AFSF ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION SAN FRANCISCO

2025 HIGH SCHOOL DESIGN COMPETITION

Welcome

Dear High School Student & Educator,

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco's Fifty-Sixth annual High School Design Competition. This is an exciting competition where high school students put their design skills, creativity, spatial and analytical thinking and craftsmanship to the test. With the guidance of instructors – or in some cases for those who opt to treat this creative challenge as an independent study endeavor – high school students conceptualize a design and communicate their solutions through drawings, models and writing. Participation in this design exercise is open to all high school levels students throughout the world. This competition provides young thinkers with the opportunity to engage in what is a very unique learning project.

The Architectural Foundation of San Francisco is a nonprofit educational organization that involves students in a mentored appreciation of architecture, engineering, construction and the design process. San Francisco reigns as one of the most architecturally significant and beautiful cities in the world. The environment of architectural diversity is extremely important to the vitality of this great city. Everywhere, the vibrant and complex layering of landscape, color, cultures and light produces experiences that unexpectedly reveal themselves. Since its inception in 1990, the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco has endeavored to reach out to the general public both locally and globally to establish an open dialogue on the architectural future of this community and beyond.

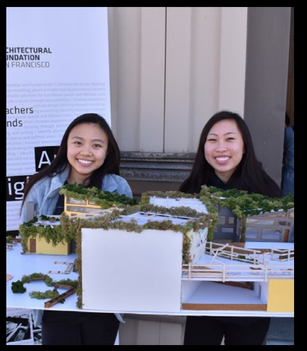
To receive more information about the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco, please visit www.afsf.org or email Executive Director, Alan Sandler, at alan@afsf.org. For specific competition-related inquiries and/or to receive competition updates, please contact Ryan Lee at ryan@afsf.org. Please utilize the live links (in red) embedded in this PDF for reference.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to seeing your designs!

Sincerely,

Ryan Lee
Competition Chair & Author
Vice President – Board of Directors, AFSF
Senior Associate, Woods Bagot

Alan Sandler
Executive Director, AFSF



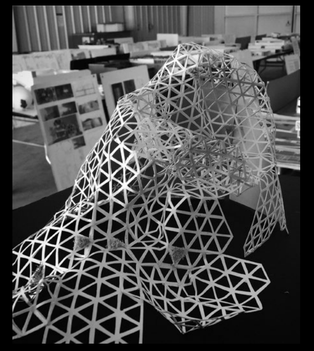
Competition History

For fifty six years, there has been an architectural design competition for Bay Area high school students, which has since expanded its participation field to include global entries. This annual event challenges students to think critically and conceptualize a design for a new built intervention, requiring students to submit drawings, models and a written description capturing their design approach and ultimate solution. Every year hundreds of students from various high schools throughout the world participate. Many of San Francisco's leading architects, engineers and builders participated in the annual event when they were in high school and credit the competition with helping influence their career paths.

In 1969, the American Institute of Architects San Francisco Chapter established the Annual High School Architectural Design Competition. In 2000, sponsorship of the competition was transferred to the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco (AFSF).

Over the years, AFSF has seen design technology evolve. When the competition began, drawings and renderings were completed in pen and ink – using hand-drafting tools – and line weight and lettering styles were emphasized in the judging process. With the introduction of Computer Assisted Design (CAD) made widely available in classrooms in the early 2000's, students began incorporating computer-generated drawings on their presentation boards. Currently, most students utilize 3D modeling as a design tool, be it modeling in programs such as SketchUP, Rhino and/or Build Information Modeling (BIM) designs completed in Autodesk Revit Architecture and rendered in Enscape or Lumion. In 2011, AFSF created a new category for the competition, allowing students who used 3D modeling software to include digital renderings as a part of their submission, with a separate prize given for Best 3D Representation. At the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco, we're committed to encouraging our participants to utilize the best tools and resources available that foster innovation. AFSF has always embraced the future. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is just one more exciting addition to the design toolbox, ready to help us reach new heights of innovation and problem-solving. While it's not required to implement AI into your design process to participate in this competition, you are not dissuaded from its use if it helps enhance your creative process.

With the world upended in 2020, AFSF pivoted the competition to an all-virtual offering, enabling students to present their design proposals through digital slide decks and video descriptions. The virtual submission process opened up the entry pool to high school students from throughout the world to take part in this now fifty-six-year-old event. Constantly evolving to adapt to the current learning climate, this competition has always served as a forum for students to not only think critically about the built environment but to also execute creative solutions for real-world challenges.




Competition Summary

ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION SAN FRANCISCO

Program
This is an architectural design competition sponsored by the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco.

Design Challenge
You are tasked with designing a vibrant, socially-active public realm along San Francisco's Market Street in support of the city's economic recovery effort downtown.

Eligibility
The program is distributed to all high school students throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area and participation is both encouraged and welcomed from all high school-level students interested from throughout the world.

Educational Objectives
- Increase your awareness of the relationship between space, human scale and function
- Gain experience in communicating your planning and design ideas through drawings and models
- Recognize the varied problems in planning and designing functional spaces for defined uses
- Develop design skills through sketching, hand drawing, computer-aided design platforms and model making
- Evaluate real-world challenges and the various factors that drive design thinking

Costs
No entry fee and no pre-registration is required.

Awards
This is a judged competition with monetary awards.

Schedule
February 13, 2025 | competition announcement
May 16, 2025 | competition entries due
May 18, 2025 | awards ceremony – details will be communicated to teachers and posted on www.afsf.org

Contact
Ryan Lee | Competition Chair and Author | ryan@afsf.org

Competition Sponsorship

Sponsor
This year's 2025 competition is sponsored by Forge Development Partners | Sustainable and affordable living for the urban environment

Forge Development Partners is creating high-tech, sustainable workforce housing solutions for people in the urban core. We are creating a new urban housing model that achieves environmental sustainability, affordability, and quality. Forge is committed to making our buildings and the construction process less impactful to the environment and local community, while also providing tremendous benefits for the building residents, not sacrificing quality, technology, or amenities.

DESIGN CONTEXT

Design Context

Downtown Recovery

In June of 2022, downtown San Francisco ranked last in recovery post-Covid pandemic compared to 62 other North American cities based on a UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies analysis,[1] which cited human activity – based on mobile phone-ping data – at only 31% compared to 2019. In 2023, then San Francisco Mayor London Breed released the Roadmap to San Francisco's Future[2] – a strategic guideline with an eye towards supporting the city's economic recovery. The Office of the Mayor set forth a goal to bring 30,000 new residents and students downtown by 2030.[3]

1 The Death of Downtown? Pandemic Recovery Trajectories across 62 North American Cities
2 Roadmap to San Francisco's Future
3 SF Planning – The Future of Downtown

Image Ref: Powell Street could feature a floating light show

Design Context

Roadmap To San Francisco’s Future

The Roadmap To San Francisco’s Future envisions Downtown as “everyone’s neighborhood” – a thriving and economically diverse 24/7 neighborhood.[1] San Francisco's Planning Department in conjunction with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development and other external organizations are focused on bringing both near- and long-term success downtown through three primary themes:

- Economic Diversification and the Future of Office
- Expanding Downtown Housing
- Public Life and Ground Floor Activation

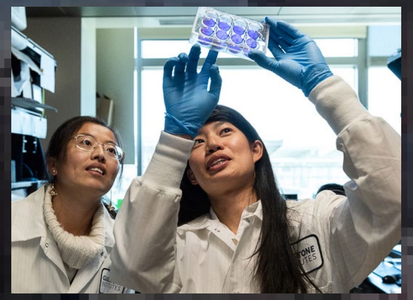
1 SF Planning – The Future of Downtown

Image Ref: Roadmap to San Francisco's Future

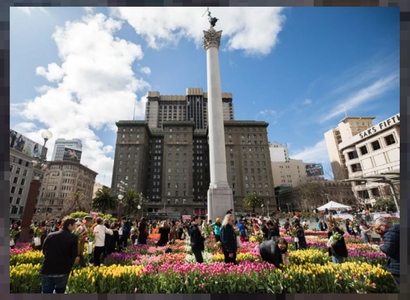
Design Context

Roadmap to San Francisco's Future[1]

Ensure Downtown is clean, safe and inviting



Attract and retain a diverse range of industries and employers

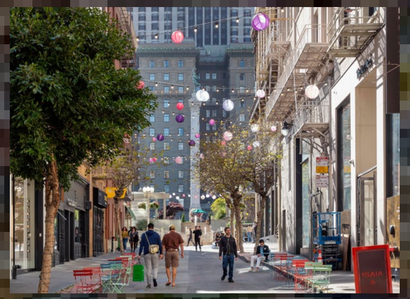


Facilitate new uses and flexibility in buildings

Make it easier to start and grow a business

Grown and prepare our workforce

Transform downtown into a leading arts, culture, and nightlife destination



Enhance public spaces to showcase downtown

Invest in transportation connections

1 Roadmap to San Francisco's Future

Image Ref: Roadmap to San Francisco's Future

Design Context

Mixed-Use Districts

Downtown Cores or Central Business Districts within cities are best utilized when a true mixed-use condition exists – a combination of residential, office and retail along with recreational, commercial and industrial program all present to create a vibrant atmosphere. Not only does this increase overall usage in the area but it also increases the diversity of people who frequent a shared space throughout a more prolonged period of a typical day. Combining existing city infrastructure, high office vacancy rates, and an identified need for more housing, an opportunity exists to revitalize San Francisco's downtown with a mixed-use concept in mind. The process of reusing a building for a new purpose, while preserving its original features is what's defined as adaptive reuse.

Image Ref: Scape – China Basin Park

Design Context

Commercial-to-Residential Adaptive Reuse Program

San Francisco's Planning Department is assessing existing properties that could be candidates for converting non-residential buildings to residential use. So far, the city has established a new Commercial-to-Residential Adaptive Reuse Program aimed at streamlining development for projects that meet certain criteria and are thus eligible to receive waivers from Planning Code requirements. San Francisco Voters approved Measure C in March 2024 to waive the City's transfer tax for projects after a conversion to residential use. The Department of Building Inspection published an information sheet to clarify Building and Fire Code requirements and alternate methods of compliance for adaptive reuse projects.[1] Efforts to date create more opportunities for new residential development in downtown San Francisco to form out of existing buildings.

1 SF Planning – The Future of Downtown

Image Ref: Gensler – Office-to-Residential Conversion

Design Context

Existing Infrastructure

In the years following San Francisco's devastating 1906 earthquake, the city massively overhauled its damaged infrastructure and introduced steam heat. Cordia, a leading provider of safe, reliable, and sustainable energy solutions, supplies energy-efficient and environmentally sound district heating services to buildings in a 2-square-mile area of San Francisco's central business district.[1] The system takes groundwater from beneath Powell BART Station and pipes it for filtration and treatment before heating it in boilers at one of two energy plants that serve a network inclusive of City Hall, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, the California State Court House, SF Department of Public Health, and the Main Library among approximately 185 other customers.[2]

1 SF Standard – Why is steam often seen rising from San Francisco streets?
2 Cordia – Two Steam Plants and a Revolutionary Water Recovery System in San Francisco's Commercial Core

Image Ref: SF Standard – Why is steam often seen rising from San Francisco streets?

Design Context

Thoughtful Collaboration

Forge Development Partners has collaborated with the city of San Francisco to discover a major urban corridor that represents a veritable "housing desert." In this process, they have identified existing carbon assets where investment could be part of a sustainable solution. Recent changes to city legislation allowing for office-to-housing conversions combined with new single-meter technology from PG&E, and a pre-existing and expandable steam energy created by Cordia, will transform San Francisco's downtown into a model of integrated urban regeneration – proving that thoughtful collaboration between city governance, utility providers, energy infrastructure companies, and private development can reshape cities, improve lives, and create tangible environmental and economic value.[1]

1 Forge Development Partners – The New Humboldt Residences

Image Ref: Cordia – District Energy

Design Context

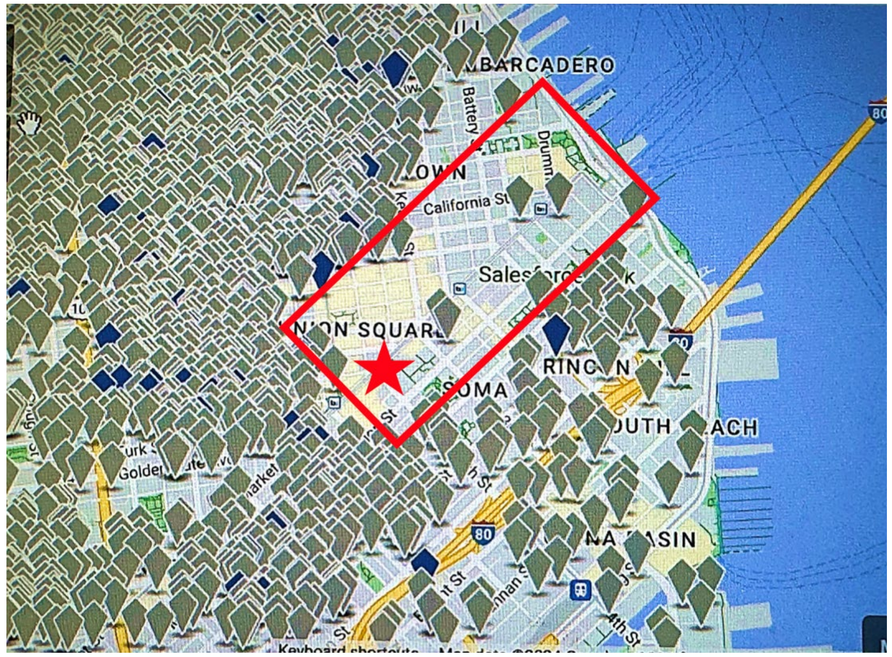
785 Market Street

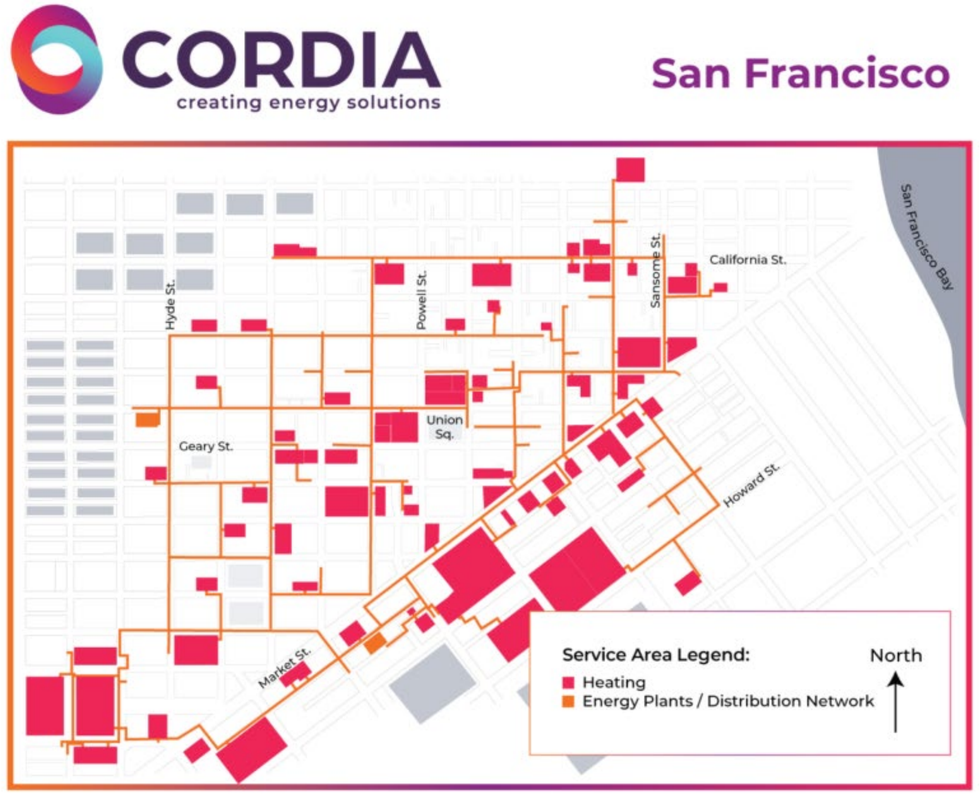
Early in 2024, Forge announced plans to invest $70 million to acquire and transform the historic Humboldt Bank office building at 785 Market Street into 120 residential units for middle income earners in San Francisco.[1] Built in 1908, the historic Humboldt Bank building was one of the first constructed in the post-1906 earthquake revitalization of San Francisco. Working closely with City agencies under the guidelines of the new policies implemented by the Mayor's Office and members of the State Senate, Forge has developed plans that will put the building at the center of the City's investment in downtown in this post-pandemic era. By utilizing the preexisting steam infrastructure combined with new solar technology, 785 Market will redefine the sustainable reconstruction of historic buildings in the urban core of San Francisco.[2]

1 Forge Development Partners takes a historic lead in office-to housing conversion in Downtown San Francisco
2 Forge Development Partners – The New Humboldt Residences

Design Context

The "Housing Desert" & Cordia's Commercial Core[1]





1 Cordia – Two Steam Plants and a Revolutionary Water Recovery System in San Francisco's Commercial Core

Design Context

The New Green City

Just as a revitalized San Francisco arose from the rubble of the 1906 Earthquake, a new San Francisco will rise in the pose-pandemic era. We will see San Francisco rebuilt with its eye on the future, and a new generation of middle class urban consumers; a generation demanding not only the best in technology but a sensitivity towards sustainability – a commitment to creating spaces that harmonize technological innovation, environmental responsibility, and human-centric design. There exists a path forward for the city that preserves its historical assets and capitalizes on its existing infrastructure in a manner that energizes a downtown ripe for a resurgence from its buildings to its public realm.

Image Ref: Mission Rock – China Basin Park

Design Context

Strengthening the Public Realm

To help San Francisco's downtown recover, the Downtown SF Partnership[1], a 501(C)3 non-profit organization released its Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan[2] that "reimagines downtown's built environment as a robust 'people-centered' focus on walkable and activated streets and spaces." The study examined six key concepts throughout San Francisco's Financial District and Jackson Square Historic District and proposed a series of strategies to implement design vision for a better future. Developed by SITELAB Urban Studio[3], the plan won an Innovation by Design Award from *Fast Company* in the Pandemic Action category.[4]

1 The Downtown SF Partnership
2 Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan
3 SITELAB Urban Studio
4 Urban Land Institute – Rekindling San Francisco's Downtown by Reviving Its Streets

Image Ref: Downtown SF – Public Realm Action Plan

Design Context

ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION SAN FRANCISCO

Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan

By recognizing the opportunities and challenges facing San Francisco's Downtown with a goal to transform the district into a social destination, the plan focused on expanding pedestrian space, bringing new energy to existing public spaces, greening the district, creating memorable experiences Downtown through arts and events, strengthening wayfinding and a sense of place, and re-energizing the ground floor.[1]

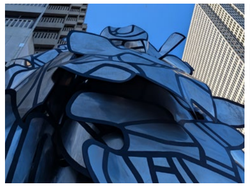
1 Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan

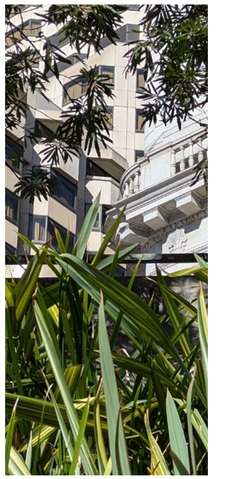
Image Ref: Lower Polk Community Benefit District – Sidewalk Cinema

SITE CONTEXT

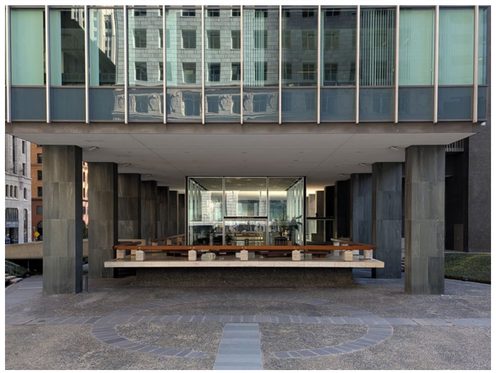
Site Context

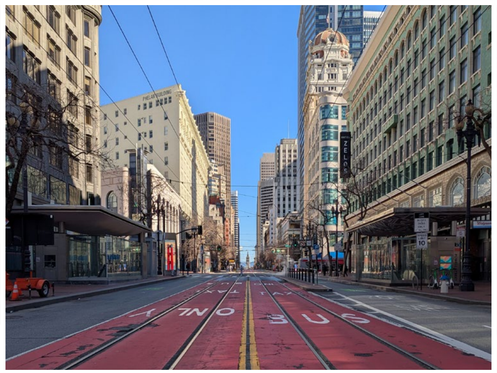
Market St. Corridor Palette

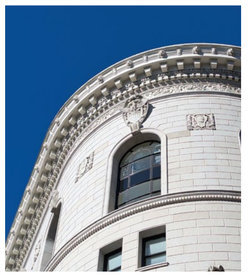







Site photos can be found on the HSDC Google Folder

Site Context

Market St. Corridor

Overlaying the "Housing Desert" opportunity on top of the city's existing steam heat distribution network, the strip along Market Street from UN Plaza at the south west to Embarcadero Plaza at the north east, with Hallidie Plaza and One Bush Plaza situated between the two is the focal point of your design intervention. Existing plazas along Market Street are prime for public realm design interventions to enhance the ground level experience in anticipation of future mixed-use development. You may choose to select any one or any combination of sites to implement your design concept.

1.5 mile stretch along Market Street from UN Plaza to Embarcadero Plaza

Site Context

UN Plaza

The plaza was originally designed to commemorate the formation of the United Nations and the signing of the Charter of the United Nations on June 26, 1945 in San Francisco. Bounded by Market Street to the east and Hyde Street to the west, the plaza is aligned on axes with City Hall. The Federal Office Building, housing the US Health & Human Services Department, sits to the north and the Orpheum Theatre sits to the south. Civic Center BART Station is accessible directly from the plaza. Further research to learn more about the history of the plaza and its former, current, and proposed future uses is encouraged.

Created in 1975 and designed by John Carl Warnecke, Mario Ciampi, and Lawrence Halprin

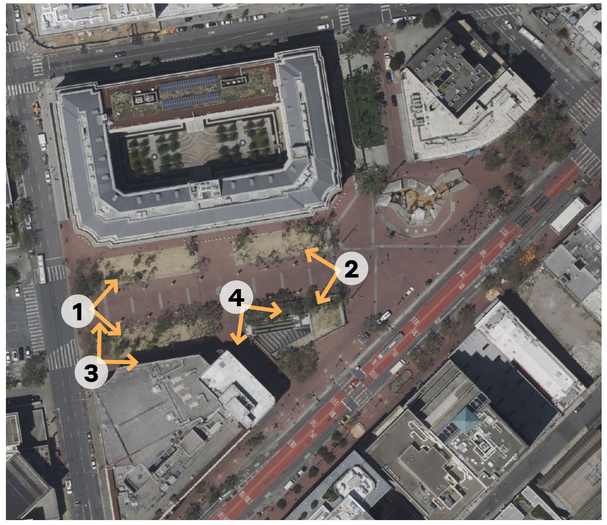
Site Context

UN Plaza
Site Photos

You are encouraged to further explore the site and use mapping tools such as Google Earth to better examine the existing context. Additional photos are saved on the competition project folder here for your reference.

Looking east towards Market Street

Looking west towards City Hall



Looking north east towards the Federal Office Building

Looking south east towards Civic Center BART Station

Site Context

Hallidie Plaza

Along with UN Plaza and Embarcadero Plaza as your other sites for consideration, Hallidie Plaza was erected out of the Market Street Redevelopment Project (1968) after voters approved the creation of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) District in 1962. Serving as the primary point of entry into Powell Street BART station, the plaza sits 20 feet below street level with tiered mezzanine levels cascading up towards street level. The sunken plaza is bordered by Market Street to the east and divided by Cyril Magnin Street where the plaza's pedestrian path connects below. Further research to learn more about the history of the plaza and its former, current, and proposed future uses is encouraged.

Created in 1973 and designed by John Carl Warnecke, Mario Ciampi, and Lawrence Halprin

Site Context

Hallidie Plaza
Site Photos

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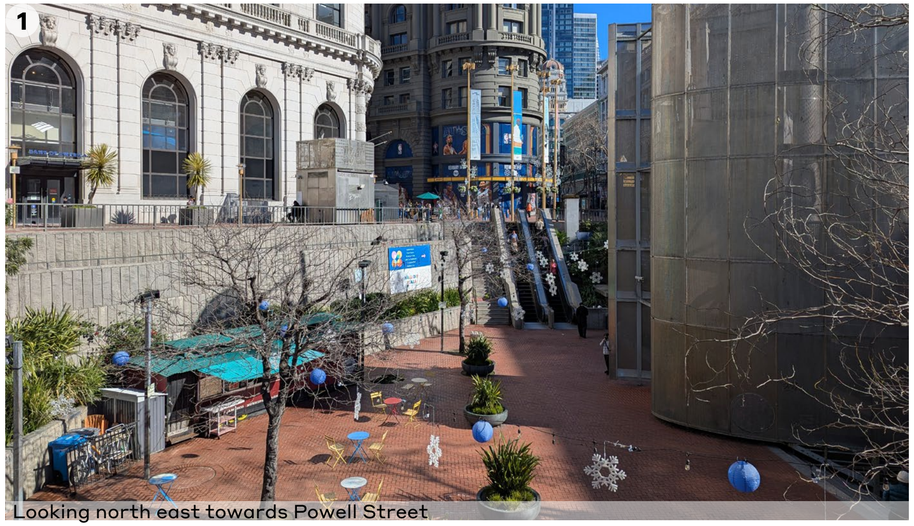
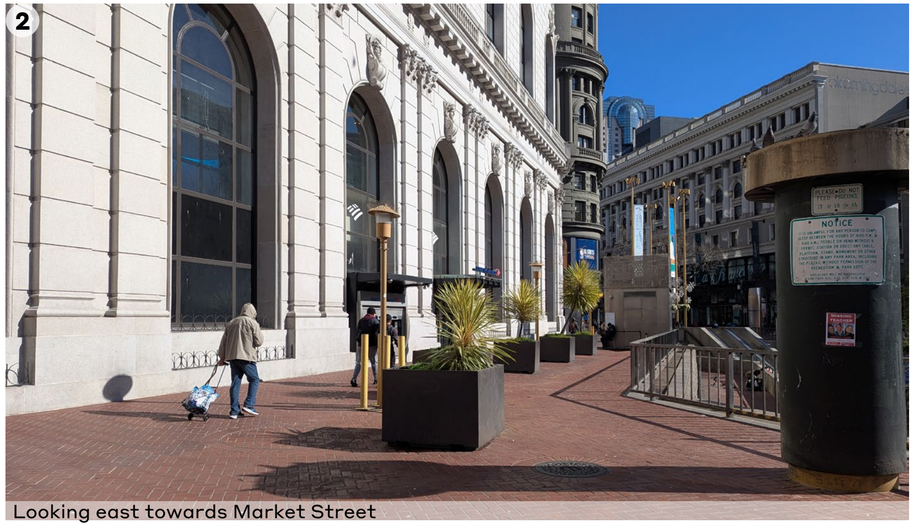
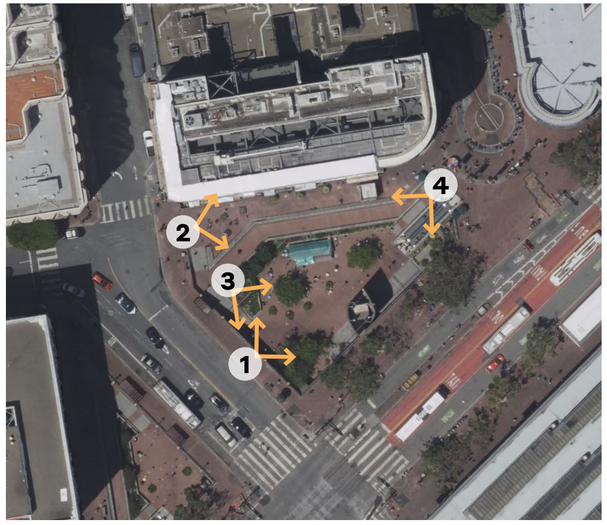
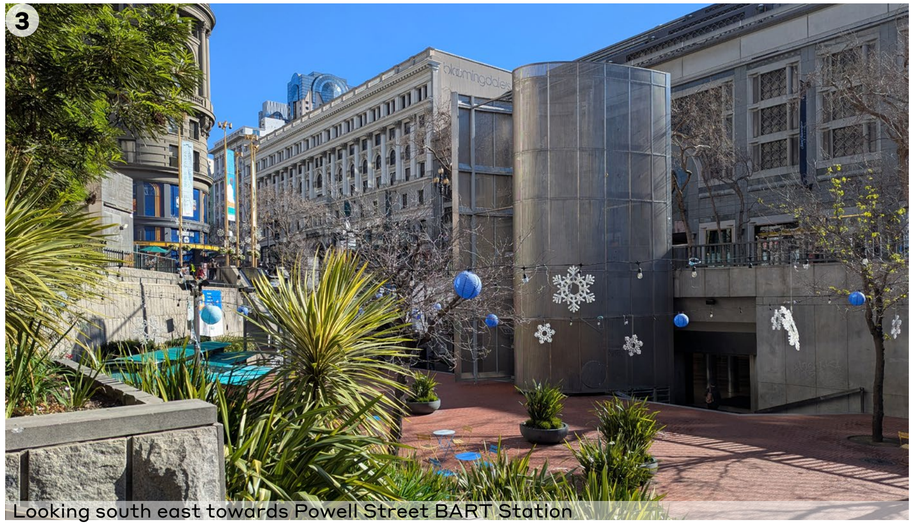


Looking north east towards Powell Street

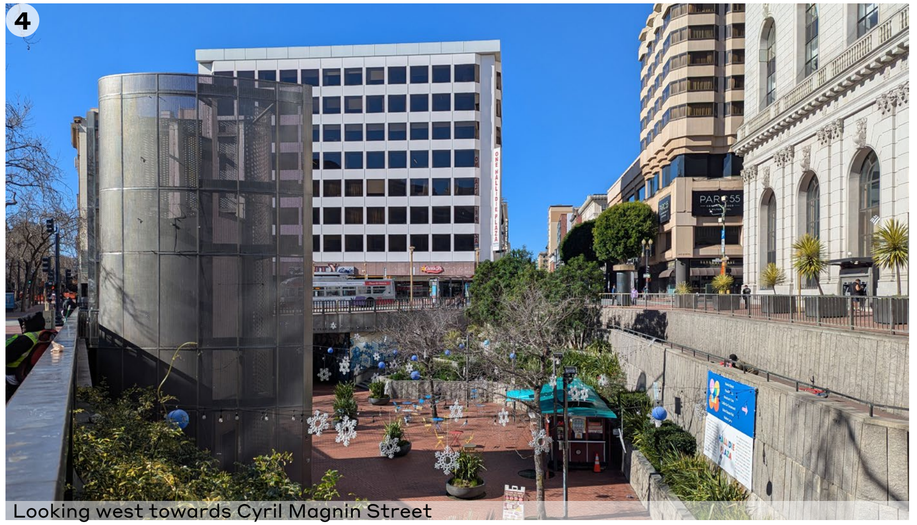


Looking east towards Market Street





Looking south east towards Powell Street BART Station



Looking west towards Cyril Magnin Street

Site Context

One Bush Plaza

Constructed in 1959 as the headquarters for the paper conglomerate Crown Zellerbach, the plaza sits at the base of an International Style 20-story office tower. One of the first towers in downtown San Francisco to integrate a landscaped plaza as part of its original design, the sunken design is triangular in shape surrounded by Market Street to the east, Sansome Street to the west and Bush Street to the north. A Japanese-influenced space, minimalist planting in gently-curving sloped beds define paths between the tower above and the standalone pavilion anchoring the south west corner. The circular pavilion embedded in the plaza may be considered in your design intervention, however you best see fit to repurpose it. Further research to learn more about the history of the plaza and its former, current, and proposed future uses is encouraged.

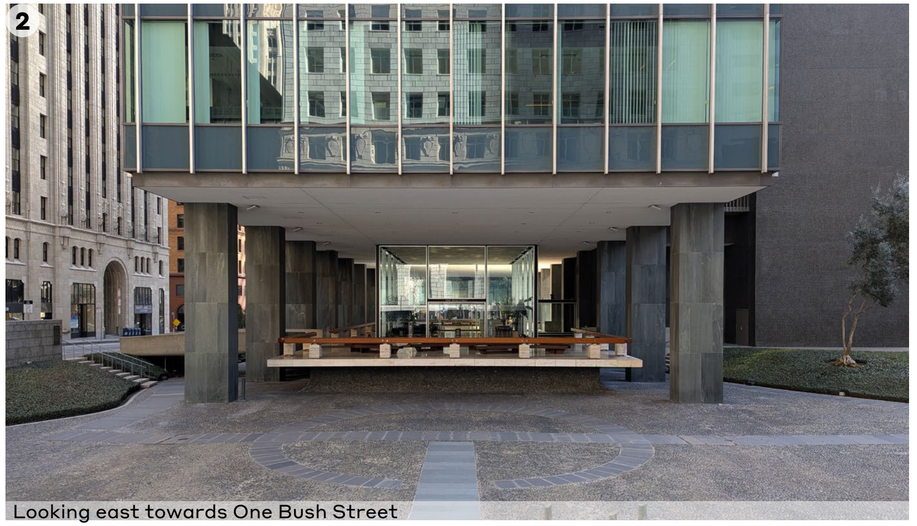
Created in 1959 and designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)

Site Context

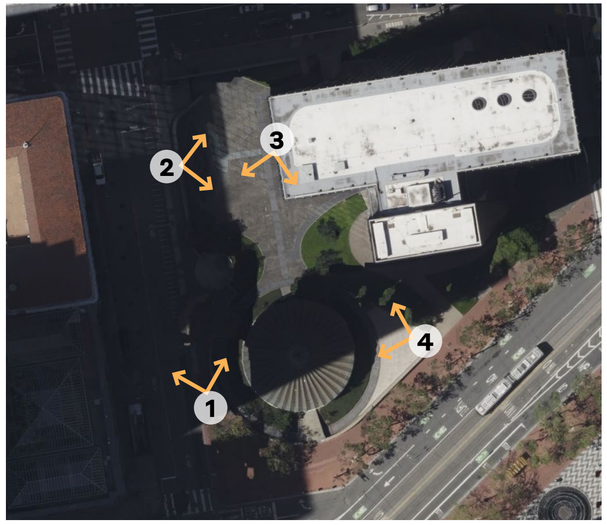
One Bush Plaza
Site Photos

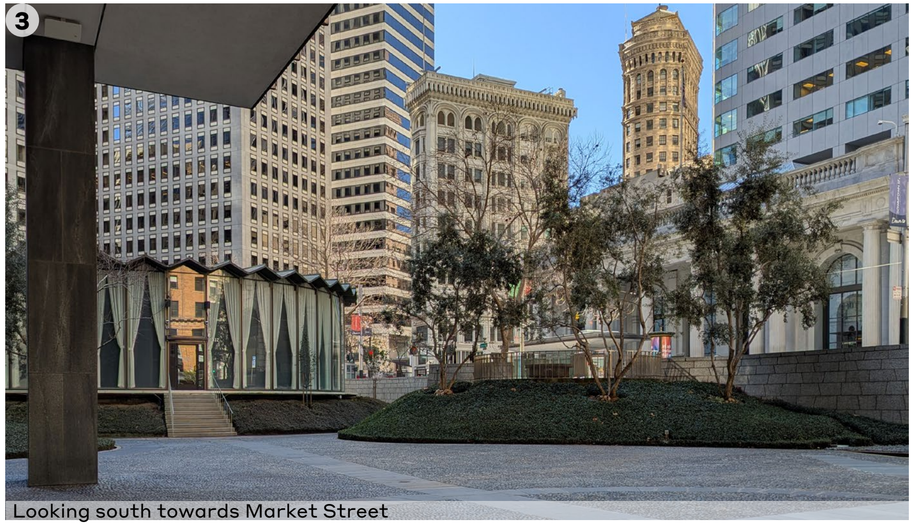
You are encouraged to further explore the site and use mapping tools such as Google Earth to better examine the existing context. Additional photos are saved on the competition project folder here for your reference.

Looking north along Sansome Street



Looking east towards One Bush Street





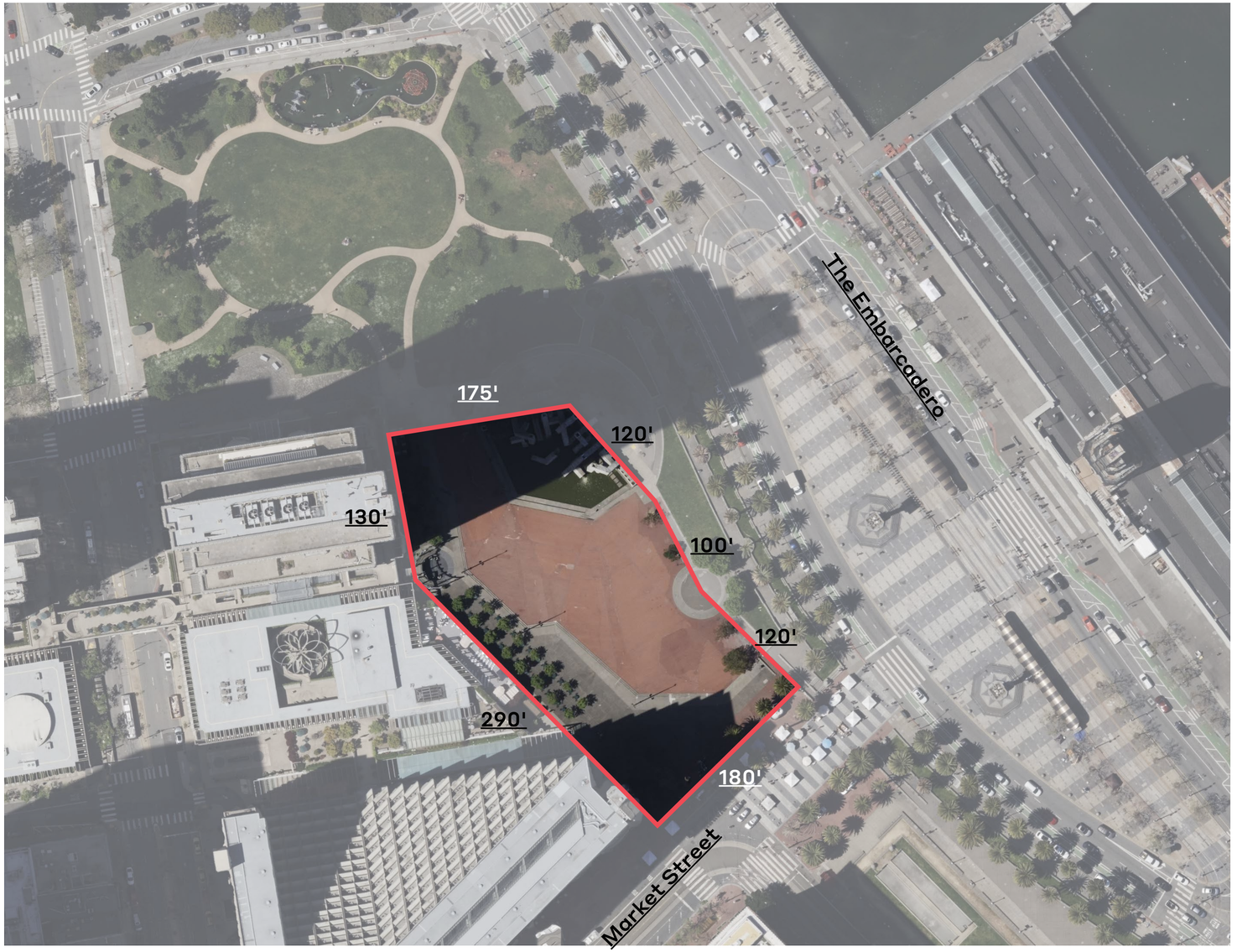
Looking south towards Market Street

Looking west towards Sansome Street

Site Context

Embarcadero Plaza

Lawrence Halprin's early visions of Market Street imagined a pedestrian-oriented series of linked civic spaces beginning at UN Plaza and culminating at Embarcadero Plaza. The 1.23-acre plaza sits near the intersection of Market Street and the Embarcadero. Adjacent to the Embarcadero Center, a mixture of office workers, tourists and shoppers spill out into the defined open space. The Vaillancourt Fountain sits at the northeast corner while the rest of the plaza extends out to the Ferry Building towards the east. Further research to learn more about the history of the plaza and its former, current, and proposed future uses is encouraged.



Created in 1972 and designed by Don Carter, Mario Ciampi, John Bolles, and Lawrence Halprin

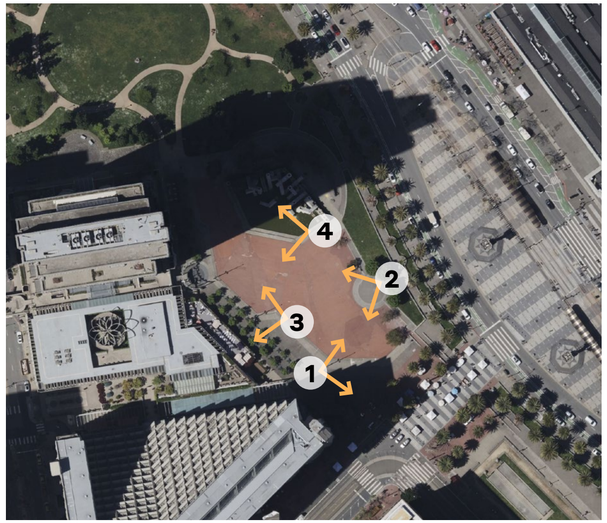
Site Context

Embarcadero Plaza Site Photos

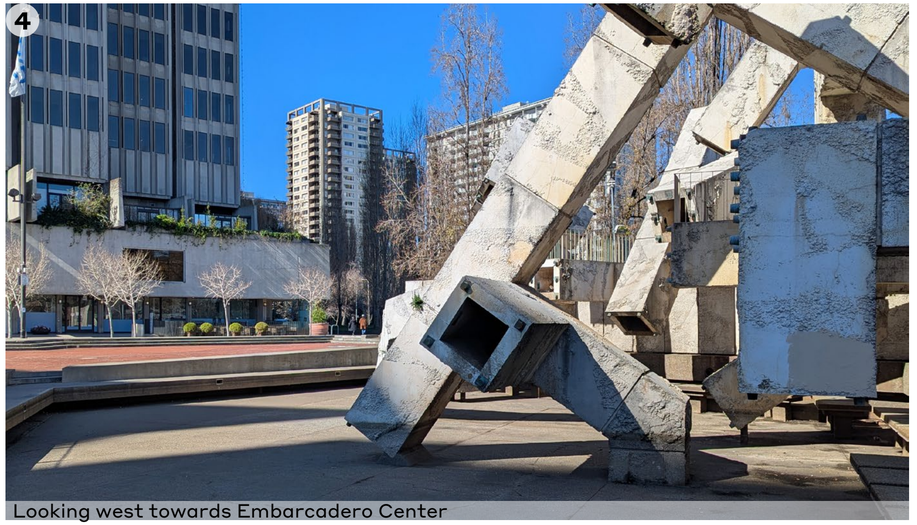
You are encouraged to further explore the site and use mapping tools such as Google Earth to better examine the existing context. Additional photos are saved on the competition project folder here for your reference.

Looking east towards the Ferry Building

Looking south west towards Embarcadero Center



Looking north west towards Embarcadero Center



Looking west towards Embarcadero Center

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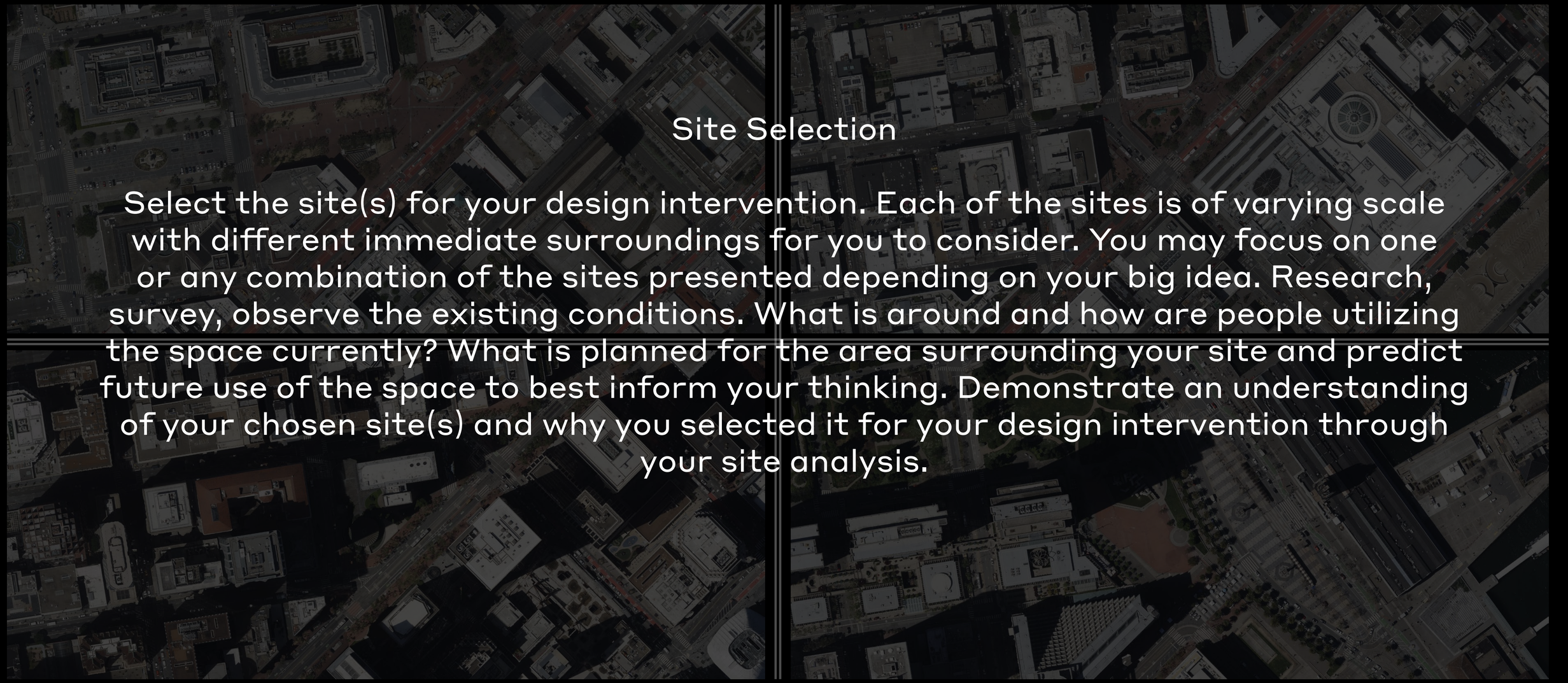
PROGRAM BRIEF

Program Brief



Site Selection

Select the site(s) for your design intervention. Each of the sites is of varying scale with different immediate surroundings for you to consider. You may focus on one or any combination of the sites presented depending on your big idea. Research, survey, observe the existing conditions. What is around and how are people utilizing the space currently? What is planned for the area surrounding your site and predict future use of the space to best inform your thinking. Demonstrate an understanding of your chosen site(s) and why you selected it for your design intervention through your site analysis.

Program Brief

ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION SAN FRANCISCO

Brainstorm Opportunities

After you gain an understanding of your site and its existing conditions, brainstorm best use cases and opportunities at your site (what's missing currently – space for recreation, dining, commerce, gatherings, activism, etc.?) to create a thriving and desirable shared use destination. Consider how you can leverage existing infrastructure (buildings, landscape, street conditions, etc.) to accommodate your proposed use cases. Benchmark your identified opportunities against precedent research of spaces that work well (what are similar spaces that currently exist, which help breathe life and energy into the community?). Explain how these proposed use cases and opportunities would enhance your chosen site(s).

Image Ref: Work begins on Foster + Partners' $250 million revamp of the Transamerica Pyramid

Program Brief

Design Strategy Proposal

After brainstorming proposed opportunities and use cases on your chosen site(s), propose design strategies in support of creating a highly-utilized and diverse public realm. Consider how the space layouts out in plan and how people move throughout. Consider what the space looks like in three dimensions and what you perceive when you approach the space from different directions. Consider how the space functions for different user types – individuals, groups, families, residents, office workers, visitors, etc. Consider elements for seating, planting and protection from the elements (sun, rain, wind).

Image Ref: Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan

Design Considerations

Formulating your Big Idea

When putting together your slide deck, this is your opportunity to communicate your thinking and craft your overall narrative. Below is a list of design considerations for you to contemplate.

- How does the overall site context inform your design strategy? Can you take cues from the history, maps of the area, the people, view corridors, environmental conditions, etc.?
- How are your program components arranged? Is there logic to your spatial adjacencies?
- Pedestrian access – where are people coming from and how does your design intervention entice visitors to the site? The site will be free of any parking as users will be encouraged to use public transportation and micromobility and/or walk to the site.
- Architectural context – as is it relates to the surrounding built environment, does your design intervention blend in, stand out or fall somewhere in between and why?
- How is your design intervention future-proof? How does your proposal consider the future of transportation or climate change? Are there components of your building that are modular and potentially able to be reconfigured for another use at another site if need be?

These are all some but not all considerations for you to think about in conceiving of your big idea.

Sustainability & Construction Methods:

A fundamental goal of this exercise is to also embrace sustainability and consider the lifespan of the building. In order to reduce the overall impact of the building on the natural environment, your design intervention should consider integrating innovative green building strategies that help increase energy and water efficiency, use renewable energy and materials and reduce consumption, pollution and waste. The building should consider careful building orientation, natural daylighting, smart shading systems, water conservation and photovoltaic solar collectors among other strategies. Where possible, the building and site should showcase green building methods used to educate the public on sustainable architecture. Research into the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system is encouraged.

You are also encouraged to contemplate various methods of design and construction for this competition. You may consider but are not limited to any of the following solutions for your design intervention: modular/prefabricated, stationary or portable architecture. You may choose to design a single structure as a whole or a cluster of several building components placed throughout the site that link the program in a cohesive manner.

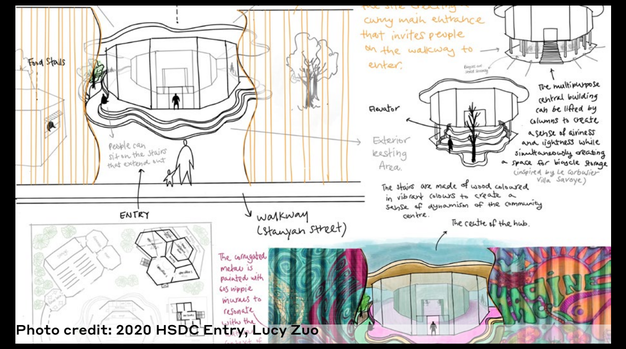


Photo credit: 2020 HSDC Entry, Lucy Zuo


Photo credit: Crissy Field Center, Project Frog

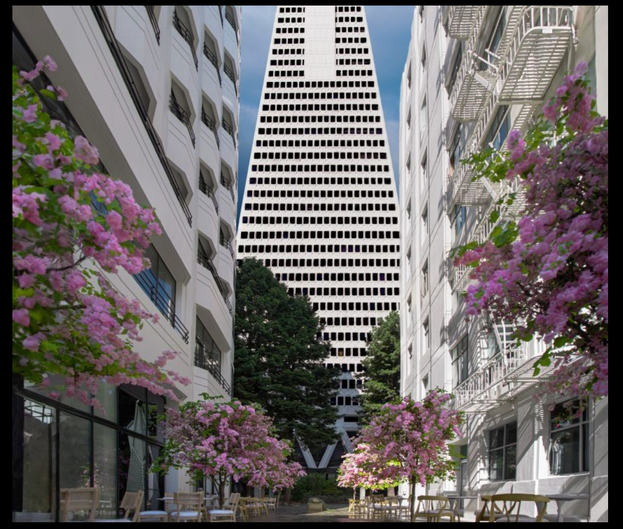

Photo credit: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission HQ

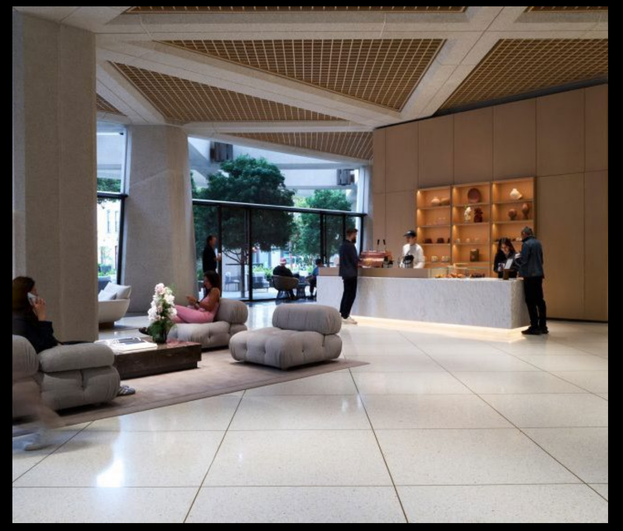
Precedent Study

Transamerica Pyramid

Foster + Partners "restores the logic" of Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco

UK studio Foster + Partners has renovated the modernist Transamerica Pyramid skyscraper in San Francisco, USA, restoring elements from the original design and linking it to a redesigned adjacent park.[1] Developer SHVO acquired the pyramid in 2020 and invested $400 million into the redevelopment of both the building's private and public amenities. Restoring the ground floor lobby and opening it up for public access, while also extending its footprint into a redesigned redwood park, transforms its public realm into a communal center at the intersection of downtown San Francisco and the historic Jackson Square neighborhood.



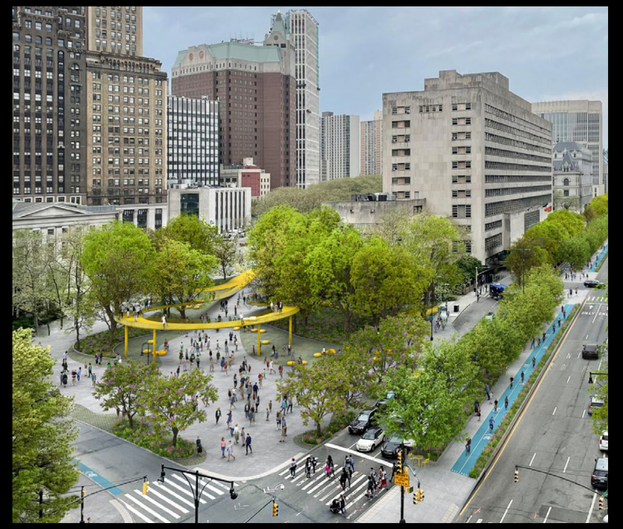


1 Dezeen – Transamerica Pyramid

Precedent Study

Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan

The Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, a non-for-profit local development corporation,[1] developed a "new vision and roadmap to transform the public realm of Downtown Brooklyn by reclaiming its streets for greater pedestrian use and creating attractive, accessible public spaces that prioritize people and the environment.."[2] As the area has developed into a true mixed-use neighborhood, the surrounding streetscape has yet to catch up to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and mass transit riders seeking a less car-dependent culture. The Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan sought to create infrastructure for people, introduce a shared street network and increase biodiversity. Use the links on this page to review their proposal to better inform your own thinking.



1 Downtown Brooklyn
2 Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan

Precedent Study

Vacant to Vibrant

A program by SF New Deal, a San Francisco nonprofit that strengthens neighborhoods by making it easier for under-resourced small business owners to succeed,[1] transforms downtown vacancies into vibrant communities, shaped by local participation.[2] A collaboration between property owners and small businesses helps form engaging pop-up experiences and community spaces in downtown San Francisco. Ranging from artisan coffee roasters and bakers to creative agencies and fine artists, partnerships are formed across a diverse mix of individuals and organizations to inject life, energy, and purpose into currently underutilized spaces.

1 SF New Deal
2 Vacant to Vibrant

Links

Organizations:
- Downtown SF
- Downtown Brooklyn
- SF New Deal
- Vacant to Vibrant

Resources:
- The Death of Downtown? Pandemic Recovery Trajectories across 62 North American Cities
- SF Planning – The Future of Downtown
- Roadmap to San Francisco's Future
- Downtown SF Public Realm Action Plan
- Forge Development Partners takes on historic lead in office-to-housing conversion in Downtown San Francisco
- Forge Development Partners – The New Humboldt Residences
- Downtown Brooklyn
- Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan

Press:
- ULI – Rekindling San Francisco’s Downtown by Reviving Its Streets
- SF Standard – Why is steam often seen rising from San Francisco streets?
- SF Yimby – $400 Million Renovation Project Starts with San Francisco’s Iconic Transamerica Pyramid

Precedent Studies:
- Dezeen – Foster + Partners "restores the logic" of Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco
- Downtown Brooklyn Public Realm Action Plan

ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION SAN FRANCISCO

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Deliverables

This year's competition will include an online submission process. You may choose to enter as an Individual or as a Group participant. As a Group Entry participant, you may work in teams ranging between 2-3 people. The final deliverable for entry into the collective is a Google Slides Presentation. *All deliverables must be captured in a Google Slide deck for presentation, not just a PDF*. To better explain your thinking to the judges, you are also required to submit a brief video describing your project (no more than 2 minutes maximum). This as an opportunity to talk about your overall goals and aspirations for your design, your design process, what you enjoyed most about undertaking this challenge, etc.

Please use the AFSF template provided via the link below and make a copy to save out a new file. Only label your slides with a project title. Do not list your name or school – you will fill this information out on the Google Entry Form when you submit. In this slide deck, you may present your design ideas by incorporating any of but not limited to the following items to best describe your design solution.

AFSF Google Slides Template

Design Proposal

- Drawings — sketches, diagrams, scaled 2D drawings (hand drawn or computer-aided drawings) in plan, elevation, section, axon, and/or perspective. Scaled drawings must indicate a scale bar and north arrow for reference.
- Models — images of physical models and/or digital models. This can be a single final model, a series of studies, or both.
- Renderings — hand drawn illustrations and/or digitally rendered models.
- Collages and Image References — digital and/or scanned or photographed collages, image references to convey design intent.
- Photos — to best support your site research

Design Description

Design Solution Title – Give a project title to your design that best describes your design solution and strategy.
Design Narrative – What is your “big idea” concept for this project? Compose a thoughtful and concise description of your design solution and strategy. This may include your design inspiration and what you are trying to achieve with your design. This is your opportunity to articulate any other ideas you may have that aren’t as easy to read from your drawings and models alone such as building material choices or site ideas relative to the greater master plan. 500 word limit.

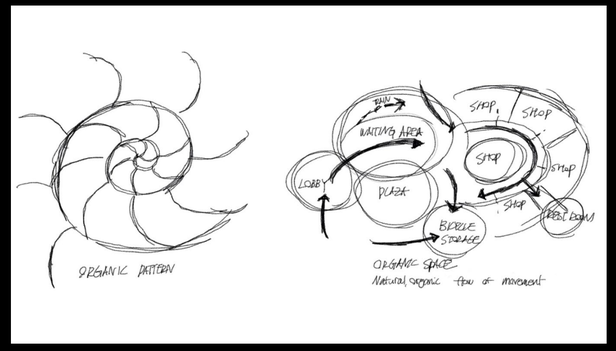
Video

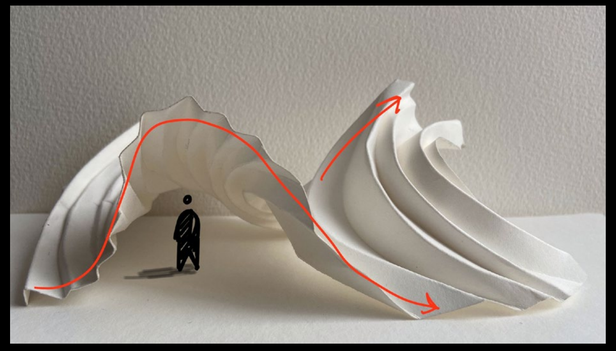
As described above, .mp4 format

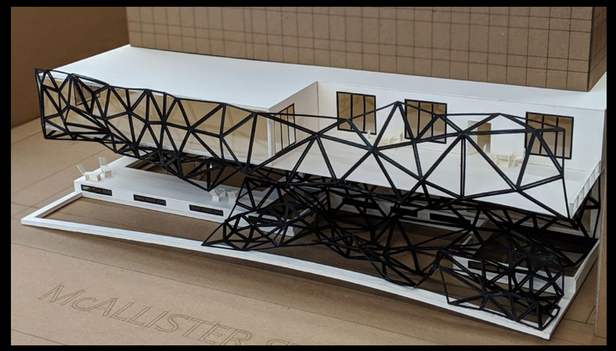
Artificial Intelligence (AI):

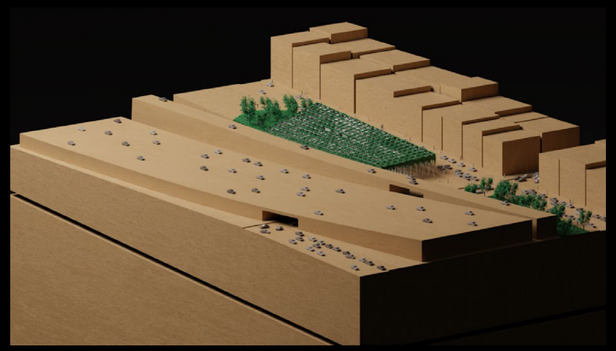
As mentioned previously when describing the history of this competition, AFSF has always embraced the use of the latest software and technology at your disposal to communicate your ideas. You may implement the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) design tools if it helps enhance your creative process. We just ask that if you do choose to use AI tools available to you that you describe what tools you used and how you integrated them into your process, this should be captured in your written explanation as part of your submission in any participation category.

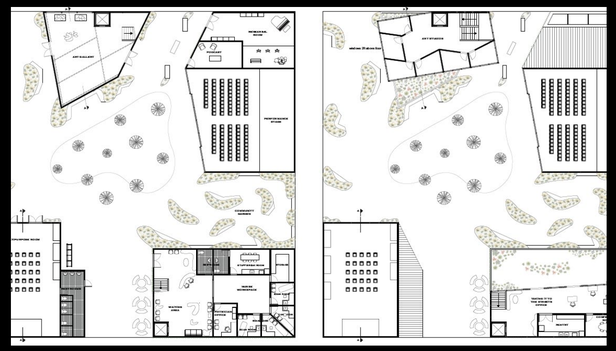
HSDC Student Work Examples

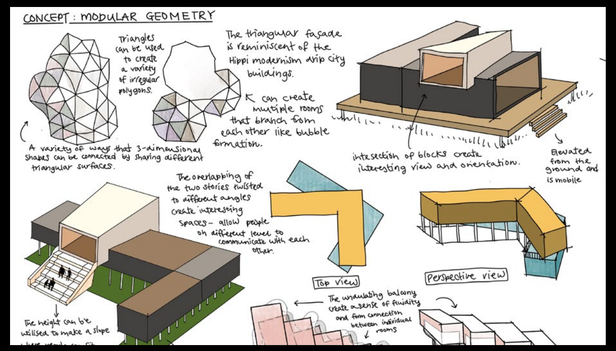












Judging Rubric

Below is a breakdown of judging criteria that will be used to evaluate your submission.

Big Idea

- What is the narrative for your design? Each project should be grounded in a big picture idea that may be inspired by your interest such as the site, the program, the users, design composition, history, view corridors, etc. – anything that most interests and inspires you. Develop a concept for what you're trying to achieve and make that evident in your process studies, drawings, models and written description.

Design Function

- How does your design function and is it conducive to a realistic working solution? Consider programmatic adjacencies (which spaces are next to each other and why?), circulation routes to and from spaces and access to light, air and views. User experience should be carefully considered – think about the different types of people who may be visiting aspects of your design proposal and how their interactions might differ from one another.

Design Aesthetics

- Do you have a compelling solution that visually carries your big idea forth? Consider spatial composition in plan, elevation, section and perspective views. How does your design read from multiple vantage points on site? Is there a specific use of color and/or patterning that brings your design to life? Consider materiality in addition to form.

Technical Execution & Presentation Clarity

- Is your design thinking clearly presented through well-executed drawings and/or models? Use your presentation skills to curate a well-thought-out and compelling project in your design deck.

Process

- Did you include images of your thought process leading up to your design solution? From conception to execution, the journey is just as important as the final product and we would like to see some of your process work. Document study models, include diagrams, sketches, whatever it may be that helped lead you to your conclusion and helps you narrate your thinking.

Submission & Resources

Submissions are due by Friday May 16, 2025 at 6pm PST.

You are required to submit your entry via the Google Form link below:
Entry Form

Please label your slides with your Project Title only, and not your name, to ensure an anonymous review process during judging. Participant information will be captured in the entry form. Your submission should include your *Google Slide deck for presentation, not just a PDF* and your short (2) two-minute length video description of your project. If you have any inquiries prior to submission, please send an email to Ryan Lee (ryan@afsf.org) for further clarifications. Thank you.

Project Resources
- Google Drive Project Folder
- Google Slides Presentation Template
- Reference Documents
- Maps
- Revit Software Instructions

Software Resources
Autodesk Education
SketchUp

Schedule

Competition Start Date
February 13, 2025
Competition packet is distributed to high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area and posted to the AFSF's website (www.afsf.org).

Design Period
February 13, 2025 – May 16, 2025
Students work on their designs, drawings and models. Progress critiques may be scheduled with the Competition Chair, Ryan Lee. Please email Ryan (ryan@afsf.org) to schedule a review.

Competition Entries Due
Friday, May 16, 2025 by 6:00pm PST
Students will need a Google account to enter and must complete the entry form and upload their files here: Entry Form.

Judging
Saturday, May 17, 2025
Judges Only. A distinguished panel of judges will review every submission virtually to determine the award winners.

Awards Ceremony
Sunday, May 18, 2025
Details for a virtual Awards Ceremony will be communicated to all when we get closer to the date and will be posted on AFSF's website (www.afsf.org).

All are invited to attend including entrants, their family, friends and school faculty members. Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at this time.

Awards

Awards will be given for the best proposals in each Design Challenge category.

Best Individual Entry
Awards for best Individual Entry submitted design solution – design solution, graphic presentation including 2D drawings, 3D model, written description, video
1st Place* | $200
2nd Place | $150
3rd Place | $100

Best Group Entry
Awards for best Group Entry submitted design solution – design solution, graphic presentation including 2D drawings, 3D model, written description, video
1st Place | $300
2nd Place | $200
3rd Place | $100

Certificate of Participation
A Certificate of Participation will be distributed to all entrants

*CCA Summer Scholarship
Through the generosity of California College of the Arts, the Best Individual Entry 1st Place winner will be offered a full-tuition scholarship to CCA's 2025 Summer Pre-college Program in Architecture & Interior Design. CCA's Pre-college Program is a four-week intensive studio experience offered in July/August, Monday through Friday. The student will earn 3 units of college credit. The value of the scholarship is $5,000 per student.

As stated prior, please note that depending on which option you choose to enter as, you will only be eligible for certain award categories. The award categories, listed above, are broken up into the two ways in which you may choose to enter the competition.

Please note that Judges may also award Honorable Mentions to any participant(s) in any submission category at their discretion and reserve the right to adjust awards and categories as they best see fit to provide recognition for projects entered into the competition.

AFSF Board of Directors

High School Design Competition Committee

Ryan Lee
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Competition Chair & Author
Vice President – Board of Directors, AFSF
Senior Associate, Woods Bagot

Alan Sandler
alan@afsf.org
Executive Director, AFSF

For questions regarding the 2025 AFSF High School Design Competition, please feel free to contact Ryan and Alan at the email addresses listed above.

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Thank you for participating in the AFSF's 2025 High School Design Competition.
Best of luck to you all!