

Apple Union Square revealed in San Francisco

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The opening of Apple Union Square in San Francisco marks an important step in Apple's continuous evolution, its purpose and its role in the local community to bring a richer experience beyond opportunistic retail. Its innovative design enables new levels of transparency, openness and civic generosity, incorporating Apple's new features and services. Apple Union Square will be a model for future projects worldwide.

The design is the result of a close collaboration between Apple's teams led by Jonathan Ive, chief design officer and Angela Ahrendts, senior vice president of Retail and Online Stores and Foster + Partners.

"This is an incredible site on Union Square and a chance to create a new public plaza. We have created the most inspiring and stimulating space imaginable, blurring the inside and outside", said Stefan Behling, Architect, Foster + Partners. "It is possible to experience Apple's extraordinary products and services while taking in the buzzing Union Square on one side and relaxing in the contemplative quiet of the new plaza on the other."

Located on San Francisco's famous and vibrant Union Square, the building's vast glass sliding doors allow the store to connect the existing square to a new plaza to the north, creating unprecedented urban permeability.

As a foil to the lively activities of Union Square, the new art-filled plaza, featuring public Wi-Fi, is imagined as a tranquil garden of contemplation with tables and seating, creating a beautiful gathering place for the community. The Ruth Asawa fountain, an important heritage feature in San Francisco, has been given a new setting on the steps leading down to Stockton Street. A canopy of shading trees and a 65 foot (19.8 meters) by 50 foot (15.2 meters) 'green wall' planted with Ficus Repens (Creeping Fig) plants, bisected by a sheer waterfall at the western end of the plaza, creates a contrasting backdrop to the fountain.

Taking advantage of San Francisco's moderate climate, the steel framed glass sliding doors, measuring 20.5 foot (6 meters) by 42 foot (12.8 meters) on the south side and 20.5 foot (6 meters) by 26.5 foot (8 meters) to the north, encourage natural ventilation throughout the store. Fresh air is drawn through the integrated structural spine before being expelled out through the roof. The store is powered by 100 percent renewable energy, including power produced by 130 photovoltaic panels integrated into the building's roof.

Apple has always been a pioneer in the use of glass. The treads of the glass staircases on either side of the store are held in place by precisely engineered metal lozenge shaped 'pucks' that are discreetly embedded into the glass tread and the stringer to give the impression of floating glass steps – an appearance of effortless simplicity, which belies the complexity of the engineering solution.

The entire building is quietly supported by a giant steel truss structure that bridges over the neighbouring hotel basement ballroom. In turn, this supports further trusses that create the tapered ceiling shape and integrate the network of services throughout the building. Vertical bracing is neatly tucked away inside the spine and side-walls. Seismic engineering design principles guided every aspect of the structural design, setting the standard for innovation and performance. The generous 40 foot-high (12-meter) volume is divided horizontally by a dramatic cantilevered mezzanine floor which tapers to less than 1 foot (30 centimetres) and extends 32 feet (10 meters)

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from the rear wall to create a 16 foot-high (4.9 meters) piano nobile. The extremely slim column-free floor structure is made possible by tuned mass dampers to eliminate vibration. The impression is of a floating stage in the centre of the space in dialogue with Union Square, creating a spectacular living room for the city.

Pushing the boundaries of innovation, the luminous white ceiling, which appears as an opaque surface during the day, surprises visitors as it gradually turns on and dramatically illuminates the space at night. The custom-made lighting panels emit a pure, even white glow, as well as having the capability to absorb ambient noise. The integrated grid that holds the ceiling panels in place has been designed so that all the services can be precisely located, while also making it flexible enough to accommodate any future technological advances.

The Apple Union Square introduces five new features. 'The Avenue' is a specially designed area for the display of accessories incorporated into the central spine wall. The 'Forum', a new learning environment, where specialists from various fields come to entertain, inspire and teach, will occupy a prime central position on the mezzanine against a vast video wall which will also act as an animated backdrop for Union Square beyond. To the rear of the Forum is the 'Genius Grove' with a more relaxed setting amongst a small grove of trees, each within a single planter that doubles as a comfortable place to sit and rest while an Apple Genius answers any questions. The unique design of the tree planters was a collaboration between Foster + Partners and Apple's Industrial Design Studio. The 'Boardroom' – a place for meetings, conversations and partnerships for local entrepreneurs and enterprises is discreetly placed behind the green wall.

The new store will open to customers on Saturday, May 21 at 10 a.m.

[Read Apple's press release](#)

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