



San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Community Workshop #2 Summary

Date: Thursday, September 26, 2024

Location: Frances Albrier Community Center

Time: 5:45 pm – 8:00 pm

Attendance: Approximately 30 community members

The City of Berkeley and the project team hosted the second community workshop as part of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (SPASP) efforts. The workshop focused on gathering community input on potential improvements and resources, public open spaces and community gathering areas, as well as future development options along the San Pablo Avenue Corridor. Participants engaged in three key activities: (1) discussing and prioritizing improvements and resources, (2) locating ground floor uses and open space, and (3) evaluating land use and development options along the corridor.

Workshop Overview

The event began with a presentation by Robert Rivera and Phil Erickson, introducing the Specific Plan and highlighting findings from the Community Assessment Report. The group then moved into breakout sessions where participants engaged in facilitated discussions and group activities. Participants placed dots on maps to visualize priorities and proposed development areas, which helped frame key themes for the SPASP.

This memo summarizes the outcomes from each group's discussion.

Overall Summary of Group Feedback

Across all groups, several recurring themes emerged:

- **Housing:** There was a strong desire for mixed-income housing (referred to as “social housing”), with some participants suggesting that rents should be determined based on income to promote equity. Affordable housing and density were viewed as essential for the future of the corridor.
- **Open Space and Parks:** Participants expressed the need for more open space and parks, emphasizing the importance of accessible, well-maintained greenery. There was also a call for small public gathering spaces and beautification efforts along San Pablo.
- **Streetscape and Infrastructure:** Improvements to streetscapes, including ground level setbacks, greenery, and lighting, were highly prioritized. Public art and landscaping were viewed as essential to improving the corridor's aesthetics.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Many participants advocated for public-private partnerships to create opportunities for community events in private spaces and to reduce storefront vacancies.
- **Commercial Flex Spaces:** There was broad support for activating ground floors with broad range of commercial and mixed commercial-working studio and commercial-residential uses, especially creative spaces like art studios and live-work spaces to bring vibrancy to the corridor.

- Building Height and Density: Opinions were mixed regarding building height, with support for higher density at key nodes, especially at University Avenue. Concerns were raised about shadows and the potential overconcentration of tall buildings along the corridor.

Group Summaries

Group A Summary

Facilitators: Robert, Hannah, Claire

Activity 1: Improvements and Resources and Open Space

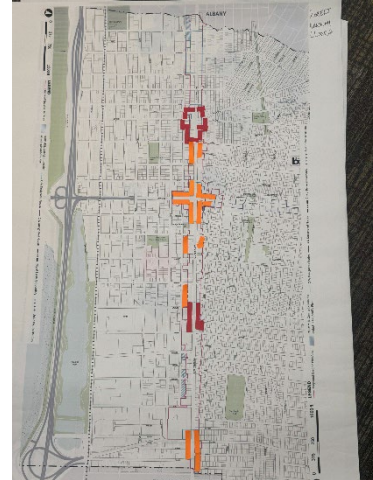
- Prioritized open space (OS), streetscapes, and community space.
- A focus on cultural and design hubs, including hosting art programs in vacant buildings and addressing storefront vacancies.
- Desire for more transportation and transit options along the corridor.

Activity 2: Specific Ground Floor Uses

- The group would like to see more storefronts with **active commercial** at the Cedar and Dwight nodes.
- They would like to see more **flexible-use space** designed as storefront but not necessarily active on San Pablo Ave between Virginia and Delaware; the University and Ashby nodes; on few parcels between Allston and Bancroft; the west side of San Pablo Ave between Channing and Dwight.

Activity 3: Ground Floor Uses, Building Height and Intensity

- Advocated for mid-block pathways and better connectivity, as well as nodes with concentrated activity.
 - Nodes with higher density may have more passive, community use. Nodes with lower intensity (example Dwight) may have more active uses.
- Southwest segment of San Pablo Ave could have more flex uses.
- Preferred taller buildings at University and San Pablo, with density tapering down along the corridor.



Group B Summary

Facilitators: Aaron, Kanah

Activity 1: Improvements and Resources and Open Space

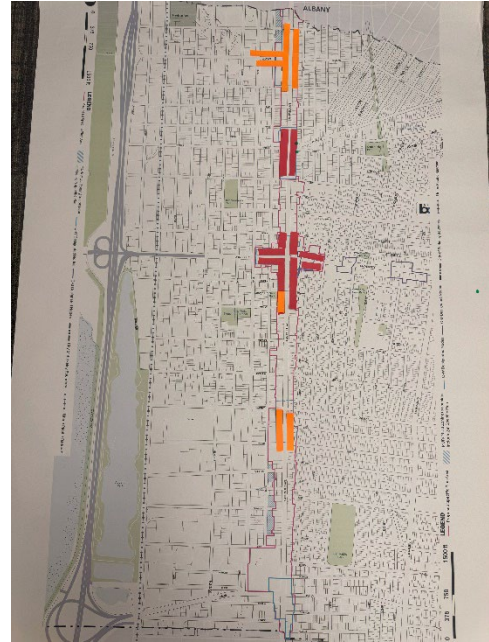
- Strong preference for creating business hubs and reducing storefront vacancies.
- Support for live-work spaces for artists and design review standards to improve building design.
- Emphasis on making open spaces visible and accessible, with public-private partnerships to create flexible community spaces.

Activity 2: Specific Ground Floor Uses

- The group would like to see more storefronts with **active commercial** in the University and Cedar node.
- They would like to see more **flexible-use space** designed as storefront but not necessarily active along the Gilman node, the southwest end of the University node, and two blocks south of Dwight.

Activity 3: Building Height and Intensity

- Support for creative ground-floor uses, including galleries and non-profit spaces.
- Supported density but with a cautious approach to building height, preferring height at nodes and limiting it elsewhere.



Group C Summary

Facilitators: Karina, Amit

Activity 1: Improvements and Resources and Open Space

- Top priorities were housing, streetscape improvements, and open space.
- Advocated for mixed-income housing and well-maintained landscape and streetscape improvements, including setbacks and public art.
- Emphasized the need for open spaces at key nodes and public-private partnerships for events.
 - Open space to complement Emeryville Greenway (starts on 9th St in Berkeley)
 - Participants would like to see more private space be opened up for community utilization and gathering, for instance something like the past poetry event at a furniture store along San Pablo Ave
- Supported community gardens and outdoor café-style spaces.

Activity 2: Specific Ground Floor Uses

- The group would like to see more storefronts with **active commercial** at the Gilman, Cedar, University and Dwight nodes, as well as the Heinz building.
- They would like to see more **active art use space** on 10th St between Carleton and Greyson St.
- There is no specific location for **flexible-use space**, but they would like to see more indoor community space and open space throughout the corridor.

Activity 3: Building Height and Intensity

- Focus on reducing abandoned storefronts and supporting small businesses.
- Concerns about the impact of building height, especially when multiple tall buildings are clustered together.
- General support for density at larger corridors like University and San Pablo, with 6 to 8 stories considered acceptable.



Internal

Group D Summary

Facilitators: Justin, Branka

Activity 1: Improvements and Resources and Open Space

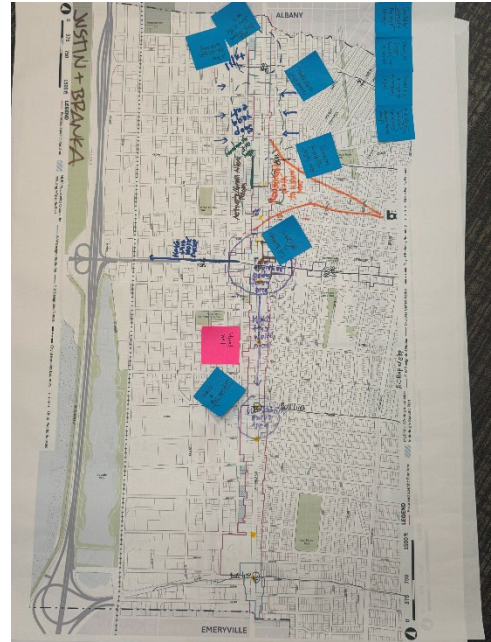
- Concern that current development standards may reinforce existing inequalities.
- Strong preference for requiring retail in specific areas along San Pablo to support the neighborhood.
- Suggested mixed-income housing to support small businesses and reduce dependence on automotive services.
- University to Cedar is walkable, crossing and streetscape improvements may help with other segments
- Mid-block pathways
- Walkable conditions to North Berkeley BART

Activity 2: Specific Ground Floor Uses

- Ground Floor activities to **“shop, yoga and eat”** on San Pablo Ave between the blocks south of Gilman to Cedar St.
- More **ground floor artist space**

Activity 3: Building Height and Intensity

- Support for cultural hubs and transportation options, including slower streets to encourage pedestrian activity.
- While acknowledging the current need for auto-repair services, there was a consensus that car-oriented businesses may become less necessary over time.
- Support for taller buildings at University and San Pablo Ave
- Support for transit nodes with mixed-use and high-density developments



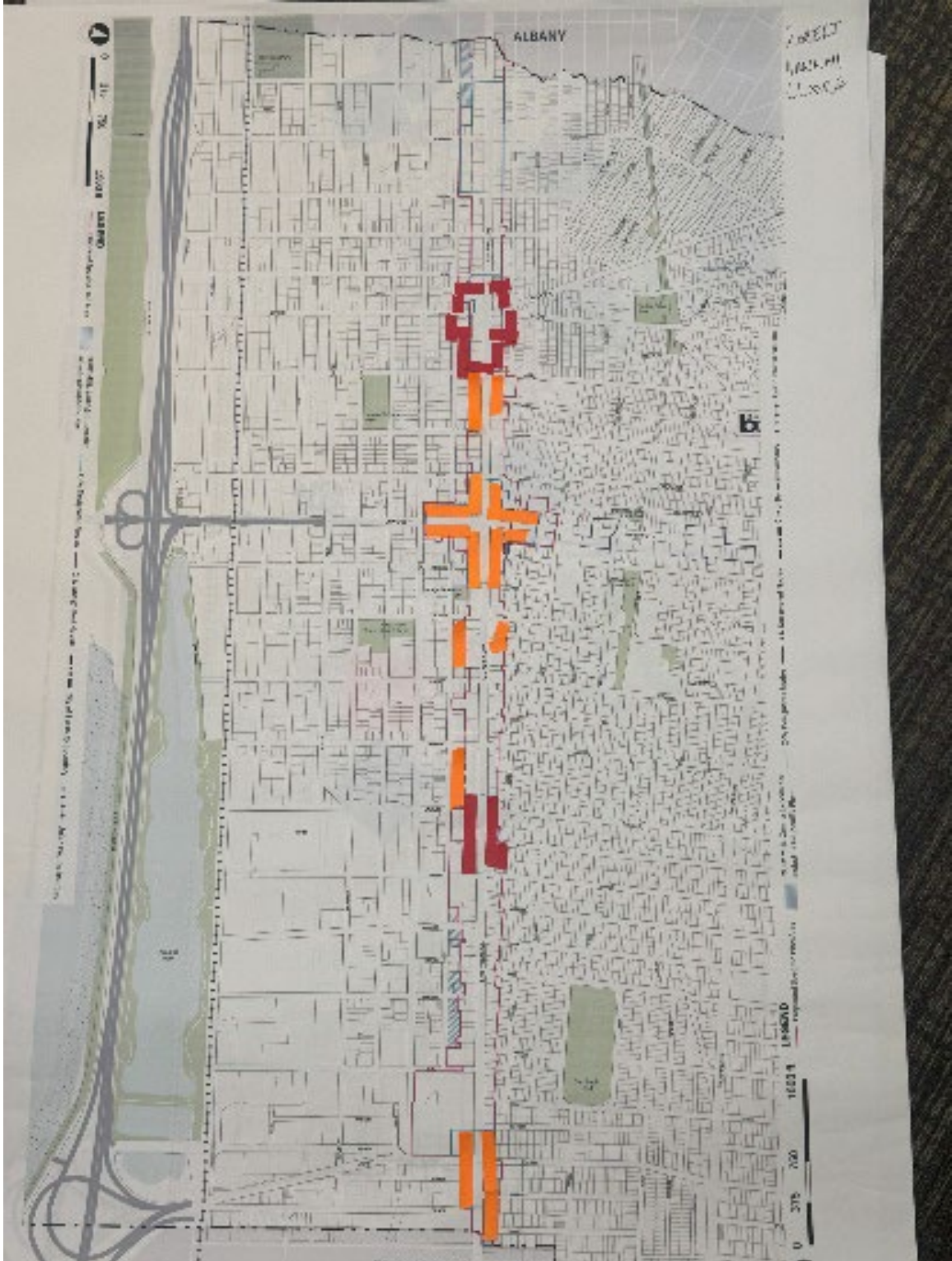
Conclusion

The feedback collected from the workshop provides crucial insights into the community’s priorities for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Key takeaways include a strong preference for mixed-income housing, more public open spaces, improved streetscapes, and thoughtful density that balances the need for affordable housing while maintaining a livable, well-designed corridor. These community-driven recommendations will guide the next stages of planning as the team works to refine and implement the Specific Plan.

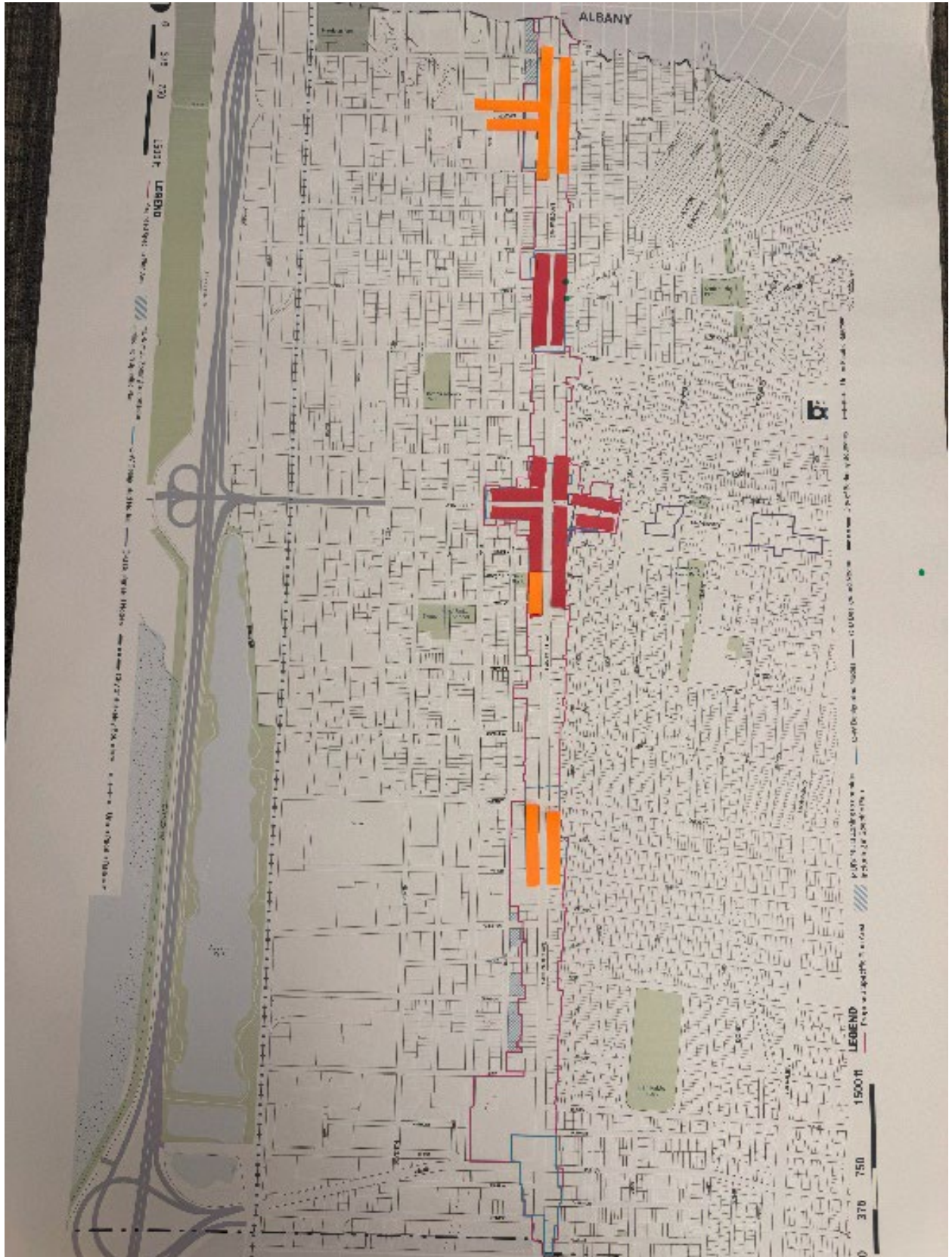
The next steps include further refining policies based on this input and continuing outreach with the broader community.

Appendix: Group Materials

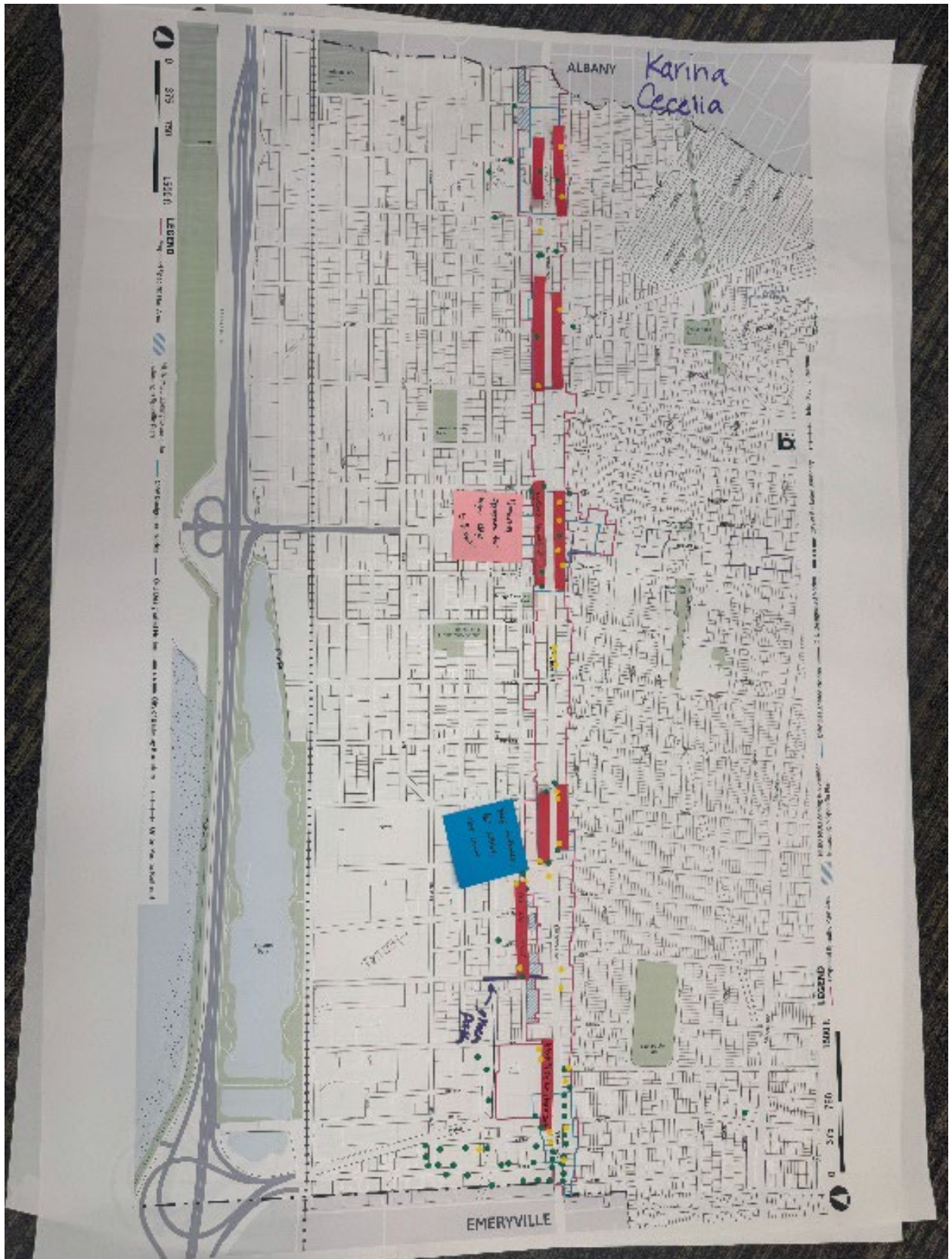
Group A:



Group B:



Group C:



Group D:

