PART TWO: THE PUBLIC REALM

WALNUT CREEK TRANSIT VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES
OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND GUIDELINES

A Sense of Place

The Walnut Creek Transit Village is the public transit gateway into the city. As such, the experience upon arrival at the station is a direct reflection of the community of Walnut Creek. For commuters, the Transit Village is a part of daily life, and for tourists and shoppers, the beginning of a pleasant excursion. For residents, this is an inviting neighborhood with easy access to downtown and cities along the BART line. From the Transit Village, North California Boulevard leads you to the heart of Downtown Walnut Creek (see figure 2.1). The shopping district is a regional draw and a steady stream of visitors travel to and from downtown and the BART station. The public realm is the framework within which this hub of activity and community life takes place.

Mt. Diablo is a regional icon and a memorable marker for the city (see figure 2.2). It sits on the eastern horizon of Walnut Creek and frames the city to the east and is a focal point from the BART platform. The oak trees and golden grassland of the mountain are a scenic representation of the local terrain (see figure 2.3).

The Walnut Creek Transit Village Design Guidelines for the Public Realm build upon Walnut Creek's unique sense of place, economic vitality, local history, and regional landscape. They aim to encourage a fresh, vibrant and livable transit-oriented community that is both unique and complementary to its context.

The public realm is a network of spaces with complementary function and character. Sidewalks and Paseos are the primary areas within and around the Transit Village that are reserved specifically for pedestrian and bicycle use. They also serve as the interface between buildings and uses of the private realm providing both connections into buildings and buffers between them (Figures 2.4 and 2.5). As such, the design of the sidewalk and Paseos and the elements within it are critical to the creation of an active, pedestrian-friendly environment.

Plazas and gardens are activity nodes within the Village. They complement active areas in the architecture, help to orient pedestrians, and provide a sense of arrival. These open spaces are an important place for Village residents and transit-users to recreate, and the design of these spaces is vital to providing a livable community (Figure 2.3).
2.6. The nature and quality of these spaces will vary according to location on site, but they are all important in visually defining the Transit Village. The design of each space should be carefully considered to complement all others, while also taking care to create variety between them.

Streets provide primary access from the Transit Village to the rest of the city. Some streets provide internal access into future development, others provide pedestrian access and open space amenities throughout the project. The streets integrate the urban fabric of the Transit Village with that of the surrounding neighborhood.

Key overarching goals for the Public Realm:

- Reinforce the Transit Village as a gateway into Walnut Creek and contribute to Walnut Creek’s identity as an established model and vibrant downtown.
- Use landscape features to maintain and complement views to Mt. Diablo, as well as draw references to the native landscape.
- Design an attractive and walkable environment by improving pedestrian safety, convenience and comfort.

PUBLIC REALM GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Develop a consistent landscape vocabulary that ties the Village together and establishes a unique site character.

2. Ensure a pedestrian-friendly environment and encourage the use of public transit.

3. Maintain universal access within the project’s pedestrian circulation routes.

4. Provide multiple, clear, and direct routes to BART for automobiles, buses, shuttles, bikes, and pedestrians and integrate way-finding elements into the landscape design.

5. Provide outdoor spaces comfortable and inviting in all seasons and a wide range of passive and active open space for use by Transit Village residents and the general public.
Figure 2.7: Site Plan

1. Building 1, proposed BART Parking Garage
2. Building 2, proposed mixed-use development
3. Building 3, proposed mixed-use development
4. Building 4, proposed mixed-use development
5. Building 5, proposed mixed-use development
6. Garage Access
7. BART Garage Access
8. Bus Plaza
9. New Street A
10. New Street B
11. New Street C
12. Mt. Diablo Vista
13. Pringle Passage
14. BART Plaza
15. The Portal
16. The Porch
17. Rain Garden Park
18. Pringle Passage Plaza

A. Existing building
B. Elevated BART Tracks
C. Highway 680
D. Existing BART Parking Garage
YGNACIO VALLEY ROAD STREET FRONTAGE

YGNACIO VALLEY ROAD WEST AND EAST

Site Description

Ygnacio Valley Road is one of the main east/west thoroughfares through Walnut Creek. It is heavily used throughout the day and especially so during rush hour commute times. This major corridor is the southern boundary of the Transit Village and BART station. In its current condition this expanse of asphalt and concrete lacks a coherent landscape treatment that is appropriate for a mixed-use residential environment (Figure 2.10).

Goals and Opportunities

a. Unify and improve the visual quality of the Ygnacio Valley Road streetscape (Figure 2.13).

b. Create a pedestrian and bike friendly path of travel along Ygnacio Valley Road.

c. Utilize large scale street trees to provide shade and to buffer residential units from the road.
Specific Goals for The Portal

a. Create a sense of entry and identity for the Transit Village and for the City of Walnut Creek.

b. Create a landscape vocabulary that establishes an identity for the project. This vocabulary should be appropriate for the scale and size of the project and its context.

c. Eliminate visual clutter at this important entrance.

d. Create a clear path of entry and exit for autos, bicyclists and pedestrians. Identify the vehicular entry to the project.

e. Integrate landscape features with existing grades and BART features.

Design Recommendations

Ygnacio Valley Road West

1. Provide a traditional urban streetscape with a 10’ sidewalk minimum and street trees in tree grates.

2. Utilize a simple palette of plants and hardscape materials to unify the entire street frontage (see figure 2.12).

3. Space trees 25’ o.c. minimum.

Ygnacio Valley Road East

1. In order to create a safer and more pleasant pedestrian experience, elevate the sidewalk from the grade of the road and separate it from the roadway with a lush landscape buffer.

2. Provide a double row of street trees that is elevated and set back from the road way to ensure clearance from truck and bus traffic. A double row would provide shade and a substantial landscape buffer (Figure 2.13).

3. Space trees 35’ o.c. minimum.
1. Building 1
2. Ornamental Planting
3. Public Sidewalk
4. Existing Tree
5. Retained Planting Area
6. Proposed Street Tree

Well with Grate
7. Street Furniture Zone
8. Existing Crosswalk
9. Existing Office Building

1. Public Sidewalk, Pedestrians, and Bicycles
2. Ornamental Planting
3. Proposed Street Tree
4. Existing Tree
5. Building 5
6. Retaining Wall Terraces
7. Private Patio
8. Existing Building
9. Overlook
10. Podium Garage
THE PORTAL

Site Description

The Portal is the portion of the site that includes the main vehicular entry and exit along Ygnacio Valley Road. This is the main point of arrival for vehicles coming from the Ygnacio Valley Road off-ramp of I-680 and as such is a major visual face of the Transit Village and the City of Walnut Creek. This area is framed by the new parking garage (Building 1) on the west and Residential Building 5 on the east. The elevated BART tracks bisect the space. This intersection will accommodate significant vehicular circulation, especially during commute hours, with both incoming and outgoing automobiles to BART, the freeway, and surrounding surface roads.

Design Recommendations

1. Create a bold, concise and refined landscape design. Use strong architectural and landscape features such as retaining walls, street trees, and large planting groups.

2. Use a series of retaining walls to negotiate the significant grade change in this area. These walls would act as an architectural plinth for the buildings and the BART Plaza to rest upon, as well establish a clear project identity. Install rain gardens in the terraces created by the walls.

3. Provide a dedicated pedestrian and bike path that leads directly from the street level and sidewalk to the BART Plaza. This path should be wide enough to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic in both directions.
**MT. DIABLO VISTA**

**Site Description**

Mt. Diablo Vista is a significant axis of visual and physical continuity between the BART platform, the City of Walnut Creek, and the peak of Mt. Diablo. Buildings 4 and 5 will frame the view of the mountain for disembarking train passengers. From the level of BART Plaza, the paseo reaches out to The Porch at North California Blvd. and beyond to downtown. Mt. Diablo Vista is an active corridor with a number of public gathering spaces. The nodes of activity include the Bike parking and repair facility, retail establishments at the intersection with BART Plaza, residential common space, and retail/commercial frontage at the corner of Ygnacio Valley Road.

**Goals and Opportunities**

- **Frame views of Mt. Diablo.**
- **Create an experience that is comfortable and engaging for the visitor.**
- **Provide interest and character through the use of site furnishings and paving materials.**

### Figure 2.20: Key Plan

### Figure 2.21: Section D-D, not to scale

### Figure 2.22: Enlarged Plan

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**KEY NOTES**

1. Public Sidewalk
2. Special Paving
3. Proposed Street Tree
4. Plaza with Building 4
5. Plaza with Building 5
6. Water Feature
7. Pedestrian Ramp
8. Raised Planter/Bench and Shade Tree
9. Planter
10. The Porch
11. BART Plaza
12. Secured Access to Private Courtyard
13. Podium Garage
14. BART Tracks Beyond
15. Grand Stair
d. **Develop a strong identity for the Transit Village with specific design details and character.**

e. **Create a sense of arrival at the entrance of the paseo.**

**Design Recommendations**

1. Use landscape to reinforce the visual axis to Mt. Diablo without blocking views from above or below. To emphasize this vista, provide a single row of deciduous trees with an open form and upright canopy.

2. Develop a linear landscape feature that spans the length of the paseo and reinforces the Mt. Diablo vista. Such a feature should include detailed paving, seating, and planting (see figure 2.24).

3. To reinforce the active uses at the ground floor, delineate a small plaza space with a change in paving materials at the end of the paseo, directly above The Porch (see figure 2.25).

4. Establish “niches” within the plan that provide space for pause or small gatherings. Use the layout and detailing of low planters to define such spaces.

5. Provide an informal “gateway” where the paseo originates at BART Plaza. Tie this element conceptually to the experience of the train arrival. For example, a fog fountain that emits fog when trains arrive or disembark. This element should not block views to Mt. Diablo.

6. Provide a signature water feature that links the Paseo with the North California/Ygancio Valley Road intersection. This feature should be readily visible from outside of the project.

7. Provide outdoor seating in locations that are buffered from the roadway, have access to views, and are energized by the activity along the paseo.

8. Provide sections of landscape buffer between the main pedestrian corridor and building facades (see figure 2.24).
THE PORCH

Site Description

The Porch is the terminus of Mt. Diablo Vista. It sits at the intersection of Ygnacio Valley Road and North California Boulevard. This important location makes the Porch a highly visible part of the Transit Village and a major collector of pedestrians moving to and from BART and downtown. The orientation is such that the public space enjoys full sun exposure and a view of Mt. Diablo. The Village sits above the street corner nearly 10 feet and therefore requires stairs and a ramp to negotiate the change in grade.

Figure 2.27: Section E1-E1, not to scale

Figure 2.26: Key Plan

Figure 2.26a: Section E2-E2, not to scale

Figure 2.28: Enlarged Plan

1. Public Sidewalk
2. The Plaza with Special Paving
3. Proposed Street Tree
4. Building 4
5. Building 5
6. Water Feature
7. Pedestrian Ramp
8. Raised Planter/Bench and Shade Tree
9. The Porch
10. Grand Stair
11. Existing Crosswalk
12. Podium Garage Beyond
13. Landing
Goals and Opportunities

- **Establish a unique visual presence on this important corner.**
- **Create an efficient pedestrian and bike connection between the BART station and the Transit Village.**
- **Make the transition from the street grade to Mt. Diablo vista a pleasant experience for transit users and residents.**

Design Recommendations

1. Provide a water feature to establish an inviting entrance to the Transit Village. A fountain could take advantage of the significant grade change in this area and make a physical link between the Mt. Diablo Vista and the Porch. White noise created by the fountain would mitigate the street noise from North California Boulevard (see figure 2.29).

2. Create a grand stairway with generous landings to provide a dramatic entrance to the project and to make a comfortable transition between the street grade and Mt. Diablo Vista. Stairs would also provide informal places for people to meet, sit, and to gather (see figures 2.30 and 2.31).

3. Provide an ADA accessible ramp that is sculpturally integrated with the overall design to the public realm.

4. Provide accent planting along the grand stairs and along retail frontage with built in planters (Figure 2.31).
PUBLIC SPACES

WALNUT CREEK TRANSIT VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

NORTH CALIFORNIA STREET FRONTAGE

Site Description

North California Boulevard serves the office developments to the east and north of the Transit Village and is a direct route to downtown Walnut Creek. The street is generally quiet in this area after the evening rush hour (Figure 2.34). The character of the street frontage will vary according to the adjacent project uses, including the Porch, private stoops, Rain Garden Park, and the plaza space at the intersection with Pringle Avenue.

The corner of Pringle Avenue and North California Boulevard is an important pedestrian connection between the BART station and office development to the north. It is also a busy intersection during commute hours. The landscape should support the easy flow of pedestrians, as well as provide an outdoor area suitable for congregating. To maintain visibility for pedestrians and retail signage, street trees may not be suitable at this location.
Goals and Opportunities

a. Maintain North California Boulevard as a major vehicular and pedestrian link to downtown Walnut Creek.

b. Develop an important landscape feature at or near the corner of Ygnacio Valley Road that acts as a project landmark.

c. Develop a residential street frontage along Building 3.

d. Ensure the Pringle Avenue corner plaza is highly active and pedestrian friendly. Create an environment suitable for outdoor congregation.

e. Maintain the easy flow of pedestrians to and from the BART station and across Pringle Avenue.

Design Recommendations

1. Provide 10’ minimum sidewalk with street trees in tree grates at 25’ o.c (see figure 2.35).

2. Provide landscaped bulb-outs at key locations to shorten cross-walk distance for pedestrians (see figure 2.36).

3. Utilize a change in paving material and/or pattern to highlight the corner at North California and Pringle Avenue.

4. Provide unique light bollards or a similar architectural element at the corner of North California and Pringle Avenue to define the street edge without blocking views of building and pedestrians.
1. Public Sidewalk
2. Private Porch
3. Proposed Street Tree
4. Building 4
5. Ornamental Planting
6. Garage Entry
7. Proposed Mid-block Crossing
8. Street Furniture Zone
9. Existing Building
10. Subterranean Garage
11. Existing Tree

1. Public Sidewalk
2. Private Stoop
3. Building 3
4. Proposed Street Tree
5. Rain Garden Park
6. Corner Plaza
7. Elevated BART Tracks
8. Garden Path
9. Existing Building
Rain Garden Park is an open space situated along North California Boulevard. Triangular in shape, this space is adjacent to many other parts of the project, including the BART Plaza to the south. The area is traversed by automobile routes, including the main auto entry into the Building 4 garage, the EVA lane, New Street C, and the taxi staging area. The BART tracks are directly overhead. As a natural low point in elevation of the site, it is well suited to treat much of the project’s stormwater run-off.

**Goals and Opportunities**

- **a. Create a green park setting in front of Building 3.**
- **b. Create usable, passive open space for the public and building residents.**
- **c. Treat stormwater run-off in a visible way and utilize plant species as bio-filters.**
- **d. Provide a direct pedestrian route between BART Plaza and Pringle Ave.**

**Design Recommendations**

1. Define the park by a single landscape gesture. This gesture should be successful in unifying the variable edge conditions of the area (Figure 2.37).

2. Use lines of trees along the BART tracks to make the park visible to BART riders and screen the BART tracks from Building 3.

3. Make a pedestrian connection to the adjacent mid-block crossing on North California. Provide walking paths through the park based on site desire lines and the crosswalk location. Provide benches at strategic points along those paths.
**PUBLIC SPACES**

**WALNUT CREEK TRANSIT VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**PRINGLE AVENUE**

**Site Description**

With the building of the Transit Village, Pringle Avenue will be an important commercial, retail, and residential street. The proposed retail and residential frontage of the Transit Village will complement the commercial office and retail along the north side of Pringle. Pringle is a major vehicular access point for commuters to BART, New Street B, and Contra Costa County Transit Authority (CCTA) vehicles.

As discussed in the section on North California Boulevard, the corner of Pringle Avenue and North California Boulevard is an important pedestrian connection between the BART station and office development to the north. It is also a busy intersection during commute hours. The landscape should support the easy flow of pedestrians, as well as provide an outdoor area suitable for a restaurant or other retail component. To maintain visibility for pedestrians and retail signage, street trees may not be suitable at this corner location, but appropriate farther down Pringle.

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**Figure 2.44: Key Plan**

**Figure 2.45: Section I-I, not to scale**

**Figure 2.46: Enlarged Plan**

**Figure 2.x: Pringle Avenue Looking West**

KEY NOTES

1. Public Sidewalk
2. Building 2
3. Building 3
4. Proposed Street Tree
5. Stair to Pringle Passage
6. Ornamental Planting
7. Bike Lane
8. Podium Garage, where occurs
9. Corner Plaza