

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan

Date: 03.21.2024

To: Robert Riviera and Anne Hersch, City of Berkeley

From: Phil Erickson, Community Design + Architecture
Hannah Chan Smyth, Urban Planning Partners

Re: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan – Community Open House #1 Summary

On Wednesday, January 24th, 2024, the City and Consultant team hosted the first Community Open House for the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. The event, which was held at the Berkeley Adult School multipurpose space from 5:30 to 7:30pm, attracted approximately 80 community members, with 72 attendees signing in and about 8 individuals not.

The Open House included a presentation by Councilmember Kesarwani, Robert Riviera, and Phil Erickson to introduce the Specific Plan and highlight some key takeaways from the Existing Conditions analysis. The presentation was followed by a drop-in style open house with seven (7) stations, each designed to address different aspects of the plan:

1. The Specific Plan Overview
2. Existing Demographics and Land Use Conditions
3. Land Use Policies
4. Mobility
5. Public Realm and Community Life
6. Priorities for Your Future Vision of San Pablo Avenue
7. Kids Table

Each station facilitated activities using a combination of dot voting and interactive questions for community members to provide feedback and responses. This memo provides a summary of the outcomes of each station's activities, including an evaluation of any written responses to open-ended questions. The Executive Summary highlights key, salient points gleaned from the results, with subsequent sections providing a more detailed discussion of the results for each station.

Executive Summary

Key themes emerged from the Community Open House that can be seen in feedback across all stations. There was widespread support for denser and more varied forms of housing, particularly affordable housing, condominiums, and senior housing. Participants expressed a strong desire for increased commercial activity along San Pablo, emphasizing the importance of local-serving businesses and advocating for programs and incentives that would stimulate more business development and help prevent displacement. Safety and comfort in the public realm were highlighted as priorities, including concerns such as traffic safety, lighting, and overall cleanliness and the need for more community gathering spaces and amenities throughout the corridor.

Existing Demographics and Land Use Conditions

- Participants expressed support for more housing along San Pablo Avenue, especially affordable housing, condominiums, and senior housing. Suggestions include diversifying housing typologies, increasing multi-generational housing opportunities and creating a resilient community.
- Grocery/food stores and restaurants/cafes were identified as the most visited establishments, with concerns raised about the potential loss of these businesses. Participants advocated for preserving commercial uses and proposed programs and incentives to fill vacant ground floor spaces. There was also a perception that there is an oversupply of retail space given demand and leading to a desire to allow and encourage other uses – service, office, entertainment, and community spaces along the corridor. Additionally, there was a call for more public open space along the corridor.
- Policy solutions may include strategies to discourage ground floor vacancies, promote homeownership and multi-generational housing, protect grocery/food stores and restaurants/cafes, permit a diversity of ground floor uses beyond retail, and implement programs to support commercial uses.

Mobility

- Walking is identified as the most common mode where participants feel unsafe, followed by cycling, with many individuals opting to avoid San Pablo Avenue altogether due to safety concerns, particularly at night.
- Mobility concerns revolve around speeding, failure to yield, and the need for infrastructure improvements to enhance pedestrian safety and increase foot traffic. Residents living adjacent to San Pablo Avenue are worried about the potential increase in demand for parking on side streets, due to the new residential developments with limited or no parking provisions.
- Community members note that San Pablo Avenue at its current state causes stress and serves as a barrier dividing the surrounding neighborhoods. The division negatively impacts San Pablo Avenue's potential as a community gathering and commercial hub.
- Policy solutions may include enhancing crossing safety for pedestrians and cyclists, implementing measures to reduce vehicle speeds, improving nighttime lighting, upgrading transit stop infrastructure, and potentially expanding parking and other transportation demand management programs to alleviate side street congestion.

Public Realm

- The lush tree canopy and open spaces are valued assets among participants, with strong support for maintaining greenery and activating the public realm through art. There is a desire for more small-scale activation such as semi-public spaces, parklets, and outdoor dining. However, discussions about public realm improvements are overshadowed by concerns such as pedestrian safety, abandoned buildings, traffic noise, and high vacancies.
- Discussions regarding the Avenue's role as a major corridor resulted in varying opinions on increasing housing density, with some viewing it as a potential boost to the corridor's economy, while others expressed concerns about potential overshadowing of the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Participants noted a lack of collaboration among businesses, and raised concerns about vandalism and theft. Notable quotes highlight preferences for ground-level commercial and mixed-use spaces.
- Policy solutions may focus on initiatives that improve sidewalk maintenance, support art initiatives, and implement design standards for new developments. Additionally, opportunities exist for creating public activity areas, permitting

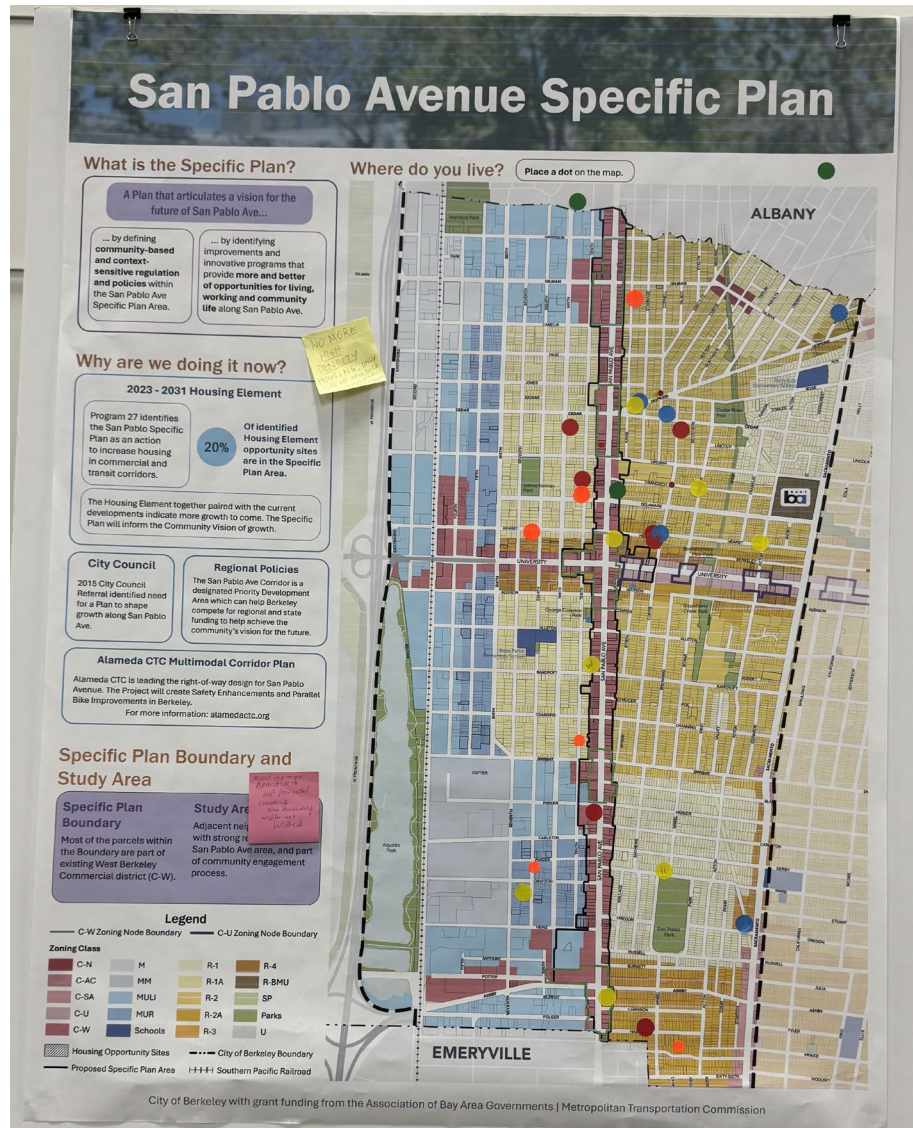
food trucks, pop-up and cultural events, and addressing long-term vacancies through temporary use initiatives.

Future Vision

- The Community input for their “Future Vision on San Pablo Avenue” reiterates general feedback made during the Open House. Priorities for the future are "Engaging & Active Building Frontage," "Community Events," and "More Lighting at Night".
- While there's consensus to maintain the AC Transbay service and prioritize public realm maintenance, opinions vary on addressing crime, with some advocating for increased police presence.
- Community members reiterate the need for a “vibrant” corridor in their vision for the future. Their vision includes wider sidewalks, thriving businesses, and improved street safety. Notable quotes emphasize the demand for more entertainment venues and a diverse mix of amenities.
- Policy solutions may focus on supporting new businesses, enhancing pedestrian safety, creating semi-public spaces to foster community engagement, and maintaining public spaces.

1.0 Specific Plan Overview

Boards



Results

General Comments

No more high density housing, only 30% of new builds are occupied (Tell Newsom).

Would like to see alternative to first floor retail. Something more community and/or art related.

Dots on map show where respondents live in the Specific Plan and Study Areas.

Commercial Activity & Displacement Risk

Local Businesses are more vulnerable to displacement or closure

90% Of Brick and Mortar businesses are locally owned.

21% are woman owned

41% are people of color owned

Commercial Vacancy Rate on San Pablo Ave

2017	5.5%
2022	10.6% +5.3%

The ground floor vacancy rate on San Pablo Ave doubled since 2017.

Brick and Mortar storefront at the corner of San Pablo Ave and Delaware St

Vacant brick and mortar storefront south of the intersection San Pablo Ave and University Ave

Which businesses or other places do you visit the most along San Pablo Ave?

Place a dot on the map or write a sticky note with the name of the business.

Notes

Place a sticky note on the map.

Sticky Notes

Place a sticky note on the map.

Locally-Owned, Brick-and-Mortar Business Mix

Source: Street Level Advisors and Gordon Consulting, 2023.

Funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments | Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Results

General Comments

Comment	Count
50k students ~ 40% of population.	1
Fix lighting! Too dark.	1
Affordable housing.	1
Housing with more parking for cars. Yes, cars! They aren't going away.	1
Elderly, disabled can't ride bikes or scooters.	1

Demographics & Housing Affordability Board

What types of housing are most needed along San Pablo Ave?

Activity (re-ordered based on weighted score)

Housing Type	Activity (re-ordered based on weighted score)																Importance		Weighted Avg. Score
	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Not Important	Important	
Condominium (owned)						1				0.5	0.5		1.5	4.5	10	1	17.0	6.72	
Affordable Housing (rental)	1												0.5	0.5	7	10	1	18.0	6.66
Senior Housing	1										1	1			5	7	1	14.0	6.13
Artist Housing	1									2	3	2	1	1	2	1	11.0	4.08	
Group Living	2	1.5	0.5							1.5	1	1	1.5	1	3	4	9.5	1.85	



Comments

Comment	Count
It's not practical the way these large developments handle "affordable" housing. 3/4 of market value is not affordable.	1
Taller, denser housing urgently needed to house more people.	1
Different kinds of housing. Not just tall apartment buildings and mix of socio-economic groups.	2
Need more multi-generational housing. Build community from within for better resilience.	4
SPA would benefit greatly [from] dense housing up to 6 floors. If shade is an issue, find a compromise.	1
Air quality standards in new developments. SPA is polluted.	2
Bring fiber internet to San Pablo Ave. (e.g. LMI, a local business).	1
Co-housing that is a mix of owned + rental units.	1
Condos are essential [for] urban path to ownership.	5
Limit Airbnb.	1
Integration + diversity of professions, income, family size, race, ages, identity, abilities together under the same roof and not separate buildings.	2
More Middle- income housing.	1

Projected Housing Development Board

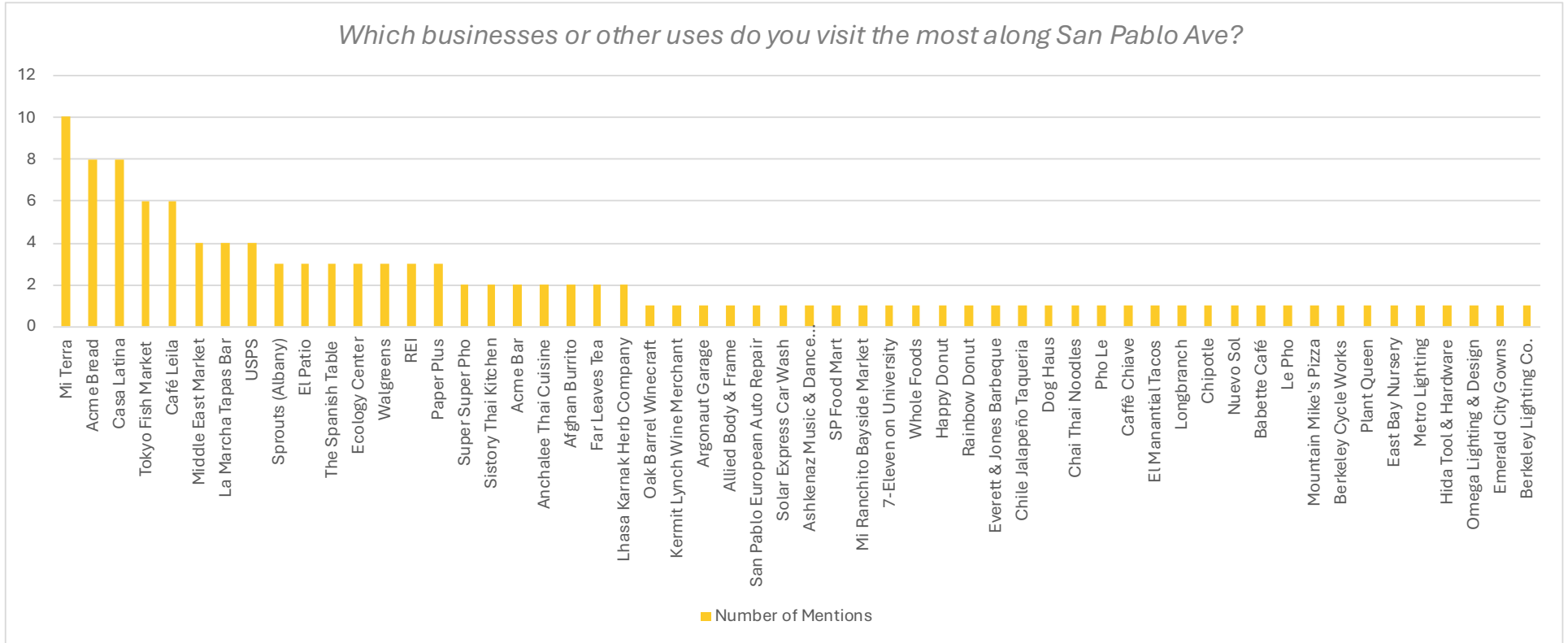
General Comments

Comment	Count
Loan program for ground floor tenant improvements.	1
Parking?? Not required anymore. Every single street space will be consumed by residents.	1
Only reduce parking in housing if there's better transit BRT available.	1
AC Transit is cutting transbay service along SPA - Solano - University. The buses are full now. They are going to cut service and add housing. We need this Transbay service on SPA.	2
Put accessible units on ground floor for emergency evacuation.	1
Make sure open spaces, landscaping, etc. is available to all. Not just building tenants.	1
Resources for 4000-5000 more units are coming from where?	1
Ground floor gym open to the public.	1
Mark streets and key buildings to help people orient themselves. [comment regarding map graphic]	1

Commercial Activity and Displacement Board

Which businesses or other uses do you visit the most along San Pablo Ave?

Activity

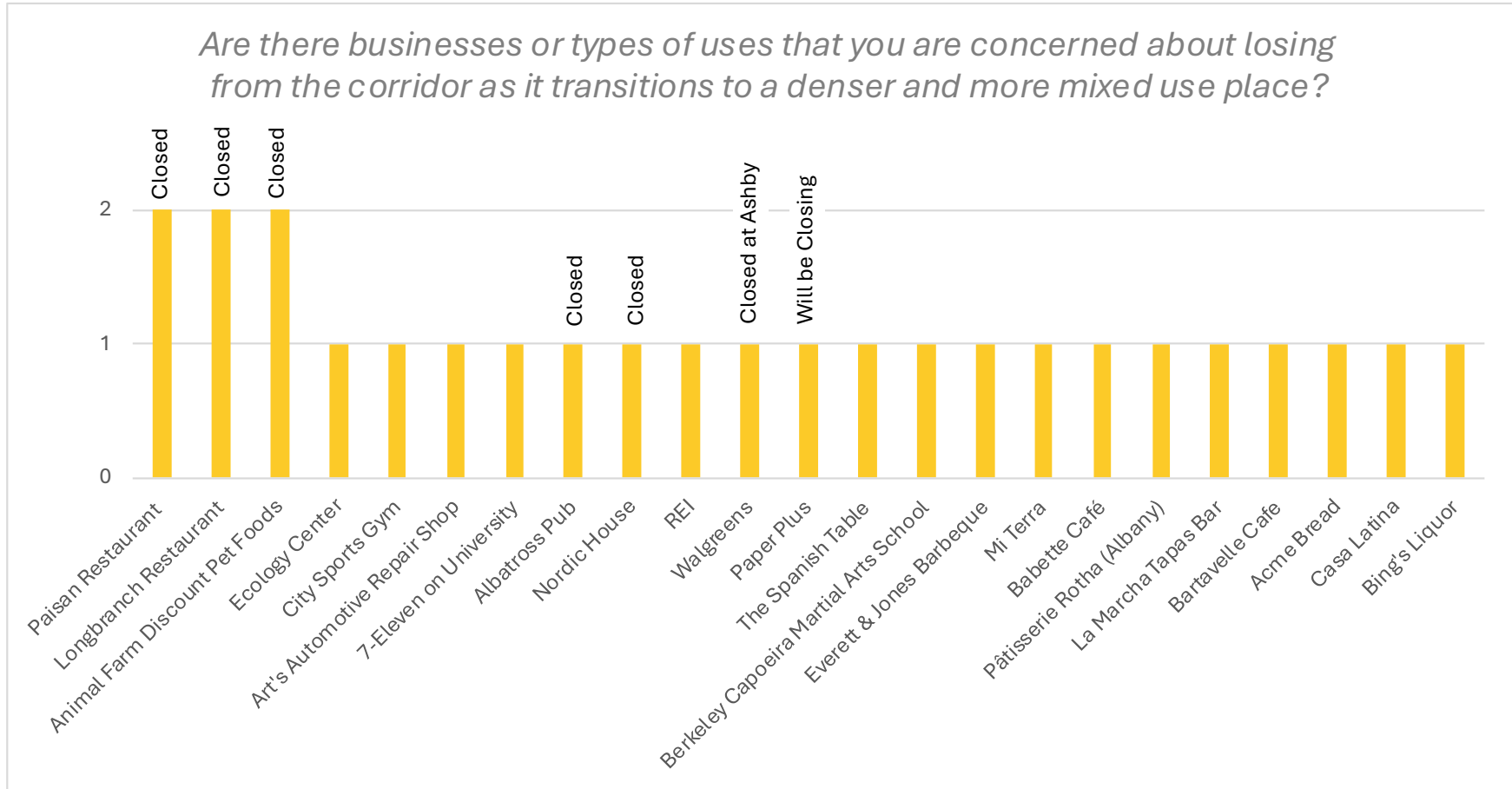


Comments

Comment	Count
Mixed-use apartment buildings <u>must</u> assure high probability of rentability of street-level storefronts.	1
Establish policies that incentivize reasonable rents and prevent vacancies. Vacancy tax? Business start-up grants. Allocate funds or loans proportional to housings.	2
Ground floor commercial support commensurate with housing incentives above.	1
Grocery stores, affordable restaurants, art supply stores, need hardware home goods.	1
Let's start with essentials: Clean streets, keep graffiti of the building walls, repair sidewalks, have good lighting for streets, assistance for mentally ill roamers.	1
Concerns about abandoned Walgreens at Ashby and San Pablo – safety and cleanliness	1
Need more markets where I can buy Clover milk without driving to Berkeley Bowl or Sprouts, near Virginia St [assume that person lives on Virginia].	1
What about service providers? Dentists, insurance agents, veterinarians, cars repair, smoke shops, cafes?	1
Now lost at University and San Pablo: bank, cleaner, 99cent Store, and ped store – businesses needed for daily life??	1
No more boutiques – we need stuff for people living here	1

Are there businesses or types of uses that you are concerned about losing from the corridor as it transitions to a denser and more mixed use place?

Activity



Key Themes

- Housing - Overall, participants expressed support for increased housing options, including a variety in housing typologies and opportunities for home-ownership along San Pablo Avenue.
 - Affordable housing, condominiums and senior housing are seen as the most important types of housing needed along San Pablo Avenue. These three types had the most dots and nearly all dots were placed in the “Extremely Important” part of the scale.
 - There was mixed feedback regarding the importance of group living, with approximately one-third of participants placing dots near “not at all important” and the remainder showing varied degrees of importance.
 - Artist housing also had mixed responses, though the majority of participants rated it as important.
 - Two specific comments related to increasing multi-generation housing and condominiums as an important path to home ownership, received overall support and a high rating from participants.
 - There was also support for increasing the variety of housing types, building forms, and creating middle housing, as well as suggestions for development standards such as increased air quality standards and taller denser buildings.
- Businesses and other uses
 - Restaurants/cafes, the post office, and grocery/food stores were identified as the most frequently visited establishment along San Pablo Avenue, followed by retail. Other uses mentioned by participants included office/business, services, alcohol sales, auto, and gyms. When asked about concerns regarding potential business loss, participants mostly cited restaurants and grocery/food store.
 - A range of comments center around what one participant called “businesses needed for daily life” including banks, service providers, affordable groceries, cleaners, etc.
 - Participants expressed support for commercial uses and desire for programs (e.g., loan programs) and incentives for ground floor tenants. Multiple comments also expressed concern for vacant ground floor spaces.
 - A couple of comments also noted that building amenities and open spaces should be accessible by the general public and not limited to building residents.
 - Some comments related to conditions on the street, litter, poorly maintained buildings, inadequate lighting, which were noted as factors contributing to an uncomfortable and unattractive environment for clientele.

Notable Quotes

“Different kinds of housing. Not just tall apartment buildings and mix of socio-economic groups.”

- *“Integration + diversity of professions, Income, family size, race, ages, identity, abilities together under the same roof and not separate buildings.”*
- *“Establish policies that incentivize reasonable rents and prevent vacancies. Vacancy tax? Business start-up grants. Allocate funds or loans proportional to housings.”*

Opportunities for Policy Solutions

The following highlights specific comments/concerns/ideas that may be addressed with the Specific Plan’s Policies.

- Consider policies to discourage ground floor vacancies.
- Consider policies to encourage homeownership and multi-generational housing.
- Consider policies to protect grocery/food stores and restaurants/cafes.

- Consider programs to support commercial uses.

3.0 Land Use Policies

Boards

Land Use Policies

Zoning

Properties fronting on SPA are predominantly zoned West Berkeley Commercial (C-W). Along University Avenue the majority of properties are zoned for C-W and University Commercial (C-U).

Residential, Commercial, Mixed-use, and Live-work are permitted in C-W and C-U with applicable permits and subject to development Standards.

Permit Review Process

Two types of review processes: Ministerial and Discretionary Review

Ministerial review is a process involving little to no personal judgment by the zoning officer or Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB). The zoning officer or ZAB ensure the proposed development meets all "Objective zoning standards" and "Objective design review standards".

Discretionary review is a process for development that is subject to public notice to neighbors, and in some cases, a public hearing.

Many recent State legislation laws have established and expanded eligibility for ministerial and streamlined review including: changes to review timeline and requirements, applicability of the CEQA, and limits to City's discretion.

Key California Laws that Support Housing

- Housing Accountability Act – No net loss of housing capacity
- Senate Bill (SB) 330 - Streamlining
- SB 35 - Ministerial Approvals for affordable housing projects
- Density Bonus Law – waive or reduce development standards

Typical Permits Required

Housing type	C-W	C-U
Duplex	UP	UP
Multi-Family	UP	UP
Mixed-Use Projects	ZC/AUP/UP	UP
Live-Work	AUR/UP	ZC
Group Living Accommodation	UP	UP

ZC = Zoning Certificate, AUP = Administrative Use Permit, UP = Use Permit, NP = Not Permitted

California Housing Legislation Highlights as of October 12, 2023

City of Berkeley with grant funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments | Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Land Use Policies

What ground floor uses would you most like to see along San Pablo Ave in addition to typical retail, commercial, and service businesses?

Place a dot along the scale below. If there are specific locations or places you would like to see a new use, place a sticky-note on the map.

← Not at all important

→ Extremely important

Community Gathering Space

Entertainment

Night Life

Art Studios

Galleries

Pop-Up Small Business Space

Recreational Space

Outdoor Community Space

Other important ground floor use:

If there is a use we haven't listed, write a sticky-note and place it below.

ALBANY

EMERYVILLE

Ground Floor Use Map based on Land Use Codes
 Source: City of Berkeley, 2023. Alameda County Assessor's Office Parcel Data, 2023. CD+A, 2023.

City of Berkeley with grant funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments | Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Results

General Comments

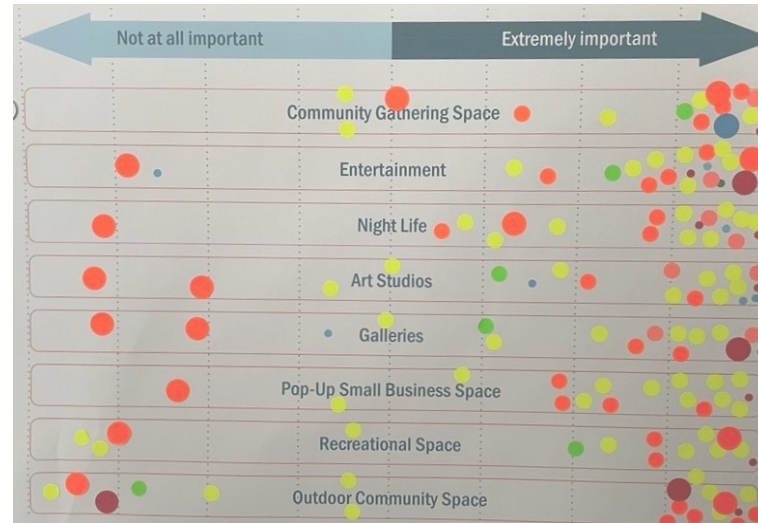
Comment	Count
Rezone & develop housing with ground retail along. Gilman [to] connect to 4th St.	1
Community plaza: Public open space with green nature at SPA & University.	2

Land Use Policies – Board Two

What ground floor uses would you most like to see along San Pablo Avenue in addition to typical retail, commercial, and service businesses?

Activity (re-ordered based on weighted score)

Ground Floor Use	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	Not Important		Weighted Avg. Score
										Important	Important	
Community Gathering Space				2.0	1.0		1.0	1.0	14.0	2.0	16.0	3.28
Entertainment		2.0					2.0	5.0	13.0	2.0	20.0	2.95
Night Life	1.0					2.0	3.0	2.0	11.0	1.0	18.0	2.84
Pop-Up Small Business Spaces		1.0		1.0		1.0	2.0	4.0	8.0	2.0	15.0	2.65
Art Studios	1.0	1.0		1.0	1.0		3.0	2.0	10.0	3.0	15.0	2.44
Galleries	1.0	1.0		1.0	1.0		2.0	3.0	8.0	3.0	13.0	2.31
Recreational Space	2.5	0.5		1.0				4.0	6.0	4.0	10.0	1.68
Outdoor Community Space	3.0	1.5	0.5	2.0					13.0	7.0	13.0	1.63



Comments

Questions	Comment	Count
What ground floor uses would you most like to see along San Pablo Avenue in addition to typical retail, commercial, and service businesses?	Businesses to support Ashkenaz and Gilman St. project for beer garden.	1
What ground floor uses would you most like to see along San Pablo Avenue in addition to typical retail, commercial, and service businesses?	Artist live-work	1
Other important ground floor use:	More entertainment venues: Bowling alley, movie theater, laser tag, beer garden, etc.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Land-use along SPA should take advantage of mixed-use. Allow for office space, housing, teen gathering areas, small bars, etc.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Grown-ups need bar, pubs and wine	1
Other important ground floor use:	Pet supply (and petting zoo)	1
Other important ground floor use:	Less vacant spaces	1
Other important ground floor use:	Ground floors for people, not cars	2
Other important ground floor use:	Lighting: Make it dark, stay compliant with warm tone to reduce impacts on natural habits	1
Other important ground floor use:	More smaller, human scale retail spaces.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Small office spaces.	1

Questions	Comment	Count
Other important ground floor use:	Offices, so workers support local businesses.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Community gathering.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Develop subsidized services, like gyms, that neighbors can join. On the ground, street facing.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Wine bar, beer garden. No parking.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Add greenery & nature along street & new public spaces.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Yes. Bank, home shopping (99ct store), pet store. The kinds of businesses needed for daily life.	2
Other important ground floor use:	Restaurant, eating places; near University.	1
Other important ground floor use:	After school tutoring, after 4 pm programs, combined with elderly and high school students. Incentive for alternative / social justice / education benefits.	1
Other important ground floor use:	Affordable artist housing.	1
Other important ground floor use:	The east side of 10th St between Camelia and Gilman; Possible to redevelop that into mixed use? What fun! (Right now, it's just a wall).	1
Other important ground floor use:	Dining parklets, sitting parklets.	2
Other important ground floor use:	Ensure more open space and public parks. Promote public-private space in- and around new developments.	2
Other important ground floor use:	Outdoor dining & gathering area. Eyes on the street.	1

Key Themes

- The dots exercise demonstrates the most important and most strongly desired ground floor uses were:
 - Community gathering space
 - Entertainment
 - Nightlife
- Pop-up small business space is also found to be very important based on the distribution of dots.
- Art studios and galleries options resulted in more mixed responses, with dots shown throughout the scale from not important to extremely important.
- Recreational Space and Outdoor community space represented the most divisive use listed on the board and had the greatest number of dots on the “not at all important” side of the scale.
- A mix of other uses not listed on the board were noted as important by participants including office, retail, eating/drinking establishments, services, and open/outdoor spaces.
- Multiple comments expressed a desire for more active participation on the street and “eyes on the street.”
- Participants indicated a preference for smaller storefronts as opposed to larger stores.
- In addition to business spaces for community and social activities, there was a noted desire for greenery, plazas, and other open spaces.

Notable Quotes

What kind of ground floor uses would you like to see most on San Pablo Avenue. –

- “Now lost at University and San Pablo: bank, cleaner, 99cent Store, and ped store – businesses needed for daily life??”.
- “The east side of 10th St between Camelia and Gilman; Possible to redevelop that into mixed use? What fun! (Right now, it's just a wall).”

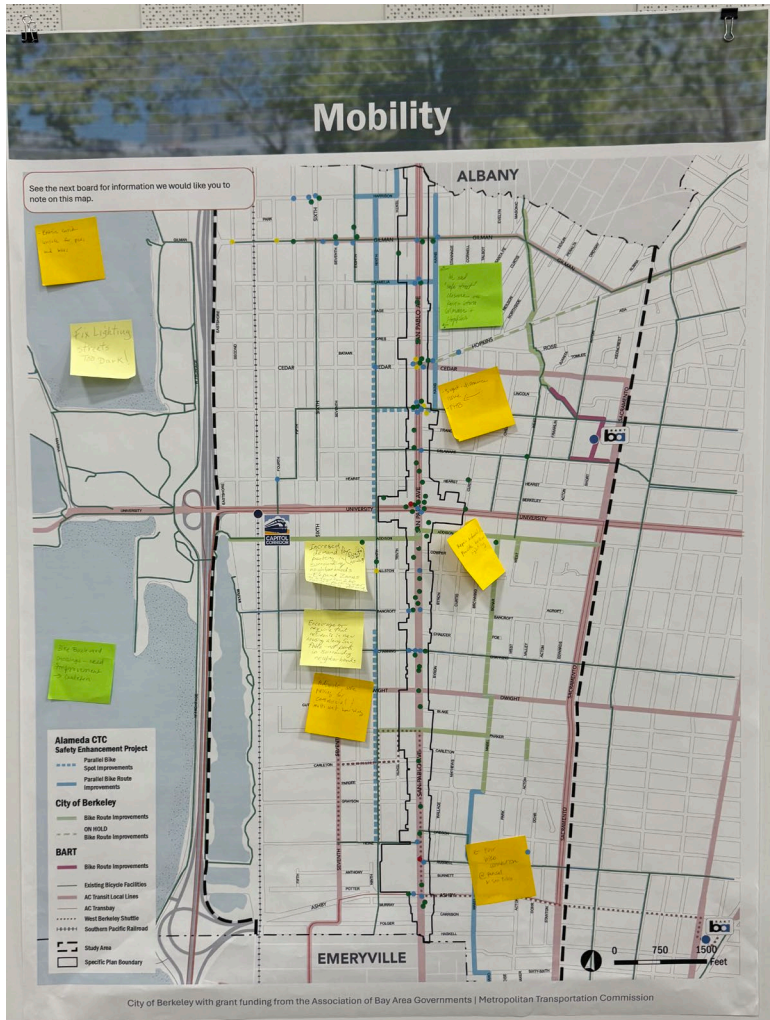
Opportunities for Policy Solutions

The following highlights specific comments/concerns/ideas that may be addressed with the Specific Plan’s Policies.

- Consider parklet applicability on side streets that intersect with San Pablo Avenue or city provided public parklets along San Pablo Ave.
- Consider relaxing permit requirements for entertainment uses such as bars and theaters, which currently require a Use Permit in the C-W zoning.
- Consider permitting other institutional/service uses such as galleries and student/elderly programming on the ground floor.
- Consider how new developments can incorporate community gathering space, both indoor and outdoor, into their ground floor design.

4.0 Mobility

Boards



Results

General Comments

Comment	Count
SPA is stressful. Just realized it acts as a border and I hate crossing over it. Increase space for people, less space for cars (i.e. parklets, bulb outs, turn median into park.)	1

Mobility Board #2

Do you feel unsafe while traveling along San Pablo Avenue using any of the following nodes, and if so, where specifically?

Activity

Mode of Travel	Number of Dots
Car	1
Bus/ Public Transport	4
Bicycle/ E-Scooter, and other wheels	6
Walking	14

Comment	Count
Bus/ Public Transport: Dirty and unsafe.	1
Bus/ Public Transport: Poor condition benches and shelters.	1
Bus/ Public Transport: No bus lane <3.	1
Bus/ Public Transport: Don't need a dedicated bus lane.	1
Bus/ Public Transport: Given the expressed purpose of big buildings placed along a Transit-Oriented Corridor, what are, if any, figures on increased bus use during commute hours?	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: Cars drive too fast, if I get hit, I'm dead. Solution: Protected bike lanes. Good for the environment, good for people, and good for business.	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: Not safe on bike.	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: No bike lane on SPA.	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: SPA is not really safe for anyone not in a car. Too bad Berkeley isn't making more bike/pedestrian improvements.	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: It's unsafe. I avoid it and I hate crossing SPA.	1

Comment	Count
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: Hate encountering SPA on bike. Very stressful, I bike on sidewalk if no pedestrians on it to get to my destination. I don't own a car, so it's my only mean of transport.	1
Bicycle/ E-scooter and other wheels: I don't own a car. Biking is my mode of transport.	1
Walking: Nighttime safety. Daytime fine. Too few open businesses.	1
Walking: Cars fail to yield and often ignore the pedestrian crossing lights.	1
Walking: Not enough lighting for me to walk at night. Cars drive fast. Building construction blocks the sidewalk.	2
Walking: Too many homeless & people dealing with mental health problems.	1
Walking: Thriving, visible businesses are essential for eyes on the street safety. Fewer businesses = less safe for people on sidewalk.	1
Walking: Cars drive too fast, don't always yield on crosswalks.	1
Walking: Scooters & pedestrians don't mix well.	1
Walking: Prioritize pedestrians.	1
Walking: Walking on SPA lacks entertainment. The vacant lots take away from the life of the Ave. Build housing up to get more foot traffic.	1

Dots on the Mobility Board 1 Map to indicate where people feel unsafe traveling along or across San Pablo Avenue

Location	Car	Bus/Public Transport	Bicycle/E-scooter and other wheels	Walking	Total
Gilman Intersection			1	1	2
Gilman at Kains			1	1	2
Camelia Intersection			2	1	3
10 th between Gilman and Camelia				1	1
San Pablo north of Page				1	1
Jones Intersection				1	1
Cedar Intersection	2		2	2	6
Hopkins and Kains			1	1	2
Virginia Intersection	2		3	3	8
Francisco Intersection				1	1
Delaware Intersection			1	1	2
San Pablo between Delaware and Hearst				2	2
Hearst Intersection				1	1
University Intersection		1	2	7	10
9 th north of University				1	1
Addison Intersection (north leg)				2	2
Cowper Intersection				1	1
San Pablo between Cowper and Allston				1	1

Location	Car	Bus/Public Transport	Bicycle/E-scooter and other wheels	Walking	Total
Allston Intersection			1		1
San Pablo between Allston and Bancroft				3	2
Bancroft Intersection			2	2	4
Channing Intersection			3	2	5
San Pablo between Channing and Dwight				2	2
Dwight Intersection				1	1
Blake Intersection				1	1
Carleton Intersection				1	1
Grayson Intersection				1	1
Oregon Intersection				1	1
Heinz Intersection			1		1
Russell Intersection		1	1		2
San Pablo North of Ashby				1	1
Ashby Intersection			2	1	3
Murray Intersection				2	2
Total	4	2	23	47	76

Comments on Mobility Board 1 Map for this question

Comment	Count
Entire corridor unsafe for pedestrians and bikes.	1
We need “safe street” closure on Kains between Gilman and Hopkins	1
Sight-distance issue, PHB on SPA & Virginia	1
Repair sidewalk. Provide better lighting.	1
Due to new housing, increase demand for parking in surrounding neighborhood (Addison & 9th). Expand 2h / permit parking zones for those areas, currently not zoned.	1
Encourage or require that residents in new housing along SPA, not park in surrounding neighborhoods.	1
Adequate, safe parking for commercial & multi-unit housing.	1
Bike boulevard crossings need improvement at Carleton.	1
Poor bike connection at Russell and San Pablo.	1
Forbid right turn on red (I was nearly killed on SPA & Gilman). [comment made on Public Realm board]	1
I would like to see cement bollards at pedestrian crossings. There have been several high-speed crashes into builds on SPA & University. Bollards provide pedestrian safety at these conflict points. [comment made on Public Realm board]	1

How do you travel to and from San Pablo Avenue?

Activity

Type of Transportation	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Car	1	11	12	3
Bus/ Public Transport	5	7	5	3
Bicycle/ E-Scooter, and other wheels	15	4	5	3
Walking	2	11	14	5

Comment	Count
I don't own a car, so it's my only mean of transportation.	2

Are there certain times of the day when you feel less safe?

Activity

Daytime	2
Nighttime	22

Key Themes

- The most common mode of transportation where participants felt unsafe while traveling along San Pablo Ave was walking, followed by bicycling. Many participants said they avoided bicycling on or around San Pablo Avenue.
- The highest density of safety concerns were noted on the segment between Dwight and Cedar, particularly around intersections such as Channing, Bancroft, University, Virginia, and Cedar.
- Safety concerns were especially prominent at night, indicating a need for improved lighting and security measures.
- Concerns were raised around automobile speeds and failure to yield, suggesting a need for traffic calming measures and enhanced enforcement of traffic regulations.
- Several comments highlighted specific locations needing improvement in terms of safety and infrastructure.
- Several comments expressed a desire to improve the public realm, including increasing foot traffic/vibrancy (“eyes on the street”) and cleaner/improved transit facilities.
- Some concerns were raised about the potential increase in parking on side streets due to new residential buildings.

Notable Quotes

“San Pablo Avenue is stressful. It acts as a border, and I hate crossing over it. Increase space for people, less space for cars.”

Opportunities for Policy Solutions

The following highlights specific comments, concerns, and ideas that may be addressed with the Specific Plan’s Policies.





- Implement countermeasures to increase driver yield rates and improve crossing safety for bicycles and pedestrians. (Review Alameda CTC’s proposed Safety Enhancement Project improvements and identify what can be done in addition to those improvements).
- Implement countermeasures to reduce automobile speeds along San Pablo Avenue to improve overall road safety.
- Improved nighttime lighting to enhance visibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Enhance transit stop infrastructure to improve accessibility, comfort, and convenience for transit users.
- Consider expanded 2hr and/or permit parking zones to address concerns about increased parking on side streets due to new residential developments.
- Explore the potential for additional traffic demand management measures for residents and workers in the Specific Plan area.

5.0 Public Realm Assessment




Boards


Public Realm Assessment


Streetscape Conditions


- Landscape:** Street trees and landscaped median define the character of San Pablo Ave.

- Sidewalk:** The width of the street and the space needed for activities and the median constrain the public spaces of the sidewalk. A typical 13-foot-wide sidewalk along San Pablo Avenue.

- Lighting:** Evening lighting along the street creates a sense of safety and security. Illumination of the roadway and intersections. Nighttime sidewalk lighting needs need to be low between intersections, unless department cases, walkways, or pedestrian lights at bus stops illuminate the sidewalk.

- Street Furniture:** Street furniture such as benches and trash receptacles are almost exclusively at bus stops. There are some benches that provide street side outdoor "cafe" seating.


Building and Site Frontages

- Brick and Mortar Frontages:** Many, but not all, brick-and-mortar frontages along the street have articulation, building form, and materials that create a visual relationship between adjacent and adjacent blocks.

- Art Along the Street:** Painted storefronts with murals provide vibrant streets when the building does not allow for windows and can represent the culture and values of the local community.

- New Mixed-Use Developments:** While many of the new retail spaces remain vacant, some have contributed to the landscape character of the street by setting back the ground level of the building to provide additional sidewalk and space of landscape.


Vacancy: Vacant, abandoned, or poor-maintained storefronts can create an environment that feels inactive and unsafe.


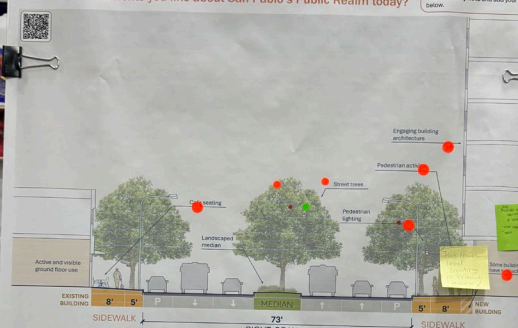
Activity and use of underused spaces: Some underused locations are used for food trucks with their patrons and outdoor seating extending into the street.


Semi-Public Spaces: There are no public parks or plazas along San Pablo Avenue, but outdoor dining areas and cafe seating to provide semi-public spaces and sit along the street.


City of Berkeley with grant funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments | Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Community Life

What are the elements you like about San Pablo's Public Realm today? Place a sticky note and add your ideas below.



Engaging building architecture
Pedestrian activity
Street trees
Landscaped median
Pedestrian lighting
Active and usable ground floor use

EXISTING BUILDING 8' 5" P 5' 8" MEDIAN 73' P 5' 8" NEW BUILDING
SIDEWALK RIGHT-OF-WAY SIDEWALK

What are your suggestions to improve the Public Realm? Place a sticky note and add your ideas below.

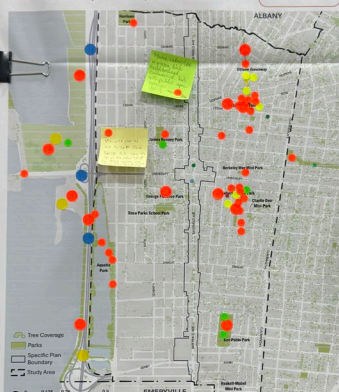
Ideas for public art
Ideas for active street frontages
Ideas for building facades (articulation)

Sticky Notes

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Public Open Space

Which Public Spaces do you use the most? Place a dot on the map.



ALBANY
EMERYVILLE

What types of activities do you do in the Public Spaces? Place a sticky note below.

Sticky Notes

What Public Space improvements or activities would make San Pablo Ave more inviting? Place a dot and add sticky notes with additional ideas.

- Places to sit with friends
- Active recreation: Nearby running or biking trails.
- Community Events
- Farmer's market/ Night market
- Art/ Performance Events

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Results

General Comments

Comment	Count
Street Furniture: Encourage mixed street use, public & private plaza spaces, parklets (summer?).	1
Lighting: Lighting needed everywhere on SPA.	1
New mix-use developments: Expanded (setback) and repaired sidewalk is safer for pedestrians and accessibility.	1
New mix-use developments: Blighted 1st floor retail, empty spaces.	2
Semi-Public Spaces: This space would be perfect, if it wasn't vacant. Incentivize no-vacancies and support small business.	1
Art along street: Public art is expensive and constantly at risk of vandalism, graffiti, unless anti-graffiti committee developed.	1
Art along street: More murals & public art & communal spaces.	1
Art along street: Murals reduce graffiti.	1
Brick and mortar frontages: [Metro lighting] Our plants get stolen all the time. :(1
Vacancy: Corner of Ashby & SPA Higby Apartments. The abandoned Walgreens on Ashby / SPA has become more than an eyesore. Deters renters because Higby faces the Walgreens. Many homeless, trash, furniture being dumped.	1
Vacancy: [2144 SPA] Isn't this block of businesses intentionally vacant due to development proposals? [Response from someone else] That's what I heard, Sfyimby.com	2
Vacancy: Can there be pop-up art or retail use of (long-term) vacancies?	1

Community Life – Board 2

What elements you like about San Pablo's Public Realm today?

Activity

Element	Number of Dots
Café Seating	1
Street trees	4
Pedestrian lighting	2
Pedestrian activities	1
Engaging building architecture	1
Some buildings have setbacks	2

Comments	Count
[Arrow points to pedestrian light] This lower level lighting is so much nicer.	1
Some buildings have inviting frontages & setbacks. Wide sidewalks, trees.	1

What are your suggestions to improve the Public Realm?

Activity

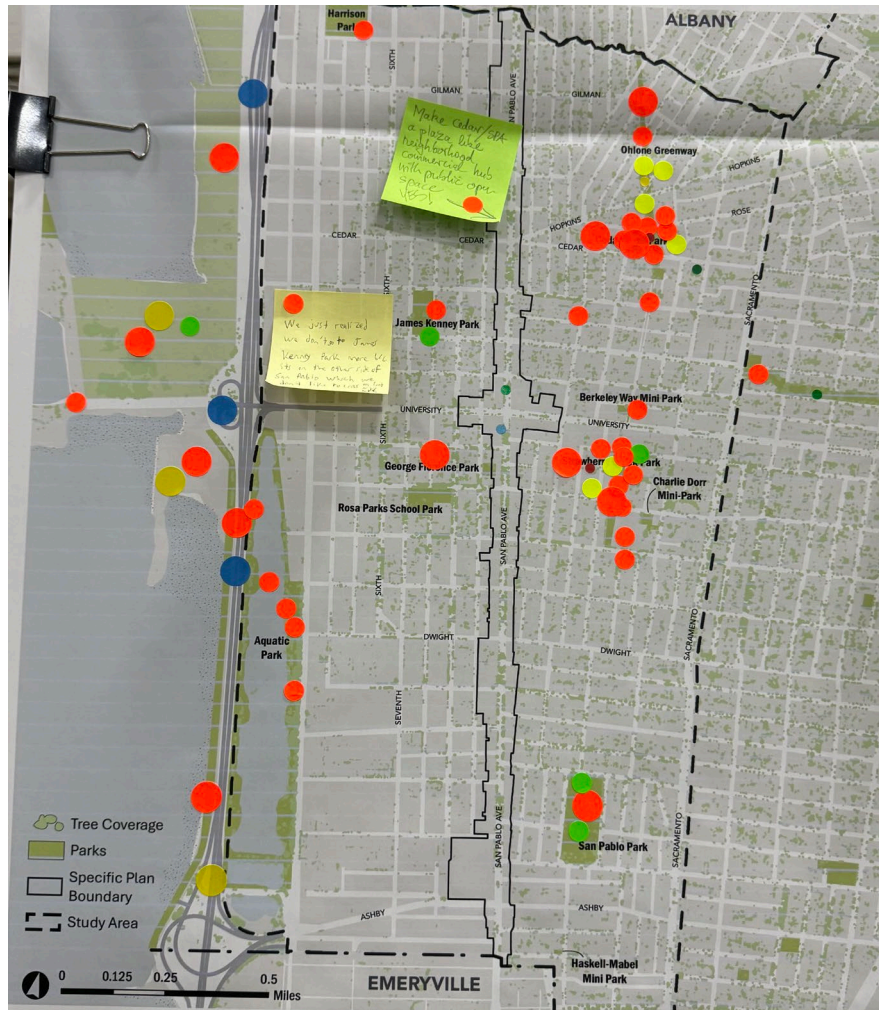
Type of Idea	Comments	Count
Ideas for public art	Murals, whimsical benches or bike racks.	1
Ideas for public art	Benches with mosaic art.	1
Ideas for public art	Love El Cerrito median landscaping (Sculpture not so much).	1
Ideas for public art	Murals, sculptures, lighting.	1
Ideas for public art	Visible cops	1
Ideas for public art	Open calls for artists on SPA to submit mural proposals and pay them for it.	1
Ideas for public art	Rain gardens/ swales and planting at curbs along SPA. Native plants.	1
Ideas for active street frontages	Outdoor dining, setbacks, benches, areas for gathering.	2
Ideas for active street frontages	Parklets to increase public realm.	1
Ideas for active street frontages	Wider / bigger sidewalks.	5
Ideas for active street frontages	Lower the barriers of entry for micro businesses.	1
Ideas for active street frontages	Bus shelter at University & SPA is awkwardly placed, collects trash, difficult to pass.	1
Ideas for active street frontages	Better city support for small business.	2
Ideas for active street frontages	Take care of the medians with wildflowers & trees.	1
Ideas for active street frontages	Concerned new buildings will shade sidewalks & corridor making it dark & not warm enough for active street frontage. Step building back.	2
Ideas for building facades	Architecturally unique. Implement standards that aren't so strict to allow for variety (i.e. Ornamental, setbacks, etc.)	1
Ideas for building facades	Let buildings avoid unnecessary articulation in favor of ornamentation & murals.	1
Ideas for building facades	Mature trees are great, but negatively impact sidewalk conditions.	1
Ideas for building facades	Stop requiring mixed-use development along SPA. Better to develop artist lofts on ground level.	1
Ideas for building facades	Street level business. Cafes and restaurants with sidewalk seating & patios.	1
Ideas for building facades	Wider sidewalks.	1
Other ideas for Public Realm	Forbid right turn on red (I was nearly killed on SPA & Gilman).	1

Other ideas for Public Realm	Fix lighting! Too dark.	4
Other ideas for Public Realm	More playgrounds.	1
Other ideas for Public Realm	Bulb outs for pedestrian / bike safety, landscaping.	1
Other ideas for Public Realm	Need lots of trash & recycling containers.	2
Other ideas for Public Realm	Crime prevention.	8
Other ideas for Public Realm	Create separate bike paths (Like Emeryville on Shellmound or Albany on Buchanan).	1
Other ideas for Public Realm	Better loading zones for businesses.	5
Other ideas for Public Realm	I would like to see cement bollards at pedestrian crossings. There have been several high-speed crashes into builds on SPA & University. Bollards provide pedestrian safety at these conflict points.	1

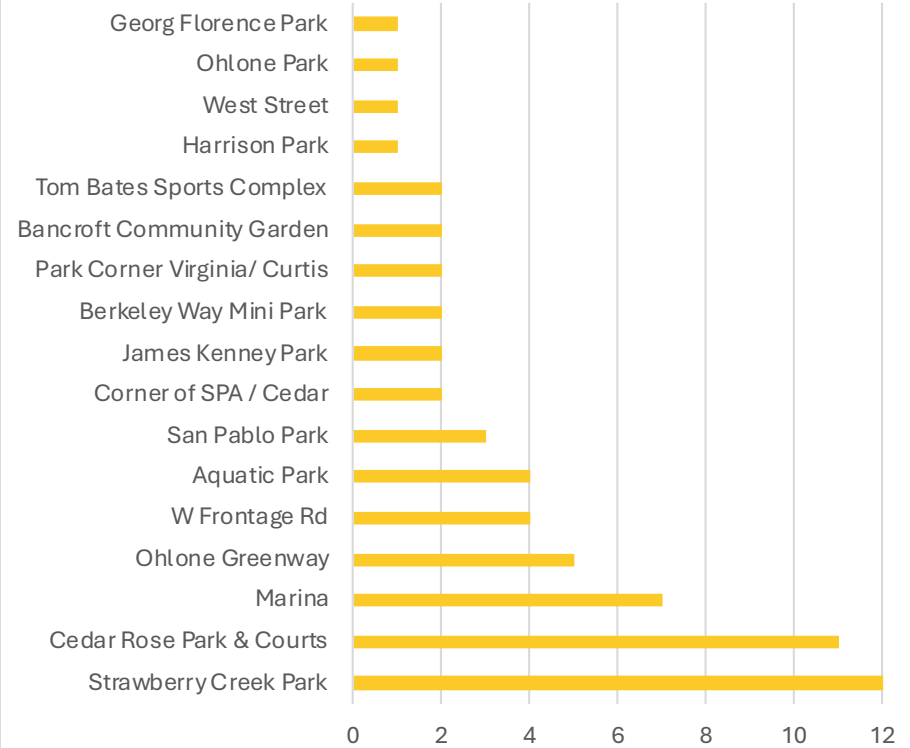
Public Open Space – Board 3

Which Public Spaces do you use the most?

Activity



Which Public Spaces do you use the most?



What types of activities do you do in the Public Space?

Comment	Count
Community Gardening.	1
Walk, bike.	1
Children's sports.	2
Sit in park, shop at businesses, eat at restaurants, walk on greenway.	3
Mini corner public parklets.	2
Like more open space but big concern it will become a housing opportunity for the unhoused.	6
Picnic, gather with friends, have lunch, walk, workouts.	1
More park / open space with benches for seniors.	2
Please take care of newly planted street trees in median. (Gilman to Cedar). Looks like the need TLC (Mulch, etc.)	1
Allow mix of public park with small business uses, like the café at Strawberry Creek Park.	1
Open public spaces at nodes to foster community, pull buildings back.	2

What Public Space improvements or activities would make San Pablo Avenue more inviting?

Comment	Count
To make SPA more inviting you need to slow cars down. The traffic noise is not pleasant.	2
Support small businesses. They ask for customer parking & truck loading areas.	1
Pick up the trash every day; empty trash cans.	1
Dog park.	1
Food truck park (As in Portland).	1
More outdoor dining, lighting.	2

Key Themes

- The lush tree canopy along San Pablo Avenue is widely appreciated as its most beloved public asset. There is strong support to keep the median and landscaping lush and well maintained. However, some community members spend more time in parks east of San Pablo Ave and some feel that the corridor acts as a barrier, limiting their access to parks and amenities west of the corridor.
- People are open to the idea of art activation through murals, sculptures in medians and artistic furniture, such as benches.
- There is a notable demand for more pedestrian-directed lighting and improved sidewalk safety.
- Maintenance of street and state of abandoned buildings emerged as predominant concerns, overshadowing discussions about public realm improvements. There is a fear that public improvements like benches and small gathering spaces will attract unhoused population with mental health issues.
- Community members expressed frustration about high vacancies with consensus that there is an oversupply of retail space available and a need for alternative uses.
- Community members expressed a desire for more “small scale” activations in the public realm, such as outdoor seating or parklets, but the public also understands the width limitation. There is support for semi-public spaces and node/intersection activation. The example of semi-public space at the new “Aquatic” development with setback was well perceived.
- San Pablo Avenue is seen as a transportation corridor that needs to support daily necessities for West Berkeley, rather than expensive boutique stores. Opinions are divided on the increase of housing density, with concerns ranging from parking issues to shade and shadow of existing properties.
- Long term business owners along San Pablo Avenue noted a lack of communication and collaboration among businesses. Incidents of vandalism and theft have occurred, prompting some businesses to remove or reduce decorations.

Notable Quotes

- *“Don’t do so much mixed-use! We have enough empty ground floors.”*
- *“Stop requiring mixed-use development along SPA. Better to develop artist lofts on ground level.”*
- *“Allow mix of public park with small business uses, like the café at Strawberry Creek Park.”*
- *“Open public spaces at nodes to foster community, pull buildings back.”*

Opportunities for Policy Solutions

The following highlights specific comments, concerns, and ideas that may be addressed with the Specific Plan’s Policies.

- Consider implementing a cohesive maintenance solution for sidewalks and adjacent landscaping along San Pablo Avenue. Currently, adjacent property owners are responsible for maintenance, but stretches with vacant building frontages are neglected. Consider maintenance and landscaping support for small business storefronts.
- Consider support or funding for art initiatives, particularly ones that include murals and address empty storefronts and semi-public spaces.

- Consider implementing design standards for setbacks & semi-public space opportunities fronting San Pablo Avenue on new developments. This may include design guidelines and suggestions to activate these spaces and enhance the overall streetscape.
- Explore opportunities for creating parklets and public plazas or greens at nodes and intersections to San Pablo Avenue.
- Consider permits for food trucks on San Pablo Avenue and adjacent parking lots. This can provide additional food options and activate underutilized spaces.
- Explore countermeasures for long-term vacancies through temporary use initiatives, collaboration with Community-Based Organizations and support for small businesses. This may include both indoor and outdoor use of empty or abandoned spaces, such as parking lots, to promote community and engagement.

Results

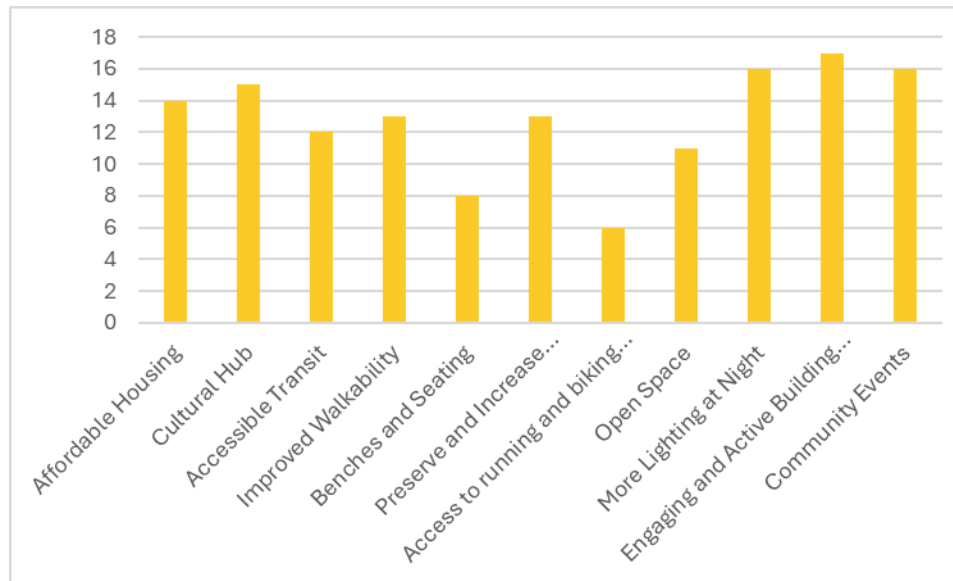
General Comments

Comment	Count
Publicize [Open House #2] more than 2 weeks in advance.	1
Hold the next Open House in S. Berkeley instead of N. Berkeley for equity and representation.	1

Future Vision of San Pablo Ave – Board 1

Which of these aspects is most important to you in the future of San Pablo Avenue?

Activity



Comments	Count
Accessible Transit: AC Transit Transbay Service	3
Increase public space with parklets for restaurants, live music, art shows, etc.	1
Plaza-like public spaces at nodes like SPA / Cedar.	2

Comments	Count
Wider sidewalks.	2
Clean: Need lots more trash & recycling containers.	2
Trash pickup, litter, maintain good streetscape.	5
Native plants to create pollinator pathways	2
Allow sunlight into the street so sidewalk won't be dark and drafty.	2
Public safety & more police presence.	1
Police sub-station in west Berkeley. Reduces crime.	1
Vibrant, local, small businesses.	5
Support for businesses.	2

What is your future vision for San Pablo Avenue?

Comments	Count
Wide Sidewalks.	4
Protect sunshine, not a dark, windy canyon.	4
It would be amazing to have more restaurants and beer gardens. Additionally, Berkeley lacks entertainment venues. Think bowling allies, house theaters, laser tag, go-karting, etc. I'd love more places to have fun!	3
Lively corridor where people from all walks of lives [life] can enjoy, mingle, and support local businesses. Good mix of housing, restaurants, stores (and grocery stores).	4
Base up permitting to make it easier for development/ businesses. And any policies to help businesses thrive.	
Walkable, bikeable, bus-able, active storefronts, not as car centric.	3
Thriving small businesses.	1
Make SPA a desirable pedestrian destination.	1
More street level nature.	3
CPTED.	1
Enhanced design & construction district	1
Trash pickup every day, empty trash cans.	1
Bulb outs for safety and landscape.	1
Less cars.	1

Comments	Count
More street live. Vibrant retail and nightlife.	1
It is our urban center or spine. Be more for the people that live here. Missing boutiques, groceries and practical things	1
Give us cheap places	1

Key Themes

- Community Members identified “Engaging & Active Building Frontage”, “Community Events” and “More Lighting at Night” as their most important future aspects, closely followed by “Cultural Hub” and “Affordable Housing”. However, there was less support for “Benches & Seating”, and “Access to running and biking trails”, indicating widespread support for this transportation option.
- There is a strong preference to keep the AC Transbay service on San Pablo Avenue, indicating widespread support for this transportation option.
- Maintenance of the public realm, which includes trash pick-up and landscaping, emerged as a priority among the community members.
- There is a perceived issue of crime along San Pablo Avenue, with some community members advocating want to increased police presence along the corridor to address safety concerns.
- Community members expressed a desire to see a “vibrant” San Pablo Avenue. Strategies to achieve this vision include wider sidewalks for better walkability, active storefronts through thriving businesses in both retail and gastronomy, and improved street safety.

Notable Quotes

- *“Berkeley lacks entertainment venues. Think bowling allies, house theaters, laser tag, go-karting, etc. I’d love more places to have fun!”*
- *“Lively corridor where people from all walks of life can enjoy, mingle, and support local businesses. Good mix of housing, restaurants, stores (and grocery stores).”*
- *“It is our urban center or spine. Be more for the people that live here. Missing boutiques, groceries, and practical things.”*
- *“Base up permitting to make it easier for development/ businesses. And any policies to help businesses thrive.”*

Opportunities for Policy Solutions

The following highlights specific comments, concerns, and ideas that may be addressed with the Specific Plan’s Policies.

- Considering streamlining permitting processes to make it easier for new developments and businesses to establish themselves along San Pablo Avenue. Implement policies aimed at supporting businesses to thrive.:
- Address pedestrian safety concerns by implementing measures such as wider sidewalks and greater setbacks, as well as improvements to pedestrian and bike crossings. (wider sidewalks through setbacks and crossing improvements).

- Explore opportunities to create semi-public spaces on nodes and properties along San Pablo Avenue. These spaces can serve as gathering points for community and contribute to the overall vibrancy of the corridor.