



**Powell Street Improvement Project  
Request for Proposals  
Design Services**

**Project Summary:**

As Downtown San Francisco emerges from the Pandemic, lower Powell Street, entryway into Union Square and home of the iconic cable car turnaround, is ripe for change and new investment. The City of San Francisco and the Union Square Alliance are partnering to design and construct upgrades to the public realm along Powell between Market and Geary.

The City has allocated a total of \$4 million dollars to support an upgrade to the sidewalk and pedestrian experience on Powell Street between Market and Geary Streets. The City has asked the Union Square Alliance to lead the schematic design and design development phases of the project. A decision will be made in the future as to who will lead the construction documents and construction phase of the project.

The project assumes the removal of the existing metallic “parklet” structures on Powell between Ellis and Geary, which are past their useful lifetimes. The project goal is to improve the pedestrian environment, potentially including sidewalks, new sidewalk extensions, landscaping, lighting and wayfinding. The \$4 million total budget is limited for this scope of work. The Alliance and the City are aware that choices and tradeoffs will need to be made as part of any successful design.

***The Alliance is seeking through this Request for Proposals a highly qualified Design Firm which can successfully work with property owners and businesses, other community stakeholders, and the City to produce a beautiful, durable, and cost-effective design that will help restore Powell Street to the iconic status it deserves.***

**About the Union Square Alliance**

The Union Square Alliance ([visitunionsquaresf.com](http://visitunionsquaresf.com)) founded in 1999, is the oldest business improvement district in San Francisco, serving 27 blocks around Union Square. The Union Square Alliance serves its members and creates a high-quality, complete neighborhood experience by managing and activating public spaces; supporting existing businesses and attracting new investments; and convening, partnering, and advocating for the district’s future success.



In 2022 the Alliance adopted a comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#) which includes as a priority initiative: *“Develop short-, medium-, and long-range design plans that coordinate filling vacancies and replacing aged the promenade to transform Powell Street into a unique cable car-centered promenade between Market and Geary or Post streets.”*

The Alliance has hired Rise Consulting to provide its internal team with Owner’s Representative and Project Management services.

### **Project Background and History:**

Lower Powell Street has been the subject of a variety of improvement efforts, both implemented and not implemented, over the past couple of decades.

In 2011 the “Powell Promenade” was launched as a 5-year project and agreement with Audi to sponsor the construction of the existing metallic sidewalk extensions. These improvements were donated to the City.

In 2016 Audi’s sponsorship period ended and discussions with the City began around removal, replacement and other options. A decision was made to replace the temporary improvements with permanent ones, at a cost estimate at that time of \$10 million.

In 2020 the design work was completed, but the estimated cost had risen to \$23 million, due in part to the sub-sidewalk basements along Powell. The project was included in the City’s 2022 General Obligation Bond, which ultimately was rejected by the voters.

In 2023, recognizing the importance of Powell Street to the Union Square district and downtown as a whole, Mayor Breed announced \$6 million in funding – \$4 million for Powell Street sidewalk improvements and \$2 million for tenant attraction efforts.

### **SFMTA Powell Street Safety Project**

The SFMTA is moving forward on a “Powell Street Safety Project” in parallel with the Powell Street Improvement Project. This project is limited to upgraded ADA curb ramps and upgraded traffic signals at the Powell/Eddy, Powell/O’Farrell and Powell/Geary intersections. The timeframes are similar for both projects and the SFMTA has agreed to collaborate to ensure that the two efforts are in sync with each other.



## **Project Limitations and General Scope**

The Alliance does not come to this design effort with a preconceived idea of what the project should include. Instead, it seeks to harness the creativity of the selected Design Firm and our Union Square community stakeholders to conceive and design the best possible project within budget and other limitations. However, the following are some general assumptions and limitations:

- The physical limits of the project include the Powell Street right-of-way from Market to Geary, from private property lines to the cable car envelope in the center of Powell Street
- The existing parklets will be removed as part of the project
- The budget is a total of \$4 million including soft and hard costs.
- No major reconstruction of the street or sidewalk will be possible as part of the project due to budget limitations and also the presence of sub-surface vaults underneath the sidewalk and street.

The Alliance is assuming that there will not be any augmentation of the \$4 million budget from the City but does believe it may be possible to fundraise from other private and public sources to augment the budget. The design produced as part of this scope may propose additional components that would cost beyond the base budget as long as it includes a standalone, implementable base project within the \$4 million budget.

## **Design Firm scope of work**

Proposals should respond to the following general scope of work.

- 1) Community outreach: The project will be developed with robust participation from property owners, business owners and general Union Square area community stakeholders. The Alliance expects to gather community input generally through: 1) its standing Streetscape and Public Realm Committee; 2) a Powell Street “Task Force” composed of Powell Street stakeholders; and 3) several larger community-wide meetings or open houses. The Alliance will be responsible for outreach, invitations and meeting logistics; the Design Firm will be responsible for providing all content and presentations as part of these meetings.

For purposes of budgeting, proposals may assume approximately 10 meetings of the two smaller committees noted above (1 hour each) and three larger community meetings (2 hours each).



- 2) Alliance working meetings: For purposes of budgeting, proposals should assume bi-weekly working check-ins with the Alliance
- 3) Schematic design drawings and cost estimate: The Design Firm will produce a full Schematic Design drawing set and report and associated cost estimate to be submitted to the City. The schematic design process will involve robust input from community stakeholders and City staff and will consider a variety of possible design approaches.
- 4) Design Development drawings and cost estimate: Following from the approved Schematic Design, the Design Firm will produce a full Design Development drawing set and associated cost estimate to be submitted to the City.
- 5) Project Implementation Plan: Following from Schematic Design and Design Development, the Design Firm will work with the Alliance, and City staff to produce a Project Implementation Plan, detailing how, and by whom the project will be permitted and constructed.

## Project Schedule

As shown on the attached project schedule, the Schematic Design phase should be concluded by July 1, 2024. The Design Development and Project Implementation should be concluded by January 1, 2025. Construction document creation and construction are anticipated to conclude by January 1, 2026.

Project Phase	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025
<b>Project Startup / consultant selection *</b> Alliance staff Alliance consultant / owner's rep	██████████									
<b>Schematic Design</b> Alliance staff Alliance consultant / owner's rep Design Firm Permitting and Miscellaneous			██████████							
<b>Design Development and implementation plan</b> Alliance staff Alliance consultant / owner's rep Design Firm Permitting and Miscellaneous					██████████					
<b>Construction Drawings</b> Alliance staff Alliance consultant owner's rep Design Firm Permitting and Miscellaneous							██████████			
<b>Construction</b> construction admin construction mgmt									██████████	



## Proposal Contents

Proposals should include the following components. Please note that the Alliance is not looking for a design proposal as part of this selection process.

- 1) Design firm background, experience and examples of relevant projects completed. Please describe why the firm would be the right choice for this work.
- 2) Names and professional qualifications of key staff proposed to work on this project.
- 3) Proposed detailed scope of work and schedule, responsive to the general scope and schedule provided in this RFP.
- 4) Proposed detailed budget.
- 5) Brief description of design approach / philosophy for this project. (As noted above, the Alliance is not looking for a design proposal as part of this selection process).

## Selection Process

Proposals are due by **5:00 pm on December 20, 2023**. Proposals should be submitted by email in pdf format to Eva Schouten at the Alliance: [eva@unionsquarealliance.com](mailto:eva@unionsquarealliance.com).

The Alliance, working with a selection committee of members and stakeholders and a City representative will narrow proposals down to probably two finalists, which will be asked to meet with the Alliance Streetscape and Public Realm Committee, tentatively scheduled for **January 11, 2024 at 9:30am** in the Alliance offices at 291 Geary Street, second floor.

The selection will be based on the following criteria:

- The firm's track record on similar public realm / streetscape projects
- The firm's understanding and appreciation of the project scope and objectives
- The responsiveness of the firm's proposed detailed scope of work to the scope outlined in this RFP
- The proposed project budget

The Alliance anticipates making a selection at the above-mentioned Streetscape and Public Realm Committee meeting and negotiating a contract with the select Design Firm to begin work no later than February 1, 2024. Please note that our schedule includes an initial community



meeting “listening / visioning session” in early March so a quick start by the selected firm will be critical.

The Alliance is happy to answer questions about this RFP at any point before the due date. Questions should be addressed by email to [eva@unionsquarealliance.com](mailto:eva@unionsquarealliance.com)