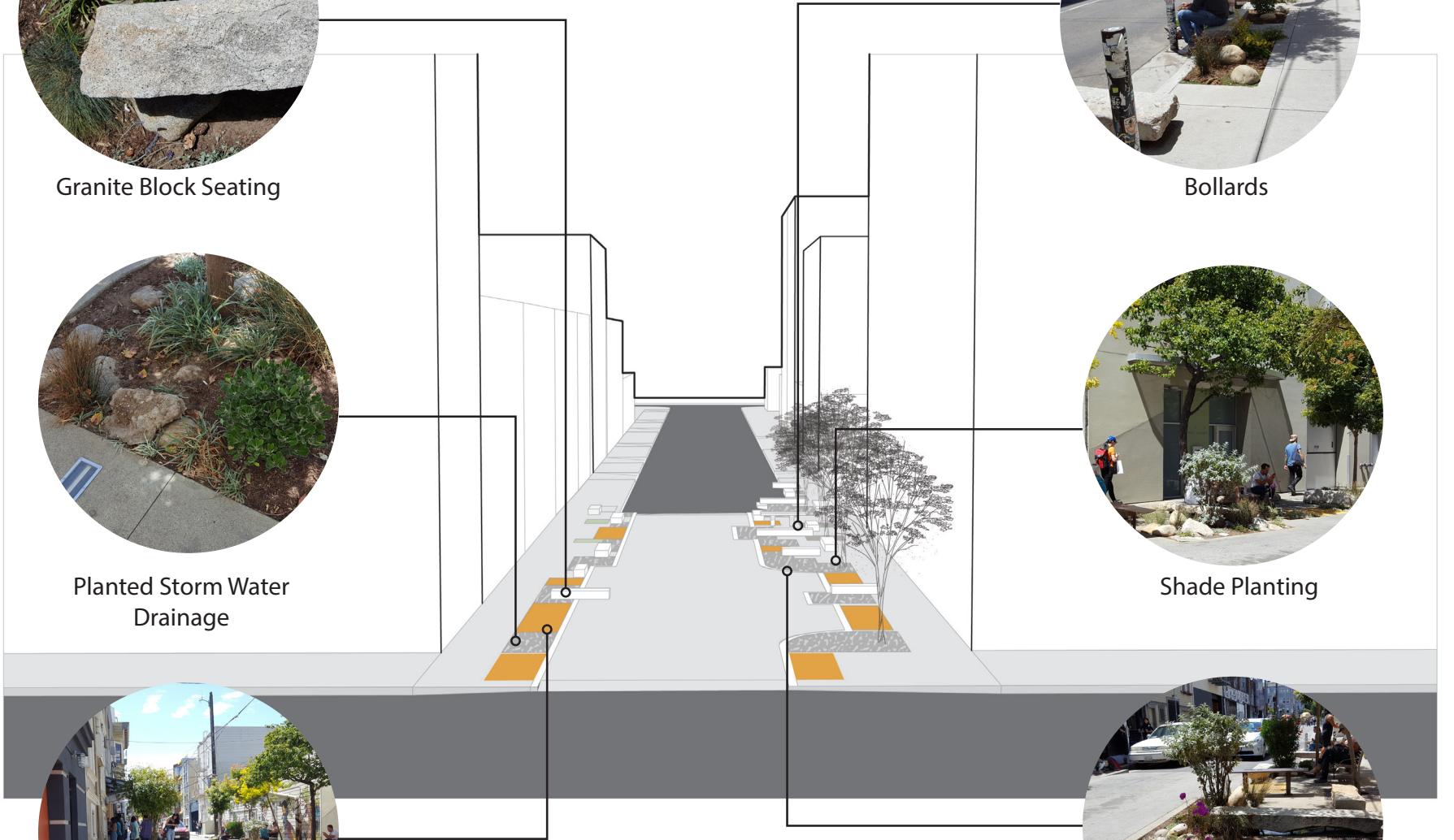
Shade Planting



Detectable Crossing Strip

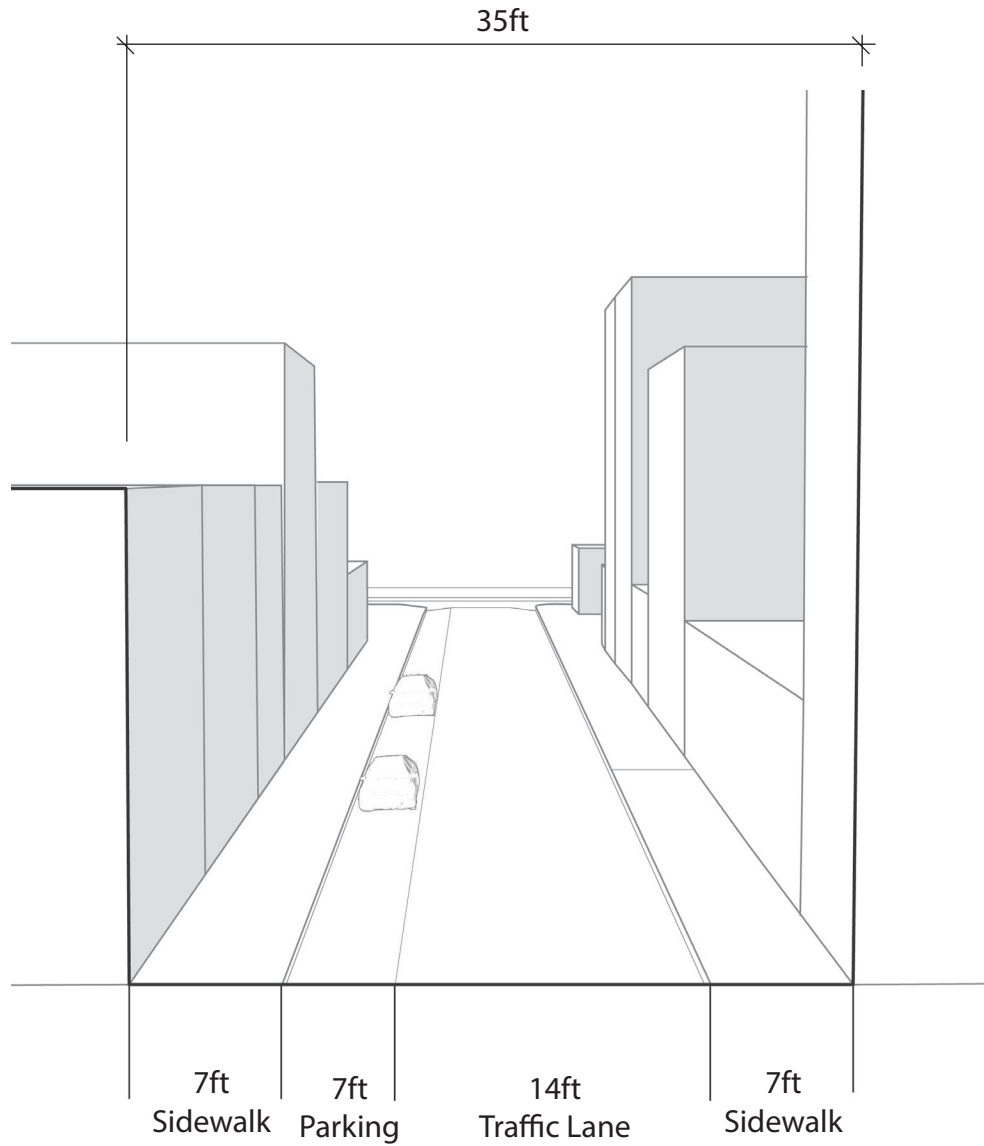


Formal Benches

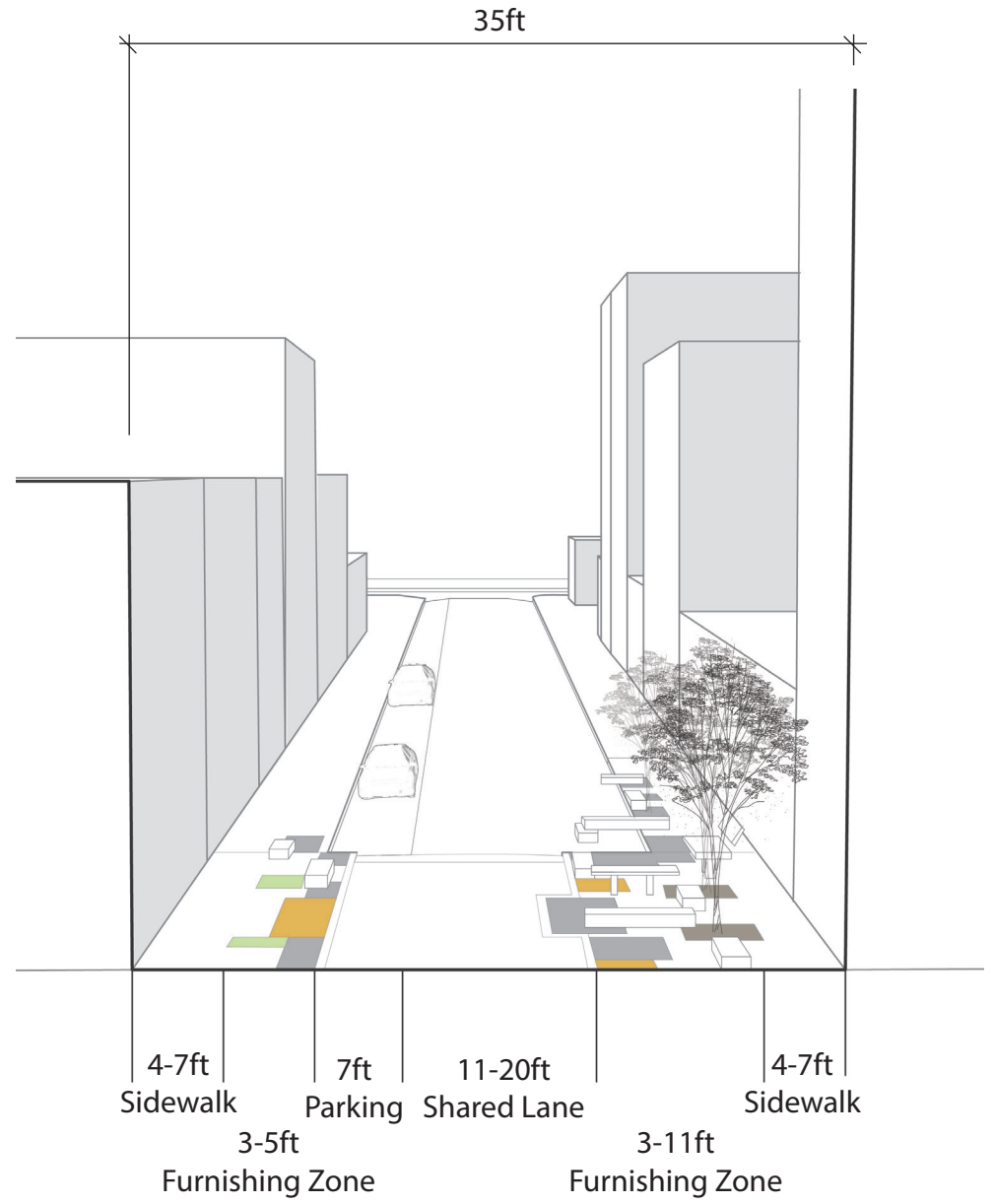


Modal Changes

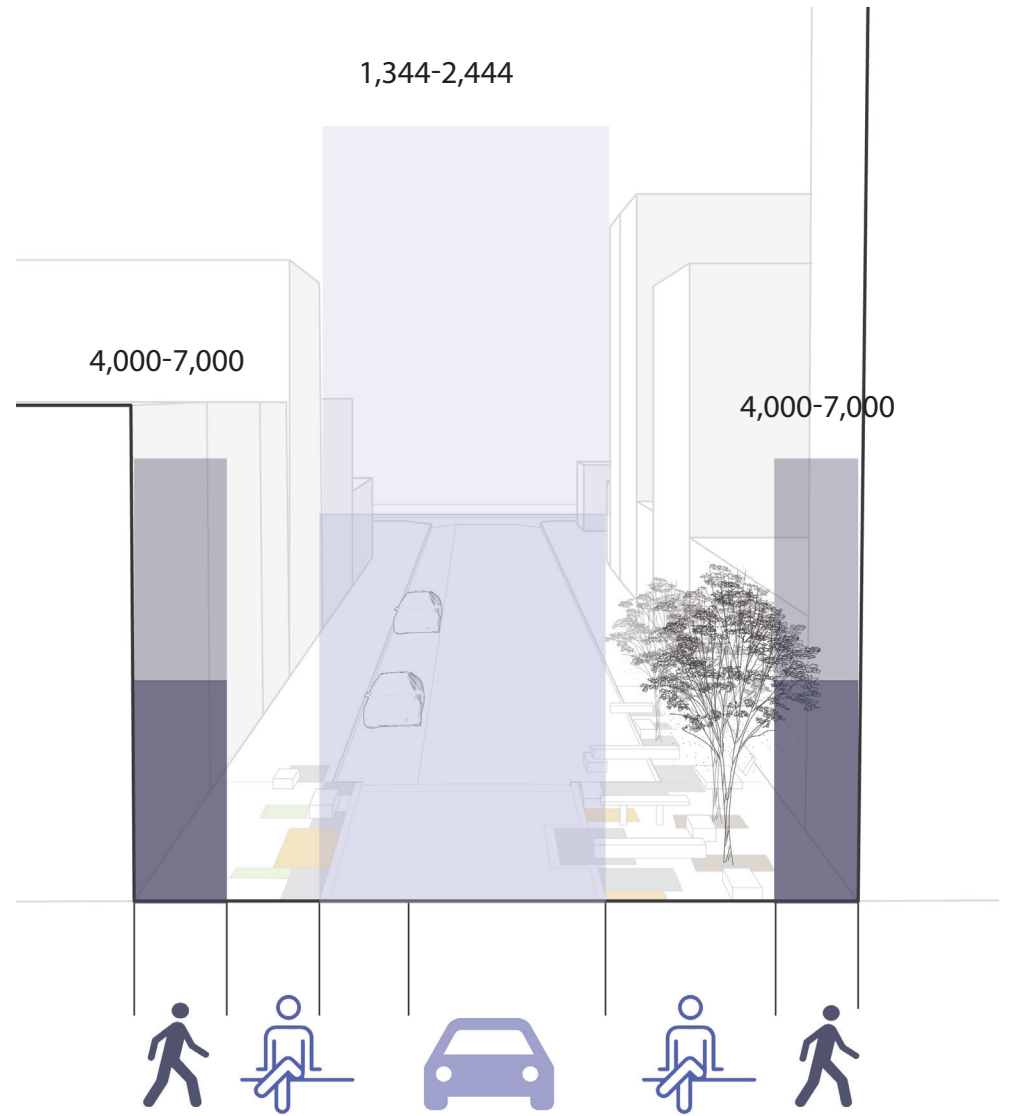
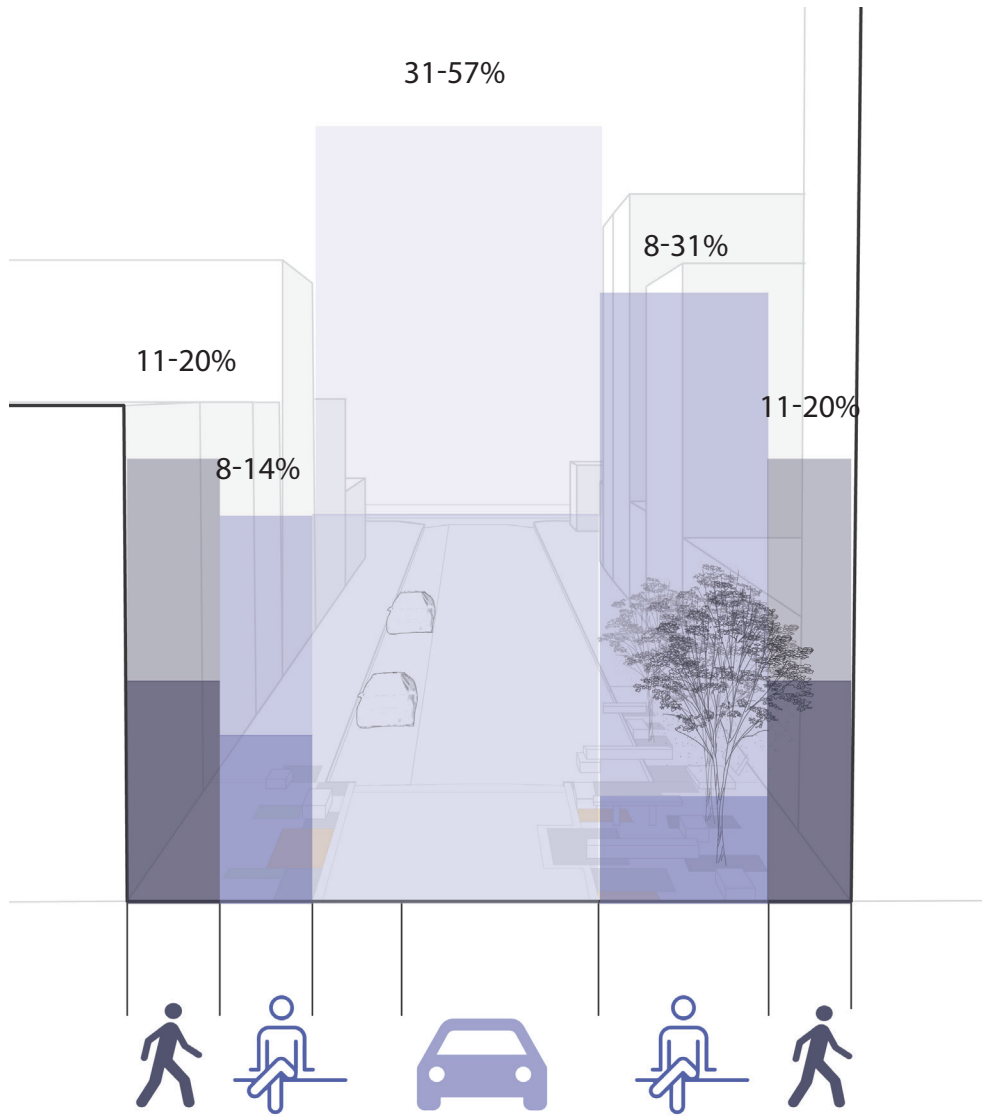
BEFORE

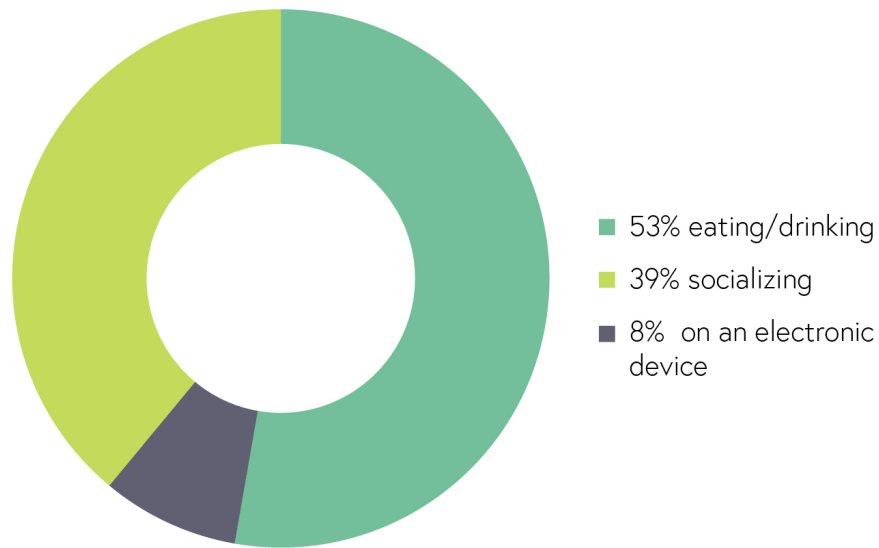
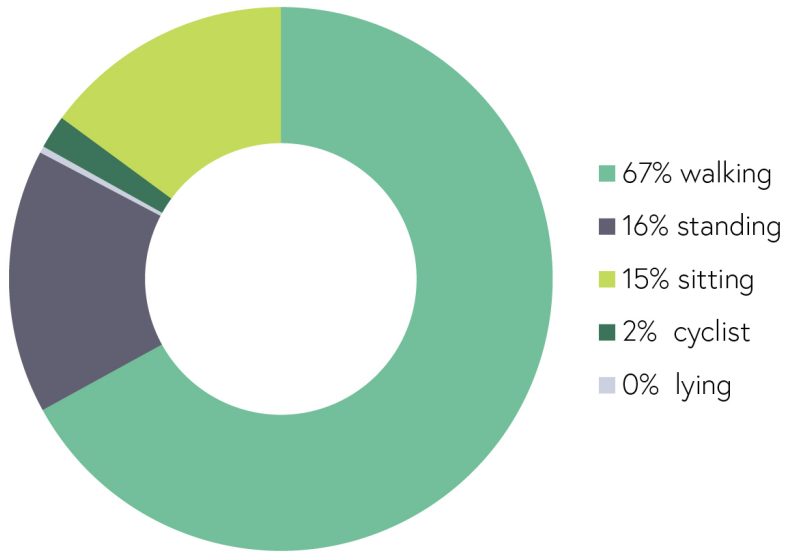


AFTER



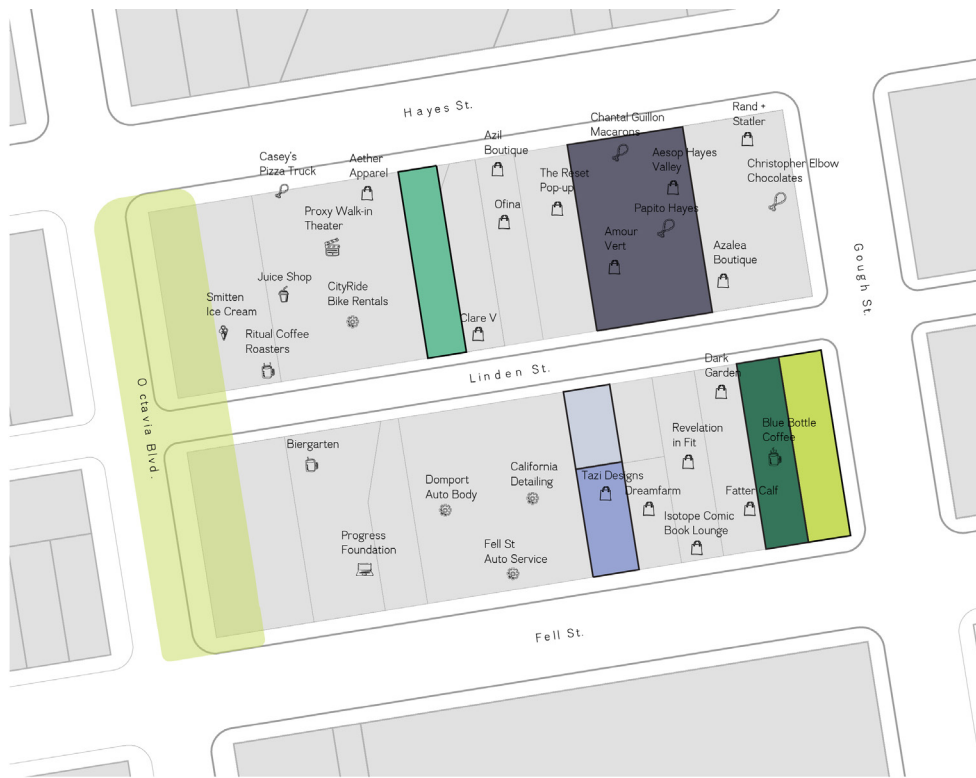
Modal Capacity





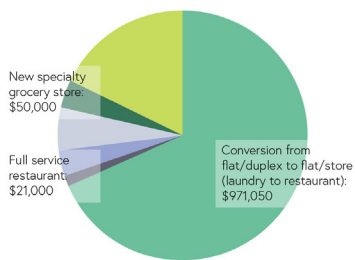
Posture. Distribution of postures observed at Linden Street.

Activities. Distribution of activities observed at Linden Street.

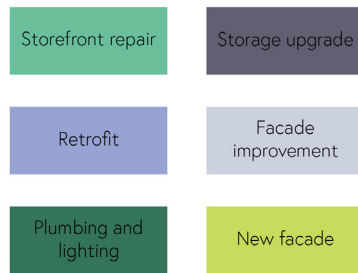


Total improvements by owner after 2011:

\$1,420,000



Type of improvements:



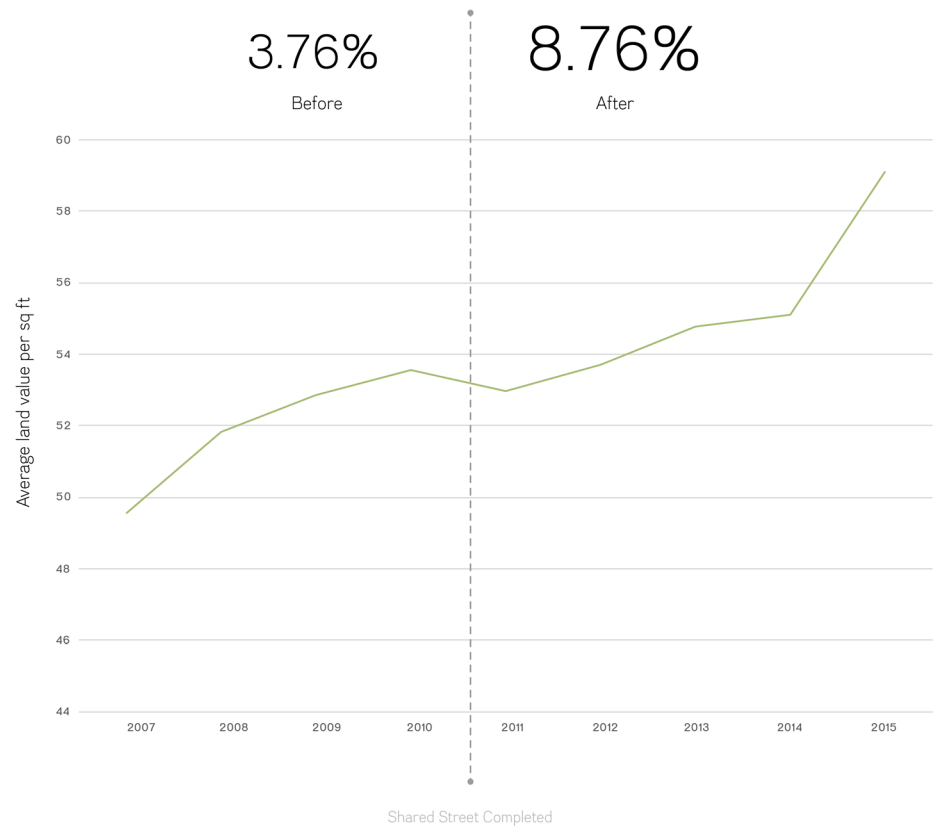
Average annual increase of assessed land value

3.76%

Before

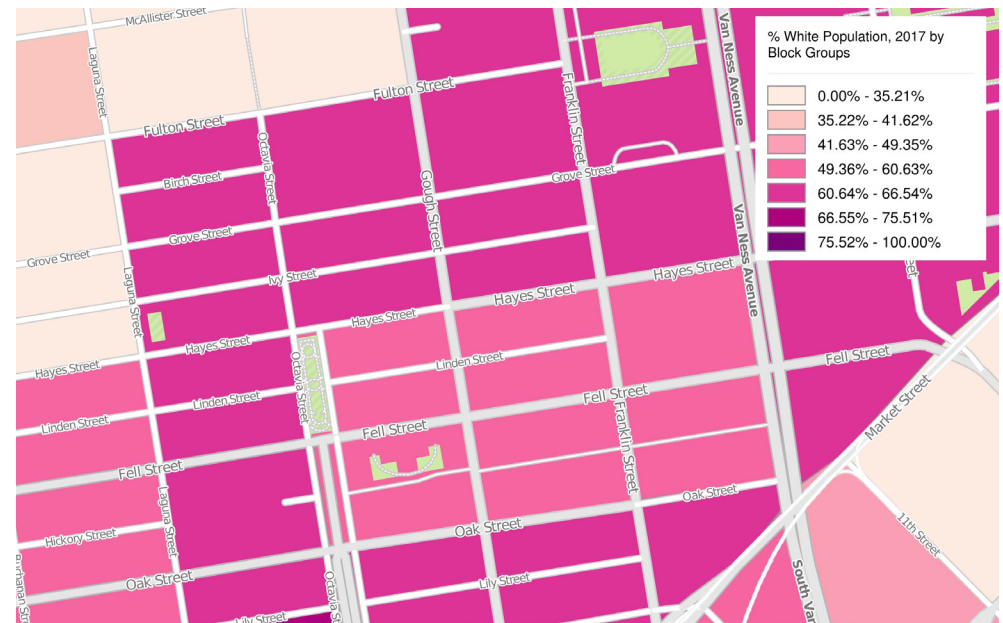
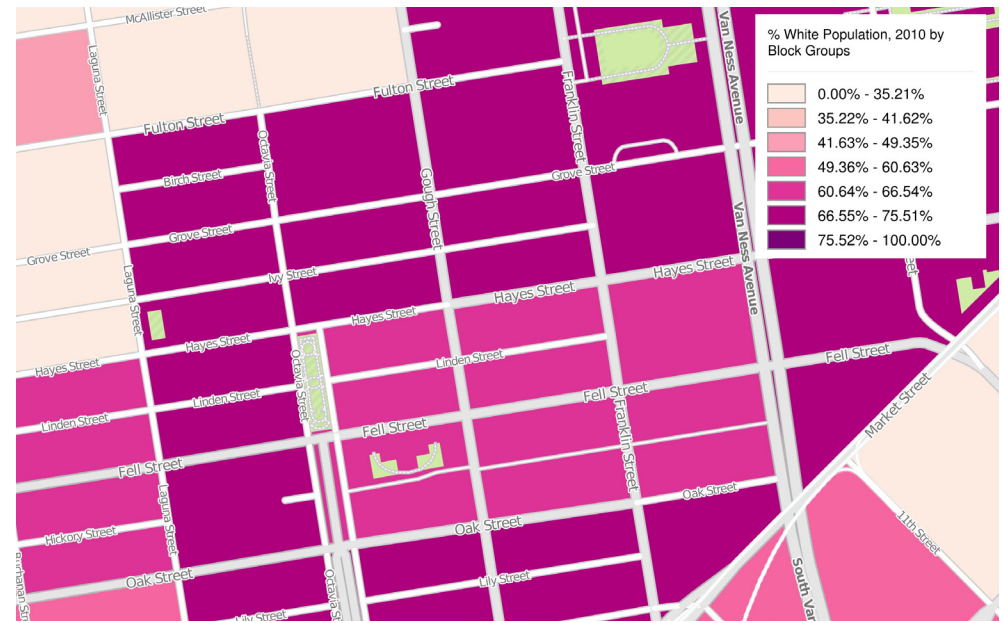
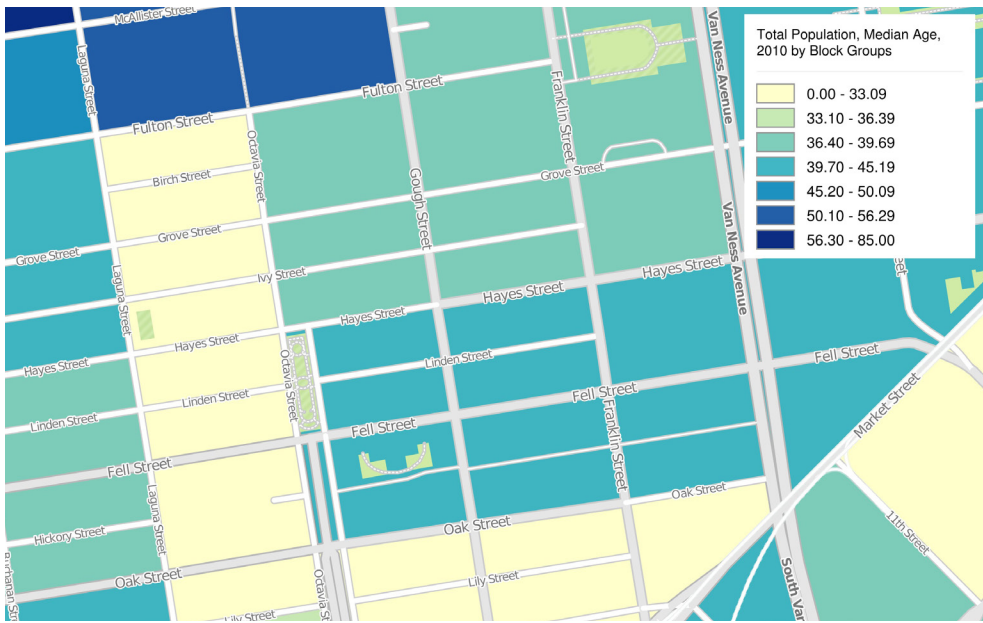
8.76%

After



Property Improvement. The implementation of shared streets coincides with various incidental repairs by property owners, ranging from facade

Land Value. Properties around the project has seen an increase in annual growth of assessed value from 3.76% to 8.76% after the project. This data already excludes outliers such as a 2000% increase in land value after the development of a multi-family housing in one of the lots.



Younger Population. The median age of residents within Linden Alley's census block group has decreased from 39-45 to 36-39, suggesting that the area has a younger population compared to 2011.

Diverse population. Interestingly, the area has become more diverse in the past few years. The percentage of white population in the area is lower compared to 2011.

We looked at Linden Alley through both design and policy perspectives. The design is relatively successful as it provides patrons with tree-shaded areas and well-used bike parking and seating. The alley prioritized its pedestrian and cyclist users, making it somehow an extension of the adjacent public space. It has brought more diverse users (beyond drivers) into the space. Linden Alley is also cleaner. It looks and feels less like a back alley. As a result, it has more eyes on the street, therefore safer for the community.

On the other hand, Linden Alley still struggles with traffic-related issues such as double parking, sidewalk parking (since the curb is very short), business loading as well as ride sharing drop off. Despite the successful maintenance scheme for liability/insurance among property owners, the streets are still not regularly or well cleaned. Even though there are some park-like elements, the alley is maintained as if it was a normal street, leaving litters and garbages stuck on the seating. There are also very limited receptacles in the area.

Finally, Linden Alley was not part of a larger strategy. The outreach and participation was word-of-mouth rather than deliberate. The community successfully carried out the project because it used networks to build relationships with necessary stakeholders. Other communities seeking to do similar improvements can learn from Linden Alley's strategy to work with DPW and other allies, while the city should try to incorporate this design into their larger street portfolio.





Some of the design elements have been effective in creating positive change on the street. These success include the well-used bike parking, the creation of shaded pockets through planting and seating, as well as the success of the informal seating areas created by the granite blocks. These elements have contributed to the positive changes on Linden Alley.



There are also some design elements or considerations that have not been successful. These include the persistence of informal parking on the north side of the street, the lack of public litter bins, the ineffective street cleaning maintenance, the lack of appropriate loading space for storefront deliveries, as well as the lack of a pick up/ drop off zone for car sharing. These are considerations that can be improved to continue the success of the street.