

BRAINWASH

CMG Landscape Architecture

The need for public open space in places like SoMa is not new. Brainwash Plaza provides one such solution. It is a Sidewalk Plaza, a permanent bump out which occupies two or more parking spaces and is programmed with amenities. Plazas repurpose the existing public right-of-way from car parking to pedestrian use. By increasing the amount of public gathering space and providing urban elements that facilitate social interaction, Brainwash Plaza will add vibrancy to this part of SoMa. In addition, environmental sustainability is central to the project. Not only are sustainable materials used, but also by intercepting and treating stormwater runoff from the street before it enters the storm drain system, the project is improving regional water quality.

Brainwash Plaza uses a physical infrastructural intervention into the existing streetscape as a tool to facilitate the improvement of the area's social infrastructure. The plaza is sited in front of Brainwash Café and Laundromat. Using Brainwash as an anchor, the sidewalk plaza creates a neighborhood-supporting outdoor space that is open to the entire community, not just the customers of Brainwash. The centerpiece of the plaza will be a "community kitchen table," providing a much-needed place for neighborhood residents and workers to gather.

Brainwash Plaza is not meant to exist as a singular pocket park. Sidewalk Plazas have been conceived as part of an urban system that could knit together the diverse community fabric. Plazas could be installed incrementally along Folsom and contain diverse public amenities, keyed to the variety that exists in SOMA and making for a responsive urban plan. Local businesses would be engaged as project stewards, helping with the creation and longevity of each plaza. A larger open space strategy could support the plazas through other traffic calming elements such as turning Folsom and Howard into two-way.

