

GREEN

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**HOW THE POP-UP  
PROJECTS AND  
TACTICAL URBANISM  
OF THE PAST DECADE  
HAVE PERMANENTLY  
CHANGED THE WAYS WE  
THINK ABOUT CREATING  
PUBLIC SPACE.**

BY KIM O'CONNELL

## EAGLE PLAZA

**A** **T THE SF EAGLE**, an LGBTQ bar in the Western SoMa (South of Market) neighborhood of San Francisco, patrons of the local leather culture feel welcome and celebrated. It wasn't always like this, of course.

Only a few decades ago, the LGBTQ and leather communities were more underground, away from the light. But this postindustrial brick-and-concrete neighborhood is gentrifying, as evidenced by the new Trader Joe's and live/work buildings that have been built there in recent years. With this reinvestment has come an opportunity to recognize the local LGBTQ community.

The SF Eagle is now a partner in an effort to create a new pedestrian park—called Eagle Plaza—that will reclaim a portion of 12th Street in front of the bar and highlight the local LGBTQ heritage. First envisioned as a pop-up park in 2014 by Gehl Studio, the plaza will be a permanent fixture on about a third of an acre, connecting the Eagle's often-mobbed patio with a new residential development across the street, and inviting visitors from the surrounding neighborhood as well.



Designed by the San Francisco landscape architecture firm Bionic, the plaza will include a designed landscape with seating and space for food trucks and LGBTQ signifiers, including a pole for flying the leather pride flag and dark paving with inlaid metallic studs—a nod to leather culture attire. Collaborating with the developer Build Inc., the nonprofit Place Lab, part of the San Francisco

**ABOVE** First activated as a pop-up park, Eagle Plaza will soon be a permanent gathering place that celebrates San Francisco's LGBTQ and leather communities.

BIONIC





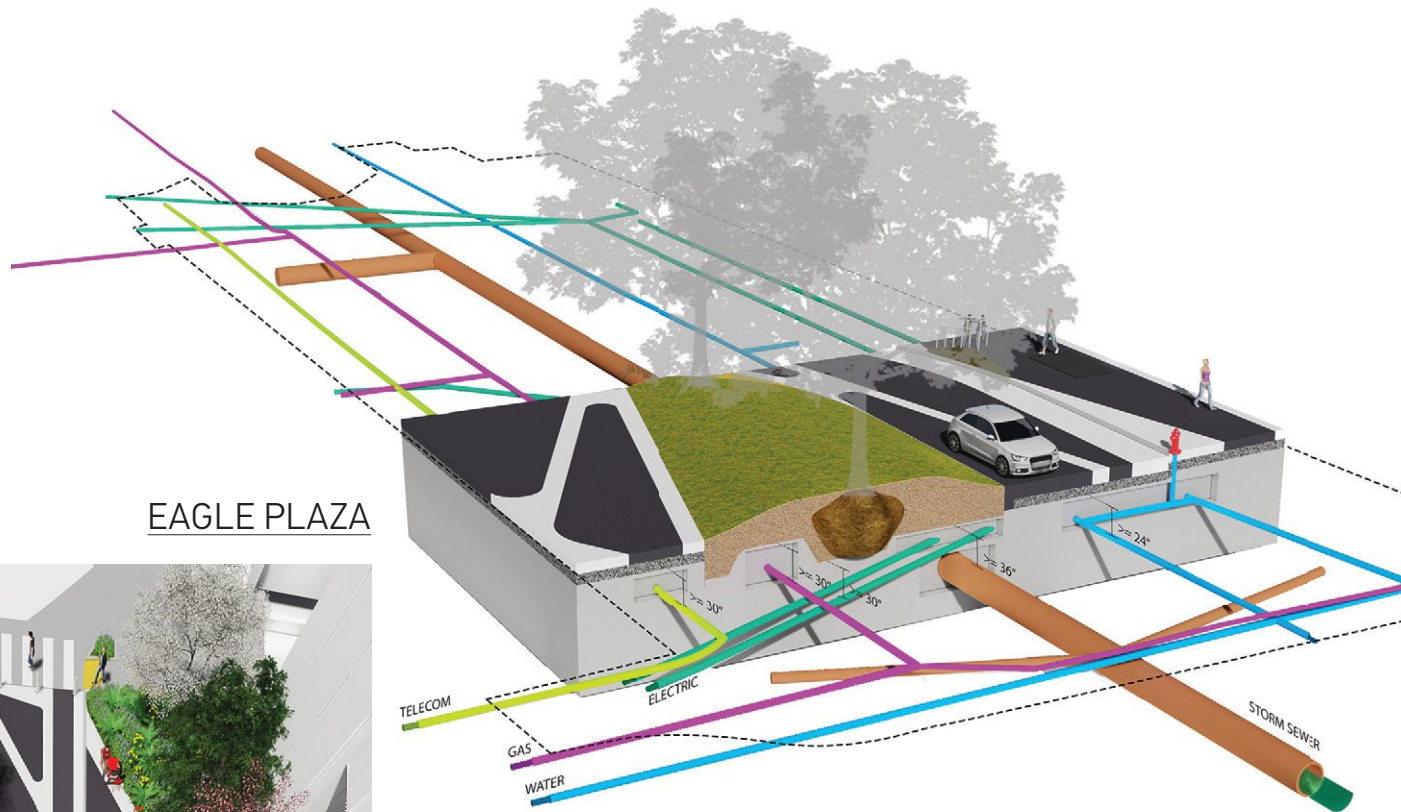
Parks Alliance, is working with the city and other nonprofit and private partners to secure final funding and permits for the project to proceed. The partners are aiming for construction to begin this spring and be completed later this year.

It's not lost on anyone involved in Eagle Plaza that the pop-up park was an essential first step

to activate the space and allow locals to envision the possibilities for its future. "Place Lab specializes in what I call Pop-Up 2.0 or Parklet 2.0," says Brooke Ray Rivera, a landscape architect by training and Place Lab's executive director. "We address the increasingly important issue of how to design permanent public realm improvements that have the deeper and more thoughtful level of



## EAGLE PLAZA



design, funding, maintenance, and stewardship required to ensure that they can endure and thrive for not just five, but for 50 years. Now that pop-up parks and tactical urbanism—and insert other buzzwords here—have ignited enthusiasm for ways to better use our public spaces, how do we channel that energy into lasting change?”

It’s a question many cities are grappling with.

**AT THE TURN** of the 21st century, many cities had embraced some pretty energetic thinking about design and urban planning, leading to a profusion of New Urbanist-style live/work developments that brought the streetscape back to the forefront, while incorporating sustainable design. Suburban malls languished as walkable shopping districts flourished. Residents came back to cities that they’d abandoned, and forward-thinking suburbs tried to copy the formula of urban centers. Yet these projects were often mired in bureaucracy and built in the traditional ways, with top-down projects grinding through the system. Then the bottom fell out with the Great Recession, leaving many large development projects dead in the water.

### ABOVE

Although the new park will remain open to traffic, it will be reduced via a curving right-of-way.

### LEFT

The new park will allow pedestrians to reclaim a landscape once dominated by vehicles and will welcome patrons of the popular SF Eagle bar next door.