

FILLMORE STREETScape

Michael Willis Architects

In the mid-1950s, the Geary Boulevard underpass at Fillmore Street severed the established Fillmore neighborhood. Constricted circulation on the bridge became a major traffic flow and pedestrian safety concern for the community. The Fillmore Streetscape stitches the neighborhood back together by widening the sidewalks five feet on both sides of the existing underpass bridge to accommodate pedestrians crossing the bridge and bus passengers waiting for several MUNI bus lines on the bridge.

Glass windscreens and translucent glass and aluminum canopies on the Fillmore Streetscape bridge provide shelter and protection from the weather and the west wind that howls down Geary Boulevard. Art on the glass screens by artist Mildred Howard for the San Francisco Art Commission includes a poem by Quincy Troupe, which reminds us of the neighborhood's history. The words are projected onto the sidewalk as the sun arcs across the sky. The bold blue bridge over busy Geary Boulevard marks Fillmore Street as a city-wide destination.

As we rediscover our cities, we remember the importance of our streets as stages for urban life. The Fillmore Streetscape bridge re-intervention reclaims the street for pedestrians by widening sidewalks, giving priority to people, and reconnecting fabric of the City. Public plazas are enriched by the hustle and bustle of urban life. For this reason, they are rarely sunken below street level. Although the Hallidie Plaza Elevator re-connects the sunken plaza to the street, we need to ask ourselves if sunken plazas are a good idea. The smaller sunken plaza at the Montgomery station at Post and Market, and the Castro Station at Castro and Market Streets, are similarly challenged.

