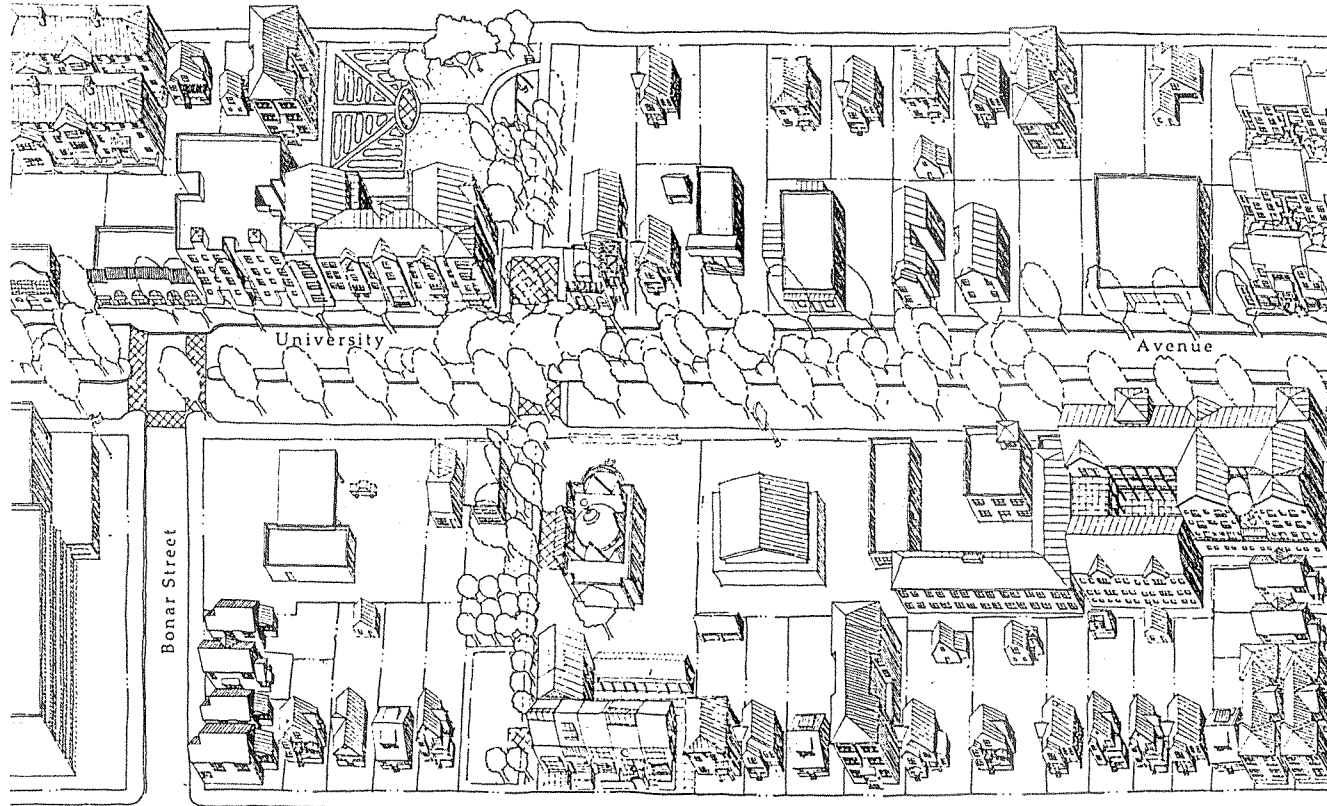


# UNIVERSITY AVENUE STRATEGIC PLAN



Prepared for the City of Berkeley

By Calthorpe Associates

with Bay Area Economics

Adopted November 1996

Plan Adopted November 12, 1996

Resolution No. 58,719 -n.s.

**Mayor**

Shirley Dean

**Councilmembers**

Linda Maio, District 1

Mary Wainwright, District 2

Maudelle Shirek, District 3

Dona Spring, District 4

Diane Woolley-Bauer, District 5

Betty Olds, District 6

Carla Woodworth, District 7

Polly Armstrong, District 8

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	i	SUB-AREA ISSUES AND REVITALIZATION CATALYSTS	69
University Avenue Strategic Plan Goals	ii	Sub-Area 1	69
Summary of Recommendations	iii	Sub-Area 2	75
Immediate Action Items	vii	Sub-Area 3	81
		Sub-Area 4	85
INTRODUCTION	1	DESIGN GUIDELINES	89
How to Use This Report	2	IMPLEMENTATION	109
STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS	3	APPENDIX	
General Plan Workshops	3		
University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission Meetings	3		
Sub-Area Workshops	4		
Community Design Workshops	5		
GOALS AND VISION	7		
AREA-WIDE ISSUES AND STRATEGIES	9		
Opportunities and Constraints	9		
Public Safety	17		
Land Use Framework	25		
Urban Design	35		
Economic Development	45		
Housing	49		
Transportation	57		
Community Services	63		

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### City of Berkeley Planning Commission

Jeff Horowitz, Planning Commission Chair

Liz Resner, University Avenue Subcommittee Chair

Joe Deringer, University Avenue Subcommittee (*as of August 1995*)

Max Anderson

Martha Nicholoff

Susan Wengraf

Clifford Fred

Kathleen-DeVries

Patty Spangler

William Travis (past member)

Margaret Peterson (past member)

### City of Berkeley Staff

Gil Kelley, Planning Director

John Ledbetter, Project Manager

Dave Fogerty, Office of Economic Development

Susie Sanderson, Transportation Planner

Nathan Landau, Planning and Development

Steve Barton, Planning and Development

Tim Stroshane, Planning and Development

Pat McGowan, Design Review Planner

Jim Hynes, Health and Human Services

Harvey Tureck, Director of Mental Health

Lt. Doug Hamblton, Coordinated City Services Task Force

Patrick Detemple, Police Review Commission

George Dondero & Erin Banks, Interns

### Consultants

#### Calthorpe Associates

Peter Calthorpe

Shelley Poticha, Project Manager

Isabelle Duvivier

Pietro Calogero

#### Bay Area Economics

Dena Belzer

Terezia Nemeth

Ray Kennedy

Natalie Bonnewit

# UNIVERSITY AVENUE STRATEGIC PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Manjul Batra, University Avenue Association  
Dan Craig/Laura Fritz, Downtown Berkeley Association  
Fathers O'Connell/Crespin, St. Joseph the Worker Church  
Jeff Schonberg, UA Housing  
Rachel Rupert, Chamber of Commerce  
Ali Kashani, Affordable Housing Associates  
Matt Williams, AC Transit  
David Duncan/Kevin Hufferd, UC Planning  
Bill Mack, West Berkeley Neighborhood Dev. Corp.  
Aimee Chaitayat, West Berkeley Neighborhood Dev. Corp.  
Dennis and Connie McCullah, West Campus Site Committee  
John Woodbury, AC Transit  
Anne Henderson, League of Women Voters  
Betsy Morris, West Berkeley Neighborhood Dev. Corp.  
Michael Dobbins, UC Planning  
Calvin Fong, Housing Advisory Center  
Merlin Stigge, Andronico's  
Carl Pearson, Berkeley Shade  
Sanjit Batra, Ajank Enterprises  
Christine Vida, Fast Response  
Maulin Chokshi, Bombay Jewelry  
Amir Aghaee, NBM Computers  
Cecile Isaacs, Strawberry Walk  
Patrick Au, Pier One Imports  
Michael Korman/Miriam Ng, Korman & Ng  
John and Lois Solomon, Venezia/Ay Caramba  
Jose Amaya, Cheese Steak Shop  
Robert Lasher, Lasher's Electronincs  
Michael Maddy, McDonald's  
Rosalie Rasberry, Campus Motel, Lee's Florist and Nursery  
Chuck Siegel, Sierra Club  
John Schweska, Andronico's  
Bill & Virginia Carpenter, Ace Hardware  
Alon Yu, China Station  
Tom Peck, Fast Response  
Peter & Joan Klatt, Forrests Music  
James Furuichi, Kuwada Realty

Mark Liolios, Takara Sake  
Jack Hoyt, J. Hoyt Architects  
Rob Browning, Ohlone Neighbors  
Linda Walls/Kirk McCarthy, Ohlone Neighbors  
Liz Filmer & Al Lewis, Berkeley Way Neighbors  
Richard Graham, Addison/Spaulding  
Nancy Holland, MAGNA  
Richard Starkeson, Bryan Tract Assoc.  
Helen Lima, Strawberry Creek Tenant Association  
Kay Wade  
Ann & Ahmad Moghaddas  
Peter Mui, SUDS  
Toni Horodysky, SUDS  
Mary Ann Bottner, Roosevelt/Addison  
Curt Grey, Curtis Neighbors  
Saeeda Khan, Strawberry Creek Tenant Assoc.  
Dorothy Morrison  
Joe Walton  
Keith Conning, SUDS 31  
Dennis Walton, Council Aide  
Linda Powell, Henry/Hearst  
George Fulmore  
Fenysa Ginsberg, Strawberry Creek Tenant Association  
David Burk, Spaulding/Addison  
Angela Sklavounos  
Allison Fisher, SUDS  
Janet Delaney Jetton, Byron St. Neighborhood  
Gerald and Kathleen Casey  
Carrie Gagliardi, UACH  
Greg VanMechelen, Architects for Social Reform  
Barri Boone, Commission on Disability  
Andrew Phelps, Mental Health Commission  
Pastor Gordon Choice, Missionary Church of God  
Marcj Jordon, BOSS  
Rev. Jim Bessey, Lutheran Church of the Cross  
Alan Acacia/Steve Elerding  
Margaret Gerner, HWCAC

Kathy Ward, Primary Care Access  
Paul Scott, USPS Station A  
John Roberts, DBA  
Levi Poe, Principal, West Campus Adult School  
Susan Felix, UA Housing  
Barbara Hillman, Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Wille Phillips, West Berkeley Neighborhood Dev. Corp.  
Kay Wade  
Dorothy Morrison  
Joe Walton  
George Fulmore  
Dea Lee Harrison  
Walter Wood  
Don Lindemann  
Hulse Rauh  
Dolores Apton  
Matt Madison/Ray McLaren  
Travis Fretter  
James Ledger  
Frank Kami, DDS  
Bill Grimason  
Steven Saylor/Rick Solomon  
Randi Thompson-Story  
Richard Worthy  
Jordan DeStaebler  
Ronald Hoffman  
Anthony Russo  
Jim Orjala  
Avram Gibel  
Anthony Maples  
Bill Lutkenhouse  
Jane Diamond/Matt Haber  
Lisel Blash  
Pablo Jasis  
Susan Caliri  
Val Shelley McHugh  
Sunday Von Drasek  
Michael Bowie

# UNIVERSITY AVENUE STRATEGIC PLAN

## SUMMARY

University Avenue is currently a place to live, a place to shop, a destination, and a corridor to drive through. Those who live in the area are intimately familiar with its strengths – the best places to eat, the friendly merchants, the pleasant bicycling routes, the neighborhood hang-outs – those qualities that make city-living enjoyable. But, living along or near University Avenue also brings its residents close to its less appealing aspects – the empty storefronts, the liquor store hangouts, the rundown buildings, the muggings and the break-ins, the homelessness, and the speeding traffic. These aspects diminish the livability of the area and make it prey to change that is car-oriented and anonymous, instead of people-oriented and socially healthy. It is the sense that the Avenue is in a state of imbalance that has brought the neighbors together. It is the intent of this plan to turn this trend around and work toward improving the quality of life on the Avenue.

The University Avenue Strategic Plan has been prepared to grapple with the complex issues affecting conditions along the Avenue and in its adjacent neighborhoods. The Plan provides strategies to encourage change and rejuvenation, while placing an emphasis on preserving the stability of nearby neighborhoods. More than a simple land use plan or streetscape enhancement program, the University Avenue Strategic Plan takes an integrated approach to balancing public safety, economic development, social services, land use, urban design, housing, and transportation priorities in order to affect long-term stability within the area. Ultimately, the University Avenue Strategic Plan will fold into the City's General Plan, which is currently being updated, and serve in-lieu of an Area Plan.

Our approach to repairing University Avenue is embedded in a few basic principles. First, if change is to be constructive, we need to tackle issues carefully, considering social, economic, and physical change simultaneously. Second, change should aim to encourage and multiply the successful aspects of the community, and aid in improving the area's unique character and quality of life. And finally, this Strategic Plan should be considered a vehicle for leveraging both the community's and the City's efforts as catalysts for future investments.

With these principles in mind, the following goals should guide future development and policy-making within the University Avenue Study Area.

## University Avenue Strategic Plan Goals

**GOAL #1:** INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY FOR RESIDENTS, MERCHANTS, AND CUSTOMERS.

- As a First Priority, Decrease Violent Crimes Against People.
- In the Long Term, Design for Safety.

**GOAL #2:** REVITALIZE THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE CORRIDOR THROUGH APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING.

- Enhance the Competitive Advantage of Avenue Merchants.
- Provide Incentives for New Mixed-Use Infill.
- Encourage Rehab and Re-Use of Existing Buildings.
- Ensure that any Displacement of Residents is Addressed on a City-wide Level.

**GOAL #3:** PROTECT AND IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE.

- Enhance the Quality of Life for Current Residents at All Income Levels.
- Increase the Diversity of Residents and Neighborhood-Serving Merchants.
- Protect Existing Local Businesses and Established Neighborhoods.
- Balance Neighborhood, City-Wide, and Regional Interests.
- Emphasize Neighborhood Involvement.

**GOAL #4:** ENCOURAGE MORE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AND AN APPROPRIATE MIX OF USES TO IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY.

- Encourage Appropriate Infill Development.

**GOAL #5:** ENHANCE UNIVERSITY AVENUE AS A GATEWAY TO THE CITY, A SERIES OF NEIGHBORHOODS, AND THE DOWNTOWN

- Reinforce the City-Wide Importance of University Avenue as a link between West Berkeley and the Downtown.
- Respect the Character of the Local Neighborhoods.
- Link Activity on University Avenue Back to the Supporting Neighborhoods.

**GOAL #6:** COORDINATE AND ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEMS, PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION.

- Make University Avenue Truly Multi-Modal.
- Decrease the Dominance of the Car.

## Summary of Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations presented by the University Avenue Strategic Plan. They represent a combination of technical analysis by staff and the consultants, as well as efforts by the community to set priorities and shape strategies.

### *Public Safety*

Public safety and the fear of crime along the University Avenue corridor has been the number one priority of this community since the beginning of the planning process. As a first action, public safety had to be reviewed, discussed, and acted upon to establish a workable setting for neighborhood revitalization. Policies related to public safety include:

- Maintain a visible and community-oriented police presence along University Avenue.
- Promote public safety problem solving.
- Improve and maintain the appearance and function of the University Avenue corridor.
- Develop and maintain crime statistics and identify hot spots within the University Avenue corridor.
- Design all improvements along the University Avenue corridor to consciously promote the safety of intended users and the surrounding neighborhood.

### *Land Use*

While the Avenue contains many successful commercial establishments, they tend to be isolated from one another, preventing the gradual evolution to a critical mass of commercial activity. West Berkeley and Downtown are regional centers that draw patrons and employees from the broader East Bay community. With the exception of San Pablo Avenue, where there is a healthy mix of local-serving shops and services catering to the needs of surrounding residents, the rest of the street contains a haphazard mix of auto-related services, a scattering of local-serving businesses, some housing, and a few region-serving businesses. Many commercial storefronts are underutilized and not well maintained, visually giving the area a poor appearance. While some neighbors have local-serving commercial uses nearby, others must drive to buy fresh produce or take care of daily needs.

The land use strategy for revitalizing University Avenue recommends establishing a new zoning overlay designation that:

- Creates mixed-use “nodes” that are within walking distance of nearby residential areas and provide neighborhood-serving goods and services. These nodes will be the primary target sites for new commercial and mixed-use buildings, helping to focus investment in ways that make a difference to the area’s quality of life. Incentives are provided for reduced parking and open space to encourage development in these sites.
- Encourages housing with ground floor retail or office as a priority along the Avenue between commercial nodes. Allowances are provided for upper story live-work and offices. Ground floor retail is required, unless a hardship can be demonstrated. Wheelchair accessible units are encouraged at the side or rear of the ground floor. Building heights are limited to a maximum of 3 stories.



- Respects the differences among neighborhoods and distinctive identities for the area’s nodes. This approach recognizes that some areas are primarily region-serving; others are oriented to the nearby neighborhoods.
- Protects the amenities of the adjoining small-scale residential neighborhoods through design guidelines for commercial development.

### *Urban Design*

The urban design issues affecting University Avenue encompass a broad variety of topics: calming traffic, appropriate approaches to infill, designing for personal safety, providing pedestrian amenities, improving the functional and visual appearance of the street, ensuring that disinvested properties are improved over time, design and maintenance of public buildings and open spaces, and public art. Both the street and its buildings must be considered in order to create healthy and safe public spaces. Key urban design recommendations for University Avenue include:

- Design with pedestrians in mind. Buildings, storefronts, sidewalks, street lighting, trees, and amenities, must be improved and designed to provide a safer and more attractive place for people. Special Design Guidelines are provided to communicate how new buildings can make a positive contribution to the community.
- Knit the two sides of the street together to the best extent possible with streetscape enhancements. Over time a Streetscape Enhancement Program should be implemented that will plant new trees in the median and along the sides of the street, improve sidewalks and crosswalks; replace freeway-scale street lighting with human-scale light standards; provide ample pedestrian and

bicycle amenities, and institute a new public directional signage and safety program.

- Create a Greenway along the West Street (Santa Fe Railroad) right-of-way. Active uses must be encouraged along its length to provide “eyes” on the park.
- Reinforce the fact that University Avenue is an important gateway to Berkeley and the Downtown through streetscape improvements. Hold a special competition to design an appropriate gateway symbol.

### *Economic Development*

Creating a strong environment for retail uses is central not only to fostering mixed-use nodes along the Avenue, but is critical to nurturing safe, comfortable, and livable neighborhoods. However, interviews with University Avenue merchants indicate that increased competition from new large-scale retail development in Emeryville and along Interstate 80 are adversely impacting local sales levels. This changing environment, as well as input from Avenue merchants themselves, indicate that the economic development component of the University Avenue Strategic Plan should focus primarily on assisting existing merchants and attracting new neighborhood-serving retail activity that will complement and create stronger synergies with existing retail in the central part of the Avenue between Downtown and West Berkeley. Thus, the economic development strategies for University Avenue include:

- Enhancing the competitive advantages of University Avenue merchants through a coordinated marketing program and annual promotional events.

- Focusing new business attraction efforts on bringing more neighborhood-serving businesses to the area and in particular, to the Avenue Nodes. Where appropriate, catalyst projects are identified.
- Increasing the capacity of existing locally-owned businesses to expand and develop their businesses. Undertake a pilot program to “grow” small local businesses and establish an education and training program to link merchants with private financing sources and management techniques.
- Investigating options for funding future merchant efforts and physical improvements, such as a Business Improvement District, assessment districts, and redevelopment authorities.

### *Housing*

University Avenue is an important gateway to Berkeley, a major transportation route, and a corridor that has traditionally provided reasonably affordable housing to Berkeley residents. Today, the study area has over 3,700 units. There are, however, numerous vacant and underutilized sites, particularly along the Avenue itself, that provide opportunities for up to 700 additional residential units (a 20% increase) in a mix of new apartment buildings, live-work units, and townhouses. From a broad planning perspective, University Avenue is a particularly attractive site for new housing, since residents would have easy walking access to transit and convenient local-serving shopping. New housing along University Avenue is a key strategy to establish economically viable mixed-use “nodes,” as future residents would also be potential patrons of local businesses. Housing policies for the University Avenue planning area include:

- Encourage a diversity of new housing opportunities in the University Avenue Study Area, in terms of tenure, income, and

unit type. Provide incentives for developers to build new urban housing along University Avenue.

- Actively encourage the renovation and preservation of the existing housing stock in the University Avenue Study Area.
- Design new and renovated housing along the University Avenue corridor so it contributes to the area’s character, without negatively impacting current University Avenue residents or residents of adjacent areas.
- New and significantly renovated units should be made accessible to persons with disabilities, or be easily upgraded to fully accessible units.

### *Transportation*

University Avenue presents an opportunity to create a truly “multi-modal corridor” – a street where walking is not only safe, but is encouraged; where frequent shuttle buses allow shoppers to easily get from one node to the next; where bicycling is a viable alternative; and where auto traffic is tamed. Selected strategies include:

- Tame traffic on University. Make it more pedestrian-friendly by timing lights, improving crosswalks, planting street trees, reducing the number of mid-block driveways or curb cuts, and encouraging the use of on-street parking for customers of local businesses.
- Work with AC Transit and U.C. to study the feasibility of creating a special and fully accessible University Avenue Electric Shuttle System.
- Use Redevelopment Agency funds to help create a satellite parking structure on the Spenger’s Parking lot that also includes mixed-use development.

- In the long term, work to provide commuter rail service along the SPRR/Amtrak line and build a new train station at the end of University Avenue.
- Improve bicycle routes on streets that are parallel to University and build a pedestrian/bike bridge to the waterfront as a top priority.

### *Community Services*

Like most major urban corridors in the Bay Area, and the United States generally, University Avenue is home to a diverse group of health and social service organizations. Many of these organizations do the important job of helping to stabilize and enrich the lives of adult and youth residents of the area and other parts of the City. Religious organizations, nonprofit groups and publicly supported agencies constitute the bulk of service providers in the University Avenue corridor. Many of them serve both general and special-needs populations through a variety of health, social, educational and vocational services. Community concerns generally center around: how programs are sited in the city; the cumulative impact of special needs populations; monitoring and evaluation; the level of community outreach; program development; the coordination of services; and the need for other communities to provide their “fair share” of crisis level social services. Specific policies for University Avenue include:

- Coordinate planning, monitoring, and evaluation of all existing and proposed programs.
- Improve community outreach, information, and publicity.
- Improve program development.
- Facilitate better intra-city and inter-agency communication and coordination.
- Encourage other communities to take responsibility for their “fair share” of social services.

## Immediate Action Items

### *Top Priorities for City Action*

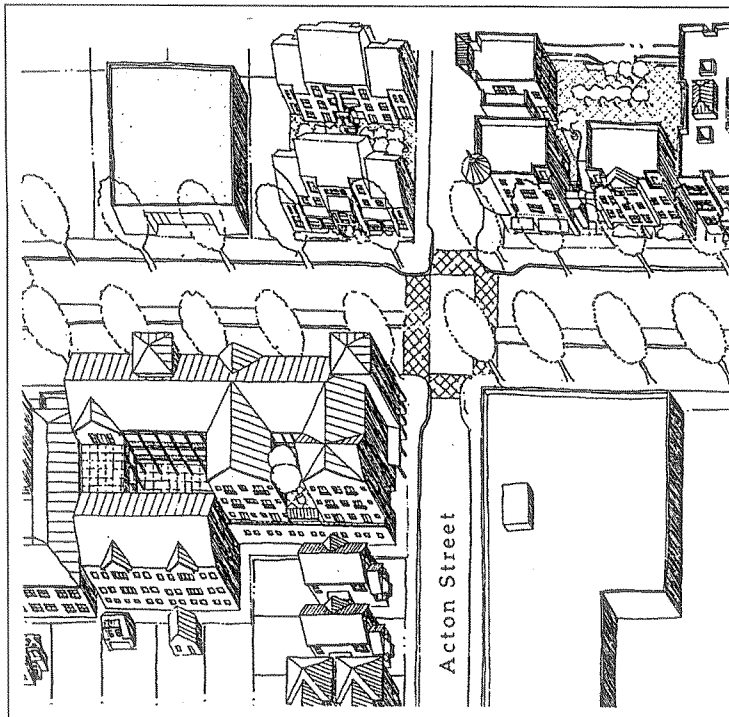
The potential along University Avenue is enormous, but it will take time, effort, and resources to reverse the negative trends. Thus, the recommendations of the Strategic Plan call for changes in policy and new ways of doing business. This section calls for early actions to be initiated by the City. These are grouped under two basic strategies: stimulate appropriate development and stabilize and improve the quality of neighborhood life.

Though many of the community's initial suggestions have already been accomplished during the planning process, a substantial new effort needs to take place to encourage private investment in buildings and businesses in the area. To do this, the City needs to take a pro-active leadership role to implement the recommendations of the Strategic Plan. Making an initial investment of City resources will help demonstrate to the private sector a public commitment to change and leverage additional private investment in the area.

The following Immediate Action Items are suggested as first steps in the implementation process. Each calls for specific actions that the City should take. The intent of these preliminary actions is to provide a coordinated set of short-term measures that will both catalyze private development and stabilize the adjacent neighborhoods. It is widely recognized that most local governments, including Berkeley, no longer have the funding reserves to allocate relatively large budgets for wide ranging revitalization programs and capital improvement projects. This plan responds to these constraints with a strategic planning and investment approach.

The following set of actions can be implemented within two years of plan adoption. Once these actions are complete, the goal is for later implementation efforts to be financed almost entirely through the recommended actions of the plan itself. These future means of financing include existing redevelopment monies, a Business Improvement District, parking revenues, and grant funding.

Not all of these commitments involve new funding allocations; some suggest reassignment of existing staff resources, others will necessitate a fresh look at existing policies and programs. Additional implementation strategies are identified in the body of the plan.



## ACTON NODE

The State-owned health facility at the southwest corner of University and Acton will soon be offered as surplus property to the City. This site presents a tremendous opportunity to make the Acton node a reality. City control of this property is key to making this catalyst project a financial success. Key features of a new mixed-use development at this site include:

<b>Land Use:</b>	Mixed Income Housing Ground Floor Retail
<b>Site Area:</b>	24,000 s.f.
<b>Residential:</b>	40 to 45 units Mix of 1 and 2 bedrooms
<b>Retail:</b>	4,000 to 5,000 s.f.
<b>Parking:</b>	40 to 50 spaces 1 space/unit + min. retail parking
<b>Open Space:</b>	5,250 to 5,850 s.f. on-site Will meet or exceed 125 s.f./unit

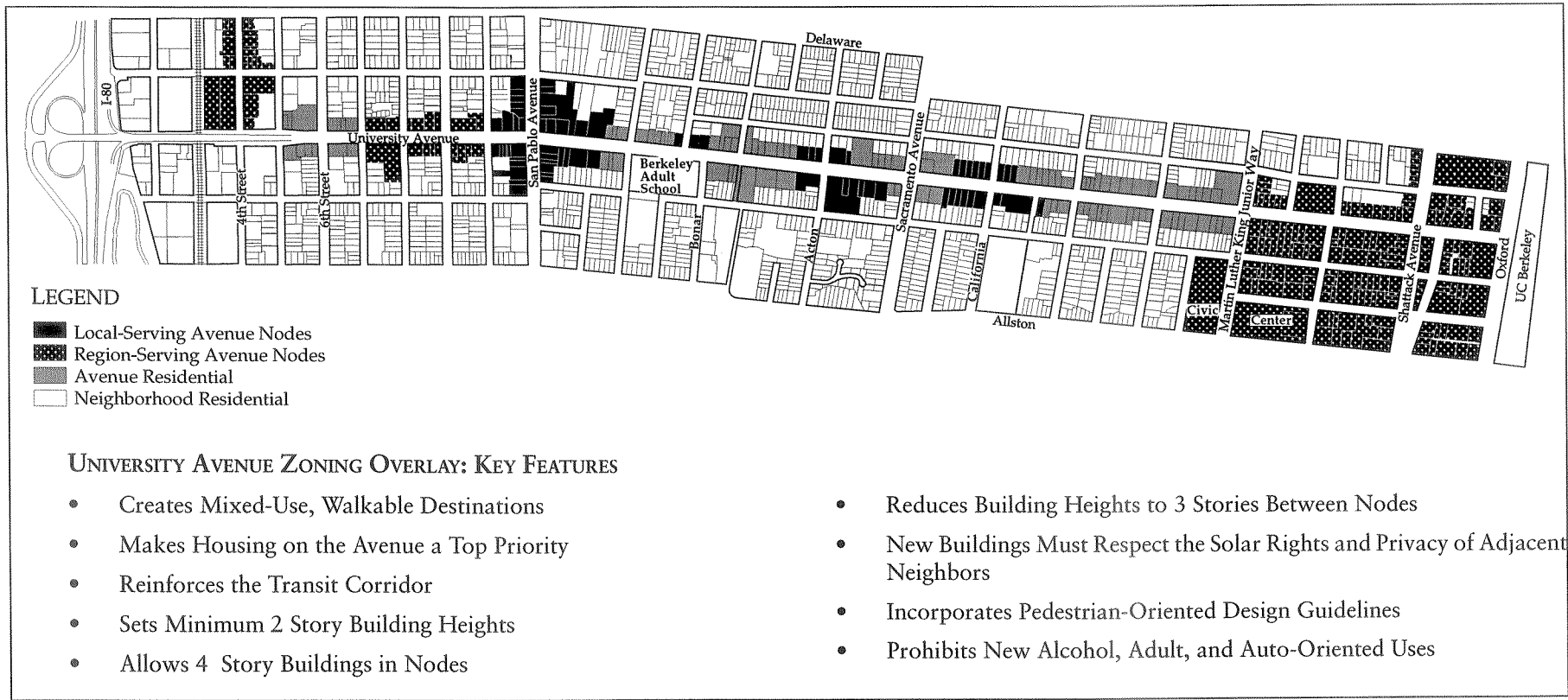
### 1. DEVELOP ACTON STREET NODE

#### Issue:

The Acton Street node is a major opportunity area along the University Avenue corridor and is within walking distance of the North Berkeley BART station. One parcel, a State-owned health facility, is potentially available to the City as surplus property. The State Employment Development Department is planning to move out of the area within the next year and may become a second opportunity site. In the future, other sites within this node may also be placed on the market for new development. Should the City acquire the State Health Facility, it may wish to offer the site to housing developers on the condition they acquire other property in the node. The confluence of these factors indicates that this area should be a top priority for City resources.

#### Recommendation:

The Acton Street node should be made a priority for the development of new mixed-use projects which include retail, office and housing targeted primarily to moderate with a low income component in the neighborhoods to inspire the broadest range of proposals. Staff resources should be focused on facilitating the transfer and development of the underutilized parcels at this node. In addition to acquiring the State Health Facility, the City should consider targeting Housing Trust Fund resources to create a significant mixed-use project on the north side of the node. The Acton Street node should also be a top priority location for completion of the University Avenue streetscape improvements recommended by the Strategic Plan and improving the appearance and safety of walking connections across University Avenue and to the North Berkeley BART Station.



## 2. AMEND ZONING ORDINANCE

### Issue:

The current C-1 zoning along University Avenue and the R-2, R-2A, and R-1 zoning for the rest of the planning area is not specific enough to accomplish the goals of revitalization in terms of mix of commercial uses, building heights, and design features. In addition, the current zoning permits a number of undesirable uses that detract from the safety and vitality of the Avenue.

### Recommendation:

Adopt a zoning overlay designation that encourages nodal development, incorporates urban design guidelines, and prohibits certain undesirable uses (also see Action Item #7). These concepts are developed in the Land Use and Urban Design sections of this Plan.

### 3. EXPAND PARKING OPPORTUNITIES

#### Issue:

In order to help stimulate commercial activity along the Avenue, a number of small, city-sponsored shared parking facilities should be created either as simple lots or a structure in the case of West Berkeley. New mixed-use infill development will also generate increased parking demand, which could be most effectively met through a couple of strategically located parking sites. This strategy would also help stimulate this desired private development to the extent that it can reduce parking costs.

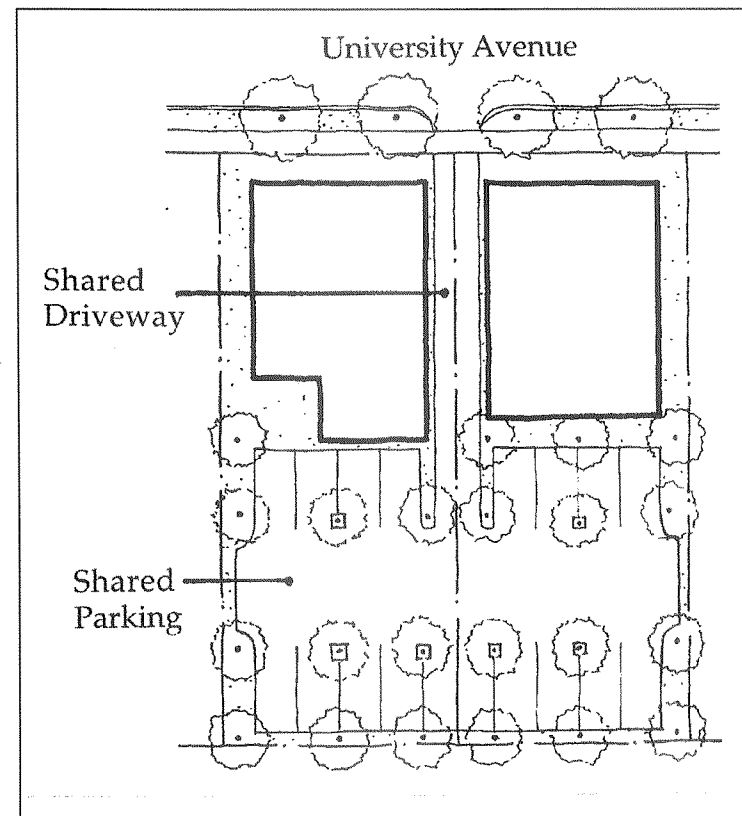
#### Recommendation:

Conduct a comprehensive Parking Study to identify the level of need, appropriate locations and key opportunities for a number of small, strategically located parking sites, in addition to the structure under consideration for the Fourth Street area. As part of the study, develop a self-supporting financing plan. In the short-term, remove Zoning Ordinance barriers to providing shared parking, and reduce parking requirements for uses with complementary peak parking needs.

### 4. REHABILITATE AND REUSE STRUCTURES BETWEEN MILVIA AND SHATTUCK

#### Issue:

The many vacant storefronts in this block of University Avenue impair the viability of drawing new tenants to the area. Several of the buildings are constructed with unreinforced masonry or have been damaged by previous earthquakes, leaving them in need of seismic upgrades. Building facades are dilapidated and deteriorated. Two historic Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs) have been vacant (and seismically damaged) for a number of years and attempts to repair and re-open them have failed. And, the U.C. Theater, the block's primary entertainment anchor, is seismically damaged and, for economic reasons, may wish to add additional screens in the future. All of these factors combine to affect both the vitality of Downtown and the safety and security of nearby neighborhoods.



**Recommendation:**

Target the Milvia to Shattuck block of University Avenue for use of the Seismic Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund, Facade Improvement Grants, and the Rental Acquisition Program, as well as stronger enforcement of the Anti-Blight Ordinance and other City codes. In addition, allow those SRO units that have been vacant for a long period of time, approximately 55 units, to be considered for alternative uses (see Action Item 10 below).

**5. COORDINATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING**

**Issue:**

The City needs to coordinate the revitalization efforts along University Avenue in a more pro-active manner. Though staff is currently assigned to the area, they are often also responsible for tracking activities in other areas of the city. A single person would be more effective at facilitating change in this very difficult area. In addition, coordinated marketing and events by Avenue merchants is seen as a necessary component of economic revitalization in the area. This effort will provide a transition from City support to merchant and neighborhood support of these development and marketing activities.



**ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO THE MILVIA-SHATTUCK BLOCK**

- Seismic Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund
- Facade Improvement Grant Fund
- Rental Acquisition Program
- Anti-Blight Ordinance Enforcement
- Streetscape Improvement Program
- Economic Development and Marketing Activities



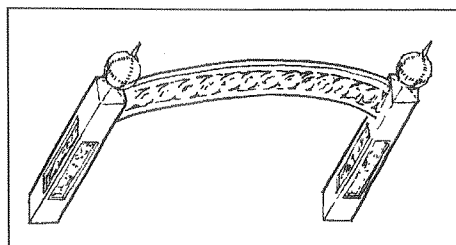
**Recommendation:**

Assign one City staff person for a period of two years specifically to University Avenue with the task of coordinating merchant activities and promotional events, working with property owners to encourage building rehabilitation and development on opportunity sites, linking tenants with available space, developing a proposal for a Business Improvement District (BID) which would allow merchants to become self-supporting, and facilitating information flow to merchants, property owners, and residents.

**6. CONDUCT GATEWAY DESIGN COMPETITION**

**Issue:**

University Avenue is a gateway to the city, the Avenue, and the Downtown, yet there is no physical indication that one has entered these important city places.



**Recommendation:**

Conduct a design competition to develop an appropriate gateway for University Avenue. Scope of the project should be limited to modest construction /planting costs.

**7. DEVELOP ANNUAL CRIME REPORT**

**Issue:**

Since the initiation of the planning effort, police presence along University Avenue has increased. However, crime prevention remains a priority for neighborhood residents and merchants. The availability of meaningful crime statistics has been an important issue for the University Avenue community. To date, crime data is recorded at the census tract level, which does not correspond with the boundaries of the University Avenue corridor, and by

calls for service at specific locations. The community feels that it can be more helpful and proactive with better information that accurately represents the Plan area.

**Recommendation:**

A police Crime Analysis Unit has recently been created to help identify hot spots and trends throughout the city. The Crime Analysis Unit should develop and maintain a more focused set of crime data for the University Avenue corridor. The Crime Analysis Unit should also work with the University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission to educate the community as to how crime statistics are maintained, the types of calls for service, trends and the limitations of the data.

**8. LIMIT PERMITTED USES**

**Issue:**

University Avenue is currently home to a number of liquor stores, auto-oriented uses, and industrial/warehousing uses that do not fit with the desired character and function of the corridor. Current zoning treats all of University Avenue as a single place and permits a very broad range of uses. This policy framework fundamentally works against many of the goals of the Strategic Plan. Like other commercial corridors in Berkeley, the list of permitted uses along University Avenue should be tailored to discourage or prohibit activities that are not consistent with the intent of this plan.

**Recommendation:**

As part of the Zoning Ordinance overlay designation, prohibit or discourage certain uses along University Avenue, such as new alcohol-related establishments (unless in conjunction with a restaurant), pawn shops, adult-oriented businesses, automobile and other vehicle-oriented uses, drive-in food and services, and industrial/warehouse uses.

## 9. INVENTORY REHABILITATION NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Issue:

The physical condition of commercial and residential properties is a concern for the entire community. A variety of code enforcement, rehabilitation and improvement efforts are required to stabilize the stock of the buildings and properties. An inventory of rehabilitation needs and opportunities can more effectively coordinate rehabilitation efforts and identify appropriate financing sources.

### Recommendation:

Conduct an inventory of all properties and structures in the study area to assess physical condition, develop preliminary costs for rehabilitation and improvements and identify appropriate mechanisms for making improvements, such as code enforcement, grants, revolving loan funds, Business Improvement Districts, etc.

## 10. PERMIT LIMITED SRO CONVERSION

### Issue:

There are 136 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units located in four separate buildings on the block of University Avenue, between Milvia Street and Shattuck Avenue. On the south side, 55 of those units are vacant and split between two buildings, on the north side the remaining 81 units are occupied, and located in two additional buildings. All four buildings are in need of seismic retrofit, and varying degrees of general rehabilitation work.

The rehabilitation of these units has proved to be problematic given, among other factors, the existing Residential Hotel Non-conversion Ordinance that requires replacement of any SRO unit that is converted to another use. In addition, other potential SRO sites, namely the motels along the avenue, are not viable options given the cost of the land and the lack of funding commitment. One of the key issues for the block of University Avenue between Milvia and Shattuck is how the City can encourage the rehabilita-

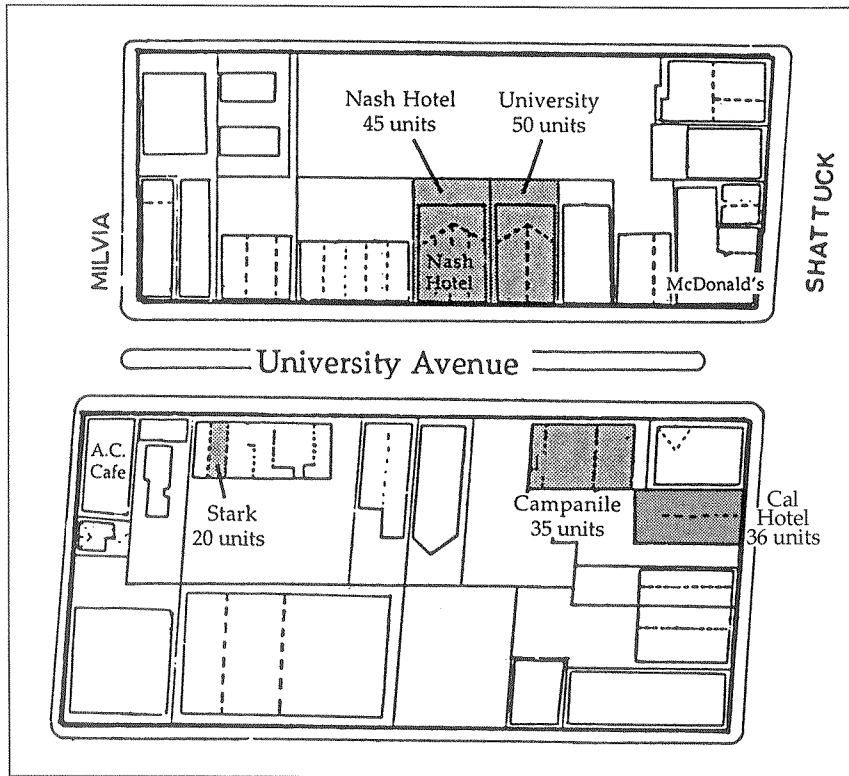
tion of the buildings while concurrently preserving housing stock for those with very low incomes.

### Recommendation:

Amend the City's Residential Non-Conversion Ordinance to permit the conversion of long-term vacant units (such as the 55 units on University Avenue) and mitigate the loss of those very low income units through a City commitment to the following: 1) Assist in the replacement of the 55 vacant units with 55 units affordable to low income, single individuals over time within the city limits; 2) encourage the development of housing projects which include affordable units accessible to persons with disabilities or are easily converted to fully accessible units at the two sites currently occupied by these 55 units; 3) if other uses than housing with ground floor retail are proposed for the 55 units, an appropriate in lieu fee shall be paid into the Housing Trust Fund for the purpose of maintaining long-term affordable housing.



Also, specifically target the 81 SRO units, as well as the 36 units on Shattuck, which are in need of rehabilitation for the following: 1) Within a six month timetable the City should meet with individual owners in an attempt to identify specific causes for building disrepair; 2) Identify issues and propose options to facilitate restoration and rehabilitation which may include: a) changing the specific configurations of units to reflect more desirable living arrangements, b) understanding the financial ramifications of seismic upgrading and other building code requirements, c) reviewing funding assistance options including; tax abatement/tax credit, and other sources, d) keeping in mind the goal to avoid displacement of building occupants; if any of the 81 units are lost, assist in the replacement with units affordable and accessible to low income, single individuals, and persons with disabilities over time within the city limits, e) establishing specific building management criteria with on going monitoring as prerequisite to assistance.



**11. EXTEND UNIVERSITY AVENUE SUBCOMMITTEE (FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR)**

**Issue:**

The University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission and members of the community that have attended their meetings, have made significant headway identifying problems, issues, and solutions for the corridor. Additional efforts, however, are needed to monitor the progress of implementation and to delve further into concerns related to public safety, economic revitalization, land use and social services. Thus, there is a need for an on-going forum for discussing community concerns and identifying appropriate strategies.

**Recommendation:**

Continue to hold periodic meetings of the University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission. The primary mission of the Committee will be to monitor implementation of the Plan, problem solve and expand and encourage community participation. The Committee should focus on identifying emerging barriers to the corridor's improvement such as: problematic businesses, deteriorated structures and facades, inadequate public amenities, and negligent management of properties. The Committees should also address responsible management and problem-solving techniques for social services and public safety, and the review any plans for siting new housing projects with social service components.

## INTRODUCTION

The University Avenue Strategic Plan has been prepared to grapple with the complex issues affecting conditions along the Avenue and in its adjacent neighborhoods. The Plan provides strategies to encourage change and rejuvenation, while placing an emphasis on preserving the stability of nearby neighborhoods. More than a simple land use plan or streetscape enhancement program, the University Avenue Strategic Plan takes an integrated approach to balancing public safety, economic development, social services, land use, urban design, housing, and transportation priorities in order to affect long-term stability within the area.

This Strategic Plan is also an effort to clarify the City's goals and policies as they pertain to the University Avenue Study Area. Though future decisions will be within the context of broader city-wide zoning, economic development, and permit processing requirements, our vision for University Avenue is in some ways a departure from past policies. The complexity of issues facing this area requires new and innovative approaches to problem-solving. And, while University Avenue may be similar to other major streets within the city, it is in itself unique. Therefore, where necessary to achieve our vision, specific policy or ordinance amendments are recommended. Ultimately, the University Avenue Strategic Plan will fold into the City's General Plan, which is currently being updated, and serve in lieu of an Area Plan.



As described below in greater detail, preparing this plan has been product of numerous meetings and workshops with the community. In fact, much of what is contained in the Strategic Plan is the compilation of suggestions from residents, merchants, property owners, and interested citizens. Though the vast majority of the policies and strategies included here represent a consensus of opinions, there remain differences and disagreements. Where appropriate, these differences are identified. Perhaps, though, it is sufficient to say that planning for University Avenue will be an on-going process. The adoption of this document is only a first step in a long term effort.

## How to Use This Report

This document has been designed to allow readers to quickly and easily understand important recommendations and the rationale for their suggestion. It addresses both Area-Wide concerns, as well as conditions in specific Sub-Areas (see below), and is organized as follows:

*Strategic Plan Process:* The section describes the extent of public involvement and the data gathering efforts used to prepare and refine the plan's recommendations.

*Goals and Vision:* Clarifies the overarching priorities for the area.

*Area-Wide Issues and Strategies:* Though each block along University Avenue has its own set of opportunities and problems, there are a number of issues that affect the entire corridor. This section addresses these concerns by topic area: Public Safety, Land Use, Urban Design, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, and Social Services.

*Sub-Area Issues and Strategies:* The Corridor has been divided into four "Sub-Areas" so that the plan can build on the differences between places along the Avenue, as well as identify strategies for specific sites.

*Design Guidelines:* As a complement to the City's zoning ordinance and as a guide for future zoning amendments, a series of Design Guidelines are provided that set forth architectural and site planning standards for new development within the study area.

*Implementation:* This section maps an approach to moving forward with the recommendations of the Strategic Plan. It identifies the steps that will need to be taken, when they should be accomplished, and how they might be financed.

*Appendix:* Detailed tables and other data cited in the body of the report.

There are several companion documents that may be consulted which provide more detailed background data than could be provided in this document. These documents include:

- "The University Avenue Area Statistical Profile." Prepared by the City of Berkeley Planning Department, January, 1994.
- "University Avenue Strategic Plan: Land Use, Urban Design, and Economic Opportunities and Constraints" (Opportunities and Constraints Report). Prepared for the City of Berkeley by Calthorpe Associates with Bay Area Economics, March, 1995.
- "University Avenue Strategic Plan: Merchants Survey." Prepared for the City of Berkeley by Bay Area Economics, August, 1995.
- Workshop Summaries, October 23, 1993 and March 3, 1994.

These documents can be obtained through the City of Berkeley Planning Department.

In addition, this plan is coordinated with and builds upon recent planning and implementation efforts in the Downtown and West Berkeley, including: "The Downtown Plan," "Downtown Public Improvements Plan," "Downtown Berkeley Design Guidelines," "Civic Center Master Plan," and the "West Berkeley Area Plan." Variations with those plans, as recommended in this plan, are noted.

## STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

This Plan is the product of a wide range of community meetings, workshops, data analysis, and surveys. This section describes this process and how it has shaped the recommendations of the Strategic Plan.

### General Plan Workshops

In Fall 1993 and Spring 1994 two community workshops were held as part of the General Plan update process to identify issues of concern and develop a common vision for the University Avenue corridor. As a result of these workshops, a University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission was formed to guide an independent planning effort. These early workshops and meetings produced a set of preliminary goals to guide future decision-making. The work of the University Avenue Subcommittee and the community have continued through the Strategic Planning Process and has helped define the specific recommendations presented here.

### University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission Meetings

The University Avenue Subcommittee addressed all of the topics identified through the goals established early on in the process. Special focus was given to three of the topics not fully addressed by the consultants: Public Safety, Housing, and Social Services. These topic areas were the subject of several meetings of the University Avenue Subcommittee of the Planning Commission.

The Subcommittee, staff, and consultants worked closely with the City Manager's office and the Police Department to identify public safety issues (e.g. assessing levels of crime, problematic behavior, and geographic "hot spots"), resources available, as well as potential solutions, including neighborhood watch programs, problem solving techniques, and physical design changes.

To arrive at a set of recommended housing policies, the planning team gathered data on the existing housing stock and analyzed three prototypical development projects: a mixed-use building with ground floor retail and upper story apartments, a primarily residential apartment project, and a live-work complex. These three typical developments were tested in term of possible conflicts with current zoning standards and financial



*The first hour of each Sub-Area workshop was spent on a walking tour.*

feasibility. The results of this analysis helped shape and inform the recommendations of the housing and land use strategies.

The recommended social service policies and strategies resulted from an analysis of existing social service providers and clients by sub-area. The data was used to reassess, improve and monitor the delivery of social services within the corridor and city-wide.

All of this information was reviewed by the Subcommittee and the community, and was used as the foundation for the recommendations presented in this document for these three critical issues.

### Sub-Area Workshops

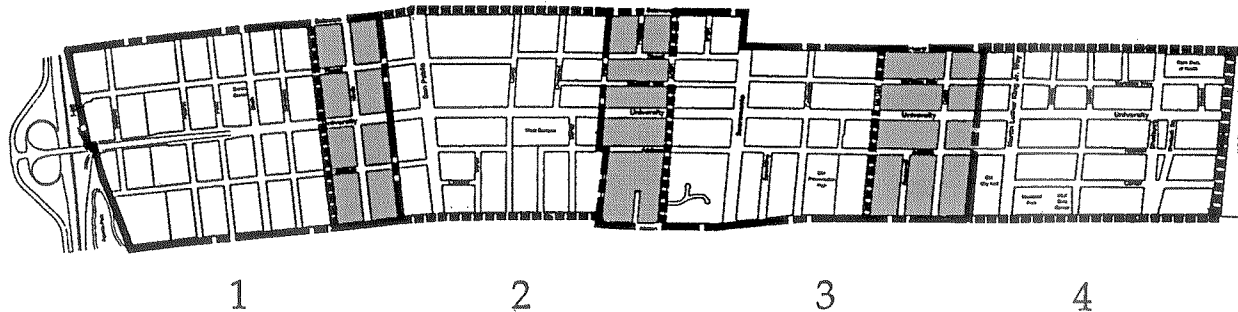
Once the general goals were set it became necessary to specify appropriate policies and identify implementation strategies. To do this, the City of Berkeley sponsored a series of workshops and hired Calthorpe Associates and Bay Area Economics to study future land use, transportation,

economic development, housing, and urban design along the entire length of University Avenue.

To facilitate the gathering of information and to allow the surfacing of unique qualities within each part of the Avenue, the University Avenue Corridor was divided into four Sub-Areas. The Sub-Areas are as follows:

- Sub-Area 1: I-80 Freeway to Tenth Street
- Sub-Area 2: Eighth Street to Acton Street
- Sub-Area 3: Strawberry Creek Park and the West Street Right-of-Way to McKinley Street between Grant and MLK Jr. Way and
- Sub-Area 4 : Roosevelt Avenue to Oxford Street and the U.C. Berkeley campus.

The Sub-Areas were not intended to and do not reflect actual neighborhoods along the University Avenue corridor. Instead, they were developed for planning purposes only. Their boundaries purposely overlap to ensure a thorough analysis of conditions.



University Avenue Strategic Plan Sub-Areas

Workshops in each of the four Sub-Areas were held from February 27 to March 7, 1995. For these meetings, Calthorpe Associates, Bay Area Economics, and City Staff compiled existing available information on the various opportunities and constraints in each of the sub-areas. This involved photographing and documenting existing conditions, analyzing economic data, talking with property owners, merchants, and developers, and reviewing previously prepared studies, including the Avenues Plan, the Downtown Public Improvements Plan, and the West Berkeley Plan. Over 100 members of the community participated in these afternoon and evening sessions.

The first hour of each workshop was spent walking through the sub-area. This gave everyone involved the opportunity to see and discuss the many possibilities and to voice concerns about current and potential problems. During the second hour of the workshop, presentations were made on economic trends and market constraints in the area, as well as a study of current land use patterns and a preliminary analysis of opportunity and constraints sites.

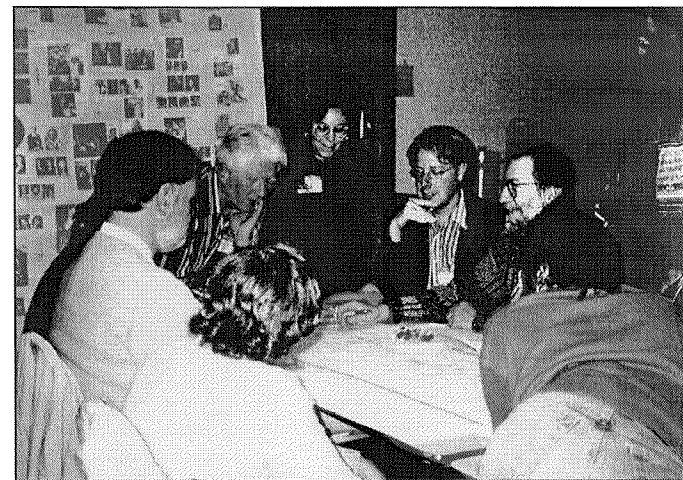
The final results of these workshops were a “shopping list” of issues, ideas, concerns, opportunities, and constraints that should be addressed by the Strategic Plan. Comments from these meetings are included in the “University Avenue Strategic Plan: Land Use, Urban Design, and Economic Opportunities and Constraints” Report.

## Community Design Workshops

On April 1 and April 20, 1995, two workshops were held that focused on land use and urban design issues along the University Avenue Corridor. The intent of these workshops was to develop, review, and critique planning concepts with local residents and property owners.

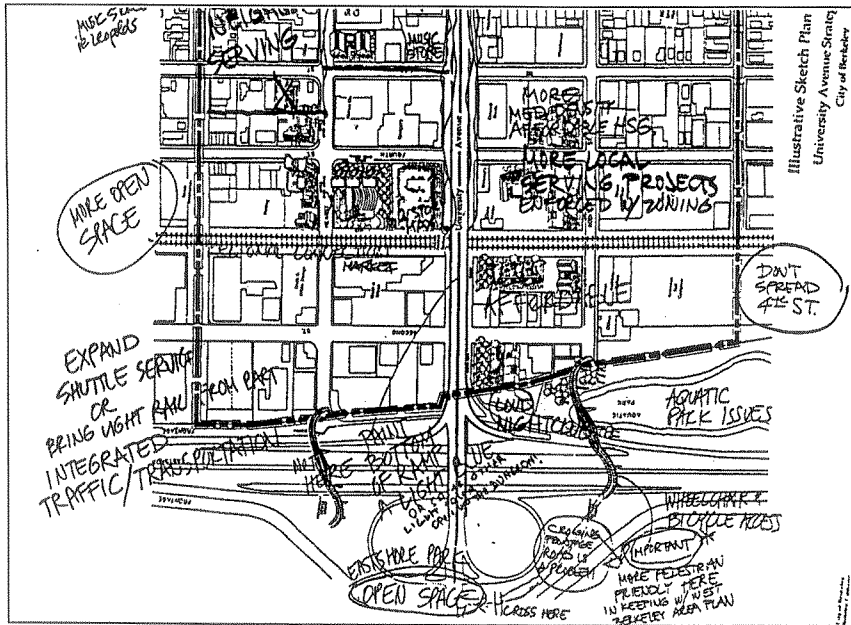
### *Community Design Workshop #1*

For a full Saturday, participants were asked to take a first pass at problem solving through urban design. Each of the groups was given a Sub-Area “Armature Plan” - an enhanced base map with streets, public spaces, natural features, existing buildings and possible “opportunity sites” The groups also received a series of playing cards or land use “icons” which represented various land uses and amenities that could be encouraged within the University Avenue Corridor. The size of these icons varied depending on the amount of land that is required to build a minimum sized project. For example, 50 units of apartments could be built on only an acre of land, while the same amount of single-family housing would need three or four acres. Similarly, a 30,000 square foot supermarket with an appropriate amount of parking would need at least 2 acres, while a mixed-use building,



*In the first workshop, participants were asked to take a first pass at problem-solving. Small groups developed plans for each sub-area.*





*In the second workshop the participants were asked to validate, critique, annotate, and modify the consolidated work from the previous workshops.*

with ground floor retail and upper story apartments, could be built on a much smaller parcel. In this way, workshop participants began to understand the trade-offs of selecting various land use types and the amount of land that must be available to accommodate them.

With the assistance of design facilitators, teams of 8 to 10 people with very diverse viewpoints worked together to identify a range of appropriate land uses and then placed the land use icons on the base map to represent their preferred plan. This entailed dialogue and compromise. In most cases plans were developed that represented a consensus of views. Last, the participants were asked to review and cri-

tique a list of preliminary policies on public safety, housing, social services and economic development.

### *Community Design Workshop #2*

For the second community design workshop, the ideas generated in Workshop #1 were synthesized into an Illustrative Sketch Plan for each Sub-Area. During this evening workshop, the concept of creating “Nodes” – areas of higher-intensity mixed-use at strategic points along the Avenue – was discussed, along with specific land use interventions on opportunity sites within the sub-areas. The participants were then asked to validate, critique, annotate, and modify the Illustrative Sketch Plans. The second part of this workshop consisted of critiquing and prioritizing a list of preliminary implementation strategies, both area-wide and for each sub-area. In this way the participants were able to identify the most important issues and recommend an appropriate sequencing of actions.



*During the workshops people worked together to define their differences and find common solutions.*

## GOALS AND VISION

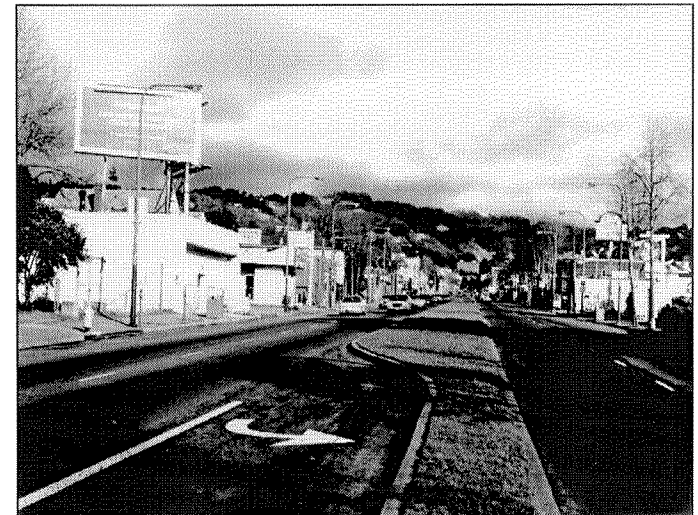
“The overriding goal should be to enhance University Avenue as a place to be...”

*Workshop Participant and Resident*

University Avenue is currently a place to live, a place to shop, a destination, and a corridor to drive through. Those who live in the area are intimately familiar with its strengths – the best places to eat, the friendly merchants, the pleasant bicycling routes, the neighborhood hangouts – those qualities that make city-living enjoyable. But, living along or near University Avenue also brings its residents close to its less appealing aspects – the empty storefronts, the local drug merchants, the rundown buildings, the muggings and the break-ins, the homelessness, and the speeding traffic. These aspects diminish the livability of the area and make it vulnerable to change that is car-oriented and anonymous, instead of people-oriented and socially healthy. It is the sense that the Avenue is in a state of imbalance that has brought the neighbors together. It is the intent of this plan to turn this trend around and work toward improving the quality of life on the Avenue.

Our approach to repairing University Avenue is embedded in a few basic principles. First, if change is to be constructive, we need to tackle issues comprehensively, considering social, economic, and physical change simultaneously. Second, change should aim to encourage and multiply the successful aspects of the community, and aid in improving the area’s unique character and quality of life. And finally, this Strategic Plan should be considered a vehicle for leveraging both the community’s and the City’s efforts as catalysts for future investments.

Imagine a place that is different from any other major street in Berkeley not a replica of Shattuck, College, or Telegraph Avenues, but a character unique to itself. A place with a diversity of residents – newcomers and old faithfuls, rich and poor, young and old, singles and families. An attractive and safe street lined with busy shops and dotted with public spaces



*University Avenue is a place to live, a place to shop, a destination, and a corridor to drive through. Residents are intimately familiar with its amenities – the best places to eat, the friendly merchants, the pleasant bicycling routes, the neighborhood hang-outs.*

that invite social interaction. A mingling of nationalities and lifestyles. A place that represents the best of Berkeley's social commitments, its ecological values, and its way of life.

With these principles in mind, the following goals should guide future development and policy-making within the University Avenue Study Area.

## University Avenue Strategic Plan Goals

- GOAL #1:** INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY FOR RESIDENTS, MERCHANTS, AND CUSTOMERS.
- As a First Priority, Decrease Violent Crimes Against People.
  - In the Long Term, Design for Safety.
- GOAL #2:** REVITALIZE THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE CORRIDOR THROUGH APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING.
- Enhance the Competitive Advantage of Avenue Merchants.
  - Provide Incentives for New Mixed-Use Infill.
  - Encourage Rehab and Re-Use of Existing Buildings.
  - Ensure that any Displacement of Residents is Addressed on a City-wide Level.

- GOAL #3:** PROTECT AND IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE.
- Enhance the Quality of Life for Current Residents at All Income Levels.
  - Increase the Diversity of Residents and Neighborhood-Serving Merchants.
  - Protect Existing Local Businesses and Established Neighborhoods.
  - Balance Neighborhood, City-Wide, and Regional Interests.
  - Emphasize Neighborhood Involvement.
- GOAL #4:** ENCOURAGE MORE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AND AN APPROPRIATE MIX OF USES TO IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY.
- Encourage Appropriate Infill Development.
- GOAL #5:** ENHANCE UNIVERSITY AVENUE AS A GATEWAY TO THE CITY, A SERIES OF NEIGHBORHOODS, AND THE DOWNTOWN.
- Reinforce the City-Wide Importance of University Avenue as a link between West Berkeley and the Downtown.
  - Respect the Character of the Local Neighborhoods.
  - Link Activity on University Avenue Back to the Supporting Neighborhoods.
- GOAL #6:** COORDINATE AND ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEMS, PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION.
- Make University Avenue Truly Multi-Modal.
  - Decrease the Dominance of the Car.

The potential along University Avenue is enormous, but it will take time and effort to reverse the negative trends and evolve toward a more active, economically viable, and livable place.